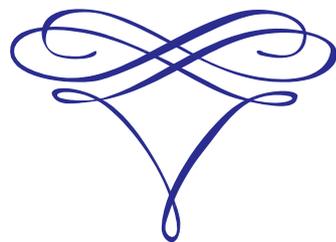


South
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Historical and
Archaeological
Society Journal



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Editorial

We are privileged to live in an unspoilt and beautiful part of this island realm. South-West Shropshire is also particularly fortunate in its archaeological features and wealth of available documents surviving for diverse areas and topics. For Journal 23 the connecting theme of the articles is mystery.

Since 1990 there have been twelve Journal articles on a variety of archaeological topics, together with 1 Occasional Paper (an interpretation of Bury Ditches), 1 adult Prize essay and 3 junior prize essays on archaeological investigations and analysis. For this issue *Teri Greene*, of the Lydbury Field Group, shares with us her investigations into the earthwork remains of Dounherberd at Lower Down.

In November 1994, at Mainstone Church, and Lydbury North Church in October 1996 the late Gordon Ashman gave talks to our Society about West Gallery music. He included reference to 'The Shropshire Harmony' by Thomas Owens. This is a delightful early nineteenth century manuscript book held at Shropshire Archives, originally part of the Shrewsbury Public Library collections. *Robert Bunting* has provided us with his thought-provoking and enthusiastic work on the mystery surrounding the identity of Thomas Owens, the man, together with a professional analysis of the music contained in this rural musician's book. This is the first time that an article on music, especially one connected with Bishop's Castle, has appeared in our Journal.

Turnpike road mileposts or 'milestones' were compulsory from 1767. Journals 5,6 and 8 include articles about local milestones. For issue 23 *Dr. Nicholas Harding* brings the discussion concerning local missing milestones up to date and, furthermore, includes for good measure some investigation into the location of the Aston Toll House and Post Office.

Also included this year are short pieces on the bravery of a First World War soldier recovering from his injuries, the Salt Library, the Gough or 'Bodleian' Map and a review of a book about Shropshire doctors and quacks. A report on local research in progress confirms a lively interest in this activity. In addition another account of the past season's events continues to demonstrate the activity of our Society and I am pleased to note the launch of the South-West Shropshire Historical & Archaeological Society website – see page 35.

I am, as always, indebted to the authors, reviewers and contributors without whom the Journal would not exist. Finally my thanks to *Janet Preshous* for proof reading the final text and to *Sarah Ellison* at Enterprise House who has produced Journal 23 in its present form.

Patricia Theobald

From the Chairman

The Society has enjoyed another good year with membership over 110 and good attendance at the various lectures and trips.

Our season started with the annual Michaelmas Fair exhibition organised by **David and Janet Preshous** entitled *Valleys of Springs and Rivers* which was a portrait of life beside the East and West Onny. Calling on their wealth of vintage photographs and memorabilia, the event was again a great success and much appreciated by the townsfolk and visitors who attended and for that I must thank David and Janet and their helpers.

The lectures this year again showed the wealth of knowledge and expertise that there is locally with all the speakers coming from Shropshire. **Colin Richards** for the County Historic Environmental Department showed how the traditional building skills are very much still alive and even being 'exported' to Romania. Our President, **David Preshous**, reminded us about the importance of Greek Historians and **Douglas Grounds'** talk on Archdeacon Plymley certainly opened my eyes to a great Salopian. The title of **Gavin Watson's** lecture, *The Fighting Shrewsburys* was intriguing and showed that planning a railway route was not without its difficulties even in the 19th century. **Andrew Wigley** showed how aerial photography has helped the discovery of new archaeological sites within the County and the season ended with the Ritherdon Lecture given by **John Cherry** who has recently retired to Ludlow following many years at the British Museum. His talk on recent treasures was very well received.

One of the questions for the next season that the committee has had to deal with is the venue for the lectures. Sadly the Community College in Bishops Castle is becoming harder to book, as it is not open every evening; gone are the days of evening classes every night. The Education Department is also putting up the rents for when it is open and we have been looking for a new venue. Finding a venue with adequate seating, a loop system and parking is not easy and this coming season we are going to try the Church Barn in Bishops Castle. We will see how it goes.

The Society owes a lot to its members and committee and I would like to thank all of you especially Joye Minshall, secretary, Nick Downes, treasurer and Peter Hutton, membership secretary for all their hard work.

Nick Howell

SWSHAS Events: September 2011 - June 2012.

Sept. 2011: The 16th Annual SWSHAS Exhibition, ‘Valleys Of Springs & Rivers’ at Bishop's Castle Michaelmas Fair attracted 500 visitors over two days. The displays featured the geology, archaeology, history, literary connections and mythology of the **Upper Onny Valley**, as well as much pictorial and documentary material on the life of the parishes of Ratlinghope, Wentnor, Myndtown, Asterton, Norbury, Lydham, More, Linley, Shelve and The Bog.

Oct. 2011: Colin Richards, environmental manager for Shropshire Council, spoke on ‘**Conserving Traditional Building Skills in Shropshire**’, exploring building techniques and materials and the understanding to avoid inappropriate restoration. He had recently undertaken work in Romania, with a team of Shropshire craftsmen.

Nov. 2011: Following the **AGM**, Peter Mills, Secretary of the Bishop's Castle Railway Society gave a lively illustrated introduction to the history of **The B.C. Railway**, which was dogged by financial insolvency but still remembered with great affection. Mike Greene reported on the **excavation by Lydbury Field Group** of a lost mill at Walcot, reconstructing the building by the use of maps and documents.

Dec. 2011: President’s Evening. David Preshous spoke on ‘**Preserving the Memory – The Ancient Greek Historians**’, illustrating (with both serious and humorous examples) the broad-brush anecdotal style of Herodotus compared with the meticulous attention to authenticity of Thucydides. The large audience then enjoyed seasonal refreshments.

Jan. 2012: Douglas Grounds, author of ‘**Archdeacon Plymley - Son and Servant of Shropshire**’*, gave a enthusiastic account of the energy and insight of Plymley’s life and work. His main efforts were for the abolition of slavery and the describing of the conditions of the parishes of Shropshire, but he gave his support to many other aspects of Shropshire life.

**[Reviewed in SWSHAS Journal No. 21, 2010].*

Feb. 2012: SWSHAS Committee member Gavin Watson gave an illustrated talk on ‘**The Fighting Shrewsburys - How the Railways came to Shropshire**’ - a fascinating account of the rival companies battling to obtain the franchise for linking and extending lines from London and Birmingham. There was political manoeuvring and violent clashes between rival gangs before the network of railways linked London with Shrewsbury, Manchester and Holyhead. Gavin also gave examples of the architecture of stations, from the magnificence of Shrewsbury to the elegance of some country stations such as Baschurch and Weston Rhyn.

March 2012: Dr Andy Wigley, Shropshire Council’s principal archaeologist, in his talk ‘**The View from Above - Recent Aerial Photographs of Shropshire**’,

gave an expert outline of the roles of vertical and oblique photography from the air, and the interpretation of crop-marks and other archaeological traces not visible from the ground, He showed outstanding views of both familiar and little-known Shropshire sites - over 1000 new sites have been revealed in the recent aerial surveys.

April 2012: The Twelfth Ritherdon Lecture, on **'Treasure and its History'** was given by John Cherry, formerly of the British Museum and current member of the Treasure Valuation Committee. He defined 'Treasure' - gold, silver or bronze objects 'hidden with intent', 'stolen', or 'ritually buried', and the present policy for preserving finds for the nation in public institutions. He showed some wonderful examples of national treasures, finds such as the recent Staffordshire Hoard, and tiny items such as the Wem Thimble.

May 2012: Following last year's Ritherdon Lecture by Richard Morriss, twenty members enjoyed an **Evening Outing to Hopton Castle**. They were shown round the recently restored and atmospheric building and its environs by Tom Baker MBE who had led the campaign to secure the land and had won support from English Heritage to make the building safe. He gave a graphic account of the complexities of the restoration work and threw light on the siege and tragic massacre of the castle garrison during the Civil War.

[NB. Access is free, and there is parking space, with good interpretation boards].

June 2012: The Society's Summer Outing was to Herefordshire, led by SWSHAS member, Dr John Leonard, author of several books on historic churches. Four churches were visited: St Peter & St Paul's at Weobley; All Saints at Monkland; St Cosmas & St Damien at Stretford; and St Mary the Virgin at Dilwyn. The Monkland PCC provided a wonderful buffet lunch. The whole day was highly enjoyable and instructive, and all present expressed thanks to Dr Leonard for his meticulous preparation and informative introductions to four outstanding churches.

Janet Preshous

This year's
SWSHAS Exhibition at
Bishop's Castle
Michaelmas Fair
in the Cadet Hall on
15 & 16 September 2012
will be
'GOING PLACES'
Historical Transport & Travel
in SW Shropshire



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

Dounherberd: A Marcher Medieval Stronghold

Little is known about the substantial earthwork remains of a motte and bailey castle known as Dounherberd (SO 3364 8460; Fig. 1). The castle is situated in south west Shropshire approximately three miles south-east of the medieval market town of Bishop's Castle and one mile south-west from the Anglo-Saxon village of Lydbury North. Sited on the Down that lies to the north of Sunny Hill and the Iron-Age hillfort of Bury Ditches, the castle looks both north and eastwards over the valley where the River Kemp flows south-eastwards from Bishop's Castle down to Clunbury and joins the larger River Clun.



Fig.1 The motte at Dounherberd, Lower Down

The castle forms part of the Norman strategic system of command and control of the Marches, being one of many established in this area in the late eleventh century. Other castles situated within close proximity to the parish of Lydbury and the Kemp valley areas are Acton, Bishop's Castle, Bishops Moat, Colebatch, Hardwick, Lydham and More (Fig. 2).

The location of Dounherberd at Lower Down represents Norman strategic planning as it does not coincide with the hillfort of Bury Ditches, positioned in the Iron-Age for its status and defence. Positioned over the Kemp valley, with intervisibility with the other castles it suggests a strong mechanism to respond to the threats to Norman rule and for those who kept the area for the King. The strategic positioning of these castles allowed for control of movement through the valleys and movement to and from Wales. As can be seen in Fig. 2, the castles of Lydham and More controlled the Camlad and Onny valleys, as did Hardwick situated between the West and East Onny. Acton and Bicton to the south of Acton (not shown) controlled the valley leading into the Clun valley before the larger medieval Clun Castle was built; Colebatch and Dounherberd at Lower Down controlled the upper Kemp valley.

