

**LIVING ON THE EDGE; THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CULTURE OF THE
ROCK HOUSE COMMUNITIES IN KINVER FROM 1700 TO 1963**

by

MARJORIE R WILLETTS

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Institute of Archaeology
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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Abstract

The study examines the changing culture of the community that occupied the Kinver rock houses over three centuries. They are regarded as an interesting but incidental feature of the rural landscape, rather than an unusual and historically important aspect of post mediaeval and modern life. The Kinver Edge rock houses were created in response to growing demand rather than desperate need and provide an unusually detailed record of a community living on the edge, with the names and occupations of its residents appearing in legal documents and parish registers throughout the late C18th and C19th. The rock houses which formed the three small enclaves clustering on the periphery of the village were the forerunners of the dormitory suburb. In this respect, the social history of the rock houses is the history of Kinver and of many other villages like it, from c.1770 to c.1950. Their creation, use, change and decline in use from working community to café and tea rooms, human resource to tourist amenity, spells out the centuries-long social and economic changes which have altered not only the appearance but also the fabric and substance of things across the U.K.

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FRONTISPIECE



Figure 0.1: Rock shelters at Les Eyzies, Dordogne. (Source: postcard from author's collection)



Figure 0.2: The rock caves, Stourport on Severn, 1931; (Bainbridge, ed: Worcestershire: Photographic Memories, 2000; after Frith)

CHAPTER ONE AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE

'The region around Kinver contains possibly the largest concentration of rock-cut houses in Britain, the contender being Nottingham and its environs.' (Heritage report, 1989, p44).

This chapter introduces the aims and objectives of the dissertation, and examines the significance of the study.

1.1 Introducing the Rockhouses at Kinver Edge

Kinver Edge is located in the West Midlands, almost at the tip of the South Staffordshire salient where it meets North Worcestershire, with the River Stour and the Staffs/Worcs canal running through the village on its eastern side. (Figs 1.1, 1.2) The Kinver Edge rockhouse sites incorporate three main areas (Holy Austin Rock, Nanny's Rock and Vale's Rock) strung out at roughly half mile intervals along a 1.5 mile length of the escarpment, looking approximately west (see Figure 1.2 and 1.3). As the archaeological report on the Kinver Edge sites was published 16 years ago (Shoesmith 1993) accurate, up-to-date knowledge of them requires first hand, visual experience. Since 1993, the National Trust has undertaken considerable work along the Edge, to restore its original, largely treeless character. This has involved clearing bracken and scrub, felling the invasive birches and other trees, and putting a herd of cattle to browse out the opportunistic growth of young saplings and plants alien to the landscape of what has been designated an SSSI. Not only has **Holy Austin Rock** been (partially) restored, but also the land around it, which at various times provided a significant part of the rock-dwellers' livelihood. In time – since much of this work is being done by volunteers – the physical context of **Nanny's Rock**, **Vale's Rock**, and other, now lost and overgrown sites will have been restored likewise. This outcome should help our understanding of the way in which that landscape worked,

since the relationship of objects to one another on any scale within a given area is in itself an important factor in any historical or archaeological equation.

Brief descriptions of the sites at Kinver follow, with some minor detail supplied by oral testimonies from former inmates, collected between 1989 and 1992.

Fig 1.1: Location map showing Kinver

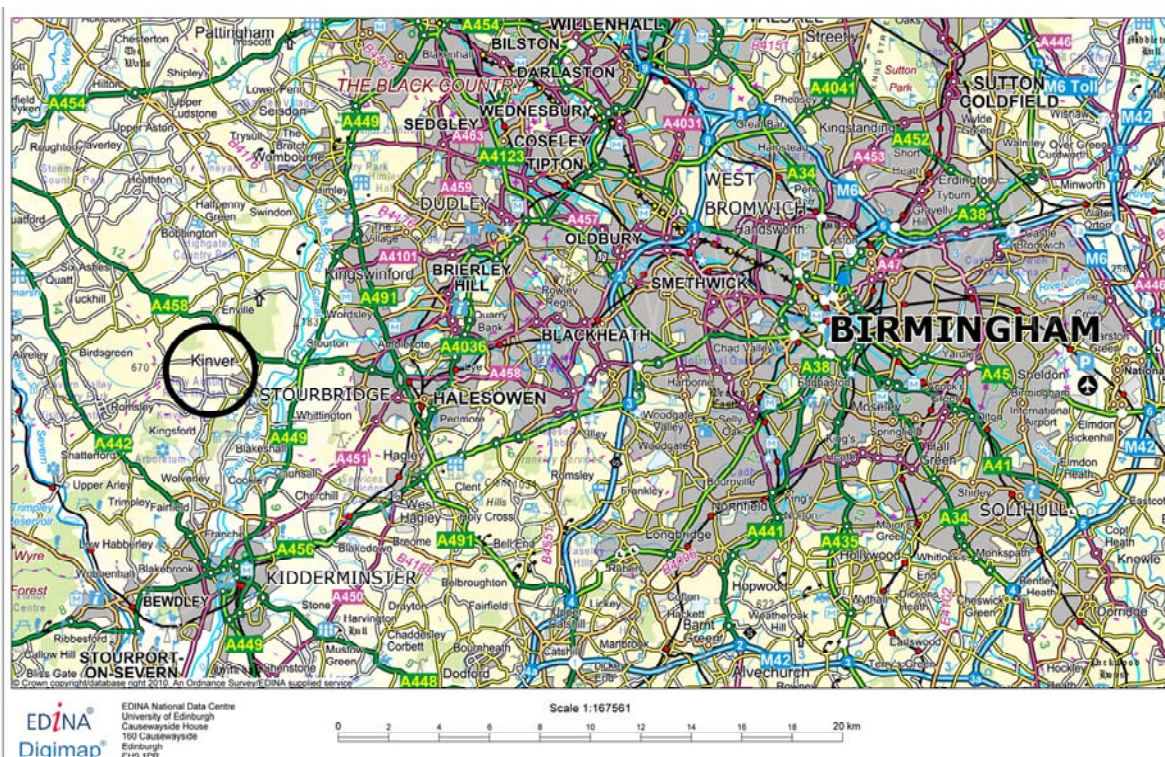


Fig. 1.2: Location map showing location of Holy Austin Rock (top), Nanny's Rock (middle) and Vale Rock (bottom) in relation to Kinver

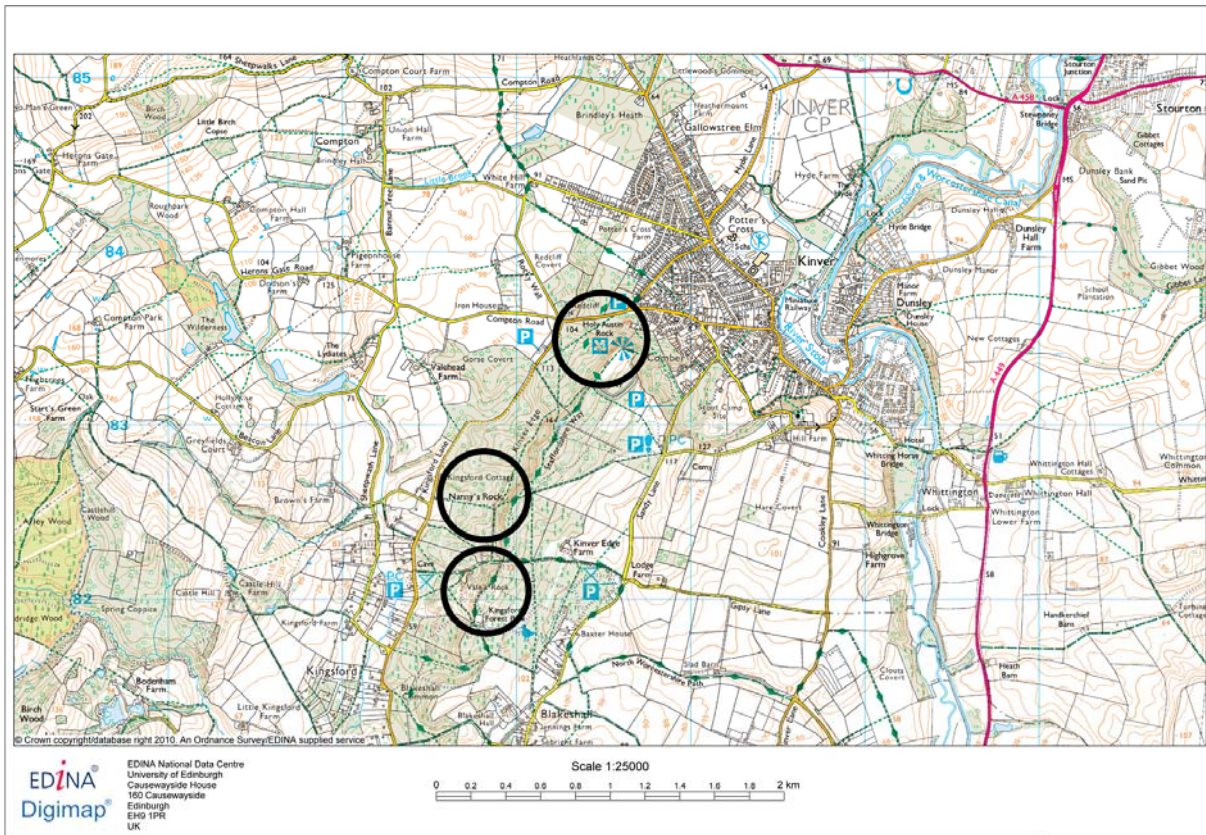
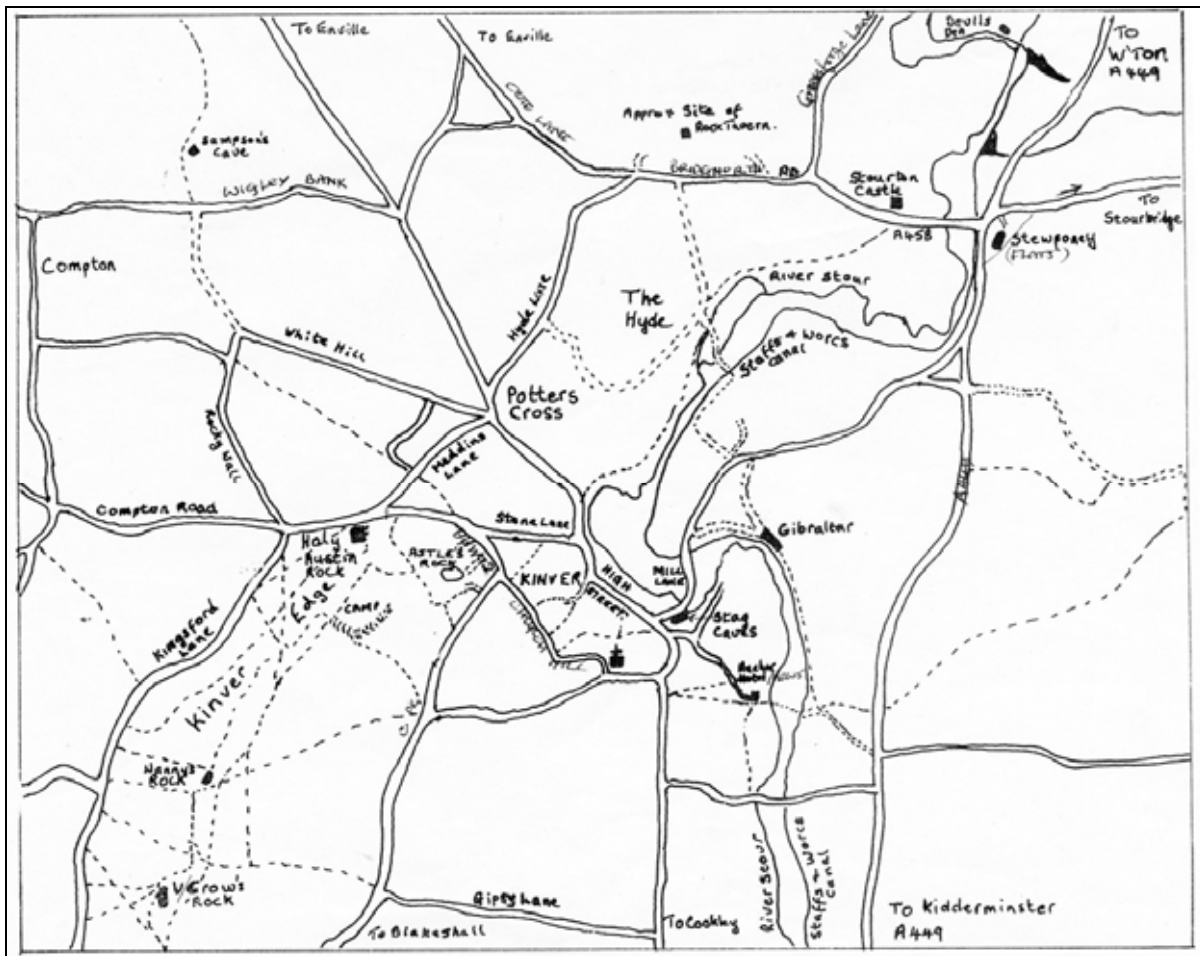


Fig. 1.3: Sketch map of Kinver indicating the location of the various rockhouses (drawn by David Bills) from The Kinver Rock Houses, 1978



1.1.1 Holy Austin Rock (HAR) (Figs 1.4 and 1.5)

Although two of the rock-cut houses in the Kinver area began life as natural caves (BGS testimony, 2008), the remainder were carved out of the sandstone at some distant period by persons largely unknown. Joseph Heely's testimony of 1777 suggests that there was only one such dwelling at Holy Austin Rock at this time: it is possible to suggest a name for its maker (see later) though this cannot be conclusive. In the parish registers, **HAR** is variously recorded as '**Rock**' or **Holy Austin (Rock)** to distinguish it from **Dunsley Rock** –

ie, 'Gibraltar', formerly **Badger's Rock** – over a mile away, on the other side of the River Stour and the Staffordshire/Worcester canal (Figure 1.2). The histories of these two sites are very different, but because HAR is well-recorded and has been investigated archaeologically, it serves as a clear exemplar for the way in which rock houses in the area were used (Figure 2.10). The censuses and surveys carried out in the earlier years of the C19th show the growth in the number of dwellings and occupants, whether owners or tenants, recording a peak of 11 houses and 46 inhabitants in 1861. The Touchstone Associates' report (1989) suggests a much larger peak total of 80 people. However, Nancy Price, remembering Holy Austin Rock c.1890, writes of '14 families'. The 1990/92 archaeological investigation traced the remnants of ten houses on 3 levels; well before this date there had been major alterations to some of the dwellings, with amalgamation on the upper level, abandonment, erosion and consequent vandalism elsewhere (see Figure 1.5 to 1.7). The conservation measures carried out by the National Trust in the early 1990s have altered the situation completely.

Fig. 1.4: Holy Austin Rock, Ordnance Survey c1880

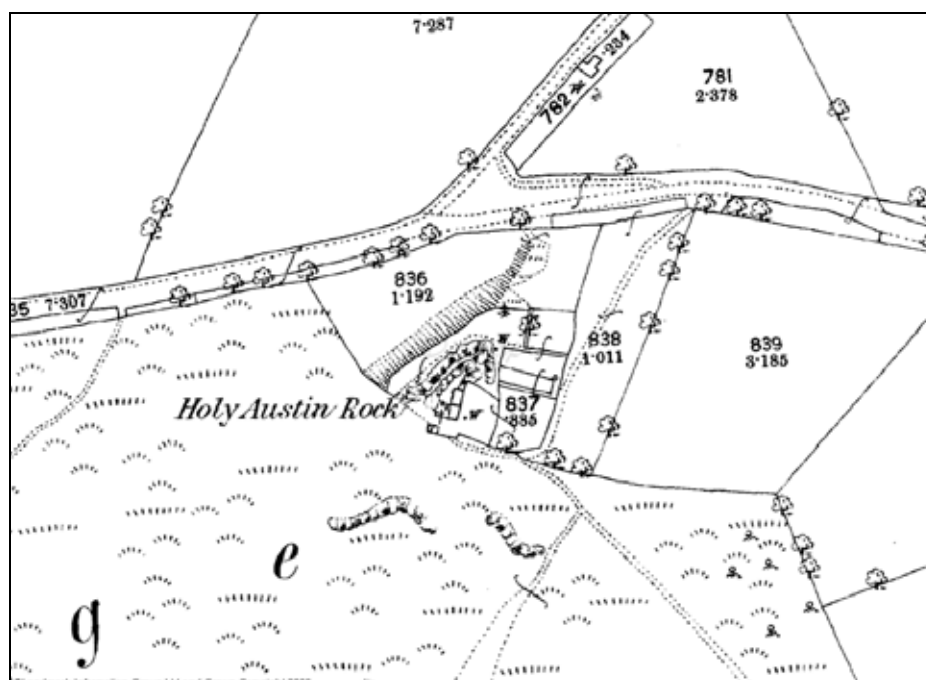


Fig. 1.5: Holy Austin Rock, restored upper level, south-west facing (Source: author)



Fig. 1.6: Holy Austin Rock, showing erosion of the upper level (Source: David James Photography)

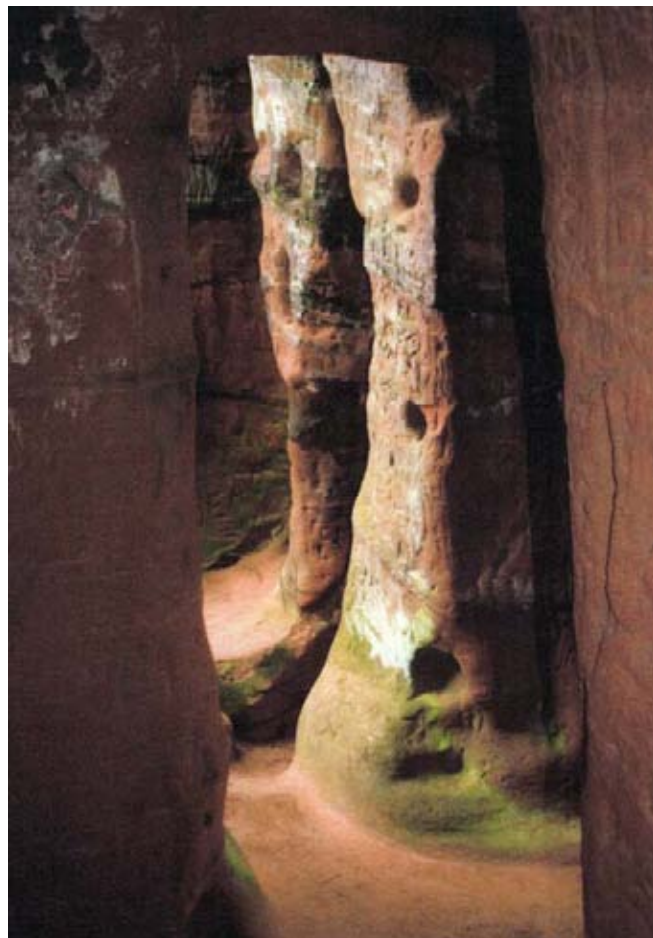
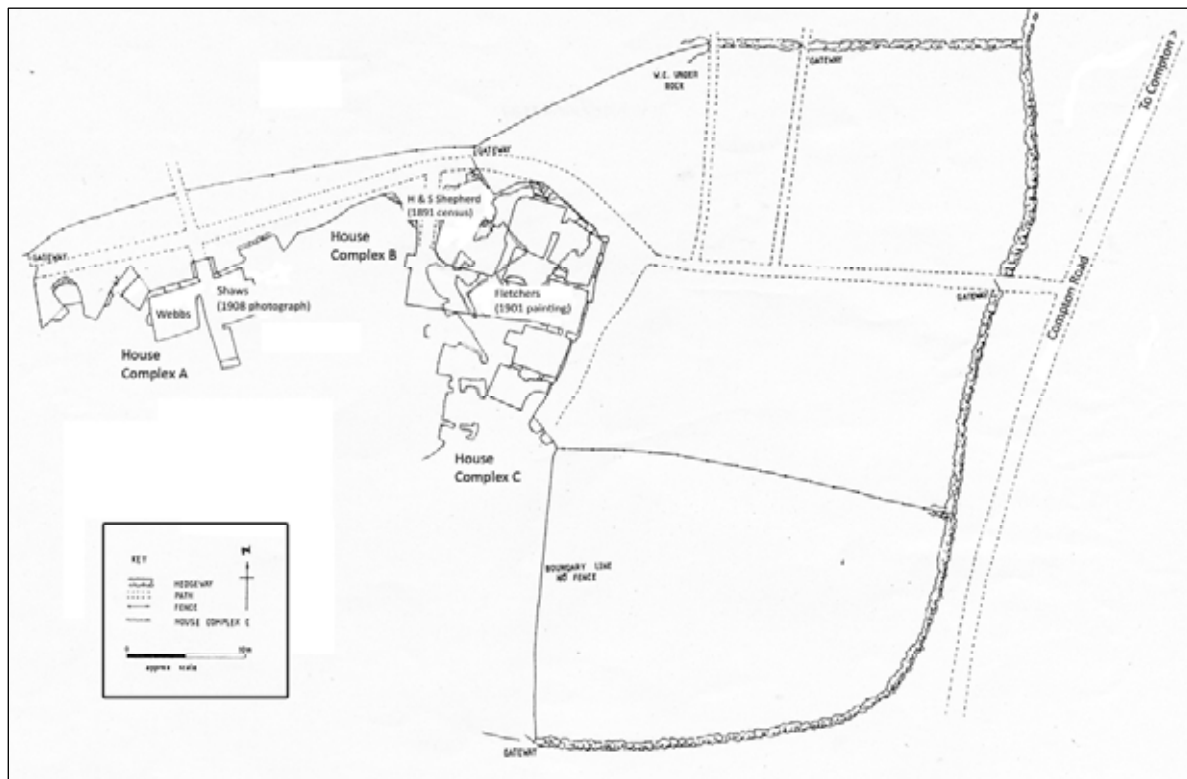


Fig. 1.7: Composite plan to show the relationship of House Complexes A, B and C, and the paths and garden areas as they were in the 1950s (names of residents added by author). From the Shoemith report, 1989)



1.1.2 Nanny's Rock and Vale's Rock (Figure 1.8 to 1.13)

HAR apart, there are at least a dozen vanishing rock-cut dwellings along the western side of Kinver Edge, with **Nanny's Rock** (Figure 1.8 and 1.9) and **Vale's Rock** (Figure 1.10 to 1.13) being the best known. Although the 1989 report recommended a tranche of possible measures here, not solely for conservation but also with a view to developing the site as a major focus and attraction for Kingsford Country Park, only stabilisation work has been carried out. Investigation and oral testimony have provided a clear picture of **Vale's Rock** in the first half of the C20th, but unlike HAR, the site is protected only by steepness, and the awkwardness of access, from casual visitation. There were 5 houses here originally; today (2009) 3 out of 4 survive on the lower level, and one (this was always so) on the upper. A

Miss Ince lived on the upper level; before 1934, two generations of the Reeves family lived on the lower one, succeeded by the Leylands later on. Sam (aka as Jack) Leyland made besoms: birch brooms, used in the local carpet factories and brickworks. The compilers of the report remark on the traditional association between rock houses and this craft, citing rock-cut dwellings in north Nottinghamshire where the same thing happened, although there, ling was used instead of birch. Lilacs and other garden shrubs testify to the layout of the terraced gardens where the inmates grew vegetables and cultivated fruit trees.

