

The 1916 and 1917 property and land sales of outlying portions of the Ashton Court Estate.

Why were the properties and land sold?

Greville Smyth had died in 1901. Esme's mother, Emily, had died in November 1914 just after the start of the First World War.

Emily's will was proved in March 1915. Emily left £974,251 (£128 million in today's values) of which £195,000 (around £25.5 million today) was payable as death duties.

Esme was defined as a 'tenant for life' of the properties and land under the terms of her mother's will. It is not clear if this arrangement was to avoid death duties, which were very complicated at that time, or for some other reason.

A 'tenant for life' means that the person is entitled to possess the 'settled land' for the duration of their life. They have the power to manage the land and to sell it as long as certain conditions under The Settled Land Act of 1882-1890 are met. The principal condition was to obtain the best price that could reasonably be expected.

At least 3 farms and some parcels of land were withdrawn from the sale, presumably because the bidding was not high enough to reach their reserve price and would hence not fulfil this condition. Some of the lots were described as 'accommodation land' this is land that could be used for housing as it was located near to existing settlements thus maximising its value.

In 1916 Esme had removed herself and her staff to Ness Castle. In 1917 Esme had given the Ashton Court estate over to the Red Cross with £1200 to help convert it to a hospital for convalescent officers. Esme and the household staff moved to her Scottish residence Ness Castle. They did not return to visit until after 1923. It was around 1934 before Esme returned to reside at Ashton Court permanently.

In 1922 Ness Castle, which had previously been rented by the Smyths, was purchased from the Estate of the late Charles Fountaine Walker its previous owner. Esme continued to periodically stay there up to about 1937 when Ness Castle was given up.

The Smyth family had a long history of the acquisition of land and properties in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. When Esme's father Greville achieved his majority in 1857 and inherited the Mansion, the Estate and all of the outlying properties the annual income from the estate was £27,000 (over £1.5 million in today's values).

In addition to land and property ownership some of their income came from ownership of the mineral rights to coal producing land in Bedminster and Ashton Vale. Dean Lane Colliery had closed in 1906 and the land converted to the Dame Emily Smyth Park. The Coal Strike of 1912 also impacted their income.

During this period there were changes in legislation around agriculture. The wider Estate was becoming increasingly unprofitable to run, whilst the income from the mineral rights and agriculture was going down and wages increasing. The First World War meant that there was less cheap labour available as men went off to fight. The land being sold was further away from Ashton Court and possibly more difficult to manage.

Maybe Esme decided to realise her capital assets so she could continue to live at Ashton Court into her old age in a manner befitting to her status, and knowing that unspent it would all go in death duties. Esme must have been aware that she was the last of the line of people to inherit the estate and who would want to live there.

The 1916 sale made £27,655 (just over £3.5 million in today's values).

The 1917 sale made £44,890 (nearly £6 million in today's values).

The 1916 property and land sales of outlying portions of the Ashton Court Estate.

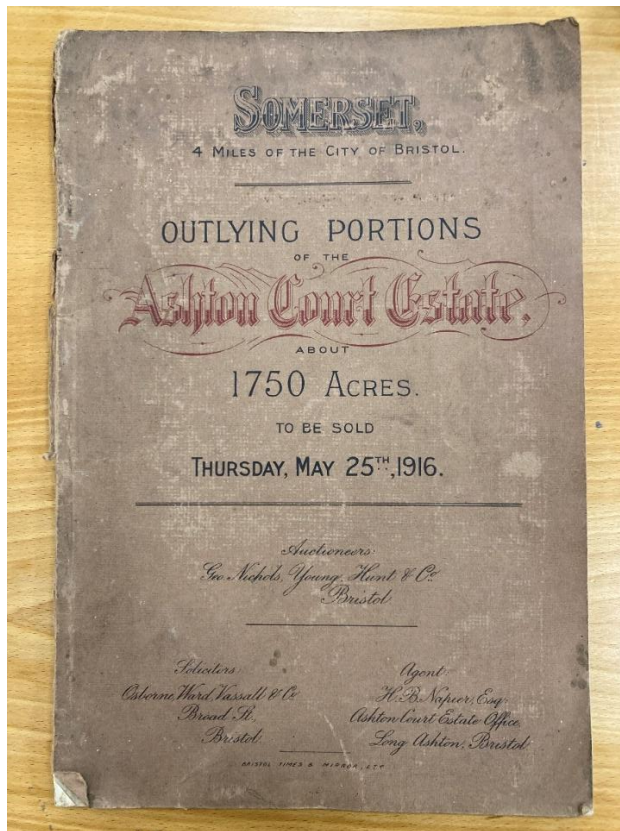


Image: BA 41097/1/a.

