Chapter 4
Historic Upton

This chapter explains the sites and properties in Upton that were known to exist before the Tithe Map of 1840 was drawn up. Many of those properties have been lost over time but we are fortunate to still have several with us today. We are left with cottages, former farmhouses, a public house, one hall, boundary stones and the ancient stone at the side of the church. Not forgetting many of the roads we use today.

Upton Hall

The pretty watercolour picture of Upton Hall from 1920 shows two houses in one; a farmhouse and a decaying hall. (See chapter 2). The hall appears to be of Elizabethan period with stone mullioned windows and had cellars. The house was between what is now the end of the hospital complex and the Dale Camp; the Chester to Birkenhead railway was put across the Hall's drive in 1840. The house had fine views across to the Welsh hills but its location does feel isolated from the rest of Upton being separated by the railway and main road. Maybe this is what the original owners intended.

The origin of the property is not known, nor is it possible to tell if there was another house on the site previously. If we assume that this house was the property of the Lord of the Manor of Upton it could well be that the Brock family, who establish themselves at the head of Upton Manor, were the most likely builders. Ormerod starts the family with John Brock, gentleman, who left his second wife a widow in 1594. The family were landowners not only in Upton but Newton, Moston, around the Christleton area and as far afield as Moreton, Wirral. There are many instances of them renting out their land to farmers.

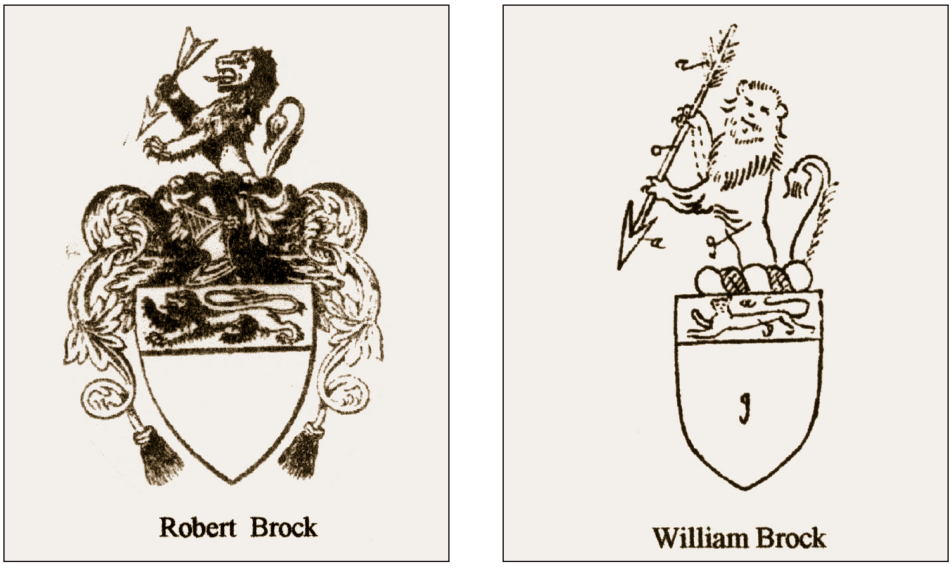
The Brocks played a prominent position not just in Upton but in Chester, and served as Aldermen, Councillors, Sheriff, as well as Churchwardens of St Mary-on-the-Hill Church. They intermarried with other local gentry including the Greggs of Bradley, the Hurlstones of Picton, and the Hockenhulls of Shotwick. When the male line ran out in 1734 it was the last time that the Lord of the Manor lived in Upton Hall. It was then rented out by the Egerton family and became more of a large farm than a gentleman's residence.

From the mid 1800s to 1923 the Hall was tenanted and farmed by the Ithell family, Thomas Ithell moved from a farm by the sand pit in Upton Lane to the Hall until he died in 1876 at almost 100 years old.

In 1897 a surveyor from Mollington, John Davies, came in July of that year to make a valuation on the property for the Egerton family. He has left a good

description of the Hall at almost the end of its long life when it was already in decay. Davies described two approaches from the main road, fields in a good state of cultivation, especially wheat, but the '*accommodation was old and considerably out of repair*'. He valued the whole property and land as comprising over 46 acres at £11/7s/4d. The Ithells kept the tenancy within the family until Richard Ithell finally left for his own house in Upton. The last tenant was Arthur Hinde and he farmed until 1933 when the Hall was finally demolished. Although the Hall is no longer, the field it stood in is still farmed to this day.

In the summer of 2004 a History Group member unearthed an old gun on the Hall field whilst walking her dog. It was taken to the Grosvenor Museum for identification and turned out to be a gentleman's pocket pistol with a percussion cap firing mechanism. This dated it to between 1840-1850 but the gun itself could have been much older as it appears that the firing mechanism is an addition, probably an upgrade.



Brock family coats of arms

Bache Hall

The house that now carries the name of Bache Hall was built in the early 18th century. It is of plain brick, two storeys, has 5 bays and is Grade III listed. The house is situated on a gentle rise; below is a rocky valley with Bache Brook running through. It was rebuilt after the old house was demolished during the Civil War siege of Chester. This older property is listed as having a medieval moat, but there is no trace of it now as modern housing covers the site but on the 1844 tithe map of Bache, field No.3 is called Moat Field and could possibly be the site of the original house.

The first references to various families who have held the manor start in the 13th century with several people having Bache as a surname, it is probable that they did represent the ownership. By the 14th century it was held by the Donecaster family and in the next century the Chauntrells take over. There are references to documents with various members of the family listed right through until William sells the manor to Robert Whitby in approximately 1606. It is during the Whitby's custodianship that the old house is lost and a new one built. From the Whitby's the estate passed, partly by purchase and partly by marriage, to the Cromptons. About 1720 the manor passes via an heiress of the Cromptons to the Morgans of Golden Grove in Flintshire until they sold it to Samuel James Broadhurst of Chester. The property descended to various members of his family who, as part of the Will terms, had to change their name from Jenks to Brodhurst (sometimes listed as Broadhurst). In 1874 Samuel Broadhurst Hill sold the estate to the Hudson family, and finally a Major MacGillycuddy who was the last private owner. He sold it to the neighbouring Mental Hospital in 1922 and the Hall has just undergone restoration and expansion by Chester College as a School of Midwifery.

