

PORCH HOUSE.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments ¹ says of Porch House²...*"It was built in the first half of the 17th century on an L-shaped plan with the wings extending towards the NW and SW."*

This dating is perhaps supported by the earliest documentary reference which I have³, which I quote from Reeves, "Leon Valley"⁴ viz: "In 1624, Philip Froysell and the Crump family of the Porch House, were presented as recusants,..."

The fact that it was detailed as Porch House at that date suggests, that, whilst the building itself may then have been new, the name was well established- and may imply an earlier building on the site.

RCHM further recites...*"Late in the same century the NW wing was extended and heightened and in the 18th century a brick extension was made on the SE front"*

Alterations to buildings often reflect recently preceding changes of ownership. I have no detailed record of when the Crump⁵ family left Porch House, but prior to early 1727 the Trumper family were established there, the death of "Joseph Trumper late of ye Porch House March the 10th 1727 (?)" being recorded "on floor of tower"⁶

The next mention I have of Porch House is also connected to the Trumper family. In his Will dated 17th September 1745 John Trumper of Leen(e) in the Parish of Pembridge gave to his daughter Anne Trumper..... *"...all and singular my freehold and leasehold Messuages Dwelling Houses, Lands, Tenements, Hereditaments with the rights Members and Appurtenances thereunto belonging and possessed or entitled to hold..... upon this condition nevertheless and it is my express Will and Devise that my said daughter shall permit and suffer my said wife and her assigns to hold and enjoy during her natural life two plocks of land adjoining to the buildings belonging to the Porch House in Eardisland aforesaid & enclosed with walls and wherein a fish pond and Brick Building now stands without any interruption."*

From this it is clear that John Trumper left⁷ Porch House and the land and buildings belonging to it to his daughter Ann Trumper, with his wife (also Ann Trumper) having a life interest in certain land and buildings appertaining to it. Whether or not the "Brick Building" was the present "Dovecote" is covered in a separate Paper.

¹ RCHM , Herefordshire (1934). Volume 3, page 48.

² After a few words of description of its then present state...and calling it "Old Manor House"

³ Not to say that there are no earlier references extant.I have done no targeted research into this subject yet.

⁴ Reeves, Norman C. "The Leon Valley.Three Herefordshire Villages. Kingsland, Monkland and Eardisland" Phillimore & Co. Ltd. 1980, page 147.

⁵ Whether connected or not I do not know, but by 1637 a Walter Crump, gent. Owned "a living at the Byrches" [HRO SR62. BM Portland Loan 29/172].

⁶ Monumental Inscriptions in Eardisland Church; via HRO BM81/1/19, page 121.

⁷ He died on 30th September 1745 as evidenced by the Monumental Inscription on his tomb stone in Eardisland church, which, in contradiction to how he described himself in his Will, refers to "John Trumper of the Porch House Gent."

In 1758 both Ann Trumper (daughter) and yet another⁸ Ann Trumper were both still living at the Porch House. This is evidenced by the daughter's Will dated 7th August 1758, on which her signature suggests she was extremely unwell:

*".....Ann Trumper of the Porch House in the parish of Eardisland...Spinster...to my Sister in Law Mrs Ann Trumper of the Porch House five pounds....."*⁹

The Trumper family continued at Porch House until 1778 when Ann, widow of John, died on the 20th February.¹⁰ Their only daughter, another Ann, had died in 1759 at the age of 36. I am not aware of any son of their marriage¹¹ and it was probably after the 1778 death that the Porch House came to be owned by another family.

After the Trumper family a period of prolonged ownership of the Porch House by any one family is not evident, but records of interest regarding the building itself and events in connection with which it is mentioned start to appear.

In 1795 a Mr *"Wm. Jones, Porch-house"* served the parish as Overseer of the Poor and Churchwarden.¹²

Other than the building itself, of which more later, the earliest non-family reference I have relates to a walnut tree. The following wording appeared in a newspaper in 1829:

*"Walnut Tree. There is now growing at the Porch House, Eardisland the property of J.P. Taylor Esq a remarkably large and flourishing Walnut Tree, the diameter of whose branches is 25 yards, the circumference of its trunk 12 feet and height 66 feet. The branches are breaking under the load of fruit. Many bunches of fruit contain in number from 18 to 20 nuts."*¹³

And then in 1832, following the passing of the Reform Bill, it is reported that:

*"...in the evening a general illumination took place in which the Porch House was shone conspicuous."*¹⁴

It would be very interesting to know how that was arranged...and who paid for it.

None of the references to Porch House cited so far give any indication of the type of legal tenure by which the property was held. This situation is resolved by a Draft of a Power of Attorney to be drawn up to enable a transaction concerning Porch House to go ahead in the absence of the principals.¹⁵ On the outside of the document is written: *"Dated 1837 Bertram Mitford and Edward Evans Esquires to Mr Thomas Sale. Draft Power of Attorney to surrender Copyhold premises within the Manor of Eardisland."* Mitford and Evans had been admitted as tenants at a special Court Baron on 23rd September 1823. The draft document itself includes the wording: *"All that and those the Capital messuage or tenement and other builds yard garden Orchard sevl. pieces or parcels of land arable meadow pasture and Hopground Cottage & tenement Garden heredit and pieces commonly called or known by the*

⁸ The Trumper family itself is dealt with in a separate Paper.

