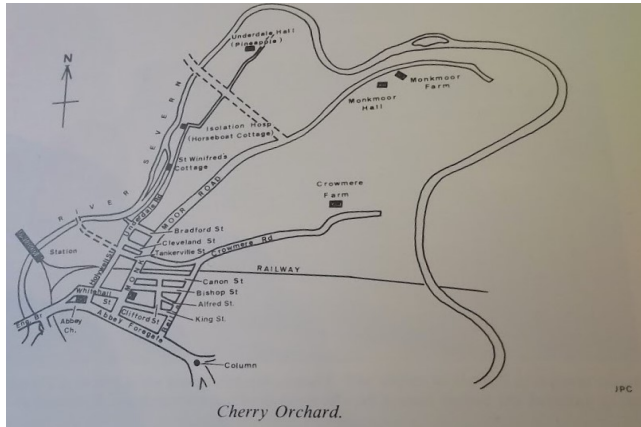


Suburbs of Shrewsbury: Cherry Orchard

Presentation to Shrewsbury U3A Local History Group 3 on 7 February 2020 by Elaine Moss

The growth of the suburb of Cherry Orchard

What area does Cherry Orchard cover? This map from Barrie Trinder's Victorian Shrewsbury shows it is a wider area than I had thought!



According to this map, Cherry Orchard includes the 3 main roads, Underdale, Monkmoor and Crowmere Roads and everything in between. These 3 roads were once just quiet lanes leading to farms on land belonging to the Earl of Tankerville.

I am going to talk about some of the areas you see on the map and how they grew into what has been described as:

"One of the most picturesque and healthy suburbs of the town" (but this was written by someone campaigning not to have the isolation hospital located here in the 1880s!)

I did my research using books, maps and websites and also by walking the streets, taking surreptitious photographs of people's houses!

What was here before 1832?

The only houses here on Hitchcock's map of Shrewsbury of 1832 were -

- Whitehall on Monkmoor Road
- The Ice House, then called Holywell
- Orchard House in Bradford Street, then called Holywell Cottage
- Holywell Terrace

I will talk about each of these later.

The name Holywell for streets and houses in the area is from St Winifide's Well at Holywell in Flintshire. St Winifide's relics were brought to the Abbey in Shrewsbury in 1138 which resulted in the Abbey becoming a place of pilgrimage.

Whitehall Street



I am going to try and do a virtual walk through the streets of Cherry Orchard. The picture above is the view from the end of Old Abbey Foregate looking up Whitehall Street towards Whitehall. This street was originally just a footpath leading to the Whitehall mansion.

Whitehall Terrace and Whitehall Place



Then in 1834 Whitehall Street began with the building of Whitehall Terrace. This is a beautiful terrace of houses at right angles to the street with iron trellis balconies and pillared verandas. You have to peek through the gates to get a good look and take a sneaky photo! It is said that many of its 19th Century inhabitants were clergy or “women living on invested income”. As you continue up the street you will also see a terrace of 11 white houses, Whitehall Place on the right which was built around the same time and said to be often occupied by women of independent means.

Whitehall



So, then we come to Whitehall itself, the first of the houses that were here before 1830. It has in fact been here since 1578, first as a private residence, then occupied by the Army Pay Corps during the First WW, then a hotel in the 1920s, which proved unprofitable. In 1931 there were attempts to place it with the National Trust but this didn't happen. It was again used by the Army Pay Corps in the Second WW and from 1947 it was used for government offices. It now has a number of unattractive looking modern buildings at the back used for clinics and until recently a GP surgery (closed in 2019). The house has been converted into flats.



This was Whitehall in its heyday. What a lovely idyllic scene!

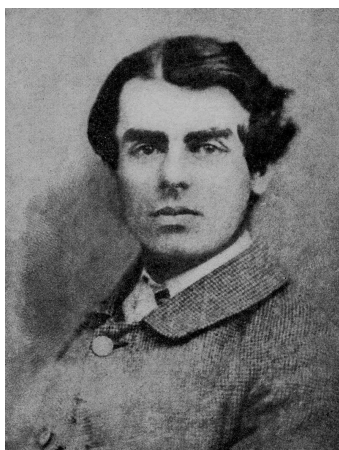
I am going to talk a bit more about the history of the Whitehall estate because it is very relevant to the growth of this Victorian suburb.

I was surprised to read that it was described as the grandest Elizabethan private residence in Shrewsbury! New stone buildings, other than public buildings, were rare after 1500 but Whitehall is one of them. It was built between 1578 and 1582 as a family home for Richard Prynne, a London lawyer. It was then known as Prynne's Place. When a part of the Abbey was knocked down during the dissolution of the monasteries, the stone was used for other buildings. Mr Prynne salvaged some of it and used it to build Whitehall which is in fact, built of stone enclosing an internal timber frame. I'd love to know more about Mr Prynne and his family and what life was like in Prynne's Place when it was a family home.

