

Object(s): Farmers Account Books October 1938 - October 1939

Object Number(s): STMEA:2005-25a

Researcher details: Rose Norris, Volunteer

Like any other business, a farm needs to be run with a close eye kept on incomings and outgoings, the farmer's account book being an essential tool for this purpose. However, this book can also help to build a snapshot of farm life, giving valuable information on everyday life during a specific time period.



*Jack Carter at the Museum
of East Anglian Life
STMEA:2013-159*

We are fortunate in having a set of account books from Mr Jack Carter of Gipping Farm, Stowupland, a local farmer who, as a key founder of our own Museum of East Anglian Life, understood the need to preserve the history of agricultural development from earlier years.

This particular account book, covers a 12-month period and is divided into weekly sections:

- Labour Account - for the recording of work to be done by named staff.
- Bought and Paid - for all outgoings including rent and tithe.
- Sold - for all receipts.
- Memoranda - for specific notes in respect of each day that week.

Farming in the 1930s

The British agricultural situation at the time this account book was written has been described thus:

'Historically the 1930s have been regarded as the nadir of an agricultural depression which began with the onset of overseas competition in the 1870s. The decade has been portrayed as a period of stagnation and despondency... low prices for agricultural commodities generally and arable products in particular. ...which brought severe hardship to large sectors of the farming community...This had led to the emergence of a more pastoral, less husbanded landscape.'¹

It was against this landscape that Jack Carter strove to make Gipping Farm a success, his account book showing that he was growing and harvesting sugar beet, barley, beans and wheat, whilst in terms of livestock he reared and sold pigs, cattle and chickens.

Several receipts tucked within the pages of the account book relate to the sale of the farm's sugar beet to the British Sugar Corporation Limited at Bury St. Edmunds.

¹ Martin J. (2000) British Agriculture in the 1930s. In: The Development of Modern Agriculture. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230in599963_2

British Sugar Corporation Limited, Beet Sugar Factory, BURY ST. EDMUNDS										1938/9 Weigh No.	
Please note that we have received BEET as follows:—										Nº 28175	
CARTER OR ROUTE			WAGON NO.			LOADING STATION			DATE		
TOTAL TONS	CWTs.	LBS.	TOPS	SUP TANK	FABRICATED TANK	FREIGHT WEIGHT	RATE	FRICTION CHARGES	MINDER'S NAME & ADDRESS	CONTRACT NO.	
				T. C. Q.	T. C. Q.						
5	16	10	2						J. Fowler Shipping Stow-upland Stowmarket	2550	
-6	2	0									
9	9	3	10								
				TOTAL TANK PER CWT	TOTAL TANK	CLEAR BEET	SUGAR %	VALUE			
				T. C. Q.	T. C. Q.						
				10	17-	8	123	46½	20	- 11	
				NETT			PRICE				
WEIGHED BY				REF. NO.	MAIL CHARGE		FREE VALUE		*Contract Price less the provisional sum of 1/- per ton deducted under Clauses 1 & 2 of the Contract and 1/- per ton for Grower Registration Charge.		
BY 1533				33	lo		lo				

One of Jack's sugar beet receipts from Bury St. Edmunds sugar factory, dated 24.11.1938.

Jack Carter and his farm workers will have spent hour's queueing with their beet on the roads of Suffolk;

Here is a description of the beet journey and processing in 1925 from Bury St. Edmunds beet factory:

'...many a local can remember the queues of overflowing beet lorries and tractors along Eastgate Street going to the factory and onto the weighbridge then depositing their loads into large heaps.

The beet underwent various operations: quality check, washing, sliced into strips called cosettes then steamed to get the sucrose out which was then dried, leaving sugar crystals. Nothing was wasted in the processing of the beet, washed off topsoil returned to farmers at a cost, stones sold off, pulp sold for animal feed and the water returned to settle in huge lagoons.’²

The 'Great Flood'

Weather is crucial to the success of farming and there are references in Jack's book to the impact of the weather on his farming routines, such as 'Sharp frost & 6-inch snow' with a comment to 'feed stock all week' (w/ending 24 December 1938).

Most notably, on Thursday 26 January 1939, are written just two words with several notes to 'Drain & let off water' the following week.

These are references to a headline-making natural disaster that hit the area, caused by a combination of melting snow and 24 hours of torrential rain, which resulted in the River Gipping overflowing, causing terrible damage and the loss of small farm animals and contributing to the deaths of 3 people. Although the main area affected was Ipswich and its environs;

‘There were several feet of water around Wickham Market, Stowmarket, Norwich and Beccles. People living in bungalows near the “doomed” Wilford Bridge at Melton had to be evacuated by boat.