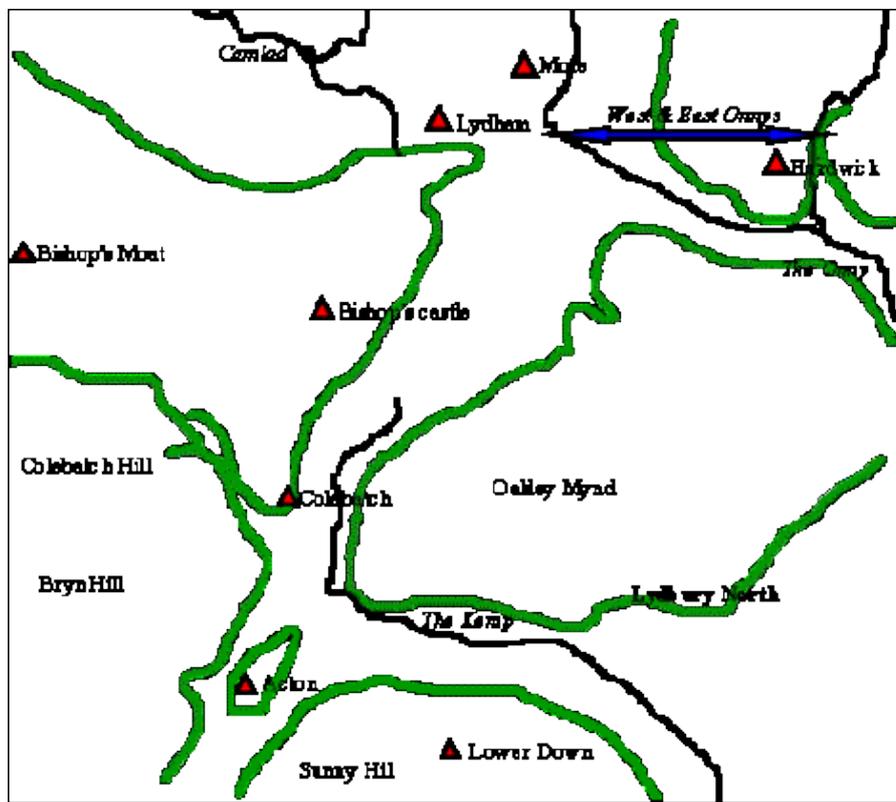


Fig. 2 Distribution of motte and bailey castles close to the Kemp valley

The substantial remains of Dounherberd can be clearly identified (Fig. 3). The motte has a diameter of 34 metres at the base and reaches a height of 4.7 metres at its highest surviving point on the western side. The surviving summit is 18 metres in diameter and the east side rises to a height of 1.8 metres. The surrounding ditch has a width of 6.5 metres and varies in depth, from 2.1 metres on the western side to 0.6 metres on the east. The ditch also shows evidence of a counterscarp which is now 0.3 metres in height but incomplete. These dimensions are comparable with those at both Lydham and More although smaller than the castles at Hardwick, Bishop's Castle and Bishops Moat but larger than the castle at Colebatch.

The poor state of the motte can be largely attributed to the removal of stone for road building and repairs. In 1909, material was removed for these purposes (NMR 107278). *'The stones of which it was composed' were 'taken for road metal and the mound is all but destroyed'* (VCH vol. I p.386; AC vol. 116 p.112).

The destruction of the motte, which would have consisted of substantial stone from the keep, revealed it to have been polygonal in shape and situated on a clay base. This clay would have served as a form of damp-coursing and has been recorded as being 4 feet from the summit, the conjectured original height of the motte being 20 feet (8 metres). Most keeps were built originally of timber and so it can be presumed that the keep at Dounherberd was also built of wood. However, exposed lower courses of the keep provide evidence of the timber castle having been in use long enough for the timbers to have been replaced in masonry. Fig. 4 shows the masonry that has survived the robbing of the stone for the road building. The stone is local mud or silt stone and when completed, the keep would have had a lime render to protect the stone from weathering.



Fig. 3 The remains of Dounherberd motte and bailey



Fig. 4 The remains of the masonry Keep at Dounherberd: scale 30cms

The circumlinear shape of the surrounding bailey enclosure (Fig. 3) has been lost due to the development of the surrounding road system although the curve of the bailey on the eastern side, opposite the hamlet of Lower Down, has been partially preserved where the road curves in respect of the former bailey just before the terminus of the bailey ditch. This terminus (Fig. 5) is the only part of the defences of the bailey that survives and it defines one side of the causeway that was the entrance to the bailey. The causeway runs away eastwards from the castle forming the medieval road down towards the hamlet of Lower Down and then possibly veers south-eastwards across the fields as a hollow-way towards the Anglo-Saxon settlements of Lydbury North, Kempton and Little Brampton. This causeway was used to carry the Walcot estate road around Robert Clive of India's country estate. Clive would have driven around his estate, incorporating both Dounherberd and Bury Ditches Hillfort, in order to impress his guests.



Fig. 5 The terminus of the bailey ditch showing part of the causeway on the left.

Within the bailey and surrounding the motte can be seen the banks of internal structures (Fig. 3). These may represent contemporaneous internal buildings of the bailey of a domestic nature such as residential, storage, workshops and stables. However, without geophysically surveying and excavating these structures it is not possible to confirm what they were used for since they may equally represent the remains of later, more recent agricultural buildings occupying the remains of the bailey.

How long the castle was occupied is also unknown although there is reference to it shown on Rees' fourteenth century map showing the castle as a grade 'C' site meaning that it was a small fortress possibly abandoned by the fourteenth century. Rees also refers to the castle as being called Dounherberd. This may have been the name of the family or owner of the castle.

Motte and bailey castles were first introduced into Britain in 1043 when Edward the Confessor returned from his exile in Normandy. However, after the Norman invasion in 1066 and as the Normans advanced they built castles not only as a secure stronghold of defence but also to visually overawe and control the local population. The site for the motte and bailey was carefully chosen for its defensive stronghold, usually on raised ground overlooking a valley and close to a river or stream as in the case of Dounherberd.

The motte was formed by the earth being dug from the surrounding ditch, and thrown inwards to form the conical circular mound and shaped with a flattened top. The bailey would have been similarly formed, except that the material from the bailey ditch was used to level the area within the bailey and form an enclosing bank upon which to erect a timber palisade. A timber keep or tower would have

been built upon the motte and the summit of the motte enclosed by a palisade to protect the keep. The keep would have been built with a number of floors within its structure and a wooden drawbridge would have connected the motte with the bailey, the entrance to the keep usually having been on the first floor.

These castles were quick and easy to build by unskilled labourers. To build a motte similar to that of Dounherberd would possibly take fifty workers forty days working a ten-hour day in good weather conditions. The wooden keeps of the more important castles were often later rebuilt in masonry and on some mottes the enclosing palisade was replaced with a wall. This is known as a shell keep and stone or timber buildings were erected inside it.

In the mid twelfth century, circular or polygonal-shaped keeps began to appear. Licences were obtained from the Crown allowing builders to crenellate the walls and by the thirteenth century, castles began to be rectangular with projecting towers, gatehouses and barbicans. By the late thirteenth century, during the reign of Edward I, there was a decline in castle building for purely military purposes and they were replaced by manor-houses that were more comfortable to live in but were also strong enough to withstand attack. A good local example of this is Stokesay Castle near Craven Arms, built of stone with a tower, barbican, later gatehouse and moat. The final phase of castle building continued right into the sixteenth century, in the reign of Henry VIII.

During the seventeenth century Civil War many of the castles were attacked, razed or partially destroyed. Those that survived were either later converted into residential use as is the case with the Lea to the east of Bishop's Castle. Other castles have disappeared, remaining only as cropmarks or parchmarks in the soil as does the castle at Acton. Some castles' ruins have now become a tourist attraction and are in the care of English Heritage such as the castle at Clun, whilst others have been robbed of their materials, as has the castle of Dounherberd, at Lower Down.

Teri Greene

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Thomas Owens of Bishop's Castle: a Musical Mystery from 1816

Shropshire Archives holds a manuscript music book with the title 'The Shropshire Harmony by Thomas Owens'. The work dates from the early nineteenth century, but there is no information concerning its provenance.

Prelude - Music In The Gallery

Until well into the nineteenth century most village churches did not have organs and music was provided by a dedicated group of singers, often accompanied a fiddle, flute, clarinet, cello and bassoon, who sometimes sat above the congregation in a gallery at the west end of the church. They would have been the aristocrats of the village, mostly craftsmen or tradesmen – blacksmith, tailor, carter – strong and gifted characters who could read and write, manage their own businesses, teach and learn new skills. They worked hard at their music, and there was a whole industry of expert support, people who travelled round teaching the younger people to sing and read music, and composing music for the use of country churches. The most successful of these composers, people like Thomas Clark of Canterbury, published printed volumes of their own compositions. There was a vast repertoire of 'West Gallery' music, ranging from the highly professional to the most homespun. The style is forceful and energetic, with independent voices echoing each other in fugue style and sometimes lengthy instrumental episodes or 'symphonies'. In some places the congregation joined in, but the music is not well suited to congregational singing, and often became the exclusive preserve of the highly practised few in the gallery.

These choirs were a definite force and highly prized within their communities. They were independent, argumentative, jealous of their status, and did not see themselves as in any way subservient to the vicar. The novelist and poet Thomas Hardy, who along with his father and grandfather was a member of such a group (he calls them 'The Quire'), often refers to their activities in his writings. In *'Under the Greenwood Tree'* Hardy tells of the demise of the West Gallery tradition. Victorian vicars wished to reform worship, and found the old-style singers in their way. The solution was to replace them with a harmonium or organ, played by the vicar's wife or the schoolmistress, and to introduce simple hymns for all to join in, led perhaps by the children of the local school.

