

TONY BOSTOCK'S LOCAL HISTORY NOTES: DAVENHAM

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DAVENHAM

Whilst we can list many people who lived within the township, of whom the majority will have resided in what is now recognised as the village, there is some difficulty in establishing precise numbers and names as part of the village, the area around the church, actually lay within the township of Leftwich. As the records of that other township do not indicate which of its inhabitants actually lived at the east end of Church Street there is a need for some estimation and interpretation. The reason for the anomaly occurred during the late 13th century. At that time the lordship of the district that encompassed the ancient parish was in the hands of the Vernon family as Barons of Shipbrook. The family's succession was divided between three sisters one of whom inherited the manor of Leftwich and lands around the church; she married a member of the Wilbraham family whose descendants were the Winnington and the Leftwich families. As a result the area around the church became enmeshed with the manor and township of Leftwich, and remained so until comparatively, very recently.

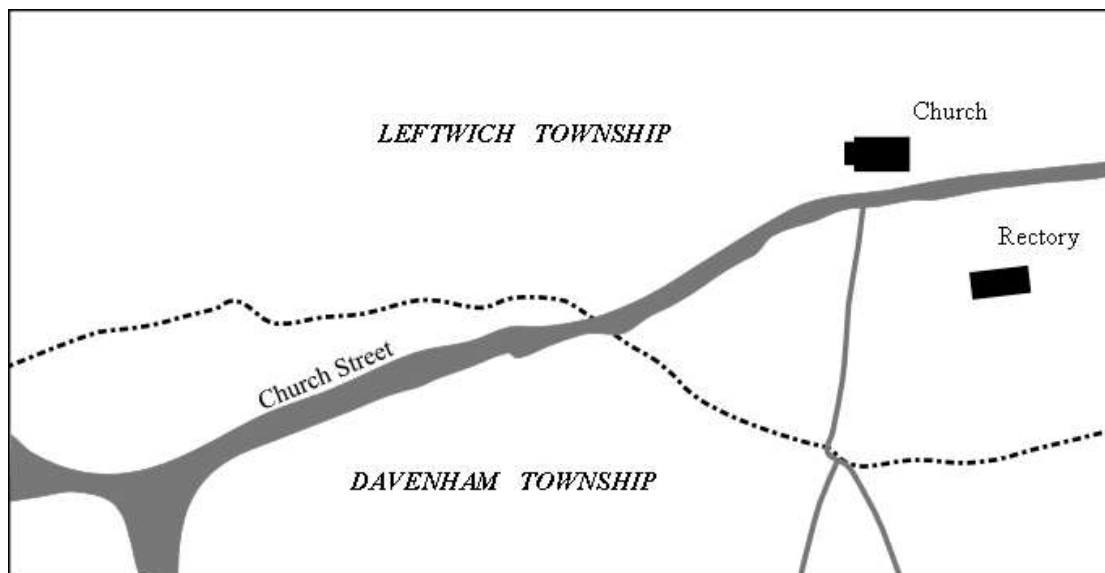


Figure One: The Township Boundary (from 19th C. tithe map) indicating the proportion of the village that lay in Leftwich

There are two very important sources for the seventeenth century and these are the Poll Tax returns of 1660 and the Hearth Tax returns of 1664. The Poll Tax lists every person aged over sixteen, who was not exempt from paying on the grounds of poverty and assessed them on the value of their property in lands or stock, The basic payment for a single man or a married couple was 12d a year. In all forty-seven liable to the tax are listed for Davenham township and these are divided up into twenty-two households. The numbers of persons listed and the households, which ignores those under sixteen years of age and the poor people, would suggest a population of perhaps no more than 100. The Hearth Tax, which imposed a charge of one shilling for every domestic hearth or fireplace in a house lists twenty-four residential properties, including the poor, also suggests a population of about 100. In addition there was in Leftwich at least one family, that of the rector of Davenham Church, which can be identified as living in the village and in all perhaps another six families. A total population therefore of around 130 during the 1660s.

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The wealthiest resident in Davenham township according to the Poll Tax seems to be a gentleman named William Wich who resided at Davenham Hall and had property worth £30 a year for which he paid twelve shillings in tax, and a further £8 worth of land in Bostock taxed at 3s 2d. A husbandman named Thomas Eaton had lands worth £20 a year and seems to have lived with a widow named Mrs Jone Booth, who was worth £25 a year and a gentleman named Peter Pidgeon worth £10 a year. Two husbandmen each had lands worth £15: William Asby (or Aspall) had a son named Peter who was taxed at the basic shilling; and Robert Poole who had at least two people living with him – John Ducket, labourer and a Sarah Poole who was presumably some relation.

Four men, three husbandmen and a shoemaker, paid tax on stock or land worth £5 a year. George Horton who lived with Elizabeth Horton, his sister or daughter, and a Cicely Minshull. William Hignet lived with a Roger Deane, labourer, and Marie Ridgeway, who were presumably his servants. John Harrison lived with his son John and daughter Margaret. The shoemaker was a Richard Baswicke who seems to have lived alone.

