

Research

by

Family Faces



# Family Faces



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THE OLD POOR HOUSE

WEST WORLINGTON

HISTORY

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Axminster, Devon, England

## HISTORY

As a listed building The Old Poor House is described as 'late 17th century'. There is not, however, an unbroken chain of records taking it back to this date. As the local poor house it suffered the fate of being unrecorded on estate and parish surveys and, for the most part, of being left off returns involving the taxation of properties such as land taxes, poor rates, church rates, highway rates etc. Since it was the house of parish welfare it was not taxed for anything.

In addition, it does not appear on the Tithe survey of 1841. This is, generally, the start point of property research and it was the cause of some dismay to see that where it stands was described as no. 306, part of Town Hill and in a state of being 'orchard and waste'. Town Hill, in turn, was part of Town Living Farm. Our initial reaction was to wonder whether the listed building assessment made a mistake and it was, actually, built in the early to mid 19th century. After all, even if it was the poor house, it should have been drawn in and left unnumbered indicating it was not tithable. However, we quickly rejected the idea of a listed building error. We have found comparatively minor errors in listing assessments before but never anything so gross as mistaking an early Victorian house for a 17th century one! If we needed it, confirmation of the house's earlier existence appears on the ordnance surveyor drawings of 1804-1805 where it seems to be marked. Also, it appears on an 1840s map in North Devon Record Office. In the tracing taken of this map, it can be seen that the house was then divided into two sections. (A photograph has also been taken on a new film and will be forwarded when the film has been used up and developed). We think that the Tithe surveyor made an error in 1841 and left it off by mistake. The smithy next door also does not appear and the house opposite to the Stuckley Arms is drawn in but is not identified on the Tithe survey by any number or name of owner or occupier. We have found errors on the Tithe survey before. One lady who owned a venerable mansion was indignant to find it marked as a barn.

Although The Old Poor House is missing off so many records, there are others it does appear on — such as censuses, the 1910 Inland Revenue Survey, voter's lists and in The Overseer of the Poor accounts for West Worlington — where one would expect it to. Just two sets of Overseer of Poor accounts have survived, one for the years 1654-1676 and the other covering 1783-1836. One set is deposited with diocesan records in Exeter and the other, the later, in Barnstaple. The Poor House appears regularly in the later, 1783-1836, overseer records, mainly as an item in the accounts requiring payment of six months rental. There are, also, more isolated instances when it incurred expenditure in labour and repair work. Some of the entries have been noted and photographed (photocopying from the fragile books was not allowed). One of the entries, in about 1819, reads 'pd for 2 bags of lime for the pore house 4s 0d'. This appears to be innocuous except that 2s a bag seems an awful lot of money for those days, bearing in mind that the £ was worth fifty to eighty times more then. A little bit of selling to the parish at inflated prices?

Sadly, there is a gap in the Poor accounts from 1676 to 1783 and the 1654-1676 accounts make no mention of a poor house in West Worlington. The

church warden's accounts of the same period also do not mention it but we would not expect it too, since the appointed overseer of the poor would handle all the business and payments connected with it and not the churchwarden. At least the non mention has a negative value and indicates that there was no poor house in 1676 in West Worlington. The 1910 Inland Revenue Survey confirmed that The Old Poor House belonged to the Stucleys and the Bucks, who were relations on the female side. There was a Stuckley court case in 1683. Sir Thomas Stuckley had died in 1663 with a will leaving his estates in trust for his sons Thomas and John and making arrangements to raise £3000 for his daughters — presumably for their dowry. Lady Stuckley, his widow, apparently hid the will and sold off portions of the estate and pocketed the proceeds. Hence the court case.

