

VCH SHROPSHIRE

Wem Rural

Sleap

by Judith Everard and Wendy Horton

This is a draft text prepared by Dr Judith Everard and Wendy Horton for VCH Shropshire

Following on the completion of the Wem short (2019), we took the decision to work on the townships of Wem Rural especially those which fell within the manor of Wem. Now, in July 2021, we are publishing as drafts the text prepared by Dr Everard and Ms Horton.

This text will be further amended in a number of respects. It will be expanded to include more material on landholding. Subsequent versions will include maps and other illustrations. At a later stage there will also be a section on agriculture.

We welcome suggestions, corrections and additional references.

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SLEAP

Before the Norman Conquest Sleaf was a manor held by one free man and by 1086 it was still held by one free man, now as a tenant of William Pantulf. This holding was divided into three freehold farms in the 16th century. The level ground between two streams supported this small agricultural community until 1943, when a military airfield was constructed which effectively occupied the whole territory of the former township and irrevocably changed its character.

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries

Sleaf comprised just 407 a. in an elongated triangle, oriented south west to north east. The eastern angle is formed by the confluence of Sleaf Brook and Sleaf Hall Brook, which were the northern and southern boundaries of the township. A straight hedgerow marks the shorter western boundary with Brandwood. Hence Sleaf is the land lying in the angle between the two brooks. Sleaf was bounded by Noneley (in Loppington) on the north, Tilley (Wem) in the east, Houlston (in Myddle) on the south and Brandwood (Myddle) to the west. From east to west, it was a mile and a half (from Tilley to Brandwood); and from north to south, at the widest point, three-quarters of a mile (from Sleaf Brook to Sleaf Hall Brook).¹

Sleaf was the only member of the manor of Wem allocated to Pimhill hundred. Its apparent allocation to 'Culvestan' hundred in Domesday Book is due to the scribe's failure to include a rubric for Baschurch [later Pimhill] hundred at this point.² It lay on the boundary of Bradford hundred, however, and abutted the manor of Wem.

Sleaf Parva, later known as Sleaf Hall, lay to the south, across Sleaf Hall Brook. By 1255 Sleaf Parva had been joined to the adjacent estate of Balderton, held ultimately of the FitzAlan barony of Oswestry. It was in the parish of Myddle and remained for administrative purposes within the township of Balderton. In this account, 'Sleaf' is used to refer to Sleaf Magna.

Landscape

¹ Garbet, 348.

² Eyton, *Antiquities*, v, 1; x, 42.

Sleap is of a uniform relief of around 83 m. ASL. The soil was described by Garbet as ‘for the most part very sandy’, although some of it was ‘moorish’ with ‘a black rotten earth, about a yard deep, on a gravelly bottom’.³ The sandy, well-drained soil seem at odds with the place name, Old English *slæp*: ‘slippery place’.⁴ It may however refer to the banks of the brooks that all but surround the township. Sleap is mentioned in a charter of Hugh Pantulf dated 1221, referring to a fish pond he had made, apparently on Sleap Brook, that flooded the abbot of Shrewsbury’s land in Noneley – whether it caused flooding in Sleap is not recorded.⁵

For most of its history the landscape of Sleap was formed by agricultural land uses. During the Second World War it was chosen as the site for an RAF station, no doubt recommended by it being uniformly level. Almost the whole land area of the township was taken over for this purpose. The runways and hangars occupied the northern part of the township and extended south into the adjacent part of Myddle. Within the RAF station, the hamlet was preserved, as well as the farmstead of Sleap Hall (in Myddle) with some of its land. Sleap airfield still dominates the landscape of the former township, although some of the outlying parts of the base and its structures are returning to nature or have been converted to educational, light industrial or agricultural use.

Communications

A road from Myddle traversed the township from west to east, and the medieval road from Shrewsbury via Bilmarsh traversed Sleap from south to north. These two roads met just before the confluence of Sleap Hall Brook with Sleap Brook. According to Richard Gough, writing c.1700, both of these routes were ‘Lanes ... which are not publicke roades and are not repaired at the publicke charge’.⁶ However, the former, at least, was recognised by Quarter Sessions in the 19th century as ‘the highway from Wem to Myddle’.⁷ North of the junction, the road crossed Sleap Brook above the confluence and continued, following the north bank of Sleap Brook, via Ruewood (named in 1221 as ‘Rodweie’ wood⁸) and Tilley village to

³ Garbet, 348.

