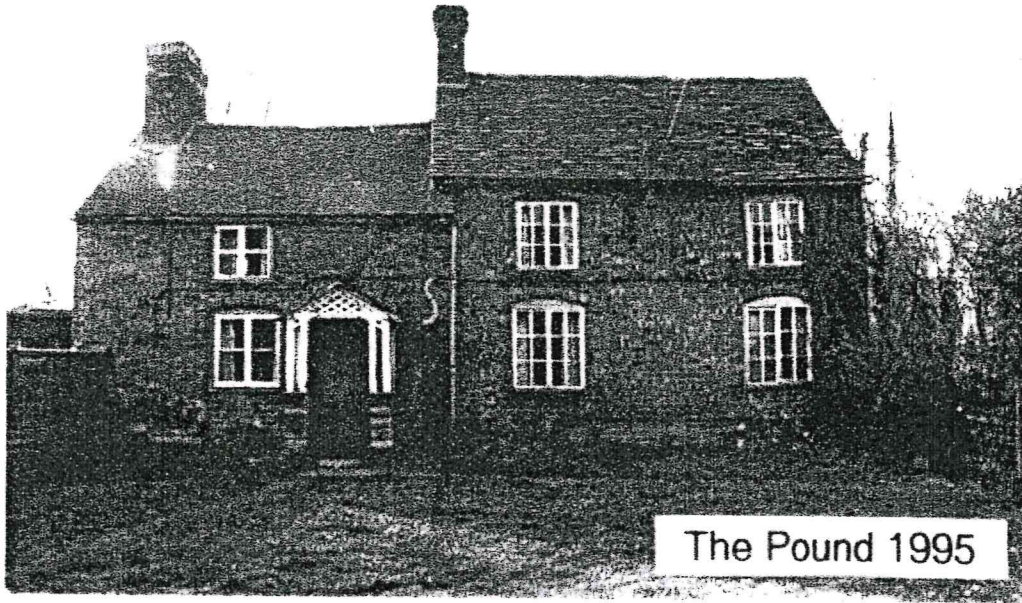


became Mrs James Paddock and mother of Mary Fowles, who loaned us the photograph. How technology has changed...!

Other photographs may have been taken for commercial reasons, such as advertising property for sale. The image of the 'The Pound' in Bicton Lane by the church is a good example as it is now an historic record. The old building



had originally been two dwellings knocked into one, but by 1995 had become ripe for redevelopment. Do pause and see what has been done to it.

Technology marches on, so that in the digital age even more photographs can be taken with a variety of gadgets. A photographic survey of the parish might be a good idea as the views could become historical records in the future, along with those of special events.

With so much technology at our fingertips, one can also have more fun treating photography as an art form, capturing fleeting patterns of shape, light and colour. Snow can look equally interesting in black and white and so an example of this is included here. With such seasonal views there may even be scope for a Bicton calendar without asking the bowling club to strip off!

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

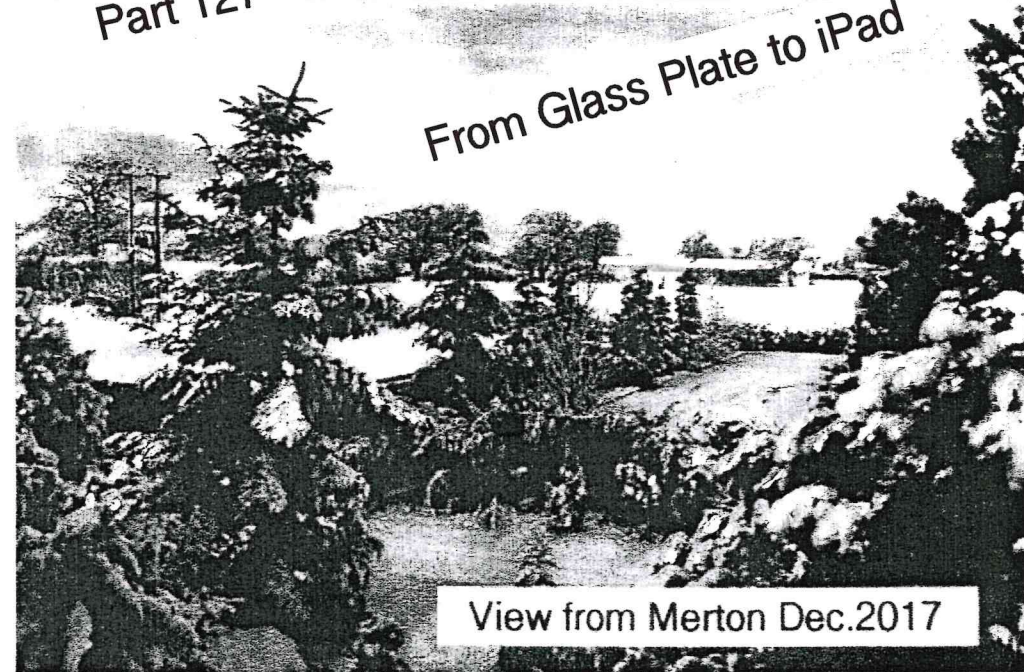
Offprint from

January 2018
No 618

Bicton

Part 127

From Glass Plate to iPad



Village News

www.bictonvillage.co.uk

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 127

From Glass Plate to iPad

This time last year we published some photographs taken by Ernest Lewis of Milnsbridge just before WW1. We later recognised one of the Lea family of the Villa, with the help of the 1911 census. Since then, our editors have appealed for more Bicton photographs and so we offer a further selection illustrating different periods.



Village group c.1910

Another of those glass negatives by Ernest Lewis shows a group of villagers brought together by some event worthy of recording, but otherwise not known. It could even have been after a wedding with everyone in their 'Sunday best' outfits, illustrating the prevailing fashions – long skirts, tight waists, floppy blouses with high necks all topped with wide brimmed hats. Such gear was ill-suited to the bicycle present, but the gents have more

practical dress. Two carry shotguns and at least one bird, while behind, farmhands with long poles may have been their beaters. Two small boys display wide collars and at least one wears a smock or dress.

Altogether there is a lot of social history here and it makes one think about what a modern version of this scene would look like...

The more usual examples of old photographs can be found in 'family' archives recording weddings and similar events which brought friends and relations together. Some scenes were set in studios, but the spread of simple box cameras and roll film enabled families to do more for themselves, even away on a seaside holiday. Less often, we find our ancestors photographed in their working environment and therefore not posing in their 'Sunday best', as illustrated by 'wash day' at Udlington in about 1926.



Udlington 1926

Here, at the home of Richard Sandford, solicitor, (now Isle Court) the simple technology required many hands, which included Olive Edwards, who later

Lobb and similar collectors were bringing back much more besides, so that the horticultural writer, John Loudon, could remark that 'the grounds of every country seat, from the cottage to the mansion, will become an arboretum'.

While all this was going on, other writers illustrated the contrasting romantic and scientific approaches to all this material. For instance, over in Ireland in 1848 (170 years ago) Mrs Alexander, a prolific hymn writer, was composing her famous verse 'All things Bright and Beautiful', while in Kent, Charles Darwin was working to make sense of natural life, including what he had observed on the Beagle. He was hesitant to publish ideas at a time when those expressed by the hymn were more popular. Meanwhile, out amongst the islands around Borneo, Alfred Wallace, hunting animals for zoos rather than plants for nurseries, was coming to the same conclusions as Darwin and wrote to him in 1858 (another anniversary). This prompted the publication of 'The Origin of Species' at long last.

One might wonder what could have been the result of these dates being the other way round, allowing time for Mrs Alexander to digest the ideas of Wallace and Darwin. Her hymn might have been different...

Refrain:

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
By selecting variation,
Evolution made them all.

The purple headed mountains,
The rivers running by,
are home to various life forms
which must adapt or die.
(refrain)

The cold winds in the winter,
The burning summer sun,
Are forces of selection
Evolving every one.
(refrain)

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
Were products of selection
That evolution brings
(refrain)

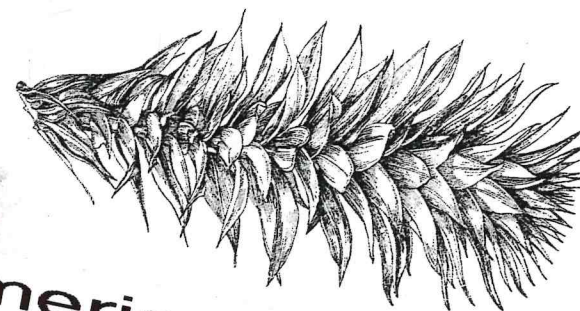
All good things around us,
Evolved through ages long,
Now human care is needed,
To stop things going wrong.
(refrain)

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Bicton

Part 128



Our American Trees



Village News

David Pannett's History of Bickton Part 128

Our American Trees

Many years ago, the Shell Guide to Shropshire, written by Michael Moulder, dismissed Bickton as a 'decayed village off the Holyhead Road... A white stuccoed manor house, a ruined and overgrown eighteenth century church, a red-brick Georgian farmhouse with a monkey-puzzle tree make up what there is. The new church (1866) has a very ugly tower...'

We hope that these essays have shown that there is more of interest here than is obvious at such first sight. Now the old churchyard is slightly less overgrown, while that monkey-puzzle tree has long since disappeared. However, new ones have been reappearing around the village gardens showing their very distinctive foliage and geometric profile, which wits thought would be a puzzle to any monkey climbing one.

The correct common name is Chile Pine, while the botanical name is Araucia araucana, based on its name in the native language. It belongs to an ancient family, whose members survive in scattered locations around the Pacific Ocean and include the newly rediscovered Australian Wollemi Pine and the once popular pot plant Norfolk Island Pine. The family evolved at a time 250 million years ago when all continents were joined together and thus now provide evidence for later continental drift, which has scattered them.

