

Shrewsbury – A History

Viroconium

The exact form of the name is uncertain. English antiquaries have preferred Uriconium, foreign scholars Viroconium or Viriconium, and Vriconium has also been suggested. The evidence of our ancient sources is somewhat confused. The MSS of the Itinerary contain all these forms, there being no manuscript distinction between Vriconium and Uriconium. 'Viroconium' is used here.

47AD

Britain is conquered by Emperor Claudius and becomes an island province of the Roman Empire.

Viroconium becomes a Roman town larger even than that at London. A little way to the south of the present excavated site is the village of Wroxeter which, in reality, stands inside the original Roman walls which protected Viroconium.

Viroconium is estimated to have been the fourth largest Roman settlement in Britain with a population of more than 6,000 people at its peak. It was founded in the later 1st century AD and by 130 had grown to more than 70ha and contained baths and a forum dedicated to the emperor Hadrian.

78

Military Western Command is transferred from Viroconium to Chester, leaving the former to become a thriving civilian town and centre for civilian administration.



Viroconium today

410

the Romans decided to abandon Viroconium, a settlement 8 miles south of today's Shrewsbury. Without a garrison, the Roman city was not easy to guard and eventually it was attacked and burned down.

Although in decline, the city continued to be occupied following the Roman withdrawal and (like many places in England) has been suggested to be the original Camelot of Arthurian legend.

Shrewsbury

The original Saxon settlement was named "Scrobbes-byrig". It is thought to have been derived from two Old English words - "scrubb", meaning be scrubland and "burh" which means fortified place.

Thus it is the fortified place in the scrubland, probably referring to the nearby plains which in Saxon times were sparsely populated with alder trees, especially in the boggy regions alongside the River Severn.

Over the years this became corrupted to Shrewsbury, which nowadays is pronounced usually in two different ways: "Shrows-bury" or Shroos-bury". 'Shrewsbury' is used here.

1066

Shrewsbury was styled as a city consisting of four churches and 250 houses. Roger de Montgomery, a relative of William the Conqueror was created first Earl of Shrewsbury.

1074

Montgomery set about building a substantial castle in the neck of the loop on the English side of the River Severn.



Shrewsbury Castle (c. 1800)

1083

on the very ancient site of a wooden Saxon church of St. Peter, possibly a small monastery and recorded here in the Domesday Survey, the priest of St. Peter's, returning from a pilgrimage to Rome, persuaded Roger de Montgomery, the newly appointed Earl of Shrewsbury, to raise the already existing church into a grand abbey.

1094

work was completed on Shrewsbury Abbey. Just outside Shrewsbury which Roger replaced with a stone building dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul and which would be at the heart of this great Benedictine abbey.

1101

Robert de Bellesme fortified Bridgnorth Castle. He was therefore in a strong position when he decided to side with the Duke of Normandy against King Henry I, the duke's younger brother. A year later, the King retaliated by besieging Robert's castles of Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury, removing them from the rebels hands and securing his position as king.

1126

The castle at Shrewsbury was granted by Henry to his second wife Adeliza. The command of the castle was given to Fitz-Alan.



Shrewsbury Castle

1138

Stephen captured the castle at Shrewsbury. Henry (II) would capture back the castle before the end of Stephen's reign.

1212

Llewellyn the Great entered Shrewsbury burning part of the town before retreating.

1227

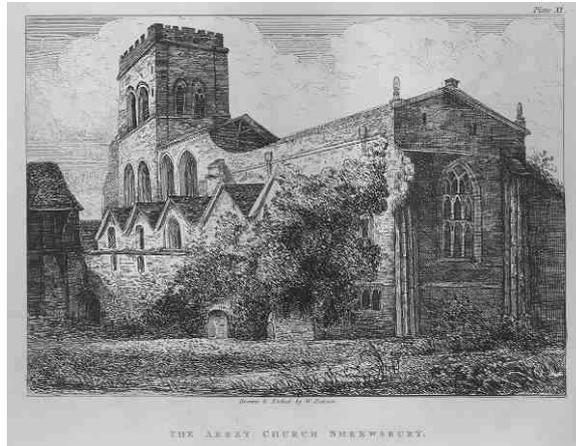
Henry III begun constructing new town walls around Shrewsbury.

