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QUARRYING THE GRINSHILL STONE FOR BUILDINGS, BRIDGES AND ROADS 1540-1768

By

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Clive and Grinshill Conservation Group
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Front Cover. *The former Shrewsbury School buildings.*
On the right are the school chapel, library and gallery built 1594-1612.
The building to the left of the tower was erected in 1627-30.

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Preface.

Originally the material of the present account was planned to form one chapter in a book provisionally entitled "The Grinshill Sandstone - the Foundation Stones of North Shropshire". A draft manuscript was all but completed as long ago as 1985 but progress since has been delayed as more pressing tasks presented themselves.

Nevertheless, in view of the reconstitution and vigour of the Clive and Grinshill Conservation Group in the last few years, and the commendable interest shown by members of the public in both the previous Nature Trail booklet of 1995 and in the educational walks so ably organised by Jill Boulton and Madeleine Lucas, it was decided that villagers and a wider local public might be interested in understanding more of the history of quarrying in the two parishes. In the last three years, therefore, various chapters of the original manuscript have been treated as separate entities - this one formally chapter five - hence the otherwise puzzling numbering of the sections of this and previous booklets.

As a prolonged labour of love, the contents of that earlier manuscript have been reprocessed through the courtesy of the computer skills of Mike Lillistone. Indeed, the author offers his deepest thanks to him for his willingness to undertake research work and to travel so widely and frequently in order to photograph digitally many of the buildings, bridges, monuments and quarries mentioned in the text.

Three booklets have appeared since 2004, hopefully in a form which has been both affordable and presentable so as to be distributed as widely as possible in the local area. Our aim is to interest villagers and visitors in the fascinating history of quarrying and engender a feeling that they, like members of the Conservation Group, are but temporary guardians of the natural and built landscape of North Shropshire. Hopefully they will approach our joint heritage with new and deeper conservational insights.

The first booklet (February 2004) told the story of the contribution of the Grinshill Stone Quarries (1923) Ltd to the construction of the English Bridge in Shrewsbury in 1925-7. The second booklet (September 2004) dealt with the hey-day of quarrying in Victorian times. The third contribution (September 2005) described the quarrying which took place during The Age of Improvement and The Second Period of National Rebuilding 1769-1840. This fourth account relates to earlier periods in the growth of quarrying in North Shropshire when fashions for building in timber, dimension stone and brick were offering considerable economic opportunities for landowners who were willing to develop or lease quarries on their land. In turn, this generated opportunities for master masons to become contractors and eventually architects. Meanwhile much work was made available in the quarries for those who were escaping from the penury of agricultural labouring and metal mining in North Wales. The remnants of these developments are still around us to observe in the local county landscape through which so many of us make their daily journeys and weekend excursions.

Sources of information are cited concisely in the text but full details are not listed at the end of each booklet. Persons who are interested in such details are free to contact the author at the address given below.

Comments and suggestions for corrections and additions are welcomed by the author at his address: 3, Ladygates, Betley, Nr Crewe, CW3 9AN, telephone 01270 820514.

Any funds which accrue from the sale of this series of booklets will, as before, go to supporting conservation work in the area of the two parishes, and the charitable efforts of the Severn Hospices in Shrewsbury and Telford.

Acknowledgements

The author extends his deepest and most sincere thanks to the following villagers, county council staff, quarry owners and others for their help and encouragement in the development of this and other booklets as yet to be published: Ruth Baggeley, Tony Carr and the librarians of the Local Studies, Archive and Records Department (all of Shropshire County Council); Roger Davies, the Downes family, Bert and Joan Fowles, Jim and W. France, Alec Harley, Trevor Kirkham, Thomas Parker, Roger Phillips, Eric Pye, Michael Renshaw, Mr and Mrs Alec Smith, Angela Jones of the Northern Shropshire Countryside Service and not least Bill Brown for his computing support.

Thanks also are tendered to Charles Thursby (of the original Grinshill Stone Quarries (1923) Ltd), Jim Thursby, John and Kathleen O'Hare and Derek Smith (quarry owners and foreman), successive managers of English China Clays Ltd, CAMAS Ltd, Barden Aggregates Ltd, and Peter Vincent (adviser to the quarry owners), for their warmth and willingness in responding to so many requests for access and documentary evidence.

The author and Mike Lillistone, the former secretaries of the Clive and Grinshill Conservation Group are pleased to acknowledge the secretarial help of Mrs Doreen Thompson and Tracy Roberts (of the Education Department, Keele University) and the cartographic skills of Andrew Lawrence (of the Earth Sciences Department, Keele University).

Figure 5a. Albright Hussey, built c 1524 and enlarged probably in mid-to late C16 and again in 1601. The porch was formerly dated 1524 and panelling in the C17 addition was inscribed: "Made by me Edward Huse 1601" The house stands within a moated site and there was formerly a chapel to the south-east, of which nothing, except a few carved fragments, remains. (Courtesy of English Heritage).

Figure 5b. Pitchford Hall built circa 1560-70 for Adam Otley with a probably C14 or C15 core and minor C17, C18 and early C19 alterations and additions: restored, remodelled and extended in the 1870s and 1880s by George Devey (1820-1886) for Charles Cotes, and further restored in the late C20. (Courtesy of Shropshire Archive)

Figure 5c. Lea Hall, Harmer Hill. A small country house, built 1584, for Richard and Eleanor Lee. Partly refenestrated in the late C18. Red brick (English bond) with red/grey sandstone ashlar dressings. Probably large red sandstone buttress to right of windows in left-hand wing was added in C19. (Courtesy of English Heritage)

5.1. The dissolution of the monasteries.

With the voluntary or enforced dissolution of the monasteries in 1538-9, there began an enormous redistribution of lands, a retrenchment of able people into fields unrelated to monastic and ecclesiastical activities, and the sale and conversion of some buildings to secular use. Haughmond Abbey, built of Grinshill Sandstone, was dissolved in 1541 (Hey 1974). Other buildings adapted to secular use included those at Wenlock and Buildwas Abbeys. Certain Oxford colleges were given land near the quarries at Alberbury and Cardeston which were underlain by early Permian breccias and sandstone. These quarries may have been worked at some time in this period by a branch of the Cureton family (see later in this booklet). Tithes in Grinshill Parish which had been hitherto paid to the Abbot of Lilleshall, including possibly those relating to the quarries at Clive and Grinshill, were bought by local landowners e.g. Sir Humphrey Lea (Gough 1981, p. 39).

5 2. The growth of fashions in the use of construction materials; the First Great Period of National Rebuilding; two periods of building in stone.

The impetus for the further exploitation of easily-masoned Permo-Triassic freestones in domestic and municipal architecture, as opposed to ecclesiastical architecture, came in the Jacobean era. Hitherto, partly timber-framed buildings like Albright Hussey (1524, 1600) (see Figure 5a.), Pitchford Hall (1560-1570) (Figure 5b.), Lea Hall, Harmer Hill (1585) (Figure 5c.) and several mansions in Shrewsbury, Ireland's 1575 (Figure 5d.), Owen's 1591 (Figure 5e.) and Rowley's 1600 (Figure 5f.), had been built at the same time as others were being constructed wholly in stone. However, building in stone generally became more common by 1600, as exemplified by Condover Hall (Figure 5g.) in the 1590s, the New Market Hall, Shrewsbury in 1596 (Figure 5h.), Moreton Corbet Castle and Mansion (1597) (Figure 5i.) and Shrewsbury Free Grammar School (1594-1612) (see the Front Cover), now the Shropshire Library and Museum at Castle Gates.

After 1600, building in stone became firmly established as superior in practice to building in timber and its use was widely regarded as a measure of the affluence and social status of the persons concerned: e.g. by the Corbets at Acton Reynald Manor House (now a Hall; 1601, 1625) (Figure 5q.) and by Sir Francis Newport at Ercall Hall, High Ercall (1608) (Figure 5r.). Many of the designs in stone reflected a flood of new ideas from the continent, from France and particularly Italy. Their exuberant adaptation by certain unknown precocious architects (e.g. at Moreton Corbet), catered for the sheer pride and ostentation of the landowners, and set a new trend. After trial and error over five centuries, and notably successful efforts over the two centuries in question here, the Grinshill Freestones from Grinshill (*sensu stricto*) were confirmed as pre-eminent sources of easily worked and eminently durable building stones; those from Carboniferous or Permian sources, or the Grinshill Sandstone Formation (*sensu lato*) at Nescliff, Hopton, Harmer Hill and western Myddle became less favoured. (See the Geological Map Figure 5x. on page 29.)

Around 1650, however, the use of brick became the fashion, albeit with certain horizontal courses, window dressings, doorway casements and porticos still constructed and ornamented in stone (e.g. at Higher House, Grinshill 1657 (Figure 5t.); Soulton Hall 1668 (Figure 5u.) and Hawkstone Hall 1700, 1725, 1740 (Figure 5w.). This is not to say that building wholly in stone did not persist in places e.g. at Grinshill Manor House 1624 and Preston Brockhurst Manor House c.1690 (see Figures 5s. & 5v.on Pages 25 & 27.).

This tradition of building largely in brick lasted nearly 100 years before it gave way to a Second Great Phase of Building in Stone, encompassed by the Palladian style. This reached Shropshire in 1742 with Henry Joynes' work at Linley Hall, but its widest expression in terms of the use of the Grinshill Sandstone does not concern us in this booklet, for most of the buildings were constructed after 1768 (e.g. George Stewart's Attingham Park and Hall 1783-85) (see the previous booklet; Occasional Publication No. 3, Thompson 2005).

Before the buildings of all these periods are exemplified, albeit under headings most suitable to the theme of this booklet, it is necessary to draw attention to the widening of the demands for local construction materials.

Figure 5d.
Ireland's Mansion was built for John Ireland, wool merchant in c.1575 and according to Pevsner's is the only timber-framed building in Shrewsbury to which one might grant grandeur. The façade is tall, broad, and symmetrical with seven bays, three storeys and dormers.

Figure 5e.
Owen's Mansion built 1592 for Richard Owen, wool merchant.
It is a timber-framed, partly two, partly three storeyd and still has the decorative motifs of 1570, i.e. thin twisted shafts and a quatrefoil frieze.

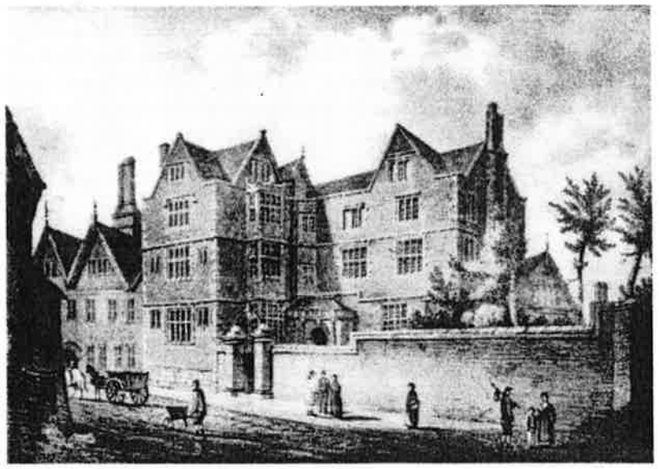


Figure 5f. *Rowley's Mansion was built in 1618 by Roger Rowley's son and is the earliest brick building in Shrewsbury. The picture is c.1823 (Courtesy of Shropshire Archive).*
Roger Rowley, a wool merchant, came to Shrewsbury shortly before 1600 and lived in the abutting timber framed Rowley's House which may well be earlier than the late C16.

5.3. Increasing problems of transportation - the need for roads and bridges.

Originally the term road merely meant a right of passage. To such a system of ancient trackways the Romans had added paving in order to fashion their straight military roads, but these had deteriorated badly by the 17th-18th century. In the Middle Ages "roads" were constructed mostly on bare earth and were invariably muddy in wet weather. Upkeep of the "King's highways" lay with the King, the lords of the manors and with the monasteries; likewise bridges were built and maintained by religious orders, guilds, landowners and individuals, each of whom exacted a toll, called pontage. The dissolution of the monasteries left a huge gap in the arrangements for the upkeep of both roads and bridges. The Statute of Bridges (1531) required them to be kept in repair by the inhabitants of counties, towns or villages. Acts of Parliament in 1535 made road maintenance the responsibility of parishes. Parishioners were required to appoint two (unpaid) surveyors of highways and each member had to spend 4, later 6, consecutive days per year working on the roads using their own tools, carts and horses; only from 1654 were road rates levied which allowed payment for labour and horses.

The generation of vehicular traffic increased after carriages were introduced into Britain from Europe, the first being used by Queen Elizabeth I. Road improvements failed to keep pace with the increase in traffic, so that both hoof-prints and wheel ruts caused considerable problems. Regulations requiring increasing wheel-rim widths of 9, 13 and eventually 16 inches, had little effect in preventing rutting and pot-holing.

The establishment of the turnpike system, whereby travellers paid tolls at intervals along a road marked by gates bearing pikes (to regulate free passage), was first authorised in 1663 and the formation of turnpike trusts was common from 1700 onwards, becoming a mania by the end of the period between 1750 and 1772. The trusts appointed surveyors and demanded local labour (or money *in lieu*). Initially the qualifications of the surveyors were minimal, for there was only limited knowledge of how to build a road for wheeled vehicles. At first two methods were used:
(i) ditches were excavated on either side of the proposed road and the earth so won was piled onto the "road" in between and covered with local gravel;
(ii) a deep track was dug - the width of the "road" to be - and filled with large stones, topped by smaller ones.
In places where people like John Metcalf exerted influence as a surveyor (from 1765 onwards), roads with arched surfaces were constructed, using the forerunners of techniques developed by Telford and Macadam. These crude surfaces enabled coach journey times to be reduced: London to Edinburgh, 10 days in 1754, becoming only 4 in 1776. Turnpike road construction radiating from Shrewsbury northwards through Albrighton, Preston Brockhurst and Shawbury would have benefited considerably from the use of Grinshill Stone for foundation and surface materials, but contracts may have been shared with other local quarries at this period. Toll houses dating from these times, sometimes constructed of Grinshill stone, are of distinctive style, and some survive *in situ* whilst others have been removed to museum sites e.g. at Blists Hill, Ironbridge. Local roads, however, remained the responsibility of the parishes and, in general, remained unimproved and waterlogged down to the time of the improvements brought about by the Inclosure Acts and even to the turn of the century.

