


CONSERVATION AREA HISTORIES:
TWYFORD
 DISTRICT OF SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

Twyford, a chapelry of Barrow-upon-Trent, lies six miles south of Derby on the north bank of the River Trent. Until Willington Bridge was built in 1839 there was no bridge across the river between Swarkestone, four miles downstream, and Burton-on-Trent some ten miles upstream. Twyford, meaning “double ford” was therefore an important crossing point on the river and on a direct route from Derby to Repton.

The name serves as a reminder that fords and ferries were very common alternatives to bridges into the 20th century. William Woolley the Derbyshire historian, writing in 1712, mentions a ferryboat at Twyford, and Viscount Torrington the famous diarist used the ferry in 1790 with his two horses: “Po was very quiet in the boat, but Blacky was much alarmed.”



The chain ferry at Twyford, photographed by Melbourne photographer Edward Martin around 1900. The ferry survived until 1963.

A chain ferry survived here until 1963 when the boat was washed away by floods and not replaced. The ferry posts still stand on both sides of the river **(1) (2)**. In February 1867 a boat en route from Burton to Hull failed to lower its sails on the approach to the ferry. It collided with the chain at speed and was driven sideways underneath it. The mast broke and the capsized vessel filled with water. The three members of the crew narrowly escaped death, two of them by clinging on to the ferry chain. The third was rescued from the wrecked vessel about a mile downriver.

The Trent had been made navigable through South Derbyshire following an Act of Parliament in 1699. The Trent and Mersey canal, opened in 1777, eventually superseded it, but the river remained navigable for many years afterwards as the above incident shows. The trading opportunities offered by the river were not overlooked at Twyford, where a building at the Hall was used for warehousing.

The parish boundary extends to a field, Hailstones, **(3)** on the south side of the river showing that the river changed its course here at some time in the past. Within living memory John Hind, the farmer of Ferry Farm **(4)**, Twyford, grazed his cows on this field, taking them there six miles by road in the spring and crossing by the ferry every day to milk them. The church registers record that in 1705, William Smith, a stranger, hanged himself at Twyford. Suicides could not be buried in consecrated ground, so he was ferried across for burial “in a place commonly called Hailstones”.

At Domesday (1086), the parish of Twyford and Stenson was divided into three manors all held under Henry de Ferrers. Two were a joint holding, so the three manors formed only two estates. One of these estates passed through the Curzons of Croxall and the Crewkers, before being split between John Crewker’s two co-heiresses in the 16th century. One part was taken through the Bracebridge and Beaumont (of Barrow) families, and was eventually sold to the Harpurs. The other part was taken through the Tevery and Huband families, before also being bought by the Harpurs.



Grange Farm. The refined detailing of this fine 18th century farmhouse suggest that it was built for an owner-occupier rather than a tenant, but the identity of the builder remains unknown. There would have been a previous house on the site.

The other manor or estate was by the fourteenth century in the possession of the Meynells of Langley. From them it came to the Plumpton family who bestowed it on the Knights Hospitaller of St John. The Hospitallers had an estate or “camera” at Barrow tenanted for many years by the Bothe family, which was part of their Preceptory of Yeaveley near Ashbourne. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries it was acquired by the Finderne family and came by marriage to a branch of the Harpur family. Old Hall Cottage **(9)** is probably on the site of the chief homestead of this estate.

Twyford had no recorded church at Domesday, but the present church of St. Andrew **(5)** has an impressive Norman chancel arch with zigzag decoration. The tower at the west end of the church shows evidence in its construction that it was built in three stages. The lowest part was said by Cox, the Victorian authority on Derbyshire churches, to be early thirteenth century and the upper part and low spire to be fifteenth century. The chancel has windows in the Decorated style and a priest’s door.

Inside are monuments to the Harpur and Bristowe families. The three bells, including one dated 1611, have been recently restored. The church registers date from 1658. Daniel Shelmerdine, a nonconformist, was ejected from the parish in 1662 and imprisoned many times for unlawfully preaching in the area before the Act of Toleration in 1689.

