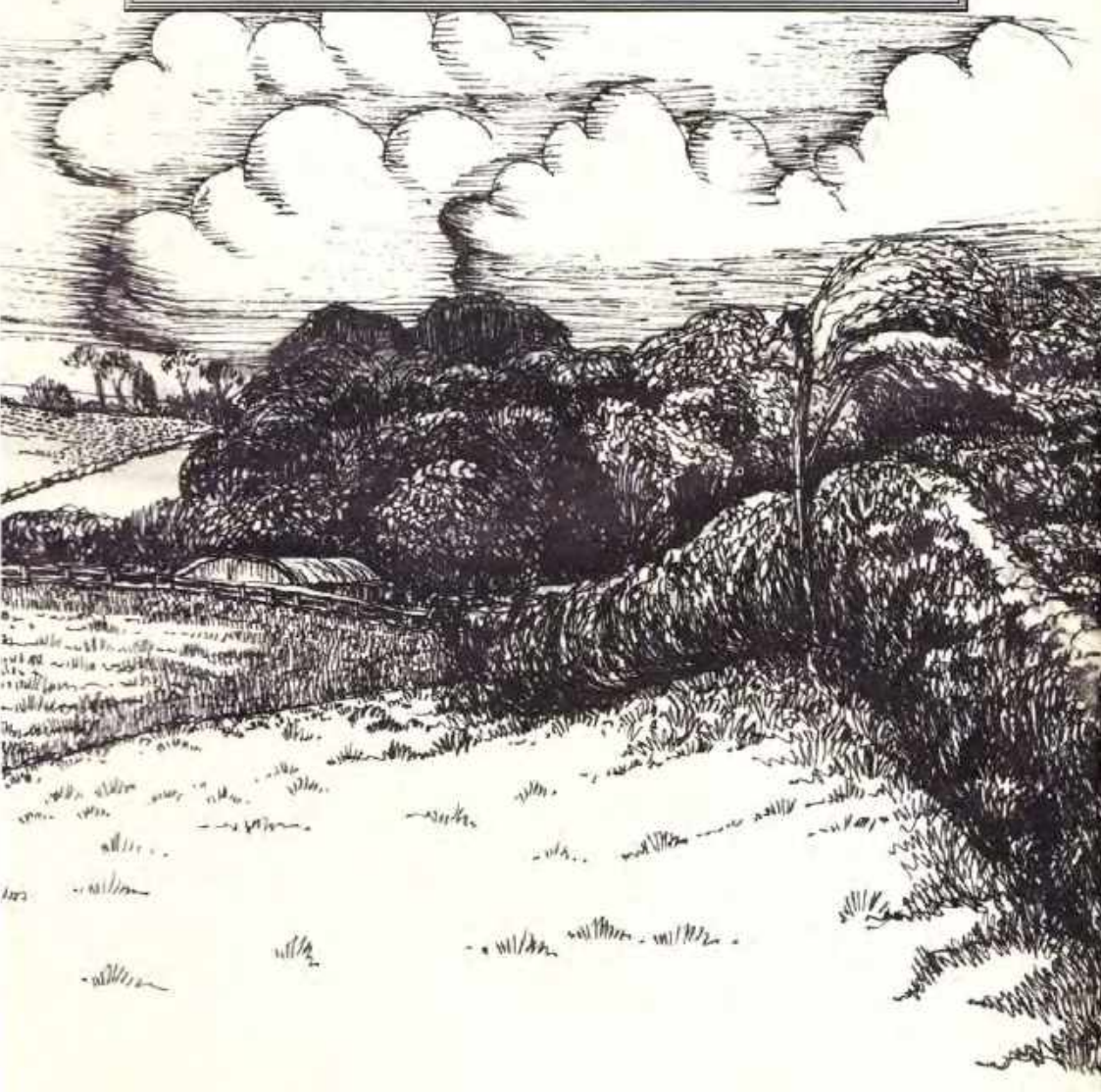


THE STORY OF KELSALL

by

Elsbeth Thomas



Mrs E J C Thomas

June 16 1908 - March 25 1988

On a wall in Lincoln Cathedral a simple tablet says "Praise God for Harry Viscount Crookshank". So may we remember Elspeth Thomas, with deep gratitude for all her endeavours and achievements since she came to Kelsall in 1945.

Her interests and influence have been manifold. She was involved with Guides, Brownies and Rangers and, with her husband Terence, was responsible for the provision of the Scout Hut.

Her training and experience as a probation officer heightened her concern for the community and she worked as a volunteer in a Family Practitioner Clinic and as a Marriage Guidance Counsellor. She was a longstanding member of the WI, a School Governor and a regular communicant at St. Philip's. Many durable friendships began when young children attended the playgroup she instituted at her house, 'Harewood'.

Her abiding concern was with the environment and particularly with aspects of village development and conservation. She valued the work of the Cheshire Conservation Trust and had been the secretary of the Mid-Cheshire Footpath Association. In Kelsall she was a founder member and prime mover in the establishment of KADRAS, and the Society was especially dear to her heart. Many of the Society's activities came at her instigation and from her enthusiasm: the provision of a village playground; constant vigilance over the village footpaths; bulb and tree planting; three Village Exhibitions in the Primary School and the promoting of an annual Horticultural Exhibition.

She was the joint author of the booklet "Kelsall Village Walks". She initiated a project to rehabilitate the derelict railway station at Dclamere, which won first prize in the annual regional Civic Trust competition.

For many years she was editor of KADRAS NEWS and her editorials often served to focus attention on village topics and needs - not least her constant advocacy for the building of a Community Centre. She was keenly interested in local history and was engaged in much research for her village history. In this context she was involved in the identification and clearing of the ancient mediaeval road known as the Hollow Way, which is now listed in the Chester District Rural Plan. In all these activities she chivvied and encouraged and made her points forcefully and courteously in debate. One of her great strengths was her ability to identify other people with talents and cajole them into community service. But always she led from the front - as in clearing the Hollow Way or in marshalling the members of the KADRAS Committee to remove the accumulation of rubbish under the footbridge.

The award, in 1987, of the British Empire Medal therefore came as a fitting recognition of Elspeth's service to the community for over forty years, and brought great joy to Elspeth and her family and friends.

Cover illustration
View towards Kelsall
from The Winsford Road

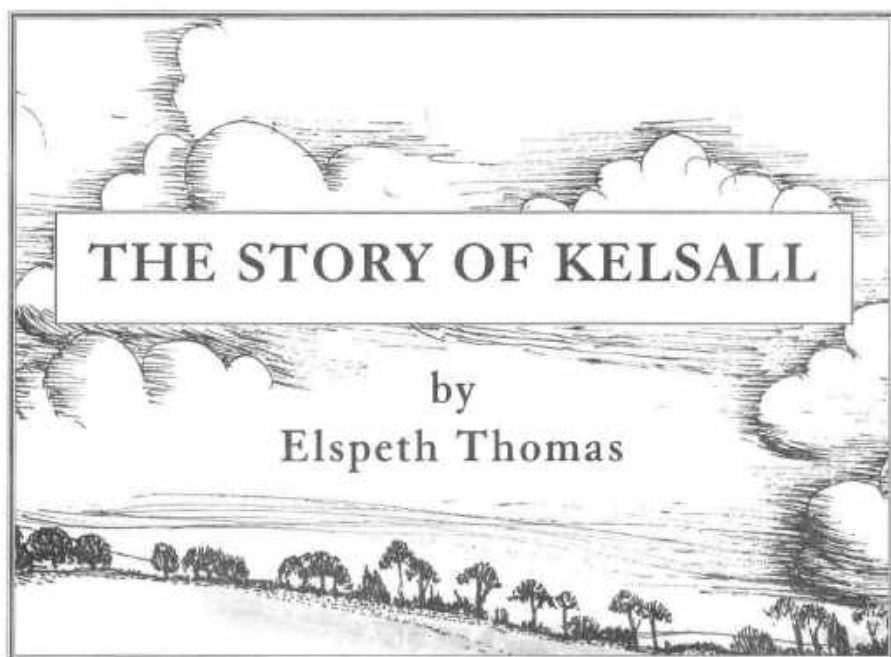
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MASONS DESIGN & PRINT, CHESTER

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by

Elspeith Thomas



with illustrations by Anne Saul



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Elsbeth died before her draft was completed and we do not have a list of all the people who helped her with information or a bibliography of sources. Our thanks are due to all those helpers unknown to us.

Thanks are also due to the following: John and Heather Leather, Ray Evans and Anne Saul for typing, editing and preparing the text for publication; Dr Graeme White, Jackie Bland and Chris Moore for reading the text and offering helpful advice and comments; Graham Haspey for liaising with the printers.

Our thanks also to the Chester and Cheshire Record Offices for their help. The 1838 Tithe Map of Kelsall (EDT 221/2), is deposited in the Cheshire Record Office and is reproduced with the permission of Cheshire County Council and the owner/depositor to whom copyright is reserved.



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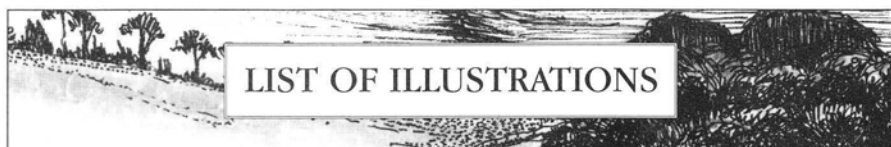
The late Elspeth Thomas was admired and respected for her efforts in either founding or supporting all amenities for the village of Kelsall. Elspeth was also keenly interested in the locality, putting many hours into researching and drafting a book on the history of Kelsall. It is a testimony to Elspeth that the book was drafted during illness towards the end of her life. Further work has brought the book to publication, keeping as closely as possible to the original text - it is still Elspeth's book! Additional comments in the book will be found in italics whilst with alternative spellings such as Priors Hayes, Prior's Hays or Prior's Heys, one spelling has been adopted for the sake of consistency. References and dates have been verified wherever possible. These matters frequently defy tidy resolution - long may that be the case for our interest, debate and enjoyment.

The book spans many years. I am reminded of a fascinating talk at a Kadrass meeting some time ago which provided insight into the lives of generations past, their trades, their houses, their farms and lanes. We may consider ourselves as owners, only ever seeing our surroundings as they are now. Really we are tenants, custodians for our lifetime, and this book sets this thought in the context of the history of our village

I do hope you enjoy reading the book and then go out and see your local heritage in a new light.

Geoff Lannin

Chairman of Kelsall and District Rural Amenities Society



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(all drawn in 1987)

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INTRODUCTION

Kelsall hides its historical face under a mask of anonymity. It lacks those picturesque features expected of an English village. It has no physical core, no Manor House, no mediaeval parish church sheltering a group of ancient stone cottages, no tree-shaded cricket field. Once it possessed a village cross but that has long since vanished, together with the neighbouring pinfold. Although the sandstone ridge is rich in springs there is no pleasant stream to enjoy. The brooks have been culverted and the wells capped to accommodate modern requirements for clean water. Even the remaining listed section of the mediaeval Hollow Way has been demoted to a field and highway drain. Ormerod, the Cheshire historian, writing in 1819, dismissed the village as "a mere collection of huts" but relented in his subsequent comment that "in point of situation, it is one of the most picturesque in the county" and continued "as the road ascends to the forest, it is overshadowed with fine elms among which the cottages are scattered with considerable beauty." And it is to its peculiar situation that Kelsall owes its existence.

The obstacles to early settlement were considerable. The adventurer was confronted by the physical presence of the wilderness, the great stretch of woodland and waste, known in Norman times as the Forest of Mara and Mondrem and later as Delamere. Here were the hunting grounds of the Earls of Chester, exclusive and preserved for their recreation and therefore a barrier to encroachment. Gradually, over centuries, on the forest fringes huge commons spread to north and south, acting as efficient impediments to colonizing. The soil too was sandy and infertile. To the south, on the plain, lay the centre of the large parish, the compact village of Tarvin. It was held by the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from pre-Domesday until the creation of the diocese of Chester by Henry VIII. The Bishop ruled over an enormous diocese which was conterminous with the old Saxon kingdom of Mercia. Kelsall was the most remote of the satellite townships in the parish.

There was one vital factor which provided the key to the gradual settlement of man on Kelsall hill. It was the gap in the sandstone ridge, clearly viewed from the plain below as a cleft in the rock, offering passage to man and beast. Therefore the track, later the road, through the split in the rock will be my first consideration of the origins of Kelsall. Linked with it must come an account of the settlement itself as it emerged from the shadows of the forest. To follow; the people, their manner of life, their role as tenants, small farmers and crofters. The influence of church and chapel, local administration and schooling will be considered. In conclusion, I hope to show the changes which have, in modern times, gradually altered the character of Kelsall.

Until 1812, the story of Delamere is the story of the forest, which will be considered later in some detail. As part of the conditions of the Parliamentary Enclosure Award, the parish of Delamere was created and the parish church founded after the British victory at Waterloo in 1815.

Willington's origins are very different from both Kelsall and Delamere, so they will be studied separately.



The Hollow Way

Chapter 1

FRONTIER COUNTRY

*"I've served in Britain forty years, from Vectis to the Wall,
I have none other home than this, nor any life at all,
Last night I did not understand, but, now the hour draws near
That calls me to my native land, I feel that land is here."*

The Roman Centurion's Song. Rudyard Kipling.

The nature of the terrain dictated the direction of the traveller proceeding either northwards to the Northwiches salt pans, or westwards to the fortress of Chester and the sea. Is it fanciful to suggest that this track through the cleft was already in use during the Iron Age? A large fort was built during this period on Eddisbury Hill, commanding the way to the west, to the north and to the east. To the south-west a second much smaller fort stood on Kelsborrow Hill, guarding the western approaches.

In 49AD the Romans marched through the gap, laying down a road pattern which was to survive up to the present day. Early this century, Professor Newstead found convincing proof of its course through the forest, below Pale Heights and Hanging Stone Hill to continue westwards downhill to the plain and on to ford the marshes and the River Gowy at the Stane Ford. Mr. Edward Kirk, writing for the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society on the subject of the route of Watling Street in the neighbourhood of the ridge, pointed out that "at Nettleford Wood, traces are most remarkable for here we find the excavation through the undisturbed forest in an astonishing state of perfection." In 1982 this comment was confirmed by a tiny group of volunteers directed by a local amateur archaeologist, Mr. E. Waddilove. On the western edge of Nettleford Wood a section of the Roman road was uncovered and a clearly defined junction revealed. 19th century O.S. maps illustrate clearly this section. Archaeological finds at Oakmere, Kelsall and Ashton suggest a wider Roman presence than was generally recognized. An unguent jar was found close to Oakmere, Roman artefacts were unearthed under the Methodist chapel in Kelsall and a kiln and pottery were discovered in Ashton.

The route of the Roman road through Kelsall has never been conclusively defined, but several theories have been advanced. The mediaeval road, known as the Hollow Way, has always been referred to in local folk-lore as the Roman road. The early O.S. maps also described this rough track as Watling Street. It is conjectured that it may have progressed through the

woodland to the old smithy and from there straight along the Old Coach Road. The presence of old cottages grouped by the smithy and further along the northern side of Brooms Lane and at the junction of Dewsbury Lane (now Dutton's Lane) with Grub Lane is evidence of a road, even if it was little better than a cart track. If the Romans laid the foundations of their military road along these lines they laid them well enough to last over centuries.

Further evidence of the Roman presence can be found in the name Street by which an old cottage on the southern bank of the Way is known and two farmhouses on the opposite side of the nearby A54. The Tithe map of 1838 illustrates the continuity of tradition naming two fields as 'Street', numbers 352 and 356. According to Ivan Margary in his book on Roman Roads, (page 300) "Just before reaching Kelsall the line recrosses the road and a hedgerow marks it up the north side of the village. Here the older main road (the Old Coach Road), now a quiet street, probably marks the course to a point near the old smithy at its eastern end."

Once the Romans had departed for ever, about 400AD, their engineering skills went with them. For centuries, the military road served as the only means of communication through the forest and wastes to the plain and northwards to the Wyche. As time went on it disintegrated through lack of skills, labour and financial inducement for maintenance. As most of its length through the eastern territory of Tarvin parish lay within the boundary of Mara and Mondrem, it was of small concern to the administration of the Forest. Teams of oxen, and occasionally horses, dragged stone from Eddisbury Quarry to build Vale Royal Abbey and Beeston Castle. Timber was also required for construction purposes. The only other commercial traffic was the conveyance of Northwich salt, loaded in chunks into panniers and slung from the harness of the sure-footed ponies. They took their precious commodity to the markets in Chester and in the neighbourhood, for salt played a major role in the domestic economy as it was the only means of preserving food against the lean months of winter. Mounted foresters and a few swineherds used the forest paths. There was little incentive and no means to improve the ancient track.

Kelsall is fortunate in still possessing a visible section of the mediaeval road, known locally first as Watling Street and more recently as the Hollow Way. Its identity can be verified by consulting the 1735 Egerton Estate Map where it is described as Back Hollow Lane and the 1838 Tithe Map where it is shown quite clearly. Documentary evidence also exists. The Court Baron held by the Cross in 1604 spoke of the lack of maintenance on the part of tenants to control "the water which runs down the Hollow Land" and "that they should maintain the way, bringing the water into its wonted course". The 1874 O.S. map marked its whole length as Watling Street. The Trustees for the 3rd District of the Chester to Tarvin turnpike, when

they met on June 2nd 1775 at the Inner Pentice in Chester, ordered the Surveyor "to sell the Old Road called Kelsall Hollows in Kelsall to the best bidder and that publick notice be given in Tarvin Churchyard for that purpose". Shortly afterwards a croft and cottage sited on the old road was purchased from one Samuel Briscoe. A considerable section of the Hollow Way is still in existence but is in private ownership. The access is by right of way, on the sharp bend in Hollands Lane, but only the first hundred yards is open to the public as the footpath turns over a stile into the adjoining field. The Hollow Way, now listed on the village plan, has suffered from neglect, being used variously as a rubbish dump for intractable refuse such as a discarded lorry, scaffolding material, household goods and sewage. The powers that be then took the main drain carrying the sewer right across the entrance and this in turn has been pierced in order to allow field and road water to pour down it. A small dedicated band of volunteers had already cleared the rubbish and the jungle, but all to no purpose - as yet!

Chapter 2

THE BRONZE HIGHWAY

*"Not half a mile distant we see Hockenbull a comely bouse
on one side of which lyes Hockenbull Plot (Platt) on our
great London roadway to Chester."*

David King, 1656.

Bridging the Gowy

The River Gowy was, and still is, the western boundary of the Parish of Tarvin and until the end of the 19th century Kelsall lay just within its northern boundary. Travellers down the sandstone ridge found that when they reached Tarvin their progress to Chester was barred by the river and its extensive marshes. They could cross by the ford called the Stane Ford, as the Romans had done before them, but as the main road from Chester to London also crossed the river close to Tarvin it was of prime importance to have a well-built bridge to take the traffic over with safety. Maintenance became a local concern. From the Black Prince's Register we learn that he awarded the authorities twenty shillings to carry out repairs (Black Prince's Register III p.115, 1353).

By the mid 16th century the roadway network was in such a deplorable state that Parliament imposed a statutory obligation upon all parishes to maintain their roads, although some bridges remained a county responsibility. Problems soon followed. The Justices of the Peace, sitting in Quarter Sessions in 1608, ordered that "no bridge or bridges in the County shall be builded or repaired at the charge of the whole County, before they have received a due examination whether the bridge or bridges ought of right to be builded or repaired by any hundred, parish, town, private person". But this did not deter the inhabitants of Hockenhull, six years later, from petitioning Quarter Sessions "showeth unto your good worships that, whereas there ys a place and Brydge called Hockenhull Platte whiche ys soare decayed and soe farre out of order — that they — are not able of themselves to repaire and amende the same without the ayde and assistance of the Countreye and hit beinge the King's Majesties highwaye and a greate travellinge waye towards Chester from London and the Nampthewyche and lykewise from Yorksheshyere and Lanchishyere towards the Houlte, Wrischam and Wales — therefore wee crave beseeke your worships that your favour maye be extended towards your poore petitioners — to grant a commission that a Collection may be and gathered

in this Countie of Chester towards the Building, repairing and amending of the said Bridge and highways, that all Travellers and passengers maye safelye passe that waye — without danger (CRO Q.S.Files,Q JF 42/4/3). This has a familiar sound to 20th century ears!

One hundred years later (1708) one Abraham Darlington of Willington signed an agreement before two JPs "to repair battlements and other repairs at Tarvin Bridge. He agreed also to pave 100 yards in length and 4 yards in breadth at the Tarvin end of the bridge and to raise it all to the height of the new pave" (CRO Q.4.R./1). There were further complaints about the upkeep of the bridge in the first half of the 18th century but the turnpiking of the main London road finally brought this chapter in the history of the Tarvin bridge to a close. In 1769 the present A51 route through Tarvin was turnpiked, which meant that the old road could eventually be abandoned. (I owe the information on the 1608 petition and the turnpiking to Mr. Paul Brook).

The River Gowy used to be a more powerful stream, running wider and deeper than today as the water table has dropped and engineers have reduced it to a smooth-flowing ditch. Well within living memory it used to flood every winter. There was a greater wealth of wild life, in particular otters and their food, fish. At the Stane Ford, a bridge was thrown across, possibly at the beginning of the 16th century. There is reference to such a bridge in 1508 when it was included in the Inquisition post mortem on the property of John Done, the Master Forester (CRO PM2/10). In 1727 £13 8s 10d was awarded at the Quarter Sessions "for the repair and making a new one 32 yards in length at the west end, Robert Aldersey JP to be the Treasurer". The repairs did not last long. The bridge was again in a poor state and on the point of collapse when Emmanuel Bowen, drawing his map of the County, omitted this bridge over the Gowy but inserted the Pack Horse Bridge. Shortly afterwards it had to be rebuilt with the help of two stone masons from Kelsall, one of them William from the well known Briscoe family.

The Turnpike

"If you talk to ostlers or landlords or post boys, or indeed to almost anybody else they mean by a Road a Turnpike Road." Cobbetts' Rural Rides.

It was the introduction of the turnpike which stimulated the improved maintenance of bridges. In the stable political conditions of the early 18th century, the expansion of trade and commerce, fairs and markets all brought increasing prosperity to the countryside. Now, close to the Hollow Way, a close-knit community was putting down roots in Kelsall, but the road was still little better than a cart track. Only the Trustees of the Chester 3rd District were able to bring the necessary finance and skills to

improve the surface and to engineer an alternative route up to the Guide Post at the top of Kelsall Hill. It became in effect the first Kelsall bypass!

The Trustees of the 3rd District of Chester Turnpike were all drawn from local notables, among them two men from Kelsall, John Kelsall and John Finchett, along with Rev. Thomas Dickinson from Tarvin. They had to fulfill the necessary property qualification. Their confabulations were conducted invariably at the Inner Pentice in early days, and latterly at the Royal Exchange, Chester. On June 9th, 1769 the following minute was passed "The Road from Chester to the Finger Post upon Kelsall Hill will be most effectively and durably repaired by repairing and widening the causeway, where a causeway now is and making a new one where there is none"!

To the inhabitants of Kelsall, small crofters, for the most part unable to sign their names, the Trustees must have seemed remote from their conditions of life. In contrast to Tarvin, there was no resident manorial landowner able to secure improvements in road conditions to the forest. The Turnpike minutes illustrate the peculiar isolation of Kelsall from the mainstream of parochial life. This centred on the parish church of St. Andrew, Tarvin, and the presence of local JPs. Attention had to be focused on Tarvin because of its strategic position on the ancient London road, and its proximity to both the Hockenhull Platt bridge and the later bridge built over the Stane Ford. However, although progress was piecemeal and slow in the Trustees' efforts to improve and turnpike the road up over the ridge eastwards to the forest, an early minute was passed in September 1769, the year of the passing of the Act of Parliament required before the Trustees could proceed. This minute is interesting because it demonstrates the route and condition of the old road, now the Old Coach Road. "Samuel Leek agrees to undertake the repair of the road in Kelsall from the Guide Post upon the Forest near Kelsall Hill for the length of 94 roods towards the house of James Earl by the course of the present cart road — Samuel Leek to find picks — the road to be formed 10 yards in Breadth and to be covered with the best Durr or Rock stone that can conveniently be got". "&1 3s 6d per rood to be paid whenever it is done, and he is likewise to be provided with shovels for gravel, Two Hammers and three crows(bars) for getting stones. Also he is to have the benefit of 3 days Statute Duty from the Inhabitants of Kelsall."

The successful application of the "Statute for mending of the Highways" which was passed in 1555 depended entirely on the goodwill of neighbours and the ability of whichever local farmer was Constable at the time. There is a great deal of evidence, up and down the country, to show that the law was a complete failure as it was exceedingly unpopular and therefore enforcement was almost impossible. The mention of James Earl's property gives a clear indication of how the old mediaeval road proceeded. Its route at this time advanced westwards to what is now known as Brooms

Lane (Broom was a cobbler who lived at a much later date in one of the two stone cottages which still stand there). It continued round a sharp left hand bend which skirted the corner of Earl's field. These cottages were marked on the 1838 Tithe map as were three tenements on the southern side of Grub Lane, an important downhill link with Back Hollow Road. It should be mentioned here that the name 'Grub Lane' has no connection with natural history but may be derived from the German 'graben' to dig out! Driving your horse and cart northwards to the forest, there lay a tract of open land called Kelsall Green, marked on the 1627 Survey map of Delamere forest and included in the Indenture of the solitary cottage built by a tenant of John Arden in the early 19th century. It is interesting to note that on Earl's croft there was a large pond and a horse trough nearby which was in constant use by the township horses and cattle.

