

## ECONOMIC HISTORY

Agriculture has been the main occupation of the inhabitants, although some produced textiles, including woollen cloth and hats, and silk thread. In the later 20th century residents increasingly worked outside the parish.

In 1086 the 10-hide estate of the abbey of Bec required seven plough teams to cultivate the arable land, three on the abbey's 6 ½-hide demesne and four more belonging to the tenants. The manor had pasture one league long by five furlongs wide, and 4 a. meadow, all worth £15 per year in 1066, and £12 in 1086.<sup>109</sup> Whitecliff manor had enough arable land for one plough, pasture of four furlongs by one furlong, and 1 a. of meadow, all worth 20s. per year in 1066, and 35s. in 1086.<sup>110</sup>

Brixton Deverill manor was highly profitable.<sup>111</sup> It came under the supervision of the Priory of Ogbourne, which from the 13th century administered all of the abbey's English estates as one economic unit.<sup>112</sup> In 1294 the demesne farm had 717 a. of arable, 6 a. of meadow, and downland pastures for c. 1,150 sheep. Brixton Deverill was a collection point for wool from other manors.<sup>113</sup> The tenants of the larger holdings provided carrying services, for example transporting corn to Shaftesbury market and cheeses to Southampton for export to Bec.<sup>114</sup> A staff of customary servants and rigid organisation of tenant labour were required to cultivate the abbey's large demesne in the 12th and 13th centuries.<sup>115</sup> Both virgators and tenants of smaller holdings were obliged to work every working day except Saturday from 1 August to 29 September (Michaelmas), and three days a week for the rest of the year. They owed the usual ploughing boons, and extra ploughing for herbage according to the number of beasts they possessed, and also had to plough, sow and harrow

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<sup>109</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 132.

<sup>110</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 167.

<sup>111</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 46; Chibnall (ed.), *Select Docs.*, 69–73.

<sup>112</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 39; Chibnall (ed.), *Select Docs.*, p. vii.

<sup>113</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 46–53.

<sup>114</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 77–78.

<sup>115</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 92; Chibnall (ed.), *Select Docs.*, p. vii.

between 1½ a. to 3 a. at Martinmas. All tenants in common worked at sheep-shearing and hay-making as necessary, and received the customary reward of a wether and a fleece, and the eighteenth sheaf of hay they bound. They were also rewarded for threshing, carrying and other services.<sup>116</sup> The abbey also had outlying farmsteads at Pertwood and Woodcombe, first recorded in the mid 13th century.<sup>117</sup>

*Arable.* Brixton Deverill and Whitecliff hamlets each had common fields; in 1333 there were three in Whitecliff, West field, East field and Little Whitecliff.<sup>118</sup> Whitecliff manor held 200 a. of arable in 1561.<sup>119</sup> Various arable fields were recorded over the centuries.<sup>120</sup> There were four open fields in Brixton Deverill, with a combined acreage of 663 a., when they were inclosed by private agreement in 1788: Tricketts Hill with Coomb field, Home field, the Forth field, and Itchiscombe field.<sup>121</sup>

*Pasture.* From at least 1086 there were extensive pastures. In 1294 the demesne farm alone had common of pasture for c. 1,150 sheep.<sup>122</sup> A great murrain afflicted the sheep flock in 1341, reducing the quantity of wool fells and lambs.<sup>123</sup> In the 16th century, Whitecliff manor had 300 a. of pasture, common rights for 90 sheep, two oxen, and one horse in Great Whitecliff, and for 20 sheep in Little Whitecliff.<sup>124</sup> In 1788 a common pasture, known as Tenantry Down, provided grazing for 1,230 sheep.<sup>125</sup>

*Meadow.* In 1333 a meadow called Westmead belonged to Whitecliff manor; in 1561, Whitecliff manor owned 30 a. of meadow.<sup>126</sup> Water meadows along the course of the river were artificially improved: Brixton Deverill manor had 9 ½ a. of water

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<sup>116</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 81–2; Pierrepont, 'The Manor of Brixton Deverill', 57–59.

<sup>117</sup> Chibnall (ed.), *Select Docs.*, 69; Pierrepont, 'The Manor of Brixton Deverill', 56–57.

<sup>118</sup> WSA, 335/15–16.

<sup>119</sup> 'The Society's MSS', 37, pp. 30–31.

<sup>120</sup> WSA, D 1/24/69/1-4; 1961/46; Hobbs (ed.), *Glebe Terriers*, 135–36.

<sup>121</sup> WSA, 1180/4.

<sup>122</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 46–53.

<sup>123</sup> *Non. Inq.*, 156.

<sup>124</sup> 'The Society's MSS', 37, pp. 30–31.

<sup>125</sup> WSA, 1180/4.

