

A SECOND MALPAS MISCELLANY



David Hayns

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Published in 2019 by David Hayns
Stoke Cottage, Church Street, Malpas, Cheshire SY14 8PD
davidhayns.123@btinternet.com

PHOTOGRAPHS

Front cover Aerial view of Malpas from the south-west (courtesy Professor Nick Higham).

Title page Alport School pupils dancing around the maypole on the Ox Heyes during celebrations to mark the coronation of King George V in 1911.

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MALPAS FAIRS AND MARKETS

Malpas Cross, possibly with some of its medieval steps surviving but now surmounted by a memorial to a Victorian rector, is a reminder of the livestock fairs and weekly markets that were held in the town until the middle of the 19th century. It was in 1281 that King Edward 1st granted a charter to *'Philip Burnel and to Isabel, his wife, that they and their heirs shall have for ever a weekly market on Mondays at their manor of Maupus in the county of Chester, and a fair in the same place to last for three days each year'*. In 1353 Edward the Black Prince, in his capacity of Earl of Chester, issued a notice stating that *'... inasmuch as the market of Le Malpas, which used to be held on a Monday, was ordered to be held on Sunday because the neighbouring market of Whitchurch is held on Monday, and the prince, considering the Sunday is a day on which all Christians ought to attend divine service and withdraw themselves as far as possible from secular works, has granted ... that the men of Malpas shall hold their market every week on Tuesday, or such other day as shall be least prejudicial to the neighbouring markets – to take good information touching the neighbouring markets and the days on which they are held and cause proclamation to be made that*

henceforth the market at Le Malpas will be held every Tuesday, or other suitable day, for the sale of all manner of wares, but that none the less all men may buy and sell bread, ale, flesh and small victuals every Sunday, as they used to do'.

Later, in 1365, the Prince sent an order from Gascony stating that *'inasmuch as the prince by advice of his council has ordained that the two fairs shall be held every year at the town of Malpas, one at Martinmas [the Feast of Saint Martin on 11th November] and the other at Corpus Christi [the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, which is the Sunday following Whit Sunday], and that the market there shall be held every Thursday ...'.*

However, it appears that the day on which the market was held continued to vary over the centuries. Travelling through Cheshire on the King's business in or around 1539, John Leland described Malpas as *'a small town of three paved streets with a Sunday market'.*



Looking past The Cross into the area of the former market place which became 'infilled' with houses and shops during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Greatly valued was the right to collect tolls from the traders at the fairs. This right seemed to have belonged primarily to the Brereton family, as one of the privileges included in their ownership of three-quarters of the Barony of Malpas. Most of the remainder of the Barony belonged to the Cholmondeley family. When Sir William Drake purchased the Malpas estates from William Lord Brereton in the late 17th century there was a certain amount of disagreement between Sir William and Lord George, second Earl of Cholmondeley, about his Lordship's claim to a percentage of the tolls. Sir William died in 1690 but the dispute continued right until around 1731, when Lord George finally conceded to the Drake family '*all the Tolls of Malpas Fair except 1/8th of the Tolls called the pitching pennys & to accept 1/8th of those Tolls provided Mr Drake takes upon Him the Charge of Collecting them & the Expenche of the fair Dinners & that he or His agents account to me for 1/8th of the pitching pennys at the end of every Fair To prevent disputes for the Future I likewise acquiesce in his Right of Walking & proclaiming the Said Fairs, & that Constables &c. shall be Sworne in His Courts.*'

Having established his interest in the fairs, Sir William Drake seemed keen to revive some of the ancient traditions associated with them. Including dinners (for his tenants?); the holding of the Malpas Manor Court Leet; and the opening ceremonies for the fair itself. A number of financial accounts relating to the fairs survive among the Drake records.

The Court Leet, which probably held its sittings in the Wyvern Inn in Church Street (which later became Wycherley's Saddlery and Ironmongers, and is currently being let out for other purposes), would hear cases such as disputes among tenants about such matters as infringement of plot boundaries on the Malpas common fields, failure to cultivate plots efficiently, and neglect of hedgerows and ditches.

In 1753, and for many years afterwards, there are payments for '*cleaning the halberds*' at the three annual fairs. In that year Thomas

Tomlinson was paid three shillings (15 modern pence) for undertaking the task. The halberds, originally weapons carried by foot soldiers, would have been used in the procession which marked the opening of the fair. Accounts in 1814 show that there were violinists, described as 'fiddlers', who took part in the procession. As late as 1845 and 1846 there are payments to John (or Joseph) Edwardson '*for crying [i.e. announcing like a town crier] the fairs and Court*'. Mr Edwardson was the licensee at the Wyvern Inn. We also know that each year the Drakes provided blue coats for 20 poor men in the town and no doubt they too would have marched in the processions. So we can imagine an opening procession, headed by the town crier, which probably included halberdiers, Bluecoat men, fiddlers (and drummers?). We know from other records that there were pipers living in the area, so maybe they also took part in the procession. Possibly the procession started at the Market House, marched around the town and finished in the market place, with the crier announcing that the fair was officially open.

Malpas was one of hundreds of small towns which claimed the right to hold regular markets and fairs. In his diary covering the period 1714-1729, Robert Bulkeley of Bulkeley mentioned attending, in addition to the Malpas market and fairs, the fairs at Caergwle, Chester, Holt, Mold, Nantwich, Over (Winsford), Tarporley, Whitchurch and Wrexham. At Malpas he bought and sold cattle and horses at the fair, and his wife sent eggs to the market.

Today most weekly markets are administered by local city, town or borough councils, which rent out spaces to traders. We don't know exactly how the medieval markets and fairs were administered. However it seems that, rather like traders at modern car boot and table-top sales, traders at Malpas markets and fairs may have provided their own stalls. In 1640 the probate inventory attached to the will of the late Thomas Roe, a Malpas yeoman farmer, included the item: '*1 ladder 2 gates boards & trestles for standings at ye ffaire 13s.4d*'.

The original Malpas market place was probably roughly triangular in plan, with the apex of the triangle by the Market House in Church Street, the High Street as the base of the triangle, and the sides extending to the former Fire Station (now a café/bistro) in one direction and the Old Hall in the other. During the 18th and 19th century this market area was infilled with a number of buildings erected by the Drake and Cholmondeley families, in High Street, Old Hall Street and what is now Church Street, including the former Wyvern Hotel, the Market House and Laburnum House. This resulted in a much smaller trading area.

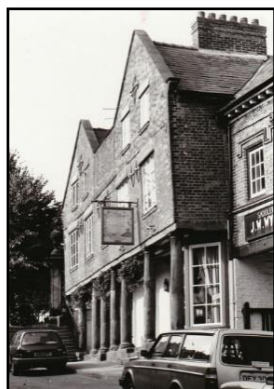
We have a glimpse of one of the fairs, in April 1790, when Reverend Reginald Heber (father of the hymn-writing Reginald, born in 1783) wrote to his sister Elizabeth, in London: *'Mama (Mrs Heber) ventured out to Doctor Townson's (Dr Townson was the 'Lower' Rector who lived in Church Street) on Easter Monday to meet Mr and Mrs Dod (of Edge Hall) and one of her sisters where they spent a very pleasant day, and, being Malpas Fair, the Ladys had the felicity of perambulating the streets and buying bargains, viz. toys, gingerbreads and Welch blankets'*. No doubt the toys and gingerbreads were welcomed by the seven year old Reginald, his brother Thomas, aged five, and sister Mary, aged three!

