STEWPONEY COUNTRYSIDE

Frances E. Cambell

KINVER

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FRANCES E. CAMPBELL

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FOREWORD

This Book has been designed by request for the Visitors to Stewponey Hotel, and Newcomers to the district of Stourton (as the district of Stewponey is now known). Being part of the Ancient Royal Forest of Kinver, it is rich in Historical and Legendary Folk-lore.

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LIST OF AUTHORITIES

1. KINVER CHURCH by kind permission.
2. KINVER LIGHT RAILWAY. County Express, 22.5.65.
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4. EXTRACTS FROM 'ROYAL KINVER' by Frances E. Campbell.
5. ILLUSTRATIONS J. A. Wylde.
6. WOLVERLEY. Worcestershire Diocesan Messenger, July 1964.
7. COTON HALL. Mrs. Howard-Thompson.

STEWPONEY ROAD HOUSE

FOLEY CREST

CHAPTER 1

THE Stewponey District lies west of the Parish of Kinver, in the neighbouring district of Dunsley, Whittington and Stourton. (All of the same Parish). It derives its name from the fact that here in the old days were the fish ponds, mostly for Stourton Castle, and Prestwood, a meeting place for Royalty and Monks and so forth. All Monasteries and Nunneries in the old days had "Stewpons" for their own use. Running through this district is the famous river Stour, marked on the old district maps "Stewri". Two main turnpike roads ran through the district of Stewponey, one from Stourbridge to Enville and the other from Wolverhampton to Kidderminster, and where the two roads crossed was the old tavern.

The legend of this Stewponey Tavern is written around a charming old-world setting. Witches and giants, saints and kings, gypsies, rebels, hangmen and highwaymen—they all have a place in the rich store of folklore, legend and romance which has been woven around the ancient Stewponey Hotel.

Where history ends and romance begins none can tell, for in the dim, distant days when the Stewponey first had its being, men were content to eat, drink and be merry, unhindered by apprehension of what the morrow might bring or of what history might say of them.

When it was built we do not know. More regrettable still, by what means the curious "Stewponey" became its name is still a matter of conjecture.

Some maintain that the famous castle of 'Stourton' within whose shadow it shelters, so frequently had Royal patronage that the Inn was built to accommodate those who followed in the Royal wake. They argue that since Latin was common usage, "the hostelry at the Stour Bridge" became "Stour Ponte," and from that was gradually corrupted to Stourponey and thence to Stewponey.

It is more likely that the name came from the 'Stewpons' in which was poached fish for Friday's meal, the fast day ordered by the Roman Church.

Others aver that it was established by an old soldier who, in the wars of Queen Anne, had been quartered in Estepona, in the South of Spain. He had, so the legend runs, married a Spanish girl, and the "Estepona Tavern," which he called his enterprise, in honour of his wife and in reminiscence of his military days, quickly became 'Stewponey' in the English mouth. A large size picture of the Spanish lady is still to be seen hanging on the wall.

But whether the attraction was the King, or the excellence of the Spanish wine which the old warrior is said to have imported, it is certain that the hostelry soon became one of the best known and most fashionable in the country.

The inn was the headquarters of the Iron Trade, when the Quarterly Meeting of the Iron Trade gave prices to all the world about the time of the Crimean War and later. The Iron Trade came to the Black Country because of the local coal and local ironstone. The first iron mills were driven by water power and the Stour provided the ironmasters with their power.

The tin plate trade began on the Stour. Sebright, Knight, Crowther and Baldwin were the founders of that industry, all based on this river, and forges and mills littered its banks as far as Stourport.

It was beneath the old oak beams of the Inn that the gentry of Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire would meet to debate at the approach of an election, to decide on the candidates they would propose.

The great Irish Road from Bristol to Chester (then the port for Ireland) brought within its doors scores of travellers afraid to risk their lives and their purses at the hands of the footpads and highway robbers who lurked in the Stourton Forest and upon the heaths of Kinver.

In such an atmosphere it was inevitable that there should be legends about the old hostelry, and legends there are, by the score—legends of fleeing Royalists who found refuge in its secret rooms—

of highwaymen and smuggled goods hidden in its vaults—of the giants from the cave dwellings on Kinver Edge, and of witches who mixed their devilish concoctions in the nearby forest.

Most popular of them all the story, half legend, half romance, of Bladys, daughter of one landlord, who became the prize for a bowling tournament upon its green. The legend has it that after being carried off by a hangman she was rescued by her lover and with him sought refuge in the caverns of the Holy Austin Rock on Kinver Edge. With witches to aid him, the hangman followed but, as in all the best legends, the assistance of the Devil was of little avail against the forces of good which supported Bladys, and the villain crashed to his death from the Holy Rock, leaving true love to pursue its time-honoured course. Stewponey was also an important Posting Station.

HOLY AUSTIN ROCK, KINVER

To-day there stands on this very same site of romance and adventure a most excellent hotel luxuriously providing for the every pleasure of mankind. Quite near to many large towns, it provides a ready retreat from city life without unnecessarily long journeyings and isolation.

Most popular of all the amenities is the Swimming Pool, open from May 1st to September 30th with accommodation for spectators and nearby a space set apart for open air dancing. Hotel residents have free access to the "Lido."

CAVE DWELLER, HOLY AUSTIN ROCK

In the days of Kinver's and Stewponey's Industrial Prosperity, many social events took place during the year at and around the Stewponey Hotel. The Iron-masters formed the 'Beechers' Club.' It was a superior kind of friendly society which drew a large number of members from the artisians of Stourbridge, Brierley Hill and Kinver area. It was established on August 24th, 1842. Its patrons included Foley, Brindley, Lee, Crowther and Sebright families, with other local gentry. Their medallion of membership had on one side, The Good Samaritan (St. Luke, 10, v. 25-37) signed J. Baker, Birmingham. The Dagger Brass Band accompanied all processions. There was also the yearly Fêtes with their side-shows and feastings. After the merry-making, in later years came the fireworks displays.

Year 1861. LAMENTABLE OCCURRENCE AT THE STEWPONEY

The following account was sent by relatives of the family from Canada, June 1965.

On Tuesday afternoon last, W. H. Phillips, Esq. deputy coroner, held an inquest at the Stewponey Hotel on the body of William Detheridge, a blacksmith of Dudley, who was drowned on the previous Sunday morning in a pond known as the 'Old Marl Pit', near this place. The circumstances under which deceased met his death were of a most heart-rending character. It appeared that the deceased, who was said to be of very industrious and sober habits, had left Dudley in the morning in a trap. On the way the horse was driven into the above-named pond to allow to drink and having almost immediately got into deep water, the deceased jumped in to endeavour to save his daughter, but instantly sank and was drowned before the eyes of those to whom he was most dear. The pond in question is situated in the public road and has every appearance of being used as a watering place for horses. It is not more than fourteen yards wide, but about a yard and a half from the side the

water is twelve feet deep, besides four or five feet of mud. The particulars of the melancholy affair, however, will be seen from the evidence adduced. The first witness called was:

Charles Clay, painter and glazier, Holly Hall. Witness said:

"The deceased was a blacksmith living at Dudley and working at Horseley. He was my son-in-law, and was 27 years of age."

The other witness was Joseph Detheridge, whitesmith, brother to the deceased. He said "I live at Constitution Hill, Dudley. Deceased, myself, deceased's wife and two children, my wife and child, and my wife's sister, on Sunday morning last started from Dudley in a spring cart, drawn by one horse. The cart had been borrowed by deceased, and the horse by myself. We intended going through Kinver and returning by way of Enville. It was about half-past seven when we started from deceased's home. I drove about ten yards past the place where the accident occurred. I said to deceased, 'Let's turn back and give the horse some water' Deceased replied, 'Yes do.' The pond seemed like a regular watering place. I turned back and drove the horse in, and he had only gone a very short distance when he seemed to go off his legs. My brother got out of the cart before this. The horse tried to back out but he could not. All the persons were got from the water. I never saw my brother after the time we went to water the horse. When I got out my brother was missing. I can't tell how long it was before my brother was got out of the water."

Elijah Yardley, carter, Stourton, was the next witness: "I live close to the place where the accident occurred. About a quarter before ten o'clock on Sunday morning I saw some persons in a cart going towards the pool, and I ran to the place to stop them, as I knew it was very deep and dangerous. When I reached the spot the cart and people were in the water. Deceased was by the side of the pool and he asked me to jump in and rescue his child. Deceased had then reached one of his children from the water. I told him that the pool was too deep, and I COULD NOT SWIM. I at once ran for a rope, and when I got back deceased jumped into the water to rescue his child, but he sank and did not rise more than once or twice. He appeared to have no knowledge whatever of swimming. Myself and others were getting the people out when deceased jumped in.

I saw deceased's body taken out about a quarter of an hour afterwards. There were rails in the pond at the time, but there was still room enough for a cart to be driven in. The pool is about four yards from the public road. The road is called the Stourton Road. The pond is the property of Mr. Foley. The tenant's name is Stinton, in whose meadow the pool is. There has been previously rails a few yards in the pool, but about Christmas last the fence was broken down. Had this fence been up on Sunday last, the accident would have been prevented. I recollect a little boy being drowned in the same pool some seven years ago. I consider the pool is not a proper and safe place without a fence. I should think that the pond is about twelve or fifteen feet deep. I have seen parties this day watering their horses at the place."

The Jury returned a verdict of 'Accidental Death' and at the same time requested that the persons to whom the pool appertained should be written to and ordered to take immediate and decisive steps to render its approaches secure.

THE FOLEY FAMILY

Richard Foley, the founder of the Foley family was a native of Dudley. He married Anne, the daughter of Katherine Robinson. He had one daughter and three sons (John, Edward and Richard). The entries of their baptisms are to be found in the registers of St. Thomas' Church, Dudley, 1577-1594.

His son Richard became executor of his will in 1600.

Richard like his father was a nailor by trade, and the business was prosperous. At this time there was much poverty in Dudley and Richard was a friend of the poor. He interested himself in the Grammar School and School House. Richard Baxter, his friend, was appointed Schoolmaster, and lived in the school house. Richard Foley was well respected, and became Mayor of Dudley 1616. In 1630 the Foley Family went to live in Stourbridge, and Richard having an interest in the Iron

MEMORIAL WINDOW, ST. PETER'S CHURCH, STOURTON

trade of the district, became Forge Master. A certain amount of wealth was acquired and he built substantial residences. He bought one at Bedcote Stoke Edith, and the Mansion House, sometimes called The Brick House in Stourbridge High Street (now the Talbot Hotel and also the Chemist's shop attached). He also acquired lands at Old Swinford, the Livings of several poor Churches at Kidderminster, Little Whitley and Great Whitley—he appointed conformable ministers to them.

The family attended Old Swinford Church, and Richard acted as Warden 1634-35, and as Sidesman 1636-37. In his civic duties he was made responsible for the local turnpike roads.

His son, Robert (1620-1676) was also an active worker in Old Swinford Church. He was Warden in 1654-55 and Accountant in 1657-59. He married Anne, second daughter of Dudley Lord North. He was a member of the Grand Jury at Worcester Assizes 1660.

Richard Foley had ten sons. They married well and brought fame and wealth to their name. At one time there were five Members of Parliament. The family was raised to the Peerage during the reign of Charles II.

Richard married for his second wife Alice, daughter of William Brindley of the Hyde Works, Kinver. At that time the nail trade was going down owing to competition abroad. It became known that Swedes were able to make nails cheaper than could be produced in England, but the use of splitting mills and machinery which had completely superseded the laborious process of preparing the rods for nailmaking, then practised in England, although something of the kind was then being invented at Dartford, Kent.

William Brindley made an attempt to find out the secret of the mills used abroad but failed. Richard Foley then decided himself to visit the Denemara works, Sweden. He took little money but had with him his valuable violin (worth 600 guineas). He gained entrance to the works as a travelling musician and after a second journey abroad mastered the splitting mill. With the help of Mr. Knight and other friends, Richard Foley was able to set up splitting mills in Swindon on the Smestowe, Prestwood on the Gothersley Canal, the Hyde Works and Whittington on the Stour. By his skill and industry he soon laid the foundations of a large fortune, and at the same time he restored the business of an extensive district. Kinver became a thriving little town with its own market and police court. The Packer's Yard at the White Harte was a busy hive of industry and trade. Dud Dudley had by this time discovered the use of sea-coal or pit-coal, as a substitute for charcoal used for the furnaces. There was plenty of iron ore in the district. A better quality of wire for nails could be produced. Large quantities of farming implements and household goods were made.

Then came the Civil War in 1642. Orders came in from the Army and Navy. Commercial Offices were established in London and Bristol. Prince Rupert came to Stourbridge for help to maintain the Army. He had the use of the 'Brick-House' for three days. Dud Dudley supplied iron for ordnance and Richard Foley provided 'Horse and Fodder'.

In 1641 Thomas Foley Esq. bought Compton from Sir William Whorwood. In 1650 his son Wortley sold Stourton Castle and Kinver to Philip Foley. The Hon. Edward Foley in 1790 married Eliza Maria, a daughter of Mr. Hodgetts who owned Prestwood Hall. Afterwards his son John Henry Wentworth Hodgetts Foley, M.P. for Staffordshire from 1857-68 and High Sheriff in 1887 lived there. He was Chairman of the School Board for many years, otherwise lived retired. He died in 1894. His son Paul Henry Foley was chairman of the Parish Council for many years. He was one of the founders of Worcestershire as a first class cricket club. He was a Barrister and an able man but little known outside cricket and local circles. On the death of his aunt he inherited the fine house of Stoke Edith in Herefordshire and shortly afterwards left Prestwood Hall. A few years later he sold the whole of his Staffordshire estate and so broke the long connection of his family with Kinver. Later the Stoke Edith Mansion was burnt down and Mr. P. H. Foley died shortly after.

To return to Richard, 'Fiddler Foley' as he was sometimes called. His sons married well and brought fame. Some helped him in the Iron Works. Samuel became Bishop of Connor and Down in Ireland. Another joined in partnership with a Bavarian Refugee and shared his glass trade. One became a sculptor. Another joined the Navy.

The Foley family were interested in restoring the Hampton Chapel in Kinver Church, afterwards known as the Foley Chapel. The Hon. Mrs. Foley gave the Altar and Altar Cloth. Some members of the family are buried there. It is pleasing to note that Richard Foley encouraged all works of benevolence in the neighbourhood. He enlarged and endowed the Grammar School at Dudley. He and his son Thomas (a great benefactor of Kidderminster) who was High Sheriff of Worcestershire founded and endowed a hospital at Old Swinford, still in existence, for the free education of poor boys. Thomas resided at Whitley Court. He died in 1677 and was buried at Whitley. A large portrait of Thomas, the Hon. Lord Foley may be seen in the Old Swinford Hospital School. The inscription at the foot of the portrait declares that it is his covenant desire that there should be no neglect nor unfaithfulness by those in charge of the Home, and the boys should be brought up to the Glory of God, and their own real good. The Foley Family has been spoken of as being of the most romantic history of all time.