For many years the Trustees were content with turnpiking the road which continued from The Globe Inn in the vicinity of the smithy to climb again uphill to link with the old road by Chapel Bank and Grub Lane. Meanwhile full attention was given to sealing off Flat Lane and Hollands Lane by placing long bars across the road exits which stopped the passage of the traveller, the farmer and his animals. This was where a graduated toll was exacted. Eventually it was realised that the existing route was unsatisfactory. On October 31st 1828 Mr. Fletcher, the current Surveyor, was invited in the following terms by the Trustees "To examine the several lines of road proposed for avoiding the steep ascent at Kelsall Hill, and it appearing that no deviation can be adopted which will effectively answer the object and justify the expenditure of the Trust Funds" "but by pursuing the line originally suggested and approved of at a former meeting, it IS ORDERED that powers to be taken in the proposed hill for affecting that improvement (which the Surveyor had already proposed) and that the Clerk was to apprise Mr. Rushton, the owner of the land through which such deviation is proposed, attention to be given to his convenience by bringing the water if possible into his upper lands ... distance to be extended so as to include the end of the Willington Lane (now called Quarry Lane and on some maps referred to as Dogmoor Well Lane). Consent for this expensive enterprise had first to be obtained from the Northwich Turnpike Trustees, as their road responsibility ended in the centre of the gap marked by the present Toll Bar Cottage (date uncertain, possibly 1830). An important point which needs reiterating and which has affected Kelsall throughout its history for good or ill, is that there was no resident landowner owning wide acres and therefore with a valuable stake in the process of efficient road engineering in Kelsall. One of the reasons for this was of course the barrier of Delamere (Mara and Mondrem) Forest. The great Parliamentary Enclosure Acts of 1812, 1816 and 1819, causing the subsequent release of thousands of acres to be allotted to local small farmers, must have influenced the Turnpike Trustees in their decision to embark on the construction of Chester New Road.



Little Switzerland

Chapter 3

THE ROADSIDE INN

"The packman of yore kept two or three horses and these he loaded with his merchandise, to the value often of several thousand pounds, and thus he perambulated the country"

The Floshend Inn, from Wilson's Tales of the Border

The mediaeval trader, travelling in charge of a train of pack ponies transporting salt, was certainly not so affluent as suggested by the above quotation. He was anxious to arrive at his destination, Chester, with animals and cargo intact. Once the great forest of Mara had been traversed as quickly as possible, his stopping place would most likely have been at the Salters' Brook, the traditional refreshment place for men of his occupation. All travellers emerging from the hazards of the wilderness of forest and waste, on reaching the top of the ridge, must have rejoiced to see before them the western panorama of plain and distant mountain range and to observe, quite near at hand, smoke curling up through a clump of oaks, promising refreshment and rest for themselves and their beasts. And so it was that the trade of innkeeping became an important part of Kelsall's economy.

There was considerable difference in the standard of service between the ale house or inn and the wayside beer house, usually a small cottage or hut of dubious reputation. Such may have been The Harp and Thistle, its sign still rudely carved on its old stone wall beside the Hollow Way and still visible close to the township pump in Dog Lane (alias Frodsham St.). Street Cottage, conveniently placed at the junction of the Hollow Way with Watling Street, was another unsavoury beer house. There was The Old Bluebell, again placed strategically at the top of the steep incline known as Red Hill, where horses had to go slowly, demolished in the nineteen sixties. It was not until 1830 that some effort was made by Parliament to improve beer houses, but it remained very easy for a person to qualify as a keeper. The Boot at Willington, previously known as The Cat, started in a cottage in a row of similar dwellings in the early 19th century, in the lee of the valley known as Little Switzerland. It is likely that both it and the larger sandstone cottage in Quarry Lane, once known as The Carters' Arms, belonged to this category. The latter satisfied the thirst of the quarriers and their mates, the waggoners.

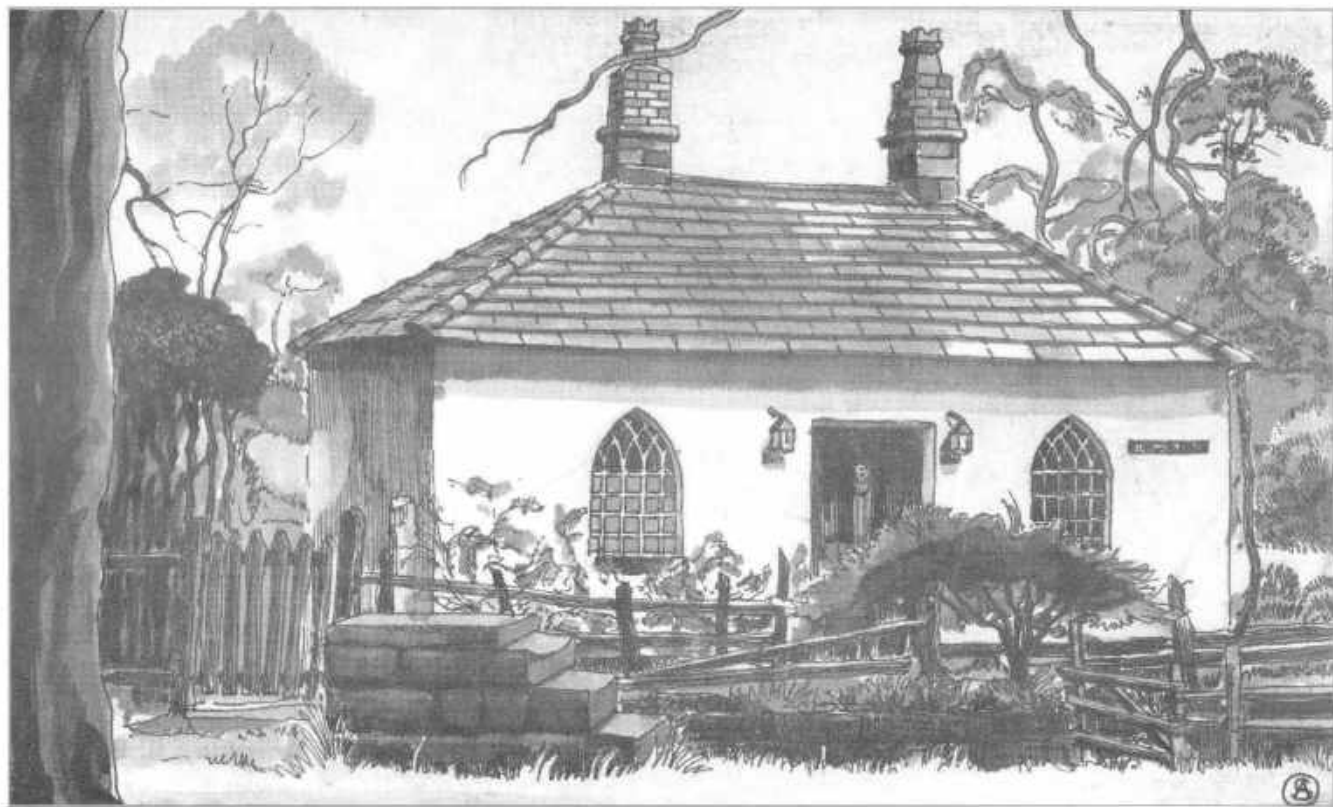
The innkeeper or alehouse keeper, before he could operate, had to obtain a Licence from Quarter Sessions, with two persons' agreement to stand as sureties. Witnesses also were required to sign their names. These licences provide useful evidence of the identity of men and women living in Kelsall in the 17th century, when consulted in conjunction with the early Parish Registers and the roll of freeholders attending the local Court Leet. Out of this information a shadowy picture of the community begins to emerge. The conditions of licensing were explicit and strict, reflecting vividly some aspects of social life in the 17th and 18th centuries. For example, in 1797 on Monday September 18th, included in the list of Recognizances of the Ale House Keepers in Kelsall, the following requirements were laid down. The innkeeper must not permit, Drunkenness, Tippling, Gaming with Cards, Draughts, Dice, Bagatelle, or any other sedentary Game, "in any of the Outhouses, Appurtenances, or Easements thereto belonging, by Journeymen, Labourers, servants or Apprentices, knowingly permit — any Bull, Bear or Badger Bating, cock fighting or other such sport or amusement — or suffer Men or Women of notoriously bad fame or dissolute Boys and Girls to assemble and meet together, nor shall keep premises open during late hours of the Night, or early in the morning for any purpose other than the reception of Travellers". Until its prohibition in modern times, cock fighting continued as a popular blood sport. Kelsall's cockpit can still be seen today, neatly situated behind Dog Lane, close to The Royal Oak. *(The editors have been unable to find this but perhaps we were looking in the wrong place).* The traditional shape was faithfully translated into marine construction. (The cockpit on a yacht is exactly the same shape as the cock fighting pit.) This sport provided the small farmer, the prosperous tenant and the local gentry with the spectacle of a deadly duel and the chance of a wager. Football, frowned on by the Puritans in the 17th century, is conspicuous by its absence from the list of prohibited sports.

The continuity of some families over a period of 150 years is confirmed by examination of the above mentioned records to which should be added the Quarter Session files. Such family names as:- Hignett, Cawley, Houghland, Finchett, Holland, Earl, Astbury, Briscoe, Beckett. For instance, on the 1640 licence, the following names appeared; William Houghland, Richard Hignett, Thomas Clowes and Rowland Ravenscroft. More than one hundred years later, £10 was paid by Thomas Beckett for his licence, sponsored by Sarah Earl and Thomas Briscoe, both members of closely related families. In 1822, James Cawley was granted the Licence for The Globe (currently known as The Morris Dancer) for the sum of £20 which at that date must have been the recognized fee. His sureties do not appear to have been chosen for reliability. One was Joseph Astbury who, although licensed at the same Quarter Session to take over The Talbot, owed £30. His surety was James Cawley. The second sponsor for Cawley was an

unnamed Land Surveyor, who almost certainly would have been a member of the local surveying family, the Finchetts. This was a new growing profession to which both John and Joseph Finchett belonged. The latter was employed for a short time by the Turnpike Trustees on their work in the Township, but was dismissed for dishonesty. The Talbot possessed an unusual title for a Cheshire inn. It was a designation usually associated with Shropshire and was the family name of the Earl of Shrewsbury. This inn stood at the eastern end of the Coach Road, probably on the site of the present day Weldon House. It was an excellent position in which to catch those travellers from the north who were en route for Chester. The Enclosure Award for a large acreage of Delamere Forest, which gave considerable opportunities to Kelsall claimants, had been completed in 1819 after lengthy, protracted negotiations over a period of seven years. The immediate result was the building of a number of cottages on the outskirts of the township and within the territory of Delamere Forest. This development must have increased trade at the inns, especially at The Talbot, the closest to the new settlements. It must also have increased the pressure on the Turnpike Trustees to go ahead with their long awaited scheme to bypass the Coach Road which until this improvement was effected was the last section of the Chester 3rd District Turnpike. This ended at the Gap, where it met the Hartford turnpike at the point where now stands the Toll Bar Cottage.

Going westwards, the Coach Road crossed farm land to join the lower road section at The Globe. Opposite was the Toll Bar which was thrown across the end of Holland's Lane in order to collect tolls on man and beast coming from or going to Ashton. At The Globe the traveller could have his horses shod at the smithy, adjacent to the inn, where they could also be baited and watered. The accounts of the Egerton estate and the Constables of Little Budworth's vestry are full of references to the management and cost of equestrian travel. Edward Rushton owned the farm opposite The Globe and it was through his fields on Kelsall hill that the final leg of the turnpike was planned to go, to be later named Chester New Road and A54. The Coach Road then was demoted to 'Old' Coach Road. The same fate was to be meted out to the New Road by the construction of the 1986 bypass to the north of the village, which now takes through traffic away from Kelsall and also from its thriving inns.

The local JPs must have administered the licensing of inns with considerable energy and care for the innkeepers of Kelsall to be compelled to apply and pay up for the privilege. The inhabitants of the township were after all living in frontier country and were not averse to dodging local regulations. Other examples of regulation which this time appear to have been successfully evaded will be mentioned in later discussion. Compared with other mid-Cheshire villages Kelsall possessed almost three times as many hostleries and still does. The road enhanced the local



Toll Bar Cottage

economy by providing custom for its three inns and several beer houses. It provided work for the smith and the saddler and was one of two great influences to bring growth and prosperity to the village. The second great influence was the forest.

The Running Dog

The sign of the Running Dog (taken directly from the hunting field) was the emblem worn by the first postmen in the land, instituted by Charles I in 1635, when he appointed the first Master of the Post in London.

The Forest Road through Kelsall must have assumed greater importance during times of civil disorder such as the Parliamentary struggle against the authority of the King, and the national wars of the 18th century, including the dangerous uprisings of the Highland Jacobites supported by France. It was the link between Manchester and Chester, the western port for Ireland. However there is no documentary evidence to show how the road was maintained, although it must have been in considerable use. The 17th century reports of the Kelsall Manor Courts held at various times during the period (1604, 1694, 1697) all appointed Constables, amongst whose duties was the implementation of the mid-sixteenth century Statute of Highways, but there is no mention of enforcement, such as appears from time to time in the Quarter Sessions Files. A clue may lie in the fining of John Woodford, Little Kelsall Constable, for his failure to attend at Chester Assizes monthly meetings "to make their testimony to date" (C.R.O. QJB 2/5 July 1621 - May 1640). It may be that the local constables, who were all local volunteers taking their turn of duty, would find too difficult the task of organizing statute labour on the road. Kelsall at that time was a small hamlet, on the edge of the forest, with a reputation for poaching and lawlessness.

Rural mail from the late 17th century to 1800 was delivered to its destination in return for special payments by messenger, or by the much later arrangement, the penny post, established under guarantee. House to house delivery was not complete until 1800. Communications in the 18th and early 19th centuries must have been limited in the main to the family business of the landed gentry and the big landowners and their lawyers. A local example of this was the lengthy correspondence between John Newton of Stockport, agent and lawyer, and his employer, John Arden of Scarborough. The latter held the title and privileges of Master Forester of Delamere under the Crown. These letters contained detailed accounts of Newton's expenditure in connection with the promotion of the Bill for the enclosure of a large acreage of the forest. The calligraphy is exquisite enough to qualify as an art form! By contrast, only a tiny section of the inhabitants of Kelsall were literate and these would be the more prosperous farmers. For the majority, the substitute for their signatures was an X, the lawyer's clerk adding the identity of the signatory.

The various Victorian directories for Cheshire supply limited information but they are fairly reliable as far as they go. Pigot's, published in 1834, did not have a separate entry for Kelsall but listed Willington. Could the reason be that Willington Hall had been built six years earlier by the Tomkinson family, while Kelsall lacked a similar manorial landowner? However, in the very year that Mr. William Palin was appointed the First Postmaster in Chester, Slater's Directory noted that delivery of the mail to the township of Kelsall was 7am and the daily despatch left the village at 5.30am. The times of the Mail Coach were given some importance. In 1819 the Mail Coach from Chester left Tarporley at 4.30pm for The Golden Cross, London, taking 24 hours for the whole journey. The Victory Post Coach, leaving Manchester at 12.45pm, arrived at The Blue Cap Inn at Sandiway at 7pm and brought the northern mail as far as the northern boundary of the forest. There must have been a local courier to continue through the forest with any mail for Kelsall, Tarporley and Tarvin, so the innkeepers in Kelsall did not receive the patronage of the Royal Mail from Manchester, much to their loss. Up to 1819 Chester was considered to be the main port for Ireland, but the silting of the River Dee over the previous one hundred and fifty years had finally ended its usefulness as a port. During this period the estuary was becoming impossible for transport ships to navigate, as witness William of Orange on his way to win the Battle of the Boyne embarked his troops at Gayton on the Wirral peninsula. Chester as a port had been supplanted by Liverpool. So perforce, Holyhead in Anglesey by 1819 had replaced Chester as the port of embarkation for Kingston, Ireland. This was a much less accessible venue for the traveller than Chester and the change was of little benefit to the Kelsall innkeepers. However there were slow improvements to notice. The first Post Office Guide was published in 1856. The following year the first Post Office Directory for Cheshire was published by Kelly; therein was recorded the name of Elizabeth Norbury, the first official post mistress in the village. Very probably she had been acting in this capacity for some time. The first telephone exchange was installed in the 20th century in a corner shop facing on to Chapel Bank. The solitary telephone box stands as a silent witness beside the nearby bank. The Post Office was removed from there in the nineteen fifties at the request of the village post master, Mr. Aylmer Faulkner, to its present venue on the southern side of the main road, Birch House. So here again the road has influenced important decisions for the siting of public services. *(In 1990 the Post Office moved again, to the Mace store in Church Street).* The first purpose-built telephone exchange was built after the end of the Second World War, in Church Street North, but after considerable development in Kelsall it was found to be inadequate. A new telephone exchange, much expanded, was built in old Dog Lane.

Chapter 4

THE FOREST OF DELAMERE

Order to Abbot of Vale Royal:

"On information by pretext of license, hunting the fox and hare on his own land in the forest of Delamere, he allows others of the County of Cheshire, and even outsiders, to hunt in the forest "to allow no living man henceforth to hunt there privily or openly on pain of forfeiture."

Black Prince's Register, 1351.

"We fall into the spacious forest of Delamere itself ... which forest is a very delectable place for situation, and maintaineth not only a convenient being and preservation for His Majesty's deer, both red and fallow, whereof there is no small store but also a great relief to the neighbouring borders and townships round about it."

William Webb, 1656.

Allowing for an element of exaggeration in both these quotations, they illustrate the changes which took place over the centuries of forest administration. The township of Kelsall was affected by these changes, but only by slow degrees did it emerge into the modern world. Because of its geographical position within the boundary of the forest, its growth was both influenced and restricted. Therefore an account will be given of the natural resources of the forest and the administration by which it was controlled.

It is believed that the ancient woodland may well have been a hunting ground long before the advent of the Normans. But it was they who, with characteristic efficiency, put the seal of their authority on the extent and administration of the area. To them the territory earmarked for hunting should be protected by law, which would mark it out as a game reserve, for the sport was their addiction. It was a vast area stretching cross-country from the River Gowy southwards to the outskirts of Nantwich. The northern half was known as la Mara; the southern as Mondrem, a fact remembered in the name of a village close to Nantwich, Aston-juxta-Mondrem. In early and mediaeval times this forest land was an uncharted wilderness of self-seeded woodland, mainly birch, ash and oak interspersed with areas of heath, marsh, bog and meres, usually referred to as waste but teeming with wild life. There was herbage and meat under the

trees providing food and natural cover for the animals of chase and warren. The meres were full of fish. Under Norman law the beasts of the chase were tidily classified under the generic name 'venison' which included the five creatures of venery, the hart, hind, hare, boar and wolf. The lesser breed consisted of the buck, doe, fox, marten and roc (from Manwood, 1598, *Treatise of the Forest*). In the hierarchy of the hunted, small fry were listed under the name 'warren' and these included the hare, coney, pheasant and partridge. Any type of vegetation which would help to sustain the life of these animals was protected by forest law. Hunting dogs were equally important. The wolfhound, often lashed to the keeper, was trained to find and start the game; greyhounds were used for their keen sight and speed and lastly there followed several pairs of deerhounds useful for scenting the prey. The splendid tapestries belonging to Hardwick Hall vividly illustrate the hounds of the chase.

The forest required its own special system of administration whose aim was to prevent the effective economic development of private land within the forest, but there was a paradox. While severe rules were laid down they were also manipulated as a lever to impose penalties (amercelements) and regular annual rents for assorted lands. Richard Fitz Neal in his *Dialogue of the Exchequer* of 1178-79 pointed out that "the whole organisation of the forests, the punishments, pecuniary and corporal, of forest offences is outside the jurisdiction of other courts and solely dependent on the decision of the King or some officer specially appointed by him." (In the case of Delamere, read Earl of Chester for King). The local dignitaries of the Church were adept at using and beating the system. We know of their successful bargains as they kept records, in the case of St Werburgh's Abbey, Chester, in its chartulary, while the monks of Vale Royal recorded concessions in their Ledger Book. Abbot Simon de Whitchurch, having assisted Edward I with men and transport in the Welsh Campaign (1282), was rewarded by the privilege of the gift of a stag on the feast day of St Werburgh and the tithes of the venison taken by the King and his men in the forests of Cheshire. There was one warning and that was to point out that the close season for the hind and the doe (November 11th to February 2nd) and for the hart and the buck (May 3rd to September 14th) must be respected.

The most heinous crime in the forest calendar was poaching, especially if a stag had been brought down, so the strictest control concerned the ownership of dogs and the carrying of offensive weapons within the forest bounds. The detailed instructions issued by the Black Prince in 1351 laid down that "No man in the forests shall keep greyhounds, running hounds ... or courtdogges unless they be lawed" (claws removed from one paw), but added that the forest of Mara and Mondrem would be exempted from the lawing. However it was a different matter with weaponry. The Hundred Years War had begun. The Prince owed a good deal of his success

at the battle of Crecy to the skill of the Cheshire archers, used to defending themselves against the Welsh. To show his gratitude, some of the local bowmen had been granted immunity for their crimes. However this made it all the more necessary to prohibit, in 1351, the carrying of "a bow or arrowes off the highway, unless the cord be removed, especially in the forest of Delamere."

The forest law was enforced through three courts, the most important one of which was the "dreaded eyre held at longer intervals by two or three justices specially appointed to try the most serious cases. The destruction of game they punished with blinding, mutilation or even death during early Norman times. For lesser crimes they levied large amercements, and later earls became more concerned to secure an income at the expense of the inhabitants than to prevent the offences." (B.M.C. Husain, Cheshire under the Norman Earls). At the head of the administration was the Master Forester. The first in a long line was Ralph de Kingsley appointed by Earl Ranulf I in 1123. A hunting horn signified his position and authority. In spite of counter claims by the Grosvenor family, through marriage the Done family of Utkinton inherited this position and retained it for 400 years. Eventually, in 1662, the title went to the Crewe family and with no male issue the forestership passed to the Ardens. Under the rule of the Master Forester worked a team of foresters providing occupation for local men. This is where the thread returns to Kelsall because the township provided two underforesters and a garcon, as far as is known, during the 14th century. Later the forester was transformed into the game keeper with duties allocated to a well defined beat in the forest. The headquarters of the administration was the Chamber in the forest, where the Master Forester lived and organized his staff. It was built in 1237 on Eddisbury Hill close to the Iron Age fort. A clearing was made in the forest to provide grazing for the staff ponies and for deer requiring extra pasture. Hence the name the 'Old Pale' to differentiate it from the New Pale, a second enclosure made at a later date (1503). References to the Chamber occur in the Black Prince's Register, confirming its importance as the lodge where the forest administration was housed.

Kelsall was fortunate in that it came under the protection of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and so was exempt from most of the forest dues. Together with Tarvin and Hockenhull, the township gained privilege from its inclusion in this great diocese. It was still liable for frithmote, a tax which it is believed may have been levied on inhabitants seeking pannage (grazing) for their pigs in the forest.

The Forest Economy

The forest may have been a hunter's paradise, but it was also the source of commodities of equal importance to the sprinkling of small farmers, the foresters, the monks and the citizens of Chester. These were fuel, food

(including fish) and building material and each carried a price, which invariably became a bargaining counter in negotiations between the lord, his forestry officials, villagers and Abbots alike. The right to collect wood was confined to dead branches (estovers): the lopping and felling of trees was forbidden, permission being given and costed solely for building requirements. Even the collection of twigs was all important, as the Abbot of Vale Royal well knew when he travelled as far as Northampton to state his case against the severity of forest officialdom. His petition included the request to have the right to collect twigs confirmed and this item was included in the King's confirmation of the liberties of the Abbey. Turf, known as turbarry, and gorse were supplementary fuels, the latter remembered for its use in the name of the Chester street, Gorse Stacks.

Grazing rights (agistment) were allowed to townships in the forest such as Kelsall. Oxen, horses, geese and in particular pigs, the primary source of meat in mediaeval Cheshire, were all allowed agistment in the forest under controlled conditions. Stray animals found poaching an illicit feed brought their owners into disfavour. The only relaxation of the rules was the exercise of the right to pannage which was granted to farmers allowing them to drive their swine into the woodland to feed on the beechmast and nuts during a strictly limited period. (It is curious to note that the term 'agistment' is still in current use in Australia with the same meaning.) In early mediaeval times all dues had been paid in kind, but as Chester expanded it became more convenient to pay in cash. This happened only at a slow rate of change.

Evidence of the occupation of Kelsall men in the 13th century is to be found in the Ledger Book of Vale Royal Abbey, well entitled as the interesting accounts of the organization and costing of the building of this great Abbey Church are therein detailed.

Vale Royal was a Cistercian foundation, granted by King Edward I in fulfilment of a vow taken when in danger of shipwreck in the Channel. The King laid the first stone in 1277 on the bank of the River Weaver, inside forest land. St. Werburgh's Benedictine Monastery in Chester was built at a very slow pace compared with Vale Royal, but the Abbot and monks also required stone and timber, as did the Earls of Chester building Beeston and Chester castles.

The accounts and records of Vale Royal's Ledger Book (Record Society ed. Brownhill, vol.68, p.90) illuminate the activities and pay of the Kelsall men who were employed by the Clerk of Works as quarriers and carters. This evidence suggests that the tiny settlement of Kelsall was already acquiring the industrial skills of quarrying, anticipating its later reputation as a village dependent on rural industry. The Clerk employed men from far and wide to quarry the stone from Eddisbury Hill, to cut the timber and cart these very heavy loads six miles to the site. "Adam and Henry de Kelsale carted 16cwt of stone at a cost of £6". Again, in 1279 the Clerk wrote that

from Sunday 8th January to Saturday 20th February he paid to "William de Terve (Tarvin) and again Adam, 10d a week for their wages for the said time 8s 4d". Sunday appears to have been pay day. "On Sunday, the last day but one of July ... Item, paid to Thomas de Bruere (Bruera) and William de Kelsale each receiving 2d a week for their wages during the said time £9 2d". Wages were reduced during the shortened daylight of winter and during festivals such as 'Souls Day'.