In 1973 Liverpool Road was widened to a dual carriageway ending at Bache Hall; a lodge house and Bache Cottage were demolished. In the 1990s a new road, Countess Way, was put in, running along the lawns parallel to Bache Brook underneath the Hall. It joins Parkgate Road and Liverpool Road.



Bache Lodge house, Liverpool Road



Moston Hall and The Dale

Moston Hall was built in the early part of the 19th century and was the seat of the Massey family. Built of red brick it was partly restored and added to in 1870. When the estate was sold off to the Swetenham family an unsold portion descended to Miss Massey who, in the 1880s, built The Dale. Mr Reginald Potts later bought it as a present to his wife and they moved there from The Oaks. In 1938 The Dale was purchased by the War Department from Mrs F Potts and became the Depot of the Cheshire Regiment.



Reproduced from the 1873 Ordnance Survey map

Heath House

There are references to this property going back to the early 17th century, and its location is revealed in the St Oswald's Vestry Orders of 1656. It describes the parish boundaries and says that the house stood on the Upton-Picton boundary '*at the north end a lane led to Picton on the east a meere stone parted Upton and Picton Heath*'. This leads us to what is now Upton Grange Farm. The large house that is just set back from the lane is a much later building, but behind in the farm courtyard stands a large cottage of a very much earlier date. This is in all probability Heath House, if not the site of it. Early records of St Oswald's and St Mary's churches have accounts of the Robinson family of Heath House in their books.

Recently local archaeology students gained permission to fieldwalk on the field next to the scheduled moat field. This was a simple exercise of dividing the field in 10m surveyed squares and retrieving objects found on the newly ploughed and rolled soil surface. A diverse collection of pottery was found from Roman to Willow pattern, lots of broken clay pipes and very thick pieces of glass from wine bottles. This shows activity across many centuries, but particularly by the agricultural worker who was smoking and taking refreshment from the 17th century onwards.

The Acres – Acres Lane

This is another of our very old sites. The Cheshire Sheaf records the sale of land here at the end of the 16th century. Firstly in 1587-8 R Browne sold land in Upton and Wervin to Henry Birkenhead (of Backford Hall). Called The Acres, it consisted of 16 acres in all lying between Upton Common, Wervin Common and the high road that led to Caughall. Secondly, in 1595-6 R Browne again sold land, this time to Will Aldersey. Called Great Acres, it had a value of £80 and was again in the vicinity of the first sale.



The exact age of the farm is not known, and it does not appear on a map until the 1831map of Bryant by which time it is a large farm house and outbuilding arrangement. At the time of the Tithe survey eight years later it was owned by Samuel Brittain, who owned various other pieces of land in Upton, including the Mill and farm next to it, but did not live at the Acres.



It continued to function as a farm right through to the early part of the 20th century when the Dean family (of Upton Mill) lived and worked here for several decades. It is not known exactly when the Deans left and the farm became semi derelict until the early 1980's, when the outbuildings were converted into residential properties called Green Acres Court. The main house became a country hotel for a while, then in the late 1980s it was significantly refurbished and extended to become the Orchard Manor Nursing Home. 'The WI Book' notes how much the display of daffodils in the old orchard was admired at the time.

Upton Farm – Upton Lane

The origins of this building are not known for certain but research leads us to a possible date sometime between the post-Civil War era and the early 18th century. The farm started life as a two-room small holding with a central entrance door facing west and an inglenook fireplace at each end. There may well have been a wooden ladder giving access to the loft space. Another room was added at right angles, on the north side, almost doubling the property and is shown on the 1735 map. It has been previously written that wattle and daub walls are in the building. Extensive restoration in more recent years has failed to locate any, but reed and plasterwork has been found in a wall and as a ceiling. It is believed that the house was extended into a farm in 1842, as there is a set of initials and the year scratched into the rough plaster upstairs in the stable block. The roof was also raised by some 6-8 courses and the farm then took its distinctive quadrangle form remembered by many today.



It has been recorded that a 'Spence' was located in the kitchen. This was described as an area partitioned off – the lower part filled in and the upper part railed. A separate area might be needed for the making or storage of products made on the farm. One hidden feature of the house is the cellars that an ex-employee of a previous owner report as being barrel-vaulted, but they were filled with sand at the insistence of the owner's wife. There is a substantial amount of sand under the present kitchen floor but no way of verifying the report. The farm had its own water pump, which also supplied the cottages in the vicinity.

Upton Farm had grown from a smallholding into a farm, which was working until the middle of the last century. In the 1920s and 30s it operated as a pig farm run by the Brickland family. When it changed hands it still kept to the business of animal keeping, slaughtering and selling the products from the farm.

After WW2, the property and some adjoining land, was owned by Mr Shinn who was a speculative builder. He built and sold plots around Upton Lane and he also sold off part of the farm; the demolition of most of the quadrangle buildings allowed the development of Penfold Hey. His son, Arthur Shinn, later took over the property before he sold it in 1990 to the current owners, Mr and Mrs Stockton, who have taken great care to restore some of the period features of the house. When Upton Lane was widened the end of the building was demolished and the garden wall built.

Rose Cottage - Upton Lane

This house has had many changes of name. It has been known as Rose Bank, Rose Bank Cottage, and Rose Villa and is on the site of the Man in the Moon public house as marked on the 1735 map. The front of the building shows a date of 1745. The house is earlier than this but its exact date is not known. In the decades that followed the Civil War there was much regeneration and building, Rose Cottage probably fits into this era. The windows on the front of the house are very distinctive, in a gothic style, which was popular in the 18th century. At some time the roof has been raised; this quite often happened and there are other examples in Upton. The house has several outbuildings including a former wash house in the back yard and a coach house at the end of the property on Demage Lane. The coach house was once a separate family house in the 1930's and was also a cobbler's business. The garden seems to be missing one side, and this is because there was once a lane next to the house. A later cottage was built in the gap.



