

MALPAS HISTORY

NUMBER FOUR

JULY 1985

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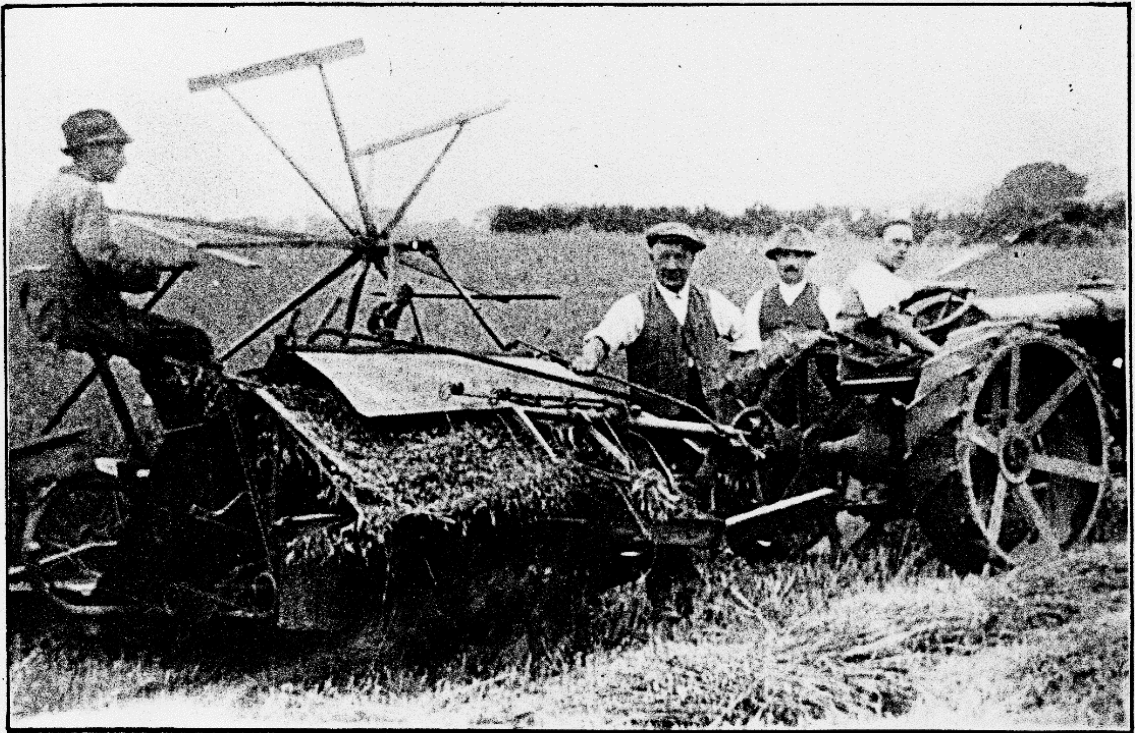
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MALPAS HISTORY

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JULY 1985



A magazine for the Malpas area including the townships of Agden Bickerton Bickley Bradley Broxton Bulkeley Chidlow Cholmondeley Chorlton Cuddington Duckington Edge Egerton Hampton Iscoyd Larkton Macefen Malpas Newton Oldcastle Overton Stockton Tushingam-cum-Grindley Wigland and Wychough, all in the ancient Parish of Malpas, and Threapwood

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COVER PICTURE: A seasonal reminder of harvesting in the 1920s. This photograph, from the collection at Malpas Library (Bishop Heber High School) shows the Blake family using a reaper binder at Egerton Hall.

BELOW: A later stage of operations, when Stevenson's tackle from Cuddington had arrived at Egerton Hall to thresh the crop. This operation was carried out on a contract basis.

We are grateful to the librarians for providing the photographs and to Mr Ivor Richards for supplying enlarged prints. Remember that the Library is always pleased to examine any old pictures you may have and, with your permission, to make copies of them to add to the steadily growing collection there, which is available for reference by any Library user.



BACK COVER PICTURE: The High Street early this century, probably taken at the same time as the back cover photograph on "Malpas History" No. 3 (The Cross). On the left is Eaton's shop (until recently Clubbe's electrical shop) with the sign proclaiming "GENERAL DECORATOR AND GILDER". The Crown (now The Wiffin) has not yet been disfigured with its mock Tudor facade and displays its Venetian window to advantage. The sign on The Crown reads "CROWN HOTEL: SAMUEL BRADLEY: LICENSED RETAILER OF ALE, PORTER & ? : ACCOMMODATION FOR CYCLISTS. ALSO GOOD STAB(LING)". Just beyond The Crown is Bussey's shop, now demolished - more about that in a future issue. Note also the attractive gardens outside the houses in Rock Terrace. (Photograph lent by Mrs Norah Chesworth).

"MALPAS HISTORY" is published by the Malpas Field Club History Group. All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, c/o Stoke Cottage, Church Street, Malpas, Cheshire SY14 8PD.

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EDITORIAL

In our last issue we made an appeal for readers to let us have articles based on their own reminiscences or those of their families and friends. The response has been magnificent, so much so that the bulk of this issue has been given over to three of the articles that resulted. Mrs Elsie Warburton, who now lives in Tilston, tells of a vanished system of poultry farming which once flourished on the slopes of the Bickerton Hills; George Roberts, our "Fire Chief", tells of his family's long connection with the Malpas Fire Brigade; and Mrs Anne Laing recounts the story of Malpas Wesleyan Methodist Chapel which, sadly, had to be demolished earlier this year. Her great grandfather was closely involved with the building of the chapel and its predecessor on the same site.

Our final two articles take a much longer step back in time. Robert Stones has unearthed some fascinating information about John Leyot, one of the Rectors of Malpas in the fourteenth century. Margaret Barker exposes some seventeenth century cases from the Courts of Quarter Sessions. Both of these articles underline the sad fact that the "common" people who get their names into the historical record tend to be those who manage to get into trouble which leads to litigation. Human nature never changes - just run your eye over this week's local paper!

We are very encouraged by the number and variety of individuals who offer material for the magazine. Articles are welcomed from anyone, in any form. Can't think of subjects? - Malpas is crawling with them! Just a few suggestions - Dog Lane Brickworks, Malpas Waterworks, cheese making, the stories of individual clubs and organisations, the Gas Works, the various chapels, churches and schools in the parish, the Roman road, your own house, local shops and businesses - etcetera, etcetera. If you would like to write an article and feel that you might like some moral support or practical help from other enthusiastic local historians, why not come along to the next meeting of the Malpas History Group - Wednesday, September 18th at Tilston School?

We are very pleased that, because of the enthusiastic reception and good sales attracted by Nos. 1-3, we have been able to increase the number of pages from this issue and to bring the price back down to £1.00. This has also been helped by our change from photocopying to offset-litho for all the pages not carrying illustrations. All profits from the sale of the magazine go into a fund which will be used to subsidise further publications on the history of the Malpas area.

David Hayns

BLACK LEGHORNS AND WHITE WYANDOTTES

Elsie Warburton interviewed by Lorraine Thornecroft

"You can rear chickens at Bickerton but you must not take my glory from me."

So said Arthur White when he started a second poultry farm at Hillside, Duckington, and left the farm at Bickerton in the charge of his three eldest children. He was referring to his prize winning breeds and stipulated that Elsie, the eldest daughter, and her brother and sister must rear different breeds.

Elsie's grandfather had first lived at this Bickerton house. Alexander White was a stonemason. He was involved in the building of Eaton Hall, now pulled down. He walked to work from Bickerton every Monday morning and back again on Friday evening. He died at the age of 40, from dust on the chest.

His son Arthur started, at the beginning of this century, with a few cattle and hens for eggs. The children took the eggs to Chester to sell, having to do the rounds on foot at first, then later with pony and trap. Arthur White then moved on to specialise in breeding poultry. He kept Black Leghorns and some Light Sussex. When he moved to Duckington he took much of his poultry with him and his children restocked with Rhode Island Reds and White Wyandottes. When he died his daughter Elsie, by then Mrs Warburton, took over at Hillside, where she kept around 1,000 birds, a small concern by today's standards.

The family sold hatching eggs, day old chicks and live birds to all parts of the country and Arthur White, being a well known name in the chicken world, also had orders from abroad. The eggs and chickens were dispatched from Malpas Railway Station.

