

English Researches



Emily and Parks Shipley

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- and you begin to visualize what it must have been like when our ancestors followed ox-drawn ploughs and tended their sheep in the 11th Century..."

ENGLISH RESEARCHES

by

Emily and Parks Shipley

As one steps back in history, the importance of Yorkshire as the origin of the Shipley family becomes more evident. In 1972, with the co-operation of the Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire (the Queen's representative), the librarians of the City of York, the York Minster and others, we obtained a list of all Shipley recordings in the old legal archives of the Archbishopric of York, back to the year 1200. While we did not uncover our Adam, the list made fascinating reading since it gave the names of some fifty towns and villages where these ancient bearers of our name lived, owned property, married, died, or broke the law, as the case may be.

Faithful subscribers to the Shipley News Letter may recall a brief article in the issue of March 1973 hopefully entitled, "Progress Report on English Researches", in which we described a survey of the places in England where present-day Shipleys reside.

This survey, based on a study of current telephone directories of most of the counties, revealed that Shipleys today are particularly numerous in the northeastern counties of Northumberland, Durham, and York. They have also fanned out into the neighboring counties of Lincoln, Derby, Stafford and Leicester and the Midlands area. Very few Shipleys are shown in the rest of England. Yorkshire, the origin of our Adam Shipley branch, still takes the prize with the most numerous listings, comparable to Anne Arundel, Carroll, Howard and Baltimore counties in Maryland.

THE SHIPLEY TRIANGLE

Towns concentrated in the West and South areas of Yorkshire form a triangle bounded on the north by the great industrial cities of Leeds and Bradford and extending southward 30 or 40 miles to the big city of Sheffield, near the border of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Significantly, the town of SHIPLEY, now a borough of Bradford, is in this area, a part of the great urban complex of Bradford and Leeds. A small hamlet of Shepley, also very old, is nestled in a valley near Huddersfield, 15 miles to the south. SHIPLEY showed no signs of its age, being a thriving, typical modern market center.

DOMESDAY BOOK

The Domesday Book in which William the Conqueror caused to be listed all the land holdings of his new domain, refers to the "Manor of Scipeleia", in the "Wapentake of Morley", an ancient subdivision of the country south of the city of SHIPLEY. It lists a certain Ravenshil as holding "3 carrucates" * of land worth 10 shillings, in the time of Edward the Confessor. It also states that "in Scipeleia, Brun and Odincar had 2 carrucates". All of these individuals were probably of Saxon or Scandinavian origin.

* A carrucate is the amount of land that could be tilled in one year by one plough drawn by 8 oxen.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

As we know, family names were just beginning to be used in the Middle Ages except in the case of a few noble families. They were derived from the trade or occupation of the individual, the town he came from, his father's name, etc. Sheep raising, production of wool, weaving of cloth, etc., have been carried on in Yorkshire for at least 600 years. Thus, surnames such as Weaver, Dyer, Shearer, Fuller are common. "Shipley" is in this category. For instance, a 14th Century list of taxpayers of the town of SHIPLEY, includes individuals with the surnames

of "de Byngley", "de Denby" as well as "Richard le Souter" (shoemaker) and John Malison, or Martin.

SHIPLEYS IN SHIPLEY

It was not surprising that we found no Shipleys listed for the town of SHIPLEY. To find them in those early years, one has to look in the other little towns and hamlets of the region to which they had moved from SHIPLEY, or Shepley, as the case may have been. The spelling of the name varies widely and appears as Seppelci, Sepelaya, Schepelay, Shepley, Shipley, etc. Usually a "de" appeared before it to indicate that it was a name of origin.

THE SHIPLEY TRIANGLE

During our trip to England in June of this year we decided that it would be interesting to visit the section which was almost certainly the origin of our family. We had been in Yorkshire several times before, notably with the famous Shipley Tour in 1977; this time we wanted to concentrate on the "Shipley Triangle".

