

WIGMORE HISTORY TRAIL

Discover the historic buildings around our village



Our Heritage

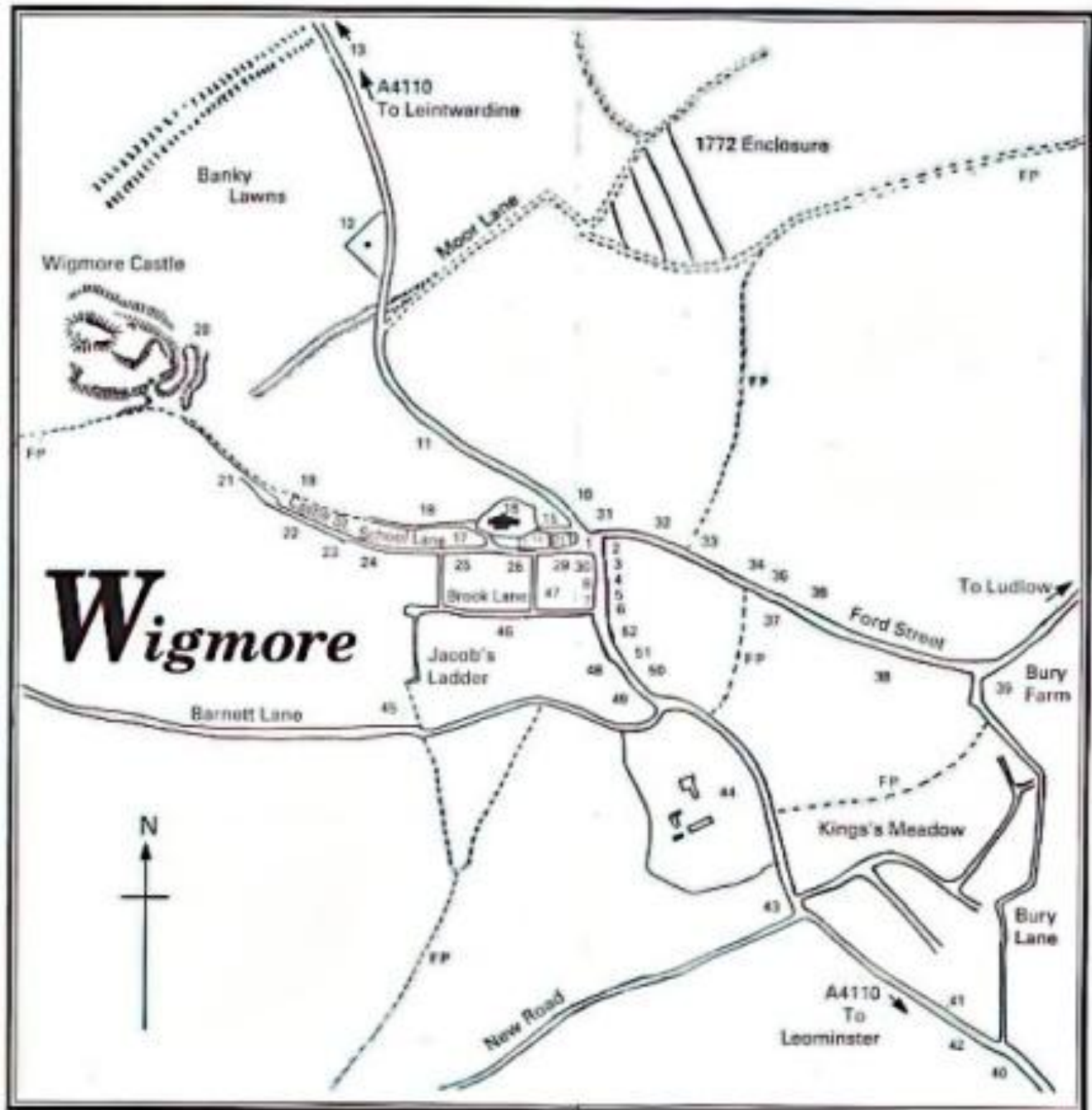
Our Community

Wigmore History Trail

This is based on the original history trail created by Jim Tonkin in the 1980s and provides information on the historically significant properties in the village.

