

Henry Pidgeon

THE SALOPIAN ANNALS

1823-1830



Transcribed by VCH Shropshire, 2022
With minor revisions 2025

Title Page: the monochrome view of Shrewsbury which forms the frontispiece to volume VII of the Annals.

Shropshire Archives, 6001/3059

The transcript is made available in this format with the permission of Shropshire Archives.

Contents

I	10 January 1823-30 December 1824	1
II		
III		
IV	2 January 1826-18 March 1827	33
V	19 March 1827-19 September 1828	91
VI	3 October 1828-19 March 1830	145
VIII	21 March 1830-24 August 1830	199

[This page is intentionally left blank]

The *Salopian Annals* by Henry Pidgeon

The *Salopian Annals* written by Henry Pidgeon (1806-71), later in life a chemist in the High Street and the town's borough Treasurer, are not a new discovery for they have been drawn on by previous historians of Shrewsbury. However, a full transcript of the *Annals* to improve their accessibility has long been a desiderata. We have answered this need with the transcript which follows.

There were seven volumes of the *Annals* which Pidgeon numbered I to VII, but volumes II and III are not known to survive. The other five were acquired by Shrewsbury Public Library and are now in Shropshire Archives. The seventh volume ends abruptly part way through so in reality we have four and a half volumes.

Our purpose in producing the transcript was primarily to make the contents of the *Annals* available to the researchers preparing VCH Shropshire, VI, part two, the thematic account of the city of Shrewsbury. The utility of the transcription is so great that we make it available here and on the VCH Shropshire website. But it is a working text, a transcript, not an edition. The scholarly apparatus which might usefully be provided has not been attempted. There are doubtless inconsistencies in presentation to be ironed out. The transcribers worked from images of the *Annals*: we have left the image numbers in place so that checks can be made on readings of the text without recourse to the original documents.

We have not attempted discover how much of the material in the *Annals* also appears in the Shrewsbury newspapers. We do not know the extent to which the *Annals* are derivative of them or alternatively how much of the *Annals* was published by Pidgeon elsewhere, either locally or in a national publication such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* (to which he was an occasional contributor).

If this were explored, then it might also be possible to explain what Pidgeon's motivation was in writing. And if this could be understood better, then we might also learn why he stopped so abruptly, part way through a volume. It a matter of regret that Pidgeon did not continue into the mid-1830s. An account by him of political activity in the town during the years of Reform could not be other than valuable especially given his conservative leanings.

The transcript is the work of several hands. Nicola Bramah-Taylor, Peter Everall and Richard Hoyle all did sections, but the larger part of the work fell to Janice Cox who on several occasions outpaced my ability to send her more photographs from which to work. The whole text has been read against the originals by Tony Carr. We are grateful to them all for their contribution and hope they draw pleasure from the finished production.

R. W. Hoyle
February 2023

The revised text tidies up some presentational matters. The text itself is unaltered. A short description of the manuscripts and Pidgeon's way of working has been added.

October 2025

[This page is intentionally left blank]

The manuscripts of the Salopian Annals

The extant volumes of the *Salopian Annals* are five hardbacked notebooks, the first 6.4 inches wide and 7.8 inches tall, the other four slightly larger at 7.8 inches wide and 10 inches tall. All have half leather spines: the boards are covered with marbled paper. The pages themselves were unruled. The first of the five books bears an auction sticker '573': the last has a stationer's label of James Hall of Shrewsbury.

The books have title pages of increasing sophistication with illustrations in monochrome watercolour.

Vol. I. Simple lettering in Pidgeon's hand, 'Salopian Annals | Vol i | 1823 | by | Henry Pidgeon'.

Vol IV has a watercolour drawing of the Loggerheads placed centrally on the page, which reads 'Salopian Annals | Vol IV | [loggerheads] | A.D. 1826 | Henry Pidgeon, Shrewsbury'. At the head of the first page is a small watercolour of a scroll with foliage surrounding it, the scroll reading '1826, Henry Pidgeon'. The heading to the entries for 1827 at p. 73 has a monochrome watercolour of a river with the ruined keep of a castle on a bluff on its far side, with stepping stones over the river, and trees to the left and right.

Vol V also has the loggerheads placed centrally on the title page. The text reads 'Salopian Annals | vol v | [loggerheads] A, D, [sic] 1627 | Henry Pidgeon, Shrewsbury'. The head of the first page has a small centrally-placed monochrome watercolour image of a chest tomb, the side of the tomb bearing the slogan '1827 by Henry Pidgeon'. Behind is the silhouette of two church spires (St Mary's and St Alkmund's) in the distance.

Vol VI has a half title page as before. The head of the first page is a full page-width monochrome watercolour view of Shrewsbury from the north looking over the Severn, with the Abbey to the left and the spires to the right as they appear in the illustration in the previous book. There is a group of three people in the foreground with what may be baskets. A seated figure with his back to the artist is playing a recorder to two women. There are cattle to the left and in the middle distance, apparently with a figure tending to the latter.

Vol VII has a plain title page like volume I bearing the text 'Salopian Annals | vol vii | by Henry Pidgeon | A. D. 1830'. The following page (unnumbered by Pidgeon) has a full width view of Shrewsbury showing the spires, castle etc, with the rays of the sun breaking through clouds. There are two figures on a road with fence rails in the foreground.

The late Tony Carr suggested to me that the watercolours were not Pidgeon's work, but were done for him by his mentor, the Shrewsbury school master David Parkes (1763-1833) whose expertise as an artist is well testified.

The first volume has an index by Pidgeon at the rear. The middle three have indexes loosely inserted; the last has no index, perhaps because the book was, for whatever reason, never completed.

The *Annals* are very clean and without amendment or correction. One assumes that Pidgeon drafted out his text before copying it into the book: the appearance may be that

he entered a sizeable section of text at a time. He wrote his account on the right hand page (recto) only. The left hand page was left blank and used for updates to the text on the right. A few of these follow a considerable period after the events described on the right, but most come fairly soon afterwards. Our practice has been to integrate the additional text on the left into the main account of the right. We have tried to ensure that the additional text will be readily distinguishable.

October 2025