

TONY BOSTOCK'S LOCAL HISTORY NOTES: LITTLE BUDWORTH

THE 'SHREWSBURY ARMS'



'The Shrewsbury Arms' stands alongside the A54 in the northern part of Little Budworth. Its name derives from its previous owners – the Talbots, Earls of Shrewsbury but does not appear in documentary sources until the late 1860s. This family had been lords of the manor of Little Budworth since Tudor times and owned about three-quarters of the land in the township. Eventually, in 1907, the public house became the property of Frederick Rutter and then in 1940 it was purchased by Robinsons Brewery.

The public house was originally one of two houses that stood on a farm situated on the edge of Budworth Common and known at times variously as 'Nield's Cottage', 'Briscall's Tenement' and 'Common Side'. The farm can be traced back to 1700 when it was probably a new establishment created by enclosing the waste lands that had been part of Delamere Forest and the commons of Little Budworth.

Thomas Nield seems to be the first tenant of 20acres 2 perches and 15 roods as he had a three-lives lease dated August 1700 for himself, his son Thomas and daughter Jane.ⁱ Twenty years later William Briscall (or Briscoe as the name is sometimes spelled) had a cottage here for a down payment, or 'fine', of £3 8s 8d and an annual rent of £1 10s. It was also stipulated that on the death of a tenant the successor was required to pay the lord a 'heriot' (his best animal or goods) to the value of £1 10s. The lease on this occasion covered the lives of Thomas Nield, Jane Broadbent (nee Neild), and William Briscall.ⁱⁱ In October 1741 the lives were changed to William Briscoe, Thomas Nield, and John Briscoe.

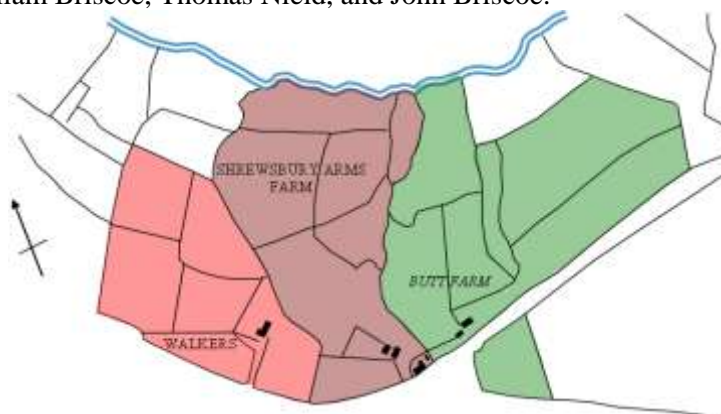


Figure One: 'The Shrewsbury Arms' farm and neighbouring farms, 1798

TONY BOSTOCK'S LOCAL HISTORY NOTES: LT. BUDWORTH

In January 1770 John Briscoe was the tenant paying a £4 10s rent for his 20 acres and his lease was for the lifetimes of his father William, said to be aged 57 years, himself aged 30, and Elizabeth Briscoe, presumably his daughter, aged 10 years. This was the state of affairs in 1798 when a map of the Earl of Shrewsbury's estates was drawn. John Briscoe was still here in 1802.ⁱⁱⁱ

Briscoe's farm was sandwiched between one on the west, known as 'Walkers', containing 15 acres and occupied by Mary Challinor and one on the east, known as 'Nixon's of the Butt' and later 'Butt Farm', which had 23 acres occupied by Joseph Challinor. At some time in the early part of the nineteenth century the house which became known as 'The Shrewsbury Arms' became separated from the farm, which by that time had been combined with the neighbouring 'Butt Farm' which itself can be traced back to 1695.

In the 1820s Mary Austen (or Austin) and her family – James, aged 16 years, William, aged 15 years, and Mary, aged 12, lived here.

In 1841 Mary Smith, a lady in her early forties, is shown in the census returns for that year as a 'publican' residing and working at 'The Beer Shop'; she resided here with a Margaret Goulden and three lodgers. Mary Smith no doubt leased the shop from, or ran it for, the owner Mary Austin, a lady then in her seventies, who is shown as both a farmer and a 'shop keeper' who also lived on the site: her shop was a grocery. Her son James Austin was farming nearby.

In 1851 Mary Austen was still alive, though retired and living with her son William Austin who ran the farm, daughter Mary and her husband John Wilkinson, who ran the grocery shop. The presence of these shops gave name to the lane opposite – Shop Lane. Unfortunately there is no mention in the 1851 census of either 'the Beer Shop' or 'the Shrewsbury Arms', but it may be presumed that it was still in the Austin family's hands. Next door, at 'Butt Farm', Mary's elder son James was the tenant of 56 acres. It seems that James had acquired this farm at some time in the 1840s for he was certainly in possession of both 'Common Side' and 'Butt', then a total of 46 acres by January 1847.^{iv} James died in 1859 a year after his mother.

