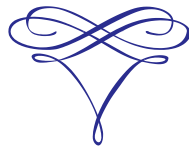


South
West
Shropshire
Historical and
Archaeological
Society Journal



No 19

Summer 2008

Published by
South West Shropshire
Historical and Archaeological Society
2008

©South West Shropshire Historical
and Archaeological Society

The content of this journal is copyright
and may not be reproduced without permission.

Typeset and Printed at Enterprise House, Bishop's Castle

Contents

	Page
Editorial	2
<i>Patricia Theobald</i>	
From the Chairman	3
<i>Maurice Young</i>	
SWSHAS Events, September 2007—June 2008	4
<i>Janet Presbous</i>	
Lydham: Early History of a Cross-Border Parish	7
<i>David Presbous</i>	
The African's Grave at Bishop's Castle	18
<i>Judith Payne</i>	
Where Do You Come From? The Sayces of Bishop's Castle	25
<i>Haydn Sayce</i>	
Smells & Bells—an Astounding Medieval Ecclesiastical Find: The South Shropshire Censer Cover	29
<i>Peter Reavill</i>	
Bishop's Castle Jacobean 'Market Hall' Project	31
Book Reviews:	
Growing up on a Shropshire Farm: <i>Janet Presbous</i>	33
Bettws y Crwyn: An account of the History, Farming and People: <i>Maurice Young</i>	34
Research in Progress: 2007-8	36
Officers and Committee 2008-9	41
SWSHAS Programme 2008-9	42

Editorial

Contributions to *Journal 19* continue the theme of People and Places. The Early History of Lydham, by *David Presbous*, paints a word-picture of this parish which is richly informed and pays tribute to his skills in data presentation. 'The African Grave at Bishop's Castle, by *Judith Payne*, is the intriguing result of a research 'journey' which sought an elusive eighteenth century identity. *Haydn Sayce* continues the theme of family history, begun in *Journals 17 and 18*, with 'The Sayces of Bishop's Castle' in which he shares part of his extensive research into a family with centuries-long connections in Bishop's Castle. I am indebted to these three authors for their generosity. My thanks also to *Peter Reavill* for an interesting archaeological contribution - 'The South Shropshire Censer Cover'.

Book reviews this year come from *Janet Presbous* for 'Growing up on a Shropshire Farm', by Diane Jacks and *Maurice Young* for 'Bettws y Crwyn: An account of the History, Farming and People' compiled by the people of Bettws.

There is a considerable amount of research activity in the Bishop's Castle area and I am very pleased to include in this edition a number of reports: 'The Jacobean 'Market Hall'; *Mrs. Marion Roberts* on behalf of the SWSHAS Research Group; *Mrs. Tessa Dodd* and *Dr. Margaret E. Wilson* who are researching the Town Hall; *Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre* Research Group which is investigating the history of the Bowling Club.

My thanks as always to *Janet Presbous* for a chronicle of Society events and proof-reading the final draft of the Journal; also to *Sarah Ellison* for producing *Journal 19* in its present form.

Patricia Theobald

From the Chairman

It was with great trepidation that I took over the Chairmanship of the Society following two such talented predecessors. Both David Preshous and Chris Train have brought so much expertise and personality to the post that they were a hard act to follow. However it was a great comfort to know that David was at hand to guide and advise and that we had such a good team of committee members, capable and willing to keep the Society's reputation at the pinnacle which it had attained over the years. I am delighted to have the support of Dr Nick Howell (Lydbury North) as Vice Chairman.

The AGM saw new blood joining the committee which is always a good sign that a society is alive and well. Graham Medlicott (Wentnor), Cecily Tilley (Stokesay) and Alan Wilson (Bettws y Crwyn) each bring their own brand of expertise to committee activities. We were sorry to have to accept the resignation of Malcolm Redgrave. He had been zealous in his support of the society and had been Acting Chairman after Chris Train's death. He and his wife are to be thanked for their organising of an evening outing to Pilleth where Malcolm told us the story of the battle in 1401 on the site when Owain Glendower defeated the English under Edmund Mortimer. Kent Tomey (Clun) relinquished the job of membership secretary which he had carried out most assiduously for some time, putting the records into digital form. We are glad he is remaining on the committee and thank him for all his work. Membership has been taken on by Heather Williams (Wentnor) who assures us that membership numbers remain steady.

We have had a good year with attendance at meetings at encouraging levels. The Christmas meeting was probably the highlight of the year. Our President David Preshous put together an evening of memories of SWSHAS under Chris Train's leadership. He showed part of his vast archive of slides of our society's activities and the area in which we work. These were interspersed with readings by committee members from Chris' own published works and others of his favourite readings. A worthy tribute.

The Lydbury Field Group has been very active in tracing the long history of occupation and activity in the area. They are nearing the end of their first major project. We hope that they will be able to publish their findings in the near future.

Publishing the results of research is a major part of the *raison d'être* of an historical society. SWSHAS commissioned Madge Moran to research Bishop's Castle's ancient Market Hall. The papers resulting from this work are now to hand and, as would be expected of such an authoritative personage, are most impressive. Publication will enhance the reputation of our society and the participants in Madge's work. Your committee is now investigating the best way to publish the work. Outlines of the findings are included in this issue of the *Journal* for which we are again indebted to Patricia Theobald our editor.

The Research Group has continued its work on Bishop's Castle's historic documents under the expert guidance of Marion Roberts pursuing the work of Chris Train. Unfortunately Marion has not been in good health recently but she has managed to send the editor her report on their work.

I am honoured to have been elected to my present post and will endeavour to encourage the maintenance of the high standard of the activities and reputation of The Society.

Maurice Young

SWSHAS Events: September 2007 – June 2008

Sept. 2007: Evening outing to Pilleth Church, near Presteigne.

Malcolm Redgrave gave a group of members a graphic account of the battle between Owen Glendower and Edmund Mortimer in 1401; they were treated to refreshments and a chance to look inside the peaceful, restored church in its beautiful setting, with wonderful views over to Offa's Dyke and the valley of the Lugg.

SWSHAS Exhibition, 'Gathered Together: Churches, Chapels and Community Halls of S.W.Shropshire' at Bishop's Castle Michaelmas Fair. Nearly 400 people visited the displays and slide show in the Cadet Hall, and their recollections brought to life many of the now-closed chapels and past congregations and events.

Oct. 2007: S.W.Shropshire in old Postcards – David Trumper, author of several books on the subject, drew on his extensive archive to provide a visual tour of local towns and villages – many views dated back to the golden age of the picture postcard in the early 1900s and his commentary offered insights into the changes over the last century. **Shropshire Archives Family and Local History Fair:** a display was taken to this two-day event.

Nov. 2007: at the **AGM** the acting-chairman David Preshous recorded the Society's deep sadness at the death in May of its chairman, Chris Train, and thanked the retiring vice-chairman Malcolm Redgrave for his leadership in the interim. The officers and committee were then re-elected and new committee members welcomed. The Society elected Rev. Maurice Young (Clun) to be the new chairman, with Dr. Nick Howell as vice-chairman. Kent Tomey, committee member, then gave a fascinating illustrated talk on the **Clun Town Museum Trust**, of which he is curator.

Dec. 2007: '**In Celebration – SWSHAS under the Chairmanship of Chris Train**' Readings from Chris Train's books were given by members of the committee, reflecting many of his interests and skills, as well as his wit, and love of the area. Slides of SWSHAS activities were shown by president David Preshous. Chairman Maurice Young, ending the presentation with a passage on the Clun Valley from Chris Train's *Quietest Under The Sun*, exhorted the Society to ensure that his lead would be followed in reflecting and advancing enthusiasm for all aspects of local history and archaeology. The evening ended with seasonal refreshments.

Jan. 2008: many members braved a stormy night to hear Jonathan Wood give a superbly illustrated talk on his home, **The Merchant House in Ludlow**. The 15th century building has connections with the Knights Hospitallers of St. John, the Palmers' Guild and the dyeing and tanning industries – its history reflects the importance of the wool trade in the development of Ludlow.

Feb. 2008: Mark Bowden, Senior Archaeologist for English Heritage give a stimulating talk on **Hopton Castle** and the survey of the site, carried out for English Heritage and the Hopton Castle Preservation Trust. He recounted the sad episode in the Civil War when the garrison of Parliamentarians was brutally killed by Royalists after a siege. The site may be more than just a motte-and-bailey, as it appears to have been surrounded by formal ponds and gardens. It is well worth further research and it is hoped it can now be cared for by the Preservation Trust.

March 2008: Malcolm Pollard gave a lecture on **The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Midlands**, illustrating his talk with examples of buildings, furniture, fabrics, jewellery and ceramics as well as church windows and fittings. The tenets of the Movement were the creativity of honest artist/craftsmen, the moral benefit of good workmanship and simple, good construction and design. The inspiration of C.A.Voysey in all aspects of building design and furnishing, as well as the influence of the Birmingham

School of Art and the Bromsgrove Guild of Applied Art could be seen in many examples in Shropshire.

April 2008: The Eighth Annual Ritherdon Lecture was given by Dr Philip Morgan, Senior Lecturer in Medieval History at Keele University on **Domesday Book in South Shropshire**. He had spent several years as a translator on the 1986 Phillimore edition celebrating 900 years since the compilation of the Domesday survey of the wealth and ownership of the lands of William I. Using examples of the text from the entries for Lydham and Lydbury North he showed how the information had been compiled, its value at the time, and what it reveals to local historians. His direct, lively delivery with well-chosen illustrations was warmly received by a large audience.

