

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Agriculture was the main occupation of the inhabitants until the late 20th century. The river allowed other types of economic activity to take place, driving mills for the cloth industry and supporting commercial watercress growing and fish farming in the late 20th century. Women home-workers supplemented agricultural wages by making gloves and buttons in the 19th century. In the later 20th and early 21st centuries, most inhabitants were employed outside the parish.

Agriculture. Domesday Book reveals an established agricultural community, which collectively cultivated enough arable land to require the services of 10 plough teams, and had extensive pasture, meadow and woodland. Few records of medieval agriculture survive: mixed farming was practiced on the portion of the Giffard estate held by Thomas Carey in 1361, then comprising of three carucates of 80 a. each, a total of 240 a. arable land, of which 100 a. could be sown annually, also 6a. meadow, and pasture for six horses, 12 oxen and 300 sheep, a stint for each carucate of two horses, four oxen and 100 sheep; and tenant holdings rented out for £11 *p.a.*²⁰⁹

Arable fields were set out on the fertile lower hillsides, to the east of Hill Deverill Manor and to the west of the church.²¹⁰ *Pasture* on the downs above the Deverill valley was shared by the inhabitants of neighbouring villages: it was agreed in 1227 by the lords of Hill Deverill's five principal estates and the abbot of Bec, the lord of Brixton Deverill, that the ancient ditch across Potteleigh should be the boundary between their pastures.²¹¹ Baycliffe apparently had its own common fields and pastures:²¹² in c. 1335 Longleat priory farmed a demesne of 101 a. arable, pasture

²⁰⁹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XI, 34.

²¹⁰ Above, intro.: boundaries, early settlement. For field names see: TNA: PRO, CP 25/1/250/10 ff. 25–26; Fry (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1195–1272*, pp. 27–28.

²¹¹ TNA: PRO, CP 25/1/250/6 f. 14; Fry (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1195–1272*, p. 16.

²¹² WSA, 861/12, and map 332/H5; *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, III, 280, 442–43; Conyers (ed.), *Extents for Debts*, 94.

for 300 sheep, and tenant holdings let for various rents and services.²¹³ *Meadow* lay in the marshy river valley, aptly described by the name ‘Wydemor’ in 1320.²¹⁴ By 1735 4 a. of water meadows had been constructed near the manor house at Stall Mead and 4 a. more at Bridge Mead, and a further 26 a. on Sturges’ farm.²¹⁵ *Free Warren* was granted by the Crown to John Mautravers in 1318 on his Hill Deverill estates,²¹⁶ and in 1735 Hill Deverill manor’s rabbit warren covered 15 a.²¹⁷

By the early 17th century, the Ludlow family of Hill Deverill manor owned most of the parish. This enabled Sir Edmund Ludlow (d. 1624) to inclose the ancient common fields for greater profitability.²¹⁸ In 1735, Hill Deverill manor house stood at the centre of the largest complex of buildings in the parish on a mixed arable and livestock estate of 1,336 a.: a total of 520 a. was farmed directly; there were two large farms, Sturges’ farm (719 a.) to the east of the river and Hooper’s farm (506 a.) to the west; three smallholdings; six small tenements; a mill; Humphreys’ malthouse; and the tenancy of the Rectory estate, *c.* 100 a.²¹⁹ An early attempt to enrich downland in the south-east of the parish for arable crops by ‘burnbaking’ is recorded in a fieldname of 1752.²²⁰

The largest farm, leased to Sturges in 1735, was known as East Farm in 1773,²²¹ and Hill Deverill Manor farm *c.* 1936–40, when it consisted of 650 a. light hill land and 30 a. water meadow, leased to Jack Houghton Brown who farmed it together with Pertwood farm, Brixton Deverill: the best valley land was too wet for dairying, so Houghton Brown grew 250 a. arable crops, as well as turnips to feed a flock of cross-bred Cheviot-Suffolk ewes living on 1,500 a. of rough downland

²¹³ Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 33.

