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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 under-mentioned residents who have willingly contributed information and photographs used in this guide.

John Greaves Smith, A.R.I.B.A.

Frank A. Bills, M.P.S.

David Bills, M.P.S.

Len Dunn

Fred Beech

George Humphries

KINVER

STAFFORDSHIRE

THE OFFICIAL GUIDE

with Map and Illustrations

Issued by authority of

THE KINVER PARISH COUNCIL

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Kinver High Street

Kinver High Street and Parish Church



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 lies in the South Staffordshire District, is a Parish of 10,566 acres, and is one of the largest in the country. It is administered by a Parish Council. Parish Clerk: Mr. J. Amphlett, 39 Billy Bunns Lane, Wombourne, Nr. Wolverhampton WV5 9BL. Telephone Wombourne 2638.

Bus Services

Frequent services run between the village and Stourbridge (route 250 and 190).

Population

Resident population 7,500 (estimated).

Hotels

White Harte, High Street, Kinver
Whittington Inn, Whittington, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Kinver on the Wolverhampton/Kidderminster road.
Stewponey Hotel, Stourton, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Kinver.
Anchor Hotel, Dark Lane, Kinver.

Churches

Parish Church of St. Peter, Kinver Hill, Anglican.
Kinver Methodist Church (Potters Cross).
Roman Catholic Church, Church Hill.
St. Peter's, Stourton, Anglican.

Schools

The following are all modern purpose built schools:-
Foley Infants School.
Brindley Heath Junior School.
Edgecliff Comprehensive School.

Kinver Past

The great sandstone bluff which rises abruptly to the west of the village has always been Kinver's most significant characteristic.

In the charter of Ethelbert, dated 736 A.D., the village is described as "Cynibre", a great or royal hill whilst the Domesday Book of 1086 records it as "Chenevare" which is thought to be a corruption of the ancient British words Keun and Vaur signifying a great ridge or edge. In the days of Kinver's woollen industry this cliff was known as "Hanging Hill", "Hanging Leaseowe" and "Churchyard Piece" because the wool was hung there to dry.

Another derivation is apparent in the charter of Edgar, given in 964 AD where the name of the village has become "Cynefare", a royal road so named either because it lay on the road to the Royal Lodge at Wolverley or because it was the road through the Royal Forest in which the village stood.

John, Richard I, Henry VIII and Elizabeth all confirmed the charters which conveyed privileges and liberties to the inhabitants and in 1629 Charles I confirmed them for the last time. This Charter, with the Great Seal of England, is on view in the village church.

After the decline of the woollen industry, Kinver became engaged in the iron trade. The first mill in England for rolling and slitting iron for nails was erected at Hide, now Hyde, powered by the River Stour. Other iron works were established in Kinver at Whittington and Stourton, with wire works at Prestwood. Since they relied on water power they are now extinct.

The trade which had passed through Kinver from Chester to Worcester declined after the building of the turnpike road from Wolverhampton to Kidderminster and with it declined much of Kinver's importance.

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 Street, 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 Street is worthy of attention, this was formerly the work-house. A little further up the hill and to the left is The Grammar School founded in the year 1511 and now a private residence. This building has recently been restored under the direction of local architect John Greaves Smith and won an award during European Architectural Heritage Year 1975. Another fine Georgian house lies a little way up Church Hill.

On through the High Street northward there are a number of modern community developments on the right, including the new Senior Citizens Club Centre, British Legion and Kinver Community Centre. The old Victorian School on the right is now a listed building. At Potters Cross is the Methodist Church, opened in 1965 and which is a good example of modern ecclesiastical architecture.

On the north side of the High Street 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 tow path from Stewponey is very pleasant and is roughly coincidental with the line

