

A History of the Charter and Chudleigh's West End

Foreword

I have always been interested in Chudleigh's local history. Looking out from my bungalow window one day I realised there was enough history surrounding me on the Parade to arouse interest in a historical researcher. The various uses the parish has made of it over the past 700 years or so are worth recording.

I have extracted a parcel of land from the parish Tithe map of 1838 (Figures 1 & 2), anciently called the West End, and taken a hypothetical line from Old Fairfield House down Parade to the Pound House at the head of Chudleigh Station hill, across to Beechwood and returning up Oldway to Old Fairfield House.

The area of this rough triangle principally consisted of three meadows, originally called Great, Long and Fairfield, recognised on the aforementioned map and associated Tithe Apportionment List as Beachwood (nos. 1359–1361), Pottery Field (1356–1358) and Fairpark (1351). It was for this triangle of land that the Chudleigh Charter of 1309 was granted to Bishop Walter Stapledon on the understanding that any revenue resulting from the fairs and shows held thereon would promote the well-being of the community.

Abutting the lane leading down Oldway on the right-hand side was another parcel of land included in the Charter. This was set aside for the accommodation of the poor and needy of the parish. Anciently referred to as land between Linhay and Brownsland (or Brownsland, 1362), it appears on the Tithe map as numbers 1015 (house), 1016 (garden), 1017 (linhay) and 1018 (garden).

— Desmond Shears, 2018

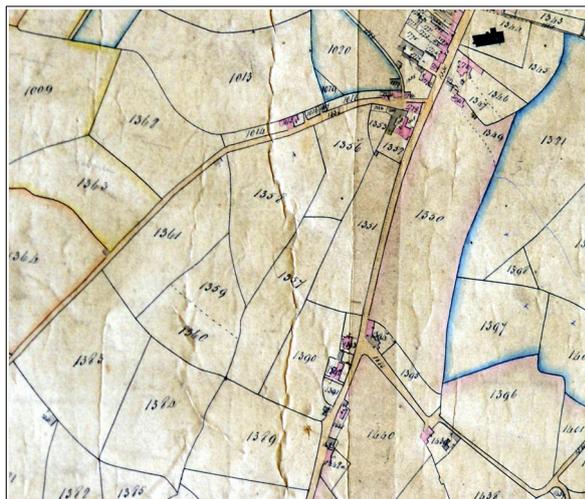


Figure 1. The West End area
(extract from the 1838 tithe map)

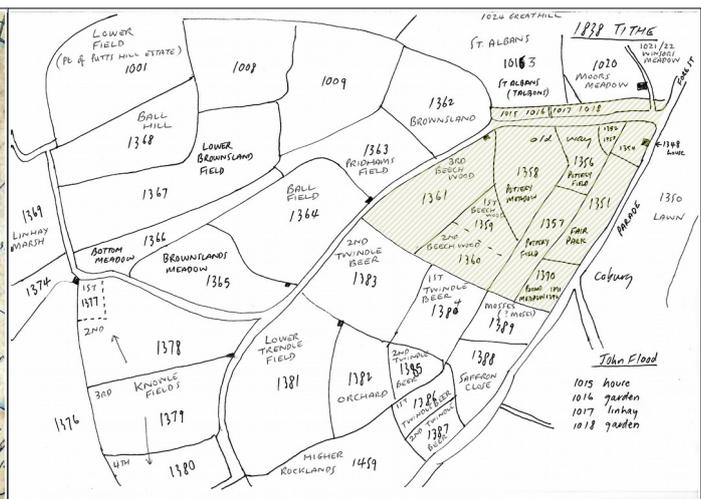


Figure 2. Field names associated with land parcel numbers in Figure 1. Des' triangle is shaded.

Walter de Stapledon — Bishop of Exeter 1307–1326



Figure 3. Walter de Stapledon (1261–1326), Bishop of Exeter. Detail from his effigy in Exeter Cathedral (source: Wikipedia)

The bishop, as head of the Diocese, governed lands from the Somerset border, through Devon and into Cornwall. It included the Bishops' Palace in Chudleigh, built in the early 12th century by Bishop Osborne and was one of the bishops' summer palaces. The bishop controlled everything that occurred within the Diocese, be it church, borough law courts and the right to collect dues and taxes on the fairs and markets. In his official capacity of 'Treasurer of the Realm' Bishop Stapledon applied to King Edward II in 1309 for the granting of Chudleigh's Charter which included holding markets and fairs on stipulated dates.

