

WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD



North Elevation in January 2006 during conversion to flats

The Wool Store High Street Codford St Peter

**A Study
By**

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SUMMARY

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In accordance with instruction by Matthew Bristow for the England's Past For Everyone Project a study comprising an historical appraisal of the Wool Store was undertaken in January 2005.

The results, incorporated in the following report, present a photographic, drawn and textual record supported by cartographic and documentary evidence where relevant, of the structure as it now stands. This is followed by a cautious archaeological interpretation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THE WOOLSTORE, CODFORD

INTRODUCTION

Constructing a meaningful history of the Woolstore is extremely difficult in the absence of relevant detailed documentation. The Department of the Environment lists it as a 'woollen mill' and 'early 19th century'.¹ These two statements alone demand explanation. The first is erroneous; the building is not and, as far as anyone can know, has never been a mill, which implies machinery driven by wind, water or fuel to complete a manufacturing process, or the grinding of corn. It was never anywhere near water, it does not stand on a prominence to catch the wind and there is no sign of any machinery within or without the building. The Woolstore was what its name implies – a storehouse for fleeces awaiting collection by a dealer. The second statement needs to be examined in the light of whatever documentation is to be found and this will form the core of this study.

Also included will be some history of the mansion house behind it, now known as The Wool House, the dwelling house to the east and the annexe known as The Woolstore Theatre.

WOOLSORTING

For centuries the Wylde Valley was an area of sheep and barley production, where the sheep were used to dung the land which grew the barley, which in turn was sent to Warminster market for use in brewing. The sheep indigenous to the area were the Wiltshire Horn, a slender, long-legged breed, aptly suited to the steep downs. But their fleeces were almost non-existent, more a coat of hair, rather than a woolly fleece and the ewes were almost bare on their bellies.²



Wiltshire Horn ram
Photograph: Sally Thomson

The 'fleece' of these sheep was probably used in the carpet trade, which developed at Wilton, further east along the valley.³ For cloth production, fleeces were imported, either from elsewhere in Wiltshire, or, quite commonly, from Spain.⁴ Whatever the origin of the fleeces, they were selected and purchased by a wool stapler, often in the field before shearing, and taken to his wool store to be sorted and graded before being sold on to the cloth trade. In the case of Codford, sorted wool would be sent to mills along the Wylye Valley, the most likely being that at Upton Lovell, where the wool would be cleaned and scoured and put through the whole carding and spinning process, prior to weaving.

Woolsorting was the best-paid process in the whole woollen industry. It involved the separation, sorting and grading of the different fleeces and different parts of the fleece and relied very much on feel and intuition. The sorters would sit or stand at a long, lighted bench, with slats in it to let through the dust and other debris. Behind each sorter would be large barrels or baskets, into which they would put the sorted wool.

However, woolsorting could be a hazardous business, though by the 19th century it was probably safe enough. It was certain imported fleeces which carried the disease (a human form of anthrax), mostly mohair, camel hair and cashmere.⁵ No masks were worn to eliminate dust and it seems unlikely that the windows were opened very often, if at all. The only benefit from the handling of raw wool was the lanolin which would be present in great quantities and which is normally used to soften the skin. But even this may have become distasteful to the workers after a time.

The wool was sorted on at least two levels of the building and there was a large area on the ground floor, which seems to have been dimly lit, but which may have served to store sorted wool until collection. There are hoist doors still present at the east end of the building and presumably these were used to lower the enormous full sacks of sorted wool to the ground. These were probably then stored on the ground floor until carts came to take them away.



Codford St. Peter High Street, 1895-6.

The George Inn is on the right, the Woolstore to the left, with the annexe (now the Woolstore Theatre) attached.

From the collection of Mrs Rosalind Gunning, with her kind permission

THE SITE

The building known as The Woolstore stands in the ancient parish of Codford St. Peter on the south side of the High Street, where the road begins to rise towards the west. The following architectural description by Dorothy Treasure is an appraisal of the building as it stands today.

EXTERIOR Main Elevation:

The main elevation of the Wool Store is symmetrical. Interestingly, there is no entrance on this face and there are no windows as such, only round-arched ventilation louvres and blind doorways on the ground floor.

The construction on this principal face is in Flemish bond brickwork, a popular bond accounting for up to 49% of all brickwork in Wiltshire. Of passing note is the mortar that the bricks are set in; as the 19th century progressed, the ash from industrial manufacturing began to be used with lime to make mortar resulting in a distinctive black-speckled and later completely black appearance.

Openings and corners are partly dressed with stone; the brickwork rises from a local greensand plinth while the better stone at the corners and windows is thought to be from the Chilmark quarry in the Nadder Valley to the south.

