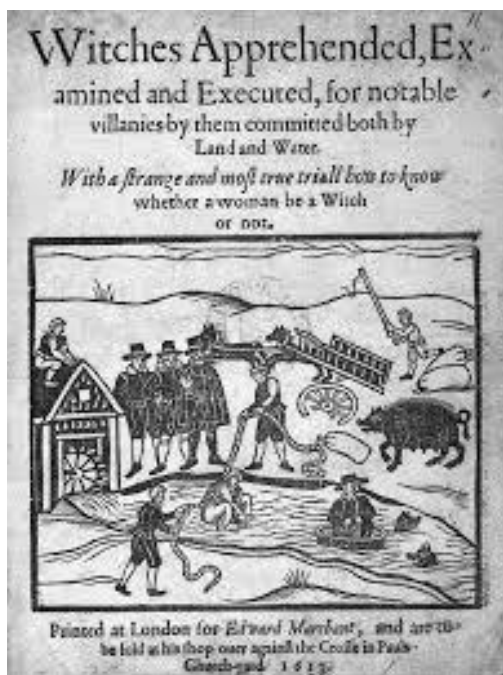


The Story of THOMAS HARLEY'S CHARITY

Thomas Harley was born in 1613. That was the year in which London's Globe Theatre burned to the ground during a performance of Shakespeare's Henry VIII; mathematician John Napier finished twenty-five years of research perfecting Logarithms; Puritan concern was increasing over the growth of 'alehouses' as social centres, with dancing, 'mummers' and sundry celebrations; and people shuddered at the recent revelations about the evil activities of the 'Witches of Pendle' - and at all witchcraft tales.



THE LIFE

Thomas was born to Francis and Ruth Harley of Osgathorpe, Leicestershire, the second child in a family of four boys and two girls. It seems likely that the Harley's were the typical small landowning family that was the backbone of rural life, the local worthies who organised the village community, dispensed poor relief, set a good example, and might aspire to becoming Lord of the Manor one day. Francis, the eldest son who would inherit the majority share of any estate, stayed at home. The others needed to seek their fortunes elsewhere – Thomas went to London, as did youngest son Nicholas, but William only went as far as Leicester. Ellen married at Breedon-On-The-Hill, and Anne at Bagworth.

Camden's Britannia described him simply as: "Thomas Harley, citizen of London". Whether he was in business, and if so what type, is unknown, but he did marry and survive two wives, Joan and Mary. Both had been widows of 'citizens of London'. Widows were subject to being recycled, due to the average low male age at death, and their acquired property often made them a more attractive proposition than a single young woman with a dowry. One can only speculate how much of a London gentleman's wealth came from shrewd marriages. Whatever Thomas Harley's affairs were, they were carried on during a very turbulent and dangerous period in English history - the Civil Wars between Parliamentary and Royalist forces and their ideals - now over simplified to 'Roundheads versus Cavaliers'. He may even have seen King Charles I on trial and later beheaded at Whitehall. Then followed the disturbances of the Commonwealth period, then repression under the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell.

London was a Parliamentary stronghold and virtually under martial law, of course, and so was Leicester, but Ashby, just five miles from Osgathorpe, was in a pocket that was staunchly Royalist - and paid the price. It must have created difficulties in communication and travel but Thomas Harley undoubtedly kept close ties with his

parents, elder brother Francis and family in Osgathorpe. This may be inferred by much of his accrued holdings in land and property being in and around the area Snibston, Hugglescote, Walton, Belton, Whitwick, etc.

Francis Harley Senior died about 1658, followed by Francis Harley Junior about a year later, leaving widow Sarah and children Francis, William and Ruth. Thomas Harley was now the senior member of the family and approaching fifty years of age. Good reasons, perhaps, that by the early 1660's he was resident in Osgathorpe, possibly at Osgathorpe Hall. The timing was fortuitous, London became very unhealthy in 1665, and very warm in 1666. Charles II had also returned to his childhood roots with the restoration of the Monarchy.



Thomas Harley married for the third time, to yet another Mary, and yet another widow, of Samuel Blount, Rector of Walton.