I have reused Jim's original map but rewritten the text descriptions of the properties and added photographs where I can. Whereas Jim focused solely on the technical architectural features of the buildings as cited in the English Heritage listings I have tried to personalise the descriptions a little more and add some background about who lived in the buildings.

David Swatton, 2026



1. The Pavement. This triangular space was the market place, typical of towns on the Marches. The livestock fairs in Wigmore in the 17th and 18th centuries occurred twice a year and were well organised and centred on the market hall which stood at the crossroads in the centre of the village outside The Oak public house until the mid-1800s. The Wigmore market hall would have looked like that in Pembridge shown in the photograph from the 1950s.



Broad Street, on the east side working south are:

2. The Oak Wigmore public house and restaurant.



The Oak (or Royal Oak as it was known at various times in its long history) is shown in the photograph here (left-hand building), dated around the 1890s.

At the time this image was taken the licensee of the Oak was Elizabeth Burgoyne who took over from her husband William, a former stonemason, who was “beer-keeper” at the pub from the 1860s until his death in 1886.

3. Rock Cottage. A 17th century timber-framed house, shown above next to the Oak and below (on the left) in about 1910.



4. Oakley House.

One of the oldest houses in the village, thought to have been built in about 1600. It has undergone many changes over the years as have all the properties in the village. In about 1900 when the photograph above was taken, it was J Morgan Butcher's shop. In the photograph below it is a more general village shop. John Morgan's son, John Clifford Morgan, was killed in action in World War 1 and is named on the war memorial in the church.



5. Brick House.

A late 17th century three storey, handmade-brick house with cellar – the right-hand building in this photograph from around 1900 (with Oakley House immediately up the road and Queen's House in the background at the top of the road).

At the time this photo was taken Brick House was occupied by Charlotte Jones, the widow of a farmer, and her daughter.

6. Burgage Farm.

A 17th century timber-framed house re-fronted in brick in the 18th century. In the photo (right) it is the right-most building, adjacent to Brick House and across the road from the Old Post Office Cottage. Presumably this was named after the concept of a "burgage" where properties were built on elongated strips of land known as burgage plots extending back from the main road.



In the gap visible between Oakley House and Brick House (photo above) in the post war years for decades there was a big Nissen hut, painted like a black and white timber-framed building, that acted as the village shop, known by many locals as Shaplands Shop - shown in this photo from the 1950s.

On the west side working north are:

7. Old Post Office. A late 16th century timber-framed building now roughcast.

8. Old Post Office Cottage. The later timber framing of the adjacent Post Office Cottage, also now roughcast, probably indicates it dates from the second half of the 17th century. The cottage is just visible on the left-hand-side of the picture of Burgage Farm above.

The earliest record we have of the post office as a discrete building is from the census of 1871 when the post-master was William Edwards. Prior to that, the postal service in Wigmore, which began in 1846, was probably run out of either a pub or shop.

9. Stepps House. The current house built on the promontory between Castle Street and Church Street dates from the second half of the 17th century but is on the site of an earlier medieval building remnants of which are visible in the house's undercroft. In the 1860s Stepps House was the residence of the village doctor, William Richard Russell Wilton.

The image to the right is watercolour of Stepps House by Louisa Puller in 1941. This work is from the 'Recording Britain' collection of topographical watercolours and drawings made during the Second World War when some of the country's finest watercolour painters were commissioned to make paintings and drawings of buildings, scenes, and places which captured a sense of national identity. Their subjects were typically English: market towns and villages, churches and country estates, rural landscapes and industries, rivers and wild places, monuments and ruins. This painting is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.



10. Court House. This building, dating from the early 17th century is, unusually for the time, built of red brick. This building superseded an earlier building that too was the local court house and outside of which stood the village stocks. As an aside, the photo below dates from 1895 and is of a sketching party visiting the area from London, pausing outside Court House.



