

Ogbourne St. George Charities

There are two local Charities which operate in Ogbourne St. George. The larger is the Ogbourne St. George Poor's Land Charity (Charity Commission Number 202675), and the older is the Wooldridge and Thomegay Charity (Charity Commission Number 201368). This document traces the history and describes the current status of these Charities.

Early History and Origins of the Charities

The following is a transcript of the Report on the Charities of this parish, dated 19th July 1834, of the Commissioners appointed in pursuance of the Act 1 & 2 William IV, c. 34, to continue the Inquiries concerning Charities in England and Wales.

Wooldridge's Charity

William Wooldridge by his will dated 2nd August 1782 gave 50*l.*, "the interest to be laid out yearly in bread, and to be disposed of by the churchwardens and overseers of this parish, for the benefit of the second poor".

John Wooldridge was his executor, and paid interest on the 50*l.* till the year 1797, when it was agreed by the parish, in vestry assembled, that the 50*l.*, together with the 35*l.* in John Wooldridge's hands given by persons unknown, and 10*l.* 4*s.* for arrears of interest should be invested in the purchase of Three per cent Consols. This was accordingly done, an additional sum of 2*l.* 1*s.*, which was required for the purpose being paid out of the poor rate. The stock was invested in the names of Richard Kemm and three others, who executed a deed of declaration of trust to the churchwardens and overseers of the parish, bearing the date 10th August 1797, whereby the trustees and their successors are directed to pay the dividend of the said stock to the churchwardens and overseers of the parish, in trust to be laid out on Christmas-day, yearly, in the purchase of bread, to be distributed among such poor persons, being legal parishioners, as are usually called the second poor; and the deed provides, that when the trustees are reduced to the number of two, the parishioners in vestry assembled should appoint two new trustees, to act jointly with the surviving trustees, to make up the whole number of trustees four, and that the churchwardens should from time to time transfer the stock into the names of the said new trustees.

The stock now stands in the names of William Kemm and John Canning, late of this parish.

Mr Bradford, of Swindon, solicitor, receives the dividends under a power of attorney from the trustees, and pays them over to the churchwardens who have generally laid the same out in bread, but a distribution has sometimes been made in money. The distribution used only to be made every other year, and all the poor used to participate in the Charity. It is proposed, however, that the 6*l.* shall annually be distributed in bread, at Christmas, to the second poor. Lists used to be made of the persons to whom the charity was given. It was intended in future to keep an account in a book.

Thomegay's Charity

The Parliamentary Return of 1786 states, that Peter Thomegay, by Will, date unknown, gave 50*l.* to the poor, then India Stock, vested in William Wooldridge and Thomas Paine, annual produce uncertain.

William Wooldridge and Thomas Paine were churchwardens in 1786, and the dividends were then received by Mr Rider, of Lincoln's-Inn, under a power of attorney.

Thomas Rider, of the Charter House, esq., was applied to, and stated, by a letter dated 3d February 1834, that he thought he had for a time received the dividends under a power of attorney, but that he had no doubt that he had duly accounted for whatever dividends he had received.

By making enquiries at the India House and Bank, we ascertained, that about the year 1793, the India stock in question was, by Act of Parliament, converted into Three per cent Reduced Bank Annuities; and in 1819 the sum of 50*l.* Three per cent. Reduced Stock, was standing in the names of William Wooldridge, deceased, and Thomas Paine, both of Ogbourn, Wilts, when, in consequence of no dividends having been claimed for ten years, it was transferred to the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt, pursuant to statute 56 Geo. 3. c. 60.

We have informed the parish of these facts, in order that they may apply, under the statute of 56 Geo. 3., to have the stock re-transferred for the benefit of the Charity.

The Poor's Land

By the Act for dividing all the open and common fields within the parish of Ogbourn St. George, in the county of Wilts, the commissioners were directed to set out and allot to the lords of the manor such parcel or parcels of commonable lands lying within the said parish, not exceeding the quantity of 20 acres in the whole, as they should think proper, for raising furze or other fuel for the use of all and every of the poor inhabitants of the same parish for ever, which parcel of land or allotment, with the produce thereof, should be vested in the lords of the manor of Ogbourn St. George for the time being for ever, in trust for such poor inhabitants of Ogbourn St. George, and should be from time to time appropriated to and for the use of such poor inhabitants, in such manner and form as the officiating minister and churchwardens of the said parish of Ogbourn St. George, or a majority of them, should order, direct or appoint; and that the said allotment should be free from all taxes.

The allotment for the poor consists of 19A. 2R. 32P. The land is now let to Mr John Banning, as yearly tenant, and a rent of 5*l.*, which was stated to be the full value, the land being partly covered by furze; but it was thought that it would be better if the vacant parts of the land were to be planted with furze, and the poor people were allowed to cut a fourth part every year. If this course was not pursued, it was intended yearly to let the ground by tender to the best bidder,

and to apply the rent for the benefit of the poor. The rent hitherto received has been distributed to the poor of the parish in bread in the winter.

