

## Talk by George Atkinson to East Meon History Group,

October 20<sup>th</sup> 2016



I'm George Atkinson, one of many Atkinsons that have farmed at Lower Farm and/or South Farm.

We'll do a bit of the straight archaeology that we've found on the farm, and get that out the way. Then it's really about farming, so I was going to then talk about change. I've always considered that farmers stayed in the same place, and it was a conservative business and we didn't go very far.

You couldn't have been further from the truth. If you go back 100 years or more, they seem to be moving every Michaelmas. I thought we'd then do the change in land ownership, and that means covering the Cumbrian migration. That's when the Atkinsons came down from the north.

The second change I was going to touch on was farming and why it has changed so radically.

Then I was going to finish off about the change and the impact it's had on the village and the people who work on the farms and/or live in the village. We can take it wherever you want, really, but here we go.

Lower Farm lies up on the Clanfield Road, on the right-hand side. We also farm – and this is the biggest map I could find – Peak Farm. We've got 400 acres that we rent now, and have done since 1956

*Right, Lower and South Farms (then named Fairfield) from Tithe Apportionment map, 1852. Far right, Peake Farm. (New map will be commissioned).*



I am going to talk about the archaeology. I went to Westbury House School and there was a second master called George Walker; he discovered the Roman villa that's in the walled gardens at Westbury House, and he used to come back with stories about Romans. As a small schoolboy, you were enthused about that sort of thing, and it got my interest. He used to walk behind the plough and find things, and that got me going about history.

When I do a tour with the kids, I bring this stuff out and they think, "You made it yesterday." It's a Stone Age hand axe found at Old Down, John Dalton's farm at Old Down where they found the 'Alton Hoard', which was the biggest Roman hoard of coins, documented as being given to Cogidubnus, who was the British King at the time, with seal rings from Caesar. It was found six foot down and it's in the British Museum. There were lots of gold coins and there's a Roman villa there, so we know people have lived there for a very long time.

*Objects found on George's land*



*Arrowhead*



*Drinking horn*



*Sheep bell*



*Lead flask, collapsed*



*Roman brooch C2*



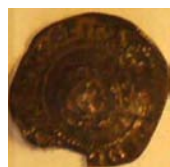
*Magnentius, C4*



*Nummus of Valens*



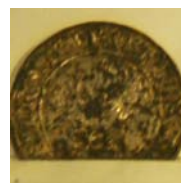
*Saxon 'porcupine'*



*Farthing, Edward II*



*Mixed coins and buckles, 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup>*



*Double-banded groat, Henry VII*



*Sixpence, Elizabeth I*



*Hampshire Regiment cap badge*



*East Kent*



*Somerset Yeomanry*

The boys always like this one, a nice arrowhead. This is just things that we've found at Peak Farm; Peak Farm has the earthworks that were thrown up by the Saxons or whoever. That runs straight through Peak Farm. East Meon and West Meon don't get on, because, of course, they were Jutes and we were Saxons. Mr Jennings, who owned Redwood Cottage, found a Roman statue head, and that's in the British Museum. When he was digging out some foundations, he found a statue head. We found a range of coins from William and Mary, and they went to the Winchester Museum, but archaeologically Peake is far more interesting than Lower Farm because we've got some super earthworks. The house itself, where I lived until I was about six, was a monastery knocked down by Henry VIII and then a fortified manor knocked down on the way to the Battle of Cheriton, beaten up by parliamentarian troops.

I really wish I'd kept the cannonball that I found in the garden when I was there as a boy. It was used as a doorstop. It's probably still there, but there's not too many people can say that you found a cannonball in the garden a

It's absolutely plastered in history, that end against the A272, with the routes through to Privett, and strewed with big villas, we had one field there which we were paid under our environmental stewardship to grass it down, because every dry summer you see the walls, the gaps, the dew ponds where the natives lived outside the walls. It's all there, but it's never been excavated.

The man who does our metal detecting comes up from Brighton. His son is doing a Master's at Oxford in Mediaeval History, and he researches them; then we get them back. So, we go through Roman coins. This one was a chap called Magnentius. We found this two years ago, just up from the cottages at Lower Farm. He was a usurper; he overthrew the Roman rule and ruled Britain and Gaul for three years, until they sent another army from Rome to kill him. He opened the British Mint again. If this had been a British-minted Magnentius, there's only one ever been found. This was minted in Trier, in Germany, or Belgium, so, sadly... But it's a nice artefact.

When I'm doing trips with children, we go through the Roman, and we've got things like a second-century Roman brooch. It's amazing that it survived that long.



*Michael Atkinson of South Farm*

My brother Michael is at South Farm, at the source of the River Meon, which is extremely ancient, and last year we found a lovely porcupine. That's a Saxon, from the predecessor of Southampton, Hamwic. It's a stamped Saxon coin, it's quite rare; there's only about five been found in the parish.

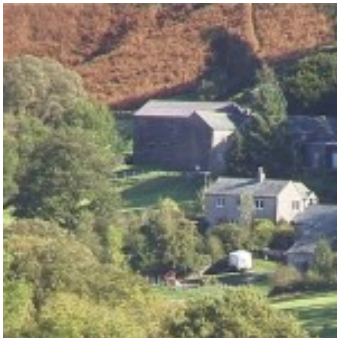
Saxon: a nice cauldron leg found last year. We've got one field where we think there's a Saxon, up against the village, and you've got a lovely Saxon brooch. They were very, very careless, weren't they? They dropped all sorts of things. We have Salt Lane, that runs down from Mercury, down towards the Gieveses. Apparently, this is a flask that would carry holy water from the Holy Land, so it's a crushed vial, which would be a flask; they've dropped it and it's broken; the end of a drinking horn.

Then we just go through the range of the tiny ones. That's Edward I, a tiny, tiny little coin. We've got Queen Elizabeth, sixpence, Queen Elizabeth I; we've got King John. Basically, you've got a whole range, right the way through to modern times.

We've even got a nice halfpenny. You can tell the story of the halfpenny because they cut it. So, things like that. Then, coming up to nearer times bells. You can always say that sheep were hugely important in the landscape. We don't find them very often with their clappers and they're still intact, but you imagine your flocks of sheep: mediaeval bells.

Then, slightly sadly, in the water meadows here we've got regiments that now don't exist. These were First World War soldiers that were billeted and then went to war, so we've got regiments from the Hampshire, the East Kent, the Somersetshire Yeomanry, these are all cap badges found in the water meadows.

In the Second World War the Black Watch were billeted out in fields. They had manoeuvres. Canadians – my father always loved the bagpipes, and they got woken up to bagpipes. If this was First World War, they went and sadly not enough of them came back. So, that's the straight archaeology. Let's talk about change.



