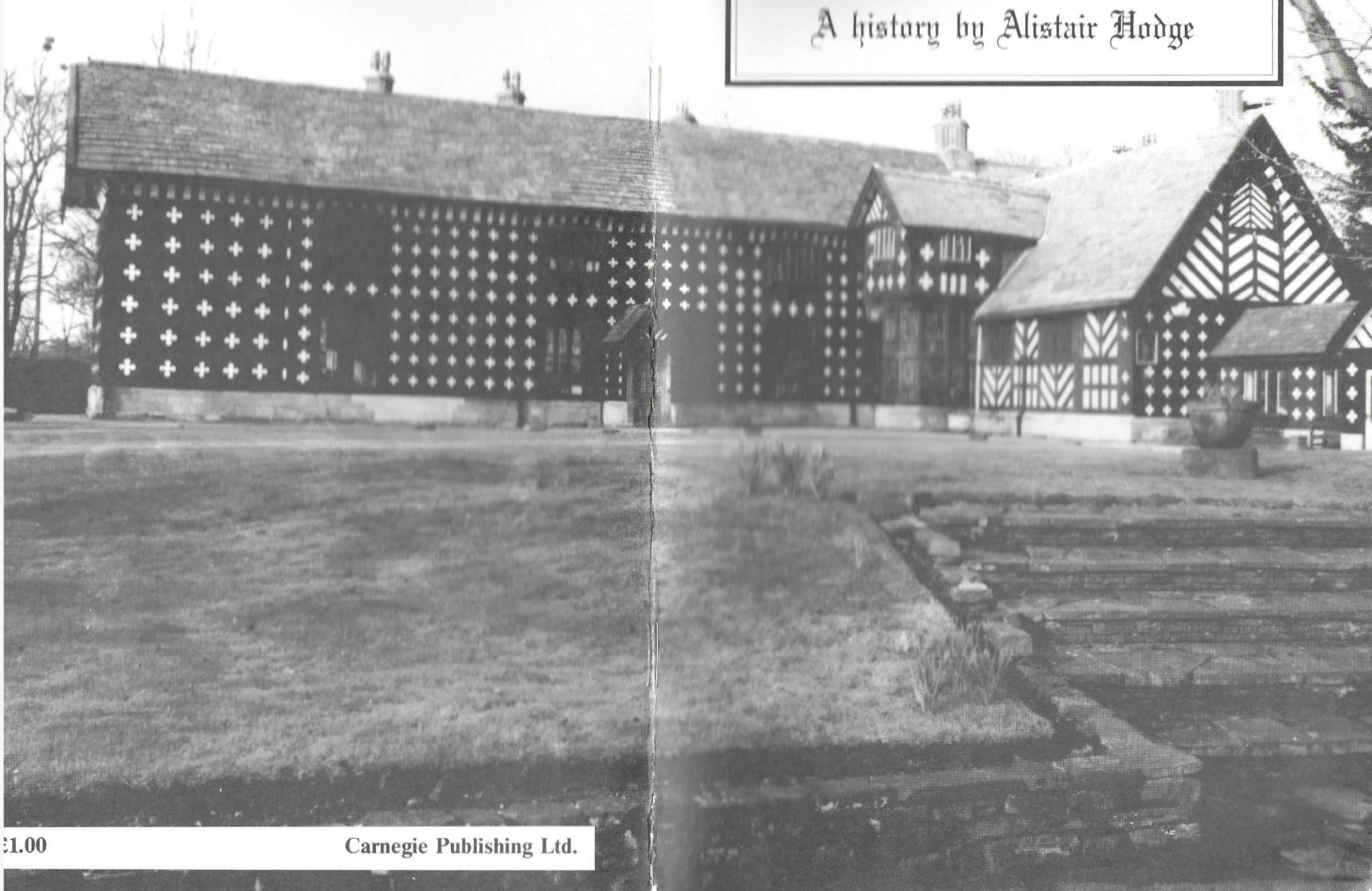


Samlesbury Hall

A history by Alistair Hodge

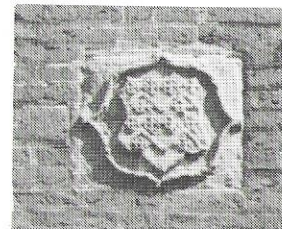


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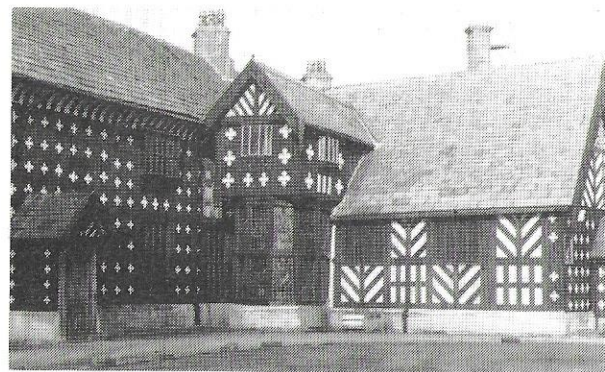
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A History