Each cambered or round-arched window head is made of gauged or rubbed brickwork, a time-consuming and therefore expensive method that required each brick to be tapered by hand to fit into the arch. In 1774 an act was passed which required all new buildings to incorporate fire reduction measures. One of these was that the use of projecting timberwork should be restricted, and also required that windows should be concealed in brick or stone reveals some 4" deep, as at the Woolstore.

This law did not seem to apply to the very deep eaves, which are seen throughout Codford in the early-middle years of the 19th century.



*Joint between Woolstore and extension to west
Photograph: Dorothy Treasure*

The adjoining Woolstore Theatre, once an open yard in which the horse-drawn vehicles drew up to offload their fleeces, was built in a similar style, incorporating many of the same details.

Rear and Side Elevations:

The east elevation is entirely in greensand blocks, or near ashlar. As with the joint to the later building up of the open yard to the west, the rear range has an almost seamless joint buried in the creation of a recess to take rainwater away from the newly-formed valley. Each corner also has rusticated quoins – stone blocks with chamfered edges to emphasise the joints – a style often seen in late 17th century and early 18th century town houses in Wiltshire and much copied in the 19th century.

The first floor doorway lintel of gauged stonework has been disfigured by the constant wearing away by ropes used to pull up goods from below. The beam from which the pulley hung is still in situ over the second floor doorway. This appears to be a secondary arrangement as the gauged stone arch has been partially dismantled to put the beam through.

As the rear elevation faced the Wool House where the owner of the Wool Store lived, this was given a decorative façade in the Gothic Revival style. Both the upper floors have two-light pointed windows with Y-tracery in imitation of the 13th century style.



Arched head of rear elevation window at ground floor level with older glazing
Photograph: Dorothy Treasure

All the windows except the lower middle one were blind until the recent alterations. The rear wall of the oldest range was not so well finished as this Chilmark stone elevation, which gave a more acceptable view from the Wool House without the workers being able to gaze out in return. The round windows that have been inserted are modern. In contrast, the west return of this building overlooking the yard is much more workman-like and has a metal-framed casement lighting the sub-cellar.

INTERIOR

Very few features have survived internally. Where a doorway has been put through on the main elevation the brickwork is seen to be a skin against local chalk rubble. Some bond timber courses are visible in the walls. These were employed as convenient fixing points for lath and plastering or shelving that may have since disappeared and were widely used throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

The roofs of the two parallel ranges survive; at the front is a king post roof, so named for the central post which rises from the tie beam to support the ridge. The rear range has a queen post roof, a term for shorter,

paired posts which rise to support the longitudinal purlins. Both types are commonly found in industrial buildings of this period.



King post roof in front range
Photograph: Dorothy Treasure

At the west end is a partitioned section on the ground floor that was perhaps an office. It was heated by a brick hearth the segmentally arched head of which is supported on an iron band, a typical feature of this period.⁶



Fireplace at west end
Photograph: Dorothy Treasure

Attached to the west end of The Woolstore is a single storey building of brick, again with a slate roof, blind windows and with a double door entrance at the west end of the street frontage. This is now the Woolstore Theatre.

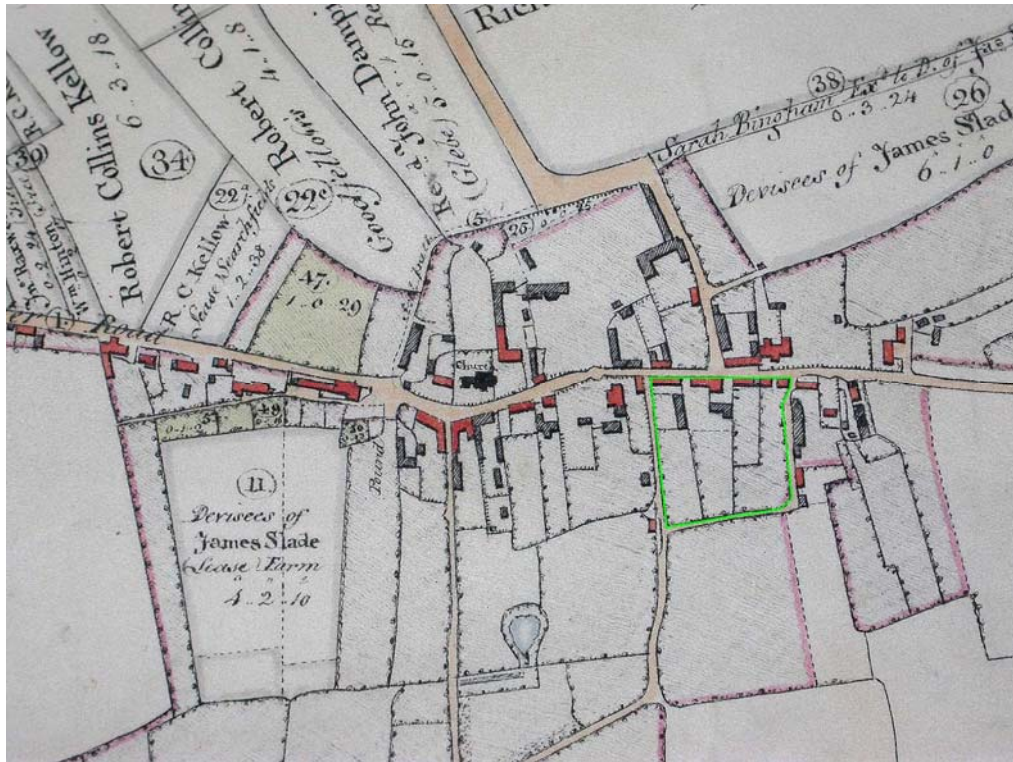
Behind the Woolstore is a large mansion house, 'The Wool House', and to the east of this is a range of single storey buildings, formerly stables and possibly grooms' and servants' quarters, now made into several small apartments. Next to these is a large house called 'The Old Wool Cottage', though this is now a substantial house.