With time, many bridges along these roads became the responsibility of the counties. In the case of Shropshire, this duty was taken up only in the period dealt with in a previous booklet (Thompson 2005), but in England generally, such work started in the first half of the 18th century. Across the country generally techniques of bridge construction improved under early civil engineers like John Smeaton (1724-1792) and Thomas Telford (1757-1834). Telford's early career is particularly related to structures and events in Shropshire (*ibid.*). These pioneers introduced masonry bridges with wider spans, narrower piers and altogether lighter appearance, and incorporated them into the larger road schemes, the most well known ones in Shropshire being constructed prior to the renovation of the Holyhead to London road in the early 19th century. With all these changes in the offing, the commercial developments of the Clive and Grinshill quarries in succeeding centuries appear to be assured. Before illustrating some of these matters both here and in the previous booklet, it is appropriate to demonstrate how the stone continued to be put to municipal, educational, domestic and industrial use.

Figure 5g.
Condover Hall is a grand Elizabethan house built 1598 for Thomas Owen, Justice of Common Pleas on behalf of his son, Roger; Walter Hancock was probably the master mason (Courtesy of English Heritage).

Figure 5h.
Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury. Designed in all probability by Walter Hancock and built in 1596 using Grinshill Sandstone. On the first floor two cross-windows flank a statue of a man in armour from the tower of the old Welsh Bridge. A plaque beneath the windows records: "The XV day of June was this building begonn William Jones and Thomas Chartts gent then bailiffs and was erected and covered in. their time".

Figure 5i.
Moreton Corbet Castle. The Castle c. 1200 and C14 was considerably altered and enlarged in mid-and late C16 by Sir Andrew Corbet and his sons who built a splendid Elizabethan Mansion along the south side (see Section 5.6. and figure 5p and the back cover).

5.4. Shrewsbury School and its Country Schoolhouse: the Stone Grange, Grinshill.

5.4.1 Shrewsbury School. Soon after the dissolution of Shrewsbury Abbey in 1538-39, the townspeople petitioned the king to found in its place a free school or college. A charter was granted to the school in 1552. By an indenture of 23rd May 1571 it was granted a very considerable number of tithes and it was endowed with property from the colleges of St Chad and St Mary. The first effective headmaster was Thomas Ashton, a friend of the Corbet family, who is thought to have once been a tutor to Sir Andrew's sons at Moreton Corbet. The school immediately attracted a large number of pupils. By 1578 Ashton had written a commendably clear set of ordnances for the growth and development of the school. Priorities for new buildings were established and in 1591 a site was cleared for the building of a library and gallery near Castle Gates.

The school consists of two buildings which form an L shape (see the Frontispiece.). The earlier of the two lies at an angle to the road at the northern end and was constructed between 1594 and 1612. It is built of ashlar and comprises a basement, two further storeys (originally a chapel and library respectively) and an embattled tower. The basement and first floor have mullioned and transomed windows. A parapet now replaces the original row of gables and a gothic window (also of the 19th century) underlies the gable. The later building, originally built as form rooms (i.e. classrooms) in 1627-30 to replace the wooden school house, lies sub-parallel to the road and is of a similar design; it harmonises exceptionally well with its predecessor.

The ground floor has a commanding elliptical archway either side of which are fluted Corinthian columns on elevated bases with the figures of two scholars standing somewhat stiffly upon them (Figure 5j.). A tablet above the archway, records the date and its inscription in Greek is in keeping with the purpose of the building:

"*If you are fond of learning you will soon be full of learning*"

Either side of this on the first floor are mullioned and transomed windows, the floors being separated by finely worked freizes. On the top of the building are crenulated parapets with volutes upside down which are reminiscent of the style of the New Market Hall (1596).

Figure 5j. *The elliptical archway either side of which are fluted Corinthian columns on elevated bases with the figures of two scholars standing somewhat stiffly upon them.*

Figure 5k. *The statue of Charles Darwin outside the old Shrewsbury School now Shrewsbury Library where he was a somewhat reluctant scholar. The statue by H. Montford was erected in 1897.*

Who were the architects and builders? Little is known except that the building was worked upon for eighteen years by John Richmond, a mastermason, between 1594 and 1612 (Carr 1983). He used a honey-coloured stone from Grinshill, the location of which in the present quarries is hard to discern; the older parts of the Bridge Quarries (G10-11) or Cureton's Quarry (G5) (Figure 5m.) might be possibilities. Bearing in mind his likely connection with the construction of the Market Hall, Mary de Saulles has suggested that the son of Walter Hancock may have been responsible for the design and building of the school (de Saulles 1986).

Apart from the addition of Gothic windows to the library (by J.H. Haycock 1815), the insertion of iron ties to stabilise the walls of the library (by John Carline III 1839) and the recent rebuilding (1974-1983), the buildings are a faithful representation of the originals which were "extensive and lavish" for their time and "astonishingly stately" (Pevsner 1958, p. 267). After being most lovingly renovated (Carr 1983), they now house the County Library.

No buildings show better the subtle varieties of colour and harmony possessed by the best Grinshill Freestone. The placing in 1897 of the magnificent statue of Charles Darwin on a jet black pedestal (see Frontispiece and Figure 5k.), a somewhat reluctant scholar of the school, in front of a building of contrasting colour, and one built of stone hewn from outcrops where bones of fossil reptiles had been found in 1839-40 (the prehistoric monsters whose discovery shocked and fascinated Victorian England) was an exquisite, though possibly inadvertent, touch.

5.4.2. The Stone Grange. Equally remarkable, though of a greyer stone, is the building now known as the Stone Grange, Grinshill (Figure 5l.), which was erected for the master and scholars of Shrewsbury Grammar School in 1617-21 and then called the Country Schoolhouse. It has a plain oblong shape arranged parallel to the road through the village, with massive gables at each end. There are three storeys, the uppermost being of dormer type. There are two doorways at the front, possibly one for use by the masters, one by the boys. The windows are mullioned and transomed and are nicely proportioned, with alternations of 2 and 4 lights on the ground floor, 2 and 3 lights on the second floor. These features are reminiscent of the main school building in Shrewsbury. Massive stone chimneys are prominent and there were as many as 11 hearths in the survey of 1672 (Watkins Pitchford 1949, pp. 9-19; Shropshire Hearth Tax Survey 1672). The porches, although dated 1631, are likely to be Victorian additions. The design is so reminiscent of the School building and Market Hall in Shrewsbury that one suspects that the Hancocks had a hand in its design and construction.

Figure 5l. *The County Schoolhouse, now Stone Grange, Grinshill was erected for the masters and scholars of Shrewsbury Grammar School in 1617-2 as a refuge from the plague. The present C19 porches possibly mark the former division between masters and pupils.*

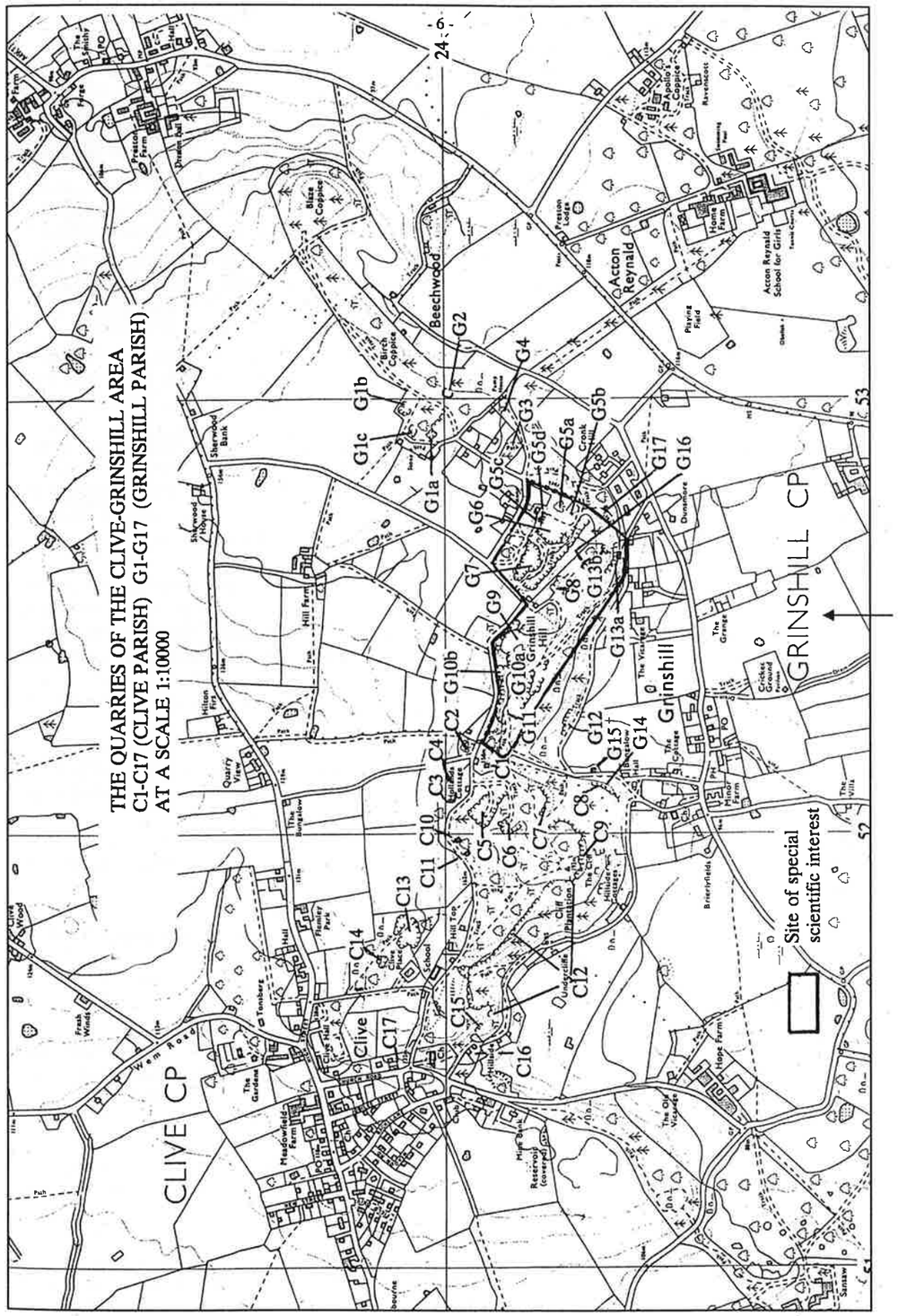


Figure 5m. *Map showing the location and numbering of quarries of the Clive and Grinshill area. The scale of the map is given by the kilometer squares of the National Grid. Note the position of the Grange i.e. the Stone Grange.*

This building was provided for in Ashton's ordinances of 1578:

"After the above buildings (the school in Shrewsbury, the library and the gallery DBT) *are completed, a house shall be provided for the masters and scholars to resort to in time of plague; and any master refusing to teach there shall be debarred of his wages for the time of his absence."* (Ashton 1578, Ordinance No. 11).

The building was deemed necessary because Ashton and succeeding headmasters found that epidemics of plague, sweating sickness, smallpox etc. sorely interrupted the work of the pupils, especially in 1576, 1584, 1587, 1592, 1595, 1597 and 1604-5. During the last-mentioned period, 667 deaths occurred in Shrewsbury, including those of the two baillifs; the streets are said to have been so little frequented that they became partly overgrown with grass (Fisher 1899, p. 81 quoting Phillip's 'Shrewsbury' and the school register). Shrewsbury (1970) cites outbreaks and possible outbreaks of plague (except where otherwise stated) in the following years: 1529, 1535-6, 1575, 1576, 1584 (gastroenteritis), 1587 (burning ague), 1592, 1595 (smallpox), 1597 (ditto) and 1604-5. Other writers refer to outbreaks in 1566 (West 1937, p. 24 quoting Marshall), 1575-6 (sweating sickness) (Fisher 1899, p. 81) and from midsummer 1606 to May 1607 (sweating sickness) (Oldham 1952, p. 30).

The necessity for such a country schoolhouse was high on the list of priorities of all headmasters. It was particularly the case with John Meighen and the Bailiffs of Shrewsbury after the outbreak of 1584, but the authorities of St John's College, Cambridge, now part of Cambridge University, who controlled the purse strings of the school, did not recognise the urgency, and sharp words were exchanged (Rimmer and Adnitt 1889, p. 88). On May 19th 1612 the Bailiffs sent Meighen to obtain consent:

"to take money out of the schoole treasure towards buildings of a Schoole house in the country, for the Schoolmasters and Schollers to resort unto in tymes of syckness" (ibid.). In reply, the college wished to be certified that after the school, the library and gallery were built and furnished, they would be offered "a complete security ... that the money proposed to be spent on this Country School House be imployed to the use pretended." (Rimmer and Adnitt 1889, pp. 88-89).

A certain distrust between school and college is apparent.

Negotiations were begun with the owners of suitable land at Grinshill, the choice of site possibly being related to the early connections of the school with the Corbets, but the matter lapsed until 29th April 1616, when the bailiffs wrote to St John's College and copied the letter to Meighen:

"God willing we meane this summer (1616 DBT) *to erect a Scholehouse for the Schoole Masters and Schollers of this towne to repayre unto in tyme of sickness."*

The College swiftly granted a licence to take £240 out of the School chest for this purpose, and on September 14th 1616 an additional £100 was granted owing to the:

"*doubfulness of the ground whereuppon the building is sett*" (Mayor, vol.1, p. 479).

The site of the house is underlain by soft weathered red sandstone of the Wilmslow Sandstone Formation and it may not have been easy to establish foundation stones on solid rock except at depth. The southern part of the grounds is underlain by a glacial till lying upon same red sandstones, but this area bears no weighty structures.

In either 1616 or 1617, about two acres of land were bought from two yeomen of Grinshill. Part of the deed that relates to this sale reads (indenture dated 20th September 14 James 1, 1617; see Blakeway 1891, pp. 358-9; see SRO MS No. 3365/2601):

"In consideration of £25 the said William Kylvart and Robert Emerie did grant bargain and sell unto the said Thomas Jones, Roger Blakewey, and John Meighen, All that Close or parcel of land situate lying and being in Grynshill aforesaid, containing about two acres, in the tenure of said William Kylvarte, called the woodes way alias Kylvartes woodes way, To hold to the said Thomas Jones, Roger Blakeway and John Meighen from St Luke's day next ensuing for the term of 2000 years, at the yearly rent of one peppercorn. Executed by William Killvert."