⁹ HRO AE45/1-8.

¹⁰ Monumental Inscription in the church, via Birley "Records Book".

¹¹ There were other families "Trumper" in the parish, then, before and subsequently. The relationships have yet to be established for a separate Paper about the Trumper family itself.

¹² HRO AJ32/58.

¹³ Hereford Journal 22nd July 1829 via Reeves Notebook number 12, page 73.

¹⁴ "Portrait of a Village", page 67.

¹⁵ HRO N41/65.

name of the Porch House Estate situate and being within the Manor & Parish of Eardisland aforesaid and late in the tenure or occupation of Saml. Griffiths and now Elizth. Taylor Mrs Elizth. Tombs ¹⁶*Mr James Tomkins.....*" The document goes on to say that the described premises was to be divided equally between Richd. Taylor of Dorstone in the Parish of Birley , Herefordshire; the other half to go to Elizth. Tombs of Eardisland widow and then Taylor and Tombs were to be admitted by the Court as separate tenants of the Lord of the Manor. This informs us that Porch House was then held by copyhold of the Manor of Eardisland, gives detail of the parties involved, a brief description of the "*Porch House Estate*" and at least some details of the changes to be put into effect. To some (unmeasurable) extent it also casts light, retrospectively, on the status of the Trumper family when they held the property.

There are several references to a school(for the girls of the village in at least one of these references) being held in the Dovecote, which is on land which pertained to Porch House. A further two references state that schooling took place in Porch House itself; these are quoted below. Whether or not these latter two references are to what took place in the Dovecote (it then being part of the Porch House 'property') or whether separate lessons also took place in Porch House itself is, at this stage, a matter of personal interpretation.¹⁷

*"There was a dame school - held at the Porch House by Mrs Parry...continued until about 1870"*¹⁸

*"...a Dame School for small children was run by Mrs Parry at the Porch House,.....This school was still in existence in 1875,..."*¹⁹

After Mrs Parry various names appear as owner or occupier. Those that I detail hereunder are by no means a complete list. It is simply those references which have come my way so far; no specific research has been undertaken in this respect.

*"In 1888, a village blacksmith, John Phillips lived there."*²⁰

1895...*"Private Residents: Phillips, John, Porch House."*²¹

1902...In 1902 the new Vicar,the Reverend F. Worsey, wrote a letter to Parishioners from: *"Porch House. April 1902."*²² That same year land was purchased for the construction of a Vicarage [the previous vicar had owned his dwelling in his own right]. The building which was constructed on this land is now [2009] known as "The Old Vicarage"...for many years a private residence.

1905...*"In 1905 George Parry...was living there."*²³

1920...*"In the 1920s, Albert Morris, the blacksmith was the owner when it was*

¹⁶ A widow, she died on 25th December 1848. Porch House is mentioned in her Will and following Probate (22nd June 1849) was one of the assets within a "Conveyance and Assignement of Trust estate" dated 8th March 1851. Further detail as to the next owner of Porch House may be therein, but a brief reading suggested that the assets were, by that document, only transferred to Trustees who would then carry out her wishes. These documents are at HRO N41/7. Elsewhere there is record that her Will was dated 28 Nov 1843. In it she is described as a *Widow then of the Porch House* [Boulton Deeds Item 21].

¹⁷ A Paper on schooling in Eardisland is in course of preparation.

¹⁸ Museum Papers, page 10.

¹⁹ W.I. Book, page 75.

²⁰ "Portrait of a Village"page 67.

²¹ Kelly's Directory, 1895.

²² HRO AK97/1, page 3.

²³ " Portrait of a Village", page 67.

also known as *Vulcan House*.²⁴

1930...*"It was run as a Guest House from 1930s by Mrs Rimmer and has continued to be so in recent times."*²⁵

1942...*"August 6, 1942. OFFICER'S WIFE, with daughter 41/2, would TAKE ENTIRE CHARGE of GIRL 41/2 or 5; country district, - Write Mrs Rocke, The Old Manor House, Eardisland, Herefordshire."*²⁶

And so to the name "Porch House" itself. Between 1624 and circa 1917, as described above, it was never referred to as anything else. Then *In the 1920s, Albert Morris, the blacksmith was the owner when it was known as Vulcan House* Note also known and there is no suggestion that when, earlier, in the late 1880's a different blacksmith was there, it was then called anything other than Porch House.

In spite of all this, the W.I.Book, completed very early in 1956, comments:

*"At the same time new names were given to houses in keeping with the Victorian fashion;...Vulcan House becomes Porch House and later the Manor House."*²⁷

The earliest reference to "Old Manor House" that I have seen is in the Report of the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments of 1934.

