

THE RECORDER



THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WILTSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

This is something of an experiment! At our Committee meeting in October, it was felt that there was little contact with members from one year to the next, apart from the AGM in the Summer and the erratic issue of Society volumes. So we thought a Newsletter might prove useful. Inevitably, this issue will be composed by Committee members, to set the ball rolling. But we would like you, the Society members, to make it very much your own. It is mainly envisaged as a vehicle in which to print articles of interest to members, on subjects relating to archives and documents. Perhaps some of you may be examining or working on particular sets of documents which you would like to share with others. It can also be a means of reminding you of the AGM dates and progress on volumes in preparation.

Articles need not be long; the Newsletter is envisaged as a few A4 pages with an editorial, any news items and articles submitted by members. These should be typed, if possible, with your name and a contact number or address, and sent to the editor. At present, the newsletter is planned to appear once a year; the deadline for articles or inclusions will be 1 February each year.

We would also welcome your views on this venture. Again, letters to the editor, please. Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy this first issue.

Sally Thomson (The Recorder Editor)

THE WILTSHIRE WILLS PROJECT

The outstanding Salisbury Diocesan Probate collection contains 90,000 wills and inventories dating from c.1560-1858. This unique collection covers the whole of Wiltshire and Berkshire, parts of Dorset, and Uffculme in Devon. The collection is an invaluable primary source. In particular, inventories provide fascinating lists of personal possessions and trade goods, and wills can supply evidence for the network of family and friends who shaped an individual's life.

The cataloguing of all the probate documents and linked registers on to a database is a principal aim of the

Project. Using this database, the Wiltshire Record Society will be publishing its own indexes to the collection.

We made excellent progress with the cataloguing over the past year and, in total, over 47,000 wills have now been added to the database. We estimate that we have listed in the region of 140,000 individual documents. The work has already located at least 20 lost wills, not to mention pieces of wills; during the year, the top half of the inventory of Thomas Dennis of West Dean, (Arch.Sarum 1601) was discovered with the bundle of probate documents relating to Walter Brasyar, also of West Dean, 1551 (P2/B/5). The top of the inventory shows signs of insect damage and storage in damp conditions, whereas the bottom half is still fairly sound, the difference indicating that they have been separated from each other for many years – if not centuries.

Our conservators are repairing badly damaged documents. In addition, every single document is being carefully flattened and repackaged in custom-made archival quality folders and boxes. The repackaging work is led by the conservation staff with the able assistance of our team of volunteers.

We are planning to digitise the collection and have now ordered a digital camera for the purpose. A room in the Record Office is currently being rewired and converted into an imaging studio and the camera itself is due to arrive in February. A digital technician has been appointed to operate the system and the imaging work will run until March 2004. Images of the collection will initially be made available to the public via DVDs at the Record Office in Trowbridge and at the Central Reference Library in Swindon.

Interestingly, we have hosted visits from, and spoken to, archivists planning similar projects in other parts of the UK. In addition, we have hosted visits from academic researchers planning to use the index and images for their work.

The Project was originally made possible by the local organisations whose support enabled us to apply for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £200,500. All local contributions are therefore vital. The Wiltshire Record Society is now contributing £1,000 a year to the Project and we are most grateful for their generous financial – and moral – support.

If you would like any further information, please contact John d'Arcy, Principal Archivist, on 01225 713136, or Lucy Jefferis, the Wiltshire Wills Project Archivist, on 01225 713139.

Lucy Jefferis

CODFORD PROBATE INVENTORIES

During the period 1529-1750, the Probate Courts frequently insisted upon an inventory of the deceased's goods and chattels being drawn up, especially if he or she died intestate. Most surviving inventories come from the period 1570-1720, though a number outside these dates are to be found.

Most inventories are found with the local probate records in County Record Offices, though a small number may be found in the Public Record Office. My particular study has been with the inventories of Codford in Wiltshire and there are some 142 of these, dating from 1552 to 1760. Spellings and writing are extremely idiosyncratic, which makes the process of transcription highly entertaining.

Codford was a self-sufficient corn and sheep community, but denied the ability to experiment with new agricultural practices by its being unenclosed until fairly late (Codford St.Peter 1810, Codford St.Mary 1840). Its only break from traditional medieval farming methods was the construction of water meadows in the 17th century, which significantly increased the local corn yield. However, there must have been great excitement some time in the 1640s, when John Richards acquired some turkeys. Two are listed in his inventory of 1647. The villagers must have been curious to see these monstrous birds from the New World. So far, the only other reference I have found to turkeys is in an inventory of 1650 for Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. Was this a first for Codford? Perhaps other members can beat this record.

