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Shropshire Archaeological Society*

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# TRANSACTIONS OF THE SHROPSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## DISPUTES IN THE WEALD MOORS IN THE LATE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES

*By* P.R. EDWARDS

IN 1953 Miss M.C. Hill wrote about the remarkable set of early estate maps of the Weald Moors area that are to be found in the Sutherland deposit in the Shropshire Record Office.<sup>1</sup> Using information contained in the maps Miss Hill discussed a wide range of topics such as the techniques of map making in the early modern period, the dates of the maps themselves, the purposes for which they were made, and the topography and population of the Weald Moors. Apart from internal evidence in the maps further information was also gathered from those leases of Leveson property in the area which had been deposited in the Shropshire Record Office.

Unfortunately only part of the collection is at Shrewsbury<sup>2</sup> as the greater part of the papers was taken to the Staffordshire Record Office.<sup>3</sup> It is particularly unfortunate that Miss Hill was unable to use the papers at Stafford, for they include a number of documents relating to the suits for which the maps were made. She was able to say much about the progress of inclosure, drainage, and encroachment from the maps themselves, and she deduced the maps' dates with a high degree of accuracy. Obviously, however, she could only guess at the precise causes for which they were made. The present aim, therefore, is to write an account complementary to hers, filling the gaps with information from the deposit at Stafford.<sup>4</sup>

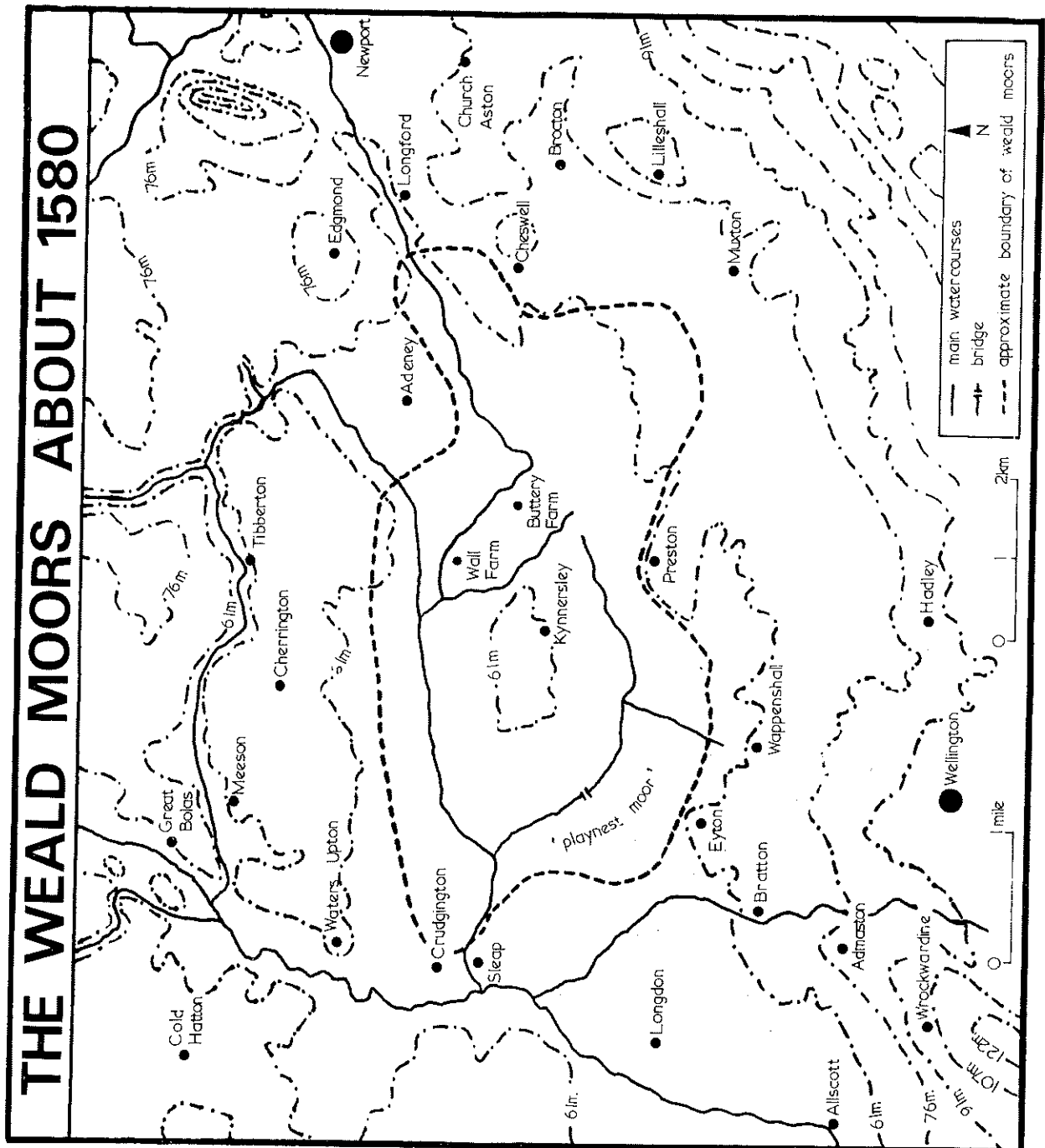
In the country as a whole the late 16th and early 17th century was a period particularly prolific in inclosure and improvement schemes. Population growth was a spur to improvement; new tenements were carved out of the commons and wastes, and a greater acreage was brought into regular use thereby providing livings for more families and lengthening rent rolls. In pastoral areas such as the Weald Moors inclosure of wastes was of greater significance than inclosure of common fields. It is true that common-field cultivation did persist into the 17th century and that such land was constantly being improved by consolidation, exchange, and piecemeal inclosure. The fields themselves, however, were small and the acreage involved was only a fraction of the total area improved during this period.

Drainage certainly brought great improvement to the area. Kynnersley, situated in the middle of the moors, was described in the late 17th century by George Plaxton, vicar of the parish and agent for the Levesons, as formerly 'surrounded with a large morass overflowed in Winter and . . . you could not come into the parish any way upon arable land'.<sup>5</sup> Such an environment presented certain problems to the inhabitants. In an Exchequer deposition of 1612,<sup>6</sup> William Baylie of Edgmond deposed that before Butterly way was made (c. 1572) he

knew a footway to pass by pole from Hassock and hassock by the space of 30 years before the said cawsey way was made and when they carried any corpse to be buried to parishe of Edgmond whereof they were parishioners they passed in boats.

In winter cattle too were probably rowed to dry islands in the middle of the fen, as they were in the Isle of Axholme.<sup>7</sup> Local inhabitants also hung bells round the necks of their cows in order to find them more easily.<sup>8</sup> Yet according to Plaxton<sup>9</sup> after drainage the ground had become good pasture yielding

great quantities of Hay, tho much of it is of such a nature, that it will dry up a new Milch cow, starve a Horse, yet will it feed an Oxe to admiration; and I have heard some Grasiers say, they could not by their best Upland hay feed an Oxe so fat, as the Moor-hay would do.



Families other than the Levesons were improving their lands in the area too. A map made in 1579/80<sup>10</sup> records that the Black Dyke had been 'latly made by Mr. Eaton to drene hys ground'. The Levesons, however, owned the greatest extent of land and were responsible for the largest drainage schemes.<sup>11</sup> Indeed the family and its tenants carried on a determined policy of drainage and improvement with little regard for the common rights of others and their behaviour not only caused a storm of protest from their neighbours but also led to numerous law suits.

Soon after inclosure and drainage operations began in the second half of the 16th century trouble arose over the fundamental question of rights of common enjoyed by the various manors in and around the Weald Moors. While all other manors claimed right of common on adjacent parts of the moors, and therefore the right to inclose land from it, the manor of Wrockwardine claimed right of common over the entire moor. Consequently inhabitants of Wrockwardine tended to oppose inclosure which would hinder the free passage of their animals over the moors. Four maps<sup>12</sup> relate to a Star Chamber case concerning trespass in the Weald Moors which was brought by the inhabitants of Wrockwardine, evidence in which was given at Shrewsbury on 13–15 January 1580.<sup>13</sup> In general, therefore, Miss Hill was quite accurate in her dating. The incident that led to the suit occurred in May 1579, only five months before William Sheldon alienated his Weald Moors property to his brother-in-law, Walter Leveson, and that would seem to account for the presence of both their names on the series of maps relating to the dispute.

The immediate cause of the suit was the action of the inhabitants of Wrockwardine. According to Edmund Eiton, vicar of Kynnersley, on the night of 7–8 May 1579 more than 40 persons had gathered together on Kynnersley Moor and had cut down the hedges and quicksetts of the enclosures and had filled in the ditch.<sup>14</sup> Moreover 27 people had returned two nights later and continued the destruction. This action is recorded, on one of the maps,<sup>15</sup> in the area of the moor west of Kynnersley, labelled 'Wrockwardyne More in Wylde more wherein the supposed trespass was done'. Two of the maps<sup>16</sup> also show a bridge crossing the Black Dyke, which had been pulled down by the men of Wrockwardine since it gave the inhabitants of Kynnersley access to the 'playnest more' which they claimed as theirs. Thomas Earsworth of Kynnersley deposed that for 30 years a bridge had stood near the spot, serving as a passage for the inhabitants to go to Wellington market. The bridge had been moved only to provide a better passage on firmer ground. Edmund Eiton stated that the bridge had been cast down at night by some 60 people from Eyton and Wrockwardine. Thomas Wilkes of Bratton (in Wrockwardine), speaking for the defendants, deposed that there had never been a bridge there before the inclosure 'only a sorrye forde to drive over cattalls'.

Maps were drawn up to show the Wrockwardine side of the case. One<sup>17</sup> is quite explicit. East of a large oak tree indicated on the map lay the Rough Moor, 'parcell of Wyldemore in to which wee clayme strake of common with our Cattalls as far as Newport'. On the same map the 'playne more' is said to be 'thowsandes of Acres in to the which the inhabitaunce of Wrockwardyne & all that holde of that manor have had free strake of common tyme owt of memorye of mane without Any Restraynt or gayne saying in that behalfe'. Another map<sup>18</sup> is more neutral but shows the entire Weald Moors area as far as Newport, indicating the breadth of the claims of the inhabitants of Wrockwardine.

The Kynnersley case, on the other hand, rested on the claim that various parts of the moor belonged to the adjacent manors and that the disputed inclosures adjoined the village fields and had been enjoyed by the inhabitants for about twelve years without any disturbance. As Miss Hill rightly commented: 'The new practice of inclosing parcels of moor was reducing the area of commonable waste, while individual land-owners were trying to exclude Wrockwardine tenants from their moors'.<sup>19</sup> As the rival claims were incompatible, a compromise had to be arrived at. Consequently on 10 September 1582 George, earl of Shrewsbury, the lord of Wrockwardine, sold his interest in the Weald Moors to Walter Leveson for an annual rent-charge of £40.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately the sale did not settle the dispute and at intervals during the course of the next hundred years the inhabitants of Wrockwardine complained about the inclosures made in the Weald Moors by the Levesons and their tenants.

In September 1591, a year after Shrewsbury's death, Walter Leveson wrote to the countess of Shrewsbury re-affirming his position.<sup>21</sup>

Because of the good will I bore towards his lordship and to keep the peace I gave to his honour and his heirs an annuity of £40 out of my manor of Lilleshall which I was well content to pay if I could quietly enjoy the land Although I do not doubt but in respect of my former title I could lawfully continue my possession and I shall be prepared to show evidences I have in order to satisfy you.

On that occasion the trouble seems to have been settled quickly. The Levesons and their tenants, however, continued to inclose hundreds of acres from the moors. By 1653 the process had gone so far that the inhabitants of Wrockwardine decided to make a stand, the last straw being the recent inclosure of 200 acres of the common.<sup>22</sup>

and the sayd persons not satisfied with the Incloseinge of the sayd two hundred Acres beinge the greatest part of the sayd common . . . out of a greedy and covetous disposition to Inrich themselves and Impoverishe your Orators they keepinge greate store of their . . . Cattells . . . uppon the rest of the said Common . . . that lyeth still open and uninclosed and soe doe eate upp with their . . . Cattells and tooke most of all the profitts of the said Common.

To make matters worse the Wrockwardine copyholders complained that the remaining commons, some 150 acres, was poor marshy soil not fit to put sheep on. Yet the defendants had over-stocked it in the summer with sheep for fattening, 'deceavinge the Countreye by sellinge them rotten sheepe and bringinge your Orators sheepe they keepe on their own lands into discreditt that they cannott sell the same'.<sup>23</sup>

The Weald Moors area was a predominantly stock-fattening district at that time and thousands of cattle and sheep were grazed there annually. Many of the Levesons' tenants were evidently graziers, for the inhabitants of Wrockwardine complained<sup>24</sup> that they put in

greate stoore of sheepe in and uppon the said Common and suddenly eatinge upp the grasse uppon the said Common not keepinge their Sheepe uppon their severall Tenements in the winter tyme but doe buy the same in Springe tyme and then sell the same againe for gaine and buyeinge more sheep againe and puttinge the same on the said common by greate numbers.

The defendants replied that the inhabitants of Wrockwardine had no right of common in the Weald Moors and that no part of the moor lay within Wrockwardine manor, adding that their houses lay two to three miles away from the moors.<sup>25</sup>

The matter came up again in 1674 when, on 24 November, a number of Wrockwardine freeholders and copyholders complained against William Leveson-Gower and his tenants. Before the 1582 agreement (according to their bill) their predecessors, hearing of Walter Leveson's designs, had prevailed on the earl of Shrewsbury to have their rights of common safeguarded. Walter Leveson was in fact given liberty to enclose 500 acres of the moors, he and his tenants agreeing in return that sufficient common be left for the inhabitants of Wrockwardine. Shortly after the conclusion of the agreement, however, Leveson and his tenants enclosed 1,100 acres to the value of £500 per annum.<sup>26</sup> Courts of survey were held in the Levesons' Weald Moors manors on 16 December 1605 and the progress of inclosure at that date is shown in Table I.<sup>27</sup> It can be compared with the figures shown in Table II which detail the amount of inclosure in the moors presented at the Wrockwardine manor court in 1650.<sup>28</sup>

As the inhabitants of Wrockwardine claimed rights of common over the whole of the Weald Moors, they were inevitably drawn into arguments with people from the other manors in and around the area who were endeavouring to inclose adjacent pieces of the moor. Other disputes involved the bounds within which each manor could enjoy the exclusive right of common or inclose that part of the moor to its own use. The various townships and manors must originally have inter-commoned their animals on the moors but the progress of inclosure from the late 16th century made boundary definition imperative. The problems were summed up in the preamble to a Star Chamber case of 1635-40 between Sir Richard Leveson and Sir Henry Wallop, lord of Waters Upton:<sup>29</sup>

Wildemore wherin diverse and sundry mannors and Townes which adioyne . . . have there knowne and particular parcells of waste grounde parcells of the . . . Wildemore . . . and which . . . wastes are called by the seuerall names of the seuerall moores of the . . . seuerall mannors and Townes and in particular the Townes and Mannors of Crudgenton, Cheriton, Slepe, and diverse other Townes in the . . . Countie of Salop. Neyther were the . . . seuerall parcells of waste ground anciently divided from one another by hedges, ditches, or defencable partitions but only by some notes or markes of distinction and were lyinge together and so promiscuously called by the name of the Wildemoore. Although of late tymes a greate parte of the . . . Wilde which did and does belonge to the mannor of Crudgenton, Cheriton, and Slepe hath byne and is inclosed from the reste of the . . . Wildemore whereby the reason of Intercomoning (if any were) is at an end.

