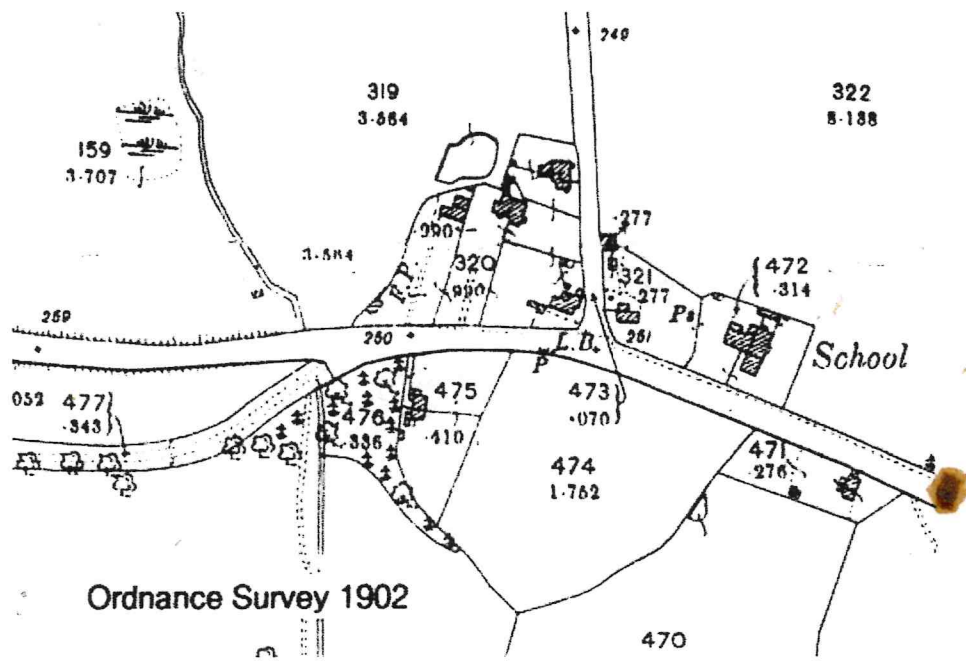


Tithe Map 1843



Ordnance Survey 1902

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Offprint from
 January 2020
 No 642

Bickton Village News



The Past in Maps

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 150

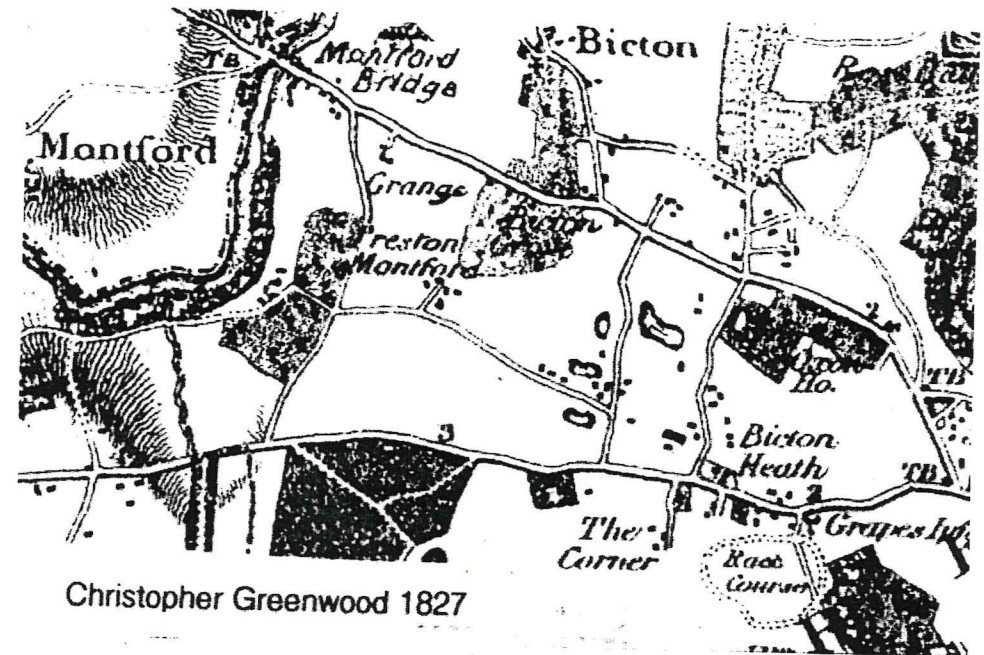
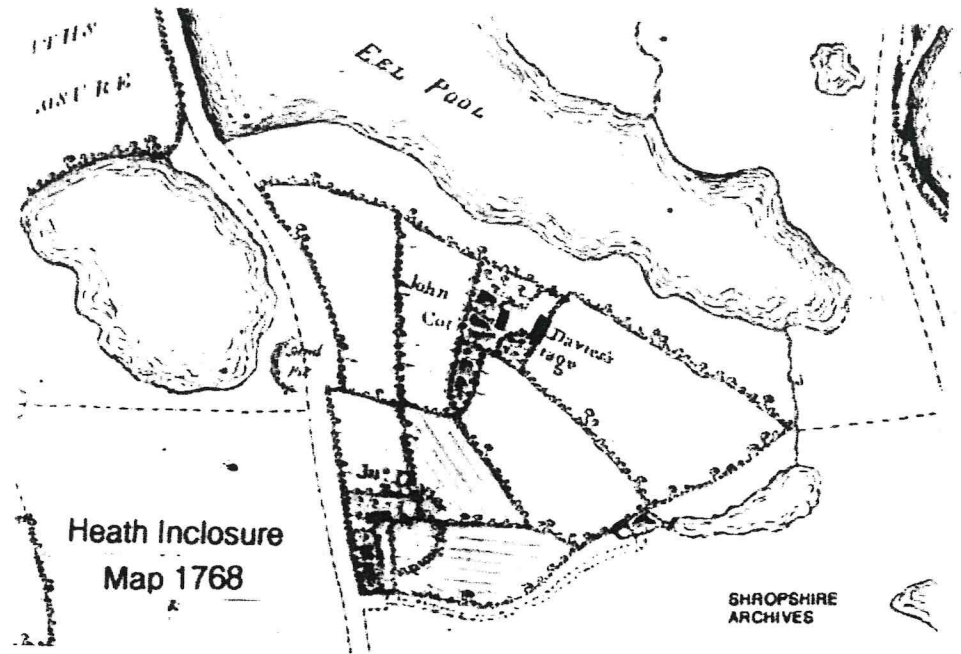
The Past in Maps

As we reach another milestone in our history series, it is perhaps a good time to reflect upon some of the topics covered over the past twelve years. One way to remind the regular reader, or introduce local history to the newcomer, is to look again at old maps of Bicton since they illustrate both the development of cartography and the evolution of our landscape.

By exploring the area with such maps in hand, one can recognise what has survived from the past and what changes have occurred since. For instance, take a close look at the shapes of buildings shown. You may even be living in one of them yourself.

Even amongst the distorted shapes drawn by John Rocque, there are clues to road changes, the location of Thomas Wright's tree nursery and the unenclosed heathland. Those heathland pools are also features which are relevant to today, as developers and road builders encroach.

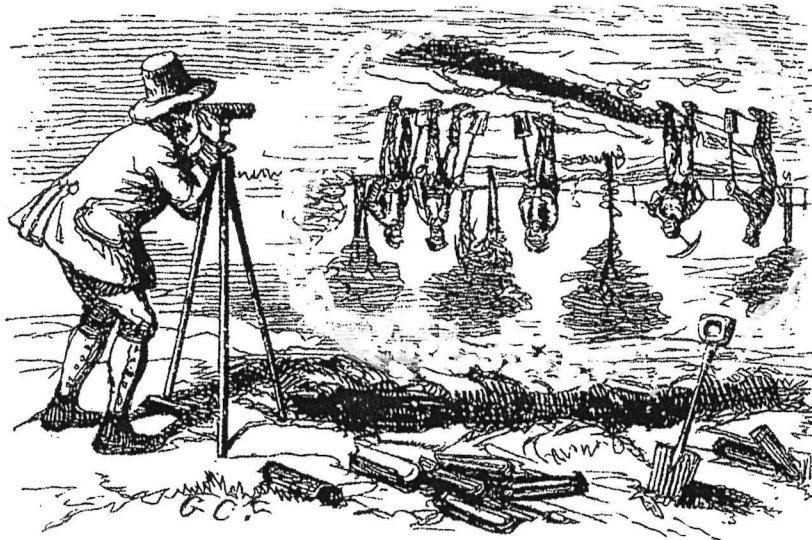
In other words, there is plenty to 'read' in such historical documents.



deeper pools survived. Nevertheless, Oxon Pool was also lowered by a culvert under Shepherd's Lane. Calcott Moss was also exposed when this pool was lowered.

Some peat had remained hidden, however, and only encountered by modern developers of road and houses. For instance, the old Shrewsbury By-Pass near the

cartoon by George Cruikshank, 1852.



Laying field drains in the 19th. century:
farmer confused by inverted image
through a new surveyor's level.

'Oak' is laid on brushwood like George Stevenson's railway across Chat Moss near Manchester. Nearby at least one 1930s house has needed underpinning.

Elsewhere in this part of Shrewsbury, damp hollows and pools have been left as landscape features within the housing estates. One developer who built a house too close to soft ground had to remove it quietly when foundations failed.

It can be seen how development and road plans have been adapted to accommodate such difficult ground. Will planners designing the 'Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension' learn such lessons? In the meantime nature is successfully taking over down Shepherd's Lane, where deep 19th century drains are no longer working, allowing 18th century pools to come back to life.

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Offprint from

February 2020

No 643

Bicton Village News

Part 151

Dealing with a 'Glacial' Landscape



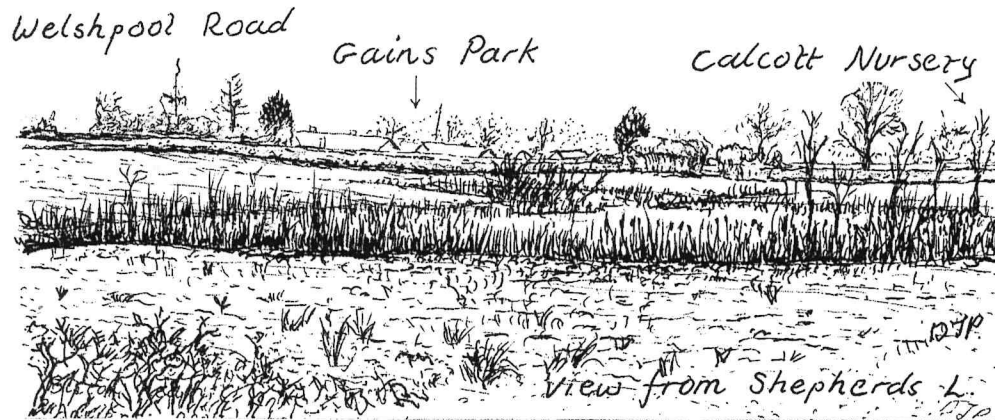
David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 151

Dealing with a 'Glacial' Landscape

Last year the reports of floods included many examples of recent housing suffering because they had been built on a floodplain, where they were supposed to be protected by expensive defences. Perhaps they should not have been built there, in spite of all that pressure to meet government targets.

In the Severn Valley, Molverley and Tewkesbury often appeared as illustrations of floods, but close inspection also revealed how the old parts of each were still dry, whatever was happening all around.

Here in Bicton we have eight miles of river frontage, half of which are floodplain, which are fortunately not at risk of development. The real problem in the parish is posed by the uneven 'glacial' landscape left by decaying ice some 20 thousand years ago, the details of which we have discussed several times over the years. Now, with new threats from development, including the NW Relief Road, it might perhaps be helpful to newcomers and neighbours if we repeat the main points.



Site of planned development

The river encounters the underlying sandstone in only two places in the parish, since the rest of the landscape is made up of boulder clay, sands and gravels, in places 30 metres deep. This is especially the case in two hidden channels, carved by meltwater under the ice which cross from Montford Bridge to Copthorne and also through the Isle towards Shrewsbury, where they converge.

The new A5 road bridge needed very long piles at one end, while any new bridge on the relief road would face the same problem. Incidentally, the fine sand filling the channel is a very useful aquifer beneath Shelton Waterworks.

As this glacial sediment filled in the channels when the ice sheet began to melt, some ice fell in too. Later, as this also melted, the surface collapsed into craters called 'kettle holes' (more jam kettles than tea kettles!). The result has been an uneven pitted surface, similar to the more famous Ellesmere district. Bicton can therefore boast of its smaller version of those 'Meres and Mosses'!

Such a surface obviously caused problems for early agriculture, so that much of it was left as 'Bicton Heath', while the ancient settlements of Bicton, Calcott and Onslow occupied the summit of a curving moraine. Although the soils here are also heavy boulder clay, at least the sloping sides provide better drainage.

In the Bicton and Shrewsbury area, the typical kettle holes appear to have gone through a similar sequence of further development as follows:

As collapse began in a dry 'tundra' landscape, the hollows became traps for wind-blown dust. This provided an impervious clay lining which allowed a pool to form fed from local rainfall.

With a warming climate forests grew, while pool margins were colonised by lush vegetation, which began to fill them with peat. Eventually the shallowest could be completely filled, leaving only the largest with open water, such as Oxon Pool.

Pollen grains trapped in the peat, incidentally, provided modern researchers with the evidence for such changes, which we have also discussed.

The 'wildwood' would have been home to game and Mesolithic hunters, who had little impact on the environment. The succeeding Neolithics and Bronze Age periods, however, saw the progressive degradation of the forest cover, which allowed disturbed soil to be washed or blown into the hollows and on to floodplains.

As this process continued, many peat deposits became buried and even dried out during the warmer Bronze Age. In these circumstances, one must wonder why so many pools still appeared on the eighteenth century maps of Bicton Heath!

