

Richard Jones on Hilhampton



Dad took over Hilhampton when he got married in 1938, a herd of 43 cows, plus young stock, payment for all his years of working with his father; he never actually got paid a wage from the time he left school at 13 to when he got married at 32; he got a herd of cows given to him when he started his own business. 43 cows sounds an odd number especially in today's world where herds are two, three, four hundred and you leap about

in tens and thirties, but we could actually only tie up 43 cows in the buildings, so that limited the size of your herd in those days. Dad continued farming like that, basically, until my eldest brother Gordon left school at 16 and Dad then went back to a much more mixed farm and he bought some sheep and some pigs; he'd always kept laying hens and done Christmas poultry since my grandfather's day back in the early 1900s, 1920s. That continued with the standard 43 cows until we put in the milking parlour; instead of having the cows tied up during the winter they were loose-housed in the barn and they went through a milking parlour which was four-unit parlour, and then we were able to balance the cows according to what young heifers and so on we had coming through: I think I was 18, about 1964/65 we put the milking parlour in. It was when the first bulk milk scheme came in; instead of having milk churns for sending the milk away a tank came round with a temperature-controlled tank, which is what we have nowadays. They did come every day to pick up the milk at that time whereas these days the big tanks hold two or even three day's milk supply and the tankers only come every second or third day to collect the milk.

Dad had rented Tipten Green farm at Clanfield and Lower Barn Farm, his Dad had farmed Lower Barn Farm and he farmed Tipten Green, and that was arable land, basically he grew spring barley there, and ran his heifers. Of course he had bull calves from the dairy, they were always taken away to big stores to be sold for someone else to fatten, or we fattened them ourselves, depending on food supplies and so on ... At Hilhampton Dad always grew about 8 acres of winter fodder for the cows, he was very good at growing roots and kale &c.; he actually won the local farmers' cup for the most points for crops grown in one year, which is quite an achievement for a 150-acre farm against the people who had 1,000 acres and more. He had an incredible system: he grew an acre of what was called white horse-tooth maize, and I've never been able to discover what that was, and he fed that green crop from the first of September until it ran out, and he cut it by hand and he put it into bundles and put in front of the cows in the cow pens; it was quite cleverly done in that so many of the plants were laid one way, and so many the other way, and then tied together, and that bundle was thrown in front of the cows so that each cow, left and right, had a top end and a bottom end to chew on. When the maize had run out we then went on to kale and mangles and Dad also grew some swedes which would have been for any stock, sheep, or even human consumption, and he also grew an acre or two of potatoes as did nearly every farm in the valley in those days. (In the field called

Hopfield at Hilhampton, you could find the occasional hop growing in the hedgerow, but that must have been many many years prior to my family being involved in the farm. Hops were grown at Buriton, quite heavily, right up until the '70s ...)

When we had all finished school, the three brothers, David, Gordon and myself, we all went to college at Sparsholt, and Gordon and I won the challenge cup for the animal husbandry student, and my younger brother David won the poultry cup for the best poultry student so we were quite successful at Hilhampton which proves that Dad was a pretty good trainer in livestock management. Once all of us were back home again, we started to try and expand the farm, and being youthful we wanted to change everything; my brother David was keenest on the dairy herd and we registered them all for bringing up to pedigree status and we ended up in the end with a herd of 150 cows all of them pedigree, we used to rear 30 or 40 heifers every year and at one time and at one time we were sending those over to the continent as down-calving heifers; there was quite a trade of quality Friesians going over to Europe; nowadays it's coming back the other way - we were quite successful at that. I have always been very interested in breeds of animals, and we introduced the longhorns into the business in the 1970s, 71, we bought two heifers, one of which never produced a calf and the other one was the great, great grand dam of every single cow that I had when I had a herd of them here at Hyden Farm. She had a huge influence on the herd, and one of her sons stood in the AI scheme for the Longhorn Society, so I used to buy so I used to buy a son or grandson of his when I needed another bull.

