

THE



RECORDER

THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WILTSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

The AGM was held on 13 June 2009 at East Knoyle village hall, a delightful stone building, with a beautifully kept garden lining the path and incorporating part of a 14th-century building. This was thought to have been part of the demesne farm, but is now considered to have been a church house: somewhere where meetings and church ales could be held. Inside, at its east end, is a massive hearth and chimney stack.

This was where about forty members and guests gathered for the short business meeting. Sadly, the Chairman, Professor Christopher Elrington, was unable to attend, due to health problems, but Mr Kenneth Rogers nobly stood in for him.

The Society business over, the audience was treated to an illustrated talk by Professor Caroline Dakers, from St Martin's School of Art in London. Her subject was the varied fortunes of two local landed families, the Morrisons,



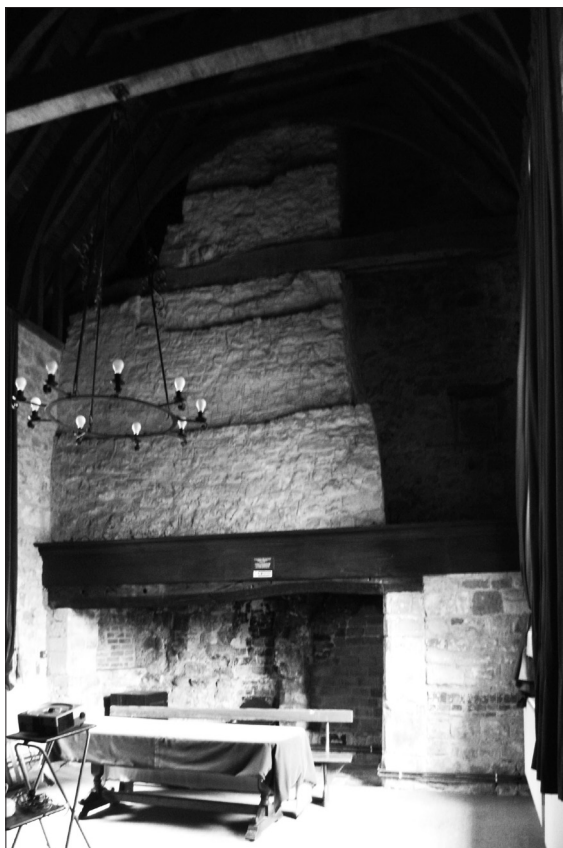
Members of the Society outside the village hall

who bought Fonthill Gifford, and the Wyndhams of Clouds, East Knoyle, both flourishing in the last half of the 19th century.

Professor Dakers' talk was extremely well-informed and kept everyone alert, as she switched rapidly from one family to the other, tracing the rise and rise of the Morrisons and the downfall of the Wyndhams. Interestingly, James Morrison came from a humble background in Middle Wallop and went on to become a landowner of enormous wealth. The Wyndhams failed to produce enough heirs to see them through the First World War, when the sole heir was killed early on. Clouds House is now a rehabilitation centre for drug and alcohol abuse, while Fonthill remains in the Morrison family, who were created Lords Margadale.

After some lively questions, Ken and Helen Rogers produced an excellent tea, as usual, and the weather being extremely kind, John Chandler took a group on a tour of the village. This included the church, with 17th-century plaster decorations in the chancel and Norman remains; the rather neglected Wyndham memorials in the churchyard extension; the line of the ancient park pale, where the Bishop of Winchester of the time had created his park, and the earthworks which are all that are left of the ancient village, cleared away to make room for the same park. From the hillside above the church, breathtaking views were had of the Vale of Blackmore and the tour concluded with a walk through the main street, where there are many beautiful and varied stone cottages, now happily slumbering in the peace which resulted from the village having been bypassed some twelve years ago.

Sally Thomson (Editor)



The interior of the building, showing the huge chimney stack

PROFESSOR ELRINGTON

Professor Christopher Elrington, our President since 1983, and a former editor, died in August 2009 after an illness of several months. A full appreciation of his services to the Society will appear in a future volume.

Kenneth Rogers

REQUIESCANT

With sadness the Society has learnt of the deaths of three other volume editors during the past year. **Michael Cowan**, who edited the *Peniston Letters* (vol. 50), was an authority on water meadows and had served as general secretary of the British Association for Local History. He died in July 2009, after several years of remission, as the result of a brain tumour. **David Carr**, editor of the *First Salisbury General Entry Book* (vol. 54), was formerly Associate Professor of History at the University of Southern Florida, and a medievalist with wide-ranging expertise. He died in November 2009 from complications following surgery to his back. **Roy Hunnisett**, editor of *Wiltshire Coroners' Bills* (vol. 36), died in December 2009. Formerly Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, he was the leading authority on the office of coroner, and also wrote two indispensable guides to good practice in editing records. The deaths of two long-standing members of the Society should also be recorded. **Richard Hatchwell**, authority on Wiltshire prints and drawings, and antiquarian bookseller, died in July 2009; and **Pamela Stewart**, formerly Salisbury Diocesan Archivist, died in January 2010. To all their relatives, colleagues and friends the Society extends its sympathy.