Adjoining the land on which the Woolstore stands are other cottages, which formerly belonged to the owners of the Woolstore, but which have long since been sold off.

DATING THE BUILDINGS

THE WOOLSTORE

Several dates have been put forward for the origin of the Woolstore building, but all without any tangible evidence. Therefore a number of sources have been examined to try to establish dates for the erection of the various buildings on the site.



Part of the 1810 Inclosure Award map for Codford St Peter, where red blocks represent dwelling houses and other buildings are hatched in black. The site discussed in the text is outlined in green.

Reproduced by kind permission of the WSRO

A close examination of the 1810 Inclosure Award map for Codford St. Peter shows, unarguably, a broken row of cottages on the site now occupied by the Woolstore. This gives 1810 as the very earliest possible date of construction. Also, the 1810 Inclosure Award does not include the name of Raxworthy, who were the first owners of the Woolstore, (*see below under Owners*) but in 1815, at the Inclosure of Ashton Gifford, John Raxworthy is recorded as being in possession of 26 acres there.⁷



Close up of the 1810 Inclosure Award map, showing the cottages on the site of the future Woolstore outlined in yellow.

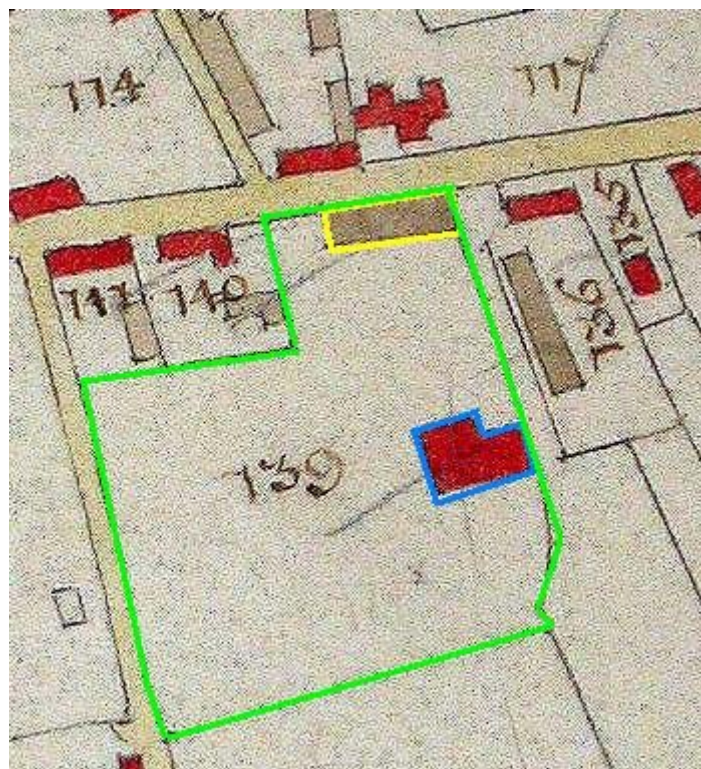
In 1810, the land was divided into four long closes, (*see map above*) with the buildings fronting the High Street forming the northern boundary, Doughty Lane the boundary to the west, and a lane on the east, running south from the High Street and turning sharply west behind the closes to meet Doughty Lane, forming the eastern and southern boundaries.

