

Agriculture and Common Fields

The landscape in 1753-1799 was very different from today. Little land had been enclosed to form fields delineated by hedges, and the landscape was dominated by the open or common fields, divided into strips, which survived from the middle ages. Instead of being consolidated, farmers' strips tended to be dispersed across the common fields. Hence farm houses were to be found in the town rather than surrounded by their own land. The enclosure process in Deddington did not occur until the implementation of the Deddington enclosure award granted in 1808.⁽¹⁾

Farms were usually identified by reference to their present owner or tenant, although Leaden Porch Farm (part of the Windsor Manor), with 6 Yard Lands in the Common Fields, is identified by name in an advertisement to let the farm on 10 May 1783.

In consequence of the perpetuation of the common field system in the Parish, auction particulars include some unfamiliar units of measurement as illustrated below.

'Yard Land': Generally 30 acres, being one quarter of a Hide, which was a variable measure depending on the terrain and quality of the soil. A Hide was generally 120 acres.

'Ridge': Another name for a 'Selion', a cultivated strip in an open field. It was ploughed in such a manner that the strip became a ridge with furrows on either side acting as drains.

'Thirdengale': Seems to have been a local unit of measurement. No definition found, but less than a Yard Land. (Cf. 2 Farthingdales corresponded to 1 Oxgang, another variable measure according to the quality of soil, normally considered to be one-eighth of a Hide, say 15 acres.)

'Ley' = grassland.

30 August 1777

Auction, at the King's Arms, Deddington, of a farm house in Hempton, and 2 Yard Lands and a thirdengale in the Common Fields of Hempton. Leased from New College.

TO be SOLD by AUCTION,
by JOHN CHURCHILL,

¹ The Parochial Report on Deddington dated July 1795 in *'The State of the Poor'* by Sir Frederick Eden, 1797, p. 591, notes that the high poor rates in the parish were ascribed to the continuation of the common field system and the consequent lack of consolidation of farms.

<http://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/thepoorindeddington/thestateofthepoor-1797>

On Saturday the 27th Day of September, 1777, at the King's-Arms Inn, in Deddington, Oxfordfhire, between the Hours of Three and Six in the Afternoon, unles before difpofed of by private Contract, of which Notice will be given in this Paper. - A FARM HOUSE, with all proper Conveniences, in HEMPTON, within the Parifh of Deddington aforefaid; together with two Yard Lands and a Thirdengale, in the Open and Common Fields of Hempton, now in the Occupation of Jofeph Tims.

The above Premiffes are held by Leafe for 21 Years under New-College, in Oxford, renewable every feaven Years.

[Also two dwelling-houfes in Middle Barton.]

For further Particulars, and to treat by private Contract, apply to Mr. Churchill, Attorney-at-Law, in Deddington.

Repeated 6 September and 13 September 1777.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000073/17770830/003/0002>

10 May 1783

Advertisement for letting Leaden Porch Farm, including 6 Yard Lands in the Common Fields of Deddington, and the great and small Tithes arising.

A FARM to LETT.

To be LETT, and Entered upon immediately, - A FARM in Deddington, Oxfordfhire, called the Leaden Porch Farm; confifting of a good Farm Houfe with all proper Conveniences, fix Yard-Lands in the Fields of Deddington, and inclofed Meadow, containing about 10 Acres and an Half; the great and small Tythes arifing in the Town and Fields of Deddington, called the Hempton Side.

Enquire of the Rev. Mr. Marfhall, of Great Hafely, Oxfordfhire; or of Mr. Churchill, attorney, Deddington.

Repeated 17 May 1783.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000073/17830510/006/0001>

15 March 1794

Auction, at the King's Arms, Deddington, of 17 Ridges of arable and 3 Leys of pasture in the Common Fields of Deddington and Hempton.

TO be SOLD by AUCTION,

By JOHN CHURCHILL and SON,

On Saturday the 29th Day of March Instant, 1794, at the KING'S ARMS INN, in Deddington, between the Hours of Three and Six in the Afternoon, - Seventeen RIDGES of FREEHOLD ARABLE LAND, and three LEYS of PASTURE GROUND, dispersed in the Open and Common Fields of Deddington and Hempton in the County of Oxford. - For Particulars enquire of Mr. Churchill, Attorney at Law, Deddington.

Repeated 22 March 1794.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000073/17940315/005/0002>

Other references may be accessed by word searching the Index or the Compendium.