

# Victoria County History Shropshire

Volume VI, part II

*Shrewsbury: Institutions, buildings and culture*

Section 3.3, 'Corn mills and Fisheries'

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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### 3.3 Corn mills and fisheries. [W.A. Champion – Final draft, Jan. 2012]

#### *Milling before 1540.*

The history of milling in Shrewsbury before 1540 was intimately connected with disputes between borough and abbey over rights of multure. With Abbey Foregate Roger of Montgomery and his wife had given Shrewsbury abbey three mills,<sup>1</sup> perhaps those which the abbey had in Holy Cross parish at the Dissolution (below) located on a leat parallel to and fed by the Rea or Meole brook, although the existence of the mill stream itself is not implied until 1301.<sup>2</sup> The earl's grant alone would have had significance for the abbey's neighbour since the Rea was 'a milling stream with no local rival', and among the most profitable in Domesday England.<sup>3</sup> But its effect was reinforced by a grant by Henry I (1121) to the abbey of the 'multure of the whole city', a right confirmed by subsequent charters into the 13th century.

By 1222 that right was being challenged by the burgesses,<sup>4</sup> as the presence c.1230–50 of a miller in Under the Wyle (*sub Wyla*) suggests.<sup>5</sup> The earliest evidence of conflict between town and abbey, however, did not involve multure directly. In 1248 timber used by the abbey to erect a watermill on its land at The Gay was destroyed by the burgesses who claimed that the mill was eroding the castle on the other bank of the Severn and would obstruct navigation on the river. A compromise permitted the abbot to erect the mill provided the navigation was not affected. In 1267 the abbot brought an action claiming that the burgesses had erected four mills within the town (three horse mills and a windmill) and three horsemills in an unnamed suburb. In the subsequent agreement the abbey's position was probably compromised by its recent support for Simon de Montfort during the Barons' War. Although the borough's suburban mills were to be demolished, the others were allowed to remain, with the costs – including survey and, if necessary, relocation and replacement – to be divided equally between town and abbey, together with the revenues. The parties were also permitted to erect two new watermills on the Severn, the profits again to be shared equally between town and abbey. If additional mills were required, the costs would again be shared. Thus the abbey, while retaining its monopoly in Abbey Foregate, had now become only a partner in the maintenance of the common mills of the borough.

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<sup>1</sup> U. Rees (ed.), *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey* (1975), I, 32 (no. 35).

<sup>2</sup> N. Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey* (2002), 218.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 214-20. Unless where stated, the next two paras. are based on this source; Rees (ed.), *Cart. Shrews.* I, 136-7; and Revd C.H. Drinkwater, 'The abbot of Shrewsbury versus the burgesses thereof in the matter of the mills', *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 6 (1894), 341-57.

<sup>4</sup> Rees (ed.), *Cart. Shrews.* I, 137.

<sup>5</sup> SA 972/223/9/11.

The arrangement, however, did not placate the burgesses. Legal proceedings of 1279–80 indicate that of the original four common mills in the town, three had been rebuilt by the borough, though it kept all the profits, while 12 others had also been erected within the town. In accordance with the 1267 agreement, a jury found that the latter should be destroyed, but that the three common mills were to remain but be repaired at the borough's expense. That this failed to resolve the issue is suggested by the fact that these proceedings were cited in a further suit of 1307. The end result was probably a decision in favour of the 1267 arrangements as the burgesses were soon petitioning to have it annulled. Ostensibly, the borough finally obtained control over its own culture by a charter of 1328 which allowed it to build engines (*ingenia*) within the town to grind corn and malt. Nonetheless, about 1421 the abbey was still citing the 13th century precedents,<sup>6</sup> and four years later another agreement appears to have been reached that the borough would not erect a common mill without the abbey's consent.<sup>7</sup> The reference may be to the erection of a watermill since one was only constructed on the Stone Bridge in 1452–3 after the borough had first employed counsel in London to examine a composition between town and abbey about the construction of mills.<sup>8</sup>

*The location of the mills before c.1540.*

*(i) Town and suburbs.*

The windmill, permitted under the 1267 agreement, presumably stood near the tenement called Windmill Hill in rentals of c.1343 and c.1385.<sup>9</sup> Described c.1297 as a 'place', the tenement lay near the castle, and extended from the highway to the town wall.<sup>10</sup> Its distinctive rent of 20s. p.a. identifies it as Thornes Place just outside the Outer Bailey, mentioned in rentals of 1521 and after,<sup>11</sup> and sold in 1633 as the site for the new House of Correction,<sup>12</sup> i.e. in School Gardens. Listed almost adjacent to Windmill Hill in the rental of c.1343, but on the other side of the street (*ex altera parte vie*), stood a mill paying a rent of 26s. 8d.,<sup>13</sup> the highest recorded in the 14th century rentals. If this was the common windmill, it must have been located on the east side of Castle Street, probably on the escarpment overlooking St

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<sup>6</sup> R. Bennet, J. Elton, *History of Corn Milling*, IV (1904), 52.

