

SOCIAL HISTORY

In 1086 Brixton Deverill had 27 households, eight of villeins, eight of coscets, two of bordars, and nine of serfs.¹⁵⁴ Although the abbey of Bec-Hellouin was an important spiritual and intellectual centre at that time,¹⁵⁵ the lives of its tenants do not seem to have reflected that. The abbey's English estates were run to maximise profit,¹⁵⁶ so tenants owed a heavy burden of weekly and seasonal labour services. By contrast, tenants on Glastonbury Abbey's neighbouring manors of Longbridge and Monkton Deverill owed fewer customary labour services but paid higher rents.¹⁵⁷ The community was apparently prosperous: a 13th-century custumal of Brixton Deverill manor named 35 customary tenants, whose surnames suggest that they included a miller, a smith, a farrier, a swineherd, a thresher and a hatter.¹⁵⁸ The manor had 23 households of villeins in 1294.¹⁵⁹ Thirty households in Brixton Deverill and five more in Whitecliff tithing were wealthy enough to be taxed in 1332.¹⁶⁰

Although Brixton Deverill manor belonged to distant institutions for much of its history, the lords of Great Whitecliff manor played a prominent role in the local community. William of Whitecliff (d. c. 1358) acted as coroner for south-west Wiltshire in the 1340s;¹⁶¹ in 1404–5 William Lyvedon (d. 1432), was the tax collector for Whitecliff hamlet;¹⁶² Robert Lyvedon (d. by 1445) was the tax collector for Brixton Deverill in 1434;¹⁶³ and Thomas Westley (d. 1561) was a high collector of the 1540 subsidy.¹⁶⁴ In 1736 Robert Cooper and Luke Foorde of Brixton Deverill were both

¹⁵⁴ *VCH Wilts. II*, 132, 167.

¹⁵⁵ Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 10.

¹⁵⁶ Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 39.

¹⁵⁷ Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 83–84; Chibnall (ed.), *Select Docs.*, 69–73; Pierrepont, 'The Manor of Brixton Deverill', 55–61.

¹⁵⁸ Pierrepont, 'The Manor of Brixton Deverill', 55–61.

¹⁵⁹ Pierrepont, 'The Manor of Brixton Deverill', 55–61.

¹⁶⁰ Crowley (ed.), *Tax List 1332*, 72–73.

¹⁶¹ *VCH Wilts. V*, p. 27.

¹⁶² WSA, 335/21; 'The Society's MSS', 37, p. 12.

¹⁶³ *Cal. Fine 1430–1437*, p. 195.

¹⁶⁴ WSA, 335/46–47; 'The Society's MSS', 37, pp. 25–26.

nominated to serve as jurors and constables for Quarter Sessions.¹⁶⁵ Edward Frowd (d. 1776), lessee of Manor farm, initiated various public improvements, notably the restoration of the church, begun in 1760 when he was churchwarden and his brother John was overseer, and the redirection of the road from Brixton to Hill Deverill.¹⁶⁶

The majority of the inhabitants in 1797 were tenants, labourers, copyholders or servants,¹⁶⁷ some of whom migrated to Salisbury to seek employment.¹⁶⁸ A close of pasture west of the church, known as ‘Football close’ in 1821, was presumably used as a recreation field.¹⁶⁹ In 1853 an exhibition of the agricultural produce of the cottagers of all of the parishes of the Deverill valley was held in Brixton Deverill. Small cash prizes were available in a number of categories, and the event was attended by the Deverill band.¹⁷⁰ No inn is recorded, but there was a shop from c. 1848 to c. 1939.¹⁷¹ With the decline in the number of agricultural workers in the 20th century, the social make-up of the village began to change. In 1994, the population of the Deverills was described as being a mixture of ‘farmers and farm workers, long-time local residents, retired civil servants and ... young professionals with families who commute.’¹⁷² The trend towards long-distance commuters, retired professionals and weekend residents continued, and in 2000 it was noted that ‘the community is no longer a farming one... all but the two farmers work outside the village.’¹⁷³ In that year, the village’s residents included retired military personnel, a pair of Warminster doctors, executives, a London barrister, and a former director of MI5.

Education

¹⁶⁵ Fowle (ed.), *Quarter Sessions 1736*, pp. 68–69.

¹⁶⁶ Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 6.

¹⁶⁷ WSA, 1961/51.

¹⁶⁸ Slack (ed.), *Poverty in Salisbury*, 17–18.

¹⁶⁹ WSA, 212A/27/18.

¹⁷⁰ *The Wiltshire County Mirror*, 2 Aug., 1853; WSA, 1180/15.

¹⁷¹ *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1848 and later edns).

¹⁷² WSA, D 115/3/8

¹⁷³ WSA, 662/49, *Brixton Deverill 2000 A.D.*, p. 79.

