

S H R E W S B U R Y:

TOPOGRAPHY AND DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

To the middle of the seventeenth century.

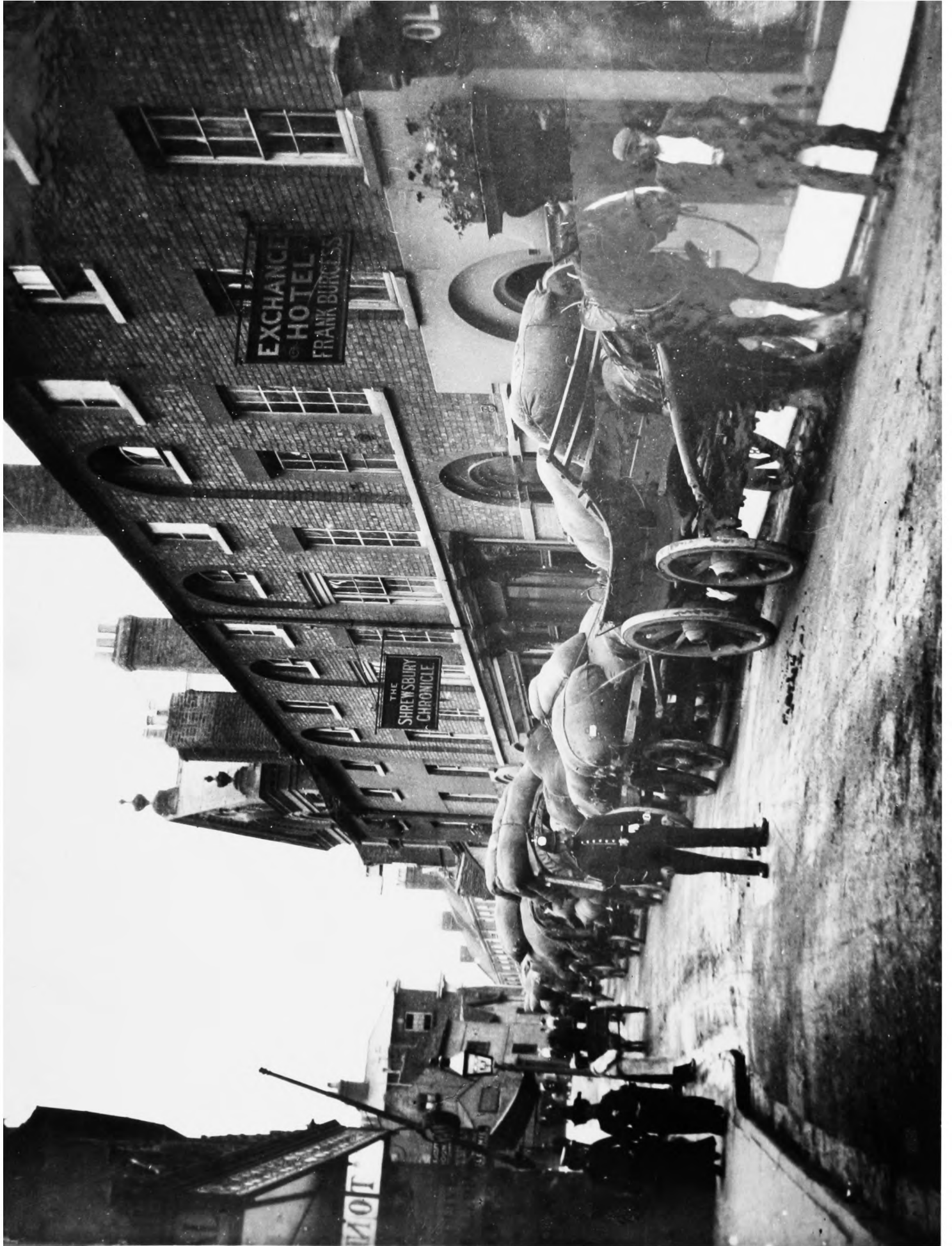
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S H R E W S B U R Y:

TOPOGRAPHY AND DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

To the middle of the seventeenth century.

J. T. SMITH, B.A.

THESIS PRESENTED TO

THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

- for -

THE DEGREE OF M.A.

1953.

"High the vanes of Shrewsbury gleam  
Islanded in Severn stream".

A.E. Housman.

P R E F A C E.

This thesis began as an attempt to relate the topography and domestic architecture of an English town to its general history, to see, that is, how far the present street plan and surviving buildings reflected the various stages in growth from its origins to the time when, with the coming of the railway, distant influences suddenly became more powerful than the historic regional environment. Shrewsbury was chosen because it has both a wealth of old houses and extensive corporation records which it was hoped would throw light on the buildings, in particular on their dating.

The examination of records of all kinds proceeded intermittently for about three years, paralleled by an exterior survey of most of the town's buildings. The intention was to date the bulk of the architecture in this way and then to assemble a few plans representative of the various periods. The discovery behind the Nag's Head public house of a ruinous medieval hall - a type of house not hitherto known to exist in the town - the revelation of the true character of the "Old Mint", and the impossibility of finding elsewhere published plans of any town house analogous to those found in Shrewsbury gradually induced a change of purpose.

Henceforth plans and structure became the main consideration since so little was known about them, and to this end a much smaller number of houses had to be examined in greater detail. The extra work thus involved necessitated a further limitation in date which was clearly defined by the nature of the buildings; the change from timber-framing to brick is the biggest break in the continuity of architectural tradition in Shrewsbury.

The close study of structure revealed in most cases a complexity which, it was felt, needed presentation in detail. An attempt has been made to convey the information about key buildings in such a way that the reader will have some opportunity of checking the conclusions independently. Detailed description backed up by copious illustration is the method employed. This situation, where an independent check can be made, is almost impossible to achieve without writing a series of short monographs on individual houses, and indeed it is highly desirable that such a series should be presented in archaeological periodicals so that by publication and discussion the main types of plan and structure may be established more securely than any other means allow.

The work upon which the following study is based was nearly all done during the past three years. Some six weeks at most were available each year for all the fieldwork, so

any inadequacies in treatment should be considered with that in mind. One further severe limitation involved in doing this kind of work alone is the impossibility of making measured drawings. Those here presented have mostly been based on whatever plans happened already to be available, supplemented by my own rough sketch plans. In a few cases friends assisted me to take enough measurements to ensure a higher degree of accuracy.

The fact that any survey of this kind is largely dependent on the goodwill and co-operation of other people accounts for a lengthy list of acknowledgments. I thank Professor G.F. Webb, C.B.E., F.S.A., Secretary to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), for granting the necessary research leave to enable the thesis to be completed; Mr. S.R.H. Loxton, O.B.E., Town Clerk of Shrewsbury, for permission to examine the Borough Records preserved in the Guildhall, sometimes on occasions when it must have been inconvenient to have visitors at all; Mr. F.R. Dinnis, A.M.I.C.E., formerly Borough Surveyor, for help of many kinds, including gaining access to certain buildings for me, the unrestricted use of the departmental office for consulting plans and drawings, and especially for permitting a member of his staff, Mr. W.C. Simpson, to take photographs for me; his successor Mr. - Morris, for similar help; and Mr. J.L. Hobbs, F.R.Hist.S., Borough



Librarian, and his Deputy Miss E. Sladdin, for their help in making topographical material known to me and readily available.

His Grace the Duke of Sutherland kindly gave permission to examine the Lilleshall Cartulary at Trentham, and his agent Mr. R.F. Allum, gave me every facility there.

I thank also the tenants, too numerous to name individually, of the shops and houses described in the text for their kindness in permitting me to enter and examine their premises.

Several people read and commented on drafts of one or more of the first four chapters. Mr. Philip Styles, M.A., F.S.A., read them all; Professor H.A. Cronne and Dr. F.T. Wainwright, F.S.A. read Chapter I; and Mr. J.L. Hobbs made many helpful comments on Chapter II.

My father Mr. Thomas Smith undertook to complete the index; without the time and labour he devoted to the task, it could not have been provided at all. He also read the whole text in manuscript and frequently improved it.

Nor are thanks any the less due to those whose assistance, though less direct, was essential to the completion of the work. Mr and Mrs. N. Coxon, wardens of Shrewsbury Youth Hostel, and Miss Sladdin and Miss Jancey at Riggs Hall, offered me hospitality on many occasions.

Lastly, my father and mother have in many minor ways helped and encouraged me during the whole time this thesis has been in preparation.

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Owen & Blakeway's	"History of Shrewsbury" is the source of the photostats forming plates 118-9, 134, 153.

The remaining 157 plates are the work of Mr. W. C. Simpson, of the Borough Surveyor's Department, Shrewsbury. They form an excellent and probably unrivalled collection of details of timber-framed architecture; my thanks are due to Mr. Simpson for his readiness to experiment in difficult situations which has produced such admirable results.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR FIGURES.

For plans upon which certain of the figures have been based I have to thank the following:-

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County Architect;	fig. 4.
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Omitted

Omitted

ABBREVIATED REFERENCES USED IN FOOTNOTES.

Ant. J.	Antiquaries Journal.
Arch. J.	Archaeological Journal.
C.C.R.	Calendar of Close Rolls.
Cal. L.P., C.P.R.	" " Patent Rolls.
D.B.	Domesday Book.
E.H.R.	English Historical Review.
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission.
O & B.	Owen & Blakeway, "History of Shrewsbury
R.C.H.M.	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.
SPL.	Shrewsbury Public Library.
TSAS.	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society.
V.C.H.	Victoria County History.

CHAPTER I.Before the Norman Conquest.

The town of Shrewsbury lies within a loop of the River Severn by which it is protected on all sides save the north; "Super Sabrinam in vertice collis posita" as Higden<sup>1</sup> succinctly puts it. Even on the north side within historic times a meander now virtually dry made of the northern approach a long, narrow, and easily defensible neck of land bounded each side by water.<sup>2</sup> From the earliest times there seem to have been only two fords, situated roughly where the English and Welsh bridges now stand, upon which routes from east, west and south converged. Within the loop of the river the land rises abruptly on the east and south sides from about 160 ft above O.D. at the bank to the 200 ft contour, with a more gradual rise on the west, yet here too the line of approach now represented by Mardol had the natural defence of a marsh on the north side, and on the south low-lying land subject to flood. Dominating the high ground are two small hills upon one of which formerly stood the High Cross with the churches of St. Mary and St. Alkmund and upon the other the

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1. Higden, Polychronicon, RS, 60.

2. R.E. James, The Old Bed of the River Severn at Shrewsbury, TSAS, LIII (1949-50), 242-50.

old church of St.Chad. In the depression between them was a peat bog <sup>1</sup> (fig.1).

The limited agricultural possibilities of the site made it unfavourable to prehistoric settlement, and the few finds of Roman date do not amount to evidence of permanent occupation. One legacy remained from these earlier periods to the Dark Age settlers, a system of communications (fig.2). Sir Cyril Fox, discussing the distribution of flat and hammer-flanged axes of the early Bronze Age, says that from "north-west Wales traffic crossed the Berwyns to the Oswestry region and descended to the Severn in the neighbourhood of Montford Bridge".<sup>2</sup> The importance of the Shrewsbury district as a river crossing is further shown by the distribution of picrite axe-hammers manufactured at Cwm Mawr, south of Corndon Hill in Montgomeryshire. One such axe hammer, of Bronze age date, is the only prehistoric object recorded from Shrewsbury.<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence to show whether the north Wales route continued to be used in the Early Iron Age, but certainly by Roman times it seems to have fallen out of use, superseded by a more complex pattern of communications likewise focussed on the

- 
1. Discovered during building excavations in 1783 (O & B I, 31 n.4); 1834 (Sir Alexander Gibb, Life of Telford, 281); 1881 (TSAS, IX (1886), 394); for its rediscovery in 1927 see p. 24 below.
  2. Sir Cyril Fox, Personality of Britain, 4th ed., 70 and pl. VI.
  3. Miss Lily F.Chitty, F.S.A., kindly informed me of the Shrewsbury axe-hammer; it has since been published in Proc. Prehist. Soc., XVII (1951), 160, 164 (fig 1), q.v. also for the Cwm Mawr factory; map, 123; probably found in 1881, during the excavations in High Street.

Severn crossings at much the same place. Another factor which dictated this new pattern was the physical structure of the valleys, up which in historic times men have always penetrated the eastern fringe of the Cambrian mountains. Thus from Wroxeter, only five miles south of Shrewsbury, a road ran along the Vale of Powys following the Severn, the main line of penetration, to Caersws, thence probably via the Garno and Dovey valleys to Pennal. An easier route led through the South Shropshire hills to Leintwardine and Kenchester, with offshoots thence to Brecon and Abergavenny. Brecon and places in the Wye Valley had good southward communications, but their northward aspect was potentially important when, as in the Middle Ages, political or economic factors made that outlet preferable. Wroxeter therefore was a focal point for the whole of central Wales, whence ran another route, the most important single element of the system for succeeding ages, which went through the Midlands to London. Thus already in Roman times the main lines of a road system were laid down which future ages were compelled by geographical conditions to follow.<sup>1</sup>

One other means of communication, the Severn itself, is obviously of great potential importance, yet evidence for its use is slight. Sir Cyril Fox has demonstrated

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1. For the Roman roads see O.S. Map of Roman Britain (2nd ed.) and R.E.M. Wheeler, Roman and Native in Wales, Trans.Soc. of Cymmrodorion, (1920-21), map opp.41.



the use of the river in prehistoric times as a link between the highland cultures of north Wales and the lowland cultures of Wessex, saying that "its middle and lower reaches may have carried some of the Irish and north Wales trade to South Britain":<sup>1</sup> this is perhaps borne out by the distribution of picrite axes mentioned above (footnote 3, page 2). There seems to be no evidence for the use of the river in Roman times, nor indeed had it any obvious function to perform, since it linked no important centres of agricultural or industrial production with any large town or port.

From this discussion one fact emerges clearly, that whatever type of culture might be dominant in the region, the immediate neighbourhood of Shrewsbury would be important in its lines of communication; the prehistoric pastoral and agricultural communities of the highland zone and the urban and (by comparison) industrial Roman civilization alike found the Severn crossing vital.

Owen and Blakeway conjectured that the history of Shrewsbury began with the migration of the inhabitants of Wroxeter to a site more readily defensible by people lacking Roman resources and organisation.<sup>2</sup> Some negative

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1. Fox, *op.cit.*, 7<sup>2</sup>, 73n.

2. History of Shrewsbury, 7.

evidence is now available which strengthens this view. Professor W.J. Varley in a study of hill forts of the Welsh Marches <sup>1</sup> shows that at least three Marcher forts were reoccupied after the withdrawal of Roman government, but of these the Wrekin, which had been the prehistoric fortress-capital of the Cornovii before they were re-settled in Wroxeter, was not one. In the absence of Roman order life reverted in some ways to prehistoric Iron Age conditions, where tactical considerations of defence outweighed strategic factors. So to whatever refuge the townsmen of Wroxeter moved under this compulsion, it was not to the Wrekin, and they may well have chosen the river-girt peninsula which was aptly named in Welsh "the end of the swamp".<sup>2</sup>

The earliest record of settlement on the site of Shrewsbury, then known as Pengwern, is in the poems of Llywarch the Aged.<sup>3</sup> Cynddylan, king of Powys, probably had a palace and town here in the second quarter of the 7th century, the destruction of which, lamented by the poet, must have taken place some time after 641, when

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1. Arch. J., CV (1950), 41-66.
  2. This is the meaning given to Pengwern by Ekwall in Oxford Dict. Engl. Place-Names, s.v. Shrewsbury.
  3. Kenneth Jackson, The poems of Llywarch the Aged, Antiquity, IX (1935), 323-7, summarising Sir Ifor Williams's Canu Llywarch Hen.

Cynddylan was an ally of Penda at the battle of Maserfeld.

So much can be said with certainty about Pengwern because it is attested by modern scholarship after critical examination of some of those Welsh sources which, for want of proper editing, have frequently to be disregarded by historians. Two such sources, Lives of Welsh Saints, have a bearing on the history of Pengwern, but the information drawn from them cannot at present be considered reliable. Saint Tyssilio, a son of Brochwel Ysgythrog, founded "the church of Pengwern, chiefest in the land";<sup>1</sup> presumably "chiefest in the land" refers to Pengwern's position as capital of Powys rather than to the importance of the church, since Meifod was the premier church of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

The second source is the Life of Saint Melangell, latinised as Monacella. Though the Latin manuscript referring to Pengwern is dated as late as 1640 and is a copy of a manuscript itself no older than the sixteenth century, it is here utilised because the Saint's existence is corroborated by other Lives and because Sir John Lloyd thought it worth quoting.<sup>3</sup> The Historia Monacellae states

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1. S. Baring-Gould and John Fisher, Lives of the British Saints, IV, 303, quoting Red Book of Hergest.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid., III, 463-6; Historia Monacellae, Arch. Camb., III (1848), 139-42, cited by Sir John Lloyd, History of Wales, I, 195-6.

that the palace of Brochwel Ysgythrog, prince of Powys, was on the site where old St. Chad's church now stands, but makes no mention of any Celtic Christian foundation. Now if a Celtic church ever existed at Pengwern it is likely to have been built near the royal palace, and it is virtually certain that the Saxon conquerors would build their church on any existing Christian site rather than abandon consecrated ground. There is therefore nothing inherently improbable or contradictory in these statements, so that despite the need for textual criticism of the two sources, this much of the information they contain may be true.

Though Llywarch says little about Cynddylan's palace or town his reference to the ruined hall may perhaps indicate an aisled timber structure of the type described in the Welsh Laws,<sup>1</sup> while the town was doubtless a cluster of hovels around it.

One general point is noteworthy about Cynddylan's highland zone kingdom of Powys; it had its capital just inside the lowland zone, thus providing the earliest historical instance of the strong connection so evident in later times between central Wales and Shrewsbury.

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1. Dr. Iorwerth Peate stresses the importance of timber in Welsh building; The Welsh House, 112 - 20, 150 - 3.

A reference to Cynddylan's "white town in the bosom of the wood", Tren, the site and character of which are alike unknown, suggests there was another settlement of some importance in the neighbourhood, equated by J.R. Green with Wroxeter.<sup>1</sup> Certainly if the poet's use of the word white implies a contrast between structures of wood or cob<sup>2</sup> and a more substantial stone-built settlement, Wroxeter seems a likely identification. On the other hand it is not obvious why Wroxeter, which was Viroconium Cornoviorum to the Ravenna Cosmographer<sup>3</sup> and was known to the Welsh in the Dark Ages as Caer Guiricon,<sup>4</sup> should have taken the name of the insignificant stream of Tren; with the Severn nearby, even poetic licence will hardly explain this.

No locality near Shrewsbury enables us to visualise a town "in the bosom of the wood"; only a reconstruction of ancient forests could limit speculation, but it may be noted in passing that Wroxeter in its heyday must have required extensive agricultural land to support its numerous inhabitants. Even in its decayed state at the end of the

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1. J.R. Green, History of the English People, I, 27.
  2. Peate, op.cit., 168-9.
  3. I.A. Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford, The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography, Archaeologia, XCIII (1949), 8.
  4. O.S. Map of Britain in the Dark Ages, South Sheet.

fourth century and later it is hard to imagine that rough woodland encroached so far on the deserted fields as to merit the description.

Moreover Professor Donald Atkinson's excavations between 1923 and 1925 showed that in the forum at least occupation ended late in the fourth century. The "White town" might find an earlier analogy in Tre'ir Ceiri,<sup>1</sup> with ruins instead of a quarry as the source of material, which would explain the adjective. But it is unsafe to rely on Green's interpretation of white as indicating a stone-built town; Dr. Iorwerth Peate has shown that the whitewashing of buildings is a practice of ancient origin once widespread in Wales, and carried on irrespective of building materials.<sup>2</sup> Nothing more is known about this settlement, and since a site anywhere on the Tren or Tern must have been less defensible and less of a natural route focus than Shrewsbury, it may be presumed this obscure place did not long survive the Mercian Conquest.

With the destruction of the Welsh capital of Powys in the second half of the seventh century Mercian control was securely established, and for more than a

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1. R.E.M. Wheeler, *op.cit.*, with other examples.  
2. Peate, *op.cit.*, 29.

century afterwards nothing certain is known about Shrewsbury. During this blank in the historical and archaeological record the name of the place must have received its English form. From the purely topographical name Pengwern it became Scrobbsbyrig, "Scrobb's burg",<sup>1</sup> and the defences thus implied, however elementary, forecast a military and strategic importance which the site retained for many centuries.

If the tradition about St. Tyssilio mentioned previously (p.6) is sound, St. Chad's may have been the earliest of Shrewsbury's four pre-Norman churches, and it is tempting to see in its dedication a hint of an origin while the memory of the late 7th century Bishop of Lichfield was still fresh.

I consider a seventh century date probable despite Dr. Wilhelm Levison's demonstration of the overwhelmingly Roman character of dedications at that period.<sup>2</sup> Although the important Mercian ecclesiastical centres of Lichfield, Ripon, Bredon, and Worcester all support his argument, he qualified it by leaving aside the Celtic districts of the west and south-west with their particular problems.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ekwall, loc. cit.

2. W. Levison, England and the Continent in the 8th Century,  
34.

3. *ibid.*, 259 ff.; and loc. cit.

The qualification is pertinent because Chad himself, although not connected with the Celtic Church, was a disciple of St. Aidan, and imbued by his whole upbringing with the practices and traditions of the not too dissimilar Columban Church. In the absence of any detailed study of Mercian dedications to prove the contrary, it seems that Levison's conclusions may need to be qualified when applied to the eighth-century diocese of Lichfield; that some at least of the Chad dedications may have followed a Columban practice in commemorating the Saint within his lifetime or very soon after.<sup>1</sup>

Although no Saxon structural remains have yet been discovered on the site of the Norman church of St. Chad there are two scraps of archaeological evidence which bear on its early history. When the 12th-century crypt was excavated in 1889-90 a bronze pin was discovered which the excavator described as Roman. Since then its exact fellow has turned up in the Saxon monastery at Whitby, and it must now be assigned to the 8th or the first half of the 9th century.<sup>2</sup> The pin had probably been used to

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1. J.A. Duke, The Columban Church, 158-162.

2. I am indebted to Mr. G.C. Dunning, F.S.A., for drawing my attention to the pin and its correct dating. For the excavations, TSAS, 2s II (1890), 359-371; Antiquary, XXI (1890), 93, 184. For the Whitby pin, Archaeologia, LXXXIX (1943), 64 and fig. 15.



fasten a shroud; when the Norman church was built, or when later graves were dug, bones from disturbed Saxon burials were placed in the crypt, some still in their shrouds. At a later date, perhaps when the tower collapsed, the crypt was cleared but the pin lay unnoticed on the floor, to be found by the archaeologist. During the same excavations two cist-type stone coffins were found, their sides and lids built of several stones, but without any stone bottom. A layer of charcoal found under the skeletons directly on the soil indicates that the bodies were placed in wooden coffins around which the cists had been built. Coffins of the same general type were found at Whitby, but as they certainly continued to be used at a much later period <sup>1</sup> the evidence is inconclusive for dating purposes. Henry Pidgeon's statement that fragments of Saxon sculpture were discovered in the walls after the fall of the tower in 1788 <sup>2</sup> cannot be relied on, as writers of that period often use the term Saxon for what is really Norman work.

Old St.Chad's occupies one of the two hilltops commanding Shrewsbury, St. Mary's the other. Its very situation speaks for the antiquity of St.Mary's, which seems

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1. As at Chertsey Abbey, founded (?) 960; Surrey Arch. Coll., I. (1858), 117 et seq. For examples from Normandy with headpieces shaped like the Shrewsbury examples and securely dated to the 12th century, see Abbe Cochet, Sepultures Gauloises, Romaines, Franques et Normandes, 323. I owe this reference to Mr. G.C. Dunning.
  2. H.Pidgeon, Memorials of Shrewsbury, 30.

about the time of the Conquest to have been the most splendid and therefore possibly the most important church in the town.<sup>1</sup> During the restoration in 1864 foundations of a Saxon structure of at least two periods were discovered beneath the present nave. It had a structurally undivided nave and chancel 76 ft. x 27 ft. with a semi-circular apse of 11 ft. radius. The chancel-nave was of reused material, the apse not, but no dating conclusions can be safely deduced from this difference.<sup>2</sup> The late Sir Alfred Clapham considered the form of the apse might warrant its ascription to the 10th or 11th century. In the 16th century Henry VIII's Commissioners were told the church was founded by King Edgar (959-975) for the maintenance of a dean, seven prebendaries, and a parish priest,<sup>3</sup> and despite the lack of early evidence Mrs. Dorothy Styles's study of some of the comparative material, namely the King's Chapels in Staffordshire,<sup>4</sup> suggests the College may in fact have been founded by him. This does not of course help to date the architectural remains, nor does it preclude the existence of an earlier church which

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1. R.R. Darlington, Vita Wulfstani, (Roy. Hist. Soc., 1928), 26.
  2. For the original report of Saxon discoveries at St. Mary's, TSAS, 2s VI (1894), 358-371. For important later observations, D.H.S. Cranage, Churches of Shropshire, 924 et seq.; A.W. Clapham, English Romanesque Architecture before the Conquest, 96n.; F.H. Fairweather, Aisleless Apsidal Churches of Great Britain, 12, 45.
  3. A. Hamilton Thompson, Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries, TSAS, 3s X (1910), 305.
  4. Mrs. Dorothy Styles, The Early History of the King's Chapels in Staffordshire, B'hm Arch. Soc. Trans., LX (1936), 56-95.

was reconstituted by Edgar. Archdeacon Lloyd developed an elaborate argument based on dedications to prove that St. Mary's is the oldest church foundation in Shrewsbury,<sup>1</sup> but his deductions will not bear close scrutiny. They are invalidated mainly by the projection back of formal canonization into a period when such a practice did not exist.

St. Mary's produced the only piece of pre-Conquest sculpture from Shrewsbury, a slab (Plate 1) found when heating apparatus was installed in 1880.<sup>2</sup> "The head of the left hand snake seems to resemble those thick-snouted beast-heads of tenth-eleventh century illuminated initials, and if the motif on the right resembles anything at all, it is the basic skeleton of 'Winchester' acanthus ornament of late attenuated form".<sup>3</sup> The slab can probably be ascribed to the eleventh century, though there is very little comparative material which has a close bearing upon it.

The Domesday survey mentions two other churches about which far less is known. The church of St. Alkmund held in Shrewsbury twelve houses for canons, so it must

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1. TSAS, 2s IV (1892), vii - xiii.

2. TSAS, V (1882), 252, fig.3.

3. Quoted from a letter dated 20 December 1951 by Mr. P. Lasko, of the British Museum, to whom the photograph was submitted.

have been a minster of considerable importance. Owen and Blakeway say it was founded by Aethelflaed the daughter of Alfred, quoting the "leiger of Lilleshall Abbey" in the Cottonian library; I found no reference to the foundation in the same abbey's cartulary.<sup>1</sup>

There is however some slight evidence to suggest she may have been the founder. The Church of St. Alkmund at Derby is similarly associated with Aethelflaed, and was no doubt founded by her in 917 when she captured the borough from the Danes, bringing, so it has been said, the Saint's relics with her and establishing his cult there.<sup>2</sup> Although the picturesque detail that she carried the Saint's bones in her train rests on exceedingly dubious evidence<sup>3</sup> it accords with the well-founded historical association of Aethelflaed with a special veneration for Alkmund. The distribution of dedications to this saint shows they are confined to places which could reasonably be connected with the queen's two foundations.<sup>4</sup>

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1. O & B. II 262; the cartulary, unpublished, is in the possession of the Duke of Sutherland, to whom I am indebted for permission to examine it. It is at Trentham.
  2. Acta Sanctorum, March III, 47-49; there is a good critical summary in Smith and Wace, Dict. Christian Biog.
  3. A MS sermon in the possession of Alban Butler, Lives of the Saints, March 222; cf. Smith and Wace, op.cit.,
  4. Miss F. Arnold-Forster, English Church Dedications, II, 324-5, lists the following dedications to St. Alkmund: Blyborough (Lincs), Duffield (Derbys), and Whitchurch (Salop), to which may be added Aymestrey (Herefs), dedicated to SS. John Baptist and Alkmund. Although I have not investigated the matter, the restricted distribution suggests Duffield may be an offshoot of Derby, and Whitchurch and Aymestrey offshoots of Shrewsbury. Cranage, op.cit., 735, following Eyton Antiquities of Shropshire, X, 14 ff., says, "There is no  
contd.

The church of St. Juliana received the barest mention in Domesday Book; its assessment at half a hide may be compared with St. Alkmund's at two hides, St. Mary's at 1 virgate (a quarter of a hide), and St. Chad's at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hides.

The basis of this purely financial assessment is uncertain, so it is a poor guide to the relative importance of the churches. Despite the total lack of any positive evidence it nevertheless seems likely that St. Juliana's was the least important of the four.

When St. Alkmund's and St. Juliana's were rebuilt in the eighteenth century no archaeological discoveries were reported.

It is possible that a fifth church mentioned in the Domesday Survey also had a pre-Conquest origin, though the evidence is inconclusive. "In Shrewsbury city Earl Roger is making an abbey and has given to it the minster of St. Peter where there was a parish of the city." <sup>1</sup> This must be the oratory of St. Peter in which Wulfstan chose to pray rather than in the more imposing church of St. Mary,

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4. (Contd... from previous page)  
 mention of a church (at Whitchurch) in Domesday Book, but shortly afterwards one was built of white stone and the old name of the place, Weston, was abandoned for Whitchurch, or "Album Monasterium". So unusual a dedication suggests a direct connection with a similarly-dedicated mother church, and in this case would fit in with the rapid development of a parish system which was then taking place; cf. p.22.

1. Translation in V.C.H., Shropshire, I.

and for which he forecast a splendid future.<sup>1</sup> The absence of any hidage assessment for this church, which appears merely as a wooden chapel at the east gate of Shrewsbury in the account of the abbey given by Ordericus Vitalis,<sup>2</sup> (who may here be followed with complete confidence as his father was granted the chapel), makes it likely that the term "minster" was very loosely applied. Ordericus's evidence relates to post-Conquest history; the theory of a pre-Conquest origin for St. Peter's therefore rests solely on the assumption that a church-builder like Roger de Montgomery would hardly have built a wooden chapel or oratory in a city already boasting four important churches, to which he himself was adding a fifth, St. Michael's in the castle.

In attempting to place the churches of Shrewsbury in chronological order of foundation two potential sources of information must be considered; parish boundaries and dedications. The basis upon which parish boundaries are here interpreted is the assumption that the oldest church in the town is likely to have the largest or most valuable parish, and that however important later foundations might become, they would not acquire parochial

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1. Vita Wulfstani, 264b.

2. Historia Ecclesiastica, ed. A. le Prevost, II, 415.

pre-eminence save by some extraordinary transfer of rights.

A glance at the maps published in 1837 by the Borough Boundaries Commission shows the former abbey of St. Peter, by then the church of the Holy Cross, to have the largest and most compact parish in the neighbourhood. This area must have been carved out of the parishes<sup>1</sup> of the older pre-Conquest churches, whether just before or just after is unimportant for the present purpose. That some unit corresponding to St. Peter's parish existed there before the Conquest is probable, but it may have been enlarged by Earl Roger. For the remaining parishes the Rev. W.A. Leighton gives a good brief estimate of their relative importance in his day. The parish of St. Chad "is by far the largest in the place, comprising very nearly half the town, and a great extent of the surrounding country".<sup>2</sup> St. Juliana's "comprehends the Wyle, the Wyle Cop, and under the Wyle, and considerable disjointed portions extending wide into the country";<sup>3</sup>

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1. Parish is not used here in its strict medieval sense, but merely as indicating the area in which a "minster" carried on its work; even in the ninth and tenth centuries the establishment of churches was no doubt accompanied by some division of spheres of activity.
  2. Rev. W.A. Leighton, Guide through the Town of Shrewsbury, 127: "largest in the place", i.e. within the loop of the Severn. (He was writing c.1840).
  3. *ibid.*, 112.

it thus included the route up from the ancient ford by which alone the town could be entered from the east, as well as the important street as its summit called The Wyle. St. Mary's parish "included about a fourth part of the whole town, nearly the entire suburb of the Castle Foregate, and extends several miles into the country".<sup>1</sup> St. Alkmund's parish "comprises only a small part of the town, but contains many insulated portions of the neighbourhood";<sup>2</sup> the "small part", however, comprises Butcher Row, Fish Street and Pride Hill, most, that is to say, of the ancient town centre.

Leighton's remarks rather suggest that the church of St. Chad was first in the field and established a strong parochial claim which was recognised throughout the middle ages. Clearly its parish was much larger than that of the splendid royal foundation of St. Mary's. It is harder to assess the relative importance of the other three parishes. St. Alkmund's parish, central and compact (fig. 3), suggests a considerable antiquity, and although St. Mary's and St. Juliana's parishes comprise a larger area within the Severn loop, they are peripheral to the heart of the pre-Conquest town. The significance of this point will be further discussed below. (p. 32.).

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1. *ibid.*, 70.

2. *ibid.*, 109.



All three parishes no doubt lost part of their territory to the latest arrival, St.Peter's, and in view of this complication no further conclusion can be reached. Two other points nevertheless deserve mention. The fact that the parish of St.Chad was served by two priests<sup>1</sup> whereas the others had only one seems to confirm its pre-eminence. The interweaving of St.Mary's and St.Juliana's parishes north of the town suggests a complicated attempt to respect ancient rights rather than a territorial division between the four churches at any given date.<sup>2</sup>

About our second source of information something has already been said in discussing the churches of St.Chad and St.Alkmund; more general considerations must now be mentioned. Of Shrewsbury's four pre-Conquest dedications the two just mentioned are unmistakably of Saxon origin, and would not be expected in a Norman or later context. St. Juliana, unique in England, might be of any date. But the dedication in honour of St.Mary has a more familiar 'modern' sound which marks it off so clearly from the others that it may be worth while looking for an explanation. Now if the tradition that St.Mary's was founded by Edgar were in fact true the dedication would

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1. In the 16th century. A.Hamilton Thompson, *op.cit.*, 306.
  2. S.P.L., O.S. 1/500 map with parish boundaries coloured shows this complexity very clearly; cf. also map in Report of the Commissioners on Boundaries and Wards of Boroughs.

fit in with that "spread of devotion to the Virgin which was so marked a feature of the English church from the close of the tenth century to the Conquest"<sup>1</sup> - interpreting "close" rather widely. The growing cult was reflected in dedications. A rapid survey of the monasteries founded or refounded in the latter half of the tenth century shows several in honour of St.Mary, mainly in the south-west.<sup>2</sup> More directly relevant to Shrewsbury are four royal free chapels in Staffordshire within the former Kingdom of Mercia; all have a pre-Conquest origin, Tettenhall, indeed, claiming Edgar as founder, and all bear a dedication to St.Mary.<sup>3</sup>

Such tentative conclusions as can be drawn from parish boundaries and dedications do therefore support the traditional sequence of church foundations in Shrewsbury, namely, St.Chad's, St.Alkmund's, and St.Mary's. Where St.Juliana's should be placed in the list is not clear;

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1. J.R.H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the 13th Century, 75, quoting E. Bishop, Liturgica Historica, 227.
  2. Tavistock, Our Lady and St.Rumon; Sherborne, St.Mary; Milton, SS. Mary, Michael, Sampson, and Branwallader; Cranborne, SS.Mary and Bartholomew; at Milton an earlier dedication may have been preserved, with the addition of SS. Mary and Michael when the Monastery was refounded. It is just possible that SS. Sampson and Branwallader were added in the time of Athelstan (cf. J. Armitage Robinson, Life and Times of St.Dunstan), but this does not affect the argument in the text. At Tavistock the joint dedication is certainly original: cf. H.P.R. Finberg, Tavistock Abbey. Miss Arnold-Forster noticed this development: "there was, from the tenth or eleventh century .... a strong tendency to couple the name of the Virgin with those of the other Saints": op.cit., I, 44.
  3. Mrs. Dorothy Styles, loc. cit.

late, probably, but one further scrap of evidence bearing on the problem will be produced later (p.31).

The four principal churches no doubt corresponded to the "ordinary minster" or "old minster" of the late Old English laws.<sup>1</sup> The evidence presented above shows that two at least had the prestige of royal foundations, while a third, St.Chad's, may have been an episcopal foundation. How widely their communities extended the work of preaching and baptism into the surrounding countryside could only be estimated properly by detailed research into the pre-Conquest history of Shropshire; a map of minsters and monasteries c.1035<sup>2</sup> shows only Wenlock, Morville, and Bromfield as rival centres of religious activity within the county.

Cranage notes that something like seventy Shropshire churches were founded before the Conquest, "if we may always assume the existence of a church where a priest is mentioned".<sup>3</sup> Architecturally too the beginnings of a parish system can be discerned in the surviving remains of three small Saxon churches,<sup>4</sup> while in Shrewsbury itself the existence of the parish outside the east gate, where the father of Ordericus ministered, testifies to such beginnings; all this evidence comes in late Saxon times.

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1. F.M. Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England, 148.
  2. *ibid.*, 448.
  3. Cranage, *op.cit.*, 1019.
  4. Barrow, Diddlebury, and Stanton Lacy.

Nevertheless the influence of Shrewsbury, though no doubt diminished in the century before the Norman Conquest, must have extended over a very wide area, particularly to the north where no rival minsters existed, and must greatly have enhanced the town's importance as a focus for other activities besides the purely religious.

