

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

GREAT ROLLRIGHT

Economic History

Until the 20th century Great Rollright was a typical Cotswold farming village, combining traditional sheep-and-corn husbandry with cattle rearing and dairying. Its open fields were enclosed in 1776, leading to the emergence by the 19th century of nine or ten ring-fenced farms which employed most of the parish's inhabitants. As elsewhere in the region farming shifted from arable to dairying during the early 20th-century agricultural depression, with some diversification (aided by the railway) into pheasant breeding and sugar beet. Mixed farming continued in the early 21st century, despite a resurgence of arable. The parish also supported the usual rural crafts and trades and (in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries) several shops.

The Agricultural Landscape

Rollright's open fields probably existed in embryonic form before the Norman Conquest, stretching from the southern boundary to just beyond the ridgeway.¹ By the 14th century they were cultivated on a three-course rotation of cropping and fallow,² though individual holdings may have been divided between two or three fields:³ Joan Despenser's 140-a. dower estate lay in north and south fields in 1306,⁴ but a west field was mentioned earlier, and a 10½-a. holding in the late 12th century was divided amongst three fields.⁵ By the 18th century the fields were organized into four quarters, and at enclosure in 1776 covered 70 yardlands (1,923 a.) or c.80 per cent of the parish.⁶ Probably the only significant area of old enclosure was at Coombe (meaning 'valley'), on the heavier soils in the north-west: that was perhaps the location of the 220 a. of pasture and meadow recorded in 1086, and in the 13th century was common pasture open all year.⁷ It was enclosed by the 16th century, probably divided (as later) between the two main manors.⁸ Part of Rollright heath, in the east of the

¹ Above, landscape etc. (boundaries).

² TNA, C 135/82/1.

³ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 14, 19; below (medieval).

⁴ TNA, C 133/124/3.

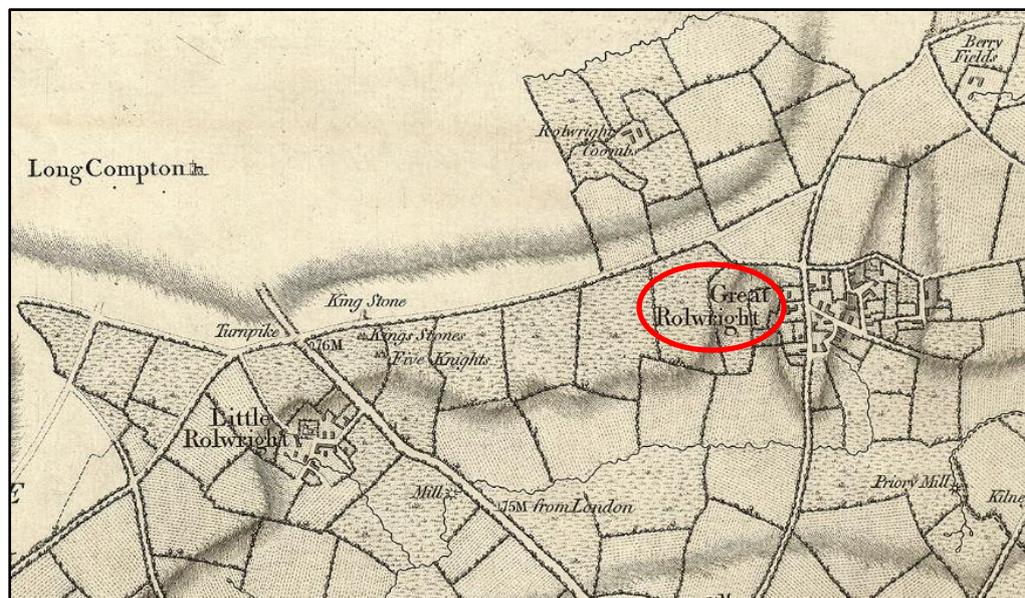
⁵ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 55, 64, 109, 113.

⁶ OHC, Ot.I/18; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, f. 63; Gt Rollright Encl. Act, pp. 1–2.

