

TONY BOSTOCK'S HISTORY NOTES: DAVENHAM

THE ANCIENT PARISH AND ITS TOWNSHIPS

Davenham parish in the medieval period is a dark age so far as the written record is concerned. The townships of this parish appear rarely in contemporary documents, though some of the people who lived within its bounds are mentioned occasionally, especially the Vernon and the Bostock families.

This paper sets out some of the information we know about the early history of the parish and its constituent townships. Some areas are covered in more detail by specific papers.

The Ancient Parish and its Church

The ancient parish, originally comprised the townships of Bostock, Davenham, Eaton (near Davenham), Leftwich, Moulton, Newhall, part of Rudheath, Shipbrook, Shurlach, Stanthorne, Wharton and Whatcroft.

The parish church of Davenham is one of only a few mentioned in the Domesday Survey and therefore its history predates 1086. However very little is known of the church's history during the medieval and early modern periods.

The dedication to St. Wilfrid is not uncommon in Cheshire. This saintly man was born in Northumberland about 634 and became one of the greatest and also one of the most controversial English Saints. He directly influenced the move away from Celtic to the more orderly Roman church practices and is best known for championing and winning the case for the Roman, as opposed to the Celtic method of calculating the date of Easter at the famous Synod of Whitby in 664. He became Bishop of York in 664 and Archbishop of York in 706 with a See covering the whole of Northumbria. He built magnificent stone churches at Ripon and Hexham, acquired vast landholdings and established monasteries in Northumbria, Mercia, Sussex and the Isle of Wight and converted Sussex, the last vestige of paganism, to Christianity. He died in 709.

The first known priest at Davenham is Ralph de Vernon who occurs about the year 1190 and who was probably a younger son of the Vernon family who held the Barony of Shipbrook and were lords of much of the land that formed the parish. At this same time Warren de Vernon held the advowson as patron of the church. Following a dispute as to who had the right to be rector and patron of the church of St Wilfrid, in 1284/5 the prior of Birkenhead Priory appeared before the justiciar of Chester and acknowledged that the advowson along with half an acre of glebe land to belong to Ralph de Vernon, for which the prior received a payment of seventy marks (£96 13s 4d).¹ The next known parson was Robert de Redeswell who in 1287 received £60 for his corn lying in Bostock and Davenham from three gentlemen.² The fabric of the chancel of Davenham Church was being built in 1290 when Robert de Redeswell, Archdeacon of Chester, obtained leave to take 300 tons of stone from a quarry in the forest of La Mare for the work.³ Redeswell was also parson at Davenham and in 1291 he received papal dispensation from Pope Nicholas V for holding both the office of parson and that of Archdeacon since there was no place of residence for the Archdeacon; he had been Archdeacon from circa 1289 and is known to have issued a letter dated July 1309 from Davenham.⁴ Ormerod says he died at Lichfield in June 1314.⁵

In 1848 the township and parish were described as follows: DAVENHAM (St. Wilfrid), a parish, in the union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester; comprising the townships of Bostock, Davenham, Eaton, Leftwich, Moulton, Newhall, Rudheath, Shipbrook, Shurlach, Stanthorne, Wharton, and Whatcroft; and containing 5335 inhabitants, of whom 488 are in the township of Davenham, 2 miles (S.) from Northwich. Davenham derives its name from its situation on the river Daven, or Dane. The parish comprises 8912 acres, of which the greater portion is pasture,

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being set out in cheese and dairy farms: there is no great extent of wood. The soil is various, comprising sand, clay, and a fine rich mould; and the country of pleasing aspect, the two valleys of the Weaver and the Dane passing through: the former vale, however, is now disfigured by numerous salt-works, the smoke of which blackens every thing on the face of the land for a considerable distance. The river Weaver bounds the parish on the west; the Dane flows from south to north, and the road from Birmingham to Liverpool runs in a nearly parallel direction: the parish is also intersected by the London and North-Western railway, and the Trent and Mersey canal. Salt is the principal manufacture, and is supposed to have been produced here as early as the time of the Romans: the brine-pits are very extensive on both sides of the Weaver.

The living is a rectory, valued in the king's books at £23. 13. 1½., and in the patronage of James France France, Esq., of Bostock Hall. The tithes have been commuted for £850, of which £82 are for the township of Davenham: there is a glebe-house, with about four acres of glebe land. The church was rebuilt, in the decorated style, in 1843-4, at a cost of £2650; it contains 921 sittings, whereof 356 are free: the former church, of which the tower and spire remain, appears to have been erected in the beginning or the middle of the 14th century. Two chapels were built in 1835, both in the Elizabethan style; the one by subscription, and the other at the expense of Mr. France. The ecclesiastical district of Wharton was constituted in 1843; and another district, Dane-Bridge, was formed in 1846, of a part of Davenham parish, and a part of the chapelry of Witton, in the parish of Great Budworth. The Independents, Primitive Methodists, and Wesleyans, have places of worship. There are three boys' schools, three schools for girls, one mixed school for boys and girls, and an infants' school, all in immediate connexion with the Church. On Bostock Green is an ancient oak, which is said to mark the centre of the county.⁶

The Barony and Township of Shipbrook

Shipbrook is a township in the parish of Davenham and lies along the eastern bank of the River Dane opposite the village of Davenham. According to McNeil Dodgson in his *Place-Names of Cheshire*, the origin of the name seems to mean a place where sheep are dipped in a stream, but it is also possible that the first element of the place-name is from 'scid' a beam suggesting a bridge over a stream.⁷ But in truth we shall never know.

The first mention of the township is in the Doomsday Survey compiled in 1086. We are informed that this was a manor held by Richard Vernon. He was a Norman knight who originated in the town of the same name in Normandy and presumably came over with William the Conqueror in 1086. Richard Vernon was given many manors within the county of Chester but settled at Shipbrook, and was known as the 'Baron of Shipbrook', a title bestowed on him by the first Norman earl of Chester, Hugh d'Aranches: in fact this was one of several military baronies he created throughout his earldom.

Perhaps it was established here to protect the salt workings at Northwich, whilst the Barony of Kinderton was similarly created to watch over the workings at Middlewich. His barony included the whole of what was then Davenham parish as well as lands further south in Occleston, but in addition to this he had other manors elsewhere in the county. Much of his land was previously owned by Osmer, a Saxon thegn.

The title and estates of the barony descended from Richard de Vernon down through three or four generations to a man named Warin who was living during the late twelfth century and certainly at the time of King John (1199-1216). He married Auda, widow of Hugh d'Altarius, and daughter and one of three co-heirs of William, the third and last Baron of Wich Malbank (Nantwich) who died during the reign of Henry II (1154-89). Warin and Auda had at least five sons the eldest of whom was also named Warin. This second Warin married Margaret, daughter of Ralph d'Andeville, and had a son who was again named Warin who is known to have been living as late as 1240-50 but died fighting in France without any children, leaving his three sisters to inherit the barony. His sister Maud married Sir Richard Wilbraham; Rose married John Littlebury and Auda married Sir William Stafford. After a prolonged litigation with their uncle Ralph Vernon, rector of Hanwell, the sisters were obliged to give up to him the 'baronial title' and the manor of Shipbrook with half of the remaining estates. The other half being assigned to the husbands of the three sisters.

