

# VCH SHROPSHIRE

## Wem Rural

### Wolverley

by Judith Everard and Wendy Horton

This is a draft text prepared by Dr Judith Everard for VCH Shropshire with accounts of the buildings by Wendy Horton.

Following on the completion of the Wem short (2019), we took the decision to work on the townships of Wem Rural especially those which fell within the manor of Wem. Now, in July 2021, we are publishing as drafts the text prepared by Dr Everard and Ms Horton.

This text will be further amended in a number of respects. It will be expanded to include more material on landholding. Subsequent versions will include maps and other illustrations. There will also be a section on agriculture.

And we welcome suggestions, corrections and additional references.

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July 2021

## WOLVERLEY

Wolverley was an Anglo-Saxon settlement existing before the Norman manor and parish of Wem, and might have developed as a village if it had not been for the proximity of Wem town. Instead, the medieval settlement was depopulated, giving way to farmsteads dispersed on the former open fields, with agriculture being the only economic activity.

### LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT, AND BUILDINGS

#### **Boundaries and origins**

Wolverley was bounded by the river Roden to the west and the North Wood to the east. The township was approximately one and a half miles (2.5 km) in length and one mile (1.6 km) in width, with an area of 716 a.<sup>1</sup> From the river floodplain, at 80 m. ASL, the ground slopes upwards, with varying gradients, towards the east where it levels at 85–90 m. ASL. The territory is crossed by Redfellis Brook, a tributary of the Roden.

The Roden here was the western boundary of Wem manor and parish. The short southern boundary divided the open fields of Wolverley and Horton.<sup>2</sup> The eastern boundary ran parallel with the Wem–Ellesmere road, lying about 400 m. east of the road, except where the course of Redfellis Brook and the common field of Newtown made a westward salient. The northern limit was a low-lying, boggy ‘moor’. Beyond it lay a detached portion of Wolverley, occupying the space between the moor, the Roden, and the Wem–Ellesmere road as it curved westwards to cross the river at Blackhurst ford (see Northwood).

The place-name, first attested in 1086, is ‘Wulfward’s *lēah*’. *Lēah* is usually translated as clearing, and the settlement of Wolverley may have involved clearing at the western margins of the North Wood. An important attraction of the site initially would have been the alluvial ground, however, and here the context also fits a later Old English usage of *lēah* as

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<sup>1</sup> Tithe apportionment.

<sup>2</sup> SA, 167/1, Wem manor court book, 22 Apr. 1579: order to Richard Mason and Richard Allyn to make gates and hedging between the fields of Horton and Wolverley.

meadow/pasture, typically on marshy ground.<sup>3</sup> Samuel Garbet wrote in the mid 18th century of the confluence of three streams that formed the river Roden at ‘Wolverley meadows’.<sup>4</sup>

## Communications

The road from Wem to Ellesmere forms the spine of the township, following the higher ground; this is an ancient route probably pre-dating the Norman castle-town of Wem.<sup>5</sup> The road was turnpiked in 1771 as the Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike and is today the B5063 road.<sup>6</sup> A lane leads off it to the south, to Spenford bridge (in Horton); in the 19th century there was a turnpike side-bar or gate and toll collector’s house at the junction.<sup>7</sup> A little further north, at Wolverley bridge, a cross-roads is formed by the lane from Newtown to Wolverley Hall.

### *Bridges*

Wolverley bridge carries the B5063 Wem–Ellesmere road across Redfellis Brook. There was a bridge by 1579, when the inhabitants of Wolverley township were ordered to make the bridge safe for horses and people.<sup>8</sup> By his will of 1639 Ellis Thomas left £20 for the building of Wolverley bridge, naming Robert Wilkinson to see that it was done within one year.<sup>9</sup> A stone carriage bridge was built by the Commissioners of the Wem–Bron-y-Garth turnpike and local residents, c.1790.<sup>10</sup> When inspected in 1823, the bridge was built of soft sandstone, having two square openings, 4 ft wide, carrying flat slabs. Thomas Stanton, for the county surveyor, reported that it was dilapidated, dangerous, prone to flooding and badly sited. A new bridge was proposed, at the county’s expense. It was to be sited a little upstream, the road being straightened and re-aligned accordingly. Stanton’s specification of 1824 included plans, an elevation, cross-section and the proposed new siting.<sup>11</sup> The tender was won by Richard Bale of Shrewsbury at a cost of £643 12s. Stanton was not entirely happy with Bale’s

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<sup>3</sup> Gelling and Foxall, *Place-Names Salop 1.*, 320; Gelling and Foxall, *Place-Names Salop*, 5, xi–xii, xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Garbet, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *VCH Wem*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *VCH Wem*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Turnpike etc.’ owned by Owen Roberts esq., 1805 Survey, 44–5. Gate keepers named in Census, 1841–81. The toll collector’s house appears to be shown on the 1841 tithe apportionment map, but the Turnpike Trust was not listed as a landowner in the tithe apportionment.

<sup>8</sup> SA, 167/1, *curia parva* held 8 Oct. 1579; Garbet, 5, 329.

<sup>9</sup> Ellis Thomas, 8 May 1639: *Wem Wills*, ed. Watts.

<sup>10</sup> SA, DP208.

<sup>11</sup> SA, DP208.

work, and in July 1825 asked him to give further attention to the embankments. The new bridge was of sandstone ashlar (specified as Grinshill or Cefn stone) with a single segmental arch with a 17 ft span and rise of 6 ft 7 in., the arch ring of slightly projecting stepped voussoirs. At road level splayed parapets were constructed of monolithic blocks leaded and dowed together, finished with large square end piers with moulded cappings.<sup>12</sup> This bridge remains in use, largely unaltered.

There are also crossings of the Roden that connect Wolverley with Loppington. Middleford lane in Loppington led north to the Roden by the mid 16th century, and Middleford bridge was said, in a Quarter Sessions enquiry, to have been newly built as a stone carriage bridge c.1815 and repaired, after flood damage, by the townships of Wolverley and Loppington.<sup>13</sup> In 1825 Thomas Dickin purchased a 717 yd section of ‘a certain unnecessary highway leading from Loppington to Wolverley, commencing at the turnpike road from Loppington to Wem and ending at a bridge called Middleford bridge over the Roden’.<sup>14</sup> As Dickin was then developing Loppington House and its landscaped park, the intention was probably to close off an inconvenient public roadway. Middleford bridge, if it was preserved, would then have become a private access bridge between Dickin’s Wolverley and Loppington tenements. A bridge carries the drive south from Wolverley Lodge to Loppington House.<sup>15</sup>

Further upriver, a single-span bridge on what is today a farm track and public footpath crossing the Roden between Wolverley Hall and Hollywell Moor (Loppington) retains substantial weathered masonry in the bridge abutments, but is not otherwise recorded.<sup>16</sup>

## Population

Five households in Wolverley were assessed as liable for the lay subsidy of 1327, and six married couples were assessed for the poll tax in 1381.<sup>17</sup> A survey of the manor in 1589

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<sup>12</sup> Historic England, List Entry No. 1264269; SA DP208; A. Blackwall, *Historic Bridges of Shropshire*, 1985, p. 34;

<sup>13</sup> *Survey 1561*, 170–1; SA, DP109, 1823–5.

<sup>14</sup> SA, 306, box 11a: conveyance by Charles Lea, farmer, surveyor of the highways in Loppington township, to Thomas Dickin, 9 and 10 Nov. 1825. Loppington: *Survey 1561*, 170–1.

<sup>15</sup> G. Williams, *The Country Houses of Shropshire* (Woodbridge, 2021), 389–92.

<sup>16</sup> Pers. obs. 2018.

