

FREDERICK JOHN GILBERT
WR/319/45/136

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.

Frederick John Gilbert (1914-1999) lived at 3 Fairfield, Evesham, and was a full-time market gardener. He was a tenant of George Crompton Lees-Milne of Wickhamford Manor.

George Wright occupied around 6 acres of land at Wickhamford which he had had for two years. He had no assistance on the market garden. He grew Brussels sprouts, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, onions and broad beans. He did not have a tractor.

As the holding was over 5 acres in size, Form B496 needed to be completed by inspectors. The inspector, R W Sidwell, judged the farm to be 75% good and 25% fair, conveniently laid out, on soil which was 100% heavy, when he visited on 20th December 1942. There was no farmhouse. The condition in regard to road and the condition of farm roads was considered good; the situation in regard to railway and the condition of buildings, fences, ditches and field drainage was considered fair. There were no infestations of any kind and no derelict fields. There was no water supply resulting in a seasonal shortage of water; there was no electricity.

Management of the farm was classed as A. The condition of arable land was good with adequate use of fertilisers; there was no pasture.