*Above, Skelgill Farm, near Kendal, below, Jane Wren, Riplington Farm*



The Cumbrian migration: the Atkinsons. My father went back up to Skelgill, the Newlands Valley; we basically came from a 60-acre farm, not much of a grand palace. The view was pretty good, not far from Skiddaw. I'm going to read this account of what happened: 'Carters had spent the time waiting in the pub They were quite merry when the train did arrive. What a mixture: happy Hampshire carters, travel-weary Cumbrian farmers, neither of whom properly understood each other. Eventually, they arrived at the destination and it was perhaps worth mentioning that Walter Tulley, baker and grocer of West Meon, was waiting at Riplington's doorstep, ready to do business.'

'I have often wondered how these farmers financed the move and the valuation and stocking of these larger farms. I can only assume it was done through private loans from relations and friends. Isaac Wren had an elder brother, John Wren, who farmed at Little Crosthwaite, and nothing would induce him to visit Hampshire and have a look at his brother's farm.

'Needless to say, Isaac returned to buy horses, cattle and sheep. The next farmer to come south was John Fawcett, who moved from Torpenhow to Manor Farm, West Tisted, on the Tichborne Estate in 1895. Fred Rook was next to arrive, coming to John Fawcett as a pupil and taking on Church Farm, Priorsdean, in 1898, and then four years later Manor Farm, Colemore. His sister Jean kept house for him until he married Mary Edgar and Jean became Mrs Edwin Williamson.'

'John Edgar, after first looking at Tigwell Farm, East Meon,' came to Old Place, East Tisted, in March 1900, having taken it the previous Michaelmas. He was brother-in-law of Isaac Wren, Jane Wren being John Edgar's sister, as was Mary Edgar, who always lived with Isaac and Jane as she did not enjoy very good health. The Mary Edgar who married Fred Rook was, of course, eldest daughter of John Edgar,' so they all intermarried. He was affectionately known as Uncle Johnny by all his nieces, and nephews, and father, and he was the best judge of stock to come out of Cumberland at that time.'

'He'd wanted to move to Hampshire the previous year, but his landlord prevailed to him to stay, which was rather unfortunate as he had a bad outbreak out of abortion on the farm and hardly had a live calf from his last year at Ormathwaite Hall. Isaac went to Edgar's sale at Ormathwaite and bought, among other things, a court cupboard and a blanket box, probably under instruction from his wife, and had them sent down with the rest of Edgar's goods. This was never popular with the Edgars, who have often regretted selling them.'

'The next family to make the move were the Mitchells, who came from Loweswater to Treyford Farm, Elsted, in Sussex,' and they still are there now, on the West Dean Estate. 'The story is that Billy Mitchell, then a young man, travelled overnight to Petersfield Station in the early morning. He was met by Isaac with a pony and trap, who then took him to look at Treyford. They liked it, went to the estate office, fixed up the tenancy and came back to Petersfield Station, and Billy travelled back to Cumberland that night.' You wouldn't do that now, would you? 'The Mitchell family – Mrs Mitchell, a widow, four sons and one daughter – started arriving in Sussex in September 1903 and the rest after giving up in Cumberland in February 1904.'

'The next family to make the move was George Atkinson, who took South Farm, East Meon, from September 1905, and moved down in March 1906. He looked at Peak Farm,' the one that we rent now, or I rent, which is now farmed by his grandson Wilson Atkinson, 'But turned it down as there was too much wood, too many rabbits and poor water supply' – very true at the time.

'They travelled overnight and arrived at West Meon Station, were met by Isaac Wren and helpers. The story goes that some of the Atkinson horses jibbed at pulling up Drayton Hill, owing to not understanding Hampshire carters, but Isaac and George got out of their traps and soon put that right.'

'I think the next to come was Alf Stanley to Liss Place, Liss, and the Stanleys went to Bordean Farm.' Mark Stanley still lives there now, on the cut through to the school at Privett on the left-hand side. Isaac Wren took Court Farmhouse and eight cottages, West Meon, approximately 400 acres in Brockwood Estate, in 1900, so he must have prospered at Riplington since 1894. As a matter of interest, he bought Court Farm, West Meon, 1919, for £11,500, sold off the timber to pay for piped water, approximately £1,200. When he died in 1931, the farm was sold for £6,500.'

I think 6 families came in 10 years, and they knew each other. They came down and swapped small farms which they owned for bigger tenancies; they took a chance. That would be a frightening thing to do now, wouldn't it, to say that and do that? People move all over the world now, without even thinking, but that must have been a big move then.



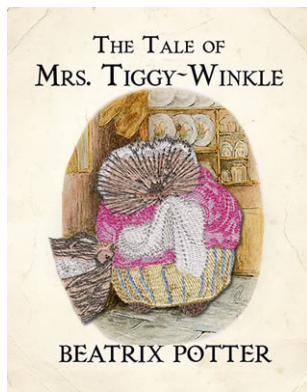
*Centre, George Atkinson. Left to right, standing, Hilda (Wren), Nellie (Hoskings), Ethel (Hobbs), Mary Wilson; sitting, George, Millie, Joseph, Elizabeth.*

Let's talk about the Atkinson family that came down there. This is outside South Farm, where Michael and Jane live. This is the austere-looking shot, the Atkinson family at South Farm, taken in about 1910. In the middle you've got George Atkinson. It is said he was nicknamed 'Razor' because he was just sharp? He wasn't nasty, he was just sharp; he was a good businessman. There's the father, George. So, George Atkinson; he actually died in 1922. He came down in 1906. His wife was called Mary Wilson, so now you know why we get the 'Wilson' in the Atkinson family. Wilson Atkinson Farms is what we trade as, so it was a thing to take your mother's maiden name partly in your name.

Then you've got the children; you've got little Millie. Millie, sadly, was killed December 1912. She was scalped in the watermill where Mark Atkinson lives. Her long hair, caught in the mill wheel. She was the youngest of the family, and then we had Joe, who's Michael's father; George, who was my grandfather.

Ethel married the Hobbs. The Hobbs had the forge and they milked. His cows used to walk down the middle of the village and graze where the village hall was. So, the Hobbs were farriers. Nelly married a Hoskings, so that's marrying again into a Cumbrian family, and Hilda married a Wren. Funny that, isn't it? They've all married into each other. Elizabeth was a Latin teacher. She never married; she was a Latin teacher. As a little boy, she used to write me lovely letters, and, as she was a Latin teacher, she used to write some of them in Latin.

She was trying to work out where I came in, because I'm George Atkinson, and my father was, and it was like Maximus, Minimus; how did it come? One day I do remember I said, "How about Microscopicus?" To Westbury House, next letter, 'Dear Microscopicus.' She was a lovely lady. Now we have an interesting artefact.



*Top, Mrs Tiggywinkle. Above, lily of the valley plate. Right, dresser.*

The Atkinsons were neighbours of Beatrix Potter. If you get your ‘Mrs Tiggy-Winkle’ out and open it to that page, I will read you what Elizabeth Atkinson has to say about a bonnet and a dresser: ‘Nearly 70 years ago, I was returning from Newlands School to Skelgill when I was stopped by Beatrix Potter, who asked me if she could sketch me standing in the opening of a stone wall near Ghyll Bank. I agreed and stood for a few moments but then developed stage fright and fled, so I will never know whether that little girl in that picture as Mrs Tiggy-Winkle was myself or Lucie Carr.’

