

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MANOR

The two halves of the manor were well managed by their lords in the late 13th and early 14th centuries.²⁵² Manorial court records survive from the early 16th century.²⁵³ A detailed survey of 1597, shortly after the Penruddocks united the half-manors, listed the rents, dues and work owed to the lord by his customary tenants.²⁵⁴ Although the lands of the two half-manors were dispersed throughout the parish, they were still being treated as separate entities, with distinct records, as late as 1636.²⁵⁵ The court baron continued to meet until at least 1858; it appointed a tithingman from at least 1746 until 1842, twice presenting wayward parishioners for refusing to take up the office.²⁵⁶ The court leet continued to meet and appoint a hayward until at least 1896.²⁵⁷

PARISH

In 1803, the parish spent £27 14s. 8½*d.* on maintaining the church and highways, and paying the county rate;²⁵⁸ by Easter 1815, this had risen to £125 a year.²⁵⁹ A vestry met in the village in the later 19th century, appointing the churchwardens, parish constables, waywardens and overseers.²⁶⁰ It was still a select vestry in 1878, but had been opened for all parishioners to attend by 1895.²⁶¹ Besides the routine business of managing the parochial officers and seeing to the fabric and furnishings of the parish church, the vestry also occasionally concerned itself with such things as roads and bridges. In 1876, it appointed a parish burial board to administer a new burial ground at the southern end of the village, purchased from Charles Penruddock with £20 donated by him.²⁶²

A dispute between Charles Penruddock and the vicar, Dudley Digges, apparently caused by alterations to the services in the parish church, caused

²⁵² TNA: PRO, C 133/122/4, C 135/11/6, C 135/15/28, C 135/35/15, C 135/164/22; *Wilts. Inq. p.m.* 1242–1326, pp. 92–96, 322–23; *Wilts. Inq. p.m.* 1327–77, pp. 23–24, 41–42, 93–94, 116, 296–97.

²⁵³ WSA, 549/1.

²⁵⁴ WSA, 332/252, f. 27v.

²⁵⁵ WSA, 549/8.

²⁵⁶ WSA, 332/250.

²⁵⁷ WSA, 1168/1.

²⁵⁸ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, p. 563.

²⁵⁹ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, p. 494.

²⁶⁰ WSA, 624/3.

²⁶¹ *Salisbury Times*, 29 Apr, 1898, p. 7.

²⁶² WSA, 624/3; 2897/4.

acrimony at vestry meeting in 1897 and 1898.²⁶³ These divisions soon spilled over into the parish meeting, first convened in December 1894, with echoes of national politics also evident, as opposition to Penruddock's dominance of the parish was led by William Thorne, the vicar's churchwarden and leader of the local Liberal club.²⁶⁴ In 1897, Penruddock's election by a show of hands as chair was challenged when Thorne demanded a poll. Penruddock was subsequently elected chairman with a large majority. In 1897, Thorne objected to the continued use of Compton House for the meetings; in 1899, he proposed that future meetings should take place in the schoolroom. When an alternative proposal, that the chairmen should be allowed to choose between Compton House and the schoolroom at his discretion, was carried by open vote, Thorne again demanded a poll, which he again lost.²⁶⁵ Following the death of Penruddock in 1899, these tensions were apparently eased.

The parish meeting took over many of the former duties of the vestry, appointing the overseers and overseeing the burial board, and consequently the vestry atrophied in the early 20th century. A vestry could not be convened for the three successive years beginning in 1904 because too few rate payers attended the meeting, and no meetings were held again until 1917; it seems to have ceased to meet after 1926.²⁶⁶

In 1941, the parish meeting formed a local defence committee, with the focus on fire, first aid and food supply. In the post-war period, it was regularly concerned with housing, transport and the supply of electricity and piped water. In 1956 and again in 1958 the chairman wrote to the County Council asking to be made a parish council but they were denied, apparently because there were too few parishioners. In 1974, the burial board was abolished and its responsibilities were transferred to the parish meeting; the former members of the burial board were constituted a committee of the parish meeting.