John Chandler

NEWS FROM WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON ARCHIVES: GLIMPSES OF MEDIEVAL LIFE

The conversion of our traditional catalogues to a digital format has provided the opportunity for them to be improved and enhanced. The lists of the records of the boroughs of Marlborough and Wilton, the subject of this note, were based on the information provided in WRS vol 5, *Wiltshire Boroughs Records before 1836*. This provided a necessarily brief summary. A reference to a deed c.1523 published at three *Morrow Speech courts* of Marlborough borough was a tantalising entry that demanded closer examination. The reward was the discovery of a deed whereby John Stephens alias Chapman of Ramsbury and Edith his wife set up Nicholas Heage, a poor hermit of the order of St Paul, in a burgage tenement on the north side of the road from Marlborough to Devizes. Further research may enable the site to be located, as it seems to be on a different site to the hermitage shown in VCH Wilt vol 12 between Hermitage Lane and Hyde Lane. Evidence of one of the order of Pauline Fathers in Wiltshire is rare, if not unique. The hermit was to pray for the souls of John Stephens and his wife Elizabeth, (possibly the grantor's parents), as well as the grantor and his wife and their children Christian, Thomas, Robert, Walter, Alice, John, Henry, Henry, Elizabeth, and Joan. This hermitage or oratory was to come under the control of the mayor after John's death, although it would have been suppressed by the reforms of the 1530s. Although undated it was endorsed with notes that it was proclaimed in three *Morn* (or *Morrow*) *Speech courts* (*cur' mane loquela*), 1523. If

there was no objection then the deed was validated, rather like the calling of banns of marriage. Such a practice of oral verification, appropriate for a predominantly illiterate society, was regarded as increasingly archaic, and the Statute of Enrolments, 1535-6, whereby deeds were enrolled in the records of the Clerk of the Peace, brought about the end of such customs. The court appears to have been merged with the Mayor's court, and their main business was the election of the mayor and other officers. This document has not been noticed by any of the historians of the town from James Waylen to the VCH, and so is an important find.

In another deed, similarly proclaimed in 1529, Thomas Evan and wife Emma gave, to fourteen named feoffees, a garden in E side of Herd Street bounded on S side by a tenement of the fraternity of the Blessed Name of John in the church of St Peter and St Paul, Marlborough. This provides a glimpse at another aspect of medieval religion in the town. (G22/1/103)

The Wilton borough archive includes a number of deeds and documents illustrative of medieval life; in particular two wills of burgesses of the town. In 1349 John Fromond, left money for the fabric of the church of St Edith of Wilton and for torches at the high altar and the altars of blessed Mary, Holy Cross beside the altar of St John the Baptist. This offers an important glimpse of the layout of the abbey church. He also left money for a torch for the church of St Michael at Lethstocke, a church I have not been able to identify. Twelve years later Nicholas Lauerans left two stalls in the corner of the Guild hall, and made bequests for the fabric of the churches of the Blessed Mary of West Street and St Michael in Kingsbury for painting the image of St Michael.

From the spiritual to the temporal the archive has one extremely rare item; a bond dated 1321 for William Virgo to be catchpole (*catchpoliris*). He was to arrest persons and keep them in gaol, an office probably associated with the county court, that was located in Wilton, and which dealt primarily with cases of debt. The word does not appear in Latham's Revised Medieval Latin Word List making the document interesting linguistically. The earliest reference to catchpole found by the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 1388, (G25/1/134)

This trawl proved particularly fruitful for my WRS volume *Gleanings from Wiltshire Parish Registers*, which is due out next summer. The *Minute Book of the Mayor's Court of Pleas*, in Wilton, includes the appointment in 1653 of the person to keep the register of baptisms, marriages and burials. Normally this is recorded in the parish register, which unfortunately does not survive for Wilton. A footnote beckons.

Steven Hobbs

WILTSHIRE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY VOLUME XIX

The Longleat Estate and the Upper Wylde Valley

The new Wiltshire Council, the University of the West of England and the University of London agreed in January to renew funding for VCH Wiltshire for 2009-14. Staff are grateful for all the support the project receives from within Wiltshire and beyond and we are now able to focus on research and writing for Volume 19. The volume will cover parishes in the hundreds of Heytesbury and South Damerham. South Damerham hundred had jurisdiction over lands which belonged to Glastonbury Abbey before the Reformation and afterwards mainly to the Longleat estate. The borough and ecclesiastical centre of Heytesbury was surrounded by the parishes of its hundred. An essay

describing the origins of the two hundreds is now on our website. Below is a summary of themes which are emerging from our initial research on the volume.

Landscape & Settlement

The parishes lie on chalk downland in south Wiltshire. Nearly all the villages stand in the valley of the River Wylde, which flows eastwards to Salisbury, or the valleys of its feeders and tributaries, notably the Deverill. North of the Wylde the downland is part of Salisbury plain, and until the 19th century it was used for sheep-and-corn husbandry typical of Wiltshire's chalkland. South of the Wylde the villages and their lands lie in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The downs are rich in evidence of the lives of our prehistoric ancestors. The pattern of medieval and later settlement, small villages clustered around a church and manor house beside a river or stream, each with land running from the watercourse up to the downs, is characteristic of much of Wiltshire.

