



Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

A Walk Through Cleeve Prior 1900 to 1914

Cleeve Prior is an ancient village that until the coming of the railways, was totally isolated from the outside world. From census data we understand the following statistics

Households in the Village			
1901		1911	
62		75	
Population - number of People			
1901		1911	
237		260	
Male	Female	Male	Female
110	127	115	145

The structure and life of the village was very much determined by its isolation for the majority of the inhabitants. Kelly's Directory gives an idea of the occupations of the upper classes in the village

COMMERCIAL.

Allen Bertha (Mrs.), market gardener
Allen Jane (Mrs.), shopkeeper
Ankers John, market gardener
Cook David, market gardener
Cook Thomas, market gardener
Farr Hannah (Mrs.), apartments
Gilbert William, shoe maker
Gould William, carpenter & carrier
Herrieff John William, farm bailiff
to Henry G. Hiorns
Hiorns Henry Garfield, miller
Holtom Marian, Edith Gertrude &
Ann (Misses), farmers

Horn George, blacksmith
Huband Henry, market gardener
Huband Thomas, market gardener
Keck William, builder
Oakley Charles, farm bailiff to George
Fosbrooke asq. Hoden
Smithin Joseph, farmer
Sparrow Arthur, market gardener
Sparrow Geo. farmer & butcher
Spittal Hedley, commercial traveller
Stock Henry, farmer
Taylor Roland H. commercial travellor
White Fredk. Wm. King's Arms P.H
White Walter, baker & confectioner,
& post office

In order that the village could be self-sufficient it was reliant on the villagers to provide for themselves. We can see from the 1911 census, the following commercial trades & occupations

• Shop keeper	Henry Hunt	• Baker & confectioner	Walter White
• Teacher	Julia Anne Smith [Head]	• Sub Post mistress	Louisa White
	Josephine Smithin [Supplementary]	• Butcher & Haulier	George Sparrow
• Boot & Shoe Maker/Boot repairer	William Gilbert	• Blacksmith	George Horn
	John Jeffrey	• Dress maker	Edith Gould
• Fruit Dealer	Charles Collette	• Licensee	Frederick White
• Bricklayer	William Keck	• glove maker	Amy Huband
	Ernest Gould	• Shop Keeper	Jane Allen
• Painter Plumber & Decorator	William Nichols	• Boarding house owner	Annie Gull
• Carpenter	William Gould	• Laundry Worker	Jane Stanley
	Jonathan Gould		
	Samuel Gould		

22 People



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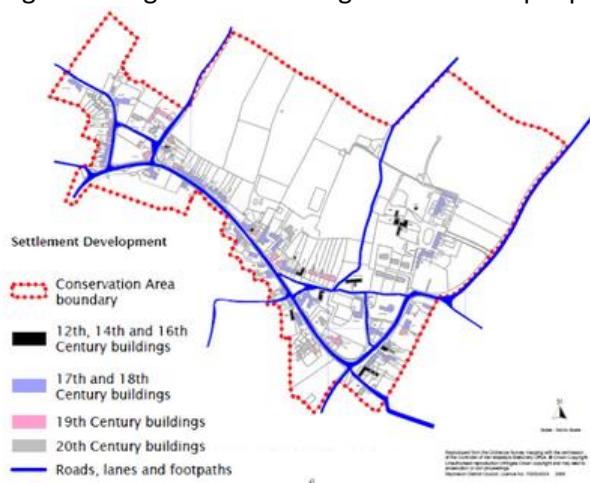
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Apart from the above workers the majority were part of the agricultural economy. The 1911 census also lists the following occupations.

Farmer	4
Farm Labourer	23
Bailiff	1
Ploughman	1
Carter	5
Stockman	4
Shepherd	1
Domestic Servant	9
Cook	1
House Keeper	3
Groom	2
Game keeper	2
Market Gardener	13
Market Garden Labourer	2

81 people

We are grateful to the Wychavon for their conservation documents, the maps of which provide details of the village & the age of the buildings in which the people lived



Courtesy Wychavon District Council ["Cleeve Prior Conservation Area Appraisal"](#)

