

Upwood Farms

The main farms in Upwood between 1850 and 1950 appear to have been Townsend Farm, Whitehall Farm, Church Farm, Hill Farm, Valley Farm and Common Farm. In 1854, the trade directory shows the principal land owners to have been Richard Hussey Hussey (Lord of the Manor), Edward Fellows Esq. and John Julian (from Bury). However most of the land was farmed by tenants and the same directory shows 12 entries for farmer. The stiff clay soil was suitable for growing wheat, barley and beans.

The 1885 trade directory still shows the Fellows and Hussey families as major landowners in the village but some new names appear in the tenant farmers — William Collett was farming Townsend Farm and Richard Pentelow was at Church Farm. The inclusion of Bury Fen into the parish of Upwood brought in some additional farmers by 1890, including Matthew Stokes and William Purser.

Charles Kilby, the first potato dealer in Upwood, appears in the 1903 trade directory although potatoes appear as a recorded crop some five years earlier. By this time, the principal landowners appear to be Col. Moubray at Upwood House and Lord de Ramsey.

A survey of the census returns between 1851 and 1891 reveals that many children, some as young as ten years old, were regularly employed as labourers and plough boys. In 1871 the male population of the parish was 184, of which 62 were under age, yet 96 people were actively employed in agriculture and allied trades. In 1880, the average agricultural wage was 8s per week. By 1891, 117 adult males out of a total of 137 in the parish, were employed in agriculture.

In 1908, Lord de Ramsey held a sale of farm stock and implements. Of the seven horses sold, the most expensive were a 4-year old brown gelding 'Farmer' priced at £42 and a five year old bay gelding 'Boxer' at £37 16s. In addition to the selling price, the buyer had to pay 1s on each horse for the horsekeeper and 6d on each pen of sheep for the shepherd. Carts made £3 up to £4 5s for the very best whilst a Massey Harris binder was sold for £7 10s. It was in 1908 that Lord de Ramsey first let part of Hill Farm to the parish council as allotments. The rent for 1 acre was £1 5s and by 31st January 1909, the council owned and rented out 20 acres. In 1940 the

War Agricultural Executive Committee (known as War Ag.) took possession of and terminated all tenancies of allotments on Hill Farm land.

The 1910 Land Valuation Duty survey shows that allotments on Hill Farm were occupied by Messrs. Deighton, Gaunt, Ingram, Kennell, Kidman, King, Shelton, Slack, Thompson, Townsend and Woodward. Common Farm, owned by the County Council was let to various tenants including Arthur Bridgfoot from Ramsey.

A rate book dated 1926 shows Townsend Farm occupied by John Shelton, Hill Farm worked by Edward Sewell and other tenants with Church Farm divided between William Scarr and William Curtis.

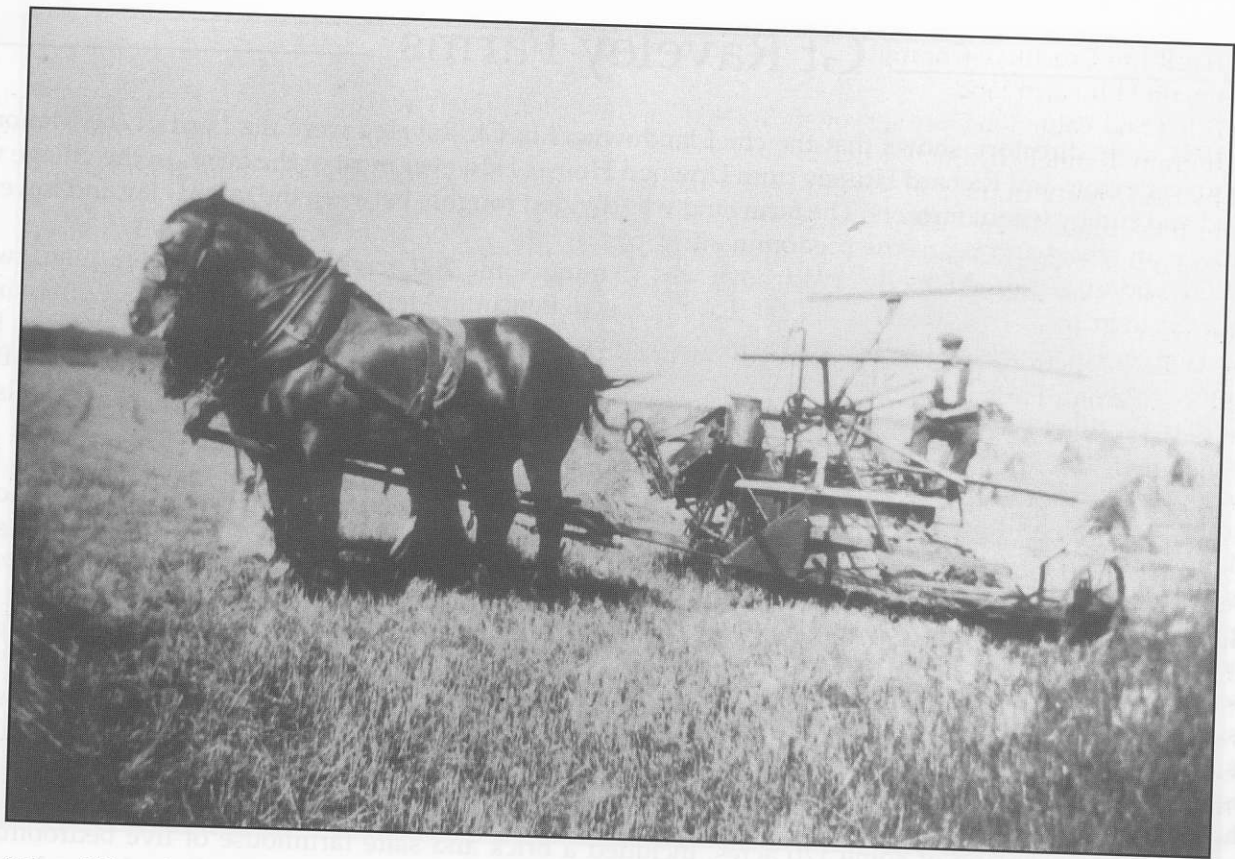
Sugar beet makes a first appearance as a crop in the 1931 trade directory. By 1936 the chief landowners in Upwood were Sir Ernest Shepperson of Upwood House, William Curtis of Church Farm and the executors of the late William Shelton. Wilfred Scarr farmed at Meadow Farm. About this time Townsend Farm was also referred to as Manor Farm.

