



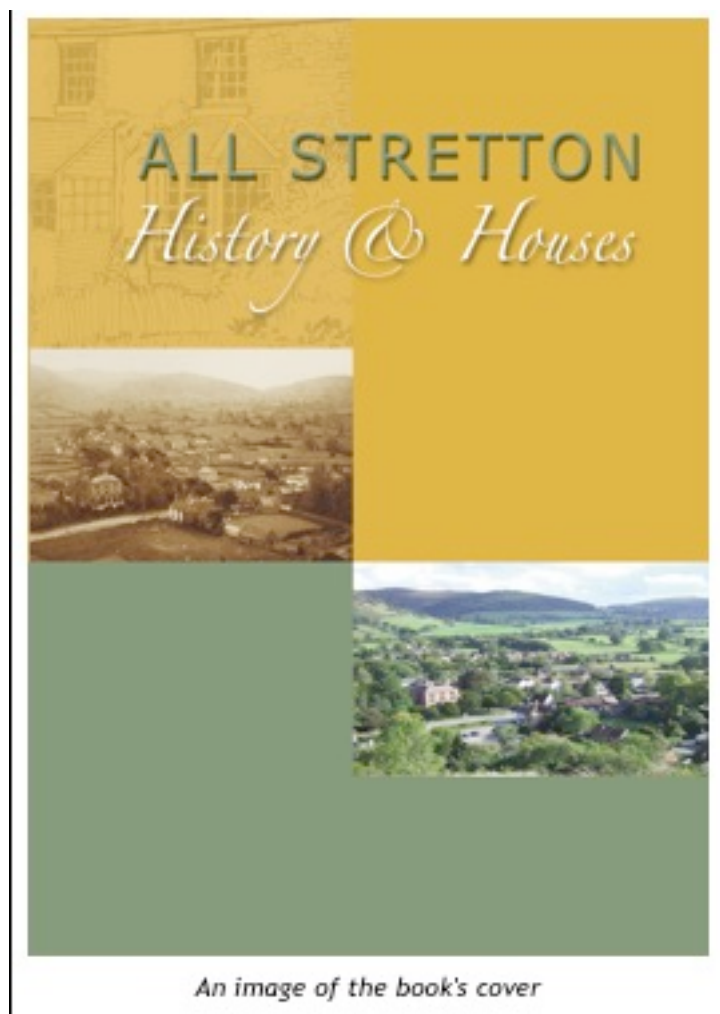
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All Stretton History Group: Our Newsletter

Number 3
October
2006

The Book is on its way!

The History Group's book "All Stretton - History & Houses" will be available from 27 October



The fruit of our labours is about to be revealed: our book will receive its formal launch on Friday, 27 October in the Village Hall, All Stretton. It contains some 200 pages of information about people and properties in All Stretton, including "1603", Dudgeley Farm, Dudgeley Mill, The Yew Tree, All Stretton Hall and Old Hall Farm.

As a result of funding from the Local Heritage Initiative, we are able to provide one free copy of the book for each household in All Stretton. To receive your free copy of the book, come to the launch on 27 October with the invitation enclosed with this newsletter. If you are unable to come to the launch you can collect your copy from either 1603, Batch Valley (Tom and Pat Beaman tel 722082), or Plush Hill (Jean and Eric Huff tel 723706). After the launch, the book will be on sale, priced £7.50, at Whinberries.

New land: The Lower Wood and High Park enclosures

The history group decided early on that we would define the northern fringe of All Stretton in such a way as to include Lower Wood, Malthouse Farm, Hodghurst, Mynderley and High Park. In the end it became too difficult to give this area the attention it deserves, as there proved to be very little historical material to go on. Nevertheless, this area has much to engage interest, and perhaps we shall be able to look at it more closely in the future. Meanwhile, here are some glimpses of Lower Wood and High Park as they were in the past.



View of the lane from Lower Wood to Womerton, past Spring Cottage

some small fields were allotted to Benjamin Reynolds of Rowley Cottage for his lands on Rowley Bank. He sold them to a speculator who sold them on to Edward Langford. He was a thatcher from Lower Wood who held an allotment next to these fields, and sometime between 1801 and 1810 he built a house on this part of his holding. By Edward's will, this house, today known as Spring Cottage, came into the ownership of his daughter Isabel, wife of Thomas Lewis. The couple were married in 1791 when Isabel was 24 years old, and they had seven children between 1792 and 1802. Then, in 1811, when Isabel was 44 years of

age, she gave birth to twins. Thomas died in 1819, but Isabel lived on until 1848. She appears as owner and occupier of the property in the tithe apportionment of 1840, except that by some peculiar clerical error, she is listed as Deborah Lewis.

By Edward Langford's will, the property was to pass to Isabel's children, but with nine surviving siblings, it was impossible to make a fair division, and in 1850 they mortgaged the property, so that the eldest son, Edward Lewis, who farmed the Spring Cottage holding, in effect became a tenant on his own land. He was still there in 1871.

Many questions arise concerning Lower Wood, such as: where exactly was the mill that was used in the 17th century for fulling cloth, why was there a house called the Court House, why was Willowfield originally known as Widow's Field, where was the Oxford Arms pub, and what happened to the Bowdler family's tannery business.