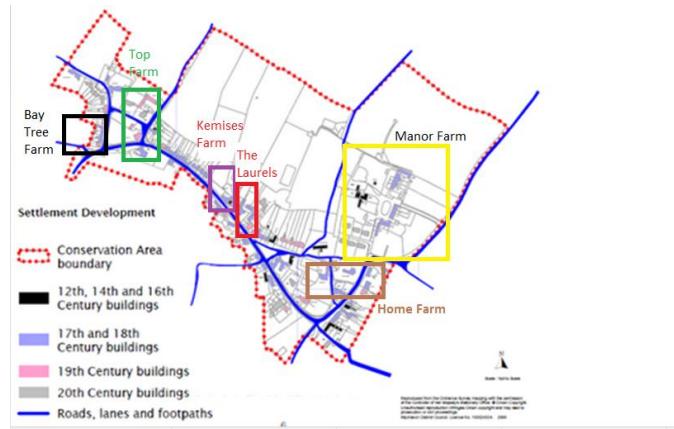
The agricultural workers in 1911 were working on 6 village farms & two in the hamlet of Hoden. The village farms were:

Bay Tree Farm
Top Farm
Kemises Farm
The Laurels
Home Farm
Manor Farm



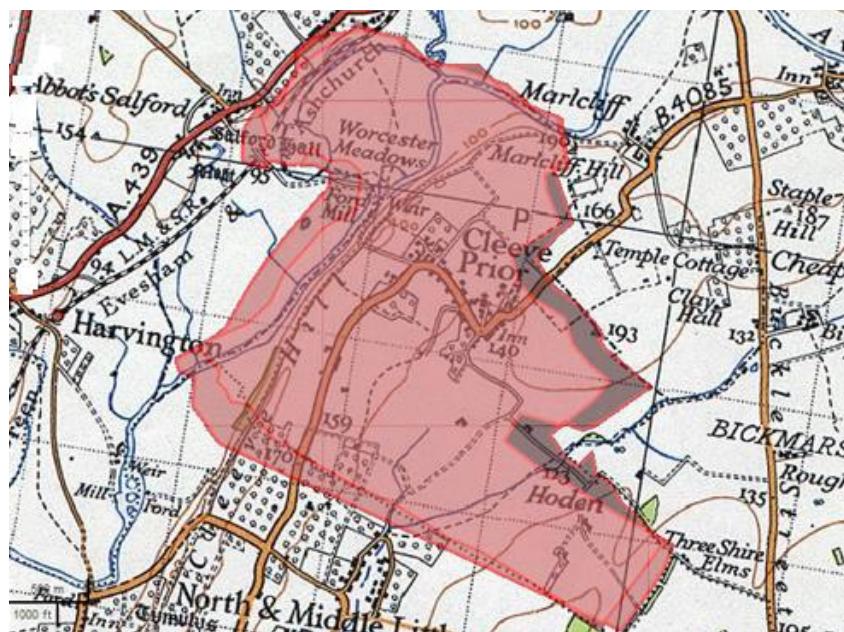
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The Village itself extended to Salford Priors & the railway line in the north, and through the hamlet of Hoden as far as North Littleton in the South

To support the economy of the village the most important areas of the Parish were the fertile water meadows across the river Avon which were reached by a ford through the shallows, or across a narrow bridge on the weir top.





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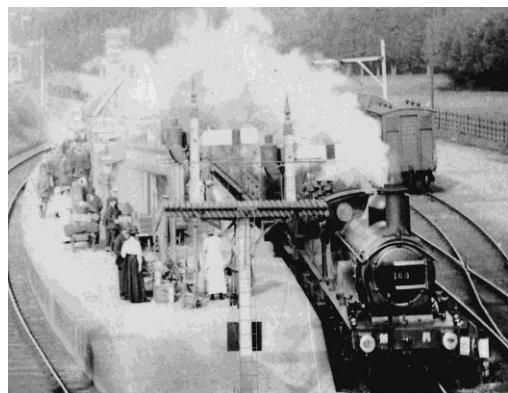
On the northern corner of the meadows, we see the station at Salford Priors , this sat on the London, Midland & Scottish [LMS] Railway which ran from Evesham through Broom Junction to Birmingham. There was also a halt for Cleeve Prior which was located just behind Salford Priors church



Station at Salford Priors



Evesham Second Station
[Now Signal House]



Broom Junction

3 Pictures Courtesy of <http://www.warwickshirerailways.com/index.htm>

Unless you had or could afford to hire a carriage or cart, the only way to the village was across the fields and river by foot. This land formed the water meadows in the Avon Valley, some of which was allocated for common grazing, the balance being split up and allocated to each farm, giving each a share of the fertile land.