<sup>7</sup> TNA: PRO E 321/2/5.

<sup>8</sup> SA 3365/382.

<sup>9</sup> BL, Hargrave 313, ff. 49, 51.

<sup>10</sup> Bodleian, Gough Shrop. 6, f. 46v.

<sup>11</sup> J.L. Hobbs, 'Three borough rentals of Shrewsbury', *TSAS* 53 (1949–50), 215, 219, 229.

<sup>12</sup> SA QS/2/1.

<sup>13</sup> BL, Hargrave 313, f. 51.

Mary Water Lane. There is no evidence that it was still working by the 15th century, though private windmills existed in the suburbs. A Windmill Hill is mentioned in the Frankwell fields in 1450,<sup>14</sup> perhaps a reference to the windmill which stood beyond the Welsh Bridge at ‘*Shrewsbury towne’s end*’ (1609),<sup>15</sup> and described in 1616 as standing on the right hand side of the road to Shelton, near Cadogan’s Cross, i.e. on the escarpment above the Severn.<sup>16</sup> It was said then to be decayed, possibly the result of having been blown down in a storm in 1586.<sup>17</sup> However, the *Wyndmylfold* in Frankwell, mentioned in 1545,<sup>18</sup> must refer to a different windmill as the site was located beside the Hanwood road. A Windmill Field or Croft was also recorded in Coton in 1548 and thereafter,<sup>19</sup> located on the west side of Corporation Lane, a little north of the Shrewsbury to Baschurch road.<sup>20</sup>

Of horse mills in the town two can be identified. One, granted in fee-farm by the borough c.1478,<sup>21</sup> stood in St Nicholas’s Lane behind St Nicholas’s chapel, though it was defunct by 1521;<sup>22</sup> the other was operating in 1476 within the tenement known later as Perche’s Mansion, on the corner of Castle Street and Windsor Place.<sup>23</sup> A mill in Knockyn Street (Hill’s Lane), mentioned c.1470,<sup>24</sup> was probably also horse-driven. The construction of watermills on the Severn had also been envisioned as part of the agreement of 1267 (above), but their erection and maintenance was difficult because of the Severn’s annual cycle, with a height range of four metres,<sup>25</sup> and the borough is not known to have attempted to erect one until 1452–3 when a communal watermill was built on the Stone Bridge. The contract with William de la Ryver, master carpenter, was for £26 13s. 4d, and the cost of materials and labour £15, with beech and oak sourced from woods at Haughmond, Wellington and Onslow.<sup>26</sup> Re-building the mill was mooted in 1520,<sup>27</sup> but was not taken in hand until 1533,<sup>28</sup> with the ‘new mill’ completed by 1535 and let, after a dispute between potential lessees, to

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<sup>14</sup> SA 3365/877.

<sup>15</sup> TNA: PRO Prob 11/115, f. 83v.

<sup>16</sup> SA 6000/1222.

<sup>17</sup> *Early Chronicles*, 309.

<sup>18</sup> SA 6001/2794, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> SA 6000/3724; 3365/2681; 840, box 13, no. 57; M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Shropshire*, IV (2004), 65.

<sup>20</sup> SA 450/35/14 (1821).

<sup>21</sup> Bodleian, Gough Shrop. 3, f. 92v.

<sup>22</sup> Hobbs, ‘Three borough rentals’, 215, 218, 229.

<sup>23</sup> SA 6000/3975.

<sup>24</sup> Bodleian, Gough Shrop. 6, f. 52.

<sup>25</sup> Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 215.

<sup>26</sup> SA 3365/879.

<sup>27</sup> SA 3365/75/4, f. 37; 215/39.

<sup>28</sup> SA 3365/75/4, f. 6.

alderman Nicholas Purcell for 24 years at an annual rent of £2 6s. 8d.<sup>29</sup> The toll was set at ½d. a bushel, with burgesses having precedence if the water level was low.<sup>30</sup>

A watermill, belonging to the Colle family of Shrewsbury, also once existed just outside Frankwell. Standing on a stone causeway, it lay in the riverside pasture beside the road from Frankwell to Pontesbury (i.e. Porthill), but by 1472, when John Colle retained the right to remove the masonry, it was probably derelict.<sup>31</sup> References to the mill or its adjoining croft extend back to 1352,<sup>32</sup> and its location was evidently near the present site of the Pengwern Boat Club, i.e. in Meole Brace, and so outside the remit of any agreement between town and abbey. A mill-like building, standing at the end of the walled precinct of the dissolved Dominican friary, is also shown on the ‘Burghley’ map of c.1575, apparently exploiting an old river channel of the Severn. Both the priory wall and the channel or ‘bylet’ – ‘turned out of the auncient course’ of the Severn – were referred to in 1620,<sup>33</sup> but no documentary reference to the mill has come to light.

