



## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Market Gardening in Cleeve Prior

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Don Archer tells us how in the mid-twenties a great change came to the agricultural scene in Cleeve Prior, when market gardening, the staple industry of the Vale of Evesham, spread to include our village. This was brought about by the sale of a large acreage of the Manor Estate to the County Council, who let it out as small holdings. All the land from Froglands Field, over Mill Lane and right along to the Coppice, changed from corn and roots to fruit & vegetables. Much of this land was taken up by market gardeners from nearby villagers, some who came to live here. It also provided an opportunity for former land workers to launch out on their own. The council split the land into narrow strips, which reached back from the Evesham Road to the top of the Cleeve escarpment. Each of these strips had a hut, known as a "hovel", where they kept their tools, labels and the containers in which the produce were sent to market. One of these market gardeners was E.R.Wheeler from North Littleton, and his old hut is the last one standing, and is preserved on the corner of the Heritage Trust land. These huts could originally be seen in a long line along the roadside out of Cleeve Prior.





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Documents found in the shed tell the story of their year through shipping notes & labels. Duplicate delivery notes from Jeffrey's, the Hauliers of Pebworth, show all the produce taken from the plot to one wholesaler alone in 1980, Jacksons in the Birmingham Market.



The Shipped Produce was:

May	Artichokes	10	boxes
	Mint	1	Bag
	Asparagus	1	Box
July	Soft Fruit	14	Trays
	Gooseberries	11	Chips
August	General Plums	50	12 lb Chips
	Blackberries	14	Trays
	Pershore/Yellow egg Plums	46	12 lb Chips
	Victoria Plums	57	12 lb Chips
September	Blackberries	30	Trays
	Belles Plums	1	12 lb Chips
	Pershore/Yellow egg Plums	8	12 lb Chips
	Victoria Plums	65	12 lb Chips
	Magnum Plums	66	12 lb Chips
	Burbank Plums	56	12 lb Chips
	Damsons	18	12 lb Chips
	Cherry Plums	12	12 lb Chips



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Ozark Plums	4	12 lb Chips
Sprouting Broccoli	4	nets
Cherries	1	Chip
Red Currants	1	Chip

We can identify other crops from the seed packets found in the hut. They are:

Peas	Gradus
	Thomas Laxton
Radish	Sparkler (White Tip)
Onion	White Lisbon
Broad Bean	Mammoth Windsor
French Bean	Prince
Runner Bean	Type unknown
Carrot	Type unknown

Other suppliers delivered to in Birmingham were



In order to ensure that fruit & vegetables from the Vale of Evesham arrived at market as fresh as possible, the directors of Coventry City Central Market [3C], approached Mary Collins Father (who had a transport business in Pebworth.) to see if fresh produce could be



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delivered by road rather than rail as previously. It would be collected from the growers' allotments in the late evening, to arrive in Coventry in the early hours of the following day.



This would allow the retailers and stall holders to buy the produce before the market was opened to the public at 5.00am. The company was set up and was based in Cleeve Prior, it was called 3C and ran the produce direct in to the Coventry Market



[See the article [Mary Collins - Recollections of 3C v1](#)]

Other hauliers would take produce to different wholesalers in Coventry Market, the labels below give an indication of the size of loads involved



We know that they also delivered to Covent Garden the majority of the produce being Asparagus, for which the area is still famous today, growing at that time an Evesham variety.





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One supplier insisted on the produce coming to them already bundled with a special label attached to indicate the quality, this was Barnett Emanuel, who traded under the Barneyman flag



The other London suppliers receiving shipments of Cleeve Prior Produce were:



From the deliver ticket below we get an idea of the two standards of asparagus shipped.

1. Special Asparagus is the prime fresh cut produces
2. Sprue Asparagus is the very young asparagus that been thinned out.



It was mainly Asparagus that was shipped south as its condition did not deteriorate as fast as soft fruit. Shipping to London was a more involved procedure & some wholesalers required notification of what was in transit and to which station it had been sent



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The produce had to be picked up from the roadside hut and taken to the nearest Great Western Railway station at Littleton & Badsey. This was where the headquarters of the Littleton & Badsey Growers, LBG, had grown up, under whose name some of the produce was shipped to Covent Garden.



Each shipment had to be recorded on a special form which was completed by the shipping grower



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Asparagus was the most important and remunerative crop closely followed by brussel sprouts, stacks of the latter packed in twenty pound nets, could be seen, throughout the season, on our road verges awaiting pick up. Many farmers rented land in the Cotswolds to supplement their farms in Cleeve Prior as the climate there was colder & more suited to growing sprouts. The only problem was that they had to take the pickers to the fields by lorry & bring back the nets of sprouts for shipping.

The Orchards were very important to the small grower and the trees had to be treated to protect them from disease. Along with the old equipment in the shed, on the wall were found the instructions for spraying apples.

PLANT PROTECTION SPRAY CALENDAR FOR APPLES

FUNGICIDES		INSECTICIDES	
<p>8000 - 'DIEBOL-COL' spray 10-14 days (or 1 rate every 7 days)</p>	<p>BUD BURST GREEN CLUSTER PINK BLOSSOM PETAL FALL</p>	<p>Aphis - 'METASYSTOX' Caterpillar - 'DIDICOL 6'</p>	<p>Sawfly - 'GAMBACOL' Red Spider - 'REDION V-10'</p>
<p>Mildew - 'PP CHRONOHANE' every 10-14 days (or 1 rate every 7 days)</p>		<p>Collin Moth Tortrix Red Collet</p>	
<p>Black Rot - 'PP CAPTAN' or 'CAPTAN COL'</p>			
FUNGICIDES		INSECTICIDES	

This is a summary of our main recommendations for controlling pests and diseases on apples. It is suitable for all varieties; all materials listed are compatible. It is brief and not intended to be comprehensive. For fuller details, information about alternative materials, other pests and diseases, please consult your PP Fruit & Veg Guide or Plant Protection Representative.

Product	RATE OF USE	
	Low Volume per acre	High Volume per 100 galls
'DIEBOL-COL'	1 1/2 pints	1 pint
'CHRONOHANE'	2-3 lb.	1 lb.
'PP CAPTAN'	4 lb.	2 lb.
'CAPTAN COL'	5 pints	2 pints
'METASYSTOX' (pre-blossom)	8 fl.oz.	1/2 pints
'DIDICOL 6'	2 1/2 pints	1 1/2 pints
'GAMBACOL'	5 fl.oz.	2 1/2 pints
'REDION V-10'	2 1/2 pints	1 1/2 pints
'CORAGLICH'	2 1/2 pints	1 1/2 pints

Area Sales Offices:

Ernie House	Shoarnes' Hall
Great Charles Street	1111 Street
Birmingham 3	Shrewsbury
Tel: 051 7070	Tel: 0574 4021

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So it seems Cleeve Prior had been given a new lease of life, still based on the land as it had always been. Unfortunately though, the coming years were those of the great economic depression, and our village was not spared the hard times that beset the nation. Supply of vegetables often exceeded demand and perfectly good crop had to be ploughed in.

But as years went by a social problem was looming, ever increasing mechanisation and new technology reduced the need for workers on the land. Smallholders could no longer keep a family on five or six acres of intensive market gardening, as they had once been able to do so, and they disappeared from the village all together



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The Hovel, Evesham Road