

## National Farm Survey

When the Second World War began in September 1939, Britain was faced with an urgent need to increase food production, as imports of food and fertilisers were drastically cut. The area of land under cultivation had to be increased significantly and quickly. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries set up War Agricultural Executive Committees in each county ('County War Ags.') to carry out a farm survey between 1940 and 1941, and to use the information collected to bring uncultivated land under the plough and to improve poor farms. No individual farm records of this survey appear to have survived. However, summarised reports by county of the 1940-1941 survey are available at The National Archives at Kew.

Once the short-term objective of increasing food production had been met, the government decided to carry out a more general National Farm Survey between 1941 and 1943, with a longer-term purpose of providing data that would form the basis of post-war planning. Such a survey was seen at the time as a 'Second Domesday Book', a 'permanent and comprehensive record of the conditions on the farms of England and Wales'.

Every farm and holding of five acres and more was surveyed, including those of market gardeners, horticulturists, and poultry-keepers. The resulting National Farm Survey consists of two distinct components:

- **A set of forms** for every farm, completed by farmers and farm inspectors.
- **A set of maps** for each county, based on Ordnance Survey maps, showing the land belonging to each farm. Unfortunately the map covering Hoxne does not seem to have survived.

Each part of the survey for a given farm bears that farm's unique code. This comprises an abbreviation of the county name, the parish number, and the individual farm number: for example SE 188/26 for the Suffolk East parish of Hoxne (188) and the individual farm number 26 for Shreeves Farm.

Each individual farm record comprises up to four forms. Each form gives:

- the name of the farmer and farm
- the address
- the parish
- the individual farm code

Three of these forms were effectively an enlarged 1941 farm census return, posted to the farmer for him to complete on 4 June 1941. The three forms show details of:

- agricultural land - crops, labour and livestock
- small fruit, vegetables, and stocks of hay and straw
- labour, engines, rent, and length of occupancy

The fourth form, the Primary Farm Survey, was completed by an inspector who visited the farm and interviewed the farmer. The Primary Farm Survey has four sections:

- section A: 'tenure', stating whether the farmer was a tenant or owner, full or part time
- section B: 'conditions of farm', assessing farm layout, soil type, condition of buildings and roads, and the degree of infestation with weeds or pests
- section C: water and electricity provision
- section D: 'management', in which the inspector had to classify the farm reflecting how a farmer managed his resources:
  - well (A)
  - fairly well (B)
  - badly (C)

If B or C were due not to old age or lack of capital but to 'personal failings', the inspector had to say what these were. This was to assess where farm management could be improved, but was naturally a controversial part of the survey.

A second sheet of this form, under 'General Comments', lists the fields and acreage of the farm. The field numbers are taken from the 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps of 1905 or 1925, the date of the map used being noted on the first sheet of this form.

## Hoxne Summary

Forms for the following individual farm numbers have survived: Nos. 1, 3 to 26, 29 to 41, 44, 46 and 60 to 64. No. 30 was deleted and included in No 15. There seems to be a number of missing forms and when identifying the farm acreages on the map the following areas/farms seem to have been omitted:

**Corner Farm** - Probably because Herbert Arthur Tibbenham, farmer and owner, died on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 1940. This farm comprised of, just under, 130 acres and was partially in Syleham.

**The Stud Farm** - Bought by Edward John Saunders in 1920, consisted of about 98 acres of arable and pasture and 51 acres of woodland. The woodland would have included the Depperhaugh Wood and the Slades Wood. Edward John Saunders died in April 1935 and the Stud Farm was sold by his executors and his son, Edward George Saunders of The Gables, Wingfield, in July 1942. Presumably the Stud farm was recorded together with The Gables in Wingfield.

**Maggots Farm** - The farmer on the 1939 register was Edward Arthur Huggins. The farm consisted of about 75 acres and had often been farmed along with Thorpe Hall.

**Oak Lawn** - Oak Lawn consisted of the house and about 8 acres of grounds. The farmland surrounding it was probably farmed by George Flowerdew of Oak Lawn Farm and so was probably recorded under Eye.

The figures below are therefore a summary of those forms completed.

Total acreage of crops and grass - 2912.25

These included:

Wheat	343.75 acres
Barley	686.75 acres
Oats	142.75 acres
Beans for stock feed	171.25 acres
Potatoes	30.25 acres
Sugar Beet	171.5 acres

Flax                    54.25 acres

Vegetables for human consumption excluding potatoes 45.5 acres

Cattle - 632

Sheep - 887

Pigs - 383

Goats - 5

Poultry - 8915

Horses - 131 of which 91 were for agricultural use

Tractors - 16 of which one was a garden tractor.

There were 89 people employed on the farms, 12 being casual or part-time.

Mains electricity and water supplies were uncommon. Many farms relied on pond water for their supplies, including those to the farmhouses.

There were wells at Elm House Farm, The Red Lion, Downbridge, Cross Street Post Office, Fairstead Farm, Gissing Farm, Home Farm, Locks Farm, Gate House Farm, Abbey Farm and The Gardens.

Only 7 of the 30 farms recorded had any electricity, some with lighting only and no power.