NORTH WANSDYKE
PAST
AND
PRESENT

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North Wansdyke

Past and Present

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The 1920s photograph on the front cover shows the avenue of poplars looking towards Queen Charlton from the Poor Houses. Before these trees were felled the avenue formed a landmark identifiable from many parts of north Somerset, Bristol and south Gloucestershire

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Memories of Queen Charlton

J. R. Loxton

These memories of Queen Charlton are taken from the fuller **Memoirs of J. R. Loxton,** *published by G. A. J. Loxton, Ston Easton, 1989.*

The village was owned by one family for the forty years I lived there, and during that time they never set foot in it nor took any interest in it. An agent from the Midlands came twice a year to collect the rents and to give instructions as to any repairs he thought necessary. He often used to walk about the village as though he owned it, and was often put in his place by my father.

There was a Church, a Manor House, a private house where a retired farmer lived, four farms, an off-licence, a school and teachers' house and a number of cottages that were tied to the farms and to the Manor House. There were also six houses called Poor Houses - one up and one down with an outhouse and closet at each end—where six elderly people lived. The Poor Houses were outside the village, past the watering troughs and the one-time avenue of poplars, and have now been made into almost a mansion.

Fig. 1: Queen Charlton in 1930, showing Ann and Arthur Cantle's thatched cottage, with later cottage behind it occupied by Mr Goodliffe who worked for Col. Robinson, then tenant of the Manor House.

There was no resident incumbent in the parish, but a dear old clergyman came from Bath by train to Keynsham and then on to Queen Charlton by the only hired conveyance, a brougham. It waited to take him back, except when he stayed for an afternoon service or to visit the sick and elderly. At these times he was entertained by the people at the Manor or by us. He often visited our home to enquire about the state of the village needy. Mother might have been called a sick visitor, as on Sunday afternoons she used to visit particularly the people in the Poor Houses, when she took them food or medicine and read from the Bible and prayed. When I was old enough I used to go with her and would say the Lord's Prayer with them. These old people were very pleased to see us, I remember. I guess they were house-bound and very glad to see fresh faces. So Mother was able to give the clergyman first-hand knowledge of the poor. He and Father used to have great talks on Church life in London. He was very Low Church, and when he had a living in London he had formed a great friendship with Hugh Price Hughes, a noted Methodist Minister of the time.

Mother had a clothing club to which the village women used on Monday afternoons to bring their money for her to save. It was paid out at Christmas in the shape of clothing cards that could be used at Jones, a big store in Wine Street, Bristol. Mother used to add so much in the pound, which she used to collect from people at the Manor or farmers and friends, and I think Jones gave a discount. There was also a Charity in the village, which was left for a certain purpose that had become outdated. It had accumulated while the powers that be decided whether to consent for it to be used for a different purpose. Father was one of the Trustees, and I remember once that Mother organised a distribution of blankets to those who were entitled to them, from this Charity.

The Manor House had many tenants during the years. The earliest I remember was from a Bristol merchant family. They were Congregationalists, and with my parents at times organised a service in the Manor hall on a Sunday evening as there was only a morning service in the Church. Mother and her nieces and nephews used to provide the musical side, and often others in the village with their musical friends would take part.

The next tenant was manager of the National Provincial Bank in Clare Street, Bristol. He kept a conveyance and coachman who usually took him to and from Keynsham station, but when it was fine in the summer he would walk back. This family was rather higher Church than the old clergyman but they were a great asset to the village because they organised many social events. They gave the children a Christmas Tea in the school room, employing what we used to call a funny man from town to entertain us—a comedian in fact. The adults were given a supper and dance at which one of the villagers played the accordion and others sang all sorts of songs.

Jubilee and Coronation Day were great occasions. There were flags and streamers

all over the village, there was a short Church service and the Church bells were rung. The children had a Tea in the manor grounds, which were open for the day, with commemorative china cups and sports. There were sports for the grown-ups, and the barn opposite the Manor was cleaned up for a dinner that included a big joint of beef and a large ham, followed by a barrel of beer and a sing-song to celebrate. The rose walk in the manor shrubbery was decorated with Chinese lanterns lit with candles. Afterwards anyone who felt like it walked up onto the hill, where the quarry is now, to see the bonfires and fireworks around the hills. I guess there were lights on the Suspension Bridge, which can be seen from the hill, and you could count a dozen fires—on Lansdown, Mendips, Brean Down, Brandon Hill and Dundry. No doubt also the Welsh hills, Malvern hills and many more if you could guess where they were.

The village was very loyal to the Crown and had a noted Queen Charlton Troop of the Somerset Yeomanry. When Queen Victoria came to Bristol to open the Children's Convalescent Hospital on the Downs, the Queen Charlton Troop was represented by two men of the village in the escort on our horses. The village did go to town then! During the Boer War lads from the village joined the Grenadier Guards, and from one family they did not return, but stayed in the South African Police. One lad died of enteric fever. One of our men who was a retired Grenadier Guardsman accepted the Queen's call for her old Guards to come and guard her while all her regulars were in South Africa. He came back later and ended his days on the farm.

It shows how long men used to stay with their employers on the farms, that several men came with Father when he moved from Chewton Mendip to Queen Charlton in 1887, and hardly worked for any one else in their lives. One was a bachelor, called Billy Pickering, who lived in house with us until he and Father retired—they died within a month of each other a year afterwards. I was a great pet of Billy's when I was little. He used to take me round the farmyard and paddock to see the animals while Mother and Father were at Chapel, having first got the horse and trap ready for them.

The old guardsman was a boy in house when Father was at Chewton Mendip. He read books on the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian wars which Father lent him, and having decided he would be a soldier, he joined for 21 years and served in many parts of the world, including India. He married a London woman and had six or seven children, mostly boys, and lived in the village. Several of these boys worked on the farm and then emigrated to Canada. Other boys from the village went to Australia. All came back in the colonial armies and visited us when on leave and most of them survived and went back abroad after the war. There were only a few who were eligible for the Great War left in the village when the war started. One of that number did not return—his name is on the Memorial Window in the Church.

Of the other farms in the village, the first you come to past the watering troughs, coming from Keynsham, was occupied by Mr Hember. He had a hay and corn business, with many customers in Bristol, and supplied hay, corn and chaff, etc. to various firms there. In the summer he would have his customers' horses out on the farm for a week or two to rest. I presume that he realised that horses would go one day because his sons became engineers and had steam rollers, steam traction engines and threshing machines. They travelled the villages doing what we now call contract work. This was at the time when a man with a flag had to walk so many yards in front. They also had corn drills and binders, etc. for hire, so they needed a lot of labour, which came from the surrounding villages or from Keynsham.

The two smaller farms had their dairy of cows with young stock growing on as replacements, a couple of horses to do the work, and a few acres of ploughland.

Our own farm, Charlton Farm, or Virginia Farm as my mother called it, had a lower part wedged between Whitchurch, Stockwood and Keynsham. The far end was called Charlton Bottom, now called Stockwood Vale. The other part of the farm extended above the village, over the hill where the quarries are now right to the boundaries of Compton Dando and Woollard. We kept a flock of breeding

Fig. 2: Charlton Farmhouse in the 1920s. The front half was slated, and the rear half tiled. There was no porch on the front door.

