

# 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.

## Between Membury Road and Smallridge, north of Cloakham

### Uphay and Higher Uphay

Whereas Uphay is a very old farm (see Ref 1 pages 586 and 615; Ref 2 page 59), Higher Uphay is much more recent: it does not appear on the 1938 map. However, the 1776/78 map shows that there were at that time several non-farm dwellings roughly where Higher Uphay now is.

Early apprenticeship records<sup>1</sup> show that in 1798 Richard **Perring** was the farmer of Uphay, Ferisses and Pereams. Since he is named in the Universal British Directory of 1792 as a farmer in Axminster, he may have been at Uphay for some years by 1798. The same source suggests that by 1813 the farmer at Uphay was Hugh **Chick**.

In 1824 (Ref 6) Hugh Chick was listed as the occupier of 112 acres described as Uphay, though a further four parcels which included the name Uphay within them (Whitty's Uphay, Anning's Uphay, Frosts's Uphay and Robins' Uphay, totalling about 80 acres) were also listed, most of them rented by W I L **Perham** Esq (who also rented Woodhouse Farm: see the Yarty PDF).

In 1838 (Ref 7) Uphay was being farmed jointly by Giles **Collier** (also at Millbrook) and George **Shore**, and was recorded as 154 acres. In 1841C it was occupied by George Collier (and Giles Collier had moved to Sart: see below). The link to the Chick family was apparently not broken, however, because 1842V lists James Chick in connection with Uphay.

In 1851C Uphay was occupied by John **Harvey**, and was shown as 170 acres. Both 1856D and 1857D show that John **Pearce** had taken over the farm, and 1861C shows the size as 180 acres. 1866D shows John Pearce as a farmer without specifying the farm, but 1870D and 1871C both place him at Uphay. 1871C gives the farm's size as 190 acres.

1873D again names John Pearce without specifying where he was farming, whereas 1878D shows that the farmer at Uphay was John **Rendell**. 1878/79 does not list Uphay Farm at all.

By 1881C the farm was occupied by Henry **Tucker**, a farm bailiff, and was recorded as 148 acres. Neither 1889D nor 1890D lists Uphay, but 1891C shows George Andrews **Trenchard**, a farm bailiff and gamekeeper who had been born at Hawkchurch in c.1850 as the occupant of Uphay. He was employed by Henry Knight, the owner of Uphay Farm (and much other land besides). No farmer was shown in 1893D, though it seems almost certain that George Trenchard was still there, because in 1895 Charles Snell carried out a valuation, following the death of Henry Knight the year before, connected with the purchase of livestock and equipment at Uphay Farm, by George Trenchard.

1901C names George Trenchard as the farmer at Uphay in his own right. This is confirmed by 1906D, 1910D, 1911C and 1914D, and by Ref 8 (1916), which states that he rented 176 acres at an annual cost of £174. The accompanying map shows that the farm extended along the eastern side of Uphay Lane, from the lane leading down to Sart Farm almost to Four Cross, and down the slope to a relatively short stretch of the west bank of the Axe. He was either assisted, or succeeded, by his son Reuben Trenchard (Ref 10, WT 29 Oct 1915). His other sons included Enos and George, as confirmed by the report of his funeral (Ref 10, 21 Feb 1936), which stated that he had spent over 25 years at Uphay, initially as Mr Knight's gamekeeper and bailiff, and then as tenant of the farm. He had left Uphay in about 1918, when he bought a farm at Membury. He was also described as the owner of racing ponies, and well known at local race meetings.

In 1918 Felix **Rowe** (who had previously farmed at Lower Westwater) evidently bought Uphay. Very soon after he arrived his 7-year-old son George got his right hand trapped in a corn mill, and had to have four fingers from his right hand amputated (Ref 10, WT 17 May 1918). 1919D lists Felix Rowe as the farmer, and this is confirmed by all of the directories up to and including 1939D. He was the son of George Rowe (see the South of Sector PDF: Lower Beavor Farm<sup>2</sup>), who had moved from Chagford to Axminster with four of his sons, of whom Felix was the youngest. Felix in turn had several sons, and a newspaper report of a dog worrying case (Ref 10, 23 Jan 1942) identifies the two eldest (Felix junior and William Daniel<sup>3</sup>) as Rowe Bros of Uphay. Information which I have seen regarding an insurance policy suggests that they probably took over

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<sup>1</sup> DHC ref 406-A-2

<sup>2</sup> Coincidentally, when George Rowe moved to Lower Beavor he too took over from George Trenchard in his role as the Knight family's bailiff.