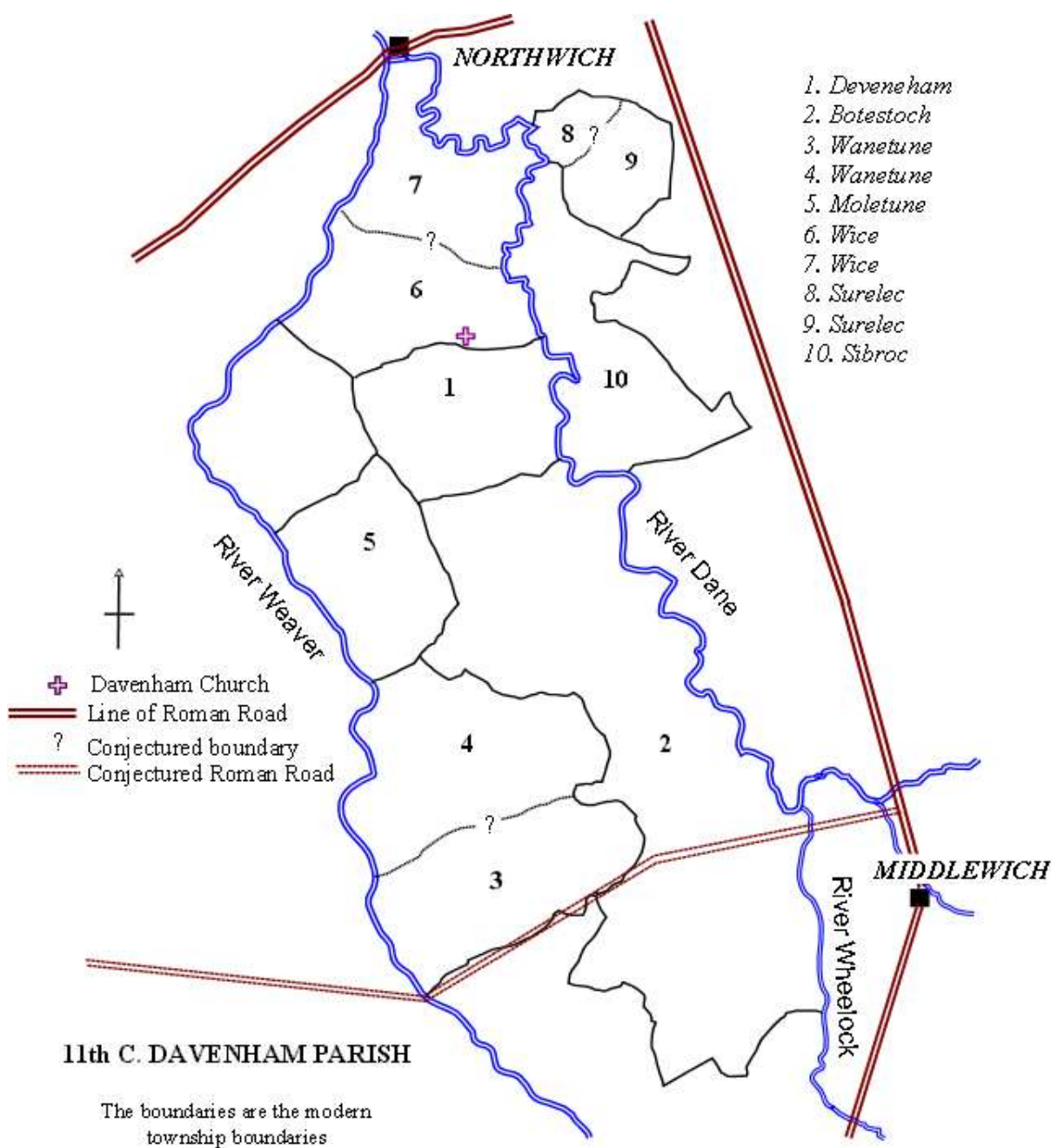


Figure One: Townships of the Ancient Parish of Davenham

The Wilbraham share, which included the manor of Leftwich, was further divided when Sir Richard Wilbraham left two daughters who married into the Winnington and Lostock families. The descent of the other two shares is not known for sure, though in the late thirteenth century a sixth part of the barony, which included Bostock manor, passed to the St. Pierre and thence the Cokesay families.

The capital manor of Shipbrook passed from the Rector of Hanwell to his illegitimate son Ralph who is recorded as 'Raufe ye Olde' on account of his living to be 150 years old! This Ralph married twice: first to Mary, daughter of Lord D'acre and secondly to Maud, sister of Robert Grosvenor of Little Budworth. During the early part of the fourteenth century Ralph Vernon purchased much of the old baronial estate and other lands which extended beyond the parish of Davenham. Vernon's lordship

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included the homages of the following for their respective holdings: Robert Touchet for Tattenhall, Hugh Roer for Stanthorne, William Audlem for Audlem, William Moldsworth for Great Moldsworth, Adam Moldsworth for Little Moldsworth, John Merbury for Marbury, William Alsager for Alsager, Adam Bostock for Bostock, John Newhall for Newhall and a Hugh Merbury and Richard Henhull for some unstated lands. The only exception being a sixth part of Leftwich and ninth part of Shipbrook which Agnes Lostock held for life, but this then eventually passed to Ralph's son Richard.

Old Ralph had a number of children from both marriages some of whom died without issue so that final descent of the Shipbrook estates became complicated. He did have a son named Thomas who married a member of the Lostock family and thus regained some of the estates lost earlier. But, eventually, Shipbrook passed to old Ralph's great-great-grandson Sir Ralph Vernon who was living during the middle of the fourteenth century and thence to James Vernon of Lostock and Haslington who then granted all the Shipbrook estates to Sir John Savage of Clifton in the mid fifteenth century whose descendants held the barony through to the eighteenth century. Ore about the Vernon family will be revealed later.

The Savage family of Clifton, later Rock Savage, rose to prominence in Tudor England following the success of Sir John Savage at the battle of Bosworth where he had command of the left wing. Sir John's brother was Archbishop of York and president of King Henry VIII's council. The families fortunes were jeopardised by Sir John's son and grandson' turbulent behaviour which forced the family into debt and the temporary surrender of their lands to the crown. For several years until his death in 1536, Sir William Brereton of Brereton, a powerful courtier who is known to history for his involvement with Queen Anne Boleyn, controlled the barony through marriage to Elizabeth Savage and the wardship of a young John Savage.

From the Brereton accounts it seems that the barony then included substantive parkland in Minshall Vernon, and property in Occlestone, probably Norcroft Farm. Other evidence suggests that Clive and Croxton were also included.⁸

The ancient circutary boundary of the wasteland known as Rudheath passed through and around this township. The earliest known description is dated 1346 and the part concerning Shipbrook starts at *Shipbrokesmos* and continues north: '*.....and following that moss thus dividing Ruddeheth as far as Polsych to Shipbrokeslone, and following that brook as far as to a certain old ditch stretching as far as the house of Walter Page in Shipbroke, and from there beyond the high way as far as the house of Reginald Legg, where a certain old cottage is raised in Ruddeheth, ...*'.⁹

Ormerod's description of the township is particularly complimentary 'situated on the right bank of the Weever (obviously he means the Dane), opposite to the township of Davenham. The view from the high ground is extremely pleasing, commanding a rich vale watered by the stream above mentioned, to which the lands on each side slope in rapid declivities, verdant and well timbered.'

Tradition has it that Vernon built a castle at Shipbrook. Whether this was of a motte and bailey type or simply a fortified house we do not know. Suffice to say that even today there is an area known as Castle Hill which is the supposed site of the motte. Ormerod states that the remains of the castle were cleared 'thirty years ago' (that would be about 1786) under the direction of Edward Tomkinson of Bostock Hall, the then 'baron of Shipbrook'.

There was a water mill in Shipbrook which is referred to as early as 1362 and in the early seventeenth century there is a reference to *Millne Lane Bridge*.¹⁰ Under Brereton's stewardship and the work of his bailiff, Richard Leftwich, the mill and the dam were rebuilt in 1532/3 allowing the mill to become a viable asset after several years of non production: the mill was then held by Arthur Holford of Davenham at an annual rent of £3 6s 8d.¹¹ Where it stood is something of a mystery now, though references to a mill and a 'Mill Hill' in neighbouring Shurlach would suggest it was close to the border of the two townships and perhaps situated along the Gadbrook which forms the boundary, rather than on the river Dane.

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Little else is known of the township. However we do have some information as to who lived here during the Tudor period. The Muster Roll of 1548 lists the following men: Thomas Colly, William Rudelhurst, Randall Halmark, and George Bulkley as being able to serve in the army but lacking equipment.¹² If these men are the adult male representatives of each household then it suggests that there were only four and a population of about two dozen people. Perhaps Bulkley was the miller in succession to Arthur who was there in the 1530s, as to the other names they do not seem to survive in the parish. During the 1580s according to the parish registers, we have families named Anderton, Blease, Bradford, Chantler, Hilton, Holland, Jackson, Plumley, Simcock, Vernon and Walley of *Shebrockhil*.¹³ Some of these it seems may have lived in neighbouring Whatcroft and some may not have produced children here so that the estimated population for the late sixteenth century is still low, perhaps no more than fifty.

Two taxation returns from the seventeenth century allow us to see who was living here.¹⁴ The Poll Tax, 1660 records twenty-five households with property interests here. Thomas Walley, gentleman, had an income of £28 10s from his land, Thomas Barrow, husbandman, had £26 6s 8d; and Richard Bradford, husbandman, had £22 13s 4d. Whilst most households were headed by husbandmen there were also labourers, spinsters and one blacksmith. Four years later the Hearth Tax records twenty-three houses of which the largest, having three hearths, was occupied by Richard Chantler; Richard Bradford, John Wrench and Robert Williamson each had a two hearth house. All the rest had simple cottages containing a single hearth and of these seven families were too poor to pay the tax.