⁴ Gelling, *PN Salop*. I, 274.

⁵ *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey*, ed. U. Rees. 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1975), no. 400; *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey in English Translation*, trans. A.M. Wilson (Marbury, 2008), no. 400. For Shrewsbury Abbey’s interests in Noneley, see *ibid.*, nos. 34, 131.

⁶ R. Gough, [history of] *Myddle*, 37, 50.

⁷ SA, QA3, ‘County Bridge Book 1846–1872’, 113–14. We are grateful to Rosemary Thornes for her work on this source.

⁸ *Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey*, ed. Rees, and *Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey in English Translation*, trans. Wilson, no. 400.

Wem. Construction of the airfield truncated the east–west road and ended through traffic, however, the road junction with the road to the south and a short distance to the west (including the site of Sleaf hamlet) has been preserved within the airfield layout.⁹

Post-medieval transport developments bypassed Sleaf, following higher ground. The road from Shrewsbury to Wem via Harmer Hill had apparently adopted a course similar to that of the modern B5476 for some time before 1700 and was turnpiked in 1756.¹⁰ Another turnpike from Wem via Loppington and Burlton (1771) bypassed Sleaf to the north west.¹¹ Finally the Shrewsbury–Crewe railway line passed to the east, with the nearest stations at Yorton and Wem.

With the construction of the RAF station in 1943, a new concrete road was made connecting the airfield with the Harmer Hill–Wem road (B5476).¹² At the same time, the old roads traversing Sleaf were blocked at the perimeters of the airfield. As they were now dead-ends, these roads fell into disuse and have been reduced to bridleways.

Bridges

Sleaf bridge crosses Sleaf Brook at the parish and township boundary. In 1869 Quarter Sessions ordered the county surveyor to inspect the bridge and survey the repairs needed, the county contributing to the cost. In 1870 it was under the authority of the Wem Highway Board.¹³ Nothing is known of the structure and appearance of the Sleaf Bridge which the county surveyor inspected c.1869 or any earlier examples. The bridge was demolished and replaced by a flat deck of coarse concrete, presumably when the airfield was created in 1943, and also served the SCC waste disposal site. It carries the road, now a track, up to a perimeter gate of the airfield which provides access for emergency vehicles.

To the south, a stone carriage bridge crosses Sleaf Hall Brook at the parish and township boundary. The bridge has long, low parapets of weathered stone blocks. It was presumably built and maintained at the expense of residents.

Population

⁹ Comparison of the 25” OS map, SJ 486266, with satellite view.

¹⁰ For before c.1700, see Gough, *Myddle*, 37; Harmer Hill to Whitchurch Turn Pike, 29 Geo II, c23 (d).

¹¹ Wem to Bron-y-Garth Turn Pike, 1771: 11 Geo III, c95; *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 24 Aug. 1776, 4.

¹² Woodward, 166; Reid, *Tilley*, 133; Shropshire Council, planning application no. 12/04582/FUL, Development Management Report.

¹³ SA, QA3, ‘County Bridge Book 1846–1872’, 113–14, 121.

A census taken by the curate of Wem in 1800 recorded a population of 23 in Sleaf township.¹⁴ In the national census of 1831 Sleaf had a population of 27 in four houses. Three of these were farms, of 145 a., 144 a. and 90 a. respectively, and the fourth household was headed by an agricultural labourer. Although there were one or two separate households of farm workers in the mid 19th century, with the population peaking at 37 in six households in 1861, from the 1871 census onwards there were just the three farms populated by the tenants' families and their resident farmworkers and servants. By 1911 the population of the three farms had declined to 16.

Construction of the RAF station in 1943 brought a rapid large increase in the population of Sleaf, with the arrival of construction workers and then military personnel, and later a post-war population living in the military accommodation while awaiting permanent housing. Today there appear to be just two farming households, but there are numbers of regular visitors for commercial and recreational purposes.