There is some doubt about the date when the sale of the land was completed, Rimmer and Adnitt quoting 20th September 1616 (1889, p. 89), but Blakeway one year later (1891 pp. 358-9). The latter author also cites (ibid.) a further indenture concerning this sale (dated 3rd October 1617 and executed by both Wm. Killvert and Robert Emery).

The present house, therefore, was erected somewhere between 1617 and 1621, the latter date being constrained by the fact that in that year St John's College sent Mr Meighen a licence:

"*to employ £420 in finishing the Country School House, but as former licenses had not been carried into effect, this was to be returned if not used*" (Rimmer and Adnitt 1889, p. 89).

In fact, in 1623, the Baillifs wrote an order for a further sum of £100 to be taken from the school chest for this purpose (ibid.). Although no record exists of who carried out the work of building the house, we may surmise that John Richmond was involved.

Despite the epidemic of 1628 (Shrewsbury 1970, pp. 361-2), there is no record of the schoolhouse being used before 1631 when there was a serious outbreak of plague. The use of the house in 1631 is reflected in the fact that no entry was made in the school register between 4th July and 26th September, and that from then to November 2nd 1631; only a few boys' names are entered as admitted at Grinshill. When the annual audit took place as usual in Shrewsbury on November 16th 1631, headmaster Meighen was:

"*at Grinshill with the schoole because of sickness then raginge in the towne*"

and he was

"unable to travayle by reason of sickness then comynge uppon." (School registers, 1631).

A schoolmaster, Ralph Gittens, was active at Grinshill at this time and it is recorded that he was not able to return to Shrewsbury with the boys until long after the summer holidays of 1631 (Fisher 1899, p. 128). As if to commemorate its first use, the porch of the present building is clearly dated 1631 but, as noted previously, this is probably a Victorian addition.

Of the workings of the school at Grinshill in 1631-2, little is known (ibid.). It is not easy to guess how the house was used, or the number of scholars present. In 1583 there were 271 pupils in the school, but there is no further record of numbers until 1665 when, in the "Life of Marmaduke Rawdon", a figure of "sometimes 600" is mentioned (Oldham 1952, pp. 310-311). Here we have to assume a much lower figure, though not perhaps as low as the 26 quoted in 1719, the next well authenticated date (Blakeway, ibid.). Whatever the number of boys, there were at least 4 masters present in the Country Schoolhouse in 1631: Joseph Meighen, Ralph Gittens, David Evans and Hughe Spendlove (Fisher 1899, p. 454). It is possible, therefore, that all the boys might not have been able to lodge at the Stone Grange, and some may have been scattered at night in the villages of Grinshill, Clive, or Acton Reynald. There were 70 inhabitants over the age of 16 in Grinshill in 1676 (Shropshire Parish Register Society 1901, Parish Register of Grinshill, p. (i)).

It is for this period, however, that we have a most intriguing record - a testimonial sent by the four schoolmasters to the bailiffs of Shrewsbury on behalf of a remarkable old lady, Margery Hamlett, who had been summoned to appear before the bailiffs at the age of 90 on a charge of illegal "ale-selling".

It appears from the letter (set down below) that the masters (and probably the school) relied upon Margery for their daily supplies of food whilst they were at Grinshill in 1631 (Fisher 1899, pp. 453-4). One is left with the suspicion that the masters (and the boys?) may have relied upon her for their ale as well!

"To the Right Worshipful Richard Hunt and Thomas Knight, Gentlemen, Bailiffs of the town of Shrewsbury.

Humbly showeth to the same that whereas Margery Hamlett, widow, hath been warned to appear before your worships for ale-selling, she being a poor creature of 90 years of age, or thereabouts (as she saith, and also may seem to be) is not able to travel and in person to perform her duty as she desireth: she is also at this time, by occasion of the schools being here, a most necessary victualler for the use of. . .us, the members thereof, so as we cannot be without the opportunity of her service, as the case standeth for

us, she being thereby occasioned, for supplying our necessities, to strain herself to do more in her trade of life than otherwise she would do or heretofore hath done, neither yet doth she keep any house of evil rule by entertaining of company resorting unto it or otherwise by any disorder used in it.

"And therefore also our special desire is, both on her behalf, being a poor aged woman without other means to maintain her, and likewise on our own (she being so necessary a help to us, as hath been said) that at the least during the time of the schools' continuance here, you will be pleased to tolerate with her and, if you think good, as at our requests to vouchsafe her such further favour as she hath been wont to obtain at the request of others formerly to other bailiffs, your worships' predecessors, and we shall rest.

At your worships' command,
Jo: Meighen.
Ra: Gittins.
Da: Evans.
Hughe Spurstowe,"

John Meighen (headmaster for 52 years between 1583 and 1635) ceased to teach the highest school in 1632 and was retired in September 1635 with a lump sum of £100, a pension of £20 and free use of the schoolhouse at Grinshill. Alas! he enjoyed the charms of the Grinshill Stone for less than six months, for he was buried on February 3rd 1636. In fact Meighen, together with Jones, had sensibly surrendered his lease of the house to his successors on 22nd August 1635.

The only other occasion upon which the scholars of Shrewsbury are recorded as emigrating to Grinshill was in 1649 or 1650 when the school was dissolved by Order of Council (Oldham 1952, p. 54) after the epidemics of 1648-50. Shrewsbury (1970, pp. 435-7, 439) mentions outbreaks of smallpox and/or flu in 1648, a dubious reference to plague in 1649 and a serious epidemic of plague in 1650). Gough (1981, pp. 268-9) refers to this last outbreak thus:

"About the year 1649, it pleased God to visit this town with the plague. It broake out about the latter end of July, but was concealed by the townsmen until after the Lambmas faire ... The free-schoole was removed to the schoole-house in Greensell; Mr Challoner was then High Schoole-master ..."

Whereas Gough mentions 1649, others prefer to date the event as 1650 (see Oldham 1952. p. 32).

The architecture of the house has been splendidly described by Moran (2002, pp. 6-10.)

5.5 The Leasing of the Stone Grange.

At times other than 1631-2 or 1649-50, the schoolhouse appears from entries in the accounts to have been let to tenants (ibid.). Moran, in a private document (2002, pp 4-5), lists many of their names.

In 1672 a Richard Cureton lived in the stone house, which was being taxed for 11 hearths (£1.2s) (Watkins-Pitchford 1949, pp. 9-10; Shropshire Hearth Tax Roll 1672). He was the first son of William Cureton, a free mason who lived between 1615-1698 according to the Parish Register. William, Richard's brother, evidently occupied a separate house with only one hearth in 1672 (ibid. p. l0) as did a further member of the family: brother John Cureton (ibid. p. l0). A Richard Cureton was still living in the main schoolhouse with his wife, four daughters, widowed mother and a servant in 1698 (Marriage duty returns; SRO MS No. 3365/278). In view of his ancestry and affluence, he may well have continued to run, if not work in, his father's quarry (presumably G5; see Figure 5m.) at the eastern end of the hill, whilst he was there.

Whilst dealing with the Stone Grange it is probably best to outline its subsequent history. In 1828 the schoolhouse was let to Rev. Dr. Laurence Gardner, quarry owner and owner of mineral rights at Clive at a rent of £4.4s a year (Blakeway 1891, p. 359), before being let as a commercial, classical academy and a boarding school from 1841-1926 under Mr Barkley and Mr Meredith. Later it was sold to a series of physicians, surgeons and commercial owners between 1874 and 1944 (see Moran 2002, p. 5).

The Schoolhouse Croft on the top of Grinshill (plot 188 in 1835): see Figure 5o, latterly formed part of quarry G6 (Figure 5m), and the field to the north of the present house was designated as Schoolhouse Field on the tithe apportionment map of 1838. By then, this croft (plot 188) (see Figure 5o and Occasional Publication No.3, Thompson 2005, p. 19) was leased by Andrew Downes, a quarry owner.

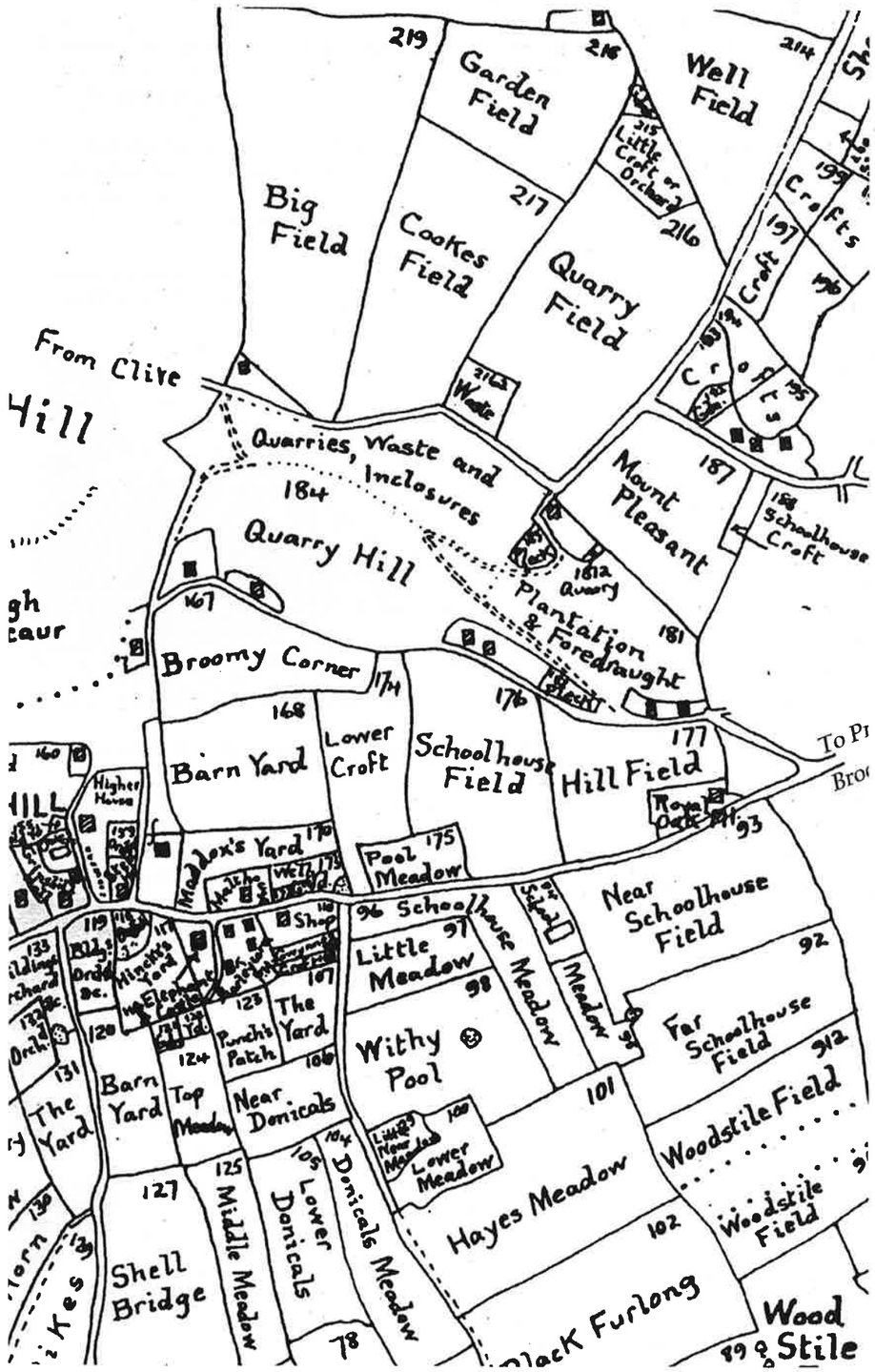


Figure 5o. *Foxall's (1977) recording of field names based on the 1838 Tithe Apportionment Map for Grinshill showing Schoolhouse Field. (Courtesy of Shropshire Archive).*

5.6. Domestic architecture: manor houses and mansions in the county.

5.6.1. 1540–1600. Building in timber and stone, and the transition to building in stone.

Clive Hall, within throwing distance of some of the quarries (see Figure 5m.), was rebuilt in the 16th century. It was timber-framed and had facings of local stone. It was the home of the Wycherley family and the birthplace of the famous playwright, William Wycherley. The present hall was restored by Thos. Meares in 1874 (Kelly 1875) (Figure 5n.).

Several other half-timbered mansions date from this time and are worth visiting. The mansions at Albright Hussey (1524, additions? 1600) (Figure 5a.) and Lea Hall (1584) (Figure 5c.) are of brick but have window dressings of Grinshill stone. In addition the former displays an unusual ashlar-faced gable, whilst the latter has a striking fireplace with an overmantle articulated by paired fluted pilasters (Pevsner 1958, p. 232).

Figure 5n. Clive Hall built in the 17th Century and the birthplace in 1640 of William Wycherley the poet and dramatist. (Courtesy of the Shropshire Archive).

Condover Hall however, is the grandest Elizabethan house (Figure 5g.), which was completed in 1598 according to Pevsner (1958, pp. 112-113) some 18 km south of Grinshill. It was built for the family of Thomas Owen, Justice of Common Pleas and a man of substance in Shrewsbury. Most of the house is of a lilac colour but for contrast the window frames, quoins, coping stones, some decorative horizontal courses, and possibly the lions at the entrance to the drive, are of a familiar yellow stone. Between November 1586 and May 1587, 3935 cartloads of lilac-coloured Ordovician Sandstone from Harnage were delivered to the site and by September 1587 a yellow Triassic Grinshill Sandstone was being quarried at Grinshill (Gaydon 1968, p. 39). The window mouldings at least were prepared there by a John Richardson, a (? master) mason, in the summer of 1588 (ibid.).

The Castle at Moreton Corbet (Figure 5i) was considerably altered by Sir Andrew Corbet (see the initials A.C. 1573 and 1576 at the site) and his sons, for example Richard (see the initials I.R.C.). The latter was a considerable traveller and is credited with travelling in Italy c. 1580 and inspiring the celebrated architect, John of Padua to design the magnificent Elizabethan Mansion alongside which was built in a mellow, yellowish variety of Grinshill Sandstone as an extension to the south side of the castle (Figure 5p.) (Susan Dutton 1988, p.4).