Codford may have been something of an agricultural backwater in many respects, but there were some members of the community who did very nicely and this is evident in the luxury items in their inventories. Several of the early lists include 'stayn'd hangings' or 'painted hangings'. These were wall decorations, hand-painted, possibly hung from batons to decorate a room. Four-poster beds are in evidence from the mention of bed-hangings and testers (bed-roofs), some of which were made of cloth, some of painted boards. The beds themselves (what we would now call the mattress) were a sure sign of wealth – feather-stuffed for the well-off, flock (short wool clippings) for the average householder and dust or 'oaten chaff' for the poorer members. The occasional mirror or looking glass turns up, one of which was hanging in the 'entry' of John Ingram's house in Ashton Gifford, an instance of the modern 'hall'.

Surprisingly, books were not unusual in Codford and one young broadweaver had a 'Psalter book' among his few possessions when he died suddenly in 1646. Several people had Bibles and Christopher Dugdale, the Rector of Codford St.Peter, had 'one Presse full of Bookes' in his chamber when he died in 1633. The Rectory still stands and the rooms in the inventory are named; so a comparison on the ground would be most interesting.

One or two men in Codford were extremely wealthy for the times, with their total wealth amounting to well over £1,000 each. They were able to afford joined chairs,

where the poor worker had only stools, nailed at the joints. Cushions, carpets (for tables, not floors) and napkins, were all signs of an aspiring yeomanry, as well as pieces of silver and glass.

Sally Thomson

TROWBRIDGE PEOPLE IN LONDON, 1746

An interesting picture of Trowbridge people in London is found in a paper in the parish records (WSRO 206/122) about a blacksmith named John End. He had gone to London with his wife, leaving two children (a girl of 7 and a boy of 6) at Trowbridge in the care of her parents, Joseph and Ann Jordan. It was because of the children's need of maintenance that the overseer, William Brewer, enquired about End in 1746.

John End was known to have worked for Mr.Stevens, a farrier at The Three Horse Shoes at Bow, so Brewer approached an acquaintance, Mr.Ryall, a broker living near The Essex Calf in Whitechapel Road, over against the Mount, to enquire. Ryall found that End had been ill but was recovering. He expressed himself civilly and said that his wife would write to her parents. She did so on 28 February, saying that the children would be sent for, or that End would come down to collect them before Easter.

Nothing happened. Ryall went to Bow again in late April. He found that End, 'a very idle sot', had been turned away by his master. He said that he 'valued not our parish', and did not desire to come down any more. His wife said that if times had been better in Trowbridge, she would have come down and taken care of one child, but now she did not care to come any more.

Another letter to Ryall got no reply, so Brewer guessed that End had changed his haunts. William Bull, a Trowbridge man who had lately been in London, told Brewer that End was often at The Five Bells in Little Moor Fields 'where Trowbridge people do resort', and that he was 'not beloved by his country men'. Bull suggested further enquiries from another Trowbridge man, James Nuntly, who lived one door this side of The Five Inkhorns in New Nicholas Lane near Shore Ditch, Bedlam Green.

John Cooper, the Trowbridge justice, thought that the parish could get a London justice to remove the Ends by an order on the grounds of begging or disorderly behaviour; on this their countrymen might have something to say. Brewer thought that another way would be to get a London justice to commit them to the Wiltshire Bridewell by *habeas corpus*, though for this an attorney would have to be used. Ryall could help them to a Whitechapel attorney, 'who usually do business at the cheapest rates'.

Another possible informant from Trowbridge was William Kellson, a tailor who lived at No.1 Ropemakers Alley. Another idea was that, as Moorfields was not far from Basinghall Street [where Blackwell Hall, the great cloth market stood] the factors' servants might be able to help. A final note reads 'Mr.Rickkards a Justice of the Peace at the Glasshouse in the Minories, Mr.Cottle presents his service and desires the favour of his friendship in this affair'.

Kenneth Rogers

A CHARM AT EASTON ROYAL

In 1600, John Stag of Easton Royal was tried in the ecclesiastical courts on a charge of witchcraft, brought by Michael Clark, one of the churchwardens. He had cast a spell to prevent the consequences on a local man who believed that he had been bitten by a mad dog.

