



map showing the
OLD BUILDINGS OF
NEWTOWN LINFORD

Loosely based on the village plan of 1925
prepared for the sale of the estate

WHITE COTTAGE, 520 Bradgate Road

The White Cottage is the first old house on the left hand side of the road from Anstey. The central section, built from local stone, comprises what would have been the original four roomed cottage. At different times the house has been extended at both ends, partly in brick, rendered and painted white. A further extension to the rear, and a front porch have also been added. Most of the windows are the usual six-paned wooden casements, some with bowed lintel, which are common in the village.

The roof is of local slate, with two chimneys on the gable ends of the original house and another on the left hand extension. The right hand extension is slightly set back and has a lower roofline, without a chimney. The extra window in one of the downstairs rooms may have been inserted to give extra light to stockingmakers. Imagine the house stripped of its later additions, and there remains a simple two up/two down stone cottage with a symmetrical Georgian appearance.

In the early nineteenth century, there appear to have been other cottages, now gone, at this end of the village, and this makes it hard to be certain who was living in this house until the end of that century.

George Edgar Smith (known as Edgar), who was born in the village in 1888, wrote down some of his early memories. He recalled a tenant here, known as Stafford Smith, who used the room on the right hand side as a small factory where three or four people made stockings. He heard his father say that Mr Smith used to walk to Nottingham with the work, going one day and returning the next, and also mentioned that villagers generally wore clogs in those days.



The White Cottage, once a stockingmaker's house.

The occupants at the time of the 1891 census were John Smith, a 67 year old gardener from Tamworth, Staffordshire, who lived with his wife Mary, their 28 year old son George, who worked with his father, and an 18 year old daughter Agnes, who was a hosiery hand. As there was already a prolific Smith family in the village (including George Edgar himself), and it was common to call people by nicknames, it is easy to see how John Smith from Staffordshire became known as Stafford. It is also easy to envisage daughter Agnes and two or three other women in the room with two windows, engaged in the local cottage industry (then dying out) of stocking making.

There were framework knitters in Newtown, as in most Leicestershire towns and villages, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but the introduction of the Griswold circular knitting machine put an end to the large cumbersome stocking frames in cottages. Mr J W Lowe, who was born in Anstey at the turn of the twentieth century and lived in Newtown

after his marriage, remembered seeing women in both villages sitting at their front windows at work on their Griswolds. Why Mr Smith should walk all the way to Nottingham with the work is a puzzle. Maybe he only did such a journey a few times, when prices were low in Leicester. Later sources recall the socks being parcelled up and put on Reynolds' brake to be taken into Leicester.

Edgar Smith noted that the two fields to the right of the cottage were used for Bradgate estate horses, and for the estate agent's cattle and ponies. When the Bradgate Estate was sold in 1925, the estate horses were also sold. One was bought by a farmer in Ratby. Unfortunately, he never managed to get the horse to understand that its home was now in Ratby, and it took every opportunity to escape back to Newtown. Eventually the farmer got tired of fetching it back, and sold it back to someone in Newtown.

Until the Sale in 1925, everyone in the village was a tenant of the Greys. The occupant of this cottage at that time was J Corden, who managed to buy the house at the Sale. It was described in the prospectus as 'A

pleasantly situated double fronted cottage on the Anstey Road, with a fine view of Bradgate Park, containing six rooms and pantry, out-premises, and a large area of garden ground thereto attached, the whole site embracing over a quarter of an acre. A useful Lot with a long frontage and ample room for the extension of the present buildings.'

Mr Corden's daughter Phyllis became the village infant teacher in the 1920s. She was not college trained, but was invited to take the job by the estate agent, Edward Haslegrave, who was the nearest thing the village had to a resident squire. She stayed at the school until she had to take early retirement due to asthma in the late 1930s and continued to live in the cottage with her mother Mary Kate, and then on her own until her death in the 1970s.

The house was then bought and modernised by Owen Monk, a Leicester jazz musician, and sold on. A later owner, D Newcombe, made further alterations, including lowering the wide windowsill in one of the front windows to create a window seat.

