

# Introduction: The Farms and Farmers of Axminster Parish

## This document in context

This PDF document, dated March 2016, forms part of 'An Account of the Farms and Farmers of the Parish of Axminster since the Agricultural Revolution; Including Smallridge, Westwater, Weycroft & Wyke'. A full introduction and additional contextual background to the research can be found on the Axminsterheritage.org website. This PDF document is one of seven, each of which deals with the farms in a different part of the parish.

The full and abbreviated titles (as used in cross-references) of all seven PDF documents are as follows:

<b>Full titles</b>	<b>Abbreviated titles (for cross-referencing)</b>
Up the Yarty from Hunthay Lane	Yarty PDF
Between Membury Road and Smallridge, North of Cloakham	Uphay-Smallridge PDF
Millbrook, Weycroft and Lodge Lane	Weycroft PDF
North of Sector Lane to the Hawkchurch boundary, including Cuthays Lane	North of Sector PDF
Between Sector Lane and Cook's / Woodbury Lanes	South of Sector PDF
Wyke, Trinity Hill and Great Trill	Wyke PDF
Down the Axe Valley and along the Membury Road	Axe PDF

The underlying research was carried out by, and the various documents have been written by, David Knapman. They are now being made available for unrestricted personal (non-commercial) use via the Axminsterheritage.org website. Any first-person references (i.e. to 'I' or 'me') in this document are therefore to David.

If you make use of any part of this research, you are asked to credit Axminsterheritage.org as the source, and David Knapman as the author.

The whole 'Account' should be treated as a work in progress. There are bound to be errors and omissions, and responsibility for them rests entirely with the author. Readers who find any mistakes are asked to draw them to his attention via the Axminsterheritage.org website (a contact Email address for all 'history-related' matters is provided on the main website), and they will be corrected in later versions. Likewise, if you have additional information which you would be happy to share, the author will do his best to accommodate it.

Acknowledgement of the help and information which has been received from several current Axminster farmers and other interested parties is given on the main webpage to which this PDF file is linked.

## Key sources and references

The main source document, which are referred to as Ref 1, Ref 2 etc are outlined below. Fuller details on these references and where to find them can be found on the main webpage. Other sources which are used once only are given in footnotes.

### *Books and surveys*

Ref 1 is 'The Book of the Axe' by George P R Pulman, and in particular the 4<sup>th</sup> edition, which was published in 1875.

Ref 2 is 'The History of Newenham Abbey in the County of Devon' by James Davidson, published in 1843. See also Ref 12.

Ref 3 is 'The Book of Axminster: The making of a town within its landscape' by Angela M W Dudley (Barracuda Books, 1988).

Ref 4 is 'The Book of Axminster with Kilmington' by Les Berry and Gerald Gosling (Halsgrove, 2003).

Ref 5 is 'Around Axminster – in old photographs' by Les Berry and Gerald Gosling (Alan Sutton Publishing, 1993).

Ref 6 is a survey of the land holdings of the Petre Estate which was carried out in preparation for their sale, in 1824.

Ref 7 is the collective term used for the tithe apportionment process undertaken in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to modernise the system under which tithes were paid by many property owners to the parish church. Some other properties were exempt from tithes because they were associated with former monasteries. This was of particular relevance to Axminster, where Newenham Abbey had been a major landowner. The tithe apportionment work in Axminster parish was undertaken in 1838.

Ref 8 is the sales catalogue which was produced in 1916 when the Cloakham Estate was offered for sale at auction.

Ref 9 comprises three ledger books which were kept by Robert Snell and then (from about 1900) by Messrs R&C Snell of Axminster. The majority of the entries comprise valuations carried out in connection with the determination of farm rents, likely sales values and the process surrounding the grant of probate.

Ref 10 is the collective term for old newspaper reports, all of which can be accessed via the [britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) website. In all cases the newspaper concerned is identified, together with the date of publication. The newspapers are identified by their initials (DCC = Dorset County Chronicle, EE= Express & Echo, EFP = Exeter Flying Post, EPG = Exeter & Plymouth Gazette, NDJ = North Devon Journal, SM = Sherborne Mercury, TCWA = Taunton Courier & Western Advertiser, WDP = Western Daily Press, WT = Western Times, WG = Western Gazette, WMN = Western Morning News).

Ref 11 is the collective term, for the Axminster parish registers.

Ref 12 is a list entitled 'Occupiers of land that are titheable to the vicar, 1828. Number of cows kept', together with an equivalent list of cows kept on farms which were exempt from tithes. The source is James Davidson's unpublished 'Collections for a History of the Town and Parish of Axminster'.

#### *Census returns, voters lists and directories*

The census returns made every 10 years from 1841 to 1911 provide invaluable information about people, but are not always reliable or detailed as far as place names are concerned. References to census data are generally made simply by citing the year (e.g. '1851C shows Mr ABC at XYZ farm').

The voters list for 1842, included in James Davidson's 'Collections for a History of the Town and Parish of Axminster' (see Ref 12), is referred to as 1842V, because information which it contains complements the information from the 1841 census return.

Axminster library has a collection of extracts from historic directories covering the period from 1850 to 1939 (plus a few earlier ones). Such directories generally list at least the more prominent local farmers. The directories are referred to in the text by citing the year (e.g. '1878D shows that Mr ABC had taken over XYZ farm by then').

#### *Old maps*

Use has also been made of a sequence of old maps. These are simply referred to in the text as 'the 1765 map', 'the 1891 map' etc. There is a detailed section of text on the [Axminsterheritage.org](http://Axminsterheritage.org) website explaining how most of these old maps can be found (and viewed) on-line.