At a considerable fee the Charter was granted for the next 200 years and four elected members of the Parish Governing Board were appointed to undertake the management of subsequent markets and fairs.

During King Edward II's reign, and in his position as Treasurer of the Realm, Bishop Stapledon spent much of his time in his London residence and became a prominent

member of the Royal Circle. This proved to be his undoing as he became embroiled in a royal power struggle. During rioting the bishop was pulled from his horse and murdered. His body lies in a tomb in Exeter Cathedral (Figure 3).

The Dissolution of the Monasteries — 1536

After a distinguished church career John Voysey became Bishop of Exeter in 1519. He found favour with King Henry VIII who appointed him tutor to his daughter, Mary, and also set him the task of selling or letting the common lands within the King's control. He granted a lease of ninety-nine years to the Duke of Somerset, the Lord Protector of England, for the manor town of Chudleigh, Park Palace and Lime Kiln. The King had again sanctioned the Chudleigh Charter, updating it from 1309.

Within three years of obtaining the Chudleigh lease the Duke of Somerset had fallen out of favour and he was beheaded on Tower Hill during January 1552, with the lease reverting to the King.

In 1550 Parke was purchased by Sir Piers Courtenay whose daughter, Anne, married Anthony Clifford, the Ugbrooke Estate passing to their son, Thomas, in 1604. The remaining manor, town, markets and fairs, along with the Chudleigh Charter, passed into the hands of Thomas Bridges. He was a royal courtier at the King's Palace, with a home address in Tangle, Oxfordshire.

An indenture dated May 1597 between Thomas Bridges and Henry Clifford, including twenty-two others on behalf of the parish, obtained for a fee of £150 the markets, fairs, market halls and playing grounds, plus the plot of ground being Old Way, between Chudleigh town and Broomsland Gate on the south part which has always been used for the said fairs. This indenture stresses again that all tolls and dues from the markets and fairs contribute to the Chudleigh charities.

It is also recorded in 1597 that Thomas Bridges, when selling the Charter to Chudleigh parish, also sold the Manor of Chudleigh to Thomas Hunt of Hams Barton. This title was held by the Hunt family for three generations until it was purchased by Lord Clifford of Ugbrooke in 1695 for the sum of £253.

From the late 1560s the four elected members of the Parish Governing Board had installed an officer to oversee the management of the fairs and their involvement with the woollen trade.

An extract from the ancient church charity read that a Mr Humphrey Pinsent was employed in this capacity during the 17th century. His brief was to oversee the markets on Saturdays and the fairs on designated dates of the year: Easter Tuesday, the third Thursday and Friday in June and the six-day fair commencing on the 2nd October. These dates are recorded in the Chudleigh Charter.

The Fair Ground's Water Supply

As shown on the 1846 Tithe map a natural pond taking water was located at the head of Great Meadow (now Beechwood) and Long Meadow (Pottery Field). The pond discharged water into a gully dissecting the two. The ancient fairs field has an area of land now owned by the Cremona property which gives access to this gully. This water supply served the fairs field for over 300 years until in 1601 another source was used. Chudleigh's pot water supply, rising from the Haldon Hills near Whiteway and excavated during the early years of the 15th century, was used to service a new water shute for the West End of the town in the aforementioned year. The parochial register of 1601 records the seven men of the Parish Governing Board sanctioning this improvement.

This new water supply was taken from the pot water leat flowing through Shute Lands (Play Park) to flow into Old Way where another diversion fed the water into the meadow's service pond. The Shute Lands leat fed water to the Bishops' Palace pond, now the Palace Meadow housing estate. The supply of water to the meadows was regulated and conformed with the allocated fair days. Upon the sale of building plots in the fair fields this provision was still in force to owners of the original meadows as late as the 19th century, although the pond had been filled in and the leat extended to carry water into the grounds of the newly-built Collingwood, now the Vicarage. The town's pot water supply was cut off in 1972 following the construction of the A38 bypass in the Withyhayes area (Heathfield Lake Hill).