Perhaps because he had no children of his own, Thomas Harley assigned some of his holdings to a fund in order to eventually found a free school in the village for local children. The intention was ultimately to send Divinity students to Cambridge.

Unexpectedly, it was said, early in 1668 Mary found that she was pregnant, and understandably Thomas wanted to drop the school plans to make provision for his new heir. Mary not only persuaded him to continue with the project, but, as she had been the widow of a Rector, must have been instrumental in adding a home for 'clergymen's widows' to the scheme, greatly increasing the expense. Mary must have counted herself fortunate in her remarriage, most clergyman's widows immediately lost the family home, which went to the new cleric, of course, and could find themselves in dire straights, especially

when left with young children.

Daughter Mary was born in August 1668 and survived. She proved to be Thomas Harley's only heir as he died in January 1670, at the advanced age of fifty six years. Mary was widowed for a second time, which was not unusual in those days, and with a sixteen month old child that would never know her father, but would live to the same age.

Recent work in May 2017 replacing the wooden flooring on the north side of the church aisle has revealed the memorial stone to Mary recording her death on 24th June 1724. The stone is in too poor a condition to contemplate removal but its position under the rear most pew is recognised by a brass plaque.

Thomas Harley was buried at St. Mary's and later a plaque incorporating his Arms and a fulsome testament to his life and generosity was erected on the South chancel wall by his trustees. This has now been relocated onto the North wall.

THE CHARITY

Harley's will appointed Francis Harley, his nephew (aged thirty), and John Smith, nephew-in-law, as principal executors to carry out his instructions. To them, and their heirs, was conveyed most of his properties upon trust. He directed them to use the rents and profits to build two houses of three bays each, one for a school

room and schoolmaster's house, the other as a dwelling for six poor ministers widows. These to be constructed on the strip of land opposite St. Mary's church with the curious name of 'Brewetts Hempleck'.

Upon completion eight persons • would manage the investments to create an annual income of £100 - £40 for the Schoolmaster's salary and £10 per widow. Francis Harley and John Smith would nominate schoolmasters and widows until Mary Harley reached the age of eighteen, when she and her legal heirs would assume that responsibility. If she died, or her legally born heirs died, the function would pass to Francis Harley and his heirs. The Churchwardens would intervene if the responsible person lapsed in duty.

For the £40 salary the schoolmaster was required to teach basic education, reading, writing, and arithmetic, to a maximum of fifty pupils, also the classics and mathematics if required. And keep the school room and house in good repair.

Thirteen years later, in 1683, an 'Indenture of Lease and Release' was made between Francis Harley and John Smith and six other persons. It stated that they had, in pursuance of the Will, built the six bays of buildings, plus outbuildings, on 'Brewett's Hempleck', made as a school room and schoolmaster's house and the other for six poor ministers widows.

It went onto detail the transfer of holdings to the trustees, with a long list of the properties, many named, such as: 'Tweene Town' s Close', or 'Hornbuckles Orlesbreach' and 'Donnington Cow Pasture'. The list ended with a small piece called 'North Orchard', purchased to enlarge the rear of the schoolmaster's house.

THE START

This 'Indenture' document states categorically that the buildings existed and were finished in October 1683. They may have been functioning earlier, of course, but this appears to be the earliest provable date at which the Harley Charity proper commenced operations.

Did it really take thirteen years to raise the cost of construction and get the annual income to £100? There was a sequel: in that same year, inspired perhaps by seeing the buildings finally finished, the Will of the Reverend John Allsopp bequeathed £160 to the

Harley Charity to house one widow. It took sixteen years, and a law suit, to finally build a cottage "on the hospital grounds."

Mary Harley married John Bainbrigge of Locking-ton and produced three sons and three daughters.

THE WIDOWS

The Charity ran into 'widow' problems right from the start, due to the living arrangements being devised by a man. A report by the Charity Commissioners, quoting old documents, spelled it out: "The building used as the Almshouses consists of three distinct tenements containing three rooms, one on the ground floor, and another above, with an attic. It was originally intended, as directed by the Founder, that each tenement should be inhabited by two women, living together, and occupying the same apartments; but in consequence of the disagreements that took place under this arrangement, it was found necessary to allot to each woman a separate room." Given Thomas Harley's extensive experience with widows he should have known better!

