

## Wighill Manor Lodges, York

### Nordic Pinelodges – an essential element in a successful farm development business

**Wighill Manor Lodges is a new farm diversification business which has provided an additional source of income with minimal time commitment for Carl Redfearn and his family.**

Manor House Farm near Wetherby has been a family farm for four generations, each generation developing and expanding the business. Now a successful 400 acre working arable farm, the need to create an additional source of income in the ever fluctuating farming climate, and provide a secure business for future generations, has resulted in Carl and Margaret Redfearn and family launching a luxury self-catering holiday lodge business.

Carl and Margaret's daughter Melanie and son-in-law Rupert Brown, and their sons have recently returned to live and work on the farm following Rupert's 18 year career in the RAF.

Said Carl: "We decided to investigate our farm diversification options. Although our objective was to bring in extra revenue, we were adamant that any new venture should not distract us from our core farming business. Something we could manage easily, without taking us away from our day-to-day work on the farm was vital."

"We looked at alternative livestock projects, egg production and poultry farming, but then we thought: Why look at industrial production scale ideas when we can offer visitors to the area what we have in abundance? Space – fresh air –

peace and quiet – and a range of environmentally friendly activities like walking, cycling and bird watching."

The farm already ran a small CS licensed caravan site so decided the best solution was to offer tourists self-catering short breaks and holidays in timber lodges. They knew that a basic lodge in a muddy field at the end of a farm track would not satisfy today's holidaymakers who are looking for well laid out accommodation with good access and all the luxury and facilities similar to, or better than they enjoy at home.

After thorough research which provided real evidence that this type of project would be viable, the decision was taken to go ahead and two acres of grassland with open views over the farm were allocated for five lodges. Aware that the planning process has become more and more complex over recent years, specialist in this type of work Savills was engaged to prepare, submit and negotiate the planning applications. Although none of the family had experience in the tourism or leisure industry, they combined their skills and Wighill Manor Lodges was born. Carl's son-in-law Rupert spearheaded the project, using his military organisational and project management skills and having previously worked in customer service Melanie's 'people' skills were to prove invaluable.





The lounge, dining and kitchen area in a three-bedroom Nordic Pinelodge

Expert help was however needed in two other key areas: a self-catering holiday specialist who would be able to market the lodges nationally and provide customer service and internet booking; and a lodge manufacturer with experience of supplying lodges suitable for year-round holiday park use.

Hoseasons, were approached first and they passed on a lot of valuable information including confirmation that there would be an excellent demand for high quality lodge accommodation

in this area, close to York. They were also able to offer immediate publicity via their website which would result in bookings from the day the lodges were commissioned. By taking responsibility for handling all enquiries, bookings and payments Hoseasons would also minimise administration time at the farm.

Several lodge manufacturers were considered but following a visit to Pinelog, an order was placed for five Nordic Pinelodges.



The lounge area

Said Rupert: "It soon became clear that the obvious decision was to go with Pinelog. In addition to the quality of their buildings they also design and build lodges specifically designed for the holiday market rather than just modified residential lodges which we saw elsewhere. They also had the advantage of owning and operating two successful holiday parks and therefore had a unique insight into customer expectations and market trends."

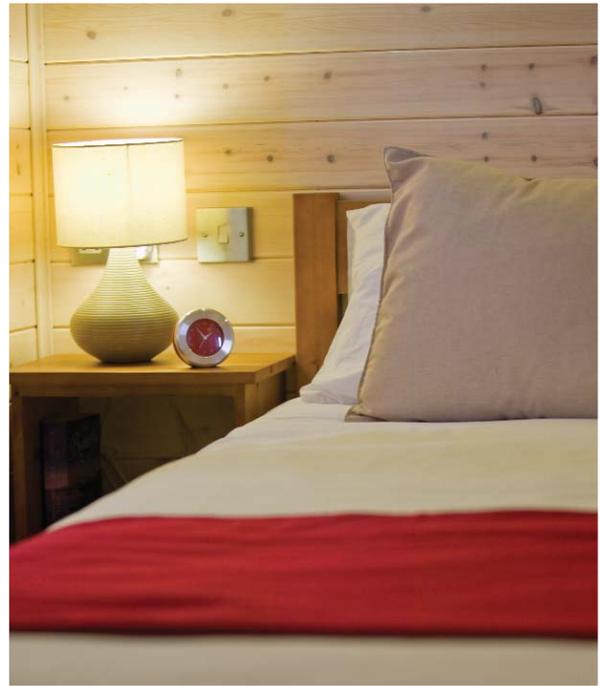
"They gave us a phenomenal amount of advice and information about the holiday business. We visited their Darwin Forest Country Park to see the lodges and as it transpired; whilst we were there one of their 20-year old Pinelodges was being dismantled prior to being sold on. We could see that despite many years of hard, regular use, the structure was still sound and rot free – a testimony to their durability."

One, two and three bedroom lodges from the Pinelodge Nordic range were selected.

The result of 30 years' experience of crafting high quality timber buildings, Nordic Pinelodges have a simple design and genuine log cabin feel. As the average holiday lodge has to withstand two change-overs a week over 40+ weeks of the year, the Nordic Pinelodge is tough enough to withstand all of this and offer uncompromising build quality at a competitive price.

