

# 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.

## Up the Yarty from Hunthay Lane

### General comments on Westwater and the Yarty Valley

Several of the farms along the Yarty valley in Axminster parish appear on Donn's map of 1765, and centuries before that land at Westwater (including Breweshayes) belonged to Newenham Abbey, and then to the manor of Axminster. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century parts of Westwater were closely associated with the Tucker family of Dalwood: William Tucker, buried at Dalwood in 1691, and William his son, buried at Dalwood aged 70 in 1733, were both described as 'of Westwater' before their descendants became described as 'of Coryton' (Ref 1, page 713).

The 1776/78 map confirms that at that time all of the Westwater farms still belonged to the Petre Estate. However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century James Alexander Frampton, who became the owner of the manor of Axminster in 1824, sold estates described as 'of Westwater and Uphay' (Ref 1, page 624) to William Tucker Esq of Coryton. Following William Tucker's death in 1855, an auction was announced (Ref 10, EPG 12 Dec 1857) by Messrs Wainwright & Co to sell a long list of farms that he had owned (described as the Coryton Park Estate) in several parishes, totalling 1,828 acres. This included 780 acres in Axminster parish, made up of Hunthay, all four of the Westwater farms, Woodhouse, Toller Hays and a property called Broughton Grounds<sup>1</sup>. The auction was set to take place at the George Hotel, Axminster on 22 January 1858.

That auction was either postponed, or if it went ahead the Westwater farms did not sell, because on 3 August 1860 a large block of land amounting to a bit over 650 acres and described as comprising 'Higher, Lower and Middle Westwater, Woodhouse, Tolcis and Hunthay' was offered for sale in 30 lots, again by Messrs Wainwright & Heard, and again on behalf of the Coryton Park Estate, the auction taking place at the George Hotel. These six farms, plus a substantial number of individual fields located at the boundaries between them and not at that time definitively tied to one farm or another, between them occupied all of the land in Axminster parish which lies to the west of Hunthay Lane / Uphay Lane / Membury Road up to and including Tolcis and Higher Westwater. The accompanying schedules and map (which will be of great interest to anyone researching any of the farms concerned) can be seen in the DHC<sup>2</sup>. This is referred to several times below as 'the 1860 sale' without repeating the context and source details each time.

A report of the 1860 sale (Ref 10, EPG 11 Aug 1860) tells us that 25 of the 30 lots (which it describes as comprising about 700 acres, rather than the 650 or so listed on the schedules that I inspected) were sold, raising £19,715. However, we can estimate that something like 250 acres did not sell, because the five lots that were withdrawn carried a reserve valuation of £12,100. The unsold portion probably included Higher Westwater, given that it was re-auctioned 10 years later, plus one of the other named farms.

Although in general it is possible to work out who was farming which Westwater property over the years, with so many farms incorporating the name Westwater into their title, there is clearly some scope for error. Counter-intuitively, Westwater Farm is the smallest of the farms that carry the name, and appears for significant periods to have been run in close conjunction with the nearby Lower Westwater Farm. On the 1891 map it is mis-labelled as Lower Westwater Farm, with Lower Westwater in turn mis-labelled as Lower Westwater Dairy.

### Hunthay Farm

The following text does not deal with Hunthay Dairy, which is covered in the Axe PDF.

The 1776/78 map shows that Hunthay belonged to the Petre Estate at that time. In 1824 (Ref 7) Hunthay, amounting to 49 acres, was let to Amos Liddon. However, he was a surgeon rather than a farmer, and the farmer's name is not known. By 1838 (Ref 7) James **Phippen** occupied 60 acres at Hunthay, He was still there in 1841C, but by 1842V the voter associated with Hunthay was Charles Phippen. By 1851C Hunthay Farm had passed to George **Dare**, a farmer and butcher, who was farming 45 acres. He was still there in 1856D and 1857D.

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<sup>1</sup> I have not been able to work out where this property was, though there was some ground associated with Jackleigh Farm called Boughtons in 1878 (see the Wyke PDF). The tenant of Broughton Grounds was identified as John Gregson, and there was a Gregson family in Musbury, and at one time a John Gregson had held an interest in Great Trill and Little Trill (see the Wyke PDF).

<sup>2</sup> DHC ref 218/4.

At the time of the 1860 sale (see above) Hunthay Farm was shown as occupying just over 44 acres, and was in the possession of Thomas Phippen (who had presumably sub-let it to George Dare, who in turn had a field or two on his own account). Thomas Phippen also rented Westwater and Lower Westwater (see below) and various other individual fields.

In 1861C James **Banks**, a dairyman, was at Hunthay, but by 1866D he had given way to John **Bussell**, and by 1870D to Ambrose Bussell who, in 1871C is listed as the farmer at Hunthay, with 45 acres. He died there that same year aged 70 (Ref 10, 19 Apr 1871), and in 1873D Mrs John Bussell is listed as the occupier of Hunthay. Henry **Swain** was there briefly (Ref 11, 1877), but by 1878D it was The Misses Bussell who were listed. By 1878/79 John **Rendle** was at Uphay, but he soon moved to the dairy at Great Trill.

In 1881C William Samuel **Hoare** was at Hunthay, farming 43 acres. He remained there through a series of census returns and directories until 1906D, and died there aged 63 in 1909 (Ref 10, WT 18 June 1909).

By 1910D Charles **Snell** had moved to Hunthay. In 1911C the farmer was Ellen Elizabeth Snell, a widow born c.1850 at Norton Chard, Somerset. Charles Snell (probably her son) was there in 1914D and 1919D<sup>3</sup>.