In 1848 the township was described in the following way: SHIPBROOK, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 3 miles (S. E.) from Northwich; containing 89 inhabitants. It comprises 519 acres, of partly a sand and partly a clay soil. The Grand Trunk canal passes through the township. Tithe rent charges have been awarded amounting to £58 18s., of which £53 are payable to the rector of the parish.¹⁵

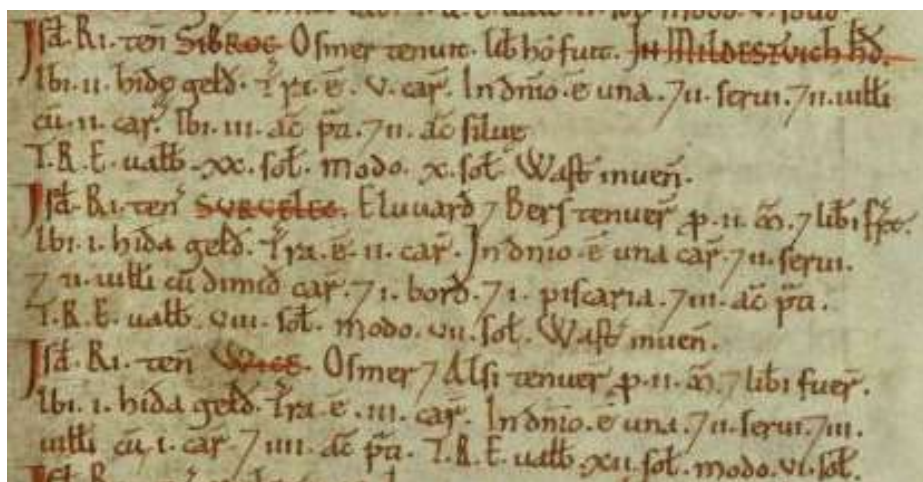


Figure Two: The Domesday folio entries for Shipbrook, Shurlach and Leftwich

Davenham

The name literally means 'the hamlet on the Daven' from the ancient name of the River Dane.¹⁶ It is first recorded in the Domesday Survey as having been one of Osmer the Saxon's manors which passed to the newcomer Richard Vernon of Shipbrook.

The settlement name was assumed by a local family who may be scions of the Vernon family. A Randle de Davenham is mentioned in Earl Rannulf's 'Great Charter' of 1215 as a person with some responsibility over the earl's avowry system on Rudheath.¹⁷ During the reign of Edward II (1307-27) we hear of a Richard de Davenham and in 1348 his son Nicholas who made a number of grants concerning tenements in the township to five ladies, presumably his daughters and their respective husbands.¹⁸ A Robert de Davenham occurs in 1380 as parson of Plemstall and proctor of St John's Hospital, Chester, and in 1405 an Alice de Davenham is mentioned.¹⁹ A family named 'le Bret' had

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lands here too. Hamon le Bret occurs a number of times as a witness to deeds.²⁰ Amy, widow of Richard, son of Richard le Bret sued a Richard le Bret, presumably her father in law for dower in 1310. In 1363 a Richard le Bret, along with William and David Bostock made a recognizance with the earl in the sum of twenty marks. A Thomas le Bret, senior, occurs in 1415 when the Winnington family were his sureties in a bond of 200 marks to the Constable of Chester castle. He was commissioned to collect a subsidy in the Northwich Hundred two years later. A Richard Bret was a commissioner in 1477 and 1487. A John Bret occurs in 1482 in a recognizance to the earl when Sir John Savage stood surety. A parcel of lands here were known as Brett lands in 1538.²¹

The Holfords, a junior branch of the Holfords of Holford, also had property here from the time of king Henry VII until the late eighteenth century. William Webb says that the family acquired their lands through marriage to one of the heirs of the Brett family; the other daughter marrying a Leftwich. By 1580 John Holford, gentleman, is one of three freeholders in Davenham, the others being Thomas Wyche, gentleman, and Robert Pickmere.²²

According to the muster roll, in 1548 the following eight men lived here: John Holford, John Jenkinson, Thomas Nickson, Raffe Young, William Eaton, William Hilton, Henry Eaton and John Blese.²³ Unfortunately the parish registers are not very helpful as regards naming people as 'of Davenham' so that only the names of Buckley, Davies, Eaton, Farrington, Hilton, Holford, Holland, Joinson, Lee, Nickson, Oakes, Taylor and Wrench can be picked out.

The Poll Tax, 1660 records twenty-two households with property interests here.²⁴ William Wich, gentleman, had an income of £30 from his land, William Asby, husbandman, had £15; and obert Poole, husbandman, had £15. Whilst most households were headed by husbandmen there were also a wheelwright, two shoemakers, a blacksmith, a tanner and a taylor. Four years later the Hearth Tax records twenty-four houses of which the largest, having six hearths, was occupied by Richard Holford; William Asby had a four hearth house and Robert Poole a two hearth house. All the rest had simple cottages containing a single hearth and of these five families were too poor to pay the tax.

Davenham Lodge, the home of the Holfords, was sold by Allen Holford to his brother-in-law Thomas Highlord Ravenscroft after whose death in 1795 it passed to the Harper family from Liverpool.²⁵ William Hosken-Harper, who died in 1872 bequeathed the estate to his nephew Charles Hosken France-Hayhurst of Bostock. In 1840 the Hosken-Harper family owned about 400 acres of the total of almost 500 acres.

Leftwich

Leftwich covers a large triangular area at the northern end of the ancient parish and is bounded by the rivers Weaver and Dane on its west and east and, in part, by a brook on the south. The name derives from *Leoftaet's wic*, the first element is a personal name and the last element can mean a 'dwelling', a 'dairy farm' or, as is quite likely in this area, 'salt works'.²⁶ In the Domesday Survey this manor is simply called *Wice* and is said to have been divided into two parts owned by two Saxon men – Osmer and Alfsi. Following the arrival of the Norman overlords it became the property of Richard Vernon of Shipbrook.

When the barony of Shipbrook was divided between the daughters of Warin Vernon a third of Leftwich, that part known as the 'manor of Leftwich', passed to the Wilbrahams and then by marriage to a branch of the Winnington family who then assumed the name of Leftwich. The manor then remained with this family until the eighteenth century when, by marriage, the property passed to the Ravenscroft family. Other small parts of Leftwich passed to the descendants of the other two daughters and some remained with junior lines of the Vernons.²⁷

The original Leftwich Hall, which was demolished in the early nineteenth century, to be replaced by a farm house, was described as being a quadrangular building of timber and plaster, at one corner of which was a square stone tower with machicolated battlements. Why? Was this to complement the castle at Shipbrook or was this tower a rebuild of the remains of that Norman edifice?

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In the mid-sixteenth century the names of the following men fourteen appear in a muster roll: Arthur Royle, John Leftwich, William Cheney, William Ackson, George Kaye, John Clayton, Thomas Bryn, Henry Royle, John Winnington, John Lamb, Roger Jenkinson, Thomas Cheney, Raffé Cheney, Roger Jenkinson. Of these Arthur Royle was 'an habile archer, the others were billmen or unable to serve.

Turning again to the parish registers we find the following family names recorded in the last two decades of the sixteenth century: Acson, Bloare, Cheney, Hollinpriest, Leftwich, Millington, Percival, Royle, Ruddlehurst, Smith, Venables, Wilson, Wrench and Wright.²⁸

According to the Poll Tax of 1660, there were fifty households or families paying tax on property in the township. The principle land holder was Leftwich Oldfield, esquire, who paid £10 tax a year. The other significant land holders were: Cheney Bostock, gentleman, with an income of £50 a year; James Marbury, rector of Davenham, with £150; Richard Wrench with £19; John Leftwich with £20; and Benjamin Symcock, husbandman, with £30. In all eighty-six people are mentioned in the list and if we add to this a few unmentioned wives, children under sixteen and the poor who were exempt from paying tax, a likely population figure of about 200 seems appropriate.²⁹

According to the Hearth Tax of 1664 In Moulton there were thirty-eight houses of which fourteen were recorded as being occupied by those too poor to pay. The largest property was Leftwich Hall, the home of Leftwich Oldfield which had six hearths; this was followed by John Royle's four hearth house, the rectory with three and John Leftwich's two hearth house. The vast majority of people lived in single storey cottages with a single, central hearth. The number of houses would suggest a population estimate of about 200.

Leftwich remained with the Winnington family until the eighteenth century when, by marriage the property passed to the Ravenscroft family and from them by sale to the Booth Greys of Ashton Heys and then by sale to William Harper, esquire, and thence to the France-Hayhursts of Bostock Hall.

In 1848 the township was described as follows: LEFTWICH, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 1 mile (S.) from Northwich; containing 2001 inhabitants. It comprises 883 acres, the soil of which is loam and sand. The manor was for several generations the property of the family of Leftwich, until, early in the seventeenth century, an heiress conveyed it to the Oldfields, who sold the estate about 1736.³⁰

Eaton

The name simply means 'farm by the water'.³¹ There is no mention in the Domesday Book of Eaton so we may presume that it was probably then an indistinct area within one of the neighbouring manors of Leftwich, Moulton or Davenham. Of Eaton, or 'Ayton', there is some mention during the medieval period. The ownership of this township seems to have passed from the Vernons to the Alprahams lords of Alpraham near Tarporley, and then to the Bulkeley of Bulkeley. Mathew Alpraham married Eva daughter of Mathew Vernon, son of Warren de Vernon, baron of Shipbrook, through whom he probably became possessed of Eaton. Mathew subsequently granted the township to Robert Bulkley who may have been the same man who was sheriff of Cheshire in the 1260s. The family were certainly in possession before 1313 when Eve, Mathew's widow sued William Bulkeley for dower of property in 'Eyton juxta Multon'. A description of the property informs us that there were sixteen messuages, a water mill, 100 acres of arable land, two acres of meadow, eighteen acres of woodland forty acres of 'moor' and pasture (heath).³² Presumably these are Cheshire acres in which case we have a total area of 320 statute acres. Normally a widow claimed a third of her late husband's estate and presumably the property here mentioned is not the complete township but a significant part of it that represented a third of all her late husband's estate in Alpraham and elsewhere. The Bulkeley remained in possession of Eaton and are mentioned many times in medieval documents until the time of King Henry VIII when Thomas Bulkeley sold the manor to Lord Brereton of Brereton, from whom it passed to the Cholmondeleys of Vale Royal.

