

CHAPTER 1.

Parish of Winkleigh.

Winkleigh is customarily described as being situated in North Devon and, more rarely in "North West" Devon. It would be more correct however, to place the parish in the Mid-Devon area. The village itself stands on a hill, over 500 feet in height, whose location is given as $50^{\circ} 53'$ (latitude) and $3^{\circ} 52'$ (longitude). Its highest beacon (640 feet) which may have served in ancient times for a signalling station, is visible for many miles around. Today it provides a magnificent prospect of the surrounding parishes¹ and of Dartmoor in the distance, from Carsand Beacon in the east, to Yes Tor in the west. (See map p)

Other details can help us to visualise our village. Exeter, the capital city of Devon lies $21\frac{1}{2}$ ² miles to the southeast along the main road to North Devon. Crediton is nearer, being only $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant. To the North West lie Torrington ($12\frac{1}{2}$ miles) and Bideford ($19\frac{1}{2}$ miles) Diagonally in this trunk road lies Chulmleigh ($6\frac{1}{2}$ miles) and Hatheraleah (7 miles). This route of the "leighs" across the divide

is joined at Townsend by roads to North Jawton ($5\frac{1}{2}$ miles) and Okehampton (10 miles away). Winkleigh is not directly served by the railways and these roads have to bear the main traffic. Eggesford ($4\frac{1}{2}$ miles) and North Jawton are the only stations of the Southern Railway within reach.

Having related Winkleigh to its surrounding parishes and towns let us examine the external features of the parish itself. The area of the parish according to the Ordnance map of 1888 was 9218.229 acres³. On examining the acreage given at the time of the Apportionment that is 1843, Mr Ralph Holland observed that there was a difference of one hundred acres in the sum total of the nearly 3000 enclosures of the parish. When checking the Official Population figures, it was noticed that from 1801 to 1881 the area was invariably given as 9118 acres, and from 1891 onwards as 9218 acres. The Director General of Ordnance whom appealed to was unable to explain the discrepancy⁴. An earlier Survey map of the North of the parish was unobtainable after the destruction of the city library in 1942, but there is a difference, although very slight, in the parish boundary as compared with the Ordnance Survey map, in the region of Smith's stream. This freshet has altered its course a little and the Ordnance map follows the new line in the direction of the water. This would not, however, make up the difference in the two maps. What so large an



area (a 100 in figures, or about the size of the average Devon Farm) can be added to a Civil Parish and no explanation be forthcoming from the Ordnance Survey will cause surprise to many.⁵ But had enquiries been made sixty years ago earlier, the discrepancy would have been suitably explained at the time, no doubt.

The map which is included in this text shows the general shape of the Parish. It is not unlike a reclining Cross, the irregular lines of which are twenty two miles in circumference and $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles across and $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles in breadth. The map which is here given was made from eleven Ordnance Survey maps⁶ (6") and the Parish map of 1843. The latter, in charge of the Parish Council is very dilapidated and of⁷ inconvenient size ($1" = 3$ chains). The map measures 12 feet by 10 feet.



Most of the Appostionment numbers have been inserted on the map showing the fields on the farms.

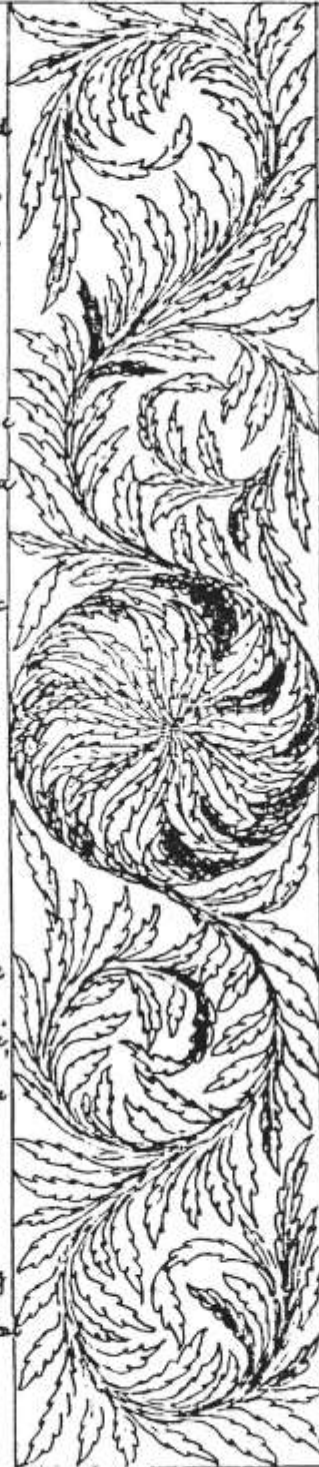
Winkleigh is the 22nd largest of nearly 500 Devon parishes.

