

Gough Walks no. 4. Scoggan... the scoundrel from the Goblin Hole!



"The Eleaventh Pew adjoining to the South wall is claimed by Daniell Hanmer for his cottage in Myddle wood, and William Candlin for his cottage in Myddle."

The main part of Gough's writings was 'Observations concerning the Seates in Myddle and the families to which they belong.'



Few houses remain that were mentioned in his book. Even fewer families can trace their roots back to the people he wrote about. The Oaks is an exception. Gough wrote:

"This Cottage of Hanmer's stands at the south side of Myddle Wood, betweene the end of the lane that goes from Myddle wood to Fennimere, and at the end of the Lynch lane." He then goes on to describe how one John Ellice, a butcher came from Hanmer, in Flintshire, to a small cottage nearby. In the Parish register he became known as John Ellice, alias Hanmer. He had three sons, Richard who worked in a Forge, but died, Thomas who kept a "petty schoole at Shawbury," and Abraham, "a litigious person among his neighbours much given to law. He married Katherine Emry, whose father and ancestors had for a long time beene tenants of this cottage.... and by this meanes he became tenant to it. Hee had noe children and therefore he took this Daniell, a bastard of his brother Thomas and brought him up as his child."

Daniel Hanmer married the daughter of Richard Owen of Goddens, whose story appears on Walk 3.

The Oaks is still in the ownership of ancestors of the Hanmer family.

"A plaine place amongst trees" - so Gough described Linches Lane, which we now call Hollins Lane. Myddle Wood and Myddle Park must have provided the trees, on either side, now sadly gone. Myddlewood common was "cutt and burnt, and sowed with corne in the later end of the warr time temp. Car.I." (in the time of Charles I) so the woods and common land had gone long before 1700, but Myddle Park continued.

Ordnance Survey maps as late as 1890 show it as a mixed wood. it was a "pretty large parke" and records show its existence in 1333, but successive fellings reduced it to little more than a coppice in Gough's day. The old bridleways in the Park still exist as footpaths, providing the only evidence of its past.

For some, one is not sufficient. Hollins Farm had a tenant called William Cleaton, who had four sons. The youngest was Richard, "an untowardly person. He married Annie, the daughter of William Tyler, a woman as infamous as himselfe..... Richard Cleaton soone out run his wife, and left his wife bigge with child. Shee had a daughter... Richard Cleaton went into the further part of this county; and below Bridgnorth hee gott another wife, and had severall children by her. At last, Ann Tyler, his first wife, caused him to bee apprehended and indicted him att an Assizes at Bridgnorth upon the statute of Poligami." because she could not prove that he had actually married the other woman, he got away with it, though some harsh words were spoken.

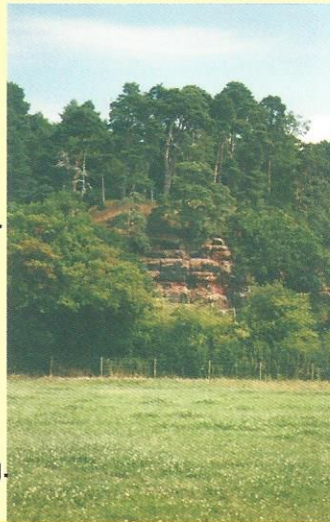
As you cross the fields from Hollins Farm towards Webscott you will see the sweep of the landscape much as Scoggan would have seen it in the time of the Civil Wars. To your left is Myddle Hill, then the Holloway Hills, across to Harmer Hill woods and Pimhill to the left. Immediately ahead is the outcrop of sandstone, below which is the Goblin Hole.

This cave dwelling was originally made into a habitation with a stone chimney, from a hole in the rock by a man called Fardo. On his death it was taken over by William Preece (also known as Scoggan), one of life's characters. He was one of the sons of Griffith ap Reece, a tenant farmer in Newton on the Hill, Sent away to be an apprentice to a London goldsmith he soon left and became a soldier, fighting for Elizabeth 1 in the Low Countries. On his return he married and lived in the Goblin Hole. But why 'Scoggan'?

Gough tells us, "After his return from the wars he told so many romanticke storyes, of his strange adventures, that people gave him the name of Scoggan, by which name (at last) hee was better known..."

But who was Scoggan? David Hey, in his edition of Gough's work explains that Scoggan was the court Jester to Edward IV. Now, it is said of Edward he was a gross man, addicted to conviviality, vanity, drunkenness, extravagance and passion. So if that was the master, what must the Jester have been?

Our Scoggan went to war again, for Charles I. In spite of having a crooked leg, through falling from a pear tree, on one of his thieving sprees (in "Bayly Downton's hortyard"), he became a Sergeant once more, for the King.





It was a cold winter, the Roundheads were abroad, and Scoggan, visiting his wife's friends at Peplow, was taken prisoner, "but he broake prison, and escaped the first night to Myddle, and there sheltered himselfe the day following in the tower or staircase of Myddle Castle, and the next night went to Shrewsbury. His foes were almost to the walls of Shrewsbury, and the Governor placed a garrison at Albright Hussey, with Scoggan in command.

It was a cold Sunday afternoon, when "a party of Horse, of the Parliament side "faced this garrison. Scoggan, true to form, shouted to his men, from an open window, "Lett such a number goe to such a place and soe many to such a place and let twenty come with mee.... (butt he had butt eight in all in the house)" Then our wily friend noticed, in the enemy ranks, a man he knew - Phillip Bunny, a Tailor, from Hadnall) "hee tooke a fowling gun, and called to Bunny, and said, 'Bunny, have at thee!' and shotte him through the legge and killed his horse." It worked, the Roundheads picked up their Bunny, and departed.