Notes on the above: William Wooldridge lived at Kemms in Ogbourne St. George. Peter Thomegay leased the Manor House from 1768 to 1777. Thomas Ryder inherited the lease of the Manor House from Peter Thomegay and held it from 1777 to 1804.

The Charities Report of 1905

The following is a transcript of the report of the Inquiry held in March 1905.

The Inquiry was held in the Elementary School, Ogbourne St. George. There was a large attendance, and considerable interest was taken in the proceedings. The following, amongst others, were present: The Rev. A. J. Smith, vicar; Mr Francis W. Lillywhite, overseer; Mr James B. Stevens, churchwarden; Mr H. J. Hill, assistant overseer and clerk to the parish council; Lieut.-Col. D. C. Pedder and Mr C. H. Nichols, chairman of parish council, representative trustees of Wooldridge and Thomegay's Charity; Mr W. Rosier and Mr E. J. Habgood, members of parish council.

Charities of William Wooldridge and Peter Thomegay and others

By a deed poll dated the 30th December 1847, under the hands and seals of Frederick Augustus Carrington, John Henry Gale, William Henry Wiles and James Blanchard, it was (*inter alia*) recited, to the effect, that the parishioners of the parish of Ogbourne St. George in vestry assembled had elected the parties to those presents to be trustees of the trust funds belonging to the above-mentioned Charities, which said trust funds then consisted of 200*l.* Consols belonging to Wooldridge's Charity and 50*l.* Reduced Annuities belonging to Thomegay's Charity, and stood in the names of the said parties hereto, and it was witnessed that the said F. A. Carrington, J. H. Gale, W. H. Wiles and J. Blanchard and the survivors or survivor of them and the executors and administrators of such survivor would at all times hereafter stand possessed of such trust funds, upon trust to pay dividends of the said 200*l.* Consols unto the churchwardens and overseers of the said parish, in trust that the same might on Christmas Day every year be laid out by them in the purchase of bread, and such bread distributed to and amongst and for the use and benefit of poor persons being legal parishioners of the said parish as were usually called the second poor, and to, for or upon no other trust, intent or purpose whatsoever, and upon further trust to pay the interest or dividends of the said 50*l.* Reduced Annuities unto the said churchwardens and overseers in trust for the poor of the said parish.

By an Order of the Charity Commissioners dated the 19th July 1901 and made in the matter of the Charities of William Wooldridge and others, and of Peter Thomegay, a Scheme was established for the further regulation of the Charities described in the above-mentioned declaration of trust.

[The Scheme document is available as a separate PDF]

One of the representative trustees should have vacated office in February 1904, and have been re-appointed, or a new trustee should have been elected in his place.

Meetings are held once a year. The Rev. Robert Blythe, the last vicar, kept no minute-book, but since Mr Smith has been vicar regular minutes have been kept.

A banking account is kept at the Capital and Counties Bank, Marlborough, cheques being signed by the three trustees.

Until this year the practice has been to distribute the whole income of the Charities in bread, no change being made when the Scheme was established.

The distribution was made to all persons in the parish except those who were comparatively well to do, each adult or child receiving a 4lb. loaf.

Bread was given away in February, and if sufficient funds were available a second distribution took place later. In the case of married couples with several children, arrangements were made by the beneficiaries that the allowance of bread should not be delivered all at once but on different days.

In 1905, which was the first year the present vicar took part in the administration, a change was made, and instead of a distribution of bread to all poor parishioners, the dole of bread has been confined to those who had families, and tickets for groceries to the value of 1s. or bread were given to all widows and those in receipt of poor law relief. One loaf was allocated to each house sharing in the bread gift, with an additional loaf for each child attending school or too young to attend.

The change, slight as it is, has given rise to much dissatisfaction, and complaints were made by many of those present at the Inquiry because the old plan of distribution was no longer followed.

The former indiscriminate distribution of bread was clearly not contemplated by the Scheme, and it would seem desirable that the present system of applying the whole income in doles, not exceeding in value 1s. each, should be changed.

The Poor's Land or the Poor's Furze

The Act mentioned in the Report of 1834 was a private Act 32 Geo. III, c. 26, entitled "An Act for dividing, allotting and laying in severality the open and common fields, common pastures, and other commonable lands or grounds within the parish of Ogbourne St. George, in the county of Wilts."

The Act directed the Commissioners to set out and allot to the lords of the manor, but did not direct any allotment to be made to the lords of the manor in their own right.

