TITHING AT HOUGHTON ON THE HILL, LEICESTERSHIRE, IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Keith Oldham

This note is a response to, ‘The Due Tenth: Problems of the Leicester Tithing Process 1560–1640’ by Anne Tarver in TLAS volume 78, 2004 pp. 97–107

Anne Tarver looked at tithing in Leicestershire during the period 1560–1640 in some detail.1 An account of tithing at Fleckney was included. Did the custom and practice continue elsewhere in Leicestershire after 1640? The following account was written by Robert Manton in 1707 after he had been rector of Houghton-on-the-Hill for nearly eighteen months. The account is contained within a Terrier for the parsonage and is quoted in full so that a comparison can be made with accounts of other parishes.2 Little had changed since 1640, not even the disagreements! With a few exceptions the items tithed were the same. At Houghton, the items tithed in kind included pigs, pigeons and eggs. Every yard land paid six pence a year for May-silver, each house paid three pence halfpenny for the maintenance of lights in the church [waxshot] at Easter and the mill paid ten groats, also at Easter. The days of reckoning differ from those at Fleckney, being 3 May and Candlemas rather than Lammas and Martinmas.

September 30, 1707 A Terrar, with an account of the dues (Tything) belonging to the parsonage of Houghton on the hill, In the County of Leicester:

... Gleabe Lands none: (unless 4 balks In the field, and a piece of land, called Reedam, may be reckoned as such; of which Reedam, something more by & by will be said).

The manner of Tything follows: All Corn, wheat, Barly, Oates, pease, growing on the yard Land, or Homesteads (excepting a portion of Land formerly belonging to Mr. John Allen) pay Tythe in Kind. All sheepe wintered in the fields pay Tythe in kind when clipt by the Owners: the account of sheepe is taken on Candlemas day: all sheepe summered in the field pay ob [halfpenny] a piece. Sheepe wintered in Houghton, though sould to other Inhabitants of the Town, pay Tythe in kind. If sheepe wintered In Houghton be sold, if the owner buy in more, Tythe in kind is paid of so many as were wintered, and ob for the rest: sheepe wintered in the field, though removed into other Lordships, pay Tythe in Kind when clipt by the Owners: sheepe wintered in Houghton dying after Candlemas pay ob. The Lambbs

2 Manton, Robert, A Terrar, with an account of the dues (Tything) belonging to the parsonage of Houghton on the hill, In the County of Leicester, September 30, 1707, Lincolnshire Archives: Houghton on the Hill parish records, Tet/17/42.

of sheepe wintered in Houghton falling in the field of Houghton pay Tythe in kind. Every Yard Land on in Houghton payes 6d a year for May-silver. Piggs, pigeons, Eggs, Apples, pears, other fruits and honey are due in Kind: every Cow and Calf pay 2d, A strapper a 1d: a new milched 2d, a fole 2d: house and waxshot [for maintenance of lights in church] 3d ob is to be paid at Easter. As for the manner of Tything wool, thus: 10 fleeces pay one to the parson, which he is to choose after the parissioner hath chosen 2. five fleeces pay ob a piece, seven a whole fleece, six half an one: the like manner for Lambs, which are due the 3rd of May (when one fleece out of seven, eight or nine is paid, tis said, an half penny, till they come to tenn, is to be allowed to ye owner). Tythe honey is usually paid: viz. the 10th penny when the hive is sold: the Tythe for the mill hath formerly paid ten groats a year at Easter: (I heare not of any Easter Roll.)

There are three yard Land and a half that pay not Tythe: they formerly belonged to one Mr. John Allen: but now are sold in parcels & possessed by others: tis not Known (as I can learn) how they came to be exempted from paying Tythes. ...

... Having gone thus far, I come now to a very pertinent matter, which deserves to be noted: it is this. There is in Houghton field, A parcel of Land, containing about 3 or 4 Acres: it is commonly called Reedam: of this piece of ground the Rectors of Houghton have yearly had the Hay growing on it, time out of mind: the oldest inhabitants of the Town never Knew it otherwise, till of late: it hath been a constant custom in Easter weeke for the Rector to tender ten shillings to the parissioners, and there custom was to return it him back again so that the Rectors of Houghton have time out of mind enjoyed the crop of hay arising from that piece of ground in Houghton field commonly call’d and known by the name of Reedam, without any trouble about it; till of late: but now for these Two years past, some few persons of the Town have about hay time forcibly driven in the Town-herd of cattel to eat up and destroy the grass ready to be mowed, pretending that it ought to be common to the Town so that the present Rector has had no benefit of Reedam for these two years past, but is left to get satisfaction for their trespass on Reedam as he can: about fifteen yeares agoe, the like trespass was made upon Reedam, but in the conclusion the trespassers were fain to comply with the Rector (Joseph Birkhead) and to make him satisfaction for the damage done: I heare not of any publick Record belonging to the Town that might determine the right in thy case; but it is generally known and owned that for these threescore or fourscore years past, the Rectors successively without interruption (till this of late) have yearly had the profits of Reedam, as to the hay, arising from it. After the hay is gotten, it becomes common, being (as is said) Lammas ground.

Houghton on ye Hill

Robert Manton, Rector of Houghton

This practice continued until 1766 when the open fields and commonable places in Houghton on the Hill were enclosed as recorded by Nichols. In an act passed in 1765 [under the 1764 Enclosure Act of George III], for inclosing several open fields and commonable places in Houghton on the Hill, and containing about 1800 acres, ... the rev. George Coulton the elder, clerk, as patron

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and incumbent, and entitled to all the tithes of corn and grain arising within such parts of the said fields as are not tithe-free, and to an annual modus, or rate-tithe, of 6d for every yard-land within the said fields, which is not tithe-free, as an equivalent for all the tithe-hay arising from such yard-lands, and also to the tithe of the wool and lamb, and all other payments within the said parish to the rector thereof; and likewise in his own right a proprietor of land in the said fields, and entitled to right of common therein ... The allotment to the rector was to consist of 200 acres of the said fields, upon an average of the whole, in lieu of all tithes and payments whatsoever, whether in open field or old inclosures, except mortuaries, surplice-fees, and certain tithes payable to the rector from the windmill.

The actual award was one hundred and eighty two acres one rood and twenty two perches or thereabouts considered by the Commissioners to be equivalent to two hundred acres of average land.

Personal Details

Keith Oldham, M.A., Ph.D., C.Eng., F.I.Mech.E. was Professor of Knowledge-based Engineering at Coventry University until his retirement in 2000. He is currently churchwarden of the parish church of St. Catharine, Houghton on the Hill, Leicestershire.