"Robert Corbet, carried away with the affectionate delight of architecture, began to build, in a barraine place, a most gorgeous and stately house, after the Italian modell. But death prevented him, so that he left the new house unfinished and the old castle defaced." (Camden).

Indeed, Sir Robert died of plague in London, but his brother Vincent continued the work at Moreton Corbet and for a time sheltered Puritan refugees there. Upon his refusal to continue doing so, the place was said to have been cursed by them to the effect that:

"Moreton Corbet shall never be finished" (Hare 1898, p. 196).

It is probable that the mansion was, indeed, never completed and it is possible that it was never inhabited. Much of it may have been burnt down for amusement by Parliamentarian soldiers who had been quartered there briefly in 1644 (Dutton 1988, pp. 7-8.).

The mansion remained in the Corbet Family until 1688 when Sir Vincent, impoverished by his loyalty to the Crown in the Civil Wars, sold it, only for it to be repurchased by Andrew Corbet of Shawbury Park in 1743.

This ruin is now maintained by officers of the Department of the Environment, who regularly request stone for renovations from Grinshill (see the invoices of Grinshill Stone Quarries (1982) Ltd and Keeling-Roberts 1972, p. 20). It is well worth a visit, particularly if one starts with a perambulation round its most imposing southern face (see Figure 5p. and back cover photograph).

The first work on the building must have taken place in the mid 1570s for Pevsner (1958, p. 205) notes the date 1579 at the SW corner and the cypher ER 21 (=1579) at the southeast corner. Overall the south frontage has a consistent and beautifully balanced design, a flat wall being rhythmically punctuated by slightly projecting bays. It shows two very tall storeys, the upper the taller; both having large windows of 3+5 lights with two transoms (Figure 5p.). The whole is articulated in an exuberant French way by attached Tuscan columns (with ornamented metope frieze) below and slim Ionic columns above. These lead upwards to slim ogee-shaped gables with pedimented windows of three lights. There is a rich sculpture around the windows and quaint monsters on the parapets. The interior displays a large fireplace with strapwork decorations.

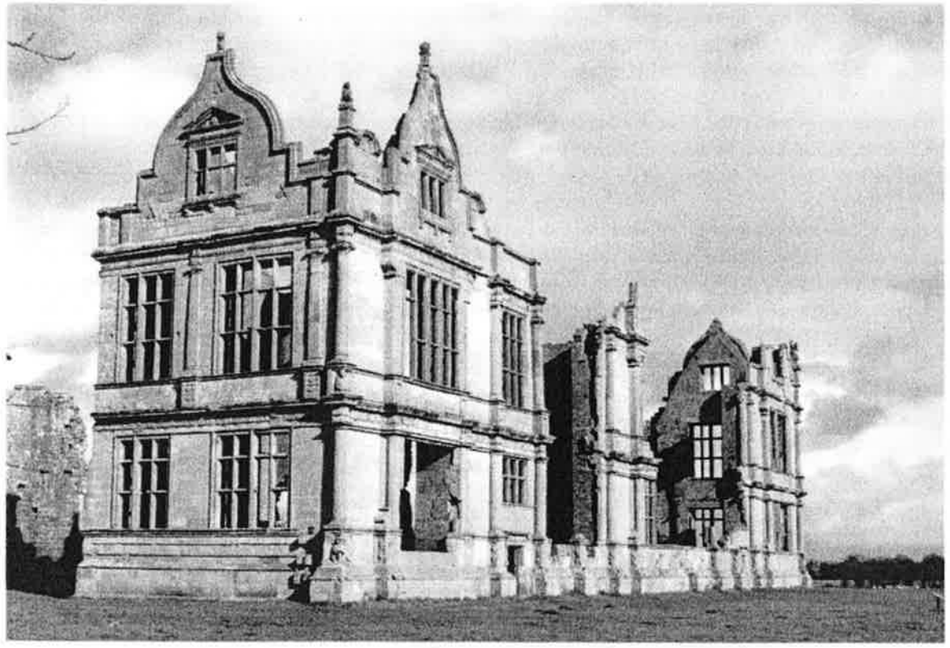
At Moreton Corbet the versatility of the best Grinshill Sandstone is well seen because, for once, its ornamental qualities are highlighted by the exquisite designs of John of Padua and the inspired workmanship of unknown mastermasons. Such qualities are rarely displayed but in this case they are seemingly enhanced by fully 400 years of neglect.

5.6.2. 1600–1650. The first period of building in stone: Grinshill Freestone reigns supreme.

Acton Reynald Manor House, then situated in the middle of the village of that name, was built for the Corbet family to replace the castle-manor house at Moreton Corbet after the Civil War (Figure 5q.). The three bays two storeys high, originally built in 1601, had a further bay added in 1625, together with Tuscan columns and elliptical arches, and skilled decoration in the 15th century Venetian traditions, all constructed presumably from material quarried on the estate only 1 km to the north. The house was large enough to be taxed for 15 hearths in 1672. In 1919 the house was bought by the Westland's School, formerly located on the Yorkshire coast. It became known as the Acton Reynald Independent Girls school until it was sold in 1988 and is now a private residence. Further details will be found in a booklet by Susan Dutton 1998.

In its lower part, the three-gabled Ercall Hall (1608) (Figure 5r.) is solidly built of a lilac sandstone reminiscent of the sandstone from Harnage used at Condover Hall (see earlier), but the upper part is, outrageously, of brick. The four-light window casements, coping stones and quoins appear to be of yellow Grinshill Sandstone (s.s). An arcade or open loggia of four arches set upon rounded piers, now standing isolated on the lawn between the hall and St Michael's Church, was clearly constructed of similar Grinshill material, but may be later than the original building. The Hall was designed for Sir Francis Newport by mastermason Walter Hancock (Pevsner, 1958, p. 20) who had probably erected the Market House at Shrewsbury in 1596 and very likely the infinitely more elegant Condover Hall in the 1590s. It was garrisoned by 200 parliamentarian soldiers during the Civil War, only 7 km (4½ miles) from the royalist bastion at Moreton Corbet.

Sansaw Estate 1 km west of the quarries was purchased by John Gardner in 1622, but it is not known whether Sansaw Hall was built of Grinshill Stone at that time, for it was altered greatly in 1774 and again in 1856.



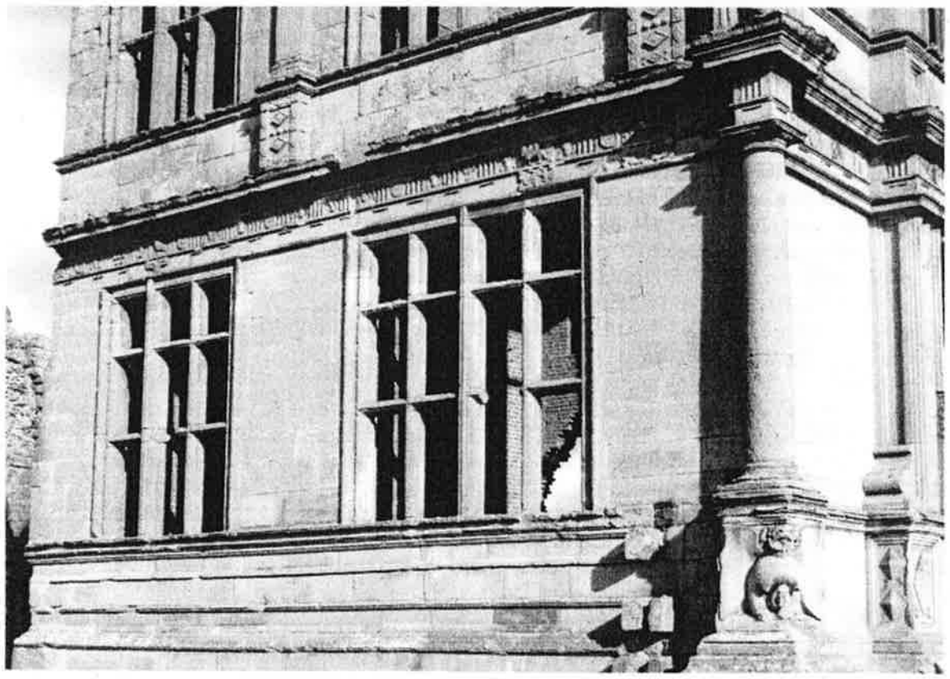


Figure 5p. *The Elizabethan Mansion alongside Moreton Corbet Castle. Considered by Pevsner as architecturally amongst the most impressive and consistent designs in the country. The lower picture shows the splendid work of the mastermasons and carvers.*

Figure 5q.
Acton Reynald Manor House (now a Hall) built 1601 and 1625 in yellow/grey Grinshill Sandstone. Enlarged c. 1800 by J.H.Haycock for Sir Andrew Corbet with further additions of c. 1840, possibly by E.Haycock.

Figure 5r. *Ercall Hall, High Ercall, built in 1608 for Sir Francis Newport by the mastermason Walter Hancock (Courtesy of English Heritage). The ground floor is a lilac sandstone possibly from Harnage, the upper floor and gables are brick. The window coping casements, stones and quoins appear to be of yellow Grinshill Sandstone.*

Figure 5s. *Grinshill Manor House (the present building possibly dating from 1624 if credence is given to the date on the wall).*

Grinshill Manor House (the present building possibly dating from 1624 if credence is given to the date on the wall) (Figure 5s.) is as solid and functional as the hard grey sandstone of which it is constructed. Its three bays and steep gables are lightened only slightly by the mullioned and transomed windows and the sundial. Pevsner (1958, p. 134) thought it had a Cotswoldian look; the quality of work at the east side speaks of a mason who is serving an apprenticeship! The initials I.K. (representing John Kilvert) beside the date on the wall imply that it was already in the hands of the Kilvert family by this time. Will. Kilvert and Robert Emerie, both described as yeomen in an indenture dated 20th September 1617, sold two acres of land for the building of the Stone Grange in Grinshill in 1617 (SRO Ms No. 3365/2601) and it is possible that William Kilvert was a quarry owner or leasee at the time. By 1637, however, "Sir Andrew Corbet held the Manor of Acton Reynald and the Manor of Grinshill." And the rights to quarry no doubt lay in his hands.

5.6.3 1650–1742. The beginning of the tradition of building in brick with dressings of stone.

Adjacent to the Church and 100 m north of Grinshill Manor House is Higher House (Figure 5t.), a structure built of local brick and crumbling red sandstone, with a good quality freestone used to make substantial repairs and additions in later years. It bears the date 1657 and the initials E.I.E. which are likely to relate to the Emerie family (later the Embureys) rather than the Edge family. (Robert Emerie, yeoman, appears on a indenture dated 20th September 1617 for selling of land for the Stone House to Shrewsbury School in 1617; on a Subsidy Roll of 1644 and on a Court Roll of 1647-8. The name John Edge appears only on the last two).

By contrast, Soulton Hall (1668) (Figure 5u.) 3 km NE of Wem is a splendid Carolean house in brick, but with a parapet, window dressings and an imposing doorway (flanked by Doric columns and overlain by a metope frieze and semi-circular pediment) in yellow Grinshill stone probably from Grinshill. It was lived in by various members of the Hill family, notably Thomas Hill, around 1697 at a time when a consortium of local landowners sought to work copper ores in the sandstones at Wixhill (SRO Ms No. 731 Box 57, Bygot Collection).

Not far behind the mansion at Moreton Corbet in quality, but of contrasting style, is the manor of Preston Brockhurst (Figure 5v.) which can best be inspected from afar in the same visit. It demonstrates that building wholly in stone continued even in the era dominated by brick. It lies less than 1 km northeast of the Grinshill Quarries which provided the stone of which it is constructed. The estate was once owned by the Saxon Turret family but passed to the Corbets by the marriage of Richard Corbet of Caus, the other line of the family.

When Sir Vincent Corbet had to pay for the ransom inflicted by the parliamentarians for his devotion to Charles I's cause, he chose to sell off the estate to a Mr Wingfield of Shrewsbury (Gough 1981, p. 164; Jancey 1956, p.16). At once the latter pulled down the old house and in its place built a "fair hall of freestone" dated no earlier than 1690 (Pevsner 1958, p.231).

The mansion is handsomely situated and is lofty and spacious, displaying three prominent gables and bay windows, the middle one recessed and rising above a square porch, whose projection is capped by a balcony on the first floor. The doorway of the porch has been altered and above it is a shield with a raven, the Corbet crest. The mullioned and transomed windows, the square chimney stacks, the walled garden, the square gate pillars guarding a long drive, all express the massively solid and enduring nature of the freestone, rather than its ornamental qualities. The contrast with Moreton Corbet, only 2 km to the southeast and built nearly 100 years, earlier could not be greater, but both buildings in their different ways are a delight.

Hawkstone Hall, however, is typical of the period in which brick was made to lie cheek by jowl with stone, often with sorry results. It deserves careful attention, for it provides the first extensive documentary records of the widespread use of Grinshill stone from Grinshill, some 11 km away.

