

## CHURCH PULVERBATCH

THE parish of Church Pulverbatch lies on rising ground in the northern foothills of the Long Mvnd. It contains 4,283 acres and comprises the townships of Church Pulverbatch (known locally, since at least the 13th century, as Churton), Castle Pulverbatch, Cothercott, Wilderley, and Wrentnall.

The parish boundary in part follows streams; Habberley Brook on the west, Ipkins (or Wallevbourne) Brook on the north, and Wilderley Brook on the south-east. On the east, however, and over Wilderley and Cothercott Hills to the south, it passes through former woodland and does not make use of natural features. The eastern boundary with Stapleton, although determined in 1385, was in dispute in the later 16th century. It was not settled until 1610, when an area known as 'the Challenge Land', between Castle Place and Churton Brook, was transferred to Pulverbatch. To the south of Churton Brook the parish boundary follows the bounds of Wilderley and Stapleton manors, laid out in 1227. The southern boundary was not determined until the inclosure of the Long Mvnd, c.1790. An anomalous projection of the boundary in the south-west corner of the parish, taking in Bank Farm and part of Paulith Bank, was still accounted part of the township of Stitt and Gatten, in Ratlinghope parish, in 1839. This presumably represents the portion of Stiperstones Forest granted to the lord of Pulverbatch manor in 1314.

Besides Ipkins and Wilderley Brooks two other tributaries of the River Cound flow from west to east across the lower, northern, half of the pariah. Along them ran most of the internal boundaries between the townships. Wildbach Brook, flowing from Broom Hill towards Moat Farm, Stapleton, was the boundary between Wrentnall and Church Pulverbatch, while Churton Brook divided Church and Castle Pulverbatch on the north from Cothercott and Wilderley on the south. The boundary between Cothercott and Wilderley ran along the road to Sheppen Fields, and that between Church and Castle Pulverbatch was the valley to the east of the road from Shrewsbury to Bishops Castle.

Over the east and north of the parish the land rises gently from 400 feet in the north-east to some 650 feet near the villages of Church Pulverbatch and Wrentnall and the sites of the former hamlets of Wilderley and Wallevbourne. Castle Pulverbatch stands at 700 feet, the only hill village being Cothercott (800 feet) on the north-eastern slopes of Cothercott Hill. The landscape in the west of the parish is dominated by a northward projection of the Long Mvnd, comprising Broom Hill (950 feet), Lawn and Huglith Hills (1,050 feet), and Paulith Bank (1,263 feet), and forming the watershed between Habberley Brook to the west and the Cound tributaries to the east. South of Wilderley and Cothercott rise the steep slopes of Wilderley and Cothercott Hills, the latter reaching 1,450 feet at its summit near the Thresholds.

The parish is ill-endowed with light gravelly soil, which occurs in significant quantities only in the lower reaches of Wildbach Brook and on the low hill between Wrentnall and Wallevbourne. Longmvndian shales and grits underlie the thin soils of the high ground to the west and south. Between Wildbach and Churton Brooks in the centre of the parish is an eastward projection of similar character, forming the promontories on which Church and Castle Pulverbatch stand. Cothercott stands on a glacial moraine, which probably accounts for its unusual site. Boulder clay extends over the lower land in the rest of the parish, thus

covering the greater part of the townships of Wilderlev and Wrentnall and the land to the east of Habberlev Brook. The Coal Measures underlying the eastern boulder day were mined in the 18th and 19th centuries and, with the clearance of the woodland which once covered this part of the parish, the almost unworkable local gritstone became the normal building material here in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Although the parish contained six ancient townships, the greater part of its area was covered by forest until the later 16th century. Steplewood, on the eastern clavs, extended into Stapleton and Pontesburv parishes and Wilderlev Wood, its southern continuation, ran southwards from Wilderlev Brook into the foothills of the Long Mvnd. Woods known as Wallebourne Wood, Broom Hill, and Over and Nether Huglith lay on the clay flanking the range of hills in the west of the parish. Extensive commons on Wilderley and Cothercott Hills were not inclosed until the Second World War.

Steplewood, bounded on the north by Ipkins Brook and on the south by Wilderley Brook, probably ran during the Middle Ages as far west as the main road to Shrewsburv, where the field-name Hayside, north of Black Lion Farm, indicates former woodland. A field called the Broach, southwest of Churton Cottage, suggests that the wood once extended to within a few yards of Church Pulverbach village. A bailiwick of the Long Forest until withdrawn from its jurisdiction in 1250, Steplewood was said in 1235 to have been much wasted in the past, but few assarts are recorded there, and its area appears to have changed little between the later 13th century and 1601, when it contained 345 acres. In spite of continuous sales of timber and underwood during the later Middle Ages, the wood to the east of Church Pulverbach was still, in the mid-16th century 'so thick of timber trees and hollies and bushes that one might very hardly find the way'. Butlers, or New, Coppice, along the parish boundary to the north of Castle Place Farm, had been inclosed by 1567 and was sold to the Jennings family of Wallebourne in 1578. The remainder of the wood was common to the tenants of Church Pulverbach and Wrentnall until 1601, common rights in the north of the wood being shared with the tenants of Longden manor after 1283. Steplewood was inclosed c.1600, when allotments were made to the lord of the manor and the tenants, and in 1611 fences here were broken by the tenants of Stapleton, who claimed rights of common in the wood. The lord of the manor appears to have cleared the remaining timber on his portion of the wood soon after 1619. By 1770 only 6 acres of woodland remained at Starr's Coppice (the former Butler's Coppice). This had been cleared by 1839, when the only surviving areas of woodland within Steplewood were the Gorse (13 acres) and small coppices along Wildbach and Churton Brooks.

The field-names Rocking Meadow and the Stocking suggest that the western boundary of Wilderlev Wood once lay a little to the east of Wilderley Lane Farm. The wood was said to be sufficient for 100 swine in 1086 and to have been recently wasted in 1235, but it had been withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Long Forest by 1301. Haughmond Abbey, granted free warren here in 1320, seems to have inclosed a portion of the wood, presumably represented by the area known as Abbots Hay, south of Churton Brook on the parish boundary with Stapleton. This was still woodland in 1595, but had been cleared by 1662.