Now let us turn to consider the other physical features of our parish. Winkleigh is situated in the Carboniferous district of North Devon. A line drawn from west to east of Pollys (Heath) Limbrey divides the upper and middle culm areas measured. In the north, including the hamlet of Hallscombe lies the upper culm, hard and thick, with even-bedded grey grits (Eggesford grits) interbedded with grey shales and slate beds. This supplies the quarries of Hallscombe with rock substantially harder than to the south of the parish. Here there are irregular and even grits, together with ovoidally splitting shales in variable association

There is very little sandstone. The soil is mainly dunland with mainly a clay subsoil, although there are also patches of red sandy soil in the clay. However, there is no better description to be found than the one given by Vancouver in a Survey made for the Board of Agriculture during the Napoleonic wars.

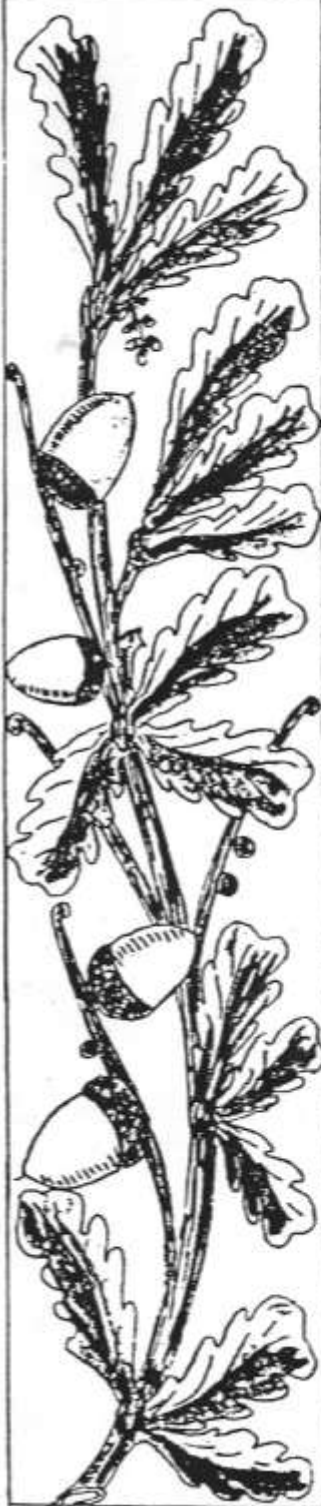
"From the river Taw towards Winkleigh there is a deep wet stratum of yellow clay lands abounding with uncultivated moors. The soil of the south side of Winkleigh and top of the ridge affords an excellent tract of tillage and grass land. It consists of a grey or duncoloured loam on a substratum of rock, rising generally in square or rhomboidal fragments.

On the eastern side towards



Wembworthy the intermediate subsoil between rock and surface mould, varies in its depth from a few inches to several feet in thickness. This is composed of decomposed shale, mixed with a coarse argillaceous gravel pervious to water, and consequently leaving the surface dry and of a tender nature.