With The Old Poor House being late 17th century it would have been built around the time of this case. It would be a pleasant thought that it was built as a philanthropic act in remorse for family misdeeds. We searched the Stuckley wills and Inquisition post mortems but there is no mention of endowing or bequeathing a poor house for West Worlington. Nor is it mentioned in the report of the Charity Commissioners of Devon, 1826-1830, which investigated and reported on the history of parish charities. A poor house is not mentioned in the brief entry concerning West Worlington. Most telling of all are the Poor accounts and the record of the regular six month rental payments by the overseer — we must presume to the Stucleys. The keeping possession of it until well into the 20th century, and exacting rent from the parish for centuries hardly squares with idea of the Stuckeys building and endowing it for parish welfare. Although we do not know for certain, it could well be that the parish negotiated with the Stucleys to rent a house suitable for use as a poor house. In addition to paying rent the parish paid for its upkeep, including the expensive work of thatching it and paying a mason. Incidentally, the area of The Old Poor House was given on the Tithe survey as part of Town Hill which, in turn, was part of Town Living or Twon Farm. In 1819 'Mr Cooke' was paid for 'work he had done about the poor house'. Cooke leased Town Living which suggests he kept an eye on the property which was still, nominally, part of Town Living. It is just a possibility but could The Old Poor House have started life as housing for Town Living and then been converted into a poor house? Alternatively, the overseers might have leased the land from the Stucleys and built the poor house. In addition to paying the six months rent there was, also, a ground rent payable on the property i.e. the price paid for the right to occupy and improve a piece of land over a period. The Old Poor House did, however, remain the absolute possession of the Stuckley family. Under such circumstances, one would doubt that the overseers built it. Which inclines to the theory that the overseers rented an extant house from the Stucleys and converted it into a poor house.

It appears that The Old Poor House was only intermittently used as such, if at all, in the 19th century i.e. in the definition of a poor house as being a 'dwelling house for paupers maintained at public expense'. (The old poor houses shaded into being work houses and were used, often, as houses of correction for petty crimes as well). For a start, it can be seen on the photocopied census returns that none of the occupants described themselves as being paupers on any of the ten year censuses from 1841 to 1891. Incidentally, we know it was split into two originally and was still two households in 1891 but it can be seen that three households were living there in 1841.

The occupants were, mainly, given as thatchers and labourers. One Richard Snow, a thatcher, seemed to live there off and on for thirty years from 1861 to 1891. (Incidentally, as can be seen from the photocopies, who was living there in 1851 proved impossible to tell from the census). Another feature adding to

the evidence that it was ceasing to be used as pure poor house — James Troake leased the 779 odd acres of Afton (Affeton) Barton. In addition to this, he is given as occupying (renting) The Poor House and paying poor rates on it from 1843 to 1848. Since he was paying a poor rate to the overseer for use of the Poor House it looks like it was not being used for this purpose but, probably, as accomodation for workers on the estate. As an item on the poor rates, it disappears before 1843. This might indicate that before 1843 it was in formal use as a poor house — hence no rates paid on it. When rented out for non poor welfare purposes then a rate did become payable. That it continued to be referred to as 'Poor House' on the census and other records could be just conveniently using the traditional name.

In 1910, according to the Inland Revenue Survey, the property was owned by Sir Lewis W. Stuckley and occupied by James Sowden. The records in the public archives do not say when the family sold The Old Poor House although as late as 1949 they still owned Affeton estate including local West Worlington properties like Mouseberry Farm. A 1949 valuation of the estate just gives farms. It looks as is they had divested themselves of smaller holdings and houses by then. From a selection of the voter's lists from 1919-1972, one can see a number of different occupants. Most tended to maintain the name 'Poor House' except for Harold and Sophia Jones who adopted 'South View' in 1964.

The Strutt and Parker sale advertisement of 1987 mentions that it had been used as a school, the village library and estate worker's cottage. This might well be so, but short of tracking it year by year through the available 20th century records, we find no mention of it being used as a library and a school. If it was it must have been for comparatively short periods. In the 1910 Inland Revenue Survey, for example, a school house called 'cottage' was located elsewhere in West Worlington. The usages given in the advertisement must be during the 20th century and knowledge about it derived by word of mouth from local inhabitants. From evidence of the censuses and other records it was never used as a school house or library in the 19th century.