Census	Population	Houses
1831	27	4
1841	29	4
1851	29	4
1861	37	6 (1 uninhabited): Chidlow 220 a, Adams 144 a, Kent 88 a .
1871	23	3 Walmsley 80 a, Adams 158 a, Madeley 149 a
1881 (Loppington par.)	18	3 Walmsley 88 a, Adams 168a, Tomlinson 145 a
1891	19	3 Pitchford, Sleaf House; Brown, Sleaf Manor; Madeley, Sleaf Farm

¹⁴ *Wem Parish Registers, 778–9.*

1901	15	3 Williams, Madeley, Scott
1911	16	3 Madeley Price [Sleep House], Madeley [Sleep Farm], Price

Settlement

Sleep was an Anglo-Saxon estate held by one free man. In 1086, it was assessed as half a hide and still held by one free man. By the 16th century, the population of Sleep resided in a hamlet consisting of three farmsteads grouped together on the old Myddle–Wem road. It was identifiable as a settlement rather than scattered farmsteads; Richard Gough refers to it as ‘Sleape towne’ (as distinct from Sleep Hall in Myddle) and Samuel Garbet describes how the whole ‘towne’ was burnt down in 1738 by a fire that spread from house to house.¹⁵

The Built Environment

The Settlement: The three farmsteads in the centre of Sleep were completely destroyed by a fire in 1738 which started in the chimney of Sleep House Farm. Mr Wingfield, the owner, built a new farmhouse of brick under a tiled roof in order to reduce the risk of a future fire, the farm buildings likewise. The two properties on the north side of the road were replaced by timber-framed buildings brought from elsewhere. John Groom’s house came from ‘Darliston’ (probably Darliston, in Prees), having been purchased from George Tyler, whilst the second house was previously a messuage at ‘Wolverley Yard’ (in Wolverley, Wem), sold by John Hinton. These timber-framed houses are two of several which Garbet mentions in his *History of Wem*, as having been moved to new locations. It must have been relatively easy to dismantle and reassemble the frame, with the help of carpenters’ marks, but it also reflects the fact that by the 18th century, much of the timber from the parks and woodlands had already been felled.¹⁶

The tithe map of 1840 shows only four dwellings in Sleep, including the three farmsteads discussed above. The fourth was an isolated property on the lane running north towards Sleep Bridge. On the Ordnance Survey of 1881, these four properties are shown in more detail. Sleep House, on the south side of the lane, was a square-plan house with gardens to the south

¹⁵ *Quarter Sessions Orders*, I, 96, Apr. 1738: Sleep: certificate for a brief to five individuals for £1055 in respect of loss by fire; Garbet, 350–2.

¹⁶ Garbet, 350–2.

and east and a courtyard of farm buildings to the west. Sleaf Farm and Sleaf Manor adjoin on the north side of the road and are on similar-sized plots with large gardens and orchards. Each farm has a courtyard plan with house and L-shaped farm buildings. The isolated property to the north, which belonged to a labourer in 1831 (see p.), is much smaller, consisting of a single range fronting the road and a small range behind. No additional properties are shown in the township on the 1902 or 1926 editions of the map, although the fourth, isolated property is reduced in size. Sleaf House Farm was put up for sale as Lot 13 of the Noneley Estate in 1920, when it was occupied by Thomas Clay. It consisted of a five-bedroom house with extensive farm buildings including shippons, cattle sheds, a calf cote, stables, mash house, granary, loose boxes, a trap-house, piggeries and swill-house. The land amounted to c.91 a. including arable and pasture.

The most westerly farm range on the north side of the road survives; it was a lofted brick range with clay tile roof, oriented north-south. At Sleaf House Farm, a brick farmhouse of was constructed after outline planning permission was granted in 1980, whilst large agricultural buildings have also been erected there.¹⁷

Sleaf Airfield: The low-lying flat ground of Sleaf made it eminently suitable for an airfield. During the Second World War, an advanced military party stayed at Sleaf House in January 1943, to plan the opening of the airfield in April of that year. It was a satellite of RAF Tilstock near Whitchurch and started as No. 81 Operational Training Unit (OTU), with Whitley medium-sized bomber aircraft. In 1944 it became a special operations unit (38 Airborne Forces Group), the Whitleys towing Horsa heavy troop-carrying gliders on training missions. The Whitleys were replaced by Wellingtons in November 1944. In 1945 the base was closed, but the RAF reopened the airfield from 1956 to 1964 as a satellite of RAF Shawbury. It is still used as a relief airfield by RAF Shawbury for helicopter training operations, but the site is now home to Shropshire Aero Club, which also manages a museum of wartime relics.