When the land was bought up, Manor House Cottage and No.103 effectively retained their gardens but lost their closes, an ancient asset, which almost all the homesteads in Codford possessed for the enclosing of livestock. At some stage, the boundary of the entire Wool House and Woolstore estate was taken right to the edge of Manor House Cottage, having taken in all the land behind this cottage and that of No.103 next door.

In the 1840 Tithe Award map, the row of cottages has gone and the earliest form of the Woolstore appears as a single, narrow, rectangular building, occupying, perhaps, half the length of the footprint. To the west there is a gap, through which runs the boundary with the land belonging to today's Manor House Cottage.

The 1840 Tithe Award schedules show that in this part of Codford St.Peter, James Raxworthy owned plots 136, 139, 140 and 141, and from the Codford St.Mary award it is seen that he owned several other properties and plots of land, including a cottage and land, which actually belonged in St.Mary's, tucked between 149 and 138 on the Codford St Peter map. William Bennett leased schedule 135 from James Raxworthy, so this meant that the whole area covered by these schedules was owned

by Raxworthy; 139 included the house and garden and 'woolshop'; in other words, the Wool House, garden and Woolstore.⁸



*Close-up of part of the 1840 Tithe Award map for Codford St. Peter
The Woolstore is outlined in yellow, the mansion house in blue and the land belonging to the
immediate estate in green.*

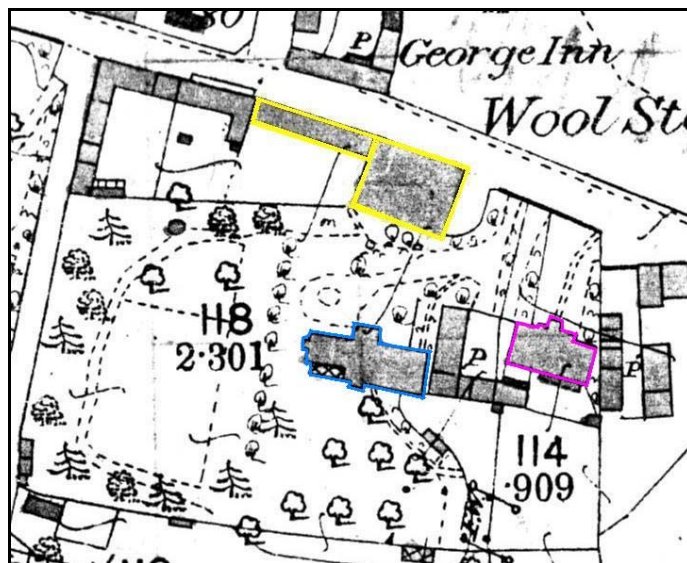
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THE WOOLSTORE THEATRE

Fleeces were originally brought to the Woolstore on carts, which stood in the open, while their loads were transferred to the building for sorting. However, in rainy weather, this resulted in the fleeces becoming extremely heavy with water and more difficult to manage. In time, the open area to the west of the Woolstore was built up and roofed over and this afforded protection for both the fleeces and the men handling them. There has been some speculation as to the date of this roofing-in, but again, an examination of maps gives a fairly good indication of when this occurred. The 1840 Tithe Award map shows no such extension to the Woolstore and neither does the plan accompanying a sale catalogue of 1869.⁹ However, the 1886 OS map does show the area described as a definite structure, so that a date of between 1869 and 1886 can be put forward for the building of the annexe, now known as The Woolstore Theatre.



*Plan accompanying a sale catalogue of 1869.
The Woolstore is outlined in yellow, the House in blue.
WSRO Ref:628/47/12
Reproduced by kind permission of the WSRO*



*1886 OS map of part of Codford St. Peter
Woolstore outlined in yellow, house in blue, Old Wool House Cottage in pink
Reproduced by kind permission of the WSRO*

When it was constructed, large doors were inserted into the back wall to accommodate the carts and the runners for these can still be seen. It is this covered annexe which in due course became the Woolstore Theatre. Presumably the carts went round the back of the building, in front of the Wool House. Perhaps James Raxworthy liked to see his money on the move.

Among the existing deeds for the Wool House is an abstract of title, dated 1909, in which two wool stores are described, one of brick and slate, the other of timber and slate:

*“Also the brick built and slated wool stores and **the timber and slated wool stores...**”*¹⁰ [my emphasis].

This would, at first glance, seem to refer to the annexe, but this was brick built, probably from its first construction. It certainly appears as a brick building in the 1895-6 photograph on *page 3* of this study. There must have been another structure, either attached to the main Woolstore, or in a yard to the rear, which no longer exists today. The plan of 1927 and the map of 1965 both show a small structure tucked into the angle between the back of the Woolstore and the annexe. Perhaps this is the timber and slate structure referred to.