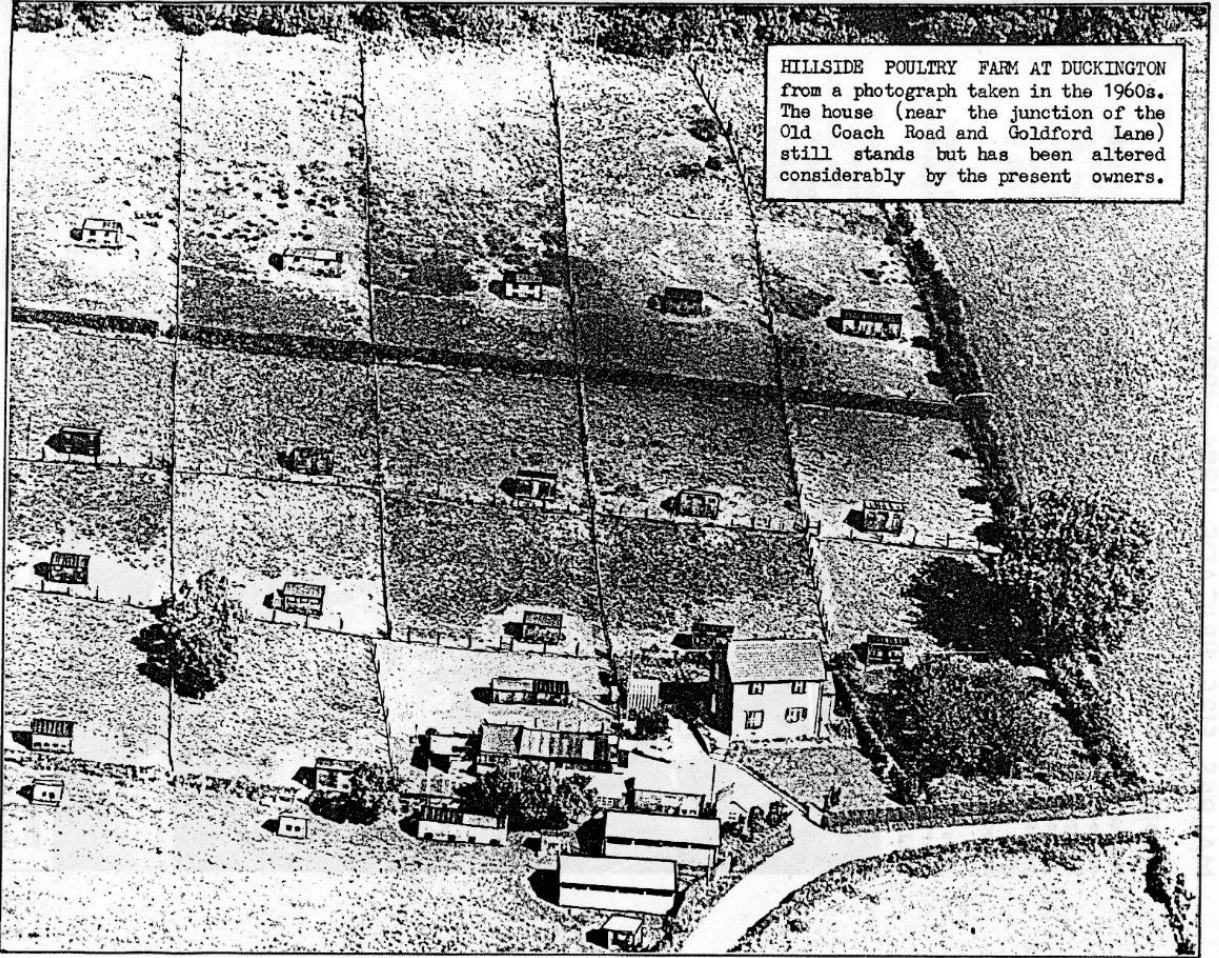
In the beginning, of course, there were no incubators and eggs were placed under broody hens, 12 to each hen, with the hope that the hen did not decide half way through that she had had enough. Later came incubators run by oil lamps and the Whites had about 10 of these at Bickerton Poultry Farm. When Mrs Warburton went to Hillside in 1952 she acquired electric incubators.

The poultry houses (see photograph) were made of wood and they had an open door onto the grass in fine weather. There was straw on the floor and dropping boards, on which the birds slept, halfway up the sides. At Duckington Mrs Warburton also had two deep litter units but still let the birds out on to the grass in summer.

Both Mrs Warburton and her father won many medals at laying competitions all over the country and Arthur won the much prized cup at the National Laying Test in Surrey in 1931/32. He held his own laying competition at Duckington for a while.

Mrs Warburton spoke of two problems which they had. One was finding enough food for the birds during both World Wars and the other was foxes. On one occasion 100 birds were killed.

When poultry farming started to move over to battery rearing many poultry farmers had to sell out, as it was no longer economic to breed by the old methods and it was expensive to change over to the new methods. Mrs Warburton began to lose money and decided to retire in 1972.



HILLSIDE POULTRY FARM AT DUCKINGTON
from a photograph taken in the 1960s.
The house (near the junction of the
Old Coach Road and Goldford Lane)
still stands but has been altered
considerably by the present owners.

MALPAS FIRE BRIGADE 1896 - 1985

George Roberts

Malpas has had a fire brigade for over 100 years and my family has been connected with it for approximately 60 of those years. My grandfather, George Roberts (he used to be the local chimney sweep), served over 20 years. My father, also George Roberts, served 20 years as well as four years as a volunteer during the second world war. My brother Joe, who has just retired, my brother Derek and I have all completed 25 years and now my son George has served three years.

Ours is not the only family involved with firefighting. Bert Rich served over 20 years and his sons Bob and Bill served 12 and 25 years respectively. Bill's son has now served four years.



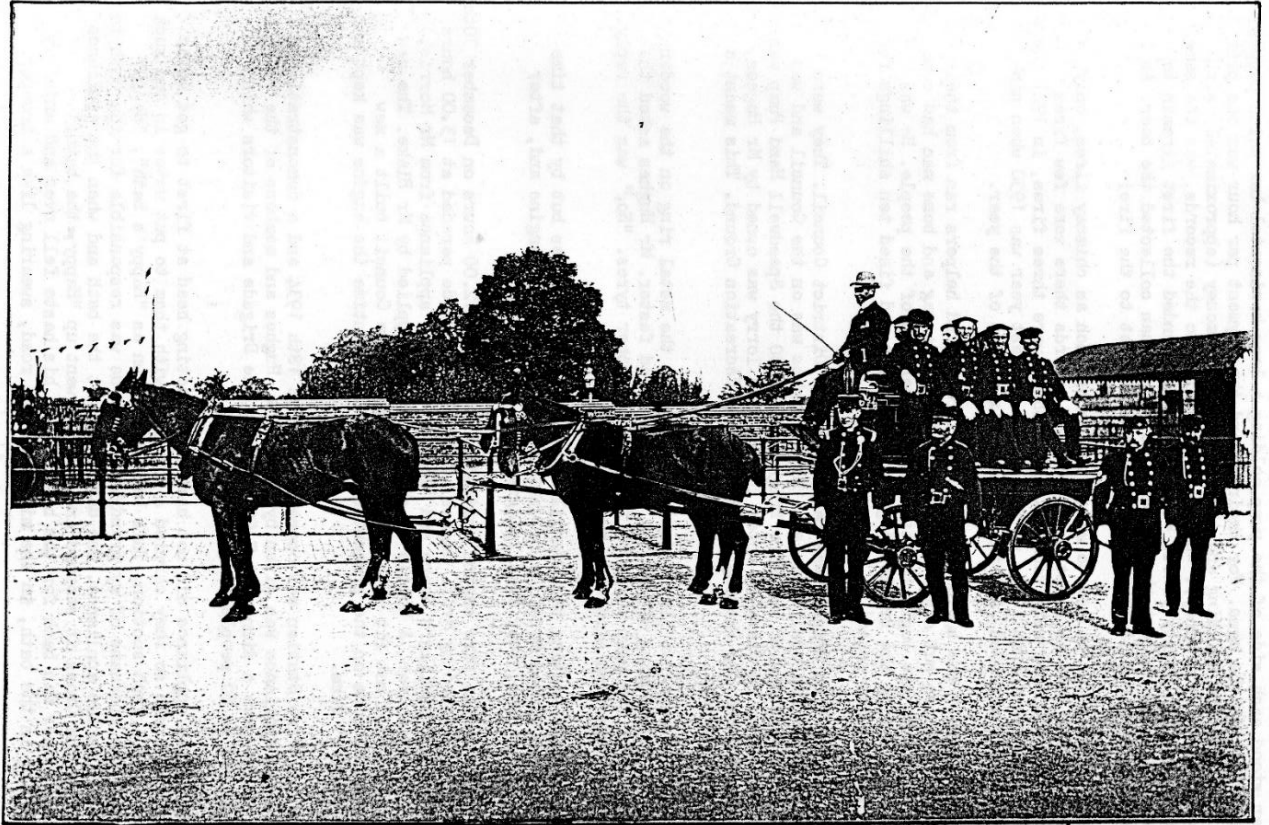
THREE GENERATIONS OF GEORGES: (L - R) George IV, George III (author of this article), George II.

Photograph: Courtesy of "The Chester Chronicle".

The earliest dated event we have on record is the delivery of the "Speedwell Hand Pump" to Malpas Fire Brigade on March 11th 1896. This pump was hauled along by two horses owned by a local farmer living half a mile from the pump garage. This garage still stands alongside the Jubilee Hall.

The alarm was raised by contacting the Captain who instructed a man to blow the bugle which was kept in a glass fronted cabinet near the pump garage. The bugle would be blown outside the Jubilee Hall, then the bugler would run to the church on the hill and blow again. He would then run to the Chester Road and blow once more. It is said that if the horses heard the bugle they would jump the hedge and run to the garage.

In those days the bugle (which is still kept in the station) not only called the firemen but also the helpers. These were men who made themselves available to operate the pump. Five



THE "SPEEDWELL" HAND PUMP AT WHITCHURCH SMITHFIELD (FOR A CARNIVAL PARADE?)
ABOUT THE TIME OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR. SEATED ON THE EXTREME RIGHT IS
GEORGE ROBERTS I, GRANDFATHER OF THE AUTHOR.

men stood each side of the pump holding a long horizontal bar which pumped the water in the hose. For their reward the payment per hour was one pint of ale and one shilling and threepence in old money (approximately six pence in today's money). This fee, according to the records, was the same for more than twenty years. When the bugle sounded the first fireman to respond would collect the horses. The second man collected the beer. As you can imagine, it could take some time to get to the fire!

They did not get called to minor incidents such as chimney fires, only large fires such as haystacks. From our records there were few fires attended compared with today. In 1920 there were three fires, in 1921 there was one fire and in 1922, no fires. The busiest year was 1930 when nine fires were attended, all in the last six months of the year.

"Tara, tara!" the bugle sounded. The firemen and helpers ran from their work and homes but alas there was no fire. The rag and bone man had come to town with his bugle to attract the attention of the people. He was brought before the Broxton Magistrate's Court and fined ten shillings for disturbing the peace!

The Malpas Fire Brigade was paid by Malpas District Council. They were responsible for equipment, etc. Mr A. Hughes was on the Council and was also the Captain of the Fire Brigade, In 1930 the Speedwell Hand Pump was converted to be drawn by motor lorry. This lorry was owned by Mr Hughes, who owned the Egg Packing Station by the Recreation Ground. This meant a quicker turnout.

The roads were not like today's which meant the metal ring on the wooden wheels kept coming off as the pump travelled faster. Mr Hughes asked the Council if the pump could be fitted with rubber tyres. "No," was the reply. The Captain then said, "No tyres, no fires!"

At the next meeting the Council agreed to the new tyres but by that time Mr Hughes wanted more. He requested a motorised fire engine and, after several months, they finally agreed.

