

VANISHED WINDMILLS IN SOUTH CHESHIRE

As you walk along the Sandstone Trail on Larkton Hill, approaching Maiden Castle from the south-west, your eye may be drawn to a circular group of trees standing on the foothills, just above Richard Siddorn's Broxton Hall Farm.

Known locally as Broxton Clump, the trees mark the site of a former post windmill.

Post mills were the forerunners of the tower mills, such as that beside the A.534 at Burland, now converted into a residence, and that at Threapwood, built in the late 18th century and now derelict.

The Broxton mill is marked on John Ogilby's road map of 1675 and is referred to in the diary of Robert Bulkeley of Bulkeley, covering the period 1714-1729.

At various times Robert wrote of his visits to Broxton windmill to grind his oats and other cereals.

We don't tend to think of our area as 'windmill country', more as an area where water mills flourished on the many watercourses, such as the Rivers Weaver and Gowy.

However, it may be that some of the windmills in our area were constructed as 'auxiliaries' to water mills, so that in times of drought it might still be possible to use wind power to grind the local corn.

At one time there was an obligation for all the residents of a manor to have their corn ground at the Lord of the Manor's mill, and he was able to charge them a fee for the service or to take a share of the grain as his due.

The rental book for Lord Crewe's estate in Peckforton shows that in 1653 he owned both a windmill and a water mill in the township.

They were close to each other and evidence for both of them still survives on the ground.

The rental book includes inventories for '*goods in ye watermill*' and '*goods in ye Wyndmill*'. The latter inventory includes the toll ark, a container for his lordship's share of the grain.

In Malpas the street now called 'High Street' was known as 'Windmill Street' until the 1870s.

One windmill, to the south of Malpas, stood in the large field on the corner of Old Hall Street and Mastiff Lane.

During the 1976 drought Rhys Williams, the County Archaeologist at that time, carried out an extensive aerial survey of the Dee Valley area and photographed a crop mark in that field.

It was in the classic form of a circle containing a cross, evidence for the base of the trestle which had once supported the massive mill post, which would have been the trunk of a felled oak tree.

At the north end of the High Street, on Tilston Road, is the field where part of the housing development known as 'Brockbank' was built in 2011.

In a lease by Lord Cholmondeley to Thomas Brereton of Edge, dated 1659, it is described as '*That part of the Milne field ... where said all milnes were lately erected by him and Lord Cholmondeley and called the wyndy Milne Banke*'.

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