The displaced singers sometimes migrated to the Methodist chapel, as did Shropshire church musician and fiddler John Moore of Wellington. But often their music was shut away in dusty archives, only to be rediscovered in the 1980s. It is now enjoying an enthusiastic revival. This is the background from which *'The Shropshire Harmony'* springs.

Who Was Thomas Owens?

The short answer is – we just don't know! To start our investigation we only have three clues from *The Shropshire Harmony*: 'Bishops Castle 27 March 1816' is written on one page of his manuscript; another page bears the name 'E. Morris'. On a third page is the location 'Henley Wood'. These inscriptions suggest that Owens lived at Henley Wood, a rural spot just outside Bishop's Castle, itself a small, bustling market town between Ludlow and Shrewsbury in the South Shropshire countryside.

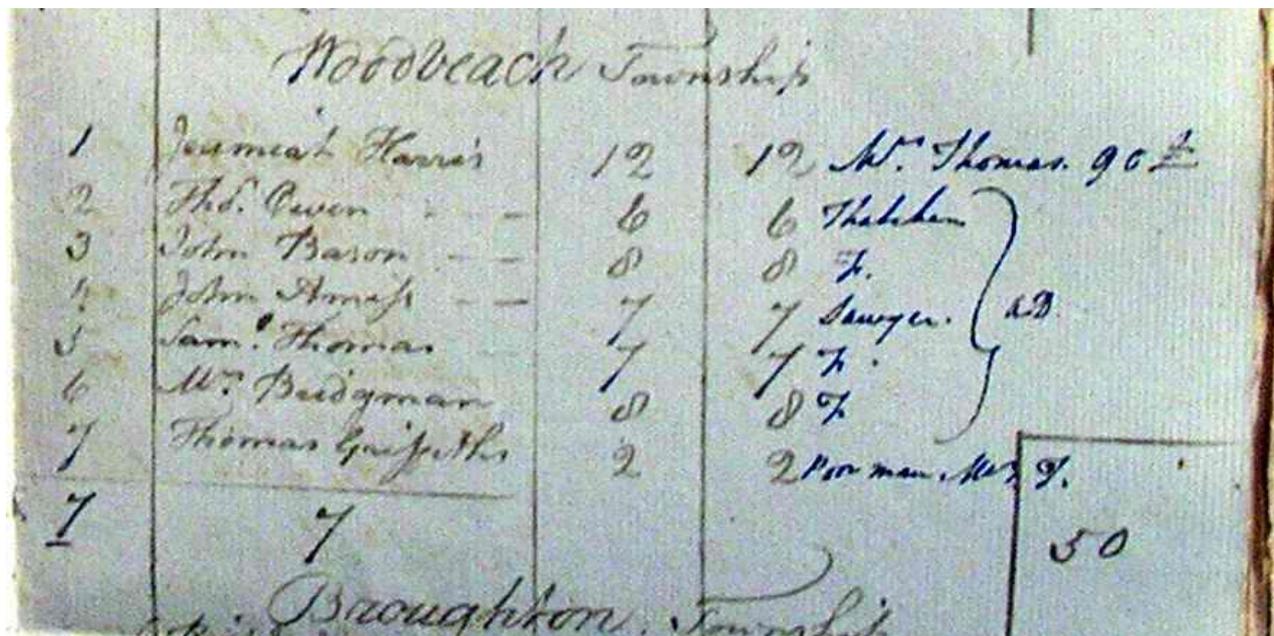
The manuscript also gives us some clues as to the possible dates of Thomas Owens's life. Because the handwriting and layout are so consistent, the book appears to be a compilation of pieces composed over many years - which suggests Owens was by 1816 a mature man. But this carefully organised manuscript is over-laid with later material, mostly instrumental music. He must therefore have been young enough to have continued his composing and performing career after 1816.

The name Thomas Owen or Owens was common in the area at the time. For instance, in the Bishops Castle Parish register, two men named Thomas Owens got married in the 1760s, while in the same period at Mainstone (near Henley Wood) three men of the same name appear. But perhaps the strongest candidate is Thomas first-born son of Zachariah and Letitia Owens, baptised in Bishops Castle on 21 Sept 1755. This Thomas would have been 61 in 1816, ready to gather his collected works, but still with some years of musical life to look forward to. He was buried in 1834, 'aged 80'.

In the survey of South Shropshire by Archdeacon Plymley in 1793 a Thomas Owen[s?] is listed as a thatcher living in the township of 'Woodbeach', with 6 in his family. The township of Woodbatch includes Henley Wood, so this could possibly be our man. Most West Gallery musicians earned their living as artisans, so the fact that he was a thatcher is no discouragement. He would have been 38, well established in his trade, married with a young family. The 6 in residence are probably Thomas's wife, children and perhaps his widowed mother (Zachariah died in 1782). This would suggest a one-man business, in fairly modest circumstances, although the term 'family' could also include live-in servants, labourers or apprentices.

Another important clue comes from papers relating to a sale at the Castle Inn in May 1786: 'Lot 2 in the township of Woodbatch – Henley Wood cottage (for the life of Thomas Owen)'. Several lots were purchased by Lord Clive of nearby Walcot Hall. Clive now owned the property, but Thomas Owen had 'lifehold' - he and his dependents could remain there while he lived. Here is a Thomas Owen unmistakably in residence at the cottage next to Henley Wood. This must

surely be our composer. Perhaps the most exciting find is in the churchwardens' accounts of Lydbury North. Here in 1790 we read 'pd Thomas Owens singing master 5 pounds 15 shillings and 6d', a remarkable find.



Phymley Survey 1793 entry for Woodbeach Township

Here is our composer working as choir trainer in the most prosperous parish of the area; this is in fact the only proof to date that Owens actually was involved with any church! So it is frustrating to find that there is no churchwarden payment to any singing master, let alone Owens, at Lydbury North after 1790. A tentative interpretation might be that Owens is paid a handsome sum to set up and train the choir, (which seems to have included some instrumentalists). After that he bows out and leaves the singers to their own devices.

Henley Wood still exists, a piece of woodland on the brow of a hill half-way between Bishops Castle and Mainstone, above a well-trodden footpath, now the Shropshire Way. A small house with outbuildings, Wood House, is set on the hillside below the wood and above a stream, looking out on beautiful countryside – a perfect home for a composer! From here, Thomas Owens could easily have walked over to Lydbury North, or to lead the music at either Bishops Castle or Mainstone churches. The information we have is suggestive, though frustratingly inconclusive.



View of Wood House

Mainstone church still has a small music stand, of a size suitable for *'The Shropshire Harmony'* manuscript, with a groove for holding a choir-master's pitch-pipe. The church was paying singers two guineas a year from 1824 onwards, and purchased a bassoon in 1828 and a *'clarionet'* in 1829.

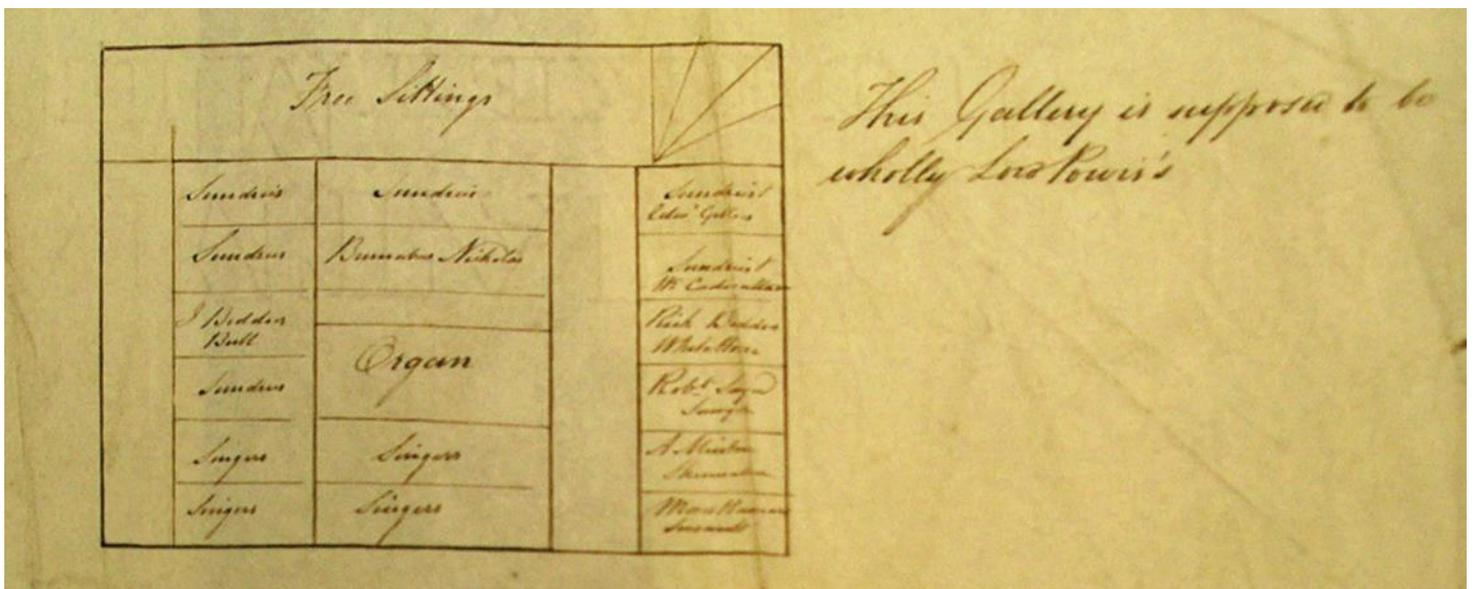


Mainstone Music Stand



Mainstone Bassoon

There survives a magnificent plan of the Gallery in Bishops Castle church, dated 1839. The plan includes space for an organ (probably a barrel organ) and four pews for the use of singers. The presence of an organ rather suggests the reformed Victorian approach to church music, in which case the singers would likely have been school-children – but the organ may well have been quite recently installed, in which case music would previously have been provided by a choir of the traditional sort. We might even spin a tale in a pattern familiar from the period: a cantankerous bunch of singers being banished from Bishop's Castle church at some time in the 1820s, replaced by barrel organ plus docile children, and emigrating to Mainstone church. But more evidence about music in both churches is needed before we can state anything with certainty.