The report continued: "There is a small garden attached to each room in consequence, however, of the limited accommodation in the Hospital, the Charity is not much sought after, and the Trustees have frequently had considerable difficulty in filling up vacancies. " That was to be the story for the entire life of the almshouses, compounded by the small annuity offered, and finally led to the building being physically divided into just two dwellings. Allsopp's Gift cottage suffered the same problems, often being uninhabited for long periods.

THE CHANGES

The Will had not stipulated the usage of surplus monies above the specified income of £100 per annum. Seventy years after commencement one person was very unhappy with what was happening and took action. The Master of the Rolls, in a suit against Philip Harley Bainbrigge and Harley Vaughan, decreed that new trustees would be appointed by the court, he also proposed a scheme for the future application of surplus income. An Order of July 1761 decreed that all profits, after building repairs, etc., should be divided into eight equal parts - one part to each widow, and the remaining two parts to the schoolmaster. Accordingly, more of those 'Indentures of Lease and Release' documents transferred all the Charity properties to eight new trustees in April 1762. The names of the new trustees is not known, and may well have included Harley relatives, but the true descent of the Charity's officers from either Mary or Francis intended by Thomas Harley was broken by the dismissal of his grandson, Philip Harley Bainbridge, and his nephew's grandson, Harley Vaughan.

Various 'Acts of Enclosure' changed the face - and the life - of the countryside by ending inefficient 'strip farming', and enclosing waste, common and forest land. Harley's Charity gained by being awarded several acres, including four acres of Charnwood Forest. The poorest country people lost - deprived of their subsistence they drifted to the towns. Land values rose rapidly, and land owners got richer. The Charity Commissioners Report of 1837 recorded that the Charity owned some 230 acres, rented

at £280 per annum. Part of the money invested in these properties had come from a windfall - literally, timber felled by a storm in 1805 was sold for £984, twelve shillings. About £200 worth of timber remained.

THE SCHOOL

The report stated that the custom was to appoint a clergyman to the post of schoolmaster, the appointment considered to be for life. The Reverend Doctor Theophilus Henry Hastings Kelk (a large name for a small school room) was appointed in 1833 (and was still there in the Census of 1851). It had become the custom to charge an entrance fee of two shillings and sixpence (13p) per boy, although there was nothing in the Will to authorise it - and it was certainly against the spirit of the foundation. Custom and usage prevailed, the practice probably dated back to the 'fixed salary' period. No boy was admitted under eight years of age, or if unable to read. Very few stayed beyond fourteen years. There were forty two scholars registered, and an average attendance of thirty five. There were only two full paying scholars. "They are all the children of small farmers, trades people and the labouring classes, and do not require to be instructed in the Classics and Mathematics", declared the Reverend Doctor Theophilus Henry Hastings Kelk. All books and stationery were provided by the pupils.

THE MONEY

The profit sharing scheme had improved the payments considerably. The 1835 figures were: Schoolmaster = £107; six widows at £43. 10 shillings each (£43.50p) = £261; Insurance = 210 shillings. Total = £370. 10 shillings, leaving an annual balance of £8.16 shillings and 10 pence (£8.84p) for repairs and incidental expenses. There was a balance of £26.5 shillings 9 pence with the treasurer (£26.29p).

The trustees appointed in 1832 were: The Marquis of Hastings, Charles March Phillips, Ambrose Lisle Phillips, Edward Dawson, John Bainbrigge Story, James Sutton, Reverend Samuel Dashwood and Reverend John Dalby.

THE BUILDINGS

The two Harley buildings were built of uncoursed Charnwood stone with dressed stone quoins. The Widows house, variously described as 'almshouses' or 'hospital', is aligned at