Fig. 1.8: Nanny's Rock, Ordnance Survey c1880

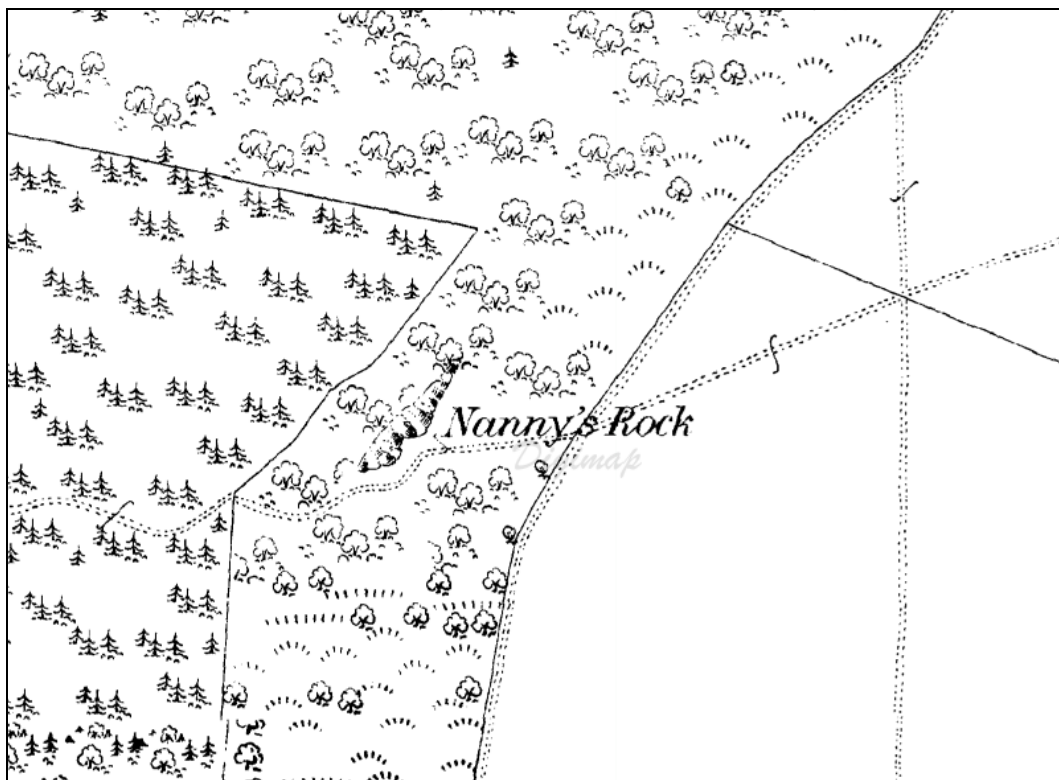


Fig. 1.9: Nanny's Rock, winter 2008; the earliest recorded rockhouse in the area. (Source: author)



Fig. 1.10: Vale's Rock, Ordnance Survey c1880

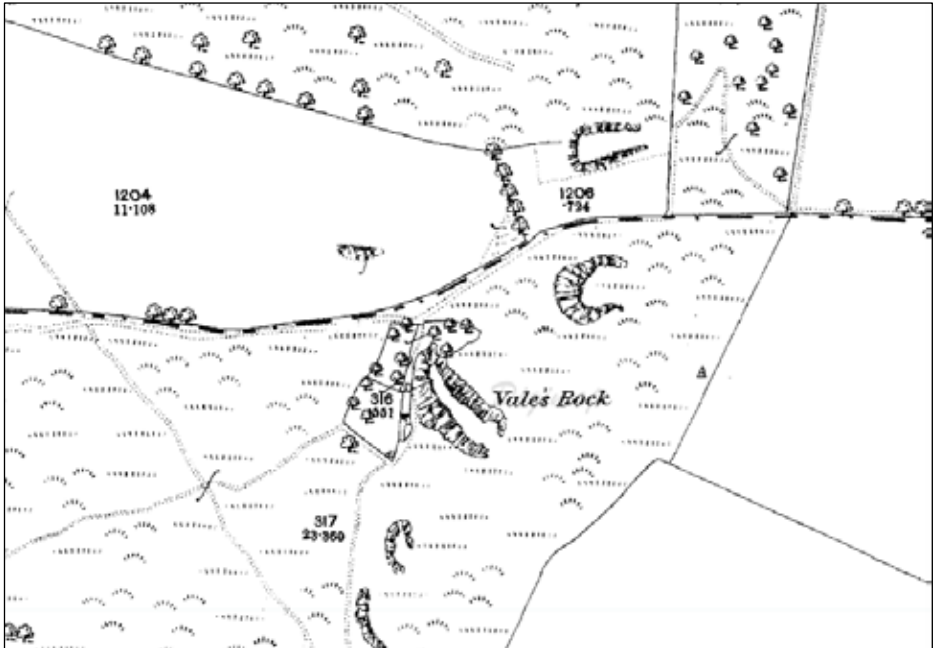


Fig. 1.11: Vale's Rock, lower level, Summer 2009.

(Source: author)



Fig. 1.12: Vale's Rock, lower level in 1989. The brick built section at the north end, ie Jack Leyland's house.

(Source: Shoesmith report, 1989)



Fig. 1.13: Vale's Rock, lower level in 1989; the south end, showing the drip arches over the windows.

(Source: Shoesmith, 1989)



1.2 Project Aims

In essence, the study aims to establish the social and historical context of the rock houses in Kinver, within a national framework, examining the changing culture of the community that occupied them over three centuries. The Kinver rock houses are locally familiar, but despite the National Trust's guardianship and its late C20th publicising of their redevelopment, they remain a little-known feature outside the West Midlands area. They are regarded as an interesting but incidental feature of the rural landscape, rather than as an unusual and historically important aspect of mediaeval, post mediaeval and modern life. There are rock-cut passages and caves elsewhere in the U.K: Exeter is one such place, Pontefract another. The concentration, duration and occupation of the Kinver rock houses, however, are unique, as B.Clarke (2004, p7) points out.

The aims of this study are thus threefold:

- i) To provide a fuller, more detailed and composite picture of the rock houses in their landscape:
- ii) To facilitate a better understanding of their social and economic functions in relation to a national context:
- iii) To allow a more comprehensive view, and overview, of their inmates and purposes.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives here are fivefold.

- 1) The first objective is to examine the physical and extant remains, alongside the archaeological evidence
- 2) The second is to research the historical, cultural and social context for the creation of rock houses and 'caves'.
- 3) The third is to inquire into their making and their makers, in order to assess the economic, and other, factors which prompted them. Was this convenience, cheapness, a sudden urgent need for housing with the expansion of industry, especially the iron trade, in the area and its concomitant need for infrastructure?
- 4) The fourth is to analyse their original and later uses in the light of changing circumstances. Why did some families continue living at Holy Austin Rock for 150 years, whereas others remained there for less than a generation?
- 5) The fifth and final objective is to attempt to determine what role the rockhouses continue to play in Kinver. What is their contemporary discourse?

1.4 The significance of this study

In 1919, Benjamin Priest, a Black Country industrialist, funded a film based on S. Baring-Gould's novel 'Bladys of the Stewpony'. Shot almost entirely on location, it used the Kinver Edge rock houses as a romantic and dramatic backdrop to this highly romantic and improbable story, complete with melodramatic additions. Well received by critics at the time, this silent film then disappeared from view and was only run to earth years later, languishing in an Old Hill cinema. Many reels had disintegrated, like the rock houses they portrayed. As a paradigm for the present state of knowledge, it is an apt if dispiriting image, since at present nothing much is being done about half a dozen rock-cut sites in the area,

including Vale Head. It is true that ways of living cannot be regained and that the 'heritage industry', as it has been called, has sometimes faltered badly in point of authenticity, re-enactment societies and all. But it is all the more important, therefore, that a phenomenon which is extraordinary, if not unique, should be recorded and given the greater prominence which its character and quality deserve.

1.4.1: Understanding rockhouse culture

There is currently a gap in our general understanding and awareness of what might be termed rock house culture. It is hoped that this study may be able, in some small way, to increase both. The community at Kinver not only provides a unique example of a small and self-sufficient enclave, with (perhaps) a unique and definable culture (see Chapter 6), but is also well recorded; the focus of this study is, therefore, HAR.

As Caunce points out (1994, p48): '*all regional or national cultures turn out to be composed of smaller cultures when we look more closely.*' Any culture is an amalgam, therefore, and the sum of other, cultural elements, often less familiar and less tangible, including outlook and attitude. HAR may be an anomaly or it may be typical; it is certainly the best recorded example, and thus the only key we have to the way in which such enclaves functioned throughout their period/s of occupation.

Figures 1.5 and 1.6 show clearly the contrasts between the conserved and preserved parts of the rock houses at HAR. Vale Head Rock falls between these two states (Figure 1.11).

1.4.2: Investigation, preservation and conservation

Clearly, this study cannot promise to save the rockhouses single handedly, but provision of a more detailed investigation into their development may help to promote them.

The 1989 *Rock Houses and Visitor Management Study* report made a number of recommendations for the development, in 'heritage' terms, of the Kinver Edge sites: this being the name they suggested for the three extant groups. Many of these specific recommendations were not carried out, either for lack of funds in the ensuing recession of the early 1990s or because an altered local council lost the will to do so. They are, however, worth recording here; '*We recommend that interpretation of Kinver Edge and the rock houses should be undertaken so as to place them in their geological, historical, social and natural history context. All such interpretation should tell the story of, and be related to, the whole of Kinver Edge and not just to one part.*' (Walker and Partners 1989, 14);

This would tackle four key aspects of the whole, which were:

- 'Who built the rock houses and why? – the human stories of the people who lived in them and why they built them;
- How they were able to build them: an introduction to the idea of the softness of the rock and what type of rock it is;
- What the Edge was like then: a description of how different the Edge was when the houses were built (well illustrated by some of the old photographs);
- What they did for a living: some of the inhabitants earned their living from forest-related crafts, as did so many people in the area . . . examples of these crafts, like besom-making, charcoal-burning or oak bark-tanning should be given.' (Walker and Partners 1989, 14).

Most extant studies of the rock houses are now more than thirty years old; Clarke's recent publication about the restoration of Holy Austin is, quite properly, just that: (Clarke, 2008). Ideally, therefore, the subject now needs greater publicity in an accessible form, but this in turn must derive from detailed historical and archaeological research, and an investigation much wider in scope than this one. This study will tackle some aspects of life in the rock houses along Kinver Edge.

At present (2009/10), there is some professional and local interest in a proper investigation of Vale's Rock, as recommended in the Touchstone Associates' Heritage report of 1989. In that report, the writers stated that: '*Wyre Forest District Council is pursuing a policy of encouraging tourism to its area, partly to offset unemployment caused by contraction in the carpet industry. . . Kinver will next year (ie, 1990) most probably receive 'tourist resort' status*' (p.23). It is true that, under the aegis of the National Trust, Holy Austin Rock has indeed become a 'tourist facility'; and, despite misgivings in some quarters about the extent and character of that development, its former inmates welcomed this outcome. '*Many remember the rock houses when occupied, greatly regret their sad decline, and would like to restore this part of what is seen as important to the history of the village*' (op.cit.p.26). In her letter of November 1988, Vera Haycox remarks: '*Very pleased you are going to reopen the Kinver Edge Rock Houses again.*' (Appendix 1)

However, the success at Holy Austin Rock has not been matched elsewhere. Despite the detailed recommendations made in the 1989 report for the future of Vale's Rock, only stabilisation measures have been carried out. It is doubtful whether most of those who happen upon it, or even those who seek it out as a point of interest on a walk, know much about its national – indeed, Europe-wide – importance. Kinver itself may still correspond to the description in the report as '*well-sited as a short break holiday touring base, with an interesting historic core, and served by a busy recreational canal*'; but the area around it,

south along the Edge, is better known (and much frequented) as a sequence of picnic spots with space for romping and bird-watching. The District Councils' touch has been light, but there are considerable opportunities for enhancing the attractiveness of several other such sites.

It is here that archaeology comes into its own. Censuses can err, memories blur and become patchy over time, with wider contexts lacking; but serious archaeological investigation applies the techniques required to establish the larger picture, together with the details within it. The plans appended later (Chapter 2) of early urban housing in the Potteries district of north Staffordshire between 1800 and 1878 provide something of that context, though of course they were the result of planned development, not of private need (or enterprise). It is the apparent divergence of the Kinver Edge rock houses from this urban and industrial framework that makes them unusual, though it is worth pointing out that in his 'Villages in the Landscape' Trevor Rowley remarks on the fact that squatters' hamlets in the Black Country areas (such as the much gentrified Mushroom Green) grew up beside streams and copses rather than on the fringes of established urban centres, of which there were several already. Even so, the growth of the Kinver rock house complexes does reflect, to some extent, the pattern of domestic building elsewhere. In this material sense at least, they exemplify both national trends and local diversity, however varied their inmates' occupations may have been.

From 3000 BC/bp to the present, human beings have '*crept in under the shelter of this red rock*', as T.S.Eliot phrased it, to make it a home, and homely, to use it as a shelter and a refuge from winter and rough weather (like Joseph Heely in 1777) or, in time of war, from other human beings. Now they have become a staple of the tourist industry and seem set to remain so for some time to come. The fact that so few people, other than locals and academics, are aware of the existence of these extraordinary dwellings in the UK is partly a

matter of plain ignorance, but perhaps it also testifies to the curiously ambivalent feelings that human beings have had, in recent times at least, towards the idea of living in a cave.

Although some rock house inhabitants, such as those living at Nanny's Rock in the C18th, were (apparently) both literate and moderately well off, judging by finds of Delft tiles and the (still visible) elegantly carved C18th graffiti, yet C19th attitudes shifted, and such inmates were now stigmatised as squatters, gipsies, dubious characters living on the edge of their society. In the C17th, visitors to Nottingham were struck by the numbers of its citizens who had chosen to live in the same fashion, and they too expressed some unease with the practice. The urban poor were clearly a dissonant element in their thinking, as they still are for some. The rural poor were less visible, and their recourse to ancient remedies remained an accepted and unremarkable practice. Later still, their way of life was romanticised, even upheld as a moral exemplar for degenerate urbanites to adopt.

For us, matters are (presumably) different: more detached. It would be well to remember the following observations:

*'It has long been recognised in studies of rock dwellings such as David Kempe's **Living Underground** that the rock houses of Kinver and the surrounding area were not only the largest group of rock-cut **dwellings** in England but were of international significance.'*

(Clarke 2004, 17)

'The region around Kinver contains almost certainly the largest concentration of rock-cut dwellings in Britain which form a coherent and unique group . . . the rock houses at Kinver are thus of national importance and at least of major interest in European terms.' (1989, Appendix 4, p44).

CHAPTER TWO: ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOCIAL HISTORY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

‘Archaeology is one of the broadest intellectual endeavours in the scholarly world, as it straddles the physical and natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities; in its techniques, methods and theories. At heart it is a social science, whose goal is to understand how human cultures develop through time and space... and then comparing them cross-culturally’ (Sabloff 2008, 28).

This chapter considers the range of methods used here, and the approach taken to such a cross disciplinary approach.

2.1 Methodology

This study draws on several disciplines and a broad range of materials, though its parameters preclude all but the most cursory treatment of many fascinating related aspects. These materials include archaeological investigations, archive documentary materials, old photographs of Kinver (from the Clarke, Freers and Reuter collection published in 2002), SMR maps and information, legal documents, historical research monographs and collected oral testimony. This study has regard, therefore, to the intrinsic hazards and advantages of combining such a range of disciplines in order to achieve an integrated overall view.

In tackling the aims and objectives of this report, a range of methods has been adopted.

These are:

- 1) Visiting and photographing those sites which are accessible. Whereas HAR is readily accessible, the danger of rock falls has made sites such as Vale's Rock much less so. (It is wired off, with warning signs.)
- 2) Drawing on archive materials such as published collections of old photographs which record earlier (often lost) topography, etc; also local (and national) newspaper cuttings: letters.
- 3) Examination of the existing archaeological/historical evidence for Kinver using 2 separate reports. These are:
 - i) Rock-Cut Dwellings, Holy Austin Rock, Kinver, Staffordshire: (Volume 3 of the report) R. Shoesmith, with a survey team of R. Williams & T. Hoverd, Hereford Archaeology series 193.
 - ii) Kinver Edge: A Rock houses and visitor management study for the Kinver Edge Management Group, March 1989: M. Quinion, M.H. Glen, A. Brooker-Carey, with Touchstone Associates et al.
- 4) Consulting transcripts of oral interviews with former inhabitants of Holy Austin Rock, conducted by Michael Ford (a former BBC producer) for the National Trust in 1989/90.
- 5) Extensive reading about the geology, history and general development of both areas, with all that that involves in terms of more obvious and national events. (This material includes books, articles, essays, et al.)

- 6) Eyewitness accounts from the C18th and C19th/20th of their encounters with those who lived and worked at Holy Austin Rock, for example.
- 7) Researching the work of various societies on their web sites; eg, the Staffs/Worcs Canal Society, British Waterways, Drakelow Preservation Trust, etc.
- 8) Using the documentary materials, eg large scale maps, supplied by SMR offices in Stafford and Worcester.

2.2 Archaeology and Social History: an interdisciplinary approach

This is not the academic equivalent of painting by numbers but a reverse process; that of defining and refining such an overall view through a close scrutiny of its component parts. Essentially, this study is the story – or part of it – of people in their landscape, using it, living with it and even in it, making a livelihood from it, adapting it to their needs and adapting themselves.

This study comprises six chapters, each dealing with particular aspects of the social, economic and historical contexts to which the rock houses belong. All are necessary for scene setting. As Sabloff argues: '*Archaeological perspectives can inform by providing long term contexts.*' (2008,102). Earlier, he points out that archaeology is '*inherently interdisciplinary in nature*' (2008, 29). Perhaps this is part of the discipline's current popular appeal; anybody can approach the subject from a variety of angles, some of them familiar, and feel able to engage with a discipline otherwise eclectic in nature. This kind of involvement also offers a sense of continuity in a society which seems (or supposes itself) to be fragmenting. In the Kenneth B. Murdoch Lecture delivered at Cambridge (Harvard) in 1980, G.R.Willey makes a similar point: '*Almost everyone is curious about the past. In one*

way or another, we want the past to be pertinent to the present, to explain it, to justify it'
(Willey 1980, 93).

The methods used in this study combine archaeology, oral history, documentary evidence, maps and historical sources.

- a) Archaeological. This includes site plans, finds, reports, recommendations, etc, including the 1989 Kinver Edge and 1993 Holy Austin Rock reports already cited.
- b) Historical/Archival. This includes maps, specific and general studies, parish registers, company accounts such as invoices and other records, like those of the Staffs/Worcs Canal Company held in the British Waterways Board archive at Gloucester.
- c) Oral/eye witness. Letters, transcripts, autobiography, etc: for example, the oral testimony collected by Michael Ford for the National Trust in 1989: newspaper cuttings and accounts from the Daily Mail in 1923 and afterwards.
- d) Photographic. The visual archive; 1880s > present day, including the writer's own material, and Clarke, Freers and Reuter's two volume collection of archive photographs, published in 2002.
- e) Primary observation. For a full understanding of the sites under investigation, site visits provide the only way to record the current preservation of the monuments – as well as gaining a proper appreciation of the location, geography and landscape in which they are situated.

2.2.1 Archaeological Investigations

This aspect of the study concentrates on one site in particular, since it has been thoroughly tackled by a professional team. An investigation of Holy Austin Rock in Kinver, South Staffordshire, was carried out under the aegis of Ron Shoesmith, the Hereford city archaeologist, and resulted in a 3 volume report, the third part dealing with a particular aspect of the site, including its future management (Shoesmith 1993).

2.2.2 Historical and Archival

Background reading apart (there is a fair amount of material about the rock houses, though most of this was published thirty years ago), it is the *primary archive sources* which provide the most immediate and vivid sense of both context and experience here. There are several booklets extant which draw on the available records in order to focus on the minutiae of local history; individual testimonies in published form by an C18th contemporary, and a C19th witness writing in the early 1950s; anthologies of primary sources such as the Staffordshire County Council's Source Book about the iron and steel trade in the area. There are parish registers, which usually record occupation and place of birth, family ties, etcetera, and there are press cuttings from local and national newspapers which reflect the ideas and attitudes of their readers/editors at the time. More recently, there are also written and oral testimonies in the form of letters and transcripts from tapes, made in response to direct requests or published articles about the rock houses, in which the former inmates of 'Rock' and elsewhere provide their own recollections of life as 'cave-dwellers' (Daily Mirror, sic, 1923). All these combine to create a fuller and more immediate picture of otherwise remote events and of people too 'ordinary' (in their own view) to warrant serious scrutiny. In addition, there are the reports and findings of various archaeological

investigations undertaken ahead of development or restoration, as at H.A.R. (1989). These will be dealt with in more detail later.

2.2.3 Oral history and eye witness accounts

The testimonies applied in this study of the rock houses are both written and oral. The written memories – Joseph Heely’s account of his travels in the neighbourhood in 1777, Nancy Price’s autobiography (published in 1953) – have passed through the several filters of a literate culture, much as an art photograph does. They are memories with an agenda and a cultural perspective. In the late C20th and early C21st, transcribed oral memories – those recorded at the time – are shaped by two contexts, namely their past and present circumstances, and the guidance of the interviewer: who, by the nature of the task, has a particular concept of information, as of its function, and may perhaps have a personal ‘take’ on such situations in general (albeit subconsciously). After all, nothing is so difficult to regain as a vanished mindset. The platitudes of one generation often become the heresies of the next; which is where academics come in, armed – or not – with different scales.

Childhood memories are usually the most vivid, even if they are the most susceptible to revision and interpretation, in particular for the highly educated and articulate. As Dylan Thomas pointed out, *‘the memories of childhood have no order and no end. But, if you are a writer, you can give them a sort of order . . .’* Memory can certainly be faulty as to fact (often it consists of a string of unconnected vignettes), but rarely so about emotions. Nancy Price (born in 1880) is hardly unique in recalling her childhood world as settled and ordered (as for her it may well have been); but the portrait she presents is not all golden and rosy (1953, pp44/45).

The individual testimonies which relate to this study range from the immediate – those of Alfred Howell, Rose Novak (nee Howell), etcetera - to the recollected (Nancy Price’s

autobiography) and the recorded. Heely's 1777 travelogue belongs to an established and growing body of contemporary factual accounts inquiring into the character of Britain (and further afield) throughout the C17th and C18th. The oral accounts transcribed by Michael Ford for the National Trust do meet Oliver Rackham's criteria for reliability, being less than three generations back (2000,p15); Nancy Price, who died in 1970, almost does, although as an actress, novelist and film star pre-1939 she could be regarded as a partial and ambiguous witness. She observes: 'I know now that I was taking endless memory photographs, or rather collecting pictures and that these pictures will never leave me' (1953, 38).

2.2.4 Photographic evidence

This is of particular value in gaining a clear picture of the landscape in which the rock houses took shape. As already indicated, the wooded countryside round Kinver today (2010) does not resemble that of the early C20th when it became a regular haunt for tourists of all kinds. Nancy Price refers several times in her autobiography to the late C19th landscape of her home: big lime trees round the church, dark firs near Nanny's Rock, the fragrant rush of hawthorn in flower on the Edge in spring, other woods at Dunsley (near Gibraltar); but elsewhere the rock house inmates had a clear, even panoramic view across the landscape they inhabited, like that of the archive postcards. This had its effect on the terrain; rabbits and archaeologists may be mortal enemies, but to the Reeves at Crow's Rock rabbits were supper. As Bill Reeves told Michael Ford in 1989, '*you never went short of fresh meat.*' (See Appendix 1).

In addition, old photographs can make sense of written accounts. For example, post-war secondary woodland on Kinver Edge, largely consisting of self-set birch and oaks (a consequence of the myxomatosis epidemic in the early 1950s), has smothered the

heathland landscape on whose resources the original rock house dwellers often relied for forage, fuel and their means of livelihood. Here it is often impossible – literally – to see the rock for the trees. Woods are great disguisers of topography.

2.2.5 Access: Visiting the Sites

The rock-cut dwellings which occupy various points along Kinver Edge lie largely to the west of the escarpment as it runs NNW to SSE, from the hillfort at its northern end to Solcum hillfort on an outlying promontory above Drakelow. In all, the Edge is about 2.5 miles long, reaching a height of c.540' OD at its northern tip above Kinver. It is currently well-wooded, but this is not its natural character, and with the aid of voluntary groups and others the National Trust is steadily restoring it to its former lowland heath status. (It has been designated an SSSI). **Holy Austin Rock** is clear of vegetation and easily accessed from Compton Lane; it is open to the public at weekends between March and November, with the interpretation centre now neighbouring a new cafe. Its close neighbour, **Astle's Rock**, is no longer extant.

Further south, **Nanny's Rock** is a natural cave which was extended and shaped for habitation at some unknown date, though this must have preceded the early C18th. It can be reached from Kingsford Lane by a series of footpaths, one of which is sufficiently broad and well-defined to have been identified, tentatively, as a probable packhorse trail. It is something of a scramble to get inside the cave rooms, but it was clearly a substantial dwelling in its time, though erosion, time and the activities of local people have altered its early C20th appearance. It has never had any frontage.

Vale's Head Rock, or **Crow's Rock** as it is also known, lies over the county border in North Worcestershire. Reaching it from Kingsford Lane (formerly Clapper's Lane, in reference to the 'clapper' or jutting rock face against which these rock houses stand) is,

luckily, straightforward enough. However, despite the conservation work done on this complex, especially the upper level, to shore up the eroded rock faces, the site slopes steeply, and its former garden terraces are largely overgrown or collapsing. The whole site has been fenced or wired off, and warnings of danger have been planted around the perimeter, acting as a partial deterrent.

Fig. 2.1: The well at Holy Austin Rock, under excavation. (Source: Shoesmith, 1989)



Fig. 2.2: Holy Austin Rock, under excavation, showing the brick surfaced path. (Source: Shoesmith, 1989)

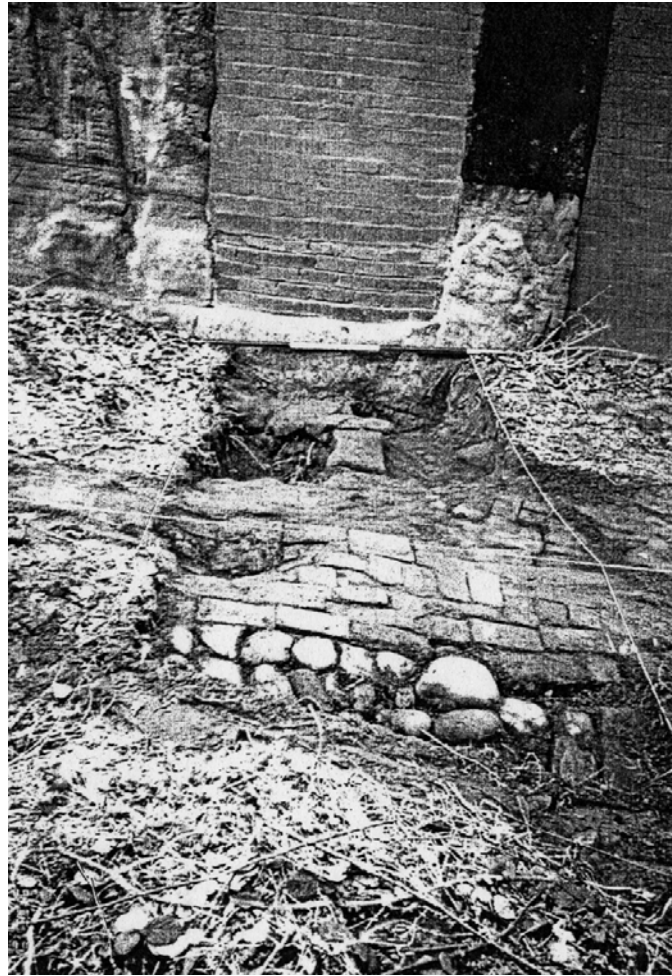


Fig. 2.3: Holy Austin Rock, plan of House Complex A, showing location and identifying different rooms.