THE WOOL HOUSE

The mansion house, known today as The Wool House, had a similar beginning to that of the Woolstore. It appears as an L-shaped building on the Tithe Award map of 1840, (*page 13*) though there is nothing on the site on the 1810 map (*page 12*). However, a fairly close date can be obtained from the Land Tax Assessments.

In Codford, there is no mention of the name Raxworthy until 1824, when James Raxworthy paid 1s for exonerated tax. This, in 1825 and beyond, turns out to be tax on a house. This must be the mansion behind the Woolstore, so that we have a fairly close date of around 1823/4 for the building of the Wool House.¹¹

James Raxworthy also paid tax on two other properties, one, the estate of the late John Crouch, for which the tax was £3 7s 4d, the other the estate of the late George Ingram, for which the tax was £1 7s 4d. Raxworthy began paying tax on these in 1825, along with his 1s for the house, for which he is both owner and occupier. Neither of these properties is likely to have been the Wool House, as Raxworthy seems to have acquired them after he began paying tax on the ‘house’, when the two properties were still held by their named owners.

By 1869, when the sale catalogue and plan were produced, (*page 14*), the mansion had a northern extension and the range of north/south outbuildings appears to have been incorporated into the premises, though they look as though they are on a different alignment and may have been rebuilt, or partially so. By 1886, (*page 14*), this range formed an L-shape, crossing the various adjacent boundaries and extending behind what is now Old Wool House Cottage.

The earliest recorded name of the mansion house built behind the Woolstore was '*The Beeches*'. This appears in the census returns of 1861. Today there are still several magnificent copper beech trees growing in the grounds, possibly the originals planted in the mid-19th century, though the name of the house has gone through several changes since then. In 1929, Colonel Sneyd renamed it '*Bradwell Grange*', after his home in Staffordshire. In a deed of 1950 it was 'now to be known as '*Flying Goose Furlong*'. Deeds of 1963 and 1964 call the property '*Gray's Mead*', formerly '*Flying Goose Farm*', and another of 1974 refers to '*Flying Goose Farm*', now known as '*Wool House*'.¹² It has retained this name ever since.

OLD WOOL HOUSE COTTAGE

The latter building was not included on the 1869 map, as it was not part of the property put up for sale, if, indeed, it was ever part of it. In 1810, there was a small cottage on the site in a small garden (*page 12*). By 1840 its shape had changed, and may have been rebuilt on a north/south alignment (*page 13*). This is the cottage and garden rented by John Foley from William Bennett, who in turn leased it from James Raxworthy. By 1886 this cottage had either been extensively added to, or entirely rebuilt, providing a large house on the site (*page 14*), the bulk of which stands today, though it would appear there have been some alterations to the rear and west end, and by 1924 the extensive porch had gone.

To summarize: the Woolstore itself began life as a single-roofed building, some time between 1810 and 1840, probably around 1824. It doubled in size between 1840 and 1869, when it appears on the sale catalogue map, mentioned above; and between 1869 and 1886, the yard to the west was roofed over.

THE WORKERS

The garden containing the outbuildings which were later incorporated into the Wool House property, also had a pair of cottages fronting the High Street, which, in 1840, were rented out by James Raxworthy to Charles Shingle and John Penny, both woolsorters.¹³ Next door, to the east, was Mary Everley and possibly her brother and his wife; he was a skinner. The cottages are schedule 136 on the Tithe Award map. To the west of the Woolstore, the present Manor House Cottage was uninhabited at the time of the 1841 census, though the year before had seen William Brown and George Lever in residence. Beyond them, at present 103 High Street, were Thomas Swayne and his family and Robert Foot; both these men were woolsorters. So it would seem that Raxworthy gathered his

work force about him, putting them into cottages close to his own property, wherever possible.

There are no known surviving employment records of the Woolstore, so the only indications of who worked there are from the 19th century census returns.¹⁴ These can sometimes be confusing, since the terms wool stapler and wool sorter were interchangeable. However, in 1841 the term wool stapler was used for James Raxworthy and one other, Leonard Barns, who may have been his foreman. One has the sense that perhaps the wool stapler was the man who bought in the fleeces, while the wool sorters were those engaged in the actual work of sorting and grading.

The Woolstore staff seem to have averaged about nine during the second half of the 19th century. In 1841 there were nine known wool sorters, six in Codford St.Peter and three in Codford St.Mary, as well as the two wool staplers already mentioned.

