

Devon County Sites and Monuments Register

Parish Ringmore (Near Kingsbridge)	National Grid Reference SX 6520 4595	Number (leave blank)	
Subject The Barn	Measurements (Sketch with scale overleaf if possible) Approx. 50' X 25'		
Description , history, field notes and other information. (Please fill in a separate sheet for each separate item) <p>The building is a stone house set back about twenty feet from a lane, from which it is separated by a high stone wall and a courtyard. There is a stone-built extension (20'6 X 20'6) across the west end of the courtyard, which extends beyond the main building. This extension appears to have been built at a later date than the boundary wall, which continues below the wall of the extension.</p> <p>Access to the house is by an external stone staircase, leading to the first floor. This staircase appears to have been added to the building after its original construction. There are traces of earlier openings, between thick stone piers, in the wall behind the staircase.</p> <p>The building was originally roofed with very large natural slates, but it now has an asbestos slate roof.</p> <p>In 1768, this building was given by the then Lord of the Manor, Francis Kirkham, to the poor of the Parish - for all time. Unfortunately, the building had no endowment and, in 1840, the Church having assumed responsibility for it, sold it to R. Rowe, who was then Lord of the Manor, for £33. It became a barn for his Higher Manor Farm. (See attached account by F.C. Hingeston-Randolph.)</p> <p>When the present owners acquired the building, in 1973, the ground floor had been used to house cattle and there was a hay loft above. The west end had been a dairy and in the south-west corner of this was a large bread oven, with a domed roof. The bread oven probably dates from before the building became a barn. It has now been blocked up but is said to be still in good condition.</p> <p>The rear of the building is set into the ground, up to first floor level. There was an opening in the rear wall at ground level, by which horses entered to work a grinding wheel above the dairy. A shute below this opening, covered by stone slabs, led to the dairy. Another shute, from the north side of the grinding area, led to the</p> <p>Please continue overleaf if necessary</p>		Reference for each piece of information	Date of each entry 1986
Owner/ Tenant Name and address Mr and Mrs J. Borne The Barn Ringmore		Recorder Name and address Mrs A.C. Bennett Hill Cottage Ringmore	

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stone extension, at the front of the building. The floor of the grinding area (approx. 20' X 20') had very thick pitch-pine floorboards and these were supported by a very thick beam running from east to west. The beam is still in position, below the ceiling of the old dairy. It has notches, where it fitted earlier joists.

In the north-east corner of the ground floor area was an old well, surrounded by a cobbled floor. This has now been cemented over.

In the south-east corner, steps led to a narrow old door. The steps were removed in 1973 and the door was replaced by a window.

In the north wall of the building, there were, before conversion, three doors and three windows at ground floor level. One door led from the dairy; one emerged below the external staircase & is now blocked up and one, leading to the old well, is now a window. At first floor level, there was, as at present a door at the head of the external staircase and a window.

The interior of the building has now been completely modernised. Almost the whole of the first floor is open-plan, forming a room measuring 45' X 19'6", with a new fireplace and chimney at the west end. The south-east corner has been divided off to form a small room and a new open staircase has been built along the south wall. A suspended false ceiling is open to the roof timbers. There are signs of earlier roof timbers at a slightly lower level than the present ones.

In the south-east corner of the first floor, is a very large old fireplace, which has long been blocked-in - perhaps when the building became a barn.

There is a blocked-up door in the east wall, between two old windows, which still exist.

