

LANGFORD FARM NEWTON ST CYRES



Prof. Hoskins wrote that Langford Farm was one of the 21 villein farms in the Manor of Norton, Newton St Cyres in 1066, and pretty certainly goes back to Saxon times. By the early 14th century-and possibly earlier – it had become freehold of the Manor and was occupied by a ‘franklin’ family’.

Langford is recorded by name in 1330, when it was owned and occupied by the Langford’s who took their name from the place.

The Northcotes bought the Manor of Newton St Cyres in 1557 from the Crown (it had belonged to Plympton Priory).

The earliest found record of Langford Farm is from an entry of Bishop Stapleton in 1303. A description of a visitation of Norton by Stewards of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter include the names of Adam and Alanum of Langford. This was in the reign of Edward the second.

Langford is the oldest standing house in the parish of Newton St Cyres and originally stood on 10 acres of land. Built of cob and roofed with thatch, the house was originally built as a ‘hall house’ as is evident by its crucked beams.

The house was built with its back to the west wind and it stands on a stone plinth which is tarred to keep out water and deter vermin. Originally wheat straw was used to thatch the roof and later Norfolk reed. Austrian was used when the house was thatched in 1989.

The Devon 'Feet of Fines' has two areas of interest, the first mentioning Adam de Langford in 1336 and the second includes Langford in 1358. Both of these original documents are stored in the Records Library in Kew.

During the time when Langford was a 'hall house' it would have had an open fire in the middle of it with a hole in the centre of the thatch to let the smoke out and rushes on the floor. There is evidence that at one time there were two cottages.

Langford for many years was a cider farm and still retains some apple trees. In the early days of cider making the apples were trodden on in the orchards by all sorts of farmyard animals and at the right time scooped up (including excrement) and put in the press. There was a particular drink named 'snarlygogs' which was the residue and rubbish left at the bottom of the crush.

On the land there was an area which was known as 'the quarry'. This was an area of the field which had obviously been dug out. At the time it was thought to be a quarry containing Manganese.

'The Langford Manganese Company' was registered on the 15th of June 1888, with a nominal capital of £10,000 in shares of £1. The company closed when all that was found was the remains of some pillars and not a solid vein of manganese.

In 1843, Thomas Townsend owned Langford Farm on a short lease until it was sold in 1889.

In 1889 Langford Farm was bought by Edward Batting from Emily Townsend for £1810.

On 29th Sept 1908, Edward Batting (described as a Yeoman) sold the property to Arthur Grant Trollop of Clyst Honiton, captain in his majesty's east Kent regiment. The property was bought for £650.

In 1919, Anna Georgina Trollop sold the property to Dorothy Mabel Bursbridge and Anne Morris for £900. Dorothy Bursbridge sold it to Sidney Edward Odgers on the 13th of September in 1922 for £1,100

On the 24th of June, 1925 Sydney Odgers sold it to William Hobbs Parsons (described as a pig breeder) for £1000.

During this period Langford Farm occupied 10 acres of land and on the land there was a small cottage.

On the 18th of August 1934 he sold the property to Thomas Gwyther for £1,200 who only owned it for 1 year before selling the whole property, plus fixtures and fittings to James Henry Congdon for £1,000. James Congdon was described as a market gardener.

On the 28th October 1938 James Congdon sold the cottage to Walter Claro, described as a decorator, for £240. George Lewis Butt from Upton Pyne bought the cottage on the 14th of August, 1940 for £350. George Butt died on the 9th of February 1955 and left it to his wife.

Ms Irene Rosemary Thomas bought the cottage on the 13th of June 1958 for £100.

James Congdon owned Langford Farm until 1943 during the war years and sold off the land in plots along the road, one at a time, for building. It is said that during the war people walked out with hand carts (or whatever transport they had) and 'camped' on the land.

In 1943, James Congdon sold the farm to John Hutchings who was the last person to farm the establishment. After his death in 1953 it was bought by Ann Rosemary Thomas who made alterations to the house which was in poor repair.

Rosemary Thomas had the stairs built in the dining room from some oak screens that were removed. Rosemary Thomas kept horses and built the indoor riding arena. She also built two brick stables and two wooden stables.

In 1972 she let the two lower stables and the indoor arena to Don Attenburrow while he was a partner with St David's veterinary hospital in Exeter.

Don ran his equine practise from this establishment and erected a small wooden office in what was the garden of the old cottage. In 1977 Rosemary Thomas decided to sell the property.

Don and Sue Attenburrow bought the property with their three children plus dogs, cats, chicken and ducks. The much loved property was sold in 2021.

While the house was being re- thatched in the 1980s the thatcher discovered some smoke blackened reeds. The people who lived with their livestock in the past would have worked hard from dawn to dusk with virtually no time off.

Their clothes would have been made of goat's hair and unprocessed wool. They would have had no artificial light except occasional rush- light dipped in fat. Food would have been rough brown bread and vegetable broth, small-ale from barley, bacon, beans, milk, cabbage and onion, honey and mead.

During the summer they may have had boiled or raw veal and wild fowl and game. In the autumn they slaughtered and salted the cattle when there was no more

pasture for them to eat. Starvation happened if the harvest failed followed by pestilence.

Langford Farm has seen many interesting and sometimes hard times, For those of us who lived there in recent years it was a much loved property.

Sue Attenburrow 2025