## Down the Axe Valley and along the Musbury Road

### Sisterhood and St Leonards

Sisterhood (spelled Sisterwood) can be seen on the 1765 map, and the 1776/78 map shows that at that time it belonged to Isaac Hand (though he was probably the landlord rather than the farmer).

Early apprenticeship records show that Samuel **Osbourne** was farming Sisterhood Farm in 1818. Sisterhood and St Leonards were then jointly occupied by Elizabeth **Bradford** in 1838 (Ref 7), and together amounted to 140 acres. This is confirmed by 1841C. She was the widow of John Bradford, who died aged 71 on 22 June 1835 (Ref 1, page 666 et seq), described as 'of Sisterhood'. Unfortunately the on-line London Gazette shows that in 1848, described as a widow and resident at Sisterhood, she was declared bankrupt. Elizabeth Bradford died on 13 March 1861 aged 71, and is memorialised in Axminster church (Ref 1, page 666 et seq) along with her husband and two of their daughters.

In 1851C Sisterhood was occupied by a farm labourer (and evidently being farmed by someone else living on another farm). In 1856D and 1857D Joseph **Higgins** was named as the farmer. In 1861C Thomas **Matthews** was the farmer, with 135 acres. This is confirmed by 1866D and 1870D, and then by 1871C and 1873D.

Both 1878D and 1881C show Benjamin **Gage**, farmer and auctioneer, at Sisterhood. 1881C also shows Robert **Flood**, dairyman. Benjamin Gage's presence is confirmed by 1878/79D and 1883D<sup>1</sup>. 1883D also lists Daniel Flood, dairyman.

1889D, 1890D, 1891C and 1893D all show James **Loveridge** as the farmer at Sisterhood (having moved there from Smallridge). 1889D shows that he was also a tax and rate assessor. 1890D also lists James **Tucker**, a dairyman, at Sisterhood. A news report (Ref 10, WT 19 June 1918, also cited in the context of Furzeleigh Farm: see the South of Sector PDF) gives James Loveridge's tenure at Sisterhood as 1887 to 1897.

1901C and 1902D both list Robert **Spiller** as the farmer at Sisterhood, and the baptismal register for All Saints Church shows that in 1903 he and his wife Beatrice Annie had a child baptised there while living at Sisterhood. There is then no entry for Sisterhood in 1906D. 1910D and 1911C both name Charles Henry **Marley** (born c.1866 at Axminster) as the farmer at Sisterhood.

1914D lists William Edgar **Diment** as the farmer at Sisterhood, and he is consistently named until 1926D. In 1927 he moved to Membury. Ref 11 (1928) and 1930D both show Frederick Hugh **Studley** farming at Sisterhood. Then 1935D and 1939D both show Thomas Bennett **Marsh** as the farmer, confirmed by Ref 11 (1940 and 1942).

I am unsure how long he stayed, but I understand that it was in about 1960 that Frank **Burrough** of Lower Abbey Farm bought Sisterhood from the Snell family. He bequeathed it to his daughter, who had married Jack **Hurford** of Tolcis (see the Yarty PDF). They moved to Sisterhood and continued to farm under the name J&JM Hurford. Jack Hurford died in 2009, and although his family remains at Sisterhood, the land is now farmed by Lisle Burrough of Lower Abbey. Jack Hurford's son Dean still farms some land above Tolcis.

### Cloakham

There is a map in Ref 3 (page 53) which suggests that Cloakham was originally a 'grange farm' associated with Newenham Abbey. This is at least partly supported by Ref 2 (page 59).

In 1824 (Ref 6) Mrs **Alexander** was renting 32 acres at Cloakham. By 1838 (Ref 7) 62 acres associated with Cloakham were shown as being occupied by Ann **Alexander**, with a further 54 acres linked to Cloakham House itself, and occupied by William Knight **Frampton**. Ann Alexander was almost certainly the widow of James Alexander, the former owner of Cloakham, and she died in 1846 (Ref 1, pages 582 and 666). Most references to Cloakham, however, are to the house rather than to any direct farming activity.

In later years, there was a farmstead (now inactive) built between Chard Road and the sports grounds which is named Cloakham Farm. This belonged to the Snell family when they lived at

---

<sup>1</sup> Mr B Gage's photograph, taken in 1905 selling cattle in the Square, appears in Ref 4 (page 58). When he died in 1915 he was described as 'of Sisterhood', even though he had not been farming there for some years.

Cloakham, and later passed into the ownership of Axminster Carpets. It has planning permission for housing.

## Willhays Farm

1841C shows John **Welch** farming at Willhays Farm. In 1838 (Ref 7) he had been farming an unnamed holding (presumably Willhays) of 82 acres. By 1851C Isaac **Edwards** was the farmer.

By 1856D Robert **Patterson**, whose family was associated with Willhays for many years, had arrived from Uplyme. He was a cattle dealer and farmer. There are several reports of livestock sales organised by him (e.g. Ref 10, WT 17 Dec 1866 when he sold 87 cattle and 70 sheep, using Messrs Dauncey & Son as auctioneer). He is frequently listed at Willhays thereafter, and in 1881C Willhays was shown as 20 acres, and Robert Patterson was living at Willhays Cottages, an adjacent house, while William **Isaac**, a farm bailiff, was also living on Willhays Lane. By 1889D and 1891C Robert Patterson was back living at Willhays Farm itself, described (in 1891C) as a retired farmer. In 1893D Robert was staying at Rosemount, Musbury Road with his son Henry Tucker Patterson, a cattle dealer like his father. An agreement dated November 1900 (Ref 9) shows that Henry Tucker Patterson was at that time working in partnership with Robert Snell (of R&C Snell). They jointly agreed to pay a fee of 3d per ewe per week to have 60 ewes kept on a farm at Colyton.