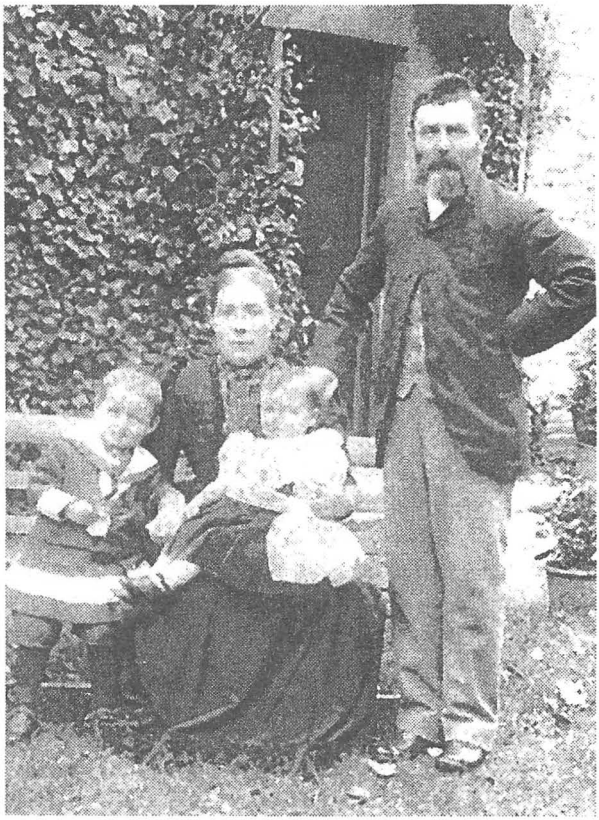


Fig. 3:
James and Charlotte Loxton about 1891, with Joseph (born 1889) and Wilfrid (born 1891).[1]

ewes, a herd of seventy milking cows with the same number of young stock, and seven or eight shire horses. Always there were two or three mares with foals, with one, two and three-year-olds gradually coming into work, and at five, six or seven being sold to Bristol or Keynsham merchants. Then we had several hackney horses and mares—we were always wanting horses to take the milk to Bristol.

My father came to Queen Charlton in 1887 from Rookery Farm, Chewton Mendip. In 1888 he married my mother, who was Charlotte Paget, born at Burnett, but living at the time at their farm at Chewton Keynsham. My father had earlier married my mother's older sister Mary, but she had died of consumption some years af-

1 James died 1924 (aged 78), Charlotte in 1939 (aged 83), both buried at Burnett; Joseph in 1978 (aged 89), buried at Queen Charlton; Wilfrid in 1994 (aged 103), buried at Mangotsfield. A later son, Edward, died aged 99, buried at Burnett.

terwards, at Chewton Mendip. My father was forty and mother in her late thirties when they were married. Father had been a Wesleyan Methodist for many years, but Mother was a member of the Church of England and had sung in the choir of Keynsham Parish Church for some years. She became a Methodist member on her marriage. However, when my brothers and I were small Mother used to take us to the village Church on the occasions that my father could not take us to the Methodist Chapel at Keynsham in the pony and trap (which he did on most Sundays).

Our family was well known to the Keynsham people, not only because of the pony and trap going to Chapel every Sunday, but also because of the cattle and sheep, as well as horses and carts and wagons, being driven through the town. Then, at times, the unemployed used to put a ferret their pockets and come over the footpath to Charlton Bottom, as there were plenty of rabbits then. Women would come blackberrying and mushrooming and boys come nutting or sometimes get permission to camp. I remember one man was given permission for his son to practise with his gun to shoot rabbits and another boy came to learn a little about farming—all free. I recently met a well-known Keynsham tradesman and stopped for a chat. He said 'Mr. Loxton, whenever I see you I always think of turnips', and I replied that I knew a lot of Keynsham folk liked our turnips in the old days. He remembered that many years ago, in hard times, he would sometimes put a bag of our turnips in his van on the way to Stanton Drew. 'Well', I said, 'That was a long time ago, we always thought it was the gipsies!' Of course, the gipsies would sometimes help themselves to swedes and turnips and cut withy or nut sticks out of the hedges for basket or peg making. Occasionally Keynsham rose growers came out and dug up wild rose roots for grafting and many crab apples and sloes went to Keynsham to make jelly and sloe gin.

My Childhood

I was born in January 1889 at Charlton Farm. As my parents were rather older than usual for starting a family, I was rather spoilt in my first year or so. I have been told that even before I was a year old, if I cried in the evening, I would be brought downstairs to sit on my father's knee while he had his supper and he would give me some of his supper. This was discussed around the family, who decided that I was being badly spoiled, and I think my parents were very much condemned! When my brother Wilfrid was about to be born it so happened that Mother had recently lost a brother by accident and his wife by illness, leaving a young family. The older one was a girl about eighteen years old and there was a boy a little younger. So it seemed a good plan that I should be taken to their home for the girl to care for her baby cousin with a housekeeper to overlook. It is said that when the time came for me to be restored to my parents I had almost forgotten

them, and that I clung to my new 'Mother', especially as I found that a new baby had taken my place.

As time went on and third baby arrived the shock was almost too much for me, especially as when I had been told another one was coming I had 'ordered' a girl. It appears that I wanted a sister and couldn't see why I couldn't have one, because in those days babies were found under gooseberry bushes and all sorts of funny places and I presumed they could be chosen.

To console me my mother invited the daughters of a friend of theirs, another farmer from the locality, to come and visit fairly frequently and I was often taken to see them. Boys brought up in a little village in those days, without any sisters wouldn't get to know the ways of girls. When we were in contact with girls, before this, we were too shy and awkward to play with them. However, Mary was about my age and she had two sisters, twins, one fair and one dark. We soon got used to each other.

It appears that I became very fond of Mary and she fond of me. Later on we boys went to the little village school across the road from our farmhouse. I can remember Mary's father coming one mid-day on horseback as I came out of school and giving me a basket of eggs from Mary. They were guinea-fowl or gallinee eggs and there is a story behind the gift. It happened that Father and Mother and perhaps two of us boys drove in our trap, or dog cart as it was called, to Mary's home to a party. The horse was put in the stable and the trap put in the barn. It appears that when we went home late in the evening a gallinee had gone to roost in our trap. Next morning it was still there but in our barn, having travelled back the night before unnoticed. It was caught and taken back to our friends, so that was why I was given the eggs. I remember I had a brood of young ones and when the time came they were sold to a game and poultry man in Bristol and that was my first pocket money. We kept two hens and a cock bird and they used to roost in a tree in the garden. They were good watch dogs as they soon made a noise if anyone was about in the night. We had them for some years.

I remember one year Mary gave me a Magic Lantern that I used to be busy with quite often, showing pictures, but the funny part is that I can't remember if I gave Mary any presents. Surely Mother would have seen to it that I did give something in return. Although it is a long time ago I can remember two different homes these friends lived in. They had to leave their farm because it was sold and they lived in a private house for a year I should think. Her father had a pedigree Shorthorn herd and we kept several of his stock for him until he found another farm. This he did at Quedgeley in Gloucestershire, although he wasn't there long as he went on to Cam near Dursley, within a year. They left our district in about 1895 or 6 and I didn't see Mary again more than once or twice a few years later, although the memory of her stayed in my mind for a number of years.

Mary's father for some years used to come down to Somerset to judge cattle at

the local shows. We learnt from him later that she had gone to Windsor as dairy-maid to the Royal farms, so we boys thought she was much too important to have anything more to do with us! In any case, there could never have been any question of a more permanent serious friendship; they were Church of England and Conservative, while we were Wesleyan Methodist and Liberal.

When we were still small Mother had a servant in the house and a girl to come in to play and take us boys for a walk. My brother Wilfrid was two years younger than I; it was quite a business to get us ready. My brother would be put in the pram and if the roads were not too muddy I would walk part of the way. Very often though, in the village itself the roads were so dirty with the cows from the several farms going to and fro that I would often be made to ride too, being promised that when we came to the lane I could walk. Sometimes my brother would cry until he was lifted out, then he would walk into all the mud he could find. It would be natural if I did the same; we were a great trial to those girls, no doubt.

When we were taken for walks it was a very good thing sometimes that we had a definite errand—a note or parcel to deliver to a friend or neighbour. On one such occasion we were taken in by two elderly ladies and given hot dripping toast. When we arrived home we were ill and Mother said they should have known better than to give it to us.

In the winter time we had our bath in Mother's bedroom by a nice fire; it was a cold room facing north, at the back of the house. A farmer normally slept in a room overlooking the farmyard so that he would be within sight of or at least within earshot of anything that might happen there. A room leading out of it, called the dressing-room, was our bedroom. On some occasions Mother was away at Chewton Keynsham or Burnett, nursing one of her brothers who was ill, then the two maids would bath us and put us to bed. Sometimes we would both want to be in the bath together but the bath was small with not enough room for both, or one wouldn't get out of the bath without the other, or both wanted the attention of the same maid. What a trial we must have been! After all the excitement I suppose we were put to bed at last and were soon fast asleep. One might ask where Father was, but in those days fathers, especially farmers, didn't concern themselves with their young children's bed time arrangements.

