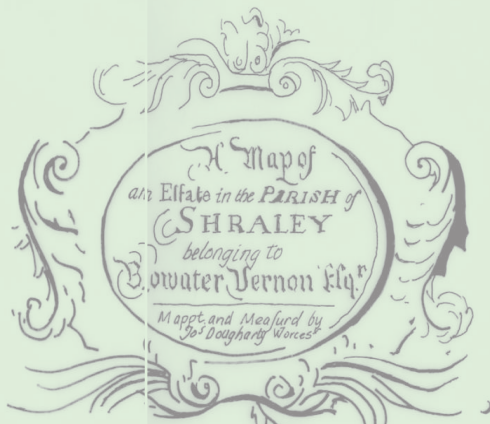


# The Vernons and Shrawley

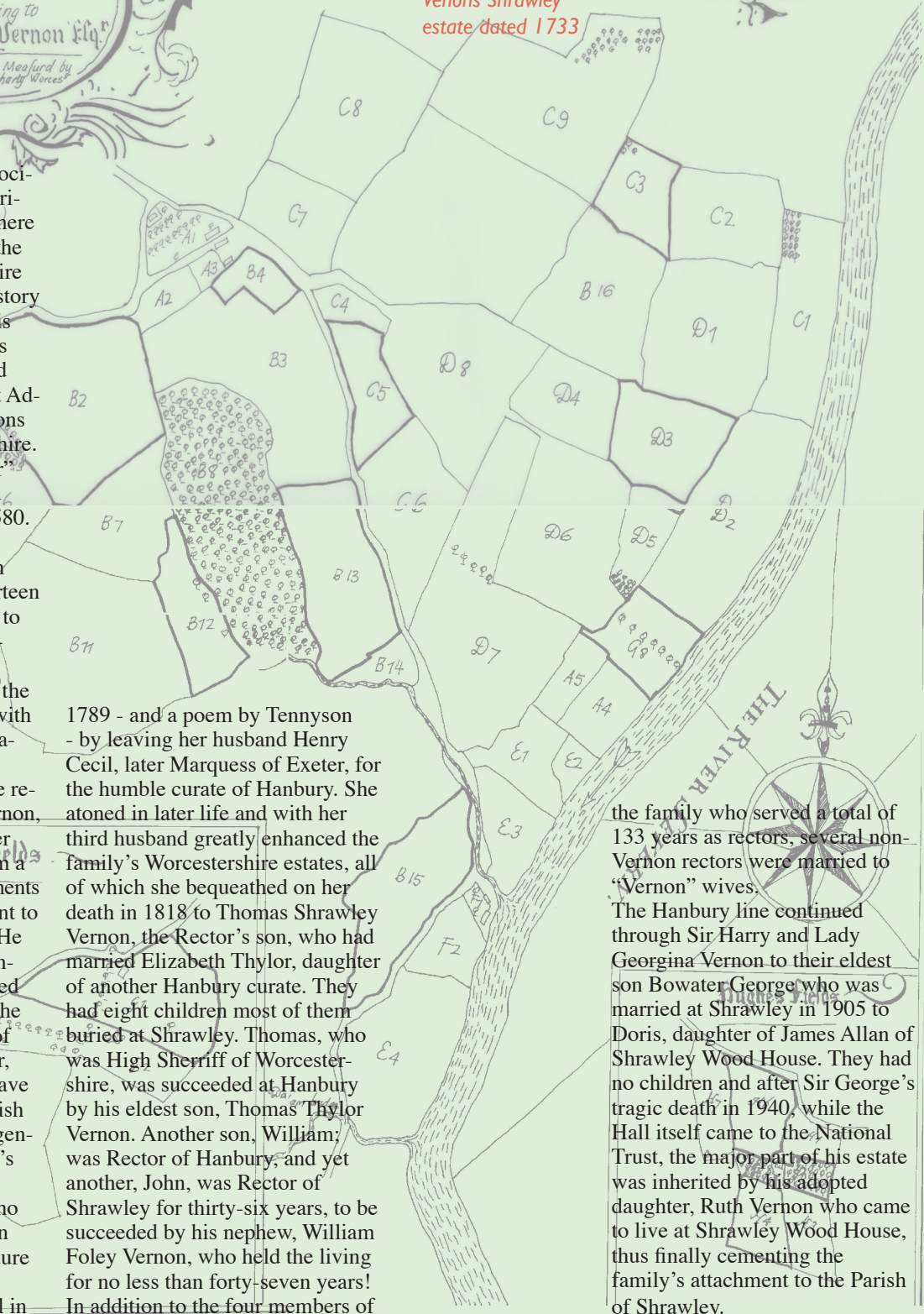
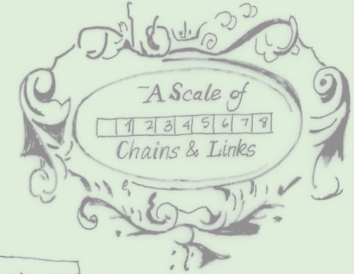
Selby Clewer