From 1894, the parish was under the jurisdiction of Wilton Rural District Council, and then Salisbury and Wilton Rural District Council from 1934. From 1974, it was under the jurisdiction of Salisbury District Council, and since 2009 it has been under Wiltshire Council.²⁶⁷

The Poor

²⁶³ *Salisbury Times*, 14 Jan., 1898, p. 7; 21 Jan., 1898, p. 7; 22 Apr., 1898, p. 7; 29 Apr., 1898, p. 7; 1 July, 1898, p. 6. See below, religious life.

²⁶⁴ *Salisbury Times*, 25 Mar., 1898, p. 7. WSA, 2897/1. For the creation of parish councils and meetings in Wiltshire, see Ivor Slocombe, 'The Establishment of Parish Councils in Wiltshire', *WAM*, XCVIII (2005), 49–70.

²⁶⁵ WSA, 2897/1.

²⁶⁶ WSA, 624/3.

²⁶⁷ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 535.

In 1649, the parishioners petitioned the bench about poor outsiders dwelling within the village, complaining that they were hardly able to maintain their own poor.²⁶⁸

Poor rates of £2 18s 9d and £2 18s 7d were raised in the village in 1711 and 1748 respectively.²⁶⁹ In 1764, 43 ‘poor people’ were listed within the parish, and 42 loaves were given to the poor in May of that year, as well as £2 2s in money and meat.²⁷⁰ The parish spent on average £55 17s. on the poor between Easter 1782 and Easter 1785, and £36 12s. 9d. in 1785–6.²⁷¹ In the year 1802–03, the parish spent £98 12s. 8½d. supporting 12 adults and six children with out-relief, and another 15 persons occasionally; seven of these 33 persons were permanently disabled from working because of age or infirmity.²⁷² By 1812–13, expenditure had risen to £333 a year, when 17 were maintained by out-relief and a further 89 by occasional relief. Although those in receipt of both kinds of relief had risen in the following year, to 26 and 94 respectively, expenditure dropped to £230 in 1813–14, and it fell again to £211 in the following year, when 17 persons were receiving relief permanently and 78 occasionally.²⁷³ The sums raised for poor relief thereafter varied sharply: £173 16s. in 1816, £311 15s. in 1818, £159 7s. in 1821,²⁷⁴ £127 12s. in 1823,²⁷⁵ £221 4s. in 1826, £262 5s. in 1829.²⁷⁶ Expenditure averaged £264 in the three years 1833–5, and the parish joined the Wilton Poor Law Union in the following year.²⁷⁷

In 1803, there was one friendly society recorded in the village, with 30 members,²⁷⁸ but it had ceased to operate by 1813.²⁷⁹

²⁶⁸ Cunnington (ed.), *Wilts. Quarter Session Recs*, p. 332.

²⁶⁹ WSA, 332/290/1.

²⁷⁰ WSA, 332/290/12.

²⁷¹ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, p. 562.

²⁷² *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, pp. 562–3.

²⁷³ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, pp. 494–5.

²⁷⁴ *Poor Rate Returns*, 1822–4, p. 187.

²⁷⁵ *Poor Rate Returns*, 1825–9, p. 226.

²⁷⁶ *Poor Rate Returns*, 1830–4, p. 217.

²⁷⁷ *Poor Law Com.* 2nd Rep. App. D [(1836) xxix (i)], 622.

²⁷⁸ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, p. 563.

²⁷⁹ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, p. 495.

SOCIAL HISTORY

In 1086, there were 28 households of villeins, two of bordars and two of slaves.²⁸⁰