I remember one occasion when my brother had a bad fall, from the bedroom window to the courtyard below, and was lucky to survive—without even one bone broken. He had to have all my mother's attention and one of the maids had to bath and put me to bed, which I didn't like very much. Nothing unusual, you will say—I agree, for I remember similar occasions with our own children, and now with the grandchildren. This is the old story, children are the same, generation following generation.

I started going to school in the village school when I was four. Two elderly ladies were teachers, Miss Hawkins, I think, and Mrs Tomkins. If any children

didn't behave they were made to stand in the corner with their backs to the class. We stood in a line to say our tables and spelling. If we got a table wrong, down the line we went, then if we were good at spelling we stood a good chance of getting up again. There was one occasion when the Diocesan Inspector came to examine the school on religion and he asked me to say the Lord's Prayer. I was speechless, and a little village girl said it perfectly and put me to shame. Mother was very shocked that I had let her down like that.

When I reached the age of nine my parents decided it was time I left the little village school and so sent me to a small private school in Bristol. For a time during the week I stayed with my Uncle Ben and Aunt Minnie Paget, going home after school on Saturdays. They lived near Kingsdown Parade and from there we had a good view of several big fires. One in particular was Thomas' soap works. We could see the firemen standing on ladders or on some building close by and the flames shooting into the sky. For a boy from a little country village it was an exciting sight. On another occasion, it was during the South African War, a regiment of Royal Artillery was coming down from Horfield Barracks, through the town on the way to the war.

On Saturdays when I arrived home my brother and I exchanged news. I told him of events in Bristol while he told me about things that had happened on the farm. Fillpail's or Bluebell's calves had gone to market, the roan bull had broken loose and run round the village and got into Mrs. Johnson's garden and tossed her tabby cat, and so on. Quite a lot could happen on a farm in a week!

Another week-end he told me about a man knocking at the back door one evening. When he went to the door, the man said 'Tell your father someone wants to see him—from Hinton Bluett where they make pudden without any suet.' Wilfrid went in with this message, but father had overheard and called out 'Come in!' It was an old friend of father's from the days when he lived at Chewton Mendip. This friend of father's, Mr James, had taken a load of poultry to Bristol, it being only a short time before Christmas, and had called in on the way home. After an exchange of greetings with his old friend Father decided he must have supper. Off they went into the yard, Father with his lantern, and they took the horse out of the trap, put him in the stable and gave him a feed of corn. Father remarked 'What a smart horse' and they proceeded to talk about the history of it— bred from old Polly and sired by 'Bristol Sensation'. Father would say 'A good sire that'. Then they would cross the yard to look at a pen of calves and then, perhaps have a look round the cows in their stalls.

When my turn came to tell of all my excitement there was a big fire to report on several occasions and soldiers going off to war. Also I told about the games we played, my Bristol friends and me, going home from school. At that time there must have been a slump in house property. There seemed to be many large vacant houses where we chased round the gardens playing all sorts of games—I expect nowadays

it would be called Red Indians.

Later I went to a small boarding school at Trowbridge where I remember learning to swim a little. My next school was Wycliff College, at Stonehouse in Gloucestershire. I was there for only the last year of my school life. It was quite a big boarding school and quite different from any of my previous schools, although there were a number of other farmer's sons there.

In the school holidays we would sometimes get up to help with the milking or sometimes do other jobs when not wanted for that. I remember one morning, before I left school, Father calling me and saying, as he often did, that I was so long getting up that he could have put on all the clothes in the village in the time it took me to dress! Then he said 'Dumpling is missing, perhaps she has calved in the field, go out and fetch her in, with the calf if she has one'. She was in the fields on the Whitchurch road and sure enough she had a calf and a fairly strong one, so I started off down the road with them. Coming past Manor Farm, where Mr. Baber always had one or two dogs about, they barked and upset Dumpling. However we carried on down the road past the off licence towards our rick yard, and a cat jumped over a garden wall into the road. Dumpling ran at it, and the cat ran to me for protection so the cow came at me. I knocked her on the head with my stick and she went down like a ninepin, dead as I thought; but as I was thinking up courage to go to Father and say that I had killed the cow, she jumped up—to my great relief, as you can imagine.

At Easter 1904 I left school to stay at home to work on the farm with my father. This was of my own choosing and I thought that it would not be long before I would be in charge of the place. I had big schemes in my mind about what needed to be done, but of course my father thought otherwise. So although I still thought my schemes were better than his I had to accept that my best plan was to give all my energies to the situation as it was. Father equally agreed that he would find me plenty of work of various kinds to absorb my interest and energy. In those days a good farmer didn't need to have much theory, as long as he knew how to plough, sow and reap and know how to bring up and manage livestock.

It must have been a dry spring when I left school as one of the first jobs after the cows went to grass was to clean out the pond in the Home Field. The pond was dry enough to be cleaned out and we hauled the cleanings to a field on the Whitchurch road and tipped it in a heap in the corner to wait until winter to mellow, when with other mud which was collected from the roads, it would be spread on the field. Motor cars had not appeared by then and the mud from the roads had a certain amount of lime in it which was good for the land. We had one putt cart being filled at the pond, another being emptied in the field and another one on the road between. I was driving the loads, and being fresh from school I was very enthusiastic and keen to get the work moving quickly. As my father was away for the day I felt responsible for getting the job finished as soon as possible. Coming back

with an empty putt the horse, although a young one, was walking very slowly, so I jumped up on to the side of the shaft and sat there, and touched the young horse with a little stick. He started to trot and the noise of the putt frightened him and he started to gallop. I was in considerable danger, being perched on the side of the shaft just in front of the cart wheel. However, when I saw a chance I jumped but as I did so the horse came towards me and ran into the wall on the near side, where I was, and just caught my leg between the cart wheel and the wall. The shaft fortunately took most of the blow but knocked the horse and putt both over, knocking the wind out of the horse. One of our neighbours, Mr. Baber, appeared and helped put things right, but I was a bit stiff in the right leg for a day or two.

A few moments after the accident a carriage and pair from Dr. Fox's private mental home came past. I dread to think what would have happened if we had met in that narrow road-between the Manor and the Manor garden walls. In those days Dr. Fox's mental home, between Keynsham and Bristol, was where wealthy people who had mental disorders stayed. There was provision for them to bring their own coachmen, horses, carriages and nurses to the home so that they could drive around the countryside supervised by their nurses.

One very important job I did was shearing sheep. I had to learn the way to hold the sheep properly and to use the shears without cutting the sheep. After that I helped every year and as time went on a clipping machine was used. Finally I used

Fig. 5: Joseph Loxton shearing sheep in 1916. James Loxton (aged 70) on horse. Land girl unknown. This photo was posed outside the shearing house.

to do the lot—about 300, I think, was the most,

About the time I left school a market gardener from Bristol bought the land the other side of the brook at Charlton Bottom, now called Stockwood Vale. He took the hedges away and planted vegetables right to the edge of the brook which left only the brook as a fence between us. So it was dangerous to put stock in our fields. If our cattle or sheep got over the brook it would cost a lot of money in compensation for not only what they ate but also what they trampled. So we had to put a fence all the way along the brook. However, he didn't fence against Coalpit Lane either so if any stock got out of our fields into the lane, there was the same problem. The law is, or was, that you must keep your animals in bounds, but there was always the danger that someone out on our fields would leave a gate open or not properly fastened. People frequently came for nuts, blackberries, mushrooms, rabbits or trout from the stream. So at times it was very worrying. We would get a message from men working on the market garden to say they had found our cattle in the lane and put them back in our fields, just in time to stop them doing any damage. Then one of us would have to rush down to Charlton Bottom to make sure there were no weak places in our fences and hedges.

During haymaking the first year I did most of the riding work, but of course there were a lot of little trying jobs as well like turning the hay with hand rakes. Machines were only just coming in and they were very costly, but most farmers hadn't the cash to spare to buy them. Most hay was put into stacks or ricks in the field and some was loaded onto wagons for this. But some was swept to the rick with 'collectors' pulled by horses, and in a few years we had improved types which lessened the work. However haymaking days were long and the work was still hard. In addition there was milking to do and the milk to be taken to town, both to be done twice a day.

