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WELCOME

The Parish Council welcomes you to Kinver, famed for the beauty of its setting, its healthy situation and rural aspect, and hopes that you will enjoy the amenities of the district.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council acknowledges its indebtedness to the many residents who have willingly contributed information and photographs, used in this guide.

The Official Guide

with Map and Illustrations

Issued by authority of

THE KINVER PARISH COUNCIL

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, which is one of the largest in the country, is a parish of 10,456 acres within the Seisdon Rural District. It is administered by a Parish Council. Parish Clerk: Mr. T. Poole, White Lodge, Potters Cross, Kinver, Near Stourbridge. Phone: Kinver 2152.

Bus Services (Midland Red)

Frequent services run between the village and Stourbridge (route 250 and 190), and a limited service exists from Wolverhampton and Kidderminster via route 883.

Population

Resident population, 6,522 (1967).

Hotels

White Harte, High Street, Kinver (two bedrooms); Whittington Inn, Whittington, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Kinver on the Wolverhampton—Kidderminster road; Stewpony Hotel, Stourton, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Kinver (ten bedrooms, and Lido).

Churches

Church of St. Peter, Kinver Hill—Anglican.
Kinver Methodist Church (Potters Cross).
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 Village—
Old Houses in High Street (1964)*

KINVER PAST

Earlier known as Kinfare, the village 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. An earlier Charter is believed to exist dating from 736 and 964 A.D.

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.

KINVER PRESENT

From the main Wolverhampton—Kidderminster road the visitor passes through the residential Dunsley area, with its magnificent view of the Parish Church of St. Peter, superbly sited on the hill, to enter the gently curving High St. with its assortment of modern shops, cottages and old houses, some of the latter being good examples of their period.

The village centre is dominated by the old coaching Inn, 'The White Harte'. Other buildings of interest include a 15th century business

house, skilfully restored by a local builder, and several Georgian houses which are in a good state of preservation. The half-timbered house at the top of the High St. is worthy of attention, this was formerly the workhouse. A little further up the hill, and to the left, is The Grammar School, now a private residence. It was founded in the year 1511. Another fine Georgian house lies a little way up Church Hill.

On through the High St. northwards, is Potters Cross, the modern part of Kinver village, which has two most unusual hillside Council house developments. Many small tasteful private housing estates are in this area, taking advantage of the lower slopes of the towering Edge. At Potters Cross is the Methodist Church, opened in 1965, and which is a good example of modern ecclesiastical architecture.

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 delightful Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal follows the river and crosses the Dunsley Road at Kinver Bridge. The walk along the towing path from Stewponcy 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.

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER

This notable landmark has crowned its spur of the cliff for some 600 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.

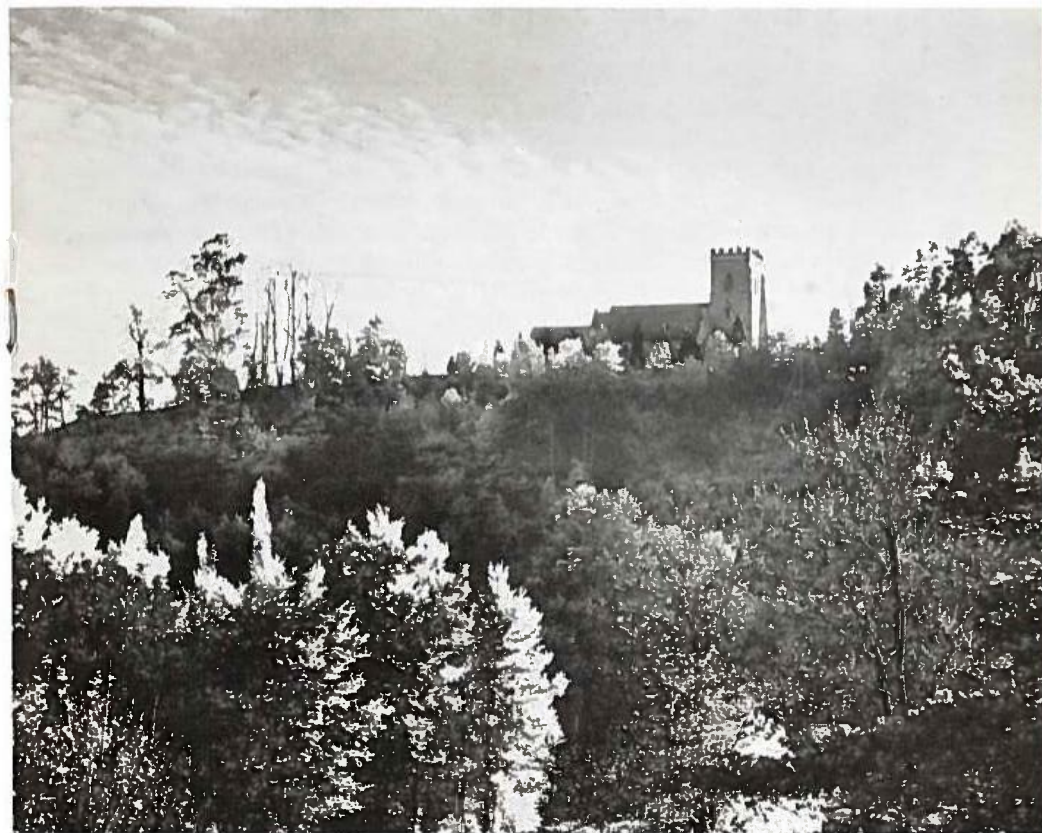
In the fifteenth century the splendid Perpendicular extensions at the east end were built, but it is not possible to discover the separate stages. The chancel was lengthened—and probably heightened as well—in order to create what the fifteenth century loved, a great east window. The south aisle was also 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.

