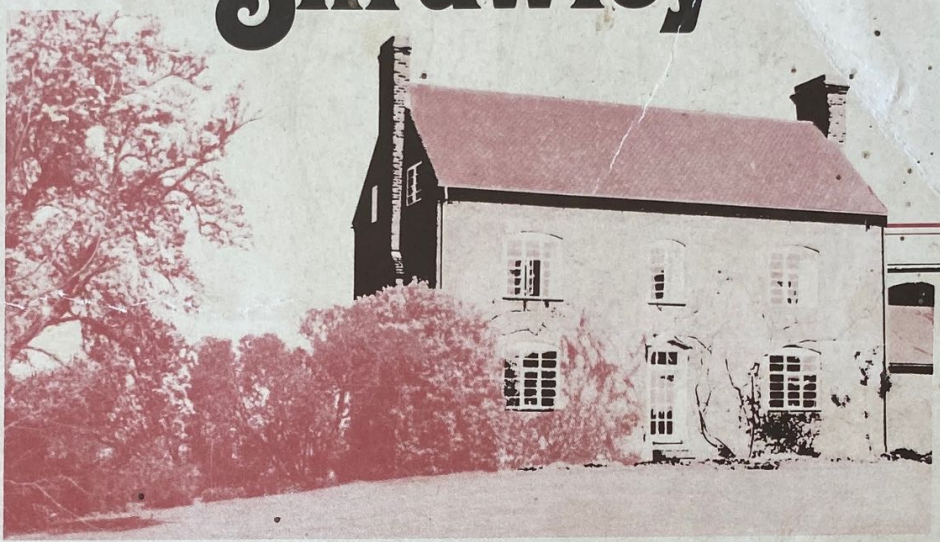
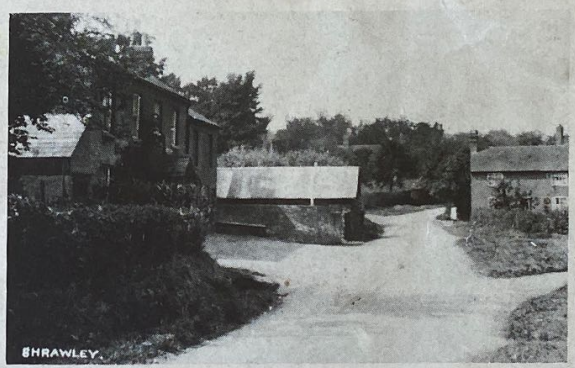
the Parish of Shrawley











the Parish of Shrawley

to celebrate the Ninth
Centenary of St Mary's Church
July 1982

Compiled and edited by
Robert O. Walker C.B.E.
The Knapp, Shrawley, Worcester.



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Preface

This booklet—published to coincide with the celebrations for the ninth centenary of St. Mary's Church—is an attempt to bring together some facts, opinions and even legends which relate to the parish of Shrawley.

It is not a comprehensive or original study in depth but is based upon extensive reading, contributions from recognised experts and conversation with many of the senior parishioners. A bibliography has therefore been included in the hope that some may be stimulated to continue the study of the history which lies— often unrecognised—on our own doorstep.

The section "Within Living Memory" cannot possibly reflect the nostalgia present in the minds of the many individuals who agreed to be interviewed. I shall long remember their kindness and generosity and for this reason hope that none will be offended by any omissions or errors of interpretation for which the editor must be wholly responsible.

I am grateful to the many parishioners who made available original prints from which illustrations have been prepared and to Mrs Fletcher who kindly travelled around to take the several present day pictures which are also included. The excellent wild life pictures were provided by Mr B. H. Smalley.

Many other individuals have provided encouragement and advice and I would only mention Mr. Cyril Powick who in a long association with the parishes of Shrawley and Hanbury has an unrivalled knowledge of both localities, Mr. John Mills whose advice on presentation and printing has been invaluable and Miss Sheila Corbett without whose patience and secretarial help over several months nothing would have been possible.

R. O. Walker

Designed and Printed by:-
SPS Print (Birmingham) Ltd.

The paper for this booklet has been kindly donated by:-
FJ Beswick (Paper) Ltd.

The Parish of Shrawley lies in the County of Hereford and Worcester 8 miles from Worcester, 4 from Stourport and 6 from Bewdley. The area of 1940 acres is bounded on the East by the Severn, on the North by the Dick Brook, on the South by Shrawley Brook and to the West by the Parish of Witley. Some 450 acres is woodland mostly in Shrawley Wood, 40 acres is water and the remainder mixed agricultural land.

The terrain is undulating and the soil a stiff loam on a base of clay or marl with outcrops of red sandstone which run through the parish. Here and there are beds of gravel and bands of clay suitable for brick making.

The bulk of the population of 348 persons (1981 census) is spread out along the 4171 yards of the B.4196 with concentration of population at Noutards Green, Frog Pool and Sankyns Green. It is not surprising therefore that visitors find themselves directed by reference to the three old established Inns, Lenchford to the West, New Inn to the East and Rose & Crown at Frog Pool.

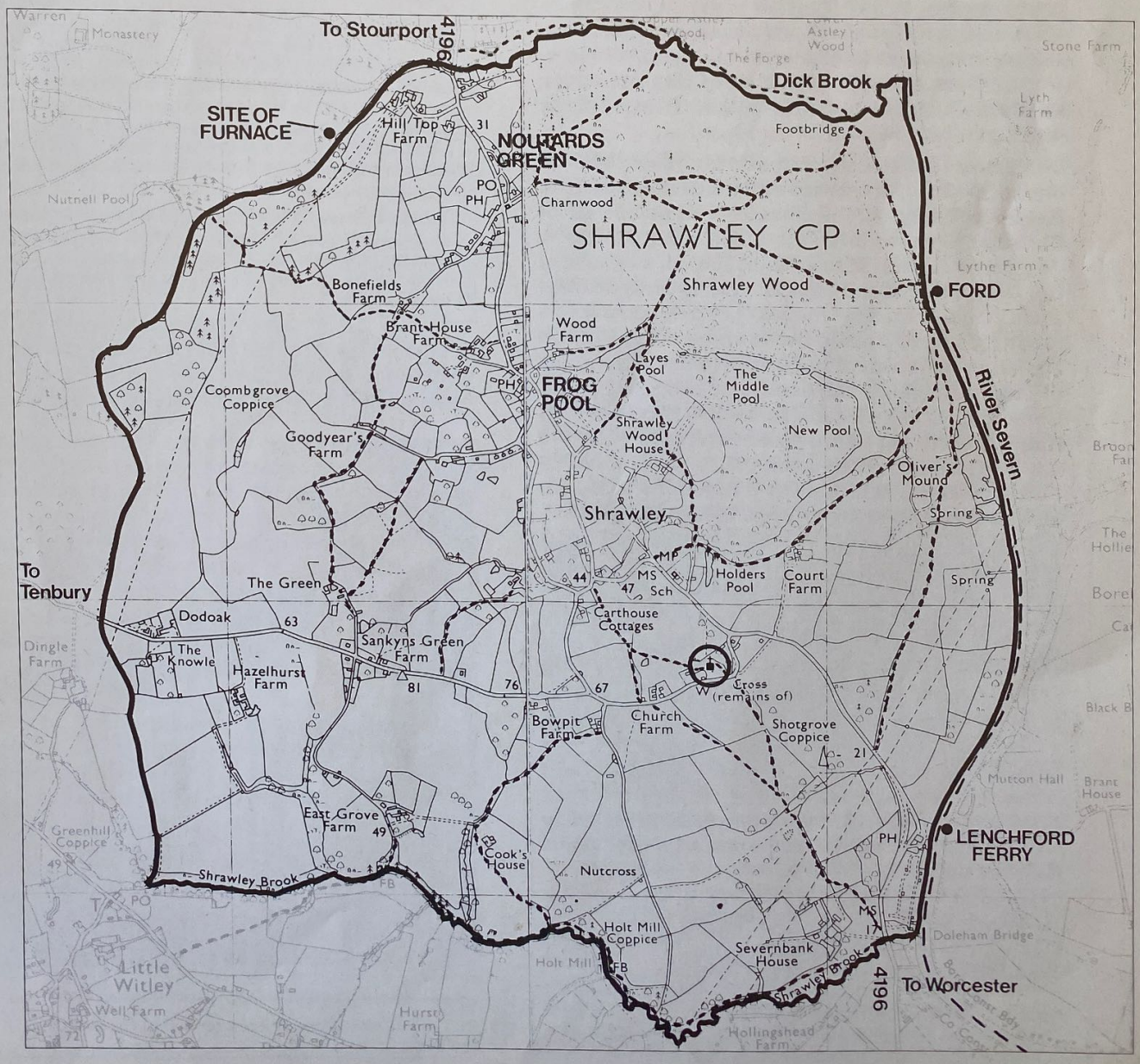
Shrawley Wood has been listed by the Nature Conservancy Council as a site of special scientific interest to Naturalists.

The church is of Norman origin set on a hill overlooking the west end of the Parish and on the road leading to the Hundred House. The incumbent Rector is now responsible also for ministering to the needs of the neighbouring parishes of Astley, Little Witley and Great Witley.

In 1977 the School, founded in 1860, was closed and children of primary school age are now accommodated at Great Witley.

The Post Office and only Village Store is at Noutards Green.

Although like so many other rural communities the village is less self reliant and self contained than it was a few decades ago, there is much to interest visitors and a variety of activities still serve to foster a sense of belonging amongst the local inhabitants which we hope will be reflected in the celebrations of the ninth centenary of the Parish Church of St. Mary.



early history

The early evidence of a settlement in what is now the Parish of Shrawley was centered near a ford across the Severn, between it and the Woods. It remained in constant use until bridges were built at Stourport and Holt and until the use of river vessels of a deeper draft demanded the construction of weirs and locks or the dredging and deepening of the shallows associated with rocky outcrops such as those at Shrawley Weyre. It probably ceased to be useful about the middle of the nineteenth century. Associated with it and on higher ground was a "castle" or fortification obviously designed to protect the ford from marauders whether they were local bandits or invading Britons, Saxons, Danes or Normans. The tracks leading to and from the crossing place, later known as Redstone Ford, are generally regarded as having been important elements in the routes from North Wales, through the Abberley Gap to London via Hartlebury or Droitwich and, in the case of the latter, part of a "Saltway".

The heavily wooded countryside included the Hundred of Doddingtree, which embraced the manors of Abberley, Astley and Glasshampton as well as that of Shrawley. The overlordship of the Hundred of Doddingtree was granted to a Ralph Todeni, a relative of the Duke of Normandy, in the year 1066 by William the Conqueror as a reward for his services as Standard bearer during the Norman Conquest. He and other members of the family owned large areas of land throughout the county as recorded in the Domesday Book. His sister owned the Manor of Elmley Lovett and Hadzor near Droitwich. After the Battle of Hastings, Ralph built the Priory near Astley Church and the well there still functions today. He also built castles at Abberley and Glasshampton.

Towards the end of this 11th century the first stage of the Parish church was built on a commanding site at the west end of the parish and with the appointment of a priest with responsibility for "the care of souls" in the surrounding district began the first real evidence of the Parish of Shrawley. The Lord of the Manor's right of appointment of a clergyman to the parish – a survival of the control exercised by Feudal Lords over churches – meant that the boundaries of manor and parish were commonly and conveniently co-extensive. There is no firm evidence of the site of a Manor House but it would seem likely that its first equivalent was situated on the "Court Hills" by the ford.

The parish of Shrawley is not mentioned in the Domesday Book and the first *official* record of its existence is in the Evesham Chartulary or Register assigned to the latter half of the 12th century.

Through Ralph Todeni the manor of Shrawley fell by marriage to the Beauchamps associated with the manor of Holt and subsequently again by marriage to the Earl of Warwick, the King Maker, who died discredited by the King, and so the Manor of Shrawley passed to the crown. During the reign of Henry VIII some fifty years later the Manor of Shrawley was granted to one Mr. Sheldon of Spetchley.

At the time of the Civil Wars 1642 – 1651 the Manor was divided, William Chylde an ardent Royalist possessing the woods and John Adams the remainder. At this time there may well have been two hamlets, one by the river and one by Frog Pool. Tradition has it that Chylde defended the ford and castle against Cromwell and that Cromwell subsequently occupied the site and doubtless the church, for the billeting of his troops. Around the same time Andrew Yarranton was active with his forge by the Dick Brook, and, being a sympathiser with the Parliamentarians, may well have rendered service to Cromwell with the repair or fabrication of his instruments of war. It would seem that the "Court Hills" which was the site of the fortification by the ford changed its name about now to "Olivers Mound".

During the years 1928-30 excavations on Olivers Mound were undertaken by S. W. Masterman at that time resident at Bartlands.

"A square tower 27 feet each way, an oblong chamber overlooking the river the base of an octagonal tower and some portions of wall were uncovered. Archaeological findings included 14th century green glaze, a handle of a bone implement which may have been used for pin making and a bronze coin also dated 14th century. Part of a sandstone capital ornamented with a pollard pattern similar to that on the font in St. Mary's church dated 13th century was also found.

Against the base of the octagonal tower was found some iron slag indicating iron workings subsequent to its abandonment as a fortified dwelling and tradition has it that the ruins were used to make armaments during the Great Civil War".