After the borough had acquired the right to its own multure in 1328, though still subject it seems to consultation with the abbey over the erection of watermills (above), sufficient millers worked in the town for a small Millers’ company to come into being, with nine members by 1398.<sup>34</sup> Six millers were also presented by the Great Court for false measures in 1436,<sup>35</sup> and of 14 taxpayers listed in Coleham in 1476, four bore the surname ‘Muleward’.<sup>36</sup> By 1525, however, the Millers’ fellowship, in the borough at least, was extinct.<sup>37</sup> Since no millers were admitted as burgesses from 1500 to 1549 (cf. two 1450–1499),<sup>38</sup> the craft’s fate perhaps reflected the contemporary problems of Shrewsbury’s economy.<sup>39</sup> However, the Abbey Foregate mills must always have provided powerful competition, and significantly it was there that a Millers’ company appears to have existed in the 16th century (below).

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<sup>29</sup> SA 3365/75/3, ff. 10v, 12v, 15, 16, 29v; 3365/75/4, 8v.

<sup>30</sup> SA 3365/75, f. 8v.

<sup>31</sup> SA 6001/2794, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> SA 3365/377 (1451); 6001/2794, p. 16 (1437); SA 6000/3788 (1352).

<sup>33</sup> TNA: PRO C 21/P19/11.

<sup>34</sup> SA 3365/2692

<sup>35</sup> SA 3365/845.

<sup>36</sup> SA 3365/163 (*Colneham* evidently including the Stone Bridge.)

<sup>37</sup> Cf. SA 3365/172.

<sup>38</sup> For sources, see W.A. Champion, ‘Population change in Shrewsbury 1400-1700’ (Typescript, 1983, at SA 6001/6821), appendix 1.

<sup>39</sup> Above, Economic history, 1340–1540.

(ii) *The abbey mills.*

The site of the mill built in 1248 on land *que dicitur le Gaye*<sup>40</sup> was said to be ‘still traditionally remembered’ in the early 19th century, standing on an old river channel of the Severn which traversed the pasture known as the Gay,<sup>41</sup> i.e. on or near the former Gay Meadow football ground. No evidence exists that the mill still operated in the 16th century. By 1539 riverside access to the abbey was affected by loss of flow,<sup>42</sup> and it is probable that the old channel across the Gay had by then dried up. Unquestionably, as they had at the time of Domesday, it was the mills on the Rea brook leat that continued to dominate the culture of Abbey Foregate and its vicinity.

At the Dissolution Shrewsbury abbey possessed four mill complexes on the leat, three in Abbey Foregate in the parish of Holy Cross, and one in Coleham.<sup>43</sup> The latter, originally granted to the abbey by Ivo Pantulf c.1144-1155,<sup>44</sup> was that known later as Sutton Lower Mill. Disputes over the mill with Wenlock priory, the manorial lord of Sutton, were resolved by an agreement of 1234 (amended 1240) when Shrewsbury abbey’s right to the mill was acknowledged, together with some land in Coleham.<sup>45</sup> The property itself (not to be confused with Wenlock priory’s Sutton Old Mill which lay upstream) straddled Sutton parish and Coleham in St Juliana’s parish.<sup>46</sup> As ‘Suttons Myll’ it was let in 1530 for 60 years at £1 p.a. and 12d. to the shrine of St Winifred.<sup>47</sup> Further down the leat lay a mill known from the 13th to the 17th centuries as ‘the mill on the green’,<sup>48</sup> later the Burnt Mill(s). This mill was not included in the rental of ex-abbey lands of c.1540, but in 1545, the year *le mylles in the grene* were sold by the Crown, the complex included two watermills,<sup>49</sup> and the rent was £2 16s. 8d.<sup>50</sup> Still further downstream stood the Trill Mill, at the end of Trill (Mill) Lane or Mill Road, recorded from the early 14th century.<sup>51</sup> In 1529 the abbey leased the mill for 60 years at £3 p.a., the rent being allocated to the abbey kitchen.<sup>52</sup> The final mill on the leat was the

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<sup>40</sup> Rees (ed.), *Cart. Shrews.* II, 347-8 (no. 385).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 21; Leland, *Itin.* (ed. Toulmin Smith), II, 81.

<sup>43</sup> Except where stated, the rest of this para. is based on Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 214-218 (incl. map of mill locations).

<sup>44</sup> Rees (ed.), *Cart. Shrews.* I, 42 (no. 36), II, 297 (no. 277); SA 6000/6260.

<sup>45</sup> Rees (ed.), *Cart. Shrews.* II, 350-4 (nos. 387, 389).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. SA P256/B/2/1/6, f. 2 (1621); 287/2 (1689); 6001/299, ff. 209, 249v (temp. 18th cent.).

<sup>47</sup> TNA: PRO LR 2/184, f. 207.

<sup>48</sup> SA 6000/6295; 1831/1/5/3 (1399); TNA: PRO E 303/14/Salop/202 (1533); Prob 11/136, f. 243.

<sup>49</sup> TNA: PRO C 66/770, m. 39.

<sup>50</sup> TNA: PRO E 318/21/1100; SC 6/Hen. VIII/3015, m. 40.

<sup>51</sup> Gelling, *Place-Names of Shropshire*, IV, 82-3.