During the 16th and 17th centuries Malpas was an important centre for the horse dealing trade. The toll books for Shrewsbury Fair record the activities of a group of families of dealers in Malpas parish, including those named Boswell, Daxon, Griffiths, Halton, Stockton, Stoke and Tomkin. They were dealers, rather than horse breeders, and would have travelled extensively looking for stock. No doubt some of their animals were purchased at Malpas fair, as well as at the specialised horse fairs held three times a year in Chester, and at Whitchurch fair.

Many Malpas properties had 'sandings', or standings for stalls, in front of their buildings. These sandings were rented out at the markets and fairs, thus generating income for the owners. The term 'sandings' may refer to the areas being covered with a layer of sand to make it easier to clean up after trading, particularly where livestock was involved.

An auction of leasehold property held at Mr Shaw's Red Lion Inn, Malpas, in January 1813 included four lots in Church Street, all of which had '*a great privilege of letting off double Market Sandings at every Malpas Fair*'. The verandah on the front of the Market House in Church Street, supported by its eight Classical columns, was probably the site of the butter market. The shade of the verandah protected the butter and other dairy goods from the heat of the sun. The same purpose was served by the covered butter market which still stands in the centre of Audlem, another former Cheshire market town. The Malpas Market House was probably not designed to ever be a market hall where trading could be carried on. The original plans for the building, which date from around 1762 and are preserved in the Drake archives, show that it was intended to serve as either two shops or as private residences.

William Cowdroy's *Directory of Cheshire* in 1789 states that at that time there was only one fair each year, on 8th December, but Pigot's *Directory* of 1822 states that fairs were held three times each year, on 5th April, 26th July and 8th December, '*for cattle, drapery, &c.*'. and that the weekly market was now held on Wednesday. By 1850 the market day was '*but thinly attended; butter is the principal commodity brought for sale*'. Within the next ten years the market ceased to function. The three annual fairs were still being held in 1874 but had ceased by 1890.



(LEFT) The Market House: The verandah provided protection from the sun for butter and cheese. (RIGHT) Fruit and vegetable stall outside the Jubilee Hall – Malpas Farmers' Market, October 2013.

It was probably the opening of the Smithfield (livestock auction) at Hampton (now replaced by the Market Place residential development), close by the railway station (opened in 1872), which dealt the final blow to livestock trading in the town itself. The railway provided a much more convenient and wider-ranging means for transporting livestock to and from market than had the cattle droving, on foot, of previous times. The only two visible signs today of the town's former importance as a market town are the butter market at the Market House (see above) and the market cross at the centre of the town. However, the monthly Malpas Farmers' Market does provide a small reminder of times past.

THE STORY OF OUR WATER SUPPLY

Sitting on top of a hill, the town of Malpas is not best placed for a water supply. However, in the past a number of wells were sunk around the town and by the eighteenth century some of them had been fitted with hand pumps. In 1737 Thomas Parbutt was paid two shillings (10p) by the Malpas Highway Surveyors *'for cleansing the well'* and in 1765 they paid Joseph Vaughan half a crown (12.5p) *'for mending ye town pump'*. This pump stood over the town well at the bottom of Well Street, known in those days as the Well Way, close to the Well Meadow. Together with those incorporating the word *'Springfield'*, these road and street names are a reminder that this low lying area on the edge of the town had long been an important source of water.

In 1832 the ratepayers of Malpas, at their regular Town Meeting, expressed their concern that *'the greatest part of the inhabitants of Malpas are subject to much trouble, inconvenience and expense on account of the great distance of their houses from the public well by which the value of such houses is much reduced'*. They put pressure on the two major local landowners, Lord Cholmondeley and Squire Drake, to do something to remedy the situation. As a result the pair financed the building in 1835 of a waterworks on the Goodmoors to

the south-east of the town, an area which formed a natural water catchment area fed by a number of springs. From here the water was pumped by an overshot water wheel, through a culvert running all the way up to a distribution reservoir specially constructed within the ancient castle mound next to Saint Oswald's church, from where the water was piped around the town. That reservoir still exists, although it has been capped off for safety reasons.



(L) Aerial view of the castle motte which contains the redundant reservoir (R) The metal dome by The Cross which covers a valve which was part of the piped water system.

Sewage works were constructed adjacent to the fresh water catchment pool on the Goodmoors and the allegedly clean water from the filtered sewage was used to operate the water wheel. Unfortunately the water from the sewage tank had a tendency to splash into the fresh water supply! Things came to a head in 1871 when an inspector from the Privy Council Office visited the site and afterwards published his report in the *British Medical Journal*. He wrote: *'It may be stated shortly that in every conceivable variety of sanitary defect Malpas village emulates the most neglected inhabited spot that has ever been reported upon'*.

The ratepayers were horrified and immediately asked his Lordship and the Squire what they were going to do to improve the situation. They replied that they were not prepared to finance the operation any longer and offered to lease the waterworks to the town for an annual rent of one pound. Eventually the offer was accepted and it was probably at this stage that the water wheel was replaced by a steam pump, to avoid contamination by the sewage.

In the 1880s Liverpool Corporation constructed its aqueduct to take water to the city from Lake Vyrnwy in North Wales. Since this passed through Malpas, the Corporation offered the town a connection to the aqueduct. The offer was finally accepted in 1892 and the old waterworks gradually went out of use. The reservoir at The Oathills is part of the balancing system for the Liverpool aqueduct and many Malpas residents continue to enjoy the benefits of soft Vyrnwy water.

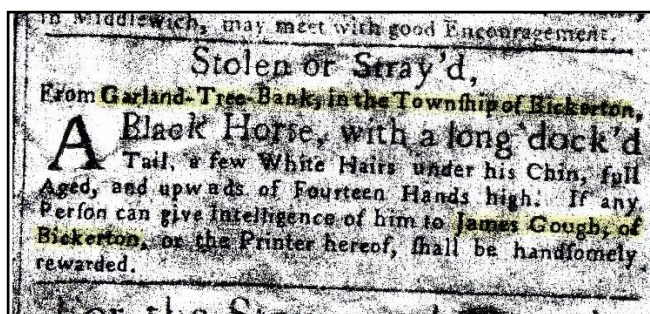
Meanwhile, the town pump continued in use within living memory, to serve those residents close to it who could not afford a connection to the piped system. The Parish Council, formed in 1894, took over responsibility for water supplies, including maintenance of the town pump. Since the pump went out of use it has become detached from the town well. Currently it is in safe storage while today's Parish Council discusses the best way to preserve and display this ancient reminder of an important part of the town's history. The iron dome which stands at the base of The Cross in the town centre has been scheduled as an ancient monument. As the cover for a valve which was part of the system provided by Lord Cholmondeley and Squire Drake in 1835, it too is a visible reminder of the history of water supply in Malpas.

