

ALBERT ENOS HARMAN
WR/319/45/51 & 52

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.

Albert Enos Harman (1907-1984) lived at 1 Longdon Hill, Wickhamford, and was a full-time market gardener who was a tenant of Christ Church, whose agent was Raymond Webb in Evesham. The land had originally been owned by the trustees of John Pickup Lord, but was bought by the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Oxford, when the estate was put up for sale in 1930. The Harman family rented the land at an annual rent of £45 10s 10d but, some time after the Second World War, purchased it from the College.

Albert had 2 acres (details shown on form number 51), which he had occupied for seven years, and on which he grew strawberries and kept six pigs and 30 chickens. He had one part-time seasonal worker. The family business had 13.2 acres (details shown on form number 52), which they had occupied for 15 years. Form 52 was originally addressed to Mrs Kate, J R & A E Harman of 55 Kings Road, but this was crossed out and Albert's name and address substituted. Kate's husband, Benjamin Thomas Harman (1871-1937), had died in 1937, and so she ran the business with two of her sons, James Rowland Harman (1904-1977), known as Jim, and Albert Enos Harman (1907-1984). Jim lived in Evesham, as did his mother, but Albert lived in a cottage adjoining the land, having moved there after his marriage in 1936. It was situated at the bottom of Longdon Hill and had a small stream running along the western edge that was used for irrigation in times of drought. They grew raspberries, potatoes, parsnips, beetroot, onions, broad beans, peas and asparagus and had orchards which consisted mainly of plums. The census forms reveal that they had a Fordson tractor and kept a horse (by the name of Bob, but of course that information wasn't on the form!). They also acquired an Austin drop-sided lorry at some stage. At the time of the census they were employing two permanent workers and at busy times four casual workers.

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 100% good, conveniently laid out, on soil which was 100% heavy, when he visited on 18th October 1944. There

was no farmhouse. The situation in regard to road and the condition of buildings, farm roads, fences, ditches and field drainage was considered good; the situation in regard to railway was fair. There were no infestations of any kind and no derelict fields. There was a stream supplying water to the fields; 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.

Albert Harman was the father of Badsey Society member, Derek Harman. Albert's daughter-in-law, Val, has provided details about the Harman family and the land that they occupied. After the Second World War, the business was known as J & A Harman. The Income Tax returns survive for 1943/4 and 1944/5. In 1943/4 the business made a profit of £1088 4s 7d and in 1944/5 £1072 18s. Although the accounts had been agreed by HM Inspector of Taxes, it appears that in the early 1950s the accounts were reviewed and disputed by the Revenue. Basically the Inspector couldn't see, after taking into account money invested in deposit accounts, how the partners could have lived on such a small income. In fact in 1944/5 the Inspector states the partners had a negative amount to live on. In one of the letters written by the Inspector in January 1955 to Albert, who was the member of the partnership dealing with the Revenue, he states "I have not taken into consideration any winnings from dog racing as you have not been able to prove any of these sums to me satisfactorily." Perhaps cash sales may have played some part in this saga. The outcome is not known but, in a letter from the Inspector dated 9th May 1955, they were after £900 for arrears of tax for 1945/6 and 1947/8.

The business continued successfully with glasshouses being built in the 1950s and 60s amounting to .75 acres. The first glasshouses were erected in 1956 and were from the Westdock Timber Co, Hull and were of the "Dutch light structure". Other blocks of glass were added over the years. The glasshouses were cropped with lettuce in the spring followed by tomatoes. The orchards were extended and they also rented further land at Faulkes Mill, Offenham, and a plum and apple orchard on the Porter Estate. The plum crops were mainly Czar, Purple Egg, Victoria and Herons. On the open land a variety of crops was grown. Stick beans, cabbage, spring onions and radish were grown in summer and, in winter, sprouts and leeks were gathered.

Jim's son, Richard, joined the business in 1962 and Albert's son, Derek, in 1966. Jim was never happier than when he was working in the orchards and he was found dead amongst his beloved plum trees. Albert continued to work on the land right up until his death aged 78. On the day he died he had been spraying weeds by the side of the stream. Richard and Derek continued in partnership but in the early 1980s Derek left to start his own nursery at Bidford on Avon.

Richard continued until ill-health forced him to retire. The land at Longdon Hill was sold by auction at The Sandy's Arms on 3rd August 1998 and realised £111,000. One of the last markets gardens in Wickhamford had gone.



Above: Two aerial photos from the early 1960s of Longdon Hill, before the dual carriageway was built on the A44. The houses are 1 & 2 Longdon Hill. The small brick buildings at the rear were very common in that era of property and a few still remain in the village. They consisted of a wash house at the front; at the side, a coal house and toilet consisting of a seat with a bucket underneath which had to be emptied, and at the rear a pig sty. The two photos show the nursery to the north of the A44 (where the dual carriageway now ends).