Wallop accused Leveson and his tenants of overstocking the remaining commons even though they had inclosed hundreds of acres to add to the adjoining manors. A map illustrating Wallop's and his tenants' claims, shows not only the alleged bounds of Upton Moor in the Weald Moors but also the strake way from the township.<sup>30</sup> The one map of the set which was deposited at Stafford deals with this case and also illustrates the point of view of the inhabitants of Waters Upton.<sup>31</sup> The cartographer wrote on it: 'I have thought good to draw within this plat [the Weald Moors] some parte of the township of Watters Upton and also strake way that goeth from Upton to this Wilde Moore'.

Depositions were taken at Shawbury on 26 July 1636 and Richard Hilton, of Waters Upton, stated<sup>32</sup> that

the Inhabitants of Cherrington weere woonte hastilye to fech oute such Cattels as they had in Uptons Moore as soone as they heard that Upton men weere aboutes to drive their moore. And hee beleeueth that they made such haste to fech them fourth of the moore onely to preuente the impoundinge of them.

An undated petition of the inhabitants of Waters Upton to Sir Richard Leveson<sup>33</sup> seems to represent the first move in this dispute. It complained that the inhabitants of Cherrington, having inclosed their own part of the moor, were now commoning their animals on the part belonging to Waters Upton. The petition continues:

wee therefore partly because your Worship hath promised us that they shall not wrong us, partly because wee are assured you are such a lover of justice and equity that you will not suffer them to doe us any wrong wee were bolde to make our adresse to your good Worship to restraine their Injustice and to cause them keepe themselves in their owne boundes and learne that common principle better.

Evidently the petitioners got no satisfaction from Leveson for they seem to have taken the matter into their own hands. On 18 June 1634, according to Thomas Galloway and Richard Gough, two of Leveson's Cherrington tenants, Richard Harries of Waters Upton took seven heifers and two bullocks belonging to them which he had found grazing on the disputed piece of waste.<sup>34</sup> Galloway and Gough went to law, taking their complaint to the court of Common Pleas in Easter Term 1635. According to Leveson, however, the court was packed with Wallop's men and gave a biased verdict. The situation was further inflamed in 1637 when, on 27 June, Wallop's men assembled riotously on Crudgington Green, marched onto the adjacent moor, and dug a great ditch, thereby turning the strine out of its usual course and enlarging that part of the moor which they claimed.<sup>35</sup> For his part Wallop accused Leveson and his tenants in Crudgington, Kynnersley, and Cherrington of disinheriting him by destroying the ancient mears on the moor and impounding his and his tenants' cattle.

A map which Miss Hill dated between 1596 and 1613,<sup>36</sup> seems nevertheless to belong to this case, stressing as it does a boundary between Waters Upton and Crudgington cutting off the former township from the moors. At Shawbury on 26 July 1636 Francis Parrock, a Sleaford husbandman, testified on Leveson's behalf. He stated that the inhabitants of Kynnersley, Crudgington and Sleaf, Cherrington, and Wrockwardine had possessed common of pasture in that part of the Weald Moors in question and also that the inhabitants of Crudgington and Sleaf had driven their cattle over the river at Sandy Ford which the Waters Upton men claimed for their exclusive use.<sup>37</sup> Parrock also deposed that Kynnersley men had dug peat for at least sixty years in the Upper Moor, the name the villagers gave the disputed piece of waste. That could account for the inclusion of Kynnersley's peat pits on the map. It is true, as Mill Hill says, that neither the Gawemoors nor Cherrington Moor appear to be divided but that seems to have been due to the fact that the area was not involved in the dispute. As it is, the map does show the division of Meeson and Cherrington Moors effected c. 1603 and must therefore be later than that.<sup>38</sup>

The case dragged through the courts until, on 5 August 1640, a settlement was reached by arbitration of George Digby and Richard More, esquires. Leveson and his tenants were granted freedom to fish any river in the Weald Moors while Wallop was given 135 acres of waste to inclose and add to his manor of Waters Upton. The award, however, was to come into effect only on Lady Margaret Leveson's death.<sup>39</sup>

Three maps<sup>40</sup> relate to disputes between Meeson and Cherrington over rights of common on a part of the moor claimed by both townships. As elsewhere in the area, the trouble lay in the absence of any firm marks of delineation. In a suit that arose in 1612 it was stated that 'It appears plainly by the map that the commons between Bolas and Cherrington lie confusedly together and that the tenants of Cherrington and Bolas . . . intercommon . . . there.'<sup>41</sup> The division of the moors some nine years before had clearly not completely settled the controversy. When the agreement had been made Mr. Cardiff and Mr. Woodcock, lords of Meeson, had accepted their allotments, but by 1612 Cardiff was claiming that the whole area belonged to the manor of Meeson. Consequently on 31 March 1611 William Bostock and Richard Jebb, two of Sir John Leveson's Cherrington tenants, trod in Cardiff's grass and cast down a ditch to uphold the rights of their manor.<sup>42</sup> One map<sup>43</sup> shows not only the ditch that the two defendants broke down but also the partition of the moors between the two manors.

Prominent on the map are three features that occur regularly on the maps of the area, namely 'the uttermost butt in Cherrington', 'the well', and 'Cherrington Cross'. The butt can also be seen on another map made in the late 16th century to accompany an earlier dispute between the two manors.<sup>44</sup> The butt was of vital importance to the inhabitants of Meeson for it provided a corridor between Crudgington and Cherrington through which they could take their animals to the moors. In the documents relating to the case of 1612 it was recorded that a previous lord of Meeson had released to the prior of Wombridge, lord of Cherrington, his common in the Gorsts in return for a butt of land 'lying in the uttermost part of Cherrington field under the Cratch next a well'.<sup>45</sup>

The well is recorded on four maps.<sup>46</sup> Miss Hill noted it as a significant feature,<sup>47</sup> and it was put on the maps not because of its importance as a water supply but because Meeson men claimed that it marked their droveway to the moors. In a dispute of 1583/4 Fowke Meeston of Meeson stated that Creswell Lane

was the drift way along which the inhabitants of Meeson drove their cattle to the moors and that there was a well in it called Creswell.<sup>48</sup>

Cherrington Cross, found on six maps, was the reputed boundary of Cherrington manor. In the 1635–40 dispute between Sir Richard Leveson and Sir Henry Wallop one of Leveson's witnesses, Philip Gravenor of Stirchley, deposed that Cherrington Cross was a cross dug in the earth and was made solely as a boundary of Cherrington.<sup>49</sup>

After Sir Walter Leveson had compounded with the earl of Shrewsbury for his interest in the Weald Moors he had his Cherrington, Kynnersley, and Crudgington tenants dig the strine from Rodway to Brymsich and on to Crudgington some two yards broader than before. In order that the strine should remain at the new width of six yards he gave the inhabitants of the surrounding manors a measure of that length.<sup>50</sup> The scouring of stretches of the strines and ditches was reckoned as evidence of rights of common on the adjacent parts of the moor and it is significant to note that<sup>51</sup>

the tenants of Meeson in respect of their common of pasture in the mores in question have scoured that side of the river or stryne which adjoins the mores in question from the Cross about the middle of the said mores to Brymsiche and the tenants of Cherrington have scoured the said river from the Rodway to the Cross on the same side.

The 1603 division respected this boundary, but the point at issue in 1612 was Cardiff's claim that the bounds of Meeson Moor extended beyond the Cross to the Land Lake that divided the moor from Rodway/Henney Green.

From the mid 16th century the lords of Meeson seem to have tried to ditch and inclose parts of the wastes which were intercommoned by Meeson and Cherrington. The low-lying waterlogged land would obviously benefit from drainage operations like ditch scouring, but such activities implied proprietorial rights over it. A deponent in 1612, remembering an earlier incident, stated that the lords of Meeson had dug a ditch on the moors secretly because they were afraid that the inhabitants of Cherrington would cast it in again.<sup>52</sup>

One map<sup>53</sup> relates to a dispute between the two manors that occurred in 1576 and was heard in the Council in the Marches.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Cherrington of Cherrington complained that on 10 May 1576 a band of men in the service of Thurstan Woodcock, father of one of the lords of Meeson, forcibly entered his waste, ploughed it, and inclosed it with a ditch. The defendants replied that the disputed land was part of Meeson manor and that they were lawfully ploughing it when the plaintiff and a number of confederates arrived to prevent them from doing so; they were, however, peacefully (so the defendants claimed) 'removed' from such 'unadvised enterpryce', so that the defendants 'mighte the more quietly passe with their said oxen and plowes'. Thomas Cherrington of Tibberton, husbandman, speaking on the plaintiff's behalf, stated that the waste in question was known as 'the more beyond the orcheyarde'; his statement establishes the link between the 1576 dispute and the map, the latter<sup>55</sup> recording 'the land in variance xii acres called the more behind the orchard'.

The map, made in 1576, is therefore a few years older than the date suggested by Miss Hill.<sup>56</sup> She did, however, list the maps in the right order, even if the dates are slightly out. She also noted that the division of Cherrington Moor and the Gawemoors had later been added to the 1576 map<sup>57</sup> by another hand.<sup>58</sup> It is clear that that was done during the course of the 1612 suit, when all the earlier documents and maps were produced.

In 1583 Thomas Cherrington complained again about the Woodcocks, bringing an action in Star Chamber on 25 July. He stated that on 10 July Thomas Woodcock collected together 'divers desparate and lewde persons . . . in riotous manner [who] dug . . . up within the said more one myghtye diche more like in truthe a defence to have kepte owte some forren enemyes then an inclosure to keepe in Cattell'.<sup>59</sup> The defendants, on the other hand, claimed that the ground was called Meeson Moor and lay within Great Bolas manor. Moreover, generously admitting Thomas Cherrington's rights over 100 acres of waste in Cherrington, they stated that if he were lord of the disputed land 'soe let him kepe yt for these defendantes endeavor not to take yt from him anye waste grounde or moore in Cherrington'.

Trouble had begun on 1 May 1583 when Thomas Woodcock had ordered his men to inclose, fence, and hedge the piece of ground. Thirty days later, according to the defendants, the inclosure was cast down at night 'by a great multitude of riotous and evilly disposed persons'. It was their attempt at repairing the inclosure which led to Thomas Cherrington's action in court. It seems likely that one of the maps<sup>60</sup> is slightly later than the 1576 map and so probably relates to this case: similar features are depicted and a piece of waste between Cherrington and Meeson is inscribed 'the land in variance called the more at the orchard'.

Another prolonged dispute, not represented by any of the surviving maps, involved Kynnersley and Adeney manors and their claims over the adjacent part of the moor. In the 1570s and 1580s William

Sheldon and Sir Walter Leveson were inclosing land in the area, some of which was added to Buttery and Wall farms. In 1612 Francis Rogers, lord of Adeney, complained about these activities in the Exchequer. Rogers seems to have complained rather late in the day, but one of his witnesses, William Baldwin of Elsieh, gent., deposed that his father Daniel Rogers had previously approached Sir Walter Leveson. On that occasion Leveson was said to have written a letter to his officers telling them to deliver possession of the disputed ground to Daniel Rogers.<sup>61</sup>

In the bill of complaint it was stated that the defendants had inclosed c. 100 acres of waste in Adeney Eyle which (the plaintiff claimed) belonged to Adeney manor.<sup>62</sup> The defendants, on the other hand, claimed that they, with the tenants of Adeney and Tibberton, had always had right of common on the disputed land, which they called the Eylemoor. They further said that, long before Daniel Rogers had anything to do with Adeney, Sir Walter Leveson possessed part of Tibberton manor and part of a capital messuage called Buttery House, now in the tenure of one of the defendants (John Adams), and of a messuage known as the Wall, at that time being farmed by another of the defendants. The defendants maintained that neither the Eylemoor nor the piece that had been inclosed lay in Adeney manor. They denied that Leveson had ever written the letter spoken of by William Baldwin, though they did admit that he had then been in some difficulty and therefore more likely to have given him satisfaction for any reasonable request. They reaffirmed, however, that they had enjoyed the inclosures and the commons uninterruptedly.

TABLE I

INCLOSURE FROM THE WEALD MOORS, LISTED IN COURTS OF SURVEY  
HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 1605

<i>Name or description</i>	<i>Size (beasts' gates)</i>	<i>How long inclosed</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>Kynnersley</i>			
The Gale	20	60 yrs.	Claimed to be in leases.
New Piece	21	over 20 yrs.	Held at will.
The Great Moor called the Peatepitts, Foule Lakes, and the Lawne			Tenants get fuel, everyone knows his own several, tenants pay only rent hens. Greatest part barren and marsh ground where no cattle can feed.
The Six-Beasts' Gate	6	20 yrs.	Claimed by And. Nurthall to be in his lease.
<i>Crudgington and Sleaf</i>			
Parcels of Weald Moors	80	20 yrs.	Held at will.
Quite Pleck	10	over 20 yrs.	Held by Rob. Barnefield and John Bell.
Branton Moor	40	over 20 yrs.	Mostly held at will.
Meadowe Hedds and Hawmore	40	over 20 yrs.	Claimed to be in leases.
The Elles	20	over 40 yrs.	
Crudgington Green			Solely used by Crudgington tenants and stinted by them.
Gawmoor	32	3 yrs.	Held at will by tenants of Cherrington and Kynnersley.
<i>Cherrington</i>			
Rodway/Henney Green	20		Allowed to individuals in lieu of common.
Parcel ground between Henney Field and river			Used only by tenants of Cherrington and stinted by them for Rodway Green wherein they had interest before.
Cherrington Moor and Meeson Moor		3 yrs.	
Total beasts' gates	289		

The four acreage equivalents in the 1599 survey show that a beast's gate ranged from  $\frac{2}{3}$  a. to 2 a. The 289 beasts' gates inclosed from the Weald Moors could therefore have accounted for  $192\frac{2}{3}$ –578 a.