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Once the path had crossed the fields the first obstacle was the river and the crossing.



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There were only two ways to cross the river, if you were on foot there was a narrow plank walkway with a handrail to one side.



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Or for carts there was the ford through the shallows below the weir





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The landscape was far different than today and there were few trees on this side of the river and a wide view back over to the water meadows and the weir



Leaving the river there were two routes to the village, pedestrians could use the parish steps, and the carts and farm traffic would use the road up along Mill lane.





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Looking back across the valley as we rise up the hill, we get an idea of the width of the river and see the islands that belonged to the manor. These were listed on the deeds as Lock Island which was scrub, and Whitley Bed Osiers, which being in the river was used for growing willow withy's .



The view would get even more spectacular as you reached the top of the hill



Here we find alongside the old Bridleway and Roman trackway , a large mound capped by a stone base of what appears to be a Saxon cross. There is an old legend surrounding this monument.



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Legend of the Cleeve Hill Stone.

Between Marl Cleeve and Offenham, on the left bank of the Avon, is a long, and almost straight ridge, which slopes down abruptly to the river and its meadows. Along its brow runs an old (reputedly Roman) road; and where this is crossed by a way leading from the village of Prior's Cleeve to Cleeve Mill, is a prehistoric barrow, upon which is a heavy mass of stone, evidently the base of a fourteenth century wayside cross. The presence of this stone is accounted for by a legend.

Once upon a time, the Devil perched on Meon Hill (in Quinton, Co. Gloucester), and looking towards Evesham, was annoyed by the sight of its Abbey, then in great prosperity. There being a big stone at hand, he kicked it at the Abbey with malicious intention; but Evesham bells beginning to ring, it swerved to the right, and fell where it now lies.

Having reached the top of the hill, the road takes us on to towards the village

Mill lane had yet to be developed, and to our right was still open fields. We know that Priorsleigh was built in the early 20's after the Manor sold the land for the first plot on this side of the road. On the left was a single pair of houses one of which was Felton's, the left hand one of a pair of brick semi's This was the second home of Charles Perkins, the Organist for Birmingham City council, who with his wife Mabel were the friends of George Halford who lived in Mill House. Charli & Mabel were to later lose their son in the first world war

The Occupation of the other half of the was occupied by Rowland Taylor a Commercial Traveller in jewellery, along with his wife & daughter and a servant Lily .



Priorsleigh building plot



looking back down Mill Lane



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The only other thing of note on Mill Lane was the Cherry orchard for top Farm. The picture above is the view back down the road from the junction with the main road.

We now turn right along the main road and see are two houses on our right . The first is Bentley House owned by Leo Myers, which was turned into a women's convalescent home



On March 15 1913, The British Journal of Nursing tells us

"A convalescent home at Cleeve Prior has been given to the Birmingham and Midland Hospital for Women by Mr. Leopold Myers, in memory of his wife, who was for many years an active member of the Women's Hospital Committee. The gift consists of a beautiful house with 23 acres of land, and a well-stocked garden. The house is completely furnished, fitted with electric light, and has cost upwards of £3,000. It has been called the 'Gertrude Myers Home,' and a committee of eight members has been formed to manage it. It will be used for patients who have been inmates of the Women's Hospital. Accommodation is provided for twelve patients, and it is estimated that the total annual cost of the upkeep will be under £400. Mr. Myers and his friends have generously contributed in annual subscriptions nearly £200."

Past this on the right was the impressive Sunnyside, now Suncourt, the home of Miss Careless & Kate Sheaf who owned & farmed Bay Tree Farm





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As we saw from the list of agricultural activities in the village, 15 of the workers in 1911 were occupied in market gardening. This was primarily taking place either side of the Evesham Rd going out to the Littleton's, and we see below ladies picking peas on these fields in 1901.