⁷ TNA, JUST 1/701, m. 1; below (medieval).

⁸ OHC, E23/1/D/28; *ibid.* E433/D1/1; Gt Rollright Encl. Act, p. 6.

parish, was called ‘new broke ground’ in 1726, suggesting recent cultivation of former common pasture.⁹



Great Rollright village in 1797, showing its post-enclosure fields of arable and pasture: detail from Richard Davis's map of Oxfordshire.

No woodland was recorded in Domesday Book, and very little was mentioned later, though in the 1540s Brasenose College received £3 from wood sales ‘in common years’, probably mostly (as later) from hedgerow trees and scattered small plantations.¹⁰ In the absence of fuel from woodland, inhabitants were allowed to take furze and bushes from Rollright heath and Westfield Leys (the latter in the west of the parish), for which a 10-a. poor allotment was created in lieu at enclosure.¹¹ ‘Lot furze and thorns’ belonging to a 6-yardland holding were mentioned with its cow and sheep commons earlier in the 18th century, suggesting the annual allocation of a scarce resource, while William Carter (d. 1649) similarly claimed a yardland’s allotted furze.¹²

Medieval Farming

In 1086 the Despenser and Stafford manors each contained arable for 6 ploughteams, 50 a. of pasture, and 50 a. of meadow, and yielded £5 including tenants’ rents. Both manors’

⁹ BNC, B576.

¹⁰ F. Madan (ed.), *Brasenose College Quatercentenary Monographs*, II.1 (OHS 53, 1909), no. IX, 193; OS Maps 6", Oxon. VIII, XIV (1884–5 edn) (e.g. Long and William’s copses by Coombe Fm).

¹¹ Gt Rollright Enclo. Act, pp. 6–7; Jeffery, *Rollright*, 18.

¹² OHC, Ot.I/18; Ot.I/20; TNA, PROB 11/210/370.

values had remained unchanged since 1066, although as the Despenser manor had only 4½ ploughteams it may have seen some slight contraction in the cultivated area. The remaining smaller manor (incorporated into the Despensers' manor by the 13th century) contained arable for 5 ploughteams and 20 a. of meadow, and was worth £3 a year as in 1066. Great Rollright as a whole had 5 ploughteams spread amongst the 3 demesnes, run in part by 7 slaves or *servi*, while a total of 21 *villani* and 9 bordars shared another 9½ ploughteams.¹³ By the late 12th century most demesne and tenant land lay probably intermixed in the open fields: the Parleses' endowment of Cold Norton priory included 30 a. of arable scattered across various named grounds in parcels of 1–5 a., along with 2 a. of meadow, and pasture for 200 sheep, 6 oxen, 2 cows, and 20 pigs.¹⁴ A similar grant of 12 a. of demesne land (half in one field and half in another) included a ½-a. strip next to that of another landholder.¹⁵

By the 1270s the Despenser manor's 23 yardlanders owed extensive labour services including ploughing, reaping, mowing, and haymaking, washing and shearing of sheep, and carrying of hay. Six cottagers were also liable for ploughing service.¹⁶ Nevertheless hired workers were employed to plough, harrow, reap, thresh, and perform other necessary tasks on what was a considerable agricultural enterprise. Under Philip Burnell (d. 1294) the demesne arable alone covered 464 a., producing wheat, barley, oats, rye, beans, peas, and vetches for sale, worth more than £17. A further 20 a. of meadow and a small enclosed pasture ground provided hay and additional grazing. Rents from free tenants (c.£3 18s. per annum) were worth half those from customary tenants (c.£7 16s.), who paid them partly in cash and partly in labour services, though by John de Hadlow's death in 1346 probably few if any labour services were still performed.¹⁷ Reeves chosen from the customary tenants most likely undertook the day-to-day running of the farm on behalf of intermittently resident lords,¹⁸ who judging by the old broken barn and cowhouse assigned to Joan Despenser in 1299 may not have invested in its buildings: repairs in 1314 were made only with the king's help, during royal custody of the manor.¹⁹ Much less is known about the Stafford manor and Cold Norton priory estate, although villeins on the former owed the same services as their Despenser manor neighbours. All tenants focused probably on mixed farming, bynames derived from agricultural occupations including Messor (meaning 'hayward'), Bercar ('shepherd'), and Rutherhurd ('cowherd').²⁰

¹³ DB, ff. 158, 160v. No *servi* were noted on the smaller manor.