The reason he named it Whitehall was because the mansion was whitewashed. It is said that this may have been to hide the stone that was reused from the Abbey (*Old Houses of Shropshire* page 200). Another explanation is that as red sandstone is liable to deteriorate rapidly, the house was given a preservative coat of whitewash. (*Tony Carr* plate 158).

It passed to Prynne's descendants, the Earls of Tankerville. In 1835 the present Earl sold the house with 28 acres to Samuel Butler, headmaster of Shrewsbury School who planned to retire there but he died in 1839 and never lived there himself although his widow did from 1840.

Samuel Butler 1835-1902



In 1886, the headmaster's grandson, also called Samuel inherited the 28 acres but not the house itself following the death of his father. This Samuel Butler was the famous author of several novels including "The Way of All Flesh", a book still in print today. He attended Shrewsbury School which he disliked and his relationship with his parents was said to be largely antagonistic, he received frequent beatings and later wrote that his parents were brutal and stupid by nature. Samuel never married and was known to be homosexual. He is described as having a predilection for intense relationships with men, a theme which is reflected in many of his works.

Samuel decided to use the land surrounding Whitehall that he had inherited to build houses. He had roads laid out which he named Bishop Street, after his grandfather who was a bishop, Canon Street after his father (Thomas Butler who was a Canon), Clifford Street after Clifford's Inn, his London home and Alfred Street after his clerk and valet, Alfred Cathie.

We will now take a walk through these streets that grew from the 1880s. This was the period when Cherry Orchard really became established as a suburb. It is typical of many that grew across the country from late Victorian times. Up until the mid 19th Century in Shrewsbury (as in many other towns) most shopkeepers lived above the shop but as the town centre became overpopulated and was described as having high levels of crime, drunkenness, prostitution and fighting, business and shop owners wanted to move to a better life in the suburbs. So, the poor were left in the filthy slums in the town and the more well off moved out.

The influences on the further growth of Cherry Orchard were the railway, the racecourse, sports centres and the Severn ferries.

Earliest houses in Cherry Orchard



The earliest known houses to be built on the Whitehall Estate were in Bishop Street, numbers 81 and 82 which have plaques dating them 1889 and 1890.

The whole estate including King Street was completed by 1920. The houses were built by different builders but many, including mine, number 48 Bishop Street were built by James Reynolds, a deacon of Claremont Baptist Church.

I have done some work on the history of my house and have found the first record for it was a Conveyance for the land on 18 January 1901 made between Samuel Butler and Thomas Reynolds, James's father.

	BISHOP STREET, Monkmoor street.
	EAST SIDE.
	1 Noble Robert Henry (Sunbeam*)
	2 Mendors Walter
	3 Price Mrs
	4 Davies John, railway foreman
	5 Day Francis
	6 Howells Mrs
	7 Clift Henry, private gardener
	8 Legh Richard H. traveller
	9 Parr Miss (Gable Nook)
	10 Wellings George (Danesford villa)
	11 Kershaw John W. manager
	12 Baldwin Philip L. insurance supt
	13 Williams John, grocers' assistant
	14 Clench Sydney H. M. clerk
	15 Thomas Thomas, inspector
	16 Cox William, collector of taxes
	17 Curtise Arthur E. householder
	18 Minton Mrs. Annie, registry office
	19 Webb Samuel, engine driver
	20 Parry John E. traveller
	21 Edwards James A. householder
	22 Hammonds John
	23 Minnmer Harry, householder
	24 Jones Mrs. Walden, householder
	WEST SIDE.
	44 Wood William H. householder
	45 Williams Alfred, clerk
	46 Moore Thomas, railway guard
	47 Jeffs Samuel J. cashier
	48 Pritchard David, clerk
	49 Stobbs Stephen, householder
	50 Howe Harry, householder
	51 Dillon-Marlowe Joseph, clerk
	52 White Edward, householder
	53 Wycherley Harry F. traveller
	54 Cousins Fred, householder
	55 Clarke George, railway clerk
	56 Steward George, householder
	57 Badger Wm. John, post office clerk
	58 Campion Mrs. householder
	59 Bromwich William
	60 Bromley Miss Emma, householder
	61 Hughes Miss Martha, householder
	62 Lee Mrs. Isabella, householder (Whitehall villas)