The five churches and the 252 houses which are mentioned in Domesday Book imply that by 1066 Shrewsbury was a border town of sufficient size and importance to require fortification. That the situation of the town was not considered adequate protection even in the earliest era of Mercian settlement is implied by the name-termination "-bury". "It is unlikely that Shrewsbury, which is described as a city in a charter of 901, was merely an open town", <sup>1</sup> and it is not mentioned among the burhs fortified by Aethelflaed in the early tenth century. Nor is there any obvious line of an early rampart, wall or ditch fossilised in the street plan; and it is worth noting that Hereford, another border town liable to Welsh incursions and Danish raids, had a garrison before 914 <sup>2</sup> but was not fortified before 1055. <sup>3</sup> There too, unless

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1. Stenton, op.cit., 322., quoting Birch, Cart.Sax., 587.
  2. ibid.,
  3. F.M. Stenton, Pre-Conquest Herefordshire, R.C.H.M. Herefordshire, III, ix.

the 12th-13th century wall follows the line of the 11th-century palisade and ditch, no trace remains of early defences. The Domesday Survey makes no reference to burgages in Shrewsbury specially liable to repair the town wall, such as are mentioned at Oxford and Worcester.<sup>1</sup> A writ of 1231<sup>2</sup> which says that the old stockade and the old bretasche of the old ditch of Shrewsbury are to be granted to the burgesses for strengthening the new ditch shows that in the early 13th century the town somewhere had a defence similar to that built two centuries before at Hereford. There is however no clue to where the ditch was - it may have run across the neck of the peninsula - nor when it had been cut. Ordericus Vitalis describes the new Abbey of St. Peter as being at the east gate ("ad orientalem portam propiae urbis"),<sup>3</sup> so there must have been some sort of encircling defence, perhaps a rampart and ditch, by 1083. This implication is the only evidence for a wall as early as the 11th century.

The documentary evidence is manifestly insufficient to prove the existence of pre-Conquest town defences. It may therefore be useful to consider the historical events which have a bearing on the problem. The 7th-century expansion of Mercia pushed the western frontier of that

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1. F.M. Stenton, Introduction to the Oxfordshire Domesday, V.C.H. Oxon., I, 396; A-S England, 521.
  2. CCR, 1227-31, 508; cited by Mrs. E.S. Armitage, Early Norman Castles, 207-8.
  3. Historia Ecclesiastica, loc.cit.

kingdom so far to the west of Shrewsbury that there was no serious threat from Wales for at least two centuries, until Mercian power was threatened by the incursions of the Danes. That there was nevertheless a considerable local danger in the parts adjacent to Wales is shown by the building of Wat's Dyke, which "probably represents a delimitation of a particularly dangerous part of the Mercian frontier in the seventh or early eighth century." <sup>1</sup>

For the late ninth and early tenth centuries the best account of the dangers threatening Shrewsbury is contained in a survey of north-west Mercia by Dr. F.T. Wainwright; <sup>2</sup> though his survey does not deal with the town directly its implications are clear, and upon it the following account is based. A Welsh revolt in 852 or 853 <sup>3</sup> shows that the Danes, whose raids were just beginning, were not the only potential threat to the peace of Shropshire. In 855 a Danish army made the first incursion up the Severn into the Wrekin country. <sup>4</sup> Thereafter for some years they seem not to have disturbed the region, not in fact before the summer of 893, <sup>5</sup> when they came up the Severn as far as Buttington, near Welshpool, where they were

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1. Stenton, A-S England, 211; and see Fox, Arch. Camb., LXXXIX (1934), 273-5. For this paragraph generally see Stenton, op.cit.
  2. F.T. Wainwright, North-west Mercia, 871-924, Trans. Historic Soc. of Lancs and Cheshire, 94 (1942), 3-35.
  3. ibid., 5.
  4. Stenton, op.cit., 241 n.5.
  5. Wainwright, art.cit., 9, 11.

besieged for several weeks. Later in the same year they went to Chester, whence they were compelled to depart for Wales,<sup>1</sup> though by what route is unknown. In 895 the Danes rode to Bridgnorth and wintered there. Throughout the years 893 to 895 it can hardly be doubted that the shire town of Shropshire, with its vital strategic position at a river crossing and an excellent tactical situation, was a centre of military activity. The paucity of Mercian annals is probably the reason why there is no direct mention of Shrewsbury. Clearly in 893 it was directly threatened by the passage of the Danish army, and at other times Danish raiding and foraging parties must have approached it closely.

In the early 10th century Aethelflaed of Mercia fortified many of the chief settlements in the Severn valley and adjacent districts in order to meet this threat of highly mobile raiding armies. Worcester, Chester, Stafford, Tamworth, all centres of population, were provided with defences; Bridgnorth, Chirbury and Eddisbury were new fortresses, and Hereford and Gloucester were garrisoned.

It is noteworthy, as Dr. Wainwright points out, that Stafford and Tamworth were fortified shortly after a Danish raid in 913, and "Chirbury was built apparently in anticipation of trouble from Wales."<sup>2</sup>

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1. *ibid.*, 11, 13.

2. *ibid.*, 24.

Some protection Shrewsbury must have had, lying as it does on a vital point for communication between all the places mentioned. Nor was defence less necessary when the Danish threat had passed, for by the early eleventh century English power had so far declined as to enable the Welsh in Shropshire and Herefordshire to reconquer territory far beyond the frontier of Offa's Dyke.<sup>1</sup> The forty-shilling fine imposed on those who refused to take up arms and accompany the Sheriff into Wales<sup>2</sup> shows that border warfare was a common experience for the men of Shrewsbury in the time of King Edward, and the city's duty to provide a mounted armed guard for the king when he hunted nearby indicates the likely attacks of raiders.<sup>3</sup>

On general historical grounds, therefore, the existence of a pre-Conquest burh at Shrewsbury is hardly to be doubted, but its character is as completely unknown as that of most other burhs. The Rev. C.H. Drinkwater indeed claimed to have discovered a stone "inner wall" of pre-Conquest<sup>4</sup> date, for which there is neither analogy nor

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1. James Tait, Introduction to the Shropshire Domesday, V.C.H. Shropshire, I, 279; B.G. Charles, Non-Celtic Place-Names in Wales, Introduction.
  2. D.BR., V.C.H., I, 309.
  3. cf. J.H. Round, V.C.H. Hereford, I, 298.
  4. Rev. C.H. Drinkwater, The Inner Wall of Shrewsbury, TSAS, VI (1883), 257-267 and Arch. Cambrensis, 4s XIII (1882), 42-50.



documentary evidence elsewhere at that period, with the possible exception of Oxford and Cricklade;<sup>1</sup> it will therefore be discussed in detail with the thirteenth century wall (Chapter III).

The possibility of pre-Conquest stone walls being remote we cannot be sure what topographical traces we should expect to find, and this extreme uncertainty may perhaps excuse the speculations which follow.

Seeking first for analogies we find that burh defences are best known from Eddisbury in Cheshire<sup>2</sup> and Witham in Essex,<sup>3</sup> both being reused Iron Age forts. There are also Maldon in Essex<sup>4</sup> and Little Bredy in Dorset,<sup>5</sup> which seem to be original earthworks of late ninth or early tenth century date. At Tamworth a defensive trench called Offa's Ditch was visible at least as late as 1923,<sup>6</sup> while at Wareham<sup>7</sup> and Wallingford substantial earth banks are laid out on a square plan. There are no doubt other places where

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1. H.E. Salter, Medieval Oxford, 7-12; but whether the wall was of stone is still an open question. I have to thank Dr. F.T. Wainwright for telling me about recent excavations at Cricklade.
  2. W.J. Varley, The Hill-Forts of the Welsh Marches, Arch.J. CV (1948), 64-5.
  3. F.M. Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England, 331; Hugh Braun, The English Castle, II, for its being an Iron Age fort.
  4. Braun, loc.cit.
  5. R.C.H.M., West Dorset, 38.
  6. C. Masefield, Staffordshire (The Little Guides), 3rd edn. (1923), 226. The date of the ditch is uncertain, and it is mentioned here only to indicate the general character of Saxon fortification. A. Hamilton Thompson, Military Architecture in the Middle Ages, 32, accepted the attribution to Offa.
  7. Excavation has since proved the pre-Conquest date of these banks.

pre-Conquest defences survive, but I have found information only about these seven.

Eddisbury, Witham and Little Bredy are all earthworks which make use of contours or other natural features,<sup>1</sup> so this characteristic is one we might reasonably expect to find elsewhere. Size is more difficult to use as a criterion because the adaptation of natural features will obviously entail wide variations.

There is only one part of Shrewsbury where it would have been possible to site an earthen rampart conforming to a contour and at the same time having a commanding aspect on every side, that is within the area bounded by High Street, Castle Street, Windsor Place, Dogpole, and the top part of Wyle Cop. To the west lay a large tract of bog which would have been a hindrance to the defenders had it been enclosed within the circuit of ramparts. Beyond that it is necessary to go to the line of the thirteenth century town wall to get a good defensive position, and even so this cannot be achieved on the north towards the Severn. Moreover such a large size is improbable for a new-built burh and would only be reasonable where a pre-existing earthwork was adapted, as at Eddisbury.

Considering the suggested defensive line (fig.3) in greater detail, we start with the sharp slope from Fish Street to High Street which is now masked throughout its remaining length (except at Grope Lane) by walls in basements and by

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1. I omit discussion of Wareham and Wallingford; their square plans are quite unlike anything at Shrewsbury.

a short exposed stretch of masonry described and illustrated below (Chapter III). This line runs roughly N.N.W. to Pride Hill (fig.3). The slope falling away to the river on the N.W. side of Pride Hill and Castle Street is its continuation, whence a contour-line would be maintained by swinging to the S.E. including St.Mary's church, and on to the Guildhall. From there across Dogpole the course is fairly plain, following the contour beneath St.Juliana's church and so back to the starting-point. Such a course approximates to a contour-line and makes possible the building of an earth rampart at a more or less constant level about 230 ft. above O.D.

The area is about 9 - 10 acres on a rough calculation. It seems comparable to Witham, where "an outer ditch surrounded an area of 26 acres, roughly oval in outline, within which a scarped enclosure of nearly 10 acres formed a citadel".<sup>1</sup> This analogy may be useful in considering some further evidence.

We may imagine, then, a palisaded eastern rampart built upon our 230 ft. contour line, the slope below it steepened by scarping, and within the enclosure so formed stood the church of St.Alkmund. On the approximate line of the bank or immediately adjacent to it are the later churches of St.Mary and St.Juliana. The early eleventh century church

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1. Stenton, loc. cit.

of St.Martin at Wareham, placed just inside the formidable earth ramparts which surround the town,<sup>1</sup> springs to mind as a close parallel and there is the earlier analogy of St.Peter's at Bradwell-on-Sea, built astride the Roman wall of Ythancester;<sup>2</sup> both stand beside gates. If the conclusions reached above about the relative dates of the Shrewsbury churches are correct, we find Aethelflaed's church of St.Alkmund excellently placed to serve the burh in the early 10th century; half a century later St.Mary's is built, and at some unknown date St.Juliana's, both sited on or near the ramparts with an eye to the defensive possibilities of a stone building, and commanding each a gate.

At this point parish boundaries may add something to the story. It will be noted (fig.3) that the parish of St.Alkmund includes the whole area of the suggested burh except for small portions on the fringes which were the minimum required to delimit the bounds of the late extra-burghal parishes. But there is more of St.Alkmund's parish than lies within the burh ramparts: it extends down Roushill Bank and Roushill to Severn side, and back fairly directly to a point near the High Cross. The lower part of the dog's-hind-leg line taken by the parish boundary is probably explicable as the best tactical position covering the ground

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1. G.Baldwin Brown, The Arts in Early England, II Ecclesiastical Architecture, 106-7.  
 2. R.C.H.M., Essex, IV, 15.

to the west; it has throughout a very slight advantage of height over Mardol, which with the ford, it may be said to command. The upper part, now called Roushill Bank, seems to carry on the line of High Street, which follows the foot of a scarp below the burh rampart. Roushill Bank, like High Street, is therefore to be regarded as a post-Conquest development; just what form the burh took in this lower, ill-drained quarter of the town is not clear. The direct return from the river to the High Cross was presumably necessitated by the existence of a marsh where Smithfield now stands.<sup>1</sup>

This parochial boundary may mark an extension of the burh, comparable in a very general way to the large enclosure at Witham. Interpreted like this the burh fits perfectly into its most likely historical setting. Its two ends are on the Severn, so placed to block the passage of vessels coming up or down the river. Not only does it control communications along the north-south waterway, it bestrides the east-west land route and completely commands the passage of both fords.

The date the burh was built is indicated firstly by its clear intention to check waterborne raiders on the Severn, who could be none other than the Danes, and secondly by the relation of the churches to the defences; in conjunction they point to a date early in the 10th century

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1. Smithfield was not drained until the 18th century.

and the direct instigation of Aethelflaed. In this historical context there is inevitably a temptation to identify it with the fortress built by her at 'Sceargate' in May 912,<sup>1</sup> even though the place-name evidence seems to make this impossible. We know that Worcester had been fortified at the bishop's request "towards the end of Alfred's reign";<sup>2</sup> the Roman walls of Chester were restored in 907;<sup>3</sup> next came the unidentified 'Bremesbyrig' in 910. The campaign to recover the east midlands from the Danes began "before the end of 911",<sup>4</sup> and in its earliest phase was marked by concern for the Severn crossings and the Roman and other main roads. Bridgnorth, built in the summer of 912, guards the only river crossing between Shrewsbury and Worcester, and controls the probable route by which the Danish raiders were returning home when they were destroyed at Tettenhall in 909.<sup>5</sup> Tamworth was fortified in the early summer of 913 to command both the nearby Roman road and the approach from Nottingham and Ashby; Stafford followed in July of the same year, to defend another approach from the north-east<sup>6</sup> and possibly to deny the crossing of the river Sowe to the Danes. At the risk of special pleading,

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1. Stenton, *op.cit.*, 322; F.T. Wainwright, North-West Mercia, A.D. 871-924, Trans.Hist.Soc. Lancs and Cheshire,  
23.

2. Stenton, *op.cit.* 521.

3. Wainwright, *loc. cit.*; and further references to Aethelflaed's forts from the same source.

4. *ibid.*

5. *ibid.*

6. Wainwright, *op.cit.*, 24 n.1.

I suggest that Shrewsbury fits into place perfectly at the beginning of this strategy. The major centres of Worcester and Chester, together with the unknown 'Bremesbyrig' were fortified well before the campaign began. The next stage of preparation for the offensive was to protect the two other important Severn crossings in north-west Mercia, Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth. And if imagination may be allowed some play we may picture Aethelflaed, fully aware of the importance of this initial step in a four-year campaign of fortification, dedicating a church in honour of Alkmund, the saint she held in special veneration. Not until six years later when the campaign had had its first brilliant success with the assault on Derby in 917 did she repeat in the captured Danish stronghold this act of piety to the Saint.

Flights of fancy apart, if the existence and approximate location of the burh be accepted, without prejudice to its precise dating, further analysis of its plan is possible. The modern High Street may represent more or less the bottom of the scarped slope which faces south-west, forming in places a natural ditch. Pride Hill and possibly St.Mary's Street are in origin, streets lining the perimeter of what may be called, on the analogy of Witham, the "citadel". Nearer the south-east end of the irregular oval-shaped plan was the church of St.Alkmund, its parish coterminous with the burh, and surrounded by a

large open space which served as a graveyard and market-place. Dr. W.G. Hoskins has described a parallel feature in Devon, where many villages "represent the earlier settlement of the Saxon conquest, nucleated villages of the Teutonic type built around an open square or a great rectangular space with the leader's house at the side or the end. This was the burh which gives us the name 'bury' for the ground near the centre of several Devonshire villages".<sup>1</sup> The buildings to the north-west of St. Alkmund's church are an encroachment upon the ancient market-place and no doubt other houses around its sides also gradually gained space on what was once burghal ground. At the southern tip of the burh stood the mechanical contrivance or 'wil', presumably a gate or moveable barrier, the memory of which is perpetuated in the name Wyle Cop.<sup>2</sup>

Fish Street (pl.5) seems to have been the original eastern entrance to the burh, placed where it is rather than at the extreme east end of the fortification in order to provide easy access to the earlier settlement around St. Chad's. Butcher Row too is a very ancient street, leading perhaps to a gate across Pride Hill and so out towards Wales. If, as suggested above, the lower stretch of

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1. The Making of the Agrarian Landscape; Hoskins and Fimberg, Devonshire Studies, 308.
  2. Ekwall, writing of other Wyle names in Berkshire and Dorset, says it is derived from the late O.E. 'wil' "trick", "used of some mechanical contrivance, as a windmill or trap; Oxf. Dict. Eng. Place-Names; I am indebted to Professor Bruce Dickins for the derivation, and for directing me to Ekwall's interpretation.



Roushill preserves the line of a rampart, it represents an original inner defensive walk. The exact location of the northern entrance to the burh is very uncertain. St. Mary's Street has level ground immediately to the east and west and so can hardly preserve the line of an early rampart. Since the whole of the churchyard is flat we must look for a defensive line overlooking the river, somewhere near the present east end of the church. The east end of St. Mary's Place appears on this reasoning to be the most likely spot for a gate, the stone-built church forming a strong-point on its northern flank. From it a direct line of approach to the market-place runs along Church Street.

So much for the burh itself. Having thus isolated one important element from the later street plan it may be possible to reconstruct the topographical development of Shrewsbury prior to the Norman Conquest.

At whatever date in the fifth or sixth century Pengwern was founded, the first settlement probably coincided with an anarchic condition of intermittent warfare following the collapse of Roman rule. The Saxons who reoccupied the site after destroying the Welsh capital were in no less need of a good tactical position, and by studying topography it may be possible to reconstruct the defensive situation

in these two earliest phases of Shrewsbury's history. On the north side of old St.Chad's church the ground sloped gradually down to a large bog where The Square and High Street now stand. To the west a natural line of defence would embrace the middle part of Swan Hill, between College Hill and Swan Hill Court; from it the ground falls away to north and west towards St.John's Hill with an average drop of about twenty feet. Thence a line running for a short distance along Swan Hill Court and so on to join Belmont at a point due west of the Judges' Lodgings follows approximately a contour-line, below which the ground drops towards the river. Proceeding south-east of Belmont and across the upper end of Belmont Bank it rejoins the protecting bog very near the east end of old St.Chad's church. This, if the site and date of the other defensive earthwork have been correctly conjectured, was "Scrobb's burg", the "city" mentioned in a charter of 901 (p.23), defended, probably, by no more than a palisade. Certainly no hint of earthwork survives. It may originally have been approached from the east by Beeches Lane and the steep, winding road called Belmont Bank.<sup>1</sup> Not only is this the more direct approach, but it has the tactical advantage for the inhabitants of being at its steepest quite near the entrance to the settlement. Wyle Cop, it may be noted, showed the same feature in relation to the presumed later burh before

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1. Pl. 4.

the steepest upper part was somewhat levelled in the nineteenth century; moreover it provides a direct road from the river-crossing only to the burh and not to the earliest settlement-area. It is less easy to trace the ancient road towards Wales because almost the whole north-west quarter of the present town has since been planned anew and redeveloped.

This earliest nucleus of Shrewsbury clustered near old St.Chad's must always have been of very limited extent. Even today there is still a large piece of open ground west of the old church: on the south side towards Belmont development seems to have come much later and was in any case naturally restricted by the steep riverward slope, which limits the possibilities of settlement on the line of high ground followed by Milk Street to a single line of tenements with gardens. The site of the medieval college, the south side of College Hill and the south east side of Swan Hill may all have seen some building before the Conquest, but there can never have been anything like a town here.

Finally the existence of later earth walls explains a reference in 1380 to a district called "Ultra Muros",<sup>1</sup> by which is meant the area of Kiln Lane (Princess Street) and Belmont; the early nucleus of settlement around St.

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1. Poll Tax, 1380; TSAS, 2s II (1890), 21.

Chad's was through topographical necessity excluded from the fortification, and the name "Beyond the walls" was applied to it.

Then in the early tenth century a burh was built to the north of the old site as a protection against the Danes. Its layout has already been described, but one question requires further discussion: how was the burh approached from the direction of Wales? Presumably the way up from the ford led along Mardol, turned left into Mardol Head and Pride Hill, and so into Butcher Row. The left-hand turn into Mardol Head would be necessary to skirt the bog which lay immediately ahead. This looks a fairly obvious way, but it presented a striking contrast with Wyle Cop. On both sides of the burh is a steep hillside; that on the English side is overcome by a steep and sinuous approach, that on the Welsh side by straight streets and right-angled turns. Now High Street and The Square nearby are certainly part of a planned street layout. Excavation in High Street in 1886 revealed along the south-west side "about 15 feet below the present level .... oak piles in situ, running parallel with the street, and obviously placed as a boundary of the bog, and for sustaining the roadway. The piles were about six to eight inches in diameter, about a foot apart, and quite sound. I saw about three feet of their length uncovered...." <sup>1</sup> The date this

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1. W.P(hillips), TSAS, IX (1886), 394.

construction was undertaken is quite unknown, save that it was certainly before 1246, when "Gomestall" (Gombestole Street, the earliest name of High Street) is mentioned.<sup>1</sup> The Square was laid out about 1261, when the market was transferred from the cemeteries of St. Juliana's and St. Alkmund's.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore possible that the adjacent area of Mardol Head and Shoplatch was altered at the same time, so giving it a regular and rectilinear plan.

At all events by the middle of the tenth century there were two focal points around which a town could grow. Apart from the construction of two churches, St. Mary's and St. Juliana's, nothing more is known about Shrewsbury before the Domesday description of the borough in the time of King Edward. The most important topographical statement in that record is that "the Earl's castle has occupied 51 burgages",<sup>3</sup> from which the existence of a considerable pre-Conquest settlement has been inferred, although the spot must have been a barren rocky eminence then; no doubt houses anywhere near the new motte and bailey were destroyed as a security measure, so I am inclined to think that most of the burgages in question stood between the bailey and St. Mary's church.

What the Domesday statement does certainly show is that a substantial proportion of the 252 burgages mentioned

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1. Rental of 1246 quoted by T. Phillips. History and Antiquities of Shrewsbury, 58.
  2. CCR, 1259-61, 351.
  3. VCH, I, 310.

as existing in 1065 were outside the burh ramparts, 51 of them presumably clustered along the road leading northward, and no doubt there were other such groups.

Outside the loop of the Severn there is hardly any evidence of pre-Conquest settlement. The existence of "a parish of the city" where later the Abbey grew up (p.16) implies early development there along the main road to the east and south. Coleham is probably a pre-Conquest name, "apparently identical with Colham (Mx.) meaning "ham" (riverside land) belonging to Cola." <sup>1</sup> No person of this name has so far been identified in Shropshire; the topographical correspondence of the -ham derivation and the place itself suggests there was no considerable habitation there.

The stages in the development of Shrewsbury from a Dark Age Welsh capital into the substantial city recorded in Domesday, and the causes underlying that development, can only be hinted at. It is reasonable to assume that the strategic possibilities of the site - commanding the only good crossings in many miles of a major waterway and the roads and tracks of a wide area - coupled with its tactical advantages, were the most important factors leading to the establishment of the "capital" of Powys.

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1. ex. inf. Professor Bruce Dickins.

These considerations applied for centuries afterwards. As early as the time of Offa there is a hint that this military importance was enhanced, however slightly, by trading connections. Sir Cyril Fox considered only two openings in the Dyke were original; "one of these is on the west slope of the Long Mountain, and from it a road, probably ancient, leads to the ridgeway on the west of the massif. The other permitted the passage of the Kerry Hill ridgeway, a route into and from the core of the central mountain-system of Wales, the importance of which is shown by the "cross-ridge" dykes which traverse it." <sup>1</sup> These openings were unmarked by constructional features, so that passage was uninterrupted; their situation in relation to ridgeways implies some purpose beyond a purely local one, presumably long-distance trade. Both ridgeways, but more especially that on the Long Mountain, gave access to Shrewsbury. No source tells us what the objects of 8th-century trade were in this region - James Tait remarked that the Domesday county had no characteristic trade <sup>2</sup> - though the 8th-9th century bronze pin mentioned above (p.11) is potentially significant, and the distribution of the type may one day indicate the direction of cultural connections.

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1. Cyril Fox, Arch. Cambrensis, LXXXIV (1929), 48.

2. V.C.H. Shropshire, I, 279.

Like any other burh, Shrewsbury had its mint. It first appears in the reign of Athelstan, during whose reign eight moneyers are known to have struck coins bearing the town mint-mark.<sup>1</sup> The decline after this reign in the number of moneyers recorded from the town is a reflection of the general disuse of local mint-marks rather than of any decrease in Shrewsbury's economic activity. Not until the late 10th century can we again use moneyers to estimate the relative importance of towns. Fifteen Shrewsbury moneyers are known for the thirty-seven years of Aethelred II (979-1016); fourteen for the nineteen years of Cnut (1016-35), and ten for the twenty-four years of Edward the Confessor (1042-66). It would be dangerous to infer from these figures variations in the town's status or economic position, but the element of chance in the discovery of coins and the complicating factor of Danegeld mint activity need not render suspect the conclusion that a centre of trade was steadily growing here from the early 10th century to the Conquest. Domesday states that there were three moneyers working here simultaneously in the time of King Edward.

For the late Saxon period the roads (fig.2) offer no clear evidence about any trade or commerce which flowed along them. It was no doubt along the Roman Road that

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1. Statements about coinage are based on G.C. Brooke, English coins; "lists at 60, 63, 75".



Edmund Aethling and Earl Uhtred came from Staffordshire in 1016.<sup>1</sup> This road must have been a main artery of communication in this part of the Mercian kingdom, since it linked Tamworth, the capital, with the very important bishopric of Lichfield, and both to the western border districts bounded by Offa's Dyke. It is significant of the road's continued use that a National Council was held at Penkrige in 958; it implies that men from all parts of the kingdom could get there easily, and presumably by the Roman routes. Edmund and Uhtred departed from Shrewsbury to Chester, and Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester at the time of the Conquest, is recorded as making the same journey;<sup>2</sup> evidently the Worcester-Shrewsbury-Chester road, well known in the later Middle Ages,<sup>3</sup> was already an important and recognised route. Confirmation of the use of Roman roads may be seen in the sheriff's duty to send twenty-four horses with the king as far as the first manor in Staffordshire, and he had to make the same provision as far as Leintwardine. For the navigation of the Severn in the early Middle Ages there is no evidence whatever, though it must have been used for short journeys.

A strong agricultural element is evident in the economy of Shrewsbury as of other Domesday boroughs.

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1. Plummer, Two A-S Chronicles Parallel, sub anno.  
 2. Vita Wulfstani, loc.cit.  
 3. e.g. Gough map, O.S. edn.

Burgages in the Borough are tied to manors in the county, so that to Emstrey (Eiminstre, D.B.) held by the abbey of St. Peter a single burgage property was attached, at Woodcote (Udecote, D.B.) a burgess rendered eight shillings, at Shelton two burgesses were labouring on land of St. Juliana's, while no less than nine burgesses pertained to Meole Brace (Mela, D.B.). Confirmation of this agricultural character is perhaps provided by archaeological discovery. When the foundations of the Town and Shire Hall were dug in 1783 on the site of the bog mentioned earlier (pp.1, 24) traces of agricultural activity were found - grain, straw, cattle-dung and nut-shells are mentioned - and about 1927, when Della Porta's premises were rebuilt, came more remarkable evidence. "At the north-eastern corner of the building a large square manure-pit was found, surrounded by oak piles, driven many feet into the unstable ground, and there were ordinary palings and a gate between the piles, to one of which was attached a chain for tethering goats or small animals.... The surface of the manure pit was eight feet below the level of High Street." <sup>1</sup> No photographs, plans or further details seem to exist of this unusual site, nor do any small finds such as the chain seem to have found their way to the Museum. The real character of the site is as uncertain

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1. A.W. Ward, The Shrewsbury of 1772 (pamphlet), 11; Owen, Ancient and Present State, 411.

as its date, and is not necessarily pre-Conquest, though perhaps more characteristic of that than any later period. A nearby market site (established after 1261) would account for the grain and straw and dung, but the evidence of structures points to the existence of farm-buildings. One other interesting object, "a complete boat, 10 to 12 feet long", was discovered in the Della Porta excavations. Why it should have been drawn so far from the Severn is a mystery; its presence at this spot has led to the suggestion that here was a pool, but that such a pool was large enough to require or indeed to permit a boat upon it is incredible. To have been embedded so deep in the peat - it rested two feet below the surface of the manure pit - it must have been there a very long time; it can hardly be supposed later than the early 13th century, when the market-place area was built up. To judge from the meagre description published, it was more or less of rowing-boat form, and of course, "when handled it collapsed". Now throughout the Middle Ages fishing and the transport of small loads was carried on by coracles on the Severn. Had such a craft been found in the conjectural pond, it would not have excited surprise, but any plank-built boat on the Severn at so early a date must have been relatively too large for so humble a purpose. With these observations the matter must be left, but the archaeologist can only

express regret that this remarkable discovery, like all others made in the town, was so ill-recorded.<sup>1</sup>

The most obscure aspect of the burh's development is its position as an administrative centre. Lying in the centre of the Wreocensaetan Shrewsbury may always have been that people's capital. The administrative change resulting from their enforced "artificial union" with the Magonsaetan in the first quarter of the 10th century<sup>2</sup> was probably slight in comparison with the economic change, for as the one borough within the new shire it became the lawful marketing centre for a much larger area than before. Moreover this union of the two peoples is not as artificial as it sounds. As has been noticed earlier, settlements in the South Shropshire Hills have their natural outlet to the lowlands through Shrewsbury, which was the completely logical site for a 10th-century borough linked with the northern lands of the Magonsaetan.<sup>3</sup>

For any estimate of population during this period the archaeological evidence cannot add to or modify the basis used by James Tait, his assumption being that each burgage tenement was occupied by one household averaging

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1. A letter to the Shrewsbury Chronicle appealing for further information about this and other discoveries produced no result, nor did inquiries directed to people concerned with or likely to be interested in such matters.
  2. Stenton, op.cit., 373.
  3. cf. O.S. Map of Britain in the Dark Ages, S. sheet; Stenton, op.cit., 200 (map).

five persons.<sup>1</sup> Using Domesday figures the total thus arrived at for the time of King Edward is about 1250 persons.

A brief note about further possibilities for the study of Shrewsbury within this period may fitly terminate this chapter. Archaeological excavation, it may be hoped, will one day produce pre-Conquest pottery and other objects which will show cultural associations with other parts of England. A thorough exploration of the site of Old St.Chad's would probably yield evidence of a Saxon church; there is nothing to indicate that the site has ever been deeply disturbed. It is perhaps too much to hope that any trace of the defences of this earliest nucleus will ever be revealed by the spade, but the ditch line outside the tenth-century ramparts may one day be exposed by deep building excavations. St.Juliana's church probably conceals beneath its pavements the foundations of a pre-Conquest structure; both here and at St.Mary's archaeological methods could make a contribution to the early history of Shrewsbury.

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1. James Tait, Mediaeval English Borough, 76.

CHAPTER II.TOPOGRAPHY FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

The first and heaviest impact of the Norman Conquest upon Shrewsbury as upon so many other places was the building between 1067 and 1069 of a castle, which differed from any previous military works the town had in being designed as much to subject the inhabitants to their new lord as to protect them from external enemies. For both purposes Roger de Montgomery's castle was admirably sited. Although the chosen position is not quite the highest ground in the town it was of greater natural strength and possessed greater tactical advantages than anywhere else within the loop of the Severn. The land at the neck of the peninsula, only three hundred yards wide between the two great sweeps of the river, must in 1067 have been effectively narrowed by low-lying marshes on the west and completely commanded by the rocky promontory on the east whereon the castle was built. Even today the walk known as The Dana gives a wide view not only over the houses in Castle Gates to the countryside beyond, but over the railway station too, which by its presence and great size masks to the modern eye the formidable strength of the castle to the north. It comes as a surprise to see in an early 19th-century painting now hanging in the Music Hall <sup>1</sup> the steep sides of the little

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1. A painting of the Dana before the railway was built; hanging on the N.W. wall of Vaughan's Mansion.

cliff, above which runs the Dana Walk, falling away northward to low-lying fields. A similar though less striking impression is conveyed by Buckler's view of the castle from the north west.<sup>1</sup> On the east of the promontory is a precipitous slope to the river nearly seventy feet below.

The oval-shaped motte of the new castle put up by the Norman invaders was sited close to this last and most easily defensible slope, so that those manning it had, as it were, their backs to the river (pl. 2) whence they could command not only the landward approach over the peninsula but also the waterway and an unbroken view of the ford at the eastern end of the town. It stands about thirty-five feet high<sup>2</sup> and was no doubt surmounted by a timber structure of the type recently excavated at Abinger<sup>3</sup> and illustrated in the Bayeux Tapestry. The inner bailey extended over the area now encircled by the Dana steps and walk, its southern boundary probably corresponding with the present wall. The area of the 11th-century outer bailey is more uncertain. It certainly extended at least as far as the modern Council House Court and from the riverside slope almost to Castle Street, its entrance perhaps coinciding with the modern

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1. O & B., I, opp. p. 38.

2. V.C.H., I, 398-9.

3. B.Hope-Taylor, "The Excavation of a Motte at Abinger in Surrey"; Arch. J., CVII (1950), 15-33.

approach. Here, on the site of the present Presbyterian church of St. Nicholas, stood a 12th-century chapel with the same dedication; Owen and Blakeway say it stood within the bailey<sup>1</sup> but quote no authority, inferring merely from its position that it was built by Roger de Montgomery "for the accommodation of such of his retainers as resided in the outer court of the fortress". Their statement has been accepted by later writers. Recently Mr. J.L.Hobbs published a borough rental of 1521 containing the words "viam ducentem a le Bayly usque cimiterium Beate virginis in fine orientale dicte ecclesie", phrases he takes to refer to the present Windsor Place.<sup>2</sup> There is no obvious way leading from the present bailey to St.Mary's, but if there had been an entrance to a much larger outer bailey further south on Castle Street, Windsor Place would fit the description well enough. On the other hand there is no reason to reject the evidence of Burleigh's and Speed's maps, which show the 13th-century town wall running between the present Windsor Place and the Council House Court in such a way as to exclude a triangle of land bounded by St. Mary's Water Lane, Castle Street and the Council House. If Owen and Blakeway were correct, the building of this wall would have necessitated an unusual and unrecorded

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1. O & B., II, 473.

2. TSAS, LVIII (1950), 216, 241 n. 7.



procedure - the abandonment of part of the bailey and its replacement in a defensive scheme by the town wall. Moreover one of two assumptions is required to reconcile topographical features with a bailey extending to Windsor Place. Firstly the bailey could have been of very irregular plan, its bounds following the line of the later town wall. Alternatively it could have been of regular plan and included all the ground to the Severn, thereby losing its commanding position towards the town. Neither assumption sounds very likely. Furthermore the chapel of St. Nicholas is nowhere specifically described as being inside the bailey, but if it were, it may well have been at the outer gate. Whichever view is taken of the size of the original outer bailey it is difficult to reconcile all the evidence, but on balance it seems likely that its southern boundary turned away from Castle Street on very much the line it does today and so round to join that stretch of wall which curves away from the river to meet it. The west side of the outer bailey impinged on Castle Street for most of its length, but the inner bailey probably stood back some distance, commanding by its superior position the steep northern approach into the town.<sup>1</sup> Though there must have been a gate across the street still called Castle

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1. Castle Gates was levelled out in the 19th century.

Gates prior to the building of the 13th-century wall, neither architectural trace nor historical record of it has been preserved.

The castle was early put to a severe test. In 1069 "the Welsh, with the men of Cheshire, laid siege to the King's castle at Shrewsbury, aided by the townsmen under Edric the Wild".<sup>1</sup> It survived the ordeal successfully until relief was near, when the insurgents burnt the town and retired.

After the events of 1069, when the initial disturbances caused by the Conquest had died down, Shrewsbury's military importance declined somewhat. After 1075, when Roger de Montgomery was created Earl of Shrewsbury, it declined still further as the frontiers of the Welsh kingdom of Powys were pushed back far to the west of the town. Earl Roger's foundation of his eponymous castle and borough, accompanied by like activity on the part of the other marcher earls, made Shrewsbury secure in all but two situations, when Anglo-Norman power was divided or the Welsh united. The confident and energetic Normans seem not to have felt it necessary to rebuild a base fortress, such as Shrewsbury had become in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, however great its strategic importance.

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1. Ordericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, trans. Thos. Forrester, II, 26.

There is certainly little among the surviving buildings of the castle to show that it was rebuilt in stone during the early Norman period, but various entries in the Pipe Rolls show that Henry II ordered work to be done here as a minor part of his extensive refortification of the Welsh border.<sup>1</sup> In the first year, 1165, £17.13s.5d. was spent on work at the castle of Salop ("in operatione castelle de Salop"), while Roger of Powis had 2 marks for fortifying the tower of Salop ("ad muniend' tur' de Salop").<sup>2</sup> This, the largest amount spent in any year before 1205, when the published Pipe Rolls cease, was a defence preparation against Owain Gwynedd, who had just begun a successful campaign against Henry. The following year the sum of £9.14s. 1d. was expended on building and repairs at Shrewsbury castle ("in operatione et emendatione castelli de Salopesberia"); in 1168 a further sum of £9.12s.5d. ("in operatione castelli"); and in 1169 £8. 0s. 7d. was paid for work on the king's houses at Shrewsbury and repair of the castle ("in operatione Domorum regis de Salopesberia et emendatione castelli").<sup>3</sup> What these "king's houses" were like is unknown - presumably they were domestic buildings

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1. A. Hamilton Thompson, Military Architecture in England during the Middle Ages, 119.
  2. Pipe Roll II Henry I, 89; this and other P.R.'s quoted below are published by the Pipe Roll Society unless otherwise stated.
  3. P.R. 14 Henry II 93; 15 Henry II 108.

attached to the castle for use by the king on his journeys in the marches, such as those of 1165, 1175 and 1176.<sup>1</sup> The sum of five pounds spent in 1171 on work on the motte ("in operatione . . . . in mota")<sup>2</sup> shows the castle was still at that date an earth and timber structure. The other entries for this reign relating to Shrewsbury castle are mostly confined to repairs, though the distinction between building, alteration, and repair ("in operatione", "in emendatione", and "in reparatione") may not always have been very clear.<sup>3</sup>

These bare records of payment give little idea of what work was really done; the reference to the motte suggests that the Norman structure put up a century before had not been seriously modified. The Hundred Roll of 1275 appears to bear this out with a statement that "a great wooden tower, which had been erected in the castle, fell to the ground when Sir Vivian de St.Pier was sheriff".<sup>4</sup> Years before, in 1229, the sheriff had expended £7.11s.11d. "in felling timber and carrying it to Shrewsbury and making a

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1. R.W. Eyton, Court and Itinerary of Henry II, (1878).
  2. P.R. 19 Henry II.
  3. P.R. 20 Henry II, 108; P.R. 26 Henry II, 2 (Yale, 1918); P.R. 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, Henry II.
  4. Hugh Owen says that near the postern (marked on the O.S. 25-inch map) "are the massive foundations of an ancient tower" (Ancient and Present State, 71), which was therefore quite near the artificial motte. It is just possible that this tower was built at some unknown date to replace a motte, and like certain 12th-century keeps, had to be placed a little distance from the made-up ground in order to be sure of a good foundation (A.Hamilton Thompson, op.cit., 128).

palisade around the tower of Shrewsbury." <sup>1</sup>

The words are not very precise, but interpreted in the light of the Abinger excavations their meaning surely becomes clear. Figure 4 shows the plan of just the kind of structures implied by these two statements, a timber tower placed centrally on the motte and surrounded by a massive palisade with an internal platform which formed a defensible fighting-walk. Now Abinger was never after its early days held by a great feudal magnate, and was never a major castle, so it was not to be expected that it should keep pace with the development of military architecture. It is more surprising to find such a simple type of fortification, successively outmoded by the massive early Norman stone keep, the shell keep and the fortified curtain, surviving in a royal castle well into the thirteenth century, until it and its supersessors alike were rendered obsolete by the Edwardian concentric castle. The later history of Shrewsbury castle is very obscure and indeed has never been properly investigated. Edward I is usually credited with building the existing hall and towers, but no documentary evidence has been quoted for the statement. Clearly the rebuilding involved the complete abandonment of the eleventh-century scheme of defence, the persistence of which is the only aspect of the castle's history which properly concerns this chapter.