The answer lies with medieval peat digging, which was certainly mentioned in the 13th century grants of Bicton to Buildwas Abbey. Pools at Preston Montford were once called 'moss pits', one of which cause problems for A5 road builders.

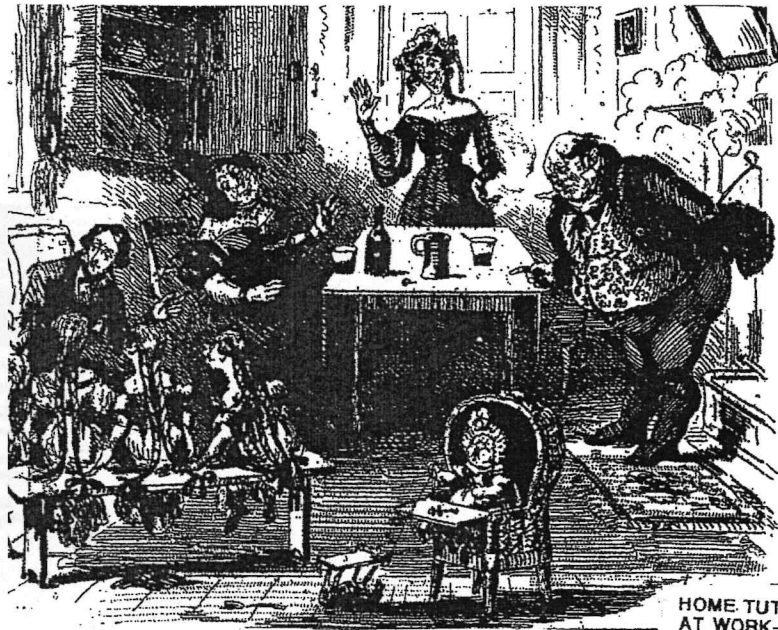
Peat was in such demand for fuel in the Middle Ages, since so much woodland had been cleared and few hedgerows crossed the land. Subsequent centuries reversed the situation to produce the landscape with which we are familiar today.

Such policies of 'improvement' also demanded better drainage in order to bring more land into cultivation. 'Underdraining' through clay tiles helped wet clay soils, while deeper culverts could remove excess water from wet hollows, so only the

l single. By 1851, as a sort of second career, she had set up her own
 irding school for girls in Calcott House (on the site of Haughton)
 e 1851 Census records a pupil aged 11 from London.
 ; later joined at Calcott by her younger brother John, when he
 irector of Hanwood. She then moved her school to Dogpole in
 ury, the advertisement for which throws light on the curriculum

rd instruction in English grammar, Geography, General History,
 ornamental needlework etc., 26 guineas per term. German,
 usic, Writing and Arithmetic, Drawing Dancing and Deportment by
 as usual extra charges."

enterprise prospered is not known, since it faced competi-
 on from
 iders in town. Significantly, she had returned to Calcott by 1871
 o a restful retirement on a teacher's pension! Instead, she cared for
 ile gentleman' until her death in 1889 aged 91. Skills learned in
 young children can still often help when dealing with victims of
 . She is buried in Bickton but the grave is not obvious.
 day's youngsters, as they sit on comfortable chairs working
 keyboards, need to be reminded of those far off days of hard
 chalk and slate!



HOME TUTOR
 AT WORK—cartoon



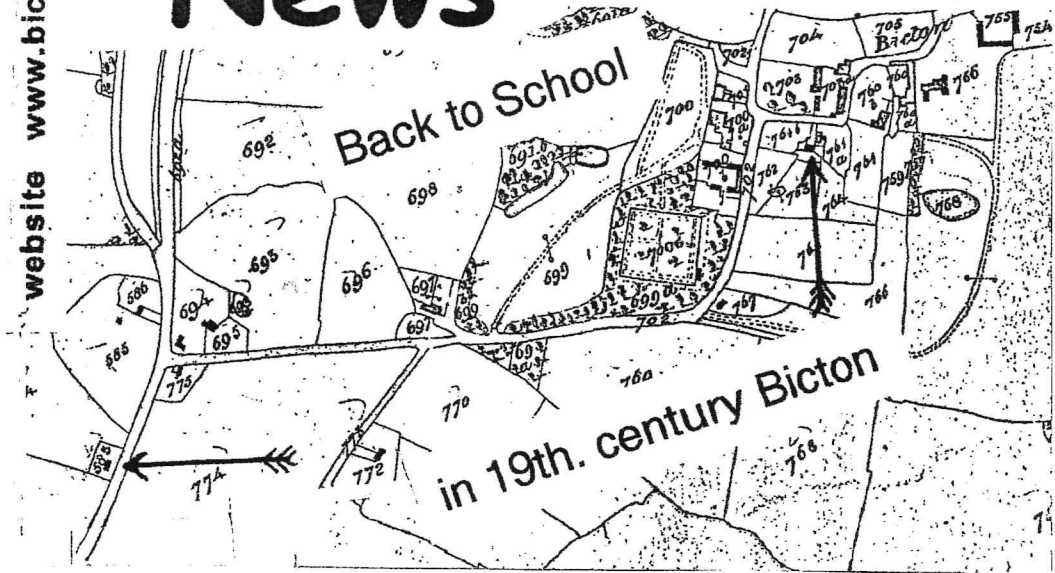
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No 542

Bickton Village News

**HISTORY
 of BICKTON**
 by David Pannett

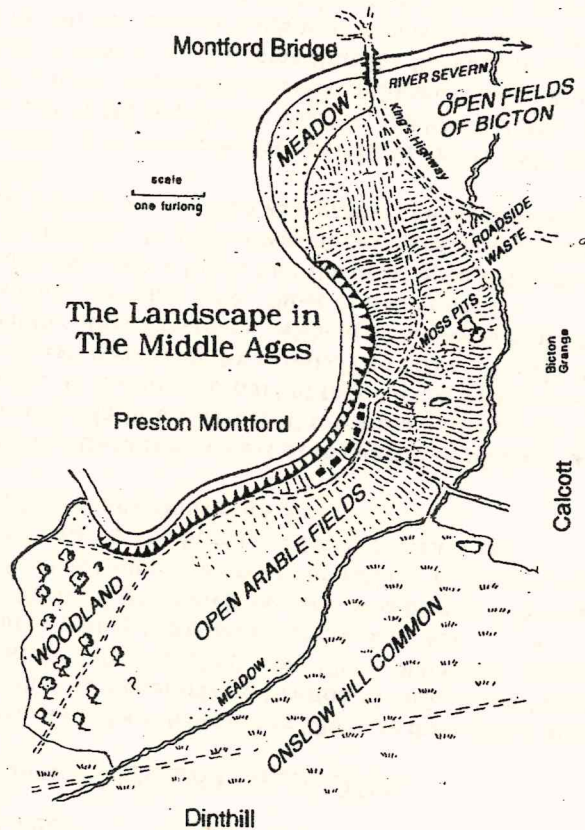
Part 53

website www.bicktonvillage.co.uk





Preston Montford Hall c.1705,
also rebuilt kitchen wing 1890
and classroom 1957

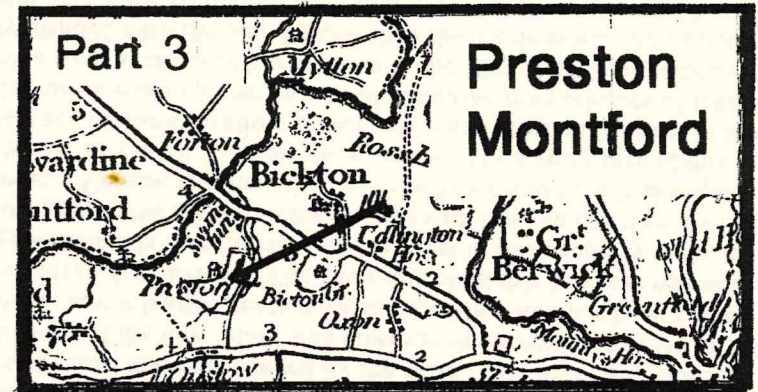


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Bickton

Village

**HISTORY
of BICTON**
by David Pannett



News

Part 3 of David Pannett's HISTORY OF BICTON

Amongst anniversaries to be celebrated in 2007 are three which involve Bicton Parish, especially that part comprising Preston Montford and Montford Bridge:

1. Samuel Adderton died on 22nd May 1707—300 years ago and was buried in Shrewsbury Abbey (slab near communion rail)
2. Thomas Telford the great civil engineer was born in 1757—250 years ago.
3. The Field Studies Council, pioneers of outdoor education, opened their Shropshire Centre in the Spring of 1957, 50 years ago.

For explanation of the connections read on:-

Although Preston Montford is now part of the parish of Bicton it originally formed, together with Dinthill, a detached township of the parish of St. Alkmund, Shrewsbury.. It also formed part of that church's endowments and indeed the name suggests ownership by priests. The suffix 'Montford' distinguishes it from all the other Prestons). Although smaller in scale its history and landscape shows many parallels with those of Bicton itself. It was mentioned in Domesday Book, had the usual open fields, meadows, woodland and common pasture. In 1145 it was likewise granted to a new monastery, Lilleshall Abbey, but was not worked as a grange, but continued as a normal village, albeit small.

A rare deed of 1308 refers to land in the open fields and in 1327 there were eleven taxpayers before the population crash at the Black Death. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, after the reformation, it was owned and occupied by the Calcot family. At the same time the Borough of Shrewsbury became 'Lords of the Manor' and through their records we learn of the first craftsmen occupying roadside waste near Montford Bridge. At what stage the open field system was enclosed is not clear.

Meanwhile, the reformation also united Abbey Foregate with the borough of Shrewsbury, after a life of separate control under the Abbey, so that its citizens could participate in the trade and politics of the whole town. One such family were the Addertons who built up their fortunes as tailors and drapers through successive generations and involved themselves in public duties, such as being Church Wardens. Eventually one Samuel Adderton even became Mayor of Shrewsbury in 1694. In 1696 he would have witnessed the building of Newport House (later the Guildhall) which introduced the very latest fashion of brick building which we know as the Queen Anne style. Indeed quite a sensation in such a 'timber frame' town. Could this have been the stimulus for him to purchase land at Preston Montford and build one for himself; sort of 'keeping up with the Joneses?'

He built it on farmland beside the old settlement and laid out a small park. And in doing so ensured the survival of some older ploughing patterns under the grass. For greater privacy the old road from Montford Bridge to Ford was later Closed and replaced by the present lane and no doubt at the same time further cottage settlement was encouraged by the main road, well away from the house. His enjoyment of the new 'Hall' was however short lived as he died in 1707. His son Samuel, now a landed gentleman, married into another local landed family and his children did likewise. The downside of all this however was that various marriage settlements transferred some interest in this property to those families, so that the grandchildren found themselves with less. In this way the Hill, Chambre and Vernon families took over the house and used it as a spare home, 'dower house' or rented it out to other gentry. The significance of this story is that it escaped major alteration, preserving many original features to this day. The wider estate was however improved, including the enclosure of Onslow Hill. The service wing at the rear burnt down in the 1890s, but the replacement was carefully blended with the old. By this time the whole estate had passed to the Wingfields who were expanding their estate in Bicton and they continued to use the house in the same way, before settling it on while retaining surrounding farmland. To cut a long story short, in 1947 (is this another anniversary?) it was given to a charity which ran it as a probation home for boys who carried out small scale farming as part of their education/treatment. This closed down just when the Field Studies Council were seeking to expand their activities in response to the rising demand from schools and colleges for environmental education out of doors. Since then the new 'Field Centre' has gone from strength to strength providing a wide variety of weekly and weekend courses for 'students of all ages from eight to eighty'. Over the years thousands have experienced the natural history and landscape of this area and many more distant locations in the county. In various ways the centre has also contributed to the local economy.

The original Hall was soon too small for the various activities so that several extra buildings have arisen around the site. At one time an old Land Army hostel near the main road was also used and this helped to prolong the life of a wartime relic with its own contribution to recent local history.

The remaining anniversary concerns Thomas Telford. Countless places in Britain (and even Sweden) were touched by the work of this great engineer, Bicton, on his 'Holyhead Road' but one of them. The details we must leave for a further instalment.

Continues on next page.

Bicton Village News:

extracts from:

History of Bicton

www.bictonvillage.co.uk

Many years ago the Shell Guide written by Michael Moulder described, or rather dismissed Bicton as a 'decayed village off the Holyhead Road near Shrewsbury. 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....'

The church is actually 1886. I like the tower - the monkey puzzle tree was cut down years ago. However, one must agree with the writer that the visitor would find Bicton a rather dull village without an old church, a picturesque house or even a central focus like a green. On the other hand this 'ordinary' village illustrates very well some typical features of the Shropshire rural landscape and by studying it we can learn more about the ways in which this developed.