Bishop's Castle Church Gallery Plan 1839

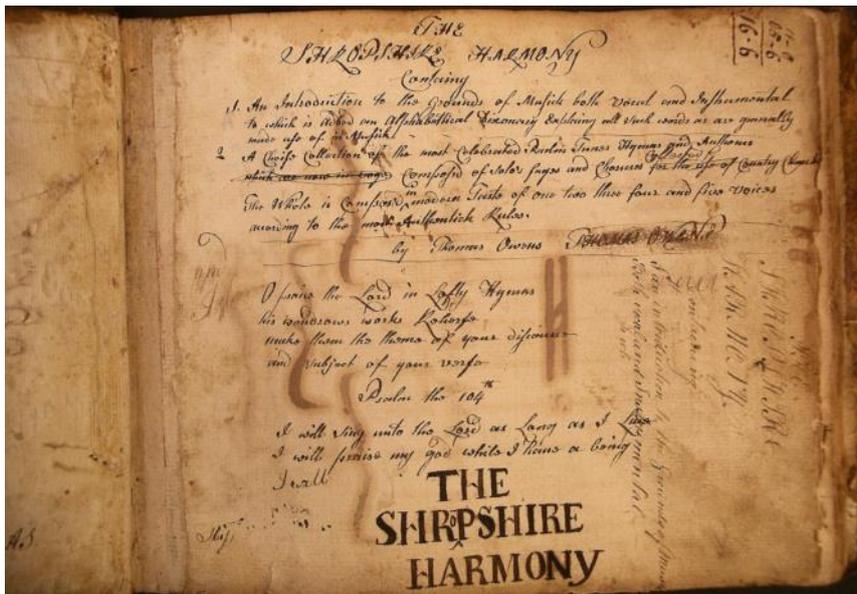
What happened to Thomas's descendants and property? We catch some tantalising glimpses from the 1841 census of the Woodbatch area, seven years after Owens' death. Wood House itself is by this date occupied by three generations of a Morris family, headed by a Thomas Morris, farmer, aged 70, with 7 family members in all. And just up the valley at Woodbatch Farm resides an Edward Morris, aged 35, farmer, with a family of 6 and 6 live-in agricultural labourers. Remember that the name E. Morris appears on the page dated '27 March 1816, Henley Wood'. The connection is surely too strong to be co-incidental — there may have been a friendly relationship between the Owens and Morris families going back many years.

Given that there were several Owen or Owens families in the immediate area at the time, any conclusions about our composer's identity and life story must be cautious ones. But to sum up, we can say with some confidence: Thomas Owens, the composer of '*The Shropshire Harmony*', may have lived from 1755 to 1834. He dwelt at Wood House, Henley Wood, near Bishops Castle and may have worked as a thatcher. He composed both church and instrumental music, acted as singing master at Lydbury North for a while, and probably directed choirs at both Bishops Castle and Mainstone churches.

What Is 'The Shropshire Harmony'?

South Shropshire is a still little-known part of England; in the eighteenth century it was quite backward and cut off. On the national stage, Thomas Owen is about as marginal as one can imagine! So we may turn to the music of '*The Shropshire Harmony*' with romantic hopes of discovering a musical John Clare, an untutored genius with a unique poetic vision. Well, Thomas Owens isn't that. Considering his situation, his musical achievement is astonishing - we can take pride in our local composer and perform his music without apology. But his tunes will never set the world alight.

That's not the point though. It's a rare privilege to be able to enter the mind of a rural community musician of the early nineteenth century. This is the workbook of a practising musician. Those who conduct local singers and arrange music for them in the twenty first century can identify with every move Owens makes musically, and to look at his actual handwriting, explore his experiments, successes, mistakes, corrections and adaptations, is a moving experience. '*The Shropshire Harmony*' contains 43 psalm tunes, 12 lengthy anthems, three hymns, and some sketches for instrumental pieces, which were almost certainly written at a later date. Most of the music is by Thomas Owens himself, with six pieces by a John Symons. A preface explains the rules of music and there seems to have been a change of direction after 1816, indicated for instance in the over-writing of new music above the original score and in the appearance of instrumental music.



Title page of The Shropshire Harmony

Our first impression of this book is one of chaos! Some pages have been torn out, several have their lower halves crudely cut away, little tabs of paper are glued on (perhaps to cover mistakes or tears?), addition sums are scrawled in margins, finished work is overwritten with scribbled sketches for new pieces. On the title

page alone Owens makes three separate attempts at a flowery title in his best copperplate hand, misses out the 'O' in Shropshire, scratches out whole phrases, writes his name four times in full at various angles and starts it a fifth time. Yet mingling with this chaos are page after page of meticulous order and precision, scores so clearly and elegantly written out that one could perform them today straight from the page, and the outlines of a grand plan for the work – psalm tunes gathered in order, followed by anthems. The actual text of the title page is intriguing:

THE
SHROPSHIRE HARMONY

Containing

- 1 *An Introduction to the Grounds of Musick both Vocal and Instrumental to which is Added an Alphabetical Discovery Explaining all such words as are generally needs use of in Musick.*
- 2 *A Choise Collection of the most Celebrated Psalm Tunes Hymns and Anthems which are now in vogue Composed of solo's fuges and Choruses Collected for the use of Country Churches*
The Whole is Composed in modern Taste of one two three four and five voices according to the most Authentick Rules.

by Thomas Owens

Elegant language for a Marches thatcher, or is it simply copied from some published collection? Owens does deliver most of what he promises; he only falls down in achieving ‘modern taste’ (on the contrary most of the music is distinctly old-fashioned for 1816) and ‘the most authentic rules’; like many amateur West Gallery composers he seems neither to know nor care about the academic niceties. There is no trace of the *‘most celebrated tunes which are now in vogue’* - most of the music is attributed to Owens himself, or to the mysterious John Symons. Is there a hint of a vanity project here? Owens surely had no realistic hope of publication, and this otherwise totally practical working musician’s book doesn’t really need a fancy title. But if he was collating a lifetime’s work into one book, it’s quite understandable he would want to give it some dignity, make a bit of a show, and even decorate it in borrowed finery.

The Preface: here Owens provides an introduction to music notation, theory, and performance practice. It’s not clear why he needed to do this – presumably he himself already knew it all! Perhaps he planned to use the book for teaching others. Or he may have decided that since many published collections include a section on ‘rudiments’ he would copy bits out to make his book look similar. Alongside a generous helping of music theory, the preface includes some eminently practical features: Owens gives useful instructions on beating time in the various metres, and provides some simple exercises for sight-reading or voice-training.

Resources And Performance Practice: at the beginning of a piece we frequently find transposition instructions. For instance a piece in C major will be inscribed ‘in C sharp’ or ‘in B’. The fact that these are often transpositions by a semitone suggest that the music was originally unaccompanied; instrumentalists, even a very good organist, would find the new keys outlandish. There is no evidence of an organ being used, but there are signs that in his later years Owens may have used instruments to double the voices, as was common in the West Gallery tradition. As every choral director knows, transposition can change the whole resonance of a piece. Some of these transpositions are downward, but several are upward – Thomas Owens’s singers clearly weren’t afraid of high notes.

The psalm settings do not include texts, so the singers must have kept their psalters open beside the music. In the anthems the text *is* provided, neatly written out beneath the notes. Few singers could easily learn such lengthy pieces by rote; the singers must either have been good music readers, or very quick to learn by ear. Either way, we get a picture of a group of skilful, dedicated singers, led by a knowledgeable and ambitious music director. It is impossible to say how many singers, but seems reasonable to assume that they were a small group, maybe even one to a part, and that Owens might have

taken one of the parts himself rather than stand at the front conducting. We have to remember that the Treble parts – just as challenging as the rest – were quite possibly taken by young boys, no doubt ruthlessly drilled in their responsibilities.

Almost all the texts Owens sets are taken from the Bible. Unlike Shropshire's other West Gallery musician John Moore (a younger man and probably a Methodist from Shropshire's industrial area), he sets no verses by Wesley or Isaac Watts. Owens follows the prevailing rule of the Anglican Church, that only Biblical texts were allowed in worship. In practice this meant setting nothing but metrical versions of the Psalms, either Tate and Brady's New Version or Sternhold and Hopkins' Old Version. Various clues indicate that Owens (or his congregation) preferred the Old Version, which makes *The Shropshire Harmony* somewhat old-fashioned.

The Musical Contents: we do not know when Owens started composing. If we assume it was when he was around 30, then the 43 psalms and 12 anthems and three hymns collected in 1816 are the result of around 30 years' work – perhaps a rather slow rate of output, although he could have produced them in a few bursts of activity rather than as a steady stream. The aim seems to be to provide a complete set of music for all the needs of the church's year; this would be useful for Owens in his role of choirmaster. There is very little Christmas music, but then little was needed for the church itself; the vast West Gallery repertoire of carols is used in 'doing the rounds of the parish' on Christmas Eve rather than to fill a place in a church service.

Psalms: 43 pieces are designed for psalm singing. They are mostly for four-part choir, but some are duets, mostly for tenor and bass. Twenty six psalms are attributed to Thomas Owens, six to John Symons, one to Symons continued by Owens and one – the most 'old-fashioned' in style of the whole book – to 'Mr Wothorol' (or Wetherall). Six are unattributed. There is an original composition for Psalm 100 by Owens, and also a setting of the Geneva Psalter tune 'Old Hundredth', a perennial favourite still sung today. There is one other borrowed tune: Psalm 104 uses the melody 'Hanover' by William Croft.



The 18th Psalm

Anthems: the 12 anthems are all based on Psalm or other Bible passages (one is the Christmas story from St. Luke), and all attributed to Thomas Owens. Seven of these are duets for Tenor and Bass; the other 5 are in four parts. They are quite lengthy, up to 150 bars, and highly polyphonic, with each voice singing in total independence from the others.