It is gratifying to know that the new College opened in Stourbridge in 1956 for further education, is called 'The Foley College'.

THE WILL OF RICHARD FOLEY

"I being in good health and memory but considering the uncertainty of death, and being desirous to settle estate whereof it has pleased God to make me steward and overseer . . . . ."

His will shows him to have been a deeply religious man. He left Robert Foley his son and Mr. Taylor, Schoolmaster of Dudley Grammar School, the use of the School House. He made promise of money to eight almhouses, a bequest to the Governors and a free Grammar School for four or more poor young beginners to be given every Easter Evening. The Iron Mills to some of his sons. Provision for other sons, his daughter £1,500. The Brick House to his wife, afterwards to John.

He wished to be frugally interred. He was buried near the Chancel in Old Swinford Church.

All the early Foleys were Puritans. Richard Baxter seems to have been on familiar and intimate terms with various members of the family, and makes frequent mention of them in his 'Life and Times'. Thomas Foley, when appointed High Sheriff of the county, requested Baxter to preach the customary sermon before him and Baxter in his 'Life' speaks of him as of so just and blameless dealing, that all men he ever had to do with spoke of his great integrity and honesty, which were questioned by none.

In passing it is interesting to note that to-day may still be seen a monument in the form of an obelisk, near to Blakeshall, on the top of a rounded knoll, set up as a memorial to Richard Baxter, probably by some member of the Foley family.

CHAPTER 2

DUNSLEY HALL, NEAR TO STEWPONEY HOTEL

Dunsley Hall is situated on a rock which commands a view of the vale of the Stour, a scene of picturesque beauty crowned with a clump of trees. In 1316, Gilbert-le-Dunsley held the Manor and water mill. He is recorded as being witness in an inquisition regarding lands granted by Edward II to John-de-la-Lea of "Bobynton." This villa, now known as Dunsley Hall, still contains some of the original timber walls which may be seen in the bedrooms; one outstanding piece is quite five feet in width.

This villa in course of time became tenanted by Mr. Hancox and then passed to the ownership of Mr. Benjamin Robins, who was murdered by a travelling carpenter named "John Wood" in December, 1812. His assailant robbed him of his money and fled from the district, after calling at the Whittington Inn, where he usually had a few drinks when in the neighbourhood. He was a journeyman-carpenter and was well known at the Inn, where he kept his own pewter mug. As was the custom in those days, the mug was hung on a beam in the old ceiling. This mug hung in its usual place for years, and was only taken down when the Inn was rebuilt.

Benjamin Robins died of his wounds and the townpeople of Stourbridge, where he was well known, called in "Scotland Yard" men of the day, "Bow Street Runners." "John Wood" or William Howe (his real name) was captured as the result of a piece of detective work well worthy of the great Sherlock Holmes himself.

The Bow Street men were Harry Adkins and Samuel Taunton. Adkins, by the way, had earned himself the nickname of "The Ferret." William Howe, being a comparative stranger to the area, was an early suspect. He had disappeared, but in their enquiries the Bow Street men learned that two boxes of tools had recently been sent to an address in London. Did they belong to Howe? The detectives set off hot-foot for the London address. They opened the boxes, and in one of them found a pistol and some bullets. Patiently they sat down and waited for someone to collect the boxes. It was William Howe. The "Ferret" had scored again.

Howe was taken to be tried for murder and robbery at Stafford, where he was executed for his crime. Before his death he made a public confession of his guilt and he solemnly addressed the hundreds of people gathered to witness the hanging, admonishing them to pray to Almighty God to keep their hands from picking and stealing.

He doubtless found little consolation in the fact that his hanging brought him a double distinction —he was one of the first murderers to be hanged on a gallows which had a trap door "drop", and he was the last murderer to be strung up on a gibbet in the Midlands. A local craftsman built a huge gibbet on the site of the murder, and Howe's body was "hung in hoops of iron" from it. We are told that on the following Sunday thousands of men and women flocked to the spot and even fought to get a view. The gruesome spectacle is commemorated in the present name of the locality. It is known as the Gibbet Wood. People still do not like going past the place after dark. The gibbet was made into uprights for a stile, and served to scare off "superstitious thieves" who periodically had been in the habit of removing the wood of the old stile where the murder took place. Today the fine tumbledown stile, used in a nearby field by the local farmers for their sheep, is in good preservation. The site of the gibbet was marked by a young oak and a stout post. A few years ago the fine old oak tree was inadvertently hewn down. Many legends grew up at the time concerning the body of the murderer. One is that a Dr. Downing had illegally removed the body from the gibbet for dissection, and while he was in the process of doing so he heard someone coming and in alarm slipped down and lay flat on the ground. While there the body fell on him and he had to remain motionless, with it lying over him until the persons had passed. He afterwards kept the skeleton wired together in his hall and used to frighten visitors with it.

In a letter to the writer of this article dated June 6th 1951, concerning the true disposal of the body, Miss Beatrice Bolding of Malvern says: "I have always been told that my uncle, Dr. Robins, had Howe's body taken down and removed to his surgery." She remembered paying early visits to Dunsley Hall with her mother.

About the year 1955 Brierley Hill Urban District Council received a most unusual gift—one cracked coffee cup and one tea cup and two dishes, which belonged to Benjamin Robins of Dunsley Hall, near Kinver. The crockery, which recalls the Dunsley Murder crime of 1812, was presented by Miss Nora Yeomans of Bank Street, Brierley Hill. It came into her family many years before, having been bought at a sale. It is now in the care of Brierley Hill Library.

Miss Nancy Price, of Rock Mount, was another visitor to Dunsley Hall. She joined her young companions there very often, riding from her home on her white pony. Nancy Price was born in

Kinver about 1880. She lived in the midst of most enchanting scenery at "Rock Mount". Rock Mount is an imposing old house standing in pleasant grounds a short distance off the road to Cookley from Kinver, High Street. It was her childhood's home of which she was very proud. Close by were the caves and cliffs of red sandstone called Gibraltar Rock, with the river Stour near by. She had a very happy childhood, and made many friends, young and old, in the village. Her father was William Henry Price. He was 49 years old when she was born, and was the son of a well-to-do local family which had established a flourishing business at Brierley Hill as canal carriers. Her mother 39 years old old, Sarah Julia, daughter of William Mannix a Wolverhampton physician. Nancy was three months old when her elder sister died at the age of five years. She was buried in the family vault at Wordsley Church.

MISS NANCY PRICE

Nancy attended the private school in Stourbridge kept by three maiden ladies'—The Misses Simms. Afterwards she was educated at a Ladies Seminary at Malvern. At the age of fourteen she ran away to Birmingham to begin a stage career. At the Theatre Royal she encountered Sir Herbert Tree, to whom,

standing on a property basket she recited portions of Shakespeare's Richard III; Tree was greatly impressed, but became alarmed when he learned she had run away from School; and forthwith packed her back. He told her to go home and study hard for another twelve months.

She ran away again a year later joining F. R. Benson's Company in a non-speaking part. She was paid a weekly wage of 12/6. She suffered many hardships and being very ill her father came and fetched her home for a short time.

In her first appearance on the professional stage she made a remarkable success of a character part, an unusual achievement for one so young and inexperienced. This early success was an indication of the way her professional career was to develop, since then, except for a few brief holidays, she has hardly been out of the theatre. To-day, as every theatre-goer knows, Miss Price is one of England's finest character actresses, and is quite an important producer. She has written and published twelve books. One is a book of poems, and the others are about the countryside and the animals and birds that inhabit it. On her 70th birthday it was said of her:—
"In the summer she still plays tennis and swims every day. She broadcasts, lectures, runs a magazine, gives poetry recitals lasting about two hours without a break. She televises, much to the pride of the Kinver villagers, who never seem to tire of relating how she stood up superbly to the challenge of a close up in the melodrama "Therese Raquin". One could not easily forget how her tortured eyes fixed the murderer's as she sat paralysed in her wheel chair, unable to speak, or move, and how the camera dwelt on the slight, painful twitching of her crippled fingers."

She was awarded the C.B.E. June 1950, an honour she well deserved. There is ample evidence that this charming, cultured lady has a strong resolute character, and a mind that does not run in common grooves; during the last war (1939—1945) she worked for ten months on a mine-sweeper, and no one ever found out that she was not a man.

Not long ago she sold her yacht and all her possessions to help the 'People's Theatre'. Her life has been a full one, and at the age when most women would be taking things easy, Miss Price confounds the theory that hard work is for the young.

For many years the Price family lived at Kinver and the fine old Norman Parish Church of red sandstone, perched on the lip of Kinver Edge, and looking across the four counties, holds the most poignant memories for her. She used to worship at this church as a child and it is the resting place of her parents and several other members of her family. The church already bears several marks of esteem in which it was held by the family. There is a beautiful stained glass window to the memory of her father, also candlesticks and Lectern.

At the time she was appearing in "Whiteoaks" at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham, as the grand old centenarian, with her parrot "Boney", she revisited the scenes of her childhood and presented a cloth of gold altar piece to Kinver Church. This same altar piece decorated the altar at the coronation of King George VI, and is beautifully embroidered. It was made by the Royal School of Needlework at Kensington. It is embroidered in pure gold. Miss Price regarded it as one of her most precious possessions. There were tears in her eyes when she gave it to the two Church Wardens, Mr. A. Timmins and Mr. W. Basterfield, with the words "I want to give this lovely thing to the Church I love more than any other. Will you take it? I am very fond of it." Chatting to the Birmingham Gazette afterwards she said, "I could not think at first what to do with the altar cloth. It was given to me by a very dear friend and it seems wrong that I should frame it and hang it up somewhere, where only a few people would see it, so I decided to give it to this beautiful old Church, which I have loved since I was a child and which has played such an important part in the spiritual life of my family. It is one of the loveliest churches in all England and one of the most beautifully situated. Not far from here there is the old Nanny Rock, where there is a cave in which a 'Witch' used to live when I was a little girl. It was an open cave with no doors and windows and this old woman lived there with a black cat and had a dried snake and other skins arranged around the cave.

She used to make potents and the villagers were terrified of her, but she was always very kind to me and I often used to go and visit her. It was rather extraordinary. She gave me a bracelet which she said was made of human hair and which had two bones and an old stone in it. She said that as

long as I had that bracelet, all those whom I loved would love me and it has always been so. I have now given the bracelet to my daughter and she is having the same fortune with it", continued Miss Price.

"Quite near here are some caves which we used to call 'Gibraltar Rock', and in the old days there were numerous families living in those caves, but the authorities said they were unhealthy and built new cottages. Within a year every single member of those families was dead".

Some few years ago Miss Price opened the local Flower Show. She was gratified to find the inhabitants had slung streamers across the Street bearing the inscription 'Welcome to our Nancy Price.'

That was a disinterested tribute to genius. For it is a long time since 'Squire Price', Miss Nancy Price's father used to leave barrels of beer outside the gates leading to his estate for the refreshment of passers by. He was a councillor and Chairman of the School Governors for Kinver and associated himself with all the local events. Nancy married at an early age Col. Charles Maude, brother of one of the most outstanding actors of the time, Cyril Maude. Her daughter too is an accomplished actress.

Miss Ellen Chamberlain on a recent visit to Miss Nancy Price tells some very interesting stories. "As the front door of her flat at Knightsbridge is opened to you, you see a huge notice to burglars, telling them that there are no valuables in the place and that the silver is kept in the top drawer of the kitchen cabinet, so will they please take it and leave the rest of the flat tidy". Once she told Miss Chamberlain, "I gave a cup of coffee to a burglar who had broken in. He was so amazed that he drank it, and went away taking nothing."

"To me, however," continued Miss Chamberlain, "her home seemed crammed with valuables, collections, and concrete expressions of the cultured, unusual, and amazingly versatile mind of this woman of sixty-nine years."

I asked her about a large china jug displayed on a cupboard, which, she said once belonged to the Duke of Wellington, who gave it to Jenny Lind the 'Swedish Nightingale'.

"My conversation with her was often interrupted by the dry cackle of 'Boney' the green parrot which was on her shoulder for over 1,000 performances of 'Whiteoaks'. He now lives with her, performing card tricks and sleeps at night under her chair.

At present she is writing a new book. "I have kept different diaries each year of my life" she admitted, "I had one for engagements, one for plays, one for my thoughts and so on. Last year I decided to keep a diary of my dreams, and I made myself get up at night and always wrote them down truthfully. Now they will be published under the title 'Acquainted with the night'. As I point out in the preface almost every sixth dream is about Kinver, my old home and the Church there."

Her C.B.E. was awarded for her services to the theatre.

It is interesting to note that a BRONZE HEAD of Miss Nancy Price by James Woodford R.A. hangs in the Royal Academy (1949).

Miss Nancy Price celebrated her 86th birthday on February 3rd, 1966. She fed the birds as usual and had her daily car ride (about 400 miles weekly).

The following article on "Remembrance" was also written by Nancy Price in 1950.

"Staffordshire, I salute you, for in your versatility lies that village which is in my heart—Kinver.

To write of a place that one loves and knows as home is difficult. Every house in its attractive, irregular street, which I knew so well as a child, I can see vividly to-day, and every one of them had a friendly face for me, probably because of the affection its inmates had for my mother and father.

The old white house on the rock, where I was born and spent my childhood, will always be the dearest in the world to me, and I can still enjoy the scent and beauty of those huge bowls and great jugs full of flowers gathered from the generous store of the rich Staffordshire earth. No one ever went from our door without a posy and fruit and vegetables in season. The boys of the village soon learnt that they could have as much fruit and as many nuts as they liked provided the birds my parents loved

so well, were left unmolested. Those birds—how we loved and guarded them—and, as I know you are interested, I send you a greeting from my feathered companion of to-day, my parrot, Boney Whiteoaks, without whom life would lose most of its glamour and savour. Then there was my fat white cob and attendant fox terrier, who accompanioned me all over that varied countryside.

The unique rock houses were a joy to me then, and a wonder to me now; all our washing was done at one of these, with water which had to be drawn from a deep well! How white and sweet were the clean clothes when they came home. These were carried to and fro in a large basket, the three miles, by two sisters. I think I could paint them to-day, with their kindly, rosy, weatherbeaten faces.

Another more lonely rock house, or perhaps I should say cave, held "Nanny" and bore her name; she was regarded with awe but held an irresistible attraction all the same for the village folk, who still believed, somewhat shamefacedly, in the potions and charms distilled. Then one day, Nanny disappeared and was never seen again; like the wild creatures she chose to live among, she had obviously crept away to die.