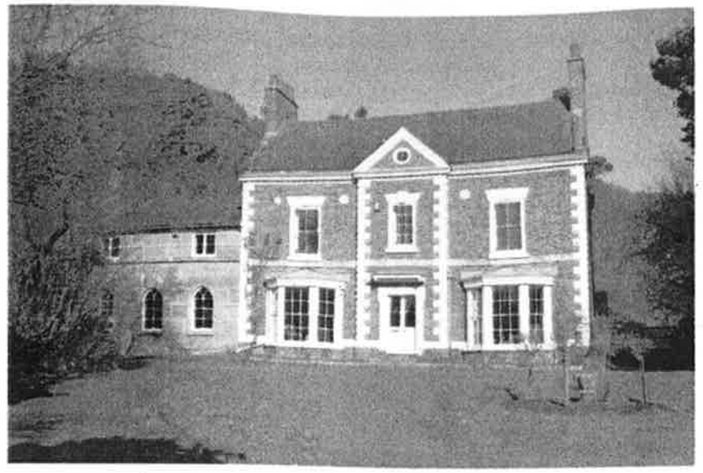


Figure 5t. *Higher House, Grinshill. Early C18 red brick with painted sandstone ashlar dressings. There is a two storey wing to the left of dressed red sandstone and a tower with central stairs built circa 1657.*

Figure 5u. *Soulton Hall built in 1668 for Thomas Hall and probably incorporating parts of an earlier building (Courtesy of English Heritage).*

Figure 5v. *Preston Brockhurst Manor House demonstrates that building wholly in stone continued even in the era dominated by brick. In quality, the manor house is not far behind the mansion at Moreton Corbet, but of contrasting style.*

The Hawkstone Estate was put together through astute dealings with various members of the Hill family, starting in the 16th century but continuing into the 18th. The manor was purchased in 1556 by Sir Rowland Hill, Lord Mayor of London, but the history of the estate up to 1700 is obscure. After the estate was inherited in 1700 by the Hon. and Rev. Richard Hill (1655-1727) major changes occurred, the estate being expanded, the core of the house built and new courts, gardens and axial walks established on the natural outcrops and crags of the scarps, dipslopes, outliers and fault lines. These are provided by the soft Wilmslow Sandstone (at the base) and the Grinshill Sandstone (senso lato) and the Tarporley Siltstones above, the latter two of which, being mineralised, better cemented and harder, form the south-facing scarp. The Brockhurst fault complex, trending north-south, accounts for the west-facing scarp at Grotto Hill and Red Castle Hill (see the Geological Map Figure 5x.). It is not known, however, whether the first Richard Hill created the first park. This was probably achieved by his successor Sir Rowland Hill, the first baronet (1705-1783) who, by 1748, had laid out the Terrace Walk on Terrace Hill and the Vineyard (a kitchen garden with mock fortifications). All were developed on white Grinshill Sandstone capped by the Tarporley Siltstones.

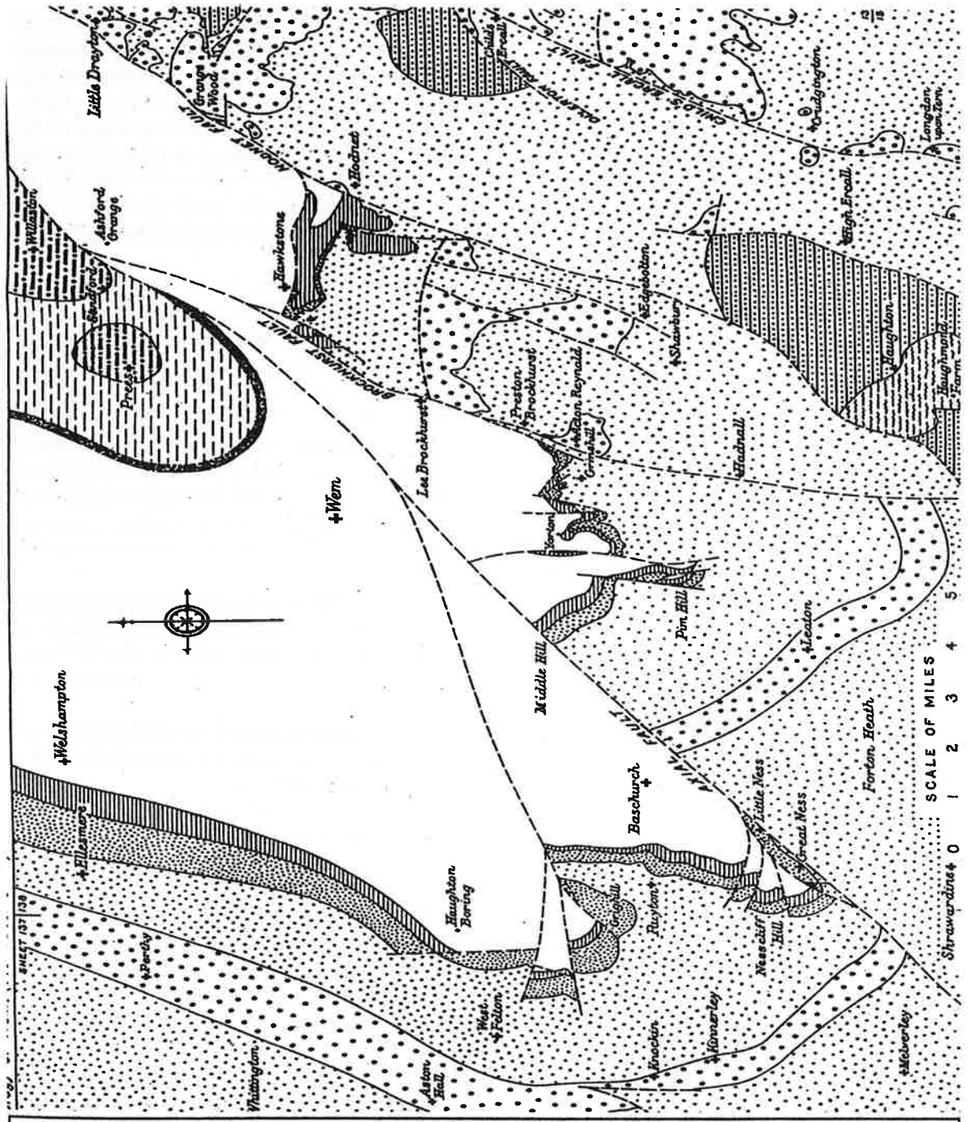
By 1752 three other key elements had been developed: Elysian Hill (on red Wilmslow Sandstone), Red Castle Hill (in red Wilmslow Sandstone with a small capping of white Grinshill Sandstone) and Grotto Hill (wholly of Grinshill Sandstone (senso lato)). In 1765 a visitor recorded that the Grotto was "under construction".

Sir Richard Hill, the second baronet (1732-1808), succeeded his father in 1783 and he immediately expanded the park. The results of that work are described in a previous booklet (Occasional Publication No. 3, Thompson 2005, pp.39-40).

The early history of Hawkstone Hall has been reconstructed in great detail by Andor Gomme formerly of Keele University (1984) and the account of month by month progress is worth setting down at some length. The first hall was probably built about 1700 (ibid. p. 309) and part of it survives as the core of the present building (see Figure 5w.), but it was added to in three stages 1719-1725, c.1740, c.1750.

The subsequent development of the landscaped park and the major alterations to the Hall of 1830-40 do not fall into this period.

Figure 5w. *The first Hawkstone Halll was probably built about 1700 and part of it survives as the central core of the present building.*



NAMES OF THE ROCK UNITS

INDEX	OLD TERMS 1840 - 1980	AGE, Millions of Years	NEW TERMS 1980 -	PERIOD
	Middle Lias	180	Lias	Lower Jurassic
	Lower Lias	200	Lias	
	Rhaetic Beds			
	Keuper Marl	235	Mercia Mudstones & Salts	Triassic
	Waterstones	240	Tarporley Siltstones	
	Ruyton and Grinshill Sandstones		Helsby Sandstone	

INDEX	OLD TERMS 1840 - 1980	AGE Millions of Years	NEW TERMS 1980 -	PERIOD
	Upper Mottled Sandstone	250	Wilmslow Sandstone	Triassic
	Pebble Beds		Chester Pebble Beds	
	Lower Mottled Sandstone	300	Kinnerton Sandstone	Permian
	Enville and Keele Beds	360		Carboniferous
	Longmyndian	545		Pre-Cambrian

Figure 5x. *Geological map showing the Brockhurst fault complex, trending north-south, which accounts for the west-facing scarp at Grotto Hill and Red Castle Hill at Hawkstone.*

The Hall is of brick with quoins, horizontal courses, porticos and window dressings now of Grinshill Stone. The architects, mastermasons and masons who constructed the original hall are unknown, but there is ample correspondence from 1719 onwards which allowed Gomme to reconstruct the likely shape of the west front (ibid. p.314; his fig.3) and for us to recognise that the original stonework may not have been of Grinshill Stone. After only 20 years John Dicken, the Hills' agent in Shropshire, was writing:

"the stonework now in the front was done with Dunge Stone and looks but some thing black and dirty" (letter of John Dicken 17th June 1724, SRO MS No. 112/2478).

Indeed Richard Hill was writing to Dicken from Richmond as early as 1719 indicating his plans to improve the house as a residence for his nephew Rowland Hill. He reveals that one William Price was deeply involved with carrying out the work using Grinshill Stone (Hill to Dicken 11th July 1719, SRO MS No. 579/3):

"*I just now received ye letter of ye 8th with ye enclosed plan of ye portique according to which I desire Wm Prees may proceed as fast as he can. While he is going forward with his pillars and pilasters I desire ye Carpenter may be employed to prepare timber for ye beams which are....to support ye floor of ye pedement room....Pray let Wm Prees know I desire the case or molding round ye window.....may be of grinsell stone ...*"

From this and other evidence, Gomme (1984, p. 315) believes that Hill was in part his own architect. Despite serious building work only being attempted during the summer months, progress appears to have been swift but Dicken had to report in May 1720 that Price was held up (Dicken to Hill 21st May 1720: SRO MS No. 112/2380):

"the Bricklayers and Carpenters are now getting up the Pediment and putting on the Roofe to ye Portique at the north end of the house till w^ch^ is finished and the Scaffolds struck from ye same... Wm Price cannot goe on with ye other portique w^ch^ is now about three foot high".

Gomme (1984, fig. 4, p. 316) provides a hypothetical reconstruction of this north front which does not now survive.

The year 1721 may have been taken up mainly with paving, but in the next year work began afresh on the south portique, for which a bill for stone was rendered by Price in June 1722 (SRO MS No. 112/2408). At the same time the two courts were laid out and walled in front of and to the west of the house. By December the steps between the upper and lower courts were set (SRO MS No. 112/2428) and brick walls were surmounted by coping stones. A pair of piers with their finishings and the steps up to them in the Middle Court was the subject of a bill for £8 for stone from Price (SRO MS No. 112/2774). Price measured nine and a half tons of stone from Grinshill "for a New portico" for which a Richard Berry was paid £2. 5s. (SR MS No. 112/2630); and the latter brought another ten tons on 2nd April 1723:

"*for ye use of ye Back portaque*" (SRO MS No. 112/2606),

this reference probably being to the south Portico. At this time Price and other masons were also busy building the family vault in the churchyard at Hodnet at a cost of £38-7s-9d (SRO: MS No. 112/2468-76).

It is only in 1724 that plans for improving the west front of the house are apparent. Price, having finished the pavement of the south portico and laid drains, is expected to send a draft of the proposals for the "front" of the house in response to Hill's directions:

"William Price has brought me a Draught of Hawkstone house as the front is now wth another Draught of ye same front with fluted pilasters w^wt^ Corinthian Capitalls w^th^ an Addicon of a pediment ... William Price saies the Pilasters to ye east front are after the Dorik order, as also the north and south Portiques, but he thinks the best front ought to be according to ye draught, which he submits to yr Honours better Judgmt." (Dicken to Hill 17th June 1724, SRO MS No. 112/2478).

The drawing which is referred to is an outline elevation of somewhat slapdash draughtsmanship of a two-storey seven-bay front with a hipped roof and large domed belvedere. Gomme (1984) suggests that the drawing is a rejected proposal for the reconstruction of the west front:

"by Price but possibly by (Richard) Hill himself, or another amateur" (ibid., p. 310; his fig. 3).

The elevation shows large sections which would need to be constructed of stone and the specification of the present west front, which incorporates considerable sections of the design eventually chosen, confirms that Grinshill Stone was used.

By 21st September 1724 Price had procured:

"a great deal of stone for new pillars and two large stones for the Capitals" (SRO MS No. 112/2486)

which he intended to work on during the winter in order to set them in the following spring. In November an unnamed carver arrived (SRO MS No. 112/2490) and began to work on the capitals. Dicken thought him to be:

"a very ingenious man who did his work well" (SRO MS No. 112/2492)

and Price recounted that, although he was a sorry husband, he was:

"an absolute workeman" who had by 1724/5 "lived so regular at Hawkstone that he will save more money by this piece of work than he has done for 7 years past" (SRO MS No.112/2496).

Price confessed, however:

"There is no Agreement made wth him; he saies he will leave his worke when finished to be valuated by my skilfull artist".

By 1st March 1725 the carver had finished and by mid-July Price himself had almost finished:

"ye new work in the west front which looks very well" (SRO MS No.112/2717).

On December 2 1725 Price asked for £30 to add to the £90 already received:

"in all £120 in full for the new frontispiece or Stone worke at Hawkstone Hall" (SRO MS No. 112/2636).

Gomme notes (1984, p. 318) that this sum may include the carver's fees, since he (Price) had evidently had second thoughts about being paid what someone else thought fit.

Dicken notes (SRO MS No. 112/2496):

"Care has been taken not to supply the Carver wth any more money than for Absolute necessarys. The Capitalls will be finished in about a month's time and the Carver seeming uneasy that there was no price fixed for his worke. William Price and he lately agreed the same for 13^l^ (£13)~viz~^t^ 10^li^ (£10) for the two large capitals w^ch^ are carved three fourths of the stones and 3^li^ (£3) for the small ones which rates William Price thinks very cheap the worke being very well done".

This evidence enabled Gomme to attempt a reconstruction of the west front as it was in 1725 (his fig. 5) with two large capitals at the extruded angles of the recessed centre and the small capitals on either side of an embellished doorcase. This is very different from the arrangement of the surviving west portico which Gomme argues is not Price's work, but that of a later architect working for Sir Rowland Hill c.1750.

In March 1726 Price went on to make a plan for a stable (SRO MS No. 112/2733, 2742) and soon after he received orders for a summer house (SRO MS No. 112/2744).

Hereabouts the evidence for Price's activities ceases, though he was known to be working under Francis Smith at Almington, near Market Drayton, in 1730 (Gomme 1984, p. 316). From the evidence available Price seems to have been foremostly a mason, probably a mastermason, who dabbled in design in an amateur way, as was the fashion of the times. He was a buyer of stone from Grinshill, notably from a Richard Berry, but Gomme speculates that Price owned and operated a quarry there. If this suggestion is substantiated eventually, Price will be the first quarry owner of whom we know a great deal. We know that somewhat later the Hill family owned at least two quarries in Grinshill in 1769 (when Martha Walford was in dispute) and in 1782, when they were awarded land under the Inclosure Act (SRO MS No. 4112/1). Could it be that Price had only leased one or more of the Hill family's quarries?