ROSE COTTAGE, 534 Bradgate Road

(Grade II listed)

Rose Cottage is another rendered and white painted stone house. It has the appearance of being older than The White Cottage, and is marked on the 1773 map of the village. It could be early eighteenth century, or even older, while the two single-storey extensions on the west side could be nineteenth century. The roof was at one time thatched, but is now Swithland slate, with casement windows nestling under the eaves. There is a dairy



Rose Cottage, which was once thatched, housed a grocer's shop for many years.

at the back of the house, under a catslide roof. It has a thrall on either side, where pigs used to be salted. From the dairy there were once stairs to a bedroom.

Some of the downstairs rooms have exposed beams, and there are two salt cupboards beside one of the fireplaces. The ground floor has solid floors, which were of brick during living memory, and a small area of brick floor remains at the base of a cupboard which, it is said, came from the mansion in Bradgate Park. Upstairs the floor is made of wide wooden planks. During the course of renovations some years ago, an unsuspected inglenook fireplace was discovered.

There are three known hand-written, leather-bound copies of a Survey of Newtown Linford Parish made in 1838. In two of these the occupier of this house is named as Samuel Bacon; the third names John Hunt, who also appears in the 1841 census. We may surmise, then, that in 1838 Samuel Bacon either died or left the district, and John Hunt and his wife Mary moved in. The details of the property are identical for both tenants. There is a slated house and grocer's shop with garden occupying 20 perches of land; a separate garden of one rood; a slated cowshed and a two-acre croft under grass. Two of the Survey copies give a (different) value to each property. Unfortunately, none of the three books gives an explanation for the Survey. In the case of Rose Cottage under Samuel Bacon, £10.10.0. is given as the 'annual value'. For John Hunt



(the later copy) the 'value' is £8.15.0. For every property the later copy gives a lower valuation. Houses without land are rated much lower than this – £1.10.0 being typical.

What we do know is that there was a shop here in 1838, and this continued until about 1960. In 1851 William Rudkin, the village builder, erected a new stable and pigstye for John Hunt. The pigstye, made of brick and roofed in slate, is still there, now in the garden of the adjoining modern bungalow. Next to it is a brick and stone privy which now has a corrugated iron roof.

John Hunt remained as tenant until he died in 1855 aged 64, after which his widow Mary continued to raise cattle on her croft until her own death in 1866. Their slate headstone in the churchyard is from Groby quarry. After the Hunts, the house was tenanted for a while by a bailiff and his wife and daughter.

In 1872 Tom Rudkin, born in 1847, and his wife Mary moved in. Tom was the grandson of William Rudkin, builder to the Stamford Estate, whose account

books from 1838 to the 1850s are such a useful source of information. Tom was a bricklayer and he and Mary had previously lived at Bank Cottage, 90 Main Street. Mary, who was born in Copt Oak, was a member of the Whitcroft family after whom Whitcroft Lane is named.

Mary sold sweets, cigarettes and tobacco, and also provided teas for Bradgate visitors. Bill Jackson, born in 1896, endured a village rite of passage here when he first went to school in the Sunday School building across the road. He was told by some of the bigger boys to go over to Mrs Rudkin's shop and ask for a 'happorth of pigeon milk on a fork'. He did and she clouted him. So did his parents when he told them.

Mrs Rudkin used to go into Leicester with a carrier's cart three times a week. The cart was kept in a shed which was alongside the house on the left hand side. In 1927 this was moved to the back garden for use as a garage, and the present owners have ensured its preservation in good condition. The horse was kept in a field near Marion's Cottage.

The Rudkins had a daughter Minnie. She was three when she came to Rose Cottage, and spent most of her life here, dying in 1961, aged 92. Until she was eleven Minnie attended the village school across the road, paying her penny a week like the other children. Then she became one of the earliest pupils at the Wyggeston Girls' School in Humberstone Gate, Leicester, under its first headmistress, Miss Lester. She had to live in town with a relative during the week as there was no regular means of transport from Newtown Linford. Her beautiful handwriting was much admired.

Minnie became a dressmaker, and met her husband, who came from Staleybridge, Cheshire, when he came to work at the Brush factory in Loughborough as a draughtsman. Minnie, now Mrs Mossop, came home to Newtown to have her baby son Harry in the cottage, and stayed. She worked for the Countess of Stamford and Warrington at Bradgate House, Field Head, as a seamstress, having her own sewing room at the big house.

