

Grange Farm

by Jean Morrison

First published by Bratton History Association in 1993 and edited for the website in 2015

Grange Farm stands on the corner of the western end of Lower Road and the road to Steeple Ashton, opposite the Court House. Grange Farm is not its original name. Sales notices in 1939 referred to it as Bratton Farm, but earlier it was known as Ballards Home Living. It is now a listed building, described thus:

C18 [18th cent]. 2-storey. Colour-washed brick. Moulded stone string at 1st floor level. Moulded stone eaves cornice. Old tiled roof. 5 windows on 1st floor, 4 windows and central 9-panel door in moulded stone architrave surround with flat stone hood on carved brackets over, lining through with stone string. All windows have flat stone surround with moulded bead edging. Later extension to right hand with dentil brick string at 1st floor. 1 window on 1st floor 2 windows on ground floor. Outbuildings mainly modern. Garden wall to road early C19 brick.

In the Middle Ages, especially after the Black Death of 1349, much of Bratton and the surrounding land was acquired cheaply by Edington Priory, as we have noted in connection with the Court House. So the forerunner of Grange Farm belonged to the Priory until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1540s.

The first mention we have of the Ballard family is in a manor court record of 1522, when Richard Ballard of Bratton was charged with allowing his pigs to trespass on his neighbours' lands and was fined. Only a year later, he is mentioned in connection with his duties as collector of the lay subsidy – a sort of poll tax. As one of the chief farmers of the village, he had to collect the tax from the inhabitants of Bratton and Milbome and pass the money on to the sheriff for onward transmission to the King.

We next hear of Richard Ballard in the 1540s when he and James Welch complained that Westbury people had impounded their livestock from pastures in the then marshy grounds on the north side of the Westbury road towards Dunge, which they traditionally used. The seizure occurred because they paid their taxes in Bratton rather than Westbury where, it was claimed, they owed payment for the pasture in question. This dispute, which was basically about the competing jurisdictions of Bratton and Westbury manors, was typical of the confusion in such matters which arose after the dissolution of the monasteries and the disposal of their lands to private landowners. Bratton's quarrel with Westbury was referred to the Court of Augmentations in London, which Henry VIII set up to settle such disputes, but we do not know how the matter was decided. *[This paragraph has been changed due to improved understanding of the issues involved – Ed.]*

Grange Farm remained with the Ballards through several generations. A document in the archives at Longleat says that Henry Ballard held Ballards Home Living by copy of court roll dating from the reign of Charles I, under the lord of the manor at that time, William Bromwich. The manor was purchased by James

Thynne of Longleat in 1669, and in 1682 a new survey of the whole estate was made, in which Henry Ballard's age was given as 70. This makes it possible to identify him in the parish register as the son of Roger Ballard, baptised on 11 August 1611. In 1683, perhaps because of Henry's advanced years and dwindling capacities, a new copyhold was granted to his son William and grandson Philip. William Ballard was a very successful farmer, who built himself a retirement home on a piece of land in Lower Road called Winters, the house later known as Fir Trees. He retired to this house in the late 1690s, leaving his son Philip to carry on the farm. Philip too had a good business head, and his accounts from 1703 to 1710 still exist. He was ambitious, and in 1715 began to build Bratton House, a typical early 18th-century gentleman's residence. It is interesting to note that the alternation of red and black brickwork, which makes an attractive pattern on the front of Winters, was repeated in the construction of Bratton House, though it was later hidden under plaster rendering. Philip died in 1723, leaving estates in Bratton, Imber, West Ashton and Upton Scudamore to be divided among his sons, whose names John, John Aldridge and Jonathan are very confusing for historians.

After Philip's death an inventory was made, dated 18 March 1723, which gives us an interesting picture of the extent of the farmhouse and its contents.

[The present editor has added a glossary of some of the less guessable and unusual words at the end of the article. The sums are in pounds, shillings and pence, 20 shillings to the pound, 12 pence to the shilling. Beyond this extract, the inventory goes on to list his extensive farming stock, and various items in 'the new house' that he was building.]

Imprimis [firstly] In the Kitchen and Bakehouse

One Settell one Cuberd two Chairs one Dough trow two rences a twicrook one trendle and binch one furnace and boyler with Grates one meshing Tub three kevers one brass budget pot one pump one Cheese press a trencher Racke three pails with other lumber	3 14 0
---	------------------

Item In the Milkhouse

One table board one silt three Whay kevers two powdering tubbs one little Tubb a pair of Milk tankards a tray two wooden platters and an old Chest	1 7 6
Eighteen Cheese Vatts five milk panns with other earthen Vessel	0 6 0
Two weighbeams and Scales with weights and a search	0 2 0

Item In the cheese loft

About eight hundred of Cheese and two old Cheese racks	6 10 0
--	------------------

Item In the Hall

Two table boards ten leather Chairs two joinechairs four other old Chairs	2 5 0
One pendelem Clock & Case	3 10 0
One Jack and four Spitts	0 10 0
Five pair of Tongs four fire Shovels and two pair andierons	1 0 0
A Warming pan four brass Candlesticks a Copper a Coffee pot a spice mortar & a pessel and a pepper box	0 10 0
Two steeling boxes and clamps three steeling irons four iron Candlesticks a Chopping knife and Clever	0 8 0

