



Wilts Agricultural Report

Within the last few weeks the weather has been variable, yet mild; on the whole, favourable for the husbandman. The wheats not sown previously to the late rains have been put into the earth in first-rate condition; the ground in this county generally working like that of a well-cultivated garden: the long-continued dry weather for several weeks after the harvest had been gathered in gave farmers every opportunity of cleansing their foul land, and fitting the same to receive the seed; when the rain did come, thousands of acres in Wilts were sown with wheat, and that operation may be said to have been finished; such in every direction is coming up strong, and looking remarkably healthy; the early-sown appears to be too forward, very rank, and thick on the ground, the appearance more luxuriant than is generally seen in the month of March. More wheat appears to be sown this autumn than other years. The short crops of turnips being early eaten off, enabled the farmers to sow land with wheat, instead of its remaining until the spring of the year for barley or oats. On the downs in the parishes of the three Winterbournes, Laverstock, Winterslow, Everley, Amesbury, Wilton, South Newton, and as far away as Devizes one way, and Warminster through Codford another, more land has been ploughed up and sown with bread corn than was ever seen before, the plant on the fresh-broke-up earth looking beautiful. Taking that part of this county beyond Devizes, in the vicinity of Pewsey, Manningford, Market Lavington, Marlborough, Swindon, &c., the wheats are very promising, on every side the field looking green, reminding us of spring instead of gloomy November. In another part of the county - by Downton, Brad Chalk, Fovant, Hindon, &c. - the same cheering prospects appear. Through the shortness of green food, including turnips, up to the month of October, more tares were sown than formerly; also of rye, mixed with winter barley and oats, such having come up thick, and no doubt will prove exceedingly beneficial to the large sheep breeders in this county. Turnips, particularly the late-sown, have grown amazingly since the late rains, and still continue to do so, as yet there having been but little frost to check the same. The low price of sheep at Wilton, Britford and Weyhill fairs has risen within the last three weeks from three to five shillings per head. The yield of last year's wheat varies much in Wilts. On some well managed land from ten to twelve sacks were grown per acres; while on shallow, sandy, and chalky soils, from six to eight sacks may be taken as the average: the general opinion being that something more than the general yield was this year gathered in, being in the finest condition possible. The markets in this county having been greatly depressed from various causes, the principal through the failure of Messrs. Brodie's (of Salisbury) and other banks; yet many now "hope" that the worst has passed over, and that things will gradually improve. Barley yields differently, in some parts exceeding the growers' expectation, in others more straw than corn; yet the produce is certainly beyond the usual average. In some parishes we heard of from six to seven qrs., other five, some few but four qrs. Per acre. Maltsters are this year extensive purchasers, the supply of malt of 1846 being nearly exhausted. The price of barley during the last three or four weeks, at all the principal markets in Wilts, has been gradually falling, so that at the present time the best Chevalier can be purchased at from 30s to 32s. per qr. Oats were generally a good yield, considering the quantity grown in this country. Beans were generally a deficient crop, the blight having taken then when in bloom.

The same may be said of peas. Rye is much grown in some parts of Wilts; and, generally speaking, this year the yield was good. Of potatoes, fewer were planted last spring than other years, partly from the fear of the disease of the two previous years, added to the dearness of those sold for seed; yet many were sown, the early ones producing excellent crops, the later sorts, being much smaller, from the continued hot and dry weather in August and September. The best are now selling at 10s. per sack of 20 gallons, inferior at 8s. and 9s. per sack of 20 gallons. Other garden produce is abundant and cheap, such as carrots, parsnips, onions, cabbage, and winter-greens. Fruit, particularly apples, was a great yield, many having cider to sell at 8d. per gallon

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