Low maintenance timber interiors create a holiday atmosphere and these hardwearing surfaces only need an occasional wipe down. A range of exterior colours is available that can be mixed and matched to blend or contrast with the environment.

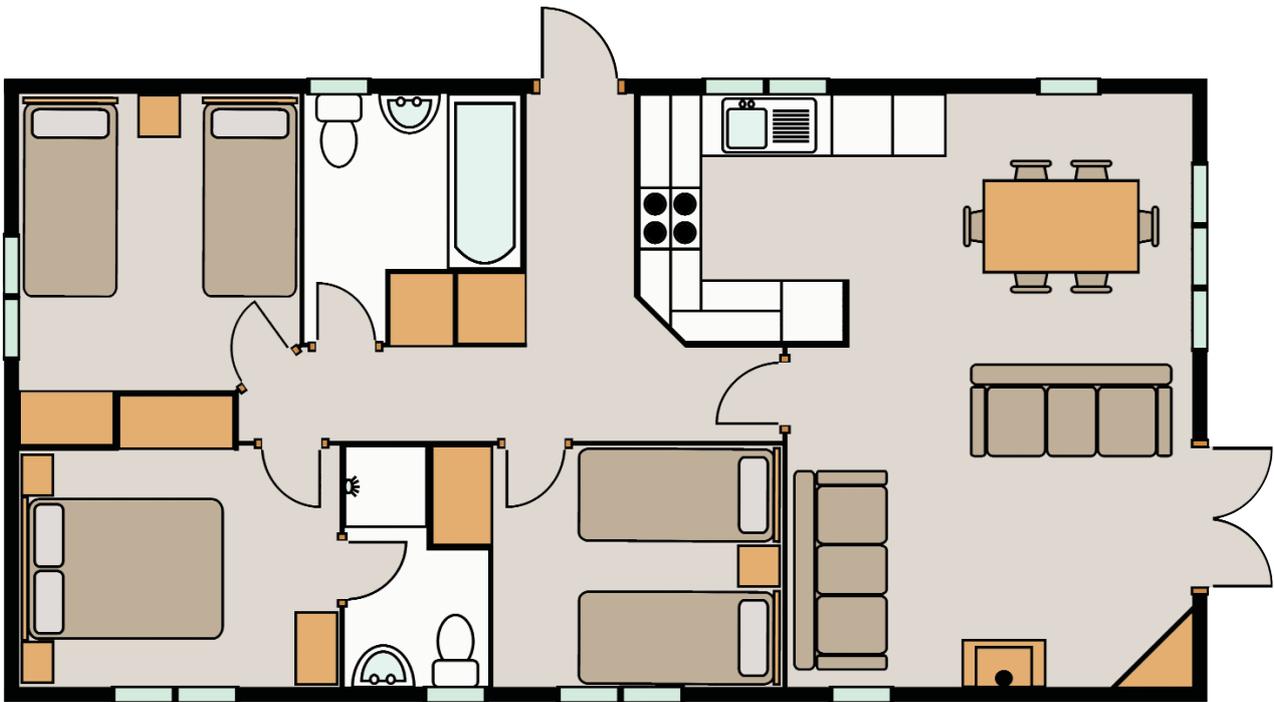
Pinelogs offer a true one-stop-shop service on all their Pinelodges. They are fully manufactured under controlled factory conditions and are delivered on two caravan type transporters, arriving complete with fully fitted bathrooms, kitchens and bedrooms. They can be located straight onto simple footings, bolted together and ready to occupy in two or three days –all that is needed is a plumber and electrician to make the necessary connections and commission the appliances. Pinelogs also offer a range of optional bed and soft furnishing packages. Pinelogs are happy to extend standard Nordic designs to make them more spacious and insulate them to higher building regulation standard. A hot tub was also incorporated in the



Rupert and Melanie Brown, Margaret and Carl Redfean on the verandah of a two-bedroom Nordic Pinelodge



A two bedroom Nordic Pinelodge



A typical three-bedroomed, two-bathroom Nordic Pinelodge (shown without verandah)

veranda. "We thought that would give them extra glamour" said Rupert. "After all very few of us can sit under the stars in a hot tub at home."

"The first two lodges arrived mid September and despite it being a new venture and the early onset of the severest winter for years, the first booking was received from Hoseasons on 26th November and a steady stream of bookings followed. The next two lodges arrived in early 2011, and will be available for booking from April. The lodges are more or less fully booked right up to the end of April and summer bookings are coming in steadily meaning our initial 92% occupancy rate will be maintained or improved on."

"We did consider converting one of our redundant farm buildings into holiday accommodation, but I am glad we didn't pursue this. The beauty of the Pinelodges is that we knew at the outset exactly what the overall cost would be – not something you can say with conversations which can throw up unforeseen and expensive problems as they progress."

Summing up Rupert Brown says: "We are delighted. The new business generated revenue from day one and is dovetailing perfectly with our day to day farming work. The only time we have to allocate to the business is on changeover days but as these are Monday and Friday this leaves plenty of time free for farm work and spending time with the children."

"We estimate that our investment will pay for itself within five years and will help to provide the next generations with a secure future on Manor House Farm."

Client: Wighill Manor Lodges  
Location: Wighill, near York