During the middle ages, the parish had a number of free tenants, and also customary tenants with substantial land-holdings. In 1274 the Haversham half-manor had ten households of free tenants, also four virgaters, 21 half-virgaters and 30 cottagers, who owed a mixture of service and money rents.²⁸¹ In 1306, three free tenants and 30 customary tenants each held a virgate of land on James Plaunche's estate.²⁸² John Olney had two free tenants and 24 customary tenants in 1325,²⁸³ whilst there were 13 virgaters on Maud de la Plaunche's estate in 1329, who each paid 5s in remission of their harvest work.²⁸⁴ William de la Plaunche had two free-holders, 28 half-virgaters and 24 cottars in 1335.²⁸⁵ On the Chamberlayne half-manor, Thomas of Grimstead had eight free tenants, 13 half-virgaters, whose harvest and winter works could be commuted for a money rent, and 12 cottars in 1328.²⁸⁶ In 1333, Katherine of Avenel's estate had four freeholders, five customary tenants, who each held a messuage and 10 a., and four cottars.²⁸⁷ There were three freeholders, 3 customary tenants and 3 cottars on the dower of Joan Grimstead [later Shaw] in 1361.²⁸⁸ A number of customary tenants were able to build up large holdings of land. Edmund Fuliet and his wife Edith held 5 virgates of land in the 13th century.²⁸⁹ In 1332, 35 households paid taxes ranging from 8³/₄d. to 16s. 9³/₄d.; some tenants paid almost as much as John of Avenel, who held a quarter of the manor at this time.²⁹⁰

Social inequality apparently caused the violence that broke out in the summer of 1303 against Reginald of Frome of South Cadbury (Som.),²⁹¹ who held mortgages on local properties.²⁹² A large mob, including several members of the prominent Coff family, broke into Reginald's home in Compton Chamberlayne at night and broke his arm.²⁹³ Amongst those charged were Hugh Chamberlain and Phillip le Clerk, respectively the son and serjeant of the lord of the manor, Robert Chamberlain, who was indicted for inciting them.²⁹⁴ The incident was presumably related to the Coff's

²⁸⁰ VCH Wilts. II, 117.

²⁸¹ Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1242–1326, pp. 92–96.

²⁸² Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1242–1326, pp. 322–23.

²⁸³ TNA: PRO: C 133/122/4; Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1242–1326, pp. 445–46.

²⁸⁴ TNA: PRO, C 135/15/28; Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1327–77, pp. 41–42.

²⁸⁵ TNA: PRO, C 135/45/20; Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1327–77, p. 116.

²⁸⁶ TNA: PRO, C 135/11/6; Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1327–77, p. 23–24.

²⁸⁷ TNA: PRO, C 135/35/15; Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1327–77, p. 93–94.

²⁸⁸ TNA: PRO, C 135/164/22; Wilts. Inq. p.m. 1327–77, pp. 296–97.

²⁸⁹ Cur. Reg., 1237–1242, p. 215.

²⁹⁰ Crowley (ed.), *Tax List 1332*, p. 12.

²⁹¹ B. W. Greenfield, 'Meriet of Meriet, and of Hestercombe', *Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society's Proceedings*, 27 (1881), 99–215, at p. 196.

²⁹² Cal. Close, 1307–13, pp. 554, 559; TNA: PRO, C 241/90/97.

²⁹³ Pugh (ed.), *Gaol Delivery, 1275–1306*, p. 145.

²⁹⁴ Pugh (ed.), *Gaol Delivery, 1275–1306*, p. 104.

estate, and a small estate conveyed by Robert Chamberlain to Reginald in 1304,²⁹⁵ which following his death in 1333 the Chamberlain family sought to repossess.²⁹⁶ Reginald had also bought the advowson from Chamberlain in 1304,²⁹⁷ and the incident in 1303 was followed by a disputed presentation to the rectory in 1315.²⁹⁸

Whether any land owners were resident in the village during the middle ages is questionable, but the Nicholas and Penruddock families were resident from the late sixteenth century.²⁹⁹ The presence of the Penruddocks as resident lords of the manor coincided with the earliest phase of inclosure, and the village was subsequently dominated by the family that owned it almost in its entirety. Besides being the principal landlord and employer in the village, the family were also paternalists, and concerned themselves with the well-being of the village. When a new cemetery was necessary, Charles Penruddock (d. 1899) donated a piece of land to the village. The family provided the parish with a day school, with which they continued to concern themselves after it received a government education grant. Besides maintaining the fabric of the building, the Penruddocks also held annual Christmas parties and gave an annual summer 'treat' to the children, and would often attend the classes to observe the progress of the children. A farewell party was thrown by Mrs Penruddock in 1931 before the family left the village.³⁰⁰

The prosperity of the village was closely linked to the fortunes of the owners of Compton House, and so the declining fortunes of the Penruddocks during a period of falling land values and agricultural depression impacted heavily on the village.³⁰¹ The arrival of George Cross in 1931 was greeted with enthusiasm by those who thought it would lead to increased employment for the villagers.³⁰² Soon after his purchase of the estate, Cross began to modernise the cottages in the villages, modernising the furnishing and installing water closets and bath.³⁰³ The estate continues to provide employment to villagers, although an increasing number of villagers are pensioners.