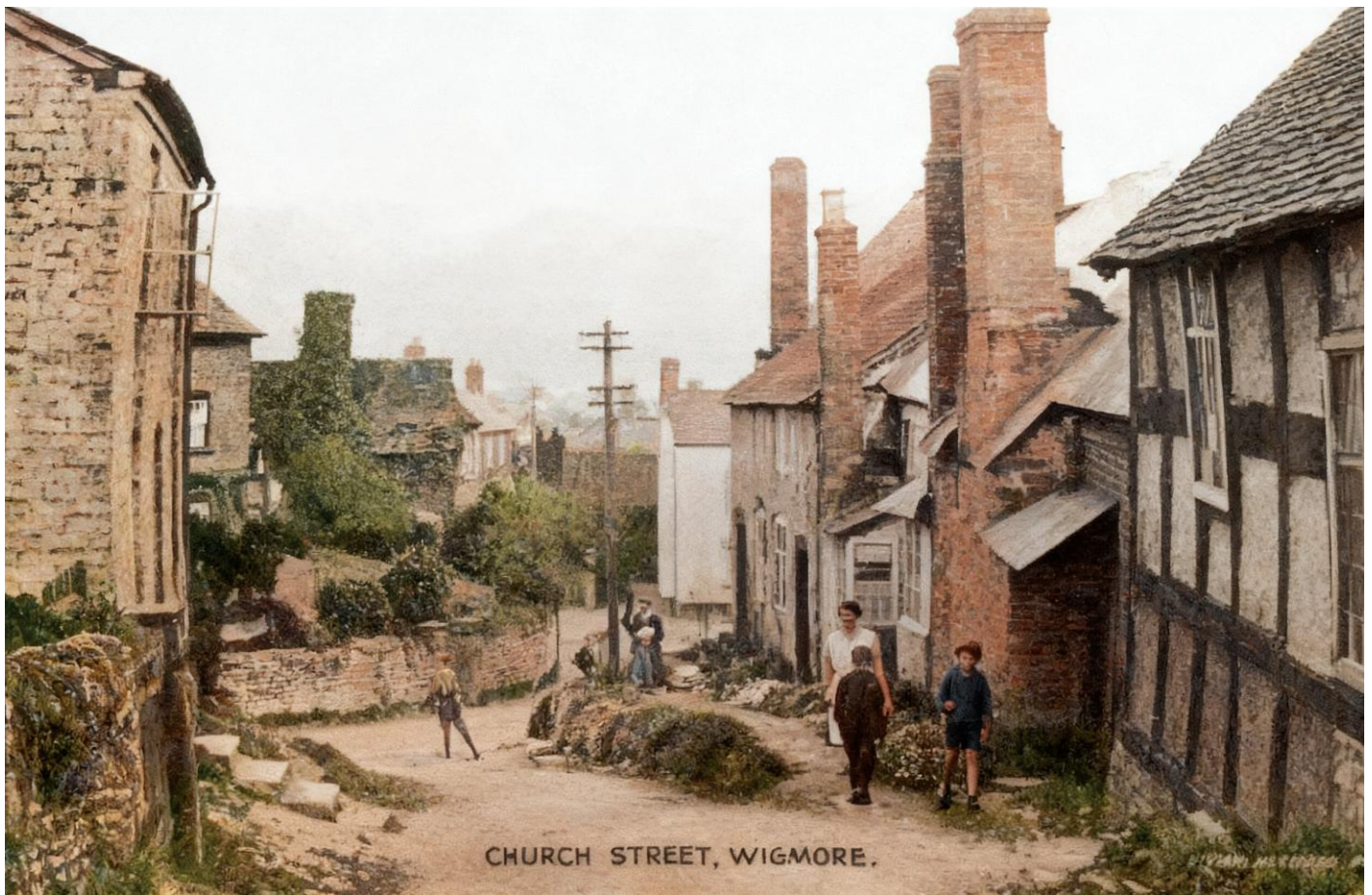
11. Bank Cottage. Much altered and renovated, the house probably dates from the 17th century.

12. Cemetery. The land was bought and the cemetery with chapel laid out in 1899. The churchyard of St. James' church was closed for burials shortly afterwards in 1901.

