

At Work



The Brownjohn brothers, Walter and Alfred, stand outside their newly refurbished stores in 1908. I think Lipton's might have had a hand in the refurbishment, as I have never seen so many adverts for tea! From left to right are Alfred's son Charles, then Walter with his hands on his hips. Next to him is his brother Alfred, with arms folded. The little girl is Kitty Collins - perhaps she has come to buy some lemon sherbert! Have you noticed the lads on the roof? How they must have enjoyed posing for this photograph. They are Alfred's sons, Tom and Harold, and Walter's son, Hubert

Farming

Looking back as far as records exist, we find that the ‘industry’ that played a very large part in the economy of Froyle in the 12th and 13th centuries was wool. Theo Beck tells us,

“Out of the Manor of Froyle, belonging to the Nuns of St Mary’s Winchester 3 weys 4 stone (a wey or weigh of wool and 56lbs or 2 sacks) of wool were sold in 1236 for £3 6s 0d; in the following years 4½ weys 28lbs realised £6 9s 6d and 2½ weys 9 cloves £3 16s 6d. In 1240 three weys of wool were sold for £3 9s 0d and next year the large wool (lana grossa) brought in £5 3s 6d, while 2s 5d was also received for 43 fleeces of lambs. The fleeces of sheep accounted for on the Manor in that year reached a sum total of 837, of these 84 were paid in tithes and 3 were allotted as customary prerequisites to the three shepherds. The 750 of the residue being estimated at 41½ weys. The price of wool seems to have been increasing towards the middle of the 13th century, for, in the year 1246, 5 weys of large wool from Froyle Manor brought in £5 6s 8d.”

There was a Fulling Mill at Millcourt where the wool was cleansed before being sent to the Clothiers. It is generally supposed that Fuller’s Earth, having been discovered at Churt, was first used here and at Orp’s Mill, Alton. Hampshire was famous for its wool in the Middle Ages, and there were many of these Fulling Mills. Wool was exported from Southampton, where it was weighed on the Tron (weighing beam) to collect the King’s dues. Woollen goods were made in Hampshire towns, including Alton, and in village cottages. ‘Burrells’, ‘Quilts’ and ‘Challons’ were made. ‘Challons’ were the nearest thing to our modern day blankets. Blankets, as we know them, were first made by Mr Blanket of Trowbridge, Wilts, in 1836.

Theo Beck continues, “Another product of Froyle was cider and every dwelling of any size had an orchard. Some cider was sold, but considerable quantities were delivered to the Abbey for its own use. In the year 1236 three Tuns of cider were sold for 21s. In the following year the remainder of a ‘cask of cider’ was sold for 14d, and out of four tuns of new cider, two were used on the Manor in ‘bever’ (bever - eleven o’clock luncheon) otherwise appropriated by the Abbess. Two full casks remained to the next year. In that and the next two years no cider was sold, but in 1241 no less than £2 3s 5½d was derived from this source.”

In Charles II’s time, when John Aubrey tells us that Farnham had become “the greatest market in England for wheat”, Froyle farmers had long since turned over to arable farming. When harvesting was done by hand all the village went gleaning and the corn was ground, and, of course, home-made bread was baked. There were several mills in the vicinity. Froyle Mill still stands on the River Wey, but is now a private house.

In more recent times the growing of hops has played an important part in the prosperity of the village. At one time the fields would be full of them, as far as the eye could see. In 1800 there were 141 acres of hops in Froyle, and an 1855 Directory states that “there are hop-yards on all the farms.” Today there are hardly any. William Westbrook was one of those farmers still growing hops at the turn of the 20th century and his daughter Lilian, who we met earlier, had fond memories of hop picking at that time,

“Hop picking was such a busy time in our family for many years, grandfather, uncle and father all grew hops on their separate farms. They employed the same pickers, always home pickers and so we knew them all. Grandfather’s hops were picked first, then uncle’s and last, my father’s. The three farms were adjoining.

Whole families went into the gardens - babies in prams, toddlers and school children of all ages. Many old folk wouldn’t have missed the hop picking season for anything. The pickers were mostly women and children, the menfolk of the village being occupied with their various jobs. The hops were always picked during the school summer holidays and it certainly gave the children something to do. Even my mother, with a family and a busy farmhouse to control, would spare a certain amount of time each day for the hop gardens, and we children went too.

We were expected to pick hops and not play around, but we had our fun. It was quite a thrill to sit on a small stool and fill an upturned umbrella with the hops, gradually covering the wires and then emptying them into the big bin and

Hop fields in Lower Froyle in 1912



starting the process all over again. These hops grew on poles. Grand-father and his sons never changed their method of hop growing to the modern way with string. Pole pullers were kept busy and would walk backward and forwards pulling the poles with a fag-hook for the pickers, who put the poles across the bins. These bins held seven bushels and were emptied from time to time, the tally man keeping a strict account of the bushels each family picked. The secret of a good day's picking was an early start at 6.30 or 7am, finishing at about 5pm. Leaves would fall in the bins and these had to be picked out again as they spoil the samples for the hop buyers.