On 6 January 1921, Hunthay was offered for sale at auction by Messrs R&C Snell Ltd on behalf of A J Knight and the estate of W H B Knight (Ref 10, EPG 24 Dec 1920 and EPG 7 Jan 1921). Hunthay Farm itself (55 acres) was withdrawn at £4,400, but two fields totalling 6 acres described as 'at the corner of Hunthay Lane' were sold (to Henry Tucker Patterson: see the Axe PDF, under Wilhays Farm), as were three pasture fields and a building in an unspecified location totalling 9 acres (to Abraham Skinner Newbery junior: see below).

In 1923D Dennis **Powell**, farm bailiff to Major F G **Swan**, is listed at Hunthay Farm, and a press report (Ref 10, EPG 10 Aug 1923) shows that there had been a fire at Hunthay, though Major Swan (who had relatively recently moved there) was not at home at the time. By 1926D he had been replaced as Major Swan's bailiff by Clement **Hurford**. (Despite the coincidence, so far as I can see he had no direct link to the Hurfords who now dominates the Axminster side of the lower Yarty valley.) In 1935D Robert **Corr** was Major Swan's bailiff at Hunthay. Hunthay was not listed in 1939D, but Major Swan was still there, because there is a press notice (Ref 10, EPG 15 Dec 1939) announcing the sale of 25 pedigree Shorthorn cattle, a mains-driven milking machine and other equipment at Hunthay Farm, to be auctioned by Messrs TRG Lawrence & Son a few days later.

Mr W **Bond** apparently took over Hunthay, because two separate press reports (Ref 10, EPG 22 Feb and 15 Mar 1946) show that he held a sale of live and dead stock marking the end of his tenure, and that the farm was sold to Mrs J **Wellmont** (or **Willment**) for £7,750. She can only have stayed a year, because the farm was re-sold by private treaty (Ref 10, WG 20 June 1947), and a further sale of live and dead stock was held (Ref 10, WG 22 Aug 1947).

I believe that Hunthay Farm was bought by Abraham Skinner **Newbery** junior (see the section on Town Dairies in the Axe PDF for more about him and his origins), and that he added a substantial block of land on the Axminster side of Hunthay Lane (fronting onto both Hunthay Lane and the Kilmington road). The running of the farm was taken over by his son, Robert E (Bob) Newbery and his family. Bob Newbery was very well known locally, not least because of his involvement in a range of local non-farming activities (including the Axminster carnival and the Kilmington pantomime). I believe that it was during his tenure that new farm premises were built further up the hill, and the original house and associated farmstead sold off. His son William R Newbery subsequently took over the farm, and has added a storage facility and business park while selling some of the farmland.

## **Westwater and Lower Westwater**

Westwater itself was not listed among the Petre Estate properties in 1824 (Ref 6), though several blocks of land which cannot easily be identified were. Lower Westwater, comprising 61 acres at that time, was rented by S R **Whitty**.

In 1838 (Ref 7) George **Phippen** occupied 124 acres in total, including part or all of Westwater (including Clay Hill) and Lower Westwater. Although he is not identified as a direct tenant of the

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<sup>3</sup> I have also seen a reference in insurance documents to John Snell of Hunthay in 1915.

Petre Estate in 1824 (Ref 6: see above), in 1818 either he or someone else with the same name had been party to an apprenticeship<sup>4</sup> there. He was also listed as living there in 1841C and 1842V.

By 1851C (and in 1857D) Samuel **Phillips** had taken over Westwater House plus 30 acres, while George Phippen continued to farm Lower Westwater, with 100 acres. He was still there in 1856D, but by 1857D his son Thomas Phippen had taken over. The 1860 sale documents (see above) confirm this: Thomas Phippen had about 160 acres including Hunthay (44 acres), Westwater (31 acres), Lower Westwater (77 acres) and miscellaneous other fields.

1861C lists Thomas Phippen living at Lower Westwater and farming 162 acres. This is confirmed by 1866D and 1870D. In 1866D Mrs Hannah **Sandford** was living at Westwater (probably at Westwater Farm), but by 1870D she had moved to Millbrook. 1871C then places Thomas Phippen at Westwater Cottage (which I believe was probably usually known as Westwater Farm) with 177 acres. James **Baston**, a dairyman, was recorded at Westwater dairy in 1871C.

Given that the 1891 OS map labels Westwater Farm (i.e. the more northerly of the two farms) as Lower Westwater, and what is otherwise consistently known as Lower Westwater as Lower Westwater Dairy, there is clearly scope for confusion over who was at which farm over the period when the surveys were being carried out. It also suggests that the two farms were becoming increasingly integrated. In this document I have tried as far as possible to use the names consistently, even if that means over-riding what was stated in some contemporary records.

Thomas Phippen remained at Lower Westwater in 1873D, 1878D and 1881C, at which time he was farming 180 acres, and Frederick **Roberts**, dairyman, was there<sup>5</sup>. Thomas Phippen was still at Lower Westwater from 1883D to 1893D. In 1891C Thomas **Tucker**, dairyman, was at Westwater Cottage dairy. In 1889D and 1893D William Tucker was listed as the dairyman at Westwater.