Tenants even from its early history have usually lived in the house. From Richard Pierce in 1735 to Samuel Brittain, a land owner and Chester solicitor who owned the house in 1839, but the Whitelock family were the tenants, through to the 20th century when David Watkins owned but rented to several tenants all with military connections. One was a Cheshire Regiment Colonel, Sir Napier Crookenden, who was born in the house in 1915. The present owners, Dr and Mrs Bowra , have lived in Rose Cottage since 1977.

Hogg House and The Manor House

There have been several references to a house that is no longer standing, but has some significance as well as great age. 'The WI Book' first notes Hogg House as belonging to St Werburgh's Abbey and quotes an as yet unfounded reference to a grant of 1579. It was included with other land in a grant to the Glaisser family of Lea-by-Backford and was in the holding of Robert Davye, who paid rent at the West Gate of the Abbey on Michaelmas and Lady Day. Robert Davye's widow was to die of the plague in 1603; although several died and were buried at the same time it is only Widow Davye's name that gets mentioned. This shows that the Davyes and their house were of some minor importance. Though none of this information helps to locate the property 'The WI Book' gives another description of a very old house that was demolished at the turn of the 20th century. It was thatched with clay floor downstairs and was reputed to have been the only cottage on the Heath and one of the oldest cottages in Upton. The location of this house is known now as the site of Woodbank and Heath House cottages on Heath Road.

Our earliest map which includes residents' names is the 1735 map and on this, John Ithell is listed as tenanting this same piece of land; there are three houses on the site. The Ithell family connection with the site is a long one and at some unknown time they must have purchased the site, as by early 20th century Richard Ithell retired from farming at Upton Hall and moved into his own house very close by.



This house was known as the Manor House but was formally called the Beeches; again it was reported to be an old house with rush ceilings and stone foundations. This picture of the house shows it in its modernised form in the mid-20th century. The house was demolished and the bungalows of Wheldon Close now stand on the site.

The key to unravelling the site is the Ithell family, whose repeated connection over several centuries is highly significant. We have a lot of evidence for various branches of the family living all over Upton but the Heath site must have become their home as they were usually tenants. It has already been suggested that Hogg House was a property of some significance, as were the Ithell family, and it is just possible that they acquired the site and built the Manor House when they needed a bigger or newer property. Hogg House remained but lost its significance until it was demolished in 1905 when the land was sold by Richard Ithell to build the pair of cottages called Heath Cottages. Further evidence, which could substantiate the claim that there was an old cottage on the site, has been found. Cellars were unexpectedly discovered when alterations were made to Heath House Cottage.

The Ithell Family

The Ithell family have had a constant presence in Upton like no other family. They farmed for the Brock and Egerton families and can be found in local records going back to at least 1631, when William Ithell buried his wife, Elizabeth. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries various members of the family occur in the Parish Records for St Mary's-on-the-Hill, the Township Minute Books, maps and in the Egerton family papers. For example, in the 1730s we can locate three branches of the family living in Upton at the same time.

Thomas Ithell was a labourer living at Bache Pool with his wife Mary and their two children, Martha and Thomas.

John Ithell was a Yeoman living at Upton Heath with his wife Margaret and their son, John.

William Ithell was a Churchwarden at St Mary's-on-the-Hill.

As you can see the family used the names Thomas and John frequently, and this makes unravelling the families quite difficult. They have also managed to live in many of the known properties in Upton, e.g. The Golden Ball Inn (The Egerton Arms), the Manor House (Upton Heath), Demage Farm and Upton Hall. In 1820 Thomas Ithell moved from a farm in Sandpit Lane to take the tenancy of Upton Hall from the Egertons. Between the various family members they farmed a considerable amount of Upton whilst owning very little, yet achieving the status of Yeoman farmers. This Thomas Ithell died in 1876 aged 99 years and 9 months. Eventually his nephew Richard was the last to take over the Hall farm in 1890 until he gave up possession in 1923 when he retired to his own house. Mr Richard Ithell held the Hall from Sir Philip Grey-Egerton and was the oldest tenant on the estate at the time of the Silver Wedding celebrations of Sir Philip and Lady Grey-Egerton in 1936. These were held at Oulton Park and representatives from Upton gave a gift of a silver cake basket presented by Mr Ithell. In the speeches that followed Sir Phillip noted the strong family tradition on the estate exemplified by the Ithell family's four hundred year association.

Mr Richard Ithell died in 1947 having served on the Parish Council, the Highway Board and the District Council.

The Brewers Arms, Frog Hall and Bridge Farm Cottage

The area that now comprises the Frog Public House and its near vicinity has a very integrated history. No buildings appear until after the 1735 map but the land here was not part of the Egerton estate. The 1801 map has Jane Jones cottage and one other building marked. The northern block we understand to be a compact set of dwellings, the southern block the farm cottage. A lease from 1835 has John Gill paying Mr Jones a peppercorn rent for 1 year, for the house that became the Brewers Arms. The 1839 Tithe map and Apportionment now shows three properties on the site; the public house, a cottage and garden and 5 dwellings and gar-

dens owned by John Axe (the owner of the Victoria Hotel). Lloyd Branford is listed as owning the other two properties but further information has a Joseph Hughes as owner of the cottage and Richard Jones as occupier.



The name Frog Hall is introduced on the 1871 OS map and the 1881 census records 30 adults plus children residing in Frog Hall – presumably the set of cottages and the farm cottage together. The 2nd edition OS map at the end of that century shows the farm cottage increasing in size. The cottages and Brewers Arms are demolished in the 1930s and the present building 'The Frog' is built set further back from the very front of the road where the old inn was position. The Frog Hall cottages were probably demolished in the 1940's. By 1960 the farm cottage – now called Bridge Farm Cottage - has fallen into such a state of decay, that Chester Urban District Council issued a demolition order, with the premises to be vacated within 12 months. Eventually a planning application was granted in 1962, which stopped the demolition of the cottage, and led to its sale and renovation. Mr and Mrs Shipley have lived at Bridge Farm Cottage since 1978.

