

KINVER



Official Guide

Phillips.
31 Princes Rd.
Jivildale.
Diplm.

WELCOME

Visitors are most welcome. This guide is designed for their benefit and it is hoped will make their visit more interesting.

Kinver is famed for the beauty of its setting, its healthy situation and rural aspect, the preservation of which is provided for in the development plan for the area.

The Parish Council earnestly hopes that visitors and residents alike will contribute to the maintenance of Kinver's heritage by avoiding acts likely to endanger the amenities of the village and neighbourhood.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Council acknowledges its indebtedness to many residents who have willingly contributed information used in the guide, and for photographs specially taken by Mr. Duckworth-Wood.

KINVER

STAFFORDSHIRE

Official Guide

with Map and Illustrations

The History and Features of
the Neighbourhood are
described.

Compiled by Leonard J. Multon, F.R.I.B.A.

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THE KINVER PARISH COUNCIL

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Kinver Village—
Old Houses in High Street.

LOCAL INFORMATION

SITUATION.

Kinver lies at the extreme southern tip of the County of Staffordshire, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-west of Stourbridge and $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Kidderminster.

LOCAL AUTHORITY.

Kinver is a parish of 10,452 acres within the Seisdon Rural District. It is administered by a Parish Council. Parish Clerk, Mr. E. Lewis Glover, "St. Ives," Compton Road, Kinver. Telephone Kinver 313.

BUS SERVICES (Midland Red).

Frequent services run between the village and Stourbridge (route 250) and a limited service to and from Kidderminster (route 883). There are also through buses to and from Wolverhampton and Birmingham (route 883) and Bridgnorth (route 190).

POPULATION.

Resident population, 4,500 (1950).

SHOPS.

The village has many good shops, catering establishments and inns. Early closing day, Thursday, excepting Post Office which closes Saturday afternoon.

HOTELS.

White Harte, High Street, Kinver (2 bedrooms). Whittington Inn, Whittington, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Kinver on the Wolverhampton—Kidderminster Road (3 bedrooms). Stewponey Hotel, Stourton, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Kinver (6 bedrooms).

CHURCHES.

Church of St. Peter, Kinver Hill	Anglican
Trinity Church, High Street	Methodist
Christ Church, Potters Cross	Methodist
Roman Catholic Chapel, Kinver Hill.			

SCHOOLS.

A Secondary Modern School (erected 1951) is available for children of 11 years and over; there are also separate Infants' and Junior Schools.



Kinver Edge—
View from the
heights above Compton

KINVER EDGE

This great bluff of sandstone rising to a plateau of healthy gorse-covered moor, with its birch-covered lower slopes criss-crossed with sandy tracks, is nearly 200 acres in extent and is administered by the National Trust. Kinver Edge was given to the Trust by the family of Stephen Grosvenor Lee, a memorial tablet to whom is set in a block of rough hewn stone situated near the crown of the headland. At its highest point it is 543 feet above sea-level and 250 feet above the village situated at the eastern extremity of the ridge hugging the narrow valley between the escarpment and the River Stour. From the headland magnificent views are obtained of the surrounding countryside. To the north-east lies the Black Country with its multitudinous industries. Prominent on the skyline is the broad spire of Dudley Parish Church. Almost due north is Baggeridge, well known for its bluebell woods and extensive coal mines. South lies Kidderminster with Stourport beyond, identified by the tall chimneys of its electric generating station. Beyond again is the massive outline of the Malverns. Almost due west, 15 miles distant, are the Clee Hills; to the east the Clent Hills, crowned with a thin line of scotch firs.

The Trust land extends $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles due south from the headland to Blakeshall Common. In Anglo-Saxon days, at its north-west extremity, existed a fortified camp, the remains of which are clearly visible to-day. Its length was about 900 feet, its width 600 feet. The west, north and east flanks were protected by the precipitous cliffs of the escarpment; the southern approaches were secured by an embankment or vallum, V-shaped and extending to the cliff edge on the eastern and western sides. These fortifications may have been the work of Wulfere, King of Mercia, in the 7th century. Some authorities ascribe their origin to the Ancient Britons or Danes.