The sharp needles may have evolved as a defence against browsing dinosaurs, which were particularly large in South America. Significantly, araucaria forests provided a 'real' backdrop to the computer animated film 'Walking with Dinosaurs', as they still grow on rough mountain terrain shunned by 'modern' flowering plants and grasses.

Their odd characteristics appealed to some Victorian gardeners, who were eager to plant exotic forms collected by intrepid plant hunters. By coincidence, Bickton in Devon can boast the finest avenue of 80' monkey puzzles planted in 1844. Significantly the garden here is not far from the site

of the Veitch family nursery, which was then promoting the collection of new plants from the Far East and the Americas. Earlier naval expeditions had already been introduced to the tree through its edible seeds, but now William Lobb was sent out to collect those seeds in bulk for planting.

In the 1840s, he was busy with this task in Chile before moving on to California, almost in the wake of the 'Gold rush'. Here he was shown the giant sequoias of the Sierra Nevada, which some 'yankees' were already interested in chopping down, before they realised their value as a tourist attraction.



Victorian Villa with exotics

In this way, their seeds reached British nurseries and the first trees were planted in 1853. As this was so soon after the death of the Duke of Wellington, many thought such a great tree should be named after him. Locally our specimens, including those in the churchyard, were mainly planted in the 1880s at the same time as the church was built.

Although much confirms what we already know from aerial photographs, the real surprise is the odd ridge pattern around the Grove, NE across the township boundary. Historically, this was part of Rossall Heath, although the western side around the Grove Farm had been enclosed by the seventeenth century. Were parts already cultivated here in the Middle Ages?

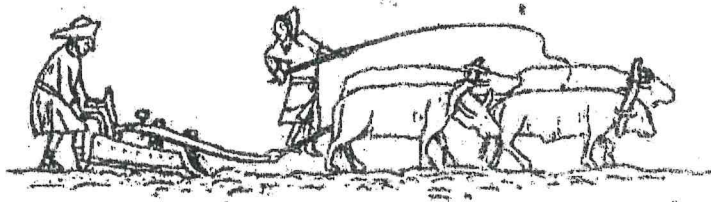
Before the Black Death of the fourteenth century, cultivation had probably spread much further than we once thought. Not only were there many mouths to feed, but yields were low by modern standards and field management included regular fallows. Flood plains likewise show signs of mediaeval cultivation, mixed up with undulations created by the river deposition, as around parts of the Isle.

One particular detail seen in some places are knobs, rather like bone knuckles, at the ends of each ridge. They arise from the build up of soil falling off the plough and its ox team as they turned around at the end of the ridge. Since water in the furrows needed to drain away through such 'headlands', any obstructing soil would have been dug out and heaped on the adjacent ridges. Headlands were often left as grass anyway to give access and some grazing after harvest and during a fallow year.

Unusually large ridges are still visible from the lane north of the Hall and must not be confused with the chicken sheds shown at the other end of the old village. Such broad ridges may have been kept for special roles such as growing hemp for flax fibres.

The characteristic curve of the ridges is thought to help the mediaeval plough team turn to the left at the headland, since it

MEDIAEVAL OX PLOUGHING



would normally be led by a right-handed driver walking on that side. Since he would need unploughed land to walk on, the plough mould-board had to be on the right. By tradition, it remained here even when stronger horse teams controlled by reins took over in later centuries and could turn to the right at the headland.

There is plenty to check out on the ground and also we will make more use of LIDAR images for other parts of the parish in future essays. Watch this space...

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Offprint from

March 2018
No 620

Bicton

Part 129

Introducing LIDAR



Village News

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 129

Introducing LiDAR

For many years we have appreciated the value of aerial photography from planes and satellites for the study of earth, moon and other planets. Also, special applications of radar, which can penetrate the atmosphere of Venus or the soil over archaeological remains, have revealed features otherwise invisible. Now, as technology marches on, we have LiDAR, which is a sort of radar using beams of laser light rather than radio waves.

A stream of light pulses scans the ground beneath an aircraft, whose position is fixed by GPS, and the resulting reflections are used by the computer to build up a 'picture' of the surface. Of course, some reflections come from tall vegetation, while others come from the actual ground beneath, but the computer can sort these out. When all such data has been collected, further computer wizardry can display the results as a 'relief model' as if illuminated by NW light, or even play further tricks generating 3-D models on the screen.

Many organisations have been quick to see the value of this new technology for landscape analysis, since it sees through woodland and shows relief at a resolution measured in centimetres rather than metres. The Environment Agency is particularly interested since it must give advice on the suitability, or otherwise, of sites for proposed development. For this reason, the Agency has surveyed the river flood plains in the whole country and made the results freely available via the house prices website (houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map).

Locally, the winding path of the River Severn has caused the straight survey runs to stray over a wider band of country, including most of Bicton. Many of the features around the village here are already well known from conventional aerial photography, so dependent on natural light directions, but LiDAR shows much more, picking out shapes barely recognisable on the ground.

Apart from village buildings, the most striking features are mediaeval plough ridges with their curving shapes, 200yd 'one furlong' lengths and their grouping in 'furlongs' or 'flats'. The later hedges conform to this pattern thanks to the gradual process of enclosing the original 'open fields' some time c.1700. Conversion to pasture helped to preserve them as dairy farming became more important in this area. Being raised up high on these poorly drained clay soils; some have not yet been totally wiped out by modern ploughing. Altogether, the patterns are typical of such fields in the Midlands.



Utilities (each reported to have the highest paid chiefs in the industry) have combined to create a new company to handle their 'retail' market to 'commercial' customers. This company, 'Water Plus' will introduce 'new systems and tools' (bigger spanners?) to make sure that dealing with water is effortless. It will continue with the Severn Trent 'branding' although businesses will now be able to select their own supplier, similar to the energy trade. Because the market has opened for competition this company will be able to offer the customer a choice of 'price and products', but even if they would prefer soft Welsh water or hard Anglian water, they will still get the same local stuff down the same old pipes! Only the bills will come from a different address. **All this would be starting on April 1st**

Meanwhile, more conventional retail customer choice has already been developed by the bottled water trade. One company is even sponsoring the Shrewsbury Town football team now and boasts successful exports. Sources are generally natural springs or shallow boreholes and therefore continue the traditions of mineral waters taken for health at numerous 'spas' across Europe. Many had a revolting taste of iron or sulphur, but were considered good medicine at a time when domestic supplies could be a health hazard. The modern versions have milder tastes and have been able to reach wider markets in first glass and now plastic bottles.

Limestone formations produce the best springs, which are also rich in calcium, while fissured volcanic rocks yield water richer in sodium and potassium. Some sources pumped from sands and gravels can boast mineral-free purity. By law the mineral content must be displayed on each bottle and these can give clues to the type of geological background. Customers seldom read these closely however, preferring their own sense of taste, or succumb to marketing hype or just accept what is on offer.

Critics of the trade point out that many continental brands can be matched by British supplies, so that long distance "diesel-hauled" imports are quite unnecessary. How many customers at our local Co-op actually realise how far that Volvic or Evian have travelled to reach the shelf?

Shropshire and the Welsh borderland can boast a varied geology and water derived from it, so if you must buy bottled water, look to local sources at Church Stoke or Wenlock for your Volvic or Evian taste. Also remember, as one poet said, "*The water in this bottle has minerals good for you, but the chemicals in the plastic may change your gender too*".

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

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Bicton

Part 130

A Water Wonderland



Village News

www.bictonvillage.co.uk

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 130

A Water Wonderland

Current discussions in the media include trading relations with mainland Europe, and the problems of plastic water bottles. As imports of water from France and Italy contribute to our adverse balance of trade with the continent, perhaps there is some connection. Excessive executive pay is also under discussion.

Bottled water has become a sort of modern luxury and convenience just at a time when piped water quality is better than ever. Indeed, within living memory, clean piped water was also a modern luxury in rural areas such as Bicton. The community once had to rely on shallow wells dug into the thick glacial deposits, while reliable supplies from the underlying sandstone could only be reached by deeper wells. One at the Four Crosses, for instance, was over 150ft deep and others nearby were similar. In these circumstances, several households would share a pump, filling their pails to carry home.

In nearby Shrewsbury there is a longer story of public supplies pumped from the river at the English Bridge, or arriving down a long pipe from springs in Cruckmeole. In 1854, a new waterworks was built on Chester Street, where cleaner river water upstream of town pollution was pumped up into the town. Eventually, in the 1930s, all this was replaced by a new works at Shelton where a water tower on this high point could distribute supplies by gravity around the expanding suburbs. At first, water was extracted directly from the river, but more recently it is drawn from adjacent boreholes, where the glacial sands can act as an additional filter.

New houses in the town could be connected to the supplies, but those in the surrounding countryside had to wait a little longer. Dorothy Lewis, growing up at Milnsbridge, Shepherds Lane in the early 30s, still remembers visiting a friend in Shrewsbury where she could enjoy the novelty of 'pulling a chain'.

While Shelton served the town, the rural areas, including Bicton, were connected to new boreholes at Ford and Eyton. These extracted clean water from sandstone under the glacial deposits and therefore contained dissolved minerals, which helped to fur up kettles and boilers, if not softened.