The Act provided that nothing therein contained should prejudice, lessen or defeat the rights or interest of the Provost of the King's College of our Blessed Lady and St. Nicholas of Cambridge, and scholars of the same College, as lords of the manor of Ogbourne St. George and Ogbourne St. Andrew, or their successors, lords of the said manor, in or to the royalties incident and belonging to the same manor (save only and except where the same had been or should or might be barred or altered by virtue or in pursuance of the Act), nor prejudice, lessen or defeat the rights or interests of the lord or lords, lady or ladies, of any other manor or manors within the parish of Ogbourne St. George aforesaid, but that such lord or lords, lady or ladies, for the time being, should and might from time to time and at all times thereafter, hold and enjoy the same, and all rents, services, courts, perquisites and profits of courts, seigniories, and other royalties or privileges, to any such manor or manors, leet or leets, respectively incident, appendant, belonging or appertaining (save only as aforesaid), in as full, ample and beneficial manner to all intents and purposes as they or any or either of them could, might or ought to have held and enjoyed the same before the passing of the Act, or in case the same had never been made.

The award made in pursuance of the above-mentioned Act was dated the 27th May 1796, and it was recited therein that the Commissioners for making the award had in pursuance of the Act set out and allotted to the lords of the manor of Ogbourne St. George and Ogbourne St. Andrew such two parcels of the commonable lands as were thereafter awarded and confirmed to the said lords for the purposes thereafter mentioned, and the said Commissioners, acting under the powers of the said Act, did by their award confirm unto the lords of the manor all those two allotments, parcels of the said commonable lands lying within the said parish of Ogbourne St. George thereafter described and thereinbefore mentioned to have been set out and allotted to them by the said Commissioners, for raising furze or other fuel for the use of all and every the poor inhabitants of the said parish for ever according to the tenor and directions of the said Act; that is to say, one allotment or parcel of land containing 11 acres 2 roods and 9 perches situate on Bytham Down, bound on the west and on part of the north by the allotment to James Smith, No.42, on other part on the north and on the east by the allotment to Job Matthews, No. 60, and on the south by lands belonging to Bytham Farm, and one other allotment or parcel of land containing 8 acres and 23 perches situate on Bytham Down aforesaid, bounded on the west and north by the aforesaid allotment to Job Matthews, No. 60, on the east by lands in the parish of Mildenhall, and on the south by lands belonging to Bytham Farm aforesaid.

Some correspondence has in the last few years taken place between the parish council and the Charity Commissioners about the Poor's Furze. The Charity Commissioners have intimated:

1. That the allotment appears to be strictly a fuel allotment, and as such to fall within the provisions of section 19 of the Commons Act, 1876, and that in view of the provisions of that section the land cannot be let for grazing, &c.

2. That the Provost and Fellows of King's College being a Corporation the Commissioners are unable to authorise the parish council of Ogbourne St. George to appoint under the Local Government Act, 1894, additional trustees to act with the Provost and Fellows.

It appears further that the Commissioners are of the opinion that the right of shooting over the land can be let by the lords of the manor, viz., the Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge, who are the Trustees of the Charity.

The land known as the Poor's Furze is situate on Bytham Down and is distant about one mile from the village of Ogbourne St. George. The land is believed to contain rather less than 20 acres.

The vicar and churchwardens have not for many years exercised their right of directing how the furze or other fuel is to be appropriated.

A custom has prevailed for very many years that any poor parishioner may go to the land and cut as much furze as he can bring away, but no cart or other vehicle may be used to carry back the furze &c. to the village.

Some of those present at the Inquiry stated that they had often cut furze, and there was sufficient furze and undergrowth to make it worth while to exercise the right.

There is no proper supervision of cutting and steps should be taken to ensure that an excessive amount is not cut in any one year.

In addition to the benefits derived from cutting the furze, the parish of Ogbourne St. George receives from the Bursar of King's College Cambridge, the proceeds of the rent derived from letting the shooting.

The right of shooting over the Poor's Furze was let in September 1903 to Mr J. B. Stevens.

The Bursar of King's College posted a notice in the village offering the sporting rights of the land in question and stating that the tenancy would be subject to the rights of the poor to cut furze, and also subject to any restrictions imposed by the award.

The Bursar accepted an offer made by Mr J. B. Stevens to take the shooting at a rent of 4*l.* per annum.

Objection was taken at the Inquiry at the amount of rent, and it was stated by some of those present that a higher rent could have been obtained.

It appears from information furnished by the Bursar of King's College that a rent in excess of the 4*l.* paid by Mr Stevens was in fact offered, but that he considered that under all the circumstances of the case he was acting wisely in accepting Mr Stevens as tenant.

Complaint was also made at the Inquiry that Mr Stevens had interfered with certain parishioners while engaged in cutting furze, and had ordered them to leave the allotment. It appeared on further inquiry that Mr Stevens had asked some women to move out of dange when he and his friends were shooting, and there does not appear to have been any interference with the furze cutting except in so far as such cutting was stopped while shooting over the ground took place.

