



Charity Enquiries - Commissioner on Tour in South Wilts

The first of a series of enquiries into the charities of local villages was held at Great Wishford on Monday afternoon, by Mr. Wigram, the Assistant Commissioner. There was a fair attendance, which included the rector (the Rev. F. W. Macdonald), Col. L. Plummer, and Messrs. G. M. Wilson, G. M. Young, A. E. Scott, W. Hatfield, H. W. Gough and T. G. Mundy.

The assistant Commissioner explained the nature of the enquiry which, he said, to a great extent was historical. He spoke of the usefulness of the report of such enquiries as a basis for correspondence upon the charities and added that in a county like Wiltshire the charities varied much indeed: in some places there were many whilst in others there were few. These enquiries would also give anyone interested in charities an opportunity of coming forward and making remarks upon their administration or to ask for further information of them. His report, when issued would be procurable for a few pence.

The first charity was that of Sir Richard Grobham, knight, who, by will dated December 16th 1528, left an estate consisting of 69 acres, 18 perches, including a site for building situated at Stoford, in trust for the erection and endowment of almshouses for four poor people and one housekeeper to be chosen from time to time out of the parish of Wishford Magna. In 1897 owing to an insufficiency of funds part of the houses was let.

The next charity was that of Daniell Oland, who by will dated the 10th day of January, 1735, gave £200 to be laid out with the approbation and consent of the minister and overseers of the poor of the parish of Great Wishford for the time being in the purchase of land the rents thereof to be from time to time applied for apprenticing poor boys of the parish to some good handicraft trade out of the parish of Great Wishford for seven years at least and with every such apprenticeship advance and pay at the same time of executing the indentures the sum of £10 and at the expiration of his apprenticeship the sum of £5 to buy tools. He also left £50 to be laid out for the provision of bread and meat to be distributed among ten of the poorest families of Wishford not receiving alms. The testator died in 1737 and the £250 was laid out in the purchase of Old South Sea Annuities.

The Rev. Frederick de Veil Williams, rector of Wishford, by his will dated the 8th and 30th September, 1887, gave to the trustees for the time being of Oland's charity a sum of £300, free of legacy duty, to be applied by them for the purpose of it. It was invested in £98 5s. 7d. new consols in private names. The Assistant Commissioner explained that a scheme had been sanctioned by the Charity Commissioners which amalgamated all the four charities. Under it there were two ex officio trustees, the rector, and the lord of the manor, two co-optive trustees, Archdeacon Buchanan, and Mr. G. R. Kendle,

and there were three representatives who were appointed by the Parish Council, and they were Messrs. G. M. Young, H. G. Scamell, and J. Ritchings. He understood that there was a vacancy among the latter. He would like to know whether the apprenticeships had turned out satisfactorily.

The Rector: I should say so, eminently.

In answer to further questions respecting the distribution of the bread and beef, Mr. Young said the amount which each recipient received varied according to his or her family. Widows and widowers always had it, and those married people who were in need of the charity benefited by it once every two years.

The Assistant Commissioner said he took it that the charity was not given to those who were able-bodied and in receipt of regular weekly wages.

Mr. Young: to those who are in need of it.

The Rector: No tradespeople have it at all.

The Assistant Commissioner: How much does each get?

Mr. Wilson: Seven pounds of beef and four pounds of bread. Continuing his answers Mr. Wilson said that of the almshouses three were occupied at the present time, and there was one person, a pensioner, who was in receipt of the Grobham charity, who did not live in the almshouses. This man received £1 a month, and those who lived in the almshouses got 6s. a week. Vacancies were filled by the trustees, who received and considered applications.

The Assistant Commissioner: Who pays the recipients?

The Rector: Unfortunately, the Rector.

Mr. Wilson, continuing, said the occupants of the almshouses also got two hundred weight of coal once a year. The balance in hand at the present time was £109 3s. 1d. About £50 would have to be spent shortly on repairs.

The Assistant commissioner read particulars of the **Church Estate Charity**, which he said was founded by indentures dated 1693, 1720 and 1712, which provided a sum of money to repair and find ornaments for the church. The churchwardens had the right to six acres of grass which was annually sold by auction.