<sup>3</sup> Other documents name him as Daniel William Rowe.

management of the farm from their father in 1938. Felix Rowe senior died in 1943 aged 57 (Ref 10, EPG 16 July 1943), and is buried at Axminster with his wife Eliza Olive (who died in 1980 aged 93). By the time he died he had been retired for 5 years, having been at Uphay for 20 years by then (i.e. arriving in about 1918, which is consistent with the above sequence of events).

Felix Rowe junior and his brother William Daniel took over Uphay Farm until William Daniel moved the short distance to Higher Uphay (see below). Following Felix Rowe junior's death in 1993 the farm passed to his elder daughter, Margaret. At the time of writing (autumn 2015) the farm, comprising 171 acres has been placed on the market by Messrs Symonds & Sampson. The sales particulars show that the land is all to the east of Uphay Lane, running from just below Higher Uphay to just above Four Cross, down to the Axe, and then as far as the railway line. It includes about 20 acres of woodland (Cloakham covert). The land has for many years been run in conjunction with Higher Uphay, by Michael Rowe (see below).

Higher Uphay was established as a separate farm in the 1930s. Although all of the evidence that I have seen suggests that it belonged to Felix Rowe senior, it was by 1934 being farmed by Herbert **Mear** (who had previously been at Hunthay Dairy). In that year his eldest son Charles Herbert (Ref 10, EPG 7 Dec 1934) was selling hatching eggs from Higher Uphay, and in 1935D and 1939D, the farmer was confirmed as Herbert Mear. Charles Herbert Mear also had an interest in Sart Farm (see below), but in 1936 he married Vera Rowe of Fawnsmoor (see the South of Sector PDF) (Ref 10, WT 17 Apr 1936) and moved there to farm. Herbert Mear died in 1939 (and is buried at Axminster). His widow remained at Higher Uphay until after the war, when a press announcement (Ref 10, EPG 18 Apr 1947) stated that Messrs W Palmer & Co and R&C Snell Ltd would shortly be selling live and dead stock on behalf of Mrs M A Mear, who was quitting the farm.

Higher Uphay then passed to William Daniel **Rowe**, the second son of Felix Rowe senior. It now comprises about 200 acres, with fields on both sides of Uphay Lane, and is currently farmed by his son Michael John Rowe, trading as DW Rowe & Co, with dairying the main enterprise. Some of the fields which now form part of Higher Uphay Farm, and which lie between Cox's Wood and the Membury Road, previously formed parts of Higher Westwater and Tolcis Farms (see the Yarty PDF), and most of the fields of next-door Uphay Farm are also rented by Higher Uphay.

A third brother (Frank Rowe) became an auctioneer after World War II, took over the local firm of Messrs R&C Snell Ltd, and became one of the best-known local figures in Axminster (and Lord of the Manor) in the 1960s and 1970s. He lived at Uphay House, which sits between the two Uphay farms, on Uphay Lane. A short biography of Frank Rowe appears in Ref 4 (page 137).

## Sart

In 1838 (Ref 7) William **Bradley** was the farmer at Zart, which was recorded as just under 49 acres. Three years later (1841C) the occupant of Sart was Giles **Collier** or **Cobben** (the writing is unclear, but that is what it looks like. If it was Giles Collier, this may well be the person who was at Uphay in 1838).

There is then a gap of almost 50 years (including four censuses and multiple directories) without any mention of Sart, for much of which time it seems likely that the land was being farmed as part of a neighbouring farm.

There was a press report in 1887 (Ref 10, WT 3 June 1887) which stated that Mr **Brown** of Sart Farm had suffered a gun accident, resulting in three of his fingers having to be amputated. Then in 1891C, Lawrence **Studley** was recorded as the farmer at Sarte. In 1895 he was in dispute with one of his workers (Ref 10, WT 3 July 1895), who did not like the offer that had been made to him of "... 18 shillings per month, with food and the cowshed to sleep in". He was still there in 1901C (spelled Sart this time) but is not listed in the intervening directories. On 25 May 1907 Sart Farm was offered for sale at auction at the George Hotel, Axminster by Messrs R&C Snell, described as comprising 55½ acres<sup>4</sup>.

