

## The Great Sale 1914 – break up of the Warleigh Estate

By Dennis Silverwood.

Presented at the AGM of the Tamerton Foliot Village Conservation Society in 2023

Place names around Tamerton Foliot give us clues as to the local history. Some are family names – Copleston Heights being a nomination by a child from Mary Dean’s school. And we have Clittaford Rd and the Hendwell Centre which are based on the names of farms, before the city took them over for post war building.

Looking into these things gives us an intriguing insight into the family history of landed gentry – the squirearchy – through the example of the Radcliffe family of Warleigh - and of the social history that surrounds them.



Warleigh House 1830 and 2000

What was it then that caused the Radcliffes to sell up 1307 acres of land around Tamerton Foliot in 1914 and reduce their estate largely to Warleigh House and Warleigh Barton?

If you go into St Mary’s church, you will see a list of the vicars on a board on the wall and if you can get into the vestry, there is a photograph of the Reverend Walter Radcliffe of Warleigh house (1779 -1867).



The Vicar, St Mary's, Tamerton Foliot

The Reverend had inherited a large estate – not only the land around Tamerton Foliot but parcels at Peter Tavy, Lydford, Whitchurch, Hackworthy, Tavistock, Mary Tavy, Bere Ferrers, Down St Mary and Bridestowe and moreover he had married locally into the wealthy Lopes family.

The Reverend Walter died in 1867 leaving 6 children of whom, the eldest was another Walter – Walter C - who took up residence in Starcross near Exeter. He in turn produced 4 sons and 5 daughters and can be regarded as the major cause of downfall – let us say, the antagonist - of the Warleigh estate as we shall see.

It was customary for the aristocracy and landed gentry to try to keep estates together, usually demising onto the eldest son. Younger sons were set up in the Royal Navy or the church or the army, usually in that order of priority. There might be a living to dole out for the churchman, commissions to be bought in the army and prizes to be taken in the Navy and certainly, it was hoped, advantageous marriages to be had. The girls were settled with a dowry or in some cases, remained

as spinsters, looking after or being companions for ageing parents. Readers of Jane Austen will be well familiar with this *modus vivendi*.

However, in the case of Walter C, whether through rejection of old-fashioned models or through care for all of his children, he willed £10,000 to each of his sons (other than the eldest who was the inheritor of the estate) and £5,000 to each daughter – a total of £55,000. This sum appears to have been entailed for the lifetime of his wife, Charlotte nee Ellicombe, and to be paid after her death. Walter C died in 1876 and his wife survived for a further 35 years dying in 1909.

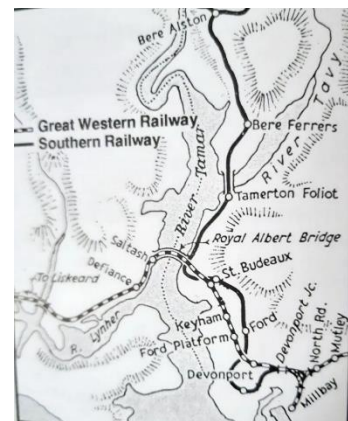
One of Walter C's nine children, the eldest son, Walter J.D. Radcliffe b 1859, is the main protagonist of our story. We can see from what has been said already that he inherited the estate but with the obligation of £55,000 to his siblings and of support for his mother for her lifetime.

Walter J.D became a barrister and we see him in 1901, married to Emmeline with a family of 4 (it may have been 5) at Compton Lodge, Eggbuckland. His mother was living with an unmarried daughter near Newton Abbot. In 1911, he has moved to Horrabridge. I have not traced who was living at Warleigh House and 'looking after the shop' at this time.

Walter JD states in a letter to his tenants in 1914 that he himself has been 'looking after the shop' spending 1/3 of his professional time managing the estate and doing all the jobs which could not be afforded from the estate income and still provide a reasonable living for his mother from that income. His correspondence shows that he had made many improvements to the farms, laying on water supplies, re-roofing and so on but had failed, unavoidably, to amass sufficient capital to pay off his siblings. He shows a remarkable grasp of detail and moreover of loyalty to his tenants.

One of the improvements for which all the village and so many other people of Plymouth will be grateful for is Station Rd. Walter JD wrangled a station at Tamerton Foliot out of the Plymouth, Devonport and South Western Railway and improved the road to it over his land in order to transport the market gardening produce of the area more speedily than could be done by sailing craft coming up Tamerton Lake.

As an aside, Walter JD's 1893 plan was to have a branch of the railway run across his land and into Tamerton Foliot, terminating in the field behind 'Denmark'. Parliamentary approval for this was not given!