²¹⁴ Pugh (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1272–1327*, p. 107.

²¹⁵ WSA, 9/1/77; another copy, *ibid.*, 490/1123; Deverill Valley and Crockerton W.I., *The Deverills: Wonderful Water* (2006), 37–41.

²¹⁶ *Cal. Chart.*, 1300–1326, p. 391.

²¹⁷ WSA, 9/1/77.

²¹⁸ *VCH Wilts.* IV, 46; TNA: PRO, STAC 5/A8/37, 5/A11/8, 5/A34/10, 5/A58/12.

²¹⁹ WSA, 9/1/77.

²²⁰ WSA, 1332/H1.

²²¹ WSA, A 1/345/137.

grazing, producing wool and lambs for meat, sired by Hampshire Down rams.²²² Rye Hill Farm,²²³ leased to Hooper in 1735, consisted of 630 a. in 1911.²²⁴ Mainly arable and dairying, it became so unprofitable in the agricultural depression that the tenant left and it was sold in 1922.²²⁵ By 2010 it had shrunk to 400 a., producing only arable crops: the farm buildings, currently leased out, are of coursed limestone rubble with red brick quoins, probably rebuilt by the Duke of Somerset after he acquired the estate: the barn dates from the 19th century,²²⁶ and its reused beams were known in 1894 as ‘Coker’s bedstead’ because they were brought from Manor Farm.²²⁷ In 1848 the parish had three other farms: Mill Farm, 69 a.; Charlock Hill farm, 77 a.; and Baycliffe Farm, 300 a.²²⁸

Woodland. The lands of Hill Deverill lay within the bounds of Selwood forest until c. 1300.²²⁹ Domesday Book suggests that woodland was already being assarted for cultivation in 1086, when Hill Deverill manor had only 3 a. and the Rectory estate had none, although Baycliffe, perhaps the manor’s portion of Selwood forest, still had woodland measuring 3 furlongs by 1 furlong.²³⁰ The process of clearing the land for cultivation continued in the Middle Ages,²³¹ although groves and woods remained,²³² especially on the steepest slopes of Bidcombe Hill, Westcombe and Little Down. The owners of Hill Deverill manor were active in exploiting their woodland resources in 1735, when willow beds and a nursery of young trees had been established close to the manor house and a total of 163 a. was coppiced, at Bidcombe Wood (93 a.) and Balls Woods (70 a.).²³³ By 1848 the area of woodland had

²²² WSA, 853/39; Houghton Brown, ‘Farmer-Soldier’, 86–92.

²²³ WSA, A 1/345/137.

²²⁴ WSA, L 8/1/134.

²²⁵ WSA, 1225/39.

²²⁶ WBR Farmstead Project, ‘Rye Hill Farm’.

²²⁷ WAM, XXVIII (1894–5), 250.

²²⁸ WSA, L 8/1/134; TNA: PRO, CP 43/971; Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 10, 31–2.

²²⁹ VCH Wilts. IV, 414–15; WAM, XLVIII (1937–39), 583–98.

²³⁰ VCH Wilts. II, 136, 140, 155, 162, 167.

²³¹ VCH Wilts. IV, 417.

²³² *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, III, 280; *Cal. Pat.* 1401–05, p. 116.

²³³ WSA, 9/1/77.

declined to only 75 a., including small withy and alder beds.²³⁴ In 2004 Bidcombe wood was the largest wood and there were smaller woods at Whitley copse nearby, and around the manor house.²³⁵

Mills. Domesday book records three mills in 1086, one on the estate later belonging to the earls of Gloucester,²³⁶ a second on the Giffard estate,²³⁷ and a third on the estate of Aubrey the chamberlain.²³⁸ The first two probably stood on the sites now occupied by Hill Deverill mill and the manor house, but the site of the third is unknown and it has not been possible to trace the history of each mill. In 1311 property in Hill Deverill and Maiden Bradley sold by Ellis of Hulle to Robert le Bore of Hill Deverill manor included two mills,²³⁹ and a fulling mill called Hamelene's Mill belonged to Longleat priory's estate in c. 1335.²⁴⁰ Although these belonged to estates in Hill Deverill, they may have stood in adjacent parishes.

