



Devon Family History Society
Joint Project Publication with
Devon Record Office



DEVON RECORD OFFICE

REGISTER OF FREEHOLDERS - WITHERIDGE & WONFORD

C1816

DRO Reference – QS7/64

DFHS Book Reference – D136

This register is one of a series kept by the Devon County Quarter Sessions as a record of men liable to serve on juries. Only men who were freeholders or copyholders, or who held land on a long-term lease were eligible to serve. The lists do not include women, who could not serve, or the burgesses of some Devon boroughs who were not obliged to serve on any jury but that of their own borough court.

The series begins in 1711. One book from every decade from 1711 to 1799 has been transcribed and an index of names from these books is available on the Friends of Devon's Archives website:

<http://www.foda.org.uk/freeholders/intro/introduction1.htm>

Freeholders books before 1780, which were not included on the Friends' website, have also been transcribed and the index to these can be found on the Devon pages of the GENUKI website:

<http://genuki.cs.ncl.ac.uk/DEV/Freeholders/index.html>

This book, QS 7/64, is one which has not been covered by either index. It is undated, but the paper is watermarked 1810 and the book probably dates from about 1816. The names are listed by hundred, and then by parish within each hundred. Unlike the rest of the books in the series, there are columns for the ages and for the trades and occupations of the freeholders, although these columns are not always filled in. There is also a column marked 'Fr' (freeholder) and 'Lr' (leaseholder) and a final column headed 'Exemptions and Observations'. This last column was used to record the freeholder's inability to travel to Exeter to serve on a jury eg 'Infirm', or the fact that his religious beliefs or his occupation rendered him ineligible eg 'Quaker' or 'Surgeon'.

The freeholders books have not been used much by family historians because it can be difficult to find a surname in them without knowing the parish where the family lived. This index will enable historians to overcome this problem, helping them to locate missing farmers and tradesmen and all those people of 'the middling sort' whose occupations enabled them to be mobile and financially independent and who are, therefore, often difficult to track down.