Other Vocal Pieces: there is a florid melody titled 'While Shepherds... kept watch over their flocks by night' - no further text, but slurs to indicate how the words fit the tune. The tune does not fit the well-known Tate and Brady text; it seems to call for a skilled solo singer. 'The Song of the Three Holy Children' is unattributed (the text is from the Book of Common Prayer) and is an elaborate setting with alternate solo and choral passages, sadly incomplete. 'A Hymn for Easter Day' is unattributed, and in a rather different style from Owens' own music. This text was popular with singers but not part of the established liturgy. It is a simple setting with a recurrent florid 'Hallelujah'. 'The Funeral Hymn' is described as *Ps the 15th or the Funeral Hymn by Jo. Symons*' but quite different in style from all the other psalm tunes: no polyphony, just simple chords, suitable for singing while walking across the fields behind a coffin.

The Score: Owens purchased a book with six empty staves printed on each page. Choir music needs only four staves, which leaves two unusable staves at the bottom of each page. Printed music paper was very expensive. But this extravagance doesn't seem to have worried Owens at first - he was producing his great compilation and wanted it to look good. Sometimes he fills the empty staves with pieces for two voices; sometimes they are just left empty. But at a later date (probably after 1816) new uses were found for these staves. Voice parts are copied out in different clefs and keys. Instrumental music, sometimes quite rudimentary as if learning to compose in a new style, is scribbled on them in small writing. Stranger still, these sketches often overflow into empty bars on the choral score itself. This is still readable if you know what is going on and know the music already, but it looks a mess. Over the tidy choral score a 'palimpsest' of later music has been superimposed. This clearly marks a dramatic change of direction, even a crisis. The reason has to be the high price of music paper - every spare scrap must be used, freehand extra staves are even added. Changes of clefs and transposed versions of individual voice parts suggest a move from *a capella* singing to instrumental accompaniment. Suddenly there is secular music for instruments on their own. Even the handwriting looks a bit different (although maybe only because it is smaller, more hurried, and seems to use a different nib-shape). Clearly it is no longer important to work from an immaculate and elegant score. Has Owens gone through a life change, so that his musical activities are now completely different? Or is this a different composer? On several pages the bottom two staves have been clumsily cut out - why, and what was on them? One tentative

suggestion is that these held parts for instruments, which Owens cut out and handed to the players. But they may have been blank, and excised simply to use for writing shopping lists!

A Mystery Collaborator: some of the pieces in *'The Shropshire Harmony'* are attributed to a J Symons. He is not a recognised composer, but Owens seems to have known him personally - for instance, one piece is described as *'by J Symons continued by Thomas Owens'*, which suggests that Owens had access to unfinished manuscripts by Symons. Research by Sally Drage has revealed a little-known church musician of this name - from Brixham in Devon! How on earth could these two men have met? Apparently Symons had a lease on a copper mine at Bickerton in Cheshire, just north of Whitchurch and east of Wrexham. The road from Brixham to Bickerton would have passed through Hereford to Ludlow then Shrewsbury (the present A49). But there were mines which might have interested Symons in the hills alongside the alternative route from Hereford to Shrewsbury, which passes through Bishops Castle (the present-day A488). Did Symons break his journey at Bishops Castle, attend church one Sunday, and stay to talk to the musicians? Was there a chance meeting on the road? However it started, we can imagine a friendship developing which resulted in regular meetings whenever Symons came north.

Musical Style And Values: Owens' composing is on a par with that of a good 'A'-Level music student of today. But we must remember that this standard was the result of long hours of isolated, untutored work after a hard day's labour. It is deeply impressive for a man in his circumstances to have achieved so much. For all its limitations, this is real music, energetic, perfectly crafted for the vocal capacities of amateur singers, melodious and idiomatic, and supremely functional as psalmody. Owens knew his West Gallery tradition well. Where there is a 'tune', it appears in the tenor, but most of the music is not conceived round an 'Air', a dominating melody, but in an equality of voices. It is in the old polyphonic spirit, going all the way back to the Elizabethan period, rather than the new tune-based Handelian style of Thomas Clark and others - sober, plain and sturdy rather than exciting, expressive and catchy.

The later instrumental music is much more experimental. We can almost see Owens teaching himself how to compose in this new genre – using text-book techniques, with dozens of sketches and crossings out. But at its best it is surprisingly assured and listenable. We can make a revealing comparison with John Moore's fiddler's book. These are not well-known dances such as we find in Moore, but newly-composed chamber music, aiming towards the style of composers like Haydn. Where did Thomas Owens learn to sing and to compose? Did he perhaps start young, as a boy treble? There must clearly have been choirs, music scores and tutors around in South Shropshire – his

Preface was surely copied from other sources - but nothing is known of these today. The Bishop's Castle census of 1831 mentions a musician and music teacher, Mr Hammond. It is hard to imagine anyone as passionate about music as Owens passing up the chance to learn from a professional living in the same town. It seems most likely that Hammond would have made his living as an instrumental teacher, of keyboard, flute or violin; might it have been he who showed Owens how to write for instruments?

Thomas Owens The Man

To quote a famous Hardy poem, Owens lived in *'the time of the breaking of nations'*: 1763 saw the start of the American Revolution, 1789 that of the French Revolution, 1803-15 the Napoleonic Wars, 1807 the abolition of slavery, 1819 the Peterloo Massacre, and 1832 the Reform Act. Hardy's poem implies that much of this passed by countrymen such as Owens. But Hardy is making a purely poetic point; in reality, both *his* Dorset and Owens' Shropshire were closely connected to world events. In 1768 the turnpike road reached Bishop's Castle and travel at last started to become easier. In 1781 the first iron bridge was built in Shropshire's iron-making centre, the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. In 1783 John Wesley visited Shropshire, marking the rise of Methodism in the industrial areas.

And in 1763 Robert Lord Clive (Clive of India), returned to Shropshire, the county of his birth, to exploit the vast fortune he had amassed from the emerging British Empire. First he bought and enlarged nearby Walcot Hall, then he started to purchase land all around Bishop's Castle, with the aim of capturing the votes of the burgesses; this classic rotten borough elected two MPs on a strictly cash for favours basis. Owens would have known first-hand about Lord Clive, who owned his very house; and therefore both about British expansion in India and about rotten boroughs – he would have understood perfectly the reasons for the Reform Act! But his political awareness would have stretched even wider since Bishop's Castle was a 'parole town' for French prisoners of war; they mingled freely with the populace, several were married in Owens' church to local girls, and one is even buried in the churchyard. And another gravestone, from 1802, commemorates the death of I.D. 'an African', complete with an abolitionist slogan – many of the Shropshire gentry, including Archdeacon Plymley who surveyed Owens' Woodbatch dwelling, were passionate abolitionists.

Owens' later years were a time of great rural poverty. From the hill above his house he would have looked across to Linley Hill, where a spacious beech avenue had been planted - a local landmark to this day. He would have seen young people emigrating from the countryside to the industrial centres; his own

children may well have considered this course. But he seems to have been cautious and conservative, sticking to his trade, his valley home and the Church of England. The manuscript shows us a man totally devoted to music, serious and ambitious about his work. Sober, pragmatic, maybe a touch on his dignity, but with a wilder, imaginative, even eccentric streak of self-assertion he was methodical and systematic in an almost dogged way, driven to learning, with a limited emotional and imaginative range but high standards of craftsmanship. Conservative yes, but trying within limits to move with the times, Thomas Owens comes alive to us as a sturdy, committed, vigorous, assertive, down-to-earth man, with all the hallmarks of the rural artisan or yeoman farmer - an enduring part of both Shropshire and British tradition.

Robert Bunting

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are due to the following people for all their help and encouragement in the research that led to this article: Isabella Ashman, Sally Drage, Edwin McAdam, David and Janet Preshous, Tony Singleton, Patricia Theobald.

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Aston's Missing Mile Stone and its Toll House

The Clun to Craven Arms road (B4368) was a turnpike road for much of the nineteenth century. At Little Brampton it was joined by the turnpike road from Bishop's Castle (B4385). These roads, in common with others controlled by the Bishop's Castle Turnpike Trust, contained distinctive stone milestones. Several articles appeared in the SWSHAS Journal in the 1990s covering the disposition of these stones: *Precious Stones*. Issue 5 1994 by Harley Thomas; *The Milestones Around Us*. Issue 6 1995 by J. A. Foley; *Adventures with Milestones*. Issue 6 1995 by John Roberts; *Milestones, an Update*. Issue 8 1997 by Harley Thomas. In addition, issue 5 contained an announcement of the formation of *The Shropshire Boundary Stones Project* by The Archaeological Unit of Shropshire County Council.



Fig. 1 Milestones on B4368



Fig. 2 'Missing' Milestone in 1884

Foley's list of 1995 gives the location of three stones on that portion of 'Route 6' (B4368 Craven Arms to Clun) lying in the parish of Hopesay. He reported as 'not found', the milestones located two miles and three miles from Craven Arms. Strangely, the 1:25 000 Explorer map 216 of 1999 indicates the location of the three-mile marker but not the two-mile one (Fig.

1). The 25-inch OS map of 1884 clearly shows a stone located 6 and 3/4 miles from Clun and 2 miles from Craven Arms, positioned on the north side of the road between Crowmoor Farm and Crowmoor Cottage (Fig. 2).

On a visit from Australia in 2002, Gary Campion, the brother of a local resident, discovered the missing milestone in a hedge (Fig. 3) just east of the property, which was called Crowsmoor Cottage in 1884.



Fig. 3 'Missing' two-mile stone in hedge.

Not only is the two-mile stone missing from the Explorer map, English Heritage does not have it in its list of *Scheduled Ancient Monuments* for Hopesay parish; however, both the three and four mile stones *are* listed. All of these milestones are in poor condition, especially the middle (3-mile) one; perhaps, the Hopesay parish council in co-operation with SWSHAS could have a go at restoring them.

John Clarke, in the Summer 1999 issue of the SWSHAS Journal, lists the round house on the Clun Road in Aston on Clun as a tollhouse. This claim is repeated in Robert Anthony's chapter in *The Gale of Life*. In actuality, it appears that the tollhouse was on the opposite side of the road. The 1851 census has a property named the Post Office in the occupation of a labourer, William



Fig.. 4 The missing two-mile stone

Pugh, and his family. The property listed before the Post Office was the Turnpike House and after, the Blacksmith's; the Kangaroo was next (Table 1).

