



Case study Steve Urwin

Steve is a 10th generation Northumbrian Farmer. His father and mother purchased High House Farm near Matfen in 1969.

In 1989 Steve took over the running of the farm and running two other tenanted farms, mainly focusing on cattle for beef.



During 2001 Northumberland, along with the rest of England and Wales, were affected with Foot and Mouth disease. In light of this Steve and his wife, Sally, decided to restructure the farming enterprise. The rented farms and cattle were released. Steve decided to pursue his love of beer by setting up a microbrewery with Sally using her previous expertise in marketing to drive the business. High House Farm brewery was born, very much using the idea of field to glass.

This quickly became a commercial success leading to the opening of a visitor centre shop and restaurant in 2004.

In 2011, Steve and Sally realised that the farm, children and the other businesses were creating a lot, if not too much work for the two of them.





The decision was made to lease out the brewery, shop and visitor centre and focus more on the farm.

The farm now has 150 acres split equally between combinable crops and permanent pasture supporting 200 commercial ewes.

In 2018 the bank managers suggested that Steve and Sally “sweated the assets of the farm”

The first project they looked at was a 64,000 free range poultry shed but quickly concluded that £1.5m was a lot more than they were willing to find or invest.

In 2019, after some research, they approached BQP, Steve explaining the main drivers to pigs and BQP were bringing in a new steady income stream to the farm, high welfare standards required by them, and the vertical integrated supply chain to the high-end retailers.



Also, Steve was chopping his straw at the time and he felt this was an under-utilised product on the farm, by putting 100kgs of straw into the pigs he now gets back 650kg of quality farmyard manure. With fertiliser prices on the increase he feels this was a great investment and his soil health will improve which again will be another hidden benefit to the farm.

Unfortunately, due to the circumstances of the last couple of years Steve and Sally’s

budget rose for the building. But the couple still believe it was a worthwhile investment for their business.

They are looking forward to another building, once the markets have stabilised, with the site already cleared.