



History of the Mytton and Mermaid and Atcham Village

The village of Atcham is situated on the old A5 Roman Road approximately 3 miles to the east of Shrewsbury. The Manor of Atcham was held in pre-conquest times by the church of St Alkmund in Shrewsbury. Subsequently the Abbot of Lilleshall assumed ownership before the Abbey was dissolved in 1539. The Atcham Estate passed through the ownership of several purchasers before it was acquired by one Richard Hill in the 18th Century.

Our Grade II listed red-brick building, opposite the main gates of Attingham Park was owned by the Hill family from the early 1700s until 1951.

It was originally a private house, which may have dated from as early as 1725, commissioned by Richard Hill of Tern Hall (which would later become Attingham Hall) and believed to have been called 'the Dower House'.

In the 1770s, Noel Hill, great nephew of Richard and son of Thomas Harwood who had inherited the estate from Richard, altered or re-built the building where upon it was described as a 'handsome inn by Atcham Bridge.'

In 1775, William Bennett, Noel Hill's former butler, became the innkeeper of what was then called the Talbot Arms. Mr Bennett had left employment at Tern Hall the previous year. It was common for 'retired' servants to go into the hospitality profession, opening boarding houses, hostels and shops.

In 1782, Noel Hill inherited Tern Hall from his father and commissioned a new house, Attingham Hall, designed to wrap around Tern Hall. In 1784 he was granted the title 1st Lord Berwick by King George III.



Attingham Hall Drawn by JP Neave (1780-1847)

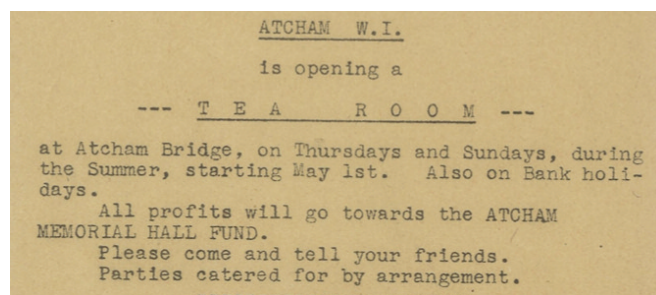
By 1793 the Talbot Arms was a major coaching inn on the London to Holyhead route and became the dropping-off point for packages for Attingham Hall.

In 1833, The Talbot Arms was re-named the Berwick Arms when William, 3rd Lord Berwick, returned from working in Italy as a diplomat following the death of his brother. In 1834 Lord Berwick granted a lease to use the building as a public inn and family hotel. The rent was 'for £100 payable 25th March 1834 and thereafter £200 payable in instalments twice a year'.

In 1873 the building was altered and it reverted to being a private residence once more, named 'Atcham House'. By 1881, Charlotte Elizabeth Owen and her 8 children had moved in after the death of her husband; they lived alongside 7 female domestic servants.

In February 1920 the Atcham Women's Institute was founded with the aim of improving rural life. By March there were 39 members and Lady Berwick acted as President until 1962. The first club room was the partially-occupied Atcham House.

From 1925 the WI used the Atcham malthouse building for their meetings. Lord Berwick had presented the building to the parish and a plaque recorded its role as a war memorial hall in memory of the men of Atcham who had fallen in the Great War.'



W.I. Tea Room Flyer

In 1924 Frederick George Burdass, his wife Irene, and their son Bruce, were at Atcham House. The couple had married in 1922. Before his marriage, Frederick George was recorded in 1921 as a Shrewsbury brewer. Their lease arrangements were many and varied.

Clauses included the need for Lord Berwick to spend £250 on equipping the place with electric light; for the man who currently has the gardens to remove his crops to enable the garden to be cultivated; Mr Burdass purchases the billiard table for £90 from Lord Berwick, along with the Extoller for the table and two fenders from the billiard room at Attingham.



Lord and Lady Berwick on the steps of Attingham Hall, early 1920s

The Mytton and Mermaid years

Bertram Clough William-Ellis (1883-1978) was the author, architect and creator of Portmeirion Italianate village in North Wales. He was a fashionable architect in the inter-war years. He married the writer Amabel Strachey and their daughter, Susan, named the pottery she established with her husband in 1961 after Portmeirion.

In 1930 – 1932 Clough William-Ellis made visits to Attingham Hall. There is an anecdote that during one such stay he allowed bath water to overflow, thus necessitating repairs to the ceiling and redecoration of the East Ante Room below. In 1932 Clough Williams-Ellis proposed to lease Atcham House and convert it into a licensed hotel and staging post. The lease was settled in 1933 and the name changed to the Mytton and Mermaid. The Mermaid from the logo of Portmeirion and 'Mytton' after the Shropshire eccentric 'Mad' Jack Mytton.



'Mad Jack Mytton'

John 'Mad Jack' Mytton died in 1834. He had lived with a pack of 1,000 dogs and 60 cats and drank six bottles of Port each day (we like him already!). His only interests were hunting and the 'mermaids of the village'. Eventually, his money ran out, and he died in a debtors' prison in 1834.

It is said that now, once a year and on his birthday, his ghost appears and jumps from the top of the building.

The old inn sign is fascinating, so much so that we decided to recreate it and reinstate it. It shows Mad Jack, mounted on his horse holding a tankard of ale, with a mermaid appearing from its froth.



In December 1932 Lord and Lady Berwick spent Christmas at the Mytton and Mermaid Hotel. Lord Berwick described the heating, lighting and water supply being 'deficient'. Attingham Hall was occupied for part of WWII, so Lord and Lady Berwick again took rooms at the Mytton and Mermaid Hotel, visiting Attingham during the daytime.



Lord and Lady Berwick on the steps of Attingham Hall, early c.1930

In 1947 Thomas, 8th Lord Berwick died and his wife, Teresa, continued to live at Attingham until her death in 1972. Lord Berwick had gifted Attingham to the National Trust upon his death but The Mytton and Mermaid Hotel was sold by Lord Berwick's executors in April 1951 to Mitchells and Butlers Ltd, a large operator of restaurants, pubs and bars.

After years of being run as either a pub, restaurant or wedding venue, we, Brunning and Price came along, unable to resist its beauty, history and position on the River Severn overlooking St Eata's church, Atcham Bridge and the entrance to Attingham Hall.



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Huge thanks to the Attingham research volunteers and staff who helped enlighten us to the history of our beautiful building and the surrounding area.