1906D then has John **Warren** as the farmer, followed by Edwin **Churchill** (1910D). 1911C shows Sart being farmed by James Churchill, who had been born c.1882 at Curry Mallett in Somerset. No farmer is listed at Sart in 1914D or 1919D (by which time James Churchill was at Greatwood Farm: see below).

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<sup>4</sup> I saw a press clipping from Pulman's News advertising the sale tucked into one of the R&C Snell valuation books (Ref 9).

By 1923D Job **Bowditch** was the farmer at Sart, but by 1926D he had been replaced by Henry William **Speed**, who was still there in 1930D. By 1935D the farmer was Charles Herbert **Mear** (see above in connection with Higher Uphay Farm).

By 1938 (Ref 11) Alfred Charles **Gill** was the farmer at Sart, which is confirmed by 1939D. He was still there in 1942 when there was a rick fire (Ref 10, EPG 30 Jan 1942), and I believe that he was still the farmer in the mid-to-late 1950s. In fact the Gill family is still at Sart, farming under the name R J Gill.

### **Stranger's Hill and High Lea**

So far as I know Stranger's Hill Farm was created after 1939 (it does not appear on the 1938 map, and my own memories of Stranger's Hill are that in the 1970s it was a relatively small pig farm).

High Lea was offered for sale by the property department of Harrods (Knightbridge) on 19 July 1921, together with Long Lea (see below) and another parcel of land. The sales particulars<sup>5</sup> state that High Lea was a newly built bungalow with four bedrooms, all modern facilities and wonderful views. It also came with two fields: 4 acres up against the Membury Road, providing the access drive and sitting in the parish of Membury; and 9 acres surrounding the house in Axminster parish. The sales particulars also stressed the excellent quality of the soil and grazing. None of the subsequent directories list High Lea as a farm, but a report in the on-line version of the Independent newspaper (dated 15 Sept 1992) in connection with a dispute over public rights of way referred to "... George **Trenchard**, who farms the 30 acres of High Lea" and stated that the Trenchard family had farmed High Lea since 1929. Part of the farm was at that time used for clay pigeon shooting, and I understand Georger Trenchard's brother David still runs Axminster Gun Club there, as well as a building business.

### **General comment on Smallridge**

The Book of the Axe (Ref 1, page 574) tells us that many years ago the manor of Smallridge was sold in parcels to the tenants. In 1838 (Ref 7) the only named farms were Undercleave, Long Lea and Frogwell, though I am also reasonably confident about Smallridge Farm (all covered below).

Later censuses indicate that a few residents of the village had small, unnamed rented farms, sometimes in conjunction with other jobs. 1891C even lists two persons (John **Welch** and Thomas **Chick**) as 'teazel growers', which is about as specialist as a farm can get, and presumably linked to the local textile industry.

From 1881C to 1901C, and in various directories between 1878D and 1910D, Edwin **Marley** is regularly shown as a small farmer. He is not the same person as Edwin Thomas Marley of Frogwell Farm (see below), having been born c.1826 at Smallridge. The directory entries show that he was also a blacksmith, and later ran the post office in Smallridge while farming (as did Mrs Clara Eliza **Richbell** in 1914D, 1919D and 1923D).

Several other Smallridge farms (e.g. Battleford, Churchill and Dennings Down) sit close to, but outside, the historic parish of Axminster.

### **Undercleave**

In 1833 there was a press announcement of a farm sale (Ref 10, SM 21 Oct 1833) which stated that as a consequence of a 'fiat of bankruptcy' against Mr James Gifford, various parcels of land at Smallridge would be auctioned at the George in Axminster by Mr Chaffey. These included 23 acres at Undercleave, described as occupied by Mr Denziloe on an annual rent, which I take to be a reference to Malachi **Denslow** (see below in the context of Frogwell Farm).

Five years later, a further sale was announced (Ref 10, SM 23 July 1838), this time including 55 acres at Undercleave, 22 acres described as Shappick Grounds and some other fields, totalling 129 acres on a 7-year tenancy (from 1836) to John **Stone**. This is substantially confirmed by the evidence of the tithe apportionment process in 1838 (Ref 7), in which Undercleave was shown as 128 acres, and occupied by John Stone. He was presumably still there in 1841 (his tenancy having a further 2 years to run), but his address was given then as Smallridge Hill, and Undercleave itself was not mentioned. However, 1842V again links him to Undercleave. The same essential block of land was re-offered for sale the following year (Ref 10, DCC 23 June 1842).

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<sup>5</sup> DHC ref 547B/P/2059.