The only other armed conflict referred to in the neighbourhood is that of a Battle in 1405 on Woodbury Hill in sight of Shrawley. This involved the last invasion of this country by foreign troops when the



Court Farm, the homestall of the Court.

Welsh Chieftain, Owen Glyndower, supported by Mortimer and Percy, brought in 5000 Frenchmen via Milford Haven on a march on Worcester. His advance was blocked by the forces of Henry IV positioned on the Abberley Hills and after the deaths of some 500 men, the invaders retreated back to Wales.

By the year 1681 the Chylde family had acquired the whole of the Manor and sold it to Alan Cliffe who later in 1700 sold it to Thomas Vernon of Hanbury to begin a long and continuing association of that family with the Parish.

In the year 1701 Glasshampton Manor, one of the stately homes of England, was erected together with landscaped parkland in place of Todeni's castle, but in Victorian times it was burnt to the ground leaving only a walled garden and an impressive range of stables which were converted, starting in 1918, by Father William into the Anglican community of St. Franciscan friars that it is today.

Near to Dick Brook and behind the monastery stands an interesting relic of the times in which Glasshampton Manor was built. It is one of the few remaining ice-houses and consists of a tunnel into the bank leading to a bricked chamber about 20 feet deep. In the days before refrigerators were invented, the owners of stately homes filled these ice-houses with blocks of ice in the winter in order to preserve meat during the heat of summer.

The comparative calm of the Middle Ages was rudely changed in the late eighteenth century by the advent of the Industrial Revolution which was accompanied by a consequential change in farming methods. The small relatively independent peasant farmer was unable to compete with the capital investment required for the enclosures, the more intensive use of machines, fertilisers and the better strains of cereals and grasses and livestock which were being introduced. Many found themselves absorbed into larger estates and made redundant without compensation. Traditional rural crafts such as spinning and weaving, and milling and brewing moved to the towns. Some individuals were attracted to the newly expanding industrial centres and the more independent chose to emigrate to the "new worlds" opening up overseas. The necessary capital came mostly from the newly rich industrialists in the towns and the harmonious, if inefficient, relationships of the old English Society were upset by a division between town and country, with further polarisation of the rich and poor and depression of the villages.

The nineteenth century was one of industrial development, awakening interest in social problems and in the absence of war for the greater part, one of returning stability and prosperity. Many of the changes which occurred are familiar, not peculiar to this parish and need not be repeated here but the recollections and reminiscences of some of the older parishioners, who have spent a life time in the area and which are contained in a later article will shed some light upon the conditions and customs which prevailed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They provide material for an absorbing insight into the way of life at that time.

R.O.W.

The Vernons and Shrawley

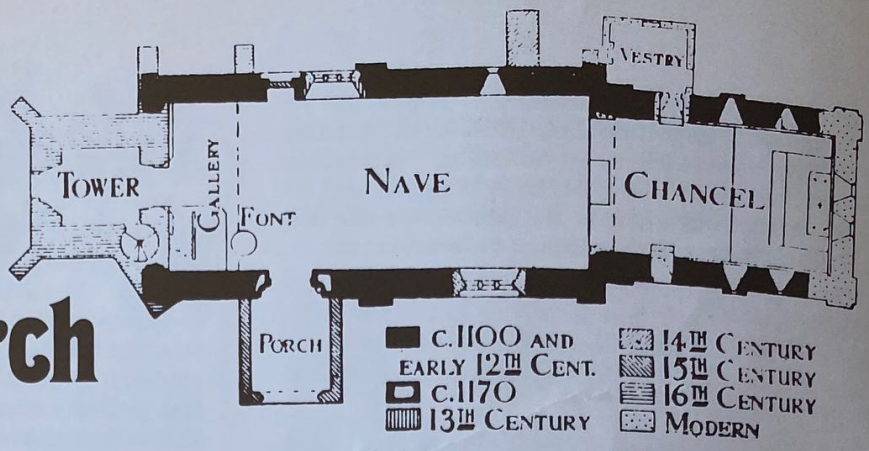
The Vernon family, so long associated with Shrawley, had their origins at Vernon in Normandy where their chateau still exists. After the Conquest they settled in Cheshire and Derbyshire – the romantic story of Dorothy Vernon of Haddon is well known. They were soldiers and statesmen, ecclesiastics and one even was canonised – Saint Adjutor. The Worcestershire Vernons came from Wheatcroft in Cheshire. Hanbury was a "Royal Peculiar" and Queen Elizabeth appointed Richard Vernon as Rector in 1580. He and his wife are pictured in a quaint Jacobean monument in Hanbury Church. They had thirteen children of whom twelve seem to have reached maturity and consequently it is not surprising to find the vicarages and farms in the neighbourhood well provided with Vernons for the next few generations.

The fortunes of the family were really established by Thomas Vernon, the prosperous Chancery lawyer who built Hanbury Hall. Of him a contemporary wrote "His arguments were marvellous and to the point to illustrate and defend the truth. He was charitable to his poor neighbours in distress". He established a Charity to provide funds for the relief of the "poor inhabitants of Shrawley". Thomas's successor, his cousin Bowater, seems to have been more interested in the parish of Hanbury to which he made generous gifts, and it was Bowater's nephew, Thomas, who became Rector of Shrawley in 1751, who began the very close connection with the village that was to endure for many generations. Emma Vernon provoked much scandal in 1789 – and a poem by Tennyson – by leaving her husband Henry Cecil, later Marquess of Exeter, for the humble curate of Hanbury. She atoned in later life and with her third husband greatly enhanced the family's Worcestershire estates, all of which she bequeathed on her death in 1818 to Thomas Shrawley Vernon, the Rector's son, who had married Elizabeth Taylor, daughter of another Hanbury curate. They had eight children most of them buried at Shrawley. Thomas, who was High Sherriff of Worcestershire, was succeeded at Hanbury by his eldest son, Thomas Taylor Vernon. Another son, William, was Rector of Hanbury, and yet another, John, was Rector of Shrawley for thirty-six years, to be succeeded by his nephew, William Foley Vernon, who held the living for no less than forty-seven years! In addition to the four members of the family who served a total of 133 years as rectors, several non-Vernon rectors were married to "Vernon" wives.

The Hanbury line continued through Sir Harry and Lady Georgina Vernon to their eldest son Bowater George who was married at Shrawley in 1905 to Doris, daughter of James Allan of Shrawley Wood House. They had no children and after Sir George's tragic death in 1940, while the Hall itself came to the National Trust, the major part of his estate was inherited by his adopted daughter, Ruth Vernon who came to live at Shrawley Wood House, thus finally cementing the family's attachment to the Parish of Shrawley.

Selby Clewer

'Thys Churche . . . mounted alofte on a hyll, seemeth a lanterne of the shyre.' (Habington)



St. Mary's Church

SHRAWLEY

J. G. Barnish, B.A. Oxon, Rector

The greater portion of this church is of the Norman period but Nash c 1750 saw on the south side of the church yard "an olde decayed chapel" so there may have been an earlier Saxon building of which no trace can now be seen.

The Chancel

The Chancel of the church is good early Norman with its narrow windows high up, narrow door and cable and dog-tooth ornament. The windows piercing the buttresses on north and south are unusual.

The Nave

The Nave is also Norman, but later. The fine arch over the door suggests a date of about 1170 but the rest of the Nave is perhaps 30 or 40 years earlier and only a generation later than the Chancel. The original south-door probably resembled the blocked north door which is well seen from outside. The north-east window in the nave is original and parts of the original decorative string course remain on the inside walls.

During subsequent centuries the windows were enlarged and the walls strengthened. The big south window is fifteenth century, much altered, and the south-west window was enlarged in the eighteenth century to light the gallery. The three-light window in the north wall is Victorian, and replaced, as more 'correct', an eighteenth century ogee window which offended the taste of the rambler, Noake (1848). The flat buttresses are original; the protruding ones were added in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The church was re-roofed and embattled parapets added during the fifteenth century. The north parapet has had to be replaced in simpler form and the south one still more so. The porch was also added in the fifteenth century but the brickwork is 200 years later, probably replacing half timbering.

The Tower

The Tower too, was built in the fifteenth century but collapsed and was rebuilt 200 years later. Its west door is c. 1845.

The Vestry

The little brick vestry, with its ogee window, was added in the eighteenth century.

The church suffered comparatively little "restoration" in the nineteenth century and the "improvements" were confined to the chancel where the blocked north and south windows were re-opened and the great pulpit removed. The chief alteration was the large round-headed Norman arch (which might have been re-erected to make the enlarged south doorway in the fifteenth century). The walls of the chancel were scraped clear of plaster at the same time and the east wall was rebuilt for the second time, its three narrow windows being replaced by new ones in a Norman style but of modern conception. There is very little evidence for the work having been done under G. E. Street, c. 1870. The new chancel arch was structurally too large and can be seen to have weakened the fabric, necessitating the erection in 1936 of the two large buttresses against the south wall.

There is a scratch dial on the south nave wall. The base of the fourteenth century churchyard cross near the south door is of interest.

Furnishings

The font is probably Norman, a good deal repaired. Its decorative work is strangely irregular. The holy water stoup at the side of the main door was added in the fifteenth century.

In the chancel there is a good fourteenth century aumbry and cupboard, used for locking up the books and plate.

The gallery, font cover and pulpit are seventeenth century—the last named no doubt the top deck of the old "three decker". The box pews are early nineteenth century.

Until some hundred years ago a small band accompanied services from the gallery lit by a dormer window at the north end which was removed in 1921.

Habington and Nash described some mediaeval heraldic glass in the east and north of the chancel. The east window had three lights with a kneeling priest in the centre flanked by heraldic glass. The present east window dates from 1920.

There are monuments to members of the Vernon family, whose main seat was at Hanbury, and to the Severnes, an older family in Shrawley. Noake says that the verses on the memorial to Mary Elizabeth Vernon were by Wordsworth, who was, he believed, a friend of the family. As he wrote when the Lady's brother-in-law was Rector, the attribution may be genuine. The royal arms are to be dated before 1816. The painting behind the altar is by Walter P. Starman, F.R.S.A.

The list of Rectors dates from 1318 and contains 46 names. The registers date from 1537.

Constant repair is necessary to maintain the fabric of this ancient church.

The Bells

There are six bells, re-hung in a new steel frame in 1978. The tenor weighs 12 cwts. The treble, 2nd, 3rd and 4th were cast in 1772 by Thos. Rudhall of Gloucester, the 5th and tenor in 1705 by Abraham Rudhall. The 5th, cracked for a number of years, was re-cast by Taylor's of Loughborough in 1977 (Jubilee year – see inscription).

The bells are inscribed thus:

Treble: Peace and Good neighbourhood 1772 T.R.

2nd: Fear God – Honour the King T.R. 1772

3rd: Prosperity to this Parish T.R. 1772

4th: Thos. Rudhall Gloucester Founder 1772

5th: 'God Save the Queen' 1772
(Originally Peace and Good Neighbourhood A.R. 1705).

Tenor: Tho. Stone, Tho. Martin, Churchwardens 1705. A. Rudhall Bell Founder.

There is evidence that there were five bells in 1740, increased to the present six in 1772.

A small Priest's Bell, said to have been found early last century, is about to be re-hung. Its comparatively high pitched tone (which caused it to be nicknamed "The Ting-Tang") urges late-comers to Church to Hurry Up!

Shrawley Wood

Pamela Gough



Shrawley Wood appears to be an ancient, primary woodland but unfortunately its documented history has proved difficult to trace.

The manor of Shrawley is not mentioned by name in the Domesday Survey and must at that time have formed part of another holding. It is not possible therefore to assign a size to its woodland in 1086. An unidentified Shrawley is mentioned in a Saxon Charter of 804. The suffix – ley – suggests a wooded area and the earliest use of this term in Saxon times was probably for a large wood surrounded by an open cleared area.

The first mention of Shrawley Wood so far found is in 1545 when it passed to William Sheldon and John Draper from the estate of Queen Katherine, during that period when the manor was a possession of the crown. It is mentioned again in 1588, 1658 and 1681.

No details of management have been found until a few accounts from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. For example, in 1760 six hundred and four oak trees 'in or near' Shrawley Wood, which were already marked and numbered, were sold and the purchaser given the right to cut down, grub up, hew and saw, square and cord the timber and cordwood and also entitled to make a saw pit, to take turves, earth and other material necessary for charcoaling.

Late eighteenth and nineteenth century accounts show that the woods were being rotationally coppiced and that the falls or coppices had names such as Ladywell Bind, Hither Thrift and Little Rageponds. It has not been possible to trace the boundaries and locations of the coppices. Species mentioned include oak, ash, chestnut, birch, hazel, willow and hawthorn. By 1839 larch was being bought for planting and spruce is also mentioned. Coppice products included underwood for faggots, hop-poles of ash (5,700 in 1834 and 1836), ladder poles, stakes, thatching spars, pitwood, birch besoms and cratewood.

The wood formerly occupied a larger area than at present. Before 1840 the area north of the fields round Wood Farm was included. The names of the meadows between the River Severn and the wood, "the Ridding Meadow" and "Lower Ridding Meadow", would indicate clearance of woodland there in medieval times. The pools appear to have been created since 1730 and New Pool since 1840. In 1730 the site of New Pool was occupied by the Wood Hopyard.