Residents were rescued from homes in Needham Market, Framlingham was cut off when the River Ore overflowed, and houses inundated. The Post Office at nearby Bruisyard was flooded by the rising

² The Sugar Beet Factory | Hazells [Internet]. Hazells. 2021 [cited 17 March 2021]. Available from: <https://www.hazells.co.uk/2020/07/28/the-sugar-beet-factory/>

River Alde. Great Glemham was “marooned” and homes, gardens and businesses near the River Gipping in Stowmarket were under up to 6ft of water.’³

British Pathé filmed scenes of the flooding around Ipswich.⁴

It appears that Jack’s farm, on the uplands of Stowmarket, had had a lucky escape, but less than 8 months after this ‘Great Flood,’ Britain officially entered the Second World War, on 3 September 1939.

WWII War Agricultural Executive Committees

Preparations for war had been underway for some time, with home production of food a high priority on the Government’s to do list. As previously noted, during the 1930s, farmers had reduced the amount of land they worked, to reduce production costs of crops in an unprofitable market. On the outbreak of war, the potential loss of imported food, hastened the need to put any potentially fertile land into food production. War Agricultural Executive Committees (known as ‘War Ags’) were established in every county to promote, lead and aid the increase in agricultural land and food production. Farmers with a good knowledge of local conditions were recruited to these committees as unpaid volunteers to assist in the work.

‘The role was to tell farmers what was required of them in the way of wheat, potatoes, sugar beet or other priority crops, and to help the farmers to get what they needed in the way of machinery, fertilisers and so on to achieve the targets which were set them. They administered, locally, various grant and subsidy schemes, the rationing of feedstuffs and fertilisers and the provision of goods and services on credit.’⁵

To see the Suffolk War Ag in action, with a focus on the Clopton area, take a look at the University of East Anglia’s Film Archive clip, it is a wonderful depiction of farm life at the outbreak of World War Two⁶.

³ Grant, S., 2021. *Looking back at Ipswich’s ‘Forgotten Flood’ 80 years on*. [online] Great British Life. Available at: <<https://www.greatbritishlife.co.uk/people/ipswichs-forgotten-flood-7032236>> [Accessed 25 February 2021].

⁴ ipswich flood 1939 - Bing video [Internet]. Bing.com. 2021 [cited 1 July 2021]. Available from: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?view=detail&mid=78A981D9524B8FF4FCDE78A981D9524B8FF4FCDE&q=ipswich+flood+1939&shp=GetUrl&shid=d23a503a-d62a-49f5-9bc7-e0e0bfb118d5&shhk=5XBzd2lJaCwgV29vZGZvcuQgYW5kIEVzc2V4IHN1ZmZlciBmcm9tIGZsb29kaW5nICgxOTM5KQ%3D%3D&shdk=R0FVTU9OVCBUCUKIUSVNIIE5FV1NSRUVMICHSRVURVJTKSBUbyBsaWNlbnNlIHQoaXMGZmlsbSwgdmlzaXQgaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYnJpdGlzaHBhdGhlLmNvbS92aWRlby9WTFZBM1ozMFJOSk9RSktBQTMQ1hYT1hWMUxHNy1JUFNXSUNILVdP TORGT1JELUFORC1FU1NFWC1TVUZGRVItRIJPTS1GTE9PREIORyBGbG9vZHMgZGFtYWdlIGhvbWVzIGlulFN1ZmZvbGsgYW5kIEVzc2V4IGFuZCBzdHJlZXRlZGFyZSBmaWxsZWQgd2l0aCB3YXRlciBGdWxsIERlci2NyaXB0aW9uOiBTEFURSBjTkpZPUk1BVEIPTjogU2V2ZXJlIEZsb29kcyBpbjB0aGUgQnJpdGlzaCBjCj2xlcYBFTkdMQU5EOiBTdWZmb2xrlC4uLg%3D%3D&shhk=ecaoekLB2%2FHVvzJK3GNhLwOQOEPXfZkHNgAq6sMaFsQ%3D&form=VDSHOT&shth=OSH.VC7PfNpGWxHLOfrOALKXyA>

⁵ Council B. County War Agricultural Executive Committees - Bedfordshire Women's Land Army - The Virtual Library [Internet]. Virtual-library.culturalservices.net. 2021 [cited 1 April 2021]. Available from: http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.wla/wla_bedfordshire_war_ag_cwaec.htm

⁶ Work - East Anglia Film Archive [Internet]. Eafa.org.uk. 2021 [cited 1 July 2021]. Available from: <http://eafa.org.uk/work/?id=2330>

In the week of 11 March 1939, Jack records that 8 acres of land are given over to the pulling down and drilling of barley, for which overtime is paid. Was this in a response to the War Ag's drive to increase land under plough? It was willing to pay £2 per acre for any land that had been under grass for at least the last 7 years, as long as it was reclaimed for crop production by 31st March, 1940 (heard during radio announcement in film⁶).