By 1901C Henry Tucker Patterson had moved to Willhays House, and 1911C shows him to have been born c.1858 at Axminster. In 1916 (Ref 8) he was listed as the tenant of several fields and areas of parkland belonging to the Cloakham Estate, totalling about 20 acres, one of which he bought. He was then consistently listed at Willhays until 1930D (after which I have not found entries for Willhays Farm), and he died in 1934. His house was hit by an incendiary bomb during World War II<sup>2</sup>, and a photograph in Ref 4 (page 79) almost certainly shows Henry Tucker Patterson and his wife Rhoda Jane in front of their house a few years before that.

## Town Dairies

The longest-running family business that I have identified which operated what I would describe as a town dairy (i.e. a dairying business with its centre of operations in the town rather than on a farm) was that of the Newbery family. By 1873D Abraham Skinner **Newbery** was listed as a cowkeeper on Silver Street. In 1877 (Ref 10, WT 20 Aug 1877) a hay rick belonging to him, and holding all of the hay from 20 acres at Lea Coombe Fields, caught fire. The whole rick was valued at £100 to £110, and the loss was estimate as one third. In 1878/79D he was living on South Street, where he remained until at least 1890D. 1906D shows that he had moved to West Street, and 1911C gives his address as West House as well as showing that he had been born c.1841 at Dalwood, and confirming that he remained a farmer and dairyman. By 1906D his son Charles was also a dairyman, on Lyme Street, as he was in 1914D. A photograph in Ref 5 (page 50) shows Charles Newbery and two of his sons at the family's stables on West Street.

The family was also instrumental in setting up dairy farms for others to run on their behalf, supplying milk to them. See, for example, Hunthay Dairy (below) and Hunthay Farm (in the Yarty PDF).

Abraham Skinner Newbery was still listed as a dairyman on West Street in 1930D, though since the father of the family had died aged 88 in December 1928 (and is buried at Axminster, alongside his wife Martha, who died in 1932), I conclude that this was a reference to his son of the same name. Abraham Skinner Newbery junior was also a cattle dealer who had bought Castle Hill Farm in 1916 (see below). He was listed as a cattle dealer in 1919D and in 1926D, at which time he was living at Newenham House, on the corner of King Edward Road and Widepost Lane, opposite the modern entrance to the railway station, where he remained until at least 1939D, sometimes described as a farmer. Charles Newbery was a cattle dealer at Coombefield by 1926D, and Isaac Newbery was a dairyman on West Street in 1935D and 1939D.

Abraham Skinner Newbery junior won prizes for his milking Devon cattle at the Bath & West and Southern Counties Society Show when it was held at Torquay (Ref 10, EPG 30 May 1930). He was at one time President of the Devon Cattle Breeders Society.

1930D also lists **Salter & Stokes** as dairymen, with a depot on South Street. Their business, which involved supplying farm produce to the London markets, had started in Colyton in the 1870s, and expanded in 1901 when they established a butter factory at Chard Junction (Ref 10, WG 5 July

---

<sup>2</sup> Source: Mary Sturgeon (née Patterson), personal communication, 2015.

1901). By 1922, if not before, this factory was operating under the name 'Yonder Hill Creamery' (Ref 10, WMN 2 Jan 1922). In fact 1930 was the year when that factory was taken over by Wiltshire United Dairies<sup>3</sup>, who in 1936 built what was described at the time (Ref 10, WMN 10 Feb 1936) as "... the biggest butter works in the country" on the Chard Junction site. The operating name changed over the years, to United Dairy Group, Cow & Gate, Unigate and Dairy Crest. An advertised property auction (Ref 10, EPG 23 Oct 1925) shows that Salter & Stokes had also operated a dairy collection point and butter factory on Gammons Hill, Kilmington (just outside Axminster parish) for some time. Photographs of those premises from 1908 can be seen on pages 54 and 55 of Ref 5, at which time they were being run by the Sanders family.

## Castle Hill

In 1866D Mrs Tryphena **Parrett** had a dairy at an unspecified place on Membury Road. In 1870D she was listed under Crabbswood, a property to which I have not seen any other reference.

In 1856D George **Harvey** was the licensee of the Green Dragon (which by then had moved to the foot of Castle Hill) as well as a farmer, and in 1866D and 1870D he was listed farming at Castle Hill. In 1873D Edward and George Harvey were jointly listed under Castle Hill, with Edward alone listed in 1878/79D. In 1881C he was farming 120 acres on 'Membury Road'. I believe this to have been Castle Hill Farm, where he was recorded in 1883D and consistently thereafter until 1893D. 1889D and other entries show that he was also a tax assessor and collector and I believe that he died in 1899, because a probate valuation (Ref 9) was carried out in December of that year, covering livestock, equipment and a row of six cottages and gardens. In 1891C Francis G Harvey was listed separately as a dairyman at Stony Bridge. There is then a brief reference in the press (Ref 10, EPG 7 Dec 1894) to E Harvey, a dairyman of Castle Hill Farm.

In 1878D James **Phillips** senior was a dairyman on Castle Hill, and 1881C lists him with 20 acres, living on Gas House Lane, aged c.70. He was then listed as a farmer in 1883D and 1889D.