At corn harvest then it was the reaper binder that cut and tied the corn into sheaves. Before that the corn used to be cut by a reaper with two seats on it. The driver sat on one seat but the other one was occupied by a man who put the corn in bundles loose onto the platform and then onto the ground. Other people came on behind and tied the bundles into sheaves with bonds made from the corn itself. This required considerable experience before it could be done neatly. The corn was then stooked in the field to dry for several weeks before it was hauled to the stack yard. There it was put into ricks to get hard and dry for threshing later on—perhaps even as late as the following spring. Corn hauling was a busy time. Three wagons were necessary to keep things going, one in the field being loaded, one on the road and one unloading in the rickyard. If the corn was a distance from the rickyard it would need another wagon, which meant two on the road. We often drove the horses and wagons, as boys.

In those days, when the corn was being cut there were lots of rabbits in some fields. We aimed to be able to cut the field in one day so that we could catch the rab-

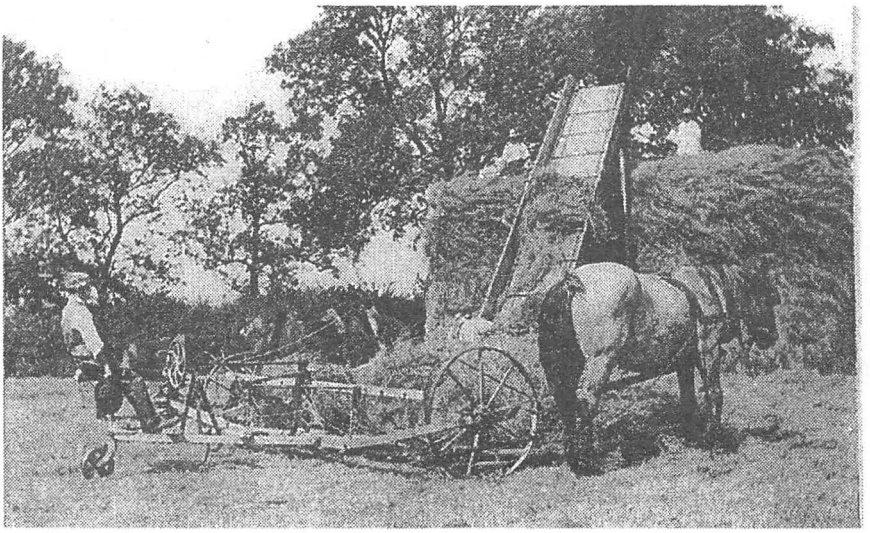


Fig. 6: An early hay sweep—pre 1914.

bits, which would run away if we left an unfinished piece of corn in the middle of the field overnight. We would have several guns standing at each corner of the corn to get as many rabbits as we could. On some occasions we would get fifty or sixty, sometimes we would kill a fox but often they would creep out quietly without being noticed, unlike the rabbits.

After the harvest the ploughs would be got to work to get the land ready for the next crop. Ploughing was with two horses, mostly one furrow at a time, and it was considered that one acre a day was good going. Later the roots would be pulled and stored away from the danger of hard frost, and for convenience for feeding to the cattle indoors later. The sheep were folded on those roots that were not fit to pull and store.

When the cold weather started, generally in the middle of November, and there was no grass, the cows were brought into the sheds at night. Each cow had its own stall, often according to the position of the 'master' cow, depending on the design of the cowhouse. After feeding and milking they went out by day for a time, until the weather got too bad. Then they would stay in all the time apart from being let out into the yard for water twice a day. After breakfast, in those days, cleaning out the stalls was a big job with peek, shovel and wheelbarrow, followed by bedding them down with straw and then bringing in their hay. The cows went out to grass again in the spring, generally about April 20th.

There were always the sheep to provide for and we grew vetches, swedes,

turnips, kale and rape for them and always with a system of rotation of arable crops. We always had a one or two year ley which we cut before any other grass, to feed to the sheep; in those days we kept them in folds, made with hurdles. In the summer the ewes, after the lambs were weaned, used to graze on the poorer rough land.

There were two regular carters who generally didn't milk but went on to plough and do any other horse work on the farm at the time. If there was anyone short in the milking staff—then they were required to help, moreover sometimes on a Sunday. In those days men worked from 5.00 a.m., with one hour for breakfast, one for dinner, and finishing at 6.00 p.m. As time went on finishing time came back to 5.30 and later, 5.00 p.m. Their pay was 15/- a week and cottage, milk and cider, but for single men, 18/- without house.

Horses, Apples and Sheep

We always had several young horses to be broken in to saddle and shafts and driven on the road and, of course, for a few years we didn't meet many motors. Nowadays it is called training or schooling. Generally they would have been taught to be led when they were with their mothers at a few weeks old, this makes it easier because they are used to being handled. So first we would put harness on them and let them get used to the feel of it. Then we would harness them together with older horses, one in front and one behind, the object being to get them used to the collar. The one in front pulls the young horse along and the other keeps it from getting away. In other cases we would put them side by side with the young one in the middle and so on. But in the case of light horses we would saddle them and ride them first for some weeks and only then put them in shafts and drive them around the roads.

Most evenings in summer, after an early tea we would get one or other of these horses in the shafts and off we would go, one leading the horse at first, and Father in the cart or trap for the first few days. One of us boys would walk or run by the side of the horse and sometimes have a long independent rein so that we could help check him if the horse was too wild. They soon got used to being driven on the roads and we would go out with one nearly every evening unless it was very wet. Sometimes if one was very wild we would put him between two old horses and work him on the land to get him tired; and sometimes we would ride him for some days all round the farm to see the cattle were alright at the other end of the farm, to quieten him.

For a few days before the young horses were put to training their mouths had to be conditioned so that they responded to being guided by a rein. A bit was put in their mouths with a key or other metal on it which they chewed, which made their

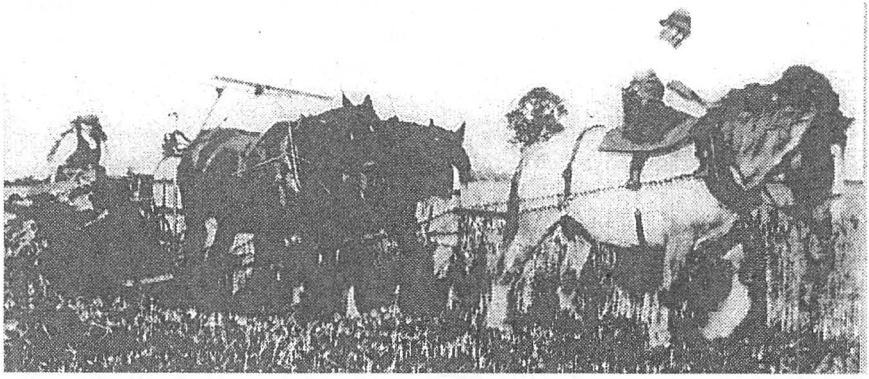


Fig. 7: Binder at work in Baggeridges field. Joseph Loxton on the binder seat, Leslie Denyard on the leading grey horse (named Captain).

mouths easy—if not you would not have been able to guide them. While road training was going on we would be working the land ready to sow corn and roots, etc. with these young horses, so that by hay and harvest time they would be ready for any work, but always for a time working them with an older horse. Some young horses became used to the work without much trouble, on the other hand we would sometimes get a difficult one, often because it was timid or nervous.

At Queen Charlton we couldn't grow apples to any extent, the ground was too stony, but down in the Chew or Severn valleys there were good orchards with good sorts of cider apples. As in those days it was the custom for farmers to give cider to their men as one of their perquisites, Father bought apples from these low-land orchards. With, say, six regular men and six more in the summer we needed a lot of cider, and buying apples and making our own cider was the cheapest way to get it. I remember going to places, Stratford and Morton Mill, which are under Chew Magna lake now—there were two farms and a water mill, all drowned. An-other time I remember getting up early in the morning, taking a carter and team and going through Bristol to Thornbury and three miles beyond that, nearly to the banks of the Severn for apples. We had to join up on all the hills because the roads were rather slippery, the carter had two mares in foal and I had a young and rather difficult horse in traces. Coming through Bristol from Horfield to Knowle the town boys were after the apples all the way. However another horse was brought to the Three Lamps to help us and we got home all right.

