



## **Part 1**

# **Agricultural Foundations**

- 1. Changing land ownership in Keinton**
- 2. Coombe Hill Council Farm**
- 3. Cider apple growing**
- 4. The mills in Keinton**
- 5. Coombe Hill House Farm**
- 6. Manor Farm, Queens Street**
- 7. Contract Farming**
- 8. Holy-days: processions and carnivals**

## The Lands of Keinton.

Medieval feudal England was based on land, the holding or renting thereof, and the consequent rents, fees or services due in return for its use. As can be expected the early documents are full of *querents* (one who asks, consults or questions) and *impediens* (those who impede or hinder)!

The language of these records is hard to fathom without good knowledge of the legal terms but it is worth persisting as they contain fascinating snippets which give some colour to the dusty language.

Once we get behind the language, it is easy to recognise concerns which continue till today.

However, there are some interesting differences e.g. rents or fees were not only paid in money:

### 1279 - 8<sup>th</sup> year of Edward I's reign.

William Attetoneshed and Celia his wife acknowledge the right of William de Fanelar to hold 5½ acres and 3 perches of land in Kyngton Maudevill, *rendering, yearly, one rose at Midsomer* and doing to the chief lord all other services...

For this, William de Fanelar did give *one sparrow hawk*

[Vol 6, p246, no 36]

1400 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Henry IV's reign, similarly...

John Gerard of Kynton and his chaplain Thomas Ode granted the right to hold land to John Wake and wife Alice, *rendering a rose at midsummer*. [Vol22, no 15]

What a nice idea! But I'm not sure that paying council tax in roses would be very acceptable nowadays....

Land measurements, however, were not exact (no wonder there were so many disputes!).

An English *hide* varied between 96–144 acres, while Norman *carcute* varied between 80-120 acres.

There were two systems of money too:

3 marks (Saxon) = £ 2 (Norman ‘Livres’, hence ‘L’ -> £).

Land dimensions were a mixture of the old English and the new Norman. For example,

*messuage* = a building plot

*toft* = a homestead

to be *seized* = to be in rightful possession

to be *enfoeffed* = to be given right to rents, fees etc

ferlingate/farthing/fourth = approx 7½ acres

4 *ferlingates* = *virgate* ie 30 acres

4 *virgates* = *hide* (or *carcute*) ie 120 acres

**The size of the parish** remained remarkably constant over the centuries:

**Domesday Book:**

the Lord’s demesne 425 – 505 acres

others’ holdings 185 - 215 acres

meadow (detached) 30 acres (at the bottom of  
Coombe Hill Road, along the river Brew/Brue)

**Total: approx 640 – 750 acres**

**1810** documents note the size as 653 acres, of which 29 were detached meadowland.

**The soil** is clay and the sub-soil blue lias, suitable as building/paving. The chief crops are orchard produce, clover, beans, teasel and wheat. Rather than a 3 field-system Keinton had 4 fields.

Rateable values were often challenged (especially with a change of ‘government’) for example,

1623 King James (VIth of Scotland): an appeal from Keinton regarding *tything rates* as the ‘inhabitants conceive themselves to be much wronged’

C19th **Trade Directories** provide source of rateable values (1861) at £949, (1889) £1,154, (1894) £1,270

**Population** was

459 in 1841, 585 in 1851, 540 in 1861, 506 in 1891...

## **Changing land ownership in Keinton**

Trying to trace the changes quickly becomes confusing, but it is perhaps worth some effort to understand the character of the village.

We find the main themes are the way in which Keinton lands are often *combined* with proximate villages (Barton or Kingweston); *distributed* amongst numerous persons, many of whom are not local; divided between *secular and religious* - holdings which all present an intricate web of ownership.

We begin with the impact of that fundamental upheaval in social life – namely the Norman invasion of 1066, as it is recorded in that most valuable resource, the Domesday Book of 1086.

**The Domesday Book 1086** records that, during the reign of Edward the Confessor, Keinton was held by:-

Two thanes, in *parage* (the portion of a *wife's* marriage settlement) from *Aelmer*, (who also held lands in Barton), of *King Edward*.

1086 lands given to *Malgar (Mauger de Cartran)*, *Earl of Chintune, of Count Mortain* (  $\frac{1}{2}$  brother of *William the Conqueror*) whose lands included *Montacute*.

**Links** with the *de Mandevilles*, with *religious foundations* and with '*lords*' of local villages

1204 *Geoffrey de Mandeville* (held Hartingdon Mandeville, E of Yeovil, also of *Count Mortain*)

1239 arranged for his lands at Keinton to be passed to his brother and then son Geoffrey (2)

1257 some lands bequeathed to *Prior of St John's Hospital, Wells* [initially, 8 messuages, 11 acres arable, 11 acres meadow and 1 dovecot]

1269 Keinton inherited by Geoffrey 2's son *John*, 'of unsound mind', whose lands were divided by his brother, between *William de Favelore* and *Richard Compton* and others...