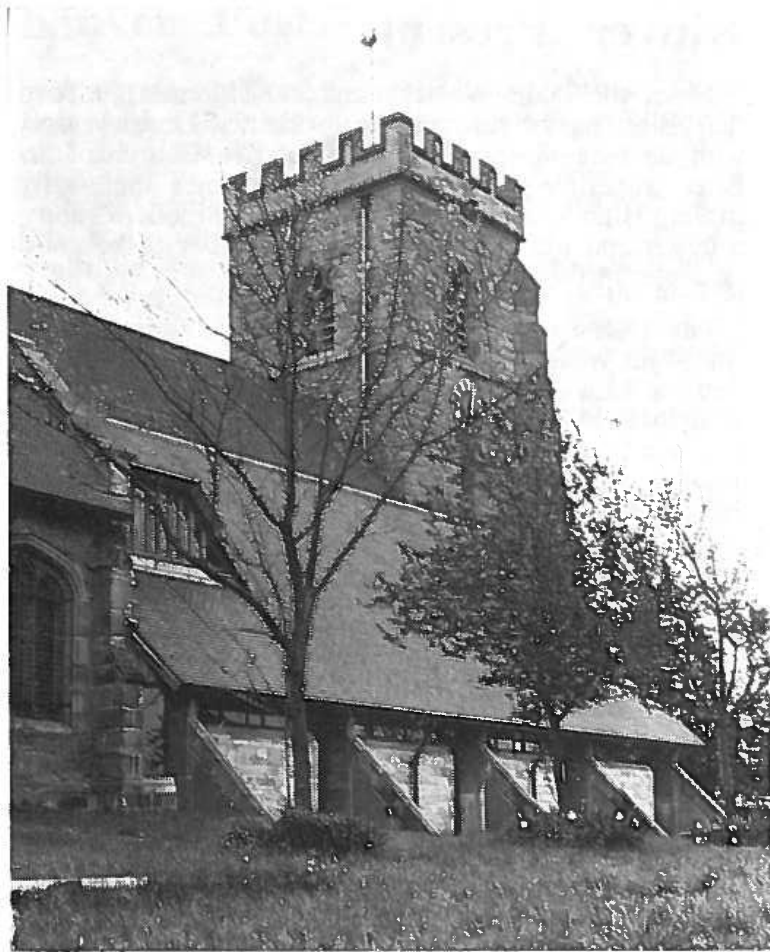


Photo: Frank Bills. Copyright

Kinver Parish Church

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.

Also from the main Wolverhampton to Kidderminster road, opposite the Stewponey Hotel, the Bridgnorth road takes the visitor through the attractive Hyde Lane to the northern edge of the village.

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. One or two fragments of ancient glass and the mutilated figure of Sir John Hampton in his armour survive.

Several changes occurred in the nineteenth century which brought the Victorian style to the building. Amongst these was the renewal of the Nave ceiling in a dark-stained boarding. The most important addition was the "Gothic" style north aisle, completed in 1857 and designed by Thomas Smith of Stourbridge as a copy of the south aisle.

In 1965-6 it was discovered that the Stonework and timbers of the Victorian aisle were in a dangerous condition, and as the adjacent Nave structure had been seriously weakened by the nineteenth century work, the stability of the central part of the Church was threatened. A major reconstruction scheme was subsequently undertaken on the north side with extensive restoration of the mediaeval Nave roof. The entirely new north aisle and re-opened Nave were completed in 1976. The building work was carried out by Messrs. W. Sapcote of Birmingham and the architect was John Greaves Smith of Kinver.

The exposed Nave timbers can be seen as a superb double-collar rafter roof design, now considered earlier than 14th-century dating and possibly the original Nave roof. The shortened rafters and braces on the north side are supported by the new upper arcade plates of the aisle structure, and the thrust is carried to the ground along the spring roofline through the heavy raking buttress beam down to reinforced stone bases. The aisle

structure is a frame of laminated pine with a solid 2—3 inch plank roof slope, all in its natural colours. A dormer window at the eastern abutment with the Foley Chapel gives daylight to the restored chapel window. This has been re-glazed by remodelling the best of the Victorian gable window glass, and the work was carried out together with the modern glass, in the west window, by Mr. W. Pardoe of Lye. The lower walls of the aisle are built of re-used Norman stone re-claimed from parts of the Victorian walling, but long lancet windows on each side of the buttresses space out the old stone into panels and allows the outside to be glimpsed from within. These narrow margins of light are carried round the edges of the roof and reach up, above the triangular west window, to a high clerestory light which admits south light to the roof, reflecting into the aisle. The whole is a simple expression, using forms and materials of the 20th century, of the function of the aisle which, with little change to the overall external composition of the Church, is designed to support and complement the soaring mediaeval Nave roof.

Within the church are a number of interesting relics, one of these the upper steps of a Norman inspection staircase (not of a roof loft) which were revealed through restoration work in 1900 and the Norman buttress on the south-east corner of the Church. The western pews embody small pieces of beautiful fourteenth-century woodwork from some original screen. The base of the font 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, though the laver is modern. 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 is the Grey tomb of 1521, while the Registers go back to 1560.



Kinver Edge

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 lies 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 10 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 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 approach 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 de-afforestation 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 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 Highwayman. 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.

Ruined caverns at Gibraltar, Dunsley, facing the canal and River Stour have been occupied within living memory.

STOURTON CASTLE

The more energetic can take a footpath through The Playing Felds, 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 the 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.

From 1690-1760 the Castle was little more than a farmhouse, but in 1805 Thomas Worrall Grazebrook,



Stourton Castle

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 a 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 four feet above the present floor, during alterations carried out in 1915.

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 arranged on two floors in perfect symmetry.

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 to the Hyde. Or the charms of "The Fairy Glen" between Sugar Loaf Lane in Iverley, and Beachtree Farm.



Holy Austin Rock

Also the lower slopes of The Edge off Kingsford Lane, known as Moscow. 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.

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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