Apart from Huglith the woods in the west of the parish were common to the tenants of Pulverbach and Wrentnall manors. Wallebourne Wood, the smallest of them, is recorded in the early 13th century. This was probably once the common wood of the former manor of Wallebourne and survived as a 13-acre coppice until 1798. At Wrentnall, where there was wood for 100 swine in 1086, a common wood called 'Werekwud', recorded between 1235 and 1342, probably lay on Broom Hill. Inclosures had been made on the lower slopes of the hill by

1565 when the wood was said to contain 160 acres. Common rights were still enjoyed here c.1600 but the hill had been inclosed by 1615.

Huglith Wood, the greater part of which was held in demesne by the lord of Pulverbatch manor, is first recorded c.1198 and by 1330 it had been divided into two parts, later known as Over and Nether Huglith. The area of the former, which lay on the western slopes of Hugiith Hill and Lawn Hill, seems to have been much reduced during the later Middle Ages, for most of it was leased as pasture in the 15th century. Licence was granted to clear underwood on the lower ground and to coppice woodland on the higher ground in 1585. Nether Huglith, in the valley of Habberlev Brook, was said to contain 600 acres in the 16th century. It had been leased in 1446 to the tenant of Wallebourne and was probably cleared soon after 1584, when William Jennings of Wallebourne bought all the standing timber. The name Huglith Wood was applied to some 60 acres of woodland on Lawn Hill c.1780. when the only other surviving portions of the medieval wood were Riddleshill (50a.) and Browns Coppice (19a.). Huglith Wood had been cleared by 1839 but the two other woods have survived until the present day.

Common woodland on the eastern slopes of Huglith, bounded on the north by the road from Castle Pulverbatch towards Westcott and on the south by Churton Brook, was inclosed between 1607 and 1616. The site of Pulverbatch castle and the Outrack, formerly a drift-way alongside Churton Brook from Castle Pulverbatch to common land on Cothercott Hill, remain common land.

Common rights on Cothercott Hill. Enjoyed by the tenants of Church and Castle Pulverbatch since the early 13th century, appear to have been extinguished in 1676, following a dispute with the lord of Wilderlev and Cothercott manors. The rights of Cothercott tenants to common on Wilderlev and Cothercott Hills were unsuccessfully challenged in 1527 by the inhabitants of Church Stretton. who claimed exclusive rights of common in the whole area outside the common fields of these two town-ships. Church Stretton's claims were again raised at the inclosure of the Long Mvnd, c.1790, when the owner of the Wilderlev estate was allotted 500 acres on the hills.

Save at Castle Pulverbatch and Wallebourne the names of the common fields of the townships within the parish are not known and their location cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed. At Castle Pulverbatch common fields called Staple Field, Broad Field (or Okeover Field), and Huglith Field, lay on boulder clay to the north and west of the village. The field-names The Furlongs, Near Field, and East Field suggest that the common fields of Church Pulverbatch lay on the relatively level ground to the south of the village, above Churton Brook. At Wrentnall, where the common fields were still in existence in 1629, a field to the west of the village was called Wharstone in 1839. This is clearly a corruption of Horestone and implies that a boundary stone once stood here, presumably marking the boundary between the common fields and woodland on Broom Hill. Another field lay to the east of Wrentnall village, where there were several inclosed common-field strips c.1780. Though no more than a single farm since the 13th century, the names and location of the former common fields of Wallebourne were still preserved in 1612, when Windmill Field lay' to the west, Wall Field to the south, and Coppice Field to the east of Wallebourne Farm. The Cothercott common fields are recorded in the early 13th century and again in 1549. Those of Wiiderley had been inclosed by 1651.

A peculiarity of settlement in the parish is that the church and the castle lie in different townships. The church occupies a hill-top site, and stands at the junction of the road from Castle Pulverbatch to Stapleton with roads from Wilderlev and Wrentnall. The village of Church Pulverbatch stands along the road to Stapleton on the sheltered east-facing slope of the hill. Of the two farm-houses in the village, Lower House Farm was the residence of the Jaundrell family, who were freeholders here from the early 15th century until the early 19th century. The present house was probably built in 1757, although its appearance suggests a date earlier in the 18th century. It is brick-built, with stone dressings and contains two stories with attics, with an interrupted stone cornice and a stone-capped parapet. Early 17th-century oak wainscot has been inserted in the hall, but there is no evidence that the brick exterior cases an earlier timber-framed house. The farm's timber-framed buildings stand opposite the house, to the south of the road. Churton House Farm (formerly Upper Farm), which adjoins the church, is a rectangular brick house with hipped roof, sash windows, and a projecting Tuscan porch, built by Abraham Jaundrell in the early 19th century. The former parsonage, on the south of the road adjoining the buildings of Lower House Farm, is now ruinous. It is a three-bay timber-framed house of early 17th-century date; and has a ground plan of two rooms on each side of a central chimney-stack, with an unheated room at the east end. The north wall, facing the road, was cased in brick at a later date. After the new rectory was built in the early 19th century, the old rectory was occupied by a smallholder. Churton Lodge, set back from the road to the east of Lower House Farm, was a smithy in the 18th century but had been enlarged and remodelled as a gentleman's residence by 1839. A large room, added to the house between 1845 and 1851 was used as a meeting-place by the Independent Calvinists until c.1914. The post office was a school-house in the earlier 19th century, being replaced by the present school in 1873. There was an alehouse in the village in 1600, but this was closed in 1776.

Castle Pulverbatch, on the slopes of a rocky promontory overlooking Churton Brook, stands beneath the impressive site of a motte-and-bailey castle, built at the junction of roads running northwards from the Long Mvnd and eastwards from Huglith with the main road from Shrewsbury to Bishop's Castle. The castle was still occupied in 1205, but there was said to be no manor-house here in 1292. Although the village is very small, the regularity of its plan suggests that it was deliberately laid out by the lord of the manor in the 12th or 13th century. The grant of a market in 1254 shows that the economy of the village was being developed at this time. The White Horse Inn, a farm-house until the 19th century, contains 3 cruck trusses, in positions which suggest that they may be the remains of two houses at right angles to each other. The Gate House, formerly a turnpike house, and Rock Cottage, are cased timber-framed houses, but the two farm-houses - Castle Farm and Home Farm - were built in stone in the 18th century. Fifteen houses, 10 of them Council houses, have been built in the village since 1945. An alehouse is first recorded here in 1599 and there may have been two of them since 1616, but the two existing alehouses are not known to have occupied their present sites before 1839. In 1823 one of the alehouses was known as 'The Letters', while 'The Woodcock' derives its name from its early 19th-century licensee, Samuel Woodcock.