(Source: after Shoemith, 1989)

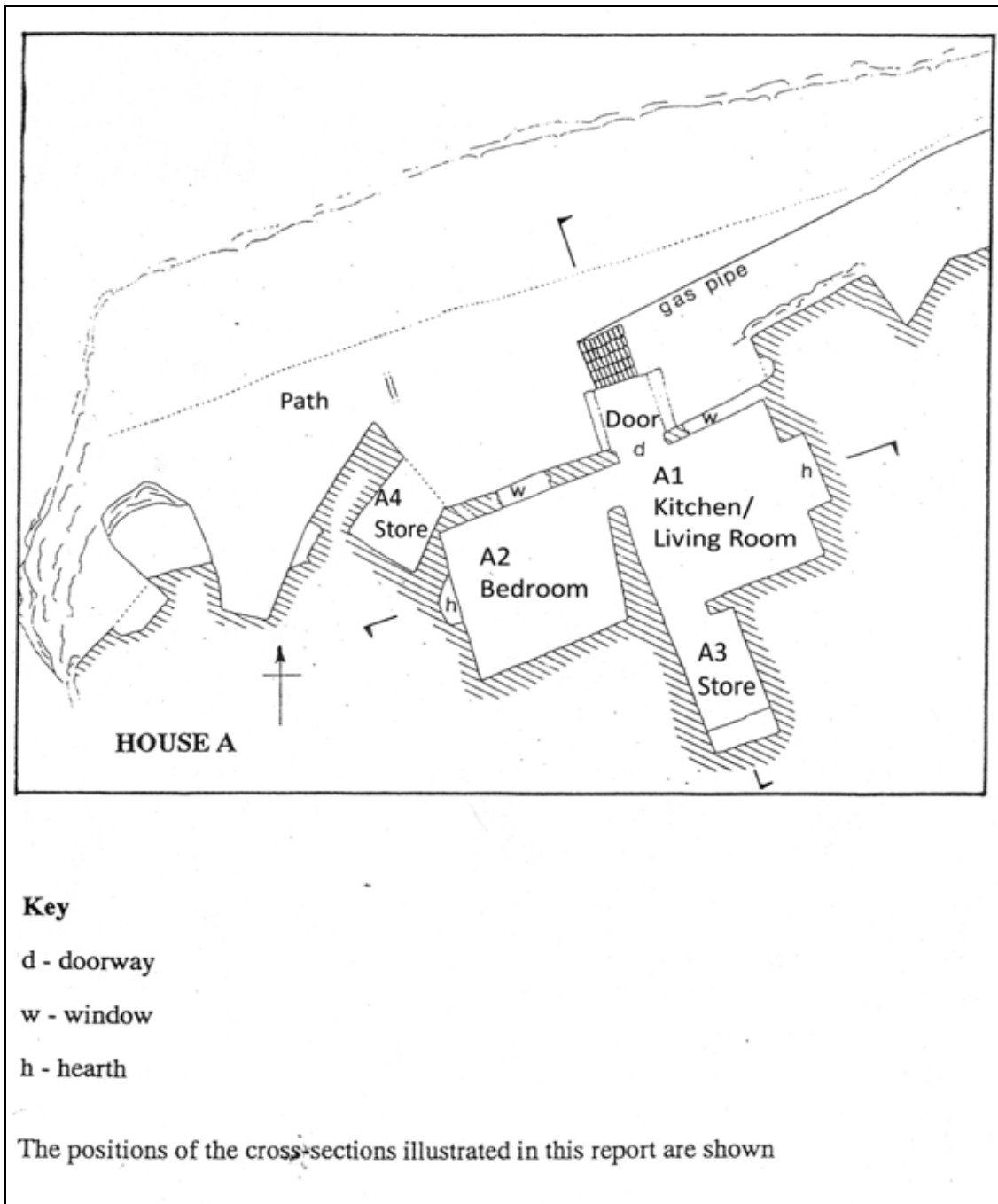


Fig. 2.4: Holy Austin Rock, showing cross section of House Complex A. (Source: Shoesmith, 1989)

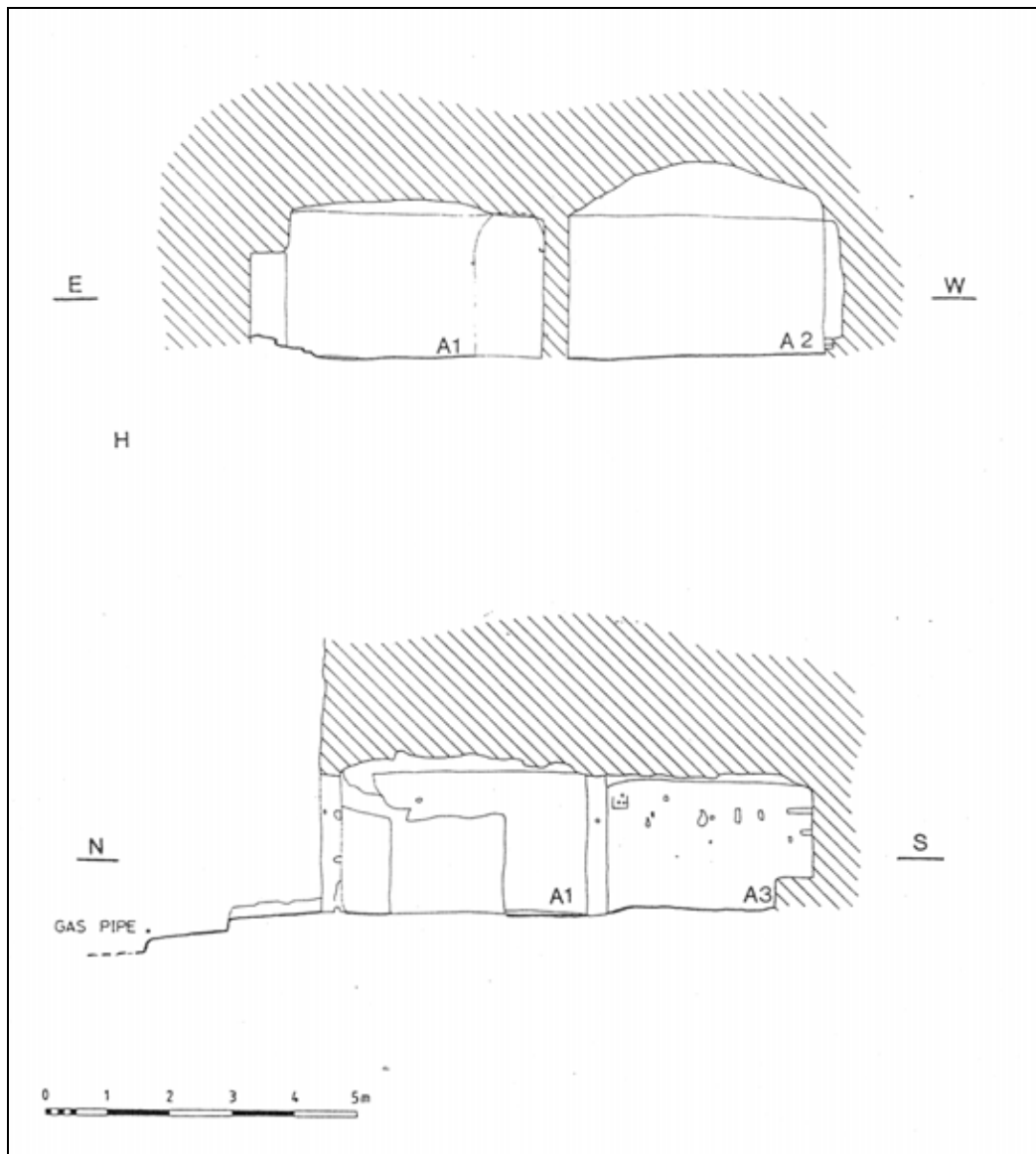


Fig. 2.5: Holy Austin Rock, reconstruction drawing of the elevation of House Complex A at the end of the nineteenth century. (Source: Shoesmith, 1989)

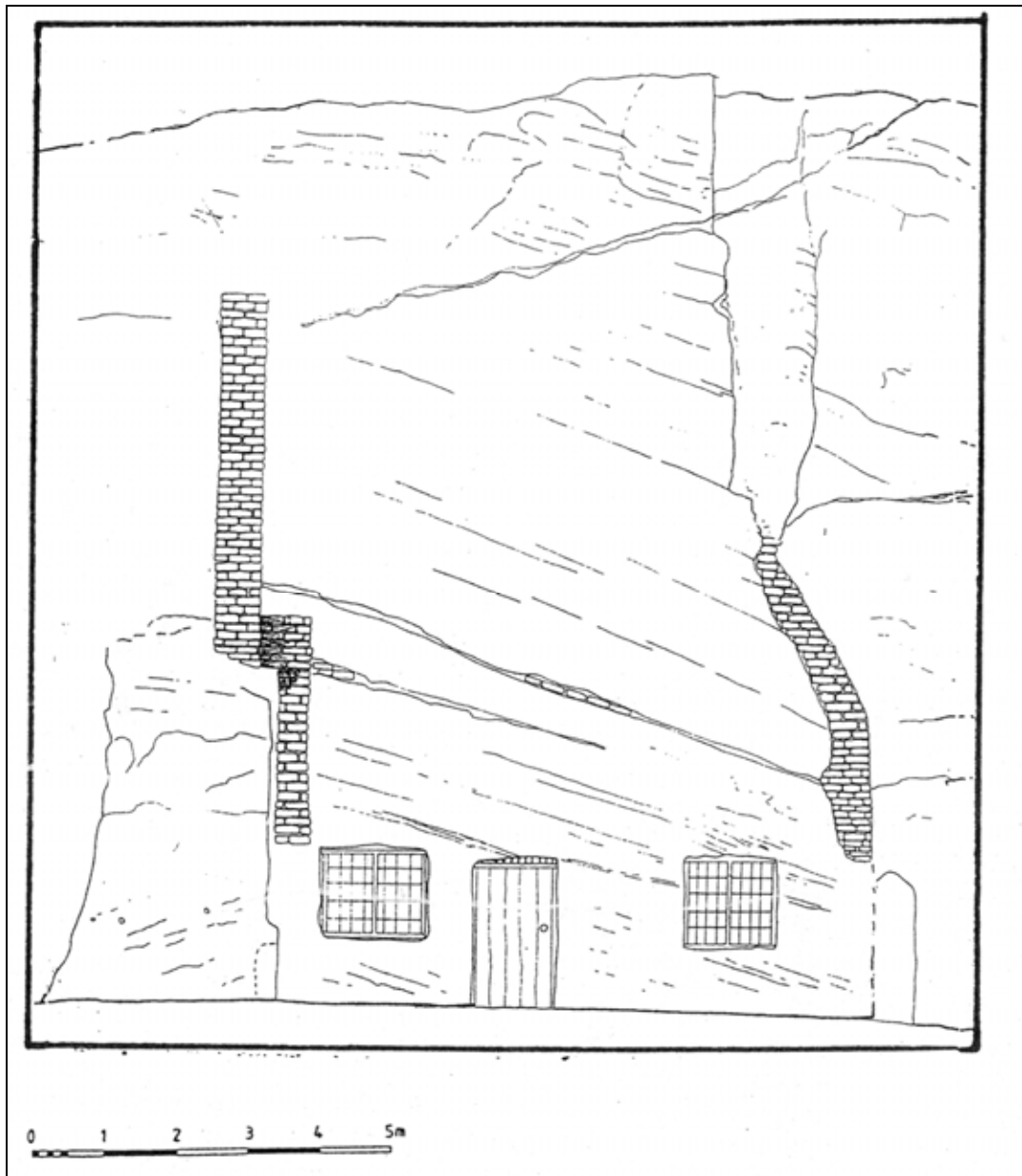


Fig. 2.6: Holy Austin Rock, plan of House Complex B, showing location, size and identifying different rooms.

(Source: after Shoemsmith, 1989)

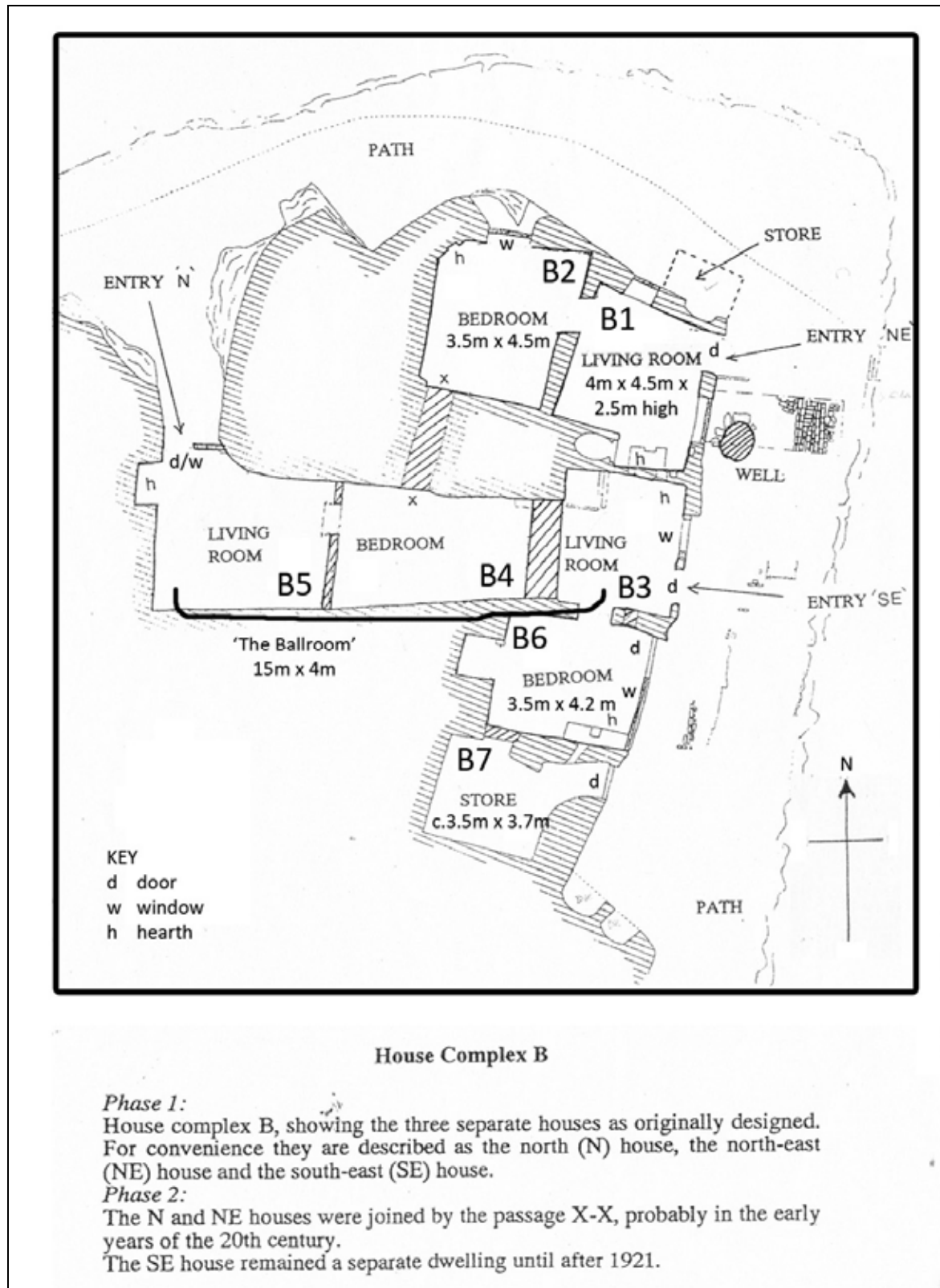


Fig. 2.7: Holy Austin Rock, North Elevation of House Complex B. Reconstruction as it was at the end of the 19th century (Source: after Shoesmith, 1989)

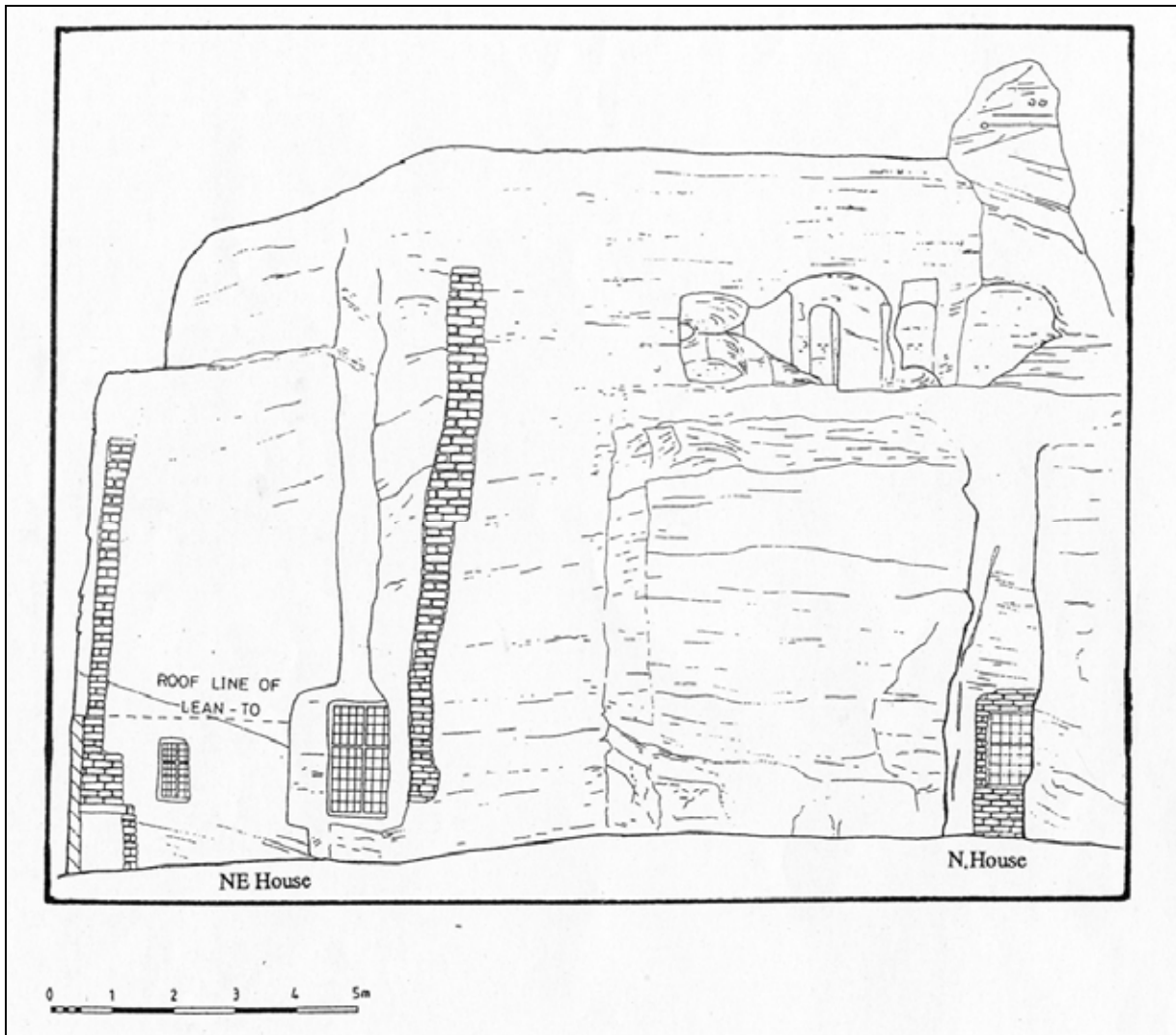


Fig. 2.8: Holy Austin Rock, East Elevation of House Complex B, as it was at the end of the 19th century.

(Source: after Shoesmith, 1989)

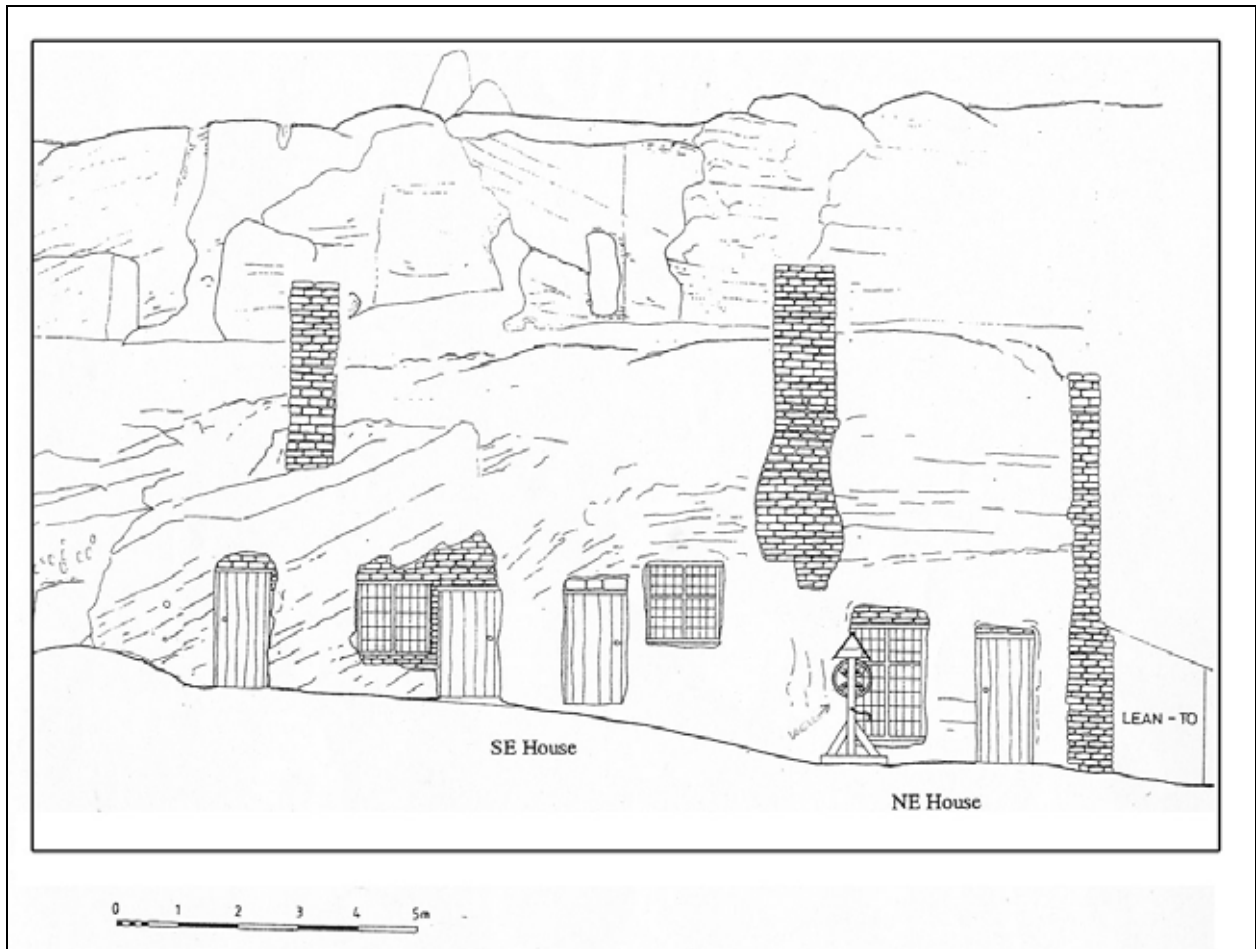


Fig. 2.9: Holy Austin Rock, plan of House Complex C, showing location of rooms and cross sections. (Source: after Shoemsmith, 1989)

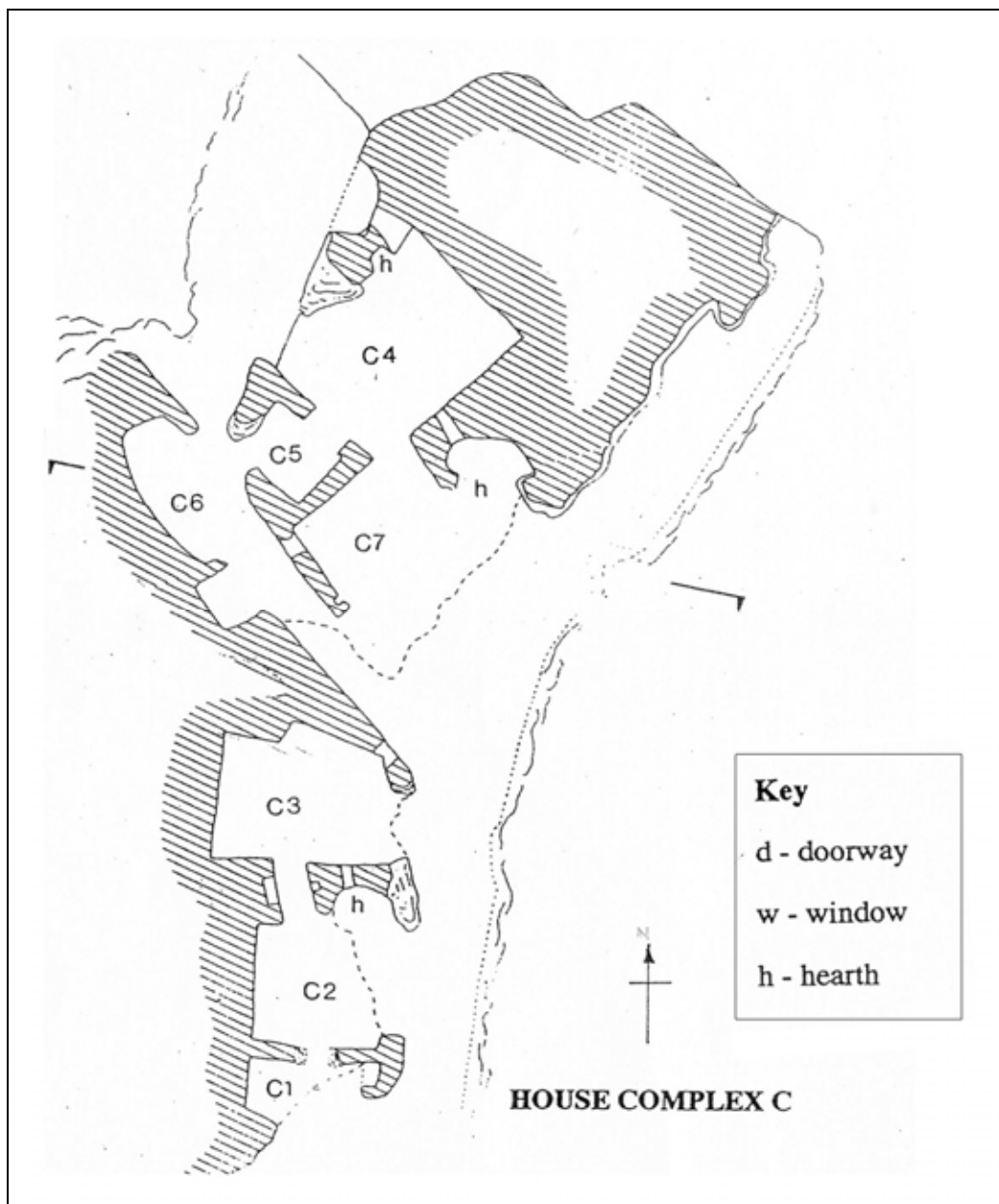


Fig. 2.10: Holy Austin Rock, House Complexes C, showing uses of rooms. (Source: after Shoemith, 1989)