Kinver Edge formed part of a great Royal Forest some 18 miles long by 15 miles wide, preserved from Saxon days until its deafforestation in 1688, when the forest laws fell into disuse, and it gradually became agricultural land. As a Royal Forest it provided the sport of Kings, and the existence of a Royal Hunting Lodge is recorded. One record of 1257 states that "50 stags took in the Forest of Kinver are to be well salted and carried to Chester," apparently for the purpose of replenishing King Henry III's larder.

The Edge is approached from Meddins Lane, Stone Lane or

Kinver Hill, past Hill Farm. Fine views across the Stour valley can be seen from Church Hill. The district of Kinver is rich with evidence of troglodytes, the soft nature of the local sandstone exposed in cliffs, allowed primitive dwellings to be cut out of the rock face with comparative ease. At the foot of the promontory of the Edge stands a rock mass known as Holy Austin Rock, containing a number of inhabited caves, the front portions of which have been extended and faced with masonry.

A further rock dwelling is to be found quarried out of the cliff face of the Edge itself, called Nannys Rock, or Meg-a-Fox-Hole, once the resort of Highwaymen. An interesting feature is the chimney flue cut through the solid rock; the last occupant left about 80 years ago. Further to the south, closely veiled in verdure, is Crows Rock, which is still occupied.

There is a further series of ruinous caverns at Dunsley, facing the canal and River Stour, which have been occupied within living memory.

L.J.M.

Kinver Parish Church with Foley Chapel in foreground



THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER

This notable landmark has crowned its spur of the cliff for some six hundred years. Previously there had been a Norman Church, but probably without any tower. The present tower was built in the middle of the fourteenth century and was probably meant to carry a spire. The addition of this tower was part of a large scheme of reconstruction planned for the Church by the Abbey of Bordesley, near Evesham, which acquired possession of the Church at that time. They took down the south wall of the Norman Church and built the present fine lofty south aisle with its windows of Decorated tracery. On each side of the tower from the outside the old Norman west wall and buttresses can be seen and inside the Church may be found many more Norman remains.

In the fifteenth century the splendid Perpendicular extensions at the east end were built, but it is not possible to discover the separate stages. The chancel was lengthened—and probably heightened as well—in order to create what the fifteenth century loved, a great east window. The south aisle was also lengthened to form another chapel, in which there are tombs and memorials of the Grey family of Enville and of some of the owners of Stourton Castle. Some interesting fragments of ancient stained glass remain in one of these windows and relics of earlier buildings are carefully preserved.

On the north side of the chancel was erected, late in the fifteenth century, the beautiful chapel, known since 1673 as the Foley Chapel, since it passed into the possession of that family along with their purchase of Prestwood Manor and several other properties. It was built originally by the Hamptons, the Lords of Stourton Castle in earlier years. It is the finest piece of architecture in the Church, the proportions, buttresses and mouldings all suggesting a Cathedral standard. One or two fragments of ancient glass and the mutilated figure of Sir John Hampton in his armour survive.

The latest part of the Church to be built is the north aisle in 1857, the architect being Mr. T. Smith of Stourbridge. There is no doubt that he intended it to match the south aisle, which it does very well indeed.

Within the Church is a feast of interesting relics for the careful visitor. He can observe the upper steps of a Norman inspection staircase (not of a rood loft) which were revealed through restoration work in 1900, and the Norman buttress

on the south-east corner of the Church. These two features will allow him to conjecture how fine the original Norman Church must have been. Behind the western pews he will discover small pieces of beautiful fourteenth century woodwork carefully embodied in the new pews. These come from some original screen. He can puzzle over the font, of which the base is ancient and the laver modern. The base may have been the pedestal of some statue or that of a stone pulpit which the Church is said to have possessed at one time. The pulpit is a good piece of Jacobean work carefully restored. The organ is entirely modern and is one of the best a parish church could desire. In the vestry he will find the Grey tomb of 1521, while the Registers go back to 1560.