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A family called 'Okythrop' or 'Oakenthorpe' lived in Eaton from the early sixteenth century. Some of the field names from that time persisted through to the mid nineteenth century, e.g. *Black More Eye*, *Blakefield* and *Nestases*.

The 1548 muster reveals that only six men: John Cowper and William Okenshawe, John Butler, John Cheney, Robert Wright and Thomas Waynwright lived in the township at that time. The registers of Davenham rarely mention Eaton though the Cowper and Okentrop family names do appear from time to time.

In 1660 only four families had property interests here: the Lows, Okintraps, Claytons and Bostocks. Four years later there were just two houses occupied by Robert Low and Robert Bostock.³³

Ormerod's description of the township in 1817 is as follows: 'Eaton is now exclusively the property of Thomas Cholmondeley, of Vale Royal, esq. And is occupied by one tenant. The hall is situated at the distance of a few fields from the Weever, in a part of the township to which the ground slopes rapidly from some neighbouring elevations, and which was doubtless selected from the facilities of supplying the antient moat. The general appearance differs little from other farm-houses, but the antient timber and plaister-work has not altogether disappeared.'

In 1848 the township was described as follows: EATON, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 3 miles (S. by W.) from Northwich; containing 11 inhabitants. The manor, anciently Ayton, was at an early period in moieties between the family of Praers (succeeded by the Mainwarings) and that of Bulkeley. In the reign of Henry VIII. the latter sold their estate to the Breretons, who seem eventually to have possessed the whole manor, which afterwards passed by successive sales to the Lindseys and Cholmondeleys. The township lies east of the river Weaver, and comprises 401 acres, of a loamy and clayey soil. The tithes have been commuted for £5. 6. 8.³⁴

In 1839 the occupier was William Dodd, but by 1879 the township was divided between two tenants living at Eaton Hall and Eaton House and comprising in total about 431 acres.

Shurlach

This township is linked very closely with neighbouring Shipbrook. Its name *Surelec* has the rather unglamorous meaning of 'the bog or muddy stream'.³⁵ In the days before the Conquest this manor had been divided into two parts each with a separate Saxon lord - Alfward and Bersi. It became part of the lordship of Shipbrook under the Norman lords. The use of the terms 'Higher' and 'Lower' Shurlach along with the area known as Bradford that are constantly linked throughout the mediaeval period may be as a consequence of this earlier division. Even when combined as a single unit it does not seem that Shurlach become the exclusive property of any particular family, rather we find a number of different families holding small amounts of land here from time to time.

As with Shipbrook part of the ancient boundary of Rudheath passed through the township. From Shipbrook and a 'certain old cottage' on the Rudheath the boundary continues northwards: '.....descending to the head of the grange of the said Reginald, following a certain ditch as far as *le Morstal*, and from there following a certain old ditch round the same croft to the head of the old field, and then along the head of that field following that hound along *Simmesfeld* as far as a certain marl pit, and from there as far as *Bradefordeswey* next "*le Lauedyfeld*," and from there crosswise through the midst to the head of the same field as far as a certain marl-pit, following that as far as the ditch round "*le Leuedysfeld*," and from there crosswise through the midst to the head of the same field, as far as a certain marl-pit in *Ruddeheth*, and from that marl-pit following the old ditch round "*le Leuediesfeld*" as far as *Walter Page's* marl-pit, and from there descending as far as *Oldefeldesdyche*, following that ditch as far as *Bradefordesbrok*, and so across *Bradefordesbrok* ascending along *Shurlache-dyche*, following that ditch on the left-hand side as far as *Bradeford moor*, and from there leaving that moor in *Ruddeheth*, following a certain old ditch as far as the vill of *Bradford*, and then across the way between the house of *William Fox* on the one side and *Ranulph de Wynnton* on the

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*other as far as to another way, leaving the house of the aforesaid Ranulph in Ruddeheth, and so from that way leading beyond the field of Bradford along a certain old ditch in decay there as far as a certain headland and from there straight to Goslache, following Goslache as far as the lane of Stephen le Hunte, and from there following a certain old ditch as far as the bounds of Wytton.....*³⁶ Besides the many curious places mentioned in this passage there are references in other contemporary documents of a *Neliscrofte* ('Nel's Croft'), *le Oxezung* ('ox-gang', a division of a common field), *Caldewalheye* ('enclosure at the cold spring'), *Collecricmhull* (probably 'Coll's rubbish hill'), *Dunsmore* ('hill moor') and *le Sperh* ('the brushwood').

As already alluded to, the eastern part of Shurlach is known as Bradford and is often confused with the Bradford in Whitegate. So much so that has been suggested that this Bradford was the property of Vale Royal Abbey during the medieval period and was home to a family of the same name who were dispossessed by the abbey. This is clearly not the case. In the mid fourteenth century Robert Wilbraham, an heir to part of the barony of Shipbrook sued Sir Roger de Trumpington, another of the heirs, for lands in 'Bradford juxta Shipbrok'.

During the fourteenth century the Winningtons had land here and they were followed by the Wodehouses. Laurence de Birches had lands here in the early part of the fifteenth century which passed to the Littleovers and later that century we find the Wrench family as tenants of the Earl of Chester, followed by the Bromfields. The Leycester family of Toft had lands here during Queen Elizabeth I's reign.³⁷

According to the muster roll for 1548 there were only four men listed as living here: Roger Nole, Laurence Deane, Laurence Vernon and John Wirral. During the latter years of the century the following family names can be identified from the registers: Bradford, Cooke, Hill, Horton, Nield, Parker, Simcock, Wrench and Yate.

By 1580 John Wrench is the only freeholder in the township.

In 1660 seventeen families had property interests in the township and these included an ironmonger, a chandler, a webster and a butcher, besides those whose livelihood depended upon the land. Four years later there were twelve houses.³⁸

In 1848 the township was described in the following way: SHURLACH, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of Cheshire, 1¼ mile (E. S. E.) from Northwich; containing 159 inhabitants. It comprises 298 acres, of a clayey soil. The Grand Trunk canal passes in the vicinity of Shurlach, and immediately on the west flows the river Dane.³⁹

By the late 19th century there were 312 acres and these were owned by a number of families of whom the Caldwells were the chief proprietor.

Whatcroft

Whatcroft ('wheat field') is one of the townships which does not appear in the Domesday Survey.⁴⁰ The reason for this is due to its either then being a part of the manor of Shipbrook, or else, as is more likely, it was land later taken into the manor from the wastelands of Rudheath. In the thirteenth century Nicholas, son of Warin Vernon of Shipbrook settled here and became the progenitor of the Vernons of Whatcroft who lasted through to the early fifteenth century when an heiress married a Bulkeley of Cheadle. Sir Nicholas Vernon of Whatcroft was twice sheriff of Cheshire in the reign of King Richard II and died in April 1397.

When the main line of the Vernons of Shipbrook died out, the ownership of Whatcroft was in that part of the barony that passed to the Leftwich family. In 1459 Margaret Mainwaring's inquisition post mortem recites that her husband Richard Bulkeley had granted to her 6 messuages and 200 acres of land in Whatcroft which was held from Richard Leftwich of Leftwich.

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As with Shurlach and Shipbrook part of the Rudheath boundary passed through the township. Beginning at a stream called *le Whitesych*, the route follows the brook '*.....as far as the garden of Hulkok de Vernoun, and then following a certain old ditch defaced through the middle of the garden of the aforesaid Hulkok, leaving the half of that garden and the houses thereof in Ruddeheth, as far as a certain dividing oak, and from that oak as far as another oak standing in a ditch of Nicholas de Vernoun, and following that ditch as far as Whatcrofteslone, and then beyond Whatcrofteslone following a certain old ditch between two fields, one of which is in the bounds of Ruddeheth, as far as Shipbrokesmos, ...*'⁴¹

Other than those already mentioned there is no record of anyone else who lived here during the mediaeval period.