<sup>52</sup> TNA: PRO LR 2/184, f. 201.

Abbey Mill, which by 1539, when it was let for 80 years at £4 p.a., comprised two adjoining watermills beside the monastery walls, facing tenements in Merivale.<sup>53</sup> In 1545 they were said to stand *iuxta le pontem*, i.e. the Monks' Bridge,<sup>54</sup> and were evidently located south of the monastic precinct near the conflux of the leat and a side channel of the Severn.

*Milling 1540 – c.1710.*

Shortly after the Dissolution the Abbey Foregate millers brought two lawsuits claiming that the recent erection of a watermill on the Stone Bridge, and its 'stank' or weir, breached an agreement c.1425 that the burgesses would not erect a common mill without the abbey's assent.<sup>55</sup> The dispute probably arose as a result of repairs to the watermill following flood damage in January 1546.<sup>56</sup> The outcome is unknown, but the Foregate millers had little to fear. Already in 1540 the borough's watermill had been re-let for 60 years at the reduced rent of £2 p.a. (the lessee, alderman Edmund Colle, was also obliged to keep a rye mill),<sup>57</sup> and in 1565 the corporation sold the mill at 30 years purchase, retaining a fee farm rent of 10s. p.a.<sup>58</sup> The grantee assigned his interest to the mercer George Trevenant whose descendants sold the estate in 1683.<sup>59</sup> Three years later the mill, 'lately purchased', was entered on the borough rental with the note 'down',<sup>60</sup> and it may have ceased to function by that date. Blackened oak timbers, located on a gravel island just east of the drawbridge, but in St Julian's parish (i.e. within the former borough), were said in the 18th century to comprise its remains.<sup>61</sup>

Of the 11 millers listed in the suit list of 1668, five resided in Abbey Foregate and two in Coleham, the latter probably working at Sutton Lower mill.<sup>62</sup> Other millers in Romaldesham, Knockyn Street and High Street presumably operated horse-mills, like that located in Castle Foregate in 1615,<sup>63</sup> although the single miller listed in Frankwell was perhaps employed at one of the windmills recorded earlier in the suburb (above). In Abbey Foregate a Windmill field is also recorded in 1614,<sup>64</sup> the field lying either side of the road to Preston ferry.<sup>65</sup> The

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<sup>53</sup> TNA: PRO LR 2/184, ff. 194v, 205v.

<sup>54</sup> TNA: PRO C 66/770, m. 39.

<sup>55</sup> TNA: PRO E 321/2/5, 321/3/13.

<sup>56</sup> *Early Chronicles*, 257-8; SA 3365/486, ff. 2v-3.

<sup>57</sup> SA 3365/64, f. 443.

<sup>58</sup> SA 3365/76, f. 257v.

<sup>59</sup> SA 3365/76, f. 261; TNA: PRO C 10/500/120.

<sup>60</sup> Bodleian, Gough Shrop. 6, f. 55.

<sup>61</sup> SA 6001/299, f. 100 (with plan); cf. Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 16, Fig. 4.

<sup>62</sup> SA 3365/1342.

<sup>63</sup> TNA: PRO C 8/14/10.

<sup>64</sup> TNA: PRO STAC 8/251/1.

<sup>65</sup> TNA: PRO IR 29/29/291; IR 30/29/291/2, fields 271-2, 281, 346.

windmill itself was probably located at the parish's highest point just south of the road.<sup>66</sup> It seems to have been built after the Dissolution,<sup>67</sup> but a date of closure is not known.

In 1545–6 Sutton Lower Mill and all three mill complexes in Abbey Foregate were sold to Richard and Robert Taverner,<sup>68</sup> and afterwards came into the possession of the four principal families of the suburb: Hatton, Rocke, Prynce, and Langley.<sup>69</sup> Conveyed to Richard Hatton in 1547,<sup>70</sup> Sutton Lower Mill was still owned by his grandson Edward Hatton in 1621,<sup>71</sup> but by 1639 it had passed – by then comprising three mill wheels – to Thomas Owen, the town clerk,<sup>72</sup> whose grandson sold it to the baker John Millington and the clothier John Paine in 1662.<sup>73</sup> By 1689, when a rent charge on the mill was purchased with money left (1669) by Thomas Davies for charity in St Julian's parish,<sup>74</sup> Millington's interest had been bought out by Paine's son Abraham, a maltster.<sup>75</sup> Further down the leat the 'mill on the green', belonging to Richard Rocke by 1621,<sup>76</sup> also possessed three wheels when his son died in 1628.<sup>77</sup> Known in 1682 as 'Mr Rocks Mills',<sup>78</sup> they were conveyed in 1735 by Robert Pigott, in the right of his late wife Diana, daughter and co-heir of Thomas Rocke esq., to Sir Richard Corbet of Longner Hall.<sup>79</sup> By that date they were called the Burnt Mills, doubtless after some earlier mishap, and let for a yearly rent of £44. In 1780 the premises were bought by Lord Berwick.<sup>80</sup>

The lease of the Trill Mill, by now comprising two wheels, had been assigned by 1580 to Richard Prynce, but with reversion to Thomas Hatton and Thomas Rocke.<sup>81</sup> After the lease ended in 1589 it was Hatton who evidently obtained possession as his family owned the mill in the early 17th century.<sup>82</sup> Hatton (d.1601) was the only proprietor known to have been directly involved in the milling trade. As a warden of the Miller's company, based in Abbey Foregate, he admitted to the borough council in 1558 that the company only ground

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<sup>66</sup> O.S. Nat. Grid SO 512 119.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. not mentioned in TNA: PRO SC 6/Hen.VIII/3010, m. 49 (Shrews. abbey ministers' accts. 1540–1).

