



Devon Family History Society
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Devon Record Office



DEVON RECORD OFFICE

WITHYCOMBE RALEIGH LIGHTING ASSESSMENT

20TH MARCH 1851

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The Lighting and Watching Act of 1833 was effective in providing a police force anywhere where property owners felt that it was needed, in places where the system of Parish Constables was not working efficiently. Property owners in a parish had to call a meeting and appoint Lighting and Watching Act Inspectors. They could then appoint policemen and levy a rate on local inhabitants to pay for them.

This rating assessment is for the parish of Withycombe Raleigh, which covered the northern part of Exmouth. The boundary between this parish and Littleham ran through the Strand, along the Parade, up Albion Street, through Hamilton Road and along Salterton Road. However, only occupiers in the built-up area of the parish were rated, so presumably it was only the town where extra policemen were wanted. The rate covers the part of the Exmouth around the Parade and Albion Street and goes out as far as Rhyll, but no further; Marpool and Bradham Farms, for example, which were in Withycombe Raleigh parish, are not included. The police constables employed by the parish would have served only in that part of Withycombe Raleigh where the rate was levied; property owners and occupiers in Littleham, the parish which covered the other half of the town of Exmouth, may well have had their own Lighting and Watch committee. The 1850s were the last years of locally-appointed constables as the County and Borough Police Act in 1856 led to the formation of the Devon County Constabulary and policemen who were responsible to the County Quarter Sessions and not directly to local rate-payers.

The rate levied five pence in the pound on houses and buildings and one penny halfpenny on land. This assessment lists the landowners, the occupiers, a description of the property rated and where it was situated, together with the rateable value and the amount to be paid. The valuation and the amount levied have not been indexed here.

The survey is valuable as a record of the inhabitants of part of the town of Exmouth in March 1851. It is useful for family historians researching the places where their ancestors lived, because it was drawn up about the same time as the census and complements the information to be found there. It can also be used to study the growth of the northern part of the town of Exmouth, by comparing the information it contains on buildings and streets with the evidence of the tithe map of 1839 and later Ordnance Survey maps.