¹⁴ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 54; above (agric. landscape).

¹⁵ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 68, citing BL, Egerton Ch. 633.

¹⁶ *Rot. Hund.* II, 727.

¹⁷ TNA, E 199/36/1; *ibid.* C 133/63/32; C 133/68/10; C 135/82/1.

¹⁸ Mentioned in 1241, 1294, and 1299: *Oxon. Eyre, 1241*, p. 150; TNA, E 199/36/1; *Cal. Close 1296–1302*, 314; below, social hist. (Middle Ages).

¹⁹ *Cal. Close 1296–1302*, 313–14; 1313–18, 59.

²⁰ *Rot. Hund.* II, 727–8; *Cal. Close 1296–1302*, 314.

Following the Black Death demesne farming was probably reduced and then abandoned. By 1383 the Despenser demesne had shrunk from three carucates to two, both of them worn out (*debilis*), suggesting a lack of manuring, while the watermill lay ruined.²¹ Derelict buildings were also noted (in 1450) on Cold Norton priory's Rollright demesne, which in 1380 was let to John Hicks of Long Compton at an annual rent of £7 4s. 5d.²² Arable cultivation, as elsewhere in the Cotswolds, increasingly gave way to sheep grazing for wool production, attracting small-scale growers such as John Freeman (d. 1491), who left several bequests of sheep in his will.²³ Others possibly engaged in the wool trade included John Goylyn (d. 1485), tenant of a 16-yardland (c.480 a.) estate,²⁴ and Edward Bulstrode of Upton (Bucks.), who in 1508 was awarded a 20-year lease of Cold Norton priory's former manor at an annual rent of £5.²⁵

The 16th Century to Parliamentary Enclosure

Conversion of arable to pasture continued in the early 16th century, when the Heythrop wool producer John Ashfield (d. 1521), a lessee of the Hungerfords, evicted cultivators from their holdings and let their houses fall derelict.²⁶ Grain was still grown, however, and inhabitants' wills suggest that farming practices were typical of the area, combining sheep and cattle husbandry with the cultivation of wheat, barley (some of it malted for brewing), and rye.²⁷ Several farmers occupied more than a yardland, probably reflecting late medieval amalgamations, although some poorer inhabitants with neither yardland nor plough were remembered in a husbandman's will in 1575. One such may have been the 'day labourer' William Russell (d. 1566), who nonetheless left more than a dozen sheep grazed presumably on the commons.²⁸ Most farms were run from the village, the earliest outlying farmstead being probably Coombe Farm, established by the 1720s in the valley on the parish's north-western edge. The site may have been seasonally occupied earlier, perhaps by shepherds;²⁹ a child was found dead there in the 1570s, and in the following decade the name referred to an area of enclosed (formerly common) pasture.³⁰

²¹ TNA, C 136/24/19; below (milling).

²² Jeffery, *Rollright*, 115–16.

²³ *Oxon. Wills*, 46–7; below, social hist.

²⁴ *Cal. Inq. p.m. Hen. VII*, I, p. 20; above, landownership (other estates).

²⁵ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 117.

²⁶ I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–18* (1897), I, 335, 383; TNA, PROB 11/20/92; *VCH Oxon.* XI, 138.

²⁷ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon., Gt Rollright (1545–98).

²⁸ *Ibid.* 180, f. 105v.; 184, f. 219v; 185, f. 322 and v.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 151/1/23 (Thos Shirley of 'Rollright Combes'); cf. *ibid.* par. reg. transcript, s.a. 1643 (Robt Hull, bachelor and shepherd).

³⁰ *Ibid.* par. reg. transcript; *ibid.* E23/1/D/28; above (agric. landscape).