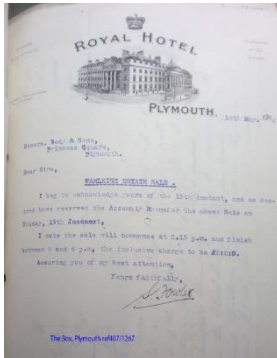


Following the death of his mother, the payments to siblings came due and he could see no other way of paying them off other than by selling his land.

And of course, there was the subject of death duties. It is not clear at what point these became due (or if they became due) but under Lloyd George's Finance Act of 1907 at a rate of 7% pertaining to estates of up to £70,000 – and on a sliding scale, more for more. It is understandable therefore that Walter JD wrote as follows in his letter to his tenants.

*"I did hope that the time and trouble I have given to the estate over many years might enable me to hand it on improved in value (as it has been in many respects) and with its burden lightened but the mischievous land legislation of recent years and the malicious attacks made on landlords by vicious politicians for their own purposes makes this impossible"*

As a matter of economic history, Walter JD's indebtedness was around £8m in today's (2023) terms whereas the 1307 acres of land and farms would have been (my estimates) in the order of £20M and the 29 miscellaneous lots of land and property around the village amounting to 78 acres (with planning permission!) a further £5-7M.



So, at 2.15pm on June 19<sup>th</sup> 1914 the auction of 14 farms and a further 39 plots of land was held at the Royal Hotel, Plymouth.

Let's have a look at the farms and a few of the plots.

Cressy Cottage anyone? Described as a "pretty residence" together with garden and stable. Knocked down to Mr Hendy for £310, £10 under the estimate and the Seven Stars to Mr Blundell



for £675, beating the tenant, Mr Hill, who subsequently refused to vacate his tenancy of Rock Hill Field.



The farms, and you will recognise many of the names, are below on a map

Lot no.		Lot no.	
1	Hayes End	9	Horsham
2	Coombe	10	Ashleigh
3	Trehills	11	Dunsborough and West Bradley
4	Whitson	12	North Bradley
5	Clittaford	13	Allern
6	Langley	14	N Coombe
7	Hendwell		
8	Porsham		

