

THE TITHE MAP

Paying taxes has been with us a very long time. Prior to Tithe Apportionment Map and Schedule of Rent Charges of 1837-1839, almost everyone paid tithe, e.g. the Parson had a right to a tenth of all eggs, milk, and corn produced in the parish. This was true of the whole country and also of Europe generally, with the Church claiming a tenth of the produce of the land. This tithe was used for the maintenance of bishop and clergy: and for the poor and general upkeep of the fabric of the church. Originally tithes were paid in kind and stored in great barns, called Tithe barns, many of which still exist. Often these tithes led to conflict, between church and farmers, and in particular with non-conformists, who would usually object to paying to the Anglican Church.

The Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 was aimed at making this payment fairer, where the appointed commissioners would negotiate land values with the owners and then apportion the

‘rent charge’ accordingly. From 1837 every parish in England and Wales had a Tithe ‘Commutation’. Weare Giffard was no exception. A very detailed map of the parish was drawn, showing buildings, hedges, woods, roads, streams and of course in our case, the river. Often these maps were of immense size, sometimes filling a large room, making seeing anything towards the middle of the map extremely difficult indeed! There were usually three copies made of each map, one remaining in the Parish, indeed some parishes still retain their copy. In years immediately following the survey, copies of the original were made, such is the one in the village hall.

On the map, each parcel of land and each building was allocated a number, and then recorded in a schedule, against which would be the name of the plot or building; the landowner; the occupier; acreage and rent due; and the state of cultivation, if land. We have extracted just a few as examples, and list these below. For a more detailed

NUMBER	NAME	LANDOWNER	OCCUPIER	STATE
10	Bulls Meadow	Mr. George Lovering	Edmund Tout	Meadow
145	Quarry Field	Rt. Hon Earl Fortescue	John Ashton	Arable
157	Castle Garden	“	“	“
171	Old Hall Orchard	“	Henry Rowe	Orchard

There is some slight confusion of dates: the map shown here has recorded on the scroll bottom right: “*Surveyed and Drawn by J. Risdon , Great Torrington, 1839*”, yet the schedule is dated 3rd October 1837.

TITHE MAP 1839