Property Number	Property Name	Head	Occupation	Remarks
16		John Thomas	Master Shoemaker	Sister listed as shoebinder
17	Turnpike House	John Davies	Journeyman Shoemaker	Wife listed as gate keeper
18	Post Office	William Pugh	Labourer	Son listed as blacksmith apprentice
19		John Dislee	Master Blacksmith employing 2 men	
20	Kangaroo	John Beddoes	Licensed Victualer	

Table 1 1851 Census Aston on Clun

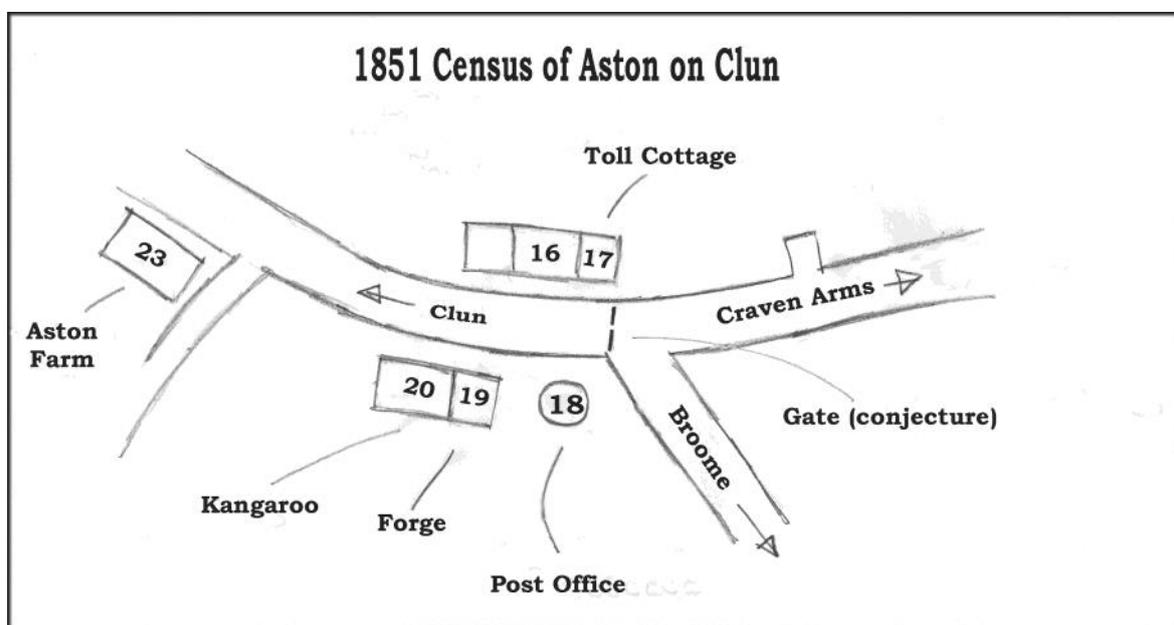


Fig. 5 Sketch of 1851 properties near the round house



Fig. 6 Round house post office window

The Post Office is clearly at the round house since it is listed as the next property beyond the Blacksmith's (the present day Forge Garage), which in turn is next door to the Kangaroo. There is also physical evidence showing the round house to be Aston's first (of three) post office: an unusual narrow window with letter flap is positioned to the right of the front door (Fig. 6) behind which is a small room - the sorting office? This window is clearly a later addition - the round house is late 18th or early 19th century - as indicated, for example, by the sandstone lintels, and I would guess was cut out in the 1840s or 50s with the advent of the penny post and the national postal system.

In 1861 William Pugh was still living in the Post Office, but now as Post Master. The census enumerator has, as in 1851, the Turnpike House immediately before the Post Office and the Blacksmith's comes after. The property before - to the west of - the Turnpike House is in the occupation of John Thomas a Master Shoemaker. Next door (further west) resides John Davies, a labourer; in 1851 he was a Journeyman Shoemaker and his wife the Gate Keeper, but now a Laundress. These three properties were in a terrace now known as Rose Cottages. A post card of circa 1905 (Fig. 7) shows this terrace; the three homes were addressed, from right to left, as 1, 2 and 3 Clun Road. Number 1 would have been the Turnpike House; it clearly had been, quite crudely, added on to the others, undoubtedly when the road was turnpiked. At some point it acquired a gabled roof, and today is an integral part of number 2 Clun Road.

Widow Gittins was 'Toll Gate Keeper' in 1871 living with her two small children at property No. 68, the Toll Gate; the Post Office was at No. 67. De-turnpiking had occurred in the 1870s and no reference to a turnpike house or gate keeper occurs in any census after 1871.



Fig. 7 Rose Cottages circa 1905

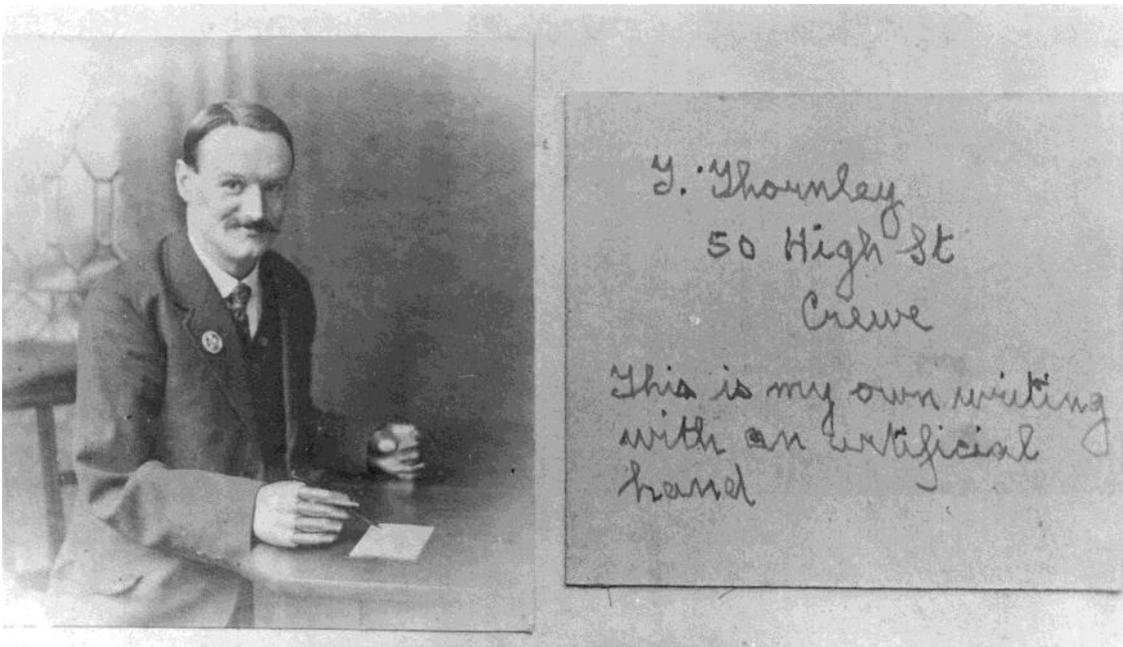
Nicholas Harding

In the postcard (fig. 7) one of the young men is clearly wearing a post office uniform. There are several Shire publications about milestones and waymarking. The Milestone Society was established in 2001, and has a website at www.milestone-society.co.uk (Ed)

A Story of First World War Bravery

When I was compiling *Bishop's Castle Well-Remembered* (pub. 1990), I spoke to many people who had been born and bred in the town. The late Mrs. Joan Newell of Union Street, Bishop's Castle let me see a letter to her mother written in May 1918 by the Congregational Minister expressing the sympathy of his congregation on hearing that her husband was reported to be a prisoner-of-war in Germany. (He returned to Bishop's Castle after the War).

Mrs. Newell also produced a picture of the minister's own son, who had apparently been wounded and had lost both his hands. The photograph has his signature and a note: 'This is my own writing with an artificial hand'.



*Thomas Thornley, who lost both his hands in action during the 1914-1918 War
(from Bishop's Castle Well Remembered by Janet Preshous)*

I was intrigued at the time, but it has taken 22 years to find out the rest of the story, and I am very grateful to Alan Brisbourne who passed on some extracts from *The Church Stretton Advertiser*:

On Nov. 1st 1917 it was reported that the Congregational Church expressed sympathy to Mrs. T. Thornley and the Rev. and Mrs. W.H Thornley - 'the pastor's son Pte Thos. Thornley (Cheshires) had been reported severely wounded, and his nephew had paid the supreme sacrifice...' Rev. Thornley expressed thanks for over 100 letters, including one from Rev. Father O'Connor at Plowden who wrote 'This letter is only a handshake of sympathy with a brother minister of Christ I knew your son and always admired him'. Pte Thornley was reported to be in hospital at Stockport. He is to be fitted with

artificial arms. He sends a cheery message 'I am not worrying'.

On March 14th 1918 the congregation sent congratulations to Pte Thornley, who had lost both his arms, on being awarded the Military Medal.

April 4th 1918 *Pte Thomas Thornley, Cheshires, was decorated with the M M., and on his return to hospital met with a rousing reception at the railway station. His wounded comrades carried him shoulder-high and the villagers joined the procession with ringing cheers'*

Dec. 12th 1918 *Pte Thornley has been supplied with a pair of artificial arms and his father Rev. W.H Thornley received a cheerful letter from him in his own handwriting'. April 10th 1919, Bishop's Castle: 'Ex-Private Thomas Thornley, son of Rev. Thornley, who acted a regimental stretcher-bearer with the 1st Cheshires on the Western Front, and was deprived of both arms, **gave an interesting demonstration including some remarkable feats of dexterity with his artificial limbs, in the Lecture Hall on Friday.** The Mayor presided.... A silver collection was devoted to the working expenses of the Shop Managers, Clerks and Assistants, disabled Sailors and Soldiers Committee Fund'.*

I am so glad to have at last learned the background to a very special and intriguing photograph.

Janet Presbous.

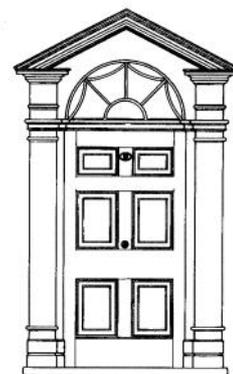
The William Salt Library, Stafford

Eastgate Street Stafford ST16 2LZ tel: 0785-278372

email: william.salt.library@staffordshire.gov.uk

Opening hours: Tuesday-Thursday 10.00 a.m.-1.00p.m. ; 2.00 p.m.-4.00 p.m.