The present *mill* may have been associated with Mill farm in 1327, when it was the home of John atte Mulle,²⁴¹ worth 5s. *p.a.* in 1342.²⁴² In 1735 a mill, mill house and 5 a. of closes west of the river was worth £25 *p.a.* to Hill Deverill manor.²⁴³ This mill was still the property of Hill Deverill manor in 1911, when it was leased with Mill Farm.²⁴⁴ The mill is a tall 3-storey coursed rubblestone and brick-dressed building of c. 1800 converted into a dwelling in the 1960s, when most of the machinery was removed and scrapped by Drinkwater of Trowbridge. Some unrendered interior walls and original elm beams remain, and some storage bays and pulleys in the roofspace. *Mill Farmhouse* is a T-shaped later 18th-century farmhouse of rubblestone with brick quoins, owned by Daniel Hurd and his family

²³⁴ WSA, TA/Brixton Deverill; Sandell (ed.), *Tithe Apportionments*, 45.

²³⁵ OS Map, 1:25,000, Explorer, 143 (2004).

²³⁶ *VCH Wilts. II*, 140.

²³⁷ *VCH Wilts. II*, 155.

²³⁸ *VCH Wilts. II*, 167.

²³⁹ Pugh (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1272–1327*, p. 125

²⁴⁰ Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Heytesbury, 32–23; *VCH Wilts. III*, 298.

²⁴¹ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 164; Crowley (ed.), *Tax List 1332*, pp. 71–2.

²⁴² *Inq. Non.*, 156.

²⁴³ WSA, 9/1/77.

²⁴⁴ WSA, L 8/1/134.

c. 1925–72, refenestrated after 1850 and rendered by John Hurd in 1955.²⁴⁵ The substantial rear range was a dairy with cheese-room reached by a stick baluster stair. In the through passage between the house and the dairy was a well and outside was a range of pig-sties, often associated with dairying. Around the mill lay c. 60 a. water meadows in 1848,²⁴⁶ on which watercress beds were developed by Daniel Hurd from 1936, completely rebuilt in 1972 and modernised c. 1989–91 by his son John Hurd, who continued to produce organic watercress in 2010.²⁴⁷ In the later 20th century a fish farm next door used the water from the watercress beds to rear organic trout.²⁴⁸

Industry

The parish had little industry, although there were fullers and weavers in the later 14th century.²⁴⁹ Over the centuries, a few inhabitants sold or processed agricultural commodities: in 1582 John Hull was a badger, or dealer in agricultural products;²⁵⁰ in 1735 Humphries' malt house belonging to the manor was worth £18 *p.a.*,²⁵¹ and in the later 19th century 'the only industry besides farming was glove-making and button-making by the women.'²⁵² There were malm pits on Rye Hill, Charlock Hill and Baycliffe farms, where chalk was dug for brick making in the 19th century.²⁵³

²⁴⁵ *The Deverills: Wonderful Water*, 55–6; *Longbridge Deverill Parish Memories*, 105–110, 131–34; inf. from Mr J. Hurd, 2009.

²⁴⁶ WSA, TA/ Hill Deverill.

²⁴⁷ *The Deverills: Wonderful Water*, pp. viii, 27–9, 55–6; *Longbridge Deverill Parish Memories*, 105–110; inf. from Mr J. Hurd, 2009.

²⁴⁸ *The Deverills: Wonderful Water*, 15.

²⁴⁹ *VCH Wilts. IV*, 122.

²⁵⁰ Johnson (ed.), *Session Mins.*, 8.

²⁵¹ WSA, 9/1/77.

²⁵² WAM, XXVIII (1894–5), 251.

²⁵³ WSA, TA/Brixton Deverill.