By 1851, James Raxworthy was recorded as a wool stapler employing twelve men. Two of these were his sons, James and John, three were from Codford St.Peter and three from Codford St.Mary. All these are listed as wool staplers and a further three wool sorters were living in Codford St.Peter. Some workers may have been drawn from other nearby villages and an examination of the census returns for these might reveal other wool sorters in the area. Only Corton has been looked at so far.¹⁵ The figures found for likely workers at the Woolstore are as follows:

1841	11	2 woolstaplers, 9 woollsorters
1851	12	9 woolstaplers, 3 woollsorters, 1 woollsorter from Corton
1861	11	5 woolstaplers, 6 woollsorters
1871	5	2 woolstaplers, 3 woollsorters
1881	10	2 woolstaplers, 2 woollsorters, 2 apprentices, 4 unemployed woollsorters
1891	10	2 woolstaplers, 7 woollsorters, 1 woollsorter from Corton
1901	6	1 merchant (the manager's mother), 1 manager, 4 woolstaplers (one an assistant to his father), 1 woollsorter.

The woollsorter from Corton in 1851 is unusual in being a female worker, a young woman of twenty-three years of age. This seems almost unlikely in the Victorian era – a young, unmarried woman working among a dozen men. But a wool sorter is a wool sorter and the occupation cannot be confused with anything else, although there was a woollen mill in Upton Lovell, between Codford and Corton, which employed many of the people from the latter village. But the business of the woollen mill was for processing wool into cloth, once the fleeces had been sorted and graded.

In 1871, woolsorting in Codford seems to have been at an all-time low. James Raxworthy the younger had evidently given up the business, but retained his ownership of the Woolstore. He was recorded as an agent for artificial manure. Although he began life in woolsorting, as was seen in the 1851 census, he seems to have abandoned the running of the Woolstore. It was just two or three years previous to this that the whole estate had been put up for auction to pay off the debts incurred in the Chancery proceedings of *Maxwell v Wightwick*, and this may account for the slump in the business. The cause of the suit has not been uncovered, but Wightwick was the Rector of Codford and it appears he was owed a great deal of money by the Raxworthy estate. As it turned out, the estate was saved, though it is not known how, since a number of lots were withdrawn on the day of the auction, including the main sites of Woolstore and mansion house.¹⁶

By 1881 the situation had hardly improved. Out of nine men connected with the business, two were apprentices and four were unemployed. George Dear was the owner and William Dear (who may have been his cousin) was his foreman. So the work force in Codford consisted of two apprentices and two wool sorters, with two woolstaplers, who may or may not have sorted. Whether other wool sorters were employed from surrounding villages is not known.

In the staff photograph, taken in the late 1890s, there appear to be fifteen staff, plus two gentlemen 'in charge' and a carter. Eight of the men wear white coats with aprons over the top; perhaps these were the actual wool sorters at the time and the rest were auxiliary staff, employed in the office. At least one of the suited gentlemen is believed to have been a member of the Dear family.¹⁷



*The Woolstore staff, ca.1898
The carter stands to the left, with his whip.
From the collection of Miss Kate Forbes of Codford, with her kind permission*

THE OWNERS

During the 19th century, the owners of the Woolstore were members of the Raxworthy family, who had originated in Somerset, but by the mid-18th century a branch of the family was established at Boyton on the south side of the River Wylfe. From here they spread to Heytesbury and Upton Lovell and it seems that the family may have had an interest in the mill at Upton Lovell. It was in Upton Lovell that John Raxworthy and Mary Pead were married in 1758. They had six children, all born in Upton Lovell. Mary died in 1774 and John married again in the following year. His new wife, Mary Dyer, was pregnant with their first child when John made his will on 8 February 1776,¹⁸ making provision for his unborn child. He died the following month, aged forty-one. His eldest son, John who was eleven at the time, inherited the bulk of his father's estate, though provision was left for the youngest, George.

John junior was baptised in 1764 and in 1785 he married Dyonisia Bracher, who had been born in Fovant, but whose father had since moved to Bathampton in Steeple Langford parish. They in turn raised a family in Upton Lovell, but according to the Land Tax Assessment returns, the Raxworthys had property in Codford at this time. The returns for Ashton Gifford (a tithing within Codford St.Peter) record a 'Mr Raxworthy' in

1773, paying 16s 6d tax and this seems to be the earliest record we have of the Raxworthies in the village. There is then a gap in the records, but from 1780 onwards, Mr John Raxworthy's name appears. Firstly, from 1780 to 1797 as the owner of land or property, let out to John Polden; then from 1798 to 1806, let out to John Foley. The tax paid varied between two amounts; sometimes it was £1 2s 0d, at others it was £1 5s 0d. From 1817 until 1831, when the records cease, John Raxworthy is both owner and occupier of the same land/property at the same rate of tax.¹⁹

John Raxworthy junior and Dyonisia raised a family of eight children in Upton Lovell between 1787 and 1800. In October 1832 John made his will and when he died in 1835, his son James, now forty-two, inherited.²⁰ Neither John, nor his father, made any reference to the wool business in their wills; both recorded themselves as 'gentleman' and the family seems to have been quite wealthy. Certainly the children were all well-provided for.