June 2008: members and friends travelled to **Wightwick Manor** near Wolverhampton for a guided tour of this impressive house, set in formal gardens, built by Theodore Mander in 1887 and extended as a medieval-style manor house in 1893. Decorated and furnished after Ruskin and Morris, the rooms were enhanced by the family with an extensive collection of pre-Raphaelite paintings, furniture and ceramics, producing an impression of serene comfort and style. In complete contrast, the group visited **RAF Cosford**, where in addition to the unique collection of vintage aircraft a new **Cold War Exhibition** is housed in a fine new building. Cecily Tilley and Nick Howell were warmly thanked for their organisation of such an interesting outing. **Discover Shropshire Day:** a display of the Bishop's Castle Jacobean 'market hall' was taken to this event held at Shirehall, Shrewsbury.

Janet Preshous

This year's SWSHAS Exhibition at
Bishop's Castle Michaelmas Fair
In the Cadet Hall on
20 & 21 September 2008 will be

KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING
South West Shropshire in Time of War

If you have any pictures or memories please contact
David & Janet Preshous at The Paddock, Lydham,
SY9 5HB Tel: 01588 638 363



Lydham: Notes on the Early History of a Cross- -Border Parish

Moving back to my home county of Shropshire in 1973 renewed my interest in local history. Following the course of studies run by the late Keith Ritherdon, Janet and I became members of the Bishop's Castle Local Studies Group. Under the guidance of James Lawson and Barrie Trinder, we gathered a great deal of material from many sources, pertaining to the history of our home parish. The following historical sketch is based upon those early researches. I have included some features which, though close to Lydham, are not strictly within the parish boundaries.

Location

Lydham is a parish two miles north of Bishop's Castle - unusual in that part of it lies in England and part in Wales. The English part comprises some 1940 acres, with two townships, Lydham and Lea, and the Welsh part 1125 acres with the township of Aston.

The parish lies at the head of the Camlad Valley - the only river flowing from England into Wales - and at its eastern edge looks towards the River West Onny, which passes through More parish to join the East Onny at Eaton. Most of the parish stands between 400 and 500 feet above sea level, with higher ground on the hillside above Aston, and at its southern edge on the 1000 ft high ridge of Oakeley Mynd.

The retreating glaciers of the Ice Age left a gently undulating landscape between east and west flowing river systems. When human settlements were established in Lydham and More, the potential of the rivers was quickly recognised. A weir and sluice-gate took water from the Onny, at the top of the field above Newton bridge, and this was channelled across the watershed to flow into Lydham village. It is marked clearly on early O.S. maps and referred to as a 'mill-race'. The stream crossed the main road and continued down into the Camlad via Lydham Mill, for which it provided the necessary water-power. It was still flowing in living memory, and there is a postcard from the early C20th showing a pool and a bridge across the main road by the present entrance to Lydham Village Hall (fig.1). If the present Lydham Mill is on the site of the mill mentioned in Domesday, this watercourse was about a thousand years old, as there was no other source of water-power.

Certainly, the present water systems of Lydham and More appear to have been created by deliberate manipulation of the natural landscape. A further

watercourse left the mill-race mentioned above, and flowed in a semi-circle around the motte and bailey castle of More forming what is now the parish boundary. It then continued in a north-westerly direction via Poolshead to form part of the stream providing water for Bromley's Mill. This stream still flows in the winter months. There are several small pools in the parish – Newton, Bromley's Mill, Heblands, and the now drained pools in Park Wood and Trashes Wood – and traces of mills on the Camlad between Lydham and Snead (Bromley's Mill, White Mill, Pell Mell and Snead Mill).



Fig. 1: early postcard view of Lydham village, circa 1910, by A Hughes, Stationer & Printer, Bishop's Castle

Earliest History

The earliest indications of human habitation in Lydham are flints and stone implements of the Neolithic period. These, most of which are held in the Ludlow Museum collections, include two stone axes (from Lydham Village and Mores Wood just north of the parish boundary). Such implements were produced a few miles further north in the celebrated 'axe factory' at Cwm Mawr near Hyssington. Sherds of Neolithic pottery have been found on Roveries Hill, indicating that the site was occupied well before the Iron Age people built their hill-fort there.

There is a curious local story concerning a large boulder, which once lay in the meadow called Furlong's Field near The Lea (one and half miles west of Bishop's Castle). This was said to be a glacial boulder 23 feet in girth, moved to that site as a boundary marker. Its unusual size inevitably attracted local folklorists and it was claimed that it turned round whenever the clock struck thirteen! An enthusiastic investigator of the Ley Lines (popularised in Alfred Watkins' *The Old Straight Track*) drew a line through its axis which, when extended six and a half miles to the north, passed through the Bronze Age Stone Circle of Mitchell's Fold. The stone has now gone, a local farmer saying that it had been 'moved to Mellington'!

The Bronze Age is represented here by a hoard uncovered in a field called Bloody Romans also near The Lea. This consisted of a number of spear-heads (one of a lunate type), and fragments of three swords (one leaf-shaped). Stanford (*The Archaeology of the Welsh Marches*) suggests that the location of such hoards in low-lying areas may have reflected rituals connected with water cults.

Iron Age and Romans

The Iron Age left South Shropshire with some of its most striking monuments – the hillforts. Roveries Hill, a mile to the north-west of Lydham, had two earthworks, the Upper and Lower Camps. The latter has a fine, in-turned entrance retaining some of the original stonework from the guard-chambers, a feature similar to that in the fort on Titterstone Clee.

From the traditional perception of Iron Age society – hill forts manned by warring, woad-painted chieftains, we are moving to a more balanced awareness of well-developed agricultural communities opening up and farming the valleys. Many earthworks hitherto considered to have been forts are now seen as enclosures and pounds for livestock.

The coming of the Romans in the years following their invasion of Britain in 43 A.D. created new tensions for the Iron Age society of the Cornovii. The campaigns of Ostorius Scapula against Caratacus (47-51 A.D.) brought Roman soldiers into the area, leaving traces of their marching camps and the lines of their new road-system. There are traces of these both west and east of Lydham (camps at Strefford, near Craven Arms and Brompton near Churchstoke, and Roman roads through the Church Stretton Gap and over Long Mountain). Earthworks in Lydham Village at the intersection of the A488 and A489 were once thought to be another marching-camp but this theory has now been discounted.

In the parish of More, a substantial building at the gates of Linley Hall and a small rectangular earthwork (usually referred to as a signal-station) on Linley Hill are legacies of the Roman period. The former, once described as a 'villa', is now thought to have been a building connected with the administration of lead-prospecting operations in the district. Further evidence of local mining operations by the Romans are three stamped Roman pigs of lead, unearthed in the vicinity of Lydham, More and Snead. One of these bearing the words *IMP. HADRIANI AVG.* is in Linley Hall.

Roman lead-mining operations in SW Shropshire do not seem to have been prolonged, although the pigs of lead and the buildings at Linley and traces of other Roman buildings at Brompton suggest that there may have been industrial activity for some years. It is also suggested that the Romans did not find the silver which they had hoped might emerge from these mines. The signal-station on Linley Hill may have provided communication with other such stations above the military bases at Forden and Caersws.

Domesday

The Saxons left no physical traces of their presence in Lydham unless the oval configuration of the churchyard (now cut across by the main road) is an indication of a Pre-Conquest church. It is in Domesday (see fig. 2) that Lydham emerges by name for the first time, with an interesting entry.

Ipse comes tenet Lidum. Edricus (Salvage) tenuit T.R.E. (tempore Regis Edwardi). Ibi XV hidae geldabiles. In dominio sunt IIII carucae; et XIII Villani cum Preposito et Presbytero et VI Bordarii habent X carucas; et adhuc XVI carucae possent ibi esse. Ibi VI Radmans, et Molinum reddens I porcum. Silvae duae leuedes. T.R.E tempore Regis Edwardi valebat X libras: modo (valet) XIII libras.

The Earl himself holds Lidum. In the time of King Edward Edric Salvage held it. There fifteen hides pay geld. In demesne there are four ploughs and fourteen villeins with a reeve and a priest and with six bordars who have ten ploughs and there might be sixteen ploughs now. Six radmans are there and a mill paying one pig. Of woodland there are two leagues. In the time of King Edward it was worth £.10; now £.14.

Domesday presents Lydham as a village of some significance. It has a church, a priest, a mill, and a Reeve (a local manorial official, functioning as a subordinate to the Sheriff). There are only nine Reeves recorded for

Shropshire. Its mill is also unique in the county in its payment of `one pig'. More than half of the ninety recorded mills in Shropshire paid their dues in money, others in fish, eels, and grain.

SCROPESCIRE.

In Civitate Scropescire in Episcopatu Herefordensi.
 Episcopus .ccc. l. ii. dom. 7 tunc burgses in ipsil domib?
 redditus p annu lxx. lib 7 xvi. solid 7 viii. den de gable.
 Ibi habet rex. E. has subter scriptas consuetudines.

Fig 2: Domesday entry for Shropshire

The tenure of the manor before the Conquest by ‘Edric Salvage’ is also interesting. Edricus Silvaticus, was the nephew of Edric Streona, Ealdorman of the Mercians, killed in 1017. He inherited lands in Shropshire and Herefordshire, and though he at first acknowledged the sovereignty of William in 1066, he joined the resistance campaigns of the Welsh kings Bleddyn and Rhiwallon in 1067 and 1069, the latter culminating in the siege of Shrewsbury. He made peace with King William in 1070, accompanying him on his Scottish campaigns in 1072, but appears subsequently to have turned against him once more. The circumstances of Edric's elimination by William's supporters are uncertain.

