



## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Don Archers Memories of Cleeve Prior – The Parish Wharf

---

When looking through papers which might be of interest to the Heritage Trust, I came across a letter from solicitors Byrch & Cox, written in 1896, to Joseph Smithin Esq, Top Farm. It was obviously in reply to a request for a lawyer's opinion on whether or not the newly formed parish meeting could claim ownership of the wharf.

The letter states that the wharf was awarded [presumably under the enclosures act to Charles Welch & John Biddle and their heirs to be a "public wharf for the use only of the proprietors and tenants of land within the parish"

So it seemed that the claim of the Parish Meeting, which had only been in existence two years, was doubtful. The letter went in to the matter at great length & even suggested a possible application to the high court. However, to put it briefly and simply, the position was that Welch & Biddle were long dead & no heirs had come forward, so if the Parish Meeting assumed ownership their claim was unlikely to be disputed.

This was good enough for the Parish meeting and, as the minute's record, they rented out some of the area to boat house owners & paid Tom Gould five shillings to place stones to mark the boundary. Coming forward to contemporary times, these "acts of ownership",

Proved decisive when the Parish Council as it had then become, made application for definitive ownership of the wharf under the Commons Registration Act.

I well remember attending a hearing before the commons Commissioner at Worcester to put forward our case. Accompanied by another councillor, we took with us all the evidence we could find including the enclosure awards. This document is a very large one contained in a metal cylinder with the appearance of a mortar barrel. Because of the activities of the IRA it was regarded with grave suspicion by the door keeper of the Shire Hall. Nevertheless, having proved our innocence, we were let in and our mission was successful. The Parish Council was given ownership of the wharf once and for all.

Don Archer -December 1999