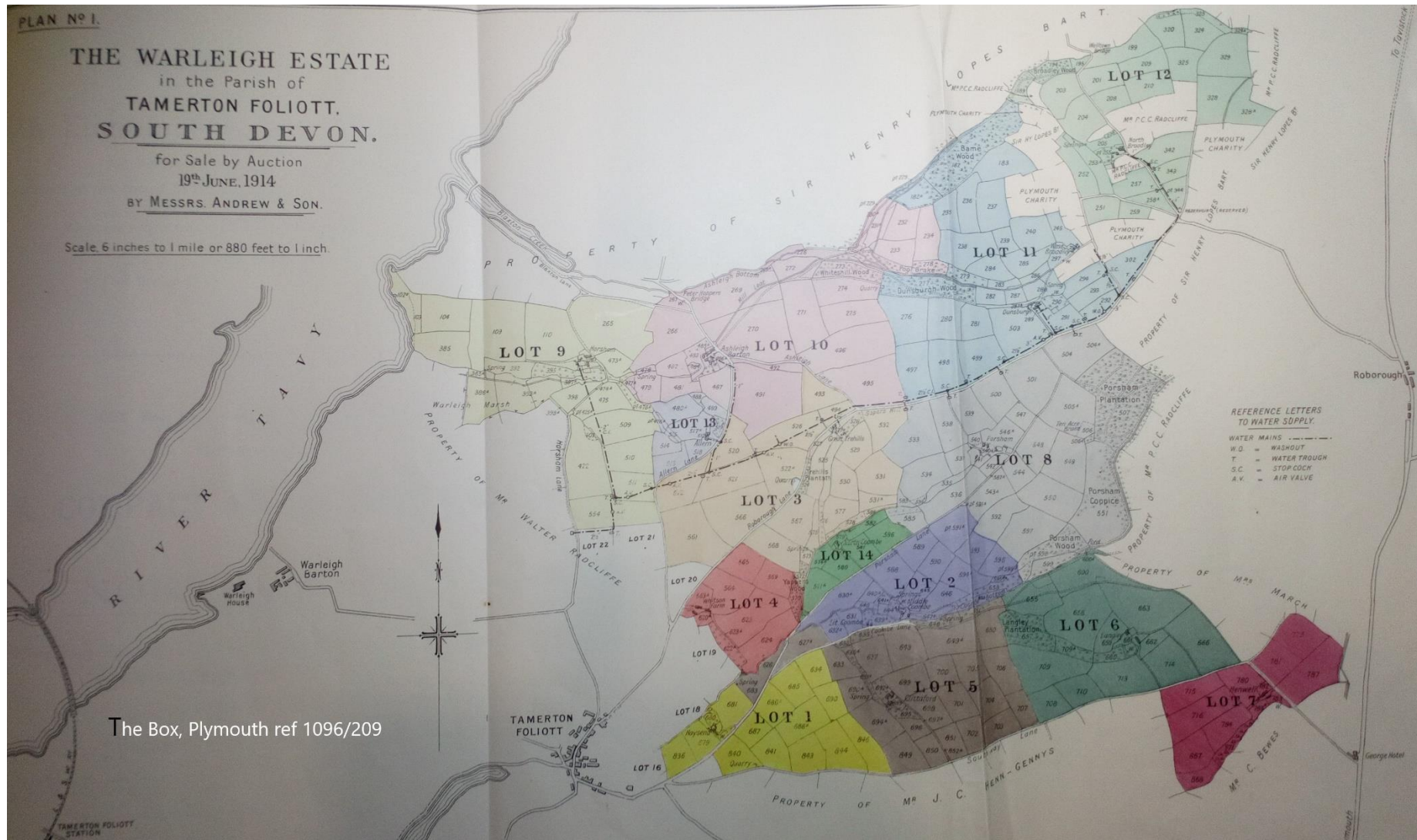


PLAN No 1.

# THE WARLEIGH ESTATE in the Parish of TAMERTON FOLIOTT, SOUTH DEVON.

For Sale by Auction  
19<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 1914  
BY MESSRS. ANDREW & SON.

Scale, 6 inches to 1 mile or 880 feet to 1 inch.

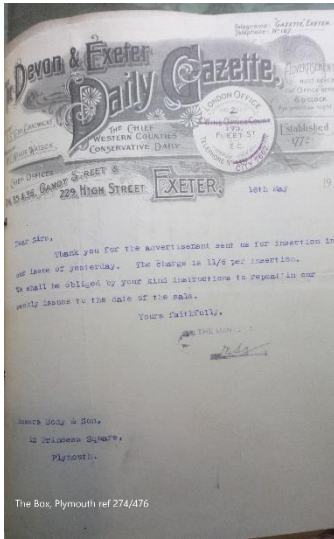


The Box, Plymouth ref 1096/209

The farms are shown in the table below with acreage, sale price, tenant and buyer. The acreage includes woodland, quarries and the like, often advertising these as good for shooting

LOT NO	FARM	ACREAGE	TENANT	Sales Estimate	Hammer Price	Buyer
1	Hayes End	59	Avery	2900		
2	Coombe	56	Hoskin	1850	2000	Hughes
3	Trehills	120	Hacker	3600	3200	Parken
4	Whitson	35	Pengelly	1400		Griggs
5	Clittaford	98	Avery	3450	3500	Hughes
6	Langley	93	Brown	2400	2700	
7	Hendwell	52	Ellis	2260	2350	Sellick
8	Porsham	171	W Luke	3375		
9	Horsham	138	Luscombe	6000		
10	Ashleigh	166	Geatons	5000		
11	Dunsborough and West Bradley	162	Gillard	3750		
12	North Bradley	113	Ellis	3100		
13	Allern	18	Gillard	670	875	Peters
14	North Coombe	14	Ellacott	625	660	Parsons
The Box archive ref 407/281	Tamerton Foliot	78				

Not all the lots sold and there is evidence that private arrangements were made afterwards. A reply from one Charles Huxham of Fancy says "Price not mentioned. I am under the impression that Radcliffe is not anxious to sell any more." The Griggs of Cann House were encouraged to buy Whitson for shooting as it overlooks their land.



Nevertheless, the auction raised £41,790 less costs such as 11s 6d for the Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette.

That is more or less how far I have gone with the story of the "Great Sale". But here are a few footnotes.

There are 7 of the 14 farms where there is no buyer recorded in the sale records. It is quite possible that they were sold 'off market' and a letter from the agent of Maristow estates enquiring as to the reserve prices of Ashleigh, Dunsburgh and North Bradley would support this. It is also probable that Hayes End and the Coombe farms were bought by the Tucketts of Cann house at some point.

An Act of Parliament of 1947 approved compulsory purchase of land to build 2,300 dwellings at Southway. Hendwell, Clittaford and Langley farms were acquired (or at least large parts of them) together with Southway, Birdcage and 2 other farms from other landowners. Whitson farm was acquired by Devon County Council and is still owned by them.