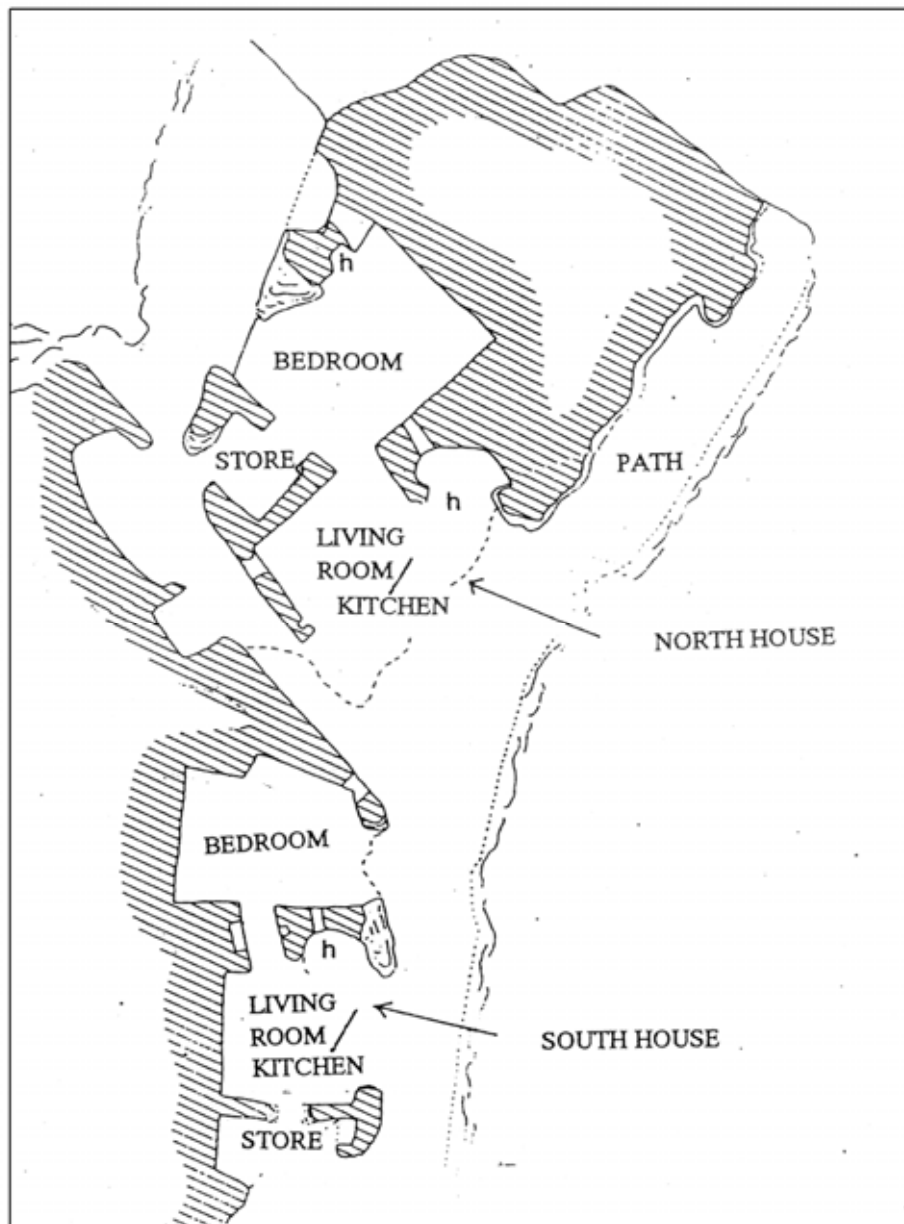


Fig. 2.11: Holy Austin Rock, section through House Complexes B and C. (Source: after Shoemith, 1989)

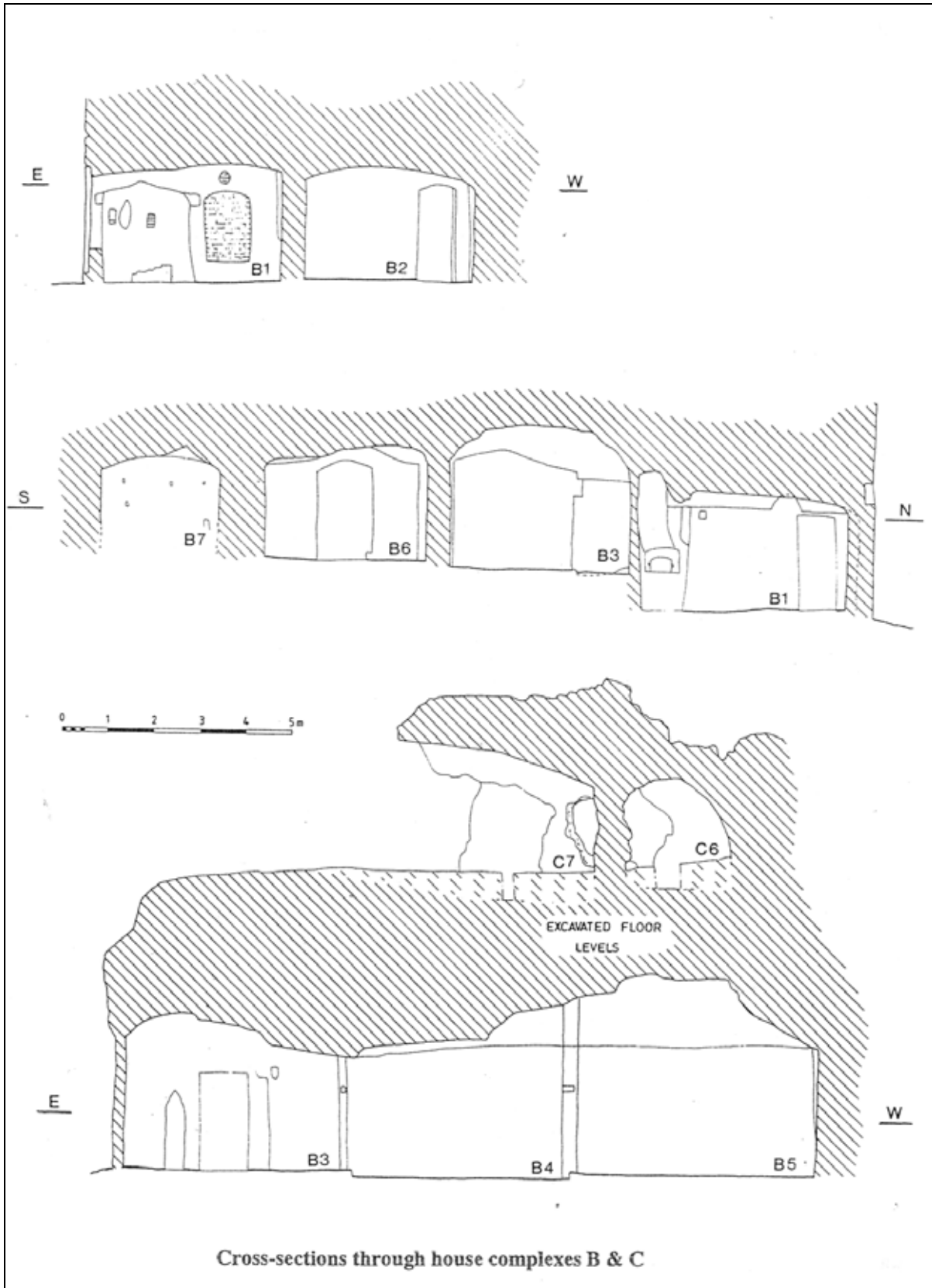


Fig. 2.12: Workers' terraced housing in the Potteries. (Source: Shoemith report, 1989)

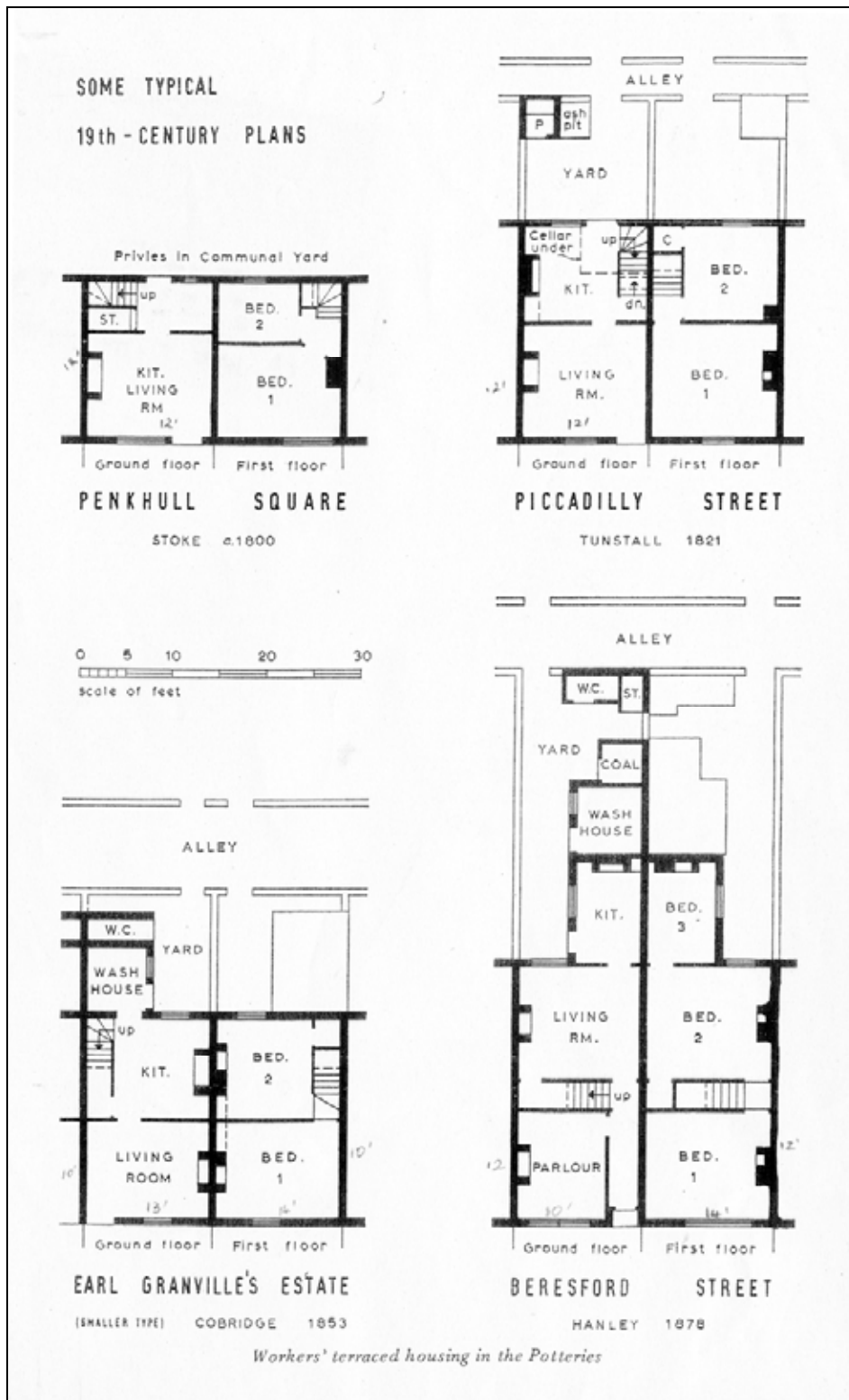


Fig. 2.13: (a) HAR, taken in winter 2008/9, and (b) HAR, taken in Spring 2009. (source: author)

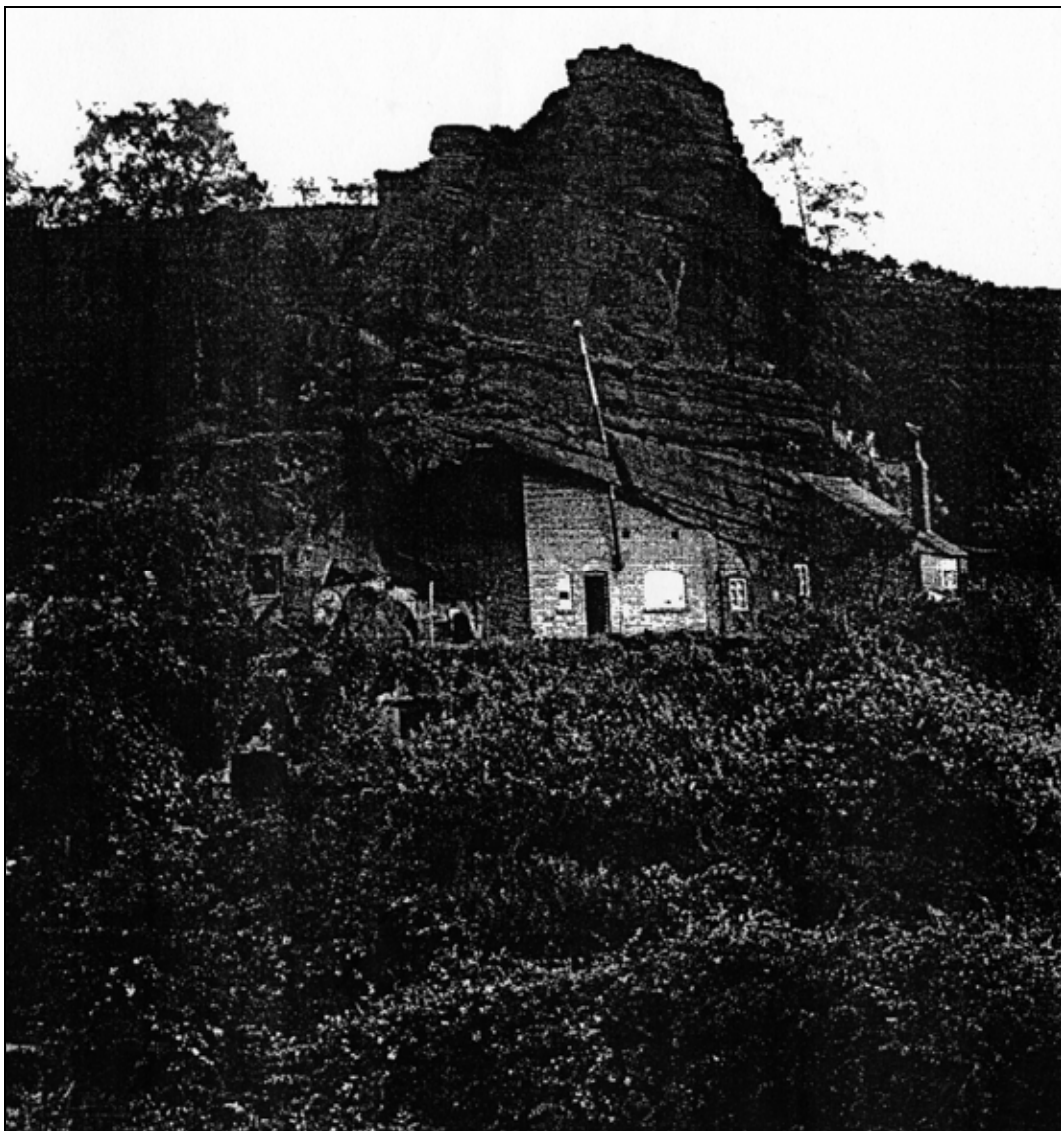


A



B

Fig. 2.14: A view of Vale's Rock, taken in August 1907, by which time the rock houses were very close to their final appearance. The privy is on the left, and the brick extension to what will later be Sam Leyland's house is clearly visible. Note the sloping ground below the houses: even then just scrub. (Source: Kinver and Enville in Old Photographs, 1996: copyright, Shugborough Museum)



CHAPTER THREE THE ROCKHOUSES AT KINVER

‘All stories need a chronology. Geological time is paradoxical and difficult. The further back in time we go . . . the less certain the narrative.’ (Foley, 2008, 25)

This section introduces the rockhouses; their form, function and current state, first explaining the local geology.

3.1 Kinver; the Past’s Long Pulse

‘...Put

Your hand on stone. Listen to

The past’s long pulse.’

(Fanthorpe 1986: ‘Stanton Drew’, from Selected Poems)

For us, geological time is unimaginably long and distant, yet geology informs landscape and underlies its history. For the 260 million years which elapsed between the Permian epoch and the near present, no human being existed to observe or record either of the foregoing elements. Yet once human beings did arrive and begin to settle, c.12000 years bp, they soon learned to exploit the area’s resources; initially, dense forest but later the topography of the land. The Iron Age seems to have been a sporadically troubled time, and the existence of two hill forts within two miles of each other – Kinver Edge and Drakelow – might well reinforce this impression. Much depends on what hill forts were meant to be; purely defensive, territorial, political statements about the power of the local tribe (or chief),

or a meeting place for doing business, living it up a little at a feast and asserting tribal identity. These functions are not exclusive of each other, of course; any gathering can become a political arena, from Parliamentary committees to the local amateur dramatic society.

3.1.2: A Brief History of Kinver

Although it took over a thousand years to settle on a name (and spelling) for Kinver, this linguistic tergiversation indicates the antiquity of the settlement. *Cynfare* – the King's road or market – was its Anglo-Saxon title; *Ceann Fawr* – the bare (or bald) ridge – its British one. The uncertainty was only resolved in the 1840s, and the village has been Kinver ever since: not the only settlement in the locality with a British name. The Iron Age hillfort above the village is a further indication of Kinver's historical longevity.

Before 1066 the area was part of the old kingdom of Mercia and was recorded in 1086 as formerly belonging to Earl Alfgar. Throughout the Middle Ages, the village prospered or declined like its neighbours, recurrent outbreaks of the Black Death in and after 1349 having a particularly marked effect on the area for many decades afterwards. Towards the end of the period, however, the locals revived somewhat and in 1511 re-founded Kinver Grammar School. The building survives, though as a (much restored) private dwelling. Provision had been duly made for the maintenance of the head master; in the later C18th the Clerk to the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal Company purchased part of an oatfield from the head of the grammar school in order to extend the towpath. Rye was also grown: hence the C19th maltings (now a bijou shopping precinct). Farmland round Kinver was not remarkably fertile; pine trees flourished in the light acid soil but C18th enclosures failed to 'improve' the land, as intended, and only orchards thrived. At HAR throughout the C19th the

inmates kept goats and pigs, not cows or sheep; in the C20th they snared rabbits along the Edge for fresh meat (Appendix 1).

Kinver seems not to have had a really local lord of the manor, despite grants of borough and market status. As part of Kinver Forest it came under the jurisdiction of various forest officials, who were answerable to the king for its management. Royal hunting parties were common from the C9th to the C15th. Centuries before the era of C18th enclosures, however, large tracts of forest had been sold off, enclosed or taken over by a process of land grab for agricultural use, to the detriment of the local commons. As indicated elsewhere, the development of the iron-founding industry from small and scattered mediaeval beginnings along the Stour, together with the inception of the canal network countrywide, were pivotal in altering the balance of interests and occupations in the area, as throughout Britain. Industry and tourism alike grew out of Kinver's topography; each, in different degrees, has shaped the physical and economic character of the village, with landscape remaining the one constant resource.

3.2 On The Edge: Geology of the Kinver area

There are two distinct rock formations underlying the region; the Bridgnorth Sandstone, which was formed during the Permian era, some 260 million years ago, and the Kidderminster Sandstone, formed during the early Triassic era, 245 million years ago (see Figure 3.1).

3.2.1 The Bridgnorth Sandstone

The Bridgnorth Sandstone has an unusual origin, being composed of spherical grains of quartz shaped by wind action and loosely cemented with a thin veneer of iron oxide: hence

its vivid rust colour. It is also known as 'Dune Sandstone' because the formation was created as an Aeolian (ie, wind) deposit in one of the very arid periods of the distant past. The Bridgnorth Sandstone is 'a record of 'a great Sahara-like desert which extended northwards and westwards, with huge sand dunes built up by the prevailing east wind blowing off what would have been the Black Country highlands' (Cutler 2008, 10).

This is the rock formation that underlies the village and Kinver Edge. Outcrops throughout the area show highly inclined and variable sandstone layers. These represent a top to bottom view of the ancient dunes landscape, whereas in the roofs of various caves – eg, the ceilings at Holy Austin Rock – '*swirling ellipses in the sandstone illustrate a horizontal or plan view of the dune structure.*'(Cutler, 2008, p10) It is fairly soft rock which can easily be excavated with hand tools, but compacted enough for vertical faces. These are exposed at various spots in the village, for example at Stag Corner (where a long-vanished pub with rock-cut cellars used to stand), along Stone Lane leading up to Holy Austin, at Holy Austin Rock itself, and at Vales Rock further south towards Drakelow.

3.2.2 The Kidderminster Sandstone Formation

This rock was formed during the early Triassic period. It consists of coarse-grained and pebbly sandstones, with occasional bands of marl. The basement beds consist of coarse grits or a thick hard conglomerate of well-rounded, water-worn, mainly quartzite pebbles in a sand matrix, slightly calcareous in places, and resting on top of the Bridgnorth Sandstone. These beds were not deposited continuously, so that there is an irregular contact junction between the two sandstones. In colour it is similar to the Bridgnorth formation. However, unlike that layer it is highly resistant to erosion, so where it surfaces it forms prominent landscape features like the Kinver Edge escarpment. On the western side of the Edge it is

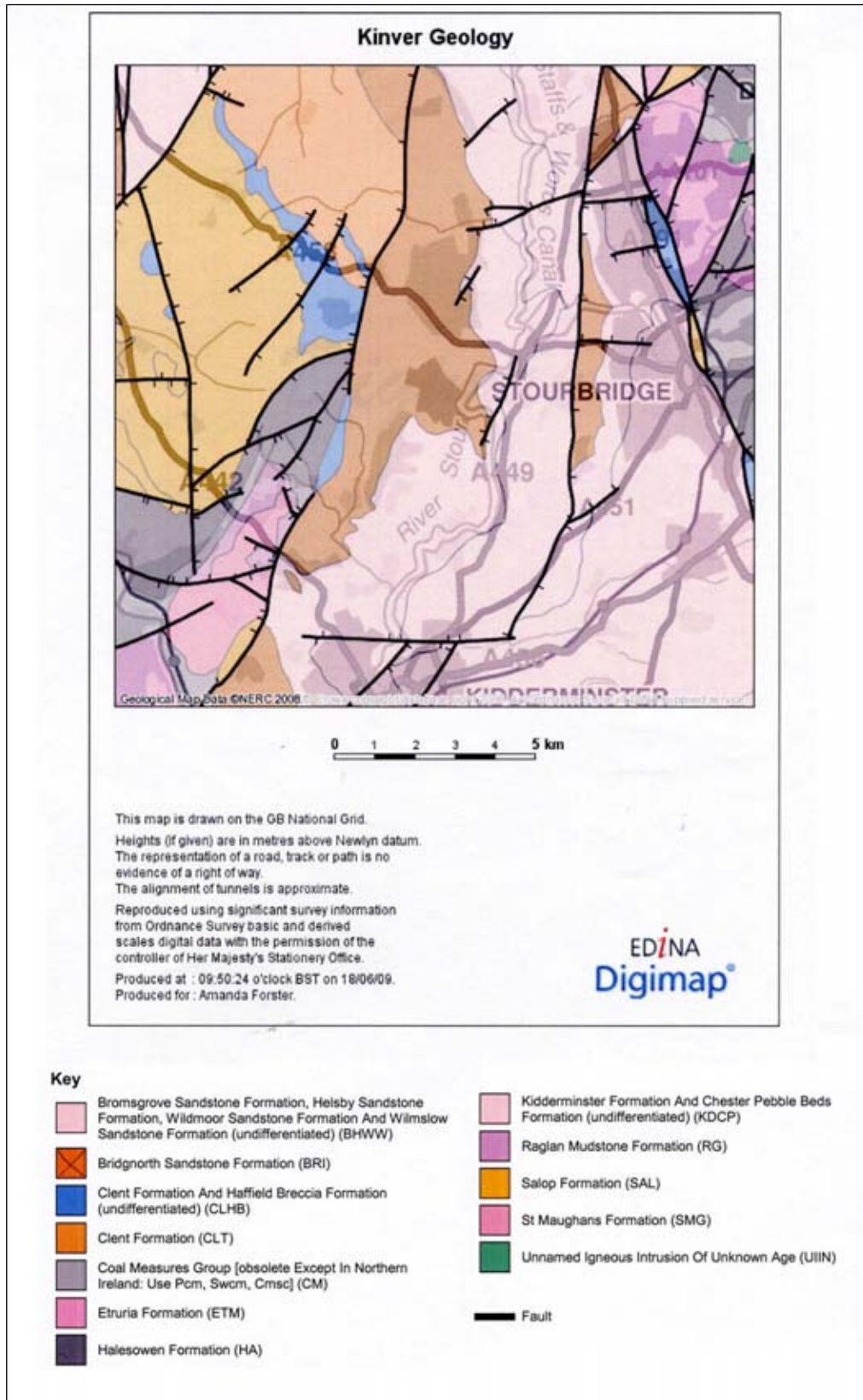
not very thick, but it protects the underlying Bridgnorth Sandstone Formation, which can develop quite high cliffs.