Mixed farming on a similar pattern continued in the 17th century. Open-field farms, held as copyholds, leaseholds, or freeholds under the two main manors, ranged in size from half a yardland to four or more,³¹ with produce sold presumably at Hook Norton or Chipping Norton (both c.2¾ miles away) or at Moreton-in-Marsh (7½ miles). Smallholders such as the day labourer Thomas Hawes (d. 1623) or the blacksmith Richard Green (d. 1620) supplemented their farm incomes by wage- and craftwork,³² while other wage workers included several shepherds, of whom Thomas Green lived with his employer Richard Berry (d. 1658), and was left 5s. on condition that he remained in his service.³³ Berry himself left a flock of 133 sheep, which was not the largest but bigger than most, with John Baughan (d. 1668) keeping 45 and John Witt (d. 1685) a flock of 60, alongside a few cattle and pigs, and horses used for traction.³⁴ Arable remained central, William Baughan (d. 1672) leaving £60-worth of corn and hay, and John Norgrove (d. 1690) more than £120-worth, the chief crops being wheat, barley, oats, and peas.³⁵ Hemp was grown on a small scale, giving rise to the name Hemplands in the village,³⁶ and several inhabitants made cheese or kept bees.³⁷



Hemplands. Open ground between Church End and High Street, looking south-westwards.

³¹ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 93–6; OHC, E433/D1/1; *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 7/5/18.

³² OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 297/4/105; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. b 69, f. 61.

³³ *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 6/1/30; TNA, PROB 11/203/281; PROB 11/300/601.

³⁴ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 6/1/30; 6/3/46; 73/1/10.

³⁵ *ibid.* 6/4/40; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 145, f. 44.

³⁶ e.g. *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1603–6*, p. 15. For the name, Jeffery, *Rollright*, 28.

³⁷ e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 164/5/18; 6/1/30; 115/5/24.

Innovations included the introduction of sainfoin, cinquefoil, and turnips (mentioned in the 1730s–40s), while field orders protected the harvest from cattle, horses, pigs, and sheep. In 1727 money was raised to employ a hayward to oversee the commons, and stints were reduced from three cows per yardland to two and from 34 sheep to 30, suggesting pressure on available pasture. Further orders imposed fines for over-grazing, and restricted inhabitants' ability to let unused sheep commons to outsiders.³⁸ By the 1730s around a dozen farmers cultivated the open fields, several of them occupying substantial amalgamations: William Baughan (d. 1751) held 9½ yardlands (c.285 a.) mostly from the Sheppards, while the newcomer Richard Humphries (d. 1769) had 7 yardlands (c.210 a.) in the open fields and leased the enclosed pasture farm at Coombe, run later by the grazier Robert Harbidge (d. 1799), another newcomer.³⁹ A 4-yardland holding with commons for 8 horses, 8 cows, and 120 sheep, let to Robert Sumner at £30 a year, was advertized for sale in 1763.⁴⁰

Parliamentary Enclosure and Later

Enclosure was carried out under a private Act of 1775 and an award sealed the following year.⁴¹ Land was distributed among eighteen owners and occupiers, of whom the rector and John Carter-Pollard (as lord of the Despenser manor) received more than 400 a. each, eight others (including Brasenose College) 54–186 a. each, and the remaining eight 3–47 a. each. Another 74 a. were allotted for the long-established Poor's Estate, 10 a. for a new poor allotment, and 3 a. to the surveyors of highways for stone and gravel.⁴² Exchanges and sales were accompanied by the construction of outlying farmhouses at Heath farm (by 1781), Brighthill (1782), Hill Barn, and Lime Kiln farm,⁴³ though most of the parish's seven or eight other farms (Coombe farm excepted) continued to be run from homesteads in the village.⁴⁴ Earlier patterns of mixed farming also continued, leaving three fifths of the cultivable land under crops in 1801,⁴⁵ while turnover of farming families was generally low.⁴⁶ In 1841 ten inhabitants were styled farmer, among them members of the long-standing

³⁸ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 23–8.

³⁹ OHC, PAR222/15/T1/1; *ibid.* MSS Wills Oxon. 119/1/8; 135/4/28; 136/2/47.