<sup>17</sup> *Shropshire Lay Subsidy 1327*, 143–5; *Poll Taxes ... 1381*, 374–5, 378–9.

reported twelve dwellings (eight ‘messuages’ and four cottages) in Wolverley.<sup>18</sup> In 1672 nine households were liable for hearth tax; among the fewest of any township in the parish.<sup>19</sup> Around 32 per cent of households may have been exempt from paying hearth tax due to poverty; hence the total number of households can be estimated at 13 or 14.<sup>20</sup>

The curate of Wem conducted a census in 1800 which found 72 inhabitants in Wolverley.<sup>21</sup> At the 1821 census the population of Wolverley was just 62. The population rose to 91 persons in fourteen houses in 1841, but by 1881 had dropped back to 78 in twelve houses and in 1911 to 62 in ten houses. From 1900, Wolverley was subsumed into Wem Rural Parish. It is unlikely that the population of the former township today exceeds its 19th-century level. The same dwellings continue to be occupied but with fewer residents, and very little new housing has been built since c.1900.

## Settlement

The topography of the township dictated the pattern of settlement. The western part, bordered by the Roden along its whole length, is too prone to flooding for permanent habitation. A large rectilinear enclosure has been observed, 300 m. south east of Wolverley Hall.<sup>22</sup> The first terrace above the river was preferable, however, and became the site of the medieval hamlet. Other dwellings, as well as the township’s arable land, lie along the Wem–Ellesmere road, in the more elevated eastern part of the township.

### *Medieval*

The manorial lord and the largest landowners generally were not resident, having implications for the township’s population, settlement and built environment. Like Horton, the future development of the Anglo-Saxon estate was stifled by its proximity to Wem, the site favoured by the Norman lords.

Prior to the Norman Conquest, Wolverley was held as two manors and assessed at three hides. In 1086 there were three households of *villani* and one of a higher status, a *radman*.

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<sup>18</sup> TNA, LR 2/225. Two of the messuages, held by Hanmer, may have been in Newtown or Northwood.

<sup>19</sup> *Shropshire Hearth Tax Roll of 1672*, 47–52.

<sup>20</sup> Based on the average for parishes in North Bradford hundred: *Shropshire Hearth Tax Exemptions*, Table 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Wem Parish Registers*, 778.

<sup>22</sup> Shropshire HER 04464.

There was a watermill and resident miller in the 1220s.<sup>23</sup> The Wolverley Hall estate existed by the late 13th century,<sup>24</sup> and a deed of 1322 records another estate in Wolverley that included seven dwelling houses.<sup>25</sup>

Lacking the 1631 Arundel map for a view of early-modern Wolverley, but reading together topographical details from Samuel Garbet with the earliest available (19th-century) map,<sup>26</sup> it appears there was a nucleated settlement extending west from the cross-roads to Wolverley Hall. The main road from Wem crossed the former Wolverley bridge close to the present ‘Parklands’ house and continued through this hamlet. The old edition Ordnance Survey (1833) shows that it passed close to the Lees farm house and continued north east to join the turnpike.<sup>27</sup> North of the bridge, the turnpike road also appears to have cut through the croft named Wolverley Yard, leaving the triangular remnant of Wolverley Yard to the west of the road and a field named ‘Marl Leasows’ to the east. The present straight road north from Wolverley bridge, bypassing what remains of the hamlet, dates only from the construction of the turnpike road, or may even be as late as the realignment of the bridge and roadway in 1824. There was also a lane heading north west, between Wolverley Hall and Lees Farm. The junction of these lanes formed an open space in the centre of the hamlet. In other Wem townships, such a meeting of route ways was commonly called a ‘green’ (e.g. Tilley Green, Barker’s Green, Northwood Green, ‘Green Lane’ in Horton), and the 1805 survey refers to the lord’s waste at Wolverley Green.<sup>28</sup> The old edition and the first edition Ordnance Survey<sup>29</sup> especially show this space, with the remaining farmsteads of Park Farm and Wolverley Hall and empty crofts around it, suggestive of a former hamlet that was once more populous. Unlike the hamlets at Horton and Lowe Hill, where the several medieval messuages seem to have been of similar size, Wolverley Hall may have originated as a manor house, set apart from the rest of the hamlet and apparently with a chapel.<sup>30</sup>

### *Early modern to present*

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<sup>23</sup> Domesday Book: <https://opendomesday.org/>; see ‘Mills’ below.

<sup>24</sup> *Survey 1561*, 92–3; SA, 1514/478.

<sup>25</sup> *Survey 1561*, 94–5.

<sup>26</sup> Garbet, 327–31; OS 1”, Sheet 73 SW (1833).

<sup>27</sup> The lane is not shown on the tithe apportionment map, but is mapped on the first edition OS 25”, Shropshire XIV.9 (1881) as a private farm track.

<sup>28</sup> 1805 Survey, 42–3. This could refer to the crossroads at the bridge, however.

<sup>29</sup> OS 25”, Shropshire sheet XIV.9.

<sup>30</sup> ‘The Built Character’, below.

Wolverley Hall is the only remaining timber-framed house in Wolverley. However, three other substantial timber-framed houses within the hamlet are known: those of Wilkinson (Park Farm, see ‘Built Character’) and Atcherley (later Lees Farm), and at Wolverley Yard. Another house is mentioned by Garbet as having been ‘pulled down’.<sup>31</sup> These can be identified with the largest houses that were assessed for hearth tax in the township in 1672: Wolverley Hall and the Atcherley house had four hearths, Wilkinson’s had three.<sup>32</sup> The house at Wolverley Yard was substantial enough in 1738 to be worth taking down and moving to a new location, to replace a farmhouse that had burnt down in Sleaf. The house at Lees Farm itself burnt down, with its outbuildings, in 1750. It was rebuilt on the same site, but as the owner had recently chosen to reside at his Ellesmere estate, the replacement only needed to be a functional farmstead for tenants, in brick and tile.<sup>33</sup>

New House Farm, at the north east limit of the township, is probably connected with the 16th-century colonisation of the North Wood (see below). A toll collector’s house at the turnpike toll gate was added in the late 18th century. The Woodlands, a gentleman’s residence first built in the 1830s, occupies a commanding position at the northern limit of the township.<sup>34</sup> Established around the same time, Wolverley Lodge Farm is an example of a 19th-century farm house built on its farmland, departing from the medieval settlement pattern.

At the 1841 census there were 14 inhabited dwellings. The census of 1911 reported just eight. No new residential premises have been added to the time of writing.

### **The Built Character**

*Wolverley Hall* is an impressive H-plan house of early 17th-century date, with a central hall range and large box-panelled cross-wings of two storeys with attics. The house is in the Transitional style, stylistically a link between the medieval hall-house and the early modern

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<sup>31</sup> Garbet, 311. The location is unknown but was probably towards Newtown.

<sup>32</sup> *Shropshire Hearth Tax Roll*, 50.

<sup>33</sup> Garbet, 328. See Built Character, below.

<sup>34</sup> Historic England archive, SA00892: 6 Mar. 1947 The Woodlands Estate, Wem, North Shropshire; Richard K. Morriss, *The Woodlands, Wolverley, Wem, Shropshire, NGR: SJ 470 321: A Heritage Statement & Heritage Impact Assessment*, May 2017, Mercian Heritage Series 1111 (Bromlow, 2017).

(or sub-medieval) house.<sup>35</sup> The hall range has been heightened and the front wall rebuilt in the mid-20th century, however, the original timber-framing of the rear elevation was recorded by Historic England (formerly RCAHME) in 1979. The box panels and eaves align with the panelling of the cross-wings, suggesting that the hall and wings were contemporary. This contrasts with a number of houses in Tilley of similar plan-form, where recent dendro-dating has shown their central ranges to be much earlier than the cross-wings. At Wolverley Hall, the entrance is on the left of the central range, its position probably original and reflecting the continuing tradition of the medieval hall-house, which had its screens- or through-passage at the lower end of the hall. The entrance contains a pilastered doorcase and panelled door, possibly re-inserted into the rebuilt wall. The tall box-panelled cross-wings, which would have been seen as prestigious at the time of construction, have tension braces and shallow jetties to each storey, whilst the attic windows are enlargements, slightly disrupting the framing pattern. Carvings, possibly carpenter's marks, were recorded on the jewel of the north west corner post. Perhaps one of the most eye-catching features of the house is the massive, stepped, external brick stack on the lateral side of the left-hand cross-wing. There was also an external brick stack on the right-hand cross-wing, but it was smaller and had been truncated to eaves level by the 1970s.