The name that unites all the properties that have stood in this area is 'Frog,' and there has been a great deal of conjecture as to its meaning. Here are two explanations – simply that there was a large number of frogs as the area was low and therefore damp – or – Frog Hall like Rats Castle, Bats Hall or Owl Castle, is supposed to have applied to ruined buildings. There is no definitive information available and it will probably never be explained.

Upton Cross House – Heath Road

The house has been a private residence for more than 140 years, but before then it was an inn called the Victoria Hotel. It stands at the meeting of the roads leading to Upton Heath, the Bache and Newton, occupying a prominent location in the village.



The property is large with obvious additions made to the original house, but its exact age is unknown. 'The WI Book' has a date of 1790 for cockfighting at the premises and the house probably dates from around this period. There are many references to the hotel and gardens in the commercial directories from 1850 to 1864, with Mr John Axe as the owner. One Victorian guide book for the Chester area records '*The Victorian Tea Gardens, the property of Mr John Axe, are extensively and tastefully laid out with shrubs, flowers and evergreens and form a place of great attraction in the summer season to the numerous visitors who have the pleasure of paying a visit to them*'.

When 'The WI Book' was first written it recorded several alternative names for the Inn as well as telling of the use of the skittle alley in the back yard which was popular with local people. This obviously shows that the old inn was still in living memory even then, and must have been a popular place within the community.

The house became the property of the Potts family who let it to various tenants from the 1860s until 1904. In the 1950s and 60s the Rev. Canon Harvey and his family lived at Upton Cross House. Canon Harvey was the Headmaster of the King's School, Chester, and was responsible for moving the school out of its old site to its present location on Wrexham Road. Canon Harvey often assisted Canon Wheldon-Williams at services at the Parish Church and his wife was President of the Upton WI. It was Canon Harvey who gave the Cockpit to the people of Upton.

On an outside wall overlooking the rear yard once hung a large bell. It is not known why the bell was needed, but the present owners of Upton Cross House brought the bell to the ULHG exhibition of 2004 where it was rung with great effect.

The Cockpit – Upton Cross-roads

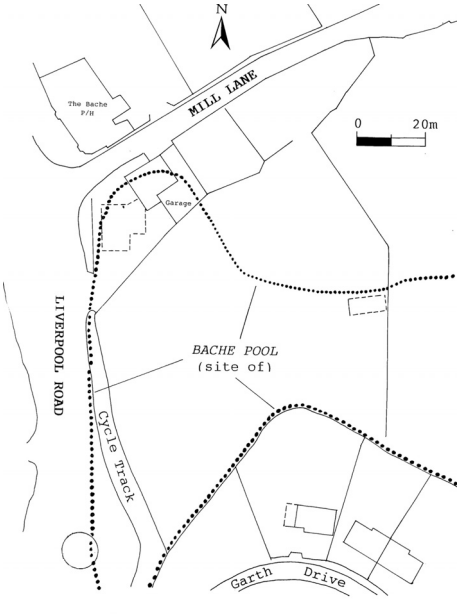
To the side of Upton Cross House is what is known locally as the Cockpit. This was once the front garden of the Victoria Hotel and was used as a tea garden. The sport of cockfighting was somewhat shady which is why the only references to it have been as reminiscences and there are none officially recorded anywhere. The Victoria Hotel was a very popular venue and the story goes that local gentry from the surrounding locality spent their evenings here after the Chester race meetings.

In 1978 The Clerk of Upton Parish Council invited the Grosvenor Museum to investigate which sadly did not reveal any new information. One clue to the origin of the 'pit' comes from the field name on which the house and cockpit stand; this was called Sandhole Croft. It may have been an 18th century sandpit that was subsequently used as a cockpit. The cockpit is open to the public.



Cockpit garden 1951

The former extent of Bache Pool



Bache Pool

The pool was enlarged in medieval times by damming the brook. This was needed to keep Bache Watermills wheels turning even in times of low water. It also had several other functions. The monks of the Abbey were forbidden to eat meat for most of the time but could have fish and would probably have had fishponds at their mill. The pool was a large landmark in the area and was used in the defining of the limits of the Chester City boundary. It also took the place of the village green as a meeting place for locals. We note in May 1744 that the meetings for the Township of Upton were to be held at the house of Thomas Ithell at Bache Pool. Again in May 1751 a meeting to settle the accounts of the Overseer of the Highways at Bache Pool.

The Egerton Arms – Liverpool Road

One cannot say for certain that John Ithell's house at Bache Pool from 1751 and the Golden Ball from 1735 are the same place. All that can be noted is that this corner of Upton has held significance for a very long time, and in particular has been the place where the community met to arrange its affairs. It has not been possible to find out when first an inn was built on the site, but the 1735 map has John Hughes living at the Golden Ball with house, garden and wheat field behind.

An inn sited here would be ideal as it was not only on the Turnpike road but was also the very last stop before you entered the City of Chester and paid city prices. The building may even be on the site of much older buildings.

The inn was the focal point for the Township meetings and we also have another name from around the 1860s, the Bache Hotel. When the inn became the Egerton Arms we do not know, but it was customary to name the inn, where people collected to pay the Lord of the Manor their dues, after him. Sir Philip Egerton is the owner of the Egerton arms in the Tithe Apportionment and the family does so until 1911 when Sir Philip Grey-Egerton sells the public house with its yard and gardens to the Northgate Brewery. The pub has had several name changes in the 20th century but it now retains it old name.



1741 Township Minute Book

This hand written bound book contains the Minutes referring to '*The charge of the poor for the Township of Upton'*; the initial signatories were John Wade, John Johnson and William Shone. Throughout these Minutes William Shone signs on behalf of John Egerton, Lord of the Manor, and principal land owner, whenever he is absent – although by 1760 John Egerton is often in attendance. The ratepayers met, typically 5 or 6 of them, and names were nominated as eligible to be an 'Overseer of the Poor'. Each year a single Overseer of the Poor was designated and they had the duty to both collect the rate and meet the needs. The Minutes therefore not only record those assigned these duties but also the accounts of how the rate was spent. Named ratepayers and their duties seemed to cycle annually with most ratepayers doing the role at some point. The 'Overseer of the Highway', later known as the 'Way Warden', seemed only to be assigned to certain ratepayers and for a number of years at a time. Even after 1760 when John Egerton attended these meetings he was never assigned a duty. During much of this period Richard Roberts was the Constable. It is assumed that the Constable was appointed from amongst the Township.