Of the grander changes made by Sir Rowland Hill after 1727, when he became a baronet and took possession of the Hall, there are no documents surviving. It is known, however, that the wings were added to the west front and that a saloon was built (Nightingale 1813) possibly by architect Henry Flitcroft, who was working with Sir Rowland on the committee for building the New Salop Infirmary (Gomme 1984, pp. 321-2); less possibly it was by William Baker (died 1771), an established local man, or Francis Smith (died 1738) his mentor.

The present pediment, the arms of which include the baronet's red hand, has a full portico beneath and an attic above which must date from Sir Rowland's time (ibid. p. 322).

After these unchronicled events of c.1750 the Hall was left alone for 80 years (ibid. p. 323) until Lewis Wyatt was called upon to redevelop the site - a story which is taken up in a previous booklet (Thompson 2005).

The beginnings of the landscaping of the park took place late in our present period, but the description of that process, too, will be taken up elsewhere (ibid.).

5.7. Town houses and public buildings in Shrewsbury, Wem, Ludlow and Montgomery.

Meanwhile in Shrewsbury in the 16th century many large Tudor and Jacobean timber-framed family houses with stone dressings were built as a result of the revival of the wool trade e.g. Ireland's Mansion (1575), Owens's Mansion (1592), Rowley's Mansion (1600) (Figures 5d., 5e. and 5f.).

In addition, the successful wool merchants began to finance substantial public buildings which were often constructed enduringly of sandstone from Grinshill: the Drapers' Hall, St Mary's Place (1580) (Figure 5ac.), the New Market Hall (now the Old Market Hall) (1596) (Figure 5h.).

In the 17th and early 18th centuries Shrewsbury changed from being a regional market town to a rather fashionable residential one in which elegant streets and residences were developed. Buildings constructed in the best Grinshill stone contributed considerably to these developments, e.g. in Belmont and along Claremont Bank. Many had ashlar fronts, others merely window dressings of yellow sandstone from Grinshill; less-favoured buildings drew their stone from Harmer Hill or Nesscliffe Hill.

The Market House at Wem (see Figure 5aa.) was built in brick and Grinshill Stone (1702-1728) according to one authority Garbett (Garbett 1982, p. 235) but this is doubted by Pevsner who dates it as probably early C19 (Pevsner 1958, p. 310). Originally the ground floor with its Tuscan columns and elliptical arches was open. The Presbyterian Meeting House (1716) was a similar construction.

William Baker of Bridgenorth (died 1771) farmer, surveyor and architect, designed and built Montgomery Town Hall in 1748, and is said to have used facings of Grinshill stone of considerable quality and pleasing colour (Hobbs 1960g, p. 34). A visit to the site renders this identification very dubious. The Town Hall was enlarged in 1828 by Thomas Penson (ibid.). The alleged use at the end of this period of Grinshill stone for a public building in Montgomery (approximately 50 km from Grinshill) may illustrate the fact that the reputation of the freestone was appreciating and spreading amongst architects, evidently the stone could occasionally compete successfully in distant markets

Table 5.1. Town Houses and Public Buildings in Shrewsbury, Wem, Ludlow and Montgomery.

Date	Town Houses	Public Buildings
1596		Market Hall, Shrewsbury, by W. Hancock, Tuscan columns. (Figure 5h.).
1679		Shoemakers' Arbour, The Dingle (Figure 5ad.). Carries high relief figures of St Crispin and St Crispian, the patron saints of shoemakers, each side of a coat of arms. Removed from its original position in the Shoemakers' Guildhall to The Dingle in 1877.
1696-1700	Newport House (now the Guildhall). Dogpole, Shrewsbury (Figure 5ab.). Brick with stone dressings, columned portico of 19th century.	
1701	Judges Lodgings, Shrewsbury. Queen Anne House.	
1708 1716		Shrewsbury National School. Brick with quoins and dressings of yellow Grinshill Sandstone. Market House at Wem (Figure 5aa.). Presbyterian Meeting House.
1724		Bowdler's School, Town Walls, Shrewsbury. Brick with quoins, horizontal courses and window sills of yellow Grinshill Sandstone (de Saulles, 1986, p. 85).
1725	Abbey House, Shrewsbury. Brick with yellow Grinshill Sandstone dressings to doors and windows.	
1734		Millington's School and Hospital, Frankwell, Shrewsbury, by Massey with centre part by E. Haycock. (Figure 5y.). Brick but with stone stringers and window dressings of yellow Grinshill Sandstone (de Saulles, 1986, p. 85).
1748		Montgomery Town Hall (Hobbs, 1960, p. 34). The stone of questionable provenance.
1762	Swan Hill Court, Shrewsbury. (Figure 5ae.). Built for the Marquess of Bath by Thomas F. Pritchard and is the most ambitious c18 house in Shrewsbury. Brick with stone dressing and ornamental dormer, five bays, two and a half storeys, 3 bay pediment with arms and swag (Pevsner, 1958, p. 282.).	

Figure 5y. *Millington's School and Hospital, Frankwell, founded by James Millington's Trustees in accordance with his Will. The building is by Massey with centre part by E. Haycock.*

Figure 5z. *Inscription above main entrance of Millington's School which is still managed by his Trustees.*

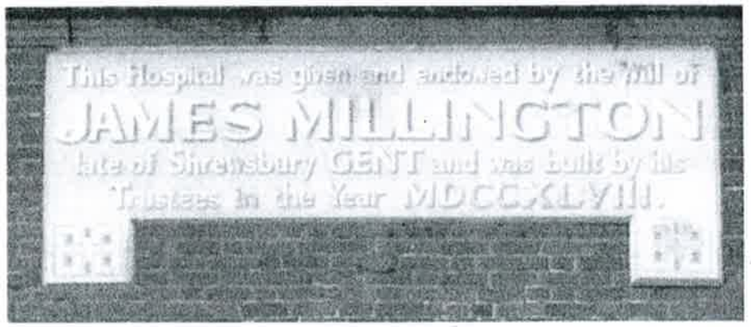


Figure 5aa. *The former Market House, Wem. The ground floor with Tuscan columns and elliptical arches were originally open.*

Figure 5ab. *Newport House (now the Guildhall). Dogpole, Shrewsbury. Built by Richard Earl of Bradford shortly after 1696 in brick with stone dressings, and columned portico of 19th century. He moved the original house that stood here to Castle Gates and re-erected it as Castle Gates House.*

Figure 5ac. *The Drapers' Hall, St Mary's Place. The guildhall of the powerful drapers' guild. Built c.1560.*

Figure 5ad. *The Shoemarkers' Arbour.*

Figure 5ae. *Swan Hill Court, Shrewsbury. Built for the Marquess of Bath by Thomas F. Pritchard. It is the most ambitiousC18 house in Shrewsbury (Courtesy of English Heritage).*

Because stone for extensive repairs to the Buttercross, the strange name given to the town hall at Ludlow, was being sent from the present quarry at Grinshill in 1984-5, the author visited the site in July 1985 to see whether Baker's original building of 1743-4 was constructed of such materials (ibid.). Most of the three bays, the middle one fronted by four Tuscan columns and a pediment, the clock turret, the cupola and the balustrade, are made of medium-coarse, cross-bedded, occasionally pebbly, yellow sandstone. The presence of pebbles and well-defined sedimentary structures suggests that Baker used Upper Devonian sandstones from quarries like those at Farlow 14 km from Ludlow rather than material from Grinshill 43 km away. However it is just possible that certain key parts of the front of the building were constructed originally of Grinshill stone.

5.8. Ecclesiastical Building.

There is relatively little to record during this period. No doubt a great deal of renovation work was carried out of which we have no record. Although the subscriptions for building the west tower of St Mary Magdalene Church at Battlefield (Figure 5ai.) were in hand by at least 1429 (Pevsner 1958, p. 70) it was not completed until the early 17th century (ibid.), hence its inclusion here. The tower of that date survives today with its thin but impressive diagonal buttresses and many offsets, but the battlements and pinnacles date from the rebuild of 1861-2 by S. Pountney Smith. At St Chad's, Prees (Figure 5aj.), in the 16th century, the north porch, with stepped gable and finely moulded entrance in Perpendicular Style, was constructed of yellow Grinshill Sandstone. At St Peter & St Paul's, Wem, (Figure 5ah.) the west window (1667), the west and north windows (1678), the Lord's Chancel (1680) were renovated (Garbett, 1982 (1818) p. 231).

Perhaps the most innovative use of our stone in this period is seen at The Parish Church of Holy Trinity Minsterley which was built in 1689, by an unidentified architect, according to a date on the original rainwater heads (Pevsner 1958, p. 201 quoting an early MS by Williams). The church is in local brick but most of the openings are set in yellow Grinshill Sandstone and embellished by semi-classical, semi-

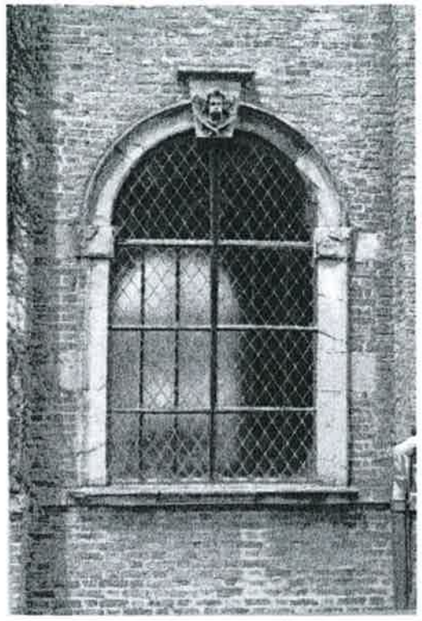


Figure 5af. *Church of Holy Trinity, Minsterley. Keystone of the window arch showing the sculpted cherub's head.*

Figure 5ag. *Church of Holy Trinity. The west tower with its giant rusticated pilasters and segmented pediment.*

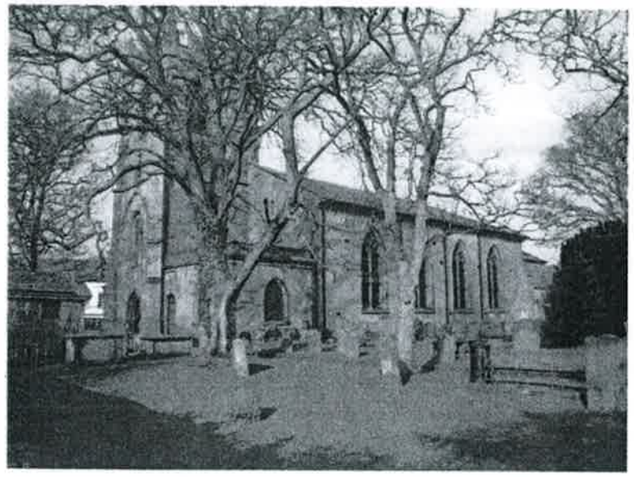


Figure 5ah. *St Peter and St Paul's, Wem. The west tower has an early c14 door-way. The west widow of Gothic character is dated 1667.*

Figure 5ai. *St Mary Magdalene, Battlefield was founded by Henry IV as the church of a chantry college to prey for the souls of those slain in the battle of Shrewsbury in 1406. The building was ready in 1409 and the tower was added early in the c16.*

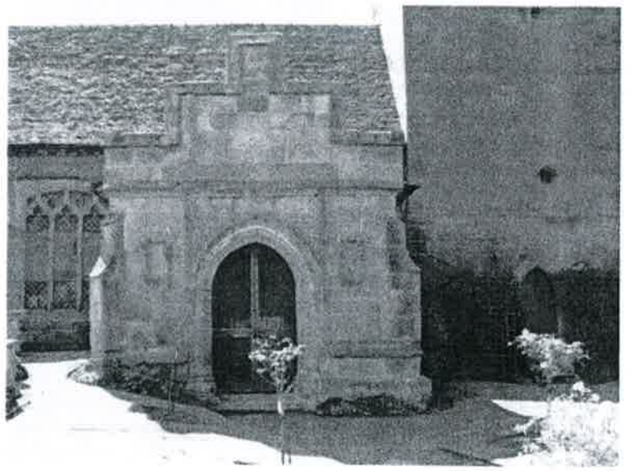


Figure 5aj. *St Chad's, Prees. The north porch was added in the 16th century, with stepped gable and finely moulded entrance in Perpendicular Style, and was constructed of yellow Grinshill Sandstone.*

Baroque motifs (Cranage, 1901 -11. Vol. II., p.531, Vol. IV, p. 1001; Pevsner ibid; Gaydon 1968, p. 263) which are well worth viewing. The keystones of the arches of the windows bear carefully sculpted cherubs' heads (Figure 5af.). The south porch has a splendid eared doorway. The west tower (Figure 5ag.) is the most impressive or pretentious, depending on taste. It has giant rusticated pilasters and a segmented pediment. Its west portal has a segmental arch and a segmental freize decorated with a variety of ornamental forms e.g. skulls and cross bones, an hour glass etc. Above this is an arched window flanked by pilasters adorned with garlands; above that the clock is set in a squarish, eared frame. Alas! the names and origins of the architect, mastermasons and masons responsible for these daring but splendid exotica are not known to Pevsner, but their erection some 25 km from Grinshill in 1689 illustrates the fact that the cost of transporting a high-quality stone was well justified when a novel architectural statement needed to be made

However Miss D T Merry's, The History of Minsterley (p. 34), records that the building of the church was paid for by Viscount Weymouth and that the architect was William Taylor from Longleat. The masonry and brickwork was in the hands of Thomas Hudson of Shrewsbury and the structural woodwork inside, and the oak galley and box pews, were the work of Joseph Meatcham of Shrewsbury. Stone from the ruins of Caus Castle was also used in the church. Caus Castle was built by Roger Corbet in 1272 at the northern end of Long Mountain and called after his native home, Caux in Normandy which latter became Caus. The castle was attacked and destroyed by Cromwell's troops in 1645.

5.9. The quarry owners and free masons: especially the quarrying network of the Cureton family.

The story of the possible quarry owners in our area at this period is a tangled one and does not always rest upon documentary evidence. The Smith, Kilvert, Embury, Wright and Cureton families are the most likely to be involved. Walter Hancock was one of the most prominent master masons. Alas, no portraits of these individuals or families appear to have survived.

The Smiths. Thomas Smith of Clive (1587) is claimed to be the ancestor of the quarrying family that was so prominent in working of the quarries in the Victorian era and beyond (Harley 1972, p. 31), but it is not known strictly whether he owned or leased quarries at that time, or to which quarry or quarries he was attached.