Little is known of the interior, but there was probably a chamber over the hall or even the former chapel. The wings probably accommodated a parlour, dining room, kitchen and service rooms. There were deeply chamfered spine beams with roll stops to the ceilings, but the central rooms had plaster ceilings with decorative cornices. Part of an inglenook fireplace was said to be retained inside the left wing, presumably related to the large external stack.<sup>36</sup>

An orchard is shown on the tithe map of 1841 north east of the house and there is a large pond immediately to the east. The farm buildings are in a loose courtyard arrangement set apart from the farmhouse to the south. They are dominated by a large L-shaped range of red brick, shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1890. Though altered, the long range is lofted with

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<sup>35</sup> See M. Moran, *Vernacular Buildings of Shropshire* (Logaston, 2003), ch. 12; E. Mercer, *English Architecture to 1900: The Shropshire Experience* (Logaston, 2003), ch. IX.

<sup>36</sup> Historic England, England's Places Collection, Cards 5115/69-83; Historic England Archive, 05/0175; Mercer, *English Architecture*, 143, 158; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 445; Historic England, List Entry No. 1237121, including Images of England, 2002.



two pitching fork occuli and decorative brick ventilators, and is characteristic of the farm improvements common in the early to mid 19th century.<sup>37</sup>

*Park Farm*, located near the junction of the B5063 road and the lane leading to Wolverley Hall, was a large box-panelled house of one-and-a-half-storeys. A photographic record of this sub-medieval farmhouse was made by Historic England (then RCAHME) in the 1960s, in advance of its demolition. There were four panels between plinth and wall-plate and 19 panels width-wise, all with brick infill. The front, facing the road and away from the farmyard, had a gabled timber-framed porch left of centre and three casement windows irregularly spaced; those to the upper storey were in gabled attic dormers with diagonal struts. A photograph of the rear shows milk churns stacked outside a timber-framed lean-to, possibly a dairy, and a porch canopy over the rear doorway. The gable ends had been rebuilt in brick, whilst there was a brick stack right of centre and a later one set forward on the roof pitch. The windows were protected by timber hood-moulds supported on consoles, detail that rarely survives. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this house was its relatively utilitarian appearance for its size, in contrast to Wolverley Hall with its large cross-wings, and particularly *The Ditches*, with its close-studding and jetties (see *Lowe and Ditches*). Following its demolition, a new farmhouse called *Parklands* was built, located to the east of the large 19th-century farm buildings which are mainly arranged around a courtyard.<sup>38</sup> (It is interesting that two young men with the surname *Park* are listed on *Newtown War Memorial*.)

*New House Farm* is reached by a track on the east side of the B5063, almost opposite *The Woodlands* (see below). *New House* is shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1833 but has earlier origins (see *Landownership*, below). The present farmhouse is shown on the 1890 Ordnance Survey flanked by orchards, with farm buildings in a courtyard arrangement set apart from the house.<sup>39</sup> In 1947 *New House* farm appeared in a *Sales Catalogue* as Lot 4 of *The Woodlands Estate*. It was advertised as the attractive Georgian farmhouse of a highly profitable and valuable dairy farm. A photograph of the front elevation is shown along with a description. The substantial two-storey three-window house was constructed of brick under a

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<sup>37</sup> Shropshire HER, PRN 26743: *Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project, 2008–2010* (ESA6427); tithe map (*Wolverley township*); OS, 1st edition, 1890, Shropshire Sheet 14SW.

<sup>38</sup> Historic England, *England's Places Collection*, Cards 5115/62-4; Historic England Archive, BB047553-568; BF114703; Shropshire HER PRN 26745: *Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project* (ESA6427)

<sup>39</sup> Ordnance Survey, 1833; *Garbet*, 329; Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1890, Shropshire Sheet 14NW

shallow, hipped slate roof, with two brick stacks set back behind the ridge. Detail includes dentilled brick eaves and large wedge lintels over the small-pane sash windows. The central bay is slightly advanced with a pedimented gable, and contains a panelled door in a timber doorcase, above which is a tall stair-light with small-pane glazing. Inside, a tiled entrance hall led to a drawing room, dining room, living room, pantry and scullery. A well maintained oak staircase led to five good bedrooms and a bathroom, and there was a dry cellar beneath.<sup>40</sup>

*The Woodlands*, a country house set in a small park, was built between 1833 and 1839 for Thomas Maddocks of nearby New House Farm. Some additions were made before 1881, but a major remodelling of the property occurred at the end of the 19th century.<sup>41</sup> Blocks were added to the rear during the 20th century, including when it briefly became a hotel. In 2014 the house was advertised for sale and in 2017 planning permission was sought for alterations to the property. A heritage assessment of the house in advance of these proposals confirmed the main phases of development.<sup>42</sup>

The original building was typical of the early 19th-century Georgian-style farmhouses built in this area, a symmetrical two-storey, three-window house of red brick under a hipped slate roof, with chimney stacks set back behind the ridge. The central entrance may have been via the current classical-style stone portico (later moved in front of a new porch), whilst the windows were sashes under wedge lintels. Internally, the staircase survives from this period, accessed from the central stair hall, but most of the fixtures were replaced in the late 19th-century remodelling.<sup>43</sup> The house was built with a rear service wing and a coach-house range detached to the north and at right-angles. This arrangement is shown on the 1841 tithe map when the house was accessed directly from the east off the main B5063 road. Before 1881, some additions had been made. A large north range was built, slightly set back from the east front, and linking with the coach-house range, whilst extensions were added to the service wing and coach-house.<sup>44</sup>

A major remodelling occurred in the late 19th-century, probably instigated by Thomas Parton Maddocks. Not only was the house extended to the south but the design was highly

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<sup>40</sup> The Woodlands Estate, Wem: For Sale by Auction, 6 March 1947. [The sales catalogue provides much detail about the appearance of the house at that time.](#)

<sup>41</sup> OS, 1833; tithe map (Wolverley township), 1841; Ordnance Survey, 25", 1881 & 1902. Also see [p. 18](#).

<sup>42</sup> Morriss, *The Woodlands, Wolverley*, Heritage Statement & Impact Assessment, 2017, in association with Shropshire Council, planning application 17/02623/FUL

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Tithe map (Wolverley township), 1841; Ordnance Survey, 1881, 25" 1st edition.

asymmetrical, though of little architectural merit. It is similar to some of the larger middle-class homes that might be found in English suburbs at this time. Because the house was extended by one bay to the south to provide a two-bay garden front, the east entrance front was then of four bays, highly asymmetrical and with an imposing three-storey entrance turret right of centre. This was fronted by a single-storey porch and the stone portico which may have come from the original house. The asymmetry was further enhanced by projecting two-storey bays and bay windows, including the garden front which had a full-height canted bay to the right with doors leading out into the garden and a wide bay window to the left lighting the dining room. This phase of construction was defined by chequered brickwork, red with grey headers, and prominent sandstone dressings including a string course, dentilled eaves cornice, pediments and balustrading. The stacks may have been reconstructed with decorative bands. Internally, the rooms left of the entrance were enlarged into the southern extension and the fixtures mainly date from this period, including wooden painted dado panelling, basket arches and decorative ceilings. Further blocks were added to the rear during the 20th century, including after 1970 when the property became a hotel.<sup>45</sup>

In 2014, the house was advertised for sale by Halls with illustrated sales particulars and contained four reception rooms, seven bedrooms, seven hotel bedrooms, an annexe and outbuildings. The entrance and garden fronts were little altered compared with the 1947 sale catalogue, and the drawing room remained in the south east corner. To the right of the entrance, a morning room in 1947 had become a study and library by 2014, whilst the northern extension remained a games room.<sup>46</sup>

Since the planning application of 2017 was approved, the extensive ranges and blocks to the rear of the house have been removed, to be replaced by a new west-facing garden front of similar length to the east front and with some attempt at regularisation of the plan-form. As such, it represents a further evolution of this country residence.<sup>47</sup>

The small park around the house is also of interest: in 1851 the Maddocks' residence was described as beautified with pleasure grounds, shrubberies and ornamental beds with choice flowers.<sup>48</sup> By the 1870s, the park had been extended to the east with the inclusion of coniferous and deciduous specimen trees and the boundaries appear to have been lined by

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<sup>45</sup> Morriss, *The Woodlands*.