A welcome visitor to the hop gardens was the local baker with his basket of buns of all sorts and sizes, and the lucky ones with pence to spare enjoyed them for lunch. Dinner was often eaten in the gardens, with hands half black with the stain of the hops and, oh, what a bitter taste was mingled with the sandwiches, pies, apples. After a busy day what a delight it was to wash your hands at the old fashioned brick sink in the farm kitchen and sit down with the family to a fish supper, herrings or bloaters for preference.

The hop kiln was a fascinating place, and sometimes we children were allowed to watch the old hop drier at his work, to see the hop pockets filled and to roast large potatoes in the hot embers of the charcoal fire for our supper. The old hop drier was a remarkable man; he went to each hop kiln in turn and ate, slept and lived in the kilns day and night for three or four weeks, his bed a wooden bench with a few sacks for bed clothes. He was a cheerful happy man. The previous old drier perished in a fire at uncle's hop kiln before the turn of the century.

And now a word of the price; it was usually 2d or 2½d a bushel, grandfather paying the pickers. Gradually the hops were grubbed out, and in 1912 only one garden remained on father's farm. The hops were so small that he had to pay 6d a bushel to get them picked, and so ended the hop growing on three family farms in a little village in a corner of Hampshire."

Mrs Smither mentions the hop drier who lost his life. His name was William Bunce and here is the story told by his son Arthur to the Coroner's Jury when it met at the Traveller's Rest, Lower Froyle, two days after the fire. This report appeared in the Hampshire Herald in September 1895.

"On Wednesday night, the 18th inst., about half past nine, deceased and myself were moving hops from the 'hair' (a large sieve); I was shovelling and father was sweeping behind me to dry hops off the kiln..... There was a lamp hanging close to the doorway, it was a paraffin lamp, with wire all round the glass. As I was throwing the hops out of the doorway, the handle of the shovel struck the bottom

of the lamp and knocked it over; as it was falling the oil fell out, and a blaze struck up all round my feet. I could not see my father, so I jumped down into the store room and from there down to the ground outside; the other fellow, Wm. Pinnells, done the same. I could not get through the flame to my father; he was a fairly active man. It was impossible for me to get at my father; there was an 'hair' cloth there and blazed up immediately. I picked up the lamp directly it fell and slung it out of the door and the oil dropped as I threw it.....”

The report continues,

“Nothing could be done to save William Bunce, but the villagers rushed to the scene to save the ricks and barns by throwing buckets of water over them. Mr Westbrook’s nephew, Mr Edwin Brownjohn, jumped on his horse and galloped the five miles to Alton to call the Fire Brigade, shouting ‘Fire! Fire!’ as he went through the village.”

In 2000 the actual hop kiln mentioned above is still standing, almost in its original state.

Hop pickers at the turn of the last century. You can clearly see the tally man with his book





Whole families worked in the field. Here we see Jim and Nancy Knight with their mother, along with a friend, Maurice Hill, in 1929

Gwen Knight lent us her late husband Jim's schoolbook for the year 1929. In it Jim, with the cap in the picture above, describes a trip to the hop gardens.

"One Monday I got out of bed at about a quarter to seven, ready to go into the hop-garden. It was a beautiful sunny morning and it looked like being a very hot day. I had my breakfast at seven o'clock and then I walked to the garden with mother. We got there at about half past seven and then we started picking. They first measured at ten o'clock, and then we had some lunch. The next measure was at half past twelve. Mr Clarke, the tally man, then told us that we could have an hour off for dinner. The last measure was at half past three and then we went home, after having spent an enjoyable day in the hop-fields."

Bill Elstow remembers what hop picking was like in the 1940s. "If you have not picked hops your picture of life's rich pattern is still incomplete," he says. "The ritual was that you were picked up early in the morning at various points in an open backed lorry and taken to the hop garden where each family was assigned a row to pick. To start with you had to hang onto a vine to pull it down. The first ones in the morning were always wet with enough dew to give you a soaking but the

summer days that I remember were always scorching hot so that the vines soon dried out. Every so often during the day the tally man would come round with a horse and wagon and two helpers to measure the hops you had picked, tip them onto a large piece of sacking, roll them up and throw them up onto the wagon. The tally man would then enter the amount against your name. The procedure was, before he came, to thrust your arms deep into the hops and fluff them up to sit as high in the basket as you could make them. Woe betide anyone who knocked the basket after that! When you picked hops your hands got covered by the hop resin and by lunch time your hands were black with it. Some people would pick with fingerless gloves to avoid the scratching caused by the vines but it was all a pretty primitive affair with no toilet or hand washing facilities. Calls of nature had to be dealt with in the shaded areas of darkness down the end of the rows. When the time came to eat your sandwiches with resin covered hands at lunch time you soon appreciated why hops were used to make bitter beer. The hops were taken from the gardens to the hop kilns for drying and preserving and this would go on all day and all night during the short season. It was a very pleasant experience as the chill of the evening came to wander into the warm base of the kiln where the drying fires were being maintained to dry the hops spread out on the upper floors. The men used to have glistening yellow sticks of sulphur which they used to burn to produce sulphur dioxide to help preserve the hops. When dry the hops would be raked to a hole in the floor falling into a very long circular sack where they would be compressed rock hard to give a poke of hops.”