90 degrees to the road, being the slightly plainer of the two. The Census of 1841 included the widows for the first time and the census enumerator used the local name 'The Residence', the name it still bears today. The description quoted in the Charity Commissioners report of three room vertical units "one on the ground floor, and another above, with an attic" fits the odd shaped building depicted in an engraving in Nichol's 'History and Antiquities of Leicestershire' (1802),

i.e. a two storey building plus attic. If that picture was accurate then the roof has since been raised by some five feet to create the present three floors proper. This was probably done at the same time that the windows were replaced with cast iron 'diamond pane' frames. The positions of the two exterior doors were also slightly altered, and it seems likely that originally there were matching exterior doors on the East side, opening on to what was later the Rectory garden. Cast iron fronts 'modernised' the stone fireplaces and extra chimneys were constructed. The Commissioners report states that the buildings were in very good condition, a considerable sum having been expended on them of late years", perhaps indicative of major works. The Ordnance Survey map of 1883, scale: 25 inches to one mile, clearly shows 'The Residence' as being divided into two dwellings, the format it retained for the rest of its 'almshouses' life. The schoolroom and 'Harley House' (schoolmaster's house) face the road and have some classical decoration. The distinctive mullioned windows that flank the school room entrance, and the house extension to the rear, probably date from the same period as 'The Residence' alterations. The study is said to have fine oak panelling, but age is unknown. The School Room is used as the Village Hall.

THE MYSTERY

Finally, a bit of a mystery.

Three 'Coats of Arms' incorporating the 'Harley shield' (plain background with 'Bend cottised t - a broad stripe) are displayed on the buildings. The arms in a small relief on 'The Residence' is with a 'Beacon Tower' as a crest; the same design is depicted in a small stained glass window over the door of 'Harley House'; the large arms relief displayed over the school room door has lost its crest. Nichol's book states that the school room arms are Thomas Harley's - arms which have a Lion's Head crest, see illustration below. Two Harley crests? The date of the school room arms, 1716, provides a clue. The 'Beacon Tower' version may be those of Francis Harley. Francis had laboured for thirteen years to bring his uncle's charity to fruition and may well have viewed the result as a Harley family project. Thomas had donated the means to the funds after his death, but it was the living who had done, and would continue to do, all the work. It would be understandable if Francis chose to display the Arms of his grandfather, and

Thomas' father, Francis Harley. Francis, the nephew, finally died in 1715, aged seventy five years, having been a senior trustee and associated with the Charity for forty five years. Shortly after, Mary's husband, John Bainbrigge, erected the over large and decorative Thomas Harley Arms relief and inscription panel that dominates the school room frontage. He died the next year. Why did he feel the need after forty five years, to make such a public, and no doubt expensive, statement? Perhaps as a gesture to Mary, restating her father's generosity and 'reclaiming the Charity in his name. Or simply taking the opportunity to be named and associated with it in a permanent manner - after all, the inscription has survived.

But, if the last suggestion was accurate then he has failed miserably - foiled by the weather and careless workmanship.

The inscription, now displayed inside the school room for protection, was carved on rather soft slate. Due to weathering the inscription has had to be re-cut on more than one occasion during its two hundred and seventy nine years life. This has led to errors of transcription - and has created a myth.

The Latin inscription today, born out by a framed translation, states that "John Bambridge Armit, the husband of his only daughter, raised this graven stone - 1716'. The 'I' and 'N' has been merged, making 'BAIN' into 'BAM'. It is a matter of record, including a plaque in nearby St. Mary's church, that Mary Harley married BAINBRIGGE, so it's a strange mistake to make. Even stranger is that the word 'ARMIGER (meaning entitled to bear heraldic arms) has become 'ARMIT', so 'John Bainbrigget, real person, has turned into "John Bambridge Armit tt, fictional person.



Brian Brooks

Sources: 'History and Antiquities of
Leicestershire'; Leicestershire County
Record Office, 1837 Charity

Commissioners Report on Harley's Charity; 'Chronicle of Britain'; 'The Life & Times of Charles II', Camden 's 'Britannia' 'Victoria County History' and 'The I-Spy Book of- Widm.us-'.

THE SCHOOL ROOM INSCRIPTION or 1716 - FACT AND FICTION

Qyo moribus bonifigue literis infoelicio raprovehatur indoles, banc. scholam liberam quadraginta libris per annum donatem; nec non hospitalium contiguum seæaginta libris per annum seæ pauperes clericorum viduas addendum, Thomas Harley, gener eætruçeit.

Scholam viouafundavit; moriens oiduarum inopie consultuit, utrique haudparum benignus.