The documents do not record the outcome of the dispute on this occasion, but a final settlement was not reached for another thirty years and after at least one more dispute. On 2 May 1639, in Rogation week, Walter Pigott, lord of Adeney, together with William Ramsden, the rector of Edgmond, and a number of the inhabitants of the manor entered the inclosed grounds of Wall farm and took away the cattle they found there.<sup>63</sup> The lord of Adeney and his tenants were particularly anxious to establish their right to the disputed land by the time of the action because, as Pigott and Ramsden stated<sup>64</sup> in their defence:

the same [enclosures] haue soe byne suffered to continue ever sithence in regard the same new enclosed groundes were att the enclosure thereof (being about fiftie yeares last past) of little worth but now are ymproved and of Considerable Value.

Both sides agreed to arbitration, and on 23 June 1641 Thomas Eyton made his award.<sup>65</sup> Pigott was given liberty to inclose 104 acres of waste close to Adeney township while Sir Richard Leveson and William Yonge, lords of Edgmond, were allowed freely to hold the residue of the moor in dispute after the Lady Margaret Leveson's death.

One point of interest to emerge from this study is the number of suits that involved the inhabitants of Kynnersley. That was not necessarily due to any excess of inclosing zeal on their part but rather to the manor's central situation in the Weald Moors. Its boundaries touched so many others that its inhabitants inevitably became involved in many demarcation disputes. One such occurred in the early 1570s when Walter Leveson and William Sheldon, respectively lords of Lilleshall and Kynnersley, were inclosing in the eastern part of the Weald Moors. A settlement was eventually reached, however, on 14 January 1574

TABLE II  
INCLOSURE IN THE WEALD MOORS BY 1650 (ACCORDING TO INHABITANTS  
OF WROCKWARDINE MANOR)

<i>Name of Encroacher</i>	<i>Name of Encroachment</i>	<i>Size (a.)</i>
Michael Todder		$\frac{1}{2}$
Ric. Millington		1
Fra. Hughes		$\frac{1}{4}$
Sleap men		5
	Atkis Piece	4
	Sleap Town Piece	20
	Crudgington Piece	30
	Felton's Piece	5
	Knolles Piece	$2\frac{1}{2}$
	Sleap Piece	14
	Cornes Piece	5
	Lancashire's Piece	$2\frac{1}{2}$
	Darbshire's Piece	3
Inhabitants of Meeson		40
Inhabitants of Cherrington		160
Tibberton men		70
Inhabitants of Adeney		180
Kynnersley men	The Three New Pieces	100
Kynnersley men	Kynnersley Town Piece	60
Kynnersley men	Cow Moor	80
Kynnersley men		600
Lilleshall & Donnington men		400
Preston men		230
Inhabitants of Wappenshall and Leegomery		120
Inhabitants of Eyton and Bratton		300
<i>Totals</i>		
Sir Richard Leveson and his tenants		2,180
Other townships		550

We find as we suppose 1,000 a. uninclosed in the Weald Moors and that neither the lords nor tenants of Wrockwardine have as yet inclosed there at all.



when a boundary was agreed to follow a water course from Bolas Dam near Adeney to Queremore ditch which butted on the lordship of Preston.<sup>66</sup>

By the mid 17th century thousands of acres of moor had been inclosed and brought into regular cultivation. The Levesons and their tenants were the main improvers but other local landowners were also involved. While the townships surrounding the Weald Moors would obviously have tended to graze their animals on the adjacent part of the moor, there seem to have been few attempts before the mid 16th century to claim exclusive rights. Nevertheless late 16th-century population increase and the desire of new owners to profit from their investments were spurs to agricultural improvement. Townships began to claim parts of the common as their own, often as a prelude to inclosure, while still attempting to graze their animals on the remaining open moor. Disputes were inevitable, and the number of court cases reflects not only the reduction of the commonable area but also the increasing value<sup>67</sup> of inclosed land.

<sup>1</sup> T.S.A.S. liv. 255–326.

<sup>2</sup> S.R.O. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593.

<sup>4</sup> In what follows these documents are quoted extensively to bring out more clearly the various parties' thoughts and attitudes. Dr. P.A. Stamper is thanked for drawing the map on p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> G. Plaxton, 'Some Natural Observations made in the Parishes of Kinardsey and Donington in Shropshire', *Philosophical Transactions*, xxv. 2418.

<sup>6</sup> P.R.O., E 134/10 Jas. I Mich./4.

<sup>7</sup> I.J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', *Ag. Hist. Rev.* xix. 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Philosophical Trans.* xxv. 2419.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 2420.

<sup>10</sup> S.R.O. 38/1.

<sup>11</sup> Between 1565 and 1579 the Levesons' Weald Moors manors formed the dowry of Sir Ric. Leveson's dau. Eliz., wife of Wm. Sheldon of Beoley (Worcs.).

<sup>12</sup> S.R.O. 38/1, 6, 9, and 14.

<sup>13</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/B/11/1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> S.R.O. 38/14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 1 and 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>19</sup> T.S.A.S. liv. 283.

<sup>20</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/6/35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* /B/2/5/8a/5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* /E/6/35.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> See p.7. The Table is compiled from Staffs. R.O., D. 593/J/11/2/1.

<sup>28</sup> See p.8. The Table is compiled from Staffs. R.O., D. 593/H/14/2/16. The inh. of Wrockwardine may of course have exaggerated the amount of inclosure to demonstrate the Levesons' and other landowners' wickedness.

<sup>29</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/6/24. The case also ramified in Common Pleas (*ibid.* /B/2/5/8a/4) and Chancery (*ibid.* /B/2/5/5/3).

<sup>30</sup> S.R.O. 38/3.

<sup>31</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/H/4/23.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* /E/6/24.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* /B/2/5/4/2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* /B/2/5/8a/4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* /E/6/24.

<sup>36</sup> S.R.O. 38/5; T.S.A.S. liv. 263–4.

<sup>37</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/6/24.

<sup>38</sup> T.S.A.S. liv. 263.

<sup>39</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/B/2/5/5/4.

<sup>40</sup> S.R.O. 38/2, 3, and 7.

<sup>41</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/6/10.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> S.R.O. 38/3.

<sup>44</sup> S.R.O. 38/2; below.

<sup>45</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/6/10.

<sup>46</sup> S.R.O. 38/2, 3, 5, and 7.

<sup>47</sup> T.S.A.S. liv. 289.

<sup>48</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/1/6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* /E/6/24.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* /E/6/10.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> S.R.O. 38/2.

<sup>54</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/B/2/1/7.

- <sup>55</sup> S.R.O. 38/2.  
<sup>56</sup> *T.S.A.S.* liv. 260.  
<sup>57</sup> S.R.O. 38/2.  
<sup>58</sup> *T.S.A.S.* liv. 260.  
<sup>59</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/1/6.  
<sup>60</sup> S.R.O. 38/3.  
<sup>61</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/6/8; P.R.O., E 134/10 Jas. I Mich./4.  
<sup>62</sup> Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/6/8.  
<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* /B/2/11/3/6. Adeney township was in Edgmond parish.  
<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>66</sup> S.R.O. 1910/477 (ref. owed to Dr. D.C. Cox).  
<sup>67</sup> See e.g. Staffs. R.O., D. 593/E/4/8.

## THE OLD HOUSE FARM, LOPPINGTON

By CAROLE RYAN AND MADGE MORAN

THE Old House Farm, Loppington, stands in an isolated position about half a mile (804 m.) north-west of the village. It was the subject of a closing order in 1974, and demolition was subsequently ordered. Investigation of the building by the authors at a later date showed that it possessed features which made it worthy of preservation. A full record of the property was made and the building was up-graded to Grade II in the statutory list of the Department of the Environment. This account will show that an apparently insignificant, dilapidated small dwelling may have something of interest to offer to the student of English vernacular architecture on a national scale and that this particular example makes a worthy contribution to the study of Shropshire's domestic building practices.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Little is known about the ownership of the Old House Farm except between the years 1745 and 1834. In 1745 the property was owned by William Griffiths of Westminster. The ownership descended to John Richards who married Anne Wilding of Stretton, a clergyman's daughter. Richards was the subject of a bankruptcy order in 1816.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1833 the house was part of fifteen lots, then tenanted by Charles Cook and Edward Kynaston, offered for sale by auction.<sup>2</sup> Lot X comprised nine plots of land including that on which the house stands, Old House Yard. The field names around the house are identical with those shown on the tithe map five years later.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that one of the other lots was sold on condition that £40 per annum was paid to Elizabeth Richards<sup>3</sup> then in her eighty-seventh year. Thomas Dickin of Loppington House bought the property and thereafter the Old House Farm was occupied by tenants of the Dickin estate.

### BUILDING HISTORY

The building history shows three distinct phases, although there is room for debate concerning certain aspects within these phases.

#### *Phase 1*

A house of cruck construction consisting of two or more bays. The south bay of this phase remains reasonably intact. The closed cruck truss, shown on the plan (fig. 1) and drawn in the end section A-A (fig. 2) clearly terminates the house-part at the south end.

The heavy tie-beam and the collar-beam are lapped over the cruck blades. Some of the original infill of wattle and daub remains above the tie-beam, and grooves for a similar infill above the collar-beam were found. The infill consisted of cleft oak laths interwoven with hazel twigs, daubed with a mud and straw mixture and coated with plaster and limewash. This truss carries visible signs of weathering.

The inserted doorway shown on the section drawing A-A (fig. 2) belongs to Phase 2 or Phase 3, and the implications of this will be discussed later.

Careful examination of this truss revealed the reason for the absence of housing for the purlins. They are not trenched into the back of the cruck blades but are half-lapped over the blades above the collar-beam. The modern rafters mask this evidence.

At the foot of the eastern cruck blade of the truss, which is the only one to survive below tie-beam level, there is a dead mortice. The original purpose of the mortice was for the insertion of a lever to enable the cruck truss to be manipulated into its final position after rearing.<sup>4</sup>

Only part of one blade of the northern cruck truss of the south bay survives on the east side. The matching blade was lost when the inserted chimney stack was added. (See section B-B, fig. 2.)

One purlin of the cruck house is visible in the roof space on the east side and is trenched into the back of the blade of the northern cruck truss. It extends about 2 ft. (70 cms.) into the space which would have been occupied by another bay to the north but is now filled with a 17th-century crosswing. There is no remaining evidence of the exact nature of these two bays. No cruck apex joint survives and there are no visible signs of smoke blackening.

The difference in the treatment of the purlin at the end section (A-A) and at the northern cruck truss (B-B) might be seen to lend support to the theory that the original cruck house was of two bays. The truss on section B-B would then have been the central truss.

### *Phase 2*

In the 17th century a two-storey box-framed crosswing was added to the north end of the cruck house replacing the north bay of the original house, and a brick chimney stack was inserted to serve the crosswing and the south bay of the cruck house into which it protrudes. The stack seems to have been inserted in two stages. Probably at first it served only the new crosswing and was later extended to serve the remaining part of the old cruck house.

It seems likely that with the addition of the crosswing the present main entrance doorway was made in the east wall. It is opposite the stack and forms a 'baffle' or 'lobby' entrance. Before the extension of the stack southwards, however, the arrangement would have been that the chimney backed onto the entrance. This particular access plan is very common in Monmouthshire<sup>5</sup> and is widespread in England and Wales generally in the 17th century.

The present position of the staircase shown in the ground plan (fig. 1) seems to be a later attempt to reduce the incline and in all probability the original stairs rose from a point close to the main doorway. There is a small alcove in the stack possibly to hold a lamp to light the dark entrance and the foot of the stairs.

Attempts to ensure that the crosswing was an integral part of the dwelling were rather clumsy. The spine-beam of the crosswing was cut too long but was simply left protruding into the upper floor of the south bay, with a mortice surplus to requirements cut into its extremity. No attempt was made to cut it back to size and an additional piece of wood was inserted beneath it for support.

The crosswing seems always to have been brick-nogged. Where it was possible to examine the frame closely it was found that no grooves or holes for a wattle and daub infill had been made. Most of the bricks used for the nogging were machine made, but on the west elevation near the apex the nogging above the collar-beam was of smaller hand-made bricks. It seems obvious, therefore, that a complete renewal of the nogging took place, apart from this small portion. When the renewal was done an attempt to achieve a decorative herring-bone effect with new machine-made bricks was made on the east gable of the crosswing above the tie-beam.

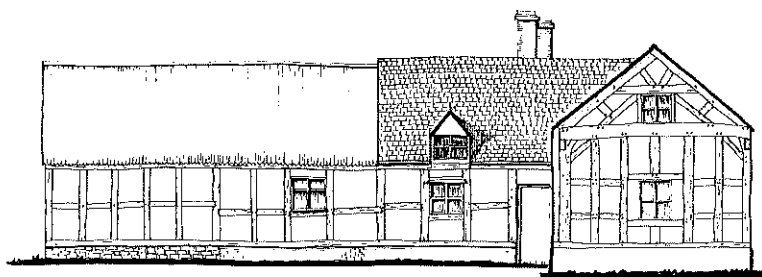
All the timbers of the crosswing are pegged in the normal way, and on the north wall the carpenters' assembly marks are well preserved (fig. 2). Also on this elevation the spine-beam of the crosswing is connected to the north lateral wall in a curious fashion. (See detail C, fig. 2.) Whilst this joint fulfils the purpose for which it was intended it seems a crude piece of carpentry and is a further indication of the trouble evidently experienced when putting in the spine-beam.

The principal rafters in the roof at either gable end survive as original timbers. All the common rafters and the ridge-piece are modern.

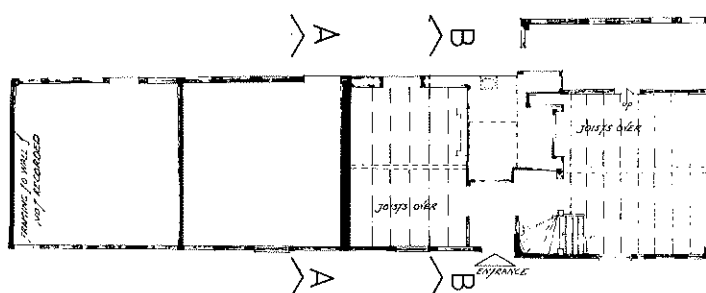
Two wind-braces appear in the upper storey of the crosswing at the west and east ends of the northern side. They are plain and straight and join the purlin to the end trusses.

From the roof-space of the crosswing there is restricted visual access into the remains of the cruck-built structure and it was from this point that the debatable evaluation of Phase 1 was made.

