

Bromborough Manor Houses

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In April 1936 a report of a talk given by Mrs Anderson, a well known and respected Bromborough historian, appeared in a local newspaper — '... a hall existed in Bromborough since 1100 AD. It probably stood in the park forming part of the grounds near what was known locally as the "Horse Wash", a pond in the second field on the left of the path to Eastham Ferry. There were clear indications there of a moated grange ...'

The footpath, field and pond referred to are shown in the 1947 edition of the Wirral Footpaths Society's map of North Wirral, in an area now covered by oil storage tanks. The pond would have been situated at SJ 355820, along the southern side of the present Old Hall Road, the field stretching in a southerly direction towards Green Lane, Bromborough. It is readily recalled by older residents as being used to wash the legs of farm hoses and known also as 'Fetlock Wash'. Enquiries to date have not, however, revealed a further description of the moated site.

The field in question was shown as part of the Manor Hall park in the 1840 Tithe Map, but in an 18th century estate map as one of several fields called the Seeches which were part of the medieval arable field system of Bromborough, being a subject of a grant to the Abbot of St Werburgh's Monastery, Chester, between 1265 and 1291 (Tait 1920, 388-89), and mentioned in various title deeds of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The name is Old English for a 'watercourse field'.

There are known to have been at least three manor houses in Bromborough at different periods:—

1. Bromborough Court House (SJ 345842) the ancient manor house of Bromborough, demolished in 1969, and subject of this society's Report no 2 (Chitty *et al* 1979).

2. Brombrough Manor, New or Upper Hall (SJ 351823) which was situated in Bromborough Village Road opposite the existing lane leading to the parish churchyard. It was demolished in 1930 and its site is now occupied by a petrol filling station. The hall is described by Mortimer (1847, 209), Sulley (1889, 206), Gamlin (1897, 64) and Young (1915, 44), who all state that it was built by Dr John Bridgeman, Bishop of Chester, between 1619 and 1645, the source being a travelogue description of Bromborough in the Gentleman's Magazine of 1762.

3. Bromborough Old, Lower or Little Hall. In 1594, Sir Hugh Cholmondeley and others sold Bromborough Court, 'that Mansion House or Manor House of Bromborough', and its demesne to Henry Hardware so that it became detached from the manor which was sold to Richard Bavand in the same year. In the relevant deed, apart from specifically excepting Bromborough Court, there is no reference to a capital messuage. The next sale of the manor occurred in 1638 when Richard Bavand sold the manor to Orlando Bridgeman. Again no capital messuage or manor house is mentioned in the deed, the relevant clause reading 'All and singular the Manor of Bromborough with the rights members and appurtenances thereof within the County of Chester and all the messuages, cottages, lands, tenements and herditaments ...'

There is a break in the succession of title deeds at this juncture as the next known deed relating to a sale of the manor is by Arthur and Anthony Samuel to James Green in 1661, and it mentions two halls, 'That Capitall Messuage or Manor House of Bromborough and that Capitall Messuage or Manor House called the Lower Hall of Bromborough'. Neither of these halls could be Bromborough Court because, as previously mentioned, it had become detached from the manor by its sale to the Hardwares in 1594, and remained so until 1748 when, following its sale to the Mainwaring family it became reunited.

It is not known for certain how the manor came into the possession of the Samuels but it may have been the subject of Parliamentary sequestration, because in 1646 a George Pressick, a Parliamentary sympathizer, complained to the Committee for Compounding that since being granted a lease of 'the Hall' by the Sequestrators for Wirral to the year ending 2nd February 1647 he had been disturbed in his possession of the Hall by John Bridgeman, sometime Bishop of Chester, to whom it lately belonged, and whose son Orlando had previously compounded his delinquency (Irvine & Bennett 1912, 43).

In 1662, James Green sold the Lower Hall with another messuage and tenement to William Pimlowe, the wording of the deed being 'one certain house . . . the Lower Hall' and 'another house or messuage . . . Mistress Alice House with appurtenances' together with the associated fields of the latter tenement. An endorsement of 1663 states 'Memorandum. that quiet possession seisin and Liverie were given by the within named James Green to the within named Will. Pimlowe in the Mansion or Dwelling House of the within ment'oned Messuage called Mistress Alice house or Messuage. And liverie in a Certain Roome in the House or Messuage called the Little Hall . . .'

In 1663, Green sold the manor to Edward Bradshaw and the deed states 'All that capital messuage or manor house called the New Hall of Bromborough . . .', and there is a clause specifically excepting 'all that messuage or tenement called the old hall and the backside . . . and all that messuage and tenement called Mrs Alice tenement with the backside thereto belonging' and specified fields.

By a fortunate coincidence the Hearth Tax Returns for 1663 have survived (Irvine & Bennett 1910, 69). Premises with more than one hearth are as follows:—

1.	Sir Thomas Povell	3
2.	James Green and Edward Bradshaw	13
3.	Frances Gille	2
4.	Will Daine	2
5.	Eallion Tellett	3
6.	Margaret Bagnall	2
7.	Will Pimlowe	5

Of these (1) was probably Bromborough Court, (2) would be Bromborough New Hall. From subsequent deeds (6) would appear to be the Mistress Alice House mentioned in the deeds of 1662 and 1663 and (7) the Old Hall. It would appear, therefore, that the Old Hall was a moderately sized building perhaps larger than the original Bromborough Court which it is thought was replaced about 1690 (Chitty *et al* 1979, 8).

The location of the Old Hall cannot be determined, and on present evidence cannot be equated with the site described by Mrs Anderson. However, the adjectives 'lower' and 'upper' when related to the slope of the land down to the river from the village encourages speculation that they are the same. The site was in the centre of the medieval field complex and it is interesting to note that if the southerly direction of the former Court Lane is continued, instead of diverting to the village as on the Tithe Map, it would meet the site and form a direct route between it and the Court House.

A further speculation is the possible relationship of the Old Hall with Bromborough Manor Farm, formerly located at SJ 350822. This building is described by most local writers in some detail, and some fine 16th century wood panelling is shown in a photograph in Young (1915). The present whereabouts of this panelling is not known but it does seem to have been slightly incongruous in a farm house. The Old Hall cannot be identified in any known documentary sources after 1663 and the Manor Farm is said to have been substantially restored in 1676 so that the panelling may have come from the Old Hall, possibly on demolition.

Unpublished sources

All the deeds are part of the Mainwaring collection of papers in the Cheshire County Record Office (ACC 53 DPB, ACC 103 DMB, ACC 124 DPB and ACC 231 DMB) with the exception of the deed Cholmondeley and others to Bavand (Bromborough Manor) 1594 which is in the Liverpool Central Library (Cheshire Deeds 195).

The Bromborough 1840 Tithe Map (EDT 70/2) and a photograph of an 18th Century survey map of Bromborough (ACC 107) are also in the Cheshire County Record Office.

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