

Foreword by Colin Thurstance - Ickleford Parish Councillor and Rand's Educational Foundation Governor.

The following article is taken from the "Programme of events to Commemorate the Holwell Millennium in 1968" and relates the story of John Rand.

Many Pirton (and other villages') children benefit from grants whilst studying for further education. Current applications for such grants should be made to:

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*Clerk to the Governors - Mr B J Frederick,
c/o Chaplin Frobisher Welling, Icknield House,
Eastcheap, Letchworth Garden City. SG6 3YY.
Telephone 01462 631717.*

Now enjoy the story: -

What is known about John Rand with historic certainty could be written on a picture- postcard - the rest has been supplied by minds more imaginative than accurately informed. He was born in Holwell, no one knows where, in 1644. At the time the parish was divided into four parts: Great Holwell, Little Holwell, Cadwell and Snailswell. It has been suggested that in view of his favourable reference to Ickleford in his will Rand may have been born in either of the latter two.

A search of the baptismal registers of both Holwell and Ickleford Churches shows no record of John Rand's christening, but a Thomas Rand was baptized in Holwell Church on November 29, 1644. In recent times it has been assumed that this was in fact the man who left his money to Holwell, as it was quite common practise at this time for a child to be baptised with his father's name and then to



The story of John Rand and his Charities.

Thomas and Joan Rand(s), brother of Henry who had been baptized the previous year and an elder sister before that. Eight years later, in 1652, Thomas Rand junior lost his parents and brother within five days, his sister having previously died. What happened to the orphan Thomas Rand?

A few years later John Rand of Holwell was apprenticed to a "joiner" in London, and it would appear that this John was the Thomas who was born in Holwell; there is no evidence of this being true, but it seems the only explanation of John Rand.

There is no written authority for the popular tale that John Rand was an old tramp found dead in the porch of Ickleford Church - or in a ditch - or that his body was pushed from the boundary of Ickleford to avoid having to bury him.

In a talk on this subject given at Holwell in 1965 the then rector of Holwell, the Reverend H. H. Bloomfield, suggested that in 1706 John Rand knew he was nearing the end of his life and made a final sentimental journey to Holwell, after making his will in August that year. He suggested that John Rand tramped around the village in his working clothes and was regarded by the villagers as just another tramp, and it would not have been uncommon to find a tramp dead in a ditch. However, no record can be found of his burial, but we do know that he died on December 12, 1706. John Rand appears to have been a thrift man; he became a "journeyman/joiner" and a "citizen of London," he owned a few cottages in Plaistow in Essex and some at Greenwich, and he was a strong churchman (with Puritan leanings, as is evidenced in his will).

**Four cottages built by Rand's Charity
in 1867 at a cost of £860/2/10 !**

In his will he bequeathed certain properties in Greenwich and Plaistow to the churchwardens and overseers of Holwell "for use to such and so many poore boys three pounds ten shillings a piece and, girls fifty shillings a piece yearly and for ever as are or shall be borne or inhabit there ... when they shall be from time to time put and placed out to buy cloathes and necessarys ... the boys to trades and the girls to trades and services." The beneficiaries had to promise never to enter an alehouse, tavern or inn, never to play dice or cards, and never, while apprenticed, to contract matrimony! If the bequest was not properly carried out the funds were to go to Ickleford for the same purposes.

After a very short time there was trouble. Ickleford residents complained that something was due to them, but the High Court decided that Holwell was entitled to the whole amount. In 1743 Ickleford again petitioned the High Court and alleged that the "churchwardens of Holwell were guilty of saving unto themselves each and every of them all and all manner of advantage and benefit of exception to the manifold errors insufficiencies imperfections and untruths ... as in their information contained." They also claimed that by now the income of the charity was more than Holwell needed.

On top of this, in his will Rand had described Greenwich as being in the county of Surrey - which it was not - and Ickleford now claimed that he never made the will or that if he had he was not yet dead.

A long quarrel between Ickleford and Holwell followed, and in 1760 a receiver was appointed and it was directed that surplus moneys should be invested. Seventy years later the income had grown considerably. At this time (1830) the population of Holwell was 160, and there were three farmhouses and twenty-four cottages - that was all, apart from a church of about 1500 which was in poor condition.

A petition from the trustees of the charity was presented to the Lord Chancellor in 1830 for permission to build almshouses, a school and a rectory, and to provide upwards of £100 per

The almshouse at Holwell, which are owned and maintained by the John Rand Charity.

annum towards the stipend of a resident rector, who must conduct divine service twice on Sundays. All these buildings were erected .

Now the feud between Holwell and Ickleford again came to the forefront, and the people of Pirton and Shillington (Lower Stondon) parishes claimed that as parts of these villages were anciently in the parish of "Holewelle" they should have a share, so they again sent in a petition, this time to the new Charity Commissioners.

In 1866 a new scheme was produced. Ickleford was to receive £40, Pirton £30 and Lower Stondon £25 for their respective schools. The trustees were authorized to build twelve labourers' cottages and to spend £250 on a village clock and pump. Only the cottages were proceeded with, six being built. Parents sending their children to school were to pay 2d. a week for one child, 3d. for two and 4d. for three or more - the money to provide prizes for them on leaving.

Fifteen years later further inquiry produced another scheme which remains the basis of the Rand's Educational Foundation and Charity to this day. Holwell lost direct control of the charity and governors were appointed and the children attending the schools at Holwell, Pirton, Ickleford and Lower Stondon were entitled to benefit.

The scheme was changed again in 1924, 1951, 1959 and 1986, which is still current today.

The current Trustees are made up of ten nominated Governors and five co-opted Governors; representatives of Holwell, Ickleford, Pirton and Stondon Parish Councils are included in the nominated Governors.