3.2.3 Ice

The glacial history of the area is complicated and, according to Cutler (2008, 10), has been little researched. The course of the River Stour is curious, as its meanders cut through a parallel ridge between Wollaston and Wordsley; then, turning west after the Stewpony site, it breaks through the escarpment at Rockmount before turning south again to follow, roughly, the eastern edge of the Kidderminster Sandstone outcrop. It seems probable that ice or the outpouring of melt water cut gorges through the escarpment at several points, thereby enhancing the height of the escarpment and widening the gorge north of the church. The direction of the flow from the ice front may be indicated by a small stream – Mill Stream on the O.S. map – which joins the Stour south of The Hyde.

It is worth pointing out that the land surface in general would have been lower in relation to sea level (O.D.) at this period because of the huge weight of the ice. After the ice retreated, the land rose, enabling the Stour to cut through rocks and leaving separate terrace deposits of sand and gravel much further away from its present course. Sands and gravels originating as glacial outwash from the ice sheet – at its maximum development 25,000 years ago, it reached the northern part of Wolverhampton – or as terrace deposits of the Stour during interglacials have been of considerable economic importance. *'Until quite recently'*, (Cutler is writing in 2008) *'deposits were being worked at the Stewpony'*. During warmer interglacial periods, hippos, elephants and bison roamed through the Stourbridge area. From the more tundra-like periods, the remains of mammoth, woolly rhino, musk ox, horse and reindeer have been recorded from the district.

Fig. 3.1: The Geology of the Kinver Region. (Source: Edina Digimap)



3.3 The Kinver rockhouses

As stated above, along Kinver Edge there are three groups of rockhouses, each variously occupied and each forming the basic for this study, albeit to differing extents. The locations of the different groups can be seen on Figure 1.3.

3.3.1 Carved out of Rock: Houses built with (and on) sand.

The Kinver Edge rock houses seem to have grown up in several phases (Figures 2.3>2.11). At Holy Austin Rock, there were, it appears, 3 such phases; a single dwelling of c.1770, as attested by Joseph Heely: a further half dozen or so between 1780 and 1801, when William Ransford bought his house for 8 guineas: and another group of perhaps four or five between 1831 and the time of the 1861 census, which records 11 families as living there. All were excavated by hand, using the ordinary tools of the time (Heely refers to 'marks of the pick'): the resultant debris would have quickly eroded to sand, which could be used either as a scouring agent, or for the foundations of paths – though not in the local glass-making industry.

The **Gibraltar rock houses** are less easy to date. According to Bills and Griffiths, there were some 13 dwellings there before 1850, albeit of somewhat cruder construction. All these have long disappeared, though 3 workmen's cottages backing onto the rock at this point above the canal were converted some years ago to a single (rather smart) dwelling, which now commands a handsome price on the housing market.

As already said, nothing remains of the Astle's Rock houses either, though between the end of the C18th and 1831, 4 or 5 dwellings existed here, with perhaps as many as 12 in all by the middle of the C19th. When first constructed, all three groups would have been on the

perimeter of the village, which then consisted of a single street, as attested by several visitors in the C18th.

Nanny's Rock, a natural cave extended by unknown persons who were living there at some point in the C18th, is the earliest recorded rock house in the area, being mentioned in the parish register in 1617; but after that the record is silent until the Evanses, Sarah and Nancy, surface in the 1820s/1830s, a period which seems significant for the proliferation of rock houses along Kinver Edge. W. Scott, writing in 1832, observes that:

'The western side of Kinver ridge... exhibits an almost perpendicular wall, occasionally swelling into rugged protuberances. Desolate as is the exterior appearance of this rough line of obdurate rock, its various intumescences are formed into rustic dwellings resembling those already noticed in other parts of this district.' (Extracts, 1832, p166) Scott also goes on to mention 'Meg o' Fox Hole' as 'a natural recess': adding that *'in a steeper part of the rock, Fox's Harbour, and a group of cottages, of the most romantic cast, form a neighbourhood.'*

It is evident that the '*rustic dwellings*' he refers to here must be **Crow's/Vale's Rock**, though there are several other rock cottage sites in the stretch of woodland lying between the two sites; enough to '*form a neighbourhood*' certainly. This section of the study attempts to establish the context in which these dwellings grew up and to track their development from housing to heritage, with the reasons why this happened.

3.3.2 Layout and form

Holy Austin Rock

There were three habitation levels at Holy Austin Rock, as follows.

Lower Level: House A – 1 dwelling

House Complex B – 3 dwellings

Middle Level: House Complex C – 2 dwellings

Upper Level: 3 stone-faced dwellings

2 'cave' dwellings (now severely eroded)

Most of the rock houses had three rooms, each roughly 12' by 12', with some further additions such as pantries (inside) and outhouses (QED). Later, towards the end of the C19th, several rockhouses were joined together; in the C20th, ceilings were raised and rooms extended or modified by their current inmates. Figures 2.3 – 2.11 show the archaeological plans of these stages.

Nanny's Rock:

Originally, this had three large 'rooms', irregular in shape and height, now 6'-7' above the level of the path. It had no frontage (Price, 1953, p28)

Vale's Rock:

There is **one** surviving rock house on the **upper level**, now stabilized by steel rods. It had three rooms, each c.13' x 10' (cp Potteries Housing, Figure 2.12); some plaster still adheres to the walls.

There are **three lower level** rockhouses; one (at the north end) with C20th brick infill and facing is chalked up as 'Jack/Sam Leyland's house' (see Chapter 2). The others are much

eroded and overgrown. Each had three rooms, c.12' x 12', with excavated 'cupboards'; the well, which is very well preserved, is at the SE end of the row. The fourth house, formerly adjoining 'Sam Leyland's', is no longer extant, owing to major rockfalls between 1932 and 1961.

3.3.4 Current conditions

The photographs included here (author's own) point up the contrast between two of the main rockhouse sites (Figure 3.2 and 3.3). HAR has been meticulously conserved, and measures are in place to stabilize the soft exposed rock at the SE side of the upper level. The archive photograph of Vale's Rock (August 1907) shows the rock houses in their habitable condition (Fig 2.14). The photographs taken in 2009 show the site as it is now, just over 100 years later, and 60 years since they were last lived in (3.4; **a** and **b**). The softness of the Bridgnorth sandstone and their years-long exposure to winter and rough weather are the factors responsible for their steady erosion, with intermittent vandalism a further cause.

Fig. 3.2: Holy Austin Rock, showing erosion in the upper levels. Note that a few traces of plaster remain on the walls. (Source: author)



Fig. 3.3: Holy Austin Rock: showing remedial and protective measures. The rock house here has vanished, and the turf cloaks the exposed rock surface. (Source: author)



Fig. 3.4: Vale's Rock: (a) looking north (b) looking into a lower level house (Source: author)



A



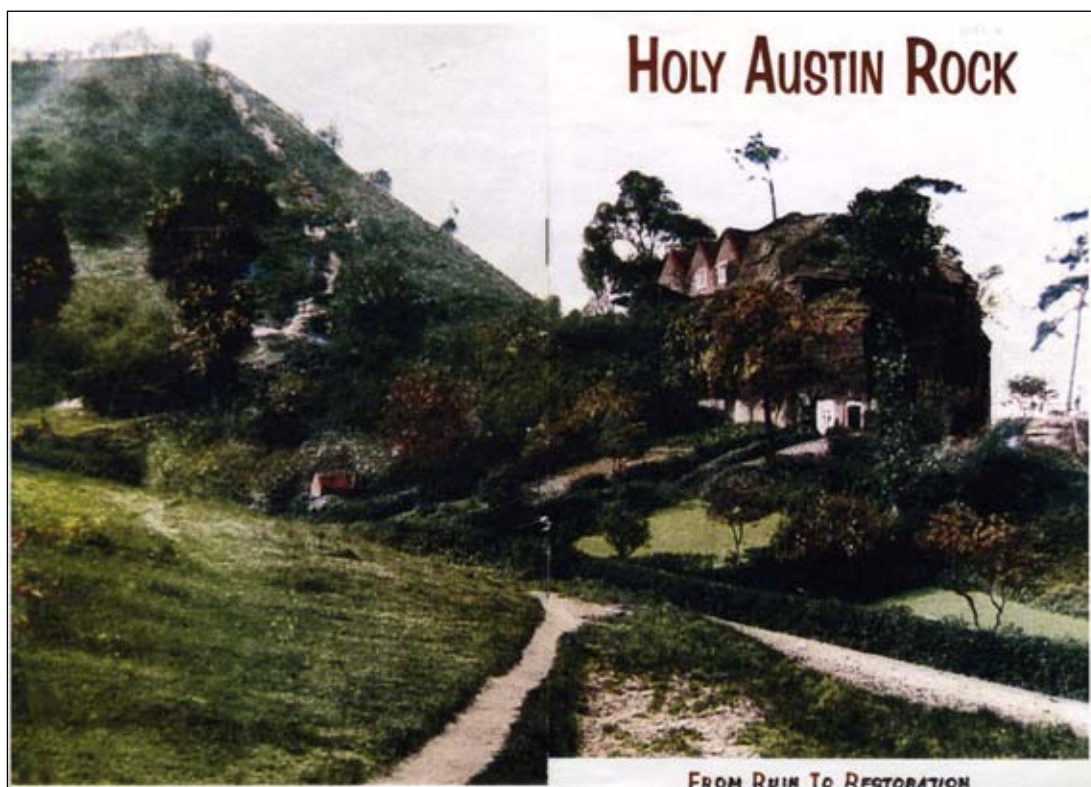
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CHAPTER FOUR TALES OF THE ROCK HOUSES FROM THE 17TH TO THE 19TH CENTURIES

'I found this exceedingly curious rock inhabited by a clean and decent family, who entertained me during the violence of the tempest with what they had done, how long they had lived there and the immense trouble they had been at in excavating the rock for their purposes.' (Heeley, 1777)

This chapter examines a number of different sources, both documentary and oral, which combine to give a comprehensive picture of Kinver's rock house communities. Figure 4.1 shows the houses at Holy Austin Rock c.1903 before the present woodland overran the site, giving an impression of the changes the site has undergone.

Fig. 4.1: The (old postcard scene) cover from *Holy Austin Rock: From Ruin to Restoration*, showing the houses and their surrounding landscape c.1903 (Source: B. Clarke, 2008)



4.1 The 17th and 18th Centuries

Before the C18th, our sole sources of reference are mediaeval charters, and these offer only the briefest glimpses of names and locations associated with the rock houses which came to prominence 400 years later. 'John-le-Hole' is a character from fable, free-floating and unattached to any particular place. 'Margaret of the Fox Hole', whose death is recorded in Kinver's parish register in June 1617, lived (and presumably died) at Nanny's Rock; but nothing more is known about her, nor whether she lived there out of desperation (like the dispossessed of Nottingham and its environs at the same period in their 'Bugge Holes'), or from choice and reasons of economy or social ostracism. Such existences are recorded but remain unmapped until accident or later bureaucracy locates them in time and topography.

4.1.2 The Evidence; Maps and Travels

In 1769, William Yates, a Customs officer based in Liverpool, set out to survey the whole of Staffordshire. His detailed maps cover the county in several separate sections, including the south west corner, from Wolverhampton in the north to the border with Worcestershire in the far south. These maps were advertised in Aris's Birmingham Gazette in February 1769 and finally published in 1775. Their details include churches (tiny drawings), mills, windmills, forges, farms and furnaces; for example, Heath Forge, Greens Forge, Bell's Mill, Slitting Mill, etcetera. A school is marked at 'Envil' (sic), and the Staffordshire/Worcester Canal is shown (completed 1770/72) with locks, bridges, summit level, and warehouse (near Atherley). Kinver Edge is shown in 'hummocky stippling', which, here as elsewhere on the map, denotes heathland. Very little woodland is marked. What is not shown on the map at Kinver (accurately delineated as consisting almost entirely of one single street) is any sign of rock houses.

There are various possible reasons for this. Yates, like other C18th map-makers, excluded from his survey a number of features which we should regard as mandatory. For instance, he gives no indication of the parkland surrounding Enville Hall, 2 miles south of Kinver, though the Earl of Stamford was an important landowner in the district in an age when ownership of land was an essential element of wealth and status. He does not record any ancient monuments or landmarks. The canal, being new and in the news, as it were, is carefully delineated. But the 'curious' aspects of industry and landscape which a different contemporary recorded in 1777 do not appear on any of Yates's maps.

However, there is an important and very interesting account of the Kinver rock house(s) and their inhabitants in a later C18th traveller's book about the area, by Joseph Heely. This is his wonderfully entitled 'Description of the Beauties of Hagley, Envil and the Leasowes, with Critical Remarks and Observations on the Modern Taste in Gardening'. (Heely had, as we might say, 'an angle'). Caught in a violent summer storm as he was crossing Kinver Edge on foot (apparently from Enville), he gives this colourful description of his experiences.

'I found this exceedingly curious rock inhabited by a clean and decent family, who entertained me during the violence of the tempest with what they had done, how long they had lived there and the immense trouble they had been at in excavating the rock for their purposes. The rooms were really curious warm and commodious and the garden extremely pretty lying on a shelve of rock towards the south and full of every necessary even to luxuriance, this I was told cost them infinite labour as there was never a particle of soil upon that part until they brought it thither on their shoulders.

'To account for this mass of rock being left in the middle of a large waste naked and distinct from any other is I believe not in my power: however I cannot think it probable the perpendicular sides are owing to(?) and that time past the rock was used as a stone quarry.

Indeed two sides evidently shew the marks of the tool upon them, and I don't think it improbable that it was once joined to the Edge itself for I observed at the foot of that precipice another perpendicular scar with familiar marks upon it, as visible as at the rock right opposite and parallel in height . . . we may conclude that formerly both joined the chasm being but 20 or 30 paces between both. Believe me, it is a very great curiosity and well worth your observations.' (Heely's spelling and punctuation!)

It seems clear from Heely's observations that at the time of his visit there was only one (obvious) rock house, '*inhabited by.... a family*'. Heely's account suggests that it occupied a lower level rather than the top of the outcrop, had a fireplace and chimney (as later archive photographs show) and that the family had been established there long enough for a south-facing garden to grow and mature sufficiently to produce '*every necessary even to luxuriance*,' though how long that had been is a matter for conjecture: several years, perhaps. Heely's description of the family as 'clean and decent' is also significant; whoever lived there might well be poor but not by any means at the bottom of the C18th's steep-sided social pyramid.

4.1.3 Observations

There are several other points worth emphasising in this account. Heely's presumption that Holy Austin Rock had once formed part of a quarry is borne out by the Touchstone Associates report of 1989, where the authors remark on the main track up to the Rock from the west side (Compton Road) being '*believed to follow the path to the former quarry*.' The local sandstone, as explained in Chapter 3 is of two kinds, one being very soft, the other much harder. All the rock houses were created out of the underlying soft Bridgnorth Sandstone; which rock was quarried earlier is hard to tell.

A second point is the fact that Heely found the family at home. He says nothing about the occupation/s its members followed, but it is possible that they were engaged in the 'forest crafts' on which the 1989 report comments and which it associates with rock house inhabitants elsewhere. A good local example in the C20th (cited by Touchstone Associates) was 'Sam' Leyland at Crow's Rock, who made besoms – birch brooms – for use in the Kidderminster carpet and brick-making factories.

Heely was clearly an enthusiast for landscape who enjoyed what he found in the area. His account demonstrates his own curiosity about things generally, but also reflects the later C18th's increasing interest in analysis and observation of contemporary conditions and developments. It is not surprising, then, that he should depart at times from his official agenda (gardening and landscape) to comment on other matters, such as the thriving glass-making trade in the area.

'The town of Stourbridge, so eminent for its glass manufactory, which gives employment to thousands, lies in the way (of this agreeable tour) and affords a pleasing hour to a stranger, who never saw the curious art of forming that delicate ware into its various uses'

The Stourbridge Canal, completed in 1779, was driven through by 'the Commercial Interest', as the term was then; almost every glass manufactory in the Stourbridge area lay within a quarter of a mile of the canal's main line. Cooperation between its management and that of the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal (the '*navigable cut from the Trent, lately executed,*' in Heely's words), which it joined near the Stewpony, was close enough to allow the companies' officials to share a wharf, stables, tollhouse and even the officials themselves.

This shared proximity in geography and traffic was to prove a saving grace for the Staffs and Worcs. Like the SWC, the Stourbridge Canal also transported coal, iron, vinegar, lime,

manure, road stone and other commodities between the Black Country and the west, though in 1777 all this lay in the future. Clearly, Heely had his romantic (and Romantic) preoccupations too, and it was no part of his brief to comment on the effects which the '*navigable cut from the Trent*' was having on the lives and livelihoods of the local population. But his comments on the flourishing '*glass manufactory*' in Stourbridge and its environs is a useful reminder that iron founding was not the only important and well-established trade in the district at the time, and that the advent of the canal would have hugely important effects on both.

4.2 The 19th Century

4.2.1 The Evidence: Bright's Tale and After 1829 - 1891

Before Bright's Survey of 1829-1831, the sources available for tracing the inhabitants of Holy Austin Rock are few and oblique, consisting of the Kinver parish registers and any legal documents still extant: for example, the 1801 deed of sale. The occupations of these early inmates include those of hairdresser, agricultural labourer (ie, farmhand, covering a range of skills), ironworker (eg, forgerman, puddler, stocktaker), boatman (several of these), and others. The word 'labourer' on its own is vague: the parish registers show that such people were usually illiterate but very much part of the village in their formal undertakings. A number of them lived in nearby Compton or Stourton, within the parish but not in Kinver itself. In the village, occupations were diverse; in the mid C18th John Hassell plied his trade as a barber and peruke-maker, while others worked as carpenters, joiners, bakers, wire-drawers, lock keepers, husbandmen, innkeepers – and the occasional 'Gent', like Frances Jukes's husband, who owned Whittington forge. Certain surnames recur across the centuries; in Worcester, the Bishop's clerk fussed about the spellings in the register,

creating confusions at a distance. In 1817, Joseph Ranbow of 'Paddock', boatman, had his son baptised in the parish church; should he have been entered as Joseph Rainbow? In January 1818, Thomas Patrick, boatman, of 'Rock' (ie, HAR) was present at the baptism of his daughter in St Peter's Church. Benjamin Hartland of Kinver, boatman, buried his infant son, Benjamin, in March 1816, and his 3 year old daughter Jane in March 1817: in December, he was back to have a son baptised in the church. In so small a community as Kinver, these three men and their families must have known each other: two of them lived at HAR after all.

Bright's Survey of 1831 records 6 cottages with gardens at HAR. The names listed are those of Thomas Childs (b.1775), an agricultural labourer, who died on February 23rd 1851, aged 76: John Webb (b.1803), agricultural labourer, who died on 27th Sept 1870, aet 67: Benjamin Williams (an infant, named John Williams, died here in 1853): a lone woman, Sarah Brookes: another, Lucrezia **Penzer** (a rare surname in the parish registers; she may have been there courtesy of the Parish Vestry as a pauper): and finally Benjamin Glover and his wife Ann, (b.1775). A James Glover had died at HAR in January 1818, aged 9 months; Henry Glover, aged 12, died in July 1834, both being children of the above, presumably. Given the dates recorded here, it seems likely that the Glovers were long-standing residents at HAR. Ann Glover outlived her husband, dying in October 1851, at HAR, aged 76.

Bright's Survey, then, cites 6 cottages, but W. Scott, writing in 1832, gives a different picture. In 'Extracts Relating to Kinver, Enville and Himley', he observes:

'In surveying (this) landscape, a feature of some interest remains to be noticed. – Many of the cottages interspersed throughout this vicinity consist of caverns in sand rocks . . .

Dunsley hill or bank (ie Gibraltar) contains no inconsiderable proportion of these cavernous dwellings . . . (Bills and Griffiths, 1978, suggest that there were, in fact, 13.)

Scott continues:

'In a rural recess, situate within one of the minor eminences which approximate to the principal hill, is a solitary cottage, singularly remote from 'the busy hum of man.' On the western side of the edge stands a curious square mass of hard sand-stone rock, containing 7 tenements formed by excavations . . . The side of the rock opposite to the Edge is vertical, probably so hewn by art, the intervening mass having probably been removed by human labour.' (op.cit, pp165-167)

In other words, some form of quarrying had taken place, as Heely had surmised sixty years earlier. Also, a year after the survey was completed, another rock house had been carved out of the sandstone at HAR, or else the surveyors had miscounted.

Scott's account further corroborates his predecessor's observations;

'Several tall firs, whose roots insinuate themselves into the fissures of the rock, sloping gardens, and plantation grounds filled with fruit trees occupying various indentations of this obdurate mass, produce a striking effect.'

The landscape which Scott saw is largely that of the late C19th tourist postcards: *'Several extensive woodlands rise to view amidst the sandy regions approximating to the Edge - the recent, though partial, restoration to its sylvan honours of the surrounding tract.'*

In fact, Scott was wrong about the last point, the Edge having been heathland, but perhaps he had in mind the records of Kinver as a royal forest. To him, however, *'these caverns exhibit a true picture of the Troglodyte station.'*

4.2.2 The Evidence: a Writer's Tale

A child's - and outsider's – view of events at Holy Austin Rock at about the time of the 1891 census is provided by *Into An Hour Glass*, the autobiography of Nancy Price (Price,1953).

Born in 1880 and brought up in the village at Rockmount House on Dark Lane, she became a well-known actress who was eventually awarded an M.B.E. for her services to the theatre. In her autobiography, published in 1953, she recalls her childhood visits, on foot and by pony, to two separate rock houses, Holy Austin and Nanny's Rock. Her account not only provides evidence of these lives but also of life in the village in the last decade or so of the C19th. She writes that:

'At the foot of my great little hills were pinewoods, dark, mysterious, aromatic, and all over my hills grew countless hawthorn bushes which made the place in spring one of bridal beauty and beyond description fragrant. On their slopes man had hewed his house out of the red sandstone rock, and he has continued to live there even to this day....' (Price, 1953, p21)

*'When I was a child, one of these huge isolated rocks housed *fourteen families, all living on different levels. They were kept scrupulously clean, and these rock dwellers were certainly more content than are many of the occupants in the council houses of today.'* (op.cit, 21)

She goes on to provide more personal corroboration of the findings of the census.

'Most of our washing was done by two sisters who lived in one of these rock houses: 'Holy Austin'. They had a steep path to climb from the lane to their house, and it was a three mile walk along this lane and through the village to our house. They had to draw all their water from a deep well; all this meant additional time spent and labour entailed, yet I have never*

seen washing so white, neither do I think I have ever smelt linen so sweet. I can see those two dear women now – rosy cheeked, rather small and spare, but, as they said, ‘never ailing’. It was an event for them to bring the washing back for this meant a talk with my mother, tea in our warm sunny kitchen, a walk round the garden when the weather permitted, all the fruit and vegetables they wanted, and a posy even in winter.

‘Sometimes I was invited to their rock house for tea . . . It was not only a sort of adventure but there were the delicious cakes baked by their wonderful old mother of 92. Even now I can hear her saying; “It’s the rock, missie, keeps me young; the rock gives me strength.”

These unique rock houses were cool in summer and warm in winter . . . ’

(* Actually less than 2 miles in total. The number of families recorded by the census is 11).

The statistics from the Kinver Parish Registers certainly suggest that the inhabitants at Holy Austin tended to live longer lives than their counterparts elsewhere in the village, as Nancy Price herself testifies.

‘A broad ridge of rock on my father’s estate known as ‘Gibraltar Rock’ housed about eight couples, but as he was continually told that these should be evacuated, he built eight little cottages eminently desirable from the modern point of view. It is a strange fact that within a couple of years every one of the evacuated rock dwellers was dead. Some argued that they were already getting on in years, which is true, but most were in their seventies, and our rock dwellers invariably lived to between eighty and a hundred.’ (op.cit, p41)

Once again, the parish registers show that at Gibraltar, at least in the middle of the C19th, infant mortality and early deaths were far commoner than in the rock houses elsewhere. It is also true that, with a few exceptions, the inhabitants at Holy Austin, as at Astle’s Rock, tended to be employed in the more skilled jobs available in the area, such as puddlers at

the Hyde Ironworks or as foremen. Better wages necessarily meant a better standard of living, and as Heely's account of 1777 shows, there were gardens attached which provided *'every necessary, even to luxuriance'*.

But it was not only the eminently respectable and homely inmates at Holy Austin whom Nancy Price visited. A mile or so further south lay Nanny's Rock, which seems never to have had either a group or a permanent resident settled there.

'Perhaps one of my greatest thrills was to visit old 'Nanny's Rock', which was isolated and lonely. 'Nanny' lived with her cat and made potions, distilled cures and foretold the future. There was no door or window in her rock house – or perhaps I should say cave, for it was open to the wind, rain and sun, but so situated that the storms were tempered by the pinewood, which stretched almost to the rock itself. This old woman was avoided as being uncanny and therefore to be feared, sought only upon rare occasions by the adventurous female who wished to probe the future – and as such was invariably accompanied by some stalwart male. It was not considered desirable to visit old Nanny alone.'

However, despite this resemblance to a more sinisterly superstitious Lark Rise, it does not seem to have deterred the child from the village.