In more recent years, the county's systems have been reorganised, so that

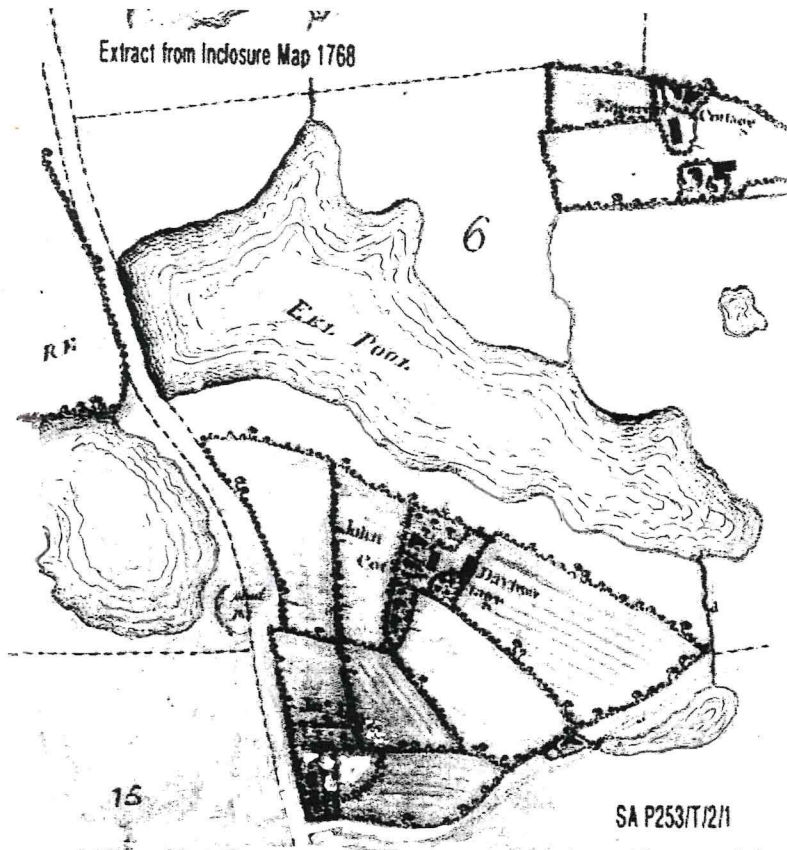


Bicton is now supplied from Shelton, resulting in much cleaner kettles, thanks to the soft water originating from the river.

This year, the Government in their wisdom, has been promoting some variations to the now 'privatised' water companies. Severn Trent and United

rent from the occupiers, some of whose old cottages were also later rebuilt to a better standard, so no originals now survive.

New sections of minor roads were laid out with a regular width of 30 feet, as can be seen along Calcott Lane. The old drainage would now be dealt with. All this was recorded on a map which happens to be an excellent specimen of contemporary cartography. The fine penmanship can only be appreciated close up and therefore is best illustrated here by extracts, rather than the full sheet.



REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION
FROM SHROPSHIRE ARCHIVES

As this 'inclosure' was by 'private agreement' with no Act of Parliament involved, the final documents were deposited with St Chad's Church rather than with the County authorities. Other draft records survive in Shrewsbury School library, since the school had an interest in the tythes of Bicton.

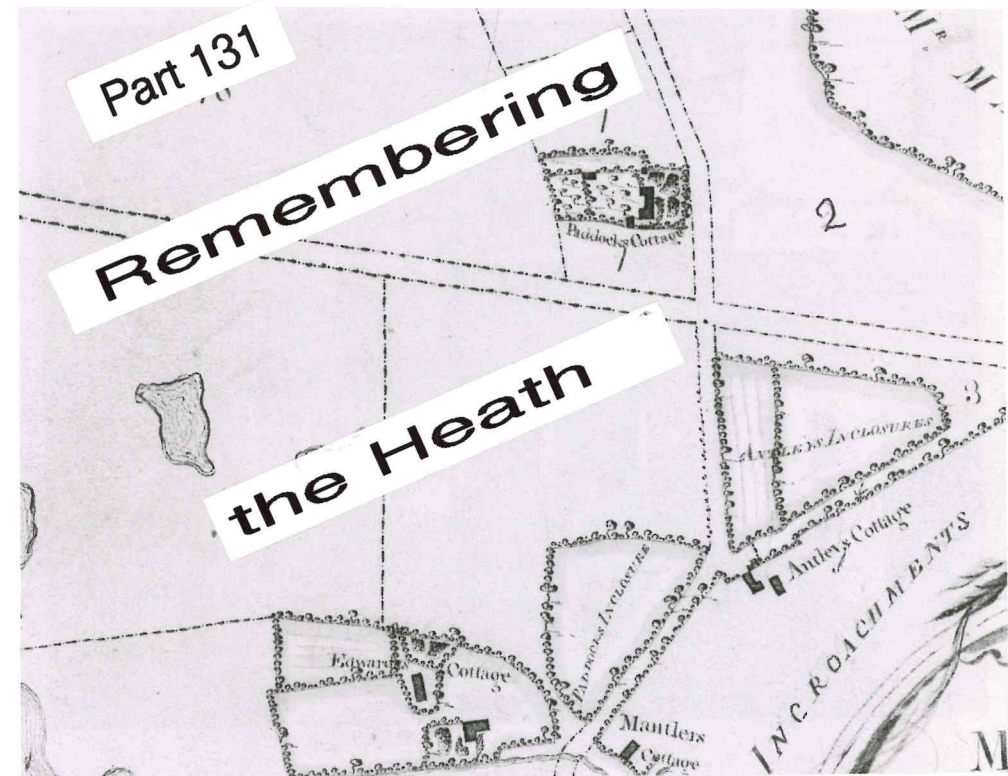
HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

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Bicton



Village News

www.bictonvillage.co.uk

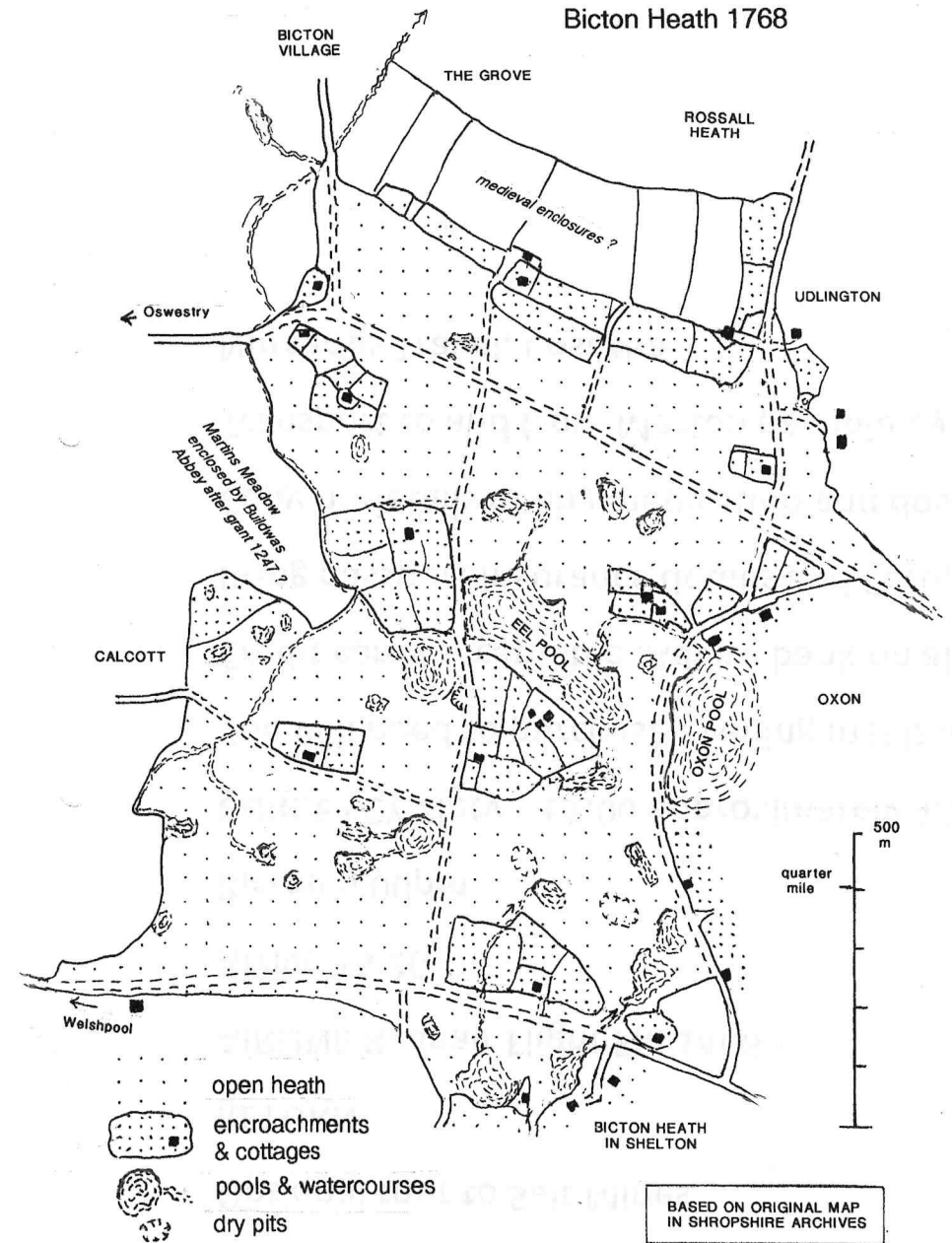
Remembering the Heath

This year, 2018, has its own crop of anniversaries to celebrate, or at least remember: the great fire at Shelton Hospital 50 years ago; the opening of Shrewsbury's new technical college by the English Bridge 80 years ago, when, by coincidence, this writer was also born. The final German offensive occurred on the Western Front 100 years ago, which led to the last casualty on the Bicton War Memorial, Arthur Bason, age 21. Much earlier, 250 years ago in 1768 was the 'inclosure' of the Bicton portion of Bicton Heath.

This area, stretching from the village to the Welshpool Road, has been discussed often in these essays in connection with its 'deformed' glacial surface, pools and cottage communities. Though no longer an open wasteland, its distinctive field and settlement pattern is still recognisable within the Bicton landscape.

The 'inclosure' process (note the old spelling) involved an agreement between the local landowners by which they appointed 'referees' and surveyors to lay out new roads and boundaries of their new 'allotments' of land. These were awarded to each landowner in proportion to their existing holdings in Bicton and Calcott which had given them rights to the common grazing. John Mytton of Halston then held not only Grange Farm but also the 'Lordship of the Manor', which made him 'owner of the soil of the common land'. He had successfully claimed this role because of his family's long association with the former monastic 'granges' in Bicton and Cruckmeole, even though other heaths around Shrewsbury were controlled by the borough authorities.