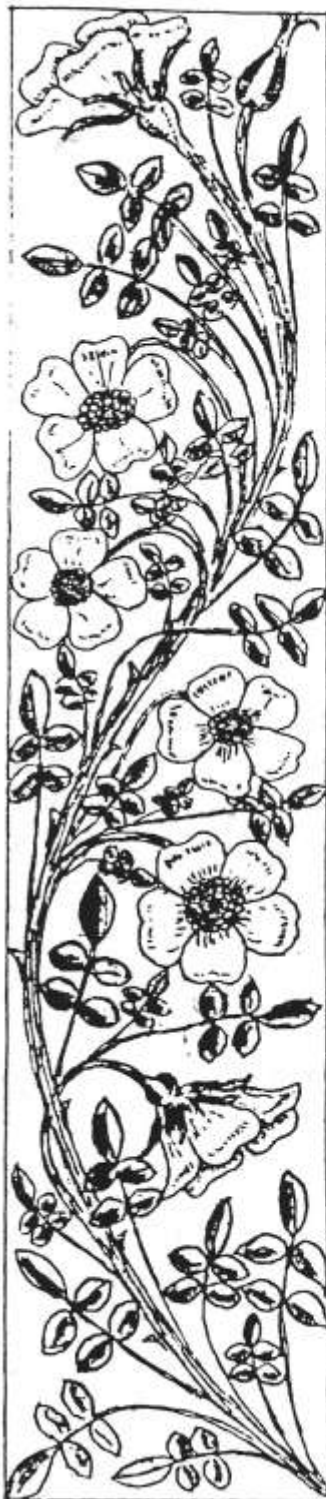
To the north of the village the soil continues of a good staple and lies upon the laminous rock, which here breaks into a small splintery fracture and affords a much drier bottom than some of the ridges lying south of it. The black gravelly stratum seems here to indicate that limestone may be found at no great distance. Descending this ridge to the northward the dunstone land appears to lose its superiority in a cold moory tract which continues



towards Astreigney, but towards Eggesford a much rounder country seems to present itself. 8.

Orographically, the parish rests chiefly on the 400-600 feet areas, dropping to 200 in the basin of the Taw and in the Hollacombe Water. Bude Hill is the highest part of the parish, (440') while Bernard (or Benvers) Cross and parts of Heckapaw are at 600'. The Village stands a little under 600' and Hollacombe "Town" at 500'. The lowest areas are Clarypits (295') to Penford (278'). The gradient on approaching the village from Exeter is only 1 in 15, but the road from Ward Mill to Bude Hill has a much steeper incline, whilst Wood Jeril, Staplegreen and Smythen Hills have a gradient of nearly 1 in 4 in portions.

although the parish consists of almost 10,000 acres, there are no rivers of importance, but it is abundantly supplied with small streams and freshlets. The Taw, where it flows in the east, is of little account because of the dwindling nature of the stream. The Bullow Brook flowing from west to east of the southern part of the parish receives the Ward Mill Brook to the east of Graysbridge and it is absorbed by the Taw south of Brothford Bridge. On the northern side, the Hollacombe Water, after receiving the



Neckhouse Stream near Wood Terril and Smiths Stream at Black Bridge, joins the Taw near Bridgeway.

The water supply at Winkleigh is usually sufficient for normal purposes, but is still supplied from wells. At Hollacombe, where private wells do not exist, Skutes (or Shettes) Well and Chapel Wood serve the hamlet. There is also a small artificial lake (fishpond) of about three acres, 800 yards to the east of the village.

The average rainfall recorded on a map of Devon in the Royal Albert Museum, Exeter, is given at 38 inches. From private records made on the north of the parish (Hollacombe) from August 1937 to July 1940 the average was 41 inches; the maximum was August 1938 (8.52") and the minimum April 1938 (0.35"). The Coast of Places Winkleigh made similar

measurements for 1944-6. The total rainfall 1944 was 35.11"; in 1945, 36.49" and 1946, 42.20. These figures do not perhaps give a very reliable estimate of average conditions in the parish. Rainfall in 1946 was abnormal, and as will be seen from the temperature figures given below, the summers of 1945 and 1946 must have been abnormally cold as well as wet. Rainfall appears to be seldom

heavy (not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ " in a day) and only more than 1" in nearly four years, during which time heavy falls occurred elsewhere, notably in South Devon. The fact that rainclouds do not come from Dartmoor probably accounts for this. Rainfall seems to approximate far more to Barnstaple than Okehampton, though the latter is nearer. If regard is had to the type of soil in the parish (chiefly of a clayey nature) it follows that crops do not suffer so much during a dry season.

On the whole, the temperature of Winkleigh is usually a little lower than most districts in Devon being well inland. The mean temperature during 1944 varied between 39.5°



February) and 63.1° (August); during 1945 between 34.0° (January) and 60.4° (August) during 1946 between 39.2° (December) and 60.7° (July). Fuller details can be found in the notes. But their worth is restricted in the same way as the rainfall figures. The irregularity of most of the months indicates that averages are only useful when they cover a longer period. Their interest lies in their guide to conditions which they provide. Speaking from experience, however, if we except the very cold east winds, the climate of Winkleigh is delightful and bracing. Having spoken in a general way of the location of **Winkleigh** with reference to its surroundings and about its main physical features and climate, we can turn to a more detailed study of some other aspects.