Gregory de Alucton was the Master Quarrier so received appreciably more than the Kelsall men who were described as diggers and carters. Their names were Geoffrey, Richard Walter, William John and Adam, all from the township, each paid 7s 6d the cwt of stones "each of them having one horse going once a day during the said time for 2400 journeys". Adam de Kelsale appears to have been a persistent and independent character, because it was recorded much later of him that he had defied the authority of the Abbot over his inclosure "of a certain piece of land of the waste of the forest of the Mara within the meets and bounds of Overe (Over) ... against the King's command to the contrary." Through the centuries until the Dissolution of the Abbey in 1538, there was constant friction between the monks and the foresters. The monks were also unpopular with their tenants who, when it came to the crisis of the inspection by the royal visitor and threatened Dissolution, failed to come to the rescue of the Abbey, in contrast to the local support for Norton Priory.

The further development of the forest especially affecting its assarts and enclosures will be considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

BREAKING THE FOREST BOUNDS

"that sayd Forest lying near Chester, Beeston Castle and Tarvyn, 3 garrisons in tyme of late warre. Deere therein were utterly destroyed ... humbly prayeth yt (that) be may receive the com(m)ands for the taking down of such cottages as are already erected since latewards and for preventing of ye like Enclosing and destroying of vert for ye future thereby yr. Highness right of way may be truly preserved."

CRO. D.A.R./H/16

The quotation was extracted from Sir John Crewe's petition to the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth in 1656. The Master Forester was fighting a losing battle against the increasing pressure for agricultural expansion. For centuries there had been encroachments (assarts) in defiance of the Forest Law; examples such as Hugh de Kelsall who was accused but exonerated in 1295 from encroachment (purpresture) (Chester Plea Roll 1295). The following year the Bishop of Lichfield, protected by the privileges of the Church, was able to make a clearing in Tarvin Wood, large enough to justify the grant of 30 oaks to make a paling round the new parkland. Some 50 years later in 1353 an area of 60 acres was assarted by a tenant called William de Praers. Vale Royal Abbey, constantly on a collision course with the forest staff, was, as a Cistercian foundation, interested in expanding its farming on to forest land. There was considerable increase in the encroachment of the forest in the Tudor period. Delamere, which under the Normans and their immediate successors had proved to be an impassable barrier to settlement within its boundaries, had gradually become vulnerable to change, enabling the forest townships such as Kelsall to expand. There is evidence in two early 16th century documents of the existence of Kelsall as a forest settlement where in the neighbourhood substantial clearance had taken place. The first, dated 10th October 1508, was the Inquisition post mortem of the deceased Master Forester's property where it was stated that his tenant Roger Manering, holding the Manor of Kelsall, had cleared and created 20 acres of meadow, 20 acres of pasture in the adjoining parish of Clotton and 100 acres of pasture in Duddon. Some 20 years later the Master Forester, another John Done, in a statement made to the church authorities on the subject of small tithes and their commutation from kind into cash, referred to Langley (Longley) Common "within my parish of Tarvine and in 1 woode or wood ground ...called Langley lying without the woodland of Kelsall"

which suggests that Longley was not yet the huge common it was destined to become and that the cleared land which provided for "all the tythes of wooll lambs and kyns" lay "without the woodland of Kelsall". John Done continued by referring to pastures in Clotton called "new ffield", probably the clearance confirmed in the aforementioned Inquisition post mortem of his father.

The Stuart policy on the Royal Forests was ambivalent. On the one hand there was the enjoyment of the chase, a recreation beloved of King James I, and on the other hand there was the government's chronic shortage of money which accounted for many of their unpopular measures, as for example in 1634 the out-dated Forest Law was revived. It was believed that its enforcement would be of economic value. James I was able to indulge his passion for hunting when, in the course of his tour of Cheshire in 1617, he stayed at Utkinton Hall, the home of John Done whom he subsequently knighted. He also planted a mulberry tree at the Old Pale, hoping that it would provide nourishment for silk worms, but unfortunately it proved to be the wrong variety; a case of good intentions marred by bad advice, characteristic of the Stuarts. (A substitute mulberry tree has been planted recently at the Old Pale Farm by the Forestry Commission).

Ten years later, in 1627, Charles I despatched his assistants, the cartographer 'Old' Mr. Allen and Richard Daines, down to Cheshire to conduct a survey of Delamere Forest. Their map, beautifully drawn and lettered, marked out its salient points, the boundary traced in undulating fashion round woodland, waste and mere, an outer ring revealing a wide expanse of cleared forest carved into commons, each attached to a neighbouring township. Kelsall appeared for the first time on a map, already depicted as elongated and narrow in shape, indicating a handful of scattered crofts, but highlighting the importance of the high road from the forest; the only road to have its destination, Chester, noted. The township appeared sandwiched between Longley or Kelsall Common to the north and to the south, the Smith or Smeath or Weetwood. These placenames have survived. Weetwood is the area south of the road from Willington Corner to Oscroft, excluding Prior's Heys which is extra parochial. Longley is remembered in the title of two farms, Higher and Lower Longley. A strong sense of historical continuity is imparted by this fine old map, the original of which is deposited at Chester Record Office. There was a schedule accompanying the map illustrating the new professionalism of the 17th century surveyors. It conveyed interesting information about the inhabitants and their tenancies. For example, as an illustration of continuity, Smetcher's Intack east of Holland's Lane survived in its original shape from its delineation in 1627 until 1986, when it was absorbed by the bypass. William Smether was described as owning a 'close' consisting of seven acres adjoining Ashton property. Then there was John Dodds, his name enshrined in the title of a strip of woodland called Dodds' Rough

where wild life and flora flourish. He was described as building his 'newe house' and his close of again seven acres at Kelsall Green. The Green must have been of topographical and local importance to have been marked on the map. Again continuity is illustrated by its inclusion in an 1811 Indenture concerning a cottage and piece of land lying to the north of the Coach Road, in the ownership of John Arden, the Master Forester. Again John Dodds held a third close of some eight acres cited as being "across the warren" showing that conies (rabbits) were already an important source of food and income. His well was shown on the map on the edge of the Green. Access to the forest was by a series of gates. The evidence for Kelsall's position as a frontier township hemmed in by forest and common is further strengthened by the existence of its own gate into the forest, shown on the map as the Hall's Wood Gate. It was placed where today Green Lane meets Common Lane, the area now known in its corrupted form as Hallowsgate. In Tarvin's early Parish Register mention was made of the Hall family of Willington on several occasions. The Baptism Roll recorded in 1581 the birth of Sabell Hall and in 1581 the birth of a boy, John. In the Register of Marriages 1621 on January 20 Ellen Hall was married to John Large and nine years later Elizabeth was also married. It is very likely that the gate was closely connected with this family. There was a second gate called after a forester, one Masters. This was placed at what is now known as Willington Corner. Kelsborrow Castle was represented in relief, suggesting that in the early 17th century substantial remains were still visible, long before the plough flattened its ramparts. The two commons also had a tale to tell. Longley stretched from Hollands Lane over the Yeld to finish at Gray's Gate at the foot of a steep hillside (now Yeld Lane). It contained 64 acres. It is uncertain whether the measurements were statute or Cheshire acres, the latter a larger unit, but it can be assumed that the former measure would be used by government officials. The larger common was the Smeath or Weetwood which stretched to the edge of Tarvin and included Pool Bank. Its boundary was closely equivalent to the boundary between present day Tarvin and Kelsall which stretches a narrow tongue of land right to Willington Corner. So too the pre-1988 boundary which divided the districts of Chester from Vale Royal, and the parish of Kelsall from that of Delamere, appears to have been determined by the undulating limits of the forest. The Smeath contained 526 acres in 1627. In 1791 it was enclosed by the Proprietors and freeholders of Tarvin by mutual agreement and an Act of Parliament. It is worth noting that the Award was carefully ruled and written by hand much in the pattern of a mediaeval charter, in contrast to the later tithe maps which were presented on set forms. The acreage in 1791 was reckoned to be 530 acres and was divided into common land, undivided meadow and waste, virtually confirming the 17th century surveyor's work. The road which runs from Willington to Oscroft dates from 1795 and was the typical surveyor's road, straight as a die with wide verges and ditches on either

side; the width a stated 40ft. To the south of this road there is evidence of old settlement, groups of cottages modernized out of all recognition of their origin. To the north are the two Common Farms linked by a cross country path. One and a half miles to the south an ancient cart track goes directly to Duddon Mill (built first out of Eddisbury stone by the Bruen family of Stapleford) which was of great importance to cottager and farmer alike; the alternative mills were situated on the River Gowy. The Finchett family, later to be connected with the building of the Turnpike and other activities in Kelsall, was recorded on the Schedule as tenanting two crofts of an acre and a rood each. The Kelsall end of the Smeath which has always been known as Weetwood terminated northwards close to Hall's Wood Gate. Its function in providing grazing for certain specified freeholders continued right up to the 20th century but was finally terminated by the need for extended cultivation under the guidance of the War Agricultural Committee in 1940. To sum up, the Crown retained the major acreage (8346) which, on the map, was described as the King's Demesne (in the schedule: The King's Waste), also the administrative headquarters, 'the Chamber', the 'Old Pale' (50 acres), also the New Pale enclosure of some 283 acres over to the north west boundary, Eddisbury House and 3 closes, the forerunner of Eddisbury Farm and four small intacks used by different foresters.

As far as the western boundary of the forest was concerned it remained intact until the Parliamentary Enclosure Award of 1812. This was in contrast to the southern section, known as Mondrem, which virtually disappeared in the reign of Charles I.

In 1632 the manor of Kelsall was included in the list of the late Sir John Done's properties. Also mentioned was 130 acres of Kelsall woodland, evidence that at this time the township was still in the 'skirt' of the forest. The mounting tension between King and Parliament finally broke out into open hostility in 1642, the most socially damaging type of conflict, Civil War. Although Tarvin itself lay right across the path of the opposing sides and was garrisoned time and time again by both Royalist and Parliamentary troops, the forest remained unharmed apart from the destruction of deer by the soldiers. The Commissariat of the Royalists was not above driving off farm animals, as for instance in 1643 an Ashton man complained that the army had requisitioned his oxen and seven in-calf heifers. The same year at the Chester Quarter Sessions, William Dentith from Kelsall, assisted by the village Constable, requested redress from the army for the loss of his horse. It had been commandeered, but en route for Tarvin it had dropped dead! The magistrates were clearly not impressed, advising the township to give help to the complainant on compassionate grounds "as he was a poor man".

Concern for Crown property such as Delamere Forest revived under the Commonwealth government, so on March 12th, 1651, Parliament passed

two resolutions, the first stating its belief that the forests and chases should be improved for the benefit of the public, especially the poor, and that the appropriate Committee should give consideration to this policy; secondly the Navy Committee was to be informed of the Resolution ("as to this business to have voyces ... have power to send for Persons, Papers, Witnesses and Records. Henry Scobel, Clerk to Parliament."). Doubtless timber, especially oak, would be the object of interest as the navy had been neglected during the years of civil disorder.

Charles II continued to protect the woodland from further neglect and destruction on the grounds that "the English wood was the best wood for shipping, and their ships were the most defensive walls of the kingdom and the chief means of the increase of commerce and trading". At the Restoration that symbol of the Master Forestership, the hunting horn, had passed to Sir John Crewe, inherited from the Dones by marriage. The Civil Law which had always operated alongside the Forest Law, now obsolete, continued to give legal protection to the forest; to its products, its game and fish, its vert and above all, its territory. Punishment was to be inflicted upon all offenders under the law: "diverse idle persons of poor and mean condition under pretence of fishing in the waters of Pools and Brooks ... do trespass much upon the vert thereof and hereby Our Chief Forester and his underkeepers are put to much trouble". This was pronounced by the new Stuart government in 1661.

The new Master Forester was frequently under pressure to make concessions such as the one demanded by Jonathan Bruen of Stapleford Hall, Tarvin. In 1662 Bruen claimed the right to own the quarry which was described by Kelsall stonemasons (Robert Finchett of Weetwood, Jo Oulton and Richard Percival) as lying on the edge of Kelsall Smeathes by Abram's Rock. Apparently Sir John Done had allowed the claimant's grandfather to obtain stone from this quarry "for the repair of his mill at Duddon". This was regarded as proof of ownership but was not conceded. Seven years later, Sir John was constrained again to object to Mr. Bruen's building of a shepherd's hut, a dry stone wall and a cote and he had even installed an employee to live at Kelsborrow Castle. Another group of stonemasons from Kelsall and Prior's Heys, which included James Wimpenny of Willington, gave written evidence against the assertion of Bruen (alias Bryne) that Kelsborrow Castle was in Tarvin parish and it took an order from the Chief Justice in Eyre to refute his claim. Bruen's name is enshrined on some O.S. maps as Brine's Brow, a hillock close to Spy Hill. In 1664 there is an interesting account of the division of the forest into sections for which a gamekeeper was responsible.

"On 1/8/64 Ye forest was driven this day by ye keepers:-

Merrick for ye Old Pale Walk

Ralph Hornby for Norley Walk and Crowton

Piers Massey for Budworth Walk

E. Willington for Cuddington Walk

Joe Wilkinson for Newton Walk

Rob Task for Blk (Blakemere) Walk

G. Ruthen for Clotton Walk

G. Pue for New Pale Walk

Rob Wright for Kelsall and Ashton Walk

Ye forest was driven by five keepers, four were absent, G. Pue, Joe Wilkinson, Rob Wright and G. Ruthen."

It is possible that April Cottage, Ashton, is the only surviving gamekeeper's cottage.

The forest tenantry in which Kelsall was included scratched a living from land which was sandy, infertile and inhospitable but was inhabited by game, chiefly rabbits, hare and partridge. The possession of a warren was of commercial value. One such warren can still be seen in Utkinton close to Hollins Hill. The underkeepers doubled up as rent collectors from the forest townships. Rent totals appear to have amounted to no more than £10 (1751 and 1765). The gamekeeper, inheriting the ancient office of Under Forester, became an increasingly unpopular figure in the 18th and early 19th centuries, partly because poaching was generally considered to be a justifiable way of adding to the larder, partly because the law became increasingly oppressive. From the end of the 17th century up to the Napoleonic Wars, the preservation of game appears to have been conducted with common sense and a good deal of give and take. To fit the circumstances, a legal formula had been framed which exacted a Bond from the poacher, by which he agreed to stop his illicit hunting but if caught again would forfeit £20. In 1711 two Kelsall men, Samuel Ball the shoemaker and his friend Henry Briscall, signed a Bond with their marks. In 1745 Thomas Leeth of Willington had been caught in possession "charged with a Nett in the night-time to take Rabbetts on the borders of the warren". He was released on the payment of 8s 6d to defray the cost of executing the Bond. Poaching was customary. In 1763 James Earl, a nephew of Henry Briscoe of the leading Kelsall family, had been caught carrying a gun, ("the value of it not worth four shillings"), by William Brock, one of the estate's keenest gamekeepers. One night in 1722 there was something approaching a roughhouse in the forest, close by a large warren. The underkeeper, James Tasker, and the Warrener were later accused in court of wounding the poacher, evidence pointing to a long-standing feud between the combatants.

Although after the Restoration there was mounting pressure to encroach and even to propose the elimination of the woodland, the Lord Chief Justice intervened in 1673 to protect the forest by ordering its continuation. As the historian Stella Davies pointed out in her discussion

on Cheshire agriculture, Delamere forest remained unique in the county during the 18th century. In spite of the growing momentum of enclosure of Common and Waste, Delamere retained its identity as Crown Forest, suffering little change, until the Act of Parliament in 1812 which legalised the enclosure of 3847 acres, the remaining woodland to be planted with timber and administered by the Surveyor General of Woods and Forests. The Chief Forestership had in the 18th century been inherited by the Ardern family through marriage. This family belonged to Harden Hall, Stockport, and Pepper Hall, Scarborough, and owned considerable property in the forest townships including Kelsall. In the following chapter the 1812 Enclosure Award will be discussed, as the decisions made at that time were of crucial importance to Kelsall and to the future of local farmers and cottagers. It was this Award which created the parish of Delamere and led to the foundation of its Parish Church and School.

Chapter 6

THE DELAMERE ENCLOSURE AWARD OF 1812

"Commissioners appointed by the Crown in 1788 report to the Treasury: 'They view almost with despair the perpetual struggle of farming interests in which no party can improve his share without injuring the others'"

Stella Davies

1808 *"the general appearance of Cheshire was an extended plain thickly covered with wood: so that from some points of view the whole county resembles one vast and continued forest. Eddisbury ... the extensive waste of Delamere Forest situated in the Hundred is almost entirely of gravel and white sand interspersed with tracks of peat moss".*

Dr. Henry Holland

The decision of the Chester Turnpike Trustees to extend their road up the final stretch of Kelsall Hill to the Guide Post on the forest boundary, taken together with the promotion by the Crown of the enclosure of the forest, was part of the increasing momentum for enclosure of common land and waste throughout Cheshire. This was stimulated by a growing need at national level, but in the northwest especially, the home of industrial expansion, for improvement both in communication and agriculture. Britain had entered a critical period in her history. Her importance as a Colonial power had been successfully challenged by the American Colonists in 1777 and later her security had been threatened by the military genius of Napoleon. Self-sufficiency in the supply of agricultural products, especially grain, was a target of the first importance to a rapidly expanding population. But how could the enclosure of 8,000 acres of infertile soil, unfit even to grow oaks with any success, further this policy? The soil was and is sandy and light, beloved by the conies and favourable to birch, ash, beech and gorse, rough grazing, pools, mosses and meres (see appendix B). To remedy the impoverishment of the enclosure land, the Commissioners accorded special sites to the north, centre and south of the township where marl, a limey clay, could be dug out by all the local farmers and cottagers without charge and as a permanent arrangement in order to fertilize or manure their holdings.

It was the Crown, in the persons of the Lords of the Treasury, who started proceedings in 1796 to promote the Bill for the Enclosure. This was to be followed by a second Bill to become the second Enclosure Act in 1819 at the conclusion of the protracted legislative proceedings. John Fordyce, the Surveyor-General of woods and waters, appointed Charles Potts, member of a leading Chester legal firm, to be the local Crown agent. He proved to be an effective advocate in dealing with the conflicting demands of local magnates such as John Arden, the Master Forester and thereby chief tenant of the Crown, and the Cholmondeley family. Judging from the Potts correspondence (C.R.O. QCX30 1805-6) these gentlemen through their respective agents, John Antrobus Newton of Stockport for the Arden interest and John Brent representing the Cholmondeleys, played a waiting game, hoping to influence the appointment of a Commissioner who would act in their favour. It was pointed out to them that their claims were mutually inconsistent, warning them that the Commission required "men of ability and of sufficient leisure and experience in business of this nature to proceed the carrying the Act into execution without delay." The appointment of Lord Glenhervie as chairman ended speculation on this particular matter but on the contents of the Bill and its effect on the Arden interest John Newton worked indefatigably for his employer, exhorting Lord Alvanley, the heir, to attend the Commons when the Enclosure Bill was under debate. The final stages were preceded by argument and dealing which included a meeting in Sandiway on 10th March 1812 of leading proprietors among whom were John Newton, the Dean of Chester (Rev. Hugh Cholmondeley), Mr. Foster representing John Egerton, the Vicar of Tarvin (Rev. John Oldershaw) and fifty yeomen with claims on the Crown land. The Feathers Inn in Bridge Street, Chester, was the headquarters of the Commissioners Robert Harvey and Joseph Fenna. Every second month they heard and pronounced judgement on claims, an onerous and complicated job as claimants came from many villages fairly remote from the Forest, such as Barrow. Care was taken to advertise the dates of the proceedings and meetings at The Feathers in the local press and on posters fixed to the doorway of Tarvin parish church, the traditional notice board for the parish. Because Kelsall was a forest township local claims had a good chance of being given favourable consideration. After all, for centuries the tiny settlement had clung to the forest's edge, providing a station for foresters, pasturing their pigs and latterly their sheep within the boundary of the woodland, labouring in the stone quarries, especially Eddisbury, and poaching game. But there were conditions for acceptance. The claimant had to prove that he had held rights of grazing in the forest for the last forty years and that he was a freeholder. He also had to be able to pay his share of the cost of the Kelsall survey which was some £360 and to be able to fence his allotment at his own expense. If successful the allotment then became his property but he could have tenants to work it and live in his house. Eight persons had to withdraw including Miller Hall

from Willington and his neighbour at Wood Lane Farm (now Home Farm), Widow Johnson. Twenty-three acres in all had to be withdrawn. Those who were successful such as Samuel and Edward Briscoe, Samuel Earl, Ralph Dean, Ralph Norton, Thomas Hignett and Joseph Finchett from Hallowsgate were already well established tenants. Samuel Briscoe held Kelsall Hall Farm from John Arden. In 1818 Ralph Norton bought Common Farm from the Earl of Plymouth. It comprised the newly enclosed Weetwood Common apart from the area of 3 acres, 3 roods and 32 perches (almost 4 acres) set aside for the public use of marl and sand. The marl pits to the north were dug out of the Yeld. The lane to the pits from the forest was created by the Award and called appropriately Marl Pit Lane (now Forest Gate Lane). The central marl pit reserved for public use was on the triangle on which the Church Hall and Parsonage stand. *(The old church hall at the end of Old Coach Road is now an office and the Old Parsonage is a private house in Church Street North)*. One of the practical effects of the enclosure of land was to enforce the definition of boundaries. In earlier days boundaries between different townships had gone undetermined. An example of this which can be cited was the fate of Kelsall Smeath or Common which in the 1627 map was entitled thus and described as stretching in a long narrow band from Willington to the outskirts of Tarvin. But the 1791 Tarvin Enclosure Award accorded the Smeath (meaning marshland) to the parent of the parish, Tarvin. Thus was the present day boundary created and identified by a wide ditch and hedge enclosing a tongue of land projecting from Oscroft to Willington Corner. The forest boundary was the exception. From the late 17th century until the Enclosure it had remained intact in spite of the Award, with little alteration. Only under modern legislation was it changed into the demarcation line between Chester and Vale Royal Districts and Kelsall and Delamere Parish Councils.

The Master Foresters of the 18th and 19th centuries had to thank Sir John Crewe (1699) who organized a perambulation of the forest bounds to be undertaken by his men. The Foresters' report gave a detailed survey noting carefully the orientation of the mere or marker stones. One of the minor changes of the Award was to declare the office of Master Forester, Bow Bearer and Chief Bailiff obsolete but to allow the Chief Crown tenant, as an honour, to retain the title.

The immediate effect of the Award on Kelsall, then a concentration of cottages along both sides of Dog Lane, was limited. The Surveyor for the Kelsall Enclosure Award was Josiah Boydell. His neat map showed the allocation of allotments firstly to be small to very small in size, and to be concentrated in an area stretching from The Talbot Inn at the north end of the Coach Road to its western end at its junction with and including Dewsbury Lane (now known as Dutton's Lane). Landmarks were the three inns, The Talbot, The Globe and the unnamed Blue Bell standing in its own

croft at the head of Red Hill. Two farmhouses and steadings were shaded in, but unnamed, Rookery and Kelsall Hall; the latter approached by a cart track which later became an internal footpath and is now Hall Lane.

In the open country surrounding the perimeter of the township and within the forest itself the effect of the Award was much more dramatic. There was an outburst of cottage building along the forest fringe and in Willington. Such a cottage was that belonging to the Hitchcock family, built in 1828 on the fine strip of land beside Nettleford wood and bordering on Downdale, a forest clearing. The family initials arranged round a large honey bee were well carved and placed over the front door.

The two most important claimants were John Arden and the Earl of Plymouth, who shared equally the Lordship of Kelsall. Apart from the yeomen claimants already mentioned there were the leaseholders, holding their land by three lives from John Arden. These were the Kelsall men: Ralph Norton, Edward Gaskin, Thomas Ankers and James Wright, holding together 127 acres on the outskirts of the township. Arden also owned the Royalty of Longley, an ancient name for mineral rights, which in this case could be valuable as it included quarries. There was considerable dealing in land as a result of the Enclosure, as for instance the sale by Messrs. Edward Briscoe, Gascoign and Ralph Dean to Joseph Gunnery gent, from Liverpool. Other such purchases of allotments included Ralph Ryder who was employed by the Turnpike Trustees and whose son, another Ralph, was the tenant of the new Toll Bar Cottage set up on the forest's edge by the Northwich Trustees. The allotments were again all small in acreage. At the end of these protracted proceedings the Crown stepped in and put some land up to auction at The Swan, Tarporley. The first lot to be knocked down was two acres of the Harewood which went to Daniel Lea ex Wright for £140; the brand new Willington Lane (now Quarry Lane) was given as the western boundary of the plot.

The most dramatic effect of the Award within the confines of the forest was the creation of a new parish, the parish of Delamere, composed of four townships, Delamere, Oakmere, Eddisbury and Kingswood, and the building of the parish church and rectory, built in 1815, as one of the conditions of the Award, as a Waterloo church. On the 19th day of December 1819 the new Rector stated that "upon this day the execution of this Award was proclaimed in the parish church of Delamere in the presence of Peter Snelson, clerk, Thomas Finchett of Kelsall and Thomas Walshman of Chester". Until this event there was no church west of Witton's ancient chapelry in Northwich and Davenham parish church until St. Andrew's, Tarvin was reached. The isolation of the forest community was emphasized on the surveyor Boydell's map by the absence of any place of worship or church school. A secondary and interesting result of the Award was to witness the filling of this social and spiritual vacuum by the energy of the popular movement of the Methodists. Three chapels were

built in the area in quick succession, Kelsall's first chapel in 1816, Willington chapel in Chapel Lane, Willington (1823) and the Welsh Presbyterian chapel known as Delamere chapel built in 1826 in Willington Lane. Their concern to improve the ignorance of their congregations was shown by the fact that all three built their attached schools. The Church was content with the addition of the Waterloo parish church in Delamere; eventually the Forest School was built in 1846.