Historic Buildings

Longleat House, built on the site of St. Radegund's Augustinian priory in Horningsham, is one of the finest Elizabethan mansions in England. The area has retained many other historic buildings including manor houses, rectories, farmsteads and cottages. In general parish churches are the only surviving medieval buildings but there are many buildings which date back to the late 17th century. The area has always been sparsely populated and because of 20th-century depopulation, the historic buildings of the settlements have not been overwhelmed by modern development. 18th- and 19th-century industrial buildings along the River Wylde have generally been demolished, leaving the impression that the area has always been rural. Traditional farm buildings are increasingly being converted to dwelling houses because 20th and 21st-century industrial agriculture requires larger steel-framed buildings. These house machinery, arable crops or intensively-reared animals, but are now generally sited to minimise their environmental impact. The Longleat Safari Park, known to millions as a drive-through tourist attraction and through the BBC TV series, is a new type of development which will be discussed in the volume.

Agriculture

The inhabitants have traditionally made their living by farming. The market town of Heytesbury was the economic hub of the Hungerford family's Wylde valley estates in the later Middle Ages, although Warminster, just to the north of the area covered in this volume, was a larger centre of rural trade and industry. Local agriculture was described by Thomas Davis, estate manager of Longleat in his *General View of the Agriculture of Wiltshire* (1794), published in a series promoting agricultural improvement. The Longleat estate built two model farms, designed by W. Wilkinson in 1859 and 1860. W. H. Hudson's well-known book *A Shepherd's Life* mentioned Lower Pertwood farm in Brixton Deverill. The way of life the book described, tending the great sheep flocks noted by Daniel Defoe on the Plain, was already passing when it was published in 1910. On the same farm later in the century, the Houghton Brown family introduced modern organic farming methods.

Industry

John Aubrey (1626-97), the Wiltshire antiquary, wrote about the cloth industry. The Wylde was strong enough to power mills in most of the parishes along its course and the

valley was industrialised by the 18th century. Mill sites were re-used over the centuries for different purposes: a mill at Boyton was used for fulling in 1616, and for weaving in 1727. John Aubrey noted that hats of the best quality were produced by the felt industry at Crockerton, where there were several mills between the 17th and 19th centuries: at Bull Mill, a 17th-century fulling mill was replaced by a large complex of buildings including a five-storey factory, which produced woollen cloth before 1823 and silk cloth until the 1890s. When William Cobbett visited the area in 1826, he noted the factories at Upton Lovell were doing 'not more than a quarter work'. Although cloth production recovered from this economic downturn, the local woollen industry declined in the 19th century and has left little trace today.

Military History

Since the Military Manoeuvres Act of 1897, Salisbury Plain has been used extensively for training: Imber village, evacuated on government orders in 1943, remains a ghost village and a mock village was built on the downs of Chitterne. Many camps have stood in the surrounding parishes, especially during the two world wars. Heytesbury was home to the war poet, Siegfried Sassoon, and Compton Chamberlayne and Codford each have military cemeteries for ANZAC veterans.

Parish research clusters – the Deverills

The two members of VCH Staff have begun working on the first cluster of parishes, the Deverills. On the banks of the Upper Wylde, there was a large estate named Deverill, from the British words *dubro*, water, and *ial*, a fertile upland area. A temple and settlement on Cold Kitchen Hill at its centre was occupied from the Iron Age to the Roman era. The estate was broken up in the centuries around the Conquest, resulting in five parishes, each with the name Deverill, four of which will be in this volume. The draft parish history of Brixton Deverill is now on our website, along with the history of Codford, and the history of Hill Deverill is nearing completion.

Local Government bodies

The parishes listed below are those of c.1840 and several of them include more than one village. The volume will cover c.11 present-day civil parishes and c.25 villages. From the late Anglo-Saxon period to the reorganisation of local government in the late 19th century they were under the jurisdiction of Heytesbury or South Damerham hundreds. They were in West Wiltshire District from 1974 until 2009 and are now in the districts of three Area Boards: Amesbury, South West Wiltshire and Warminster.

Heytesbury hundred

Warminster Area Board – Boyton, including Corton; Chitterne All Saints; Chitterne St. Mary; Codford St. Mary; Codford St. Peter, including Ashton Gifford; Brixton Deverill; Heytesbury, including Tytherington; Horningsham; Imber; Knook; Upton Lovell.

Amesbury Area Board – Orcheston St. George

South Damerham hundred

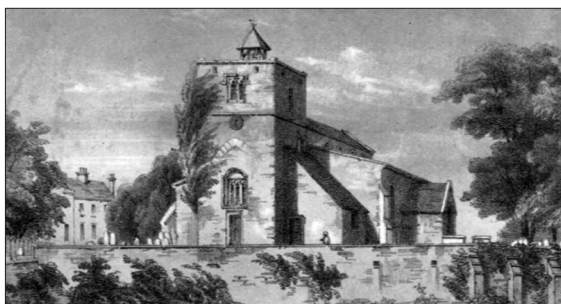
Warminster Area Board – Hill Deverill; Longbridge Deverill; Monkton Deverill

South West Wiltshire Area Board – Compton Chamberlayne

Virginia Bainbridge

SOME MEDIEVAL CLERGY OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF SWINDON

