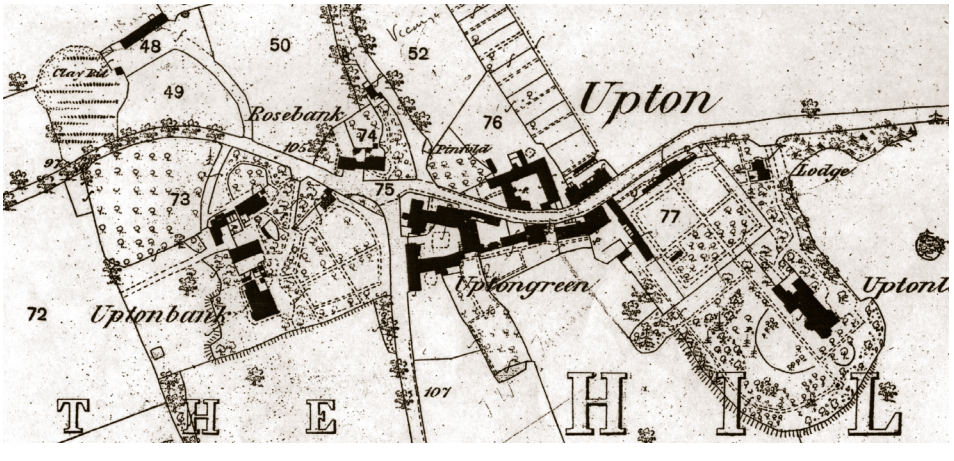
CHAPTER 6
Developments 1840 - 1899

This period saw the shift away from a truly rural agricultural economy towards a residential area. First to move in were the wealthy families seeking country estates that could now be readily created and accessed. As they moved in using the new railway and improved road network these gentlemen became 'local squires' often playing a major role in the community through their provision of employment, sponsorship, community venues and no doubt a belief that they were bringing useful expertise to the evolving community. Today most of these country houses have been demolished and built over. Some remain, belonging to organisations, with only Upton Lodge retained as a private residence.

The population for Upton, Bache & Moston grew nearly three fold from around 270 to just over 750 without including the Asylum whose numbers outstripped these. With this growth came the need for community facilities – the churches and school as well as public houses, shops and the improving utilities.

The wealthy who chose Upton were prepared to travel to Liverpool or Manchester for business but also some Chester shop keepers and other businessmen were looking to move further outside Chester than the Hoole and Newton areas. While there was extensive housing development closer to Chester, including the Hoole and Newton areas, Upton's mass housing development did not start until the 1930s.

This chapter looks first at these gentlemen's country estates although some such as Bache Hall and The Dale have already been covered in Chapter 4. Three of these were developed in what was then the centre of Upton village.



Reproduced from the 1873 Ordnance Survey Map

The Oaks (formerly Upton Bank) - known today as the Upton Golf Clubhouse.

This residence was already established by the 1839 Tithe survey but is covered in this chapter as the first of Upton's 'Gentleman's Country Estates'. Charles Potts had a solicitors practice in Chester and was the Clerk of the Chester Borough County Council. He is listed with his wife in the 1841 Upton census but not for 1851. By 1881 Charles Townsend – County Treasurer – is recorded as the resident and then by 1902 Reginald Potts was in residence before moving to The Dale. It is suggested that this was only one of the Potts residences and that a farm bailiff ran the estate during their absence. The extent of dwellings for estate workers within the estate can only be assumed from studying the map.



'*In late Regency style, it stands on a slight rise and commanded a pleasant vista of lawns and trees with pastureland beyond'*. (see also colour photograph – page 6)

William Richardson Moss acquired 'Upton Bank' in 1903 and carried out extensive alterations to the house including changing its name to The Oaks. Prior to his retirement he had been a successful cotton mill owner in Bolton. William Richardson Moss was a keen patron of the arts and having accumulated wealth through the cotton industry loved to spend it on art treasures of any kind. He had a tremendous collection of china, embroidery, pictures and books. He died 24th Aug 1915 and is buried in Upton churchyard with his second wife Helen Eveline (1851-1909). Although the property no longer houses any of these contents - the downpipes dated 1903 remain and the painted glass lights in the banquet room window have been retained within Upton although the window itself is now a new double glazed unit. This painted window bears the initials of William and his second wife Helen.

