

# Victoria County History Shropshire

Volume VI, part II

*Shrewsbury: Institutions, buildings and culture*

Section 3.3, 'The Liberties and Muncipal Boundaries'

The following text is an unrevised draft prepared by the late W. A. Champion. It is made available here through the kindness of his executors.

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## 2.1 The Liberties and Municipal Boundaries. [W.A. Champion – Final draft, Jan. 2012]

The Domesday ‘city’ (*civitas*) of Shrewsbury included nine hides identifiable as townships of its original liberty. To the south of the Severn they included Sutton, Meole Brace, Shelton, and Monkmeole (Crowmeole), and to the north Hencott.<sup>1</sup> The location of a further half-hide, belonging to St Juliana’s church, was described by Eyton as ‘doubtful’,<sup>2</sup> but may refer to the detached portions of St Juliana’s in Shelton.<sup>3</sup> More obscure, as leaving no later parochial trace, was a virgate in Meole Brace which belonged to St Mary’s church.<sup>4</sup> The Domesday liberties, however, were not settled. By 1278 they included Edgebold, Pulley (i.e. Lower Pulley which lay in Meole Brace lordship),<sup>5</sup> Newton and Nobold.<sup>6</sup> If Nobold was probably listed simply as a member of Meole Brace, Edgebold and both parts of Pulley (the other, including Bayston Hill, lay in St Juliana’s parish) had in 1086 been part of Condoover hundred.<sup>7</sup> Newton, not named in Domesday Book, may have been part of Edgebold, which it adjoined and with which, later it was usually linked for administrative purposes.<sup>8</sup>

To the east, the abbey parish was also, it seems, originally part of Condoover hundred.<sup>9</sup> Although included in Domesday as part of the ‘city’, it had become a distinct liberty, under the abbey’s jurisdiction, by the later 13th century at least, though still taxed in the 14th century as part of Condoover hundred.<sup>10</sup> The suggestion that Longner was also a member of the original borough liberties is incorrect.<sup>11</sup> Although Longner was sometimes listed with the ‘old’ liberties after 1495,<sup>12</sup> it never appears as such before that date, and in 1515 was said to have been taxed previously as part of Bradford Hundred.<sup>13</sup> Medieval records do not always consistently record the townships of the borough liberty, but a full list of 1316 was employed again in 1433 and 1474, but with the addition of Merivale – the disputed area lying between the borough and Abbey Foregate.<sup>14</sup> A list, c.1370, in the borough register book, also included Derfald,<sup>15</sup> an extensive tract of heathland (later part of Old Heath), mostly in Hencott, and probably in origin a late Anglo-Saxon royal deer park.<sup>16</sup> Presentments to the Great Court from ‘Derfald’ were occasionally made during the 14th and 15th centuries.<sup>17</sup>

The liberties were much enlarged in 1495. A royal charter granted to the borough all the outstanding townships in the parishes of St Chad, St Mary, St Alkmund and St Juliana, and,

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<sup>1</sup> R.W. Eyton, *The Antiquities of Shropshire* (1854-60), VI, 347-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 348, 367-8.

<sup>3</sup> W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of Shropshire*, I, (1908), 315; Revd J.B. Blakeway, ‘History of Shrewsbury Hundred or Liberties’ (ed. Revd W.G.D. Fletcher), *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 9 (1897), 181.

<sup>4</sup> Eyton, *Antiquities*, VI, 358-9.

<sup>5</sup> Eyton, *Antiquities*, VI, 350; Blakeway, ‘History of Shrewsbury Hundred’, *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 8 (1896), 158-9.

<sup>6</sup> J.A. Morris, ‘The provosts and bailiffs of Shrewsbury’, *TSAS* 3rd ser. I (1901), 171-4.

D. and R. Cromarty (eds.), *The wealth of Shrewsbury in the early fourteenth century* (1993), 122-3.

<sup>7</sup> A. Williams, G.H. Martin (eds.), *Domesday Book. A Complete Translation* (Penguin edn. 2003), 711, 714; Eyton, *Antiquities*, VI, 5-6, 350.

<sup>8</sup> Blakeway, ‘History of Shrewsbury Hundred’ (ed. Fletcher), *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 3 (1891), 341-2.

<sup>9</sup> Above, Shrewsbury abbey and its manor. Underdale (the ‘hundred nook’) in Abbey Foregate probably refers to its position as a projecting part of Condoover hundred: M. Gelling, *Place-Names of Shropshire*, IV (2004), 80.

<sup>10</sup> Above, Shrewsbury abbey and its manor.