Animal Pound

At the southern extreme of my hypothetical triangle, at the head of Station Hill, stood the parish animal pound. Recorded by the Board of Parish Affairs from before the mid-17th century, it was part of the ancient Trendle Bere area. Situated at the southern perimeter of the fairs' fields it played a vital role in the fair's functions. The pound was an enclosure where stray animals from

the fairs and parish highways were kept, only released when owners paid a toll to the pound keeper.

Chudleigh's Play Park and Pinsent's Grammar School



*Figure 4: Porch of the Old Grammar School.
Photo probably taken in the early 1900's*

The Play Park (no. 1345 on the tithe map) was originally a part of the Thomas Bridges' indenture and comprised three acres of land adjoining the church graveyard. This, along with other amenities, came under the church wardens' control.

In 1667 one acre of this land was sold to John Pinsent of Combe in the parish of Croydon for £10. He built a free school for the parishioners of Chudleigh (Figure 4). From then until the present time it has progressed as the Pinsent Foundation, although the school itself closed nearly 100 years ago.

The Charter also enhanced Chudleigh's reputation as a thriving 'wool town' with its woven cloth selling to European markets. However, by 1800 the demise of Chudleigh's woollen industry was almost complete and the original fair fields made redundant. The Charity Governors were creating plots of land from the original Pottery Meadows and fair fields and selling them to industrial buyers. The

1838 Tithe Apportionment records at least ten owners of the original grounds.

From 1800 the three acres of Chudleigh's sporting grounds, now known as the Play Park, became the venue of the Chudleigh Fair.

Eventually the several small charity committees responsible for distributing the rents, fairs and market fees to the poor and needy of the parish amalgamated and became the Chudleigh United Charities. A committee of eleven stalwart trustees from the parish undertook this role as well as the well-being of the Play Park.

The Linhay to Broomslands Gate in Old Way

This area of land was set aside in the Charter for the accommodation of the poor and needy. In 1552 parish registers of the poor were introduced and in 1553 justices of the peace were empowered to raise compulsory funds for the relief of the poor. The poor were placed into different categories:

- *Those willing to work but could not.* These were the able-bodied or deserving poor. They were to be given help or wages in return for labour.

- *Those who could work but would not.* These were the idle poor and were to be whipped through the streets until seeing the error of their ways.
- *Those who were too old, young or ill to work.* These were the impotent or deserving poor and were to be looked after in the alms houses, hospitals or the poor house.
- *Orphans and the children of the poor* were to be given a trade apprenticeship that they could then pursue as adults

In 1597 legislation created a new parish officer position, that of overseer of the poor. The law required at least two officers, although Chudleigh had four. Their duties were to work out how much money would be needed for relief of the poor and set the poor rate accordingly; to collect the poor rate from property owners and to relieve the poor by distributing either food or money and to supervise the parish 'Poor House'.

Although space in the Chudleigh Church House had been allocated for use by the paupers, new legislation and the passing of the 'Elizabethan Poor Law' in 1601 made it apparent this space was not sufficient.