The new Morris fire engine arrived at Malpas at 12.00 hours on December 30th 1933, collected by Mr P. Hughes. The Malpas Brigade paraded at 13.00 hours to watch councillors Shone and Blake accept the appliance from Mr Morris, the Manufacturer. A bottle of champagne was supplied by Mr Blake. The new engine would not fit into the old garage so the Council built a new appliance room on the present site. In the meantime the engine was kept at Mr Hughes' farm.

The new Fire Station was opened on August 18th 1934 and a demonstration of the new appliance was given by Captain A. Hughes and members of the Brigade. Mr Blake gave a dinner at 7.00 p.m. for the Brigade and visitors which amounted to 60 people in all.

The Morris appliance did not have a collecting head at first to get water from hydrants so they carried a tin bath with them to put water in and suck out with 4 inch suction. This bath was known as "Happy's Bath", "Happy" being the nickname of my grandfather and he was responsible for the bath to be put on the appliance. One day he forgot the bath and when the appliance was by the Cross it stopped and the cry went up "Happy, the bath!" Grandfather ran back for the bath and in his haste fell over and ended up sitting in the bath, in the middle of the road, swearing like a trooper.



THE BRIGADE WITH THE MORRIS FIRE ENGINE OUTSIDE THE NEW FIRE STATION

(L - R): FRONT ROW Mr A. Hughes (Captain) Mr T. Mercer Mr B. Rich
 Mr G. Allman Mr J. Griffiths Mr H. Powell BACK ROW Mr P. Hughes
 Mr T. Powell Mr J. Ridgway Mr J. Bickley

In the 1930s life was much slower than today so to have a fire engine travelling at 40 miles an hour was something very frightening, especially for the crew sitting on the top holding grimly onto the ladder. My grandfather almost fell off twice so he resigned in 1936.

Captain Hughes next went to the Council with a request for leggings but received a firm "No!" in reply. The Captain then organised a demonstration for the Councillors near the Church and he made sure that they stood downwind to watch. The idea was to pump water over the Church. You can guess what happened to the Council members, they got soaked and at the next meeting they agreed to the supply of leggings.

In the second world war the Fire Brigades were nationalised. Malpas was called upon to stand by for duty in Liverpool on May 4th and 5th 1941. An extension was built at the rear of the Station for sleeping quarters. A full time fireman was on duty during the day and at night six men (all volunteers) were on duty. A rota meant that each man worked two nights in a week.

In 1948 there was a big change in the Fire Brigade, each county taking over the responsibility of running the Brigade in its own area. All equipment became standardised so that one Brigade could help another when and where necessary. This saw the end of the Morris pump and we then had a secondhand Dennis pump. This appliance carried a tank of 200 gallons of water as well as a pump and the men travelled in a cabin. The alarm was raised by a siren and each fireman had a bell in his home.

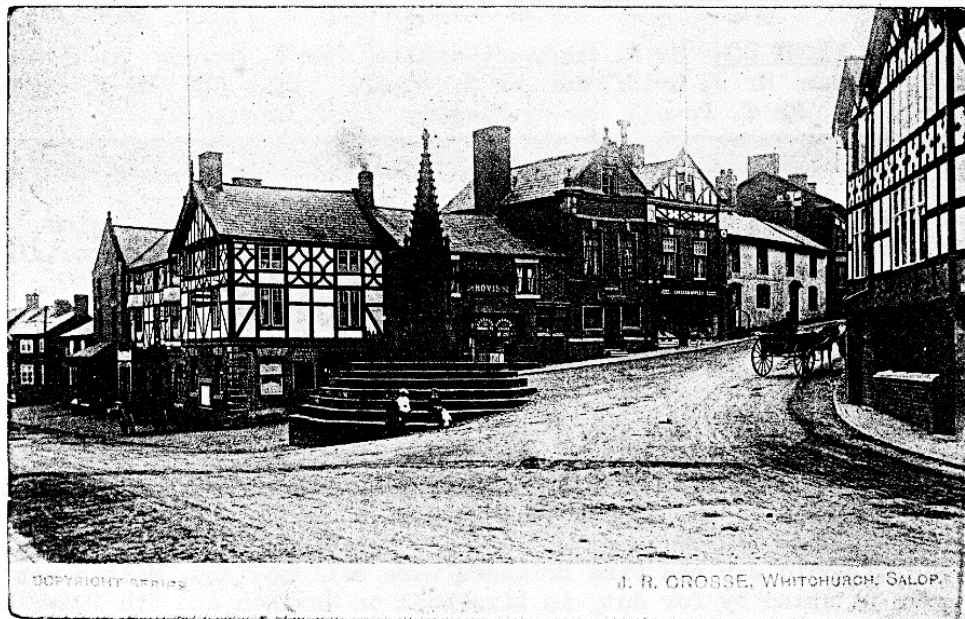
In 1971 the siren ceased to be used. Although it is still in the station its function is now to provide an early warning in case of war. Each man now has a pocket alerter which calls him to the station and the teleprinter there provides the address to attend. We are mobile within two minutes of the call.

We now attend approximately 90 calls a year, one third of which are road traffic accidents and we have special cutting equipment for this type of incident. We also have breathing apparatus to enable firemen to enter smoke-logged buildings or to deal with gases and chemicals.

In 1975 I was promoted to Sub Officer in Charge after Mr Tom Chesworth retired. He was Sub Officer from 1963. In 1973 he was honoured with the B.E.M. from the Queen for services rendered to the Brigade.

In 1979 we were issued with a new appliance, a Dennis "R" series. This was the ultimate in its day with a 400 gallon water tank, static pump, mobile pump, twin hose reels, 45 ft. ladders and roof ladder. The Brigade paraded on the car park and in attendance were the Chief Officer, Mr Lightbody, and his Deputy, Mr Foster, the Parish Council and its Chairman Mr Norman Craddock. A buffet was held in the Jubilee Hall afterwards.

At the present time we are waiting for the County to provide the funds for a new Fire Station and training ground.



Malpas Cross early this century. Where the N.F.U. Office is now, there was the New Inn (Licensee: Henry Richards), next door to the Cheers and Hopley branch pharmacy.

I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID UNTO ME.....

Malpas Wesleyan Chapel 1874 - 1969

Anne Laing

January 25th 1985

Today I have stood on the spot, or near the spot where my Great-Grandfather, the late John Barlow, must have stood in the early months of the year 1892, with a heart full of thankfulness to God watching the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Old Hall Street rising from the ashes of the former chapel which had been burnt down. I was watching it being taken down almost as reverently, I felt, as it had been built. For just over ninety years it had stood as it was rebuilt then a sermon in stone. I have known it for well over 50 of those years.

I know little of the early years of Methodism in Malpas. There must be accounts of it somewhere. Certainly in the days prior to 1874 for we read in the Whitchurch Herald dated February 28th 1874:

NEW WESLEYAN CHAPEL

"We notice the foundations of the above new chapel are now being made, and from the appearance of the plans, the building is likely to be an ornament to the town, although it is very questionable if the friends have not erred in the situation of the site, the other two chapels being close and the congregation chiefly coming from the west side of the town."

These followers of John Wesley were obviously determined to have their own chapel in which to worship God in the way they wished. They had set about the task of building their chapel. My great grandfather, he lived in a small-holding in the Wrexham Road, set about the mammoth task of collecting money to help to build the chapel. I can remember seeing a ledger containing the names of those who had subscribed. What a task he had. Some of the amounts were very small. There was not a lot of money about in those days but Methodists have always been generous to their places of worship. My grandmother (the late Mrs Ruth Bagshaw, née Ruth Barlow) used to tell me about him. He was a postman as well as a small-holder. He used to walk, she told me, to the Cock o' Barton delivering letters on his way, spend the day going round the farms killing pigs for them and then return to Malpas emptying the letter boxes on his way. Malpas was then, of course, a main sorting office. He must have succeeded in collecting with friends £100 as this amount is given in the account of the laying of the foundation stones, one of which he laid. He was given a replica of the trowel used at the ceremony and I believe that this is still in my family. His photograph hung in the vestry of the chapel until it closed in 1969. So many times I heard my grandmother tell with pride why it hung there.

What great occasions these stone-laying ceremonies were. One can read an account of it in the Whitchurch Herald dated March 7th 1874.

NEW WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL

"On Wednesday last, March 4th, the foundation stone of a new chapel in connection with the above body was laid by Joseph Beckett, Esq. of Belvedere. (These Becketts were outfitters and had an exclusive shop in the Rows in Chester). Towards noon the quiet old town assumed quite a lovely appearance for the influx of visitors who came from all sides convening about half past two towards a spot opposite the famous Old Hall which had been selected and purchased from the Marquis of

Cholmondeley on which to build a new chapel, the site is a most pleasant one and the building from the drawing will be a credit to the denomination, and an ornament to the town. The Rev. J. Sutton, Superintendent of the Circuit gave out a hymn after which the Rev. Thomas Orton read an account of the preparations and offerings for the temple raised for Jehovah as recorded in the 29th chapter of the first book of Chronicles after which the Rev. J. Clare, Primitive Methodist and the Rev. J. Sutton offered prayer. The dedicatory prayers being over the Rev. Alex McAuley, the Chairman of the Liverpool District gave an address. After the address which was listened to with great attention, the Rev. J. Sutton called upon Joseph Beckett Esq. to lay the foundation stone. Mr Beckett then took the trowel and mallet (there being no need of the sword) and laid the stone, after which he laid upon the stone a roll of notes value £25. Mr William Smith of Whitchurch then laid another stone depositing £10 thereon, G. Brown of Birkenhead, who had been born and reared in the neighbourhood laid a stone and deposited thereon a cheque value 20 guineas."

We read on a lengthy account of people who laid stones, depositing their donations. These people came from all over the district. We read that "Miss Faulkner of Nomansheath had the honour of laying the first brick leaving thereon 10/- The total taken at the foundation laying being over £117."