<sup>11</sup> O & B, I, 86, n. 2; G. Baugh (ed.), *A History of Shropshire*, XI (1985), 95.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. SA 3365/1052. 1054.

<sup>13</sup> Revd W.G.D. Fletcher, ‘Inquisition of the liberties of the town of Shrewsbury, 1515’, *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 2 (1889-90), 73-4.

<sup>14</sup> SA 3365/157, m. 4; 840, 163.

<sup>15</sup> SA 3365/67, f. ‘A’ (orig. foliation).

<sup>16</sup> Above, Common Lands and the Quarry.

<sup>17</sup> SA 3365/784, mm. 3, 18d, 24; 3365/817, 837, 952. Though some of these may have come from the borough’s part of Derfald in Castle Foregate, the later Ditherington: above, Common Lands and the Quarry.

in addition, the townships of Hadnall and Alderton (both in Myddle parish), Grinshill and Acton Reynald (both in Shawbury parish), Merrington and Preston Gubbals (both in Preston Gubbals parish), Great Hanwood (Hanwood parish), Little Hanwood (Pontesbury parish), and Pimley (in Uffington parish).<sup>18</sup> The king's charter cited, as reasons for the grant, the corporation's poverty and its past loyalty to him, together with the generous level of its hospitality during his visit to the town that year.<sup>19</sup> Issues soon arose over the composition and privileges of the 'new' liberties, and the borough was put to much trouble convincing the royal Exchequer that the townships absorbed in 1495 should enjoy the same tax privileges granted to the borough in 1485 and confirmed in 1495.<sup>20</sup> Despite obtaining c.1512 a letter from the Crown confirming the tax privileges of the new liberties,<sup>21</sup> the 1495 charter had to be taken up to London in 1513 and copied onto the memoranda rolls of the Exchequer.<sup>22</sup> In 1515 the charter was again taken to London, and an inquest held to determine the issue, mainly in relation to townships which lay within the town's parishes.<sup>23</sup>

At the inquest the tax liabilities of the townships were annotated as if they were still included in their former hundreds. As a result it has been suggested that the jurisdictions of the borough and of Bradford Hundred may have overlapped.<sup>24</sup> However, there is no indication from municipal records that the new liberties were anything but subject to the borough, even if some anomalies had to be ironed out. The 1515 inquest found that Eton Parva (in Pitchford), and its members Newton and Beche, were in St Chad's parish and therefore part of the new liberties – as they had been listed in 1495 and 1508.<sup>25</sup> Afterwards, however, Eton was not so included, perhaps because it was proved to have been anciently part of Pitchford parish, or because by that date the hamlet was deserted.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Albrighton, a chapelry of St Mary's, was placed in the liberties in 1495 and 1508 but excluded thereafter, remaining a detached part of Pimhill Hundred, probably due to the influence of the manorial lord, Shrewsbury abbey.<sup>27</sup> Later (c.1588) the township's inhabitants were amerced for non-appearance at the Great Court, but the fine was stayed and the issue is not known to have arisen again.<sup>28</sup>

Concerns of inhabitants in the new liberties were laid out in a petition to the Shrewsbury bailiffs c.1529.<sup>29</sup> Requesting that burgesses from the 'new franchises' should be able to hold borough office and vote for municipal officers just as townsmen did, it also asked that inhabitants there who bought grain and other wares in Shrewsbury for their households only should also be free of toll; that gentlemen, their tenants and 'lovers' in the king's wartime service should not have to contribute to the borough's own levies; that the new franchises should enjoy the borough's tax privileges; that they also be discharged of certain new ameracements; and that instead of a 'whole appearance' (i.e. at the biannual Great Court), suit of court should only be required of five men from each township 'as it was of olde tyme to the kyng'. On the tax issue at least, the borough was supportive (above), and when in 1542 the appointed tax collector Edward Hosier, of Preston Gubbals, spent time in the Fleet prison

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<sup>18</sup> Above, Economic history, 1340–1540: O & B, I, 268; SA 3365/67, f. 'A' (orig. foliation).

<sup>19</sup> O & B, I, 268.

<sup>20</sup> Above, Economic history, 1340–1540; O & B, I, 255, 268-9.

<sup>21</sup> SA 3365/67, f. 110v.

<sup>22</sup> TNA: PRO E159/292, *recorda*, rot. 18.

<sup>23</sup> SA 3365/438, f. 30v; Fletcher, 'Inquisition' (orig. doc. at SA 3365/2693).

<sup>24</sup> Baugh (ed.), *Hist. Shrop.* XI (1985), 95.

<sup>25</sup> Fletcher, 'Inquisition', 73-4; SA 3365/67, f. 'A'; 3365/1842, box 1. pt. 2.

