

TONY BOSTOCK'S LOCAL HISTORY NOTES: LITTLE BUDWORTH

THE 'FOX AND BARREL'



The modern A49 runs along the western edge of the township following the line of the old Roman Road. Travelling south towards Tarporley the road crosses what were once the wastelands of Delamere Forest and Little Budworth Common before descending a steep bank to cross the Sandyford Brook into Cotebrook. On the top of the bank, once known as 'Bastard Bank' and now 'Fox Bank', stands 'The Fox and Barrel' which has been in existence as a public house since at least 1770, and as a property possibly a century before that. This public house was once owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury, then by Greenalls, and is now in private ownership.

Folk lore has it that the name derives from a tale that a former landlord let a fox which was being pursued by huntsmen escape to the cellar where it sat upon one of the barrels. It's said that a heavy flat stone marked the opening into the cellar where the fox entered the premises.ⁱ It seems that the name of this house first occurs in the early nineteenth century. A map of the area which formed an appendix to the Act of Parliament for the enclosing of parts of Delamere Forest, dated 1812, shows 'the Fox and Barrel'.ⁱⁱ When the boundaries of Delamere Forest were being recorded the following year by Robert Harvey and Joseph Fenna, two of the Commissioners dealing with enclosure, it was said that the bounds hereabouts ran from,

"... the said Mere Stone called Headless Cross Southerly to and passing several other Mere stones standing between the said Forest and the Common Lands in Little Budworth to a Gate called Hinds Gate and from thence along the West side of several Inclosures made from the said Common Lands in Little Budworth to the Inn called the Fox and Barrel and through the Parlour of that Inn and along the West Fences of Several Inclosures belonging to the said Inn to and ending at the said first mentioned Mere Stone in Sandyford Brook."ⁱⁱⁱ

The name may go back further but how far is uncertain. It clearly alludes to foxhunting which as such did not begin in Cheshire until after 1762, the year after the Tarporley Hunt Club was founded. Members used to bring their own private packs of hounds to Tarporley and their chief quarry originally was the hare. When the transition to foxhunting took place is not known but the first person to have a pack of foxhounds in Cheshire was the Hon. John Smith-Barry, fourth son of the 4th Earl of Barrymore, of Marbury Hall, Northwich, who also owned Whitehall in Little Budworth. He was elected a member of the Tarporley Hunt in November, 1763, the same year that his hound Blue Cap won the famous Hound Trials at Newmarket

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after whom the public house in Sandiway is named.^{iv} So all we can say is that the name must have been coined between 1770 and 1812.

From early records it seems that the area around the public house was enclosed from the open lands that were Budworth Common during the early eighteenth century. The earliest map to detail this enclosed area is of about 1750. This was made at a time when Philip Egerton, esquire, of Oulton Hall (1694-1766) was responsible for adding to and improving the family estates. It was he who about the year 1752 enclosed the park at Oulton and entered into an agreement with his neighbouring landlord, the Earl of Shrewsbury, to obtain for himself the area we now know as Budworth Common which lay between the north wall of his park and the Tarporley to Cuddington road. He was no doubt concerned that as there had by then been some encroachment onto the Common in the area around 'the Fox and Barrel' and on the other side of the Common, around Whitehall, he had had no wish to spoil the approach to his residence by additional tenant farmsteads.

Whilst there are no surviving deeds recording this transaction we do have a plan of the common at this time endorsed "The Part of the Commons that Philip Egerton, Esq., is to have, the roads excluded contains 333A 1R 00P".^v (See Figure One) The plan, which is well drawn, shows the Common extending from the north wall of the park towards the Tarporley road, on the other side of which lay Delamere Forest, and also beyond the Chester to Middlewich Road. The areas of enclosure that remained in the Earl of Shrewsbury's hands are clearly shown and drawn in such a way that they are easily identified on later maps. The various intersecting roads and paths formed ten wooded compartments. To the east of the area lay the remaining parts of Little Budworth Common that were 'left open' and which were to remain so until the turn of the century. The triangular enclosure containing 'the Fox and Barrel' can be clearly identified in the south west corner of the plan.

