

The 1665 Hearth Tax in Steep

Even in 1665 the government had problems with how to raise money. It was solved in by the creation of a Hearth Tax, as money was needed for the restoration of the monarchy on the return of king Charles II. The Hearth Tax was an annual levy of two shillings (10p) payable for every fire, hearth or stove within dwellings, houses or lodgings. Anyone who paid poor or church rates or who occupied a house worth less than 20 shillings (£1) was exempt. Details of the hearth taxes payable in Steep are available in the local history section of Petersfield library. They are an interesting insight into the number of houses in Steep at that time, the size and quality of the housing and the people who lived in them. In 1665, there were 148 hearths in Steep that were chargeable, with 30 hearths not chargeable. The hearths chargeable included the following:

- 9 hearths: William Woolgar
- 7 hearths: Mister William Harling
- 6 hearths: William Colebrook, Richard Baker, Thomas Eames
- 5 hearths: Roger Aylward, Roger Geale, John Eames, John Westbrook, Edward Aldred
- 4 hearths: Mistress Clements, widow, Robert Milles, Thomas Woolgar, John Pooke
- 3 hearths: William Tribb, John Halsteed, Gregory Tanner, William Cowdry, Thomas Collier, Anthony Heather, Richard Figge, John Hooker, Mr Peacock, John Cresswell, Samuel Briday, Francis Russell junior, Robert Hills, Zacchaeus Gardner, Oliver Russell.
- 2 hearths: Henry Newland, John Restall, John Pink, John Rolfe
- 1 hearth: William Bettsworth, John Webb, Edward Jennings, Henry Rolfe, Richard Restall, Andrew Woods, William Sewarde, Peter Compton, Francis Russell, William Munday, John Booker, Widow Roake, John Roake, William Hall, Dorothy Petty, Francis Roake.

There were 30 hearths not chargeable including :

- 2 hearths: Thomas Hill, Joseph Moorey, Edmund Snugg, John Parsons, Ralph Jennings, William Stiggins.
- 1 hearth: Richard Quallett, John Wade, Richard Welch, Widow Nexon, Roger Barfoote, John Moreton, Joan Cooke, Anthony Parr, Widow Bridger, John Vallor, Nicholas Fry, Seth Heather, Widow Booker, Widow Johnson, Thomas Grinsted, Widow Writh, Richard Baker, Widow Collier.

Source: A Village History by G Timmins, quoting the Hampshire Hearth Tax Assessment 1665.

Readers may be interested to note that some of these names, or names that are very similar, are still known in Steep & its surroundings in 2011, either as house names or surnames:

Colebrook, Eames, Collier, Peacock (Pocock?), Gardner, Restall, Barfoote.

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