<sup>26</sup> A.T. Gaydon (ed.), *A History of Shropshire*, VIII (1968), 115.

<sup>27</sup> Blakeway, 'History of Shrewsbury Hundred', *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 1 (1889), 95-101.

<sup>28</sup> H.W. Adnitt (ed.), 'The orders of the corporation of Shrewsbury, 1511-1735', *TSAS* 11 (1888), 160.

<sup>29</sup> SA 3365/67, f. 113.

for failing to carry out his duties, the borough again went to some trouble to ensure that the Exchequer gave way.<sup>30</sup>

The townships of the post-1495 liberties were integrated into the borough's jurisdiction as 'foreign' or 'out' parts of Shrewsbury's three wards.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, the liberty of Monks' or Abbey Foregate, which the abbey had surrendered to Henry VIII in 1540, though granted to the borough in 1542,<sup>32</sup> was administered separately until 1586 when Elizabeth I extended the liberty of Shrewsbury to include both it and Merivale.<sup>33</sup> It was afterwards reckoned as an 'in' part of the Stone Ward, although the status of Monkmoor was at issue with the owner Thomas Ireland in 1623.<sup>34</sup> Later in 1699 the lawyer Henry Jenkes was removed from the town council for attempting to withdraw Smethcote, Haston and Black Birches (part of Smethcote) from the liberties,<sup>35</sup> but elsewhere the corporation was less successful in defending its rights.<sup>36</sup> Sutton manor, which had belonged to Wenlock priory until the Dissolution, came in 1544 into the hands of the Mackworth family who held it until 1775. Until the 17th century the Mackworths accepted the borough's jurisdiction,<sup>37</sup> but in the 1680s, for the first time, a constable was not sworn for the township,<sup>38</sup> though the corporation did not attempt to enforce its rights until 1754 when William Boycott of Sutton was presented for refusing to serve the office, the case proceeding to the assizes where the corporation lost on a technicality. From that date until 1835 the Mackworths, and the subsequent owners of Sutton, the Hills of Attingham, held a 'court leet and view of frankpledge',<sup>39</sup> though the corporation again asserted its rights in 1791 and 1826. On the latter occasion the town clerk Joseph Loxdale turned a blind eye, and by then Sutton, irrefutably a member of Shrewsbury's ancient liberties, had for practical purposes ceased to be so.

The post-1586 boundary of Shrewsbury liberty remained unchanged for local-government purposes until 1835. However, the extent of Shrewsbury's parliamentary franchise was more mutable. In the early 18th century there was much dispute whether this franchise included the liberty and required residential qualification, but in 1723 the Commons approved a resolution by its Whig-controlled Committee of Privileges and Elections to reduce the parliamentary borough to the town and suburbs, excluding Abbey Foregate, Merivale and Coton Hill.<sup>40</sup> The 'voting liberties' were enlarged again in 1832 to include all the area within the borough limits,<sup>41</sup> and, for the first time, Kingsland and other parts of Meole Brace (Map [. . .]).<sup>42</sup> The

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<sup>30</sup> TNA: PRO E159/317, *recorda*, rot. 40.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. SA 3365/172, 1017.

<sup>32</sup> *L&P Hen. VIII*, XVII, 166. Cf. A. Gaydon (ed.), *A History of Shropshire*, II (1973), 36.

<sup>33</sup> O & B, I, 381-2.

<sup>34</sup> Bodleian, Gough Shrop. 12, f. 192.

<sup>35</sup> SA 6001/290 (25 July 1699).

<sup>36</sup> Except where noted, the rest of this para. is based on J.A. Morris, 'Sutton, near Shrewsbury', *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 5 (1893).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 133; SA 3365/1804.

<sup>38</sup> SA 3365/2430, ff. 4, 14.

<sup>39</sup> SA 112/4/5/12-127.

<sup>40</sup> *CJ* 20, 190-4; *Lewis, Topog. Dict. England* (1835 edn), V, pl. LXXII; G.C. Baugh (ed.), *A History of Shropshire*, III (1979), 267; above, Politics and religion, 1640-1780.

<sup>41</sup> With the exception of the northern part of Derfald Grange, Castle Foregate, where the boundary now followed the more natural line of the stream running from Bow Bridge to the Severn: A. Hitchcock, *Map Of The Borough Of Shrewsbury As Extended And Settled By Act Of Parliament July 15th 1832* (1832), copy at SA 3073/1.