One summer after the lambs had been weaned and the ewes were all out on the rougher grassland they were attacked by dogs. One morning in August, out of about two hundred ewes, we found about 30 dead or so badly mauled that they had

to be killed. They were all over the village, one here, another there—it was a terrible sight. We never found out which dogs did this but it must have been two or more to have scattered them so far in one short night—in August the nights are very short, of course.

Another year the sheep were in folds just below where the quarry is now, and a man came along and let 33 out of the fold and went off with them. He went down the road, turned off down Chewton Lane, turned right at the bottom of the hill to Compton Dando and from there he went towards Marksbury. Then he took them to Bath market and tried to sell them. The auctioneer wouldn't have anything to do with them, but eventually a dealer bought them but wouldn't pay for them then and there. The dealer gave the man 5/- and promised to meet him the next day on Bath bridge to pay the rest. However, the man didn't turn up. We went to the police when we realised they had been stolen rather than strayed. They had heard of some sheep believed to have been stolen at a village the other side of Lansdown Hill. Father went over and paid the dealer £5 for two or three days keep and nothing more was heard of the man.

In about the year 1907 I had an attack from a bull. It must have been early June and the cows, with the bull, were in a field down Coalpit Lane. I went down on horseback to get them for afternoon milking—in those days we milked at five in the morning and one in the afternoon. As I was getting them up together, the bull came towards me scraping the ground with his feet, so I went away and tied the horse to a stile the other end of the field and got a big stick and went to meet the bull. But the stick broke on the bull's head when he came for me and I had to get in among the cows out of his way. He followed me up to the gate into the lane, but when I shut the gate he continued to dig his horns into the hedge and the hedge bank, still following me on the other side of the hedge as I went up the lane. I got over the stile and onto the horse and went home the other way to get help. I got my brother and the cowman to come. I had a four-pronged fork, my brother a long handled two-prong and the cowman a bull stick, which you lead a bull with and we walked down to the field. Most of the cows had gone through the gate before I shut the bull back, but a number of cows and the bull were down in the middle of the field. We walked down towards him. I said 'Keep together', and I went straight up to him. He put his head down to go at my fork and pushed at it. But I pushed it at his nose and he stepped back a foot and I gave him as hard a dig as I could and he turned and galloped off. As he was turning through the gate to go up the lane I gave him a hard dig behind. He never forgot and afterwards he always knew my voice. All the same, we always let him drag a chain when we let him out in the field with the cows after that.

With so much livestock about the place we were bound to have accidents one way or another. To start with, I often used to be told how, when I was still in long clothes, I was sitting on an aunt's lap in a dog cart in which my father was taking us

to Bath, when the horse fell on Bath Hill and threw both of us out onto the road. That aunt couldn't sit facing backwards, whether in a train or a trap, so we were sitting in the front, facing forwards, in a rather dangerous position.

On the farm itself, there were a number of deep ditches and brooks which animals sometimes got into. One such animal was a very good horse we had called Tom. He used to take the morning milk to Bristol every day—that is always the heavier load. At night he was always put in the paddock to be close by for the morning, but one day he was not there and another horse had to be used. It was always said of Tom that he could open any gate or door—except the paddock gate, but this time he did. We hunted all over the village without finding him and finally Father got on the horse he always rode and went off in search of Tom. He soon came back to say that Tom was in a ditch some half dozen fields away and had been struggling to get out and had got himself right down in the clay. Men and horses with spades and ropes were organised, and soon the neighbours and their men were on the scene to offer help. Getting any animal out of this sort of situation is very difficult, and it was so in this case. First Tom's legs were freed from the clay. Then chains and ropes were fixed round his neck and body in such a way as not to hurt his neck, and gradually he was carefully pulled and pushed out onto the grass. We boys thought it strange that the first thing he did, still mud all over, was to start eating grass as if nothing had happened. The mud was all cleaned off him and he was alright in a few days.

On another occasion a cow got into a ditch and had been there a day and a night before she was found. When we got her out she was too weak and stiff to walk so we tied her to a field gate and dragged her home. She recovered in a day or two. I remember her name was Handsome.

Once I was sent out to see the heifers and I found one had her head between two branches of a tree and was stuck. Father and some of the men would hardly believe me when I got back and told them but they got a saw and came out with me and freed her. We called her Tree when she came into the milking herd although her mother was of a family we called Star. At another time I had to get help with a heifer with a tin on her foot, she was too wild for me to catch and take it off on my own.

The horse Tom, that could open almost any door or gate, once got into the barn and ate a large quantity of seed vetches from a sack. Then, I suppose, he felt ill and opened another door probably to get out, but it led into the narrow forestall of one of the cowsheds and he got stuck. He had to be backed out and round a 45 degree corner which was rather difficult. Then he had to be given medicine and walked about for several hours for the seeds to work through him as they are most dangerous and could have killed him. However he got over that trouble.

Tom was a strong carriage horse and was very valuable as a steady trotter with a good load. He took five or six 17 gallon churns of milk the seven miles to Bristol

every morning for a good number of years; through the town, over several miles of tram lines to Hotwells, almost under the Suspension Bridge. Then at last one Sunday morning, coming home, on the last bit of the tramlines his shoe caught in the line and he fell and broke his leg and had to be destroyed.

Peggy, another useful horse, used to take the afternoon milk on the same journey, but it was a smaller load. She did this constantly for many years but when we thought she needed a rest we turned her out to a field some distance from the farmhouse. Then one day we found she had fallen over a bank and broken her back and she had to be put down.

We sent a load of milk to Bristol twice a day, calling on three or four dairymen who carried the milk around with yoke and can although the larger ones had horse and cart. Some had a churn balanced on wheels that they pushed around. I could never understand why we took our milk to so many dairies so far apart. We dropped some at Bath Road, Totterdown, some at Queen Street and some right down at Hotwells, almost under the Suspension Bridge. It took a man and two horses all their time, but my father would never allow me to question this for many years.

As Father got older he seemed to have a passion to rent land anywhere within five miles. This wouldn't be far at the present day but then travel was by horse or cycle—or by walking, so it was difficult when we were haymaking or attending

Fig. 8: Joseph Loxton coming home for lunch to 12 St Keyna Road in about 1920. He and Emmie, married in 1918, lived there until about 1921.

cattle a long way from home. We had a farm at Saltford called Hill Farm, of about 45 acres; 25 acres of it and a cottage and buildings adjoining the golf course, and the other 20 acres down behind the 'Jolly Sailor' public house. It lay next to the river and all stock grew well on it. Then we had the three cornered fields, built on now—with Norman Road on one corner, which belonged to a man who lived in Saltford manor house, and also fields at Broadmead, as well as Gastons, behind Bath Road and Unity Road. My brother and I often had to be at Saltford attending sick or calving cattle, apart from having to see them regularly to see that they were all well.

In 1913 we had a pony mare and our old hackney mare both in foal to the same stallion called Whitewings, but the old hackney Nessie died after the birth of her foal. However I got the pony mare Queenie to take to the foal after several weeks training and she brought up both of them. Three years later I used to drive one or other of them over to Paulton or Midsomer Norton most Sundays and sometimes during the week, courting Emmie Charles, my future wife. We were engaged in 1916, and when at the age of twenty-seven I told my father I wanted to get married he said 'What's the hurry?' He was first married when he was twenty-four!

Geoffrey Loxton (b. 1922)

I believe I must always have been a rather noisy child. It was often said of me that I was ever either laughing or crying, and as an example I understand that I yelled at the top of my voice throughout my christening. This took place at the Victoria Methodist Church at Keynsham where all of us were christened. Father had been christened there himself, the first child to be christened in the new church, he always said.

I was the middle boy. Mary, the eldest, was too far above me in age, four years, to be seen as anything but a distant mentor, almost grown up. Donald, although only eighteen months older than I, was always taller. He had had several operations, wore glasses and was looked upon as being more studious and therefore, by implication, rather brighter. He was in a junior school rugby and hockey team at Bristol Grammar School Prep when only about nine. Brian and I were brought up together. We always seemed to be the same size, although he could always run faster, and although I was closer in age to Don, Brian and I were always referred to as 'the boys'. We, unlike the others, had the same bed-time.

