

A New History of Newport

A call for support



Newport History Society
Victoria County History, Shropshire



newporthistorysociety.org



vchshropshire.org

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The Victoria County History was launched in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year as a project to write the history of every English parish in a common format. Its founders were perhaps a little optimistic as to how fast this could be done: 120 years later it is still underway and in some counties the early volumes are being superseded by new ones written to a much fuller and contemporary scheme. But the basic ambition remains: to produce a history of England in a uniform, encyclopaedic style.

It is to VCH that everyone who wants to know about the history of a place – whether historian, genealogist, archaeologist, planner or resident – turns first. It is the gold standard for local history. Until about 2004, Shropshire VCH made good progress with a small office funded by the county council. After that funding came to an end, a group of volunteers run from the national VCH office prepared the first of two volumes of a history of Shrewsbury. When that was published in 2014, the time seemed right to relaunch VCH in Shropshire as a volunteer-led, volunteer-driven organisation. Since then we have undertaken more work on the history of Shrewsbury and on Wem, which will be the subject of our first publication (to appear later this year).

At the time that the VCH office was disbanded, work was underway on Newport and the four adjacent parishes of Chetwynd, Edgmond, Longford and Sheriffhales, and some text had already been prepared. Newport is therefore not only the obvious place to start, but it lacks a good modern history whilst offering some interesting historical challenges, including a good medieval archive. Previous writers on Newport have barely scratched the surface of this richly-documented town. So, with the support of the Newport History Society, VCH Shropshire is coming to Newport.

Along the way we would like to have a bit of fun. We want to communicate some of the excitement of research through History Days, discussing with Newport people what we have found and sharing their history with them. And we hope that some of them will participate in the venture.

So what do we want to do?



Ultimately to produce a VCH 'Red Rook' covering Newport and the four parishes, but that is some years away. So we envisage publishing a history of medieval Newport as a VCH 'Short'; an account of its buildings, and then a history of Newport from the sixteenth century onwards. All of these will finally be folded into the authoritative Red Book, which will appear in print and, after a period, on the web.

We have some challenges on the way, notably the archive of Newport solicitors Liddle and Heane at Shropshire Archives. We need to catalogue its 323 boxes before its riches can be fully exploited.

With the aid of funding from Newport Town Council and the Victoria County History Trust, we have looked carefully at what needs to be done, how much it will cost, and the contribution that volunteers might make. Our scoping study can be found at www.vchshropshire.org or we can let you have a printed copy.

What do we need to do it?



Money of course. We have taken care in the scoping study to cost the various parts of the project: in all we need around £90,000. We have taken care to break the overall project into bite-sized pieces and we welcome contributions towards any of them. Donations totalling £1,000 or £2,000 will allow us to bring together a volunteer group to do research of lasting value for the town, to put in, as it were, some of the necessary foundations of the larger study. £20,000 allows us to do the project on Newport's buildings. Big donations are more than welcome, but our project will be based on many small ones.

And volunteers. We have many opportunities for volunteers: to transcribe documents; to research and collect information; to examine buildings, perhaps to draft text, certainly to help with fundraising. We will need a volunteer effort to catalogue the Liddle and Heane archive. Some of the work can be done at in Newport, some in Shrewsbury at Shropshire Archives, and some anywhere in the world, with an internet connection. We welcome offers of help of all sorts although, to take full advantage of them, we need the volunteer organisers we mentioned before.

The fact that VCH is now heavily reliant on volunteers does not mean that VCH work is without cost. We need money to employ our volunteer organisers and the professional staff we need to undertake the study of the medieval town and the buildings of Newport and to write up the work of the volunteers. Very little local government money now goes into VCH or the heritage sector in general. Newport Town Council has been a good friend to us and will, we are sure, continue to help where it can, but we need to call on the people and businesses of Newport for their help. We are confident that pride in the town, the pleasure of living and working there and curiosity about its history will all come to our assistance.

We therefore hope that many Newport people will become our supporters and complete our standing order form. Even small monthly contributions are very helpful to us, and we can claim gift aid on your donations. Individual, one-off donations are equally welcome. We can offer corporate donors high-end publicity at the beginning of the project and all donors a permanent note of our thanks in our publications.

In the future we hope to turn to the other adjacent parishes. Offers of assistance for our work on these are welcome.

To discuss our needs, and how you might be able to help, please contact the Chairman of VCH Shropshire, Professor Richard Hoyle, r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk or Linda Fletcher of the Newport History Society, thefernsshropshire@hotmail.co.uk.

VCH Shropshire and Newport History Society: A new History of Newport

VCH Shropshire depends on donations from individuals, businesses and charities. Your donation will go towards writing the history of the county. We welcome donations of all sizes, and particularly recurring ones. With your permission we will acknowledge your donation on our website and in our publications and send you invitations to VCH events. If you wish to make a donation by BACS or set up a standing order by electronic banking, please take our account details from below. If setting up a transfer or a standing order by online banking, please mark your transaction 'Newport', *followed by your name*.

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