To some, this could be seen as a legal fraud. Also his fellow landowners were further suspicious of his 'wheeling and dealing' when he proposed his own land agent to be one of the 'independent' referees! This was John Probert, who was an important local figure in his own right, working also for Lord Clive, whose Montford estate he was also about to reorganise. He occupied a grand house on Mytton property, still to be seen by the hospital entrance on Mytton Oak Road. As a busy man with 'fingers in many pies' he certainly left his mark on our local landscapes, so that we could well discuss him further some time.

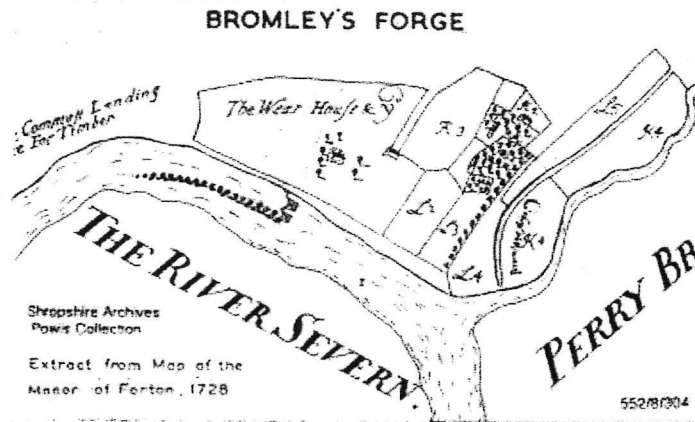


As 'Lord of the Manor', John Mytton was therefore allotted most of the cottages and encroachments around the heath younger than 20 years, as well as his 'Eel Pool'. Thereafter, he drew up proper leases and extracted

already appeared around the margins of the open land, including those at Bromley's Forge. Here one cottage was associated with the fish weir, but the other two would have been linked to a seventeenth century iron works at the confluence of the rivers, which exploited water power from the Perry and transport links along the Severn.

Records point to the involvement of Sir Basil Brooke, Lord of the Manor of Madeley, who also owned operations in the Forest of Dean and Coalbrookdale. In 1623, he was presented at the Manor Court of Forton for diverting the River Perry and building a dam on Forton Heath, where he had lately erected certain 'iron mylles' (SA 6000/18523). In 1616, he had been involved in a dispute over the cutting of cordwood (logs for charcoal) near Borreaton when it was said that he had been cutting wood for at least seven years (SA 6000/8494).

What iron products he made here is not known and anyway it all came to an end when he backed the wrong side during the Civil War and then died in 1646. At the same time, Lord Bromley, local Lord of the Manor, lost his castle at Shrawardine, but has left his name here.



In any case, such works would have become obsolete as production shifted to the coalfield, where coke and steam engines continued the Industrial Revolution. LiDAR shows lengths of leat (millstream) which drove a waterwheel for the bellows and hammers at the mill still surviving, though some parts near the road have been since lost. Otherwise, many eighteenth century features can still be recognised around the cottages, showing how much of our history is 'written in the landscape'.

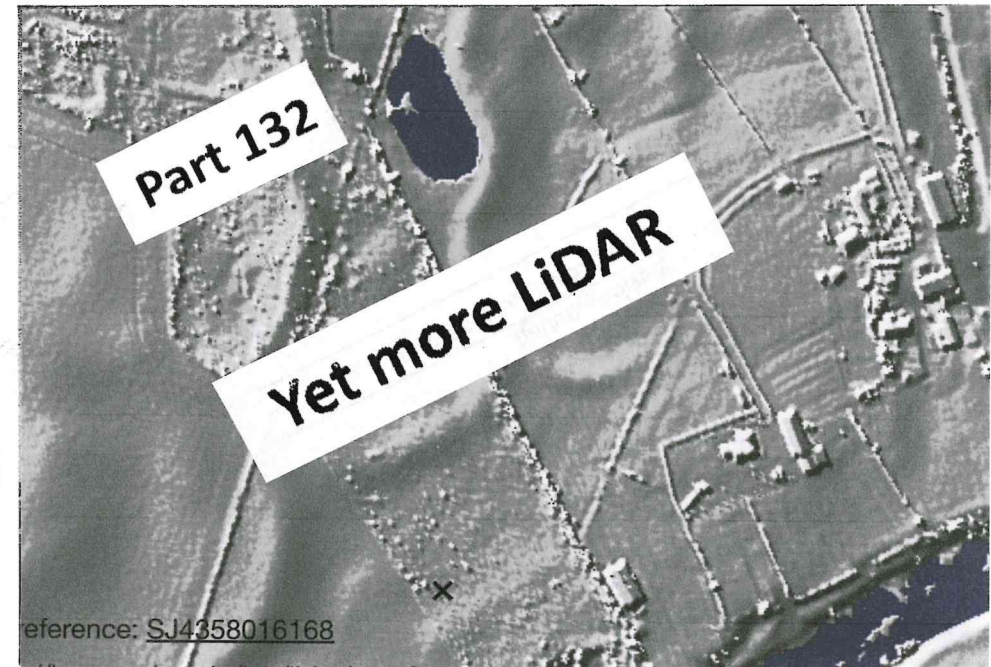
If you are suitable equipped why not explore the landscape of the Severn Valley on houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map/

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

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No 623

Bicton



Village News

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 132

Yet more LiDAR

In a recent essay (March '18) we drew attention to the value of LiDAR, a sort of laser light 'radar', for the interpretation of our landscape. The sample area chosen included the village of Bicton and the surrounding patterns of medieval 'ridge and furrow' cultivation ('butts & reans') which had survived more recent ploughing. By moving our attention to the north-west corner of the parish, we can not only encounter the same patterns in neighbouring Mytton, but also a whole lot more natural and man-made features around the confluence of the Rivers Severn and Perry and upon Forton Heath.

The image of Bickley Coppice demonstrates how well LiDAR can see through tree cover to reveal the ground beneath, which here includes parts of the Severn flood plain. In particular two 'barge gutters' by-passing around fish weirs, stand out (Sept '17). One belonging to Mytton was listed in 1575, but probably went out of use in the following century after flood damage. By contrast, the Forton Weir has no such early record, but appeared on an eighteenth century map. Its 'gutter' still flows, although weir timbers have long since decayed. The sites for weirs were usually on gravel banks in the channel and, significantly, the water flow at the Mytton site gives a disturbed reflection as the water tumbles over a particularly rough bed of gravel and boulders brought in from the Perry valley or eroded from the 'Bicton' moraine at this point.

A further reminder of 'glacial' history is the uneven surface of the Forton Heath area left by the ice some 18,000 years ago. Such an uneven surface was no doubt the reason why the area was unfit for cultivation in the Middle Ages. Anyone driving through this area en route to North Shrewsbury should already be familiar with the undulations along the road. This odd pattern of low banks, some of which hold up ponds on the valley side, may mark the fluctuating margin of the Severn Valley Glacier. The very course of the Perry itself may have been created at the ice margin, so that such odd shapes are confined to one side of it.



In the 'age of improvement', the problems posed by such ground could be overcome, so that the heath was 'inclosed' in 1780, producing a pattern of new straight roads and fields not unlike those on the Bicton Heath (May '18). Also, in a similar way, by this time some cottages and encroachments had

On the opposite corner, Lyndhurst was once the home of George Proctor, foreman gardener at the Shelton Asylum. Following his death, son William, 49, and wife Ann had recently moved in with mother. They may also have enlarged the building, providing space for the first of a sequence of lodgers and a new enterprise 'tea rooms'. In the new bicycle age this location was ideal for catering for visitors out of town.

Fairview, the house next door, had been divided some thirty years before so that it was never clear which half a census entry referred to. Anyway, by now half was occupied by another gardener, James Cartwright, 69, and his wife. Once they had six children, but now the nest was empty except for one unmarried daughter and a niece. He probably worked for Miss Milbank at the Hall, who was also involved with the 'Oxon Nursing Association', a charity which employed Ann Webster as parish nurse in the other half of Fairview. The cost of this service was covered by subscriptions.

Myrtle Cottage, built 1869, also had two parts, the modern 'Rose Cottage' end being occupied by yet another gardener, Frederick Chambers, 50, with wife and two children. They were already here in the previous census and thereby further illustrate how specialist workers and tradesmen moved house less often than typical farm workers.

The impact of Bicton School from the 1860s and the general mood of the Country for improving literacy was reflected in the use of the rest of the cottage as a parish reading room. In this same year, in Shrewsbury, the Priory School was being opened, bringing more opportunities for brighter children to gain access to a wider choice of careers not available in traditional rural life. The modern age was developing!

Now we reach the end of the cottages and, in best Michael Portillo style, we will leave the rest of the route for another day. In the meantime, reflect upon changes since 1911, not just in the fabric of the buildings but the typical households within; family size, lodgers, relations, employment etc.

Special thanks to the Family History volunteers in Shrewsbury Archives and the 'oral tradition' passed on by Dorothy Lewis.