In 1850 Undercleave was offered yet again for sale as part of a package of 86 acres, this time by James Hussey (Ref 10, EPG 5 Oct 1850), to be sold at the George on 17 October that year. Undercleave was listed at 34 acres, alongside Sock's Tenement (27 acres), Keats (23 acres), Linhay (1 acre) and an acre of common land near Weycroft. The tenant was named as Mr **Sandford**.

1851C shows John **Welch** farming at Undercleave, but with a smaller farm than before: just 86 acres (i.e. consistent with the 1850 sale reported above). He was also listed as a farmer at Smallridge in 1850D, but without any indication of which farm he ran. He is listed there (albeit with the farm name spelled as Undercliff) in 1856D and 1857D, and in 1856 timber on the farm was offered for sale (Ref 10, SM 29 Jan 1856) by Mr T H Wills, with the tenant identified as John Welch. He probably died soon thereafter, because 1861C lists Ann Welch as the farmer, still (it appears, though the writing is poor) with 86 acres.

1866D and 1870D both list James **Manfield** as the farmer at Undercleave, which is then confirmed by 1871C, when the farm size is shown as 90 acres. Although the family remained at Undercleave for some time, the spelling of their surname varied quite a lot, as did the spelling of the farm. I have settled on Manfield, while recognising that this may not be correct. 1873D shows James Manfield still present, as do 1878D and 1878/79D. By 1881C Thomas Manfield had taken over as the farmer, and the size of the farm appears to have fallen to 40 acres. Thomas' presence is confirmed by all directories and census returns until 1906D, and by a document (which I have not seen) at the DHC<sup>6</sup>, which shows that he was paying rent of £125 a year at around the time that he retired. He and his wife Emily also had children baptised at All Saints Church between 1884 and 1887.

Both 1910D and 1911C show that James Long **Perring** had taken over Undercleave, and the baptismal register for All Saints Church confirms that he and his wife Alice Bridget had children baptised there in 1910 and 1911. 1911C shows that he had been born c.1876 at Hawkchurch. He was still there in 1914D.

By 1919D the farmer at Undercleave was John **Loving**. From 1923D to 1935D it was John Thomas **Wheadon** (formerly at Wyke, but more recently at Alston<sup>7</sup>). When Undercleave Farm was offered for sale at auction in 1938 by Messrs W Palmer & Co and R&C Snell Ltd (Ref 10, WG 1 July 1938), described as 42 acres occupied by John Thomas Wheadon, it was withdrawn, having failed to reach the reserve price. In 1939D no farmer was named at Undercleave, and John Thomas Wheadon was listed as farming at Elmwood Farm, All Saints.

I have not managed to establish what happened over the following 50 years, but by 1991 it can be seen from the EDDC planning website that Mr & Mrs C Ryder were converting at least some of the farm buildings at Undercleave to non-agricultural use.

## Long Lea

In 1838 (Ref 7) Long Lea was occupied by William **Smith**, and amounted to just over 23 acres. This is consistent with 1841C. He was still there 1851C, with the farm shown as 60 acres, and in 1851 he and his wife Susan had a child baptised at All Saints Church with their address given as Long Lea. 1856D, 1857D and 1861C all show William Smith as the farmer, and 1861C states that the farm was 88 acres.

In 1863 Thomas **Charles** and his wife Sarah, of Long Lea, had a child baptised at All Saints Church. However, in the absence of other evidence I do not know whether he was the farmer or a resident labourer. There is no listing for Long Lea in 1866D or 1870D.

1871C shows James **Perring**, a dairyman, as the occupant of Long Lea. The farm is not mentioned in 1873D, but in 1876 it was reported to be occupied by Henry **Walrond** (Ref 10, EPG 23 June 1876). The press announcement in question concerned the offer for sale of a 95-acre freehold estate within a ring fence and with mostly new buildings, comprising Long Lea, Green Down and Flutteridge, including 36 acres of meadow and pasture, 3 acres of orchard, 10 acres of oak and fir and the remainder in arable cultivation. It is described as well suited for use as a dairy farm, with 14 cows currently milked by Henry Walrond.

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<sup>6</sup> DHC ref 3030A/PZ 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ref 10, WT 28 Jan 1920.