⁴⁰ *Oxf. Jnl*, 26 Nov. 1763.

⁴¹ Gt Rollright Encl. Act, 15 Geo. III, c. xli (private); OHC, encl. award; cf. BNC, B576 (an apparently failed attempt at enclosure in 1726).

⁴² OHC, encl. award; above, landscape etc. (roads); landownership; below, social hist. (welfare).

⁴³ *Oxf. Jnl*, 23 Mar. 1776, 7 July 1781, 1 July 1820; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 250/1/51 (sales); OS Map 1", sheet XLV (1833 edn); above, landscape etc. (built character).

⁴⁴ OHC, QSD/L/227.

⁴⁵ TNA, HO 67/18.

⁴⁶ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 235/2/7; 250/1/15; 252/2/24; 265/2/19; 265/2/24; 279/1/11; TNA, PROB 11/1458/264; PROB 11/1598/110; PROB 11/1896/440.

Bailey, Berry, Harbidge, Harris, and Hughes families,⁴⁷ and ten years later nine farms covered an estimated 2,276 a. (53–720 a. each), employing a total of 68 labourers. Most probably lived in the parish, some 70-odd inhabitants depending wholly or partly on farm work in 1851.⁴⁸



Lime Kiln House (centre), looking northwards from Lime Kiln (later Halt) Farm in Over Norton, across the former railway line.

Later consolidation reduced the number of farms, several of which were taken over by newcomers,⁴⁹ though in the 1860s–70s the largest farmer by far was Richard Berry, with over 1,000 a. and control of nearly half the parish's cottages.⁵⁰ A range of acreages continued in 1910,⁵¹ when Alexander Hall's 830-a. estate (encompassing the former Coombe and Hill Barn farms) was run directly from the newly built Manor Farm. Joseph Hughes's 588 a. combined his own land with the leasehold Heath, Cardwell, and Buildings farms, held respectively from the rector, the Berrys, and Brasenose College, while other leasehold farmers included Benjamin Salmon (338 a. mostly under Brasenose), Richard Berry (251 a. also under Brasenose), George Wyton (163 a. under the rector), and J.H. Hudson (54 a. at Brighthill). The 88-a. Lime Kiln farm (mostly in Over Norton) was owner-occupied by Stephen Matthews. Land use changed little during the early decades of the agricultural depression, with just over half the parish under crops in the 1870s–90s, of which some two thirds were cereals (wheat, barley, and oats). Thereafter an increased emphasis on dairying prompted a modest rise in cattle numbers and a fall in those of sheep,⁵² and though Manor farm produced mixed cereal and fodder crops and had a 'splendid flock' of Oxford Down ewes, it 'relied chiefly on the sale of store cattle and milk'. Hall's biggest

⁴⁷ TNA, HO 107/879; OHC, par. reg. transcript.

⁴⁸ TNA, HO 107/1732 (also recording 30-odd 'farm boys').

⁴⁹ e.g. *Oxf. Jnl.*, 23 Sept. 1848; *Banbury Advertiser*, 27 Mar. 1879; TNA, RG 13/1400.

⁵⁰ TNA, RG 9/911; RG 10/1458; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 335, f. 324 (presumably Berry).

⁵¹ For following incl. acreages, OHC, DV/X/80 (with maps).

⁵² TNA, MAF 68/255; MAF 68/711; MAF 68/1281; MAF 68/1851; MAF 68/2421.

problem there was lack of skilled labour, encouraging a turn towards ‘mechanical contrivances’. Joseph Hughes also suffered from low prices and high wages, but remained convinced that Rollright was well suited to the traditional ‘half-and-half farm’, combining cereal and fodder crops with cattle, sheep, and pigs.⁵³

