

Memories of an ex- worker at Tongham Fruit Farm:

“My father started work for Sam Gillians in the mid 1930s. I believe there were quite a few old apple, plum and pear trees in the orchard when Gillians took over but a lot were removed and replanted with newer, better varieties. Later the 6 large greenhouses were built to diversify from just fruit production by growing tomatoes, lettuce, bedding plants, vegetables, crysanthemums etc

”The area of the fruit farm was as shown on the map, the boundaries being the railway bridge hill, the former main rail line, the gas works rail line, Tongham nurseries field, the houses on **The Moors, The Cricketers Pub**, Houses in **Oxenden Road** including **Sturts the Butchers**. The total acreage was said to be just over twelve acres with what was called One Acre, where vegetables were grown, to the north of the greenhouses behind a long, tall conifer hedge. The main entrance was off **The Street** with rear access to The Moors but this was seldom used.

“Nobody seemed to know who owned the copse in between the main rail line and the gas works line, it was always assumed it belonged to the Gas Works. Mr Baker and his son Graham often went shooting rabbits on this Gas Works land. Soon after The Bakers and Mr Hislop bought the Farm off the Gillians, my family moved from Ash to live in a tied cottage on the Fruit Farm, in about 1949, by which time The Bakers had built a new house on the left halfway down the main entrance drive.

”Another couple lived in the other tied cottage and there were four permanent staff and several part time workers employed during the 1950s. This was the decade when the farm was busiest, pigs, geese, turkeys and chicken were all bred. Tomatoes, lettuce, bedding plants etc were delivered daily to various wholesalers and retail outlets in Aldershot and Farnham as well as being sold in the Farm Shop/Packing Shed. The Tin Hut (The Chapel) was eventually converted into a Farm Shop near the main entrance.”