The Tudor muster roll of 1547 refers to several men, namely: John Vernon, William Berrington, Arthur Vernon, Richard Nickson and John Vernon. Whether or not each of the Vernon men were directly related is not known, though there is every likelihood that they were at least cousins and members of junior branches of the ancient Vernon family. According to late sixteenth century entries in the parish registers the following families are associated with Whatcroft: Adams, Alexander, Eaton, Barrington, Baker, Bleaze, Bromfield, Dodd, Hudson, Jackson, Moss, Nickson, Smith, Vernon and Walley.⁴²

In 1622 Sir Richard Bulkeley died in possession of the manor of Whatcroft, held from the Leftwich family, along with 120 acres of land and sixteen of wood all known as the Peartree Lee, held of the Earl of Chester.

In 1660 fifteen families had some property interest in the township of whom Mrs Katherine Goodyear had an income of £100 a year from lands and her tenant Francis Deane had £100 worth of stock. Whilst most people lived off the land there was a wheelwright and two tailors here. In 1664 there were fourteen houses.⁴³

From the Bulkeleys the estate was sold in 1756 to the Robinson family and from them it passed by marriage to James Topping who was in possession in 1817 and thence by marriage to the Atcherley family.

The house was built around 1780 and then improved and enlarged in the early nineteenth century.

In 1848 the township was described as follows: WHATCROFT, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 3 miles (N. W. by N.) from Middlewich; containing 49 inhabitants. It comprises 637 acres, the soil of which is partly clay and partly sand. The tithes have been commuted for £58. 8.⁴⁴

Rudheath

Much of Rudheath was extra-parochial and what was not was divided between a number of different parishes. Some parts of the western portion of Rudheath Lordship, including the area known as Gadbrook, and the township of Newall lay within Davenham parish. Rudheath's early history is somewhat complicated to be included in this paper and so is subject to another article.

The men listed in the muster rolls are: Edward Cook, Peter Dutton, Arthur Symcock, John Huginson, Arthur Bulkley, Richard Yett, Thomas Nicholl, Roger Deane, Randal Eaton, Thomas Bulkley, James Vernon, William Nicholl, Thomas Bradford, Arthur Wrench, John Goodier. It is quite likely that most of these were from other parts of Rudheath than the Davenham area, though with a fair degree of certainty those with the names of Bulkley, Symcock, Vernon and Wrench will be from the parish. In the parish registers we only find reference to the families of Buckley of Gadbrooke and Moss Lane, Sutton of King Street, Vernon of Billinge, and Hulse of Newall.⁴⁵

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In 1848 Rudheath was described as follows: RUDHEATH, a township, partly in the parishes of Great Budworth and Sandbach, but chiefly in that of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 4 miles (N. E.) from Middlewich; containing 435 inhabitants. The manor anciently belonged to the family of Drakelow, and having been forfeited by the attainder of John Drakelow, was for a long period in the crown; it was eventually granted to the Duke of Portland, and was purchased of the late duke by Thomas Marshall, Esq., of Northwich. An action was fought here on 22nd Feb. 1643, between the forces of King Charles and those of the parliament under Sir William Brereton; it appears to have been a drawn battle. The township comprises 2033 acres of land, of which the soil is clay.⁴⁶

Stanthorne

This palce-name means 'the stony way' and might suggest the route of the lost Roman road that ran from Chester to Middlewich by way of Kelsall and Over.⁴⁷ This township, which was divided into two parts Great and Little Stanthorne, is another township not mentioned in Domesday. It seems that in fact there were three separate lordships. A portion based on Great Stanthorne, was throughout the medieval period regarded as part of the manor of Bostock and held by the lords of that manor under the barons of Shipbrook and their descendants and heirs. The Venables family held lands in Litte Stanthorne and their sub-tanants the Bulkelys of Cheadle had a water mill and lands there in the mid-fourteenth century. The third lordship, which seems to have been regarded as the main part and was described as the manor of Stanthorne in the late thirteenth century, was held by the Dufefyn family, from the Earl of Chester through the Venables family. The Roer family who had obtained a tenement here from a member of the Multon family from neighbouring Moulton; this portion passed down to the Done family. The number of families having an interst in this township makes its history somewhat complicated.

The Abbot of Vale Royal was granted lands here by Ralph de Vernon. These are described as being 'the Westcroft' in Little Stanthorne bought from Henry Dufefyn, all that part of the Stanthorne Moss Vernon held from Dufefyn, and all his fields in Great Stanthorne with another part of the moss he held from Hugh Roer. The mention of 'the Croftes' and 'Westcrofte' certainly suggests that some of the township had been divided into several small land units. Part of Little Stanthorne was waste and known as Stanthorne Moss.

During the later middle ages it seems that the various parts of the township that had been held in severalty were united under the name of Stanthorne and under the single ownership of the Done family of Crowton, but how this came about is far from clear.

According to the muster roll there were ten men of the appropriate age who could perform service: George Whalley, Randal Farrington, Hugh Farrington, Richard Whalley, Humphrey Carter, Raffé Whalley, Randall Whalley, Raffé Bircheval, Hugh Chatterton and John Sanbach.⁴⁸

In the parish registers we find the following families: Aston, Carter, Dodd, Farrington, Hoole, Legh, Pearson, Rainscroft, Smith, Walley.

In 1660, twenty-four individuals held property or had some interest in the township.⁴⁹ The population then numbered around 120. Four years later, there were eighteen houses in Wharton of which those of Raphe Walley, Matthew Wright, John Pearson, William Farrington, and Robert Dudlow were the largest. From this fact we may estimate the population then to be around 100. During the mid-seventeenth century most people were employed on the land and even those who had a trade would have also worked a small-holding - then there were three tailors and three websters.

In 1848 the township was described as follows: STANTHORNE, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 1¼ mile (W. N. W.) from Middlewich; containing 169 inhabitants. It comprises 1050 acres, the soil of which is partly clay and partly sand.⁵⁰

Wharton

In the Domesday Survey this manor is known as *Wanetune* the meaning of which, apart from 'ton' or 'tun' meaning farm, is obscure.⁵¹ The later spelling of *Waverton* seems to suggest 'farm by the Weaver'. During the Norman period a member of the Vernon family granted lands here to the convent of St. Mary, Chester, and thence, throughout the medieval period, the identities of the two Saxon manors were retained and referred to as *Waverton juxta Bostok* and *Waverton juxta Medium Wicum*. During the mediaeval period the Bostock family held the first part from the barony of Shipbrook and the nuns held the other. It seems that the nuns' estate was further divided into *Waverton juxta Medium Wicum*, the area now known as the Nun House estate, and *Waverton juxta Overe*, for that area nearer to the river. Some local families, such as Merton, Clive, Weaver, Bulkeley, Venables and a family that took the name of the locality, also had interests in the township.

Some remnants of the medieval manor remain in field names. Dodgson is somewhat scant in this regard but of significance *Crokedefurlong*, *Overefurlong* and *Solme Grenefurlong*, all names from circa 1230, refer to the ancient strips of the communal town field. The first name is fossilised in the name of Crook Lane, and a field behind Christ Church which, in 1841, was named 'Crooked Field'. Likewise the three fields named 'Over Croft' (between Crook Lane and Bradbury Road) and the one named 'Over Field' (between School Road and Wharton Road) probably represent the medieval *Ovrefurlong*. The last named furlong is a lost name, but a sixteenth century rental suggests that it was close to the border with Bostock, in the area of Wharton Green. Other interesting names are *Fridaeschlache* (c.1240), 'the Friday stream' where fish for the Friday diet were caught; *Mussetum de veteri warton* (c. 1233), 'the moss of old Wharton': *Long Slang*, which seems to refer to ancient arable strips; *Ox Heyes* a hey referring to an enclosed area of waste land or wood land; and Riddings, which refers to new, improved and enclosed areas of the waste.

In 1548 it is recorded that seventeen men, aged between sixteen and sixty, from *Wanerton*, were available for military service. Five men were able to serve as billmen, each with a jack (a protective leather jerkin), a sallet (a helmet) and a bill (an axe with two sharp points mounted on a long pole); they also had between them two 'splints' (a pair of armour for the elbow). These were: Richard Dutton, Arthur Jenkinson, Thomas Burne, William Ch.....ton (probably Chatterton), Humphrey Atherton. A further ten men were available for service but did not have sufficient armour or weapons save for one poleaxe and two jacks: Henry Hamson, John Dutton, Raffe Wetenhall, Richard Wrench, Richard Burrenste, Robert Warton, Thomas Hole, Henry Bulkley, George Whalley, Thomas Holland. Two more men were for some reason not available for service - perhaps they were too ill or infirm - but they could provide one jack and one bill: Robert Cliffe and John Adamson. Such numbers of adult males would seem to imply a population of between eighty and 100.

In the parish registers we find the following families: Acton, Adamson, Adderton, Barlow, Bradhurst, Buckley (of Donefields), Burrows, Hampson, Hoole, Hayes, Hulse, Maddock, Robinson, Tomlinson, Torkinton, Weever.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were three large estates or farms here: these were Nun House, Duttons Farm, Tomlinsons Farm and Billows Heath House. Nun House Farm, the basis of the original parcel held by the nuns of Chester, was owned by Thomas Marbury of Westminster, London, a younger son of the well-known family from Great Budworth.