War Ag relations with local farmers were contentious at times, and they were accused of dominating rather than partnering with local farm holders, leading to discussions in the Houses of Parliament, and calls for a public enquiry into their operation. On 8 May 1941, the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Robert Hudson, defending the War Ags, referred to a press article stating that 200 Suffolk farmers had been dispossessed of their land by the county war agricultural executive committees said that the number was 'not much more than half the figure stated' and that the reason for this was 'the difficulties of farming in East Anglia during the last 20 years. We are now trying to bring back the land into cultivation.'⁷

By February 1945, concerns at the operation of the War Ags are still being voiced in Parliament, as Mr. William Craven-Ellis, MP for Southampton says:

'...The committees have these powers and they have abused them with the result that there are over 10,000 farmers who have been dispossessed of their holdings... Owing to conditions between the two wars, they have lost most, if not all, their capital, and they found themselves when war broke out in a position in which they required assistance and co-operation. Had that been given nothing like as many as 10,000 farmers would have been dispossessed.'⁸

Mr. John Loverseed, MP for Eddisbury goes so far as to say:

'Some of the cases which have been brought to my notice rather remind one of the Gestapo methods used in the countries against which we are fighting to-day.'⁸

The MP for Eye, Mr. Edgar Granville, struck a more conciliatory, but still pointed tone:

⁷ DISPOSSESSED FARMERS, SUFFOLK. (Hansard, 8 May 1941) [Internet]. Api.parliament.uk. 2021 [cited 3 May 2021]. Available from: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1941/may/08/dispossessed-farmers-suffolk>

⁸ COUNTY WAR AGRICULTURAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES (Hansard, 6 February 1945) [Internet]. Api.parliament.uk. 2021 [cited 3 May 2021]. Available from: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1945/feb/06/county-war-agricultural-executive>



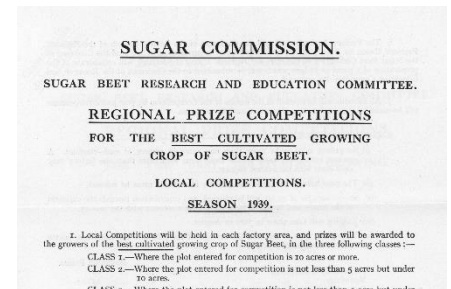
Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1DL

Tel: 01449 612229

www.eastanglianlife.org.uk

'I would like to take him to Suffolk, the place which produces the Suffolk punch, and I agree with an hon. member that the farmer of this country is like the Suffolk punch. You can lead him, but he will not be driven... let him meet some of the farmers there... They would convince him over and over again that the man who has farmed a particular piece of land, just as his father, grandfather and forefathers had done before him, knows very much better than, say, a rival farmer who is one of the right hon. gentleman's officials exactly what can be produced out of the particular piece of land.'⁸

Away from the War Aps, there were other less contentious efforts to encourage farm food production, as shown by the competition notice found tucked within Jack's account book. Issued by the Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee, it advertises a regional competition for the best cultivated growing crop of sugar beet. The first prize is £5 which is equivalent to around £330 in today's money.



It appears Jack wasn't tempted by this competition prize of £5 as he didn't send in his entry form.

Farm Mechanisation

An area where the War Aps' success was more universally applauded was in that of farm mechanisation.

'To aid the farmers, War Aps set about introducing more and more machinery to facilitate the mass production of food now required by the war. Home production of tractors was greatly increased and machinery of all sorts brought over from America, thanks to the Lend-Lease scheme, and from Canada, through Mutual Aid...Some of this machinery was quite novel for Britain the caterpillar tracked tractors and the first combined harvesters, which both cut and immediately threshed and bagged the corn in one mobile process. They cleared 36 feet in a single sweep, compared with the five-foot cut of the old horse-drawn binder. Training courses for both farmers and workers were needed, and for the mechanics who were to keep them going.'⁹

⁹ Council B. County War Agricultural Executive Committees - Bedfordshire Women's Land Army - The Virtual Library [Internet]. Virtual-library.culturalservices.net. 2021 [cited 1 April 2021]. Available from: http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.wla/wla_bedfordshire_war_ag_cwaec.htm

Jack Carter used traditional horse machinery for his farm, but on Thursday 8 August 1939, he records; 'Bought International Tractor from G. Gosling for £67 10s 10d' and he 'fetched tractor home' the next day. The same page shows a payment of 10s to Fremans Insurance for the tractor and a further record for the week commencing 2 September 1939 shows 'Gosling (part tractor) £40 5s'.