David Pannett

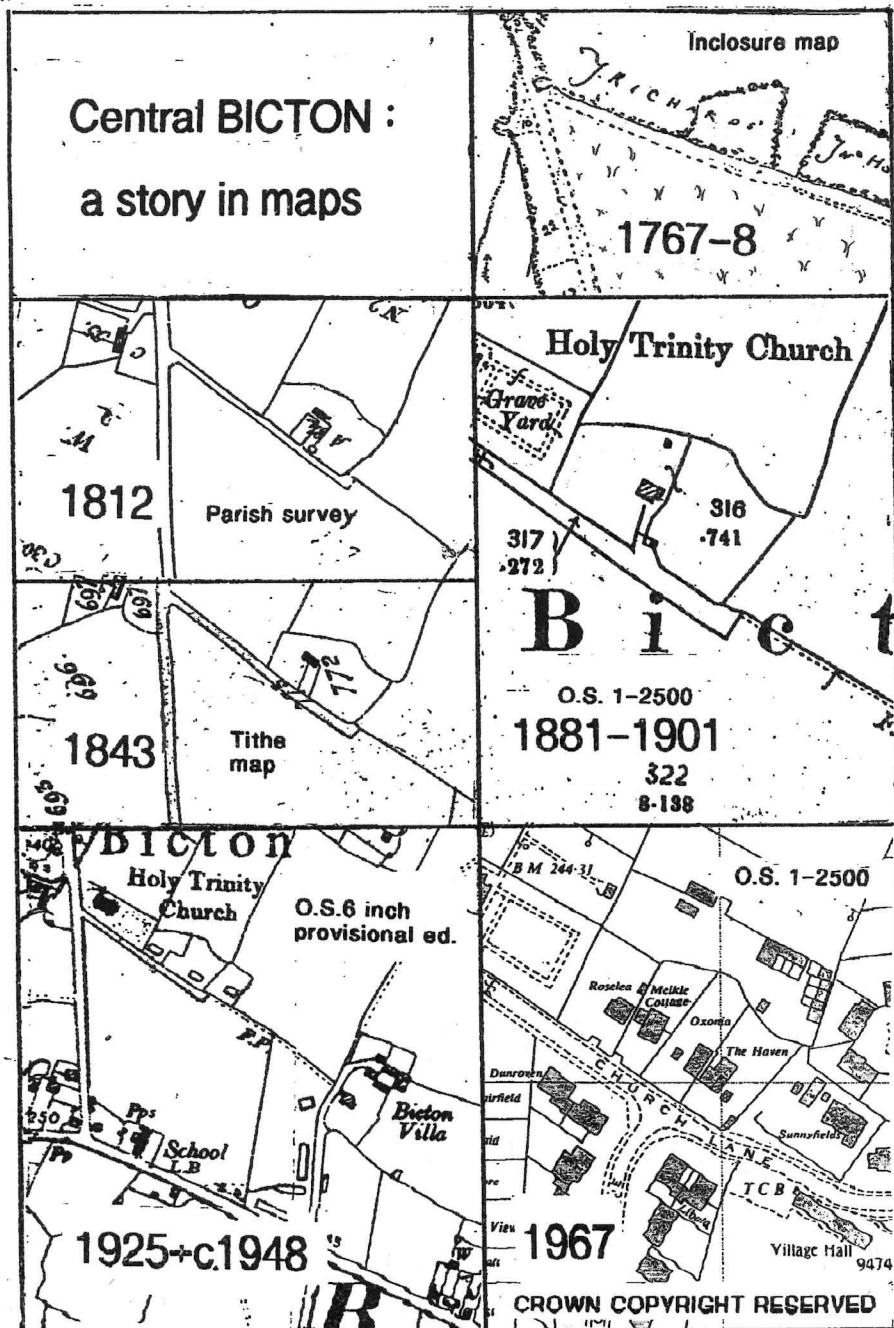


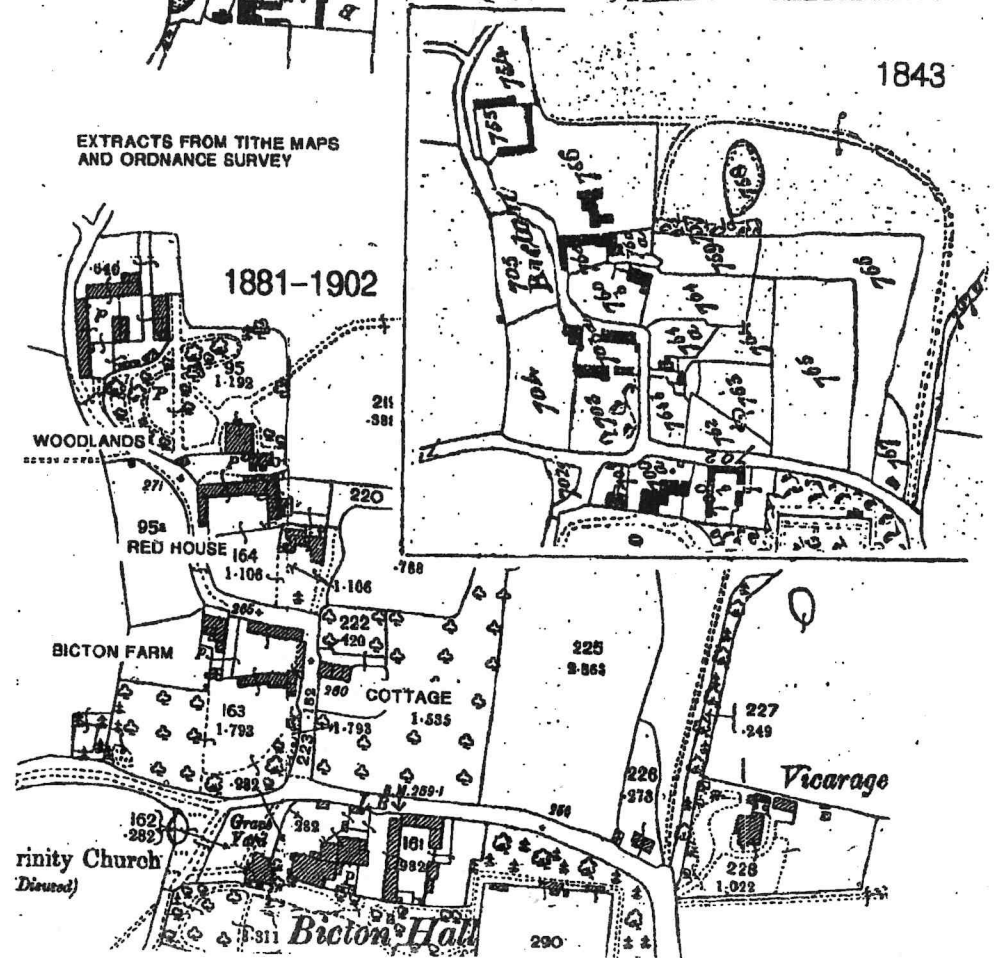
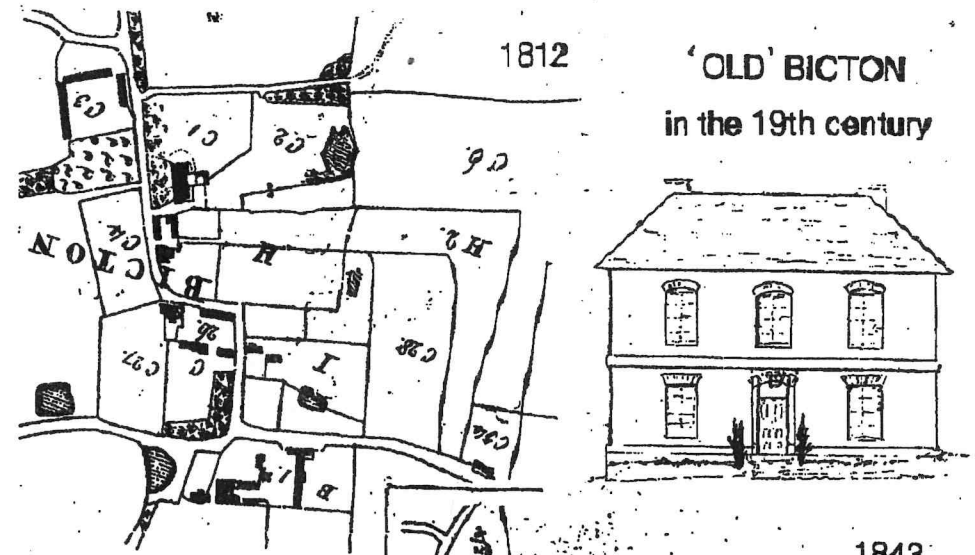
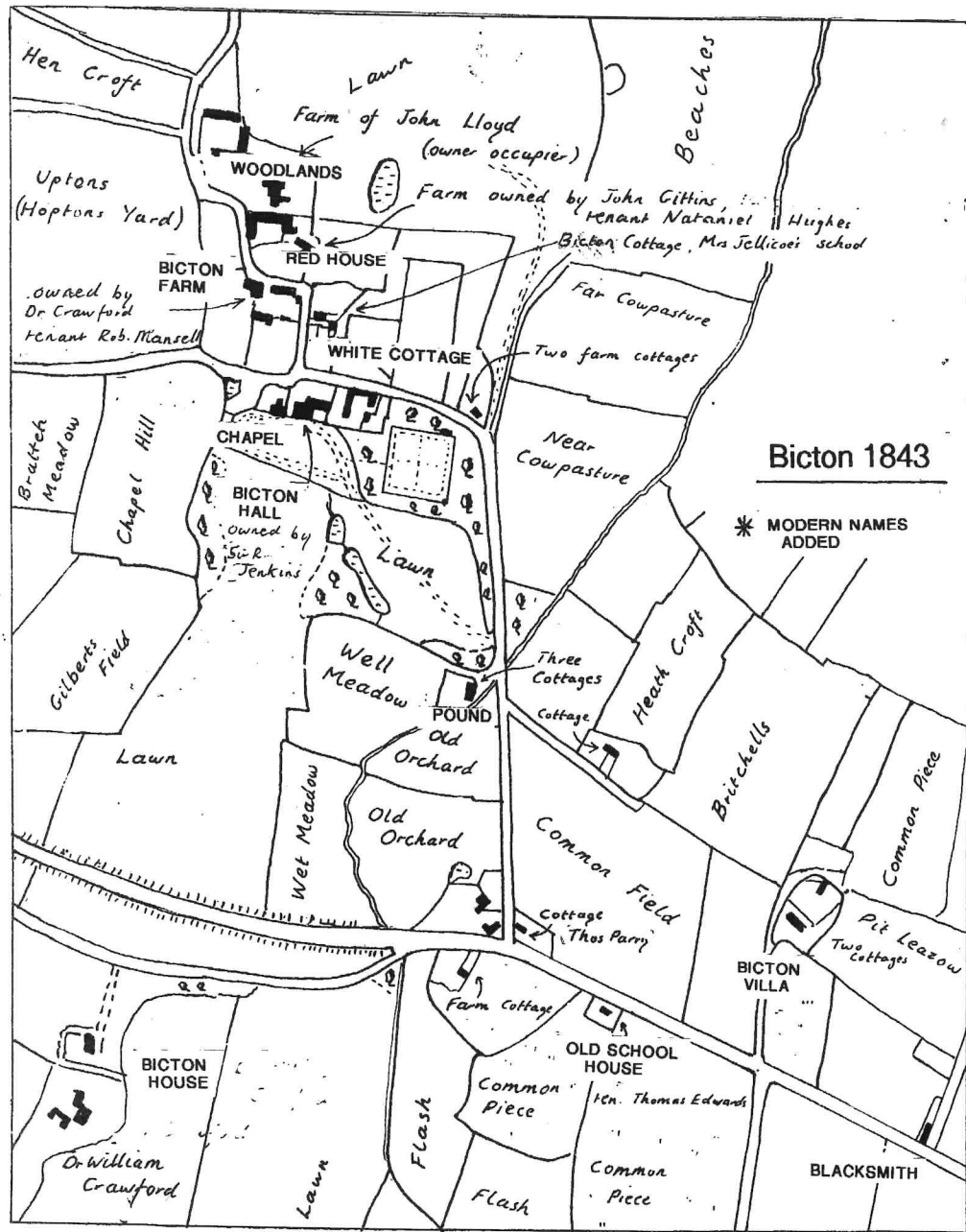
Bicton Hall 1879

BASED ON DRAWING BY STANLEY LEIGHTON

Holy Trinity Bicton (1865)

Arthur Lloyd-Oswell





However, by now family responsibilities were looming so that Dorothy chose instead to return nearer home, taking up a similar post in Shrewsbury, based at The Elms, near Shirehall. At least one current Bickton resident was delivered by her and perhaps there may be more.

Indeed, family commitments were to become increasingly dominant in her life, such is often the lot of any unmarried youngest daughter. She thus sacrificed her career. Sister Mary, by now a teacher, had married a colleague working for oil company schools and in this connection Dorothy spent some time with them in Venezuela.

All went well at first, but Mary developed cancer and had to return to their new home next to Milnsbridge. Thus Dorothy switched from caring for her widowed mother, who died in 1961, to caring for her sister till her death soon after. Now Dorothy moved into their home and became surrogate mother to Mary's children, allowing their father to remain working overseas. As the children were able to 'fly the nest', Dorothy went back to Milnsbridge to care for her unmarried brothers, until their own deaths in 1976 and 1988.



After all this, Dorothy was to spend the next thirty years living on her own in this house, with company from dogs, geese and chickens as a sort of replacement family. Now, after caring for others, she is enjoying being cared for in Bowbrook residential home where, with phone and iPad, she still keeps in contact with friends and relations far and near.



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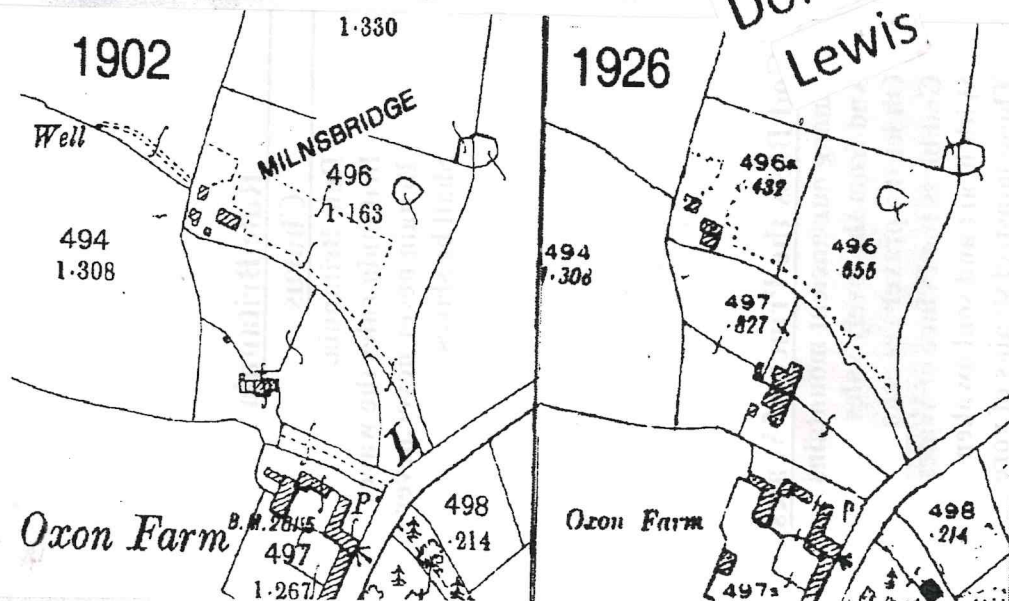
**HISTORY
of BICKTON**

by David Pannett

Part 152

Call the
Midwife

Dorothy
Lewis



David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 152

Call the Midwife

One of the most popular drama series on TV at the moment is 'Call the Midwife', which is not just another 'soap', but almost a serious documentary. As the storyline progresses through successive years, it illustrates the development of the service in a changing world.