The servicing of the new allotments and cottages by a network of new roads surveyed and directed by Boydell also illustrates the frontier condition of the township. Only footpaths had provided cross country communication. The marlpits on the Yeld required access, so the surveyor arranged for Marl Pit Lane from the forest and Yeld Lane from the turnpike, to connect and to carry this new occupation lane southwards, running straight as a die, across the road to climb uphill to the Waste to another marlpit, now fringed with bullrushes. (The original stone stile into Nettleford Wood from Marl Pit Lane is still in place.) The road was styled Rutter's road as it led directly, after a sharp bend, to George Rutter's Lodge in the forest, now known as Forest farm. In Cheshire, at least within the township, properties were always familiarly known by the name of the farmer's family, in contrast to custom further north where the farmer was always known by the title of his farm.

As mills were an essential part of the local economy, the cart track to Hall's mill at Willington across Weetwood Common was improved and came to be known as Common Lane. Access to the mill at Duddon was similarly improved by the Surveyor's road to Oscroft; the lane leading to a group of ancient cottages to the south led directly by a cart track, and still does, to the mill and the Chester to London road. The footpath to the Thatcher's Cottage was widened to ten feet and was scheduled as Thatcher's road, indicating also that it branched off the lane in a northerly direction; this was later designated Dingle Lane.

Footways and bridleways were not forgotten. Not every lady owned a horse and trap! The Surveyor laid down that "they were to continue in the same direction for public use". The onus for maintenance of paths, stiles and bridges (platts) was placed on the landowners. For example "from Dogmoor Stile in Kelsall (Church Path) in a S.W. direction over allotment to Dogmoor Well in same allotment and then to Willington Road (Quarry Lane)." Dogmoor Well was one of the most important sources of drinking water in the village and was supposed to be kept available for public use. Before it was unfortunately capped, when service water was for a time unavailable, I sampled it and found it delightful in quality. In line with traditional Elizabethan highways policy, the responsibility for upkeep of the new roads was laid on the local community, the township.

Boydell's work on creating cross country communication opened up this remote wooded territory. Isolated crofts could now be connected to the

township centre, to the salt pans of Northwich beyond the forest and to Sandiway and to the city of Chester. The rash of new cottage building on the outskirts of the township was much assisted by the road programme. The system was divided between public carriage ways, thirty feet wide with wide verges and drainage ditches on both sides and occupation roads twenty feet wide, a more work-a-day version, each lane stemming from the main artery, the Northwich turnpike, which had preceded the completion of the Kelsall turnpike extension and had terminated by the Guide Post at the entrance to the Coach Road.

The Surveyor's roads were always recognized by their straight military precision. Such a highway is the road known as Willington Road, which links that place with Oscroft, planned and constructed by the Tarvin Surveyor. Boydell, noting the isolation of Willington, constructed a road first known as Willington or Dogmoor Well Road then, in the 20th century, as Quarry Lane. It's orientation was thus described in the Award document as coming "from the Northwich turnpike road near Kelsall Toll Gate in a southerly direction on the west side of Harewood Hill to Wimpenny's house (present day Barn Cottage, and its old shippon and stable) and from there in nearly the same direction to Willington Gate and leading towards Tarporley". This was an important link with the outside world, with the London road and the Post Coaches which stopped at The Swan and Tarporley market.

Tirley road was also scheduled as a public carriage way and constructed as such to join the Frodsham Highway at Stable Road end. It proceeded from the Willington gate by Roughlow. Wally's gate gave entrance to the forest close by, one hundred yards to the west. The Tirley lane continued eastwards to Tirley farm where, down an occupation road, the Tirley Gate barred the way and the track proceeded directly to the chalybeate Whistlebitch Well, widely known for its medicinal qualities.

The track ended at a woodman's cottage known as Harwood Hill Lodge which eventually was called Primrose Hill Cottage after the nearby woodland. To digress, the exact date of the present cottage is unknown, but it is very likely that it was built as a result of the Award on plot 229 which was claimed by an Ashton woman called Eliza Harbridge who must have been a freeholder. Her tenant was Thomas Longton who may have found work in the forest. The cottage was shown on Pargant's map of Cheshire in 1829. In the mid-Victorian era there was further clearance of the woodland because the Crown Commissioners, who had, in 1815, allocated their share specifically for the planting of oaks to provide timber for the navy, realised that this scheme was a failure. Organsdale Farm, bordering the Old Pale, was carved out of the landscape at this time under an Act in 1856 and this cottage was included on its land. The cottage was and is closely linked to the Whistlebitch Well, which is its present source of water and is believed to have medicinal qualities specially helpful for

agues and rheumatism. It had been used for health reasons by a local farmer, one Greenway and his sons, with success, with the result that the well became a place of pilgrimage for the sick. A vivid description of the well's situation in the forest came in an early 18th century broadsheet. "About 1 mile from the Chamber towards the Southwest side of the forest is situated the New Found Well". The writer went on to point out that the land was "scatteringly beautiful with many oaks (yet many of them shrubby and of low growth and not queaches and thicks of Hull (holly) and Hawthornes, the hills themselves distinguished for the most part by galles and gutters." The Primrose Hill Cottage was, until October 1910, let with Organsdale Farm and from that date until sold was let as a separate holding. (Information from Mr and Mrs Hine.)

With the help of intensive marling another 2,000 acres were converted to agriculture, leaving 2,500 acres of forest. The remaining area was planted with mainly Scots pines in the 1890s. Corsican pine was introduced later and Weymouth pines soon after. In 1924 the fully planted Crown woodland was transferred to Forestry Commission management and as yet provides one of the few examples in this country of a mature conifer forest.

Once again the effect of war was the spur to an expansion of forestry. For this reason the Forestry Commission was founded in 1919. Today the total area of the forest is 2,383 acres. There are two Forestry Commission nurseries at Abbots Moss producing six million seedlings annually. At one of these, the Old Pale Nursery, plants are grown up to eight feet, including many hardwoods for the Department of the Environment. The Award continued to be a point of reference to Delamere and Oakmere Parish Councils. When in doubt, which according to their minutes happened occasionally, the problem could only be clarified by consultation of the Award maps, lodged with the lawyers in Chester.

The townships of Kelsall and Delamere, in different ways, were much affected by the Enclosure, so the history of settlement must be looked at next.

Chapter 7

OUTLYING SETTLEMENTS

"Eddisbury. Godwin held it as freeman. 2 hides paying tax. Land for 6 ploughs. It was and is waste. This land is 1 league long and as wide."

1066 Domesday Book

"Blakemere. A considerable pool, is drained and exists as a marsh; but Hatchmere remains. Old forest folk still call it Hatchew, and it seems to be no smaller than of yore, though on the opposite side of the road a low damp hollow, where bog asphodel and lousewort grow amongst the sundews, is all that is left of Flaxmere".

T.A.Coward, 1903

The wilderness, later known as the forest of Mara and Mondrem, was known to man some 5,000 years B.C. The evidence is sparse so far, but a little has been revealed. In 1935 on October 12th Mr. A.W. Boyd, the well known naturalist, was working along the edge of Oakmere, the largest sheet of water in the forest, when "By far the most interesting thing seen during the week has been a dugout canoe some 2,000 years old found buried near the bank of Oakmere in Delamere Forest. I was lucky enough to see it while it was still embedded in mud and sand at the margin of a mere which is far lower than normal. We have to thank a keeper for the discovery and for the good sense he showed in not attempting to do more than uncover the prow. Consequently it is one of the best preserved just as it is one of the most beautifully shaped ever found in this part of England." There may have been a lake dwelling built out on the mere. The discovery of the remains of a whale under the peaty sedges on the fringe of the water was even more extraordinary as the find must date from the post glacial period when the sea covered the land. The whale's jawbone was preserved as an unusual arch at Whalebone Cottage in Abbey Lane.

The Lynchett fields at Woodside, which in the 17th century must have provided a well defined northern edge to Longley Common, are further evidence of Celtic occupation and cultivation. They are referred to as follows by Pevsner and Hubbard. "Celtic fields just west of Longley Farm. The most noticeable features are the Lynchet banks running E W across the ridge but less well defined banks, much reduced by ploughing, also run

N S forming a group of small rectangular fields. The field system is undated and may be either Iron Age or Romano British."

There are several burial mounds, usually mapped as tumuli. The Seven Lows, although much damaged by road works, are the best known and lie behind The Fish Pool Inn. There are others such as Glead Cob and Cole Hill and two east of Kelsall recently demolished by excavation. In 1957, a short distance further east, Mr. S. Flood unearthed a burial urn containing the remains of a child. Doubtless in the light of the important recovery from a peat bog at Lindow Moss, Wilmslow, of the body of a young man, dated perhaps 500 B.C. (the dating is uncertain), there may be further finds in Delamere of archaeological importance.

Settlement linked to defence is suggested by the archaeological analysis of the Iron Age fort on Eddisbury Hill. The site is admirably adapted to security. From the rocky eminence there is a splendid view across the north east countryside to the Staffordshire hills. During the Iron Age the watchers on the hill improved its defences by replacing the wooden walls with dry stone walling completely surrounding the area. Ead's Bury, or fort as it came to be known, was one of the strongest links in the chain of forts built along the sandstone ridge. It was later destroyed, nobody knows by whom, but it has been suggested that the Romans, whose road ran close by, would not have tolerated a hostile stronghold in their rear.

Nearby, commanding the passage through the Kelsall gap, a second smaller settlement was established. This site too must have been chosen for its superb position. The view is panoramic ranging from south-east to north-west. The plain is rimmed by distant hills, the Peckforton range to the south, the Clwydian range to the west; its summit Moel Famau rising to a triangular point. To the distant south, depending on the weather, the Long Mynd can be discerned. Precipitous cliffs, now invisible through a screen of conifers, protected the Iron Age fort from attack from the west and south. Although much smaller than Eddisbury, Kelsborrow Castle as it came to be known was a well known landmark in the 17th and 18th centuries, but the plough has destroyed most of its earthworks. Local tradition connects these forts with the struggle which Aethelflaeda, Lady of the Mercians and daughter of the great Alfred, maintained against Viking incursions from the west against the northern bounds of the kingdom of Mercia. A tall stone always known as Aethelflaeda's used to stand in the field below the rock face of the castle, but was finally destroyed by the tractor. It may have been a mere stone marking the forest boundary; a similar one used to stand opposite the entrance to Abbot's Moss which was known as the Long Stone.

The sombre words of Domesday Book "Eddisbury ... is and was waste" may refer as much to the sterile character of the sandy soil of the forest floor as to the scorched earth policy applied to the recalcitrant north-west by the Normans. There was water everywhere. Watery hollows over long years

became filled up with peat to a great depth, thus forming mosses of which Abbot's Moss is a classic example. Although to day there is no evidence of old peat cuttings, it is difficult to believe that the monks from Vale Royal did not avail themselves of this rich source of fuel, known in their time as turf or turbarry. Its terrain, now carefully guarded by Cheshire Wildlife Trust, is a living demonstration of the original nature of forest and waste. (For a list of the forest Mosses in 1817 see appendix B.) The two large meres, Hatchew fringed by reeds and bog plants and Oakmere, were both sources of the Cistercian monks staple food, fish, and were jealously preserved. Local tradition suggests that the 'fishpool', close to the cross roads of two ancient forest tracks to Over and Tarporley was also frequented by the monks. After the Reformation the fishing rights continued to be of great importance to rival landowners, the Cholmondeleys of Vale Royal and the Master Forester. As the demand for water increased with the expanding needs of a settled farming population the smaller meres such as Flaxmere and Linmere dried up or became quaking bogs. Black Lake, the home of sphagnum moss and sundew, remains under the protection of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

The abundance of spring water along the sandstone ridge enabled the expansion of building once the Enclosure Award had been ratified. Each house owned its private well and there were several communal and private pumps. Hindswell served the farm cottages belonging to Organsdale. The Yeld Well similarly, to this day, provides nearby farm cottages with water, even in times of extreme frost. Dogmoor Well, marked on all early maps, approached by an ancient footpath, served the needs of local people in the Kelsall township and was still available after 1945. Mains supply pumped up from deep bore holes replaced pumps with tap water, but not until 1932.

In 1986 even this supply was becoming exhausted, so the North West Water Authority has been constrained to build a reservoir on Pale Heights to serve the neighbourhood. Here I quote from the Authority's report "The present population in the two areas (Delamere and Kelsall) is 1875 and 2000 respectively which is expected to rise to 1950 and 2150 by the design year of 2001. From ... Hollins Hill, water is pumped to Abbey Arms tower and then from there, as required, to the higher level Pale Heights reservoir. The Pale Heights distribution system also receives a pumped supply direct from Hollins Hill at present about 55% of total demand. All these pumps are electrically driven from overhead power supplies and this combined with the very low storage/demand ratios mean that the reliability of water supplies ... is very unsatisfactory. The pumping capacity to Pale Heights is now barely adequate to meet present demands and during a thunderstorm in July 1983 the 4 hour loss of electricity to the pumps supplying Abbey Arms tower resulted in this being virtually emptied." Hence the establishment of a new pumping station with standby plant. The water is derived from Lake Vyrnwy and the River Dee.

The mineral wealth of Eddisbury Hill lay in its rich core of hard stone, splendid building material. The quarry has already been referred to in Chapter 4. Today the forbidding grey walls tower over an incongruous group of neat chalets clustering on the quarry floor. Nearby stands an interesting small stone building sporting a very tall chimney: this was the old Quarry Smithy.

The conditions for settlement on the forest edge were adverse. For centuries traversing the woodland and waste for eight or nine miles was regarded with some justice as a dangerous enterprise. The County had an unenviable reputation for crime and lawlessness throughout the mediaeval period which persisted right up to the 19th century. The crack troops of the armies which fought against the Welsh, the Scots and the French were the Cheshire Archers. The Black Prince in his Gascony Campaigns 1346-1357 relied on the deadly shower of Cheshire arrows to win his victories of Crecy, Poitiers and his expedition to Spain. For reward some of these same archers received documents of immunity called 'boons' which absolved them from punishment for acts of criminal violence committed on their home ground. W.S. Hewitt mentions William de Praers and Randolph de Kelsalle amongst the Cheshire men recruited to the service of the Black Prince. Robert Brown, whose descendants may have been the Bruens of Stapleford, Tarvin, was responsible for the Eddisbury hundred.

For centuries the Forest of Delamere, including its fringe of scattered holdings, was regarded as dangerous territory; Indian Country! Reference has already been made to the continued friction between the Abbots of Vale Royal and their tenantry, the villeins or bondmen of Over and Darnhall. By 1336 this tension had flared up into open rebellion. A monk was killed in the forest and the tale goes that he was decapitated and his head used as a football. Briefly described: the peasants, unable to get a favourable hearing of their case in the county, walked first to Nottingham and then to London in order to lay their pleas before King Edward III and his Queen Philippa but all to no avail, as the Abbot was always able to persuade the Court of the justice of his defence. The conflict continued in the county but in the end the peasants had to accept defeat. They had weakened their position by attacking the Abbot on the highway in Rutland "and killed his groom William Finch with an arrow."

The turbulence on the Vale Royal Manor reflected the social disorder prevalent in the county in the 14th century. Evidence of widespread lawlessness was illustrated by the pleas brought before the Trailbaston Commission held in Chester in 1353 by command of the Black Prince. The Hundred Years conflict with France (1337-1455) was one of the causes of civil unease. Cheshire was one of the main recruiting areas for the crack troops of the English army: the bowmen, the archers. These men, hardened by war against the Scots, the Welsh and the French, found it difficult to accept the restrictions of returning to farm and forest.

Recruitment was based on the ancient regional division, the Hundred: the forest spread over most of Eddisbury Hundred and so it was here that the Dones, the Master Foresters, called up their men for foreign service or to supplement the Cheshire bodyguard of Richard II and later to fight in the Civil Wars of the Roses.

It was not until the Tudors were established that stable government brought order to the county; nevertheless, to quote a local historian, "One legacy of the Wars of the Roses was the need still felt by everyman to be able to take up arms in his own defence". "Study of the Probate Inventories for the period 1570-1630 indicated that in some 10% of Inventories detailed, mention was made of weapons of every kind". The Forest of Delamere was regarded as an area still dangerous. Local husbandmen kept bows and arrows, swords and daggers at the ready. "The armaments of Thomas Litler of Eddisbury consisted of his best longbow and arrows, a great crossbow, a second longbow and a sword, a Caliver, a longbow and arrows." (P. Dodd, Cheshire History No.14).

Civil war broke out in 1642. Mid Cheshire became an important military area where there were frequent skirmishes between Royalist and Parliamentary troops leading up to the prolonged siege of Chester 1643-4. Sir William Brereton, the Parliamentary General in Tarvin, wrote to Sir John Crewe (later to be appointed Master Forester under the Commonwealth) "Good Cosen, we had great want here, of provision money and amunition." The small farmers in the forest townships saw the deer disappear and were compelled to supply the soldiery with horses, hay and food for the troops. The wilderness of the forest, like a mountain range, acted as a barrier between the north east and the west. So, in 1642, it was in the forest that Lord Byron's pickets with Fairfax's troops advancing into mid Cheshire. On the eve of the 1660 Restoration Sir George Booth shocked the London Parliamentary Rump into decisive military action when he led a widespread but abortive revolt supported by a majority of the local gentry. In 1683 when James, Duke of Monmouth was acting treasonably in canvassing for support in Chester, the house of the Master Forester, Sir John Crewe, Utkinton Hall, was raided by his cousin Sir John Arden of Harden (Stockport) in search of incriminating documents. This action he attempted to justify in a letter to his relation.

The reputation of the Forest as a sinister no-mans land persisted, even after the 1812 Enclosure Act, right up to the present day. This sentiment may have been heightened by travellers' tales but was at least partially justified by the feeling of isolation engendered by the wilderness. The poacher was a popular character. The footpad was not so respectable. In 1752 it was in Delamere that a Mr. Thomas Blower was relieved of his cash. At the end of the century three highwaymen confessed that they had frequently stolen horses off the local farms.

Some Victorian fiction reflected this folk lore as for instance in

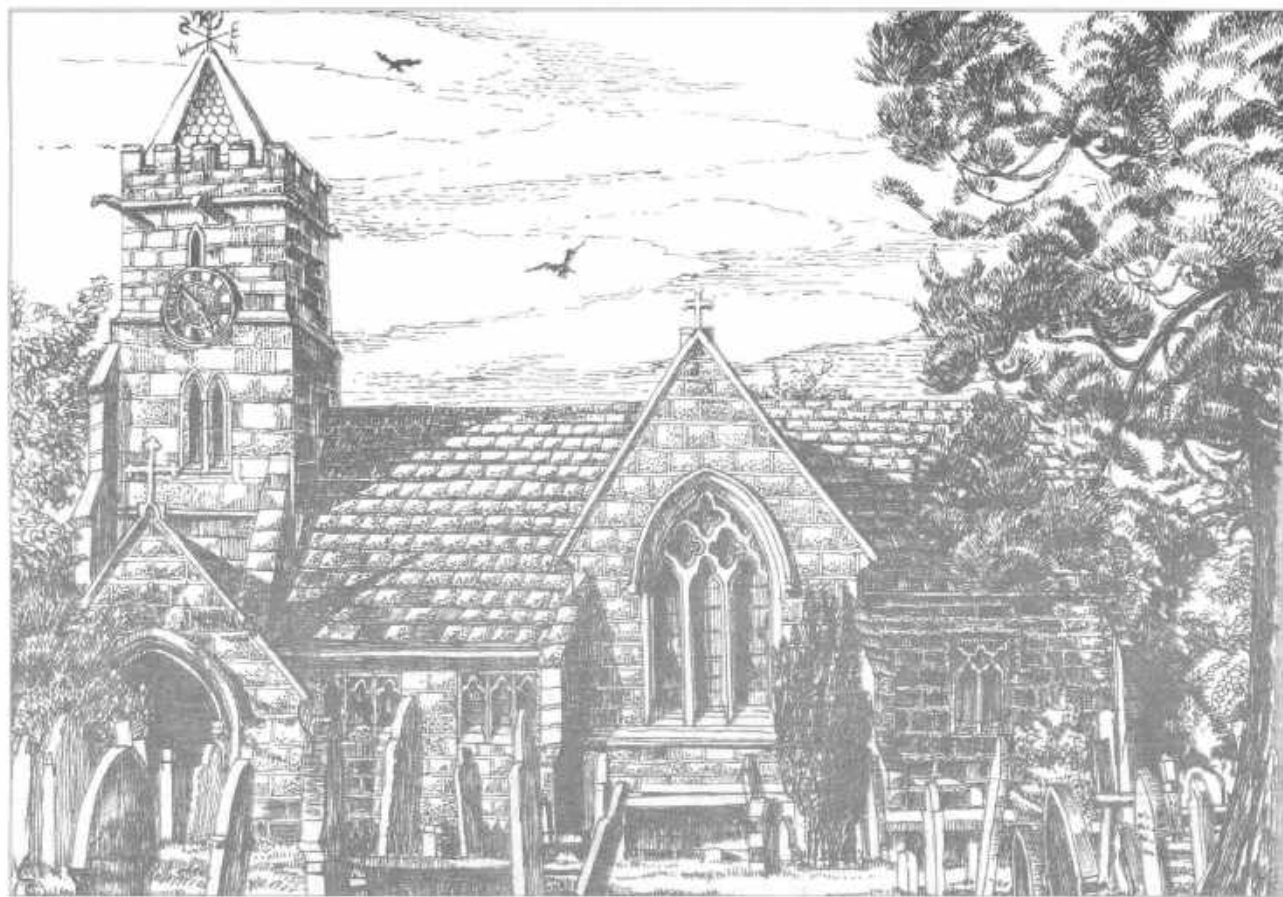
Mrs. Linnaeus Banks' "God's Providence House" where plot and ambush are set in Kelsall and the forest. Beatrice Tunstall, in "Shiny Night", placed the scene for the visit of her heroine Elizabeth to the witch in the ruins of the Chamber in the Forest on Eddisbury Hill. The old man acting as a guide described himself as a "catcher of conies, for to make hats", a comment which explains the importance of the maintenance of warrens within the forest boundary. Rabbits were a valuable crop in the 18th century and a source of constant friction between the tenants and game keepers. The farmer at Rutter's Lodge, (now Forest Farm) George Rutter, plot 228 on the 1816 schedule, claimed his allotment "in satisfaction of his right of warren upon the said forest". A reference was also made to "Owd Nixon, the great soothsayer as was housed by my Lord Delamere and got clemmed to death (starved) in the midst of plenty at the Court of the King" (James I). Nixon was believed to have frequented the rocky cleft in the King's Wood, still known as the Urchin's Kitchen.

Later stories confirmed the fears of local people. One such, vouched for as true, was as follows. A Kelsall man driving home from market, drew up his horse and trap on a forest track in obedience to a signal from an old woman requesting a lift. Suddenly the horse became unaccountably nervous. When the edge of the village was reached the passenger dismounted. Later, when the ostler was unharnessing, he discovered a sharp knife or dagger lying in the back of the trap; this was kept as a family souvenir. An Oakmere resident, a member of a well known local family, recounted how her grandfather, when driving through the woodland on business, always carried a truncheon as he was carrying substantial sums of money; and in 1987 the I.R.A.'s activities in the forest appeared to be maintaining the local tradition when the police discovered a large cache of explosives concealed close to the switchback road.

Delamere Church

The dark reputation of the forest was not to continue unchecked: Indian country was to be opened to new influences. Land had been redistributed through process of the Law. But it was the building, in a woodland clearing, of St. Peter's parish church, Delamere, which became the symbol of social stability, the expression of religious faith and civil order. The church stands isolated with no old cottages clustering round its consecrated ground either in the past or at present. Its site is central to the original parish, close by Watling street, the way to Northwich and Manchester, by Eddisbury and Black Hill; its sturdy square tower backed by Eddisbury's ancient hill.

Pevsner and Hubbard tell us that it was designed and built by John Gunnery. Gunnery came from Liverpool. He was a stonemason owning land and a quarry in Kelsall and was responsible for the later erection of the Hearse House and stable to the rear of the church. "The tooling of



St Peter's, Delamere

much of the masonry is typical early 19th century. So are the north window with Y tracery and probably also the west tower and the transepts." The dedication of the foundation stone took place in 1816. This was an unusual but somehow appropriate event. It was made the excuse for a splendid celebration of Freemasonry! Notable brethren from all over Cheshire foregathered at The Globe Inn in Kelsall, marched in procession to the site led by the Grand Master, Sir John Grey Egerton and headed by the Royal Militia Band. There the great stone was anointed with wine and oil, blessed by the Masonic Chaplain, a Masonic anthem was sung and then the whole company retired to a great feast at Oulton Park, Little Budworth, some three miles distant.

The Forest had always been exempt from ecclesiastical levies, although at a Bishop's Visitation in 1778 the Vicar of St. Oswald's, Chester, claimed that the Old and New Pales had owed dues to his parish since 1660. George III built and endowed St Peter's. The Rev.J.Brocklebank served as the first priest and curate subsequently serving under the first Rector, Rowland Hill, and then succeeding him in 1827. It was he and his wife who sheltered two orphan girls, probably Indian in origin, called Mudgee; they died aged 8 and 10 years and are buried in the churchyard. The endowment can best be described in the words of the Rev. Howard Huggill, one time Rector of Delamere: "the endowment, as the Enclosure Award shows, was what is now the Rectory Farm (where Richard Rutter farms) and the land within the triangle formed by the Abbey Lane and the road across from the school." The first Rector, Rowland Hill, discovered this land to be poor sandy soil and exchanged it quickly for land now called Delamere Farm. This may well be the origin of the right of way which emerges from the King's Wood on it's northern edge, crosses diagonally the Organsdale Farm pastures and comes to an end close to the old glebe land and the church; a practical link for the farmer Rector and his men. Delamere Farm may have been larger in the 1830s, "but it was sold sometime about 1895 (I forget the price) but the money was invested in Indian State Railways! All that is left to the Rector is the Rectory field between the old rectory and the new." (Huggill) The old Rectory and its three acres of garden dates from 1812-17. In 1963 it was sold for £10,000 and the new one built for £9,500 on the Rector's land. The profit was sent by the P.C.C. to help build a vicarage in a poor parish in South Africa. Again I owe further details to Mr. Huggill.