In cujos charitatis memoriam lapidem hunc afficæit eæcultum

Johannes Bainbrigge, armiger, unice eæjus fillie maritus,

A.D. MDCCXVI

Above - FACT: The 1802 transcription of the 1716 inscription from Nichol's History and Antiquities of Leicestershire. This differs in detail from the present day version, not least in stating that Johannes (John) Bainbrigge erected the Arms. The word 'ARMIGER' means 'Entitled to bear Heraldic Arms'

Below - FICTION: The translation of the present day version of the inscription (which has been re-cut due to weathering) displayed in the school room (my italics). This claims that Thomas Harley's son-in-law built the buildings and founded the Charity, and perpetuates the myth that this person was called 'John Bambridge Armit'. The letters 'I' and 'N' have been merged, creating the letter 'M' and turning 'BAIN' into 'BAM'. 'ARMIGER' has become 'ARMIT'.

"In order that Talent might be more richly directed towards the Study of Letters, and a good life, the son-in-law of Thomas Harley built this school, endowed with Forty Pounds yearly, and also the neighbouring Alms houses, with Sixty Pounds yearly for the maintenance of six needy Widows of Clergy.

**When alive he founded the School, and at his death he provided for those in want; in both matters equally generous. In Memory of whose charity *John Bambridge Armit*, the husband of his only daughter, raised this graven stone
A.D. tocccxvi."**

FACT: Mary Harley, daughter of Thomas Harley and his sole heir, married John Bainbrigge of Lockington. She produced three sons and three daughters. John Bainbrigge died in 1717, and Mary in 1724. She was buried at St. Mary's, Osgathorpe, and a plaque incorporating the Harley and Bainbrigge Arms was erected to her memory.

Brian Brooks VI. I February 1995



OSGATHORPE

It's population over 900 years as recorded in Survey and Census.

VARIOUS SURVEYS

1086	Domesday Book - Approximately 20-30 adults
1124-9	Survey based on Domesday Book - "the same"
1377	Poll Tax: 30 Taxpayers
1563	12 Households - Ecclesiastical survey
1603	70 Communicants and no Recusants - Ecclesiastical survey
1670	Michaelmas Hearth Tax - Total: 30. 21 pay; 9 exempt.
1676	Population 90 - Ecclesiastical survey
1722	21 Freeholders polled.
1775	13 Freeholders polled.

NATIONAL CENSUS:

1801	318
1811	313
1821	352
1831	344

Stricter count adopted:

1841	396	Included 1 1 persons in The Residence for Clergymen's Widows.
1851	346	
1861	351	
1871	350	
1881	304	
1891	306	
1901	312	
1911	298	
1921	298	
1931	357	

1941 Second World War (1939-45) -no census taken.

1951 404*

1961 474

1971 475*

1981 329

1991 369

*In 1936 a part of Thringstone (which had a population of 28 in 1931) was transferred to Osgathorpe.

* *Boundary change.

Sources: Victoria County History; Antiquities of Leicestershire; Office of Population, Censuses & Surveys. BRIAN BROOKS VI.2 JAN '95



THE RESIDENCE

and

The Census

Residents of THE RESIDENCE were not recorded in the National Census until 1841, when persons living in Institutions, Hospitals, Asylums, etc., were included for the first time. Adult ages in the 1841 Census were rounded down to multiples of five.

1841 7th June.	Ref: HO		Born in County?
Elizabeth Brownwrigg	107/595/14 '60'	Clergyman's Widow	No
Dinah Higgins	'65'	Independant (Sister of do)	No
Penelope Mitchell	'60'	Clergyman's Widow	No
Penelope C Mitchell	'25'	Daughter of do	Yes
Elizabeth Thompson	'40t	Clergyman's Widow	No
Mary Medley	45	do	No
Anne Medley	'20t	Daughter of do	No
Anne Ellis	43	Clergyman's Widow	No
Anne Russell	'20'	Servant of do	No
Theodore Satchell	6	Sons London Solicitor	No
Walter Alfred Satchell	1	Sons London Solicitor	No