Minnie was able to buy Rose Cottage at the 1925

Sale. It was described in the prospectus as having six rooms and a larder, out-premises and a small piece of garden.

Harry was mainly brought up by his grandparents. He became a pattern maker at the Victoria Stone Works in Groby Quarries, and married Dora Sleath, whose family were builders from Rothley. After the Second World War he became a carpenter/joiner in the building trade, and later became self-employed, buying and selling cattle from local markets. He kept the animals for a few days in the field he rented near the house before selling them on. He kept hens and turkeys, and always had some pigs in the pigstye – little knowing that it had been built by his great-great-grandfather William Rudkin. Harry continued in the family tradition of turning his hand to odd jobs of carpentry and building, making himself an invaluable part of the community.

When Harry married Dora in 1931, he drew up plans for a bungalow, and this was built at the side of Rose Cottage. Dora helped her mother-in-law every afternoon, providing teas for visitors. In good weather these were served on the front lawn, otherwise two rooms indoors were brought into service.

In 1955 Minnie, then 84, told a reporter from the Leicester Evening Mail that she had been selling sweets for 70 years. The reporter gushed that “when today she



takes a sweet bottle to her brightly burnished balance scales, the habit of a lifetime guides her practised and graceful old hands.”

After Minnie's death, Harry and Dora rented out the cottage to a succession of tenants, amongst them Leicester Tigers rugby star, Peter Wheeler, until around 1980 it was sold to Christopher McChrystal. It was bought by P Parkinson in 1987, and each owner has made careful renovations, preserving the character of the old building.

JADE TEAROOMS

544 Bradgate Road

Leicester Corporation Water Works built this house and the pumping station behind. An underground tank received the village sewage, which an oil engine pumped over the ridge south of the village, to prevent it seeping into Cropston reservoir to the north-east. A narrow stone road led up to the Sewage Field from Groby Lane, at a point a little beyond the present cemetery.

In the 1920s the Water Works installed Mr Frank Smith as the engineer in charge of the pump house, and he and his wife lived in the brick house. Later they went to live in a bungalow on the top of the hill on Bradgate Road.

The next tenant was Ernest Thorpe, who was the brother of Mrs Corden at the White Cottage (520 Bradgate Road). He lived there with his sister Beattie, who kept house for him and provided teas for Bradgate visitors. A young lady named Vera Keats from Leicester was a regular customer, and caught the eye of Ernest.



They married, and lived here together with Beattie. Vera was very small and Ernest was large, with size 13 boots. They had a son Lancelot, and a parrot who used to shout 'Lance' so loud it could be heard in church.

The last tenants of the Water Department were Thomas and Madge Fowkes and their daughter Valerie. The house was sold by Severn Trent in the 1980s, and bought by Malcolm O'Shea from the Nursery next door, who turned it into a café.

NEWTOWN LINFORD

POST OFFICE,

546-550 Bradgate Road



Aspiring house detectives, start here! A village shop is the ideal place to look for clues to the history of a building, as you have every right to wander in, and nobody will complain if your gaze wanders up to the ceiling beams while you select a birthday card or tin of sardines.

First of all, look at the outside. A black and white timber framed cottage with graded slate roof? Or does something seem not quite right? Well, first of all the

roof slates, though graded, appear to be Welsh. Then there is something strange about those external timbers. Closer scrutiny shows that planks would be a better word. Far from being a weight-bearing framework, they are just pieces of wood nailed on over the stucco – adding to the weight rather than supporting it. The shopkeeper, looking at one of the planks which will be in need of repainting soon, conjectures that the easiest thing will probably be to take it down, paint it, then nail it back up again!

If a date now springs to mind, it could well be early 20th Century – a time when mock Tudor was just as fashionable as mock Georgian became in the 80s and 90s.

Now go inside – but mind your head on the low beams. Perhaps Tudor isn't a daft idea after all. Old photographs show a low-slung thatched cottage which would be almost unrecognisable as the Post Office if it weren't for the projecting wooden porch.

What we have here is not one long building erected all of a piece, but a range of five bays (or really three and two halves) put up apparently in four stages – but none of them alas dated. If we number the bays 1-5, starting on the right hand side, by the shop door, bay

two appears to be the oldest. This is the area covered by the great beam which runs lengthways down the middle of this part of the shop.