Shrawley Wood is noted for its small leaved lime trees and Lees, writing in 1867, says that the undergrowth of limes was regularly cut as coppice wood. In 1913 Elwes quotes Sir Henry Vernon as saying that this underwood was previously cut every seventeen years and sent to the Potteries for crate making. By then the demand had ceased. The underwood, being difficult to get rid of, was subsequently allowed to grow into poles which were sold for use in copper smelting in the Black Country at six to seven pounds per acre for timber of twenty to twenty-five years growth. Sir Henry is also quoted as saying that in his opinion it would have been better to grub out the lime and plant larch in its place.

Small-leaved lime (Tilia Cordata) is a tree normally confined to ancient, probably primary woodlands, i.e. woodlands on a site for which there is no evidence of it ever having been cleared and used for other purposes. Such woods, which will of course have been managed and used from early times, are always rich in plant species, particularly in plants which are such poor colonisers that they can only have maintained themselves under continuously wooded conditions. Forty such woodland species identified in Worcestershire seem to be confined to ancient woodland, and most have been recorded in Shrawley Wood. Rarer species associated with ancient woodland include Wild Service Tree, Lily of the Valley and Herb Paris.

It is, therefore, very likely that at least parts of the wood are primary woodland, originally part of the wildwood cover of some seven thousand years ago and never completely cleared since then.

Domestic Architecture

Margaret Oakes

To the first settlers man's primary need for protective shelter was amply served by the abundance of natural building materials. Shrawley Wood yielded an unlimited supply of well seasoned oak. Outcrops of sandstone, sand, clay and gravel were common, whilst willow and rushes bordered the river. Domestic buildings of that date were mostly of timber and so nothing remains of these early settlements save the church and castle ruins.

By the late 16th century however Shrawley was a well organised, industrious village with an established style of building, evidence of which can be seen today.

Situated on undulating rift valleys, builders mastered the art of creating substantial foundations by cutting deep into solid sand-stone, in-filling with brick and squaring-up with massive stone blocks. On steep inclines, where parts of these walls remained exposed, a doorway provided access to the cellars used for storage or livestock. Remains of these are still visible at Yew Tree Cottage, Rock House and Shrawley House.

Stone chimneys were raised, usually at one end but sometimes centrally.

Mature oaks split end to end, shaped and pinned into the foundations provided a base upon which the main framework was elevated. No nails were used, beams being drilled and held by wooden pegs. Smaller timbers formed the framework for doors, windows, floor beams and rafters. Oak planks were used for doors, staircase and floorings whilst rough hewn off-cuts enclosed the stairs and partitioned downstairs into scullery and pantry and upstairs into bedrooms. Woven wattle hurdles between layers of daub filled the spaces between the timber framework and were "rendered" inside and out with plaster. Although these were later replaced by brick, samples of wattle and daub still exist, as do thatching boards hidden under clay tiles or slates which replaced the original thatch.

Windows were leaded, small and few (24 x 17). Water was drawn from the central well, pump or spring around which the community grew. Each cottage had a small orchard, essential for fresh food with boundaries defined by stonewalling surmounted by a hedge.

Life was lived on a more compact, intimate scale with great economy of space, large families sharing three or four rooms 10ft x 12ft, with 6ft 6ins headroom, in an architecture whose shape was dictated as much by the natural geography as the shape of materials.

Glasshampton Monastery

Brother Alban

The motorist travelling from Stourport through Astley towards Worcester, will perhaps notice a long low building with towers, on a high point beyond the fields, as he passes beyond Wood Green. A notice at the entrance to a track beyond Dick Brook declares this place to be Glasshampton Monastery.

It was intended for stables to Glasshampton Manor House, long since destroyed by fire. The clock in the central tower is dated 1813 but the rest of the building was not used for monastic purposes until 1919. In that year, William Sirr, a member of an Anglican religious community called the Society of the Divine Compassion, of which he had for a time been Superior, settled in these deserted stables to found a house of prayer. His own community, S.D.C., had been for some years engaged in active work of ministry in the East End of London. Father William wanted to begin a new community devoted to a life of prayer.

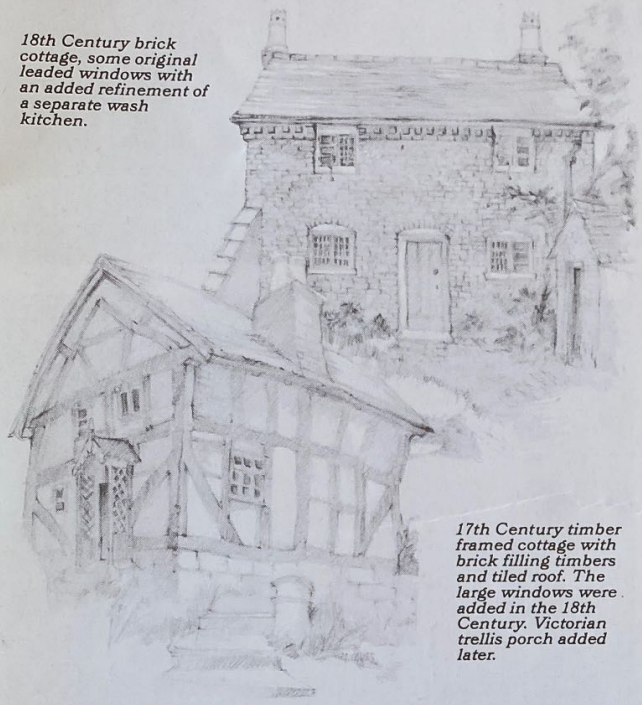
A number of men did come to try the life but none stayed. The stern self-discipline of the ageing monk could be admired but not easily imitated. The diet was said to be atrocious, there was little or no provison for heating and the life proved to be beyond surviving. Father William did in fact minister to a number of people who came to him at various times, latterly priests who had been in trouble. Another visitor was Stanley Baldwin, through whose offices permission was given for Father William to be buried on the premises after his death in 1937.

The monastery was left in the hands of trustees until such time as a community in the Anglican church should wish to use it in the way Father William had intended. It was used for various purposes in the years that followed; early in the second World War,



above: The Chapel
right: Glasshampton Monastery

With the advent of the canal in 1771 Stourport expanded and trade prospered. The road through Shrawley was widened in 1814. The village enjoyed a building boom! New houses were built on old foundations and a different style emerged. Built entirely in brick with a central staircase and chimneys at either end, oak was used only for doors, internal beams, rafters, window frames and the rough planks enclosing the stairs divided both floors into two rooms either side. Flues were now tucked into the corners, and a few feet of space was gained but headroom remained the same except in bedrooms where 6ins was lost because the rake of the roof was flatter. Tiles replaced thatch and though upper windows had doubled in size they were now placed directly under the eaves headed by a deep moulded casement. Arched bricks capped the lower windows and doorway. In larger houses pine was introduced for internal doors, floors and partition panels with refinements such as sash windows, pedimented door frames and porches added, but all followed the same plan, central staircase, rooms either side and chimneys at each end.



18th Century brick cottage, some original leaded windows with an added refinement of a separate wash kitchen.

17th Century timber framed cottage with brick filling timbers and tiled roof. The large windows were added in the 18th Century. Victorian trellis porch added later.

All had the same characteristic pattern on the top with three courses of brick, the centre row all "headers", that is alternate bricks protruding to support the top row of stretchers.

The impact on small communities of such a quantity of new style building must have been enormous. How grateful new generations should be that the marriage proved harmonious, and that so many houses still remain the backbone of today's village.

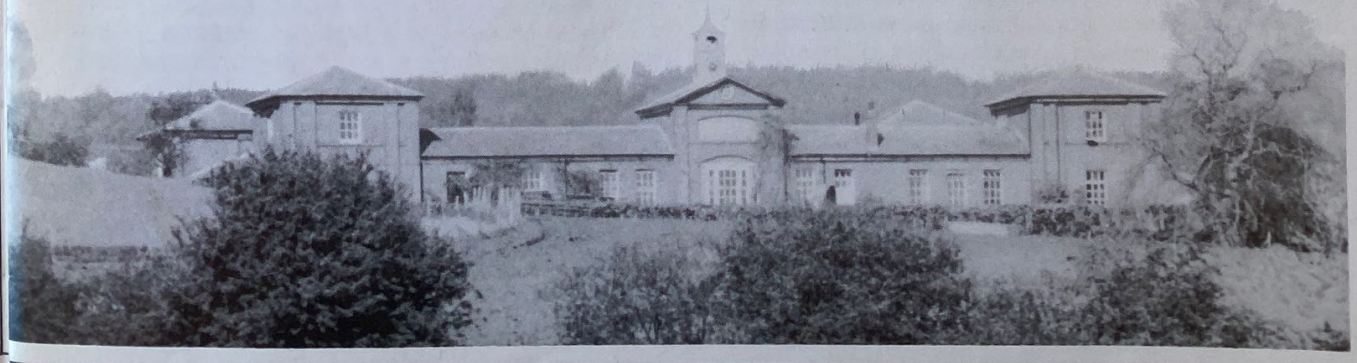
Sisters from a community at Haywards Heath, together with some old ladies they cared for, occupied it for a time. After the war, the Society of Saint Francis was offered the use of it in a caretaker capacity.

The Society, of which the original and largest house is at Hilfield in Dorset, had an interest in the poor and unwanted and in preaching. Its other houses were quite unlike Glasshampton. It was perceived that this house with its tradition of prayer and quiet, might make a distinctive contribution to the life of the Society.

Later, as the original trustees grew older, the premises were handed to the Fidelity Trust, for use of the Society of Saint Francis as a house of prayer. It has been used most particularly for novices in the Society. After their first introduction to community life in a larger Friary, they come to Glasshampton for a time of quiet reflection for some months. This is a chance for the deepening of prayer, for considerable reading, and for the opportunity of self-confrontation. Visitors sometimes imagine that because it is quiet, the brethren are at peace with themselves. Such is not inevitably the case, as when distractions are removed, things thought to have been forgotten rise to the surface and have to be dealt with – a useful but sometimes unsettling experience! Moreover, the course of prayer does not always run smoothly. "Don't you get bored with all that praying and stuff?" a brother was asked by a schoolboy. "Yes", he replied gravely. There is a certain doggedness necessary for the development of prayer, but in the long run it is very worthwhile and rewarding.

Those who live near must be used to the sound of the 1813 clock striking the hours of the day (but not at night). Other bells are rung before our times of worship together in chapel at 7.00 a.m., 12.40 p.m., 6.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. Thus the course of our day is marked. Bells for meals do not sound outside the house!

Guests who come to stay must need quiet and be ready to use it – and be male! Visitors (either sex) come from time to time in groups or singly but the mile of track from the road serves generally to guard our seclusion. We are always ready to receive particular requests for prayer.



THE DICK BROOK and Andrew Yarranton

Spencer Comley

At the point where Dick Brook joins the River Severn are to be found a pair of locks in good condition in which there is deep water for modern boats to tie up today. These stone locks are generally thought to be Roman Locks used when the Romans brought boats of sand up the Brook for the production of glass at spots along the valley called such names as Glazenbridge and Glasshampton. It is, however, more likely that these locks were the first pair in a system constructed at a later date by Andrew Yarranton, a 17th century worthy little known today even in the district in which he lived. He was born at Larford and his family lived at Little Yarran and Glazenbridge. After service as a Captain in Cromwell's army, he used the locks for the transport of iron ore left by the Romans on the site of the present Pitchcroft race course at Worcester, up the Brook to his furnace.

This is believed to be the first canalised Brook to be built in this country and there are several locks on the stretch from the river to the furnace. They are called flash locks made with only one pair of gates through which the square flat bottomed barges passed up on the fast flowing current as the gate was opened. Later James Brindley introduced the double pair of lock gates to Stourport.

The ruins of the furnace were originally discovered in 1924 when torrential rain broke down the dam of Sharpley Pool* revealing them at the bottom of the pool where they had lain undisturbed for 200 years, originally flooded by Capability Brown as part of a landscaping plan for Sir Thomas Winter, the then owner of the Astley estate.

When the dam broke, tons of bricks and soil were deposited on the furnace and it remained so until some years later when volunteers began painstakingly excavating the ruins over a period of 20 years. The excavations, including the site of the water wheel used to produce the necessary blast of air, were listed as a national monument of historic interest after a team of archaeological experts had been here for the Department of the Environment.

But the ruins needed about £10,000 spending on them and 30 years ago the excavations were filled in by the Department of the Environment to protect and preserve them. Perhaps in the future someone will find the money and time to spend on their preservation.



The furnace, when revealed, stood nine feet high, its inner cylindrical wall glazed with the heat of the fire which was brought to a high temperature by two bellows operated by a water wheel. Originally it would have been about fifteen feet high. The iron-ore, charcoal and limestone would have been wheeled across a bridge from an existing stonework abutment, to be fed into the top of the furnace. It was almost certainly the first commercial iron furnace in existence in Britain, proving Andrew Yarranton to have had a brilliant brain but no business-sense, because he never made any money or gained any credit for his ingenuity.



left: The Severn from Lenchford Wharf



Acknowledgement Worcester Evening News

The site of Andrew Yarranton's furnace after excavation

Forge Cottage lower down the valley marks the site of a forge, again using a water wheel for power, where Andrew Yarranton is believed to have made his first tinplate in 1652. Later the old forge was used for other purposes. In her will dated June 19th 1717, Mrs. Mercy Pope, the widow who owned Astley Estate at the time, left £20 per year towards the founding and maintenance of a free school in Astley out of the profits from the forge. This old school is now a storehouse at Pound Farm, Astley, but the legacy is still paid annually.

