

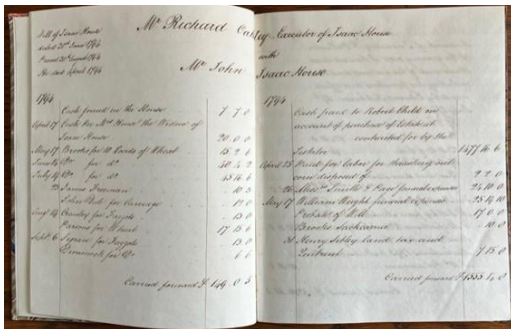


News and events

- Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday 15 May** when Jon Mein and Frank Iddiols will tell us about **The Long Story of the Short St Albans Canal**.
- **'Cows, Clocks and Coffee: Shopping in St Albans'** is the theme for this year's **SAHAAS Library Open Afternoon**. This is on Wednesday 24 April from 2.30 – 4.30pm. Further details on www.stalbanshistory.org/category/events

Isaac House (1757-1794)

We are grateful to Mike Martin for his generous gift to the History Society of an account book dated June 1794 that relates to the House family of Wheathampstead. He acquired this from an antiquarian bookseller in York.



The accounts are concerned with the proving of the will of wealthy landowner Isaac House who had died on 5 April 1794 at the age of 37. He was owner of the Grove Farm in Pipers Lane with its malthouse, barns, stables and outhouses, arable land, orchards, fields and woods. His wife died just three weeks later aged 27. They had been married for only two years and left two infant children, John Isaac and Mary Ann. The original will document is held at HALS.

This document is relatively short, with a mere six hand-written double-page spreads ending with legal notes acknowledging their receipt by Isaac's son John Isaac House, who was to inherit the property, and witnessed by John Hawkins.

The accounts were authorised by Isaac's brother-in-law Richard Oakley as executor of the will and guardian of Isaac's two children and finally signed off on 6 April 1830 by John Isaac House who by then was 37 years old. He acknowledged receipt of £1,356. 56s. 6d. "the balance due to me on the annexed accounts in satisfaction of all claims by me in respect thereof".

At the time of Isaac's death, the inventory and valuation of the growing crop, his live and dead Stock, and his furniture and effects, amounted to £847 (£65,000 today). Several other farms are

mentioned in the accounts, including Bamville Wood Farm, Porters End and Bowers Heath. At Pipers (presumably in connection with Grove Farm) we learn that the cost of building cottages was £800. Between July and October 1794, Isaac House's estate bought crops from Robert Child for £59. 10s.9d., and paid wages to Dorrington the mealman.

The account book is full of precise information about the extent of the fields owned by Isaac House, what was grown on them, the costs of bringing in the harvest, and rents payable and due from tenants. On 23 July Parsons was paid £17.15s. 6d. for wheat, and on 6 September Seagrave was paid 13s. for faggots. Money due on securities, bills and bonds gives us the names of several local people: Mrs Hawkins, Mr and Mrs Thomas Cook, Mrs Ann Roberts, Mr John Wilkins, Mrs Mardall, Mr Searanke, Benjamin Stansfield and E. Swain.

Alcohol was important to refresh the many farm labourers and the accounts show that in February 1795 James Wilkins was paid £36.13s.6d. for supplying beer. (Sun Fire insurance records tell us that Wilkins was a co-owner of the farm at Porters End where there was a brewhouse.) Later that same year in July, a certain Mardall was paid £29.14s. for 'liquors'.

The accounts show us the high costs of medical treatment and burial for Isaac and Mary. Apothecary bills amounted to £56.19s.6d. On 26 April Messrs. Smith and Page charged £24.10s. for Isaac's funeral expenses, and in May William Wright was paid £25.19s.10d for the burial of Mary. The bricklayer for the vault was paid £24 for his labour but the Reverend Mr Mardall's burial fee was a mere 10s.6d.

We look forward to discovering more about life in eighteenth-century Wheathampstead as we delve further into this unique document and thank Mike Martin for rescuing it for the Society.

Ruth Jeavons