<sup>46</sup> The Wolverley Estate, Sales Catalogue: 6 Mar. 1947; Hallsgb.com: Sales Particulars, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Shropshire Council, planning application 17/02623/FUL including Morriss, *The Woodlands*.

<sup>48</sup> Bagshaw, 337.

trees. In 1881, the house was approached by a U-shaped carriage driveway off the (now) B5063, but when it was remodelled at the end of the century, the park was extended to the south and the current driveway constructed. In 1947, the area of parkland was 11 a. 2 r. 11 p. and there were heated greenhouses for vines, a peach house, potting sheds and a kitchen garden with fruits.<sup>49</sup> The grounds will be relandscaped once more following the post-2017 alterations to the property.

*Wolverley Lodge Farm* and *Lees (or Leys) Farm* have red brick farmhouses and farm yards of apparently early 19th-century date.<sup>50</sup>

At the junction of the lane leading to Spenford bridge, there was a turnpike gate with a small cottage, by c. 1840, but probably demolished soon after 1881, when the roads had been disturnpiked, and not shown on the OS map of 1901.<sup>51</sup> North of the turnpike gate was a cottage with outbuilding, probably an encroachment on the roadside, owned by Thomas Dickin in 1840. The cottage had disappeared by 1881; between 1901 and 1926, a two-storey house named ‘The Lodge’ was built on the site.<sup>52</sup> Further down the lane is the northern gate lodge to Loppington House, built c. 1900.<sup>53</sup> Of Arts and Crafts style, both were perhaps the work of T.A.M. Dickin (d. 1919).

## LANDOWNERSHIP

In 1066 Wolverley was held as two manors by two free men. At the Norman conquest, it was granted to Roger de Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury, and by him to William Pantulf. In Domesday Book, Wolverley heads the list of the eleven manors in Hodnet (later North Bradford) hundred held by William Pantulf, and its geld assessment of three hides was inferior only to Wem’s four. After William Pantulf chose Wem as the site of his baronial

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<sup>49</sup> OS, 25”, Shropshire sheet XIV.9, 1st edn 1881, 2nd edn 1901; P. Stamper, *A Survey of Historic Parks & Gardens in Shropshire*, 1993; SCC report 41: Woodlands; [www.parksandgardens.org](http://www.parksandgardens.org)

<sup>50</sup> Both are shown on the old edition OS, 1833; Garbet, 328–9; pers. obs.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Evans, ‘toll collector’: Census 1841; OS 25” Shropshire sheet XIV.10, 1st edn 1881, 2nd edn 1901.

<sup>52</sup> Tithe apportionment, lot 3336; OS 25” Shropshire sheet XIV.10, 1st edn 1881, 3rd edn 1926.

<sup>53</sup> William Robinson, butler, at Wolverley Lodge: Census 1911; OS 25” Shropshire sheet XIV.10, 1st edn 1881, 2nd edn 1901.

caput, however, Wolverley was consigned to the rural hinterland of the new castle-town. As a member of the manor of Wem, lordship of Wolverley followed that of the manor.

### **Demesne**

As a legacy of its former manorial status, Wolverley had a water mill with suit and service due from the tenants. Around 1230 William Pantulf II leased the mill to Lilleshall Abbey with the miller's dwelling, all the service owed to the mill by the men of Wolverley, and the right to raise the mill(dam) without harming the land of William and his men.<sup>54</sup> The arrangement was challenged by William's successor as lord of the manor,<sup>55</sup> and there is no further record of the mill; Wem mill was already in existence and all tenants of Wem manor were obliged to grind their grain there. Subsequently, the only seigneurial demesne in Wolverley was a close of meadow which was probably the site of the mill (see below, and Economic History, Mill).

### **Copyhold**

In 1436, customary tenants held two messuages and eight nooks of arable land (approximately 56 a.) in Wolverley, for which the total rents were 6s. and 32s. per annum, respectively.<sup>56</sup> By 1561, however, there were no customary tenants in Wolverley as all the tenements were freehold.<sup>57</sup>

### **Freehold**

John of Wolverley held half a virgate in Wolverley as a free tenant in the late 13th century. A deed of 1304 confirming the inheritance of John's son refers to the common pasture enjoyed by the free tenants of Wolverley, and the dues payable by all men holding half a virgate in

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<sup>54</sup> *Lilleshall Cartulary*, nos. 87, 260. The grant would have been made 1227 x 1233.

<sup>55</sup> Eyton, *Antiquities*, IX, 182, cites a writ issued by the abbot of Lilleshall in 1254 against Ralph le Boteler for disseising the abbey of its tenement in Wolverley. William Pantulf's grant of the mill was confirmed in 1265 (*Lilleshall Cartulary*, no. 260), but an extent of the abbey's possessions in 1330 makes no mention of it (*ibid.*, Appendix B).

<sup>56</sup> TNA, C 139/76/34; *Cal. Inq. PM*, xxiv, 348, no. 495.

<sup>57</sup> *Survey 1561*, 92–5.

that ‘manor’.<sup>58</sup> Two similar tenements, measured in half virgates, and with dwellings (messuages) are attested in the 14th century.<sup>59</sup>

At the 1561 survey, there were six freehold tenements in Wolverley, paying rents totalling 11s. 5d.<sup>60</sup> So limited was the lord’s financial interest in the township that Wolverley (‘Overley’) was left blank on the Arundel map of Wem manor (1631); just two small closes of meadow, Lord’s Meadow and Milney, are depicted. In 1805 Lord’s Meadow was held as demesne and it was sold soon afterwards by the earl of Darlington.<sup>61</sup>

In 1805 there were 11 landowners, plus three cottagers. The largest estate was Wolverley Hall, with 170 a. As well as holdings of farmland, whose occupants resided in adjacent townships, there were half a dozen farms, with acreages ranging from around 20 a. to 115 a.

In the next few decades there was a notable concentration of landownership. This was the result of the sale of Wolverley Hall Farm by the earl of Darlington, along with remaining parcels of demesne in the manor, coinciding with estate-building by Thomas Dickin and by Thomas Maddocks. The former benefitted also from the death of Edward Atcherley in 1829, intestate and without issue, to acquire the Atcherley estate in the north of the township.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, by the tithe apportionment in 1841, Thomas Dickin held approximately 477 a., two-thirds of the township. The remaining third was shared between Edward Dickin with 48 a. (mostly in the detached part of the township<sup>63</sup>) and Thomas Maddocks with 161 a.

While acquiring his estate in Wolverley, Thomas Dickin was also (re)building Loppington House as his country seat, where he moved, from The Hall in Wem, in 1826. The Loppington House estate extended into Wolverley, incorporating all the Wolverley farmland between the Spenford bridge lane and the river into the new park.<sup>64</sup> In 1885 T.A.M. Dickin consolidated

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<sup>58</sup> *Survey 1561*, 92–3.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Survey 1561*, 94–5; TNA, SC 12/26/56 (valor of 1589).

<sup>61</sup> 1805 Survey, 42–3; SA, 306, box 5b: Abstract of title of Thomas Dickin to Lord’s Meadow in Wolverley, from 1806; SA, P120/V/7/1: Lord’s Meadow owned by John Groom in 1825; SA, 306, box 3c: Conveyance by John Groome to Thomas Dickin and his trustee of parcel of land called Lord’s Meadow in Wolverley. 1829.

<sup>62</sup> See ‘Atcherley estate/Lee Farm’.

<sup>63</sup> A farm held by Mrs Mary Dickin in 1805: 1805 Survey, 44–5.