1321 a further 30 acres given to *St John's* (later bequests added to the *St John's* holdings)

1351 '*Lords of Barton*' held lands in Keinton, passing down to the *Gerard's of Barton*

1441 4<sup>th</sup> yr of Edward VI [Enrolled Deeds]  
*John Cary of Glastonbury* sold to *Hugh Fry* (yeoman), holding lands from neighbouring *Witham Friary*  
i.e. 1 messuage, virgate of land, pasture for 8 oxen, 6 cows, 6 horses, 4 sows, 1 boar, 100 sheep

**After 1536: The Dissolution of the Monasteries** and also religious institutions like *St John's Hospital* caused a second huge upheaval and widespread shifts in landownership which affected Keinton.

By the C16<sup>th</sup> St John's was the largest landowner in Keinton. Their lands were divided, yet often remained within ecclesiastical hands though as personal holdings.

1578 30 acres went to *Richard Bramston*, a vicar choral in the choir of Well's cathedral

1680s 70 acres went to *Rev Dauncey*, vicar of Keinton 1686-1706,

1709 218 acres were sold to *Vicar of Longbridge-Deverell*, Wilts: known as **Manor Farm**

1876 eventually sold in lots to local families, from within the village e.g. *Cullings*, *Symes*

The secular lands also changed hands frequently, mostly to neighbouring large landowners

1551 lands in Kyngton Maundevyl sold to *John Cary of Balesboroughe* (Baltonsborough)

1587 also to *Isabella Cheverell of Barton*, some passed to *Marmaluke Jennings of Barton*

These formed **Rectory Farm**, about 50 acres

However, at the time of the 1810 Enclosures, land ownership showed the following:

St John's Hospital still the largest single holding	103
Manor Farm + sub-lettings	218
3 other large farms (50 acres each)	150
Remaining fragmented holdings	68
Detached <i>meads</i>	29
Sub-total	550
<b>Total acres</b>	<b>653</b>

Gradually, buyers whose families have remained in the village are evident

e.g. 1673 *Alice and John Squires* pay £30 for 44 acres

1745 *George Coate* (100 acres),

1778 *George Harris* buys some of Jennings' Barton lands

1791 *John Cabble*, and *Jeremiah Evill* lease (later buy) quarry land from Rev Ball.

p15

## Farms and farming in the village.

The first thing to note is that Keinton hasn't been, primarily, an agricultural village for the last two centuries. Because of the quarries, it seems more an 'industrial village'. Even a key 'crop' such as *teazles* – grown until the late C19<sup>th</sup> on the north side of Castle Street – was for industrial purposes i.e. woollen textile processes in nearby Glastonbury and Shepton. A Castle St (south side) cottage is still so named.

The Dunn family remember: *To harvest these you needed to cover-up from head to foot to avoid the prickles. We were paid piece-rate for the number cut per day. They were then tied to poles, hung up to dry and sent off to the woolcloth factories. It was good money while it lasted – right up till '60s in some places locally... like Curry Rivel.*

Throughout the C19<sup>th</sup> farming was a diverse activity, more small-scale husbandry than arable. This still seems true today, with most local farms concerned with *chickens, pigs, sheep, some dairy cows and a few crops.*

Although a few small *cider apple orchards* remain they have been greatly reduced in number as it is no longer economic to collect from small-scale producers.

Despite several houses in the village having the name of Farm e.g. *Rosemead, Homestead, Manor Farms*, they are only witness to what was rather than what is...

Many families kept a few chickens and often their own pig until the mid '60s. The sties were usually at the bottom of the garden.

In Row Lane the remains of a piggery is only now, summer 2008, being demolished and the Keinton half-shields exposed as stall dividers, though the asbestos roof has had to be carefully removed.



Census returns show:

*1841 William Stocky, teazle grower*

*1841 Louisa Sealy, gardener*

*Also, one cheese factor*

*10 in farming and 22 labourers,  
who often had other jobs as well*

*1851 Clarke, Cully, Harvey, Howe and Osbourne, farmers*

*1861 Cabball, Harvey, Derrick, Osbourne, Walter, teazles;*

*and Dawneey and Murch, farmers, Dyke, pig dealer*

*1871 Osbourne and Walter, teazles;*

*Phillips, farmer and, by*

*89 also Barnes, Lykins, Seymour, Squires*

*1891 also Cannon, Herbert, cattle dealers;*

*Dyke egg dealer; Pochell, pig farmer*

*plus Ffitch, horsebreaker; Haker, milkseller*

To this list should be added an auctioneer (presumable livestock rather than antiques!)

*1889 William Dan Knight, of Manor Farm*

*in addition, 13 farm hands....*

*1891 a shepherd and a miller (wind or water?) are mentioned*

Also in Queen's Street was the egg enterprise of *HP Salter's* (at '*Psalters*'!). Percy used to take them over to Bristol twice a week – at first by cart, then by van. As Trevor Cook remembers “*My father used to go with him sometimes. Before the war roads were bad, resulting in many punctures and delays – and not a few scrambled eggs along the way!*”

Keinton continues to have a piggery on the north side and, also, a chicken farm on the south side of the village at *Southmead Rearers* Dave Fry, then de Jagers (from S. Africa)

Finally, on the southern edge of the village, we have *Thistledown Farm*, devoted to rearing goats, sheep and chickens using organic methods.