Map the First

1733

**Background**  
Map of Bowater  
Venons Shrawley  
estate dated 1733



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 Ad-jutor. 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 Tylor, daughter of another Hanbury curate. They had eight children most of them buried at Shrawley. Thomas, who was High Sheriff of Worcestershire, was succeeded at Hanbury by his eldest son, Thomas Tylor 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.

# ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Original text by J. G. Barnish, BA OxOD, Rector 1967-1985

The greater portion of this church is of the Norman period but Nash c1750 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 Bells

There are six bells, re-hung in a new steel frame in 1978. The tenor weighs 9 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

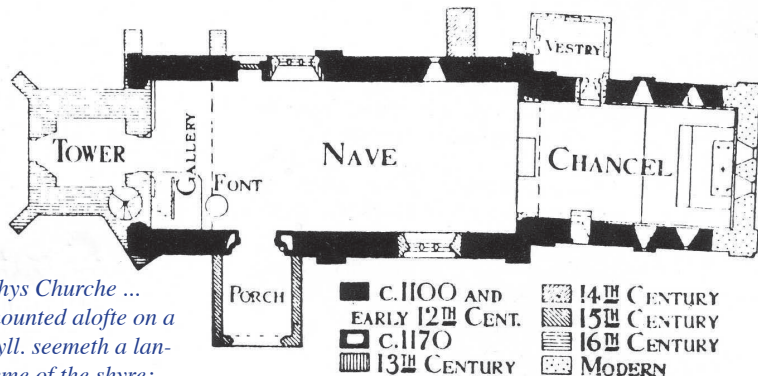
**4th:** Thos. Rudhall Gloucester Founder 1772

**5th:** 'God Save the Queen' 1977 (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 on Oliver Mound, 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!



*Thys Churche ... mounted alofte on a hyll. seemeth a lan-teme of the shyre: (Habington)*

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 brick-work 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 win-





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



The Flower Festival in 1982  
Below - The WI exhibit at the Festival



*Since this article was written in 1976 the church has had major work completed to the south wall of the Chancel and at the present time of 2007 the roof and some timbers are being replaced.*

The list of Rectors dates from 1318 and contains 47 names. The registers date from 1537.

