

Tithes were described as " the tenth part of the increase arising each year from such things as do yield an increase yearly by the Act Of God ". They were therefore estimated not as a rent, but on the natural product of the land.

They were known in very early times (see Deuteronomy Chap. 12 Verse 6) , and existed in this country in the Anglo Saxon days. In the medieval period they were devoted to the maintenance of the fabric of the church, the use of the Bishop and of the incumbent, and to some extent to the feeding of the poor and the entertainment of strangers.

When the incumbent was entitled to the whole tithe of a parish, he was termed a Rector, and on him was cast the burden of repairing the church. It was, however, the custom for him to be responsible only for the part he occupied. namely the chancel and the sanctuary, the parishioners paying for the cost of repairs or alterations to the parts used by the public - the nave, pews, galleries and the rest of the church. This would account for the Minutes of the Warden and Society of Sutton Coldfield recording information about the re-building of the nave, new pews, galleries and new bells in the 18th century, and how these expenses were met by using and selling oak trees from Sutton Park. No references to repairs or alterations to the chancel are made anywhere in those Corporation Minutes.

It is interesting to observe that even though the tithe system is abolished and the church estates are now administered by the Church Commissioners, the maintenance of both the chancel and sanctuary in Holy Trinity is paid for by the Commissioners, and that of the nave and the rest of the church by the Parish Council -- a custom which has not changed since feudal times.

There were three kinds of Tithes :- Praedial, Mixt, and Personal. Praedial Tithes were " on such as arose merely and immediately from the ground " namely on grain of all sorts, hay, wood, fruits and herbs.

Mixt Tithes were on animals " living on the ground and nourished by the fruits thereof " e.g. colts, calves, lambs, chickens and the produce obtained from them :- eggs, milk, cheese.

Personal Tithes were on " such profits as do arise from the honest labour and industry of man employing himself in some personal work, artifice or negotiation, being the tenth part of the clear gain after charges deducted ". This latter applied to profits from water mills and " liveings " from work on the land, but was eventually withdrawn with the introduction of Income Tax.

A detailed record of the Sutton Coldfield Tithes received by the Rev. John Riland (senior) as Rector of Holy Trinity in 1698 has been preserved together with the Glebe Terrier of Sutton Rectory, in the Lichfield Diocese Record Office.

This record of the tithes in 1698 divides Sutton into eight areas, i.e. Great Sutton (High Street, Mill Street, Coleshill Street and adjacent areas); Hill;

Hill Hooke; Little Sutton; Moore and Ashfurlong; Beyond the Wood (which was mainly to the East of the present Fox Hollies Road); Wormley; and many and the Wild. These were all separate settlements connected by cart tracks or bridle paths, and were all within the Parish of Holy Trinity, Sutton.

The Tithes for the Rector are shown to have come from the various " liveings " and profits from the mills, and in addition were paid in kind, the hay being stored in the Vesey stone tithe barn which stood on the East side of Sutton High Street where the railway bridge now crosses. The cottagers who had too small a holding paid a fixed tithe, usually two pence per cottage per annum, - which, to form a monetary comparison with present day workers would be the equivalent of about one day's pay. The more wealthy people, living in houses, paid the Rector annually amounts varying from four pence to one shilling; their names together with those of all the cottagers are recorded in the list of tithe payments, and thus forms a " census " of Sutton for that period.

It can be summarised as follows :-

Areas of the Parish.	"Liveings"	Cottages	Houses	Received by the Rector		
				£	s	d.
Great Sutton	10	54	20	2	4	4.
Hill	7	30	5		7	11.
Hill Hooke	-	22	-		3	8.
Little Sutton	12	26	10		10	4.
Moore & Ashfurlong	14	36	13	1	5	10.
Beyond the Wood		14	12		17	10.
	20	14	8	2	4	
Many and the Wild	5	34	11	3	12	9.
Wiggingshill	<u>11</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8.</u>
Totals :-	<u>86</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>£ 12</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>

Signed : John Riland, Rector.

Concerning Wiggingshill, it is stated : -

" Item : The Tenth of all Corne is paid to the Rector except the Corne that grows within that parte of the parish called the Fee of Wiggingshill aforesd, and the Corne growing there, the two thirds are paid to the Rector, and the other third paid to the Impropiator of Curdworth. "

Note that included in Maney and the Wylde is the New Hall Estate and mill. for which George Sacheverell Esq. paid £ 3 - 0 - 0.