In 1713-20 the site of the forge became a fulling mill and in 1739 a paper mill. In 1750-60 a flint mill was set up in which materials were ground up in the preparation of china or earthenware, and circular pans and saggers used for this purpose were unearthed by the Worcestershire Archaeological Society in 1929. It is thought that these china-making activities were later transferred to Worcester to form the beginnings of the Worcester Royal Porcelain Company. In 1803 the site reverted to a forge and remains of a blacksmith's hearth can still be seen, but in 1820 it was put to use as a bobbin-mill, presumably in connection with the carpet trade. During the period when the site was in use as a forge, cider was regularly supplied to the men at work there and this was produced at Wood End Farm nearby, in a cave where the chimney still remains.

The most lasting impression of Andrew Yarranton was that his brilliant though unappreciated discoveries were always directed not to personal gain but towards the much needed improvement in the economic conditions of his day. In his book entitled "Account of Andrew Yarranton, the Founder of English Political Economy" published in 1854, P. E. Dove is at pains to emphasise this. He not only describes Yarranton's efforts to produce high grade iron more efficiently and tin-plate for the first time in this country, but enumerates the numerous other innovations that he introduced. These include the construction of new harbours and the first canal; in agriculture the introduction of clover and of flax for making linen in the Kidderminster district; the working out of a banking system using land registers and, as if this was not enough, he first put forward in a leaflet a scheme for fighting fires in English towns.

Thus, it is not surprising that Bishop Watson should exclaim "he ought to have a statue erected to his memory because of his emminent public services". Perhaps this long overdue recognition of Yarranton's undoubted merits is something to which the village of his birth will now give attention.

*Hundreds of fish and eels were stranded on the roads and adjoining meadows and provided several unexpected free meals for the villagers. *Ed.*



WILD LIFE

by **John Day**, *Field Officer, Worcestershire Nature Conservancy Trust.*

The parish of Shrawley is situated on the west bank of the river Severn and in all covers an area of about 1940 acres. The central part lies on an undulating plateau which slopes away into stream and river valleys to the north, south and east. The altitudenal range is approximately 200 feet, from about 60 feet near the river Severn to 259 feet at Sankyn's Green. Apart from Shrawley Wood, most of the sites of wildlife interest are centred around the valleys and their associated slopes.

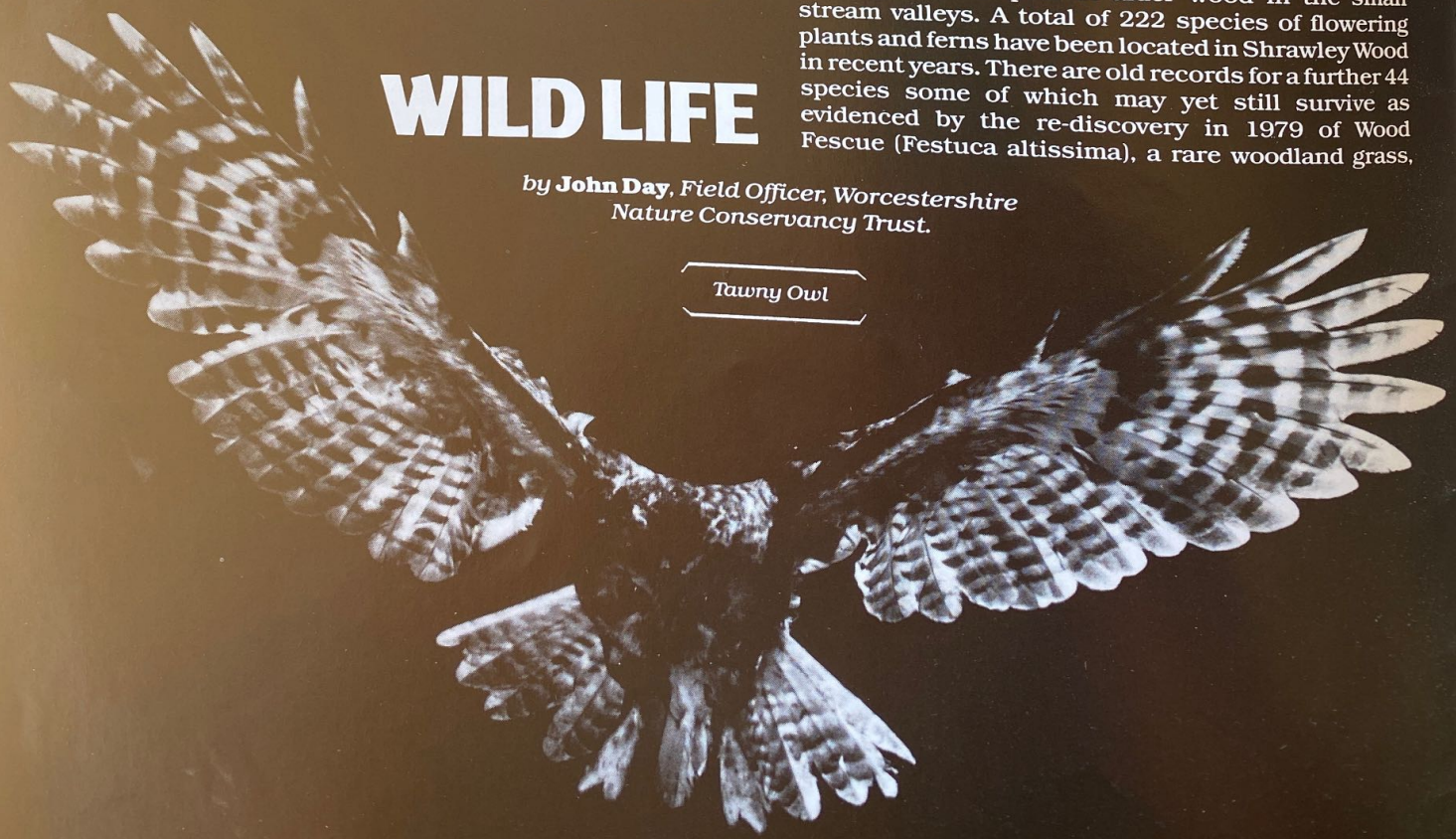
Geologically most of the parish is situated on the Triassic Lower Keuper Sandstones of which there are good exposures in several places; notably along the B.4196 and above the river Severn in Shrawley Wood. These sandstones give rise to a fertile, light, well-drained soil with a neutral to mildly acid reaction. Consequently most of the flora is composed of species typical of slightly acidic or sandy soils. Typical species of open ground situations include the Hare's Foot Clover (Trifolium arvense), Bugloss (Lycopsis arvensis) and Storksbill (Erodium cicutarium).

Species with calcareous (lime-loving) tendencies are rather sparsely distributed, being mainly confined to the more base rich alluvial soils of the valleys and occasionally on the gravelly glacial river terraces.

Shrawley is well endowed with a range of semi-natural habitats. It is one of the most well wooded parishes in Worcestershire with about 450 acres of woodland. This represents nearly 25% of the surface area compared with a county average of around 7%. Wetland habitats are well represented by the river and streams, several moderately sized pools, some marshes/wet meadows in the valleys and two disused brick-pit sites. Besides a number of minor habitats such as field ponds and hedgerows there are several agriculturally unimproved grassland sites. Taken together these form a complex with a high degree of diversity and consequently the parish has considerable wildlife interest.

Woodlands dominate the natural history interest of the parish. Although Shrawley Wood, one of the county's top wildlife sites, makes up most of the woodland area, there are a number of other small woods, which are mostly of quite a different woodland type. These add diversity to the woodland cover of the parish. Approximately one quarter of the woodland is recent plantation. A variety of trees have been planted ranging from poplars in the damper valleys to mixed conifers in parts of Shrawley Wood and around Dodoak Coppice.

Plantations provide valuable wooded cover and may help in the range extension of some species such as goldcrest and coal tit in association with conifers. It is, however, to the native broad-leaved woodlands that the naturalist normally looks. Shrawley is extremely fortunate in this respect in having the whole of Shrawley Wood within its boundaries. The wood is mostly dominated by the native small-leaved lime (tilia cordata) and is one of the best examples of a limewood in Western Britain. Some areas have been replanted with softwoods since 1964, but their extent and distribution tend to add an element of diversity rather than detract from the overall value of the site. The diversity is increased by the presence of small areas of a more mixed woodland type with oak, wych elm and ash notably along the Dick Brook and some good examples of alder wood in the small stream valleys. A total of 222 species of flowering plants and ferns have been located in Shrawley Wood in recent years. There are old records for a further 44 species some of which may yet still survive as evidenced by the re-discovery in 1979 of Wood Fescue (Festuca altissima), a rare woodland grass.



Tawny Owl

after a gap of 114 years. Over 400 species of fungi have also been recorded for the woodland and records for a number of unusual insects would indicate a rich but as yet unstudied invertebrate fauna. The ground flora varies from extremely sparse in parts to rich communities in the alder carr and in the more open areas. Typical components of the flora include wood-sage (Teucrium scorodonia), bracken (Pteridium aquilinum), bramble (Rubus Fructicosus), Wood Forget-me-not (Myosotis sylvatica), Wood-rushes (Luzulaspp), whilst amongst the county's rarities are Lily-of-the-Valley (Convallaria majalis), Wood cudweed (Gnaphalium sylvaticum) and Hard Fern (Blechnum spicant). The bird-life is quite diverse with breeding species including woodcock, tawny owl, steel dove, kingfisher, nightingale and in the recently coppiced areas abundant warblers especially garden warbler, tree pipit and yellowhammer.



Wood Mouse

In addition to Shrawley Wood and the various plantations, there are several other woods of note. These include an ash/alder wood near the Lenchford Hotel, where there is a moderate sized rookery; Shooter's Coppice, a mixed woodland of birch, oak, ash and wych elm and several small woods alongside the Shrawley Brook. These tend to be mixed oak, ash, wych elm woods with a moderately calcareous ground flora amongst which occurs the impressive nettle leaved bellflower (Campanula trachelium). There are two disused brickpit sites alongside the river Severn. These are extremely wet and overgrown with willow/alder swamp. They have exceptionally rich wetland floras with many uncommon species and are some of the best examples of this habitat in the county.

Agricultrally unimproved grasslands are some of the richest habitats in Britain for flowering plants. These traditionally managed hay meadows and permanent pastures have become extremely scarce throughout lowland Britain in the last few decades. Shrawley is therefore fortunate in still retaining several good examples of such sites. Perhaps the most spectacular of these is the field situated behind the New Inn. For a good proportion of the year much of the meadow is apparently dominated by bracken but an April visit will reveal a magnificent display of the wild daffodil (Narcissus pseudo-narcissus) in one of the most outstanding concentrations within Worcestershire.

A walk along the footpath from near the Lenchford Hotel to Holt Mill will reveal a series of small but interesting grasslands. These range in character from wet sites with their rushes (Juncus spp), spotted orchids (Dactylorhiza Fuchsii), ragged robin (Lychnis Flos-cuculi), lady's smock (Cardamine protensis) and a variety of unusual sedge and sedge-like species, to drier meadows with mounds of yellow ant nests (Lasius Flavus) and plants such as lousewort (Pedicularis sylvatica), yellow rattle (Rhinanthus minor), lady's mantle (Alchemilla vestita) betony (Betonica officinalis) and adders tongue fern (Ophioglossum vulgatum).

Walking north from the Lenchford along the footpath to Astley will bring the observer into contact with several other interesting sites. The meadows on the steep bank above the flood plain hold a particularly rich and interesting flora. Although predominately of the neutral dry type with species such as the hawkweed (Hieracium pilosella) and millwort (Polygala vulgaris), a few lime lovers such as wild liquorice (Astragalus glycyphyllos) find a home here. On the flood plain below Shrawley Wood are a couple of marshy areas with rich wetland floras. One site is especially unusual in the dominance of wood club-rush (Scirpus sylvaticus). This is a localised species in the county normally found only in damp woodlands.

The parish has about 7½ miles of waterways. The river Severn, which forms the Eastern boundary of the parish is a large, slow moving, navigable river. Aquatic vegetation is mostly confined to small bankside stands due to the depth of the river and the intense boating in summer. It does, however, have good fish stocks and a moderately rich invertebrate fauna.

Throughout the Shrawley reach the banks are generally well wooded, predominately with alders/willows but including a good range of other trees and shrubs. Amongst these is the native black poplar (Populus nigra). This is one of Britain's rarest native trees and has a localised county distribution. The bankside herbaceous flora is fairly rich mostly with species typical of damp woodland and streamsides. These include the local small teasel (Dipascus pilosus), the rare scarce water figwort (Scrophularia umbrosa) and the two alien balsam species, small balsam (Impatiens parviflora) and himalayan balsam (Impatiens glandulifera). The latter is a large attractive plant with pink flowers but is becoming a major problem on many damp sites because of its tendency to form pure dense stands ousting other more interesting native species.