Richard Brown, aged 38, who was now curate of Semington, but was before curate of Easton, deposed that about six years past 'one William Stag came unto this deponent's chamber and told this deponent that his said father did desire him that he would let him have a little paper and ink to write ii or iii words which this deponent granting him and standing by him and looking over his shoulder while he wrote and perceavinge *Arabo Arabus Adhibo Adhibus Harpulus pro* thrice written asked the said William wherefore he wrote the same whereto he held it was to give unto ... one Whiteharte of Mylton [Milton Lilborne] that was bitten with a mad dog whereupon this deponent told him that yt was contrary to the Statutes of the Realm and that it was a manner of witchcraft the said William replying that he knew not the meaning thereof but said he his father ... doth use to give the like unto divers kind of cattle but he never knew any harme to come thereby. And ... the said Stag ... hath used the same or such like charme for dogges piges and other cattle giving the same unto them in a peece of cheese or oats whereupon this deponent gave knowledge thereof unto the then Churchwardens of Eston namely George Goodall and Michael Clark ... and wished them to present the same at the Visitation ... which was shortly after'.

Other deponents testified that John Stag had been successful in his treatment. One William Pike affirmed that 'these words viz *Arabo* etc or suchlike was his charme' and was especially effective on anything that was bitten with a mad dog, 'having been bitten with a mad dog have recovered and done well and such as he hath not given the same but hath perished and died'. 'What harme the same hath done he ... knoweth not but Stag hath done good'.

The case had been brought up in the lord's court [the Earl of Hertford] when all the jury, except Clark, refused to present Stag upon suspicion of witchcraft. A deponent, William Wise, said that Clark was activated by 'mere malice and hatred towards the said Stag and not otherwise'. Perhaps it was because, as William Pike affirmed, that 'he hath herd ... Clark say that ... Stag did give the said charme or the like unto his ... pigs and that they pined away after and died'. [WSRO D1/42/18]

Helen Rogers

WILTSHIRE GLEBE TERRIERS

Glebe terriers are schedules of the land, property, tithes and offerings with which benefices are endowed. They were drawn up by clergy and churchwardens as instructed by the bishop and were deposited in the Diocesan Registry. Almost 900 survive for this county and are now in the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office. They range in date from 1588 to 1783, although at no date when a terrier was asked for did every parish produce one. They provide the most comprehensive source for land tenure, agricultural practice and custom, and topographical details covering the

16th – 18th centuries. They are also a useful genealogical source, as the names of over 7,000 witnesses, tenants and landowners appear in them. An assessment of the often detailed descriptions of parsonage and vicarage houses, particularly in the 1783 terriers, will be covered by Pamela Slocombe of the Wiltshire Buildings Record in the introduction to the WRS volume on Glebe Terriers. The volume is scheduled to appear by Spring 2003.

Steve Hobbs (WSRO)

WILTSHIRE MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTERS 1903–1914

The appearance of this WRS volume will be something of a landmark for the Society. No English Record Society has published any source examining this form of transport which has transformed our lives. It is only the second time that the Wiltshire Record Society has published any 20th-century material.

Vehicle registration was introduced in 1903 and Wiltshire was assigned the letters AM. The first registration AM-1 was issued, appropriately enough, to the County Surveyor. The volume covers motor cars (up to 2 tons unladen) and motor cycles AM-1 to AM-4000. Registers give the owner's name and address, description of the vehicle, use (private, trade and public conveyance) and details of the vehicle's subsequent history. Where possible, information from county and trade directories is being used to identify the trade use, thus giving an insight into the social and economic impact of motor vehicles in pre-First World War Wiltshire.

Anyone wishing to date photographs and postcards will find this edition useful, as will those writing parish histories, since it will list the owners of the first vehicles in each parish, and the numbers, the types of vehicle and their uses. It also illuminates various themes in the social history of Wiltshire, by examining the growth of vehicle use in the County up to the First World War, the social composition of car owners and the increasing popularity and spread of car ownership.

If any members have any photographs or postcards of AM registered vehicles, I would be most grateful to have details, since I am seeking possible illustrations for the volume. I would also be interested in any information relating to motoring before 1920, whether connected to Wiltshire or not.

Ian Hicks

MARLBOROUGH GOLDSMITHS

The probate inventories of Marlborough men and women which are deposited in the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, are being transcribed for future publication by WRS. One of the goldsmiths, Nathaniel Winter, whose inventory will be included, is recorded as having appeared before the Wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company for producing inferior work:

'Monday the 19th of August 1633

This day the aforesaid Wardens riding to search in the town of Marlborough came to the shops of William Goffe and Nathaniel Winter goldsmiths there who freely delivered unto them all the wares to make trial of them. And being tried by the touch they

were found some good and some bad. And being showed the trials of their bad wares they confessed the same not to be agreeable to His Majesty's standards. And those wares which appeared to be bad were now broken and defaced and the rest spared ... And now Messrs. Wardens fined them for setting to sale such deceitful wares at xx^s [20s] a peece which they now severally paid. And they severally promised that they will hereafter sell none but such as shall be agreeable to the standards protesting that they did not know their wares to be bad as upon trial they appeared and were sorry for the same'.