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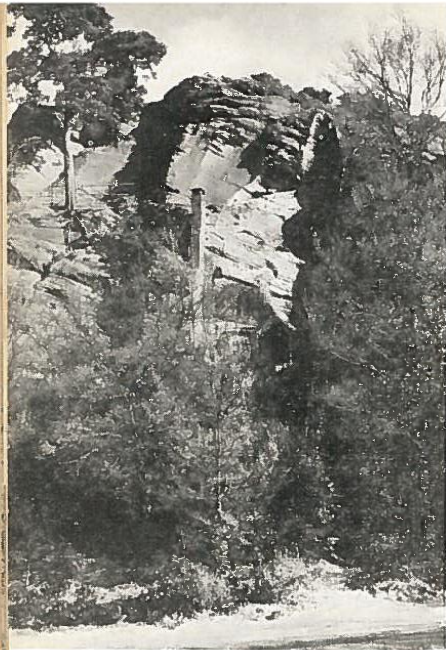
**51 ENVILLE ROAD
AND
MILL LANE, KINVER
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KINVER VILLAGE

Kinver, earlier known as Kinfare, is recorded in the Domesday survey of England, made in 1086, as Chenevare, which may have been a corruption of the words Keun and Vaur of Ancient British origin, signifying a "great ridge or edge." It was a Royal Manor at the time of the Conquest and was granted several Charters. King John made three visits to the Forest during his reign, and renewed the Charter granted by Richard I, conferring privileges and liberties upon its inhabitants. In 1525 Henry VIII renewed this Charter, which was once more confirmed by Elizabeth in 1559. The privileges granted to Kinfare and Stourton in these Charters were given Royal confirmation for the last time by Charles I. This Charter, dated 1629, sealed with the Great Seal of England, is permanently on view in Kinver Church.

The privilege of holding a Fair and Market was granted in 1257. The township apparently prospered and possessed a Market House, since demolished. An important highway from Chester to Worcester passed through it and no doubt brought much trade, the construction, however, of a Turnpike road through Wolverhampton and Kidderminster, diverted this traffic and the importance of Kinver declined. Until the middle of the eighteenth century the town was noted for its woollen manufactory. From the early part of the seventeenth century until well into the nineteenth century it was engaged in the iron trade. The first mill in England for rolling and slitting iron for nails was erected at Hide (now Hyde) on the banks of the Stour, and powered by its waters. Further iron works were set up in Kinver itself, at Whittington and Stourton. There were also wire works at Prestwood. All these manufacturing activities, which relied on water power, are now non-existent, having decayed due to their rural isolation involving difficulties of transport, and the competition of steam-powered works in the adjacent Black Country.

Old Kinver consists of a single gently-curving highway, High Street, bordered each side with continuous rows of cottages, houses and shops. Some of these houses are of great age, but many have been much altered. In Kinver Hill there is a fine Georgian facade of red brick, with well-proportioned sash windows and doorway. Almost opposite is Grammar School House, formerly an endowed School with a history dating back to 1511. Further down the Hill is a



HOLY AUSTIN ROCK

This Photograph shows that part of the rock from which Bladys of the Stewponey escaped capture from her hangman husband, who plunged to his death leaping through the open doorway of the cave dwelling

half-timbered cottage in fair preservation, formerly a work-house. Parallel with High Street, on the north side, hidden behind its buildings, runs the River Stour, once navigable between Stourbridge and Kidderminster, on its way to join the Severn at Stourport. The now little-used Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal follows the river and crosses the Dunsley Road at Kinver Bridge. The walk along the towing path from Stewponey is very pleasant and is roughly coincidental with the line of the Kinver Light Railway or Tram Track to Stourbridge, which closed in March, 1930. The cheap and convenient travelling facilities provided by this Tram Track, opened on Good Friday, 1901, and the earlier "discovery" of Kinver by Baring Gould, the novelist, made the district a holiday centre, which is becoming increasingly popular.