Wrentnall, on the eastern slopes of Broom Hill, contained in the later 17th century a higher proportion of substantial farm-houses than any other township in the parish. In 1662 there were in the village two houses with 3 hearths and one with 2 hearths. The existing houses have been built since the 18th century, with the exception of Farm Cottages - a timber-framed building which was once a farm-house. Wrentnall House was built before 1816 by James Freme, who bought most of the township in 1802. He also built Wrentnall Cottage, on the main road, which is dated 1814 and was probably intended as a lodge, and Wrentnall Chapel,

erected shortly after 1839 for the Baptists, but used as a village hall after Freme's death and as a Methodist Chapel since 1910. Willowburn Cottage, to the north of the chapel, stands on the former outtrack leading from Wrentnall towards Broom Hill. An alehouse, recorded in 1613, was closed in 1776.

Walleybourne Farm, below Wrentnall on the northern boundary of the parish and on the edge of one of the few substantial deposits of sand and gravel, was presumably one of the two pre-Conquest manors in Wrentnall and, since it once had its own set of common fields, is undoubtedly the site of a former hamlet. It was held with Wrentnall manor in 1086, and there is no evidence for the existence of a hamlet here when Wallevbourne was granted to John Walensis in the early 13th century. Occupied as a freehold estate by the Wallevbourne and Jennings families until 1605, it was subsequently a farmhouse in the manorial estate. The hall and the farm buildings recorded in 1612 are still standing, but its gate-house has been demolished and there is now no trace of the moat which seems to have surrounded it. The unimpressive brick exterior of the house conceals a medieval open hall of 3 or 4 bays, probably built c.1400. The 3 surviving roof trusses are of arch-braced collar-beam construction, two of them being ornamented at their apex with delicate cusping. The spere-truss and one of the door-heads of the screens passage at the east end of the house are still in position. Closely spaced vertical studding visible on the inside of the north wall probably dates from the 16th century, when a fireplace was inserted on the north wall and a two-storied cross-wing was added at the west end of the hall. The upper floor of the hall itself, however, does not appear to have been inserted until c.1700, perhaps at the same time as the external brick-casing.

Cothercott and Wilderley, the two ancient hamlets in the south of the parish, both appear to have shrunk to their present size in the 18th century. Cothercott, though said to be waste in 1066, was a flourishing hamlet in the 13th century and probably contained 4 farm-houses in 1717, but their number had been reduced to two by 1839. These two houses are now known as Upper and Lower Cothercott Farms but only the former is now a farm. Both are timber-framed and have the common central-stack ground-plan.

Like Castle Pulverbatch, the medieval hamlet of Wilderley lay under the shadow of a castle, which was designed to command one of the roads formerly running northwards from the Long Mynd towards the Severn valley. The site of the castle, a motte with two rectangular baileys, lies to the north of Wilderley Hall Farm, sole survivor of the former hamlet. Sources of information about the numbers of houses here in the 17th and 18th centuries do not distinguish houses in the ancient hamlet from isolated farms and squatter cottages, but the general decline in their number in the earlier 18th century suggests that Wilderley was shrinking at this time. Fifteen persons were assessed to poor rates here in 1700 and only 10 after 1723. By 1838 the whole township contained only 7 houses, of which only 3 were anything more than small-holdings. Wilderley Hall Farm, enlarged in brick in the 19th century, incorporates a small brick-cased timber-framed house, while timber from former houses nearby seems to have been used in farm buildings to the north of the house.

Isolated settlement in the woodland areas to the east and west of the ancient hamlets is first recorded in the later 16th century. In Steplewood there was a house at Starr's Coppice and a cottage on the site of Castle Place Farm by 1580. The latter derives its name from a large circular depression, apparently natural, which surrounds the house and was formerly known as Toppings Castle. It is a brick house with some Georgian features, built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the present house at Starr's Coppice was probably built after 1805. A cottage which stood to the south of Castle Place c.1595 has been demolished since 1839. A parish

ordinance (c.1617) prohibiting the erection of cottages<sup>33</sup> may account for the relatively small number of isolated houses erected in this part of the parish after the inclosure of Steplewood c.1600. The only houses here still substantially of early 17<sup>th</sup> century date are The Allies, near New House Farm and Holly Grove Cottages. New House Farm, however, contains a timber-framed wing, and Lower New House Farm, described as a timber-framed house, c.1780, has since been rebuilt. Holly Grove Farm and Holly Grove House both date from the 19th century.

Wilderley Lane Farm and Cotham Leasowes, the two farms in the area of the former Wilderley Wood, were originally timber-framed. Each had a ground-plan of two rooms with a chimney-stack on the west gable, like the adjacent farm-houses on Shadymoor, but both have been cased in brick and at Wilderley Lane Farm a stone east wing was added, probably in the 18th century. Wilderley Workshop, a cottage south-east of Wilderley Hall, near Wilderley Brook, is partly timber-framed and, like the two last-mentioned farms, dates from the 17th century. A cottage stood on Churton Brook, north of Cotham Leasowes Farm, in 1601, but had been demolished by 1839.

In the western woodland Huglith Farm and Lawn Farm, first recorded in 1612, were formed after the clearance of Nether Huglith Wood in the later 16th century. The present farm-house at Lawn Farm seems to have been rebuilt in the 18th or 19th century, but Huglith Farm, much enlarged in the 19th century, incorporates one bay of the original house at the south-east end. Prestley Farm, only a few yards from the village of Habberley and in an area occupied by tenants of that manor since the Middle Ages, is a timber-framed house of two bays which dates from the early 17th century. It has been little changed internally, though rough-cast outside, and retains an original staircase alongside a chimney-stack on the east gable.