WHY 'GALLANTRY' BANK?

You may have wondered why the hill on the A.534, at the point where the minor road from Bickerton Church meets the main road, is known as Gallantry Bank. We know, from the day-to-day chronicle of the Civil Wars written by Thomas Malbon, an attorney from near Haslington, that on 19th March 1645 Prince Rupert, the dashing young nephew of King Charles I, hung twelve of his men at Bickerton '*on a crabtree at Widow Fisher's house*'. The Prince was on route from Beeston Castle, where he had tried unsuccessfully to raise the siege laid by Parliamentarian troops around the Royalist garrison in the castle, to Holt Castle, another Royalist stronghold. The twelve men were hung for mutiny, a not uncommon occurrence during the conflict when funds were short on both sides and the troops were frequently not

paid. It is said that it was this incident that caused the area to become known as 'Gallows Tree' Bank. The hangings obviously did not solve the Prince's problem since the next day he hanged a further twenty-four at Holt Castle *'for that they were not so forward in performing of the command as he expected'*. Brutal times indeed!

However, if one examines the accounts surviving for the Bickerton copper mines at the end of the 17th century they refer to work being carried out not at Gallantry Bank but at 'Gallan Tree' Bank (the well-known chimney by the side of the A.534 is the last visible evidence for these mines). Many years ago, when I was searching through the files of *Adams Weekly Courant*, an early Chester newspaper, I came across the following advertisement in the issue dated 28th November 1769: *'Stolen or Stray'd, from Garland-Tree Bank in the Township of Bickerton, A Black Horse, with a long dock'd Tail, a few White Hairs under his Chin, full Aged, and upwards of Fourteen Hands high. If any Person can give Intelligence of him to James Gough, of Bickerton, or the Printer hereof, shall be handsomely rewarded.'* Records show that a Gough family did live in the house which still stands at the top of Gallantry Bank (where the Sandstone Trail crosses the A.534). Reference to a glossary of Cheshire dialect terms explains that in former times the evergreen yew was called the 'garland tree', due to the availability of its foliage for decorating churches at any season.



Gallantry Bank today and the advertisement from *Adams Weekly Courant* in 1769

What does a visit to Gallantry Bank today reveal? Right on the crown of the hill stand two magnificent yew trees, at least four hundred years old! So was it 'Gallows Tree' or 'Garland Tree'? We may never know.

THE CIVIL WARS AND THE FOUNDING OF THE ALPORT SCHOOL

The political events leading up to the English Civil Wars were very complicated and they continue to be the subject of much discussion and debate among historians. They were rooted in disagreements between King Charles I, with his Roman Catholic sympathies, and Parliament, over matters of religion and of national finance, particularly relating to taxation. By August 1642 matters had reached crisis point, resulting in the King raising his standard at Nottingham. This was the ancient signal for feudal military duty to be rendered by his subjects.

Alports and Verneys

The King's standard bearer was Sir Edmund Verney and it was he who was to provide one of the links between events in Malpas and events on the national front. One of the notable features of the Civil Wars was the way in which they caused division within families, where some members supported the King, identifying themselves as Royalists ('Cavaliers') while others joined the opposition in the form of Parliamentarians ('Roundheads'). The Verneys, who lived at Claydon House in Buckinghamshire, were one such family. Sir Edmund's oldest son Ralph joined the Parliamentarians. His eldest daughter Susan, although remaining close to Ralph and writing to him frequently when he was obliged to take himself into self-imposed exile in France, remained a Royalist.

Sir Edmund Verney was killed at the Battle of Edgehill in Oxfordshire (October 1642), the first major engagement of the first Civil War. His body was never recovered but legend tells us that his severed hand was discovered after the battle, still clutching the Royal Standard. His hand is still preserved beneath a monument in Middle Claydon church, next to Claydon House

In 1644 Richard Alport, of Overton Hall in Malpas parish, was declared a debtor by the Parliamentarians and thrown into the Fleet Prison in London. His debts had arisen because he had mortgaged all his property to provide funds for Sir Hugh Calveley, one of the Cheshire Royalist commanders. Unfortunately Sir Hugh did not repay the debt within the time promised, leading to Richard's punishment at the hands of Parliament. One of his fellow prisoners was Tom Verney, another of Sir Edmund's sons, who appears to have been the 'black sheep' of the family. Taking advantage of what appear to have been fairly lenient parole arrangements at the prison, Tom was able to introduce Richard to Susan, his sister. Richard and Susan became engaged and in 1646 they were married, living on together in the Fleet until Richard's eventual release in June 1648. When Richard finally



returned to Overton, bringing Susan with him, they found the Hall in a dreadful state. Susan wrote to her brother Ralph: *'My long expected happiness to see home is come at last, I have been in Cheshire this ten days, where I find a pitiful house for*

want of living in, not only so but plundered besides.'

PHOTO ABOVE: Lyndsay Nixon and Steve Chesworth dressed as Susan Verney and Richard Alport for 'An Evening with Mr and Mrs Alport', Overton Hall (in the background) August 1995.

The Alport School



It was Richard's grandson, another Richard Alport (died 1720), who in his will left £500 to endow a charity school for poorer children in Malpas (the better-off boys already had the Grammar School available to them – this had been founded by Sir Randal Brereton in the 16th century). The school was actually opened in 1745

in the old school building (the centre building in this photo) which still stands in Tilston Road, now converted to a private residence. We

know from later records that this was a 'Bluecoat' charity school. Each year *'fourteen boys, from amongst those who had been observed to be most punctual in their attendance and correct in their conduct throughout the year, are selected about Christmas, and provided with a suit of clothes (a sort of blue uniform) consisting of coat, waistcoat, trousers, boots, and a blue cap, out of the charity funds. The same boys, provided they remain and conduct themselves well, receive the clothes two consecutive years, and then give place to others'*.

During the early 19th century a girls' department was added to the school and in 1833 an infants' school, managed independently of the Alport School, was opened in a wing specially built onto the original Alport School building. One of the reasons for Richard Alport's endowment of the school was because, like many other members of the 'middling' classes' he did not want to see a repetition of the Civil Wars and the Roman Catholic influence which had been so harmful to the Church of England. One way to help prevent this was to ensure that working class children were well educated in the principles of the Established Church (i.e. the Church of England with the monarch as its head). Thousands of similar charity schools were founded in England during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Civil War action in the Malpas area

Overton Hall was not the only family seat to have suffered as a result of the Civil Wars. Malpas lay in a battle zone, between the Royalist headquarters at Chester, Royalist garrisons at Holt, Cholmondeley and Whitchurch, and the Parliamentary headquarters at Nantwich. Cholmondeley House, the timber built forerunner of today's Cholmondeley Castle, came under frequent attack from the Roundheads at Nantwich, who were under the command of Colonel William Brereton, Cheshire's Parliamentary commander. After a particularly vicious assault in 1644 Cholmondeley House was taken by Brereton's men. It was left in such a sorry state – *'a hogsty ... unuseful and unfit for a place of residence for a person ... of quality'* - that following the end of the first Civil War in 1646 Lord Cholmondeley,

who could not afford to restore his house, was forced to live at Bickley Hall until his death in 1659.