Thomas Phippen was still at Lower Westwater in 1893D, 1901C and 1902D. In between the census of 1901 and the 1902 directory entry the family and the farm both suffered a serious blow (Ref 10, WT 11 June 1901). The article, headed 'Blaze at Axminster' reads as follows. "A disastrous blaze occurred on Friday which resulted in the total demolition of a farmhouse with all outbuildings and livestock at Lower Westwater, near Axminster, in the occupation of Mr Thomas Phippen<sup>6</sup>. About 8:30 in the morning while the family were at breakfast they were startled by the information that the pound-house adjoining the residence was on fire. The farm with the barns and stock houses form a circular enclosure, and the gravity of the situation was at once realised." Seventeen pigs and some cattle "... were literally roasted alive, but one valuable bull was saved through the energetic action of a neighbouring farmer, Mr R White<sup>7</sup>, who, forcing his way through at considerable personal risk liberated the animal from its burning quarters". The report goes on to note that the farm belonged to Mr Dommatt of Axminster, and that losses were partly covered by insurance. It also states that the fire brigade did not arrive in time to make a great difference, because in the initial panic the family had not alerted them to the emergency. The source of the fire was traced to the practice of placing ashes from the fire in a tub in an outhouse.

I have seen an undated description of Lower Westwater, produced in connection with an insurance policy (no doubt connected with the above incident), when it was in the possession of Thomas Phippen. It describes the farm as comprising about 30 acres of arable land and 60 acres of pasture, and the produce as including "... cereal crops (but not any other growing crops), wool, cider, cheese and manure, on wagons, carts, ploughs, harness, hurdles, chaff cutters and other utensils and implements of husbandry worked only by manual or animal power".

Thomas Phippen and his wife Charlotte both died in 1905, and they are both buried at Axminster, described as 'of Lower Westwater', alongside two of their several children, including one whose death later in 1901 may well have been linked to the effects of the fire. A valuation report (Ref 9) produced in early 1906 stated that on Lady Day of that year the Executors of Thomas Phippen would quit Lower Westwater, and be succeeded as tenant by George **Loud** (who was, I believe, coming from Shute). He evidently did not stay long.

From this point onwards the two farms tended to be managed separately, and I deal with Westwater and Lower Westwater, in that order. However, before dealing with the question of who

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<sup>4</sup> DHC ref 406-A-2.

<sup>5</sup> Although William Roberts had been farming at Higher Westwater until just before 1881, the census return is clear that James Griffin was the dairyman there in 1881, with Frederick Roberts at Westwater.

<sup>6</sup> This is the spelling used in the article, and a reminder that no single source can be unduly relied on.

<sup>7</sup> He was presumably from the nearby Woodhouse Farm.

was managing which farm, I deal with a valuation and three transactions (or attempted transactions) in which the farm names may well have been wrongly given in some instances.

A probate valuation report (Ref 9) produced in December 1916 identified Martha Newbery as having been the owner of Westwater Farm prior to her death, and named the tenant as Felix Rowe (whereas, as reported below, he farmed at Lower Westwater). The report describes the farm as having 85 acres of good land (which would again match Lower Westwater better than Westwater). It stated that the land was being well farmed, but comments on the poor access to the farmstead<sup>8</sup>. Felix Rowe was at that time reported to be paying an annual rent of £188, giving the farm an estimated value of £2,850.

Lower Westwater Farm was then offered for sale at auction on 17 January 1918 at the George Hotel, Axminster by Messrs R&C Snell Ltd on behalf of the estate of the late John Dommett (Ref 10, WT 28 Dec 1917 and WG 11 Jan 1918). In the first advertisement it was described as a very rich grazing and dairy farm comprising almost 90 acres of meadow, pasture, arable and orchard, with a slated dwelling house and range of farm buildings. In the second it was described as 94 acres, and let to Felix Rowe as tenant until Lady Day 1919.

It would appear from this evidence that John Dommett bought Lower Westwater from Martha Newbery shortly before he himself died.

Then in January 1921 (Ref 10, EPG 24 Dec 1920 and EPG 7 Jan 1921) what was described as Lower Westwater and Wink House, totalling 54 acres (and therefore much closer in size to Westwater Farm than to Lower Westwater), were reported to have been sold by Messrs R&C Snell on behalf of A J Knight and the estate of W H B Knight. The sale fetched £3,000 and the buyer was Mr J Brooks of Falmouth. At the same sale Eli Collard bought three unspecified, but probably nearby, fields totalling 18 acres for £500.

Just over a year later both Westwater (i.e. not Lower Westwater) and Wink House were re-offered at auction (Ref 10, WMN 8 Mar 1922), again by Messrs R&C Snell, with Westwater described as 47 acres (exactly the same as 'Lower Westwater' had been in 1920) and Wink House as 7 acres, and with Eli Collard named as the tenant until Lady Day.

My reading of this highly confusing sequence of events is that the farms were wrongly named in three out of four cases, though of course I cannot prove this.

Reverting to the question of who was farming which piece of land, from 1901C to 1914D Alfred Thomas **Grabham** is consistently listed as the farmer at Westwater. 1911C shows that he had been born c.1862 at Chardstock. Then in both 1919D and 1923D Eli W **Collard** is listed at Westwater. I believe, based on insurance documents that I have seen, that he had left for a farm near Crewkerne by 1925.

By 1926D Walter Henry **Loud** was at Westwater. He was almost certainly from the Seaton branch of the widely-distributed Loud family of butchers; and he had married Edith Mary Reakes in 1904. In both 1935D and 1939D William (probably a mis-transcription of Walter) Henry Loud was listed at Westwater Farm.

The Loud family was still at Westwater in the 1960s, with Bob Loud farming Westwater Farm, and his brother Dick farming Westwater Bungalow Farm (see below). After Bob Loud gave up farming, the land was taken on by the **Hurford** family, and incorporated into Lower Westwater.