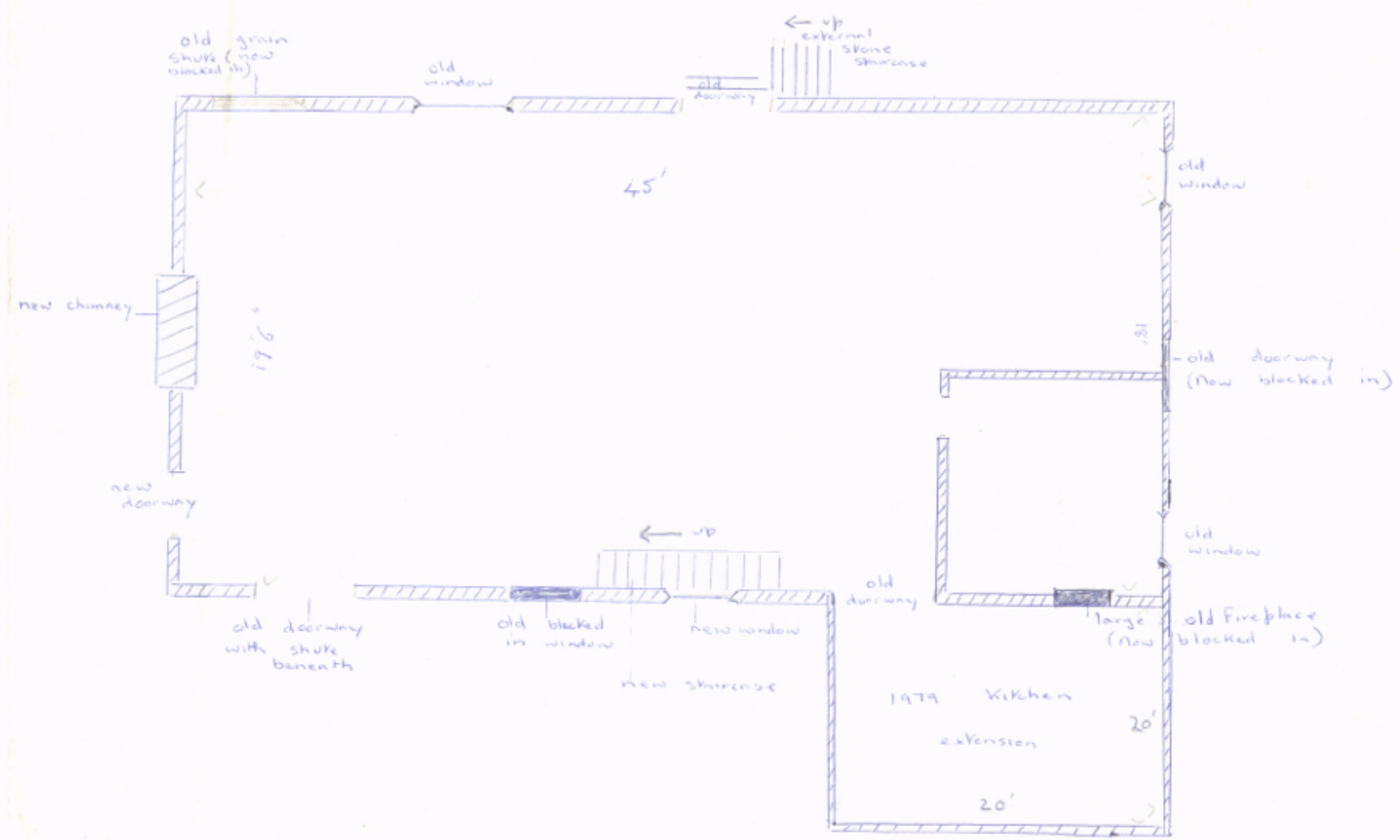

To the south of the first floor, a kitchen extension was built in 1979.

The south wall of the ground floor, which is entirely below ground level, has been lined with a false wall enclosing a two-foot cavity, in order to keep it dry.

The open area of the ground floor has been divided into three bedrooms, a bathroom and a toilet.