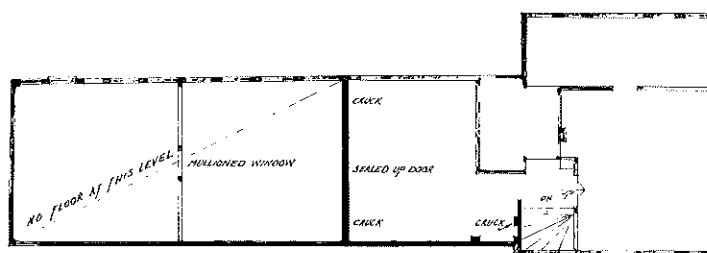
OLD HOUSE FARM BROWN HEATH LOPPINGTON  
SALOP O.S. REF. SJ 465 298



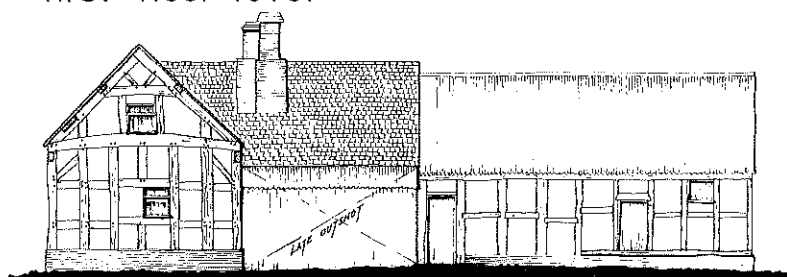
east elevation (to road)



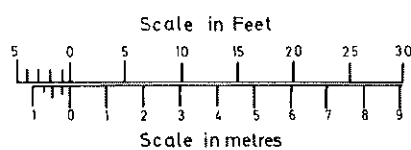
ground floor plan



first floor level



west elevation



RECORDED BY C.R. M.M. C.A.S. MARCH 1977

Figure 1

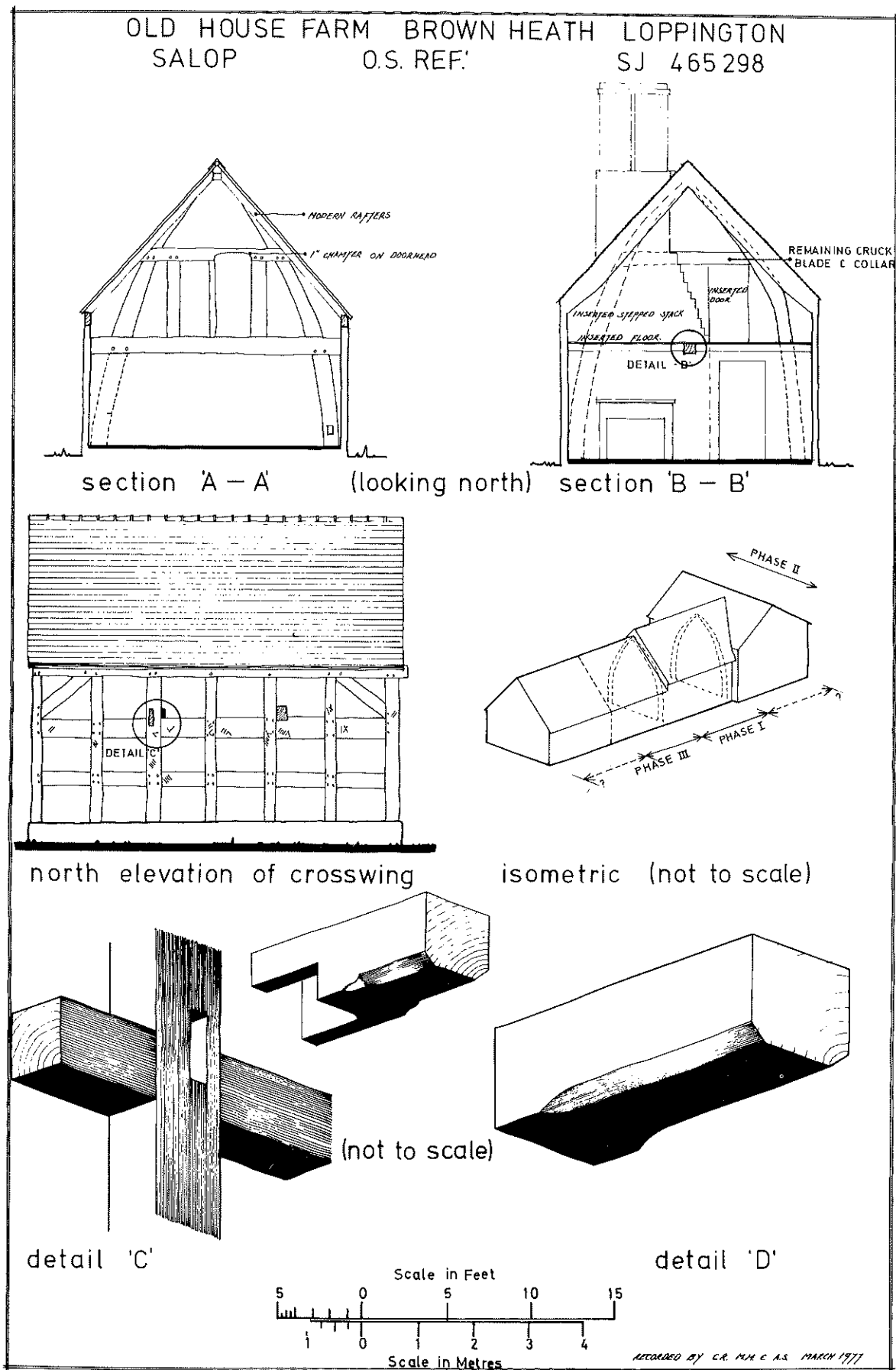


Figure 2

*Phase 3*

A box-framed two-bay extension was added to the south bay of the cruck house to provide a byre and a milking parlour. That was done in two stages. The byre, which adjoins the house part, may be contemporary with the crosswing. The milking parlour incorporates much re-used timber and there is a noticeable difference in the quality of the carpentry from that of the byre. The vertical members are of thinner scantling.

This two-bay extension, however, puts the complex into the category of 'Longhouse variant'. Although there is no direct access at ground level from the south bay of the house part into the byre, there is an inserted doorway with a chamfered head, now blocked; that would have given access from the house at first-floor level to the upper part of the byre. This would mean that, if the upper part of the byre was used as a hay-store, then the animals could be fed from above. A similar arrangement has been noted at Newton Farm, in Stoke St. Milborough parish.

There is a window aperture in the present central truss of the byre above tie-beam level, and with provision for vertical mullions. This would tend to ratify the suggestion that the byre was the first stage of the extension southwards and might imply that the upper part of the byre was used for sleeping accommodation and not as a hay-store. That, however, is not necessarily the case. Hay-stores require adequate ventilation and some 17th-century longhouses have windows of good quality in the hay-loft.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The structural history of the building, whilst giving a fairly lucid account of the origin and function of the old farmhouse, has not answered many of the questions concerning its development during its possible 500 years lifespan. An attempt was made to study the topography, agricultural developments, field systems, and other farm groups in the vicinity of Brown Heath.

The area is one of scattered settlement showing two main periods in building construction; the ubiquitous 17th-century box-framing remaining in many cases in the form of out-buildings or as extensions to the second period of rebuilt 19th-century houses. It would not be unreasonable to postulate as follows

*Phase 1* of the Old House Farm has its origins in an early period of increasing population and general land hunger, when villagers were forced outwards to the waste lands to build a dwelling in an irregular enclosure carved out of the waste.

*Phases 2 and 3* have their origins in a much more universal migration to the waste lands possibly following some early inclosure by private agreement for which there is now no documentary evidence. There are many squatter-type dwellings on Brown Heath. Documented inclosure in the area took place in 1815<sup>7</sup> and was followed by a general 19th-century refurbishment of many of the existing timber-framed houses. It may well have been at that period that the infill of the frame of the Old House was replaced by machine-made bricks. Field systems have generally been unhelpful in corroborating this postulation, although the fields in the immediate vicinity of the Old House are small and irregular in shape<sup>8</sup> and may thus be of early origin. Old House Meadow and Little Meadow, immediately to the south of the house, do show faint traces of ridge and furrow, although this synthesis may be contested as the area is one of undulating glacial drift. Home Field and Barn Field to the east of the house have within their domain an enclosure with banks. Possibly the banks may indicate an early field boundary although they may be a natural feature in the drift.

## SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

For a county as large as Shropshire there are surprisingly few wholly new, or wholly rebuilt, dated 17th-century farmhouses. The results of the increased agricultural wealth which the county enjoyed in the late 16th and early 17th centuries are more likely to be seen in additions and improvements to existing houses.

In the case of the Old House Farm *Phases 2 and 3* of the building sequence might be seen to reflect not a large-scale migration to the area but simply an increase in prosperity of the owner.

A desirable and sensible improvement, when funds permitted, would be to add a wing to an old house and so turn it into a larger dwelling of a more modern and pleasing form. There are many such examples in Shropshire. It is important to differentiate between winged houses where the two planes are contemporary and those in which the wing is clearly an addition.

The inclusion of a list of box-framed houses with added crosswings would be outside the scope of this article, though a very good example was noted at Wem, about three miles (4 km.) east of Loppington.<sup>9</sup> The following table, which may serve as a preliminary survey, is therefore confined to known Shropshire cruck-built houses with added box-framed crosswings. It does not include cruck-built halls with contemporary box-framed wings nor the more unusual disposition of two cruck structures at right angles. Four examples of the former are known in Shropshire, and four of the latter.

TABLE

CRUCK-BUILT HOUSES IN SHROPSHIRE WITH ADDED LATE 16TH- OR EARLY  
17TH-CENTURY BOX-FRAMED CROSSWINGS

<i>Grid ref.</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>House</i>
SJ 316 119	Alberbury	Winnington Green Fm.
SO 702 968	Astley Abbots	Gt. Binnal Fm.
SJ 422 219	Baschurch	The Hollies (made <b>T</b> -plan by the addition of a stem so that the older cruck range forms the wing)
SO 367 757	Bedstone	Manor Fm. (completing the fully developed <b>H</b> -plan)
SO 246 820	Clun	Lower Spoad
SJ 488 035	Condover	2 Grange Cottages, Gt. Ryton
SO 468 903	Eaton under Heywood	Hatton Fm.
SJ 343 235	West Felton	Home Fm., Sandford
SJ 415 138	Ford	Oak Cottage
SJ 398 036	Habberley	No. 1
SO 654 784	Hopton Wafers	Catherton Cottage (a small right-angled projection)
SJ 313 211	Kinnerley	Llyn-y-Go, Maesbrook (two large right-angled projections)
SJ 475 985	Leebotwood	The Pound Inn
SJ 465 298	Loppington	Old House Fm.
SO 376 866	Lydbury North	Plowden Hall <sup>10</sup> (base crucks)
SJ 696 044	Madeley	44 Church St. <sup>11</sup>
SO 510 867	Munslow	The White House, <sup>12</sup> Munslow Aston
SJ 373 195	Gt. Ness	Kinton Cottage
SJ 423 048	Pontesbury	Lower Fm., Oaks
SJ 425 068	Pontesbury	Brookgate Fm., Plealey
SJ 413 016	Pulverbatch	Shepton Fields
SO 509 925	Rushbury	Wall under Heywood Hall Fm.
SJ 498 125	Shrewsbury	18 Abbey Foregate (modified to present a crosswing)
SO 574 909	Stanton Long	The Malthouse
SO 456 914	Church Stretton	Ragdon Fm.
SO 444 916	Little Stretton	Bircher Cottage
SO 431 908	Little Stretton	Longmynd House Fm., Minton
SO 623 998	Much Wenlock	Barclays Bank, High St. <sup>13</sup> (base crucks)

The conclusion which emerged from the survey was that the **T**-plan house of the early 17th century was widespread<sup>14</sup> and that many old cruck-built houses were brought up to this standard.

<sup>1</sup> S.R.O. 306, box 3C, survey of est. nr. Loppington belonging to Wm. Griffith (n.d.); *ibid.* box 10C, sched. of writings relating to property in Loppington mortgaged by Thos. Dickin to J. Done. Thanks are rendered to Hall, Wateridge & Owen, estate agents, of Shrews., for permission to record the Old House Fm.; to Mr. Alan Snell and Miss Helen Morrison for help with measuring and drawing; and to Mr. Eric Mercer for help and advice.

<sup>2</sup> S.R.O. 306, box 11D, sale partics. 1833; S.R.O. 4143/T/2; personal observation.

<sup>3</sup> Only dau. and heir of Wm. Griffith; sources in S.R.O. 306 cited above.

<sup>4</sup> F.W.B. Charles, *Medieval Cruck-Building and its Derivatives* (1967), 20.

<sup>5</sup> P. Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* (1975), 159, 161. Smith classifies the chimney-backing-on-the-entry house as 'Type B' and the lobby-entry house, which is dominant in Montgomeryshire, as 'Type C'.

<sup>6</sup> e.g. Tin-Philip-Evan, nr. Llangattock, Breconshire (O.S. Nat. Grid SO 205 163).

<sup>7</sup> *Commissioners' Awards for Inclosing Lands* (Salop. Co. Rec. i [Shrews. 1901]), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> S.R.O. 306, box 11D, sale partics. 1833 (map).

<sup>10</sup> T.S.A.S. lix. 264-71.

<sup>11</sup> V.C.H. Salop. xi. 27.

<sup>9</sup> E. Mercer, *Eng. Vernacular Houses* (1975), 197.

<sup>12</sup> T.S.A.S. lviii. 140-52.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* lvi. 154-5.

<sup>14</sup> Since this art. was written 8 more examples (7 in south Shropshire) have been identified: the Bold, Aston Botterell (base cruck); Cleeton Ct., Bitterley (base cruck?); Wolverton, Eaton-under-Heywood (base cruck?); Lower Fm., Chorley, Stottesdon (base cruck?); 23 Barrow St., M. Wenlock (base cruck); Shootrough, Cardington; Lower Cottage, Greete; and Sodylt Fm., Dudleston, Ellesmere.



## WHATMORE HAMLET AND THE FAMILY OF WHATMORE

By GEOFFREY WHATMORE

THERE have been Whatmores recorded in the south-east corner of Shropshire – mainly in the parishes of Stottesdon and Cleobury Mortimer – for more than 400 years. Some would say the family has been there from time immemorial. That view is lent substance by the existence nearby of the hamlet of Whatmore, a scattered handful of houses south-south-east of the Titterstone Clee and north-north-east of Tenbury Wells (Worcs.). The hamlet is referred to several times by Eyton, writing of the 13th and 14th centuries, and linked with a family living there.

There is however, a difficulty, for the accepted origins of the family name are almost entirely North Country. According to such authorities as Reaney<sup>1</sup> and Bardsley<sup>2</sup> the name is a variant of Watmough, meaning 'Wat's brother-in-law', one of the few surviving names to use the suffix 'maugh', referring to relationship by marriage. Whatmore hamlet, on the other hand, has taken a number of different forms of name but most of the earlier references use the form Wetmore, and the name appears to be descriptive.

Nevertheless no less an authority than the Worcestershire *Victoria County History*, writing about parishes on both sides of the county boundary, is quite specific about the link between the hamlet and the family: 'The family of Whatmore held land at Whatmore in Burford and apparently also at Sutton under the Sturmys.' The *Victoria County History* writer is referring to the period around 1200,<sup>3</sup> but the use of the same family name which exists in the county today implies a continuity from that remote time to this. The closer we examine this statement, however, the more question marks arise. Were those feudal Whatmores really the forebears of the Stottesdon and Cleobury Mortimer families of the 16th and 17th centuries? It seems very doubtful. The period is too remote, the gap of 300 years too great. And the evidence for North Country origin is circumstantial but strong.