[from the Court Minutes of the Goldsmiths' Company]

William Goffe [Gough] was one of the appraisors of Nathaniel Winter's inventory.

Lorelei Williams

COMING SOON . . .

Income Tax is never, perhaps, the most popular topic of conversation, and especially at this time of the year when self-assessments and fixed penalties loom over many of us. It is small consolation to learn that when it was first introduced (in 1799) and also when reintroduced (in 1842) it was regarded as a temporary measure. The intention all along was to abolish income tax in 1860 – we live in hope!

Responsibility for assessing and collecting the early Victorian income tax rested in each division with a body of commissioners, who were invariably local magistrates. The divisions were loosely based on the old administrative units known as hundreds. After the assessments had been made, any disputes settled, and the tax paid, the paperwork was no longer needed and it was the practice of the local officials to burn everything.

Dr. Robert Colley of Aberystwyth, while working on his doctoral thesis about Victorian income tax, discovered that in Devizes this instruction had been ignored, and that among a solicitor's deposit in the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office the certificates of assessment for private sector taxpayers, 1842-60, have survived. The assessments cover businesses of all sorts, not only in Devizes itself, but also in the hundreds of Potterne and Cannings, and of Swanborough – that is to say, in most of the Pewsey Vale, in the villages around Devizes and in the Lavington area.

The importance of this most interesting material is considerable. Against the background of rapid technological innovation, the spread of the railways and the creation of Victorian society, we can see how the small businesses – pubs, private schools, builders, printers and solicitors – of a country town and its hinterland were prospering or failing, year by year, for nearly two decades. We can see too the earning capacity of different trades and professions, and of many individuals, members of well-known Devizes families, who may now be remembered from their accomplishments in other fields. And at a national level the assessments offer valuable, probably unique, evidence about the administration of tax-collection 150 years ago.

Dr. Colley has edited and indexed the assessments for the Record Society, and I am in the process of typesetting his work. We hope to have everything complete soon after Easter for publication (volume 55 in our series) around the end of May, in time for the Society's AGM (at which, other engagements permitting, Dr. Colley will be our speaker).

John Chandler (WRS Editor)

FROM THE TREASURER

First, it is a pleasure to be able to report that we had a very good year in 2001. I am very grateful to all who made this possible and we extend a particular welcome to the number of new members. The 'sale' of our stock of past volumes has been a great success and seems to have been welcomed by longer standing members and an incentive to new members to join the Society. I do hope that this favourable situation will continue and that we shall be able to hold the annual subscription at £15.

Now, a few 'commercials'.

Subscriptions: These were due on 1 January. If you have not already paid your subscription for the present year 2002, then I hope this will serve as a gentle reminder.

Gift Aid Donations: Last year the government replaced the old system of covenants with a system of Gift Aid donations. This has proved to be very beneficial for us and enables us to reclaim about 20% of a member's subscription. It is very easy and requires any tax payer simply to make a declaration that they wish their subscription to be treated as a Gift Aid donation and authorises the Society to reclaim tax. Unlike the old covenants, there is no continuing commitment and it can be cancelled at any time. About 90 individual members have already signed such a declaration. I hope shortly to write to newer members to ask if they are prepared to sign a Gift Aid form.

Membership items: Can any member help on these two queries?

A Lost Member: Mr. L. Gunstone, has moved from his address at 47 St. Michael's Road, Bath, and we have been unable to find his new address. Our last two publications are still awaiting him. Does anyone know Mr. Gunstone and his present address? Please let me know if you do.

Banker's Orders: A large number of members pay by Banker's Order and this is extremely helpful. But I discover that if you pay through a Building Society, our bank statement records not your name but your account number. Our bank has been unable to identify the name of the person who has paid in this way. If you have paid from an account number W(Woolwich) 504114207, do please let me know so that I can record the payment of your subscription for the year.

Ivor Slocombe (Treasurer)

THE AGM

This will take place on **25 May 2002** at 2.30 p.m. in the **Wilton Council Chamber** at Wilton, near Salisbury.

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