

VICTORIAN FARM BUILDINGS IN HAMPSHIRE

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INTRODUCTION

It could be argued that the prosperity of agriculture during the Victorian period varied from what was known as the 'Golden Age', the decades of improvement and 'High Farming', to the decline which led to the so-called 'Great Depression' towards the end of the century. The years following the Napoleonic Wars had proved to be a period of difficulty for the farmer, but, by the time of Queen Victoria's accession, the situation had improved considerably. From about 1840 to the mid-1870s, agriculture enjoyed great prosperity and improvements of many kinds occurred. This may be seen mainly as the result of a change in attitude. Pioneers, who included the Prince Consort, took a far more scientific view of farming. Such developments as the Rothamsted Experimental Station, opened in 1842, and the Royal College of Agriculture, set up in 1846, were important, as had been the formation of the Royal Agricultural Society in 1839. Many of the ideas adopted by the innovative farmers were contained in the 1849 pamphlet by James Caird, called 'High Farming' – a title which was to be used to describe the new methods of the period.

The main practical changes which took place were in improved drainage and the extension of the use of water meadows; in the introduction of additional fertilisers, such as guano, potash and superphosphates; and in increased emphasis on the breeding of pedigree stock. Farm machinery also became more sophisticated although the degree to which this occurred must not be overstated.

The combination of economic factors, such as increased competition and poor harvests in the 1870s, led to a decline in agricultural fortunes during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There is considerable disagreement amongst historians as to the depth of the depression which occurred (Hill 1977; Saul 1969),

but certainly it became necessary for the British farmer to adapt in order to remain profitable. Many, by changing from arable farming to such specialisations as market gardening and dairying, managed to retain a reasonable level of prosperity, being able to take advantage of the expansion of the urban market which came with the advent of the railways. Nevertheless, this diversification, together with the increase in mechanisation, resulted in the shrinkage of the workforce on the land. In the years between 1871 and 1911 the proportion of the national work force engaged in agriculture nearly halved (Mingay 1976).

Farming in Hampshire reflected the national trends and the impact of the changes which took place may be seen in the buildings that survive today. Railways made the London market more accessible and, although small towns such as Romsey experienced only minimal growth, Southampton and Portsmouth grew rapidly. There were three particularly impressive new towns, Aldershot in the north east, Eastleigh in the centre, and Bournemouth in the south west. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that both new building and rebuilding took place on Hampshire farms throughout the Victorian period.

MODEL FARMS

It has to be remembered, however, that few farmsteads are planned and built at one time, the majority tending to be the result of years, and even centuries, of evolution, although the Victorian period did see the erection of some model farms, which as a rule attempted to combine the most innovative methods of farming with appropriate buildings. The construction of these model farms reflected availability of capital as much as a demand for produce, and Hampshire examples are usually associated with large estates. For instance, W Nicholson of



Fig 1. Church Farm, Privett; range of model farm buildings (Photo: P Moore).

Basing Park, constructed a number of new farms on his estate at Privett. His church, by Blomfield, built between 1876 and 1878 may be better known, but the farm buildings are equally evocative of the period. Church Farm (SU 675268) is, like all Nicholson's farms, built of flint and brick (Figs 1 and 2). This is the most common building material for Victorian farm buildings in the chalklands of Hampshire. In addition to the carefully placed buildings (Fig 1), a farmhouse exists (Fig 2), set apart, but corresponding in style. Also on the chalkland is Itchen Down Farm (SU 545342). As at Privett, the buildings are constructed of flint and brick, but at Itchen Down, a number of these retain their original roofs of Welsh slate. One of the buildings usually included in a Victorian model farm was a cart shed, and there is a very good example here. The barn differs little from tradi-

tional barns, but was used almost exclusively for storage, threshing becoming mechanised by the mid-Victorian period. Itchen Down was not provided with an impressive farmhouse, as at Church Farm, but with two good farm workers' cottages, matching the rest of the buildings. Rather different in style is the model farm at Pylewell, on the edge of the New Forest, and close to the Solent shore (SZ 358 960). This is near to the mansion to which it was related. The buildings are of brick, and less systematically arranged than those of the other model farms.

