

# Life on the farm

Change and continuity characterised farming during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Farms varied considerably in size from small family farms to large institutional farms. Innovation and mechanisation contrasted with traditional practices, with some farms combining old and new technology. New ideas and technology could be expensive, time-consuming and subject to suspicion. Many men, women, and children lived and worked on farms.

The seasons shaped life on the farm. Writers and artists often depicted agricultural work associated with the different seasons, with some chronicling the agricultural calendar and others focusing on specific activities such as harvesting.

Pedigree livestock breeding was popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Breeders were often drawn from ranks of landed elites. David Low published his pioneering work describing and illustrating different breeds of livestock in 1842. This was a major undertaking and included some breeds that have since changed or become extinct. Low advocated retaining the diversity of different breeds and believed important qualities were being lost because of some modern breeding practices.

Local markets connected town and country. Farming families would travel to the market to sell produce and buy goods. Alongside trading, market towns were sites of knowledge exchange, political debate and leisure.



## From A Picture of the Seasons (1834)

**August:** 'The gathering in of the harvest is a scene that addresses itself not so much to the eye as the heart, and the emotions that it gives birth to, are not so much those of delight and surprise, as the satisfactory termination of anxiety...'

Image from A picture of the seasons: with anecdotes and remarks on every month in the year (1831). University of Nottingham, Briggs Collection LT210.S/P4



Top left: Women's Land Army girls working a tractor harrow at Sutton Bonington, 1939-1945. University of Nottingham Photographs, UMP/5/70

Top right: Photograph of farming at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, 1920s-1930s. University of Nottingham, Manuscript Collections MS 565/97



Above: 'The Sheeted Breed of Somersetshire', from David Low, *The breeds of the domestic animals of the British Islands*, Volume 1 (1842). University of Nottingham, Special Collection Oversize X SF105.25.G7.L6

Right: Image from Mary Elliott, *Rural employments, or, A peep into village concerns* (1820). University of Nottingham, Briggs Collection LT210.S/E5

