

The Cottage at the Memorial Hall

From the administration of George Merryweather, who became the Steward of the Beckett Estate in April 1815, we have learned much about the estate property. He was a very thorough administrator and shortly after his arrival he made it his business to discover who leased what, since when and for what price. In a list of leases contained in one of his registers held at the County Archives in Reading (D/EX52/E1), there is an interesting entry that provides very useful information.

The Beckett Estate had been in Trust since the death of William Lord Viscount Barrington (2nd) in 1793. (See SHS publication, *Beckett & The Barringtons*, N1481 in this catalogue for more information). The Trustees were William Barrington's three brothers and his nephew George, but by 1808, only Shute Barrington the Lord Bishop of Durham, and George, the Vicar of Sedgefield were still living. From a lease of 1808 we learn that William Price, family friend of the Bishop, was still in occupation at Beckett House as a temporary steward and overseer. He seems to have made an agreement with local man Daniel Powell to build his own house. The wording in the lease, '*then lately erected by the said Daniel Powell near Dodds Lane in Shrivenham with the garden adjacent.*' It was a lifehold lease on the lives of his wife and children for 99 years, but the property would still be owned by the estate.

The Tithe Map for 1844 showed exactly where the cottage was located, being at the western end of Dodds Lane, right on the spot where the Memorial Hall would be built and opened in 1925. The census for 1841 showed that Daniel and his wife Amelia, were still at the cottage with son Thomas aged 20. In 1851 the couple were still there aged 76 and 74 respectively. Daniel died in 1854 and was buried on 27th June aged 80. His wife Amelia survived until 1859, when she was buried on 23rd May, aged 83. But in the Parish Burial Register there is an entry for a Thomas Powell, buried on 10th September 1858, aged 41, very likely their son.

The Beckett Estate map of 1866 listed that the occupier of the cottage was Charles Gaiger. From then we lose track of it with the subsequent census' proving very difficult to pinpoint properties. In 1924 it was demolished to make way for the Memorial Hall, the community project of Charlotte Lady Viscountess Barrington. So from the lease entry we were able to trace the cottage from the time it was built to the time it was taken down.



The cottage at the road junction before the Memorial Hall was built and a closer view of it below circa 1910. Photo courtesy of Paul Williams



The Lease in full

Daniel Powell, Shrivenham. By lease granted by the Lord Bishop of Durham, George Barrington, Clerk and William Price Esq, dated 20 October 1808, of a Messuage or Tenement then lately erected by the said Daniel Powell near Dodds Lane in Shrivenham with the Garden adjacent then occupied by the said Daniel Powell. Covenant by said Daniel Powell his Heirs, Executors etc, to pay the yearly rent, to keep the premises in repair and so leave them etc. From 29 September 1808 for 99 years on the lives of Daniel Powell then aged 33, Amelia his wife aged 30, Daniel Powell, aged 10, John Powell, aged 13, Charlotte Powell, aged 7, Martha Powell, aged 5, Mary Powell, aged 2, sons and daughters of Daniel Powell and his wife, Amelia.