In August 1643 the Nantwich troops had attacked the saltworks at Dirtwich (Higher and Lower Wych), in Malpas parish. They smashed up the works and took some of the lead boiling pans back to Nantwich, thus depriving the Royalists of their vital salt supplies, since Dirtwich was the only Cheshire saltworks outside the main salt producing areas of Nantwich, Middlewich and Northwich. The action against the Dirtwich saltworks was repeated in September 1644 but not before the actual fighting came its closest ever to the town of Malpas.

On 2nd July 1644 the Royalists suffered a major defeat at Marston Moor, near York. Six days later two companies from Nantwich launched the attack which was to destroy Cholmondeley House. Then the following month, following their defeat at Marston Moor, around two and a half thousand Royalist troops returning to Chester, under the command of Sir Marmaduke Langdale, pitched camp at Oldcastle Heath, just outside Malpas. Colonel Brereton received intelligence of them and with 800 to 900 of his troops marched from Nantwich to attack them. Battle was joined on 25th August. Despite the imbalance in numbers, the Roundheads took control and put the King's men to flight, slaying about eighty of them and making prisoners of twenty-five, while suffering no casualties themselves.

The next month the Roundheads were back in Malpas again. They were billeted overnight in Malpas church where they had '*but sorry quarter*'. Despite their puritanical hatred of ornament in churches and the fact that in many other places they had destroyed statues and other 'popish' furnishings, the Roundhead troops did not damage the ornate alabaster tombs of Sir Hugh Cholmondeley and Sir Randal Brereton. Local legend has it that, because the Breretons of Malpas were related to Colonel Brereton's Handforth branch of the family, the troops were under orders not to desecrate a church whose history was so bound up with that of the Breretons. The next day they marched

for a second time to Dirtwich and carried a further six brine boiling pans off to Nantwich.

There were many more incidents in the Malpas area, involving rustling of livestock to feed the Nantwich garrison; the hanging of twelve Royalist mutineers by Prince Rupert (nephew to King Charles) at Gallantry Bank, Bickerton; and the plundering of local properties, including Bulkeley Hall and Carden Hall. Throughout all of this war, which was little understood by 'ordinary' people, the townsfolk of Malpas tried to live a normal life. They had troops from both sides billeted upon them from time to time and had to make enforced contributions in cash and in kind to support those troops. They must have felt very relieved, along with the rest of the country, when the Battle of Naseby in June 1645, a crushing defeat for the Royalists, effectively brought the first Civil War to an end. For Malpas the action was over and one can only conjecture how much, or how little, the town was affected by subsequent events. King Charles I was executed in January 1649 and conflict continued until Oliver Cromwell's final defeat of King Charles II at Worcester ended the second Civil War in September 1651.

A SERPENT IN THE GALLERY!

During the early 19th century galleries were erected in the nave of Saint Oswald's church. They were mainly to provide seating for a growing congregation but one of them, possibly the one at the west end, accommodated the choir. The choir not only led the singing but they had their own orchestra, to provide accompaniment in the absence of an organ. It seems possible that the church did have an organ as early as the 17th century, since in 1612 Sir Robert Cholmondeley paid for the building of an organ loft. The loft was taken down in 1680 and it may be that the organ had been destroyed by the Parliamentary (Roundhead) troops who were billeted in the church in 1644, during the Civil Wars. To the Puritan Parliamentarians such devices as organs smacked of 'Popishness' and were destroyed

along with other ‘abominations’ such as rood lofts and images of the saints. In 1824 the Vestry Meeting agreed to buy a splendid new set of musical instruments ‘for the use of the singers’. These were one German (i.e. transverse) flute, two clarinets in B, two clarinets in C, one bass viol (‘cello) and one bassoon. The singers and instrumentalists were to be paid, with the proviso that ‘the number of performers who are to receive the salary be confined to 15 and not less than 12’.

Paid Mr. Seacombe of Chester for 5 Music Books with carriage	£ 1.. 17.. 0
Paid for Clarinet reeds	0.. 2.. 0
Paid for a Serpent with Carriage	8.. 13.. 8
Paid for a Clarinet	3.. 3.. 0
Paid for Violoncello Strings	0.. 3.. 11
	<hr/>
	13.. 19.. 7
Paid for an old Clarinet and Flute	1.. 16.. 0



(LEFT) Malpas Churchwardens' Accounts 1825: Payments for music books, clarinets and reeds, serpent, violoncello strings, and flute (Cheshire Archives & Local Studies P 21/4943/63) (RIGHT) A serpent player

The following year the orchestra was expanded by the purchase of another clarinet and of a serpent, a military keyed wind instrument for playing bass parts, made of wood bound with leather and played with a tuba-style mouthpiece.

The church orchestra did not last for many years after this, despite the money that had been spent on instruments. Perhaps they were not as tuneful as had been hoped! For an account of the conflicts that could arrive between church bands and organs (or harmoniums, their close cousins) one has only to read Thomas Hardy's entertaining Dorset novel 'Under the Greenwood Tree', which tells how the Mellstock Choir was ousted from the parish church. By about 1842 an organ had been installed in the west gallery at Malpas (similar to the instrument which still survives in that position in Worthenbury

church). John Silvester was appointed organist at an annual salary of ten pounds, soon raised to fifteen pounds, and William Tomkin was engaged as organ-blower at two pounds a year. In 1863 the Vestry Meeting agreed to remove the west galley and to re-erect the organ on the ground floor. In 1897 it was replaced by the present organ.

RICHARD MINSHULL, THE JACOBITES AND 'THE CYCLE'

Disputes over religion did not come to an end with the ending of the Civil Wars. One of the long-term effects of the wars was the exile of the staunchly Roman Catholic King James II, as a result of the Great Revolution in 1688. It was his attempts to overthrow the Church of England and to re-introduce Roman Catholicism, plus his claim to have authority to control the laws of the land without consent of Parliament – the 'Divine Right of Kings' – which led his Protestant Dutch nephew and son-in-law Prince William of Orange to come over with an army and to seize the throne from his uncle. King James was the last member of the Royal House of Stuart to rule over England but for many years the Stuart family, in exile in France, plotted to regain the throne.

James Francis Edward Stuart, son of James II, became known as the 'Old Pretender' because of the claim he made to the English throne. His supporters were known as 'Jacobites', from 'Jacobus', which is the Latin equivalent for the name James. It was his son Charles, known as the 'Young Pretender' or more popularly as 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' who, unbeknown to his father, crossed the Channel from France and landed in Scotland on 25th July 1745. He planned to rally the loyal Scottish clans to march with him on London and to reclaim the throne for the Stuarts. A similar attempt involving the Old Pretender in 1715 had ended unsuccessfully with the defeat of the Jacobites at Preston.