HISTORY of BICTON

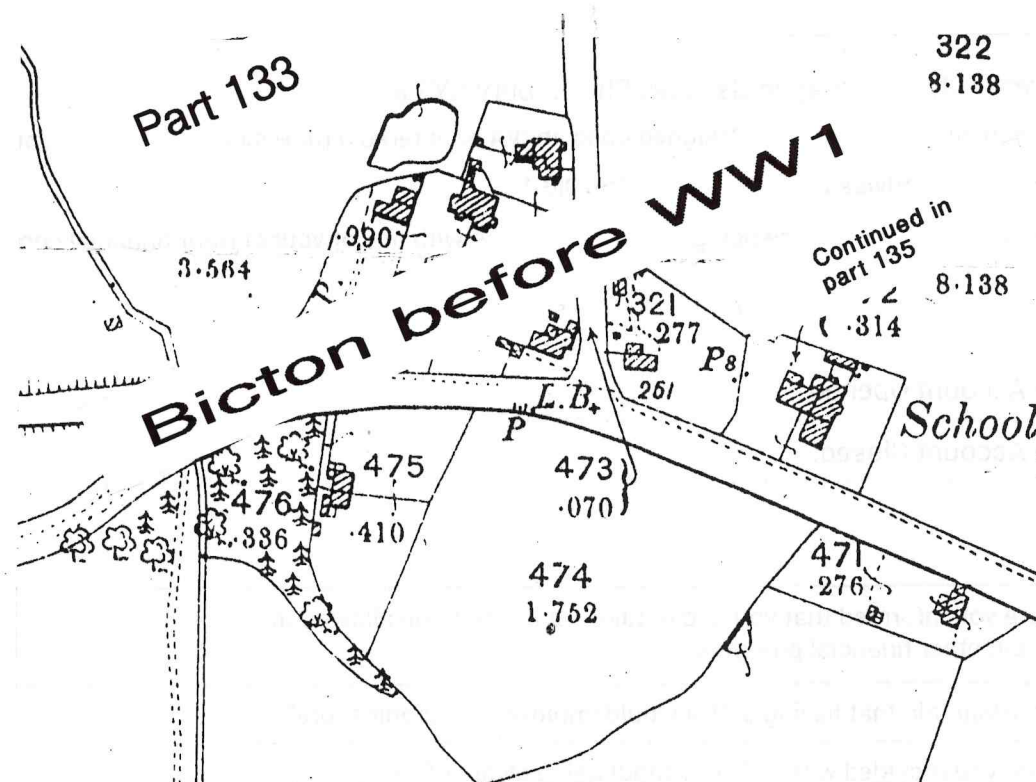
by David Pannett

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July 2018

No 624

Bicton Village News



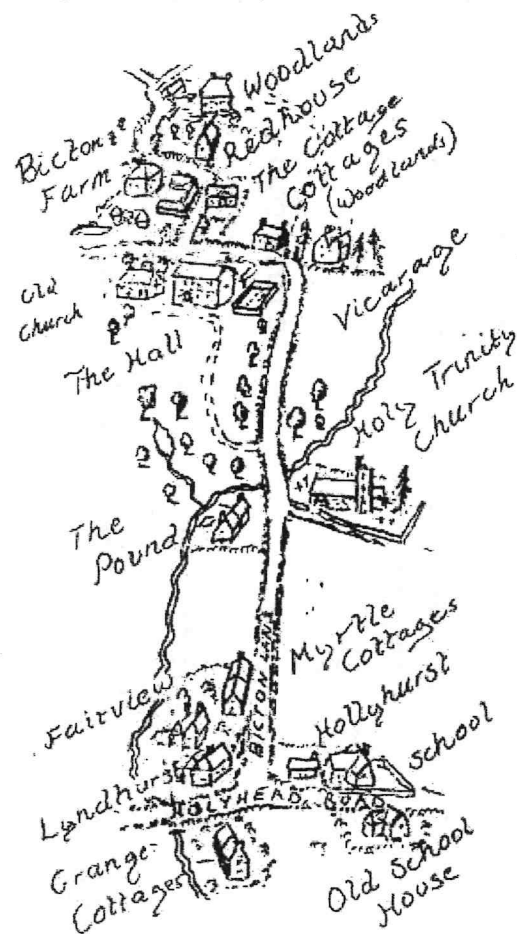
newsletter@bictonvillage.co.uk

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 133

Bicton before WW1

Fans of Michael Portillo's TV rail journeys will be familiar with his technique of travelling with an old guide book, seeking out what had survived from that period. By implication the subsequent changes are also recalled, including those brought about by wars and social attitudes.

The nearest equivalent for our local study would be a walk through the village in the footsteps of the 1911 census enumerator along Bicton Lane



shops also offered apprenticeships for the boys, altogether hinting at the increasing role of urban work in this rural community, a short cycle ride away.

from the Holyhead road to the Woodlands. Some stories along here have already featured in these essays (Dec 08, Dec 14), but by combining census data with trade directories and folk memories we may appreciate the community as a whole.

Our starting point, the former Bicton School (now Evolution Centre) was both home and workplace of 30 years for headteacher George Blakemore, 53, his wife Sophie and their family of eight. Six of these were still at home, although by now of working age. The eldest girls had in fact become assistant teachers, while another was a clerical assistant in Shrewsbury, showing how the typewriter was now offering more opportunities for female employment beyond domestic services. Shrewsbury

Another factor keeping them all together may have been Sophie's desire to maintain a close family life in compensation for the one she never had herself. Unkind village gossip would comment how she had been rejected and brought up by relations, until sent away to work. Perhaps now the sheltered home life was to leave son Denis unprepared for the pressures of WW1, with tragic consequences... (Nov 15).

By contrast, across the road in the Old School House, Mary Lewis, 74, was now in an almost 'empty nest', since the recent death of husband William, a bricklayer, and the dispersal of their seven children through emigration and marriage (Dec 08). Son Frederick was, however, returning from New York, but was at this moment recovering in Liverpool Hospital from the effects of his building work there. With room to spare, Mary had taken in a young farm worker as lodger. Thanks to son Earnest we still have some surviving photographs of people around the area at this time (Jan 17).



The Lewis family here had always been good friends and neighbours with the Blakemores, but relationships with Charles Lewis, 59, another bricklayer, next door in one of the Grange Cottages during the last 20 years is less clear. Charles and William had been brought up together at the parental home in Montford Bridge, but Charles suffered the social stigma of being the illegitimate son of William's sister Martha (Jan 16). At a time of large families Charles and wife Charlotte had raised only one daughter, perhaps because of some health problems.

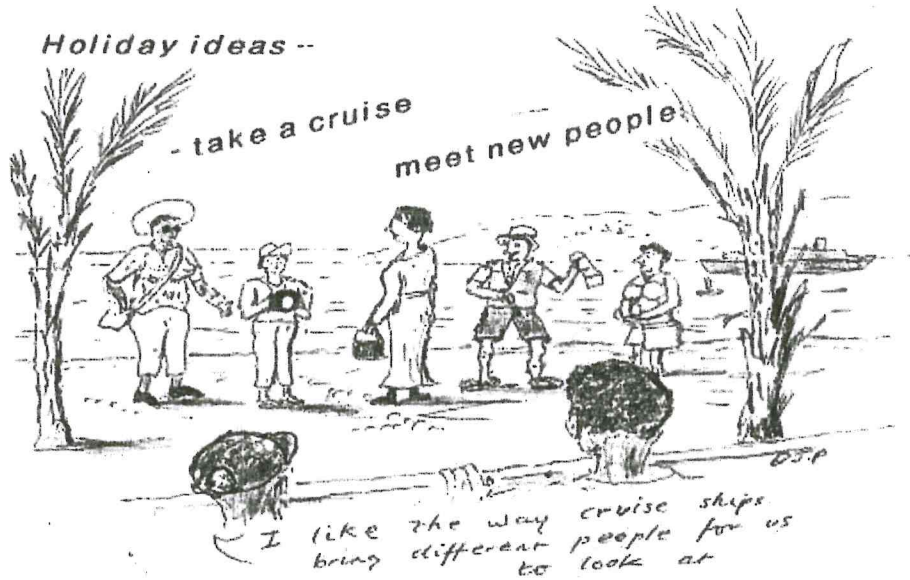
Neighbour George Yewberry, 36, and his wife had only recently moved here from High Ercall taking up new farm employment. They were in a way typical of such workers. They were soon to be joined by parents and siblings and, as a result, the family contributed two names to the Bicton War Memorial (Nov 14). Their work was probably at the Woodlands.

Across the road at Hollyhurst, another newcomer was William John Edwards, 37, and his wife of three years taking over the long term home of the Parry family. As part of the Bicton Hall estate, originally Jenkins, now Wingfield, the little cottage was probably 'tied' to his work as gardener there. Before they filled it with their own children, there was still space for the wife's mother and sister.

David Pannett's History of Bicton

David is taking a summer break from serious history and is offering his light-hearted views on holidays and current political debate:

Holiday ideas --



meet new wildlife



The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the European Union rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, the British Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan that will become known as "Euro-English".

In the first year, "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard "c" will be dropped in favour of "k". This should klear up konfusion, and keyboards can have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with "f". This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be ekspekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible.

Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling.

Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent "e" in the languag is disgrasful and it shud go away.

By the 4th yer peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v".

During ze fifz yer, ze unesesary "o" can be dropt from vords kontaining "ou" and after ziz fifz yer, ve vil hav a rel sensibl riten styl.

Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech oza. Ze drem of a united urop vil finali kum tru.

Und efter ze fifz yer, ve vil al be speking German like zey vunted in ze forst plas.

How the European Union works:: In Germany, they make the rules, in Britain, they obey the rules, in France, they bend the rules, in Spain, they break the rules, and in Italy they have no rules at all.

Working in Brussels: On a visit to the Headquarters of the European Commission, a visitor noticed that there was a big yellow line painted down the middle of the corridor. "What's that for?" he asked his host. His host replied: "Oh, that's to keep the staff coming in late from colliding with the ones who are leaving early."

The weather this year has prompted memories of 1976, when lawns were also parched, hosepipes banned and some forests burned (e.g. Haughmond Hill). Then, as now, the flow of the River Severn reflected the low rainfall, while local trees failed to lay down normal width of growth rings (July 2011).

Normally, rainfall enters rivers by three main routes: over the surface; through the soil and via deeper bedrock. The first reaches the channel quickly, while the latter are much slower, but then maintain river flow long after wet weather has passed.