<sup>64</sup> SA, 306 box 13b: Account of William Hughes for building work at ‘Loppington Villa and Lodge’ for Thomas Dickin of Loppington Villa, 1829. There was a lodge at the gate on the Loppington–Wem turnpike, to which the 1829 account may refer. Williams, *Country Houses of Shropshire*, 389–92.

his ownership of the southern part of Wolverley with the acquisition of Wolverley Lodge Farm (75 a.) from Thomas Maddocks by exchanging 63 a. near to The Woodlands.<sup>65</sup>

## Principal Estates

### *Wolverley Hall*

In the late 13th century John of Wolverley held half a virgate in the *villa* of Wolverley of the lord of the manor. The tenement was confirmed to John's son William in 1304, in a charter specifying William's rights to take wood and pannage in the lord's North Wood, and his obligations of rent of 5s. per annum and other dues and services. The tenure was hereditary upon payment of the best beast as heriot.<sup>66</sup> William son of John was assessed for the 1327 lay subsidy at 3s. 2d., the largest amount of the five Wolverley households that were liable.<sup>67</sup> In 1328 he granted to his son John 11 a. next to the North Wood, held of the lord of the manor in heritable fee.<sup>68</sup> By 1381 the estate had passed to a family that took its name from Wottenhull (Prees), with Alan Wottenhull named in 1424.<sup>69</sup>

At the 1561 survey the estate was held by Thomas Sturry of Down Rossall (Shrops.). In 1586 Sturry leased 'the messuage in Overley called the Hall of Overley' and its land to Richard Mason of Wolverley, yeoman.<sup>70</sup> Thomas's grandson, Walter Sturry,<sup>71</sup> later resided at Wolverley Hall but in 1638 his son Carew Sturry conveyed the property to Sir Vincent Corbet and others as trustees for sale.<sup>72</sup> In 1640 the estate consisted of three messuages, 100 a. of land, 40 a. of meadow, 100 a. of pasture and 84 a. of furze and heath. Dame Elizabeth Corbet, widow, purchased Wolverley Hall in 1642. Elizabeth gave Wolverley Hall to her son Richard in 1648, when it formed part of the settlement on his marriage to Grace Noell. At this point there was a notional division of the estate, with one part being the capital messuage and

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<sup>65</sup> TNA, MAF 11/133/5943; *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 24 July 1885, 3; SA, 306, box 2c.

<sup>66</sup> *Survey 1561*, 92–3.

<sup>67</sup> *Shropshire Lay Subsidy 1327*, 143.

<sup>68</sup> SA, 1514/478.

<sup>69</sup> *Poll Taxes ... 1381*, 392; SA, 1514/479.

<sup>70</sup> SA, 1514/481 and 482. Cf. will and probate inventory of Richard Mason, yeoman, of Wolverley (d.1570): *Wem Probate Inventories*, ed. Watts; *Wem Wills*, ed. Watts. Mason was sufficiently prosperous to decorate the house with six 'painted sheets'.

<sup>71</sup> SA, 1514/482; SA, D3651/G/11/3.

<sup>72</sup> The following account, to 1685, is from: Raby Castle, Box 6: Abstract of Title Deeds relating to the Barony of Wem and the manors of Wem and Loppington and the Advowson of Wem and several other estates ..., 'Bundle 3. Wolverley Hall', pp. 21–8.

its appurtenances, and the other two parts being two messuages and all the lands pertaining to ‘Wolverley Demesnes’.

In 1677 Richard Corbet mortgaged some of the Wolverley Hall land to Francis Chambre for £300. Chambre was the tenant of the ‘capital messuage’ of Wolverley Hall, and was succeeded there in 1678 by John Chambre. The division of the estate created under the Corbet marriage settlement was also completed in 1678: Richard Corbet would retain two-thirds, including the capital messuage and pieces of land in its vicinity. The remaining one-third was allocated to Richard Jebb the elder and Thomas Payne, including a messuage, leased for 20s. and two capons per year, and the remaining pieces of land pertaining to the estate, situated further from the hall.<sup>73</sup>

George, Lord Jeffreys, in acquiring the lordship of Wem, set out to purchase additional properties nearby to enhance his estate. In 1685 Richard Corbet agreed to sell him the whole of the Wolverley Hall estate for £1,150. The estate then comprised: 100 a. of land, 50 a. of meadow, 100 a. of pasture, and 40 a. of furze and heath. Title to Wolverley Hall thereafter descended with the lordship of the manor of Wem.

Upon his succession to the lordship, the earl of Darlington sold off much of his remaining estate in the manor of Wem. Wolverley Hall was sold, c.1810, to John Heatley, as the house, buildings etc. and farm of nearly 186 a.<sup>74</sup> Thomas Dickin of Loppington House purchased Wolverley Hall from Heatley’s widow in 1837.<sup>75</sup> The farm was still part of the Dickin estate in 1879 when it was leased to John Cooke.<sup>76</sup>

#### *Atcherley estate/Lees Farm*

This freehold estate existed by the mid 14th century. In 1377 Hugh son of Richard Phillips of Frankton and his wife Isabel daughter of Richard Taylor of Lineal held a messuage and a half virgate of arable land in Wolverley, of which Evan of Admore had a life tenancy. In 1561 it was held by John Millward, son of Richard Millward, paying the lord of the manor of Wem

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<sup>73</sup> For the subsequent division and disposal of the share of Jebb and Payne, see: Garbet, 331, and Garbet’s papers: SA, 9043, file U no. 8, ‘Writings concerning Great Shaws in Wolverley’.

<sup>74</sup> SA, 6000/12498.

<sup>75</sup> SA, 306, boxes 5b, 5c and 13a.

<sup>76</sup> SA, 306, box 1c, 12 Nov. 1879 Acreage of Wolverley Hall farm, with signed and sealed agreement Thomas A.M. Dickin esq of Loppington House to John Cooke.



an annual service rent of 2s. 6d.<sup>77</sup> In 1634 the marriage settlement of Richard Chambre, *alias* Millward, of English Frankton, and his wife Ann included messuages and lands in English Frankton and Wolverley.<sup>78</sup> Thomas Atcherley was the tenant by 1642, and in 1662 Francis Chambre of Wolverley sold the tenement to his son, Richard Atcherley of Wolverley, for £428 10s.<sup>79</sup> In 1746 the owner was Roger Atcherley, who increased his fortune by marrying in that year the heiress, Dorothy Spencer of The Cross (Ellesmere).<sup>80</sup> In 1805 the estate comprised the farmstead and nearly 115 a., mainly lying in the north of the township, and being second in size and value only to the Wolverley Hall estate.<sup>81</sup> The owner then was Edward Atcherley of The Cross, who died intestate and without issue in 1829.<sup>82</sup> The estate was then acquired by Thomas Dickin of Loppington, by purchase from the administrators and/or by a claim to inheritance via his descent from Roger Atcherley. At around the same time, a parcel of land opposite New House farmstead was acquired by Thomas Maddocks to build The Woodlands.<sup>83</sup> By 1840 the former Atcherley land, now incorporated in the Dickin estate, had been made into a farm of 137½ a. farmed by Lewis Cooke.<sup>84</sup>

The origins of the name ‘Lees Farm’ are unclear. The tenant *c.* 1860 was Francis Lee, a young dairy farmer from Ellesmere, but he had left by 1871. The farm was named ‘Leys Farm’ in the 1871 census and Lees Farm in 1913.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Survey 1561*, 94–5.

<sup>78</sup> SA, 103/1/5/120, and see other deeds concerning the Millward/Chambre estate, including the tenement in Wolverley, 1577–1647: SA, 103/1/5/119–124. It is not known why members of the Millward family changed their name to Chambre.

<sup>79</sup> Gough, *Antiquities and Memoirs of Myddle*, 49; Garbet, 328–9; SA, 306, box 1a: sale by Francis Chambre of Wolverley to Richard Atcherley of Wolverley, 1662; will of Thomas Atcherley, gent, of Wolverley (d. 1658): ‘Wem Wills’, ed. Watts; probate inventory of Francis Chambre (1678): TNA, PROB 4/15611.

<sup>80</sup> SA, 5982, box 2: indenture between 1. Mary Acherley of Lee, Salop, widow, and Roger Acherley, younger son and heir apparent, and 2. Edward Spencer of the Cross, Ellesmere, and his wife Sarah and daughter Dorothy Spencer, 1 Aug. 1746. See also SA, 302, box 6b: bundle containing extracts of parish registers, dated 1831, of marriage of Roger Atcherley with Miss Dorothy Spencer etc.; Garbet, 328–9. It was the daughter of this marriage, Sarah Atcherley, whose marriage to Thomas Dickin, then the tenant of Aston Hall (Wem) *c.*1780 made that family’s fortune in turn: Woodward, 56–7, 176.