The auctioneers were Geo. Nichols, Young and Hunt of Bristol. The sale took place on Thursday 25th of May 1916, on the directions of Esme Smyth, and about 1750 acres of outlying farms and land were sold. The solicitors were Osborne, Ward, Vassall & Co. of Broad Street, Bristol and the agent was H.B. Napier Esq., Ashton Court Estate Office.

The sale comprised seven dairy farms, from 80 to 375 acres, small holdings, cottages, and accommodation land, the whole comprising an area of 1750 acres, with a rental of £2600 per annum.

Prior to the auction the auctioneer, Mr. Hunt, commented on the exceptional state of repair of the buildings:

"The motto at Ashton Court was 'a stitch in time saves nine', and when a repair was wanted it was done. The land was in an exceptionally high state of cultivation, and there were good tenants."

The Western Daily Press reported the following day:

"An important sale of farms in the neighbourhood of Bristol yesterday afternoon attracted a large number of agriculturists to the Grand Hotel in Broad Street where outlying portions of the Ashton Court Estate were sold."

The total revenue from the sale was £27655.

The following farms were sold:

- Pottery Farm, Bishopsworth 113 acres
- Hill Farm, Whitchurch 157 acres
- Lyon's Court Farm, Whitchurch 81 acres
- New Barn Farm, Norton Malreward 183 acres
- Whitewood Farm, Norton Malreward 230 acres
- Manor Farm, Norton Malreward 169 acres
- Model Farm, Norton Hawkfield 374 acres
- Oakhill Farm, Bishopsworth 30 acres

Additionally, many lots of land and small cottages were sold in the following villages: Barrow Gurney, Bishopsworth, Dundry, whitchurch, Norton Malreward, Norton Hawkfield, and Stanton Drew.

The sale consisted of a total of 48 lots.

Lot 9 Oakhill Farm, Bishopsworth 30 acres

At the time of the 1916 sale the tenant was W.R. Prideaux. It was sold to Mr. Broad for £2000.

This land is now developed for housing.

Lot 14 Pottery Farm, Bishopsworth 113 acres

At the time of the 1916 sale the tenant was Hugh Wyatt.

Nothing remains of this farm except a road named Pottery Farm Close.

Lot 18 Hill Farm, Whitchurch 157 acres



Image: BA 41097/1/a.

Hill Farm was described as:

'A very desirable dairy holding ... consisting of old-fashioned farmhouse, agricultural building, orcharding and pasture and arable lands.'

All the fields are named and their function and acreage listed. In 1916 the tenants were W.G. Young and others.

This farm was not sold, it was withdrawn from the sale at £4400.

Hill Farm remains down a long track off East Dundry Road to the SW of Whitchurch.