After an apathetic initial reception, Charles raised his standard in August and rallied many Highlanders to his cause. On 17th September he entered Edinburgh and proclaimed his father as King James III. Four days later he routed the English troops at the Battle of Prestonpans.

On 3rd November at the head of an army of around 5,500 he marched to the Border. By 15th November he had taken Carlisle and continued his progress through Manchester, reaching Macclesfield in Cheshire on 1st December and arriving in Derby four days later. It was in Derby that the Prince had to face the reality of his situation and turned back for Scotland. At the Battle of Culloden on 16th April 1746 the rebels suffered the final blow, when the Duke of Cumberland's troops slaughtered 1,200 Jacobites, following up with the execution for treason of many others in Scotland and England.

Many of the landowners in the Malpas area and across the border in North Wales were Jacobite supporters. Most of them were also members of the 'Cycle of the White Rose', a not particularly secret society whose ring-leader appears to have been Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, of Wynnstay near Ruabon. The Cycle was named for the Old Pretender, whose birthday was on White Rose Day, 10th June. Among its members seems to have been Richard Minshull, an enigmatic and somewhat legendary character, who later became tenant of half of the Earl of Cholmondeley's Malpas Hall estate. Minshull is supposed to have been a confidant of the Young Pretender himself; to have fought with him at the Battle of Prestonpans in September 1745; to have been wounded at the Battle of Falkirk in January 1746; and to have assisted Charles in his final escape after the defeat at Culloden. Referred to only as 'The Mysterious M of M', he is a central character in *The Long Day Closes* (1934), Beatrice Tunstall's novel about the Cheshire Jacobites.

It had been the declared intention of the members of the Cycle to assist the Young Pretender on his march to London. However, that assistance was not forthcoming when the rebel army arrived in Macclesfield on 1st December 1745. The coming of the Highlanders set Cheshire into a panic. In Chester the City Fathers ordered the Watergate and Northgate to be bricked up, cannon were positioned on the Walls and over 3,000 men were '*employed throwing up Trenches and erecting Pallisades, to be able to make some stand*

against the Rebels, should they go that way'. Many Chester residents put their belongings onto boats which were then moored further down the River Dee for safety. Some of them fled south of Chester, no doubt passing through Malpas on their way to Whitchurch. When false intelligence reached Whitchurch that the Highlanders might be about to march on the town it 'threw Whitchurch into confusion; the mob began to gather in the villages near [including Malpas?], people were driving off their cattle; all the Chester strangers deserted the town; and in an hour's time seven families, in as many coaches, fled from one Inn'.

So why did the members of the Cycle of the White Rose do nothing to help the Young Pretender? The reasons for their lack of action are not totally clear but it is known that the Earl of Cholmondeley, Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, had been keeping them under surveillance. On 20th November 1745 he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State to King George II: *'I can not imagine that any thing serious, or formidable is to be expected from that quarter [i.e. the Cheshire and North Wales Jacobites], tho' I know them, but too ready in their inclinations; and as there are but few men of capacity among 'em, and that, for the time past, all his Majesty's Officers have had directions from me to watch their motions ... I have had constant correspondence with the well-affected Gentlemen of Flintshire, Denbyshire and Momtgomeryshire ... whatsoever may be their attachment and inclinations, it is impossible any exclusive scheme can subsist, and the secret kept among such numbers.'*

Sir Watkin Williams Wynn seems to have understood the situation. He disappeared from Wynnstay into Gloucestershire to stay with his friend the Duke of Beaufort until all the fuss had died down. What of 'Mysterious Minshull'? Legend has it that after he died huge quantities of gold coin and armour were found in the cellars at the Old Hall. However, this does not seem to tie up with the little evidence there is available. His lease for half of the Old Hall estate was signed in March 1777. The previous Old Hall building had been destroyed by

fire in 1760 and its replacement may have been on a different site. So there would be no 'continuity in cellars' between the Jacobite activity of 1745 and the Hall as it stood in 1777. It is thought that he married Sarah Barlow at St Martin in the Fields in London in 1760 and died at Overton by Malpas in 1812. Otherwise his life remains a mystery, preserved only as part of the story later contrived by Beatrice Tunstall in *The Long Day Closes*.



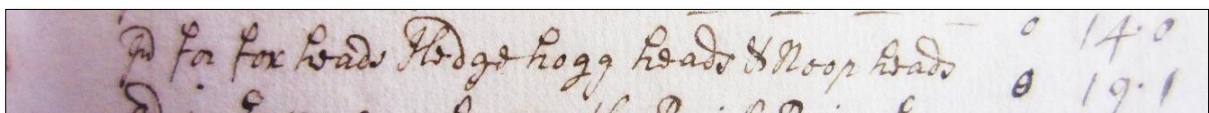
(L) Sir Watkin Williams Wynn (R) Malpas Old Hall in 1924

NAUGHTY NOUPES, RASCALLY ROOKS AND PESKY PIGEONS!

When I was a boy growing up in the 1950s it was well-known that one way to augment one's meagre pocket money (not that I ever did!) was to take the tails of grey squirrels – contemptuously referred to as 'American tree rats' – to the local police station. A bounty of one shilling (5p) per tail was paid at the station, in support of the efforts to control the spread of the invasive and destructive rodents which were slowly driving the native red squirrels towards extinction, and causing extensive physical damage to our trees. It was over four hundred years previously, in 1532, that the first Tudor Vermin Act required every parish to raise a levy, out of which payments would be made for the heads of different species of designated vermin. This was followed in 1566 by '*An Acte for the preservation of Grayne*' (much at the mercy of rats and mice). As one recent writer commented, '*some of the species listed – hedgehog, dipper, woodpecker, hen harrier – stretch the imagination to the limit in terms of relevance as agricultural pests*'.

The officials responsible for enforcing the Vermin Acts were the churchwardens at the local parish church. From the 17th until the 19th centuries, entries relating to vermin control can be found in the account books (now preserved in the Cheshire Record Office) which were kept by the churchwardens at Saint Oswald's in Malpas. In 1692 they paid 3s.0d (15p) for three foxes' heads, £1.19s.6d (98p) for 237 hedgehog heads (one old halfpenny per head) and £1.2s.4d (£1.12p) for 268 *noupe* heads (one old penny per head). *Noupe* is an old south Cheshire dialect name for bullfinch. One wonders how the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (based near Ludlow in neighbouring Shropshire) and the Royal Society for Protection of Birds would react to such wholesale slaughter nowadays!

So why were hedgehogs and bullfinches regarded as vermin? Is this evidence that people really did believe that hedgehogs suckled the milk from sleeping cows? Bullfinches as a pest are perhaps easier to understand since possibly they took the blossom from important crops, maybe field beans, gooseberries or the old Cheshire damsons, which all made important contributions to the local economy. In 1826 the ratepayers of Malpas at their vestry meeting '*resolved that the charge of vermin be abandoned with the exception of sparrows, for which three pence a dozen will be allowed*'. Obviously they did not take seriously Saint Luke's assertion that God protects the sparrows! Four years later they agreed to pay '*3d per dozen for destroying young rooks and 6d per dozen for old rooks and old sparrows*'.