Edric, whose title Silvaticus (Woodlander) became corrupted to Salvage, Sauvage, or Savage (The Wild), became Shropshire's own folk-hero. With his bride, Lady Godda, he rides the Stiperstones and adjacent hills with his pack of hounds, appearing when Britain faces danger of war. To see the Wild Hunt in full cry was thought in local superstition to portend one's own death. A further legend has it that Edric and his followers, in punishment for

their folly in trusting King William, are imprisoned in the Stiperstones lead-mines where miners periodically heard them knocking to seek a way out.

Bishop's Castle did not exist at the time of the Domesday Book, the most important local manor being Lydbury North. A comparison between that parish and Lydham is intriguing (see Table 1).

Although Lydbury was in all respects, a larger manor at the time of the Conquest, its value slumps thereafter, while Lydham gains slightly. The amount of wasteland in Lydbury by 1086 indicates serious damage caused during the conflict, probably by Edric's forces during their early resistance to King William.

Table 1: Domesday Comparisons

	Lydham	Lydbury North
Hides paying tax:	15	53
Ploughs	14	28
Possible ploughs	30	120
Households -		
Villani (villagers)	14	38
Praepositus (reeve)	1	0
Bordarii (small-holders)	6	32
Presbyteri (priest)	1	2
Radmans (riders)	6	8
Servi (slaves)	0	2
TOTAL:	28	82
Woodland	2 leagues	Enough to fatten 160 pigs.
Mill	1	1
Wasteland	0	32.5 hides
Value (Pre-Conquest)	£10	£35
(Post-Conquest)	£14	£12

The Middle Ages

During the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Lydham's strategic position at the head of the Camlad valley, on a natural east-west passage, gave the Manor a degree of importance. The ownership was contested vigorously among local barons, as the following brief chronology shows:

1207. Death of Earl Baldwin de Bollers, Lord of Montgomery. His brother Robert and father (Baldwin) had held Lydham since the reign of Henry I, when the king had annexed it to the Honour of Montgomery. Baldwin's widow, Wenthlian, presented the first known incumbent of Lydham, Adam. He remained priest there until 1255.

1214. Death of William de Courtenay, Lord of Montgomery who held the Manor of Lydham.

1215. A Charter of King John recognised the right of Thomas de Erdington to the Honour of Montgomery, including Lydham.

1216. A further Charter entitled William de Cantilupe I to Lydham. He rebelled against the Crown in 1223, forfeiting Lydham, but regained favour (and Lydham!) in 1224. It then passed by inheritance to William de Cantilupe II and III.

1248. Thomas Corbet, Sheriff of Shropshire was Fermor of Lydham, receiving (up to Michaelmas 1249) rents and dues to the sum of £11.2s.5d. In an Inquest of Henry III, (12 May 1253) the Manor of Lydham was assessed to yield an annual income of £ 10.1s. and 1 lb of pepper.

1255. Death of Parson Adam. Simon de Burnham was presented to the vacant Benefice by King Henry III.

1257. The Purslow (Posselawe) Hundred Roll re-assessed Lydham as follows: *"The Bishop of Hereford holds two and a half hides in Lydham for the king (it is not known upon what authority). The Manor is in the power of the king and valued at £12.14s.1d. The church of this Manor is in the power of the king and valued at 100 solidi"*.

1265. On 1st July, while preparing for the battle of Evesham, Prince Edward granted the Manor of Lydham to his faithful and beloved supporter Adam de Montgomery *"to hold to him and his heirs by the customary services"*.

Markets, Fairs and Gallows

A Charter, given at Canterbury on 16 April 1267 in the 41st year of the reign of Henry III, allowed Adam de Montgomery *"to holde a weekly Market on Fridays at Lidum"* and also two annual Fairs of four days each, viz. the eve, day and two days following the Feast of St Philip and St James (30 April - 3 May); and the Feast of St Mary Magdalene (21-24 July).

This Charter document measures 9 inches by 6 inches and still has part of the Great Seal in green wax suspended from a red and green silk plait. The witnesses were William de Valence, the King's brother; John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey; Roger de Leyburne; Robert Aquilon; Alan la Zuche; William de St Omer; William Aste; Geoffrey de Percy; Stephen de Eddewyth; and Bartholomew le Bygod.

The Charter contained a saving clause relating to the market and fairs at Lydham. They were licensed *"unless that market and those fairs be to the hurt of neighbouring markets and fairs"*. This would refer particularly to Montgomery, which the king was anxious to boost as a local centre for trade and resistance to the Welsh, and to the relatively new town of Bishop's Castle, established in the late twelfth century by the Bishop's of Hereford.

A further Royal Charter of 10 July 1270 conceded to Adam that his *"vill of Lydham"* should become a free borough and *"the men thereof free of toll and tallage throughout the realm"*. It continued *"The Grantee may erect a Gallows on his own land, and hang thereon all robbers taken with their booty upon them... so that this be done without loss to the Crown and to other persons of that District"*. This charter also gave licence for *"a weekly Market to be holden on Wednesdays at Lydeham"*, and two annual Fairs of four days' duration each, viz. the eve, day and two days following the respective feasts of St Ethelbert (19-22 May) and St Michael In Monte Tumba (15-18 October).

During the latter half of the thirteenth century the possession of Lydham was disputed between Adam de Montgomery's heirs and Roger and Alice de la More. It finally passed into the hands of the Barons Charleton of Powys. Its importance dwindled as Montgomery and Bishop's Castle became firmly established as centres both for trade and for military operations along the border.

The adjacent parish of More (not recorded in Domesday) also gained importance when in 1293 Roger de la More was granted a Serjeanty. He was to assume command of 200 foot-soldiers whenever the king crossed into Montgomeryshire in hostile array. The said constable was *"to march in the vanguard of the army and, with his own hands, to carry the king's standard"*.

Castle, Church & Mill

Physical evidence of Lydham's early history remains in two major monuments - the castle and the church. The castle is a fine example of the small defensive compound built in many communities in the years following the Norman Conquest to provide local protection against raiders, whether Welsh invaders or rival local warlords. The situation of the Lydham castle is dramatic, looking down the Camlad valley into Wales. It was clearly built for military purposes, whereas the castle at More, barely two fields distant, with two or three extensive baileys, has rather the feeling of a civil settlement. The castle at Lydham (fig.3) consists of a conical mound (the Motte) rising at the west end of an oval enclosure (the Bailey). The mound rises 19' above the level of the bailey court, and on the western side, where it coincides with the scarp of the bailey, has a total height of 27' from the floor of the outer ditch. The ditch (the Fosse) is up to 9' deep where it is preserved on the western side. On this side there is also an outer bank up to 6' high. If there was an extended outer bailey this has now disappeared but would have been situated where the mill and the church now stand.

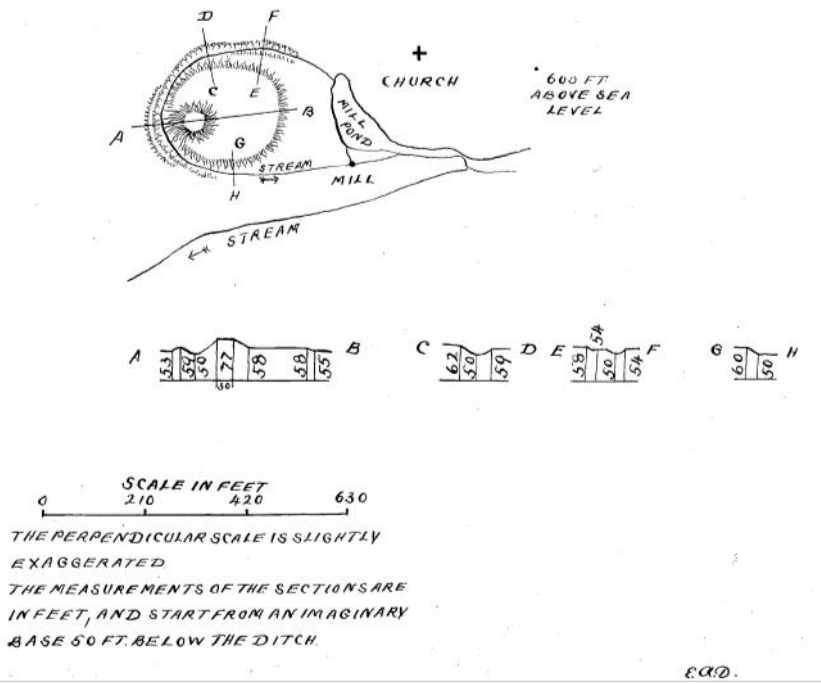


Fig. 3: Lydham Castle. Diagram from *Ancient Earthworks in Shropshire* E.A.Downman,1906

Holy Trinity Church is situated adjacent to the castle and mill (see fig 4) and has an oval churchyard, truncated on the east side by the main road (A488/489). Dean Cranage supposed it to be of Saxon foundation, but the present church has no traces of that period, being principally a thirteenth century building, substantially restored and altered in the Jacobean period (1642) and again in 1885. The west wall of the nave slopes steeply - a characteristic of late Norman/Transitional building in the area. The roofs are very fine - the chancel with thirteenth century trussed rafters and the nave with collar-beams on arched braces and a single tier of quatrefoil wind braces. There is a mediaeval font, and windows, and a pulpit and some woodwork from the Jacobean period.