<sup>68</sup> TNA: PRO E 318/21/1100, rot. 12; C 66/770, m. 39.

<sup>69</sup> Above, Religion and culture, 1540–1640.

<sup>70</sup> W. Phillips (ed.), 'Old deeds relating to property in Shrewsbury', *TSAS*, 2nd ser. 12 (1900), 203.

<sup>71</sup> SA P256/B/2/1/6, f. 2.

<sup>72</sup> TNA: PRO C 6/153/121.

<sup>73</sup> Phillips, 'Old deeds', 203–04.

<sup>74</sup> SA 287/2; P256/Q/2/1; O & B, II, 431–2.

<sup>75</sup> TNA: PRO Prob 11/395, ff. 166v–167.

<sup>76</sup> TNA: PRO Prob 11/136, f. 243.

<sup>77</sup> PRO C 142/443/66.

<sup>78</sup> PRO E 134/34 Chas. II/Mich. 33, m. 12.

<sup>79</sup> SA 567/2F/45. But the Rockes of Trefnanney retained a moiety: SA D 3651/B/18/2/49, 57.

<sup>80</sup> SA D3651/B/18/2/60; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 29 April 1780.

<sup>81</sup> TNA: PRO C 2/Eliz I/P2/59.

<sup>82</sup> TNA: PRO STAC 5/P29/23, 8/251/1; SA 6000/1749; 6001/2794, p. 217.



customers' wheat or rye if they could also grind their malt,<sup>83</sup> and he appears as a member of that company in a lawsuit of 1590.<sup>84</sup> The freehold of the Trill Mill was bought before 1682 from Walter Hatton by Richard Prynces's descendants,<sup>85</sup> and the mill was afterwards known as Prince's Mill or Monk's Mill.<sup>86</sup> Before 1629 the Hattons had also obtained possession of the Abbey Mill,<sup>87</sup> which was eventually sold in 1647 by Richard Hatton to Jonathan Langley,<sup>88</sup> with ownership afterwards passing with 'The Abbey' property.<sup>89</sup> At the 1647 sale the premises had incorporated three water corn mills, though only two wheels are shown on an 18th century illustration.<sup>90</sup> The change may reflect the fact that by the later 17th century the mill had been relocated onto the old river channel itself, by then silted up.<sup>91</sup> The adjacent early 18th century 'Queen Anne' house was perhaps built for the miller.<sup>92</sup>

#### *Milling after c.1710.*

Sutton Lower Mill was left by Abraham Paine, baker, to his wife and heirs in 1711,<sup>93</sup> but was sold afterwards and converted to ironworking in 1717.<sup>94</sup> Forgemasters later involved with the mill included William Wood, Thomas Harvey (brother-in-law of Abraham Darby), and Joshua Gee, all of whom had interests in the ironworks at Tern, for which Sutton forge probably served as an outlier.<sup>95</sup> But jobbing work was also done there: a clapper belonging to St Chad's was repaired at the forge in 1726.<sup>96</sup> In 1786 Sutton forge was sold by the ironmaster Thomas Powell to the millers Samuel and Thomas Hiles and converted back to corn milling.<sup>97</sup> In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Hiles family, farmers and millers of Meole Brace and Rodington, acquired most of the mills on the lower reaches of the Rea brook, including Pulley Mill, Lower Sutton Mill, Burnt Mill (as tenants), and the Abbey Mill itself, bought in 1810, along with the Abbey property, by Simon Hiles of Sutton (d.1815) and

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<sup>83</sup> SA 3365/76, f. 27: 6001/2794, pp. 234-5.

<sup>84</sup> SA 3365/1899.

<sup>85</sup> TNA: PRO E 134/34 Chas. II/Mich. 33, ms. 1, 3-4.

<sup>86</sup> J.L. Hobbs, *Shrewsbury Street Names* (1954), 75.

<sup>87</sup> TNA: PRO C 5/396/126; CP 25(2)/476/4 Chas I/Hil.

<sup>88</sup> TNA: PRO CP 25(2)/478/23 Chas I/Mich; E 134/34 Chas II/Mich. 33, m. 3d.

<sup>89</sup> Above, Shrewsbury abbey and its manor.

<sup>90</sup> Baker (ed), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 183.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 179-81, 218.