By coincidence, Dorothy Lewis, the oldest native of Bicton, was also once a midwife during those very same 'TV' years, even cycling to calls around east London. The reason for raising this story now is that she has just celebrated her one hundredth birthday and still has vivid memories of that time.

Dorothy was born 25th February 1920, youngest child of Ernest and Blanche Lewis of 'Milsnbridge', Shepherd's Lane. The story of this family has already featured several times in this history series also partly thanks to Dorothy's memory.

Dorothy's arrival added more pressure on an already crowded household, which included one sister and three brothers aged 4-14, two parents, one grandmother and even a wartime 'landgirl' working at The Woodlands. Such a situation was not uncommon in those times.

Likewise in many such rural cottages facilities were very basic, without mains water or electricity until the following decade and perhaps all this had contributed to the death of another child some years before, during a cold spell. Otherwise, mother managed well on the traditional kitchen range, since she had been cook at the vicarage when she first met Ernest.

Dorothy's christening was somewhat delayed by a gap in the succession of vicars in Bicton, but Miss Milbank of the Hall arranged it to be carried out by Rev'd Fletcher at Oxon instead.

Incidentally, Miss Milbank was also involved in managing the local nursing service, which was financed by subscription. In this context, Dorothy was later amused by the story of an innocent little girl, who, upon hearing her parents discussing this payment, concluded that her new siblings were being bought from Miss Milbank at 15 shillings and 6 pence a time.

Otherwise, it was a case of self medication, avoiding an expensive doctor. No wonder Dorothy was to become a fan of the NHS when it came about.

Dorothy followed her siblings through Bicton School and as the oldest survivor from such times she was invited to the ceremonial opening of the present building in 2007 (recorded on a plaque). Secondary education was limited to the 'Lancasterian' in Castle Fields, which left her envious of sister Mary winning a scholarship to the Priory, while the boys had gone to Allat's School in Murivance (with help from Miss Milbank).



After leaving school at 14, Dorothy stayed a while at home to help her mother before starting nursing training at the Royal Salop Infirmary in 1937. Further



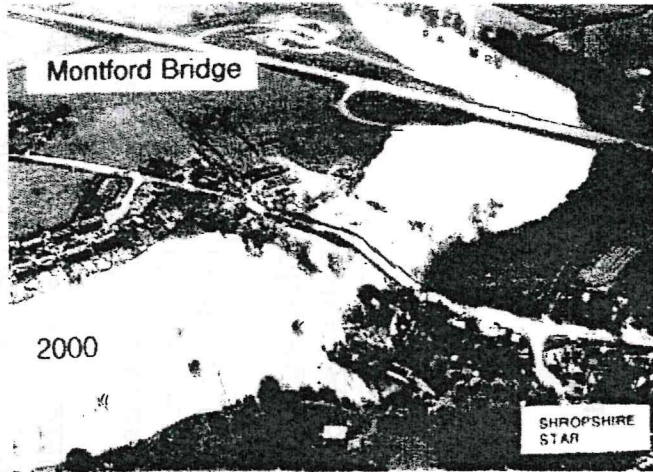
midwifery training continued in Birmingham, before a post at St Thomas' Hospital in London. By this time it was facing obvious wartime problems and therefore Dorothy actually carried out most of her work at its 'outposts' in such places as Woking. With the return of peace, normal work brought her back to London (as on TV).

By now, she had witnessed the problems of urban poverty as well the rural poverty of her early years and in particular was upset at the unkind treatment of unmarried mothers. As a result, it was no surprise that Dorothy looked out for posts in more pleasant environments and eventually became a district midwife at Leamington Spa. Here, her professional qualities were appreciated and after a time promotion was even suggested.

the plague returned early in the next and may have caused the death of the chronicler. It also prompted Shrewsbury School to build an 'outpost' at Grinshill to avoid outbreaks in the town. Others reported the last episode in 1649-51 and one wonders how much this was mixed up with Civil War and commonwealth politics. Finally, the disease was to strike London in 1665, after which the 'Great Fire' may have helped prevent further infection.

The Severn, meanwhile, has continued to behave as before, with memorable floods, often triggered by that combination of heavy rain and melting snow. That in 1795 was one of the worst, well documented in the records while the 1947 flood may have been similar.

In living memory, the 'millennium' floods of 2000 and now the latest, show how the new 'Elizabethan' Age was little different from the first. However, the complexities of modern life now make it more vulnerable to damage and disruption (electricity, fitted carpets etc.).



The same is true of plagues. While 'old time' diseases are now more under control, new ones can spread far and wide thanks to modern national and international traffic in goods and people. Plagues, which spread throughout the Roman Empire in a similar way, permanently weakened it.

We keep our fingers crossed.

Last month we told the story of Dorothy Lewis as a celebration of her one hundredth birthday. This now serves as her obituary, since she passed away on the 17th of March. Funeral arrangements are being disrupted by our modern 'plague'.

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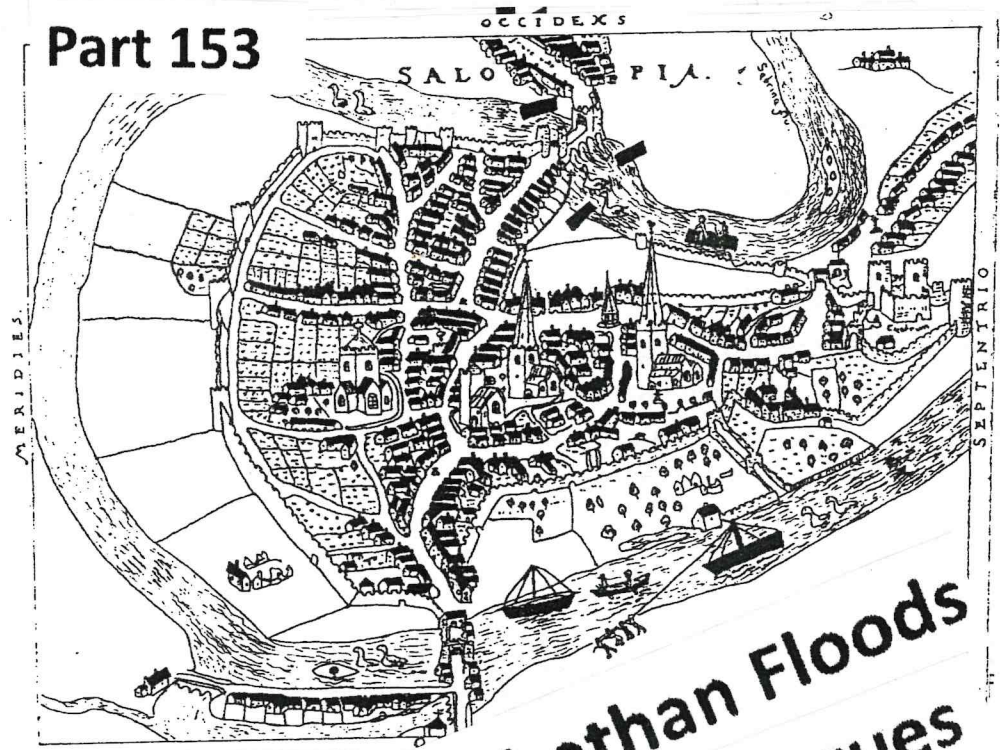
April 2020

No 645

Bicton Village News

David Pannett's History of Bicton

Part 153



Elizabethan Floods
and Plagues

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 153

Elizabethan Floods and Plagues

This year the news was first dominated by floods and now it is the progress of that virus. Looking back, some aspects of all this have happened before!

The Elizabethan chronicler of Shrewsbury reported the following in 1576:

"This year uppo' St Matthews daye being the xxiiij th day of Februarie was a grate fludd in Shrewsberie which dyd greate harm especially in Frankwell...

...the height of the same water ys to be seen in dyv's placis in Frankwell upon the which water dyv's people were karieed in one Byshopps bardge from the toll shop at the northe end of the Walshe brdge through Frankvill as hyghe as the good man Tylstones house...which water dyd ryse in the lowe countreys as Brydnorthe Tewkesbery and Bewdley in the nyght and dyd greate hurt cummynge soodenley upon them.

This yeare the plage was in Shrewburey in the begyninge of which there died one Mr Hawecksworth curat of St Chads and one Roger Burns curate of St Aldemoonds in Salop".

The chronicler had already recorded another flood in 1545 and went on to record others later in the century, including two in 1579 and 1586 which prevented the September horse fair from being held in its usual riverside place in Frankwell. Then, in 1587, the inhabitants of Frankwell were forced to spend Christmas in their upper chambers, following heavy rain and melting snow in Wales. In between, in 1585, another flood was remembered for carrying a whole 'mixin' (dungheap) through the town, complete with a pig and chicken.

That outbreak of plague in 1576 was also but one of several during that century, both locally and in London. Although the famous 'Black Death' had swept Europe some two hundred years before, pockets of infection

remained, especially in some towns which were notoriously insanitary places.

In Shrewsbury, steps were being taken to provide a clean water supply via a pipe from springs beyond Radbrook. (The so-called 'conduit head' still survives from this period and is now being conserved with the help of Shropshire Bee Keepers, and made open to visitors). However, poor drains and congested housing kept the town unhealthy.

The 1580s seem to have been a particularly bad time here. While 'national' headlines may have been dominated by Drake's safe return from sailing around the World, or the various Catholic plots against the Queen, leading to the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, or the Spanish Armada, the locals faced health problems! (As well as those floods)

In 1583, Sir Andrew Corbet of Moreton Corbet visited London where caught the plague and had to be brought home for burial. The plague also came to Oswestry in 1585, forcing the regular clothe market to take place in Knockin instead. Meanwhile, a 'strange sickness' afflicted Shrewsbury, like the plague, but with different symptoms, which led to many deaths.

Sheep flocks also suffered their own 'plague' in the following year, causing distress to the farming community. Shrewsbury then experienced the 'burning Agewe', along with many other parts of the country, striking rich and poor alike and leaving many orphans. It was probably a form of malaria, which could have been associated with all that wet weather. Possible 'omens' in the sky were noted as warnings of such difficult times - comets, stars, rings around the moon etc. The chronicler summed it all up with some blank verse:

*'He which had no mischance in '85
and in '86 dothe remayne alive
he being in '87 unhurt and unslayne
and lyving until the year '89
he may then specke of a joyfulle tyme'*

Indeed, the remainder of the century proved to be a little quieter, although

THE DAILY BATH OR "WASH ALL OVER"

Doctors and specialists warn us that we cannot keep thoroughly fit and healthy unless we wash all over frequently. Warm water and soap are necessary to remove the dirt from the skin. This dirt is made up of particles of dust from the air, flakes of the skin, dried perspiration, particles of the clothing—all mixed together with oil from the skin. No wonder soap and water are needed—needed daily!

To those who have a bathroom with hot and cold water the daily bath is an easy matter, but to the many housewives, in both town and country, who live under the inconvenience of being without a bathroom, it is something of a problem. Under the latter circumstances the "bath by instalments" is the best solution, the equipment required consisting of a kettleful of hot water, jug of cold water, a wash-hand basin, a foot-bath (or enamelled bowl), a flannel, soap and towel. The bath is easily carried through by dividing the hot water (suitably cooled down) between hand-basin and foot-bath, standing in the foot-bath and washing the upper portion of the body from the wash-basin, following the wash with a thorough rinsing and drying. The lower portion of the body is then similarly washed, rinsed and dried. This is a very effective way of giving the body a wash all over, and with practice can be quickly done.*

* A leaflet describing the instalment bath in greater detail may be obtained from the Health and Cleanliness Council.

Bicton Village

News

David
Pannett's

History of Bicton

Part 154

Hygiene

Health &

Old and New



David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 154

Health & Hygiene Old and New

Even before the current crisis, government agencies were issuing advice regarding our health. At the same time experts in newspapers and magazines were adding their own advice, particularly regarding diet.

Along with these, commercial advertisers have been tempting us to buy their products, which might help or hinder a drive to better health. Most exaggerated claims have now been weeded out and smoking has certainly been suppressed! Thus we see no more 'Players Navy Cut' or 'Marlborough Country'!



Today, a range of drugs, especially antibiotics, can keep us healthy, but, in years gone by, an earlier generation could only rely on basic hygiene and good nutrition to fend off infection. Medical advice could have therefore concentrated on these aspects, while manufacturers were clearly responding to the demand created.

It has been recognised that the health of the whole nation greatly improved towards the end of the

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nineteenth century, both because of increased food supplies and the improvements in the provision of public water systems and drainage. In this, the mass production of soap and allied cleansing materials by companies such as Lever Brothers of Port Sunlight played an important part. While many town dwellers benefitted from all this, those still in very basic rural cottages would have found it challenging to keep pace.

Nevertheless, encouragement and information could still reach them via newspapers and magazines, which must have been available in the 'Parish Reading Room' occupying part of Myrtle Cottage in Bicton Lane at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Examples of adverts in Country Life from this period illustrate how various cleansing products were the main weapons in the fight against common diseases such as fever, smallpox and diphtheria.

In the following decades, published advice continued to stress washing. Since virus infections cannot be treated by antibiotics and must be fought by our immune systems, the old methods of avoiding them are still valid!



