



Charity Commission Logo

Charity Enquiries – Commissioner on Tour in South Wilts.

The Rector and Clerk to the Parish Council (Mr. Hays) were the only parishioners who attended the charity enquiry on Tuesday, which was held in the Reading room. The particulars of the charities are quaintly inscribed in an old minute-book by "Samuel Weller, Rector." The inscription bears no date, and it is therefore impossible to gauge the relationship between the worthy rector and his namesake of immortal memory in the Pickwick papers.

Dame Elizabeth Neervin left in the year 1581 by will, chargeable on Great Bathampton Farm, to be distributed annually on Good Friday, wheat cooked into bread, two quarters, canvas, 12½ ells at 12 pence an ell, and cloth 12½ yards at 20 pence the yard.

The Rector stated he annually received £8 5s. and distributed tickets for the purchase of groceries and draperies which were bought in the village, or even in Salisbury. An innovation of his was the classification of the recipients. One class received 3s., another 2s., and a third class 1s. 6d. All widows, and all those in receipt of parochial relief had 3s.

Mrs. Susan Mompesson, in the 17th year of Elizabeth, left by deed for ever £1 6s. 8d. to be distributed annually on the Wednesday in the first week in clear Lent. This is chargeable to Little Bathampton Farm. The Assistant Commissioner remarked that it appeared that a communication was made to the Charity Commissioners in 1893 stating that the charity had lapsed. There was no doubt that the Duke of Somerset's estate was that upon which the sum was chargeable.

The Rector remarked that his predecessor, Mr. Hext, wrote to the Duke of Somerset's agent on the matter and the agent replied that he did not repudiate liability but they must remember that his grace gave the parish £3 - £2 for the school and £1 for the clothing club - and if they pressed this matter the Duke would only pay what he was obliged. As a matter of fact, added the rector, the fact the Duke had this year withdrawn his subscription of £2 and only paid £1 instead of £1 6s. 8d.

The Assistant Commissioner said it was clear that the charity would have to be put on a proper basis. No doubt this sum was chargeable on the property of the Duke of Somerset, and although his grace was undoubtedly at liberty to withdraw his subscription he must pay this £1 6s. 8d.

Another charity was that of an unknown donor, amounting to a charge of £1 6s. 8d on Steeple Langford Farm, to be paid annually on the feast of St. Michael, for the benefit of the poor.

The Assistant Commissioner said that this charity had lapsed since 1811. The agent of the estate was written to some years ago asking him why the rent charge was discontinued and whether he had any objection to continuing it and paying the arrears since 1811, but no answer had been received. He would have a search made at the Record Office, and see if he could find out why the matter was not pursued further. It looked as if steps ought to have been taken, and failing a satisfactory conclusion being arrived at a certificate should be forwarded to the Attorney General. After this lapse of time the recovery of the charity seemed almost hopeless.

Poor's Allotment, another charity which provided allotments for the labouring poor of Steeple Langford, was said to be carried out in accordance with the terms of the bequest, and Mr. Hays, one of the trustees, stated that the plots of grounds were always occupied.

The only other charity was that of the Rev. R. T. Coates who, on the 5th October 1849, left the Rector and churchwardens of the parish for the time being £100 to invest in trust and pay the dividends to such Sunday school children of the Established Church as the Rector might think most deserving, and in the event of no Sunday School existing, to pay the same to such poor persons as the Rector might select, who were most regular and reverent at divine service at the church.

The rector said the bequest was applied for the purchase of prizes for the Sunday school children and payments of the expense of an annual treat. He might mention that there were no endowments in connection with the schools. The schools were built and handed over to the parish absolutely free of charge by his predecessor, Mr. Hext, and now the schools were taken over by the County Authority it seemed a little hard that his authority in the school should be abolished.

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