<sup>92</sup> N. Baker, *Shrewsbury Abbey. A Medieval Monastery* (n.d.), 42, 63-4.

<sup>93</sup> Lichfield RO B/C/11, 4 Apr. 1711, Abr. Paine.

<sup>94</sup> SA 6001/299, f. 54 (plan at f. 209).

<sup>95</sup> SA 112/5/14/28; B. Trinder, *The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire* (1981), 15; *id.* *The Industrial Archaeology of Shropshire* (1996), 16-17; P. King, 'The History of the Tern Company', *TSAHS* 83 (2008), 76-8.

<sup>96</sup> 'The parish book of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, 1722-1785', *TSAS* 4th ser. 3 (1913), Misc. vii.

<sup>97</sup> For this and what follows, D. Davies, *Hiles of Salop* (1997), unpubl. TS at SA q BH 64.

devised to his son James in 1814.<sup>98</sup> The family's history was eventful. In 1801 the Burnt Mill, which now included a hemp and snuff mill, was destroyed by arson;<sup>99</sup> in 1808 Simon Hiles sued his nephew Thomas, tenant of the Burnt Mill, claiming that the mill dam was impeding the flow at Sutton Lower Mill;<sup>100</sup> and in 1851 Simon's grandson James was drowned at the Abbey Mill.<sup>101</sup> By that date, however, some alternative to the Rea brook mills was provided by a windmill erected on Kingsland in 1796 by the guardians of the Shrewsbury Union workhouse, who announced their intention to grind corn at 6d. a strike.<sup>102</sup> The windmill, formerly located at Uffington, was set up on the site of the Shoemakers' Maze (about 17 Ashton Road).<sup>103</sup> It operated until sold in 1828,<sup>104</sup> and was pulled down in 1861.<sup>105</sup>

After Thomas Hiles died in 1829 Sutton Lower Mill was offered to Lord Berwick of Attingham Hall, owner of Sutton manor, and although his agent expressed doubts about its value due to 'the modern erections of steam mills', Berwick purchased it in 1835.<sup>106</sup> The agent's comment was prescient. In the early 1850s the largest steam milling complex in the county was erected in Castle Foregate by Richard and William Blakeway, adapting former canal carrier's warehouses on the west bank of the Shrewsbury Canal.<sup>107</sup> By the 1870s two beam engines were driving nine sets of stones, although the owners later diversified into malting.<sup>108</sup> Sutton Lower Mill itself, still owned by the Attingham family in 1875, was converted to steam-power,<sup>109</sup> and in 1879 was operated by Hughes & Son, who also ran the mill at Meole Brace.<sup>110</sup> By that date it may also have had industrial uses.<sup>111</sup> There is no reference to a miller in subsequent directories, and the premises, though still known as

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<sup>98</sup> O & B, II, 138.

<sup>99</sup> E.H. East, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Court of King's Bench*, III (1803), 457-9.

<sup>100</sup> SA 1005/75-82.

<sup>101</sup> Davies, *Hiles of Salop*, 71, 188.

<sup>102</sup> *Salopian Journal*, 20 April 1796.

<sup>103</sup> J.E. Auden, 'Kingsland and its associations', *TSAS*, 52 (1947-8), 55; A. Hitchcock, *Map of the Borough of Shrewsbury* (1832), copy at SA 3073/1.

<sup>104</sup> SA PL2/3/6/1-3; *Report of the committee to the Guardians of the Poor of the Shrewsbury United District* (1831), 7.

<sup>105</sup> H. Pidgeon, 'Ancient guilds, trading companies, and the origin of the Shrewsbury Show', *TSAS*, 6 (1883), 194.

<sup>106</sup> SA 112/5/14/27-8; 112/7/114.

<sup>107</sup> Trinder, *Industrial Revolution*, 44.

<sup>108</sup> B. Trinder, *Beyond the Bridges. The Suburbs of Shrewsbury 1760-1960* (2006), 149-50.

<sup>109</sup> SA P256/Q/4/4.

<sup>110</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Shropshire* (1879), 514.

<sup>111</sup> A. Wharton, *Excavations of Sutton (Lower) Mill, Sutton, Shrewsbury* (1975), unpubl. TS, copy at SA D 27.7 v.f.

‘Sutton Mill’, appear to have been converted afterwards into a farm, demolished in the 1960s.<sup>112</sup> Excavations in the 1970s confirmed a little of its former history.<sup>113</sup>

The Burnt Mill fell out of use after the miller Richard Owen retired in 1886, and in 1888 it was converted for the Salop Steam Laundry which operated until 1996.<sup>114</sup> In 1999 the footings of a large 18th century brick watermill were observed on the site, overlying the wall of a wheel-bay of an earlier, but undated, structure.<sup>115</sup> The premises of the Abbey mill, rebuilt c.1800, were modified to accommodate changes in the vicinity, notably the coming of the railway, but corn milling persisted until near the end of the mill’s life when it was converted into a small sawmill for an adjacent timber yard.<sup>116</sup> The mill was destroyed by fire in 1906, levelled and not rebuilt.<sup>117</sup> Excavations in 1986–8 discovered one of the cast-iron waterwheels, but walls, footings and culverts were removed for the construction of the adjacent gyratory road system.<sup>118</sup> Shrewsbury’s last surviving watermill was the former Trill Mill, now Monk’s Mill, which by the last quarter of the 19th century belonged to the Embrey family who had milling interests elsewhere in Shropshire.<sup>119</sup> The Embreys, owners of the Bricklayers Arms in Abbey Foregate, finally closed the mill c.1934,<sup>120</sup> bringing to an end probably more than a millenium of corn-milling on the lower reaches of the Rea brook.

