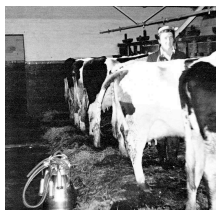


Dairy Farming in the Village

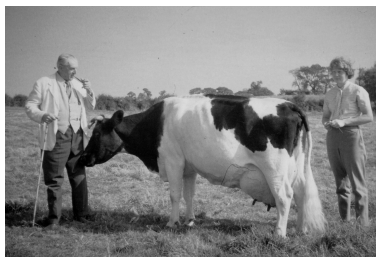
Dairy farming was once the mainstay of the parish's economy and there were around twenty smallholdings and farms in the village with milking cows. Originally many farmers took their milk to railway stations for transportation elsewhere, though some was sold in the village on a local milk round (see picture).



Smallholders with just a few cows would milk them by hand but in the 1950s the larger farms began to introduce vacuum milking machines. This photo shows the milking shed at Marston Fields in the 1960s. Churns of milk would now be collected by a lorry and taken to places such as Nestles factory in Aylesbury.



Eight dairy herds predominated in the second half of the twentieth century. Three pedigree Friesian herds at Hill Farm, Manor Farm (St John's Lane) and Stevens Farm won prestigious awards both locally and nationally. The Horwood Herd at Stevens Farm, founded by Bill Hall and later managed by his daughter Cynthia (see right), became famous world-wide.



Whilst the big herds were expanding, the smallholders gradually stopped milking. One main reason for this was the introduction of the bulk tank which was impractical and uneconomical for just a few cows. Churn collections stopped. Larger farms had new parlours built (see left at Church Hill Farm).



Owners of the larger herds gave up milking during the latter half of the 20th century. Dairy farming was gradually becoming more unprofitable. The first sales at Marston Fields and Manor Farm (High Street) took place in 1975. More herds went during the 1980s, and in 1999 the famous Horwood Herd was sold. This left just one milking herd at Manor Farm (St John's Lane) until that, too, was sold in 2000.

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This resulted in many of the parlours and barns being converted to residential use. Work began on Glebe Farm (left) in the late 1980s. It seems unlikely that milking herds will ever be seen in North Marston again.