By 1902D William Phillips had taken over at Castle Hill Farm, and he was still there in 1906D. Ref 4 (page 133) has a photograph of a prize bullock belonging to him. In 1910 Mrs William Phillips was the farmer, and 1911C confirms that Clara Phillips, a widow born c.1846 at Axminster, was running Castle Hill Farm. She was still there in 1914D, which is the last entry that I have seen which refers explicitly to Castle Hill Farm. Ref 8 shows that in 1916 a 13-acre smallholding on Castle Hill was still occupied by the Executors of William Phillips, along with 60 acres in scattered fields, mostly in the area of land to the east of the road running up to Four Cross.

Ref 8 also shows that the 13-acre smallholding itself, plus some fields amounting to about 25 acres, were bought by Abraham Skinner **Newbery** junior (see the section on 'Town Dairies' above). I understand that he lived there for some time, before moving to Newenham House. He was still running Castle Farm, and selling cattle from it, in 1951 (Ref 10, Sussex Agricultural Express 14 Dec 1951). In 1938 the farmhouse was occupied by Mrs G **Coombes** (Ref 10, 2 Dec 1938), who was reported to have been marooned briefly by floodwaters up to 7 feet deep that winter.

## Blackhakes

The first reference that I have found to Blackhakes is in 1824 (Ref 6), at which time Lawrence **Wills** was the tenant of between 2 and 3 acres. I do not know whether he was farming, or just working the clay pits there. By 1838 (Ref 7) William **Loud** was living at Blackhakes Cottage, farming 17 acres. Several members of the Loud family were butchers in Axminster at various times. Based on the small acreage, and a reference to his occupation as a brickmaker and farmer, I suspect that by 1851C the land had been taken over by Aaron Dunster **Curzon**, who was listed as farming 13 acres at Retreet Cottage, near Stony Bridge.

In 1866D John **Genge** was recorded as farming at Blackhayes. In 1871C he was shown with 14 acres at Black Axe, and in 1873D he was at Blackhayes.

By 1878 Job **Membury** was farming Blackhakes, having been listed as a cottager at a brickyard in 1870D, and as a farmer in a place described as brick kiln in both 1873D and 1878/79D. (He had also been a dairyman at Greatwood in 1866D.)

---

<sup>3</sup> This date comes from the chaffcombe.com parish website.

In 1881C and 1883D the farmer was James Walter **Dare**, with 16 acres in 1881C. He was there again in 1891C and 1893D, with the farm's name increasingly frequently given as Blackhakes from 1873D onwards (with one mention of brick kiln in 1890D).

In 1901C, 1911C and in intervening directories John **Bull**, a cattle dealer born c.1841 at Colyton, was farming at Blackhakes. He was there consistently until 1914D, but in 1916 Ref 8 lists the Executors of John Bull as renting 13 acres at Blackhakes itself at an annual cost of £56, plus a couple more fields amounting to about 5 acres. It also shows that his widow, Mrs Emma Maria Bull, bought one of those very small fields. In 1918 she was fined £10 for selling adulterated (watered-down) milk to "... the Poor-law institution" (i.e. the workhouse) (Ref 10, WT 24 Apr 1918). She is then shown as the farmer at Blackhakes from 1919D until 1930D, and having sold the farm in July 1931 (Ref 10, WG 24 July 1931), described as 19 acres, to be vacated by Christmas, she died on Christmas Eve that same year (Ref 10, EPG 31 Dec 1931). There is a photograph (Ref 5, page 99) of Richard Bull, described as of Blackhakes, taken in the early 1920s when he was working as a butcher for F Chick of Trinity Square. See also Ref 4 (page 60) for another photograph.

1935D and 1939D both list Charles F **Board** as the farmer at Blackhakes, and he remained there (as owner-occupier) until 1950 (Ref 10, EPG 4 Aug 1950), when the farm was offered for sale by Messrs GS Taylor & Co at the George Hotel, described as 20 acres of grass, and freehold. The land was bought by Mrs O Hoskins for £6,300 (Ref 10, EPG 8 Sept 1950), though I understand<sup>4</sup> that C H **Brown** farmed at Blackhakes in the early 1950s.

After that the Speed family moved to Blackhakes, and for most if not all that time the farmer has been Roy G **Speed**.

### Hunthay Dairy

Whereas the other farms accessed from Hunthay Lane face the Yarty, Hunthay Dairy is clearly on the Axe side of the watershed.

I have not found any references to Hunthay Dairy in census returns or in most pre-1940 directories. However, in 1930D Herbert **Mear** was listed as the dairyman at Hunthay Dairy. He subsequently moved to Higher Uphay (see the Uphay-Smallridge PDF).

My understanding<sup>5</sup> is that Hunthay Dairy had been established by Abraham Skinner Newbery (see above, under Town Dairies), probably in the late 1920s. After Herbert Mear left, I understand that the cows were milked first by George **Collier** and then by Jim **Hooper** as dairymen acting for Abraham Skinner Newbery junior.

In the late 1960s or early 1970s Clifford **Penhaligan** moved from Cornwall to Hunthay Dairy with his wife Jean and their daughters. He died in 1990, but it continued to be run under the name C&JM Penhaligan. Then, as can be seen from the EDDC planning website, in 1998 Mrs Penhaligan was granted permission to convert what were by then redundant farm buildings for residential / holiday use. The plans submitted at that time show that the land owned by the farm comprised a roughly oblong block occupying the northern third of the land bounded by The Trafalgar Way, Hunthay Lane and Four Cross Hill, plus one large flat field on the other side of the Four Cross Road, on the town side of what used to be known as Vineyard Lane (this field having subsequently been absorbed into Blackhakes Farm). The total area then was roughly 55 acres.