- Richard Sillol 1318*
- Thomas De La Berewe 1323*
- StephanusDe Depham 1337*
- Reginald De Parker 1349*
- John De Spellesbure 1369*
- Robert De Derlanston 1370*
- John De Spellesbure 1372*
- William Gretham 1375*
- John Gardonere 1388*
- Roger Elmeley 1416*
- Roger Dowerberrey -*
- Thomas Je 1420*
- Thomas Eton 1424*
- William Dey 1430*
- Walter Boker 1432*
- David Dewe 1434*
- John Rawlyn 1462*
- Hugo Tayllour 1471*
- Symon Singer 1485*
- William Blackden 1515*
- Richard Tandy 1520*
- John Butler -*
- William Watcroft 1538*
- John Taylor 1556*
- Thomas Wood -*
- Richard Patrick -*
- Robert Luddington 1620*
- John Jourden -*
- Edward Burlton 1664*
- Richard Vernon 1711*
- Thomas Vernon M.A. 1751*
- William Wilkins 1754*
- Daniel Piercy M.A. 1764*
- William Cox 1782*
- Slade Nash M.A. 1809*
- John Foley M.A. -*
- John Vernon M.A. -*
- John Vernon M.A. 1821*
- William Foley Vernon M.A. 1863*
- John Brian Frith M.A. 1911*
- Horace Townsend Boulton M.A. 1919*
- Henry Fraser Crennell M.A. 1928*
- Thomas Cyril Powell Gould M.A. 1947*
- Robert Cecil Armstrong M.A. 1962*
- John Geoffrey Barnish M.A. B.D. 1967*
- Peter Heaps 1993*
- Alan Norkett 2001*



Ringing for the New Millennium  
L to R. T Hinett, C Martin, M Westwood, J Mills, J Westwood (Tower Captain), M Bendall, Rev P Heaps (front).



Back Row L-R F Rowley, E Powick, C Powick, J Oakey, ?????? G Walker, T Jones, W Barker J Westwood, A Watkins, W Rowley. Ladies Row N Anderson, R Powick, ???, M Crane, E Hall, Rev. Boulton, ???, D Weaver, ???, A Rowley, P Jones, Front Row A Hodgkinson, C Hall, R Turford, A Smith, W Hodgkinson.



L-Right - J Hollaway, T Hinett, R Williams, C Shorney, A Williams, P Hinett, V Smith, B Smith, Rev. Thorpe, P Westwood, M Smith and Mrs Shorney



Choir at St Mary's Ninth Centenary Celebrations in 1982  
Back Row L-R - Dr Johnson, ??, ??, L Goodman, V Powick, C Johnson, M Hinett, V Ashley, H Preece, V Barnish, R Colwill, W Dorrell, C Dorrell.  
Front Row L-R - S Padmore, R Johnson, A Millington, P Ashley, R Whitmore, S Preece, J Whiting, J Powick, R Colwill



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



## Dick Brook and Andrew Yarranton

Spencer Comley

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.

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 saggars used for this purpose were unearthed by the Worcestershire Archaeological Society in 1929. It is thought that these chinamaking 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 enumer-



ates 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 eminent 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.*



**Further facts and information about Andrew Yarranton's life.**

Andrew Yarranton (1616-1684) was born at Astley, Worcestershire and apprenticed to a linen-draper in Worcester, but broke his apprenticeship and ran away. In the Civil War he rose to the rank of Captain in the Parliamentary army.

After the War, in 1652, iron making became his prime interest. At Astley, on Dick Brook, he built a blast furnace and forge, using cinders (Roman bloomery slag) found in great quantity outside the city walls at Worcester. He was an advocate of inland waterways, and on Dick Brook, he made a long artificial cut, with a towing path, a wharfing basin, and substantial locks. The enterprise flourished for only a few years and was abandoned. At the Restoration, being a well-known parliament man would not have helped. He was imprisoned at Worcester on a trumped-up charge, but in 1662, he escaped.

There followed travels in the Low Countries, where Yarranton was inspired to take up as a consulting engineer. He improved the Avon at Salisbury, the Harbour at Christchurch, before returning to Worcestershire and embarking on his biggest projects: the navigation of the rivers

Stour, Salwarpe and the Avon; the introduction of the tin-plate industry, and of clover and flax-growing; of seed-drilling, thus eradicating the need for extensive fallows lying idle. He wrote several books on improving agriculture, and on economy, laying the foundations for banking long before the Bank of England was formed. Yarranton preceded the acknowledged pioneers by half-a-century. He died in 1684 at the age of 68. A questionable record states: 'he was beaten and thrown into a tub of water.'