Few were hardy enough to settle in the windswept hill-country to the south of the parish. The oldest and most impressive of the houses here is the old farm-house at Sheppen Fields, at 925 feet on the northern slopes of Wilderley Hill. A house already stood on this site in the later 13th century, when it was called 'le Shupene' and was the focal point of Haughmond Abbe's sheep-walk on the hill. The present house may have been built shortly after 1464. Now used as a farm building it is a 'long house' in which 3 cruck trusses are still in position. In the early 17th century an ashlar chimney-stack was inserted and a cross-wing added at the east end. Another farm-house, even higher on the hill, known as Upper Sheppen Fields, was standing in the late 17th century and was still occupied in 1717, but had been deserted by 1839. The field-name Pulleys, to the north of Shepperi Fields, marks the site of another medieval homestead, known as the Pool House. Houses still stood here in 1534 but no trace of them remained in 1839. Lea Farm, on the road from Castle Pulverbatch to Wilderley and at the foot of the hills, is an early 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed house, later cased in stone. Cothercott Hill Farm and Cothercott Cottage, standing at 1,000 feet on the northern slopes of Cothercott Hill, are stone-built and date from the 18th century. Both are in origin squatter cottages, and the former has been deserted since c 1900.

On the high ground west of Castle Pulverbatch, once the site of Over Huglith Wood, an isolated house is recorded in 1613, but the only building now standing here is a ruinous stone cottage known as Pennsylvania, recorded in 1783. The only notable isolated house in this area is Bank Farm, standing at 1,050 feet on Paulith Bank. Built in 1615 by Reece and Mary Bower, it is a timber-framed house of two bays with a central chimney-stack. A range of timber-framed farm buildings is attached to the east end of the house. Two cottages stand at the foot of Huglith, along the outtrack leading from Castle Pulverbatch to Cothercott Hill, one of which is of 17th- and the other of 18th-century date.

The older isolated houses along the main road, between Castle Pulverbatch and Longden Common, are for the most part stone-built and date from the later 18th century. Black Lion Farm, which seems to have been an ale-house until the later 19th century, is first so named c. 1780 and is likely to have been the first house on the main road here, but it was rebuilt after 1794.

There were said to be 260 adults in the parish in 1676 and 439 inhabitants in 1801. During the earlier 19th century the population rose rapidly to a peak of 574 in 1851 but it declined thereafter, falling to 401 by 1881, 338 by 1931, and 298 by 1951. The erection of new houses has ended this trend and by 1961 the population had increased to 322.

MANORS. The manor of *PULVERBATCH*, held of Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1086 was by the end of the 12th century the *caput* of the barony of Pulverbatch and was subsequently held of the Crown in chief. Held as three manors by Hunnic and Ulviet before the Conquest, it had been granted by 1086 to Earl Roger's huntsman Roger the huntsman. When next recorded, c.1135, the tenant was one Roger. He was perhaps the father of Reynold de Pulverbatch, who held the manor after 1154, but had been succeeded before 1189 by his daughter Emma, wife of Herbert de Castello. At her death without issue in 1193, the manor passed to John de Kilpeck, whose relationship to Emma is not known. John did not receive full livery of the manor until 1196 and at his death in 1205, wardship of his son Hugh was granted to William Cauntelow. Hugh de Kilpeck had succeeded to the manor by 1216, and at his death in 1255 he left as his heirs his daughters Isabel, and Joan, wife of Philip Marmion. Marmion did homage for the manor in the same year and in 1258 Isabel, then wife of William Walerand, released to him her rights in the estate. At his death in 1291 Philip Marmion's estates passed to three co-heirs, Pulverbatch being assigned in 1292 to his daughter Joan, widow of William de Morteyn. Joan died without issue in 1295, when she was followed by her nephew Ralph le Boteler. The latter, who was lord of Pulverbatch until 1342, had leased the manor by 1327 to his son John, who held it until his death in 1339. On Ralph's death in 1342 a third of the manor was assigned in dower to his widow Hawise, who survived until 1360. The remainder passed to his grandson Ralph, then a minor. Guy de Brienne, to whom wardship was granted in 1342, also obtained, on Ralph's death while still under age in 1348, the wardship of his brother and heir Edward. The latter had livery of the manor in 1359, but died without issue in 1412, when the manor passed to his cousin, Sir Philip Boteler of Woodhall (Herts.) who died in 1420. The latter's son and heir Edward died under age in the same year, when wardship of Edward's brother and heir Philip was granted to Sir Hugh Willoughby. Philip Boteler came of age in 1435 and the manor passed from father to son until 1599, the following being lords: Philip, 1435-53; John, 1453-1504; John, 1504-15; Philip, 1515-c.1564; John, c.1564-c.1585; Philip, c.1585-99.

In 1599 Sir Philip Boteler sold the manor to Sir Roger Owen, and it followed the descent of Condover manor until 1802, when the greater part of the manorial estate was sold.

Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury, was overlord of *WRENTNALL* manor in 1086 and, as at Pulverbatch, Roger the huntsman was his tenant. The estate was said to have been held before the Conquest as two manors by Ernui and Chetel, but they may have been merely under-tenants, for it was reported in 1086 that three-quarters of the manor had once belonged to the Church of St. Chad, Shrewsbury. The Church never regained possession and the estate was subsequently merged with the manor of Pulverbatch.

The overlordship of the manors of *COTHERCOTT* and *WILDERLEY*, vested in Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury, by 1086, was annexed in the early 12th century to the Honor of Montgomery, but by 1215 the Abbot of Haughmond, as tenant of the two manors, had been released from all services due to the overlord except scutage. The Cauntelows and their successors as lords of the Honor of Montgomery remained overlords until the Dissolution, when it was vested in the Crown.

The pre-Conquest tenants of these two manors seem also to have held estates in Pulverbatch and Wrentnall, for Hunnic then held Cothercott and Chetel held Wilderley. The two manors were still separate estates in 1086, when Avenel held the former and Hugh fitz Turgis the latter but they had been united by 1204, when Richard de Wilderley, descendant of Hugh fitz Turgis, sold the manors to Haughmond Abbey to redeem his heavy debts.