One of the more colourful of the Rectors was Darwin Fox (1838-1874), a cousin of his famous namesake and there is mention of Delamere in his voluminous correspondence. "I remember one in which Charles wrote to offer condolences on the death of one of the Rector's children, but on mentioning the other sixteen he suggested that the Lord had been merciful." The rector had a considerable staff which included a nanny, a lady's maid and three gardeners.

Mr. Brocklebank was prompt to summon his newly appointed churchwardens to the first Easter Vestry of St Peter's in 1817. It was customary for this meeting to appoint on an annual basis local volunteer officials, such as the overseer of the poor, the constable and somebody with the unwelcome task of supervising repair to the highway, but there is no record in the early Delamere Church minutes of any such appointments. The main business throughout the 19th century appears to have been confined to meeting the running expenses of the church and maintenance of the church fabric. However, as it was vital to the interests of the freeholders who were churchwardens and members of the Vestry, to have accurate knowledge of the boundaries of the new forest allotments, a copy of the map of the Award was ordered and paid for, £5, from James Cawley, surveyor of Kelsall. Members of the Vestry included Sam Hornby (gamekeeper), Thos. Rathbone, John Wimpenny and William Leeds, licensee of the newly built Abbey Arms(1819). It is interesting to note that these local farmers appreciated music as an integral part of the service. The Tarvin Singers followed the Weaverham and Tarporley Singers and the payments were 11 shillings and 5 shillings. Church gates were installed for £10 by John Gunnery. It was even proposed in 1824 that a gallery should be built to accommodate singers. It was to be 5ft wide, but nothing came of the notion. Much later in the century, links were established with the little school on the Tomkinson estate in Willington where services were held on the premises. However there was a rival branch of the church flourishing in nearby Chapel Lane: in 1823 a large chapel was built with an attached Sunday School and graveyard: and northwards along Willington Lane a Welsh Presbyterian chapel had been established in 1817. It too had a large Sunday School attached. There was no church in Kelsall. In severe weather, parishioners on the Yeld gathered for worship in the house of Mr and Mrs Stockton.

The Sunday School preceded the Church Schools by nearly 40 years. It was under Mr Fox's incumbency that the Forest School was built in 1846, by order of the Queen, and for many of its pupils it remained 'Fox's School'. This was a belated and much needed decision as many of the people, especially the women, were unable to sign their own names.

Delamere School

The School was built on Crown land in 1846. The site, including the adjacent farm land of Organsdale, was originally part of the new plantation of oaks, planted specifically for the use of the Royal Navy. However, it was discovered that the timber was faulty or "shaked", ie. full of clefts and splits and therefore unsuitable for the shipyards, so the experiment was abandoned. As a result Organsdale Farm was created and the school, which included the Master's House, was built. A few of the original trees may still be seen in the farmhouse garden, some have been cut down and a few descendants stand in serried rank on the bank in the western farm

field. In 1844 one acre of clearing was given by Queen Victoria "for the creation of a school for the instruction of the children of the poor in the tenets of the approved Church." If the land ceased to be used for this purpose it must revert to the Crown. The Trustees for all time are the Rectors of Delamere and Tarporley and the Vicar of Whitegate. Undoubtedly funds for the erection would have been forthcoming from the National Society whose main concern was the building and maintenance of Church Schools. Messrs Pevsner and Hubbard describe the building as "Large for its date, and lavishly done. Gothic. A symmetrical front with two canted bay windows. Entrance is from the back." It must have made an extraordinary impression on the passersby and local people, contrasting strongly with the nearest National School built in 1844 in Kelsall, constructed in brick, its design severely functional. Delamere School was built in local stone and had style. Mrs Carter, the Headmistress, gave me the following resume of the School's history.

"Known in its early years as Fox's School ... later, and for some hundred years, known as the Forest School. Some 250 children were on roll arriving on foot and on ponies, the ponies tethered in the woodland around. An engraving shows the trees crowding round the 'gothic' new school. The children came long distances and sometimes arrived very wet. One little girl walked by herself through the woodland all the way from Willington to School. The School House formed part of the main building at the back and on the old plan part of what is now the staff room and library was designated 'parlour or classroom'. The children sat in two rooms set out in galleries, with slates on their knees, until in the 1880s a new School House was built (in the school yard) and the old one utilised by the School. In 1910 Mr Nixon of Kelsall knocked out the middle partition in the main school. On April 23rd 1888, the Managers drew up a scale of charges as follows:

1. Infants under 6 one penny per week
Infants 6-7 two pence per week
2. Standards II, III, IV and V three pence per week
Standards VI upwards four pence per week
3. No labouring man of the parish to pay more than nine pence per week
4. Neighbouring parishes, with the exception of Willington
(which was and is extra parochial) to pay double fees.

In 1935, electricity replaced the oil lamps and flush toilets were installed instead of the pail closets. In 1946, a great centenary celebration was held and all old pupils over the age of 65 were entertained to a party. The oldest, aged 84, came from Frodsham and cut the celebration cake."

The first teachers were Samuel and Martha Jones. The School Log Book

(1897-1913) is an interesting account of the day to day events and problems. One of the recurring difficulties was the lack of a secure supply of pure drinking water which dogged the School Managers into the 1920s. For many years the School relied on a nearby spring and well, which required the fetching of water in bottles. This must have been the well where the Headmaster, Mr Norman Ackerley, lost his favourite fountain pen which he later retrieved by immersing himself in the water! In 1924 the Rector (Rev. G.S. Payne) appealed for funds to link the School with the Liverpool aqueduct, thus describing the serious state of affairs on July 2nd 1923 "consequently many children have been compelled to bring their water in bottles, or fetch some water in a bottle from a well a considerable distance from the School." The water rate was then 7s 6d, but the local community gave generously; £50 15s 6d was subscribed to meet the shortfall of £45 17s 6d in addition to a grant of £96 5s and so at last the water problem was solved by community effort. (P108/12/1 Minute Book, School Managers).

Another school improvement scheme was launched in February 1936 to install electricity and to replace the obsolete earth closets with modern sanitation. Hardly had this scheme been launched when a bombshell was dropped by the Director of Education. A proposal to build a senior school in Kelsall for pupils over 11 years living in Delamere, Kelsall, Ashton and Barrow caused consternation among the School Managers. By 1939, if this scheme was accepted it would become law. On May 11th, after discussion locally, a resolution was passed unanimously and forwarded to the Director objecting to the proposal. Nothing came of this scheme! Kelsall County Primary School was built with and continued with earth closets until the tardy sewage scheme was at last implemented in 1962 and the vision of a Kelsall Secondary School proved to be a mirage.

The weather was a constant factor affecting school attendance, as the catchment area for pupils stretched from Sandiway and Hartford to Willington and Kelsall. Other more frivolous excuses were offered such as work on the farm, bilberry picking, Church and Chapel outings, but a more serious stumbling block was the seasonal onset of infectious diseases. Particularly serious were measles and scarlet fever which took their toll. In the spring of 1909 an epidemic of measles was followed by scarlet fever, so severe an attack that the Rural District Council (Northwich) closed the school for three weeks and used the holiday to fumigate the premises thoroughly. Diphtheria was another fever causing great concern. The size of the scattered population in Delamere stood at 424 in 1821, was little more by the half century and only started to rise after the building of the Cheshire Line railway.

Levels of population must have affected the school numbers but the impression one receives is that Delamere School was generally popular and well supported. The name of the school was changed by request of the

Managers from the National School to Church of England School, its status underlined by the display of the Ten Commandments on the wall of one of the classrooms. Reports were beginning to be presented by the Government Inspectorate. In 1905 "there was overcrowding due to too small premises for 32 infants and 122 children of mixed ages"; criticism in 1908 was levelled at poor reading ability "the word by word pattern should be abandoned"; there was not enough stimulus but competence in arithmetic was recognised. By 1914 the roll had dropped to 98, possibly caused by local expansion of schools. There is comment for the first time on the hazard of the busy main road. The dust arising from its unsealed surface was a nuisance and an accident just outside the school left a child unhurt, but it was a warning.

Mr Fugler was appointed Headmaster in 1911 and after war service returned to the School, retiring in 1935. He was regarded as showing little sympathy with modern teaching methods "his pupils (a class of 45) still used slates". However, change, improvement and stimulus were at hand with the appointment of an energetic young man: Mr Norman Ackerley. He was appointed in 1935 and was succeeded by his wife on his acceptance of the Headmastership of Weaverham Secondary Modern School in 1954. Numbers were beginning to rise: a favourable report from the H.M.I. stated "that the pupils were self reliant and industrious; the emphasis on speech training was commended. Dramatic work had been introduced with excellent results."

An innovation was introduced which was to bear unexpected fruit. "There is now a dinner scheme which enables the children to obtain a hot meal each day at a charge of 2d per head." War broke out in September 1939 and nineteen evacuees from Liverpool arrived (only one returned): the school numbers increased to 100 and the school dinner scheme became the subject of the sustained attention of the war time Ministry of Food. Delamere School canteen became the pioneer model for the national scheme for provision of school dinners. The school dinner was a valuable component in the drive to improve the health of all school children under war conditions. The Headmaster of Delamere at this time was still Mr Ackerley and he was responsible for the success of the local experiment.

Before primary education was established on a national basis in 1870, the school was financed by a combination of Crown grants through the agency of the Office of Woods and Forests, subscriptions from the Church of England National Society and from the local gentry, local farmers and tradesmen. This support was further evidence of the close link between the Church, the lands and the local people. But this relationship was impaired when the new Board of Trade became responsible for Grant Aid to rural schools.

Opportunity for pupils to obtain secondary education was severely limited. Transfers to the local grammar schools at Northwich or Winsford were rare;

public opinion regarded such extended schooling with suspicion. This prevailing attitude was reflected in the vigorous objections voiced by both Delamere and Oakmere Parish Councils to the Cheshire County Council's proposal, in 1902, to build a 'Council' School in Kelsall and a later Secondary School. This was seen at once as a threat to their much cherished Forest School, a threat which failed to materialize. Kelsall's County Primary School remained a dream for another thirty years and the secondary department was finally laid to rest when the Secondary Modern School was built in Tarporley to serve the district.

Chapter 8

THE COMMUNITY: DELAMERE

"His Majesty is empowered to grant a lease of the Old and New Pale to George James Earl of Cholmondeley. A proportional allotment to be made to Mr. Arden, for the value of the conies, fisheries, as he shall prove himself entitled to as Chief Forester and Bowbearer. ... Moss, pits and turbaries (peat bogs) incapable of being drained to be left open for the use of such persons as have heretofore enjoyed them, any person cutting and taking away turf from the forest to pay a penalty of £5. Rights of common are to cease."

Quotation from the Enclosure Award.

Delamere and Oakmere to this day bear the marks of their forest heritage. No village, in the conventional meaning of the word, exists. It was frontier country, clearings in the woodland scattered along the edge of the Northwich turnpike, providing limited space for church and school, for cottages and farm houses. Only a solitary red sandstone building was and is outstanding: The Vale Royal Abbey Arms. It commands an angled vantage point at the junction of Abbey Lane with the turnpike, later the main road to Northwich and Manchester. Then in 1869, when the Cheshire Lines brought fast transport to the neighbourhood and the stone-built station with its station master's house were erected, the track to Norley, Kingsley and Frodsham became the Station Road. The Inn was built in 1818-1819, one hundred years later than The Blue Cap, Sandiway, the last coaching house before the forest. The studded door is surmounted by the Vale Royal Abbey Arms 'boldly moulded with the Inn's name in gothic script carved on the sill'. The Cholmondeley family, inheritors of Vale Royal, included Oakmere and therefore the inn within their property. This could well account for its name and superior style. William Reeds was the first licensee and he was also one of the first Delamere churchwardens. There was a close-knit camaraderie between all the publicans in Eddisbury. Under the strict Licensing Law recognizances had to be sponsored and it was here that the local men all supported each others applications. It was here, in 1850, that Queen Victoria, en route to Chester, changed horses. Here too, for over sixty years, that the local magistracy for the Eddisbury Hundred and Division met for Petty Sessions. After a continuing chorus of complaints about the inadequacy of the provision, at length a Police Constabulary Station was built in 1908 which provided housing for a Police



Vale Royal Abbey Arms

Inspector and sergeant and a new Courtroom and offices. But now in 1987 this chapter too will close with the removal of the Oakmere judicial business to Northwich. Local folklore will insist that the inn has a much earlier history, linking it to the great monastery of Vale Royal.

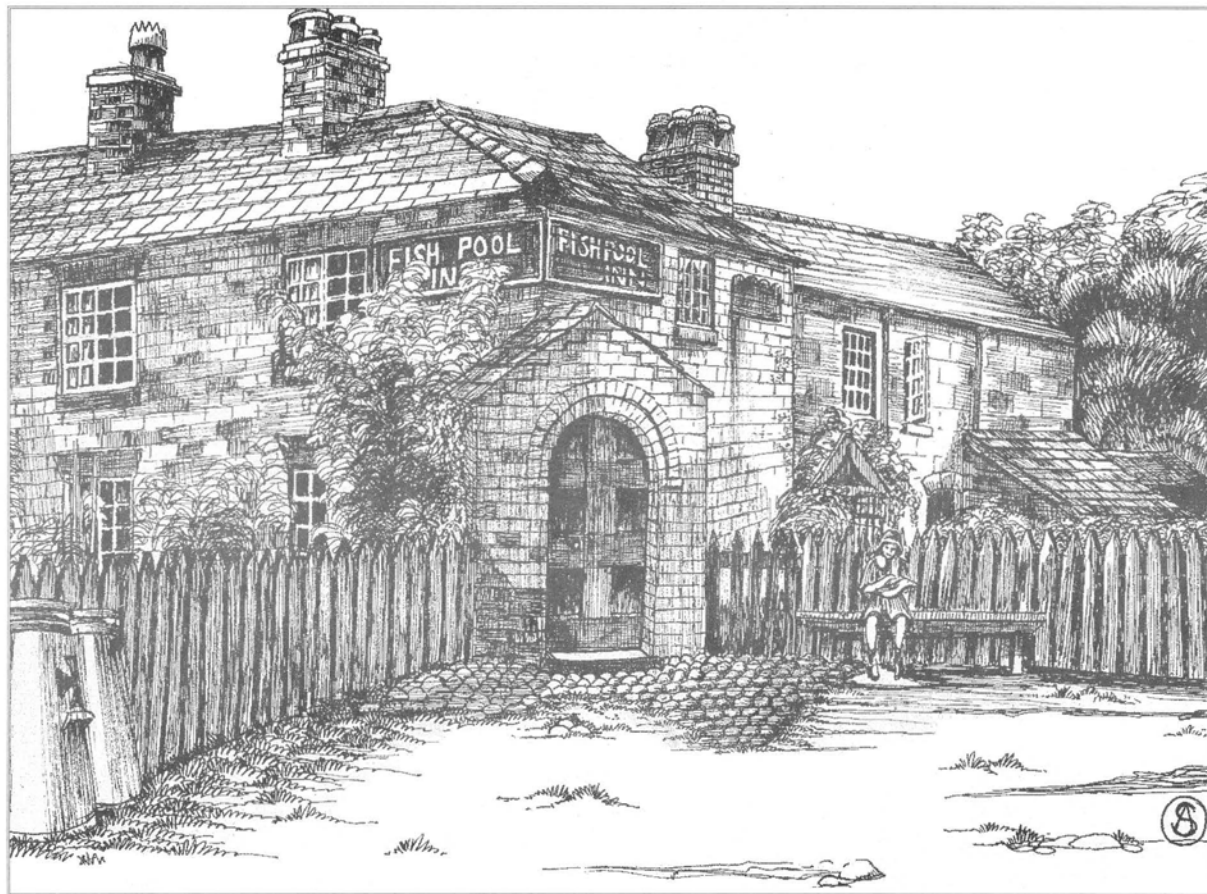
It is tempting to surmise that this flat area could have been used as an assembly point for the monastic wagons engaged in the transport of stone and timber from forest to Abbey. Its strategic importance on the salt road would certainly have been recognised by the Abbots: they often had occasion to ride to Chester, therefore were likely to require a post house at the cross roads, but so far I have found no supporting documentary evidence.

The charming Fish Pool Inn also stands at an important junction, where Abbey Lane crosses the main road to Little Budworth, Over and Winsford, and continues on towards Tarporley. This inn dates from 1921, but it may stand on the remains of an earlier wayside tavern. The fishpool to the rear of the inn, now dried up, has been long associated with monastic tradition, although it is difficult to believe that in the close proximity of the important Oakmere (mentioned for its fish in the Ledger Book of the Abbey) the fishpool offered much food or sport.

Delamere Parish: Farms and Cottages

The effect of the Enclosure Award upon the released territory and the scattered community was twofold. First came the claims of the big landowners usually represented by their lawyers and agents. When these had been completed the local freeholders' claims were considered and in a few cases purchases were made at auction as the Commission required cash to pay the expenses of their work. The forest contained round about 8,000 acres, half of which was retained by the Crown including the mediaeval Old Pale and its sister farm the 17th century New Pale. Thomas Cholmondeley, later created Baron Delamere, leased these two farms, the Eddisbury Quarry, Hatchew Mere, Oakmere and its surroundings. The Master Forester, John Arden, by right of his office, secured a considerable share as did, much later, the Wilbraham family of Cuddington. Much of this territory was converted into farmland and at the same time tree planting continued. Nicholas Ashton planted 133 acres with 477,000 trees, chiefly larch and Scots pines. Stone was an important mineral right jealously conserved by the landowner. No stone was allowed to be taken out of the forest, which ruling probably explains the explosion of quarrying which took place on the western edge of the new parish and in the township of Kelsall. The huge quarry opened up in Willington Lane (later Quarry Lane) by that enterprising stonemason John Gunnery was his answer to a pressing need - the need for building material, sandstone.

Secondly came the clearings on the western edge of the forest which were allocated to the successful small claimants, usually about 3 acres in extent.



Fishpool Inn

Wells had to be sunk unless there was a convenient spring to provide the necessity of life, water. The cottages appeared like beads on a string, in haphazard fashion, along the Surveyor's new roads, usually gable end on to the track. They conformed to a uniform pattern but in some cases speed overtook efficiency and foundations were inadequate and mortar confined to the house corners. Typically these cottages had thick walls, small windows and roofing of thatch which was soon replaced by the more durable and fire proof slate, cheap and easily obtainable from North Wales. The owner often commemorated himself and his wife with their initials carved over the doorway and sometimes an emblem was included as for example the Hitchcock bee. An earlier stone cottage in Black Hatch known as Harewood Hall used to display an unusual coat of arms; a sword held in a clenched fist suggesting the owner's determination to defend himself. Willington had its share of new cottages, such as Pear Tree Cottage in Chapel Lane, occupied by the Astbury family. In Potter's Hollow, at the end of Willington Lane, the initials TR on a cottage most likely represent Thomas and Ann Rathbone. They built a sandstone house in 1812, now derelict, at the outset of the Enclosure. This same settler described as "near to Kelsall by the Forest of Delamere Wheelmaker" acquired a homestead on the edge of Prior's Heys, another extra parochial island in the newly enclosed Tarvin Common. Its situation is neatly described as being known as "Nobody's Yard". However the boundary is marked to this day by two huge mere stones; close by are Randle Wilbraham's marker stones, green with age, but still visible are the initials R.W. These were all farmsteads built to a local familiar design. The floors were earthen, usually laid with stone flags; attached to the rear wall was the housing for animals, the combined shippon and stable, above them the hayloft and to the rear a couple of stone pig styes. Fireplaces were very wide and usually stepped inside to give foothold to the sweep's boy: from the chimney a strong chain was suspended as a fixture for the big black pot. The garden was usually a plot for vegetables and was often planted with apple and hazel pears and damson saplings in the newly grown hedge. For of course, in this recently cleared area of woodland, hedges were an introduction to the landscape, but necessary to confine the farm stock and to mark the limits of each man's property.

The new beerhouse soon appeared to meet the social requirements of a growing population. The Saddlers' was well placed at the junction of Rutter's (Waste) Lane and the Northwich turnpike, as was The Carters' Arms at the southern end of the quarry in Willington (Quarry Lane). Both were promoted by John Gunnery. The Saddlers' also at some point in its history included a shop and land and in 1903 became the property of Messrs. Greenall Whitley who continued with it as The Farmers' Arms. (*Now called Tb'ouse at Top*). The property now known as The Boot Inn and often referred to as The Cat (renamed in the 1860s) was purchased by John Crowfoot (later known as Crawford) farm labourer, from the Crown



Cottage in Kelsall with shippon, since destroyed by fire

Commissioners in 1815. It comprised six allotments which nineteen years later supported a dwelling house and buildings as well as land which Crowfoot, now called yeoman, left to his son George. Eventually this became The Boot Inn and the property of the Warrington brewery.

The political and economic background to this expansion was the big rise in agricultural prices between 1760 and 1810 coupled to the increasing demand for farm produce against the background of twenty years of war against Napoleon. The Industrial Revolution was also responsible for increased demand. Forest land was tithe free, with better drainage, new or improved roads and the provision of marl pits, providing better prospects for such small investors as John Crowfoot. His position contrasted favourably with that of an older neighbour Thomas Wright who in 1801 acquired the lease of 3 acres, 1 rood, 37 perches and a dwelling house for the down payment of £10 and the agreed annual rent of one shilling. The lease was old-fashioned and reflected ancient feudal practises. The lease would continue to hold good during the three lives of his sons Daniel (16), Samuel (13) and William (9). The rent was to be paid annually on the 11th day of November and the tenant must "do suit and service at the Courts of John Arden."

One result of the wars which directly affected the forest was the continuing high demand for ships' timber, especially oak. With this object in view, the Crown planted a great stand of oak on land which stretched from the Rectory at Delamere to Nettleford Wood. About 1844 the experts realized that the trees were faulty and unfit for the keel of a man o'war. The resulting clearing was the site for the first Delamere school.

Organsdale Farm stretched across the turnpike, beyond the 16 acres of Hind's Well Gully, westwards to Primrose Hill reaching Tirley Farm. The solitary cottage standing in the woodland was included in the 530 acres of Organsdale land. This was the final chapter in the continuing process of forest enclosure. As if to celebrate in fitting manner this conclusion the Crown designed and built a fine substantial stone farmhouse (1816) on the northern bank of the Northwich turnpike close to the Winsford fork. The elevated site gave the new owner of Organsdale a commanding view of his territory. Its style was more in keeping with the contemporary version of a gentleman's residence than with the traditional farmhouse. The lives and fortunes of the Frith family have for the last 100 years been linked to this farm and its neighbour the Old Pale, as John, Peter and William between them from the 1880s until the 1960s managed successfully both properties. Peter's father John became the tenant of the Old Pale in the 1880s when agriculture was suffering from economic depression. Both he and his son Peter at Organsdale managed their farms efficiently and the family prospers to this day. The families of the farm staff were housed in a row of cottages close to the Hind's Well, conveniently placed opposite the farmyard and its steading. Two cottages in Quarry Lane were tenanted by Organsdale men. Dairy farming with beef and some arable were the main concerns of the

Delamere farmer. Once the Cheshire railway line to Manchester was opened and a station built in the heart of the forest (Delamere) an important expansion in the market for dairy products was made possible. The early morning train timed for freight to reach Shudehill market in Manchester transported the milk churns, the cheeses and the vegetables from Mr. Morrey's market garden. All the cartage was, of course, horse drawn.

Delamere Lodge farm was the second large farm to be created by the Crown but this preceded Organsdale by some years. The land lay along the Long Ridge (986 acres). The house was similarly sited on a prominent rising overlooking flat lands to the north. Its size and design too suggest a small manor hall rather than a farmhouse. George Wilbraham from Cuddington leased it but by 1860 Simon Leather was the tenant. He became well known locally and it was during his occupation that the Crown built the substantial row of farm cottages in 1863 known as Crown Cottages. Again these attractive workers' houses were built to standards superior to the local version and had more in keeping with good estate housing. The families worked for the Lodge farm. Farming was then "labour intensive" and the census returns show 90% of the population were employed in agriculture. In 1908 Organsdale alone employed 31 men. The provision of communal ovens and efficient pumps reflected the necessity for self sufficiency. Neat gardens provided the space for vegetables.

In the field behind the Crown Cottages is a local landmark, the Gig Hole. This is a large hollow whose purpose dates from mediaeval times. Flax was grown by the monks and this hole is where they dried their crop. The name is misleading but the forest name of Flaxmere is further evidence.

The village of Norley supplied the tradesmen and the shops for Delamere, which only had the little Post Office in Station Road, in a private house belonging to Miss Moseley who also sold a few groceries and sweets. There were also the travelling tradesmen from Northwich and near at hand Kelsall bringing meat and bread. The local millers called with animal foods. These peripatetic tradesmen often enlivened their calls with information and local gossip.

The one great annual event was the Hunt week, always held in the first week of November. Horse racing on the Racecourse along the Tarporley road was the highlight of the celebrations. The Saddlers' and Stable lanes in the vicinity recall the event. Polo matches close by Cabbage Hall continue to show the Cheshire love and knowledge of the horse. Otherwise the travelling fair, the market day and the national events were the only excitements which attracted the whole population to meet together.

The destiny of the Lodge Farm lay in the sandy nature of its soil and in the presence of large deposits of gravel. In 1910 a considerable position to the

north was sold to the newly formed Delamere Golf Club leaving many of the remaining acres to be converted into a group of small farms several of which lay along the station road. Two were situated between the golf course and the Northwich road and were linked by a track called Golf Course (Farm) Road. The combination of sand and gravel attracted the investment and establishment of the Marley Tile Company, giving local employment to many who could no longer find work on the mechanized farms. The Tilcon sand quarrying business bought the old camp site which belonged to Fir Tree Farm and turned to quarrying sand on a huge scale, returning the old land to 169 acres of water 40 feet deep; so the wheel had turned full circle from centuries of extracting the stone for building the land itself was being exploited for industrial purposes.