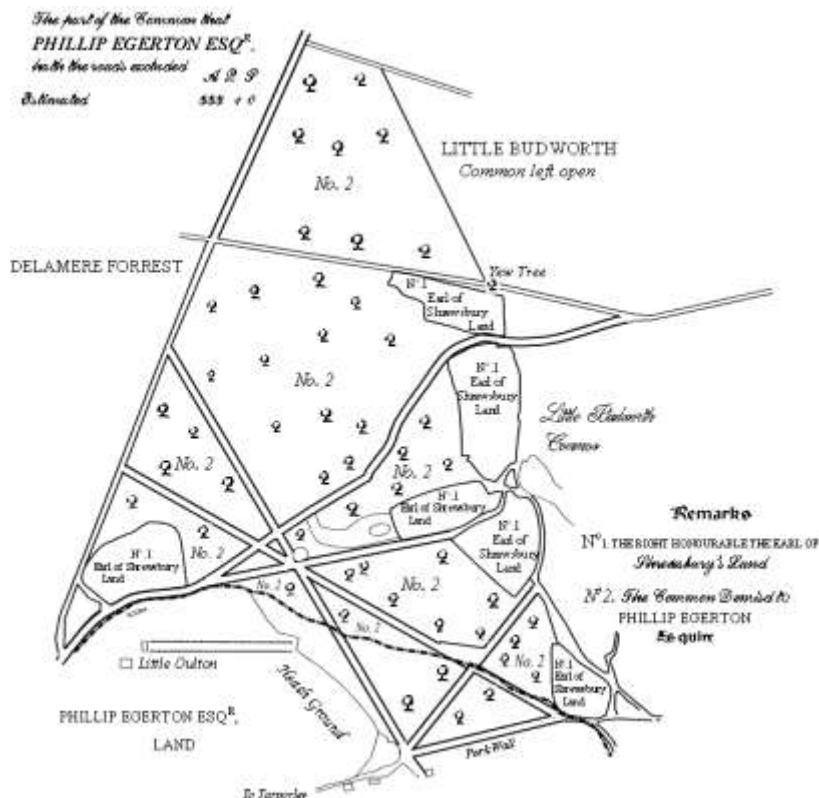


Figure One: The Plan of Budworth Common, c. 1750

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A quarter of a century later, though somewhat inaccurately drawn, Burdett's map of Cheshire, 1777, shows the enclosed area around 'the Fox and Barrel'. Greenwood's map of Cheshire, 1812, shows the area in more detail and names 'the Fox and Barrel', as does Bryant's map of Cheshire, 1832. Fortunately, the Earl of Shrewsbury commissioned the drawing of a detailed plan of his estate in 1789 together with a schedule of tenants and their respective lands.^{vi} (See *Figure Two*) These may be summarised as follows:

<i>Plot No.</i>	<i>Description, field name, &c.</i>	<i>Tenant</i>
135	Far Yard	John Hinde
136	House Croft, House, &c	Ralph Massey
137	Near Croft	Ralph Massey
138	Middle Yard	John Hinde
139	Near Yard	John Hinde
140	Next Croft	Ralph Massey
141	Far Croft	Ralph Massey
142	House & Garden	Ralph Massey
143	Garden	Ralph Massey
144	Little Croft	John Hinde
145	House & Garden	John Hinde
146	Encroachment	John Hinde
147	Great Croft	Simon Frazier
148	Public House, Garden, &c	Simon Frazier
149	Croft beyond <i>-ditto-</i>	Simon Frazier
150	House & Garden	Simon Frazier