The friends by this time began to assemble in the Congregational Chapel schoolroom where an excellent tea had been prepared by Mr James Taylor of Malpas whose exertions to make the service a success reflect great credit on him. Upward of 540 people partook of the good things to refresh the inner man, the tables for the whole being presided over by the ladies of the neighbourhood and all supplied gratis for the benefit of the new building. At half past six o'clock the public meeting took place in the Congregational Chapel, which was quite filled. Mr R.T. Smith was voted to the chair. He said in reference to the new chapel that he would give them a few particulars. The site cost £35 from the Marquis of Cholmondeley to whom they were much indebted, the building itself together with the heating apparatus, gas and law expenses came to £1,197 towards which they had gifts from a number of people (listed in the newspaper) and added all together he found he had the amount required all but £230, which he hoped the bazaar and other events would realise. Mr Brown of Birkenhead addressed them. After the address they closed the proceedings with prayer, "the total proceeds of the day being £127 4s - 6d".

The new chapel was on its way. So often I heard as a child what a fine building this chapel was with its pipe organ. John Barlow's son Charles, whose organ playing was always somewhat of a legend in the family, had played it.

The Whitchurch Herald of September 4th 1875 gives an account of the Opening of the New Chapel:

WESLEYAN CHAPEL.

Wednesday, September 1st, 1875, will always be a red letter day in the annals of the Wesleyans of this district, for on it was dedicated to the Worship of God, their new sanctuary, which has been in the building about two years.

The Chapel itself is of a very ornamental and costly character.

The Chester Chronicle dated September 4th 1875 gives a graphic account of this memorable day in Malpas:

"A new Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was opened last Wednesday at Malpas. The new edifice stands on a bank on the left of the road on leaving the town for Whitchurch and the site was given by the Marquis of Cholmondeley or rather we should say it was purchased for £35 and after holding the money for a short time His Lordship returned it. At the laying of the memorial stones the Rev. McAuley delivered an admirable expository address which appeared to fully justify the erection of the chapel which has now been completed and though not an absolutely beautiful specimen of the Gothic style it is a desirable addition to the architecture of the place. It is built of Ruabon pressed bricks with a dressing of Grinshill Stone. The chapel may be said to consist of a nave divided into four bays with side aisles the latter lighted by three double light windows with a row of nine quatrefoil lights on each side of the clerestory of the nave and a handsome circular window in the gable with a group of four lights above. At the opposite end the chapel terminates apsidally but the lower portion is converted into a minister's vestry and the upper into a choir chamber, these being divided from the transepts by a screen of woodwork the same as that used for other fittings, namely pitchpine stained and varnished. The seats are open with sloping backs and fitted with convenient umbrella stands but strange to say hat racks have either been forgotten or thought to be unnecessary. The seats extend right across the body and the aisles can thus be utilised when required, the actual accommodation being 800. The edifice is warmed by hot water, and lighted artificially by coronas of gas jets. One of the most artistic features in the fittings is the reading desk which stands on a raised dais the floor being formed of coloured tiles."

We can add to the picture of this magnificent building by reading again from the Whitchurch Herald: "... the Communion rails ... supported by iron work of a light modern pattern richly ornamented. There is a marble font on a granite pedestal. The entrance is by two handsome porches."

The Chester Chronicle tells us: "The building which has been erected by Messrs. Powell & Co. of Preses from the designs of Mr John Rogers, amount of £1,460 and of that sum £1,149 has been raised as follows - Bazaar at Whitchurch £427, subscribed at Stone Laying £180, subscriptions received £212, ditto promised £280, grant from chapel fund £50, leaving £311 to be raised."

At half past eleven on the morning of September 1st, the weather being fine there was a chapel full of people with all the available seats being occupied, the Superintendent of the circuit The Rev. J. Sutton having announced that the place had been registered for Divine Worship. The Rev. Dr Punshon, who conducted the devotional part of the service, gave out the hymn - "Before Jehovah's awful throne" - and then offered prayer. The lessons read were the 132nd Psalm, "Lord remember David and all his afflictions", and the 2nd chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". This was taken by The Rev. Gervase Smith, M.A., President of the Conference, as the basis of a masterly discourse on the doctrine of human depravity. A collection was made at the closure of the service and amounted to £30.

In a tent adjacent to the chapel, in a field to the rear of it in fact, provision was made for the temporal wants of visitors. Mr James Taylor had charge of a tempting refreshment stall, the whole of the viands having been given. As they included about 30 couples of fowls besides substantial

joints a cold collation was provided. Unfortunately however the details were defective. Plates of ham and tongue, and fowl and tongue, were put before people but no knives and forks. Several who at last secured them at first had to make use of pocket knives. That was by no means as bad as having cutlery and not the meat. In the same tent was a stall of fancy and useful goods preside over by Mrs J. Beckett, Mrs R. Smith, Mrs Nash and Mrs T. Reid and they not being able to clear out their stock very wisely brought it to the hammer and Mr Roberts sold at ruinous but remunerative prices, for that paradox will be understood by those who know anything about bazaars. At four o'clock a tea meeting was held and was fairly attended and the proceeds together with those of the refreshments and the atll of goods provided by the ladies must have swelled the receipts of the day very considerably.

In the evening at half past five an assembly of no less than 1500 persons occupied a long tent erected for the purpose at the side of the field and before the service began sang several of Sankey's melodies to pass away the time.

When Dr Punshon arrived with The Rev. Gordon Smith the tent became insufferably hot and in several places the canvas had to be dropped. The latter conducted the devotions of the people, giving out the first hymn, "Far as creation's bounds extend". He offered prayer and read the 84th Psalm, "How amiable are Thy dwellings: Thou Lord of Hosts". The next hymn, "Great is the Lord our God", was given out by Dr Punshon who, after one verse had been sung, insisted on the leader coming to the front that the people on either side might keep time, as they had not done before. By that means the singing was considerably improved.

Dr Punshon took as his text Psalm 42 verse 4 - "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise". Several columns of the paper are taken up by this sermon, written in full - an eloquent exposition.

Afetr reading the account of this outstanding day for the Wesleyans at Malpas I stood by the half demolished chapel and found it so hard to imagine that all this fervour and commitment had taken place on that spot.

The Wesleyans obviously settled down to a life of fervent service to God and His Church. One reads accounts of various events connected with the chapel.

In August 1880 a certain Rev. MacKenzie "the popular lecturer of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion visited Malpas and preached in the new chapel in Old Hall Street in the afternoon and gave a lecture in the evening on 'Balam and Balak - a perverted prophet and a baffled King'. A tea meeting was also held in a commodious shed at the Old Hall which was tastefully decorated". My elderly Methodist friends tell me that Tea Meetings were very popular and a good way of raising money.

They were obviously keen supporters of the Wesleyan Mission Society and there are accounts of their meetings each December.

There were services of Sacred Songs. At this time the chapel had a flourishing choir. In 1887 we read of the Cantata "Esther the Beautiful Queen" being performed by the choir. This must have impressed my grandmother very much as she used to tell me about it.

In 1889 a Circuit Gathering was held in the chapel with a tea meeting in the Jubilee Hall. The Hall must have been very new then. 270 were served with tea. They took a collection of three guineas.

A service of song in 1881 was held to raise funds "to remove the organ into one of the recesses on the ground floor". I do not believe that this was ever done.

The chapel had been in use for just sixteen years when it was burned to the ground. My grandmother often talked of the fire. By this time my Great Grandparents were living at Cross o' th' Hill where my uncle, Mr Charles Bagshaw, now lives. John Barlow had gone outside the house and noticed a fire in Malpas. On one of the paths still stands a big block of stone. My uncle tells me that it was on that stone that John Barlow stood watching the conflagration until he realised that his beloved chapel was going up in flames and he dashed to Malpas to help, but it was to no avail. One can picture the almost inadequate fire appliances trying to cope with a fire of that magnitude. The Whitchurch Herald of January 24th 1891 gives this graphic account:

SERIOUS FIRE.

THE WESLEYAN CHAPEL COMPLETELY DESTROYED.

About half-past three o'clock on Sunday afternoon, when most people in the quiet little town of Malpas were taking their usual Sabbath rest, they were disturbed by an alarm of fire. People at once flocked to the scene to find the Wesleyan Chapel, situated in Old Hall-street, a mass of flames. The building was one of the ornaments of the place, being erected about sixteen years ago. The fire, it seems, originated through the over-heating of the warming apparatus. Owing to the extreme cold, the attendant made up an extra fire after the morning service, and locked up the chapel. The pipes running at the back of some brickwork in the vestry became over heated and set fire to the floor, and the fire having got firm hold spread very rapidly to the gallery and organ chamber. It was when the fire had reached this stage that it was first seen. On the flames reaching the roof, which was of pitch-pine, the whole building was completely enveloped in flames. So great a hold had the fire obtained that it was hopeless to attempt to subdue it. The roof of the building fell in less than an hour after the fire was discovered. The fire brigade, after the falling in of the roof, played upon the burning wood left on the walls and upon the flames inside. They continued to work until a late hour on Sunday night, and on visiting the scene on Monday the chapel was found to be a complete wreck. Not an atom could be seen of the organ, which only a few years ago cost £200. The stone pillars are more or less broken, and the marble font is split up into very small fragments. Every window in the building was smashed, and the lead had run into all manner of shapes. All the books and two valuable chairs were burned, and nothing remains but the walls. The scene of the conflagration has been visited by great numbers of people from different parts of the country. The building was insured for £1,600.

One can hardly imagine the despair of that congregation who had such a few short years before worked so hard to build their chapel. I vaguely remember being told that services were taken in the Old Hall occasionally whilst they were without a chapel, and I suppose they would join the Primitive Methodists and the Congregationalists. They did not give up.

