

FREDERICK JAMES MARTIN

WR/319/45/64

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 James Martin (1900-1981) lived at Laburnams, Pitchers Hill, Wickhamford, and was a full-time market gardener. He 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. Frederick Martin also owned land which he had bought from the estate and also occupied land at Norton and Lenchwick. Frederick's father, Charles Martin (c1865-1946) had also occupied land in Wickhamford and Aldington at the time of the 1910 Lloyd George Land Valuation Survey.

Frederick Martin had 8 acres of land at Wickhamford, 2½ acres of which he had occupied for 16 years, 3 acres for seven years and 2½ acres for three years. He owned 5 acres and held 3 acres as tenant. He appears to have had no assistance. He grew potatoes, Brussels sprouts, carrots, onions, peas and asparagus. 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 100% good, moderately laid out, on soil which was 50% heavy and 50% medium, when he visited on 17th December 1942. There was no farmhouse. The situation in regard to road was considered good; the situation in regard to railway and the condition of buildings, farm roads, fences, ditches and field drainage was fair. There were no infestations of any kind and no derelict fields. There was a roof water supply for the farm buildings and a well 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.