The amounts then paid may seem very small, amounting in all to £ 12 - 7 - 11, but by to-day's standards this would represent an income in cash for the Rector of £12,000 - £15,000 per year. This money was greatly supplemented by the tithes

received in kind, and also other charges which are explained in the following extract from the 1698 Tithe for Sutton :-

- " Item : There is due from each house and Garden to the Rector. Four Pence. If a house and noe Garden then Three Pence, with a Penny for every Cow and a half-penny for every calf under Seven, but if Seven there is one Calf to the Rector.
- " Item : There is due to the Rector for every Pig under Seven one half-penny, but if Seven then One Pig is due to the Rector.
- " Item : There is due to the Rector for every Lamb under Seven one half-penny, but if Seven then One Lamb is due to the Rector.
- " Item : Mortuaries are due to the Rector as the Statute allows.
(N.B. A Mortuary was a gift claimed by an incumbent from the estate of a deceased person).
- " Item : Due to the Rector for persons being marryed by virtue of a Lycence, Five shillings. And for publishing of Banns and marrying persons by publication, there is due to the Rector Two shillings and Sixpence.
- " Item: Due to the Rector for every burying Sixpence, and for Churching every Woman Four Pence.
- " Item : Due to the Rector every Tenth Fleece of Wool as it fall from the Sheep, and according to antient custom there is One Fleece due to the Rector out of Seven and Two out of seventeen.
- " Item : According to ancient Custom there is due to the Rector for every Colt One Penny.
- " Item : Due to the Rector, the Tythe of Bees, Apples and Eggs.
- " Item : Due to the Rector for every Servant, Two Pence, and for every Sonn or Daughter which is of years to receive the Sacrament - One Penny.
- " Item : Due to the Rector, Herbage from every Forrainer that holds Land in this parish and depastures Cattle thereon.

(N.B. A Forrainer was anyone living outside Sutton).

Such a high income in cash, kind and fees was zealously guarded over the centuries by the Rectors of Holy Trinity, and was claimed up to the last quarter of the 19th century even on the railway to Lichfield which Cut across the Sutton tithe lands.

In the 18th century a dispute concerning the tithes arose when Simon Luttrell of Four Oaks Hall, having by an Act of Parliament enclosed 48 acres of Sutton Park in order to enlarge his adjoining estate, refused to pay a tithe on this encroachment, maintaining that he had acquired land on which no tithe was due,

Item There is due from each house & Garden to the Rector
00.00.04 if a house & not Garden then 5^s wth a penny for every Cow
and a half penny for every calf under seven but if seven there
is one Galf. to the Rector...

Item There is due to the Rector for every Pig under seven one
half penny but if seven then one Pig is due to the Rector.

Item There is due to the Rector for every Lamb under seven
one half penny, but if seven then one Lamb is due to the Rector

Item Mortuaries are due to the Rector as the Statute allows.

Item due to the Rector for persons being married by virtue
of a Licence 00.05.00 And for publishing of Banns and
marrying persons by publication there is due to the Rector
00.02.06.

Item due to the Rector for every burying 00.00.06 And for
Churching every Woman 00.00.04

Item due to the Rector every Tenth Fleece of Wool as it
falls from the Sheep and according to ancient custom there
is one fleece due to the Rector out of seven, and two out
of seventeen...

Item According to ancient Custom there is due to the Rector
for every Colt one penny.

Item due to the Rector the Tenth of Bees Apples and Eggs.

Item due to the Rector for every Servant two pence and for every
Son or daughter which is of years to receive the Sacrament.

Item Due to the Rector Herbage from every Towner that
holds Land in this parish and depastures Cattle
thereon.

From the
Sutton Coldfield Tithe record of 1698.

for Sutton Park was always exempt from tithes. The Rector, the Rev. Richard Bisse Riland commenced legal proceedings, and the matter was speedily decided in favour of the Rector.

In 1796 there must have been comment in Sutton that the Rector was doing well from his tithes, for in April that year the Rev. John Riland (who was then the Rector) wrote a letter to " All the Occupiers of Corn Land " in the Parish pointing out that the money he had received for the sale of corn from his tithe of the last harvest was only about one third of the current market price.