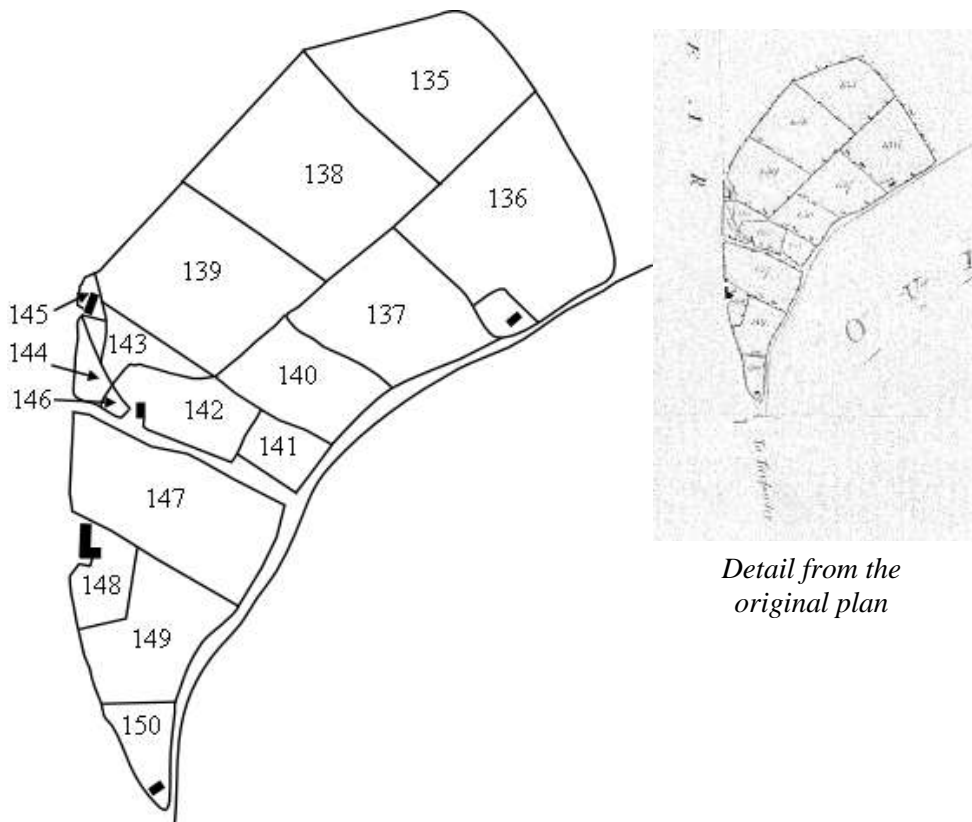


Figure Two: 'The Fox and Barrel' (148) and surrounding fields, c. 1790

'The Fox and Barrel' was occupied at this time by Simon Frazier (or Frazer) who had previously been a gardener at Oulton Park. On 2 January 1770, for a down payment of £5 and an annual rent of £1 10s., Simon Frazier took possession of the house known as 'Bastard

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Bank' for a 90 years term and for the life-times of himself, then aged forty-nine years, his wife named Phebe, who was only twenty-six, and a nine months old son named Charles. Three-life leases, as they were known, were standard practice on old estates in Cheshire from the middle of the sixteenth century until the nineteenth century. A tenant would purchase the lease for the lives of three named individuals, often children or other close relations, for a nominal price known as the 'fine' and for a set annual rent. When a 'name' died the lease holder or his survivors could add another life thus keeping the tenancy within the family for generations. Whilst this lease was only for the house, he also had another, separate, lease for the fields within the triangular block, which included a property to the south which still stands today as 'Fox Cottage', so that in all he held just over 5 acres worth £6 10s 6d a year. It is interesting to note that on the estate plan of 1798 the shape of the public house is much as it is today, as is the shape of the garden croft in which it stands, all of which suggest that the present building may date to this time and has had little alteration.

Simon and his wife had been married at Whitegate in November 1768. The parish registers at Little Budworth record other children: Simon, William, Mary and Nancy christened between 1771 and 1784. A few years before he died in 1791 it seems that Simon left the public house to live in nearby Utkinton and also to return to gardening: he was buried at Little Budworth on 10 June 1791 and Phebe five years later.^{vii} Neither left a will and administration of their estates was granted to their son Charles Frazier of Manchester.

The next tenant of whom we are certain is Thomas Cowap who was the licensee in the 1820s and certainly up to 1832.^{viii} He was followed by Abraham White who is recorded here as paying land taxes in 1835 and also in the 1841 census. He was a man in his forties and married to Elizabeth by whom he had five children. The family employed two female servants. Interestingly in 1837, according to the tithe apportionment and associated map, the land hereabouts was leased by the Earl of Shrewsbury to a Mary Billington so it is possible that White was a sub-tenant of that family.