Let us first consider what is known of Whatmore hamlet. The tiny community lies in the Nash portion of the parish of Burford, scarcely meriting the title of village. It has no centre, consisting of little more than Whatmore Farm, a disused water mill, and a plain red-brick farmhouse dignified by the name of Whatmore Court. Opposite the Court is a gnarled relic described as the oldest oak tree in England, worth mentioning only as the sole claim to distinction of this ancient territory.

For the earliest references to Whatmore hamlet we must of course consult Eyton's *Antiquities*,<sup>4</sup> the first port of call in any Shropshire investigation. Writing in the middle of the 19th century, Eyton headed his section on the locality 'Whetmore or Whatmore'. Throughout numerous quotations from medieval sources he allows the spelling to change, presumably following the scribes' phonetic forms always clinging to the 'e' version, as in Wetmore, Wetemore, Wettemore and Whetmore. Eyton mentions several Wetmore personalities using the place name of origin, most of them in 13th-century legal actions and taxation records. We have, for example, Richard de Wetemore and his son Robert mentioned in a suit of 1256,<sup>5</sup> and Margery, second wife and widow of Peter de Wetemore, suing her stepson Simon for dower in Wetemore and Sutton (Worcs.). It is the latter action, of 1199, quoted in the Worcestershire *V.C.H.* using the modernized spelling of Whatmore, which led the *V.C.H.* historian to imply a continuity of Whatmores in the county from that day to this.

In the 13th century, we are told by Reaney and others, only a few English surnames were hereditary. A man was commonly described by his baptismal name followed by his trade or dwelling place: Richard de Wetemore, for example, is Richard who came from Wetmore. We cannot by any means be sure that where a surname derives from a place successive references to the name relate to the same family; thus

there is no particular reason to suppose that the Richard de Wetmore engaged in a suit against Robert Esturmi (Sturmy) in 1203 was related to William de Wetmore, a juryman for Overs Hundred at the assizes of 1292. The appellation merely indicates where they lived; we are in too early a period for generally accepted inherited surnames.

The origin of the place-name Whatmore is the subject of conflicting evidence among the experts, although there seems no reason not to accept the simplest explanation. Bannister,<sup>6</sup> quoting Old English and dealing with Wetmore near Leintwardine, says the name implies a wet moor, which is reasonable when we consider the marsh around our Whatmore mill and the course of the Corn brook. Alternatively, we may prefer a phonetic version of Ekwall's<sup>7</sup> explanation from the Old English for Wedmore in Somerset, for which he offers 'moor for hunting'. (In parenthesis we should mention here that Mrs. Baldwyn Childe, writing in the preface to the printed edition<sup>8</sup> of Burford parish register in 1915, gives Oughtmore as an alternative to Wetmore. Mrs. Childe cites no authority for that version.)

A long gap in the record faces us until the first firm reference to the modern family occurs in 1552. This relates to Thomas Watmore, a parishioner of sufficient standing to display the church goods to the king's commissioners at that time. Few medieval Whatmores appear after those who emerged briefly from the shadows around 1200. We have Alice and Walter de Watmore, living at Moreton Folet in Worcestershire in 1280, and an unpopular constable of Bridgnorth, Hugh de Donvile, lived in Wetmore about this period. A few early 14th-century references exist. Then the Black Death rings down the curtain, and for an immense period of 300 years we hear little of Wetmore until 1636 when the name of the settlement occurs in the Burford parish register. At that time the form is settled as Wetmore, and no one called Whatmore or Watmore appears to be established there until John Watmore, an agricultural labourer, lived there 200 years later. In Stottesdon, however, some ten miles or so to the north west, a prolific family of Watmer or Watmore occupies the pages of the parish register from its commencement in 1565. Were they the descendants of the 13th-century folk mentioned by Eyton as tenants of the Sturmys? Or were they more recent immigrants from the North?

Careful analysis and inference from such facts as are available, following clues from a notary's office in Canterbury to a family of royalist landowners, suggests that the Stottesdon Watmores are a branch of the Watmoughs of Prescott in Lancashire. They are unlikely to have existed in Shropshire much before 1500.

Two pedigrees exist, registered by the College of Arms, though neither of them, on the face of it, is directly connected with Shropshire. The earlier appears in the Lancashire Visitation of 1613<sup>9</sup> granted in 1602 to Francis Watmough of Micklehead. The other is in the Kent Visitation of 1619<sup>10</sup> and was claimed by William Watmer, a notary and alderman of the city of Canterbury. It is amplified in the 1661 visitation. Clearly these pedigrees are related, for the arms and the crest are practically identical and Alderman Watmer's pedigree in particular includes common forebears with Francis. The Kent Visitation is particularly valuable as it shows the Watmer/Watmore branch stemming from the Watmoughs of Lancashire, the spelling of the name changing in the move south. The southern branch of the family is shown originating with the third son William who lived about 1500.

Alderman Watmer led a busy life and was much involved in the affairs of his adopted city; twice elected mayor, he was a man of compassion and generosity. During one of the recurring outbreaks of plague in 1609 Robert Wynne, a former mayor, and his wife died leaving a family of five children in the house. William Watmer caused them to be looked after, clothed, and cared for by Goodwife Maple, and in due course he took responsibility for the children as his wards. Watmer was three times married with children of his own, but he remained involved with the orphans, educating them and seeing them set up in useful careers, for the rest of his life. He deserves the title, conferred upon him by Dorothy Gardiner, of 'the children's friend'.<sup>11</sup>

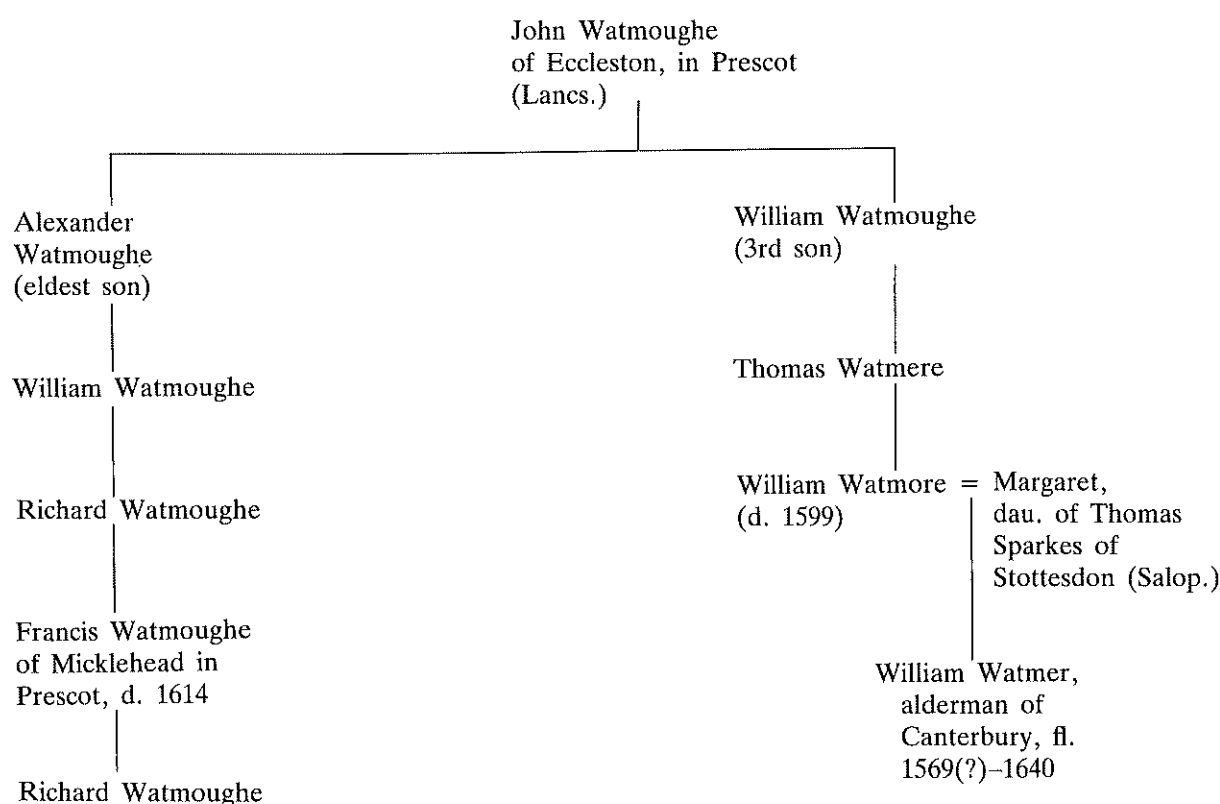
Watmer was not, however, a man of Kent, or of Lancashire either. He was born in Shropshire. The Kentish Watmer pedigree names his father William and his mother Margaret, 'daughter of Thomas Sparkes of Scottesden [*sic*], county Salop.' No record survives of the marriage of Margaret Sparkes to William Watmer senior, but we do have the will of William senior, husbandman, and it is a key link in the chain.

This will was elusive for a long time, being incorrectly identified in Purton's list<sup>12</sup> as that of William Watmore of Coreley. On closer scrutiny this proves to be a misreading for Chorley in Stottesdon. The will, dated 1598, refers to William's wife Margaret and three sons, James, Thomas, and William, with a daughter Ales. To James and Thomas are bequeathed farm implements with a request to Thomas that he 'remain with his mother and do her husbandrie as heretofore he hath done myne in my lyfetime'. To his son William, who by that time, if our assumption is correct, was employed in a notary's office in Canterbury, he left just 'tenn poundes and my wyfe's rewarde besides'. There are no further references to William, either in the will or in the Stottesdon parish registers. Fascinatingly, in view of what is to come

later, William senior also provides the sum of twenty shillings for the preferment of Ales his daughter and John Hamond her son.

None of this proves a link with Canterbury, but so far we have the following matching facts. Alderman Watmer of Canterbury was the son of a William Watmere who married Margaret Sparkes of Stottesdon. We know from his will that William Watmore senior of Chorley in Stottesdon also had a wife named Margaret and three sons, two of whom stayed to help on his farm. The third, William, was somewhere else, receiving only a modest gift of money in his father's will. The third son's identity with the Canterbury notary and alderman is clinched by the will of Alderman Watmer himself, proved 42 years later in Canterbury.<sup>13</sup> William bequeaths 'to John Hamon my sister's son forty shillings'. William senior's Stottesdon will shows that his son William had a sister Ales whose son was John Hamond. Further, the Stottesdon parish register<sup>14</sup> records the marriage of John Hamonde and Ales Wattmer in 1580. There seems no doubt that the John Hamon remembered in Alderman William's will is one and the same as John Hamond, grandson of William senior of Stottesdon, who was left twenty shillings in nobles towards his preferment. What that preferment was becomes apparent three years later from an entry in the

### PEDIGREE



Canterbury city treasurer's accounts<sup>15</sup> which have miraculously survived fire and war to be preserved in the archives of Canterbury cathedral. For several years these are written in Alderman Watmer's careful hand and in an enrolment of apprentices for 1601 we find him recording

This Accomptant yieldeth accompt for the enrollt of John Hamond his Apprentice, being bound to this Accomptant by indenture dated the first day of January in the xliiii year of the late Sovereign Lady Queen Elisabeth for xii years from the date of the said indenture.

What is more natural than that Alderman Watmer should take his sister's son, John Hamond, into his notary's practice? Evidently Alderman Watmer, who is almost certainly the William Watmore whose birth is recorded in Stottesdon in 1569, grew up with his brothers and sister on his father's farm, eventually to leave home and become a successful lawyer and mayor of Canterbury.

How he came to choose Canterbury instead of (say) Bridgnorth or Worcester, remains a matter for conjecture. It is tempting to speculate that John Barker, parish priest of Stottesdon for some 40 years, may have had a hand in it for there were Barkers in Canterbury at that time. Or perhaps those energetic and prosperous Watmough cousins in Lancashire assisted the bright farmer's boy in Shropshire towards

his career. There are indeed indications of a link between the Lancashire Watmoughs and London and Kent. On the evidence of the two pedigrees alone it seems likely that they were in touch.

Having settled to our satisfaction that Alderman Watmer of Canterbury was a member of the Shropshire family of Watmore, it is not difficult to link this family with Lancashire. The connexion was clearly made by Alderman Watmer in preparing his pedigree. At the height of his career in 1619 he must have been aware of the grant of arms to his Lancashire relatives some years earlier and he applied for a similar honour. He proved his right to the same escutcheon by tracing his ancestry through his Shropshire forebears to his great grandfather William Watmoughe, third son of John Watmoughe who lived at Eccleston in the parish of Prescott about 1400. There are many references to the family in local records.

It is of course possible that a family called Wetmore or Watmore was already living in the vicinity of Wetmore or Whatmore hamlet, taking its name from the village, before the Lancashire Watmores arrived. The Worcestershire *V.C.H.* makes that assumption and receives some support from Reaney who, almost as an afterthought, gives an alternative form under Whatmoor as deriving from Whatmoor (Salop.). It is not clear what place Reaney refers to or what his evidence is, but the coincidence is very extreme. Wetmore hamlet remained under that name into the 19th-century.

The balance of probability is that the presence of Whatmores flourishing in Stottesdon not too far from the hamlet of Wetmore led the Victorian topographers into confusion. We can see this from an examination of the 19th-century tax and census returns. The 1822 Land Tax accounts refer to Wheatmore, an isolated spelling aberration. A further single oddity occurs in the Shropshire Hearth Tax Roll of 1672 when the hamlet appears for the only time in earlier years as Watmore; ten householders then paid tax, none of them Watmores, although there were a number living in parishes nearby. By 1841, in the first national-census enumerators' returns, the hamlet is given as 'Whatmore'. That, however, is deleted, apparently by the same hand, and a new schedule made out for 'Whetmore'. The properties are listed, more confusingly still, as Whatmore Farm, Whitmore and Whitmore Mill. Ten years later the next census returns revert to 'Whetmore', with a final one as 'Whatmore'. Over all the name of the neighbouring village of Nash Tilsop is substituted. We now have Whetmore Farm and Whatmore Mill. 'Whetmore' finally disappears in 1861 and 'Whatmore' remains. The place-name indexes to the census records (no doubt compiled centrally) are, however, firm in holding to the 'Whatmore' version throughout. From other official sources it would appear that the change of name arose in the first decade of the 19th century. An abstract of title for the mill dated 1796 refers to Whatmore Mill. By 1808 Baugh's map specified Whatmore. We are left with the oddity of Whatmore Court. In the 1861 Census this is described simply as a dwelling and a farm with no title of its own. By 1871, however, it had become Whatmore Court. During the previous decade, the 1860s, the house was occupied by Richard Meakin to whom these aspirations of elegance may perhaps be ascribed.