It is not only the *scale* of farming but the *style* too that has changed. Whereas, farmers used to be free to farm as they saw fit. Now farmers have to battle bureaucratic entanglements from the EU as well as British governments. Quotas, grant requirements and changing conditions have greatly altered the context.

Technical developments, too, have wrought change. The C20<sup>th</sup> saw the shift from *horse-power to tractor-power*, and the change from horses as work animals to pleasure mounts – resulting in increasing numbers of liveries nearby.



The *Ridewood* family at **Rosemead Farm** (left) grazed a Fresian dairy herd, on land extending from near the Village Hall to the glebelands by the Old Rectory. The cows were milked by hand in what is now called the *Coach House*(right), until the late '50s when the farm was sold.

The Farm business extended into a *shop* which Mrs Ridewood mostly ran, with help from her sons in the '50s-'60s. The outlet diversified with deliveries by van to surrounding homes and villages. The eldest, Mick, was more interested in retailing and the youngest, Chris, always preferred the farm.

*Chris Ridewood recalls that on his father's death, he had to leave Keinton as a child to go to Street for the best part of 14 years, before he could return to Keinton and get back to farming, this time on Manor Farm then worked by Mr Charlie White.*

In the late '90s, Chris Ridewood and his wife (having bought a plot for a modern farm house plus annexe for Mrs Dora White) was able to re-start at *Newlands Farm* in Common Lane. Land was bought back from that which the family had originally farmed for over 150 years. They now farm 100 acres of silage, 50 of hay, 20 of corn and hold about 165 acres for their pedigree *simondtal* herd.

**Westfield Farm** was first based on the village's western field where *Westfield House* now stands, off High Street. *Rowland Sutton's* family were originally in the quarry business but in the 1920s started farming with pigs, sheep, poultry on about 40 acres of land.

John Sutton remembers: *Despite being Chapel-goers, I always had to help my Dad weigh/stamp pigs on Sunday morning as the lorry for the Walls factory transport collected early on Mon morning. Piglets need iron – and we used to dig small pits for piglets to root around + eat soil with iron content (later this was done with a 1cc Imposell injection)!*

When his parents retired the family moved to **Hollies**, Queen Street - where there was still a 3-seater garden loo, underground rain tank, well and pump. The family bought 60 acres from the Walkers in 1961 at the bottom of Combe Hill Rd. and gradually the farm moved to the new site.



On getting married, aged 27, John received his first wage! He took over and expanded to 175 acres. The Frisians went in '98, and now the focus is nursery pigs kept from 3 - 10wks (till weighing 40 kilo) when they are sold on to be fattened for slaughter. Lambs are sold for meat too and the wool goes to the Wool Marketing Board (in 2008, for a less than profitable price of 100 kilo @ £14.00 !)

## **Coombe Meads**

There are a cluster of homes and farms at the bottom of Combe Hill Road which is the meeting point of three parishes - Keinton, Barton and Lydford. The boundaries have officially shifted over the years but the community of residents included the Walkers at *Coombe Hill House*, Suttons at *Westfield Farm*, the tenants of *Coombe Hill Farm* and also *Lady Beckett of Lydford*.

**Combe Hill Farm** was one of the 350 odd **Council Farms** in Somerset. The idea began by offering tenants small starter farms, initially for returning soldiers after World War I. The farm was 55 acres and had been rented to the *Whiteheads*, then *Ted Cotter* between 1936-69, before *Mike Stocker* took over from 1969-2003. The house was then privately sold while the farm went to the *Suttons*.

Adjacent to the farm house was *old cider house*. Delivery drivers were often refreshed before travelling onwards! The metal from the machinery was donated to the war effort.

Mains water was brought from Barton in the early 70s. Until then water was from the well outside, which was brought into the house by a pump situated in the kitchen and raised to the roof tanks which then fed the flushing toilet and taps.

Mike and Shirley Stocker had to pay the water board around £10 a year to pump their own water! ... perhaps as it all comes from the same underground sources. To this day, the waste goes into the septic tank and contributes to the slurry which is spread on the fields... recycling is as old as the hills! While the Stockers farmed there, they also rented an additional 18 acres from Lady Beckett, where they kept a dairy herd of 40 Frisians.

Mike Stoker remembers: *After the first calf, at 2 yrs old, a cow started milking – often 10-12 gallons a day over the morning and afternoon sessions. At this period milking was done in a mechanised milking bale – a blue-roofed cabin which could accommodate 6 cows at a time, with each pair sharing a cluster and the milk flowing into the containers to be fetched by **Wincanton Dairies**. This was mostly distributed as milk (even to London), sometimes it went to **Claps at Baltonsborough** to be made into cheese and distributed through supermarket chains. The cows usually continued calving annually for the next 4 year-long lactation cycles and then, with the milk production tailing off, were sent to market for meat.*

They rarely had serious difficulties with the herd. The Vet was called out for routine checks and tests. By the late '70s most treatments had to be bought through the vets and self-treating the animals was becoming a thing of the past.