The airfield covers both Sleaf Magna and Sleaf Parva and has three concrete runways. The control tower is in Sleaf Magna, aligned with the road which ran towards Myddle and west

¹⁷ Wem Tithe Map (Sleaf township), 1840; OS, 25", XXI.6, 1881, 1902, 1926; SA SC/10/44; Google Street View, 2009. SCC planning application: Erection of a farmhouse (on site of wartime demolished farmhouse), Airfield Farm, Sleaf, near Wem. Ref. No: N/80/00428/OUT; see also SCC planning permission: NS/03/01215 and NS/06/01832.

of the former settlement. It is a square two-storey flat-roofed block of type 13726/41, the standard design of a Watch Office for Bomber and OTU satellites. A wartime photograph shows the building, probably of brick with railings around the top, the small-pane windows of various sizes, and a balcony to the upper floor which was reached from an external staircase. The structure is still in use, with rendered walls and replacement windows, and is surmounted by a glazed control room. It looks out over an entrance courtyard to the east. Two accidents occurred, in August and September 1943, when aircraft crashed into the control tower causing fatalities but the tower was repaired afterwards.

A detailed map of the airfield, released after its declassification, shows the three farmsteads of the original settlement. A label for Sleaf House notes that its farm ranges and outbuildings were used as workshops, stores and garages. Surrounding the control tower were small buildings, including a signals square, a balloon filling hut, flare path party hut, stores and a blast shelter. To the east, around the former road junction, was a bulk tank for aviation fuel, a machine gun range and a transformer plinth. Ruins of the brick-built machine gun range still survive.

Some of the former buildings of the airfield have been re-used as industrial units. South of the machine gun range, a school for children with complex needs was developed from 2016, formed by adding modular buildings to an existing unit. On the airfield itself, several new portal-framed steel aircraft hangars have been constructed, many receiving planning permission in 2018–19.¹⁸

LANDOWNERSHIP

In 1066 *Eslepe* was held by one free man, Wulfric (*Uluric*). In 1086 it was still held by one free man (unnamed) who now held of William Pantulf, lord of the adjacent manor of Wem.

By 1255 Sleaf Parva, or ‘the grange of Sleaf’, later Sleaf Hall, in Myddle parish, appears as a tenement distinct from Sleaf (Magna) in Wem parish.¹⁹ In a deed of 1471, for

¹⁸ <http://www.lightaircraftassociation.co.uk/Airfields/sleaf.html>; <https://www.abct.org.uk/airfields/airfield-finder/sleaf>; controltowers.co.uk/S/Sleaf; pastscape.org.uk: 1410445; SA, C29.v.f.: Sleaf Airfield Site Plan, published by *After the Battle* magazine; Shropshire HER PRN 29116: **SCAS Report 357, 2014, p. 103**; T. Neal, *Shropshire Airfields* (2005), 104–5; Shropshire Council Planning Application: 16/01522.

¹⁹ *Rot. hundr.*, ii, 75; Roll of tenants in chief for Bradford and Pimhill hundreds, c.1284: SA, 6000/2651; SA, 6000/6304, ‘grangia de Slepe’ (1318).

good measure, Sleap township was named ‘Slepe Magna in Wemmeslond’.²⁰ The obvious explanation for this would be the division of Domesday Sleap into two unequal portions. Nevertheless, Domesday Sleap was assessed at half a hide, while in 1255 Sleap Magna and Sleap Parva were worth half a hide each. There could be an alternative explanation, however. Adding the rubric for Baschurch hundred next to Sleap in Domesday Book results in two manors of William Pantulf appearing beneath that rubric: Sleap and ‘Sudtelch’. The latter remains unidentified.²¹ Like Sleap, it was held by one free man and assessed at half a hide. It is therefore possible that ‘Sudtelch’ is to be identified with the half-hide estate later known as Sleap Parva and therefore that the two estates existed as separate entities by 1066. Their separate identity is also consistent with the fact that Sleap Magna was in the parish of Wem and Sleap Parva in the parish of Myddle, without any apparent contention between the two parish churches. Lordship of Sleap Parva had passed from William Pantulf to the FitzAlan lordship of Oswestry by 1255. It subsequently descended with lordship of the manor of Myddle.²²