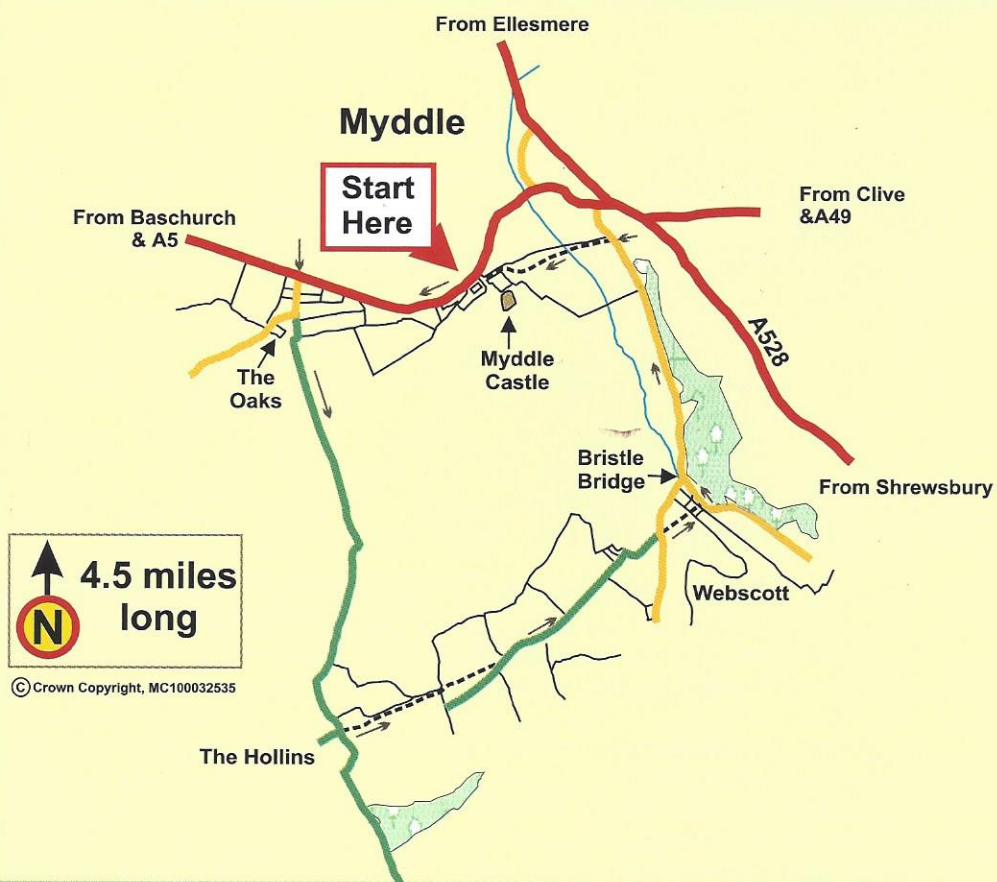
In his 'roll of honour' to the men from the Parish who fought in the wars, Gough tells us that Scoggan and three of his sons went to the war "(i.e.) Francis, Edward and William. Two of them viz. Francis and William were killed at High Ercall. The old man died in his bed, and Edward was hanged for stealeing horses."

As you walk away from the Goblin Hole, which is immediately opposite the stile into the Lower Road, you will see Brook Cottage, on your left. The brook (which you crossed over unknowingly, just before the stile), "takes its rise Head at a little pond or moate in Preston Gubballs and passing thence to Haremeare, it goes through the middle of it, and leaves it at a place called the Meare House, and passing still northward it goes over across the lane or road way that leads from Ellesmere to Shrewsbury; it there runs under a stone bridge..... This bridge is called Bristle Bridge."



Here comes Scoggan, again, "But amongst the rest of the storyes that were told of him, or by him, one was, that he killed a monstrouse boar, of soe large a size that the bristles on his back were as big as pikeeavell grains. This story being fresh among the neighbours and the workmen that were building the bridge, they gave it the name of Bristle Bridge, which name it still continues." And does, to this day. Brook Cottage has changed rather since this photograph was taken, and the main road from Ellesmere to Shrewsbury no longer follows the rest of our route, today. "From thence the brook runs to Myddle, and crossing the street there it goes under a piece of building, built over it by ... Robert More."

So let us follow the brook (and Lower Road), back towards Myddle, but unlike Scoggan, there will be no need for us to hide in the tower or staircase of Myddle Castle, the natives are friendly!



Start at Myddle Church and walk up the road.

150 metres after the last house turn left down Fenemere Lane.

When the lane turns sharp right, follow the lane to the thatched cottage called the Oaks, and then return to this corner.

Now go down the green lane just over 1/2 mile to Hollins Farm.

Opposite the drive to the farm there is a gate to a bridleway on your left. Follow the bridleway across two fields until you meet a farm lane that takes you to Webscott Farm and out onto Webscott Lane.

The footpath goes straight ahead through one or two small fields, coming out on the Lower Road opposite an old cave, known as the Goblin Hole.

Turn left and carry on along the road to Myddle passing more sandstone cottages and the entrance to the modern quarry.

When the road begins to climb, take a stile by a gate on your left (there are two stiles into this field, please take the second one).

Head for the farm crossing a little bridge over Myddle Brook joining two fields. To the left of the farm buildings you will see the remains of Myddle Castle, but the right of way takes you to the right of the farm and then past the buildings to the church.