Fig 4: Early aerial photograph of Lydham

The churchyard is most beautiful with a number of valued flower species. The monuments were carefully recorded by Lydham, More, and Snead W.I. in 1985 for the Shropshire Family History Churchyard Survey. There are some very attractive gravestones here, mainly from the nineteenth century. The Parish Registers date back to 1597, and there is a list of the incumbents of Lydham from 1265 to 1741. A new survey of memorial inscriptions in the Parish of Lydham was published in 2008 by the Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society.

As already stated, there can be no certainty that the present Mill is on the site of that mentioned in Domesday. Nevertheless, the present building is of great historic interest, as it still contains a water-wheel, and clear evidence of its mill-pool and water-course.

Conclusion

The name LYDHAM has, like many other village names, undergone numerous variations throughout its history. The most obvious meaning is that it is of Anglo-Saxon/Old English origin, from the words Hlid (slope) and Ham (home) -'the home on the slope'. Other suggestions are Leod-Ham = Leoda's Home (as in Lydbury); Lyde-Ham = home on the river Lyde; and Hlid-Ham = inexplicably meaning 'the home at the lids'.

Whatever the meaning, a wonderful variety of spellings occur in historical references to the parish: LIDUM (Domesday 1086); LEDEHAM (1243); LYDEHAM (1245); LIDHAM, LIDEHAM, LYDHAM (1253); LIDEM (1256); LIDEHUM (1265); LIDUN (1267); LYDUM (1272); LYDHOUM, LYDOUM (1295); LYDOUN (1316); LEDON (1534); LYDDUM (1577); LYDOM (C17th) and LEEDHAM (1705).

As the strategic importance of Lydham faded, its historical documentation becomes disjointed. As well as Parish Registers and Census Returns there are many references to individuals and local families; good Probate Inventories, Churchwardens' Accounts, Peace Rolls, Hearth-Tax Rolls, Court Rolls, and Land Tax Documents. Much more research is needed to bind these into any sort of coherent account of the continuing life of the parish.

The adoption of Lydham by the Oakeley family with their houses at Oakeley, Snakescroft, and ultimately Lydham Manor, added a new and fascinating dimension...and the material for many more books or articles. Today, Lydham still enjoys a degree of familiarity... that village you pass through on your way to... ! Its strategic location as a crossroads for movement north, south, east or west has not been diminished, though it has lost its market, its fairs, and its gallows. And it can still boast that between 1865 and 1935 it had at Lydham Heath, an important Bishop's Castle Railway terminus, a remote outpost of Britain's lost and lamented Railway System!

David Preshous

The African's Grave at Bishop's Castle

In the churchyard of St John the Baptist Church, Bishop's Castle, is an interesting grave. It is beautifully decorated, and bears the following carefully incised inscription:

*Here lieth the body of I.D.
A native of Africa
Who died in this town
On Sept 9th 1801
"God hath created of one blood all nations of men"
Acts Ch 17 verse 26*



Fig.1: African Headstone,
Bishop's Castle churchyard

In Bishop's Castle it is known as 'The Slave's Grave', although there is nothing to say that the person interred here was a slave. However, the text is one that was used by those fighting for the Abolition of Slavery. English Heritage has included this memorial in its 'Sites of Memory', commemorating the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807. Their citation says: *'the quality of the headstone, with its elegant decoration and inscription indicates that I.D. had achieved some status by the time he died.'* (Fig.1).

Of course, 'he' may have been a 'she'. However, according to the burial register, a 'John Davies' was interred on September 12th 1801. Was this one and the same person? It seems likely, but John Davies is not an African name. It could be an adoptive, or a baptismal name. There is no trace of this baptism in the Bishop's Castle registers. So the mystery is how an African journeyed to Bishop's Castle in the late eighteenth century. Did he live for long in Bishop's Castle? Where? How did he die? And who erected the undoubtedly expensive memorial with its message of liberation?

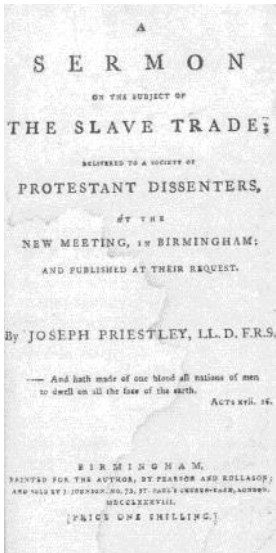


Fig.2: Title Page,
Priestley's Sermon

The quest began with the Equiano Exhibition in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and continued at the Museum in Docklands in its London's 'Sugar and Slavery' gallery. In between, books have been read, the Internet trawled, librarians e-mailed, archives and old newspapers explored, experts quizzed, and pavements pounded. The first happy discovery was seeing a copy of the sermon preached by Dr. Joseph Priestley - Unitarian minister, scientist, member of the Lunar Society and leading abolitionist - in 1788 to the New Meeting in Birmingham. A copy of this sermon is held in the Central Library, and the text printed on the front cover matches the inscription on the gravestone for 'J.D.' (Fig.2).

There have always been black people living in Britain. Some came with the Romans, and with traders in mediaeval times. It became fashionable to have black servants. In 1704, Charles Mason, MP for Bishop's Castle had a black page boy 'aged about ten' baptized Charles Hector. By the end of the century there were possibly between 13,000 and 15,000 black people living in Britain. There were probably few left in a condition of slavery, but many were in domestic service, like Francis Barber, Samuel Johnson's servant, who also died in 1801. It was forbidden by the City of London for black people to become apprenticed to 'learn a trade'. But in the cities were living many who had liberated themselves; by leaving owners or households to find their own living as labourers or craftsmen (most were men, though not all, of course), or as entertainers such as prize fighters. It was a close community, where people looked after each other in times of adversity, and all were looking towards the end of the slave trade, to free them from the fear of capture and return to the West Indies. There were also some who had served with the English in the American War of Independence, and had been 'given' their freedom as reward; many of these had gone to Nova Scotia or the new colony at Sierra Leone.

There were many black men, such as Ignatius Sancho, known as 'the extraordinary negro', Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, and Olaudah Equiano, (renamed Gustavus Vassa), who had obtained their own freedom. They were

all three writing about their experiences and actively engaged in the campaign for Abolition. Equiano, born around 1745 in Eastern Nigeria, was a contemporary of 'I.D.' Their journeys could have been similar. Equiano was captured as a child, enslaved, bought by a naval officer and educated by his sisters in London. He was a resourceful, energetic and intelligent person who earned and bought his freedom, travelled the world, and wrote his memoirs: *'An Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano'*. He joined the Abolitionists in the campaign for the end of slavery, married, had two daughters, and died in 1797, in his fifties. (Fig.3). It is thought that up to 12 million Africans were captured, enslaved and transported across the



Olaudah Equiano
or
GUSTAVUS VASSA,
the African

Fig. 3: Equiano

Atlantic. Many never survived the voyage, which was travelled in atrocious conditions. Once in the Caribbean, survivors were sold into hard labour, probably in sugar plantations. Women were additionally vulnerable to rape, by seamen, or the overseers and owners on the plantations. Their children were born into slavery and could be bought and sold at their 'owner's' wish.

It is hard to realise now to what extent the prosperity of the trafficking nations (England, France, the Netherlands, Portugal) depended on what is known as the 'Triangular Trade.' Ships left from European ports laden with manufactured goods, including shackles and leg-irons made in Birmingham, sailed to West Africa, exchanged these goods for slaves, and who were then taken across the Atlantic - the dreaded 'middle passage'- to the Caribbean, and sold. The proceeds were used to purchase sugar, rum, tobacco, cocoa, cotton, indigo and rice, to be brought back to Bristol, or Liverpool, or London, among other cities. Fine hardwoods, such as mahogany, were also shipped 'home' to make elegant furnishings for the grand houses that were being built or renovated by the newly wealthy ship owners, and those with a share in slave-ships or in sugar plantations. Very few English country houses are free of the taint of slave-gotten money.

The Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers, with their belief in the equality of all men and women, could see that trading in people was wrong, and had to be stopped. The Quakers formed a Committee in 1783 *'to effect the abolition of the slave trade'*. It was thought that this was more achievable than immediate emancipation. In 1787 the Committee was expanded to include others, such as Thomas Clarkson. Clarkson had decided at the age of 25 to

dedicate his life to eliminating the evil of slavery. He was described by Samuel Taylor Coleridge as *'a moral steam engine'* – and that in the days when steam engines were fairly new and extraordinarily powerful. Clarkson travelled ceaselessly around the country, gathering evidence of the cruelties of slavery, of the appalling conditions in the ships for both slaves and sailors, and getting people together to sign Parliamentary petitions. 519 petitions were raised in total and sent to Parliament. At the same time many, especially women, agreed to boycott the use of West Indian sugar – a man in Montgomery was so inspired that *'he threw his sugar loaf into the street'*. Clarkson persuaded the MP William Wilberforce to put forward in Parliament a motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1782. He was supported by the Prime Minister, the younger William Pitt. Although both of these made marvellously impassioned speeches, this motion was unfortunately diluted in the House of Lords to read *'the gradual abolition'*, which made it totally ineffective. The Slave Trade was finally abolished in 1807, but full emancipation of all enslaved people in British lands was not achieved until 1838.