On Dick Brook, L.T.C. Rolt wrote: 'Here a long artificial cut with towing path 18ft above the level of the brook ... show that at this early date Yarranton had virtually perfected the art of canal construction ... Had the times been more propitious, Yarranton and not Brindley might be remembered as the progenitor of the English canal system'.

To make the Stour navigable, Yarranton built between 1665-67, 12 locks and 4 turnpikes (Flashlocks) between Stourbridge and Kidderminster to take 16-ton craft ... there is a much-quoted entry in the Kidderminster Parish Registers that the first ton of coal arrived at Kidderminster down the new navigation on the 6th March, 1665. Yarranton had bolder and far-sighted plans to link the Severn with the

**Left**  
The site of Andrew Yarranton's furnace after excavation.

**Above**  
Plan of the site

**Below**  
Location map of the site

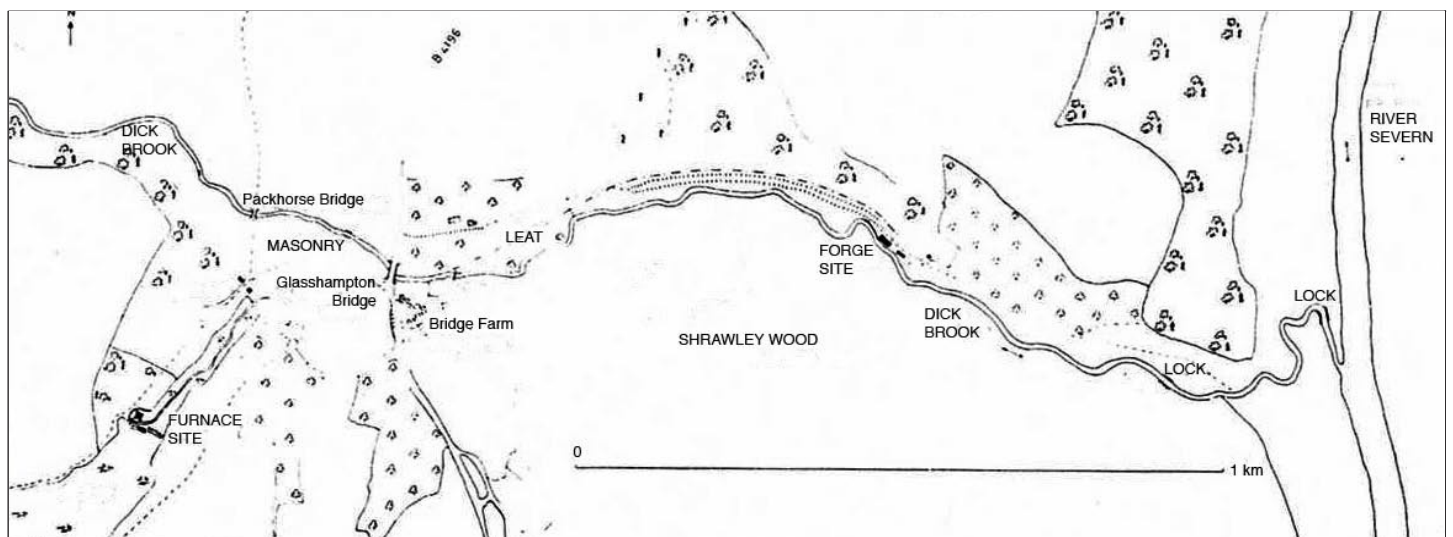
Trent by deepening the adjoining rivers. The project fell through due to financial difficulties. On the Salwarpe the need was to alleviate the high cost of transporting salt by road. For £750, Yarranton, with a Captain Wall, undertook for the burgesses of Worcester, to make the Salwarpe navigable from Droitwich to the Severn. Out of six locks believed necessary, five were completed, but then the scheme fell through for lack of funds in unsettled times.