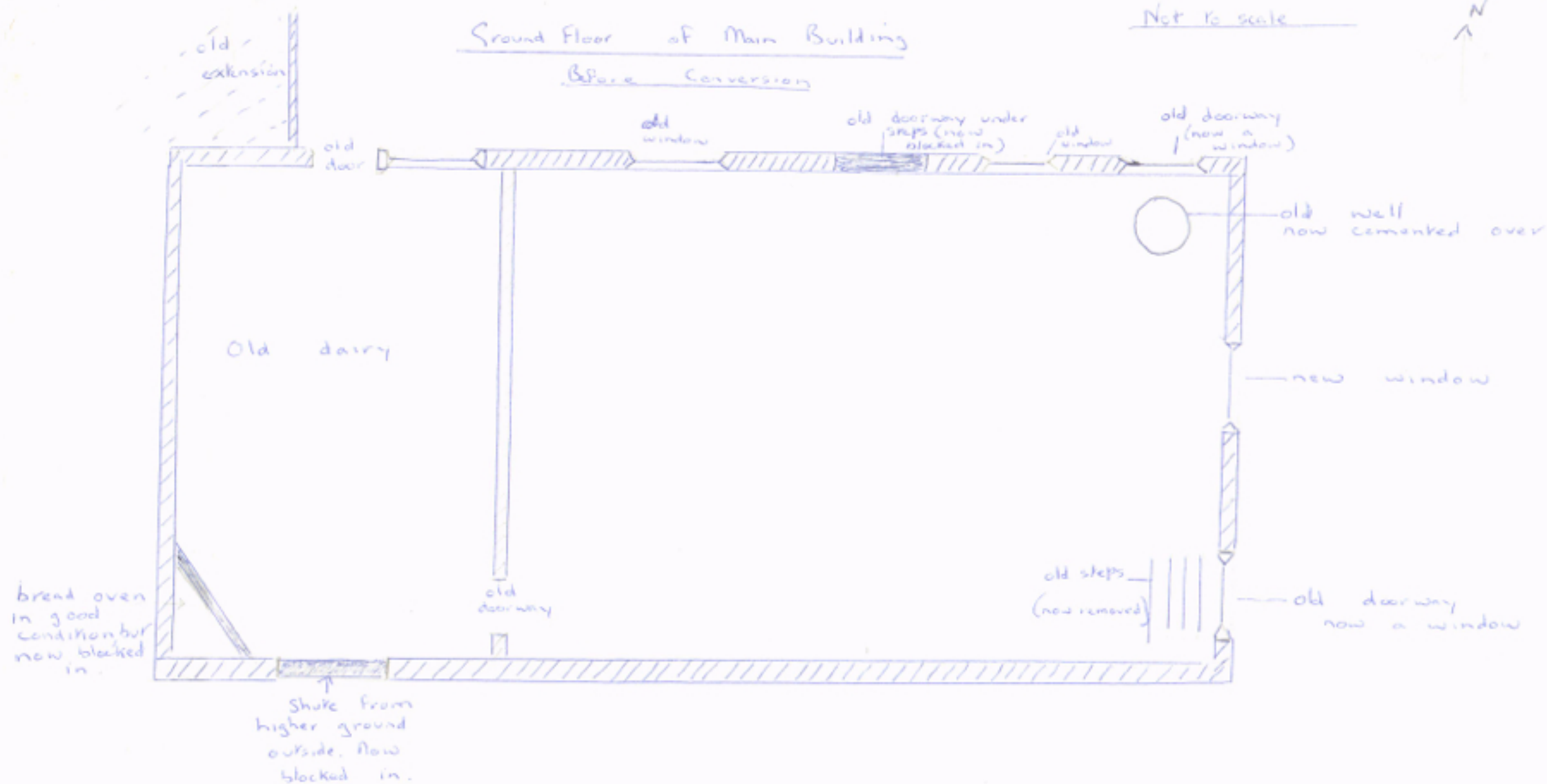
First Floor of Main Building.