Many a walk did I have, as a child, with Baring Gould, the novelist, who wrote much about these interesting rock houses. There were great thrills in these conversations for me, and though he was an old man in years, his young heart matched well with my tender years. The old Norman church on the hill was, and still is unrivalled in my heart. Here the worshippers toiled up the hill, through the cuttings between the sandstone rock at least twice, sometimes three times, on Sunday. I do not think we ever missed, save through illness. In that church there is a lectern and candlesticks, presented by my mother, in memory of my little sister, who died when she was five years old, and a window in memory of my father. How well I remember my mother and I insisting there should be flowers and birds in this window, because my father had loved them so much. The church's old beadle-cum-sexton terrified me when I was a child; he was misshappen and his appearance was rather like a gargoyle, but he was really a kindly soul and I still possess some of his little gifts. On Sundays, he wore knee-breeches and a blue broadcloth coat with brass buttons and carried a long stick with a iron knob at the end. During the sermon he walked up and down the aisles and leaned over the square pews; if there was a luckless sleeper inside, he or she received a sharp rap. My father always kept two bags of sweets; one—the most delectable variety—was reserved for a long dry sermon, the second grade for sermons that were of the more wide-awake order. It interested me that only the other day, in Sussex, I went into an old church still possessing the square pews, and each was provided with a little cupboard, which the understanding old parson told me contained refreshments of various orders, and "Why not?" said the dear old man, with a sigh, "I fear I am very tedious sometimes and some of my congregation are very old. This combination necessitates stimulant!"

Kinver Edge. What has happened to that lovely wild area? There were no baskets for litter when I was a child, indeed, none were required—no litter was strewn about. Perhaps more people were occupied and there was less leisure, fewer holidays; parents may have been stricter. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that to-day litter has increased. I have often thought what wonderful work the women of the Institutes throughout England could do in the way of instilling into their own youngsters and those of their neighbours the desirability of keeping our fair countryside still fair, as far as it is possible in this mechanical utilitarian age.

Then I think of the meadows, for Kinver and the district was rich in meadows, with buttercups and daisies that always seem so essentially English, and the water meadows with kingcups, irises and forget-me-nots, and the silvered willows. And again, I think of those tall, thick hedges and quiet lanes; they have gone, I fear, and live only in memory. As a child, I was always walking or riding and never hindered or stopped in either of these pleasures, although I believe it was thought extraordinary, by many, that so young a child should have been allowed such liberty; but what a love of nature has this comradeship with the countryside given me. I sometimes feel, even to-day, that the people I know best are the "people with the green-heads" as Stevenson called the trees, and the creatures of hoof, pad and claw.

Another family who lived at Dunsley Hall was named Bird. This family did a great deal of work for Kinver Church. The daughter was a well-beloved Sunday School teacher. She often visited the little Church at Prestwood to entertain at children's parties.

The Misses Harrison of Cookley often visited their relatives at Dunsley Hall. These ladies kept the draper's shop in the High St. Kinver. One of the sisters went to China as a medical missionary. During the Boxer Rising she was carried off by brigands. They sent one of her fingers home in order to receive a ransom. The ransom, however, arrived too late. She was murdered October 1932. A tablet to her memory is placed in Cookley Church with the following inscription:— "This tablet was erected by the parishioners of Cookley and other friends to the memory of Eleanor Jane Harrison, elder daughter of Alfred and Jane Harrison. Born at Austcliffe, Cookley, July 3rd 1871. Who laid down her life in the Service of Christ as a Medical Missionary in China, September 1930. Faithful unto Death." She adopted a Chinese boy whom her relatives brought back to England when they visited the scene of the murder. He was educated as a Medical Missionary and returned a few years ago to China to preach the Gospel.

CHAPTER 3

PRESTWOOD

About a mile from the Stewponey Hotel, along the Wolverhampton Road, is Prestwood House. It is beautifully situated on the verdant banks of the River Stour. History goes back to the reign of Richard III, 1223 A.D., when it was occupied by John de Somery. Long before this time there was a religious order of monks who celebrated Midnight Mass with a religious order from the monastery at Wolverhampton. We are told that the Lady Wulfruna was a great benefactress to Wolverhampton, with the sanction of Archbishop Sigerie, and her grandfather King Alfred. Her mother was Ethelfleda, "the Great Lady of the Mercians", who rebuilt Tamworth Castle after it was destroyed by the Danes in 914 A.D. A fine Collegiate Church now stands on the site where an early monastery may have been. The noted families of Dudley Lyttelton, Sebright, Hodgson and Foley have each in their turn added improvements to Prestwood House. The beautiful gardens were laid out by Repton. There was a Domestic Chapel and a resident chaplain. Dr. Holingsworth stayed there after the Reformation. The mansion is now used as a chest hospital.

In the 17th century, there was a flourishing wire works in this district, with its small cottages for the workers, and a small sandstone building was provided, which served as a school for young children. It was also used for a Sunday school and for Divine Worship. A fee of 2d. a week was charged, the money being returned in clothing at the end of the year. The boys were given hob-nailed boots to wear in the winter, and the girls wore white capes in summer and red woollen cloaks in winter. It is recorded that in November 1872 a mattress was ordered from Stringer's Stourbridge for the little ones to sleep on. Another item recorded is that at the marriage of the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) in 1863, the children were given a holiday, and after attending divine service partook of sandwiches and wine. The yearly tea-party for the Sunday School was held on the lawns at Prestwood House. The Chapel House near the school was occupied by the school mistress. Owing to the Education Act of 1885 the Day School was closed. The Sunday Services taken by the headmaster of Kinver Grammar School were continued for many years afterwards.

A report of 1850 says the Prestwood School was built by J. H. H. Foley when the Rev. G. Wharton was Vicar of Kinver. There was at that time 60 scholars in the Day School and 75 in the Sunday

School. Another report mentions that a tea was provided for 50 Sunday School scholars on January 2nd, 1894. It was arranged by Miss Bird of Dunsley Hall. There was a concert afterwards, the artistes being Mr. Foley, Mrs. Foster, Mrs. Stear and Mr. Whiston.

When the Foley Estates were sold in 1913 Mr. Francis Grazebrook of Stourton Castle bought the church at Prestwood and presented it to the trustees of Lichfield Diocese. When the last headmaster of Kinver Grammar School died Ald. H. S. Walker of Stourbridge was asked to take over as Lay-Reader in charge. Some years ago he presented a stained glass window in memory of his first wife.

There are four locks on the canals at Stewponey Junction. A few years ago a blacksmith's shop stood on the lock-side doing a good trade with the boat-men who used the canal.

Recently at Stourbridge Public Library there was on show a bill of an auction sale relating to the wire works of Halfcot Wire Works estate by Mr. Davies on June 23rd, 1829.

It consisted of, "Furniture, grates and other fixtures, farming implements, at the Halfcot Wire Works adjoining the turnpike road leading from the Stewponey to Wolverhampton. Lot I was a capital six-inch waggon with thripples, and the other lots included, two iron candle-sticks two chamber candlesticks and snuffers, a 'tram and bench,' a pair of bottle slides, two pairs of nut-cracks, three slates, and two pole fire screens."

On the site of the old Halfcot Wire Works, there now stands a useful service station for petrol.

The Stewponey District, or Stourton as it is better known, presents a more up-to-date appearance to-day and looks back incredulously at its recent past:— a way of life which had continued unchanged since late medieval times, is changed overnight with little but the memories of the older folk to confirm that it still existed until yesterday.

Gone are all the old industries and attendant cottages. New building estates now take their place. A Women's Institute has been formed and is thriving well, while the Youth Club has its own headquarters. The Newcomers are hoping to build a Community Hall in the near future.

CHAPTER 4

STOURTON CASTLE

Stourton Castle is also very near the Stewponey Hotel.

The history of Stourton Castle is also the history of the Royal Forest of Kinver. It was primarily built as a house for the head forester, and was used probably as headquarters for Royal visitors to the forest for hunting.

The earliest records occur in the Salt Collection of Historic Staffordshire. In the time of Edward 1 appears the following account: John Fitz Philip holds the castle of Stourton and the wood, which belongs to the kitchen of the castle. There is no castle guard appurtenant to the said castle.

Kinver also shared in the sensation caused by a startling murder during the reign of Edward II at Stourton Castle. Records of this are contained in at least twelve Court Rolls. The murder was so gruesome as to be almost unbelievable. It took place in 1316 on Easter Monday.

The murdered man was Sir Thomas Murdac, Knight of the Castle. The accused were, his wife Juliana, and her lover, Sir John de Vause, forester of Kinver. One roll states that Sir John sent several men along to do the deed, with Juliana aiding and abetting the felony. It appears that one,

William, son of Richard Bodekisham, dispenser of Sir Thomas, and Robert, the chaplain and senesehall, with Roger the chamberlain of Juliana, killed the man with sticks and a knife in his bed. The knife was stuck right through his body. The body was taken to Northampton, after being dismembered, a distance of fifty miles from the Castle, where it was buried.

After the murder, Sir John and Juliana appeared to have fled, and they were married at Lichfield three days later. It appears however that she was arrested and imprisoned many times, yet no one came forward to confirm this. Eventually she was brought to justice and suffered the terrible end of being burnt at the stake. There is no trace of the evidence of the trial of Sir John de Vause until five years after the murder. It seems he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, gave the guards some "strong drink" and escaped. Again he was caught—imprisoned and after much litigation was tried before twenty four knights and freemen. He was acquitted. Seven years later, he petitioned the King, that as he had been acquitted of all charges, his land and possessions, having been confiscated, should be returned to him, and this was done. In the year 1310 A.D. he was reputed to have been "Lord of Kinver."

Stourton Castle was known to be a fortress in the reign of Edward IV. It is recorded to have been in possession of John Hampton, Lord also of Kinver, who died in 1472. Cardinal Pole was born here A.D. 1500. This celebrated man was son of Sir Richard Pole, Lord Montague, by Margaret Plantagenet, Countess of Salisbury, daughter of George, Duke of Clarence, brother of Edward IV. After receiving part of his education in the Carthusian Monastry at Shene, he went to Oxford, and became fellow of Corpus Christi College. Henry VIII sent him to pursue his studies on the Continent. He resided several years in Padua. In 1536 he was elected Cardinal. The hostility manifested by Cardinal Pole to the divorce of Henry VIII from Catherine of Aragon, drew upon him the displeasure of that Monarch and the resentment of the King was probably heightened by a publication of the Cardinals entitled "Pro Unitate Ecclesiastica," in which the King was reproved for assuming the title of head of the Church.

On the demise of Paul III he was twice elected Pope, by the conclave, but declined to accept that dignity. In 1543, the Cardinal was appointed Legate to the council of Trent and in 1554 arrived in England, being invested with the legative power by Paul IV. He succeeded in reconciling the King, Queen and Parliament to the See of Rome. In 1555 he succeeded the venerable martyr Cranmer, to the See of Canterbury, which high station he occupied till the time of his death, which took place in 1558, sixteen hours after that of the Queen. He was the last archbishop whose remains were deposited in the metropolitan church of Canterbury. Mary, Pole, and Bonner Bishop of London, were responsible for the fatal policy of burning 300 Protestants in less than four years in an effort to restore Catholicism in England. They temporarily undid the reforming work of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Pole and Bonner were Englishmen of the older generation, who failed to realise that there was little Catholic zeal left in the country and that there was instead a growing Protestantism and more humane attitude towards the agonies of the martyr. The fanatical attitude of Mary, Pole and Bonner did more than anything else to ruin the chances of restoring the power of the Pope in England. Cardinal Pole's tomb is against the north wall of the eastermost chapel of the Cathedral at Canterbury. This chapel is the principal apse of the Cathedral and is named the "Corona" or "Becket's Crown." Pilgrims were shown here a jewelled reliquary shaped like a man's head, which was supposed to contain part of Becket's tonsure. Here now stands St. Augustine's Chair of Petworth Marble, completed about 1205. Every Archbishop of Canterbury uses it at his enthronement. On the south wall of the chapel, opposite to that of Cardinal Pole, the kneeling figure of another Archbishop, Frederick Temple (died 1902), is framed in a monument of Cornish marble.

Ralfe D. Payne, 1950.

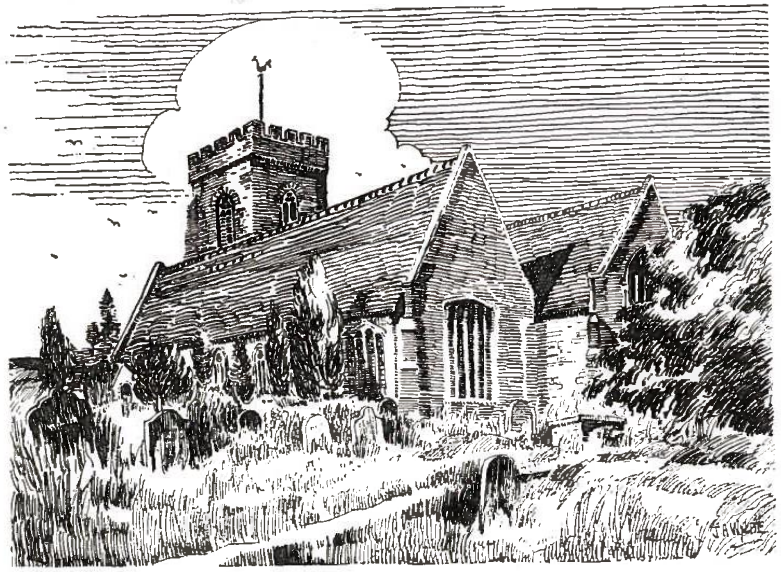
Stourton Castle, together with Tutbury, Dudley and Hartlebury, were garrisons at the period of the Civil Wars between Charles I and Parliament. The former surrendered to Gilbert Gerard, for the King, March 23rd, 1674. Another family of distinction resident at this castle was that of Talbot, William, son of Sherrington Talbot, previously of Lichfield and Whittington, died here 1686, to whose memory a monument is erected in Kinver Church.

Stourton Castle was also the birthplace, 1650, of Dr. William Talbot, successively Bishop of Oxford, Salisbury and Durham, 1699, 1715 and 1721, father of Lord Chancellor Talbot; who died October 10th, 1730. He descended from Sir Gilbert Talbot of Grafton Manor, who was the youngest son of John, second Earl of Shrewsbury.

The castle at this time was really a farmhouse occupied by several respectable families at various dates, the last one being Thomas Sellick Broome, Esq. Mrs. Stewart was also known to have been in residence there in 1789. In 1805 Thomas Warrel Grazebrook entered upon lease of Stourton Castle. Mr. Foster succeeded to the tenancy in 1833. He made many alterations. After Mr. W. O. Foster left Stourton, Mr. G. R. Collis became tenant for a short time. The next tenant was Mr. Arkle. He died in 1856. After this the castle remained empty for some time. It was bought by Mr. Francis Grazebrook in July 1913. The principal entrance to the mansion is by a gateway on the western side, under the sole remaining tower; two other towers are said to have been destroyed at the period of the Civil Wars. The larger massive door is perforated by cannon balls, and was preserved. On the opposite side of the inner court is a fine brick arch, over which are several tiles of mosaic figures.

