

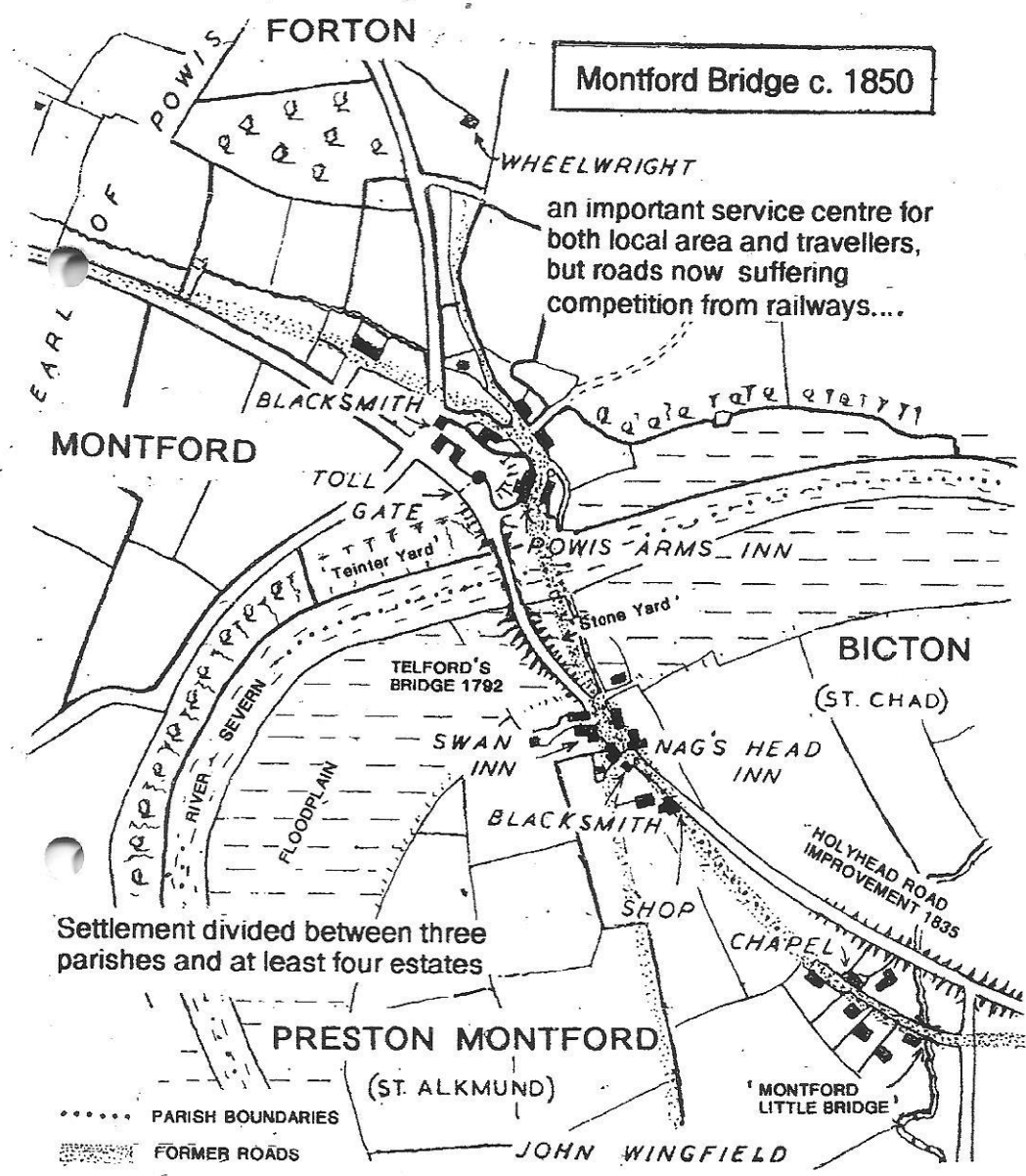
David Pannett's History of Bickton Part 22

Montford Bridge at your service (part 1)

The closure of Montford Bridge Post Office as we know it, prompts us to reflect upon the varied services which also once occupied this important convergence of roads and river.

Roadside inns were always important on this major route. The 'Pheasant' stood on the Montford side, occupied by Elizabeth Jones in 1728, while 'The Swan' occupied by Thomas Griffiths in 1763, stood on the other. Here the building certainly gives the impression of being far older than the eighteenth century. Moreover, it is not exactly aligned along the main road, but on the former lane branching off to Preston Montford and was also part of a small farm. Inn keeping was not necessarily a full time occupation, while land for the cow, horses and supplies of hay was always useful to the business.

Significantly, when Lord Clive, the new owner of the Montford Estate, reorganised the farms in 1771, he gave some extra land to the 'Pheasant', then occupied by Mary Gough, widow. The bridge by Thomas Telford, 1792 (July 02) then almost by-passed the inn, but at the same time may have released a strip of roadside waste on the Bickton side for further development, which included yet another inn, the 'Nags Head'. It was probably built by John Mytton, lord of the manor and technically owner of that waste, but later in 1824, his wayward son Jack was obliged to sell it to settle his debts. It was bought by John Wingfield of Onslow while the tenant was then George Whitehorn and, soon after, in 1829 he also acquired the 'Swan' as part of the Preston Montford estate. Its tenant was William Blandford, who held it until the 1840's, to be followed by William Jones.



Montford Bridge c. 1850

an important service centre for both local area and travellers, but roads now suffering competition from railways....

Settlement divided between three parishes and at least four estates

..... PARISH BOUNDARIES
- - - - - FORMER ROADS

HOLYHEAD ROAD
IMPROVEMENT 1835

JOHN WINGFIELD

Meanwhile John Gough still ran the 'Pheasant', but its name changed to 'Clive Arms' in recognition of its owners. With further fortunate marriages, The Clives then became the Earls of Powys and so the name changed yet again.

In this period traffic was reaching its peak, boosted by the Holyhead Road project, (August 2007) so that there was enough trade to go round. Associated blacksmiths shops, William Lewis on the Montford side and Francis Cotton and later John Randleys on the other could also help the travellers.

All this was not to last, however, as in 1848 the Shrewsbury-Chester railway opened and steadily reduced the long distance road traffic passing this way. The 'Swan' closed down soon after 1851, when William Jones, by then age 67, was still employing his own brewer. Between 1863 and 1870, the 'Powys Arms' run by Mary Dawson (Thomas' widow?) also closed,

Meanwhile the 'Nags Head' continued with successive members of the Whitehorn family; George, John and James, but this too closed in 1870's when James crossed the road to revive the old 'Swan' as the 'Wingfield Arms'. As both houses belonged to this estate, such a move would have been easy to arrange and also made economic sense. It was also not uncommon for such businesses to stay in one family for several generations. Thus, when James died in 1885, he was succeeded by yet another John until 1905, when Charles Blake took over until 1922.

O.S. Map 1902