**Extracts from Calendar of state Papers, (Cotton 1886).**

1662 May 3, Worcester. 'Sheriff of Worcester commanded by Deputy Lieutenant to search for Capt. Yarranton, who has lately escaped from custody.

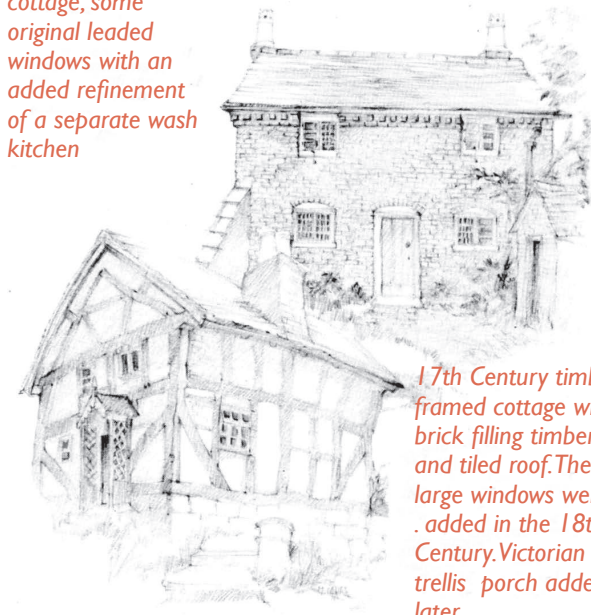
1662 June J. Capt Andrew Yarranton, a seditious person who recently escaped from the Provost Marshall at Worcester.

1666 July 23. Capt. Yarranton of Worcs. as 'violent a villain against the King as any in those parts...'





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.



**Left**  
An example of infill with wattle and daube

**Below**  
Showing construction using split timbers

**Bottom**  
An example of windows set high up along roof line



## 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 sandstone, 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 stone-walling 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. 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 comers, 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.

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.



# 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. Barton 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 religious 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 am, 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 am and at 6.0 am, we were walking home".*

One of the more notable events in Shrawley was the opening of the Vil-

lage 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 7.30p.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.

## Items from the magazines illustrated.

1912. Rector- Rev J.B. Frith; 40 people attended a social evening arranged by Mr Teasel; Hugh Neems left for Australia; Gas put into Gt Witley Chapel.

1938. Nov 12th Mary E. Pugh baptised; WI committee elected members inc Mrs Allen, Miss A Rowley, Mrs Green, Mrs Verity and Mrs Compton. Mrs Weavers won the evenings prize.

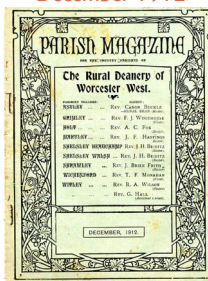
1944. (2 sided piece of paper) Marriages of James E Goodhall and Muriel J Davies, Edward E Davies and Mabel A Powick; Last date for evensong Sept 17th due to blackout restrictions..

1978. (Cover drawn by David Powick) Rector-Rev J.G. Barnish; United Benefice of Shrawley, Witleys and Hillhampton started 1st April; Samuel Ford buried; Friendship Club celebrated its 5th Anniversary.

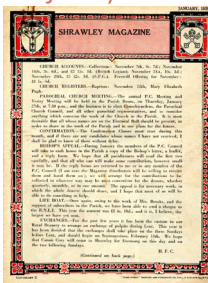
1989. Rector-Rev P. Heaps; Shrawley Fete made £2491 profit; Robin Hood was the Christmas play; Gt Witley won the pumpkin competition.

