

Agriculture

In Barton there were seven farms.

Pennygate Farm was known in the past as Mack's Farm and Gunn's Farm and employed up to 10 men. The farm pit was used for watering the horses.

Berry Hall Farm

belongs to an old Norwich Charity but is worked by the Drake family. At the roadside is one of the clearest farm pits found locally. Behind there are bullock yards and barns to accommodate corn and potatoes.



Photo: Herbert Drake harvesting

Five men used to be employed on this farm. Nearby there are some wooden buildings where bullocks, pigs, chickens and goats were kept. Sugar beet was taken from the farm to Barton Staithe to go to the sugar beet factory at Cantley.

Home Farm used to employ three or four men.

On Staithe Road there was **Staithe Farm**, the last occupant being Mr Jack Neave. The farm had a cowhouse, a meal house, a cattle yard and some stables.

Hall Farm produced the milk for Barton Hall and anybody in the village who was ill could have skimmed milk from Hall Farm.

Records show that **Point Farm** was sold by the Prestons in 1919 to Joseph Salmon Cox. Part was then sold on in 1920 to John Wood of Barton Hall. The farm consisted of the farm house, stabling for two horses, a cow house for eight cows, bullock and calf boxes, piggeries, implement shed and chaff house. There was also a brick and tile barn, a turnip house, bullock shed, loose box and bullock yard. The farm also had a marsh. Later records show that Jack Neave of Staithe Farm occupied Point Farm.

Ikens Farm is on the road towards Smallburgh. In the early 1900's a vet lived here and the house was used for his business. Mr Daniels, the vet, owned a steam threshing machine and his men travelled around different farms threshing.

Paul Lamb wrote in NIB

“Walter Jones returned from Canada around 1920 with a wife and three small children and for a few years somehow eked out a living with some cows and a small parcel of allotment in Water Lane. Then having expanded his family (three more children) and his small herd of cows, he needed to expand his enterprise. With a considerable amount of trepidation he plucked up courage, and, literally with cap in hand, knocked on the door of Beeston Hall to ask Sir Edward Preston if he could hire a small lakeside meadow for some extra grazing. “Better than that Jones” was his reply, “You can have **Ikens Farm**”. And indeed he did – rent free for the first year! Had it been otherwise Grandfather would have joined the ranks of two recently departed bankrupt tenants, and Sir Edward would have been searching for yet another.

Such was the state of agriculture in Britain at that time. Survival, I am told, was a constant struggle, and keeping Walter's head above water was secured with the help of an extremely hard working, Scottish Presbyterian wife, a village milk round and a lot of unpaid child labour!

Times for them and the rest of the working classes were very hard and the production of food on the farm or cottage garden was an extremely serious business. Food was very, very precious and was not wasted.

Neither was land on which to grow it. Approximately 45% of the weekly wage was spent on food. Any surplus, for those lucky enough to have some, was fed to the hens for egg or meat production, or to a pig at the bottom of the garden that would provide food through the winter. Today less than 10% of our wages are spent on food.”

People used to go gleaning in the field after the harvest. They took sandwiches and worked all day in a field collecting ears of corn from among the stubble. Later on when the farmers were threshing, anyone could give the man with the threshing machine tuppence and he would thresh their sack of gleanings for them. For gleaning you picked up ears of corn into a bunch until you couldn't hold anymore, then tied a straw round it and began again.

The Mill Garage was the site of a post mill. This is a wooden structure turning on a wooden post and the base of the post and the supporting timbers were covered with a single story built roundhouse. The mill had one pair of sails of the old pattern, when canvas was bent on them to catch the wind and one pair of the slatted vane type. At the end of its time the mill was using one pair of sails only. The last mill owner was Sam Chapman and after the mill ceased working he used the roundhouse and the pitched wooden granary for the storage of flour, corn and meal which he delivered in the area by horse and cart.

Going towards Neatishead there is the entrance to a track to “Duffield's Lodge” a stockyard. Two or three farm workers were employed here to look after the pigs and cattle and to cultivate the surrounding acres.

Goods landed at the staithe in Barton included brick, tile, marl, stone, coal etc. Wherries took away billet wood for tanning and smoking fish, corn etc.

Extracts from A Jam Around Barton Turf by kind permission of John Yaxley and Wherries and Windmills by kind permission of Anne Wilson.

Barbara Pilcher, August 2014

Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf Community Heritage Group