In 1622, Marbury's lands were described as consisting of thirty acres of arable, ten acres of meadow, thirty acres of pasture and ten acres of woodland, all worth £4 a year. Later in the seventeenth century, in 1660, thirty-five individuals held property or had some interest in the township.⁵² Whilst many of these actually lived in Wharton, seven were landlords from neighbouring townships. The population then numbered around 100. Four years later, there were thirty-four houses in Wharton of which those of John Aderton (or Atherton) and Mr Minshull were the largest, followed those of William Buckley, John Dudlow (or Dudley), Raphe Nixon and Elizabeth Twamlow. From this fact we may estimate the population then to be around 140. During the mid-seventeenth century most people were employed on the land and even those who had a trade would have also worked a small-holding - then there were

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seven weavers, two tailors and a smith. It is particularly interesting to note that some family names, such as Atherton, Burrows, Nickson, Tomlinson and Carter, continued on from then to 1841, and even persist today.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century the northern part of the township together with the 'lordship of the manor of Wharton' was vested in the Harper family of Davenham. This family, who originated in Liverpool, purchased the 'barony of Shipbrook' from the Tomkinsons family and this included a large estate in Wharton as well as the manorial rights. Major William Hosken Harper then sold his manorial rights to the Winsford Board of Health and devised his estate to the France Hayhursts of Bostock Hall, his sister's marital family who had also originated in Liverpool. The vast majority of the other part was held by the Dudley family.

Wharton occupied nearly 1225 acres when surveyed in 1841. Of these acres, James France-France of Bostock Hall, lord of the manor of Bostock, held 324 acres. The other chief proprietors of the mid-nineteenth century were the Dudley family who owned about 380 acres; Josiah Perrin with 129 acres; William Court with about ninety acres and John Sumner of Wharton Hall who held about ninety-seven acres. In all there were fifty-five landowners in Wharton.

Wharton was bounded along the west by the River Weaver which, by 1841, had already started to dominate life in the town. To the south, across the Rilshaw Brook and Rilshaw Lane lay the hamlet of Clive; to the east, straddling the road to Middlewich, was Stanthorne. The north-east corner was contiguous with the village of Bostock, whilst the northern boundary separated Moulton from Wharton. There were few named roads or lanes through Wharton. Essentially the main roads were Gravel Lane, or Middlewich Road as it is sometimes referred to, and Wharton Lane. The first entered the town from Middlewich and then became Winsford Hill, as it dropped down to the river; this route is now known as Station Road. The other road was Wharton Lane, which came in from Bostock, through Wharton Green, and is now known as Wharton Road. Joining these two was Crooked Lane, now Crook Lane, that forked near to Wharton Road to form what is now School Road.

Wharton lay in the parish of Davenham, but in the mid 1830s, James France-France of established a church and vicarage, Christ's Church, for the convenience of the local people though the patronage remained with the rector of Davenham.

In 1841 the railway age had just begun. The Grand Junction Railway from Birmingham to Warrington had been opened seven years earlier and ran through Wharton, though the River Weaver was still regarded as the main means of transportation. For most people however, journeys were still made on foot or on horse transport. Much of the landscape was agricultural and dairy farming predominated. The small amount of industry, concentrated along the banks of the river Weaver, involved the extraction of salt from brine.

In 1848 the township was described as follows: WHARTON, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 2½ miles (W. N. W.) from Middlewich; containing 1400 inhabitants. It comprises 1157 acres; the prevailing soil is clay. The Liverpool and Birmingham railway passes through the township. Here is a church, the living of which is a perpetual curacy in the Rector's gift, with a net income of £120. A rent-charge of £75. 1s. has been awarded as a commutation for the tithes.⁵³

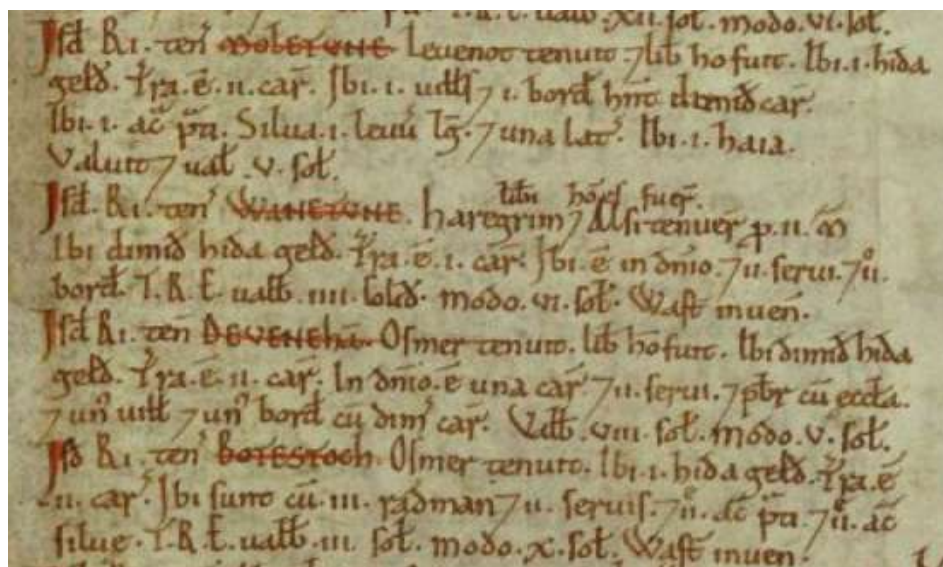


Figure Three: The Domesday folio entries for Moulton, Wharton, Davenham and Bostock

Moulton

Moulton is thought to a place-name meaning ‘Mula’s Farm’, but another possible meaning is ‘the farm at the mill’ from ‘mola’ – a mill.⁵⁴ The retrospective clauses of Domesday tells us that it was held by a Saxon named Leofnoth before the Normans arrived. Post 1070 it was part of Richard vernon’s barony of Shipbrook. From an early time Moulton was the property of a family that took the name of the township as was customary though there is little record of them: a Robert son of Robert de Multon occurs at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The origins of this family are certainly obscure: they may have been descended of a Norman family who were distantly related to Richard de Vernon’s or members of his retinue when he arrived here who were then subsequently rewarded with a grant of land, or else they may have been descended of Saxons already settled in the area.

The main line of these Multons will have lived at the manor house - Moulton Hall - though they seem to have died out during the mid-fourteenth century when an heiress married a member of the neighbouring lords of Bostock and founded a family of that name that was to continue to reside at Moulton Hall until the late seventeenth century. But, exactly how the Bostock family became possessed of lands here is not clear. It seems that a junior line of Multon family, or else a separate family that might have made small-holdings for themselves to the north of the hall and also adopted the name, continued to reside here for there are late fourteenth and fifteenth century documents mentioning ‘de Multons’ as owning property here and in neighbouring townships; they too seem to disappear.

During the thirteenth century there is evidence that some of the unused, ‘waste’, lands of Moulton were being gradually improved and brought into cultivation by a number of people from the surrounding area. In 1260 there was a case before the County Court brought by John le Barker of Middlewich, Richard Golde and their wives for possession of three oxgangs of land in Moulton (about forty-five acres), against Roger de Bostock. They claimed right of inheritance from their ancestors but Roger was able to successfully bring a witness to the effect that he had granted the land to a Richard Snel of Wereford though the charters had been lost in a house fire. In 1289 William Bostock of Moulton sued Nicholas de Hova for a small area of woodland. Nicholas claimed that his father had held it as one of a number of co-tenants and that he succeeded as heir when his father died. The case was found in favour of Hova and Bostock was fined for bringing a false case. The matter was appealed but again lost resulting in Bostock being sent to prison. He eventually made a payment for his release. The detail given in this hearing indicates that Nicholas’ father, Randle, and his partners

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had possession of the wood to do as they pleased by 'assarting' (clearing for cultivation), taking 'pannage' (pasture for pigs) and taking honey. There were also squabbles between the Bostock cousins. In 1288 William sued Philip Bostock of Bostock for possession of a very small piece of woodland in Moulton. In defence Philip said he was only claiming a pigsty which was the property of his father's manor of Bostock: the outcome of this case is not known – perhaps they settled it amicably.

For the rest of the medieval period the records are silent as regards the manor or township of Moulton.

In 1548 the muster rolls show that Henry Wrench, Raffe Bostock and Robert Bulkley, although they had some equipment between them were not available for service.⁵⁵ Only three men – the lowest number for a township within the whole parish – would suggest a very small population here in the middle of the sixteenth century.

In the parish registers we find the following families: Bostock, Buckley, Hill, Hilton, Holland, Wrench.