Lot 22 Lyon's Court Farm, Whitchurch 81 acres

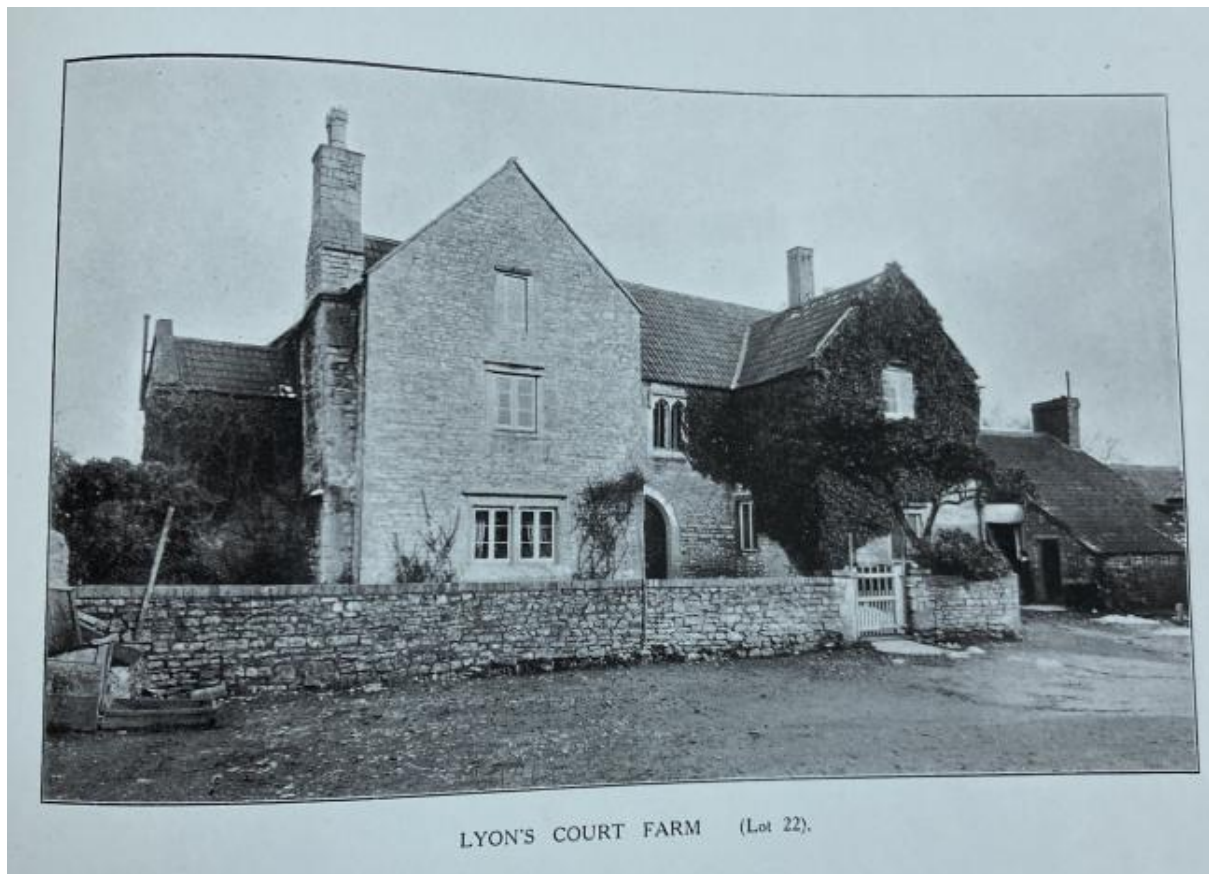


Image: BA 41097/1/a.

Lyon's Court Farm was described as a capital dairy farm with a picturesque and interesting old farm house, orchard and kitchen garden, and compact agricultural buildings. All the fields are named and their function and acreage listed. The tenant in 1916 was Mr. John King Young.

The auctioneers added a note about the farmhouse building from Collinson's Somerset:

"A manor called Lyon's Court, is situated westward from the village of Whitchurch, and it's Mansion is still remaining. It belonged to the family of Lyons (a family distinct from those of the name at Ashton) so early as the thirteenth century, who bore for their arms Argent, two Lions rampant respecting Gable, and were retainers to the Abbots of Keynsham, under who they held territory."

It was sold to Mr. George for £3450.

Lyons Court Farm is a grade II listed farmhouse with a 15th century core, which was altered in the 17th century and subsequently. It had had several changes of ownership before being bought in 1799 by the Smyth Estate from Francis Adams.

Lot 33 Whitewood Farm, Norton Malreward 230 acres



Whitewood Farm was described as:

"A highly attractive Dairy and grazing farm ... with stucco fronted and slate roofed farmhouse, two five roomed cottages, adequate buildings, productive orcharding, and numerous closes of old sound pasture land, including Maes Knoll Camp and a portion of the ancient "Wansdyke".

In 1916 the farm was let to Mr. Michael Clancy. It was sold to the tenant for £7500.

The farmhouse remains and is grade II listed.

Lot 34 New Barn Farm, Norton Malreward 183 acres



New Barn Farm was described as:

“an excellent pastoral holding ... with comfortable farmhouse, good buildings and a four roomed cottage.”

It was let to a Mr. R.W.R. Knight. The newspaper reports did not include the purchaser of this farm or the price sold.

The farmhouse remains and is grade II listed.

