

The Story of the Domesday Project – Tarrant Monkton & Launceston

In 1986, 900 years after William the Conqueror's original Domesday Book, the BBC published the Domesday Project. The project was probably the most ambitious attempt ever to capture the essence of life in the United Kingdom. Over a million people contributed to this digital snapshot of the country. People were asked to record what they thought would be of interest in another 1000 years.

The whole of the UK – including the Channel Islands and Isle of Man – was divided into 23,000 4x3km areas called Domesday Squares or “**D-Blocks**”.

Schools and community groups surveyed over 108,000 square km of the UK and submitted more than 147,819 pages of text articles and 23,225 amateur photos, cataloguing what it was like to live, work and play in their community. This was about documenting everyday life - the ordinary rather than the extraordinary.

In 2011 the BBC published the survey online and for six months invited updates to the photographs and text to celebrate the 25th anniversary. Shortly afterwards the website was added to The National Archives' UK Government Web Archive.

The post code DT11 8RX gives the D-block GB-392000-108000, which can be accessed online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-392000-108000/page/1>

Some excerpts are shown below ...

1986 INTERVIEW WITH RESIDENT

This is Matthew Litten reporting from Launceston Farm in the little Dorset village of Tarrant Launceston. The lady I've interviewed is Mrs Strange who has lived here at the farm for 43 years. She spoke to me from her fruit garden which has strawberries, raspberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries and apples and pears growing in it. I asked her what changes she had seen over the years and she said that it was the traffic which had changed most. Cars zoomed up the narrow country lanes as if it was Brands Hatch. She also said that most of the cottages used to be lived in by farmworkers but now are owned by rich people often retired. Mrs Strange said it was a shame that the village shop at Monkton had closed as she had to shop in Pimperne which was two miles away.

1986 TARRANT MONKTON

The lady we interviewed, Margaret, said that a lot more than the price of houses had changed in the village since she had first come there. The Langton Arms pub had once held over 300 people but now it is much smaller with a restaurant and a skittle alley. This meant that the car park and roads were much busier and a lot of people came to look around the village and drive through the ford, especially in summer. Most of the people in the village now had cars and did their shopping in Blandford. This meant that the village shop and post office had closed down and Margaret had to go into Blandford to collect her pension and do her shopping. She said that she used to know nearly everyone in the village but she doesn't know many now.

1986 A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ...

My name is Tim Mackenzie and I live in Tarrant Launceston and this is how I usually spend my Saturdays. I get up about 9 o'clock being careful not to wake my brother up who sleeps in the same bedroom. I don't have much for breakfast, usually a cup of coffee and then I go 'rookie hunting'. A rookie is a bird scarer, a bit like a firework and they are often lying about the fields I collect as many as I can find and then go home for an early lunch. I have to hang two ponies haynets. We have lots of animals, ducks, hens, goats and dogs. After tea I watch television or I go out in the garden for a game of frisbee throwing with my brother. I usually go to bed at 10pm.

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1986 INTERVIEW WITH RESIDENT

We interviewed an old lady called Margaret who said she first moved into the village 40 years ago. The village was much busier then as it was still wartime and the American Army Camp was just up the road. She remembered 100's of American soldiers queuing up outside the Langton Arms pub waiting for it to open. Margaret remembers the bomb shelter in the pub garden. After the war the soldiers left and the village became quieter with mostly farm workers living in the cottages. There was a little school next to the church but this was later closed down. There was also a village hall where there used to be regular concerts and meetings. Now the village has changed and a lot of outsiders have bought houses and they have become very expensive, up to £100,000.

1986 INTERVIEW WITH RESIDENT

The lady I interviewed was Mrs Mackenzie and she had lived in Tarrant Launceston for 16 years. Mr Mackenzie works 2 miles away for a firm called Taymix which deals in pig food. Mrs Mackenzie has lots of animals around her house, 2 ponies, 10 bantams, 1 goose, 5 goats and a duck. She showed us how she talked to them. She had appeared on the television programme "That's Life" talking to her animals. She said it was a good job she lived in the countryside as she would not be able to have so many animals in the town. Mrs Mackenzie goes shopping once a week in Blandford or Wimborne but she misses the village shop as she is always running out of things. She is glad she lives in Tarrant Launceston and she doesn't think she will ever move.

1986 MANOR FARM TARRANT MONKTON

Manor Farm is on the outskirts of Tarrant Monkton and the farm house was built in the early nineteenth century. The the farmer is Mr Robert Bagwell but the farm is owned by J.C.Bugg. Mr Bagwell is the tenant. The total average is 800 acres. They have 4 full time workers but none part time. The farm is 61 metres above sea level and the average rainfall is 32 inches. The soil is chalky. The farm has 170 acres of winter barley, 280 acres of wheat, 70 acres of spring barley and 80 acres of fodder. There are 200 acres of pasture and some woodlands. They have all sorts of Machinery. There are 3 tractors, a trailer, a combined harvester, a crop sprayer and a two way plough.

1986 TARRANT MONKTON FARM - ANIMALS

Manor Farm has 200 Friesian cows, a Hereford bull and three horses. Mr Bagwell keeps Friesians as they give the most milk but not the most quality. We went on the trailer to see the milking parlour where the cows were milked twice a day by machine, once at 5 am in the morning and again at 3 pm in the afternoon. When the cows go into the milking parlour they stand in the stalls, the milker pulls a lever and food drops into a tray for each cow. Then the milk suckers are put on and they suck the milk out. The milk is collected once a day by a tanker lorry which takes it to Wincanton. When the cows are not much use for milking they are taken to the cattle market in Sturminster Newton and sold.

1986 LOCAL HISTORY OF THE TARRANT

There must have been a lot of people living in this area in Prehistoric Times Judging by the numbers of barrows in our block. A lot have been ploughed up but these burial places are still everywhere. When the Romans came to the Tarrants they built a road which ran from the NE of Tarrant Hinton straight past Tarrant Launceston and Monkton and onto Badbury Rings. It is not hard to imagine farm carts loaded with corn, officials in their litters and soldiers all using this important road. The Tarrant villages are mentioned in Domesday Book and you can still see the field patterns used in the Middle Ages. From the seventeenth century onwards there has always been an army camp in the SW corner of the block.