

## Sale of The Quethiock Estate 14<sup>th</sup> August 1919

The early twentieth century was a time of great change for the inhabitants of Britain, dominated of course by 'The Great War' of 1914 – 1918 and the Spanish Flu' pandemic that killed 50 million people worldwide. It was also a time of social and political change, with the introduction of the vote for all adult men and for women over 30 who met a property qualification.

For the small parish of Quethiock, there was soon to be a change that would touch the lives of all parishioners in one way or another. For generations the parish had been in the ownership of the Coryton family of Pentillie Castle, but in August 1919 the squire, William Coryton, lay on his deathbed and a decision had been made to sell the entire parish to pay death duties. According to the sale catalogue produced for the occasion, the Estate consisted of 4,200 acres of land, 28 farms, numerous smallholdings, mill properties, The Mason's Arms Public House, Quethiock Post & Telegraph Office, blacksmiths', wheelwrights' & carpenters' shops, Quethiock School House and various shops, cottages and gardens – in short almost every dwelling and business in Quethiock, Trehunist and Blunts and every farm in between.

Many of the tenant farmers saw the sale as an opportunity to buy the farms that had been in their families for generations, so on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1919 they gathered at The Royal Hotel in Plymouth for the auction. By the end of the afternoon, only nine of those farms had been sold to those farmers – Holwood, Goodmerry, Gooseford, Dannett, Trecorme, Great West Quethiock, Treweese, Coombe and Tilland Mill Farm. Nine others had been purchased by Cornwall Council – Luccombe, Trenance, Hepwell, East Quethiock, East Trehunist, West Trehunist, Trebrown, Venn and Tilland. The other ten farms were sold to buyers from neighbouring parishes. To those nine families whose farms were sold to Cornwall Council, there was no choice other than to move on and seek the tenancy of farms outside the parish, as the intention of the Council was to divide those farms into smaller farms and smallholdings to rent out to servicemen returning from the war. It is unknown whether any of the farmers whose farms were bought by other buyers were able to retain their tenancies.

Most of the tradespeople were successful in their bids. The Mason's Arms was sold to Frank Snell, the landlord; Alfred Harris bought his shop; the school managers bought the school house; Benjamin Hawken bought his carpenter shop in Quethiock; two of the Jane brothers of Blunts bought their carpenter shops, as did Joseph Bate, carpenter at Lower Pounda; Francis Pooley bought Higher Pounda which was his blacksmith shop and Sydney Hawken carpenter and millwright bought his shop at Treweese Cross.

For the ordinary working people – the agricultural labourers, the woodmen, the quarrymen, the game keeper, the carters and the retired – whose homes were dependant on their landlords, there was nothing they could do until the results of the auction were known. For those whose homes were sold outside the parish, there were questions. Would the new owners keep them on in their current jobs? Would the retired workers and widows be allowed to remain in their homes?

It was a time of celebration for some - for those who now owned their land and properties - but a time of heartbreak for others, who had to move out of the parish to find new homes and jobs elsewhere. It was a time of uncertainty for many more who rented their homes and were dependant on the new buyers for their jobs. The parish of Quethiock was changed forever on that afternoon in August 1919.

## Events Planned for 2019 to Commemorate the Sale of Quethiock Parish

- 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019** Quiz Night at the Quethiock Parish Hall. All profits will be donated to the Addington Fund, a registered charity that funds homes for farming families in England and Wales who have left the industry through no fault of their own.
- 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019** Lecture by Robert Leishman who wrote “Parish for Sale”, a book about the sale of Quethiock Parish. This will take place at the Quethiock Parish Hall.
- 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019** Lecture by Simon Harris-Wood at the Quethiock Parish Hall. Simon will discuss the wider world of 1919 – that is, major events, scientific advancements, the new era of travel and other aspects of everyday life as Britain emerged from the trauma of the Great War. This lecture will provide some context for the sale of Quethiock Parish.
- 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019** Boundary Walk of Quethiock Parish with a pub night to follow at the Quethiock Parish Hall.
- June-August 2019** Scarecrow Competition with all profits donated to the Addington Fund.
- 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019** Afternoon Concert at Quethiock School performed by the schoolchildren.
- 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019** Tea at the Quethiock Parish Hall followed by the unveiling of a permanent marker to commemorate the sale of Quethiock Parish.
- Autumn 2019** Harvest Mass at St. Hugh’s Church to commemorate the sale of Quethiock Parish.  
(date to be announced)
- 10<sup>th</sup> November 2019** Remembrance Sunday commemoration at the war memorial with detailed obituaries of the soldiers on the cenotaph.

The Women’s Institute will commission a mug to commemorate the sale of Quethiock Parish. All profits will be donated to the Addington Fund

More details on these events will appear in the Quethiock News throughout the year.