2007. Rector-Rev A. Norcott; Dedication of the restored WW2 War Roll in November.

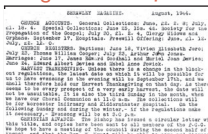
December 1912



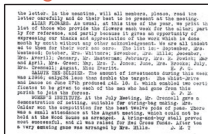
January 1938



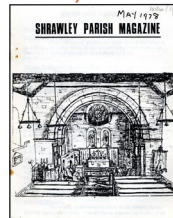
August 1944 - front



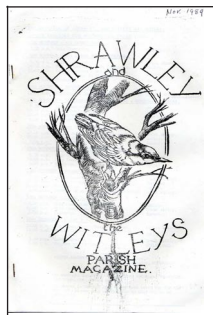
August 1944 - back



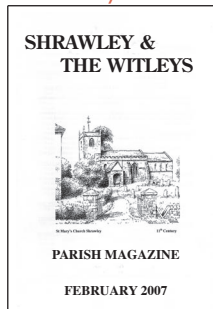
May 1978



November 1989



February 2007







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.

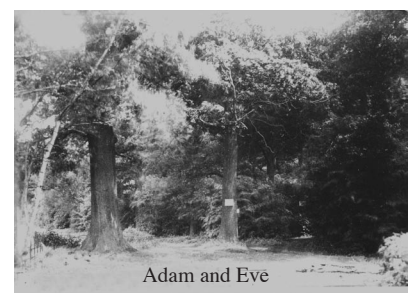
Shrawley Wood is noted for its small leaved lime trees and Lees, writing in 1867, says that the undergrowth

of limes was regularly cut as coppice wood. In 1913 Elwes quotes Sir Henry (Harry) 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 Harry 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.

*At the July 2007 Parish Council meeting it was decided to name the two Oak saplings (below) planted to celebrate the millennium John and Mary. These names appear to be the most popular male and female names of the current electors.*







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 provision 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, 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

## Glasshampton Monastery

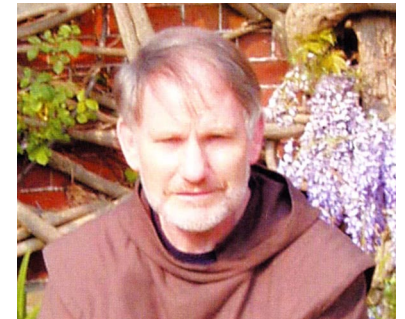
Brother Alban

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 am., 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.

### Below

*Brother Benedict who is leaving Glasshampton this year (2007) after 9 years as the Guardian of the Monastery to become Guardian of the Priory at Hillfield.*

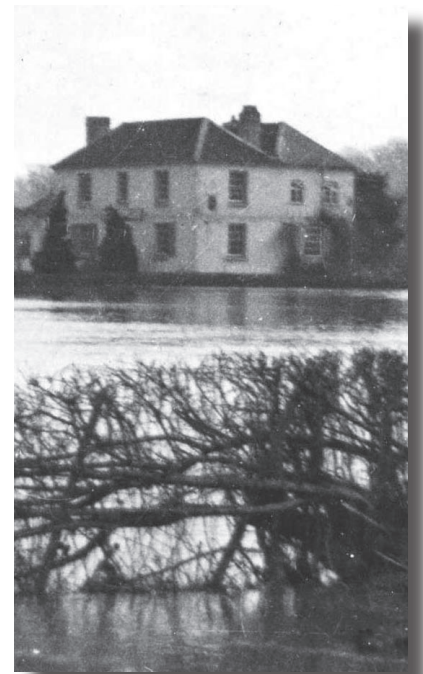


The Chapel





# Picture Gallery



**Clockwise from Top left.** Aerial view of centre of village, Lenchford Inn, Nicholls Farm, Rose and Crown, No 3 Old Crown cottages, Rock House.







**Clockwise from Top Left**

*Severn Bank House*

*The old Rectory*

*Middle cottage*

*Frog Pool Cottage*

*The Woodhouse*

*Hayes Farm*

*Bartlands*

*The Lenchford*







**Clockwise from top left**

*Shrawley, Baxters Green?.*

*Old Crown cottages.*

*Kings Hill.*

*Timber clearing, Shrawley Wood.*

*B4196 by Rose & Crown.*

*B4196 just before turn to Rectory Lane.*

*Shrawley, location unknown.*