The abbey only obtained a mesne tenure at Cothercott by this transaction. The under-tenant, John de Cothercott, was succeeded in 1242 by his son Baldwin, who conveyed his estate there to the abbey c.1265. The estate thereafter formed part of Haughmond Abbey's composite manor of Boveria, which also included lands in Smethcott, Church Stretton, and Ratlinghope. At the Dissolution the manors of Cothercott and Wilderley again passed into divided ownership. Sheppen Fields was granted by the Crown in 1543 to Thomas Ireland, who obtained the remainder of Cothercott manor in 1545. The manor passed from father to son in the Ireland family until 1701, the following being lords: Thomas, 1545-54; George, 1554-1614; Thomas, 1614-50; Robert, 1650-c.1676, Thomas, c.1676-1701. On the death of Thomas Ireland in 1701, the manor passed to his widow Elizabeth, who was succeeded at her death in 1720 by her son Thomas. The latter died in 1728 and in 1739 his son Thomas sold the manor to Thomas Powys, the lord of Wilderley manor.

The manor of Wilderley was granted in 1551 to Edward Fiennes, Lord Clinton and Saye, who sold it to Richard Goodrich in 1554. Goodrich later sold the manor to Thomas Lodge, from whom Robert Barnfield acquired it in 1557. The manor passed in 1568 to Barnfield's son Richard, who settled it on his second son Robert Barnfield in 1602. The latter sold Wilderley in 1615 to Sir John Egerton, later Earl of Bridgewater, whose son John, Earl of Bridgewater, sold it to Henry Langley in 1674. The manor subsequently passed to the Powys family of Berwick, following the descent of Stapleton manor until 1905, when R. L. Purcell-Llewellyn sold his estate at Cothercott and Wilderley to E. S. L. Walker. The latter conveyed the estate to J. B. Walker, on whose death in 1950 it passed to his sister Mary Walker. The estate was broken up after her death in 1957.

**OTHER ESTATES.** Walleybourne, a member of the Domesday manor of Wrentnall, was the largest of a number of freehold estates created by the lords of Pulverbatch manor in the early 13th century. It was granted, c.1216-30, to John, son of Roger Walensis. and may have passed to John Walensis, who was living in 1272. By 1317 the estate was held by Robert de Walleybourne, who was still alive in 1332. It passed from father to son in this family until 1419, when John de Walleybourne settled it on his daughter Joan at her marriage with John Walker of Lee. Walker, who enlarged the estate by purchases in Wrentnall and acquired the lease of pasture at Nether Huglith, was still living in 1446, but had been succeeded before 1470 by his grandson Thomas Jennings. The estate then passed from father to son and was held by the following members of the Jennings family: Thomas, c.1470-c.1499; Rowland, c. 1499-c.1528; Thomas, c.1528-68; William, 1568—87. On the death of William Jennings in 1587 the estate passed to his brother Rowland, who sold it to Sir Roger Owen in 1604.

ECONOMIC HISTORY. No fewer than 5 pre-Conquest estates in Pulverbatch and Wrentnall had by 1086 been united to form a single manor, and from the 12th century the estates of Roger the huntsman in Westley, Great Lvth, and Little Lvth, in Condoover parish, were also accounted part of Pulverbatch manor, though separated from it by the forest of Steplewood. Roger the huntsman's estates in Wrentnall and Pulverbatch were assessed at 4 hides in 1086 and were valued at 60s having been worth £9 before the Conquest and only 45s when he received them. The manor, including the detached portion in Condoover, was assessed at 5 hides in 1255. It was said to be worth £17 8s. 6d. in 1292 and only £11 6s. in 1342.

This apparent decline in the value of the manor may be accounted for by the shrinkage of the demesne and by grants to free tenants in the 13th century. Although there were 5 ploughs and 9 serfs on the demesne lands of Pulverbatch and Wrentnall in 1086, there was only one carucate of demesne by 1292, when the manor house was no longer standing. The demesne had been leased by 1342 to 4 tenants, who paid rents of 26s. 8d. a year, and no attempt seems to have been made to enlarge the manorial estate or to increase its value until it was purchased by Sir Roger Owen in 1599. Owen presumably initiated the inclosure of woodland and waste in Steplewood and Broom Hill, and of the common wood of Castle Pulverbatch, shortly after 1600, and he secured an allotment of 158 acres in Steplewood alone. He purchased the Jennings estate at Wallevbourne in 1604 and acquired 35 acres in 1610 when the eastern boundary with Stapleton was determined. Two small freeholds were purchased in the course of the 18th century and in 1794 lands in Church and Castle Pulverbatch. were exchanged to consolidate the manorial estate. The estate contained 1,767 acres c.1780 but 142 acres in Church Pulverbatch were sold in 1794. The remainder of the estate was sold, 1801-2, with the exception of New House Farm, which was still owned by the lord of Condoover manor in 1895.

By the end of the 13th century there were at least 9 free tenants within the manor, whose rents produced £9 in 1292 and £7 18s 8d. in 1342. There were 11 free tenants here in 1599 but, apart from Wallevbourne, the only substantial freehold estate was that of the Jaundrell family of Lower Farm, Church Pulverbatch, who had been free tenants here since the early 15th century. This estate, containing some 140 acres, was held by the Jaundrells and their descendants the Corries until the later 19th century. By the end of the 18th century the only other freeholds amounting to anything more than a house or isolated fields were those of Thomas Oswell in Church Pulverbatch (60 acres) and of the Powys family in, Wrentnall 62 acres).

Wilderley, the more prosperous of the two manors in the south of the parish, was assessed at 2 hides in 1086, when its value had fallen from 30s. to 20s. since before the Conquest. Cothercott manor, waste in 1066, was assessed at half a hide in 1086, when it was worth only 2s. There was demesne or one plough at Wilderley in 1086, when there were 4 serfs here and 2 at Cothercott. Wholly in the possession of Haughmond Abbey by 1265, Cothercott and Wilderley subsequently formed part of the manor of Boveria. Demesne lands in these townships had probably been leased by 1291, when the demesne of the entire manor of Boveria was worth only 6s. 8d. In 1446 rents of demesne lands in Cothercott and Wilderley, then leased to 6 tenants, produced 37s. a year. The two manors again passed into divided ownership at the Dissolution but were reunited in 1739.

A number of small freehold estates were created at Cothercott in the early 13th century, but these had all been bought in by the abbey before c.1280. Lea Farm (35 acres) in Wilderley has been a small freehold since it was first recorded in 1656 but its origin is unknown. Bank

Farm, in the south-west of the parish, has always lain within the Gatten manorial estate, and Prestlev Farm likewise was part of Habberley manor until that estate was broken up in 1945.