This library contains an extensive collection of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, drawings, watercolours and transcripts collected by a London banker, William Salt (1808-1863). As a young man, he acquired the papers of some important Staffordshire antiquarians. William married Helen Black in 1857 and went to live in London. He died in 1863, after which his wife agreed to donate this collection to the county of Staffordshire.



Stepping across the threshold of the William Salt Library is a unique experience - entering into the world of this building, its contents and atmosphere. Whilst it is devoted to the history of Staffordshire the volumes contained in the library can be surprisingly informative to researchers from Shropshire.

The library was first housed in Market Square Stafford during 1872, moving to its present home at East Gate Street in 1918. This building is conveniently situated close to the Staffordshire Records Office and ideally placed for a combined visit to both archives.

Editor

The Gough Map of Great Britain



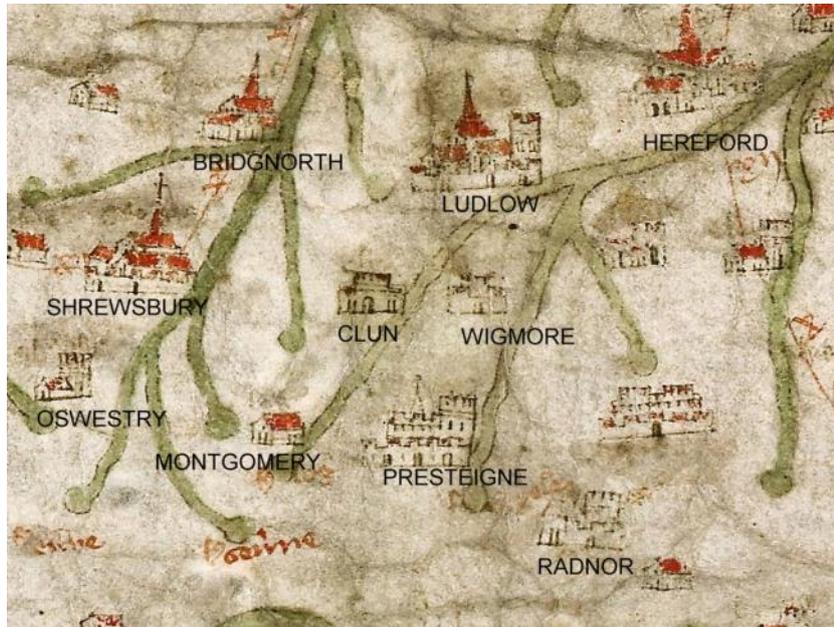
The late fourteenth century Gough Map is one of the earliest maps to show Britain in a form we can recognise today. It is the first known map not to be based on a Jerusalem influenced world. This map, named after Richard Gough (1735-1809) who bought it in 1774, was bequeathed to the Bodleian Library in 1809. It has been digitised and is now available on-line at www.goughmap.org.

The map measuring 115 cm by 56 cm was created on vellum with north rather surprisingly on the left. Habitations - with 600 place names - are approximately where we would place them today and the coastline is also recognisable. Physical features are represented by symbols, rivers are given prominence and distance is shown by connecting lines expressed in Roman numerals.

The *Linguistic Geographies* project has worked on the Gough Map and offers a re-interpretation of its origins and provenance. Complicated evidence and interpretation of the writing on the map has produced a date of around 1360, during the reign of King Edward III. Other evidence is the overwriting of some place names which demonstrates interest and use of this map into the later fifteenth century. Research into the palaeography and language employed in the map has revealed the importance of England as an island realm and the changing relationships between England, Wales and Scotland. One of the main outcomes of the project, apart from the on-line map, is a collection of short interpretive essays to help us understand the significance of the Gough Map within the history of cartography.

The whole map is a fascinating document with much to discover generally and locally. The on-line map consists of several layers which can be examined, including rivers, coastlines, distances and settlements. Time spent studying the on-line map and the related information is well worth the effort. Bishop's Castle does not appear to be mentioned. The enlarged image below shows the Marches area of the map with modern place names overwritten by the author.

Editor



Postscript

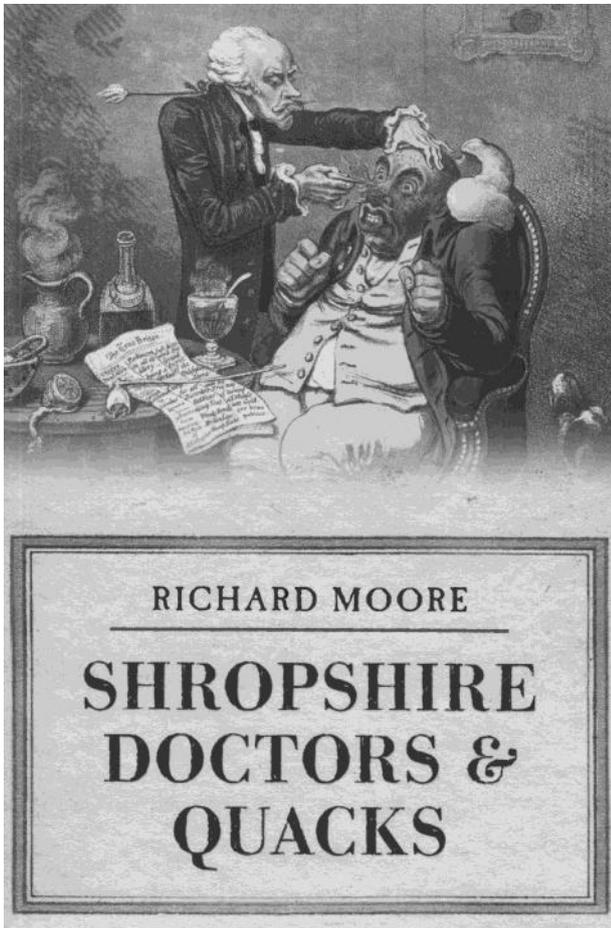
The Bodleian Library is the main research library of the University of Oxford and is one of the oldest libraries in Europe. Under the *Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003* it is one of six legal deposit libraries for works published in the United Kingdom (even copies of this Journal) and under Irish Law it is entitled to request a copy of each book published in the Republic of Ireland. First opened to scholars in 1602, it incorporates an earlier library erected by the University in the fifteenth century to house books donated by Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester, which survived in its original form for just over sixty years. In 1550 it was denuded of its books after a visitation by Richard Cox, Dean of the newly-founded Christ Church. He was acting under legislation passed by King Edward VI designed to purge the English church of all traces of Roman Catholicism, including ‘superstitious books and images’.

The library was rescued by Sir Thomas Bodley (1545–1613) and the old library was refurnished to house a new collection of some 2,500 books, some of them given by Bodley himself, some by other donors. A librarian, Thomas James, was appointed, and the library finally opened on 8 November 1602. The first printed catalogue followed in 1605; a new edition of 1620 ran to 675 pages.

Shropshire Doctors and Quacks

Medical Care in Shropshire, 1740 –1899

Richard Moore, 222pp, with 36 illustrations, 2011 Amberley Publishing £16.99
ISBN 978-1-4456-0431-2



If anyone has the authority to write a book about Shropshire doctors Richard Moore surely tops the list. He can boast nine generations of doctors in his family (he is the seventh), and was a Shrewsbury General Practitioner who upon retirement studied for and achieved a PhD from the University of Birmingham, Medical History Unit.

His very readable book covers nearly 200 years of the history of medicine with special reference to Shropshire, including the opening of the Salop Infirmary and the Eye and Ear Dispensary. He is very good at explaining the various levels of healthcare provided to the people of Shropshire, some of whom were not eligible to attend the infirmaries and had to fall back on charitable dispensaries and the poor house.

The book is very well illustrated, the best being cartoons from the Wellcome library. They mostly parody the doctors and apothecaries of the time but many are still very relevant. There are also plans and pictures of the old Salop Infirmary and the bas-relief on the former Eye, Ear and throat Hospital showing Christ blessing the sick.

The book has a particularly entertaining section on quacks and proprietary medicines. One such preparation was “Old Parr’s Infallible Life Pills”, a product which exploited the legend of the 150-year-old man from Alberbury, Old Parr. The book has obviously been very well researched but that in no way detracts from the fact that it is very enjoyable and very interesting. I would thoroughly recommend it for anyone interested in the social history of Shropshire in the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

NCBH

Research in Progress 2012

SWSHAS Research Group

This year the group has concentrated on finishing the transcribing of the Lydbury North Registers from 1563 to 1841 (the year of the first official Census to mention individuals). Transcribing is complete, indexing is well on the way to completion, typescript is being checked against the original register. An introduction has been drafted and is being circulated to Group members. Two meetings have had to be cancelled this year owing to illness, but two meetings in July and probably two in September will bring us up to our regular monthly scheme of meetings with an annual break in August.. Other registers almost as complete are Clee St. Margaret, Halford, and Myndtown.

George Baugh

Any member of SWSHAS with an interest in old documents is invited to join the group in a fascinating, if sometimes challenging, monthly session on local documents. The Group usually meets on the third Thursday in each month 2.00-4.00 p.m. at Enterprise House. Please contact Malcolm Redgrave, email at mredgrave@btinternet.com or Patricia Theobald at panda.theobald@virgin.net tel: 01588 638 555

Lydbury Field Group: Community Archaeology

The Lydbury Field Group, is a community archaeology group based in South West Shropshire which was formed in 2003 by a group of local residents who wanted to explore the archaeology of the area through practical fieldwork. The Group carries out investigations into the development of the archaeological landscape in South-West Shropshire. Activities include documentary research, map analysis, fieldwalking, finds recording, site surveying, and excavation. As a result of the research, with Heritage Lottery Funding, the Group has published a research report 'The Making of the Lydbury Landscape' (2009) and a summary publication 'Lydbury, The Making of a Landscape' (2010). Regular monthly meetings are also held for talks or guided walks and visits to places of archaeological interest. These are usually open sites or free through English Heritage as educational visits. We also publish a monthly newsletter. The purpose of them is to engage members in the local and regional archaeology as a part of the continuing educational function of the Group. We welcome all with an interest in archaeology and the historic environment, regardless of experience.