*But accidents do happen: while lying down one cow's teat got trodden on and had to be stitched; another cow 'misplaced' one of her three stomachs, so a vet was needed to give a local anaesthetic and minor surgery; one cow needed a caesarean at Cary to help with a difficult birth.*

*Once Mick needed help in roping and pulling a calf out which, after birthing, appeared not to breath so the (town-y) visiting friend gave it the kiss-of-life, instead of the usual tickle up the nose with a straw!*

*Shirley recalls enjoying the spring day when the cows were let out of the barn and yard where they had been living on compound cakes and silage during the winter months. They used to run and bounce about, chasing each other like frisky lambs. They loved it. It was a while before they settled down and starting grazing. We all had to stand by in case they broke any fences in their excitement. We had to be really careful they didn't eat too much and get blown out with wind from the rich clover and grass. That would need 'drenching' with salt and water to disperse the wind or, in serious cases, a 'trawcar' (puncturing the stomach)*



*A view of Coombe Hill Farm*

**‘Somerset and cider’** have always gone together like ‘eggs and bacon’. Many homes had small orchards and made their own brew. Other small orchards sold apples to local processors.

**In 1894** Somerset had 24,000 acres of cider apples, but by 1973 this had declined drastically to about 2,400 and by 2000 was possibly only about 1,500. The main production areas were still Glastonbury, Taunton, Wedmore, Martock and, more locally, Baltonsborough. Experiments were begun by *Sir Robert Neville Grenville* of Butleigh, in 1894, with chemist FJ Lloyd, to make production processes more stable to improve transport and to boost business in a wider market. It led to a national Fruit and Cider Institute at Long Sutton.

**Back in 1763** a tax was placed on cider to raise money for wars in America. This meant that inspectors would have had the right to enter private homes. It gave rise to a famous remark from opposition MP, William Pitt, that *‘every man’s home is his castle’* - repealed in 1766!

Wages were shockingly low. Action from Joseph Arch’s *Union of Agricultural Workers* (formed in 1875) slowly improved conditions and the use of cider as *part payment* for *labourers’ wages* was illegal from ’87.

Farmers still offered it to win extra hands at harvest until WW II, when land girls often provided the labour which, together with drinking restrictions to boost productivity, made it seem inappropriate!

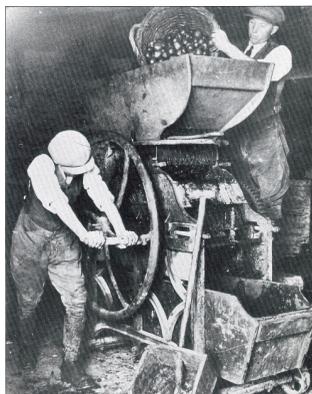
*Making cider involved several processes: first collecting, either by ‘poling’ trees to knock down fruit onto sheets underneath, or waiting till they fell for the women and children to pick them up. They might then be stored, on straw, in lofts till convenient. Next, was the milling in a wooden rectangular container with a large hand wheel to ‘pomace’/pulp them.*

*Then, the pulp was pressed in a 'cheese' consisting of layers of reed/straw in the centre of a wooden bed leaving a 6" trough around the edge, into which juice would drain. A 4" layer of apple pulp came next then more reeds for up to 8-12 layers, each smaller so making a pyramid shape. With a wooden hatch placed on top and heavy weights applied this was now squeezed for 2-6 days. Finally, it was stored in large hogshead barrels, allowing the froth to drain out (topping up to expel air) till ready to bung – or drink!*

**Twelfth Night Rituals** were once common – wassailing the trees, firing guns to frighten spirits and burning the ash faggots, but was revived in some parts of the county in the 1970s, having faded for over a century!

*Old apple tree we wassail thee  
And happily thou will bear  
For Lord knows where we shall be  
Till apples come another year  
So bloom well to bear well  
So merry let us be*

*Let every man take off his hat  
'nd shout out to th'old apple tree  
Old Apple tree we wassail thee  
And hope that thou will bear  
Hat full, cap full, dree bushel bag full  
And a little under the stair  
Hip hip hurrah!*



*Hand Milling*



*Building the 'cheese'*

*Pictures from Somerset Rural Life Museum and Hecks Cider, Street*

Keinton had its orchards too, of which only the area between Row Lane and Chistles Lane remain - though Suttons have recently replanted a small area at the bottom of Coombe Hill..

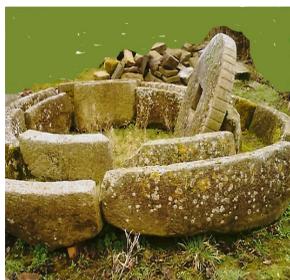


**John Sutton remembers:**  
*As a child it was my job to pick up cider apples for 3d a (big) bag (about 4 buckets-full). It was pocket money for fireworks! Just in time for Guy Fawkes night...*

The traditional style was to have *standard trees* where *cattle undergrazed*, rather than modern bush trees which are shorter and have a higher yield: *standards* usually yield 4-5 tons, and the *bush varieties* 8-10 tons.



**Coombe Hill Farm** had an adjacent *cider-mill*. Apples were spread throughout the circular trough and a horse, attached by harness to the vertical stone, walked in circles to turn the shaft which turned the wheel to squeeze the juice (*below right, found at Wells reclamation!*). The juice was then stored and fermented in hogshead barrels kept on cool stone platforms high enough from the ground to be convenient for drawing cider into jugs. Production stopped during the war when metal machinery was donated to the war effort.