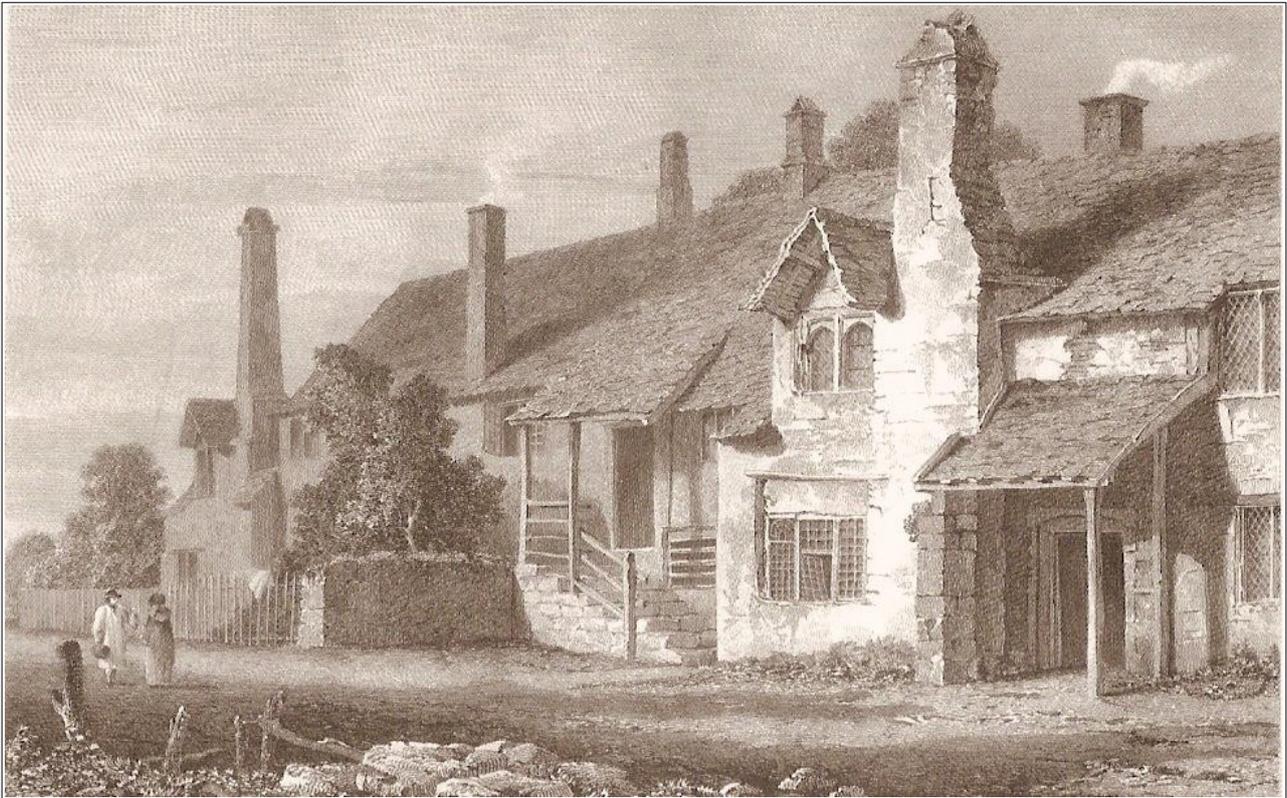
In 1607 at the usual Whitsuntide parish meeting in the Church House officers, including the overseers of the poor, were elected for the coming year. Mindful of the parish responsibilities to the poor, Mr Thomas Clifford (1572-1634), having already collected monies towards the scheme, proposed a larger parish alms house in place of the present one which was rented from Mr John Keene of Poole, and had been for over fifty years. Thomas Clifford retained this money until the parish agreed to erect a suitable building. In 1610 a contract was signed with Jasper Luscombe for the work and building commenced in Old Way which was completed twelve months later. The costs were met partly by public funds and private subscriptions.

Mary Jones in her title History of Chudleigh published in 1852, and later republished in 1875, describes the buildings as consisting of two storeys of five rooms, each with an exterior wooden gallery leading to the upper apartments. These were located in Pottery Lane, now Oldway, near the junction with Fore Street. The building is said to be featured as one of Henry De Cort's 'Six Views of Chudleigh', drawn in 1795 and later published in 1817 (Figure 5).

The aforementioned 1597 legislation also allowed the parish to acquire various properties within the Old Way area which were rented out and the monies raised used to benefit the poor.

The new alms house of 1611, also referred to as the new hospital, placed quite a financial burden on the parish as the following records from the parochial accounts of 1627 and subsequent years show:

- 1627** *The Alms House was cleared and littered with fresh straw for the accommodation of sick soldiers home from the wars in Spain, France and Austria.*
- 1679** *For work done upon the Alms House and for stones.*
- 1734** *Mending the glass of the Alms House.*
- 1750** *Paid for sweeping the Alms House chimneys.*



*Figure 5. One of Henry De Cort's 1795 "Six Views of Chudleigh"
thought to depict the arms houses in Old Way.*

- 1771** *Lyme for the Alms House.
Paid Mr. John Bowden for slats for the Alms House.
Paid labourer 3 days work at the Alms House.
Eighty pounds coarse wool mix with lyme at the Alms House.*

Between 1795-1800 officers and men of the North Devon Militia were at times billeted at the Alms House, which was often referred to as the Barracks.

