

CHARLES MARTIN OLDAKER
WR/319/45/81

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.

Charles Martin Oldaker (1885-1977) lived at Field Farm, Wickhamford, and was a full-time farmer. He was a tenant of J Payton of Ashleigh, Home Road, Birmingham, who had bought Field Farm in 1927 from the trustees of John Pickup Lord, following the death of tenant farmer, Benjamin Carter, who had farmed there for over a quarter of a century.

Charles Oldaker became tenant of the 252-acre farm in 1927. He employed two full-time male workers and a male seasonal worker. He grew wheat, barley, oats, beans for stock feeding, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, had 8 acres of orchard, 46 acres of grassland for mowing that season and 129 acres of permanent grass for grazing. He had a herd of 46 cattle, had 105 sheep, seven pigs and 204 chickens. He had three horses used for agricultural purposes; 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, A B Williams, judged the farm to be 100% good, conveniently laid out, on soil which was 100% heavy, when he visited on 2nd June 1941. The situation in regard to road and the condition of farmhouse, farm roads and cottages was considered good; the condition of ditches and field drainage was bad; and the situation with regard to railway and the condition of buildings and fences was considered fair. There was infestation with rooks and wood pigeons and with insect pests; there were no derelict fields. There was piped water to farmhouse and farm buildings and a well and stream providing water supply to the fields; there was electricity for household and farm purposes.

Management of the farm was classed as A. The condition of arable land and pasture was fair with use of fertilisers to some extent.