L.J.M.

STOURTON

The Hamlet of Stourton lies to the west of Stourton Castle on the old Bridgnorth turnpike road. There is a pleasant footpath through woods which leads to the Hyde and thence proceeds across the Hyde Meadows following the River Stour to Kinver Village.

To the east of the Castle, at the junction of the Kidderminster and Bridgnorth roads, stands the Stewponey Hotel. The present modern building replaces a former inn of that name built in Georgian times. There are many accounts as to the origin of this curious appellation, the following is that given by Baring Gould in his historical novel *Bladys of the Stewponey*:—

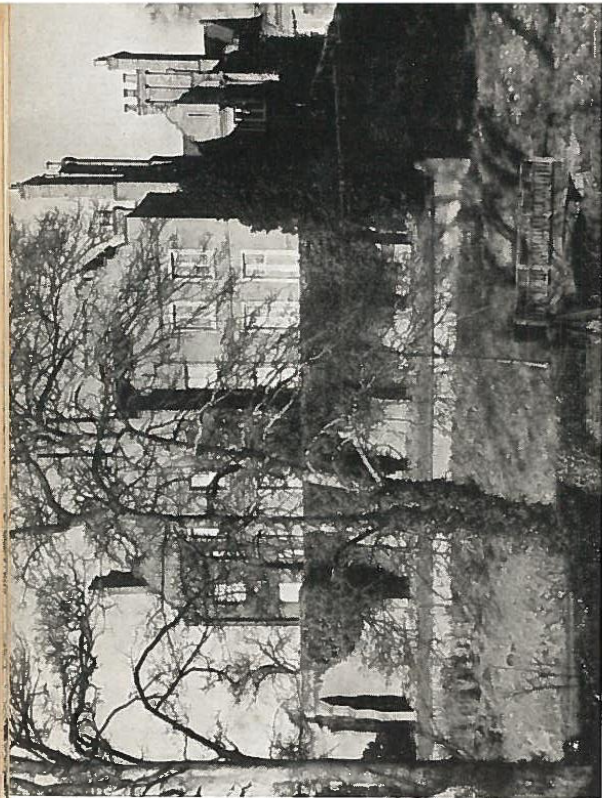
"An old soldier in the wars of Queen Anne, a native of the place, settled there when her wars were over, and as was customary with old soldiers, set up an inn near the bridge at the cross-roads. He had been quartered at Estepona, in the south of Spain, and thence he had brought a Spanish wife. Apparently in honour of her, chiefly in reminiscence of his old military days, he entitled his inn "Estepona Tavern." The Spanish name in English mouths became rapidly transformed into Stewponey. The spot was happily selected, and as the landlord had a managing wife and provided excellent Spanish wine which he imported himself, and with which he supplied the cellars of the gentry around, the inn grew in favour and established its reputation as one of the best inns in Staffordshire."

L.J.M.

STOURTON CASTLE

When William of Normandy conquered England, Kinver was in the middle of a forest. The King appointed Chief Wardens to safeguard crown property, and Lodges were built partly as the residence of the Warden, in part as fortresses. Such was Stourton Castle.

It was enlarged in 1184 and entrenched; ten years later a large sum was spent in adding kitchens, a gaol and a palisade, 1,300ft. by 16ft. high, round the sandstone keep. King John made three visits to the Castle in 1200, 1206 and 1207. A hundred years later it was the scene of the murder of Sir



*Sourton Castle from river Stour,
showing the polissade and massive
Tudor chimneys*

Thomas Murdoc, by his wife and one John de Vaux—at whose trial Robert de Gresbroke was a juror. Its chief fame is, perhaps, that in March, 1500, Reginald Pole, a cousin of King Henry VIII, was born at the castle; his mother was Lady Margaret Plantagenet, Countess of Salisbury in her own right. He lived to become Papal Legate and Archbishop of Canterbury under Queen Mary, in spite of King Henry's attempts to kill him.