by Alistair Hodge



Carnegie Publishing Ltd., 1990

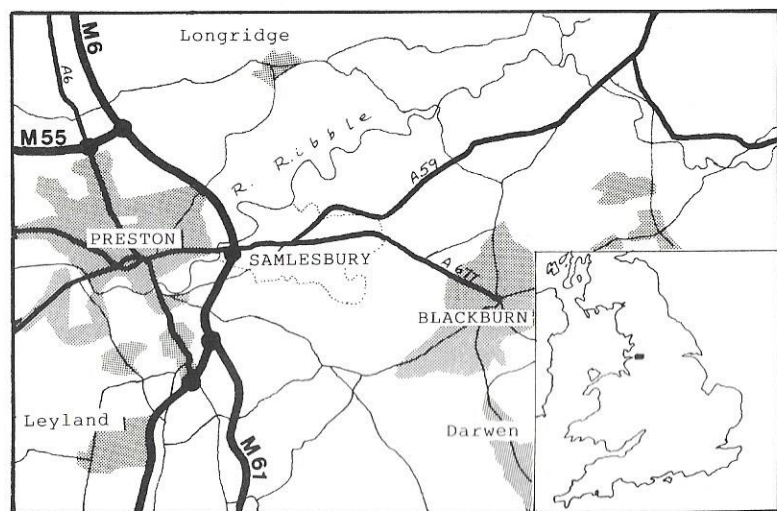
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Introduction

SAMLESBURY is a small, mainly rural township in central Lancashire, on the south bank of the River Ribble between Blackburn and Preston. There is not really a village of Samlesbury, but there is a fine manor house, a delightful little church and many other attractions for the local historian.

This book is an edited version of one first published in 1985. In the main it concentrates on the history of Samlesbury Hall, but it does attempt to set that important building within its wider context.

I would like to thank the trustees of Samlesbury Hall for their continued interest in and support for this booklet; particular thanks go to Mr Brown for his help and kind permission to reproduce some of Robert Eaton's illustrations which are now in his possession; to the many farmers who allowed me to tramp their fields in search of old boundaries and an elusive manorial deer park. I would also like to thank the staffs of the Lancashire Record Office and the Harris Reference Library in Preston.



Map of part of central Lancashire, showing the location of Samlesbury. The dotted line indicates the township boundary.

In the dim and distant past . . .

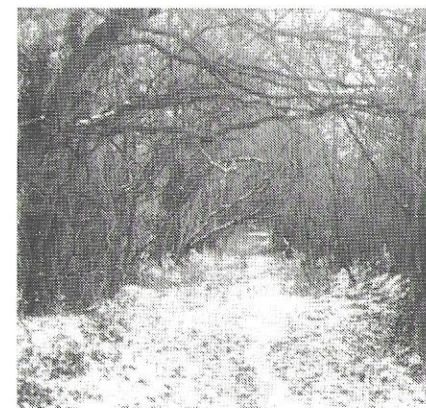
DIM, distant and very murky — quite an accurate way to describe the early history of Samlesbury, indeed of Lancashire as a whole. For, although archaeology strongly suggests that people were living in this area thousands of years ago, the first direct, written reference to Samlesbury comes only in 1190, when the manorial lord is named as one Gospatric, son of Swain. We are told that he had some fourteen 'bovates' of land — around 250-280 acres — in 1196 and that he also held land on the other side of the Ribble.

Before Gospatric, we know very little. The Romans were at Ribchester and at nearby Walton-le-Dale, and probably knew of the fertile arable land near to the river just upstream. We also know that the Vikings had an important trade route across the Pennines following the Ribble/Aire gap to link their settlements at Dublin and York — as evidenced by the discovery of the Cuerdale Hoard just downstream from Samlesbury — and they, too, must have been well acquainted with Samlesbury.

Unfortunately, however, very little archaeological work has yet been undertaken in the Ribble Valley — apart from on the obvious Roman site at Ribchester, and at Portfield near Whalley — and we can say little other than we think that the area has been inhabited for thousands of years but that we cannot really say

for sure.

One clue is often provided by the placename itself. Here, too, we are in some difficulty, for the name has been interpreted, variously, as being derived from the Old English word 'sceamol' meaning a bench or ledge (referring to the slightly raised plateau around the church); from some aesthetically inclined Roman referring to the area's beauty in the epithet 'Belisi-mas-bury'; even from 'Salmon-bury', taken to indicate an early appreciation of the Ribble fishing. The first explanation is the most likely, and probably can be taken to indicate that — as we suspected — there was a settlement of some kind near to the river, before the Norman Conquest.



This peaceful, snow-covered track through the Samlesbury woodland shows little of its former grandeur as the main road from Samlesbury Hall to the parish church by the river.

The medieval manor of Samlesbury

THERE is no trace whatever of the first manorial hall at Samlesbury. It seems likely that Gospatric and his immediate successors lived in a manor house somewhere close to the River Ribble, and this may well have been near Samlesbury Chapel which was first endowed in the twelfth century. In the 1930s Eaton suggested a site near the wide loop of the river to the north west of the manor (marked 'b' on map opposite) where, he says, there 'are ancient stone foundations'. There is no trace of these foundations today, and the intensive farming of the district makes it unlikely that any remains have survived. The good quality of the land is significant, however, as it probably would have been the first choice for a new manor house in the district (this was certainly the case at many of the other manor houses of the Ribble Valley which were also constructed close to the river).

