

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF MARKET GARDENING

JOAN

Joan moved from London to the Vale of Evesham in 1938. There was a lot of poverty in the Vale at that time. Joan's father ran a shop and allowed market gardeners to wait until their crops were harvested before paying him. The fortunes of market gardening improved after 1939 when vegetables prices rose, as they could no longer be imported from abroad because of the war.

Joan attended a grammar school in Evesham. At the age of 11 or 12, she and her classmates were taken on a flat back lorry to the fields (she's not sure exactly where, but probably the Badsey area) to pick up potatoes. The potatoes had already been lifted out of the ground by a harrowing tool and left in the field to dry. The children had to pick them up and dust off any mud.

The potatoes were then packed in pot hampers and taken by lorry to the station at Evesham, where they were left in the yard until they could be loaded on to trains for Birmingham or further afield.

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JANE

Jane's father, Esmor, lived at Bengeworth and rented a market garden in Badsey from Mr Brotherton, a farmer.

Esmor grew cabbages, sprouts, spring onions, rhubarb, wallflowers and a few potatoes. These crops were mostly sold locally, taken by Esmor in his lorry to towns such as Ledbury and Hereford.

Jane, her mother and brother, helped her father on the market garden – for example with hoeing or washing and tying onions. When she was older, Jane was given responsibility for looking after the rhubarb and was allowed to keep the money made as pocket money. At the end of the day they often went for a drink at the 'Round of Gras' pub at Badsey. Seeds and tools were kept in the front room of the family home in Bengeworth.

Jane remembers her father taking them on the back of the lorry along Badsey Lane and putting the brakes on so that they could do forward rolls.

Esmor's garden was small and never very profitable – Jane said that her father “dabbled” in market gardening. He was once offered more land by another farmer, but declined. He added to his income by playing the piano in local pubs and other venues.