As a side note, at the beginning of the 1900s the graveyard caretaker was John Griffiths who lived in a house on the lane leading up to the church. He shared his house with his sister and brother-in-law, John Castree, who was the grave-digger and who took over as caretaker a few years later.

13. Gotherment. An 18 -19th century farmhouse on a much earlier site incorporating a timber-framed house of the 17th century.

Church Street – rather grandly named for the tiny lane leading up to the church gate from the main road. The lane is much changed from the photo below taken in the 1920s or 30s from outside the churchyard gate. The cottages on the right hand side are no longer there.



14. Old School. William Allen's School, known locally as the Dame School (right foreground in the photo above) dates from the 17th century, donated to the "Poor of the Parish of Wigmore" - May 6th 1658.

15. The Cottage. The house opposite the Dame School (north side) now rendered, appears to have been a single room timber framed house raised in the 18th century and added to on the west in the 19th century.

16. Church of St. James. Early Norman church built soon after the Conquest incorporating herring-bone masonry in the north wall that is typical of that period. The chancel was lengthened and the south aisle built in the early 14th century by Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March. The tower dates from the same period. The building was subjected to a Victorian make-over in the 1860s, designed by George Bodley who was one of the leading Gothic revival architects in England in the latter half of the 19th century. At Wigmore his work was undertaken in two phases, in 1864 the focus being on the nave and in 1868 the focus on the chancel. He also had the porch outside the main door constructed in a 14th century style.

In the churchyard the cross has a 14th century base.

The photograph here, taken from the top of Jacob's Ladder dates from about 1900.



School Lane

17. Old Primary School and School House: built in the Tudor Revival style and opened as a school on 16 October 1860 having been paid for by public subscription on land given by Lady Langdale. The first teachers there were William Newell and his wife, Emily. It was converted to a private house in 1968 when the primary school opened adjacent to the senior school.

18. Callis Close. A timber-framed house built in the 17th century. It was originally thatched, as shown in this Edwardian photograph.



19. Greenhill Common - Old Castle site. One of the only pieces of common land remaining in the parish contains mounds of a motte and bailey castle probably built immediately after the Norman Conquest before the grander castle up the hill was built.

20. Castle. Parts of the wall of the keep are Norman of the 12th century. The north east tower is 13th century and everything else dates from the 14th century when it became virtually a palace for the Mortimers. It was dismantled by the then owners, the Harleys, in 1643 during the English Civil Wars to stop it falling into the hands of the Royalists. It had been one of the largest and strongest castles on the Marches and for a handful of years at the beginning of the 14th century England was virtually ruled from there by Mortimer and Isabella after they deposed Edward II.

Banky Lawns. This 'field' from the castles outer defences at the east end to the double moat of the later castle at the west end gives good views north over the 1772 enclosure of the moors and away to the last site of Wigmore Abbey. A resistivity survey carried out in 1988 showed that there were buildings in the area likely dating from when it was an outer bailey of the medieval castle. This is private property and now unfortunately not accessible to the public.

Castle Street

As one walks down this street the alleys off to the south mark the streets of the old borough grid pattern to the east and south of the early castle. In the photograph, right, we see Castle Street from the junction of School Lane.



21. Barn, Green Hill Farm. Now dilapidated this 17th century barn is timber framed and weather-boarded on a rubble plinth. It was designed with four bays, a wagon entrance in second bay, and was probably thatched originally.

22. Green Hill Cottage. A much-altered timber-framed building. The central part of the building may have been small open hall at one time.

23. Yew Tree House. A timber-framed 17th century house. It was a single storey and attic but was raised in the 18th century.

24. Barberry Cottage. An early 17th century timber-framed house.

25. Burnt House Barn. A timber-framed and weather-boarded barn built probably in the late 17th century.

26. Old Vicarage site. Opposite the bottom of School Lane the foundations of a two-room building about 45 ft by 27 ft were exposed when the present bungalows were built. It matched the drawing in 'Vox Corvi', 1694, written by Wigmore's longest serving priest, Alexander Clogie.