We read in the Whitchurch Herald of April 2nd ¹⁸⁹² 1902:

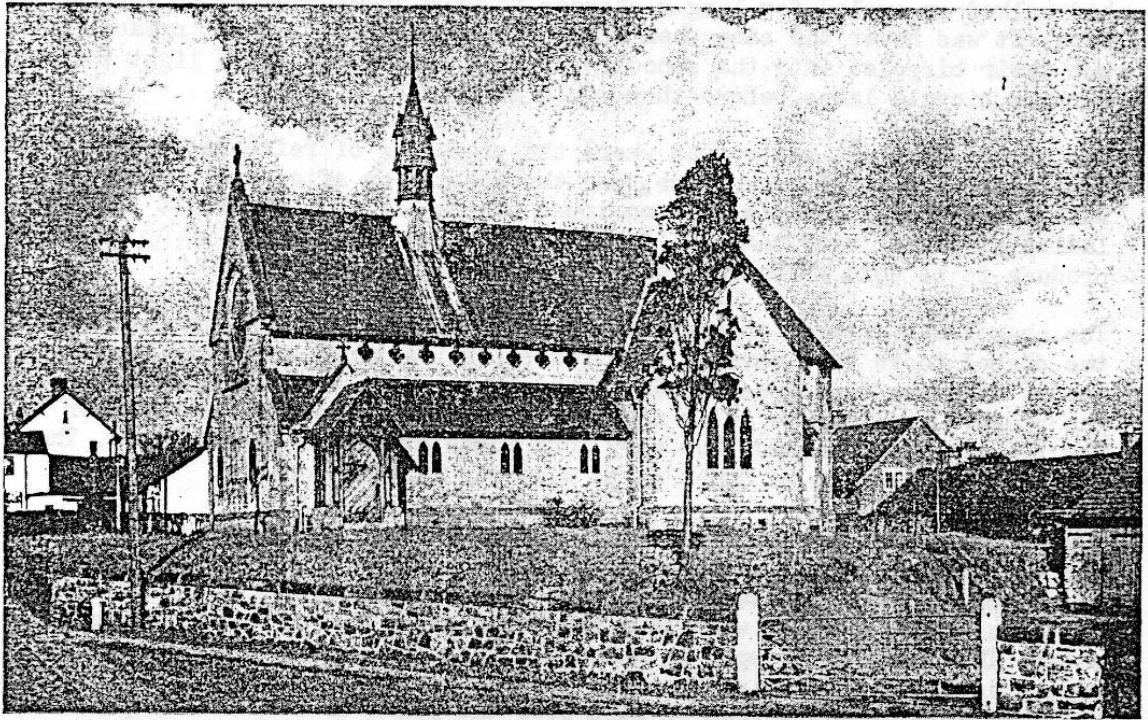
"On Wednesday last (March 29th 1892) the Malpas Wesleyan Methodist Chapel which has been closed now about fourteen months during the re-building and renovating after the disastrous fire that occurred there in January 1891 was re-opened. The building at the time of the fire was fully insured, consequently the opening took place without any debt remaining upon the structure which has been substantially rebuilt in a chaste and befitting manner. The organ gallery has been done away with and instead a schoolroom has been substituted. The work which is now entirely completed has been carried out by Mr George Dodd, Builder, of Whitchurch. In the afternoon the opening service took place in the chapel when the Rev. Charles Garrett of Liverpool preached an excellent sermon from the words contained in Matthew Chapter 28 verses 20 - "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". The audience was deeply moved by the masterly manner in which the preacher discoursed from the text. The singing was ably assisted by the choir of the Wesleyan Chapel, Whitchurch. Tea was served in the schoolroom at the rear of the chapel and this was numerously attended. The tea makers we should mention were:- Mrs James Taylor, Mrs Penkamon, Mrs W. Robinson, Miss A. Taylor, The Misses Austin, Miss Ruth Barlow, Mrs Hughes of Cuddington, Miss Lanceley, Mrs Parkes, Mrs Hoyle of Whitchurch and Miss Carter, Well Street. In the evening a public meeting was held."

Those who have noticed that the garages on the site of the old chapel have been repaired and renovated to serve for the new houses will be interested to know that they were built in 1901. The Chester Chronicle dated September 3rd of that year tells us:

"The local Methodists are most enthusiastic in their endeavours to provide accommodation for the horses and traps which convey their numerous country worshippers to chapel, the lack of which has proved a hindrance to the swelling of the congregation. With this object the services were inaugurated. They took the form of a service at the chapel when a sermon was preached to a large number of people in the afternoon by Mr J. Bennett of Bolton who, after the serving of tea in the Jubilee Hall, gave a lecture entitled "50,000 miles through British Methodism". Present was the far famed Gipsy Smith who contributed a solo. The proceedings throughout were of a highly successful character."

I suppose I have been told so often about it that I feel I can remember being taken, wrapped in a shawl from the age of six months to this our family's place of worship. I was the fourth generation to attend. Having a young baby was no excuse for the Methodists of that day to absent themselves from Services. Morning, evening and, as I grew older, Sunday School in the afternoon, we went. What harm has it done any of us? I can hear the cynics say "What good?" but we all know what Hitler said about giving him a child until it was seven years of age.

The second chapel on the site was a lofty and spacious building with pitch pine furnishings. Always Methodist chapels are dominated by the pulpit - the preaching of the word being the all important doctrine of Wesley's



METHODIST CHURCH, WHITCHURCH ROAD, MALPAS

From a photograph taken around 1961

church. Malpas Chapel's pulpit was an impressive one with the steps into it on each side and its beautiful brass book stand. I can still hear it creaking as it was being raised and lowered. Below stood the Communion table - brown mottled marble - standing on a tiled area within the Communion rail. This rail was supported by wrought iron patterned stands. How many times I sat as a child and counted the shapes in the tiles and built up different patterns from them. The sermons could be so very long for a child.

The chapel was lit by gas. Someone had to stand on a pew to pull down the chain to switch on the gas so that each mantle, inside its round glass shade, could be lit with a taper. I have seen some hazardous balancing acts performed when mantles had to be replaced. I thought 'lighting up' was magic as we still had oil lights at home. Malpas then, of course, had its own very busy Gas Works, now marked by a plaque in the wall in Well Street, in charge of Mr Crowther. I wonder how many of the older residents in Malpas remember as young sufferers from Whooping Cough being taken there when the retorts were open, to be done good to.

Behind the chapel was a large schoolroom with a fire-place. What beautiful fires blazed away in that grate for week night services and meetings. This was where the Missionary Lantern Slide Lectures used to take place. No wonder they were called Magic Lanterns. I think that the lamp itself was worked by carbide.

I can remember the Malpas Town Band holding their practices in this room. I am sure I am right in saying they had to leave because they carried in beer and violated their contract. This was not tolerated by Methodism. Equally frowned upon were dancing and Whist Drives. Throughout my life I have never had the least interest in card games. Somehow it was ingrained in me that they were 'works of the Devil'.

The chapel had two vestries. The preachers' vestry had a fire-place. How grateful the preachers must have been on a cold winter's night when they had walked or cycled for long distances to warm themselves by a glowing fire. It was never the same when a gas fire replaced it. Local preachers put their bicycles into the schoolroom. What a performance to light their carbide bicycle lamps before they could go home.

The other, smaller, vestry was where the preparing of refreshments for meetings and parties took place, and the washing up afterwards. When I walk into some of today's well equipped church halls I wonder how those ladies at chapel ever managed. I can see that vestry now, piled up with produce to be sold at Harvest Sales.

The chapel was entered on each side by doors which went into porches. All the chapel doors were covered with red baize, fastened around by brass studs. Many are the times we have stood here having arrived late, during the prayers, waiting to go in and peeping round the door to see whether the prayers had finished. How very long these extempore prayers were. The Almighty was left in no doubt as to what was expected of Him.

A coke boiler - coke delivered from the gas works - under the chapel heated the central heating pipes. There were rows of large fat pipes, one above the other, which often were too hot on which to warm one's hands on a cold winter's night. I never went down into this eerie place, down its steep steps. The coke was dropped in through a hole covered by a tin sheet which made a lovely hollow noise when one jumped up and down on it. Mr Harold Worth of Well Street worked so hard over the years to keep the chapel warm.

This chapel too had umbrella stands, beautiful brass loops and metal troughs. The back seat could be let down so that it was possible to walk across from one aisle to the other.

There were some quite lovely leaded windows in the chapel. I was delighted to see when I went into the chapel that up to the time of the demolition the colourful rose window in the end of the chapel was still intact, shining out over the devastation left in the once finely furnished building. How many saintly men had stood facing that window, proclaiming the Word of God.

Like the seasons, the main events of the chapel's year came and went - Easter, Chapel Anniversary, Children's Anniversary, Harvest Festival, Home Missions and Foreign Missions. Each was celebrated in its turn.

Before each of these events hand bills were printed and delivered round the village. Some were posted to friends who had gone to live at a distance. A large poster or two were put about. I mention this because I so loved to be allowed to go and fetch these from the Printer's - Fletcher & Sons - in Church Street. How that shop fascinated me as a child - the machinery, the letters, the ink and the wet posters pegged up to dry. Mr Fletcher and Mr W. Bailey always had time to show me how they did their printing.

I suppose it is the Sunday School which I remember best. Occasionally hearing 'What a friend we have in Jesus' on Songs of Praise or singing 'There is a Green Hill Far Away' takes me back to the Sunday School in the big schoolroom at Malpas, with its orange coloured Sunday School Hymn Books. There was an older harmonium in there, there being a much bigger one and more modern in the chapel. Miss Hesketh, Bless Her, took Sunday School for many years and there were months during the war when I was the only child who went. Mrs Moore (née Hesketh) of Whitchurch who had also been brought

up at Malpas Chapel said that she had, at one stage, been the only child in John Barlow's Sunday School Class. What we can learn from these stalwarts who thought that one child was worth so much effort. Mrs Woodward, Miss Lucy Bostock of Nomansheath and Miss Edith Bagshaw were also Sunday School teachers over the years. Miss Bagshaw was always devoted to the service of the chapel and kept it open for many years longer than anyone else would have struggled to do. Maybe the closing of it broke her heart. We used to have our stories from 'Line upon Line', a copy of which I still treasure.

The Sunday School always grew considerably before Christmas and in the summer. We had our annual trip to Rhyl in August, and our Christmas party with books. A ride in a 'chara', as some of the older people still called it, to the seaside was such a treat. Children did not travel far in those days and it was a thrill to see the sea. Building sand castles and paddling in the sea were the highlight of the whole year. I wonder what children do on Sunday School Outings in 1985, if indeed they still take place.