Thus it would seem that the Watmores of Chorley in Stottesdon migrated there from Lancashire during the 15th century. The fork in the pedigree where the older Watmough version changes to Watmore or Watmere for the southerly branches is apparent from the Kent Visitation. The weight of the evidence, circumstantial though it is, interlocks too well for coincidence. If the case is proved, as closely as it ever may be, a tiny loose end in the skein of local history is disentangled.

<sup>1</sup> P.H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (1958).

<sup>2</sup> C.W. Bardsley, *A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames* (1901).

<sup>3</sup> *V.C.H. Worcs.* iv, 367.

<sup>4</sup> Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, iv, 327-30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 330; *Roll of Salop. Eyre of 1256* (Selden Soc. xcvi), pp. 128-9.

<sup>6</sup> A.T. Bannister, *Place Names of Herefordshire* (priv. print. 1916).

<sup>7</sup> E. Ekwall, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names* (3rd edn. 1947).

<sup>8</sup> *S.P.R. Heref.* xvi(4), p. v.

<sup>9</sup> *Visitation of Lancashire* (Chetham Soc. lxxxii), 114.

<sup>10</sup> *Berry's Kent Genealogies* (1830).

<sup>11</sup> Dorothy Gardiner, 'A Mayor of Canterbury: William Watmer, Children's Friend', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, lxi.

<sup>12</sup> The Revd. R.C. Purton, 'Shropshire Wills Proved at Hereford' (MS. in Shrews. Public Library).

<sup>13</sup> Now in Kent R.O., Maidstone.

<sup>14</sup> MS. transcript in Shrews. Public Library.

<sup>15</sup> In Cathedral Archives and Library, Canterbury.

## THE 91ST (SHROPSHIRE VOLUNTEERS) REGIMENT OF FOOT

By J. ROBERT WILLIAMS

THE outbreak of hostilities with the American rebels in 1775 required the despatch of fresh forces to the colonies. With the involvement of France in 1778, Spain in 1779, and the Netherlands in 1780, even more troops were required. As usual Britain was in a state of military unpreparedness, with inadequate forces to fulfil her commitments.<sup>1</sup> New regular regiments<sup>2</sup> were raised in Britain to serve for the duration of the war. Most of these regiments stressed an affinity with a specific area, and a large number adopted county titles. One of them, the 91st, was raised by Dudley Ackland at Shrewsbury in 1779 and adopted the title of the Shropshire Volunteers.<sup>3</sup> Information on the majority of these short-lived regiments is rather scarce.<sup>4</sup>

The terms of enlistment for the new regiments were advertised in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* (13 March 1779) as follows:

By an Act passed in this Session of Parliament, the following Encouragements and Advantages are offered to all Gentlemen VOLUNTEERS, who are ready to serve His Majesty against the French, and all His Majesty's other Enemies.

Firstly, THREE GUINEAS AS Bounty Money will be given to every VOLUNTEER at the Time of his Inlisting, either before the Commissioners appointed by the said Act, or with any recruiting Officer.

Secondly, Such Volunteer will be obliged to serve only for the Space of THREE YEARS, or to the End of the War, when he will be entitled to receive his Discharge Gratis.

Thirdly, When he is so Discharged, it will be lawful for him to set up or exercise any Trade in any Town or Place within the Kingdoms of Great Britain or Ireland, without being a Freeman of such Town or Place, and without having served an Apprenticeship; and his Wife and Children will not be removeable from such Town or Place until they become actually chargeable.

Fourthly, When he is so discharged, he will not be liable to do any Highway Duty, commonly called Statute Duty, or to be appointed to serve as a Peace Officer or Parish Officer.

Fifthly, When he is so discharged, he will not be liable to serve in the Militia, or in any of His Majesty's Land or Sea Forces, unless he shall consent thereto.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Inserted by Order of one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the County of Salop.

Recruiting notices for the 91st were placed in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*:<sup>5</sup>

ALL GENTLEMEN VOLUNTEERS, Who are willing to serve his Majesty *King George*, And to distinguish their VALOUR in Support of their King and Country, By humbling the Insolence of France and Spain. Have now the most advantageous Opportunity, by offering themselves For the Colonel's own Company, in the LOYAL SHROPSHIRE REGIMENT, Now raising, and commanded by DUDLEY ACKLAND, Esq: Able-bodied Men repairing to the Colonel's Head-Quarters, at the Lion Inn, Shrewsbury; the Castle, Bishop's Castle; the Crown, Ludlow; the Cross Keys, Oswestry; the Royal Oak, Ellesmere; or the George, Whitchurch; and applying to Mr. WINGFIELD, shall receive FIVE GUINEAS ADVANCE, and a Crown to drink his Majesty's Health. They will also be intitled to the Privileges and Advantages of the Act of Parliament passed in the Nineteenth Year of his present Majesty's Reign, for the more easy and better recruiting of his Majesty's Land Forces.

Such Young Fellows who can Read and Write, will be recommended to the Colonel as Non-commissioned Officers.

N.B. Whoever will bring any Person willing to serve as a Loyal Shropshire Volunteer, shall be handsomely rewarded.

Another notice (published August–December) reads:

SHROPSHIRE VOLUNTEERS. All Shropshire MEN of Spirit, Who are Able and Willing to serve His MAJESTY KING GEORGE III. In a Regiment now raising, commanded by Colonel DUDLEY ACKLAND, And in a Company commanded by Captain JOHN RIDOUT, Let them repair to HEAD-QUARTERS, at the TALBOT, in Shrewsbury; Where they shall receive His MAJESTY'S ROYAL BOUNTY, And meet with every Encouragement. N.B. Wanted, several Non-commissioned Officers and Drummers. Bringers handsomely rewarded.

Four months later (as yet another notice in the *Chronicle* reveals) recruitment was complete:

SHREWSBURY, *December* 11. The regiment of Shropshire Volunteers quartered in this town, commanded by Colonel Ackland, on Saturday last received their route; and Thursday morning the first division marched, yesterday the second division followed, and this morning the third and last division set off for Tiverton, in Devonshire. Tiverton is 168 miles from Shrewsbury. and 68 1-4th from Plymouth.

Thursday and Friday mornings proving very wet, the soldiers had a very uncomfortable beginning for so long a march.

The following List and Rank of the Officers of the Shropshire Volunteers, or 91st Regiment of Foot, is copied from the London Gazette of Tuesday last, viz:

Dudley Ackland, Esq; is appointed to be Colonel.

Major Richard Boycott, of 61st Foot, to be Lieutenant-Colonel.

Captain Dudley Ackland, of 36th Foot, to be Major.

*To be Captains,*

Lieutenant William Highmore, of 8th Foot. Lieutenant J. Christopher Ridout, of 46th Foot. Lieutenant R. Leighton Kinnersley, of 8th Foot. Lieutenant Robert Allen, of 30th Foot. Lieutenant John Sloper, of 19th Dragoons. Lieutenant John Probyn, of 18th Foot.

*To be Captain-Lieutenant,*

James Ackland, Esq.

*To be Lieutenants,*

Ensign J. Jemmitt Denis, of 3d Foot. Ensign Anthony Gore, of 66th Foot. Ensign William Harris, of 52d Foot. Ensign Robert Bourne, of 58th Foot. Ensign James Sandys, of 72d Foot. Ensign Anthony Kinnersley, of 8th Foot. Ensign William Sneyd, of 56th Foot. Ensign William Cox, of 9th Foot.

*To be Ensigns,*

Ensign William Winnall, of the Shropshire Militia. Ensign John Wild, of the Huntingdonshire Militia. William Fowke, Gent. Henry Johnstone, Gent. John Stanley, Gent. George Airey, Gent. Thomas Puleston Hayman, Gent. John Browne, Gent.

Reverend John Wingfield, to be Chaplain.

James Ackland, Gent. to be Adjutant

John Webb, Gent. to be Quarter-Master.

Samuel Winnall, Gent. to be Surgeon.

The above regiment was reviewed last week by General Fawcett. The Colonel did not obtain leave of His Majesty to raise this regiment till the 24th of July last; so that in little more than four months, (by the uncommon assiduity of its officers) a corps has been completed, which, it is imagined, will prove inferior to none of the new-raised regiments. It consists of 800 privates, with the usual number of non-commissioned officers, &c. They acquitted themselves so as to gain the approbation of the General, and every military person who attended.

A bound manuscript volume entitled 'Return of Stations 1775 to 1785' records the following home stations for the 91st: 1 Sept. 1779, 1 Oct. 1779, 1 Nov. 1779, and 1 Dec. 1779 – 10 Companies at Shrewsbury; 1 June 1782 – 9 Companies at Patrington, 1 Company at Watford, Stanmores, Bushey, and Richmond; 1 July 1782 and 1 Aug. 1782 – 9 Companies at Patrington, 1 Company at Hampton Court Barracks; 1 Sept. 1782, 1 Oct. 1782, and 1 Nov. 1782 – 9 Companies at Doncaster, 1 Company on King's Duty; 1 Dec. 1782, 1 Jan. 1783, 1 Feb. 1783, and 1 Mar. 1783 – 10 Companies at Doncaster; and 1 Apr. 1783 – 10 Companies at Rotherham.

In December 1779 the 91st marched south via Worcester and Bristol<sup>6</sup> to Plymouth. 'Last Sunday sailed his majesty's ships *Intrepid* and *Milford*, with several transports under convoy, having on board the 86th, 87th, and 91st regiments of foot from hence, and one regiment from Portsmouth. The place of their destination is kept a profound secret, but it is supposed they are gone to the West Indies. The *Milford* having sprung a leak put back again yesterday to repair.'<sup>7</sup> Two hundred and forty-three of the 91st sailed from Cork on 31 March 1780 on board the transports *Providence* and *Union*.<sup>8</sup>

The first division of the 91st arrived at St. Lucia on 24 March 1780.<sup>9</sup> In the West Indies the troops' ranks were decimated more by disease than enemy action, and the Shropshire Volunteers had to endure a hurricane on St. Lucia on 13–14 October 1780. One hundred and nine men of the 91st were drafted into the 87th and 90th Regiments on 24–25 February 1781 and remained in the West Indies, while the officers, non-commissioned officers, and remaining men later set sail and arrived in England on 24 June. The *Northampton Mercury* (30 July 1781) reported that 'Friday last the 91st Regiment (lately arrived from the West-Indies, and which is reduced to about 80 Men) marched through this Town, on their Route to Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire'.

Recruiting was then recommenced to bring the Regiment up to strength, and at the end of the year the Birmingham newspaper reported:<sup>10</sup>

The following melancholy Affair happened at Shrewsbury, on Saturday Night the 22nd Inst. One Ford, a Native of that Town, and a Serjeant in the 91st Regiment of Foot, recruiting there, from some old Grudge subsisting between him and Charles Manley a Painter of that Town, when beating up constantly ordered the Drummer to beat the Harlot's or Cuckold's March before the said Manley's Door, which being repeated last Saturday Night, exasperated the Painter's Wife to that Degree, that she flew to her Husband (then out) and expostulated with him for taking such Insults from Serjeant Ford. Manley somewhat elevated with Liquor, and fired with Resentment, by his Wife's Story, went in Search of Ford, who was found in a Public House, and after calling him out, knocked him down, took him by the Heels, and doubled him up in such a Manner, that the Blood overflowed the Heart, which proved the Death of the Serjeant; on which Manley was immediately apprehended. The Coroner's Inquest sat on the Body the next day eight Hours, and brought in their Verdict WILFUL MURDER against Charles Manley.

In spite of the coroner's verdict Manley was convicted of manslaughter only in March 1782.<sup>11</sup>

With the Peace of Versailles and the cessation of hostilities in 1783 the 91st was disbanded – but not without some rancour, as the following report from the *Leeds Intelligencer* (8 April 1783) shows:

On Sunday se-ennight at night there was a meeting amongst the soldiers quartered at Rotherham, being about 280 (the remains of the old 91st regiment) who alledged that they had been entitled to their discharges for above ten days, but had been sold by their officers to the East India Company for ten guineas a man. – They seized their arms, beat up, and about ten o'clock marched off to Sheffield, from whence they returned at seven the next morning, with about 200 Sheffield rabble at their heels, broke open the guard room, and secured thirty rounds of powder and ball each man, and continued so riotous during the day that the market could not be held, all business was stopped, and the inhabitants were under the greatest apprehension for the consequences. The officers at last, however, consented to discharge them, and they are since most of them dispersed.

There is no known illustration of the uniform of the 91st. An inspection report of 1779, however, notes the officers' uniform as being faced with green, with green cuffs and collar, and narrow gold-laced buttonholes, white waistcoat and breeches, and plain hats. The men had white jackets with green facings and cuffs, white waistcoats and leather breeches and hats cocked up on one side only.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The war was not confined to North America but involved troop engagements in the American colonies, the West Indies, Gibraltar and Minorca, India, the East Indies, and Africa.

<sup>2</sup> The 71st–105th were raised 1775–82 and disbanded 1783–5.

<sup>3</sup> The 53rd (Shropshire) Regiment of Foot, from 1881 the 1st Battalion, the Shropshire Regiment (King's Light Infantry) (cf *V.C.H. Salop*. iii. 164), was not given the appellation 'Shropshire' until 1782.

<sup>4</sup> Some letters in S.R.O. 2029/11, 13–31, concerning the association of the Boycott family with the 91st, are noted and quoted by G. Archer Parfitt, 'The 91st Foot or Ackland's Loyal Shropshire Regiment, otherwise known as the Shropshire Volunteers, 1779–1783', *Jnl. Soc. for Army Historical Research*, xlvii. 225–32.

<sup>5</sup> For extracts in this para. cf. Parfitt, *op. cit.* pl. facing p. 230.

<sup>6</sup> In the Min. of Defence Libr. (Central and Army).

<sup>7</sup> 'This week the regiment of Shropshire volunteers commanded by Colonel Ackland passed thro' this city in several divisions on their route to Plymouth, from whence they are to embark for the West Indies': *Felix Farley's Bristol Jnl.* 25 Dec. 1779.

<sup>8</sup> *The Western Flying Post or Sherbourne and Yeovil Mercury*, 2 Feb. 1780.

<sup>9</sup> P.R.O., WO 34/189, p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 211, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Aris's Birm. Gaz.* 31 Dec. 1781.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 25 Mar. 1782: 'At Shrewsbury Assizes, which ended on Wednesday last . . . Charles Manley, indicted for the murder of John Ford, after a Trial of eight Hours, was found guilty of Manslaughter; fined 5 shillings, and ordered to be imprisoned for three Kalendar Months'.

<sup>13</sup> H. Strachan, *British Military Uniforms 1768–96* (Arms & Armour Press, 1975).