	vey, Idris villa
	Burgwin, Edward, collector, Monkmoor
	Green, —, grocer's manager, Melrose villa
	Brownjohn, B. J. carpenter Melrose villa
	Clark, G. clerk, Blantyre cottage
	Cousins, —, Robin Hood house
	Aitcheson, Alexander, Lassington house
	Hammonds, Frederick, Garth villa
	Edwards, George, Glynn villa
	Middle, John, Woolway
	Wycherley, H. Francis, Thirncroft
	Dixon, Andrew, Rowena
	55 White, Mr. —
	54 Void
	53 Jones, Walter, P. O. clerk
	52 Sherratt, Walter, head goods clerk
	51 Void
	50 Williams, George, commercial traveller
	49 Clifton, John Henry
	48 Young, Robert, boot salesman
	47 Eason, Benjamin, commercial traveller
	46 Vanderpool, Jan Paul, manager
	45 Williams, Alfred, postal clerk
	(return)
	Wood, W. H. Sherwood house

This is just a snapshot showing who was living in Bishop Street in 1905 (on the left) and 1910 (on the right) taken from street directories in Shropshire Archives.

In 1905 there were several people working for the railway in Bishop Street including a foreman, a guard, a clerk and an engine driver. Other occupants included a gardener, a collector of taxes and a post office clerk, an insurance superintendant a grocer's assistant and a commercial traveller. Not all occupations were listed and some were just listed as householders.

In 1910 the occupant of my house was listed as Robert Young, boot salesman.

Wilmot House, home of Wilfred Owen and his family



This house is at the very end of Canon Street at the junction with Bell Lane. Wilfred Owen, the famous war poet, lived here with his family from 1897 when it was newly built. It was named after his birthplace in Oswestry, Plas Wilmot. The house was described by his brother Harold as "rather shabby...in a long street of other mean little houses – all exactly the same" The Owens later moved to 69 Monkmoor Road and this house was

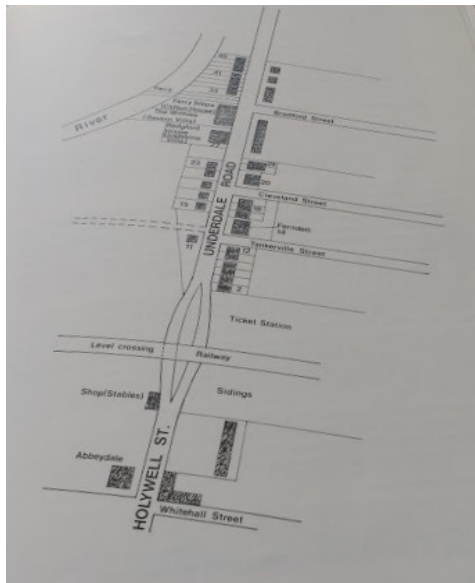
given Grade 2 listed status and a blue plaque in 2014 as part of the commemorations of WWI.

Delbury Villa



As you walk further along Canon Street, you could easily walk past this house without noticing anything different about it. Delbury Villa is in fact a new build completed in 2017. It was featured in a Channel 4 programme called Building the Dream.

Holywell Street and Underdale Road



Having walked round the streets of Samuel Butler's Whitehall Estate, we are now walking back down Whitehall Street and turning right into Holywell Street. In the 1830s Holywell Street and Underdale Road were simply one lane leading to Underdale Hall.



As you walk along Holywell Street, don't miss taking a diversion to view Holywell Terrace on the right. This lovely terrace of 12 double fronted 3 storey houses with attics and basements was built around 1830. You will see that these houses were built for well off Shrewsbury families and their servants. In 1861 the residents included a portrait painter and 3 clergy. In 1891 all 12 houses had resident domestic servants but 10 years later there were servants at only 2 and residents included a pastry cook, a plasterer and a fishmonger's clerk.

The Railway in Cherry Orchard



As you continue to walk up Holywell Street you will see that the railway line crosses through Cherry Orchard here. It was originally called the Shrewsbury to Wellington line, opened in 1848. Many railway clerks, engineers and engine drivers were living in the area in the 1850s. Near to Gayfield Terrace in Holywell Street was a level crossing (no longer there) and a “drop station” called the Cherry Orchard platform opened in 1886. A drop station meant just that – passengers from Wellington could get off but nobody was allowed to get on even though the train continued to Shrewsbury Station! That is, except for one passenger who had the privilege of being allowed to get on here and that was Thomas Owen (father of poet Wilfred) who worked for the railway and used the train to get to his office at Shrewsbury Station.

Bradford Street



We are now taking a diversion to a street on the right of Underdale Road. This is Bradford Street, one of several streets leading from Underdale road to Monkmoor Road. It is a lovely street with many interesting houses in a variety of styles. It is where Cherry Orchard gets its name from the orchards bordering Bradford Street behind Orchard House.