MALPAS CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS 1737

'Pd for fox heads Hedgehog heads & Noop heads [£]0.19[s].1[d]'

(Cheshire Archives & Local Studies [P 21/4943/63](#))

Evidence has been found that after 1894 the newly-formed parish councils assumed some responsibility for vermin control. In 1901

Malpas Parish Council was paying 5s.0d (25p) yearly to a man to keep down moles on the allotments known as the Moss Lands. Although vermin problems do not appear very often in the Parish Council records, they still occurred from time to time, such as in 1966 when the National Farmers' Union was having trouble with pigeon droppings on the roof of its Malpas office (near The Cross). When, a year later, I came to live in Malpas, I used to see the van owned by Malpas & District Rabbit Clearance Society, parked outside that same NFU office. The Society, which continued to help control the rabbit population after the widespread rabbit-destroying myxomatosis epidemic of 1953, which recurred a number of times in later years, was not dissolved until 1976.

Nowadays Malpas is a generally healthy place in which to live, partly thanks to the services provided by the Borough Council. Mind you, the situation has changed from my boyhood days. Rather than being paid 5p at the police station for a squirrel's tail, I would now have to pay Cheshire West & Chester Council sixty pounds to catch just one squirrel (with any additional catches charged at five pounds each)! For the appropriate fees they will also deal with pigeons, moles and other pests. Also nowadays there are many commercial products available for dealing with wasps, rats or other unwelcome wildlife. However, debates about vermin still take place, particularly in our dairy farming and former fox-hunting county of Cheshire. The threats posed both by badgers as potential carriers of bovine tuberculosis and the relative merits of various methods for controlling the fox population continue to generate considerable discussion.

'TONS', 'LEYS' AND TOWNSHIPS: THE BEGINNINGS OF OUR PARISH

There is little archaeological evidence for the Anglo-Saxons who first arrived and settled in our area in the sixth century. A significant archaeological find was made in 1819, when a dugout canoe, fashioned from the trunk of a single tree, was extracted from deep in a peat bog at Cholmondeley Park. It was 11 feet long and 30 inches wide. Comparison with similar canoes found in Cheshire suggests it dated from the Saxon period. A similar canoe can be seen on display in the Inland Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port. Among the other recorded finds from the period is a silver Anglo-Saxon pin, discovered at Egerton Hall.

The most enduring evidence for settlement of the area by the early English is the wealth of place-names dating from the period. The most common place-name endings in this district are *-ton* and *-ley*. The ending *-ton*, originally Anglo-Saxon *-tun*, meaning a 'fortified farm' or 'settlement', is thought to indicate an earlier phase of settlement than *-ley*, meaning 'clearing', 'glade' or 'settlement in a clearing'.

The names of the twenty-five (or possibly twenty-six) townships which made up the later ecclesiastical parish of Malpas were probably the names of early English manors which evolved before the Norman Conquest of 1066. Sixteen of these townships have endings in *-ton* or *-ley*. The possible meanings of these names, as suggested by John Dodgson in *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, are:

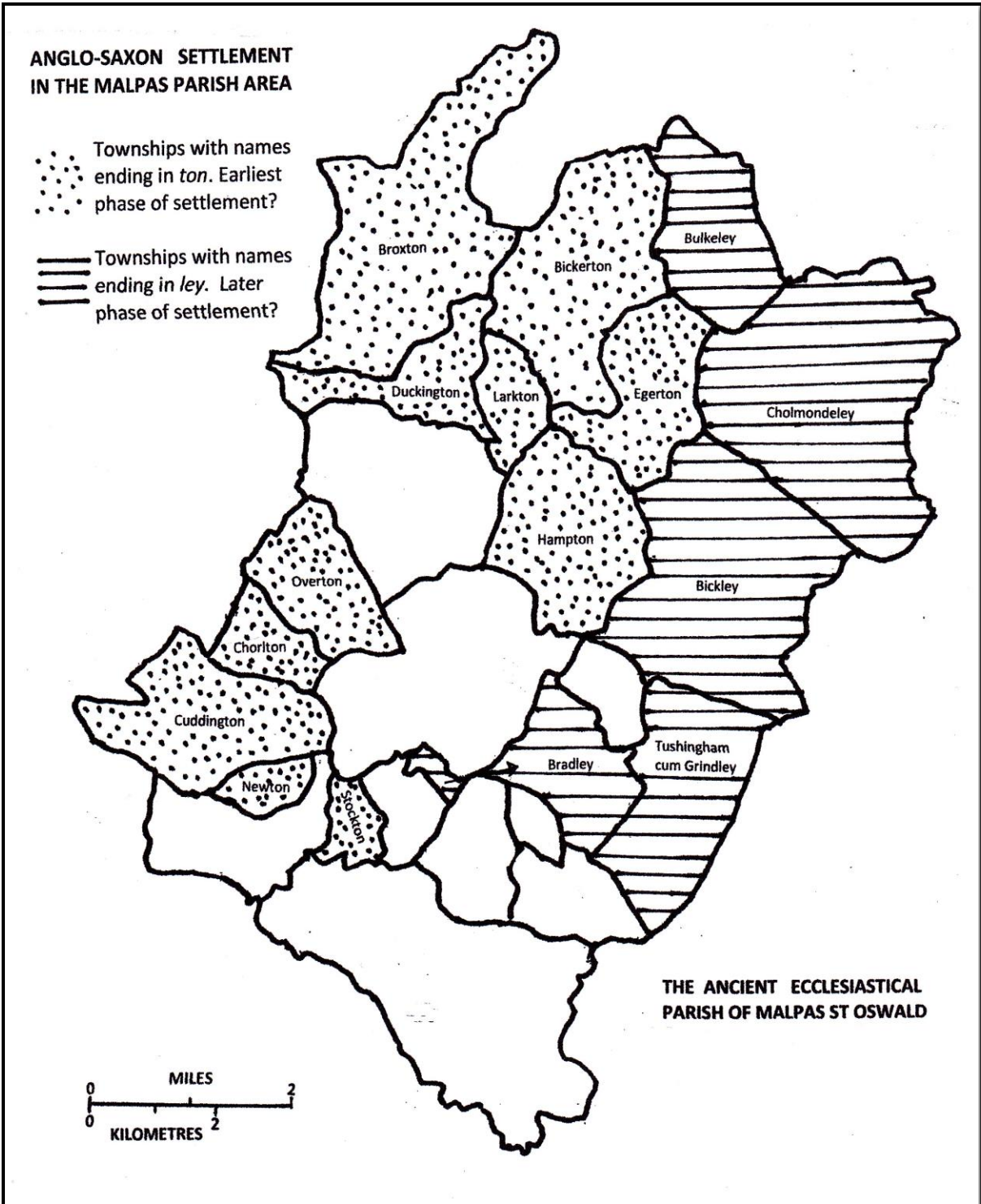
*(*indicates a personal name)*

Bickerton	<i>The bee-keeper's farm</i>
Bickley	<i>Glade of the bees' nests or beehives</i>
Bradley	<i>Broad glade</i>
Broxton	+See below
Bulkeley	<i>Bullocks' clearing</i>
Cholmondeley	<i>*Ceolmund's clearing</i>
Chorlton	<i>Peasant's farm ('ceorl' = peasant)</i>
Cuddington	<i>*Cydda's farm <u>or</u> *Cuda's farm</i>