Lot 42 Manor Farm, Norton Malreward 169 acres



Image: BA 41097/1/a.

Manor Farm had been purchased by Sir John Smyth in June 1841.

Manor Farm was listed as a valuable dairy holding, with an early Georgian farmhouse, extensive outbuildings including a pair of stone-built cottages. All the fields are named and their function and acreage listed. The tenant was R.J. Marsh.

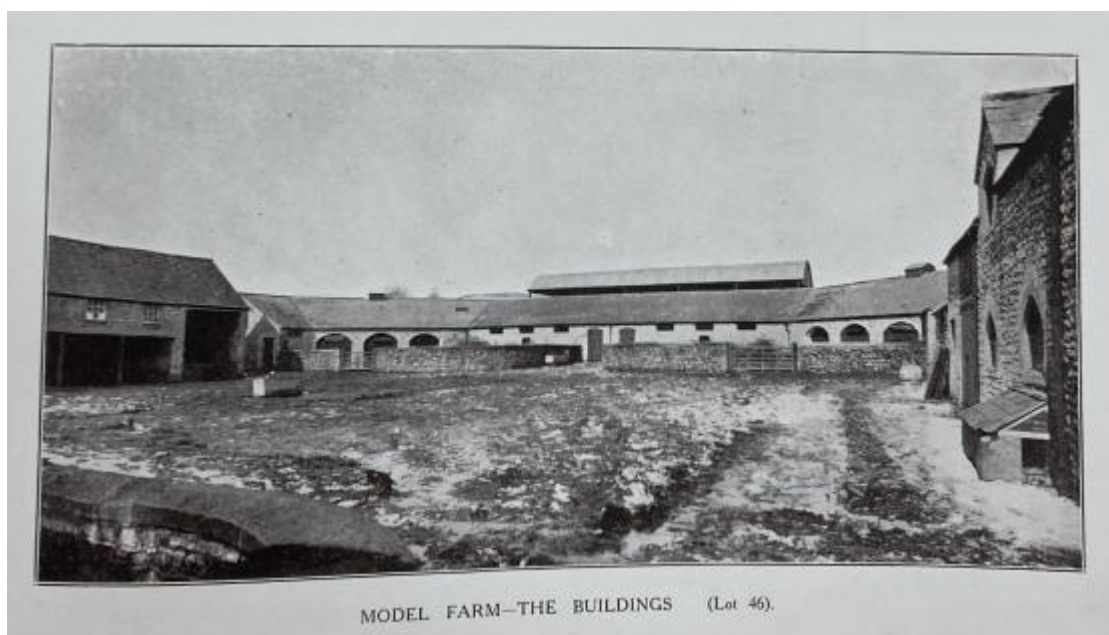
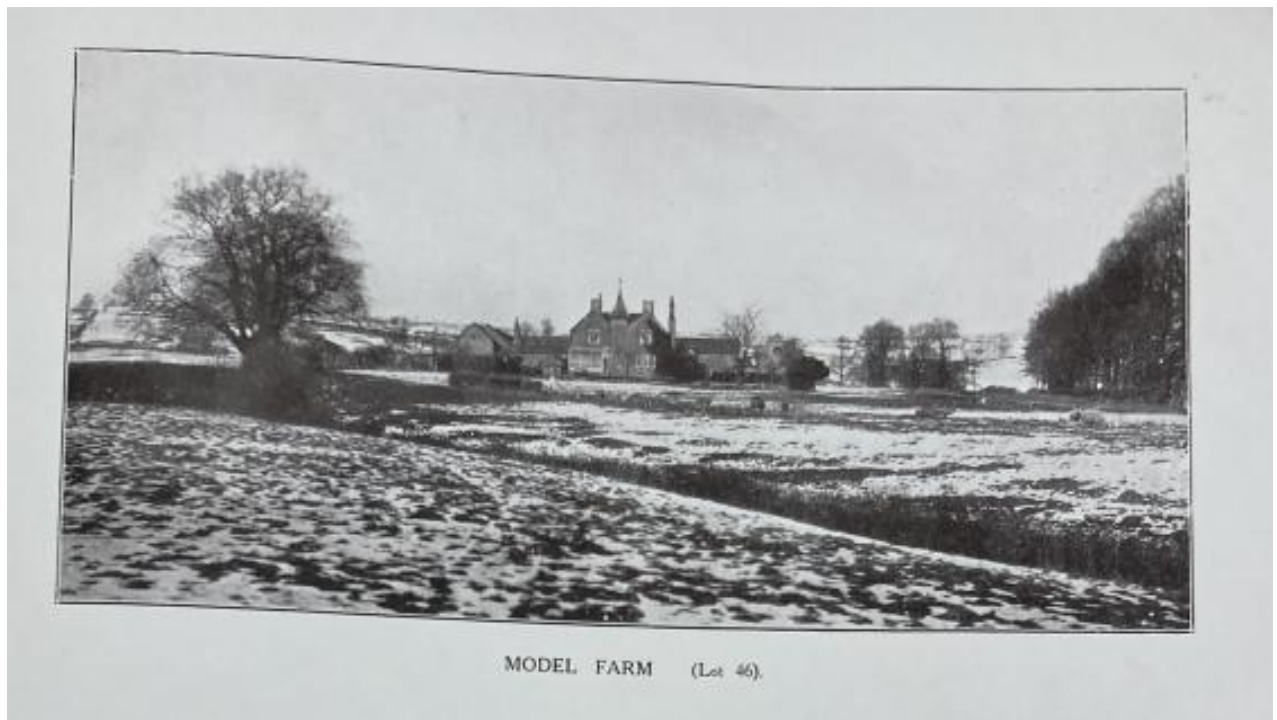
Manor Farm was not sold. It was withdrawn from the sale at £4100.