1851 30th March	Ref HO 107/2084		Born
Maria Macpherson	Widow 42	Clergyman's Widow	Shrop. Bishopsturth
James do	Son 11	At Home	Cheshire Hoose
Elizabeth Thompson	Widow 53	Annuitant	Nott'm Eastwood

Four 'houses' uninhabited

1861 7th April Ref RG 9/2269

Phoebe Dodd	Widow 61	Harleys Charity	Kent Seven Oaks
Annie Dodd	Daughter 24	Governess	Berk Eton
James Francis	Visitor 25	Tutor	Monmouth Newport
Elizabeth A Preisen (?)	Widow 36	Harleys Charity	Leic Loughborough
Ann Walsh	Servant 67	House Servant	Leic Loughbrough

1871 7th April Ref RG 10/3247

Elizabeth Currey	Widow 69	Annuitant	Kent Deal
Lydia Currey	Daughter 35	Annuitant	Kent Borden
Elizabeth Currey	Do 34	Annuitant	Derb chesterfield
Harriet Cooper	Widow 44	Annuitant Articled	Ireland
Frank L Cooper	Son 18		Jamaica West Indies

1881 3rd Aril Ref RG 11/3140

Emily E Mitchell	Widow 43	Clergyman's Widow	Bermuda Brit. Subject.
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Frances L Broadbridge	Boarder 23		Sussex Brighton
Alfred C Keighley	Cousin 5	Scholar	Calcutta E. Indies
Jane Clepton(?)	Servant 16	Domestic Servant	Stafford. Kembury

1 uninhabited

1891 5th April Ref RG 12/2510

Frances J Vibesh	Widow 64	Living on Harleys Charity	London Southwark
Bertha M do	Daughter 38	Certfied Nurse	Oxford Chadlington
Alice A do	Daughter 31		Cornwall Newlyse St Peter
Marriette Wood	Sister 63	Living on own means	London Southwark
Martha A Hardwicke	Servant 13	General Servant (Domestic)	Derby. S. Wingfield
Harriet J Miller	Widow 47	Living on Harleys Charity	India Vellore
Rose B do	Daughter 23	Private Governess	Yorks. Farnley Tyas
Laura G Siddons	Servant 14	General Servant (Domestic)	Leic. Osgathorpe

