

VCH SHROPSHIRE

Newport

Victoria Park

With an appendix on The Vineyard

This text has been prepared for VCH Shropshire by Professor Richard Hoyle with the research assistance of Dr Judith Everard.

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Victoria Park

Victoria Park was an area of 10½ acres situated at the north end of the town between the canal to the north, Vineyard Road to the south and Watery Lane to the West. Despite its name, it was never a park in the understood sense but served as a showground for the Newport and District Agricultural Society's shows and other entertainments. In 1938 it was sold to Newport Urban District Council who developed the east end of the site as a housing estate. Between 1967 and 1973 a swimming pool was built on the site and a childrens' playground in the south-west corner. The remainder of the site remains open as a public space. At an earlier date the park was known as Vineyard Park.

The tithe map shows the area divided between five fields (nos. 74, 75, 79, 84 and 85). By the time of the OS survey of 1892, most of the field boundaries had been removed but standard trees continued to mark the lines of removed hedges. There were also farm buildings in the north-west corner (no. 78). A large fishpond placed centrally was measured by the OS at 0.456 acres. On the tithe map this was a large pond with a small one lying close to it, but by the time of the OS survey they had been made into one. The pond(s) were regarded locally as the last remnants of the mill pond. The merged pond was still visible on the OS map revised in 1954 but had been filled in by the time of the 1967 revision.

At the time of the tithe map the whole area was in the ownership and possession of Thomas Jukes Collier (d. 1846). It was bought by John Holland from Colier's devisee, Thomas Boulton, in 1855 and was in the ownership of John Holland on his death in 1870.¹ Mrs Holland was always thanked in press reports for her permission to use the park for events in the 1890s.

In 1918 Frank Siberia Kelly, a Newport draper, bought Victoria Park from the Holland Family. By this time it had been heavily mortgaged. It was described in the conveyance as a single field of 10½ acres with a cottage.² Kelly died in 1931 and his executors offered the field at auction on 18 February 1938 when it was acquired by Newport UDC for £950. The formalities of purchase were completed in September 1938.³ The council also acquired from Kelly's heirs the property called Paradise which faced onto Watery Lane and which Kelly had

¹ SA, Liddle and Heane, p. 23; 1101/31/1, mortgage 8 Sept. 1894.

² Telford and Wrekin Council, Deed Packet 492 (2), conveyance 30 Oct. 1918. The mortgages are listed in the conveyance.

³ Telford and Wrekin Council, Deeds Packet 492 (1), conveyance 9 Sept. 1938.

bought in 1919. They also made a number of other small purchases of properties about this time to round out their Victoria Park property.⁴

The council saw the land as building land rather than a recreational asset. Their housing estate - called Victoria Park - was envisaged before the war but was finally built to a new design after it.⁵

The use of these fields as a showground can be traced back to at least 1874 when the North Shropshire Agricultural Society held its show in a field belonging to Mrs Holland called Vineyard Park. The show came to Vineyard Park again in 1878. In March 1877 the Local Board received a letter asking it to make provision for sports. A debate in the Board acknowledged that a cricket ground was needed as well as a space for public recreation and amusement.⁶ It is not clear whether Vineyard Park was seen as meeting this need and whether Mrs Holland should be seen a benefactor to the town. Certainly in 1880 a football match between Market Drayton and Newport was played in Victoria Park, apparently the first occasion when the fields were given this name in print.⁷

The Shropshire Agricultural Society met at Victoria Park in 1888.⁸ Shortly after the Society merged with the West Midland Agricultural Society. This was resented locally and a new society, the Newport and District Agricultural Society was founded and held its first show in 1890.⁹ Victoria Park was then the Society's showground until 1931. In 1932 the Society considered whether it should carry on and whilst on a vote of members it resolved that it should, no further shows were held at Victoria Park. It was argued in 1932 that the park was not satisfactory as a showground. It was difficult to steward and so to collect admission money. The ready supply of car parking round the showground meant that the takings from parking were less than the Society wished. In 1935 the Society advertised for sale all the showground furniture it held at the site.¹⁰ When the show revived in 1947, it met on a new site on Forton Road in Islington, actually in Staffordshire.¹¹

⁴ Telford and Wrekin Council, Deed packet 492 (1), conveyance 11 Feb. 1939.

⁵ Newport UDC minutes; DA 11/701/2.

⁶ DA11/990/1, 2 Mar. 1877: report in the *Newport and Market Drayton Adv.*, 3 Mar., 7 Apr. 1877.

⁷ SC 15 July, 16 Sept. 1874; 20 Sept 1878; 3 Dec. 1880.

⁸ SC, 20, 27 July 1888. For a history of Newport show, D. Adams, *The history of Newport and District Agricultural Society. The first hundred years* (1989).

⁹ Adams, *Newport and District Agricultural Society*, pp. 3-7: SC 29 July 1910.