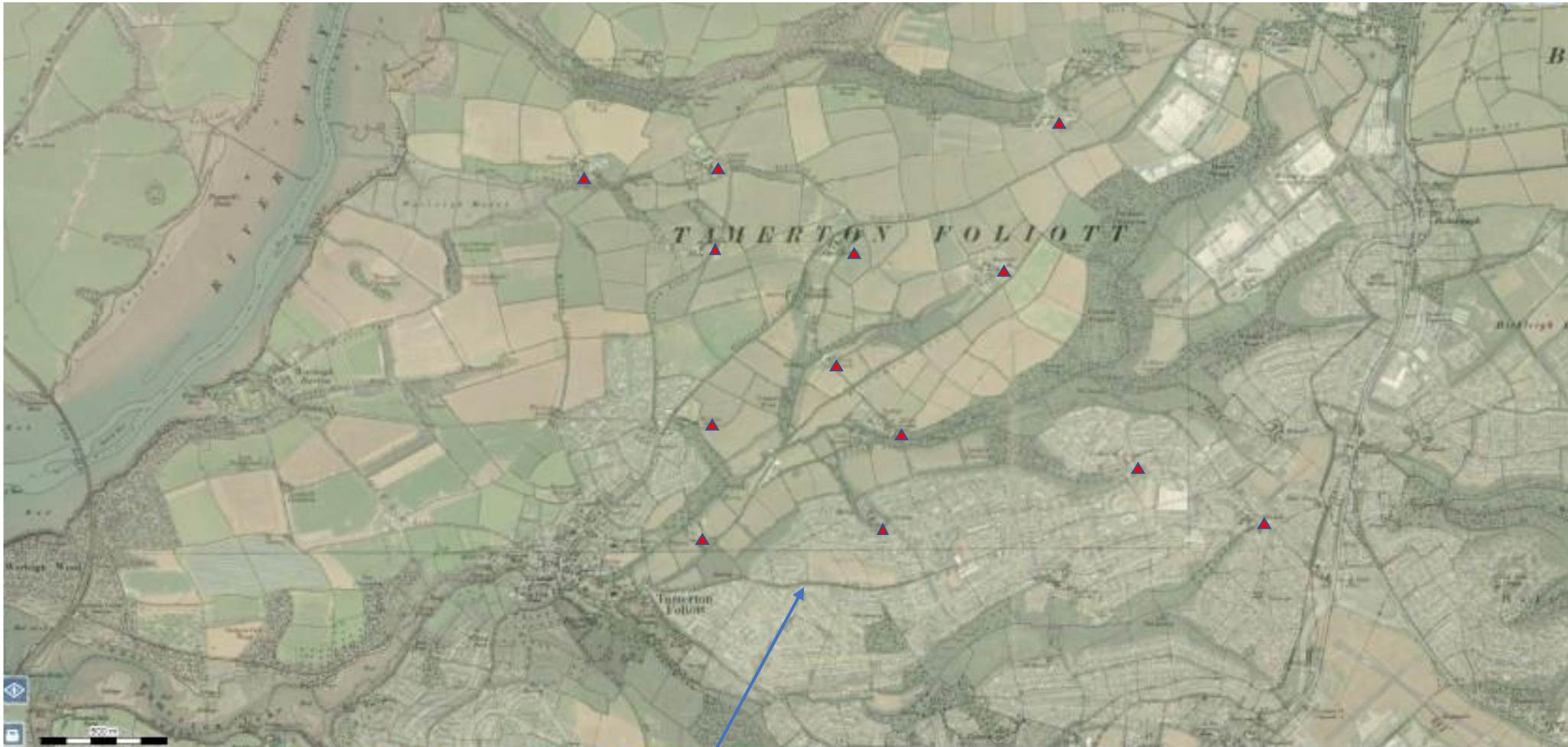


Aerial view of Southway c1952

The following map overlays 2020 Google map onto the 1909 ordnance survey. The built up areas can be seen following the line of the Coombe valley. The distinctive shape of Tamerton Foliot, Holly Park and the industrial estates at Roborough and Bradley can be seen easily.



1909 OS map overlay on Google maps. Farms are marked ▲



Line of Southway Lane



Lot 20 is where the Copleston Heights estate is. People may remember the planning battle and enquiry associated with this and the formation of Friends of the Field. The hachured bits are subject to a covenant not to build and to some extent this has been observed...but not to the full extent of the area. The land itself was eventually sold in 2017 to Taylor Wimpey for around £800,000 having been estimated in the "Great Sale" at £250.

And finally, lot 17 which had been advertised as building land and offered to Charles Huxham and remained unsold, was eventually sold by the Warleigh Estate in 1992 and divided into 2. The bottom part is horse pasture (below the old school) and the top part has 3 houses in one of which my wife and I have the privilege of living.