The eastern part of the building contains a noble range of apartments rising boldly from the valley and environed by a fine terrace of garden ground. On a minute examination it appears that the tower is built of stone, as also a part of the northern side wall of the interior area. The remaining buildings consisting of a capacious mansion, with appurtenances, are entirely of brick. This part, though ancient, is probably of a date considerably later than the period when the towers were erected. The latter may be conjectured to have been constituent parts of the original fortress.

CHAPTER 5



ST. PETER'S CHURCH, KINVER

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, KINVER

The Kinver Church is not more than one mile south of Stewponey, and visitors to the district will find it superbly sited on the extreme end of the Kinver Edge, seemingly to stand guard over the magnificent country-side. It is a neat structure of stone from local quarries, containing several vestiges of antiquity. In pagan times there may have been a simple structure used for devotional purposes. When Wulfhere, the Saxon King of West Mercia became christian he rebuilt the church and dedicated it to the memory of his two sons Ruffinus and Wulfhad whom he had murdered at Stone, a few miles away, for professing Christianity.

He was later responsible for the appointment of St. Chad as first Bishop of Lichfield in the year 700 A.D. From the Saxon style of architecture, the building of the church was enlarged by using Norman method, and again during the 14th and 15th centuries. This was replaced, probably at intervals using red sandstone and incorporating with the old stonework a new Greek style. Many additions were again made in the 19th century.

The marks of the original church can be seen on each side of the red sandstone tower where two massive Norman buttresses of grey stone mark the corners of the earlier church. The south porch was built in the 18th century as a vestry.

Inside, one notices a fine lofty aisle, the south aisle, and in the lofty walls some grey stone masonry from the Norman church and some of the stones are marked with Norman diaper ornament. The inner porch, added in 1937, is the work of the Bromsgrove Guild, under the supervision of Mr. H. Jennings, the hon. architect.

The font has an ancient base (date unknown), and a modern top. An interesting feature is a Charter of A.D. 1627, with seal attached. This is contained in a glass case with a translation by the side showing the privileges and exemptions to which Kinver was entitled.

In glass cases are also kept the chained books, "The whole duty of man", with "The Gentleman's Calling" (1703), bound with "The Ladies' Calling," "The Government of the Tongue," "The art of Contentment," and "The Lively Oracles" (1704) also "Burkitt's Commentary on the New Testament" (1716), and some others dating from 1609, 1702 and 1856.

One is signed by the great Bishop Wilson, a saint and hero of the Church of England.

Here too is "The Knobbler," the long stick used to rap people on the head to wake them, when they fell asleep during the service, last wielded by John Hubble, sexton. It is said that the local squire was "caught in his own trap," for he apparently promised the sexton half-a-crown for the first person he woke during a service. Later he was surprised to receive a crack on the head from the sexton during the service. He had been asleep and being a good sportsman he paid up!

The fine tower contains a ring of eight bells and in the old days the clock chamber was one floor up and contained the following rhyme:—

Welcome all you that come to ring,
But first consider well this thing,
If that a bell you chance to throw,
Fourpence you must pay before you go,
And if you ring with spur or hat,
Then sixpence you must pay for that:
And if you chance to swear or curse,
A shilling it shall cost your purse,
Our laws are old, they are not new,
Therefore each man shall pay his due.
Isaac Fryer, Clerk, 1741.

Years ago there were galleries in the nave and the present ceiling of wood replaces an older one of plaster. In the north-east corner can be seen a curious inspection staircase leading up to a Norman doorway—this was found during the 19th century restoration. Behind some of the present pews can be seen some fine old carving, probably taken from an early screen. The pulpit is part of a onetime three decker of 1625. It is thought that Richard Baxter has preached in it. The north side aisle was added in 1857. The two eastern windows are in memory of members of the Brindley family and the Resurrection window was given by the widow and daughter of William Henry Price.

In the 14th century, directly after the south aisle was built, the chancel ended about halfway across and in the 15th century it was considerably enlarged, mainly it is thought, to create the present fine perpendicular window. The east window glass is in memory of Mrs. Bourne, of Heathlands (1849). The first organ was installed in 1833.

The present organ is the third of such instruments the church has possessed, and is a very fine one.

The Altar Frontal which is used on special occasions includes hangings used in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation of King George VI.

The eastward extension of the south aisle is known as the Grey Chapel. Here can be seen a very fine brass depicting Edward Grey, who died in 1528, with his two wives, seven sons and ten daughters .... quite a family! Brass rubbers would take a delight in this. There is some interesting glass in this chapel, including ancient fragments.

Next we come to the Foley Chapel. This Chapel has belonged to the Foley family since 1672 and used for many generations as a burial place. They had their own family pew, of course, and a private

entrance door to the chapel. Above the north door are more ancient glass fragments, together with several monuments to the Foley family.

There are traces of mural decorations on the south aisle walls, between the two tables of the Commandments and in the Chancel south wall was an aumbry. The Foley Chapel also contains a dilapidated stone effigy of a recumbent armed knight . . little is known about this figure and it is shrouded in mystery and uncertainty as to date and name.

The man said to be the greatest vicar of Kinver was John Hodgson, 1871 to 1901, who did a great deal for the parish and restoration of the church. He collected materials for the History of Kinver which are believed to be deposited with the Salt Library at Stafford. The parish registers and accounts go back to the 12th century and make a fine collection.

Since the Rev. D. Watson was installed (1955) a new Vicarage and Church Hall was dedicated by the Lord Bishop of Lichfield (1961).

The Rev. John Hodgson was a relative of the Foley family. He was a very distinguished looking man and had the manners of a true gentleman of the old school. He married a wealthy lady and spent the larger part of his income from the living on the salary of a curate to help him in his large parish. He took the most active interest in all parish matters, and was a member of all the local bodies. He died in 1901. His curate for many years was the Rev. William Henry Boulton who was also master of Kinver Grammar School. Kinver was one of the first rural parishes to adopt the Education Act of 1870. The first headmaster of the New Board Schools was Mr. J. Bennett. He served 30 years.

These registers are somewhat different from the usual ones one sees in old Churches, inasmuch as they show the very early methods of administration of parish affairs and the general and domestic life of the times. Accounts were kept by a Clerk, appointed by a gathering of parishioners, generally at the Church. This early group of parishioners was known as the parish vestry, but at some period of Kinver's history parish affairs were partly controlled by the early Court Leet officials by ancient manorial rights, privileges and penalties.

Some of the register entries are fascinating. Thus:

1597 "Be it remembered, only one wedding at St. Peter's in this year. Edward Comber and Agnes Robinson."
1661 Richard Whittle alias "Nick-nack" buried two days before Christmas.
1674 Margaret Jones stabbed to death.
1684 Two people both "wonderful old" buried.
1701 William Baylis, "honest BUT poor," buried.
1703 (hard luck) Norman York, whom God preserved in ye great snow from being stifled was drowned in the Stour.

Other records show that the Beadle, John Fryer, was a man of many parts—Town Crier, bell-ringer, grave-digger, and "knobbler" (waker-upper of people in church) and all for the princely wage of 24s. 6d. for thirteen weeks. One wonders who did all this on the fourteenth week onwards. Other entries are: "Entertaining four bishops after a Confirmation service 3s.": "12 months contract for oyle and clock repairing, 8s." "Spent in Kinver when the cavalry and soldiers came, ale 1s. 6d."

And another: "Cry the warnings about evil doers and arrange for men at a shilling per day for seven days to make the Cliff and Quarry Hill passable after ye great storm and to provide the village constable with a new pair of handcuffs, 2s. 6d."

These registers:— The Church Register and the Parish Register compiled under different-conditions contain some peculiar references as regards names and sometimes nick-names, cause of death and trades followed, or some trait of character or place of residence or status in the parish. Of course this would depend upon the whim of the writer. It would be brief and badly spelt and often reflected the true life and character or habits of the departed. It was during the 14th century that surnames became popular, and nearly all Christian names had a Bible origin, and those appearing in early Rolls or Deeds took or adopted names from parentage, estates or some personal feature, profession

or trade. The Parish Registers are different. They show early methods of administration of parish affairs, and the general domestic life as affected by Taxation, Education and Religious Life of the district.

S.J.H.

In the churchyard is a quiet Garden of Remembrance and also one or two interesting head-stones. One epitaph reads, "Fast asleep, five foot deep, all by my own direction. Let no one then disturb my sleep until the Resurrection."

On many of the stones of the exterior walls can be seen the incisions made when men of old sharpened their weapons on the sandstone.

Which reminds one that perhaps in those ancient times it was necessary to some extent to do this' but there seems to be no legitimate reason to-day to carve one's initials all over the walls of the church and thus despoil a holy building with a conglomeration of crudely carved initials and names of no significance whatsoever.

People who do this sort of thing can be of no importance, and they probably act under the false impression that someone is interested to know that "J.B." carved his initials in 1959. The only interest they have is that they would probably like to give the individual a good hiding.

It is suggested that the "carvers" do something more worthy to commemorate their visit to the church; there are, for instance, offertory boxes inside.

Unfortunately sandstone is soft and any fool can carve in it.

From the churchyard a magnificent view can be enjoyed. Down below can be seen the somewhat haphazard layout of Kinver with lovely wooded slopes all around. The famous Kinver Edge is near, a great attraction to visitors during the summer time.

KINVER VILLAGE is about one mile from Stewponey bus stop. It is a place where life is never dull. In the summer it is a magnet for visitors from all over the Midlands. With its beautiful country-side and magnificent views from Kinver Edge, with the ancient Rock Dwellings, it offers many attractions. Even in the winter it is far from being dull. It is a hive of activity in the evenings and week-ends.

This is an area once swept by the sea. Sea-shells have been dug up in the parish. Discoveries of the remains of military occupations, either of Pagan, Saxon, Norman or Danish origin, include the ancient flint spear heads, remains of old Roman earthworks, and wells, ancient religious sites. It is not surprising therefore that it has an enthusiastic Historical Society which has made several discoveries, some ancient and some of a later date. The site of an old Roman well created much interest. The discovery of an ancient wooden carved pipe in the roof space of an old house in the High Street is dated 1620. Pieces of clay pipes and bowls have been found in the district together with the reputed sites of old marl-holes lead to the fact that there was a pipe industry nearby. In a small factory at Penn Hole it is reputed that Churchwarden pipes were made. Pieces of pottery of the same kind of clay used for the pipes lead to the fact that there may have been a pottery industry in the district also. The old world charm of Kinver High Street is still maintained, while New Housing Estates have induced a large population increase. The population is now well over 4,000. The new Church Hall promotes many activities. The New British Legion Hall and Social Club have about 800 members. The new Edgecliffe Secondary Modern School has an imposing site and has many activities. There is an active Darby and Joan Club. The Old People's Committee provide special comforts for the elderly, with a chiropody service. The Parish Council is actively engaged in providing a Community Hall. The Kinver Women's Rural Institute has been in existence for over 35 years. The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have each their own Headquarters . There is an extremely interesting Horticultural Society of about 130 members. A New Methodist Church has lately been built at Potters Cross replacing the two former ones. It is proving a great asset to the neighbourhood.

Many of the old historic buildings are slowly disappearing. No longer can be seen the old Burgess House. The old Grammar School has long been closed. The workhouse as such no longer exists. Gradually the High Street is changing the old world quiet appearance. At one time it had six inns, four malsters, and two coopers. No longer is the White Harte the old Coaching Station. There seems

to have been two butchers, two smiths and two wheelwrights, two hatters and several "naile" shops, and one woman barber and one resident doctor.

Potter's Cross is an important centre of village life. It is becoming even more so. Tradition has it that near here was a very large stone with three considerable round holes drilled through the top. It was the ancient ritual stone: set up in Pagan times pointing the way to an old site of worship, i.e. Coton.

It is also the site where two important roads cross at almost right angles, near to lands farmed by two brothers, Humphrey and John Potter. Again at the time of the Black Plague, 1349, so many deaths took place that the near-by inhabitants were not allowed to go outside their homes, except to this place for food.

Kinver enjoys the reputation of being able to find within its own confines the right man or woman at the right time. It seems fitting here to place on record the fact that both the Ambulance Corps and the Home Nursing Associations have provided Leaders who have attained the highest Distinctions of the St. John of Jerusalem awards. When the days of summer sunshine are over, there is a winter service from many willing hands.

KINVER LIGHT RAILWAY

The rugged attractiveness of the Kinver area as a get-away-from-it all beauty spot must have been apparent for many decades. But it was not until the turn of this century that the towering sandstone bluff and the quiet village in its shadow became a really popular week-end and bank holiday resort for Black Country people.

One of the main reasons for this was the opening of the Kinver Light Railway in the spring of 1900. The project—which was in fact an electric tramway—formed one of the outlying branches of the once extensive West Midland tramline network.

During its 30 years' existence, until it was superseded by less limited public road transport, the railway provided a cheap (3d. each way), regular link between the grime of the industrial Black Country and the unchallenged beauty of the most attractive place in Staffordshire.

The track 4.2 miles long, was laid from a depot near the Fish Inn, Amblecote and followed the roads through Wollaston, up over the Ridge Top and down to Stewponey.

From there the roads were too narrow and steep to take the tramway and the track was laid across the fields, following very closely the line of the Staffordshire—Worcestershire canal and the River Stour.

Today of course, the tramway has completely disappeared between Amblecote and Stewponey. But there are still very clear traces of the route across the fields. All the half dozen or so bridges built to carry the line across the river and other smaller streams still exist and the remains of the permanent-way, minus track, can easily be identified and followed on foot.

It is very pleasant to take a walk along the remains of the old tram track. The scenery is well worth it. At Stewponey strike off to the left between the river and canal bridges on the Bridgnorth Road. A decaying old wood and iron bridge, which once carried the tramway should be crossed. The route of the tramway curves gently between high hedges (there are a couple of stiles in this section) towards Dunsley Hill. At this point the track delves into woodland and a formidable fence halts further progress. Here one must move on to the nearby canal towpath and follow it round the foot of Dunsley Hill for a few hundred yards. This allows the walker to regain a conveniently low fence and to follow the route of the tramway as it passes through the woods.

At this point now barely visible in the trees and undergrowth, are two long deep concrete-sided trenches, filled with rubbish, odd pieces of rusty tram tracks and dead leaves. This was the site of a half-way halt depot, and the long holes were inspection pits, similar to those now used for motor vehicles, which allowed the underworkings of the tram-cars to be examined. From this point one should follow the now well established footpath, over a number of minor bridges and past the Hyde

Meadows. There are no further hazards to progress until the old tramway, raised up on an embankment, disappears near the site of the former depot, into the grounds of the South Staffordshire Water Works Company's pumping station off Mill Lane.