*Apple press*



*Apple store at Coombe Hill Farm*

## The Mills

Village streams mean water and, where possible, the power for a mill to grind the all important flour for bread-making. Millers were very significant people and were (sometimes grudging) held in respect. It was a lucrative job and the premises often leased by the Lord to a family for business.

The stream in Keinton is part of that which was ‘improved’ and deepened by the C10<sup>th</sup> Abbot of Glastonbury (later Saint) Dunstan, who was born locally at Baltonsborough. This improvement included dredging the stream at Southwood to reduce flooding, building a weir along its course and diverting a short ‘leat’ to the mill: it is known as **Dunstan’s Dyke**.

A local resident refers to an ‘ecclesiastical ring’, found by the banks, which was popularly referred to as Dunstan’s ring, but there is no record of such a find in the Taunton Museum or Records Office and its whereabouts, now, is unknown.

An early mention of **Keinton Mill** is 1339, *when William de Wilde and Juliana his wife gifted lands, rents and 1/12<sup>th</sup> part of the mill in Kyngton, Barton, Hinton St George and, again, in 1351...*

The *Cheverell* family, Lords of Barton St David, owned a mill with 30 acres of land, in Keinton, in 1578. Known as the **New Mill**, it was leased in 1589. This probably refers to the mill on the stream in the ‘detached’ part of the parish at the bottom of Coombe Hill Road, between the known *Barton Mill*, (downstream at Tootle Bridge) and upstream at *Lydford*. (VCH)

The date of the current existing mill, *King o’ Mill* (alternatively *King at Mill*), is uncertain but may possibly be the *Keinton mill* referred to in C17<sup>th</sup> local Court documents. *King o’ Mill* is built at a meeting of parish boundaries and may well have sometimes been recorded with Lydford.

In 1610, a mill was believed to be part of the sale of lands belonging to the former Wells Hospital of St John's, which still owned almost half the lands of the village. However, there is no clear record of these transactions.

Census records from 1841 show millers at Baltonsborough just 2 miles upstream, and Barton (at Tootle's Bridge) ½ mile upstream, but none in Keinton.

*Census records:*

*1871 Sam Gotthard 62 Devon and Thomas Harper High Ham*

*1891 In Keinton, John Stark, 18*

*In Barton, Samuel and Ernest Hooper + two labourers 15, 13*

*In Baltonsborough, Charles Berry (41), John Norris (30)  
(same/separate mills?)*

By the second world war, the Keinton Mill, had fallen out of use so the machinery was donated to the war effort in the 1940s.



*King o' Mill*

*An interesting feature of the King o' Mill was the construction of the mill wheels. The vertical style was changed and the wheel re-orientated to drive a horizontal turbine. There were double mill wheels in the upstairs section of the building. Documents and plans showing this were found by the current owners when they restored the fabric of the building and converted it to its present residential status.*

## **Windmills**

To the west, adjacent to Keinton, on land within the Kingweston estate along the road towards Somerton, stands **Windmill Hill** – presumably because there was a wind-powered mill atop.

Currently, several Somerset water mills have been converted to produce hydro-electricity and some wind turbines have also been constructed - nearby Dimmer Waste plant, at a local farm near Castle Cary, and on other higher ridges such as on the Mendips and Exmoor.

Perhaps 'mills' are coming back into fashion to serve our current 'greener' energy demands.

**Coombe Hill House**, (soon known as Happy Valley) at the north of Keinton, has passed through many hands. The 1871 census shows a *Capt Ebenezer Chaffrey* at Coombe Hill House. From 1926, the Victorian house and farm belonged to an Irish family *Sir Cecil* (a distinguished military man) and his wife, *Lady Violet Walker*. Sir Cecil's business was horses, mostly at the Irish sales. Their son *Hugh* also joined the army, but their daughter *Sheilagh* bred **Suffock Punch horses** and usually had about 8 horses at any time, including a couple of **shires**, *Kitten and Tom*, as well as a horse and pony which were used by Lady Walker, who preferred riding side-saddle, on *Sweetheart*, and also drove a small trap made locally by Lamberts of Sparkford.

Although it was quite a big house with a farm of about 80 acres, the total staff only consisted of a butler (Sir Cecil's batman), a gardener, his daughter who came in for a couple of hours to do the washing and cleaning, and a farm hand, *Brenda Carter*, who had general care of the 20 black-eared **Hampshire Down sheep**, *Mischief* a **saddle-back sow** and her several litters, also, about 30 pedigree **Gurnsey cows** who needed milking at about 6.30 and 4.30 daily. It was hard work for everyone, including *Sheilagh's* governess, who all enjoyed evening meals, together, in the house.