#### COMMENT ON THE RESEARCHES AND THE RECORDS

All the records of possible value were noted off the indexes and are listed in the notes. Virtually all have been checked in Exeter and Barnstaple. We also checked what was in Taunton, Dorchester and Truro from indexes we hold.

There is one source left that could be valuable — The Field Books of The 1910 Inland Revenue Survey. Information has already been extracted from the master book of the survey lodged in Barnstaple. The Field Books, however, are much more detailed. The amount of information entered varies considerably, but usually includes the names of owner and occupier; the owner's interest (freehold, copyhold, etc); details of tenancy (term and rent); and the area covered by the property. Other details recorded may include date of erection, number of rooms, state of repair, liability for rates, insurance and repairs, dates of previous sales and, sometimes, a sketch-plan of the property. This is as summarised by the Public Record Office, London where the Field Books are located. The West Worlington Field Book might give the invaluable information on the origins and nature of the agreement between the Stuckleys and the overseers of the poor of the parish. We are planning a visit to London to test the value of the Field Books and when we do we will check The Old Poor House.

RESEARCH NOTES

Parish Records West Worlington

336 A add /

PW | 1 Churchwardens Account Books 1834-1920 OB  
(for CW accounts 1654-1676  
see \*Chanter 750C V)

PS | 1 Surveyors Acct. BK 1773-1815 V (see MFK 1-3)  
2 Abstract Account Book 1858-1859 B

Overseers List

336 A add /

PO |

1-2 Acct Books, 1783-1825; 1825-1836 1783-1836 B  
3-4 Rate books, 1836-1838; 1838-1840 1836-1848 B  
5 One settlement certificate 1709 / 10 B  
6 One settlement examination 1784 B  
7-15 Nine removal certificates 1750-1799 B  
16 One Bastardy certificate 1797 B  
17-96 Apprenticeship indentures 1741-1815 B

Note: all above records except those marked  
MFK 1-3 (microfiche) are in  
North Devon Record Office, Barnstaple.

\* Chanter 750C is diocesan records and included are:  
Churchwarden accounts 1654-1677; Collectors Poor Accounts 1654-1676;  
Petty Constables accounts 1658-1659; Constables accounts 1659-1660, 1670-1671;  
Surveyors highways accounts 1656-1658.



Devon Record office

Place Index West Worlington

- 1) Letter John Balman, 1719 Basket A | 2874  
Diocesan.
- 2) Worlington Manor Survey Books 1750 96 M | Box 65 | 1
- 3) DD East and West  
(1442-1814) Z1  
72203 - 72204 (DH)  
72214 (1674)  
3913 (1671)  
4335 (1721)
- 4) West  
336 A | P I 1-4  
336 A add |  
1107 M | B1

Moger Diocesan Records II

Church Rate Worlington West- 1622 \* \* damaged and faded.  
(It was ordered but declared unfit for production)

Glebe Tenures 353, Worlington West 3  
1602; 1613; 1679

Devon Record office  
Persons Index Stuckley.

- 1) John Stuckley of Affeton, West Worthington, esq.  
lease of properties in West Tonyfeilde, Chawleigh  
1583 1332/T4

Persons Index Bucke

- 1) Reference in records 16-MC 1201 A/PZ 46
- 2) Mrs Bucke Donation at Xmas with notes  
on candidates for relief 1839-1858 799A/PW478
- 3) Bucke, Lewis William, Esq., Legal Case  
Papers c. 1800 1148M | add 35/26
- 4) Bucke, Lewis William of Daddon House, esq.  
1821 57/11/12
- 5) dilló 1823 55/15/1/18
- 6) Bucke, Lewis William, esq., lease on  
Property 1838 603 MIT 37
- 7) Bucke, Mrs. Widow of Colonel Bucke late of  
Daddon, decd. 1817 216/1/10/9.