In addition to farmsteads, many of the nineteenth century landlords provided dwellings for agricultural workers. Although not always adjoining the farmstead, they are, since they housed farm workers, included in this consideration of Victorian farm buildings. They varied a great deal in quality, some being little more than



Fig 2. Church Farm, Privett; farmhouse corresponding in style to remainder of farmstead (Photo: P Moore).

hovels, antiquated, cramped and insanitary (Mingay 1976). Others, however, were substantially constructed, and provided adequate accommodation. A typical group may be seen just off the main road, east of Bramdean (SU 631271). Built of brick with slate roofs, these solid estate cottages provided, by Victorian standards, very good housing. The village of East Tisted is linked to Rotherfield Park and many of its buildings belonged to the estate. Here, flint is the main material, together with brick and timber. Although East Tisted is Victorian in character there are also some older buildings.

Many farmsteads included Victorian buildings mixed with others of earlier or later date. For instance, a large number of barns were renovated and some new ones constructed. As already mentioned, Victorian barns tended to

have a more general function than their predecessors, and whilst their main use was for storage of produce and fertilisers, they also could provide shelter for cattle and house the machinery increasingly in use. An example, built characteristically of flint and brick, is one of the buildings of West Hoe Farm, near Bishops Waltham (SU 567176). This includes some of the features of the traditional barn, such as its large wagon doors, but in detail is unmistakably Victorian. No longer forming part of a farmstead, another interesting example is the barn of the Home Farm at Eastleigh (SU 442193). This is a brick building with a half hipped slate roof and diamond shaped air vents, and has recently been considerably altered.

Although many buildings were constructed to accommodate animals, particularly horses and cattle, a large proportion of piggeries are of



Fig 3. Dovecot, St Clair's Farm, Soberton (Photo: P Moore).

Victorian date, pigs tending increasingly to be housed on the farmstead as woods and wastelands contracted. Some of these buildings are worthy of note, the group formerly attached to Chilworth House on the outskirts of Southampton, (SU 406183) for instance, being quite elaborate. Interestingly, the current tendency is once again to move pigs off the farmstead into the fields, and many pigsties are suffering neglect. A somewhat surprising building is the rebuilt dovecot at St Clair's Farm, Soberton (SU 604154) (Fig 3). Its construction in flint and brick is typically Victorian, but the dovecot can hardly be claimed as a common Hampshire farm building and its use was, anyway, declining by the Victorian period.

Special facilities were frequently available on the Victorian farm. In the hop growing areas in the northeast of the county, hop kilns were constructed in the nineteenth century. A typical example has survived at East Worldham near

Alton (SU 748382). There are three kilns with pyramidal tops which continued in use until a few years ago when, to an increasing extent, hop drying was undertaken by the buyers. An even larger hop kiln survived for many years at Buriton, south of Petersfield, but this has now been converted into dwellings.

FARM BUILDINGS IN DURLEY AND FAIR OAK

The above list does no more than provide examples of some different types of building which were constructed in the nineteenth century on Hampshire farms. It gives no indication of Victorian farm buildings which survive, or to what extent Victorian relics are to be found on the typical farm. A clearer impression will, hopefully, be available when the Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group complete their survey of Hampshire farmsteads. This will cover over three hundred farms, and

while this is only a small proportion of the total number in the county, with the help and advice of the District and County Planning Departments, it should be possible to select representative sites. In order to check the techniques of selection and survey, in 1982 a comprehensive survey was made of all the sites in the parish of Durley and part of Fair Oak marked on the Ordnance Survey as 'farms'. There were forty-two sites thus described, of which six had not been used as farms for many years. In many cases, the stress was on milk production on old established farms, varying from small to moderate in size. Examples of Victorian farm buildings were found, but not in quantity.