Mr Andrews Crompton J.P. was the next owner occupier acquiring The Oaks in 1916/7. He had married William Richardson Moss's elder daughter Teresa. The Andrews Cromptons became involved in the community. Mr Andrews Crompton was the first Vice Chairman of the Upton Village Hall and Mrs. Andrews Crompton became the first president of the Women's Institute. They lived at The Oaks for 15 years prior to the sale in 1931 to G J (Fred) Owen (see page 93).

Upton Lawn

According to Ormerod this large and spacious brick residence was built in the 1850s by T Helps, whose initials are entwined on the front of the lodge. By 1859 there was a curved walled garden, the line of which was still clear in later maps.

The property was sold first to the Logan family who were generous benefactors to the church, and then on to John Meadows Frost, who was Mayor of Chester during the WW1 period and knighted shortly afterwards.



The house is seen here in a photograph c1950 after it had been converted into flats. After that it gradually degraded until it was demolished c1970. The grounds were enhanced by the many lovely trees with rhododendrons in flower in spring. Many of the periphery trees still remain to this day along the wide verge of Heath road. Sir John and Lady Frost frequently opened their grounds for community events and were renowned for their generosity – see later chapters. This photograph of the 1933 Rose Queen festivities shows some of the grounds.

Parish records show the existence of a lending library in 1884. '*By the kindness of T. Walton Thomson, Esq. a handsome gift of new books has been given for the use of Upton parishioners. These books are for the present placed in the Reading Room at Upton Lawn and are now ready for use. The library will be open every Monday evening from 7-8 o'clock. Subscriptions one penny per month (payable in advance). The Library is not confined to members of the Reading Room but open to all Residents in the Parish*'



The most notable visitor was Earl Haigh in the immediate post-WW1 period. He planted an acorn from Verdun which grew to a large oak around which the Earls Oak development was built in the 1970s. The tree standing in a private garden was later felled. Also now demolished are the several estate workers' cottages – see the map at the start of this chapter. All that remains is the refurbished lodge and the many fine trees. See chapter 9 for the coach house and post-war development of this estate.

The Grange

The modern housing developments, Grangeside and Nield Court, both take their names from the gentleman's country estate that stood there for over a century. Apparently the middle part of Upton Grange was built first around 1830 and then two wings were added later at different times. Named 'Upton Green' in 1872 it



was extensively developed by 1898 and renamed 'The Grange'. Not to be confused with Dutton's farm 'Upton Grange', this was a fashionable name for the site of a former farmhouse. It is shown here looking west down Upton Lane in what is understood to be an early 1960s photograph.

'The W I Book' notes that '*There is a secret room, a very small one, between the dining room and study, whose door is opened by treading on a knob in the dining room floor. The dining room and study are panelled in three different kinds of wood; this panelling was made by the Upton villagers. The tower was only built to hide a water tank. The lodge, behind which are stables and garages, has been converted into two cottages'*.

The original owner has not been identified but may have been the wealthy Brittain family who owned land in Upton. In the early 1900s it was the home of Colliery Manager Thomas Morris and then Sir Helenus Robertson. For several years between the wars it was the home of High Court Judge Sir Basil Nield who succeeded Sir Charles Cayzer as Chester's Member of Parliament. During WW2 it was at least partly used as the headquarters of the National Fire Service for this area. From February 1947 it became the Forestry Commission HQ for the North-West of England until June 1965. From then on demolition was on the cards. The Lodge entrance off Church Lane and its associated cottages – all now demolished - housed staff for the big house including the gardener and driver. During the WW2 years these were gardeners – Jim Stacey & Mr Hughes – with chauffeur Mr Harris.

