

# LOST LOCAL FERRIES

## HAMPSTALL FERRY

Two miles below Redstone was the crossing at Hampstall. It was once the direct way from the Abberley Pass, by way of the Burf, to Hartlebury and Dudley, and much used by pack horses and drovers. It was a dangerous crossing, and used to have a notice above the landing stage with the words, 'Passengers cross here at their own risk'. Indeed, the dangers of: this crossing were seen on August 4th, 1919, a Bank Holiday Monday, when the ferry with 17 people aboard, capsized, and nine people, including two or three children, were drowned. At the inquest, it was found that the ferry-boat which should have carried a maximum of ten had seventeen on board, and the minimum freeboard permitted of 12 inches was, on this occasion, no more than two inches. It was stated that some disturbance, either aboard, or the wash of a passing steamer caused water to enter over the side.

## SHRAWLEY FERRY

The Ferry here served 'Great Shrawley', for there were once two hamlets; one, the smaller, clustered round the church and the larger and original one, described as 'Great Shrawley' which has now disappeared. It stood at the ford crossing the Severn beneath the cliff known as Oliver's Mount, which in medieval times had a castle guarding the ford, like the one at Holt, but which was destroyed during the Wars of the Roses, or earlier. Shrawley, until Victorian times, was very cut off from the rest of the county, and its main access was by river. At the crossing was the Wyre Inn, or Weir Inn (possibly so called because of the nearness of Shrawley Fish Weir). The inn was the principal tavern of Shrawley, with a fine bowling green and a great tree at its door. A ferry worked here and was much used by Ombersley men who crossed for a social evening, for the music and dancing at the inn were renowned. It was here that the dances, 'Old Severn' and 'New Severn', were collected and used by Julius Harrison in his Severn Suite.

The ford must have been very shallow at times, for it is recorded that Ombersley men often did not wait for the ferry, but walked across the Severn with the greatest of ease. The inn and ferry have long since gone. The inn had been built against the cliff and its cellar was a cave. The cave is there and the platform, on which the house stood, is very noticeable, still with a stone wall surrounding what was once an attractive pleasure garden.

## LENCHFORD FERRY

This ferry was in use in the 1930s but not for the general public, being worked by the landlord of the Lenchford Inn for the convenience of his customers. It had long been a private affair, the Lenchford wharfing being used by the

Foleys and the Dudleys in the 18th and 19th centuries as the nearest point on the river to Witley Court. Coal for the Court was brought from their collieries at Himley by barge to Lenchford, and from there by horse and cart. In the 19th century, as much as 2,000 tons was stored at a time, and the procession of coal-laden carts from Lenchford to Great Willey lasted several weeks at a time.

## HOLT FERRY

Noake in his 'Guide to Worcestershire', published in 1868, says, '.....' there had been from time immemorial a ferry over the river at that point (Holt Fleet), till in 1826, Lord Foley laid the foundation stone of the present handsome bridge, which was opened in 1828.'

The old ferry lane on the east bank still runs to the river immediately north of the bridge and at the river's edge stands the Ferry House, which was large enough to accommodate travellers who were unable to cross when the river was too dangerous. On the west bank stood the old hostelry called the 'Holt Fleet Inn', which for centuries had provided shelter and good fare for travellers on that side. It was certainly in existence in 1607. When Holt Bridge was opened and the ferry ceased, the Ferry House became a private residence but the Holt Fleet Inn entered a new lease of life for, throughout the 19th century, until the 1930s, the old Georgian hostelry and its tea gardens became the most popular resort on the Severn.



Thomas Telford's fine bridge was built under a Private Act of Parliament. There were two toll houses, one on each side of the river, and the one on the east bank remains, with a little cobbled path in front, though in 1980, it was altered drastically. Tolls ceased in 1900. It was the last of the toll bridges in Worcestershire.