There is a village hall, and a cricket ground near the junction of the village street and the A30.

Inns

Compton Hut, on the old turnpike road in the south-east corner of the parish, was an inn in 1750; trade presumably declined when the turnpike was allowed to expire,

²⁹⁵ TNA: PRO, CP 25/1/252/29/18; Pugh (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1272–1327*, p. 50.

²⁹⁶ TNA: PRO, SC 8/98/4868–9.

²⁹⁷ TNA: PRO, CP 25/1/252/29/18; Pugh (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1272–1327*, p. 50.

²⁹⁸ See below, advowson.

²⁹⁹ WSA, 332/252; 487/1; D 1/42/17 43b–45b; D 1/42/30, ff. 44–53.

³⁰⁰ WSA, F 8/500/81/1/2.

³⁰¹ Sawyer, *Nadder*, p. 191.

³⁰² WSA, F 8/500/81/1/2.

³⁰³ Information from Mrs P. Noble.

and by 1865 it was in a dilapidated state.³⁰⁴ King's Elm House, at the northern end of the village street, was a beerhouse in the 19th century and early 20th century.³⁰⁵

Hospital

Compton Hut was briefly a sanatorium for people suffering from respiratory problems. In 1907 it was described as containing 'apartments for down air',³⁰⁶ and by 1915 it was described as the Dowager Lady Pembroke's Home for Consumptives.³⁰⁷

Charities

In 1621 Alexander Thistlethwaite, brother-in-law of Sir Edward Penruddock, bequeathed £30 a year to be paid from the grange of West Barn in Witham Friary (Som.) for the maintenance of a university-educated preacher who was to give a sermon every Sunday in the parish church of Compton Chamberlayne.³⁰⁸ In practice, the fund was used to supplement the wages of the parish vicar. In 1837, the payments went into arrear as payment as one of the co-owners of the land, one Mr Balch, disputed how much of the sum should come from his portion of the estate.³⁰⁹ New trustees were appointed by the Charity Commission in 1856, and they distrained West Barn in the following year. Payments to the vicar were renewed in 1858, when the accounts record that Mr Balch paid one year's rent-charge and the trustees' legal costs. It is not clear whether the arrears were ever recovered.³¹⁰ Payment of the rent-charge continued to be made to the vicar throughout the 19th century.³¹¹ In 1906, payment of the charity was put under the control of the Charity Commission. The last recorded payment was in 1931, when the death of Charles Penruddock had left the charity with no surviving trustee.³¹²

In 1630, Nicholas Lawes bequeathed £3 6s. 8d. to be paid in alternate years to two charities, known as Maid's Money and the Poor's Money. The first was a payment to the longest-serving poor maid who had not been impeached for lewd behaviour, the second a dole of bedding and clothing for the poor of the parish.³¹³ An inquisition of 1711 found that Maid's Money was often paid, either in money or

³⁰⁴ WSA, 332/119.

³⁰⁵ WSA, G 11/505/3. Sawyer, *Nadder*, p. 191. Information from Mrs J. Lovell.

³⁰⁶ *Kelly's Directory* (1907).

³⁰⁷ *Kelly's Directory* (1915).

³⁰⁸ WSA, 332/276.

³⁰⁹ *Endowed Charities, 1908*, p. 118.

³¹⁰ *Endowed Charities, 1908*, p. 118.

³¹¹ The accounts only record payments until 1881; WSA, 487/10. However, Revd Dudley Digges claimed in 1901 that he had always been paid the sum whilst he held the living; WSA, 332/270; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 20 July, 1901.

