

Preamble

Our purpose has been to record the history of our parish during the second millennium. Clungunford is representative of countless other parishes in the Marches of Wales. It was far from the centre of power, although in the middle of the troubled borderland, where lasting peace came only when the Welsh Tudors won the crown of England and promoted the union of the two countries. During the Middle Ages Welsh wool was the envy of Europe and sheep were the produce of Clungunford, where farmland still constitutes the landscape for miles around.

Documentary references to Clungunford in the medieval period are surprisingly frequent and we have set the recorded local events within the wider national canvas, for people of every manor in England had to support their feudal superiors, whose interests often lay far away. Clungunford was not immune from wars and plagues, taxes and laws. With the spread of local record keeping in Tudor times and particularly following the establishment of parish registers, with details of baptisms marriages and funerals and the making of Wills by people throughout the social spectrum, the problem for the historian can sometimes be a glut of information. We have related much of the developing story of Clungunford during the last five hundred years to the houses in the parish and the people who lived in them, while, through the centuries, St Cuthbert's Church has been the focus of the parish, weathering all the storms. Some of the dates need explanation and this has been included in the Notes on the Chapters at the back of the main text¹.

In our research for this book, we have received help from a great many people. More than half our neighbours in the parish of Clungunford have provided information, lent us paintings, engravings and photographs and allowed us access to their houses. Particularly useful have been those who have lived longest in the parish or who occupy the houses we describe. From the mass of information supplied to us, it has been difficult to select what should be included in this book and we regret that so much has had to be omitted. To list the names of every one who deserves our thanks would almost equal an electoral roll. Without their help, this book would not have been written and we wish to record our gratitude to them. Many kind friends from further afield have given us crucial advice and several have generously permitted paintings in their possession to be reproduced. We are most grateful to all of them.

Special mention must be made of certain people who have provided expert professional help of a high calibre. Tony Carr and his superb team at the Shropshire Records and Research Centre have been immensely supportive, as has Sue Hubbard at the Herefordshire Record Office. The British Library, the Public Record Office, the Family Record Centre, the Pierpont Morgan

Library in New York and Pearson Print in Craven Arms were of great assistance. Alex Ramsay took some very fine photographs for the book; Eleanor Harris transcribed and translated manuscripts; Madge Moran gave us the benefit of her expertise on timber framed buildings; John Wheatley, the Architect, who has in his care Clungunford church and many others in the Hereford Diocese, provided detailed guidance about the building of St Cuthbert's; Daniel Miles of the Oxford Dendrochronological Laboratory took samples from the timbers of the church and some of the oldest houses in the parish, so revealing invaluable information about their age.

Above all, we are indebted to our Rector, Barney Bell, and the Chairman of the Clungunford Parish Council, Patrick Ramsay. Both of them have been endlessly patient and helpful throughout the long gestation of this book, providing information and suggestions and reading successive drafts of chapters. Patrick has been instrumental in obtaining through the Parish Council a most generous grant from the Local Heritage Initiative, which is a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency, towards the cost of the production of this book, so that, should any profit result, it can benefit the restoration fund for St Cuthbert's.

Finally, we must make it clear that, despite receiving help from so many quarters, the contents of this book are our own responsibility. In a work of this sort, it is obvious that reliance is placed on what can be gleaned from books and manuscripts of previous centuries and from reminiscences. We have tried to check their accuracy as best we can and we trust we have interpreted correctly the narratives of those who have informed and advised us. Any mistakes and omissions will be our own.