The farmhouse remains and is grade II listed.



Image: courtesy of David Craig

Lot 46 Model Farm, Norton Hawkfield 374 acres



Model Farm was described as:

'A valuable residential farm estate ... with superior farmhouse, exceptionally well built and conveniently arranged agricultural buildings, two cottages ...'.

Model Farm was built in the 1850s for the Smyth Estate. It was let to a Mr. H.S. Branch.

Model Farm was not sold. It was withdrawn from the sale at £10750.

The farmhouse remains and is grade II listed.

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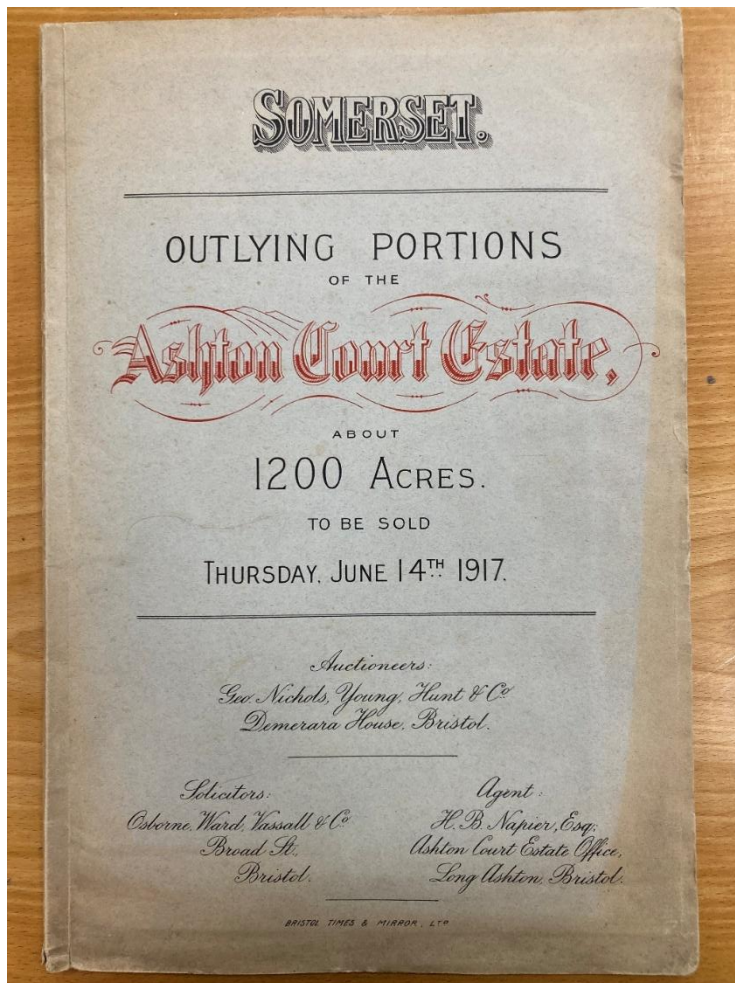