Oakmere, the largest mere in the Forest, and its surrounding territory, had been the property of Vale Royal Abbey. It followed that after the Dissolution of Religious Houses the successors would inherit Oakmere; so it was that the Cholmondeley family owned Oakmere and guarded jealously their fishing rights. There was marshland and common to the western end of the water and here John Boyer with his numerous family lived and farmed the waste. Later, after the Second World War, the Rural Council built houses on the old waste. Farming was concentrated on the Plovers Moss allotment skirting the parish boundary along the Warrington-Tarporley road. Oakmere, always retained in private hands, has continued as an estate. It was sold around 1900 to Lord Wavertree, a well known racehorse owner - a tradition which has been maintained by the present owner, Capt. Gordon Ferguson. *(Recently developed into apartments and news cottages)*

Social Conditions in Delamere

The creation of a new rural parish, in the hundred of Eddisbury, was unusual enough to warrant a brief examination of its character. A tiny population was spread thinly over a wide area. At this time and up to 1894 the parish was an ecclesiastic institution and administered accordingly by the Church vestry. Not until the Civil Parish was legally instituted did Oakmere become a parish separate from Delamere in 1894. For much of the first half of the century the population was almost static (1820 = 424; 1831 = 742; Oakmere 1821 = 95; 1841 = 195; 1851 = 252), but the opening up of Cheshire Lines railway and the building of more cottages encouraged a considerable increase (Delamere = 1050 : Victoria County History); for Kelsall throughout this period the figures were always higher. It has to be remembered that Delamere's figures include those inhabitants who lived at the top of the hill on old forest land and down towards Willington.

The Militia Returns are a helpful guide to the composition of the male population. The elder Pitt had instituted the reform of recruitment; this

became of increasing importance as the French and Napoleonic Wars continued for 20 years with little respite. Men called up for service were usually nominated as the result of a ballot and it was possible to secure release by paying another man to take your place. There were categories for exemption from the Regular Militia, the poor with two children, apprentices and articled clerks and undersized men (under 5ft 2ins), but they were liable for recruitment to the local militia. Those exempt from the local militia were the poor with three children, 30 year old men with two children, army and navy sea fencibles, officers on half pay, the infirm, clerics, licensed teachers (retired) and constables. In 1823 the total registered in Delamere as liable for regular service was 18 and in Kelsall 59 (exemptions Delamere 6, Kelsall 5), from an overall population of 424 in Delamere and 598 in Kelsall (see 1821 Census Returns). These figures suggest considerable evasion of the regulations. Boney and the French must have appeared as a remote threat to the citizens of the new Parish and one which could be safely ignored as the war had come to a successful conclusion at Waterloo.

As far as health was concerned it was a question of the survival of the fittest. There was no expert medical help until the 1860s. The Parish register reveals the high rate of infant and child mortality. In 7 years from 1822 the Parish had lost 43 babies and children, many only a few months old. Hygiene in the modern sense was unknown (Delamere Parish Register P108/1). Infectious diseases such as measles and scarlet fever must have taken their toll. Work as a servant girl appears to have been a sexually vulnerable occupation as the Baptism Roll in the Register shows. It has many entries indicating the birth of children to these women and girls. This aspect of the mores of the community is underlined by the three monthly lists of Bastardy Orders recorded in the Petty Session Division's books. The putative fathers were summonsed and if on admission or found guilty were all ordered to pay 1s 6d weekly to the mother and 10 shillings to the midwife. The number of such orders for the whole division appears to have been fairly constant at 40 annually. Failure to pay brought a prison sentence. The weekly payment had to continue until the child was able to fend for him or herself. This behaviour is confirmed as traditional comment by Daniel King. In 1656 Daniel King published the travel account written by William Smith and William Webb on Cheshire. "The people live there till they be very old; some are grandfathers, their fathers yet living; and some are grandfathers before they be married. Likewise be the women very friendly and loving, in all kinds of housewifery expert, fruitful in the bearing of children after they be married, and sometimes before."

The Abbey Arms Inn has been described, but it is pertinent to ask why it was chosen by the magistrates as the meeting place for their Court. It can be assumed that it was the Cholmondeley family who built the inn, the only coaching hostelry within the forest boundary. This was one of the immediate results of the Award and of course the land was Oakmere. The

magistracy was a voluntary body. Justices of the Peace were all drawn from the local gentry such as George Wilbraham, Col. Tomkinson from Willington and William Atkinson, a Lancashire mill-owner from Ashton Heyes. The work of the JP had been performed in piecemeal fashion in different local pubs and at home but now with increasing work and eventually with a professional police force it was essential that their deliberations should be carried out in an impartial central building, with good communications in all directions. The Inn appeared to fit the bill.

The JP's business was varied and increasingly so as 19th century legislation increased in complexity but so far as Delamere was concerned, including its neighbourhood, two offences were constantly on the clerk's list. One was trespass in search of game (an acceptable form of local sport) and the other was drunkenness. Poaching was usually punished by a £5 fine or three months spent in the local prison, the House of Correction, Middlewich. Drunkenness, providing it did not lead to riotous behaviour, was also awarded a light fine but frequently gangs of Kelsall men were found on the Ashton highway, drunk, obstructing and behaving riotously and these offenders usually ended up in jail. The gangs were quarrymen returning from their work, with their wages, from the huge Manley Quarry which was supplying stone for the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. Such men were George Cowap, James Cawley, John Johnson, James Jones, Robert Hollingworth, James Joinson and another Johnson from Delamere.

There were numerous applications for licenses, often beerhouses, so here once again the number of places of refreshment is striking. In 1869 The Saddlers' had become The Farmers Arms (James Pine). There were also The Foresters' (William Bate), The Boot Inn (John Prescott) and The Carters' Arms (William Gleave). A curious rule was the necessity laid on farmers who permitted hare shooting to report the names of the sportsmen. Cruelty to animals was an indictable offence, although of rare occurrence. Equally unusual was the case of cock fighting at Horton-cum-Peel, brought by the RSPCA in 1865. This must have been widely advertised as it was attended by personnel from London, Dublin and Lancashire as well as the local farmers. All the chief participants were fined and among them was James Cubbon who had been nominated as High Constable for Eddisbury. There is a dramatic absence of offences against property: a small essay in vandalism by three Kelsall men who attempted to remove the Guide Post (invaluable to travellers to the forest) was exceptional and there was almost no evidence of criminal behaviour in 40 years of Sessions Minutes. After 20 years the Court Room at the Abbey was proving too cramped but it took 10 years of complaints to the authorities before a Police Headquarters was built 200 yards from the inn which provided better accommodation for the JPs. This in turn has been superseded by other premises in Northwich in 1987.

All the local parishes for centuries had their Court Leet or Court Baron at

which the freeholders were able to discuss the agricultural failings or trespasses of their neighbours and other matters of farming interest and had the authority to impose fines. Delamere did not have this outlet. This must have caused difficulty for the authorities as nobody was responsible for the collection of the Land tax, for example in 1825 "The Land tax assessments are wanting ... for the townships of Delamere, Eddisbury, Kingswood and Oakmere." The Constable must have taken on the task. When in 1894 legislation was passed setting up Parish Councils an unusual experience faced the newly elected Councillors. Delamere met for the first time on December 4th 1894. Predictably there were seven farmers elected, Alfred Barnett, Alfred Bettley, John Crawford - ex Crowfoot - farmer and woodman, Earle Rutter, George Rathbone, George Wimpenny, and George Wright from Quarry lane, quarryman and builder. The Rev.W.Payne was both Chairman and Treasurer. The Clerk appointed was Thomas Large, assistant Overseer. They decided to meet in spring, summer and autumn so from the end of October until April no Council meetings were held. The quarryman appears to have put his area forward, forwarding complaints about the rough state of Black Hatch attributed to the supply of water from Mr. J.C. Needham's pump. Considerable concern was expressed over the condition of local roads, especially if they were on the Enclosure Award Map. In fact this map was their Bible and was constantly being consulted. Oakmere had split off from Delamere at this time and had its own meeting in the old Court Room on November 1st 1894 to hear the Clerk to the Overseers explain the Act. The following month there was no poll but seven men agreed to serve, H.E. Wilbraham taking the Chair, the first Police constable William Jones, James Lewis, Fred Oakes, John Robinson, William Walley, Thomas Walton and Isaac Wilson. The Award Map was put to frequent use as a survey was made of remaining areas of waste, and also when the Council decided to walk the boundary of the Parish of Oakmere. The end of the First World War and the demobilisation of the troops revealed the shortage of houses. Six were required and built; two near Lob Slack, two near the smallholdings and two on the Tarporley Road. Frith Avenue off Station Road dates from this time, but the council houses at the back of the school were built just before the Second World War, again on land donated by the Frith family. Northwich Rural District Council also constructed the main sewer and the County made a pavement from Delamere Lodge to the church - all this in 1927. The Second World War had immediate effect on the quiet countryside. Preparation for air raids had to be made and arrangements made for the reception of the Liverpool families whom the authorities had evacuated from danger zones. These matters were organized by Mr. Philip Rutter, the Parish Council Chairman (Oakmere), in conjunction with Delamere and with Mr. Everett, mine host at The Abbey Arms.

Chapter 9

WILLINGTON

*"a beautiful wooded promontory of rock shoots out
from the forest near Kelsall hill."*

Ormerod

Willington or Wynflaeda's farm. It is idle but interesting to speculate about the identity of this woman. Her name suggests Anglo-Saxon origin like Aethelflaeda, the daughter of Alfred, who defended the sandstone ridge, the western boundary of Mercia, from Viking attack. Surely she must have been important, of outstanding personality for her name to be enshrined in the name Willington. The settlement derived from her farm is noted in the Domesday inquiry "1 hide paying tax, Land for 2 ploughs, 2 villagers have 1 plough; woodland half league long and 1 acre wide, wasted, value before 1066 8 shillings now 10 shillings." Her forest clearing must have been well chosen for water and good earth to have survived the "wasting".

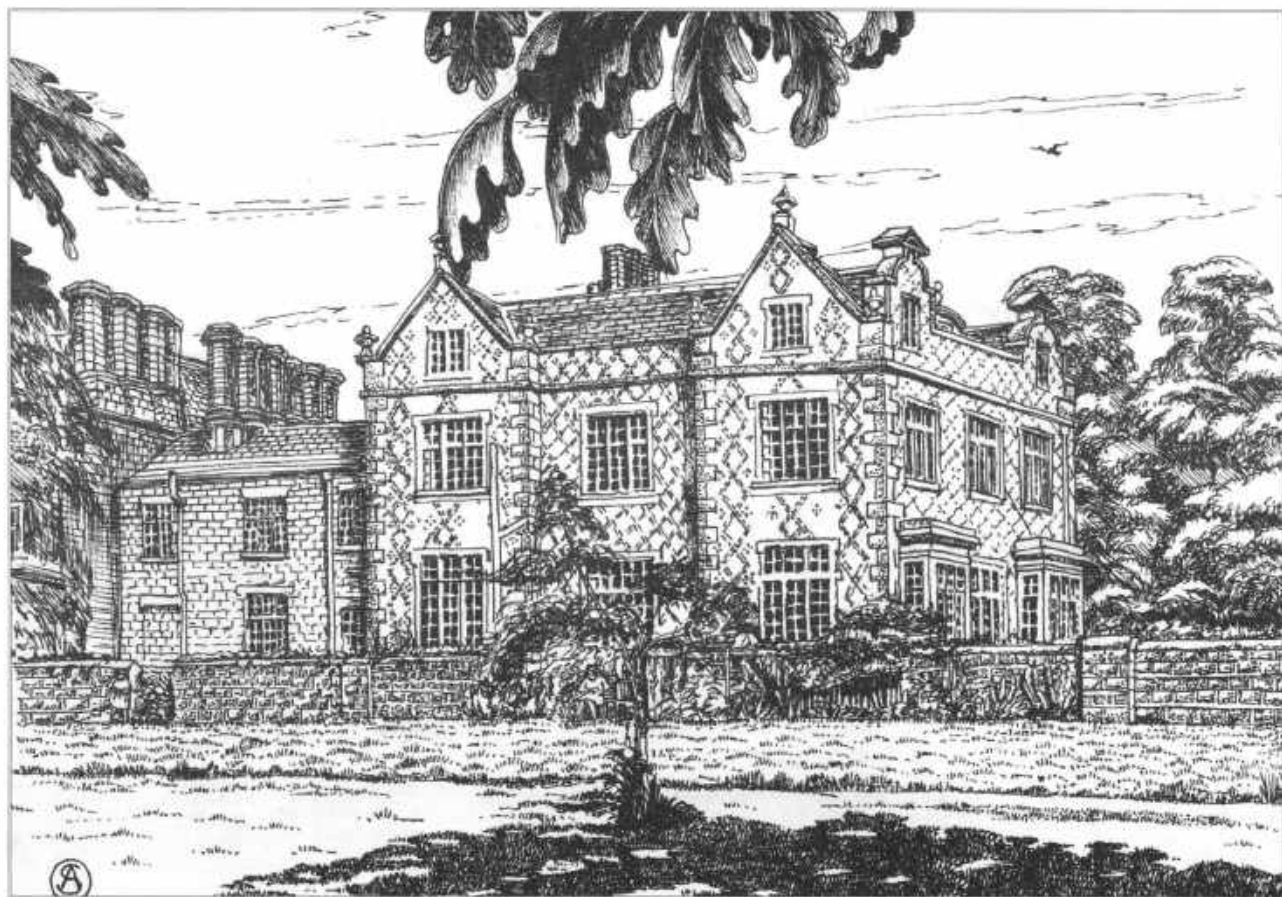
Hugh Despenser, one of the Norman followers of Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester, gave Wynlaton to the Abbot of Stanlow on the banks of the River Mersey. The Abbot, however, must pay 10 shillings rent annually in Chester. This conventional gesture of penitence was to have lasting consequences to the settlement's status. The Abbot's tenants here were released from forest dues and tithes and this customary ecclesiastical exemption continued until modern times. The monks were compelled to abandon Stanlow because of the flooding of the Mersey's high tides and were fortunate to be granted a fine site on the River Lune where they built their new Abbey at Whalley. In its Coucher Book (Chetham Soc.) Wynlaton is itemized in the list of the Abbatial granges and remained as a Whalley possession until the Dissolution of the Religious Houses in 1542. It was then annexed by the Leghs of Booth. In turn in 1593 it came into the ownership of the Master Forester, Sir John Done. In 1614, in reference to the commutation of small tithes, Sir John Done mentioned that "I now have a property in Crown grounde called Willanton taken and stated to belong to the Abbey of Whalley, as claim that his ancestors had a great stock for all the tythes of wooll, lambe and kyne." It remained with his successors until it was bought in 1828 by Major Wm. Tomkinson who transformed the farms and woods into a family estate thus continuing its air of separateness. Echoes of centuries of monastic ownership can be heard in the name W(h)alley's gate, which led into the forest opposite the top exit of

Roughlow, and the Monk's Heath which eventually was cultivated in the 18th century as part of Rock Farm. But Willington has retained its independence from parochial control. Its remote position must have made it an unattractive addition to the huge parish of Tarvin or to the Enclosure Commissioners in 1812. In Tarvin's Parish Registers Willington was referred to either as "an extra Parochial place adjoining this Parish" or "Willington Wood", suggesting that the settlement was synonymous with the farm. Today it is the largest extra-parochial area in the County; a small community unrepresented by the first tier of local government and still enjoying minor ecclesiastic privileges. A fleeting glimpse of the farm in mediaeval times is given by the entry in the Chamberlain's Accounts rendered at Chester's Exchequer in 1303-4. Among the lists of Trespass and Escapes came the complaint "the township of Wilaton and Clotton amerced 5s 4d, because they did not come to the Forest Eyre (Court)", (Lancs and Ches Record Soc, vol 59). This rings true to form!

In 1627 the Survey of Delamere Forest was mapped with professional skill by Richard Daines, assistant to Sir Thomas Fanshaw, Surveyor General to the Crown. One of the smaller commons was Willington (enclosed in 1795), a slice of cleared land stretching from Abraham's Well in the hollow below Roughlow to the Door at Tirley End into the forest. Much of the monastic farm land was described as waste (104 acres) but stretching southwards along the Utkinton ridge there were still 92 acres of pasture remaining. In addition 11 acres were divided between Richard Ellis and his 3 neighbours. Monk's Heath too is interesting covering 49 acres of scrubland and at that time included in the lands of Fisher's Tenement. A remnant is still visible beside the Sandstone Trail but later this land was transferred to Rock Farm and put under the plough. The important forest gates for the hamlet were "The Door" into the forest to Whistlebitch Well and Master's Gate at Willington Corner. The shape of Willington has hardly changed to-day from its appearance on the 1627 map. Wynflaeda's farm had been overtaken by scrub and woodland but under the Ardern estate management became one of their larger, fertile farms known as Willington Wood. Exemption from the Diocese of Lichfield's tithes did not apply to the local leys (rates). These were assessed and collected by the churchwardens of Tarporley parish church and were chiefly concerned with the poor, the Constable's expenses and the Highways. The administration of the Elizabethan Act of Settlement always cost money, particularly if vagrants or Irish beggars visited the township. Willington Wood's second Poor Ley was £8 15s (signed by Caleb Briscall) in 1740. Depending on the terms of the lease, either the landlord or the tenant paid the tax. Often the farmer sent his repair bill, accompanying his leys demand. William Baugh in 1756 asked Jonathan Brayne the bailiff for £4 10s for wintering the Ardern sheep: accompanying this was the leys statement. "Willington ha(e)yys and township: Land Tax £3 10s 7d and the Poor ley £1 5s 6d. Mid

18th century Willington Wood was a thriving farm and, with the Willingtons, was one of the most valuable properties belonging to the Ardern estate. In 1756 the tenant was Samuel Filken. He was replacing the farmhouse's thatched roof with slates and doing the work himself. For improvements to the farm buildings he employed a carpenter, stonemason, probably William Briscoe from Kelsall from whom he bought flags and slates, and a labourer; the total cost being almost £48. The bill was sent to the bailiff. This was the era of the improving landlord. The new ideas on farming were percolating slowly into Cheshire. Monk's Heath from being part of Fisher's tenement by the last decade of the 18th century had become part of Rock Farm, west of The Willingtons and had nearly doubled in size to 80 acres. The strict conditions of tillage and the use of manure and marl written into the 1788 short lease suggests a better informed understanding of land use. In spite of these efforts rent valuation was modest, £100 for just over 100 acres at Willington Wood and £9 15s for 10 acres of Monk's Heath. These valuations were made in 1754.

In 1815 Sir John Sinclair, Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, had estimated that Cheshire land would fetch 30 shillings an acre. However, after the long war with France was at last brought to a victorious conclusion in the same year, agricultural values slumped, and proprietors such as Lord Alvanley, heir to his dead uncle John Arden, were forced to sell some of their land. In 1827 Willington was sold for £24,000 to Major Tomkinson, third son of the Rev. Henry Tomkinson, Rector of Davenham, and related to the ancient Tollemache family. The three tenants who were in occupation had to be bought out as some of the Willington Wood farm land was required for the proposed new Hall site, its garden and parkland. William Gilbert the farmer finally signed an agreement on March 21st 1828 by which his tenancy was terminated and he was to be paid £523 in instalments by the Alvanley estate, but in the end it was Major Tomkinson who made the payments. The specification for the Hall was signed in Nantwich on May 12th 1818. These were the terms. The masonry was to be made of the best quality stone quarried on the estate. This may be the origin of the quarry nearly opposite the entrance to Rock Farm; there is another larger quarry on the Willington land, which later became the family swimming pool. The present Sandstone Trail passes it by, but no walker could fail to enjoy the beauty of the panoramic view of Beeston Crag and the Peckfortons which unrolls before the eye at this point. Brick in Flemish Bond was to be used for the walls and must tie in with the masons' work. The chimney flues were to be made out of "quick withies well pargetted with a mixture of hair mortar and cow dung." Mortar was to be composed of best Welsh lime mixed with two parts sand and the slates must be Bangor Queens. The work was to be carried out in a workmanlike manner. The architect was George Latham. His design was in the neo-Elizabethan style much in fashion at that time. The total cost in



Willington Hall

1828 was £5,000. The mill, its house, 3 pools and field and Burnt Croft were all linked to the Hall. Willington Wood Farm, shorn of much of its acreage, retained the following fields:- Round Brow, Foxholes, Long and Smooth Woods and the Brick Kiln field, identified to-day by its brick paved approach.

Wynflaeda's farm had been well chosen for conversion into a small compact estate. It lay in a secluded spot, sheltered from the north by the well-wooded ridge with good pasture, fertile soil and beautiful spring water obtained in particular from the hollow below Roughlow known as the Pearl Hole and earlier as Abrahams Well. One wonders if this well was so named after a particular man, perhaps a gamekeeper or forester. Later this became the main water supply to the village. A new experience was in store for the small collection of farmers and cottagers of Willington. Instead of paying rent to an absentee landlord such as were Whalley Abbey and the Master Foresters, the new owner was building his Hall with the intention of making his family home there among them. Estate cottages of distinctive design were built eventually housing members of the estate staff such as the game keeper and grooms.

The landed gentry were well aware of the ignorance and superstition of many of the cottagers and their families. They had improved their land in the 18th century but following the accession of Queen Victoria there was a growing realisation of the importance of education.

Although the Church had founded Delamere school in 1846 and a few Willington children walked or rode through the woodland to reach it, it was too far away. Col. Tomkinson founded Willington School, free and undenominational, in 1848. It met in a large cottage close to the Hall and apart from the payment of 1d per week was free to all comers. By 1850 seventy children were on the Roll. The school, which had a good reputation and is still remembered to-day by several former pupils, closed down in 1934 when the present county primary school was built in Kelsall. During the spring and summer the Delamere curate used to ride over to conduct services in the school. There was no church although the Methodists had built their chapel in 1823 on Roughlow (now Chapel Lane). Miss Cubbon was the last head mistress and she recalled her happiness and pleasure in her teaching life at Willington. The great Christmas parties for the children, laid on at the hall, must not be forgotten; each child received a much appreciated present; the girls frocks are remembered to this day! It was a popular annual event.

The commutation of tithes had been legalised in 1836. Only 289 acres of Willington land was liable and in 1849 this was commuted to £30. This may appear to be of little interest but this payment to the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield illustrates an inheritance from pre-reformation days when the great Mercian diocese exercised ecclesiastical authority as far as Lancashire. The tithe on corn and hay still belonged to the Vyse family

descendant from the post reformation impropiator, the Rector of Tarvin. A few traditions survived into the modern world.

By 1850 the rentals had increased, reflecting the booming prosperity of farming. Edward Robinson rented his reduced acreage (164) at Willington Wood for £240; William Newport's 88 acres of Roughlow £200; Rock Farm's 147 acres for £260. The neighbourhood of Willington Corner was tenanted by families with familiar names, Golborne and Woodward. Miss Hilditch rented the cottage (still standing) for £5. Somehow a slice of the Old Common remained unenclosed at Master's Gate, clearly only a fraction of what must have survived for communal grazing for cattle and geese when the estate was bought. To celebrate the old Queen's Jubilee (1897) the Tomkinsons built a Reading Room and house and formed a cricket club with the pitch alongside - most likely on a piece of remaining common land. This must have been the area of common which caused concern to the new Delamere Parish Councillors. Accordingly, recorded in the Council Minutes for 1899 "permission given to James Tomkinson at Willington Hall to improve the said common". Now only a morsel remains, planted up with trees and maintained by Vale Royal District Council. It was round the Master's Gate or corner that the cottages clustered, including the blacksmith whose forge stood in Oaktree Farm's Yard. As in Delamere during the 19th century there were no shops, as self-sufficiency made such an innovation unnecessary. An expedition in pony and trap to Tarporley, only 4 miles distant, would amply reward the most discerning housewife as by 1850 the little market town boasted a wide variety of goods and services. The population in Willington was very small, only 109 in 1811 and growing to 153 in 1891 (Victoria County History).

There was no parish church in Willington, partly because there was no parish. Consequently there was no Chapel of Ease, as in Kelsall which was attached to the mother church of St. Andrew's, Tarvin. (The first Chapel of Ease in Kelsall was built in 1844). There was the Methodist chapel (1823) and the earlier Presbyterian chapel (1817), both with Sunday Schools to serve the sparse scattered population. Both were unlicensed judging from their absence from the lists of licensed non-conformist places of worship. That would not of course concern the solitary cottager to whom religious worship must have been a new experience and to whom the Church of England may well have appeared remote. The enthusiasm of the followers of Charles Wesley was frowned on by the clerical establishment, but one must conclude that it was the challenge of Methodism in the forest's enclosed territory which spurred on the local gentry, such as Col. Tomkinson, to finance the building of the prominently sited stone neo-Gothic church in Kelsall in 1860, replacing the earlier chapel of humble size and appearance which he also helped to finance in 1844. Methodism denied that poverty was inevitable. Perhaps more important, it affirmed that salvation had nothing to do with social position and that churchless

outcasts, if converted, could enjoy real self-respect. The better off were encouraged to give to the poor and this would reduce the poor rate administered by the Church of England churchwardens. In 1867 it was Col. Tomkinson who chaired a meeting of a number of gentlemen, inhabitants of Kelsall and the neighbourhood, to raise money for the fencing and draining of the new graveyard on the motion of the Rev. Dalton, seconded by Mr. Dean; this was to stretch in front of the new church of St. Philip's. "Resolve that the following noblemen and gentry be invited to become patrons". Some disagreement between the chairman and his committee must have occurred, as on September 12th 1870 Col. Tomkinson was claiming the repayment of £180 from the churchwardens. However a dignified denial and refutation of the claim was carried "That as Col. Tomkinson voluntarily took upon himself to build a new church on consideration that the Inhabitants of the District allowed him to dispose of the old church. No claim or Demand whatever can honourably and fairly be made against them."