This growth of mechanisation being a long-term development, an account book entry for the week ending 9 September 1939 indicates how much work is still done using horse-drawn machinery.

LABOUR ACCOUNT. Week ending Sept 9 th 1939.							
Monday.	Tuesday.	Wednesday.	Thursday.	Friday.	Saturday.	Cash or A/c, Remarks, &c.	CASH PAID.
						Horse Rake	1 18 10
						Barley & Bean stubble	1 12 10
						Rebbling.	1 16 3
						Saturday Bean and stubble	1 12 10
						Barley stubble with tractor.	1 13 0
							11 0
						Harrow and Burn Plough.	2 0
						Plough round 14 acres.	1 13 0
						Harrow Beans.	
						Spindle	5 7 6
						Wade	1 15 10



The International Tractor Jack bought in 1939. Museum Object STMEA:A.459. He used it throughout the war years, till he could no longer get parts for it.

A horse-drawn rake and motorised tractor are now both in use on Gipping farm.

WWII War Risk Insurance

In the first week following the declaration of war, the usual tasks of farm life go on as before - the clearing of bean and barley stubbles, along with the harrowing and burning of the rubbish. However, under the Bought and Paid section of Jack's account book is also shown the first entry for an £18 premium for War Risk Insurance, paid to Essex and Suffolk Insurance. The growing likelihood of a war occurring meant that since 1937, many companies had been offering war risk insurance. However, these schemes raised concerns amongst parliamentarians, with Hansard showing the following statement by Lord Templemore on 21 November 1939:

'Since 1937 various companies have started, on a basis of mutual enterprise, claiming to give subscribers protection against war risks to their property. These companies... give the impression ...that they afford full protection against war risks, whereas in reality the protection in many cases is very thin indeed...and may in the end prove severely limited or perhaps non-existent.'¹⁰

¹⁰ Hansard.parliament.uk. 2021. *Restriction Of Advertisement (War Risks Insurance) Bill - Tuesday 21 November 1939 - Hansard - UK Parliament*. [online] Available at: <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1939-11-21/debates/ef5a1bf3-1c80->

Perhaps Jack realised this as, on 21 October 1939, the £18 premium paid by Jack Carter for the War Risk Insurance is refunded!

WWII Petroleum Board

Wartime conditions would make the obtaining of fuel for the farm's machinery and transport more difficult. It is in the week ending September 23 1939, that we see the first recording by Jack of a £3 4s 4d payment to the newly established Petroleum Board.

Sept 23rd

1939.

BOUGHT AND PAID.

To include Rent, Tithe, and all Outgoings.

SOLD.

To include all Receipts and Produce consumed and used.

Saturday.	Cash on A/c, Remarks, &c.	Insurance Deduction.	CASH PAID.	Master's Contribution.	NAME.	Description.	£	s.	d.	NAME.	Description.	£	s.	d.
Bastley			1 18 10		Wages		11	1	2	Eggs		1	17	6.
Sheet.			1 12 11		House		1	10	0	Bush		12	0	0
			1 16 3		Bank		12	0	0	2 Bullocks @ 48/- per cwt		38	10	0
			1 12 11		Petroleum Board		3	4	4					
			1 18 0		Balance		24	12	0					
			11 0											

This board was a;

'non-governmental organisation, established at the outbreak of the Second World War, to coordinate wartime supplies of petroleum and petroleum products throughout the United Kingdom. It was composed of senior executives of the major oil companies who operated an 'oil pool' with distribution controlled by the Board... Supplies of petroleum and petroleum products were no longer branded and competition between the oil companies was suspended.'¹¹

The Board did *not* control the rationing of petrol, which was a matter for the Government, and it was seen to have been highly effective in ensuring petroleum was imported and widely distributed. It was disbanded in 1948.

This account book of Jack Carter's ends in October 1939 but Jack's story, reflecting that of many East Anglian farmers, can be picked up 2 years later with the Museum's object STMEA:2005-25e, covering Gipping Farm's accounts from 11 October 1941 onwards.

4c42-ba9e-3efb55543182/RestrictionOfAdvertisement(WarRisksInsurance)Bill?highlight=war%20risk%20insurance%201939#contribution-8ae5f8e8-427b-433c-89f6-3df0600df466> [Accessed 25 February 2021].

¹¹ Petroleum Board - Wikipedia [Internet]. En.wikipedia.org. 2021 [cited 1 April 2021]. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroleum_Board