The Kilverts. John Kilvert may have rebuilt the Grinshill Manor house (Figure 5s.) from the best local stone in 1624

The Embureys. It is possible that the initials and date E.I.E.1657 on the walls of Higher House, Grinshill (Figure5ak.), relate to the Embrie (later the Emburey) family doing likewise. Both Kilvert and Emburey are quoted as yeomen and it is conjectured that they or their families worked local quarries on the waste lands and commons of Clive and Grinshill in order to accomplish their task.

Figue 5ak. *Date and initials on wall of Higher House.*

The Wrights. A mason named Wright repaired Clive Church in 1632-3 (Shropshire Parish Register Society, Clive Parish Register 1906, p. 42 & 45). The Hearth Tax roll of 1672 records no man named Wright at Grinshill or Clive: only an Andrew Wright at Ashley (Watkins–Pitchford 1949, p. 10). This mason is unlikely to be related to the stone masons named Wright which are recorded in the censuses in 1861-1881, since they were mere lodgers.

The Curetons. There is no doubt, however, that the members of the Cureton family occasion most interest as quarry people of substance and influence at this time.

The account which follows relies somewhat heavily upon the purely genealogical and accurate researches of Mr David Cureton of Solihull, but more conjecturally upon the devoted work of Dr Thomas Kirk Cureton, physical educationalist of Urbana (Illinois, USA) who has tried to piece together the Cureton family histories across five countries. He is involved because his Puritan, parliamentarian rebel forebears emigrated from north Shropshire and Grinshill, first to Barbados in the West Indies (D. Cureton personal communication 1985), then to the North American mainland prior to 1623 (Dr T. K. Cureton SRO MS No. 1975, p. 3).

The family name, variously spelled Curton, Churton, Cuerton Cureton (in the Welsh areas) and Cuerden (relating to the original Lancastrian and French connections dating back to the Norman invasion of 1066) is widespread in the Welsh Borders and North Shropshire (see the Map, Figure 5al.). On good documentary evidence it is known that their descendants worked Cureton's Quarry G5 (see Figure 5m.) in the Grove (Shawbury Parish) at the east end of Grinshill in the 18th and 19th centuries; (Shawbury Tithe Book SRO MS No. 2959/3/12; Bagshaw 1851; Censuses 1841-1881), but it is here argued that they may have done so in the 16th and 17th centuries, in addition.

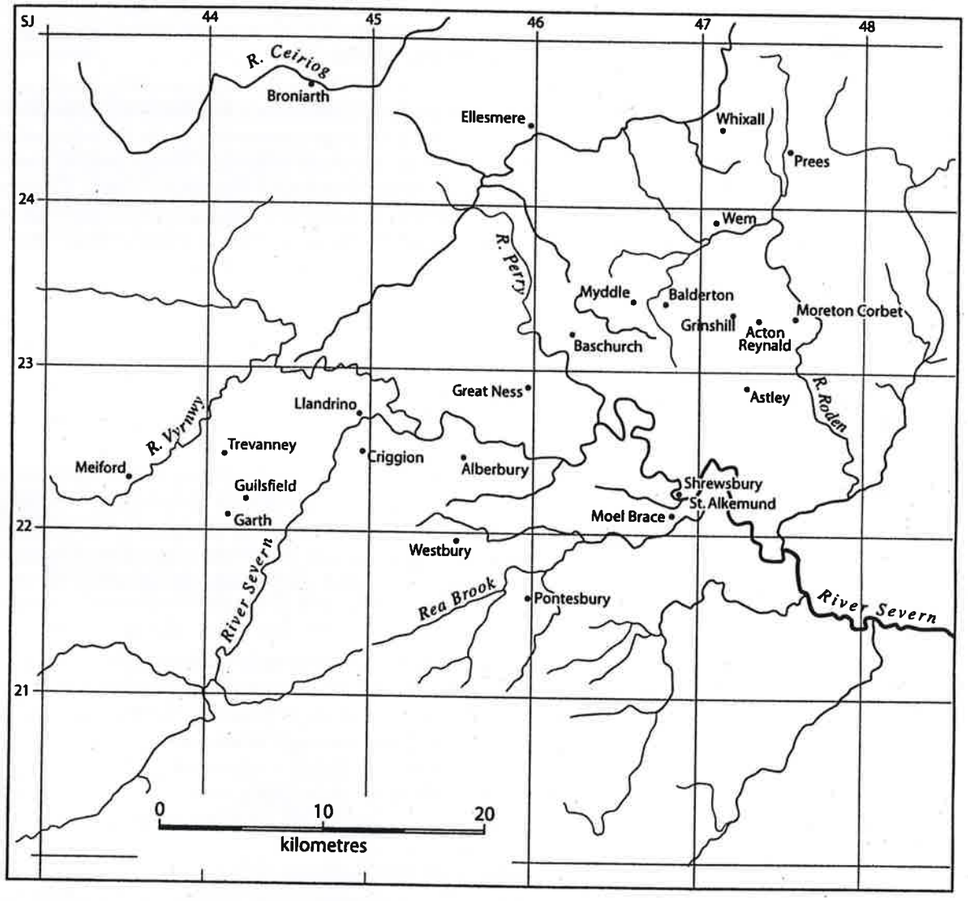


Figure 5al. *Map showing the extensive area of the Curetons' distribution and the sites where Dr Cureton has evidence that they owned or worked in the quarries which are shown on the map. (Map courtesy of Andrew Lawrence).*

Upon the dissolution of the monasteries c.1540, the Curetons and the families with which they had intermarried moved outwards diversifying their interests and seeking to establish economic viability in other spheres: in agriculture, shipping, soldiering and in particular in quarrying. They had started to move c. 1520 from Lancashire and Cheshire into North Shropshire to the Welsh Borders, where their quarrying interests were well developed amongst others; they even emigrated to North America. The extensive area of the families' distribution and the sites where Dr Cureton has evidence that they owned or worked in quarries is shown on the map (see Figure 5al.). The succeeding paragraphs attempt to trace some of these events in detail.

Dr Cureton suggests (T. K. Cureton 1968, p. 98) that the William Cureton who was Parish Clerk of Grinshill was the same man who became Rector of St Alkemund's in 1540, and Dean of St Mary's

Collegiate Church in 1550. He had been forced to surrender his church to the King's appointees (T. K. Cureton 1975) and was pensioned off by Henry VIII in 1551. He wrote a will in 1556 and died in that year. There is, however, another William who retired to Longford, near Market Drayton after 1560 and is said to have developed a quarrying business at Grinshill (ibid.) although the evidence for this is not at all clear. At some time one of these Williams had married JoAnne (née Farrington, buried 24.7.1590) one of the descendants of Sir William Farrington who had been in charge of legal affairs in Aquitaine for King John in the 13th century. After 1463 the Farrington sons had come back to Cuerden in Lancashire together with the sons of Abbot William Curton head of the Grand Sauve, the Abbey near Tizac-Curton (ibid.). Elsewhere it is suggested (ibid. p. 144) that Balderton Farm near Myddle (see Figures 5am and 5ap.) was the home of some of the Curetons from 1543 to at least 1714. Certainly a Humphrey Curton married an Anne (née Taylor) of Myddle in 1543.

Dr Cureton goes on to trace further migrations of Curetons from Lancashire, Cheshire and Shropshire to the Welsh Border from 1572 onwards, the likely cause being religious persecution of the catholic part of the family. Certainly the Curetons appear frequently in parish records related to Wales and the Welsh Border (Broniarth, Guilsfield (sometimes spelt Guildesfield), Llandrino, Trevanney, Garth, Criggin, Meiford, Pontesbury, Westbury, Alberbury as well as in adjacent places in England (Shrewsbury, Moel Brace, Great Ness, Baschurch, Myddle, Balderton, Grinshill, Moreton Corbet, Astley, Wem, Prees, Whixall, Horderley, and Longford amongst many others) (see Figure 5al. and Table 5.2).

In view of the evidence that this Richard Cureton and his wife Magaret were living with their mother Isabel in the Schoolhouse Grinshill village at the time of the hearth tax in 1672, it would appear that Dr Cureton should seek another Richard Cureton as his prime emigrant. Mr David Cureton has evidence that it was the Guilsfield branch of the family which emigrated at this time (personal communication, 1990).

Between 1685 and 1714, however, there was generally a return of the Curetons from USA. Dr Cureton states that some of these migrants were connected with quarrying particularly at Broniarth, Criggion, Garth, and Alberbury on the one hand and Grinshill and Moreton Corbet on the other (T. K. Cureton 1975, pp. 2-6 and confirmed by D. Cureton, personal communication 1990), although the documentary evidence for this is not clear. The locations of the possible quarries and parishes are shown on the map (Figure 5al.).

It is appropriate to add that the Curetons were involved in further emigration to North America in 1627 and that they participated in the triangular trade: London-Bristol-Liverpool to Barbados using the 'trade' winds, then on to Philadelphia before returning on the westerly winds to England. Sir William Courten of London equipped three ships (including the Speedwell) and, amongst others, carried Captain Roger and Robert Corbett of the Corbet family to Barbados between 1627-36. Unfortunately Charles I sought to invalidate this settlement. The eviction was contested interminably but successfully in the International Court in The Hague by c. 1700. Despite this the family was never recompensed.

The main emigration to North America took place from 1660 onwards. The cause of the emigration was again said to be the persecution of religious dissenters, this time of the Quakers of the family, but we must not forget the political problems occasioned by taking the "wrong" (i.e. parliamentary) side in the Civil War. Curetons from Ellesmere, Myddle and Grinshill are said by Dr Cureton to have fought on the side of the Commissary and in the forces of General Mytton of Guilsfield. After the war the Curetons of Guilsfield - Meifod - Trevanney returned northeastwards to Alberbury - Myddle - Grinshill, whilst other Puritans went to Barbados as migrants.

Dr Cureton suggests that Richard Cureton (1642-1720), the quarry owner living in the Country Schoolhouse (son of William Cureton, freemason 16??-1698, and the Richard who had married Margaret Emburey in 1681), was one of the main persons concerned in this migration. It is suggested that he emigrated in the 1660s, returned to England c. 1672 and went out again in 1685.

Furthermore there is evidence of two Richard Cureton's involved in quarrying at Grinshill in the 1580s according to Dr Cureton (T K Cureton SRO MS No. 1975, p. 2). One lived at both Grinshill and Guilsfield and was a soldier for Queen Elizabeth in 1582; the other only at Grinshill. Between them the Richards are said to have owned quarries at the following places:

It will be recalled that John Richardson was preparing window dressings etc. for Condover Hall at Grinshill in the summer of 1588 (Gaydon 1968, p. 39) and it could be that this work was carried out in the quarries owned by the two Richard Curetons.

Table 5.2. The quarries of the two Richard Curetons.

Place and Parish	Rock Type	Geological Age of Materials
Alberbury*	Sandstone and breccia	Permian
Criggion*	Dolerite (igneous)	Post-Ordovician, pre-Silurian
Garth near Guilsfield	? Shales	Lower Ordovician
Grinshill	Sandstone-Freestone Sandstone-Flagstone	Lower Triassic
Meiford, Broniarth Hill	? Shales	Lower Ordovician

- wrongly described as 'marble' by Dr Thomas Kirk Cureton (ibid. p. 1)
- Dr T. K. Cureton (ibid. p. 2) writes about quarries at Criggion (Alberbury). Criggion has well-known quarries to this day but is in Wales (not in Alberbury parish which has quarries of its own and is in England).

5.10. The Cureton Quarrying family at Grinshill as recorded in the parish registers.

We do not have to rely on Dr Cureton's circuitous accounts for the succeeding events, for the parish registers record that a Richard Cureton (baptized c. 1580 died 7. 8. 1659) married Magaret Taylor on January 16th June 1608 at Moreton Corbet and had a first son William (baptised 22.7.1615; died 30.3.1698) at Grinshill. Unusually for a parish a register, William's occupation is described: that of a freemason i.e. a skilled journeyman mason working with mallet and chisels to cut freestone. William first married Isabelle Heyward (d. 22.6.1701) and she bore him three daughters and five sons. His will, made at Grinshill 12th December 1663 and probated 4th April 1685 at Grinshill, named his second son as Nathaniel (Rector of Hodnet) and his daughters as Mary, Margaret (wife of the Rector of Wem) and Katherine and eight grandchildren. Later he married Isabel Walker of Grinshill. The first of his sons was Richard (baptised 29.9.1642, died 28.9.1720) whose family (four daughters and one son) we have already encountered living with their grandmother in the Stone Grange, the Schoolhouse of Shrewsbury School, in between 1672 and 1698. In view of the prevalence of silicosis amongst masons and quarrymen reported in later years, it is to be noted that William lived to a ripe old age, 83, as did many of his descendants.

Figure 5am. *Curetons Cottage. The family home at The Grove, Grinshill in quarry G5, see the map Figure 5m. (Courtesy of Mr T. Hill)*

Further scrutiny of the family tree around Grinshill, Shawbury and Moreton Corbet reveals that successive generations of Curetons belonged to rather large families with many sons anyone of whom might have followed the family business. Only occasionally, however, is there a hint that the persons are to do with quarrying. Richard, son of Jane and Edward Cureton (Clerk of Moreton Corbet in 1734) was baptised 16th November 1711, left a will on January 10th 1753 (T. K. Cureton 1975) or 1763 (D. Cureton 1985) which indicated he was a stonemason, but there is no record of him in the Grove, Grinshill (D. Cureton MS 1985). An Edward Cureton Senior baptised 5th October 1735 at Grinshill and died August 19th 1809 at Moreton Corbet (Parish Registers. D. Cureton MS 1985), had a son Edward Jr. (born 1767 died 1769) who is recorded as living, albeit briefly, in the Grove, i.e. next to Quarry G5. It is therefore reasonable to think that Edward Senior lived in the Grove also and was a stonemason in this period. This story was recounted in previous booklets, (Occasional Publication No.3, Thompson 2005, and pps.15-18.). It is tempting to think that the reference to the Grove implies the existence at that time of Curetons' Cottage. Alas! the only map which relates to this time, that of Acton Reynald township for 1777, shows no dwellings in the Grove except at the crossing of the tracks. It is most likely, as T. K. Cureton suggests (Cureton MSS) that the cottage in the Grove dates back to 1540. Such is the size of many of the Cureton families, that it is reasonable to speculate that many of the sons learned the stonemason's craft as apprentices at their fathers' or uncles' feet and in their quarries in the Grove at the east end of Grinshill in Shawbury Parish (Quarry G5 on our classification, Figure 5m.) throughout the period in question. However the first record of quarries existing in the area is that on the Ordnance Survey map of 1880.