Documentary evidence from wills and inventories dating from the early sixteenth century shows that almost everyone in Twyford in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was engaged in farming, though sometimes on a very small scale. The fields **(7)** between the church and the A5132, named on an 1842 Estate Map as “Old Yard” and now pasture, show signs of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation in very wide, pronounced strips. The ridge and furrow is accompanied by other, irregular features, which may suggest old homesteads long gone. These fields are crossed by a web of footpaths with kissing gates at each field boundary.

Map evidence (1849) shows a yard surrounded by farm buildings within the precincts of Hall Farm, the former manor house, immediately south of the church. By the time of the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1881 most of these buildings had been demolished, but a well constructed and massive stone wall **(6)** survives against the lane leading to the church. Its quality suggests that its builder was of high social status, and it is the only tangible indication of the importance of the Hall Farm site prior to the 18th century.

In the 1662 Hearth Tax Returns for Twyford and Stenson two houses stand out for having seven hearths each, a large number for that time. Mrs Harpur, the widow of George Harpur, a younger son of Sir Richard Harpur of Littleover, was living in one of these houses later known as the Old Hall and now known as Old Hall Cottage **(9)**; this house stands on rising ground above Twyford Green and is still lifted out of the ordinary by its massive external stone chimney stacks.



Old Hall Cottage. Although much reduced from its original size, the huge chimneystacks and fine quality of the stonework still betray the high status origins of this house, once occupied by a branch of the Harpur family.

An oil painting, dated 1810, shows the Old Hall prior to partial demolition. A tree ring analysis has been undertaken of the timber frame of the part of the house still standing, showing that it was built soon after 1654. The

front of the house, originally timber framed, was rebuilt in brick in the early nineteenth century. Old Hall Farm **(10)** is shown on the oil painting as a timber framed barn. A timber studded wall of the barn is retained in the present house which also has blocked vents for a former cheese chamber on the first floor.

The other house with seven hearths in 1662 was occupied by Mrs Huband; this was the manor house already referred to, known as Twyford Hall **(8)**, on the north side of the Trent. In 1692 the Hubands sold the manor to Mr Harpur. Meanwhile the Bristow family had been amassing property in Twyford for at least a century and in 1696 Samuel Bristow consolidated his property by an exchange of lands with Mr Harpur. By 1759, when Samuel Bristow made his will, he was wealthy and described himself as a gentleman. It is likely that he was living in Twyford Hall by this time, and that he had substantially rebuilt the house earlier in the century.

The 17th century hall was in the vicinity of the present house, but it is uncertain whether the present building occupies the very same spot. It descended through the family until it was offered for sale in 1856 and was then bought by the Harpur Crewe estate. In 1863 the Hall was radically modernised and became a tenanted farm until it was sold in the 1980s; it has not been altered substantially since.



The gauche proportions of the front elevation of the Hall stem partly from its evolution over time. The frontage has been widened from three bays to five by the addition of a window at each end, and the roof line has been raised. The upper parts of the attic windows are blind and exist for cosmetic effect only, relics of a time when large windows were a status symbol.

Meanwhile the Old Hall had been bought by a Leicestershire branch of the Harpur family, represented by John Harpur and his wife Dorothy. John Harpur kept the accounts for the Calke Abbey estate until his cousin Sir John Harpur came of age in 1701. John Harpur died in 1712 but with no male heirs. His property in Twyford was eventually divided between two surviving daughters who did not live in Twyford. The house was subsequently tenanted as a farm, hence its eventual reduction in size as mentioned above. At the end of the eighteenth century the whole estate had come by marriage to the Bathurst family who sold it to the Harpurs of Calke.

Grange Farm, **(11)** close to the church and facing south west across the river, was built in the mid eighteenth century. It has a good range of farm buildings including a barn of about 1800 built of reused timbers from an earlier cruck framed building. The builder of this fine and substantial house is, as yet, unknown.