<sup>81</sup> 1805 Survey, 40–1.

<sup>82</sup> *Worcester Herald*, 21 Feb. 1829, 3; SA, 5982, box 75: legal papers on intestacy of Edward Atcherley. For Edward Atcherley (1756–1829), see ‘Atcherley Family Tree’ and ‘Thomas of Marton and his descendants’: atcherley.org.uk (accessed 21 June 2021).

<sup>83</sup> See The Woodlands/Maddocks estate.

<sup>84</sup> Tithe apportionment, Wem, p.144.

<sup>85</sup> Census 1861, 1871; *Harrods Dir. 1861*, 728; *Kelly’s Dir. 1913*, 173.

*Wilkinson estate/Park Farm*

In 1561 this estate was held ‘freely by charter from the lord of the manor’ by John Chidlow as a messuage with croft of 4 a. and 20 a. distributed in the common fields of Wolverley, paying annual service rent of 2s. 6d., said to be a rose rent in 1689.<sup>86</sup> By 1642 it had been acquired by Robert Wilkinson, the earl of Arundel’s bailiff for the manors of Wem and Loppington, of whom Richard Gough wrote, ‘He took more care to get money among the tenants, than to gain their love or preserve his own credit.’<sup>87</sup> In contrast, according to Samuel Garbet, Robert Wilkinson gave generously to the foundation of Wem grammar school and was one of the founder feoffees, and in 1677 he gave £5 towards rebuilding Wem parish church.<sup>88</sup> Andrew, the son of Robert Wilkinson of Wolverley, around 1679 sold his freehold tenement in Wolverley to Rowland Wingfield of Preston Brockhurst,<sup>89</sup> but his descendants continued as tenants. In 1805 the owner of the 81 a. 3 r. 12 p. farm was Rowland Wingfield and the tenant Thomas Wilkinson. The house and farm were sold by John Wingfield to Thomas Dickin of Loppington House in 1825/6.<sup>90</sup>

*Wolverley Yard/Wolverley Lodge Farm*

Although not one of the principal estates in modern times, this estate is of interest for having belonged to the Revd. Samuel Garbet and his descendants.

The estate originated with the seven messuages and one and a half virgates with appurtenances, and a plot called Corbrachan, in Wolverley, the whole claimed as one-quarter of the township, owned by John son of Thomas son of ‘Kenewrick’ of Ightfield in 1321 and by Roger of Lawley in 1344. By 1561 the estate, whatever it now comprised, was held by Rowland Lacon, rendering no annual rent to the lord of the manor.<sup>91</sup> By the 17th century, the capital messuage was at Wolverley Yard, a large croft lying east of the Atcherley messuage (Lees Farm).

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<sup>86</sup> *Survey 1561*, 94–5; TNA, LR 2/225.

<sup>87</sup> Gough, *Antiquities and Memoirs of Myddle*, 145.

<sup>88</sup> Garbet, 330.

<sup>89</sup> SA, 306 boxes 3c, 5b and 5c, 6b, sale of Wolverley messuage and farm by John Wingfield to Thomas Dickin, 1825–6; Also, SA, 306 box 5e: conveyance 1. Thomas Wingfield of Preston Brockhurst and Thomas Wilkinson of Wolverley to 2. Daniel Payne of Wolverley, a croft in Wolverley known as the Lyners, 8 May 1708; Garbet, 330.

<sup>90</sup> Garbet, 329–30; 1805 Survey, 38–9; Wolverley tithe apportionment, p. 145.

<sup>91</sup> *Survey 1561*, 94–5.

The estate was purchased by Richard Jebb, steward of the manor, who in 1694 included it in the marriage settlement of his daughter Mary on her marriage to John Wicksteed of Nantwich of a messuage and 100 a. land in Wolverley, Newtown and Northwood. The Wolverley part of the estate was sold by Wicksteed's trustee to John Goodall of Nantwich in 1715 for £502 3s. Goodall then sold part of the land to the Revd Samuel Garbet, in 1717, and the remainder, including the capital messuage, to John Hinton of Newtown. Garbet's purchase was a close of about 14 a. called the Great Shaws.<sup>92</sup> According to Garbet, Hinton sold the (timber-framed) house that stood on Wolverley Yard to replace a house in Sleaf that had been destroyed by fire in 1738. Hinton sold the whole of his estate to Garbet in 1748.<sup>93</sup>

In 1805 the owner was Thomas James, the son and heir of the Revd Samuel Garbet the younger. The Wolverley estate consisted of 60 a. 3. 4p. and included Wolverley Yard and a compact group of fields in the south east of the township, but not apparently a house or farmstead.<sup>94</sup> The property must have been sold after James's death. Wolverley Yard and adjoining closes were acquired by Thomas Dickin, before 1840, to form part of Holly Farm.<sup>95</sup> The remainder, now a messuage and farm of nearly 49 a. known as Wolverley Lodge Farm, was sold by Thomas Ireland and George Walmsley of Wem to Thomas Maddocks of The Woodlands in 1839.<sup>96</sup> At around the same time, soon after 1835, Joseph Harper (1803–1887), a blacksmith from Berkshire, became the tenant of Wolverley Lodge Farm. Joseph and then his son Samuel farmed there until the 1930s.<sup>97</sup> In 1885 Thomas Parton Maddocks conveyed Wolverley Lodge Farm to T.A.M. Dickin in exchange for land in the north of the township, each consolidating their estates.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> SA, 731/2/196; SA, 731/2/2019–32; 'Writings concerning the Gr. Shaws in Wolverley' in papers of Samuel Garbet: SA, 9043, file U no. 18; cf. Garbet, 314, 330. The location of the Shaws is uncertain; it may have been incorporated in Wolverley Hall Farm: Abstract of title of Thomas Dickin to several pieces of land in Wolverley called The Shaws, 1727–1825, and another 1727–1811; SA, 306, box 5b.

<sup>93</sup> Garbet, 330–1, 352. See also Newtown.

<sup>94</sup> 1805 Survey, 40–3.

<sup>95</sup> Tithe apportionment, 144.

<sup>96</sup> Conveyance, Sept. 1839: SA, 306, box 3c; Tithe apportionment, 147. Several documents concerning conveyance by George Walmsley to Thomas Maddocks, 1839: SA, 306, box 12d.

<sup>97</sup> Joseph's son, Samuel (1845–1935) became the tenant in 1876: University of Reading, MERL, FR SAL 8: Wolverley Lodge Farm, Wem : Co. Salop 1868–c.1970: Harper family of Wem. Correspondence on Wolverley Lodge Farm and Harper tenants, 1885, 1914–18: SA, 306 box 2c.

<sup>98</sup> Order of exchange of land in Wolverley, Wem and Newtown. Capt. T.A.M. Dickin and T. Maddocks. 23 Dec 1885: SA, 306, box 6a.

*New House Farm and the Maddocks estate*

The Maddocks estate dominated the northern part of Wolverley from 1807 to 1947. The estate was founded on the acquisition by Thomas Maddocks of New House Farm.

New House farmstead is situated at the extreme north east of Wolverley township, on the boundary with Newtown and Northwood. The situation and place-name are indicative of a late medieval establishment connected with the colonisation of the North Wood. If it existed at the time of the 1561 survey, New House may have been the freehold messuage and ‘certain lands’ held by John Hotchkis which he received by charter from Sir Richard Mainwaring in 1548, paying annual rent of 15*d.* to the lord of the manor.<sup>99</sup>

According to Garbet, part of the estate was held by the Menlove family in the first half of the 17th century. By 1684 that portion was owned by a Mr Brindley of Wellington, who sold it to William Wicksteed of Wem.<sup>100</sup> Another part was owned by Richard Jebb, who settled it on his daughter Mary on her marriage to John Wicksteed of Nantwich in 1694; in 1698 John Wicksteed and his wife Mary levied a fine on the messuage, 40 a. of land, 30 a. of meadow and 40 a. of pasture in Wolverley, Northwood and Newtown.<sup>101</sup> Part of that estate, perhaps lands in Northwood, was sold to Sir Richard Hill by the trustees for John Wicksteed, c.1715.<sup>102</sup> In 1723 William Wicksteed sold ‘Newhouse’ with two cottages in Northwood to Richard Hill of Hawkstone.<sup>103</sup> In 1805 New House Farm was owned by Sir Richard Hill, comprising 73 a. in Wolverley and 72 a. in Northwood.