YORKSHIRE

Yorkshire, although now subdivided into four parts for political administration, is the Texas of England, the largest of the English counties. It is scenically one of the most varied and most beautiful. Today, visitors are drawn to the famed Yorkshire moors in the northeast, to the rolling open wolds on the southeast, or to the spectacular wild dales of the western section.

Tourists avoid the murky coalfields and heavily industrialized belt around Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax and Sheffield, where the Shipleys came from. But, before the industrial revolution, this section might have been justifiably called the most beautiful in the country. Even today the rolling green vistas that suddenly appear as you round a bend between Halifax and Huddersfield or on the outskirts of Sheffield fairly take your breath away.

- You soon forget the mining shafts, factory stacks and dingy workers' dwellings and you begin to visualize what it must have been like in the 11th century when Ravenhil, Brun and Odincar (possibly our ancestors?) followed their ox-drawn ploughs and tended their sheep.

MANOR OF SHIPLEY

SHIPLEY-ON-THE-AIRE

After a few days in the wonderful city of York, during which we did some intensive digging into parish records of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, we moved our base of operations to the little village of Bingley, on the edge of the moor near SHIPLEY. The town itself, not being a center for visitors, does not have a suitable hostelry. Those on the Tour in 1977 will recall that it was a rainy market day when we got to SHIPLEY and there was no place to park. So we hurried on to our overnight stop at Harrogate.

This year there was time to walk around and make inquiries. There is really not much to see in SHIPLEY except shops and supermarkets, but the town is superbly situated. Perched high on the banks of the River Aire, it is easy to visualize the medieval village with sheep grazing on the hillsides around about.

The Aire Valley and Shipley Glen were one of the chief east-west trade routes across the country in the Bronze Age, so SHIPLEY must have been selected as a settlement site very early on.

While the Domesday Book mentions a "Manor of Schipeleia", we found no manor house in the town of SHIPLEY, and it is important to realize that in early Ages, "manor" varied widely as to extent and nature.

At the time of the Conquest, the Manor of Shipley was granted to one Ilbert de Lacey, a follower of William the Conqueror. At some point it reverted to the Crown, and during the reign of Edward the Confessor some lands therein were given in a grant to Nicholas de Maray, Superior of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. In 1316 the Order was made "lord of the manor" and Knights of St. John held fees of lands in SHIPLEY for ~~many~~ many years.

The Gascoigne family became lords from 1422 until the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, when (in 1570) a William Rawson of Bradford, through marriage to the daughter of William Gascoigne of SHIPLEY, acquired the manor. Rawsons held the manor until 1745, when it went to the widow of the last Rawson. She remarried and passed the lordship to her husband, Cyril Jackson of Stamford.

The manor was sold in George IV's time for £24.00 and eventually came into the possession of the Earl of Rosse, where it presumably still is.

SIR MATTHEW de SHIPLEY

To the east of the Manor of Shipley was the immense Manor of Wakefield, which William the Conqueror granted to his cousin, the Earl of Warenne. Perhaps the much smaller Manor of Shipley was somehow subsidiary to the Manor of Wakefield; we cannot tell, but the town of SHIPLEY is named in the Domesday Book as among others making payment for the use of lands in the Wakefield grant. Most of the towns mentioned in our records are situated in the Shipley or Wakefield areas, eastward to Pontefract. In the year 1219 a Sir Mathew de Shipley was listed as Steward to the Earl of Warenne.

SOWERBY

One of our earliest Shipley records has to do with the little village of Sowerby (pronounced Sorby), about 10 miles southeast of SHIPLEY, due west of Halifax in the Calder Valley. This is glorious high hill country with steep wooded slopes down to the valley floor. Sowerby may have been settled as early as the 10th century and was a part of the Earl de Warenne's great Manor of Wakefield. It once gave its name to a wide area, including a vast Royal forest, and was the seat of the Manorial Court of Wakefield. It was a great center for sheep raising

and the woolen trade. Today, it is only a tiny village, high on a windswept plateau. We just managed to maneuver our small English car up the steep, winding road. Once there you can see for miles, and in our imagination what we saw were early Shipleys trudging over the countryside.