In 1878D James **Boon** is the named farmer (he, or someone of the same name, was also listed as the farmer of Middle Furzeleigh, and the baptismal register for All Saints Church has other persons resident at Long Lea in 1877 and 1879, who were, I suspect, labourers who were living there while James Boon lived elsewhere). He was also identified (Ref 10, EPG 18 Sept 1878) as the owner of some timber that had been stolen from Long Lea. In 1878/79D James Boon is identified as a woolstapler, miller and farmer, with an interest in Axminster Town Mills and property in Uplyme, and resident at Cedars House, Lyme Road, Axminster<sup>8</sup>. 1881C states that William **Retter**, a farm bailiff, was living at Long Lea, and he and his wife Jessie (who had moved from Smallridge Farm: see below) had a child baptised at All Saints Church that same year. 1883D confirms the continuing link to James Boon by naming both him and Long Lea in the same entry, and in 1884 he and his wife Alice had a child baptised at All Saints with their address given as Long Lea. It is likely, therefore, that William Retter worked for James Boon, overseeing one or more of his farms. James Boon died in 1887 (Ref 10, EPG 6 May 1887).

I have found no entries for Long Lea in 1889D or 1890D, but 1891C shows Benjamin **Parsons**, a dairyman, living there. The following year (Ref 10, EPG 2 Aug 1892) the shooting rights at Long Lea were advertised over the name Goss (though he may well not have been the farmer). 1893D again has no entry for the farm.

1901C names Eli Thomas **Strawbridge** as the farmer at Long Lea, and in 1902 he and his wife Elizabeth had a child baptised at All Saints Church shown as residents of Long Lea. There was also a criminal case that year (Ref 10, EPG 26 Feb 1902) in which he was stabbed by a hawk. Although he was not listed there in 1902D, he was in 1906D, 1910D and 1911C, which shows that he had been born c.1863 at Stockland. He was still there in 1914D, but by 1919D had been succeeded by James Strawbridge.

During the tenancy of Eli Thomas Strawbridge the farm had been offered at auction at the George, Axminster by Messrs R&C Snell Ltd (Ref 10, WT 26 June 1904), described as 88 acres of freehold land let at an annual rental of £80. The land was withdrawn after the bidding stopped at £1,150.

There were attempts to sell Long Lea in 1914, and again in 1917. It was withdrawn unsold in 1914, and the 1917 sales particulars<sup>9</sup> although catalogued at the DHC were not in fact deposited.

When Long Lea was offered for sale at auction by the property department of Harrods (Knightsbridge) on 19 July 1921, the sales particulars<sup>10</sup> named Mr C **Smith** as the tenant, described Long Lea as a dairy farm, and gave its size as 79 acres of grazing and 9 acres of copse (which would match exactly the earlier references to 88 acres). A further parcel of six fields and a quarry, named Shrapwick Lands and described as amounting to 23 acres, formed a separate lot<sup>11</sup> (as did High Lea: see above). Shrapwick Lands abut the parish boundary, near Higher and Lower Rag Copse. Long Lea may well not have been sold in 1921, because 1923D confirms Charles John Smith as still farming at Long Lea. The farm was offered at auction yet again in 1925, this time by Messrs R&C Snell Ltd and TD Hussey & Son (Ref 10, WT 22 May 1925). The announcement gives the size of the farm as 86 acres, and emphasises the quality and range of the farm buildings.

No farmer is listed at Long Lea in 1930D, but in 1934 the on-line London Gazette shows that the land comprising Long Lea and Shappick Lands was registered with the Land Registry by J F Clarke of Widworthy. I have seen no evidence to suggest that he farmed the land himself. No farmer is listed in 1935D or 1939D.

By 1965 Ralph Alfred **Biedermann** was living at Long Lea (in that year he dissolved a Trust that had been established in his name according to the on-line London Gazette), and in 1979 when he died (again the source is the on-line London Gazette) he was described as a farmer, of Long Lea.

The farm continues to exist, and based on the evidence of recent on-line trade directories, I believe that the current farmer is Robert A **Speed**.

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<sup>8</sup> He had also been recorded as a woolstapler, cloth manufacturer and farmer (of an unspecified property), living at Cedar House in 1870D, and had moved to Axminster following a disastrous fire which destroyed the family's Waterside Factory / Blanket Mill at Uplyme in 1866 (see 'Industrial Lyme, Paper 2: The Woollen Cloth Industry in the Lim Valley' by Richard Bull for the Lyme Regis Museum, accessible on-line via the museum's website for further information). I believe that he may also have been the founder of one of the two brush-making factories at the foot of Castle Hill.

<sup>9</sup> DHC 547B/P/1544. NB These documents are not available.

