

## Compton Dando Church Estate Properties in 1878

Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century most of the income of the Church Estate was derived from rented land and cottages. Much of this was let by the usual west-country tenure of copyhold for lives with low annual rents and fines for renewal. By 1878 many of the cottages were in a poor condition and the well-known land agent, Henry Spackman of Bath, was employed to advise on the management of the properties. He reported that the Feoffees possessed 104 acres of land, mostly scattered across the parish, but with 45 acres in one block. The land included some former strips in the large area of arable on the eastern side of the parish, and enclosures on the former common in the western part of the parish. After much negotiation between the Feoffees and the Popham estate this common had finally been enclosed and fenced in 1845. Henry Spackman also reported that the Feoffees possessed 18 cottages in various parts of the parish. He advised that 10 of these cottages should be retained and put into good repair, and that 8 cottages which were in very bad condition should be sold.

Most of the cottages had two rooms downstairs and two bedrooms; they were old, with thatched roofs, no drainage and badly in need of major renovation. The lack of drainage meant that at some cottages the stench was dreadful, and accumulations of dung and filth were close to the wells which supplied drinking water for the tenants. The cottage east of Blackers Mead and south of Compton Green Farm had a pig-sty with 12 pigs close to the well, it is now demolished and the ruins, together with the well, survive in a thickly-wooded copse. Two cottages at Woollard had rotten thatch on the roofs, decayed timber and badly leaning walls. Spackman concluded that these cottages would have to be pulled down and rebuilt. The Feoffees decided to accept Spackman's advice and sell the worst eight cottages, but agreed to keep the others and retain the land, some of which was said to be particularly valuable because of its proximity to the Popham estate park and game preserve. The sale was held at the Grand Hotel, Bristol in 1878; the expenses came to £14. The eight cottages were sold for £463, mostly to sitting tenants. The two cottages by the bridge at Woollard each made £60. Two cottages on Compton Green made £70 each; Yew Tree Cottage above Woodborough Mill was sold for £60. The cottage above Blackers Mead made £40. The rest of the proceeds came from the two cottages which were apparently in better condition. One on Compton Green was occupied by Edwin Harding of the famous cheese-making family, the other was in the centre of the village and is now known as Church View.

Later other cottages were sold. For example, in 1917 the cottage beside Cherry Orchard Farm which is now demolished was sold for £90. By 1925 all the cottage property had been sold, and during the following years most were completely rebuilt and greatly extended by the new owners.

[From Church Estate records in Somerset Record Office DD/CD 14]