

WILLIAM THOMAS SIMMS
WR/319/45/95

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.

William Thomas Simms (1903-1994) lived at 10 Coronation Street, Evesham, 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. He was also a tenant of George Crompton Lees-Milne of Wickhamford Manor.

William Simms occupied around 6 acres of land at Wickhamford, 3 acres of which he had occupied for nine months and 3 acres for six months. He had the assistance of family members (the precise number is unknown as it varies between the forms). He grew potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, onions, runner beans and asparagus and had a quarter of an acre of orchard. 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 100% heavy, when he visited on 18th October 1944. There was no farmhouse. The situation in regard to road and railway and the condition of buildings, farm roads, fences, ditches and field drainage was considered fair. There were no infestations of any kind and no derelict fields. There was a roof water supply for 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.