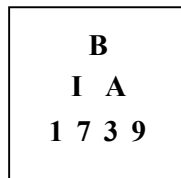
One pair of bellows a Candle box and salt box and nine pictures	0	3	[]
A small looking Glass and six old cushions	0	2	[]
Eleven sides of bacon	4	[]	[]
<i>figures torn away here</i>			
[Item] <u>In the pantry</u>			
Three bell mettall potts two brass potts six brass kittles three brass skillets three brass ladels two skimmers a little brass pott and a brass fender	2	10	0
Twenty three pewter dishes great and small twenty four pewter plates one pewter salver one pewter Cheese plate one pewter Chamber pott a pewter Tankard & four porringers	2	10	0
Four latten pye pans a culleinder a dripping pan six patty pans a saucepan	0	2	6
One Iron dripping pan	0	1	0
One table board two Joinstools two Curtains for the Window with some earthenware	0	6	0
Item <u>In the Buttery</u>			
Sixteen Barrells great and small	1	10	0
Item <u>In the Parlour</u>			
Two table boards thirteen Joinstools and two side Cupboards	1	10	0
One Cabbinet	1	0	0
A small looking glass & a dressing box a little truncke	0	3	0
Item <u>In the best Chamber</u>			
One feather Bed and Bedstead two bolsters five pillows three Quilts one Rugg one blankett curtains & curtain rods	5	0	0
Two table boards two Stands two Chests of Drawers 13 Cane Chairs two stools	5	0	0
A Looking Glass	1	0	0
A Brass fire shovel & Tongs three pair of Brass fire Dogs a pair of bellows	2	0	0
The Clavy furniture some Cheyney & earthen ware	0	5	[]
Wearing Apparell both Linnen and Woollen & money in Pockett	25	0	0
The Linnen three sky lights three pair of pillowbies two pair of Sheets two table cloaths a bolster Case one cuboard Cloth six Window Curtains a night bag	5	0	0
In plate one Tankard one Cupp and eight spoons	10	0	0
Item <u>In the Little Chamber</u>			
A Flock bed two blanketts two bolsters one Sheete one Rug Curtains and fallons and bedstead	3	0	0
One Chest of Drawers one Chest one Coffe and one Chair	1	0	0
Item <u>In the middle Chamber</u>			
Two flock beds three bolsters four blanketts two rugs two Bedsteads curtains and fallons an old Chest	4	0	0
Item <u>In the Inner Chamber</u>			
One feather bed & a flock bed three bolsters five pillows three blanketts one coverlid one Rug two Bedsteads one set of Curtains & fallons	4	0	0
One press one Chest one Coffe one trunck one leather Chair and a little Stool	2	0	0

Bed Linnen and table Linnen six pair of Sheets six pair of pillowies			
one bolster Case three damask table cloaths twelve damask table			
napkins one diaper table Cloath twelve diaper napkins six ordinary			
bolster Cases six ordinary napkins	6	0	0

This inventory reveals a very comfortably furnished four-bedroomed farmhouse, with good-sized rooms, at least three of which can seat over a dozen people. It is interesting to note amongst the furniture three chests of drawers. For centuries blankets, sheets and curtains were kept in large chests. It was only gradually that the notion of constructing drawers to keep items separate caught on – first chests were built with two drawers underneath, but it was only in the late 17th century that chests of drawers as we understand them were developed. The Ballards with three in their farmhouse were up-to-date and obviously quite well-off. Their home was far superior to the medieval timbered house, parts of which can still be seen incorporated in the rear north wall of the present house. Yet it did not satisfy Philip Ballard, who began to build Bratton House. Nor did it satisfy his son, John Aldridge Ballard. The latter's neighbour Jeffrey Whitaker, who lived at Yew Trees and kept a diary that still exists, refers several times in 1739 to alterations being made to Ballards Home Living:

<i>Thurs. 5 April</i>	Mr Ballard tiling part of his house of the home living
<i>Thurs. 12 April</i>	Mr Ballard digging Cellar at W. end of the House (Note: When I inspected it some 20 years ago, this cellar was in good condition still with a good drain)
<i>Mon. 23 April</i>	The foundation of Mr Ballard's cellar began last week
<i>Thurs. 7 June</i>	Mr Ballard's load of freestone
<i>Thurs. 2 August</i>	Mr Ballard's cornice and upper floor put up

These entries provide the reason for the small stone plaque still legible on the front wall of the house inscribed:



But all his plans came to nought. Little more than sixty years later the family had died out, smallpox and other illnesses having ended all their ambitions.

Some words from the inventory explained:

andirons – supports for fire logs

binch [bench] – can mean a frame of shelves

budget pot – possibly a type of milk can shaped to be carried on the back

cheyney – china

clavy – mantelpiece

diaper – white linen woven in a geometrical pattern

fallon – valence or similar type of hanging

joine[d] chair/stool – one made by joinery

continued >>

latten – alloy similar to brass

night bag – small travelling bag

pillowbie – pillowcase

search and **renge** – types of sieve

skimer [skimmer] – a type of ladle

sky light – in the context of linen goods, not yet identified

steeling box/iron – a type of smoothing iron

trow, trendle, silt, kever, meshing [mashing] and **powdering tubs** – all these are troughs, tubs and vats for various uses such as bread-, butter- or beer-making, or curing/salting meat

twi-crook – double hook for hanging pots over the fire

AJM