By the eighteenth century the church was in need of repair. A Church Brief or Royal Warrant for Collection of Charitable Objects was issued in 1739 to help raise the money required. Ten thousand copies were printed for distribution throughout the country and £1,050 was raised. The money was chiefly used on the nave, which was rebuilt using the existing masonry, faced externally with new brickwork. The roof was also repaired at this time. New pews were added later in 1775. In 1821 the church spire was badly damaged by lightning and part of it was rebuilt.



The Georgian nave of the church, rebuilt in 1739, contrasts with the mediæval tower and spire at the west end.

A school **(12)** was built in 1843. At a meeting of householders, held in the chancel of Twyford Church in January 1842, grateful thanks were given to Sir George Crewe for his present of a site for the school and also for £20 towards the erection of the schoolroom. Queen Adelaide, widow of King William IV and then resident at Sudbury (Derbyshire), gave £10, and £125 was raised by public subscription. A stone shield above the door bears the building date and the Harpur coat of arms. It is a single storeyed building built of brick with a bellcote, and had a very small schoolyard.

Ferry House **(13)**, on the road to the river, was two houses until the early 20th century. It is known locally as Noah’s Ark because the land around the house is so often flooded. John Hudson, gamekeeper on the Calke estate, lived here from 1860. He was one of the gamekeepers of Sir Vaucey Harpur Crewe photographed outside Calke Abbey in 1887. Until 1850

an inn called the Blue Bell stood in the field (14) close to Ferry House. The Enclosure Commissioners held their first meeting here in February 1838 but the inn was demolished by Sir John Harpur Crewe after it had become notorious as a meeting place for local poachers.

The Towle family were blacksmiths in Twyford for many generations. John Towle, blacksmith, was listed in a rental of 1734. The Smithy (15) was their home in the nineteenth century and the Cox family who succeeded them were blacksmiths here until the 1960s. The blacksmith's shop is now incorporated into the house.

In 1856 a new vicarage was built on two acres of land at Barrow Gate on the parish boundary between Barrow and Twyford, for a vicar serving both parishes. Its site, owned by Sir John Harpur Crewe, was given by him in exchange for two pieces of glebe land, namely half the churchyard which had not been consecrated (16) and a farmyard near the river called Booker Yard (17).

A fire in 1910 destroyed the eighteenth century church furnishings and the eighteenth century nave ceiling. New oak pews and a stained glass window were given to the church by William Towle, son of the blacksmith, who had become manager of the Midland Hotel and later achieved fame and a knighthood for providing the first refreshment service on the railway. The plaster was stripped from the internal walls, revealing the faint traces of wallpaintings still to be seen over the chancel arch.

Twentieth century amenities were slow to come to the village; electricity was not connected until 1939 and there was no mains water supply until 1959.



Twyford School was only small but was 'dressed to impress' and stood proudly on the main road where all could see it. It was saved from dereliction by the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust.

The School closed in 1943 because of the diminished number of children. Twyford and Stenson children were transferred to nearby Findern School. The School House became derelict but was rescued in 1979 through conversion to a dwelling house by the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust.

The death of Charles Harpur Crewe in 1981 led to the break up of the Harpur Crewe Estate in order to pay Capital Transfer Tax. Tenants were able to purchase their houses and the land they had farmed. Twyford Greens, being the unfenced land to the north (18) and south (19) of the A5132, has until recently been managed by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust as a good example of unimproved permanent pasture land, ponds and marshes.

The population of Twyford was never very large. An estimated population from the Diocesan Census for both Twyford and Stenson in 1563 is 148. The Hearth Tax returns a century later give an estimated population of 135. By the nineteenth century there are population figures for Twyford on its own. Bagshaw's Directory for 1846 records 24 houses and a population of 135. By the 1881 Census there were seventeen households and a population of 101. One hundred and seven electors are listed on the 1999 Electoral Register in nineteen households.