SMALL-POX EPIDEMIC.

SEE ANALYTICAL REPORT.

CHIVERS' CARPET SOAP

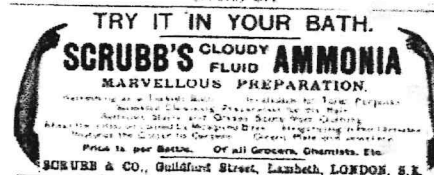
Will remove all Dirt and Impurities from Carpets, also Woolen Fabrics used in the Sick Room, creating a healthy atmosphere, and thus save the spreading of infection.

Used in ROYAL HOUSEHOLDS.

WRIGHT'S COAL TAR SOAP

CLEANSES
SOOTHES
PROTECTS

4d per Toilet



With this background and a copy of Mrs Beeton's 1866 edition she had a reputation for being both a 'lady' and an excellent cook.

Many of Mrs Beeton's recipes could still be followed today, but some are dependent on cuts of meat which are no longer available. Flesh from awkward shapes like head and feet are now mechanically removed by food processors and turned into pies, burgers and pet food, so that brains, pigs' trotters and even whole heads do not appear in the modern supermarket. We may nevertheless be eating some in processed form without realising it.

Also in a world of large families and armies of domestic staff, Mrs Beeton had to cater for more mouths than in the modern household, which would be wise to reduce the amounts listed by her. She also calculated the time taken and the cost per person. This is a useful exercise which you can also try at home.

The example reproduced here illustrates these points.

COLLARED CALF'S HEAD.

862. **INGREDIENTS.**—A calf's head, 4 tablespoonfuls of minced parsley, 4 blades of pounded mace, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoonful of grated nutmeg, white pepper to taste, a few thick slices of ham, the yolks of 6 eggs boiled hard.

Mode.—Scald the head for a few minutes; take it out of the water, and with a blunt knife scrape off all the hair. Clean it nicely, divide the head and remove the brains. Boil it tender enough to take out the bones, which will be in about 2 hours. When the head is boned, flatten it on the table, sprinkle over it a thick layer of parsley, then a layer of ham, and then the yolks of the eggs cut into thin rings and put a seasoning of pounded mace, nutmeg, and white pepper between each layer; roll the head up in a cloth, and tie it up as tightly as possible. Boil it for 4 hours, and when it is taken out of the pot, place a heavy weight on the top, the same as for other collars. Let it remain till cold; then remove the cloth and binding, and it will be ready to serve.

Time.—Altogether 6 hours. *Average cost, 5s. to 7s. each.*

Seasonable from March to October.

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

Offprint from

June 2020

No 647

Bicton Village News

Part 155

Home on the Range



Why not Bake
at Home?

Brown & Polson's

raising powder

"Paisley Flour"

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 155

Home on the Range

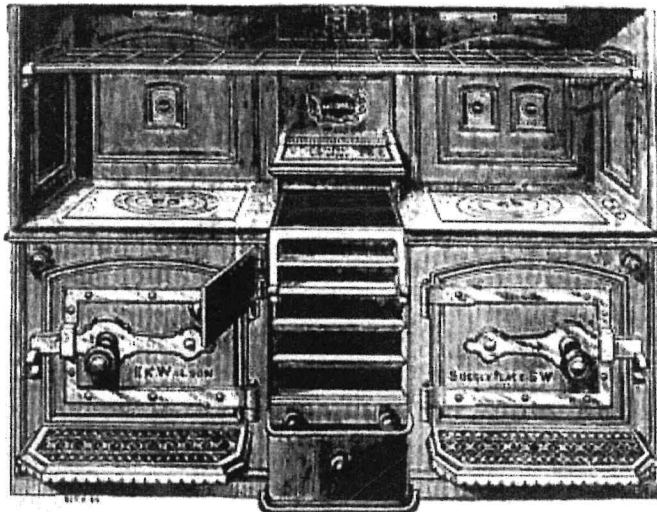
One by-product of lockdown has been the opportunity for many households to take more time preparing food, just as our parents and grandparents once did. Today, as well as takeaways and ready meals, there are many semi-prepared ingredients available to speed up home cooking while the significance of different seasons is being lost by the reliance on imported products.

Another feature of modern times is the wealth of mechanical aids, mainly dependent on electric power, which past generations, especially in rural areas, could not enjoy. No wonder being a housewife was a full time job, while 'big houses' needed to employ staff, amongst whom the cook was a very important member.

To them, one of the most useful inventions of the Victorian era was the Kitchen Range, which could be considered the ancestor of the later Aga. It was but one of the many cast iron products of that time, which could vary in size to fit either 'big house' or humble cottage.

The core of this 'machine' was a confined coal fire with front grill, which could also heat ovens on one or both sides, as well as hot plates on top. In this way food could be baked, boiled or grilled, while consuming fuel in an efficient way. It was ideal for slow cooking, such as maintaining a

THE NATIONAL KENSINGTON KITCHENER.
E. K. WILSON, 13, 38, & 47, Sussex Place, S.W.



stock pot, or keeping a tea kettle on stand-by. The room was also warmed, so that an off-duty cook could also enjoy sitting by it in a comfortable chair. At the same time, 'morning sticks' could be drying in the oven, ready for relighting next day.

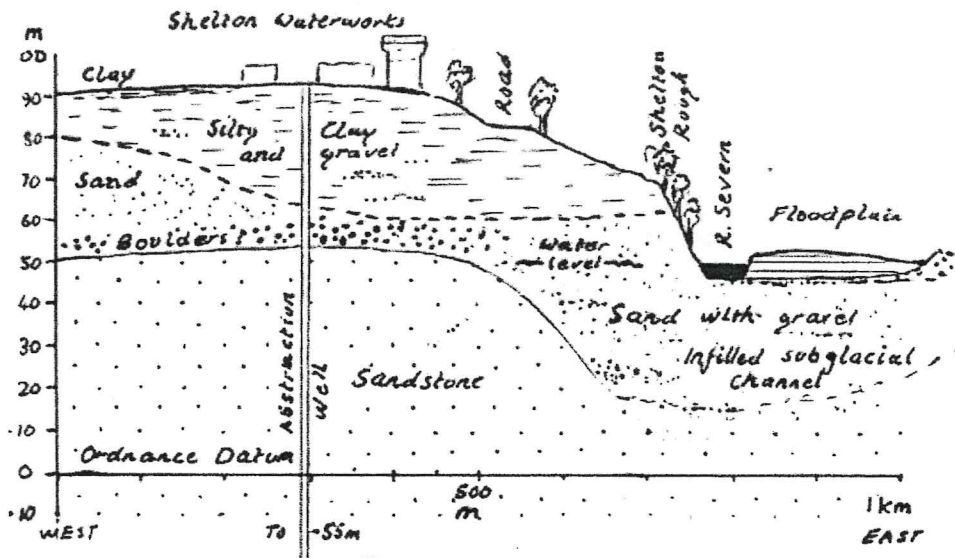
Bit by bit, such 'apparatus' have been replaced by gas and electric cookers, modern fireplaces or log burners and, of course, they have become very rare. Do any still survive in the parish?

Another Victorian development was the publication of cookery books, which still give us some insight into what would have been prepared in such kitchens. Perhaps the most famous of these was written by Mrs Isabella Beeton, who gathered together many of the recipes to fill her 'Book of Household Management' first published in 1859-61. Her husband was actually also her publisher. The book also contained advice on general management of a large household, including the duties of different servants. There was also advice on health matters and it was sad that she herself suffered infections during childbirth and died in 1867. The book, however, continued to be published in many more editions during the following decades, hence the lasting fame.

One local housewife who certainly would have been familiar with Mrs Beeton's ideas was Blanche Lewis, of Milnsbridge, wife of Ernest and mother of Dorothy, whom we have recently discussed. Her 1866 edition survives, although the Milnsbridge kitchen and range have long gone.

Originally Blanche Rosier, she had first come to Bicton with her sister to work for Rev'd Edwards at the vicarage, having been obliged to seek domestic work after death of father, a teacher. The girls did not stay long here, however, as the 1901 census recorded them working for Arthur Maw at Alderley Edge, Blanche being the cook.

Arthur and his wife had recently retired here allowing the next generation to take over the family home and tile manufacturing in the Ironbridge Gorge. Sadly his wife died in 1900 and so Arthur later decided to move again, this time to Kingsland in Shrewsbury, taking Blanche with him. This was certainly conveniently closer to Ernest Lewis of Old School House, who had kept in touch since first meeting her at the vicarage. They married in 1907.



The channel enters the area from the direction of Ellesmere, passes under Walford, the Isle, Rossall and then swings around to pass under Shrewsbury, heading to the Ironbridge Gorge. In north Germany similar features are appreciated as aquifers, while here it is proving useful too.

When the waterworks was originally constructed here in 1935, its supply was drawn directly from the river. The availability of clean water above the town, right next to a high point from which it could be distributed made it an ideal location. Direct supply from the river did still, however, face the inherent problems of muddy water and debris at time of floods as well as water life, all of which had to be filtered.

Fortunately, the local geology offered a solution. Two wells were sunk into the underlying sandstone, producing much cleaner water. Then, as pumping draws down its level, it more easily filters in from the river via that sand-filled channel. The ease by which water seeps through to the wells was highlighted when a drum of cleaning fluid was spilt at nearby Shelton Hospital! Thus the water authorities express concern about too much development and road building near their site.

Above the aquifers, the section reveals the thick 'blanket' of mixed glacial deposits which cover much of Bicton parish. It varies both vertically and laterally and can support its own 'perched' water table independent of the porous sandstones beneath. Developers must be aware of this, but no doubt they will blunder on to fulfil targets by packing in the houses.

HISTORY of BICTON

Offprint from

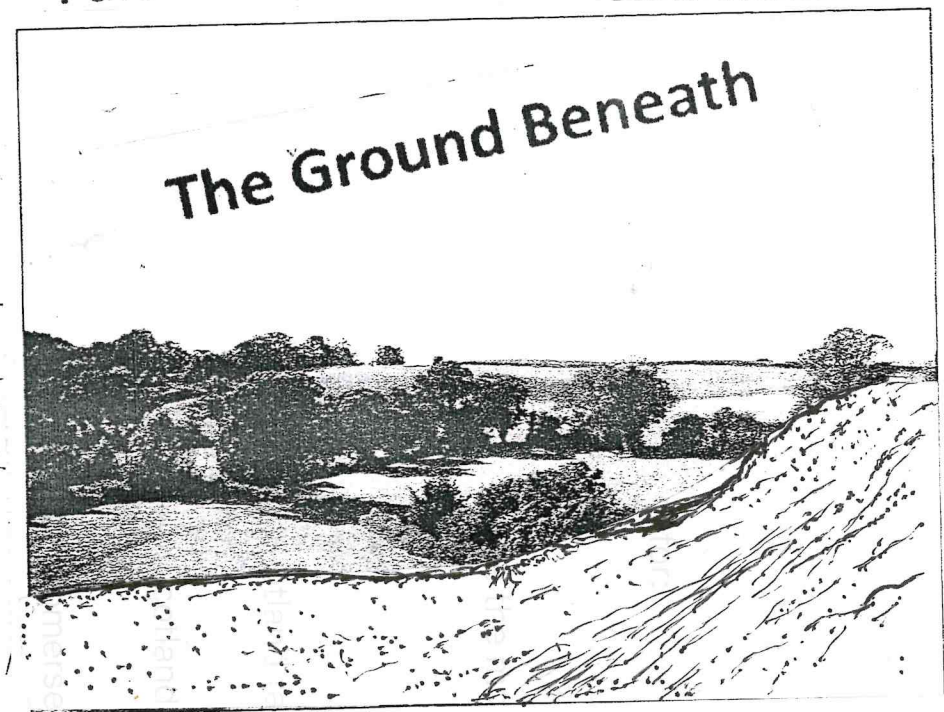
July 2020

No 648

by David Pannett

Bicton Village News

Part 156

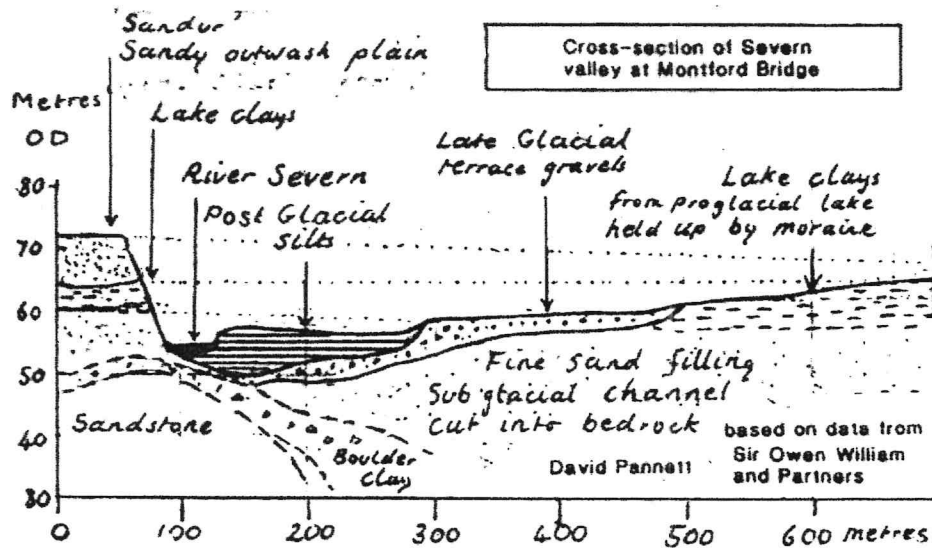


David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 156

The Ground Beneath

Road building, housing development, climate change, water management and flooding seem to be regular issues appearing in the press these days. It is not always realised that ground investigations for the former can also throw light on the latter....

The A5 by-pass, for instance, had to cross the Severn at Montford Bridge and during construction revealed more evidence of the history of this area.



