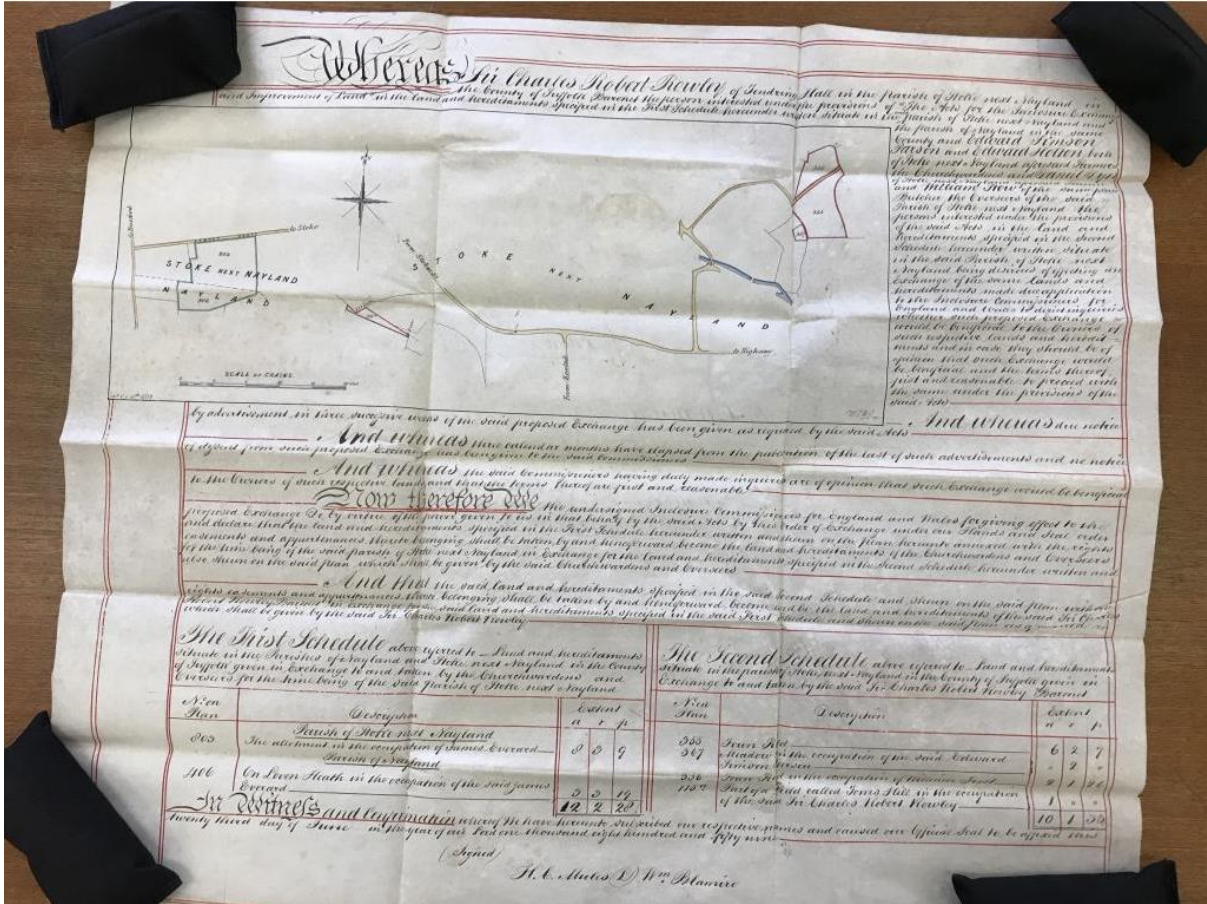


“The Lady Anne Windsor Charity want to develop their Plough Lane field for almshouses”

But what’s a Stoke Charity doing in Leavenheath?

In 1859 “The Churchwardens and Overseers” of Stoke, on behalf of the Town or Parish Lands Charity, did a land swap with the Tendring Hall estate. The Estate took three patches of land near Thorington Street and one at the edge of Tendring Hall park, and the Charity took the Plough Lane field. The Record Office in Bury still has the original parchment deed recording the transfer, beautifully drawn and in elegant handwriting:



In terms of area, the Charity had the better of it: the field is over 12 acres/5 hectares, while the four patches of land totalled just over 10 acres/4 hectares. But the Estate owned all the land surrounding the Charity’s property, so taking over the intruding patches will have made management much easier.

OK, but what has the Town or Parish Lands Charity do with the Lady Anne Windsor Charity?

The present Lady Anne Windsor Charity is a merger of six Stoke charities, one being the Town or Parish Lands. The original LAWC corresponded to what most people think of almshouse charities: set up at one go by someone hugely rich, a local boy made good or, as in this case, the local big landowner. But many ancient charities are not like this, and Town or Parish Lands Charities are found elsewhere. Over the years and generations they received modest donations and legacies from ordinary people – even as little as half an acre, as in the case of the smallest of the patches taken over by the Tendring Hall estate. They were then administered by the parish church (“The Churchwardens and Overseers”), which at that time was local government.

OK, but why did a Stoke Charity want property in Leavenheath?

When Lady Anne set up her trust for the almshouses in Stoke village in 1608, Leavenheath and Nayland weren't separate entities. The parish of Stoke by Nayland covered all of Nayland and much of what is now Leavenheath. The Stoke by Nayland Town or Parish Lands Charity had emerged by the end of the 17th century, so the same applied.

Nayland became an independent ecclesiastical parish in the 18th century and a civil parish in 1844. The civil parish merged with that of Wissington in 1884. Leavenheath became an independent ecclesiastical parish in 1863, and a civil parish in 1952, being constituted from parts of Stoke by Nayland and other neighbouring parishes. So in 1859 70% of the Plough Lane field was in Stoke parish and 30% in Nayland, and earlier had all been in Stoke.

Until 2019, the LAWC's Governing Document specified that residents of the Charity's almshouses had to be "inhabitants of the area of The Ancient Parish of Stoke by Nayland". The fact that no one knew for sure how much of Leavenheath was included in The Ancient Parish hadn't mattered up till then. But by then we were hoping to develop the Plough Lane field for almshouses, and these would be first and foremost for Leavenheath people. Plainly, we had to know who would be eligible, in terms of where they lived. Equally plainly, it would make sense for anyone in the existing Leavenheath parish to be eligible.

The Charity Commission agreed, when this was explained, and the Governing Document now specifies that residents of the Charity's almshouses have to be "inhabitants of the area of the civil parishes of Leavenheath, Nayland-with-Wissington and Stoke by Nayland".

So, a grassroots charity accumulated patches of land here and there over a couple of centuries - the big estate did a deal to consolidate both parties' holdings - the village charities were merged under the banner of the main property - the newer settlements got their own local government arrangements - the merged ancient charities brought their Governing Document up-to-date - and now look to develop the field acquired 160-odd years ago for the benefit of the parish created 70-odd years ago. And if we succeed, it won't any longer be just a Stoke Charity.

For more details about us, see our webpage at <https://stokebynayland.onesuffolk.net/parish-organisations/lady-anne-windsor-charity/>.

If you have any questions, do contact us, preferably by e-mail to our Clerk, at LAWCclerk@gmail.com.

The Trustees of the LAWC