The parish church of Swindon, dedicated to the Holy Rood, and in 1851 replaced by the present church of Christ Church, belonged for much of the medieval period to Southwick Priory, which was situated at first at Portchester, and from about 1150 at Southwick in Hampshire. The cartularies of the Priory, preserved in the Hampshire Record Office (1M54/1-3), have been edited in extensive calendar form, with a modern index, by Mrs Katharine A. Hanna, in two volumes published in 1988 (Cartularies I and II) and 1989 (Cartulary III) Hampshire Record Office as Volumes IX and X in the *Hampshire Record Series*, cited in this article by the sequential cartulary volume and entry numbers used in that edition.¹



Holy Rood, 1847, while still in use

As the bishops' registers do not survive before 1297 and thereafter still have occasional gaps, the cartularies provide some additional information about the medieval clergy of Swindon. The first of the clergy to be named was Robert the elder, priest of Swindon church. In a subsequent dispute, probably heard before 1160, with the priest of Swindon over the income from the church, the Priory cited evidence from Robert and others that he had served Swindon church in the time of King Henry I, paying the Priory annually 30 shillings. The case revealed an arrangement between Robert the elder and another priest, Robert the younger, made before Jocelin, Bishop of Salisbury, in the chapter house at Salisbury, for the younger to serve the church, providing for the elder's maintenance as long as he should live. The Priory and Robert the younger came to an agreement for the latter to hold the church of Swindon and its tithes from the canons of the Priory, paying them one mark of silver a year, half at Easter and half at Michaelmas, and to provide maintenance for the elder priest. Robert the younger was thus serving as priest of Swindon church, possibly from the early 1150s and certainly by the early 1160s (I 12).

On 8 January 1199/1200 Herbert Poore, Bishop of Salisbury, granted Southwick Priory an annual pension of 100 shillings from Swindon church to help in the provision of hospitality to all and everyone making a crossing (presumably to France or the Isle of Wight) through Southwick. The pension was to be paid by the hand of Gilbert, then styled vicar of Swindon (I 154).

This pension proved to be a source of continued contention. In 1230, proceedings were brought by the Priory against Sir Thomas de Olney, chaplain, elsewhere in the record called Thomas de Swyndon., for detaining the annual pension: and a hearing took place in Chichester Cathedral before the dean, precentor and archdeacon acting as papal delegates. Thomas confessed that he was bound to pay the pension so long as he was the Priory's

clerk in the church of Swindon and swore that he would pay it without further dispute or appeal; and indeed was recorded as paying what was due up to Easter 1232² (III 669).

In the 1240s, the Priory was again in dispute with the rector of the church of Swindon, Thomas Gainor, and complained to the Pope of injustices from Gainor and other clerics and laymen of London, Salisbury and the city and diocese of Winchester, presumably affecting Priory income, not only from Swindon, but also from Priory properties in the Winchester diocese. Pope Innocent IV directed the official of the Bishop of Winchester to call the parties together and decide the case (III 30).

The issue of non-payment of pensions from various churches, including Swindon, arose again in the 1280s. In 1282, the Pope directed the dean of Salisbury to hear the Priory's complaint and decide the matter finally (III 32). However, he still found it necessary to write to the dean of Chichester, directing him to enforce the sentence of the official of Salisbury against Nicholas, rector of the church of Swindon, provided that the Priory's pension from the church did not compromise adequate provision for the vicar (III 18). It seems likely that this dispute arose from efforts by Queen Eleanor, widow of Henry III, to augment the Priory's income from their churches. Her efforts, perhaps in conjunction with the court case, led to a confirmation by Walter Scammel, Bishop of Salisbury, on 23 May 1286 of the annual pension of 100 shillings from Swindon granted by Herbert Poore in 1199/1200 (I 107).

Between 1354/5 and 1360 there is a gap in the Bishops' Registers and the Southwick Cartularies provide some additional information. On 1 May 1357 a royal licence was obtained from Edward III for the appropriation of Swindon church to the Priory (II 403; Cal.Pat.R., 1354-8, p 531). This was effected by a grant by Robert Wyvil, Bishop of Salisbury, dated 12 July 1357, to the Priory of the fruits, rents and profits of the church, over and above the advowson and the 100 shilling pension (II 1). The grant reserved a suitable portion of the profits for the perpetual vicar. The Priory was to take possession of the church when the existing rector retired or died, or when the church was vacant for any other reason; and it should then appoint a suitable perpetual vicar for institution by the bishop and under the jurisdiction of the bishop and archdeacon. In July 1359 the rector, Nicholas Haughman, duly resigned and surrendered his church (II 2,3); and on 25 July 1359, Robert Wyvil, with the agreement of both the Priory and the perpetual vicar, William Matthew, issued ordinances for the precise division of the income and property of the church (II 3).

This was clearly not the end of the matter for, in 1378, the Priory sought and obtained from Ralph of Shrewsbury, Bishop of Salisbury, a confirmation of Robert Wyvil's appropriation of Swindon church to the Priory (II 413). This was followed in 1379 by a further request for confirmation to the Pope (III 31), who remitted the matter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who confirmed the appropriation on 3 October 1380 (III 415). Thereafter, there was no further reference to the issue in the cartularies.