Of the freehold estates created by the sale of Pulverbatch manor in 1801-2, the largest was the Wrentnall House estate, built up by James Freme in the earlier 19th century, which comprised 430 acres in 1839 and 1,080 acres in 1895; With this exception, and in spite of constant minor changes, the overall pattern of landownership in the parish remained little changed throughout the 19th century. In 1839 some 2,750 acres lay in the three large estates of E. W. Smythe Owen, H. W. Powys, and John Freme, and some 1,850 acres in the hands of 28 smaller landowners. Six of the latter owned estates of over 100 acres, but 19 owned fewer than 25 acres apiece. Only 11 of these smaller estates were wholly or mainly owner-occupied and 15 of them had non-resident owners. In 1895, when the 3 larger estates accounted for some 2,450 acres, the remainder of the parish belonged to 25 smaller landowners. The sizes of their estates and the proportion of resident to non-resident owners was roughly the same as in 1839.

On the manors of Pulverbatch and Wrentnall in 1086 10 villeins and 3 radmen had between them 4 ploughs. Rents of customary tenants were said to be worth 33s. 8d. a year in 1292 and 54s. 10d. a year in 1295, but are not separately recorded in 14th-century surveys of the manor. Copyhold tenure survived in Pulverbatch until the 1560s, when most of the land so held was re-granted by the lord of the manor on long leases, and in 1599 the tenants included 11 leaseholders, holding for terms of 19-41 years, and several tenants-at-will. Some tenures-at-will were converted into leaseholds in the early 17th century and the 99 year lease became normal, surviving here until at least 1770. A rapid increase in income from rents in the course of the 18th century - from £239 a year in 1701 to £699 in 1784 - indicates, however, that conversion to short-term leases was taking place at this time. Farm-sizes also increased during the 18th century. The number of tenants fell from 40 in 1701 to 24 by c. 1780, when two-thirds of the estate lay in 8 farms of more than 100 acres.

There were 3 villeins with one plough on Wilderley manor in 1086 but no tenants are then recorded at Cothercott. Assized rents from the two townships, which produced £2 6s. 5d. a year in 1291, had risen to £4 8s. 6d. by 1446, when a further 12s. 5d. was derived from rents of assarted lands. Copyhold tenure, still found here in the early 16th century, seems to have disappeared after the Dissolution. Of the 17 tenants in Wilderley in 1651, 9 were leaseholders and 8 were tenants-at-will, while at Cothercott in 1717 the six farms were all held on long leases and there were only 2 tenants-at-will, both cottagers. Two of the Wilderley farms were already over 100 acres by 1651, but most of the tenants still had holdings of less than 50 acres. The large farm was introduced after the union of the two manors in 1739 and by 1838 the six large farms on the estate accounted for 1,095 acres of the 1,200 acres of inclosed land in the two townships.

Although there is little evidence for the economy of the medieval manor of Boveria, it is clear that its focus, and the chief source of its income, lay on the sheep-walks of Cothercott and Wilderley Hills. Large flocks of sheep still grazed on the common lands there in the later 17th century, and it is likely that the relative affluence of the inhabitants of Wilderley and Cothercott in 1542, compared with those of the northern townships, reflects a higher level of prosperity derived from the sale of wool. Wilderley, on lower ground than Cothercott, may have served for winter pasture. Several meadows are recorded here in 1446 and in 1651 the manor was said to be 'a great part meadow'. The cultivation of marginal land on the hills,

recorded in 1655 and 1684, is perhaps evidence of a shift of emphasis towards arable farming in Wilderley and Cothercott in the later 17th century.

There were said to be 902 acres of arable in the parish in 1801, when roughly equal acreages of wheat, oats, and barley were sown. In 1839 the parish contained 1,086 acres of arable land, of which about half lay in Wilderley and Cothercott.

A corn mill on Churton Brook, first recorded in the early 13th century, was said to be worth 30s. a year in 1292, but it was ruinous in 1345. Still in decay in 1384, it had been repaired by 1413 and was held by the Gittins family from 1564, until last recorded in 1649. The field-name Windmill Field, found at Walleybourne in 1612, suggests that a windmill once stood there.

Coal was mined in the north of the parish in the 18th and 19th centuries, principally near the main road to the east of Wrentnall, where pits are first recorded in 1717. Mines on the glebe to the east of Black Lion Farm were in use for a short period. c.1734, and were re-opened in 1793, while nearby pits on the manorial estate were leased in 1766 and 1792. There were numerous pit mounds in this area c.1780.. A shaft was sunk at this time near Castle Place Farm, and mining continued there, and at New House Farm, throughout the 19th century. To the south a mine near Cotham Leasowes Farm was in operation c 1776-1782.

Although the local gritstone was the main building material in the parish in the 18th and early 19th centuries, bricks had been made from clays near the Habberley road, west of Castle Pulverbatch from c.1780, and along Wilderley Brook, to the west of Cothercott, before 1839. Coal mined on New House Farm was used for brick manufacture after 1832.

Unsuccessful attempts were made to locate deposits of lead and copper on Lawn and Huglith Hills shortly after 1798. Large amounts of barytes, also found in the hills to the south and west of the parish, were extracted between 1890 and 1945 at the following mines: Wrentnall mine, 1890-1925; (recorded output, 1908-18, 10,866 tons), Cothercott mine, 1911-28 (recorded output in this period, 23,000 tons); Huglith mine, 1910-45; recorded output in this period, 295,108 tons). At Cothercott the ore was processed at the mine but at Huglith mine an aerial rope-way was used to transport the barytes some 3½ miles across the valley of Habberlev Brook to Malehurst mill near Minsterley.

A weekly market and an annual three-day fair on the feast of St. Edith (17th September, established at Pulverbatch in 1254, continued to be held until c.1914, but by 1851 the date of the fair had been changed to 22nd September. Standing on a main road and at the junction of the Severn Valley and the hill country to the south, Castle Pulverbatch was an ideal site for a market, but there is no evidence that the village ever became anything more than a small farming community. In 1379 the only craftsmen in the parish were a carpenter and a wheelwright.

