

The Miser and the Housewife

John Camden Neild was a wealthy lawyer who inherited a large fortune upon the death of his father in 1814. His estates included several farms in the North Marston area. Neild also inherited the patronage of St Mary's church making him responsible for the building. Neild was an infamous miser and reputedly loathed spending any of his vast fortune. Therefore important repairs to the church and his farms were sometimes done very poorly or ignored.



One of his tenants was William Neal whose wife, Martha, was the daughter of the former vicar of North Marston, William Pinnock, and they farmed Glebe Farm. On one of his visits to Glebe Farm, in 1828, Camden Neild was especially depressed about some poor investments. He tried to kill himself in one of the outbuildings at Glebe Farm but his life was saved by Martha Neal. In this aerial picture we can see the farmhouse and outbuildings as they once were.

When Neild died in 1852 he left his entire fortune of £250,000 to Queen Victoria. His long-serving domestic staff and his saviour, Martha Neal, were left nothing at all.

The Queen made sure those who had worked for him were rewarded and she gave Martha Neal a pension of £100 a year, roughly equivalent to £76,000 in today's money.



The Queen instructed that Neild was to be buried in the chancel at St Mary's church and she commissioned a leading architect to renovate the chancel and install a memorial window (pictured).

With the remainder of the bequest, the Queen and Prince Albert builtBalmoral Castle.