North Devon Record office

Stüdey Index

- 1) notes on Stüdey family 2015 4347 / 7
- \* 2) Stüdey Appeton Estate Valuation 2239<sub>B</sub> add 7 / 95
- 3) John Stüdey of Appeton party to deed  
Place unspecified c. 1640 B156 / 42/5
- 4) Sir Lewis Stüdey [deceased in 1911]  
Property of 1911 2239 add 7 / 138
- 5) Stüdey, Susanna of Appeton wife of Lewis  
transcript of will 1689, including bequest for  
Bideford Grammar School, n.d 276 add 2 / 21  
copy will, 1689, 276 add 4 / 8
- 6) Stüdey, Susannah bequest by [1721]  
referred in later deed, 1751 276C / EFT12  
note: 276 add concern Bideford Grammar School.

\* Calendars: Stüdey Appeton Estate - valuation of  
property at West Worlington, Chulmleigh  
↪ Mesham 1949

Deeds Worlington in Somerset Record Office

DD | BR | e1y

Card 4

1/3

15 Jan 1640

marriage Settlement. Estates in Worlington,  
Devon and Lankestōn, Cornwall.

Sir Francis Drake of Worlington;

John Pym and his daughter Dorothy;

John Upton, John Bampton, William Stode

Trustees

Southmoulton  
Dunwoody, Welfi  
Woolmeston, Welfi

The Account of Francis Hamon  
Shurwoode, warden of the gifts aforesaid  
for the year last by aft made this 2<sup>d</sup>  
of March 1676 of following

pd for a lock & three keys for the poor mans Box - 0 - 08 - 0

1 pd for a lock & three keys for the poor mans Box (?) ---  
a strange item. Photo has been taken of the page  
and will be forwarded.

336 A add | P02

West Worthington

Assessors Account Book, 1783 - 1825

The Poor House consistently appears in each 6 monthly Schedule of Accounts, its first appearing 6 months to 29 September, 1784.

The entries were, generally, for the half year rent mostly given at 12s 6d. Sometimes, a ground rent was payable at 1s 0d. Extra entries to do with repair work were picked up.

Photos taken

29	Sept. 1784	1
16	April 1786	1
25	March 1819	1
circa	1819 (undated)	2

Family Faces: Research Notes

Overseers RATE ASSESSMENTS

PARISH OF West Womington

(GER = Gross Estimated Rental; RAT VAL = Rateable Value)

336 A add | P04

Occupier	Owner	Premises	A.	R.	P.	G.E.R.			RAT VAL		
						£.	S.	D.	£.	S.	D.

28 / 8 / 1843

No.	Occupier	Owner	Premises	A.	R.	P.	£.	S.	D.	£.	S.	D.
27	Troake James	Bucke W.	Aiton Barton	779	1	9	422	0	0	281	5	0
28	"	"	Collage	-			2	17	0	1	18	0

13 / 10 / 1845

No.	Occupier	Owner	Premises	A.	R.	P.	£.	S.	D.	£.	S.	D.
28	Troake James	Bucke L.W.	Aiton Barton	779	1	9	422	0	0	281	5	0
29	"	"	Pooms House	"	"	"	2	17	0	1	18	0

Note: goes up to 1848 same from 1843. Property disappears before 1843 and Troake is given as holding only Aiton Barton back to 1839. From 1839 back to 1836 Richard Gardner holds Aiton Barton

1910

INLAND REVENUE SURVEY

PARISH OF East & West Womington

Parish: East and West Womington (Geacombe, Withersidge & Womington East)  
 County: Devon Division: Tiverton

The Inland Revenue Survey is often dubbed the '1910 Domesday'.