## THE INCLOSURE OF SOWDLEY WOOD, CLUN, 1839

*By D. G. BAYLISS*

THE deep, steep-sided Clun valley runs from west to east past Clun. Its southern slope was a particularly unpromising place for agriculture, and throughout the Middle Ages it formed part of the common lands of the lordship of Clun. In the early 19th century there was pressure to inclose all the township's common lands, including the 200 a. Sowdley Wood.

The following account tells of the efforts of the bailiffs and burgesses of Clun to establish their absolute ownership of the wood, claimed as having been their right from time immemorial. Others, however, with common rights in the wood, objected to the borough's claims. They wished to see the woodland so inclosed and allotted as to include their own claims.

In due course an Inclosure Act passed<sup>1</sup> and, under some pressure, the burgesses halved their claim to the wood, and it was agreed that 100 a. should be inclosed and allotted to other claimants. It should be noted that the problem of Sowdley Wood was not the inclosure commissioner's only responsibility for in the township as a whole 1,700 a. were involved.

The inclosure award for the borough of Clun<sup>2</sup> was made in 1845, and details are given of the apportionment of 1,700 a. by the commissioner William Eyton, of Gonsal. Two major contenders in the slicing of this large cake were Lord Powis, as lord of the honor, and the bailiffs and burgesses of Clun, as lord of the manor. Those two parties were to have  $\frac{1}{14}$  of 'such residue of the said common and wasteland in lieu of, and in full compensation and satisfaction for, the Lord [of the Honor] and said Bailiffs and Burgesses'. Half of the  $\frac{1}{14}$  was to go to one party, half to the other. Additionally another 25 a. was allotted to the bailiffs and burgesses and 45 a. to Lord Powis.

A study of the inclosure map shows clearly that the burgesses had given up their claim to one half of Sowdley Wood. The part they retained, and which was not at issue, is shown blank at the eastern end of Sowdley Wood: it was not divided or inclosed. The remaining c. 100 a. was allotted to former commoners as shown. It appears, however, that the bailiffs and burgesses also laid claim to part of these remaining common receiving 48 a., presumably half of the  $\frac{1}{14}$  above (Lot 180), 'as Lords of the Manor . . . in lieu of, and full compensation and satisfaction of, their rights and interests in the soil of the said common and waste lands and to all mines and minerals in and under the same'. Four lots of 10 a. each (Lots 182-5) were also sold by the commissioner to the Revd. Christopher Swainson 'to defray expenses'. These four lots were located immediately west of the 100 a. eastern end of the wood held by the burgesses and bailiffs.

In the end, as the following document<sup>3</sup> makes clear, Clun corporation was faced with such a heavy bill of legal charges that, in order to defray them, it had to sell the lands to which it had established its claim. The corporation's share of the wood passed intact to the Revd. Christopher Swainson who had bought the adjoining four lots.

The land was not improved or farmed. The wood is still there, and the frenetic activity of the 1830s made no impact on this wooded part of the Clun valley except to redistribute its ownership from public (if the bailiffs and burgesses of Clun can be so regarded) to private hands. The wood is now under the watchful eye of the Forestry Commission.

STATEMENT OF THE TITLE OF THE BAILIFFS AND BURGESSES OF  
CLUN TO SOWDLEY WOOD

The Town and Borough of Clun in the County of Salop is a very ancient Corporation and has from time immemorial been governed by the Bailiffs who were till the recent Act of Parliament 3rd & 4th Wm. 4th cap. 31 chosen annually out of the sworn Burgesses on the Sunday before Michaelmas Day at which time the Sergeants of Mace for the Borough were also chosen and such Bailiffs and Sergeants were duly sworn to execute their several offices at the following Leet held for the Town of Clun. The Bailiffs held a Court of their Hall either every Wednesday three weeks when pleas were entered and personal actions tried and the Court is in every respect held and conducted in the same manner as similar Courts of Record. They possess a Common Seal and all Acts done at their Common Halls are sealed with their Seal and several Deeds of Conveyance of their Lands have been made and executed under this Common Seal.

The Bailiffs and Burgesses have from time immemorial claimed an exclusive right to Sowdley Wood about 200 acres of Wood Land and always exercised right of Ownership and trespassers in the Wood have been convicted before the Magistrates fined flogged and imprisoned on the complaint of the Bailiffs and Burgesses.

At the Shrewsbury Summer Assizes 1836 the Bailiffs and Burgesses brought an action against one John Davies, a Freeholder in Clun, for cutting Wood in Sowdley and succeeded in obtaining a verdict against him.

The Bailiffs and Burgesses commenced another action in 1837 against one Charles Luther for trespass in Sowdley Wood which was entered for trial at the Salop Spring Assizes 1838 it was compromised by a Juror being withdrawn and an Agreement was then entered into for an Inclosure of the Borough Lands on which an Act of Parliament was passed on the 14th June 1839.

In the Preamble of the Act the Bailiffs and Burgesses claimed to be exclusively entitled to a part of the Common and Waste Lands called Sowdley Wood containing about 200 acres, and in relation thereto the following is inserted in the Act being the 41st Section

And be it further enacted that if the claim of the said Bailiffs and Burgesses to be exclusively entitled to the said part of the said Common and waste Lands called Sowdley Wood shall be established to the satisfaction of the said Commissioner then and in such case the same Wood or so much thereof to which the said Bailiffs and Burgesses shall so exclusively be entitled shall not be allottable under this Act nor shall the Power and Provisions of this Act extend thereto; but no allotment shall be made for or in lieu of any Common right which shall be claimed in respect of the said Wood or any part thereof.

The Bailiffs and Burgesses sent in their claim by their only appointed Agent Mr George Jones as follows:

CLUN BOROUGH INCLOSURE

I George Jones of Bishops Castle in the County of Salop Gentleman as Agent for and on behalf of the Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Clun in the said County by virtue of the Act of Parliament passed in the second year of the reign of her present Majesty Queen Victoria entitled 'An act for enclosing Lands in the Borough or parish of Clun in the County of Salop' "Do claim that the said Bailiffs and Burgesses are seized [*sic*] of and exclusively entitled to an Estate of Inheritance in fee simple in the several Lands woods and hereditaments commonly called or known by the name of Sowdley Wood situate within or surrounded by or adjoining to the Common or Waste Lands contained or mentioned in the said Act of Parliament and thereby empowered to be enclosed and which said Lands, Woods and underwoods contain in the whole by estimation Two hundred and two acres three roods and thirty three perches (be the same more or less) subject only to a claim of right of Common of pasture appertaining to a certain Farm and Lands situate in the Township of Clunton in the said county formerly belonging to Thomas Lello a sworn Burgess of the said Borough of Clun and by virtue whereof he is alleged to have enjoyed the said right of Common and one Rowland Statham as his representative still claims the right to enjoy the same.

And the said Bailiffs and Burgesses further claim all such rights as are vested in or given to them by the said Act of Parliament as owners or joint owners of the soil of all the said Common and waste Lands thereby empowered to be enclosed or which they are or may be or become otherwise entitled to as such owners or joint owners of the soil thereof as aforesaid. And the Bailiffs and Burgesses claim the right to amend this their present claim at any time hereafter as they may be advised."

Signed Geo: Jones

The Freeholders of Clun made and entered the following objection by their Agent Mr Richard Green to the above claim.

Take Notice that I the undersigned Richard Green of Knighton in the County of Radnor Attorney at Law as Agent of Philip Morris Matthews of Bucknell in the County of Salop Gentleman who is a party entitled to an extensive right in the Common and Waste Lands directed to be enclosed by and under an Act of Parliament passed in the second year of the reign of her present Majesty Queen Victoria entitled 'An act for enclosing Lands in the Borough or Township of Clun in the parish of Clun in the County of Salop' Do hereby on behalf of the said Philip Morris Matthews object to the account or claim which has been delivered to the commissioner appointed by the said Act by and on behalf of the Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Clun in the said County of Salop to an Estate of Inheritance in fee simple of and in the several Lands, Woods and hereditaments commonly called or known by the name of Sowdley Wood containing Two hundred and Two acres or thereabouts as described in such claim or to any other assured right of the Bailiffs and Burgesses asserted in such claim which if established would exclude the said Wood from being a part of the said Common and Waste Lands to be by the said Act divided allotted and inclosed. Dated this sixth day of February 1840

Richard Green

To Mr William Eyton the Commissioner above named and  
The Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Clun.

On the 26th August 1840 a hearing of this claim and the objection came on before the assessor under the Act Edward Vaughan Williams Esq. After the hearing of the Case and the examination of many witnesses in support of the exclusive right of the Bailiffs and Burgesses to Sowdley Wood a compromise was ultimately effected and the following Agreement signed by the respective Agents.

Clun Borough Inclosure Act second Victoria 1839 at the Commissioners and Assessors' Sitting 28th August 1840.

I George Jones Agent for the Bailiffs and Burgesses of Clun, hereby reduce their claim to be exclusively entitled to Sowdley Wood to 100 acres only part thereof and agree that such 100 acres shall be accepted in full for all their claims upon Sowdley Wood and under the said Act and that the residue thereof shall be allotable among the Commoners under the said Act and that the above 100 acres shall be situated towards the Eastern end of the said Common next adjoining to the allotment to be made to Mr. R. Statham pursuant to the clause entitled 'Allocation of any allotment to Mr. Statham' and in such situation as the Commissioner shall find expedient And I further agree that the Bailiffs and Burgesses shall make all such fences round and occupation roads through the said 100 acres or any part thereof as the Commissioner shall direct and shall allow such other person besides themselves as the Commissioner shall direct to make use of such occupation roads for ever afterwards.

Geo. Jones

We the Bailiffs and Burgesses in Common Hall assembled this 28th day of August 1840 hereby confirm the above Agreement made by our Agent and agree to execute all Deeds and do all such other Acts and things necessary for carrying the same Agreement into effect as the Commissioner shall direct – Given under our Common Seal the day and year aforesaid.

As Agent for the Mr. Philip Morris Matthews I hereby withdraw all objections to the above mentioned claim of the Bailiffs and Burgesses of Clun as now reduced.

Richard Green

As Agent for the Earl of Powis I hereby withdraw all the claims of the said Earl to Sowdley Wood and agree that the residue of the same wood after allowing the reduced claim of 100 acres to the Bailiffs and Burgesses shall be allotted to the Commoners under the said Act.

[No signature]

The Corporation were put to great expense in the costs of the above mentioned Actions and more especially in getting evidence to support their exclusive claim to Sowdley Wood and much valuable Documentary evidence was found by their solicitor Mr. George Jones in the Tower of London and other

Public Offices amongst them Copy of their Charter and very important ancient depositions in Chancery in 1707 clearly establishing the exclusive right of the Corporation to Sowdley Wood were discovered.

The Bills of Costs were made out and delivered to the Bailiffs and at a Common Hall held the 11th day of October last the following resolutions were entered into

At a Common Hall held in the Town Hall of the borough of Clun in the County of Salop this 11th day of October 1842 pursuant to a notice or Summons to the Bailiffs and Burgesses convened.

Boro of Clun in the County of Salop

*Resolved* That our Attorney Mr. George Jones having produced his Bills of Costs whereby there remains a balance of £682 due to him and in lieu of any taxation of such Bills being made by this Corporation the said George Jones has this day agreed to deduct £207 leaving £475 as the sum or balance now only due to him on all his said Bills which he has agreed to accept.

*Resolved* That the Bailiffs and Burgesses are hereby empowered to sell part or all of Sowdley Wood as will be sufficient to defray the said sum of £475 to the said George Jones to be immediately advertized and out of the purchase money thereby made the said George Jones shall be first paid the said sum of £475.

*Resolved* That the Bailiffs do now affix the Common Seal of this Borough in confirmation of the foregoing resolution.

(LS)

A Public Sale by auction was consequently advertised for the 11th of January last but there having been no bidders another Common Hall was held on the 14th of February last when the following resolutions were entered into:

At a Common Hall held this fourteenth day of February 1843 pursuant to a regular notice given by the Bailiffs of this Borough.

Borough of Clun

*Resolved* on the 11th day of October 1842 that the Bailiffs and Burgesses of this Borough were directed to advertize the Wood called Sowdley and out of the purchase money to pay Mr. George Jones's Bills of Costs.

*Resolved* That the Bailiffs of the said Borough did cause advertizements to be issued and also in two of the Shrewsbury Newspapers for such Sale to take place on the 11th day of January last past that the Bailiffs and Burgesses attended such Sale at the Six Bells Inn in Clun aforesaid but that the Property was not sold.

*Resolved* That the Bailiffs do now cause similar advertizements to issue and be printed for a Public Sale by Auction to take place in the month of April next.

*Resolved* that this meeting stand adjourned to the fourth day of April 1843

Thomas Hamar	} Bailiffs
John Law Jnr.	
The mark of	
X	
Thomas Lancett	
John Lancett	

Pursuant to the last mentioned resolutions another Public Sale by Auction was duly advertized for the 25th day of April last but there being no bidders the Property was not sold and in consequence of the expense of their advertizing the Property the Bailiffs endeavoured to find a Purchaser by Private Contract and offered the Wood to the Revd. Christopher Swainson Vicar of Clun who agreed to purchase at £700 when a Common Hall was duly summoned for the 22nd day of August Instant at which the following resolutions were made

At a Common Hall held the 22nd day of August 1843 pursuant to a regular notice given by the Bailiffs of this Borough.

Borough of Clun in the County of Salop

*Resolved* That in consequence of Sowdley Wood having been again offered for Sale by Public Auction on the 25th day of April last and no Sale having been effected the Bailiffs of the Borough are now hereby authorised and directed to sell the same Wood by private contract to the Reverend Christopher Swainson for the sum of seven hundred pounds, the purchase money to be paid to them on or before the 20th day of September next on their duly executing a Conveyance under the Common Seal of this Corporation in the usual and accustomed manner at a Common Hall to be duly summoned for that purpose and out of the purchase money the Bailiffs are hereby directed first to deduct and pay the sum of £475 to Mr George Jones Attorney in discharge of the balance of his Bills of Costs agreed to be due to him from this Corporation pursuant to the resolutions made and entered into at a Common Hall held on the 11th day of October last. Resolved that the Bailiffs do now affix the Common Seal of the Borough in confirmation of the foregoing resolution.

Thomas Hamar }  
John Law Jnr. } Bailiffs



The Bailiffs and Burgesses in pursuance of the Resolutions of the last Common Hall signed a Contract with The Revd. Christopher Swainson on the Twenty ninth of August for the sale of Sowdley Wood to him at £700 with the express Stipulation that they only showed a Title as the absolute and undisturbed Possessors of Sowdley Wood for the last 30 years and subject to Counsel considering such Title to be good and sufficient and they proposed to prove such a Title by the Depositions of respectable witnesses who can prove this to have been the case 30 or 40 years ago in addition to this they have much valuable Documentary evidence from the Tower of London & the Exchequer offices proving on oath 240 years ago that Sowdley Wood belonged then absolutely to the Bailiffs and Burgesses of Clun and their Title is now presumed indisputable.