By 1580 Ralph Bostock, gentleman, is the only freeholder in the township.⁵⁶

According to the Poll Tax of 1660, there were nineteen households paying tax on property in the township each of whom were probably resident, unlike in some townships where a person might hold property in one place and reside elsewhere. The principal land holder was John Holford, gentleman, with an annual income of £50 a year who was paid £1 tax. The other significant land holders were: Ralph Bostock, gentleman, with £10 a year; Philip Bostock, gentleman, with £20; Richard Wrench, clerk, with £20; Thomas Lowndes with £17 10s; Alice Buckley, widow, and her son George, husbandman, with £13 between them; and John Symcock, husbandman, with £5. Each of these paid tax at a proportional amount. Then we have 10 married couples, 4 labourers, 3 widows and 10 spinsters who all pay the basic tax of 1s. In all forty-five people are mentioned in the list and if we add to this a few unmentioned wives, children under sixteen and the poor who were exempt from paying tax, a likely population figure of about seventy seems appropriate.⁵⁷

According to the Hearth Tax of 1664 in Moulton there were only four houses with more than one hearth and one of these, with three hearths, was Moulton Hall. The other three houses may have been on the sites of what were to be known as Moulton Lodge, Hillside Farm and Moulton Bank. The vast majority of people lived in single storey cottages with a single, central hearth. In 1664 there were sixteen houses and such a number would suggest a population estimate of about seventy-five people.

In 1848 the township was described as follows: MOULTON, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 3 miles (S.) from Northwich; containing 318 inhabitants, and comprising 437 acres of land. The soil is partly clay and partly sand. The Liverpool and Birmingham railway passes through.⁵⁸

Bostock

The Bostock place-name suggests a secondary settlement founded by a man named 'Bota' a pet-name derived from St. Botolf.⁵⁹ In Domesday *Botestoch* is shown to be part of Richard Vernon's barony of Shipbrook and had been previously one of the Saxon Osmer's possessions. A family of the name merges in the 12th century and tradition has it they were descended from Osmer – but this is highly unlikely. It is more likely that they descend, as in the case of the Moulton family, from a relation of Richard de Vernon, perhaps a young son, or a member of his retinue when he arrived here. The Bostock family became lords of the manor through the medieval period and are well documented. The main line came to an end when Sir Ralph Bostock's daughter Ann became his heir and passed the manor to the powerful Savage family during King Henry VII's reign. Subsequently it passed from the Savages to the families of Acton, Whitmore, Tomkinson, France and finally the France-Hayhursts. Junior lines of the Bostock family continued to live in the area.

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The muster rolls show that there were nineteen men who could have been available for military service in 1548. They were: Randal Tailor, William Bostock, Adam Bostock, Edward Wrench, John Capse, Thomas Parker, Laurence Bostock, Humphrey Okes, Alexander Broadhurst, Robert Bostock, John Percival, Henry Vernon, Arthur Buckley, Thomas Okes, John Okes, Edward Holland, Robert Cartwright, Peter Percival and William Venables.⁶⁰

We know the detailed history of one such man – John Bostock of Bostock. Although not listed in the 1548 roll for he may then have been too old, his son Laurence Bostock, who is listed, wrote a paper in 1573 recording the details of his father's military career. Laurence was an antiquary who wrote about the history of Cheshire lived during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I whose writings are preserved in the Public Record Office, London. By 1580 a relation named Henry Bostock, gentleman, is the only freeholder in the township.

In the parish registers we find the following families: Barker, Blundel, Bostock, Bradhurst, Buckley, Dennis, Holcroft, Hoole, Jepson, Painter, Tailor, Whishaw, Wrench.⁶¹

In September 1616, Sir Thomas Savage (great great-grandson to Ann Savage, nee Bostock) granted a lease to Sir Richard Wilbraham and others to hold in trust 'all that Capytall messuage or mansion howse wth th app'tences Called or known by the name of the hall of Bostocke' together with its demesne lands except for Bostock Wood. The lease was to remain in force for eighty-seven years following the death of Dame Mary Savage and for the lifetimes of her daughter Elizabeth Mainwaring, her son-in-law Thomas Mainwaring and grand-daughter Marie.⁶² Then in July 1632 Thomas Viscount Savage conveyed the manors of Shipbrook, Bostock, Leftwich and Occlestone to John Minshull and others as trustees. Then, in April 1650, John (Savage) Earl Rivers, John Minshull and others, sold the manor, which included lands in Shurlach and Occlestone, for £6209 to Sir William Acton of London. At this time we are informed that the manor consisted of about 470 acres. This was made up of the 'Old Hall' and its demesne lands amounting to 197 acres; a messuage and farm held by Thomas Bostock with 104 acres; a messuage and farm held by William Painter with forty-four acres; Edward Wrench's farm of fifty-three acres; Widow Percivall's eleven acres; Richard Vawdrey's twenty-one acres; and Ralph Massey's thirty-four acres. Added to this there were ten cottages with small parcels of land held by: Richard Shaw, Hugh Swettenham, Robert Bulkeley, Thomas Lambe, Bartholemew Davies, Raphe Whittingham, Edward Burton, Ciceley Eaton, Thomas Taylor and William Buckley.⁶³ Subsequently the manor came into the hands of the Whitmore family. In March 1662 Lady Elizabeth Whitmore, administrator of Sir William Acton's estates, leased Bostock Hall (the old hall) 'sometime in the occupation of Thomas Mainwaring' with lands in Wharton and Bostock to Sir Francis Lawley for £6 a year. She also leased Norcroft, in Occlestone, then in the occupation of Thomas Carter and Robert Irish, to the same man for £12 a year. Lawley then assigned these leases to Sir William Whitmore five years later.⁶⁴

Two taxation returns from the seventeenth century allow us to see who was living here.⁶⁵ In 1660 the Poll Tax returns show that Philip Pritchard was the wealthiest land-owner with an income of £105 a year. Next came Thomas Mainwaring with an income of £71 who had three servants; we know that he lived in Bostock Hall. Thomas Church and his daughter Margaret had an income of £30 and had three servants. His mother Margaret, widow of Edward and daughter of Henry Bostock,⁶⁶ also had property here. Besides them and Thomas Bostock there were another thirty-one tax paying families in Bostock and a total of sixty-seven individuals mentioned - a population of something over 100 when children and those exempted are allowed for. According to the Hearth Tax returns there were twenty-seven households which would suggest a population of about 110.

In 1663 Sabbath Church of Nantwich, Thomas Church's uncle, sold to Thomas Seagrave a 'capital messuage and tenement with appurtenances situate and lying in Bostocke sometimes in the tenure, holding or occupation of Henry Bostocke, gent. dec. and his ancestors'. This property and another, except a parcel of land called 'Rogers Eye', was at the time occupied by Margaret Church and her son Thomas. Five years later another deed informs us that Margaret was the widow of Edward Church and that Thomas' wife was named Mary. Then the property was described as having three messuages,

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three gardens, three orchards, fifty acres of land, fifteen acres of meadow, fifty acres of pasture and twenty acres of wood. In 1693 the same property was conveyed to Stephen Wilbraham and from him to Roger Wilbraham.⁶⁷

During the seventeenth century the largest home was that occupied by Philip Prichard; in 1664, according to the Hearth Tax returns, he paid tax on 7 hearths suggesting a significant property: he was still there 14 years later. It is possible that this was the predecessor of the 'modern' Bostock Hall, or Bostock House as it was known in the nineteenth century. The 'old hall' which in 1660 had been occupied by Thomas Mainwaring was now the home of a 'Mr Seegreaves' (Seagrave) who paid tax on six hearths. Raphe Burrows had a two-hearth house, but all the rest had simple cottages containing a single hearth and of these nine families were too poor to pay the tax. It is interesting to note that in 1664 Thomas Bostock of Bostock is not listed and may have died by that time.

Further to the mention of the Mainwaring family living at Bostock Hall in the 1660, there was a case heard by the Justices sitting in Quarter Sessions in 1647 which mentions them, the Church family and the hall. On 5 October that year an order was issued by the court for the cleansing of Bostock Hall from the 'sickness' and that the goods of the late John Mainwaring were to be sold for the costs involved. For this purpose it seems that Thomas Church took possession of all he could find, but Samuel Carrington, clerk and curate of Davenham, pleaded for the return of some items on the grounds that these had been lent to Mainwaring by his wife and his sister-in-law, Mainwaring's widow.⁶⁸

In October 1765 Sir Thomas Whitmore of Apley, Shropshire, sold the manor to William Tomkinson for £6000.⁶⁹

One of the tenements here was known as Wrench's. This contained in 1737, twelve and a half acres and fields called: Fould, Hemp Yard, Lower Croft, Smithy Field, Town Field, Cow Croft, Nearer Meadow, Further Meadow, Brown heath, White Field, White Field Meadow.⁷⁰ The four acres field known as Cow Croft was conveyed in 1776 to Tomkinson by Richard Wrench in order that the latter might create a park around Bostock House.