Netherhill Farm (SU 519152) was on the Netherhill Estate, which was sold and broken up in 1918. At one time it produced milk and sugar beet, but now concentrates on pigs and beef cattle. New buildings have been added, mostly re-used from the two Wars, and include Nissen huts. The barn was either built, or more probably rebuilt, in 1854. The lower courses of bricks appear older than the remainder. This large building has two conventional barn doors on one side, and one on the other. Three small buildings, in the form of leantos, were added on one side, probably built as cartsheds and stables, and are dated '1900'. The pigsties on the opposite side of the yard are almost certainly Victorian. Otherwise, the farm buildings would appear to belong to earlier or later periods – for instance, the granary is of eighteenth century date, while other buildings are post-1918. A former coach house and stables, however, could have been rebuilt about the same time as the barn. The buildings of Netherhill Farm reflect its present specialisation very clearly, but the Victorian period has left its mark.

Durley Middle Farm (SU 520170) was not a self-contained unit, but was subsidiary to Durley Manor Farm. In one sense it was a model farm, being built on the site of some old cottages in the 1880s. However, with its buildings consisting of three cartsheds, a cowshed, a stable and a store, it was limited in function. It is now being converted into dwellings. The cowshed has already become a bungalow and other buildings are in a state of transition. At the time

of survey, however, on 21st November 1981, the stable was still in its original condition. Whilst unlikely to receive a 'star billing' by Pevsner, it was a very good example of a Victorian farm building. Measuring fifty eight feet by nineteen feet, it had stalls for twelve horses, although the internal divisions had been removed. The floor, of blue engineering brick, remained complete with drains. The tack room occupied one corner of the ground floor and there was a hay tallat above. The walls were of local red brick and the roof of Blanchards' clay peg tiles. This stable will probably be converted into a four bed-roomed house, the cartsheds into garages, and the granary demolished. The latter was a simple timber framed structure, with walls and roof of corrugated iron, but unusual in resting on iron staddles, as opposed to the more common stone variety.

Greenwood Farm (SU 509177) originally served the nearby manor house which has now been demolished. It was allowed to run down – in fact, the barn was used as a squash court – but is now being rebuilt for the accommodation of beef cattle. The barn was either built or rebuilt during the Victorian period. The walls are constructed of bricks made on the estate, plus blue bricks from Blanchards (the latter indicating the date of the building). The single span roof truss is unusual as its members are mostly of iron; there is one wagon door. The cowsheds and stables are in a poor condition but would appear to be contemporary with the barn. Although the impending conversion is less drastic than at Middle Farm, very little will remain that is unmistakably Victorian.

Firtree Farm (SU 485174) has been touched but lightly by Victorian improvements. Unusually, the barn, which has a date stone marked '1830', the piggeries, and remainder of the farmstead are separated from the farmhouse by a public road and are now in separate ownership. The house includes a beam dated 1661, but was rebuilt in 1897. It has a number of late Victorian features and is, in effect, a farmhouse without a farm. Lane End House (SU 498162), like Firtree Farm, is now a private house with the associated farm buildings little used. However, the buildings still adjoin the



Fig 4. Durley Hall Farm; north side of barn showing wagon door (Photo: E Course).

house, which replaced an earlier dwelling in about 1890. They served a market garden, and as the produce, which included strawberries, went straight to market, the provision was for horses and carts rather than storage. The cartshed survives, but the most striking building is the stable block of 1898, now used for general storage. It is built of brick with a slate roof supported by timbers. The ground floor is of brick and carried a coach house and stalls for four horses. The hay loft has a wooden floor and remains of a hoist.

The five farms mentioned so far give the impression that Durley and Fair Oak have little to offer the seeker of Victorian farm buildings. This is a fair generalisation, but two farms do offer rather more. Snakemoor Farm (SU 503163) has a new set of buildings with the original farm kept for general storage. Virtually all the piggeries found were, not surprisingly,

Victorian and the example at Snakemoor was no exception. However, the farm does also include what is almost certainly a Victorian cowshed. This is of red brick with the original peg tiles replaced by Marley tiles. Of conventional design, it is single storey and about a hundred and twenty feet long. To meet hygiene regulations, a concrete floor has been inserted.