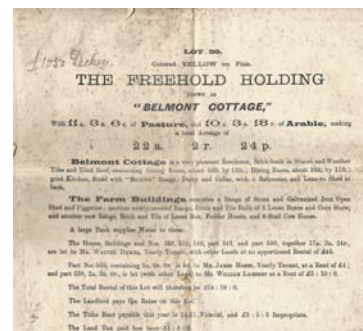
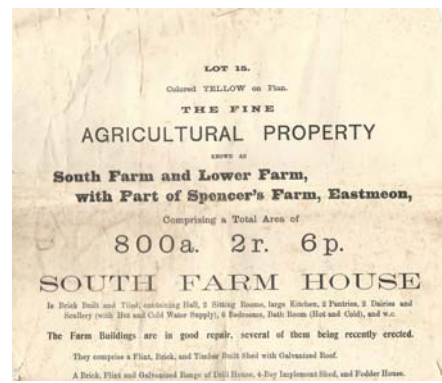
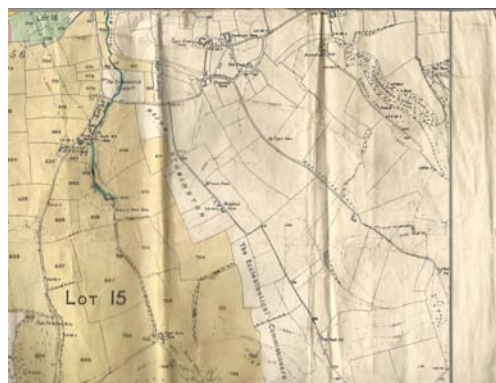
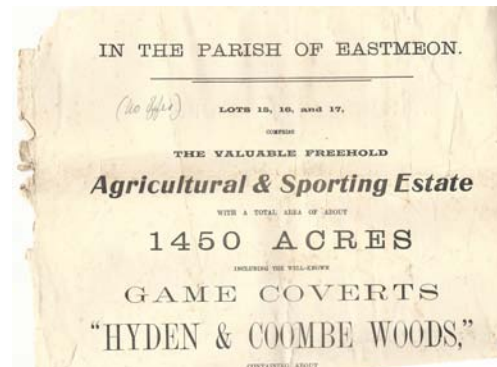
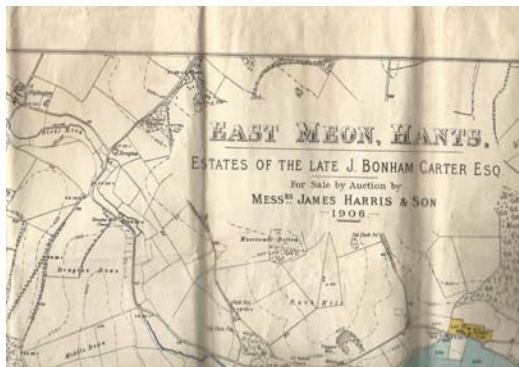
‘I certainly recognise the bonnet. However, the Welsh dresser, with its lily-of-the-valley plates, also in Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, was a subject that did not run away. Beatrix Potter sketched it in our kitchen’ – get to the right page – ‘And it’s now in my nephew’s home in Hampshire.’ So, we’d moved; she sketched in 1905 and it’s now in my farmhouse in Hampshire. It’s just the nice lily-of-the-valley plates and a Welsh dresser, but it’s a lovely bit of social history.

This year, being 150 years of Beatrix Potter, they don’t know what happened with the Atkinsons, so I went on the website and sent them a message to the society. They sent an email back, saying, ‘We’re very interested. Somebody will get back to you,’ and nothing has been heard from the last four months or whatever; it doesn’t matter.

We left Cumbria, but George Atkinson, who was a six-year-old boy, went back and married Sarah Kelse. That was my grandmother, a tiny little lady. That was mum’s father’s mother. She was from Uldale so he married a Cumbrian. My father met and married, ultimately, my mother. She was on a cruise with some girls from Cumberland. She was from Penrith, so I’m sorry, Elizabeth, I’ve gone over the border and married to

Sussex. That's fine, absolutely fine, of course. Yes, there is a big Cumbrian connection. There's more; there's lots of second cousins and family farming in Carlisle, Penrith, and up in the hills still, yes – nice connection.

So, you've got the idea that they moved down. Why did they move down? Let's cut to the landowning. We're not going to belt out lots and lots of figures, but let's do a bit of a timeline about what's happened. We came to South Farm, but who owns South Farm? South Farm was owned then by the Bonham Carter estate. These are the sales particulars for the trustees of the Bonham Carter estate in 1906.



Details from the particulars of the sale in 1906 of the estate of John Bonham Carter

He owed large parts of Petersfield; he owned where Travis Perkins is, Rushes Road. He had the brickworks at Steep. This is a map of East Meon, which very nicely tells you basically who owns what, apart from the estate. It's Mrs Merritt – I remember the Merritts – and the Kingsburys.

Why were they selling? Why have tenants? Why bring in new blood? If you think that the prairies had been broken, the Great Plains of America, all the food – the bulk of the food – was coming across the Atlantic, so corn prices had plummeted. People didn't have the



nous, if you like, to carry on farming stock, and so the whole area was starting to revert back to scrub and so they wanted to bring in people. You could get land rent -free for a year, which was part of the chance, I think, to come down and go to a bigger area. They sold 60 acres of hillside. Then I think the original George Atkinson was a haulier and they were obviously livestock men, so they brought their livestock with them. That was the idea. How on earth did they make that jump?

The bit about Lower Farm has been cut out because that hasn't survived but you've got Belmont. Interestingly, I think it's probably Grandfather, has written here what they made at auction and who bought them. The Dicker family bought that for £1,050 in 1906, and then certain lots were unsold.

Doing this research, you've got Hyden Farm, which is where Richard Jones was and obviously now belongs to the White estate. That was let on a yearly tenancy – think about it: a yearly tenancy; not much security there, is it? – to the Cannings family. There are some Cannings still in the village, but there were a lot more.

The last one I was going to say ... It's rather grand; it says, 'The valuable freehold of a sporting manor, Hyden Wood and Coombe Wood,' so you're talking at the top of the hill and all the way round. It was far more wooded then, and it was 578 acres, it says – this is a wonderful one for anyone who's a gamekeeper, it was all to do with foxhunting.

'It has for many years been known as a leading factor in the welfare of the Hambledon Hunt, being the natural home for foxes in that district. It's well known for woodcock, while its general position and healthy situation offers every facility for the successful rearing of pheasants.'

There was no house there then, so they've put: 'This extensive track to woodland is situated on high ground. Principally, with a southern aspect overlooking Portsdown Hill, the whole of the range of the South Downs offers a fine situation for a gentleman's residence.' So, that's what happened to that, but certain parts weren't sold at all.

This is South Farm. Then no offer was made for 1,450 acres of the game coverts of Hyden and Coombe Woods, so they didn't want the bit going out towards Coombe; nobody bid for that.