James Raxworthy was baptised in 1793 and in 1822 he married his second cousin, Dyonisia Barnes, who had been born in Collingbourne Kingston. Her father was a gentleman and there is some indication that the family may have been connected with the Stock Exchange and the East India Company.²¹ Perhaps it was at about the time of their marriage that the Woolstore building, as we now know it, was built. Certainly the Woolhouse mansion dates from around this time.

THE SWING RIOTS

James Raxworthy senior was presumably in residence in Codford by 1830, for in November of that year, the Swing Riots began and he was unwittingly involved. At this time there was a tide of growing unrest in the south of England, with large groups of labourers breaking up much of the new machinery acquired by both farmers and clothiers, because they naturally feared that their jobs were in jeopardy. There was also general unrest in the countryside at the exploitation of the labouring poor by the ruling classes; their grievances were many and mostly justified.²²

The Wylve Valley, having a number of mills along the river, saw a wave of destruction in the autumn of 1830, the rioters passing through Knook and Upton Lovell, causing fear and destruction as they went. Luckily, the movement only reached Codford in the form of a threatening letter sent by one William Mussell (*alias* Olding) to James Slade, a farmer in Codford, citing James Raxworthy as well. The culprit was eventually arrested and brought to the Assizes the following year, though he was acquitted through lack of evidence. However, James Raxworthy made a signed deposition and this, together with the notorious letter,

gives an insight into life in Codford at this time. Raxworthy signed himself 'of Codford, Woolstapler'. He had previously employed the ringleader, William Mussell, as a gardener and had occasion to find fault with him. The man's previous employer had also found him unsatisfactory and when Raxworthy mentioned this, Mussell roundly abused his unfortunate ex-employer, saying the man would 'smart for it'. Later, Mussell was employed on some quarry work and was derogatory about Raxworthy in his turn, saying he would have 'blood for blood.' Soon after this, James Slade, who lived at what is now the Manor House, close to the Woolstore, received the ill-written and threatening letter, in which Mussell threatened to fire Slade's wheat and hay and Raxworthy's stables, adding that the first act would be the firing of Raxworthy's house.²³

This was the nearest Codford came to destruction by the rioters and soon afterwards, it all subsided. Raxworthy's stables were, of course, in the L-shaped block running partly at right angles to the house and partly behind the Old Woolhouse Cottage, (*see 1840 Tithe Award map on page 13*).

LATER HISTORY

In 1856, James Raxworthy died, having made his will the previous year.²⁴ There was still no mention of any connection with the wool trade, and the census returns for 1871 record his son James as an agent for artificial manure; perhaps this was the '*guano-rush*'.

By the time of the next census, in 1881, George Dear had taken over at both the Woolstore and the mansion. George Sedley Dear came from Durnford in the Woodford Valley and lived at the house with his wife, Emma, his eight children, two nurses and two servants.²⁵

There is reference in the Abstract of Title of 1929²⁶ to a conveyance between J.Ravenill and others to Edward Atkinson and in March 1872 from Atkinson to George Dear. So presumably this was the year in which George Dear purchased the estate.

George Dear also had an interest in the woollen mill at Upton Lovell; this had been owned and run by the Everett family, but between about 1876 and 1885, George Dear took over the business. By 1882 he had enlarged the loom sheds and fitted a new steam engine and the business was thriving. But in 1886 it passed into the ownership of William Walker, when it became the Upton Lovell Manufacturing Company. In 1899 it was damaged by fire and the cloth trade in the upper Wylfe Valley was virtually at an end.²⁷



Upton Lovell Cloth Mill, 1880s
Photograph courtesy of Danny Howell Photographic Archive

George Dear made his will in 1896 and added a codicil in 1898 in which the woolsorting business in Codford was to be offered for sale on his death, to each of his sons in turn.²⁸ The following year, George Dear died and it would appear that his wife took on the business, as it was still under George's name in the local directories until 1907, the year before Emma died. The 1901 census returns record that Emma was a wool merchant and her son, Alec, the manager of the woolstores.²⁹ Between 1901 and 1907, William Dear, who may have been George's cousin, (he was the same age as George in the 1881 census) was the foreman of the wool works, according to the directories of the time, but in 1907, Giles Conduit, a Codford man, took over. From 1911 until 1923, Alec Dear is listed in the local directories as 'woolstapler', after which date there is no further reference to the business.³⁰