'Looking back, I suppose I was drawn to her as like drifts to like: I also found companionship in the wind, rain and the wild life that frequented her cave. In fact I was interested in the things that filled her days, and though I know we never talked much – one having but the vocabulary of youth and the other the lack brought about by isolation – yet there was a comradeship between us, and this on my side was accompanied by a desire for adventure . . . These visits of mine were kept secret and might be described by the moderns as 'escapism'.

An interesting example of wicca-like belief was the 'bracelet of human hair' which Nanny gave the child;

'She mumbled some words (over it) which she may or may not have believed. She told me it would bring a particular 'goodness'. 'Those that thou lovest will love thee. Thou shalt never be troubled by mistrust of them. They will not be able to break from the thrall of thy love.' Many times she said this, and the words were left as firmly imprinted on my mind as a well-known text or hymn. As she promised, so it has been; I have never suffered a broken friendship. . .Imprinted upon my mind is someone apart, someone who seemed to belong to the creature world that I knew and loved.' (p27)

As the only (surviving) child of a well-to-do family - her father, William Price, went on to become a director of the canal haulage company of Fellowes, Morton and Clayton - Nancy enjoyed an unusual degree of freedom, aided by her possession of a pony. Clearly she was able to roam far and wide on her cob, though prudently she kept these excursions to Nanny to herself.

But Nanny's time was not long. One day:

'I found her gone. I scrambled down to her rock house calling: 'Nanny! Nanny!' But the only answering sign was the whisper of the pines in the wood below. Her cat had gone too. Perhaps, like the beasts, old Nanny had an instinct that the time had come for her to solve the great mystery. She would sense, as they do, that her hour was at hand, and she would wish to meet death rather than await it. How largely she figured in my childish adventures and how mysteriously she passed!'

Note: Gibraltar (Badger's Rock)

Like Astle's Rock, 'Gibraltar' no longer exists, but for about a century, between the 1780s and the 1880s, these rock houses formed '*the most extensive collection of inhabited caves existing hereabouts.*' (Bills and Griffiths, 1978, p.21) The 'caves' at Gibraltar were rented out at 1/- a week (ie, 5p) to labourers waiting to load cargoes at Kinver Wharf, and so needing shelter for the night. According to Bills and Griffiths, '*only one or two families were resident for any length of time.*' (op.cit.p.21) Such families were usually farm labourers or forge workers, and, as Nancy Price's account indicates, the conditions obtaining at Gibraltar were far from healthy. In one period of 13 days, 6 children died of smallpox; whereas in the whole of the rest of the **parish**, only 4 died in total.

Though she does not say so outright, Nancy Price's father was compelled by the local Board of Health to re-house these tenants. He did so by building 8 cottages to replace the cave houses. Bills and Griffiths state that by the 1880s – ie, after the closure of the local ironworks at Whittington and The Hyde – these caves were largely disused, though boatmen are said to have used them on an irregular basis. As already stated, they are no longer extant. Archive photography suggests a rather cramped warren of small dwellings, hewn out of the rock face which had been created by the construction of the canal, and perched above the dual line of the canal and the Stour, which closely parallels the canal at this point.

It also offered shelter for some rather dubious characters, according to Nancy Price's testimony (op.cit.1953, p41). After one particular incident, it became usual for her to be escorted home from Whittington, after dark, when she visited a friend of her own age there. On this occasion, she was startled by the sudden eruption of a nearly naked man from the undergrowth beside the path, clearly desperate and with robbery (perhaps) in mind. Nancy caused her pony to rear and dance sideways, which made the man take to his heels. As she remarks: '*there was sufficient hiding place for those whose deeds favoured darkness in*

the caves at the foot of our wood – which indeed showed constant evidence of affording shelter.’ She seems to be referring here to Gibraltar or its near neighbourhood. After this episode, her friend’s parents insisted on sending someone home with her to ensure her safety. Rural life in the 1890s was definitely not all idyll.

4.2.3 Observations: Households and Histories

There were several ‘troglodytes,’ as Scott termed them, at HAR in the first years of the C19th, amongst whom the Webbs, Childs and Glovers can be tracked out of anonymity through the parish records. For example, in June 1799, Benjamin Glover married Ann Veal (another rock house surname): later that same year, their first child (another Benjamin) was baptised on Christmas Day. His father is described as a labourer; other village Glovers were tailors and so on. Four other children followed: William in May 1809, Richard in September 1812, James in April 1817 and Henry in March 1822. James survived for only 9 months and was buried in January 1818 from ‘Holly Austin Rock’: Henry died in 1834, aged 12. However, the two elder boys survived into adulthood and were living at HAR years later.

There were several population censuses in the C19th, about ten years apart. Thus, in **1841**, there were **8** households at HAR, the surnames given being Robins, Wilcox, (Blunt, Lawley), Childs, Webb, Glover, Harris; plus Nott, Mason and Hill. The Notts are easy to follow because of their taste for Biblical names such as Shadrach; nephews being named for uncles, not fathers, however.

In **1851**, the census registered **10** households with one uninhabited rock house; not quite the population peak of the next count, but a time of high prosperity for the local iron trade nonetheless. The ironworks at The Hyde and other nearby locations were in full production;

in 1852, as described in Appendix 2, there were 63 puddling furnaces along the Stour and the Smestow, with the Hyde works having a 400' frontage along the canal. These decades of the 1850s, '60s and '70s saw the heyday of the iron-making business in the area; elsewhere, railways were taking over the transport of bulk commodities such as coal, iron bars and strip from the canals, but despite losing business to the Birmingham-Worcester canal and others, the Staffordshire and Worcester continued to prosper, largely through its links with the network across the country. As Langford points out, these links were its lifeblood (1978, SWC.)

The **1861** census (then published) registered **11** families, **46** persons, living at HAR on 3 levels; its official peak. They were recorded in some detail, though the attribution of house numbers remains problematic. We know that the Childs were resident at **No.1**, but not which house that was. There were two 'families' there: however, Sarah Childs was a widow, living with her daughter Hannah and her son-in-law. Her husband, Thomas, had died in February 1851 at the age of 76. She herself lived to be 82. (See Appendix 1 for further details.)

The **1861** census refers to other families whose names also appear as inmates at HAR. They include the Hills, the Shepherds, the Perks, the Jennings and the Laws, about whom various details can be gleaned from parish registers and other records.

This brings us to the Shepherds. In 1861, William, aged 42, was a labourer at the Hyde ironworks. He was born in Kinver and had formerly been a maltster's mate, at which time (c.1844/5) he had married Hannah Childs (see infra). However, he had had other occupations, as the story will show. He died in 1875, having fathered a large family, though several of them died in childhood, as was all too common then, even under relatively favourable circumstances. His wife was Hannah, aged 42 in 1861. She was born therefore,

in 1819, nee Childs, the daughter of Thomas Childs, (already tenant of a rock house in 1829). At the time of the 1891 census, she was 72, not 92 as Nancy Price supposed.

The Shepherds are not the only family whose history demonstrates the variability of life and work in the middle of the C19th. There were others too, such as the Fletchers, who were to be recorded in paint by a professional artist at the turn of the century.

In 1861, Joseph Fletcher, aged 35, was employed at the ironworks, where he had begun work c.1850. An 'offcomer', he had been born in Stoke in 1815: Waterloo year. From 1871 on, however, his occupation is given as that of farm labourer. Sarah (his wife), who was 41, came from Kinver; they had 3 daughters, and 1 son - Mary Jane, 7: Caroline, an infant (?): Joseph, aged 4, and another, unnamed child. Living with them in 1861 was also Mary Ann Edwards, aged 14, who is described as a 'daughter-in-law', meaning stepdaughter in the parlance of the time. (Had Sarah, six years his senior, been married before?)

Families not only moved about in search of employment, or better-paid employment: they also eked out their income by taking lodgers. It was not only elderly widows who resorted to this means of increasing their finances; the Jennings family did the same. Joseph Jennings, aged 43 in 1861, an agricultural labourer born at 'The Rock' in 1816, with a wife (Anne), and 5 children to support, aged between 11 years and 3 months, had living in his house at the time of the census a George Jennings, aged 60, described as 'a visitor' and from Whittington, so probably a relative; and also Frederick Price, aged 19, who seems not to belong clearly anywhere. More sadly, there was also a John Jennings, who had died in February 1860, at 1 year old.

What brought these offcomers and their families to Holy Austin? Certainly, many of them were seeking employment which offered slightly better wages than seasonal work on the land, thereby representing that drift away from rural life towards a more industrial pattern of

employment which has shaped our society ever since. Also, the Kinver rock houses were not an entirely local phenomenon; those who arrived from Bewdley and Bridgnorth would have seen such dwellings in their own locality too. It is worth remembering that at Holy Austin Rock there were already vegetable gardens, fruit trees, easy access to the local woods and the Edge for fuel and rabbits. The inhabitants also kept goats (if archive photographs can be trusted), chickens, pigs, etcetera. There were also two wells, one for each major complex, variously recorded as 80' or 180' deep, and three outside privies, one for each level (National Trust information provided at H.A.R.).

There is a well-known painting by Alfred Rushton, A.R.A., entitled 'After Dinner, Rest Awhile,' which is said to be of the Fletchers, ie, Joseph and Sarah, and to have been commissioned by the Edge View Hotel, to advertise local curiosities and features, presumably. The reflection in the mirror hanging on the wall behind the elderly couple is said to be of the painter himself.

4.2.4 Observations: Ownership

The first indication of anybody living in a cave or rock house in the immediate Kinver area comes in 1293, when, according to the V.C.H. XX, (1984), a 'John atte Bury' is recorded: 'bury' implying at or near the hillfort. (p.122) In 1617, as already said, 'Margaret of the Fox-Earth' enters the parish register, as having died there on 8th June. This means Nanny's Rock (its later title), a natural cave extended for habitation at some point before that date. Much of what is now Kinver Edge was then common land, so that in these earlier times ownership amounted merely to squatters' rights; but in the C18th this becomes more problematical. At Nanny's Rock (so-called by the 1880s) a date of 1726 in elaborate C18th handwriting remains visibly carved into the wall of one of the rooms, and (surface) finds of

Delft tiles suggests that whoever lived here was scarcely on the bread line. According to the V.C.H, XX (op.cit), some time before 1750 '*a poor man converted the cave into a dwelling for himself and his family.*' The archaeological evidence seems, at least in part, to contradict the idea of extreme poverty. Just a century later, in 1820, a Sarah Evans was resident, and in 1830 a Nancy Evans lived at 'The Fox-Earth.' In 1890, a woman recluse – the 'Nanny' of Nancy Price's autobiography (see section 3.5) – was living there, visited (albeit on an irregular basis) by the ten year old child on her pony, but regarded with some unease by the village population, as Nancy Price herself testifies. There seem to have been 3 main rooms, but the cave is now much weathered and eroded, though a recently-found vertiginous stairway cut into the rock directly above it survives. In 1993, the remains of 2 rock-cut chimneys associated with the main chambers were still visible in the rock face. (See Figs 2.3, 2.7/8).

At Holy Austin Rock (so named by the late C18th, in keeping with contemporary fashion for the Gothic and picturesque), the situation was different. Visiting the area in 1777, Joseph Heely (op.cit.) describes only one rock-cut dwelling here, which its inmates had carved out quite recently, although the garden had matured into considerable productivity, as Heely observed. He comments that '*this extreme curious rock*' was inhabited by '*a clean and decent family*' who '*entertained*' him during his stay with an account of their labours in creating their home. The second comment testifies to the family's status: they were not merely struggling peasants but resourceful and self-respecting. As the makers, presumably they were also the owners, since a deed of 1801 clearly shows legal title. This is cited by Shoesmith, Williams and Hoverd in Volume 3 of their Archaeological Report of 1992/3. On 29th June, 1801, John Milward, carpenter, of Alveley (Shropshire) sold a rock house to William Ransford of Kinver, hairdresser, for 8 guineas (£8.40p). The property is described in the deed of sale as:

'a cottage and garden situate at Holly (sic) Austin Rock in the parish of Kinfare for £8.8/- all that cottage or tenement cut or hewn out of a rock (with several others) commonly called or known by the name of Holly Austin Rock with the Garden and Appurtenances thereunto, belonging late in the occupation of Thomas Bagley since of John Milward but now in the possession of the said William Ransford and which said Cottage or Tenement Garden and Premises are situate lying and being in the Parish of Kinfare . . .and near to the Road leading from Kinfare aforesaid to Compton and were lately purchased by the said John Milward of the said Thomas Bagley Together with all Rooms Ways Paths Passages Waters etc.'

This shows that in its thirty or so years of existence, Holy Austin Rock (house No.1?) had had at least three owners. It is tempting to infer that **Thomas Bagley** was its original creator: hence, Heely's host on the occasion referred to. The cottage is described as *'belonging late in the occupation of'* and *'lately purchased,'* which implies a fairly recent purchase by John Milward. The wording of the deed indicates that other rock houses had come into use since Heely's visit a bare quarter of a century before.

Thomas Bagley first appears in the parish register of August, 1765, when he married Betty Jordan, daughter of George and Elisabeth Jordan; both had to 'make their mark' (ie, an X), thereby showing that they were illiterate. Both were recorded as *otp - of this parish*: no occupation is given. Betty's date of birth seems to have been February 26th 1731: a second Betty Jordan (a relation?) baptised in August 1756 is clearly too young. In July 1770, Thomas and Betty had their (only) daughter baptised in Kinver church, giving her the name *Tryphoena. (*See Romans XVI, v12) Betty died in April 1783; her daughter was buried in May 1785. Nothing more is known about Thomas, but the Jordan family lived in the area in some numbers and were still thriving in the 1830s and 1840s when one branch of the family had taken up lock-keeping at Halfcot on the Stourbridge Canal.

Whether Thomas Bagley was the creator of No.1,HAR or not, in 1819 William Ransford was still living there, as in that year he cut a wood/coal house out of the rock for Joseph Collins, for which he was paid £8. This sounds a hefty sum, but he had also supplied buckets, chains, etc, for the well used by the houses in the lower part of the Rock (the part still extant.) The well, 80' deep (though sometimes recorded as 180': see Appendix 1) is now covered over, but archive photography shows that it was repaired on a regular basis until the 1920s, when piped water (and gas) reached HAR. It is worth emphasising that the shed was for wood and coal: the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal had opened between Stourport and Wolverhampton in 1770, with an immediate and significant fall in the cost of coals. This revived the flagging iron trade, bringing increased employment to the locality (forgemen and boatmen eventually appear among those living at HAR), as well as putting a previously expensive fuel within the budget of the modestly paid.

William Ransford can also be tracked through the parish records. Although described as a 'hairdresser' in 1801 when he bought one of the rock houses, by 1813 he appears as a labourer. On June 28th 1801, he and his wife Mary had their son Henry baptised. Some years later, on August 1st 1813, there was Ann: in November 1815, George (when the family is recorded as living at 'Rock'); and on June 13th 1819, there was Frederic (sic).

Bright's Survey of 1830/31 records a Joseph Collins as the proprietor of one of (the) six houses in the Rock. The only records about him in the parish registers show him acting as a witness to the marriages of various local couples on several occasions between 1819 and 1833. However, the house he owned was occupied by a Benjamin Williams. The survey records six dwellings, with their owners and occupiers. One of these was Thomas Childs, father of Hannah (later Hannah Shepherd), born in 1819, and perhaps the best recorded character from the early years of HAR.

Early ownership of the Rock, according to the Shoemith report, '*can be split into several sections.*' In 1830, the houses on the lower level made up the second largest section, valued at £1.11/- (£1.55p) These were separate, therefore, from the upper section, inhabited by Benjamin Williams and Thomas Childs. This larger section was owned by Thomas Webb but occupied by John Webb, his wife Charlotte, and their son William. It also appears that the Webb family owned the upper level at HAR; this would square with the fact that when, in 1917, the Grosvenor Lee family of Birmingham wanted to give a memorial gift to the nation through the National Trust, they purchased some 155 acres of Kinver Edge Farm from William Harcourt Webb, together with much of the Holy Austin Rock site. Excluded from this sale were four messuages and a piece of garden ground belonging to Mrs Charlotte Shaw, formerly Charlotte Webb (who appears in several archive photographs of the upper level at HAR, eg in 1908.) These four messuages presumably encompassed the upper level, long owned by the Webb family.

There was yet another section of rock housing, owned (?) and certainly occupied by Benjamin Glover pre-1818. In 1830, the same dwelling was still owned/occupied by Benjamin and his wife Ann. She continued to live there after her husband's death in 1831, until her own demise in 1851. In 1830, the house was valued at 9/-: ie, 45p. In 1834, Henry Glover, aged 12, died at HAR; the Glover family is the only one recorded as being buried from HAR between 1814 and 1851. Also in 1830, two of the houses were owned by the Overseers of Kinfare; these were occupied by Sarah Brookes and Lucretia Penzer, which suggests pauper status. Five years later, the Vestry gave consent for a pauper to move into a house owned by the parish at HAR (from the Vestry Minute Book, November 21st, 1835.) In the following year, the Vestry ordered the repair of houses at the Rock (op.cit. 30th July, 1836). Some years later, the only entries in the 1841 Census which could be considered (due to age and occupation) to reflect pauper status are for Joseph and Hannah Robins,

aged 70 and 68; in the 1851 Census they are actually entered as paupers, together with a Thomas and Mary Harris (aged 70 and 80.) It seems that parish involvement and ownership at HAR was fairly short-lived: there are no later records of this. (Archaeological Report, op.cit.) Even so, the threads of ownership, as against occupation, remain difficult to disentangle.

Almost two miles further south and butted up against the west-facing escarpment of the Edge was (and is) **Crow's Rock/Vale's Head Rock**; the two names appear to refer to different parts of this 'clapper' - ie, prominent rock outcrop in local terminology*. Here, there were 4 separate houses, with a fifth house on the level above. Part of the lower level has brick-built extensions, with doors and window frames (see Figures 1.12, 1.13) and a deep well. This lower level is **Crow's Rock**: the upper, **Vale's Head**. In the early 1930s, owing to a rockfall, the dwellings were condemned as unsafe, and in 1932 the Reeves family moved away to live at HAR, occupying House Complex B (now a single dwelling) from which they ran refreshment rooms until 1935 (or 1939, according to Mr Reeves.) The lower level of Crow's Rock was then reoccupied by Sam (aka 'Jack') Leyland, a besom-maker, and his son, John Cashmore, who remained there until the mid 1950s or a little later. **Vale's Head** was occupied by one or more elderly ladies, variously named as Miss Nightingale, Mrs Shillingfield and Miss Ince: the second is remembered as a dog-hater, the first as a dog-lover (but see transcript in Appendix 1). A further serious rockfall in the early 1960s resulted in at least one fatality. The area is now wired off as dangerous, with warning notices planted on its perimeter.

4.2.5 Observations: Population density

Between 1840 and 1870, there was a rapid increase in population, which is reflected in the increasing numbers at HAR and at Astle's Rock. Both can be associated with the expansion of the iron industry at Whittington and The Hyde, and with the wider economy generally.

The number of rock houses cut at HAR (as at nearby Astle's Rock) increased from the late 1840s into the 1870s. Their makers were probably unaware of continuing a much older and more widespread tradition with its roots in the early Middle Ages.

However, by 1882/3, the Hyde ironworks had closed, and between 1880 and 1890 one third of all the houses in Kinver were said to be empty; the census returns for HAR reflect this fall in numbers too. To summarise, therefore;

1831: 6 cottages (and families); the exact numbers are unclear.

1841: 8 families, 26 people resident at HAR.

1851: 10* families, 33 people (1 house uninhabited); * possibly 12, with the Glovers

1861: 11 families, 46 people (including 2 visitors)

1871: 7 families, 31 people

1881: 3 families, 7 people

1891: 4 families, 11 people (though Nancy Price, writing in 1953, says 14 families.

Did she mean 14 people, remembering at a distance of over 50 years?)

The '*4 messuages and garden ground*' belonging to Mrs Charlotte Shaw in 1917 came into other hands later. On 29th Jan, 1964, they were sold by Rose Novak (nee Howell) and Alfred Howell to the National Trust for £113.19/-. These two were the last permanent residents at HAR, and transcripts of their recollections were made in 1989 for the National Trust. (See appendices). Further afield, two rock houses on Sladd Lane at Wolverley were

advertised for sale in 2007, with an asking price of £25,000. They fetched four times as much and remain (2010) in private ownership, deliberately unmodified for any form of use. The relevant newspaper cuttings appear in Appendix 3.

Barely half a mile from HAR and fronting onto The Compa, **Astle's Rock** also housed several families in the course of its occupation. In 1831, there were already two cottages there, but by 1841 a third had been added. The occupants were Philip Matthews, Joseph Astle and James Marchant. They were labourers, who lived in these rock houses with their families throughout their working lives. (Bills and Griffiths, p18). Joseph Astle outlived the others, dying at the age of 87.

By 1871, there were 13 families resident at Astle's Rock, though it is not clear whether they were all housed in the Rock itself or in cottages abutting onto the rock faces. Most of the men worked at the Hyde Ironworks, generally as puddlers or stock-takers, so they were better off than many of their fellow employees. When the ironworks in the area closed, they gradually moved away, leaving the original three tenants still resident.

Habitation at Astle's Rock, therefore, reflects with some exactness the fortunes of the local iron trade. This was extensive, with mills and forges all along the Stour Valley, including Halfcot, The Hyde, Whittington and Wolverley. Writing in the Cookley and Wolverley Historical Society Journal (9), Lucy Torode points out that:

*'the population nationally and in this parish was more or less equally agricultural and industrial by 1850. Incoming workers of all sorts settled here during the early and mid C19th. More homes were needed and people squatted on the commons, creating homes from the caves in the sandstone. Since the enclosures of 1778, * Blakeshall Common had been part of the Blakeshall estate, belonging to William Hancocks. (Hancocks is said to*

have granted freehold to the rock dwellers on his land. He also set up a school on the common at Drakelow).'

4.2.6 Observations:Visitors and Incomers

Although a flourishing ironworks had provided employment throughout most of the C19th, Kinver remained somewhat remote, in terms of access if not distance. Consequently, it was a self-contained community, whose domestic anomalies such as the rock houses attracted some curiosity and attention.

This was all very well, but the reason for the creation – or carving out – of the rock houses was more pragmatic. The building of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal apart, such houses did in fact fit into a national and regional framework. Lucy Torode, writing in Journal 9 of the Wolverley and Cookley Historical Society, observes:

'The population nationally and in this parish was more or less equally agricultural and industrial by 1850. Incoming workers of all sorts settled here during the early and mid C19th. More homes were needed, and people squatted on the commons, creating homes from the caves in the sandstone.'

Michael Wood also comments: *'By the 1830s, there was no longer a living on the land for the bulk of the population.'* (Domesday, 1987, 205)

Writing in a wider historical context, Trevor Rowley makes both a general and a specific point. In his 'Villages in the Landscape', he points out that:

*'From the late Middle Ages on, landless settlers were establishing themselves on the edge of the common land and enclosing it as squatters, earning their living both from the land **and from the expanding coal and iron industry.**'* (1978, p.142)

Clearly, this squares very well with the period when the Holy Austin rock houses began to proliferate, or those at Crow's Rock with inmates such as Sam/Jack Leyland, the birch broom- and besom-maker. As ever, there were complicating factors, but the overall picture is clear enough. Rowley goes on to develop his point in more local terms: (1978, p143)

'In the Black Country, nailers and other workers, for instance, settled in hamlets or isolated cottages rather than expanding towns. Around Brierley Hill, coal-miners squatted on common wasteland and created new unplanned hamlets. Delph has recently been demolished to make way for fire-clay mining' (Rowley was writing in 1978) 'but nearby Mushroom Green survives . . .it consists of early C19th brick cottages scattered at random on a bank above a stream, linked by hedged lanes rather than roads. The first squatters here worked in the Earl of Dudley's colliery at Saltwells, but chain-making soon developed.'

Interestingly, Rowley then cites a range of occupations followed by such 'squatters' on the edge of economic and social life. All these occupations involved the production of some manufactured item or commodity, sometimes marginal, as with straw-plaiting, sometimes essential, as with Cornish china clay. Some required high levels of skill, others merely brawn.

The same conditions obtained for the inhabitants of the Kinver Edge rock houses. While farming and iron-working provided the bulk of gainful employment in the area from the C18th on, other occupations included besom-making, lace-making (as archive photography shows), mole-catching, hairdressing, laundry work, gardening, and so forth. There were at least two boatmen and their families at HAR too. The C19th censuses show that people often travelled from some distance to find work in the Kinver area: Bewdley and Bromsgrove are two such places of origin. Nor were these itinerants always single men;

whole families uprooted themselves from their own neighbourhoods upon occasion, like the Laws from Claverley (near Bridgnorth).

4.2.7 Observations: trade and occupation

What part did the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal play in all this? Considerably less than is sometimes asserted. As with the iron trade, there is no room in this study for a detailed survey of the subject, but a few brief notes are essential.

In brief, the effect of the canals upon trade and commerce was twofold. It brought about a significant decrease in costs and a significant increase in the volume and reliability of transport, particularly for bulky or delicate goods such as coal, iron ore, glass and china. This fact accounts for the keen interest of industrial luminaries such as Josiah Wedgwood and his fellow manufacturers in those canal schemes which succeeded the pioneering work of several earlier engineers, some years before 'the excellent Mr Brindley' got to work on the Bridgwater Canal.

'Mr Brindley's ditch' reached Kinver and opened for traffic in November 1770, though the canal did not open officially for almost two more years. Closely linked as it was with the Trent and Mersey canal, (all part of Brindley's 'Grand Cross'), the Staffs and Worcs, as it was generally known, served as a **vein** for commerce rather than an artery. It was also one of the few schemes that Brindley saw through to completion: he died before the Trent and Mersey was finished.

The canals' backers were prescient. According to Langford, in his account of the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal's history: '*These two canals formed the basis of the U.K's canal network and . . . may be said to have heralded the canal era.*' (1978, p30).

