

INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF

25

MORETON IN MARSH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

GUY STAPLETON ©

ANCIENT ROADS

An ancient way, associated with the Jurassic Way, entered the county at the Four Shire Stone (SP 231321). It came from the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire and followed the slight ridge of the watershed between the Thames and the Severn just north of Moreton in Marsh. Its course from the Four Shire Stone is probably marked by the short stretch of county boundary across Wolford Heath to Lemington Lane. The subsequent line is difficult to determine; it may have struck north west across Batsford Heath to Dorn or, perhaps more likely, may have continued along Lemington Lane around the eastern boundary of the Fire Service Technical College, so skirting the marshy area of Lemington and Batsford Heaths. In the latter case, it would have continued across the Moreton in Marsh-Todenham road and along the narrow lane past Lower Lemington which crosses the A429 road (the Fosse Way) to Dorn. From there it would have continued to follow approximately the line of this road up past Batsford and along the ridge above to the course followed by the A44, thence following the Cotswold Edge southwards.

The Salt Way from Droitwich through Campden followed the same route through Batsford and Dorn to the Four Shire Stone, where it divided into two routes. One followed the same line as the previous way through Kitebrook and past Salter's Well Farm near Little Compton to the Ridgeway near the Rollright Stones. This route, continuing to Chapel House near Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, remained in use until about the end of the 18th century, first as part of the main road from Worcester to London and then as an alternative to the turnpike road by Salford Hill. The other route from the Four Shire Stone ran along the eastern boundaries of Evenlode and Adlestrop, where it was called Lodres Wei, Beggar's Way, in a Saxon Charter, and then along the north eastern boundary of Daylesford, where it left the county on its way towards Kingham in Oxfordshire.

(G.B.Grundy, The Ancient Highways and Tracks of Worcestershire and the Middle Severn Basin, The Archaeological Journal, xci, 1934; Saxon Charters of Gloucestershire, Trans. BGAS, 1935-6; C.R.Crosher, Along the Cotswold Ways, Cassell & Co, 1976)

ROMAN ROADS

The Fosse Way followed the line of the A429 through Moreton in Marsh to the northern end of the High Street. From there for $\frac{1}{2}$ mile beyond the railway bridge its original alignment, marked at intervals by a low bank and ditches, continued northwards to the west of the present road, passing along the eastern boundary of the site of the Romano-British settlement at Dorn (SP 207339) before rejoining the line of the modern road.

(Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in Gloucestershire Cotswolds, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), HMSO, 1976)

A minor road branched off from the Fosse Way at Dorn in a south-easterly direction, its initial line being marked by hedges and a bank, to Lemington Lodge on the Moreton in Marsh-Todenham road (SP 216333). It continued diagonally across the former Batsford Heath, now occupied by the Fire Service Technical College, to the Four Shire Stone, whence its alignment is marked by the Oxfordshire-Warwickshire boundary to the Ridgeway about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the west of the crossroads at the Cross Hands Inn. The section between Dorn and the Four Shires Stone continued in use as part of the route from Chipping Campden to the main London-Worcester road until the early years of the 19th century.

(Ivan.D. Margary, Roman Roads in Britain, John Baker, 1967)

TOLLHOUSES

Pike House, London Road (SP 208325). A Two-storey Cotswold stone house with a blue slate roof. Of roughly cruciform plan, with a Tudor-arched door; large windows on the ground floor face east and west along the London Road. It marks the Moreton Gate of the Moreton Turnpike (1731), which looked after 12 miles of the London Worcester road from the quarry above Bourton on the Hill (SP 169327) to Chapel on the Heath near Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, and of its successor, the United Trust of the Stow and Moreton Turnpike Roads. A shop for many years until 1968, it is now a private house.

(Sale Particulars, Sheldon Bosley, 1969)

Turnpike Lodge, High Street (SP 205328). A two-storey Cotswold stone house with a Cotswold stone tile roof, fronting the junction of the Moreton in Marsh-Batsford road with the A429. This was the Batsford Gate of the United Trust of the Stow and Moreton Turnpike Roads. Now a private house.

(Moreton Free Press, 8 January 1876)

MILESTONES

Moreton in Marsh (SP 186326). On the A44 to the west of the town, it is of Cotswold stone and bears a metal plate 'Worcester 28, Moreton in Marsh 1'. This appears to be a survivor of the twelve stones erected in 1749 at a cost of a guinea each along the length of the Moreton Turnpike road from Bourton on the Hill to Chapel on the Heath in Oxfordshire. A second stone to the east of the town (SP 217323) lacks its metal plate.