In contrast to the slow moving river Severn, there are two faster flowing streams; the Shrawley Brook, which forms the southern boundary and the Dick Brook which forms the northern boundary of the parish. These are both trout streams and the latter is one of the counties more interesting fast moving streams. Both retain a good degree of naturalness and have well wooded margins. Their breeding birds include Dipper and Grey Wagtail, species typical of fast upland streams.

Shrawley has few small ponds but does have several larger pools—notably New, Middle and Layes Pools within the confines of Shrawley Wood. Their existance enables birds of still waters such as the Coot, Tufted Duck and Dabchick to maintain a breeding foothold in the parish. Pools on the Lower Keuper Sandstone do not usually have rich aquatic floras

due to the low nutrient levels in the water. The Shrawley pools are no exception to this rule but they are, however, fairly representative examples of their type and hold such species as the white (Nymphaea alba) and yellow (Nuphar lutea) water-lilies which might not otherwise find a home in the village.

Besides these primary habitats there is also a number of other features of wildlife interest. Perhaps the best is the parkland around Shrawley Wood House with its fine specimen trees, with their attendant woodland breeding birds. Hedgerows, field ponds, rock outcrops and the churchyard all contribute to the overall diversity of the parish's wildlife habitats. Of the minor habitats the road verges are the most interesting with several unusual species occurring including pyrannean cranesbill (Geranium pyrenaicum), upright cinquefoil (potentilla recta) and leopard's bane (Doronicum pardalianches).

Taken as a whole good wildlife habitats occupy about one third of the total area of the parish. This is a remarkably high total within Worcestershire. The extent and degree of diversity of the semi-natural habitats has produced a very rich flora. No systematic survey of the parish has been undertaken but over the past six years I have looked in detail at many of the primary sites and have recorded over 500 species of flowering plants and ferns within the confines of the parish. Therefore, even without a complete survey, Shrawley is already known to hold over one half of the total number of species recorded in Worcestershire, a remarkably high total for an area of this size.

Shrawley is undoubtably one of the richest parishes in Worcestershire for wildlife; a situation, which we hope, will continue into the forseeable future.



Heron

A DAY IN THE YEAR OF A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

B. H. Smalley

The day began with the fog obscuring everything beyond twenty-five yards, and although it was no longer snowing, the steady on/off fall over the past two days had left a depth sufficient to cause chaos on the roads and keep all sensible people firmly entrenched in their homes, apart that is from those whose work necessitated venturing into the cold, damp, snow-bound gloom.

However, weather conditions such as these, present the wildlife photographer with opportunities that would rarely arise in less extremes, for with wildlife, there is no choice but to come out into the open; survival depends upon their ability to find the food that will build up their body fat to keep them warm during periods of rest.



Shrawley Wood

It is a sad fact that when temperatures drop alarmingly and the ground becomes frost or snow-bound, unless the Bluetits, Wrens, Goldcrests and other small birds can replace with food, the tremendous amount of energy they use in very short flights, they will quickly die, and die they do in very large numbers in conditions such as these. Wild creatures, therefore, become bolder and take greater risks, even in the presence of their natural enemies, and on the snow covered ground when they come down to feed, their greatest asset, camouflage, is lost and they are totally vulnerable.

It is at this time, that birds which are usually very shy and secretive, will come into the open for food put out for them. Goldcrest, Lesser Spotted and Green Woodpecker, and the less shy Great Spotted Woodpecker, Fieldfare and Redwing, all can be enticed to feeding stations that would not normally be accepted. On different occasions, rabbits, weasels, stoats and even a badger in mid-morning, have passed within feet of my position. Furthermore I make a point of checking on the movements of birds which frequent certain areas, such as the Kingfisher, for these beautiful birds too are severely affected in extreme cold conditions and their chances of survival fall dramatically in an extended spell of very cold weather.

So, ignoring the fog, the snow and the appeals on radio to stay put, I set off to drive the twenty-five miles to Shrawley.

The journey was uneventful, a little slide here and there. But the fog became progressively more dense as I neared Stourport and I was feeling rather despondent, but as I drove through Areley Kings, I was delighted to see the sun filtering through the lifting fog. As I came to the top of Bull Hill, the countryside was suddenly transformed into a white and silver fairyland of indescribable beauty. Speaking therefore from a photographic viewpoint, Saturday, December 12th 1981, was entered in my notebook as a day, previously unmatched for sheer splendour. Parking the car just around the bend from "White Cottage", atop the hill, I stood, camera equipment ready, not really knowing what to photograph first, When even a subject as mundane as barbed wire becomes a dazzling strand of pure white flakes, and clumps of grasses along with small insignificant mounds of earth are transformed into graceful snow covered contours, each reflecting the

blue of a cloudless sky into the shadows. All around, the trees, hedgerows, bracken and tall grasses were heavily laden with fresh crisp snow, its crystals, glistening like millions of tiny diamonds in the brilliant sunshine. I could have pointed the camera anywhere and each picture would have been a "gem".

There was, however, one particular scene that I cannot adequately describe. Looking across the field into the hollow that lies on the opposite side of the road to "White Cottage", a band of mist just a few feet in depth and seemingly suspended above the ground, stretched for a hundred yards or so, screening the cottages from view whilst the tops of the trees stood out clearly above the mist. As the sun was reflected back off the mist into the tree tops it was as though they were floating, whilst the effect created by the strong sunlight filtering through to the snow covered furrows, was almost ethereal. All that was missing was the music of Tchaikovsky. Romanticising?—maybe, but such was the effect on me.

It was approaching eleven o'clock when I drove to my usual spot near the orchard at the rear of "Wood House", and after photographing the magnificient oaks, beeches, chestnuts and scots pine in their winter foliage, I set off, well wrapped against the cold, to spend the next two or three hours, filming the spectacular scenery surrounding the pools in Shrawley Wood, lost in a world of gentle shapes and forms and trying to capture on film all that this wonderland had to offer.



Weasel

Whilst I walked the pool I twice saw the Kingfisher, a flash of turquoise blue as he streaked along the length of the frozen surface no more than two feet above the ice, then back again. So often I've watched that scene but what a joy to see it again.

Along the side of the pool now towards the gate, with the odd grey squirrel scampering treewards and a few Mallard flushing noisily from the edge, a pause as I watch a pair of Snipe feeding in the brook that crosses the meadow below Court Farm, I make a note to visit the area more often to watch these delightful little waders.

Near the river, I spend a few moments watching a Heron moving slowly round in the reed-beds, but ever alert, his sharp eyes caught sight of my outline and he rose and flew away upstream.

The sun was sinking lower now and though covered by a slight haze it was still very bright and the snow had taken on a delicate shade of orange as I reached the river bank. The water was at about normal summer level, and was frozen for up to ten feet or so from bank; as I walked slowly upstream I caught a fleeting glimpse of a dark object, partly obscured by scrub, scurrying across the ice for cover. A Moorhen I thought. Reaching the spot, I squatted and waited in the hope of identifying the creature I had disturbed. After a few minutes, almost directly below me, slowly inching his way onto the ice there appeared a full grown male Mink, almost black and very near eighteen inches in length, his thick furry tail seven or eight inches long. As he moved to my right, I lost sight of him under overhanging shrub and after sitting quite still for a few minutes I started to move my position, but as I did so he 'shot' back across the ice under the cover of the bank.

Fitting the appropriate lens to the camera, I moved further to the right and it was then that I saw the attraction for him. A Barbel, about one and a half pounds in weight was lying on the ice and a small pool of blood had formed around its head, indicating that the Mink had made the kill only a short while ago and had just begun to feed. I positioned myself rather precariously, straddling a convenient tree stump and hoping that it would support me on the dangerously sloping snow covered bank, knowing that if I kept quite still the animal would return to its meal. With the camera raised to my eye to avoid unnecessary movement I waited. Slowly he came into view, stopping to look around, then raising himself on his haunches to test the air for strange scent. Satisfied there was no danger, he moved to the fish and began feeding. Allowing him to feed for a while I then began to take pictures, but after only three frames the noise of the shutter disturbed him. He grabbed the fish and dragged it towards a pile of driftwood but in his eagerness to reach cover, lost hold and the fish slid off the edge of the ice into the water and sank.

The Mink had vanished under the driftwood but a few seconds later was swimming frantically around beneath the ice in search of his catch. I watched for several minutes, eventually losing sight of him and after a further period of waiting decided I wasn't going to see him again and moved on along the river bank.

The sun was now well below the treeline and the light fading rather quickly. I turned and headed back but thoughts of the Mink made me return to the scene again, there was no sign of him but the pool of blood was still on the ice. I was on the point of moving off when a dark shape beneath the ice, near the waters edge attracted my attention, but it was quite still. Finding a tree branch I managed to break the ice around the form, now knowing what it was. The Mink was quite dead, I can only assume that he had drowned after becoming trapped beneath the ice and unable to surface for air.

The Mink is an instinctive killer of many forms of wildlife, and even when he isn't hungry, will kill just for the sake of it. Because of his ability to climb, swim and search underground, few creatures are safe. He is, therefore, an officially declared pest and few tears are shed when he dies, but I would rather such a wonderful day had ended not quite this way.

Within Living Memory

"We walk every day among witnesses of History who probably never talk about it"

In conversation with those who have spent a lifetime in a parish, it is possible to build up a picture of life in Shrawley during the early part of the 20th century.

Two world wars contributed greatly to the changes which occurred but prior to 1940 it would seem that the transition was gradual. After the second world war the speed of change was accelerated as a result of even more rapid advances in applied science and technology, difficult to embrace and profound in its impact upon the fabric of a rural society.

Farming methods changed, domestic service was no longer available or acceptable as an occupation for girls, and improvements in roads, the rapid increase in privately owned cars and public transport opened up new opportunities in the towns for the younger generation. City dwellers who during the war period had regarded the villages as convenient evacuation centres were able to revisit the countryside under different circumstances and some chose to take advantage of the availability of vacant cottages to modernise, restore or in some instances replace them as dwellings suitable for the commuter, displacing families who for centuries perhaps had known no other home.

This is a familiar national pattern, accepted perhaps reluctantly but with good grace by the older generation, who saw an era of self sufficiency in a closely knit community, enjoying a degree of tranquility, replaced by one, perhaps less peaceful, which will require time to consolidate and to acquire a fresh identity.

This narrative therefore – while of necessity referring occasionally to post-war developments – will concentrate rather upon those recollections of the pre-war periods in the hope that it can convey some impression of the quality of life in this rural community which may be in danger of being forgotten in this more affluent age.

Statistics

Any rural community around the turn of the century depended largely upon landowners for their employment, upon farming which required back up services from blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters and coopers, and upon local gentry who while also farming to a greater or lesser extent were pleased and able to employ additional staff to maintain the gardens and to serve in the house.

A further not inconsiderable group was the self-employed shop-keeper and tradesmen who "serviced" the community by providing for most of the everyday requirements.

Littleberry's Directory & Gazetteer of 1879 gives the population of Shrawley in 1871 as 519, with 119 inhabited houses and 134 families or separate occupiers and a Post Office with daily deliveries from Stourport.

There were then 2 blacksmiths, 2 wheelwrights, 2 carpenters, a cooper and haulier, an excavating contractor, a coal merchant and two carriers travelling to Worcester on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Of shops there were 2 butchers, 4 general provision stores, a shoemaker, tailor, draper and a market gardener and to provide for the refreshment of local inhabitants and travellers, three Inns – The New Inn, the Rose & Crown, and one at the Lenchford Wharf known then as the Vernon Arms.

By 1901 the population had fallen to 414, in 1921 to 384 and by 1931 had risen again to 414. The 1981 census identifies 348 persons.

This declining population is readily understood but what is more significant of the social changes taking place is the steady decline in tradesmen and shopkeepers.

*In 1904: one blacksmith, one carpenter and wheelwright, one coal merchant, one grocer and draper, one baker and grocer, one general store and one dressmaker, as well as the Post Office and, mentioned for the first time, a Police Station.

*In 1928: one blacksmith, one carpenter, one wheelwright, a grocer, a newsagent and mail now coming from Worcester

*In 1940: one carpenter, a Post Office and shop, a newsagent, one other general store.

*In 1980: one Post Office and General Store.

During the transition the part played by the travelling tradesman with his horse and van and later motor van, was not insignificant in accelerating the demise of the local shopkeeper and craftsman.

From time to time charitable bequests have been made for the benefit of parishioners in need. As with many such old established charities their usefulness was limited by restrictions placed upon their designated application. In 1977 four such charities, two donated by Thomas Vernon and others by Jane Bourne and Rev. Edward Burlton were consolidated with the consent of the Charity Commissioners into a substantial capital sum and can now be used for purposes more in keeping with present day needs.

*From Kelly's Directories

The Vernon Family

During the past 300 years the destinies of the Parish have been inextricably bound up with the fortunes of the Vernon family, the major landowners but non-resident. Sir Harry and his eldest son, Bowater George, are those who are best remembered today. Both were popular and considerate squires.



Sir George Vernon at a childrens party at Hanbury Hall

Sir Harry and his wife Lady Georgina were especially well loved and had three children, Bowater George, who succeeded as Sir George in 1920, Herbert, a batchelor who died in service in the South African War and Auda Laetitia, who married late in life and died in 1957.