The route was described in Aris's Birmingham Gazette on March 24th 1766. It was to start: 'at or near a Place called Stour's Mouth': then to go 'through or near Kidderminster, **to or near Kinfare**, Prestwood, Orton, Tettenhall, Coven, Brewood and Penkridge, to or near Shutborough.' Its southern terminal was to be 'at some Place between Bewdley and Tilton Brook.'

In fact, the canal did not go near Bewdley, and it seems very unlikely that Brindley ever intended to follow a line which would have involved major engineering problems. If it is true, that the Brindleys of Kinver and Compton were relatives of his, he might have known already about these topographical difficulties. In any case, his canals tended to follow the natural contours of the landscape; the Brindley blueprint for a canal was, as Nigel Crowe writes, '*earth-hugging, contour-trailing*' (p20); and as Ian Langford (op.cit) points out, the canal '*is remarkably straight for most of the way, and though use was made of natural features throughout, it only follows river valleys when advantageous to do so*' (p20.) In fact, the River Stour and the canal run more or less parallel between Prestwood and Wolverley. Langford adds: '*The Staffordshire/Worcester Canal is a tribute to his (Brindley's) prowess as an engineer.*'

Who, in Brechtian terms, worked on the canal? – Who, that is to say, actually dug out its line, puddled its bed, built up its banks and did all the back-breaking manual labour which was needed to create it? Names are few, and survive by accident. Apart from Brindley himself and his resident engineer and assistants, Thomas Dadford (the elder) and Robert Whitworth, his 'apprentice', only three names indicate the nature of the workforce. In the late 1760s, George Thomas, aged 16, the son of a farm labourer from Wombourne, south of Wolverhampton, was working on the local stretch of the canal. So too was John Catharall, '*of a dark complexion, Pock-mark'd, and has been a drummer, 5'6" tall.*' (Hanson, 'Canal People', 1978, p20). However, Johnathan (sic) Melloday, '*of a brown complexion and*

squints with an eye and is 5'5" had gone missing, probably decoyed away into similar employment by another canal company; a hazard of the times in the fierce competition for workmen. At this early stage, the teams which Brindley himself, according to his biographer Samuel Smiles, had trained up personally were still few, and the labourers employed on the canal were often local, temporary (because seasonal) and largely unskilled.

It is impossible to know whether any of the farm workers in Kinver left the land to dig the canal, although in the first quarter of the C19th some villagers certainly became boatmen and lock-keepers, Benjamin Hartland and William Jordan (op.cit) being two such respectively. Hartland and his family lived at Holy Austin Rock, William Jordan with his family on the job at Halfcot, on the Stourbridge Canal but still within the parish, so they were certainly part of the economic life of the village. However, the greatest boost to Kinver's economy came from the canal more indirectly, by first saving, and then serving, on an increasingly important scale, the local iron industry. Forge workers and puddlers are among those living at HAR at the time of the censuses; both were skilled jobs which commanded better wages than labour on the land. Neither, however, was a job for life: men changed their occupations on occasion, though their reasons are sometimes difficult to understand. William Ransford, for instance, began life at HAR as a hairdresser, but some years later was 'a labourer'. William Shepherd, a maltster's mate when he married, became a servant in neighbouring Compton, then 'a labourer' living at Holy Austin. His widow worked as a laundress into her seventies, or so the 1891 census records her occupation. She was the Hannah Shepherd, already described, maintaining to the child Nancy Price that it was '*the rock, missy – it's the rock that gives me strength.*' Judging by the census returns, she had needed it.

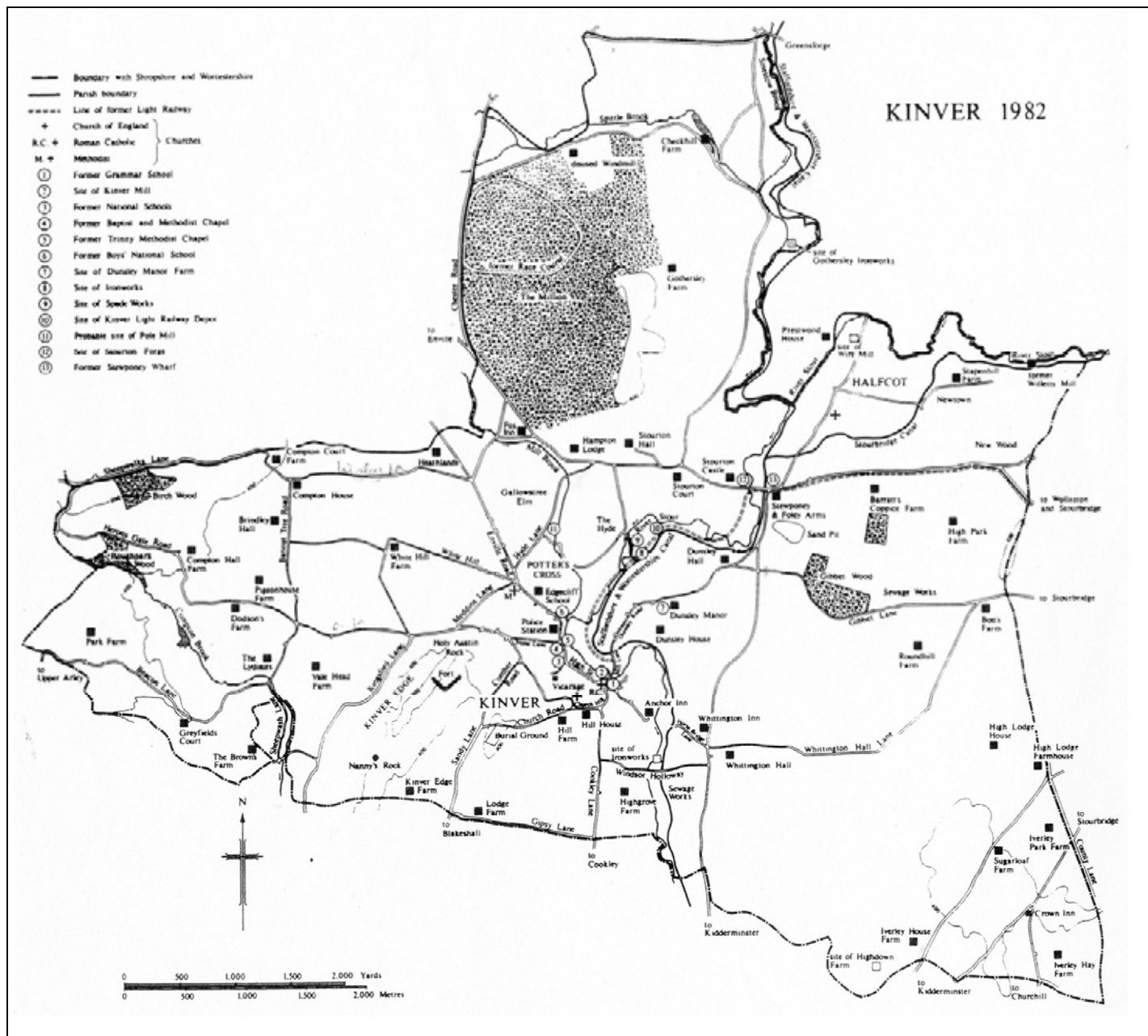
CHAPTER FIVE VILLAGE TALES AND TOURISM; THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

During the 20th century, the rockhouses of Kinver Edge saw a dramatic change from domestic life to being a focus for the developing tourist trade. This chapter discusses this transformation.

5.1 Village Tales, 1929 - 1964: 'Short and Simple Annals - ?'

The later, C20th history of the rock houses is soon told. In 1917, most of HAR was purchased and then gifted to the National Trust by the Lee family, the upper level excepted. By 1920, the north and north east rock houses had been joined together by a sloping narrow passageway, linking rooms B2 and B4 (see Chapter 2). The south east dwelling was still separate, however. In 1920, the former dwelling was occupied by Mrs Handley's grandfather and her Aunt 'Greta' (Alice?) In the south east house lived Harry Martindale, whom Greta married in 1921. They then moved into House A and had 2 children, but Alice Martindale died there in the late '20s. The Trust charged a rent of 7/6d (37p) a week. In trade directories between 1916 and 1932, the house is billed as having Refreshment Rooms. In 1932, the Martindales left House A, which was taken over by the Reeves family from Crow's Rock. *Their* son and his wife moved into House Complex B, by now a single dwelling, with their 2 children. When the Reeves left (in 1939), the house remained unoccupied as a dwelling, but in the 1950s a character called Tug Wilson (once a notable footballer with West Bromwich Albion) ran a cafe there. By this time the parish of Kinver had grown (see Figure 5.1).

Fig. 5.1: Map of Kinver, showing the extent of the parish in the later 20th century. (Source: V.C.H. 20, 1984)



In the early years of the C20th, Astle's Rock was owned by a Mr Fairbridge, who opened the 'Forest Rock Museum' here, which he ran for over twenty years. He added other attractions to the site such as penny peepshows and proto-one-armed bandits, thereby cashing in on the tourist trade, which had received a considerable boost from the advent of

the Kinver Light Railway in 1901. In this respect he pioneered the idea of the rock houses as intriguing in their own right, as well as being purveyors of refreshments and other amenities for visitors. However, once the 'museum' closed down, as it did some time before the Second World War, the rock houses remained empty. Mr Fairbridge's granddaughter, Betty, is remembered as coming from Astle's Rock by Miss Freeman, who says in her letter that Betty's grandmother lived there. (See Appendix 1.) These rock houses, many barely extant, now have little function other than as garden stores for the more modern houses which occupy The Compa at this point.

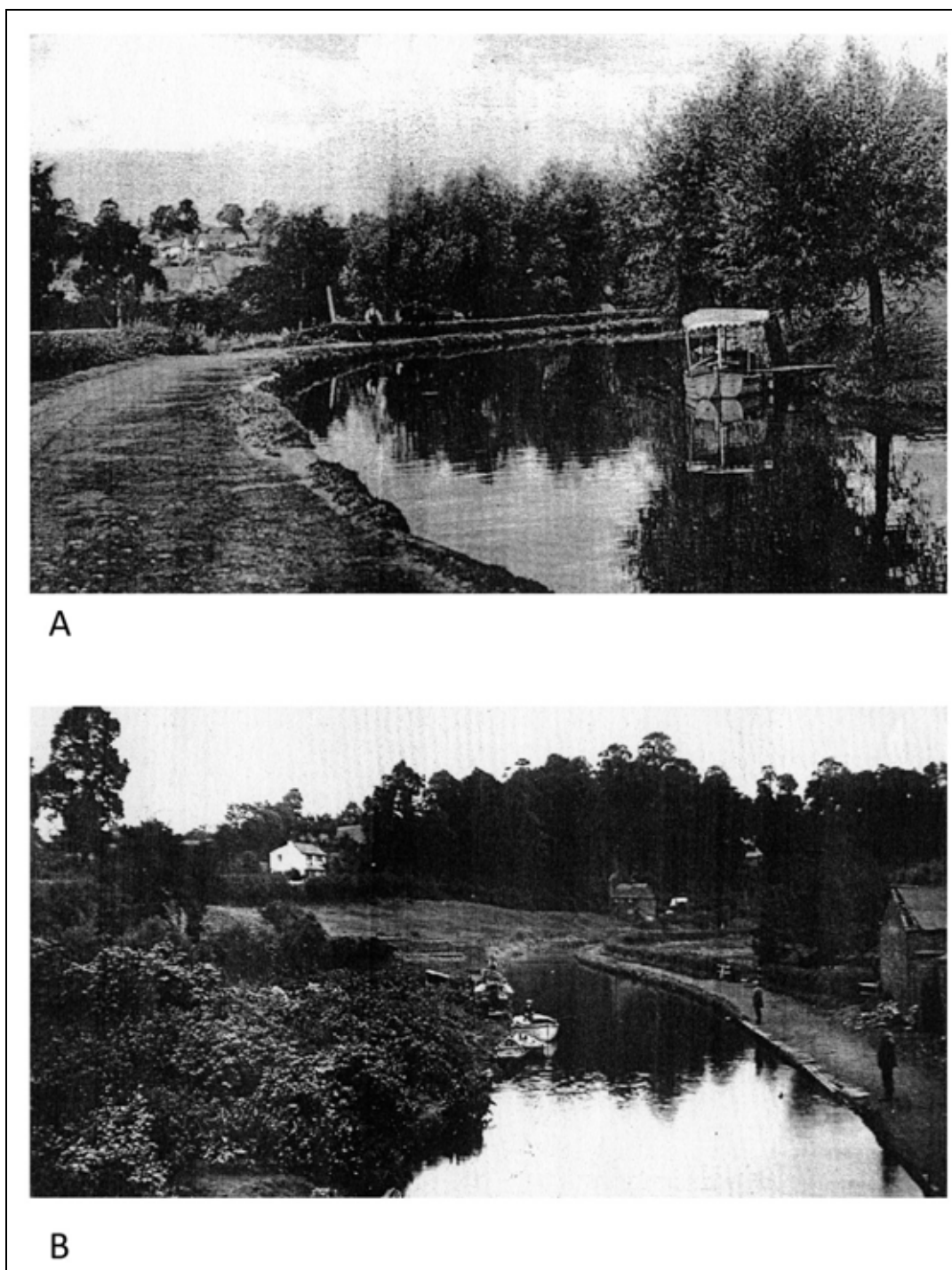
5.1.1 Observations

The Kinver Edge rock houses varied in detail but could be modified comparatively easily in order to enlarge living space or increase storage. By the late C19th, several had been so extended, notably on the upper level. All had chimneys; in the C20th some had a porch and brick facings, as well as glazed windows – for example, at HAR and Vale's Rock. Room sizes often compared favourably with contemporary accommodation, as residents were well aware (see Appendix 1). Indoors, the ambient temperature was 56 F; quite adequate for non-sedentary inmates, though wood and coal fires served a range of domestic purposes apart from heating. By the mid 1920s, however, the houses at HAR had piped water, obviating any need for the well, while gas lighting had been installed by one inmate, himself a local gas worker. The houses had no numbers but enjoyed postal deliveries nonetheless; in the first half of the C20th the postman was a rock house resident himself. Sanitation – bucket and earth closet style – remained external to the last, giving the local council of the early '60s its final leverage. Thirty years earlier, visitors to the tea rooms were quite accustomed to this mode of relief and paid one penny for the privilege. (Those who

remember caravan and camping holidays in the '50s and '60s, however, will appreciate the council's point.) Figures 5.2 (a) and b) show the difference in the way that the canal operated pre- and post- war.

Fig. 5.2: (a) A postcard scene looking away from Kinver Lock, probably dating to the late 1930s.

(b) A postcard scene showing the view from the canal bridge; on the tow-path is the wharf edge and a gateway which leads to the gasworks (probably dating to around 1948). Source: 'Kinver and Enville in Old Photographs, 2 vols, 1996



5.2 Gifts and Futures

'I do love these ancient ruins;

We never tread upon them but we set

Our foot upon some reverend history'.

(John Webster: The Duchess of Malfi, Act V)

5.2.1 The National Trust

As stated earlier, the National Trust acquired Kinver Edge and most of the Holy Austin rock houses by gift from the Lee family in 1917, and the rest almost fifty years later. Exactly fifty years later, in 1967, Tug Wilson, the last person to use these rock houses, closed the cafe at HAR and moved away completely. Nearly a quarter of a century after that, the National Trust requested a heritage report and then an archaeological investigation, prior to developing some part of the rock houses as a tourist facility. The upper level – the three houses joined together in the previous century by the Shaws and bought by the Howells in 1949 – was restored (in effect, rebuilt: see Figure 5.3) as a private dwelling; this accommodated a member of the National Trust staff as part-time custodian of the site.

In a sense, the wheel had turned full circle. Only one family inhabited HAR in the 1960s, as when Joseph Heely had taken shelter there in 1777. Then, he had conjectured that:

'...time past the rock was used as a stone quarry. Indeed, two sides evidently show the marks of the tool upon them, and I don't think it improbable that it once was joined to the Edge itself for I observe(d) at the foot of that precipiece another perpendicular scar with familiar marks upon it...'

Similarly, the 1989 report refers to '*former quarry tracks*' and observes of the approach up to the rock houses from Compton Road, that '*the main path is believed to follow the original track to a nearby quarry.*' (pp 20, 32)

What of the future? The 1989 report estimated that '*the total resident market for the proposed visitor centre at Kinver Edge together with the rock houses is . . . 108,000, and for the rock houses only, 36,000.*' (p9) This assessment was based on the fact that 2.9 million people lived within a half hour's drive of Kinver Edge, and 5.4 million within an hour's drive; numbers likely to have increased somewhat in the last twenty years. The authors also observed that the majority of those using the Edge for walking, dog-walking, bird-watching and so forth tended to be local, thereby accounting for the comparatively low visitor numbers they predicted. As already explained, no such visitor centre has been built, and the Crow's Rock houses, though stabilised, remain perched up on their hillside in a semi-derelict and fast-eroding condition. No recommendations were made regarding Nanny's Rock; as indicated previously, this 'natural recess' is not obvious and can be reached only on foot. This requires casual walkers to venture much further from their cars than most are prepared to do, particularly when nearby amenities offer a much easier option for exercise and picnicking.



Figure 5.3 Holy Austin Rock in 1989, prior to restoration by the National Trust. (Source: Timpson 1989, 25)

What are the implications of these facts for 'heritage'? Vale's/Crow's Rock is Grade II listed, but its value as a romantic ruin, playground for the more adventurous visitor, and surprising discovery for the casual walker is a fragile one, vulnerable to weather and sporadic delinquencies, such as recent attempts to dislodge the stabilising supports on the upper level; access to which is tricky enough in all weathers. There is a growing body of local support for a proper archaeological investigation to be carried out here (as the 1989 report

recommended) and for the site to be made accessible, comprehensible and available to the public in the same way as the Holy Austin Rock houses.

There are difficulties. Money is one: the local authorities would need to be involved in financing and overseeing such a project, which would not be cheap. Location is another; unlike Holy Austin, there is no nearby housing, Kingsford Lane is narrow, as well as scenic, and the car park some ten minutes' walk away from the site is unsupervised. All three factors make any access to the Crow's Rock houses vulnerable to vandalism, the element which exercised the writers of the Kinver Edge Management report twenty years ago and one which has increased rather than diminished, locally as also country-wide. One kind of curiosity, the tourists', has been replaced by another, more destructive variety, it seems, and the barbed wire fences and high wired gates which protect Drakelow from all but the most determined or reckless intruders would not be appropriate here.

Yet all the authorities agree that the Kinver Edge rock houses, all of them, constitute something extraordinary, something which is not only part of a local culture but of a long established historical practice European in character and scope. Whatever the pitfalls into which the heritage industry may plunge, this complex surely justifies the epithet important and merits some form of rescue from obscurity.

5.2.2 Of Trams, Tourists and Tearooms

It is important to consider this particular juncture in the life of the rock houses by close comparison with Kinver itself; they are closely interrelated. As the previous section has shown, rock house occupations changed in the C20th, reflecting the changed character of

Kinver; but their occupants were quick to offer services which accommodated the needs of new batches of 'incomers.'

Tourism came to Kinver in the nick of time, travelling by tramway from its Amblecote terminus. Tourists, day trippers or visitors, the village supplied all comers with tea and entertainment, though the rock houses which set themselves up in the business of refreshment, such as Astle's, were not necessarily what the visitors had come to see and explore. Their chief objective was Kinver Edge, which, being then almost treeless, was a dramatically obvious landscape feature. Their second objective was the River Stour, at that time flowing in a wider deeper channel before C20th dredging works constrained it, and providing opportunities for boating, launch trips downstream or bankside picnics. Archive photographs(eg, 5.2a) present a quintessentially leisured and Edwardian scene which evokes episodes from *The Wind in the Willows*; though H.G.Wells's 'History of Mr Polly' is probably a nearer social equivalent.

The economics of this trade and the times which immediately preceded it were much less romantic. The 1880s were marked by a sharp decline in employment in the area, both at The Hyde ironworks and on farms. Increasing mechanisation meant that there was far less need for labour on the land, whether seasonal or permanent; while the closure of the Hyde ironworks in 1882, the Longbridge of its day (though generally more successful and far longer-lasting) resulted in a fall in Kinver's population of over a third in barely one generation. By 1890, Kinver was something of a ghost town, its dwindling population trapped by events over which they had no power. Yet little more than ten years later, record numbers of visitors – over 31,000 in one Whitsun Bank holiday weekend – were swarming into the village and stimulating an economic revival that must have seemed heaven-sent. And this was all because of a tramway.

The Kinver Light Railway began its short but important life on 5th April (Good Friday) 1901. Starting from the Fish Inn (now a Chinese restaurant) in Amblecote, it travelled through Stourton, crossing the River Stour and the canal from the east, opposite the Stewpony Inn (now demolished and its site built over with houses and executive-style apartments), past Stourton Castle (now so-called and rebuilt many times in its long life), before continuing on a raised (causewayed) track over the fields and water meadows past Dunsley Hall. A Mr Foley (no relation?) who lived near the Stewpony objected strongly to this route: he thought it would hinder his access to his osier beds. However, he was squared, or overruled, and the tramway rolled on. (Dunsley Hall is first recorded in 1305, but is now, after much alteration, a very smart hotel). From Dunsley, the track struck across the meadows towards the Hyde, running parallel with the canal to its terminus just beyond The Vine Inn – the raised track bank is still visible – where South Staffs Water now has its pumping station. Archive photography provides a full record of the trams, (nicknamed ‘toast racks’), the line, its operators and passengers, a few of the former being identifiable by name. The original intention had been to run double decker trams on the line, but the Board of Trade forbade this on safety grounds; in its view, the track was not up to carrying heavier vehicles. (Subsequent experience proved them right. In 1903, the railway suffered a fatal accident when a tramcar carrying 70 people – far too many for its capacity – careered off the track and overturned.)

As things turned out, this scarcely mattered; the tramway was an instant and continuing success, carrying thousands of passengers to Kinver and employing a small army of photographer- publicists to produce its own range of scenic postcards. These now form part of a local photographic archive, but also testify to a more general development, the ‘huge expansion’ of tramways throughout the West Midlands conurbation in the 1890s. As early as 1895, the LMS railway company had suggested building a branch line to Kinver, though

nothing came of it. The tramway – the Kinver Light Railway – has left much gentler vestiges of its existence and, by a curious quirk, was ‘greener’ in modern terms too. As well as its terminus near Kinver Lock, the tramway company needed a depot, and the site of the former Hyde ironworks offered a spacious, unused area which could accommodate the numerous trams that operated on the line. This was prescient, because on many Bank Holidays and summer weekends the volume of traffic was so great, with tramcars travelling in from West Bromwich and Birmingham, amongst others, that trams had to be parked at passing loops along Hyde meadows prior to the homeward-bound rush. Furthermore, the huge quantities of slag left behind when the ironworks was demolished provided track ballast for the stretch of line between Kinver and the Stewpony.

Scenery apart, there were other, more pragmatic reasons for its success. Its appeal to visitors resided in its cheapness and convenience, but it also initiated the start of Kinver’s life as a commuters’ home base; villagers could now work in town but live in the country. Others were also quick to see these advantages, and it was not long before holiday chalets and similar homes appeared, often randomly, within the village bounds.

All this was a far cry from the situation in the 1880s and 1890s when the closure of the ironworks along the Stour opened a period of considerable poverty. Several charities were set up to assist those in need; the church distributed bread and coals, while some of the more prosperous citizens donated money for the education of needy children. Lady Stamford from Enville Hall, two miles south of the village, provided warm clothing and Christmas dinners. In her autobiography ‘Into An Hour Glass’, Nancy Price of Rockmount House in Kinver recalls that in her childhood – ie, the late 1880s and early 1890s – her mother gave tea, fruit and vegetables in season to several of the residents at Holy Austin Rock.

At this time, therefore, Kinver was a rural and somewhat isolated place, not quite the day trippers' mecca that it became after 1901. The lanes roundabout were narrow (many still are) and unsurfaced; and hired transport, when available, was costly. The tramway must have seemed the answer to many prayers. Writing in 1901, Edwin Bennett remarked of Kinver:

'Sixty years ago it was practically unknown beyond a radius of 5 miles, and even to this limited area, known more by name than actual acquaintance.' (Bennett 1901, 29).

In 1923 when the Daily Mail was 'covering the story', one contemporary observed of Holy Austin Rock that it was:

' a huge isolated crag at the foot of the hill: a solitary Scotch fir growing on the flat roof gives it a unique appearance. As many as 12 families have been known to live in this rock at once . . . Although the sandstone is soft it is both firm and dry, so that the tenants of these caves are provided with cheap and comfortable dwellings – cool in summer and warm in winter. The top storey has brick-built fronts and tiled roofs, which give it a more modern appearance. Visitors may obtain teas and other refreshments from the occupants of these caves . . .' (Sutton 1929, 29).

Even in the 1930s, as Mrs Taylor (nee Reeves) told Michael Ford in the course of their interview:

'Kinver was almost a closed village, everybody knew everyone else and such a lot of families became inter-related. It wasn't until the war times when the evacuees came and that sort of thing that Kinver became wider socially and then the building started and all the nice green areas became covered in houses.'

Kinver's popularity with the fare-paying public showed no signs of diminution when the bus companies began to compete in the 1920s with the tramways. In 1930, the Kinver Light Railway closed as completely as the Hyde ironworks had done fifty years earlier, and buses took its place. This held good for almost every Black Country tramway too. For the better off, the car was coming into its own; petrol was cheap, and this brought visitors in from further afield. Attempts to start up hotel businesses failed to make headway, but cafes and pubs fared better. (They still do.) The last of the Holy Austin Rock houses survived as a cafe until 1967, though by then it was not inhabited on a permanent basis, as Rose Novak told the National Trust interviewer in 1990:

'Nobody lived in the rock below, but they used to come and do teas at the weekend same as we did, but they had been inhabited.'

Now under the auspices of the National Trust, the rock houses have become a different attraction, open on most weekends of the year and with an interpretation centre developing there too. In April 2009, the Trust opened a new cafe at Holy Austin Rock.

