

County Senior School
Pershore,
Worcestershire.

5.4.33.

Sir E. John Russell, D.Sc. F.R.S
Harpden,
Herts.

Dear Sir,

My Headmaster received from you a letter saying that you would like some of us to write to you, giving an account of the life we live in the midst of this horticultural district. As I am one of them I hope to give you an interesting account.

~~The soils of this district are mostly~~ clayey or heavy. Ours is a black loam like that found in Leicestershire, and is fairly easy to cultivate. Most of the cultivation done in this district is intensive. By this I mean that the land round Pershore is called upon to make a steady output of produce throughout the year.

Some soils grow better crops than others and vice-versa. For instance the people near us grow much better Brussels Sprouts than we do because their soil is a clay soil. We do not grow such good sprouts but we grow better radishes. Some soils, being heavier and more difficult to work, require different management. Most of our soil can be worked in all weathers, provided we do not walk on it and let the sun bake it hard after showers of rain. Clay soil may be roughed up during the winter and worked in spring.

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By "roughing up," I mean that the big clods of earth are stood on end and left for the frosts to dis-integrate. If this is done the most stubborn clay soil will come down like powder, especially if it is given a dressing of lime beforehand.

Many market gardeners are now resorting to motor cultivation. We have one of the petrol driven "Auto Culto" machines, and it has proved to be very handy indeed. It is very adaptable and can mow, roll, plough and even spray as well as cultivate all the different crops. It holds a distinct advantage of speed and easiness over the older, slower, more expensive and more laborious methods used by our forefathers. A man who keeps his land clean and who cultivates freely is more likely to attain success. His trees and plants grow stronger and healthier and consequently stand a much better chance of producing as much heavier and bigger crop, while the crop will be much truer to strain.

The prospects for this year are very bright indeed. The fruit trees are covered with blossom and we shall have an exceedingly heavy crop, if no frost comes to take it. But if we get no frosts a glut year will result. These years have their evils. The trees have such a heavy crop to bear that the branches often break. This takes a good time to replace. In these glut years the plums the make about 6^d per pot.

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If people wish to obtain the best results and prices there is a great deal to be said on the subject of packing. Years ago the market gardeners used to think that if they put a lot of small stuff in the bottom of the pots, and just put the big stuff where it can be seen, they would get the best prices in addition to getting rid of the rubbish. But today the buyers empty the hampers to see what is in the bottom, so that if the buyer finds that the produce he has bought is inferior, ^{he} can have their money back, while the sender is obliged to take his produce home again. Many people believe that grading is more profitable both to the grower and the buyer. So important has grading become that the Pershore Co-operative Fruit Market has built a shed for the sole purpose of grading produce.

Around Pershore the growers send their produce to the Pershore Co-operative Fruit Market in pots or hampers. These vary in weight according to the produce. A pot of pears or plums weighs seventy-two pounds, a pot of apples or parsnips weighs fifty-six pounds and a pot of cabbage weighs forty pounds. For fruit we use seives, twenty-four & pounds, bushels, forty-eight lb pounds, and chips, twelve, six and four pounds each.

Some people also use punnets of different weights for packing raspberries, loganberries, and blackberries, etc..

The market gardeners in the Pershore district send their produce to either the

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the Porthore Co-operative Fruit Market
or the Central Market in drays drawn by
horses or by lorry and motor drawn trailer.
At the market it is put in rows with
spaces between for the buyers to walk
up and down and inspect the produce.
In winter the auctioneer ^{begins} at 11.30 am, and in
summer at 10.30 am. The produce, when bought
is ticketed and then put on Great Western
Railway lorries and sent to Porthore Station
en route for the great industrial towns of London,
Leeds, Glasgow, Swansea, Birmingham, and
Cardiff. The agricultural people work from
6.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. During the busy season
many people work from light till dark.

Trusting that this letter will be a
source of interest to you,

I remain,

Yours truly,

Robert Beard.

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County Senior School,
Pershore,
Worcs.

5.4.33.