As one follows the track every now and again coming across rusty relics of the old tramway, one cannot but wonder about the Kinver Light Railway and how it came about.

The construction of the line followed the electrification of the steam tram routes between Dudley, Stourbridge, Kingswinford and Cradley. It proved to be a difficult task for various reasons.

Long negotiations had to take place between representatives of the company and the landowners concerned and it was some time before the necessary permission to run the tramway over the fields from Stewponey to Kinver was given.

Then there were construction difficulties, bridges had to be built over the River Stour and other low ground because of the course stipulated by the owners. The laying of the track was not easily done.

On one occasion a steam engine which was pulling trucks loaded with ashes and ballast for the permanent way was derailed near Stourton Bridge and the train was hurled into the River Stour. The engine driver managed to leap clear.

Another setback occurred when heavy rains caused the canal bank to give way and water flooded over the railway embankment and many wooden sleepers were carried away.

Eventually, however, after the various difficulties had been overcome, the track was laid and made ready for services to begin. But then there was more trouble.

When a Board of Trade inspector made an examination he ordered compulsory stops at several cross-roads and at places prior to steep descents and he refused to allow double-decker trams over the route. The company protested and argued over this ban but the inspector remained adamant. Eventually the company overcame the problem by cutting down the tramcars and removing the top seats.

When the service finally went into operation the trams could cope with 40 passengers at intervals of 20 minutes. This schedule was completely unable to deal with the vast holiday crowds and on many occasions during the initial period hundreds of holiday-makers had to walk from Kinver back to Stourbridge.

Later three more single decker "toast rack" trams with open sides were included in the service and, with seating for 56 and plenty of room for standing, they were greatly welcomed by the Kinver "regulars."

During its lifetime the Kinver Light Railway supplied a much needed facility and the rattling, swaying tramcars proved to be a popular mode of transport and when in 1927 the service finally died, and the more efficient but less romantic motor buses took over, there were many mourners.

Previous to the Good Friday of 1901 the only transport Kinver had was the Carters' Horse and Wagonette, which left Kinver each morning approximately at 9 a.m. for Stourbridge, calling at Stewponey and returning later in the day. So the advent of the Kinver Light Railway (as it still is affectionately known) was a great boon to the natives who had to go out of Kinver to earn a living. It certainly brought a good many families to come out and live in Kinver. The first tram was at 5.25 a.m. to accommodate the workers who paid 3d. to Stourbridge, 2½d. from Stewponey to the Fish Inn, Stourbridge.

People still recall the happy atmosphere of these "toast racks" as they were affectionally called. One memory is of a dear gentleman, Mr. Price (the father of the famous actress Miss Nancy Price) was one of the regulars from Kinver. He would leave his home "Rock Mount" along the path leading down the side of the Grammar School. If the tram happened to be waiting when he reached Mill Lane, he would give several blasts from a very loud whistle which he always carried with him to draw attention of the tramway men of the 5.25 a.m. There were the regular punctual passengers, and also the runners up, to whom Driver and Conductor would always give a few minutes grace. The

punctual passengers in a friendly way would say "They ought to be left behind". There was always that consideration given which created a very good understanding between the public and the employee. On the 7.25 a.m. there was a very punctual passenger for a good many years. When he boarded the tram, his first job would be to walk round the tram and see that all ventilators were closed. This had to be done whatever the weather or conditions, then a word to the Conductor "I think it is time you were off." The Conductor would generally remark, "Oh, we will wait another minute or so and give the Hyde Meadow passengers a chance to get to the Halt." Some of these would be running eating their last bit of toast.

It was a sad day when the tramway was closed.

Kinver Pumping Station

Kinver's Pumping Station is a very well built red-brick building set in very pleasant surroundings quite near to the River Stour, and within a short distance from Kinver High Street. It was opened in 1939 in order to supply the Dudley Area with water. The water is pumped from two boreholes below the station and are 750 feet in depth. They are lined to a depth of 250 feet with steel lining tubes to shut out surface water. The water is very soft and pure; it is filtered naturally as it passes through the sandstone into the bore holes. The water is pumped by vertical spindle turbine pumps. The rate is at 125,000 gallons per hour— that is 3,000,000 gallons per day. There are two pumps on each pumping unit, a borehole pump and a force pump.

The borehole is 250 feet below ground level; this pumps the water to the force pump, which in turn forces it into the pumping main. The pumping main is 24 inches in diameter and 12 miles in length. Its route is along the old tram track as far as the Stewponey Hotel. It then turns along the Wolverhampton Road as far as Wallheath. It then turns off and runs through Gornal and on to Shaver's End Reservoir, Dudley.

J. Handley, 1950.

CHAPTER 6

WHITTINGTON

Whittington is about 1½ miles on the main road from Stewponey.

The Manor of Widdington is mentioned in Domesday Book. Sir William de Wittenton was owner of the estate. It contains a distinguished mansion. In the reign of Henry III his son sold it to Thomas de la Lowe. It is said that Richard Whittington, thrice Mayor of London, who died during the reign of Henry V, is mentioned after the last William. In a monthly magazine, March 1828, is a brief memoir of Sir Richard stating that according to City Records he was Sheriff 1396 and Lord Mayor in 1397, 1408, 1425, and that a stone at the foot of Highgate Hill, London, commemorates his approach to that town. The writer adds that, having lent £60,000 to assist Henry V in equipping

his army, he burnt the King's Bond at a city feast. On Henry's returning from the conquest of France, Richard exclaimed "Never before had subject such a King," a compliment which Henry returned by rejoining, "Nor King such a subject."

Lady Jane Grey (proclaimed Queen 1554) spent part of her childhood here. She was the daughter of Mary, sister of Henry VII. She was brought up very strictly, well versed in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian and French. She was also a skilled musician. In 1553 she married Lord Guilford Dudley. Edward VI named her as his successor. After a nominal reign of nine days she was arrested and placed in the Tower of London for four months. She was afterwards beheaded on Tower Hill together with her husband.

After the battle of Worcester in 1651 King Charles and a few noblemen fled north through Kidderminster, hoping eventually to get to Scotland. Reaching Wolverley, near the Grammar School, they crossed the River Stour and became completely lost. Lord Talbot met the party, and they were able to find safety in a hiding place at the Whittington Inn. Charles Giffard, a member of a Staffordshire family, advised the King to find refuge in South Staffordshire. The party is believed to have travelled from Kinver to Stourbridge and through Wordsley, where the King is said to have had a crust of bread and some meat at a house.

Queen Anne many years afterwards stayed in this 644 years old Manor. Her seal on the door of what has now become Whittington Inn commemorates this fact, 1712. She was the second daughter of James II. She was brought up as a protestant, and married Prince George of Denmark. Under the influence of the Duke of Marlborough she sought to settle the Crown on William of Orange. She ascended the throne in 1702 and her reign was regarded as one of the most glorious periods in English history. She alienated part of her income to establish the "Queen Anne Bounty" to increase Church Livings, among other good causes. She was the last to be touched for the "King's Evil." Samuel Johnson was so touched as a child. Her reign was remarkable for the number of literary men —Addison, Steele, Pope, Johnson and many others flourished in this period.

A further walk along the Kidderminster Road from Whittington one comes to Caunsall, a veritable beauty spot well worth a visit.

CHAPTER 7

WATERWAYS

THE RIVER STOUR

If one would turn aside from the Hagley Road into the road leading to Wassel Grove, one will find that less than a mile away at Lutley, it crosses a tiny stream which has its rise in a coppice a short distance to your left. This is the infant Stour, a river which derives its name from the Gaelic "dwr"—"water," and which in turn, lends its name to Stourbridge, Stourton and Stourport.

There are several rivers of this name in the country, none of them claiming first rank, but all of them interesting, and the Worcestershire Stour is fully as interesting as any of them. It follows a curiously winding course through quietly attractive country after it has escaped from the fringe of the industrial Black Country, touches on several places of traditional and historic fame, and slips away to join the Severn at a place which aspires to be the most inland of our ports. For the most part its banks are inaccessible, and we only see it where it is crossed by some unimportant by-road or, occasionally, where some fieldpath runs in its near neighbourhood.

It sets off in a north-easterly direction, winding about between the uplands between Cradley and Quarry Bank before deciding to make for Stourbridge, where it swings northwards to reach Amblecote. East of Lutley it is reinforced by a stream that rises at the back of the Hare and Hounds at Hasbury and, for the rest of the way to Stourbridge, it is by no means an attractive rivulet, indeed, it is not until it reaches Audnam, beyond Amblecote, that it "mends its ways."

Stourbridge need not detain us, for it retains very little that is revealing. Its roots lie in the dim past of history, for there was a monastery at Sture-in-Usmere that was destroyed by the Danes and refounded later. It received a market charter from Edward IV, had a school in the time of Henry VIII, and was engaged in clothmaking early in the 17th Century. Glassmaking is said to have been introduced by Hungarian refugees a century before that, and still flourishes in the locality.

Two miles from Amblecote, in an angle between the Stour and Smestow Brook (which enters it from the north) is Prestwood. Here Sir John Lyttelton, of Frankley, built a hunting seat in the late 15th Century, a house which his son, Gilbert, made his chief residence. Two hundred years later it was sold to the Foleys and remained with them until it was burnt down half a century ago. It is said to have been a fine house, finely situated. The point at which the Stour and Smestow join is known as "Devil's Den," and half a mile downstream is Stewponey.

Some odd stories are told to account for the name. One is that the Landlord of the nearby inn was called upon to provide a meal for a troop of soldiers who had arrived unexpectedly and, having no other provisions available, cooked part of a pony which had died. A third supposes that it is a corruption of Stour pont—the bridge over the Stour.

Before it was rebuilt it was an old country inn; it looked from above as if it were nodding in its sleep. With the then busy canal and nearby iron works, it was a favourite calling place for boatmen, who liked its red-quarried floors and high backed benches. One of the tenants was old Dick Calcott, who sold home brewed ale at one shilling a gallon, made a fortune and retired to a near-by farm.

Across the bridge, and rising above the river bank is Stourton Castle, a place of some fame. Tradition says that King John was born there or, if not, that he often lived there when hunting in Kinver Forest. History tells us that Cardinal Pole, who opposed the divorce of Catherine of Aragon, was born there. It was garrisoned by Parliamentary forces, surrendered to the King, and retaken by "Tinker" Fox, who had his headquarters at Edgbaston Hall.

The Stour makes a curious ear-shaped loop to reach the immediate neighbourhood of Kinver. It passes The Hyde, where the first mill for rolling and slitting iron was set up, runs for a short time on a course parallel with Kinver High Street, and then strikes off southwards.

Kinver! The "'Appy 'Ampstead" of the Black Country! Who does not know that odd little place, half town, half village, nestling beneath the shelter of its Edge? And who, knowing it, does not love it? It is considered 'odd' by reason of the curious formation of its Edge, the remote hilltop position of its church, the strangeness of "Nanny's Rock" and its other modern cave-dwellings—especially of Holy Austin Rock.

Beautiful for situation, the view from its 540 feet high hill is unusually extensive and very charming; the walk down the road on its western side, the road leading to Kingsford, is delightful; the breezy height crowned with its age-old camp makes a perfect promenade. And, add to this the fact that the place has a history going back to remotest days, and traditions that go back still farther—to the time when "There were giants in the land"—and you have a sum total that is not really exceeded. No one has yet decided how Kinver came by its name; whether it is from the Celtic Kin vaur (great ridge), or the Saxon Cyne Fare (King's road) is still in dispute, even though there is a River Kinver in Cardiganshire. No one has decided yet by whom the camp was made. Bishop Lyttleton thought it was British, Nash said it was Danish, Harwood declared that it was Saxon; perhaps it is safer to say merely that it is "prehistoric." In Norman times Kinver Forest was a royal hunting ground. It practically linked Wyre with Cannock and both with Feckenham. Kingsford is said to have been the site of King John's "hunting box."

Throughout its course from Stourton to Stourbridge the river has its close companion a canal. Just south of the High Street at Kinver both are crossed by a path leading to Whittington, one of the many places claiming to be the birthplace of the celebrated owner of the Cat. And it was this claim that led to the iron turned out from the nearby works being marked with a "cat."

Just below Caunsall the Stour swings westwards, and between there and Wolverley, the next place of note on its banks, it is crossed by several minor roads and a number of footbridges, and the road from Cookley to Wolverley follows it closely. Wolverley is a village of contrasts and in many respects unlike any other in Worcestershire. It retains a substratum of antiquity upon which has been superimposed a veneer of more recent development. A modern church in the Italian style has replaced its ancient one; The Court (nearby) stands on the site of the old house of the Attwoods, lords of the manor in the 14th Century; Lea Castle, the park of which is skirted by the river, is an ancient building of brick, and the grammar school founded in 1620 by Sir William Sebright and named after him, has been rebuilt and reconstituted. It still retains its reputation as one of the finest educational establishments in the county. North of the village, on the west side of the Stour, is the romantic Blakeshall Common, with its curious group of "rock-houses," its obelisk to the memory of Richard Baxter, and its rounded knolls topped by clusters of pines.

There is a field path from Wolverley to Kidderminster, leading past Sion House (the birthplace of John Baskerville, the famous typefounder, printer and papier-mâché manufacturer, of Birmingham) and Broadwater's-large pools formed and fed by a tributary stream which joins the Stour immediately to the north of the "Carpet Metropolis." Kidderminster's earliest industry seems to have been cloth-making. It is recorded that in 1677 there were 417 looms in the town. The carpet trade was introduced a generation later, and in 1772 there were 250 in operation. The church is unusually large and, though extensively "restored" and (partly) rebuilt it is full of interest, while the view from the terrace in front of it is exceptionally interesting. Much of the interest in the town—historically speaking—centres round Caldwell Castle, some remains of which are to be seen in a side street leading off the Stourport Road. The Stour, "cribb'd cabined and confined," runs through the heart of the town and at one time provided power for the mill after which Mill Street is named (Incidentally, Sir Josiah Mason, to whom Birmingham owes Mason College—the nucleus out of which the University grew—and Mason's Orphanage, was born in this street).

For the remainder of its course the Stour flows quietly through open country, skirting the golf course on one side and Oldington Wood on the other, passing by Wilden Pool and ironworks, making one loop to touch Upper Mitton, and joining the Severn a little below Stourport Bridge. In one sense Stourport is the most remarkable of all the places the river touches. In 1770 it consisted of a "few scattered houses upon an unprofitable heath." In the course of twenty years it had become a "Sizeable" town. In 1851 it possessed "the largest tannery outside London." And its growth was entirely due to the construction of the canal, work on which was begun after the passing of an Act in 1770. It is said that eleven-twelfths of the trade between Gloucester and the north passes through Stourport!