### Purzebrook, Hakes, Gamberlake and Horslears

Purzebrook House has been in existence since mediaeval times, and at one time had formal gardens in front (on the other side of Musbury Road) as well as land all around. Purzebrook is not specifically identified in 1838 (Ref 7), but in 1841C John **Denham** is listed as the farmer there.

In 1875 Benjamin Gage advertised (Ref 10, WT 13 Aug 1875) that he was going to auction land forming part of Purzebrook, comprising 23 acres of arable, meadow and orchard land, occupied at that time by James **Boon**. The schedule of land provided as part of the advertisement included fields called Great and Little Foxhill, Long and Little Moor, and Gamberlake Mead. There is no suggestion that the sale included Purzebrook House as well. The only other census and directory entries that I have found are in 1891C, when Levi **Welch**, a farmer, was living at 9, Purzebrook,

---

<sup>4</sup> Source: Documents held at the Dorset History Centre, ref D/LRM/H2/5 and /7 which are referenced on the National Archives website.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Dick and Dudley Hurford, personal communication, 2015.

and 1893D when he was listed at Purzebrook as a dairyman. He later appears in connection with Shoals Farm (see below).

Some of the land associated with the farm was built on during the mid-to-late-19<sup>th</sup> century, and most of the rest was used for the Union Workhouse and 20<sup>th</sup> century housing. At various times the outbuildings behind the house included a dairy and a slaughterhouse (operated by Stuart's butchers, in support of their shop on the corner of South Street and Silver Street).

The first reference that I have found to Hakes Farm is 1824 (Ref 6), when the farmer was identified as A **Forward**. In 1842V John **Welch** was listed in connection with Hakes, though he may not have been farming the land.

There is then a long gap until 1878D, when John **Pidgeon**, a dairyman, was listed there. In 1873D he had been recorded as a dairyman on South Road (not South Street: this could therefore refer to what is now Membury Road, and could well also be a reference to Hakes Farm). He is again listed at Hakes in 1878/79D and 1883D, but I have not found him in 1881C. 1889D and 1890D link him to South Road and Musbury Road respectively, rather than specifically to Hakes Farm. There is no listing for either Hakes or John Pidgeon in 1891C or 1893D.

1901C shows Charles **Newbery** (born c.1879 at Axminster) as the farmer at Hakes, but 1902D does not. It was at around this time that some of the land associated with Hakes Farm was being built on. Ref 5 (page 20) shows Hake's Buildings (now Hillhead Terrace), and Rougemont Terrace (on the other side of Musbury Road from Hakes Farm buildings), which had both been built by about 1908. By 1911C Charles Newbery was recorded at Axe Dairy, George Street, described as a dairy farmer. I believe that he was from the Newbery family which ran a 'town dairy' (see the Axe PDF).

Land at both Gamberlake and Horslears was clearly used for agricultural purposes (mainly grazing and small-scale dairying) before it was developed for housing, but as far as I can tell neither ever constituted a farm in its own right. I have found three references to it, all connected to the same person. In 1813 William **Henley**, described as 'of Musbury', took on an apprentice<sup>6</sup> for Horselears; then in 1824 (Ref 6) he was described as occupying 32 acres described as Horslears; and Appendix 3 confirms that he was keeping cows there in 1828.

## Shools / Shoals

Shools can be seen on the 1776/78 map, showing that it belonged to the Petre Estate at that time.

In 1838 (Ref 7) Shoals was shown as 184 acres, and was being farmed by William **Whitemoor**. 1841C and 1842V both confirm this, and describes him as a yeoman. He is also identified in Appendix 3 as having been a cow keeper back in 1828 (and he may also have been the tenant at Pennsylvania Farm for a time: see the Weycroft PDF).

Shools is not listed in 1851C, or in 1856D or 1857D, but 1861C lists Robert **Gill** as the farmer, with 42 acres. He is also listed there in 1866D, as is Job **Symonds**, a dairyman. 1870D lists John **Denning**, a dairyman at Shoals, and 1871C shows William **Cotterell** living and farming there. 1873D then shows Mrs Mary Ann Cotterell running a dairy on Musbury Road, which was presumably at Shoals. 1878/79D lists Miss Jane Cotterell as running the Shoals dairy.

1881C shows Thomas **Swain** farming 90 acres at Shoals, and this is confirmed by 1883D. The following year (Ref 10, EPG 8 Oct 1884) the Axminster & Kilminster Agricultural Association held its annual ploughing match at Shoals Farm, courtesy of Thomas Swain.

1889D, 1891C and 1893D all show that the main house at Shoals was occupied by non-farmers (e.g. a retired policeman in 1891C), but 1889D shows that the farm was being run by Reuben Swain junior of Lower Abbey (see below), together with a dairyman called Levi **Welch** (see above under Purzebrook).

A press report the following year (Ref 10, WT 3 Sept 1890) stated that James **Smyth** had completed his harvest at Shoals. In 1898, an advertisement was placed (Ref 10, TCWA 9 Mar 1898) offering to let a 12-18 cow dairy at Shoals. The advertisement had been placed by James Smyth. The following year (Ref 10, EPG 19 Aug 1899) there was a fire on the farm, and the press report names James Smyth as the owner, and Mr **White** as the dairyman.

---

<sup>6</sup> DHC ref 406-A-2.

There is no entry for any farming-related activity at Shools in 1901C, and 1906D shows that the land was being farmed in combination with Lower Abbey Farm by Reuben Robert **Swain**. He was resident there in 1908 (Ref 11), and was again listed as having some link to Shools in 1914D.