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1. Cal.Liberate Rolls. (1226-40), 151. The previous year the 'houses' of the castle had been repaired: ibid., 64.

One last payment deserves mention, the sum of £18.12s.4d. expended in 1166 "in custamento murorum de Salopesberia". This is a puzzling item. It might point to Norman town walls for which there is otherwise no documentary evidence - a lacuna which will be discussed below (Ch.III) - but as there is no satisfactory architectural evidence either, the entry probably refers to the walls of the inner and outer baileys. Parts of these yet remain, notably a round-headed doorway of two orders moulded continuously in jambs and head, which connects the two baileys and can reasonably be ascribed to the period 1150-70 (pl. 3).

It is in any case most unlikely that the walls referred to are the Saxon fortification described in the previous chapter, because by the middle of the twelfth century these must have fallen completely into disuse. Even if no attempt had been made to slight them, building and street development must by then have begun on a scale sufficient to render them useless.

Within a few years of his becoming Earl of Shrewsbury, Roger de Montgomery introduced that other characteristic manifestation of Norman culture, a Benedictine monastery. In Shrewsbury indeed the contrast between Norman and Saxon organisation, the new culture and the old, is striking;

a castle supersedes the burh, a house of regulars assumes pre-eminence over the four colleges of secular priests. The abbey was founded in or after 1083<sup>1</sup> and before 1086<sup>2</sup> when building had begun; the small parish which stood outside the east gate was swallowed up by the monastery. Work on the new church was sufficiently advanced by 1094 to allow the founder Earl to be buried there, and by the early years of the twelfth century it was completed. The form of the eastern arm being unknown, the only feature of the plan that need be<sup>e</sup> mentioned is the division of the nave into two parts, the three eastern bays occupied by the monastic choir, the three western devoted to parochial uses. Red sandstone is the material used throughout.<sup>3</sup> The claustral buildings were in the normal position on the south side of the church, extending almost to the large "Abbey Pool" which was formed by a diversion of part of the Meole Brook, and the precinct occupied the whole area of the present cemetery.<sup>4</sup>

A few years after the abbey church was finished the cultural effects of the Conquest were further manifested in the architectural transformation of the four Saxon churches in the town. Unfortunately three of the four

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1. Knowles, Religious Houses in Mediaeval England, 66, quoting Dugdale, Monasticon, limits the date to 1083-90.
  2. R.R. Darlington, Vita Wulfstani, 27n.
  3. Cranage, Churches of Shropshire, 866-892.
  4. O & B, II, plan opp. 83.

churches thus rebuilt, which retained much of their Romanesque character throughout the middle ages, were destroyed by neglect or stupidity in the 18th century and are known only from drawings and descriptions. Dr. Cranage summarised what can be learnt from these sources, and his conclusions are here accepted without re-examination of the evidence.

St. Mary's was perhaps the first to be rebuilt, "about the middle of the 12th century, in the reign of Stephen rather than that of Henry II", <sup>1</sup> as an aisleless cruciform church with a crossing tower. The plan shows certain peculiarities. The setting-out of the first Norman work is irregular to a degree unusual even in mediaeval buildings, where the contemporaneous parts of a new church are commonly found to be reasonably rectilinear and aligned; Dr. Cranage himself comments on the way the north transept leans to the west. The transepts are disproportionately long, some three times the width of the nave. Although the original form of the east end has never been discovered by excavation, the length of the transepts as well as existing architectural evidence shows that there were chapels flanking the chancel. That at the east end of the north transept projects boldly in the way usual for such chapels in the larger churches of the period; <sup>2</sup> the corresponding

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1. Cranage, *op.cit.*, 924; and 923 - 963 *passim*.

2. cf. A.W. Clapham, English Romanesque Architecture after the Conquest, for many such examples.



chapel in the south transept is hardly more than a recess in the thickness of the wall, which breaks forward very slightly to accommodate it. The space left between the existing chapels and chancel is sufficient for an intermediate chapel to have existed in each transept though Dr.Cranage did not think any such were built.<sup>1</sup> The fact that St.Mary's was an important collegiate foundation would in any case sufficiently account for an unusually ample provision in a church of this size for simultaneous celebration of masses. Such a need would be the more strongly felt at a time when, through the development of the parish system, such colleges were losing their pre-Conquest function of serving the spiritual needs of a wide area, and tending to perform offices similar to those of the smaller houses of regular canons. The existence of at least three and perhaps five structural features directly intended for altars suggests that the prebendaries were expected to spend considerable time in Shrewsbury rather than in performing their original function of ministering to the surrounding countryside.<sup>2</sup>

About the same time that St.Mary's was rebuilt, or slightly before, the church of St.Alkmund was transformed

1. Cranage, op.cit., 1018.

2. The change in emphasis is the more striking when it is remembered that priests in the twelfth century did not usually celebrate a daily mass: J.R.H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century, 317.

both in fabric and constitution. "Shortly before the middle of the 12th century, <sup>1</sup> Lilleshall Abbey was founded out of the revenues of St.Alkmund's, each prebendal stall as it became vacant being suppressed and the property being handed over to the important new house of Regular Canons. St.Alkmund's thereupon became a poorly endowed vicarage and has remained so ever since". <sup>2</sup> It is likely, therefore, that the Romanesque church recorded in drawings was built in the first half of the twelfth century, or at least before its revenues were drastically curtailed. It seems to have been an aisled cruciform structure which may well have had originally a crossing tower, though no record of such a feature survives. <sup>3</sup> Such a central tower was often replaced later by a west tower, a feature which St.Alkmund's (like St.Mary's) still possesses.

If this were indeed the case three of the four Norman churches of Shrewsbury had a strong family likeness, for a third, St.Chad's, though apparently rather later, of late twelfth-century date, was also an aisled cruciform church with crossing tower. There was a crypt under the north transept extending eastwards into a small rectangular

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1. Between 1144 and 1148; Knowles, Religious Houses, 86.

2. Cranage, op.cit., 893; and 893 - 897.

3. Clapham, op.cit. 59; "The vast majority of eleventh and early twelfth-century Norman churches above the rank of parish church were provided with a central tower".

chamber which doubtless underlay a transeptal chapel.<sup>1</sup> Although it is surprising that so important a church should not have been rebuilt before the late twelfth century, some confirmation of this late rebuilding is perhaps to be found in the chantry certificates. There the foundation of the church is ascribed to "Roger, bishop of Chester", who can be identified with Roger Clinton, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1129-48).<sup>2</sup> Founder he was not, but he probably reconstituted the college to accord with its change of function, after which a reconstruction of the church would be necessary.

The only evidence that St. Juliana's was rebuilt in the twelfth century is provided by the base of a respond now in the churchyard, of which the original position is not known; it can be ascribed to the middle of the century. The responds of the nave arcades are said to have been of late twelfth-century type.<sup>3</sup>

Summing up the effects of the Conquest on the three most important parish churches of the town, all three underwent a fundamentally similar constitutional reform to adapt them to a developing ecclesiastical organisation, and in consequence all were rebuilt on similar lines. For St.

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1. Cranage, op.cit., 899-912.

2. A. Hamilton Thompson, "The English Clergy... in the later Middle Ages," 86 n. 2, quoting TSAS, 3s X (1910), 306.

3. Cranage, op.cit., 919, 921.

Alkmund's and St.Mary's the architectural evidence implies such a change; for St.Chad's there is a scrap of documentary evidence.

The extensive church-building activity that went on in Shrewsbury throughout the Norman period did not slacken until well on in the thirteenth century. St.Mary's underwent continuous modification for half a century after the original design was completed. First a western tower was added in the third quarter of the twelfth century, then in the few years following 1190 the chancel was lengthened by a bay, aisles and a south porch were added to the nave, and a chapel was added or rebuilt in echelon on the north transept; possibly this was matched in the south transept too, but later rebuilding has swept away the evidence. Work was going on at St.Chad's c.1226 - 35, for in 1226 four oaks from Lythwood were granted to the church,<sup>1</sup> and ten more followed in 1232.<sup>2</sup> Dr.Cranage considers the Early English clear-storey shown in drawings may be associated with these references.

St.Juliana's and St.Alkmund's were likewise altered or extended in the thirteenth century, so that lancet windows in the chancels are a prominent feature of eighteenth century drawings and descriptions.<sup>3</sup> "It is plain, indeed,

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1. Ibid., 909.

2. Close Rolls (1231-4), 73.

3. cf. descriptions in O & B. and Cranage.

that a general improvement, amounting in some cases nearly to a renovation, took place about the same time in all the ancient churches of Shrewsbury, during the reign of Henry III".<sup>1</sup> The changes were part of that wider movement general throughout England in the early thirteenth century which led to the modification, extension, or rebuilding of the east end of nearly every church in the land, ranging from the modest enlargement of a square chancel in a parish church to the building of sumptuous eastern chapels at Durham and Lincoln.

So far a chronological treatment has been adopted in order to show the magnitude of the changes which resulted from the Norman Conquest, and how the wave of building and rebuilding which accompanied the imposition of a new rule and a new culture was not finally exhausted until the 13th century. It now remains to complete the tale of ecclesiastical development by describing several medieval chapels which are known mainly from incidental references, of obscure origin and development.

The most interesting of them is the chapel of St. Martin, stated by Owen and Blakeway to have stood "in the High Street, on the south side, somewhere near the turning

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L. O & B., II, 426.

into the Corn-market". They based their opinion on a deed of 1325 relating to "a tenement opposite the chapel of St. Martin .... between the tenements of Walter Geffrey and Nicholas Ivo (or Ive) on one part, and the lane called Gropecount Lane on the other".<sup>1</sup> The architectural evidence put forward is conflicting, but on balance it seems fairly certain that foundation walls discovered on the south-east side of The Square are the remains of the chapel. They were last seen about 1927 during the rebuilding of Della Porta's premises: "between High Street and Princess Street, flanked on one side by the Shire Hall and the other by the Unitarian Chapel, the front (or possibly the back) and part of the end wall of a red sandstone building were found deep down in the excavations .... under three very old cottages on the west side of Phillip's Passage. Part of this ancient structure had evidently projected on to the site of the Guildhall. The end wall was about 65 feet from the High Street frontage, and the long wall ran for a distance of 30 to 35 feet in a south-westerly direction towards Princess Street". The excavations were carried to a depth of 16½ feet below High Street, where the ground was a treacherous running sand, without reaching footings. "There were two small niches, several feet apart, in the long wall, with pointed arched heads".<sup>2</sup>

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1. O & B., II, 473; the deed is now S.P.L. 3758.

2. A.W. Ward, The Shrewsbury of 1772 (pamphlet), 12.

Other evidence had been obtained in 1891 during earlier excavations on Della Porta's premises, No.5 Princess Street, when "an ancient wall of stone" was found, "well constructed and in good preservation, running parallel with the street, in a line with the back wall of the house.... having a length of 14 or 15 feet and a thickness of 7 ft.6 ins. On the side next the street was an arched recess in the thickness of the wall, the arch being a flat ellipse, slightly pointed. To the west of this wall, at right angles to it, was some masonry indicating the spring of an arch of considerable span, which might have been a bridge, the earth being wet".<sup>1</sup> The external niches and the pointed recess suggest a building of some pretensions, while the wall 7 ft. 6 ins. thick very likely indicates a tower. The description of the recess may denote a four-centred head of perpendicular type. The "bridge" mentioned in the second passage was apparently at right angles to Princess Street; its real purpose remains unknown, but that the writer should have suggested it was a bridge is striking proof of the wet and boggy nature of the subsoil hereabouts.

Other architectural evidence purports to show that St. Martin's chapel stood on the opposite (north-east) side of High Street, near Grope Lane. "About May 1884, when alterations were being made to the shop at the bottom of Grope Lane, portions of the mullions and tracery of a very

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1. W.P(hillips), S.N. and Q., n.s. I (1892), 98.

large window were found; with human bones and other remains. Some twelve months ago other moulded and cusped stones were brought to light in laying the foundations of the new Fire Office", <sup>1</sup> the building which is now the Alliance Insurance offices. The writer quoted in support of his theory Hulbert's reference to "remains of an ancient building of red stone, now a stable belonging to the Cross Keys Inn" <sup>2</sup> at the corner of Grope Lane and High Street. The red stone building need not however have been a church; the existence of several mediaeval secular stone buildings can be proved, and this might be another for which no written evidence survives. Some of the known examples could have shown elaborate window tracery, though the evidence of mullions and tracery in itself signifies little, as such fragments can be easily transported from their original site. The walls adjacent to the Square, on the other hand, suggest more definitely a church, therefore probably the chapel of St.Martin. The date of its foundation and building are quite unknown, but one general consideration may perhaps limit speculation. The market was moved into the present Square in 1261, <sup>3</sup> which implies there was sufficient open ground for a new market-place to be laid out. Moreover the laying-out of the north-west end of Princess Street was

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1. R.E. D(avies), S.N. and Q, n.s. I (1892), 13; ascribed to 13th century (ibid., 5); to early 13th century (ibid., 7).

2. Hulbert.,

3. Above, p.39; cf. the evidence of pile-structures in High Street.



probably contemporary with the new market, so that the chapel, set between them, is unlikely to have been built much before the middle of the thirteenth century. It is difficult to fit into this theory the discovery of human bones north of High Street, which suggest there was a cemetery attached to the chapel. On the other hand there is nothing to show the date of these interments, or even that they were in a cemetery and Christian. If St. Martin's stood on the south-west side of High Street it is equally unlikely either that it was divided by an important street from its cemetery or that High Street was driven across the old cemetery. Despite this apparently insoluble difficulty the evidence for a chapel adjacent to the Square seems on balance to be better than that for a site anywhere else.<sup>1</sup>

St. Martin's has been discussed at length because it is almost the only chapel for which there is any evidence of an architectural character, and because it has an important bearing on the topography of a central part of the medieval town.

Barker Street preserves in its ancient name of Romoldesham the tradition of the existence there at some uncertain period in the middle ages of a chapel dedicated to St. Rumold or Rumbold. No direct mention of it is

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1. It has been objected that if St. Martin's were only a chapel it would have had no burial rights at all; but cf. the references to the cemeteries of St. Blaise and St. Werburga (p.70).

known; a reference in the Bailiff's accounts of 1260-1261 to the gate of St.Rumold <sup>1</sup> points to an origin in or before the thirteenth century. I have not been able to identify the particular saint honoured by this dedication.

Somewhere in the same street stood the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene which is referred to in a rental of 1580. <sup>2</sup> William Phillips said it stood at "the angle formed by the junction of Barker Street and Bridge Street, facing us as we proceed down Barker Street from Bellstone, on the right-hand side", <sup>3</sup> quoting Owen in support of his view, <sup>4</sup> and said that Owen and Blakeway were wrong in assigning it to somewhere on the Meole road. <sup>5</sup> Phillips undoubtedly identified correctly the precise location of a chapel with this dedication in Barker Street, but there must have been a second in the area now called Belle Vue..

In his will dated 1355 Thomas Gamel of Shrewsbury mentions "a certain tenement situate in the street called Muryvans, between a tenement of Sir Thomas Vaughan, knight, on one side and a tenement of Roger de Tromwyne on the other, extending from the king's highway .... and up to a plot of land belonging to the chapel of St.Blase". <sup>6</sup> The

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1. "portam sci Rumoldi".

2. TSAS, LVIII (1950), -222.

3. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), v - vii.

4. Owen, Ancient and Present State, 314.

5. O & B, II, 473; II, 165 n.4., quoting CPR (1354-58), 404.

6. TSAS, 3s., V (1905), 394-5.

phrase might refer to a detached property; that the chapel did in fact stand close by is clear from a deed of 1481 describing a garden in the street of Muryvance as extending "in length thirteen woollen yards from the cemetery of the old chapel of St. Blaise up to the royal way ....".<sup>1</sup>

On the O.S. 25 - inch map the probable site of the chapel is south-east of the junction of Swan Hill and College Hill. No architectural remains of it have ever been found.

We know of the existence of a chapel dedicated to St. Werburga only from a grant of 1308 in the cartulary of Haughmond Abbey,<sup>2</sup> which speaks of the cemetery of St. Werburga. The wording of the grant is confused, so all that can be said is that the chapel lay somewhere near Chaddelode (Belmont) and Cordelode, probably in Swan Hill Court.<sup>3</sup>

The late eleventh century chapel of St. Nicholas has already been mentioned in connection with the castle bailey; it survived almost unchanged until the middle of the 19th century and is known from the excellent drawings and plan

1. TSAS, 2s., III (1891), 275-80; O & B, II, 465.

2. Quoted O & B, II, 475.

3. I have to thank Mr. J.L. Hobbs for this information: "St. Werburgh's chapel stood in what is now Swan Hill Court, which was formerly a thoroughfare leading from Swan Hill, to Priest's Lane. The latter street has now disappeared (Phillips's History tells us that it was enclosed in the 18th century) but ran from College Hill parallel with Belmont to which it almost converged at Chadlode" (letter of 31st March 1952).

by J.C. Buckler.<sup>1</sup> The chancel originally had a square east end, though the east wall had been demolished by Buckler's time;<sup>2</sup> the chancel arch was of two plain orders, its responds having nook shafts, scalloped capitals of the simplest semi-conical form, and chamfered abaci. The nave (50 ft. x 19 ft.) had north and south doors with plain round heads and chamfered imposts; the north and south walls were of herring-bone masonry.<sup>3</sup> At each side of the nave near the west end was a round-headed window placed high in the wall, its sill being above the level of the door head. Later insertions in the west wall, namely a perpendicular window and an 18th-century elliptical-headed double door, destroyed all trace of the original arrangement there. It is remarkable that this small church should have retained so much of its original structure throughout the middle ages.

Within the castle stood the chapel of St. Michael, just where is uncertain. Owen and Blakeway discerned from Speed (fig.5) that it was "near the river, to the east of the Castle, and towards the area before the present county gaol";<sup>4</sup> I cannot myself see so much from the doubtful

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1. O & B, II, plate opp. 473, and 473-4; and Owen, Ancient and present State, 313-4.
  2. Inferred from plan; but cf. Owen., loc.cit.
  3. D.Parkes, B.M. Add. MSS. 21016, f.8.
  4. O & B, II, 424.

indications of the map. The parochial history of the church is complicated but has no bearing on the topographical history of the town and will therefore be omitted.

So far this chapter has dealt with what may be termed quite broadly public works and buildings. The distribution of chapels implies a considerable expansion outside the nucleus (fig.6), the real heart of the pre-Conquest town which lay around St.Alkmund's, St. Mary's and St.Juliana's churches, and perhaps mainly around the first two. No doubt there were settlements outside this nucleus before the Conquest, such as the one outside the east gate (p.41), but on the whole systematic development of new streets, whether inside or outside the Severn loop, only began late in the eleventh century. The evidence for this growth, which has already been mentioned briefly in discussing the Saxon burh, is of two complementary kinds, documentary and topographical; the documents are rarely precise and require interpretation with the considerable indications on the map and on the ground.

Claremont is a good instance of this early medieval development. What might be assumed to be an eighteenth-century name like Belmont can be traced back to the twelfth century under the forms Clerimund Street and "in claro

Monte", <sup>1</sup> and is evidently a part of the town named and developed by the Anglo-Normans. Most of the early deeds mentioning the street relate to gardens or curtilages, but in one at least, as early as the reign of John, Gaufride Aurifaber confirms a previous grant of a messuage upon Cleremunde. <sup>2</sup> It is difficult to be certain what is referred to under this name, but since the modern Claremont Street was known successively as Hound Street and Dog Lane until the eighteenth century it must be the present Claremont Hill.

It is impossible to use statistically the scanty and possibly unrepresentative evidence preserved by chance in deeds, but the impression gained from them is that the layout of the low-lying north-west quarter of the town is largely the product of Norman development. Several deeds in the Haughmond cartulary <sup>3</sup> which can be assigned to the reign of John refer to messuages in Rumoldesham (Barker Street), and there are a few similar early references to houses in Mardol. On the other hand, for Dog Lane the only surviving deeds refer to gardens at this early period, though it is virtually certain that the street would have shared in building developments in this

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1. TSAS, I (1878), Haughmond Cartulary, 173; cf. TSAS, 3s. VII (1907), 344; Professor Bruce Dickins compares it with Beaumont.
  2. TSAS, I (1878).
  3. Ibid.

quarter. Such contrasts are however, rather artificial; the "garden-city" aspect of early medieval towns has been sufficiently stressed by other writers <sup>1</sup> to show that there is no inherent contradiction between these references to gardens and the building implicit in the idea of street development. Any further attempt to show how the street plan grew will not therefore be on the inadequate basis of deeds alone.

The principal monument of medieval town-planning in Shrewsbury is the open space known as The Square, to which the market formerly held in the churchyard of SS. Alkmund and Juliana was transferred in 1261. In the words of the royal writ the market was for the future to be held in the place which is called Gumpestolstrete, <sup>2</sup> which strictly speaking means the present High Street. Pavage was granted in 1266-67 for three years for the market place, still described at that time as being in a street called Gumstolstrete. <sup>3</sup> The wording of a charter of 1265 granting to the friars preachers "two selds in the market of Shrewsbury" <sup>4</sup> suggests a separate market-place existed by that date, something more than a widened portion of a street, otherwise the shops would surely have been described as in

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1. H.J. Fleure, A Natural History of Man in Britain, 264.
  2. CCR (1251-61), 351.
  3. Referred to in CPR (1272-81), 129.
  4. Cal. Charter Rolls, II, 53.

Gumpestolstrete. About the building and development of High Street, name and deed evidence really tell nothing, but several obscure names are associated with the neighbourhood of the thirteenth century market. Only one of them, The Shields, has an exact topographical identification, being mentioned in the Borough Rental of 1686 as "The Sheldes, now the Plough Inn", <sup>1</sup> i.e., the north-west side, for which payment is recorded in 1580, headed "Under the Booth Hall". <sup>2</sup> The medieval latin word 'Selda' meant a shop or stall, <sup>3</sup> hence The Shields may be synonymous with the Stalls which are mentioned as early as Henry III's reign in gild-merchant rolls; but the latter name may with more likelihood be connected with the place "in vico de Mardepole which is called Hokerstalles". <sup>4</sup> Hokerstalles is "possibly an unrecorded compound of O.E. "hocor", M.E. "hoker", "mockery, contempt, abuse", and "stall", used of a pillory" <sup>5</sup> "Apud Pilloriam" occurs in the 1246 rental and is said to have been near the market towards Mardol Head.

The difficulty about identifying the "Selda" of the 1246 rental with the Shields is that the transfer of the market from its ancient site in the churchyards of SS. Juliana and Alkmund only took place in 1261.

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1. S.N & Q.
  2. TSAS, LVII (1950), 224.
  3. Medieval Latin Word-list. (Oxford), 1934.
  4. Drapers' Company Deed, S.P.L.
  5. S.P.L. 269; I owe the reference to Mr. J.L.Hobbs.



Unfortunately the rental has disappeared, and since Phillips only extracted the main headings and street names it is impossible to elucidate the reference.

Turning now to topographical indications, High Street is rather wider at its north-west than at its south-east end, so it is just possible that in the years immediately after the transfer a market was actually held in the street, or, it may be, was intended to form part of the market area. Such a situation, where the widened part formed a T-junction with another main street, was frequently favoured in the middle ages for a market-place.<sup>1</sup> The widening is more clearly indicated in Rocque's map than on the modern O.S. maps, and as many of the buildings at the south-east end of the High Street are modern, some later widening may have taken place there which has altered the appearance of an originally narrow end. A terminus ante quem for the square is provided by the building there of the Gild-hall in 1310-11,<sup>2</sup> so that by the early 14th century at latest High Street, Princess Street and Market Street, and The Square had assumed basically their present plan.

It is by no means certain that High Street is an instance of the "widened street" type of market but a

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1. For the type, cf. R.C.H.M. Bucks, South, 43, plan of Beaconsfield; ibid., North, 4, for comment.
  2. TSAS, 2s. III (1891), 41-92; date corrected in Hist. Mss. Comm., 15th Rep., Appx. pt. X, l.c. 27, footnote.

better example may be noted where formerly the High Cross stood and where a market was held until the early 19th century. The O.S. 25 - inch map still shows this feature clearly even after the rebuilding of many properties in the area; Rocque's map presents it with more emphasis as a widening of Pride Hill to form a narrow triangular market place based on St.Mary's street (then Ox Lane). Again an element of planning, a deliberate layout, can be inferred, though the date it took place is quite unknown; the presence of the High Cross there certainly argues an ancient origin for the plan. It existed at any rate by 1283, when David, brother of Llewellyn ap Gruffyd, was executed at the High Cross. This market may be the one in "alto foro" referred to in the 14th century; <sup>1</sup> other deeds link it with Corviser's Row. Such triangular market places were widely distributed in the middle ages, and often, as in Shrewsbury, the type can be inferred to be earlier than a rectangular market place where the two occur together.<sup>2</sup> The name of the street unfortunately tells us nothing of its origin; Rocque shows it as Shoemaker's Row, a name which properly belonged only to the north-west side of the street. <sup>3</sup> The south side was called Butcher Row, or later, Single Butcher Row.

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1. S.P.L. 3978.

2. See W. Page. The Origins and Forms of Hertfordshire Towns and Villages. Archaeologia, LXIX (1920), 47-60; W.G. Hoskins, talk on The Market Town, printed in The Listener, October 2, 1952; cf. also Hereford and Leominster. R.C.H.M. Herefordshire, I, III.

3. TSAS, 3s.V (1905), 272 and n.l.

The next problem, the date Pride Hill was laid out and its probable purpose, is a difficult and complex one, involving consideration of the whole long street which under various names runs the length of the town from north-east to south-west and forms the main artery for traffic from east and west to the north. It should be stated at once that the ensuing discussion turns entirely on the acceptance of the existence and plan of the burh as set forth in Chapter I; if that be rejected, the whole basis of the argument is destroyed. The first thing to note is that the greater part of Pride Hill runs parallel with and close to the scarped slope or 'citadel' of the burh, just inside the line on which the tenth-century earth rampart is presumed to have stood. The most interesting characteristic of the street is that although it lies within the ancient defensive enclosure it avoids the large open space which was the heart of the burh and the focal point for all burghal activities, whether military, religious, or economic.

In order to emphasise the significance of this characteristic it will be necessary to digress for a moment. Now it is quite impossible to prove that the three original entrances to the burh from east, west and north all led directly to the market place: but that was certainly the case with the Fish Street entrance from the east; it has been suggested (p.36) that the northern entrance was

similarly planned; and if this suggestion be accepted, then whatever the precise position of the original western entrance, it can only have led along Butcher Row to the market-place. Such a suggested layout conforms with the importance attached by the Saxons to the original open space which was the principal feature of the burh; <sup>1</sup> and reverting to Pride Hill, that street conspicuously ignores this original focal point.

Implicit in the purpose of Pride Hill, which is the avoidance of the Saxon market-place, is a hint of its date; it belongs to a period when the literal and figurative centre of burh life had been superseded. We do not know enough about the English burh from Athelstan onwards, to say whether such a development could have occurred late in the tenth or early in the eleventh century, but leaving such a possibility aside, the condition is best met by the building in 1067 of a castle and to supersede and indeed, to nullify the earlier fortification. A lower date limit is provided by the existence of the High Cross in 1283 when Llewellyn was executed there. In view of the large area enclosed by the thirteenth-century walls it is probable that

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1. "Where the compact village occurs in Devon it often has a characteristic plan of a large open central square or rectangle, with houses set well back on all sides and the parish church somewhere to one side or at one end. The roads of the parish enter this central space from all points of the compass..... Sometimes, too, this space, or part of it, is called 'the Bury'..."; W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the Agrarian Landscape, Hoskins and Finberg, Devonshire Studies, 291-2.

so central a street as Pride Hill was developed many years before, perhaps shortly after the Norman Conquest.

There is scarcely any evidence to date Mardol Head and Shoplatch which continue south-westwards the line of Pride Hill. The general fall of the ground west of The Square, itself the site of a bog, makes it doubtful whether there could have been much building in that area before systematic drainage had begun. The right-angled junctions of High Street and Mardol with Mardol Head suggest on the map the regularity of a layout planned all at the same date. That the area cannot have been extensively built upon before the thirteenth century is shown by the building of Bennett's Hall at the foot of Pride Hill about 1260 (p.148 ff.). The house was built freestanding in its own ground, probably in a quite considerable plot of land, to judge from the grounds of Charlton Hall nearby. The street-name evidence cited above proves that the Stalls, if they are the same as the street so marked on Rocque's map, were in existence by the middle of the thirteenth century, which is no more than one would expect on topographical grounds alone.

About Shoplatch there is simply no evidence save that it was presumably not developed until quite late in the middle ages. The great mansion of Charlton Hall stood south of the junction of Shoplatch and Market Street, its grounds extending, apparently, to Swan Hill and Cross Hill.<sup>1</sup>

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1. H.E. Forrest, Old Houses of Shrewsbury, 34-35.

The front wall of one block of building stood where the pavement of Shoplatch now is, almost as far out as the kerb, so narrowing the street to a width consistent with the relative unimportance of this part of the north-east to south-west street axis.

One last point is worth noticing about the High Street - Mardol Head - Shoplatch area. Between High Street and Kiln Lane (Princess Street) Rocque's map shows three alleys or shuts, two of them staggered midway. Another pair of alleys similarly staggered connects Shoplatch and The Square. That they are not so obvious on the modern O.S. 25 - inch map is partly because of modern rebuilding in Princess Street, and partly, perhaps, because Rocque simplified and stylised some features of his plan.

Despite some artistic schematisation there is no doubt some basis for his representation. Its historical explanation may be that standard plots were laid out on all the street frontages concerned, and because of the irregular setting-out of the angles, which were determined by topographical features, a plot on, say, Princess Street did not exactly back on to a plot facing High Street. It is doubtful whether there is any means of checking this conjecture in a town street subjected to centuries of building alterations; perhaps the 1/500 O.S. map would suggest the size of a standard frontage. Whatever the true explanation may be, these staggered alleys look like part

of a planned, not a haphazard development.

I would hazard the guess, and it is no more than a guess, that this axis was laid out in the late eleventh or early twelfth century as part of the Norman development of towns which went on throughout the country. It was built up slowly in piecemeal fashion, hence the slight irregularities of its course. The reclamation of the bog, the making of High Street and The Square before 1261, and the beginning of Claremont are all part of a process extending over some century and a half.

North of Claremont Street and west of Mardol are a number of streets apparently dictated by no natural feature, conforming to no plan, and meeting no obvious need of communication. Even to the eye of faith which can discern signs of planning elsewhere in Shrewsbury, these streets present the haphazard unplanned appearance that is supposed to be normal in English towns.

Rocque's map presents certain differences from the O.S. 25 - inch map which may be significant. The modern Bridge Street is shown leading down towards the Severn, with a corresponding path or road on the opposite bank joining Frankwell, suggesting that there was a ford here supplementing the Welsh Bridge. The use of fords is known to have continued into the eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> though their

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1. "Corporation orders in the eighteenth century refer to their use, e.g. in 1748".

sites are not precisely known. Barker Street is to some extent explicable in this light as a road up from the river-crossing towards the town centre, to which, however, it gives access by somewhat devious routes. It may be significant that the reference to fords in the eighteenth century relates to cattle coming into the town. Before Smithfield was built in the nineteenth century cattle fairs were held in The Square,<sup>1</sup> which might well be approached quite directly via Barker Street and Bellstone by Welsh drovers bringing cattle up from the ford. The old name of Barker Street, Romaldesham, is derived from a chapel dedicated to St. Rumold and appears first in 1260. In view of the considerable evidence for Norman planning in Shrewsbury, particularly in the nearby Claremont Hill, it is worth quoting a remark by Mr. J.W.F. Hill about another such dedication at Lincoln, where, he says, it is "reminiscent of Flemish post-Conquest piety"<sup>2</sup> rather than devotion to the similarly-named Mercian saint. Failing any further evidence from Shrewsbury it would be worth studying all the Rumold dedications to see in what contexts they occur, but until this is done the significance of the street-name will remain uncertain.

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1. W.A. Leighton, Guide through the Town of Shrewsbury, 3rd. ed. (1850), 12.
  2. J.W.F. Hill, Medieval Lincoln.



Hill's Lane, once Knuckin Street, apparently leads nowhere in particular. Rocque emphasises Bugle Lane at its north end and suggests that the west side of Bridge Street has been straightened since 1746; in his drawing there appears to be a small square formed by four streets and built over in the middle. I can offer no explanation of this peculiar feature. Hill's Lane has some slight advantage of height over the lower part of Mardol, though it is not obvious why one route should be preferred to the other, or might have been so preferred in early times. The whole question of the pre-Norman approaches from the west is obscure. If Mardol Head represents a piece of deliberate planning, the older way into the burh may have been along Hill's Lane, Roushill and Roushill Bank, and so up the steep lower part of Pride Hill to a gate near Butcher Row. Unfortunately the street-names have provided no evidence and deeds do not go back far enough, so there for the moment the matter must be left.

On the other side of the town Dogpole, which appears as Doghepol or Dokepol in the thirteenth century, resembles Pride Hill in being definitely later than the burh, and is probably also of twelfth century origin.

A few street names recorded in medieval documents have never been satisfactorily identified. The most important of them, Waxchere, occurs in the Records of

Proceedings before the Coroners of Salop,<sup>1</sup> and was said by Blakeway and others to be the modern Butcher Row. The editor of the coroners' roll himself equated Waxchere with the district known as the Bailey, on the strength of an entry he translated as "la Baylye, otherwise the district of Waxchere". District, in these records, appears to be synonymous with street, and by the grouping of various districts which were together involved in any particular accident or crime, it may be possible to locate streets which are otherwise unknown. We thus get the following associations: (i) Gombestallstret, Wyla, Doggepol, and Waxchere; (ii) Colham, Sub Wyla, Doggepol, and W ; (iii) Hagemanestret, Balliua, Altus Vicus, and W ; (iv) Mardefole, Gombestallestret, Candelanstret and W ; lastly there is Drinkwater's identification, quoted above.

The nature of the incidents in which these 'districts' were involved is relevant; some cases were of wounding or theft, involving pursuit and therefore several districts which need not be close together. Now in the first case, Edith, maid of William Vaughan, was scalded to death, and the fifth case is one of death by fire. Both are what might be termed static incidents, pursuit not being involved, and the streets associated with Waxchere in each case are totally different. Turning to other sources, a manuscript

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 149-187.

containing abstracts of Mytton family deeds<sup>1</sup> includes a document of 1333 relating to Waxchere which is headed Flesshe Row. In the several deeds quoted by Blakeway there is no absolutely conclusive identification of Waxchere with Butcher Row and though on balance the evidence favours this the apparently clear statement in the Coroners' Roll leaves the issue in doubt. The correct interpretation is important because it may be hoped that the name will one day be explained philologically and thus throw light on the early medieval town. Another street whose location is uncertain is Cokabitestret or Cokabitinestret, mentioned in the Coroners' proceedings of 1299-1304.<sup>2</sup> Mr. J.L.Hobbs in a letter has identified it with Knockin Street, but the philological change has not been satisfactorily explained step by step.

It is a curious fact that the oldest part of the town, and certainly one of its most important parts up to the middle of the 13th century, has provided scarcely any ancient names. Wyle Cop and Dogpole lie on the fringes of the area; we are then left with relatively modern and uninformative names like Fish Street, Butchers' Row, St.Alkmund's Square and Church Street. The first two of these names are medieval but much later in origin than the streets

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1. S.P.L. 269. I owe the reference to Mr.J.L.Hobbs.  
 2. TSAS, 3s V (1905), 149-187.

themselves. Fish Street appears in Rocque's plan of 1746 as New Fish Street, Old Fish Street being the present St. Alkmund's Square. Some of Rocque's street names are of doubtful accuracy, e.g. his application of Shoplatch to the present Market Street, but there is no reason to doubt his naming here. In Blakeway's day Fish Street was still the shambles used by the country butchers, whence he inferred that an entry in the bailiffs' accounts for 1547, "pro mundiatione oppellarum carnificum subtis cimiterium Sancti Juliane" refers to the same place.<sup>1</sup> The earliest instance yet recorded of the name Fish Street is in the Poll Tax of 1380.<sup>2</sup> Butcher Row is perhaps the Flesshewerasrewe of 1396-7,<sup>3</sup> but this is not certain. Rocque shows it under that name, but Blakeway nearly a century later called it Double Butcher Row, using Butcher Row as the name of the south-west side of Pride Hill.<sup>4</sup> This confusion I cannot disentangle, and conclude that there is as yet no certain evidence for the early name of the present Butcher Row.

Development was taking place both within and without the town proper; outside the river loop a small community slowly developed around the Abbey and in due course gained

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1. TSAS, 3s. VII (1907), 340.
  2. TSAS, 2s. II (1890), 21.
  3. S.P.L. 3952.
  4. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 271-2.

the right of holding markets and fairs.