Here is an example of the type of items paid out to local people in need as discussed at the Township meetings.

From the account of 1751/2

Ann Downs coffin 9/-

Burial of Ann Down 6/2

Some items to Old Nell £1/9/7

Some items to Old Nell 52wks £1/6/-

Ralph Wilkinson for John Downs rent 15/9

Linen drapers bill £1/2/3

Mr Price for 52wks £3/18/-

John Price and Ann Stouts child £6/10/-

Widow Jones for 52wks @ 12^{d} £2/12/-

Mrs Price's bread 15/6

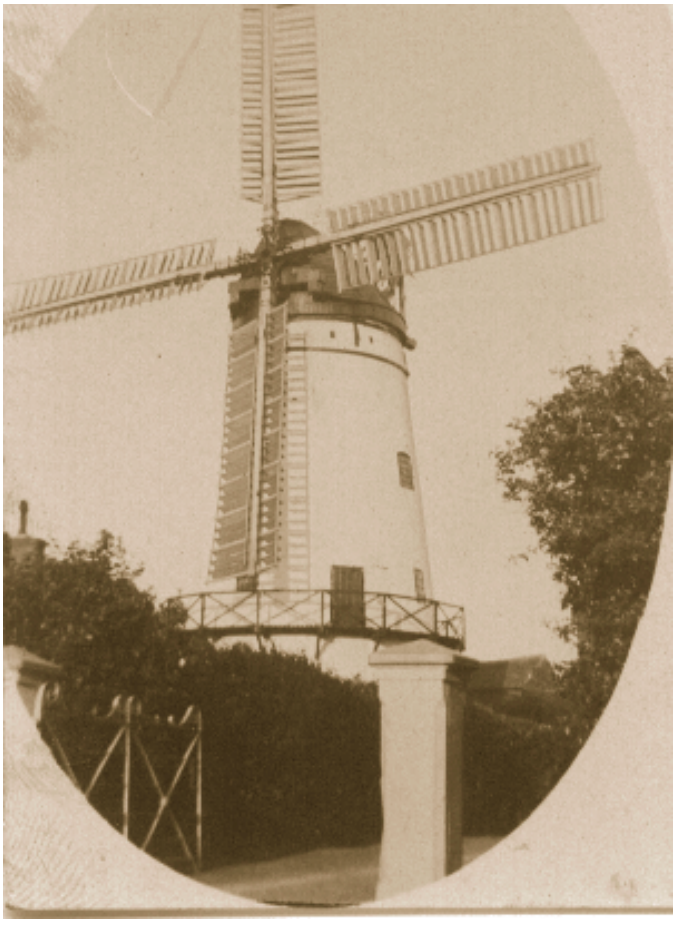
Shoes for the poor 16/-

Shurtt cloth 8/-

Coals £2/7/6

Upton Mill – Off Mill Lane

The mill is purported to have been built in 1775; the building and equipping of a tower windmill would have been an expensive investment for someone. Not many people were capable of such an outlay and the Egertons may well be the likely candidates. Prior to the windmill being built, grain was milled at the Bache water mill, but this was at the end of its working life and it is conceivable that the Egertons saw fit to make their own arrangements for their estate. The mill first appears on the 1801 Egerton estate map but there is unfortunately no detail as to who the owner or tenant was at that time.



The windmill itself was a brick tower 5 storeys high and was topped with a wooden cap which held the sails, it could turn to face whichever direction the wind took, and this was achieved by the small set of fantail sails at the back. It seems that the sails were made of cloth until 1901 when they were replaced with wooden louvered type made by a Newark firm of millwrights. It is this image that has appeared on so many pictures of the mill; it even featured on a postcard in 1918. On the Tithe map of 1839 we see that Samuel Brittain is the owner of

the mill house, buildings, the farm house next door (which fronts Mill Lane today) the orchard and several fields, one with a lane connecting to Mill Lane. The Miller was William Carter, who eventually bought the mill and sold part of the grounds to create the Mill Lane entrance to Upton Park in 1857. In the 1871 Census William Carter, now aged 60 is recorded as being the miller, baker and farmer; his daughter had married Edward Dean. The name Dean figures largely in the history of the mill, the Dean family baker business is covered in Chapter 11. Upton Mill lost its sails sometime in the 1920s and was used as a bakery until a new one was built on the site in 1929. The expanded bakery business is shown on the OS map for the 1930s, so much so that it was proposed to demolish the mill by 1954 but this was opposed by residents. In 1956 the bakery business transferred to larger premises at Saltney, and the site and buildings fell into a state of disrepair. There were various uses for the mill until the firm of T Houlbrook and Sons, wholesalers and vegetable merchants, took over the site in the early 1960s. Their use provoked considerable local concern. A newspaper article from October 1969 shows that the situation had reached government level as the County Council Planning Dept had reported the case to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The Houlbrooks moved out and the site was cleared with bits sold off for housing development. The bakery chimney came down, allegedly by Blaster Bates. By 1979 the mill itself was up for sale, and was purchased and converted by Mr M Field.

Cottages



We are fortunate to have several cottages that were built before the 1839 Tithe still standing. One group can be found at the lower end of Upton Lane, next to Rose Cottage; there are 5 of them. There were more cottages in this area, a little further up each side of what was then called Smoke Street. The cottages were known as the Smoke Street Cottages and were demolished in the 1940s. It is not surprising to find such a concentration of older properties in this one spot, as it was around here the initial settlement formed and developed.