### **Fisheries.**

At least 18 fisheries were recorded in Shropshire in 1086,<sup>121</sup> eight on the River Severn. Erected on suitable gravel banks or ‘riffles’ in the channel, they were typically constructed of nets or baskets held over funnels in wattle fences built across the river.<sup>122</sup> River traffic could by-pass the weirs by means of a gutter, either natural or artificial, the island so-created being known as a ‘bylet’. The two centuries after Domesday may have seen the peak of weir construction, and at least 40 sites on the Severn have been identified, six in Shrewsbury’s vicinity at Preston, Uffington, Pimley, Holywell, Coton,<sup>123</sup> and Crossgreen (Berwick),<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.; *Kelly’s Dir. Shropshire* (1922), 266; (1941), 267.

<sup>113</sup> Wharton, *ibid.*.

<sup>114</sup> Trinder, *Beyond the Bridges*, 77; Hobbs, *Shrewsbury Street Names*, 17.

<sup>115</sup> Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 216.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 184-9.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 189; *Shrewsbury Then and Now* (1991), no. 67.

<sup>118</sup> Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 179-189.

<sup>119</sup> *Kelly’s Dir. Shropshire* (1870), 139; (1891), 564; (1900), 392.

<sup>120</sup> SA DA5/516/1/1-3.

<sup>121</sup> G. Baugh (ed.), *A History of Shropshire*, IV (1989), 67.

<sup>122</sup> D. Pannett, ‘Fish Weirs of the River Severn’, *Folk Life* 26 (1987-8), 54-8.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 54, 56, 62; Hobbs, *Shrews. Street Names*, 121.

<sup>124</sup> SA 3365/784, m. 13d (1382), 3365/820 (1410).

although only two of these (Coton and Holywell) lay within the boundaries of the borough and Abbey Foregate.

### *Coton weir*

The 1267 agreement between Shrewsbury abbey and the borough over mills (above), also mentioned the ‘ancient and accustomed fishery of the burgesses’,<sup>125</sup> the earliest reference to the borough’s fishery. It lay beneath Coton Hill where the weir, and the ‘cliff’ above it, are mentioned in deeds of 1354 to 1363.<sup>126</sup> It may have been rebuilt c.1447–8 as the bailiff’s accounts of that year record £10 being spent in full payment *pro edificiatione gurgitis subtus Coton*.<sup>127</sup> About 1483 repairs were also made to a bridge at Coton called *le Glovers bruge*, next to the weir.<sup>128</sup> The ‘common’ weir at Coton was again mentioned in a deed of 1506, together, for the first time, its gutter,<sup>129</sup> and in the 1520s the tenant of the weir was sued in the Small Court for obstructing float-woods (rafts of timber) which had been sent downriver.<sup>130</sup> A petition to the bailiffs, complaining of the same problem, had already been received from a number of Welsh float-men c.1520,<sup>131</sup> and in 1527 Coton weir was also alleged to be a cause of flooding in adjacent riverside pastures.<sup>132</sup> It does not appear in a 1575 list of Shropshire weirs on the Severn,<sup>133</sup> and may have been closed after a Commission for Sewers c.1525–7 had investigated weirs in Shrewsbury’s vicinity.<sup>134</sup> A later request c.1618 to re-erect the weir was rejected by the corporation.<sup>135</sup>

On digging a gutter, it was normal for the parochial boundary, if it followed the river at that point, to be adjusted to accommodate the new line of navigation.<sup>136</sup> Thus the bylet created by the Coton gutter, although lying on the Frankwell floodplain and therefore a natural part of St Chad’s parish, appears in later maps as part of Coton in St Mary’s on the other side of the Severn.<sup>137</sup> The bylet itself was parcel of the borough estate, and was disposed of in 1544 (or

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<sup>125</sup> Rees (ed.), *Cart. Shrews.* I, 137.

<sup>126</sup> SA 6000/3247, 3761; 1514/470.

<sup>127</sup> SA 3365/377.

<sup>128</sup> SA 3365/421.

<sup>129</sup> SA 6000/3810; O & B, II, 471.

<sup>130</sup> SA 3365/1793 (1521–2, f. 22v; 1522–3, f. 17).

<sup>131</sup> SA 3365/2643.

<sup>132</sup> SA 3365/75/2, f. 9r.

<sup>133</sup> Pannett, ‘Fish Weirs’, 56–7.

<sup>134</sup> SA 3365/438 (accts.); 3365/2150.

