

Farms, Farmers and Agriculture

Background

Gloucestershire has always been a predominantly agricultural county. The celebrated three-fold division of 'forest, vale and high blue hill' has shaped the nature of agriculture within the county. The Vale of Gloucester is traditionally associated with dairy farming with pasture for beef plus orchards, while the Cotswolds are the realm of sheep and cereal crops. The Forest offers a mix, primarily silviculture (forest vegetation) and sheep on the higher ground, but with arable and orchard on the rich narrow lowlands.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

There are a wide variety of records that can be used to find out more about a particular farm or farmer. This guide gives you a brief overview of some of the types of records that might be of use. Most are not held under a set reference, so search for them using the online catalogue- see the **How to Find the Records** section.

Local Government - County (Ref: C or K), District (Ref: DA or DC) & Parish (Ref: P) Councils

Farms appear in many official records relating to land, such as planning records and compulsory purchase orders. They may also appear in rights of way records. Farms may also be discussed in the Parish Council minutes.

Maps

These include tithe maps, the 1910 Finance Act maps, and Ordnance Survey maps. There is a research guide for each of these maps, please take a look at them for more information. The National Farm Survey of 1941 is a very good source and is held at The National Archives. See Further Reading for further information.

Personal, Family and Estate records

These could include family diaries, letters, commonplace books, photograph albums, and much more. You may find that personal records are held amongst the records of a business, or vice versa. For more information, please see Research Mini Guide: *Estate Records*.

Probate records

A will can show you how a farm was passed through a family, whether it was split up or if there were any conditions of use. If the will was before 1800, an inventory may have survived. For farmers this may include livestock, farming equipment, household goods and other items which can give you an insight to their working and family life. For more information please see Research Mini Guide: *Wills and Probate Records*.

Parish records

You may find that the farmer or his workers are mentioned in the parish overseer's records. They may have fallen on hard times, fathered an illegitimate child or resettled in a new parish. For more information about these records please see Research Mini Guide: *Overseers of the Poor*. There are other records in parish collections which might help find out who farmed a particular plot of land. These include terriers and tithe maps, see Research Mini Guide: *Tithe Maps*.

Business records

These might include accounts, sales particulars & auctions, farm leases and rentals, livestock records and much more. There are often also records of local societies – such as breed societies, local gardening clubs, etc.

Newspapers

Newspapers are a great source of information for farm sales, farm equipment sales & adverts, stolen animals and other things (such as stock prices and corn prices, etc). They will also include references to national issues, such as livestock diseases, taxes and trade conditions. For more information about Newspapers please see the Research Mini Guide: *Newspapers*. For a full list of Gloucestershire Newspapers please see the Newspapers Guide (Handlist), which is available by request from the reception desk.

Published material

Various published sources can be used to find out more about farmers and agriculture. These include Trade Directories (see the Research Mini Guide: *Trade Directories*), Magazines (Farmer's Guardian, Farmer's Weekly, etc), Parish histories and The Victoria County History.

Manorial records

See the Research Mini Guide: *Manorial Records*.

School Records

School records not only contain information about farm workers' children at the school, but they may also contain notes regarding pupil absences due to involvement with farm work (typically harvesting), bad weather and 'special' events (such as wartime foraging collections). For more information about please see Research Mini Guide: *School Records*.

How to Find the Records

Many Gloucestershire maps, parish records, wills and newspapers are now available online. Please see the relevant Research Mini Guide for more information .

For the other types of records listed above, please use the [Gloucestershire Heritage Hub Catalogue](#) on our website to find hit-lists of relevant items. Use the collection references given above as your search term. You can refine your search, for example by date or place. You can also try using key words such as farming, farm or agriculture. You will need to visit the Archives in person to view these items. Details on how to request a visit can be found on the 'visit us' section of our website at: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/visit-us/> .

For more guidance on how to use our online catalogue please see the Help page and FAQs. Or you can watch our YouTube tutorial.

Further Reading

You may find the following [National Archives research guides](#) helpful:

- National Farm Survey of 1941:
- Agricultural Statistics