



Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

Life in our Village in the early 1900's

Extracts from Mr Eli Ankers recollections

Most of the village was farm land and there were long days for farm workers, Monday to Saturday night from 7am to 6pm and later still at haymaking and Harvest.

The Manor was the largest farm. The cowman started at 5.30am to do the milking, with his yolk and two buckets and lantern. He took the milk to the dairy to be separated. The cream was put in a barrel with a handle to turn until butter came. This was patted into round one pound pats with wooden pats, with dots and then stamped with an acorn pattern. Fresh milk was sold for two pence a pint and the skimmed milk for puddings was free. Leftovers were fed to the pigs.

Then there were carters. They started at 5.30 too, to give the horses bait and to fill up the fodder racks. Charley Adams & Bob Payne were the carters. Lads left school at 11 years old. I [Eli Ankers] with Frank Farley started work driving horses, four in a team, Jolly, Boxer, Sharper and Turpin, ploughing up and down the field, six miles a day. It was better than school. The carter learnt us.

All the ploughing was done by horse power with a Newbold plough. In wet weather the old long swing plough made of wood was used

Newbold Plough



Long Swing Plough

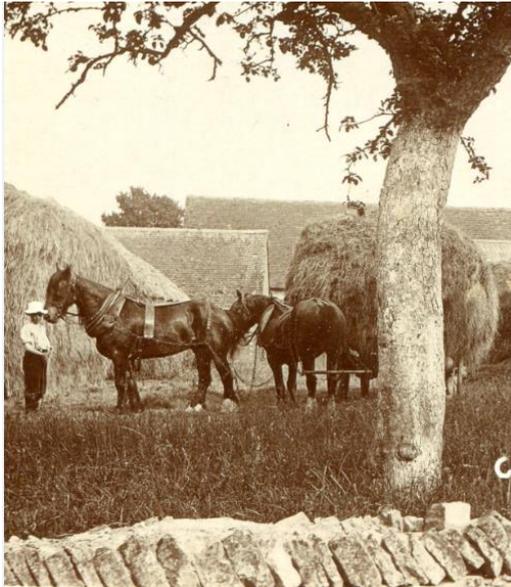




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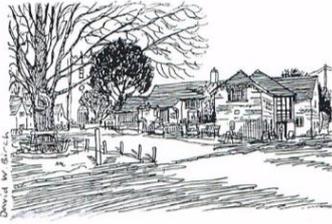
Then there were days of muck carting and after that drilling and planting with wheat, barley, oats, beans sanfion, mangolds swedes & potatoes. After haymaking, all done by hand, the wagons were loaded by pitch fork & unloaded in the rick yard

You could always get a rabbit for the catching, it made a good meal with dumplings. Eggs were 2 dozen for a shilling and a boiling hen cost a shilling. You could get an ounce of red bell tobacco, a pint of ale & a box of matches for sixpence and have a half penny change.

Everybody worked long hours and were happy.

The Great War August 4th 1914 to November 11th 1918

All the young men joined Kitchener's Army and were sent to France and were blown to bits within weeks. The Army took all the good horses to pull gun carriages



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The W.O.D. claimed all the good hay and left the poor quality. Great showman's engines arrived with bailers to bail it with twines, and it was taken to the station by steam wagons, the engine driven by parsons and people who would not join the army together with land girls. Prisoners were sent to work on farms, some were good others would not work.

About 1910 a wealthy couple from Birmingham built a large house on the Evesham Road at Cleeve & lived there for a short time. They both died of cancer, their name was Grainger. They left their house to Mrs Meyers who soon also died of cancer & she left the big house to the Women's Hospital in Birmingham for them to come to after their operations for two weeks. They had their own ambulance and Fred Wellon drove it & done the gardens, it was called Gertrude Meyers Home. When it was closed it was sold off in flats.

Just before the war a man called Tom Mayer came to live in Cleeve. He was a millionaire and he brought the first car to the village. It was a Lanchester and a man called Phostin drove it for him, when he went to Broom Station or Birmingham. Kids used to see it come home at night a rare sight in those days. He made nuts & bolts in Birmingham.

1920

After the war folk got together and talked about a village hall. Could enough money be raised to build it? Then the owner of the Old Malt House offered to



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sell it if enough money could be raised to buy it. It would cost a £1000. So whist drives and dances, fetes & concerts were organised to raise funds which went well. Then out of the blue came an offer of £500 from Mr Tom Mayer, and the old Malt house was transformed into the beautiful village hall which is used to this day enjoyed by all.

After the war Jim Holtom from the Manor, myself & several others went bird netting at night with a long net & two sticks. Lads took the net along one side of the hedge and some went on the other side with sticks to beat it and drove the birds into the net. One night we went round the houses with ivy on them; in one cottage an old man put his head out of the bedroom window to see what was going on, so he got his head caught in the net. He said he would send for the police, but we did not hear any more.

Our village was full of character, some are still remembered today, and their names smack of bygone days. Charley Brooks was one, he was a carter at Top Farm. He lived in Nightingale Lane, we called it that because he had six daughters and they sang like nightingales. He used to play the squeeze box and they had socials in Lilac Cottage on Froglands cause they had a big front room.

Now Nappy Dixon he was a funny one , he was the Gardener at the Gertrude Myers Home, and Mr Wellan, he was a busy one, he drove the ambulance and was the church warden.; he was the one that lit the light over the entrance to the churchyard and he also pumped the organ on Sundays. The one name I forget is that of the Chap who buried his wife one day & got married the next!!

In the bad winter of 1922 we had a storm, it was a real catastrophe, because the flood water swept away part of the weir and the ford at the same time. So we was cut off from Worcester Meadows on the other side of the Avon that was part of the village since mediaeval times. Water meadows they were, see, we always got lovely crops of hay off them.



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Old John Sheaf, he told me as how those farmers who had land on the other side of the river, his father & Don Archers among them, had tried to rebuild the ford by dumping gravel in from a punt, but it didn't do much good.

With the weir gone, the boating suffered I recall reading the parish minutes relating how that Dr Crawford from Bidford brought a deputation to a public meeting in Cleeve to try and get the village to raise the money to rebuild the weir. It was going to cost £1000 or more, a lot of money in those days. Well they must have succeeded a cause in March 1926 it had stood the test of the winter floods, and that was in the paper.



Anyhow, the restoration of the weir enabled boating to be resumed on the upper reach of the Avon at Cleeve Prior and some people may remember the little steamer which used to come puffing down from Bidford, with the well-known skipper Jones at the tiller. He used to tie up at the special landing-stage by the old lock, the remains of which you can still see, if you know where to look.