The exterior walls of this bay have very little depth. Although no structural timbers are visible it would appear that this was a small wood-framed cottage with one room downstairs and another upstairs. There is a fireplace and chimney between bays 2 and 3, and evidence of two staircases (or ladder access), one by the fireplace and the other near the front window. When the building was thatched there was no upstairs front window in this section. The present window, added when the thatch was replaced by slate, is a sideways sash (Yorkshire sliding sash), similar to some of the other windows in the building.

Bay 1, where the shop counter and window is situated, has thick stone walls, and appears to be an extension to the timber-framed cottage rather than a separate house. Upstairs a large beam across what would have been the end wall of the original house (about 3 foot from the floor) has been sawn through to insert a door between the two upstairs rooms. The stone walls end just under the present windows, where the thatch would have reached, and there was no front



Older than you might think. This early 20th century photograph shows a pair of thatched and rendered cottages. The right hand dwelling is entered through the wooden porch. The only window upstairs is in the gable wall, and there are shutters at the downstairs window. The stone building to the right, now a small shop, housed a cart. It was thatched until a fire in the 1970s. A window has been inserted on the road side.

window when the building was thatched – just what appears to be the present six-paned casements. There is a fireplace and chimneybreast in this outside wall.

Between bays 2 and 3, upstairs, there is a step; while downstairs the floor gradually slopes towards the eastern (Post Office) end. Passing between bays 2 and 3 we are moving from one house to another.

Bays 3 and 4 appear to have been built at the same time, and bay 4 is only about 8 feet long. For the first two and a half feet or so the side walls are stone, and then there is visible brick – but whether they are weight-bearing brick walls, or the brick is a later infill to hidden timbers is not known. The wall between bays 4 and 5 is of stone up to a height of about four feet, and there is evidence of a bricked up door and window between bays 4 and 5.

In the back wall of bay 4, overlooking the garden, there is a window which is larger than any of the others (except for the modern shop window). It has three sets of six-panes, with hinges for external shutters, and would have been a good place for someone with, for instance, a stocking frame or a Griswold machine to sit by. Upstairs at the front, there are two small sideways sash windows.

The history of bay 5 is simpler – or at least, better known. It began as a single storey lean-to kitchen, and was given an upper storey in the middle of the 20th century. Being fairly narrow, this is the other ‘half bay’.

As far as floors are concerned, the shop has modern tiles, but behind the Post Office the floor is still a mixture of red bricks and flagstones, while bay 5 has blue bricks. Upstairs all the floor are of ‘plaster’.

Most of the internal doors are made of three vertical panels of wood, but there is not a matching pair among them. Some show evidence of having been cut down from some previous use. Some have thumb latches and some handles.

The present ‘ice-cream’ area in the shop is a modern outshot, and where the rear stone wall has been taken down, this has been replaced by two RSJs in the ceiling (mind your head....). There are also five vertical

RSJs in the shop which, together with the chimney breast between bays 2 and 3, hold up the ceiling now that so many internal walls have been removed.

As there are apparently four front doors in this property, it would be easy to jump to the conclusion that it was once four small cottages. However, we have seen that bay 5, on the far left, is modern, and the shop door is nowhere to be seen on old photographs. In fact it is possible to trace occupants back to 1838 (as in much of the village), and there have never been more than two families here during that time. Ignoring bay 5, then, as relatively recent, we can assume that one family was in bays 3 and 4 (really only one and a half bays in length), and another in bays 1 and 2 – which at some indeterminate time in history was just bay 2.

The earliest known map of Newtown Linford, dated 1773, makes some attempt to differentiate between different sizes of buildings (though not between houses and barns). It shows a building abutting the village street which is longer than Beech Farm next door, suggesting that bays 1-4 were all built by this time.

For much of the nineteenth century the left hand cottage (bays 3 and 4) was the home of Mrs Sarah Harlow. In 1841 she was a charwoman whose age was given as 45, with a son of eight and another child of 3, who must have been the tail end of a larger family. The early censuses rounded adult ages up or down to the nearest five years, and twenty years later she was recorded as being a 72 year old ‘chairwoman’, with a 22 year old grandson, Henry, an agricultural labourer, who lived with her. In 1871 she was still there (her age given as 79) and living alone.