In the later 18th century, there were 2 blacksmiths at Castle Pulverbatch and one at Church Pulverbatch, but only one (at Castle Pulverbatch) remained in business by 1839. A second smithy was opened, c.1917 and both continued until c.1941. In 1856 the two villages also contained 2 shoemakers, a tailor, a butcher, a grocer, 4 carriers, and 2 shops, of which only the shops remained in 1964.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT.** The jurisdiction of Pulverbatch manor court, for which there are extracts from court rolls, 1352-1596, court rolls, 1577, 1580, 1599-1629, and presentments. 1777-1840, included view of frankpledge and the assize of bread and ale and extended over the three northern townships, and over Great Lvth, Little Lvth. and Westlev in Condover

parish. There are court rolls for the manor of Boveria, 1508-38 and 1547, and for Wilderley Manor, 1718-44.

The parish records include two parish books, containing accounts of churchwardens and overseers, 1653-1708, and overseers' accounts, 1708-43. Churchwardens' accounts, 1708-45, vestry minutes from 1850, together with a quantity of overseers' papers, recorded c.1900, were missing in 1964.

The two churchwardens and two overseers were still appointed in rotation in the mid-18th century, the churchwardens of one year serving as overseers in the next. Until 1669 the churchwardens and overseers each rendered a combined account, but the parish was then split for administrative purposes, into northern and southern divisions, the former comprising Church Pulverbatch, Castle Pulverbatch, and Wrentnall, and the latter, Cothercott and Wilderley. Subsequently each churchwarden and each overseer rendered a separate account for his division. Although there was still a poor stock of £21 in 1662, the income of the parish officers was later derived entirely from rates, which were first assessed on a pound rate in 1692.

Annual expenditure on poor relief ranged from £5 to £18 in the later 17th century and rarely exceeded £30 before 1740. Poor rates, £82 a year in 1776, had risen to £197 by 1803 and reached a peak of £421 a year in 1817. The poor were farmed to contractors, 1734—7, and in 1742, but, although a poor-house on Pulverbatch outtrack had been leased by 1784, no workhouse appears ever to have been established.

A vestry resolution of 1655 that the constables of each township should act as highway surveyors was revoked by the county justices, who required the overseers to assume the office. Separate highway surveyors, appointed in the following year, last appear in 1692. Constables for the five townships were being appointed at the manor courts in the mid-17th century.

CHURCH. John the chaplain, recorded before 1193, is the first known priest at Pulverbatch, and Church Pulverbatch was already known, c.1221, by its local name -' Churcheton' now Churton. The status of the church during the Middle Ages was anomalous for it was a benefice without cure of souls. Described as a free chapel it was valued as part of the assets of the manor in 1421. Its incumbents were styled rectors, but the office seems to have been a sinecure and the church was normally served by one of the portioners of Pontesburv. Pulverbatch thus became in some measure dependent on Pontesbury, and its inhabitants were required to repair a section of Pontesburv churchyard wall until 1714.

The advowson followed the descent of Pulverbatch manor until 1794, but Thomas Goch claimed the right to present to the living in 1394, his nominee being confirmed in possession by the Crown in the following year, and Richard Prince presented c.1579. The advowson was purchased in 1794 by Thomas Noel, Lord Berwick, but had passed before 1806 to George, Lord Kenyon. It remained in the Kenyon family until 1927, when G. L. T. Kenyon granted it to Wrekin College, Wellington. The Church of England and Martyrs Memorial Trust have subsequently exercised the right of presentation.

The little evidence available about the value of the living suggests that its meagre income in the Middle Ages increased considerably after the church ceased to be dependent on Pontesburv and after the enlargement of the glebe at the inclosure of Steplewood. The church was said to be worth £6 in 1291, £16 10s in 1421 and £10 0s 8d in 1535. In 1607 the rector

had a gross annual income of £60, which had risen to £592 by the 1830s. In 1607 the glebe, which amounted to some 27 acres, lay in a number of small inclosed pastures in the common fields of the three northern townships.

Enlarged soon afterwards by an allotment in Steplewood, the glebe contained 45 acres in 1839, when it still consisted of a number of scattered fields. The small tithes were valued at 40s. in 1341 and £4 14s 4d in 1421, when the great tithes were worth £6 14s 8d. There is no evidence on the method of tithe-collection here, or for the value of the tithes after the Middle Ages, but no moduses are recorded in 1840, when the tithes of Church Pulverbatch, Castle Pulverbatch, and Wrentnall were commuted for a rent-charge of £385 a year.

The tithes of Cothercott and Wilderlev had been commuted for an annual rent-charge of £140 in the preceding year. A modus of 1s. a year was, however, being paid in 1846 by the tenant of that part of the township of Stitt and Gatten which lay in Pulverbatch parish. Lands in Pulverbatch. worth 14d. a year in 1547, formed the endowment of a light in the church.

Four medieval incumbents bore the same surname as the lord of the manor and were probably related to him, and another was a king's clerk. Thomas Newport (rector, 1394-1413), who was a graduate, also held Pontesbury first portion. He employed a curate at Pulverbatch, but the church seems to have gone out of use in the 15th century - perhaps as a result of the rising of Owen Glendower - and Newport's successor, Thomas Cockayne, who was also non-resident, did not appoint a curate here.

Nine of the 13 rectors of Pulverbatch, 1551-1883, held the living for over 20 years. The only one to be a relative of the lord of the manor was William Owen (rector 1642-6, 1662-72), but between 1664 and 1806 most of them were non-resident and employed curates to serve the living. Evan Evans, curate 1721-45, was also the curate of Longden, where he was succeeded by John Eyton, rector of Pulverbatch, 1744-81. Between 1750 and c.1787, Eyton and his successor John Pyefinch (rector, 1781-1806), who also held Westbury first portion, employed as their curate here Thomas Mills, who lived at Pulverbatch and was also Vicar of Habberley 1758-98, and one of the curates of Pontesbury. Rectors have normally been resident since 1806, but William Gilpin (rector 1806-48), for whom the present parsonage was built by the patron, employed a curate in 1823 and continuously after 1832.

In 1421 services appear to have been held only at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun. Communion was administered from 3 to 5 times a year in the later 17th century - there were 159 communicants at Easter 1658 - and 6 times a year c.1790, when there were 40 Easter communicants. Two services were held on Sundays c.1790 and in 1851, when 122 persons attended morning service and 50 in the evening.