The W.I. Book comment demonstrates a lack of knowledge on behalf of its compilers of it having been "Porch House" long before it was Vulcan House - and raises the vexing point of it having, by 1980²⁸, become generally known as "The Manor House".

There are two reasons why it is completely inappropriate to call it "Manor House".

First because in this part of Herefordshire, and indeed elsewhere in the county, the home of the Lord of the Manor, and therefore usually the place where Courts were held [what elsewhere in England is indeed referred to as the 'Manor House'] is hereabouts called ".....Court": eg. Street Court, Shobdon Court, Luntley Court, Tyrells Court, not to forget Burton Court in our own parish. I could go on, but the point is made.

"Lynch", whilst never an actual manor, was owned by a Lord of the Manor of Eardisland from 1804, and soon after that date became known as "Lynch Court" - as is still the case today.

Why then is there no "Eardisland Court"? A fair question to which the answer lies in the identity/status of those who held the manor of Eardisland over the centuries. Until the very early years of the nineteenth century²⁹ it is very improbable that any of them would have lived here, even on an occasional basis. The administration of the manor, including holding Courts, would have been, indeed for considerable periods of time is recorded as having been, in the hands of a bailiff. A separate Paper on the

²⁴ "Portrait of a Village", page 67. Kelly's Directory records him there a little earlier, in 1917, and uses the same wording again in 1922 and 1926: *Morris Albert blacksmith, Old Manor House*

²⁵ "Portrait of a Village", page 67. In fact Mrs Rimmer was there in 1929. Kelly's Directory of that year has *Rimmer Edith (Mrs), boarding ho. Old Manor ho* Kelly's uses the same wording again in 1934, 1937 and 1941.

²⁶ www.timesonline.co.uk

²⁷ W.I.Book, page 26.

²⁸ "Porch House: this is now called Manor House;..." in Reeves, 'Leon Valley...' page 187.

²⁹ When they did indeed become resident.

subject of the Lordship of the Manor of Eardisland is in course of preparation.

The second reason why it was inappropriate to call it "Manor House" was that it, 'Porch House', was never owned by a Lord of the Manor and manorial courts would therefore never have been held there. But that said, the bailiff held Court on behalf of the Lord of the Manor somewhere in the manor. If there was an earlier building on the same site which was sufficiently demolished when the present one was built for there to be nothing for the RCHM to comment on, then Courts might after all have been held at the present site at early date, leading to it being called not "Manor House", 'Old' or otherwise-but, as was indeed the case - Porch House. This seems contradictory, perhaps convoluted, but the explanation of this possibility (*it is no more than a possibility*) is given at (ii) in the next section of this Paper.

Does the name "Porch House" signify anything-is it descriptive, or does it relate to something else?

(i) A Porch - the architectural feature:

Later on the page from Reeves' "Leon Valley..." already cited, he goes on to say: "......, 'Porch' because this feature was conspicuous." But the present east porch is said to be "...a twentieth century gabled Porch."³⁰ against which it was mentioned towards the start of this Paper that the earliest documentary mention of "Porch House" dates to 1624. Was there perhaps an earlier porch which was replaced?

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (1934) made no mention of a Porch, from which it can be deduced that it was considered that (if indeed there actually was a porch at that date) it was modern.³¹ The closest it gets to mentioning a porch is to say of the doorway:

"The front doorway has an original moulded frame and a battened door with strap hinges"

Since 1934, indeed since 1976,³² alterations have been made to the building including the area around the front doorway.

This first photograph is dated 1976³³:



³⁰ "Portrait of a Village" page 67.

³¹ The Commission's brief was to report on 'Monuments' "...from the earliest time to the year 1714,..." [RCHM, Herefordshire, Volume 3, Page xii].

³² It is now March 2012.

³³ Reeves Papers.

This second photograph dates to 2006:³⁴



But if not called after an architectural feature of that type, what is the origin of the name?

(ii)Porch – part of the building itself:

The current edition of the Oxford English Dictionary³⁵ [OED] includes under the heading "Porch":

"3a. A colonnade, portico, cloister, stoa; spec. in the East, such a place used as a hall of justice; hence, the tribunal held there. Obs".

For *"tribunal"* read *'manorial court'* and the implication is clear.['Obs' =obsolete].

There is however evidence that, certainly in 1796, the Steward of the Lord of the Manor was not resident here and that the Court which he administered was held in a hired room, probably in one of the three Inns then in the village, it being documented that Parish Vestry Meetings were held both at "The Cross" and at "The Bull" around those times.

The evidence referred to lies in a bailiff's notebook³⁶ which predominantly covers manors in other parishes, but at the back of which is the heading :

"1796 Fees pd to the Stewd of the Manor of Eardisland"

The tabulation which follows this heading includes:

<i>"Journey & Holding special Ct</i>	<i>2. 2. 0</i>
<i>.....Pd for Room</i>	<i>0. 5. 0....."</i>

This makes the implications from the OED entry quoted above much less likely to apply here than might otherwise have been the case.

And there for the moment the matter rests.

³⁴ 'Portrait of a Village', page 67.

³⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press. 1989.

³⁶ HRO K99/57.