

CHARLES BAKER

THE WORK OF A NINETEENTH CENTURY SURVEYOR

by A. Bailey

Charles Baker, who describes himself as architect, surveyor and civil engineer (1), married Ann Bayliss and thus came to Castle Hale, Painswick. He was responsible for extensive alterations to the house from 1835 (2). His working practices can be studied from 1816 (a road map) (3) through to 1850 (a letter book 1829-1850) (4). In addition to maps, plans and the letter book, his account book (1836-1840) (5), is also deposited in the Gloucestershire Record Office.

His early work, 1816-1825, related principally to roads, for which there are seventeen of his maps. In addition there are parish maps of Paganhill, Lypiatt and Painswick; he also surveyed the town of Stroud. In his report on the condition of the handloom weavers, W. A. Miles mentions Charles Baker as an authority on local mills, but the only record remaining of his activities in this field is a plan of mills at Ebley.

During the period 1826-1835, he produced a lesser number of public works but these included the building of a church at Slad. However, from 1835 onwards Charles Baker was extremely active. In addition to designing and building estates at Oxenton and Alstone (1,200 acres), and King's Stanley, his work on estates and parish surveys led to an extensive practice in surveying and mapping for the Tithe Commissioners.

His first recorded tithe map, dated 1838, is for Nettleton in Wiltshire. His brother lived in Acton Turville and it was probably through him he obtained the commission. Tithe maps for Harescombe and King's Stanley dated 1838 are followed by several other maps yearly. Many of the tithe surveys had been preceded by parish or estate surveys, e.g. the parish plan of Painswick in 1820 and the later tithe map of 1839. Private surveys in Stroud and Rodborough of 1829 were followed by the 1839 tithe survey of Minchinhampton and Rodborough.

The letter book indicates that he took articled pupils and for his railway survey (6); the accounts mention charges for three assistant surveyors.

However, by 1843 business problems had arisen; in a letter dated March 9th, 1844, to his bank he states "...in consequence of not having had any profitable business for the last twelve months I am not able to pay anything at present in reduction of my account at your bank". He goes on to solicit the bank manager for business - his letter book is increasingly concerned with requests for work, details of timber valuations, estate and

house valuations together with the supervision of minor building works: e.g. in 1848 he surveyed the roof of Painswick church. The last glimpse we have of his activities is in November 1843 when he mentions in a letter that he has still not been paid for surveys conducted two years previously. A letter of December 1843 quotes his terms for pupils - "My usual terms for instruction are for three branches viz. land surveying, civil engineering and architecture, £300 paid at the commencement. As there is a possibility that your son wants land surveying only I will agree to thoroughly instruct him in that and give him a general knowledge and instruct him in the principles of civil engineering for £125, £100 at commencement and the remainder when he leaves". In December he also mentions going to law for the Randwick survey money.

In 1846 he mentions going to Ireland referring to himself as "a very poor man". His troubles were further increased by a letter from W. H. Hyett suggesting that he withdraw from the school business - a sorry state for one who had held the office of church warden. His financial worries had already forced him to let Castle Hale and live at Highgrove Cottage, and in 1847 he was in acrimonious correspondence with the tenant Mrs. Rollerton who wanted new furniture and carpets. By 1848 he had been joined in business by his son and they went looking for business far afield. He applied to clean and survey the streets of Winchester. In 1849 he pronounced work on Painswick church roof to be satisfactory but was quarreling with John Mills - "your sheep are in my ground". 1850 the last year of the letter book mentions the re-letting of Castle Hale.

His account books give a further idea of his work and life style - there are all the accounts of the rebuilding of Castle Hale, records of expenses, costs of buying books in addition to survey work undertaken but not mentioned in the letter book. His charges for surveys range from 9d per acre in the earlier years to a more standard 11d per acre reaching as high as 1s 3d per acre in later surveys, and tithe commutations at 1s 6d per acre. Poor rate valuations of a parish were 1s per acre; in 1838 he presented a bill for the Nettleton poor rate of £98 15s. He also undertook a considerable number of small surveys and valuations in the Painswick and Cheltenham areas. He was particularly involved in the building of houses in Suffolk Square, Cheltenham, and he executed a map of Cheltenham for Griffiths' book on Cheltenham published in 1826. Unfortunately the account book stops in 1840 and so we have no idea of his fortunes in the years of trouble from 1841 onwards.

It is tempting to speculate about the reason for the decline in Charles Baker's business from the prosperity of the middle years when he was married to Ann Bayliss, rebuilding their home, a churchwarden, charity trustee and contented family man. Certainly the letter book shows that he increasingly quarrelled with everybody, be it client or fellow parishioners. He was asked by W. H. Hyett to withdraw as a charity trustee and in creasingly he had to look far afield for work. The letter book

gives several instances where he submitted estimates for major public surveys and in the later years others were awarded the contract. Correspondence relating to the Stroud workhouse and subsequent payments is quite acrimonious though whether due to the parsimony of the managers or the personality of their surveyor it is impossible to ascertain from a one-sided correspondence.

