

The area of Bicton civil parish known as Oxon was historically always linked to Shelton and still is as part of the same ecclesiastical district established in 1854. Its general area was bounded by the two main roads to Oswestry and Welshpool radiating from Shrewsbury and the former open land of Bicton Heath. It shares the same undulating glacial landscape of the heath which therefore made it more suitable for pasture rather than arable and no doubt this inspired the name.

Today it is the scene of various developments, the latest of which will be a new sheltered housing complex for Wrekin Housing Trust near the Holyhead Road. Its assisted living regime will complement the existing range of services already available along this part of Oxon: apartments at Oxon Hall, The Uplands Nursing Home and the Shropshire and Mid Wales Hospice. Together these can cater for different aspects of later life from 'downsizing' to terminal care in a way which is the subject of much political discussion at the moment.

Meanwhile, on the western side, fields are given over to a touring caravan park. In between the proposed Bicton Heath relief road (a section of proposed NW relief road) and associated commercial development will just about use up the remaining farmland.

In ten years of these history essays, Oxon has been rarely mentioned for the very practical reason that relevant documentary evidence is in short supply and the shape of the field pattern offers few obvious clues. For instance, being only a small unit of land it did not earn a separate mention in Domesday Book, 1086 when data for Shelton was recorded (Calcott in Bicton and Udlington in Rossall were in a similar situation) such areas did not appear in records until much later.

One of the earliest references may be a deed of the mid 15th century in which John Colle granted to Richard Waring of Shelton, for 40 years "all his lands and tenements in the town and fields of Shelton, except Oxden, Udlington and Blakemermedoes". The last name is a mystery, but Blakemeer Plantation in nearby Onslow may be a clue to its location. The Colles also held land at the Isle which was then associated with Udlington.

In 1672 the Heath Tax recorded households in the township of 'Oxon and Shelton' without specifying which part they were in. Other taxation lists are likewise unclear. The first firm evidence for a large house in Oxon came in 1785 when 'William Spearman of Oxon gent.' became involved in the Shelton Tithes. A year later his daughter Margaret married Thomas Morris, a lawyer from Newport. The marriage record also referred to William as being of 'Donnington' so at the time the families were much closer. However in 1789 the marriage of another daughter was recorded in the local St. Chads Register. Son John succeeded William at Oxon where he was joined by brother Richard, a clergyman. They both lie together under an ornate tomb in Bicton's old churchyard, dated 1824 and 1826. Their other monument may actually be Oxon Hall which has a fine 'Regency' appearance. Nearby, the survivors of their parkland trees can still be recognised.

Meanwhile, Thomas and Margaret Morris (nee Spearman) produced four sons, Charles, Thomas, John and Edward. Thomas died young in 1813, but the others grew up and started buying land. First Charles and John bought Bicton House from Henry Hanmer in 1830, but this soon after passed to Dr Crawford who had married a Morris. Also in 1830 the parish survey recorded John renting Rossall Hall. Then, in 1832, Edward bought Oxon from his mother's Spearman family and later nearby Udlington from Viscount Boyne. Nearer Newport, in 1845, Charles and John bought the Wood Eaton Manor estate, which was to become an important alternative home for the whole family.

Charles and Edward never married, so that, after 1878, all the various properties passed to nephew Charles John Morris, born 1831, who could split his time between Oxon and Wood Eaton.

He was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in the County. He was educated at Eton and Oxford and married Constance, daughter of Rev. Herbert Oakeby from near Bishops Castle. He acted as JP in both Staffordshire and Shropshire and was High Sheriff of this County in 1864. Otherwise he was of a retiring disposition and concentrated his efforts on improving his estates rather than contributing generally to local affairs. Vaughan Cottages in Bicton Heath were probably one of his improvements.

Hi died in 1899 and like other members of the family was buried in the family vault at Church Eaton near their Staffordshire home. His widow stayed on at Oxon for some years, but it was left unoccupied during most of WW1 until eldest son Charles Edward took over. Since, by then, he had married a Miss Eyton, he took the name Morris Eyton in recognition of this.

He did not spend much time here, however, and as a result of changing economic and family fortunes the Oxon estate was put up for sale in 1930. By then it consisted of 364 acres, made up of the hall and its grounds, four farms (including Udlington), two smallholdings, 16 cottages (mainly along Welshpool road and Shepherd's Lane) and the Welsh Harp at Bicton Heath.

Most cottages were bought by their tenants, as was Udlington Farm, but the bulk of the other farmland went to the County Council who added it to their County smallholding estate. The Hall itself was taken over by Shelton Hospital to serve as an annexe.

Fast forward to modern times and the Council has since sold on all this land to other users, while the Hall became redundant and available for redevelopment and the pressures for urban expansion continue to dominate the future