(Accounts of Moreton Turnpike 1731-67, GRO D621/X4)

TRAMROADS

The Stratford and Moreton Tramway. A horse tramway of 4ft 8½ in gauge, with fish belly rails on stone blocks, opened in 1826 to link Moreton in Marsh with the Stratford upon Avon Canal. About 3 miles of the total length of 16 miles were in Gloucestershire. A branch to Shipston on Stour, Warwickshire, was completed in 1836. It was built mainly to bring coal to Moreton and Shipston, carrying as much as 15,000 tons a year at one time. Cotswold stone from the quarry above Bourton on the Hill constituted the main loads back to Stratford. Passengers were also carried until 1859, when the Honeybourne-Stratford branch from the London to Worcester line was opened. In 1856 Herman Melville, the author of 'Moby Dick', used the line. It was taken over in 1847 by the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway (later the West Midland Railway), which amalgamated with the Great Western Railway in 1863. The GWR converted about 8½ miles of the tramway and branch to Shipston into a locomotive railway from Moreton to Shipston, which opened in 1889. The remainder continued to be used for freight until about 1904, the rails being lifted for war scrap in 1918. The former tramway buildings at The Wharf, Moreton (SP 206328), a long low construction of Cotswold stone, are now the headquarters of Spook Erection Ltd.

(E.T.Macdermot and C.R.Clinker, History of the Great Western Railway, Ian Allen, 1964; John Norris, The Stratford and Moreton Tramway, in C.Hadfield and J. Norris, Waterways to Stratford, David & Charles, 1962)

RAILWAYS

The Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway entered the county near Daylesford and left it south east of Honeybourne. It was opened in 1853 as a mixed gauge line from Wolvercot Junction near the Oxford terminus of the Great Western Railway as far as Evesham, and was extended in 1854 to the Bushbury Junction station of the London and North Western Railway. Although parts of the line were laid as a doublemixed-gauge line, broad gauge trains never operated commercially on the line, and the stretch between Charlbury and Campden remained single line until 1858, when the broad gauge rails were removed. The company's under-capitalisation and poor rolling stock earned it the well-merited nickname of the Old Worse and Worse. In 1860 the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton merged with the Newport, Abergavenny and Hereford company and the Worcester and Hereford Railway under the name of the West Midland Railway, which itself amalgamated with the Great Western Railway in 1863. The branch from Moreton in Marsh to Shipston on Stour, constructed from part of the Stratford-Moreton Tramway, opened in 1889. The passenger service gradually declined from a maximum of four trains daily each way, and ended altogether in 1929. The intervening stations at Stretton on Fosse and Longdon Road closed in 1941. After the 1939-45 war, the condition of the line imposed a speed limit of 5 mph and the line finally closed in 1960, the rails being lifted in the following year. A former level crossing keeper's lodge, a late Victorian building of red brick

with a blue slate roof, can be seen where the railway crossed the Moreton in Marsh-Todenham road (SP 207329) and bridges over a cutting near Dorn at SP 209337 (Sandpit Bridge) and SP 211342, where the line went under the Dorn-Lemington road.

(E.T.Macdermot and C.R.Clinker, History of the Great Western Railway, Ian Allen, 1964; John Norris, The Stratford and Moreton Tramway, in C. Hadfield and J. Norris, Waterways to Stratford, David & Charles, 1962)

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

The clay of the Vale of Moreton is underlaid by large spreads of glacial sand and gravel, which have been worked from time to time at a number of places, including Stretton on Fosse and Moreton in Marsh.

Gravel

At the enclosure of Moreton's remaining common land in 1824, a field of about 11 acres about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the east of the town was allotted to trustees in replacement of the poor's previous right to take furze for fuel from Moreton Heath. The land was let and the rental applied to supplying the poor with cheap fuel. From 1864 it was let to the Moreton in Marsh Highway Board, and by 1869 a gravel pit was being worked there (SP 215322). Subsequently, this pit to the south of the Moreton in Marsh-Chipping Norton road was supplemented by a smaller pit on the other side of the road (SP 214324). These continued in operation at least until the close of the 19th century, when about £750 was in the trustees' hands, and were not closed until the gravel gave out. The pit to the north of the A44 is now obscured by the plantation of young trees edging the Fire Technical College, but that to the south is still visible, although much overgrown.