Similar patterns persisted in the 1930s–40s,⁵⁴ when Alexander Wishart, an enterprising Glasgow butcher ‘in a very big way of business’, leased 918 a. from the Halls and Brasenose College, which his bailiff ran as a typical mixed farm. Brasenose’s Courthouse farm (304 a.), let to the newcomer Norman Righton, was broadly comparable, though diversifying into market-gardening, while G.P. Hughes’s Cardwell farm (401 a.) was ‘very well farmed’, with a ‘good hill flock’ and its arable in ‘good heart’. At Heath farm (445 a.) A.B. Harvey reared pheasants, transporting the birds and eggs by train, and cropped almost three quarters of his acreage (a high proportion). Two smaller farms (54–97 a.) were predominantly grass and attracted criticism, one tenant (a ‘shellshock case from the last war’) lacking ‘knowledge of rotations’. The railway also encouraged the growing of sugar beet, worth £2,500 a year by the 1950s when it was sent for processing at Kidderminster (Worcs.), but production ceased following the line’s closure in 1962.⁵⁵ Thenceforth the parish’s farms (which from the 1950s were increasingly owner-occupied) expanded their crop production, with wheat supplanting barley as the dominant cereal by the 1980s, when the parish was four fifths arable and only c.520 a. were grazed by 400 cattle and over 570 sheep.⁵⁶ At Heath farm in 1986, 600 a. were worked by 17 permanent staff, producing crops including brussel sprouts, leeks, beans, and onions, sold in London and Birmingham.⁵⁷

Around half a dozen farms remained in separate ownership in the early 21st century.⁵⁸ Manor farm was worked in 1991 under a share farming agreement, operating a three-course rotation of winter wheat (150 a.), spring beans (173 a.), and oilseed rape (144 a.), with a smaller area used for fattening cattle and grazing sheep. A 32-a. woodland plantation produced a variety of hard- and softwoods, and provided shelter for c.800 pheasants, with a shoot overseen by a part-time gamekeeper.⁵⁹ Mixed farming with an arable bias also continued at Cardwell farm (430 a.), where new storage was provided in

⁵³ H. Rider Haggard, *Rural England*, II (1906), 107–14.

⁵⁴ TNA, MAF 68/3525; MAF 32/913/88 (from which following quotations taken).

⁵⁵ OHC, CC3/4/C9/11; above, landscape etc. (communications).

⁵⁶ TNA, MAF 68/4693; MAF 68/5189; MAF 68/6123 (figs for united Rollright parish).

⁵⁷ BBC Domesday Reloaded D-block GB-432000-231000/page/10 (accessed online Feb. 2021).

⁵⁸ OCC Register of Landowner Statements, nos. 1477, 1547, 1619, 1888 (accessed online) (Cardwell, Church End, Hutton Grange, and Manor fms). For Heath fm, below.

⁵⁹ *Sale Cat.*, *Gt Rollright Manor* (1991): copy in OHC.

2010 for hay, straw, feedstuffs, and machinery,⁶⁰ while in 2012 neighbouring Heath farm was commended for its winter oats.⁶¹

Non-Agricultural Activities

Trades, Crafts, and Retail In 1253 Adam Despenser was licensed to hold a weekly Friday market and three-day annual fair at St Andrew's feast (30 November).⁶² Neither was mentioned later, and 13th- and 14th-century occupational bynames suggest that the parish remained predominantly agricultural, possible exceptions including William Pistor (or 'baker'), who perhaps ran the common oven (*furnum*) mentioned in 1279. Other inhabitants were named Tailor and Cook, while the name Bartour (borne by a prolific Rollright family) means 'fraudulent dealer or cheat'.⁶³

By the 16th century a few inhabitants were apprenticed to a trade outside the parish,⁶⁴ and in the 1550s Richard Ward was a resident fuller.⁶⁵ Blacksmiths were common from the 17th century, Richard Green (d. 1620) being succeeded by his son, grandson, and great-grandson,⁶⁶ while later smiths included William Goodwin (d. 1780) and John Webb (d. 1836), presented to the manor court in 1825 for encroaching on the roadside with a newly built smithy.⁶⁷ That (at South End) was sold in 1870 and probably closed soon after,⁶⁸ though another (on Old Forge Road) continued in 1946 when it was sold with the manorial estate, and was later converted into a shop.⁶⁹ Other 17th- and 18th-century trades included carpenter, collar-maker, fellmonger, shoemaker, staymaker, tailor, and victualler (at the parish's several pubs),⁷⁰ while a bakery at South End operated probably from the 1760s until 1891, when the baker Charles Collett died.⁷¹

⁶⁰ WODC online planning docs, 10/1747/P/FP; cf. *Oxf. Times*, 26 Mar. 1982 (Cardwell fm).