Upton Lodge

Croft field - of nearly 4 acres - had passed from Lord of the Manor ownership prior to 1735 when it was part of the Nicholls farm covering much of central Upton. By 1801 it was farmed by a member of the Hesketh family and by 1839 was one of the few fields actually owned by the long established Upton farmers - the Ithells.

In the 1840s Croft field was sold for the house and grounds of Upton Lodge. The house is believed to have been built around 1848 (the 1848 date displayed on the cottage and former stables) - although the 3-storey house may have just preceded the cottage and outbuildings. One of the first occupants may have been Mr Tilston - a cheese maker (factor). It is also believed that in 1874, retired nurseryman James Dickson was living there shortly before he died. The 1881 census records it being the home of Captain Henry Hall (aged 35yrs) of the 22nd Cheshire Regiment - living there with his family. On 7th November 1885 the house with its out-offices, stabling, coach house and grounds were auctioned as three lots - Lot 1 being the house and gardens with two fields, Lot 2 and Lot 3 being potential building land. However it appears that all three lots went to a single purchaser - the estate staying intact. The next known owner was Mr B I Kemp but it is not known whether he was the 1885 auction buyer. Mr T A Beckett then bought the house and grounds from Mr Kemp sometime in the early 1900s. He later raised some finances by selling some land adjacent to the Mill to the Mill owners and then sold the house and remaining ground in 1927 to the War Department.



The illustration is taken from a 1994 full colour painting by George Thompson - reproduced here by courtesy of Dr. John Charles-Jones.

The 1963 aerial photograph on page 122 shows the kitchen garden to the side prior to it becoming a small public park.

Dorin Court (later Government House)

Chronologically this should be covered in the next chapter since it was built c1902 but is included here as the last of the gentleman's country residences to be built.



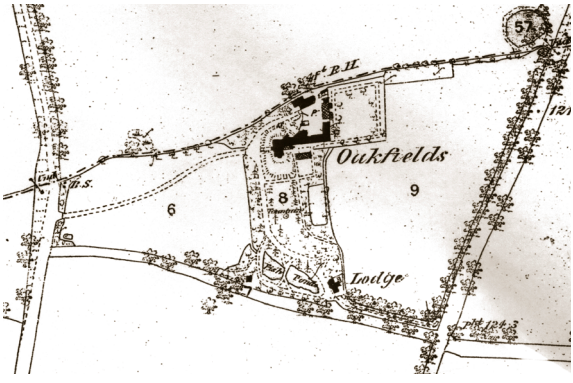
Clothier Mr S J W Clerk bought land to the south of Upton Cross from Egerton on which to build a house which was known either as Ravenscourt or Dorin Court. It was built in the ornamental style of the late nineteenth century. Later it became Government House because from the 1930s until c1970 it was owned by the army (see Chapter 8) before demolition to make way for the Cheshire County Council Care (CLS) residential home Dorin Court (now known as Weal Stone).

Mrs Lilian Edmunds (nee Halford) – (seen here with other staff) was a kitchen maid from 1937 – 39 and recalls the staff of General and Lady Jackson being invited to live on the premises for a month every summer and a month at Christmas while the Jacksons were away in Dorset. They were encouraged to enjoy the tennis courts, the summer house and the whiskey and cigars while looking after the property.



The Oakfield estate

The original smaller Oakfield, as shown on this 1872 Ordnance survey, is understood to have been built in the 1850s. Complete with its lodge (long since demolished) it would appear to have been the home of a gentleman farmer with fountains and fishponds. It was later acquired by Benjamin Chaffers Roberts - a wealthy Liverpool Tea Merchant – who built the current familiar Oakfield building and the new lodge across the drive. This was complete before the next Ordnance survey of 1898 and the later plan, also shown here, relates to sale particulars c1913. It was bought by Mr. Beresford Jones and then let during WW1 to Belgian refugees and to Lady Arthur Grosvenor for her hospital (see page 108). Post-war, Oakfield changed hands twice before it was bought, with its much reduced land, by George Mottershead in 1930 for his zoo (see page 149).