I am unsure who farmed Lower Westwater immediately after the death of Thomas Phippen, but 1910D and 1911C both list Felix **Rowe** as the farmer. He had been born c.1886 at Upottery (his father being George Rowe, originally of Chagford, who was farming at Lower Beavor). When he died, many years later, it was reported (Ref 10, EPG 16 July 1943) that he had spent 8 years at Westwater (meaning Lower Westwater), from about 1910 to about 1918. I believe that he may well have acquired and then retained some interest in the farm, which later passed to his son Frank Rowe (see under Uphay and Higher Uphay in the Uphay-Smallridge PDF).

In 1919D Clara Harriet **Phillips**, a widow, formerly of Castle Hill Farm (see the Axe PDF), was listed as the farmer at Lower Westwater, as she was again in 1923D. By 1926D her son Walter Phillips had taken over at Lower Westwater, and he was again listed in 1930D, when Charles

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<sup>8</sup> I understand from Dick Hurford that Felix Rowe actually put in the current access lane to Lower Westwater, so that the farm was approached from Hunthay Lane rather than from Westwater lane, past Westwater Farm. This made the journey to deliver milk to either Gammons Hill or Axminster appreciably shorter.

**Reakes** may well have taken over as the dairyman (despite being listed at Middle Westwater, which I am 99% confident was not correct). Clara Harriet Phillips had died by 1933, and a report of her will (Ref 10, WT 2 June 1933) shows that one of her sons had moved to Sussex, while Lower Westwater was the home of her daughter, Clara Mary Phillips.

In both 1935D and 1939D Joseph **Summers** was listed at Lower Westwater, where he was the tenant. Lower Westwater was then offered for sale at auction by Messrs W Palmer & Co and R&C Snell Ltd on 23 August 1945 (Ref 10, EPG 17 Aug 1945), described as 93 acres and let to Joseph Summers at an annual rent of £300. The map produced for the auction shows that at that time all of the land lay to the south of the lane from Four Cross to Higher Westwater, and there were several places where changes in the bed of the river Yarty had left small pieces of ground on the wrong side of the river, given that field edges still followed the historic parish boundary. When Joseph Summers' wife died in 1946 (Ref 10, WT 25 Jan 1946) it was stated that he had been at Lower Westwater for 12 years (i.e. since about 1934).

The following year a further auction of live and dead stock was held on behalf of Joseph Summers (Ref 10, EPG 20 Sept 1946) by Messrs TRG Lawrence & Son. The particulars noted that the sale included both a cart horse and a tractor, this being the era when farmers were actively changing from animal to motive power. Joseph Summers was retiring from farming.

Following the 1945 sale, the farmhouse and farm buildings were insured by Frederick Sidney Kett, an architect who lived in Axminster, but he may well have been acting as an agent for a client, because in October 1945 the interest in the policy was transferred to Ernest William **Hurford** of Crabhayne Farm, Axmouth, who had bought the farm. He was from the same family as the Hurfords of Yeatlands and Tolcis (see below), and he took possession following Joseph Summers' retirement.

The farm remain in the Hurford family. Having been taken over by Ernest William Hurford's son Richard (Dick), it is now run by his sons, under the name RH&MJ Hurford. Lower Westwater is the last working dairy farm in the Yarty valley in Axminster parish, and following a gradual process of accumulation, it is one of the largest farms in the parish. Dick Hurford's brother Dudley also operated a farming business based on a mixture of some land of his own and some rented land, in Westwater and Membury, until his retirement.

### **Wink House and Westwater Bungalow Farm**

The field between Westwater Farm and what is now Westwater Bungalow Farm included a property called Wink House until the 1960s, when it was demolished. The only census or directory listing that names a farmer living there is 1841C, when James **Flack** was listed. Subsequently farm workers lived there, and as late as the 1920s a smallholding named Wink House was offered for sale at auction twice in 2 years by Messrs R&C Snell (Ref 10, EPG 24 Dec 1920 and WMN 8 Mar 1922). On both occasions it was described as 7 acres, and on the second occasion it was being farmed by Eli **Collard** (who also farmed Westwater Farm: see above, with Westwater Farm being offered for sale as a separate lot on both occasions). The land was also farmed in combination with Westwater Farm by Walter Henry **Loud** and his son Bob.

In 1938 Richard Walter (Dick) **Loud**, the son of Walter Henry Loud of Westwater Farm, married Beryl O Summers (from Lower Westwater). He was a cattle dealer as well as a farmer, and he subsequently lived and farmed at Westwater Bungalow Farm. This farm was created at around that time from the land that fronted onto Four Cross and the lanes running from there towards Westwater and Hunthay. Subsequently some land on the east side of Westwater lane was added, from Woodhouse Farm (see below).

Dick Hurford built a modern dairy unit close to Four Cross, and after he retired the land was bought by the **Hurford** family of Lower Westwater. After they developed their new dairy unit at Lower Westwater, milking ceased at Westwater Dairy Farm.

### **Woodhouse**

Woodhouse can be seen on the 1776/78 map, confirming that it formed part of the Petre Estate at that time. During the 1790s it was farmed by William **Liddon**, a relatively wealthy dairyman, who died there in about 1795.

In 1824 (Ref 6) W I L **Perham** Esq was shown as renting Woodhouse (46 acres) plus a further 73 acres in plots which included the name Uphay (see the Uphay-Smallridge PDF) and 10 acres called Bryndbury, giving him about 130 acres in total.

Appendix 3 shows that by 1828 John **Harvey** was keeping cows there, and by 1838 (Ref 7) Woodhouse Farm was 170 acres, and farmed by John Harvey. No farmer is recorded at Woodhouse by 1841C, but John Harvey was the listed voter in 1842V.