Duckington	<i>Farm called after *Ducc(a)</i>
Egerton	<i>*Ecgheard's(?) farmstead</i>
Hampton	<i>High farm or enclosure</i>
Larkton	<i>Farmstead where larks are found</i>
Newton	<i>The new farm</i>
Overton	<i>Farm at a hill</i>
Stockton	<i>Enclosure or farmstead at a dairy hamlet</i>
Tushingam-cum-Grindley	<i>A place where tufts of grass or rushes grow (Grindley = Green wood or clearing)</i>

+ **Broxton** may be derived not from an original *-tun* or *-ton* ending but may have evolved from **Burzaesn**, meaning 'burial place'. Professor Nick Higham has suggested that, standing as it does in Malpas parish and sharing borders with five other medieval parishes (Bunbury, Coddington, Farndon, Tattenhall and Tilston) the township of Broxton might have included a central burial site which served an extensive area.

When the townships ending in *-ton* and *-ley* are highlighted on the plan of the old parish of Malpas, it is clear that there is a very clear west ('tons') and east ('leys') divide. This suggests that the eastern side of the parish may have been heavily wooded at the time of the Anglo-Saxon settlement and that therefore the more accessible western area, going down towards the Dee valley, was settled first. Subsequently the wooded 'leys' area on the east was settled. This eastern sector may have fallen into the area covered after the Norman Conquest by the medieval Royal hunting forests of Mara and Mondrem. A hunting forest was not necessarily wooded, probably containing both woodland and open scrub areas, but it was subject to very strict legislation as to its use. Mara has disappeared nowadays, although the village of Aston-juxta-Mondrem ('Aston next to Mondrem') near Nantwich preserves its name. All that is left of the much shrunken Forest of Mara is the Delamere Forest which we know today.



The other nine townships which made up the ancient parish of Malpas are Agden, Chidlow, Edge, Iscoyd, Macefen (Maesfen), Malpas (Depenbech – see below), Oldcastle, Wigland and Wychough. Another township which may have been part of the original parish is Harthill. This township was a ‘free chapelry’, which later became a parish in its own right.



The name 'Malpas' does not appear until after the Norman Conquest. It is first mentioned in a document dated AD 1121, 55 years after the invasion. However, it seems to be generally accepted by historians that the manor and township which existed roughly in the same area as the later town of Malpas (Norman French '*mal-pas*' = bad or difficult road – the former Roman military road?) was *Depenbech*, spelt also as *Depinbeche* or *Depenbache*. The evidence for this comes from the Domesday Book of 1086 (*Depenbech*), two documents dated 1346 and four documents from the period 1468-1473. The 1346

documents refer to '*Depinbeche in Malpas*' and the 15th century documents refer to '*Malpas or Depenbach(e)*'. The name is derived from *deop*, meaning 'deep', and *bece*, meaning 'brook' or 'beck', giving 'at the deep valley with a brook in it'. Dr Dodgson suggests that this refers to the area around the Bradley Brook at Hough Bridge, on the line of the Roman road between Malpas and Whitchurch.

However, I think that there is a strong possibility that Depenbech was in fact centred in the area of the Baw Brook, near Cross o' the Hill, on the road from modern Malpas via No Man's Heath to Bickley. A document of 1465 refers to '*Le Stone Cross in the Highway towards Bickley*', which is the Cross o' the Hill road. If this was an early preaching cross it does lend weight to my theory that Depenbech included a forerunner of the later parish church of Saint Oswald. This may have been an outdoor preaching site rather than an actual building. The area around Baw Brook could, equally as well as the area around Hough Bridge, be described as 'at the deep valley with a brook in it'.

WHO'S BURIED IN SAINT OSWALD'S?

The two most prominent tombs in Saint Oswald's church are the alabaster chest tombs of Sir Randle Brereton (d.1530 - left, below) and his wife Eleanor, in the chapel in the south aisle; and of Sir Hugh Cholmondeley (d.1596 – right, below) and his wife Mary, in the north aisle. However, as with other memorials inside the church, they have been moved around over the centuries so that we cannot be certain of the exact locations of the actual burials.



In the floor of the north aisle is a blue stone slab (on left, below), with spaces for two brass coats of arms which have disappeared, and for an inscription. The brass plate with the inscription, in Norman French, is preserved on the south wall of the Brereton chapel (centre, below), at the end of the south aisle. Translated, the inscription reads: *'Philip de Egerton his wives and his children lie here, may God have mercy on their souls.'* This memorial dates from somewhere between 1362 and 1446. With the Cholmondeleys and the Breretons, the Egertons were one of the three families which were joint holders of the Barony of Malpas in the Middle Ages.



Let into the floor next to the pulpit is an alabaster grave slab (right, above) bearing the incised likeness of a priest. The inscription, now very worn, is in Latin and translates as: *'Here lies the body of Urian Davenport at one time Rector of Malpas and Vicar of Acton, which said Vicar died 18 July A.D. 1495 on whose soul may the Lord have mercy. Amen'*. We know nothing more of this 15th century rector than is given by the inscription.

Among the local families who supported the Royalists (Cavaliers) during the Civil Wars were the Dods of Edge Hall. The Dods had been staunch Royalist supporters during the wars. Randle Dod was buried under the church floor in 1679 and there is a brass commemorating him on the south wall of the chancel. Preserved with his will in the Cheshire Record Office is the probate inventory of his possessions, which included pistols, carbines, rapiers, swords, and a barrel of gunpowder. Were these all left over from the Civil Wars, which really

ended with the execution of King Charles 1st in 1649, or was Randle keeping himself prepared for any further upsets?

Until right into the 18th century, wealthy persons could arrange to be buried inside the church. An interesting side-light is thrown on the costs and disruption involved in such burials by the 'expense account', dated 1711, which survives for the burial of Thomas Wicksteed, a Malpas ironmonger. Susanna, his mother, paid out the following amounts, among others, for the funeral itself: £2.12s.0d (£2.60) for mourning gloves; 12s.0d (60 pence) for the shroud; and £4.5s.0d (£4.25) '*for mourning to hang the Pulpit with & for other matters used at the Deceased's funeral*'. Further expenses were a 'dole' of £3.0s.0d '*Paid to the Poor People*', ten shillings (50 pence) to the priest who preached the funeral sermon, and seven shillings (35 pence) for the parish clerk's fees and for tolling the funeral bell. For preparing the actual grave in the church she paid the sexton 6s.6d (32½ pence) '*for making the grave, taking up the pews and tiles and placing both down again*'.