Thomas Maddocks, from Bronington (Hanmer par., Flints.), married Sarah, daughter of John Mulliner of Edstaston Hall, purchased New House Farm from Hill and settled there in 1807.<sup>104</sup> Thomas later purchased about 9 a. opposite New House – from Edward Atcherley (d. 1829) or his administrators – where he built The Woodlands for his son, Thomas, who was married and living at The Woodlands by 1839.<sup>105</sup> Thomas Maddocks the elder died at New House in 1841, and thereafter it was let to tenants as the Maddocks family made The

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<sup>99</sup> *Survey 1561*, 92–3. See SA, D3651/B/151/17/1, D3651/B/151/18. Cf. Garbet, 239.

<sup>100</sup> Wem Churchwarden’s accounts, 1684: SA, P295/B/3/11; Garbet, 329.

<sup>101</sup> SA, 9043, file U no. 8. See also Wolverley Lodge Farm.

<sup>102</sup> Garbet, 330.

<sup>103</sup> SA, 112/1/2439–52; SA, D3651/B/151/18/4 (1807).

<sup>104</sup> *Wem Parish Registers*, marriage, 18 Oct. 1807; SA, 5168/1/18.

<sup>105</sup> See Wolverley Lodge Farm (above).

Woodlands their residence.<sup>106</sup> The estate came to be oriented more to Northwood and Newtown than Wolverley. In 1885, Thomas Parton Maddocks exchanged Wolverley Lodge Farm with T.A.M. Dickin for land in the north of the township nearer to The Woodlands. His son, Herbert George Parton Maddocks, inherited the estate in 1935.<sup>107</sup> By that time, it was almost entirely in Northwood and Newtown, apart from The Woodlands park and New House farmstead. It comprised New House, Northwood and Top House farms; four smallholdings (Pinfold House, Narrow Lane and Wheelwright's Cottage in Northwood, and a 'Newtown holding'), two cottages in Newtown (Church House and Newtown Cottage), various closes of accommodation land, and a holding in Wem Moss. The land area totalled 538 a. with a rent roll of £1,497 per annum. H.G.P. Maddocks seems to have had an only daughter, and after his death, in 1947, The Woodlands estate was sold in lots.<sup>108</sup>

## ECONOMIC HISTORY

### Farming

Before the Norman conquest Wolverley was assessed at three geldable hides, and valued at 17s. On this measure, it was larger and more valuable than the neighbouring manor of Horton (two hides, 10s.) and but smaller than Wem (four hides, 27s.). By 1086, however, Wem was already outstripping its neighbours: Wem was now worth 40s., whereas Wolverley was worth just 8s. and was equipped with just one plough.

At the Domesday survey, Wolverley had no woodland available for pannage. After the formation of the manor of Wem, Wolverley tenants were granted rights, including pannage, in the lord's North Wood.<sup>109</sup> In 1086 there was arable land for four ploughs, more than Aston (three) or Edstaston (two). Wolverley had two or three open fields, situated on the higher ground above the river. In the south of the township, field-names and boundaries indicate an open field abutting the open fields of Horton and Newtown, perhaps bounded to the south by

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<sup>106</sup> Burial, June 1841: 'Newtown Parish Register 1813–1906 (baptisms), 1813–1963 (burials)' (typescript by K.J. Bulmer, 1969–70, SA, Parish Registers Box 36); 1841 Census.

<sup>107</sup> Improvements to estate cottages: SA, DA27/710/2/115 (1943) and /166 (1946).

<sup>108</sup> 'North Shropshire. The Woodlands Estate, Wem', sale particulars, 1947: Historic England archive, SA00892. H.G.P. Maddocks's daughter, Patricia Mary, married William John Vaughan at Newtown church in 1939: *Chester Chron.*, 14 Oct. 1939, 4.

<sup>109</sup> *Survey 1561*, 92–3.

the lane to Pensford bridge.<sup>110</sup> The field-name Big Gravel Furlong on higher ground north of Wolverley Hall may indicate another open field, or at least arable land, there.<sup>111</sup> The regular shape of fields in the north of the township, east of the road, shown on the tithe map, may also indicate the organised enclosure of strips in an open field, or alternatively, the organised enclosure of woodland.<sup>112</sup> The open field system was in operation at the time of the 1561 survey, when, for instance, John Chidlow's tenement included 20 a. of arable land divided in the common fields of Wolverley.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, c.1750, Samuel Garbet wrote that the fields 'have been so long enclosed that no account can be given of them'.<sup>114</sup>

Probate inventories from the 16th and 17th centuries demonstrate mixed agriculture, with all farmers having livestock and equipment for both arable and dairy farming, as well as sheep.<sup>115</sup>

Hemp was cultivated. In the 17th century Wolverley tenants were often presented to the manor court for watering hemp.<sup>116</sup> Few of the probate inventories of Wolverley residents include hemp, however, whether as crops, tow or yarn. Humphrey Witcherley (d. 1625), who was unusually wealthy, mainly in debts owed to him, left hemp and flax valued (evidently approximately) at £1 and wool to the same value. Witcherley also had 32 sheep. John Mason, yeoman (d. 1564/5) was a prosperous farmer, whose livestock included 30 sheep; his household goods included two spinning wheels – but no flax, hemp or wool for spinning.

By the mid 19th century, dairy farming predominated. An advertisement for sale of the stock of Thomas Maddocks (of The Woodlands, who died in 1847) included a dairy herd, 22 pairs of cheese vats plus other dairy and brewing utensils, but also seven sheep, and arable farming equipment.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Tithe apportionment, e.g. lot 3307 'Wolverley field', lot 3308 'Long Liners', 3305, 3306, 3310, 3311. See note 000.

<sup>111</sup> Tithe apportionment, lot 3370. Faint strips are revealed by Lidar imaging.

<sup>112</sup> Tithe apportionment, e.g. lots 3401–9. Lidar imaging does not reveal any ridge-and-furrow, however.

<sup>113</sup> *Survey 1561*, 94–5.

<sup>114</sup> Garbet, 327.

<sup>115</sup> *Wem Probate Inventories*, ed. Watts, e.g.: William Allen, husbandman (d. 1557); Jane and Richard Baylies (d. 1589); George Ison (d. 1604); John Mason, yeoman (d. 1564/5); Richard Mason (d. 1569).

<sup>116</sup> E.g., SA, 167/3, 6 Oct. 1663.

<sup>117</sup> *Eddowes's Jnl*, 15 Mar. 1848, 3.

## Mills

William Pantulf II, c.1230, leased to Lilleshall Abbey the water mill at Wolverley with its mill pond and fishery, as well as the messuage held by William the miller, all the service owed to the mill by the men of Wolverley, and the right to raise the mill pool provided it did not harm the meadows and arable land of William and his men, for an annual rent of 2s.<sup>118</sup> The arrangement was unsuccessful, however.<sup>119</sup> Wem mill was established by c.1200 and the tenants of the whole manor were required to grind their grain there. Wolverley mill was probably situated at the confluence of Redfellis brook and the Roden, where closes named Lord's Meadow and Milney are depicted on the 1631 map, at a bend in the river that was still named Weir Corner in 1805.<sup>120</sup> The mill had disappeared by 1561; in 1589 the manor court ordered that no one was to make a dam in 'Wolverley brook' for the purposes of fishing.<sup>121</sup>

## SOCIAL HISTORY

In 1086 there were three *villani* and one *radman* – the latter a form of tenure distinctive to Shropshire involving an obligation of riding service on the Welsh border.<sup>122</sup>

A significant minority of the population were of Welsh heritage – a characteristic shared by the townships north of Wem.<sup>123</sup> In 1327, among the five most prosperous tenants in Wolverley were Maredudd and William the sons of Hugh.<sup>124</sup> The owner of a large estate in Wolverley in 1332 identified himself as John son of Thomas son of 'Kenewricke' of Ightfield (Shrops.), and there were closes named 'Kendricks' beside Redfellis Brook, in Newtown (in 1561), near Wolverley.<sup>125</sup> The wills of Robert ap Thomas (d.1616/17)<sup>126</sup> and William ap

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<sup>118</sup> *Lilleshall Cartulary*, nos. 87, 260.