*Marie Summer and Beryl
Vivian in the hop gardens*





The Brewery area in Husseys Lane at the turn of the last century. You can just see the hop kiln

During the 1800s, when hop growing was at its peak, there were several Maltheuses in Lower Froyle - nearly all harvesting and drying their own hops.

But, in Husseys Lane there was not only a Maltheuse, but also a Brewery. I was very fortunate to be able to examine the deeds of what is today, Old Brewery House, although these only go back to 1798 and the house is a little older than that, I believe. At this time it was described as a “messuage, tenements, maltheuse and kilns.” From 1826 until 1864 it was run by William Messenger, who also had another Maltheuse in ‘Froyle Street’. This, I believe, was the Maltheuse which stood alongside Brownjohn’s Stores and which was pulled down around the turn of the last century.

The last Brewer in Husseys Lane was Mrs Hannah Selina Morse, who lived to the good age of 94. The daughter of William Mayhew of Lower Froyle, she was brought up at The Travellers Rest ‘Beer House’, as it was known then. She married Raymond Morse and the couple farmed at Yarnhams for several years. In 1881 they left the farm and Raymond purchased the Froyle Brewery from the estate of the late Mr W.Knight. After her husband’s death in 1907 Mrs Morse carried on the Brewery, which was renowned for its family ales, until about 1926, when the oasts were demolished.

These next few pages look at farming with one of the longest established families of Froyle, the Westbrooks.

The photograph below is of George Herrett Westbrook, (Lilian's father) watering his horses in the 1920s at Sylvesters, the first farm his family occupied. The pond only had a soft bottom, so the horses would be brought to the water's edge with a halter round their necks to prevent them from entering the pond and becoming stuck in the mud. On one occasion a young horse did take the plunge and Lilian remembers how everyone, farm hands and neighbours, rushed to push at it with poles. "The poor beast must have been bewildered", she writes, "and then a mighty push and a plunge and out he scrambled covered in black slimy mud."

By the 1960s this pond had disappeared completely, like so many of the ponds that used to exist in the village.

If one looks at the Tithe Map of Froyle one will see that in 1847 there were no less than 17 ponds in Froyle. In 2000 there are just two; one in Upper Froyle in what was part of Froyle Park, and the other in Lower Froyle at the corner of Husseys Lane, which as long as anyone can remember has been 'The Village Pond'.



Lilian Smither remembers

“About the year 1895 my grandfather, William Westbrook, decided it was time that a long outstanding debt was settled, so he took the law into his own hands. Very early one morning he harnessed two of his horses to a farm wagon and, accompanied by one of his carters, set forth. The distance was about fifteen miles to a farm in a village of the neighbouring county. The money not being forthcoming, he thereupon collected goods to the value of the amount owing and commenced the long trek back home, and so the debt was satisfactorily settled.

When it grew dusk my grandmother, then well over 70 years of age, became uneasy as grandfather had not returned. Lighting a hurricane lantern she and her son went through the village to the main road. This village road was very narrow, very rough, in many places trees met overhead and even in the day time it was dark and gloomy. At night the darkness was such that it could be felt and one could pass other travellers on the road without seeing them; only their footsteps could be heard. They could hear the horses’ hooves upon the road and the rattle of the wagon. One can imagine the shouting and the “Wooa Wooa,” as the swinging of the lantern would be a sign that someone was waiting for them. Then with grandmother and her lantern in front they all proceeded through the village street to the home farm.

Among the goods grandfather collected were four sets of horse bells. These were used on special occasions and in 1900, at a ‘Harvest Home’ in the village, grandfather’s four horses and decorated wagon, complete with horse bells, won first prize. The bells were fixed to the horses’ collars and made sweet music as they walked. The bells, no doubt, contributed towards the gaining of the prize. These bells were also used at night to give audible warning of approach as the farm wagons had no lights.

The years passed, grandmother and grandfather died, and an uncle living in the same village acquired the horse bells. They rested in his attic for several years. I paid uncle a visit and he showed me the bells lying on the floor of the attic covered in dust, beside the rotting apples and pears. I admired the old bells but uncle never so much as lifted them from their dusty bed and I had to be content to leave them there. In due course of time uncle died and we of the family said, “What about the horse bells?” After a while we learned that auntie had sent them to a Museum in a nearby town and there they rest to this day.