Sir E. John Russell, D.Sc., F.R.S.
Harpenden,
Herts.

Dear Sir,

I have great pleasure in writing to you a description of a small village in the Vale of Evesham, and its inhabitants daily routine.

Groptorne, for this is the name of the village, is situated mid-way between Evesham and Pershore, on the banks of the River Avon.

It is very picturesque, for its thatched cottages are old and beautiful, and the gardens in Spring and Summer are adorned with many coloured flowers. Many small orchards are found on the out-skirts of Groptorne, and looking at the village from Bredon Hill, it appears to be in the centre of a large wood.

Groptorne being in the centre of a market-gardening area, is of course a gardening and fruit growing village. Vegetables such as, potatoes, carrots, parsnips, cabbage, sprouts, asparagus and marrows, share much of the ground and time of the worker. Along the main roads in this district, about Easter time, placards are seen advertising asparagus. At a few places near Groptorne blackberries are

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cultivated as well as raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries and a few loganberries. The usual working hours in the Vale of Evesham are seven till five in the Winter and seven till six in the summer. Overtime is worked in the summer, the people working as long as it is possible to see.

The hard fruits are packed in pots and the soft fruits in chips, and are conveyed by motor lorry to the markets at Evesham and Pershore, or despatched to more distant markets by rail.

The food eaten in the market-gardening area is of course quite different from that eaten in the town. Vegetables and green food can be cheaply bought in the country, while in the town the articles are very dear, consequently more of these are eaten in the country than in the town.

I sincerely hope that my letter has run of interest and value to you and that your broadcast will be a great success.

I am,

Yours faithfully,
F.W.R. Parbo

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County Senior School,
Pershore,

Notes:

5: 4: 33.

Sir E. John Russell, D.Sc., F.R.S.,
Harrowden,
Herts.

Dear Sir,

Having heard that you are giving a talk about crops in which you are mentioning the Vale of Evesham, I am writing to tell you about the part in which I live.

The Pershore Plum is mostly grown on the plum orchards, but of course other kinds are grown. Its blossom is in its full glory now, and any road radiating from Evesham is lined with plum orchards. Apples too, are grown in great quantities, some of them being Newtons, Blenheims and Orange-pippins.

When green, plums are picked and packed in chip baskets and sent to the markets where they are purchased by shopkeepers to sell to people for cooking later in the year when they are ripe they are packed in pots and sievers. Large quantities are sold to canning factories where they are bottled as well as canned. Jam, too, is (many) made in nearly every country home. There is a canning factory just outside of Evesham which belongs to Smedleys. The apples are not picked until September, when they are packed in pots and sievers

Strawberries are grown in this district, and in July, when they are ripe they are picked and packed in six and twelve pound chips, and sent to canning factories where they

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were canned and bottled, and some of them were made into jam. Raspberries too are grown, and they are packed the same as strawberries, but sometimes punnets holding one pound are used.

Vegetables as well as fruit are grown. Cabbage cutting will be in full swing soon, and when they are picked they are packed in crates and nets. New potatoes are just coming in, the price now being threepence per pound. Rhubarb is also nearly big enough for cutting, but that which is not yet ready, has straw round it to keep the frost from it.

Hoping this letter will be useful to you in your talk,

I remain,

Yours faithfully,
Joan Orchard.

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County Senior School,
Pershore,
Worcs.

10-4-33.

Sir E. John Russell, D.Sc., F.R.S.,
Harpenden,
Herts.

Dear Sir,

Hearing that you are broadcasting a talk I hope this letter will help to interest you about the district in which I live.

My home is in a little village in the valley of the Bredon Hills. It lies just at the foot of the Hills, but at the top of the village of Great Comberton.

My father works on Manor Farm and his chief job is to look after the horses and do nearly all the agricultural work on the farm. His master only employs a carter, cowman, herdsman and a young boy to do a few odd jobs. The carter is the man who looks after the horses. The cowman looks after the cows. The herdsman is the man who sees to the herds of sheep and lambs. At night when my father comes home my brother helps him to do work on a small allotment which he rents. The rent of the allotment amounts to eight shillings every half year, because it is only one quarter of an acre.