It has been claimed that "the Stour drives more water mills than any other river of its length in the Kingdom."

Canals

The Stourbridge Canal was built in 1776. It was undertaken during the reign of George III for making and maintaining a canal from or near the town of Stourbridge to join the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal at Stewponey and Kinver district, and two collateral cuts, one from Pensnet Chase, and another to join the Gothersley near Stewponey for Wolverhampton. There was much trading in sand and iron goods, and before railways, the manufacturers of the Midlands used these canals for transport. Before the canals, the Rivers Severn and Trent were the chief transport routes, with pack-horses acting as feeders for these rivers. Goods from the forges and furnaces of the Stour Valley were taken to warehouses at Bewdley for shipping down the river. There was a scheme for making the Stour navigable in 1648.

James Brindley in the 18th century envisaged a "Silver Cross" of waterways across England for transport purposes, and a part of his system was the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, linking with the Severn. This canal was completed in 1770, when the Whittington Lock Cottage near the Stewponey was built. This cottage lies half-a-mile away along the Kidderminster Road. It is extremely solid with 14" thick walls, but it had no sanitation nor damp course. For this reason Seisdon Council recently placed an order for demolition, and the waterway's lengthman and his family were housed in a council house at Potter's Cross, and the cottage was left vacant for some time.

Recently an application to use the cottage for an Adventure School was made by Mr. John Parsons (a local company director) and his brother Richard, who frequent the canal on their narrow boat "The Dane". They approached the authorities to see if there was any way of preserving the cottage and making it habitable once more. The British Waterways authorities offered to sell the property and the council subsequently approved the plans for extending and modernising the cottage.

The Adventure School was opened in the Summer of 1965. The school is to provide instruction for young people in canoeing, rock-climbing, camping and trekking. It is run by London-born Mr. Graham Henderson, aged 24 who qualified as an instructor at the Outward Bound School in North Wales. The cottage will provide accommodation for up to 16 boys and girls who will be given one-week or two-week courses which will aim at educating young people in the recreational uses of the countryside. Mr. Henderson hopes to draw young people from the nearby industrial Midlands to his school. The cottage which is amongst the trees in the Stour River Valley, will be the base for trekking expeditions into the beautiful surroundings of the countryside. The canal and the river will be for training young canoeists and the nearby sandstone outcrops for young climbers.

Mr. Henderson hopes to take more proficient pupils further afield for these activities and also plans to arrange horse riding and special camping courses. He plans to include a narrow boat and a horse-drawn caravan in the equipment and to offer the facilities of the cottage as a youth hostel; there will also be places of nearby historic interest to visit.

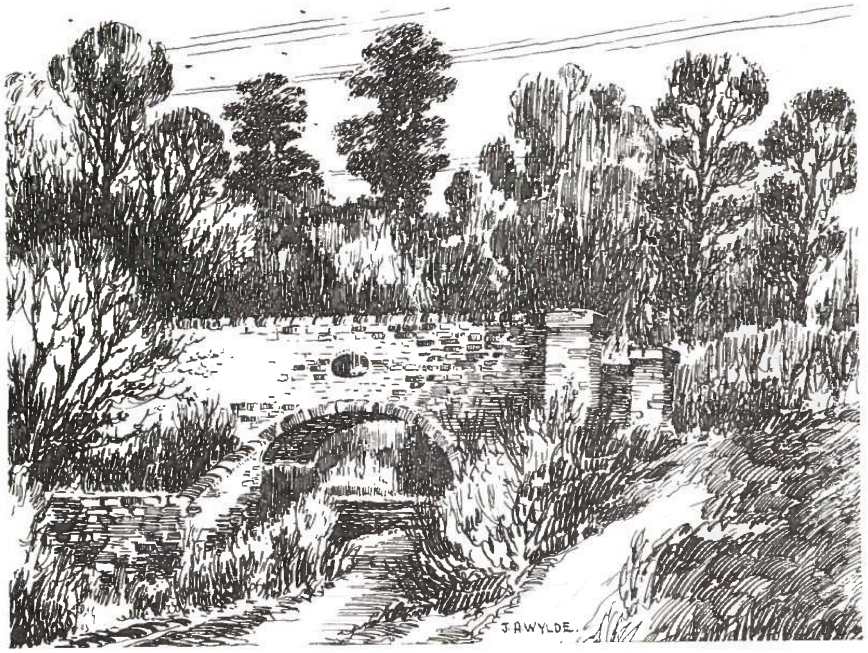
The Dick Whittington Inn, The Gibbet Wood, the Stewponey Hotel, Kinver Church, and Rock House ruins, are all places rich in legendary and historical fame.

Not only were the waterways of the district used for trade, there were cruises in decorated boats, and Sunday School Parties.

Much of the old trade has now gone back to the roads and goods are moved by motor transport. Gone are the boatmen and their horses. In places fishermen enjoy the quiet solitude of the canals. Within the last few years however canoes and small cruisers have taken the place of the long narrow boats which were used for commerce. Two Canal Cruisers built at the Dawncraft boatyard, Kinver were on display at the 1966 Boat Show, Earl's Court, and attracted much interest. They were the only craft to sell under £2,000 and trade in them was good. Dawncraft Company take orders now from Inland Waterway's Cruises. The more these Inland Waterways are used the less dereliction and unsightliness will occur, and it will discourage those who use our canals as repositories for household goods and the graves of domestic animals, and in some measure our over-crowded roads will be relieved.

The canals at Prestwood, Stewponey and Kinver wind through beautiful verdant and wooded country. James Brindley the noted canal engineer always followed the contours of the land, hence the winding waterways of the district, which in places run parallel with the River Stour. His bridges were built of brick and are very durable. Staffordshire County Council placed a distinctive plaque on the birthplace of James Brindley. It was unveiled in May, 1966.

Stourton to Netherton by narrow boat. For the first time since 1951 a narrow boat has navigated the stretch of canal between the Stourton Junction on the Staffordshire—Worcestershire Canal and Netherton. In the Autumn of 1965 Rowley Regis Grammar School's barge, "Bumble Bee", was bow-hauled the nine mile trip between the Junction at Stewponey and the Bumble Hole at Darby End by a group of senior boys. So that the boat could make the journey, British Waterway's Transport workmen



CAUNSALL CANAL BRIDGE

had to carry out work along the canal, removing obstacles and servicing docks. The "Bumble Bee" a twenty-ton full decker, used by the School as a floating classroom, and headquarters for their canoe club, had been moored at Stewponey, Stourton since the Spring of 1965.

CHAPTER 8

A LITTLE FURTHER AFIELD

"I would entreat thy company
To see the wonders of the world abroad."

'Two Gentlemen of Verona.'

Visitors to the Stewponey country-side, will no doubt seek out such places as are mentioned herewith.

(Wolverley, Iverley, Enville Hall, Dudley Castle, Hagley Hall, Coton Hall, St. Kenelm's Church Clent)

To the South and South-west good roads lead through much pretty scenery to such places of interest as Bromsgrove, near the Lickey Hills, Kidderminster, Hartlebury (seat of the Bishop of WORCESTER), Ombersley, Stourport, (good facilities for fishing) and Droitwich Spa.

There are excellent bus services from Stourbridge.

WOLVERLEY

King Edgar granted a charter to the parish of Wolverley in 964. The church itself is impressively situated above the village and is reached from it by a steep lane cut through an outcrop of sandstone. Out of this rock of sandstone, in days gone by, villagers of Wolverley carved the curious rock dwellings still to be seen thereabouts. Indeed, until recently, some were still inhabited.

The church was completed in 1772, and is supposed to have been built of bricks made from clay excavated in making the nearby canal. Within the church is an effigy of Sir John Attwood, who fought under the Black Prince. On the site of his birthplace stands Wolverley Court, an Elizabethan mansion, now run as a Christian family home for students overseas. One looks down from the church upon the original 17th century grammar school founded by William Sebright, Town Clerk of London, who was a native of Wolverley. Sebright, now a public school, has moved to fine premises up the hill, but still interests itself in church and village life. One of the pioneers of printing in Europe-indeed one of the greatest printers of all time—was the 18th century English typefounder John Baskerville. He was born at Sion House, Wolverley in 1706. He died at Cradley.

A very beautiful caravan serai is nearby, serving the needs mostly of Black Country people. The land immediately in front of the caravans, a gentle slope of grass, golden gorse and rocky paths, has been acquired for the children—a pocket-size wilderness where they can hide and scramble to their content. Around each caravan is a clearly defined garden area, providing sufficient space for gardening to be a real pleasure.

There are facilities for all forms of recreation near the edge of the quiet unspoiled village of Wolverley.

Extracts from Worcester Diocesan Messenger, July, 1964.

At one time Lady Godiva's husband Earl Leofric owned land at Wolverley.

Belonging to the district and buried there was Delilah Boswell, the last Queen of the Gipsies; she was killed in 1833.

IVERLEY

Iverley is the eastern extremity of Kinver. It consists of a range of hills of moderate elevation, gently declining into a plain. There are acres of waste land, subject to the claims of Common Right, appertaining to farms. Iverley, or High House, of grotesque architecture, situate on the brow of Hay Hill, was built by Thomas Millward, Esq., who improved the district. Nearby is the Round Hill of King Charles fame. The old Roman Road to Kidderminster from Kinver passes through this district, and traces of Roman baths may still be seen to this day.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Kinver became famous for its iron trade. There were slitting mills on the River Stour, at Whittington, Hyde and Gothersley. Their trade was immense. They made springs, bolts, rings, staples, door handles, door scrapers, saws of all kinds, hatchets, fire shovels, spades, all kinds of gardening tools—nearly a hundred kinds of ironware. They supplied iron goods for the Army and Navy. The Kinver ironmasters built themselves substantial residences, and reared large families. Their daughters married into other ironmasters' families (Brindley, Seabright, Lee, Crowther).

So much charcoal was used for the smelting of iron and so much timber was being used that the ironmasters became concerned. It was at this time that Dud Dudley introduced sea-coal. A charter was granted by Charles I for the digging of this and many free miners came into existence. They never went far below the ground and required only one shaft and cage.

ENVILLE HALL

Enville Hall is two miles from Stewponey along the Bridgnorth Road. Enville Manor comprised Enville Hall, Enville Village, Enville Common, The Sheep Walks, etc. The original name was Evenfield. The Church registers call it Enfield in its early records, and the Communion plate now in use is marked Envil, 1763. To begin with the earliest records of Enville we must turn to the Domesday Book compiled by William the Conqueror, and we find "The King held it as a forest." This shows that it was part of the Royal Forest of Kinver.

Through the years the families residing at Enville Hall were: Alric, one of the King's Thanes. He re-let it to Fitz Ansculph, who again re-let it to Gilbert; he assumed the name of Evensfield. Various families resided in the Manor: Enfield, Birmingham, Lowe, Somery and Grey. In 1603 Sir Henry Grey was created Baron Groby. His successor became Earl of Stamford. Harry, the fourth son, became the fourth Earl. He married the only daughter and heiress of George Booth, the last Earl of Warrington. He was succeeded by his son, George Henry Grey, fifth Earl of Stamford, in whom the title of Earl of Warrington, Baron Delamere, was revived in 1769. He married in 1767 Henrietta Cavendish, second daughter of the second Duke of Portland. This lady dowager died in 1827, aged 91. His lordship, dying in 1819, aged 82, was succeeded by George Harry, who married a daughter of Lord Elcho, son of the Earl of Wemys.

Other sons and daughters of the fifth Earl are- Henrietta, wife of Sir John Chetwode, Bart.; Maria, married to John Cotes, Esq., of Woodcote; William Booth; Amelia, married to John Lister Keay, Esq., of The Grange, Yorkshire.

Other residences of this family are Dunham Massey in Cheshire, seat of the Earl of Warrington, and Stewarts' Hay, Bradgate, Leicestershire, once the seat of Lady Jane Grey, daughter of the Duke of Suffolk. The Grey family held Enville Hall for over 400 years.

The village school is named after the "Countess of Stamford and Warrington," and the scholars pay a yearly visit to the Hall, on St. Clement's Day, They are given fruit and new pennies.

In the Churchyard, near the remains of the Cross upon an Altar Tomb, is the following inscription: "Christo Duce, Sub Cruce Morior, P. Lafargue, M.D., Patria Profugus, anno 1711." A translation reads: "Christ being my Leader, under the cross I die. P. Lafargue, M.D., an exile from my country." Dr. Lafargue was one of the Huguenot refugees, driven away from France on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He became tutor to the Hon. Harry Grey, and settled at Enville. In his old age he spent most of his time visiting and instructing the poor of this place. He died in 1711, leaving by his will the sum of £10, and appointing the yearly increase of it to be laid out in books, entitled "The Whole Duty of Man," to be given by the minister to poor communicants of this parish for ever. For many years the above sum, amounting to £1 10s. 0d. a year, has been expended in giving Communicant Manuals to those who have been confirmed, and also in providing hymn books for the Church. The entry in the Parish Register is as follows: "Mr. Peter Lafargue, a French refugee, and late Tutor to the Hon. Harry Grey, was buried August 19th, 1711."

(*Reprinted from the Enville Church Monthly.*)

One outstanding resident of Enville in later years is that of Mr. Edwin Bennet. He worked for the Church and parishioners for 50 years. He was licensed lay reader of the Lichfield Diocese. He assisted the Rector with the Men's Bible Class and the Children's Service. He also helped in the Mission Church at Highgate. He was organist for 50 years. He made a valuable transcript of the Ancient Church Registers from 1627—1768. He was schoolmaster for a very long time. He performed many acts of kindness for the poor of the parish, sparing himself no trouble to do someone else a good turn. He was secretary of the Free Gardeners' Club. He died July 26th, 1905.

The famous cricket ground at Enville Hall was in 1857 accounted the largest most level and best kept ground in England, even better than the famous Lord's. It had been laid out and maintained by Lord Stamford who was then president of the Marylebone Cricket Club and himself a famous cricketer. Highgate Common and Enville Common are famous for their Golf courses. Many members

of the Royal Family staying at Himley Hall as the guests of Lord Dudley, enjoyed a day's golfing there They included the Duke of Windsor (when he was Prince of Wales) the Duke of Kent and Princess Marina and the Duke of Gloucester.