Gospatric had four sons and a daughter, and was succeeded by his son, Roger, shortly before 1212. Roger was followed in turn by his son, William. William and his wife, Avina, did not have a male heir, and so after their deaths the estate was split up between their three daughters — and, of course, their husbands. William and Avina's eldest daughter, Margaret, died childless and so her portion of the estate was divided between the other two daughters — Cecily and Elizabeth —

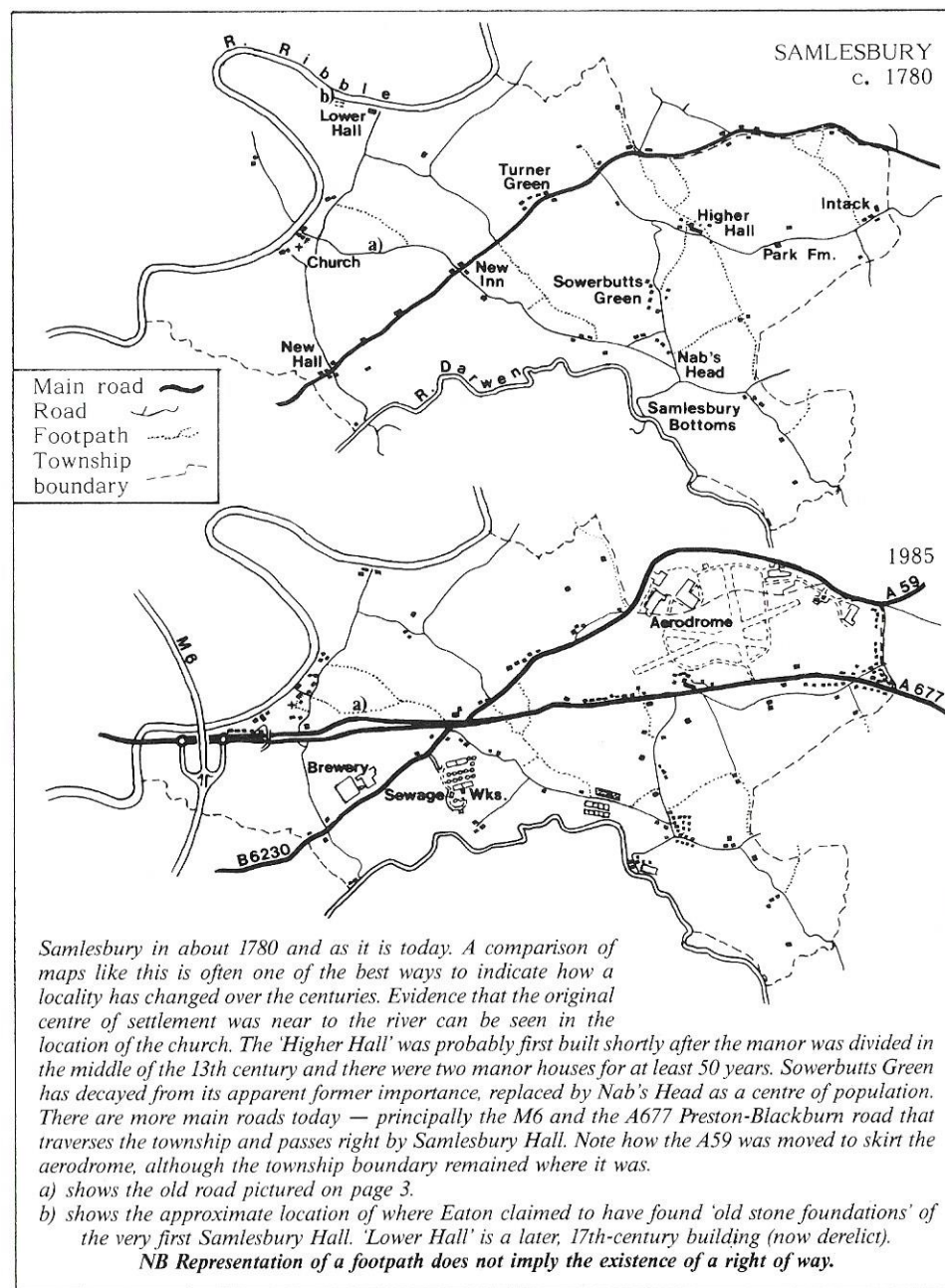
but only after a protracted legal dispute which lasted twenty years. Shortly before 1259 Cecily married one John Deuyas, whilst Elizabeth married the influential Robert de Holland.

The traditional story goes something like this. Deuyas and his wife were the only ones who lived in Samlesbury. They occupied the original hall near the river until, in 1322, Robert Bruce raided Lancashire, 'burned the old stone hall', and made off with several items from his estates and the chapel. This raid induced Deuyas to seek a more secluded spot in which to re-build his home — choosing, therefore, the present site of Samlesbury Hall.

We now know, however, that the other lord of the manor, Robert de Holland, also had a house in Samlesbury. He may well not have lived in it himself, since he had many other more important lands in and around Lancashire, but he certainly did have a house, agricultural equipment and armaments in the township, as shown by two crucial documents.

The first is a list of items taken from Holland's estates in Samlesbury by one of the deputy sheriffs, Robert de Leybourn, under pretence of a royal warrant:

56 lances worth 14s., 26 pole-axes worth 6s. 6d., 6 shields and 3 basinet [a small, light steel head-piece, closed in front with a visor] worth 13s. 6d., 6



old leather sacks, 9 belts with buckles worth 6d., 2 white horse hides worth 12d., 4 old bridles, 1 old rope worth 2d., 3 pairs of ploughs with irons worth 18d., 2 harrows with iron fittings worth 20d., 1 linen cloth worth 6d., 2 waggon-worth 12d., 2 quarters of wheat worth 2 marks [a mark was equivalent to 13s. 4d.], 2 quarters, 5 bushels of barley worth 12s. 6d., and 35 quarters of oats worth 106s. 6d.