The last year he wrote, " I received only 6 shillings an Acre for the Tithe of Wheat, when the Worth of it was, at a moderate Computation, 20 shillings, or 24 shillings or 26 shillings - and that without the straw. For the Tithe of an Acre of Barley, I received only 5 shillings, when the Worth of it was, at a moderate Computation, 15 shillings or more, without the straw. Observe that like Computations may be made respecting Oats, in Proportion to their lesser Value ".

He offered, for the coming harvest, to sell the tithe corn back to the farmers at a fixed price of 10 shillings for every acre of wheat, 8 shillings for every acre of barley and 7 shillings for every acre of oats.

He felt that some explanation was needed of his entitlement to the tithes, for he concluded his letter :-

" SHOULD any of you be disposed to ask me for what Reason I make this Rise in the Tithe, I am very willing, in Condescension, to answer : It is that I may receive what is the Order of God for me, and his Gift to me : What the Law of the Land allots me, and secures to me : and what all Equity and Reason claim, in my Station ; by your Means, acting justly for myself, and not unjustly to you : and, another Reason is, (and which is the most pleasing Part of the Business) that I may, by an Addition to my Income, be better enabled to assist my poor Parishioners next Winter than I could last; through the small, very small Portion of the Value of the Tithe, the last Harvest; which I was contented, for your Benefit, to receive from you. "

This offer of accepting money rather than corn in kind, and the implication that the tithe system in Sutton might be modified, must have encouraged the gentlemen farmers to wonder if a reduction or even an abolition of the tithes might be possible, for the minutes of the Warden and Society dated 7th September 1805 record that a committee of freeholders (i.e. the more wealthy landowners) had recommended that " All lands within the Parish be exonerated from Tythes. That the Rector and Patrons of the Living be requested to accept an allotment of Land in lieu of Tythes, and That in case such terms shall not be accepted by the Rector, a Corn Rent be offered: which Corn Rent shall be subject to be regal at ed at stated Periods to be agreed upon. "

This appeal was supported by the Corporation, and, after lengthy discussions and correspondence, the Rector, the Rev. John Riland agreed to payments by Corn Rent – an arrangement which was in 1836 enforced throughout the country by the Tithe Commutation Act .