Reproduced from the 1873 Ordnance Survey Map



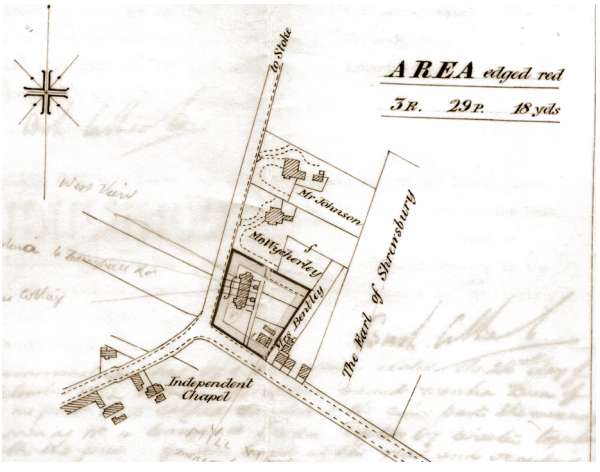


Oakfield pictured c1950

Roberts acquired considerable land around the Oakfield estate. Some properties were built specifically to service the estate while it is likely that some dwellings were initially built for his estate workers.

Properties within or surrounding the Oakfield estate

Within this section some of the properties were clearly part of Roberts' Oakfield estate whereas others may have been attracted to develop nearby.



Plan from deeds covering Long Lane/Caughall Road junction

The corner field in Upton Heath known as 'the Horse Pasture' had been acquired by Hesketh from the Egertons in the 18th century. By the 1872 OS survey a property and outhouse had been built on Long Lane - presumably Heath Cottage – shown to the east of the encircled area. By 1881 this was the home of spinster schoolteacher Emma Frith and her lodgers. The corner field was then owned by Robert Spear Hudson (a manufacturing chemist) of Bache Hall and he sold to Ben Roberts of Oakfield in 1885. A row of four cottages (shown here encircled) were then built in 1891 possibly for Ben Roberts estate workers. When Roberts put the estate up for sale in 1913 the southerly end of the former 'Horse Pasture' along with the cottages was sold to Mrs Martha Dean of Upton Mill. It was acquired with sitting tenants (H Dutton, T Garner, W Williams, P C Bratt, G Brown and J Baird). This may have been when the 'Heath Cottage' dwelling had its name changed to Nos: 1 & 2 Mill View. Possibly the Deans (see page 156) wanted all 6 dwellings to house the growing force of mill workers. With the later demise of the mill the cottages were gradually sold into private householder ownership.

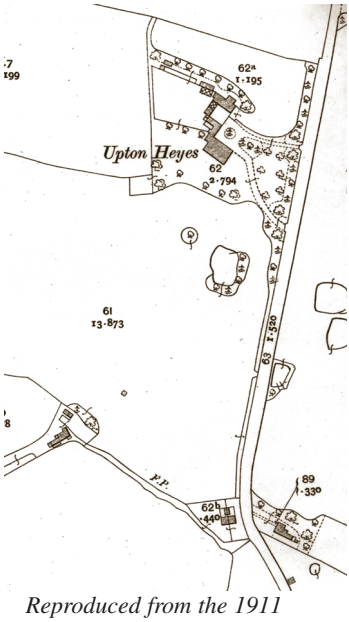
Ben Roberts also acquired the north end of the fields up as far as the pond that still remains today. By the 1898 Ordnance survey, 3 large detached houses - Rosedene, Heathfields and The Grove (built 1878) had been built possibly for estate managers. These properties and further developments in this area are covered in later chapters.



Shown here - the property that was used as the laundry for Oakfield still stands near the corner of Flag Lane North.