<sup>10</sup> DHC ref 547B/P/2059.

<sup>11</sup> I think it is possible that Shrapwick Lands may previously have formed part of Undercleave Farm, though I have seen no evidence to support this, and it should be treated as pure speculation.

## Frogwell

In 1833 Frogwell Farm, described as 50 acres, was offered for sale at auction by Mr Chaffey (see Undersleave Farm above for further details of the circumstances, and Ref 10, SM 21 Oct 1833). Malachi **Denslow** was farming the land on an annual rental agreement at that time.

In 1838 (Ref 7) Frogwell Farm, shown as 124 acres, was still in the hands of Malachi Denslow. The spelling of his surname varies over time, but this is the most common version, including in the baptismal register at All Saints Church, where he and his wife Mary Ann had children baptised between 1840 and 1848. 1841C lists him (in error) as one of two farmers at the neighbouring Long Lea Farm, presumably using Long Lea as shorthand for the lane that both farms share, but 1842V is specific as to his link to Frogwell. By 1851C his widow Mary Ann was the farmer at Frogwell, and the size was shown as 130 acres.

There was no entry for Frogwell in 1856D, but 1857D gives Thomas **Harris** as the new occupant. This is confirmed by 1861C which gives the size of the farm as 120 acres. 1866D and 1870D show Thomas Harris still there. 1871C shows that the farm had by then grown to 200 acres. 1873D is the final entry for Thomas Harris, and 1878D has Mrs Sarah Harris as the farmer (though 1878/79D still names Thomas).

1881C has Edwin Thomas **Marley** as the farmer at Frogwell, with the farm listed as 80 acres. His presence is confirmed by all directory and census entries until 1906D, and by the baptismal register from All Saints Church, where he and his wife Annie had children baptised over the period 1882 to 1889. A valuation report (Ref 9) carried out in 1897, when the owner of the farm was evidently considering selling, confirms that he was at that time renting about 100 acres on an annual tenancy. He was apparently widowed and re-married, because in 1906 Edwin Thomas and Mary Jane Marley of Frogwell Farm had a child baptised at All Saints Church. In 1908 (Ref 10, EPG 24 Jan 1908) Messrs R&C Snell announced a sale of live and dead stock to be held on behalf of Edwin Thomas Marley.

1910D and 1911C both show Robert **Warren** as the new farmer at Frogwell, and 1911C shows that he was born c.1861 at Membury. There is no entry for Frogwell in 1914D, but information which I have seen in connection with insurance suggest that Thomas George **Sturgeon** arrived as the new farmer in 1914, and his presence is confirmed by 1919D, and then by two press reports (Ref 10, WT 30 June 1920; and WMN 11 July 1927 when there was a fire in a wagon house) and by 1923D through to 1930D. He subsequently moved to Highbridge (Ref 10, 13 Apr 1937). The last of these directory listings (1930D) may be incorrect, because 2 years earlier (Ref 10, EPG 25 May 1928) Frogwell was offered for sale at auction by Messrs R&C Snell Ltd on behalf of Thomas George Sturgeon, who was described as quitting farming. The farm itself was described as 103 acres of meadow, pasture, arable and orchard within a ring fence.

1935D lists Thomas **Woodall** as the farmer at Frogwell, followed in 1939D by Ewart Woodall. The farm then passed to Mr V C **Boulton**, though only until 1946. Two press notices placed by Messrs R&C Snell (Ref 10, WG 25 Oct 1946 and WG 6 Dec 1946) announced the sale of the land (by 1946 just 60 acres) followed by the live and dead stock.

I do not know who farmed the land over the subsequent 60 years, but the land is now rented and run as an integral part of Porch Farm (see below).

## High View Farm

I understand from Shirley Hurford (who has family connections to it) that High View Farm was previously known as Fairview Farm (though I have not found any documentary references to it under that name, and there are no references to either name in census returns or pre-1940 directories, and it does not appear on any pre-1940 maps). The original farmhouse is now called Honeysuckle Cottage, and the bungalow called High View was built in the 1950s.

The EDDC planning website contains information regarding planning applications affecting the site, from which it is possible to see that in 1954 Francis (Frank) **Searle** bought the site. At that time the farm comprised at least 20 acres<sup>12</sup>, and Frank Searle had previously milked at Axe Farm. He used the farm to rear calves. After he retired Roy Bagwell took over the site, but did not actively farm it, and some of the land was sold to the Searle family of Colston Farm (it is now farmed as part of Porch Farm: see below).