In 1820 the premises with outbuildings, garden and orchard were being leased from the parish by Mr. John Flood. It was a ninety-nine year lease term from 1781. From before this date Flood had run a pottery business in a premise adjacent to the Alms House. The pottery had given rise to renaming Old Way Lane to Pottery Lane and Great Meadow and Long Meadow to Pottery Meadows. Beechwood Meadows appeared on the 1838 Tithe map for the first time.

In 1823 the charity commissioners carried out a review of the properties owned by the parish. The list of rentals showed John Flood' as the lessee of the two houses, orchard and outbuildings in the Old Way. The review also showed that the lessee had taken down some old cottages and built the present tenements at considerable expense to himself. One can assume that John Flood had destroyed the 1610 alms house.

The same commissioners' review mentioned William Hayes whose freehold land and houses were near the old pottery. He was a farmer living at Moors House, today Great Hill Farm, and passed away in 1874. Moors House was probably the previous home of James Moor who in 1717 drew up an indenture to the effect that income from his Broomsland fields be directed towards the maintenance of a Protestant Minister who would 'officiate, preach and pray' in the said meeting house (the Congregational Chapel in Woodway Street). Next to James Moor's house was Moors Meadow, now the Oldway estate, with the Broomsland fields further down towards the River Teign.

In the 1838 electoral list it would appear that the pottery had ceased production. Upon its demise the dwellings were let by the parish to a succession of tenants. The 1851 census shows one of these to be Henry Brown and his family, who at that time was the master of the National School in Fore Street.

An auction was held in the Clifford Arms on Saturday, June 1st 1878. It comprised five lots of parish properties which were described as follows:

Lot 4 *A parcel of land, orchard and garden plots in the Old Way extending from Broomsland Gate to the western wall of the linhay, together with the cottage and outbuildings thereon*

This lot was purchased by Robert Crook, the owner of Chudleigh newspaper The South Devon Weekly Express.

Lot 5 *Another parcel of land in the Old Way, extending from the said linhay up to the southern corner of the lane leading to Windsor's Meadow; with the dwelling house and premises thereon, the cottage, yard and adjoining outbuildings.*

This lot was purchased by George Tucker for £45.

The aforementioned sales of land and properties severed any title the Charity Governors had over these ancient lands.

Until 1818 Pottery Lane was the main thoroughfare to the old Chudleigh Bridge over the River Teign and then onto Ashburton. The twists and turns of the lane and the narrowness of the bridge made it a hazardous route for horse-drawn vehicles and being that Chudleigh was an important staging post on the Exeter to Plymouth road a new bridge was constructed over the river between 1820-1822 (Figure 6). A new stretch of road through what is now Parade and Station Hill was also constructed to link up with the bridge.

The Parade, now being an integral part of the Western Way, was by 1870 seeing properties being built either side of the road through to Coburg Corner and beyond (Figure 7).



Figure 6: Chudleigh Bridge. 1878 painting by William Cook



Figure 7: Parade, looking towards Coburg, 1910

A plot of land at the commencement of Parade, stated as part of The Lawn in the 1886 survey map, was developed and is now numbers one and two Parade with the detached properties Fairfield and the Clint. The original Fairfield became Old Fairfield. These houses were built by local tradesman Robert Collings, who apparently owned building land on what was the original Fair Park on the Tithe map of 1838. He also built 'Collingwood', a substantial building of local stone, dressed on site by local stonemason Daniel Train, and now the Vicarage. It was previously owned by Colonel Buchan, a local school governor and local dignitary. Collingwood has been the Vicarage since 1953. Robert Collings also built a pavilion for the cricket club during the early 1900s. Around the same time he sold to a Mr Kelly the plot of land now recognised as Desian, Parade, the home of Des and Diane Shears with a covenant against the ground being used for fairs, shows or pleasure pursuits, an obvious reference to the area's ancient usage.