⁶¹ At the Moreton-in-Marsh agricultural show (competition results accessed online).

⁶² *Cal. Chart.* 1226–57, 414.

⁶³ TNA, E 179/161/8–10; E 199/36/1; *Rot. Hund.* II, 727–8; *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 314; *Eynsham Cart.* I, p. 6; Jeffery, *Rollright*, 6, 8, 12, 55.

⁶⁴ A. Crossley (ed.), *Oxford City Apprentices 1513–1602* (OHS n.s. 44, 2012), pp. 27, 212; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 29/1/24. For later apprenticeships, e.g. M. Graham (ed.), *Oxford City Apprentices 1697–1800* (OHS n.s. 31, 1987), p. 219; below, social hist. (welfare).

⁶⁵ Bodl. MS dd Dawkins C9/IB5/5. The family later moved to Over Norton.

⁶⁶ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 196, f. 339; 28/1/20; 129/2/34; *ibid.* par. reg. transcript; TNA, PROB 11/239/470.

⁶⁷ TNA, PROB 11/1070/174; BNC, D670.

⁶⁸ *Oxon. Weekly News*, 11 May 1870; run meanwhile by Humph. Webb: TNA, HO 107/879; HO 107/1732.

⁶⁹ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XIV.3 (1881–1922 edns); OHC, B28/1/D1/58/1; *ibid.* RDC9/3/F6/2. For earlier occupation, TNA, RG 9/911; RG 10/1458; RG 11/1520; RG 12/1179; RG 13/1400; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1935 edns).

⁷⁰ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 8/2/23; 21/2/29; 42/2/37; 162/1/94; 164/5/18; *ibid.* Cal. QS, I, 121, 274; II, 68b; for pubs, below, social hist. (1500–1800).

⁷¹ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 42/4/22; 252/2/24; *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 1 Mar. 1782; *Oxf. Jnl*, 28 Apr. 1827; *The Times*, 25 Feb. 1987; TNA, RG 10/1458; RG 11/1520.

A lime kiln existed by the 1710s,⁷² and a new one was built in 1774, run by John Bradley using furze as fuel.⁷³ Later maps show a kiln at the ford over the Swere (abandoned by 1900), and another on the Chipping Norton road,⁷⁴ run with the adjoining Lime Kiln pub by Thomas Edwards (d. 1788) and his widow Jane,⁷⁵ and continuing in production until the 1910s–20s.⁷⁶ Thereafter the site (next to the railway halt) was taken into a coal wharf and storage yard run by the coal merchant James Taplin of Lime Kiln House, who continued there until the railway closed.⁷⁷

By the 1820s over twenty families were employed in trade, craft, or manufacture, and in 1841 (besides a blacksmith and two bakers) there were eight shoemakers, two carpenters, two tailors, two sawyers, and a joiner.⁷⁸ A house advertized in the 1780s was said to be suitable for a butcher (none then being resident), and butchers were mentioned sporadically from the 1850s.⁷⁹ Other trades recorded infrequently in the 1850s–90s included coal merchant, haggler, haulier, and plasterer, while women worked from home as dressmakers, gloveresses, laundresses, seamstresses, and straw bonnet makers.⁸⁰ In the 20th century the range of trades and crafts narrowed, those mentioned in the 1930s including travelling draper, haulage contractor, and stationer (at the post office).⁸¹ An outlying café on the Oxford–Stratford road operated in the 1930s–60s.⁸²

A shopkeeper was convicted of using false weights in 1817,⁸³ but otherwise the earliest known shops opened in the 1840s–50s, among them two grocers' belonging to the blacksmith Humphrey Webb and the shoemaker William Farbrother.⁸⁴ Three or four shops in the 1880s–90s included a beerhouse or off-licence at South End, Ann Tompkins's general store at the southern end of High Street (still open in the 1930s), and Joseph Tidmarsh's shorter-lived grocer's further north on High Street.⁸⁵ The off-licence closed probably in the 1960s, leaving the post office and the shop in the old forge, to which the post office later

⁷² OHC, Ot.I/18; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, f. 63.