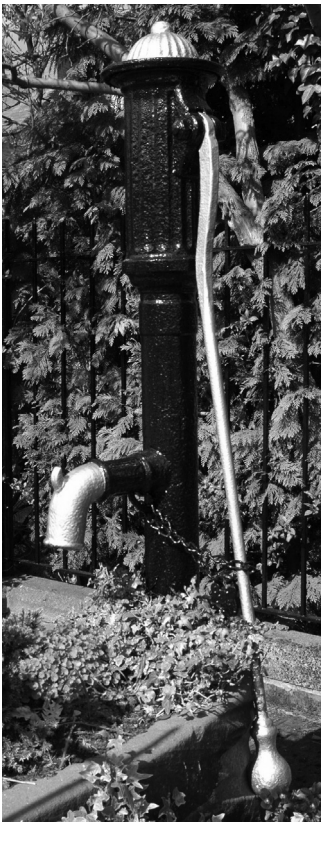
Another ‘hot spot’ can be found at Upton Heath, of the many cottages there, the pair on the Long Lane/Heath Road corner have particularly distinctive windows. Again the Gothic style could be an indication of its age. We do have some information about these houses, one in particular. They seemed to be owned by

Samuel Brittain in 1839 and from 1876 the Darlington family ownership with tenants. Previously owned by joiner Bob Jones and his sisters, the cottages were in poor condition with no lighting in 1932. The houses are currently owned by Mr S and Mr G Ryder, who have renovated them retaining the character of the building.



There are a further two cottages next door but one, whose age is unknown but again appear on the Tithe map. With these cottages and the ones that existed opposite, they formed another early nucleus of development at this end of the village.

One other cottage can be found on church Lane, between the Churchyard and the Cock Pit. Oak Cottage is of unknown date and is another example of a property where the roof has been raised; it was allegedly once thatched. The cottage was also reputed to have been used as a toll cottage from which tolls were levied on loads of sand coming from the sandpit on Upton Lane. It was also once the abode of the village cobbler, but now retains a great deal of the character shown in the illustration.



The Water Pump – Heath Road

Until 1880, when the Chester Waterworks Company brought water to Upton, residents used their nearest well. The last remaining communal pump has become a local landmark, and is believed to be more than 200 years old. During the early part of WW2 it was decided to make the pump ready for use, it was still found to be in working order and the water usable. Post-WW2, railings were put around the pump and the well itself, at the side, covered over.

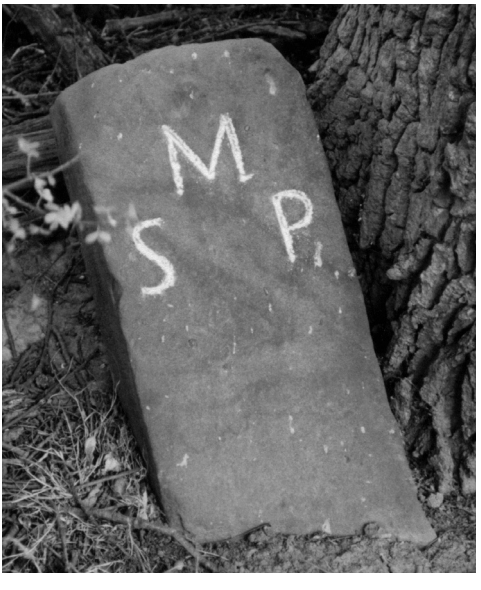
Boundary Stones

The present day boundaries of Upton are almost exactly as they were on our earliest known map, the 1735 enclosure map. There have never been any outstanding natural features that have been used to delineate the boundary; therefore boundary stones were used as markers. Only one stone is marked on the current OS map; earlier OS maps have an increasing number of stones marked, the further one goes back in time. If the location of all the stones is noted from all maps, including the 1801 Egerton Estate map, a total of twelve positions are found.

We have been able to find three boundary stones, two of which are in their original positions. All three have a similar inscription on them, SMP and a date of 1731. These obviously were used to mark the division of Upton, i.e. the line between St Mary's and St Oswald's parishes. The date helps to confirm this as we must not forget that Upton as a parish in its own right did not exist until 1882, from its consecration in 1854 to 1882 it was a Chapel of Ease to St Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester.

The boundary stone on Long Lane by the sports ground footbridge was not marked on an OS map until the 1936 edition; just one field away the position of a stone is marked at least back to 1801 and this could well be its original position.