*The cost of annual membership, which allows us to cover the insurance:
Couples £18.00, Adults £10.00*

The **Lydbury Young Archaeologists Group**, formed in March 2009, seeks to engage and encourage the children in practical field archaeology and archaeological techniques. We meet every fourth Sunday of each month from 10 am until 12 noon. If the weather is fine we meet at whatever site we are excavating; if the weather is unsettled we have archaeological games, slide shows and activities including finds processing. The activities of the children and their findings actually contribute to the continuing research project.

The annual cost of membership per child is: £5.00

Contact Mike Greene (Chair) Email: greenefate@hotmail.co.uk

Research Groups at Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre

The **BCHRC Transcribers** continue to work upon the town's first Borough Minute Book spanning the years 1572-1677. There are approximately 280 pages which list bailiffs, town clerks, sergeants at mace, constables and chamberlains together with oaths and the law and order of the Borough. Approximately half of these pages have now been transcribed up to the 1620s. Besides the annual records of the elections of bailiffs and other officers there are references to the affairs of the town. The maintenance of the main street and the Guildhall or Town Hall was a frequent concern *'The baillife and burgesses have bin at greate cost and chardge and bestowed much labour as well in repairing the towne hall as the high streate both of them being an ornament to the towne and of greater use both to the towne and contrie...'* Householders were required to make their own contribution to repairs.... *'We order for the preservacion of the high streate that as farr the streate is or shalbe raysed with rubbish, That every howseholder pave his gutter with [primple] stone, against his howse, for the passage of the water coorse and that before easter upon payn of every defalt five shillinges...'* The Elizabethan Charter of 1573 gave certain privileges to the Borough which were extended by the new Charter of James I ... *'At which day the new charter and letters patentes graunted by the Kinges maiestie to this town under his great seal was openlie read & published in open coort...'* When completed, this transcription will provide another useful reference available at BCHRC for researchers.

Oral History Group

A grant, from the 'Grassroots' Project administered by the Community Council of Shropshire, allowed BCHRC to purchase appropriate equipment which enabled this group to collaborate with Janet Preshous in preserving her valuable archive of taped 'reminiscence' interview sessions. These recordings made in the 1980s and 1990s were of people remembering their lives in Bishops Castle before World War 2. More recent reminiscences take us through that war and into the second half of the twentieth century. A recent visitor to BCHRC from Essex was amazed to find that she could listen to the voice of the Bishop's Castle great-uncle with whom her mother had stayed when she had been evacuated during the war. She was given a copy of the recording to play to her elderly mother.

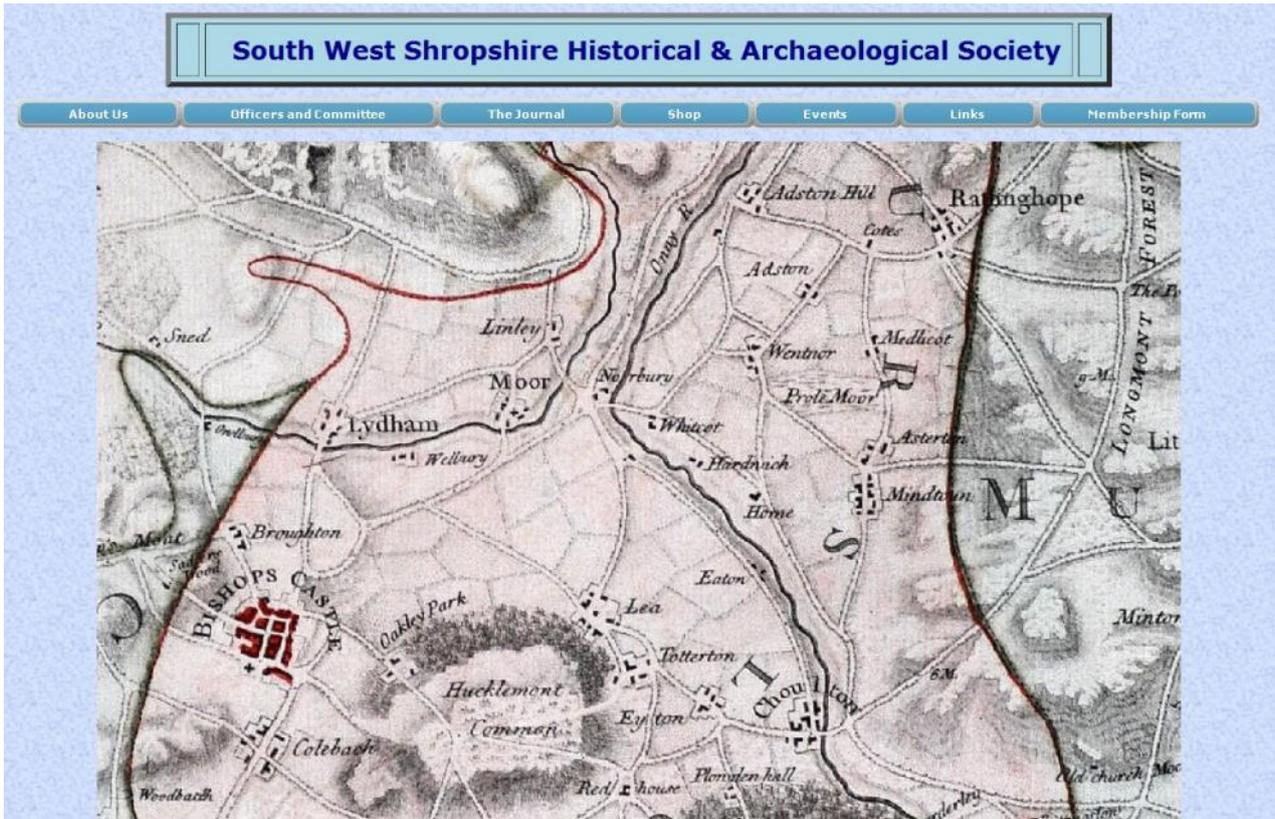
Town Hall Renovation Project 2011-12 obtained a grant to develop the plans for the regeneration of the town hall building and to discover historical information connected with the town hall and the town for the period 1750-1850. This research was carried out by a small group of volunteers at BCHRC. Over the period more than 500 references were acquired from a variety of sources nationwide and the USA. Individual researchers are pursuing many of these references and the topics include the members of parliament for Bishop's Castle, the Bailiffs and Burgesses, Clive of India, the town's clockmakers, the town hall architect. Included in this project was the digitisation and conservation at Shropshire Archives of Bishop's Castle's two charters. The next phase of research will depend upon the outcome of the current Heritage Lottery Fund grant application.

The Local History Centre at BCHRC has been open since 2010 and continues to provide a volunteer run service. Information on Bishop's Castle and surrounding parishes which available for inspection and includes: parish and census records, maps, electoral registers and transcriptions of some documents, together with relevant estate catalogues for collections held at Shropshire Archives. This material is being extended 2012 through the *Parish Champions Project* and also the generosity of visitors and members of SWSHAS. There is also a local history library and a considerable collection of additional local information.

*The Local History Centre is open at BCHRC on Saturdays from 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
On other days the Centre can be contacted by telephone: 01588 630556 or email:
mail@bchrc.co.uk*

Patricia Theobald

SWSHAS Website



In 2011 the Society launched its own website which can be accessed through the URL: <http://swshas.org.uk>. There are seven drop-down menus leading to screens describing various aspects of our organisation:

- A potted history of the Society.
- A list of officer contact details.
- The table of contents for the last three issues of the Journal together with an index of all issues from 1989-2010.
- The shop lists back issues and other publications available for purchase.
- Under events is the programme of talks, details of outings and notice of exhibitions.
- Relevant internet sites, including other Shropshire historical societies, are provided.
- A downloadable membership form is to be found on the navigation bar.

Nicholas Harding
webmaster@swshas.org.uk

Officers and Committee 2012

President:	David Preshous OBE
Chairman:	Nick Howell
Vice Chairman:	Maurice Young
Hon. Secretary:	Joye Minshall, 47 Alvaston Way, Shrewsbury SY2 5TT
Membership Secretary:	Peter Hutton
Hon. Treasurer:	Nick Downes
Journal Editor:	Patricia Theobald
Webmaster	Nicholas Harding : webmaster@swshas.org.uk
Committee:	Mike Greene, Peter Hutton, Graham Medlicott, Norman Morris, Janet Preshous, Gavin Watson, Alan Wilson.
For membership details apply to:	Peter Hutton, 11, Copall Paddock, Bishop's Castle, SY9 5DL, 01588 630 271 email: peterhutton186@btinternet.com

*If you would like to make a contribution to the 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*

*BACK-NUMBERS
for some years of the
JOURNAL
are available at 50p each
from the Editor*

Programme 2012-13

Meetings take place at the Church Barn and Community College Main Hall

Bishop's Castle, and commence at 7.30 p.m.

Visitors are warmly welcomed

2012

- 15-16 Sept. Saturday-Sunday
Cadet Hall, New
Street
- SWSHAS EXHIBITION**
at Bishop's Castle Michaelmas Fair
'Going Places' – historical transport & travel in
SW Shropshire
- 16 Oct. Tuesday
Church Barn
- Servants of Erdigg*
Jill Burton
- 16 Nov. Friday
Church Barn
- A.G.M.** followed by
*How a non-historian stumbled into a late-middle age
obsession with local history*
Paul Cosgrove
- 10 Dec. Monday
Community College
- A Short History of Choral Music*
Fred Averis & Corndon Singers
Followed by seasonal refreshments

2013

- 15 Jan. Tuesday
Church Barn
- The origins of the Salop Infirmary*
Richard Moore
- 12 Feb. Tuesday
Church Barn
- A History of why and how plants were and are used as medicines*
Henry Oakeley
- 15 March Friday
Church Barn
- The Labour Workforce Movement in South Shropshire 1900 - 30*
Nick Mansfield
- 6 April Saturday
- RITHERDON DAY**
Looking Back – SWSHAS over 40 years
A day of lectures, tours and entertainment