1234

once again, the Welsh tried to enter but this time they were foiled by the new town walls.

1283

the first English Parliament in which the Commons had a legal share, took place in Shrewsbury Abbey Chapter House and in 1398 Richard II summoned the Great Parliament in the Abbey.



Shrewsbury Abbey

1403

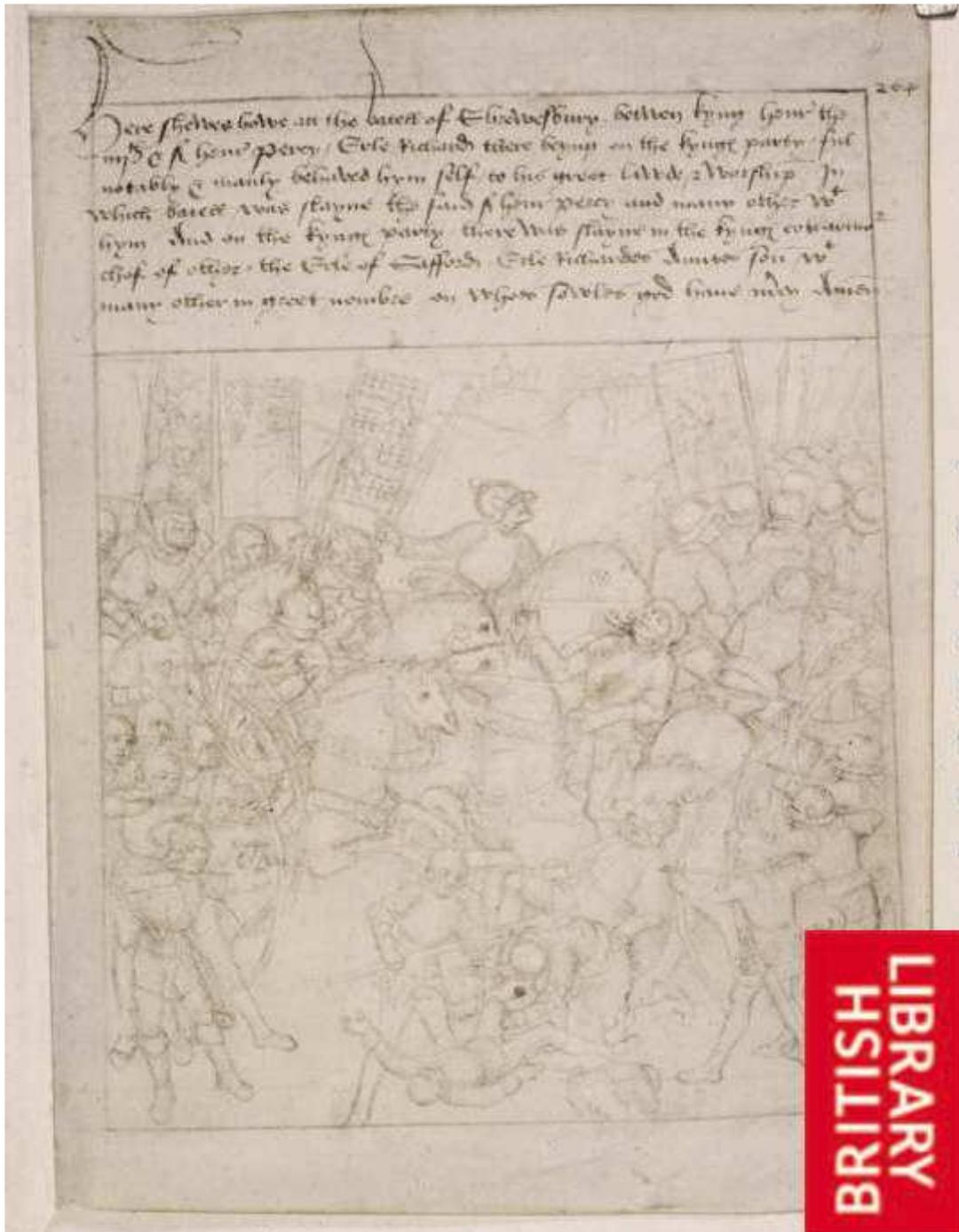
Harry (Percy) Hotspur was defeated by King Henry IV in the battle of Shrewsbury, one of the most bloody in medieval times.