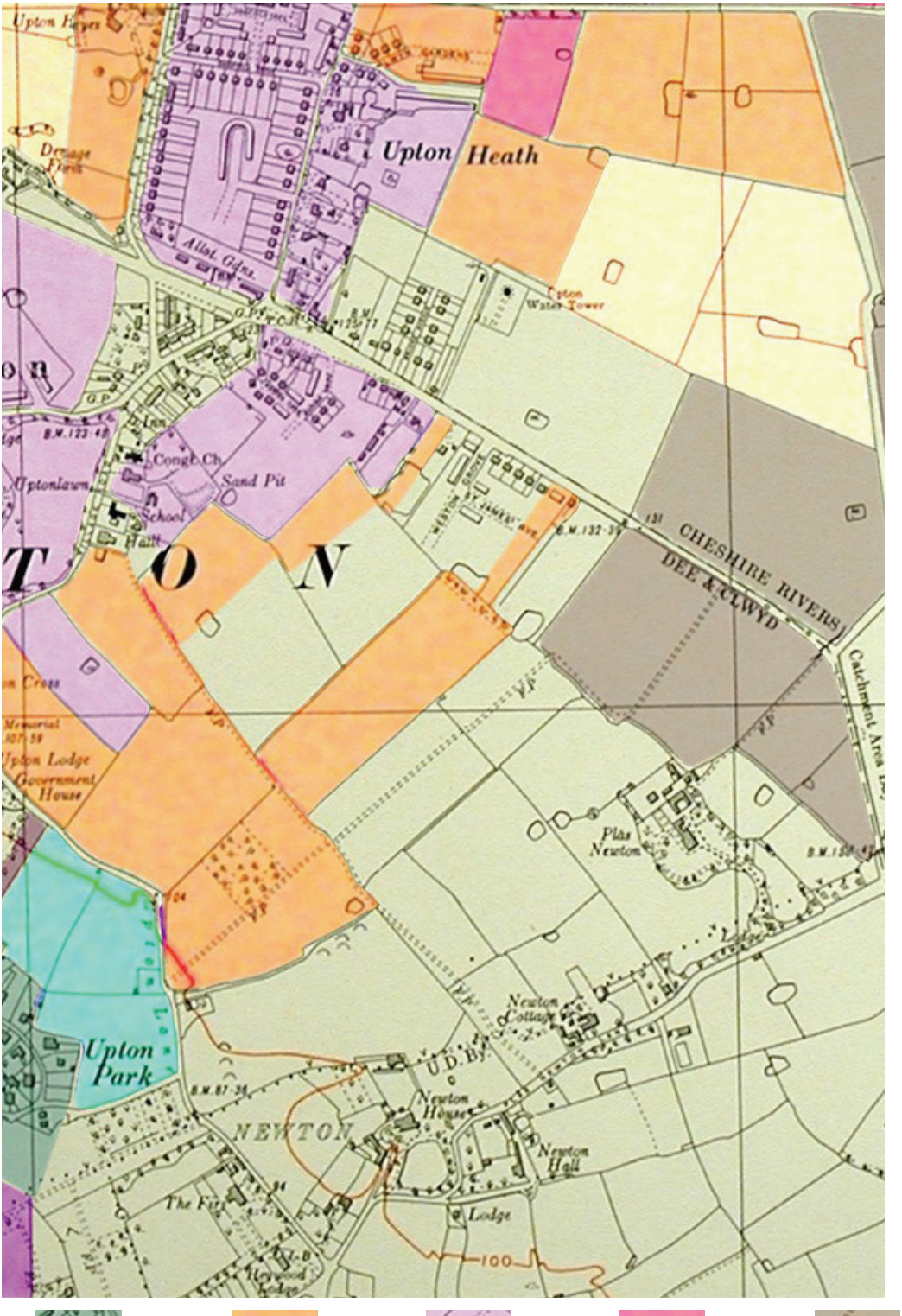








Thomas Seacome | George Rolison | Thomas Ithell | Charles Potts | Dicksons Nurseries



Joseph Lloyd | Joseph Jones | G & M Denson | James Sadler | Samuel Thompson

Roads and Footpaths

The roads and lanes of Upton have their own story to tell of the development and growth of the area. Some of the oldest trackways are still with us today; some have disappeared, but are remembered in other ways. The old maps for the Heath enclosure, Egerton estate, and Tithe Apportionment give us a snapshot of the layout at those dates. The Ordinance Survey maps and local people's living memory give an opportunity to compare information. We can therefore see the approximate order in which the road links developed.

There are two categories of roads we will look at; firstly local roads that connected various parts of Upton together e.g. Mill Lane, Upton Lane. Secondly, the roads that connects with other villages, e.g. Liverpool Road, Caughall Road, and Wealstone Lane. Several have been listed below to give more detail.



Mill Lane c.1912

Mill Lane is one of our oldest roads as it connected the ancient cornmill at Bache with the Upton inhabitants. Later, as Upton Windmill was also located on this road, it may well have been know as Mill Lane for a very long time.

Church Lane has changed its name and its layout in the last 270 years. It obviously has not always been called Church Lane but 'The WI Book' records locals remembering it as Port Lane prior to the church being built. This can be confirmed on the Tithe map as it lists the spare piece of land created when the road was straightened as Port Croft. This is another very old local road as it connected the central settlement with Upton Cross.

Upton Lane is another of our old local roads and it too has had several other names. The lower part joining with Liverpool Road was called Sandpit Lane in relation to the large sandpit that was excavated in the 19th century, alternatively Frog Lane, as it led to the Frog Hall. The stretch from Upton Farm upwards towards the Heath was called Smoke Street; the smoke element was from the fires of the cottages on that stretch but the Street element denotes its Saxon origins (strete OE) and may have more simply been called the Street originally. The road was straightened and connected to Heath Lane sometime between 1735 and 1801 and renamed Upton Lane in the 1930s.

Demage Lane connected the central community with the outlying Demage Farm. The field at the end of the lane was called Demage Croft on the 1735 map, though no building is recorded.



Heath Road too has had other names; it was called Main Road at the top and is marked on the 1936 OS Map as Village Road.

Wealstone Lane was previously called Upton Lane from pre 1872 to 1911 as it is so marked on the OS Maps that cover that time period. This must have been very confusing for all concerned as the name transfers to the other side of Upton. As the road connects Upton and Newton it is quite probable that it was also called Newton Lane depending on which direction you were coming from. It has had its present name since pre WW 2 and could well fit into the changes around the War Memorial at that time.

Acres Lane is another road that connected other communities. It was a very significant road, much longer than at present as it joined Picton, skirting the edge of Upton before crossing to join the Birkenhead toll road. Acres Lane stops when it meets Caughall Lane but would have carried on crossing Flag Lane and arcing across open fields. It has been noted in the past that this road could have been part of the Salters Way. (See chapter 2)

Flag Lane leads out of Upton, northwards, across Butter Hill and on to Chorlton. This very old trackway has many local stories attached to it to explain its name. They include lepers, monks, Flag Iris and route markers. The name Flag could also be an indication of its age as Old English dictionary lists '*Fleag'* as meaning to fly, possibly confirming it as an exit route from the village.

Long Lane aptly describes this road. It connected those who lived on Upton Heath with Heath Farm (i.e. Upton Grange Farm) and on to Hoole. From the Cheshire Sheaf in 1750 it was announced that '*All the Freeholders in the township of Upton are desired to meet on the 12th September 1750 by 10 in the morning at Thomas Ithils at the Beach Pool to settle each one's share of land on Upton Common and to fix on proper roads to be made over the same*'. The straightness of Long Lane may indicate that although it may have been a track or footpath for a long time it was not upgraded to a road until after this date. A direct route as opposed to an Old English winding lane.