Grandfather’s method of settling a debt was quite unlawful no doubt, even in those far off days, but he avoided a County Court action and its costs, and one feels that the bells are quite safe in their last resting place. They will not return to a dusty attic nor be sold to a scrap iron dealer.”



These two photographs, taken in 1900, are of the Harvest Home dressed wagon competition, which was an annual event. Below we see the wagon entered by Mr William Westbrook, complete with its team of four horses, which, incidentally, won first prize. Above can be seen a number of entrants in other classes, including two prams and a small cart pulled by a little goat. Today William Westbrook's horse bells can be seen at the Curtis Museum in Alton





Frank Pinnells, George Cox, Dick Beckhurst, Jack Day and Gyp in the yard of Rock House Farm

Frank (Chink) Pinnells at Sylrock Farm stables with Toby in 1939. Frank worked for the Westbrook family for over 40 years

Bill Elstow remembers that Frank Pinnells worked three shire horses at the Westbrook farm. “Whether ploughing or binding when lunch time came he would unharness the horses and ride them back to the farm for lunch. How I yearned to be given a ride on them but never had the nerve to ask and so never did.”





Saddling the horses at Rock House Farm

The farmyard and stables of Rock House Farm





Harvest time at Froyle in the 1930s





Steam power on the farm at Froyle in the 1930s



A much loved Froyle farmer of the last century was Ena Westbrook and her sister Lilian wrote this about her in 1982.

Ena Westbrook

“I must begin at the beginning, even before she was born. Her birth occurred two months after our only brother died. One can imagine the hope that the new baby would be a boy, to replace, in some measure, the little lad of seven years, who died the previous February.

The baby arrived at Sylvesters Farm, Lower Froyle, on April 20th, 1906, a girl, and was christened ‘Ena’. Why ‘Ena’? ask my grandchildren. Princess Ena, the great granddaughter of Queen Victoria was married on that day to King Alfonso of Spain. Great interest was obviously taken by my family in the Royal Family at that time.

The Westbrook family came from a long line of farmers. The name occurs in the Froyle Church Registers in the 16th century, and always they were farmers and later hop growers; hence the great desire for a boy. Ena was the youngest child in a family of four daughters.

Ena, with her sisters, attended the Froyle Village School; at the age of 12 she cycled with her sister Grace to Eggars Grammar School, at Alton. She often recalls the pleasure she obtained from riding a bicycle. The distance from our home to the Grammar School was four miles, and the road through the village was rough and stony. These two young girls cycled in all weather, wet or dry. Two or three other Froyle children also cycled with them. Ena found the academic side of life at the school most interesting and she enjoyed every minute of it and certainly did her best in work and play, particularly netball.

It was taken for granted that she remained at home with mother and father to help in any capacity at the farm, indoors or outdoors, as required. She spent many hours with the poultry and watching mother make butter, and kill and prepare poultry for the oven for various customers.

She became fond of the horses, both the trap horses and cart horses. Father died in 1936 at Rock House Farm, Lower Froyle, but fortunately he bought Ena a car in 1934 and she learnt to drive. Father never did, he preferred to drive a horse in the trap and wagonette, with the entire family, going to market or visiting relations and friends. How slow the pace was in those days.

Mother continued to farm with Ena’s help after father’s death and built the house ‘Sylrock’, where Ena and her sister Grace still live. Because we were all girls we did not inherit the Westbrook property after father’s death. Grandfather’s will directed this and the property passed to our male cousin.

Ena loved the outdoor life and continued to farm after mother’s death, in

1943, with the same carter and cowman (Jack Day). Fortunately her health was very good and from about 1930 onwards she has not had a holiday. She organised the hay making and harvesting in due season, year after year; turning the hay with a two pronged long handled fork and putting the corn in stooks. She worked long hours, all the hours of day light. Farming was her first love but she was also very interested in the two Churches in the village, St Joseph's at Lower Froyle and St Mary's at Upper Froyle.

She made butter, reared poultry, killed and plucked them, just like Mother did in her day. When the cowman became too old to milk the cows, she did this job also, by hand of course, no milking machine for Ena.

The next thing she tackled was a tractor, as shown in the photograph below. Now at the age of 76, she rears poultry and looks after other people's horses, when necessary, in the meadow adjoining the house.

So the baby girl, who should have been a baby boy, was certainly the next best thing!"



Ena Westbrooke passed away in 1986 at the age of 80. Her sister Grace died in 1989, closing the Westbrooke chapter in the history of Froyle.



Henry Brownjohn

In 1937 Lilian Smither's cousin, Henry Brownjohn, and his family, took over Rock House Farm and his two daughters Kath and Marj worked alongside their father. Marj can see herself now sitting up on the binder and taking the reins of the three horses, while her father sat beside her with the whip ready to 'gee' the horses up. "They really needed that when we were working in Upper Cullum, (the old name for the field above the quarry in Well Lane). It was hard work for them in that particular field because of the slope of the land", she told me.