So, 1906 we've just come down as tenants, but quickly we're given notice to quit because you're on a tenancy because they're selling it – great uncertainty. I have a feeling I've seen a bid that we put in, obviously quickly, for our farm, but we didn't get it. So, what happened then? The Cumbrians have come down; Bonham Carter's sale. Basically, the majority of it doesn't get sold, but one of the trustees of the Bonham Carters is a chap called Baron Hotham of Titchfield. He buys it in 1908, I think, by the time it's actually finally gone through.

The one good thing we know about this is that a lot of our bits and pieces – there's a lot more than this – Freddie Standfield took it and collated it when he did his book, so, fortunately, all the correspondence has been bulked up.

Lord Hotham, or Baron Hotham, put in the water supply for East Meon. On the next map that I show you in a minute, it's got the new pipelines. He put in the borehole, he put in the pumping station, he put in the reservoirs, and East Meon got a really up to the state-of-the-art water business.

1914, the East Meon estate is sold to Lord Peel, and again we're given notice to quit in 1916, but we continue as tenants after that. Lord Peel was a great politician and their money was from lino; they were the lino producers for the British Empire



*Leydene House, built by Robert and Lady Peel in 1918 - 20*

Quite eccentric, Lady Peel, but she was quite well served, I think, through her life by her butler. Or more than a butler, he was her chauffeur, who was a man called Tyrode, because, in fact, some of the tenancy agreements we've got it's been witnessed by Eleanor Peel and Tyrode. The Peels purchased 10,300 acres in 1914. They then built Leydene House up there. Brian Blacker used to own Garston Farm. He was Eleanor Peel's nephew

In 1928, now reverting to my side, the Lower Farm branch of the Atkinsons, we got the chance in 1928 to take the tenancy of Lower Farm. South Farm was always the bigger landmass; Lower Farm was a tenanted farm to somebody called Singleton, and then it went to Sam Hardy. Sam Hardy was, I suppose, after the Bonham Carters, the de facto squire of Petersfield. He was the master of foxhounds. He used to keep the Hursley Hambleton hounds at Lower Farm, stable the horses in the pubs and West Meon. He used to take a pack of hounds to the Isle of Wight. He liked nothing better than a hard day's hunting, come back and get his butler to pull his boots off, full of water, and sit down and play the pianola which is in my house now.

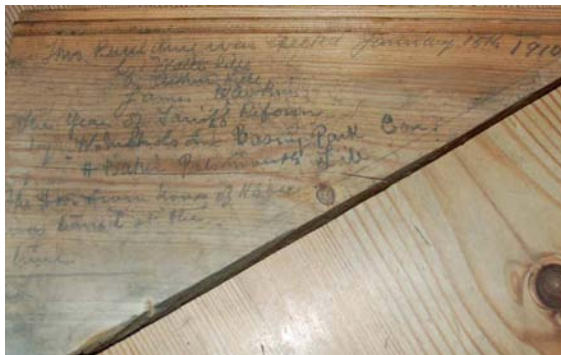
Anyway, the Hardys, their house in Petersfield was 'The Spain'. There's still a Hardy house there. They'd made their money in Australia; they figured on the first Australian banknotes. Sam – and I have, again, the correspondence that he wasn't a particularly good tenant – Lady Peel wasn't very chuffed with that so that negotiations were opened with the Atkinsons to take on the tenancy before they gave him the heave-ho. That's exactly what happened in 1928 – a slight reversal and we finally get a bit of social history.

Look at this placemat (*right – Lower Farm*). Those of you who've been in the village quite a long time will know that, when I took over at Lower Farm and swapped with my dad, there was a store on stilts in the farmstead just here, this green thing.

It was just like the village institute that we used to have, the village hall, and just like the one at Stroud. It was steel sheet plate, but this one was on metal coins. It had a sprung-lined dance floor and it was paper lined – not when I got to see it, but that's why it was built.



Sam Hardy didn't like farming too much, but he did like to live. They used to have the 'Savoy Orpheans'. This was built to celebrate the introduction of a corn law. What happened was the government introduced the 'Corn Law', which set a price on wheat, which meant they weren't going to go bankrupt.



*Pencil inscription on off-cut of Lower Farm barn.*

We know when that was built, because when I took it down there was an offcut chucked in behind. This is the pine lining of it and it says, 'This building was erected in January 15<sup>th</sup> 1910, by Walter Kille and Arthur Kille' – so, that's a family name – 'and James Hawkins, in the year of tariff reform, by W Nicholson of Basing Park, conservative, and H Baker, Portsmouth, liberal.' So, there were the two sitting MPs of this area, founding a dance hall. The other thing they did: they tarred the roads at the same time.



*Road Tar gang, 1920s*

That's again a lovely little bit of social history, really, that there was great celebration. They put up a dance hall and they used to have the 'Savoy Orpheans' used to come down, which was the 'Palm Court Trio' of the time. They got through, one weekend, 120 crates of champagne, because the butler had to go round with a wheelbarrow, picking up the champagne corks.

They used to go racing a lot; they used to have Sir Harry Lauder, who was the big vaudeville act, the big act of the time – come down and stay and go and travel out to all the big houses and do shows. The Hardy money started to run out because he hadn't invested it very wisely, and, of course, we had the 'Wall Street Crash'.

His cousins were the Hardy and Hanson's brewers in Manchester, and everyone carried on drinking beer. Ultimately what happened: the staff got made redundant and most of them went to work for the cousins in Manchester. Sam Hardy and my mother remembers, when she was alive – and I've met him – the Hardys still have land in Australia, but we've lost touch with that side of it because they said the little pond that we have, or old moat in the sale particulars, was a lake with swans, apparently.

One silly little thing that he said once, but I'm not sure how it fits in time wise, so his mother was a great friend of Barbara Cartland and he said, "She got a phone call." He said, "I must tell you because we've got all these papers in my archive, but I'm just going back to Australia." I don't where it is now; I think he's put it in storage in Reeves. He said his mother was a great friend of Barbara Cartland. Barbara Cartland rang up and said, "Can we bring some friends down for Goodwood fortnight?" which it was then, and up rocked Edward and Wallis Simpson. They stayed for a fortnight and went to Goodwood, but obviously long before meeting ...

So, we haven't got a blue plaque or anything like that, and we don't know where they stayed, it's a little bit anecdotal, but I've no reason to disbelieve him.