1910D and 1911C both list Walter William **Wills** as the farmer at Shools. He had been born c.1839 at Musbury. Richard **Halcombe** (born c.1864 at Cullompton) was the dairy manager in 1911C.

1914D shows Beresford John **Snell** as the farmer at Shoals (not Shools), and this was consistently the case until at least 1939D. He was still there and advertising for staff for Shoals well after the war (Ref 10, WMN 2 Apr 1949), and I understand that his family remains there still, though the farm must have been significantly affected by the construction of the by-pass, and by the general expansion of Axminster.

## Higher and Lower Abbey

There has been farming close to the site of Newenham Abbey since mediaeval times (see Ref 2 for a full account). The land formed part of the Petre Estate from 1605 until 1824, when it was sold to James Alexander Frampton. At the time of the 1824 estate survey (Ref 6) two parcels of land described as Newenham Chapel (25 acres) and Prince's<sup>7</sup> (16 acres) were let to William **Tucker**. A further 28 acres, described as 'Part of Abbey' were rented to Mrs R **Forward**, along with a further 8 acres of an unnamed plot. In 1828 (see Appendix 3) James **White** was recorded as keeping cows at Abbey (and at Millbrook / Sector), though his listing at Abbey was in connection with titheable land, and we know that most of the Abbey lands were not subject to tithes, since they are not recorded on the 1838 tithe apportionment schedules (Ref 7).

In 1841C William **Shocker** was the farmer of Princes Abbey (which appears to be the same farm as Higher Abbey: see above), while Samuel **Swain**, a yeoman, was at Lower Abbey, and a farm labourer occupied the house of a third unnamed farm in the same vicinity. Samuel Swain was again connected to Abbey in 1842V.

In 1851C two farmers were listed at Abbey (but with no farm details given): Francis Swain (103 acres) and James Swain (100 acres). They were two of the sons of Samuel Swain (a third son, Reuben, farmed at Yeatlands; while a fourth, William, farmed at Kilmington, where his parents had also moved by 1851).

We know from 1861C that at that time Francis Swain was at Higher Abbey (100 acres), and James Swain was at Lower Abbey (110 acres), and from this point on it is sensible to deal separately with the two farms. The main London to Exeter railway had been built during the late 1850s, and opened in 1860, and this will have affected both farms, but particularly Lower Abbey, which is closer to the line (though both farms have land on both sides of the line: Lower Abbey's is mainly close to the Axe, while Higher Abbey's is closer to the Yarty where it joins the Axe). A press report (Ref 10, DCC 14 July 1859) refers to progress being made on the stretch of line from Abbey to Slymlakes (see below).

Francis Swain was consistently recorded at Higher Abbey until 1866D, and then again in 1871C, at which point the farm still comprised 100 acres. In 1870D his son Thomas Swain was named as the farmer, and Francis may well have been at least semi-retired by then. Nevertheless, he was again listed as the farmer in 1873D. In both 1878D and 1878/79D Henry and Thomas Swain were jointly listed as the farmers at Higher Abbey.

In 1881C Henry Swain (another of Francis' sons) was both resident at Higher Abbey and shown as the farmer, of 95 acres. His sole tenure was confirmed in 1883D, and this remained consistently the case until 1902D.

In 1904 William Thomas **Trott** took over as the tenant of Higher Abbey, a change which is reported in a valuation report (Ref 9) dated April 1904, and confirmed by 1906D. 1911C shows him to have been born c.1879 at Shute, and he was still there in 1939D. He did not have any family to take over the farm, but he remained at Higher Abbey until about 1968, when it was sold to Francis George (Frank) **Burrough** (see below in connection with Lower Abbey). It has for many years now been run by his son Dean Burrough and his family.

---

<sup>7</sup> We know from a 1776 map (Ref 3, page 52) that two fields adjacent to what is now Higher Abbey Farm were called Princes Moor and Princes Close.



James Swain was consistently recorded at Lower Abbey until 1871C, at which point the farm was shown as 130 acres, and he was listed again in 1873D. In 1878D and 1878/79D he and Reuben Swain (one of his sons) were jointly listed.

By 1881C Reuben Swain junior (to distinguish him from his uncle Reuben, who farmed at Yeatlands) was the named farmer of Lower Abbey, with 133 acres. However, a valuation report (Ref 9) carried out in August 1900 (in connection with the effects of the Axminster-to-Lyme railway) confirms that James Swain was still formally the tenant. Reuben Swain junior was consistently listed there until 1906D, with 1893D showing that as well as Lower Abbey, he was at that time farming Shools as well (see above).

A dairyman called William **Sampson** was also listed at Lower Abbey in 1906D. I have also seen his name spelled William Cox Sansom, in connection with household insurance when he was at Lower Abbey. A note attached to that description states that "... an oil engine used for working dairy appliances is fixed in the dairy", though he was not responsible for insuring the dairy, which would be consistent with him being a tenant dairyman.

1911C shows Reuben Swain junior of Lower Abbey to have been born c.1845 at Dalwood. 1911C also lists Reuben Robert Swain at Lower Abbey, born c.1878 at Axminster (the son of Reuben Swain junior). 1914D lists Reuben Swain junior at Lower Abbey and Shools, while 1919D only mentions Lower Abbey. There is a photograph in Ref 4 (page 104) taken at Lower Abbey in 1914, showing the fire brigade tackling a fire at Lower Abbey. A probate valuation report (Ref 9) dated August 1919 shows that he had died by then, and a press report (Ref 10, WT 12 Sept 1916) shows that his own son Reuben Robert had pre-deceased him in 1916, having died aged 37 of septic poisoning, following an accident involving a horse and cart on the farm.