There was a tendency for a settlement to spring up at the gate of every Benedictine abbey, a natural focal point for travellers, and a further incentive was the trade to be done with the monastic community itself. The financial advantages to be derived from markets and fairs usually prompted the abbot to obtain these formal privileges in order to encourage the growth of the nascent town or suburbs. This was what happened at Shrewsbury, where Monks Foregate was quite favourably situated for such development, lying on the main eastward road and free from the pontage, murage or pavage dues payable by foreigners crossing the English Bridge. Offsetting this advantage was the inability of the Abbey market to tap the real source of Salopian prosperity, the profitable Welsh trade.

That Castle Foregate too was growing is shown by two 13th century grants involving messuages in "Norforiet", which figures several times in the Haughmond Cartulary. But the third considerable suburb, Frankwell, may well have been the most important. Its name, meaning the vill of the Frenchmen,<sup>1</sup> shows that the area was first settled in the late eleventh century or early twelfth century, and in the next century quite a large number of deeds attest

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1. Ex. inf. Prof. Bruce Dickins.

its continued growth. It seems to be the most obvious instance in Shrewsbury of the stimulus imparted to urban life by the Normans.

Men bearing the names of families associated with Shrewsbury throughout the middle ages appear as buyers and sellers of land and messuages in Frankwell, among them Hugh Colle,<sup>1</sup> William, son of Reiner Ruffus,<sup>2</sup> William Vaughan,<sup>3</sup> Alan Gamel,<sup>4</sup> whose names recur as bailiffs or witnessing early deeds. No French personal names seem to have survived from the twelfth century to support the place-name derivation, but about the middle of the next century the grant of a messuage to John of Frankwell, clerk, by Robert Gascoyn<sup>5</sup> hints at a connection with the Bordeaux trade. Because of the street's close proximity to the Severn tanning could easily be carried on there, so we find Shrewsbury abbey, for instance, granting land in the thirteenth century to Hugh of Lichfield, tanner, to build upon.<sup>6</sup> A hospital of St. George was established here in the twelfth century at the north end of the bridge.<sup>7</sup> The least important of the suburbs was Coleham but this too

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1. TSAS, 3s. I (1901), 12, 29.
  2. Ibid., 8.
  3. Ibid., 311.
  4. Ibid., 20.
  5. S.P.L. 162.
  6. TSAS, I (1878), Haughmond Cartulary.
  7. Cranage, op.cit., 914.

was growing by the second half of the twelfth century. Deeds refer mainly to gardens and barns, with apparently only a small nucleus of population.

Although by the end of the thirteenth century building seems hardly to have begun on the low hills south and west of the medieval heart of Shrewsbury, they were enclosed inside the town defences for tactical reasons. Within the walled circuit the streets had taken on much of their present plan from the castle to Bellstone, and from the English Bridge to the Welsh Bridge, so that the lines of future expansion were strictly limited.

For this reason the three orders of friars which established themselves in the town during the thirteenth century have left little mark of their presence on the town plan. All three houses were built near the Severn (pl.8 ) on land subject to floods, and since there was no shortage of land within the walls, the siting was perhaps deliberate, with a primary emphasis on sanitation. The Dominicans came first in 1232, the Franciscans a few years later in 1245-6, and near the turn of the century the Augustinians (1298).<sup>1</sup>

Little can be said about their architectural history, because scarcely a trace of the buildings remain. Several entries in the Close Rolls record grants of materials to the

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1. Dominicans; Close Rolls (1231-4), 65. Franciscans: Monasticon. Augustinians; C.P.R. (1292-1301), 52.

Dominicans, without giving any idea of the structure they were intended for. The latest grant is dated 1244.<sup>1</sup>

When the site was levelled in 1823 to build a new wharf excavations revealed "fragments of mullions, of a very handsome late gothick, and many pieces of very small octagonal pillars of an elegant form."<sup>2</sup>

Not much more is known about the Franciscan buildings, although the house secures mention in every history of the order for one notable incident which typifies the adherence of the early Friars Minor to the poverty to which they were vowed. When their church had been completed a burgess named Lawrence Cox put up their domestic buildings. "The stone walls of the dormitory, by the decree of the Minister, to wit Brother William (of Nottingham), out of zeal for poverty, he (Lawrence Cox) removed, and made them out of mud with wondrous devotion and docility and at very great expense".<sup>3</sup> This incident must have taken place before 1251 when William of Nottingham died.<sup>4</sup> The king's liberal benefactions to the Franciscans begin about the same time

1. C.C.R. (1231-4), 65, 67, 93; *ibid.* (1237-42), 180; Cal.Liberate R. (1226-40), 47, 466; *ibid.* (1240-5), 253. See also C.F.R. Palmer, The Friars Preachers of Shrewsbury, TSAS, IX (1886), 251-266, reprinted from The Reliquary, XXVI (1885).
2. O & B, II, 451; Palmer, *loc.cit.*
3. Thos. de Eccleston, De Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam, trans. E.G. Salter (1926), 31. See also A.J.Moriarty, The Grey Friars of Shrewsbury, TSAS, 4s. XII (1929-30), 75-84.
4. D.N.B.



as gifts to the Dominicans cease; he gave money to buy a site and materials to build a church.<sup>1</sup> The church was still under construction in 1251 when he granted fifty quarters of limestone for the work. One of the minor claustral buildings still stands, now transformed into cottages and greatly altered.<sup>2</sup> A good concise article on the history of the Shrewsbury Augustinians is accompanied by an illustration of small architectural fragments which is the only evidence of their buildings.<sup>3</sup>

It was the remoteness of the friaries from any part of the town which was then or in the future of commercial value which has caused their houses to leave so little trace of their presence in the street plan. In 1258 the Dominicans were granted permission to stop up a lane called Irkelonde<sup>4</sup> which was noisome to their church. The lane can never have been of much importance, no more than a way down to the Severn, probably, but it is the only instance where the friars were hampered by earlier development.

Finally the bridges must be mentioned, though despite their importance little is known about them.

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1. Cal. Liberate R. (1245-51), 4, 82, 131, 231.
  2. A.R. Martin, Franciscan Architecture in England, 247 ff. illustrated.
  3. C.F.R. Palmer, loc. cit. plate opp.251.
  4. Cal. L.P. (1266-72).

The first mention of a bridge is in 1228 when the Sheriff of Salop was ordered to go to "the bridge of Shrewsbury, to appraise the five jars of wine in a ship that lately came from Worcester".<sup>1</sup> The Bailiffs' accounts for 1275 include payments for the repair of St. George's Bridge, and no doubt both the main exits from the town had by that date been bridged for many years. For centuries the long bridge spanning the confluence of the Severn and the Meole Brook was known as the Stone Bridge. At what date it replaced a timber structure there is no means of telling,<sup>2</sup> but the wooden bridge towards Wales lasted very much longer, perhaps until the middle of the fourteenth century. Between 1338 and 1351 pontage was granted for a total of twenty years,<sup>3</sup> the grant of 1346 describing the bridge as "in a dangerous state for those passing over and under it".<sup>4</sup> Not many years before, in 1284, when it had been described as "le Whalshebrugge qui dirutus est et confractus",<sup>5</sup> three years of pontage dues were expended on repair; a stone bridge would hardly have required so much repair a mere fifty years

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1. Cal. Liberate R. (1226-40), 99. The identification with the English Bridge is probable but not certain; cf. p.93 note (2) below.
  2. The grant of thirty oaks in 1259 for the repair of the bridge at Shrewsbury may refer to the English Bridge, but if it does, is not proof of timber construction; enormous quantities of centering and scaffolding would be needed to repair a stone bridge. The reference may however be to the Welsh Bridge, despite the use of the singular.
  3. Cal. L.P. (1338-40), 6; (1345-8), 45; (1350-4),
  4. Ibid. (1345-8), 45.
  5. Hist. Mss. Comm. Report, 3.

later, even allowing for the somewhat haphazard upkeep of medieval bridges, so the mid-fourteenth century is the more likely date for the replacement of timber by stone.

The architectural character of the English Bridge is hardly known except for the fact that it had a fortified tower about midway in its length, rather like the wellknown Monnow Bridge at Monmouth, but larger. (pl.6 ). This feature it shared with the Welsh Bridge, of which we possess several contemporary drawings and paintings, by far the best being by Paul Sandby in the Victoria and Albert Museum. (pl.7 ).

Despite the existence of two fine bridges the Severn is so shallow that at the two crossing points it was often negotiated on foot. The fords at these points therefore continued in use for centuries, probably at least until the bridges were rebuilt late in the eighteenth century, for we find the Corporation in 1748 prohibiting the driving of cattle over the Welsh Bridge or the ford adjoining by reason of an outbreak of cattle distemper. Some of the deaths by drowning recorded in the coroners' proceedings of the early fourteenth century were caused at fords.

CHAPTER III.

The Town Walls.

The earliest substantial defences of Shrewsbury were the earth ramparts of the Saxon burh, surmounted no doubt by a palisade and encircled by a ditch or scarped slope. It has however been claimed that the town possessed a stone wall of Saxon origin, and although the date advanced by its discoverer was never generally accepted, the existence of a defensive wall before the thirteenth century was admitted almost without discussion. It was in 1883 that the Rev. C.H. Drinkwater published an article entitled "The Inner Wall of Shrewsbury"<sup>1</sup> in which he claimed that several stone structures described in some detail were fragments of a pre-Conquest town wall. Evidently he had broached the theory to his fellow-antiquaries prior to publication, for alongside his article there appeared another by the Rev. W.A. Leighton<sup>2</sup> asserting that the most imposing part of Drinkwater's "town wall" was in fact the remains of the medieval deanery of St. Alkmund's church. In later years the wall was accepted as such by most Shropshire antiquaries but assigned to the early Norman period, probably the reign of Henry I.

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1. Archaeologia Cambrensis, 4s. XIII ( ), 42-50; reprinted TSAS, VI (1883), 257-267.
  2. TSAS, VI (1883), 268-270.

I have not noticed any article in which the basis for the revision was explicitly stated, and perhaps none ever appeared. The Rev. Thomas Auden, for instance, in his admirable historical and topographical account of Shrewsbury<sup>1</sup> describes the wall, dates it to the time of Roger of Belesme or a little later, and referring the reader to a footnote for his authority, merely cites Drinkwater.

There is of course no documentary evidence for a stone-built town wall before the 13th century. Now although negative evidence would not be of much significance for the pre-Conquest period, it makes an early Norman wall rather unlikely. Ordericus Vitalis was a Shropshire man, whose "Historia Ecclesiastica", continued down to 1141, makes reference to important happenings in his native county; it is hard therefore to imagine that so notable an event as the fortification of his shire town would have escaped at least incidental notice, even though it had no direct bearing on church history. More remarkable is the absence of a single reference to any such town wall in the numerous thirteenth-century deeds which survive or are known in abstracts; so obvious and permanent a boundary for property would surely have left some traces in medieval legal documents. This

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1. Rev. T. Auden, Shrewsbury (1905), 47.

negative evidence is the more surprising because Drinkwater himself demonstrated the great antiquity of his wall by pointing out how it is everywhere used as a property boundary, and traced part of its course solely by such boundaries.

One further general consideration tells against a late eleventh or early twelfth century date for the alleged wall. This is the apparent lack of concern about Shrewsbury, the complete certainty that the town was faced by no serious military threat, which was noted earlier in discussing the history of the castle, and which must represent the prevailing Norman attitude towards the potential danger from Wales.

If the Shropshire antiquaries who revised Drinkwater's dating did so after examining the remains of the wall, they published no further discussion of it. The evidence must therefore be re-examined.

"The area enclosed by these first defences would resemble an oblong trapezium with four unequal sides, the isthmus forming one side, the line from the isthmus to the angle of the declivity westward, about the middle of Pride Hill, making the second; the third being from thence to the top of the Wyle, and the fourth from that point to the isthmus again".<sup>1</sup> This, argued Drinkwater,

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1. TSAS, VI (1883), 259.

included three of the four pre-Conquest churches and formed a reasonably compact and readily defensible area (Fig. 7 ).

The most distinctive piece of architectural evidence cited in support of the theory is "a piece of old wall forming the segment of a circle", which was probably part of a gate or barbican, "under the shop front of the house at the corner of Fish Street where it joins the High Street".<sup>1</sup> This house, now Phillip's shop (A on plan), is an early nineteenth-century building which has its freestanding corner built as a segment of a circle (pl. 5 ), an architectural fashion of the Regency period to be seen elsewhere in the town. In the cellars are visible what seem to be the segmentally planned stone rubble foundations of this feature, its masonry, so far as can be discerned beneath coats of whitewash, being of poor quality and roughly coursed. The wall thickness is nowhere ascertainable. The curved face of the stonework makes a slight but quite perceptible and abrupt change of direction where it meets the stone foundations upon which the High Street frontage rests, but this straight joint may be accounted for by the general lack of finish rather than by assuming it to be the junction of the modern front

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1. *ibid.*, 260.

wall with an ancient bastion. Therefore though final proof is impossible without cleaning down the walls it is virtually certain that Drinkwater's "bastion" is of nineteenth-century origin. Lastly it is noteworthy that his sketch plan (fig.7) does not mark any such circular structure, and that the line of the main wall is there shown a considerable distance from it.

At the back of Nos.10-12 High Street (B on plan) is the stone wall which Drinkwater claimed as part of the earliest town wall and which Leighton published as the only surviving fragment of the deanery of St.Alkmund, with a not very accurate illustration. /

It may best be seen from the small derelict open space, once a garden, behind No.10, (The Hat Shop). From here the backs of houses in Fish Street may be seen standing at a considerably higher level than those in High Street. It is therefore in effect a retaining wall, whatever its original purpose may have been. To a height of some 6 feet above the level of the garden ten courses of roughly squared red sandstone ashlar indicate the original build of the wall. Above them is irregularly coursed rubble rising to a total height of 22 or 24 feet, with a slight offset at 15 or 16 feet. The upper part of the wall has a slight batter and it 2 ft. 6 ins. wide at the top. <sup>1</sup> The offset seems to

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1. Measured from behind No.6 Fish Street (Jones's Paint Stores).



indicate where it ceases to be a retaining wall and becomes the back wall of premises in Fish Street, which are sometimes single storey outbuildings and sometimes more substantial structures. At right-angles to this wall there is visible above the adjacent premises to the south (No. ) another wall running towards High Street, not quite so high but of fairly well coursed sandstone masonry. These two walls are clearly the ones depicted in the illustration accompanying Leighton's article, but unless much alteration has taken place since his day, the illustrator showed the remains in a deceptively perfect condition. The position of the pointed window there shown is now concealed by a modern brick structure,<sup>1</sup> and the stonework as drawn is too regularly coursed.

The purpose of these walls is hard to guess, not least because they are difficult to examine thoroughly. Drinkwater considered the early town wall "makes a sharp turn to the westward for five or six yards and then takes a course parallel to its former one, if it does not, as I suspect, pass back to the same original line after encompassing three sides of a parallelogram; and if this be the case, here may have been another large fortification ...<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that "the old foundations to be seen in

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1. In fairness to Leighton it must be admitted that no attempt has been made to trace this window.

2. TSAS, VI (1883), 261.

the cellars of the dwellings, are not sufficiently distinct to warrant a positive statement".

I have not examined these traces of walls in cellars because they are hard to date and harder still to use as evidence without plotting their exact position on a large-scale map. Taking Drinkwater's evidence and that of the O.S. 25-inch map together, their general position lies along the suggested line of the burh defences.

The very marked change of level which may be seen when looking down Grope Lane is shown on the O.S. 25-inch map to be a difference in height of 24 feet as between the Fish Street end of Butcher Row and High Street opposite the Square; nearer Wyle Cop it is less, perhaps 15 feet. The fall of the ground, probably part natural and part artificial, has been altered to form two terraces, one at the level of Fish Street and the other rising slightly from High Street, the upper terrace being maintained by the sandstone wall in question. Similar walled terraces have been formed both inside and outside the thirteenth-century defences to such effect that it is sometimes hard to be sure where the true town wall lies. Drinkwater cited the difference of levels (he says 8 to 12 feet) as his first proof of the "inner wall" having once been an outer defence, and indeed he was right, save that it was

not originally a masonry structure. In this long-inhabited part of the town, near two of the Saxon churches, there has been sufficient time for the gradual formation of such big terraces without supposing the present stone wall to be all of one build. At whatever date the original houses along Fish Street and High Street may have been built, they must have been quite small structures, and for their gardens or outbuildings only slight terracing would have been necessary. As the importance and value of the sites increased, the extension of building operations further away from the streets, with a corresponding need for space at the rear, would necessitate some levelling of the natural slope of the ground.

Leighton's argument may have this much substance in it, that the lowest six feet of coursed ashlar in the wall parallel to High Street could conceivably be the remains of a building put up after the natural bank had been cut into, in the same way that Bennett's Hall was built into the sloping ground towards Roushill Bank and Pride Hill in the late thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Only a very close examination could prove whether such a process has taken place here and elsewhere. In any case it represents the final stage of terracing, where a plot fronting either High Street or Fish Street is reduced from a slope to two

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1. See p.149 below.

or three levels which in some places are all built upon.

If this explanation of the wall is accepted, it accounts for the absence of any reference to a town wall in early medieval deeds. By the time High Street was built and developed all memory of the Saxon defences had either gone or it had lost all practical significance; they were no longer fit to serve even as a property boundary.

Before finality can be reached with regard to this third side of Drinkwater's trapezium of walls a detailed house-to-house examination and planning of the relevant area may be necessary. Such investigation could only be done either by team work or by a local resident. With this reservation, I would prefer to regard the wall behind Nos. 10-12 High Street and similar walls elsewhere behind High Street as the architectural expression of the need for space in a congested part of the town.

There remains to be examined the second portion of the trapezium, the early walls said to exist on Pride Hill. This involves discussing the course of the thirteenth-century wall which Drinkwater found running parallel with his earlier defence. His arguments will be controverted, but the reasons for rejecting them are so closely bound up with a detailed account of the thirteenth century wall that they will be dealt with later (p.110 ff.). There

are however two supplementary references to his early wall which can be mentioned here.

The more remarkable of them was published in the Shropshire Archaeological Society's Transactions in 1926,<sup>1</sup> and deserves to be quoted in full. "The recent alterations at the top of the Wyle Cop have been inspected by several members of the (Society's) Council, and there seems little doubt that the old wall of the town has been brought to light, at its junction with the second wall". No photograph, sketch or plan accompanies this bald statement, so that in this respect there is a decline from the standards set forty years before by Drinkwater and Leighton. Presumably "the top of the Wyle Cop" means its junction with Dogpole, where several neo-Georgian shops now stand. The "second wall" is evidently the one built in the thirteenth century, which did not approach the top of Wyle Cop. Unless further evidence can be found to amplify this statement its meaning must remain obscure.

Finally there is a statement made in 1884<sup>2</sup> that "during excavations for a drain in the north-west corner of St. Julian's churchyard the workmen came upon an old wall, the direction of which was along the side of the graveyard down towards Milk Street. It is about four feet thick and very carefully built of stone....

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1. TSAS, 4s. X (1925 - 26), vi.  
2. S.S. & P., VI (1884), 2.

The wall seems to show that one of the entrances to the pre-Norman town was here". The 4-ft. dimension is comparable to the thickness of the walls of medieval houses in the town, and seems too slight for an early twelfth-century town wall, in which a more massive construction would be expected. Its direction suggests it belonged to some late period when burials had so raised the level of the churchyard as to necessitate a retaining wall.

Examination of the evidence makes it virtually certain that no Norman town wall ever existed. For the thirteenth-century wall both documents and structures are available, and to them we now turn.

An entry in the Patent Rolls dated 1218<sup>1</sup> and entitled "De villa Salopesbiry claudenda", ordered the good men of Shrewsbury to strengthen and enclose the town. The grant of murage dues in 1220 for four years was repeatedly renewed without any considerable break until 1275.<sup>2</sup> That defences of some kind existed before 1218 is implied by an order to the sheriff of Shropshire in 1231 that the good men of Salop shall have the old stakes and the old bretasche from the old ditch for making the new

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1. Cal. L.P. (1226-1257), 169.

2. *ibid*, (1220); p. 445 (1224-for 1 year); p. 514 (1225 for 1 year).

ditch: <sup>1</sup> "old" would hardly have been applied to a ditch cut only thirteen years before. The date and position of this old ditch are quite unknown. The good men of Salop were also granted in 1231 material to make chevaux-de-frise ("hircones"), <sup>2</sup> and similar provision was again made in 1264 by the grant of fifty or sixty cartloads of underwood. <sup>3</sup> Some years before, in 1242 a grant to the Friars Preachers of 200 cartloads of stone "which remains over from building the town wall of Shrewsbury" <sup>4</sup> shows that the building of more permanent and substantial defences had been begun.

The sequence of events shows that from the Conquest to the early thirteenth century Shrewsbury had relied on its castle for defence, with only a palisade and ditch added at some unknown date to reinforce the natural strength of the peninsula. The capture of the town by Llewellyn in 1215 revealed its weakness, so in 1218 or perhaps with the grant of murage in 1220 a stone wall was begun, but the outbreak of the Welsh war in 1229 led to the hasty digging of a new rampart and ditch as a temporary defence until the wall should be ready. The provision of chevaux-de-frise in 1231 and again in 1264

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1. CCR (1227-31), 508.
  2. loc. cit.
  3. CCR (1261-4), 340.
  4. CCR (1237-42), 403.

emphasises the imminence of danger.

The documentary evidence for the building of the walls is regrettably incomplete, since the bailiffs' accounts only survive from 1256 onwards, by which time, clearly, the bulk of the work had been finished. It will therefore be better to consider first the surviving architectural remains, which are considerable.

Although the exact course of the wall is not always easy to trace, several Shropshire antiquaries have contributed observations upon it which supplement usefully the valuable plans made by Speed and Burleigh within a few years of 1600.

In general the wall is sited just above the 200 ft. contour, dropping below that line only to secure the English and Welsh bridges( fig.8).

We will begin our perambulation at the inner of two gates near the Castle, the one marked by Speed (pl.8 ) as the North Gate. Thence the wall ran in a south-westerly direction, enclosing the ground on which the old School buildings (now the Public Library) stand, towards Mardol. This stretch was excellently sited for defence. Near the North Gate it has no very commanding position, but the large tract of marshy ground where now the Smithfield Cattle Market stands was an effective obstacle to attack in this quarter. The exact line of the wall by the



library is doubtful; the north end of the library may well be built upon or very near it, but too little masonry remains in situ for complete certainty.

At Riggs Hall (C on plan) which stands within the angle of the library building, the coursed and roughly squared red sandstone masonry may be seen incorporated in the later structure built above it. It is most clearly visible in the cellars and in a small outbuilding (pl. 9 ). Miss E. Sladdin, Deputy Borough Librarian, is conducting a small-scale excavation to establish its thickness and the details of its construction.

The next clearly discernible portion is behind some early eighteenth-century houses (D on plan) which face a courtyard opening on to School Gardens (Nos. ); here again coursed red sandstone ashlar survives to a height of about 6 ft. At this point the sharp descent to the former marshy ground of Roushill Meadows is the more striking because it is unencumbered by buildings; nearer Pride Hill garden terraces obscure the steepness of the slope.

Behind and beneath the Raven Garage are the substantial remains of a tower <sup>1</sup> which was 40 ft. long and survives to a height of 17 ft. (pl. 10 ) (E on plan). It is built of coursed and roughly squared sandstone

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1. TSAS, 3s. I, 32 note.

rubble with a batter of six inches in a rise of six feet on the west <sup>1</sup> and south walls, The north wall had a similar batter which has been cut back at the outer return. The west face projects about 1 ft. 6 ins. beyond the face of the adjacent thin walls of reused sandstone rubble, which are much later. The tower on its south side projected about 16 ft. in front of the town wall. Seven yards south of the tower in the side walls of the covered steps leading up to the higher ground on which the Raven Hotel stands are deceptive traces of stonework, all of it reused; in the adjacent boiler-house which is built against it, the wall proper may be seen running under the head of the steps. Although the exact course of the wall hereabouts is not visible, it seems that the tower was on a small salient. When building operations permit, it would be worth checking the position of the 200 ft. contour at this point in order to see whether the salient is adventitious or whether it was planned purely for tactical reasons. Due west of the Raven a short stretch of the wall may again be seen running in a westerly direction on a line well behind the tower.

The Seventy Steps passage shows no clear sign of the wall; a small patch of stonework in its north-east side by the first flight of steps from Pride Hill is of very

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1. For convenience of description N.E. = N., N.W. = W., S.W. = S. (tower only).

uncertain origin. A little lower down Pride Hill is No. 15 (Marshall's), where the Rev. C.H. Drinkwater describes and illustrates certain features in the thirteenth-century town wall (F on plan).<sup>1</sup> The cellars at the rear of these premises were altered for A.R.P. purposes during the late war and may have undergone other modifications since Drinkwater's day. Consequently neither the jamb of the doorway with a shouldered lintel nor the embrasure which he illustrated are to be seen; there are however in the front wall of the cellar (i.e., the wall facing the garden) traces of an arched opening with a severely mutilated two-centred head, said to have been a sixteenth century window. The outer face of the wall in which this opening is set is built mainly of coursed white sandstone ashlar with a small intermixture of red sandstone. It stands about 10 or 11 feet high and contains a blocked rectangular window which originally had a chamfered head and jambs. Some eight yards behind it is the back wall of the cellar, built of small coursed and squared rubble which resembles the masonry visible at Riggs Hall save that its colour is hidden by plaster and whitewash. Before commenting on the significance of this it will be well to describe certain similar features in nearby buildings.

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1. TSAS, VI. (1883), 264.

The adjacent house down Pride Hill (No. Afford's) has been altered very extensively, but the front wall of the cellars, now concealed externally by a brick skin, appears to be of stone and about 2 ft. 9 ins. thick. The back wall is similar to that in No. . On the south west side of the courtyard fronting Pride Hill Chambers, (No. 17 Pride Hill; G on plan) is a covered stairway with ashlar walls going down through the thirteenth-century town wall and so to gardens outside it; H.E. Forrest called it a sally-port.<sup>1</sup> The doorway which closes the stair at its lower end has a segmental-pointed head rebated externally and built of white sandstone with jambs mostly of red sandstone. It is 4 ft. wide and about 7 ft. 4 ins. high (pl. 11). Ten feet above it on the right-hand side of the stairs (descending) is another doorway opening into cellars; it has a chamfered two-centred head, is about 5 ft. 6 ins. wide and 8 ft. 2 ins. high, and has been partially blocked in modern times. Facing the garden which these cellars overlook are five large brick relieving arches with buttressed piers carrying the rear wall of the Chambers. Framed by and behind these arches is a wall built of coursed red and white sandstone ashlar (pl. 12) having neither batter nor plinth. Plate 11 shows the stairway running through the arch at the south-west end; above it is a window with plain jambs, perhaps inserted

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1. H.E. Forrest, Old Houses of Shrewsbury, 34.

in the seventeenth century but certainly later than the door in its present form. In the adjacent bay to the north-east, the right-hand bay of pl. 12, is a window of which only the left-hand chamfered jamb is visible for about five feet, its top and all the right-hand jamb being concealed by the brick relieving-arch. The next bay, the third, has a square-headed window with a continuous chamfer in the head and jambs, and the next again has a similar but taller window. A window in the fifth bay with plain jambs and a cusped ogee head (pl.13 ) is clearly an insertion of a reused head; when it was put there is uncertain. In these five bays the stone wall remains fairly intact to a height of 12 feet or so, but above this it seems to have been greatly altered at the time the relieving arches were built. Short of measuring wall thicknesses in the premises above there is no means of telling what its original height was or how far up it exists behind the masking brickwork. Adjacent to the fifth bay is a small projecting tower about 14 ft. square of which perhaps the lowest 13 ft. of its mixed red and white sandstone ashlar are the original build. The door which opens from it on to the garden has no ancient features, but beside it, almost in the return angle, is a narrow square-headed loop with a continuous chamfer. The junction of the tower and

cellar walls appears to be roughly bonded.

The cellars, whitewashed and subdivided by modern partitions and other encumbrances are less easily examined. The door by which they are entered from the stairs has splayed internal jambs and original internal rebates for a door. The reveals of the windows are widely splayed and the front wall to the garden is about 2 ft. 6 ins. or 2 ft. 9 ins. thick. The little square tower has in its north-east and south-west walls two large and simply-moulded corbels now carrying nothing. A double plinth surmounted by an offset is visible inside the tower on its south-east wall adjacent to the doorway. The cellars are about 14 yards long and have a back wall which, where it is visible, is of coursed rubble.

These two cellars at 15 and 17 Pride Hill are precisely where, according to Drinkwater and later writers, two town walls are visible, and it may be conceded that it is difficult to decide on the spot either where the thirteenth-century wall ran or what may be the significance of the other stone wall. Drinkwater explains the cellar walls thus: "...about half-way down Pride Hill these two walls project about 5 or 6 yards beyond the general line and a small tower of 10 or 12 feet square projects still more. Here then, probably, was some building sufficient for the accomodation of a large number of defenders, and outside the building may still be seen a broad flight of

stone steps...." <sup>1</sup> The sketch plan lacks detail and is hard to relate to the site itself.

The first observation is that the outer stone wall does not seem to have been built as a defensive work. It is too slight, 2 ft. 9 ins. thick at most, no thicker than the walls of medieval stone houses in the town. The chamfered jambs of the larger windows are carefully coursed with the wall masonry, so they are original features. The third bay has a window chamfered continuously in head and jambs (pl. 12), indicating an original width which is too great to permit of the wall being more than an emergency defence. A building such as Drinkwater suggests, "for the accomodation of a large number of defenders" would certainly not have had a window in this very low and vulnerable spot. The ashlar is larger and better cut than that in the thirteenth-century wall, as may be seen from a comparison of plates 9 and 12. Drinkwater himself remarked on the difference: "The outer (wall), and, as I infer, the more modern one is of dressed freestone of excellent quality and the inner one of softer, more friable, and more highly coloured sandstone, not regularly dressed nor so carefully put together".<sup>2</sup> The characteristics he ascribes to the "early wall" are

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1. TSAS, VI (1883), 260.

2. *ibid.*,

just those noted above as typical of the thirteenth-century build. What is described above as white sandstone is his "dressed freestone", contrasting with the "more highly coloured" red sandstone found throughout the thirteenth-century wall.

The size and general appearance of the tower are so different from the one behind the Raven Garage as to make it certainly of later construction; further comparison may be made with the smaller tower which still survives on Town Walls.

Having thus dismissed the "early wall" in this part of the town there remains the problem of what the cellar walls really represent. Speed shows in his plan of 1611 "the towne wall built upon with houses" (pl. 8 ), running the length of Castle Street and Pride Hill. Houses on the present building line of those streets could hardly have been described as on the town walls, a description which would better fit such buildings as Pride Hill Chambers, lying 20 to 25 yards from the street. It fits Riggs Hall perfectly, where the structure of a fifteenth-century timber-framed house can clearly be seen standing directly above the town wall. The stone wall of the cellars which fronts the garden is therefore suggested as medieval, probably in large part domestic building of the fifteenth-century which incorporated part of the town wall. An editorial note to Blakeway's "Topographical



History of Shrewsbury" presents this idea in modified form: "It would appear that the inner wall at some period was built upon, the houses occupying the space required by its defenders, and that when fresh dangers threatened the outer wall was erected." <sup>1</sup> Whether the later domestic wall was built with an eye to emergency defence does not appear from the above examination; not all medieval town walls were entirely built as such, and it is not beyond possibility that a stone basement could have been incorporated at need in a defensive scheme.

Resuming the description of the thirteenth-century town wall, it is next seen running due west and swinging slightly northwards at a point north of Bennett's Hall (H on plan); the red sandstone masonry still stands 10 feet high but has been patched and partially refaced. Thence it continues in Shuker's Warehouse and garage (J on plan), where a 40 yard stretch is excellently preserved to a height of 16 feet almost as far as Roushill Bank. The site of a gate across Roushill is marked on the O.S. 25-inch map, and J.A. Morris wrote that "one jamb of this gateway with its hook stone for the gate" <sup>2</sup> could be seen in his time; nothing now remains of it.

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 254 n. 2 (ed. W. Phillips).  
2. TSAS, 4s. XI (1927-8), 69.

What direction the wall took from this gate is doubtful. Its obvious course would be on the east side of Mardol and parallel to it. Morris speaks of it extending "from the bottom of Roushill bank to a tower near the old Welsh Bridge", but mentions no specific architectural remains between the two points.<sup>1</sup> From another source come the following scraps of information: "In a passage just below the King's Head (K on plan) there are the remains of what appears to be an old tower .... it consists of a wall about 26 ft. long, which has evidently been returned at each end, so as to form a square building... of red stone" having no dateable features. "Colonel Prideaux, who made a study of the old walls of the town about the end of the last century, thought that it might be a tower at the end of the old Norman wall .... There are several blocked-up openings in the wall ..., embrasures or window openings; one of them has a chamfered jamb, typical of thirteenth-century work". There were also the remains of a doorway. I have not been able to find the stone building referred to; it has probably been demolished. Colonel Prideaux does not seem to have published his study of the town walls, at least not in the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society, so it is impossible to discuss his reasons for thinking a twelfth-century wall encompassed Mardol. The course

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1. *ibid.*, 70-71.

suggested by Morris for this portion of the town wall is likely enough on general grounds, but as no remains of it are known confirmation is impossible save by excavation. Blakeway writing early in the nineteenth-century said that the course of the wall from Roushill Lane to the river was lost by his time.<sup>1</sup> He changed his opinion later on the ground that Speed's plan shows in the lower part of Roushill " a wall proceeding first in a northern, then in a westerly direction .... some vestiges of this are still discernible".<sup>2</sup> This is a misinterpretation; the parallel lines Blakeway took to be a wall are simply Roushill, and quite unlike Speed's manner of depicting the town wall. There is now nothing to show what the "vestiges" were. The need for defences here is very apparent as Mardol for the whole of its length is below the 200 ft. contour, and north of Hill's Lane is no higher above O.D. than most of the old Roushill Meadows, which although marshy can hardly have afforded adequate protection for the Welsh Bridge. Burleigh's map (pl.14) shows a wall apparently running down the east side of Mardol from Pride Hill to Roushill, but as Roushill Bank is not clearly shown, it is difficult to know what the draughtsman intended.

"At the river", continues Blakeway, "old foundations commence and go to the Welsh Bridge", thence southwards

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 254.  
2. *ibid.*, n.3.

to the bottom of Barker Street. Whether these foundations east of the Bridge belonged to the thirteenth-century wall is doubtful; more probably they are to be associated with the seventeenth-century Roushill wall. Across the short cul-de-sac at the bottom of Mardol was a gate protecting the town end of the old Welsh Bridge; a second gate-tower on the middle of the bridge itself ensured that this double defence could not be outflanked by landward attack alone.

The stretch of wall west of the gate (fig.8) is as congested on Speed's plan as the area itself was until about twenty years ago. The extensive clearance of Mardol Quay and modern building operations around the Austin Friars have combined to make it impossible to trace the wall above ground, so we are left with the scattered observations of nineteenth-century antiquaries as the only light by which to interpret Speed. <sup>1</sup>

A short distance west of the Welsh Bridge stood the gate called Cripplelode, the name being derived from O.E. "crepul", a drain, <sup>2</sup> which may therefore mean that it was

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1. Most of these observations were collected by William Phillipps and incorporate notes by J.A. Morris and R.E. Davies; it is in a manuscript book including many plans and sketches, SPL D69 of 1920. The material which follows is taken from it. My text references = Phillipps's.
  2. ex.-inf. Prof. Bruce Dickins.

primarily an outflow for the town drainage.<sup>1</sup> There is no medieval evidence to show it was more than this, but in 1669 the Corporation ordered "Cripples gate leading to Severn near the Welsh Bridge"<sup>2</sup> to be enlarged. It could have led to a quay near the bridge. Its precise position is uncertain. The O.S. 25-inch map puts it on the river bank, whereas Speed shows it some distance from the bank on a wall-line which swings round more sharply than the river in order to regain the higher ground on Claremont Bank. Most of the recorded traces of stone walls which are mentioned below and which were suspected at the time of discovery to be part of the town walls lie well back from the bank. The first of these fragments (L on detail plan), described as a length of stone wall probably forming the side of a gateway, lies to the south of Mardol Quay and south west of the old Welsh Gate, on what is now open ground. The record of this discovery is accompanied by a sketch which does not help in elucidating the text. M on the detail plan indicates the position of the foundations of a wall "recently destroyed",<sup>3</sup> 12 feet from the fragment just described; it was thought to be the opposite side of the gateway. Phillips nowhere infers that this was Cripplelode Gate, though there can hardly have been a second so near the bridge; whether there was

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1. A suggestion I owe to Mr. J.L.Hobbs.  
2. TSAS, 3s. VI (1906), 406; quoting a book of Corporation orders which has since disappeared.  
3. Date not stated.

a good reason for not equating the name and the structures must remain unknown. West of this point "traces of the foundation of a wall built of stone and about 6 feet thick were found by Mr. Withers when excavating in this place" (N on detail plan). The thickness suggests that here was the true line of the wall. A drawing of "the exposed face of the wall existing at Mr. Withers's premises", which were presumably here, shows a plinth perhaps 18 inches high, then two narrow and three wider courses of ashlar above it. This too is probably the town wall. During excavations in Bridge Street (O on detail plan) the foundations of a wall were found which were traced in the cellars of the adjacent house. "Portions of the wall", the note goes on to say, "can be seen in the Brewery between this point and another fragment of stone wall in St. Austin's Court (P on detail plan); west again, on the opposite side of the Court, two cottages built mainly of stone (Q on detail plan) were thought to be probably on the line of the old walls. Two other discoveries, both in Mardol Quay and both recorded on the Borough Surveyor's 1/500 plans, must be mentioned. The first (R on detail plan) was a wall 18 ins. thick found 2 ft. below the surface; the south face was 8 ft. from the building face. It is difficult to consider this as part of a town wall; the second sounds slightly more probable. It was a wall 4 ft. thick, found 4 ft. below the surface, and excavation to a

depth of 9 ft. 6 ins. did not reveal its base. Despite a note on the plan describing it as "old red sandstone, solid work", the lack of satisfactory corroborative evidence makes it doubtful whether this fragment was really part of the main wall.