Bowater George married Doris, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Allan – at that time tenants of the Wood House – in 1905 – but their union was childless and ended unhappily in separation. Ruth Powick daughter of Edward Powick the manager of Shrawley estate, who was at that time Sir George's secretary, was adopted by him and in 1938 given the name Vernon by Deed Poll. On his death in 1940 she inherited the major portion of the estate and returned to live at the Wood House until her death in 1980 – Mrs. Allan, now a widow of some 20 years moving to live at Hanbury with Lady Doris.

It is thus Sir George, the last male heir, who is best remembered in the early part of this century. He was recalled from "ranching" in South America in 1902 to assist his father in the management of the Vernon estates and in 1906 was given the Shrawley estate by his father. It is now recognised that he had a special regard and affection for Shrawley and especially its historic woodland and his programme of woodland management earned him a considerable reputation among contemporary experts, although the changes introduced in Shrawley Wood were criticised by some of the local population at the time.

A considerable part of the property was sold in 1919 largely to sitting tenants, but the Wood House, the woods and several farms and cottages were retained. It is of interest to note the prices paid at that time for some of the farm properties. Bonefields: 40 acres: £1450. Caldicotts: 10 acres: £850. Goodyears: 49 acres: £1590. Nicholls: 11 acres: £800. Other small properties also changed hands. Horn Cottage: £290. Wood Cottage (the present Post Office): £230. Harbord Cottage: £260 and Fir Tree Cottage: £175.

Much of Sir George's love for the wood was nurtured when, as a youth, he spent many hours with college friends from Oxford using the Summer House as a base for sporting and other activities, and would account for his frequent visits in later life.

Sir George was active in the Tithe War of the early 1930's and the resultant conflict with the church authorities accounted for his expressed wish to be buried privately, not in consecrated ground but by the Summer Cottage, the scene of many happy memories. The grave was lined with honeysuckle, picked from the wood, a fitting tribute to one who had always enjoyed the unique nature of the surrounding flora and fauna.

Shrawley Wood House

The Wood House, without doubt the most prestigious house in the parish, was built in the early eighteenth century, on the site of a previous house, by the Vernon family for the use by one of its number but was only occupied for a short time. For the most part it has been the home of tenants who have enjoyed the associated parklands and gaming rights in the adjoining woods.



The Wood House

During the present century it was first occupied by Mr. & Mrs. Allan, 1903 - 1940, from the older Victorian school of wealthy tenants. Mr. Allan died in 1919 but Mrs. Allan stayed on and it is she who is best remembered for her patronage. Among the several benefactions attributed to them were the addition of an extension to the school in 1911, the building of the present Parish Room as a Working Men's Club in 1913 and its extension in 1924, the building of the sandstone retaining wall around the church yard and the provision of the first local district nurse. The

woods were opened for two weeks each summer for the collection of "winter fuel" by parishioners but axes, saws and wheelbarrows were barred for obvious reasons! They were generous to the poor sick and their kindess to the children took many forms including parties on special occasions, outings for choirboys who each also received a suitably inscribed book and all young couples on marriage received a gift of £1. All of this, of course, was in addition to the care of the park and woodland and house which provided employment for five servants and four outdoor employees who maintained the garden, grounds, woodland paths and riding tracks, in immaculate order.

An important occasion in the social calendar of the county was the "Blue Bell Party", when many guests were invited to admire the profusion of wild hyacinths in the woods and were subsequently entertained to afternoon tea.

Other "comfortable gentlemen's residences" of that era still exist at Bartlands, Court Farm, Dodoak, East Grove, Hazelhurst, Severn Bank and Wood Farm and doubtless each made their own contribution to the personalities of the parish.

Miss Ruth Vernon returned to Shrawley to live in the Wood House from 1940 till her death in 1980 and she is survived by her husband Mr. Fredrick Horton whom she married in 1946. Many have cause to be grateful to them for the special interest they have taken in the welfare of the parish and its parishioners. The lovely parkland in particular has been the scene of many festive gatherings and the Fete, organized to celebrate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, has now become an important annual event.

We would wish Mr. Horton many more years of health to enjoy the amenities of this splendid house set in such beautiful surroundings.

Witley Court

Witley Court in its heyday provided much opportunity for gainful employment by Shrawley parishioners and many of the paths and tracks still appearing on todays maps bear witness to the routes taken by those of the many employees walking to work.

The Court, greatly enlarged by the Foley family from the original manor and their home for just under 200 years, was purchased in 1838 by the trustees of William 11th Baron Ward later to become Earl of Dudley. In the ensuing years the Court maintained a connection with royalty, was further enlarged and rendered palatial at a cost of £250,000 and became an important centre of social activity, employing something in the order of 200 people in the house and on the estate, which included the farms of East Grove, Hazelhurst and Dod Oak in the Parish of Shrawley. It was sold after the tragic death of Rachel Countess of Dudley in 1920, lost much of its importance and was finally totally destroyed by fire in 1937.



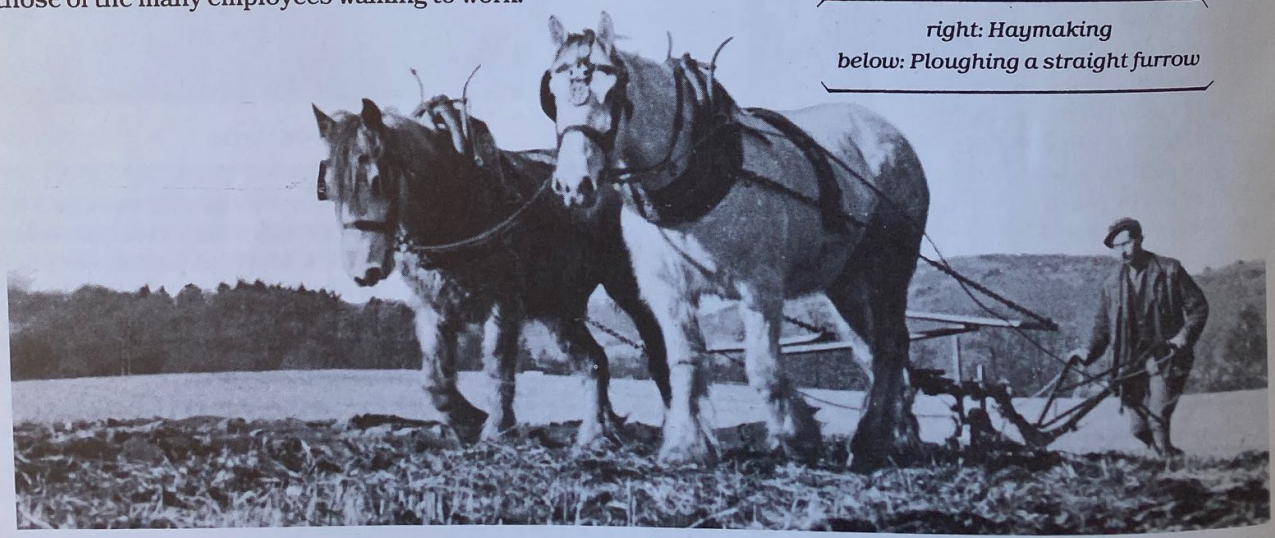
Witley Court

Happily the adjoining church, first consecrated in 1735 and completed in 1756, was saved and remains today as the finest baroque style interior of any church in England. It is now used as the Parish Church of Great Witley and the work of its maintenance and restoration goes on.

Agriculture

Any rural community at any time must be aware of the situation facing agriculture. What is difficult to appreciate today is the magnitude of the change

right: Haymaking
below: Ploughing a straight furrow



which has taken place and the Parish of Shrawley, will, of course, only vary in details from the county or national pattern. It would be difficult also for the author of a short essay such as this to convey anything other than a broad picture of the situation as it appears to have been in the early part of the century and he must leave the reader to superimpose his or her own observations on the situation as of today and to make comparisons. With this in mind let us start with a few statistics.

In 1912 there were 22,000 horses employed in farming in Worcestershire and in 1920 50 full time farm workers living in the parish of Shrawley – plus 10 full time gardeners. The average wage at the time was sixteen shillings with two shillings in extras and estimated alllowances in kind. Farms were comparatively small in acreage – 60 acres probably representing a large holding – many others struggling to make a living from 5 or 10 acres and the occupiers prepared to hire themselves out to neighbours on a permanent or casual basis, relying on the family to keep the homestead going in their absence. Few owned their own land, most being tenants of the Shrawley or Witley Court estates, the principal landowners in the parish. Rents were low but productivity was poor and much of the land infested with weeds and overrun by rabbits. It is difficult to visualise the picture on one farm where one could walk over permanent pasture jumping from one ant mound or tussock to another, where crops within 40-50 yards of woodland were grazed bare by rabbits and where three thousand or more of these pests were trapped in one year. The wiring in of many crops was essential if reasonable yields were to be obtained.



There was little understanding of the need for liming or fertilising other than the compulsory returning of manure and unused hay or straw to the land as humus, rather than see it sold off the farm. Weed control was only possible by hand-hoeing of root crops and the yearly laying down of part of the land to fallow – this land being ploughed *after* June 1st to avoid any late frost which might break up the clods, thus leaving the maximum surface of soil exposed to the elements and birds. Wheat was the usual crop to follow and further rotation of crops was regularly practised.

Hedging and ditching were the tasks for winter with suitable stretches of hedge being "laid" but only after the landlord had been informed and given the opportunity to mark any oak, ash or elm saplings he might wish to retain.

All farms, large and small, carried at least one house cow, a pig and farm yard fowls. Many of the wives would eke out the housekeeping by selling surplus dairy products, eggs or even bacon, locally or in the market at Kidderminster. Although mechanical devices were available for some farming procedures, many tasks could only be carried out using hand implements and the farm worker took considerable pride, not only in his horsemanship, but in his skill with scythe and sickle, hedging hook or draw hoe, sheep shears or sowing fiddle.

The process of harvesting was often long drawn out and very dependent upon the weather for good quality hay or corn. Reapers and binders were available but all fields had to be "opened out" by hand to receive them. "Laid" corn and, in fact, many entire fields were still cut, sheaved and stooked by hand. In such cases a team of men would enter a field and, weather permitting, stay there until the task was complete, sleeping the nights under specially long stooks erected for the purpose. Root crops of mangolds, swedes and potatoes were lifted by hand. It is easy therefore to understand the satisfaction derived from a full stackyard, the pride taken in thatching and the sense of security when root crops were securely 'clamped' and protected from the elements. The arrival of the threshing box from Hammonds of Astley or Colbach of Witley was a day to be remembered when neighbours would join together to help, when the cider would flow more liberally than ever, and comparisons in quality and yields of crops made. Harvest Homes and Festivals were real occasions for thanksgiving.

Progress however was being made. Sugar beet was becoming an established and profitable root crop with the opening of a processing factory at Kidderminster in 1925. In the same year weather forecasts and special programmes for farmers were introduced on the radio. Agricultural research and education in special colleges was now more widely available with the result that improved strains of grasses, cereals and livestock were constantly being introduced. Advice was more readily available on the use of fertilisers. Electricity was reaching the rural areas.

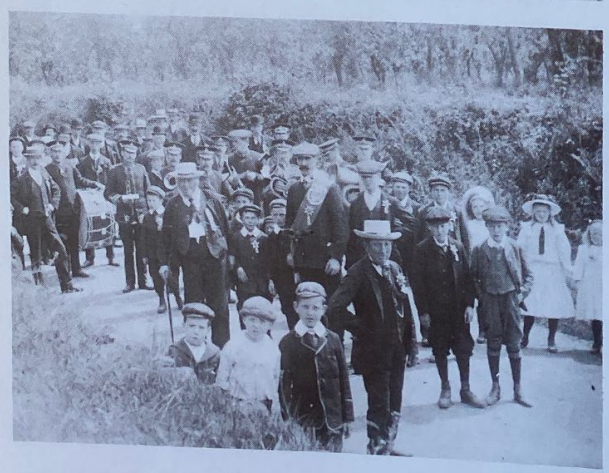
Two world wars accelerated the development and use of power driven implements and permanent pasture was broken up to meet the need for more production of essential foods. At the same time shortages of male labour and increasing mechanisation resulted in a progressive run down of manpower and the replacement of the traditional farm labourer, highly expert in his own skills, with the more scientific and technically trained operator. Farming was becoming increasingly intensive, the few hop yards – one at Hazelhurst – had disappeared and the many orchards with their apples, plums,

damsons and cherries and underlying pasture were ploughed. Low lying land by the river was drained and the associated osier and withy beds turned over to more productive use. The breakup of the Shrawley Estate in 1919 and the Witley Court Estate shortly after enabled many tenants to purchase their own land and others to extend their acreages.

It seems a far cry from those early days to the present situation where nearly 1200 acres of the 1450 acres of land available for farming is worked by six farmers with eight workers and the remainder probably under-used by remaining old established families or newcomers to the parish. Short term leys have largely replaced permanent pasture and yields of all kinds, unheard of even 30 years ago, are now common-place, largely due to improved farm management, the availability of chemicals for weed and disease control and the enormous increase in mechanisation of farming procedures. Even the rabbits have largely disappeared!!

Doubtless the environmentalists and conservationists will deplore some of these changes but most farmers are aware of their responsibilities. Some may even regret the demise of some aspects of a bygone age, one in which there was at least time "to stand and stare".