Orchard House (see slide) is the second of the houses that were here before 1830. It was originally called Holywell Cottage and over the front door is a tablet showing the date 1819 and flanked by a lion and a unicorn. A banker called John Beck bought a 5 acre field and built Holywell Cottage to live in himself. The house changed hands several times until in 1851 it was bought by the Shrewsbury Permanent Freehold Land and Building Society.

Other houses were built and a road was made through the middle connecting Monkmoor and Underdale roads and it was given the name Union Street. In 1881 it was renamed Bradford Street following the fashion to name streets after Shropshire aristocrats (Lord Bradford).

Abbey House



We are now at the other end of Bradford Street. Ashley House, on the corner of Bradford Street at the Monkmoor Road end (now the Abbey pub) was built about 1860 as a private house and only later, in the 1930s did it become a hotel. In the 19th Century it looked over the racecourse.

The Cherry Orchard Ferry



We are now walking back along Bradford Street and when you get to the end you will see the site of the Cherry Orchard ferry at the house (now called Clifton House) opposite the end of Bradford Street. As the population of Cherry Orchard grew, the ferry landing stage was moved here in 1882 from its previous location at the far end of Underdale Road. The ferry was at its busiest for the Royal Show which was held on the Racecourse. The construction of the Castlefields Bridge in 1910 made the ferry redundant and it ceased operation.

St Winifrides



As you walk further along Underdale Road, you will see a huge variety of lovely old houses built in the mid to late 19th Century. The ones on the left back onto the river and their gardens can be seen if you walk back along the Castlefields side of the river. One of these houses is St Winifride's built around 1900 in the Arts and Crafts style. The site was occupied by a house in 1832 but the present house is later. There are a couple of interesting things about it. Firstly look out for a stone gothic church window in a portion of sandstone wall in the garden, apparently removed from a former nunnery.

Powell Island



The second thing about this house is that it used to own Powell Island, which has also been known as known as Gough Island and France Island. It forms part of the gardens and used to be linked to the house by a footbridge. It was later sold with a plot of land where a new house was built and the new owners briefly kept alpacas on it!

And there's more!

It is said that the Beatles attended a party on the island when they played in town in the early 1960s and that Ringo Starr carved his initials in the trunk of one of the trees. Going back further in history there may have been a woollen mill on the island around 1790-1820.

Horseferry Cottage and the Isolation Hospital

We have now reached the very end of Underdale Road. In 1800 it led through fields to Monkmoor Farm and Underdale Hall. It still has a country lane feel because it is not a through road as long as you ignore the modern housing estate on the right! Somewhere around the area shown in the picture is the site of Horseferry Cottage, a cottage built in 1809 for the keeper of the horse ferry. But as I said earlier the ferry moved further towards the town end in 1882.

In 1885 and again in 1893 there were several cases of smallpox in Shrewsbury and it was suggested that the disused Horse Ferry Cottage could be used as a temporary isolation hospital. The residents of Cherry Orchard protested but the Sanitary committee insisted and the hospital was built with wards for 12 beds, 2 convalescent rooms and 2 rooms for nurses. It remained in use until 1936 but nothing remains of the cottage now.

Underdale Hall



Underdale Road used to continue as a country lane along the river until they built the by pass! It is now cut in two by Telford Way. You can still continue the walk by going up the steps to Telford Way and down again the other side. Originally this lane led to Underdale Hall. In 1818 it was Underdale Tea Gardens. Shrewsbury residents were encouraged to use the horse ferry from town to visit the gardens, referred to as a "quiet rural retreat". By 1840 the house was licensed and known as The Pineapple (I don't know why). The landlord, John Tudor, offered tea and dinner parties with strawberries in the Summer and

use of the bowling green. During the 1860s and 70s it was famous for summertime quadrille parties held annually and these were a major event in Shrewsbury's social calendar. After John Tudor died his widow sold it to a WR Gough in 1883 after which it became a centre for football, cricket, rowing, pigeon shooting and a track for athletics and cycling. The Hall is still there on the site of the golf driving range and is now a private residence.

If you go down to the river path at the end of Underdale Road you follow the route often taken by Wilfred Owen and his family to Uffington to attend church. You will find an information board about Wilfred Owen if you go up the steps at Telford Way. The walk continues the other side.

That concludes my virtual tour. I realise I have abandoned you at Underdale Hall! From here I am planning to continue my research to cover Monkmoor and the Racecourse which would bring the walk back along Monkmoor Road to Whitehall Street where we started.

My sources for the history of Cherry Orchard:

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