The relative contribution of each route depends upon rainfall intensity, relief, vegetation and underlying bedrock. In the rainy uplands of Wales, which supply water to the Severn, the rock is mainly impervious mudstone, which sheds the water quickly, giving sudden peaks to its flow chart or 'hydrograph'. As each wet spell passes, i.e. as passing Atlantic depressions give way to high pressure; flow soon falls to a low level. Thus 1975-6 winter showed the typical seasonal pattern, although perhaps lacking any really high 'overbank' floods.

Higher summer temperatures cause losses by 'evapotranspiration' through the vegetation, so all rivers must depend upon that winter rain still stored in the ground, but this was in short supply in 1976.

Low summer flows have always been a problem in the Severn, noted throughout history by those trying to navigate it. In more recent periods the situation has been made worse by agricultural improvements increasing runoff and reducing natural storage capacity of upland soils and lowland flood plains.

Now a new power station at Buildwas was demanding reliable supplies of cooling water... As a result, the Clywedog Dam was built above Llanidloes in the early 1960s to store that winter rain for release in dry summers, such as 1976.

As this system was proving a success, thoughts turned to finding other valleys to dam, but none were available without wrecking agricultural communities. Instead, authorities chose to exploit the water held in sandstones under the plain, into which bore-holes could be sunk to extract supplies to 'top up' the river.

One interesting by-product of this has been a better understanding of both local groundwater and the solid rock shapes beneath the thick glacial deposits which otherwise dominate our local landscape (Nov. 2009).

In the meantime, the power station has closed down, but demands for agricultural and domestic supplies are increasing, so that all those back-up systems have been doing their job this summer.

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Part 134

Remembering 1976

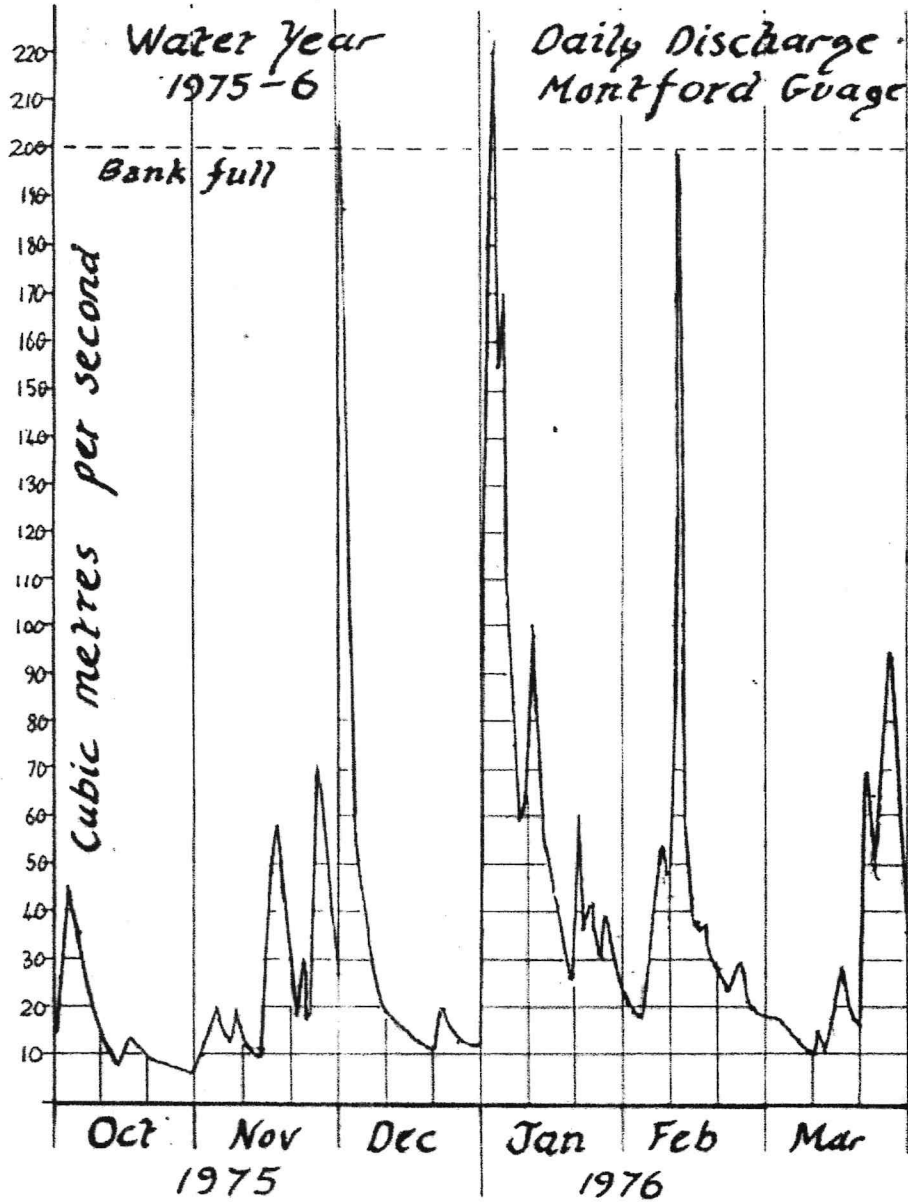
Bicton Village News

Offprint from

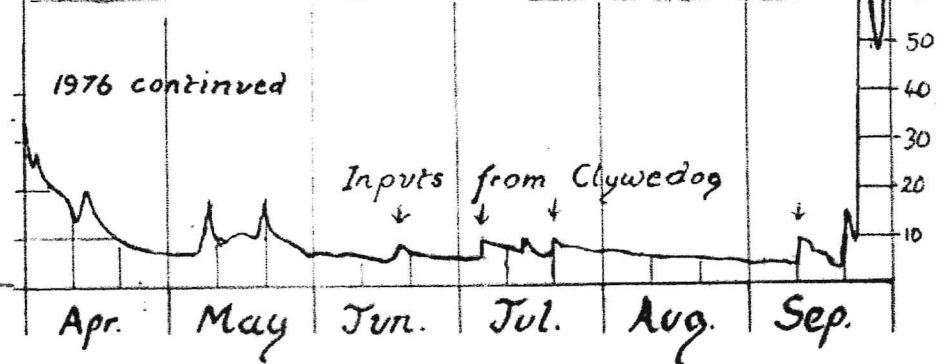
September 2018
No 626

Remembering 1976

River Severn:



A Cedar Tree: cut section



At Redhouse, the long standing tenant was John Roberts, 63, helped by wife and four grown up children. Originally there had been seven, but one had died while two had left for other work. Altogether it was a typical farming family, which had started earlier in Buttington.

By contrast, at Bicton Farm, the tenant was James Paddock, brother of Alfred of the Pound and therefore another member of this long established local family. Aged 40, he was still unmarried, but the house was well filled by an unmarried sister and three nieces as well as two young farm workers, as the farm had no cottages of its own. The Wallader nieces were particularly glad to be here with Uncle James since their own home in nearby Calcot was such a cramped cottage.

Indeed, all this again highlights the contrasting sizes of farmhouses and cottages at this time. There would be little in between before the development of typical 'suburban' houses.

At the Woodlands, George Percy Mead, 45 lived as a 'gentleman farmer' specialising in producing milk from a herd of Jersey Cows. He really came from a medical background, but opted out when still a student after meeting Annie, a nurse at St Thomas' Hospital, London, who had been brought up on the Bowen Jones farm at Ensdon House. Together they clearly had the necessary finance to buy this property. They had no children, however, probably because Annie's own birth had caused the death of her mother and may have put her off the idea (Jan 13). They employed just two living in staff, while most farm and dairy workers lived back down the lane.

Thus we come to the end of the village and reflect upon what the census recorded, particularly the different roles within the population owning and working the land. One important component not recorded by the census was, however, the muscle power provided by the horses, who, like the people were to be affected by the coming war.

Many of the stories touched upon here have already been covered in greater detail in earlier history essays for which 'offprints' are available on request.

Many thanks again to the Family History volunteers in Shrewsbury Archives and oral tradition passed on by Mary Fowles.

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Offprint from

October 2018
No 627

Bicton Village News

Part 135



David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 135

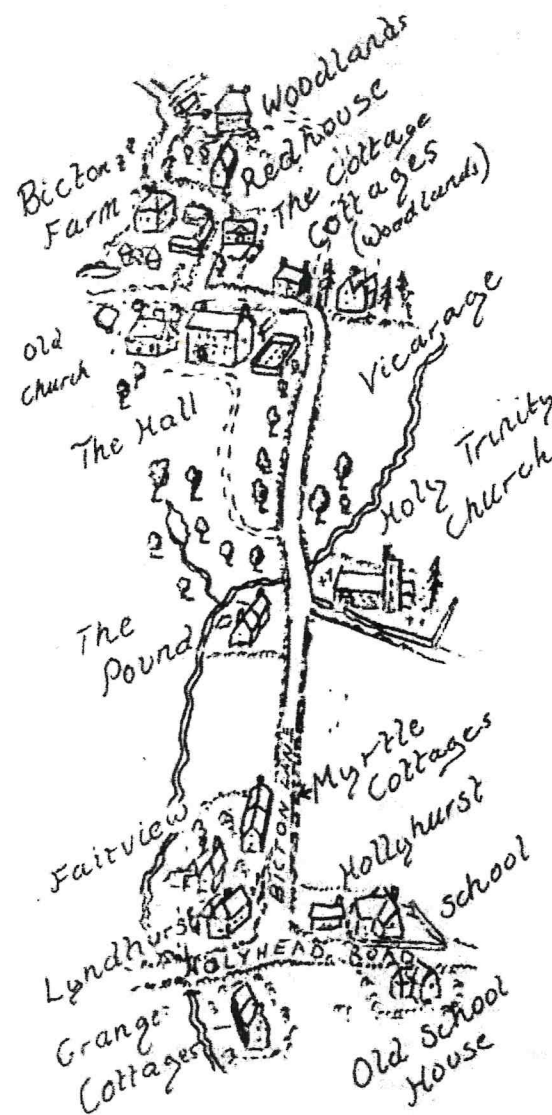
Bicton before WW1

After a break, we continue our Michael Portillo-style exploration of the pre-war village by following the path of the 1911 census enumerator along Bicton Lane. We thereby discover what survives from that period and, by implication, what has changed, both in the buildings and the lives of the people.