It was interesting to discover how enlightened many people in Shropshire were at that time. Archdeacon Joseph Plymley, was the local Chairman of the Committee to Effect the Abolition. He put up Thomas Clarkson, travelling through Shropshire, at his house, Longnor Hall. We know this from the diaries of the Archdeacon's sister, Katherine, a fervent abolitionist herself. 'Gustavus Vassa', aka Equiano, also called on the Plymleys in the 1790s, as he travelled about promoting his book and its message. Plymley and Clarkson went to Shrewsbury for a meeting of 'respectable' townsmen to persuade them to sign the petition. Shropshire provided 464 signatures (300 from Shrewsbury), and the petition was nine and a half feet long. Petitions were also sent up from Montgomery and Ludlow, and other towns in Shropshire. We also know from Katharine Plymley's diaries that her brother met Clarkson in Bishop's Castle in November 1793. It would be interesting to know whether a petition was got up in this town too. Unfortunately all the actual petitions were lost in the Palace of Westminster fire in 1834, so it is impossible to check this, or the names upon them. The Shrewsbury Chronicle was decidedly against the 'Slave Trade', and in 1792 published Wilberforce and Pitt's speeches, as well as weekly letters and editorials urging people to support the cause. It printed the wording of the petition to Parliament, but, unfortunately, no list of the signatories.

Searching the locality for anyone with abolitionist sympathies who could have employed one or more black servants, and might have erected the memorial to 'I.D.' revealed no evidence to link the local families of Plowden, More and Oakeley with any overseas interests. Also, these families would have been likely to bury this person in their own parishes, rather than in Bishop's Castle; the Plowdens anyway, were Roman Catholics. The Clives at Walcot of course did have overseas property, and William Clive was MP for Bishop's Castle at that time, but they were certainly not supporters of Abolition, and their servants would have come from the East Indies rather than Africa. Any local Quaker would certainly have been sympathetic, but no Quaker would have approved of an ornate gravestone, with anything other than a name upon it.

One explanation for the presence of 'I.D.' in Bishop's Castle could be that he was travelling through, either on his own, like Equiano, or with his employer. But why and where did they stay? The Castle Inn - later called The Castle Hotel - was the main coaching inn for Bishop's Castle. Sadly, the Hotel's Visitors' Book does not go back as far as 1801. There was, however, a General Election called in 1802. Bishop's Castle was, as we know, a 'pocket borough', in the pocket of the Clive family. But for the 1802 election, there were opponents, who must have had enough money to match the 25 guineas that appear to be the price of a vote at that time. There were about 150 voters, or 'capital burgesses', so fighting an election involved a considerable outlay.

One of those opponents was John Charlton Kinchant, who had inherited Blunden Hall in 1763. His main residence was Park Hall near Oswestry, and Blunden Hall was later let to a Mr. Walters, but in 1802, Mr. Kinchant decided to oppose the Clive interest. Initially his running mate was Thomas Clarke, of Peplow Hall (he had bought it from the Pigotts in 1798). Clarke, we are told by the Victoria County History, had an *'immense fortune made in the Liverpool slave trade'*. The fact that he owned a ship at Liverpool has been confirmed by the Liverpool City Archive.

Many slave traffickers were known to have chosen Africans as personal servants for themselves, often as children and 'I.D.' may have been one of these. After a while, Clarke dropped out of the contest and was replaced by a Richard Bateman Robson, who had already been an MP elsewhere. He was known to be a Whig and a Foxite (follower of Charles James Fox), and therefore probably an abolitionist. Kinchant, Clarke and Robson would



Fig.4: Blunden Hall, Bishop's Castle

probably have been of the same mind on these matters. They lost the election, of course, and fired off angry letters to the Shrewsbury Chronicle accusing their opponents of '*unconstitutional practices, corruption, and menace*' against the voters. Interestingly, Clarke is mentioned in a rhyme quoted by David Preshous in his chapter about the Clives in '*The Gale of Life*':-

*Let Clive and corruption together be driven
From the Boro' where both have hitherto thriven.
Let Robinson, Clive and the rest of them know,
That the lads of old Clarke can yet strike ye blow:
They can send up a Member to sit in the House
Who cares for the Ministers less than a l---e.....'*

My point is that these were wealthy men, they did have shipping interests and they could well have been in and around Bishop's Castle in the previous autumn of 1801, buttering up the bourgeoisie, and that any one of them could have been travelling with an African manservant, who met his end here, was buried in the churchyard, and commemorated with a grand headstone.

There is still no definitive evidence as to the identity of 'I.D.' On the basis of what we have learnt about the time, there are the following probabilities: that 'I.D.' was a man, that he was a free man, and that he was a servant. It is unlikely that he lived in Bishop's Castle for any length of time as there is no mention of him in any records, other than the possible reference in the Burial Register. He probably did not work for the local families, unless for

the Kinchants of Blunden Hall. He was very likely to have been travelling here with his employer. He would not have been buried in the churchyard of St John the Baptist had he, or his employer, been a Quaker or a Roman Catholic.

Perhaps it was realised that 'John Davies' was not his true name, which is why only initials were used. His age is uncertain, but if he were a contemporary of Equiano, he would have been in his fifties by 1800. Only someone worthy of much respect and affection would have merited a memorial of such quality – and only someone who sympathised with the cause of Abolition would have had the text from Acts of the Apostles inscribed upon it.

Judith Payne

I am indebted to the following: Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre for obtaining a small grant from Renaissance West Midlands, which funded this research; Rosemary Gillett of Blunden Hall; Rachel Hasted of English Heritage; Barbara Philpott; Marion Roberts; Arthur Torrington; Staff of Liverpool City Archives; Staff of Shropshire Archives.

REFERENCES

Primary sources:

Bishop's Castle Parish Registers: *Burial Register*, volume V, Shropshire Archives.
Plymley, Katherine: *Diaries*, volume 2, Shropshire Archives 1066/LB/7/355
Shrewsbury Chronicle: 13 March 1792; 25 March 1792; April 13 1792; June 1797;
23-30 July 1802

Priestley, Dr. Joseph: *Sermon on the subject of the Slave Trade*. 1788. Central Library, Birmingham.

Secondary sources:

English Heritage: DCMS website: http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/media_releases/2241.aspx

Preshous, David: *Clive, Walcot & Bishop's Castle*. pp.173-185 in *The Gale of Life* edited by John Leonard *et al.* Logaston Press. 2000.

Transactions of Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society: volume VII, 2nd Series, 1895.

Victoria County History, vol. III

Williams, Gareth: *Slavery and the Economy of the English Country House*: a talk given to the Friends of Shropshire Archives on 22 November 2007.

Bibliography

Edwards, P. Ed. *The Life of Olaudah Equiano*, Longman, 1988.

Fryer, P. : *Staying Forever -The history of Black People in Britain*, Pluto Classics, 1984.

Hochschild, A.: *Breaking the Chains*, Pan Books, 2005.

Lorimer, D.A.: *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, Leicester University Press, 1978.

Wilson, E. Gibson: *Thomas Clarkson: a biography*, Macmillan, 1989.

Where Do You Come From? The Sayces of Bishop's Castle

On retiring after over 36 years of travelling around the world on business, time became available to find out where my family came from. During my years of travel and meeting many different people and visiting countries all over the globe I did not come across one Sayce, other than my direct family, until I was about to retire. I was attending a celebration dinner at the London Guildhall when a gentleman came up and said how pleased he was to meet a Sayce in person. This was a first for me as well; he announced that he looked at a Sayce every day in his office, an oil painting of A. H. Sayce hanging on a wall of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The gentleman was the Director of the Museum and he invited me to visit The Ashmolean to see the Sayce artefacts. This was a pleasant surprise but an embarrassing introduction as I had no clue then as to who this Sayce was. This set me thinking and determined that, when time allowed, I would find out about Sayce names and where they came from, because my family had absolutely no information at all.

My Family Background

This research into the social history of the generations of Sayce families who lived in Bishop's Castle is the result of an initial investigation into my own Sayce family which was thought to come from the London area. However the family genealogy has shown that this was totally erroneous as the Sayce family roots are firmly found in Shropshire and, in particular, Bishop's Castle for hundreds of years.

My great grandfather **Isaac Sayce**, a plumber, was born 1848, the son of **John Sayce**, a stone mason, born 1805, both in Bishop's Castle. They moved to Shrewsbury in the 1850s, where Isaac met my great-grandmother Jane, who came from Oldbury, and married her in Trinity Church, Shrewsbury. Isaac and his brother **Thomas**, also a plumber, moved to the west side of London, which was expanding its housing and industrial buildings at the end of the 1800s towards what is now the Heathrow airport area, taking up the increased work opportunities. This is where my father **William Henry** was brought up; unfortunately his father **George Sayce** was killed in 1916 during the Great War, when William was two years old. My father did not meet any of the Sayce family members until he was grown up and all records had been lost, leaving just a rumour that the family came from the west of London.

The Surname Sayce

There are today about 630 Sayce families in the world and in almost all cases their roots go back to Shropshire or Herefordshire and many lead to Bishop's Castle.

This surname continues to be researched by a member of the Guild of One Name Society which has been very helpful in my own research and to whom I am indebted for the details of Sayce families provided. It would seem the name has developed and changed its spelling over the years and continues to be investigated in the hope that more positive connections will be uncovered, taking into account the name variations found. The name appears not to be based on patronymic or metonymic derivations or topographical connections, but probably has a connection back to early locative deviation.