By the time of the 1851 census the victualler was William Billington whose name would suggest he was local man, in fact he was born in Wharton (Winsford). He was then forty-four year old and was married to Frances who was ten years older. They had an only daughter – eleven years old Elizabeth. Living with them were three servants one of whom may have been a nephew who was also called William Billington, and a lodger who was employed nearby as a jockey. In addition to holding the whole of the triangular piece of ground divided into four fields, he also leased two fields containing eight acres on the far side of Little Budworth in an area known as 'Stoadley'. In 1871 Billington, then a sixty-five years old widower ran the inn with his daughter Mary. He remained as the licensee until 1875 after which it remained with the family until 1895 through his daughter Mary, who was the licensee in 1878^{ix}, and both William and Henry Billington who were probably related in some way.

According to the 1881 census fifteen years old William Billington was then the publican and farmer of ten acres at 'the Fox and Barrel'. Is the given age correct? He lived here with his younger brother Henry, elder sister Annie, and younger sister Amy. By 1890 Henry Billington was the tenant.^x

The 1891 return of licensed houses and beer houses lists 'The Fox and Barrel' as a free house occupied by Elizabeth Rutter, who was related to James Rutter the licensee of the 'Red Lion' in Little Budworth (a member of a family which goes back in the village at least as far as the Elizabethan period). There were two bedrooms for guests with a room for six people to take refreshment and it was described as being a 'fair house with 'fair accommodation'. The 1903 return records the licensee as being Elizabeth, now Bickley, wife of Alfred Bickley.^{xi}

In 1917 the Earl of Shrewsbury's estates in Cheshire were sold at an auction held in the Grosvenor Hotel, Chester, over two days – 11th and 12th December.^{xii} The Fox and Barrel Inn

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was let at the time at an annual rent of £35 to Mrs E Bickley. As 'Lot 245' it was described as having a 'capital draw-up in front', of the house a feature which is evident today. Inside there were several rooms: Smoke Room, Tap Room, Snuggery, Kitchen, Pantry, Wash-house 'with pump', five bedrooms and three attic rooms. Outside there were some farm buildings built of brick with slates and tiles: two pigsties, a two-stall stable, a granary, two loose boxes (covered and enclosed stalls for horses), a shippon for four cattle and a loft above. In the nearby field there was a 'Trap house' and a shed.

Licensees

Simon Frazier	1770s	Gladys Tilling	1973 - 1976
Thomas Cowap	1822 - 1834	Philip Ratcliffe	1976 - 1977
Abraham White	1840s	W. J. Appleton	1977 - 1988
William Billington	1850 - 1874	Elsie Hockenhill	1963 - 1966
Mary Billington	1874 - 1878	Alistair Appleton	1988 - 1990
Henry Billington	1878 - 1891	Philip Swarsbrick	1990 -
Elizabeth Bickley (nee Rutter)	1891 - 1941		
Michael Dean	1941 - 1963		
Frederick Wright	1963 - 1973	Currently:	Messrs. Steele, Cotterill & Kidd

[The above list of licensees is based on A.J.McGregor's *The Licensees of the Public Houses of Vale Royal*, published in 1990.]

ⁱ *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol 50 (1955), p.42

ⁱⁱ Another map of Delamere Forest dated 1816 and published in Ormerod's *History of Cheshire*, vol. ii, p. 107, shows 'The Fox and Barrel Inn'.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 38 (1938), p.107

^{iv} *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 60 (1965), pp 1,2

^v Chester and Cheshire Record Office(CRO): DEO 1/15

^{vi} CRO: MF 397

^{vii} CRO: WS 1795 and WS 1800

^{viii} CRO: QDV 2/255

^{ix} Kelly's *Trade Directory* 1874

^x CRO: DSH299/27

^{xi} CRO: Acc. L1018 & 1019

^{xii} CRO: DSH299/27