According to the 1861 census the occupants of 'the Beer House' on Chester Road was James Hopley and his wife Fanny, as tenants of the Austin family.^v Martha Austin, a 44 years old widow (James's second wife, previously Barlow, whom he had married in 1850), and her step-son son William Austin, aged 19 years, now had 50 acres at Butt Farm. John Wilkinson had what was now a grocer's and draper's shop with 60 acres of land: he may be the same man who leased a property next door to the church known as 'The Old Bear's Paw'.^{vi} Two years later Martha Austin was the tenant of Butt Farm, with 45 acres, and her step-son James Austin, junior, had the public house.^{vii}

By 1871 'the Shrewsbury Arms' was still in the hands of John Hopley and his wife: at this time they had one child and a servant living with them. This is the first time that the name seems to be officially used. Next door Mary Wilkinson, now aged about 60 years, was still carrying on as a grocer, draper and farmer and living with her nephew, James' son, twenty-nine years old William Austin. Joseph Austin, James' second son was at neighbouring 'Butt Farm'.

In 1881 Mary Wilkinson was running the grocery business with 60 acres of land, and Joseph Austin had Butt's with 40 acres.

In the 1880s this inn was one of the meeting places for people attending the Forest Races which took place on the common lands of Little Budworth. In 1885 a crowd of men from Manchester, most of whom were bookmakers who were attending the races were taking

TONY BOSTOCK'S LOCAL HISTORY NOTES: LT. BUDWORTH

refreshment at 'The Shrewsbury Arms'. A crowd of salt workers arrived from Winsford and an altercation occurred between the two groups which caused locals to take refuge in the cellar and others who were not quick enough to sustain injuries. The local policeman suffered injuries from which he died the next day.^{viii} At this time Richard Rutter (b.1827) was the licensee who lived here with his wife Margaret and their three children.

The 1891 return of licensed houses and beer houses lists 'The Shrewsbury Arms' as a free house occupied by William Crompton and describes it as being a 'small roadside inn: Crompton was licensee for less than a year but the census of that year shows him, originally a Manchester man, and his wife Margaret residing here. At this time the farm land associated with the inn consisted of 26 acres and 9 perches. The 1903 return records the licensee as being Frances Julia Rutter and says that there are two bedrooms for visitors, room for twenty to take refreshments and a three-stall stable.^{ix}

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.^x The Shrewsbury Arms which was both a farm and a 'free and fully licensed inn' was let at the time at an annual rent of £70 10s to Mr F. Rutter. As 'Lot 162' it was described as having several rooms: three bedrooms, club room, bar parlour, bar snuggerly, kitchen, and pantry. The associated farm buildings had: a double coach house, a three-stall stable, a chaff house, a wash house, two shippens each for five cows, a cart shed a pig-sty, a coal shed and a store shed.

Licensees

Thomas Nield	1790s	Frances Rutter	1903 - 1904
John Briscoe	1800s	Henry Dean	1904 - 1907
Mary Smith	1840s	Frederick Rutter	1907 - 1924
Mary Austin	1850s	Harold Rutter	1924 - 1945
James Austin	1860s	Joseph Oakes	1945 - 1962
John Hopley	1871 - 1875	Sydney Thompson	1962 - 1977
Joseph Barlow	1875 - 1926	Andrew King	1977 - 1980
Richard Rutter	1878 - 1891	John Bailey	1980 - 1988
William Crompton	1891	Michael Wade	1988 - 1990
Thomas Parr	1891 - 1898	Margaret Ball	1990 - 20??
Martha Parr	1898 - 1899		
James Rutter	1899 - 1903		

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



'The Shrewsbury Arms', circa 1917

TONY BOSTOCK'S LOCAL HISTORY NOTES: LT. BUDWORTH

ⁱ Cheshire County Record Office (CRO): DSH 30/8.1

ⁱⁱ CRO: DSH 30/8.2

ⁱⁱⁱ CRO: MF 397; EDP 171/4

^{iv} CRO: DSH 30/10

^v The house and plot of land on which it stood, and still stands, were part of the Austin tenancy

^{vi} CRO:DSH 299/25

^{vii} CRO: DSH 299/27

^{viii} Bostock A.J. and others, *Vale Royal* (1993), p. 83

^{ix} CRO: Acc. L1018 & 1019. Frances Rutter was the widow of James Rutter (born 1834) the previous licensee.

^x CRO: DSH 299/27