The Welsh dictionary of surnames variously lists Sayce as Sai, Say, Saise, Sayse, Sayce, described as a foreigner or someone who speaks English. The English surname dictionary also has similar spelling variations. The surname distribution mapping of the name from the eleventh century to the nineteenth century clearly shows the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and adjacent Welsh border counties as the area of most use; even today this is the case. The most probable connection dates from around 1086 when the Norman barons took control of the Welsh borders and started their defences of England from the Welsh by constructing a series of border castles. One of these barons was **Robert Picot de Sai** from the village of Sai in Normandy, which still exists today. He is mentioned as estate prime tenant on behalf of the Robert de Montgomery at least twenty-seven times in the Domesday Book, all being in the border area around Clun. It is anticipated that further research and collation of data will reveal more connections and also what happened to the families after this period. It is likely that in the early days of the occupation by the Normans they intermarried with the local Welsh families in order to cement better relationships, explaining why there is some history of Saices along the border counties between England and Wales.

Bishop's Castle

From the available Bishop's Castle records it is clear that the Sayce family are old residents of Bishop's Castle and there is a strong connection with the Corporation and Town Council. The earliest record of a Sayce so far found is a Burgess in 1591 **Hugo Saises**, which indicates the Sayces were in the

area at that time and are waiting to be discovered. The Bishop's Castle parish records transcripts reveal that **Robertus** son of **Rolandi Saise** was baptized 1601 and go on to record another 80 births, marriages and burials through to 1837; unfortunately some years are missing.

These records also illustrate how the surname changed in spelling over the period from Sais, Saise, Sayse, to Sayce. To further support these records a survey of burials in St John the Baptist Church cemetery shows the location of 22 Sayce family graves. The only Sayce resident in the town today is **Mr. Terence Edward Sayce**.

In 1203 King John granted Bishop's Castle its first charter and by 1285 there were 46 Burgesses. In Elizabethan times it had a further Charter and records a bailiff and 15 'capital burgesses'. The Bishop's Castle Burgess Roll names 100 Sayces who have held offices since 1598. From seventeenth century records the Sayce name is mentioned in a number of public appointments: bailiffs, burgesses, land surveyor, church wardens, town criers and other representatives of the authorities of the time, indicating that they were one of the key older families in the town contributing to its governance. In 1820 the Bishop's Castle Burgess Roll lists 12 Sayces from different Sayce families within the town holding positions; it would seem an influential time for them in Bishop's Castle. The early records pre-1598 have yet to be discovered and these may indicate when the Sayces became burgesses of the town.



Fig. 1: Bill Sayce,
Town Crier, 1902

In many cases records mention the individual's father and their trade. Records of Bishop's Castle apprentices and indentures show that the Sayces were active in the town during the 1700 - 1800's starting as apprentices in many cases ending up running the businesses and taking on apprentices. The census records from 1831 through to 1901 show the growth of the families, their occupations and businesses over this period; there were about 50 Sayces resident within Bishop's Castle at any one time. They lived in many of the streets and roads that remain today, bringing up their families and often passing on their particular trade to sons

and daughters. Their trades included, master builders, stone masons, carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, inn keeper, hat makers, milliner, butcher and farmers and are well recorded in the local trade directories including one **Elizabeth Sayce**, recorded in 1850 as gentry living in the ‘The Hall’ in Bishop’s Castle.

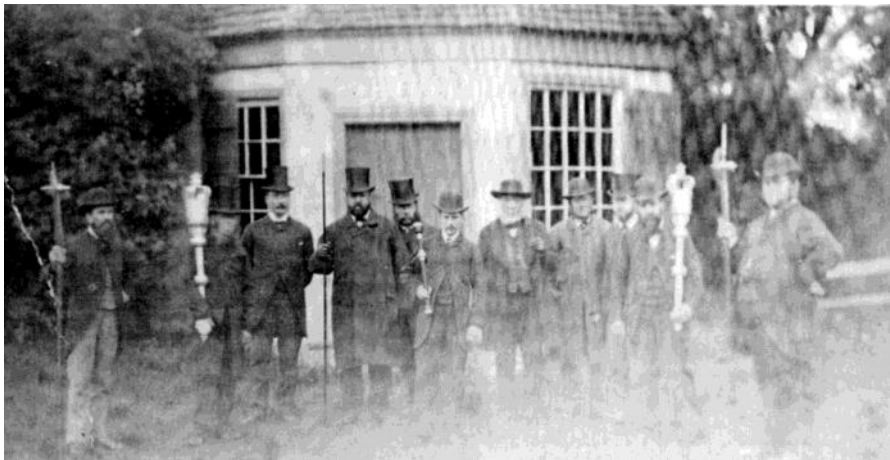


Fig.2: The Old Corporation, Bishop’s Castle, 1885 including three members named Sayce, R Sayce (Sergeant at Mace), ? Sayce (Baton Man), H Sayce (Sergeant at Mace), reproduced from a damaged photograph.

Migration

Researching the Bishop’s Castle Sayces has allowed a family tree to be developed. This was assisted by information provided from a few other Sayce connections which have come to light that would otherwise no doubt have been left dormant. Some 300 family connections have been identified, showing that during the later part of the 1800s a number of Sayces migrated from Bishop’s Castle, to those developing parts of England offering job opportunities, probably aided by the arrival of the railway in Bishop’s Castle. Others left England for overseas territories and their families can be found in the USA, South Africa and Australia. In the burgess records it is noted that in 1868 **James Sayce**, a butcher, was resident in Indianapolis, USA. The **A.H. Sayce** mentioned above was a renowned archaeologist and linguist of ancient languages - a Montford Sayce – who emigrated to America in the late nineteenth century. There was also a female Sayce who married a Maharajah of India and a host of names associated with the time since William the Conqueror. The common link is that somewhere in the past many come from the Bishop’s Castle and Shropshire ‘Sayce’ connection.

Conclusion

Research into the people sharing the name of Sayce will continue and the results will be collected in “The Life and Times of the Sayces in Bishop’s Castle”, an historical and social history of a family holding public office and trades which contributed to the life of Bishop’s Castle and its people.

William Haydn Sayce

Acknowledgements:

Shropshire County Archives

Shropshire Family History Society

Guild of One Name Society

SWSHAS Research Group members, Marion T Roberts, Malcolm Redgrave

BCHRC volunteer Patricia Theobald

Rev. Paul Collins, Rector of Bishop’s Castle and Mainstone

A Sayce family tree has been deposited at Bishop’s Castle Heritage Resource Centre and may be inspected upon application. Ed.

Smells and Bells— an Astounding Medieval Ecclesiastical Find: The South Shropshire Censer Cover

Some artefacts take your breath away when they are brought to you and the subsequent handling and recording of them is a real privilege. The discovery of the South Shropshire Censer Cover is a case in point.

The censer cover (Fig. 1) was discovered in 2004 by a metal detectorist in South Shropshire and was brought in to the local Finds Liaison Office in Ludlow for identification and recording. Although nothing quite like this artefact had been seen before it was felt to be from the medieval period and connected to the Church. A big clue was the representation of a cruciform building with a central tower positioned on the top of the artefact. Censers are used within the Christian church service to burn incense. The reasons for the development of this practice are unclear, however, and the tradition probably evolved from the use of incense and other perfumes in embalming and rituals involving the dead. By the medieval period the use of incense in the Catholic Church was commonplace and the sweet smelling smoke emitted from the censer is thought to represent the prayers of the

saints and the faithful rising to Christ in heaven. The censer was usually suspended from a number of chains and swung either by the priest or a thurifer (thuribulum is the latin word for censer) at particular times during the ceremony.

The South Shropshire censer consists only of the upper cover or lid. The rest of it, the lower dish and the suspension chains, were not discovered. There were two distinct styles of censers in the medieval period; those which are spherical in design and those with an architectural form. This example is in the architectural style which was common in the eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (1050-1250). This style is thought to symbolise heaven, which is described as a city, the 'heavenly Jerusalem' in the last book of the New Testament.

The design of the cover consists of a hemispherical dome from which a cruciform shaped building rises. The dome has three semi-circular suspension loops projecting from the base. These are evenly spaced and would have contained rods or chains that would have held the bottom dish in place. The dome is decorated with a number of incised and pierced decorations which are also functional. The holes would have allowed the smoke from the incense to escape and the oxygen in the dish to keep the incense smouldering. The design of the building on top of the dome is also very intricate and has been executed with much more skill and care than that on the dome beneath. The building has four gabled wings which are positioned in the shape of a cross. On the end wall of each of these wings are two pierced arched windows in the Romanesque style. Above several of these windows are small incised crosses. The roofs of all four wings also have incised panels which represent either tiles or wooden shingles. The central tower has similar windows and incised decoration on the walls and roof. On the apex of the tower's roof is a broken loop. This would have originally held a chain which would have lifted the cover from the lower dish.

There are a number of censers known to be from both Britain and Europe dating from this period. Some of these were produced by workshops in the Low Countries, but a number are thought to have been made in Britain. Many of the known censers are illustrated in articles by A.B. Tonnochy. The closest parallel to this example is from Ferguston Muir, Bearsden near Glasgow found in 1879. A similar styled censer was discovered in Pershore, Worcestershire during the nineteenth century.



Fig. 1: Censer cover

Although the medieval censer was once a relatively common ecclesiastical object, few from this period have survived. It is likely that many of them were destroyed during the Reformation and the later uprisings against Popery in the English Church. The fact that this example has survived, been recovered and recorded adds to our knowledge of the Church in Shropshire and also the Midlands as a whole. As with all artefacts, it links us to our distant past and sparks our imagination to times gone

by: in this case perhaps to a church service on a wet winter day in a dark church; with a priest or thurifer swinging a censer as clouds of incense rise towards the rafters whilst the sound of Latin psalms ring from the walls.