<sup>119</sup> The abbot of Lilleshall in 1254 issued a writ against Ralph le Boteler for disseising the abbey of its tenement in Wolverley: Eyton, *Antiquities*, IX, 182. William Pantulf's grant of the mill was confirmed in 1265 (*Lilleshall Cartulary*, no. 260), but an extent of the abbey's possessions in 1330 makes no mention of it (*ibid.*, Appendix B).

<sup>120</sup> 1805 Survey, 42; tithe apportionment, lots 3321–2.

<sup>121</sup> SA, 167/3, 26 May 1589.

<sup>122</sup> M. Atkin, 'A study of "radman villages" recorded in Domesday Book in western Shropshire', *TSAHS*, 89 (2015), 15–26.

<sup>123</sup> Except Northwood, due to its later settlement.

<sup>124</sup> *Shropshire Lay Subsidy 1327*, 143. Here and in the 1332 example, the Latin 'filius' disguises whether the vernacular usage was English 'son of' or Welsh 'ap'.

<sup>125</sup> *Survey 1561*, 74–5; 94–5.

Hugh ('ap Pewe') (d.1619), both 'husbandmen',<sup>127</sup> reveal a network of prosperous families based in Wolverley of Welsh heritage and possibly Welsh language, given that William ap Hugh's son was named, in both wills, as George ap William.<sup>128</sup> By that date, however, most of the Welsh patronymics had been anglicised. For example, the beneficiaries of Robert ap Thomas included his brother's son, Robert Bytchell (ab Ithel), and individuals surnamed Powell, Hayling and Maddocks. Marriages and baptisms with names in the 'ap' form were a regular occurrence in the first decades of the Wem parish register, until c.1630; the last marriage was in 1625 and the last baptism in 1636.<sup>129</sup> It is unlikely that this was due to ignorance of Welsh; Reese Hughes, the rector from 1662 to 1670 'could never speak English like a native'.<sup>130</sup> Anglicised versions of Welsh names were very common in Wem parish; however, the George Williams buried at Newtown chapel in 1692 might have been the grandson of George ap William.<sup>131</sup>

Wolverley had no resident lord or even gentry; the most eminent resident families, from the 17th to 20th centuries, were Chambre, Atcherley and latterly Maddocks. The township's population generally consisted of several tenant farmers and their domestic servants and farm workers. No estate cottages for farm workers appear to have been built, although the butler of Loppington House lived in Wolverley Lodge, and the coachman of The Woodlands had a tied cottage a short distance north of the property.<sup>132</sup>

The Dickin family were suitably honoured by their many tenants, but their seat was in Loppington,<sup>133</sup> and the nearest to resident gentry in Wolverley in the 19th and 20th centuries was the Maddocks family of The Woodlands. Thomas Maddocks, gent, of Hanmer

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<sup>126</sup> Robert ap Thomas is named in a suit roll of Wem manor court, 7 Oct. 1585: SA, 2495, box 50, no. 119, fol. 5v. although others have Welsh names, e.g., 'Davyd Evans' (Lowe and Ditches), no other suitor is named with 'ap'. Anne, wife of Robert ap Thomas, husbandman, was buried at Wem in 1612, and Robert likewise in Mar. 1617: *Wem Parish Registers*, 132, 136.

<sup>127</sup> George and Margaret, the son and daughter of William ap Pewe, labourer, were baptised at Wem in Nov. 1607; William's wife Joan and daughter Margaret were buried in Dec. the same year. William ap Pugh, husbandman, was buried at Wem in 1619: *Wem Parish Registers*, 26, 138.

<sup>128</sup> Wem wills, ed. Watts.

<sup>129</sup> *Wem Parish Registers*, 5–71, 93–104, 110–59 *passim*, 293, 298. The registers from this early date unfortunately do not specify the individuals' township of residence.

<sup>130</sup> Garbet, 156.

<sup>131</sup> *Wem Parish Registers*, 332.

<sup>132</sup> 1911 Census.

<sup>133</sup> E.g., *Cambrian News*, 15 Dec. 1866, 4; Williams, *Country Houses of Shropshire*, 389–92.



(Flintshire) married Sarah née Mulliner of Edstaston Hall,<sup>134</sup> and purchased New House Farm in 1807. Their son Thomas succeeded in 1841 to an estate in Newtown, Northwood and Wolverley,<sup>135</sup> having taken up residence at The Woodlands in his father's lifetime, but he died young. Thomas's two daughters and son Thomas were raised by his widow, Mary, who never remarried and was duly revered in the community. Mary was one of the most generous benefactors of the new charity subscription school in Newtown in 1853, along with the Maddocks brothers, her tenants at New House Farm<sup>136</sup> – probably kin of Thomas Maddocks the elder.<sup>137</sup> Sarah Maddocks, daughter of Thomas and Sarah, also subscribed even though she had moved away.<sup>138</sup> Mary and her son Thomas were also patrons of Newtown church, donating the land on which the new church was built in 1868.<sup>139</sup>

Thomas Parton Maddocks, after graduating from Oxford, spent his long life at The Woodlands, raising a family and serving as a JP. Descriptions of the 'rejoicings' at his coming-of-age in 1867, and that of his son, Thomas Brassey Maddocks, in 1895, manifest the community's enthusiasm for a family filling the role of resident gentry.<sup>140</sup> The community also joined in mourning when Thomas the younger was killed in action in South Africa in 1900.<sup>141</sup> Thomas Parton Maddocks died at the Woodlands in 1935, aged 88.<sup>142</sup> The last member of the family to reside there was Thomas's second son, Herbert George Parton Maddocks, on whose death in 1947 the estate was sold off in lots.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Wem Parish Registers*, 18 Oct. 1807; SA, 5168/1/18.

<sup>135</sup> TNA, PROB 11/1954/79; PROB 11/2067/434.

<sup>136</sup> TNA, ED 103/56/5, 99.

<sup>137</sup> His widow Sarah died in 1846, and by 1851 the tenant of New House farm was Owen Maddocks, born at Bradley Green, near Whitchurch. Owen's sons John and James then farmed at New House into the 1880s. At the 1851 census, Owen's wife Mary and son John, and Sarah Maddocks (note 000), were visiting Thomas Maddocks's daughter Mary Wynn at Crickett (Ellesmere).

<sup>138</sup> TNA, ED 103/56/5, 100. Sarah was born at New House in 1808; she never married and, after her mother's death, lived with her sister, Mary Wynn, at Crickett. She died there in 1869 but was buried at Newtown church: *Wem Parish Registers*; Census 1841, 1851, 1861; Newtown Parish Register, burial 1869.

<sup>139</sup> See Newtown.

<sup>140</sup> *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 26 Apr. 1867, 5; *Wellington Jnl*, 21 Sept. 1895, 7. E.g. also hosting Sunday school treats: *Oswestry Advertiser*, 10 Oct. 1877, 7.

<sup>141</sup> *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 21 Sept. 1900, 7. A memorial window was erected in Newtown church, made by T.F. Curtis, Ward and Hughes of London, in 1902.

<sup>142</sup> Newtown Parish Register, typescript, p. 104.

<sup>143</sup> Sale particulars, 1947: Historic England archive, SA00892.

## RELIGIOUS HISTORY

In the mid 18th century ‘the shell of a domestic chapel’ remained at Wolverley Hall,<sup>144</sup> which is otherwise unrecorded.

Wolverley was one of the three townships that joined together in the 1650s to establish a chapel of ease at Newtown. In 1861 Wolverley was removed from Wem ecclesiastical parish to join the new parish of Newtown.

In 1851 a private house in Wolverley was used as a Primitive Methodist ‘preaching house’, with meetings held on Sunday evenings and space for 20, although the average attendance was 12. Luther Richards was the ‘local preacher and class leader’.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Garbet, 327.

<sup>145</sup> *Church and Chapel*, 107.