The 1941 National Farm Survey showed William Curtis at Church Farm. He was cultivating some 300 acres which included 99 acres of wheat, 60 acres of barley, 26 acres beans for stock feed, 14 acres of sugarbeet, 6 acres of flax and 40 acres of permanent grass for grazing. He employed eight men full time. In addition to arable cultivation, he also had 59 head of cattle, 119 pigs, 120 fowls and 14 horses.

Meadow Farm, occupied by G.H. & J. Slote, showed 159 acres under cultivation, employing two full time labourers. There were 24 cows, 85 fowls and 7 ducks, 1 goat and 5 horses, three used in agriculture.

Whitehall Farm, part of Townsend Farm, owned by Lord de Ramsey but farmed by W. & G.J. Cordell comprised 302 acres of farmland, of which 118 acres were put down to permanent grass for grazing and 74 acres for wheat. There were six horses used for agricultural purposes, 130 sheep and 43 head of cattle. At this time tractors were more commonplace and this farm could boast a 20hp International.

The only major changes to the landscape in and around Upwood in the period 1850 to 1950 appear to have been the consolidation of some of the smaller farm holdings shortly after Enclosure in the early 1850s and at Hill Farm where the Airfield was built in 1917.



Edgar Edwards, farmer at Gt. Raveley, on an Albion binder with horses Boxer and Beauty.

Gt Raveley Farms

The 1854 trade directory shows that the chief landowners in Gt. Raveley were the Lord of the Manor, Sir Thomas Peyton, and Richard Hussey from Upwood House. However most of the farms in the village were occupied and run by tenant farmers. The farm land was divided roughly between the raised clay and lower fen peat soils with wheat and beans the predominant crops.

In 1851 widow Sarah Dobbs from Warboys was farming some 200 acres employing seven men, two of whom lived-in in 1851. Two other farmers at that time were Benjamin Martin working 290 acres employing 11 men and Oliver Foster with 110 acres employing three men. It is perhaps worth noting that at High Oben Farm (note the dropped 'aitch) Thomas Fairley, born in Berwick, Northumberland, was recorded as a Farm Bailiff and George Berridge was the molecatcher. George Brighty, farming some 770 acres at Fen Lode, was also recorded as a brickmaker.

The 1887 25 inch Ordnance Survey map identifies White House Farm, Manor Farm, High Holborn Farm and Lodge Farm with Brighty's Farm down in the Fen. In 1890, the trade directory shows that the new Lord of the Manor is Capt. Sir Algernon Francis Peyton, Bart. of Swifts House, Bicester, Oxon for whom occasional courts were held. By that time, there were nine farmers recorded in Gt. Raveley and in 1891 John Meadows was living at Manor Farm.

The 1910 Land Value Duties survey shows six major farms in Gt. Raveley. Arthur Moubray of Upwood House was the owner of Holborn Farm, tenanted by Ernest Collett; White House Farm tenanted by William Cross; Manor Farm tenanted by Benjamin Irish and Brighty's Farm tenanted by William Curtis. These four farms accounted for the majority of arable and pasture land in the parish. Lodge Farm, tenanted by William Simpson was owned by Sir A. Peyton and Mrs. Simpson of Heath Farm was an owner occupier.

The sale in 1919 of the Moubray holdings gives detailed descriptions of three of the Gt. Raveley farms. High Holborn Farm, comprising of some 170 acres, included a brick and slate farmhouse of five bedrooms, two sitting rooms, kitchen, dairy, cellar, wash house with copper, usual outbuildings, a small garden and orchard.