Returning to Sleap (Magna), around 1200, the ‘villa de Slepe’ was held by Richard de Slepe of Hugh Pantulf and his heirs by homage and service for 16s. per annum with services including the obligation to mill at Pantulf’s mill, supply labour to maintain the mill, and give aid at Pantulf’s castle when aid was required from other free tenants.²³ Richard de Slepe also held a parcel of meadow that was enclosed in Tilley Park in the mid 13th century.²⁴ Ivo son of Robert de Slepe held land in neighbouring Noneley.²⁵ Richard, son of Hugh de Slepe, among other tenants of John Le Strange, was named in 1256 in a civil plea brought by Reginald de Slepe concerning common rights in heathland pasture in Bilmarsch (*Byllmers*).²⁶ Richard de Slepe, however, had fled when accused of killing Walter de *Sywaldeston*, and was outlawed in 1256, when his forfeited chattels were valued at the not inconsiderable sum

²⁰ SA, 3706/IV/A/33.

²¹ Eyton, *Antiquities*, v, 1; x, 206; Gelling, *PN Salop*, V, 1.

²² *Rot. hundr.*, ii, 75; SA, 6000/6304, 6305; SA, DA4/999/1/3/1; Bagshaw, 335.

²³ *Survey 1561*, 160–1, copy of undated charter of Hugh Pantulf (fl. c.1180 x 1225).

²⁴ SA, 3607/IV/A/49: undated charter recording agreement between Ralph le Botiler, lord of Wem, and Robert of Beslow, over the enclosure of Tilley park, c.1240 x 1281.

²⁵ *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey*, ed. U. Rees. 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1975), nos. 253–4, ‘c. 1231–40’; *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey in English Translation*, trans. A.M. Wilson (Marbury, 2008), nos. 253–4. That the lords of Sleap shared the Christian names Hugh and Ivo with the Pantulf barons of Wem suggests they were either related or closely allied.

²⁶ *Shropshire Eyre Roll 1256*, 37, no. 98.

of 28s. 5d.²⁷ Richard's disgrace may be the reason why in 1255 the tenant of Sleap (Magna) was Robert de Beslow, holding two virgates in *Slepe* for 16s. per annum, as well as the customary dues of 'motfech' and 'streteward'.²⁸ At the same time, Richard de Slepe, son of Hugh de Slepe, was paying Ralph le Botiler, baron of Wem, 4d. per annum for his *advocaria*, perhaps to be understood as protection and sanctuary,²⁹ and Richard's kin continued to hold Sleap Parva.³⁰ Around 1284, *Slepe Magna* was said to be held of Ralph le Botiler by the service of one mounted soldier (*montar*) for 15 days at Wem castle.³¹ In 1328 William Banastre of Yorton was the free tenant of the 'villa' of *Magna Slepe*.³² By the 1540s it had descended to Richard Banaster of Hadnall, still liable to 'fre rent' of 16s. per annum.³³

In 1545 Banaster sold Sleap [Magna], 'that is, all the lande that the Lorde haithe to his freehold in that Toune', to William Nonely and William Groome; the latter, at least, was already the tenant of one messuage there. The estate then consisted of four messuages and one cottage with four virgates ('yardes of land') in the township and fields of Sleap with commons and appurtenances.³⁴ By 1561 it had been divided into three tenements held by the heir of Richard Drury, William Groom and John Parbolde, respectively.³⁵ In 1589, George Tyler, Richard Groom, William Parbold and Richard Petton held Sleap as 120 a. by knight service, for 16s. per annum.³⁶ A three- or fourfold tenure continued thereafter, as did the 16s. rent. In 1683 there were four estates of equal rateable value held by Thomas Wingfield of

²⁷ *Shropshire Eyre Roll 1256*, 250, no. 708; contrary to the edition, *Sywaldeston* is not Soulton (Wem) but a lost place-name in Wroxeter parish, hence *Drayton* is Dryton (Wroxeter): M. Gelling, in collaboration with H.D.G. Foxall, *The Place-Names of Shropshire*, VI (Nottingham, 2012), 217–18.

²⁸ *Rot. hundr.*, ii, 75. For Beslow, a member of the barony of Wem, see Eyton, *Antiquities*, viii, 40–1; *Survey 1561*, 146–7; Robert de Beslow was also a tenant in Tilley: SA, 3607/IV/A/49, and see 'Tilley'.

