

WALTER FIGGITT
WR/319/45/32

At the beginning of World War II, Britain needed to increase home food production, and the area of land under cultivation was rapidly increased. County War Agricultural Executive Committees and district committees under them had exceptional powers to determine the direction of farming at a local level. Once the short-term objective of increasing food production had been met, thought was given to implementing a more general National Farm Survey with the purpose of providing data to form the basis of post-war planning. Census forms were sent out on 4th June 1941 for the farmer/market gardener to complete. In addition, every farm and holding of five acres (ranging from large farms to market gardens) received a visit from an inspector who surveyed and classified according to the physical condition of the land. These records may be viewed in the MAF 32 category at The National Archives, Kew; a team of Badsey Society members visited The National Archives in January 2013 and took copies of the records.

Walter Figgitt (1919-?) lived at 15 Council Cottages, Wickhamford, and was a part-time market gardener who assisted another grower. The census form was addressed to Messrs A W Figgett & Son. Walter's father, Albert Walter Figgitt (1895-1928), had died when Walter was a child. Walter Figgitt had 5½ acres of land, which he had occupied for seven years; he worked the land on his own with no assistance. He grew raspberries, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cabbages, onions, runner beans and asparagus and had one pig. He did not have a tractor.

As the farm was over 5 acres in size, Form B496 needed to be completed by inspectors. The inspector, R W Sidwell, judged the farm to be 100% fair, conveniently laid out, on soil which was 100% heavy, when he visited on 20th December 1942. There was no farmhouse. The situation in regard to road and railway and the condition of buildings, farm roads, fences, ditches and field drainage was considered fair. There was heavy infestation with weeds (couch grass and thistle); there were no derelict fields. There was no water supply which resulted in a seasonal shortage of water; there was no electricity.

Management of the farm was classed as C, the reason being personal failings, given as slackness and laziness. The condition of arable land was poor with use of fertilisers to some extent; there was no pasture.