Lower Wood, in former times known as Womerton's Wood, consisted of a few smallholdings apart from common grazing land and coppice woodland. The event that shaped Lower Wood as we know it today was the passing of an Act of Parliament in 1798 to create new farmland by enclosing the



Remains of Parliamentary enclosure boundary, High Park

common. Thanks to a gift of title deeds by Harold Longstaff, we have been able to piece together the early history of one of the new farm units. In recompense for the loss of common grazing rights, landowners were given newly enclosed land in proportion to their existing land holdings. In connection with the Lower Wood enclosure,

The mortgage lender was Sarah Heighway, sister of Edward Heighway, who lived in her brother's household at Minton Cottage on the corner of

the lane that now bears their name, Heighway's Lane, until her death in 1875. The property was

sold the next year to Thomas Roberts of Underhill Hall, Smethcote. He died in 1904.

Another area that was to be subjected to enclosure at the end of the 17th century begins at the top of the road from Lower Wood to the Long Mynd. This is the High Park enclosure, and the south end of it, against the track to the top of the hill, shows clearly the efforts that went into creating proper boundaries to the newly enclosed fields, with hedgerows on ridges created by digging on either side. Here we find just three properties: Mynderley, The Hill, and High Park House. Mynderley was at first known as Greenfields, and The Hill, formerly Ford's Cottage was in fact part of an encroachment on the common at the edge of Thomas Ford's allotment.



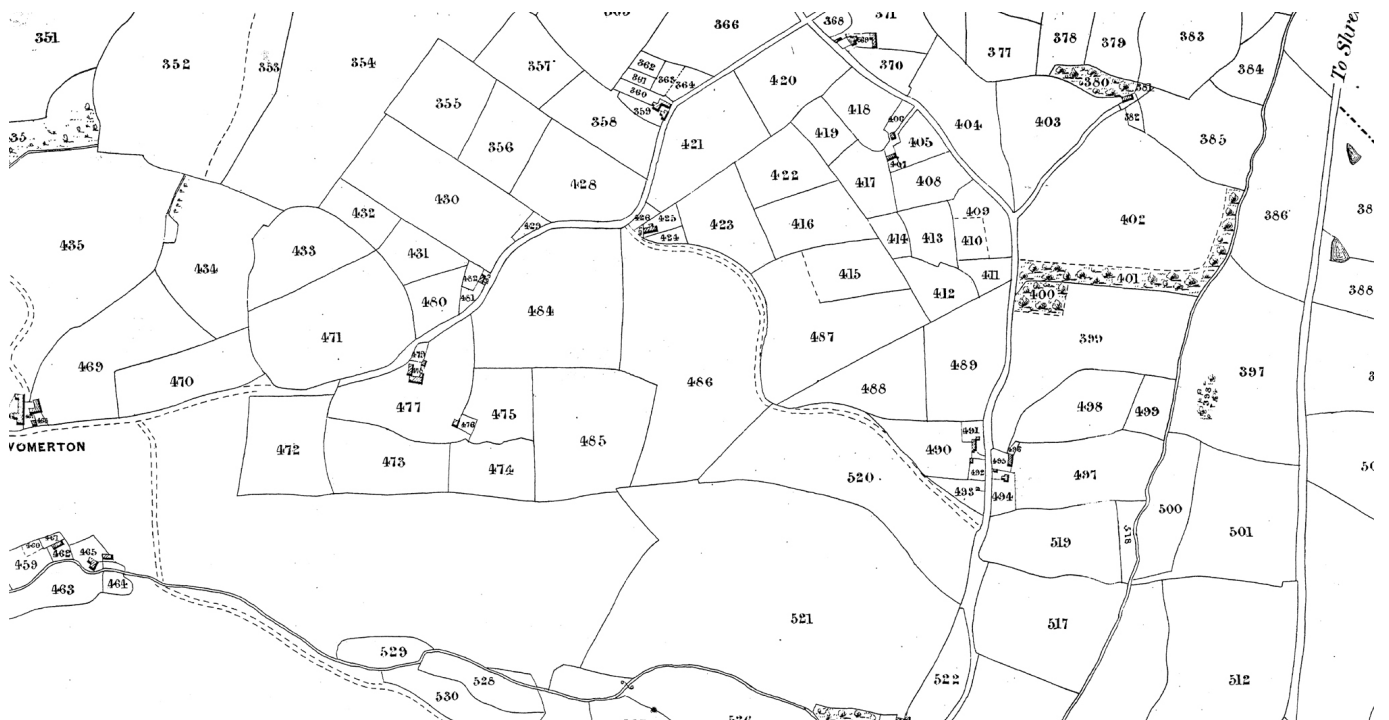
High Park House

Church Stretton and a major local landowner, with respect to his existing Womerton holding. Because this land was common before the enclosure, and because there is no mention in the historical records of a house in these parts before that time, we should conclude that High Park House was put up some time after 1798. In any case it was there in 1840, having been purchased by one John Whitehurst at an auction of Wilding property in 1838.

Because the area known as "High Park" included a large area with several small dwellings that cannot be identified from the census returns, we have no way of deciding exactly who lived in High Park House at any given time, but it remained in the ownership of the Whitehurst family until 1921. Later that year, the new owners transferred the rights to the property

on mortgage to Arthur Edward Lloyd Oswell, the architect who designed All Stretton's parish church.

High Park House lies on land that was allotted to the Rev Richard Wilding, curate to the Rector of



Extract from the tithe map of 1840, showing part of Lower Wood, with Gogbatch at the bottom and Womerton farmhouse to the left. The straight-lined field boundaries represent enclosed land. Irregularly shaped fields such as 433 and 471 are ancient encroachments on the common. Spring Cottage is near number 480.