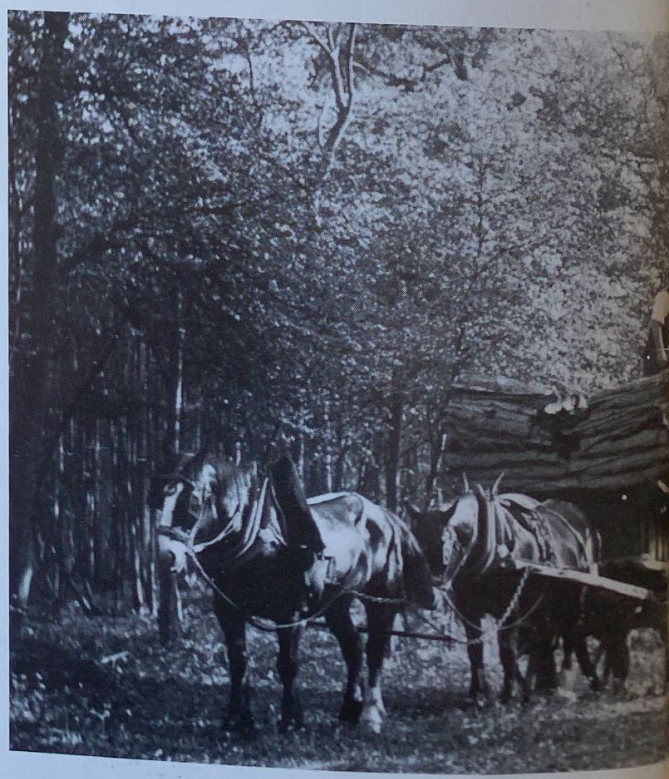


above: Cider making at Wood Farm
below: Club walk

Cider. It was general rule for many years that farm workers carried a small wooden cask – ½ to 1 gallon in capacity – which was filled with cider or less commonly perry, before setting out to work. It is apparent therefore that in the appropriate season cider or perry making was an essential occupation for anyone with a crop of cider apples or suitable pears.

For small quantities home-made hand grinders and presses were sufficient but for larger quantities a mill, preferably power driven, and a large screw press were essential. One such was based at "The Knowle" and this would "travel" if transport could be provided and another static unit remained operational at Crown Cottages until recently for those with smaller requirements.

Fruit was ground in the grinder or mill and collected in a tub from which it was spread on coconut matting suitably folded to prevent spillage. One such unit was referred to as a "Hair" and when ten or twelve of these were placed on top of each other in the press, this constituted a "Cheese" upon which the top platform of the press was placed. As the press was screwed down the liquid extract was collected in a fermenting barrel and allowed to "work", a process usually taking about three weeks. Water was added according to the quantity of the fruit and alcoholic content required. It was usual to wait a further three weeks before sampling the result – if one had the patience – and in a good year sufficient cider or perry would be available with only occasional need to import from other producers in the county or in Herefordshire.



Bark being loaded in Shrawley Wood

Various adjectives were applied to the end products according to taste but the title "prepared by the twelve apostles" was said to be reserved for that, so diluted, that it was alleged to have included only one tub of apple juice to eleven measures of water!! On the other hand if rum or brandy casks were available for storage, especially when straight from the wine cellars, a cider of exceptional quality could result only suitable for consumption at home or with special guests!

An interesting indication of the popularity of cider in the county among farm workers is given by the fact that in 1865, 10,000 gallons and 130 hogsheads were "listed" at two farms in Astley and Shrawley. The daily ration of cider for the agricultural worker gradually died out in the early part of the 20th century but not before there was conflict between farmers and workers over the practice of some employers of making deductions in wages for drink supplied or alternatively of giving men 4 pence and boys 2 pence per day in lieu.

Local Industry and Transport

The advent of the canal to Stourport in 1771 and the Railway in 1862 did much to improve communication between the larger centres of population but many rural industries remained untouched, supplying local needs and using available raw material. Thus in Shrawley blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights and coopers remained while brickmaking, basketry, pottery and candlemaking were still practised. With clay, eminently suitable for making bricks or land drains, readily available in meadows by the Severn, it was inevitable that an industry should develop and the sites of several kilns can be identified on the Tythe Plan and Award Map of 1839. These were still in use in the late 19th century and children, when not at school, were regularly employed to "tread" the clay beds. The end products were a rich rosy red colour and apart from those required for local needs, were transported by trow or barge on the river Severn to developing centres of population such as Worcester and the Black Country. When production ceased, the buildings along with those by the Old Weyre, which had become refuges for poachers and other vagrants, were razed to the ground and evidence of their existence no longer exists.

The woods provided occupation for many foresters. Apart from the usual requirements of the carpenter, some wood catered for special needs. Lime wood was in demand for handles for enamel pans and as witton for chip baskets for the soft fruit producers around Evesham. Withy from the willows was in demand for basketry and oak bark for the tanneries in Worcester. The alder provided soles for clogs and each year clogmakers would camp in the woods and ply their craft "on site", using the waste wood and chippings for their fires. Many acres of timber were thus sold but perhaps the most lasting monument to the woods of Shrawley rests in the benches of the present House of Commons at Westminster, made from some of the magnificient, centuries old oak trees for which they were famous, to replace those lost by fire during World War II.

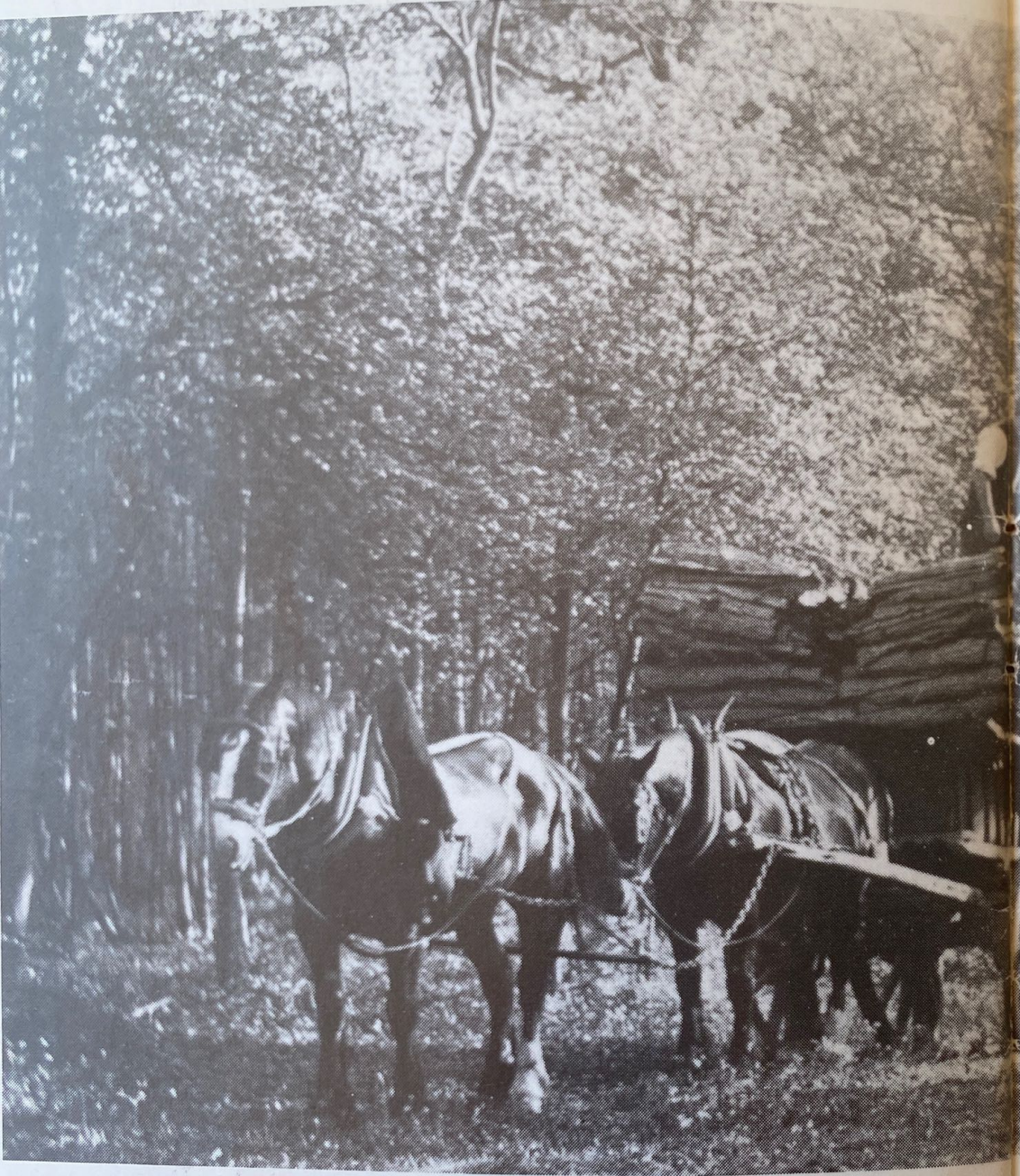


for the Tannery in Worcester.



B4196 before the advent of Tarmacadam showing road metal at Hayes Corner.

The advent of macadamised roads was a gradual process as far as rural communities were concerned. Dirt tracks were first reinforced with "road metal". Suitable stone brought by barge to the Wharf at Lenchford, was deposited at strategic points along the route and then reduced to a suitable size by the roadman with his "knapping" hammer, a specific tonnage being required each day. These chippings, spread and bonded lightly with soil and water, were rolled in with the steam driven road roller. Such surfaces took time to settle and were noisy, so much so, that straw would be used to cover the surface near the houses of the sick or other places where quiet was important.





Horse-drawn buses or carriers with wagonettes capable of carrying merchandise, as well as a few passengers, plied between the main towns using local hostelries as staging posts. By the end of the day the journey could become exciting if the drivers were inclined to over-indulge!



The open topped double decker bus.

Rubber tyres and motor coaches were quickly introduced after World War I and two bus companies competed for custom in this area. "Owens" of Abberley which ran twice weekly from there via Holt to Worcester and "Moores" of Witley, also twice weekly, which called at Sankyns Green and the Rose & Crown before proceeding to Worcester or Kidderminster. The open topped double deckers were popular but even the single decker carried the occasional adventurous passenger on the roof along with the luggage and livestock! Owens eventually took over Moores and both were later absorbed into the Midland Red Bus Company.

Roads and transport improved rapidly between the wars to accommodate the motor propelled vehicles which had replaced horse drawn carts and wagons. The farmer had given up his stylish pony and trap for the speedier motor car. Motor bus services opened up otherwise isolated villages and the rural dweller, especially the younger generation, was able to reach wider opportunities for further education and move if so desired, into neighbouring towns where other trades and professions offered better rewards.

Education

In the early part of this century large families were common and the Church Endowed School built in 1860 and extended in 1894 and 1911, was required to cater for up to 90 children with a headmaster and two other teachers. It catered not only for the education of children but also provided facilities for social functions. The Parish Room, built in 1913 as a Working Men's Club, was not generally available for other functions until considerably later.

Two names of headmasters stand out, Mr. Teasel and Mr. Thomas, both strict disciplinarians but just in their dispensation of punishments for misbehaviour. Between them they served for nearly fifty years. Mr. Teasel played the organ in church and held a Sunday school in the school prior to morning service, after which the children would walk in crocodile formation to church, all but the choir boys being accommodated in the gallery. Later the Sunday school met in the afternoon in the Parish Room. Mr. Thomas, a church warden, was ably supported by his wife, and children normally stayed at school till aged 14. A few scholars left at age 11 if successful in the "Scholarship Exam", and would then qualify for entry to Worcester or Kidderminster Grammar Schools. It should be remembered that education did not become compulsory till the Education Act 1870 after which time education reached the majority of children, although for a time country children were still expected to help in the many and varied seasonal tasks concerned with a farming community.

Before the advent of the Church endowed school in 1860, privately run Dame's Schools provided primary education for those who could afford the small fees involved. One of these was at Church Cottage – pupils going on from there to other fee paying schools probably as boarders.

Both masters played an important roll in the life of the Parish being included, with the occupants of the Wood House and the Rector, as worthy of a curtsy from the girls or a touch of the forelock or cap by the boys, a custom which died out after World War II.

Occasional school holidays were approved to enable children to assist in the fields with the harvesting of peas, hops and potatoes, or for the boys to act as beaters when important game shoots took place. Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day were generally regarded as half-day holidays. With the advent of "wireless" children aged 7 and over were walked on Empire Day to the Wood House to listen to the King's Speech and be regaled with plum cake. Empire Day was also associated with the "oak apple" as was Ash Wednesday with the "ash" and children would take samples of each to school or risk a pinch from their friends if found defaulting!

Before traffic monopolised the roads, playtime could be spent on the road or adjacent green and many a child at the proper season would be able to skip, bowl a hoop or whip a top along the roads to and from school. Popular children's games which seemed to come around the same time each year were marbles, tip cat, tig, leap-frog and conkers with hop scotch and various ring games considered more appropriate but not exclusively for the "young ladies". The area round a fir tree in the meadow adjacent to the school was worn as smooth as concrete by countless feet playing "Bobby Bingo", "Drop Line", "Mary is Weeping", "Jenny Jones", "Nuts in May" and "Roman Soldiers".