In the Civil War it was garrisoned for the King and was important because of its proximity to the Black Country, at that time the Woolwich Arsenal of the King's army. The owner, Sir John Whorwood, who, like many other land-owners, hunted with the King, and ran with Parliament, put in a guard hut. It was captured by that brilliant cavalry guerilla leader, "Tinker" Fox. A Royalist relief column, under Sir Gilbert Gerard, after a scrimmage on Stourbridge Heath, recovered the Castle from the Parliament Garrison. Sir Gilbert, so it is said, fired a cannon which pierced the front door and knocked a porringer out of the hands of a maid crossing the open courtyard. The door still exists.

It was on the banks of the Stour that the Iron Age came to Great Britain, and possibly the earliest, certainly one of the richest ironmasters, Philip Foley, bought the Castle and Manor of Kinver from the Whorwoods.

From 1690/1760 the Castle was little more than a farmhouse, but in 1805 Thomas Worrall Grazebrook, who inherited from his mother the Worrall estates which then surrounded the Castle, leased it from the Foleys. His widow lived at the Castle until 1832 when Mr. James Foster took over the lease. It was in his hands that the Castle took its present shape. He greatly enlarged it, covered in the courtyard and lowered the ground floor some four feet. Under the floor of the keep the old trapdoor leading to the dungeons was found. The sandstone walls of the Norman tower are 4ft. thick and on the first floor is a room which may well have been the chapel; a circular stone staircase in the wall itself leads to the floor above.

Next in age to the tower is probably the Tudor brickwork on the north wing, providing a good example of chimney architecture of the period. The old Tudor fireplace to the dining room was discovered 4ft. above the present floor, during alterations carried out in 1915.

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WHITTINGTON

This rural hamlet, referred to as Widdington in Domesday Book, stands astride the Kidderminster road $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-east of Kinver.

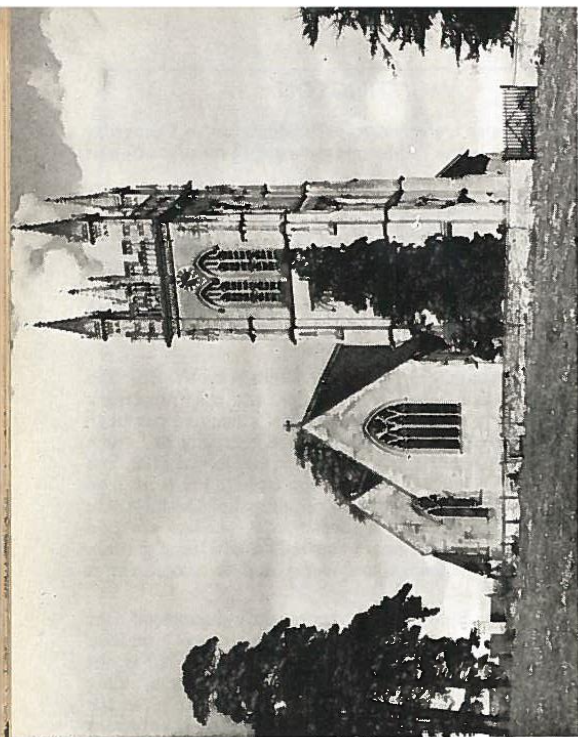
Lying well back from the road behind an avenue of limes, is Whittington Hall, erected in the reign of George II on the site of an earlier house. The classic red brick facade has a central doorway and sash windows arranged on two floors in perfect symmetry. A short distance from the house is a huge pigeon tower, 22ft. in diameter. The brickwork above the stone base, and the roof, are a recent addition. On the opposite side of the house is a large Tythe Barn.