In 1796 the trustees of Edward Tomkinson put the 'Barony of Shipbrook', with its main component, the Manor of Bostock, up for sale. The sale took place in the White Bear in Middlewich on 1 and 2 June.⁷¹ Eventually the manor, along with the Moulton Hall estate, lands in Wharton, Shipbrook, Shurlach and Davenham were sold as part of a complete package to Thomas France of Liverpool for £63,000. It is at this time that we get a full description of the Bostock manor. It comprised of several properties. First, Bostock House, then 'lately built' by Tomkinson, along with 320 acres of land, much of which was the parkland about the house. A messuage and 179 acres in Bostock and Wharton, which included a garden and a moat which is clearly the 'Old Hall', then tenanted by John Bennett, senior. John Maddocks held a third property of thirty-eight acres. Peter Ravenscroft held nineteen acres including a plot known as 'Town Field', a part of what used to be Wrench's tenement which had been reduced in size to create the park lands. Then, John Wright had seven acres; Samuel Barrow, thirty-seven acres; an area known as 'Whatcroft' consisting of eight acres held by John Bennett, junior; Thomas Chatterton's Tenement of ninety-eight acres and John Bennett junior's fifty-four acres. In addition there were several dwellings - houses and cottages - and a smithy which form what we now know to be Bostock Green. In all about 780 acres. The sale was subject to an annual charge of five shillings to be laid out by distributing ten 6d loaves to the poor on Easter Sunday each year. For the purchaser the Bostock property meant an income of about £530 a year from rents on the various farms and other properties.

Bostock House as it was originally known in order to distinguish it from the older Bostock Hall, was built in the style of the architect Wyatt. The building is 'L' shaped fronting both the drive and the gardens. It has an early Georgian style but also has much later alterations and additions and was heavily Italianised during the mid-nineteenth century.

TONY BOSTOCK'S HISTORY NOTES: DAVENHAM

In 1797 it was bought from the Tomkinsons by the France family (later the France-Hayhursts) from Liverpool. This successful merchant banking family lived here until 1950 when the property was acquired by the Manchester Education Authority as a boarding school for girls. It remained a school until 1980. It is now owned privately and has been converted into luxury apartments.

The grounds of Bostock Hall at one time contained ornate gardens, a long narrow lake and extensive parklands which swept down to the River Dane. Today some of the gardens and parkland contain a number of luxury homes. The apartments and the new houses accommodate people who commute into the cities of Manchester and Liverpool. The old medieval hall was said to have been three stories high, surrounded by a moat and of the traditional black and white appearance. It was destroyed following an out-break of plague in the 1660s when it was the home of the Mainwaring family. Although rebuilt in the late seventeenth century the Old Hall was demolished again in 1805 having become unsafe for habitation. The site of the Old Hall lies a mile south of the 'modern' hall and its location is now marked by a clump of trees in the middle of the moated area and opposite 'Old Hall Farm'.

The modern day hall was never the home of the Bostock Family for it was built in 1775 for the then lord of the manor Edward Tomkinson. There was an earlier building on this site but nothing is known of its description. It is highly likely that the former building will have been one of the half dozen or so farms on the manor.

Today the heart of the township is the village of Bostock Green which is a charming place of timber and brick cottages housing about 100 people engaged in the rural economy of the area. These cottages were built for the Bostock estate workers and the red bricks used to build them were made from clay dug locally and fired in a kiln along what is now Brick Kiln Lane. During the third quarter of the 19th century the France-Hayhursts developed the village and with its cottages farms, polo stud and dairy herd the whole area was regarded as a 'model estate'. In the early 1900s Colonel France-Hayhurst gave land to the community for a social club, tennis courts, bowling green, play area and sports pavilion. During the nineteenth century five cottages were allocated to the Overseers of the Poor to house those dependant upon parish poor relief. At the beginning of the twentieth century the estate laundry was situated on the village green. Nearby reading rooms were established for the estate workers to use and this building is now the Bostock Social Club.

In 1848 the township was described as follows: BOSTOCK, a township, in the parish of Davenham, union and hundred of Northwich, S. division of the county of Chester, 2¾ miles (N. W. by W.) from Middlewich; containing 190 inhabitants. This place gave name to a family descended from Osmerus, lord of Bostock in the reign of William the Conqueror: the heiress of the elder branch brought the manor in the latter part of the 15th century to the Savages. In 1755 it was sold by Sir Thomas Whitmore to the Tomkinsons. The township comprises 1523 acres; the soil is sand and clay. The Liverpool and Birmingham railway passes about a mile to the west of the village. The tithes have been commuted for £75. 11.⁷²

At one time an old oak tree, planted in 1887, once stood at the corner of the village green and was said to mark the exact centre of the ancient county. This tree was planted by the then lord of the manor Canon Thomas France-Hayhurst and Colonel C.H.France-Hayhurst to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign.

In the grounds of Bostock Hall which, now converted into apartments, a number of luxury homes have been built which house people who commute into the cities of Manchester and Liverpool.

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- ² *Chester County Court Rolls 1259-1297*, Chetham Society (1925) p.64
- ³ Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward I: volume 3: 1288-1296 (1904), pp. 155-156. [*Cheshire Sheaf* xxxii, 1937, p. 108]
- ⁴ Calandar of Papal Letters, 1198-1304; Ch. Sheaf, xix, (1922), p60
- ⁵ Ormerod , i, 114
- ⁶ Lewis, S. (ed.), *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848), pp. 15-23
- ⁷ Dodgson, J, McN., *Place Names of Cheshire* (E.P.N.S.), ii, p. 208
- ⁸ Ormerod, iii, p. 253.
- ⁹ *The Ledger Book of Vale Royal Abbey* (1914), pp. 138-149
- ¹⁰ BPR; Dodgson, J, McN., *Place Names of Cheshire* (E.P.N.S.), ii, p. 209
- ¹¹ Ives, E.w., (ed.), *Letters and Accounts of William Brereton of Malpas*, Record Soc. vol. 116 (1976), p. 150
- ¹² PRO: SP 10/3
- ¹³ CRO: P6
- ¹⁴ Lawton, G.O. (ed), *Northwich Hundred: Poll Tax 1660 and Hearth Tax 1664*, Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, cxix (1979), pp. 185, 241
- ¹⁵ Lewis, S. (ed.), *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848), pp. 82-85.
- ¹⁶ Dodgson, J, McN., *Place Names of Cheshire* (E.P.N.S.), p.203
- ¹⁷ Tait, J. (ed.), *The Chartulary of Chester Abbey*, Chetham Society, vols 79 & 82 (1920 & 1923)
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- ¹⁹ Plea Rolls
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- ²¹ Dodgson, J, McN., *Place Names of Cheshire* (E.P.N.S.), ii, p. 204
- ²² Rylands, J.P. (ed), *The Visitation of Cheshire, 1580*, Harleian Society, xviii (1882), p.10
- ²³ PRO: SP 10/3
- ²⁴ Lawton, G.O. (ed), *Northwich Hundred: Poll Tax 1660 and Hearth Tax 1664*, Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, cxix (1979), pp. 166, 255
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- ²⁷ Ormerod, iii, p.270
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- ²⁹ Lawton, G.O. (ed), *Northwich Hundred: Poll Tax 1660 and Hearth Tax 1664*, Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, cxix (1979), pp. 170, 246
- ³⁰ *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848), pp. 55-62
- ³¹ Dodgson, J, McN., *Place Names of Cheshire* (E.P.N.S.), ii, p.204
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- ⁴⁷ Dodgson, J, McN., *Place Names of Cheshire* (E.P.N.S.), ii, p.211
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⁵³ *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848), pp. 534-537

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⁵⁷ Lawton, G.O. (ed), *Northwich Hundred: Poll Tax 1660 and Hearth Tax 1664*, Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, cxix (1979), pp. 154, 242

⁵⁸ *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848), pp. 353-356

⁵⁹ Dodgson, J, McN., *Place Names of Cheshire* (E.P.N.S.), ii, p. 202

⁶⁰ PRO: SP 10/3

⁶¹ CRO; P6

⁶² Cheshire Record Office (CRO): DCH/J/34, part I. The Mainwarings were from Marton, Over, on the other side of the River Weaver.

⁶³ CRO: DCH/J/35; DFN 2705/52

⁶⁴ CRO: DTM 32

⁶⁵ Lawton, G.O. (ed), *Northwich Hundred: Poll Tax 1660 and Hearth Tax 1664*, Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, cxix (1979), pp. 167, 255

⁶⁶ Margaret Bostock married Edward Church of Nantwich in 1639/40 according to Hall's History of Nantwich.

⁶⁷ CRO: DFN 2705/19, DTM 32

⁶⁸ *Cheshire Quarter Sessions Records, 1559-1760* (1940)

⁶⁹ CRO: DTM/32

⁷⁰ CRO: DTM/32

⁷¹ CRO: DFN 2705/34

⁷² *A A Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848), pp. 305-309