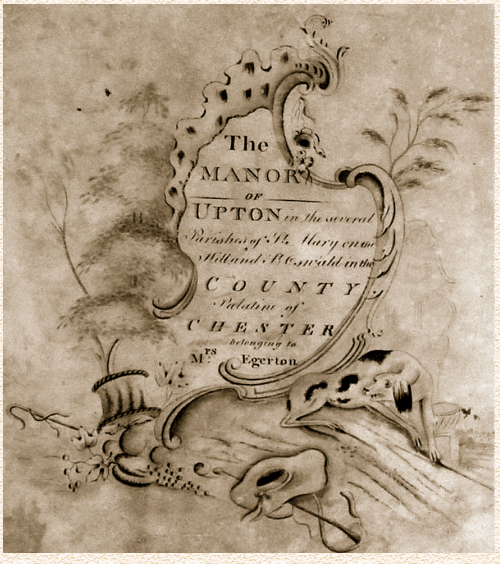
Chapter 1
Introduction



The book aims to reveal the story of Upton's development, both in physical terms and through its community. The first chapters draw heavily on public archived material, analysed and presented for today's reader, telling the story from the earliest records through to the Tithe surveys of the mid-1800s. Subsequent chapters draw mainly on privately held material and memories. After following the growth from small rural village to city suburbia, the later chapters then focus on the people and their activities – both for employment and for leisure.

Location maps and illustrations

This introduction concludes with a set of eight full colour pages giving a brief, colourful, visual trip through our history. Throughout the other chapters, illustrations have been located alongside the relevant descriptive text. The double spread map on pages 98 / 99 and aerial photograph on pages 122 / 123 are useful references for chapters 5 to 10. To help the reader identify streets and some current day facilities, a modern map is featured opposite (x) and the gazetteer (end of the book) gives map grid references to aid their location.

The early years

We start by looking at some of the area's natural history and man's influence on the landscape. Then, from the first signs of man's presence, public archives have helped reveal the evolving story through Roman and Saxon times, Domesday, the diminishing Church control after the Reformation and then the disruptions of Civil War. Land ownership through the 'Lord of the Manor' is then covered and the evolving use of the land with enclosures and the formation of farms with various tenant farmers. Local 'antiquities' are examined and new theories revealed. Buildings dating back to Upton's agricultural past are discussed including coverage of what became of them. The 1839 Upton Tithe Survey presents a good snapshot of life at that time and chapter 5 is devoted to this period.

Shift to suburbia from the mid-1800s

The first incomers were wealthy businessmen seeking country estates. They became the 'local barons' and their resources strongly influenced the local community. By the turn of the century there was a trickle of the clerical and artisan classes – with both the Upton Heath area and Upton Park as significant communities, accounting for nearly half the population. Although the Asylum was established at the Bache, its impact on the Upton community was small. A thriving nursery business took up farm land in the south and from the 1930s, a major zoo has grown to cover a large part of our northern area, constraining housing development. The mid-1930s saw a significant increase in housing demand as Chester suburbs spread. Building was well underway when it was suspended by wartime activities. This war was 'close to home' with locally based military headquarters and hospitals. Post-war soon saw extensive housing development underway, building on fields after first mastering the streams and man-made pits and ponds. Due to Upton's location there were many proposals for canals, railways, trunk roads and even an airport that could have made Upton turn out very different from today. Upton is now reaching its residential capacity – held in by its greenbelt policy and kept green itself with its golf course, public greens and leafy verges.

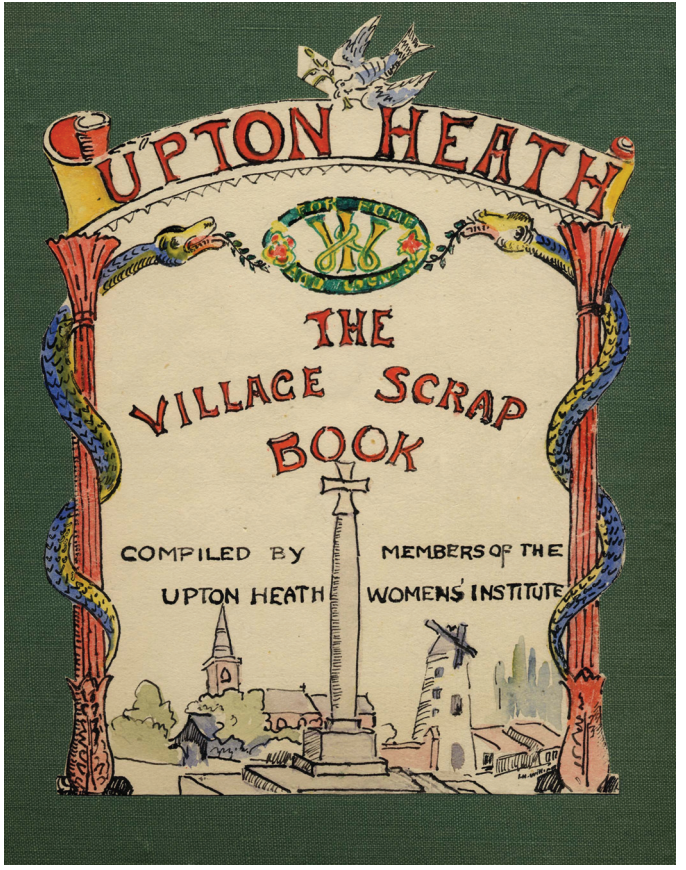
The people and their activities and reminiscences