The details are written out across a double page in very large ledgers which we cannot photocopy. The information is as follows:

Occupier	Owner	Premises	Street / Place Name	Estimated Extent		Gross Annual Value		
				A.	R.	£.	s.	d.

NO 52 Sowden Stuckley Cott. & Poor House 0 3  
 Jas. Sir L.W. Gardens

Agent:  
 Smyth-Richards  
 Land Agent  
 Barnstaple

Table Continues...

Rateable Value			Valuer Extent			Original Gross Value
£.	s.	d.	A.	R.	P.	

2 0 0 - -

Table Continues...

*Family Faces; Research Notes*

Machinery Buildings, Structures	Original Full Site Value	Tithe Rent Charge	Original Total Value
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- - - - -

*Table Continues...*

Original Assessed Full Site Value	Value of Land for Agricultural Purposes Where Diff from Assd Site Value
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NOTE: At NO. 42 is School House "Cottage"  
 no extent given, occupied W. M. Edmonds and  
 owned by County Council. At NO. 43 is  
 County Council School, same owners and occupants  
 and, also, no extent given

Voters Lists, West Worlington & East Worlington

1919 No Poorhouse given. Fredericks Souden was living in 'The Village' given in 'Division 2' which also has Town Living Farm & Mays Cottage.

1925 Way, William Poor house NOTE Souden F. disappd

1930 Smith, William Poor House  
Smith, Mary Louisa Poor House

1935 Pelling, Edward Frank Poor House  
Pelling, Florrie Poor House

1951 Nil identifiable

1959 Hold Albert. H Poor House  
Harris Doris. M. Poor House  
(in 1951 Holds were at Keeper's Lodge).

1961 Edwards J. A. Poor House

1963 Nil identifiable

1964 - 1972 Jones Harold W. South View  
Jones Sophia A. South View

County of Devon / To wit /  
 for the Parish of Westwilmington  
 in the said County

An Assessment made in Pursuance of  
 an Act Passed in the 20<sup>th</sup> Year of his  
 Majesty's Prerogative for Granting an Aid  
 To his Majesty by a Land Tax to be  
 raised in Great Brittain for the  
 Service of the Year 1780

Proprietors	Occupiers	Estates	£	s	d
George Buck Esq.	John Osmond for	Aston	15	14	0
Ditto	Prob. Phillips for	Parsonage	3	4	4
Ditto	Andrew Lobley for	Brackley	3	4	4
Ditto	Andrew Lobley for	Yeoland	1	12	2
Ditto	W <sup>m</sup> Adams for	Lobley	3	4	4
Ditto	W <sup>m</sup> Pafsmore for	East Suttery	2	16	4
Ditto	John Kichery for	Liddenhay	2	8	2
Ditto	John Cooke for	Thensley	2	8	2
Ditto	John Cooke for	Town Living	1	12	2
Ditto	John Tolley for	Manselby	2	0	4
Ditto	John Hovegood for	Halls	1	12	2
Ditto	Thomas Cole for	West mitton	1	12	2
Ditto	James Price for	Part of Normdash	1	12	2
Ditto	George Collier for	Cole Park	1	12	2
Ditto	W <sup>m</sup> Hovegood for	Wood Park	0	16	0
Ditto	John Hovegood for	East mitton	1	4	2
Ditto	Prob. Phillips for	Shutt	0	16	0
Ditto	George Hovegood for	Aston mill	1	4	2
Ditto	W <sup>m</sup> Pafsmore for	Sethe bays	0	8	0
Ditto	Himself for	Loppie wood	0	8	0
James White Esq.	John Kichery for	West Suttery	1	12	2

DEVON RECORD OFFICE  
 Further reproduction prohibited

Signed this 2<sup>d</sup> Day of June 1780  
 by us

£ 51<sup>l</sup> 1<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup>

Done the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1780 / Allowed by us

John Cooke  
 the mark of John Osmond

Joseph John Crumys

John Cooke  
 John Osmond Collectors

J. B. Karlake