The bishop's ordinances of 1359, setting out the terms of the appropriation, provided that the Priory was to have tithes of corn of any kind, and hay and half the arable land and common and separable pasture belonging to the church and all other houses, buildings, gardens and places belonging to the rectory not specifically assigned to the vicarage, together with responsibility for the building and repair of the chancel,³ the maintenance of charity and all other ordinary charges which formerly pertained to the rector. The vicar and his successors were to have

for their dwelling the houses situated in the rectory of the church, described as 'the granary and whole house under that roof, the kitchen and all adjoining houses, also the curtillage and the small garden with the little gate leading to the church; all the meadows which once belonged to the demesne of that church, and half the arable and common and separable pasture belonging to the church from ancient times; all tithes [presumably the lesser tithes], oblations and obventions and every emolument pertaining to that church'. The bishop also laid down the duties of the vicar and his successors as being to 'serve the church suitably and perform divine service as in times past at their own expense; pay archidiaconal fees and other accustomed annual rents to the archdeacon of Wiltshire;⁴ provide two processional candles and incense; provide, repair and maintain the books, vestments and all other ornaments in the chancel of the said church; build and repair houses, buildings, walls, partitions, closes and whatever places belong to the said vicar, and [undertake] all other ordinary charges which used to pertain to the rector of that place before the appropriation of the church'. (II 3).

These details were rehearsed again in the 1378 confirmation (mentioned above) by Ralph of Shrewsbury, Bishop of Salisbury (II 413). *VCH Wiltshire IX*, pp.145-6, assumes that this grant, rather than that of 1359, ordained the vicarage, but gives some of the above information drawn from the transcript of the 1378 grant in BL Add. MSS 33280, ff.261-2, 264, and also adds later information drawn from diocesan terriers of 1588 and 1608 (for full details, see Steven Hobbs *Wiltshire Glebe Terriers 1588-1827*. WRS, vol.56, pp.424-7), and later sources, including the Tithe Award.



Southwick church (From *VCH Hants vol.3*)

Some details of the medieval holdings of the vicarage are given in an interesting, though only partially legible, document, sewn on to folio 89v of the third cartulary, containing evidence about the rights of the rector of Swindon given by tenants. The information in the document appears to come from, or relate to, the early 1380s,⁵ (possibly gathered during the legal proceedings mentioned above), although the document itself seems to have been written, perhaps as a copy, in the early 15th century (III 406). The rector was said to have two virgates from the lord's demesne for pasture of four oxen with one draught animal (aver) in the ox pasture; that the glebe was in the town of Swindon and that neither the rector nor his representative had food by right of the glebe. The tenants referred also to some property held by [John] Broke, clerk, 'formerly the representative of John Chitterne, the farmer of the rectory', including 1 virgate held at the lord's will so that he could have [pasture] for sheep and other animals'.

The Southwick Cartularies illustrate how gaps in the survival of diocesan and secular records may occasionally be supplied from former monastic records, which in the circumstances of the dissolution of the monasteries

and similar institutions might themselves not have been expected to survive.

Notes:

1. As was common in the 12th and 13th centuries, few of the charters entered in the cartularies are explicitly dated. Mrs Hanna was able to provide only approximate dates from internal evidence, primarily from the names of witnesses. This often makes it difficult to arrive at a precise chronology for the cartulary entries.

2. The dating of the hearing is somewhat unclear and depends on the interpretation of the dating of a papal mandate, which Mrs Hanna, on the evidence of papal itineraries, ascribes to 7 September 1230 (in the 4th year of Gregory IX's pontificate) rather than 7 September 1229 (in the 3rd year, as stated in the cartulary entry). She concludes accordingly that the case was heard before the dean, precentor and archdeacon of Chichester acting as papal delegates in Chichester Cathedral, on 21 and 22 April 1231. The year of the court hearing is not stated in the cartulary, but is said to have been on Monday and Tuesday after the 4th Sunday after Easter (*dominica qua cantatur*). She records that he paid the pension at Easter 1231 ('at Easter following the return of King Henry, son of King John, from Brittany'). If the payment was made on Easter Sunday, it must already have taken place by the time of a hearing in April 1231, but the payment may have been seen as having been made during the extended Easter period (or Paschaltide), which then did not strictly end until 17 May 1231.

3. In 1391-2 the Priory spent £16 on a new chancel for the church of Swindon, with carriage of timber all the way from its estates at Moundsmere and Hannington in Hampshire (Hampshire Record Office 5MO50/44). The appropriation in 1357 had already provided for the payment of annual pensions to the bishop of 13s 4d, to the archdeacon of Wiltshire of 6s 8d and to the Chapter of Salisbury of 6s 8d. (II 1).

4. 'Johannes Brok' was instituted vicar of 'Hye Swyndon' in 1381 and may have remained vicar until Richard Suggeworth was instituted in 1390 (Sir Thomas Phillipps (ed.) *Institutiones Clericorum in Comitatu Wiltoniae ab anno 1297 ad annum 1810* (2 vols., Salisbury and Middle Hill. 1821-5), I, p.65, 75.