As in most of Bicton, here the solid sandstone remains hidden but, nevertheless, was important to the bridge engineers seeking a firm foundation for their piles. Unfortunately, at this very point, the sandstone has been cut by a deep channel carved by melt-water flowing under a thick ice cover. As the ice became thinner when conditions warmed, this old channel filled with soft sand. As a result bridge piles on the Bicton side had to be much longer, and it was still not clear if they actually reached solid rock!

As the ice front moved further back from Shrewsbury, it lingered here for some time, building up a 'moraine' which we know as Grange Bank.

With further retreat, melt-water formed a lake between the ice and this moraine in which fine clay sediment accumulated. Since water flow and sediment load alternated with the seasons this formed thin layers called 'varves', which could record the life of that lake rather like tree rings.

As the River Severn began developing its valley downstream the lake drained away, but was replaced by an extension of the outwash plain or 'sandur' spreading out from Shrawardine and Ensdon, where a new moraine was being built up.

Further down-cutting by the river and the retreat of the ice front even further west into Wales saw the evolution of the winding course of the river we see today. At first the river created a large channel with its high rate of seasonal flow from melting ice and snow and cool wet climate generally. Its meander pattern thus consisted of wide loops with cliffs being eroded on the outside of the bends while gravel has built up on the inside.

With the arrival of true 'interglacial' conditions which we enjoy today, the river began to shrink, leaving those old gravel banks as a terrace while filling at least two thirds of its channel with clay and silt, helped by a thick growth of vegetation which trapped it.

From time to time, the river reoccupies this floodplain, adding more silt, but the houses of Montford Bridge stay dry on the adjacent terrace. The flooding 'problems' which worry our MP are not caused by the natural behaviour of the rivers, more the man-made problem of building on their floodplains!

To sum up, one can appreciate how our landscape illustrates the story of climate change. Reflect on this as you drive down Grange Bank, noting its shapes in the view beyond (while of course keeping your eyes on the road!).

By contrast, the deeper ground investigations around Shelton originally had more to do with hydrology than road-building, but should the North West Relief Road ever come to pass (any money left?), it will encounter the same features found here.

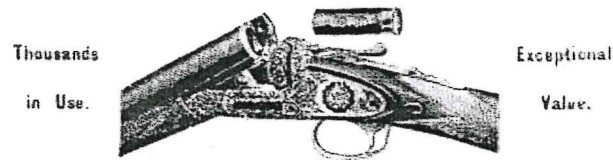
As at Montford-Bridge, the river has cut a winding valley into soft glacial deposits, including a larger sand-filled channel cut into the underlying sandstone so that this site poses the same challenges to bridge builders as those at Montford Bridge!

As in the Middle Ages laws reserved even wild game for the landowner, who could also enter tenanted land in pursuit of it (evidence from farm leases). Others taking some would have been branded 'poachers' and, if caught, taken before the magistrate. Since so many large landowners were also JPs, poachers could not expect much sympathy here!

Meanwhile, the successes of those medieval knights who chased deer with greyhounds were finding an alternative riding activity in fox hunting. Special packs of hounds were introduced during the late eighteenth century, leading to the formation of hunting societies whose activities could spread over more than one estate.

Country Life 1908

COGSWELL & HARRISON, Ltd.



THE GUN OF TO-DAY.

By now, agricultural improvement was providing much more cover in the form of hedgerows and new woodland, from which a fox could venture out seeking lambs, chicken and also those game birds. Thus hunting

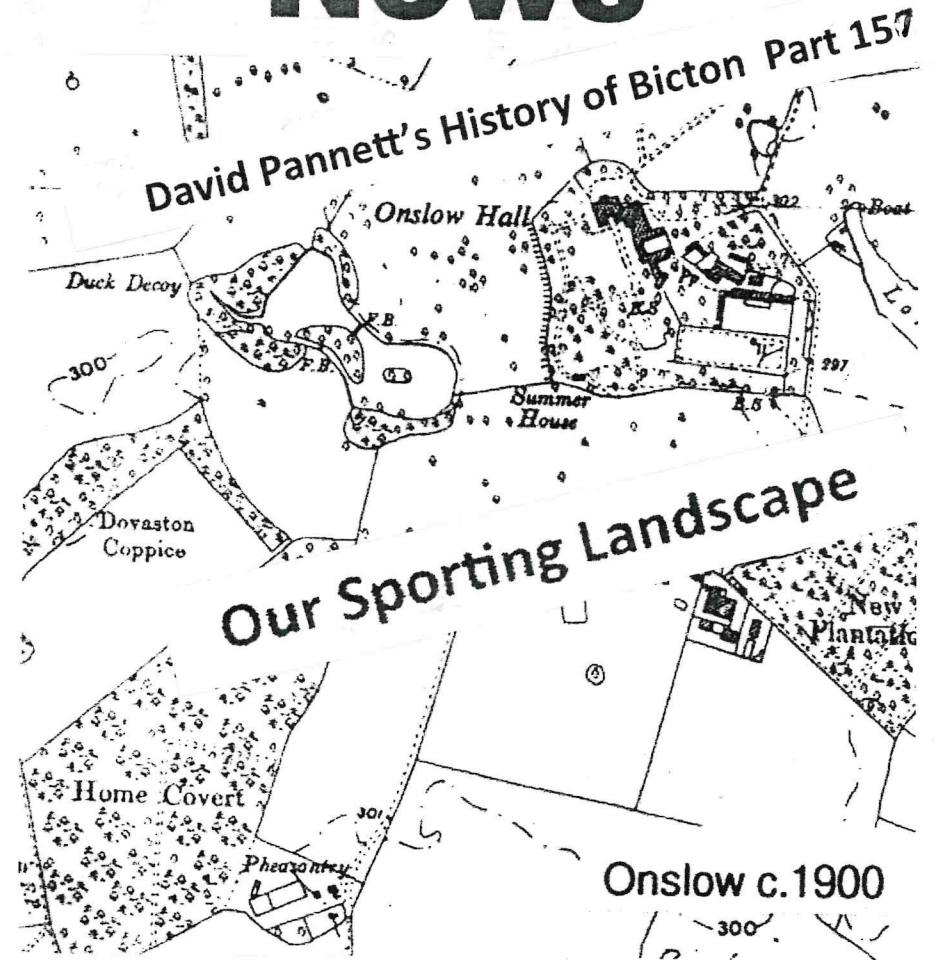
became a form of 'vermin' control as well as exercise in horsemanship. This was still important at a time when horses played such a key role in both military and rural life. (The gauchos of Argentina were quite impressed with Charles Darwin's skills, when they met him during the Beagle voyage). Locally, Charles Morris of Oxon maintained a pack of hounds in his kennels in Shepherd's Lane until 1866. Hunting scenes in the form of coloured lithographs can still be seen decorating some old county pubs.

Such activity was obviously also an important part of rural social life amongst squires and larger tenant farmers, so that Onslow Hall's capacity to host 'Hunt Balls' proved valuable.

In modern times such estates cannot follow the same old ways, while attitudes to blood sports have been changing. Some of this has been expressed in wildlife legislation setting out new rules. Like it or not, those blood sports have helped create and maintain the English rural landscape which we love today so shooting syndicates, open to everyone still make a contribution. Meanwhile, more peaceful enjoyment continues to be found in fishing – but that is another story.

August 2020
No 649

Bicton Village News



Our Sporting Landscape

Onslow c. 1900

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 15

Our Sporting Landscape

With the arrival of August, the Queen begins her regular summer break in Scotland, where on the 12th followers of grouse shooting will be welcoming a new season.

In this way the nobility and rich will continue a long tradition of hunting game, going back to the Middle Ages or before. Then kings and nobles controlled large areas of forest and waste as their hunting grounds. Deer were an extra source of protein for them, while the exercise of the chase was useful practice for mounted warfare. Sharing a hunt with your peers also became part of social life. 'Forest' Laws forbade the locals from sharing this and around the Stiperstones, for instance, Manor courts could fine anyone keeping greyhounds, the preferred hunting dog as late as the eighteenth century.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the Middle Ages gave way to the early modern world, most hunting 'forests' and deer parks were converted to agriculture, including one at Shrawardine, following the destruction of the castle during the Civil War. Now, a generation of landowners, many not descended from those medieval knights, sought pleasure in parkland actually surrounding their mansions, where visual enjoyment of landscape was replacing the thrill of the chase. Nevertheless, the desire to hunt still lingered and would be helped by the development of firearms needed in war.

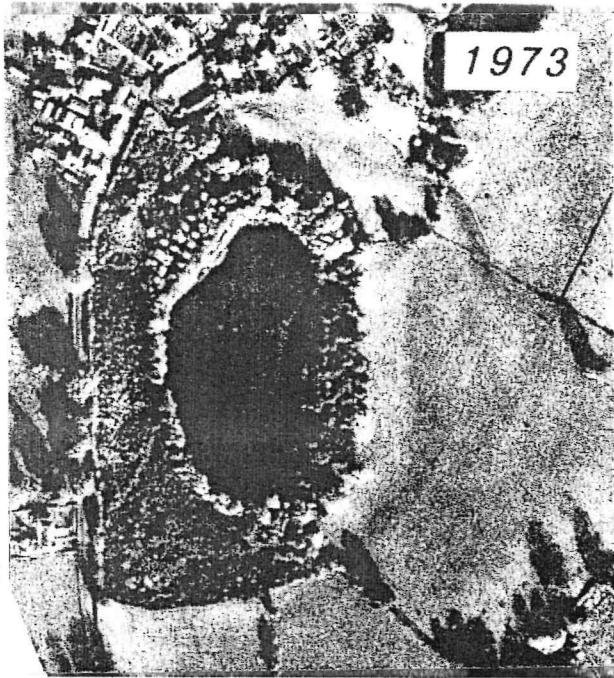
During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an 'arms race' between competing European states saw the muzzle loading musket, with loose ball and gunpowder, evolve into the breach loading, percussion cap, cartridge loaded rifle. The privately owned sporting gun followed a parallel evolution from the flintlock musket to the shotgun we know today. By stages in the nineteenth century inventions included stronger barrels, better rounded shot and the cartridge, together with smokeless powder. (Meanwhile in this age of innovation bicycles were also taking on their modern form, as illustrated in one of Ernest Lewis' photographs).

Improved guns were thus making it possible to shoot at flying birds, not just 'sitting ducks'. While this made 'grouse moors' possible in the uplands, shooting in lowland estates would have to take place over normal farmland, which did not provide much game worth shooting without some help. Thus big estates reared pheasant and partridge and planted suitable tree cover in order to provide 'good sport'.

All this is well illustrated by our local Onslow Estate, where a 'pheasantry', 'coverts' and plantations were established by the end of the century. In addition, one lake was equipped with a 'decoy' to trap wild ducks. The Hall was also large, run by at least a dozen staff, who would have been able to cater for those weekend shooting parties. Outside, the gamekeeper and his team of 'beaters' would ensure a good show. (Even the two young shooting gentlemen shown in the photograph appear to have two beaters, not in Sunday best, to help them).



Wartime meant the loss of useful timber, so that replanting and natural regeneration maintained the tree cover during years of neglect mixed with bursts of activity. The 1973 photograph clearly shows planting patterns. All this time water level was still controlled by that 19th century culvert, but as it began to fail in the nineties, levels rose, drowning bordering woodland. As trees died and the peat softened, wind then wore it down into a tangled mess. Thus the council had to wake up to its responsibilities since even after selling the rest of the estate, it still held the pool.



A lot of effort went into cleaning up, replanting the roadside hedge, improving gates and fixing that old culvert. Council staff, volunteers and Shropshire Anglers made a big difference ten years ago, but what has happened since?

With other country parks to look after, the Council's resources have become ever more stretched, allowing little work here. However, since fishing rather than nature had become the priority, it is perhaps logical for the management of the site to be passed to Shrewsbury Town Fisheries, even though the pool is outside the borough.

Now, under new management, excellent facilities of parking, a lockable gate, gravel paths and waterside platforms cater for fishing ticket holders only, rather than the general public. The rest of us must enter via the wicket gate at the north end and follow the old dirt path through a dense wood saplings and coppice growth, now in dire need of management. By the pool, a rotting bird hide is a relic of those 'nature reserve' days.

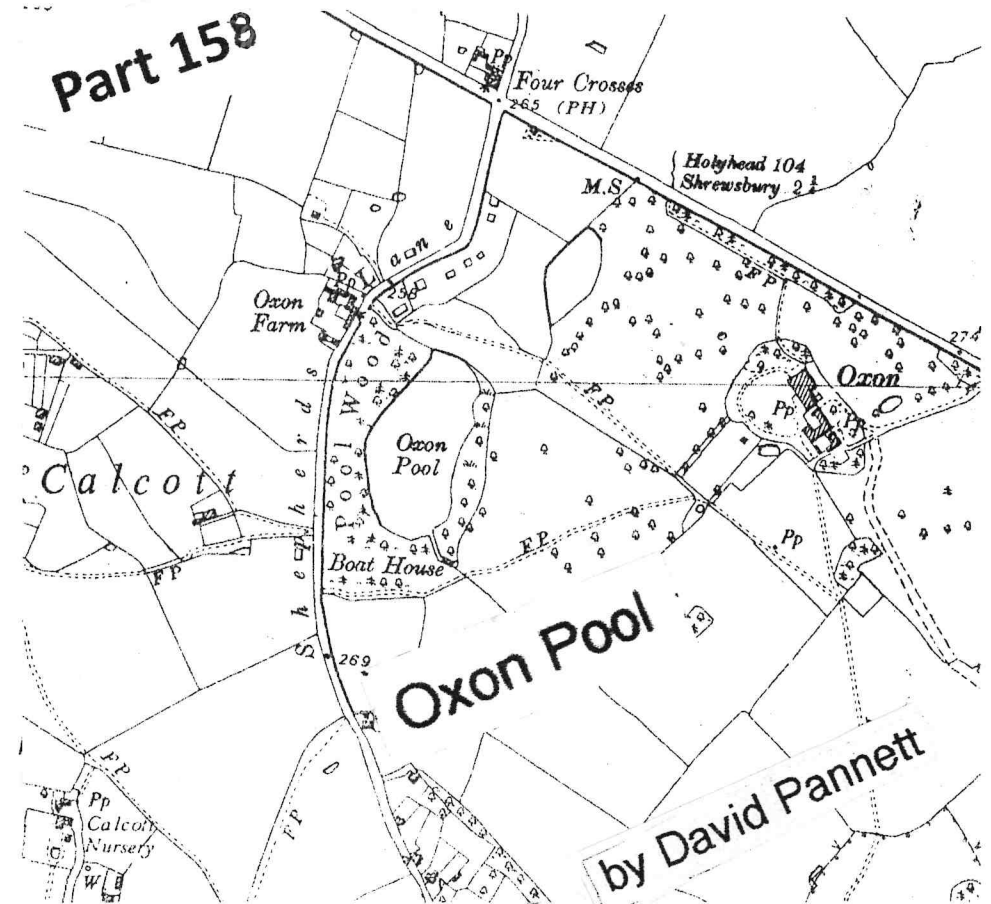
**HISTORY
of BICTON**

Offprint from

September 2020

No 650

Bicton Village News



David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 150

Oxon Pool

Lockdown and a lingering fear of distant travel have been encouraging many people to explore their local areas via footpaths and quiet country lanes. Now, some restricted open spaces are open again, including our local Oxon Pool.