REV. J. C. WEST



KINVER: The Ancient Church on a Hill. Founded upon a rock—St. Peter's Church, built 600 years ago on a spur of the cliff overlooking the village High Street. (Photo: J. Duckworth Wood, A.I.B.P., Kinver)

IN AND AROUND KINVER

Lovers of the countryside have a choice of many pleasant excursions in and around Kinver, perhaps the most famous and popular of these is **Kinver Edge**. This ridge of sandstone rising to a plateau of bracing heather-covered moorland, 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. From the headland magnificent views are to be obtained of the surrounding countryside. Northerly, prominent on the skyline is the broad spire of Dudley Parish Church. South lies Kidderminster and Stourport, and beyond lie the massive outline of the Malverns. Almost due west, 15 miles distant, are the Cleve Hills; to the east the Clent Hills, crowned with a thin line of Scotch firs.

The Trust land extends 10 miles due south from the headland to Blake-shall Common. In Anglo-Saxon days, at its north-west extremity, existed a fortified camp, the remains of which are clearly visible today. 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 seventh century.

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 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,



*A scene of Rugged Grandeur: Kinver dwellings nestle at the foot of the northern escarpment of the Edge.
(Photo: J. Duckworth Wood, A.I.B.P., Kinver)*

containing a number of once inhabited caves, the front portions of which were 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 in the late nineteenth century. Further to the south, closely veiled in verdure, is Crows Rock.

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

STOURTON CASTLE

The more energetic can take a footpath through The Playing Fields, and The Hyde Meadows, past the woods to Stourton Castle.

Formerly a Royal Hunting Lodge, situated in the middle of a forest at the time of the Norman Conquest, it was enlarged in 1184 and entrenched. Some ten years later a large sum was spent in adding kitchens, a gaol and a palisade 1,300 ft. by 16 ft. 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 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 guerila 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.

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 four feet 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.



*Stourton Castle, showing the fine Norman Tower and massive Tudor chimneys
(Photo: J. Duckworth Wood, A.I.B.P., Kinver)*