I remember many happy times at the farm at Queen Charlton. At haymaking times there were often picnics in the hayfield, and later on in the harvest field under the prickly stooks. Also at haymaking and harvest Mother and Brian and I used to walk across the Home Field in the afternoon and open the gate the other side of the field and let the cows from a field called Baggeridges across Coalpit Lane to the Home Field, so that Mr Denyard, the cowman, could stay a bit longer in the

hayfield before milking time. We would run along the cow paths and pretend we were on railway lines, with occasional warnings from Mother to mind the cow dung. Don and Mary would have been at school then.

Even earlier we were taken for walks up Dapwell or other lanes, with the big pram carrying Brian. I think these walks were a daily occurrence; a regular airing with exercise was looked upon as essential to the health of small children. I would sometimes be allowed to ride towards the end of a long walk, if I was tired.

When my grandfather Charles was alive he once took Don and me out for what was supposed to be a short walk, but continued to the top of Dapwell Lane, turned right towards Whitchurch and came back along Whitchurch Lane, perhaps as much as three miles. Although I could only have been three years old, as he died in March 1927, I can remember he carried me some of the way, and rested, exhausted, for a long time against a gate that I can pinpoint to this day. Don would have been five, and he had to walk all the way, of course. I also remember that Mother was very angry with her father over this, not surprisingly, because she and the rest of the family had been looking for us and could only assume he had collapsed somewhere, and couldn't guess that he had taken us as far afield as he had. When Mother referred to his being difficult I think she was thinking of this episode in particular.

Our big farm house provided an ideal playground for small children. We would sit on the stairs and play trams or buses, dash up and particularly down the hall with our scooters and tricycles, bumping down the little step between the two halls and banging into the heavy back door at the bottom of the back hall. When there was no work going on in the kitchen we could go round and round the big table where the flagstones had been worn unevenly to provide us with a switchback ride! In the afternoons in bad weather there would be a fire in the dining room, which then became a playroom, with the big gate leg table, with flaps that almost touched the floor when they were down, becoming a house. Don's railway track would be laid out and the clockwork train put into action, or we would use the parallel lines around the edges of the carpet as roads for our toy cars or lorries. Sometimes Mary would bring out her tea sets and we would play at doll's tea time.

In the late afternoon the cart-horses would come in from ploughing, usually two or three teams, a total of perhaps six heavy horses. We would hear them coming long before they got to the stable and would dash to the little window looking out onto the yard and climb up and watch them arrive, and name them one by one. The plough chains would jangle as they waited, fidgeting impatiently, for their turn to go into the stable. If it was very wet there would be large puddles in the yard. On the way to the stable the horses would splash through them with their big broad hooves, making tidal waves, to our great delight. At other times we would watch the big water drops making rings in the puddles or the water wagtails dancing around those same puddles. Sometimes some of the many swallows would swoop low over

them.

We had no piped water in the house, but there was a hand pump in the back kitchen which pumped water up to a tank when you turned off the big brass tap on the pump spout. Then, as long as the tank was full, water came back through the spout when you turned on the tap. Otherwise you had to pump each time you wanted water, which then came straight out of the spout, with the tap left on, of course. Every day one of the men on the farm would come in and 'pump up' until the tank was full because it was quite hard work and not considered to be a woman's job. Children were not allowed to 'pump up' because it was thought that they might strain themselves.

We had a bathroom, but as there was no piped water a large water can stood by the water closet so that water could be tipped in to flush it. The same applied in a lavatory just outside the back kitchen door. The children never had a bath in the bathroom, because apart from the work of carrying hot water upstairs, it was warmer and cheerier and easier in front of the kitchen range. Brian and I came first, one each end of the long galvanised bath, the water having been heated in one of the two copper boilers in the milk cooling room the other side of the back kitchen. Mary and Don would sit at the other side of the table and when we had been put to bed Don would have his bath and last of all, Mary would have hers when all the boys were in bed.

Fig. 9: Joseph Loxton with Donald on Kitty, at the back of the farm house in about 1923.

My parent's bedroom was at the back of the house overlooking the farm buildings, and Brian had the adjacent dressing-room with a connecting door, as all last born children had had in turn. I was in the pink room on the left at the top of the stairs, overlooking the shrubbery with its big acacia tree, that is a pseudo-acacia or robinia. Don's was next, the blue room, and Mary's next again, the front bedroom on the same side. We children all had a bed, a washstand, a dressing table, a chest of drawers and a couple of bedroom chairs, and on the floor was linoleum with a few rugs. Mary and perhaps Don had a wardrobe as well. The windows were open winter and summer to give us plenty of fresh air, but it was very cold at times. However in perhaps October we would find that deep cosy featherbeds would appear on our horsehair mattresses, to remain until spring cleaning time the following year.

The front bedroom on the other side was occupied by Mother's parents, Granny and Grandpa Charles, while they were alive. I once remember Mother injecting insulin into her mother, who was a diabetic, and must have been one of the first who had this treatment, although we were not normally allowed to be present. I have been told that my grandparents 'spoiled' me, by putting a piece of chocolate every morning on the window sill of their bedroom during the period when Don, at the age of four or five, was in and out of hospital having a series of operations—appendicitis and eyes—and Brian was a baby. At that time my grandparents must have looked after me quite a lot. I am told that Grandpa, who had had one glass eye since the age of seven, used to carry me through doorways with me on his blind side so that he invariably managed to hit my head against the door post. However, as I always liked him I don't think he could have hurt me much, although I think it may have been suggested later that the bangs had a permanent influence on me!

I have always remembered the weekly routine of the household. Monday was washing day of course. Mrs Cantle would come in to help Maria Pike, who came in every day except Sunday and was looked upon as part of the family. There was a low heavy wooden bench, or perhaps two, on which were several oval galvanised baths and there were various buckets for carrying water. The back kitchen would be full of steam and there would be a lot of lather about. Children were very rarely allowed in because they would get in the way or might be scalded. One bath contained blue water, which always puzzled me a bit although I was assured you put white clothes in blue water to make them whiter. I suppose nearly everything went through the heavy mangle, which we were kept away from in case our fingers were crushed in it.

On Tuesday the major operation was ironing, although I think this might spill over into Wednesday during a wet spell. But, of course, all the clothes that had been dried, often with some trouble, had first to be dampened again with water flicked over them by a dripping hand, and rolled up to become evenly damp, a

very puzzling operation. When ironing started, on the kitchen table on a pad of old blankets and a sheet, the kitchen range had to be kept at a constant heat and about a dozen 'flat' irons would be placed on it. I could never see why these irons were called 'flat', because they were not flat except on the bottom, where most things were flat anyway to stop them falling over. We were often allowed to iron our own handkerchiefs with a tiny iron if we wanted to, under heavy supervision in case we burnt ourselves. I was amazed that Maria could tell how hot an iron was by touching it with a wet finger, and not burn herself. I was also puzzled by the damp cloths used to press some garments, which then, like all the rest, had to be aired over heat to dry them again. I think the sheets were sometimes put through the mangle when they were dry, perhaps in busy times, instead of being ironed.

Wednesday was lamp cleaning day. I think old newspapers were spread thickly on the kitchen table, because it was a dirty, smelly task, and any tiny spill of paraffin had to be kept from the table itself. After all, we always had breakfast there, and at busy times other meals as well. All the lamps in the house were brought to the kitchen table; the big ones from their permanent positions in the sitting room and dining room, the little carrying ones with a glass chimney but no shade, and the tiny 'Betty' lamps which hung on walls in the hall and perhaps the landing. All glasses were removed and the lamps taken outside, I think, to be filled with 'oil' as we called it. All the lamps with their chimneys and globes would then be cleaned and polished and carried back to their rightful places in different parts of the house. I don't believe I ever knew of any of that delicate equipment being broken, although I suppose it must have happened at times. An extra job was provided by the oil stove, which supplemented the coal range. It had four burners, two of which were under an oven, and a paraffin reservoir that had to be inverted after filling, and yet it never leaked. It was something else to fill and clean on Wednesdays.