The rents received by King's college have for some years been paid to the clerk to the parish council of Ogbourne St. George.

The Bursar of King's College has regarded the rent received for the shooting as the property of the College, and the payment to the parish council as a voluntary gift on the part of the College. There appears to be some doubt, however, whether the rent does not belong to the parish, and the parish council are anxious to obtain the views of the Commissioners on this point.

It has long been the practice to keep the money in hand until a sum has accumulated sufficient to provide a supply of coal for each householder in the parish, other than the well-to-do.

In 1903 a sum of 22*l.* was spent in providing a supply of 5 cwt. of coal for each beneficiary.

There was at the date of the Inquiry a sum of 8*l.* 10*s.* in the hands of Mr H. J. Hill, clerk to the parish council.

Notes on the above: The Scheme of 1901 remains the governing document of the Wooldridge and Thomegay Charity.

The Poor's Land Since 1940

On 20th August 1940, the Wiltshire War Agricultural Executive Committee wrote to the parish council:

“The Minister of Agriculture has given instructions that all derelict and semi-derelict land in the county must be reviewed with regard to its reclamation for increased food production.

My Committee have given consideration to the field O.S. 252 11.267 acres, known as Poor's Gorse, in the Parish of Ogbourne St. George, with the idea of taking possession of the land and reclaiming it so that it could be used for the production of food, such as cereals and potatoes.

I understand that your Council acts as Trustee for the land, and on behalf of the Committee I wish to ask if you would agree to these suggestions. Possession of the land would be taken for the period of the war and three years afterwards. All expenses of clearing the scrub, cultivating the land and the application of lime would be undertaken by the Committee, and it is anticipated that a rental of £1 per acre would be secured.

The difference between the present rental obtained for the shooting rights and that of the sum for which the land could be let would be retained by my Committee towards the cost of reclaiming, and the balance handed over to the Trustees.

I shall be glad to know as soon as possible if the Trustees agree to the proposals of my Committee, and I hope I may receive a favourable reply both in the interests of food production and to the ultimate benefit of the owners of the land as a result of its improvement.”

There followed much correspondence between the Parish Council, the Bursar of King’s College (John Maynard Keynes), to whom the Parish Council had forwarded the letter, the Charity Commission, the War Agricultural Committee, and Oliver Frost, who was by then the owner of the Lordship of the Manors of Ogbourne St. George and Ogbourne St. Andrew, which the College had relinquished in June 1928.

The land was formally requisitioned on 22nd December 1941. A rent of £6.8.0. per year was agreed, payable half-yearly from 25th December 1941, and was held by Mr Frost on behalf of the Parish. The tenant was Mr N C Grove, who continued to farm the land until December 1950 when the land was de-requisitioned and returned to the ownership of the Charity. The smaller of the two parcels of land belonging to the Charity had initially been rejected as unsuitable by the War Agricultural Committee and was never formally requisitioned. Grove Bros have continued as tenants ever since.

In preparation for the return of the land, which by then had no more furze to supply fuel to parishioners, Oliver Frost had initiated a new Charity Scheme, sealed 22nd September 1950, under which the land would be leased for agricultural purposes. The income of the Charity, after deduction of expenses of management, is to be applied in “providing fuel for the poor inhabitants of the Parish of Ogbourne St. George”.

[The Scheme document is available as a separate PDF]

It has been the practice since 1950 for the Trustees to distribute the income in December each year, each share being given to a household rather than to an individual. The 1950 Scheme continues to be the governing document of the Poor’s Land Charity, but in February 2009 the Trustees decided that the Charity’s Objects ‘for the provision of fuel’ was becoming unnecessarily restrictive, and resolved, using the power provided by section 74c of the Charities Act 1993, to amend the Objects of the Charity to read, “the relief of financial hardship of people living in the Parish of Ogbourne St. George, by making grants of money for the provision of fuel and for providing or paying for items, services or facilities”. This change was accepted by the Charity Commission on 27th February 2009.

Charity Trustees

As at November 2011, the Trustees of the Charities are:

Wooldridge Thomegay and Others Charity

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithoutPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=201368>

Revd Roger Powell (ex-officio, present Vicar of the Parish)

Terry Knight (appointed by the Parish Council)

Frances Maundrill (appointed by the Parish Council)

Poor's Land Charity

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithoutPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=202675>

Timothy Frost (ex-officio, present Lord of the Manor of Ogbourne St. George)

Revd Roger Powell (ex-officio, present Vicar of the Parish)

Elizabeth Brockman (appointed by the Parish Council)

Romayne Daw (appointed by the Parish Council)

Lesley Harvey (appointed by the Parish Council)