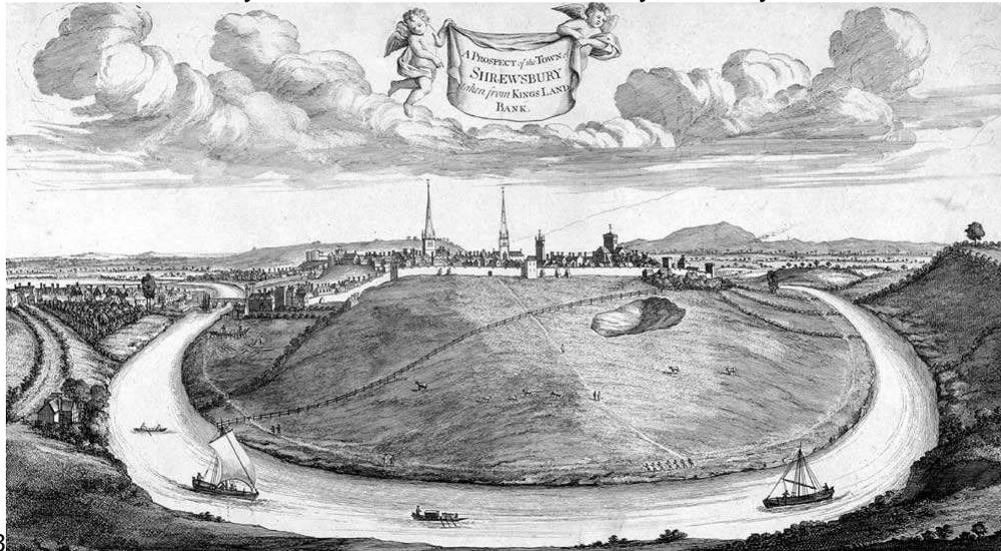
Harry Hotspur

1459

the armies of the House of Lancaster and the House of York met on a damp Sunday morning at Blore Heath, 2 miles east of Market Drayton, and fought the battle which would begin the English Wars of the Roses. Thousands of men from across England fought and died in a bloody battle, which lasted for the rest of that day. Legend has it that Queen Margaret of Anjou watched the battle from the nearby Mucklestone church tower, only to flee when she realised her army had lost. A stone cross still stands on Blore Heath to this day, to mark the spot where the Lancastrian leader is said to have been killed.



Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, fighting with Henry IV against Henry Percy at the Battle of Shrewsbury, 21 July



1403

A prospect of Shrewsbury

[This clearly shows the quarry which is now called the Dingle in the larger area now known as the 'Quarry'. The Crescent was built later against the town walls on the right]

1540

as with all English abbeys and priories, monastic life came to an end at Shrewsbury during King Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. The Abbey's annual income, as returned just before its suppression, was £615.

1552

Shrewsbury School was founded by Edward VI following the dissolution of two ecclesiastical colleges in the town. In its original incarnation the school was sited not outside the loop of the River Severn as it is today, but within its boundary, where it occupied a number of black and white houses.