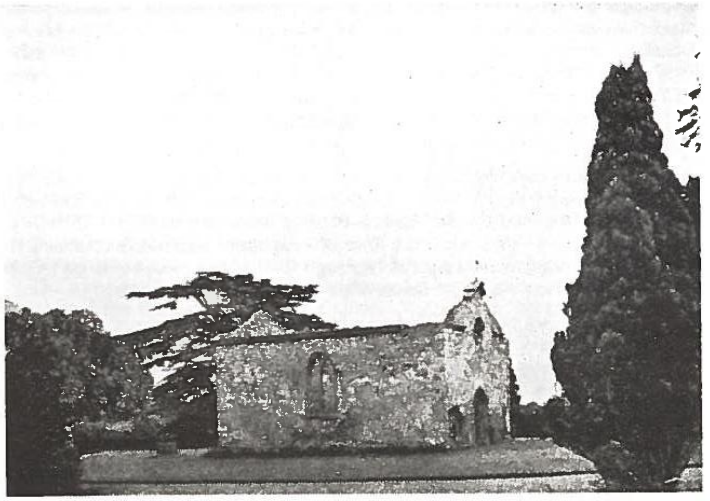
The "Wakes" at Enville were happy yearly events. In 1847 it was decreed that at the first hurdle event there was an offer of a rich smart patterned waistcoat, open to men and lads of any colour or size except "Black". There was also jingling matches, greasy pole competitions, eating rolls and treacle competitions, bag races for all under 100 years old, and no end of light hearted frolics, arranged and superintended by Abraham Barefoot of Lord's End.

The children of Enville School have again revived the old custom of "Clemening." This tradition seems to be peculiar to Staffordshire, and its purpose is to celebrate the apple festival of St. Clement's Day, November 23rd. On this occasion the children visited Enville Hall, where they were welcomed by the butler with fruit and new pennies. He also threw hot pennies from a shovel to the children. The tradition of hot pennies is probably a left-over from the days when, on their way to school, the children had to pass Enville Hall furnace—the source of hot water—the workmen used to throw them hot pennies at this time.

COTON HALL

The Royal forest of Kinver was a vast territory including Iverley, Wolverley, Alveley, Worfield, Morf, Quatt to Bridgnorth, and was frequented by our early kings for hunting. It was customary in these forests to maintain a house or hunting lodge for the king and his retinue, which was generally considerable. It follows, therefore, that adequate accommodation had to be provided. It was the duty of the Sheriff to provide this, as ordered by the king, and to credit in account the necessary outlay.

The name Kinver implies the presence of Royalty. Its earliest form is to be found in a charter of Ethelbert, King of the Mercians, A.D. 736, granting lands on the Stour, adjoining "The Wood called Cynibre" as endowment for a monastery to be founded at Husmere (near Stourbridge), but as appears by another charter of 964, the name at that time had become Cynefare, meaning "Royal Road."



KING'S DOMESTIC CHAPEL, COTON HALL

The Pipe Rolls for the 31 Henry 11 (1185) contain the following entry as an allowance to the Sheriff: "And in the work of making a fosse round the King's Houses at Kinefare six pounds, by the King's writ." The cost seems trifling even taking the then value of money at more than thirty times its present value, but probably labour was provided by the King's tenant's, who usually held their lands by military or other service.

In 1186 the Rolls contain the following entry as an allowance to the Sheriff: "And for enclosing the King's Court at Kinefare and round the King's Houses forty-two shillings, by the King's writ." In 1188 Philip, Lord of Kinfare, is allowed £22.2.6, in work at the King's Chamber at Kinfare, by the King's writ, and by the view of Albert of Ashley, and Peter of Whittington. 1191 (3 Richard 11) the same Philip is allowed £9 (in work of the King's Houses at Kinver, by writ of the Chancellor). In 1190 Alfrid, son of Peter, is allowed £24 18s. 9d. (in cost of one Hall in the Forest of Kinver, with the adjoining offices, and of a kitchen and a chamber, and a goal, and of a fish-pond (vivarii) and a Gate-way, with a wooden defence projecting over it (Bretesch-ia) and a palisade of sixteen perches long and sixteen feet high and of implements of the house, by the King's Richard II's writ). A Breteschia was a projecting wooden gallery over the gateway, with openings in the floor to enable the defenders to drop down stones, melted lead, etc. upon the besiegers. In 1198 (Richard 11) the Sheriff is allowed ten marks (£6 13s. 4d.) for repair of the King's fishponds at Kynefare, by the writ of Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, and by the view of Thomas of Prestwude, and Simon of Alvitheley (Alveley).

Alveley formed part of the ancient demesne of the Crown. It is a parish of long lineage. It has history far back in the mists of time. The lovely valley of the Severn knew all the former glories of the famous stretch of land lying in the centre of the Ancient King's Portway.

The names given to this riverside estate of the kings have been many and varied, and have caused much confusion in documents. It has been called Nordley, Eastley, Audley, Astley, and in the dim past Cote as being the seat of a pagan religion. In the dim mist of time there had been established here the Herculanian Cult, in 400 B.C. called the Cottian religion, and a temple had been built to Diana. Later Christian missionaries came and established their religion.

Brutus next arrived and drove the Christians to Wales. He made conquests of landings 45 A.D. He built ships, taught the people to mine, to plough with wooden ploughs, to make pottery, to build bridges, to make forts, and enclosed villes. He taught the people to trade, he made a borough for local government, and he carved two Royal roads. One of these still runs through Coton Estate and is called the King's Road (now much overgrown with grass) leading from Cockshuts across Merefield towards Cote Broc, now known as Coton Dingle, thence by Stoney Street through the King's Road lying midway between Worcester and Wroxeter. This Portway was garrisoned, and a military station was formed on the Coton Estate, presided over by a Petty Sergeantry.

There were more than seven gateways in the fences round the Royal Coton Estate. One was named Wolfing's Gate. In the year 597 A.D. Coton, then known as Cote was the Bishop's Fiex (there being by that time a Christianised Centre), Bishop Wolfing living here in 1053 A.D. with a College of priests. Wolfing's Gate was well known in the fifteenth century, so also was Six Ashes Gate and High Gate near Enville. Another gate was known as Herring's Gate, now known as Heron's Gate. Lidigate was not so well known. There were also seven other gates staffed by soldiers.

Brutus called Britain after himself. Finding a lovely spot adjacent to water, he made a city and named it Troy the New. Many years after Brutus's death one of his kin was named Lud, and it was from him we get the name today of the city of London. Locally the name is incorporated in Ludstone, which was one of the thrones of King Lud. Ludbroc and little Lunsden or house, now called Little London, are also named after Brutus. One of Brutus's sons was called Camber, and to him was given Cambria, afterwards called Wales.

The second Roman invasion was not easy. The Britons stood fast, but one by one, by reason of superior weapons and numbers, they gave up the struggle, all except Caractacus, who was the son of Cymbeline; he held a last stand in the Coton Estate, but was betrayed by a friend, and sent captive

to Rome. After this last resistance the Romans gave of their best to Britain. They created jurisdiction, law and order, and organised military service in the grand manner. The Romans stayed long enough to leave their mark on civilisation .

After the Romans left, the Saxons invaded Britain. They pillaged and destroyed existing culture. With their pagan practices they disrupted and despoiled the land. Later, having made themselves masters they settled down to farming, and by their industry soon drained and tilled the loamy soil. They were pagans of the worst kind, but later embraced Christianity.

After these early Christians were driven into the fastnesses of Wales, they were followed by the Druids, who kept alive the only culture known in their day. Their temples and sites of jurisdiction were generally situated in a wooded glen or grove, usually of beech trees. Here laws were made and enacted, justice dispensed, sacrifices ordained, and despite the barbarism of their dreadful rituals culture was nevertheless kept alive and learning cherished. They taught the people that their souls were immortal and that there was another life after death and beyond the grave. In several matters the Druids' influence was great, but in matters religious it was looked upon as supreme. They were versed in the knowledge of stars and science and were totally exempt from taxation and military service as their calling was sacred.

From the times of the kings of Mercia, the Royal Forest of Kinver was king's demesne. The king's estate at that time stretched from the River Severn to Lud's Stone near Claverley, forming a solid little kingdom of the king, and was called "The King's Ley," hence Eastley, Nordley and Alveley.

King Oswald of Northumbria defeated the Mercian King Penda, and founded the site of Christianity on the Mount of Coton (where was once a pagan temple to Diana of the Cotian religion, followed by that of the Druids). On St. Oswald's foundation of Christianity the Church on Coton Hill was dedicated to St. Anne, the mother of our Lady. In Edward the Confessor's Day the payments laid down by Oswald are reiterated when the king granted to the Bishop of Worcester the ancient ecclesiastical strip of ground from the river to the Berestone i.e., the Bolt Stone on Tuck Hill. Penda ultimately defeated King Oswald, whose grand-daughter (Oswy's daughter) married Peada, the son of Penda. Peada afterwards married his son to Cymburga, daughter of the Mercian king, whose name is inscribed on the Bewcastle Cross. The early Saxon churches were probably made of wood, but inside they were full of splendour, with painted walls. After Oswald was defeated and slain by Penda in the battle of Maserfield, near Oswestry (long spelt Oswald's Tree) in Shropshire, in 642, his successor, Oswey, also a Christian surprised and defeated Penda at the Battle of Winwidfield (now known as Winweed) across the Severn in 655.

Wulfhere was the next great Mercian king. His castle was at Tamworth but he also built a palace and fortified an encampment at Bury Bank, two miles from Stone. Converted to Christianity, he married a daughter of Egbert, Ermanilda and became the father of Werburga, over whose grave rose the cathedral at Chester. Soured and shaken by incessant wars, Wulhere reverted to paganism and because his sons Wulfhad and Ruffinus clung to their Christian faith he had them murdered at Stone. Filled with remorse for what he had done, he pleaded before St. Chad. St. Chad bade him stamp out idolatry from his kingdom. He was faithful to his promise, and appointed St. Chad the first Bishop of Lichfield. The scene of the tragedy is at the bottom of Abbey Street, where may be seen the cellar of Priory House, and the scanty remains of the ancient walls. They are all that is left of the Priory, founded by Queen Ermenilda in memory of her murdered sons. A modern window of the new church built over the old Priory has charming figures of the martyred sons.

It was about 670 A.D. that Cheadda or Chad, being made Bishop of the Mercians, put up in the wilderness near Letocetum a wattle mission church for the savage Celt, and called it Lighfield. It was near Tamworth, the capital (if a nomad monarch could be called as having a capital) of the kings of Mercia, so that it conveniently qualified for the seat of a Mercian church. So few were the buildings other than the church, so insignificant their value, that on the ground of its being an obscure village, even after four centuries, the Bishopric was changed to Chester in 1075. The Saxon Bishops themselves we may suppose, were accustomed to follow the King's Court.

St. Chad started a College of Priests at Alveley which was in the King's Demesne of Coton. Their time was devoted to prayer and good works. When he travelled about his diocese, St. Chad went modestly on foot until the Primate, recognising in him a saintly man, begged and even commanded him to ride. He discharged the duties of his see with loving humility.

The great kingdom of MERCIA, besides including all lands of middle England, was increased by the capture of the West Saxon Settlement in the Severn Valley. After Penda and Wulfhere, Ethelbald and Offa were the most celebrated rulers. Offa ruled his own kingdom with a strong hand and set up kings whom he could trust in the smaller kingdoms. Offa made war on the Welsh and took from them Shrewsbury and its district of Powysland. To protect these conquests he made an earthwork from Chester to Chepstow which is called Offa's Dyke. The power of Mercia depended upon its king and when Offa died the struggle for supremacy began again in the smaller kingdoms. His death happened in 769.

Egbert succeeded him in 802. He became overlord of the whole of the English-speaking race from the Bristol Channel to the Firth of Forth. When he died, his son Ethelwulf succeeded him in 839—858. Egberts' four grandsons in turn then became kings of Mercia. Ethelbald was famous for leadership 858—860. Ethelbert 860—866, was murdered at Offa's Dyke On Sutton Walls. His body was hurled down a well in Marden Parish Churchyard, Herefordshire.. Egbert's wife Bertha, welcomed to England St. Augustine, who converted the king. He it was who built the first Church of St. Paul, London. The next of the grandsons was Alfred, who gave his daughter Ethelfleda the castle of Tamworth, and fortified the town of Bridgnorth after driving away the Danes. This watch-tower and fortress was after superseded by a magnificent castle, which became much beloved by Royalty.

Charles I was exceedingly fond of it and the surrounding countryside. He was once known to have said: "There is not a fairer spot in all my kingdom."

William the Conqueror brought Norman Barons and followers over from Normandy. He knew the valley as "The King's Ley", and used the ancient demesne situated in the Royal Forest at Coton, as it was then the battlefield between England and Wales; he decided to entrust the ruling of it to Roger-de-Montgomery. He granted jurisdiction of Alvely and Coton both spiritual and temporal, to Guy-le-Estrange, one of his staunch Crusaders and followers. Guy befriended Thomas of Astley who held a Petty Sergeantry at Coton Hill.

Thomas of Astley had got himself involved in a rebellion against Henry II through his friendship with the King's son, but Guy-le-Estrange promised him if he would fight for Henry in the Crusades, he would present his case to the King and ask for pardon for his friend. Thomas Astley returned from the Crusades covered with glory. The King reinstated him and Sir Thomas Astley, busy on the King's business, a pillar of the Church, and an endower of several religious foundations including the ancient Church of St. Anne, removing it from Coton Hill and erecting it in the now thriving hamlet of Alveley, a mile and a half away, made full atonement.

There is a tale in Alveley that the Monks of Coton College of Priests rode down to their newly established Church on their donkeys, chanting as they went. They used to stable their animals in the cellars of what is now known as the Church Cottages, moving into the Chancel by a subterranean passage, still using the Chancel at Coton as the Chapel of Ease.

The Alveley church was a lay foundation and was granted to the Abbey of Worcester and leased by the Abbot to the early College of Priests in Coton Park. The Abbot as spiritual head of this College, took upon himself the responsibilities of the upkeep of the king's military station, and payments of repairs of the bridge at Alveley, and the church responsibilities and payments, and in return the land was to be held by him free from tax for his length of tenure.

We can trace the confines of this land from the description in the Charter, starting at the bridge, which may have been either a wooden erection, or of large slabs of stone, and which spanned the river at Potter's Load. Near there we note the Celtic Cross bearing upon its side many interesting marks, among them the early votive sign "T", meaning the oath of the thigh (vows were made upon this member as being the most sacred spot of man). "W" stands for Wulfstan.

There is some early carving and indistinct lettering on this pillar-stone, which points the entrance to the private estate, carved out of the primitive forest, also the way to the nearest crossing of the river. According to the Charter, the way led across Bradley Fields, and up under the stone heap (which is the gravel burial ground in Coton Park) and the "Cwen of Coton," meaning peak of the hill, down to the mere or lake, and on to the end of the ancient parish, where it joined Enville, and where stood the ancient Bierstone or Bolt Stone (meaning a bolt from heaven), called the House of the Sun, this having a soul and being venerated as an early church, ceremonies being performed at its foot, including the pouring of oil, sacred fires, and most likely, early sacrifices.