Perhaps the nearest approach to a set of Victorian farm buildings in the area studied is to be found at Durley Hall Farm (SU 522181). None of the buildings bear date stones but comparison of the Ordnance Survey Plans of 1885 and 1911 indicate that, with the exception of the house, granary and barn, all the buildings were erected between those dates. Of the earlier buildings, all but the granary were 'improved' at the same time. The barn, of aisled construction, is timber framed with brick sleeper walls and queen post trusses and has been given an origin-

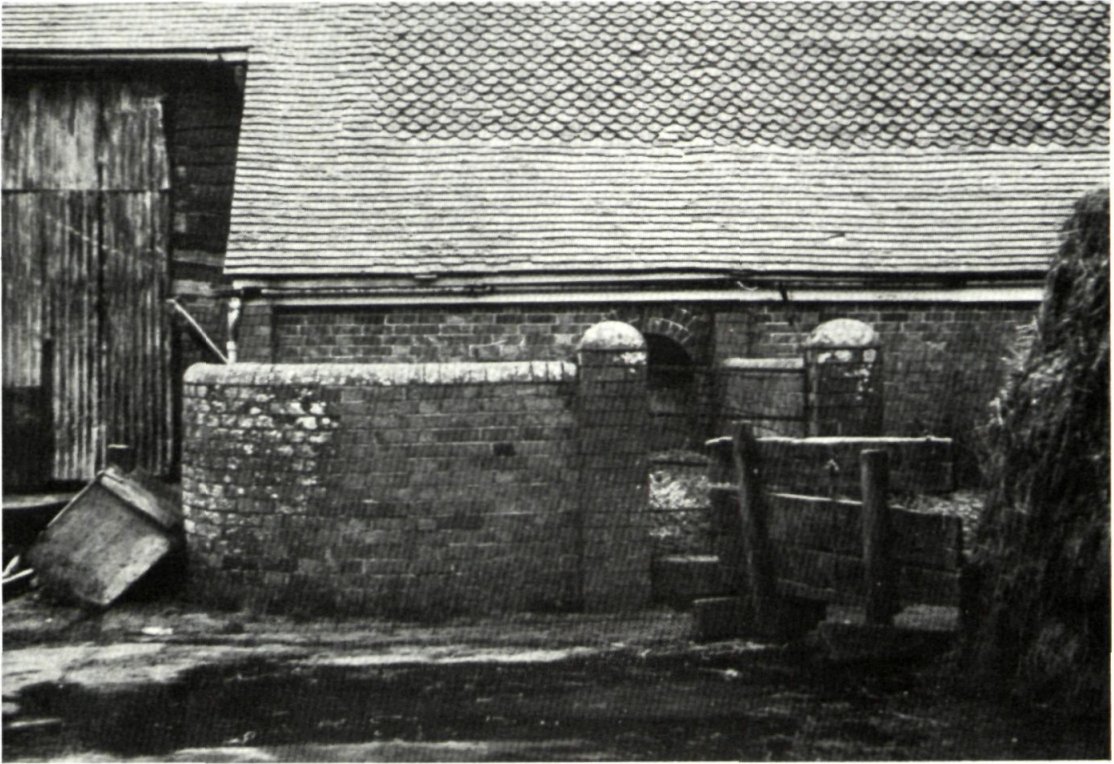


Fig 5. Durley Hall Farm; pigsties adjoining the barn (Photo: E Course).

al construction date of 1650 to 1700 (Fig 4). There are two ranges of pigsties, both unmistakably Victorian, one built into the wall of the barn (Fig 5), with the roof extended over the inner sties. Other buildings which belong to this period are the stables (with hay tallat) and a range of poultry houses; whilst architectural details, including a distinctive ventilator, suggest that, although the plan of the cowpens was unchanged, these too were rebuilt.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarise, Durley and Fair Oak are not rich in Victorian farm buildings, except for piggeries. All the free standing granaries surveyed were from earlier periods, with the interesting exception of the example on iron staddles at Middle Farm, Durley. Where there was evidence of Victorian building or rebuilding, with the notable exception of Netherhill, it

usually belonged, surprisingly, to the 1880s or 1890s. Whether or not these generalisations can be applied to the county as a whole must await the completion of the survey, supplemented by documentary research. A first impression is that 'model farms' were built, but were not common, and that most construction and reconstruction was carried out on the larger estates. However, this generalisation is based on a present day impression and may be distorted by a low survival rate of Victorian farm buildings in Hampshire. The survey should allow more definite conclusions to be drawn.

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