The church of *ST. EDITH*, which has been completely rebuilt since the 18th century, consists of a chancel and nave under one roof, a north aisle and a western tower. It was among the churches said to have been destroyed by the Welsh before 1414 and was reconsecrated in 1521. A sketch of 1653 shows that this church consisted of a nave and chancel with a south porch and bell-turret at the west end. In the south wall of the chancel was a priest's door and a small window of two round-headed lights. There was a similar window in the south wall of the nave and, at its west end, a dormer window had been inserted to light a gallery within. The dormer window and the priest's door were preserved when the church was remodelled in the Classical style in 1773. A large round-headed window with a plain keystone was then inserted at the east end and two smaller windows of similar design in the south wall. A new south porch was also built, but the only surviving portion of this church is the tower. The latter, which is of three stages, has rusticated quoins and a similar

treatment to the windows and west doorway. There are circular windows to the ringing chamber and, at the belfry stage, a round-headed window with forking tracery on each face. The parapet is surmounted by angle vases. An external stone staircase on the south wall gives access to the ringing chamber. The church was entered through the west door, c.1790, but in 1828, when the south porch was reopened, the west door was blocked and the base of the tower made into a vestry.

In 1854 the nave and chancel were rebuilt in the Decorated style by Edward Haycock, who also built the north aisle, divided from the nave by an arcade of 3 pointed arches. Local gritstone was used throughout, apart from freestone work on windows, but none of the surviving fragments of the 16th-century church was preserved. The roofs of the nave and north aisle are of arch-braced collar-beam construction.

Within the church few fittings older than 1854 now survive. Panels from the box-pews, made in 1779 with wainscot taken from Woolstaston Hall, were re-used in 1854. The communion table is a late-18th-century side-table; its predecessor, made in 1675, is probably the oak table stored in the gallery in 1964. The pulpit dates from c.1800. The octagonal font, in the Perpendicular style, is unlikely to be older than 1854, since the church had a small round font with a slender stem in 1823. The choir stalls were inserted in 1896.

The church had a silver chalice in 1552. The existing plate - a chalice, 2 patens, and a flagon - are all of silver plate and are probably of 19th century date. There were two bells in the church in 1552 and in 1740. Five of the present peal of six bells, cast by Thomas Rudhall of Gloucester, were acquired when the church was remodelled in 1773, and the sixth bell was cast by John Rudhall in 1789. The parish registers are complete from 1542.

**NONCONFORMITY.** The parish was said to contain only one dissenter in 1676 and a single family of sectaries c.1790. The latter were probably Methodists and may have met at a house in Church Pulverbatch, licensed as a dissenting meeting-house in 1816. They still met at a private house in 1851, when they had been affiliated to the Primitive Methodist Association and had an average congregation of 40. A Baptist chapel at Wrentnall, built by James Freme of Wrentnall House c.1840 had an average congregation of 26 in 1851, when it was served from Pontesbury. The chapel closed c.1875 but since 1910 it has again been used as a chapel by the Methodists recorded above. An independent Calvinist congregation, established by the Revd. R. Maydwell c.1845, met at Churton Cottage (now Churton Lodge) Church Pulverbatch. This had an average congregation of 30 in 1851 and 168 baptisms are recorded between 1845 and 1898. The meeting had a flourishing Sunday School in the later 19th century and continued until c.1914.

**SCHOOLS.** Rectory Cottage, Church Pulverbatch, is the site of a day school built by public subscription on the glebe before 1818, on the initiative of the rector, George Gilpin. The rector also provided a Sunday School, first recorded in 1828. Between 80 and 90 children attended it in 1833, when there were two private schools in the parish. In 1839 the day school was placed under the management of a committee of churchwardens and subscribers. By 1846 the school had been affiliated to the National Society, when the standard of education was said to be improving, but 'little, if at all, above mediocrity'. George Bowen, appointed schoolmaster in 1839, was also the postmaster, and kept a grocer's shop, 1851-79. This school was replaced by the present school, built on the glebe in 1873.

The school was still supported solely by voluntary subscriptions in 1833, but school-pence were introduced in 1839. By 1854 these were assessed on a graduated scale and then produced £18 a year, but they had been abolished by 1893. The school became Controlled in 1951. Sixty children attended in 1818, and attendance continued at this level until 1906. The Sunday School is not recorded after 1833, but the Independent Calvinists provided a night school in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

CHARITIES. The poor of Pulverbatch were entitled, with those of Condover, to a share of the charity established by Henry Brickdale by will of 1700. The endowment of £44, with some other Condover charity funds, was used in 1709 to purchase a rent-charge of £2 11s 6d arising from the tithes of Betton Abbots and Emstrev. Pulverbatch received £1 a year from this source c.1830, when it was distributed in bread to 6 widows on alternate Sundays, but as a result of a recommendation by the Charity Commissioners, the share paid to Pulverbatch had been increased to £1 5s 7d by 1862. The charity was being distributed in the same manner c.1864, but was lost after 1877, when the agent for the Betton estate refused to pay the rent-charge.

By will of 1777, Ann Jaundrell left £20, to be distributed in bread to the poor. This sum was then put towards the expenses of re-pewing the church, and £1 was thereafter paid annually by the church-wardens to provide bread for the poor on St. Thomas's Day and New Year's Day. This charity had been lost by 1886. By will of 1790 James Perkins left to the rector an annual rent-charge of £1 6s. arising from a farm at Marton in Chirbury, to be distributed in bread every Sunday to 6 widows. The owner of the estate was paying the rent-charge c.1830, when it was distributed with Brickdale's charity, but the rent-charge was later held to be void under the Mortmain Act and was no longer being paid in 1862. A similar fate seems to have overtaken the charity of Richard Perkins (d. 1798); who gave a rent-charge of £1 6s. arising from lands at Church Pulverbatch, to be distributed to the poor on New Year's Day. This sum was being paid by his daughter, Margaret Wall, c.1830, when it was distributed with part of Jaundrell's charity, but the charity is not recorded after 1862.

Margaret Perkins, by will dated 1840, left £400 stock, the interest on which was to be distributed to the poor. Payments began in 1855 and in 1866 were being made to 42 families, when each family received between 4s. and 6s. In 1931, when the charity is last recorded, its annual income of £10 was distributed to 32 persons.

By will proved in 1916 Mary Anne Corrie left £100, the interest on which was to be distributed among the poor at the rector's discretion. Payments began in 1924 and in 1964 its income of £3 1s 2d was given to 4 poor persons at Christmas.