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<sup>12</sup> Source: Shirley Hurford, personal communication, 2015.



The farmyard and residual land was used as a scrap yard, before being sold in 2008 to B **Wood**, a farmer from Marshwood who has other parcels of land in and around All Saints. He has recently applied to use the site to store implements and hay, and to rear calves.

### **Smallridge and Porch Farms**

In 1834 (Ref 7) Henry **Fowler** was farming 143 acres on an unnamed farm at Smallridge. He is also recorded in 1841C, and then 1842V positively links him to Smallridge Farm. Appendix 3 shows that in 1828 he had been one of the larger cow keepers in the parish, but whether this was at Smallridge Farm or elsewhere I do not know.

1850D only names one farmer at Smallridge: James **Phippen**, and 1851C shows that he farmed 140 acres, without naming the farm itself. However, given that we know how large Smallridge Farm was in 1838 (see above), it seems highly likely that he was there.

The next mention that I have found of Smallridge Farm is 1868, when Thomas William **Genge**, described as a dairyman there, and with a wife called Mary Ann, had a child baptised at All Saints Church. In 1871 there was another baptism from Smallridge Farm, this time of a child belonging to parents called William and Jessie **Retter**, with William described as a farmer. This is confirmed by 1871C (albeit with the surname shown as what looks more like Potter), which also gives the size of the farm as 99 acres. Later that year there was a fire at Smallridge Farm, with serious damage inflicted on buildings and stored crops and machinery (Ref 10, WT 8 Dec 1871). William Retter was stated to have been insured, but not sufficiently to cover the full losses. He won a court case 2 years later (Ref 10, WT 20 May 1873) despite selling a horse which proved to be lame.

When William Retter left Smallridge Farm it was described (Ref 10, EPG 15 Oct 1880) as comprising 100 acres, 70 of them grazing and 30 arable, all within a ring fence, and with a range of more or less new farm buildings. The owner was named as Thomas Bath of Glastonbury, who was seeking a new tenant. William Retter evidently went to work for James Boon at Long Lea (see above).

By 1881C James **Loveridge** was the resident farmer, and the farm was shown as 99 acres. 1883D shows that as well as farming, he had a role as a local tax and rate collector. Despite the coincidence of name, he was not the son of James Gill Loveridge of Wyke Farm (see the Wyke PDF). He subsequently appears several times below at different farms around Axminster.

1891C shows Charles **Dare** as the farmer at Smallridge Farm (1890D also lists him, but does not specify which farm in Smallridge was his). There is no entry for Smallridge Farm in 1893D.

At this point (as far as census returns and directories are concerned<sup>13</sup>) it appears that Smallridge Farm changed its name to Porch Farm, and 1901C lists John George **Beer** as the farmer at Porch Farm, as do 1902D, 1906D and 1910D. 1911C shows that he was born c.1866 at Membury. Soon after the war the farm was sold at auction by Messrs Whitton & Lang at the George, Axminster (Ref 10, WT 13 June 1919), described as Smallridge or Porch Farm, and comprising 74 acres. The sale included a further 11 acres on Watery Lane and a further 3-acre field. It was reported that Messrs R&C Snell bought the land for an unidentified client (or clients), paying £4,050 for the main farm.

John George Beer was still at Porch until 1930D, and when the farm was re-sold in 1934, he was described as the owner-occupier of 54 acres at Porch Farm (Ref 10, EPG 27 Apr 1934). The sale was organised by Messrs W Palmer & Co and R&C Snell Ltd. A second report (Ref 10, WT 25 May 1934) states that the farm was bought by Abraham Skinner Newbery for George **Beer** of Chardstock, for £1,550. John George Beer died in 1936 aged 80 (Ref 10, EPG 2 Oct 1936), and the report of his funeral states that he had retired from Porch Farm about 2-3 years before, having farmed there for about 40 years.

In 1935D and 1939D the farmer was Cyril John George Beer, and a press report (Ref 10, WMN 10 Feb 1943, regarding a minor technical infringement of the milk regulations) shows that he was still there in 1943.

I do not know how long the Beer family remained at Porch Farm, but by the 1980s (and probably for several years before that) it was owned and farmed by S J **Bale**. This can be confirmed by reference to the EDDC planning website. Mr Bale died in about 1987 and the farm was taken over

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<sup>13</sup> Somerset OS sheet 095/NE uses the name Porch Farm, and places it in its present location.

by Michael Percy **Dare**, who farmed under the name MP&LR Dare & Son. He was there until at least 2004 (again, as confirmed by the EDDC planning website).