The four brick-built semi-detached houses between Desian and the Vicarage (Parade) were built around 1904, the land between the Vicarage and Coburg being post-war properties. The semi-detached cottages alongside Coburg are 18th century. Coburg House was the home of William and Ellen Rouse in 1841, the catalysts for the Baptist presence in Chudleigh.

Incidentally, the Mid Devon Advertiser on 17 September 1927 carried the following item: 'Coburg Cottage and The Cottage were sold to Miss James for £355 and the adjacent Pound was sold for £20' Both cottages and the Pound were given to the parish in 1904 by a Miss Winter.

Old Way with its sharp descent and acute twists and turns clearly defines the difficulties experienced by coaches and wagons in days gone by to negotiate this stretch of road. The original hedgerow to each bend is set back considerably to enable the coach and wagon drivers to secure the most favourable pieces of ground to drive over. With the decline of traffic down Old Way upon the construction of Parade and the new bridge over the River Teign its width was reduced for the economy of road surfacing. It was banked to leave a void between the bank and the original hedge. Examples of this can be seen in several locations in the parish.

The original Chudleigh Bridge, approximately 100 yards upstream from the 1820's stone structure, would frequently sustain damage through the river breaking its banks on the Teign Marsh flood plain.

Anecdotes

During the 1920s the wealthy owners of the newly-built Saffron Close property, on the right-hand side of Station Hill, Newton Abbot bound, acquired a small plot of land in Beechwood and Great Meadow to plant a few pine trees and scrub in which to rear and hold pheasants for a winter shoot. Their intention was ill-fated; the trees could not provide enough cover and the birds escaped onto open land which provided several roast pheasant dinners to local residents.

The Old Way council estate was built in 1930 but house number 88, known as Tor View, was built in 1890 by the Caunter family and was their family home until 1904. A succession of tenants occupied the property until 1939 when it was sold to the gas company as a home for their manager.

In 1980 a parcel of land next to the old gas works, now Skaigh Engineering, had eleven houses built on it and named Foundry Court. Previously a block of flats stood here until their demolition because of concrete cancer (Moor View flats. The Moor View estate, built on Great Meadow, was acquired by Newton Abbot Rural District Council for the building of a council housing estate in 1949. The aforementioned flats were a part of this complex.

The Beechwood estate, developed during the mid-1960s, was built on the remaining Great Meadow (Figure 8). Along with the Beechwood construction a pair of semi-detached houses were built for tenanted occupation by police officers as part of the Chudleigh force, a procedure much in evidence when building large council estates at that time.

Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government of the 1980s introduced an option to council tenants to purchase their homes. This offer was well received by the tenants of the three estates

— Oldway, Moor View and Beechwood — and they are now predominantly inhabited by owner occupiers. Incidentally, Old Way was formerly named Pottery Lane, the name change occurring in 1913. Beechwood Cottage, built in 1930, was at that time occupied by a Mr Legette and his family. Mr Legette was the gardener for Colonel Buchan at Collingwood, Parade, now the Vicarage.



Figure 8: Beechwood estate under construction, c1967

Pottery Meadow and the Gas Works

In 1856 Mr Whiteway, the miller at Town Mills of Clifford Street, sold part of Pottery Meadow to the newly-formed Chudleigh Gas Company for a sum of £85. Steer Brothers of Hull secured the contract for building the gas works and construction work commenced during the 1860s. In 1865 the company announced it would be producing gas within twelve months. However, this proved wildly optimistic as a local newspaper article of April 1869 stated the town was to be lit partly on the twenty-first of that month. A further press release in June 1869 announced that the street lamps will now be lit by an improved method superseding the cumbersome employment of using ladders. The introduction of gas lighting throughout the town continued and on the 6th September, 1870 the town hall was lit for the first time by gas. In December 1875 the gas company extended the mains to Coburg and erected public gas lamps along Parade. Records show that in September 1884 a decision was taken not to install lighting from Coburg to the station because the cost of £30 in doing so was considered prohibitive.