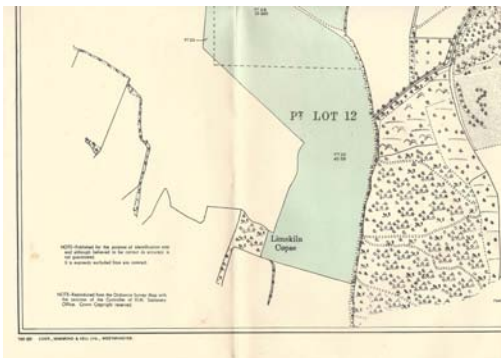
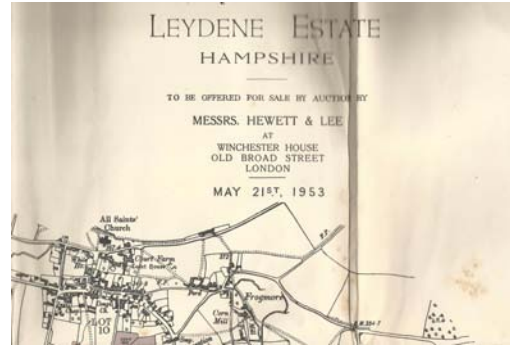
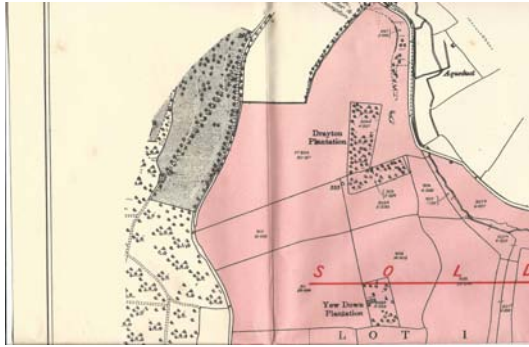


*Left, gravestone of Lord and Lady Peel in All Saints churchyard.*

So, the Hardys moved, my grandparents moved into Lower Farm, and the farms were all put up for sale. The Navy had moved in and set up HMS Mercury during the war, but the Peels effectively died out. Lord and Lady Peel are buried in this churchyard, but there was no-one to take on the estate, and they had estates in Scotland



*Plan 1 of Leydene estate sale showing, in pink, the land sold in advance to Major Nicholson of Bereleigh and, in blue, the land which was let to the Atkinsons.*



*Segments of Plan 1*

So, what happened? 1953 there are five maps. This is the map for this part of the valley: the pink area was sold to the Nicholsons prior to the sale - the Drayton plantation and down to Duncombe Wood. Then you've got South and Lower Farm.

Interestingly, in doing this research I never realised there was a Spencer's Farm. We have a field called Spencer's, just as you go out of the village, the first house on the right, that was built in 1906. That was the farmhouse for Spencer's Farm. It's now been blown apart amongst other farmers.

We added Lower House Farm to our patch in the '90s. I never realised that – this area here, between Greenways Lane and the road to Petersfield there's Germans Barn. This was known as German Farm. I didn't realise that. My uncle can't remember who the man was that farmed it, but this was never together as one farm.

So, in 1953, the whole lot was up for grabs and the Whites bought it. The Whites were Timothy White & Taylors, so Boots. They cashed in all the shares they had in Boots, they put half into War Bonds and half into the 10,500 acres, the whole lot. But, fortunately for the Atkinson family, there was a coming together and they said, "If you are prepared to make an offer for your land, then put a bid in an envelope."

Basically they sold the north-facing farm, South Farm and Lower Farm, but they've kept Chidden and all the way down. Then they've added on Southleigh and everything else that goes with the White estate, which they still own, so we were very fortunate in that respect of being able to buy. South Farm is 560 acres, with a little bit of tenanted land as well.



LOWER FARM HOUSE. Lot 12

SOUTH FARM HOUSE AND BUILDINGS. Lot 12

LOT 12  
(Coloured Blue on Plan No. 1)

**The Highly Productive  
CORN AND DAIRY HOLDING  
LOWER & SOUTH FARMS**

Situate to the South of East Meon Village, well served by Council roads, partly surrounded by the River Meon. This Holding is in a high state of cultivation and has been in the occupation of the present Tenants for a great many years. It includes some of the best Corn Growing land in the district, as well as some excellent grass Downs, very healthy for Cattle and Sheep Grazing, with a good hot Water Supply, and well fenced. It extends to an area of about

- 1,178 Acres

**OF LOWER FARM.**

**THE ATTRACTIVE FARMHOUSE - RESIDENCE**

of brick and limestone, with tiled roof construction, has the following accommodation:-

**ON THE GROUND FLOOR.**

Entrance Hall, with quarry tile floor.

Chamberlain, with wash basin and separate W.C.

LOUNGE (17ft.6in. by 17ft.6in.), with fireplace.

DRAWING ROOM (21ft.6in. by 17ft.6in.), with fireplace and French case-panels leading to Garden.

DINING ROOM (22ft. by 13ft.9in.), with brick fireplace.

Kitchen, with sink (h. & c.) and store cupboards. Larder.

Storey, with sink and store cupboard.

Dairy and Store Room. Two staff W.C's.

Principal and back Staircases.

**ON THE FIRST FLOOR.**

SIX BEDROOMS (22ft. by 10ft.3in.; 18ft. by 12ft.6in.; 10ft.3in. by 10ft.6in.; 10ft. by 9ft.; 14ft. by 8ft.; 13ft.3in. by 11ft.3in.), two with fireplaces.

[ 29 ]

BATHROOM, with bath, wash basin and heated linen cupboard.

Box Room.

The Outbuildings: Brick and flint built, with thatched roof, Double Garage and Wood Store. Large timber built, with galvanised iron roof, Workshop and Store.

The Garden is laid out with Lawns, Flower Borders and Fish Pond (bordering on the River Meon); part walled-in Kitchen Garden.

**THE LOWER FARM BUILDINGS**

arranged around two large Yards (one of which is concrete paved) comprise:-

Brick, flint and slate roof Stalls (for 22 cows), Dairy, Sterilising Room and Engine House. Large 3-bay Implement Shed and Loose Box. Brick and timber built, with thatched roof, Barn (converted into 6 Loose Boxes), Covered Cattle Yard and Store Shed. Brick and timber built, with thatched roof, Stalls (for 8 cows). Range of brick and flint built, with thatched roof, Bull Pen and Run. Three Loose Boxes, with mangers and concrete floors. Brick and timber built, with part tile and part thatched roof, 3-bay Barn (converted into 3 Loose Boxes). Timber built, with galvanised iron roof, Cattle Shelter and Loose Box. Range of Five Pigsties and Runs.

**AT SOUTH FARM.**

**A PICTURESQUE FARMHOUSE - RESIDENCE**

of brick and tiled construction. It contains:-

**ON THE GROUND FLOOR.**

Entrance Hall.

LOUNGE (19ft.9in. by 19ft.), with brick fireplace and oak beamed ceiling.

DINING ROOM (20ft. by 10ft.3in.), with brick fireplace.

Kitchen, Larder and Lobby.

Large Scullery, with sink. Large Store Room. W.C.

**ON THE FIRST FLOOR.**

SIX BEDROOMS (19ft.3in. by 11ft.3in.; 12ft.6in. by 10ft.9in.; 12ft.9in. by 10ft.6in.; 13ft.6in. by 11ft.3in.; 10ft.6in. by 12ft.; 10ft.3in. by 10ft.3in.), two with fireplaces. One Bedroom is panelled in fine old oak; and three others have oak-timber framed walls.

[ 30 ]

BATHROOM, with bath, wash basin and heated linen cupboard.

Entrance W.C.

The Outbuildings: Timber built, with galvanised iron roof, Garages.