Image: BS40197/2/a

In 1917 the sales took place on the 14th of June 1917. The auctioneers were Geo. Nichols, Young and Hunt of Bristol. The sale took place at the Grand Hotel, Broad Street, on the directions of Esme Smyth, and about 1200 acres of outlying farms and land were sold. The solicitors were Osborne, Ward, Vassall & Co. of Broad Street, Bristol and the agent was H.B. Napier Esq. Ashton Court Estate Office.

The total revenue for the sale was £44890.

The following properties were sold:

- Tynings Farm, Whitchurch 173 acres
- White Cross Court Farm, Whitchurch 101 acres
- Crox Bottom Farm, Bishopsworth
- Headley Farm, Bishopsworth 31 acres
- Brown Rocks Farm, Tickenham 44 acres
- Vynes Farm, Wraxall 43 acres
- Week's Farm, Wraxall 38 acres
- Hengrove Farm, Brislington 36 acres

Additionally many lots of land and small cottages were sold from: Brislington, Bishopworth, Whitchurch, Long Ashton, Wraxall, Tickenham and Nailsea.

At total of 80 lots were sold.

Lot 1 Brown Rocks Farm, Tickenham 44 acres

Brown Rocks Farm was described as:

“A very desirable accommodation holdingA substantially built & commodious farmhouse, excellent farm buildings, pasture land, wood and orcharding.”

At the time of the sale the tenant was Jos Vowles. Brown Rocks Farm was sold to Mr. H.J. Masters for £1650.

The farmhouse and outbuildings remain.



Image: courtesy of Google Street View

Lot 8 Four roomed cottage, garden and quarry, known as Cherry Orchard 2 acres, Nailsea

This cottage was situated in Silver Street Nailsea. The tenant was Mr. J. Pippett. It was sold for £180 to Mr. W. Lippiatt.

The cottage remains, now called Orchard House and grade II listed.



Image: courtesy Google Street View.

Lot 12 Stone built six roomed cottage and garden, Nailsea

These cottages were situated opposite the Heath Brewery in Nailsea. The tenants were Mr. F. Neate and the executors of Mr. E. Thatcher. It was sold for £240 to Mr. W. Neate.

Some older buildings remain in this area.



Image: courtesy of Google Earth. Possible lot 12

Lot 14 Two four roomed cottages with small gardens

These two cottages were situated on the main Wraxall to Nailsea Road. The tenants were M. J. Painter and Mrs. A.L. Darby. They were sold for £80 to Mr. Thatcher.

Lot 15 Week's Farm, Wraxall 38 acres

This farm was described as a desirable accommodation holding, and consisted of a 4-bedroom farmhouse with sitting rooms, kitchen, scullery, dairy and cellar.

It was let to Mr. Henry Weeks, except for 2 fields which were let to Lieut. Col. G.A. Gibbs.

The farm was sold to Mr. John Marshall for £1825.

Lot 17 Two well built for roomed cottages, Wraxall

The cottages were situated on Wraxall Road. The tenants were Mr. Thomas Price and Miss Painter. They were sold to Mr. C.A.R. Gillet for £280.

Lot 18 Three pleasantly situated cottages and gardens, Wraxall

These cottages were also on the Wraxall Road. The tenants were Miss Russell (Post Office), John Gould and Charles Row. They were sold to M. D. Davis for £250.



Image: courtesy Google Earth

Lot 20 Vynes Farm, Wraxall 43 acres

Vynes Farm was described as a

"Substantially built and commodious farmhouse, excellent farm buildings, pasture lands, orcharding, cottage and garden."

The tenants were Mr. William Marshall and Mr. H. Jones. It was sold Mr. S. Davies for £1725.

Lot 22 Two four roomed cottages and gardens, Wraxall

These cottages were situated near to Vynes Farm. The tenant was Mr. R.C. Prideaux. They were sold to Mr. H Summers for £150.

Lot 24 Bridgwater Farm, Dundry 28 acres

Bridgwater Farm on the A38 Bridgwater Road was described as:

“An extremely healthy small holding ... comprising Farmhouse, buildings ...”.