We also kept a flock of Hampshire Down sheep. We bought five very old pedigree Hampshire Downs from the top breeder in the country, they were all in lamb; beginner's luck, the five old ewes had five ewe lambs when they gave birth and that was the foundation of our flock and we built that up to 50 or 60 Hampshires, and we used to sell rams locally. We did that until the continental breeds took over in popularity and I stopped the pedigree status and just kept them for meat production.

Pigs, we've kept Oxford Sandy & Blacks, a very rare breed, and we've kept them since the 1970s, and I have been keeping Dorking chickens since those days. When the Romans came to Britain, they sent reports as all invading armies do about the newly-conquered land and in one of the reports said that there was a particularly good type of chicken they had found, and that it was very unusual in that it had five toes instead of four, which is what the Dorking has, so the Dorking bloodline was here in Roman times. And we always did Christmas poultry, geese, ducks, turkeys of course. The chicken were always free-range, out in the fields, we had a compound for the turkeys and they were free-range at that time, and they used to back in at night into a high-fenced open-topped pen. Turkeys, once they're fully feathered and strong, they're quite safe in all weathers. We always used to do 20 or 30 geese, and since I've been up at Hyden, I think the biggest number here has been 250 at Christmas.

When I was a little boy we always had three horses, only one of them was working when I was there. There was Phyllis, who was an old mare, who had damaged her leg and we had to have a special shoe made for her, one of which I've still got, and then there was Captain, he was a young castrated male, gelding, he was never actually broken properly, because the tractor side of the business had taken over, before he came into full work, and Darkie, another mare that we had, and she still worked; we used her for feeding the

cattle, bringing the fodder in from the field, during the winter months, kale and so on. The advantage of horses, when you're working on your own, a horse will stand at a gate whilst you go and open it, and will then walk through the gate on its own, and stop the other side so that you could close the gate and then continue with your work whereas with a tractor you have to get on and off, on and off all the time. Darkie was an incredibly good horse for hoeing mangles and swedes and that sort of thing; she could walk a straight line very very accurately without damaging the plants and Dad used to like her particularly for that job. She died eventually of old age and that was the end of horses.

I moved to Hyden in 1984/5 and Hilhampton was sold then.

Farm buildings

First, as you approach from the south, there was a calf shed, in bad repair, which we replaced with modern building. Then came the granary, on staddle stones, which is still there today, where we used to keep poultry, pig and sheep feeds, to be made into pellets or nuts, kept in bags and stacked up against the sides.



Granary from Weald and Downland. Grain stores were raised from the ground to exclude rodents.

After the granary, there was a gap to the left, leading to the rickyard; the turkeys were kept here. The next buildings had a stable, with four stalls plus a foaling box; there was a loft over it into which hay was forked up, then down into the racks for horses to feed. The other part of that building was a pen for cows, six on each side, with the loft over. Then, at the end of the block, came the cake house, a small room, where we mixed up the daily ration of feed.



Above, stables and cowshed with cake house.



The first section of the next building (*above*), with a lower roof, was a long pen for 15 cows, linked to an older section with a higher roof, which has the oldest timbers (*right*), and had a calving pen. There were



Loft over cow shed, for storing hay



Old door to stable



tie-ups on the wall for the cows, with their calves behind them; they were bucket-fed for six to eight weeks. Next to them was the brick dairy and engine room. The milk went to the dairy where it was cooled and poured into the churns. The warm water was pumped to the roof and then out to the pens to water the cows, which was better for them in winter.



Next, where the car ports are now (*left*), was the bullpen which had a domed roof, 40' by 60', and held 10 cows, and a loose box; next to the farmhouse was another cow pen for 6 cows. In 1938 it had no electricity, no running water ...

The ponds

Of the two ponds in front of the house (*see map, right*), the eastern one is four or five feet higher than the other, with a spring from the top to the bottom. In dry weather you can see the foundations of a building, which might have been a mill, either wind or water. Richard still has the millstone (far right) which he found there.



Contemporary map; a new farmhouse has been built to the south.

When the lower spring dried out in the 1960s, you could see where malmstone had been cut from it. It was probably not used to build the farmhouse, but may have been used for one of the farm buildings.



With millstone from Hilhampton