Mrs Moore tells me that in her Sunday School days the trips went to Rawhead by horse-drawn brakes. Several chapels in the district, Crewe-by-Farndon, Tilston and others would join together. Mrs Hesketh (Mr and Mrs Hesketh were the Bakers and Confectioners, where Mrs Crawford now has her shoe shop) would borrow the horse-drawn butcher's van and take the food up in the morning so that it could be all there ready for the children. One year she had a stubborn horse and had only got as far as the bottom of the hill when the children arrived.

Christmas parties were in the big schoolroom where there was always a beautiful fire. All the chapel ladies baked and the trestle tables were laid at one end with white damask table cloths and they literally groaned with food. At the other end of the room we played games - 'Spinning the Trencher' (with forfeits, how daring!), 'Passing the Parcel', 'Musical Chairs' (with Miss Hesketh playing the harmonium) and 'Postman's Knock' and many more of the 'Oldies' belonging to that time. As we played we had one eye on the tables to see when we would be allowed to eat. At last the red enamel teapots which, I am told, are still in use at St. John's, Whitchurch, were brought through and we could start. Children did not expect fruit drinks. There were few in the market and felt to be an unnecessary extravagance. The memory of egg sandwiches and sardine sandwiches sticks in my mind, and jelly, and always jam tarts, and that real treat - such extravagance - tinned fruit. The adults who were interested in the Sunday School joined us for tea and I can still hear Mr Hesketh, if one of the Ministers had not travelled out from Whitchurch, saying grace before we could start our tea. Sometimes we sang it. We usually wore paper hats, often these having been saved from the previous year or salvaged from someone's family party. It was not long before it looked as though the locusts had descended and there were rows of clean plates with the golden trefoil showing in the middle. Those were not the days of faddy children and, parties being few and far between, this was a red letter day.

There was usually a game like 'Simon Says' or 'I Spy' whilst the ladies cleared and washed up. There was a spate of "Please may I leave the room?" as it was quite an adventure to go out at the back of chapel where set in the bowels of the earth were the lavatories, of the bucket type. We were shown down by a hurricane lamp - if it didn't blow out in the wind.

The evening concluded with its Prizegiving. These books were presented by one of the Influential Methodists of the Circuit. I have one or two books which I received. These were either Bibles or hymn books, or moral tales.

My grand-daughters love my 'oldies'. These parties were such happy occasions. We all went off gleefully clutching our apple or orange.

Both of these events were made possible by the Sunday School Anniversary Collections in aid of Sunday School Funds. I loved them. We practised special hymns from Anniversary Sheets. We were joined by adults from the Congregation to help swell the sound. We were all tucked on forms and chairs in front of the pulpit. Children read the lessons and recited poems. This was a great feature of the Anniversary and I can well remember struggling to learn Rudyard Kipling's 'If' and another I remembered was "Are you standing at Wits' End Corner Christian with furrowed brow?" On these occasions in the afternoon the Minister forewent his sermon and talked to the children. He always made up for it at night.

All the children had, however poor their families, something new to wear. This in itself made us keen about Anniversaries.

The neighbouring chapels often closed on Anniversary Sundays, so that they could support each other.

Harvest Festivals were also great occasions. The chapel was decorated, everybody having given so generously. Methodism was born in song it says in the preface to the Hymn Book, and how everyone sang those rousing hymns. Monday was a busy day. The produce was cleared into the vestry, divided up and sold in lots. I only remember Mr Hesketh as auctioneer. "How much am I bid for this lovely marrow?" I marvel that it was ever sold because most people had gardens full of produce. People would run each other up to silly prices too. I suppose by the end of the evening if they had made £6-£10 they would feel they had done very well.

The Chapel Anniversary was held each year in September, the Anniversary of the dedication of the first chapel. A special preacher was invited and there was special music. I can remember the visit of the Coppenhall Male Voice Choir on one occasion. My most vivid memories are of either Mr or Mrs W. Bailey, or both, singing at the Service. I can remember her rendering of "Oh, for the Wings of a Dove" and "How lovely are Thy Dwellings". She had a beautiful voice.

There was always a great effort on everyone's part to collect as much as possible for Foreign Missions. We children went round with our cards. The adults had boxes and I remember my aunt doing several trips on her bicycle with her missionary box as she had regular donors in the district.

The Methodists at that time could be very bigoted but we always went to the United Service on the Rectory lawn on the Wakes Sunday evening after we had all had our own services. On this Sunday we had Wakes Pudding - a type of Bread Pudding.

Several times pre-war there were Cliff College Missions, with one or two students coming to the chapel. They either slept on the schoolroom floor or brought a caravan which they parked at the side of the chapel. They made their own breakfast and then were entertained at members' houses for the rest of the day. My grandmother used to send them eggs for breakfast which I took to them on my way to school. She always sent them all the double-yolked ones with the result that double-yolked eggs in our house were always known as 'evangelists' eggs'. Their meetings were of a Billy Graham type with people committing themselves to Christ. We sang lively choruses of the "I'm H-A-P-P-Y" type. They were always likeable lads who were of course training for the Ministry. There was always a good following of young ladies.

There were many families connected with the chapel and so many lovable characters, people who served it faithfully all their lives. It would be wrong to mention any more names than I have. From the Ministers of those days the names Rev. Fielding, Rev. Unsworth, Rev. Nash and Rev. Thompson come to mind. One became very fond of them and they moved on. The local preachers who came were many - Mr Isaac Welch, Mr Andrew Pearce, Mr Rupert Lee, Mr Forshaw, Mr Pointon, Mr Salt and Mr Lansley I remember. It was the usual thing for preachers who had travelled long distances to be given hospitality for the day. This was usually provided by Mr and Mrs Hesketh, who lived at The Terrace. One noticed at the end of the service the quiet click of the chapel door as Mrs Hesketh made a hurried exit as she used to say "to put the potatoes on for the preacher".

Approaching Malpas along the Well Meadow these days I think back to the nineteen thirties when we walked along to Chapel. The 'calling in' bell as my grandmother called it would be ringing at the Parish Church and we would know that we had only five minutes to get to chapel. There was, of course, no Springfield Estate and a most conveniently sited path went up from the bottom of Well Street and came out by the chapel. We usually used this short cut.

Although it is now forty years since I left Malpas, I shall always look back to the Malpas Wesleyan Methodist Chapel with gratitude and fond memories of its services and congregation, and will always say of it:

"I was glad when they said unto me ..."

I should like to acknowledge the help of the Editor of The Chester Chronicle, the Editor of the Whitchurch Herald, Mrs M. Moore of Whitchurch and Mr Charles Bagshaw.

BELOW: Malpas in the year before the Wesleyan Chapel fire.
An extract from Slater's "Directory of Cheshire" for 1890.

The parish church of St. Oswald is very ancient, and a fine specimen of the enriched Gothic which prevailed in the reign of Henry VII. Several very ancient and handsome monuments, some of which well deserve attention, grace its interior. The windows are enriched with elegant tracery, and there are some old oak stalls and niches. In 1811 the whole of the interior was restored at a cost of upwards of £2,000, and between the years 1875 and 1885 was again thoroughly renovated at a cost of over £3,000. In 1889 a stained glass window of elegant design, representing the Resurrection, was placed in the north aisle by the Tarleton family, in memory of the late Admiral Tarleton. The register dates from the year 1561. The living of Malpas, which is a rectory, was until recently divided into two mediocities, higher and lower, the following being the reason, assigned by tradition:—King James, travelling *incog.* stopped at the Red Lion Inn, where he met with some of the most respectable inhabitants, including the rector and curate, who were accustomed to spend their evenings there. The king, by his familiar jocularly, so highly pleased the company that the curate proposed conferring some token of their gratification upon the stranger guest prior to his departure, and intimated the propriety of exempting him from sharing in the evening's expenses. All agreed to the proposal except the rector, who insisted that "every tub should stand on its own staves," which convinced the king that there were more liberal rectors in the kingdom than the incumbent of Malpas; and immediately throwing off his disguise, he avowed himself their king, declaring that henceforth the curate should also be a rector, enjoying equal

emolument and privileges. But, popular tradition notwithstanding, it is certain that Malpas had two rectors as far back as the 13th century. The right of presentation to the rectory belongs to the Marquis of Cholmondeley and T. T. Drake, Esq. alternately. Besides the church, there is a chapel of ease at Edge, and places of worship for Congregationalists and Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists. Among the charities of Malpas are an endowed Grammar school, an endowed National school, clothing charities, and two blocks of almshouses, each for six poor widows. The Cholmondeley almshouses were founded by Sir Thomas Brereton in 1638, and rebuilt by the Earl of Cholmondeley in 1721. The Wigfield almshouses were built by the Rev. Henry Wigfield in 1851, according to the bequest of Miss Taylor. In the centre of the town is a monument, erected in 1877 to the memory of the late Rev. Charles Augustus Thurlow, M.A., chancellor of the diocese, honorary canon of Chester Cathedral, and 33 years rector of the higher mediocity of the town. The Victoria Jubilee Hall, in High street, with provision for social club and institute, was erected in 1887, at a cost of £1,200, raised by public subscription, the site being given by the Marquis of Cholmondeley. The Cemetery, covering an area of 2½ acres, was consecrated 1st of April, 1875. The town is well supplied with gas and water, the former by a limited company, and the latter by works erected at the joint expense of the Marquis of Cholmondeley and T. T. Drake, Esq. A market was formerly held on Wednesday, and fairs for cattle, drapery, &c. several times a year, but both are now fallen into disuse.

A MEDIEVAL PARSON OF MALPAS

Robert Stones

Some time ago a collection of books from a well known Lancashire family was sold by auction. Fortunately some were purchased by a local book dealer and distant member of the family. This article is based on a chance reference which the author discovered in one of these books - "Hale Hall: with notes on the Family of Ireland Blackburne", written in 1881. It concerns a certain Master John Leyot, who was Parson of Malpas at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Before proceeding I must stress that this article is based entirely on secondary sources and no attempt has been made to consult any primary material. The secondary sources consulted are listed at the end of the article article.

A short account of part of John Leyot's life is given in Ormerod's "History of the County Palatine and City of Chester". The anonymous author of "Hale Hall" provides a few facts but concentrates mainly on his life at Hale. In 1386 John Leyot was Rector of Dinforth, then of Coddington, near Farndon, from 1392 to 1394. This living was presented to him by the Abbot of St. Werburgh's Abbey in Chester. From 1395 to his death in 1428 he was Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. John, in Chester. He became Rector (sometimes referred to as Parson) of the Higher Moiety in 1405 and was probably still in this post when he died in 1428. He was buried at St Mary's, Hale, and his tomb was formerly inside the church.