The farm is now owned and run by Paul and Lucy **Herrod** trading as PT & Mrs LA Herrod. A 2012 planning application viewable on the EDDC planning website shows that as well as Porch they farm Pennsylvania (see the Weycroft PDF), which they ran before moving their main operations to Porch; and they rent the adjacent Frogwell Farm, making theirs among the larger local farming businesses.

Once the former Smallridge Farm had become known as Porch Farm, it appears that another farm was established on the other side of the road, and a bit closer to Weycroft, called Smallridge Farm. The 1948 English Guernsey Cattle Society's Herd Book includes a reference to Cecil **Forward**, of Smallridge Farm, Axminster. Soon thereafter (Ref 10, EPG 6 May 1949) he commissioned Messrs W Palmer & Co and R&C Snell Ltd to sell 70 acres of freehold land with vacant possession, comprising "... rich meadows, healthy pastures and arables" with modern farm premises and a licence to build a house up to a cost of £2,000. A month later (Ref 10, TCWA 4 June 1949) John Thornton & Co announced the sale of the entire purebred and non-pedigree Guernsey herd at Smallridge Farm on behalf of Mr Cecil Forward of 'The Gables', All Saints. As well as a gentleman farmer, he was a solicitor in Axminster, and Clerk of the Axminster Rural Council.

## Greatwood

In 1838 (Ref 7) Greatwood, recorded as 110 acres, was being farmed by James **Bradford**. By 1841C he had died, and it was occupied by William **Royland**, described as a dairyman rather than a farmer.

In 1850D Samuel **Phillips** was shown as the farmer of Greatwood. By 1851C Mary Phillips was the farmer, with 142 acres. She was still there in 1861C, but the farm was down to 80 acres. Half way between those two listings, in 1856D, Samuel Phillips (possibly her son) was shown as the farmer at Greatwood.

In 1866D Job **Membury**, a dairyman, was at Greatwood. There is then no entry for Greatwood in 1870D, but 1871C lists Thomas **Froom**, with 110 acres. This is confirmed by 1878D.

1881C lists Moses **Moore** as the farmer at Greatwood, with 100 acres. There are then no entries for Greatwood in 1883D, 1889D, 1890D or 1891C, though the baptismal register for All Saints Church shows that in 1885 Richard **Matthews**, a dairyman from Greatwood, and his wife Sarah had a child baptised there.

It appears probable that Greatwood was being farmed by a manager on behalf of its owner, Henry Knight, over this period, because in January 1895, following Henry Knight's death the previous year, a valuation of the livestock and deadstock (Ref 9) had been carried out. Given that the valuation also jointly covered the adjacent Uphay Farm (see above), it is possible (arguably probable) that the last manager had been George **Trenchard**. Later that year the farm, described as 110 acres of arable, orchard, pasture and meadow (Ref 10, EPG 8 Feb 1895) was offered for rent, with enquiries being directed to George Trenchard on behalf of the Knight family.

1901C names Alfred **Batstone** as the farmer at Greatwood, and in 1903 he and his wife Flora Matilda had a child baptised at All Saints Church while resident at Greatwood. The following year Messrs R&C Snell placed an advertisement (Ref 10, EPG 22 Jan 1904) for a forthcoming sale of live and dead stock at Greatwood, stating that Alfred Batstone was leaving the district.

By 1911C Greatwood was being farmed by William **Wheaton** (born c.1859 at Axminster). Although there are no confirmatory directory entries for Greatwood over this period, Ref 8 confirms that in 1916 William Wheaton was the tenant of 126 acres at Greatwood (excluding Greatwood coppice, which was almost 14 acres in its own right), at an annual rental of £100. The accompanying map shows that the farm was roughly square.

In 1919D James **Churchill** was the farmer at Greatwood, as he was in 1923D, and a planning application submitted in 1997 (and accessible via the EDDC planning website) states that the Churchill family has owned the farm since about 1923. However, 1926D names the farmer as Henry Westcott **Bolt**, which is confirmed by 1930D. 1935D then names Churchill Bros as the farmers at Greatwood, and by 1939D the listed farmer was Cecil James Bowditch Churchill. He was still there in the early 1950s, and the Churchill family remains at Greatwood, where they currently operate under the name of M&K Churchill & Son.