**THE MODERN RANGE OF FARM BUILDINGS**

comprise:- Brick and timber built, with tiled roof, Stalls (for 42 cows), with leading passages and tubular partitions. Milks Room. Root House. Wash basin, with asbestos roof, range of buildings. Seven Loose Boxes, Bull Pen and Run, Fodder and Milks Rooms, 4-stall Stable. Brick built, with tiled roof, Stable, Stable Room and Engine House. Brick built, with thatched roof, Cattle Yard (17) and Hay Barn. Timber built, with galvanised iron roof, Loose Box and Fodder Store. Covered Cattle Yard and Manure Pit. Brick built, with asbestos roof, 4-bay Implement Shed and Tractor House. Granary. Range of brick built, with tiled roof, buildings (previously used as a Mill), comprise:-

**ON THE GROUND FLOOR.** Large Corn Store, Engine House. On the 1st Floor. Grinding Room. Large Grain Store. Loose Box and timber built, with tiled roof, buildings, used as 2 Loose Boxes and Store.

**AT SOUTH BARNY (O.S. No. 726).**

3-bay brick and timber built, with thatched roof, Barn. Timber built, with galvanised iron roof, open Cattle Shed, and a large Cattle Yard.

**THE FARM COTTAGES**

**LOT 12, No. 626.**

Three of four brick built, with tiled roof, Cottages. Each contains:-

Single Ground Floor. Sitting Room, with fireplace. Living Room, with range, bayonet.

One and Two Floor. Three Bedrooms (two with fireplaces).

Outside W.C.

At South Farm.

1847 Cottages, of brick and tiled construction. It contains:-

Single Ground Floor. Living Room, with range. Sitting Room, with fireplace. Bayonet, with sink.

One and Two Floor. Three Bedrooms (two with fireplaces).

**LOT 12, No. 628.**

3-bay of semi-detached, brick built, with slate roof, Cottages. Each contains:-

[ 31 ]

On the Ground Floor. Sitting Room, with fireplace. Living Room, with range. Scullery, with sink. Larder and Coal House.

On the First Floor. Two Bedrooms (each with a fireplace).

**In O.S. No. 272.**

A detached, brick built, with slate roof, Cottage. It contains:-

On the Ground Floor. Living Room, with fireplace. Sitting Room, with fireplace. Scullery (with sink) and W.C.

On the First Floor. Three Bedrooms.

**SERVICES.**

Mains Electricity (including lighting and power points) is connected to the two Farm Houses, some of the Farm Buildings and to a number of the Cottages.

Water is laid on to the two Farm Houses, some of the Cottages, Farm Buildings and to some of the fields. As to supply see General Remarks and stipulations No. 10.

This Lot (with the exception of O.S. Nos. 277, 636, 702, 722, 723a, 727a, with an area of 17,073 acres), is let to, and in the occupation of, Messrs G. W. and J. Atkinson, on a yearly Michaelmas tenancy, at an approximate rental of £1222 per annum.

O.S. Nos. 277, 636, 702, 722, 723a and 727a are in hand, and Vacant Possession will be given on completion of the purchase.

There is a Lease, with the Hampshire Police Authority, in respect of a strip of land in O.S. No. 630, at a rental of £1 per annum, and this Lot will be conveyed subject thereto.

The following buildings and fixtures are the property of the Tenants, and are not included in the sale:-

Dutch Barn, as erected in O.S. No. 473 (East Meon); Dutch Barn, as erected in O.S. No. 29 (Hantsdown); the "Aps" cooler and "Agnawick" boiler in Lower Farm House; the sleep and square wash wire setting in O.S. Nos. 674/675/676; O.S. No. 477, O.S. No. 284; O.S. Nos. 633, 656 and O.S. No. 706/722.

The Water Reservoir on the West side of O.S. No. 630 and at the South-East corner of O.S. No. 284 respectively, as well as the Water Pumping Station in the benefit of the Vendors or their successors, and coloured pink on the Plan, are reserved out of the sale of this Lot.

[ 32 ]

This Redemption Annuity: 263 Ds. 4d.

Lease Term: 21 Yrs. 9d.

Next Charge payable to the Church Commissioners: 4 Yrs. 0d.

Year	Amount	Year	Amount
1911	100	1921	100
1912	100	1922	100
1913	100	1923	100
1914	100	1924	100
1915	100	1925	100
1916	100	1926	100
1917	100	1927	100
1918	100	1928	100
1919	100	1929	100
1920	100	1930	100
1921	100	1931	100
1922	100	1932	100
1923	100	1933	100
1924	100	1934	100
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1979	100	1989	100
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1981	100	1991	100
1982	100	1992	100
1983	100	1993	100
1984	100	1994	100
1985	100	1995	100
1986	100	1996	100
1987	100	1997	100
1988	100	1998	100
1989	100	1999	100
1990	100	2000	100

[ 33 ]

Particulars of 1953 Leydene estate sale – description of Lower and South Farms

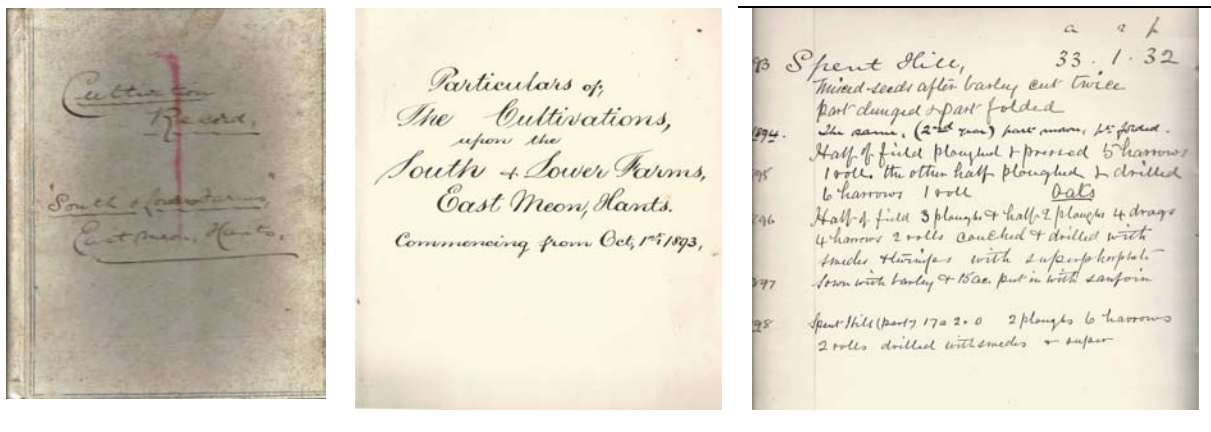
At the front of the sale particulars, it runs down through the properties and it says who was where then. Duncombe Farm was Tosdevines, the Jones' land at East Meon, different parcels of lands at East Meon, the Hobbs were still in the village. The Blackmans, there were lots of Blackmans farming parcels of land. The Killes, which was Stoneylands and Coombe Cross.