North side. East of School Lane

27. Long House. Built with its gable end to road, shown in the photo above (the white building, centre right) probably in the 18th or 19th centuries, possibly on the site of an earlier building.

28. Chapel Cottage. This was built as an Independent Chapel in 1847 and bought by Primitive Methodists in 1853 for £95. The attendance varied between 40 and 70 on Sundays and by December 1862 this was deemed sufficient for

the Circuit to decide to obtain a new, larger building in Wigmore. Work on the new Methodist Chapel on Broad Street began in 1863 and the old chapel was sold off and lost its religious use, becoming a private house.

South side

29. Castle Cottage. A timber-framed house dating probably from the 17th century but incorporating earlier timber. The building was originally a cobbler's shop with two attached dwellings that were converted into a single home in the 20th century. The original Castle Cottage was on the corner of Castle Street and was demolished – now the site of the Millennium Garden.

30. Smithy. Probably an 18th century workshop attached to a 19th century house. In the 1870s and 80s the blacksmith was Benjamin Faulkner, from Yatton, whose father was a blacksmith before him and also a local preacher.

Ford Street, North side

31. Queen's House. 17th century timber-framed hall and later cross-wing, probably 18th century.

Beside Queen's House, where the late Victorian Moorview house now stands used to be a lodging house (right). In 1890, roughly when the picture was taken, the lodging house keeper was a widow, Mrs Ann Cartwright and most of her lodgers were labourers, hawkers and drovers.



32. Ford Farm. A 17th century timber-framed house with an attached 19th century stable, now incorporated into the house. Until relatively recently the main farmhouse building was rendered as shown in this photo from 2003. The render has since been removed to reveal the timber frame and brick infill.



33. The Castle Inn. Originally named the Compasses Hotel. Built and owned by Benjamin Pollard who was living in it in 1844. The picture below dates from the 1930s when the proprietor was Ernie Hughes.



34. Plough Farm and barn. A two-bay house with stone sides and timber-framed front, just beyond the Compasses in the photo above. The adjacent 17th century timber-framed barn is weather-boarded and probably had a thatched roof originally. In the 19th century this was the site of the Plough Inn, one of five inns and beer houses in the village in the mid-19th century.

35. The Cottage. In the same photo just beyond Plough Farm. The building probably dates from the 17th century and is now completely rendered.

36. Old Vicarage. Now a Residential Care Home. This is a typical Victorian brick middle-class house built in 1845 when the village vicar was John Trollope.

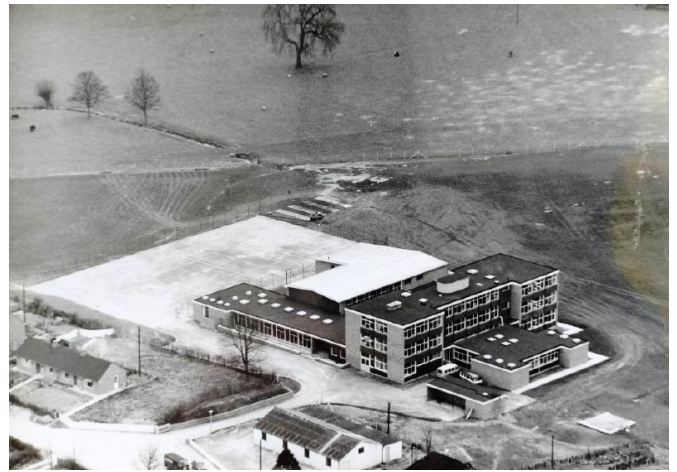
South side

37. Ford Cottage. Early 17th century that is now a single home but was probably originally an amalgamation of a main farmhouse, workshop and separate smaller cottage. The photo here was taken in the 1890s from outside what was the Vicarage looking up Ford Street.

The gable end of Ford Cottage is on the left. In the middle distance is the lodging house mentioned previously, on the right Plough Farm. The church is on the hill in the distance.



38. Wigmore School. Built on land known as King's Meadow, a name dating to the 14th century when it was owned by a man of that name. To build the school the contract was put out to tender and a project cost of exactly £132,068 was signed off by the council in November 1961. Wigmore County Secondary School opened the following year. The photo here shows the school shortly after it opened with the village hall in front which opened in 1956. Jim Tonkin who wrote the first Wigmore History Trail was the first head teacher at the school.