⁷³ *Oxf. Jnl*, 11 June 1774.

⁷⁴ OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XIV.3 and XIV.4 (1881–1922 edns); *illustr.* (1969) in OHC, POX0065435.

⁷⁵ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 302/2/11; 75/1/24; *ibid.* QSD/V/2–3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* DV/X/80, no. 203 (and map).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* RDC9/3/F6/2–3; RDC9/3/F7/2; *ibid.* CC3/4/C9/11; *Oxon. Dir.* (1958–9); OS Map 1:2500, SP 3230 (1974 edn). By 2010 the site was a scrap metal yard: WODC online planning docs, 10/1448/P/CD3.

⁷⁸ *Census*, 1811–31; TNA, HO 107/879.

⁷⁹ *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 1 Mar. 1788 (ho. with maltho.); TNA, HO 107/1732; *ibid.* RG 9/911; RG 11/1520.

⁸⁰ TNA, RG 9/911; RG 10/1458; RG 11/1520; RG 12/1179.

⁸¹ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1903–39 edns).

⁸² OHC, RDC9/3/F6/2–3; RDC9/3/F7/2; *ibid.* B28/1/D1/58/1; *Oxon. Dir.* (1958–9); *Blair's Dir. Oxon.* (1967).

⁸³ OHC, Cal. QS, IX, 210.

⁸⁴ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–69 edns); TNA, RG 9/911.

⁸⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1939 edns); TNA, RG 13/1400; OHC, DV/X/80 (and map); Gt Rollright Hist. Group, *Rollright Past and Present* (2001), 18, 152–3.

moved.⁸⁶ The post office's closure in 2007 made the shop no longer profitable, and it closed in 2008,⁸⁷ the sole remaining pub (the Unicorn) having closed in 1989.⁸⁸ The only retail business in 2021 was a garden centre, farm shop, and tea room at Hill Barn Farm, established in 1988.⁸⁹



The former forge, shop and post office (left), and the former Unicorn pub (right).

Milling No mill was recorded in Domesday Book, but inhabitants called 'miller' were mentioned in the 12th and 13th centuries, and by 1279 both Hugh the miller and Richard de Burchville held mills freely from Adam Despenser, each with half a yardland.⁹⁰ In 1347 William Gamage held a mill directly from the Crown, but it was not mentioned in the 1350s,⁹¹ and in 1383 a watermill on the Despenser manor lay in ruins.⁹² The mills' locations may be preserved in the later field names 'mill furlong', 'mill butts', 'mill corner', and 'mill way' (suggesting that one lay in Danes Bottom),⁹³ unless those referred to nearby Priory Mill (in Over Norton) or to the watermill and windmills in Little Rollright.⁹⁴

⁸⁶ OHC, RDC9/3/F6/3; RDC9/3/F7/2; *Blair's Dir. Oxon.* (1967); above, landscape etc. (communic).
⁸⁷ WODC online planning docs, 09/0522/P/FP; 12/1497/P/FP.

⁸⁸ Below, social hist. (since 1800).

⁸⁹ <https://www.wyattsgardencentre.co.uk> (accessed July 2021).

⁹⁰ Jeffery, *Rollright*, 6, 8, 103; *Rot. Hund.* II, 727; TNA, E 199/36/1.

⁹¹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VIII, p. 504; X, pp. 337, 401; *Feudal Aids*, IV, 174. Not specifying watermill or windmill.

⁹² TNA, C 136/24/19.

⁹³ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, f. 63; Jeffery, *Rollright*, map facing p. 1.

⁹⁴ Above, Over Norton; below, Little Rollright, econ. hist. (milling).