Moving on to community activities, we then get an insight into the businesses and employment through the last two centuries. All the major employers and many of the small business trades are covered. The story of the Village Hall has been given its own chapter and shows the major part it has played in the recreation of the area. This leads into a chronological look at the community-wide festivities such as those marking national celebrations. Looking at leisure activities, one of the earliest interests was growing and exhibiting flowers; this in time became the Horticultural Society. Another early recreation for the wealthy classes was Chester Golf Club which began its life in the Bache area, more than 30 years before Upton Golf Club became a reality. By the mid-1850s the growth of the village justified its own school and parish church.

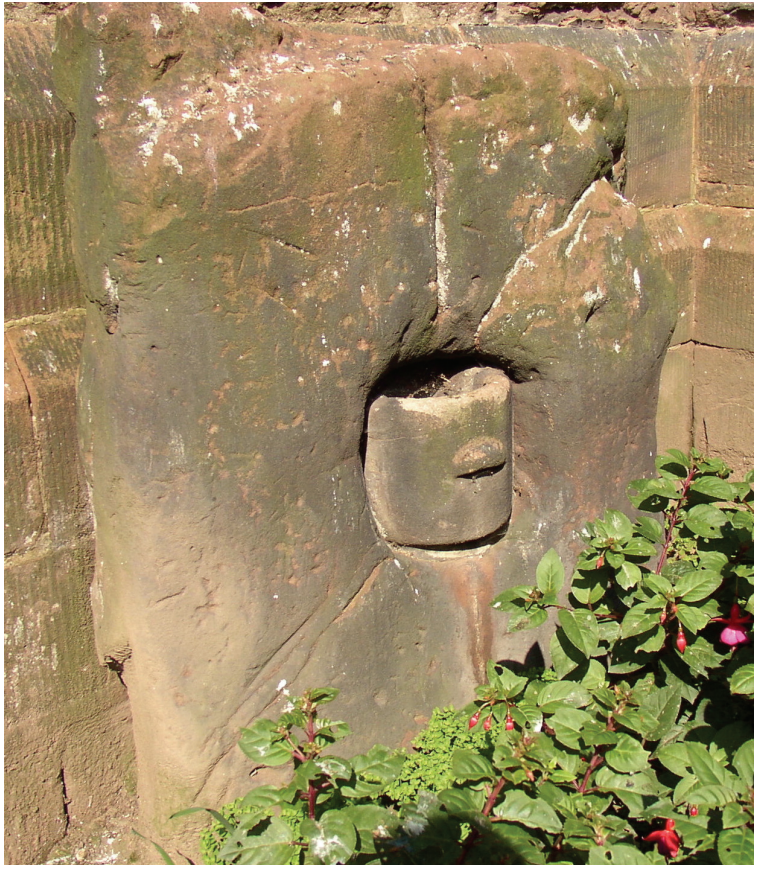
Some members of the community have been singled out for coverage where they have made a wide impact. They have 'made their mark' in public service, such as civic or church, achieved something to make Upton proud or simply and humbly been part of the general well-being of the community. They are all remembered fondly by local residents. Under 'Reminiscences' we have selected some richly descriptive recollections and anyone who is of an age to remember schooldays of the first half of the 1900s will be magically transported back in time. Finally, 'Tale Ends' is an amalgamation of amusing stories told by residents – whether you believe them all - is in your hands.

Abbreviations used throughout the book

'WI Book' – The 1951 Upton Village History Scrapbook compiled by the W.I.
'CRO' – The Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies.



The 1951 W.I. Village History Scrapbook
Image reproduced courtesy of the Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies



Upton's Plague Stone – or is it? See page 54
Photo – Kate Roberts



Aerial photo of one of the Roman practice camp enclosures on Upton Heath

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Reproduced from 'The W.I. Book' courtesy of the Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes



The Oaks, formerly Upton Bank, the first of Upton's Gentleman's Country Estates. Now part of Upton Golf Club

Reproduced from 'The W.I. Book' courtesy of the Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes



Mr Godwin passing 'Nixon's Land' – now the Bache supermarket entrance
Date and photographer unknown









The 1977 Silver Jubilee Carnival Procession

Photos – David and Ailsa Clegg



Stanton Drive, 1953 Coronation *Photo – Francix Fox*



An Upton entrance – Demage Lane *Photo – David Hooper*



Pine Gardens, 1977 Silver Jubilee *Photo – Jill Smith*



An Upton entrance – Bache Roundabout *Photo – Kate Roberts*



Some members of Upton-by-Chester Local History Group, March 2004, at the Village Hall

Photo – Geoffrey Newcombe, History Group Official Photographer