*Brenda recalls: Working with animals always involves humour as well as hard work! The cows needed to be kept out of the orchards, but the boss-cow, Rosie, had other ideas and once led the herd to feast on the fallen apples. By the end of the day when I collected them for milking they were drunk! Rosie and several others staggered home. Rosie slipped twice, cutting her knees. The evening's milk and the following morning were unusable, but hangovers soon wore off. After 24 hours it was back to normal!*

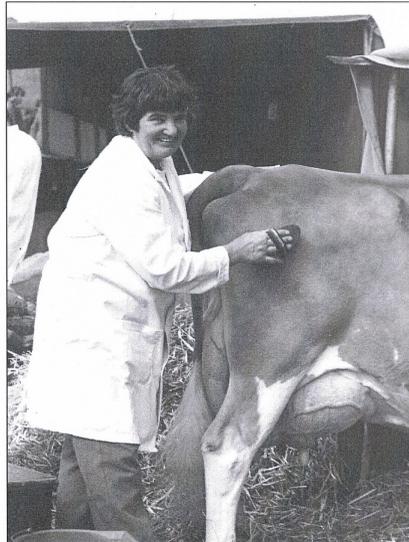
*The sheep were often loaned to neighbours as 'lawn-mowers on legs' and helped to keep down the grass in the nearby orchards. Once, it was the bull that caused trouble... He somehow got his budding horns caught in the handles of his metal feeding trough. You can imagine the noise he made as he tried to free himself and got more and more terrified into the bargain. Everyone lent a hand: he had to be tied down so someone could get close enough to cut him free. After that, a stone trough was made to avoid any more trouble!*

The thoroughbreds lived alongside a donkey for company who even travelled in the horse-box with them, to calm them on the journey. The shires were also used for hoeing and hay-raking and general work around the farm.



*Happy Valley Jacynth at work*

The big shires, Kitten and Tom, were ridden up to *Mr Comer's forge* on the High Street for shoeing when needed. However, the younger, more lively thoroughbreds were often shod and trimmed by *farrier Parsons* who came into the yard regularly to do the job on the spot.



*Sheilagh: grooming a special cow*

Many of the animals were entered at local shows. Preparing them was a lot of work, but winning made it all worth it! The shires were often put to work pulling the carts for the carnival parades and village fairs. *Kitten and Tom* were a grand pair and everyone loved to see them with manes beribboned, tails plaited and carts festooned with flower garlands.

Later, Brenda found breeding **rabbits** proved profitable as they provided meat and also skins for gloves. Brenda Carter recalls keeping usually about 50 **New Zealand White does** till they reached about 6 lbs in weight when they were collected, fortnightly, by local company by the name of *Hunnybuns*.

**Manor Farm**, in Queens Street, (first documented in 1709) was owned by *Mrs Dixon* (related to Morlands Tannery family between Street and Glastonbury). She lived in *Rosedale* opposite the Farm which, from Michelmas to Michelmas 1926-1958 was rented to the *Carters* – *William*, then *son Alan*.

The long farmhouse building had an upstairs corridor the whole length of the house with bedrooms off. The kitchen had a flagstone floor and water came from the pump outside which was carried up for bathing or for kitchen uses.



(Photos from Brenda Carter)

It was a mixed farm, with around 8 **Frisian milkers** and about 18 **Large White pigs**. The sows were often shown and the boars sired to local farms. Some hay and wheat were grown and neighbours often came for 2/6d worth of corn for their chickens. At that time many people also kept their own pig in a shed at the bottom of their garden, till the '60s.

Mostly, farmers made up their own feed and treated their own animals: 'Stockholm Tar' was painted onto hooves and smeared around mouths for foot-and-mouth, ringworm was treated with creosote. A vet from *Taswell and Greeno* (Castle Cary) was called if necessary.

When the Manor Farm lease lapsed, in 1958, tenancy passed to *Mr Charlie White* and his wife *Dora*, till it was sold in 1990s, outbuildings demolished and the barn converted into a home.



*Aerial view*



*Manor barn*



Ricks in the yard, and (right) Keinton students on 'Farm Day'  
*(photos from Mrs B Carter)*

## Farm Machinery: Contracting Work

One local family, *Dunns*, moved from Wivilescombe in the west of the county to farm here in 1934. They rented about 1000 acres of land at about 10s an acre at Manor Farm, W.Lydford from the owner Mrs Creese, whose husband was a lighthouse keeper. Part of the family then moved on to Mells, but one son Len stayed and married a Keinton girl. They kept a dairy herd and some arable land. In addition, the family invested in machinery and so did local contract work.

Although he also kept horses *Mr Len Dunn*, on arriving, bought the first tractor in the area, a **Fordson Standard** and, later, up to three threshing-machines. During the war years, all farmers were urged to grow more wheat so there was plenty of work. Barley was grown as fodder for the cattle, while oats was for the horses. The whole process was lengthy and was still labour intensive. A *reaper-binder machine* would cut the grain then make the sheaves which were stacked by hand for drying then *carted* to the rickyard and again *stacked* manually till such time as the *thresher* could arrive.

Howard Dunn remembers: “*Threshing was a complicated business and labour intensive. First there was a tractor to drive the belt which worked the thresher which had to be carefully positioned by the rick. Two men on the rick would fork down the wheat to another man who manually feed the thresher. Another would collect the sacks of grain (heads) to be carried to the barn. Behind the thresher was a baling machine driven off the thresher. The straw bales (tailings) also had to be manually collected and stored for bedding. Haying, too, was lengthy: first the mowing, then turning, tedding (spreading) side-racking to row up before baling.*”

The account books from 1943-45 show that *threshing work* continued *throughout the year*. The winter barley was the first, in July, followed by only a limited amount of oats, even less of beans and predominantly wheat through till the following July.