Not to scale



Ground Floor of Main Building
Before Conversion

Not to scale



Up and Down the Deanery

By the Rural Dean

Chapter XXXVII - Ringmore (continued)

I alluded, in a former chapter, to the fact that this Francis Kirkham, who sold the Manor in 1759, had previously given to the poor of the parish, for ever, a house of refuge for their declining years, close to the church; and I promised to say something more about this thoughtful gift to the worn-out labourer. Its history is a strange and, from my point of view, a cruel one; and I have often regretted that I was not Rector of Ringmore some twenty years sooner, that I might have had my say in the matter, when the proposal for its alienation came up. This house of rest, it must not be forgotten, was given to "the Poor"; it was not given to "the parish," by which I mean the parish-vestry and the "overseers" of the poor. No doubt, it had come to be used as a "poor house"; but it was nothing of the sort; for all that: it was the heritage of the poor themselves. But the poor had few friends in those times, and no friends at all, I fear, when questions of rates were concerned; and in those dead old days, when men had not learnt, because they had not been taught, that "there is no respect of persons with Him," and in an out-of-the-way place like this, the poor were quite helpless when their little heritage was claimed as parish property; and, probably enough, none of them knew, by that time, that the house had been freely given to them nearly a hundred years before, and that it was their very own. I daresay, too, that the process had been a gradual one; the poor could not keep their "home" in repair; and as there was no one here, then, to help them and plead their cause, they were, probably, glad enough to have the necessary work done for them by any one who would undertake to do it. And so it came to pass that our little "almshouse," (which unhappily had no endowment whatever), became a reputed "poor-house," and its true history was, perhaps, forgotten by all.

The old parish book shows that it was sold, in 1839, to the then Lord of the Manor (who was, probably, very glad to get rid of an encumbrance on his estate, and who, speedily, turned it into a very useful cattle house, and a granary-barn for his tenant of the higher farms), for the sum of £33. And so, for ever, passed away from our poor that which had been given to them, for ever, by one who remembered the poor, and was careful to do something for their lasting help, before he sold to another the heritage (for so many centuries) of his antient race.

The old book shows, further, what the "parish" did with the money; and it was very far, indeed from being the most creditable part of the transaction. They lost no time in spending it; and this is how it was done. Church-rates, as we know, were levied on a large scale in those days, and were applied for all sorts of local purposes. Someone killed a fox on the 15th of December, 1840, and he had seven shillings for his pains. The year before, another fox had expiated his raids on the poultry-yard by his death, and the same sum, paid to the slayer, was brought into the account. A local lawyer had two pounds, our parish's share of his bill "about Prowse (and others from the parish of Bigbury) who had been transported." They gave the "Parson" a new "Surplice," with a bag to keep it in, at a cost of £1 16s 10d. The highway rate being behind hand, they cleared off the balance against the parish, and the rest of the money, except for one notable item, went to discharge the liabilities of the Churchwardens, on the general account of the Church-rates. Finally—and this is the exception alluded to,—they took the view which was usual in those days of the injunction not to "muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn;" they felt, no doubt, that the labourer was worthy of his reward; and so they devoted the sum of £4 0s 7d to what used to be called "settling the account," that is to say, giving themselves a good dinner at the public-house. So lavish was the expenditure, that year, that, in addition to the purchase-money of the Poor-House, they had to make a Church-rate of some £12, and only the meagre balance of five shillings and ninepence remained, when all was over, to the credit of the next year.

There are still old people living in our village who remember, with affectionate appreciation of its comfort and value, their old "Poor-House;" under whose shadow their Fathers and Mothers had spent their last days, when the active battle of their laborious life was over, in happiness and peace. The labourer's task was done in the ease of all that dwelt therein. They had always been friends and neighbours in the village outside; and now they were only brought a little nearer together, under a common roof-tree, old jealousies and the little quarrels of the Past forgotten; all living in contemplation of the near approach of their great change, and the prospect of being soon conveyed to their last Home in the quiet Churchyard, which they could see from their windows. It was a most comfortable and home-like place; and round the common hearth, day after day, when the shades of even began to fall, it was their wont to gather—as one family—and talk over old days and old ways. They are all, let us hope, at rest, now, awaiting the Day when they will be called to a better Home "that is, an Heavenly." Their children, and children's children, know only by our village tradition what was once given to them, and by them has been lost—"for ever;" they dread to think of the substitute provided for them.