In 1819 charitable donations enabled poor children to attend schools in neighbouring parishes.¹⁷⁴ A school room was built onto the Rectory with the help of a £40 Treasury grant,¹⁷⁵ and opened to fee-paying daily pupils in 1823; it was attended by 11 boys and eight girls in 1835, when 15 boys and 20 girls also attended a Sunday school; the fees paid a schoolmaster and the Rector provided books for the children to use.¹⁷⁶ King's College gave £6 a year¹⁷⁷ to support this National School.¹⁷⁸ In 1858 an uncertified mistress was teaching 40 to 50 children in the school room, described as 'fair', but with 'imperfect ventilation'.¹⁷⁹ In 1871, the school accommodated 31 children,¹⁸⁰ and £20 8s. 6d. was spent in 1876 to upgrade the building to the requirements of the School Board.¹⁸¹ The school was closed by 1895 and the village's children were once again travelling to schools in the neighbouring parishes of Longbridge and Kingston Deverill.¹⁸² The old school room may have been in use as the parish reading room in the early part of the 20th century;¹⁸³ it was infested with rats by 1965.¹⁸⁴ In 2000, the old reading room was in use as part of the house.¹⁸⁵

Charities

In the early 20th century, the churchwardens made regular collections for charitable causes, including a sick and needy fund.¹⁸⁶ The parish joined with Kingston Deverill and Monkton Deverill to provide a nurse in 1919.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁴ *Educ. of the Poor Digest*, p. 1020.

¹⁷⁵ *Account of Wilts. Schools, 1859*, p. 19; DOE, 'Bldgs List', Brixton Deverill, 25.

¹⁷⁶ *Educ. in England Abstract, 1835*, p. 1030.

¹⁷⁷ WSA, 1180/3.

¹⁷⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1848).

¹⁷⁹ *Account of Wilts. Schools, 1859*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁰ *Returns relating to Elementary Educ., 1871*, p. 424.

¹⁸¹ WSA, 1180/11; D 1/11/239.

¹⁸² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1895 and later edns).

¹⁸³ OS Maps, 6", Wilts. LVII NE (1901, 1926).

¹⁸⁴ WSA, D 365/3/17.

¹⁸⁵ WSA, 662/49, *Brixton Deverill 2000 A.D.*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁶ WSA, 1180/11.

¹⁸⁷ WSA, 662/47.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Manor

Brixton Deverill came under the jurisdiction of the Selwood forest eyre in the 13th century, but was exempt from forest law by 1300, presumably because the abbey of Bec had negotiated with the Crown for exemption.¹⁸⁸ Manorial court rolls survive from the mid 13th century,¹⁸⁹ and a custumal from 1334.¹⁹⁰ Jurisdiction by the manor court continued until relatively late: in 1788 the tithingman was allotted a parcel of land in Home field in recompense for serving in office, and in 1824 King's College was still holding manor courts twice a year at which the provost presided in person.¹⁹¹

Parish

A parish vestry met regularly in the manor house during the 19th century and in the school room in the 20th century.¹⁹² From the late 19th century, there was also a parish meeting. Whilst the vestry had oversight of the churchwardens, overseers and the affairs of the church, the parish meeting attended to civil matters, such as the maintenance of the bridge and provision of social housing.¹⁹³ The parish paid for repairs to bridges and ways along the road from Mere to Warminster in 1673.¹⁹⁴ Brixton Deverill bridge was restored in 1834, and again in 1841, partly at the rector's expense.¹⁹⁵ In 1844, the waywarden spent the unusually large sum of £32 5s. 10d. on road repairs.¹⁹⁶ A police constable was resident at some point in the 20th century, as

¹⁸⁸ *VCH Wilts. IV*, 414–15; Grundy, 'Ancient Woodlands', 595.

¹⁸⁹ Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 43; F.W. Maitland, *Select Pleas in Manorial & other Seigniorial Courts* (Selden Soc. ii. 1889), 13 check.

¹⁹⁰ Morgan, *Abbey of Bec*, 68, 71.

¹⁹¹ Hoare, *Mod. Wilts. Heytesbury*, 5.

¹⁹² WSA, 1180/10–11.

¹⁹³ WSA, 662/47.

¹⁹⁴ WSA, A 1/110/1673M

¹⁹⁵ WSA, A 1/533/40, 65, 79.

¹⁹⁶ WSA, 1180/10.

Laurel Villa was formerly the parish police house.¹⁹⁷ During the Second World War, an invasion committee for the parishes of Brixton, Kingston and Monkton Deverill co-ordinated the local war effort, with officers appointed for each parish.¹⁹⁸

Brixton Deverill came under the jurisdiction of Warminster Rural District Council from 1872, and then Warminster and Westbury Rural District Council from 1934.¹⁹⁹

Poor

The parish spent an average of £33 0s. 6d. towards the maintenance of the poor in the three years ending at Easter 1775, and £19 1s. 2d. in the year ending Easter 1776. This figure had risen dramatically to £71 13s. 1d. by 1803, when seven adults and 12 children were in receipt of out-relief.²⁰⁰ It increased to £173 in 1812–3, and decreased to £88 in 1814–5: in March 1813, 14 adults received permanent out-relief, and another three received occasional relief from the parish; two years later, the number of adults receiving permanent relief had fallen to ten.²⁰¹ The average expenditure 1833–5 had risen to £107, and Brixton Deverill joined Warminster Poor Law Union in 1835.²⁰² In 1851, the Overseers paid out £61 18s. 8d. In the following year, the parish meeting reduced the rates on existing rateable property, except cottages, by 15%, and rated all new houses in the parish.²⁰³ In the early 20th century, the parish was employing an assistant overseer on a salary of £6, raised to £8 in 1923.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ *Brixton Deverill 2000 A.D.*, p. 72.

¹⁹⁸ WSA, F 2/851/3.

¹⁹⁹ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 536.

²⁰⁰ *Poor Law Abstract, 1804*, 564–65.

²⁰¹ *Poor Law Abstract, 1818*, 496–97.

²⁰² *Poor Law Comm. 2nd Rep.*, 560.

²⁰³ WSA, 1180/10.

²⁰⁴ WSA, 662/47.