

TOWNSHIPS  
in the  
Parish of Eardisland.

In the context of English history the Township goes back a very long way. The Township was an:

*...administrative unit within a Parish.....The origin of townships are unclear though most are of undoubted antiquity. When ecclesiastical parishes developed in the late saxon and early medieval periods large numbers of townships were incorporated within the new boundaries.....Township communities were often scattered among neighbouring farmsteads and HAMLETS<sup>1</sup> and could be administered corporately by a township assembly. Former townships may often be identified by Old English –vill and –tun place-name elements.<sup>2</sup>*

Townships were a constituent part of the ‘Hundred’, in our case ‘Stretford’ Hundred.<sup>3</sup> Much has been written over the years on that subject by eminent historians of that period. To give an overview of the Hundred a quotation from one of the earlier authorities is appropriate:

*Now the hundred may be regarded.....It was the congregation of the freemen, or as we should say of the citizens of the district, of the mot-worthy, fyrd-worthy, and fold-worthy; and it was a territorial union of all the townships and estates of the district...<sup>4</sup>*

and when discussing the manor the same writer says:

*Beneath the individualistic network of feudal rights a system of territorial organisation is clearly discernible. It is of more ancient date than the feudal arrangements, and it has by no means lost its vitality and importance even in the feudal age. We need not trace its beginnings in the settlements of various tribes on English soil. It is sufficient for our purpose to note that the divisions of shires, hundreds and wapentakes stretch all over the kingdom as a complete organisation for the management of military, fiscal, and judicial affairs. The primary cell in this organisation is not the manor but the township;...<sup>5</sup>*

‘Fast Forward’ now to circa 1694 when the Reverend William Bedford was vicar of Eardisland.<sup>6</sup> One of the answers he gave in returning to Hereford a Parochial Terrier was:

*2.3 The Parish is made up of 11 or 12 Hamletts & Townships besides that wherein is the mother church.*

Can these still be identified? First, Townships.

The Townships of Burton and Hardwick are quite well documented and have merited me having written each a separate Paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Capital letters in the text from which I am quoting.

<sup>2</sup> FRIAR, Stephen “A Companion to the English Parish Church”, page 389.

<sup>3</sup> I deal with this in a separate Paper.

<sup>4</sup> Vinogradoff P, “English Society in the Eleventh Century” page 98.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page 475.

<sup>6</sup> His tenure lasted from 1669 to 1725.

Relating to the reign of HENRY III (1216-1272) is a reference in a document which itself dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century:

*...Twyford, & Brome for Burton & Twyford Townships...*<sup>7</sup> and in a Feoffment of 10<sup>th</sup> January 1632 *...in the township of Broom and Twyford in Eardisland*<sup>8</sup>

Eardisland itself is also referred to as a *Town*. Dating to 1508-1510 in the *Account of George Dygas bailiff there for the said time...* is the wording *...rent of one messuage formerly of Alice Smyth near the Cross in the middle of the Town.*<sup>9</sup>

By not long after the date of this last source, the administrative structure was changing: *By the 1540s the townships were giving way to the parishes as the effective units of local government as more duties fell on churchwardens, so lessening the importance of the township constables.*<sup>10</sup>

But whilst the administrative functions no doubt weakened here as elsewhere,<sup>11</sup> useage of the word 'Township' continued to surprisingly modern dates:

1704 *"...being ye dutifull Townsfolk of y<sup>r</sup> mannor of Eardisland."*<sup>12</sup>

1712 A list of *"...all Hundreds in the county & the Parishes and Townships they contain..."* under the heading *"Stretford Hund"* is *"Eardisland Little"*.<sup>13</sup>

1754 In the *Parish Book*<sup>14</sup> relative to 1754 is: *William Cook of this town*

*David Probert of this town*

and in 1805: *At a Leagal Vestry Meeting held this 30<sup>th</sup> Day of May 1805 it is agreed by the majority of this Meeting that the Present Surveyor Mr James Fencott should have a rate of six pence in the pound for and towards the Repairs of the turnpike Roads and Highways within the Parish of Eardisland and Township.*<sup>15</sup>