Picture courtesy of Country Life Magazine

Let us now go back to the Mill and follow the route to the village for pedestrians. Having walked up from the river in front of us we see the Parish Steps, which look the same today as they did 100 years ago



The Cleeve Escarpment



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Having reached the top of the steps, the path takes you to the track at the top of the escarpment and directly in to the village to what is now Nightingale lane. In the early 1900's the Long House in Nightingale lane was three cottages. Charles Brookes lived at the far end, William Taylor in the middle and a Miss Teague in the one nearest the village

From The Village Steps to the village



The Long House

Charles Brooks had five daughters living in a small cottage. They were a musical family and toured the district as "Charles Brookes and his Nightingales" giving concerts and providing music for sing-songs. This is how the lane became known as Nightingale Lane.

From The Village Steps to the village





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From Nightingale Lane to the Main Street we have today West End, on the 1901/1911 census this was called Queen Street. The road was dominated by a fine Georgian building called, Upper House. As one of the most prestigious houses in the village it was owned by Louisa Newton who was an organist & played regularly in the church. She was born in Birmingham and by 1861 she was living in Cleeve Prior with her uncle & aunt, John & Louisa Rock, who by the 1891 census had passed away leaving her with Upper House and its lands. The Rock Family, the Smithin's of Top Farm, & The Bateman/Lunn Family had inter married over 200 years & by this time, owned or farmed a lot of the land in the village, not owned by The Manor. Just past Lydstep on the left was Priors Close, a shop in the early 1900's, run by Mr & Mrs Howe



There were several large houses at this end of the village, apart from Upper house. The oldest being Charlettes House which had been derelict for 120 years, before it was knocked down in the 50's, to allow for the bend in the road a safer entrance to the village.

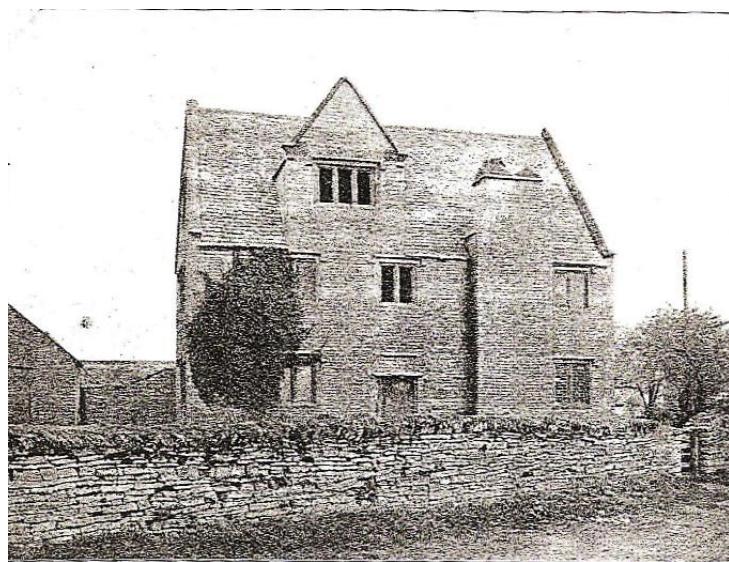




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For as long as anyone could remember, the old house had been vacant, and slowly falling apart. It was a fine example of a small, early seventeen century, English stone house, and even though works were carried out at the beginning of the 1900's, no one lived there for 120 years . In 1903 it was owned by a Mrs Charles Lunn & the Lunns & Batemans lived there in previous years.



Charletts House

Over the road from Charletts House we had Top Farm, now called Prior House, which was run by the Smithin Family. The rest of the farm buildings comprised of Cleeve Barn & the dwellings and land on the left of Froglands Lane including "Top Farm", which at this time were the old bull pens.



Top Farm



bull pens



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At the bottom of Froglands Lane is Lilac Cottage & we hear in Frank Vickeridge's recollections, how, before the malt house to Peacock House was converted in to the Village Hall, the social centre of the village was the large sitting room of Lilac Cottage. Here they held all the parties, harvest suppers, sing songs & village entertainments .



Walking down the Main Street it is interesting to see the uninterrupted line of blue lias walls in front of each house. Here is "The Cottage" which was the home of William & Anne Keck, the bricklayer and builder. It is interesting that on the 1911 census, he has enlarged the house by one room, this was probably by the conversion of a lean to store on the end into a habitable room.