Whittington Manor, erected by Sir William de Whittendon in 1310, is of half-timbered construction, the oak framework filled with wattle and daub. The original structure has been much altered and adapted throughout the centuries but much old work still remains. It was turned into an inn in 1788, and so it has remained ever since. On the front door is an iron emblem said to be a representation of the seal of Queen Anne, indicating that she had stayed there. In the cellars are two piscinas, and once a Font, now removed to the front garden. It is thought that these cellars were used as secret Jesuit Chapels.

A priest hole, or hiding place, was recently discovered near to the front entrance and now forms an inglenook fireplace. There is said to exist a secret staircase, although this has not been discovered, leading to a hidden room used as a hiding place by Charles II on his flight to Boscobel House after the defeat of the Royalists at the Battle of Worcester. The remains of a moat and the walls of a Tudor garden, still to be seen, are reminders that this cheerful hostelry was once a semi-fortified Manor House.

Whittington once contributed its share to the industrial enterprises of the neighbourhood. Scott's *History of Stourbridge*, 1832, referred to a nail-slitting works on the banks of the Stour "remarkable for wheels of uncommon dimension and extraordinary velocity of motion," but the account naively continues: "its celebrity is somewhat diminished by the improvements of modern times." These works have now entirely disappeared.

L.J.M.



Enville Church and Tower

ENVILLE AND THE SHEEP WALKS

This charming village, situated amidst a well-wooded and fertile countryside, is reached from Kinver, from which it is two miles distant, by the Bridgnorth Road. There is a great house, Envile Hall, home of the family of Grey, whose lineage has been traced back to the Conquest. The present house dates from the middle eighteenth century, the centre portion of the mansion has a machicolated parapet and pillared portico, the architecture is a romanticised version of the Georgian style and has been ascribed in part to the poet Shenstone.

To approach the Sheep Walks, Envile Hall Park, with its famous cricket ground, has first to be traversed. This park with its gardens was, at the height of its glory, famous for the diversity of its attractions; there was a cascade and chapel dedicated to Shenstone to whom is attributed the romantic landscaping of the woods and walks in the style of Repton. A great sward, with ornamental trees, extends from the house towards the park, from which it is separated by a Ha-Ha, or sunken wall, so contrived that the prospect is unhindered by any artificial barrier, and the parkland merges with scarcely-perceptible change into the wooded undulations of the surrounding countryside. Beyond the lawns are ornamental lakes, the margins closely wooded but partly open to preserve the vista from the distant Hall.

Leaving the Park the visitor reaches an extensive range of downs called the Sheep Walks. These hills, 665 feet above sea-level, command extensive views over three counties. South lies Kidderminster and the Malverns, south-east the village of Compton in the valley, with Kinver Edge and the Clent Hills beyond; west the Cleve Hills; to the north-east the Shropshire Wrekin. The view due north is obstructed by Essex woods, not open to the public.

Built on a slight eminence, overlooking the village, is the ancient Church of St. Mary the Virgin. It underwent a thorough restoration in 1871, when the present tower was built, replacing the old tower, which had been struck by lightning in 1715. Though modern it is a beautiful copy of the Perpendicular Gothic style, and contains a peal of eight bells and clock with four copper dials. The arcades to the Nave are Norman, the Chancel and Aisles were added later, built during the 13th and 14th centuries. In the spandrels between two arches in the south arcade are rude Saxon

carvings of a Bishop in a niche and an unclothed figure holding a fan, these must have been inserted by the Normans. The carved capitals of the piers of the north arcade were also considered to be Saxon work by that eminent authority on church architecture, Sir Gilbert Scott. Four finely-carved misericords are to be found in the Chancel, also a tomb to Roger de Birmingham, a Rector of Enville in the time of Edward I.

Amongst other tombs is one of alabaster with the recumbent figures of Thomas and Anne Grey; ranged beneath them are carvings representing their thirteen children.

In the churchyard, by the porch, are three stone coffins, and nearby the remains of the ancient Calvary Cross.

L.J.M.

Whilst every care has been taken in compiling this guide, and the statements contained herein are believed to be correct, the Publishers and the Promoters of this publication will not hold themselves responsible for any inaccuracies.

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