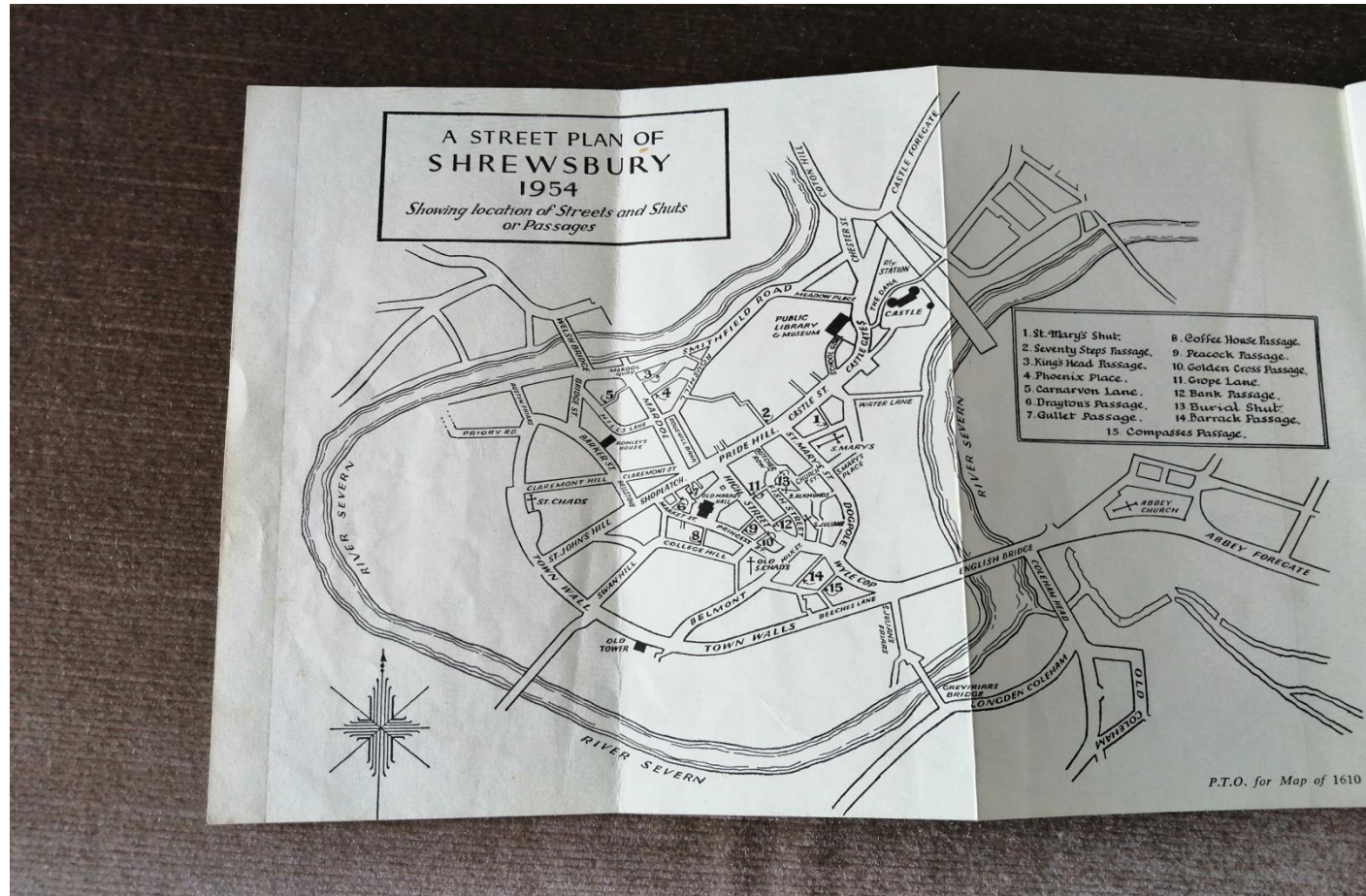


SHREWSBURY STREET NAMES



EXTRACT FROM A BOOK CALLED 'SHREWSBURY STREET NAMES' (PUBLISHED IN 1954) BY JOHN L. HOBBS



MEDIAEVAL STREET NAMES

- With the possible exception of York, no other old English town has retained its mediaeval street names to the same extent as Shrewsbury.
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- Probably no other town has retained so faithful to the original layout of the town, mainly due to the good sense of successive generations who have resisted the temptation to modernise their street names. This arises from the peculiar geographical position of the town, almost encircled by a loop of the River Severn.