However, there has been no great rush to visit it, as so few parishioners know much about it. Its story featured in these pages almost ten years ago, so perhaps it is time we repeated it and add up to date detail.

The pool has already been mentioned several times amongst the features of our 'glacial' landscape, which make our area a smaller version of the more famous Ellesmere 'Meres and Mosses'.

Its first mention in historical records came in a survey of the Rossall or 'Isle' Estate made in 1587, when it was being forfeited to the Crown because Francis Englefield, as a catholic, had gone into exile: "*The lord of Rossall hath a pool there, wherein is a great take of eles, now in the tenure of Richard Mytton Esq., and called Oxon Pool*".

The reference to eels is a reminder that they could reach such pools away from the main rivers because of their ability to 'wriggle' along narrow ditches and over wet meadows. Indeed, early naturalists considered them to be akin to 'serpents' rather than normal fish. Their life cycle includes migration back down rivers in order to reach the western Atlantic where they spawn. The next generation of 'Elvers' then return to live their adult lives in our rivers and pools.

Eels were a very important source of extra protein in the Middle Ages and even later, but in modern times a combination of overfishing in river estuaries, and loss of wetland habitats inland have greatly reduced their numbers. It is rare to encounter one in Oxon Pool today.

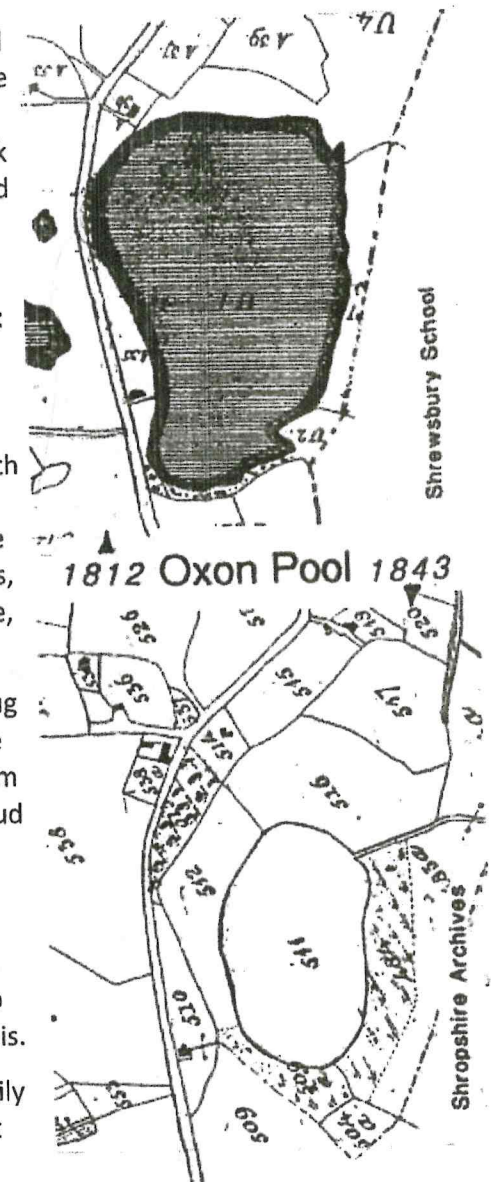
By the eighteenth century, John Mytton of Halston, a descendant of that Richard, had claimed the 'lordship of the manor' and therefore owned the

'soil' of Bicton Heath, which bordered the pool. At the 'inclosure' in 1768 he was allotted the 'cottage' encroachment' here as well as a block of land where he had recently created another 'Eel Pool'. The map of 1812 shows the resulting pattern.

After 1824, however, things changed: thanks to the wayward life of John Mytton's grandson, his Bicton estate had to be sold and thus the Spearmans of Oxon Hall acquired both cottages and land on the Bicton side of their pool. Then through marriage most of this passed to Edward Morris, who continued to improve the estate, including the pool.

As part of this, a deep culvert was dug under Shepherd's Lane, lowering the water level and reducing its area from 9 to 3½ acres, obviously exposing mud and peat. Later, old cottages were removed and land around the pool planted offering a more private landscape, both for visual effect and extra cover for game. The tithe map of 1843 and later OS maps record this.

Through these years the Morris family had also acquired a 'country seat' at Wood Eaton in Staffordshire and in the end preferred to live there instead of Oxon. The estate here was therefore sold in 1930, when many sitting tenants, including Uddington Farm, were able to buy their homes. The Hall and most farmland, however, was bought by Shropshire County for use as smallholdings. While the Hall was let to Shelton Hospital, Oxon Pool and surrounding woodland was kept 'in hand' and left as a nature reserve.



settlement in almost depopulated lands. Cities in particular, including Rome itself suffered dramatic loss of population.

By now, climatic belts were shifting, causing droughts in the valuable North African corn lands, although Germanic Kingdoms in the north actually benefitted from more rain. As the south dried out, even more desert peoples now following the new religion of Islam, took over.

Looking back even further into prehistory, there is a possibility that the important cultural changes in Europe, which marked the early Bronze Age may have had a similar cause. The 'Beaker' people spread from the east, bringing not only metalworking, but also bubonic plague, to which they had some resistance, but the Neolithic farmers had not! They rebuilt Stonehenge and introduced a different style of burial mound amongst other things.

As the Romans reached towards the tropics and proudly brought elephants, lions, tigers and camels into their arenas, some nasty bugs came along too!

In this way Smallpox virus spread in AD. 165-180 and was added to the collection of diseased already endemic in the crowded cities. Possibly Ebola virus wrought havoc in AD. 249-252, weakening the once great army. No wonder rich Romans were investing in grand villas safely in the healthier countryside.

All this stirred up religious debate in the Empire, in which many felt let down by their traditional gods and turned to Christianity. Traditionalists then blamed the Christians for displeasing the gods, which provoked persecution. Anyway, Christians were gaining a reputation for compassion and care of the sick which may have helped more of them to survive in such a brutal age.

Eventually, Constantine adopted Christianity as the state religion so that its network of bishops and clergy were able to fill the void when the civil administration of the western half of the Empire collapsed. The invading 'Barbarian' leaders actually adopted Christianity as a way of becoming 'new Romans'! They were also seeking refuge from those Steppe-dwelling Huns.

So much for history – what is its relevance today? Firstly you may notice many parallels and also changes which are still with us today. Pressure to build houses in 'safe' countryside like Bicton will surely increase, while the loss of the Four Crosses Inn after 200 years of service may be a lasting monument to these troubled times.

HISTORY of BICTON

by David Pannett

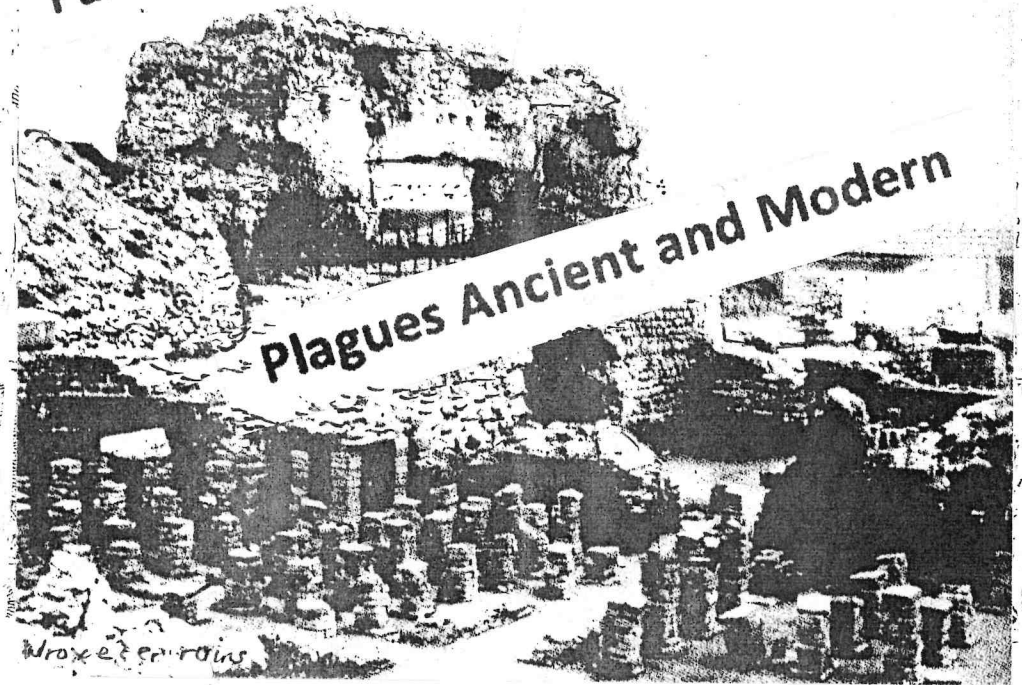
Offprint from

October 2020

No 651

Part 159

Bicton



Village News

website www.bictonvillage.co.uk

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 159

Plagues Ancient and Modern

Our current pandemic continues to dominate the news, while climate change agreements keep popping up at every opportunity. Looking back in history, there was often a connection between the two, as climate-induced famines lowered a population's resistance to disease while also disturbing wildlife ready to provide a new one.

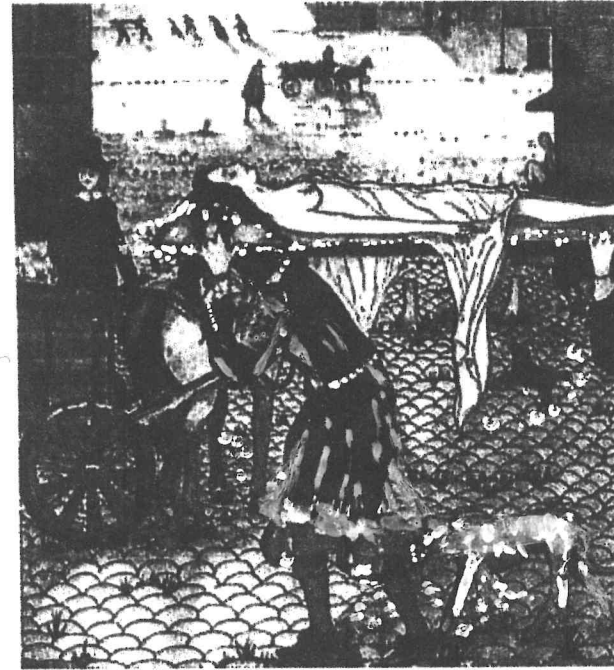
Significant factors in the spread of disease then and now are the 'degree of connectivity' in the world and concentration of so many people in cities.

As we approach the annual season of 'remembrance' it is appropriate to reflect upon the famous 'Spanish Influenza' pandemic of 1918-19, as it killed more people worldwide than the fighting on the 'Western Front'. Thousands of British and 'Empire' troops passed through the military depot of Étaples near Boulogne, helping to spread the virus to their far flung homelands. Precautionary measures were not put in place since the main war effort remained top priority.

It earned the name 'Spanish Flu' because Spain, as a neutral country, could discuss it, while military censorship operated elsewhere. Thus its origin is not fully understood. Chinese labourers were employed at Étaples and one wonders if they had accidentally introduced yet another mutation of the familiar 'Asian Flu'. It seemed to strike down young more than old, suggesting the latter had acquired some immunity after an earlier outbreak in 1899. In 1898 H G Wells wrote 'War of the Worlds', in which the Martian invaders were finally beaten by our 'bugs' rather than bullets!

Otherwise, the most famous pandemic to strike Britain was the 'Black Death' in the mid fourteenth century, which contributed to changes in our local settlement pattern. The reduction in population undermined the management of commercial agriculture and eventually led to the system of larger units we see today. We have already illustrated this with the story of Woodcote on the southern end of Bicton Parish.

The early years of that century had seen spells of poor weather, bringing the first



hints of the 'Little Ice Age'. Failed harvests thus weakened the population. At Shrawardine, for instance, the community pleaded poverty to the taxman because the river had flooded their crops.

Meanwhile, out in the central Asian Steppes the pastoralists had to move westward in search of better grass. Changeable weather had also upset the normal behaviour of desert rodents allowing their fleas to switch to rats nearer human settlements. As rats died, the fleas hopped next

on to the people in search of blood. Unfortunately, in return, they passed on the bacteria 'Yersinia pestis' causing 'bubonic plague'.

Over the centuries the local population may have acquired some resistance to such infection, but when they attacked a Genoese trading post on the Black Sea, the fleas could hop off to more vulnerable people. By the time a boatload of refugees reached back home in Italy, they were already dying and disease then just kept on spreading via the trade routes.