William **Seaward** was farming Woodhouse in 1851C, and had been recorded at Westwater in general in 1841C, possibly as John Harvey's tenant. In 1851C the farm was shown as 100 acres, as it was in 1861C and 1871C, with William Seaward consistently shown as the farmer in all post-1851 directories up to and including 1878/79D.

At the time of the 1860 sale Woodhouse itself was listed as comprising just over 75 acres, but William and John Seaward were farming much more than this (including Higher Westwater and a small number of odd fields). William Seaward is reported to have bought Woodhouse Farm for £3,000: one of the earliest instances in Axminster parish of a tenant becoming an owner-occupier.

In 1880 Woodhouse Farm, described as 80 acres of pasture, orchard and arable, was offered to let by William Seaward (Ref 10, WG 16 Jan 1880). 1881C, 1883D and 1889D all show Charles **Osbourne** as the farmer (and tenant) at Woodhouse, with the farm shown as 70 acres in 1881C.

1890D and 1891C record James T **Hill** as the farmer at Woodhouse, as do 1901C and 1902D. However, 1893D lists Charles Osbourne, the previous farmer, and there is also a press item (Ref 10, EPG 11 Sept 1895) which identifies William **White** as being at Woodhouse in 1893. A probate valuation report (Ref 9) dated July 1904 shows that James T Hill had died by then.

1906D and 1910D name William White as farming at Woodhouse, but 1911C lists Elizabeth White (possibly William's widow) and William John White (born c.1853 Colyton). 1914D, 1919D and 1923D all have Mrs Elizabeth White as the farmer. Then 1926D lists 'E White and others', followed in 1930D by E R A White. In 1930 an unspecified Mr White was advertising for staff at Woodhouse (Ref 10, EPG 20 June 1930).

By 1934 (Ref 10, EPG 14 Sept 1934) it was Dudley Owen **Chown** who was advertising for help with the milking at Woodhouse, and both 1935D and 1939D list him as the farmer at Woodhouse. Another a press item (Ref 10, EPG 17 Dec 1937) states that he had arrived at Woodhouse in about 1931. He retired in the early 1960s, and died in 1969.

When Woodhouse Farm was sold, it was split into at least three lots. The house and some of the land was bought by Graham **Cawston**, who farmed it for a while, and then sold the land to the **Hurford** family of Lower Westwater. A block of land adjacent to Uphay Lane was bought by the **Rowe** family and incorporated into Higher Uphay (see the Uphay-Smallridge PDF), while the land closest to Four Cross was bought by Dick **Loud** and incorporated into Westwater Bungalow Farm.

## Middle Westwater

In 1824 (Ref 6) The Executors of Mary **Cole** were identified as renting 61 acres described as Middle Westwater. In 1838 (Ref 7) John **Denning** was at Middle Westwater, where he farmed 69 acres, probably in association with his son, James. He had probably been there since at least 1818, when he was party to an apprenticeship<sup>9</sup>. He was still there in 1841C, and in 1851C, when the farm had grown slightly to 80 acres, and again in 1861C when it was shown as 70 acres.

At the time of the 1860 sale John Denning was listed as the tenant at Middle Westwater, but the 'main' farm was only just over 38 acres, and the additional land that he rented as odd fields amounted to no more than 15-20 acres. This is at slight variance with the census returns reported above.

In 1866D, 1870D and 1871C William **Tucker** was the farmer, with 55 acres in 1871C. He may or may not have been from a branch of the Tucker family of Coryton Park who had offered the farm for sale in 1860. He was still there in 1873D, but by 1878D George Tucker had taken over. 1881C lists George Tucker with 80 acres. He was still there in 1883D and 1889D.

In 1891C John **Bright** was the farmer at Middle Westwater, but by 1893D he had given way to John **Stone** (who at that time was farming at Westwater, but without the farm being specified).

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<sup>9</sup> DHC ref 406-A-2.



However, a valuation carried out on 1 January 1898 (Ref 9) names John Stone as the outgoing tenant of Middle Westwater, and James **Newbery** as the incoming tenant. The valuation covered stocks of hay and straw to be left on the farm, swedes in the ground etc. 1901C and 1902D both identify James Newbery as the farmer at Middle Westwater, though a further valuation report in March 1902 shows that he was at that point preparing to leave.

By 1906D William **Dunstan** had bought the farm, and was living there, followed in 1910D and 1911C by George Henry Gilbard **Gerry**, born c.1876 at Callington, Cornwall, as his tenant. During his relatively brief stay he was prosecuted for sending milk with low butter-fat to the dairy (Ref 10, WT 15 Apr 1910). The report on that case also names his dairyman as Thomas Froome.

In 1913 Middle Westwater (then 74 acres) was sold by William Dunstan to Edith Webber (my grandmother), shortly before her marriage to Percy **Knapman**. In 1921 (Ref 10, EPG 7 Jan 1921) Percy Knapman bought four adjacent fields totalling 13 acres at auction, for £500. My grandparents farmed Middle Westwater until Percy's death in 1957, soon after which their son William Percy (Bill) Knapman, my father, bought the farm, and stayed there until his retirement. In 1993 he sold most of the land in two parcels (17 and 59 acres) to Dudley E **Hurford** (the son of Ernest William Hurford of Lower Westwater) and Peter **Dare** (of Coryton Park Farm, Kilmington) respectively. They had between them farmed much of the land on annual grass keep contracts for some years. The farm cottage and buildings with limited planning permission for residential use, were sold separately, together with the balance of the land and the fishing rights.

### **Higher Westwater**

In 1824 (Ref 6) Higher Westwater (72 acres) was being rented by William **Tucker**, as was Cox's Wood (65 acres) and Brewishayes (61 acres).