Holland's estates, including his half of Samlesbury, were confiscated to the Crown for his part in the Earl of Lancaster's rebellion against King Edward II, and the second document is a list of the items taken by Bruce's men in 1322 from these lands in the township:

goods and chattels of the king in the manor of Samlesbury, which was Robert de Holande's, and by his forfeiture came to the king's hand, were taken by the Scots and carried away towards Scotland, and wholly dispersed by the sudden coming of the said Scots and not by the negligence of Willian de Holdene then keeper of the manor, viz:

2 wains	.....	4 shillings
18 oxen	.....	13s. 4d. each
55 aketones [padded jerkins]	.....	£11
100 lances	.....	20 shillings
30 polhaches [pole-axes?]	.....	10 shillings
4 poor saddles for rouncneys [horses]	.....	4s.
4 reins for rouncneys	.....	12d.
4 targes [shields]	.....	4d.
2 vestments for the chapel	.....	12 shillings
1 chalice	.....	10 shillings
1 missal	.....	6s. 8d.
1 psalter	.....	2 shillings
7 brassen pots	.....	53s. 4d.
1 bowl	.....	18d.
1 laver	.....	12d.
1 pan	.....	12d.
1 coverlet for a bed	.....	2 shillings
3 cloths for covering beds	.....	3 shillings
2 sheets	.....	20 shillings

It is quite clear from these documents that Robert de Holland had a manor house — or at least a large farmstead complete with arsenal — and that it was located near the river and chapel in Samlesbury. We also know that Nicholas Deuyas had most of his lands at the other end of the manor and it seems clear that the manorial split in the middle of the twelfth century was quite a major matter — with two lords, the estates halved, and with two manor houses.

Nicholas Deuyas did not move his hall to the seclusion of the woodland away from the river — it was there already.

Samlesbury was a prosperous area and seems to have been quite capable of supporting two manorial establishments, albeit on a fairly modest scale. The soils are fertile if properly drained and evidence from the 16th century shows that extensive arable farming took place all the way up the Ribble Valley.

In a tax of 1332, Samlesbury was taxed at the third highest rate in the extensive Blackburn Hundred and had the second highest number of people (after Walton-le-Dale) liable to pay the tax. Its proximity to the large market at Preston must have been significant, and later the Southworths were always prominent out-burgesses of the borough. There was a ferry not far from the church, where an 18th-century boathouse still exists, although the ferry was discontinued in 1824 when the new Preston-Blackburn turnpike and bridge were built (this is the road that passes right by one corner of Samlesbury Hall and which ended the relative isolation of its location).

The Southworths of Samlesbury

THE fortunes of the Southworth family became firmly linked with the story of Samlesbury from the date at which Alice Deuyas married Gilbert de Southworth. Gilbert was from a well-established south-Lancashire family and was high sheriff of the county at the time of his wedding in the 1320s. Representatives of the family fought in the Agincourt campaign and at the siege of Harfleur, as well as against the traditional enemy north of the border.

Sir Thomas Southworth inherited the family lands in Samlesbury in 1517 when his father, John, died. He served in Scotland and was knighted for his efforts in 1523, but he is best remembered for his re-building of large parts of Samlesbury Hall.

When Sir Thomas died in 1546 all the components of the hall which can be seen today were in existence, and, although subsequent restorations have left little of the original fabric untouched, Sir Thomas's architectural legacy can still clearly be seen.

Sir Thomas Southworth had the south range built in timber but he faced its southern side in brick. This, the first recorded use of brick for a manor house in Lancashire, can still be seen

and enjoyed today. The western end was extended in 1862. The brick facing was apparently added either at the same time as the range itself was built, or only slightly later; in reality, the brick façade simply encases the wooden frame, which was left exposed on the inner, courtyard side of the range.

The brick wall might have been needed to help support the bulky square-headed windows on that side. One of these, at the eastern end, lights a room that used to be the domestic chapel and which is said to have been taken from the ruins of Whalley Abbey when it was closed down by Henry VIII. This is quite possible, especially since Sir Thomas himself acted as a royal commis-



Sketch of Samlesbury Hall in about 1850, when it was an inn. The three original chimneys, together with a representation of the patterning on the brick, can clearly be seen. Soon, the range was extended at the left, and another chimney added.

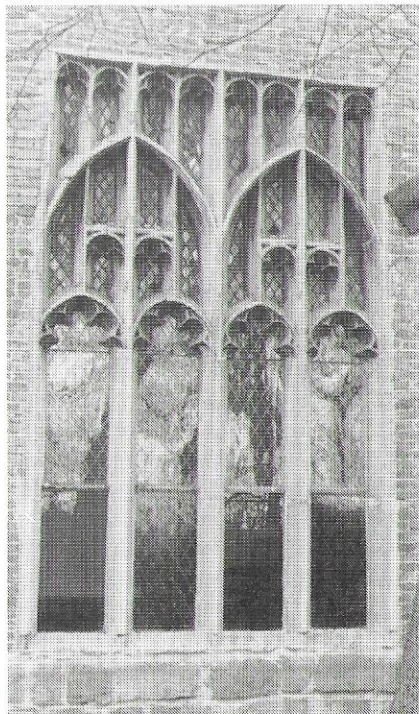


On the courtyard side of the south range, the opportunity was taken to carve many wooden reliefs. Strange animals and geometric designs are interspersed between the white quatre-foils. This one is below the window near the bay window and is supposed to depict Sir Thomas Southworth, who re-built this part of the hall.

sioner for the dissolution and may even have measured up the window on an official visit to the abbey before it closed.