Looking back even further, historians now realise that all this also happened before in the Roman Empire. The climatic shock which triggered it came suddenly in 536 and continued for a few years, having been caused by volcanic dust and sulphur in the atmosphere. The 'smoking gun' volcanoes have not been identified and an asteroid dropping in the ocean has even been suggested. With widespread famine, restless barbarians attacked the eastern frontier and introduced plague into the extended network of trade routes.

By this time the western half of the Empire had already been taken over by 'Barbarian' kings, thanks to the state being weakened by earlier infections. Further incursion by Germanic peoples could now lead to more permanent

understand how 'Jam and Jerusalem' reflected the mood of the times, ie. practical effort and hope for a brighter future.

After abortive struggles before the war, women were at last allowed to vote, making use of it in 1922. They could also be called for Jury Service.

As 'swords were being beaten into ploughshares', many of the technical advances stimulated by the war were now available to civilian life. The expansion of motor transport heralded the beginning of the life with which we are now familiar. As more activity returned to the Holyhead Road local services were established along its length. For instance, Haywards started their garage across the river at Montford Bridge and even developed Severn House as a hotel. On this side, the People's Refreshment House Association took over both the Wingfield Arms and the Four Crosses offering services outside usual licensing hours.

By 1920, 'Midland Red' were running a local bus service into town, while Corbets were running tractor ploughing demonstrations at Uffington. As a stunt an ex-serviceman drove a car to the top of the Wrekin.

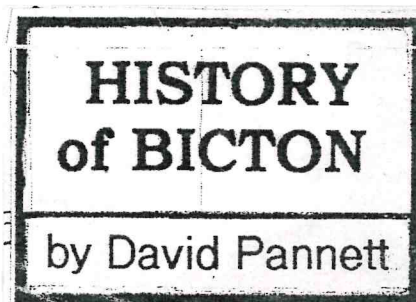
Amongst the trenches, telephones were important for rapid communications and now they were being installed at home, even in rural areas. The post office at The Yews at Montford Bridge added a manual 'exchange' to its services, before automatic switched were invented.

The next war likewise prompted some permanent changes including the establishment of the National Health Service, which has been in the news so much!

After years of wartime economy, fashion designers launched a 'new look' of longer skirts consuming more fabric!

On the serious side, we are still trying to finish the stories of WWII victims on the Bicton memorial: the seamen Brown, Edmunds, Green and Griffiths.

Any help would be appreciated.



Offprint from

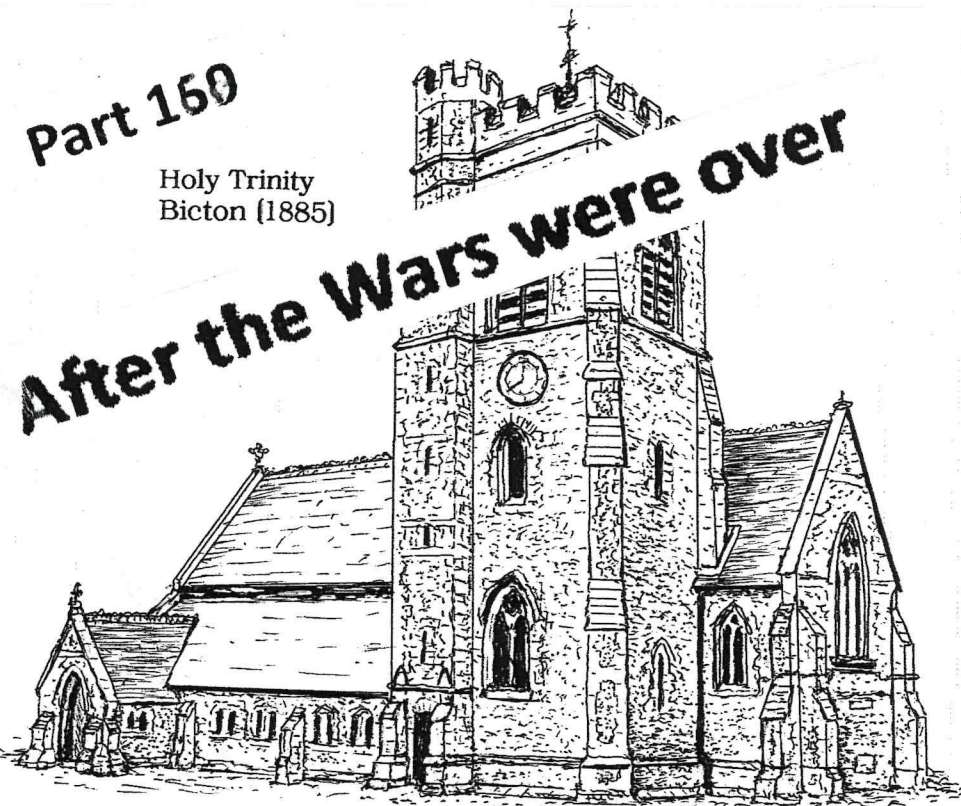
November 2020

No 652

Bicton Village News

Part 150

Holy Trinity
Bicton (1885)



David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 169

After the Wars were over

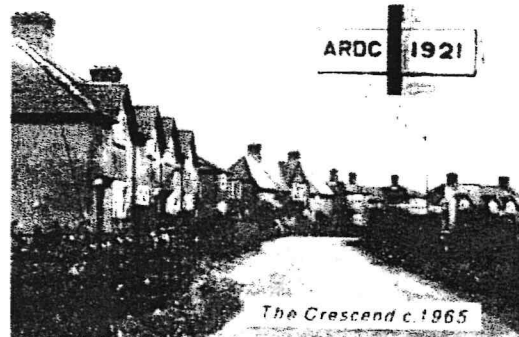
As the current 'plague' rumbles on, one wonders where its lasting effects might be. How many pubs and high street stores will close? We can but wait and see.

As each November comes around, we commemorate past wars, often focusing attention on memorials. One in Bicton is safely inside the church, but its more public face is the clock in the tower, still ticking after 99 years.

In such ways, the effects of those wars are still with us, both locally and globally. Although wars brought many personal tragedies, they also prompted the desire to make a better world. 'A land fit for heroes' was the cry in 1918, leading to improvements in such things as housing and education.

One example of all this was the building of the first 'council houses' in our area in 1921. Already, before the war, responsible rural estates and 'company villages' such as Port Sunlight and Bournville were demonstrating

better standards of housing for their workers. After the 1919 'Public Housing Act', local authorities, including Atcham Rural District Council, were able to follow these traditions with their own 'rural cottages'. Small groups can still be seen in Montford Bridge (The Crescent), Shelton and Ford (Welshpool Road) proudly displaying their date. Next year will be their centenary and perhaps we ought to have a



celebration. Their basic structures were well built, although many details have been modernised since.

Meanwhile, how were lives changing? The photographs taken by Ernest Lewis, reproduced often in these pages, sport many people before the war. The grown up girls all seemed to be wearing long dark skirts, voluminous white blouses with high neck, all topped by wide-brimmed hats. Tight waists may have been squeezed by hidden corsets, illustrated in some journals.

During the war many women took on men's jobs, including farmwork, which required more practical clothing, including shorter skirts and even trousers. Although liberated from corsets, food rationing kept them all slim. A 'landgirl' lodging at Milnsbridge is said to have upset Mrs Lewis by revealing so much ankle in front of her husband Ernest.

The post-war look adopted by such youngsters was almost a total rejection of the old styles, so well illustrated by TV period dramas and those family albums. Thus female shapes became more 'cylindrical', as unsupported busts flopped out of sight, necklines plunged while one-piece dresses obscured any waists: Hats seemed inspired by the German 'stahlhelm' worn in the trenches.

With the loss of so many men, matchmaking by the girls had to be more competitive, with glamorous ideas from Hollywood films, which were becoming available in the Empire Cinema, Mardol. A new dance hall at Morris's cafe in Pride Hill also helped after 1927.



Glamorous advert

With peace, in 1918, the return of men meant that women had to 'return to the kitchen'; however, the government had much appreciated the role of country women here in managing food supplies, including the presentation of seasonal surpluses. Extra sugar ration was even offered to help.

All this encouraged the formation of 'Women's Institutes', following their success in Canada, including our local group in 1924. Once can fully

far as Four Crosses situated on the old delta at its head. One design of the barrage would allow water to be held almost up to 60m OD so just trace the 60m contour line upstream on the OS map. On the way Bicton stands safely high upon the moraine, but Montford Bridge should look out!

Within the Meverley lake basin, rural settlement has shown good adaptation to dry spots, but would be at risk if levels became artificially raised. This was confirmed by computer models in a 2009 report, so that they would need special protection, adding to costs and disturbing their landscape. Such rural communities would naturally feel that are being sacrificed to save urban areas downstream.

Other additional expenses may also arise from building on the soft glacial sands underneath the proposed site, which we illustrated recently in these pages. If such a barrage is absolutely necessary, geology and landforms point to a better site just below Shrawardine.

The natural regime of the Severn is dominated by rapid run-off from impervious high rainfall uplands, where centuries of deforestation, soil drainage and channel clearance have made the situation worse. Downstream the top layers in floodplains hold hints to soil eroded from up here during late Roman Dark Age times. More recently improvements downstream have been reducing the ability of wide floodplains to hold water. The outlet of Boggy Moor on the Perry for instance, was lowered by about 1 metre.

Modern approaches to drainage basin management are already reversing these trends. The value of upland peat and forests as 'carbon stores' now have an additional appeal. The wide floodplains of the Welsh valley floors and the Meverley lake basin could be better exploited as 'wash lands' by breaching the 19th century flood banks (argae). All this, of course, needs cooperation with the farming industry, but could operate as part of grant aided environmental policies.

From Shrewsbury downstream, however, the main problem is not so much the natural behaviour of the river, as urban settlement on floodplains. Some old riverside settlements chose to line the banks when the Severn was an important 'highway', but many new developments should not be there at all! Planning controls must be much stricter about location of new developments, while the building details should incorporate flood tolerance. Local barriers are also improving, all making better use of funds available.

David Pannett's

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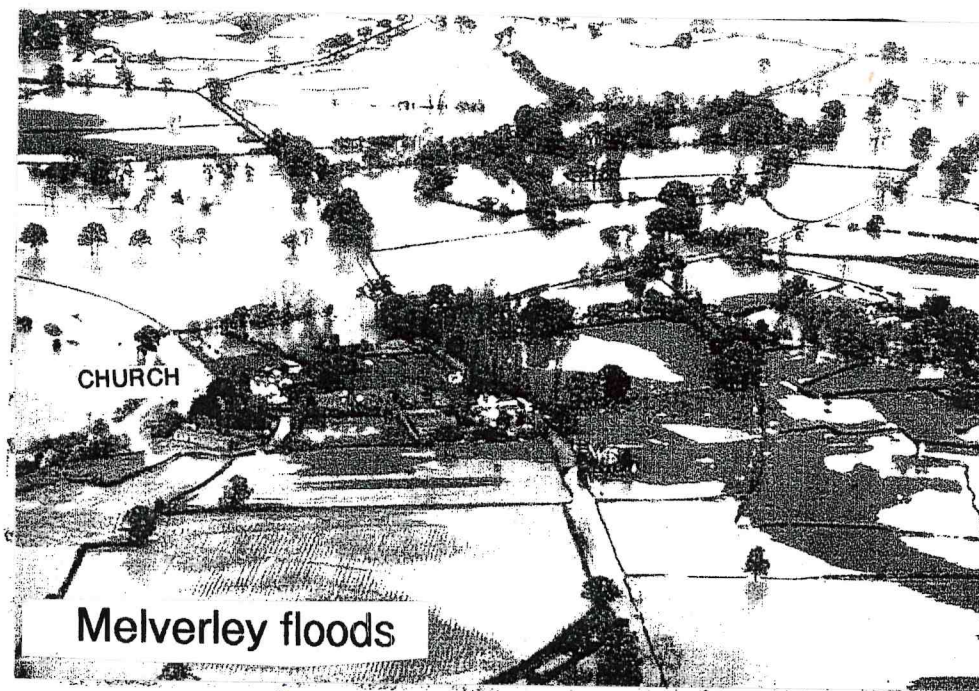
Bicton

Part 161

It's That

Dam Again

Village News



Meverley floods

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 161

It's That Dam Again

How time flies. It was in 2005 and 2009 that Shropshire Council discussed and rejected the idea of combining a flood control barrage on the Severn with the North West Relief Road. Now the idea is being raised again.

Politicians generally have a poor understanding of natural processes, but like to be seen to be doing something about them for the sake of their constituents. Local MP Daniel Kawczynski demonstrated this in 2009 when arguing with Environment Agency over the treatment of islands by the English Bridge (he needed a lesson on how artificially enlarging a channel slows down the current and thereby encourages deposition until it is 'back to square one'). Now he is promoting the current discussion on curing floods throughout the Severn Valley, involving that barrage idea again.

Apart from the professionals, ignorance amongst the electorate is not much better either, thanks to the poor landscape and environmental interpretation available to them. Our local museum, for instance, concentrates so much on the Condover mammoth that the wider 'glacial' landscape is ignored.

To their credit, our local councillors have acknowledged that arguments and data collected for the debate have not been shared with the electorate, who, after all, will be paying for it. Meanwhile here in Bicton Village News we have been trying to make up for this by explaining the origin of the Severn Valley and behaviour of the river, prompted in the past by those on-off road/barrage discussions.

In particular, we have explained how the river valley in Shropshire owes so much to its glacial history. Upstream of Shrewsbury is a 'textbook' pattern (available for all to read) seen in more famous places such as Loch Lomond in Scotland or Lake Garda in Italy i.e. a deep glacial trough in the upland blocked by end moraines on the plain. Here, however, Lake Molverley soon became filled with clay and silt, while being lowered by the river cutting its winding valley through the moraines towards Shrewsbury. From time to time, exceptional floods partially fill it again to remind us of its existence.

Throughout these reaches, the river has a very flat gradient, so that any blockage near Shrewsbury would pond back water far upstream into the lake basin, even as