In 1838 (Ref 7) John **Seaward** was farming 190 acres at Higher Westwater, making him the third largest farmer in Axminster parish at that time. He had probably been there in 1828 (see Appendix 3), and he was still there in 1841C, but he died aged 70 soon after the census had been taken (Ref 1, page 666 et seq). In 1851C Mary Seaward, presumably his widow, was the farmer, of 180 acres. Notwithstanding her listing, John Seaward (probably her son) was identified as the farmer in 1856D and 1857D. However, Mary was there in 1861C, with 200 acres, and her father (William Loveridge, a retired farmer) was staying with her. No farmer was listed in 1866D or 1870D.

At the time of the 1860 sale (see above) the 'main farm' of Higher Westwater was listed as 189 acres, let to William and John Seaward. William Seaward had a further 13 acres between Cox's Wood and the Membury Road which was offered for sale as a separate lot, as well as Woodhouse Farm (see above) and some other odd fields.

On 30 November 1870 Higher Westwater was again offered for sale by auction by Messrs Wainwright & Heard, this time at the George Hotel, Chard. At that time the farm amounted to just over 198 acres and ran all the way to Musbury Road, including the eastern half of Cox's Wood and fields above the wood accessed from Musbury Road.

In 1871C William **Roberts** was farming Higher Westwater, with 200 acres. He was there in 1873D, 1878D and 1878/79D, but in 1881C only James **Griffin**, dairyman, was listed at Higher Westwater.

In 1883D George **Dare** was farming an unspecified farm at Westwater: I suspect it was Higher Westwater. He may be the same George Frederick Dare who 12 years later took on the nest door Yeatlands Farm (see below).

In 1889D an unspecified **Johnson** was a dairyman at Westwater; then in 1891C and 1893D he was named as John Johnson, and confirmed as the farmer of Higher Westwater. A probate valuation report (Ref 9) dated September 1895 (presumably undertaken following the death of the owner) shows that the farm was being let on an annual basis at a rental of £240. John Johnson was still the tenant in 1901C and 1902D, though a further valuation report carried out in December 1902 for the London-based Reversionary Interest Society Ltd (presumably either the new owner, or a potential bidder) shows that by then John Johnson was sub-letting the farm to his sons, who are described as hard-working young men, and desirable tenants. The farm itself is described as 198 acres with some excellent dairy pasture, generally in a good or fair state of cultivation and repair, with fishing and shooting rights and some timber.

1906D lists William Johnson as the farmer. He was still there in 1910D and 1911C, which records that he had been born c.1874 at Chard, Somerset, and in 1914D and 1919D. On 20 November

1919 Higher Westwater was again offered for sale<sup>10</sup>, this time by Henry Duke & Son in conjunction with Messrs R&C Snell, at the George Hotel, Axminster. This time it was described as just over 206 acres, and occupied by W Johnson.

In 1923D Ambrose **Bussell** (of Loud & Bussell) was farming Higher Westwater, and in 1926D Charles Arthur Trivett **Loud** was named as the farmer. He was almost certainly from the Loud family of Seaton, and a brother of Walter Henry Loud who was farming at Lower Westwater at the same time. He died in 1932. However, by 1927 he had moved to Musbury, and a small advertisement in 1926 (Ref 10, WG 26 Mar 1926) shows that the farm was by then being run by Snook Bros, one of whom was Mr G **Snook**. In both 1930D and 1935D the farm is recorded as being run by Snook Bros, and it is not listed in 1939D. The last reference to Mr G Snook of Higher Westwater that I have seen was in connection with a neighbour's funeral (Ref 10, EPG 17 Dec 1937). This was probably about the time when he left the farm, because it had been advertised to let (Ref 10, WG 28 Aug 1936) by W Palmer & Co and R&C Snell Ltd with effect from Lady Day 1937, described as 202 acres.

By 1942 (Ref 10, WMN 2 Dec 1942) Higher Westwater was in the possession of Thomas Bernard John **Turner**, who (certainly by the late 1950s) had a herd of Ayrshire dairy cows. He sold the farm in about 1960 to Stanley Harold **Burrow** from Colaton Raleigh, who farmed it in conjunction with his son Ken. After his father's death in 1986 Ken Burrow took over the farm, which he ran until he gradually retired and let the land to the **Hurford** family. RH&MJ Hurford bought Higher Westwater in 2014, and re-sold the house together with a small amount of the river-front land.

## Yeatlands

There is a map in Ref 3 (page 53) which suggests that Yeatlands was originally associated with Newenham Abbey as a 'grange farm'. Ref 2 (page 83) also mentions Yeatlands in connection with Newenham. However, the 1776/78 map shows that it had by then been sold by the Petre Estate, and although surrounded by Petre land, it belonged at that time to a Mr Bradford.

Appendix 3 shows that by 1828 Thomas **Gould** was keeping cattle at Yeatlands. By 1838 (Ref 7) however, Noah **Bishop** was farming Yallands, which comprised 87 acres. In 1841C the farm was recorded as Yeatlands, and he was still there, as he was in 1842V (which also names George Balstone in connection with Yeatlands, though whether he had anything to do with the running of the farm I do not know).