Peter Reavill

This article was first published in Midlands Portable Antiquities Scheme Newsletter 3 Summer 2005. Ed

Bishop's Castle Jacobean 'Market Hall' Project

Fire! Fire!

A few years ago Bishop's Castle Railway Museum in School Lane was badly damaged by fire in the adjacent property. The museum was re-instated but the 'property next door' remained an exposed site with charred timbers. This disaster drew attention to the need for an investigation into an area which could possibly be the remains of an early market hall. The Railway Museum building was surveyed by Madge Moran and Henry Hand in 2005/6. They concluded that the impressive structure, thought to be medieval, required all three properties to be surveyed and dendrochronological samples taken for establishing the age of the building.

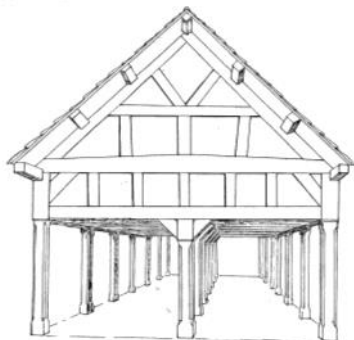
The Madge Moran Challenge

In 2006 Madge Moran gave the 6th Annual Ritherdon Lecture to our Society. At the end of the evening she challenged the Society to raise half the cost of timber-dating the buildings. The Society accepted the challenge to facilitate a survey of the entire site during 2007 at 28 High Street; BCRS

Museum, School Lane; Goodman Yard, School Lane. Through the generosity of the Corndon Singers a fundraising concert was given at St. John The Baptist Church, Bishop's Castle in May 2007.

The Jacobean 'Market Hall'

Dendrochronology provided a felling date of 1618. This rectangular building is approximately 82' x 22' having 21 free-standing posts arranged in two aisles with a central arcade. There were seven posts in each row giving 6



The Old Market Hall, High Street,
Bishop's Castle
Perspective from the West

double bays of even size. The carving shows evidence of good craftsmanship. The first four bays from the street were floored over giving storage space above, but not fit for people to meet. The end two bays had no upper floor; they were open to the ridge of the roof which was probably of stone slabs. There was much rivalry with Church Stretton, whose market hall was built in 1619. The carpenter working on the Church Stretton market hall was John Abel of Sarnesfield.

It is possible that he may have worked on the Bishop's Castle market hall. There has been a market in the town since 1203 and it is suggested that this building was the first covered market hall in Bishop's Castle. Documentary evidence may attribute ownership to Robert Howard, Earl of Northampton.

Project Team

Madge Moran, Henry Hand, Jean North, Ernie Jenks, George Baugh, Marion Roberts, Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, Patricia Theobald.

Acknowledgements

SWSHAS would like to thank the following for their kind co-operation during this project: Mr. Les Goodman (property owner: 'Goodman Yard'); Mrs. Sarah Screen (property owner: 28 High Street and Museum building); Emrys Jones Solicitor (tenant 28 High Street); Bishop's Castle Railway Society (tenant Museum building, School Lane); Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre, Chapel Yard for providing a meeting place and facilities.

Ed.

A fully illustrated report on this project will be published by the South-West Shropshire Historical & Archaeological Society.

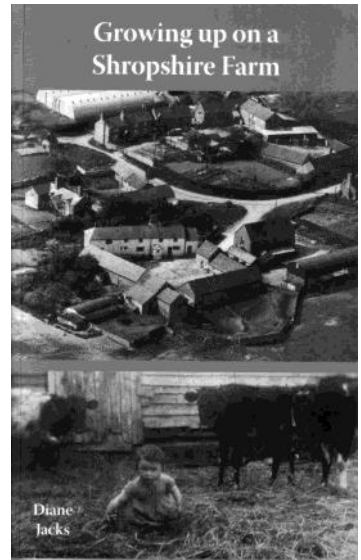
Book Reviews

Growing up on a Shropshire Farm by Diane Jacks

Growing up on a Shropshire Farm, published by Logaston Press, 2007. Price £4.75.

Diane Jacks' articles on dialect words and place-names in S.W.Shropshire were published in the SWSHAS Journal in 2005 and 2006 [Journals 16 and 17]. Sadly, Diane died in 2005 before completing this memoir on her family's life, which has been edited and published by her husband Stephen Meyer and her friend Lynda Wilcox.

Using her father's diaries covering 40 years from the 1930s, and her own post-war memories, Diane Jacks recounted in immense detail the everyday life of a small farm in her parents' early married days in Rorrington, near Priest Weston, and the hardships and war-time economies of her own upbringing as an only, delicate child in a larger farm at Aldon, near Craven Arms. Her method was to piece together from her father's brief notes, the daily and seasonal tasks of the farmer, to describe events such as the cutting of bracken to make stacks for use as litter for the stock, and to show the significance, over the years, of the arrival, in turn, of the first tractor, baler and combine-harvester. At Rorrington her father 'CWJ' reared cows, sheep, pigs and poultry, helped very much by his wife 'EMJ'. When they moved to Aldon he had more arable land and grew crops. Diane was born in 1943 and she remembered the everyday tasks of drawing water and lighting fires, as well as the highlights of visits from their extended family and the social life of Church and Sunday School. She looked back to these earlier times with a clear vision of the drawbacks and hardships, but with nostalgic memories of the simple, close-knit family ties and the satisfactions of well-run farm life. Her book will help to jog many other people's memories.



JBP

BETTWS Y CRWYN: An account of the History, Farming and People Compiled by the people of Bettws

Published by the people of Bettws; printed at Imprint, Newtown, 2007

Bettws y Crwyn won the Shropshire Calor Village of the year Competition in 2002. This seems amazing for a community with no central area of housing and whose Church, Pub and Village hall are separated by miles of empty landscape. There must be something special about a small community spread over such a large area of Borderland which makes them deserve such an award.



In 2006 the parish of Bettws was encouraged to set down in writing something of their history and an account of life in their parish in living memory. The resultant book speaks with an authentic voice of the people who live in this beautiful remote highland region. I would have liked a map to show the location of Mount Flirt, Rose Grove and many of the other places with such fascinating names, many of them Welsh.

Farming is the dominant theme of the early part of the book as is justified by the composition of the community. We read of the hard lives of their ancestors who managed without many of the things urban dwellers would consider essential. They had to cope with extremes of weather without easy transport to bring in supplies. We hear the names of the families who lived on the farms and how they were handed down to current occupants. There are still problems today. Like most farmers they are beset by rules and regulations imposed by seemingly intransigent government departments. Computers and tractors may have made life easier. Better water supplies improve the land. Cars make it easier to meet ones neighbours and therefore a richer social life. However the price of lambs and wool still make living precarious in a highland area.

The community comes over as strong and caring. Despite their small numbers it is still possible to maintain a village hall with a lively programme of self-help entertainment. The WI keeps the ladies together and forms the core of a surprisingly numerous ladies' choir. Sports teams have been raised. A Pony show is put on each year. The Anchor pub carries on despite no longer benefiting from a weekly Welsh invasion since the pubs in Wales were allowed to open on Sundays.

The church figures as a centre of activity in the parish not only as place of worship. The building is valued and much effort is given by folk who want to see it continue to play its part in their lives. This is not a recent phenomenon. The history of William Cantlin started two centuries ago but is still being recalled today by locals and visitors alike. His memorials in the churchyard and on the hillside are still sought out frequently.

There are tales of some of the strong characters who have lived their lives in this remote spot. One warms to the landlord of the Anchor who hunted packs of hounds and of beagles. How he found time to serve beer is not said. One also loved the story of the Home Guards on duty fire watching on the hilltop who set an alarm to warn them when they were about to have a visit from their officer so that they could be awake and about their duties when he arrived.

Everyone who lives in the Bettws will want a copy of this book and those who hear of this determined little hill community will want to read of the thread of their lives. This is local history in a most readable form. I can commend it to the readership of this Journal.

WMY

Research in Progress: 2007-8

SWSHAS Research Group

Parish Registers

The indexes of names, places and subjects of the Bishop's Castle registers (1559-1837) are now at the printers. This is 128 pages long and was compiled by Mrs Ivy Evans. It also contains a list of corrigenda and addenda to parts 1-6. The name of another Vicar was added who was discovered in the first Corporation minute book, namely Samuel Wilson who was made a burgess in 1650. Copies of the index will be available for purchase shortly. The index to the Wentnor registers has also been completed by Mrs Evans and sorted alphabetically: it is being digitised. This register will be available for purchase on a CD. A paper copy will be available in Bishop's Castle and the Shropshire Archives. The Clun registers are also digitised and again the index, which has yet to be sorted and digitised, is the painstaking work of Mrs Evans. This will take some time to complete as the Clun registers are far larger than those for Wentnor. Alan Wilson continues his work on the Mainstone registers and as there is no transcript for 1812-37, he is copying out the three registers covering that period. A start has been made on transcribing the Lydbury North registers, particularly from the Bishop's Transcripts for that parish.

The Bishop's Castle Burgess Roll

Malcolm Redgrave has made good progress on this project, sorting the record cards of the burgesses alphabetically; and checking entries. Negotiations for the publication of the roll up to 1900 by the Shropshire Record Society have been opened; funding will have to be sought for this publication and its format has been discussed with the Editor, Dr Fran. Bumpus.