We have passed one of Top Farms orchards, where Close is today and on the opposite side Kemises Farm



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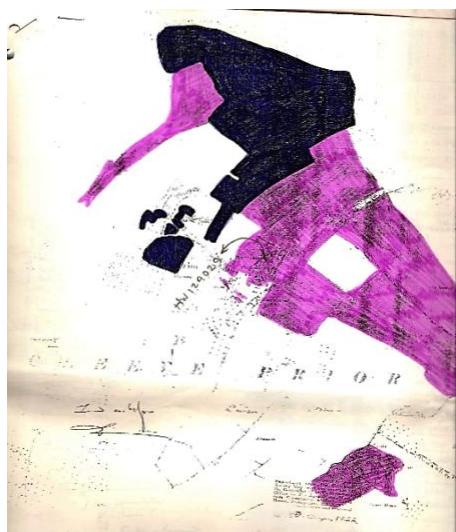
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In 1881 Kemises farm was being farmed by the Gair family but later became part of the Manor Farm

There was a disaster in 1903, when Kemises farm burned down, when a spark from a threshing engine set fire to one of the corn ricks. Jack Stock tells how his father got up in the night and managed to put out a burning beam that threatened to burn down Miss Holtom's House. Machines, ricks and buildings were destroyed



The black area on the plan below indicates the land that was Kemises farm, as indicated on the deeds from Cleeve Prior Manor



In 1800's John Smith Holtom, married Anne Thomes, as the younger brother of William Holtom at the manor, he was the Miller. They had 4 daughters Marian, Edith, Gertrude & Anne, who we see as the owners of the Laurels at the turn of the century and along with it the stone quarries.



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The Laurels



We pass squirrel cottage on the right hand side of Main St, which later in the 1900's was to become a shop.

Squirrel Cottage

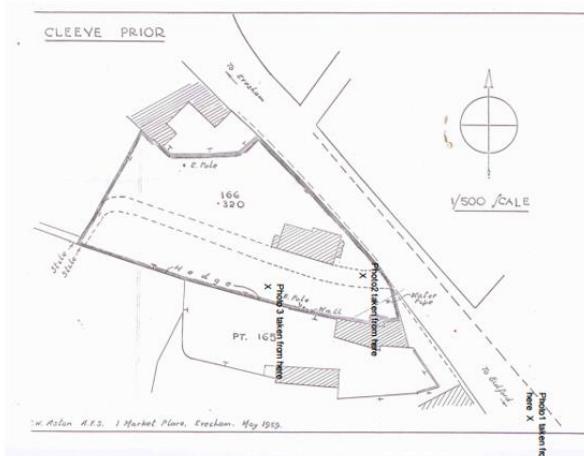




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At the turn of the century there was a major footpath which passed between Squirrel and "Pile of Stones", which was eventually closed to enable the construction of the close.



On the opposite side of the road was the old village shop & post office , which were owned by Walter & Louisa White, Louisa being the Sub postmistress & Walter the Baker & confectioner. The bakery is now part of "Greens Cottage", the current garage was the store & behind was located the bakery, with an entrance out to the rear of the shop. We can still see the village bake ovens in the end wall today.



The Old Post Office



The Bakery



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In the 1911 census we see a Mr Thomas Mayer, 62, living at Annie Gull's boarding house with her daughter Dorothy Gull, 29. Thomas Mayer owned a factory in Birmingham & it was rumoured that he was a millionaire. It was Thomas who gave half the funds £500 to enable the Malthouse to Peacock House to be turned in to the Memorial Village Hall. Kelly's directory also list Thomas Mayer as living at Orchard Cottage so we presume this was the boarding house.

Orchard Cottage was originally the Cart shed to Peacock House. It was initially turned into a single storey cottage, before a later second storey was added. This can be seen in the photos below





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Peacock House

The other cottages around the green were all built for farm workers. Two cottages were knocked together to form Greens Cottage alongside Ashby Cottage & Nancot. Nancot was the home of the famous Newlyn Artist Edwin Harris, who died there in the village in 1906, although we are not sure whether he was here to paint or to recuperate from illness.