In Willington the Memorial Cottages were given to the neighbourhood by the family in memory of Major Tomkinson who died in 1812. There are four cottages and although in poor condition they still display an attractive design and are well sited above land allocated as gardens but now derelict. The houses were designed specifically for local old people but unfortunately the Trust which was in the hands of the Rectors of Delamere and Tarvin has fallen into abeyance, with depressing results.

An unusual event which must be recorded is the making of the German Wall on Roughlow. In 1946 the County Council steam roller engine had toppled overboard taking a good deal of road and bank with it into the dell far below Roughlow. There was a desperate shortage of manpower at that time so an inspired decision was made to set the German prisoners of war to the task of rescue and repair. They soon demonstrated their native capacity for hard work and engineering skill. The result is for all to see today. *(The editors have tried, unsuccessfully, to verify the story of the steam roller but the road did collapse in 1946 and it was repaired by POWs.)*

The early Parish Registers of Tarvin Parish occasionally come up with a Willington entry. The Halls, mentioned earlier in connection with the 1627 map, were the Willington millers and therefore one of the leading families in the tiny hamlet, important enough to have their own forest gate. By 1793, Richard Hall was sufficiently prosperous to leave a will. A century had passed and his descendant was to be found at the mill. It must be noted that the mill was inevitably sited near the source of water power, the linking ponds and lade in the meadow lay 400 yards to the south of the present farmhouse where Mill Lane now stops, but where in times past it must have continued as a cart track down to the mill. In the Poll Book of 1701-02 comprising "a List of the Freeholders of the several Townshippes



Willington Memorial Cottages

... in the hundred of Eddisbury" qualified by property valued at 40 shillings to vote for a Parliamentary candidate, in comparison with Kelsall's 11, Willington had only 2, Nathaniel Billington and Ranel (Ranulph?) Hasselhurst. The hamlet of Willington and the township of Kelsall were closely linked by kith and kin, although physically remote lying in meadow and wood without any road communication until 1819. A cart track to the mill and a second track parallel to the present Willington Lane possibly finishing at Manor Hall Farm were the sole means of communication. Finchett was a well established Kelsall family but when Anne married Philip Rutter in 1759 they were described as "both from Willington". Again the miller's family turns up in Edward Hall, one of the 19th century tenants of the Willington estate.

A second beautiful large house was built in 1906 on the rolling country of the ancient Willington pasture, commanding sweeping views of Beeston and the Peckfortons and important enough to merit an entry in the Pevsner-Hubbard "Buildings of Cheshire". This is Tirley Garth, built at the direction of Bruno Mond, completed by the second owner R.A.Prestwich, both well known industrialists. It is a second neo-Elizabethan Hall designed by C.E.Mallows "an architect in the Voysey-Baillie-Scott succession and a brilliant draughtsman. It is the magnum opus of this architect. The two lodges and a house nearby are his also ... the gardens both formal and landscaped, a delightful dell, are by T.H.Mawson". This house is now the H.Q. of the British branch of Moral Re-Armament. Willington Hall has become a hotel.

The Willington file cannot be closed without mention of the cottage at the corner of Willington Lane and Oscroft Road. It is rough-harled with a variety of sea shells and gravel and was the original post office at the corner opposite its to-day's counterpart. (*There is no longer a post office in Willington*). The postmistress Mrs. Vickers is well remembered as devoted to her job over many years. Her husband was closely associated with the Tomkinson family. Amongst a variety of duties he was in charge of the village water supply which came directly from the Pearl Hole. One day he returned soaked to the skin. He had suffered an impromptu bath!

Willington Wood had become the Home Farm, but in the 20th century the area was distinguished by its success in market gardening rather than dairying. The sheltered situation, southwest exposure and fertile warm soil favoured early and beautiful crops of both hard and soft fruits especially apples and blackcurrants. These products were sold at the local markets in Chester, Frodsham, Knutsford, Liverpool and Manchester. It was here that the Winsor horticultural empire was born in land by Chapel Lane. And here too the file on Willington closes: it is still a place apart.

Chapter 10

KELSALL: EMERGING FROM THE FOREST

"Neeld's Well a fyne spring within a flight sbott of it."

1632 Survey of Longley (Common) DAR/E/56 C.R.O.

Kelsall, Delamere and Willington, although closely related, are all three different both in origin and character. Delamere was created by an Act of Parliament, becoming a farming community guided and dominated by the landed interest in conjunction with the Church. Willington slowly evolved from the soil under centuries of monastic protection, which in turn was eventually replaced by the management of a private estate. Kelsall's beginnings are shadowy, unmentioned in Domesday, eventually becoming a remote township within the bounds of the large, ancient parish of Tarvin. Not till 1894 did the township become a civil parish in its own right and not until 1952 did St. Philip's Chapel of Ease become the head of an ecclesiastical parish, independent of the mother church of St. Andrew, Tarvin.

The two determining influences in shaping Kelsall have been shown to be the road and the forest. Its long, narrow elongated shape has remained unchanged for centuries, little changed to-day from Richard Daines' 1627 map, where it is shown to be straightjacketed between vast areas of common and waste, Longley to the north, Kelsall Smeath (marshland) to the south. This was all Crown forest land. Longley was wooded, had good drainage as it rose to 510ft and possessed fine spring water and mineral wealth, sandstone already being quarried by 1627. The low-lying area between Willington and Prior's Heys was often under water and even in the years after the end of the Second World War was prone to flooding. The mediaeval settlers' survival depended on employment by the Crown, either in the forest or in the quarries. For food they depended on self-sufficiency achieved by sharing in the cultivation of the open field and strips close to their hovels. As the settlement in Dog Lane grew, so did the need for more land. Hence the catalogue of increasing encroachments on the commons, especially on Longley. Hamon and Joanne de Masey were amerced for assarting on the Master Forester's Langeship (Longley) in 1333. A bundle of documents dated 1632 contains interesting references to Longley Wood in what is an inventory of Ralph Done's property. The rough sketch map shows the shape of the area and drawn in are boundary marks, such as

Woodsyde, Mylison's Well, Ashton Gate, natural objects used as boundary markers. John Minshull 'misured' (measured) it to find that it contained 63 Cheshire acres or 120 statute acres. These points including Robert Wright's house (site of Lower Longley Farm on the edge of Ashton common) can be identified today. Double Pits Pool is shown and the Rag Way from the Coach Road to Woodside close to the edge of the forest (marked by a speckling of dots). Ashton Gate is surely the entrance to Shay Lane. However, it was not until the mid 18th century that pressure was building up to have the common enclosed. The comments of the luckless surveyor sent by the Master Forester's Land Agent suggests passive resistance on the part of the Kelsall freeholders, several of whom had already taken up common land and built their cottages, without permission and without paying rent. Mr. Walley wrote to say that he had been surveying for two days in Kelsall "but was obliged to come away yesterday morning for want of proper information ... The people I met were not able to satisfie me about the premes (premise) and those that were able were out of the way and not to be found."

The freeholders' intransigence is confirmed in the proceedings of the Court Leet, 16th Oct. 1758, in which twenty-nine names were presented and sentenced for enclosing and encroaching on the waste within the Manor. Unless the cottages were thrown down by 2nd Feb. 1759 a heavy fine would follow. Since members of the Court Leet were the offenders, few complied with the ruling. These were Wm. Briscoe, Thos. Robinson, Robt. Wright, Thos. Crawley, Thos. Garner and Wm. Hignett. That year the son of the Master Forester, writing to his fellow landowner on Longley, referred to the problem remarking that "persons having no pretence of right to the prejudice of the Lords (of the Manor) we should join in bringing ejectments.". Longley was finally enclosed in 1809. An interesting comment was made in 1795 by one of the claimants for grazing rights, on the uses of the Common - "he had seen trees being burned for charcoal and warming himself in the charcoal burners' hut, when he was tending his father's sheep on the Common."

As stone was required for building, the ownership of the Longley Royalties and mineral rights was challenged by the Earl of Plymouth. The grounds for his claim failed. The justification for the Enclosure was expressed in the preamble to the Award. "Longley affords little profit at present but the same would if divided and inclosed, be of great advantage to the several persons interested therein and be of public utility." The following Kelsall men were all accorded ownership rights, presumably because they had established themselves on the Common for the statutory twenty-one years; Edw. Briscoe gent, Thos. Hitchcock Esq, Thos. Dean gent and the owner of Oulton Park, John Egerton.

Enclosure of forest and common had gathered momentum. Kelsall Smeath, or Weetwood Common, in the ownership of the Earl was also enclosed.

Carved out of it were 55 acres to become a new farm, The Commons. A condition of this process was the continued enclosure of 3 acres for the use of the township officers for the storage of gravel and sand. The Chapel Bank in the centre of Kelsall had been allocated by the Delamere Commissioners for a similar purpose. It is thanks to them that we owe the survival of the only piece of Common land in the parish.

Kelsall Hall Farm was carved out of Longley after its enclosure and judging from the 1831 Ardern Estate Timber book, with its valuation lists, must have continued to be thickly wooded for many years. The landowners of the 18th and early 19th centuries were aware of the importance and value of their woodlands. Samuel Briscoe, the tenant of Kelsall Hall, had a walnut tree in his garden and a considerable plantation of oaks, ash and alder, doubtless self-sown from the ancient forest and valued at £1080 12s 1d. Old Longley also grew beech, horse chestnut, poplar, larch and pine, much of it soon to disappear. Now alas only windbreaks of towering alien cypresses stand out as strange landmarks. Kelsall Green, identified as a slice of the old common just north of the Coach Road, grew sycamore and elm; oak and poplar grew along Barber's Lane. On the damp sides of the Old Road or Hollow Way grew willow, poplar, oak and ash. Kelsall at the turn of the 19th century was thickly wooded; the small cottages and crofts were like islands in a leafy wilderness.

In a number of ways the village has missed the benefits of early planning and direction which might have been part of the improvements proposed by a progressive resident Lord of the Manor. The splendid situation of Kelsall might well have been turned to better advantage and some coherence given to the village. Instead the passing of the 1812 Act released land for some farming and a hotch potch of building, continuing to this day at ever accelerating pace. It still seems to be frontier country.

Further evidence of the important role played by quarrier and mason is to be found in the records of the Quarter and Petty Sessions. The employment of Kelsall craftsmen on the repair of local bridges has already been referred to in a previous chapter. Often the same men are to be found working on the farm buildings of the Ardern estate, usually a member of the numerous Briscoe family. It was local men too who were recruited by the Master Forester to bear witness against the trespass of Ralph Bruen of Stapleford. He had claimed the right to quarry on Castle Hill, clearly within the forest bounds and so lost his case (end of 16th century). This disused quarry can be identified to-day opposite the old marl pit, forbidding and full of black water. There was a final quarry to be opened in the area in 1816, the great quarry in Willington Lane (Quarry Lane), before stone was overtaken by brick as the local building material. In August 1815 lots 1, 7 and 8 were auctioned at The Red Lion in Tarvin and knocked down to that enterprising Liverpooldian John Gunnery for £143. This covered four acres of the eastern escarpment starting some 200 yards

from the junction with the turnpike. This stretch under agreement had to be left untouched in case the turnpike required it for diversion. This accounts for the much later building of the three dwelling houses erected round about 1904. The quarry must have presented a dramatic scar along the hillside before it was screened from view by a line of assorted cottages. In the 1880s the Rathbone brothers retired and the quarry became obsolete. For £285 it became the property of that new phenomenon, the speculative builder. Soon George Wright had built cottages on the floor of the quarry although the rock face had never been made professionally secure from rock falls. Eight houses were built; one of the final ones was of brick to become the home of the builder.

The nature of the stonemasons' village was primitive in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The evidence of a rough, rowdy village is borne out by the building of a lock-up or Round House in the early 19th century. Reference has already been made to the drunken behaviour of gangs of quarriers brought to the judgement of the court at the Abbey. This stone cell was placed strategically opposite The Royal Oak at the junction of Dog Lane with the turnpike. (On a map of 1840, Kelsall Hill Township, is indicated lot 323 pinfold and Round House). It stood next to the pinfold where stray cattle, like erring men, were impounded. At the Spring Quarter Sessions 1842 the magistrates criticized the Kelsall lock-up as "unfit for use further than to detain a prisoner an hour or two". Two years later the special magistrates committee concerned with prisons, on which Col. Tomkinson from Willington served, recommended (after a ruling that the necessary straw, blankets and rugs should be available) the transference of all prisoners in Kelsall to Frodsham or Tarporley. (Frodsham has a fine example of a Round House at the gate to St. Lawrence's parish church.)

If social behaviour was often primitive, agriculture as practised as late as 1812 and even later appeared mediaeval. Barber's Lane, which probably started at the Cross at the end of Dog Lane before being turnpiked, led directly to the town fields. This was where the cultivation in severalty was conducted, mostly pastoral, which required strict control of the stock. In 1694 the jury at the Manor Court Leet found Thomas Wright at fault "for putting more cattle on the town field than he had gates for: fined 2/-." The town fields were to be found on both sides of Back Lane which continues over Barber's Lane to cross the fields to Street Farm to this day. There are still a few remnants of these fields to be seen although vanishing rapidly under the wheels of the tractor and its plough. The continuity of field patterns in the township is striking and well illustrated by the 1735 Egerton Estate Map and the 1838 Tithe Map and even the 1874 O.S. map shows the town fields as before. In conjunction with the flexible Cheshire version of the open field system was that expression of local opinion the Manor Court. Reports of many of these meetings have survived

illuminating the proceedings and attitudes of the village community particularly with regard to farming, its success a vital necessity to families living in frontier country.

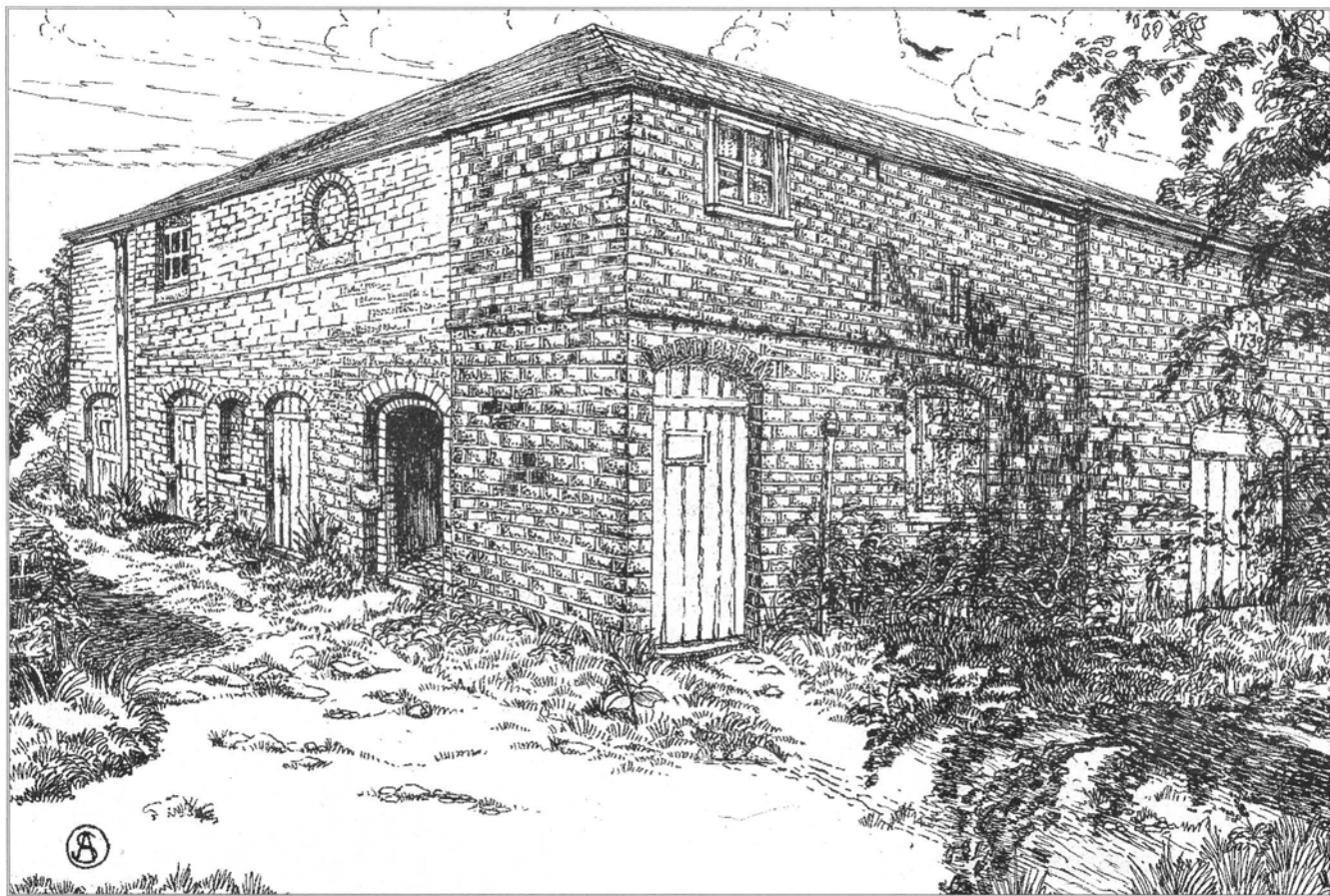
The reports of the Manor Court Leets have been preserved in the Ardern estate papers written by the various bailiffs who always took the chair. (1680, 1690, 1694, 1697, 1758 and 1817 accounts). The freeholders met and elected a jury of twelve of their members from a gathering of sixty men meeting outside at the Cross. For the period under review the men's concerns were with encroachment on the common, illegal inclosure, failure to clean ditches, upkeep of road to town fields and, on one occasion, an order to channel the water in the Hollow land (the Hollow Way or mediaeval road to Chester). An offence brought before the 1604 Court Leet stated "that they were not maintaining the way, bringing the water into its wonted course." The men were also concerned with minor agricultural misdemeanours. The officials elected at these Leets were chiefly concerned with the maintenance of the status quo on the town field and common which would refer to either Longley or Kelsall Smeath. We read of the Burleymen, the Tenderers of the Common, the Tenderers of the Town field and the two constables, all elected and carrying out their duties as responsible villagers. It seems to have been a rough and ready but effective expression of village democracy. Names which appear time and again become familiar: such as Wright, Lightfoot, Earle, Dentith, Littler, Wimpenny, Cawley, Briscoe, Houghlands and Finchett. Some of the same names appear on the 1702 Poll List for Eddisbury Hundred: Briscoe, Cawley, Dentith, Ackerley, Holland, Finchett, Robinson, Raphson, Wright. Thus a strong sense of local responsibility was fostered and in so doing perhaps paved the way for a rural electorate in the distant future.

The 1838 Tithe Map has already been mentioned as a source of information on the pattern of land ownership. It is the first charted picture of the township, comprehensive, accurate and packed with information. For this benefit we have to thank the 1836 Commutation of Tithes Act of Parliament. Throughout the centuries the levying of taxation had always been the means of assessing population and tax liability and by implication ownership of property. The Act only gave legal recognition to long standing practices. The mediaeval payment of tithes in kind had long ago been abandoned to be replaced by cash but the ecclesiastic beneficiary remained the same as in the 14th century; the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield. This in spite of the fact that Henry VIII had established the Diocese of Chester (1541) to replace the old pre-Reformation Mercian Diocese. One of its canons still held the status of Prebendary of St Andrew's, Tarvin. Another example of historical continuity was illustrated by Tarvin wills being proved at Lichfield through the offices of a surrogate officer in Chester. Such wills were those of the following Kelsall men: Thos. Finchett 1704, yeoman, Thos. Wright 1705, gentleman, James Wimpenny 1710, Edw.

Briscoe 1711, yeoman; John Holland 1715, Wm. Cawley 1720, yeoman, Moses Wimpenny 1778, husbandman (vol 20, 1889 Chester Wills).

Mr M. Muir's study of the Kelsall landscape through the agency of the 1838 map is helpful and illuminating. "Six men owned 64% of the total area showing considerable concentration of ownership and of these six, three were local landowners owning over half of the total between them." (Trustees of the Ardern Estate, Sir P.G. Egerton of Oulton and Mr Booth Gray.) None of these men lived in or visited the township but their interests were represented by their bailiffs. Ann Wimpenny, Daniel Lea and Wm. Dean shared the remaining acres. The residual 36% acreage was divided between the Trustees of the Blue Coat School, Thomas Finchett and others, Wm Jeffs and Edward Rushton; his name remembered in the house and farm buildings opposite The Morris Dancer (formerly The Globe). Around 1830, the Trustees had invested in the Hallowsgate Farm (spelt Allowsgate in the Indenture) perhaps impressed by the appearance of good farm management, a small cruck beamed farm house and a good range of farm buildings. The farm was one of the earliest to be formed out of cleared land; Wm Cawley was the tenant in 1732, soon followed by Thomas and Mary Finchett who had their initials displayed on the plaque below the date 1739 on the stable range which they must have built. Thomas Finchett was a Chester merchant, a Skinner and Glover, but his family had long connections with Kelsall. Another legal document (1755) in connection with his son John lists four local men as signatories, Briscall, Hignett, Houghland, Ralph Norton (cordwainer). Eventually the farm became the property of the Hitchcock family before it finally fell into the hands of the Bluecoat School Trustees who still owned it in the early years of the 20th century. Rookery Farm at the end of Flat Lane dates from the late 17th century and is No. 325 on the map. Its house and buildings are built in the Cheshire vernacular style, timber framed and wattle and daub walls. It is listed but nothing so far is known of its history.

The ancient field names were all shown on the map and its schedule together with the nature of the crops: 292 acres of arable, 857 meadow and pasture and no glebe because there was no church. Nanny's Yacht, Yolk of Egg, Hawk Ridding, Black Birches, Street Side, Frogmill, King William's Croft; this last a remembrance of that day in late June 1690 when William of Orange spent the night as the guest of Col. Roger Whitley at Peel Hall, Ashton, on his fateful journey to Ireland, the Siege of Londonderry and the Battle of the Boyne. The Frogmill may well have been the nickname for a small area of marsh on the newly enclosed Kelsall Smeath. The obliteration of hedges and landmarks did not take place until the EEC and mechanisation changed the character of farming in the mid 20th century. However there were new influences already at work.



Hallowsgate



Rookery Farm

Chapter 11

KELSALL: NEW INFLUENCES CHURCH AND CHAPEL

"There are 3 or 4 who disregard Religion and despise all church authority: more than one half of the Inhabitants never attend any place of public worship; their general excuse that they had neither the clo(a)thes to come to church in,

or they have nobody to leave their children with."

Reply from Vicar of Tattenhall to Bishop's Visitation, 1789.

Throughout the Middle Ages it was the Church that was central to the spiritual and social life of society. The Church was national and international, acknowledging the Pope in Rome as its Head. The tiny forest settlement had St Andrew's Tarvin, in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, as its parish church where all the main sacraments of the religious life took place, baptism, marriage, burial, the hearing of confession and the receiving of absolution. The high points in the annual calendar were all determined by religious feast and holy days, for example Lady Day, Corpus Christi, Michaelmas, All Souls. However, the ties between settlement and church were unlikely to have been close. From the financial angle there was little to attract an impoverished parish priest to visit the distant forest clearings or the monastic farm of "Wilanton Wood" as both were exempt from the payment of tithes. The draught animals were oxen, of little use to transport personnel across the swamps of the Weetwood or along the rough forest tracks. I think it is necessary to draw attention to the changes which took place after the Reformation and Dissolution of the Religious Houses and which must inevitably have affected the lives of the settlers in so far as they recognized their allegiance to Mother Church.

The first evidence of change was the creation of the new diocese of Chester by Henry VIII in 1541 under its first Bishop, Wm. Downham. Thus Lichfield had to relinquish its possession of the Manor of Tarvin, but retained the Bishop's house and a portion of land which later, in 1857, became the site for the Tarvin National School. The conflicting currents of ecclesiastical practice and belief which stemmed from the governments of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary must have been very confusing so it is not surprising to learn that the new Bishop's agents in 1557 found Tarvin church and yard in poor repair.

Elizabeth gave much needed stability to the Protestant settlement, requiring all her clergy to demonstrate their loyalty by signing under the Act of Uniformity. All services were to be read in English and every parish church was required to own an English Bible. She made the keeping of Parish Registers a compulsory duty of the parish priest. Startling differences were in store for St Andrew's. One of the local landowners, Sir John Bruen of Stapleford, inherited his estate in 1585. As the heir he had pursued the conventional life of the young country gentleman of his times but on assuming the responsibilities of a debt-encumbered estate he became a changed man. His wife was a Hardware, a member of a well known Chester Puritan family and mother to his nineteen children. Perhaps it was her influence which inspired him to become a militant Puritan. St Andrew's Sunday services became day-long praying and preaching sessions. He was an iconoclast so the mediaeval stained glass was smashed and the statues and stone pinnacles destroyed. St Andrew's must have looked a sorry sight and certainly was not improved when used as a fortress in the protracted Civil Wars of 1643-45. Bruen also frowned on the traditional celebration of St Andrew's Day, November 30th, and had the festivities curtailed. However, his influence in the introduction of Puritan ideas, anathema to the government, was powerful. The ground was therefore well prepared for the breakdown of the established Church in Tarvin during the Civil Wars and further evidence was the neglect of the Parish Registers, very clearly shown in Tarvin's sample. Militant priests followed in the wake of the Parliamentary troops, successfully dislodging the sitting incumbents. Such a one was Nathaniel Lancaster, self-appointed Rector of Tarporley, who became Chaplain to Sir Wm. Brereton, the successful Cheshire Parliamentary General. Inevitably St Andrew's suffered. This is borne out by the petition brought by the overseers to the Quarter Sessions at Nether Knutsford in 1651 "that theire church being in great decaye, by reason these distracted times concerning now(e) that the Consistory Court, now(e) out of use, their(e) is noe Lawe to inforce them, Doe refuse to paye theire Leyes (Church Tax) assessed on theire Livings for that purpose, by reason whereof others also are unwilling." The Magistrates ordered that the goods of all those who refuse or neglect to pay should be distrained. An echo of the dilapidation of the church furniture comes in 1698 that one Edward Briscoe "ex villa Kelsall" (churchwarden) had been employed renewing the pews.