The time and the costs have changed enormously.

**In 1943** it might take a day of threshing to complete 61 sacks of wheat (heads) – using the 2½ cwt sacks - and about 1 cwt of straw (tailings) at the cost of **£6.10.0d for a day's work**.

**By 1973** a single combine harvester was used for reaping and threshing, and in a day it was possible to harvest about 20 acres at £4 an acre coming to about **£81.23p for a day's work**

**By 1984**, prices had risen to **£19.00 per acre (£40 in 2008 !)**

Of course much depended on the ground, condition of the crop and the all important weather. Some farmers wouldn't allow haying to begin till 4pm to give time for the field to dry out, others allowed work to start at 11am.

### **Extracts from 2 Keinton Farm accounts.**

1943 Sept 21<sup>st</sup> 1 day, 2 hrs

Threshing wheat

61 sacks £5.00.0d

1cwt tailings £1.10.0d

£ 6.10.00d

Plus 5 galls

Tractor vaporising Oil

(pre-diesel fuel)

1984 July (about 2 days)

July Barley 11 acres,

Aug Beans 15 ac@£19/ac

+ 10% VAT

£ 568.10p

**The cost of the machinery** escalated, too. A **Massey Harris** in 1973 might have cost £1,000 new (£200 second-hand) and harvested 20 acres a day: a modern **Class Lexion** costs about £250,000 but then it can harvest 100 acres a day – some even can be set to cut by laser.



*Reaper/binder*



*Modern combine*

All farming work was hard. On the machines it was dusty and hot. It could also be dangerous – a man's leg could be torn off in the thresher if anyone slipped. Nowadays, modern machines have air-conditioned cabins and are highly computerized – scarcely believable luxury!

There was also a nearby *experimental plot* run by the Ministry of Agriculture. Wheat of different types with alternative treatments was grown to compare length of straw, yield etc. Many small farming businesses were involved in such research projects – which helped lead to some modern improvements.

## **H is for High days and Holidays!**

The highlight of the year was probably **May Day**. This was the day of the Parade!

The village had at least two Bands: the **Temperance Band** and the **Quaker Band of Hope**.

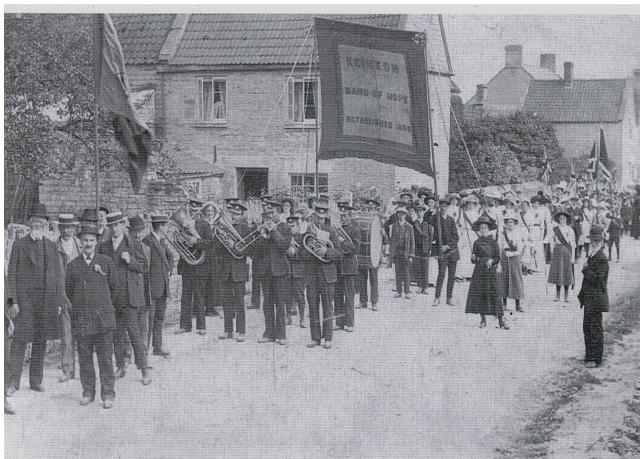
*“Us children loved the **May Parade**. We collected wild white moon daisies and decorated the carts. Younger children sat in the cart and the older ones followed as it went from the **Methodist Chapel**, up **Queens Street**, along **High Street** and turned round the ‘triangle’ at the **Barton Road turning**, back along **High Street** and up **Castle Street**, doubling back at the **Cotton lane turning**, then down to the **bottom of Queens**, round the ‘triangle’ at the bottom and **finishing at the Chapel**.*

*Then the **feasting** began! Buns and treats down in the Sunday School room under the Chapel. We had a wonderful time that day. And there was more. **Swing boats** would be out in the field behind the **Social Club** up Combe Hill Road (by the tennis courts). General merrymaking for everyone!!*



*Decorated May Day carts*

## Preparing for the May Day Parade, 1910.



**The Band of Hope** (formed in 1856 by *Mrs Bithia Chalker*, lasted till WWII) was for younger boys and girls. Anyone could join the activities for younger people, but all members signed the pledge to forswear alcohol.



*(Photos from Village Archive)*

**Empire Day 24<sup>th</sup> May** was another chance for celebrations. The girls put their hair in rag-rollers to make curls. Everyone wore their best clothes. The day started with saluting the flag in the school-yard and singing some well-loved patriotic song - such as *Hearts of Oak* and *Men of Harlech*. Later, parents and friend were invited to join in too.

Keinton also seems to have held a *Cattle Fair* (Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, noted in Kelly's Directory of 1861) although we have no records of what kinds of celebrations were associated with it – did it only involve the farmers and dealers, or a family fun event too? Perhaps the Autumn Fair was held at this time of year when the cattle were well fattened after their summer grazing on the levels. The levels had gradually been drained and ditched ever since the C13<sup>th</sup> - mostly by Dutch engineers often encouraged to come over by local monasteries.(Immigrant labour is not new!)