Baking was the important business on Thursday. By this time, the 1920s, the baker came up from Keynsham quite regularly, although perhaps not every day, so bread was rarely baked. However, every week there would be one or two fruit cakes, one or two victoria sandwiches and several batches of rock cakes, not to mention several apple pies, or, if we were lucky, plum pies. Rock cakes were my father's customary snack although we children found them rather hard and dry. Somerset is famous for its orchards, and we had two, containing mainly cider apples and cooking apples. Consequently apples were frequently on the menu. The form varied. It could be apple pie, baked apple dumplings, boiled apple dumplings, or to save time, stewed apple or even plain baked apple. My problem with apples was that I did not like the little bits of core in cooked apples; there were always some bits and I always found them. But I loved pastry, and couldn't understand why Mary, who preferred the apple, couldn't have my apple while I had her pastry, but it was never allowed.

Friday was house cleaning day. There were no vacuum cleaners in those days and we didn't even have a carpet sweeper, which was often used in town houses. I think the flagstone floors were scrubbed, and the whole house swept, dry mopped, and dusted. Rugs and mats were all taken out and beaten and the furniture was polished. This is not to say that no other cleaning was done on other days. In fact the house was mopped and dusted every day; to me it seemed an unending and useless operation, quite beyond my comprehension. The flagstones of the kitchen floor, for instance, had damp used tea leaves sprinkled all over them, and then the tea leaves were all swept up again. However, I soon learnt to keep out of the way, after on one or two occasions complaining of not having anything to do and having a duster thrust into my hand with the instruction to go and dust the dining room chairs!

I have always been fascinated by horses and as a child loved to see them gallop, although they very rarely did, except when out in a field. In shafts a horse should never gallop, or even canter, a smart trot is the fastest pace. There was a time when I used to go every evening in summer with Leslie Denyard as he took the horses in a bunch from the stables across the yard to turn them into the Home Field for the night. Sometimes, but all too rarely, they would be so pleased to be free that they would kick up their heels and gallop off out of sight into the valley. One day when I was about five or six I decided I would give them a bit of encouragement, so I picked up a stone and threw it at the last horse as it went through the gate. People who have since seen me play cricket will find it easy to believe that I missed the horse and hit Leslie Denyard on the head! Luckily he had a hat on, as all adults did in those days, and I did hope that this mistake might be overlooked, but not surprisingly, next day I was really on the carpet and Mother informed me that we did not do that sort of thing, and that she was ashamed of me. I was not allowed to follow the horses any more.

Apart from Joey, who was more of a pet pony, Sam, Nesse and Kitty were the last light horses on the farm, but Sam must have died or been sold when I was quite small; I only just remember him. Kitty was the last riding horse and one day father was riding her somewhere on the farm along the high bank of a stream, and the bank collapsed, and they both rolled over into the water. I remember going into the kitchen and seeing father's muddy breeches hanging over the kitchen range, but I was scooted out sharply, but not before I had absorbed some of the atmosphere of drama hanging in the air. Apparently Kitty had arrived home covered with wet mud long before my father did, and Mother must have feared the worst. When he did arrive, also wet and muddy, no doubt Mother blamed him for carelessness. I don't think she ever let him ride again, in any case the saddle was broken and was never repaired, and Kitty, whose eyesight was failing, died not long afterwards.

The sole fast transport on the farm then was Nesse, the last of the family of

horses originating from a purchase by my grandfather at Binegar Fair many years previously. Nesse was not suitable for riding because she was a 'daisy cutter', that is, she did not raise her hooves much above the ground, and therefore was more likely to stumble on uneven ground and so be a danger to a rider. However she was quite fast and was kept harnessed in the milk float most of the day so that fast transport was always available. Nowadays farmers have a Land Rover. By now the milk was collected by lorry, and the milk float, often just called 'the cart', only went further afield than the farm when it took small livestock to market at Keynsham. Calves would be tied by a rope to a ring in the front of the cart, while sheep would ride loose, but with a net tied over the cart to keep them in. Some people also transported pigs under a net, too, but we did not keep pigs, although in earlier days they had been kept on the farm for home cured bacon. I think that traditionally pigs were thought to be more appropriate on a small-holding than on a large farm, unless it was a cheese-making farm with a supply of whey throughout the summer.

One day Brian wanted to get in the cart as it stood, with Nesse harnessed, under the open roof outside the stable. I pointed out that it was not allowed, but Brian, who always had more adventure in him than I ever had, climbed onto the tailboard. I had no alternative but to follow him. After all, it was always understood that I was responsible for looking after him as I was older, so I had to stick with him, having failed to stop him. Nesse knew that when anyone got onto the cart it was always for the purpose of going somewhere. As she was never tied up, she backed out, turned round, proceeded out of the gate and trotted up the road through the village, as she had done innumerable times before, until she got to the watering troughs, half a mile up the road, just past Mr. Willy's house (which has since been demolished). There she stopped to drink, as all horses knew they had a right to do. By this time the alarm had been raised because there had been witnesses, and we were retrieved. I expect my 'ticking off' was a mild one because Mother would have been so relieved that nothing worse had come of this escapade.

Joey the pony and his trap, properly called a governess car, had come to us in the mid twenties from two old ladies who were friends of the family. They wanted a good home for Joey now they were too old to go driving with him. He had been rather spoiled. Mother, who had never driven a horse in her life learned to drive and could then take us to school if the weather was very bad, and sometimes to Chapel. Occasionally I remember driving to Keynsham and then taking the train to Bristol. Joey and the trap were left at an inn near the church, not there now. Once when we went to Burnett (pronounced Burnut) to see Aunt Caroline Paget (who was Mother's aunt but married to Father's cousin), Joey was rather fresh and difficult, and going down the steep hill to Chewton Keynsham Mother in desperation put on the brake. The wheels locked and we were more or less thrown out of

the trap!

If a charabanc, nowadays called a motor coach, passed Joey (which fortunately happened only rarely because there were very few charabancs—and no buses at all—in the countryside at that time) he would chase it until it was out of sight, and Mother had great difficulty in holding him in. However, she kept on driving us about and we loved riding in the trap for the fun of it, apart from the fact that it saved our legs! There was a brass holder for a whip (which was never used), a set of lamps with candles in them, a basket-work 'holster' to put umbrellas in, and a special square rug, brown check on one side and plain navy blue on the other which fitted over all our knees when it rained. We kept the trap and harness well polished and the reins whitened, but one snag was that apart from the time it took to harness Joey, he was sometimes difficult to catch in the field in summer!

When I was quite small, Mary and I were picking wild flowers out in the field called Upperslips, on the side of the little valley opposite the watering troughs, when we heard the church bell striking. Mary said, 'Stop! Listen!', and she counted, 'One, two, three, four. Four o'clock. It's nearly tea time, come on, we must go home now'. It was thus that I learned to tell the time by the church clock, and very likely how I realised the usefulness of being able to count!

Another memory is of threshing (pronounced 'thrashing'). Mr. Hember, who had another farm in the village, would bring his steam engine and thresher into the rickyard, and the humming would start, punctuated by gulps as now and then thicker pieces of sheaf went through the drum. We were not allowed near when the machine was working, but I remember once that we went there with my father afterwards and he had a tug of war with Don and me with one of the ropes he was collecting up. The midday meal on threshing days included Mr Hember and one or two others, probably his sons, and the kitchen table would be very crowded.

From the age of five we all went to Mrs. Jolliman's school at Keynsham. Mother had known Mrs. Jolliman's daughter at some time, I think, at any rate there was some connection. It was a simple little school in an Edwardian house in Charlton Road, with two permanent teachers, Miss Marjory and Miss Edna, and a visiting music and dancing teacher. Miss Marjory was strict and must have found me difficult; I believe I had a reputation for arguing. When she was annoyed she would shake me almost until my teeth rattled and with the last shake release me so that I fell back into my chair with hardly any breath left. Unfortunately I was only taught reading by Miss Edna, who was no trouble at all. I well remember on two occasions when I crossed Miss Marjory. Once it was about 'dry' cows and later about hay elevators. Although I could hardly pretend to be an authority on arithmetic, I was sure of my facts within my limited knowledge of farming. Miss Marjory maintained there were no such things as 'dry' cows which gave no milk, and was also sure that hay elevators were properly called escalators. Knowing I was right, I expect I argued and had not yet learned, if I ever did, that you do not argue

Fig. 10: Mary, Donald, Geoffrey and Brian, in a governess car pulled by the pony called Joey. At the back of Charlton Farmhouse (1929/30).

with an adult, especially a teacher, even if you are right.