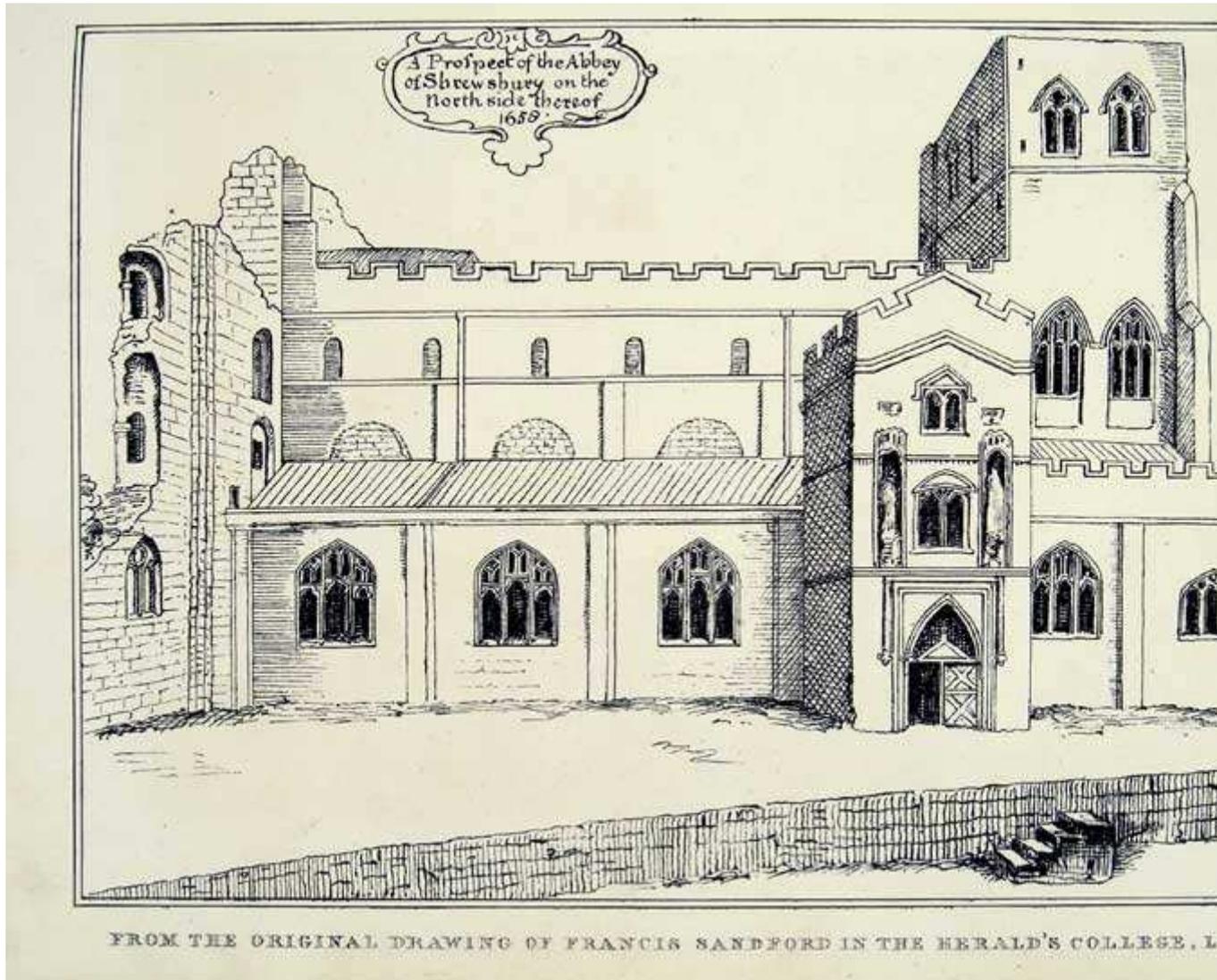
Shrewsbury School (c1818) now the City Library

1583

Under the headmastership of Thomas Ashton, pupil numbers steadily increased and Shrewsbury rose to national prominence, gaining the description “the largest school in all England”.

c. 1590

This is a map of Shrewsbury during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603). In the bottom right hand corner of the map you can see bow haulers towing a Severn barge up the River Severn. Other interesting features include both the towers on top of the English and Welsh bridges and the gates still standing in Castle Gates.