Sand

A sandpit about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north of Moreton in Marsh was also worked during the late 19th and early 20th century until it was exhausted. It can be detected as a depression to the east of the Moreton-Evesham railway line (SP 206332).

(References in L. Richardson, The Country around Moreton in Marsh, Memoirs of the Geological Survey England and Wales, HMSO, 1929)

LIGHT INDUSTRY

Linen Factory, Moreton in Marsh (SP 205322). Flax was grown throughout the 18th and much of the 19th century on the clay lands around Moreton in Marsh. In 1742 a Benjamin Busby started at Moreton what was to become the most important linen-weaving business in north Gloucestershire. Initially he and his son marketed the homespun linen and strainering produced by the local handloom weavers, but in 1824 his grandson, Henry Goodear Busby, built a factory in Church Street. For many years the business was the town's largest employer of labour, giving work to as many as 100 hands at one time. A tablecloth manufactured there is still in the possession of a Moreton resident. The factory continued in use until about 1880. It was then converted into cottages,

but from the 1920s to about 1960 it housed the Playhouse Cinema, and is now part of the Long Room of the Manor House Hotel. Of Cotswold stone, the inscription 'H G Busby 1824' in a panel over what was the factory's main entrance and the outlines of the original windows can still be seen in Church Street. In the orchard of the Manor House Hotel is an ornamental pool which was formerly the retting pit used in the preparation of the flax.

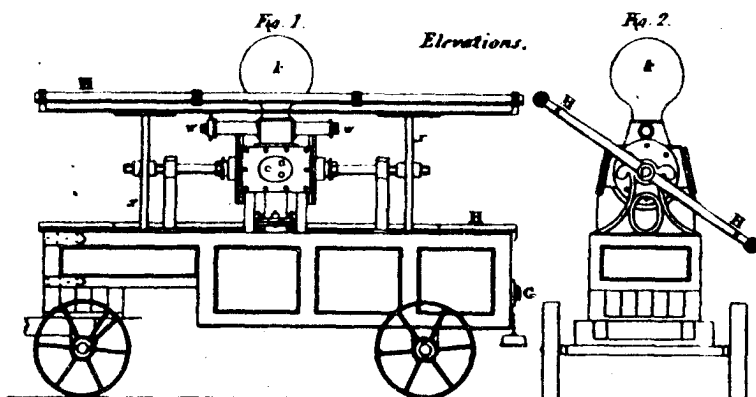
(G. Stapleton, The Weaving Busbys of Moreton, Glos, Genealogists Magazine, xvii, June 1972)

Rope Walk, Moreton in Marsh (SP 203324). Rope making by hand was carried on at Moreton in Marsh for about 100 years and the building and rope-walk still remain. Benjamin Hogetts, a rope and twine maker, founded the business in about 1840, and extended it during the 1850s and 1860s to the manufacture of sacks, rick-cloths and tents. Benjamin Hodgetts and his son were at their most successful during the 1870s, when they held the Royal Warrant for a patent rick cover, and operated a branch in the Commercial Road, Gloucester. After Benjamin Hodgetts' death the business was run for a short period first by his son and then by Mrs Sarah Hodgetts before being bought in 1880-85 by Thomas Wells, who continued the making of rope, from the 1920s with his son, until his death in 1935. In the early 1950s, although rope making had ceased, the original rope making tools were complete, and tarpaulins were still being made up. The building is a tall structure of Cotswold stone with a stone tile roof on the east side of Hospital Road. The rope walk extended from Hospital Road towards the High Street, although when the longest ropes were being made the strands had to be taken out into the road and the twisting carried on very early on summer mornings. The ground floor is now occupied by a shoe-repairer. The Royal Arms which were formerly displayed on the High Street frontage of the premises were bought by the White Hart Hotel and can now be seen over its main entrance.

(Gloucestershire Directories; H. Hurlbutt Albino, Rope-Making by Hand, Gloucestershire Countryside, viii, 1952-5)

URBAN

In Church Street, Moreton in Marsh, is an Edwardian ER VII wall letter box (SP 205322)



Guy Stapleton.©

ROWNTREE'S FIRE ENGINE