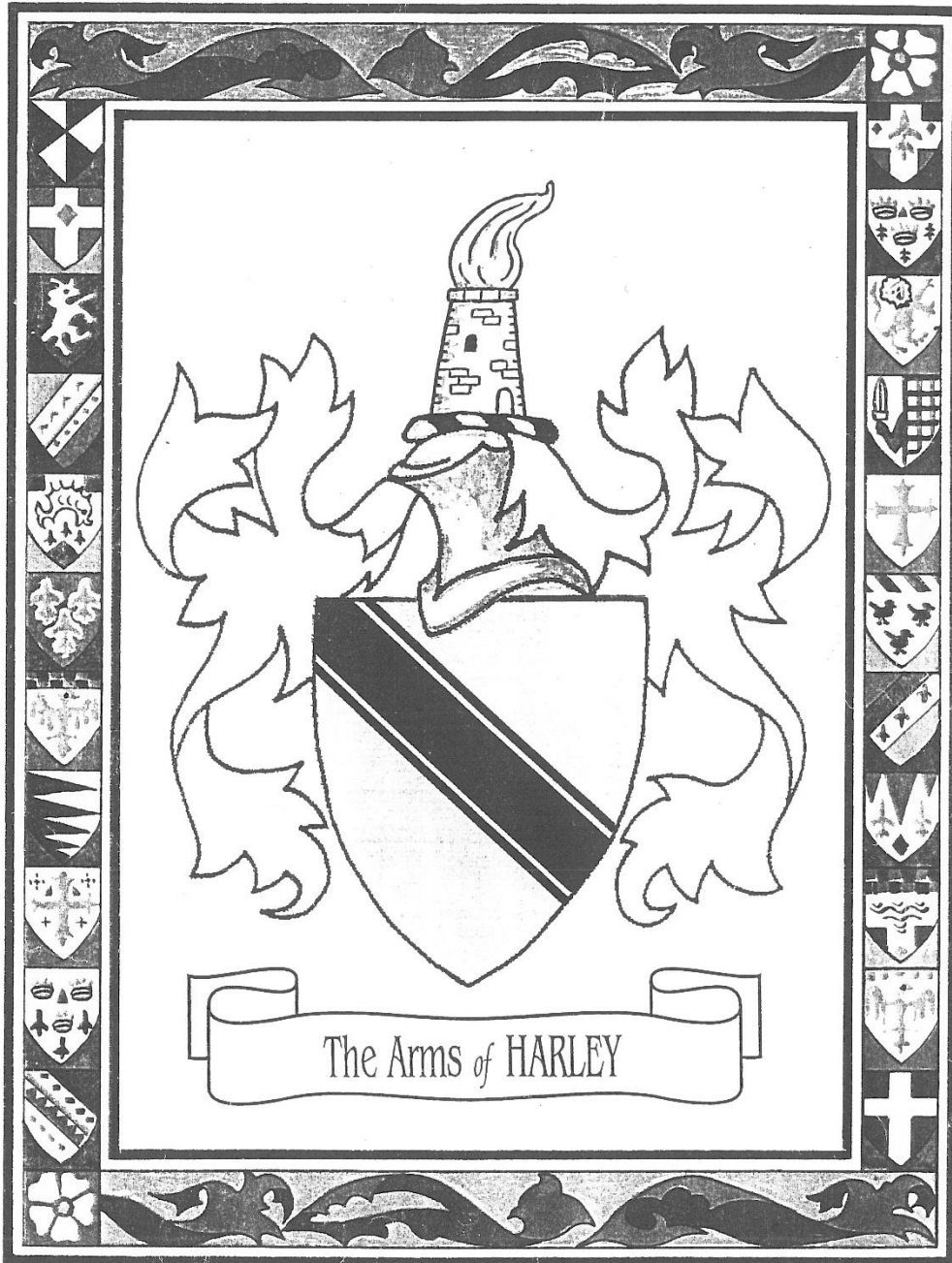
Occupants from home

Notes:

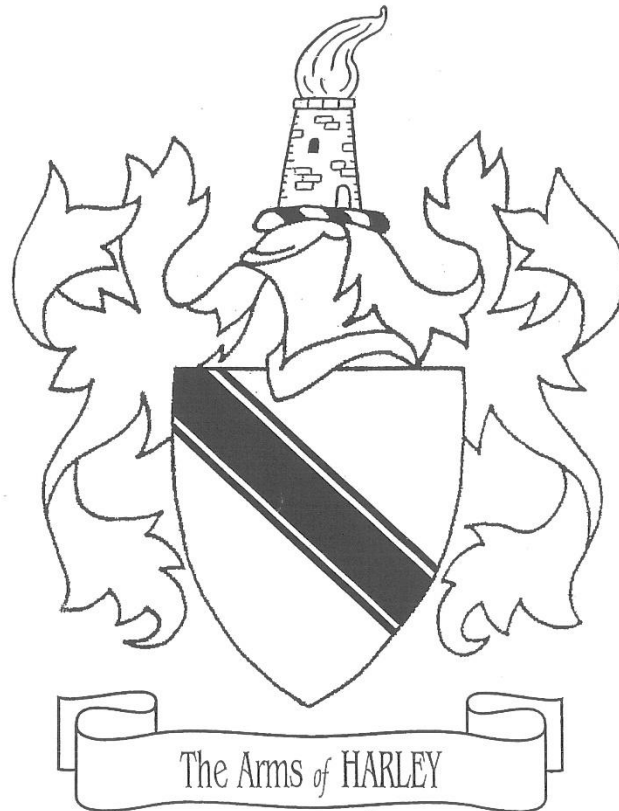
Frances Vibesh and family recorded at Allsopps Charity Cottage in 1881 Census.