Sarah used to earn money by burning the bracken from the park and making the ashes into hard balls which were used to soften water. These were used in the local big houses, including Steward’s Hay (later Bradgate House, Field Head) and Anstey Pastures on Gynsill Lane, Anstey, the home of the Martin family. William Martin (see Linford House, 6 Main Street) was agent to Lord Stamford from 1795 to 1850 and allowed

villagers to make use of Bradgate Park in various ways. Many householders kept a cow on their croft (a field behind the house). In the summer the cows were turned onto the park so that the croft could be given over to hay. When the sixth Lord Stamford visited he loved to see the milkers on the park on a fine summer evening. However, when his Lordship died in 1845 his grandson, who was his heir, was still under age. Colonel Wildman, who managed the young earl's affairs, eventually appointed as estate agent Loftus Launds, who made himself very unpopular in the village. One of the first things he did was to stop the milkmaids and their cows from using the park. Tenants continued to be allowed to collect and stack the bracken for animal bedding, because this checked the bracken and encouraged the grasses.

By the later years of the nineteenth century the Hill family were living in Sarah's cottage. Edward Hill was a farm labourer who had been born in Liddington, Rutland. In 1891 he gave his age as 50, and his wife Anne was 40. Their children Thomas (12) and Sarah (10) had been born in Groby and Anstey respectively. They also had a bachelor lodger, Lorenzo Stephens, aged 25, who was a gamekeeper.

A younger son of the Hills, Herbert William (known as Sam) was born in the cottage in 1896 and went to school across the road in what is now the Sunday School. He recalled how his mother would serve jugs of tea to Bradgate visitors, fetching water from the pump in the yard. In those days the Hills had only oil lamps and candles, with food cooked in a pot over the fire. Eventually gas was installed and there were gas lamps downstairs and a gas cooker to supplement a kitchen range. Upstairs it was still bedtime by candlelight, and because of the slope on the bedroom floor the bed sometimes moved downhill. The only rooms downstairs were the living room and lean-to kitchen. However, there was no connecting door between the two, so 'popping into the kitchen' entailed going out of the front door and back in the kitchen door.

Sam worked at the Victoria Stone Works, and lived

Freda and Gwen Hill in front of their home in the 1930s. The genuine timbers shown here bear little relation to the planks which adorn the building today. Note the stone plinth and timber sill plate to the left of the door. The small bricks probably came from the ruins of Bradgate House. The lean-to kitchen on the side has since been extended upwards.



in the cottage with his wife Amelia and their daughters Freda and Gwendoline after his parents' death, remaining there until the 1970s.

When Sarah Harlow was raising her family, going out cleaning and gathering her fern, her neighbours to the right were the Mee family, who were charcoal burners. There were at least eleven families of Mees in the village in the eighteenth century, of various generations. One of them, John Mee, who was buried in the churchyard in 1771, lived to be 96. Some Mees struggled along with the help of poor relief, while others held parish offices, such as Overseer to the Poor, and were obviously literate.

Sarah's neighbour was Thomas Mee, who was born in 1793. His father Peter was a charcoal burner and a leading light in the village sick club. Each year the sick club had a feast, when they spent what they

had saved, and processed down the street carrying white staves with blue tips. Peter Mee carried the flag at this procession, an honour for which he paid ten shillings. After his death his son Thomas continued to carry the flag each year.

Thomas Mee was the tenant in 1838, when the Parish Survey and Valuation described his house as 'Cottage stone and thatched, a shed stone and thatched, stable thatched and garden – value £1.5.0.' (It is not clear what is meant by 'value' – it may have been an independently assessed annual rental value, which may or may not have been what was actually paid to the Stamford estate.)

Thomas, like his father, was a charcoal burner. In 1841 he and his wife Ann had three children and a 14-year-old live-in male servant, George Harrison, who was presumably assisting with the charcoal making. Thomas and Ann had seven surviving children, spaced over about 25 years. Their youngest son William, born in 1853, later lived with his wife Maria across the road in Workhouse Row.