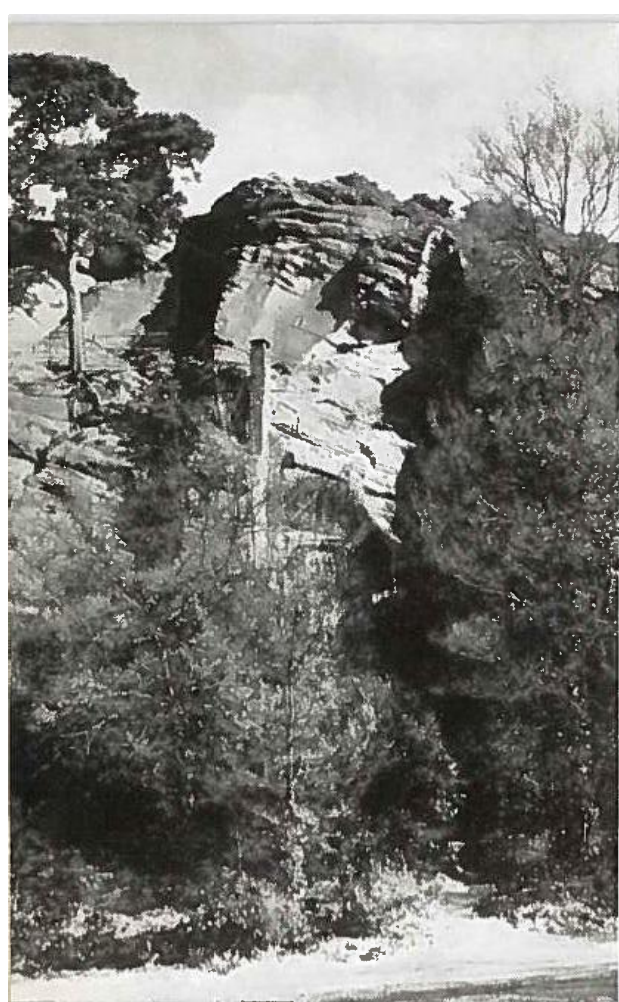
Next in age to the tower is probably the Tudor brickwork on the north wing, providing a good example of chimney architecture of the period. The old Tudor fireplace to the dining room was discovered four feet above the present floor, during alterations carried out in 1915.

OWEN F. GRAZEBROOK

WHITTINGTON

Leaving the village and taking the canal towing path, or the footpath through lovely Gibraltar Woods, one comes to Whittington, referred to as Widdington in Domesday Book, standing 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



HOLY AUSTIN ROCK

This photograph shows that part of the rock from which Bladys of the Stewponey escaped capture from her hangman leaping through the open doorway of the cave dwelling

arranged on two floors in perfect symmetry. A short distance from the house is a huge pigeon tower, 22 feet 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.

OTHER WALKS

Opinion varies locally on which is the best, indeed, it would be most difficult to choose so striking and full of contrast is Kinver. However, we do suggest that you try the paths from Stourton Post Office to Greensforge. Or the charms of "The Fairy Glen" between Sugar Loaf Lane in Iverley, and Beachtree Farm. If the love of the hills is still with you, then take the "Compton Heights" and walk across "The Sheepwalks" in the neighbouring parish of Enville.

THE WHITTINGTON INN

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KINVER'S FORMER INDUSTRIES

Kinver's earlier importance as a trading centre, was undoubtedly due to the fast-flowing River Stour, which provided the motive power for all the Mills and Works which were situated on it. The first two of these were mentioned in the Domesday Book, and were close to the village High Street. Five similar Mills were located at Gothersley, Stourton, The Hyde, Kinver and Whittington, all within the Parish boundary.

The most famous of these Mills was The Hyde, under the management of Richard Foley, and from which he is reputed, according to Samuel Smiles's "Self Help", to have journeyed to Sweden in the early seventeenth century, to try and discover the secret of "iron splitting". Taking with him his violin, he travelled under the guise of an itinerant musician and earned the nickname of "Fiddler Foley". As late as the early nineteen hundreds, spades and shovels were still being made at The Hyde, and the great Water Wheel was still in existence. Remains of the water wheel hub are still to be seen in the village Mill, and was providing power well into the twentieth century. Kinver Mill made screws, while at Whittington, iron bar, rod, and sheet iron were produced. Prestwood made the famous wire from which nails were produced, and it is interesting to note that "The Nailer's Yard" still adjoins the "White Harte Inn".

One of the earliest industries recorded is the making of strong carts and wagons for use in the time of war. This was in the fifteenth century, and a popular theory is that it is likely that this was a way of describing what we now call gun carriages or cannon cradles.

The Woollen Industry remained in Kinver for a very long time. The cliffside between the Church and The High Street was known as "Hanging Hill" or "Hanging Leasowe" and "Churchyard Piece". This was for no sinister reason, but simply for the fact that the wool was hung there to dry. Associated trades were flax-making, hatting and glove-making.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, in addition to the fifteen Inns and Taverns, there were two beerhouses, and three maltsters. There were three blacksmiths, five butchers, eight boot and shoe makers, seventeen farmers, two wheelwrights, five tailors, and one solitary carrier, one William Rowley, who daily plied between Kinver and Stourbridge.

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 cannot accept responsibility for any inaccuracies.

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