In 1851C the farmer at Yeatlands was Reuben **Swain**, with 88 acres. He was listed there in 1856D, 1857D and 1861C, when the farm was recorded again as 88 acres. He was repeatedly listed (in 1871C as a yeoman, in 1878D with both Yeatlands and Tolcis, and in 1881C with 200 acres. 1889D specifies that he was the owner of Yeatlands, which is very unusual for a directory entry). 1893D is the last listing for Reuben Swain at Yeatlands, and on 28 July 1895 a very simple valuation was carried out at Yeatlands (Ref 9) which would be consistent with his impending departure. The farm was offered for sale at auction in 1896 by Robert Snell (later of R&C Snell) (Ref 10, WG 21 Aug 1896), described as 89 acres of water meadow, pasture, orchard, arable and coppice, in a ring fence. It was also stated that the farm had recently been let on a 5-year lease to George Frederick **Dare** at a cost of £160 per year. He bought Yeatlands, either in 1895 or at some later point.

This is confirmed by both 1901C and 1902D which show George Frederick Dare, farmer and cattle dealer, at Yeatlands, a position which was re-confirmed in 1911C, which shows that he had been born c.1847 at Kilmington. He was then consistently listed there until 1926D, and in 1929 he was identified as the farmer when his son-in-law George Seller, who worked for him at Yeatlands, was buried (Ref 10, WMN 23 Feb 1929). However, he must have left Yeatlands very soon thereafter, because when he died (Ref 10, EPG 13 Dec 1935) he was described as having farmed Yeatlands for 32 years, until his retirement about 6 years earlier.

Edgar Giles **Hurford** bought Yeatlands, and 1930D lists him as the farmer. He did not stay long, however, and in 1933 he moved to Farwood Barton (between Northleigh and Southleigh, in the area where he had been married in 1930). Yeatlands was then taken over by his father, Charles Giles Hurford, who was the listed farmer in 1935D and 1939D.

Charles Giles Hurford had been born in Kilmington, where his father was the licensee of the Old Inn, but he had become a cowman, working in Sussex for a time before returning to East Devon to farm at Lower Farm, Stockland. He had four sons: Edgar Giles, Charles John (Jack), Ernest William

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<sup>10</sup> DHC ref 1476M/E/3.

and Richard (Dick), all four of whom farmed in Axminster parish at various times. Charles Giles Hurford was well known in local farming circles, and in 1936 he was elected to the committee of the Colyton & District Agricultural Society (Ref 10, EPG 14 Aug 1936). His youngest son Dick, who worked with him at Yeatlands, subsequently took over the farm. When he retired in 1988, the milking herd which he had built up was taken over by his nephew Dudley E Hurford (see above in connection with both Lower and Middle Westwater). Other parts of the farm were run by Dick's daughter Ann (now Bond), to whom I owe several of the details above. Since Dudley gave up the tenancy in 2011 Ann has run the whole of the farm, which now incorporates some land formerly owned by Lower Tolcis Farm.

## Wellands

The 1776/78 map shows Willands where Wellands now is. It formed part of the Petre Estate at that time. Then in 1824 (Ref 6) a Mr **North** was renting 63 acres described as Willands. The size of the farm closely matches the record for Wellands in 1838 (Ref 7), when John **White** senior was farming 62 acres there. He was still there in 1841C and 1842V. Wellands was not listed in 1851C or 1861C (or in the intervening directories).

In 1866D and 1870D Thomas **Sandford** was listed, and in 1871C Henry Sandford was recorded, farming 75 acres. 1873D shows Mrs Hannah Sandford as the farmer at Wellands (and at Millbrook).

In 1878D and 1878/79D George Thornhill **Swain** was listed at Wellands, but in 1881C Frederick G Swain was the listed farmer, with 110 acres. 1883D again shows George Swain as the farmer, as do 1889D and 1890D. After a further listing of Francis G Swain as the farmer at Wellands in 1891C, 1893D reverts to George Swain. I conclude that there was only one person, whose full name was Francis George Swain, but that he generally used George.

In 1901C and 1902D John **Stone** was the farmer listed at Wellands, as he was in 1906D.

By 1910D and 1911C Harry **Richards**, born c.1876 at Branscombe, was shown as the farmer at Wellands. He was still there in 1919D, but a valuation report (Ref 9) produced in early 1920 shows that on Lady Day he was due to leave, to be succeeded as tenant by Carell **Ellis**. The farm, totalling 130 acres, was sold at auction in early 1921 (Ref 10, EPG 7 Jan 1921) by Messrs R&C Snell Ltd on behalf of A J Knight and the estate of W H B Knight. It was bought by Mr H Watts of Yeovil for £4,925, but Carell Ellis evidently took the tenancy, and from 1923D until at least 1939D he was listed as the farmer at Wellands. As late as 1978 the EDDC planning website shows a planning application in connection with agricultural use that had been lodged by Carell Ellis of Wellands Farm, suggesting that at some stage he had bought the freehold of the farm.

The house was subsequently separated from the land, which is now managed as part of Brays Farm (which is adjacent, but on the other side of the Yarty, in Dalwood parish).

## Tolcis

There is a map in Ref 3 (page 53) which suggests that Tolcis was originally associated with Newenham Abbey as a 'grange farm'. See also Ref 2 (page 83). This is supported by the fact that the 1776/78 map shows that Tollershayes (i.e. Tolcis) formed part of the Petre Estate at that time. For long periods, the land was farmed in two parts, sometimes referred to as Higher and Lower Tolcis, and what is now effectively the hamlet of Tolcis comprises several dwellings.

In 1824 (Ref 6) George **Skinner** was renting 60 acres at Tolcis. In 1838 (Ref 7) John **White** junior was farming 137 acres at Tolse Hayes, while Richard **Denning** was farming 37 acres at Tulse Hayes (see also Appendix 3). By 1841C the farmers at Tolshays were listed as John White and Elizabeth Denning, and in 1842V John White junior was a voter linked to Tolshays. In 1851C only John White was listed at Tollshayes, with 130 acres. He was also the only listed farmer in 1856D and 1857D.