Certainly, brick was just beginning to become fashionable at that time and there are three (four since 1862) splendid chimneys on that side.

The south range of the hall is not the oldest — that distinction is held by the Great Hall, a magnificent timber room with massive wooden framing that is substantially the same as when it was built in the fifteenth century. Sir Thomas was probably responsible for the then major household improvement of the addition of the wide Tudor fireplace and the stone wall on the west of the Great Hall — no longer would the smoke have had to find its way out through the thatch or a hole in the roof. Perhaps at the same time, he built the bay window, together



The 'Whalley Abbey' window, located at the eastern end of the south range and lighting the domestic chapel. The dissolution of the monastery and the re-building of this part of the hall coincided most conveniently for Sir Thomas!

with its small room above.

The exact layout of the interior of the Hall is unknown at this time. Generally, the locations of the rooms today seem to follow more or less their original pattern. The inside of the Great Hall has been altered at both ends, but it has always been the single open room that we see today. The south range has always consisted of two storeys except at its eastern end where the chapel extended up through both floors. This

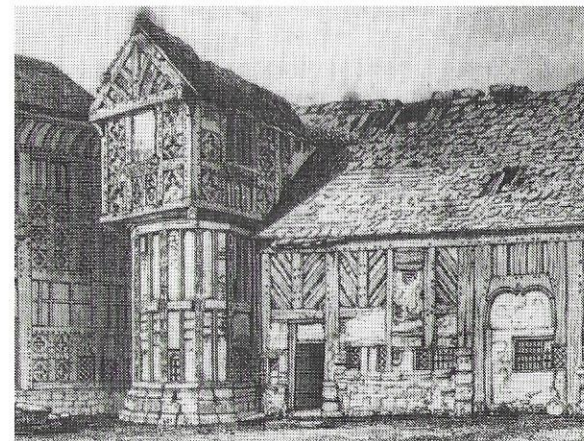
small chapel was overlooked by a first-floor gallery which would have been used by the Southworths during divine service.

One very important document describing the contents of Samlesbury Hall dates from 1623; it is a domestic inventory of the hall and its outbuildings which was appended to the will of Thomas Southworth Esquire.

It begins with a detailed and most impressive list of the agricultural equipment and livestock owned by the estate. Listed are ploughs, carts, 3

harrows and a wide range of different tools. The estate owned two oxen, fourteen head of cattle, twelve horses, some pigs and some sheep. This list may just have included the animals found actually at the hall itself by the surveyors, and may not include those animals located elsewhere on the estate. The farm buildings included two stables, one of which had above it living accommodation, apparently for a fairly important servant or used as a guestroom since it contained a feather bed and other furniture to the value of 44 shillings. There were also two barns, workhouses, an 'oxen-house' and a brewhouse.

The location of the other buildings which made up the Samlesbury Hall complex can only be guessed at. It is possible that these buildings formed



A fascinating sketch of the Great Hall (right) with its bay window as it looked in 1814. This sketch is invaluable because it shows the structure of the building as it actually appeared at that date, with a blocked-in doorway to the hall and the fabric in very poor condition. The bay window dates from the 16th century and was used not only for light but in order to display the large amount of pewter and plate that was kept in the hall.

part of a north range corresponding to the south one which still exists. This may well be the case. Samlesbury Hall was moated and it would be logical to include most of the important buildings within it. There is no trace of any such north range today, however, and archaeology may be the only way of confirming its former existence.

The inventory then moves on to catalogue the wide range of goods found in the main buildings. The list of items includes 32 beds, ranging from feather beds complete with their luxurious coverings and embroidered valances to a 'truckle bed' in the 'inner chamber'.

From a list drawn up in 1592 we know that there were 36 people living in the hall and its associated

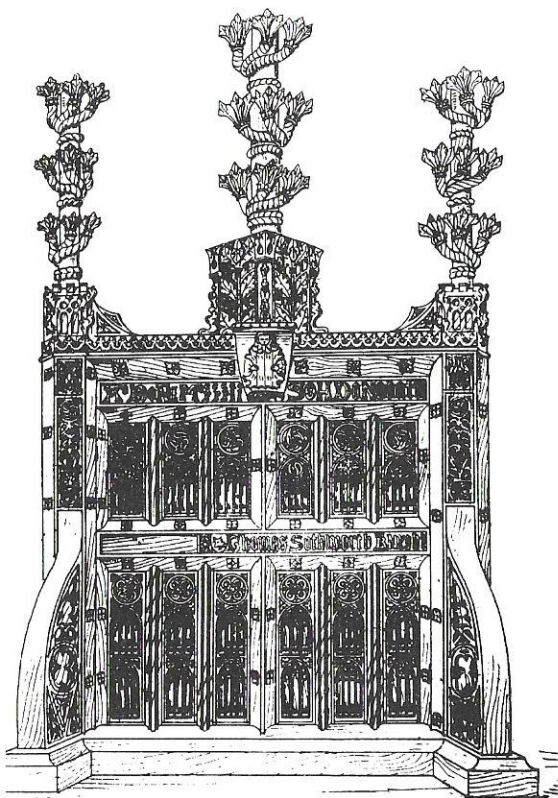
buildings: 22 were labourers; 3 were described as being 'spinsters'; there were 2 men described as 'servingsmen', there was a butler, a keeper of the park, a cook and a porter, as well as the Southworth family itself. There was quite a community at the hall.