After the Mees, the right hand cottage was

tenanted by the Reynolds, a family who came from Ratby in the 18th century and soon proliferated. There were several branches of the family in the village, sometimes spelling their name Renals or Rennals. An Edmund Reynolds appears to have been married as Edward. Perhaps the vicar misheard, or just knew him as Ed.

In the early twentieth century, Arthur Reynolds was one of the village carriers. He had a horse-drawn brake which made the journey to Leicester on a regular basis. A J Harrison, born 1902, recalled the cart going in on a Wednesday and Saturday morning to the Salmon Inn in Butt Close lane, where the horse was stabled until the return journey at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Later the brake went into Leicester four days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday. At the tail end of the local cottage knitting industry, some village women still made socks on Griswold machines, and these would be sent with the carrier to Morleys and Russells on the Western Boulevard, or to Hawley & Johnson on Frog Island. Another service was to take parcels to the Leicester pawnshops. Items such as men's suits, pocket watches and the like could be sent to the pawnbroker's on Monday and bought back on Saturday, but not many in Newtown availed themselves of this facility.

After the bus service began in the 1920s, Mr Reynolds used his cart



Noel Reynolds with his horse and cart outside his house in the early 1920s. The boy is thought to be Walter Sewell, who was born in 1911. The board on the wall announces that 'A Brake will leave here for Leicester & Groby', Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday. The actual times of departure are now illegible.

for a coal round. He kept his horse in Johnson's yard (28 Main Street) and he and later his son Noel spent one day a week fetching coal from Ellistown pit and five days delivering it, weighing it out on scales at the end of the dray. It was not put into sacks until a later date. The large pieces of coal were carried in the coalman's leather apron, and the smaller pieces taken in buckets to the coalhouse. In the 1930s, those who could store it could receive a ton cartload of good quality coal for fifteen shillings (75p).

The 1925 Sale prospectus describes the two houses as 'A cottage holding comprising two brick and thatched cottages situate opposite Newtown Church, one containing four rooms, pantry and wash-house and the other five rooms, pantry and wash-house. Carriage house, pigstye and gardens, together with grass field at rear'.

The property was bought by Harry Neale, who lived next door at Beech Farm. The two acre field at the back became part of his land, and the two cottages continued to be let to Sam Hill and Arthur Reynolds.

Arthur Reynolds' son Noel continued to live in the right hand cottage until his death, and continued the coal business. Local historian J W (Billy) Lowe summed up what happened then when he wrote that the cottage, 'considered one of the finest buildings in the village, with thatched roof and massive interior oak beams ...

was ruined after Noel's death by fixing unsuitable roof tiles and phoney woodwork on the outside walls'.

The property was bought by an Italian family of ice-cream manufacturers, who wanted to use part of the building as a weekend retreat, and added an upper story to the lean-to kitchen on the left hand side, with its own door (bay 5).

Later the right hand cottage was run as a cafe and ice cream shop, at weekends only, by the Altobells. It became the village Post Office, run by Mr Biddles from Groby, when Kitty Brown (25 Main Street) gave up. The next occupant, Denis Scupham, turned it into a shop. The closure of Brown's Stores (15 Main Street), and the retirement of longstanding newspaper deliverers, Wilf and Eric Buthaway, together with the removal of Sam and Amelia Hill to sheltered accommodation, meant that the entire ground floor could be made into a General Store and Post Office (and, some would say, village gossip shop – or, to put it another way, centre of a local communications network).

On the retirement of the Scuphams, the shop, with all its functions, was taken over by Martin and Janice Clarke, with a series of tenants in the upstairs flat. In 1997 Mark and Olga Whenray took over the lease, and live above the shop. They provide a much valued service to locals and visitors alike. Just mind your head!

BEECH FARM, 552 Bradgate Road

(Grade II listed)

This is a forest stone house with Swithland stated roof, but, as has already been noted, the 1773 map of the village seems to portray a rather more modest dwelling. The frontage of the main part of the building has a Georgian look about it, being plain and symmetrical, with a chimney at each gable end. The

main door, under a small projecting porch, opens directly into one of the two front rooms, and this part of the house may have been originally a simple two up/two down cottage. The left hand room has an inglenook fireplace spanned by a chamfered oak beam, with a spiral staircase at the side behind a wooden door

Beech Farm, a symmetrical, apparently Georgian, stone frontage.

fashioned from five vertical planks of different sizes. All the downstairs ceilings have exposed beams, and the main beam in the right hand room appears to be 'second hand' as it has unused joist holes along its length. There also appears to have been at one time a ladder or straight staircase from the right-hand room into the chamber above. There are wooden shutters which fold into the thickness of the wall, inside the downstairs front windows. In the early 20th century there was a partitioned passage (which must have been very dark) from the front door to the room behind, with doors to rooms each side. The floors at the front of the house are of wood, with the joists resting on the earth.