<sup>1</sup> 2 & 3 Vic. c.13 (Private).

<sup>2</sup> In S.R.O.

<sup>3</sup> S.R.O. 4755, a statement of the bailiffs' and burgesses' title submitted to counsel's opinion on the Revd. Christopher Swainson's behalf.

## REVIEWS

**A History of Shropshire**, Volume III, ed. G.C. Baugh, published by Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research (the Victoria History of the Counties of England), 1979; pp. xvi, 399; £50.

The Institute of Historical Research, the Shropshire County Council, and Messrs. G.C. Baugh, D.C. Cox and J.F.A. Mason are to be congratulated on producing this excellent volume which deals with a thousand years of county government from its inception under Alfred and his son-in-law Æthelred to the controversial changes of 1974. The volume will fascinate and inform many people of diverse interests. Those who are immersed in the manifold problems of local government will gain perspective and perhaps optimism from reading about the long and arduous processes by which private gain was gradually subordinated to the public good, or from perusing the chapters which deal with the more recent developments in Shropshire government. These reveal how much progress has been made since 1949 when 'a councillor visiting East Hamlet Hospital . . . found that the old men and women were housed in separate buildings each having "one long common room with cold stone floors, and one fireplace, around which all huddle on cold days". The low-ceilinged rooms had drab walls whose age-rotted plaster could not take paint. There was no privacy even in the long dormitories'. In a similar institution (the Beeches Hospital), 'none of the old people had room for personal possessions save that a few had managed to beg "a cardboard box to put under the bed and keep a few treasures"' (p. 218).

Historians will be the principal beneficiaries of this volume. The local and regional historian is presented with a well documented and scholarly account of county government and parliamentary representation in which each period receives such fair and adequate coverage that it is impossible to detect the specialist interests of the editors. More importantly this volume (along with other *V.C.H.* publications) does much to counter the parochialism which all too easily can cloud the perspective and judgement of local historians. The editors, who are well read in the literature of other counties, move easily between narrative and analysis and, as far as space permits, set both within a comparative and national framework. Judiciously chosen footnotes point the critical reader to a range of studies which will provide further context for particular developments in Shropshire.

One of the prices which has to be paid in a publication of this quality is the time which elapses between the completion of a typescript and its publication. This may account for the editors' failure to respond fully to the contextual shifts which have recently taken place in the study of both county government and parliamentary affairs. The inter-relationship between social structure, economic interests and the conduct of local administration right down to the 19th century has received a great deal of attention from historians and it would have been useful to have had this theme more fully explored in this volume. It may still be possible for this to be done when the volume dealing with the county's economy and society is published. Even more recent, and so not reflected at all in this volume, has been a change of perspective among parliamentary historians. At the very time that the editors were presenting their analysis of parliamentary representation in the wake of structuralist interpretations by Sir John Neale and Sir Lewis Namier, Professors Geoffrey Elton and Conrad Russell were busy emphasizing that Parliament was essentially a place to which representatives were sent in order to get business done. The nature of that business remains essentially a problem for the historian of county government and society. At present we

know very little about the genesis of parliamentary business, but there is more than a hint that a good deal of it was rooted in local economic and constitutional problems and that much of the heat generated in Tudor and Stuart parliaments may have arisen from conflicting regional and economic interests as much as from resounding constitutional conflicts. Such a thesis demands that borough and county elections be examined in terms of issues as well as personalities and that the business of parliament should be re-examined in terms of local interest groups. This work can best be done by those like the editors of this volume who have an intimate knowledge of county government and society. Perhaps the time is not too distant when, as happened thirty years ago with the preparation of the *Wiltshire History*, a new V.C.H. historiographical context will be mapped.

Economic and social historians as well as archaeologists have made sophisticated explorations into the diverse regional characteristics manifest in British buildings, topography, farming systems, industrial organization and their accompanying social systems. In contrast political and administrative historians have, not unreasonably, tended to stress the uniformities imposed by monarchs and their parliaments. This study leaves the reader in no doubt that Shropshire government, like the cultural landscape, has its own ethos and 'personality' which at any point in time at least down to the 18th century differs from that of other counties. The challenge of interpretation and exposition presented by our realization of the infinite variation of the cultural landscape has been met and resolved in such brilliant studies as Eric Mercer's *English Vernacular Houses* and Joan Thirsk's *Agrarian History of England*, vol. iv. This volume suggests that administrative historians may have to confront the problem of county 'personalities' interacting with government policies. Any more sophisticated view of politics which may emerge from such a reinterpretation will undoubtedly draw heavily upon the scholarship in this volume.

A few examples of Shropshire's 'personality': of the manner in which its administrative ethos has developed differently from that of other counties, must suffice. Throughout the medieval period the frontier with Wales profoundly affected all aspects of its government and society. In contrast with most other counties curial sheriffs continued to be appointed down to Edward I's conquest of Wales, and whereas the common medieval practice whereby two counties shared a joint shrievalty (22 in all) continued down to the late 16th century, in Shropshire and Staffordshire it was abandoned in 1345. Shropshire also differed from most counties in that down to the 14th century there was no 'enforceable system of communal policing'. The ancient service of *stretward* and the payment of 'county police officers', sometimes called 'grithserjeants', went some way towards countering lawlessness, but during the 13th century the withdrawal of substantial areas in the western part of the county into private lordships (marcher lordships) under the Corbets, FitzAlans, and Mortimers did much to weaken royal justice and administration, so that well into the 15th century Shropshire was notorious for its lawlessness.

The 'dynastic misfortunes of the greatest local magnates' during the 15th century, combined with the merging of the most powerful baronial interest in that of the Crown in 1461 and with the Act of Union of 1536, bade fair to impose 'the English pattern of administration on Wales and the Marches'. But the simultaneous development of the Council in the Marches of Wales, itself an instrument of uniformity, did much to ensure the particularity of Shropshire's administration down to the middle of the 17th century. There are signs that the presence of the Council at Ludlow inhibited the development of an assertive county community of the sort which has been detected in some other English counties. The presence of Council members in the commission of the peace reduced the number of local gentry who could participate in local administration, and well into the 17th century Shropshire differed from many other counties in that there was no 'marked growth' in the active membership of the county commissions.

It is possible that this feature of Shropshire government reflected the structure and ethos of county society as much as the impact of the Council in the Marches. Unlike many English counties Shropshire was dominated by a small, tightly knit group of gentry – the Hordes, Bromleys, Leightons, Corbets, Newports and Onslows. The county appears to have accepted their leadership and they, in turn, seem to have been efficient agents of government policy. Under their leadership the county militia developed well and there are few signs of those protracted wrangles with the Council over who paid for what which seem to have debilitated militia service in some counties. This may have been because the Shropshire magistrates managed to devise an equitable system for assessing militia contributions and other occasional rates by dividing the hundreds and liberties into 100 area (allotments) which were notionally of equal value. Since Shropshire contained less than 200 parishes this equated closely to a parochial system and therefore avoided the injustices apparent in those counties in which militia and occasional rates were 'laid' on the basis of the hundred and assessed, like the subsidy, upon entire estates.

Shropshire was conservative in religion – a Roman Catholic stronghold which contained few Puritans. Consequently, unlike some of the more puritan counties of Eastern England, it seems to have shown little initiative in devising schemes, often in advance of government and parliament, for the treatment of

economic and social problems. 'The Poor Relief Act, 1576, had immediate results in Shropshire, where the justices issued orders to parishes for the "avoiding of vagabonds". The same Act required the magistrates to provide a house of correction, though none is known to have been established in Shropshire until the requirement was repeated by the Beggars Act 1597-8 . . . A regular county rate for the relief of poor prisoners in the county gaol was required by the 1572 Act and was being collected in Shropshire by 1578. A regular rate to provide pensions for injured soldiers was required under an Act of 1593 and was being collected in Shropshire by 1594' (p. 72). Clearly Shropshire magistrates were responsive but not innovative.

By the late 17th century the administrative 'personality' of Shropshire, like the cultural regions of England, had become less distinctive and less distinguishable from those of other counties. In describing post-Restoration government the editors frequently use such phrases as 'most of the gentry in Shropshire, as in other counties' or 'magistrates in Shropshire, like those of other counties'. By that time uniformity and standardization were creeping in along with Queen Anne 'pattern books' and standard English. Nonetheless it is worth stressing that for most of the 1,000 years so well surveyed in this volume Shropshire displayed its own distinctive administrative ethos. So too, no doubt, did other counties; it is only when studies such as this have delineated these distinctive county 'personalities' that we shall appreciate the rich diversity of English local government and begin to see the implications of that for our understanding of central government and the intricacies of parliamentary business.

This is an erudite volume which will best yield its riches to those who have an over-view of the subject. This the editors have produced in a succinct pamphlet of 35 pp. entitled *Shropshire and its Rulers: 1000 years*, which is published by the Shropshire Libraries.

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David J. Lloyd, **Country Grammar School: A History of Ludlow Grammar School through Eight Centuries against its Local Background** (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 192, with numerous plates and illustrations.

Ludlow by its location has withstood the intense ravages of urbanization from which so many similarly old-established towns have suffered. The cobbles of main thoroughfares like Broad Street have been overlaid but the town itself both in appearance and spirit retains unmistakable character and distinction. Relatively stable in population (the size probably doubled over a period of four centuries to reach 5,000 in the inter-war period and during the next four decades increased to the present figure of 7,000), it is a bustling market town serving a wide area of south Shropshire, Herefordshire, and the Welsh border. In his study David Lloyd traces the evolution of the grammar school from the Middle Ages, when Ludlow was a military stronghold and frontier town, through the centuries of its development as a trading and servicing centre.

Academically and socially the school conformed to the national pattern. It provided a classical education, firmly vocational in purpose in pre-Reformation times and thereafter, until almost the 20th century, unquestioned for its cultural value. It served the sons of local tradesmen and artisans as well as those from professional and landowning families. (For poorer families there was little provision prior to the foundation of the town's charity school in the 18th century). Again, as with schools elsewhere, its origin was associated with the church; reconstituted as 'the Free Grammar School of King Edward VI', it became an Anglican foundation intended to serve the needs of church and state. It was in its local circumstances and personalities that the school was distinctive, in the relationships between the administering body, the town corporation, and individual masters and particularly in the character and calibre of the masters themselves. Its fortunes therefore reflected the local situation and, as in the 18th century, were sometimes at variance with the national picture.

In his detailed treatment, the author reveals from an otherwise shadowy background the significance for the school of early association with the Palmers' Guild and hence the guild charities. Under the new dispensation of the 16th century the school staff comprised master and usher. With his graduate status the



former was able to move easily in protest against the refusal of a parsimonious corporation to increase his salary in line with inflation; the latter, with humbler qualifications, had little chance of advancement and had to make do with meagre pay and with attic accommodation. By the following century building improvements enabled the master to supplement his income by taking in boarders and indeed, on occasions, gave him the independence to challenge the corporation. Thus pupils comprised town boys and boarders, the latter of higher social class, from families of neighbouring gentry and others from further afield, who were attracted by the quality of teaching and by university exhibitions available by local benefaction.

The early 19th century brought a measure of rationalization: the usher, then in charge of a separate Lower School, taught writing and accounts while the master in the main school offered classics as the staple curriculum, though occasionally supplemented by 'extras' including even, according to a school report of 1840, dancing – at a fee of two guineas per half-year. One master had aspirations for expansion on public school lines; his energies, however, were to be absorbed in a vendetta with the trustees whom he successfully charged with misuse of endowment. In the event, according to a negotiated arrangement in the mid century, boarders were to be severely restricted. The classical curriculum remained, and the realistic recommendation of the Endowed Schools Commission (1868) in favour of replacing Greek by subjects of 'more practical use in business' went unheeded. In fact it was competition from private schools which eventually compelled the authorities to expand the curriculum. By the closing years of the century the school with its staff of three was offering a wide range of subjects; the daunting problems of organization presented by widely fluctuating numbers, between 50 and 120 in a decade with a third of the boys enrolled for a year or less, can only be imagined!

In the early 20th century the school surrendered its independence under the county scheme. For the next fifty years it retained prestigious status as a single-form entry grammar school which afforded an academic education, and much more besides, to a selective intake from town and country. Loyalties were such that proposals for amalgamation with the neighbouring Girls' High School, so that the combined schools should have a two-form entry, were greeted first with incredulity, in turn succeeded with furious, well organized opposition which resounded even at national level. But amalgamation came in the 'sixties, to be followed a decade later by comprehensive reorganization from which the former grammar school emerged as the new sixth form college.

It is not only Ludlovians who will find Mr. Lloyd's book compelling reading. Written with skill and based on meticulous research it depicts the sequence of developments against a broad canvas. There are, of course, vignettes of individual personalities; there are also more generally representative descriptions like that of the 17th-century schoolroom (p. 71) or that of the training for manliness and the encouragement of *esprit de corps* two centuries later (pp. 143–6). In the penultimate chapter on the 20th century the author, faced with abundance of evidence on achievements and individuals strikes a happy balance. With economy of words also, he is able to convey, as background to the amalgamation controversy of the 'sixties, the contrasting atmosphere of the two schools – indeed, one can almost see the polished floors of the girls' school and smell the flowers! Wisely, at the end, he is restrained in his judgement of the radical reconstitution.

Timed to coincide with the conclusion of the grammar school era, this is in no sense a nostalgic book. In the analysis the theme is one of service to the community in a setting which may have changed less than most but which is in no sense insulated from the wider world. The writer and the sponsors of this scholarly and attractive publication are to be congratulated on the form of their commemoration.

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**A Shropshire Landowner: The Diary of Henry Oakeley, 1869–1871**, ed. Gerald Rhodes (£1.50 incl. postage; obtainable from the editor, Keeper's Cottage, Capel St. Mary, Ipswich), pp. 66.

Gerald Rhodes has edited extracts from a diary covering two years and four months (1869–71) in the life of a retired naval officer who, in 1870, inherited a modest estate near Bishop's Castle. Henry Oakeley hunted, fished, shot, watched cricket, attended to the ordinary duties of a country gentleman and county

magistrate, involved himself in the affairs of Bishop's Castle, looked after his heavily mortgaged estate (mostly tenanted), saw a good deal of many friends in the same social rank, recorded the weather, and went to church on Sundays. He tells us little about any of these matters. The diary is laconic in the extreme: taxing for the editor and (without his elucidations) unrewarding for the reader. Perhaps meteorology was Oakeley's real interest: the only vivid phrase afforded by these extracts sums up a winter visit to London as 'Rain, Hail, Smoke & Filth'; an election of Bishop's Castle aldermen was recorded as 'a Stormy Scene'.

In a way that will be useful to historians of the neighbourhood Mr. Rhodes has painstakingly identified all the places and people mentioned in this jejune record. He also tells us that Oakeley died in 1877 as the town clerk of Bishop's Castle read him a letter concerning the affairs of the Bishop's Castle Railway.

G.C. BAUGH  
Victoria History of Shropshire