The remaining residents and the taxes they paid were:

Elizabeth Platt	1s
Ellinor Walley	1s
William Oulton, husbandman & Marie, his wife	1s
Arrabella Davie, wid	1s
Martha Bleas	1s
Roger Bosson, husbandman, & Margerie, his wife	1s
William Blease, labourer	1s
Katherine Bostock, spinster	1s
Thomas Buckley, husbandman, & Ellin his wife	1s
Thomas Buckley, wheelwright, & Ann his wife	1s
Richard Hall, labourer	1s
Elizabeth Warton, spinster	1s
Elizabeth Richardson, spinster	1s
Laurence Birkenhead, blacksmith, & Ellinor his wife	1s
Ralph Cooke, labourer, & Ann his wife	1s
William Piggott, weaver, & Margery his wife	1s
Robert Ducket, shoemaker, & Margaret his wife	1s
John Buckley, tailor, & Prudence his wife	1s
Robert Shawler, labourer, & Margaret his wife	1s
Robert Bostock, labourer, & Elizabeth his wife	1s
Ralph Richardson, tanner	1s

Under Leftwich is listed the rector and his household. The Reverend James Marbury had property worth £150 a year and therefore paid a tax of £3. There is no mention of his wife but his servants are listed as Ralph Holland, Elizabeth Fletcher, Katherine Wright and Bridget Newton, all of whom paid the basic tax.

As regards others listed under Leftwich it is possible to identify a further two families on the south side of Church Street.. In 1696, associated with the Parsonage were some tenements the occupiers of which paid a rent to the rector, these were: 'Royle's House', 'Holland's House' and 'Finnies Yard'. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the following two properties, which were all listed under Leftwich in 1660, can also be added to the Davenham entries.

John Royle, husbandman, worth £9 p.a.	3s 7d
Jane Wilkinson, spinster	1s
Ellin Boden, spinster	1s

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Randle Holland, skinner, & Katherine his wife 1s¹

The name of Finney does not appear so it's not possible to say who occupied the third property. On the other side of the road, west of the church yard there were perhaps about four or five families whose identities cannot be ascertained.

Turning now to the Hearth Tax recorded four years later. This taxation list is valuable as an assessment of wealth for the number of hearths indicates the relative size of house and also because the poor are listed as being exempt from paying the tax. For Davenham we have the following twenty-three dwellings:

	<i>Chargeable</i>		
		William Hignett	1
Thomas Buckley	1	Robert Poole	2
John Harrison	1	Richard Beswick	1
Richard Holford	6	William Oulton	1
William Aspell	4	William Davis	1
Laurence Birched	1	Thomas Leister	1
Ralph Cooke	1	Robert Duckworth	1
Robert Shawler	1		<i>Not Chargeable</i>
Robert Cleaton	1	William Piggot	1
Robert Bostocke	1	Samuel Oulton	1
George Amery	1	William Maddock	1
Thomas Buckley	1	Peter Holland	1
George Horton	1	Thomas Leicester	1

Richard Holford's home will be Davenham Hall which he occupied in succession to William Wich. It is not clear where the other large house was, though it could be the forerunner of the Bull's Head Inn. Likewise it's unclear where Poole's two-hearth house would have been. The majority were single-storied, two room cottages with a central fireplace.

To these we can add from Leftwich:

	<i>Chargeable</i>		<i>Not Chargeable</i>
James Marburie	3	Thomas Finney	1
John Royle	4	Raphe Holland	1

Marbury was the incumbent so the three-hearth house represents the rectory. Royle's house in 1696 was described as having four bays so it reasonable to suggest that the four-hearth house attributed to John Royle in 1660 are one of the same. The 1696 terrier also mentions property owned by a Holland and a Finney so it is reasonable to add these. On the other side of Church Street there may have been about five cottages with a single hearth but which of those listed under the Leftwich township cannot be gleaned.

Of the twenty-seven families, seven, about a quarter of all families, are listed as too poor to pay the shilling a year tax.

During the Civil War the township does not seem to have been affected directly. However a few residents do appear in the records.

John Holford of Davenham fought for the Royalist cause and served at the siege of Beeston Castle in 1643. He surrendered to Colonel Croxton and went home to live peacefully with his mother. Nevertheless as a known Royalist he had to appeal to keep his property and on 20

¹ There were two other Hollands in Leftwich: Joseph and Ralph, both labourers, who might be the appropriate resident.

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March 1647 he formerly admitted his part in the Civil War and begged to fined rather than suffer forfeiture: he was fined a tenth of the value of his property at £110 17s.

It seems that there were divisions amongst the people of the parish as local families are found on opposing sides. John Holford of Davenham along with Philip Pritchard, who served as a captain in the army, Thomas Mainwaring and Edward Wrench all from Bostock were Royalists. On the Parliamentary side Cheney Bostock of Leftwich served as a captain and is said to have been in command of the guard at the scaffold when Charles I was beheaded.

To be continued