When I go home at night I generally do a few little jobs for my sister who keeps home and sometimes I run a few errands. After tea I help to "tag" small onions which are called spring onions. These onions are tied with a small piece of string or raffia with about a dozen in a bunch. They are bunched up with twelve small bunches tied together

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with a twig. They are then washed in the ditch with a small brush and put in hampers or pots. A pot consists of two gross small bunches or two dozen large bunches. Now the people at the Pershore Co-operative Market use wooden boxes called crates. When the onions are packed they are sent by dray or lorry to the Co-operative Market in Pershore about two to four miles away from our village.

The wallflowers are in season now so that is another extra job to help to do at night. We pick the flowers, as many as one can hold in one's hand, and tie them round with raffia. A pot of wallflowers consists of forty eight bunches. (to) These are packed (at) with two dozen in the bottom and two dozen with the heads facing upwards at the top. These are sold at the price of eight pence to nine pence per dozen bunches. They are bought and said to be used for dyes.

On Saturdays I have to do many jobs in the house then I work on my flower and vegetable garden. My garden is divided into two parts; on one part I grow vegetables and on the other I grow flowers. Last Saturday my brother drilled me one ounce of peas on my garden and I trampled them in and raked over the top so as to make it look tidy. The chief flowers which are out now are pansies, narcissi, daffodils, and some primroses.

In the Vale of Evesham the trees are a mass of bloom which shows we shall ^{have} an abundant crop of plums. This district has more plums than apples because the plum trees like a well cultivated land and the apples like an uncultivated land like the orchards and ⁱⁿ any

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place where grass grows.

In the summer it is the women's job to go into the fields, ^{picking} peas, picking, gooseberrys, currants, plums and apples. Round our village the country looks as though it is all fruit plantations.

I hope this letter will be of much interest to you and help you to interest other people.

I remain,

Yours Truly,
Lily Barter.

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J. 5.

County Senior School,
Pershore,
Worcestershire.

10.4.33.

Sir E. John Russell, D.Sc., F.R.S.,
Hathenden,
Herts.

Dear Sir,

As you wanted to know something about agricultural work in the Vale of Evesham, I will describe the work that goes on around Pershore.

Most of the people work on farms, or on fruit plantations, where plums are grown in greater quantities than any other fruits. The plantations are very pretty in April, for then all the trees are in blossom. In the currant plantations, the buds are opening, and the ground is entirely covered with bushes of fresh green. Before the plum trees are planted, the ground must be well cultivated, as good trees can only be cultivated in well manured ground. But with apple trees bad ground is used for growing them. When the fruit is ready for picking, men are hired for picking them. With the currants, women are hired for picking them.

Although a lot of fruit is grown, a large amount of ground is put by for the growing of vegetables. The chief vegetable is sprouts. The seeds are sown in late February, and in Autumn, and they are transplanted about three two months after they are sown. They are picked in the Winter, and as there are so many fields to be picked, special men are hired, who have made sprout picking their occupation. As more and more sprouts are grown each year, and the pickers are so speedy, a Sprout Picking contest has been organised to see who is the most expert picker in the Vale of Evesham. Cabbage is also grown, and many pounds have been spent on a field before one cabbage has been grown. Big growers never have much to do with produce which requires a lot of labour, such as onions, and radishes. The growing of these

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are left to small allotment holders, as a few seeds produce many plants. Onions are

All of these crops have to be differently packed, and here are some of the methods of packing. Plums and apples are packed in hot hamper which belong to the market which the grower supplies. Currants and raspberries are packed in six and twelve pound chips. Sprouts are put in nets, when they are packed, and cabbages are put in crates. Onions are put in a bundle of a dozen each, and twenty four bundles in a hot hamper. They are tied in bundles with twigs and are put to soak in water.

I hope this letter will be of help to you in your broadcast lecture.

I remain

Yours truly,
Jack Wilson.

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