HALE HALL, SOUTH FRONT.

The book on which this article is based concerns a Lancashire family and their family home at Hale near Liverpool. The inclusion of John Leyot in the book centres round a number of documents then in the Ireland family's possession. At this period Hale was largely owned by the Ireland family.

The first reference to John Leyot comes in a document of 1385, when he owned forty hoggs and was accused of not paying rent for them. Another document, of 1386, calls him Rector of "Denforthe" and "Postea Deacon" of Chester and Rector of Malpas. A document of 1395 accuses him of digging a ditch without a licence "to the great prejudice thereof to the lordshipp". He owned an estate of one messuage and had half an oxgang of land, which was worth 40d per year.

It is at this point that the story becomes a little muddled. Four documents (1393, 1415, 1426 and 1428) all mention a Thomas Leyot. The last document includes references to a dispute involving land and property, which were also the subjects of the main complaints against John Leyot. Therefore it is conceivable that a mistake has been made but the name mentioned is unequivocally "Thomas" and not "Johannis". Presuming that most of these documents would have been copied from verbal information it does seem unlikely that these two names could have been muddled up. For the present the mystery must remain unsolved.

A document of 1410 states:

"John Leyot, parson of Malpas, bought one hall of John Blackburne which stood in Holland's Hey, and built the said Hall in Hale...."

This continues by stating that Leyot had also purchased two plots of land at Hale, totalling ten acres altogether.

This document does provide us with another facet of John Leyot's character. He is seen to be the owner of a house and land in a "foreign" parish. We must remember that Hale was over thirty miles from Malpas and that the only form of transport at this period was by horse.

In 1412 Pope John XXIII issued an Indulgence concerning the conservation of a chantry at Hale Church, which had been built at John Leyot's expense. In this document Leyot is referred to as "Dean of Chester" (this does not have the same meaning as "Dean" nowadays), Rector of Bangor, Parson of Malpas and Dinforth. The inscription on his tombstone gives the following:

"Here lies Master John Leyot, Bachelor of Decrees, Dean of Chester, Rector of Malpas and Bangor, who first obtained this free burial place from the Supreme Pontiff Alexander V, at his own cost, at the Court of Rome, A.D. 1400, temp. Richard II. Whoever will say a pater noster and ask for the good of his soul may have 300 days of indulgences. To his soul God be gracious. Amen."

An interesting document of 1420 concerning John Leyot and a disagreement with the local gentry at Hale is as follows:

"John Leyot, Rector of Dinforth, afterwards Dean of Chester, then Rector of Malpas, produced a letter of Attorney of John Duke of Bedford, brother of King Henry V and declared the said Duke to take seizin in all the lands and tenements, which the said Duke had of the gift of William Kendale, chaplain, officiating at Hale, priest of John Leyot which lands and tenements John Leyot had given to Will. Kendale"

These lands and tenements were given to Kendale on condition that he gave

them to the Duke of Bedford, as Leyot's son (Richard) was the Duke's Chancellor. However there seems to have been another less generous reason for this act. The document continues:

".... and for the great affection they had in the said Duke, the said John Leyot appointed to the said Duke, to maintain and support against William Ireland, his lord, to the great prejudice of the said Lord"

We can see from this document that Leyot was still Rector of Malpas in 1420 and that he also held the living at Dinforth at the same time. He certainly seems to have been well connected and determined to upstage the Ireland family whenever possible.

A document of 1422 mentions a hall (previously mentioned in this article) which was "apparently finished on one side". It seems that Leyot had encroached on William Ireland's land.

To those of us in Malpas a document of 1425 adds a fascinating point to our knowledge of the village. Leyot had bought a water mill and had it rebuilt at his own house - presumably the hall which had just been built. Two carpenters were employed to do this - "... Thomas Coley and Matthew Walmesley ... of the Parish of Malpas". Perhaps they were in his employ at Malpas, or perhaps he had an estate and workers at Malpas. If this were not the case then it seems odd to take two carpenters some thirty miles, when Hale had its own indigenous population. On top of this, Speke was next door, with its own fair sized population.

Yet again Leyot seems to have come into conflict with the Irelands. Apparently the rebuilding of the water mill was:

".... to the great prejudice of the lord, retraction of his multures (fees paid to millers for grinding corn) and to the oppression of the lord's millers."

It would seem that Leyot's mill was "poaching" water from another mill, evidently owned by William Ireland.

Another dispute occurred at some date prior to 1425. The book continues:

"There was a certain discord about a fishery between Master John Leyot and John del Crosse John Leyot had three acres of land where he had built a hall and a fishery which John del Crosse occupied unjustly"

This resulted in William Ireland taking the land and acting as arbitrator in the dispute. Eventually Leyot proved his ownership and Ireland returned the property to him.

The author of "Hale Hall" often becomes muddled - the various references to this document are unclear. It seems highly probable that there was more than one document, even though only one date and document is mentioned. Reference is made to an additional dispute but no mention of a different date is made.

The death of John Leyot manages to confuse further the picture we have of him. When he died in 1428 he was described as "the tenant of the lord of Hale". He held "four messuages lands and tenements in the village, and in the fields of Hale". All of these belonged to John Ireland, the "lord of Hale" at the time. This information is in direct contradiction to what was previously stated by this anonymous author. Another document optimistically begins:

".... 1428 - A presentment of all the lands, that belonged to Master John Leyot"

However this then continues with fifteen lines concerning yet another dispute and the erection of John Leyot's tomb. Only the original will tell us if the author has left out parts of the document, or not.

So what have we learnt about this mysterious priest, Master John Leyot? He was Rector of Dinforth in 1386 (but where is Dinforth?) then of Coddington in 1392. After this he became a Dean of St. John's in Chester, in which position he remained until his death in 1428. He was Rector of the Higher Moiety of Malpas from 1405, probably up to his death. At the same time he seems to have held the livings of Dinforth and Bangor. He was also Priest in Charge at Hale from somewhere around 1400. He was well educated and had a son who was Chancellor to the Duke of Bedford. We must consider ourselves fortunate that he did have disagreements with the Ireland family, otherwise we would certainly not have had so much information about Master John Leyot.

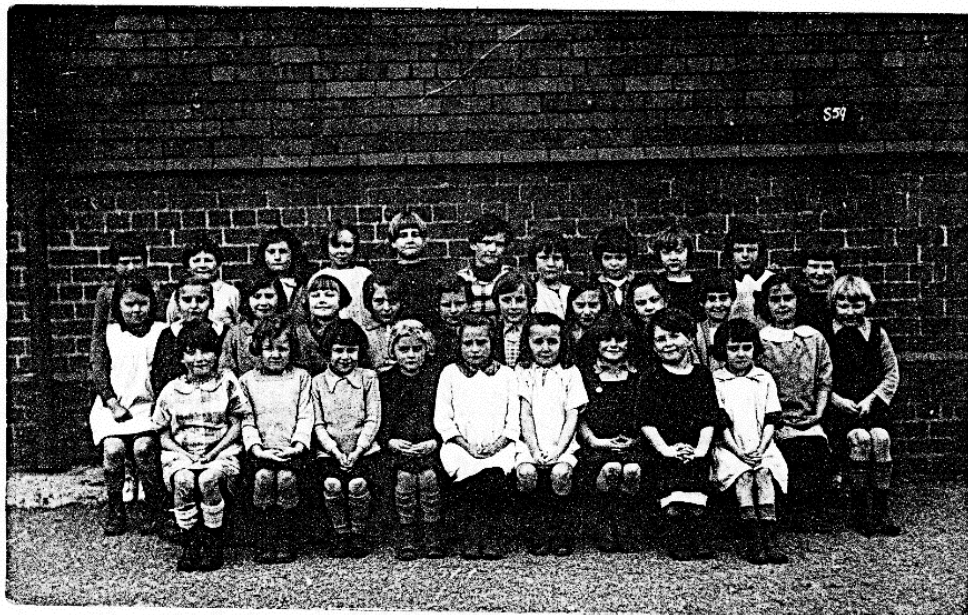
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I should like to thank Mr A. McGowen of Chester for his help with this article.



WERE YOU THERE? Malpas Infants School around 1932.

(Photograph lent by Mr Les Boughey)

HISTORICAL HOOLIGANS or MALPAS MISDEMEANOURS

Shocking Snippets from the Quarter Sessions Files

Margaret Barker

We tend to think of violence as a 20th century problem and look back at the past as a time of peace and tranquillity. After all, the police force as we know it did not come into being until the 19th century. What, then, went on in Malpas and its townships three or four hundred years ago? In the absence of newspapers, television, etc. the information is not so readily available but there are documents, many of them unpublished, which give fascinating insights into what life was like.

One of these sources comprises the Quarter Sessions Files, which are kept at the Cheshire Record Office. From 1571 they give an account of the judicial and administrative work of the Justices of the Peace. They record, amongst other things, cases of public disorder. Four of these are reproduced below, all dating from the early 1600s.

The first document concerns a brawl in Malpas, the J.P. being Sir Richard Egerton. Notice the fact that the "punch up" was contained because of the lack of any street lighting. An aleseller was a person who made or sold ale from his or her own house - it was only later that public houses came into being. Alehouses were often places of concern to the authorities and had to be licensed. The constable here was an un-paid official of the township, one of two petty constables who were responsible to the High Constable of the Hundred of Broxton for maintaining law and order.

The second case is of Elizabeth Bowker of Bickerton, in 1605. At the bottom is a list of her unfortunate neighbours. Maybe today she would have been arrested for "unruly behaviour" or disturbing the peace.

The third case, also dating from 1605, suggests that the wealthy did not always dominate. John Richardson is described as a husbandman, that is a smallholder. He is being harassed for some reason by Thomas Clutton, described as a gentleman, that is someone whose income comes from renting land and very much above the husbandman in the social scale.