Leaving behind the cottage community of gardeners and tradesmen by the main road (Jul 18), we enter the old farming village beyond the new church. Here, at the edge of the former heath (May 18), stood a small enclosure, or 'Pound', for stray animals, hence the name of a small farm here. For two generations at least, it has been occupied by the Paddock family, first Thomas, now Alfred, 48. In a way, he was a link between the two halves of the village, since he was also a carpenter, supplying amongst other things, the coffins for burials at the church opposite. With a family of wife, four children and mother-in-law, life was a bit cramped. The house had actually been three cottages in a row, so life must have been even more congested in the past.

Next, up a long drive, we encounter a contrasting situation at the Hall, which was once the home of Richard Jenkins, but since his death had become part of the Wingfield estate. Thus it became home to a series of tenants, first the Cotes sisters and then, for the last 15 years Miss Edith Millbank, 62, from Yorkshire. She employed four female staff, all of whom had changed since the previous census in a way not unusual in those times. In the wider village, she was appreciated as a sort of 'fairy godmother', which we have recalled in previous essays (Dec 11).

Further up the lane, the typical 'Victorian' vicarage housed the Revd. Frederick Edwards, 73, incumbent since c.1890. He was also single and once helped by his sister, he also employed two domestic staff, who were frequently changing (earlier girls included the Rosier sisters who subsequently married into the local Lewis and Glover families). By now, he also had help in his duties from a succession of curates. In general, such clergy still lived like minor gentry.



Next door, a pair of cottages belonging to the Woodlands housed John Thomas, 26 and John Ralfs, 27 and their wives. Since they had only just started their own families, there was also room for a young lodger. In a way typical of such workers they were all new to the village, replacing workers who had moved on. They were both part of the milk business run from the Woodlands.

The next household up the lane occupied a rather unusual building serving also as a stable and coach house. Here, first Charles Newitt, 72 and now son-in-law William Davies, 29 were based as coachmen and gardeners, probably serving the Hall. Another building also once stood here, which must have been given the name 'Cottage', and was occupied by Miss Jelleco and her school (Sep 11). Later it became known as the 'White House'.

The rest of the old village included the three large farmhouses, each of which had its own individual story, arising partly from different 19th century landowners (Sep 09). Now, their occupants exhibited different family structures.

Now everyone was returning home to carry on their normal lives. Charles Wingfield at Onslow continued local public service, which now included charitable work with ex-servicemen. However, all this was cut short by his death in 1923, age 49, during an operation at a local nursing home.

Meanwhile, Humphrey Sandford, now 27, after a brief spell farming in Kenya, married Shropshire girl Mary Pickmore and joined her brother at his farm. To cut a long and interesting story short, he eventually returned to the Isle and lived until he was 100, in spite of that gas attack. By contrast, Thomas Roberts of Montford Bridge died, age 40, only eight years after the war. Had his health been undermined by it?

Len Cooke, likewise set off farming 'in the colonies' in order to delay returning to the Grange until his father died, allowing him to be his 'own boss'.

Frank Yewbrey returned to his young wife and continued as cowman at the Woodlands. The Cassels boys returned to Bicton House, which was big enough to accommodate an additional wife and new family. Others could also now settle down to married life and varied employment, perhaps inspired by war experience.

William Naylor of Lower Calcott, railway clerk; John Edward Owen, now of Conover, baker; and John Edwards of Montford Bridge, chauffeur. George Henry Davies of the Isle learned to be a electrician while serving, but the general trauma of the war so depressed him that he never married (Nov 13).

George Dudley also served, but is not on the list, perhaps because he did not go overseas. Nevertheless, his experiences probably prompted him to set up his own milk rounds, later based at the Villa.

Otherwise, many others moved on out of the area leaving little trace in local records or memories.

There must be many more war-related stories out there amongst descendants, which we might hear about some time.

Some local war stories supplied by such families have already been used in our history essays, offprints of which are available, while they have also been added to the County's website: www.shropshireremembers.org.uk

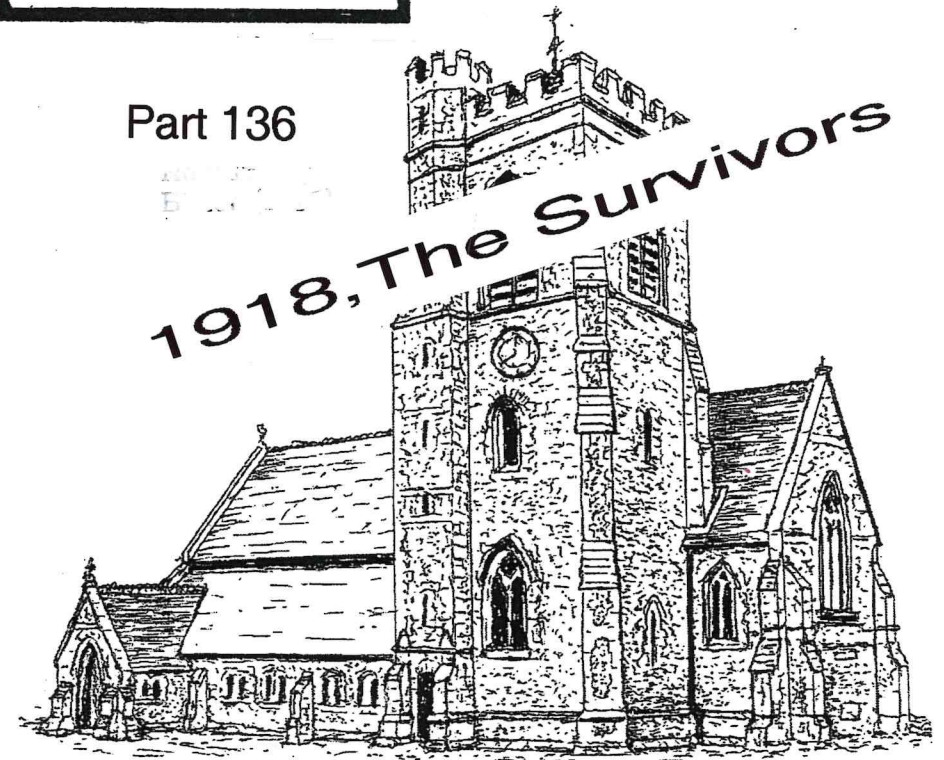
HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Offprint from

November 2018
No 628

Part 136



Bicton Village News

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 136

1918, The Survivors

Once again in November our thoughts turn to past wars, especially the 'Great War' which finished one hundred years ago. Then, the nation looked forward to welcoming the troops home, while also thinking of ways of remembering those who had died.

In the following years, stone monuments bearing their names appeared in prominent positions in many communities, especially village churchyards and town parks. Here in Bicton, however, the public memorial took the form of a clock in the church tower, while

the 'role of honour' with 11 names was carved into a panel of fine marble safely inside the building. Even more unusually, an extra wooden panel here listed the 47 who also served overseas, but returned.

Although such valuable records are safe from the weather, they can be easily overlooked by parishioners who now visit the church in decreasing numbers. Moreover, with the constant movement of population fewer relatives and descendants, who might have a special interest, now live in the area. Hence the need to publish them here and offer some explanation of the names.

List of officers and men of this parish
who served overseas in the Great War

Archerlancie Geo.R.	R.A.F.	Lawrence W.	M.T.
Allman Phillip	M.T.	Leedham W.	K.S.L.I.
Beaman R.W.	R.A.F.	Morris J.	K.S.L.I.
Brown H.	R.A.F.	Morris T.	K.S.L.I.
Brown W.R.	K.O.R.L.	Morris Wm.	R.W.F.
Cartwright F.	B.E.A.	Naylor W.G.	R.A.V.C.
Cassels C.E.	K.S.L.I.	Naylor J.	R.A.V.C.
Cassels R.	K.S.L.I.	Owen J.E.	N.Staffs
Chambers J.R.H.	S.N.A.	Owen P.	R.A.V.C.
Chambers Wm.	Cheshire Reg.	Price W.E.	R.W.F.
Chidley W.H.	Gren.Guards	Pritchard W.	Cheshire Reg.
Cooke Lt L.J.	R.A.F.	Ratcliff A.	S.Y.
Davies A.	K.S.L.I.	Roberts T.J.	S.Y.
Davies G.H.	K.S.L.I.	Richards S.	R.E.
Edge A.	K.S.L.I.	Roderick O.	K.S.L.I.
Edwards W.	K.S.L.I.	Sambrook A.R.	R.C.A.
Edwards J.E.	R.A.F.	Sandford Lt H.	S.Y.
Fyfe G.E.	R.E.	Thomas F.B.	R.G.A.
Griffiths E.	North Staffs.	Thomas J.E.	R.E.
Hall F.	R.A.F.	Tipton F.	K.S.L.I.
Hancock J.B.	Welsh Reg.	Webb E.	K.S.L.I.
Huwitt A.H.	E. Surrey Reg.	Wingfield Maj. C.R.B.	K.S.L.I.
Hughes H.	R.A.S.C.	Yewbrey F.	K.S.L.I.
Johnson R.	S.Y.		

Transcript of panel in Bicton church

The casualties have already appeared (Nov 2010) and now it is the turn of the survivors, some of whom also suffered mental and physical scars. Some may also have succumbed to Spanish Flu.

As only to be expected, most served the locally based King's Shropshire Light Infantry, both as regulars and new recruits or had been part of the local 'territorial' Shropshire Yeomanry. Inevitably, the majority of casualties came from such K.S.L.I. ranks.

