

# THE HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTY OF SALOP

By Charles Hulbert 1837

## The Parish of Middle

Middle, an extensive agricultural parish, eight miles from Shrewsbury and the same distance from Ellesmere, situate on the left of the road leading from the former to the latter town, from which road the remaining tower of the ancient castle, the parish church, and principal houses of the village present a view both rural and interesting. The church is a plain handsome substantial structure, the interior is remarkable for its clean and neat appearance; it is dedicated to St. Peter; the living a rectory, in the patronage of the Countess of Bridgewater, the net value of which is £1003 a year. The present worthy rector is the Rev. James Horsman. The entire patronage of this valuable living was originally purchased, according to Mr. Gough, by the Lord Chancellor Egerton from Chambre Esq. for £100.

The organ, by which the laudatory services of the congregation are assisted, was built and presented by William Watkins, Esq. of Shotton Hall. There are no splendid marble monuments, venerable for their antiquity, to attract the attention of the visitor; there are, notwithstanding, some interesting memorials of good and eminent individuals of the families of Atcherley, Watkins, and whose ashes lie within the peaceful precincts of this sacred temple. A capacious altar-tomb, in the eastern part of the churchyard, is erected to the memory of the pious and benevolent Dame Mary Hill, of Hardwick, in the chapelry of Hadnal, whose living and posthumous charities have thrown a halo around her name and memory, more durable than the stone on which her death is recorded.

There is no charity school connected with Middle Village, a very neat Sunday school has lately been erected. Besides the handsome rectory, there are capital farmhouses, various cottages and small houses, a comfortable inn, kept by Mr. Phillips, also, one or two provision stores; at the same time it may be observed, that it no small advantage to belong to this parish, there are so many excellent charities connected with it, especially that of the late Earl of Bridgewater, who has bequeathed the interest of £2,000, to be bestowed annually on the poor of the parish. Under the entire direction of the Rectory of Middle for the time being. There are also bequests of William and Richard Gough, of Newton on the Hill; Thomas Atcherley, Richard Watkins, John Mansel, Sir A. Corbet, for the use of the poor, chiefly for those who receive no parochial relief. The excellent charity of Dame Mary Hill will be noticed hereafter.

The remains of the castle have for some years past been fast hastening to entire demolition, one tower and a few fragments of walls are preserved. I am informed that orders have been given by the Lady of the Manor, for great care to be taken of the existing vestiges. The moat is very complete, enclosing an excellent garden, in the occupation of Mrs. Bate, tenant of the adjoining farm. The embankment under the garden hedge is of stones from the ruins of the castle, on one of which I observed carved in alto relievo, within a shield, two lions passant, the arms of the Lord Strange, the probable builder of the castle.

It may be remarked of Middle, that it is considered by many as the Roman Mediolanum, having been in some writings latinized by the word Mediolanum,

being also in the direct road from Uriconium to Deva (Chester). The author of this work conceives it may have derived its name from its being situate a middle distance from Shrewsbury to Ellesmere.

The townships comprised in the parish of Middle and which are in the hundred of Pimhill, are Balderton, Marton, Middle, Newton on the Hill, and part of Sleep. The extensive chapelry of Hadnal which includes the townships of Alderton, Hadnal, Haston, Shotton, Smethcott and the Grange of Hardwich is in the Liberties of Shrewsbury. (The Grange was anciently applied, by way of distinction, to those farms whose houses were at a distance from neighbours).

In the higher division of this parish, next to Middle, Marton is the most important township. Marton Hall is the residence of Mrs Atcherley, relict of the late – Atcherley Esq. This highly respectable family has long been located in this township. There are various capital farms, several genteel houses, neat cottages etc. A turnpike road connecting the Holyhead road, about five miles on this side Oswestry, with the Chester road, eight miles from Shrewsbury, passes through Marton and Middle. There are several meres or lakes in this vicinity, of beauty and extent. Marton ? of from 40 to 42 acres; Fennymere 46 acres.

Newton on the Hill, next in consequence to Marton, consists of several capital farms, including also the flourishing neighbourhood of Harmer Hill, where a neat Independent chapel, under the pastoral charge of the Rev. George Rogers, has been recently erected. The town ship of Balderton adjoins Newton, and consists of capital farms etc. Sleep Hall is a farm in the tenancy of Mr. Edward Bagshaw.

This division of the parish also includes the celebrated and delightful eminence of Pimhill, which though humble in altitude, is distinguished as the head of an important portion of our county. Being clothed to its very summit with waving plantation of firs, flourishing under the excellent management in almost each of the beautiful landscapes for which this district is so distinguished: while that from its own highest point, comprehends a view rich, lovely and extensive. At the time England was divided into counties, according to ancient authorities, the names of hundreds were often taken from places where the chiefs mustered their people, as hills, beacons etc. When the unfortunate Charles I was in Shropshire, some of his followers were collected together on Pimhill. It is situate at the very extreme of both parish and hundred, and only five miles from Shrewsbury its eastern brow overlooking an adjoining portion of the parish of Preston Gubbals and the chapelry of Hadnal.