Above is the paved *Drove Road* (which curves around Lunn Hill's Wood south-west of village) and links the Somerton Road with the south side of the village.

Before cinema was available, some villagers remember **Lantern Shows**. These were mostly shown during **Sunday School** – itself, very well attended pre-war. The slide-shows often showed the work of missionaries in Africa and other far-flung corners of the Empire. Generally, it was the Church organizations which provided almost all the opportunities for social activities.

*A group of Band of Hope members all in their best for the annual picnic in 1913, held in Dan Knight's field behind the houses on the west side of Queen's Lane where the school sports were also held.*



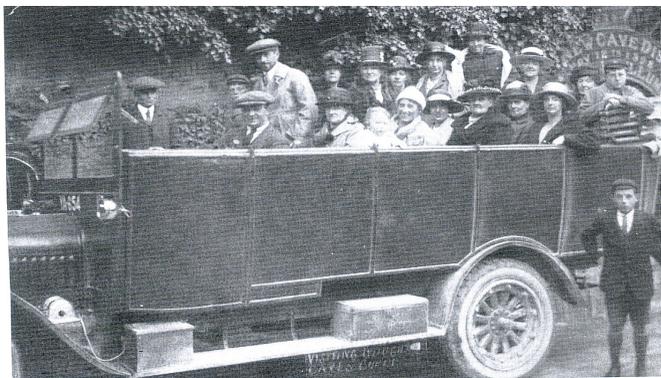
**Other Fun Events** later included *Harry Parker's open-top Bluebird Coach* to Yeovil cinema, or the 2/6d ride on the 'bucket' train to Taunton for a film show or shopping expedition. A growing number of families in the 20s and 30s had a motorbike and side car or even an automobile – at first with solid tyres, later gradually more reliable rubber tyres with which to travel locally to Street, for a silent or talkie film, or just for a day out. Seaside Trips were increasingly popular and accessible, but picnics in nearby countryside were a treat too.

The Village had a number of **Friendly Clubs and Societies** which were mostly charitable organisations, looking after their members before the era of welfare. These included the awesome **Royal Ancient Order of Buffaloes** which met at the Three Old Castles pub (since become homes).

A **Harvest Home** supper had been established by the Rector in 1876 and lasted for many decades. After a lapse between the wars, it has recently been revived.

The **Liberal** and **Conservative Clubs** often organised events, especially in the summer – like *charabanc* outings which were very popular before the wars.

*Summer Charabanc outing to Cheddar, 1920s*



*(Photo, courtesy Cabble family)*

There was also annual *horse-racing* for some to look forward to in the parish, held in the neighbouring village of Kingweston, till around 1926, then organised by Babcary village but held on Keinton land, on the west of the A37, off Common lane. This was a rather wild affair, but lots of school pupils regularly played truant to go along and watch the fun!

**The Temperance Hall** was the home of the *Western Temperance League Band* which played for weddings as well as village events such as late summer **carnival**, Armistice etc. These were special events, but on a regular basis the Hall served as village **cinema**, where, on Friday nights in the '50s, anyone with 6d in their pocket could be thrilled by a mobile cine company which supplied the reels for the latest blockbuster. The Hall also had a piano for shows and entertainments.

Then there was the **Lido** 'swimming pool' in the old quarry, fed by a spring, down Church Lane close to the village sports ground. This proved very popular during those golden 'long hot summers' of yester year! During the winter *Snows Ltd of Glastonbury* soaked elm trunks in the water to be cut and used later.



*(photo, courtesy Mick and Grace Ridewood)*

**Somerset is famous for its late summer carnivals** and Keinton Mandeville held theirs at this time too. The main events took place in the fields around Quarry Inn, remembered in the naming of the road, Fayre Field, now leading to sustainable houses built in 2008.

Below, *Kitten* draws a decorated cart to the Fayre.



(photo, 1951 Mrs B Carter)

It included fair attractions as well as children's competitions for costumes – anything from Robin Hood, to modern soldiers and nurses, to the very politically incorrect but, at the time, endearing Golliwog, as well as the Carnival Queen and attendants, with *Grace Ridewood*, Aug 1951.



(photo, courtesy Mrs G Ridewood.)

At Christmas time, there was the children's party to look forward to, provided by the esteemed *Royal Ancient Order of Buffaloes*. This was for the children, but plenty of adults also joined in and enjoyed the festivities too.

A post-war favourite was the *Boxing Day Pram Race* (wives pushing husbands in the large old prams) from Barton Cross to the Three Castles. It stopped in the '60s when large prams went out of fashion !! You can't fit a husband in a 1960s buggy! Below, (left) the pre-war prams which went on into the '60s, till the iconic 'buggy' arrived, demonstrated by *Sarah Cooke and Kate Craigie* (below right) who both did so much to launch Village Day and the Happy Tracks toddler park (*More details in Pt2 section 'From Social Club to Village Hall'*).



After WW2, many of these traditions began to fade. Standards of living were rising, alternative sources of entertainment were becoming available (such as TV) and the large scale building projects in the early '80s and again in the late '90s all helped to change village relationships and expectations – though it seems the *new millennium* is reinvigorating many village events.