The Chudleigh Gas Company, paying dividends of 5% per annum, continued to prosper and in December 1906 reversed the decision of twenty years earlier and laid a gas main from Coburg to the station, which included street lighting for Station Hill. Around the same time a gas supply was provided for the convent up Heathfield Lake Hill and a new gas holder was erected at the main

depot in Old Way. In February 1909 a public appeal was launched to raise funds for the installation of gas lighting for the Church School.

The gas company's first manager was John Pooke. Over the following years this position was held by Andrew Chalmes, James Block and George Pantchause. The latter saw the transition of the Chudleigh Gas Company to the Devon Gas Association Ltd., Old Way, with an accounts office at 13 Fore Street in 1914. A later manager was a GW Price and when he retired in 1939, Dick Stookes held the work's management until the company's demise in 1952. Dick was a colourful character and a local councillor for several years. Amongst his staff were Bill Milton, Ron Collins and Archie Bryn.

In 1930 Chudleigh's Electric Light and Power Company, whose works were based at Parkway Mill, secured the contract to light the town's streets and houses and on September 1st 1931 Chudleigh was lit by electricity. This resulted in the gas company losing the street lighting contract but it was still viable to make gas at the works and a new gas holder was erected in 1940, the older one being gradually phased out.

The gas works compound, now Skaigh Engineering, comprised a large stone building containing five coal burning furnaces. To the left of the entrance was the metering building, named the Governor Room. This was where the gas input from the five furnaces was controlled and monitored on its way through the screening shed, in the centre of the complex, into the gas holder. The screening involved the sand cleansing of the gas before entering the gas holder, which was sited to the rear of the works. The new all-steel gas holder of 1906 had exterior governor valves which controlled the gas supply to different areas of the town through a maze of pipework. The increasing demand of gas led to yet another holder being constructed in 1940.



Figure 9: Chudleigh Gas Works, c1967.

Note the prominent gas-holder still extant under a conical 'hat'

Fuelling the gas furnaces

With the coming of the railway into south Devon in 1846 the Great Western Railway stockpiled its coal reserves at their marshalling yard at Hackney in Newton Abbot. The best coal was used on its steam engines, with the coal nuts and dust (nutty slack) being greedily accepted by the gas companies for their furnaces. 'Nutty slack' was ideal because it was slow burning and left a residue which could be sold as coke.

Chudleigh Gas Company collected its fuel by horse and cart from Newton Abbot prior to 1906. A goods siding was then installed at Chudleigh Station on the Teign Valley line. In 1952 the gas company closed its gas-making furnaces. Until this time Walter Taverner, Chudleigh's coal merchant, held the contract to transport fuel from the rail-side coal trucks up the hill to the gas works. He also carried and sold the coke on his local coal rounds. I can well remember as a boy in the 1940s pushing the wheelbarrow to the gas works for a load of coke for which I was paid one shilling. The 'nutty slack' was popular with Walter's customers for bedding down their hearth fires for overnight burning.

In 1949 the gas industry became nationalised and the process of private gas companies closing down began. Chudleigh's furnaces were made redundant in 1952 when a gas main connecting its governor room to the Newton Abbot and Bovey Tracey supply was laid and fed into the gas holder. Over the next fifteen years gas-making depots were installed in Torbay to supply the whole of south Devon and later in Plymouth for the same area.

With the advent of the North Sea gas project in 1967 two large underground pipelines were fed into the West Country, one of which was routed into Torbay with a connection to Chudleigh's governor room in the gas works.

Frank Hellier

In the early 1900s Frank Hellier purchased the last remaining land in Pottery Meadow and established a timber business. The meadow once had a pond which fed water to the fair fields as previously mentioned.

He supplied timber to customers over a wide area. Local tradesmen purchased his oak boards and produced highly polished coffins. He also hired out agricultural machinery including a belt-driven threshing machine powered by a steam-driven traction engine. In the parish council minutes during 1920 an entry refers to him being granted permission to extract water from the town leat to replenish his steam engines.