¹⁰ Adams, *Newport and District Agricultural Society*, p. 30; SC 24 May 1935; *Staffs. Adv.* 1 June 1935.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3, 34

Victoria Park was also used for other purposes. Football matches continued to be held there, a carnival in 1925, a sports meeting in 1920 and a circus in 1932.¹² It was also farmland: in 1916 the stock of Victoria Park Farm was offered for sale by the executors of William Derrington who had been the tenant in 1910.¹³

APPENDIX

The Vineyard

The Vineyard was a close of land whose general – but not exact – location is known. It gave its name to a much larger area and ultimately Vineyard Road.¹⁴

The earliest reference to the Vineyard comes from the churchwarden's rate of 1694/5 which has an entry for Mr Holmes Ho[use] and the 'Veniard'. As this is the earliest extant churchwarden's account it should be not assumed that the placename was recently invented: it is almost certainly older. In 1697 William Holmes mortgaged a close called the Vineyard with a small close adjoining (but not a house) to one Ann Rhodes, a widow of Oulton (Ches.). In 1706, the mortgage not having been satisfied, Holmes and Rhodes sold the premises to Elizabeth Du Gard, the widow of the Anglican divine Samuel Du Gard, Rector of Forton (d. 1697). Apparently she was a nominee for her sister, Hannah Kimberley, who made the purchase. Elizabeth Du Gard left her right in the Vineyard to Hannah in her will of 1729 (proved 1730). In turn Hannah Kimberley left the land to her niece, Elizabeth's daughter. Hannah, the wife of the Revd Thomas Perkes (d. 1766). The descent of the land then remained in the Dugard family until Thomas Dugard of Shrewsbury, Doctor of Physic, sold the Vineyard to Thomas Jukes Collier of Newport Esq. in 1810.

Collier still held it at his death in 1846. The Vineyard was included in the sale of his property advertised that year.¹⁵ It was bought by John Holland of Newport from Collier's devisee in 1854-5.

¹² Football, for instance *SC* 20 Nov.; 4 Dec 1903; 1 Jan. 1904; Carnival, 28 Aug. 1925; sports meeting, 3 Sept. 1920; Circus, *Staffs. Adv.* 7 May 1932.

¹³ IR 58/75921 no. 849; *Staffs Adv.* 22 July 1916. There were farm buildings on Watery Lane.

¹⁴ The following account is chiefly based on an abstract of title, SA, 1011/5/1/5A(b). The placename is not acknowledged in the EPNS account of the placenames of Newport.

¹⁵ *Eddowes's Shrewsbury Journal*, 23 Sept. 1846.

Collier was responsible for bringing together all the land which later formed Victoria park.¹⁶ It is all shown in his ownership in the tithe apportionment of 1840. This does not regularly give placenames which would help us identify which field was the Vineyard: the name does not appear. The conveyance of 1697 says that the Vineyard adjoined a close called Warden's Croft which is named on the tithe apportionment. In 1706 we are told that the close being conveyed had been known as Warden's Croft but was now called the Vineyard: it lay between Warden's Croft and the Hoyles. In 1763, The Vineyard was bounded by 'Nearer Common' (4 a., owned by the Burgesses), which was near the Hoyles and on its other sides was bounded by the Strine brook and Calvercrofts.¹⁷ This gives a general location.

In the conveyance of 1810, The Vineyard was said to extend to 2a 3r 0p. This allows us to identify the Vineyard with the field to the north of Warden's Croft running alongside what was later called Vineyard Road. The Hoyles was on the other side of this road. In the tithe apportionment this field (numbered 84) was measured at 2a 3r 23p which is a close match to the acreage given in 1810. This field was built on soon after the Second World War when Victoria Park was developed. If this seem plausible, then the sale advertisement of 1846 and the contract for the purchase of the Collier estate is quite explicit that The Vineyard was a different field, no 85 on the map amounting to 1a 2r 11p, which formed the western edge of the Collier estate, and an affidavit secured at the time was clear that one end of this field had been sold to the canal company. Whilst it makes perfect sense for field 84 to be The Vineyard, in 1854 the name was given to the adjacent field 85.¹⁸

Vineyard Road was a mid- or late nineteenth-century coinage. In medieval sources the road is called the lane or way leading towards Calvercroft or the Pool Head. After the Newport workhouse was constructed on the south side of the lane, it took the name Workhouse Lane. After the workhouse moved to a new site on Audley Avenue, the road came to be called Vineyard Road. The name first appears in estate agent's advertisements in the mid-1860s.¹⁹ Vineyard Place as a placename is found from the late 1850s and there is a suggestion that the properties there are a repurposing of the old workhouse buildings.²⁰

¹⁶ A draft affidavit of 1854-5 says that Collier bought The Upper Wardens Croft, the Lower Warden's Croft and the Wardens Meadow and the Coppice or Wilderness from The Rev. Robert Outlaw in 1804. SA, 1101/55/1/5B (c). See the abstract of title at SA, 1011/5/1/5A(e).

¹⁷ SA, NB/E/3/1.

¹⁸ SA, 1101/55/1/5B (c), Draft agreement for sale, 4 Dec. 1854; affidavit of Thomas Cartwright, 1855. Field 84 is not given a name.

¹⁹ *Newport and Market Drayton Advertiser*. 31 Mar. 1866, 16 Sept. 1866, 25 May 1867.

²⁰ For instance SC, 24 June 1859 (sale advert of a house called Mount Pleasant), 15 June 1860; *Eddowes*, 15 June 1864. *Eddowes* 5 Apr. 1865 equates Vineyard Place with the old workhouse buildings.

The question will be asked whether there was ever a vineyard. A number of authorities have held that the placename indicates the presence of a vineyard (or at least the growing of grapes for the table) and so the possibility of there having been one cannot be ruled out, but there is no evidence to support it either.²¹

²¹ For instance George Redmonds, *The Yorkshire Historical Dictionary. A glossary of Yorkshire words, 1120-c.1900* (2 vols, Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society Rec. Ser, 165-6, 2021), II, p. 653.