The tenant was Mr. G.E. Marshall who purchased it for £1500.



Image: courtesy of Google Earth

Lot 25 Old Farmhouse and pasture land 16 acres, Dundry

The Old Farmhouse was set back from the road opposite Bridgwater Farm. It was sold to the tenant, Mr. G.E. Marshall, for £550.

Lot 26 Home Farm 13 acres, Bishopworth

This most desirable small holding was sold to the tenant, Mr. A.L. Wyatt, for £1000.

Home Farm had been occupied by the Wyatt family for many years.

Arthur Light Wyatt and his wife, Elizabeth took over the farm in 1867. They lived there with Arthur's brother Edwin light Wyatt. Arthur died in 1922.



Image: courtesy of Know Your Place Bristol

Lot 33 Old Mead Farm, Bishopsworth 3 acres

Old Mead Farm was described as a stone-built six roomed cottage with outbuildings, garden and pasture land. It was on the Bridgwater Road on the corner of Bishopsworth Lane.

The tenant was Mr. Thomas Thorne. The farm was sold to Miss R. Lock for £500.



Image: courtesy of Flickr PE175. Image taken 2012.

Lot 48 Crox Bottom Farm, Bishopsworth 93 acres

This farm was another very desirable Dairy farm with a well-built farmhouse, agricultural buildings, pasture and arable land. It was situated between what is now Headley Park and Hartcliffe.

The tenants were Mrs Rosina Flower and Mr. A.A. Flower. The farm was sold to Mr. J.C. Jordan for £2900.

Crox Bottom Farm was a working dairy farm until 1962. Part of the site is now a small nature reserve, the rest has been developed for housing.

Lot 49 Headley Farm, Bishopsworth 31 acres

Headley Farm was described as:

"An exceedingly attractive small holding ... comprising a substantially built farmhouse, out buildings ...".

At the time of the 1917 sale the tenant was a F. Witcombe. It was sold to Mr. W.E. Gardner for £1900.

This farm no longer remains and the land is now Headley Park housing estate developed in the 1930s and originally called Headley Farm Estate.

Lot 60 Tynings Farm, Whitchurch 173 acres

Lot 60 comprised a desirable farm with farmhouse, cottages and outbuildings. The house had 2 sitting rooms, Kitchen, cellar, pantry, dairy and back kitchens on the ground floor, and 3 bedrooms, 2 attics and a cheese room over.

The outbuildings were extensive: 2 yards with sheds, 2 cow houses to tie up 9 and 11, 4 pigsties. Coal and wood house, implement shed, wagon house, calves' house, meal house, barn with loft over, cider house, trap house, and fowl-house.

In 1917 the farm was unoccupied and in the hands of the executors of the late Mr. W.G. Carpenter. Tynings Farm was sold to Mr. Park for £5100.

All the area of Tynings Farm is now developed for housing. A short road has been named Tynings Close.

Lot 61 Hengrove Farm 36 acres, Brislington

In 1917 the tenant was Mr. J. Fitzgerald. It was sold to Mr. A. White for £2150. This lot also included an old quarry and kilns.

A road called Hengrove Farm Lane exists. The old quarry has been filled in and is now an open space.

Lot 65 White Cross Court Farm, Whitchurch

Whitecross Court Farm was described as:

"A most desirable dairy farm ... with farmhouse, cottage, outbuildings ...".

The tenants were the executors of the late Mr. W.G. Carpenter. The farm was sold to Mrs. Carpenter for £410.

The sale particulars included this statement:

“It appears from a tablet in Whitchurch Parish Church that Sir John Smyth ... who died in 1849 ... gave 40 shillings to be distributed on St Thomas’ day to twenty poor people ... at the discretion of the vicar and churchwardens for ever. The said annual sum of forty shillings is charged upon White Cross Court Farm Whitchurch forming lot 65. No written document creating the said charge is in existence but such charge has regularly been paid down to the present time ...”.

Whitecross Court Farm remains and is a grade II listed building.

Lot 71 Two newly built five roomed cottages with gardens, Whitchurch

The tenants were the executors for the Late Mr. W.G. Carpenter. They were sold to Mrs. Carpenter for £410.