

# *Hillingdon's Poor Rate Books, 1780-1790*

by Sandra Morris

I volunteer at Hillingdon Local Studies, Archives and Museum Service where I have been transferring the Poor Rate Books for the 1780s for parishes in Hillingdon onto an Excel spreadsheet. Rates were levied on property owners and occupiers based on the yearly value of property and the records of the collections were recorded in rate books and kept by the church vestry. The vestry was a meeting of parish ratepayers chaired by an incumbent of the parish. Church wardens acted as senior parish officers, aided by a number of overseers.

Acts of Parliament made the parish responsible for poor relief and required the registration of all property. The rate was mainly used to raise money for poor relief but also for other local services such as church expenses, public highways, educational needs as well as drainage and sewer maintenance. The rate books record ownership of property and possibly its location and name, the rent payable and occasionally additional comments on owners and their property such as 'Widow', 'Poor', 'Owne Land' etc. Other entries show both the owner and occupier, and some owners appear to have many properties with different occupiers.

This money was collected by the overseers for the relief of the poor - an early form of Social Security! Many entries have 'To Inquire' against them, suggesting some dispute over the rate? The rate was recorded every quarter and the records are sectioned by area e.g. Hillingdon Town, Colham Green and the wonderfully named Wewsley (now Yiewsley). The rate in 1780 was set at 'sixpence in the Pound'. It appears that it was not actually collected in January 1782 so it was set at 'ninepence in the Pound' for a couple of quarters that followed, presumably to catch up on missing payments.

I find the records fascinating but they can be a challenge to transcribe. Spelling was not standardised and so some names have a variety of forms, e.g. Tilyer, Tylyer, Tylar, Tylyar, Tyler. I am capturing all the versions as alternatives. The quality of the handwriting varies and also some entries have become very faint. As the rate records are by quarter I can see changes as I move through the data. The sudden absence of a name may indicate death, change of ownership or movement away from the area.

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The Society has a research group which is open to all members. Research ranges from delving into dusty archives to reading old newspapers, looking at censuses or interviewing long term residents. The First World War period is still popular at the moment, but more or less any topic is valid. In the past members have collected old postcards or written the history of their road. Our old Journals are gradually being put online, so you will be able to see what has been carried out previously.

We also prepare exhibitions from time to time at Manor Farm House, for which we need material, and would be grateful then for assistance with preparation.

Eileen Bowlt and other researchers will provide support and guidance, and you can assist with a group project or carry out your own research.

If you would like to have a go, or just see what is involved, please contact

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