Frank Hellier was a substantial property owner within the parish and at one time owned Culver House and its grounds and the Lion Inn, which stood on the corner of New Exeter Street and Old Exeter Street. A row of properties used to link the two streets, but were demolished in the early 1960s. The History Group archives have several old photos clearly showing how it once appeared.

He retired and closed his business during 1957 and passed away three years later. Gibbs Haulage purchased his old yard and built garaging for their heavy vehicles and office accommodation. A lot of their work came from the Teign Valley Concrete Works delivering its

products over the country. Hayes Wharfe Transport were the next owners of the site and between 1970-72 Connaught Civil Engineers occupied the complex whilst constructing the A38 Chudleigh by-pass. Upon its completion the Devon Highways Authority used it as a depot for highway maintenance. They also purchased the 1940s gas holder and its site for use as a road salt store and the permanency of a gritting vehicle. Upon the conversion of the gas holder to a salt store the vicar at that time, Reverend Christopher Pidsley, referred to it as Chudleigh's first mosque.

In 1986 Devon Highways closed the Chudleigh depot and relocated to Buckfastleigh. Skaigh Engineering, a manufacturer of aluminium castings, who since 1953 had operated on part of the redundant Chudleigh gas works site, purchased the former Devon Highways depot in 1987. Their business complex in Old Way now covers the apex of Pottery Meadow (Great Meadow as it was once known) and the apex of my hypothetical triangle.

I started writing this article many years ago and concluded by stating that just Long Meadow, now referred to as Coburg Field, was the only meadow in its original state although plans were in hand to build yet another housing estate. Recently this came to fruition and in so doing effectively filled the whole of my 'West End Triangle', a process which has evolved over 700 years.

Old Fairfield House — Parade

At the head of my hypothetical triangle stands the early 19th century property Old Fairfield House (Figure 10). It was named Old Fairfield during the 1890s following the building of Fairfield, a well-



*Figure 10: Parade, 1915,
with Old Fairfield on the left*

proportioned brick-built house on land owned by the Clifford Estate, the whole of which extended from the Lawn to Coburg Corner, to the left, travelling out of Chudleigh. On the opposite side of the road at the juncture of Parade and Oldway stood Brockley House (Figure 11) with five terraced cottages leading down Oldway. The cottages were demolished in 1938 after being purchased from a Miss Ellen Wright for £50, to allow road widening. Brockley House was demolished in 1970 to allow further widening.

During the early 19th century Old Fairfield House was a town house of considerable size, enclosed in its own walled garden. A doorway in the wall led to a plot of land on which my own property, Desian, was built. The stone wall between the two properties was originally the boundary wall of the ancient Chudleigh town. On the forecourt of Old Fairfield House stood its coach house with its entry on to Parade.



Figure 11: Brockley House photographed about 1950 and demolished in 1970 to widen Oldway. The adjoining house to the right, numbered 38 Fore Street was built in the 1940s and called Brockley Cottage for a time. Old Fairfield is to the left

During the early 20th century a retired vicar purchased Old Fairfield and his two daughters became prominent members of the local suffragette movement, one being the local secretary.

In the 1930s the property was owned by Admiral O'Dogherty who between 1940-1945 was the parish council chairman. It was not until December 2004 that the council became a town council. Chudleigh's town hall was requisitioned by the military authorities during the Second World War and Admiral O'Dogherty allowed one of Old Fairfield's rooms to become the council chamber. The adjoining Fairfield Cottage became the distribution point for the parish ration books and the monitoring of the used coupons, a task that made the admiral few friends.

During the late 1960s the cottage was renovated and is now a separate dwelling called Coach House with its own entrance off Oldway. Old Fairfield today is a house converted to two flats.

Resources

Jones, Mary (1852) *The History of Chudleigh* [reprint of the 1852 first edition]

Jones, Mary (1875) *The History of Chudleigh* [reprint of the 1875 second edition]

A free version is available online at

<http://ukga.org/england/Devon/towns/c/Chudleigh/History/Contents.html>

and hardcopy reprints are available from various online retailers.

Shears, Desmond (2008??) *The History of Chudleigh's Water Supply*.

Orchard Publications, pp.18.

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_de_Stapledon (March 2019)