Behind these two front rooms there is a large square room which has the 'feel' of being older, but if the 1773 map shows the true shape of the house, it was not added until after that date. The floor is solid and covered with quarry tiles in red, black and yellow, except for an area which was once walled off to be a store room and later cloakroom, which has a wooden floor. This wall (which was modern brick) has now been removed, and all the remaining internal walls downstairs are of a similar thickness to the outside walls – about 45 cm (17½ inches). There is a large chamfered beam across the middle of the back room, and exposed joists. There are iron bars inside the large window overlooking the back yard.

At one time the back room was obviously the farm kitchen. It contains a brick domed bread oven, which has been used very successfully in recent years. It has



a flue (outside the oven door) which joins the fireplace chimney, with a damper set in the wall. In this room there are various pieces of ironwork attached to the beams, from which sides of bacon and the like were presumably hung.

All the windows in this part of the house are typical for the village: six-paned casements, set only slightly back into the outside wall, under a brick arch. Upstairs all the floors are of plaster.

The part of the house to the left of the garage doors comprises the present kitchen and dairy. It is also made of forest stone, with Swithland slate roof, and was once totally separate from the house. At some time beyond living memory, probably when the rear part was made into a kitchen, it was joined to the rest of the house by a back porch. The rest of the area between the two buildings was covered over around 1960 to make a garage. The front room, now a dairy, has iron bars

outside the window, with a Yorkshire sliding sash (much bigger than those upstairs at the Post Office, and equally awkward to open and close). The floor is of blue brick, and there are brick thralls round two of the walls.

Some light is thrown upon the history of this house by the 1838 Survey and Valuation of the Parish, where we find that James Shaw occupied here a stone and slated house and butcher's shop, a thatched stable and coalhouse, and a 2 acre croft. This was valued in total at £10.

So it looks as if the front part of the left hand building was the butcher's shop. The door at the side, in what is now the garage, would have given the public access to this room, quite separate from the house. The northern aspect and the barred windows, which could be open to cooling draughts while still being secure, were ideal for a butchery. There is a gauze covered cupboard set like a window into the depth of the stone wall on the garage side. The 'drive' side of the building is of brick, and the room to the rear (now the kitchen) was not built at the same time, for the join in the bricks is only roughly in alignment – suggesting it was a farm building not worth spending a lot of effort on.

At the 1841 census James Shaw described himself as a 25-year-old butcher, but he aspired to something more than a shop and a couple of acres. He wanted to be a farmer. In 1851 William Rudkin drew up an estimate for new farm buildings, including a waggon stable, hay barn and granary in stone and brick. 53 loads of building stone were required, as were 10 new scaffold hurdles. James Shaw was

The stone barn behind the house was built by local builder William Rudkin in the 1850s when the tenant changed from butchery to farming.

able to do some of the work, such as lime-washing himself, and was separately charged for his materials. The total estimate for materials and time was £68.10.3d. By 1861 James had given up butchering. He had a wife and four children and was farming 144 acres with the help of three labourers. There were two other families of Shaws in the village at the time, both of whom were timber dealers, and may have been his elder brothers. Robert and Thomas lived at 6 and 45 Main Street respectively.

The next occupants of the house were James Shaw's niece Sarah and her husband William Wesley, who was a timber dealer. They had two daughters and three live-in servants, two male and one female. They were here during the 1870s and 80s. Edgar Smith (born in 1888) recalled that in his young days the place was not much used for farming. The tenant had use of the Park fields and sometimes the Vicarage fields, but the main activity was the making of cloven gates and fencing.

This changed again in the 20th century when the house was occupied for many years by Harry Neale, whose family were among the chief farmers in the village. Harry, who had two sons and two daughters, ran a dairy farm of 70 acres from here. His brother was