Liverpool Road begins as Upper Northgate Street, which goes straight out of the City. The Wirral-bound Roman Road that left the fortress via the North Gate veered to the left along Parkgate Road, making Liverpool Road a more local road of a later unknown date. It was called Bache Lane in the medieval/Middle

Ages as it led to the Bache and the end of the City Liberties, i.e. Boundary limits. From here it becomes the Chester to Birkenhead Road, eventually being turned into a toll road.

The position of some of our more modern roads has not always been the whim of the developer. For example, Weston Grove, Gatesheath Drive and several others follow the line of the old field boundary that the houses have been built on. We can also see from the old maps that there are even a few lanes which have been lost long ago and others which have fairly recently become obsolete.

One very old footpath, which was once a popular and pleasant walk for locals, disappeared with the housing development of the late 20th century. It began on Heath Road at the side of the Village Hall and ran across the fields to meet Plas Newton Lane at Newton Cottage. This track is marked on many maps going back to the 1735 one and from this its position suggests that it could be a much older track still. It was known locally as the Stile (or Style).

Of the other footpaths that have come and gone with time, there are two remaining; one is a short cut between Upton Lane and Demage Lane and is known as the Twitchell. The other runs from the back of Daleside across open land, over a footbridge crossing a drainage stream and out onto Liverpool Road at Moston.

Upton Cross

Where the roads Church Lane, Mill Lane, Heath Road and Wealstone Lane converge it has always been a feature of Upton. Around the crossroads there has been the Victoria Hotel (Upton Cross House), the Cock Pit, Upton Lodge and the War Memorial, but these come relatively later on historically. In the main the area has remained quite open. It is not the only crossroads in Upton as Upton Lane crosses Demage Lane and Church Lane, but it is the only one to be called 'cross'. The name is therefore significant and becomes the first place to start investigating.

In Dodgeson's book Place Names of Cheshire Part IV it lists The Cross in the entry for Upton, '*a house named from a cross shown 1831 Bry at the cross-roads'*. This is explained by looking at Bryants map of 1831 (see page iii) and there is the site of an ancient cross marked. The book entry also includes a Latin reference from 1398 as '*landas terre iuxta crucem'*. We can therefore see the possibility that the name comes not from the crossing of these old roads but from some kind of ancient monument.

Official records also need to be consulted and these turn out to be the Sites and Monument Record (SMR), the Public Monument and Sculpture Association National Recording Project (PMSA) and eventually the Upton Township books for the early 20th century. The SMR also has the same reference to a 14th century cross but when checked no further information was found, though the Environmental Planning Dept, Backford Hall were able to clarify the Latin reference. It comes from a document once in the keeping of the British Museum

now transferred to the British Library. It must be noted that there are two other Upton's in Cheshire and great care must be taken before any confidence can be put in a document unless it can be seen in its original context. The two entries on the PMSA are for the Plague Stone and the War Memorial. The plague stone reference does not include any extra information it just records the inscription inside the church; the War Memorial does have one very interesting sentence. '*When the foundations for the war memorial were being dug, the workmen discovered the old plague stone from the 1660's'*. Again caution is required but it does marry up with the inscription in the church that the stone's location originates at the crossroads. The date of 1920-22 is the date given as the period when the memorial was designed and built and presumably when the stone was found. The Upton Township Book 2, which recorded the minutes of their meetings, is the next reference point, and this has occasional entries concerning an ancient stone, over a period of 8 years.

The story starts in 1931 when Mr Potts offers a stone to the Upton War Memorial Committee. February 1932 Professor Newstead examines the stone and in his opinion says that it is probably the base of a cross. The stone is to be placed at the rear of the War Memorial and in the accounts, a Mr Clegg is paid for removing the stone from Mr Pott's house. April 1932 sees the stone set back into the hedge where it now stays until 1938. By 1937 it seems the committee had decided the stone needed to be moved from that site and an inscription was to accompany it. A Mr Collins from the Blue Coat School and Upton resident was to add the stone cup. (This is the first reference to a stone cup). From January 1938 the stone was recorded as the Ancient Plague Stone where previously it was recorded as the Ancient Stone. In correspondence with Prof. Newstead he recommends Mr W F Irvine of Corwen on the inscription and explanatory note. A revised caption is submitted and approved, but does not record by whom and the stone was cleaned and taken to Upton Church where the bowl was fixed to constrain its removal.

This fascinating and revealing story from the Township Minute Book means we need to have another look at our Plague Stone, as it seems to be hiding another story altogether. It was in fact felt that professional help was required to further the research for this book and Chester Archaeology, the Chester City archaeological unit, were called in. After very careful examination of first the stone and then the paper evidence the archaeologist was able to confirm that the stone was not a plague stone but was the base of a cross as originally thought. That is, the remains of an ancient monument – probably all stone that was made up of a base, shaft and cross on the top. There is nothing in the minutes recorded to suggest why they thought that the stone was a plague stone, except perhaps that this was an unusual idea for an unusual stone. It has not yet been possible to date the base, as it has no distinguishing features to suggest a style. Crosses of this type were not uncommon features in the local landscape. There were for example sites at Vicars Cross, Christleton and of course the cross in the city centre. The Puritans pulled down most and this could be why only the base of ours remains. Crosses were erected from the Saxon period right through the medieval period and would have been repaired or replaced when needed. It seems we have therefore some-

thing much older and more special than a plague stone and it is very fitting that the remains of the early Christians focal point of worship is now in the safety of our Parish Church. More work is needed to complete the story and this will be an ongoing project for Upton Local History Group, but steps have already been taken to correct and update the official status of the stone and so give Upton's oldest relic more protection.



Upton's ancient cross base

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The Cheshire Sheaf 1941 (8007) The Broadhurst Family and the Bache Estate, 1941 (8009) Brodhurst or Broardhurst Family 1917 (3273) The Morgan and Crompton Families

Sites And Monuments Record 1921 The Cockpit

Upton Township Book 2 CCRO RP/12/2

Boundary stone image, Mrs Lott
Boundary stone image Eric Illingworth
Simon Ward from Chester Archaeology, Chester City Council