Marj and her sister were kept very busy milking the cows on the farm. An average day for the two girls started at 6.00am with milking, followed by bottling. They then delivered the milk by pony and float and a trade bike to Lower Froyle and the nearby village of Bentley. As well as helping with many chores on the farm, they also assisted their mother in the house as she took in paying guests.

It's perhaps difficult for us to imagine a time when milk was collected in cans, still warm from the cows! But right up until the 1950s people in Froyle collected their milk this way from various farms in the village and horsedrawn milk floats were a familiar sight. When the lanes were much quieter there was a pleasant stir of activity after the afternoon milking, when women with cans and jugs would greet each other in passing. In the 16th century a gallon of milk could be bought for 1½d and for many, many, years fresh butter and cream could be bought at any farm. Ann Hill, who lived at Elm Croft, used to have to walk up Husseys Lane every day to fetch two pints of milk from Mrs Morse - do you remember, we met her earlier at the Brewery! She apparently also kept cows and sold milk to villagers in the area around Husseys Lane. Ann also remembers the fact that Mrs Morse used to smoke a clay pipe!

Kath and Marj Brownjohn in the spring of 1942 taking a well earned break after milking



Marj Brownjohn with the pony and float





*Roy Andrew with his sister
Joan in the early 1940s*

In Upper Froyle the Andrew family had farmed since 1925, but this article from the Petersfield Post of August 17th, 1994, is indicative of the changing face of the village.

“Farewell to a Farming Era

Three generations and 82 years of family farming come to an end next month.....

The Andrew family have been tenant farmers at Froyle since 1912, when Roy’s grandfather and family moved from their farm in Thame, Oxfordshire to Hodges Farm, Lower Froyle. All livestock and equipment was brought by road, using horses for transport.

In 1925 the family moved to Blundens Farm, Upper Froyle, where Roy’s parents moved into Blundens Cottage, where he was born. Grandparents moved into The Chestnuts, where Roy has lived since his marriage in 1955.

Blundens Farm became a mixed farm, growing wheat, oats, barley, lucerne, peas, beans, sainfoin and short leys for hay. The livestock consisted of sheep, dairy cattle, beef cattle, pigs and 1500 chicken. (Roy’s sister, Joan, tells of 999 eggs being collected in one day alone and, try as they might, they could not find that 1,000th egg!)

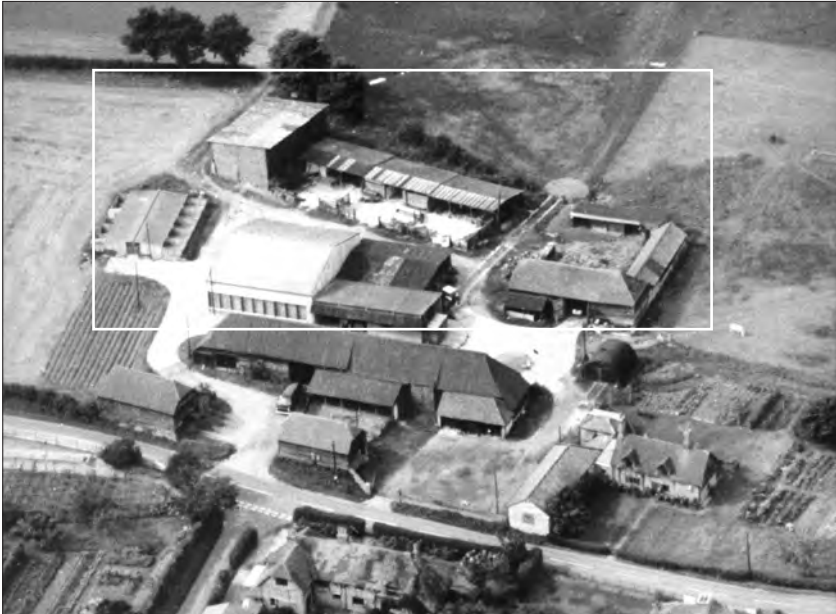
During the Second World War Roy started full time work on the farm which by then was also growing kale, mangles, swedes, potatoes and sugar beet. Each beet was trimmed and loaded into trailers by hand, then taken to Bentley Station and loaded by hand onto the railway wagons.

In 1920 Roy’s father and uncle purchased their first tractor, a second was acquired in 1939, but still much of the farm work was carried out by horses and manpower.

In 1925 there were 11 men working on the farm and during the Second WW 10 men (some of whom were Italian and German prisoners of war) with one land girl.

In contrast Roy has, for the past 7 years, run the now all-cereal farm on his own with the help of one man during the summer months.”

In 2000 all the large barns highlighted in the photograph below have disappeared. In their place is a ‘modern day Manor House’.