Mr. Scott, in reply to Mr. Wigram, said the grass was still sold by the Clerk who, according to the rules laid down in the bequest, used the church key as an auctioneer's hammer. At Easter, 1904, there was a balance of £2 10s. 1d. in hand. The money received on this account went into the churchwardens' accounts and it was impossible to say how much of the balance he had mentioned belonged to the Charity.

Mr. Young said there was an opinion abroad amongst some of the people of Wishford which he, to a certain extent shared, that the Charity might benefit in a greater measure than it did before if the land were let more advantageously. It was now let to Mr. Martin, who farmed a considerable area of land under Lord Pembroke. Practically, he supposed, that land was let to Lord Pembroke.

The Assistant Commissioner replied that very often, one could get a better rent from a man who occupied land adjoining than from anybody else.

Mr. Wilson remarked that Mr. Martin rented the land and paid the rent himself.

Mr. Young (to the Rector): Doesn't Mr. Coombs rent a part of it?

The Rector: I don't know. It has never entered my head.

The Assistant commissioner remarked that in the absence of any express stipulation what the trustees ought to do was to obtain the best terms for the charity they could. If the trustees could get better terms for this land they ought to do it.

Mr. Scott thought the wisest thing the trustees could do would be to invite tenders.

The assistant Commissioner: The trustees would be well advised I think if they looked very carefully into the matter before they made a change.

Mr. Young: I have expressed a general feeling and I will let the matter drop.

Mr. Wilson: this is the first I have heard of it.

The Assistant Commissioner: One knows what arable land fetches. I don't know that Wiltshire is especially favoured, and in many cases arable land is almost a drag on the market. I don't think the trustees would be well advised to change unless they could clearly see that they could get a considerably increased rent for it. Continuing, Mr. Wigram said there was another charity he wished to mention – a rather curious one. It appeared from Lord Brougham's report that in 1728 a small manual fire engine was purchased by the churchwardens, and was, from time to time, repaired by them. He believed that the parish laid claim to it subsequently, and that the matter went to the Courts?

The Rector: the rector and churchwardens.

Mr. Young: the rector and one churchwarden. It was not defended. It was ruled that it was ecclesiastical property.

The Assistant commissioner: Where is the fire engine kept?

Mr. Scott: I have never seen it since I have been a churchwarden. I don't know who keeps the key.

The Assistant Commissioner: Is it ever used?

The Rector: when there is a fire we have to get another fire engine.

The Assistant Commissioner: Except as a matter of ancient history and as an ancient monument it is of very little use to anybody I suppose?

Mr. Young: That's right, sir.

The only other **charity mentioned was that of Sir Richard Howe, Bart.**, who by will dated January 3rd, 1728, left to the lord of the manor of Wishford all those tithes of which he was possessed in assertion of the parish of Berwick St James in trust for the support of a master to teach twenty-four poor boys of the parish of Wishford to read, write, cast accounts, and learn to say the Church Catechism; and of a mistress to teach twenty-four poor girls of the same parish to read, work, learn and say the Church Catechism in the school built by him in the parish in 1722.

The Assistant Commissioner explained that under the new Education Act the schools in the country had been taken over by the Education Authorities, and it therefore became the duty of the Education Department and not the Charity Commissioners to determine to what purpose the particular endowments should be applied, whether the whole of it should go to reduce the rates or apart go to the foundation managers for the repair of the school.

The Rector stated that although the school had not actually been taken by the County Authority he had reason to believe that it would be in the near future.

Mr. Hatfield asked whether the parishioners were entitled to see the accounts of the school for years that were past.

The Assistant Commissioner replied that the accounts of public trusts were sent to the charity commissioners every year and might be seen at the office in London. He had no authority for saying so, but he should say that this was not a parochial charity.

Mr. Young remarked that he was of opinion that accounts of public money ought to be published. The Assistant commissioner: One has to go by Act of Parliament. The Act of Parliament says that all parochial charity accounts must be published and sent to the parish. That doesn't apply to non-parochial accounts. Any complaints should now be sent to the board of Education.

This concluded the inquiry, and on the motion of the rector seconded by Mr. Young, a vote of thanks was accorded to the Assistant Commissioner.

Salisbury Times, Friday, 15 July 1904