

The DRAPER family of Warmington

The DRAPERS were an ancient family in the parish. Nine members of the family left wills that survive, dating between 1539 and 1618. No doubt they were all related, but relationships are difficult to establish, possibly because the family had already been in the parish for some generations

The senior branch of the family held land on a freehold tenancy in the sixteenth century, one of only two families privileged to do so, at a time when most tenants held by the inferior, and more expensive, copyhold tenure. Thomas DRAPER had the responsibility of collecting the tenants' rents in the year 1538/39, very shortly after the dissolution of the smaller religious houses. He can be identified as the Thomas DRAPER who died in December 1550, a comparatively wealthy man, as shown by the inventory of his goods.

His (second) wife Joan died just a few days later, also leaving a will. The joint inventory of their goods makes interesting reading. As well as stores of grain, they had a large stock of animals including a flock of 262 sheep. A list of wages due for payment show they had a dozen employees.

In 1572, the copyhold tenants of the manor were given the opportunity of buying the freehold of their estates. A William DRAPER availed himself of the opportunity, buying the freehold of his house, together with a cottage and three yardlands in the open fields for £60, plus a very small annual rental. This property was sold in 1617 by Richard DRAPER, presumably his heir, to William CLARIDGE, a native of Tysoe. This was to form the nucleus of the Claridge estate, later known as Grove Farm.

The senior branch of the DRAPER family moved to Bruern Grange in Oxfordshire. The will of John DRAPER, gentleman, of Bruern Grange was proved in 1672. John had a daughter Mary, the first wife of the Reverend Richard CLARIDGE, eldest son of William CLARIDGE of Grove Farm. Mary died in 1687 and was buried in Warmington church. The details of her memorial tablet are recorded in Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (2nd ed.), although the tablet itself has now vanished. Her husband was rector of Peopleton in Worcestershire at the time of her death, although he later became an influential Quaker.

Another branch of the DRAPER family was headed by Joseph DRAPER, who sold his Warmington farm in parcels between the 1660s and 1685. In 1660 he sold Dovehouse Close, although he retained ownership of the actual dovecote for a further twenty five years.

The ownership of a dovecote was usually a manorial prerogative. Possibly the ownership of this one by the DRAPER family was because of their almost unique position as free tenants during the period of monastic lordship of the manor. Recent archaeological investigation in a garden in School Lane, uncovered the base of a medieval structure, and the suggestion is that this is the dovecote. The situation, in Dovehouse Close, agrees with property deeds.

The above mentioned Joseph DRAPER sold the dovecote and his remaining property in 1685. His name was joined in the sale deeds with Elianor his wife and John his son and heir, clerk of Stevington, Bedfordshire. A Bedford Borough Council website relates the sad and unsavoury life story of Reverend John DRAPER and how he was eventually

deprived of his living in 1712, because he had married his dead wife's sister thirty years earlier.

The account also gives details of John's siblings: brother Thomas lived in Banbury, brother Mathew served in the army for fifteen years and lived in Westminster, while sister Margaret had moved to Stevington to look after the babies of John's first marriage and stayed on, marrying a Stevington man, Evans Yarrow. An Ellen Draper was buried in Stevington in 1687, probably the clergyman's mother.

Around the same time, in Warmington, Quarter Session records of 1695 reveal that three villagers, William and Robert DRAPER, labourers, and Katherine DRAPER, spinster, were indicted for a riot and assault upon Gilbert Wharton, the rector. Gilbert Wharton stayed in Warmington for a brief period only but no further details are known of this tantalising story.

In 1716 a Katherine DRAPER was married in Warmington to Samuel THOMPSON of Long Itchington. With that entry in the parish register the DRAPERS' long association with the village appears to end.