<sup>126</sup> WSA, 335/15–16; 'The Society's MSS', 37, pp. 30–31.

meadow in 1821,<sup>127</sup> and 19 a. by 1838, with a drowner's house and livestock pens. The Upper and Lower water meadows were further extended by new channels and sluices, possibly in 1841, when a third arch to the bridge was constructed to allow the passage of floodwater.<sup>128</sup>

*Farms & Farming.* In 1838 there were three large farms in the parish: Brixton Deverill Manor farm, at c. 854 a.; Pertwood farm, c. 732 a.; and Whitecliff farm, c. 487 a.<sup>129</sup> There were also four smaller farms, including the c. 77 a. of the Rectory estate.<sup>130</sup> At this time, around half of the parish, a total of 1,087 a., was laid down to arable crops,<sup>131</sup> chiefly wheat, oats and barley;<sup>132</sup> 161 a. were given over to meadow and pasture, and there were 1,060 a. of downland sheep grazing.<sup>133</sup> In 1910 there were four large farms: Manor farm now comprised 523 a., Pertwood and Whitecliff both remained the same as the previous century, and Woodcombe farm contained 381 a.<sup>134</sup> Lower Pertwood farm in Brixton Deverill was mentioned in W. H. Hudson's *A Shepherd's Life* (1910), describing a way of life already then in the past.<sup>135</sup> On the same farm the Houghton Brown family were pioneers of modern organic farming methods in the second half of the 20th century.<sup>136</sup> Whitecliff farm, which had been a dairy farm with 70 cows, was converted into a corn and beef farm after 1946.<sup>137</sup> In 2009, both Pertwood and Woodcombe farms were mainly arable farms, with some livestock.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 5.

<sup>128</sup> WSA, TA/Brixton Deverill; WSA, A 1/533/40, 65, 79; OS Map, 1:2500, LVII 7-8 (1887).

<sup>129</sup> WSA, 628/48/24.

<sup>130</sup> WSA, TA/Brixton Deverill; Sandell (ed.), *Tithe Apportionments*, 45.

<sup>131</sup> WSA, TA/Brixton Deverill; Sandell (ed.), *Tithe Apportionments*, 45.

<sup>132</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1880 and later edns).

<sup>133</sup> WSA, TA/Brixton Deverill; Sandell (ed.), *Tithe Apportionments*, 45.

<sup>134</sup> WSA, L 8/1/134.

<sup>135</sup> W.H. Hudson, *A Shepherd's Life* (ill. edn 1987; 1st pub. 1910), 135-36.

<sup>136</sup> Houghton Brown, 'Farmer-Soldier'.

<sup>137</sup> WSA, 662/49, *Brixton Deverill 2000 A.D.*, p. 50.

<sup>138</sup> Information from Ms T. Webster of Pertwood Farm and Mr S. Allard of Woodcombe Farm, July 2009.

## Woodland

Brixton Deverill lay within the bounds of Selwood forest until *c.* 1300.<sup>139</sup> In 1086 Brixton Deverill manor had woodland covering an area of three furlongs by two furlongs,<sup>140</sup> enough to support 25 pigs in the late 13th century.<sup>141</sup> In 1086 Whitecliff manor had woodland covering one furlong by one furlong,<sup>142</sup> called Ywecombe wood in 1333,<sup>143</sup> and Woodcombe in 1821; in 1561, the manor's woodland comprised 40 a.<sup>144</sup> The parish had 50 a. of woodland in 1838.<sup>145</sup> By 1887 the Longleat estate had laid out woods at Woodcombe as a plantation.<sup>146</sup> The escarpment descending into Woodcombe Bottom remains heavily wooded: elsewhere in the parish there is little woodland, apart from a few coverts on Pertwood Down.<sup>147</sup>

## Trade and Industry

*Mills.* In 1086 a mill belonging to Brixton Deverill manor produced an income of 30*d.* a year.<sup>148</sup> *Cloth making* was a major local industry: in Brixton Deverill a hatter was recorded in the 13th century,<sup>149</sup> and fullers and weavers in the late 14th century.<sup>150</sup> Although there was no factory in the parish, in 1824 its female inhabitants were 'engaged in spinning silk for an establishment at Bruton' (Soms.).<sup>151</sup> *Quarrying* for building stone and sand took place along the valley sides and a *lime kiln* stood west

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<sup>139</sup> *VCH Wilts. IV*, 414–15; G.B. Grundy, 'The Ancient Woodland of Wiltshire', *WAM*, 48 (1937–39), 583–98.

<sup>140</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 132.

<sup>141</sup> Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 48.

<sup>142</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 167.

<sup>143</sup> WSA, 335/15–16.

<sup>144</sup> WSA, 212A/27/18; 'The Society's MSS', 37, pp. 30–31.

<sup>145</sup> WSA, TA/Brixton Deverill; Sandell (ed.), *Tithe Apportionments*, 45.

<sup>146</sup> OS Map, 6", Wilts. LVII 4 (1887).

<sup>147</sup> OS Map, 1:25,000, Explorer, 143 (2004).

<sup>148</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 132.

<sup>149</sup> Pierrepont, 'The Manor of Brixton Deverill', 55–61.

<sup>150</sup> *VCH Wilts. IV*, 122.

<sup>151</sup> Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 6.



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of the village in the 19th century.<sup>152</sup> A newly-erected *malthouse* stood west of the church on property leased from King's College in 1821.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> OS Map, 1:2,500, Wilts. LVII 2, 7, 8, 12 (1887); LVIII 9 (1886).

<sup>153</sup> WSA, 212A/27/18; TA/Brixton Deverill.