Over the past few pages we have seen several working horses and they, of course, all needed the services of a blacksmith. So, here in Froyle, as in other rural communities, we find, not just one but several blacksmiths.

In Upper Froyle there was a forge, built by Sir Hubert Miller at the turn of the century, which was certainly in operation within living memory. But before that the censuses tell us that there was a “Blacksmiths Shop with Cottages at back” in Upper Froyle Street. It has been suggested that this was at Park Edge, as part of the old Heath’s Farm, but I wonder whether it might not have been at Blundens Farm Cottage, seen in the bottom right of the photograph above. Bob Adams, who worked in the blacksmiths all his life, told Joan Andrew, who lives in Blundens Farm Cottage, that he lived in her house. The Census of 1871 tells us that he lived at the Blacksmiths Shop!

Bill Elstow remembers the Upper Froyle smithy, built by Sir Hubert Miller, as if it was yesterday.

“Jack Morris was the village blacksmith and many is the hour I used to stand in the doorway watching him work, both shoeing horses, making shoes and mending bits of farm machinery. The smithy was a mixture of smells... burning hoof, quenching steel and the smell of the forge. And the noise of the hammer on the anvil was characteristic too. With each strike he would let the hammer bounce to give ‘clang, tink, tink’. And in between the anvil noises the wheeze of the bellows to bring the coke up to white heat to redden up the bits of iron laying in it.” Mr Morris retired in the early 1950s and in 2000 the forge is a timber yard.

In Lower Froyle there was a blacksmith at the north end of the village, opposite Rock House Farm, but certainly not within living memory.

The other main blacksmith’s shop in the village was also in Lower Froyle, near the pond in Husseys Lane. In the 19th century it was a wheelwrights and blacksmiths, run by Mr Faulkner. Of course, he didn’t just deal with the horses and carts. An invoice, dated 1894, shows us the kind of jobs he carried out; “soldering a teapot, 3d; ringing two pigs, 6d; soldering two tin cans, 4d.”

Children from Mayfield School in Alton visit the forge in Upper Froyle. Jack Morris, the blacksmith, can be seen standing to the left of the door with, on his right, Bob Adams with cap





The village pond on the corner of Husseys Lane at the turn of the last century. Carts would be driven into it, and allowed to stand for some hours, to fully soak the wooden wheels which would swell and make the iron tyres fit tightly onto them

Mr Faulkner also stamped hop bags, and Edwin Stacey, who worked at the forges in both Upper and Lower Froyle, told the compilers of the Froyle W.I.Scrapbook, in 1952, that during the hopping season, it was not unknown for him to work from 2.30am until 8pm. Mr Stacey and his wife had been married in St Mary's Church in 1905 and lived in Froyle all their married life.

In the 1930s the blacksmith was Mr Stent or 'Spriggy' as he was known. Sheila Gordon, née Hill, told me about his association with her father, E.R.Hill, who was the local builder and undertaker. "My father was a qualified wheelwright, but when it came to making wheels, he also had a carpenter and joiner, Charlie Chappell, in the yard. When it came to putting iron bands on the cart wheels, these were made by the blacksmith, 'Spriggy' Stent, who also worked in the yard. They worked together to put the bands on. Mr Stent shod the horses. He was a very busy man."

Mr Hill stamped the hop bags for Mr Mann at nearby Coldrey and continued to do this well into the 1960s. This was still carried out with the traditional wooden stencil, each one painted and applied by hand, with a certain amount of effort.



Ann Brownjohn who started her bakery business around 1841



Brownjohn's Stores in 1902, looking more like a scene out of the Wild West

The stores in about 1907. Walter Brownjohn stands at the door of the shop, while his brother Alfred is standing with his three children. On the right are 'Doughy' Lawrence with his horse 'Rufus', 'Bob' and cart. Note the gate across the entrance to the shop area



Brownjohn's Stores

We can trace the complete history of Froyle Stores, or Brownjohn's Stores as it was known for years, from its beginning in 1841 until it ceased to be a grocer's store in 1989. Since then it has been home to two interior design shops and, in 2000, is an art gallery. But it began its life as a bakers, run by a young widow with five children, the youngest of them just one year old.

Ann Sutton had married John Brownjohn in 1828 and they had settled at Froyle Mill. Sadly John passed away in 1840 and Ann sold up, purchasing the property at Lower Froyle and setting up her baker's business. By 1851 the census shows us that she was employing two bakers and a roundsman.

Ann died in 1871, but by this time Thomas, her son, had taken over the business. He married Caroline Vardell in 1860 and the couple had ten children, eight of whom survived. The eldest of these, Walter Brownjohn, took over the running of the shop on the death of his father in 1892.

For over half a century Walter and his younger brother Alfred worked alongside each other, serving the community. They sold everything imaginable; sweets, especial lemon sherberts, hardware, soap, paraffin, patent medicines, coal in the yard, and home baked bread, to name but a few. The store was also a sub-post office.

