

6. Lympstone Farms & Farming



Introduction

Farming has always been a traditional activity in the Parish, particularly in what is termed the “Upper Village,” east of the church. In the early part of the 19th century there were 14 farms operating, mostly mixed arable and pasture with a considerable scattering of cider orchards.

By the 1930s there were about 10 farms in the parish but by the end of the 20th century this had reduced to 4 as a result of farm consolidation and residential development. Current agricultural activity is focussed on cereals, such as maize, and grazing for sheep and horses.

To find out more, scroll down.

This is one of a set of info points around the village.

For more information click [here](#).

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Lympstone is a small, roughly wedge-shaped parish squeezed, north and south between the two larger neighbouring parishes of Woodbury and Exmouth.



Fig. 1: The parish of Lympstone

This shape has provided the opportunity for farmers within the parish to exploit the range of different soil types which are distributed in four bands which run approximately parallel to the Exe estuary bank.

Each of these bands are of varying levels of acidity and fertility and so provide the opportunity to farm either a limited range of crops or feed livestock. The fertility of the soils also combines with the local topography to influence the farming methods used. As an example, in the eastern “panhandle” of the parish the higher level sandy heathland soil was only really of value as rough grazing pasture up to the 19th and early 20th century. This has largely been turned over to forestry since WW2.

UK National Soilscales viewer link:

<file:///C:/Users/User/Documents/History%20Society/Info%20Boards/Soilscales%20soil%20types%20viewer%20-%20National%20Soil%20Resources%20Institute.%20Cranfield%20University.html>

Farming has always been a traditional activity in the Parish, particularly in what is termed the “Upper Village”, east of the church. To counteract the levels of soil acidity, which varies between slightly acid to very acid, lime has been applied to the farm land by various methods, which explains the presence of the old lime kilns located on the foreshore by the boat shelter.



Fig 2: Offloading limestone or coal in the 19th century (not Lympstone)

In the early part of the 19th century, at the time of the 1838 tithe survey, there were 14 farms operating within the parish, mostly mixed arable and pasture with a considerable scattering of cider orchards, as is indicated in house names such as “Orchard View” and “Aggies Orchard”. As well as being sold in local pubs, cider had been used throughout the county since the 16th century, as a means of part payment of agricultural labourers. This practice declined in the late 19th century under the influence of the Temperance movement and the amended Truck Act of 1887 which mandated that payment of labourer’s wages must be made only in cash. Cider was also exported from the area as a whole, for example across the Atlantic to Newfoundland, further strengthening the links between Devon and this part of the US eastern seaboard. Moreover, it was also being taken aboard ships in the 18th century as a means of fighting scurvy.



Haymaking, opposite the Parish Church

By the 1930s there were about ten farms in the parish but by the end of the 20th century this had reduced to four, as a result of farm consolidation and residential development. Until recently there were members of the parish who remembered a fortnightly market held in what is now the car park of the Saddlers Arms, where sheep, cattle and pigs were bought and sold.

Today, there is still some evidence of market gardening activities in the village, glasshouses still exist in Courtlands Lane and the village plant nursery opposite the church is, at the time of writing (2022), in the process of redevelopment as housing.

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