At this time, the 'officer class' was usually supplied by public schools and landed gentry, represented locally by Charles Wingfield of Onslow and Humphrey Sandford of the Isle.

The Wingfield family already had a tradition of military and public service and Charles was actually co-opted as Mayor of Shrewsbury in 1914, before being commissioned in the K.S.L.I. in 1916. He served on the Western Front rising in rank and commanding his battalion.

Humphrey Sandford had been experiencing life in the Australian outback in 1914, but returned to join the Shropshire Yeomanry, with whom his father had served in the Boer War. While a Lieutenant in France and Palestine, his riding skills would have been appreciated, but he had to be invalided out after suffering from the effects of gas.

As casualties mounted across all units new recruits were often deployed where most needed to maintain numbers, so that local lads found themselves serving in a variety of other regiments e.g. North Staffordshire, East Surrey, Kings Own Royal Liverpool, Royal Welsh Fusiliers etc.

At the same time, authorities may have appreciated special skills found amongst rural workers, especially for dealing with animals. Thus Len Cooke escaped work at Grange Farm but found himself working with mules in the Military Transport instead (Nov 2011). Others joined the Royal Army Veterinary Corps. Royal Engineers could also make use of skills developed in practical farm and estate management.

As the war progressed, flying became increasingly important and saw the evolution of the Royal Flying Corps into the RAF. Recruits often came from existing fighting units and these included Len Cooke. He was also being promoted to Lieutenant at this time, reflecting how the losses sustained by the traditional junior officer class were giving more opportunities to other ranks. Flying also had its own risks, but the war ended soon after he started.

established in the 1880s. He also served two terms as MP for South Shropshire, during which his first hand experience with running the Loton estate enabled him to make useful contributions to debates and legislation on rural affairs.

He showed a passion for many aspects of agricultural improvement, including the welfare of tenants. On the estate he pioneered the provision of new cottages at a time when such accommodation in the county was still generally poor, and so provided a model for other landowners to follow.

By visits and meetings, he was eager to exchange ideas on such subjects. In one address he reminded everyone of all the improvements locally, which had already taken place since the eighteenth century, especially by enclosure of wasteland, installation of better drainage and upgrading of roads. These had contributed to increase in food production, access to markets and an improved diet, all of which confirmed his conviction that one must seek ways of avoiding rural poverty rather than just condemning those who became poor. In this way, the burden of the Poor Law system could be reduced and he did, in fact, manage to reduce costs in the Atcham Union (welfare debates are nothing new!).

In between all this, he was also a family man, who, with wife Mary from Sweeny Hall, raised four daughters and two sons. The girls were educated at home by a series of governesses, while the boys were sent away to school, which their father personally selected – Eton and Harrow.

By 1871, after the death of Mary in 1864 and having lost his parliamentary seat in 1865, Baldwyn began thinking of retiring from public service. However, he sadly died that same year age 66. He had lived at a time when the landowning gentry ruled the political scene in the 'Shires' and therefore to some extent he just did what was expected of him. However, he did so with extra energy and compassion for those less fortunate in society, thus earning the lasting respect from his peers. In many ways he just wanted to be 'useful', an inspiration we all could try to share.

It is fitting that his name should be preserved by the new development, along with the bricks and mortar of the old building.

Based on
Leighton diary

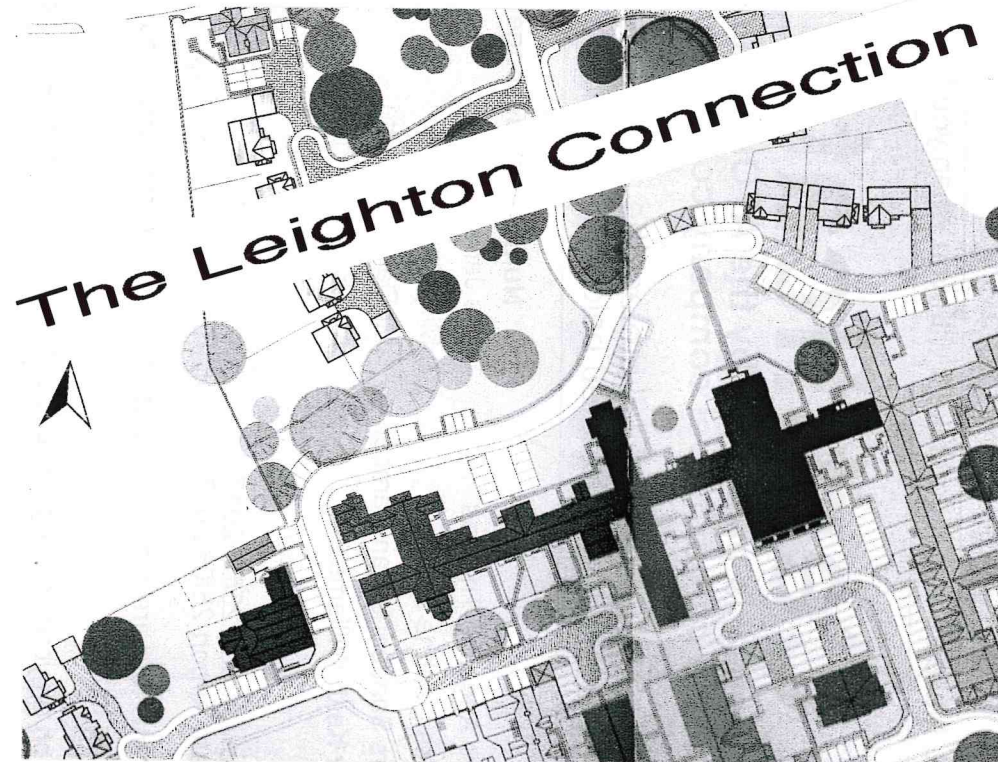
Walsh V.J.
Trans. Shrop. Arch. Soc.vLIX

Offprint from

Dec 2018

No 629

Bicton



Village

News

**HISTORY
of BICTON**

Part 137

by David Pannett

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 137

The Leighton Connection

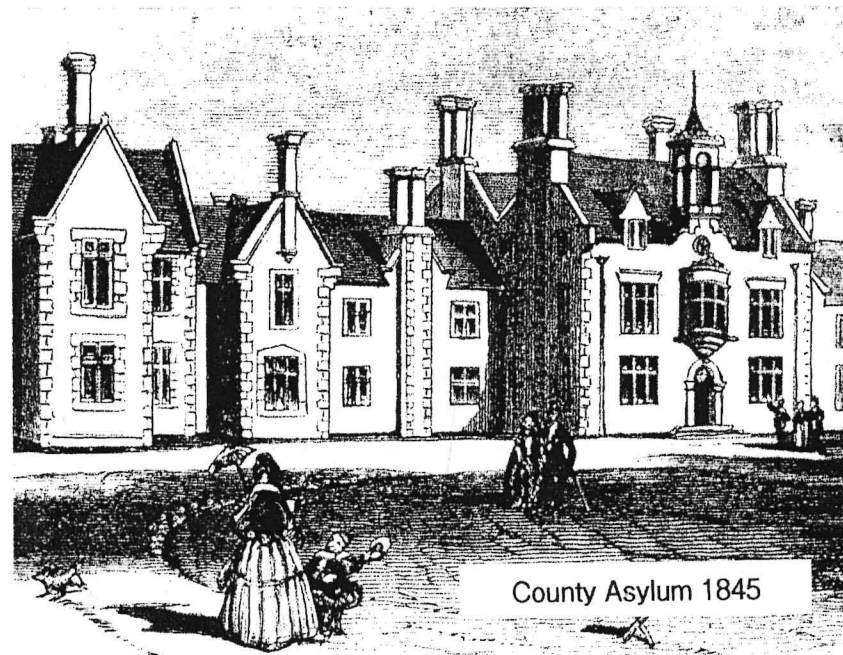
Anyone from Bicton travelling along the Welshpool Road through Shelton, on the no 70 bus or Park and Ride, would have noticed the gradual redevelopment of the old Shelton Hospital. Now new houses mingle with mature trees, while spacious hospital wards have been converted to luxury apartments within the original Victorian asylum!

Nearby, a replacement health centre, now offering modern approaches to mental problems, has been named 'The Redwoods' after those Victorian trees, while the redevelopment by Shropshire Homes is now called 'Leighton Park'. That link with trees is obvious, but perhaps many people may be puzzled by 'Leighton'.

The answer lies in the history of the hospital, which was founded as the County Asylum for pauper lunatics in 1843 when Sir Baldwyn Leighton of Loton in Alberbury was chairman of the Atcham Poor Law Union. He aimed to run this organisation and its workhouse at Berrington to the highest standards, blending compassion with efficiency, but soon realised that many paupers were also suffering from mental problems, for whom the typical workhouse regime was inappropriate. He therefore advocated a special asylum, both for their own good and to relieve pressure on the conventional 'union' workhouses in the County as a whole.

To this end, he visited examples of such institutions already built in other parts of the country, in order to pick up the best ideas. He also involved Montgomeryshire so that costs could be shared, since he also contributed to county affairs there. Significantly, the site chosen was a detached portion of St Julian's parish within the St Chad's township of Shelton lying just outside the town, on the road towards both Loton and Montgomeryshire.

The Leighton family had come to Loton in the early 17th century and were often involved in various aspects of public service. Perhaps for this reason one Edward Leighton had been made the first Baronet in 1693. Sir Baldwyn was therefore able to inherit both an estate and title along with a strong family tradition of service. In this aspect he was to surpass all the other Leightons with his efforts and achievements.



He was born in 1805 and, in 1824, inherited the estates in Alberbury and Cardeston from his father General Sir Baldwyn Leighton. In 1836 he became chairman of the Atcham Poor Law Union, of which Bicton was a part, and continued in this role until his death, while doing many other things. For instance, as serving JP, he was a member of 'Quarter Sessions', the committee of justices which ran the county before county councils were