In 1923D Mrs Lilian Sarah **Frampton** (of Swain & Frampton) was listed as the farmer at Lower Abbey. She was the daughter of the late Reuben Swain junior, and I believe that following the death of her father she farmed Lower Abbey for a few years in partnership with her brother, Charles. In 1924 they left the farm: the evidence comes from a press announcement (Ref 10, WPG 29 Feb 1924) of a dispersal sale to be run by Messrs R&C Snell Ltd of live and dead stock, and in particular a herd of Devon and cross-bred cattle. The announcement stated that the partnership was being dissolved, and that both parties were quitting the farm. This ended the direct association between the Swain family and one or both of the Abbey Farms going back over 80 years (though the Swains continued to own Lower Abbey Farm for some years, and the family remained strongly linked to the immediate area: see Balls and Slymlakes Farms below).

By 1926D Lower Abbey had passed to Walter William **Franks**, who had moved from Ottery St Mary with his elder brother Sidney. Their tenure was relatively brief: a press announcement (Ref 10, WG 21 Feb 1930) shows that Messrs R&C Snell Ltd had been retained by Mr S C Franks to organize a dispersal sale of 53 Devon and cross-bred cattle (suggesting that the Franks brothers may well have bought the herd of Swain & Frampton). The press notice stated that Sidney Franks was quitting, though in fact he and his brother Walter William Franks moved to Lower Beavor Farm (see the South of Sector PDF).

No farmer is listed at Lower Abbey in either 1930D or 1935D, but the farmer at that time was Henry Mervyn Brewsey **Dunford**. He had moved from Paignton, and he was a breeder of pedigree Dairy Shorthorns (Ref 10, WG 12 Sept 1930 shows that he won a prize at the Yeovil Show that year). Unfortunately for him things did not go well, and not only did he lose his wife tragically young in 1934 (Ref 10, EPG 11 May 1934), but 2 years later some of his cattle died. We know this because he was declared bankrupt in 1938, after he had left the farm, and these two factors were identified as the key causes of his difficulties (Ref 10, WT 19 Aug 1938).

In about 1936 Francis George (Frank) **Burrough** had arrived at Lower Abbey, starting an association between the Abbey Farms and another local family which is fast approaching 80 years (as of 2015). Frank Burrough's photograph (as a child) appears on page 38 of Ref 5, at which time his family was living at Bewley Down, between Axminster and Chard. His presence at Lower Abbey is confirmed by 1939D. Insurance document that I have seen show that by 1951 he had bought Lower Abbey Farm from Frederick Robert Swain.

The farm has for many years been run by his son Lisle Burrough and his family. Over time the farming business has expanded to incorporate other local farms and smaller parcels of land (including Sisterhood and Weycroft Manor).

## Abbey Gate and Little Jackleigh

When the 1776/78 map was drawn, the buildings at Abbey Gate formed part of the Petre Estate, but the fields to the south east (towards Wyke and Great Trill) did not.

Although Little Jackleigh was a property close to Abbey Gate (as confirmed by maps from 1803 and 1827, and the map which appears in Ref 1 and Ref 3), I have not seen any direct evidence to show that it was a farm, though we do know that there was a farm there (see below).

In 1878D and 1881C Edwin H **Berry** was listed as a blacksmith and farmer at Abbey Gate. A press report (Ref 10, WT 1 Sept 1893) confirms that he had indeed been a farmer at Abbey Gate, and states that he had emigrated about 4 or 5 years earlier (i.e. in about 1888). The same report names Albert **Voysey** as having taken over the farm, and this is confirmed by 1901C and 1902D. Another newspaper report (Ref 10, WT 19 Aug 1904, with his surname spelled Voisey), concerning a robbery (nothing to do with the farm), confirms that he was at Abbey Gate Farm at that time, though I believe he left soon thereafter to farm at Musbury. His tenure spanned the construction work on the Axminster to Lyme branch railway line, including the building of a bridge over Musbury Road close to Abbey Gate, which must have disrupted farm operations.

By 1910D William Charles **Smyth** as at Abbey Gate, though a valuation report (Ref 9) produced in April 1915 named Reuben **Swain** as the outgoing tenant and W Smyth as the incoming one. Although he apparently remained at Abbey Gate until 1919D, William Charles Smyth was not listed in 1911C, which lists another farmer at Abbey Gate: Harry **Tuck**, born c.1876 at Ashill, Somerset.

However, there are also two press reports which tie William Charles Smith to Abbey Gate Farm in the 1920s: Ref 10, WT 14 Jan 1920 reports that he was summonsed for allowing stock to stray onto the road; and TCWA 21 Dec 1927 show that he was offering goats for sale from Abbey Gate Farm.

A third report from this period (Ref 10, EPG 20 Aug 1920) shows that Abbey Gate Farm, described as a mixed farm of 45 acres, was to be offered for sale, though neither the owner nor the tenant was named. There was also a directory entry from this period for a farmer at Abbey Gate: Mrs K **Gibson** in 1926D.

By about 1932 Frederick Herbert **Griffin** was the farmer at Abbey Gate, as confirmed by Ref 11 (1934) and 1939D, and he remained there until his untimely death, from influenza, in 1943 (Ref 10, EPG 24 Dec 1943), on the day of his own father's funeral. The report of his funeral stated that he had been at Abbey Gate Farm since leaving Annings Farm in 1932. (This is contradicted to some degree by Ref 10, EPG 4 Dec 1931 which gives Frederick Herbert Griffin's address as Wyke Farm when he was summonsed for poaching rabbits. This may simply have been a generalised reference to a farm at Wyke rather than Wyke Farm itself.)