Looking again at Speed we find the two towers of the Welsh Gate and Cripples Lode all clearly marked; the latter is depicted like all the lesser gates, such as the one at the end of Swan Hill (Speed's Meryvaux), and, moreover, it is placed at the end of Bridge Street. Between the two another tower seems indicated of which no architectural or documentary record exists. Burleigh's map shows a tower at the end of Bridge Street but nothing between there and the bridge. Both maps agree in putting another tower at the end of the present St. Austin's Street; Burleigh but not Speed shows another between there and the Bridge Street tower. From this we may perhaps conclude that there were three towers in all between the friary and the Welsh Gate without being able to say exactly how they were disposed.

The Austin Friars, like the other mendicant orders, built their house outside the wall. Settling in the town in 1298 they were granted the same year a piece of land to build on "near the postern of Rumboldsham".<sup>1</sup> In 1345 they were assigned in mortmain "a stone wall without

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1. Cal. L.P. (1292-1301), 328.

the town with two round towers built on it and a crenellated house adjoining the wall of the town".<sup>1</sup> Most of the buildings were demolished shortly after the Reformation, but one of the round towers survived to be drawn by J.C. Buckler.<sup>2</sup> Where their defensive precinct ran is uncertain. On the footpath which follows the Severn bank are the foundations of a circular structure said to be one of the round towers (S on detail plan). Its discovery is described by R.E. Davies:<sup>3</sup> "Several feet below the surface a layer of concrete was found covering one half of a circular structure .... The semi-circle thus exposed has a diameter of eighteen feet, the wall being three feet in thickness .... At a depth of four and a half feet from the present surface there is a plinth or set off, which runs down to the foundation." He suggested it was part of "a wall of stone with two round towers called the Neweworke" which had been built "in a year and time beyond memory, because of wars and other dangers arising" by the burgesses.<sup>4</sup> Comparing its masonry with that of the round towers of the castle, he argued that it had been built early in the reign of Edward I before the conquest of Wales was begun. In 1337

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1. Cal. L.P. (1345-48), 11.  
2. B.M.Add. Ms. 36378, ff. 66, 171.  
3. TSAS, 4s. II (1912), ii-iii.  
4.



the bailiffs agreed with the prior that he should have this outwork on which to build "a substantial house, to be well embattled, but without a turret", the bailiffs to occupy it only in time of war.<sup>1</sup> The foundations of the second of the two towers were discovered close to the river, "under a cottage when the Bakery premises were erected",<sup>2</sup> which seems to be the same as the "two cottages" mentioned above and marked as T on the detail plan. A MS note on the O.S. 1/500 plan in the Borough Surveyor's office states that at the north-west corner of these cottages an "old watch tower" was found in 1922; it is shown as having a circular plan, and about 15 ft. in diameter. J.A. Morris recorded<sup>3</sup> the discovery in 1901 of the foundation of a stone wall 2½ ft. wide in that portion of St. Austin's Friars which runs west (U on detail plan). Where the street turns north the wall swung away almost due west, and was curving continuously where it could be traced. On the north side of the wall was a paved roadway 2 ft. below the existing surface. South of the wall was a short curved foundation, perhaps connected with the gate marked here on the O.S. 25-inch map, the same, probably, as the friars were allowed to build in 1337 in the wall in Romaldisham, with a postern

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1. *ibid.*,  
2. TSAS, 4s. XIII (1931-2), 51-57.  
3. SPL. D69.

gate to give access to their house and church.<sup>1</sup> Speed shows a large rectangular building connected by two walls to the main line of the defensive wall; as all three friaries are depicted by such a building, literal accuracy cannot be looked for here. The round towers are not shown at all. Burleigh's map does not even mark the Austin Friars.

The whole of the area between the Welsh Gate and the Austin Friars has been so obscured by modern development that it is difficult to appreciate the tactical situation confronting the 13th-century builders. Most of the land outside the walls must have been subject to flooding, but such occasional assistance the defenders could only expect in winter. Writers in the 17th and 18th centuries say that the Severn did not permit of regular navigation owing to the great fluctuations in the volume of the water, so that in summer shallows impeded even the low-draught trows.<sup>2</sup> Hence at those times of year when medieval warfare was most likely to break out, the assailants rather than the defenders would be likely to benefit from the state of the river. The use of fords rather than bridges for driving cattle across the Severn is well-attested in the late 13th-century;<sup>3</sup> determined fighting men might cross in the same way. Hence St. George's gate-tower on the

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1.  
2. cf. Joseph Plymley, Report on the Agriculture of Salop.  
3. TSAS, 3s. V (1905).

Welsh Bridge may have had the double purpose of commanding the ford and blocking all passage of the bridge. This tactical argument is not weakened by the fact that medieval bridges elsewhere were built with towers solely to defend a main entrance to a town; although it became a recognised means of defence, the Shrewsbury bridge could in fact have met this very necessary additional requirement. The substantial defences of the Austin Friars further indicate the vulnerability of this low-lying portion of the wall, and though Burleigh's and Speed's plans disagree in detail, both give the impression that hereabouts strongpoints were more numerous than elsewhere.

With this inconclusive discussion the matter must be left. Only careful observation and plotting of future discoveries can throw further light on this important sector of the town defences.

Thereafter the line of the town wall may be traced more easily, running successively along Claremont Bank, St. Chad's Terrace, Murivance, Town Walls, and thence towards the English Bridge. Halfway up Claremont Hill Speed and Burleigh both show a tower "taken down before 1739", <sup>1</sup> with another, "large and massive", <sup>2</sup>

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 255.

2. Owen, Ancient and Present State, 74-5.

on the site of the present St. Chad's nave, just south of Claremont Hill, which was only demolished when the church was built. Opposite Claremont Hill the wall is depicted by Speed as the incurved segment of a circle, a peculiarity not found in Burleigh and disproved by plans made when St. Chad's was put up.<sup>1</sup> The wall continued along the east side of St. Chad's terrace to the main entrance to the medieval quarry, Scheplach Gate at the top of St. John's Hill. William Phillips copies an undated plan of about 1750-1770, which shows the wall here.<sup>2</sup> The roads now called St. Chad's Terrace and Murivance were each divided into two by the wall running down the middle of them, the inner way, called Wall Lane, being probably very ancient. Speed shows this gate with another tower a short distance to the south of it which does not appear on the Burleigh map. The 18th-century plan confirmed the existence of a tower about 8 yards long approximately 20 to 22 yards south of the gate. The gate opening was not very wide, though sufficient for carts, and each side of it the wall was thickened into an internal projection beyond the normal line of the face. This no doubt supported the head of the arch and a walk above of extra width as befitted a vulnerable point.

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1. Catalogue of Borough Records, No. ; copy by Wm. Phillips of plan accompanying lease of 26th June 1790, SPL. D69.
  2. SPL. D69.

The next important feature stood at the end of Swan Hill. Speed shows it as a gate, and it is so marked on the O.S. 25-inch map. Owen however, having referred to the "large and massive tower" on the site of St. Chad's, says that "another faced the School lately founded by Mr. Allatt, and was taken down about .... 1780".<sup>1</sup> Phillips shows a stretch of the wall running along Murivance in 1760,<sup>2</sup> when apparently some steps which may have been original led to a walk along the top of it. There is no sign either of its continuation or of a gate opposite Swan Hill, which may be merely a fortuitous omission because the draughtsman was not concerned with that spot, or because it had been demolished earlier. Speed's general reliability may be judged by his accurate differentiation between Scheplach Gate and the tower nearby. Owen was the most careful and accurate observer Shrewsbury ever had; he must himself have seen the gate or tower. The question must be decided on general grounds when the only two reliable witnesses disagree. Swan Hill seems to have been known in the fourteenth-century as the way leading to Cordelode, the -lode termination invariably implying the existence of a gate, and it is quite likely that some means of access was necessary here to reach the river and the quarry. The balance of probabilities therefore seems in favour of a gate here.

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1. Owen, loc. cit.  
2. SPL. D69.

Some hundred yards south-east of the Swan Hill gate stands the only tower which remains complete (pl.15). It probably gives a fair indication of the size of all the intermediate towers, for example the one south of the Scheplach gate-tower. Speed shows it clearly. The wall can easily be followed from here almost to the site of the gate known as Chaddelode<sup>1</sup> or St.Chad's Watergate, a stretch of 40 yards.

Beyond the late eighteenth-century houses which form the Crescent the wall still stands to nearly its full height for a distance of 350 yards. When it became necessary to repair this part of wall late in 1951 its foundations were found to be quite slight and built on a bed of red sand. A little way east of the Roman Catholic cathedral it falls below the 200 ft. contour (pl. 16) and opposite Belmont Bank changes direction, leaving the line of Beeches Lane to run due east towards the river. Speed shows a tower, probably gated, at the bottom of Belmont Bank just where the change occurs, and another about half-way between there and the return the wall makes towards the English Bridge. The sites of both towers are probably now marked by houses (V and W on plan), the patched remains of coursed red sandstone ashlar visible between them and standing to a height of 9 or 10 feet (pl. 17). The suggestion conveyed by Speed that the second of the towers

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1. Referred to in deed of 1303-4, TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 255n.2.

was gated is perhaps borne out by the Burleigh map, on which a gate but not a tower is shown. Certainly there was a gate somewhere near here which led to the house of Franciscans, to whom in 1267 a licence was granted "to enlarge their gate through the wall .... so that carts can go in and out".<sup>1</sup> This friary apparently had no special defensive works, perhaps because attack was less likely in this quarter.

Throughout its length from Claremont Bank to the Franciscan Friary the wall has a less marked positional advantage than along Pride Hill. The total rise from the bank of the Severn is much less and for the most part over firm ground except possibly in the loop of land north-east of the friary, which was subject to flood. The wall appears to have been built on the steepest part of the slope and in some places, particularly east of the Crescent, artificial scarping has clearly been resorted to in order to form a sufficiently abrupt change of level. There are in any case other topographical factors to compensate for lack of height. The river between the Augustinian and Franciscan houses is narrower than at either of the two medieval bridges; it is swift flowing, without islands or sandbanks even at periods of drought. Moreover the far bank slopes abruptly down to the river

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1. Cal. L.P. (1266-72), 113.

with a steepness which is masked by the well-cut grass now covering it, but which must in an uncultivated state, covered with trees and bushes, have been a considerable obstacle.

East of St. Julian's Friary there is now no sign above ground of the wall which Blakeway traced on both sides of Friars Lane in the early 19th-century.<sup>1</sup> The course plotted on the plan is absolutely conjectural, based solely on property boundaries with an attempt to conform to Speed's line. Speed shows near the right-angle turn a lane leading to the river from a postern which, since it was unprotected by a tower, must have been small. Burleigh's map shows the gate without the lane, and much nearer the Wyle. The lane is perhaps to be identified with Bulgerlode, a street which led to the river from the bottom of Wyle Cop on the right-hand side of the bridge.<sup>2</sup>

The course plotted for the town wall immediately north of the Wyle is likewise based on property boundaries in general conformity with Speed and Burleigh, and lacking any confirmation from masonry above ground must be considered suspect.

It is now necessary to consider another defensive wall which is said to have crossed Wyle Cop at a higher level than the one just described. Blakeway in his

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905) 255.  
2. T. Phillips, History and Antiquities of Shrewsbury.



posthumously published "Topographical History of Shrewsbury" wrote that from the junction of Belmont Bank and Beeches (then Back) Lane "the town wall itself went north-east, in the direction of, but leaving to the left, a narrow alley yet remaining, as far as the Wyle, which it crossed about the middle, and in the back part of the premises opposite, now occupied by Sir John Betton, were foundations of a strong tower now destroyed. A few yards further, in the same premises, a wall sets off parallel" to that which runs down to the bridge;<sup>1</sup> this is a continuation westwards up the Wyle of the wall mentioned in the preceding paragraph, and in the early nineteenth-century some of its loopholes were still visible. The present wall is built of reused red sandstone masonry about 2 ft. thick, and in its present form suggests it is no more than a garden wall. The line to the river is continued by other modern walls bounding terraced plots upon most of which stand modern buildings. Burleigh's map shows a small gate about half-way up it. Blakeway's editor, on examining the narrow alley then known as the Compasses Passage, found no more than "a few detached portions of masonry which may have formed portions of such a wall"; I failed to find even these. Nor does there seem to be a marked difference of levels such as there is

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905) 255-6.

on the opposite side of the Wyle Cop, though such a difference is by no means an essential accompaniment of a wall; the stretch between the Welsh Bridge and the Austin Friars is another which does not show this feature, the existence of which would depend on local topography. The foundations of the tower cannot be corroborated from any other source, but it is quite likely that Blakeway was correct. Sir John Betton's house is not easy to identify; <sup>1</sup> there is however on the west side of the yard behind the Nag's Head a wall some 14 ft. high (X on plan), mostly of brick refaced with concrete but containing some red sandstone masonry (pl.18). A brick tower built on this wall opposite its junction with the wall coming up from the bridge appears to be entirely modern. That the wall is medieval is shown by the existence of a timber-framed house, dateable to c.1400, built against it. Since the general wall line continues very clearly, turning first west, then due north, this portion is certainly part of the town wall and not, as might otherwise be fairly surmised, a retaining wall. There is no reason therefore to doubt that the wall once went across to Belmont Bank; it has vanished only where the difference of ground levels was not so marked as to make its retention desirable.

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1. R.E. Davies in a letter to William Phillips, 17 November 1904 (SPL. D69), marks on a sketch plan what is presumably the site of Betton's Mansion.

An alternative course has been suggested for the sector of the town defences north of Wyle Cop which must be mentioned if only to be rejected. One of R.E. Davies's sketch-plans in William Phillips's collection <sup>1</sup> shows the line of the wall running higher up Wyle Cop, west of No. (Anne Clark Ltd), and turning eastward to join the brick tower mentioned above. On this line there is certainly a substantial wall built mainly of red sandstone, standing perhaps 12 - 15 ft. high in the garden at the back of the shop (Y on plan). Now the character of the masonry becomes important; here the ashlar is much larger than in any place where <sup>the</sup> well-established thirteenth-century build can be seen. The blocks are between 2 ft. 6 ins. and 4 ft. long, contrasting strongly with the small squarish masonry on, for example, Town Walls. Moreover there is no trace of the slight batter found throughout the genuine wall. It is of course possible that some parts of the genuine wall were rebuilt in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, for which the different character of this masonry might be quite appropriate. In the absence of any proof of such late rebuilding elsewhere it is impossible to use this as an argument in favour of Davies's suggested course, hence a line further down the Wyle Cop must on the available evidence be preferred.

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1. SPL. D69.

The defensive implications of the wall plan on Wyle Cop are interesting. There was a gate at the town end of the English Bridge, the remains of which are shown by Speed, and another must have stood halfway up the Wyle at a point not much below the 200 ft. contour, perhaps 190-195 ft. above O.D.; certainly high enough to command the steep rise from the bridge. The walls running along the north and south sides of the Wyle Cop were, as Blakeway wrote, "designed only to maintain communication with the bridge", while a second line of defence stood in a stronger tactical position on the higher ground behind. A somewhat similar plan will be noted below at St. Mary's Water Gate, where communication with the river was also maintained by a walled street. The absence of any comparable feature at the Welsh Bridge is no doubt because the lie of the ground nowhere gives sufficient advantage to the defenders to make it worth while building a second line of walls. The siting of the north wall so far from Wyle Cop is not primarily because settlement had already begun here when it was built, but because its course lies along the edge of a spur which reaches from the high ground towards the river.

Following the wall on a northward line (pl. 20) east of Dogpole the next feature calling for discussion is a "postern" marked on the O.S. 25-inch map as lying below

the Borough Engineer's offices. The opening is 3 ft. 3 ins. wide with jambs of red sandstone and a segmental head with alternate voussoirs of white and red sandstone. The lowest visible part of the doorway has a modern brick blocking about 10 ft. below the springers of the arch. The right-hand jamb shows traces of a rebate for a door; the left-hand, crudely built, its members not bonding with the wall masonry, has undergone alteration. The springers of the arched head also appear to fit badly in their present positions, especially on the left-hand side. The south jamb is built flush with the wall which here has a vertical face; north of the opening the three lowest visible courses each have a slight offset with a further offset of 3 inches at a height of 6 ft. 3 ins. The wall survives to a height of 15 ft. above the present ground level. The lowest 8 ft. are mainly composed of nearly square ashlar blocks in courses of irregular width; the upper part shows a marked difference of technique, the ashlar being much better cut and incorporating large blocks up to 3 ft. long. The inside of the opening has not been examined.

Evidently there has been much rebuilding of the wall here although its actual course is not in doubt. The portion stretching 18 yards north of the doorway has been entirely rebuilt from top to bottom; that to the

south is original to a height of 8 ft. The large size of the ashlar in the upper parts of the wall suggests rebuilding at a fairly late date, not necessarily in the middle ages; perhaps the Civil War is the most likely period, though a white sandstone would have been in general use then. The date the opening was formed and its original purpose cannot finally be determined without examining the passage which leads to it, but the architectural characteristics show that no part of what is visible is 13th-century work. This does not preclude the possibility of its having replaced a medieval postern, though the purpose such an exit would have served is not clear. One final observation may be added; on the Burleigh map a tiny marking could conceivably have been intended to show a door in approximately the position of that now existing, but the date of the feature is still an open question.

Mention must be made of the subterranean passage marked on the O.S. 25-inch map. It is terminated by a plain rectangular opening in the wall and is brick-lined internally. The floor, though largely concealed by rubbish, appears by its gentle slope from west to east to be more appropriate to a post-medieval drain than a passage.

Behind the Guildhall the wall makes a straight joint to the portion just described. Twelve yards further along is a second straight joint, after which the red sandstone ashlar is slightly battered, heavily pointed, and apparently reset. Near the north side of the Guildhall Garden the wall curves round to set back 4 yards from its previous line and continues beyond as a mixture of squarish red and white sandstone ashlar standing to a height of 6 ft. 6 ins. above a bold plinth and a base course of rubble. White sandstone has not been noted hitherto in any part of the 13th-century work, but in this stretch south of the castle there can be no doubt that it is part of the original build. A slight constructional peculiarity is perhaps worth recording. The seventh course above the plinth is mainly of red sandstone with white sandstone blocks at 8 ft. intervals, each set on its shorter face and thus projecting upwards into the top surviving course. There is no clear sign of resetting here, though it is obviously a strong possibility. No explanation can here be offered of this oddity in the masonry; it is recorded in the hope that it may be observed elsewhere. At the junction of the original construction with the curved work there is a very crudely bonded joint, and the plinth does not run continuously but breaks off at the angle and reappears for a short distance at a lower level and in slighter form on the curved wall.

The main plinth is at about the same level as the top of the surviving wall in the Guildhall garden, because the general ground level rises considerably; in the same way Dogpole rises steadily to the north, and St. Mary's Court also. A tentative explanation of the reset masonry behind the Guildhall may therefore be offered. That stretch of wall at some time collapsed, causing the earth behind it to subside forwards. Instead of rebuilding exactly on the original line, the wall was put up further forward to ease the problem of replacing the soil, and for the same reason battered back. It may be noted in this connection that so pronounced a batter as this is not normal except in the tower behind the Raven Garage; on Town Walls, for instance, or behind Shuker's warehouse, a batter is only just perceptible in a height of 16 feet.

The wall continues (Z on plan) behind St. Mary's Vicarage, where it breaks forward at an angle of about  $20^{\circ}$  to about 1 ft. in front of its former line. It may once have gone further forward, but where it resumes a course parallel to its previous line the masonry appears to have been reset. The angle of the break forward is formed mostly of stones shaped to fit it, therefore original. The thickness here is about 6 ft. 6 ins. or 7 ft. Pl.19 gives a general view of this section of the wall.



Below the infirmary the wall has vanished. The steep banks which the O.S. 25-inch map marks as the site of the Town Wall show no trace of masonry but probably represent its course correctly, swinging first N.N.W., then returning to a due north course, keeping to the high ground all the way. It is largely masked by modern buildings in this last stretch; only from the Infirmary steps can one see the sandstone masonry where it ran up to the upper gate across St. Mary's Water Lane shown by both Speed and Burleigh. Somewhere east or south-east of St. Mary's church Speed shows the wall curving outwards in a segment of a circle, as though it were a kind of bastion to enfilade the adjacent defence. Since the Burleigh map shows nothing comparable the feature must remain a mystery.

Near the waterside due east of St. Mary's church lay the Dominican Friary to which the lane called Irkelonde gave access <sup>1</sup> presumably through a postern. The house seems not to have been strongly fortified, though in 1242 fifty loads of stone from "Monte Gilberti" were given by the King to the Friars Preachers for them to build a wall adjacent to the town wall.<sup>2</sup> The work proceeded slowly, despite an order to the Sheriff in 1246 to build a wall

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1. Cal. L.P. (1266-72).  
2. CCR (1242-7), 402-3.

"next to the water beneath the buildings of the Friars Preachers" <sup>1</sup> because in 1265 it was ordered to be enclosed with a wall which in 1279 had to be raised to a height of 8 feet out of the issues of the murage of the town. <sup>2</sup> Perhaps the crenellated wall shown running along the river bank in the Burleigh map was part of their precinct.

Where the town wall joins St. Mary's Water Lane fragmentary remains of sandstone masonry on both sides show where the upper gate stood. Small patches of masonry remain in the south wall, but the north wall, which retains a high bank behind it, has been entirely refaced in brick. The lower waterside gate has a two-centred chamfered arch 7 ft. 10 ins. high with a segmental-pointed rear-arch and is flanked externally by two buttresses having three offsets. All the dressings are in white sandstone, with patches of red showing only in plain walling (pl. 21 ).

From the gate the wall returns a short way to the west before resuming a northward course parallel with the river. It seems to run immediately below the Council House and gardens (pl. ?? ), although it is said that the house is built on the wall itself. The visible evidence is insufficient to decide the question. The large garden

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1. *ibid.*, 394.

2. Cal. L.P. (1258-66) 412; CCR (1272-9), 544.

which formed part of the outer bailey of the castle has a stone wall bounding it towards the Severn; at the south end this wall curves inwards slightly as if to join a line leading directly under the Council House. From the north end of the Council House garden onwards the town wall is really part of the castle defences, which were integrated with those of the town. The wall runs up from the garden to the late eighteenth-century tower which is said to have replaced a thirteenth-century structure on the same site.<sup>1</sup> Speed's and Burleigh's plans, however, suggest that before Telford rebuilt the alleged "watch-tower" the wall excluded the whole of the motte, i.e., the motte was then in the outer bailey. From the eighteenth-century tower a wall ran direct; nothing of it remains near the street, but otherwise it survives, forming the division between the inner and outer baileys.

Speed's and Burleigh's maps both show a wall going from the upper gate of St. Mary's Water Lane behind Castle Street and so regaining the main wall somewhere near the Council House. Burleigh's in particular suggests a course immediately behind the houses fronting Castle Street, then turning sharply to meet the south end of a large building which must be the Council House. Recent examination of this area did not reveal any sign of 13th-century

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1. Owen, Ancient and Present State, 71-2.

masonry, nor did workmen engaged in digging footings trenches hereabouts know of any buried foundations.

Little more need be said about the defensive situation. For the whole of its course from Wyle Cop the wall has an excellent position commanding the steep slope which ends in low-lying gardens extending to the river. It will be noted that there is neither documentary nor architectural evidence for towers throughout this stretch.

For at least part of its course the wall was accompanied by a ditch. An early 14th-century deed refers to "a piece of ground behind the walls, called the moat, extending in length from St. Chad's Gate to the House of the Friars Minors ..." <sup>1</sup> Another deed relating to a house behind the Wyle (the name given to the steeply sloping portion of Wyle Cop) describes it as being part within and part without the town ditch; <sup>2</sup> perhaps it was the timber hall of c.1400 mentioned above, which would fit the description admirably.

There remains to be mentioned a detached portion of the 13th-century wall which ran from the outer or Castle Gate westward to the Severn, and then for a short distance parallel with the river. This wall is shown by Speed as

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 255 n.2.  
2. SPL.

having two square towers near its riverside end, with perhaps a third near the Castle Gate. Burleigh's plan shows the whole layout differently proportioned, but with only two towers which seem to correspond roughly to Gerewald's and Gilbert's towers shown on the O.S. 25-inch map. The authority for the latter name is not clear; I think it is probably of 17th or 18th century origin, at which period many of the wall towers are referred to by their owner's names. Blakeway detected the foundations of a wall running from Gilbert's tower up the hill towards Castle Street, which he considered to have enclosed part of the castle bailey.<sup>1</sup> This was certainly not the case, but the evidence is too slight to permit further conjecture about its date or purpose. He adds that a deep wet moat extended from the river to the Castle, and was crossed by a draw-bridge.

From archaeological evidence we now turn briefly to the documentary material available in the bailiff's accounts for the building of the wall. The series is regrettably incomplete, the earliest account dating only from 1256, by which time a large part of the work must have been completed. The result is that the fragmentary documents cannot be related to any part of the equally fragmentary ground remains

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1. TSAS, 3s. V (1905), 257.

of the thirteenth century wall. I have not attempted to extract all the later references to the wall from the bailiffs' accounts of the fourteenth and later centuries because a cursory glance through those items specified in the catalogue of the borough records to contain wall material suggested that the exact position where repairs were carried out is very rarely mentioned, hence the records do not throw light on the character of masonry at different periods. Thus the combination of structure and documentary evidence which Mr. B.H. St. J. O'Neil used to clarify the history of Southampton town walls<sup>1</sup> cannot be hoped for at Shrewsbury.

A close analysis of the thirteenth century accounts would certainly yield interesting information about the organisation and cost of building operations, but this is not of primary importance in a topographical study, and, moreover, would probably not reveal anything additional to what is already known of such subjects from more complete series. There remain a number of details which deserve mention.

The earliest roll covering parts of the years 1256 and 1257 contains a placename which does not seem to be recorded elsewhere; it occurs in the entry, "ad hauriendum aquam

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1. B.H. St. J. O'Neil, The Town Wall of Southampton, Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond, ed. W.F. Grimes.

supra murum inxta wrohrgepol".<sup>1</sup> Work was going on late in 1256 at the "Castellum Garewalldi",<sup>2</sup> and was still unfinished eight years later.<sup>3</sup> Garewald's castle was perhaps a particularly strong tower near the Severn. For other towers the normal word "turris" is used, but unfortunately it is not now possible to identify any tower mentioned in the accounts with a surviving structure. In this and other rolls are references to minor repairs at bridges, often unspecified, though the "bridge towards the Abbey" occurs several times, and the "bridge under the castle" is also mentioned. St. George's gate was one of the three points where murage was collected - the others were of course the Abbey and castle gates - but no mention is made of work on a bridge of that name.

Work upon the walls at Garewald went on for a long time, at least as late as Easter 1259; <sup>4</sup> mention of the "wall next to the water" shows that the defences facing Wales were being built, perhaps because they were the last part of the whole plan to be executed, the town having been encircled first.

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1. Borough Records, Bailiff's Accounts No.302, (W.E. 17 Sept. 1256) Seventh week.
  2. *ibid.*, 16th week, W.E. 19 November 1256.
  3. *ibid.*, 309, week, W.E. 17 October 1264.
  4. *ibid.*, 307, second week, W.E. 13 April 1259.

The precise location of the quarries is nowhere stated. In 1261 workmen were employed in 'emptying the new quarry', probably of water, in order to get stone for use at the house of the Friars Minor.<sup>1</sup> Three men with a little boat ('navicula') were normally employed in bringing the stone from the quarry,<sup>2</sup> which suggests that there was some more distant source than the old quarry near the river which is now a public park.

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1. *ibid.*, 308, 43rd week, w.e.  
2. *Bailiffs' Accounts*, *passim*.



C H A P T E R IV.

EARLIER DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.

The earliest domestic buildings in Shrewsbury about which anything is known are some large stone houses built, it seems, mostly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Our knowledge of them is derived partly from structural remains but mainly from descriptions and drawings, which can be supplemented by a very small amount of documentary evidence. Accurate dating is therefore impossible. All that can be said with reasonable certainty is that the Council House, built in 1502, seems to be the latest example in Shrewsbury of this type of medieval building.<sup>1</sup>

The house about which most is known lies on the north side of Pride Hill almost opposite High Street with its axis parallel to Roushill. A modern tradition gives it the name of "The Old Mint"; more correctly it seems identifiable with the "tenement formerly called Benneteshalle opposite the Hey Strete" referred to in a deed of 1378.<sup>2</sup> The existing remains are largely concealed by timber-framed houses put up on the site in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, and successive layers of plaster combined with later alterations conceal many details, so the following account is merely tentative until further examination can take place.

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1. The Council House falls well beyond the dating range of all the other buildings mentioned in this chapter so it will be discussed later.
  2. TSAS, I, Extracts from ~~Heugmond~~ "Heugmond Cartulary".

Originally it was a two storeyed building (Fig.11) about 65 ft x 30 ft (internally), divided into two unequal parts respectively 28 and 34 feet long by a transverse wall pierced with arches (Fig.12). The ground level here falls away to the north and north-west, so the lower storey must have been in the nature of an undercroft at the end nearer Pride Hill. The interpretation of the building is dependent upon the significance attached to one or two details, so it will be postponed until a description has been given.

The walls are of coursed red sandstone ashlar; the best-preserved portion is the west<sup>1</sup> wall, 3 ft. 9 ins. thick, which survives from the north-west angle for a distance of some 40 ft. to a height of about 12 ft. above the existing ground level in the adjacent yard of Lloyds Bank (Pl.23). The exterior of the north wall is also of coursed ashlar and is preserved for 21 ft. from the north-west angle but internally it seems to have been reduced to a thickness of about 2 ft., the inner face now being of coursed or random rubble. The eastern third of the north and south walls was certainly destroyed to make a court or "shut" giving access to the sixteenth century buildings, when too the former ground storey or undercroft was filled with earth to a depth of five feet. To that height therefore the demolished stretches of the end walls may yet survive. The remaining parts of the south and west walls show no traces above the same level though masonry

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1. The building's correct orientation is NW and SE but for convenience of description SW is here W and other points modified to suit.

may well be concealed behind brick and timber. The east wall has been extensively robbed. A 7 ft. length of coursed squared rubble still stands to a height of six feet at the south-east angle of the building; its fair face terminates as a vertical line and contrasts with the broken rubble face which seems to mark the return of the south wall. South of the arched structure spanning the court or passage a 17 ft. stretch of red sandstone walling remains to a height of 14 ft.; it will be discussed again later. North of the arch a 7 ft. length of the wall is incorporated in the sixteenth century building. To the north again the traces of red sandstone masonry which serve as footings to the brick walls of adjoining premises, although exceedingly slight, probably indicate the wall-line; it may be noted that beyond the conjectured north-east angle there is no stonework whatever. These fragmentary remains of stone walls are the evidence for the outline plan.

We now turn to the transverse wall which is the other major feature. Dividing the undercroft or ground floor are two arches each of two chamfered orders continuous in the responds and two-centred heads; the chamfers are stopped (pl.24) but there is at present no other indication of bases. The apex of the eastern arch is visible at the south end of the covered passage dividing the court (pl.25), and more of its voussoirs may be seen in the small room adjacent on the east side. The western arc of this arch has been hidden by

brickwork or demolished. Of the west arch only the west arc and apex survive, considerably displaced (pl.26); the other arc has been removed to allow a modern fireplace to be inserted. A short length of the west respond can be seen in the present cellar. Immediately above this arcade the wall is rebated on the south side for joists and there is probably a similar original rebate on the north side upon which the sixteenth century joists still rest.

The general disposition above the rebate comprised a fireplace on the south side of the wall, flanked by two large two-centred arches, each filled with masonry but pierced by a lesser arch on the side away from the fireplace (Fig.12). Although these subsidiary arches were not placed with exact symmetry the conjectured arrangement fits the evidence reasonably well.

There are three indications of a fireplace. The most striking is the foliated capital which supported the lintel (pl.27), with the beginnings of a hood above it. More of the hood is visible in the second storey surviving behind later lath-and-plaster and the view from Lloyd's Bank shows the indistinct outline of the masonry rising up to form the back of the chimney (pl.23). The hood was probably corbelled out beyond the capital to give an appearance like the fireplace at Stokesay.<sup>1</sup> Below the capital was an attached shaft which has

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1. Margaret E. Wood, Thirteenth century Domestic Architecture in England, Arch. J. CV (1950) Supplement, pl. X.

been broken off.

J.C. Buckler sketched the arrangement of fireplace and arches in 1821 (pl.28), together with some exceedingly valuable details of the eastern arch (pl.29) and a general view of it from the yard or shut (pl.30).

On the side nearest the fireplace the larger arches spring from carved capitals, whereas on the opposite side the chamfered head and respond are continuous. Of the two adjacent capitals on each side of the fireplace the inner had the deeper bell, as may be seen from pl.27 and the top left hand detail of Buckler's f.31 (pl.29). It is curious that no comparable treatment was applied to the opposite side of the large arches or at least to the eastern of the two. Buckler shows very well the enriched capital of the doorway adjacent to the continuous chamfer of the main arch.

No trace remains of a lesser arch west of the fireplace except the gap and filled so the drawing of the eastern arch (pl.30) must be considered carefully because it supplements the evidence for dating the building, which is otherwise confined to the capital already mentioned.. The prolonged exposure to the weather has by now completely destroyed all detail and thereby enhanced the value of these admirable antiquarian records.

The larger eastern arch is of red sandstone and has a chamfered order above chamfered jambs. Its one capital on the west side (pl. 29), now defaced, is closely comparable to

the single survivor illustrated in plate 27, with a highly evolved late form of the stiff-leaf foliage ornament which first appeared in the early thirteenth century. This arch is largely blocked by masonry, all of which is coursed with the responds up to the level of the springers. The remainder of the arch contains a doorway with a chamfered two-centred head springing from defaced capitals; the head contains a trefoil from which all trace of ornament has been weathered away, and the form of the bases and jambs is equally indistinguishable. The soft red sandstone in which the whole was worked seems to have decayed very rapidly since Buckler's day; it is possible that an increase in atmospheric impurity caused by the modest degree of industrialisation in Shrewsbury since then is a relevant factor.

Examining the drawings (pl. 28 and 29) we find that the capitals of the smaller arch had a somewhat different kind of foliation from that previously noted, and there was also a slight difference as between one capital and the other. The one on the left has more of the stiff-leaf stalk showing, in a manner reminiscent of work on Salisbury chapter-house, ascribed to c.1270.<sup>1</sup> The arch above as shown in pl. 29 was trefoiled with formalised foliage terminations to the cusps, and with what looks very much like ball-flower ornament running around the trefoil and in the spandrels of the cusps. A

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1. Samuel Gardner, English Gothic Foliage Sculpture, 30, and pl. 50.

detail of the arch head shows however that what look like ballflowers are in fact cinquefoil flowers set in hollow-chamfered cusps (pl. 29d), for which I have found no parallel. It is equally difficult to find an analogy for the foliated cusps, though they may perhaps be compared with those in the presbytery of Lincoln Cathedral.<sup>1</sup> They are more formalised than the Lincoln examples and one (pl. 29 b) resembles a simple crocket. The mouldings of the jambs are so simple as to afford no help in dating. It is worth noting how carefully Buckler drew the stop to the jamb (pl. 29 g): his accuracy may in this detail be tested by examination of the base of the west jamb of the west arch, on the other side of the fireplace, where its fellow still survives with sharp undamaged arrises.

At this point we may consider the date of the building because all the relevant evidence has been brought forward. Despite the lack of exact parallels for the foliated cusps and the formalised flowers, the capitals drawn and surviving, suggest a date in the middle decades of the thirteenth century which the other two potentially significant features do not necessarily contradict. The capitals are in any case the firmest basis for dating, so provisionally we may assign Bennetts Hall to c.1259-60.<sup>2</sup>

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1. J.A. Parker, *Glossary of Architecture*, II, pl.69; dated to c.1260.
  2. I am indebted to Miss P. Wynn-Reeves, who has written a thesis (awaiting publication) on stiff-leaf foliage sculpture for the Courtland Institute, for advice on the dating of this capital.

The arch east of the fireplace has often been regarded as the entrance to a chapel,<sup>1</sup> but clearly the stone steps up to the doorway are no part of the original design, and what is alleged to be a stoup on the right-hand wall near the jamb (pl. 34 and 30) is a reset two-centred arch cut in a single stone without a trace behind it of a bowl or shaped recess. It is shown, with dimensions, in one of Buckler's details (pl. 29 k); the moulding assigned to it is not visible today, nor are the trefoil cusps which appear in the general view. No purpose can be suggested for this arch but it is interesting to note that a very similar one exists in close association with a wall fireplace in the north tower at Stokesay.<sup>2</sup>

The arch west of the fireplace is partly masked by later alterations but sufficient remains to suggest it had a similar arrangement to the one just described. Both jambs of the large arch are coursed and bonded with masonry which partially blocks the intervening space, extending inwards on the east side 3 ft. 4 ins. (pl. 27) and on the west 10 ins. (pl. 27). This leaves space for a doorway about the same width as that under the eastern arch, though no traces of it are now to be seen. The absence of an attached shaft at the west jamb shows the arrangement was not identical with that of the eastern area, where such a shaft clearly appears. The soffit

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1. e.g. by Margaret E. Wood, *op.cit.*, 64, and H.E. Forrest, *Old Houses of Shrewsbury* (4th edn., 1935), 34-5.
  2. Turner and Parker, Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages, I, Thirteenth Century, illus. opp.160;



of the west arch of the head is dressed to a fair face with no sign of coursed and bonded blocking such as appears in the jambs; this is to be expected, since it would be easier for the masons to work the voussoirs separately from the blocking. In Buckler's drawing (pl.26) the east arch is shown thus, though now the stone is so badly weathered that the soffit and blocking appear to be one unbroken mass.

The architectural features of the walls are of less certain interpretation. Inside near the north-west corner of the undercroft is a recess with a shouldered lintel (pl.28), perhaps a lamp-recess; it seems too high to be a cupboard, nor are there any signs of hinges or fastenings. South of it is a large opening with very slightly splayed jambs and segmental head (pl.28) which appears to be an original window. In it, flush with the outer wall face, is a Grinshill sandstone window of two square-headed lights each with a continuous chamfer round the frame (pl.29); it was inserted probably at the time the timber-framed building was put up. Another similar window to the south again has had its sill removed and the jambs extended to the present floor level (pl.30); it contains a two-light window identical with that just described. Adjoining the transverse arcade is a round-headed opening of which the rear-arch and jambs have been removed (pl.31). Its head is built of carefully coursed ashlar sloping downwards from the outside of the building as if it had been the barrel-vaulted head of an entrance down into the

undercroft, presumably with a flight of steps partly inside the building; it is blocked with brick and is masked outside by modern structures. Immediately above the heads of these three large openings is a rebate for joists which is certainly an original feature.