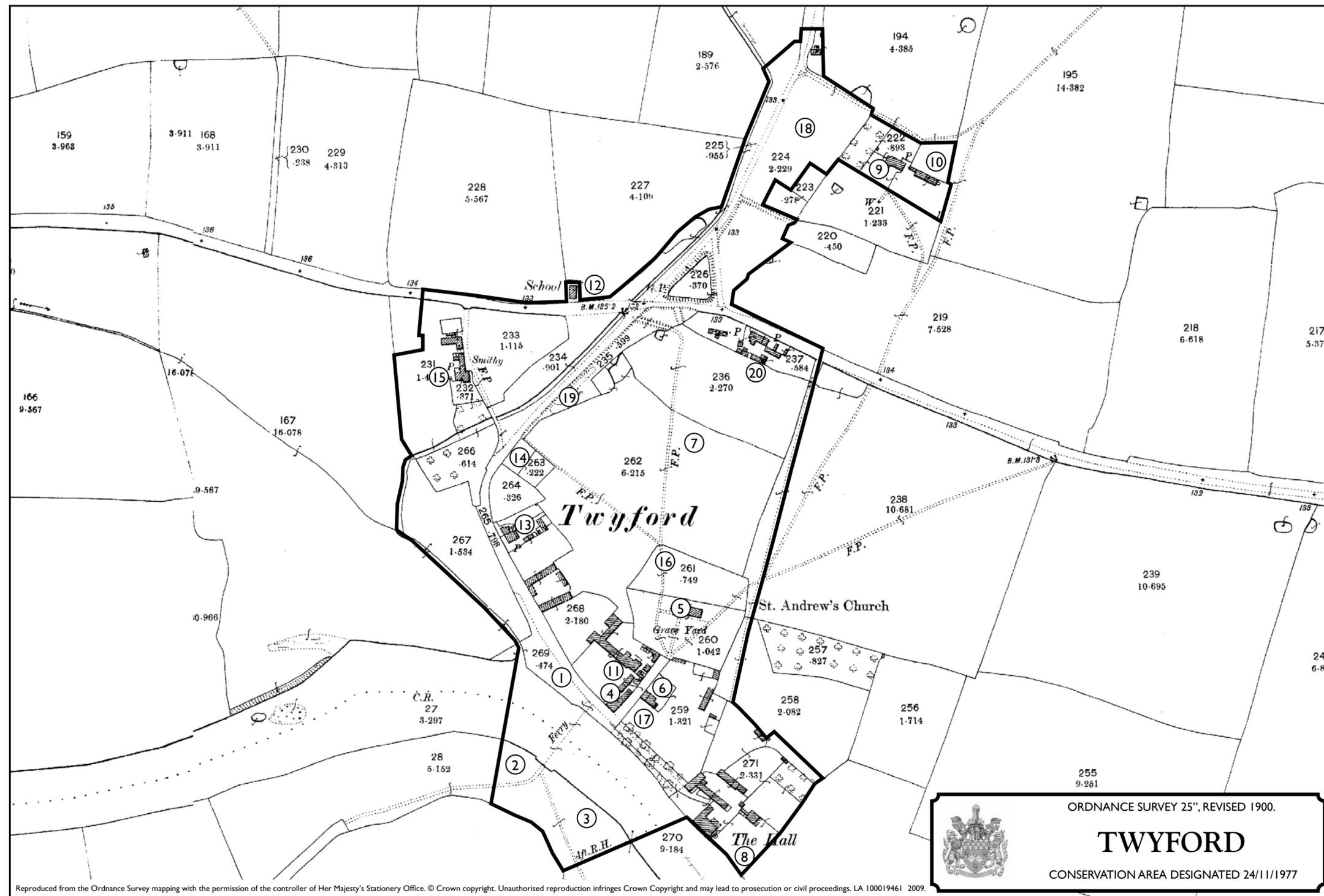
Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century there were seven farmers in Twyford each employing a number of farm workers; now there is only one, with no farm workers. Population shrinkage over time has been due to the amalgamation of cottages into single properties as at Ferry House (13) and Green Farm (20), in addition to demolitions and the reduced size of modern households. The growth of the village has been naturally limited by the terrain. All the existing houses in the village are built on slightly rising ground above flood level; the access roads are often flooded but the houses remain dry.

Joan and Alwyn Davies

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ORDNANCE SURVEY 25", REVISED 1900.

TWYFORD

CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATED 24/11/1977