A Prospect of the Abbey of Shrewsbury on the North Side thereof, 1658 (from original drawing by Francis Sandford)

1725

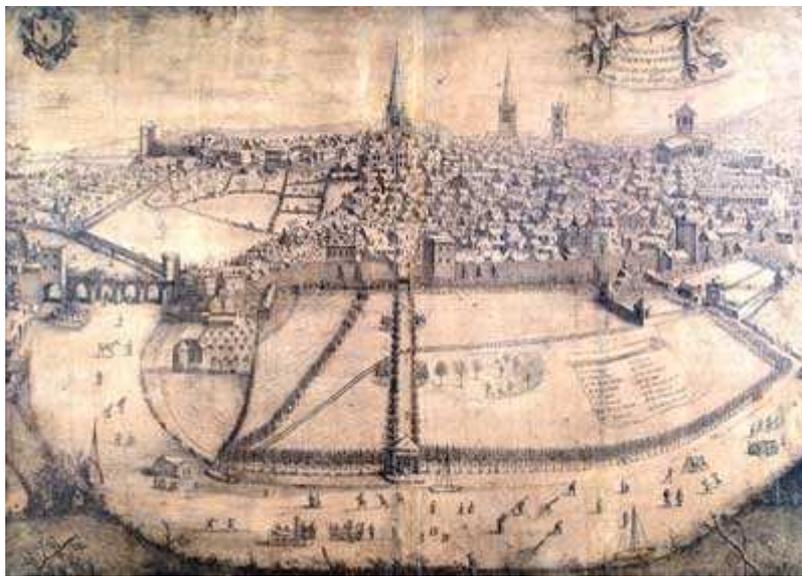
Robert Clive (Clive of India) was born at Styche Hall outside Moreton Say.



Robert Clive



Styche Hall in 1898



A Prospect of Shrewsbury as it appeared in the Great Frost 1739

1777

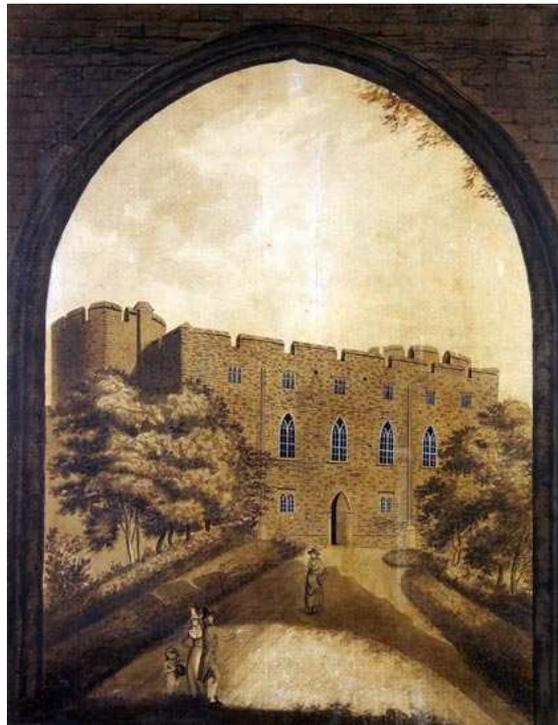
Abraham Darby III began construction of the World's first iron bridge. Designed by Thomas Farnolls Pritchard, a Shrewsbury architect and crossing the river Severn it was completed in 1797. Now a place called Ironbridge, it is considered the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.



Iron Bridge

1790

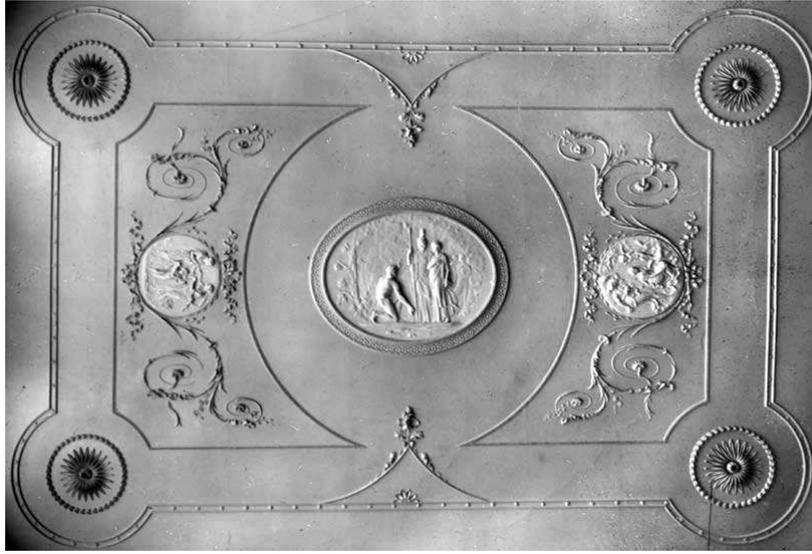
Shrewsbury Castle was restored by Thomas Telford