The first-floor details are more problematical. Inside near the north-west corner are the remains of what appear to be the impost and lower voussoirs of an arch, chamfered continuously through impost and head. A possible respond for an arch at the same height exists about 9 ft. to the south. Internally the wall seems to be much reduced in thickness at about the height the impost begins; whether this is an original feature or solely the result of later alteration is difficult to tell. Externally however (pl.33) the masonry survives intact and shows very clearly the jambs of an original window opening about 5 ft. wide, now blocked with brickwork but just showing that both jambs and sill had a continuous chamfer. The height of the window is uncertain but seems to have been at least as great as the surviving walls which rise some 6 ft. above the sill. Another such window opening, rather narrower, is visible outside; it is now filled with a white sandstone window of two square-headed chamfered lights and is of the same height and has the same continuous chamfer in jambs and head as the previous opening. Internally the jambs and sill are extensively altered.

South of the transverse arcade the only architectural features are tantalising fragments. Adjacent to the west jamb of the west arch on the first floor is the springer of an arch about 9 ins. thick (pl.32). Outside it is the springer of a segmental arch which can be traced to a thickness of 1 ft. 6 ins. where it is hidden by brickwork; it can just be seen on the same photograph. It may by analogy with the ground floor openings be the head of a window. The corresponding point in the east wall is quite different. Four feet from the jamb of the main transverse arch and at the same level as its springer is the springer of a longitudinal arch. It is of white sandstone, contrasting with the red sandstone of the impost below, but despite this difference the continuous chamfer, clearly indicated in Buckler's drawing (pl.30 & 34), shows it is an original feature.

How should we interpret all these architectural features in terms of their social function? The first point is that there is no evidence of heating anywhere in the ground-floor or undercroft, nor in the northern half of the upper storey. This suggests that the elaborate axial fireplace heated a first-floor hall at the south end, a hall which occupied rather less than half the length of the building. The two doorways flanking the fireplace show the need for communication between the hall and the remainder of the upper storey. Now immediately below the north side of the fireplace is an original entrance, placed in a side wall as was

the medieval fashion, and there may have been another door facing it in the opposite wall. On the south side of the "passage" between these conjectural doors was the arcade of the undercroft. Now if we imagine a stair placed in a fairly close relation to this passage, it would have led up behind the transverse wall in which the fireplace stands; in other words this wall may have corresponded to the screens. It is obvious that this tentative reconstruction is highly speculative, and it is only offered in the absence of better evidence on which to build. It does present several difficulties, the most important of which is the position of the solar. The northern half of the ground-floor is too large for such a purpose, and it would in any case imply a screens passage between hall and solar, which is an unusual arrangement. But if the solar were at the other end, in its usual relation to the hall and passage, it implies that the fireplace was at the lower end of the hall, which, one is tempted to say, is absurd. Perhaps too little is at present known about the original entrance to carry speculation much further, although it is worth remarking that the presence of two doors flanking the fireplace suggests they led into something more than a solar, which can never, for reasons of privacy have required more than one; a screens passage is the obvious solution.

The absence of a fireplace in the undercroft shows that cooking was carried out in another building, perhaps a

timber structure nearby, or a lean-to outbuilding. The undercroft must have been used primarily for storage - of what, there is no means of telling, but such ample provision suggests the house may have belonged to a merchant.

A few minor points require to be noticed. The hall fireplace stands above the pier of the undercroft, so removing the danger of fire in a building without vaults.<sup>1</sup> The windows of the undercroft were of necessity placed high in the walls, but in the upper storey too they were apparently placed just beneath the wall place in the usual medieval manner. The building no doubt had an open roof, of which, unfortunately, no evidence remains, even of its pitch.

Bennett's Hall has been described first because it is the only example of the type of which any considerable remains survive, but it was certainly not the largest or most imposing of its kind. That title belongs to Charlton Hall in Shoplatch which is described in a deed of 1470<sup>2</sup> as "One great hall called Chorlton's Hall, one great stone chamber annexed to the hall, one large cellar under the said hall, and one great garden enclosed on either side with stone walls". Three drawings by J.C. Buckler (pls.35 &36 &37) have preserved for us the appearance of the building a few years before it was

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1. cf. Margaret E. Wood, op.cit., 124.

2. Owen, Ancient and Present State, 481-2.

demolished. They show a large rectangular stone structure ("Court of the remains of Charlton Hall") with an adjoining two-storied stone building ("Remains of the Palace of the Princes of Powis") butting against it in a way which suggests the latter was a later addition. The two entrances opposite each other in the ground-floor hall (pl.36) look like the ends of a screens passage, the principal doorway being presumably the larger one on the right, an idea which is confirmed by Buckler's drawing of "The Entrance to the remains of Charlton Hall". Here the big pointed arch has a quite impressive appearance, and there had apparently been some kind of porch to it, if the sloping line above the doorhead is in fact the trace of an old roof. Each door arch seems to be pointed, probably two-centred and of a single chamfered order (pl. 35 ). The rear arch of the right-hand doorway is perhaps segmental, that of the lesser doorway either segmental or pointed segmental. All three drawings suggest the floor of this hall was at ground level.

Other details are harder to interpret; pl.37 shows two windows placed high in the wall, and perhaps part of a third low down next to the door, but of this there is no internal sign (pl. 36); it may have been a blocked door. The tops of the window sills are at the same level as the apex of the outer order of the smaller doorway. Pl.36 shows that the window nearest the door had a segmental rear arch

and had been blocked, a fact which is clearly confirmed by the abbreviation "Bl" which appears across the opening in pl. 37. As the jambs of both windows are shown bonded into the adjacent masonry they were doubtless original features; their size and proportions may be compared with the smaller of the first-floor windows in Bennett's Hall. Their sills are at a level below the head of the larger doorway, and an upper storey above even the shallowest segmental head these windows may have had could hardly have been feasible; it may therefore be assumed this older Hall was at ground level and open to the roof, with the windows placed high up in the customary manner to shield the inmates from draughts.

The several structural features cursorily sketched on the gable wall (pl. 36) are not discussed here because they are more closely related to the later building. This second block is presumed to be later than the ground-floor hall only on the basis of general probability; the heavily built gable wall of the latter (pl. 35) can hardly have been inserted into the plan and structure of the pre-existing building. The later building was probably the "great stone chamber annexed to the Hall"<sup>1</sup>, beneath it being an undercroft of which two windows can be seen. The upper storey must certainly have been subdivided into at least chamber and solar, and was approached by

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1. cf. Owen, op.cit., 483.

an external staircase of which only the weathering of its penthouse roof may be seen against the wall; below is a door which seems to have had a corbelled or more probably a shouldered lintel. There was also a "narrow spiral stone staircase",<sup>1</sup> where situated we do not know. Reverting now to the "Court of Charlton Hall" the door at the head of the external staircase seems to have been at the same level as the upper pointed-arch opening in the gable end of the old hall (pl. 36). There is an indication that a flight of steps gave access to this door also; four black scribbles resemble a sloping row of putlog holes for a staircase. At ground level in the gable wall are two arched doorways, one blocked. At the risk of basing one doubtful conjecture upon another it is suggested that here was an original opening blocked to permit the building of a stair to the door inserted above, and some support for this idea comes from the apparent lack of space for a stair on the other wall, where it would have cut across the screens passage. The older Hall might well have had a timber-framed kitchen wing on the far side of the screens, entered by the blocked doorway shown in Buckler's sketch. It is uncertain how far along the end wall of the Hall the later building extended; a suggestion of a coping-stone at the apex of its gable appears above the truncated gable of the Hall. If that is correct the right-hand ground floor

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1. Owen, loc.cit.



doorway may have led originally into some building not shown in the sketch or into a yard or garden. The two square-headed openings flanking it are too uncertain to permit useful conjecture.

Of the lesser architectural features of the later building little can be said save that the four-centred arch and the two much altered windows are perhaps original.

The only extant remains of Charlton's Hall are two parallel stone walls, one of which lies beneath the pavement of Shoplatch,<sup>1</sup> and it is possible to show they are the walls of the undercroft. It will be seen from Buckler's sketches that his orientation was not strictly correct, but Owen adds enough to decide the matter. "The most considerable remnant" he says, "is a lofty building of red stone, extending in length 100 feet and in breadth 31. On the side next the street, an attempt has been made to give it a modern air, by a plaister front; the other exhibits the original walls of red stone, with some gothic arches blocked up...".<sup>2</sup> Therefore the elevation of the latter building was parallel to Shoplatch and the earlier hall was roughly parallel to Market Street. This is confirmed by pl.35 which shows timber-framed buildings at right angles to the old Hall; they must have been alongside the approach, so that as built the Hall lay a considerable

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1. The building was pulled down about 1833, having become dangerous; "Some deaths were occasioned in June 1821 by the falling of a wall". Gent's Mag. Lib. Engl. Topog., X, 144, quoting GM (1833), pt. ii, 356-7.
  2. Owen, loc.cit.

distance from Market Street, with the addition at right angles to it. Forrest notes that when the foundations of the Borough Police Office were dug in 1892 "Solid and thick masonry of red sandstone, doubtless belonging to this ancient mansion" was found.<sup>1</sup> This may have been connected with the stone walls enclosing the garden, which (like the Abbey walls) were no doubt crenellated after the licence to do so had been issued in 1325.<sup>2</sup> The deed of 1470 speaks of the house and garden as being "in the street called Scheplache, extending in length by the King's highway, leading from the aforesaid street towards the church of St. Chad."

To sum up Charlton Hall, we have a large stone building in two distinct parts, the earlier forming originally a complete domestic hall. This first element was a ground-floor hall with the screens-passage at the west end<sup>3</sup> nearest Shoplatch. There is no independent evidence to date it, but since the later two-storeyed hall probably dates back to the early fourteenth century, some time before the licence to crenellate was issued in 1325, we may not be far wrong in assigning its predecessor to about the middle of the thirteenth century. What purpose it served when the new building with its great chamber came into use is impossible to guess.

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1. H.E. Forrest, op.cit., 34-35.

2. Cal. L.P. (1324-27), 178.

3. Property NW, since the early hall must have been aligned roughly NW and SE, and the later NE and SW.

The inferior end of both blocks was on the corner where they joined; the continued use of the old hall for its original purpose seems thereby precluded, since there would have been no means of access from the hall to the great chamber except through service passages. The exterior of the later building gives scarcely a hint of its plan. The only chimney visible is at the extreme south end; the large pointed window midway looks as if it lit some important room, perhaps the "great chamber" itself. This attempt to reconstruct the plan is not very conclusive, but although I have found no parallels for it a more extensive search among plans of the larger manor-houses might well throw light on the use to which the two blocks were put.

A third important house in the series, Vaughan's Mansion, known to Owen as Vaughan's Place, "or, as it is called in old leases, Vaughan's Hall",<sup>1</sup> is now incorporated in the nineteenth century Music Hall at the south-west end of The Square. It is known from some small extant remains, three Buckler drawings (pl.38 - 40) and an interesting description by Owen, who complained of the alterations which changed the building in his day.<sup>2</sup> As the fragmentary remains are rather featureless it will be best to begin with Buckler's

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1. Owen, op.cit., 488.  
2. ibid.

drawings. He did one detailed drawing of the main elevation facing The Square (pl.38 ), another of the first floor hall (pl.39 ) and a third of the elevation towards College Hill, which looks as if it may be a sketched reconstruction of the ancient features he discerned rather than an exact record of what was visible.<sup>1</sup>

Here, even more markedly than in Bennett's Hall, the rising ground level makes the lowest storey a ground-floor on one side (towards The Square) and an undercroft or cellar on the other. Entrance from College Hill leads directly on to the first floor. The main elevation shows a first-floor hall above a vaulted <sup>2</sup> lower storey at ground level, with a stone built wing which formed an L-plan. As drawn in 1821 the house was of half-H or U-plan around three sides of a courtyard, but the timber-framed wing shows every sign of being a later addition. The hall was entered up a flight of stone steps carried by what appears to be a depressed two-centred half-arch in order to clear the entrance to the ground floor immediately below; the latter appears to have had a pointed arch of at least two orders chamfered continuously in the head and jambs. There is no reason to doubt the lower entrance was an original feature, and the upper entrance is appropriately situated, leading to a screens passage dividing the service wing from the hall, so the

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1. cf. this drawing with those of the town gates (pl.242,243), which are certainly reconstructions.
  2. "Beneath the passage and hall are extensive vaults"; Owen, loc. cit.

unusual arched stairway may be original. The timber-framed oriel window in the penthouse-roofed lobby seems to be of fifteenth-century type, but this may simply represent a rebuilding of the original structure, probably at the same date as the hall roof.' "In the passage to the hall" says Owen,<sup>1</sup> "is a pointed arch recessed with numerous ribs, and with a similar one which, till the late tasteless alterations, communicated with College Hill, formed a small lobby at the principal entrance." H.E. Forrest says that a fire in 1917 disclosed a fourteenth century doorway "adjoining the screen",<sup>2</sup> which sounds like Owen's blocked door. No drawing or photograph is available, but Owen thought "the sharp-pointed form of the remaining arch and its round mouldings with flat ribs" suggested a date early in the fourteenth century. Buckler's drawing shows two windows in the hall, and the fire revealed two more in the opposite wall; early in the nineteenth century they received their square-headed form, having previously been narrow and pointed.<sup>3</sup> How the ground floor was lighted is not clear, as the tiny lights shown by Buckler are obviously inadequate and not certainly original.

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1. *ibid.*
  2. Forrest, *op.cit.*, 41.
  3. Owen, *loc. cit.*

The hall had a fine open roof with hammer beams and braced collars (pl.39 ); it was destroyed in the fire of 1917 and copied in the rebuilding.

A considerable part of the stone-built hall still survives, masked almost everywhere by later buildings and modern decoration. A view of the main or north elevation from the yard of the Music Hall (pl.41 ) shows the same extraordinary-looking dormer as Buckler drew, with the medieval stone fabric below it in the old solar end of the building. Another stretch of stone walling is visible next to the Music Hall proper above a boiler house, showing that on this side Vaughan's Hall stands to its full wallplate height. The south elevation is less easily seen. In a waiting-room at first-floor level there are the sill, jambs, mullion and transom of a blocked window, its head now hidden by the ceiling.

The plan (fig.13 ) shows that the thicker medieval walls of the hall have been incorporated in later work, but just how much remains is very difficult to decide.<sup>1</sup> The west wall is probably original; it seems to coincide with the end gable of the roof in Buckler's drawing (pl.38 ). How far east the hall extended is hard to decide. The sketch of the interior has at the foot the dimensions 35'0" x 28'0" which clearly apply to the hall alone;

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1. I have to thank Mr. F.R. Dinnis, formerly Borough Surveyor, for a plan of the Music Hall and associated buildings.

allowance must be made for the solar lying beyond the wall which closes the perspective. The positions of the windows regularly spaced on both sides of the hall but not placed exactly opposite each other, can perhaps help us. If we assume, as I think we can, that the present roof faithfully reproduces the one existing in 1821, the position of the regularly-spaced wall-posts of the hammer-beam trusses in relation to the windows is significant. The first-floor plan shows that the trusses are about 8 ft. apart and the windows each side between 16 and 17 ft. apart, which means that alternate trusses will be in much the same relation to each pair of windows, one post cutting into the window head, the other not, hence the relationship shown by Buckler applies equally to both pairs of windows. But it can be assumed that the artist drew as much as he could of this impressive roof, that is to say he was standing near one end of the room, from which he could draw two trusses, only one of which showed the desired relationship. Now the western pair of windows on the plan can be equated with those in the drawing, and there is still a partition wall in the position shown by Buckler. Measuring back 35 ft. from it brings us just within the inside face of the Music Hall wall, on which line, therefore, the hall once ended.

It may be objected that there is no proof that the western room was a solar. The only support for the idea comes from the room's position at the opposite end of the

hall from the screens passage, and this assumes that the two-storeyed stone wing was a service wing. There is no sign either on the plan or in the drawings of a fireplace to heat the hall.

Buckler's reconstruction I find impossible to understand. The large doorway must represent the end of the screens passage, the "pointed arch with numerous ribs" mentioned by Owen<sup>1</sup> as leading to College Hill, but the remaining features cannot be reconciled with what has been stated above.

So much for the plan; the surviving structural details do not need a lengthy description. The four hall windows, all now blocked, have segmental-headed rear-arches (pl.42); the form of the head is nowhere visible, and each opening has a mullion and transom. Only the window near the south-east corner reveals the moulding of these members, which appears to be continuous around the jambs too. This can be seen in the meeting room which now abuts the south side of Vaughan's Mansion, where also it is quite clear that the jamb mouldings are coursed with the wall masonry, hence they are original (pl.43). The south-west window of the hall makes a straight joint to a door immediately adjacent, between it and the end walls the door has a sunk chamfer continuous in the jambs and two-centred head. Whether it is an original feature is uncertain; its position

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1. loc.cit.,



suggests not, nor is it shown in Buckler's view of the hall, against this it should be noted that he does mark on his reconstruction a door in approximately this position, next to the solar end.

Lastly comes the problem of dating the building. The windows are moulded with an edge roll and fillet; their mullion and transom form is highly unusual, but there is no obvious sign of reconstruction that I can see. Owen speaks of the "narrow lancet windows lately destroyed", "a pointed ~~arch~~ recessed with numerous ribs", and of a sharp-pointed arch having "round mouldings with flat ribs".<sup>1</sup> These last sound like edge-rolls and fillets; narrow lancets suggest the thirteenth century; and although the many-ribbed arch might be of almost any date, it would certainly be a better description of a thirteenth century door than, for example, a late fourteenth century door with wide casement mouldings. Parallels for simple mouldings are hard to find and not likely to be confined to a narrow dating range; one quite close parallel is however to be found in the south doorway of Little Hereford Church, dated to 1270-80,<sup>2</sup> where both orders are treated solely with an edge-roll-and-fillet. On much the same grounds Owen declared the building to be "as old as the early part of the fourteenth century at least"

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1. *ibid.*

2. R.C.H.M. Herefs. III, 224.

and perhaps the analogy of Little Hereford is good enough to date it slightly earlier, to the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Although the next example, Bellstone House, disappeared as late as 1934 when the street of that name was widened, its demolition did not, apparently, excite much local interest despite a clear reference by Owen to its early origin.

A photograph in Shrewsbury Public Library taken by Mr. J. Mallinson in February 1932<sup>2</sup> shows the main elevation facing Bellstone. At that time the frontage was of brick with stone dressings in an "Elizabethan" style which probably dated from the 1840's, with later alterations to match. The house was basically of half-H plan<sup>3</sup> with the two wings at right-angles to the street, and during the nineteenth century the courtyard so formed had a single-storey block built upon it. A Buckler drawing of the "West View"<sup>4</sup> shows, incorporated as one wing of the Elizabethan house, a two-storied stone building of different and earlier

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1. A suitable occasion to examine the ground-floor could not easily be found, but it is said that all traces of masonry are concealed.
  2. SPL. Photo. 520. (pl.50).
  3. This is clear from O.S. 25" maps.
  4. The main block was aligned NW and SE, here called N and S for convenience of description.

character (pl.44 ). The steep pitch of its roof is seen again behind the jettied timber-framed wing in a drawing of the front elevation (pl.45 ). That it was a much smaller building than those hitherto described is proved by a plan of 1865 <sup>1</sup> from which it seems to have been about 25 ft. x 17 ft. internally with walls 3 ft.6 ins. thick. The "West View" shows the undercroft lit by two square headed windows and the hall by two lancets, with the faint suggestion of a wider pointed arch, then blocked, between them. The evidence is too slender to permit much conjecture, but comparison may be made with the similar alterations to the gable wall of Shearmen's Hall (p.181below). The interlacing glazing bars in the lancet heads show that some alteration had taken place in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century but there is no hint of structural changes. Owen describes this upper storey as "the great chamber, now a very handsome drawing-room", <sup>2</sup> approached by three steps. His reference to the "unusual loftiness, and the sharp gothic arch of the roof" suggest the original open timber roof was still in position.

Too little is known of the building to make either dating or a close analysis of its plan possible. Two features point to its being a solar rather than a hall. There is its two-storeyed structure coupled with its small

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1. In possession of the National Provincial Bank, to whose Architect Mr. B.C. Shenan I am indebted for the loan of it. The thick walls of the early wing stand out clearly from Elizabethan and later additions, and have been redrawn as fig.14.
  2. Owen, op.cit., 525.

size; and there is the absence from the plan of any sign of the fireplace which was essential in a hall but quite often lacking in the solar. It is of course a plan of the undercroft, not of the first-floor, but even so some sign of a stone base for a fireplace and chimney might be expected.<sup>1</sup> Possibly the Elizabethan stone house replaced an earlier timber hall. A word should be said in conclusion about Owen's remark that it had "much the air of an ecclesiastical building",<sup>2</sup> which has led some people to regard it as a chapel in origin. Owen himself did not go so far as to say it looked like a chapel probably because he did not know of any two-storeyed chapels, which are in any case invariably domestic. I consider, therefore, that although it is impossible to prove this was a secular building its context is secular, and since a private chapel is less likely in a town house than in a remote country mansion it is likely to have served some domestic purpose.

What seems to have been another medieval house of the same type as Bennett's Hall and Vaughan's Mansion was demolished about 1929. The note recording its destruction which appeared in the Shropshire Archaeological Society's Transactions is the only evidence available. "During recent

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1. cf. Old Soar Plaxtol, Kent; Margaret E. Wood, *op.cit.*, 36, and other examples. But cf. Bennetts Hall, where there is equally little trace.  
2. Owen, *loc.cit.*

months an old building has been demolished, which was probably a store house for goods passing over the medieval Stone Bridge. It covered an area 40 ft. x 20 ft. The lower portion was originally built with stone and appeared to date from the fourteenth century. The upper floor had a fireplace, with massive oak principals carrying the roof. Some portion of this upper floor may have been divided off as a living-room for a caretaker..... This building stood upon a piece of ground which was converted into a garden attached to the sixteenth century residence of William Jones, draper, on the opposite side of the street".<sup>1</sup> It stood somewhere behind the Barge Inn, at the foot of Wyle Cop on its south side, near the English Bridge

It is not clear whether the upper storey was built of stone or timber, but lacking any proved example in Shrewsbury of a building with a stone undercroft and timber superstructure such as has been postulated elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> I prefer to assume it was of stone. The writer treated all the domestic fittings as later additions in the light of his theory that the building was a medieval warehouse, comparable presumably, to the Town Cellars at Poole<sup>3</sup> or the Marlipins at Shoreham.<sup>4</sup> No example is known outside a

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1. An Early Mediaeval Building behind the Barge Inn; TSAS, 4s. XII (1929-30), xix.
  2. Margaret E. Wood, *op.cit.*, 117; but see below p.
  3. H.P. Smith, History of Poole, I, 189-191.
  4. Sussex Arch. Coll.,

port of a stone medieval building used solely for storage. On what is admittedly very slight evidence, it could be interpreted as an undercroft for storage, above which was a large room heated by a big fireplace, with a timber partition dividing off a smaller unheated room as a solar.

On the south side of Hill's Lane, near Mardol, stood Cole Hall, "an ancient stone building of which fragments only remained"<sup>1</sup> when the area was cleared of derelict and ruinous buildings in 1934. H.E. Forrest said it was a fourteenth century house but gave no architectural evidence for it;<sup>2</sup> another writer ascribed it to the thirteenth century and mentioned "a building with an arched opening which may have been the chapel."<sup>3</sup> The garden and adjacent premises are said on deed evidence to have opened on to Claremont Street, Barker Street, and Hill's Lane.<sup>4</sup> I have found no architectural record of any kind for this house. Few towns, probably, can boast of having destroyed one medieval house (Bellstone) and the remains of another in the same year without bothering to record either; and this as late as 1934 when Owen's account of both had been in print for a century and a quarter.

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1. A.W. Ward, An Account of Rowley's House, Shrewsbury, (pamphlet), 2nd.edn. (1945), 2.
  2. Forrest, *op.cit.*, 51.
  3. TSAS, 4s. XII (1929-30), xviii-xix.
  4. TSAS, 3s. I (1901), 250.

Beneath Nos. 8 and 9 The Square are cellars said to have been part of a stone house belonging to the Shute or Shete, family.<sup>1</sup> The Rev. W.A. Leighton in his early guidebook distinguished clearly between Charlton Hall and "a mass of red stone buildings" on the same side of Shoplatch.<sup>2</sup> The statement that these buildings communicated with the street by a passage suggests they were really part of Charlton Hall or its outbuildings. The cellars are certainly at a considerable depth, said to be as much as 30 ft. below ground level; the principal one is 18 ft. x 26 ft. and has a segmental roof. It has been for many years a wine-merchant's cellar, so that the roof is completely covered with wine-mould and not easily examined. There seem to be no masonry joints in this roof, and at the risk of appearing ridiculous I would suggest the whole cellar has been cut out of the natural rock. The segmental vault is not a medieval form; eighteenth century builders everywhere used bricks for cellar vaults, certainly never the soft red sandstone of this cellar; and lastly I cannot imagine that a true vault built in such stone would not display marked weathering at the joints.

The evidence so far presented is of houses built entirely of stone; there may have been others which had a timber structure above stone cellars. J.H. Parker speaks

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1. Forrest, op.cit., 49; a reference in S.N. & Q, (n.s.), I, 8, adds nothing.
  2. Rev. W.A. Leighton, Guide through the Town of Shrewsbury, 3rd ed. (1850), 186.

of "a house in the High Street, the lower storey of which is half under ground, and vaulted in the manner usual in the fourteenth century".<sup>1</sup> This is the only example (with the possible exception of the building behind the Barge Inn, described above) known to have existed in Shrewsbury, though parallels are known in many towns and are particularly numerous in Winchelsea.<sup>2</sup> I have not been able to identify it.

There is some documentary evidence to prove the existence of other medieval stone houses. In a deed of 1462 a house is described as being "opposite a great tenement of stone of Thomas Hoord"<sup>3</sup> in Cleremount (Claremont Hill). An undated deed recorded in the cartulary of Haughmond Abbey and ascribed to the early part of Edward I's reign records that Agnes de Hibernia gave to the Abbey "a stone house and another .... on the opposite side of the cemetery of the Church of the Blessed Mary .... which approached towards Doggepole".<sup>4</sup> Blakeway noted that her stone house is stated to be opposite the stile of St. Mary's churchyard, next to Dogpole, i.e., on the site of Jones's Mansion.<sup>5</sup> Now Owen provided the only evidence of where

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1. Turner and Parker, op.cit., II Fourteenth Century, 306.
  2. Margaret E. Wood, op.cit., 94.5.
  3. SPL 6285.
  4. TSAS, I (1878), Haghman Cartulary.
  5. TSAS, 3s. VII (1907), 315-6.



Jones's Mansion stood; it was "at the corner of Ox-lane, leading to St. Alkmund's", <sup>1</sup> and was built of stone <sup>2</sup> in the early seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> I regret that there has been no opportunity to examine thoroughly the house in question, which is now divided between Dorothy Britland's shop and the Shrewsbury Arms (pl.46 ). In the former red sandstone masonry can be seen first below the wallplate; externally it looks as though the early seventeenth century details are later brick additions to an earlier building. If this is correct, some fragmentary remains of Agnes de Hibernia's house may conceivably be incorporated in the present structure. I hope one day to test this conjecture. The Haughmond Cartulary under the heading Rumboldsham includes a grant of land ascribeable to 1293 which refers to "the stone house formerly of Roger Reyner". <sup>4</sup> Joseph Morris said that the remains of this house were taken down in 1848; it was "on the left-hand side going down Barker Street, just below Claremont Hill".<sup>5</sup> Scattered throughout Shropshire antiquarian literature are vague references to Pride's Mansion. Forrest states the situation well: "Nothing seems

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1. Owen, op.cit., 525.

2. After describing the house Owen says "The above are the only remains of ancient mansions, constructed with stone"; *ibid.*, 527. The usual modern identification of Jones's Mansion with a timber-framed building on the opposite side of Church Street (Forrest, op.cit., 70-72) is wrong.

3. *ibid.*, 525.

4. *ibid.*,

5. TSAS, 3s. I (1901), 293, where a further reference of 1295 is cited.

to be known as to the character or appearance of the Pride Mansion, but it would certainly have been of stone. Its exact position is quite conjectural".<sup>1</sup>

The last building to be discussed in this chapter, although not strictly domestic - it was the hall of the Shearmen or Clothworkers - is closely allied in plan and structure to a medieval house. It was built at right angles to Milk Street, consisted of a main storey above an undercroft, and was of red sandstone. Neither plan nor interior view is available, which is the more regrettable because of its unusual origin as the hall of a craft or mystery, not as a private dwelling. Buckler's drawing of the west end<sup>2</sup> (pl.47) shows the high steep-pitched roof line, which appears also in a photograph (pl.49) more clearly and impressively than in the other drawing (pl.48). Owen, writing in 1808, says that "about ten years ago" the three lancets were inserted,<sup>3</sup> and the steps added;<sup>4</sup> the lancets replaced "a handsome pointed window, in the style of the fourteenth century; divided by a single mullion". The east end of the building had a blocked two-centred arched opening which Owen suggested was like the original west window. The large window in the south wall apparently had elaborately moulded jambs and head

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1. Forrest, op.cit., 32-3.

2. Really NW; I have followed Owen's cardinal points for description.

3. Owen, op.cit., 465.

4. The steps were added in 1793; House Meeting Book V, f.32 (No.73 in Cal. Corporation Docs.).

but unfortunately Buckler's profile drawn on the left-hand jamb is not clear enough to help in dating it. At the south-west end of the hall was a wall fireplace near which the warden and officers of the gild must have had their place. The octagonal chimney rises on two stages masked by weathered offsets, the base and capping alike being enriched with miniature crenellation. This enrichment, the window mouldings and the flowered cross which once crowned the west gable<sup>1</sup> all suggest a building of considerable pretensions. Where the original entrance was is now impossible to say, and evidently by 1821 the windows of the undercroft had been much altered. The arched opening which appears in the photograph of the east end (pl.49) suggests a possible entrance; its base must have been about level with the first floor. The curious blocked arch high in the same gable looks like a nineteenth century insertion. The dormers were certainly inserted into an original open roof.

In 1889 the building was demolished above ground level in order to put up the present ugly warehouse, which uses the lower part of the old undercroft as a cellar. As far as it can be seen behind a mass of shelving and shoring the old Hall seems to have been about 40 ft. x 20 ft., built of coursed ashlar which in places survives to a height of 7 ft.

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1. Owen, loc. cit.

above the present ground floor. In the cellar near the north-east corner is a rectangular cupboard 3ft. 6 ins. above the floor; it is 1 ft. 3 ins. deep, 1 ft. 9 ins. wide, and 1 ft.6 ins. high. A first-floor doorway has a sunk chamfer continuous in the jambs and two-centred head; some of the voussoirs may be reused from an original doorway.

So far as the first-floor plan can be reconstructed it seems that the west was the equivalent of the solar end; there was doubtless a dais for the senior members of the fraternity, and the entrance would have been at the east end, perhaps from the north side since there is no sign of a doorway on the south. For its date we can only accept Owen's opinion that it was built in the fourteenth century.

What is the historical significance of this group of stone houses? In the first place it is noteworthy that such evidence as there is, much of it admittedly inadequate, points to these houses having been built within a span of about a century, hardly more, - between, let us say, 1250 and 1350.<sup>1</sup> This will cover Bennett's Hall, Vaughan's Mansion, Charlton Hall, and probably Shearman's Hall; the references to houses of Agnes de Hibernia and Roger Reyner fall within this period, though they could of course have been built

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1. Although stone houses are referred to in a number of late medieval deeds, only one (The Council House) survives. The total body of evidence is much less impressive than that under discussion.

much earlier; the house behind the Barge Inn and Cole Hall is said to be of fourteenth-century date, and documentary evidence suggests the latter at least could have been considerably earlier; Bellstone provides no dating evidence.

Even if the closeness of this grouping be discounted it is remarkable to find so many early stone houses. In a recent full-scale study of thirteenth-century domestic architecture in England it is stated that "no complete example of a town-house is so far known".<sup>1</sup> A careful examination of Bennett's Hall would probably enable most of the plan and structural details to be reconstructed, and thereby do something to fill this gap in architectural knowledge. We know too that there were at least three other stone houses in Shrewsbury before 1300, the earlier part of Charlton Hall and the houses of Agnes de Hibernia and Roger Reyner.

How does Shrewsbury compare with other medieval towns for numbers of stone houses? Adequate surveys of English towns are very rare, so the comparison is liable to be unfair to other places. Coventry seems to possess only one such building, the early fifteenth century "merchant's house" in Much Park Street,<sup>2</sup> and there are perhaps half-a-dozen vaulted undercrofts.<sup>3</sup> At Oxford there survive a small

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1. Margaret E. Wood, op.cit., 117.

2. Revealed by bombing, 1940; NBR photographs and Levi Fox, Coventry's Heritage, 119, 167.

3. L. Fox, op.cit.166-7, 171.

hall incorporated in Merton College, three crypts, one early fourteenth century hall (Tackley's Inn) and two fifteenth century halls, these last three being incomplete.<sup>1</sup> Norwich has the famous "Stranger's Hall", Bristol is said to have had a large number of medieval undercrofts, Chester has a number of cellars beneath the Rows. But the general impression, so far as it has any value, is that Shrewsbury's medieval houses were of the same order of size and magnificence as those of the greater English towns, a fact which is not obvious except to the careful student of Owen's "Ancient and Present State".

Little detailed research has been done on houses of this kind.

A house in Eign Street, Hereford, for instance, where there is a four-bay vaulted cellar divided into two rooms by a cross wall against which is built a fireplace,<sup>2</sup> is reminiscent of the Shrewsbury undercrofts and the two-chamber division of Bennett's Hall. Tackley's Inn, Oxford was built for a purpose so different from the ordinary, as an academic hall, that it can hardly be used for comparison, which is unfortunate since it is one of the few town buildings adequately planned and studied. In default of anything more appropriate, comparison must be made with buildings of totally different character such as manor-

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1. R.C.H.M., City of Oxford, xxvi.  
2. R.C.H.M., Herefordshire, I, 138.

houses and the domestic structures in monasteries or castles, and the striking thing is that the Shrewsbury houses will bear the comparison.

We know from Hugh Owen that at Charlton Hall the building which seems to be the later of the two was 100 ft x 31 ft, whether internally or externally is not stated. Now Shropshire possesses two of the best known thirteenth century houses, Acton Burnell and Stokesay, of which the former is about 95 ft. x 60 ft. overall and the latter, excluding the south tower, about 105 ft x 40 ft. Both had their architectural dignity enhanced by towers and to that extent had the advantage of any town house, but the bare comparison of size shows that in that respect Charlton Hall was quite their equal. The impression conveyed by Buckler's drawings is that the earlier ground floor hall was itself of considerable size, perhaps as big as the hall and solar of Stokesay, and fitting Owen's description of its ruins as those of a large building. The accommodation and amenities of the whole must have been the equal of almost any contemporary house outside royal residences, castles and the big episcopal palaces.

This impression is confirmed by the architectural detail. At Bennett's Hall, for instance, the foliated capital supporting the lintel of the fireplace, and the other sculptured details known only through Buckler show a high

degree of refinement and are as good as anything of the kind elsewhere. The provision of both external and internal staircases in the later building of Charlton's Hall is another pointer towards a high standard of comfort and privacy associated only with great houses.<sup>1</sup>

It is regrettable that none of these houses can so far be ascribed to particular owner-builders, though Owen made certain conjectures which are as valuable as any made since. The easiest case to deal with is Charlton Hall, which is clearly identified with one man fairly early in its history. John de Charlton who obtained a licence to crenellate his house in the town of Shrewsbury in 1325 was a figure sufficiently notable to obtain a place in the Dictionary of National Biography. Succeeding to his father's estate in 1300 he married in 1309 Hawise, sister and heir of Gruffudd ap Owain, through whom he derived his title Lord of Powys; hence the title of Buckler's drawing, "The Palace of the Princes of Powys". An incident in 1313, when John de Charlton and his wife complained that Griffin de la Pole and others "approached their castle which is in the Marches of Wales .... beseiged it, burned the doors of the castle .... broke their park and hunted therein",<sup>2</sup> shows that the licence of 1316 to crenellate his castle at Charlton was

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1. Margaret E. Wood, *op.cit.*, 133-4.

2. *Cal. L.P. (1307-13)*, 546.



not obtained solely for ornamental purposes. Similar practical considerations may have prompted the licence of 1325, for such happenings were not unknown in Shrewsbury,<sup>1</sup> In May 1323 when all Wales sent men to attend in the north of England for the Scotch war Charlton was ordered to supply 500 footmen from his land of Powys, a number exceeded by only one Welsh contingent, Hugh le Despenser's. One aspect of his career not mentioned in the DNB is that he was a citizen of London who was for a considerable period Mayor of the Merchants of the Staple, in which capacity he is mentioned in 1318, 1320 and 1326.<sup>2</sup> Although he is nowhere mentioned specifically as being engaged in the wool-trade, the position of his great estates, in just those parts of the Welsh Marches where wool was of the highest quality and price<sup>3</sup> shows where some of his wealth was derived from and why he was chosen mayor of the staple. The absence of the name Charlton from the thirteenth century gild merchant rolls may signify several things, as, for instance, that John de Charlton was the first of his family to begin marketing wool; the unique importance for the wool trade of the estates he acquired by marriage would suffice to put him immediately in the front rank of merchants. Perhaps too his father conducted business at Ludlow rather than Shrewsbury as there is evidence of a tendency for merchants from the

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1. Cal. L.P. (1301-1307), 198-9; Eyton, Antiquities of Shropshire, VII, 29-30.

2. CCR.

3. H.C. Darby (ed.), op.cit., 244 n.2, 245 (map).

former to transfer themselves to the larger town more favourably situated for transport.

