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FROM CAMPBELL TO KENDALL

A HISTORY OF THE NFU

Guy Smith

"A spirit of excessive individualism, almost of cantankerousness, is inevitable among farmers, seeing that it is but an exaggeration of their essential manliness, self-reliance and independence. Such men see the individual side of things first and the collective position later. The great merit of the Union is that it leads them to see it all."

From a newspaper editorial, 1920

It has pointed out that for a smallish place, Britain packs in a lot of geography. Mountain and moor; hill and dale, fen and marsh, downs and plains; all within a half days drive of each other. Given that topography dictates the type of farming it hosts then it follows from this that Britain also packs in a lot of farming. The farmers of England and Wales are an eclectic bunch of rugged individuals that make for a broad church of size and sector. It is remarkable then that in the past one hundred years that these same disparate farmers have in the main been represented by one organisation – the NFU.

The story in this book is built around the 33 men who have been its Presidents since its foundation one hundred years ago. As they were all farmers and countrymen this also provided an opportunity to comment on some of the changes in agriculture and the countryside over the same period. The NFU is a vast organisation with a long detailed history spread out over a wide geographical area and so it is impossible to mention all those who have had a part to play. But by concentrating on just one man, the President, the task of tracing the history of the NFU becomes manageable, and its important changes marked.

Guy Smith is first and foremost a farmer, coming from a mixed family farm based on the Essex coast near the village of St. Osyth. He writes and broadcasts about farming and related issues in a range of media. In 2003 he was named columnist of the year at the PPA awards and in 2007 awarded a Silver medal for his work with communications by the RASE. In 2008 he received an honorary doctorate from Essex University.



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TITLE INFORMATION – A HISTORY OF THE NFU



Five hard-working Land Army women in 1918 with one male supervisor.



Sussex farmer Richard Denny gives his chickens away in 1965 as they are not worth selling.



A regular at the county show – the NFU tent – this time at the Bedford Show in the mid-1950s



Female staff pick onions in R.R. Robbins' fields while one laid back male looks on.



An NFU county dinner in Hereford in 1912.



Example of a double page spread.