SPELLINGS

- Attempts to argue the meaning of place and street names from modern spellings have often led to quite ludicrous derivations. Although Underdale may seem at first sight to be a simple union of two words “under” and “dale”, early references show that it was originally “Hundredhale”, deriving from two entirely different words.
- The modern Shoplatch, Beeches Lane and Knockin Street (Hills Lane) are almost unrecognisable corruptions of earlier names – Schoteplache, Byspestansland and Cocabitinestrete.

ABBHEY FOREGATE



- The earliest name (c.1160) was Biforieta. It later became Munk's Forystate, Abbey Foreate, but by 1600 Abbey Foregate was in general use.

BEAR STEPS



Historically, the area was filled with traditional traders which gave the surrounding streets many of their names; Butcher Row, Fish Street, Grope Lane. Bear Steps itself is named for The Bear Inn Pub which sat on the corner of Fish Street and Grope Lane. Although local legend claims the area was historically home to one of Shrewsbury's bear pits.

COLEHAM



Almost certainly a pre-Conquest name deriving from “Cola’s hamm”, i.e. land near the river belonging to Cola. Cola being an uncommon Saxon personal name.

An area that now regularly floods when the river is high.

CARLINE CRESCENT



John Carline II
(1758-1834)

Carline Crescent is a modern complex [situated near the English Bridge on the corner of Coleham Head and Longden Coleham](#). It was built on Carline's Field, named after the Carlines, who were a dynasty of architects, builders and sculptors, active for around a hundred years.

CLAREMONT HILL



Claremont Hill looking down to
Claremont Street

This is one of the few streets which has retained its early name, from a French origin. The Norman “Clare” (a residence) and “mont” (a hill).

COPTHORNE

- There are two explanations – the “copped thorn” ie the pollarded thorn tree, or the “cop” or hill, with thorn trees upon it. Copthorne is first mentioned in 1605, but experts believe it must have existed earlier.



Copthorne in 1955

DITHERINGTON ROAD



Probable sight of hangings, the raised area near the shops at the bottom of Mount Pleasant Road.

The common belief has long been that it is derived from the word 'dither', whose original meaning was to shake or quake. This describes the public hangings that used to take place at Old Heath, just off Ditherington Road, before the opening of the new prison in 1793.

DOGPOLE



Martin Wood, our Town Crier says "When I am leading any of my tours around Shrewsbury, one of the most asked questions is, "What is the meaning of the word Dogpole?"

"There is a couple of answers that could be given –

1) that there was a second ducking stool here in the 14th Century or that it is derived from the medieval name for top or summit- "Pol" I.E top of the Wyle Cop, or it could be that I tell our American visitors that in medieval times dogs were not allowed in the town so they had to tie them to a post hence a dog-pole!

2) BUT the real reason is that part of the old inner town wall ran across this street and there was a small gate that people had to duck to get through so "Duck-hole" or, Dogpole, came into being."

KENNEDY ROAD



Shrewsbury School in Kennedy's time.

[Kennedy Road](#) is so named in memory of Benjamin Hall Kennedy (1804-89), one of the three headmasters of Shrewsbury School honoured by street names in Kingsland.

MARDOL



Mardol in in
1912

An unusual street name which has given rise to much speculation and its etymology remains a mystery. It has been called “Mardevol” (1270); “Mardall” (1596) and “Mardowell” (1853)

MOUSECROFT LANE

- An ancient thoroughfare as it indicates the line of the old Roman Road towards Westbury. Its modern name comes from a small brick cottage known as 'Mousecroft' to which the lane leads.



Mousecroft Cottage

MYTTON OAK ROAD



General Thomas Mytton

[Mytton Oak Road in Cophorne, Shrewsbury](#), is well known as being the location for the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, and is named after Mytton Oak Farm, now on Cruckmeole Lane. The area once belonged to the Mytton family, who had been major landowners in Shropshire since Medieval times.

PRIDE HILL



- Remains of Medieval house behind the former McDonalds (Now Hobbs Fashion Shop)

The street has been there since medieval times, but it has not always had that name. The neighbourhood was called Altus Vicus (High Town), and Pride Hill started as an informal name first recorded in 1378, reflecting the fact that the Pride family lived in the area.

ROUSHILL

- Many different spellings in old records. The derivation is probably from 'rhos' a damp plain or meadow and 'hyl', a hill. Records show it was called Roreshull as early as 1239.