However John de Charlton acquired the wealth which enabled him to inherit through his wife the estates of Powys, it is certain that his feudal status acquired by marriage was thereafter of greater importance. His Shrewsbury hall may thus be compared with the town residences of the nobility and higher clergy rather than merchants' houses. The nearest parallel I can quote is the late fourteenth century palace of the Bishops of Winchester at Southwark;<sup>1</sup> and although Winchester House was a finer and more imposing building the comparison is not ridiculous. Charlton Hall, pre-eminent in Shrewsbury, was by the architectural standards of England generally a fitting residence for a territorial and merchant magnate between his frequent journeys to his country estates, to London and overseas.<sup>2</sup>

The architectural evidence is not precise enough to ascribe the building of Vaughan's Place to an individual member of that family; Owen suggested either Thomas Vaughan who died in 1362 or his son Sir Hamo, who was an infant at the time of his father's death.<sup>3</sup> Sir Hamo is not likely to have built anything much before 1370, by which time the kind of arched doorway shown leading into the screens passage

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1. L.C.C. Survey of London, XXII Bankside, Ch. VI.  
2. He was several times abroad in the King's service, Cal.L.P.  
3. Owen, op.cit., 485.

would have been outmoded. If the slender dating evidence put forward (p.172) be accepted, William Vaughan, father of Thomas, bailiff in 1287 and 1304, is the likely man. William Vaughan was, with other Shrewsbury merchants, granted letters of safe conduct to export wool in 1277; <sup>1</sup> he appears on the Gild Merchant roll of 1280-1 <sup>2</sup> and was twice bailiff of the town, in 1287 and 1304. <sup>3</sup> He is named second in the long list of persons against whom Isabella Borrey made complaint in 1303 that they had attacked and pillaged her house at Shrewsbury. <sup>4</sup> Wool was clearly the basis of the family's prosperity, and their trading profits brought them civic office and a leading position in town life followed by a knighthood.

The stone house formerly of Roger Reyner was so described in 1297, when presumably the building had been standing for some years. This is the earliest dated reference to the type of house described above, but unfortunately there are neither architectural remains to tell us what the house was like nor documentary evidence to tell us who and what Roger Reyner was. Among the several persons designated "son of Reiner" in the thirteenth century gild rolls none bears the name Ranulph or Thomas. <sup>5</sup>

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1. Cal.Chancery R., Various (1277-1326), 227.
  2. TSAS, 2s. II (1890), 29 ff.
  3. Owen, op.cit., 484.
  4. Cal. L.P. (1301-7), 198-9.
  5. The deed reads thus: "Ranulph son of Roger Reyner granted to Alicia widow of Thomas Reyner .... land lying between the stone manse formerly of Roger Reyner ...." etc. TSAS, I, (1878), Haghmon Cartulary.

They were possibly descendants of the Roger son of Reyner who bought two messuages in Rumaldesham in 1212.<sup>1</sup>

It will suffice to say that several members of the Cole and Pride families were wool merchants, the Prides in particular being among the major English exporters.<sup>2</sup> From which of her two husbands Agnes de Hibernia received the stone house she gave to Haughmond Abbey is not clear, but their name, John de Hibernia and Hugh de Londonius, suggest they were both merchants, though there is nothing to show what they traded in. How Bennetts Hall came to be so called is not known as nobody of that name appears in medieval records. It has been suggested it is a corruption of Bernard, a family of wool merchants,<sup>3</sup> but no explanation is offered to account for such a striking change in the short period between the building of the house in the late thirteenth century and the appearance of "Bennett" in 1378.

Scanty though the information is, it does at least point to the importance of the wool merchant in medieval Shrewsbury. The grandest house of all in the town, Charlton Hall, can only in part - the earlier part - be ascribed with reasonable probability to such men. There was nothing quite like Stokesay, built by a Ludlow family of merchants who had their trading address in Shrewsbury; nothing as imposing as

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1. TSAS, I (1878), loc.cit.,  
2. cf. Cal. Chancery R., Various (1277-1326), 2, 227, etc.  
3. Forrest, op.cit., 74.

this was put up in the town solely out of the profits on wool. Vaughan's Mansion is the only house that can certainly be ascribed to a wool-merchant but it is no accident that the Shearman's Hall was so good a building. It is reasonable to suppose that the men whose names occur in the thirteenth century list of export licences for wool, and whose descendants recur in the next century as creditors to the King in wool, should have built the finest houses in the town. Their private houses and business premises were one and the same; the poorly lighted undercrofts were no doubt used for storing the wool<sup>1</sup> while the owners and their families lived in the first-floor halls above.

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1. Vaulted cellars were so used in Nottingham, giving to the street in which they stood the name "le Voutlane"; Eng. Pl.-Name Soc., Place-names of Nottinghamshire, 16.

CHAPTER V.

The Economic Background from the Norman Conquest  
to the Fourteenth Century.

The economic changes in Shrewsbury during the century and a half following the Norman Conquest can only be conjectured, for apart from Domesday Book, there are scarcely any relevant documents. Indeed, the topographical changes outlined in Chapter II are the principal evidence of the widespread development of town life long recognised elsewhere in the Marches as a policy of "burghal colonisation".<sup>1</sup>

The first impact of the Normans was clearly disastrous, involving first the destruction of 51 burgages to clear an area around the castle, and soon afterwards a siege which ended with the burning of the town.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless such widespread destruction probably had no long-lasting effect in a period when houses could be regarded as moveables<sup>3</sup> and were correspondingly easy to replace. The agricultural basis of a small shire-town's prosperity was hardly affected beyond the destruction of one or two years' crops, from which it might easily recover.

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1. H.C. Darby (ed.), Historical Geography of England.
  2. D.Bk.; Ordericus Vitalis, as p. 53 n.1.
  3. J.F. Willard, Studies in Parliamentary Taxation, 1, quoting Pirenne,

Against this physical destruction of the pre-Conquest town must be set an important new element which had appeared in the town by 1086, the forty-three French burgesses who provide the earliest evidence in Shrewsbury of deliberate urban development. This attempt to foster the growth of town life in the Marches made the markets to which the Welsh of Powysland brought their produce. Centres of the Norman way of life, whence Norman cultural influences in the widest sense could permeate the border districts, so bringing them gradually into dependence and political control. In pursuance of this policy settlements were established at Welshpool, Ryton, Ludlow, and Llanvyllin, and further afield, at Hereford and Rhuddlan.<sup>1</sup> Of these six places the last two lay quite outside the area for which Shrewsbury was the focal point. The other four - and Montgomery could perhaps be added to them<sup>2</sup> - acted as primary collecting centres within the large geographical area for which Shrewsbury was the natural secondary market. The pattern of communications along river valleys compelled all goods and produce to pass through the shire-town if they were destined for any wider market, and even within the area of this geographical and economic unit distribution was of necessity often through Shrewsbury.

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1. Darby, op.cit.,

2. Its town plan is probably of Norman origin.

The nature and extent of this trade cannot be known directly. A few references in the Pipe Rolls show how the town acted as a secondary market serving the Crown's needs in distant places. Thus payments are recorded for the transport of pigs ('bacones') from Salop to Gloucester in 1160-61.<sup>1</sup> Thirty cartloads of lead for the Church at Amesbury in Wiltshire were sent to Gloucester in 1173-4,<sup>2</sup> and the same quantity is mentioned again two years later for an unspecified purpose.<sup>3</sup> The source of the lead, used for roofing, was the Pontesbury district, which in a period of great building activity like the twelfth century must have passed a large output through Shrewsbury. The only other evidence comes from a list of names forming part of a late-twelfth century Dublin gild-merchant roll, in which several Shrewsbury men can be detected under corrupted spellings of their town of origin.<sup>4</sup> Only two of the names denote a trade or occupation; William Goldsmith<sup>5</sup> was presumably a financier engaged in the development of Dublin following the grant of a charter in 1172. The second name, Roger the Woolmonger ('Rogerus lanista de Slopesburia')<sup>6</sup> conveys the first hint of the wool trade for which Shrewsbury

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1. P.R. Henry II, 32.
  2. P.R. 29 Henry II, 1.
  3. P.R. 31 Henry II, 127.
  4. Historic and Municipal Documents of Ireland, 1172-1320  
(R.S.), 12, 17, 21-23, 46.
  5. *ibid.*, 22.
  6. *ibid.*, 45.



was noted in later centuries. One form of economic activity not to be overlooked is the building trade, which must have been in a flourishing state from the late eleventh century onwards. Work on the Abbey had begun by 1086; it was followed in the twelfth century by the rebuilding of the four parish churches, some work at the Castle, and the building of at least one chapel, a hospital, and the English Bridge.<sup>1</sup> Although the labour force was probably never very large, nothing like the number of men employed, for instance, at Vale Royal,<sup>2</sup> there must have been fairly regular seasonal employment for masons, their labourers, quarrymen, and carpenters, in numbers sufficient to affect the town. Labour apart, the total demand for materials, especially stone and the enormous quantities of timber required for centering and scaffolding, must have been an important factor in local trade. Coins continued to be struck in Shrewsbury until the reign of Henry II, but the gradual concentration of provincial mints as the use of money increased reduces their significance as an index of local trade.

Alongside this fragmentary evidence we may set the physical expansion of the town during the same period. Pride Hill and High Street were laid out, both widened at one end as if to accommodate a market. There is besides the

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1. See Chapter II for chronology.  
2. Knoop and Jones, The Medieval Mason.

hint of a new Norman settlement preserved in the name Frankwell; the conjunction of the name and situation shows that the commercial importance of Wales<sup>1</sup> was soon grasped by the new settlers. Unsatisfactory though the evidence is, it suggests that Shrewsbury by the end of the twelfth century was an established market town living to a considerable extent by trade. That it was much more than a purely agricultural borough is shown by the fact that some of its citizens were carrying on a regular business in or with Ireland. This impression is confirmed by what we know of it in the thirteenth century, to which we now turn.

The two earliest rolls recording admissions to the gild-merchant in 1209-10 and 1219-20<sup>2</sup> may be assumed to provide a representative sample of the trades and occupations followed in the town. The fine wool for which Shropshire was famous in the later middle ages seems already by the early years of the thirteenth century to have been the mainstay of the regional economy; the finishing processes of the cloth made from it were performed in Shrewsbury right up to the nineteenth century. Thus we find shearmen mentioned 17 times in these early rolls, mercers 25 times, and dyers 3 times; all were concerned with finishing and

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1. By Wales I mean also the Welsh side of Shropshire.  
2. TSAS.

marketing cloth. Even when allowance has been made for possible errors in transcription, the trades dealing with wool and its products amount to a quarter of all those mentioned. A different function in relation to the raw material is seen in the next most important group of trades, those using hides and skins; there are 3 skinners, 4 tanners, a sadler, 3 makers of white leather ('tawere'), 3 pouch-makers, and 8 glovers. In this case both primary and secondary processes were carried on in the town, both those who worked the skins into leather and those who worked the leather into the finished article. Only at a later date did disputes arise between them which imply that at this period there was no clear division of function.<sup>1</sup> Two of the Shrewsbury men listed in the thirteenth-century Dublin rolls are described as tanner and corviser respectively,<sup>2</sup> so evidently there was a considerable export trade in leather products. These two groups of trades were so important that in 1209 the town obtained a charter which by restricting the buying of raw hides and undressed cloth to persons assized and tallaged with the burgesses<sup>3</sup> created a virtual monopoly for its citizens.

The other trades mentioned in the gild-merchant rolls do not call for much comment. The two vintners and the

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1. *Supra*, p. 212.  
2. *Hist. and Mun. Docs.*, 117, 118.  
3. *O & B.*, I, 89.

grocer were certainly wholesalers, the latter by definition; on the other hand, the butchers and bakers, the latter mentioned no less than 25 times, were probably all small retail tradesmen. Their numbers suggest most of them had another occupation, no doubt farming, besides. The building trades are represented by five carpenters, and among the remaining miscellaneous occupations the only considerable group is one of metal-workers, comprising 3 smiths, 2 farriers and 8 lorimers.

The broad picture of Shrewsbury's trade thus shows five main lines of business. Woollen cloth and leather products were the two most important, and the only ones likely to involve long-distance trading, i.e., beyond the bounds of the county. To the former should be added the dealing in raw wool for which there is so much evidence from the mid- and late thirteenth century; presumably the mercers and drapers conducted this business while describing themselves by a more restricted name, a common practice among medieval traders. There were in addition, the metal-working trades, which were never important in the way they were at Gloucester, for instance; the purely local building trades; and such wholesale and retail trades as would normally congregate in a market town. Clearly these grouped trades were not all of recent growth, and their beginnings can be presumed to go far back into the twelfth or eleventh centuries. Whether they

originated still earlier, in the late Saxon period, is a matter for speculation dependent on which theory of borough origins and development the inquirer subscribes to.

For the last century of our period, extending roughly from the middle of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century, there is a large body of material available in gild merchant rolls, Patent Rolls, and deeds.

All the gild-merchant rolls show the increasing importance of wool in the town's economy; the leather-working trades decline in relative importance as compared with their position in the first two decades of the thirteenth century, although they remained easily the second largest group of occupations. Several rolls covering the middle decades of that century <sup>1</sup> include 21 shearmen, 11 dyers, 17 tailors and 11 mercers, <sup>2</sup> all dealing with cloth. By contrast those who processed raw wool were few, comprising five weavers or webbers, three fullers, and two "wolbaters", presumably also fullers. The total number engaged in the wool or cloth trades was seventy, rather more than twice the total of 33 in the leather trades.<sup>3</sup> By this

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1. TSAS.

2. The figures are of the number of times each trade is referred to, and one man may be referred to more than once. It is difficult to be sure how many individuals are named because the same man may appear under slightly different designations.

3. Comprising 7 shoemakers, 5 skimmers ('pelliparius'), 3 cordwainers, 2 barkers, 2 pouch-makers, 1 'tawyer', and 13 glovers.

time there is scarcely any sign of metal-workers beyond those who served purely local needs, that is to say three smiths, three farriers ('ferrator'), and a lorimer and a 'mayler' who presumably both plied the same craft. The carpenters number 22, and there are two masons whose small numbers may reflect their position as members of an itinerant craft who never needed to purchase the freedom to work in any particular town. Some such explanation is necessary in a period when the building of the town walls was providing work for several masons,<sup>1</sup> the regular recurrence of whose names shows that they were permanent residents in the town. There are again large numbers of butchers and bakers (14 and 38); and two spicers and a merchant, all three, probably, dealing in a wide range of merchandise.<sup>2</sup> One other occupation is noteworthy, the sixteen carters whose primary business was road transport, a number which is at first sight surprising in an area served by the Severn. More will be said of this later.

The geographical conditions which make Shrewsbury a focal point for a large part of mid- and north Wales have already been noted. The gild-merchant rolls, by indicating the places of origin of many of the newly-admitted members,

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1. There were normally about 8 masons employed; Bailiff's Accounts, 1256-70.
  2. See the remarks on London grocers and spicers in G.Unwin.

enable us to see more precisely the area from which Shrewsbury drew its trade. To supplement this a number of royal itineraries ranging from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries show the principal roads along which trade flowed.

The earliest burgess rolls show men from Bath, Gloucester, Bristol and Worcester trading in the town,<sup>1</sup> that is to say there was a strong connection between Shrewsbury and the Severn valley towns, communications between them being presumably by river. There is no sign of men from Chester or Cheshire at this date, perhaps because that area was as yet little developed. The fact that Hereford figures in the list certainly implies the existence of a road to carry the trade; although Leominster and Ludlow are not specifically mentioned they lay on or near it, so that the gild-merchant rolls a few years later<sup>2</sup> mention both places frequently. One of the Leominster men, significantly, is a carter, an occupation which was no doubt expanding rapidly at this period. The mention of Montgomery, Oswestry, Alberbury and Bishop's Castle hints at the growth of small marcher centres of population which looked to Shrewsbury as their regional capital. Apart from Brecon which is a more distant centre mentioned at this period, most of these places south and west of Shrewsbury are fairly near, but by the middle years of the thirteenth century wider

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1. The sources upon which these remarks are based have been indicated above, and will not therefore be quoted in support of every item of information in the text.
  2. Mid 13th century G.M. Rolls: TSAS, 2s. XII (1900), 229-282.

connections with the midlands and south are becoming apparent. William the Tailor of Coventry, William the Fuller ('Wulbeterre') of Oxford, together with others from Darlaston, Dudley, Warwick and London who were doubtless active in some branch of the wool or cloth trades shows that Shrewsbury was a place of more than local importance.<sup>1</sup> Lichfield and York point to activity in another direction, the first hint of that eastward connection which recurs repeatedly to later periods. We have already noted Shrewsbury men at the end of this century and the beginning of the next who were exporters of wool (p. above). Their foreign trade connections were foreshadowed by the presence of Robert and Philip of Gascony and a man of Flanders in the earlier gild-merchant rolls.

We know from other sources that by the early fourteenth century some of the wool which was exported from Shrewsbury was sent by cart to Nottingham and thence along the Trent to Boston.<sup>2</sup> In 1343 Peter Gerard of Shrewsbury, merchant, was allowed the sum of £147. 4. 0. which was due to him in respect of wool at the port of Kingston-upon-Hull,<sup>3</sup> so the eastern trade was evidently small but regular. Further links

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1. Several men called "le Kent" or "de Kent" occur; I do not know if this indicates a place of origin.
  2. H.C. Darby (ed), op.cit.
  3. CCR (1343-6), 152, 155.



with that part of the country are seen in a roll of foreigners for 1318-19<sup>1</sup> which lists Walter of Nottingham mercer, and Robert of Grimsby, 'piscator', to whom another mercer should perhaps be added, Alexander of "Denecastre", which I suppose may be Doncaster.<sup>2</sup> The foreigners engaged in the leather trades are mentioned in the persons of Ralph of London, corviser and Nicholas the saddler of Northampton. A large number of places of origin are named in these later rolls, including so many towns and villages in Shropshire and the neighbouring counties that it is not worth listing them here. It is really only the links with more distant places, particularly when they are coupled with an occupation, which are significant. Although most of the striking ones have been mentioned earlier, Robert of Leicester, spicer, and Michael Baret of Essex tailor, serve to show further the wide area of England and Wales from which men came to do business in Shrewsbury. That wool, leather and cloth, were the mainstay of trade is shown more by the coupled occupations and place-names than by analysis of the number of times they are mentioned in the gild-merchant rolls. Mustarder, potter, ~~katener~~ and apothecary are among the great variety of trades mentioned, some of which approached in importance the frequently recurring dealers in the wool and leather trades

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1. TSAS, 3s, II (1902),

2. Oxf. Dict. Engl. Pl. Names lists only Don- forms.

Thomas le Lumbard was probably an agent buying wool for one of the big Italian firms; his name is the only hint of long-distance international trade.

The impression derived from the gild-merchant rolls is of the steady expansion of the area with which the town had trade connections, starting with the Severn Valley and the marches in the late twelfth-century and in the course of a century and a half spreading to embrace most of England south of the Trent, and a few places like York even farther afield.

The use of the Roman road system especially the route from Worcester south-eastwards through the midlands to London was mentioned in Chapter I. It has continued to be used for the greater part of its length to the present day, so its use in the middle ages can be largely taken for granted. It is nevertheless interesting to realise that along that part of it which runs due east from Worcester almost to Lichfield, where it turns to the S.E., the link between Shrewsbury and Nottingham was maintained, and that its existence made connections with places like Polesworth, Leicester, and Northampton relatively easy by the standards of medieval transport. This was certainly the road used by Henry II when in July 1175 he travelled from Shrewsbury to Lichfield and Nottingham, or the following year in going

from Shrewsbury to Northampton.<sup>1</sup> The journeys of other sovereigns were mainly along that other most important road which, beginning at Chester, ran through Shrewsbury and down the Severn Valley. John used it frequently to travel from Gloucester through Worcester and Bridgnorth as far as Shrewsbury;<sup>2</sup> Edward I perhaps used the northern part of the road too, on some of his journeys to Nantwich and Chester.<sup>3</sup> The salt traffic, though direct references to it are few, certainly mentioned the importance of this route; Thomas Parslowe the salter of Whitchurch<sup>4</sup> must have been only one among several of this trade who carried their wares southwards along it. There was a much-used alternative route to Chester via Ellesmere, the place of origin of many 'foreigners' appearing in the gild-merchant rolls. Edward I three times visited Acton Burnell travelling as far towards it as Conover on a road used by Henry I in 1121.<sup>5</sup> Near Acton Burnell the route into Herefordshire joined the Rowan Road and followed it much of the way to Wigmore and Leominster. The continued use and importance of this road, over which Edward travelled from Leominster to Shrewsbury in

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1. R.W. Eyton, Court and Itinerary of Henry II, (1878).
  2. Sir T.D. Hardy, Itinerary of King John, Journeys in 1208, 1209, 1212, 1216.
  3. Henry Gough, Itinerary of Edward I, (1900), journeys in 1277, 1282, 1294.
  4. G.M. Rolls, 1318-19.
  5. E.H.R. ( ), 520-1 for Henry I; Gough, op.cit.,

December 1283, has been well shown by the recent excavations at Acton Burnell of a Roman bridge abutment in the middle ages.<sup>1</sup>

With the general picture in mind of Shrewsbury's economic growth and the expansion of the areas with which its citizens traded we may assemble some facts about particular aspects of this activity.

Wool was obviously the most important of these and closely allied to it was the finishing of cloth. A charter of 1209 gave the burgesses a monopoly of the trade in undressed cloth within the town.<sup>2</sup> In 1266 they strengthened their position with a royal grant which provided that wool should only be purchased in the market towns of the county,<sup>3</sup> of which Shrewsbury was the chief. Prominent in this trade were members of the famous merchant family to which belongs Nicholas of Ludlow who built Stokesay Castle. He is described in the Patent Rolls as "Nicholas de Ludelawe, merchant of Sillop"; of Ludlow and Shrewsbury, as a modern firm would style itself. The close connection between the two market towns most concerned with the marketing of wool is illustrated by the fact that in 1343-44 one of the two bailiffs of Ludlow was John of Shrewsbury.<sup>4</sup> In 1273

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1. I am indebted to Miss Evelyn Sladdin, who conducted the excavation, for the information.
  2. O & B., I, 89.
  3. Cal. Pat. R. (1258-66), 455-6.
  4. ibid., (1272-1281), 23-4, 36, etc.,

Nicholas was granted a licence to export 240 sacks of wool, a figure only exceeded by the greatest merchants of Florence and Lucca with totals of up to 500 sacks.<sup>1</sup> Four years later Lawrence son of Nicholas and John of Ludlow occur as exporters, the former with 200 sacks.<sup>2</sup> Another name in the same list, that of Richard Pride, a kinsman of Edward I's chancellor Robert Burnell, who took out 200 sacks to parts beyond sea, shows that there were other firms of about equal size in the business, less famous because they have left behind no enduring architectural monument. Not that the single comparison is quite fair, but it does show that some of the Shrewsbury burgesses were wealthy men engaged in large-scale wool business. Among them was Thomas Colle who in 1343 was owed the sum of £469. 8. 8d. for wool, the money being allowed to him in the Port of London.<sup>3</sup> This was the largest sum owing to any Shrewsbury merchant at that date, the nearest being the £292.12.11d. due to John de Foriete of Salop.<sup>4</sup> It may have been Thomas Colle's father of the same name who was appointed custodian of the seal for recognisances of merchant's bonds in 1295.<sup>5</sup> Hugh Nicholas Colle held land in Frankwell

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1. Cal. Chancery R., Var., (1277-1326), 2, 227.
  2. TSAS, 2s. IV ( ), 290.
  3. CCR (1343-6), 138.
  4. ibid.
  5. Cal. Patent R. (1292-1301), 131.

during the thirteenth century,<sup>1</sup> perhaps for some purpose connected with the wool trade, such as cleaning. Thomas took over custody of the merchant seal from Henry Borrey whose family name recurs in thirteenth and fourteenth century records. Richard Borrey or Barri was granted export licences for wool in no very large quantities in 1273 and 1277. Isabella Borrey complained in 1303 that a large number of men including representatives of all the wool prominent Shrewsbury families had attacked her premises in the town;<sup>2</sup> they include Thomas Colle and Thomas his son, Richard and Simon Colle, Roger, son of William Pride, Richard Strong, William Vaughan, and other respectable citizens. The cause of the dispute, which involved a counter-claim by the alleged attackers is not stated in the Patent Roll entries but probably concerned trading matters. The same Richard Stury who appears in this complaint was appointed Mayor of the wool staple in 1313:<sup>3</sup> in 1294-5 he served as Bailiff as his father had done in 1277, and represented the town in Parliament at the end of Edward I's reign.<sup>4</sup>

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1. SPL Deed.
  2. Cal. Patent R. (1301-7), 198-9.
  3. ibid., (13 -13), 15.
  4. TSAS, 4s. XII (1293), 130.

Enough has been said to show the wealth and standing of the leading men of Shrewsbury in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Though sometimes surpassed by individuals of other occupations, yet as a group the wool merchants were supreme, forming a trading aristocracy which their nearest rivals, the hides-and-skins dealers, could not emulate. That is the impression the list of office-holders - bailiffs, tax-collectors, members of parliament - give. It is no accident that the closely allied shearmen had a splendid hall, for that gild may well have included members who dealt in raw wool as well as undressed cloth: no fine distinctions were made between the trades which gildsmen practised. It is significant that when Henry VIII's Commissioners inquired into the Shrewsbury chantries the only one whose founder they could not discover was the Shearmen's chantry. Others maintained by the weavers, tailors, mercers and drapers, could be ascribed to an individual; the Shearmen's chantry alone had been founded so long ago that its origin had been forgotten. <sup>1</sup>

Secondary to wool in importance was leather in its various forms - the hides-and-skins trade, for want of a comprehensive word. A statute of 1326 constituted Shrewsbury, along with Carmarthen and Cardiff, as a staple town for the

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1. TSAS, 3s. X (        ), 311.

wool, hides and woolfells from the whole of Wales,<sup>1</sup> a status which implies that all the north and centre of the county sent those products to its lowland capital, Shrewsbury. Already in 1209 a charter has linked undressed cloth with hides as the two commodities in which the burgesses had a special interest.<sup>2</sup> The lack of an export market for raw leather or its products restricted the development of the trade and was incidentally responsible for the paucity of information about it as compared with wool. What little we do know relates to the early 14th century, when the cordwainers and tanners were involved in a demarcation dispute about the limits of their respective crafts which culminated with a petition by the former to the Bailiffs in 1324.<sup>3</sup> The tanners dealt with the raw skins only, turning them into leather for other craftsmen, the cordwainers, to work up as finished articles. The trade of tanning seems to have grown up as a specialised branch of the leather industry, which had in earlier days been practised by craftsmen who performed all the tasks involved in turning skins into the final leather products. The tanners became sufficiently powerful to try to divide the trade into two separate branches by restraining the cordwainers from handling raw skins.

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1. CCR. (1327-30), 116.

2. O & B., I, 89.

3. Cal. Patent R. (1321-4), 416; TSAS, 2s. VI (1894), 284-90.



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1. CCR. (1327-30), 116.

2. O & B., I, 89.

3. Cal. Patent R. (1321-4), 416; TSAS, 2s. VI (1894), 284-90.

The attempt was frustrated by a royal charter confirming the right of the cordwainers to exercise the craft of tanning unrestrictedly except for horseskins. The tanners' action was presumably inspired by the general medieval love of a monopoly with the idea of strengthening their position vis-a-vis the cordwainers.

One branch of the trade in skins which flourished at Shrewsbury was that dealing with parchment. Although William le Parmenter doubtless did not trade solely in the article from which he derived his name, it presumably played quite a large part in the business which was sufficiently prosperous to give him **the** highest assessment in the county to the tax of a twentieth in 1327; his contribution of 38s., even allowing for the unreliability of the assessment as a basis for estimating the relative wealth of those who were taxed, implies that he was a man of substance.

The absence of any strong distinction between trades is revealed by the assessments for a tax of twenty-fifth on movables in 1309,<sup>1</sup> which not infrequently shows a farmer or a smith to possess not only the stock appropriate to his normal or principal business, but wool or cloth too.

With the growth of population which accompanied the increase in trade went the need for bread and the corn to make it, wherein lay a further source of trouble. Among the

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1. Cal. Borough Recs., 158.

provisions for the maintenance of his newly-founded Abbey Earl Roger had included the exclusive right of grinding corn for the whole city of Shrewsbury.<sup>1</sup> The monks failed to make adequate provision for grinding the corn needed by a growing population, with the result that mills were built within the town in defiance of the Abbey charter. The three monastic mills in 1267 were competing with no less than seven illicit mills in the town and suburbs, three worked by water, three by horses, and one by windpower. The position was rectified in favour of the Abbey, but in the long run it was impossible for the monks to keep control of the situation, so that by 1306-7 the abbot was again complaining of unlawful mills, this time to the number of twelve. An order for their demolition postponed a solution to the problem until 1328 when the burgesses by royal licence were allowed to build mills to grind corn and malt at the rate of twenty quarters day and night.<sup>2</sup> The mills which were then built have left no topographical traces in the town today, nor do their positions seem to be accurately known.<sup>2</sup> The issue continued to be a source of constant friction between the Abbey and the town right up to the Reformation because no inflexible solution could cater for the continually increasing needs of the townspeople. The heavy demand for grinding facilities for corn is matched by the

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1. TSAS, II (1879), 223; 2s. VI (1894), 352 ff.; VCH, I, 418.  
2. For the Gaye mill see O & B., II, 100: this is the only town mill whose site is known.

bakers whose names figure in large numbers on all the burgess rolls. Upon them, it must be remembered, fell the main task of provisioning the medieval town, so that the repeated mention of their trade in the admissions of foreigners is an accurate reflection of the town's growth; and the same is true to a lesser degree of butchers. To estimate the number of inhabitants at the end of our period is impossible through lack of data comparable in value to the number of houses which is the basis of the Domesday assessment of population (pp.47-8). A little later however there is the poll-tax of 1377 which applied to 2083 persons over the age of 14 years. By that date there were perhaps 3500 people of all ages; their numbers cannot have been very much fewer a generation earlier.

This brief survey may serve to explain the existence of the big houses described in the previous chapter better than the exiguous references to their owners which are cited there. It does not matter whether Roger Pride or William le Parmenter or Robert the Spicer built a particular house. All three represent equally well the prosperous merchant class which conducted large firms trading with most of England and even farther, beyond the sea. Such men were apt to disguise their origin by a change of style. No longer were they content, like Lawrence of Ludlow, to be

"of Ludlow and Shrewsbury"; they became citizens of London, dropping the name of the town in which their prosperity was rooted. The process is illuminating because it shows the standard of life to which these Shropshire merchants aspired and with which they were familiar. Viewed in that light the presence of these great houses excite no surprise.

It remains to list briefly the topographical and architectural developments which resulted specifically from this growth of trade; some have been mentioned in earlier chapters. The most obvious is the transfer of the market to more commodious surroundings in 1261 (p.74 ); subsequently (in 1276) it was paved,<sup>1</sup> an amenity which we take for granted in a market but which was no doubt a considerable advance on conditions in the churchyard which formerly served the purpose. Another generation and there was need for a new permanent Gild Hall, which, with an Exchequer chamber, was built in the new market between 1310 and 1312.<sup>2</sup> The rise of a wealthy merchant class produced several substantial stone houses which must have set completely new standards of domestic architecture in Shrewsbury. It is impossible to show accurately how the town expanded from one century to the next, but it can safely be inferred that the

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1. Cal. Patent R. (1272-81), 129.

2. Building accounts: TSAS, 2s. III (1891), 41-92.

hundred years between 1250 and 1350 saw a transformation as thorough as that accomplished in the century following the Norman Conquest.

CHAPTER VI.

LATE MEDIEVAL HALLS.

Medieval town houses are commonly divided into two main categories. There are the large halls normally of stone or brick which belonged to merchants, great ecclesiastics, or the feudal nobility and which are exemplified by Crosby Hall <sup>1</sup> and Winchester House. <sup>2</sup> The second category, smaller and much more numerous, is timber framed with one or two projecting upper storeys, and can be seen in every ancient town in England. This classification, made by J.H. Parker nearly a hundred years ago, was hardly modified until recent years when Mr. W.A. Pantin's work at Oxford showed that there is more than one kind of house included in this second category.

In this chapter, however, we are not concerned with either. Investigation of timber framed buildings in Shrewsbury revealed several small medieval halls which through refronting and the insertion of floors have not hitherto been recognised for what they are. Five examples have been studied in detail, three more are known but have not been examined carefully either for lack of time or a suitable opportunity, and there is one 'probable'. On the very slender dating evidence that is available they seem to

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1. A.W. Clapham and W.H. Godfrey, Some Famous Buildings and their Story, 121 ff.
  2. L.C.C. Survey of London, XXII, Bankside, Chapter VI.

be generally earlier than the two- and three-storeyed types of building. That so many should have come to light in a very limited survey suggests that timber-framed halls were once a common, perhaps even the normal, form of town building in the fourteenth century.

The customary plan for the smaller medieval hall comprises three main features, an entrance, usually by a transverse screened passage, an open hall, and a solar which is often two-storeyed. In the "classical" medieval plan these three elements are placed in that order proceeding from one end of the building to the other. I have found only one such plan in Shrewsbury, at the Old Gullet Inn, and even there it is not absolutely straightforward. In the remaining five cases either part of the evidence has been destroyed or the plan is probably different from the one described and which is considered normal. We will begin therefore with the Old Gullet Inn, describing it in some detail because its true character is not easily recognised.

#### The Old Gullet Inn.

Its external appearance is unprepossessing (pl.57), showing two blocks of building roofed at right angles to each other, forming a main block and wing, the whole rendered in cement which has been painted "black-and-white". None of the doors or windows is older than the eighteenth century,



Nevertheless two or three features suggest a considerable antiquity and point to its being a building different from the ordinary run of timber-framed houses. Seen from the west end the roof of the main block is slightly higher than the wing, and terminates in a tiny triangular gable whose feet rest on the ridge of the wing roof (pl.58), a feature reminiscent of medieval practice as exemplified at Ockwells Manor, Berkshire <sup>1</sup> and a number of Kentish "Yeoman's Houses".<sup>2</sup> The north elevation towards Hill's Lane is vertical throughout, showing not the least sign of a jetty either projecting or underbuilt. Lastly the large dormer has the look of an insertion into an originally unbroken roof line.

Examination of the interior soon confirms these slight hints of an open hall, with its vertical walls and unused roof space. The plastered projections at the north-west and north-east corners of the ground floor (plan fig.15) conceal posts which serve no obvious structural function for the present low ceiling; presumably therefore they carried the roof, not a rail into which joists were tenoned. At the head of the stairs at the south-east angle the floor-joists of the attics rest sufficiently far above the wall-plate to make it certain that they are a later insertion. Similarly curved windbraces from the roof principals to the purlins

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1. N. Lloyd, A History of the English House, 193.

2. N.B.R. photographs: the feature is recurrent in Kent.

suggest that the roof was intended to be seen. Midway along the hall roof is a truss which has incurved struts from the purlins to the tie-beams (pl.59), and which shows at the middle of both the collar- and the tie-beam the mortises of a post now removed to permit access from one compartment of the roof to the other; again proof that the attic floor is an afterthought. Finally the smoke-blackened condition of the truss itself indicates that the hall was heated originally by a centrally-placed open hearth.

The open hall thus proved, we turn to the wing, the solar wing, presumably, and here the real difficulties begin. Its plan is extremely odd, with the south-west corner forming an acute angle and the east side narrower than the west end of the hall. There is now no obvious reason why this should be so, for there are no structures at the rear (south) of the building. The north and west sides were doubtless sited to conform respectively with Hill's Lane and the ancient passage to Cole Hall, hence the slightly acute angle at the north-west corner. Unfortunately this part of the building has been so extensively altered and its structural features so obscured by plaster that it adds very little evidence to what can be gained from the plan. On the east side of the ground floor a beam, considerably mutilated, crosses the two openings from the hall, but it does not run exactly parallel with the west wall. Despite

this peculiarity it presumably does mark the line of a wall. One explanation which might account for the extremely irregular layout of the presumed solar is that in origin it is part of an earlier building.

That is the easiest explanation of its extremely irregular shape, but it is just possible that the plan was completely determined by property boundaries. We know that this part of the town was built up fairly early; Cole Hall may have originated in the thirteenth century, and no doubt by the end of the following century this quarter was becoming a fully built-up area. If we suppose there was a continuous range of properties, not necessarily all built upon, facing the street now named Old Colehall, a small corner plot might well have been of this irregular shape. This hypothesis at least dispenses with the need to suppose two builds in a structure where only one can be proved. We need not presuppose an earlier build to account for the alignment of the east wall of the solar, which would of necessity have to run parallel with the west to support the roof trusses, whereas the gable ends of the hall did not need to be parallel; purlins could easily be adjusted to different lengths.

It is however, unfortunate that the vital points of junction between the hall and solar roofs are inaccessible, for here, if anywhere, it might be possible to prove their relative

date, short of demolishing the house piecemeal. <sup>1</sup>

As a solar the building is fairly easily explicable. The ground floor is divided into two parts by the main partition, which might well represent in part a medieval division of the storage-space beneath the solar proper; there is of course no proof of this in the present structure. The first floor is open to a ceiling at the level of the lower purlin, with a straight windbrace at the north-east corner joining the principal of the roof truss to the purlin. The south room has been incorporated as part of the kitchen below, and the roof is inaccessible. How the upper floor was approached is now impossible to tell; perhaps by a straight flight of stairs from the hall near either the north or south end.

Reverting to the hall, we see how the stairs inserted at the same time as the first floor are at the inferior end of the medieval plan; the original entrance was probably by a cross passage here.

It is desirable to discuss the principal changes made to the medieval structure because it may help to illustrate certain aspects of the early plan. The subdivision of the hall into two storeys and attics cannot be certainly dated

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1. I have to thank Mr. F.R. Dinnis, formerly Borough Surveyor for the plan, without which adequate discussion of the building would have been difficult, and of the solar, impossible. Although a plan had to be drawn for official purposes the date of the survey was advanced to enable me to make a more thorough examination with it in hand.

but it is likely to have taken place in the second half of the sixteenth century. The system of crossing two main beams, in contrast to some form of staggering such as occurs in the back wing of the adjacent Dermal Clinic is found in the front room of Draper's Hall built in 1560; it is probably of much the same date here. The stairs were built at the same period but have since been largely renewed. At this time too the chimney at the west end was built to serve large fireplaces in ground and first floors. The reason why the fireplace was inserted near a corner of the room rather than in the middle of a wall is not evident; its heat would have been thrown out more effectively from the middle of either the south or west walls. But given that it had to be sited on the west wall, its position might be explained by the prior existence of a partition dividing the ground floor of the solar wing into two rooms which it was desired to retain. The curious way in which the present partition wall turns as if to avoid the fireplace suggests that the partition existed first, otherwise the chimney breast would have been squared up with the front of the fireplace in the normal manner. The chimney was intended from the outset to serve a fireplace in the room above, which was no doubt a chamber, acting both as bedroom and sitting-room.<sup>1</sup> In connection with the upper fireplace a

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1. Cf. *Ant. J.*, XXXII (1947), 131.

very puzzling feature must be noted, a beam across the room which is not placed parallel to the tie-beam of the truss; it is marked A on the first floor plan. This beam once formed the head of a partition, the mortises and wattle-holes of which can be traced on the soffit; it seems to have been inserted in order to carry the ceiling joists, and there is another beam performing the same function above the light partition to the east. What is curious is that it should have been necessary to have a new partition wall when the east wall of the solar was so near, and I can offer no explanation of this. Both these beams probably rest on the wall-plate at each end, hence the attic floor, as noted earlier, butts against the slope of the roof.