³¹² WSA, L 2/72.

³¹³ WSA, 549/27/1.

in clothing, but was then seven years in arrears. Penruddock was ordered to pay the arrears, and it appears that Maid's Money was still being paid in 1766.³¹⁴ There are records of payments of the Poor's Money – for sums exceeding the original bequest – until 1720.³¹⁵ By 1818, the original benefactor was unknown,³¹⁶ and by 1832 it was believed that both charities were voluntary benefactions by the Penruddocks;³¹⁷ the money appears to have been lost thereafter.³¹⁸

A charity was founded in 1977 to maintain and manage the village hall. It still existed in 2010, when it recorded an income of £3,996 and expenditure of £2,949.³¹⁹

Education

The parish curate maintained a school within the parish in the later sixteenth century.³²⁰

There was a day school in Compton Chamberlayne in 1819;³²¹ in 1835, 21 pupils of both sexes were being taught there at the expense of their parents.³²² In 1859, the schoolroom was described as being large enough to accommodate the 60 children then being taught there.³²³ In 1864, it was maintained entirely by the Penruddocks without a grant from the Committee of Education.³²⁴ By 1871 it was a National school,³²⁵ and in receipt of an annual grant from the government; the average attendance was recorded in 1877 as 42.³²⁶

Frequent changes of teachers in the early years led to a series of negative annual reports by the inspectors, who complained of poor academic ability and indiscipline. Attendance varied according to the rhythms of agriculture and the vagaries of the weather. Children often helped their parents in the fields, and bad weather prevented children who lived at a distance from attending. An ambitious extension of curriculum to include geography and grammar was attempted in 1877; however, inspectors recommended concentrating on elementary subjects until significant improvements in these areas were shown. Thereafter, standards rose

³¹⁴ WSA, 549/27/4.

³¹⁵ WSA, 332/272.

³¹⁶ *Charitable Donations, 1786–88*, pp. 1344–5.

³¹⁷ *Endowed Charities, 1908*, p. 117.

³¹⁸ WSA, 332/270; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 20 July, 1901.

³¹⁹ 'Compton Chamberlayne Village Hall (Reg. Charity, 1003199)', *The Charity Commission*, <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk>, accessed 20 Nov. 2010.

³²⁰ WSA, D 1/42/18, ff. 4bv–8b, 28bv–29bv.

³²¹ *Educ. of the Poor Digest*, p. 1024.

³²² *Educ. in England abstract, 1835*, p. 1034.

³²³ *Account of Wilts. Schools, 1859*, p. 17.

³²⁴ WSA, D 1/56/7.

³²⁵ *Return relating to Elementary Educ. 1871*, pp. 428–9.

³²⁶ *Returns of Public Elementary Schools, 1877*, pp. 282–3.

steadily. There were regular complaints by inspectors about the cramped conditions and the poor state of the schoolroom, the lack of books and desks, and the need for a separate classroom for the infants.

The average attendance fell sharply in the 1890s, and a system of weekly tickets and annual certificates was introduced in 1894 in an effort to improve attendance, although the average weekly attendance rarely exceeded 40 during the remainder of school's history; in 1904–5, it was 35.³²⁷ In 1898 the education department awarded a grant of £10 for new desks and maps. By 1924, the inspectors noted that the teaching of history, geography, scripture and poetry had joined the traditional elementary subjects. The inspector was still able to complain in 1931 about the cramped conditions and the lack of a separate classroom for the infants. Hopes were expressed in that year, however, that the arrival of new landlords at Compton Park would lead to a revival of the village, thereby boosting attendance at the school. Despite this, there were still only 23 pupils on the books in the following year, and the school was closed in 1933.³²⁸

The Old Schoolhouse, now a private home, was a single storey built of dressed limestone, with a deep tile roof, one-storey gabled stone porch, and round-headed mullioned windows with hoodmoulds. An upper floor with dormer windows has been added. It is set well back from the road.

³²⁷ *Return of Non-Provided Schools, 1906*, p. 695.

³²⁸ WSA, F 8/500/81/1/1–2.