ST. MARY'S STREET

- Originally believed to be part of Dogpole and later became St. Mary's Almshouse Street after the erection of almshouses by the Drapers Company. Became known as St. Mary's Street around 1825.



Former Almshouses in St.
Mary's Street

ST. MARY'S PLACE

- Once entered from St. Mary's Street through a turnstile, situated near the Drapers Hall. The street was sometimes called "Turnstile" or "The Close". The turnstile (in place since the reign of Henry VI as it appeared in deeds of the Drapers Company) was replaced by iron gates in 1836.



SHOPLATCH



Derived from a family named Scite or Schuttte which is mentioned in old records. In the middle ages it was called Schetepplache (1295), then Sheplache (1377) and finally Shoplatch from 1647.

SWAN HILL



Takes its name from an Inn which stood at the corner of Cross Hill. It was there in 1671, but disappeared in the early 19th century.

It was sometime known as “The street of Muryvance” (1347) and “Murivance” (1782)

THIEVES LANE



Thieves' Lane followed the line of an old Roman road, and has been known by that name for about 500 years, perhaps because it was a way for robbers to avoid the main turnpike roads.

TOWN WALLS



Burghley Map, c1575, showing the walls



Surviving section of Town Wall, showing various phases of rebuilding

[Shrewsbury's Town Walls](#) road runs alongside what is clearly an ancient wall, with [an interesting tower in one place](#). Unlike cities such as Chester and York, however, the rest of the walls are not obvious. There are, though, more of them left than immediately meets the eye.

TOWN WALLS (cont.)

Nearer the English Bridge the wall disappears underground, but a good surviving section remains in the garden of 18 Wyle Cop, as the wall ascends the hill before turning back along the edge of the slope towards the Castle. This part of the wall is particularly interesting in that it has three 'loopholes' made at the time of the Civil War to allow defenders to fire along the outside of the wall towards the Castle.



THE DANA



Also called Castle Walk, Castle Terrace, Dana Walk or The Dana. Constructed about 1790 and named after the Rev. Edward Dana (1739-1823). He was the Vicar of Wroxeter and had much to do with laying out the Walk.

WEEPING CROSS

- The site of an ancient cross, used for religious ceremonies. A writer in 1881 stated that part of the font in the Abbey Church, which was discovered in St. Giles Churchyard in 1795, was said to be part of the old Weeping Cross.

Weeping Cross Island in 1948



WYLE COP



This area, particularly the top of the Cop, was perhaps the most ancient part of the town originally settled by the Saxons. The name probably dates back to pre-Conquest times. It has been suggested that Wyle is the old Welsh 'hwylfa'- a road leading up a hillside; and that Cop is the Welsh 'coppa' top or head.

SHUTS

- Narrow passages linking street to street which form a convenient series of short cuts for pedestrians – are a notable feature of the topography of the town.
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- However, it has been noted by historians in 1874 that in Shrewsbury the term “shut” was dying out and was being replaced by “passage”. This process had been going on for many years and after 1830 old Shrewsbury records show that the word “shut” had almost disappeared.

SHUTS - COFFEE HOUSE PASSAGE

- On the south side of The Square - named after an 18th century house of entertainment which stood at its mouth.



SHUTS – GROPE LANE



This is a name that is often applied to a dark, narrow alley, through which one groped one's way.

But the more popular (untrue) version of the story is that the lane was once a 'Red Light' district.

SHUTS – GULLET PASSAGE



Perhaps the most famous – between the Square and Mardol Head. This seems to have existed from very early times, taking its name from an Inn which stood within it.

And Finally – JANE’S PLACE



[Jane's Place is a tiny cul-de-sac at the top of Chester Street \(Coton Hill\)](#) nearly opposite the turn to Berwick Road. The 'Jane' in question was the wife of [John Simpson](#), the builder and civil engineer considered in the [previous article](#).

Jane Simpson (1763-1829, née Perrett) came from the Erlestoke area of Wiltshire. John Simpson was employed by George Steuart the architect on the rebuilding of Erlestoke Manor from 1786. Presumably he met Jane during that time, and they were married in July 1788. After Steuart's urgent plea to Simpson to go to Shrewsbury to rescue the building of St Chad's, they arrived in the town in May 1790, living initially in Hill's Lane, then Milk Street, and finally Belmont, a progression that reflected the family's increasing prosperity.