Several rooms are mentioned by name, but sadly it is rarely possible to work out the exact location of these rooms. In 'the old chamber', there was a large bedchamber which contained six beds, a large amount of bed linen and other furniture. The

next room referred to in the survey was described as the 'inner chamber', a smaller room with only two beds. It would appear that the room described as 'the entry' could well refer to the entrance of the main hall building itself, and this could even be the same entrance hall that is in use today. There then follows a reference to 'new buildings' and an adjacent chamber, but these rooms only appear to be small storerooms.

The Great Hall was simply 'the hale', and it is treated near the end of the document, along with its service rooms — the kitchen, larder etc., which we know were located behind the southern end of the Great Hall. By process of elimination, it is reasonable to suppose that the domestic rooms mentioned in the middle of the document refer to the only other part of the house that we know existed at this time — the south range. These rooms included the 'mistress's closet', the nursery and an adjacent chamber, a servant's chamber, the 'chapel chamber', 'my lord's chamber', a 'dining chamber', another bed chamber, the 'staire head chamber' and 'the dairy chamber'.

The 'chapel chamber' presumably has to be next to the chapel, which we know was in the southern range of the hall. This room may, in



The imposing old passage screen that used to stand in the Great Hall, from a sketch made about the year 1833.

fact, refer to the first-floor gallery which overlooked the chapel. The survey shows that it must have been a fairly large room since it contained at least five beds as well as other furniture. The 'staire head chamber' was smaller, with only one bed, and could be any one of several rooms in the hall. The 'dairy chamber' was obviously near the dairy section of the complex.

There was a 'dining chamber' listed amongst the main domestic apartments, and, since it was written directly after 'my lord's chamber', it is possible that this was a small, private dining room for the Southworth family. The dining chamber's contents included one long table, two cupboards, two chairs, three cushions and three carpets. Apparently, however, it contained no plate or pewter, all of which was still kept in the Great Hall. It seems likely that this dining chamber was just used by the Southworths as their own private dining room in preference to the large and draughty Great Hall.

In the Great Hall itself, there were:

Item, in the hale: 2 tables, 1 rugge and a form [a backless seat]. . . 26s. 4d.

Item, one settle 3s. 4d.

Item, 126 pieces of pewter beinge in weight 117 pounds at eight pence the pound £3 18s.

Item, pott brasse; 6 peeces, in weight 117 pounds 39s.

Item, 12 peeces of panne brasse and candlesticke brasse, in weight 22 pounds 16s. 8d.

This list mentions a substantial amount of pewter and brass, together with some furniture. It is likely that some of this plate would have been on display in the bay window recess,

especially since there was no mention of a cupboard in the room. This last point could have been due to the inventory omitting some of the semi-permanent fixtures and fittings. We know, for example, that there was a splendid passage screen which used to be placed at the northern end of the Great Hall. This moveable screen was built in 1532, but was dismantled in the early-nineteenth century. A sketch of the screen was drawn shortly before it was dismantled, and parts were used to create the somewhat anomolous 'minstrels' gallery' above the southern end of the Great Hall.

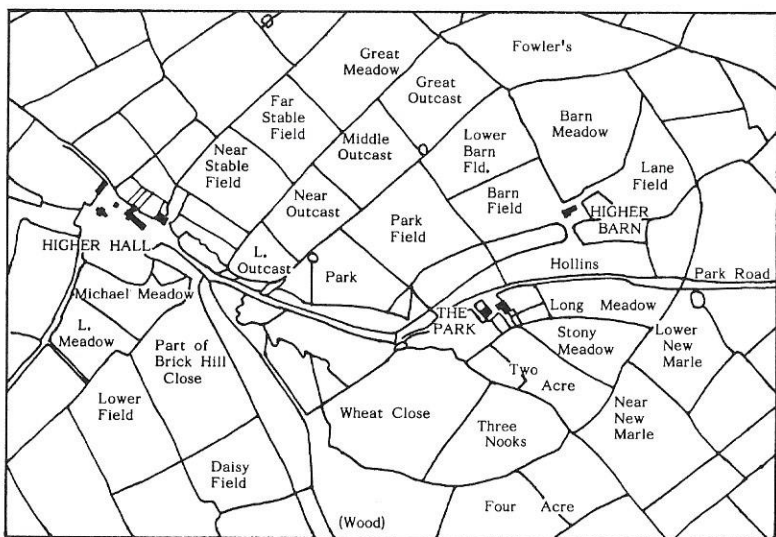
It was at this southern end of the hall that the main table would have been located, elevated on a dias which was still to be seen as late as 1830. The northern section of the hall has been shortened by about half a bay, and there have been other modifications to the section of the hall beneath the minstrel's gallery at the opposite end of the hall. The overall effect of these changes has been to reduce the size of the hall by 10-12 feet from the room that was featured in the 1623 inventory.