Another text, dating to circa 1646<sup>16</sup> has, under a sub-heading *Townships* the wording *Nun.house- Hardwickes-Redockes-Twyford & Brome* Redockes can be safely taken to be the modern *Riddox*, which produces an anomaly as *Riddox* is included in a record of a *...Composition Rate for the Township of Hardwick from Michaelmas 1830 till Michaelmas 1831...*<sup>17</sup>

A further text, dating to circa 1675 mentions *Twiford, Brome* as anciently being part of the Town of Pembridge.<sup>18</sup>

And so, mention of six Townships: Burton, Hardwick, Twyford and Broom, Eardisland, NunHouse and Riddox. It is surprising that so far I have not come across reference to Hinton as a Township. It may be that the area which later became the manor of Hinton was first

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<sup>7</sup> Harleian Mss 6868 via HRO BM81/1/12, page 83.

<sup>8</sup> HRO D4/22.

<sup>9</sup> PRO SC6/HEN VIII/1273.

<sup>10</sup> Faraday, M. 'Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII', WFC 2005.

<sup>11</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that the Reverend Bedford uses the words 'Township' and 'Hamlett' synonymously. At early date the township was superior to the Hamlet in the administrative context.

<sup>12</sup> HRO BR67/107.

<sup>13</sup> HRO CF50/125.

<sup>14</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>15</sup> HRO AJ32/59.

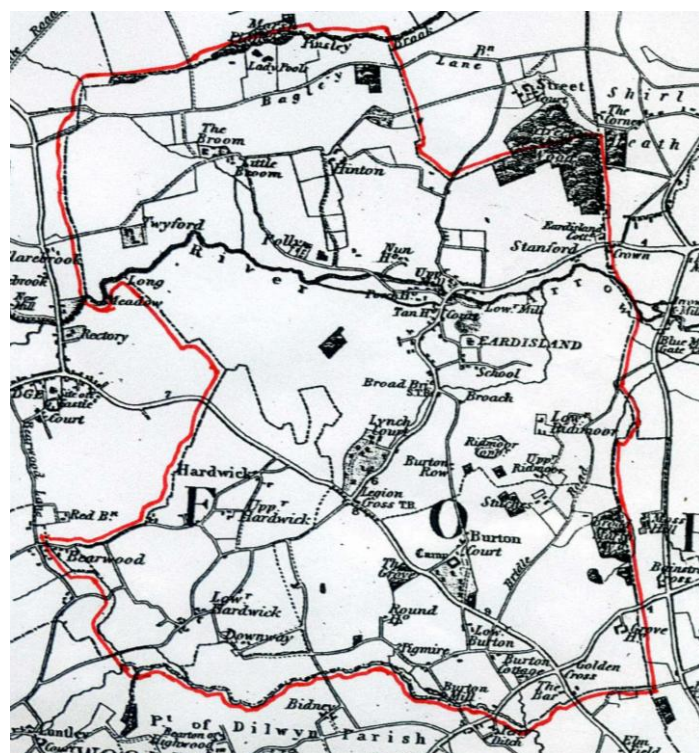
<sup>16</sup> HRO CF50/106.

<sup>17</sup> HRO CF50/106.

<sup>18</sup> HRO B56/13;2.

simply part of Twyford and Brome Township, and/or Eardisland Township, or even in part the area referred to as NunHouse Township, although that name itself was certainly not appropriate to that small part of the parish until considerably later than the early ‘Township’ administrative structures. It could however have existed at early date as a Township, but under a different name.<sup>19</sup>

The geographical extent and position of some of the Townships which I have mentioned were in fact identified on Bryant’s Map 1835.<sup>20</sup> Bryant shows four categories of boundary: County; Hundred & Borough; Parish; and Township. In some parts more than one of these take the same course and it is not easy to differentiate between the various line symbols which he uses. To add to the difficulty the far South West of the parish is not on the same sheet of his map as the remainder of the parish. For these reasons I shall show a succession of illustrations, superimposing the various boundaries on Bryant’s map by hand. This first one shows the Parish Boundary, just inside the red line, excluding the two detached areas further to the south west:



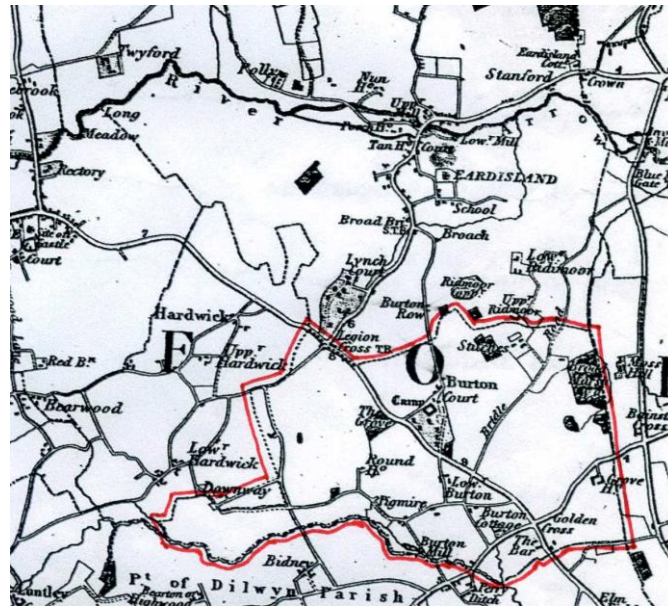
I have started by highlighting the Parish boundary.<sup>21</sup> This is because it defines the area within which I attempt (not always with complete success) to restrict all my Local History Papers. Showing it at this stage is not intended to suggest that it pre-dated the other boundaries shown by Bryant. That may well not have been the case.

<sup>19</sup> *Monechslene*. Detailed consideration of this possibility is ongoing.

<sup>20</sup> HRO Maps 6/24/1.

<sup>21</sup> The position and extent of the far south west, detached, portions of the parish will become apparent when I deal with the Township of Hardwick.

The Township of Burton is the first one which is referred to in the last paragraph of page 2 of this Paper. Its boundary shows more clearly on Bryant's map than most stretches of the Township boundaries:

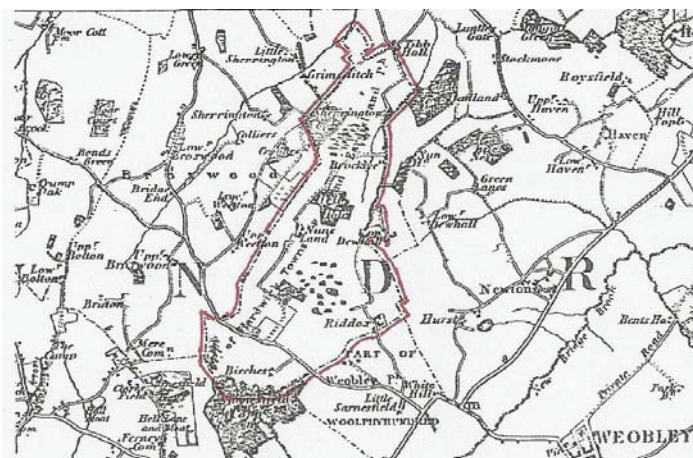


*Township of Burton*

I deal with the Township of Burton in detail in a separate Paper.

Referring again to the last paragraph of page 2 of this Paper, after Burton the next Township mentioned is Hardwick.

Its position is less easy to illustrate by using Bryant because it extends over two separate sheets of his map. The northern part of it is on the same sheet as the Township of Burton, and is partly adjacent to it to the west. However, apart from this northernmost portion the boundary of the Township of Hardwick is difficult to follow. The course taken by the southernmost part of it follows the parish boundary of the detached part of the parish of Eardisland which lies to the south-west of the main part of it. Its position can conveniently be demonstrated by relation the the village of Weobley:



*Township of Hardwick-far SW portion.*

*To be continued...*