However, we all had a good 'grounding', as Mother would say, at Mrs Jolliman's. I soon learned to read and from then on loved books, but while I could do 'sums' if I was not hurried, I never had any success with 'problems'. I believe I was so harried by Miss Marjory that I was never able to concentrate, and acquired a hatred and fear of school which lasted until I went to Crewkerne at fifteen, after a year working on a farm.

The other children in the village went to school at Whitchurch, although the Longs went to Keynsham because it was nearer to the Poor Houses where they lived. On one occasion when I was coming home from school alone, which only rarely happened, I went a slightly different way across the fields and played for a long time on a fallen tree with Tom Long from the Poor Houses. We got on very well together, but not only was I very late getting home and Mother was very worried, but I ought to have remembered that we were not allowed to play with the village children. I always wanted to play on the village green, partly because the single railing round it made a marvellous horizontal bar to do somersaults on, but also one of the girls I was in love with was Alice Denyard, and she used to play on the green. The other girl was called Bunty some one or other; she had been at Mrs. Jolliman's school but had left, and I only saw her at parties, although she was a lot

older than I was and wouldn't even look at me, let alone talk. In fact I never spoke to Alice Denyard, either!

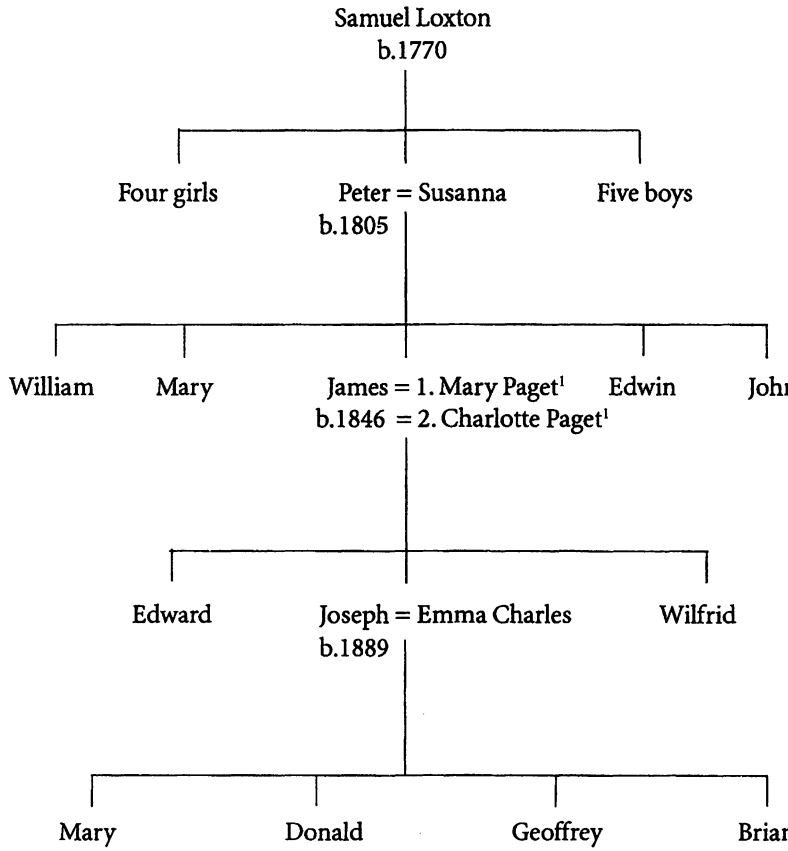
I expect Mother was quite wise to restrict our associations, because children do quite innocently pick up odd habits very easily. I well remember an example of this on my own part. On one occasion I was allowed to go to tea with Maria Pike, of whom we were all very fond, and Charlie Pike, her brother, had tea with us. He may have been in a hurry because he poured his tea into his saucer to cool it, and then drank from the saucer. It seemed a very practical solution to a perpetual problem of tea being too hot to drink, so next day at the tea table I did the same thing. Mother very strongly disapproved, and I don't think any of us were allowed to have tea with Maria again!

Almost every Sunday we went to Keynsham to the Victoria Methodist Church. Rarely we would go in the bull-nosed Morris—with three children in the 'dicky'—which we shared with Uncle Edward. More often we went in the pony and trap, but often we walked, although obviously not when we were very small. On Sunday evenings Father would take his place in an armchair, the youngest on his knee, and he would read children's stories from the Bible Book. My parents were definite Christians, without being bigoted. Neither of them ever swore. Even 'damn' was forbidden, although Father did allow himself 'blast' very occasionally, as I noticed in later years. He was a quiet, kind man who never stood on his dignity but was always dignified. He never grumbled or complained even at the most depressing of periods in his life. Mother, who suffered from migraine and sinus trouble, did complain occasionally about her headaches and 'nerves'.

We left Queen Charlton in the early 1930s, Uncle Edward having bought Father's share of the farm. We moved to a smaller farm with a large house at Yatton where we 'diversified' into taking 'guests', mainly at holiday time. My parents had tremendous energy. After several years in rural semi-retirement in the late 1940s, they opened a private school for forty children at Gillingham, Dorset, but finally retired to Charlton Road, Keynsham in the late 1950s. Mother died aged 82 and Father three weeks before his 90th birthday. They are buried at Queen Charlton.

Loxton Family Tree

From 1448 to 1849 these Loxtons were born or lived at Emborough, Somerset.



[1].Sisters.

Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society Book List

1. Percy Sims, *A History of Saltford Village.*
2. Peter Davenport, *Archaeology of Bath, 1976-85.*
3. Barbara Lowe & Tony Brown, *Around Keynsham and Saltford in Old Photographs.*
4. *Avon Conservation News.*
5. Avon County Council Planning Department, *Avon's Past from the Air.*
6. Derek Jones and Gwyn Richards, *BBC Day Out Series.*
7. Clare Gittings, *Brass and Brass Rubbings.*
8. Kathleen Barker, *Bristol at Play.*
9. Joan Day, *Bristol Brass: The History of the Industry.*
10. Ivan Benbrook, *Bristol City Docks: A Guide to the Old Harbour.*
11. D. C. Hearle, F. B. Warne & D. Geddes, *Bristol Heritage: A Walking Guide to Bristol Churches.*
12. The Rev. S. Paul Shipley (ed.), *Bristol Siren Nights.*
13. John Moore (ed.), *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories 1609-1761.*
14. J. S. Fry & Sons Ltd, *English City: The Story of Bristol.*
15. David Iredale, *Enjoying Archives.*
16. Patrick McFrath & John Cannon, *Essays in Bristol and Gloucester History.*
17. Stewart Harding & David Lambert, *Gazetteer of Historic Parks and Gardens in Avon.*
18. Martyn Whittock, *King Arthur in the West Country.*
19. Downend Local History Society, *Mangotsfield Past: Memories of Downend, Staple Hill and Mangotsfield.*
20. Stewart Harding & David Lambert, *Parks and Gardens of Avon.*
21. Avon County Council, *Railway Stations and Halts in Avon: A Photographic Record.*
22. Joe Blake, *Restoring the Great Britain.*
23. Graham Smith, *Smuggling in the Bristol Channel 1700-1850.*
24. Tom Mayberry (ed.), *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society.
25. John Wroughton, *The Civil War in Bath and North Somerset.*
26. British Association for Local History, *The Local Historian: Journal of the British Association for Local History.*
27. William Lowndes, *The Theatre Royal at Bath.*
28. James Belsey & Helen Reid, *West at War.*
29. John Bailey, *Weston-super-Mare: the Good Old Days.*
30. C. H. B. Elliott, *Winterbourne, Gloucestershire.*
31. John Reynolds, *Wish You Were Here.*
32. Russell Leitch, *The Railways of Keynsham.*