Upton Heyes & Demage Farm

Demage (or Damage) cottages existed at the time of the Tithe (see Chapter 5) but expanded later to become known as Demage Farm. This was reached by a lane (Demage Lane) that ended at the cottages/farm. In the 1890s stock broker's agent Harold Broadbent bought land from Egerton including fields called Hay Field and Near and Further Hay Field. When he built Upton Heyes off Flag Lane is not known – still not shown on the 1898 Ordnance survey. The next owner was Thomas Arthur Rigby – a flour miller of Waterloo Dock Mill, Liverpool. It is understood that he may have built up Demage Farm. The Upton Council minutes record the dispute of the ownership of Demage Lane during Rigby's ownership when he sealed off the lane only to have this torn down by annoyed locals before the issue was amicably resolved. Rigby is understood to have built the two Heyes Cottages in 1900.



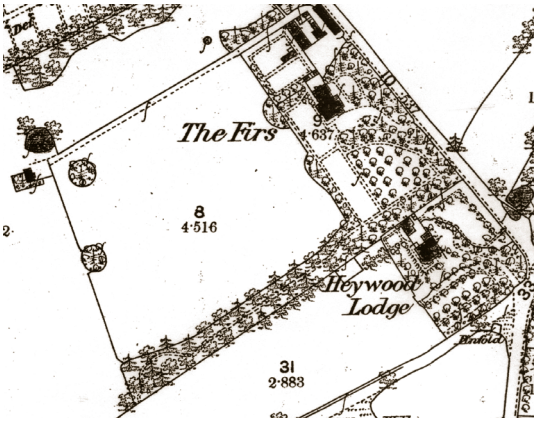
Reproduced from the 1911 Ordnance Survey Map

In 1923 Mr. Beresford-Jones bought Upton Heyes and the family lived there until 1947, when it was taken over by the Cheshire County Council for use as Judge's Lodgings. A famous visitor there in November 1950 was Lord Goddard, Chief Justice. The 1965 WI History update records the judges arriving during April, May, July and November - the traffic on the A41 being halted by the police to allow the safe crossing of their official cars. In the 1950s / early 1960s Mr & Mrs Thornton were the wardens and the grounds are remembered for their unusual trees - Tulip & Handkerchief - as well as the grass tennis courts. This Upton Heyes photograph features Lady Grosvenor during her 'gypsy' era in attendance to present the prizes to the Upton Scouts in 1912.



The Firs

The origin of The Firs is not known but first appears on the 1872 Ordnance survey; its style suggests another gentleman's country residence. It sat alongside Heywood Lodge in the corner of Well Lane and what is now Wealstone Lane. After use by the military it was demolished c1980 and the housing estate around Horrocks Road built. A sample of the sandstone boundary wall and many tall trees are all that remain.



Reproduced from the 1873 Ordnance Survey Map





Heywood Lodge



The 1841 Newton Tithe survey shows a large field at the Wealstone Lane / Well Lane junction known as Heywoods Field. By 1854 Heywood Lodge was the home of the Rev. R D Thomas - and it is assumed that the house was built for him shortly before that date. In 1851 Rev. Thomas had become the minister of Christ Church Newton and died in the 1890s. By 1896 Thomas Ledsham Wilkinson - a Chester fishmonger and game dealer - was in residence and it is assumed that he built the snooker room - later used as the school dining room. It was later owned by Mr Maitland and then by the early 1900s, by Charles Anderson Earle - a Liverpool cotton broker. His uncle, also named Charles, was a well known landscape watercolourist and many of his paintings still hang on the walls.

The photograph supplied by their descendant - Sally Symes - shows C A Earle (on the left) with other members of the family all in the garden of Heywood Lodge. Joseph Cooper was the coachman - later chauffeur - to the Earles for some 30 yrs pre-WW2. Wartime use of the building and grounds is covered on page 106. By 1952 it had become a co-educational secretarial college called 'Normain College'(proprietors - Norman & Main) - providing a dual role of a secretarial college and a private school for children who had failed the newly introduced 11-plus. Later under new management the school started suffering dwindling numbers and closed in 1961. At this time, there was already a flourishing school accommodated in the army huts of The Firs. They purchased Normain College in 1962 and relocated the school into Heywood Lodge – see page 256.

