

GEORGE EDWIN ROBBINS

WR/319/45/90

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.

George Edwin Robbins (1899-1973) lived at 16 Pitchers Hill, Wickhamford, and was a part-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. George Robbins was also in the fruit and vegetable haulage business.

George Robbins occupied around 13 acres of land at Wickhamford, 6 acres of which he had occupied for 24 years, 4 acres for ten years and 3 acres for six years. He employed one full-time male family worker and two female family workers. He grew potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cabbages, cauliflowers, carrots, beetroot, onions, runner beans, peas and asparagus. He used one horse for agricultural purposes; he 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, conveniently laid out, on soil which was 100% heavy, when he visited on 20th December 1942. There was no farmhouse. The situation in regard to road and the condition of farms roads and field drainage was considered good; the situation in regard to railway and the condition of buildings, fences and ditches was considered fair. There were no infestations of any kind and no derelict fields. There was no water supply which resulted in a seasonal shortage of water; there was no electricity.

Management of the farm was classed as B, the reason being personal failings, given as drink and lack of ambition. The condition of arable land was fair with use of fertilisers to some extent; there was no pasture.



George Robbins