²⁹ *Rot. hundr.* ii, 58. See R. Stewart-Brown, 'The avowries of Cheshire', *EHR*, 29 (1914), 41–55; G. White, 'The Magna Carta of Cheshire', May 2015: http://magnacarta.cmp.uea.ac.uk/read/feature_of_the_month/May_2015_6 (accessed 27 Oct. 2019).

³⁰ See also SA, 6000/6305, undated (13th-century) charter of John Le Strange, lord of Myddle, granting land at Bilmarsh to Reynor de Slepe, son of Richard de Slepe; SA, 6000/6304, Roger, son and heir of Reyner de Slepe, tenant of 'the grange of Slepe' (1318).

³¹ SA, 6000/2651. The tenant is not named. For 'montar' (mounted) service, see F.C. Suppe, *Military Institutions on the Welsh Marches: Shropshire, A.D. 1066–1300* (Woodbridge, 1994), 73–86.

³² SA, 3706/IV/A/30.

³³ SA, 3706/IV/A/34 (1541).

³⁴ *Survey 1561*, 160–1. For Groome's leasehold, see SA, 3706/IV/A/34.

³⁵ *Survey 1561*, 160–1.

³⁶ TNA, LR 2/225.

Preston Brockhurst (the former Drury estate), William Groom, Edward Garland³⁷ and ‘Widow’ Morgan. The last was later largely absorbed by the Wingfield estate. In the mid 18th century, the three tenants were Rowland Wingfield of Preston Brockhurst, John Groom and William Greenwollers (married to the heiress of the Garland estate).³⁸

In 1805 there were four landowners in Sleaf: C.G. Greenwollers (225 a.), J. Groom (97 a.), John Lloyd (34 a.) and John Walmsley (26 a.) (total 381 a.), all but Lloyd farming their own land.³⁹ At the tithe apportionment in 1841, landholding had concentrated in the hands of three landowners, none of whom farmed their own land: Christiana Lloyd (two tenanted farms: 185 a., 47 a.), William Groom (140 a.) and Robert Betton (24 a.). The lord still possessed almost 2 a. of withy beds and plantations and 6 a. of roads and waste.⁴⁰ In 1851 the principal landowners were William Groom, the Wem solicitor Henry John Barker, Mrs Thomas Betton, and the representatives of Miss Lloyd.⁴¹ In 1891 the three farming households remaining in the township were named as Sleaf House, Sleaf Manor and Sleaf Farm.⁴² Sleaf House farm, around 92 a., was part of the Noneley estate when it was offered for sale in 1920.⁴³

In 1942 all the properties in Sleaf were requisitioned by the Air Ministry for the construction of an RAF station. The land was returned to private ownership in 1964.⁴⁴ It is currently owned by the quarrying company, Hanson UK. Shropshire Aero Club has leased the airfield since 1955.⁴⁵

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Farming

³⁷ For Garland, see SA, 327/2/4/2/276 (1674).

³⁸ Garbet, 350–2; SA, P295/B/3/11.

³⁹ SA, 167/47.

⁴⁰ Tithe apportionment, pp. 59–62.

⁴¹ Bagshaw, 335.

⁴² 1891 census.

⁴³ SA, SC/10/44.

⁴⁴ TNA, AIR 29/687/1; TNA, AIR 2/16939–16940; *Shropshire Star*, 30 Mar. 2017.

⁴⁵ Shropshire Council, planning application no. 12/04582/FUL, Development Management Report, par. 4.2.4; <http://www.flysac.co.uk/>

In 1086, Sleaf had arable for one plough team and woodland pasture for just six pigs. It was valued at 5s., which had not changed from 1066.

...