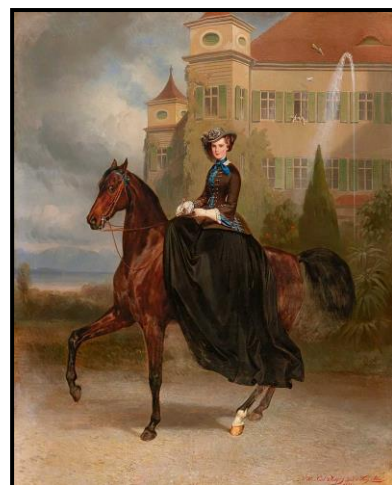
THE EMPRESS AND SIR WATKIN

The following report appeared in the Malpas news section of the *Chester Chronicle* for 5th March 1881: '*On the occasion of the visits of the Empress of Austria to Macefen and Carden the inhabitants were highly honoured by her Majesty, as on both occasions she visited the Lion Hotel before returning, and lunching there. On the first visit, too, she paid Mrs Large a call, and partook of refreshments. A goodly number of persons assembled to witness the departure of her Majesty from the Lion Hotel*'.

So, what was the Empress of Austria doing in Malpas? Elizabeth, who became Empress Consort of Austria when she married her cousin Franz Joseph in 1854, was born in 1837, daughter of the Bavarian Duke Maximilian Joseph. The Emperor, who was eight years older than Elizabeth, turned out to be a serious and conscientious ruler, spending long hours at his desk working on affairs of state.

Unlike Franz Joseph, the Empress was passionately fond of riding and hunting and took to travelling around Europe, without her husband, in order to indulge these interests. In February 1881 she arrived in England to stay at Combermere Abbey, home of Lord Combermere, accompanied by her lady-in-waiting Countess Marie Festetics. According to Count Corti's biography of the Empress, which draws heavily on the detailed diary kept by Marie Festetics: *'The house had originally been an old abbey, built in the year 1132 and altered for William of Orange in 1682, the room in which he had slept being painted orange in his honour. This room was allotted to Marie Festetics. Even the furniture was orange, and the bed in which the Prince of Orange had slept was hung with curtains of the same shade. The bed was so high that, to Elizabeth's great amusement, the Countess had to climb on a chair and jump up at the risk of her neck. She felt as if she were living in an orange rind turned inside out.'*

It appears that the Empress came to Malpas to follow the hounds with the Wynnstay Hunt, when *'... it amused Elizabeth to see how the children of the Master of Hounds – 'Sir Whyn', as she called him, nicknamed 'The Prince in Wales' – two dear little girls of the ages of eight and fourteen, joined in the hunt. When the Countess Festetics asked them in alarm "But who looks after the children?" the Master replied quite calmly "Oh, everybody does".'*



(L) The arms of the Empress which were over the door of a shop in Whitchurch, suppliers 'by appointment' during her stay at Combermere Abbey (courtesy of Mrs Olga Richards)

(R) The Empress dressed for hunting.

The Master referred to was Sir Watkin Williams Wynn of Wynnstay, who was descended from the Princes of North Wales. Macefen Hall and Carden Hall, which the Empress visited, were the homes respectively of the Kenyon and Leche families. Both Halls have now vanished, Macefen being demolished in 1960 and Carden burning down in the famous fire of 1912. According to Count Corti: *'The English gentry vied with one another in their hospitality, but she no longer found so much pleasure in riding as in past years, and became more difficult to please in the matter of horses. Her fondness for hunting was severely judged by many people. A certain Herr Friedrich of Rotterdam, for instance, wrote her an ironical letter, requesting her to advance him the cost of one day's hunting in England to enable him to carry on his business ... "The only thing that surprises me now," she wrote ... from Combermere Abbey, "is when anybody says or writes anything nice about me".'*

Presumably the hunt had met at Macefen and Carden respectively on the two occasions that she visited Malpas and probably her visits to the Lion Hotel were for the purpose of 'freshening up' before returning to Combermere for lunch. The Mrs Large whom the Empress is reported to have visited *'to partake of refreshment'* on the first visit was almost certainly Miss Large, who lived at 'The Lodge' in Wrexham Road.

Elizabeth seems to have enjoyed her stay in Cheshire, so much so that she returned for a short visit in February of the following year. After that her interest seems to have waned and the rest of her life became a rather sad story. The death of her only son the Crown Prince Rudolf in 1889, apparently in a suicide pact with his mistress, was a shock from which Elizabeth never recovered fully. She herself died a tragic death, sixteen years after she came to Malpas. On a visit to Switzerland in 1898 she was mortally wounded when stabbed by Luigi Lucheni, an Italian anarchist who bore her no personal grudge but sought publicity for his cause. So died the Empress who had been

described as the most beautiful women in Europe, whose beauty for a short time graced the streets of Malpas.

'MANY A SLIP'
MALPAS LADIES' HOCKEY IN 1901

By 'H.A.P.'

(from Malpas Deanery Magazine February 16th 1901)

The Malpas Ladies' Hockey eleven played a match against the Remenham (Henley-on-Thames) Ladies' Club in January last.

Result: Remenham 8 goals, Malpas 0 goals.

'There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip'

*Now a story I will tell,
Though it grieves me much to dwell,
On such platitudes as 'Pride before a fall',
But when tempted to be vain
First pause and think again
If really you are any good at all.*

*For a certain Ladies' Club
Rather thought itself the hub,
Round which the Hockey universe revolved.
In the country round, it seems,
They had beaten several teams;
To become more famous still they then resolved.*

*'A cap and coloured tie,'
They said, 'we, too, must buy,
Which all the very best elevens wore.'
But their heads the hatter found,
When he ran the measure round
Were several sizes larger than before!*

Now at Remenham they had
A Club that wasn't bad,
And to journey south our friends were next invited,
For several days to stay,
And a test match there to play;
So at Henley one fine day they all alighted.

Through the town they drove in style,
Smiling graciously the while,
The folks came out to wonder and admire.
'But,' they said, 'the Thames is here,
Please do not go too near;
We can't afford to have it set on fire.'

Next day – Hockey off

The match had scarce begun
'Ere Remenham scored one!
The defence appeared to be so very tame;
To all around 'twas clear
There was arsenic in the beer,
Or else they simply didn't know the game.

But what a sorry fix,
With the goals increased to six!
All efforts were in vain to turn the tide.
It was a perfect farce,
For when they tried to pass
They merely passed it to the other side.

The game at last was o'er,
Eight-nothing was the score,
And our friends were feeling glum as well they might;
But in spite of telegrams
With sarcastic epigrams,
They say they spent a very jolly night.

*Now in future, I am sure,
They will swagger never more,
Nor will they let their 'pride precede a fall',
For by hard experience
They have gained some common sense,
And they know they are not any good at all.*

80 YEARS ON - WHEN THEY WERE WINNING!



Malpas Ladies Hockey team in the early 1980s

*L-R: (Back row) Pam Edge (umpire) Viv Lee Lynne Suckley
Anita Lloyd Sue Mathie Linda Jeffrey Marjorie Holland Lindsay Lee
(Sitting) Margaret Richards Carole Corbett Val Hancock
Jenny Matthews Judith Harper (captain)
(Photo: Malpas and District Sports Club)*

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