

MESSRS J & V PETHARD
WR/319/45/85

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.

Messrs J & V Pethard lived at Wickhamford, and were full-time market gardeners. They were tenants 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. They also owned land which they had bought from the estate. V Pethard was Vernon Joseph Byrd Pethard (1885-1960); J Pethard was probably either his brother, Henry Jarrett Pethard (1884-1953) or his half-brother, Edward John Pethard (1868-1947).

J & V Pethard occupied 6½ acres of land at Wickhamford, 2¾ acres of which they had occupied for 16 years and owned and 3¾ acres for 31 years for which they were tenants. Their father, George Pethard (1837-1911), had occupied the same land at the time of the 1910 Lloyd George Land Valuation Survey. They had no assistance. They grew strawberries, carrots, parsnips, onions, peas and asparagus, and had 2¾ acres of orchard and 1½ acres lay fallow. They 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% good, moderately 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 field drainage was considered good; the situation in regard to railway and the condition of buildings, farm roads, fences and ditches was considered fair. There were no infestations of any kind and no derelict fields. There was a well supplying water to the fields; there was no electricity.

Management of the farm was classed as B, the reason being personal failings, "somewhat lazy". The condition of arable land was fair with adequate use of fertilisers; there was no pasture.