Farming resumed after 1945 based on Sleaf House Farm, where a new farm house was built c.1980. In 2010, when the whole property was advertised for sale, Sleaf House Farm comprised 21 a. including the pre-war brick barn, stables and a number of other agricultural buildings, and 5 a. of aircraft hangars. In the same ownership, but across the parish border in Sleaf [Hall] (Myddle), were New House Farm and Meadowlands, comprising 60 a. with two wooden buildings used for rearing free-range poultry. From 2013, Meadowlands was developed separately by the Grocott family of Prees (Meadowlands Poultry Ltd) for large-scale poultry production.⁴⁶

Other

Shropshire Aero Club was formed in 1955 and has occupied Sleaf airfield ever since. Under the club's management, the airfield operates as the only general aviation airfield in Shropshire. Sleaf airfield offers commercial services to private aviation, aircraft hire and pilot training, as well as a visitor attraction offering a café and museum of the airfield's wartime history.⁴⁷

Land between the northern perimeter of the airfield and Sleaf Brook, possibly a former quarry (see below), was used by SCC for the disposal of household waste from the 1960s, with 20 m. of waste accumulated by the late 1980s when the site was capped with 1 m. of earth, grassed and restored by SCC.⁴⁸ A refuse incinerator may have been installed at the airfield in the 1990s, but in 2014 Shropshire Council centralised household waste incineration at Battlefield (Shrewsbury).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Birmingham Post & Mail*, 2010; *Shropshire Star*, 27 Feb., 2013; SCC, Planning applications: 15/01921/EIA, 15/01937/EIA, 15/01938/EIA.

⁴⁷ Shropshire Aero Club website: <https://www.shropshireaeroclub.com/> (accessed 21 June 2021).

⁴⁸ A. Young, *Applications of Computer Modelling to Landfill Processes*. DoE Report CWM 039A/92 (?Oxford, 1992), pp. 47, 55: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ayoung/LF/cwm039b.pdf>; A. Reid, *Tilley. The Secret History of a Secret Place* (Shrewsbury, 2003), 133.

⁴⁹ House of Commons, Standing Committees, 'Incineration of Waste', debate 16 June 1999, Owen Patterson, MP (North Shropshire); *Shropshire Star*, 13 Nov. 2014.

Sleap, including the airfield site, may be used for quarrying. It is assigned to Shropshire Council's landbank for the supply of sand and gravel aggregates.⁵⁰ In 2020, the landowner, Hanson Quarry Products Europe Ltd, obtained permission to expand its quarry at Condoover (Shrops.), delaying for the time being the 'reactivation' of the Sleap quarry.⁵¹

SOCIAL HISTORY

Education

A small independent school and residential accommodation for children with emotional social, behavioural and learning difficulties was registered in 2005, located near the airfield. The school site has progressively expanded; when inspected in 2017, there were places for up to 50 pupils of both sexes, aged 11 to 19 years.⁵²

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

As Sleap (Magna) was a manor held by William Pantulf by 1086 was contiguous with Wem manor, it was incorporated in Wem parish.⁵³ Organised religion for the residents of Sleap, in general, was the same as for Wem and, more particularly, the neighbouring township of Tilley.

Licence to hold Nonconformist meetings was granted to William Cooke of Sleap Hall (Myddle parish) in 1690.⁵⁴ He was described by Richard Gough of Myddle, c.1700, as a Cheshire man 'in good repute'.⁵⁵

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

⁵⁰ Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council: Draft Shropshire Local Aggregates Assessment 2014 (2014), p. 3: <https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/8324/ev28-draft-laa-9-7-14.pdf>

⁵¹ *Shropshire Star*, 29 July 2020.

⁵² Rubicon School: Ofsted Report 2007; Smallbrook School: Ofsted Reports 2013, 2017.

⁵³ Eyton, *Antiquities*, x, 205. See, e.g. *Wem Parish Registers, passim*.

⁵⁴ *Salop Quarter Sessions, Orders*, I, 129.

⁵⁵ Gough, *History of Myddle*, 51.

Sleap (Magna) was a manor held by William Pantulf by 1086 and was contiguous with Wem, via Tilley.⁵⁶ Sleap was never closely attached to the manor of Wem, however; it did not owe suit to the manor court of Wem but to the hundred and county courts.⁵⁷ By the mid 18th century, the constable of Sleap was sworn in at the manor court of Myddle.⁵⁸

For the purposes of parochial government, Sleap was assessed within the Aston quarter of Wem parish. Payments were made occasionally from the church rates collected in Aston quarter to the constable of Sleap.⁵⁹

Sleap is now in Myddle and Broughton Civil Parish.

⁵⁶ Eyton, *Antiquities*, x, 205.

⁵⁷ *Rot. hundr.*, ii, 75.

⁵⁸ Garbet, 352.

⁵⁹ SA, P295/B/3/11, e.g. 1715.