<sup>135</sup> SA 3365/2643 (petition of Richard Lester).

<sup>136</sup> Pannett, ‘Fish Weirs’, 54.

<sup>137</sup> A. Hitchcock, *Map of the Borough of Shrewsbury* (1832).

perhaps c.1564),<sup>138</sup> supporting the idea that the weir had by then fallen into disuse. The barge gutter itself, illustrated in later prints, continued to be used for recreational purposes into the 19th century,<sup>139</sup> and only finally silted up after the main river channel was dredged in the 1920s to permit easier passage for pleasure boats.<sup>140</sup>

#### *Holywell weir.*

Both the bylet and the gutter of Shrewsbury abbey's fish-weir survive at Holywell, Abbey Foregate. The location, near the pasture called *le halywell*, was recorded c.1540 in the rental of ex-abbey properties.<sup>141</sup> The weir itself may have been constructed c.1230–1240 when the abbey acquired land on the opposite river-bank in Castlefields.<sup>142</sup> In 1536 the weir, with the slope (*helde*) of Holywell and all the fishing in the abbey liberty between the Stone Gate and Atcham Bridge, was let to the fisher Thomas Maunsell and his wife at 6s. 8d. p.a.<sup>143</sup> Both 'Halliwell Hill' and 'Weare Hill' belonged to the Prynce family by 1619,<sup>144</sup> and there is little doubt that the fishery also came into their hands after the Dissolution. By the 19th century conservation of fish stocks for sport on the upper Severn had become of increasing importance, and in 1811 the Earl of Tankerville, ultimate inheritor of the Prynce estate, agreed to close the Holywell fishery.<sup>145</sup> Since then erosion of the bylet has revealed timber stumps, possibly remains of the medieval fish-weir.<sup>146</sup>

#### *Other fisheries.*

Fish weirs did not prevent alternative attempts to exploit the Severn's resources. The Franciscan friars were fined c.1432 for keeping fish traps on the river, as were seven other 'common fishers'.<sup>147</sup> They were, in effect, licencees, though ten others presented at the same time for fishing were perhaps not, and in 1438 illegal fish nets, and rotting salmon catches, were destroyed by the town bailiffs.<sup>148</sup> Later in 1586 and 1593 the mercer George Trevenant, owner of the corn-mill on the Stone Bridge, was also presented for impounding the river above the bridge and erecting fish traps under the mill-house, said to impede the passage of

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<sup>138</sup> Bodleian, Gough Shrop. 12, f. 99.

<sup>139</sup> *Shropshire Notes & Queries*, 18 Jan. 1895.

<sup>140</sup> D. Pannett. 'Fish Weirs of the River Severn', *Salopian Recorder* 63 (2009), 3.

<sup>141</sup> TNA: PRO LR 2/184, f. 205v.

<sup>142</sup> Rees (ed.), *Cart. Shrews.* I, 142 (no. 165); Pannett, 'Fish Weirs', 56.

<sup>143</sup> TNA: PRO E 303/14/Salop/179.

<sup>144</sup> TNA: PRO C 142/374/79.

<sup>145</sup> Pannett, 'Fish Weirs', 57.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>147</sup> SA 3365/837.

<sup>148</sup> SA 3365/370.

barges.<sup>149</sup> However, the regulation of the borough's fishery is obscure. Among those presented c.1432 for keeping fish traps was the merchant Hugh Dyer who also kept two fishponds at 'The Stew' in Frankwell, on the north side of the approach to the Welsh Bridge.<sup>150</sup> In the early 15th century other fishponds are recorded at Roushill and Garewald's Tower,<sup>151</sup> probably the same 'stues or pitte about Thornes [Roushill] Meadow' of 1547,<sup>152</sup> exploiting the 'back-swamp' of a defunct river channel which formed the Roushill bylet recorded in 1313.<sup>153</sup> The fishpools of Shrewsbury abbey itself were doubtless located in the two pools at Carnecoll, each an acre in size, embanked and fenced,<sup>154</sup> and shown on Rocque's map of 1746 as lying between the mill leat and the Rea brook. They may have been excavated about the 11th to the 13th centuries, with the Rea brook being diverted further south.<sup>155</sup> By 1594, however, the pools were being used for leather preparation by the abbey's owner, Richard Langley.<sup>156</sup> The two pools were later amalgamated, probably c.1800, and then employed to feed the Abbey Mill.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> SA 3365/1098, 1112; 3365/1803 (3 Oct. 1593).

<sup>150</sup> TNA: PRO C 1/12/235; M. Peele, 'Medieval deeds of the Shrewsbury Drapers' company, *TSAS* 52 (1947-8), 226-7.

<sup>151</sup> SA 3365/820-1.

<sup>152</sup> SA 6002/93/229.

<sup>153</sup> SA 3365/3869. With thanks to Mr David Pannett for advice on this point.

<sup>154</sup> TNA: PRO LR 2/184, f. 258.

<sup>155</sup> Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury Abbey*, 218.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 85, 216.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.