There is a lovely tale that has been handed down about postage stamps. Before the Second World War, Lady Baden-Powell, who lived at Pax Hill in nearby Bentley, was seen laughing to herself as she left the store. When asked what was so amusing she replied that she had purchased thirteen stamps, but had only paid for twelve. When she had asked why, Mrs Brownjohn had pointed out that when someone bought twelve stamps she always gave them one extra - a real baker's dozen!

The Brownjohns sold their store in 1946 to Messrs Wheatley of Bentley and the local newspaper ran this story, "Mr W.L. Brownjohn handed over the reins of office on Monday after completing fifty four and a half years service at Lower Froyle. He was appointed sub-postmaster on May 1st 1892, in succession to his father, who had held the appointment for a number of years. Mr Brownjohn's connection with the Post Office actually extended over 70 years and goes back to his schooldays, when he performed a delivery of letters in the village before attending school. He has carried on a grocery business as well as the Post Office and in addition has been Parish Clerk for over 51 years. As an appreciation of his services, he was recently presented with a pair of silver candlesticks by the parishioners."

(The presentation was actually given when he retired as Parish Clerk after 52 years)



Alfred and Kate Brownjohn with their sons, Charles, Thomas, and Harold

Harold Brownjohn, seen above on the right of this family group, remembers Brownjohn's Stores just prior to the First World War.

"The staff consisted of Walter, Alfred (Harold's father) and Edith Brownjohn. Lawrence was the head baker and Green the assistant with two roundsmen and a stable man to attend three to four horses and outside operations. There was one covered van plus two carts which went out daily covering rounds in Froyle, Bentley, Binsted and adjoining hamlets taking bread, cakes, groceries etc. generally ordered in advance.

In the shop Walter, Alfred and Edith did the serving, covering the sub-Post Office and groceries on one counter. Bacon, butter and bread etc. was on a rear counter whilst the third counter dealt with household goods - shoes and materials, crockery and glass and haberdashery etc. In the storeroom was meal and grain as well as feed for poultry, pigs and domestic animals, also a separate section for wood and paraffin etc. In the yard coal and coke was on sale and in the orchard behind the hop kilns pigs were reared for slaughtering and a special building used for curing bacon by smoking oak wood.

Good Friday was a hectic period as Hot Cross Buns and Lardies were specially made overnight and delivered round for Friday breakfast tables. The hop picking period caused extra work as bread, cakes and sweets were taken to the hop fields and camps. The business also covered the catering for the annual flower shows

and school and Christmas parties using their own trestle tables, crockery etc.

In fact the shop in the period 1900-1945 was the centre of the community and I remember many times when someone would knock quite late in the evening asking for a loaf or cheese to make sandwiches for the following day's lunch. On one or two occasions Alfred was knocked up in the middle of the night as he had a cycle, to alert the doctor or district nurse in Bentley of an emergency."



Alfred and Kate Brownjohn in 1932



Mrs Holland's Shop

Also in Lower Froyle was the confectioners and tobacconist shop run by Mrs Holland. It was situated at the bottom of Husseys Lane, opposite the pond, in a property now known as Bridge House. In the photograph above, taken in the 1930s, the shop can be seen on the right of the picture. It is probably Monday as Mrs Holland has a fine line of washing fluttering in the breeze. Note the state of the roads - they remained this way until the 1940s.



Mrs Holland outside her shop in the 1930s. The young lad on the left is Rob Stilling

The house itself was built in 1712, or so says a plaque set high in the wall facing the pond. Also on this plaque is a simple inscription of a boot, along with the initials K.E.L., so one might imagine that this particular building might have been a shoemaker's shop back at the beginning of the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the twenty first century it is a private house.

But back to Mrs Holland. She ran the shop in the 1930s and sold sweets and tobacco etc. Her daughter, Dora, has this to say about the shop, "It had iron railings outside, also a verandah with a galvanised roof, which allowed Mother to display fruit and odds and ends, basically it was a little general shop. We entered the shop from a living room. There were fixtures and drawers on one side, a narrow gangway, but a fairly big counter to serve and display. Thinking back of course, most people smoked, so that was a lively trade; woodbines, 2d a packet of five cigarettes; there were many cheap brands and tobacco for pipes and rolling one's own. Mr Jones was a friend and tobacconist from Alton who supplied Mother.

Unfortunately, she had very little time to herself in the evenings as people were always coming to the side door for things they had run out of, usually cigarettes!"

Francis Milne can remember buying toys there on his sixth birthday. That memory has stayed with him for sixty four years, so it must be a very special one!

E.R.Vivian, Butcher

Just down the road from Mrs Holland's was Mr Vivian's butcher's shop. Indeed, Mr Vivian had begun his butcher's trade in the shop on the corner of Husseys Lane which was to become Mrs Holland's. This new shop, pictured below, was built for Mr Vivian by Mr E.R.Hill, the local builder (and undertaker) in the late 1920s. Bill Elstow, who, incidentally, married Mr Vivian's daughter, Pam, passes on one of his father-in-law's famous sausage recipes of the 1930s.