Bronze medals suitably inscribed and greatly prized were awarded for "unbroken school attendance" and all choir boys received, each year, a book from Mrs. Allan of Wood House. School concerts and school plays were annual events and for many years a Christmas Party was provided for the children at

the Wood House and later in the Parish Room. The Christmas Tree decorated with lighted candles excited the children but presented a major fire risk which was controlled, if necessary, with wet sponges mounted on bamboo canes. Until 1940 a joint summer party for the children of Shrawley and Hanbury was arranged by the Vernons, the venue alternating between the two parishes, one year being held in Hanbury Hall and the next at Shrawley as a picnic with games in the woods.

The declining birthrate associated with the departure of some of the younger generation after the second World War led to a gradual run-down of the school population from 90 in 1900 to 60 in 1940 and to 32 in 1977, when much against the wishes of the local population and to the detriment of the cultural life of the parish, it was closed. Children are now "bussed" to Witley where their education continues but at a cost, more noticable perhaps to parents and future generations, of that sense of belonging to an important institution in the life of a village. Plans are now well advanced for the conversion of the school buildings into a new Village Hall to replace that which has served the parish well for nearly seventy years.

The Club Walk or Wake

A highlight of the Social Calendar enjoyed by everyone was the "Club Walk" or "Wake" arranged annually by "The Foresters" on the second Tuesday of July. This "Ancient Order of Foresters" – a friendly society with the object of providing sickness and other social benefits – formed a branch in Shrawley in 1880 which still functions today although its medical benefits have been taken over by the National Health Service.

Members of "the Club" dressed in their regalia, assembled at the New Inn for early refreshment to march through the village, which was decorated for the occasion with flowers, headed by a Brass Band either from Stourport or on some occasions by local musicians. The outward journey terminated with a service at the church and refreshment at Church Farm before returning to the New Inn where they would be joined by the entire village population to enjoy the "fun of the fair" on the meadow beyond the New Inn where council houses now stand. Special Club Cakes were baked in Worcester and sold for ½ penny each. Other travelling fairs occasionally visited the village but none could compare with "The Club" although the "greasy pole" mounted annually on the green opposite the Rose & Crown brings back memories for some. Dancing on the green at Hayes Corner to music, provided by the blind musicians, Abel and Bob Spragg, was also popular and doubtless the adjacent Pound with stocks added something to the mood of the revellers.

Tradition has it that in years gone by a Wake was also held at the Weyre Inn by the old ford on the fifth of November when this was an important part of the village.

R.O.W.

In Celebration of the Parish Magazine

Caroline Westwood

The Parish Magazine was first introduced in Shrawley in July 1911. With the exception of a break in the 1950's it has continued to be published monthly until the present day. A fascinating chronicle of village life emerges, which over the seventy years of its publication has reported on the important events of the day, both national and parochial.

The content of the magazine has altered surprisingly little but the format has changed considerably. From 1911 to 1919 the Shrawley news was published in the form of a booklet alongside the news of our neighbour parishes, the Witleys, Astley, Holt, Grimley and the Shelsleys. As today, advertising space was sold to local tradesmen and one could buy a suit at S. Baron in Stourport for 42/-!! 1919 saw a change when Shrawley had its own magazine for the first time. It was in the form of a pre-printed magazine featuring short religous stories, household hints and recipes. Shrawley news was over-printed on the front and back covers. During the Second World War, the magazine dwindled to a single duplicated sheet with only essential items of news. It petered out completely in the 1950's and was revived in 1959. It has developed from then into its present day form.

The pre-1914 editions read uncannily like their modern counterparts and even the names are the same! Rector's notes, parish registers, reports on village events and the inevitable exhortation to tidy the churchyard were there in 1914 as in 1982. Some of the most interesting excerpts are from the earlier magazines, none more so than those which describe the village outings. Our predecessors were very adventurous and undertook trips to far and wide. In September 1912, the Choir embarked upon what seems like an epic trip to Blackpool. Their hectic schedule is described below:

"We met at the School in the early hours of the morning and made our way to Worcester, a party of 43. We found a compartment in the train reserved for us and had hoped to sleep. But alas, the excitement was too great. We found ourselves in Blackpool at 7.30 a.m. feeling rather stiff but there was no lack of amusements – the sea, donkey rides, the Tower, elephants and wax works. In fact, between us, we must have sampled all of Blackpool's wonders. After dinner, most of the Choir spent the afternoon at the Circus and after tea we assembled at the Winter Gardens. Our train left at twenty to twelve, and this time there was no doubt about sleeping. Worcester came as a surprise at 5.0 a.m. and at 6.0 a.m. we were *walking* home".

One of the more notable events in Shrawley was the opening of the Village Hall in 1913. We shall probably be reading in the 1983 magazine of the opening of our other village hall and it is odd to think that seventy years on, some of our older parishioners will have "seen it all before".

"The postponed opening of the Hall took place informally on April 7th at 7.30 p.m. when Mr and Mrs. Allan entertained most of the (male) householders. The company numbered between 80 and 90 and sat down to an excellent meat tea. After the meal, Mr. Allan rose to welcome his guests and then called upon the Rector (Rev. B. Frith) to explain the uses to which it was proposed to put the Room".

During the 1st World War, the magazine continued to be published monthly. In common with every community in the land, hardly a month passed without the mention of a Shrawley man dead or captured. The magazine offers a unique opportunity

to read of the devastating effect the War had upon a small rural community and, in its way, goes far to give the reader the sense of horror which is not always given by more factual accounts. The account of the Armistice is as moving as one could find.

"The news of the Armistice on November 11th reached us at about 11.00 a.m. when the buzzers were heard in the direction of Worcester. As soon as the news was confirmed, flags appeared at the School, Post Office and Church Tower. The joy throughout the village surpasses all powers of description. A band of volunteers rang the Church bells from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. and the sound did one's heart good.

Thank God it is over"

The magazine for October 1939 describes with due solemnity the War news and gives instruction on how the villagers should conduct themselves. Immediately below is the W.I. report which (perhaps unintentionally) illustrates typically British stoicism in the face adversity.

"W.I. News. The August meeting was held at the Wood House and a talk was given on "Life's Little Irritabilities". Owing to the war, the next meeting will be held on the 1st of next month instead of the 3rd".

As befits a Church magazine, Church affairs have always taken up a large proportion of the magazine and reflected the standing of the Church in the community. It was especially true, earlier this century, that the whole of village life centered around the Church, and its associated activities. The magazine reported upon important occasions in our Church, the first Confirmation held there, the consecration of the New Church Yard and the improvements which were carried out in the 1960's. In this, our 9th Centenary year, our Parish magazine will give an account of the most ambitious and important event in the lifetime of most of us for our Village Church.

The seventy years of the magazine's publication have seen enormous changes in our way of life as a nation. Those years have seen two World Wars and their aftermath, severe economic depression but also great strides in technological and scientific fields. Industrial and agricultural practices have been revolutionised and the latter particularly has affected the general style and pattern of rural life. The most striking conclusion, I draw after reading through all these magazines is, that whatever happens on a national and even international scene, village life alters very little. Some of the magazines from ten, twenty and even fifty years ago are almost interchangeable with their 1982 counterparts. We still report on the W.I. – fifty years ago we would have read about the Girls Friendly Society; Church matters are reported upon in much the same way with information on Church affairs, choir practices, bellringing and the like; today we read of our Toddler Group – some years ago similar reports appear but headed Mothers Union. The names featured in the magazines add to this sense of continuity and give the reader the eerie feeling that history really does repeat itself!

It is reassuring to reflect that whatever momentous events may occur, the ordinary everyday rhythm of life goes on. Perhaps that is the reason why we in Shrawley are now celebrating the 9th Centenary of our Parish Church.

Two Interesting Legends

The Spring at Parsons Bath in the Woods flows at a constant pace the year round and its crystal clear water is endowed with specific healing properties for diseases of the eyes.

The Legend of the Severn Family according to Rev. J.H. Molliot of Abberley.

"In the Parish of Shrawley on the banks of the Severn are some curious caverns called the Red Rocks, anciently the abode of hermits and it is reported that they occupied their leisure time in fishing out of the river certain baskets – pitched on the outside – containing children supposed to have been launched on the surfaces of the stream from Bewdley Bridge. These children, in Christian Charity, they baptised and nurtured giving them the name of the river and if they seemed in good condition educated them and settled them for life".

Could this be the origin of the names of the several Severn Families whose names appear in the Shrawley register as well as in other parts of the county since the early 16th century.

These same "Red stone caves" were certainly used by hermits and holymen who sought alms from travellers passing up and down the Severn. Later they were used by smugglers, for the harbouring of various wanderers and for the making and selling of cider.

Maps

Much useful information can be gleaned from a study of old maps and several of these are available for examination in the Worcester County Record Office – notably The Tythe Plan and Award of 1839, the Vernon Estate of 1731, the Court Estate of 1808 and a Road Widening Plan of 1814. All give interesting and revealing details of title, usage and ownership and when compared with the present day, demonstrate clearly the many changes which have taken place in the intervening years. A few examples must suffice.

They confirm the important role of the wharfs by the Lenchford Ferry, which were used to handle coal, timber, road metal, bricks and other heavy merchandise to and from the towns both up and down the river. It is said that great skill was required in matching the flexing of the wooden planks with the movement of the barrows as they were wheeled to load or unload the barges or trows, if one was to avoid ending up in the river! A second wharf for the private use of Witley Court lay just down-stream and was in daily use by farm tenants who were expected to haul coal daily to the Court as part of their rent.

The Court Estate in 1808 occupied some 151 acres of land to the south of the Parish with its main residence The Court near the river and now no longer existing, and its Homestall or Home Farm identified as the present Court Farm, an important link with the past.

Public houses existed at The Knapp in 1839 and the present Crown Cottages in 1814 – then known as "The Olde Crowne" and probably later succeeded by the present Rose & Crown. The present "New Inn Lane" was "Husbandry Road" and "Noutards Green" "Outwards Green" doubtless both with some significance in the title.

Another map recently prepared and hanging in the Parish Church identifies *all* the old field names in the Parish – fascinating because in many instances they reflect their role. Pound Meadow, Rush Meadow, Washing Pool are but three examples. They also help to provide reasons for names applied to popular footpaths – The Stocking, from Nicholls Farm to the School and the Curradine from the church to Lenchford Ferry.

R.O.W.

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Nash T.	*History of Worcestershire Vol.2.*	*1781.*
Noake J.	*Worcestershire Nuggets.*	*Deighton & Co. 1889.*
Victoria County History.	*Histories of the Counties of England, Vol. IV.*	*1971.*
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MAPS *(available in Worcester County Record Office).*

Shrawley – The Vernon Estate.	*1731-32.*
Shrawley Wood.	*1731-32.*
Shrawley – The Court Estate.	*1808.*
Shrawley – Road Widening Plan.	*1814.*
Shrawley – Estates plan.	*1817.*
Shrawley – The Tythe Plan and Award.	*1839.*











SHRAWLEY FRIENDSHIP CLUB.

WEDNESDAY 8th July : Miss Mills.
22nd July : Mrs. Whitmore.
5th Aug. : Mrs. Christie.

SHRAWLEY : FLOWER FESTIVAL.

On 16th July 1992 at 8.00 p.m. there will be a gathering at Church Farm, Shrawley, to "talk over" the recent Flower Festival and present the balance sheets.

Please come along, whether you were involved in the organisation or not, anyone interested would be most welcome. This is an informal meeting so don't bother to ring with your apology if you can't make it, just turn up if you can.

Anne Ballard.

WANTED:

Bed, breakfast and evening meal for Agricultural Student aged 19. From August/September for around 9 months.

If you are able to help, please contact Anne Ballard 0905 620283

1992

SHRAWLEY WOOD.

On Friday 15th June about thirty people met in Shrawley Wood at Noutards Green by invitation, to witness the signing of the Shrawley Wood Management Plan by Dr. Peter Knights, English Nature's Regional Officer for the West Midlands and Mr. Roger Busby, Forest Enterprise's Regional Director.

Visitors were taken on a short conducted walk to view the three types of management area proposed.

New plans by county foresters are set to safeguard the future of Britain's largest limewood. Shrawley Wood is a national treasure. The 103 hectare site of Special Scientific Interest has a history going back to the Middle Ages. Now its future is to be assured by new Forest Enterprise management plans. The scheme will cover the 57 hectares of the limewood which are under the organisation's control. Another 40 hectares of conifer forest will also be included. The wood was last cropped in 1947 when oak was taken to repair the war-damaged Houses of Parliament. Coppicing of the lime trees finished a few years earlier. On 19th June plans drawn up with the approval of English Nature will put Shrawley back to work. As well as keeping the stock of trees healthy, the scheme will draw into the area even more species of plants and animals. Shrawley already has a great diversity of wildlife. Animals living there include rare species of slugs and hoverflies. Several types of rare plants are also to be found. Some areas will be coppiced as they were in medieval times. This practice involves cropping trees to their bases. The slender staves which grow as a result were used for fuel, building material and furniture. Other areas will remain wooded with tall trees. Open glades will also be created. Better recreation facilities will mean even more people can come and enjoy this outstanding site. Dem Powick + 16 others were Still Coppicing until the 1950s