5. 'Food' is Mrs Hanna's suggested translation of the word *cona* for *cena*. A more probable reading may be *cana* or *cona* (from *conum*) meaning 'cain' or rent (or rents) in kind (R.E.Latham (ed.) *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List* (London, rep. 1973), p.66).

Duncan Chalmers

MAKING ASSURANCE DOUBLY SURE

Papers about the purchase of land in Hilperton in 1873 (WSHC 2153/225) include the 'Requisitions on Title' by which solicitors attempt to close every loophole. In these, the purchaser's man appears to have known the answer to one question before he asked it, but did so anyway: 'Having regard to the age of Mrs Caswell, it is assumed that she cannot have another child, but, as all her children take equal shares, any child she might have hereafter would be entitled to a share'. Her lawyer answered this: 'Mrs Caswell is, I understand, nearly eighty years of age, and I think it may therefore with safety be assumed that she will not have another child. *She is, moreover, at present a widow*'.

Kenneth Rogers

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE DRUNKEN WIDOW?

Froxfield Almshouse, the large red-brick building on the left-hand side as you leave Wiltshire for Berkshire on the A4, was built in 1694–5 and enlarged 1772–5. It was paid for by Sarah, duchess of Somerset, who died in 1692, and was built by Sir William Gregory as her executor. By her will the duchess gave the money for the building, lands to endow it, and instructions that its accommodation should be shared equally by the widows of clergymen and the widows of laymen. It consisted at first of 30 houses, later of 50, and was built around a quadrangle in which stood a chapel. The widows were women who led what the duchess called a good life and, although their poverty may not have seemed acute to many of their contemporaries, were what the duchess called poor. Each widow received a pension out of the endowment.

By a Chancery decree of 1698 control of the almshouse was transferred from the heirs of the duchess's executors to trustees drawn from the upper ranks of local society. In the 18th century there were usually about 10 trustees, and nearly all were landowners, clergymen, or both. They maintained the building, chose the widows to live in it, made rules to govern behaviour in it, and held and managed the endowment. They met regularly and at their meetings took decisions designed to perpetuate the trust and to resolve important, difficult, or doubtful issues which had arisen. They employed a steward and a porter to deal with the day-to-day matters of estate management and almshouse life.

In exchange for their pensions the widows in the almshouse were expected to lead independent lives and to obey the rules adopted by the trustees. Rules were first codified in 1698 when, *inter alia*, it was required that the widows 'do each behave themselves reverently to their superiors and respectfully to one another and be not at any time in their behaviour disguised by liquors, swear, or

curse'. The penalty for breaking that rule was expulsion from the almshouse. Rules codified in 1710 and 1729 were equally insistent against drunkenness but more moderate as to penalties. The penalty was set for a first offence at 1s. and admonishment in the presence of three or four of the other widows, for a second offence at 2s. and admonishment by the chaplain in the chapel, and for a third offence at forfeiture of pension and liability to expulsion. At least from then the widows had three strikes before they were out.

Any serious infraction of the rules by a widow could be, and sometimes was, referred to the trustees. One such serious case was that of Elizabeth Powell, a widow admitted to the almshouse between 12 October 1785 and 9 January 1786. Mrs. Powell was the relict of a clergyman and, before entering the almshouse, had lived in Wiltshire, Somerset, or Berkshire. She was already in poor health and in July 1786 the trustees authorized the steward to pay 1 guinea to Elizabeth Barnes, another of the widows, for nursing her. The nature of Mrs. Powell's indisposition is not known. The amount paid for looking after her suggests that it was longish and it may have been the forerunner of the illness reported to the trustees in June 1791. Mrs. Powell was then said to have been frequently drunk and to be very ill. Her illness was not expressly attributed to the effects of alcohol, but it seems likely that she was addicted to it. The trustees, who presumably did not recognize alcoholism as an illness, were in doubt about both her condition and what to do about her. They did what men in doubt often do. They appointed a committee.

The members of the committee were Lovelace Bigg Wither, Thomas Bruce, earl of Ailesbury, and the Revd. Edward Popham, D.D. These were very big names locally, and at first one wonders why the owner of a large estate in Chilton Foliat, the owner of the Savernake estate and much besides, and the rector of Chilton Foliat and vicar of Lacock would bother themselves with a poor and drunken widow. On the other hand, Lord Ailesbury was Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, Bigg Wither and Dr. Popham were magistrates,



Froxfield Almshouses (from VCH Wilts vol 16)

all were therefore used to exercising authority, and they may have taken the widows of Froxfield in their stride as a routine matter of public duty. As trustees of the almshouse they had nothing to gain but the occasional right to bestow a small house and a pension on a poor widow.

In June 1791 Bigg Wither, Lord Ailesbury, and Dr. Popham were charged with enquiring into the facts of Mrs. Powell's case, and to do so by employing an apothecary to visit her and report on her. If she were found to be ill, medicines were to be given to her; if she were found to be deranged, a nurse was to be employed to confine her and take care of her; but if she were found to be the author of her own misfortune, she was to be punished. The punishment would be for all or part of her pension, then £15 a year, to be suspended or for her to be expelled from the almshouse. Mrs. Powell was attended on by James Blackman, a surgeon of Ramsbury, and, presumably as a result of his comments, she was found guilty of drunkenness. 'Her intemperance appeared so habitual, and her conduct so violent and offensive, that the committee judged it necessary for the peace and safety of the hospital to remove her as soon as possible.' On being told of the committee's judgement, and on being offered an additional half-year's pension, Mrs. Powell agreed to resign her house and pension at Michaelmas 1791. By 17 September 1791 she had vacated the house and had returned the key to the porter. Her pension, £11 5s., was paid up on 13 October.

