



Stephen Gray

Stephen Gray was a landowner merchant and public figure of considerable significance in Louth from the early 19 century to his death in the 1840's. He owned freehold land in Westgate which was awarded to him under the Louth Enclosure Award of 1805. His holdings here ran from the first part of Westgate Fields along the south side of Westgate to just beyond the junction of Westgate with Breakneck Lane. He also acquired freehold land near the canal in 1811, when he bought a parcel of land from Stephen Palmer & Thomas Freeman of Cumberworth.* This included a mill known as "the Dog Mill", this was commemorated in a lane running near his property called Leathermill Lane.

Stephen Gray also held leasehold land from the canal company adjacent to this freehold land. It was here that the Woolpack Inn stood (and still does) but he is listed as the owner of the Woolpack Inn in 1813 two years after he bought the Dogmill site. We believe that possibly until his death in the 1840's subsequent publicans were his tenants. He had wide ranging interests at the riverhead, being listed in Pigot's 1835 directory as a wharfinger, corn, coal & timber merchant.

Between 1824 - 1828 he is also referred to as an acting commissioner, and shareholder to the extent of £1900.00 in the suit between the Chaplins and the Commissioners. There is no mention of his shareholding on the 1840 list. The suit in Chancery seeking to rectify grievances against the Chaplin family was successful, but led to a second act of parliament confirming the Chaplin's privileges: the 99 year lease.

The arguments against the second Bill are set out in a lobby document that was circulated in 1826.

Stephen Gray was a figure of public significance in the town in his role as Commissioner for taking special bail in the courts at Westminster, Uppgate.

On his death his freehold and leasehold property was left to his nephews in 1840. The land was sold on in 1843 to Thomas Horton, yeoman and Thomas Masler or Maslin, yeoman, both of Louth.

* Source: Ian Beckwith "The Louth Riverhead" in conjunction with Louth WEA Local History Class 1974 -76.

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