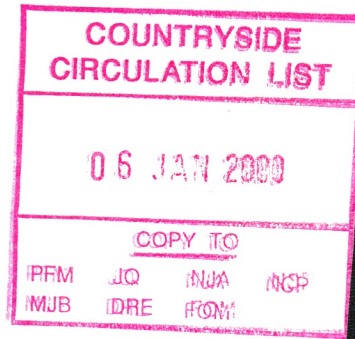


Staffordshire Area

Martin Reay

Mr Sidhu
Green hall
Lich field Rd
Stafford



5/1/00

Dear Sir,

Enclosed is evidence taken from a modern book about the river Sow. It mentions 2 paths which I have claimed.

4/JS/L5612 &

ADDING FOOTPATH FROM STATION RD, SHALLOWFORD TO HIGHWAY LEADING TO CHEBSEY.

This is a ^{very} short length of path leading past an old burial ground - GRID REF 874292 at Shallowford. Page 30 of book. The book mentions the ^{claimed} path as part of a ghost story.

Yours Sincerely



The cottage became a museum of its famous owner in 1924. It was still thatched in those days, but the property had to be roofed with tiles in 1939. Visitors to Shallowford who remember steam trains will appreciate why the thatch had suffered so often due to the proximity of the railway line and its fiery engines.

Three centuries ago this rural community was the scene of religious persecution. Yeoman families of Whitgreave, Chebsey and Shallowford were among the first converts in the county in 1654 to The Society of Friends, or Quakers as they are better known. Meetings of the Society were held in Eccleshall, Shallowford and Chebsey until over 180 members were arrested in Staffordshire in 1660. Among those gaoled were John Till of Whitgreave and another local man, Edward Scotson. They were neighbours of the Woolrich family, who were also staunch members. This family farmed the land adjoining Izaak Walton's cottage and gave a piece of their acreage for a Quaker burial ground. This can still be traced in a field beside the Shallowford to Chebsey lane.

Some years ago I heard an unusual story about Shallowford. A married couple were taking an afternoon stroll along the road from Norton Bridge to Shallowford when they saw another person ahead of them. What caught their attention was the appearance of the man, who was dressed in the sombre clothes of a 17th century Quaker. He turned off the road before the junction with the lane to Chebsey and walked across the field beside it. The couple continued on towards Shallowford but suddenly realised as they reached the other lane that there was no break in the hedge at the point where the mysterious figure had left the road to enter the field. They were baffled by the experience. Later enquiries produced a 19th century map of the area. This showed that there had indeed once been a path across the field. It led from a gate in the now solid hedge where the man had turned, and crossed to the Quakers' burial ground!

Downstream from Shallowford is Worston Mill, which now houses a restaurant. Built in 1814 on a site which mills had occupied since 1279, it dealt with several different products during its working life. Initially this last mill was used to chop and grind wood, then from 1932 to 1970 it was a cornmill. The most unusual feature, however, was the silk mill which operated in the 19th century until, like Izaak Walton's cottage, it fell victim to the nearby railway. In this case the problem was not the fire hazard but the vibrations from the trains which snapped the fine silken threads as they were being produced.

Anyone travelling to the mill until the 1920's would have encountered the Sow direct for the river had to be crossed by a ford.

A Deserted Medieval Village

Between Bridgeford and Stafford the river winds and loops in a series of tight turns. It is lost from view from the main road as it twists through low-lying meadows but the traveller should spot the remnants of a ruined stone building in a field beside the road.

This is all that remains of the ancient settlement of Creswell, for today it is a good example of a deserted medieval village. The Oxford Dictionary of

Place Names interprets Creswell as "the stream where watercress grew". The "Cressvale" of the Domesday Book had a mill by the river. At that time the land was held by William Pantulf. It then passed to the de Cresswell family who held it until the 14th century, when it was seized by Edward III after a rebellion. It acquired its next owner on 1st November 1334 when the king granted to Thomas de Swynnerton the lands "late of Henry de Cresswell and Thomas his son who are outlawed for felony".

The ruined stone building is the chapel which was built about 1200 but destroyed in the 16th century. The settlement had little future left and, in 1679, Walter Chetwynd's "History of Pirehill Hundred" stated "Creswall was formerly a village of some note, though now there is nothing of it but ye Manor House". This is not quite true as the trained eye of the archaeologist can still detect in the fields the platforms where the houses and other timber buildings of the medieval village once stood.

Creswell's ruined chapel drew the attention of the North Staffordshire Field Club in 1883. The report of their visit stated that "Mr. Whitby (Lord of the Manor) had caused excavation to be made which laid bare the outline of the building in its entirety". The work of uncovering the stonework also unearthed a skeleton which "those in the party who were learned in Archaeology" thought might be the remains of the founder of the church. Although only fragments of the North wall, with two Early English lancet windows, and the East wall of the chancel survive, it is possible for the size of the building to be estimated at 18 feet wide, with the chancel 20 feet long and the nave 30 feet. It is interesting to note that Mr. Whitby was the host for the Field Club on that day in 1883. The Staffordshire Chronicle reported that, on Wednesday, 4th December 1811, Captain Whitby of Creswell Hall presented to the Borough of Stafford the colours of the ship "Le Caronne", which he had captured in a naval action against French and Italian ships in the Adriatic.

For generations of Stafford children a public footpath has lead past the chapel ruins to Shaky Bridges, a cherished play area beside (and in) the Sow. The path continues on after crossing the river and heads towards the village of Seighford. Its name describes its location, for Seohtre was the Anglo-Saxon name for a brook, and the ford element is still there on the track from Creswell. The village stands beyond the ford, dominated by its church of St. Chad. Much of the church building is the original Norman or Medieval work of about 1300, although the tower and south wall had to be rebuilt when the Norman tower collapsed sometime between 1600 and 1610. The contrast between 17th century construction of local red brick and the earlier building's sandstone is evident. The dedication to St. Chad indicates that a Saxon place of worship had stood there before the Norman Conquest. The Bishop of Lichfield still held the living at the time of the Domesday Book.

It is to be hoped that this village does not suffer a repetition of a freak storm which it once endured. The Staffordshire Chronicle had "an authentic account of a hailstorm, when fell a hailstone of 11 inches in circumference, that was taken up at Seighford, after the dreadful tempest that happened there, July 3, 1719. The day before the hailstorm the air was dark and cloudy,



Two walls of its chapel are lonely evidence of the deserted medieval village of Cresswell



Now only these cows drinking in the river inhabit the village. The trees in the background are possibly on the site of the Domesday watermill