But what was to become of Mrs. Powell? By expelling her and stopping her pension the trustees would be turning her into a pauper from, in effect, Midsummer 1792, and her maintenance from then would become a charge on the parish in which she had a legal right of settlement. Under the 16th-century poor law that parish would have been Froxfield, where she had been living for five years, or the parish of her birth. By 1791, however, the poor laws and the laws of settlement, which obliged parishes to relieve paupers with a defined right to claim from them and entitled them to refuse relief to others and to expel them, had changed and become much more complicated. Mrs. Powell's legal place of settlement was then almost certainly not Froxfield.

At first the trustees shrank from leaving Mrs. Powell to her fate. Motivated perhaps by paternalism, or perhaps by a hope that the expense of having recourse to the laws of settlement could be avoided, they tried to bring about her removal from Froxfield by offering compensation to someone who would take her. The steward wrote to Mr. Lloyd, a gentleman named by Mrs. Powell as her friend, and intimated that, if any of her relations would take the charge and care of her, and provided she was kept far from Froxfield and gave no trouble to the inhabitants of the almshouse or the parish, an allowance towards her maintenance would be forthcoming. Mr. Lloyd was no longer quite as friendly as Mrs. Powell might have thought, and that attempt failed. He, 'after what he himself lately saw at Froxfield, declined taking any active part in her affairs'. He referred the steward to Mrs. Powell's brother-in-law Mr. Nash, an attorney at High Wycombe, to whom the steward sent a letter to the same effect as that sent to Lloyd. The answer, dated 24 August 1791, was equally unequivocal: 'Mrs. Powell's behaviour to me and her sister has been so very unbecoming that I am determined she never more shall enter my house'. Her condition inspired in Nash no sympathy for her. He declared that 'under her present misfortunes, which she has thought proper to reduce herself to, I know of no benefit she can claim or expect but that of a pauper at her own parish'.

By 17 September 1791, when the trustees met and heard the committee's report, they may have felt somewhat

nervous about Mrs. Powell. Perhaps recognizing the weakness of their position, and fearing that they might have to take her back, they resolved that until further order no other widow should be placed in the tenement lately occupied by her. Meanwhile it seems that the offending widow still lived in Froxfield on her pension, and the trustees resorted to the law. They ordered their steward to take the opinion of counsel on what was Mrs. Powell's legal place of settlement and, if Mrs. Powell would not 'voluntarily remove herself to some distant place', he was, at the expense of the trust, to help the parish officers of Froxfield in having her removed from the vicinity. By October 1791 £5 13s. 10d. had been spent on the opinion of counsel and on other proceedings at law relating to the removal of Mrs. Powell, and £3 9s. 2d. had been paid to one William Fowler for removing her.

And where did the much-reviled Mrs. Powell end up? Nash had suggested that her legal place of settlement might be an unspecified Ham or Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire, but whether counsel told the trustees to send her is obscure. At all events she had probably gone by 4 July 1792 when the trustees, at their meeting on that day and without sorrow or regret, declared themselves independent of her by resolving that 'the order made at the last meeting that no widow shall be placed in the late Powell's tenement is rescinded, and the trustee whose turn it is to present a widow to that vacancy is at liberty to do it'. The sigh of relief is almost audible.

Douglas Crowley

LACOCK – CARE OF THE SICK POOR: A POTPOURRI

It is not appropriate here to detail the early Poor Law Acts, with authority to levy Poor Law Rates, appointment of Collectors for the Poor at Lacock and Parochial Administration; but care of the sick poor is within that structure. A variety of ailments were treated, also Smallpox and Midwifery. Lunacy was contracted out.



An early workhouse in Lacock, housed in a 15th C building

1709 Richard Grist be allowed 2s 6d for eye water.

1724 lists of persons receiving relief. Occasions which hath brought them under that necessity. Infirm and impotent, lames, bedridden. Wife bad in consumption and a great family.

1725 paid Kathleen Mathus for attending Mary Gibbs in her sickness 1s 6d.

1726 For carrying a great bellyed woman pretending to be in Labour 2s 6d.

Another great bellyed woman 1s 6d
(Perhaps not as deceitful as it sounds, as in 1809 an American Physician/Surgeon was the first to remove fifteen pounds of gelatinous material from a woman – an ovarian tumour).

1729 Rates for Maintenance – and to be Multiplied as this shall be occasion.

1740 and shall be Doubled as many times as Need shall Require.

1736 Gave Jane Humphries in her illness with a sore throat 3s od

1766 A bottle of Batemans Drops for Mrs Elms

1818 A Parish Surgeon appointed on condition that he gives proper medical attention to the poor and attends all accidents and likewise attends at a place appointed by the Overseers.