At this time there were only 4 cottages running up to the church, 1-4 the green, built by the manor for their workers, it housed:

Samuel Hope	shepherd
Frederick Grafton	Groom Gardener
Charles White	Carter
Charles Adams	waggoner on farm

Opposite was fir tree corner again this was three cottages



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Backing on to Fir Tree Corner was the Malt House & the attached barn where George Sparrow butchered his meat





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Opposite the green is Quarry Lane which led to the quarry. The quarry covered all the fields around the millennium green over to the Evesham Road. The quarry men would strip the top soil, excavate the stone by layer & then tip the rubbish into the previous hole and cover it with topsoil. This way there was no residual hole.



Stone mason cutting flagstones at the quarry

Walking Further up the Main Street past Quarry Lane we pass the old village smithy to reach the school

Frank Vickeridge recalls:

"This was one large room divide by a curtain. Within the two sections the pupils were split into groups according to age. Children received their whole education here and left at fourteen. The building was heated by an old coke stove and so was very cold in winter. Hands were washed under a cold tap in the coke store, and the elder children took it in turns to fetch a bucket of coke to keep the stove going. The lavatories were outside & were of the non-flush type. In the 20's the teachers were miss Roberts & Miss White"

We presume the Miss White was one of the three daughters of Walter White



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In 1858 the school had been established and the area of land below the footpath was allotments for the villagers to grow their own produce, this was still the case throughout the early 20th Century.

Opposite the allotments on Hoden Lane was the Old Coach House comprising of three open fronted bays for carriages and two loose boxes. Mr Gould, the wheelwright who lived at a "Pile of Stones", rented one of the loose boxes for his carpentry work, which included making coffins for the village & the surrounding areas.

He also had another workshop in part of the Cider Mill, where cider was still being made in the 1920's with a horse pulling the large circular crushing stone, round the trough filled with apples.

At the End of Hoden Lane we have Mill House which was the home of George Halford who





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was the pioneer of orchestral concerts in Birmingham and was a renowned organist, sometimes playing in the Parish Church on Sundays. At Mill House he entertained famous musicians who used to play with him in Birmingham. During the war years, 1914 - 18 he organized a Red Cross fund raising concert in the Cleeve Prior Parish Church with his friend Edwin Elgar.



George Halford sitting outside the front of Mill House with a famous solo violinist called Ernst Shiever.

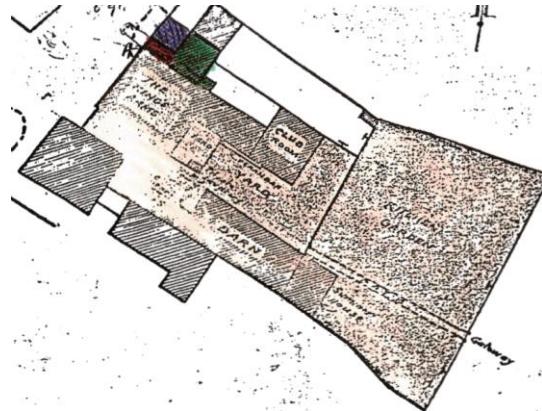
The Kings Arms

On the 8th December 1864 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners records indicate that the premises at that the two cottages, The Den & Huband Cottage, were indentured or contracted to Thomas Bissel, Charles Sylvester & Richard Keen are subsequently sold to Richard Keen along with the Kings Arms. On his death he left the two cottages to his elder daughter, Anne Huband, & The Pub to his younger, Clara Keen. Clara subsequently ran the pub & then sold it with "The Den" to Fred White, the brother of Walter the Baker



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Opposite the Kings Arms was Home farm. At the turn of the century owned by John Harris, a farmer from Inkberrow, he rented the farm to the Stock family. Home farm then included the barns opposite the pub and Sharrow. In 1904 he sold part of the farm yard to Clara Keen, for the construction of Lynwood.



The Ankers Family tell us

"There was a huge tin and wood structure attached to the back wall of Sharrow, just inside the gates, and this was used to house the cart, trap, various bicycles, farm implements and cradles for asparagus and loads of other items. The farmyard ran right across the back of Sharrow, out to the Bidford road (I believe the stable block can still be seen from the road. The cows were brought in either from Hoden Lane or Sett (or Dead) Furlong, which was at the end of Quarry Lane and milked in the stables, where the swallows returned each year. There was a chicken house (which included Bantams) pigsties, a harness and tack room and the trap house. There was a wood pile and a midden, all hidden behind Lynwood, and ducks and geese in the orchard to the right on the house a lovely place for a child."