39. Bury House. This is a big 19th century farmhouse on an earlier site positioned on the outskirts of the village. In the late Victorian era Bury House was owned by the Nott family. Charles Nott was one of the largest land owners in the area and in 1871 had numerous live-in servants including a governess, cook, housemaid and two farm servants.

On the main road into the village from Aymestrey:

40. Perrywood. A mainly 17th century farmhouse on the edge of the village.

41. Pear Tree Farm. An 18th century farmhouse on three storeys.

42. Opposite Pear Tree Farm. A one up, one down house occupied in the 19th century, now derelict.

43. Lower House Farm. This is a block of late 18th century brick farm buildings built on the corner of the main road into the village and New Road (going towards Lingen). New Road is so called because it was part of the Wigmore Turnpike Trust of the late 18th century (but the road is now mostly known as Ongar Street. Lower House Farm has been in the ownership of the Mason family for over 100 years.

44. Wigmore Hall. A big timber-framed house originally dating from the middle of the 16th century. There was much 20th century alteration and this picture dates from around 1920 when a lot of the changes were undertaken. At that time the hall was owned by Major Henry Cecil Akroyd.



45. Barnett Lane. About 300 yards up the hill a footpath runs down steeply to the north to Brook Lane, the path being known as Jacob's Ladder. To the west of the path some unevenness marks the short lived site of Wigmore Abbey (1160 to 1172) – it was located here between moving from its original site at Shobdon to its final site outside Adforton. Apparently, the monks complained about the steep ascent from fetching their water in the brook at the bottom of Jacob's Ladder.

Brook Lane

46. Brook Farm. This is another 17th century timber-framed farmhouse with many 19th and 20th century alterations and additions.

47. Brook House. Thought to be one of the oldest buildings in the village, potentially pre-dating Wigmore Hall. It's an early 16th century timber-framed house cased in brick in the 19th century.

Broad Street, West side, south of Brook Lane

48. Garage on site of Castle Inn. The garage was established shortly after the Castle Inn burnt down in 1927. The Castle Inn, shown in the picture below on the left, was a large coaching inn and served a number of civic purposes as well as being an inn. It was the hundred house for over two centuries, the location where the petty sessions court was held and even provided a back room as a police lock-up. The picture on the right is from the 1930s showing that the garage was already open by then.



49. Old Court House and Police Station. This was opened in 1848. The station is shown here in the 1890s complete with Police Constable Lee standing in front.



Prior to the opening of the Police Station and its associated lock-up, prisoners were held in a back room of the Castle Inn. It had been debated by the council for years whether or not to build a police station in the village but one argument that helped sway opinion in favour of supporting the motion was that of a case in 1845. A man had been arrested in Wigmore and because the "cell" in the Castle was occupied he ended up being locked up overnight in a farmer's pig sty! He had subsequently formally complained about his treatment and been awarded damages.

Broad Street, East side

50. Oak Cottage. A timber-framed 16th century building with a 17th century wing.

51. Primitive Methodist Chapel. Construction began on this chapel in 1863 to supersede the chapel on Castle Street. It was formally dedicated in 1865 as evidenced by the large inscription on its front pediment. It served as a chapel for almost 120 years and was converted into house in 1983.

52. Pretoria House, Tannery House. These are 17th century timber-framed properties shown on the right in the photograph from the 1930s. The existence of a tannery in the village likely explains the number of shoemakers and glove-makers who lived and worked in the village in the 19th century. The name "Pretoria House" was applied around 1900, drawing inspiration from the Boer War (the capture of Pretoria occurred in June 1900). Applying names from the British Empire to older houses was common practice for property owners during the early Edwardian era. Pretoria House is explicitly named for the first time in the census of 1901.

The house was occupied in the mid-20th century by Major Ernest Charles Taylor (a retired military surgeon from the South African Field Force and Indian Medical Service), cementing the house's historical ties to late 19th and early 20th-century history.