The Berrys farmed 830 acres based on Oxenbourne, running up to Butser and in that area there. If you come to present day, now, they're farming no acres. That's been divided between Michael, ourselves, and the Tosdevines and Freddie Walther.

The Rooks, the Coles, Cannings again, Stan Jones, Crossleys, Wrens, Lawfords, Parker – a number of families that are still farming in the area, but basically that's when we got lucky to purchase that farm.

Peak Farm was LeRoy Lewis, then it's Nicholson, and we took on the tenancy in 1953. It was a busy year that year. My grandfather went on as a tenant in 1953. I do remember David Rees' mother said that as a tenant it was the coldest house, Peak House, of anywhere in Hampshire. They were offered a tiny 150-acre/200-acre farm down at Bishop's Waltham or the 400 acres at Peak Farm, and they took the smaller farm at Bishop's Waltham. Interestingly, Peak House was unoccupied between 1952 to 1956 and it was pretty much going derelict. It's a miserable bit of ground, but we've continued to farm it since then.

The second change I want to talk about is, why did people come here to farm? Basically, the livestock had gone, the ground was getting poor. If you talk to Tom Parker, the governor, the legendary farmer from Fareham, he said, "You could stand on the hills in the early years of the century – last century – and you would look, and everything was going back to scrub." The livestock had gone, so the oomph had gone out of the soil; you couldn't just keep on growing crops. So, the Cumbrian migration brought their herds and stock with them.



*Buckram-bound cultivation record of South & Lower Farms, 1893 – 1898. L-R, cover, title page, record for Spent Hill*

Interestingly, when you talk about change: the products that we were producing. This is a buckram-bound record of tillages of South and Lower Farm in 1893. We inherited this when we inherited the farms, and it gives in lovely copperplate what crops were going in each field, with the names too, which is helpful, ... vetches, oats for horses, but there weren't a huge amount of cattle. There were sheep, but they were growing a lot of corn.

There were a lot of failures. Whether it's to do with weather, and obviously you'd got a certain amount of fertilisers, but the biggest change I've seen is that the Cumbrians brought their livestock expertise. This isn't boasting; it just happens to be. When that store was pulled down, on the walls were cards. I thought that would be a pity for them to be destroyed. I have a big pile of them and I've selected some, principally because they're all shows that no longer exist, such as Havant It hasn't got a date on it.

This one is an interesting one; this is 1929, the 'Royal Counties' at Southampton. Yes, 1929, funny little things like 'Petersfield Meat Show'. That's a more recent one, but obviously they came down here and they started to do cattle, and sheep, and horses very well. That's how they made their money, and they won prizes.

This one is an interesting one; this is an all-round certificate of merit for the 'Petersfield Autumn Show', which is our farms competition in this area, to Messrs G and J Atkinson for gaining highest marks in the lay, corn, herd, and acreage competitions in 1957.

That list that I was looking at there, the 1953 sale, there were 11 dairy herds within that group. Prior to that, you had buildings with five cows. I was trying to think; why was that? Think about it: the railways, urbanisation. People had a few cows and supplied fresh milk for this area, but the fact is, if things were going to move, we could supply the London market, Southampton, Portsmouth, and so herds. Suddenly you had lots of building, lots more men employed, and milk became a big feature. Now, we have two dairy herds left in those farms: Butlers at Whitewool and Sylvesters at Glidden. Not one herd left now, so in a funny way it's gone back to where it was.

This was one; it was called the 'Calthorpe Challenge Cup' for the competition members of the 'Hampshire Milk Recording Society', but it was presented by a company from Liverpool. It was run outright, in 1925, '26, and '27, by G and J Atkinson, so it wasn't perpetual then; you got to keep it. Interesting that the milk buyers were coming from Liverpool but obviously operating, perhaps, in London, and they'd be taking the milk by train.

I love this one: presented to G Atkinson for the 'Best Cart Colt' at Heath Fair, Michaelmas 1918. They did their horses rather well. This is the horse called Yashmak; they bought a horse called Southhill Yashmak. Southhill was the – and I know this because I went to college in Bedfordshire – Southhill is the estate owned by the Whitbreads in Bedfordshire.

That's a silver medal awarded at Romsey in 1921, so we've got a nice little Mappin & Web silver carthorse there. Yashmak made a lot of money for the Atkinsons in that period of time, because of course that was the mode of transport, that was the, you know, cars and everything else were coming in.

The last one, just interesting: '30th Annual Christmas Show', Petersfield, held by the Cosham and Petersfield Market Company, presented by Major Talbot-Ponsonby for 'Best Fat Cow' 1926, won by GW and J Atkinson. You couldn't really see Sainsbury's or Tesco's saying, "We want to award anything for a fat cow", would we?



Basically, they came down, they got busy, they got working. So, we've got Bishop's Waltham, Petersfield Market, Fareham. It was pigs as well; we used to have a pig yard at Lower Farm and South Farm, and that's just for pigs, but none of these exist anymore, which is kind of sad. It kind of reflects what's happened with food and the way it's sold. Chichester Fair and Winchester, they've all gone, haven't they?

So, they're continuing to farm, obviously, now. Grandfather fortunately survived the first war, or else I wouldn't be here to talk to you. The war had a huge effect on farming and the people. The numbers weren't there; they weren't prepared to work on the land or in the houses, like they had before.



*G.W. Atkinson in uniform*

Grandfather was captured on the Somme, presumed dead, They knew he was alive, but, when he walked into the cowshed one morning without any warning, the blokes nearly dropped dead of fright, I think, but anyway.

I remember Mr Cannings senior, George Cannings, he lived where the Sweeneys live, in Duncombe Wood. He had the terrible shakes because he was buried in the first war and the only thing that survived was they saw a little bit of hair sticking out of the mud, out of the soil. They dug him out and he was never the same afterwards. That's so his sons said, because they both work for us, but he was; he was terribly shell shocked.

There we go, but the war changed not only the attitude of the people and the value of food, because, let's face it, we nearly starved twice; it also changed the landscape. In my tours with kids, I always say, "That is the biggest change in our landscape here, without a doubt." The hills were all cleared, and, post the war, seeing big tractors busting all the ground from HMS Mercury to Old Winchester Hill, ripping out the gorse, taking out the hedges, taking out the trees, improving the area of fields or creating fields.

Basically, during the war there was a 'War Agricultural Committee', and they had well-known farmers went round and made sure that people were producing enough food. 'War Agricultural' drove, using prisoners of war, using land girls; they ripped everything off the hillsides. If you didn't, you were booted off your land. There was a farmer shot dead at Botley: he got in his house and wouldn't leave, and he was killed because he fired on the police. The only one in the parish here, Coombe Cross Farm, was rented by the Blackmans. They forced him off and forced his end of his tenancy, and it was taken on by Cecil Kille. So, if needs must, it's quite interesting to see how heavy-handed you would think, but that's as it was.