<sup>42</sup> *Reports on Parliamentary Boundaries of Counties and Boroughs* (Parl. Papers (1831-2) (141), xxxix), pp. 201-3, and map facing p. 201; Parliamentary Boundaries Act 1832, 2 & 3 Wm IV, c. 64, sched. (O), no 29.

new parliamentary boundary was unaltered until the Shrewsbury borough constituency was replaced by a county division with the same name in 1918.<sup>43</sup>

The liberty of Shrewsbury itself was abolished in 1835, and the parliamentary boundary of 1832 was adopted as the new municipal boundary.<sup>44</sup> The constituent parishes or parish portions of the former liberty were then distributed in the following year to the hundreds of Conover and Ford, and (with parts of Coton within the borough) the newly created Albrighton Division of Pimhill hundred.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, a habit of invoking the ‘liberties of Shrewsbury’ lingered afterwards,<sup>46</sup> perhaps because the corporation, as part of its ‘royalty and manor’ (1721),<sup>47</sup> continued to extract rents from cottages on the wastes. From the 1560s into the 18th century encroachments on the wastes by private landlords had been opposed, or the erection of cottages exploited, at Shelton, Rossall, Clive, Bicton, Merrington, Betton Strange, Monkmeole, Pulley, and Hencott (Old Heath).<sup>48</sup> In the early 18th century the corporation was also at law with Sir Francis Edwardes over title to Nobold quarry,<sup>49</sup> from which it permitted parishioners from both St Julian’s and St Chad’s to obtain stone for church repairs,<sup>50</sup> and it continued to take rent from cottagers on Pulley common<sup>51</sup> until it sold its cottage estate there at Bayston Hill in 1789.<sup>52</sup> In 1774 the corporation also sold its estate at Rossall Heath.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, despite the eventual inclosure of the heathlands,<sup>54</sup> including Bicton (1768),<sup>55</sup> Sansaw (1783),<sup>56</sup> Acton Reynald (1797),<sup>57</sup> Shelton (1804),<sup>58</sup> Leaton (c.1809–13),<sup>59</sup> and Rossall (1829–30),<sup>60</sup> some cottage rents remained part of the borough’s estate after the abolition of its liberty, notably at Bicton Heath where rents still brought in over £40 p.a. in 1863.<sup>61</sup> The corporation eventually sold the estate there for £900 in 1868 to assist the purchase of the remaining company arbour on Kingsland.<sup>62</sup>

The post-1835 borough was divided into five wards (Welsh, Stone Within and Without, Castle Within and Without);<sup>63</sup> but in 1891, following the Municipal Corporations Act of 1882, the wards were rearranged into ten: Welsh, Stone, Castle, Quarry, Abbey, Belle Vue, Kingsland with Coleham, Coton Hill, Ditherington, and Castle Fields.<sup>64</sup> The municipal boundary was extended greatly in 1934, when the borough was rearranged again into 11

<sup>43</sup> Baugh (ed.), *Hist. Shrop.*, III, 354.

<sup>44</sup> Municipal Corporations Act 1835, 5 & 6 Wm IV, c. 76.

<sup>45</sup> Gaydon (ed.), *Hist. Shrop.*, II, 211.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Eyton, *Antiquities*, VI, 349; Blakeway, ‘History of Shrewsbury Hundred’, *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 1 (1889), 94.

<sup>47</sup> SA 6001/290, 27 Oct. 1721.

<sup>48</sup> SA 3365/76, f. 66; Bodleian, Gough Shrop. 1, f. 171v, Gough Shrop. 12, f. 215; Adnitt (ed.), ‘Orders of the corporation’, 182, 188, 190-1, 197, 199-209; D. Pannett, ‘Landlord and tenant on the heath’, *Bicton Village News*, 497 (Dec. 2007), unpag.

<sup>49</sup> TNA: PRO C6/98/95, C10/386/6.

<sup>50</sup> Adnitt (ed.), ‘Orders of the corporation’, 200 (c.1703), 207 (c.1726).

<sup>51</sup> Nat. Lib. Wales, Castle Hill 1518-20, 1546-63, 2452.

<sup>52</sup> Nat. Lib. Wales, Castle Hill 1522, 2129.

<sup>53</sup> SA 3365/72, 29 Jan. 1773, 30 Sept. 1774.

<sup>54</sup> A common process in N Shropshire: G.C. Baugh (ed.), *A History of Shropshire*, IV (1989), 174, 179.

<sup>55</sup> SA 3365/2512; 1709/34/1

<sup>56</sup> Baugh (ed.), *Hist. Shrop.* IV, 175.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>58</sup> SA 3365/2519.

<sup>59</sup> SA 3365/2517, Baugh (ed.), *Hist. Shrop.* IV, 175.

<sup>60</sup> SA 465/415.

