

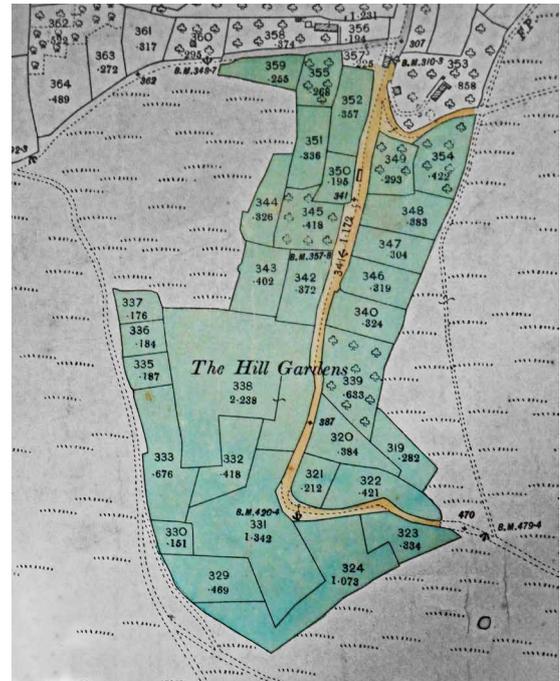
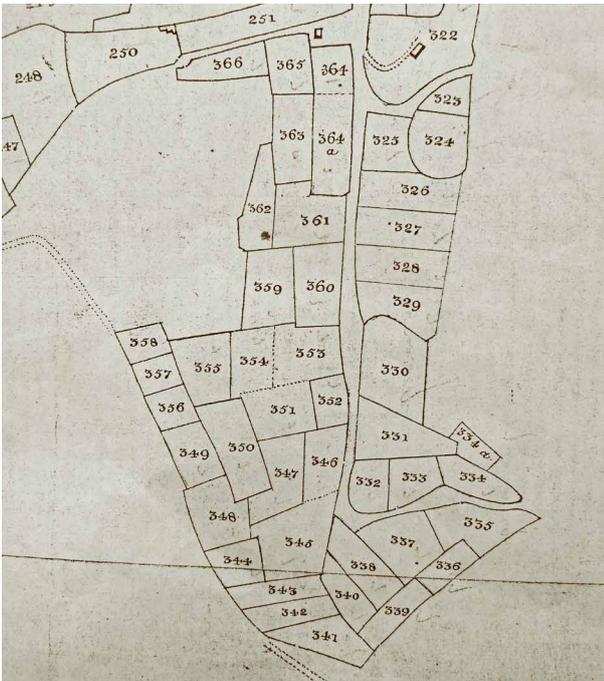


# The Hidden History of Burrington Ham



## The Hill Gardens

The Hill Gardens were once allotments created for local labourers by taking land from the edge of the common land of Burrington Ham. It is not known when they were created, although in Francis George Heath's book *The English Peasantry*, published in 1874, there is a description of "an admirable system of allotments" that had been created about thirty years previously at Burrington. This suggests that the Hill Gardens were established in the early 1830s. They were in existence by the time the tithe map of Burrington was made in 1838. This map shows 47 gardens, the majority of which were in the valley that is still called The Hill Gardens, although there were others to the east and west.



Left: The Hill Gardens as shown on the tithe map of 1838. Right: The gardens in the 1880s.

Writing in 1874 Heath reported that the "gardens grounds" at Burrington had been created by "cottagers" and were "much prized by the labourers, who grow in them their little crops of fruit and vegetables." At the time of the 1841 census the majority of the tenants of The Hill Gardens at Burrington were agricultural labourers from Burrington, Lower Langford, and Rickford. Each plot averaged a quarter of an acre and by the 1870s was let by the lord of the manor for a nominal 1s. and 6d. a year. Interestingly, similar allotments had been created at nearby Shipham, and by 1841 there were 52 in that parish also averaging a quarter of an acre and were rented for one shilling a year. The Hill Gardens went into decline in the late 19th century and by 1930 they had been abandoned and are now covered by woodland. During the World War II the now wooded Hill Gardens cleverly concealed the construction of Bailey Bridges carried out by American soldiers preparing for the invasion of Normandy (D-Day) in June 1944.