The sum of £30 per annum to be given to Mr Colborn for attending and supplying proper medicine with the exception of Midwifery cases

1820 Mr Thomas Skeats appointed, same terms.

1827 Paid surgeon to be appointedwith condition, Salary to be paid at the end of the year. If any neglect or inattention, complaint to be investigated and if found correct, such paid Surgeon to be dismissed without payment of Salary.

1825 Harry Kick of Hedddington (Eddington) do agree with the Parish of Lacock to cure Jos Bakers Knee so as him to be able to work for the sum of £5 and he is to have £1 in hand and if he complete to have four pounds more, but if not complete he is not to receive more than £1 more which he will receive in hand.

Harry Kick of Hedddington do agree with the Parish of Lacock to undertake to cure Mary Hilier of the cancer on her nose for the sum of One pound one shilling, if not perfect to have no pay.

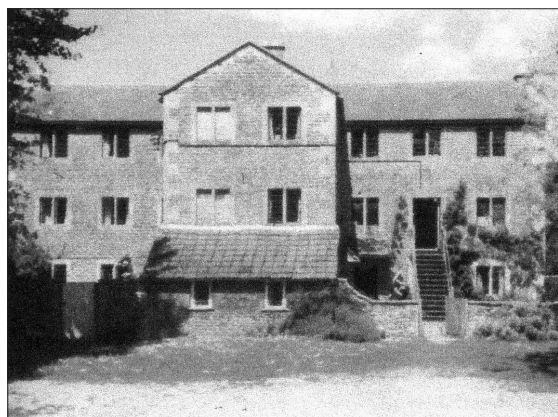
1826 Harry Kick To cure the evil of Samuel Fry's neck so that he be able to do his work, for the sum of £3 10s to be paid at the time of the Agreement and the other £2 10s to be paid when he has made a perfect cure.

1833 Building of the third Lacock Workhouse. Opened 1836.

Inmates' victuals were controlled by dietary scales which were occasionally revised by the authority of the Medical Officer.

1829 John Banks (of The Red Lion Inn) paid £1 13s 4d – Beer for the sick, ordered by the Medical Officer.

1854 Appearance of Cholera. Diet revised as a precaution by the Medical Officer: 2lbs of potatoes for Men and 1½ for Women, to be 1½lbs and 1¼lbs respectively, and to have rice pudding in lieu of suet flour pudding; also



Lacock Workhouse 1833-59

that meat be increased by ½oz each for dinner.

Not a sickness item, but Christmas Day in the Workhouse part of the tradition: each year extra Beef, Suet, Flour, Potatoes, 24 pints of Beer, Raisins, Currants.

1833 Demand from Parish Officers of Frome for £13 10s, being a Surgeon's Bill for attending a pauper belonging to Lacock Parish. The amount was paid in full by instalments.

Smallpox

1736 An Epidemic of Smallpox was dealt with by isolation in a cottage rented as a Pest House.

Paid for wood that Smallpox people burnt, and for faggots

1766 Paid Dr.Banks for inoculating 12s od

Paid Dr.Banks for inoculating Joseph Barnes Farmely 7s od For inoculating 5s od For inoculating 6s od Robert Hiscocks 4s od George Bond 2s od

Ann Heath for the smallpox people at Bonds 8s 6d

1832 All persons who are disposed to have their children Inoculated or Vaccinated are to be done at their own expense.

Some expenses other than treatment:

Carriage for moving families to the Pest House and carrying back, setting up beds, white-washing the house, cost of lime.

Lunacy

Treatment was contracted out. Those suffering from severe mental illness were housed separately.

1790 Devizes Sessions:

Jane Fry of Lacock, Widow. In £100. Condition for the Good behaviour , who is now licensed.

William Crook of the same, Chandler, in £100. To keep a house for the reception of Lunaticks within the parish of Lacock for one year (not exceeding £100).

1791 William Crook of Lacock, Shopkeeper, £100.

John Stantial of the same place, Taylor, in £50.

Again, Jane Fry.

1792 William Crook of Lacock, Tallow Chandler, in £100. To keep good order in the house where he now resides in Lacock for the reception of Lunaticks, not exceeding £10 for one year.

Midwifery

To Ann Stallard in her lying in 2s 6d

To Mary Brinkworth for delivering 2s 6d.

On a piece of paper, not dated, but early in writing – *take Elicompare, unset hyslop, coltsfoot, Ground Ivey, French barley of each one hand ful, 12 Cloves of Garlick. Boyle these over a gentle fire in 4 quarts of Spring water till it is consumed to one quart, clarify it with white of Eggs after fusing a pint of brown sugar, boyle it up to a syrup, take a good spoonful of it morning and evening, after it you please to drinking a Glass of cold water after it.*

Not an intake of the sick poor, but avoidance of dubious cold water.

Brian Howells Banks

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are respectfully reminded that subscriptions to the Society are now due. Please send subscriptions to: Ivor Slocombe, 11 Belcombe Place, Bradford on Avon, Wilts. BA15 1NA, cheques made payable to Wiltshire Record Society. The subscription remains at £15 annually.

Editor: Sally M Thomson, Home Close, High Street, Codford, Warminster, BA12 0NB (homeclose@aol.com)