<sup>61</sup> SA DA5/100/3, 9 Feb. 1863.

<sup>62</sup> SA DA5/100/1, repts. of Improvement Committee, 12 Aug. 1867, 13 Feb. 1871.

<sup>63</sup> SA fc 01/3044; John Wood, *Plan of Shrewsbury* (1838), copy at SA 3551/3; A. Hitchcock, *Map of The Wards Of The Borough Of Shrewsbury* (1835), copy at SA 5400/1.

<sup>64</sup> SA DA5/106/5.

wards, and a little in 1967, to allow for suburban growth,<sup>65</sup> and there was no further change before 1974, when the area of the municipal borough was absorbed into the new borough of Shrewsbury and Atcham. That, in turn, was absorbed in 2009 by the Shropshire unitary authority created in that year.

### Table of Shrewsbury liberties

<i>Old liberties (with members)</i>	<i>Domesday hundred</i>	<i>Parish</i>
Sutton	Shrewsbury	Sutton
Meole Brace	Shrewsbury	Meole Brace
Nobold		
Edgebold	Condover	Meole Brace
Newton		
Pulley (part)	Condover	Meole Brace
Shelton	Shrewsbury	St Chad/St Juliana, Shrewsbury
Oxon		
Monkmeole (Crowmeole)	Shrewsbury	St Chad, Shrewsbury
Goosehill		
Hencott	Shrewsbury	St. Alkmund, Shrewsbury
Derfald (Old Heath)		
<i>New liberties of 1495 (with members)</i>	<i>Pre-1495 hundred</i>	<i>Parish</i>
Preston Montford	Ford	St Alkmund, Shrewsbury
Dinthill	Ford	St Alkmund, Shrewsbury
Onslow (part)	Ford	St Chad, Shrewsbury
Woodcote	Ford	St Chad, Shrewsbury
Horton		
Great (Church) Hanwood	Ford	Hanwood
Little Hanwood	Ford	Pontesbury
Wood Hall		
Woodhouse		
Panson		
Whitley and Welbatch	Condover	St Chad, Shrewsbury
Pulley (part)	Condover	St Juliana, Shrewsbury
Bulridges		
Betton Strange	Condover	St Chad, Shrewsbury
Alkmere		
Longner	Bradford	St Chad, Shrewsbury
Albrightlee	Bradford	St Alkmund, Shrewsbury
Pimley	Bradford	Uffington
Clive	Pimhill	St Mary, Shrewsbury (chapelry)
Sansaw		
Grinshill	Pimhill	Shawbury (chapelry)
Acton Reynald	Pimhill	Shawbury (chapelry)

<sup>65</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Shrop.* (1941), 225; *Salop Review Order 1934* (Min. of Health order no 77933); *Salop (No. 2) Order 1966* (Stat. Instr. 1966, no 1529).

Alderton	Pimhill	Myddle
Shotton	Pimhill	Myddle
Hadnall	Pimhill	Myddle (chapelry of Hadnall Ease)
Haston		
Smethcote		
Hardwick		
Broughton	Pimhill	St Chad, Shrewsbury (chapelry)
Yorton		
Preston Gubbals	Pimhill	Preston Gubbals
Lea		
Merrington	Pimhill	Preston Gubbals
Astley	Pimhill	St Mary, Shrewsbury (chapelry)
Battlefield <sup>66</sup>	Pimhill	Battlefield, formerly St Mary, Shrewsbury (Albright Hussey chapelry)
Albright Hussey		
Harlescott	Pimhill	St Alkmund, Shrewsbury
Leaton	Pimhill	St Mary, Shrewsbury (Albrighton chapelry)
Great Wollascott	Pimhill	St Mary, Shrewsbury (Albrighton chapelry)
Little Wollascott		
Great Berwick	Pimhill	St Mary, Shrewsbury
Little Berwick		
Newton (on Heath)	Pimhill	
Alkmond (Almond Park)	Pimhill	
Great (Up) Rossall	Pimhill	St Chad, Shrewsbury (chapelry)
Little (Down) Rossall		
Bicton	Pimhill	St Chad, Shrewsbury (chapelry)
Calcott		
Onslow (part)	Pimhill	St Chad, Shrewsbury
<i>Added to the borough in 1542</i>	<i>Original hundred</i>	<i>Parish</i>
Abbey Foregate	Condover	Holy Cross
Underdale		
Monkmoor		

<sup>66</sup> Battlefield College was granted return of writs in its precincts and in Albright Hussey and Harlescott in 1445, 'but the grant's effect is obscure': Baugh (ed.), *Hist. Shrop.*, III, 44, n. 46.