References

1. H. M. Colvin, A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects (1952), p.52
2. St. Clair Baddeley, A Cotteswold Manor (1929), p.218
3. Glos. R.O. Q/RUm 58
4. Glos. R.O. D3917/1
5. Glos. R.O. D3917/2
6. Glos. R.O. Q/RUm 147

CHARLES BAKER - An analysis of his principal business taken from his letter book (Glos. R.O. D3917/1); an account book (Glos. R.O. D3917/2) and maps deposited in the Gloucestershire Record Office:

- 1816 Road: Gloucester/Stroud (Q/RUm 58)
- 1817 Road: Gloucester/Stroud (Q/RUm 61)
- 1818 Road: Pitchcombe/Prinknash (Q/RUm 63)
Road: Minchinhampton/Tetbury (Q/RUm 64)
- 1819 Road: Cheltenham/Upton St. Leonards (Q/RUm 66)
Road: Stroud/Bisley (Q/RUm 69)
Parish: Stroud (Paganhill) (P320 VE 1/9)
- 1820 Parish: Stroud (Lypiatt) (P320 VE 1/10)
Parish: Painswick (P244 MI 1/1-5)
Estate: Awre (D1430b/29)
- 1821 Road: Tetbury/Minchinhampton (Q/RUm 74)
Estate: Kemble (Photocopy 1061)
- 1822 Road: Stroud/Bisley (Q/RUm 79)
- 1823 Road: Cheltenham (Q/RUm 83)
Road: Broadland Pitch/Stroud (Q/RUm 91)
- 1824 Road: Whittington (Q/SRh 1824 D/2)
Road: Cainscross/Minchinhampton (Q/RUm 93)
Road: Dowdeswell/Shipton (Q/RUm 97)
Railway: Stroud/Severn (Q/RUm 100)

- 1825 Road: Cheltenham/Gloucester (Q/RUm 105)
 Road: Cheltenham/Tewkesbury (Q/RUm 112)
 Road: Cheltenham/Gloucester (Q/RUm 104)
 Road: Whittington (Q/SRh 1825 C/2)
 Parish: Stroud Town (Photocopy 333)
- 1826 Estate: Nettleton (Wiltshire Record Office)
 Mills: Ebley (D873 T20)
 Map: Griffith's New Historical Description of Cheltenham
- 1827 Road: Stroud (Q/SRh 1827 C/3)
- 1829 Road: Stroud/Rodborough (D3917/1)
- 1830 Road: Cheltenham (Q/RUm 122)
 Enclosure: Milbourne (Wilts.)
 Mill: Fromebridge Mills (valuation) (Wilts.)
- 1831- Church: Slad
- 1834 Parsonage House: Slad (D3029/3)
- 1835- Church: Cainscross (P263 MI6)
- 1837 Vicarage: Cainscross (P86 IN 8/1)
- 1836 Railway: Ireland/London (Q/RUm 147)
 Estate: Stinchcombe (1,200 acres, D3917/1)
 Estate: Ozleworth (580 acres)
 School: British School, Stroud (D2186/120)
- 1837 Road: Dursley
 Estate: Oxenton/Alstone (1,200 acres, D3917/1)
 Estate: Stonehouse (409 acres, D3917/1)
 Estate: King's Stanley (D873 P22)
- 1837- Workhouse: Stroud
- 1838
- 1838 Tithe: Nettleton (Wiltshire Record Office)
 Tithe: Harescombe (GDR TI/93)
 Tithe: King's Stanley (GDR TI/169)
 Parish: Oxenton (D2079/V1/6)
 Parish: Hardwick (D3917/1)
- 1839 Tithe: Avening (GDR TI/11)
 Tithe: Eastington (GDR TI/73)
 Tithe: Corsham (Wiltshire Record Office)
 Tithe: Minchinhampton and Rodborough (GDR TI/120)
 Tithe: Newington Bagpath (GDR TI/127)
 Tithe: Painswick (GDR TI/137)
 Tithe: Stonehouse (GDR TI/172)
 Hope Mansell (Hereford)
 Parish: Stonehouse (D1347)
 Parish: Nettleton (Wilts.)
 Inclosure: Saul and Fretherne (D3917/1)
- 1840 Tithe: Pewsham, Wilts. (Wiltshire Record Office)
 Tithe: Owlpen (GDR TI/136)
 Vicarage: Eastington (D3917/1)
- 1841 Tithe: Swindon (GDR TI/175)
 Tithe: Brockworth (GDR TI/39)
- 1842 Tithe: Fretherne (GDR TI/83)
 Parish: Fretherne (P152 VE 1/1)
 Tithe: Randwick (GDR TI/146)
 Mills: Kings Grist Mill, Dudbridge (D3917/1)
- 1843 Inclosure: Fretherne (Q/RI 69)
 Parish: Randwick (D3917/1)
 Vicarage: Randwick (D3917/1)
- 1844 Estate: Olivers, Painswick (D3917/1)
 Estate: Peg House (D3917/1)
 Estate: Cord Hill (D3917/1)
- 1847 Estate: Ozleworth (D3917/1)

Bill to the Land Owners and Rate Payers of the Parish of Hope Mansel

1840

To Charles Baker

Surveying and making a first class map of the Parish of Hope Mansell, copies and valuing appertaining to rent charges in lieu of tithes and valuing the houses and making as assessment for the relief of the poor, 1175 acres at 1/4d per acre	£83	12	11
To journey 20 miles to Ross to lay the appointment before them	£3	3	0
Expenses and fly hire and pikes	£2	9	0
To journey and expenses to Hope Mansell at the request of the rate payers for the purpose of examining and finally settling and arranging the new assessment	£3	3	0
Expenses of fly hire and pike	£2	4	0
Postage and carriage of parcels from London and Stationary	£12	15	0
Engraving 3 copies of rent charges	£9	3	0
		14	0
	£106	4	5