The electoral rolls for Codford list Alec Dear as manager of the Woolstore, living in the mansion house, called *The Beeches*, until 1926, when, although still on the roll by virtue of his owning the business, he now lived in Moor Town, Ringwood, in Hampshire.³¹



*A view of the High Street in 1915, looking east, with the
Woolstore and part of the annexe on the right
From the collection of Mr Owen Pearce, with his kind permission*

During the First World War, the building was used by troops, so it may be that business was suspended for the duration, or perhaps only part of it was used by the military. In 1926, Colonel Ralph Sneyd, who came from Keele Hall in Staffordshire, bought the Wool House and the Woolstore, which included the annexe to the west.³² His wife was a keen amateur actress and he converted the annexe into a theatre for her and her friends. Over the years this became the Woolstore Theatre and today is a thriving country theatre, with its own company. Its history has been well-examined and written up by Mrs Karen Johnson of Codford.³³

During the Second World War, American troops used the building as their Sergeants' Club and plans for its conversion to this use are to be found in the WSRO.³⁴



Opening times (for club?) on east elevation
Photograph: Dorothy Treasure

A mural was painted by one or more American servicemen on the north wall of the south room on the first floor. It measures 4.5 metres by 1.75 metres and supposedly depicts the American idea of Utopia. It has since been partly covered up, but the coverings are not permanent, with the idea that it can be viewed again, in the future, should this be proved necessary.



*The American Utopia mural, painted by American troops during World War II on a wall in
the Woolstore*

Photograph: Miss Bridget Lorimer, Codford

NOTES

1. Department of the Environment Listed Buildings
2. Sally Thomson, *Codford: A Farming Community in the Wylye Valley*, p.25
3. Personal information: Mr Kenneth Rogers
4. Kenneth Ponting, *The Woollen Industry of South-West England*, p36
5. W.S.McLaren, *Spinning Woollen and Worsted*, p 21
6. Dorothy Treasure, WBR Organiser.
7. WSRO: Ashton Gifford Inclosure Award 1815
8. WSRO: Tithe Award Codford St.Peter 1840
90. WSRO Ref: 628/47/12 Sale Catalogue 1869
10. Wool House deeds, 1909
11. WSRO Ref: A1/345/116 Codford LTA
12. Wool House deeds, 1963, 1964 and 1974.
13. WSRO: Tithe Award Codford St.Peter 1840
14. Census returns for Codford St.Peter and Codford St.Mary 1841
15. Census returns for Corton, 1841 - 1891
16. WSRO Ref: 628/47/12 Sale Catalogue 1869.
17. Personal information: Miss Kate Forbes
18. PRO Ref: prob 11/1019 Will of John Raxworthy 1776
19. WSRO Ref: A1/345/117 Ashton Gifford LTA
20. PRO Ref: prob 11/1841 Will of James Raxworthy 1835
21. Personal information: Mr Geoffrey Holland
22. Robert Lee *Unquiet Country*
23. Jill Chambers *Wiltshire Machine Breakers*
24. PRO Ref: prob 11/2228 Will of James Raxworthy 1856
25. Census returns for Codford 1881
26. Wool House deeds 1929
27. Kenneth Rogers *Wiltshire & Somerset Woollen Mills*, p 247
28. Wool House deeds, 1929
29. Census returns for Codford 1901
30. WSRO: Local Directories
31. WSRO Ref: A1/355
32. Wool House deeds, 1929
33. Karen Johnstone, *A History of the Woolstore Theatre*
34. WSRO Ref: G12/760/332 Alteration plans for ARC 1944

ABBREVIATIONS

WSRO	Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office
WLH	Wiltshire Libraries & Heritage
WBR	Wiltshire Buildings Record

PRIMARY SOURCES

Box of deeds dating back to 1896, belonging to Mr Paul Hember, the present owner of The Woolstore and The Wool House.
1810 Inclosure Award and Map for Codford St.Peter (WSRO)
1840 Tithe Award and Map for Codford St.Peter (WSRO)
1886 OS Map for Codford St Peter. (WSRO)
Census returns for Codford St Peter and St Mary 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881,1891, 1901.(WLH)
Census returns for Corton 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891.(WLH)
Kelly's Directories 19th and 20th centuries (WSRO)
Land Tax Assessments for Codford (WSRO)
Electoral Rolls for Codford 1918- 1929 (WSRO)

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