To sum up the medieval state of the Old Gullet we have here what we can for the present regard as a normal plan; a screens-passage, a hall with an open fireplace, and a solar. Ignoring the difficulties of the solar with an earlier structure possibly incorporated in it, what date can we assign to the phase in which it possessed a normal tripartite plan? The dating evidence is slight. There is the hall roof truss, which resembles a much larger truss in Henry Tudor House on Wyle Cop, a fifteenth century building. The curved windbraces in the roof are generally similar to those found in many late medieval buildings.<sup>1</sup> Finally the

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1. Many illustrations of fifteenth-century roofs show this feature, but the dating range appears to be very wide; cf. N. Lloyd, *op.cit.*, 355-365, whose examples include Stokesay, c.1260 (date revised by Margaret E. Wood, *op.cit.* 64-69), to Cothay Manor, c.1480.

solar has a single straight windbrace in the roof, for which at present no dated analogy can be quoted. For the moment, then, it will be sufficient to say that the house is late medieval, probably fifteenth century.

### The Nag's Head Hall.

The second hall-type building to be described is much more remarkable than the Old Gullet Inn, and despite its ruinous condition sufficient yet survives to enable most of the original plan and structure to be reconstructed. The house is about twenty yards away from the Wyle Cop on the north side behind the Nag's Head public-house, and as a result of the removal of half of the roof is now completely derelict, with parts of the walls in a state of collapse. It will be referred to for convenience as the Nag's Head Hall. It is built on ground which has been levelled out of the natural slope of the hillside and even now falls slightly from the base of the thirteenth-century town wall, against which the west<sup>1</sup> end stands. The plan is incomplete because the east end has been demolished, so that what remains was intended for only part of the activities of a medieval household; service rooms and kitchen at least have disappeared. The remains comprise a hall of two unequal bays and a screens passage above which

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1. Actually N.W.; other compass points correspondingly altered for convenience of description:- NE. = N., SE. = E., SW. = S.

was a room. The screens passage is at the lower end of the building, divided from the hall by a structural partition (plan fig.16).

The remarkable character of the building is apparent from looking at the north elevation (pl.60) which, being the one farthest from the street, it was never thought necessary to recase or rebuild in brick as was done on the south side. Though the lower timbers have been altered the wall still presents substantially the appearance and structural details of a highly elaborate medieval house (fig 17). The bay divisions of the hall are marked by principal posts which are tenoned into the ground sill and wall plate; lateral rigidity is provided by braces, cusped on the soffit, which are tenoned and pegged into posts and wall plate. Another principal post which formerly supported the wall plate on the far side of the screens passage has had its lower half cut away, but its mortise can be traced in the rotted sill of the east wall.

The original arrangement of the lesser timbers is harder to distinguish, but the general scheme of infilling between the principal posts is clear enough. In the upper half of each bay stand two stout posts which are pegged to the wallplate immediately next to the cusped braces. Such pegholes and mortises as can be traced suggest that a further cusped brace joined each of these posts to the



wallplate. The clearest indication of this can be seen on the east post in the west bay (A. fig. ); it has a row of four pegholes and a mortise (pl.61), which by its sloping head shows it was cut to take an angularly-placed timber rising upwards. In the western bay of the hall there is no evidence to show whether the two subsidiary posts rested upon the ground-sill or upon a rail; in the eastern (pl.62), one post (C) rested upon a rail one end of which was tenoned into the corresponding post (D) opposite; there is now no means of telling how far down this second post continued.

The short entrance bay has a very massive baulk tenoned into the principal posts each side to form a lintel across the screens-passage. The cusped brace on the east side of the hall principal (E, fig. 17) joins, not the wall plate, but a post which is tenoned top and bottom into the wall plate and the lintel. This intermediate post and the end principal carry plain arch braces which are tenoned into a rail some two feet below the wall plate, forming a shallow two-centred arch. The interpretation of this and other features in the wall will be deferred until a description of the interior has been given.

Entering the hall from the screens-passage it is obvious that the first-floor is a later insertion because

there is no structural provision at the principal wall posts for a floor. The main post <sup>1</sup> which divides the north elevation of the hall into two bays is moulded continuously from the ground to the tie-beam it supports, and the upper floor has been cut into this moulding. The open truss has a cambered tie-beam with cusped braces below (pl.63); the inner of two mouldings on the principal is carried through the cusping to the underside of the tie-beam. This truss is not placed midway along the hall, but rather nearer the east or screens end. The west bay is about 13 ft. long and the east about 10 ft. implying that the open hearth was placed just west of the truss, with a louvre immediately above to take off the smoke. It is this portion of the roof, unfortunately, which has been removed, so there is no possibility of knowing what the louvre was like or even its exact position.

The truss itself has a collar beam resting upon king- and ~~queen~~-posts which have cusped braces placed diagonally between them to form quatrefoils (fig. 18), with two raking struts, from tie- and collar-beam respectively, to each roof principal.

The Nag's Head Hall had its upper or dais end in the larger of the two bays, with the open hearth placed nearer that end and adjacent on the east side to an open truss which was enriched by cusped and moulded braces and two

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1. Spoken of in the singular because only one of the original pair of posts now survives.

quatrefoils. Fox and Raglan have emphasised the impressiveness of the cruck-trussed hall, "the darkness of (its) roof, intermittently lit, we may suppose, by torches and the flicker of the central hearth fire";<sup>1</sup> a similarly imposing effect would have been presented by the cusps and moulded tie-beam, surmounted by two quatrefoils, spanning the Nag's Head Hall. But in daylight too the interior must have been impressive, for like many other timber-framed halls it no doubt had sufficient natural lighting to show off the proportions and decorative detail.<sup>2</sup> Post A (fig.17, and pl.61) has a moulding which presumably denotes that it was once the jamb of a window. The horizontal timber which is above it looks like a later insertion slotted into the mortise of a cusped brace now removed, so it is not clear how big the window was. The highly decorative character of the timberwork in this elevation suggests a window of considerable pretensions, and to get some idea of what it may have been like we may consider Baguley Hall in Cheshire,<sup>3</sup> which although rather bigger than the Nag's Head Hall (34 ft. long as against 24 ft) was likewise of two bays and heavily ornamented with cusping. There the four-light square-headed window at the dais end was about 6 ft. wide overall with six-inch moulded mullions

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1. Sir Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan, Monmouthshire Houses, I. Medieval, 23.
  2. See, for example, the illustrations of Rufford, Great Dixter, and Gainsborough, in F.H. Crossley, Timber Building in England, plates 141, 144, 145.
  3. Henry Taylor, Old Halls in Lancashire and Cheshire, Chapter XXVI.

about 8 ft. 6 ins. high.<sup>1</sup> Now the space from post A westward to its fellow, is about 7 ft. 6 ins. and the lowest visible part of the moulding is 6 ft. 8 ins. below the wallplate, giving a window whose jambs are formed by heavy structural timbers, as at Baguley, and of a not disproportionate size. From the evidence of the mortise it had a pointed cusped head which it might be possible to reconstruct in more detail if the underside of the wallplate were fully exposed, and if the lights were comparable in width to those at Baguley there were at least five; but until something more is known about the form of the head further conjecture is idle. There may have been a second smaller window in a corresponding position in the eastern bay, as indeed would be expected by analogy with Baguley where the design of the dais window is repeated but is appropriately diminished in size - three lights instead of four - to emphasise that it is at the lower end of the hall. The only other sign of an original opening is in the lower part of the wall and next to the screens, where the main rail has a 3 ft. long chamfer stopped at both ends (pl.62). Its purpose is hard to guess, but it is relevant to note that in an exactly comparable position at Baguley there is a small ogee-headed window, apparently blocked.<sup>2</sup> A small

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1. These measurements are only approximate, as the plan and elevations from which they are taken are on a very small scale.
  2. Best shown in Turner and Parker, op.cit., II Fourteenth Century, opp. 236; also F.H. Crossley, op.cit., pl.138: Although the window as depicted appears to be pointed, it has an ogee head.

window so placed would certainly throw light directly on the screens, but it seems that in both houses an adjacent larger window already did this more effectively.

So far we have established a hall of quite normal plan, but clearly the solar was not in its normal position at the far end from the screens. Now the screens-passage is here divided off from the hall by a form of spere-truss, beyond which, presumably, both solar and service-room were in close proximity.

A spere-truss consists of two stout posts, so placed as to divide the width of the hall into nave and aisles, which are carried up to support the roof where they commonly replace a normal closed truss. This they do by rising to the height of the lower or middle purlin, at which level they support a collar and a closed truss which is smaller than those spanning the hall. The wall principals and the speres are fastened together by one or more horizontal ties; a common rafter extends from collar to wall plate. That is a frequent, perhaps the normal form.<sup>1</sup>

At the Nag's Head Hall the two posts provide a nave-and-aisles division without directly supporting the roof-truss, which is probably of the usual closed type with

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1. R.C.H.M. Herefordshire, III., lxvi.

principal rafters.<sup>1</sup> Structurally it is akin to Denton and Ordsall Halls in Lancashire.<sup>2</sup> The aisle openings were blocked by trefoiled arches (fig.18), entrance to the hall being gained by the large central opening which was normally closed by moveable screens such as remain at Rufford Old Hall.<sup>3</sup> This central opening is spanned by a beam which is about 6 ft. above the present floor level of the hall, say, perhaps, 7 ft. above the original. It is certainly an integral feature of the truss because the moulding of the spere-posts is returned along it.

The screens passage is ceiled over to form a room above. On the west side of the passage the joists are apparently tenoned into the middle rail of the spere-truss; though the actual junction is concealed by plaster there is no other means of support, so a mortise-and-tenon is the only possible solution. On the east side the corresponding rail is rather lower, so the joists are not tenoned in, but rest upon it. Thus one side suggests the floor is original, the other that it is inserted. In the room above, however, is the finest wooden doorway in Shrewsbury, a moulded and crocketed ogee-headed opening set in a square-headed moulded frame with foiled sunk spandrels (pl.64); it is certainly

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1. It is difficult to verify this because the room adjacent to the truss on the west is inaccessible, likewise the roof.
  2. Henry Taylor, *op.cit.*, pl. XXXI.
  3. F.H. Crossley, *op.cit.*, 130.

original and suggests a date early rather than late in the fifteenth century. It divides the room into two, a tiny square lobby and a larger room about 17 ft x 5 ft. 6 ins., with the carved ornament facing the former. Adjacent to it in the east wall of the lobby is another doorway with a continuous chamfer in the jambs and shallow ogee-head (fig.65). On its right-hand (south) side the head is pegged into a stud; on the left-hand side there is no sign of pegs and the head has apparently been butted against a curved brace springing from the principal post, suggesting that the door is a later insertion; its awkward relation to the post which forms the left-hand jamb together with the rough finish of the face which actually butts against the brace point to the same conclusion.

Clearly the crocketed ogee-headed door led to some important part of the house; a gallery is the usual explanation of a feature like this.<sup>1</sup> Now at this first-floor level the "aisle" space is filled by two quatrefoils and the "nave" space by two plain studs each connected by a rail to a spere-post, the central space being blank. Whether this simpler framing is contemporary with the spere-truss or a later insertion, there is at present no evidence to show; either way there are awkward problems.

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1. Cf. Denton Hall, Taylor, op.cit., Pl. XXXI; and The Commandery, Worcester, F.T. Dolman and J.R. Jobbins, Analysis of Ancient Domestic Architecture, I.

Firstly, how was the gallery (for want of a better word) approached? The north elevation suggests at first glance a doorway above the passage, opening into a lobby with the enriched doorway immediately opposite. There is however no sign of the mortises required for an external stair, and it would be surprising if no ornament, not even a chamfer, had been applied to the outer door. But if the gallery was not entered there, and it was clearly not entered from the hall, the stair must have been on the "service" side of the passage; and at this point speculation must cease for lack of evidence.

We may sum up the alternative thus. The first-floor space was either a gallery or a solar. If it was a gallery the solar was presumably above the service-room and approached from that end of the building. If it was a solar, the approach remains a problem, but the elaborate door-head is accounted for. Either way the plan was radically different from the normal straightforward tripartite plan found at the Old Gullet Inn.

The Nag's Head Hall is instructive in two ways. It shows firstly the high standard of ornament **and** the elaboration of structure to which town houses could attain; and secondly, that an owner of the wealth and social standing implied by this costly craftsmanship did not demand that his house should conform rigidly to one type of plan.



This conclusion contrasts strikingly with the uniformity of plan found in the medieval cruck-trussed halls of Monmouthshire.<sup>1</sup>

Finally the dating of the building must be discussed. The moulding of the speres (fig.18) and the crocketed ogee-headed doorway are both common Perpendicular features. The ogee member of the moulding might in itself be of any date between the late fourteenth and early sixteenth century; the profuse ornament of the doorhead, the crockets particularly, suggest a date in the first half of that period: say, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. The size of the structural timbers is moderate, not like the big scantlings of the next house to be described (8A Castle Street); if, therefore, the idea that heavy timbers are generally indicative of an early date be accepted, we may ascribe the Nag's Head Hall to the early fifteenth century.

8A, Castle Street (Church Farm Cafe).

The Nag's Head Hall is impressive because of its profusion of cusped and moulded timberwork; it is scarcely possible to carry ornamentation further. No. 8A, Castle Street, impresses rather by its size and proportions, though it too does not lack structural decoration.

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1. The Monmouthshire houses do, of course, show advances in structural subdivisions according to basic social requirements, but the requirements seem to have been constant: Fox and Raglan, op.cit., especially 46, 48, 98.

The house flanks a passage off the west side of Castle Street, and two large cusped braces high up beneath the wallplate (pl.66) are the only external sign of its medieval date. Their size may be judged by the brick nogging. Inside it is clear that an open hall survives, now divided into three storeys; the fact that the second floor has adequate headroom below the wallplate and tie beam indicates a height out of the ordinary, when it is remembered that the Old Gullet hardly has room for one upper storey.

As in our previous examples the hall is of two bays; it is nearly 21 ft. long, 22 ft. wide, and almost 20 ft. from ground to wallplate, so approximating to a cube (plan, fig.19). The roof is the most striking feature. It is of two bays with the smoke-blackened open truss slightly nearer the east end, so that the open hearth must have been more or less central, with, probably, a louvre immediately above. That the screens passage was at the west end, perhaps entirely outside the hall, is suggested by the fact that when the chimney replaced the open hearth in the late sixteenth century it was built against the gable end of the hall, that is to say, backing on to the former screens. This disposition gives the only clue to the site of the solar. There is no sign of it at the west end of the building, and it is on all grounds more likely to have been at the other end, with small tenements between it and

the street, as was the case with a number of larger houses elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The slender evidence will be discussed more fully below.

We are left with the roof itself as the main evidence of the building's character. It is of king-post type with a collar purlin upon which rests the collar of each of the close-spaced pairs of rafters. The massive, tie-beam carrying the king-post of the open truss is supported by two suitably large chamfered arch-braces which may be seen below on the first floor and rise to form a true arch at the middle of the tie (pl.67). This apart, there is no trace of the original structure on the ground and first floors.

The king-post of the open truss itself is braced in four directions, by two longitudinal cusped braces pegged to the collar purlin, and by two transverse braces tenoned and pegged to the top of the king-post and to the tie beam (fig. 20) i.e., these latter follow the pitch of the roof (pl.69). Two struts complete the open truss; they are vertical, and are fastened to the tie-beam and the rafter above it (pl.68). All the structural members of the truss with the exception of the king-post itself are ornamented with cusps and ogees. Viewed from the second floor the size

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1. W.A. Pantin, Domestic Architecture in Oxford; Ant.J., XVII (1947), 123, quotes several instances.

of these timbers gives an appearance of heaviness which was no doubt less evident when seen from the floor of the original hall, when, indeed, recalling "the flicker of the central hearth fire" we may imagine the extremely impressive effect of these massive and boldly carved timbers. The roof proper consists of six pairs of collared rafters to each bay, with another pair over each of the three trusses. The collars rest on the collar purlin, apparently neither pegged nor slotted into it.<sup>1</sup> A number of the rafters have been renewed near the apex, possibly because a louvre has been removed from a position near the open truss.

The gable trusses are generally similar to the open truss but lack the vertical "queen-post" struts and have plain braces to the king-post.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore the arch-braces meet the tie-beam, not in the middle but approximately beneath the plain raked braces of the king-post.

About the remainder of the house, outside the hall, scarcely anything can be said. The screens passage itself has been rebuilt, and there is no trace of a kitchen or buttery, or of the doors that led to them. The solar too

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1. A thick coating of dust made adequate examination difficult but there was no clear sign of any fastening such as is found, for instance, at Baguley Hall, where the reverse-curved scissor-braces are notched to fit the collar-purlin (personal observation).
  2. SPL photograph 535 (Mr. J. Mallinson) shows an exactly similar gable truss in course of demolition during the widening of Wyle Cop in June 1926. This hall was on the north side near the turning into Dogpole and opposite the Lion Hotel.

has been very thoroughly rebuilt more than once, beginning in the early seventeenth century. Probably a minute examination would give some hint of its original size and plan, but a cursory inspection shows that scarcely anything can be left of the original structure. Confirmation that this was the solar end is hinted by the scanty remains of late sixteenth century panelling; such refurbishing, maintaining the relative importance of the former solar, is common in medieval houses.

Structure apart, the building raises several problems. Firstly, it is the only medieval timber-framed house in Shrewsbury which has its main axis at right-angles to the street, with a screen-passage not entered directly from the street. Moreover, it can hardly be supposed that so large a hall was lit merely by light penetrating from a passage as narrow as that by which it is now approached. The building on the north side (Whitfield's) is clearly later, therefore, and it can be assumed that no predecessor - it is itself of fifteenth century date - was of the same height. Taking this into account, and remembering the imposing character of No. 8A, it seems likely that there was a considerable open space near the house - a courtyard, perhaps, giving light to the hall, around which lay the kitchen and other offices. Admittedly there is no positive evidence to support this

idea, but a comparison with the Nag's Head Hall may help. This latter hall, smaller but highly enriched with mouldings, certainly stood in a considerable plot of ground extending front and back; to the street, probably, at the front, and quite open at the back, as it still is. Now a comparably large open space must, I think, be allowed to 8A, Castle Street when it was built, probably extending on both sides of the hall. It is not clear where the kitchen and offices stood; they may well have been around a courtyard closed on its north side by a hall which gained both warmth and light from its southward aspect. Although the total lack of evidence makes conjecture impossible, it may at any rate be granted that a small courtyard must have formed part of the first layout; and should this conclusion be accepted, it throws some light on the character of the medieval town. Not only the great stone houses discussed earlier had their courtyards; timber halls, smaller perhaps, but of considerable architectural pretensions, existed alongside them, and were no doubt equally numerous.

Secondly, what is the date of the building? There are no mouldings to help, only the cusped and ogee-shaped braces and the general character of the timbering. Cusping might be of almost any date from early in the thirteenth to late in the fifteenth century; the ogee limits the early range a little, starting in the early fourteenth century.

Within this span of two centuries the massive timbers and the boldness of their ornament may suggest the earlier rather than the later half, i.e., some time in the fourteenth century. Pending a more detailed survey of the dating evidence for Shrewsbury houses, we may leave the question.

One final comment on this house. With all the problems of its plan, it seems to have been of orthodox arrangement, following the "classical" layout of screens passage, hall, and solar, in that order, so differing from the Nag's Head Hall and other buildings. At all events there is no positive sign that it departed from this normal arrangement.

### Riggs Hall.

The impression so far gained from these Shrewsbury timber-framed halls is one of considerable diversity of plan as well as of size, though in the matter of size it is interesting that the differences are expressed in width and height rather than length; two bays and a length of 20-24 feet seem to have been fairly constant features. With this in mind we may consider yet another house which is full of problems of plan and structure.

Riggs Hall stands at the northern tip of the walled area of Shrewsbury, within the courtyard enclosed by the

two wings of the L-shaped Public Library building, formerly the School. It is now divided between the Deputy Librarian's house (the southern half), the Library Committee and store rooms, and the Fuel Office,<sup>1</sup> but it is in fact the building bought by the town Bailiffs in 1552 to form the first Shrewsbury School.<sup>2</sup>

A sketch plan of the ground floor (fig.21) shows in the east wall of the Committee Room two projections, one in the corner and the other about 9 ft. 6 ins. away. Presumably two wall posts are here concealed behind the late sixteenth century panelling. Clearly they do not support the present ceiling; an Elizabethan timber-framed house is so built that the wallposts do not project into the rooms, and the panelling forms a flush unbroken surface. These two posts are therefore part of an earlier structure, presumably an open hall. The north<sup>3</sup> gable confirms this structural explanation; it has vertical walls, the timber-

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1. Miss Evelyn Sladdin, Deputy Librarian and present tenant of the house, very kindly invited me to examine Riggs Hall and gave me every facility for doing so. Miss Sladdin argued that the position of the house in relation to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century School buildings proved it was of earlier origin, and she was right. Without this invitation I, like all preceding students of Shrewsbury's architecture, would have dismissed the house as Elizabethan.
  2. Little will be said here about the later documentary<sup>?</sup> history of Riggs Hall; this will be discussed by Miss Sladdin in a forthcoming paper.
  3. Correctly NNE; and other points correspondingly altered for convenience of description.



framing being plastered over. There is no sign of the jetty which is universal in two-storeyed Elizabethan houses, and although the barge-boards of the gable proper are carved with a late sixteenth century vine-scroll, the prior existence of a single-storeyed hall is likely. The first floor provides confirmatory evidence. In the north-west corner of the building a post projects, corresponding to the post visible in the NE. corner of the room below.

Turning now to the opposite end of this conjectured hall, there is a two-storeyed block, square on plan at its south end, with a large open fireplace, on the south wall. The west wall of this solar block (pl.70) incorporates a portion of the thirteenth century town wall (p.133 below), but the first-floor wall above is timber framed; a photograph (pl.71) shows the difference in wall thickness. To the right of the drainpipe is a rebate in the wall; comparison of the vertical brick wall face to which the pipe is attached with the wall in which the upper windows are set, shows that in the return angle the latter wall is curved slightly, bending outwards towards the plate - a sure sign that it is of timber construction, since no other material would retain its stability curved thus. There is internal evidence too. In the middle of the east wall is

a projecting post and at a corresponding point in the west wall is panelling which boxes in another. The latter post can be seen from the attic above, by looking down the panelled casing; it is chamfered and stopped at the base, which is on first-floor level, showing that this part of the house was always of two storeys. In the attic above is a medieval truss (pl.72) whose construction show clearly that it roofed this square-plan wing as an independent unit of construction, i.e., whether it is regarded as a solar or a kitchen wing, it is something divided structurally from the hall.

Inspection of the roof above ceiling level is impossible. It seems however to be of king-post type with a collar purlin; the king-posts in the north and south walls are visible, resting upon heavy tie-beams and braced by equally heavy cusped braces like those in 8A Castle Street. Plain curved braces rising from the king-post are tenoned into the collar purlin upon which rest the collars of several pairs of rafters, now hidden by the ceiling. The collar of the middle pair is thickened, cambered, and supported at each end by rudimentary arch braces, so that in this single instance the collar gives support to its purlin instead of the other way round. The associated pair of rafters may perhaps be of larger scantling than the others to take the strain imposed on them by the weight of the collar.

The roof of the hall is of queen-post type, clearly built to allow the space to be used as attics. It is therefore contemporary with the barge-boards noticed earlier. Since the Elizabethan schoolmasters found it necessary to rebuild the old roof it was presumably of some type which could not be converted; not, that is to say, like the roof of the Old Gullet (p.221). It was no doubt of king-post type like the "solar" roof, since that type alone can hardly be altered to form attics, and if at all, only with great difficulty.<sup>1</sup> Confirmation of the rebuilding may be found on the first floor; the wallplate visible from the landing shows a large slot intended to take some ceiling or roof member other than the present one, which is slightly too small for it. The process perhaps worked this way: the old roof and the beams were removed; the new roof needed differently spaced ties, so at least one of the old slots was left vacant to be filled by a new and smaller ceiling beam required to reroof the E. wing.

To sum up Riggs Hall so far, we have a single-storey block about 33 ft. by 16 ft. with a two storeyed wing at one end about 15 ft. 6 ins. square. The former may be an open hall, the latter a solar.

There is however an E. wing which is also of medieval origin, and it is this which raises all the real problems

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1. A longitudinal division of the space is possible, but then there is the difficulty of access caused by the transverse braces of each king-post.

of the plan. Before the additions made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was about 24 ft. by 15 ft., with its south wall in the same line as the south wall of the presumed hall; the gable in the E. elevation facing the library porch represents its original width. Evidence of its date is small but conclusive; it is a post at the south-east angle of the first floor. Here is a large mortise with five peg-holes and a sloping top to show that the brace which fitted it sloped upwards. Above the thickened head of the post may be seen in section a sawn-off wallplate running W; above it has been placed the wallplate of the present Elizabethan roof. The date of the new plate shows that the old was medieval; and in any case, so large a mortise is characteristic in Shrewsbury of the medieval period, no later.

It is difficult to say whether this wing was of one storey or two; I have found no evidence on the point. One thing is obvious, that Riggs Hall did not conform to any normal medieval plan. It should of course be said that the main body and the wing are of the same date, or rather, that there is no evidence that they are of different dates. Rebuilding of both sides of the wing has made it difficult to find out how it joined the hall. Unfortunately there appears to be no published analogy for such a plan,<sup>1</sup> nor

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1. Dippersmoor Manor (R.C.H.M. Herefordshire, I, Kilpeck parish) differs in that the cruck-built wing is earlier than the main block which is of timber-framed construction.

is it easy to see what purpose a large wing can have served in that position.

The only decorative detail to date Riggs Hall is the cusped brace of the solar (pl.73), to which all the remarks made earlier about cusping apply. In this instance too, if any importance can be attached to the massiveness of the timber, the building does not belong to the end of the medieval period; tentatively we may ascribe it to the first half of the fifteenth century.

Two further points about Riggs Hall deserve emphasis because they may throw some light on the previous house, 8A, Castle Street. There the gable ends of the hall had plain braces fastening the king-post to the tie-beam. The cusped brace performing the same functions in the solar of Riggs Hall may indicate one of the architectural means whereby in such a house the superior character of the solar was emphasised. The single-bay square plan of the Riggs Hall solar may also have been followed in 8A Castle Street rather than a wing wider than the hall; the wallplate seems there to continue beyond the hall gable at that end. Finally Riggs Hall is an example of a timber-framed hall standing in a considerable area of open ground; not only the gardens in front of the Library but most of the street called School Lane belonged to the house.

Nos. 160-161 Abbey Foregate.

The last hall to be discussed in detail is a much smaller and humbler building than the previous three; in the social scale it is nearer the Old Gullet Inn. It stands in Abbey Foregate, a little way off the street frontage, and is about 320 yards ESE. of the Abbey, nearly due south of the junction of Monkmoor Street with the Foregate. It is now divided into two tenements.

Although it is clearly much older than most other houses in Abbey Foregate, indeed probably the oldest, its appearance is so deceptively simple that it has never been commented on and so unpretentious that it has never interested photographers (pl.74). It is a building of four bays of which the one at the west end is wholly occupied by the entrance, where two large curved braces form an arch to the lintel of the opening, the lintel being simply an extension of the wall plate. The arch thus formed has an arch-braced collar, an arrangement which could have been the original one, although the present collar braces are largely modern. In particular the pendant at the apex of the arch below the collar is not in keeping with the medieval character of the original work, and the braces of the arch present the unfortunate appearance of springing from mid-air, not from any bracket or cap, or even from the post itself. The collar is thus the only timber inside the

main arch which forms part of the original design; it would probably be thought necessary to strengthen the arch in the inevitable absence of a tie-beam. Clearly, although the house was entered by it, such an entrance was something more than a screens passage, and in view of the height and width of the opening, adequate for a cart to pass through, it is probable that the building was a farmhouse in the suburbs of the town; indeed, the arrangement of small buildings at the rear still carries a hint of the outbuildings scattered round a farmyard. A mortise in the principal at the north-east angle shows that there was a similar arch facing the yard.

The original timber-framed partition dividing this "screens passage" from the former hall has either quite disappeared or is so completely embedded in bricks and plaster that it is impossible to say whether it was framed or a form with speres. Although there is nothing to suggest an orthodox spere-truss with principals carried up to the roof, a modified form of it like that at Amberley Hall in Herefordshire <sup>1</sup> could have existed. The three bays of the north elevation facing the road are divided by principal posts rising vertically from sill to wallplate. Two of the principals have simple curved braces joining

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1. R.C.H.M., Herefordshire, I, and III.

them to the wallplate like those forming the arched entrance. It is likely therefore that this elevation originally had a series of four arches as nearly identical as possible but modified by the substitution in the eastern bay of a collar for the rail in the other bays. The peg-holes which might prove this are completely obscured by paint. The heavy middle rail is the main lateral support of the arches, dividing each main panel into two. No trace remains of subsidiary timbers and the ground-floor has been entirely rebuilt in brick.

The interior was radically transformed in the late sixteenth century when an upper floor and a central chimney were inserted, the latter providing a main fireplace in the ground-floor room of each tenement. These fireplaces are of a simple common type with depressed four-centred heads and chamfered jambs which are stopped top and bottom; they provide the only evidence for the date of the reconstruction. The extensive remodelling coupled with the excellent condition in which the house is kept make it difficult to reconstruct the original interior. Sufficient exposed timbers remain at the back to suggest that north and south elevations were similar, and it may here be remarked that the braces of the main elevations perform an important structural as well as decorative function, hence



the necessity for repeating the arched opening at both back and front, a feature already noted above. The internal divisions of the hall are irrecoverable; even the open truss is now completely concealed by bricks and plaster.

The only clear indication of its roof structure is obtained at the east end (pl.75). Two heavy queen-posts carry a straight collar into which the purlins are notched. The principal rafters are notched into and above the purlins. Typologically, it is an early development of a roof in which the thrust is concentrated by principal rafters into a few points rather than distributed along the full length of the wall plate.

By comparison with the preceding houses this is a simple structure. It is basically a hall with an entrance passage at one end and presumably a "dais" or its humble equivalent at the opposite end; of a separate solar there is no sign. It conforms to the normal plan of a small medieval house, not differing in its general layout from several Monmouthshire yeoman houses except in the form of entrance. Why so much space - a whole bay - should have been left for the purpose is not obvious, nor, if it were designed to allow a cart to pass through, why such a provision was felt desirable or necessary. It is perhaps

possible that building plots were sufficiently narrow to be almost filled by a house built parallel to the street. If this were so, the owner wishing to provide a covered entrance to the house and at the same time leave access to the farm behind, might adopt this compromise solution.

Coming to the question of dating the building the absence of moulded detail again drives us back to such general criteria as are suggested by structural development.

The plan is medieval and is unlikely to be later than the dissolution of the abbey in 1540. The use of perfectly plain curved braces exposed to view as a means of decoration is not likely to be earlier than the middle of the fifteenth century. That is not to say that earlier small houses may not have had such braces, but the general tendency in the century between 1450 and 1550 was for timber work to get simpler, the bold ornamentation of structural members giving place to applied enrichment. Thus in Shrewsbury curved braces in fifteenth century houses are normally cusped - examples will be described in detail below - whereas in the first half of the sixteenth century enrichment took the form of carved barge-boards and moulded bressumers, leaving structural members plain.<sup>1</sup> In the

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1. A bressumer protects the ends of the joists from the weather in a building with jettied upper storeys; these joists were usually left exposed in the fifteenth century. It thus performs exactly the same function as barge-boards do for the ends of purlins, and so regarded is decorative rather than structural.

early sixteenth century curved braces were largely superseded in favour of close-studded timbering. On this basis the house may be assigned provisionally to the second half of the fifteenth century.

#### Other timber-framed halls.

The most interesting of these is shown in pl.76, a house at the corner of Fish Street and Butcher Row, opposite the "Abbot's House". The only external hint of a medieval building is the great expanse of roof visible above the corbelled-out end which faces Fish Street. Internally this single bay retains a king-post roof; the brace from the king-post to the collar-purlin is cusped on both sides and the two braces to the tie-beam, only one of which is visible, <sup>1</sup> are curved but plain (pl.77). A rapid glance at the adjacent tenement, now subdivided into a shop and flat, showed that the same roof construction had once been carried through two more bays, although in both the longitudinal braces have now been removed, leaving only the sawn-off tenons in their mortises. The timbers here are now painted black so it is impossible to discern smoke-blackening. In one corner of the house (sketch plan, fig.22) two braces are visible in outline beneath the wallpaper; the one in

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1. I am indebted to Mr. H.J.Gornall for his interest in my investigations; after I had conjectured that the king-post was thus braced, he very kindly stripped the plaster off to expose the timber.

the side wall (pl.78) is clearly cusped, the one in the partition wall (pl.79) is less clear and is perhaps plain. The partition probably marks the division between a two-bay hall (P.H. Breeze) and a single-bay solar or service room; it is possible, though less likely in a house of this size, that it divided the hall from a service bay. The two bays have a total length of 20 ft. 6 ins., the truss being placed a few inches west of the middle. The essential point is that here was another single-storey hall, open on one side to Fish Street and on the other, presumably St.Alkmund's churchyard.

For such a house the relevant dating considerations have all been raised before; the boldly carved cusps of the braces, and particularly the one which is cusped on both sides, suggest here as in 8A Castle Street a date in the first half of the fifteenth century or earlier; I would hazard late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

The remaining examples of this class will be noted briefly in Appendix A; their general interest only may be pointed out here. Four adjacent houses on the east side of St.Alkmund's churchyard contain medieval timberwork, but their division into separate tenements would necessitate detailed planning before any original plan or structure could be discussed.<sup>1</sup> No.14 St. Mary's Street (pl.80) should

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1. Moreover one tenant refused all but the most restricted access, and another, a night worker, was available only after 6 p.m.

probably be associated with No.2 St. Alkmund's Square; both are of uncertain medieval date, and possibly represent a solar wing and hall respectively. The latter, at all events, was certainly not a hall. No.14 Dogpole (pl.81) should probably be associated with Dogpole House;<sup>1</sup> again both are medieval, perhaps hall and solar respectively. An antique shop in Milk Street, (pl.82), now largely gutted by later alterations, concludes the list as a "probable"; it was seen briefly at an early stage in these investigations, but I think that close study would reveal a fragmentary hall plan.

Some of the medieval deeds which mention halls<sup>2</sup> without specifying a "great stone tenement" must refer to the kind of building described here, but since there is no means of distinguishing a stone from a timber building in most of the documents this source of evidence has been ignored.

### Conclusions.

Shrewsbury in the later Middle Ages had a number of timber-framed halls, of which at least eight have survived to the present day. This presupposes that several more have disappeared;<sup>3</sup> there are none, for instance, in Pride Hill,

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1. Fronting on to the passage between Dogpole and St. Alkmund's Square.
  2. e.g., Thomas Talbot's hall in High Pavement, TSAS, 3s.V. (1905), 269: "le Straunge Hall; ibid., 149 ff.; "le Ireland's Hall" (John de Hibernia's descendent?) in Dogpole, TSAS, 3s. VII (1907).
  3. e.g., the one on Wyle Cop mentioned above (p.239n).

Mardol, The Square,<sup>1</sup> or High Street, all of which were among the most important parts of the town. This type of building must once have formed a conspicuous part of the town's architecture, existing alongside the large stone halls described in Chapter IV.

The plans of these timber-framed halls seem to have been irregular. The solar was not always in its normal relation to the hall (Nag's Head Hall), and there were additions to the usual tripartite plan (Riggs Hall). Some of the more important examples may have been built around a courtyard (8A, Castle Street), while others which offer no concrete evidence of a courtyard plan stood within a considerable area of their own ground (Riggs Hall, Nag's Head Hall). Humbler examples of the type certainly existed alongside these (Old Gullet Inn), but the general impression is one of dignified and imposing buildings.

The date of these houses is difficult to determine; all of them have provisionally been assigned to the period between 1350 (8A, Castle Street, late fourteenth century) and 1500 (160-161 Abbey Foregate, second half of the fifteenth century). Some refinement may be possible when other dating criteria have been marshalled. One fact is

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1. The cusped brace of a medieval building, possibly a hall, may be seen in a building in The Square at the corner of High Street which is illustrated in Hulbert, pl. .

clear from this, that as a group, the timber-framed halls are later than the stone halls. This may be fortuitous; the accidents of fire and decay might have destroyed earlier wooden structures while leaving the stone standing, if not unimpaired. But what little is known about the owners of these houses suggests that from the fourteenth century onwards the wealthy burgesses who might have built in stone at an earlier period turned to timber instead. Riggs Hall, for instance was the mansion of the Shotton family;<sup>1</sup> 2, St. Alkmund's Square is traditionally part of the town house of the Berringtons.<sup>2</sup> The Shotton (or Shetton) family seem to have been at the height of its prosperity and influence during the early part of the fourteenth century, John Shetton acting as Bailiff in 1415, 1425 and 1431, and Nicholas in 1408, 1414, 1422, 1428 and 1433.<sup>3</sup> By the middle of the sixteenth century a decline of their fortunes may have set in, caused them to sell the large timber house for use as a school. Berringtons acted as Bailiffs quite frequently from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century; the owners of the house near St. Alkmund's were a branch of the Berringtons of Moat Hall in the county.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Borough Rentals.
  2. H.E. Forrest, op.cit., 72-74.
  3. O & B., I, list of Officers.
  4. Visitations of Shropshire, Harleian Soc.