Shrewsbury Castle after Telford's restoration

1793

The Crescent was built.



Drawing Room ceiling



Front door



The Crescent

1797

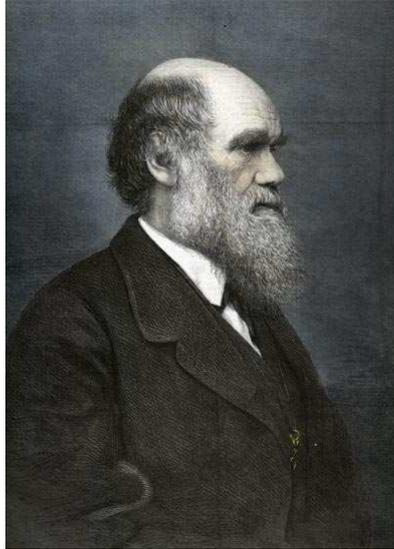
Ditherington Flax Mill was built, the first iron-framed building in the world. Designed by Charles Bage, its fireproof combination of cast iron columns and cast iron beams developed into the modern steel frame which made skyscrapers possible. Despite its global importance, the mill has stood empty since 1987 and is considered to be one of the most important buildings at risk of neglect and decay in England . The Flax Mill is listed at Grade I and the site contains a range of other historic buildings listed at Grade II* and II.



Ditherington Flax Mill

1809

February 12 - Charles Darwin was born the fifth child of local GP Dr Robert Darwin and his wife Susannah, the daughter of pottery king Josiah Wedgwood.



Charles Darwin

He spent his early years at The Mount, the grand house his father had built overlooking the Severn in Shrewsbury, before attending Shrewsbury School as a boarder.



The Mount

1850

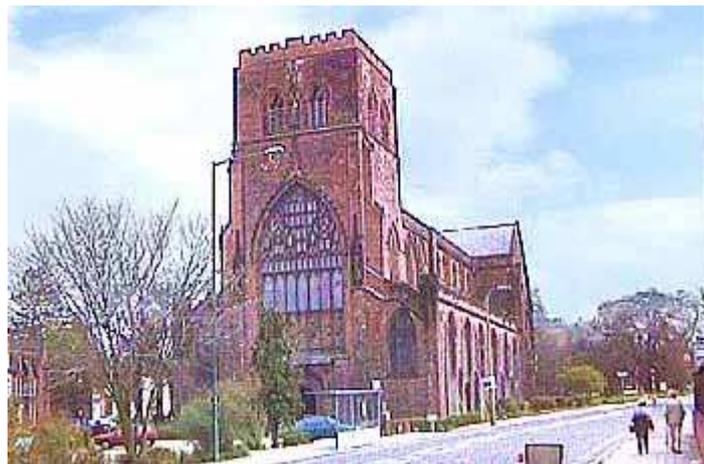
Dr. William Penny Brookes, organised the first ever Olympian Games held in the Shropshire town of Much Wenlock.



William Penny Brookes

1885

the Bishop of Lichfield was left £10,000 by Mrs Harriet Juson of Shrewsbury for the construction of a new chancel at Shrewsbury Abbey. Over the next two years, the church was carefully restored, by John Loughbridge Pearson, to the beautiful structure that we see today.



Shrewsbury Abbey

1947

Shrewsbury famously flooded.



1984

Christmas carol was filmed for TV in Shrewsbury using St Chad's Church for various scenes including those of Scrooge's gravestone. 22 The Crescent was used for some of the internal shooting.



A scene from Christmas Carol outside St Chad's Church

References

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