The 1623 inventory has given us a fascinating insight into the operation of Samlesbury Hall as a viable economic concern and to what life must have been like for its residents. It gives us a picture of a relatively self-sufficient community which provided for most of its own needs. There were workshops, a dairy and a bakery, as well as its own brewhouse, and all had their own specialized equipment and, no doubt, trained and experienced servants.

The inventory also lists four

muskets and related equipment, a far cry from the survey of 1324, when Samlesbury Hall had its own substantial arsenal. Most of these guns would have been used for hunting. There was a deer park at Samlesbury, extending just to the east of the hall. There has been some controversy over the exact location of this, but contemporary plans indicate clearly

that the park was in this area. Nearby is Park Farm and Park Lane runs past fields by the name of 'Park' and 'Park Field' on its way eastward to rejoin the main road near Intack. Interestingly, there is now a fast-food restaurant right in the middle of where the deer park was — perhaps, instead of roast chicken, they should be serving venison burgers!



Eighteenth-century fields around Samlesbury Hall, from a map held in Lancashire Record Office. The semi-circular line of field boundaries around Park Farm and Park Lane can be seen clearly. This might just be the only surviving trace of the former deer park boundary. None of this boundary is very high, and would certainly not provide a significant obstacle to a lame sheep, never mind a deer, but it could well have been eroded over time and when it was in use it was probably in any case surmounted by a pale fence or hedge to keep the deer within the bounds of the park.

Sir John Southworth

SIR John Southworth of Samlesbury is famous. He was a quiet, peaceable man apparently beloved of his home and estate. But there was one thing that marked him out for official attention and persecution — his religion. Like many of his neighbours at the time of the Reformation, he saw little attraction in the new religion and decided, quite simply, that he would prefer to abide by the faith in which he was brought up.

Sir John's career in public service started well enough. He was knighted in Scotland and was high sheriff of Lancashire in 1561; during his term of office, however, the first sign of impending trouble came when he was rebuked and threatened with a fine of £40 for failing to arrest fellow Catholics in the county.

Soon, the government was urging the bishops to prosecute local Catholics and, although the Lancashire authorities were initially very lax in their obedience to the new strictures, Sir John was summoned to London and interviewed by no less a person than the Archbishop of Canterbury who found that Sir John

refused to submit himself . . . [to Protestantism]; his conscience cannot serve him in most points of that order . . . He seemeth to desire that he may be suffered to live according to his conscience.

The Archbishop could do no good, although the authorities were extremely willing to try to persuade

rather than to coerce. Sir John was next taken to the Bishop of London in the hope that the good bishop's company and conversation might bring him to relent. Bishop Grindal reported, however,

that I can do no good with Sir John Southworth for altering his opinion in religion . . . the man is altogether unlearned, carried with a blind zeal without knowledge. His principal grounds are, 'he will follow the faith of his fathers . . . [and] he will die in the faith wherein he was baptized &c.'

The government gave up for a while and, although he was again reported to the government in 1576, Sir John seems to have been left in relative peace until 1581, when fears of Spanish invasion and of Catholics at home helping the foreign foe led Parliament to pass a law making it treason simply to acknowledge the Pope's authority in England. Sir John Southworth was one of the first Lancashire Catholics to be caught in the net of suspicion.

He was imprisoned in Manchester, released, and re-imprisoned. A professional London informer, one Hugh Cuffe, gave evidence against Southworth to the effect that he had not attended Protestant services, and Sir John was eventually fined the huge sum of £180 (Cuffe got one third of this), with every prospect of further fines if he did not relent.

Periods of imprisonment followed and in 1584 he was ordered to live in

London because he was 'greatly allied and friended' in Lancashire — his presence in Lancashire was considered too dangerous.

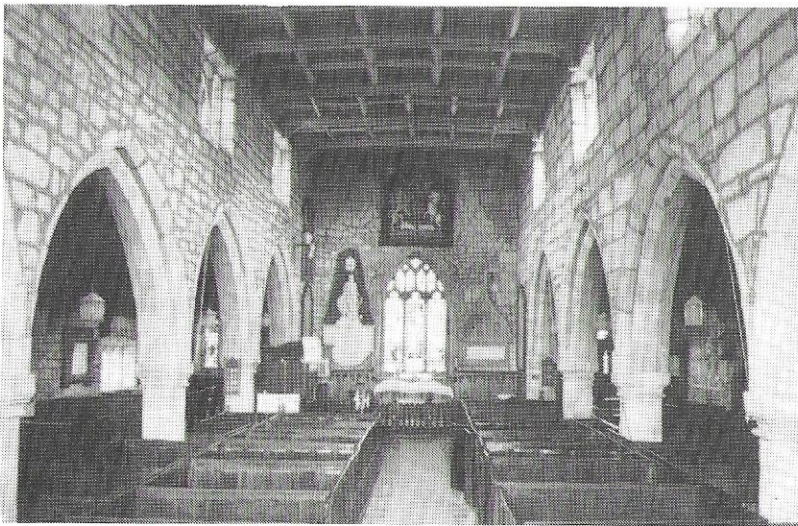
The financial burden was becoming crippling — by 1587, he owed a staggering £1,060, an impossibly large sum. A commission was appointed to seize his lands but, 'as Sir John] himself affyrmeth, all his lands and leases are alreadye leased for her Majestie'. There was nothing left to seize.