5lbs lean white pork
4lbs of fat
1lb breadcrumbs
6 new laid eggs
1 pint of cream
2½oz of seasoning

The seasoning consisted of ½oz of each of dry marjoram, thyme, rosemary, mace, black pepper, ground together to a fine powder with 8oz salt.

As Bill adds, "You don't have to go and buy sausages like this - they come and knock on the door by themselves!"





There are two more shops I would like to mention. The first is the old Post Office in Upper Froyle, photographed above in about 1908. Now a private house, this was a Post Office until as late as 1989. But at the end of the eighteenth century it was a carpenter's shop with a saw pit in the front.

It was the home of Gerald Robinson and he helped his father, Thomas, in the saw pit until he was twelve years old. But, according to Gerald's son, Reg, he got so fed up with his father saying, "Clear out the sawdust, boy! I'm going down the pub", that he left home and went to work for Sir Hubert Miller as a gardener. You may remember a photograph of him in Chapter One. In time he became Head Gardener for Sir Hubert at The Shrubbery.

As well as being a carpenter's shop, the building was also the Upper Froyle Post Office and stamps etc. were sold from a tiny window at the side of the front door of the house. You can just about make it out in the centre of the photograph, to the right of the large round bush. It's interesting to note that in 1891 there were two posts on week days and Saturdays and one on Sunday!

This wasn't always the Post Office in Upper Froyle. Until at least 1861 the Post Office was part of the butcher's shop. 'A butchers? In Upper Froyle?', I hear you say! Sadly, not only is the shop no longer there, but neither is the building, although a few of the sheds can still be seen. They stand behind The Chestnuts, a house which was built almost directly in front of an earlier building known as 'Jointure House'.

A Jointure House was similar to a Dower House; that is to say, a house built for a widow for the period in which she survives her husband.

Unfortunately, we know nothing about this house, apart from the fact that it was there in 1672.

The butcher was John Simpson, the brother of James, who we have already met at Blundens Farm. The Simpsons were butchers from at least 1841, until at least 1891, and the family lived here until 1926, when the present Chestnuts was taken over by William Edward Andrew. The Chestnuts must, therefore, have been built during the tenancy of the Simpsons.

John was a very keen cricketer and we have a letter written by him to his sister, Rebecca, in 1832. In it he tells her, "I am beginning to feel myself at home. I don't know how I shall feel when I return for we are at Cricket every day and I fancy myself respected by them all. We have Gentlemen come for twenty miles round to play with and against us." He was writing from Cirencester and told her he was moving on to Oxford, but would not be home for about six weeks. He also remarks that he wished he had been playing for his friends in Froyle. Could it be that John was a semi-professional cricketer? He would have been 21 years old at the time. Anything is possible!



Besides these 'proper' shops, ones which we would recognise today, there were several other shops in the village, that could hardly be called 'shops' at all; they were often just the corner of someone's front room. In Upper Froyle, Mr Hall had a shoemaker's shop at Combefield, while in Lower Froyle, the 1861 Census informs us that James Lunn ran the "Lower Froyle Grocer's Shop" in one of the three Chapel Cottages, adjoining the Methodist Chapel. This photograph of them was taken some time later, in about 1905. Today the three cottages have been modernised and made into two.

At Warren Cottage we find Harriett Finden with her grocer's shop and post office. This must have been where letters were delivered before Brownjohn's Stores became a sub-post office. There were also several shoemakers, including William Ellis near the Prince of Wales public house.

At Leecot, just below Sylvesters, there was a grocer's shop in the 19th century, run by an Edwin Warren. During the Second World War the owners, Mr & Mrs Lee, let the small shop attached to it to Ted Wallace, an electrician by trade, who used it to charge up accumulators for radios.

If you were not working in the fields, or in a shop, then you would probably be in service. Many girls would go straight from school at quite a tender age to take up a post in 'the big house'.

In 1851 the servants at Froyle Place were:- Ann Thurkettle, cook & housekeeper, from Norfolk; Harriott Grimwood, nurse, also from Norfolk; Elizabeth Stroud, laundrymaid, from Dorset; Sarah Burt, housemaid, from Wilts; Esther Faulkner, housemaid, from Bentley; Mary Smith, kitchen maid, from Binsted; Charlotte Stacey, dairy maid, from South Warnborough; Harriott Hankin, laundry maid, from Bentley; Sarah Walker, scullery maid, from Froyle; James Mancey, gardener, from Winchfield; James Lock, footman, from South Warnborough; and Richard Kemp, footman, from Froyle.

Mr Herson, proud to drive the very first car in Froyle.

He worked as chauffeur to Mrs Lindsay, who lived at Highway House, Lower Froyle