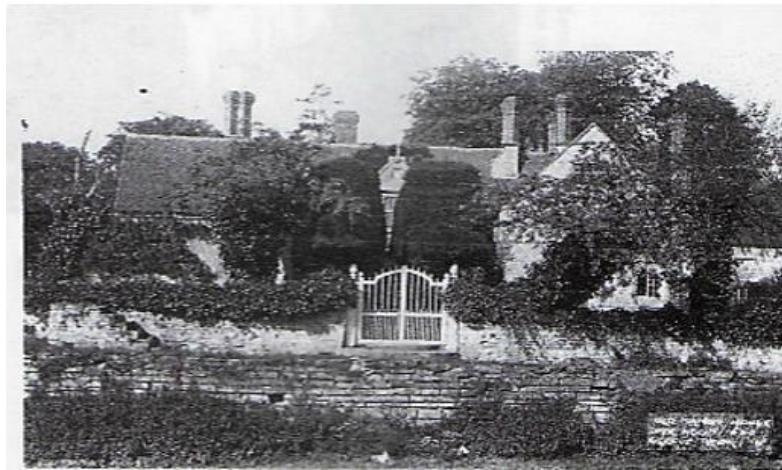


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In 1911, the Reverent Charles Alfred Styles was the vicar living in the vicarage with his wife Ethel & servant Rose Ankers.¹⁵, the daughter of Eli Ankers & his wife Elizabeth, a farm labourer in the village. This is a different side of the family to the Eli Ankers who married to Clara Keen at the pub.

At the end of the village is Cleeve Prior Manor originally owned by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who sold it in 1917, to Henry Hiorns. Henry Hiorns married Julia, the daughter of William Fifield Holtom, who moved to the Manor in the 1830's & was married to Juliana Thomes. They took over the Manor on the death of Julia's parents & remained there until Henrys death in 1921. Shortly after this Julia moved to Mill House where she died in 1945 at the age off 88.



-Cleeve Prior Manor-Picture courtesy of Country Life Magazine



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The Manor





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1914 The Peace & Tranquillity of village life is Broken

The Evesham Journal Records 35 men from the village signing up or already being in the army at the beginning of the war.



C.E. Adams Royal Field Artillery - had served in S. Africa
D. Adams Royal Field Artillery - had served in S. Africa
A. Adams Worcester Regt. - had served in S. Africa
T. Blower Army Service Corps
A. Brookes 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
G. Brookes 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
A. Coates 3rd Worcs. Regt. - had served in S. Africa
G. Coates 3rd Worcs. Regt.
E. Cook 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
H. Ewins 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
G. Freeman 6th Worcs. Regt. - had served in S. Africa
N. Gibson Birmingham Batt. Warwick
N. Goode Birmingham Batt. Warwick
B. Grafton Birmingham Batt. Warwick
W. Halford Irish Fusiliers
C. Haywood 2nd. Batt. Grenadier Guards
H. Haywood 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
Capt. S. Holcroft 4th Royal Berks. Regt.

C. Holtom 5th Batt. N. Staffordshire
Major H. Jones Army Service Corps
G.E. Jones 2nd Batt. Grenadier Guards
W.H. Jones 4th Welsh Brigade
E.J. Nicholls 6th Worcs. Regt.
H. Nicholls 2nd. Worcs. Regt.
S. Nicholls Grenadier Guards
C. Pitt
A.C. Robbins 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
E.W. Robbins 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
A. Sisam South Wales Borderers
F. Sheaf Birmingham Batt. Warwick.
W. Slaney Staffordshire Regt.
A. Smithin Warwickshire Yeomanry
J. Spiers 2nd Worcs. Regt.
G. Spiers 5th Batt. Worcs. Regt.
E. Taylor Grenadier Guards

Of the above men we see their occupations as below, those not resident [listed as others] tended to be relations or those born in the village but working away

Village Agricultural Worker	Other Village Worker	Others	Total
Gamekeeper 2	Painter Dec & Plumber 1		
ploughman 2	Gardener 1		
Market Gardener 3	Baker & Confectioner 1		
Stockman 1	unknown 3		
Farm labourer 12			
<u>20</u>		<u>5</u>	<u>10</u>
			<u>35</u>



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We hope you enjoyed the walk through the village