LANDOWNERS IN SOWERBY

A John and a Thomas de Schepeley were listed as landowners at Sowerby in 1298. John was stated to be a son of Hugh, a grandson of Harding, and a brother of Matthew. In 1202 Matthew was shown as having a dispute with Ryland Abbey about a land transaction. It is a mere surmise that this family lived at Sowerby, but it is a fact that they owned land there and their interests were wide-ranging in the area, especially Matthew's.

"THE CHURCH STILE"

We had hoped to find an old parish church in Sowerby but were disappointed that St. Peter's, a very stately structure, had none-the-less been built only in 1763, and tombstones in the cemetery dated from that time. As we sat in our car deciding where next to go, an attractive young "Bobby", by name Peter Cushing, asked if he could be of assistance. Since it was nearly lunchtime we inquired

about a place to get a sandwich and he directed us to "The Church Stile", a charming little pub on the road on the other side of the church.

Quietly, we sat next to a nice couple, but our American accent gave us away when we ordered our sandwiches. The entire company joined in a lively conversation about America and world issues. They were interested in our family researches but could offer no clues. Our "period" was far too far in the past for any of them, and there were no Shipleys there any more. They certainly had never heard of Thomas de Schepeley and his wife, who in the late 1200s, were fined for illegal ale-selling!

SHIPLEYS ON THE MOVE

The reference in the lists prepared for us by Mr. Barr, the librarian of Yorkminster, move eastward as the years progress. Old Sowerby is about 3 miles east of Halifax, and Shipleys are reported in towns to the east and south of Halifax, such as Heckmonwike, Brighouse, Rastrick and Southowram in the 1200s and early 1300s. They had also begun to appear in records for Mirfield, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Wakefield and Pontefract, farther east. By the 1500s and 1600s they show up farther south toward Rotherham and Sheffield. We drove back and forth through the whole area, stopping at as many "Shipley" towns as possible.

WILLIAM SHEPLEY

Southowram is now a part of Halifax and here, in 1499, a William Shepley appears in a deed connected with Shibden Hall, which we visited. It is a magnificent Tudor manor house, now owned by the City of Halifax Corporation. The earliest part of the house was built in the beginning of the 1400s and now, fully restored and furnished, it houses in its out-buildings the Folk Museum of West Yorkshire.

The property was part of the large grant given by William the Conqueror to the Earl of Warenne, and as mentioned before, Sir Matthew de Shepley was his Steward in 1219. We have no knowledge of any connection between him and the William Shipley mentioned in the Shibden deed in 1499, but it was interesting to visit the old house and realize that Shipleys had had some connection.

MIRFIELD

The most numerous Shipley references on our list are for Mirfield, a large town about 10 miles southeast of Halifax. They began in about 1564 and for the period covered, up to 1744, indicated a large settlement of persons of the name. This is supported by parish register entries which we also were able to obtain from the City of York.

The Earl of Warrenne also enters the picture here since parts of the Mirfield area were included in his grant of the Manor of Wakefield.

PARISH CHURCH

We found the parish church of St. Mary's, and while it was rebuilt in 1871, the medieval tower still stands to the south of the present building. We were interested and pleased to see a Shipley listed on a plaque of donors to a memorial fund affixed to the tower wall. Next to the church is a huge mound which marks the location of the ancient Manor of Wakefield.

GREEN FIELDS OF ENGLAND

The open countryside surrounding the town of Mirfield is a tribute to the "green belt" policy, and the town is separated from its neighbors by a continuous band of lovely country that conveys a feeling of what it was like when the first Shipleys arrived there hundreds of years ago.

" THE OLD COUNTRY "

There is neither time nor space to continue the travelogue of our visit to Shipley country. It was a fascinating experience even if we did not come up with conclusive evidence of Adam Shipley's lineage in "the old country".....

Some day some enterprising Shipley will come upon the needed clue, either in Annapolis or in Yorkshire, and we will be on our way!

Emily and Parks Shipley

Summit, New Jersey
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