



## Update - Whitfield Court, Horsell (1868) Littlewick Road, Surrey GU21 2JU.

The earlier Report shows Richard Dover and his wife Jane are the occupiers of Whitfield Court in 1841 and 1851 according to the Census returns for those years. Richard was born at Worplesdon the son of Robert Dover, farmer of nearby Whitley Farm on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1795 and died 8<sup>th</sup> November 1858.

It is possible to identify previous owners and occupiers of the house by means of the Land Tax. This tax was first introduced in 1692 along with a number of other personal taxes to raise revenue by an Act for taxing personal estate, public offices and land. The tax was voted annually from 1692, and from 1702 the annual legislation became known as the Land Tax. In 1745, an act specified that freeholders should be entitled to vote only if they were assessed for the Land Tax and in 1780, a further act reinforced this requirement. As payment of this tax qualified landowners to vote in parliamentary elections, Clerks of the Peace in each county were required to keep copies of the parish assessments to make up the poll books at parliamentary elections. Most counties therefore have a good run of Land Tax assessments between 1780 and 1832.

Surrey including Horsell has such a run, regrettably only for the period 1780 – 1832, which can be found at the Surrey History Centre. These show the names of the owners and occupants of property, its description and the tax paid. More often than not, however, the only information shown is the names of the owners, the occupiers and the tax paid. The names of the properties, however, can often be deduced from the names of the owners and occupiers.

For example so far as Whitfield Court is concerned, the father Robert Dover, appears in the Sithwood end part of the return for Horsell in 1801 as the owner paying a Land Tax of £2 15s 6d, the occupier being Joseph Davis. Joseph Davis continued as the occupier until 1804 when Robert became occupier as well as owner. The previous year in 1800 there is an entry - *Owner Trust of William Piercy, Occupier Joseph Davis, Tax £2.15s.6d*. The Trust must be the previous owner same occupier, same tax.

Robert died at Whitley Farm on 28th July 1819 although the Land Tax continued to show his name as owner and occupier until 1822 when his Executors were substituted. In 1826 Robert's son Richard is noted as owner and occupier.

Going further back to the first years of the Land Tax returns these show that William Piercy was the owner and occupier of Whitfield Court at least from 1780<sup>1</sup> although the tax was only £2.13s.5d until 1789 when it increased to £2.15s.6d presumably following the purchase of additional land. William was buried at Horsell 18<sup>th</sup> December 1789 *Mr William Piercy of Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire*. Thus, the *Trust of William Piercy* became the owner from 1790. James Webb was the occupier in 1791 and then Joseph Davis until 1800.

<sup>1</sup> Confirmation that William was indeed the owner of Whitfield Court is provided by deeds dated 1785 at Surrey History Centre (9010/8/1-2) which refer to *William Piercey of Whitfield House, Horsell*. Court was presumably added by a subsequent owner.

The following is the interpretation of the Horsell Land Tax returns for Whitfield Court 1780-1832, the following shows the owners and occupiers for the period of the house which is described as House & Land from 1825.

<b>Years</b>	<b>Proprietor (Owner)</b>	<b>Occupier</b>	<b>Tax</b>
1780/8	William Piercy	William Piercy	£2 13s 5d
1789	William Piercy	William Piercy	£2 15s 6d
1790	The Trust of William Piercy	The Trust of William Piercy	£2 15s.6d
1791	The Trust of William Piercy	James Webb	£2 15s 6d
1792/3	The Trust of William Piercy	Joseph Davice	£2 15s 6d
1794	Return missing		
1795/7	The Trust of William Piercy	Joseph Davis	£2 15s 6d
1798	Late William Piercy's	Joseph Davis	£2 15s 6d
1799	The Trust of William Piercy	Joseph Davis	£2 15s 6d
1800	Trust of William Piercy	Joseph Davis	£2 15s 6d
1801/2	Robert Dover	Joseph Davis	£2.15s.6d
1803/21	Robert Dover	himself	£2 15s 6d
1822	Exors of late Robert Dover	Exors of late Robert Dover	£2 !5s. 6d
1823	Exors of late Robert Dover	Richard Dover & James Faggetter	£2 !5s. 6d
1824/5	Robert Dover Exors	Richard Dover	£2 !5s. 6d
1826/30	Richard Dover	himself	£2 !5s. 6d

This takes the ownership back to 1780 but we also have the survey of the property carried out and drawn by Matthew Richardson c1750 when the property was called Knights Farm and owned by Joseph Whitfield. There are also the feet of fines for Joseph Whitfield v Robert Kitching in 1739, Robert Kitching v Charles Viner in 1723 and Charles Viner v John Clement in 1720. These were records of fictitious suits at law instituted in fact to secure a secure transfer of land. As a result we can summarise the ownership between 1720 and 1780 as:

<b>Years</b>	<b>Owner</b>
1720	John Clement
1720/3	Charles Viner
1723/39	Robert Kitching
1739/50	Joseph Whitfield
1750/79	William Piercy and Joseph Whitfield

We must be careful with our assumptions here. The evidence is that the parties sold property to each other. Whitfield Court is not mentioned but it is reasonable to assume it was the property involved.

Below are four images of the house held by Surrey History Centre:



West end of house in 1972 ©Surrey History Centre



Front of house in 1978 ©Surrey History Centre



Front of house with east end 1978 ©Surrey History Centre



West end of house 1978 ©Surrey History Centre

### Sources

Ancestry.co.uk

Surrey History Centre

Surrey Land Tax 1780-1832

West Surrey Family History Society (publishers of Feet of Fines 1558-1760)

I am grateful to the present owners Mr and Mrs Keith Sohl for their agreement that I may publish both this Update and my previous Report on the Horsell Residents Association 's website in common with all my other work on Horsell.

© Phillip Arnold March 2017