Census terminology:

Ag Lab	—	Agricultural Labourer
FWK	—	Frame Work Knitter
Scholar	—	Child attending school
Chain	—	Gang of women and children field labourers

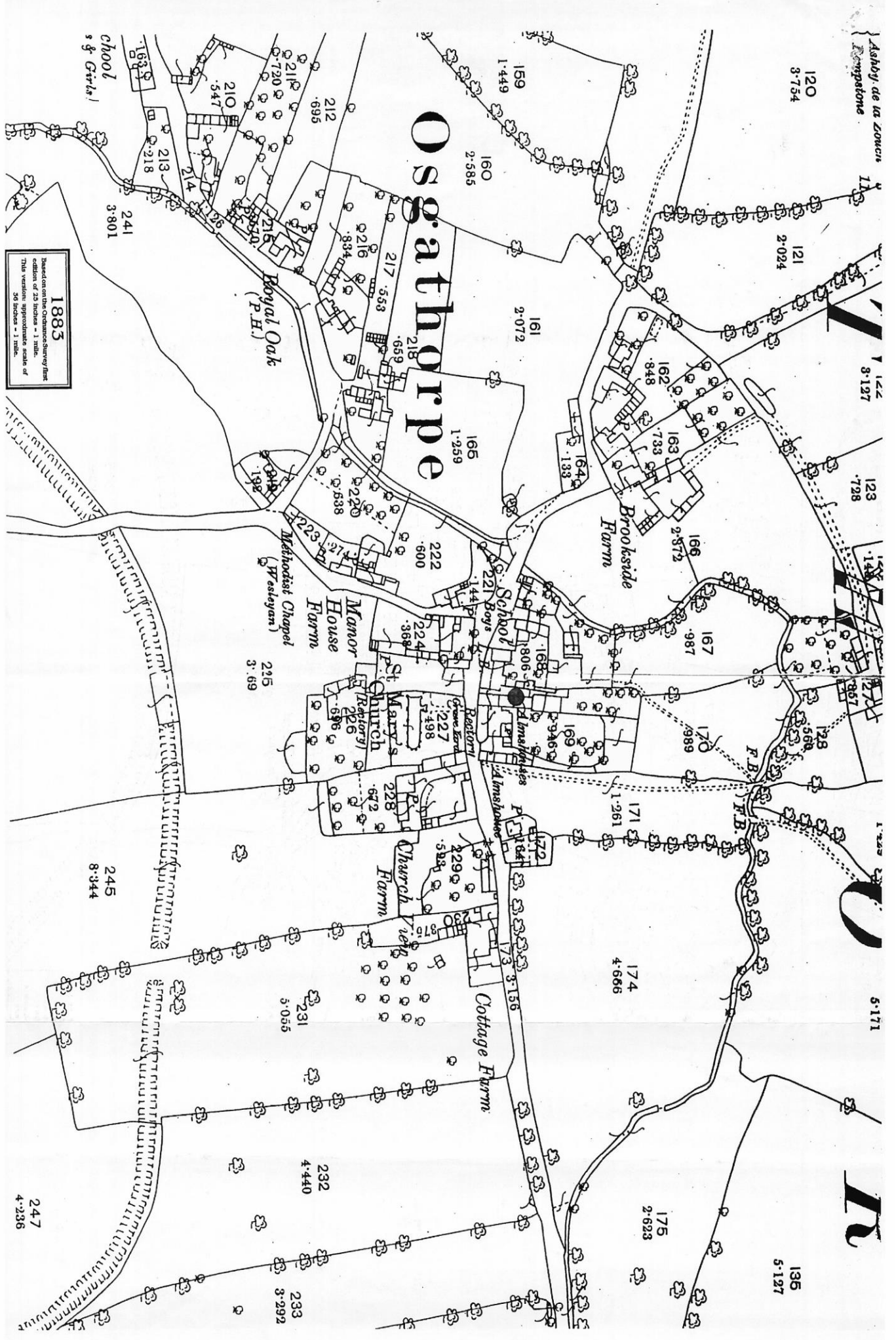


THE RESIDENCE
OSGATHORPE - THOMAS HARLEY'S CHARITY



‘At Osgathorp is an Alms-house for six poor
clergymens widows, built by Thomas Harley
citizen of London, with an allowance of £.10. per
ann. each, and a Freschool of £.40. per ann.’

Camden's *Britannia* Pub. 1806, Volume II.



1883
 Based on the Ordnance Survey first
 edition of 2 1/2 inches = 1 mile.
 This version, approximate scale of
 2 1/2 inches = 1 mile.

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