No trace of this stone may now be found. Report has it that the stone was blasted by a farmer in whose field it was. Whoever removed the Bolt Stone from the hill on the North Ley, now called Tuck Hill, is open to the ancient curse "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's mark!" For a few generations the Lords of Astley held the King's Castle on Coton Hill, incorporating the military governorship with the ecclesiastic sovereignty. Sir Thomas Astley, the last of his line to live at Coton, left his only daughter and heiress his estates. Margaret brought the parish manors into the Lee family when she married Robertus-de-Lee an ancient family who also owned many manors. Coton Chapel is a small Domestic Chapel of the kings. It is quite distinct from the church of St. Anne, founded by King Oswald. This Domestic Chapel standing close to the King's House was built by Saxon kings. Cote was the first Christianised centre in West Mercia.

During Henry II's reign many Crusaders stayed in the Royal Residence and it is believed some are buried in the vaults under the Chapel. This Chapel was originally two-storey. The Manor Court occupied the upper storey, which held ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the king's demesne, presided over by an ecclesiastical Lord, and having rights over the little kingdom which now forms the parish of Alveley. The Chapel was altered to a one-storey building in the time of Eldred Lee, who was the lay-owner in 1650. This building stands today without a roof. Plans are now being made to restore the roof. An open-air service is still held twice every year.

Each successive generation of Coton Hall seem to have made alterations to the house. The hall is built on a solid rock foundation and abounds in secret tunnels and passages, which lead, according to tradition, to remote spots. Strange things have been done to Coton, apparently to hide the ancient foundations, the terrace having been thrown up round the building to conceal the moat which still runs round. By doing this the builders have made the original ground floor of the house into cellars, but a visit down to these parts shows the old monastic windows and traces of the original arched entrance. Steps lead down to the wine cellar at the end of which another blocked door-way, doubtless leads down again to some underground passages.

In modern times Harry Lee converted the main portion of the Hall from a three-storey building into a two-storey one, covering the old house with large stone slabs and removing the dormer windows. In the roof can still be seen traces of other rooms and beautiful bits of moulding. The Hall was originally known as 'Fitz Ulky', i.e. King's Nordley. Thomas Astley adopted the name of Astley's Hill. Later it became known as Coton Hall.

The King's Portway was guarded by fourteen gates in all and there were several important bridges over the River Severn. The South Bridge was at Alveley, the North Bridge at Bruge (Bridgenorth): Allum Bridge, and Quatt Bridge were also important. They were made of wood or even stone slabs. Within the Portway was to be found the Wool Guild shops. These shops were owned by the Prebend of Alveley, and also dues of Pendleston Mills, which at one time carried on the old wool trade. For many years the Constable of the castle of Bridgnorth held the King's Portway and military station at Coton. The king's bailiff, seated in the Portway Lodge, was witness of any sales in the Portway shops; not many of the vendors being able to read or write, the sales were legalised by a shake of the hand.

Many great names are bound up in the Royal Demesne of Coton. Mention has already been made of the Mercian, Saxon and Norman kings. They include King Arthur and the Knights of the Round-table, some of whom were buried at Coton and some at Enville; a miserer carving to the memory of Sir Leys is still to be seen there; King Alfred, who fought some of his toughest battles

here; Ethelfleda, The Noble Lady of the Mercians a daughter of King Alfred, to whom he gave the hamlet of Alveley, who fought with her brother Edward the Elder against the Danes and fortified Bridgnorth (she rebuilt Tamworth Castle after it was destroyed by the Danes, she was the widow of the Earldorman of Mercia 914); Edward the Confessor, whose charter is mentioned by the Bishop of Worcester; William the Conqueror, who gave the manor to Montgomery; Henry II, who gave the church lordship and manor to Guy-le-Strange; Queen Elizabeth who tried to make some provision for the future of the ley of the kings by many careful grants and provisions.

The lay-owners after the royalty left Coton were, starting with Worwood, the Attorney General, and going through the families of Warwick, Throckmorton, Grey, Astley, and Lee (this famous family held the parish with its manor for five hundred years), a descendant of whom was General Robert E. Lee of Virginia, to Gatacre (whose ancestors had held the manor in Queen Elizabeth's time), Orme Foster, M.P. for Bridgnorth, then the Wakeman family, and today the Howard-Thompsons. Each of these families must have loved the King's Ley.

On a Spring morning a fairer spot cannot be found in all England.

DUDLEY CASTLE

About five miles east of Stewponey, in the midland town of Dudley may be seen the ruins of what was one of the chief castles in Worcestershire and Staffordshire. It had the proud distinction of being the most historical, and important, during a period of more than eleven hundred years. During that time it was enlarged and fully occupied as a military fortress (of immense strength for those times) for more than five hundred years, visited by Queen Elizabeth I, bombarded and damaged by Cromwell's men, further damaged by order of Parliament, so as to render it useless as a fortress, and nearly 200 years ago was rendered totally uninhabitable by fire. A magnificent record for any castle, and who may prophesy for how many years its noble ruins may contine to withstand the effects of weather and natural decay?

The ruins of the grand old Castle are situated on the highest portion of a beautiful and thickly wooded hill about a mile in length close to the town of Dudley. It would be difficult to imagine a more commanding situation for a stronghold, and in England, few grander monuments of by-gone greatness are to be found. Its architectural beauty, together with its historical and legendary interest, magnificent situation, and archeological attractions all combine to render it unique amongst the ruins of feudal fortresses.

Near the entrance to the Castle at the bottom of Castle Street, the beautiful statue of the late Earl of Dudley (who died 7th of May, 1883) will be noticed. This nobleman was well known for his generous support to almost every institution in Dudley. The grounds of Dudley Castle were once used as a public park with its 72 acres of woodland, but today they are used as one of the most important Zoo's in England, and is visited by many thousands of people each year.

Between the founding of the castle and the Conquest 1066, its history is somewhat obscure, but it was known to have been the home of "that fair Dame" the Lady Godiva. Her husband, Earl Leofric, was King of Mercia and Earl of Dudley. He was killed at Abbots Bromley 1057, and buried at his own church in Coventry. Their son Algar inherited the Castle. Another relative a Frenchman William Fitz Ansculf, inherited afterwards. In 1138 Ralph Paganell held the Castle in the interest of Empress Matilda, against the forces of Stephen. Through Paganell's daughter the Castle passed into the hands of De Somery. In the reign of Edward III by marriage again the Sutton family became possessed of the Castle. The family continued to hold this until the reign of Charles I. The heiress of the Suttons by marriage again became possessed of the Castle, and she married Master Humble Ward (son of a rich London jeweller) from whom descended the Earl of Dudley who built Himley Hall after the great fire of 1750.

The Dudley Parish Registers contain the following entry as to the burning of Dudley Castle:— "In 1750, be it ever remembered Dudley Castle was on fire on St. Jane's Fair Day Eve, July 24th and was burning the 25th and 26th, the folks would not go near it on account of the powder said to be in

the armoury, the eastern part of the roofs being mostly lead, it ran down the hill red hot and set fire to the long grass which for a time looked as though the whole hill was in flames and sadly feared the town folks."

HAGLEY HALL

Hagley Hall is the seat of Lord Cobham, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Worcestershire. It stands in a most picturesque park. The poet Shenstone was a frequent guest at Hagley Hall. He was the author of "The Seasons". There is a structure called "Thompson's Sect" in the park also an outstanding Obelisk on a hilly slope of Hagley which may be seen for miles around. It has no particular significance.

The Lyttelton family have played an important part in the history of the country and of more distinction was the appointment of Lord Cobham as Governor General of New Zealand in 1961.

An ancestor of this noble family in the 16th century lived at Prestwood during the reign of Edward VI. Later John Lyttelton built there an elegant house, it was afterwards occupied by his son Philip. The Lyttelton's were great cricketers, the present Lord Cobham is president of the famous Enville Cricket Club.

From Hagley to the south and south-west, good roads lead through much pretty scenery to such places of interest as Bromsgrove near the Lickey Hills, Kidderminster, Habberley Valley, Hartlebury Castle (the home of the Bishop of Worcester) with one of its wings now opened as the Museum of Worcester. There is also Ombersley and Stourport (with good facilities for fishing and boating) and Droitwich Spa with its brine baths and lovely salt water Lido. To all these places there are excellent bus services from Stewponey.

THE STORY OF ST. KENELM

The Story of the murder of St. Kenelm and St. Kenelm's Church is one of the oldest and also one of the most fascinating stories of the Midlands and has been told and retold for over 1,100 years. Had it not been for the little Church that stands between Clent and Walton Hills, perhaps many people would not have heard the name and no doubt, if it had not been for the legend the Church might not have had the same attraction, for the thousands of people who visit it every year. In the old days many pilgrims used to come from many parts of the country, to make their devotions at the shrine, and to pray for healing of their infirmities. It is the story of the boy King who was murdered by his guardian Askobert, who was bribed by his jealous sister to kill him. She also promised Askobert marriage. The boy was out hunting in Uffmore Wood and as he knelt to pray, Askobert chopped off his head, and buried his body under a thorn bush. As the head was struck off a white dove fled from it, a column of light hovered around and a staff which the child of 8 years was holding burst into leaf. The dove reached Rome bearing a scroll telling where Kenelm's body lay. The Pope received the message while celebrating Mass in St. Peter's, which said

"In Clent in Cowbach, lieth under a thorn
His head off-shorn,
Kenelm King-born."

As a result of this the Pope sent some men to England to try to locate the rough burial place of the Royal Martyr, and to make arrangements for the removal of the body to a proper burial place at Winchcombe, the Abbey founded by Kenelm's father. The legend has it that when the body was conveyed for sanctification and reburial, it passed, his sister Quenfrida who fell dead at the same time. On the Lych Gate at St. Kenelm's Church, the boy King is shown holding his dove and flowering staff. It is said that before his murder St. Kenelm dreamed of a tree reaching to the stars, with spreading branches covered with flowers and glowing with countless lights. When Kenelm's body was removed a spring of water came from the spot. It had healing properties and a shrine was built, afterwards a Church standing so it is supposed near the site of the murder.

The story of the boy King spans the centuries, linking us with that far off event, and reminding us of a cruel deed, inspired by jealousy, and of a little boy of royal blood who was faithful unto death.

The Church itself is worth a visit. The story of St. Kenelm is told in tiny pictures in a beautiful window in the little Church. Another coloured glass window was the gift of Mr. Gladstone, the 19th Century Prime Minister, who used to worship at St. Kenelm's when he was staying at Hagley Hall as Lord Lyttelton's guest.

It was not until 1816 that St. Kenelm's Church became a Parish Church for the newly created Parish of Romsley and Hunnington. This Church has been well maintained by the succeeding generations. The following is an extract from "The Kenelmstowe Discoveries" by Wilson Jones. "One of the main tasks is to locate the early burial ground of Kenelmstowe which from ancient records, should date back to pre-Norman times. The identification of Roman coins points to the fact that this was a pagan site of worship, and that the legend of Kenelm dated back to the Moon Goddess and Zodiac cults, and was, probably connected with the pagan Cotteri Chapel at Coton near Alveley. Since Mr. J. T. Partridges preliminary survey has brought to light about twenty Roman coins, tiles, pieces of pottery and a drainage system, it seems to point to the fact that Kenelmstowe is an important archaeological site. The whole story of the Clent burial burrows, Druid pagan rites and battles between Roman and Britons in the area connects up with the legend of the "Boy—King".

To the south and south-west good roads run through much pretty scenery to such places of interest as Bromsgrove, near the Lickey Hills, Kidderminster, Hartlebury (seat of Bishop of Worcester, and folk Museum), Ombersley, Stourport (good facilities for fishing) and Droitwich Spa. There are excellent bus services from Stourbridge.

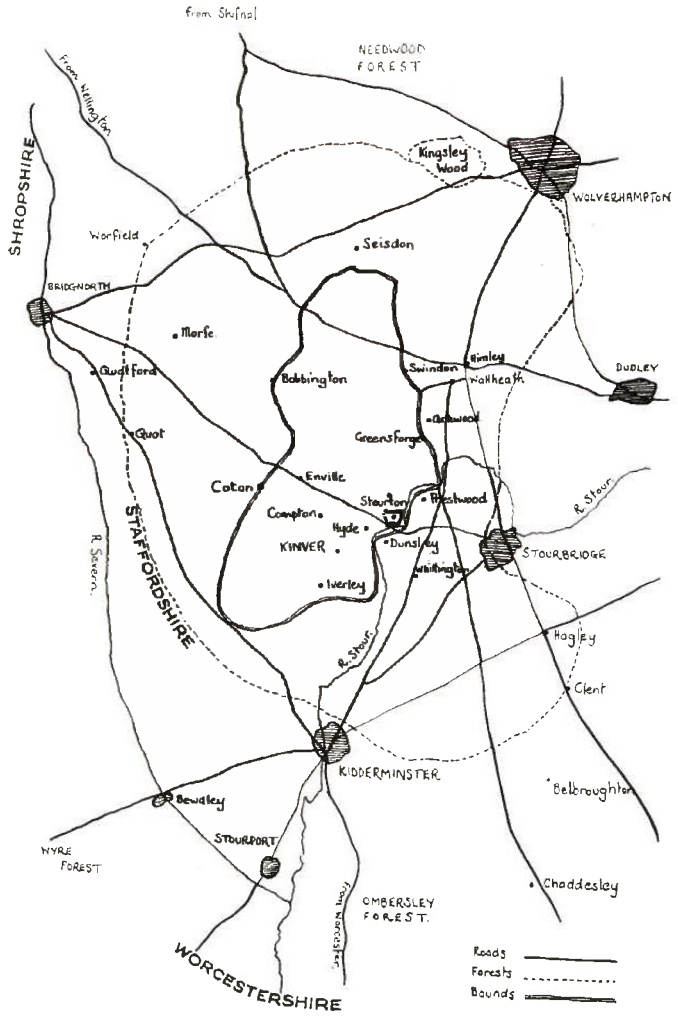
CHAPTER 9

THE COUNTRY CODE

Those who do not fully understand the country way of life can easily do harm by thoughtless and careless actions. For example, it is not sufficiently realised that a gate left open will invite animals to stray from their fields: they may then damage crops or suffer harm themselves, or involve you in an accident. The unsightliness of litter left discourteously behind all too often spoils the beauty of a scene for others, some may cause painful injury to humankind and animals, or damage costly farm machinery. So when you are out and about in country places follow these rules for good country behaviour from the Country Code prepared by the National Parks Commission:—

Guard against all risks of fire.
Fasten all gates.
Leave no litter.
Keep dogs under proper control.
Keep to the paths across farm land.
Avoid damaging: fences, hedges and walls.
Safeguard water supply.
Protect wild life, wild plants, and trees.
Go carefully on country roads.
Respect the life of the countryside.

KINVER FOREST and DISTRICT



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