In 1944 Abbey Gate Farm was offered for sale at auction at Honiton by Messrs TD Hussey & Son (Ref 10, EPG 18 Aug 1944), described as 43 acres of arable and pasture. I understand<sup>8</sup> that at one time Roy **Mear** milked cows at Abbey Gate in a small cowshed attached to one of the houses there, and it may well be that his tenure came at this point

I also understand that the farm was subsequently bought by the Chapple family of Wyke Farm (see the Wyke PDF). It is now run from premises further down Musbury Road by JC&PA **Chapple**, and includes a caravan and camp site facility.

I am uncertain quite when the farm moved from Abbey Gate to its new location, but from the look of the house and buildings it was probably in the 1950s. It is also possible, based on the inconsistencies and overlaps set out below) that there was more than one smallholding at Abbey Gate.

## Balls and Slymlakes Farms

Balls and Slymlakes are both old farms. The 1776/78 map shows them both belonging to the Petre Estate.

In 1824 (Ref 6) Balls Farm (70 acres) was rented by Joseph Melford Esq, while Slymlakes was let in two separate parcels to Thomas Hoskins (43 acres) and Henry Knight and Samuel Clode (32

---

<sup>8</sup> Source: Lisle Burrough, personal communication, 2015.

acres). However, I do not think that they were the farmers. Appendix 3 places James **Rowe** at Balls Farm in 1828, and James **Gill** at Slymlakes, both with herds of cows. This is confirmed by 1841C, which identifies them both as yeomen, and spells Slymlakes as 'Sliplakes' (one of many approximations found in census returns and directories). They are both listed at those farms in 1842V. The report of James Gill's death in the USA (Ref 10, WT 12 Oct 1869) stated that he had emigrated from Slymlakes "... 20 years ago last spring" (i.e. in 1848).

By about 1851C it appears that the two farms were being run as a single unit by John Stamp **Loveridge**. 1851C shows him living at Slymlakes (with a dairyman, Charles **Palmer**, also there), and a farm of 70 acres. This was the period when the London-to-Exeter railway line was being built, which must have disrupted farming activities quite considerably. By 1861C John Stamp Loveridge had 217 acres under his control, and a shepherd, Henry **Anning**, was living at Balls Farm.

By 1866D John Stamp Loveridge had moved his residence to Balls Farm, and 1871C shows that by then he was farming 245 acres. John **Broomfield**, a dairyman, was at Slymlakes. 1873D is the first listing to confirm unequivocally that John Stamp Loveridge was farming both Balls and Slymlakes, but this should be regarded as a statement of what was already obvious rather than as new information. The point is confirmed by 1878/79D.

In 1872 Robert **Newbery** of Slymlakes married Polly Loveridge of Balls Farm (Ref 10, WT 1 Mar 1872), she being the daughter of John Stamp Loveridge. He was still there in 1874, but had moved to East Donyatt by 1876 (Ref 11, both events). When a man drowned in the river near Slymlakes (Ref 10, WT 8 Feb 1876) John Stamp Loveridge was named as the occupant of the farm.

By 1881C James **Swain** junior had taken over Balls Farm, and was farming 146 acres. Thomas H **Trivett**, a dairyman was at Slymlakes. However, the next year (Ref 10, WT 24 June 1882) Henry **Tucker** of Slymlakes was advertising for a man to milk cows there.

1883D, 1889D and later directories show that James Swain junior was running both farms while living at Balls Farm. In 1891C Malachi **Trim**, a dairyman, was at Slymlakes.

In 1898 an advertisement was placed (Ref 10, TCWA 26 Jan 1898) over the name of James Swain, offering a "... dairy of 35 cows to let". The offer was repeated (albeit with 32 cows) 2 years later (Ref 10, TCWA 26 Dec 1900). Then in 1901C Victor Swain, aged just 14 and described as a farmer's son, was the main resident shown at Slymlakes.

1911C shows that James Swain junior had been born c.1847 at Axminster. The last time that he is listed in connection with Balls and Slymlakes is 1914D (at about the time when he died), and in 1919D Mrs James Swain is shown as farming both properties, a position confirmed (when she was named as Mary Ann Swain) in 1923D.

By 1926D Frederick Robert Swain was farming Balls Farm, with his brother Victor having been at Slymlakes at least 2 years by then (Ref 11, 1924). Both of them were still there in 1939D. Then in 1943 (Ref 10, EPG 19 Mar 1943) there was a barn fire at Slymlakes, the report of which confirms Victor Swain as the farmer. A year later (Ref 10, EPG 8 Sept 1944) Messrs W Palmer & Co and R&C Snell Ltd advertised a sale of live and dead stock at Slymlakes, and stated that Victor Swain had already left the farm.

Frederick Robert Swain of Balls Farm died in 1954, and his family remained there until the 1960s, when they emigrated to Tasmania. Sales details<sup>9</sup> (which I have not seen) show that the farm was sold on 7 May 1964. By that time not much land remained attached to Balls Farm.

Slymlakes passed into the possession of Lisle **Sweetland**, who in 1950 (Ref 10, EPG 29 Sept 1950) hosted a ploughing match there on behalf of the Colyton & District Agricultural Society. It remains in the hands of the Sweetland family, and his son John Sweetland runs a beef herd there under the name of LE&LJ Sweetland.

---

<sup>9</sup> Source: National Archives website. The details are in the English Heritage archives, ref SA02338.