During the 18th century, church and government were close allies. St Andrew's benefited from this period of tranquility. Further fragmentary information shows that it was the family of stonemasons, the Briscoes, who provided the link between the parish church and Kelsall. Several of them became churchwardens, following the example of their 17th century ancestor Edward. Henry Briscoe, stonemason, in his capacity as churchwarden, signed a conveyance for the installation of pews in the new

gallery and this same Henry has his name inscribed on bell No. 4, 1779, with that of John Blythe, churchwardens. These bells must not be overlooked. Ever since their introduction in 1779 they have rung out their message in musical chimes across the farmland of the parish. A message was inscribed on each of the six bells, No. 1: Peace and good neighbourhood, No. 2: Fear God: Honour the King, No. 3: Thos. Rudhall, Gloucester, founder, No. 5: Rev. Thos. Dickenson Vicar, No. 6: Come at my call, Serve God All.

Ten years later (1789) the Bishop's Visitation illuminates the political and social climate in the late 18th century. Only a generation after the '45, the Jacobite rebellion which had shaken the complacency of the church and state and was fresh in men's minds, the Papists and their possible connection with Britain's arch enemy France were the contemporary bogey men. Hence all parochial clergy were required to answer searching questions as to the presence in their parish of adherents of the old faith. Almost as searching were the inquiries as to the numbers and categories of Dissenters. The conduct of the parochial clergy in the management and understanding of their duties did not go unnoticed. Thos. Dickenson who had been Vicar of Tarvin and was a local magistrate for the last 40 years gave cautious non-committal answers. His reply to the query "Are there any who disregard the Church?" was "None who profess to disregard the Church: but there are too many of their number I cannot pretend to a certainty, who commonly absent themselves from church from what I hear, from what motives and principles they are understood to do so I cannot say, except from their becoming Methodist." He was right: the new most powerful influence was Methodism.

The assurance of spiritual refreshment, of hope and comfort to the common man, to the poor, to the outcast, this was a spellbinding interpretation of Christian belief. It was sweeping the countryside even to remotest frontier country. John Wesley had passed through Kelsall on numerous occasions but had never stopped to announce his message. The dramatic camp assembly of men and women on the slope of Mow Cop in Staffordshire in 1812 gave fresh impetus to the movement in the western region of Cheshire. From this revival meeting sprang the Primitive and Forest sects, represented locally by John Crowfoot from Delamere. Three aspects of Methodism will be mentioned here. It emphasized the moral content of Christianity, insisting on sobriety, temperance and anti-gambling, thus tackling well known social evils. Secondly, by the universal foundation of Sunday Schools, the Methodists recognized the importance of education in an illiterate age. Thirdly, the imaginative linking of homely celebrations, such as the harvest supper, to the age-old folk tradition of harvest home sanctified an ancient festival. The ground had been well prepared in Kelsall. Twenty two members from the village had already joined the Chester Circuit (once again a Briscoe in the lead, this time

Thomas) by the end of the 18th century. The first Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built in 1816 in Kelsall "a neat brick edifice", (Bagshawe's Directory). Attached to it was a Day and Sunday School. The following year the Delamere Chapel was built by the Presbyterians and in 1823 the Methodist Chapel in Chapel Lane, Willington, followed, each with Sunday Schools. By this means Kelsall became a Methodist village and remains so to this day.

Meanwhile, the Crown in Delamere had built both church and rectory, providing a substantial glebe in 1815 and much later, in 1864, an unusually fine Church School. Ashton, benefiting from the generosity of its wealthy cotton mill owner, Mr. Wm. Atkinson, gained a well-designed new church, vicarage and school in 1848. The Church did not take up the challenge until 1844 when prodded into action in Kelsall by two local landowners, neither of them residents, Col. Tomkinson of Willington and Mr. Randle Wilbraham of Cuddington.

The tale of Anglican representation within the township illustrates further its isolation in frontier country. A combination of a subscription list, supported to a large extent by persons living outside Kelsall, the magistrates, gentry, and farmers, with the grant from the Church Building Societies, resulted in the erection of the first Chapel of Ease (the title accorded to subsidiary churches built in the outlying districts of an ecclesiastical parish). This chapel was small but pleasantly-situated on rising ground to the east of the village. It was destined to be the site of the future schoolmasters house and, later, the parsonage. The chapel was short-lived. Within twenty years it was condemned to demolition to make way for a much more ambitious project, the building of St Philip's, which eventually was to become the parish church, but not until 1952. A replica of the sketch of the first chapel hangs in St Philip's vestry. The original is lodged in the Chester Record Office. The sad comment attached is "Forsaken and demolished about 1860". The window frames are now at Castle Hill on the Waste. The bricks were used to build the schoolhouse on the site of the Chapel of Ease.

John Dalton from Cumbria was appointed curate in 1844 and he remained in Kelsall until his death in 1900. His salary was £200 p.a. No provision was made for his domestic needs but as he was a man of means he built for himself a comfortable gentleman's residence complete with stables, offices and shippens, on a desirable hillside site well outside the village. This was Northwood Hall which, on his death, became the family farm of the Ashworths. Col. Tomkinson, Mr. R. Wilbraham and the Vicar of Tarvin each contributed to the curate's salary but there was no thought of building a curate's house for future incumbents. There seems to have been hand to mouth provision until the schoolmaster's house was transferred to the church to serve as a parsonage. No purpose-built vicarage was erected until 1981.

In 1841 the population was 686 but ten years later it had declined to 542. In view of Methodism's strongly rooted presence and the continuing loyalty of some churchgoing villagers, such as the Briscoes, to St Andrews, it was a surprising gamble to build such an expensive church as St Philips. It showed considerable confidence in the future of the established Church in Kelsall. Pevsner describes St Philips as "built by T. Bower in 1860. The prevailing fashion at that time was Victorian Gothic so the nave and chancel are late 13th century Gothic. The bellcote awkwardly placed on the nave's east gable, ashlar interior."

The origin of the bell is uncertain. Although it is officially attributed to an English foundry (CRO P23/6/1), its flat uncompromising tone is reminiscent of the bells tolling out from Orthodox churches in Greece. It is believed that Col. Tomkinson brought it back from the Crimea in 1854 as army loot. Old residents always referred to the bell as Balaclava! It was Col. Tomkinson's family who gave the east window, dedicated to the memory of their father. Unfortunately another donor presented the church with an imitation triptych which completely obscured (and still does) the bottom dedication of the window. (*The reredos was donated in memory of Cadet John Oakley RN who died in 1911, aged 16. The painting is a copy of a triptych painted by the Flemish artist Hans Memling in 1491. The original is now in the museum at Lübeck. Thanks to Allan Pearson for this information*). Col. Tomkinson resigned from the Easter Vestry, failing to reach agreement with the churchwardens over money which he considered they owed him but which they stoutly denied. The west window was given by Miss H. Lunt, a local parishioner.

Up to 1861 all burials had taken place in St Andrew's yard but now the sponsors negotiated with the Ardern estate for sufficient land to create a Kelsall graveyard. This included an extremely well-built boundary wall which afforded protection from the New Chester Road long before there was a pavement.

At the turn of the century St Philips was a hub of social activity. Classes included cookery, ambulance, men and women's Bible, shorthand, sewing, cycling, hockey, tennis, glee and dramatics and eventually Scout and Guide companies were formed. However St Philips was still not the parish church and it was a long-delayed decision to campaign for independence from St Andrew's, Tarvin. After the Second World War some active parishioners led by Capt. and Mrs. Strong achieved the seemingly impossible. In 1956 St Philip's became Kelsall Parish Church. Some years later its ecclesiastical boundary was extended to include Quarry and Waste Lanes and Willington at the expense of Delamere.

Meanwhile the Methodist church had become so popular that it had become overcrowded and there was no adequate schoolroom. "A new building was essential ... it was decided to build (1883) new premises (on the old site), the builders being George and Henry Wright and Isaac

Johnson of Kelsall. The buildings to be Gothic in style, of stone, rock pitched faced with Eddisbury stone dressing." A piece of land adjoining was purchased from Mr. R. Littler. It is of interest to note that during the excavations some good Roman artefacts were unearthed, including a number of Roman coins. "The memorial stones of the Chapel were laid on 14th April 1884, the first by Mr. Richard Beckett, the second by Mrs. Edmundson, the third by Mrs. Anne Frith and the fourth by Mr. John Reece. The memorial stone of the Sunday School was laid on 17th May 1884 by the Sunday School scholars and their Superintendent Mr. Chesterson." The final cost was £1,717 2s 3d. Fifty years later, as part of George V's Jubilee celebrations, substantial additions were made, in particular to the Sunday School and to the church offices. On a much smaller scale the Vestry of St Philip's was enlarged. The registration of marriages had always been the sole responsibility of the parish church and for Kelsall that meant St Andrew's, but after 1902 it was legally possible for the Methodist minister to carry out this duty. Land was purchased for a private Methodist burial ground and this came into use in 1911.

Thus a new influence, after long delays, had at last reached frontier country. The final chapter will describe the second influence, education, and the changing social conditions.

Chapter 12

KELSALL: THE ALL-PURPOSE SCHOOL 1844-1958

"The list of object lessons should at once be revised; the list should be based

on objects familiar to the children in this distinctly country district, and they themselves should be encouraged to provide them."

1903: School Inspector, from Log Book,

In the field of education Kelsall continued to be frontier country. In 1844 the National School, which was erected by the Church authorities represented by the Vicar of Tarvin, compared unfavourably in building standards, style and facilities with the neighbouring Church schools of Tarvin, Ashton and Delamere. Unfortunately, the site chosen was selected more with a view to its convenient proximity to the first Chapel of Ease than for its suitability. It was a narrow rocky outcrop over which ran a trickle of water. It was exposed to weather and left little room for expansion. Again it was Col. William Tomkinson and his friends, in collaboration with the Church authorities, who provided initiative and money to found the free Kelsall School. There was agreement on the part of the country gentry that schooling provided by the Church should play an important part in stabilizing the rural population now affected by outside influences, not least by Anabaptists and Methodists. Until the introduction of free schooling, the township population had been illiterate with the few exceptions of those who had received the three Rs at one of the Dames' Schools or had been a pupil at Tarvin Grammar School. Signatures on Indentures were almost always an X with the lawyer's clerk writing the signatory's name alongside. Most girls continued to be unable to sign their names, probably because they were too useful at home to be allowed instruction. Slates and slate pencils formed the customary writing equipment right into the 20th century.

The new school was brick-built, a high barn-like structure, lacking heating, drinking water and sanitation. It was lit by two windows. A porch at either end provided the entrances. According to Bagshawe's 1850 Directory, Richard Carman was the schoolmaster with 90 children in his care. No Log Book existed until the 1870 Act, which effectively introduced compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5 and 13 years and made the keeping of records mandatory. The implementation of the 1870 Act

compelled the Church to recognize that this Cinderella of rural schools required urgent improvement. The following year the decision was made to extend the premises by building a small additional room at right angles to the main schoolroom.

That same year, the additional small room accommodated 47 with 92 attending in the large schoolroom. The local parents did not give a high priority to schooling: for example in 1874 the school opened its doors to 63 children but 100 attended the Church treat the next day! Weather, farming practices, infectious diseases and social events all combined to reduce attendance. Fevers were common. In 1894 the Medical Officer of Health forbade the attendance of all children from Dog Lane (Frodsham Street) on account of the prevalence of diphtheria in that quarter. There was vaccination but immunisation was unknown and hygiene was neither fully understood nor practised. The new official, the School Inspector, was a voice to be heard. In 1894 his report on the school stated that "Handwriting was the best subject, spelling was weak, arithmetic very fair, but wanting in intelligence in the First Class, it is poor. The roof of the cloakrooms required repair."

A later introduction of a lesser official was the School Attendance Officer whose main task was to chase after truants. Mr. Sam Flood was Kelsall's last Officer. What better than another voice from the past, that of an old pupil, Mr. Tommy Astbury, ex policeman, to testify to conditions within the school in the opening years of the 20th century. "The Headmaster was Richard (Dicky) Clarke and was assisted by three female teachers. Miss Moore had charge of the infants, 5 and 6 years old, and occupied the small room, the only classroom. The remainder of the pupils occupied the Big Room. They were divided into three classes. As these were about 100 pupils herded together in such close proximity concentration became somewhat difficult at times. The larger room measured 36'x18'6"; the new addition 25'x18'6". At the far end of the small room a gallery had been constructed to be reserved for the infants. Lighting in the main room was improved by the installation of two more windows. Two fireplaces were added and a tap for cold water (from a butt) was added. At last the importance of sanitation was recognised. Two earth closets for the boys were provided, while for the girls two earth privies were placed against the east wall of the playground cheek by jowl with a public source of water, a pond used by cattle and people, by the track which became Church Street North. All classes were mixed boys and girls. The Headmaster was approaching retiring age, he was the one who had taught my parents. He used the cane indiscriminately and sometimes with the offender across his knee he would put the cane between his teeth and continue the punishment by hand." It is hardly a surprise to learn that when the Hunt rode down the road half the boys in the class rushed out to follow the chase. Punishment followed the next morning. Miss Hannah Johnson,

displaying her independence of character from an early age, confirmed Tommy Astbury's account and related how she rebelled, defending her brother from punishment, how they refused to return to Kelsall School but preferred to walk to Delamere, where I noted their names in the School Register. Still unsettled, they moved to Willington School and there they stayed content. So there was freedom of choice!

Another sequel to the passing of the Education Act was the provision, in 1874, of a house for the Schoolmaster, on the site of the first Anglican Chapel. One of its more popular tenants was F.J. Tunstall. He was an excellent teacher by all accounts, well respected for the responsible role which he played in Church and village affairs.

Of course there were other schools in the neighbourhood apart from the ones already mentioned. Best known was Tarvin Grammar School which offered a free place to 20 poor boys in the parish. Daniel Lea of Brook Cottage and Kelsall Hall Farm must have been a pupil as his workbooks, recently discovered in Quarry Lane and now lodged with Liverpool Institute of Education, showed immaculate handwriting, a skill for which this school was very well known. His arithmetic problems provide interesting comments on teaching methods and social attitudes. His school days preceded the foundation of Kelsall School by 20 years. There were Dame Schools; among the best known was Sarah Booth's. It was held in her house, Gable Cottage, Lower Kelsall.

In 1906 Cheshire County Council's new Education Committee endeavoured to gain local support for a new Council School in Kelsall but was rebuffed, so the project was abandoned.

The need for improvements in Kelsall always appear to reach crisis point before the problem is tackled; so it was with education. By 1930 the overcrowding in the school had become something of a scandal but it required a campaign launched by Methodist farmers to persuade the County Council to build a new all-purpose school in Flat Lane, thereby removing education from the hands of the Church. The new site was well chosen, a field situated on the western perimeter of the village, open to the four winds of heaven. A single storey group of classrooms, L shaped were linked by an open verandah which faced north and east. Earth closets were still the mode of sanitation in 1934. They were pumped out weekly by the Northwich Rural District Council wagon as apparently Tarvin Rural District Council, in whose territory the new school stood, was unable to supply the necessary equipment.

The Headmaster, Mr. Kilner, in line with all Council Schools during the Second World War, started the wartime Dinner Service, buying the fresh vegetables and fruit locally. In spite of these efforts, together with the newly-established children's clinics, offering free orange juice and cod liver oil, there were severe health problems surfacing in the new school.

At the end of the war in 1945, scabies, impetigo and nits were rife. A great deal needed to be done to improve health standards. A more serious threat to health was the prevalence of bovine tuberculosis due to the consumption of infected milk.

Kelsall continued as an all-purpose school until 1958. The only avenues open to gain secondary education were to win a scholarship, either to Chester Boys Grammar School or its sister the Girls High, or entrance to the Kings or Queens Schools. There were only two open scholarships available in the rural district. The new Director of Education, Dr. Kellett, had to face the formidable task of introducing and organizing secondary education in a county notorious for the backwardness of its educational system.

From 1958 the school in Flat Lane became the County Primary School and secondary education had at last been made available for all children from 11 years upwards to 15 years and then later 16 years. Village families can count themselves fortunate in having an up-to-date school on their doorstep, extended and improved from its original design.

The fate of the old Church School should be mentioned. Although still Church property, it became the village hall and finally was sold in 1986-87 for business premises. Its closure meant that there was no central meeting place in a village which now had a population of nearly 2000. Consequently, a positive move had to be made to provide a Community Centre to replace the old Church School. *(The proceeds from the sale of the old Church Hall went towards the building of the Church Lounge in St Philip's churchyard. The Community Centre was opened in 1994.)*

Appendix A

ANCIENT FOOTPATHS

Originally these paths may have been old forest tracks, eventually linking together tiny hamlets such as Willington, Oscroft and Ashton. They are still in existence today in the guise of rights of way. Black Hatch is a special track, neither a footpath nor a roadway. Its name suggests what it is realistic to believe that it is, an adopted forest lane, a shadowy, dark way to the well and the stream in the bottom. It must have always been an important link to old Willington Lane (Quarry Lane). It served a tiny group of cottages built in a forest clearing. Some strange stories have been associated with Black Hatch, adding to its sinister character.

Six Cross Country Tracks

First. Leading SW from The Globe (Morris Dancer) an old cobbled cart track leads by a bridge over a stream and then turns westwards to Flat Lane. A few yards to the right is the entrance to Back Lane by Rookery Farm yard. The track then heads due west. Except in dry weather or freezing conditions this lane is always extremely muddy and wet. Beside it there is a wide deep ditch. There is a footpath which leads off it to the north, directly to the old village centre, at The Royal Oak. The lane meets Barbers Lane, but to reach Street Farm go through the field gate and continue due west. The going, in places, is pretty rough but it is worth exploration as it is all the more interesting for not being walked over often. To the south there is another interesting path which leads over the Saltersbrook to Oscroft and eventually links up with the two Common Farms.

Second. Back Lane again and Barbers Lane, which exits on to the main road at the western end of the village. These lanes were both very important to the economy of the tenants when agriculture was based on the open field system. Along here are the town field and vestiges of the ancient strips. Turn south along the little road which leads past Manor Cottage to acres of soft fruit and the sewage farm.

Third. This is really an ancient shortcut across Ashton Common to Ashton, with its fine church spire pointing the way. Proceed along Dog Lane (Frodsham Street), now a cul-de-sac, to Northwood Hall. The path starts alongside the Caravan Park and crosses the bypass. Old stone bridging-slabs for crossing the Boundary ditch between the townships of Ashton and Kelsall are still to be seen lying close to their original situation. The path continues over stiles and exits on to Shay Lane and Pentice Lane, Ashton.

Fourth. Start in Quarry Lane at the Footpath sign on the west side. There used to be a connecting link from the east side with Waste Lane but only a shred of this is left, entering the top field. Next plunge downhill between housing and gardens to the stream at the valley bottom, noting the old well on the right under the hedge, then cross the stream and mount the stone stile, the last to survive in the parish. Progress to the roadside hedge, mount a second stile and cross the road to a narrow path which, well within living memory, crossed a small field to meet Old Coach Road. Walk across Kelsall Hall fields, crossing the bypass, to find a third stile which brings one down the bank to the woodside gate. Looking northwards it is still possible to see traces of the ancient terraced lynchet fields. Turn to the right, walking alongside old Ashton Heyes wall, to search and find among the screen of leylandii hedging another stile which brings the walker on to the Home Farm ground. The right of way then crosses diagonally to a fine old oak tree where a fence and more leylandii mark the boundary between the Home and Woodside Farms. Cross to the three stiles which give access directly on to the road in the neighbourhood of Spy Hill Farm. This section of the road is called Brine's Brow and some people believe that it is called after a local man, John Bruen of Stapleford Hall. It may well have been a forest path leading from the ridge through woodland to a northerly encroachment.

Fifth. Globe Inn to Duddon Mill, along Back Lane to the southerly stile. Cross the field to the farm boundary, cross and proceed down to the old marl pits and up through a small iron gate to a second one on the further side of the farm road. Walk straight on, but stop about 150 yards from the boundary ditch between Kelsall and Tarvin parishes. Strike diagonally into the next field and cross the ditch by the bridge; on southwards to meet the Weetwood road. Two approaches can be made to the Mill road. The first is by crossing to Mill Lane, walking to the end of the Lane and turning right. The path goes diagonally across a small field and over a stile where the walker must turn left, climb a low wall and strike the Mill track by again crossing the field at a slant to an oak where the track is met. The track goes south through the adjacent apple orchard to meet a clearly marked road which is fringed by old trees and farmland and so to the Mill. The farm road joins the main Tarvin-Tarporley road close to the Inn distinguished by the name "The Headless Woman" derived from an unauthenticated incident at Hockenhull during the Civil Wars. The alternative route is to walk along the main Weetwood road for about 200 yards; then turn left by the green sign and walk down to the wicket gate which is placed alongside a field gate, which is directly on the Mill road.

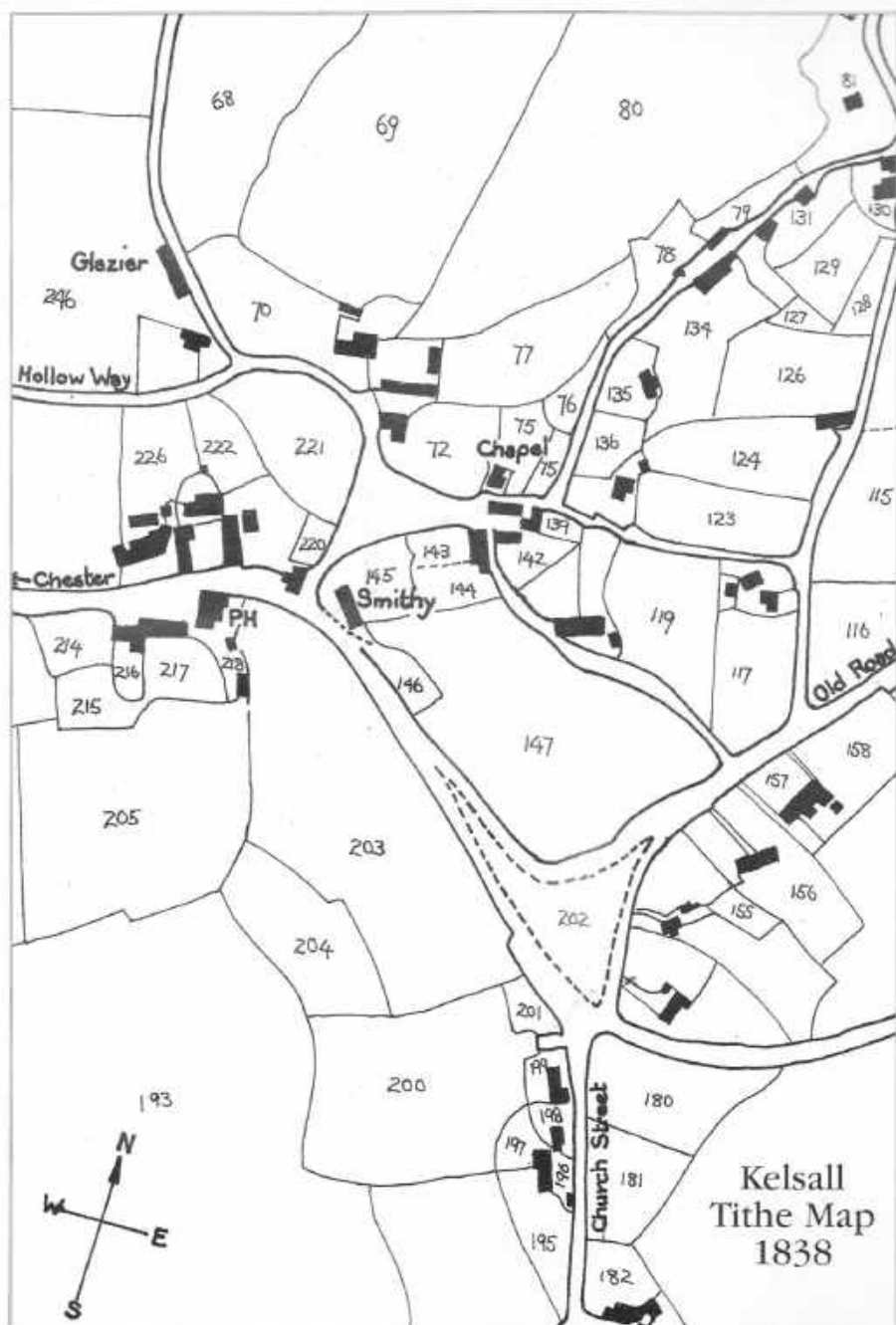
Sixth. Quarry Lane to Willington. A very useful path this, as an excellent short cut to Gooseberry Lane, Willington. It is well signposted as its beautiful prospects have made it popular. To the right can be seen the mound and defensive embankment of the Iron Age fort on Kelsborrow Hill.

The hill is reached by the so-called '39 steps' from Elizabeth Close off Quarry Lane. On reaching the woodland, climb the stile which takes the walker along the somewhat precarious field wall to emerge at the northern end of Gooseberry Lane and its picturesque assortment of cottages.

Appendix B

MOSSES IN FOREST OF DELAMERE, 1817

Linmere
Birchen Holt
Hockenhull
Great Blakemere
Piersons
Hunger Hill
Blains
Norley
Ham
Hatchew Mere
Wilkinsons
Harrisons
Alvanley
Bend Shaw
Barns Bridge
White Mere
Great Middel
Little Middel
Finney
Harthill
Blakeford
Crap
Reucks
Shipley Mere
Leech Mere
Clotton
Thieves Moss
Snidley Mere
Masseys Meadow
Plovers Moss
Garden



A section of the Tithe Map, with some names added.