In 1860 (see above) two separate plots of land surrounding the hamlet of Tolcis, both in the occupation of John White, were offered for sale: one amounting to 79 acres and the other to 47 acres. By 1861C the area farmed by John White had further increased to 160 acres. By about 1862, however, the two main plots were being farmed by Reuben **Swain** of Yeatlands (see above, and see below as well in the context of the 1875 sale).

A map produced when Higher Westwater was offered for sale in 1870 (see above) shows that at least that part of Tolcis which shared a boundary with Higher Westwater was owned at that time by

William Seaward (who lived at, and farmed, Woodhouse: see above), and we know that Reuben Swain was running both farms at that time. In 1871C various people were listed living at Tolcis (the first time in the census returns that the modern spelling appeared), including Mrs Hannah **Burroughs**, a dairywoman. It would seem that she may have been at Tolcis for many years, because in 1878 an employee of hers (Sarah Salter) got a long-service award, having worked for Mrs Burroughs for over 19 years (Ref 10, EPG 11 Oct 1878). (Although William Wakley placed press announcements when two sons were born (Ref 10, WT 17 Jan 1871 and WT 14 Jan 1879), both describing him as 'of Tolcis Farm', he was not the farmer, but worked there for many years, for Reuben Swain and his family (Ref 10, EPG 5 Jan 1912).)

A press advertisement in 1875 (Ref 10, EFP 19 May 1875) stated that Benjamin Gage (the Axminster auctioneer) would shortly be offering Higher and Lower Tolcis for sale at auction, plus two lime kilns and the blue lias quarry, evidence of which can still be seen up-hill from the farm buildings. Higher Tolcis was described as 81 acres, with Lower Tolcis being 45 acres. Both were described as comprising orchard, meadow, pasture, arable and woodland, and both were stated to be contained within a ring fence. The advertisement also confirmed that for about 13 years the land had been farmed by Reuben Swain of Yeatlands.

1881C again lists lots of people living at Tolcis, but does not appear to name any of them as farmers.

1890D and 1891C both name Francis Thornhill **Swain** (son of Reuben Swain of Yeatlands: see above) as both the farmer of Tolcis, and a lime merchant. In 1897 (Ref 10, EPG 4 Oct 1897) there was an outbreak of swine fever at Tolcis (with Francis Thornhill Swain named as the farmer), and over 20 pigs had to be slaughtered. Then in 1900 (Ref 10, 14 Feb 1900) Messrs R&C Snell announced that they had been retained to sell live and dead stock for Francis Thornhill Swain, "... who has let the farm". This is consistent with another press notice which had been placed a month before (Ref 10, TCWA 17 Jan 1900) by Messrs Symes & Madge of Chard offering Tolcis for rent, described as a 102 acre dairy farm with watered meadows, pasture, orchard and arable land.

In 1901C Francis Thornhill Swain was the manager of Tolcis Quarry, while Albert Edwin **Saunders** was named as the farmer. He advertised for a carter in 1903 (Ref 10, WG 13 Feb 1903), and he was still there in 1911C. The census return showed that Francis Thornhill Swain had been born c.1856 at Axminster, and listed him as the manager of the lime works, with Albert Edwin Saunders (born c.1873 in Hampshire) farming Tolcis Farm. When Francis Thornhill Swain died in 1932 aged 77 (Ref 10, WT 2 Sept 1932), he was still described as 'of Tolcis', and a director of the Devon Trading Co.

By 1914D David **Mitchem** was listed as farming at Tolcis, as he was consistently until 1930D. Various press items also name him over this period (Ref 10, WT 28 July 1916, WT 2 July 1918 and TCWA 16 Nov 1927).

By 1934 (confirmed by Ref 10, EPG 13 April 1934, and then by 1935D) Charles John (Jack) **Hurford** had moved from Yeatlands (see above) to Tolcis. He was listed as the farmer at Tolcis in 1939D, and remained there for many more years, until his death in 1971. His sons Beresford and Jack took over the running of the farm, though neither lives there now. Beresford moved to Cornwall, and Jack moved to Sisterhood (see the Axe PDF), while retaining some of the land at Tolcis, particularly the high ground to the north of Cox's Wood. Other parcels of land which formerly belonged to Tolcis were sold to Yeatlands and to Higher Uphay Farm (see above).

My understanding is that although the land is still farmed, there is no longer an active farmer resident at Tolcis.

## Quarry Fields

The first mention of a farmer at Quarry Field appears in 1856D, when John **Smith** was listed.

After a long gap, in 1891C Noah **Aplin**, who had been an agricultural labourer at Wellands a decade before, was listed as the farmer at Quarry Field Farm, followed in 1901C by Caleb **Austin**.

In 1921 (Ref 10, WG 30 Sept 1921) Mrs **Braddick** of Quarry Fields Farm was offering weekly board, and the report of a funeral several years later of a member of the Aplin family (Ref 10, WT 21 Aug 1942) named Mrs S Braddick as a friend of the Aplin family. By 1937, when he died (Ref 10, EPG 28 May 1937), Noah Aplin was farming in Membury.

After a further gap, Ambrose **Bussell** is listed at Quarry Fields in 1926D, and then regularly until at least 1939D. The Bussell family was still there in 1946 (Ref 10, WT 1 Feb 1946) when Miss Laura Bussell died aged 61, described as 'of Quarry Fields'. She was also described as the daughter of James Bussell, who had farmed Woonton Farm, Chardstock for 30 years.