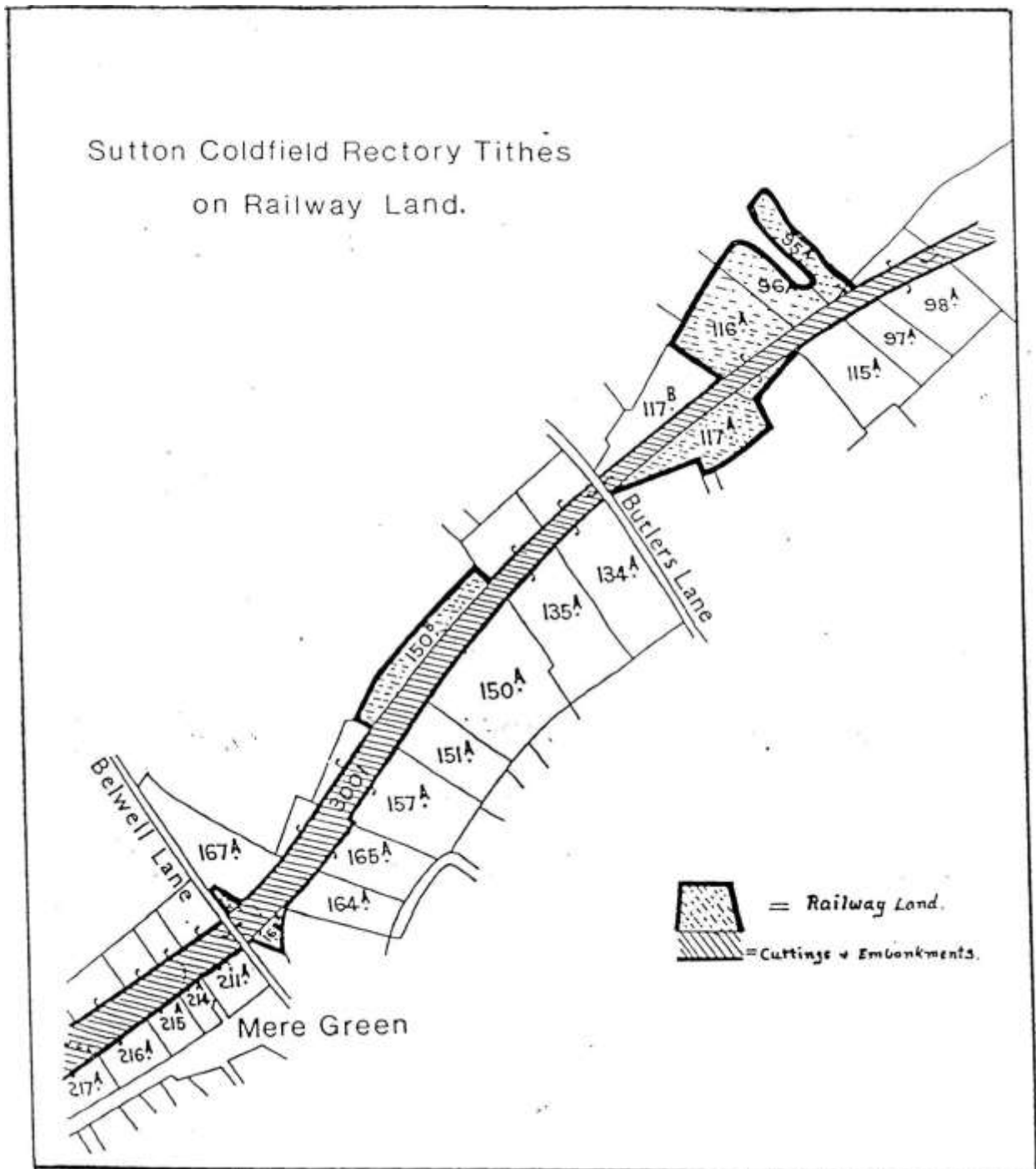
In 1824, a survey was made of the whole of Sutton and a Corn Rent Map was produced to a large scale, with an accompanying reference book showing the ownership, tenancy, acreage, Corn Rent value and name of every field. It can be studied in the Sutton Cold field Local Reference Library.

The total acreage of all the fields amounted to 7,081 acres 2 roods & 8 poles. producing in lieu of a tithe for the Rector a Rent of £1,587 – 5 – 3½d annually. To bring this amount up to current figures, as a comparison it is useful to observe that it is recorded in the Warden and Society Minutes of 7th January 1827 that the headmistress of Hill Girls' School was paid a full time salary of £30 per year; the Rector was therefore receiving annually from the Corn Rent 53 times that amount, so if the salary of a present day schoolteacher could be multiplied by 53 the recipient would be very rich, and it is easy to understand why the Rectors of those days, by receiving tithes, have justifiably been described as the wealthiest people in Sutton.

The diligence of the Rectors in claiming all that was legally theirs is revealed as recently as 1889 when an agreement was reached with the London and North Western Railway Company on the Corn Rent due from them for the railway embankments and cuttings on their line between Chester Road and Blake Street. The plan accompanying the agreement shows that 62 acres 0 roods 28 poles of land were involved, and that from this, £15 – 4 – 9½d was due to the Rector annually.

•The retirement of the Rev. William Campbell Riland Bedford in 1909 marked the close of the era lasting 200 years during which time the Riland / Bedfords had been not only the Rectors but the Patrons of the living as well, and were thereby entitled to decide who should be the incumbent at Holy Trinity. The advowson passed to the bishop of Birmingham who selected -the Rev. Canon Charles William Barnard to be the Rector, the financial matters transferring to the Church Commissioners for administration and distribution.

Sutton Coldfield Rectory Tithes
on Railway Land.



A Corn Rent in lieu of Tithes was paid to the Rector by the London and North Western Railway Company on former tithe fields or parts of fields over which the railway had been made between Chester Road and Blake Street.

The above plan is from the railway map of 1889 showing a section between Mere Green and North of the present Butlers Lane Station. with its railway owned fields and track on which the Rent was paid.



Location of the Little Sutton fields in the present-day road lay-out.