Balderton Hall Farm (SJ482239) (Figure 5an.) between Myddle and Yorton is worth mentioning at this juncture, because it is claimed by Dr Cureton that it was the homebase of one of the lines of the Cureton family which has episodically provided emigrants to Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Pennsylvania. A Thomas Cureton (died 1724 at Balderton) took a land grant in Virginia in 1682; Thomas Cureton Jr., his wife Mary Harrison and two sons, emigrated to the same state at an unspecified date in this period and another Thomas (born 1715 at Balderton) followed them (Dr. T. K. Cureton's MS p. 6). Balderton Hall Farm is worth visiting today, for it massively conveys the deep connections of the Cureton's with quarrying. The homefields are surrounded not by hedges, as on most of the farms nearby, but by walls built enduringly of hard-wearing, veined siliceous red sandstone blocks; the walls being 30-40 cm thick and a metre and a half high (Figure 5ap.). The rock is the red variety of Grinshill sandstone and has probably come from the quarries at either Webscott or Myddle within a kilometer to the southwest or west respectively.

It is convenient to record here, somewhat out of time sequence, that an Edward Cureton contracted to build, very successfully it seems, the bridge over the River Perry at Platt Mill, Ruyton of the XI towns, Salop. He designed it in 1787 and built it in 1791 (Blackwall 1985, p. 24); it still stands.

Other Mastermasons. Walter Hancock was a mastermason who was frequently using the Grinshill Freestone (s.s) and whose work has occasioned the highest praise. He built High Ercall Hall (completed 1608) (Figure 5r.) for Sir Francis Newport who had earlier, in writing to the bailiffs of Shrewsbury in 1595, given him the following recommendation with respect to building the Market House in Shrewsbury:

"Whereas I am informed that you intend to buyld a new market house of stone in that towne and so go forward with the work next spring, I pray you let mee commende a Mason of approved Skyll and honestye, one Walter Hancock, unte y^{o} for the doing thereof. ... I have great cause to make tryall of workmen ... and ... can well write unto you. ... that you cannott match the man in these parts (with any of that occupacon) neyther in scyence and judgement of workmanship, nor in playnes and honestye to deal with all ..... I know that if Mr Justic Owen were in the country he would say as much on Hancock's behalf as I have done " (Sir Francis Newport to the bailiffs of Shrewsbury, quoted in Pevsner 1958, p. 30).

From this circumstantial evidence we may suggest that Hancock built the New Market House in Shrewsbury in 1596 (Figure 5h.) and probably Condover Hall (Figure 5g.) for Mr. Justice Owen sometime in the 1590s, the former being built entirely of Grinshill freestone, the latter in part only.

Figure 5an. *Balderton Hall Farm between Myddle and Yorton claimed by Dr Cureton as the homebase of one of the lines of the Cureton family which has episodically provided emigrants to Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Pennsylvania in the 17th century.*

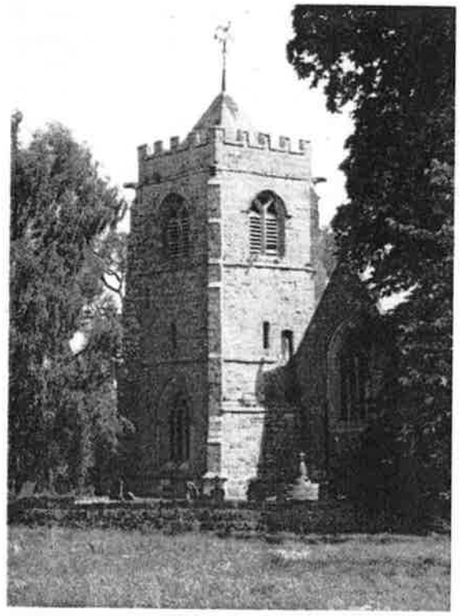


Figure 5ao. *The tower of St Peter's Church, Myddle rebuilt in 1629-1634 by John Dod.*

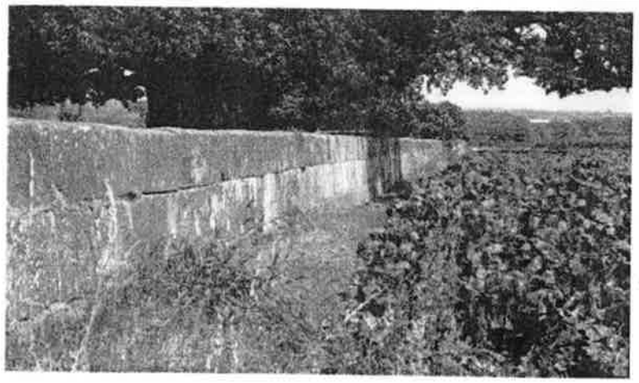


Figure 5ap. *The homefields of Balderton Hall Farm are surrounded by walls 30-40 cm thick and a metre and a half high built of hard-wearing, veined siliceous red sandstone blocks.*

Unusually for a parish register, that at Much Wenlock records equally high praise for Hancock for his skill in the art of masonry:

"in settinge of plottes for buildinges",

for engraving in alabaster and other stone and plaster work (Registers of the Parish of Much Wenlock quoted in Pevsner 1958, p. 30). Curiously, Pevsner quotes Hancock's date of death as 1599, yet he was evidently working on High Ercall Hall which was completed as late as 1608. De Saulles (1986, p. 64) suggests that the building of Shrewsbury School could have been the work of his son, who evidently carried on the craft, and this may apply to High Ercall as well.

Other master masons who are known to have been working at this general time in North Shropshire were John Richardson, who was preparing the window mouldings for Condover Hall (Figure 5g.) at Grinshill in the summer of 1588 (Gaydon 1968, p. 39), and John Richmond a mastermason who was employed during the construction of the Free Grammar School building (see the Frontispiece) in Shrewsbury between 1594 and 1612 (Carr 1983, unpaginated, but p. 3).

5.11. The ordinary workman: the masons, quarrymen, labourers and squatters; vernacular buildings.

So much for the story of the landowners , the quarryowners, the mastermasons and the customers; the well-heeled, the well-travelled and the powerful, but what of the ordinary workman and his wife?

The fact is that there was little work for a mason or quarryman in most places and the quarries around Grinshill were the great exception. The scarcity of masons in Myddle in Gough's time (c.1700) is explained by Hey (1974, p, 144) in terms of a tendency to build in wood and to rely on stone being worked at and brought from Grinshill. All this was despite Gough's 1701 (1875 p. 175) citing of freestone as the first item in his list of natural conveniences that his parish enjoys:

"There is a great plenty of freestone which is very serviceable for building and soe firm that noe violence of weather will decay it, but the longer it continues the harder it is."

Although he was at pains to concede the poorer quality of stone at Harmer Hill and Myddle, occasionally in his account he mentions that the churches, chapels and cottages fell into disrepair and that local masons, though few, were well occupied at times.

John Lloyd of Myddle, described as a pavoir (a journeyman mason who is skilled at setting paving flagstones), was working there in 1581 (Hey 1974, p. 144) and John Dod, a mason, rebuilt Myddle Church tower in 1629-1634 (Figure 5ao.), being paid (poor man!) only 5 pounds for every yard from the base of the tower to the top of the battlements (Gough 1981, p.33-4). He may be related to the John Dodd of Hadnall recorded in 1672 (Watkins-Pitchford, 1949, p.8). John Dod's mason's marks can still be seen on Myddle Church tower. Thomas ap Reece, Michael Wright and his apprentice Adam Dale, the latter sharing a cottage with Will. Vaughan a weaver, were also kept in work episodically (Gough 1981, p. 132-3, p.233). Watkins-Pitchford (1949, p.8) records an Adam Dale of Yorton, in 1672, presumably the same man. Subsequently, John Dod went to live in Clive and very likely worked in the quarries there. It was no doubt more normal for masons from Grinshill and Clive to be brought across to Myddle when needed, unless of course there was a very great demand for building stone in the local area when the Myddle quarries might sustain their own masons' lodge.

What of the quarrymen and labourers upon whom the masons must have depended? As if to prove the point that Grinshill would be the natural focus of work, and would normally provide a livelihood for both masons and quarrymen, it is recorded that as late as the 1920s Joe Chettoe and Joe "Capsey" Walford of Myddle, both skilled quarrymen, walked to work at Grinshill Quarries on a daily basis (see the wages ledger for the Grinshill Stone Quarries (1923) Ltd.) (see a previous booklet: Thompson 2004, p. 17).

Beginning in the 16th century, squatters had clustered on the edge of the commons or waste lands and had often built their miserable dwellings of less durable local materials; later they encased them in stone or brick. This practice had the tacit agreement of the Lords of the Manor who often accepted a low rent of 6d or 1 shilling per year because they needed cheap labour for profitable extractive industries like

quarrying or mining. No documentary evidence is known to the author, but it is suggested that several of the cottages which surround the Cliffe (Clive Hill), Grinshill, originated in this way. Indeed a pair of houses cut into the rock face at Cronk Hill, which appear on the Inclosure award of 1783, might relate to these events, and others appearing on the same map are likely candidates, for example those four on the low road between Cronk Hill-Grinshill and Clive and the six on the upper road to the north of the quarries. At Cliff Cottages, near Cronkhill, in addition, there are the remains of two very small buildings, one a veritable rockshelter bearing a mason's date 1790, which may have originated as squatters' abodes in the period in question. Similar instances of squatting were reported in the margins of the commons around Harmer Moss and Myddle Hill in the 19th century (Hey 1874, p. 17).

There were no doubt other solid vernacular buildings built of red and yellow freestone of lesser quality; the massive red sandstone barn and several cottages in the centre of Grinshill, and the former blacksmith's shop at Alderton, all undated, come to mind. Occasionally one can speculate on the distant age of a building; for example, when in 1569 the bailiffs of Shrewsbury held the constables of Grinshill to account concerning the number and nature of the inns and alehouses in the village. They reported only one (of impeccable character of course!). This is likely to have been the Barley Corn and Oak, sited, until at least 1869, 50 m to the southeast of the Elephant and Castle (now the Inn at Grinshill). Its foundations are built of Grinshill Sandstone.

5.12. The origins of the quarry people; 1540-1840.

A reasonable hypothesis suggests that many of the quarry people in the Middle Ages and in this period were impoverished Welsh immigrants who brought their skills and labour into England and attempted to make a living for themselves and their families.

Indeed Hey (in Gough 1981, p. 23) suggests that:

"Shropshire was able to absorb these immigrants without undue stress... Families such as the Davies and the Beddows raised Gough's ire, and the poor rates were inevitably much higher in 1701 than they had been in his father's time ... but the squatters did not create the tension that was produced by the numerous poor of the crowded villages of central and eastern England ... we cannot tell where most of them came from but about a quarter came from Wales."

The existence of parish registers for Clive and Grinshill for this period from 1592 to 1849 allows us to test these ideas in a crude way with respect to both the incidence of "welshness" of names both in the marriage registers and the burials lists. The results of these analyses for 25-year periods are given below, with the "welshness" of names being expressed as a percentage of all the names in the list for each period for comparative purposes. The definition of "welshness" is necessarily rather personal, but it is at least applied consistently across the whole of the time period in question

Table 5.3. Percentage of Welsh Names in Parish Register Grinshill 1592-1812.

	1592-1599	1600-1624	1625-1649	1650-1674	1675-1699	1700-1724	1725-1749	1750-1774	1775-1799	1800-1812
Marriage Register	0	7	25	100	100	29	35	7	41	40
Burial Register	11	5	17	16	15	7	17	27	21	22

The burials list obviously provides a better guide than the marriage register. These figures suggest that Gough's estimate is approximately right, at least for the later years.

This matter might be taken up more quantitatively for later years when census data becomes available. By inference it is likely that between a quarter and a third of the working men were Welsh immigrants desperate for work, and that many began their working careers as squatters.

5.13. Conclusions

The dissolution of the monasteries by 1539 redistributed the tithes to wealthy landlords. It led to able people taking up new forms of activity and employment. Many of the latter were involved in the construction of a range of buildings using, to varying degrees and in more or less distinctive fashions, timber, dimension stone and eventually brick. Three periods are recognisable - of building in timber and stone; in stone alone and in brick with dressings of stone.

Increased economic activity and wealth led to the construction and renovation of churches, manor houses, and the erection of public buildings and mansions in both the countryside (for prosperous landowners) and in the towns (for wealthy merchants). Hence there was a pressure to improve all methods of transportation and to create and maintain better roads and bridges.

Meanwhile the county town was increasingly afflicted by outbreaks of plague and the governors of Shrewsbury Free Grammar School deemed it advisable to establish a schoolhouse in the country, now the Stone Grange in Grinshill village, away from such pestilence. In times of non-use by the school, this building was rented out e.g. to Richard Cureton and his quarrying family amongst many others.

All these developments increased the need for durable, preferably local, construction materials and quite quickly a pecking order emerged with respect to the quality of the materials which were available. The Grinshill Sandstone from the Grinshill-Clive area slowly but surely continued to show its superiority over its competitors. Landowners under whose properties lay good-quality dimension stones were keen to allow developments and to offer leases for new and expanded quarries. William Price of Prees and Richard Berry are the first leasees of which we are aware based on documentary evidence. They worked extensively on Hawkstone Hill in the early 1700s.

Certain families and clans - notably those who were being persecuted for their religious beliefs like the Curetons - seized upon the opportunity to diversify their economic activities and to colonise wide areas of the countryside as quarry owners or leasees. The most skilled masons like the Hancocks began to make their mark across the whole width of the Welsh Borderlands and to take on the roles of persons who would later be called architects. Meanwhile, for considerable numbers of local people, the setting up and expansion of the quarrying network provided much-needed work: as apprentice masons; skilled or unskilled quarrymen; quarry labourers and all at slightly higher wages than those bestowed on the agricultural labourers on local farms. To the ranks of these quarryworkers were added the impoverished metal miners and their families who were trekking eastwards out of the Welsh mountains.