The fourth case is of extortion and forgery. The sentence received by Richard Hotchkyn was 10 days in Chester Castle and he had to repay all the monies gained illegally. The forgery of the J.P.'s signature on the warrant which allowed him to extract the money was considered very serious, enough to warrant it going to the High Court of Star Chamber.

Acknowledgements are due to Paul Booth, of the University of Liverpool Institute of Extension Studies, who originally unearthed these documents from the Quarter Sessions Files, for use by his Malpas local history class, and to the Cheshire County Archivist for permission to reproduce the facsimile copy of document No. 2. Transcriptions are by Paul Booth (No. 1), Margaret Barker (Nos. 2 & 3), Eric and Margaret Barker (No. 4).

(transcriptions on pages 26-28)

To the Right worshipfull the Honorable
Justices of peace within this county of Chester
These are to certifye your worshipps that on
Elizabeth Bowker of Bickerton within this county
of Chester as of diverse badde and evil behavours and
most notorious and common scoulds amonge
us call her neighbor a common slanderer and
defamer and most notable and wicked
and pious to the great trouble and disquiett
and annoyant of all neighbors near unto her
may it please your worshipps upon the humble
request of all her neighbors most maner are under
written and signed are continually molested
with her to graunt a warrant against her
to find sureties for her good behavior hereafter
for as we shall be bounden to your worshipps
being a thinge very fitt and necessary to be done
for our common quiet and so we humbly take
our Bickerton the vijth of this instant october
1605

John Biddle
Thomas Buckley
Bickerton

R P
William Buckley
William Bickerton
John Bickerton
James Bickerton
Mary Bickerton
William Bickerton

①

A Brawl in Malpas, 1615

Com' Cestr' The examinacion of Rondle Bickerstaffe Connstable of Malpas taken the xiiijth day of Aprill 1615 before Sir Richard Egerton Knight one of his Majesties Justices of the peace within this Countie of Chester.

The said Connstable affirmeth that on the eleaventh day of this Instant Aprill aboute ix^{en} of the Clocke in the night ther suddaynly arose a greate Tumulte in the dwellinge house of William Yardley Aleseller, whither the said Connstable came to appease the said Tumulte and as far as in him lay to keepe the kings peace, and their he found a great number of people in the said Alehouse and amongst the rest one William Owley verie much disorderinge himselfe, who as the said Connstable was then Informed had begoone (w^{ly}) a Brawle on William Neylor, which occasioned a great uproare in the Towne of Malpas, so that most of the Towne were disquieted and arose forth of their bedds to appease the said Tumulte ; and the said Connstable verily beleeveth that if the night had not beene verie darke, ther would have much harme have ensued, for the people beganne to take parties on both sides, one against an other. And the said Connstable affirmeth that the said Owley is a common frequenter of the Alehouse, and of ill behav.our, and that the said Owley beinge Chardged by the said Connstable in the kings name to obey him and to come with him the next morneinge before Sir Richard Egerton to annswear for the late misdemeanor that he had committed, the said Owley Contemptuously refused to obey the said Connstable and kept himselfe afterwarde in secrett for a longe tyme forth of the Towne.

Ric. Egerton (signed).

(Cheshire Record Office,
Quarter Sessions Files,
QJF 44/3/50).

P.H.W. Booth, 1982

②

Certificate concerning the disorderly behaviour of Elizabeth Bowker of Bickerton, 1605

To the Ryght Worshypfull the Kynges Majesties Justices of peace within this county of chester.

These are to certyfye your worships that on Elizabeth bowker of bykerton within this county of chester is of verye badd and evill behaviour and a most notorious and comon scowld amongste with all her neybons a comon slanderer and defamer and most notable and wicked curser and swerar to the great troble and disquiett and anoyans of all neybons neere unto her. May it please your worshippes upon

the humble request of all her neyborns whose names are under written
and whoe are continually molested with her to grant a warrant against
her to fynd suertyes for her good behavior for which we shall be
bonden to your worshippes beinge a thinge very fitt and necessary
to be done for our comon quiet, and so we humbly take our leave,
bikerton the 12th of this Instant October, 1605.

John (Dodde)
Thomas buckley
Wm. bowker
R P (.....) signe
William bathewe
William Shereton and Elizabeth his wyffe.
John Massy his signe
Raffe Bathewe
Joan bowker
Thomas leghe
Mary Leighe
William Collye

(Cheshire Record Office
QJF 34/3/36)

M. Barker
1985

③ Petition of John Richardson of Hampton for relief from molestation
by Thomas Clutton of Hampton, 1605

In most humble maner Informeth yor worships your Suppliant, John Richardson
of hampton in the Countie of Chester, husbandman, That whereas your sayd
suppliant hathe for the space of many yeares now paste had and enjoyed a
certain cottage in hampton aforesayd; and Certen landes thereunto belonginge
And duringe all the tyme aforesayd hathe payd Rente for the Same unto
Sir John Egerton, Knight; And forasmuche as Thomas Clutton of Hampton
aforesayd, gentleman, hathe made an entrie¹ in and upon the premisses, and
hathe spoyled a greate parte of the Corne latelie growinge upon the samme,
And not so Contented hathe diverse tymes geven threateninge speeches
unto your sayd suppliant, bothe for thindytinge of him and other harms to
be done unto him by the said Thomas Clutton, for tender consideracion
whereof, and forasmuch as the sayd Sir John Egerton, whose right and
tyle in the premisses yt dothe Concerne, is as yet unacquaynted with the
troubles aforesayd, or of any suite concerninge the same, may yt therefore
please your worships that all Indytementes Concerninge the premisses
against your sayd suppliant may be stayed for this tyme - And this for
godes love

(Cheshire Record Office,
QJF 34/2/86)

M. Barker
1985

1 This means "has taken possession of"

④

Order committing Richard Hotchkyn for extortion, 1602

4 May 1602

Uppon informacion given to the quenes majesties justices of peace at this Sessions against one Richard Hotchkyn for divers misdemeanors by him committed, for as much as it is directlie proved by the othes of divers persons examined in open court that the said Hotchkyn hath gone about to abuse Mr Justice Warburton by divers untrue reportes . and Mr Dutton of Hatton and Mr Arthur Starkey esquier, two of the quenes majesties justices of peace of this county, in unlawfully procuring their handes to an estreete of the sheriffes turne of the hundred¹ of Broxon, whereof the said Hochkyn pretendeth himself to bee farmer¹, and against the clerke of the peace, and for his undue exactinge and extortinge of divers somes of money of sundrie the quenes majesties subjectes, inhabitantes of the said hundred, viz of John Bowker the some of 5s. 4d. and of one John Cowley, servant to one John Strange, the some of 3s. 6d., as also in forginge a warrant under the hand and seale of Richard Grosvenour, esquire, high sheriff of this county for the apprehencion of divers persons inhabitinge within the saide hundred of Broxon, it is ordered by the justices that the said Richard Hochkyn, beinge now present in court, be² committed to prison to the Castell of Chester, there to remaine by the space of ten daies without baile or maine prise, and before his enlargement² thence to be Bound with sufficient suertie for his good behavior, and before his enlargement to repaie all the said somes of money by hym extorted and undulie receeved of the foresaide persons, and for as much as the said misdemeanor in forginge Mr Sheriffes warrant is a greate misdemeanor and deserveth to be punished in the highest degree, it is therefore desired that Mr Sheriff shall (if it so please him) take his remeddie against the said Hochkyn in the quenes majesties high Court of Starre chamber, or otherwise, for his said offence and misdemeanors comitted by him in forginge the said warrant; and it is further ordered that a warrant of good behavior be awarded against Roger Hotchkyn of the Malpasse for attemptinge to arrest sundry persons by Collor of the said forged warrant.

Geo Leycester
Thomas Wylbram
Hugh Chaulmley
John Done Rowland Danby
John Massye
Henry Birkhened
R. Brereton
Arthur Starkey

(Cheshire Record Office
QJF 31/1/22)

E & M J Barker
May 1985

Note

1. i.e. he has a lease of the profits and perquisites of the sheriff's turn
2. this phrase means 'before he is set free'.



DETECTIVE WORK REQUIRED!

When was the Great Thunderstorm?

The cutting reproduced here has been lent by Mr Les Boughey. It obviously refers to the thunderstorm which caused the damage shown in the photograph, which comes from Mrs Norah Chesworth's collection. This illustrates the devastation outside Salt's (now Shepherd's) shop.

Unfortunately the cutting has been cut off at the bottom and on the right hand side.

QUESTION: What is the date of the press cutting? We suggest that it is in the 1890s, because of the reference to the Old Waterworks - this was probably after Malpas had been connected to the Lake Vyrnwy-Liverpool aqueduct in the early 1890s.

If we can fix the date we should be able to track down the whole story.

*Thunderstorm was
26 June 1895
Cutting is
Herald's 29 June 1895
p. 8 col. 4*

26 June MALPAS. 1895
THE THUNDERSTORM.

The thunderstorm on Wednesday proved to be of exceptional severity, in living inhabitant remembers anything app it. The thunder and lightning was terrible after flash, and peel after peel, breaking for out intermission. The storm broke right town and was accompanied with hail of extraordinary size and hardness, the force has scattered destruction all around, as twelve window panes being smashed at house. Many houses were completely saturated the upper rooms as well as on the first floor in numerous instances the flood was 18 inches and the inmates were compelled to take the tables, or in other elevated position streets were like raging torrents, the force current carrying everything before it. street, where new footpaths are being received the full force, and the street on was washed up quite three feet deep, and Post Office side as wide as six feet in some Mr Salt's shop front was nearly washed away the flood rushed right through his shop and out through the back door. A quantity of goods placed outside, such as casks, buckets, and crates were found after the storm down Well-street, and some were actually into the pool (the Old Waterworks) a distance nearly a mile, while the whole course was with all manner of debris, including a great of dead blackbirds, sparrows, chickens, and ducks. The storm lasted quite two hours, sides the town, the fruit trees and all garden produce here suffered untold damage.

THE PRESS CUTTING IS FROM THE 'WHITCHURCH HERALD' FOR 29TH JUNE 1895 (EDITOR)
THE DATE OF THE THUNDERSTORM WAS 26TH JUNE 1895