We grew linseed; we grew potatoes on the hillsides. Not now, of course, but of course the poor old wildlife has taken a very long time to get back from that sort of Armageddon, if you like. Here's a certificate for my grandfather, saying, 'On behalf of his Majesty's government, I wish to thank you for the service you've rendered to the nation during the war. The task of British agriculture is arduous and, indeed, a vital one to keep the nation fed.'

We don't milk any more, Michael doesn't milk anymore. We fatten cattle, we've got sheep, and we've got arable and we've got storage. Our land doesn't lend itself: you can't plough a lot of it, just the terrain. Of the 1,200 acres, 400 is arable, which is quite a small amount in this area, so we're extended graziers. By the fact of our farm, that's how we farm.

So, that's done the change of land tenure, and the change in agriculture. That is still happening now. If we go to present day, we're farming 1,200 acres, of which 400-plus is rented, but we've acquired Lower House Farm. Lower House Farm doesn't figure in any of those sale maps. It was the Weekes family and then the Joneses. It's been sold since 1969. It was the Joneses, then John Paul Jones, Led Zeppelin's lead guitarist, then John Chadwick and then ourselves. So that piece of ground has probably changed hands quicker than any other since 1969. We've added, Michael's added to his ground, the Tosdevines have added to theirs, so you've lost the volume.



To finish up, the staff, the people, the village – how that's changed along with farming. It's not retrograde, but if any of you remember Herbie Goddard, so the man that built the village hall was basically the Mayor of East Meon, who had the garage next to Glenthorne House, with Chris Pamplin. *(Left, aerial view of the garage.)*



Herbie is there, *(left)* stood with a very youthful Wilson Atkinson, pointing from Hockham Cottage up the hillside when they're clearing it in 1962. The bit of land which is the Hockham Valley, the first bit, was scrub. For some reason, when it got sold from the estate in '53, it got into the hands of some speculators from London. It went, got turned over and went bust, and it was just a mess, so the village said "Please, please, Wilson, will you buy it?". He said, "Yes, I'll buy it" – it was 40-odd acres – "If you'll let me clear most of it from woodland," so the steep bit is still woodland and the rest is now.



We had to have a very youthful Michael and Jane, and Michael's mother and my father, mother, grandmother, and Les Phillips *(left,)*. Les' family, the Phillips, worked for the Atkinsons. The brother was killed in the Second World War as a pilot, so we read his name out every Remembrance Day. 1950: 52 years' service, from hand-milking cows to driving



and drilling, driving the combines. Then he retired to the almshouses and died, what, three years ago? His daughter, two of his daughters live in Glenthorne Meadow, which is lovely – still a connection Malcolm Painter (*left*), Malcolm has worked for us for 32 years and now retired – semi-retired – to Frogmore

Last but not least, we touched on the Cannings, identical twins, George and John, lived in Duncan Wood in that cottage, which is now the Sweeneys', with Les Phillips and this young man; Fred Willis his name was. Anyway, these two, you couldn't tell them apart. They'd never done anything; they went on national service to Mesopotamia and, other than that, they never really left the village. One smoked, one didn't; one wore the beret one way and one wore the beret the other way.

I remember doing a farm tour once with some school kids, and one of the children actually noticed that one brother had taken over halfway through and couldn't figure why this different coloured or... Anyway, there's the Cannings family, who rented Hyden Farm,. They weren't owners, they were tenants, and yet the sons, after the father was very badly hurt in the war, they ended up as gardeners to Lady Peel up at Mercury and then worked for us. Sadly, neither of them had any children.

Then, of course, lastly I was just going to say, "Bernard Avery." Do you remember Bernard? They came to work for us. The bench on the recreation ground is dedicated to Bernard, down at the bottom, next to the swings. Bernard and Ted Avery came to work for us at Peak Farm. Ted was a very large man who tried to annihilate my father once. He had a very short-fused temper. Fortunately, Frank Moffatt, who was working for us at the time, stepped in, or father ducked. Ted was 25 stone and could lift things up without having to use a jack, but Bernard milked cows and continued to live in the area, although he was a Sussex man..

Lastly, my mother collated a list from 'Kelly's Directory' of 1935. I don't know whether anyone's seen this, but it's basically categorising East Meon in private residences and commercial. I thought the commercial was interesting, to see what trades and where they were trading in East Meon in 1935. See who's living in those houses and who's still here.

There was an Aburrow & Sons blacksmiths at Drayton; Atkinsons, George and Joseph, Lower and South Farm; Aylmore, George, a butcher. Banham, they were saddlers and they were at West Meon, but Russell is a relative and lives in Germans Barn. Berry, Philip Henry, farmer at Oxenbourne; Blackman, farmer, Coombe Cross. Broadway, Lythe House; Broadway, Old Down and Garston Farm, which has just been sold again. Coles, Henry, motor engineer, so the Coles that are in the village were motor engineers. Collyer, Frank: 'Firewood Director' it says here. Is that right, or was he the fireman? 'The Square.' Crockford, George Henry, baker and pastry cook, the high street.



*The Institute, 1874 - 1973*

The East Meon Institute; it wasn't a poor-house, it was an institute; it was that steel-built village hall.

There's a Norgate still; Bill the baker was a Norgate, wasn't he? Ernest Gordon, farmer, Church Farm; William Gough, farmer, Peak Farm at Warnford; Harford, a surgeon, John Edward. Hobbs, Archibald, grocer; Hobbs, James, a blacksmith. Hope, Spencer, farm bailiff to the Butlers at Coombe Cross.

George Edward Jones, farmer, Lower House Farm; George Kille, builder, the high street, Chapel Street. The Lamberts, farmers, Duncan Farm; Lamberts, smallholder, Rookham Lodge. Lough Harry, chimneysweep; Morris, farmer, Belmont Farm; Nicholson, farmer, Park Farm; Nicholson, Humphrey, farmer, Upper Bordean.

Norgate, gardener to Major Nicholson; Norgate, Butcher. Noyce at Colchenna; Pace, boot and shoe repairer. Parsons, grocer; Pink, shopkeeper. Porter, Arthur, the George Inn. Russell, farmer, Hyden Farm. Shaw, Miss, district nurse; Silk, George, farmer, Frogmore Mill. Smith, Percy, grocer in the Post Office and Smith, George, the New Inn. Whitehead, Thomas. I remember him; he owned Westbury House. Wren, Arthur, farmer, Riplington. Wynn, Harry, haulage contractor, Pidham Farm and father of Margaret Tosdevine, and Young, Newton gardener to the Whiteheads. If you look, there are quite a few families still in the village. This is not all connected to farming, but there were obviously far more farms.

The last thing I was just going to say, I just get passionate about it. I'm lucky: I walk out every day and I'm somewhere where history is happening. Everyone is to a certain extent. What you do today is tomorrow's history, isn't it? I just feel that we're very lucky to live here and to have roots enough to get the feel for it, because I believe that if people who move in or come to an area, if they get underneath the skin and understand why things have happened or why things are happening, history usually has a part in that.

*I propose to add, as appendices, the description by Harry Walter Edwards of his boss, Sam Hardy, at Lower Farm. more details from sales particulars and the crop survey of 1893 - 8.*

*MBB Jan 20 17*