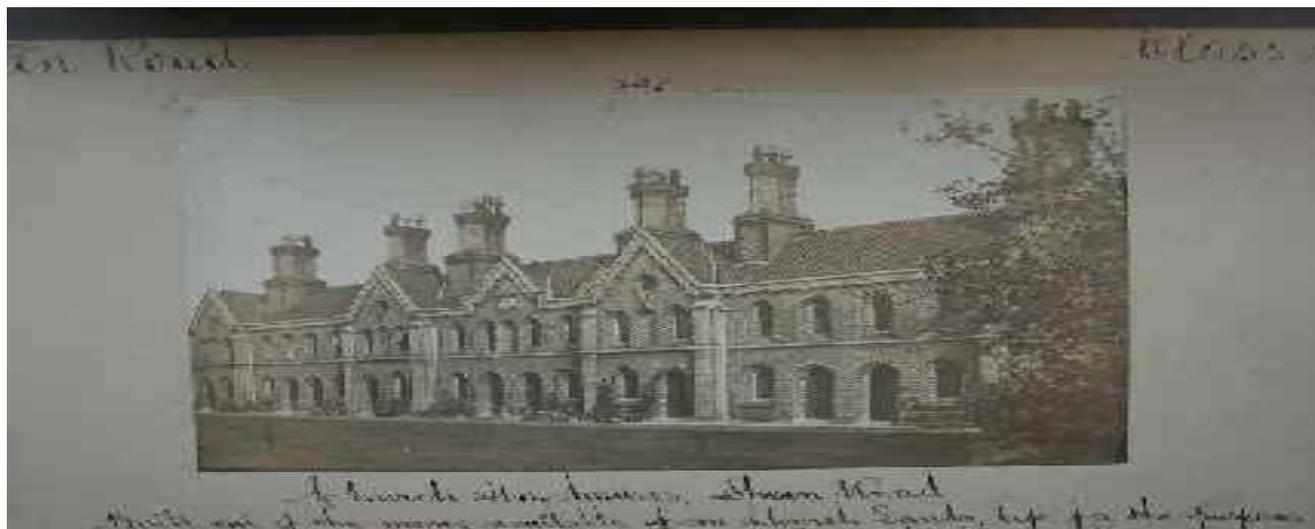


The Almshouses of Richmond



Queen Elizabeth's Almshouses

Founded by Sir George Wright in 1600 to house 8 poor aged women. They were built in Petersham Road, a few hundred yards south of Ferry Hill (now Bridge Street). They were known originally as the 'Lower almshouses' and the name 'Queen Elizabeth's' came into being when extra ones were built. By 1767, they were almost derelict and so were rebuilt in The Vineyard, Rebuilding took place twice more – in 1857 and 1955.

Bishop Duppa's Almshouses

Brian Duppa was Bishop of first Chichester, and then Salisbury. He had been Chaplain to Charles I and tutor to the future Charles II and had remained at Richmond Palace with him until the Civil War. Deprived of the See of Salisbury during Oliver Cromwell's time, Bishop Duppa lived in Richmond – in a house now occupied by the Old Town Hall. At the Restoration in 1660, he was made Bishop in 1661 of Winchester but continued to live in Richmond. He founded the almshouses that bear his name in 1661 for 10 unmarried women over 50 years of age. They were built on Richmond Hill at the corner of Friars Stile Road and remained there until 1852 when, in a bad state of repair, they were demolished and rebuilt in The Vineyard, next to Queen Elizabeth's almshouses. The land there was provided by the owner of Downe House who wanted to extend his garden into the original site.

Michel's Almshouses

In 1695, almshouses for 10 single or married women were founded in The Vineyard by Humphrey Michel, who lived in the house at the corner of The Green and Duke Street. Humphrey died in 1696 and the building was finished by his nephew, John, who also increased the endowment. The almshouses were rebuilt in 1811 and 6 additional ones were erected in 1858. They face Queen Elizabeth's and Bishop Duppa's almshouses.

Houblon's Almshouses

9 of the 11 almshouses in Worple Way, Sheen Road, were founded in 1757 for 9 poor single women by the Misses Rebecca and Susanna Houblon. They were the daughters of Sir John and Lady Houblon and descendents of a Huguenot family who fled to this country c.1567 during the Alva persecutions. Their father, Sir John, was the first Governor of the Bank of England in 1694 and Lord Mayor of London in 1696. When he died in 1712, his widow and 2 daughters came to live in Ellerker House on Richmond Hill, probably to be near their first cousin, Lady Palmerston (of Temple Grove, East Sheen), the great grandmother of Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister of England.

The **Richmond and Twickenham Times** for 30th August 1930 has an article and pictures of the almshouses which states that "in her will Rebecca gave two acres of land lying in Richmond Field, in a shott there called Church Shott". The original rules provided that the inmates should be "none but those brought up and instructed in the Protestant religion, and who shall have lived virtuous, sober and honest lives". A sum of £9 was laid aside to purchase 9 substantial stuff gowns of a brown colour of the value of 20s each, to be given to each inmate at Easter.

Under an order of the Charity Commissioners dated 14th July 1857, the Trustees built 2 additional almshouses at a cost of £195. In 1877, a portion of the land belonging to the charity was let on a building lease and 73 houses were erected – the road was called Houblon Road. In 1758 the charity trustees paid each inmate 13s a month; by 1909 they amount had increased to £2, a new dress and free medical attention. In December 1909, a tragic fire occurred at no. 6 which caused the death of Miss Lucy Townsend.

In 1907 Lady Alice Archer Houblon wrote a book entitled **The Houblon Family** in which she describes the almshouses. She writes –

"the road to London passes scarcely fifty yards from the wrought iron gate which leads into the high-walled, peaceful sanctuary within where one can imagine oneself in the past and conjure up a vision of the two little old ladies, Mistress Rebecca and Mistress Susanna, tripping across the quadrangle to read a chapter of the Bible to the white-capped inmates of the tiny houses. They would have walked down the green lane on their own land all the way as they owned many acres on Richmond Hill."

This same lane is the one now called Houblon Road. The almshouses, although modernised inside, are unchanged externally.

Hickey's Almshouses

William Hickey, who died in 1727, left his property in trust to provide pensions for 6 men and 10 women. Hickey owned several important and valuable properties on Richmond Hill, including The Wick. By the start of the 19th century, the trust had to decide what to do with the large amount of income. So in 1834 it decided to build and endow 20 almshouses for

10 men and 10 women, plus a chapel, and 2 gate lodge cottages – 1 for a porter, the other for a nurse – in Sheen Road. Since then another 29 dwellings have been built on land behind the original almshouses.

Church Estate Almshouses

The Church Estate charity is the oldest charity in Richmond, having been founded in the reign of Mary I by Thomas Denys. Denys gave properties to the Church for repairing the church and other charitable deeds in 1558. There was a dispute over the property which was possibly settled in 1650 when a trust was formed to provide for the poor of Richmond. Two members of the Vestry at that time were John Weeks and John Anthill. Weeks was a baker who bought The George Inn on Richmond Green in 1653. Anthill was a draper who owned property in Twickenham and had no. 7 The Green converted into The Three Bells Inn.

By 1844, the Trustees of the Church Estate found themselves in the same position as the Trustees of William Hickey's estate. They built 10 almshouses for men and women on a site adjacent to Hickey's Almshouses in Sheen Road. In 1968, another 8 were erected behind the original ones.

Michel's and Church Estate Almshouses are for Church of England
Houblon's and Bishop Duppa's Almshouses are for Protestants.

More information on Richmond's Almshouses and other historic buildings in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is available from the Local Studies Collection.