In the end it was bankruptcy that forced Sir John to do the unthinkable and attend the parish church, in all probability St Leonard-the-Less in Samlesbury itself. His arrears of tithes were remitted and he was able at last to look forward to a quiet old age; he was 64.

Within five months, however,

Samlesbury Hall was raided by the authorities and various 'suspicious' items of clothing were found, including a (very suspicious) 'gown without a pocket'. More importantly, several Catholic books were found, including important new works from the Continent. The dawn raid on Samlesbury Hall also brought to light a 'secret vawlte over the dyninge chamber', usually associated with the hiding hole in the roof near the bay window which can still be seen in the hall today.

Sir John was hounded for his religious beliefs practically until the end of his life. His occasional conformity, and the laxness of the Lancashire authorities, however, meant that when he died in 1595 he was able to hand over his estates more or less intact to his son.



The interior of the parish church of Samlesbury, with the charming name of St. Leonard-the-Less. Parts of the building date from the 14th, but much of what we see here dates from the 16th century. Note the box pews, two-deck pulpit and the communion rail.

The later history of the hall

SAMLESBURY Hall remained in the Southworth family until 1679. One of Sir John Southworth's sons, Christopher, studied to become a Catholic priest and made a brief appearance in the history of the area by becoming involved dubiously in the strange affair of the Samlesbury witches tried at Lancaster assizes in 1612.

Samlesbury Hall, of course, also comes complete with ghost. The tale of the White Lady is familiar enough — how a Catholic lady fell in love with a Protestant gentleman; how the couple decided to brave the inevitable consequences and elope; how the lady's brother jumped out and killed the lover; and how the grief-stricken lady, depending on the version you prefer, either retreated to a French nunnery or committed suicide. Since then her inconsolable spirit has made itself visible to many a witness, including army officers, bus drivers and a greengrocer — August, the evident anniversary of the tragedy apparently being her most active season.

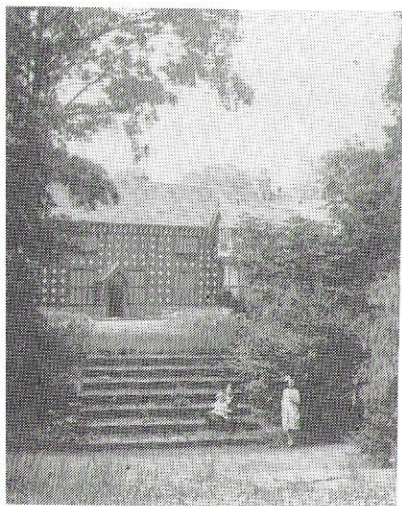
Witches, ghosts . . . and martyrs — Samlesbury has it all. The martyr is Saint John Southworth. Although his early history and pedigree are obscure, he may well have been a nephew of the famous Catholic Sir John Southworth. He studied at the Catholic college at Douai, the proving ground for many an English Catholic, and became a priest there

in 1617. He was arrested and condemned to death in 1627. After many reprieves and just as many re-arrests for preaching Catholicism, he was eventually executed at Tyburn in June 1654.

Meanwhile back in Samlesbury the family's fortunes were waning. Several heads of the family died young. Another John Southworth was lord in 1642 when the civil wars broke out, but he does not appear to have taken any part in the fighting. Nevertheless, the estates were seized by the parliamentarians, presumably because of the Catholicism of the family.

Financial worries dogged the family. John Southworth had to mortgage the hall in 1666 to help pay the family's debts and, shortly after his death in 1676, his son Edward had to sell up and leave.

Any domestic building which is four or five hundred years old is bound to have seen many changes and many ups and downs. Since 1679 there have only been a few years during which the hall has had a resident owner. By the beginning of the last century, the fabric of the hall was decayed and in 1824 the new road was built right up against one corner of the south range of the hall, evidently in order to maintain the straightness of the turnpike's line: 'indeed, the road cuts across the spacious moat which formerly surrounded this venerable seat of the



the moat steps at the beginning of this century. Part of the driveway used today actually passes along the line of the original moat.

outhworths, and almost touches the corner of the building'.

It was probably this proximity to the road that led the hall to be converted into an inn, the Bradyll Arms; it was at this time that the building underwent its first serious bout of 'restoration'. This 1835 work apparently saved the building from ruin, but at a high cost to much of its ancient detail.

For a time part of the hall became girls' boarding school, while in 1851 the census listed two resident families, the Crooks who farmed 70 acres and the Earnshaws who combined farming and textile work.

Shortly afterwards, the hall was bought by Joseph Harrison, who spent large sums on restoring the fabric. He extended the main south wing at its western end, while 'in the

internal decorative work [he] had the services of Mr Shaw F.S.A., author of *The Decorative Arts of the Middle Ages*, and many parts of the hall today are the product of their work together.

Uncertainty continued to dog the life of the hall, however, and at one stage it was even rumoured that the whole building would be dismantled and exported to America.

The hall had many admirers, however, and a vigorous campaign was launched by a number of local people to buy and preserve it. Eventually a trust was established, the money was raised, and the hall was saved. It has since become one of the jewels of Lancashire and one of the most important tourist sites in central Lancashire. At last its future seems to be secure.

THE END