Nursing Associations.

Some members of the research group are listing several large boxes of records from the Town Hall for the Bishop's Castle District and the Lydbury North Nursing Associations. The earliest papers relate to Rachel Humphreys' Charity for a district nurse, and some letters identify her as the daughter of a Shrewsbury surgeon (d. 1891) and his wife, the daughter of Robert Evans (d. 1849) a surgeon in Bishop's Castle

A number of queries have been passed on to the group:

1. *The Market Hall.* As dendrochronology revealed the date 1618 for the timber of the building which is thought to be a market hall, a detailed examination of the copy of the first Corporation Minute Book which the Society owns has been made, but there is no reference to it on or around that date, nor during the rest of the seventeenth century. Relevant data extracted, mainly about the market tolls and standings, has been passed to George Baugh, former Editor of the Shropshire Victoria County History.
2. *Town Hall.* We were unable to do research into the history of the present building, erected in 1745, as this required the Corporation Minute Books deposited in Shropshire Archives. However, from the papers about the Corporation's property previously listed by this group, we discovered the cistern was put under the old Town Hall in 1738, the subject of an earlier query.
3. *Bowling Green.* The earliest reference discovered so far is in the Shropshire Gazetteer by T. Gregory for 1824.
4. *I.D. 'A native of Africa.'* No further light has been thrown on the identity of this man recorded on a tombstone in Bishop's Castle Churchyard. The pencil note against the burial entry of a John Davies buried on 12 Sept. 1801 identifying him with the 'native of Africa' who died in the town on 9 Sept. could have been written by any Vicar at any time noticing the tombstone and looking for a suitable burial entry.

Marion Roberts

See article pp18-24. Ed.

TOWN HALL STUDY

Local government is set for some radical re-organisation and it seemed important to re-examine how day-to-day local affairs were conducted in the past.

Before investigating Bishop's Castle Town Hall it was necessary to find out something of the history of Town Halls in England and then to discover those details which make Bishop's Castle unique. This proved far from simple: searches seem to point to 'Town Halls' referring to facilities or

institutions created from the nineteenth century onwards. One book, which has proved helpful, is Robert Tittler's *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community 1500-1640*. The first reference discovered so far to Bishop's Castle Town Hall is an election notice for 1770, then it continues until 1830 to be known as the Guildhall. Prior to the nineteenth century terms used across the country include Merchant Hall, Boot Hall, Tolsey, Courts of Pie Powder, Guildhall (as in BC) and others. These names are related to specific uses and particular social circumstances; they changed historically and varied from location to location. A building itself may have commenced as a Guildhall or Market Hall or lock up and then enlarged to accommodate all three. Or the reverse could have occurred.

Uses to which the Town Hall was put are varied. The lower hall and two upper rooms were hired regularly by some organisations, such as the Quarter Sessions, later Petty Sessions, and the WI, and for occasional meetings, such as political meetings. The charges for hire remained the same for many years.

Early in the twentieth century the layout of the larger upper room, the Guildhall or Court Room, was reversed. Originally, the presiding magistrate had his back to the Venetian windows. It had been suggested that a blind be provided for these windows but that does not seem to have been acted upon. The person in the dock would have been in full light, making it easier for the presiding magistrate to examine the accused's face. In the new layout he or she had their back to the windows. We wonder if this was done to remove unspoken distractions with signalling from people outside.

There were frequent complaints about lack of heating and conditions for Judges sitting in Bishop's Castle. In 1903 a letter states *'I might mention that the Judge has always complained of the discomfort of the accommodation provided for him at Bishop's Castle, which he says is very inferior to that provided by all other Courts in which he acts. I might suggest that the Corporation provide a new table cloth, a hearth rug, a comfortable chair & otherwise make the room a little more comfortable looking for the occasions when the Judge uses it. For the credit of the town I do not like to feel that he is treated worse here than anywhere else. He has often spoken very strongly about it.'*

When presenting plans for these major Town Hall repairs and reversal of the Court Room, it had been suggested that it would not cost much more to install heating. The Town Council did not accept this idea. Heating, or more precisely, lack of it, was a major cause for complaints from several of

the regular hirers. The WI acquired a reputation for complaining about this. The magistrates complained that at times they had to wear all their outer clothing because of the lack of a fire. Coal was supplied in a paper sugar bag so it is not surprising that this was inadequate for heating the Court Room! Quarter Sessions cases were often of a trivial nature with petty theft being common. In 1783, a woman [named] was accused of stealing 1 hand saw, 1 pick....., value 10 pence, from Richard Pugh, of BC, carpenter. Witnesses: Richard Norton, Elizabeth Pugh. She was found 'Not Guilty'. Some people appeared regularly and there may have been some local feuds with tit-for-tat accusations. Alehouses, which were different from public houses, had to be licensed and these were dealt with by the Court. Indeed, so many of these licences were needed that a separate Court was held just for dealing with these applications.

Who the magistrates were is being investigated: from the 1573 charter, one of the duties of senior Burgesses was to act as magistrate and some were regularly appointed to this post.

Again, early in the twentieth century, the lower hall was hired by the County to teach butter making. A surviving poster advertised butter-making classes during the afternoon. Lectures were held between 30th October and 1st December 1923. The course of lectures was increased because of the large number of students attending. The invention of the cinema resulted in a demand from several suppliers to hire the Town Hall lower room for performances from 1913. Up to 200 people could see regular shows six evenings a week. Even the Government took advantage of this and hired the Town Hall to show the official War Office war pictures, 'The Battle of the Somme' in Nov 1916.

A start has been made on a study of the newspaper reports from 1901 of the Town Council affairs and the Courts' proceedings

Tessa Dodd and Margaret E. Wilson

BCHRC Research Group: Bishop's Castle Bowling Club

The Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre (BCHRC) Research Group is investigating the history of the Bowling Club, which recently opened its restored eighteenth century clubhouse. Preliminary notes on this research have been produced and may be inspected at the Resource Centre.

Lydbury Field Group

The Group has a continuing programme of archaeological field research and related activities. New members are warmly welcomed, not only for outdoor participation but also for documentary research. Please contact the Secretary, Greta Howell, on 01588 680 223 or the Chairman, Mike Green, on 01588 680 685.

The Christopher Train Memorial Shields

This Society has established two annual competitions for papers on any aspect of local history and archaeology in South-West Shropshire. Papers must be previously unpublished, show evidence of original research and not exceed 3,000 words, excluding illustrations, maps etc. The competitions are open to all comers and consist of two categories:

- a. For adults
- b. For students of 18 years and under.

The winners will be announced and trophies presented at the annual Ritherdon Lecture (usually held in April). Winners will receive a shield to be held for that year and a prize of £30 (adults) or £25 (students). It is anticipated that winning entries will be published in the Society's *Journal*, or as Occasional Papers.

The first competition will be for the year 2008. Entries must be submitted not later than 1st December 2008 to the Society's Secretary: Mrs. Joye Minshall, 4 Alvaston Way, Rivermead, Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury SY2 5TJ. Tel: 01743 235 907; email: mjoye@fish.co.uk

Officers and Committee 2008-2009

President:	David Preshous
Vice President:	Marion Roberts
Chairman:	Maurice Young
Vice-Chairman:	Nick Howell
Hon. Secretary:	Joye Minshall, 4 Alvaston Way, Shrewsbury SY2 5TT
Membership Secretary:	Heather Williams
Hon. Treasurer:	Nick Downes
Journal Editor:	Patricia Theobald
Committee:	Mike Greene, Celia Hooper, Peter Hutton, Graham Medlicott, Janet Preshous, Cecily Tilley, Kent Tomey, Alan Wilson, Mike Wise
For membership details apply to:	Heather Williams, Holly Cottage, Prolley Moor, Wentnor. SY9 5EH, Tel: 01588 650 610

*If you would like to make a contribution to this Journal please contact the Editor,
Patricia Theobald, at Old School House, Mainstone, Bishop's Castle, SY9 5LQ,
Tel: 01588 638 555: email panda.theobald@virgin.net*

SWSHAS Programme 2008-2009

2008

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 20/21 Sept.
(in Cadet Hall,
New St, BC) | Saturday/
Sunday | SWSHAS Exhibition at Bishop's Castle
Michaelmas Fair: KEEP THE HOME
FIRES BURNING—S. W. Shropshire
in Time of War. |
| 22 Oct. | Wednesday | <i>The Shropshire Regimental Museum and its
South Shropshire Connections</i>
Peter Duckers |
| 13 Nov. | Thursday | A.G.M. followed by a presentation from
Leintwardine Historical Society |
| 9 Dec. | Tuesday | Chairman's Evening: <i>The Wrekin in
History & Fable</i>
Maurice Young |

2009

- | | | |
|-----------|----------|---|
| 13 Jan. | Tuesday | <i>Charles Darwin and his Shropshire Evolution</i>
Gareth Williams |
| 12 Feb. | Thursday | <i>Dr Penny Brookes and the Wenlock Olympic
Games</i>
Helen Cromarty |
| 13 March. | Friday | <i>The Civil War in Shropshire</i>
Terry Bracher |
| 23 April. | Thursday | 9th RITHERDON LECTURE:
<i>The Wroxeter Hinterland Project</i>
Roger White |

Outings for 2009 to be arranged.

Unless otherwise stated, meetings take place in the Community College,
Bishop's Castle, and commence at 7.30 p.m.

Visitors are warmly welcomed