Nothing more has been done at Crow's Rock, however. The Daily Mail contemporary in 1923 said of Crow's Rock: *'(It has) two tenants and is still inhabited. At the base of the Rock is an orchard of fruit trees. There is also a deep draw well . . .'* (Sutton, op.cit, p30)

The well is still there, but the rock houses are steadily eroding.

5.3 The Kinver Edge Rock houses in 2010

In 1995, Bill Bryson wrote:

*'It sometimes occurs to me that the British have more heritage than is good for them. In a country where there is so astonishingly much of everything it is easy to look on it as a kind of inexhaustible resource. Consider the numbers; 445,000 listed buildings, 12,000 mediaeval churches, 1,500,000 acres of common land, 120,000 miles of footpaths and public rights of way, **600,000 known sites of archaeological interest (98% of them with no legal protection)**. There is so much of it everywhere that it's easy to believe that you can take away chunks of it – and that there will still be plenty left. In fact, the country is being nibbled to death.'* (Notes From A Small Island, 1995, p103).

Although the situation may have improved numerically in the past decade or so, Bryson's point is well made. The current status of Crow's Rock near Kingsford, which is Grade II listed, is not enough to prevent its being 'nibbled to death', (not by Bryson's pet hate, unregulated development, but its opposite). Since these comments were written, PPG 16 has come into force across the U.K. However, another force has also come into play: a more ambivalent one, but powerful nonetheless and one which Fowler explores in a highly perceptive essay (2006). Here, he deals with the 'archaeological matrix' in which archaeological resource managers now operate: ie, the social, economic and intellectual situation that obtains generally in Britain with regard to 'pastness', observing:

'Pastness, at least in the U.K., performs in the present... not just for its own sake or that of its practitioners. Archaeological resource management is not only now political but is on a par with other issues such as education and health, that are sensitive to and debated by the public interest.' He also defines *'the philosophical and practical issues which have to be confronted'*, citing four *'where fire or any other disaster, like flooding, occurs, or where major, archaeologically destructive change is proposed...'* (Fowler 2006, 6) These four issues are:

- Build anew or restore? (the decision faced at HAR by the National Trust)
- Who pays? (the problem bedevilling Crow's Rock)
- What are the future uses?
- Who benefits?

The idea of building anew brings into play the seven Rs: rebuild, restore, replicate, renovate, reinstate, replace and recreate. Examples of all seven are easy to find; in Kinver, HAR is just such an example of restoration which involved rebuilding and recreating in order to achieve at least a form of reinstatement. Fowler also speaks of avoiding repetition, which may well be one factor in the non-appearance of a major interpretation centre for all the Kinver Edge rock houses, as recommended in 1989 by the Management Report, though finance must have been a major factor too. He points out further that '*Such examples . . . are particularly apposite if . . . archaeology would embrace . . . standing buildings, such as people's homes.*'

This puts cave dwellings into a limbo-like category, like Aesop's bat. Caves are not buildings, but in Kinver (and other places, such as Nottingham) they served as homes. However, these were not natural caves, unlike those at Creswell Crags or Cheddar Gorge, so where did they stand in this scheme of things? Were they trapped by a definition perhaps? Such questions immediately raise the central issue of what heritage is, involving definition in terms of time, as well as structure, function, relationship to similar entities and their surroundings (or environment), amongst others. And who judges such matters? To quote Fowler again:

'People may or may not be content to leave archaeology to archaeologists, but heritage belongs to them' (2006, 6).

In the U.K. this sense of belonging works reciprocally, even if what we own does not, as sometimes happens, come to own us. The *'strong emotions'* which Fowler refers are likely to be local loyalties, not part of a (party) political agenda, though by its very nature *'heritage'* is now regarded as a resource, and a public resource at that. He hits a nerve when he points out:

'Particularly is that so when the resource in question, perhaps through its history but more probably through associations acquired irrespective of its scientific value, has crossed a magic line, transmuting itself from being merely archaeological to emerge as 'heritage' (2006, 6).

5.3.1 Crossing the Line: managing heritage

It seems, then, that heritage has become a chameleon concept; if not free-floating in time, then shifting identities in chronological terms. An antique is now defined as any item more than fifty years old; similarly, the archaeology of the battlefield has now reached the Second World War and shows no sign of flagging, though the maxim *'when people are dead, it's history: when they're alive it's politics,'* does. This shifting identity (like status) is defined by Fowler as *'a fact, little appreciated, that 'heritage' is not unchanging; the very fact that an item has been identified as heritage means that it is (paradoxically) bound to change as a direct result of its selection and the consequent need to keep it.'* In short, the item is now visible on the official cultural radar, thereby incurring publicity, attention, and redefinition, though not adequate funding.

This change may be of three kinds. The first is that its new importance alters our perceptions of it (and of other entities like it, too); the second change involves the seven Rs

previously cited, often as a consequence of the first. A third change involves our understanding of the thing in relation to other elements; for example, one rock house might be an anomaly, a small group of such houses (like Crow's Rock) an interesting feature in the landscape: but a complex several hundred strong, like the Nottingham caves, is a phenomenon. As Fowler goes on to argue: '*A consequence is that the appearance of a heritage item, and sometimes its actual nature, is not fixed but the product of successive decisions involving factors of the kinds just listed.*' Of course: all those immaculate expanses of manicured sward at Fountains Abbey, Kenilworth Castle, Rievaulx, Ludlow, Letocetum, once in the care of the Ministry of Works: tidy, timeless: stills for every 'Scenic Britain' calendar . . .

Archaeological resource management, therefore, must be '*to some extent creative and, even when consciously neutral, bound to be so*' (Fowler 2006, 7). Neutrality would seem to be unattainable, even if authenticity is not – or not quite. One of the unexpected elements at the Jorvik Centre in York is the smell, a sense rarely invoked when recreating the past, even at Butser and West Stow. These issues, as Fowler insists, '*are about theory and ethics*' certainly, but also '*about practical site management . . . and the emotive power of heritage, especially as a trigger for the expression of public concern*' (*ibid.*). Only the environment – more precisely, the landscape and encroachments upon it – rouses so much passion and protest in a community. Very often, the two causes (they are little less) are closely linked; archaeology is always part of a landscape in some way, even when that landscape is now relict, or derelict; as industrial ruins or sites overgrown by woodland, are. Often enough, landscape functions not only as a context and an amenity but as the interpreter of its own archaeology. Ironbridge is an obvious example, with history growing out of geology, just as at HAR.

CHAPTER SIX: LIVING ON THE EDGE: THE CHANGING CULTURE OF THE KINVER EDGE ROCK HOUSES

As stated earlier, the aims of this study have been threefold.

- i) To provide a fuller, more detailed and composite picture of the rock houses in their
landscape
- ii) To facilitate a better understanding of their social and economic functions in
relation to a national context
- iii) To allow a more comprehensive view, and overview, of their inmates and
purposes

It is clear from both archive photographs and written accounts such as Nancy Price's that the landscape of Kinver Edge has altered significantly in the last hundred years. *Ceann Fawr*, the old British name for Kinver, means 'the bare (or bald) ridge', and that is what appears on very early C20th postcards (Fig4.1). This terrain was the attraction for early tourists, with its open expanses and scattered pinewoods. Both Heely and Price refer to lime trees round the church; the latter also describes the pines fronting Nanny's Rock (whereas hazel and birch occupy the slopes today) and the hawthorn flaunting across the open heathland. At that earlier period, the Edge supplied the inmates of the rock houses with food, fuel and forage for their goats. Now, it is an SSSI and has official country park status; an amenity, rather than a resource, thereby mirroring a common enough transition elsewhere.

It is equally clear that the rock houses were created in response to growing demand rather than desperate need. The softer Bridgnorth sandstone was a resource itself, being highly conspicuous in the landscape and easily worked, wherever it outcropped along the Edge, from Holy Austin Rock to Vale Head, Blakeshall and Drakelow. HAR is simply the best recorded such community, with the names and occupations of its residents appearing in legal documents and parish registers throughout the late C18th and C19th. As Torode and Rowley have pointed out, (op. cit.), the arrival of these incomers reflects the changing character of many villages nationwide; so that Kinver's present sylvan surroundings bely its more industrial past, when *'iron, cold iron, was master of men all.'* Indeed, iron-working was the magnet which drew many outsiders to Kinver, and their work here made them part of its community, as C19th censuses and parish records testify. In one sense, though the analogy is imperfect, the rock houses which formed the three small enclaves clustering on the periphery of the village were the forerunners of the dormitory suburb; a function which, in part, Kinver still retains now that the ironworks, the maltings, the coal barges (or 'light boats') and the Kinver Light Railway have become extinct. (Nowadays, most people travel outside the village to find work.) In this respect, the history of the rock houses is the history of Kinver and of many other villages like it, from c.1770 to c.1900 and beyond. Their creation, use, change and decline in use from working community to café and tea rooms, human resource to tourist amenity, spells out the centuries-long social and economic changes which have altered not only the appearance but also the fabric and substance of things across the U.K.

In our pessimistic days, the word 'culture' is usually preceded by qualifiers such as 'drug' or 'gang'. However, the social and economic culture of the rock house communities had a vigorous character of its own, combining an independent spirit, resourcefulness and adaptability; in essence, a strong self-respect and sufficiency which (unwittingly) harked

back, in its use of natural resources, to a period far more remote, while epitomising a species of self-reliance which Samuel Smiles, the C19th doyen of such attributes, would have admired. The rock dwellers travelled to find work, and they changed their work, when necessary, to accommodate their own needs, and changing demand. It is noticeable that when three generations of the Reeves family moved away from Vale Head with its regular deliveries of milk and coal, they moved to another rock house community – HAR – where water and gas lighting had been laid on some years before. Their move seems to have been motivated less by mere habit and familiarity than by an active preference for rock house life. Like the Bagleys in the 1770s, the Reeves (and others) in the 1930s were an independent-minded bunch who preferred their ‘troglodyte station’ to any available council house. They were well aware, clearly, of their curiosity value for those less familiar with that way of life (see Appendix 1); but they appreciated its many advantages too; space, flexibility, fresh garden produce (making for a healthy diet), sweeping views across the countryside, a constant pure water supply, and where payable, low rent. The C19th inmates at HAR formed an enclave of some forty to fifty people at its peak: perhaps a little larger than the earliest hunter/gatherer groups or a modern army platoon. C20th inmates were certainly reluctant to leave their homes for more cramped quarters, and clearly they formed part of a community – Kinver – that still felt itself to be somewhat isolated and self-contained, geographically and also socially. Only legislation and ponderous bureaucracy compelled their departure (c.1960). After that, the rock houses eroded into dereliction and disrepair until rescued by the National Trust and recreated, in part, for the curiosity of the C21st.

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THE APPENDICES

As already indicated in the body of the text, this study has had no room for the inclusion of detailed analysis or comprehensive description of several important elements in the historical narrative, such as the advent and development of the Midlands canals or the local iron trade. Accordingly, these have been omitted. Instead, the appendices consist of a selection from the oral (and written) testimonies of former rock house dwellers at Holy Austin and at Crow's/Vale Head Rock, together with some items of commercial interest about the sale of the rock house properties in Sladd Lane, Wolverley, some two miles south of Kinver.

'Oral history is an expression of the personality of the interviewees, of their cultural values and of the particular historical circumstances which shaped their point of view. This is precisely its great value, rather than its limitation . . . Oral histories are always distinguished from diaries or letters in their retrospective construction of reality.'

'Oral history is . . . a subjective process. It provides insight into how people think about certain events and what they perceive their own role to be in the historical process.'

(T.Hareven, *The Search for General Memory*, p247; *Oral History, an Anthology*, 1996).

'It is intellectually dishonest to discount the interviewer's role in creating oral history.'

(S.Gluck, *op cit.* p218)

'It is not the literal past that rules us . . . It is images of the past. These are often as highly structured and selective as myths. . . Each new historical era mirrors itself in the picture and active mythology of its past.' (G.Steiner: *In Bluebeard's Castle*, 1971)

Appendix 1: Testimonies (HAR and Vale Head)

last
[Appendix 6

Transcript of letter from Miss M. J. Freeman of 6, Foreshaw Avenue, St Annes-on-Sea, Lancs, FY8 2HT, dated 31st August 1978

Dear Sirs,

I have been sent your booklet by my Aunty, who lives in the Midlands, and knew I would be interested to read it.

My parents bought Holy Austin Rock Cottages - the gabled part - from Mr Jack Shaw in 1939, we moved into it in early February 1939, and Mr Shaw left about a month later to live with his daughter, Mrs Maud Goode in Birmingham, this will tell you that in fact the Shaws lived there until 1939, NOT 1935, he had a son living in Wollaston at the time.

The following year we bought the other part of the top level and the middle level from Mr Harry Shaw - the father of the person you mention - Jack and Harry were brothers, there was, I think, another brother.

The film you mention was shown in America as well as this country because an American Airman came to see where it was filmed, and told us he remembered seeing "the body" - a dummy - fall from the large fir tree on the balcony at the back of the caves, he was really fascinated to stand on THE spot, do you think maybe the film was lost out in America and not Old ^{Hill} Well it was during the turmoil of the war wasn't it?

You mentioned the Well, we were told by the engineers from the Waterworks, it was the deepest PRIVATE well they had recorded in England, it WAS in fact a stream running through the rock, I have marked it on a rough sketch which I enclose. My parents had the piped water brought up for the catering business which they ran, I think it was in 1940, but the well wasn't dry then, Dad had it filled in later because he was afraid some person or animal would fall in one day.

Yes we did have rugs and even lino on the floors, and wallpaper on the walls, it was very cosy in Winter. Mr Harry Shaw had the piped gas taken to all the homes, he was a gas worker, as you probably know. I went to school in Kinver with Barbara Shaw, his youngest Daughter, and Betty Fairbridge from Astles Rock, she called it the Rock House, her Grandma was there.

The one old lady was still living at Crows Rock, and had a very fierce white terrier, I have been trying to remember her name, I think it was something like Mrs Shillingford, she was VERY down on children, especially with dogs, which I had.

I have several photos of Holy Austin Rock in our time, and an etching of Mrs Fletcher at the door of the lower level and Mr Fletcher at their well, done by a Mr A.S. Watkins who was a friend of my Fathers.

We left in late June 1946 as the business had got too much for my Mother, I was by then working in Barclays Bank Ltd Amble. We went to Kingswinford, moving here in 1957, where my ~~after~~ father died a year later and Mother died three years ago.

(Father-?)

My father did a Broadcast from and about Holy Austin Rock which was printed in the Listener, I think the programme was "In Britain Now" he had to repeat the story as they had an echo from the window and our dog was quite clear barking at the visitors, he had his kennel by a big tea room Dad built by the tree you mention and I have a photo of him there.

We used our Pantry - the first one with the window - as an air-raid shelter during the bombing, and when the landmines were detonated on Enville Common, breaking Marsh and Baxter's plate glass window in the Village, it blew our door open and a crack started between the rock and the built part of the cottage, but this never got any worse when we were there.

The Holy Austin was a monk and teacher - I always thought he was a Franciscan Friar - this was in some book which my father read, he taught the children from round about, maybe a legend.

I hope this will be of interest to you, I felt I must write after reading your booklet, which brought many happy memories.

Yours faithfully

M J Freeman
(Mrs M J Freeman {SS St J}?)

Keep?

Appendix(5)

Detail of Deed of 29th Jan, 1964;

Between the vendors

Alfred John Howell and Margaret Rose Novak

and the National Trust

Sale for £113.19s of the area of ground which was excluded in the 1917 deed and is described as:

"All those pieces or parcels of land in the Parish of Kinver in the County of Stafford being the sites of four messuges tenements or dwelling houses and a piece of garden ground near thereto formerly the property of Charlotte Shaw and shown on the plan."

Appendix 7

Transcript of letter from Mrs Vera Haycox of 47 Woodward Road, Kidderminster, Worcester and dated 3 November 1988.

Dear Madame

My friend gave me this cutting out of her evening Express & Star paper.

I am enclosing the photo of my grandmother Granny "Genner" who died there at the ripe old age of 96.

My parents took me as a small girl to see my aunt Alice Martindale who also lived and died there. I can remember the shining Black leaded grate as we went in.

Very pleased you are going to reopen the Kinver Edge Rock Houses again. Harry Genner's daughter came over twice from America and she & I went to look at them about 1970. She was deeply moved to see them all boarded up, picking up a stone; I am taking a small token of my English Home back, & dearly loved my village of Kinver.

My mother too was born at Kinver. Christened, Confirmed and married there, but not at the Rock Houses, she hoped to be buried there, but it wasn't possible.

I am 77 years old, hope this will help your research a little. Good Luck.

NB

1 Mrs Haycox enclosed a newspaper cutting from the News Record (USA) of 12th July, 1972 from which we discover:

Mrs Paul Davies is the cousin of Mrs Haycox

Mrs Davies is the daughter of Mr & Mrs J.H.Genner

Mr & Mrs Genner and Mrs Davies came to USA in 1909 when Mrs Davies was 9

Mr & Mrs Genner managed a tea room in Kinver—

J H Genner was an estate gardener for Tom Wills—

Mrs Genner was the daughter of Tom Wills! —

The cutting includes details of the Davies family

2 The photograph of Mrs Genner ('Granny') is in the National Trust Collection reference KIN/I.D. It shows Mrs Genner seated outside house B and next to the well. The well has had several repairs and is in a similar condition to Vol 1, p21 (top and bottom). The National Trust index suggests that the photographs is c. 1900.

Appendix 8

[Transcript of part of tape

Mrs Handley and Mr Timmins

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mrs Handley

Bold: Mr Timmins

This is a conversation recorded on the 6th February 1989 in Netherton in the West Midlands with Mrs Margaret Handley and her brother, Mr Bernard Timmings. Both of them were born in Kinver. Mrs Handley is the elder of the two and was born in 1911. They lived with their parents and their other brothers and sisters in Kinver Mill House as their father was at one time the miller there. (It would be very useful to have the booklet written by Bills and Griffiths on the Kinver Rock Houses and refer to the two photographs on page 12.) The bottom one shows two houses round the north-west corner of Holy Austin Rock with a well in between. There seem~~s~~ to have been at one time three houses here, but the middle and lower one were joined together, and this was the house that Mrs Handley's grandfather lived in, together with her Aunt Greta. And in the photograph this house is just below the well. Mrs Handley said there were passages and rooms behind these houses, one of which could take a four-poster bed, and another large room which she called the ballroom. In 1921, Aunt Greta married the local postman, Harry Martindale. He lived in the little two-roomed house above the well and after their marriage they moved around the corner to the lower rock house on level one, which is at the top of the present flight of steps overlooking Compton Road. They lived there until early 1932 and you can see this house in the top picture on page 12. When Mrs Handley was about 14, that was in 1926, she used to help her aunt and uncle with the teas that they served to the many visitors to the rock, and there were steps directly in front of the house down to the area below which was a private route through the gardens and a quick way to take the trays of tea down to the visitors. The other nearest access to the house was via the less steep path on the right-hand side. To the left of the sandy area at the base of the rock, bordering Compton Road there were apparently extensive gardens, and the present trees were fewer and very much smaller than they are now.

The conversation with Mrs Handley and her brother Mr Bernard Timmings starts with a description of her aunt's home which is on the right of the present flight of steps on level one; Although she does occasionally refer to the well around the corner and to a water tap which was erected near the well.

*What was it like inside, can you remember what the rooms were like? It was just sandstone. These two rooms here, they were side by side. One was the kitchen come front room and that was a bedroom **to the right**. And that was all sandstone and there was like a fireplace where there was usually a great big fire, a really great big fire. It was a coal fire. *Where did the coal come from?* Well I think it came from down Kinver. *So how did you get it up here?* It was delivered in sacks. But it was a tremendous great big fire. Used to be lovely in here. **During the summer months they were extremely cool and in the winter they were quite warm and you know why don't you?** That being sandstone all the way round, it was like a huge storage heater. **The sun being on it all summer, meant it held the heat, and by the time it was cooled off it kept cool in the summer.** There was a great big range. They had the gas in by about 1925. *That made a difference didn't it?* It did. I think the rooms were tiled,*

perhaps with red tiles but I can't remember. The walls weren't rough, they were like sort of cleaned off. **If you look at them now they are much the same as they was except where the vandals have scraped into them. If you can imagine the sort of scrapings up there, that's as it was.** And the chimney from this here went right up through the rocks, through up by where Shaws is. **If you look carefully and see where the smoke's been coming up, there was actually a chimney built on to that with normal bricks.** In our Aunt Greta's kitchen, which was the kitchen-come-front room, I mean they didn't have proper furniture then did they? They had tables and chairs and they had a big dresser there, like a Welsh dresser. There was what could have been a sink underneath that window there but I can't remember where they got their water from. **For a lot of houses of that era it was quite a common practice to put one tap in the yard even locally. So everyone would use it. I remember there was a tap between four wasn't there?** But my Uncle Harry brought the water up and there was a tap somewhere there, and he put the tap water in. *For the pipes* I remember mother telling me that everyone had said he shouldn't have done that because he put steel pipes in where in them days everybody was using lead. **But he was doing the right thing as we know today. Before then where did they get their water from?** From the well I think. I can't remember the well. It could have been that the well was there but this part wasn't there. The top part wasn't there. Because we lived up by a place called Greyfields and they got a well there and we used to have to drop a bucket there on a rope.]

Aunt Greta's house there, it would be the kitchen as well, wouldn't it. We say it was the front room but it was a proper kitchen. They had a great big table in the middle. Because there were big rooms there, quite big. She put one of those sofas in. And there was a table. I know she got a great big mirror and it was supposed to be off the Titanic. It had a big gold frame and it was gigantic. She had a sewing machine. **Everyone had sewing machines then. Every house had one.** In the bedroom she had a dressing-table, an old fashioned one, and a wash-stand. She got two double beds in there because she got two children. *Where did you sleep when you stayed there?* We often only went when Aunt Greta was on her holidays and we slept in the beds, and if she was there, she would put a bed on the sofa and that sort of thing. She had a big, feather bed. It was nice. And that was underneath that window there because they got two windows, one in the sitting room (or general room) and one in the bedroom. It was all smooth walls. *Were they whitewashed walls?* No, they were just sand. There was a little pantry affair but it wasn't whitewashed or nothing was it? *So the walls were just left their natural colour?* I seem to remember somebody might have whitewashed part of it at one point. It might have been the pantry. There wouldn't have been much point of it because the sand was always falling away. We were always sweeping sand up.

Did you have carpets down on the floor? No, they just had rugs. **Podged rugs as they were in those days. Pegged rugs?** Pegged or podged. *How were they made?* You get a piece of hearden. This might be an unusual name to you but it was virtually sacking. A piece of sacking that they called hearden bags in them days, that was the old name for them, I don't know why but it was hearden. What they used to do was to cut any piece of woolly cloth into pieces about this long, about 4 inches, about 3/4 inch wide and they used to use what they used to call a podger. It had a little handle on the side and a point on the front and a clamp on the side. You pushed it through and pulled it through and it went in and out. They used to make a pattern up of these little loops. And they would stop at the top and any extra long ones they would cut them off with the scissors into an even length. They would back it with another piece of sacking that would stop the bits coming out. We sometimes referred to them as podge rugs because of the podger. There was

another simpler form of podgery that was just pushed through. *Was it similar to a crotchet hook?* Well it was something like that but instead of having to hook it through, this little lever would catch hold of the piece and pull it through and this would save going through both sides. It would push and pull it. *Is this particular to this area?* Possibly. I do know, that when I worked away up in the North of England just after the war in a project up in West Hartlepool and they would do a similar thing up there but they used to call them hooky mats. But they used to weave it. But of course what they would do, they used to draw a pattern on it first of all - they would put a row a red and perhaps make a flower of it sometimes. But they would always draw it on in pencil or crayon or something. *And you would use any sort of material that was available?* Anything really - woolly material and I mean knitted wool like cloth. In the latter years down on the farm I did some rugs with nylon stockings.

Did you help make the teas they used to make? Did they do that every day or just weekends? Well if anybody came, every weekend yes, but holidays, that was the most that was. When I helped my Aunt, my Granny would come to the cottage, she used to say, 'Go and see if there are any people who have come off the trams.' And we would see the first people come off and of course this was when they used to get the kettles on for the teas. They used to charge for the jug, about 6 pence I think, but you got to pay for it on the jug, I always remember that. You used to have teas with cake, jam, bread and butter and a pot of tea was one and six. They got a great big pot/kettle. I can tell you what they boiled the water in - it has just come to me! It was a huge black pot with a brass tap on it, and it was sort of that shape and that was on the fire and there was a long brass tap that was always shiny. They would keep that fairly hot so that when they wanted a quick boil up they would probably take it out and put it in a kettle. I can see it now, as clear as a bell, but right opposite that door in that picture Uncle built some posts up and some tables out there, it was to the right of them. He built it out there - it was called a tea arbour - and there was cover over it in timber.

What was in the gardens? He grew a lot of potatoes and I remember my mother was not very happy about it because we had earth toilets of course in them days. Imagine that you have come out and the steps are in front of you, if you turned at that path, it goes way down doesn't it? Now the toilet used to be at the end there, but the kids were put on there to take the pennies, because at the tearoom you had to pay a penny to use the toilet, which was fair do's. But I remember my mother saying very well that Uncle Harry used to use the toilet deposits to grow his potatoes in. He grew some very nice potatoes.

It had some lovely gardens, all roses at the front. You would go down a little path and it was all loganberries. I used to go down this path instead of going down the front, and I always used to help myself to some loganberries. There were some little bits of steps down there. My uncle used to get a big branch of a tree and put it right across and that would make the step and put the earth behind it. That held the step each time. I remember thick branches. Now that went to the bottom but I can't remember how you got out. There was some steps down, not regular steps. There was a bit of slope and then some steps. It leads out on to the road. I used to go through that way because of the loganberries. *It is very similar now isn't it?* Very similar. Somebody used to take ponies up and down there and charge them for rides. It used to take it into Hyde Lane, right opposite, but it wasn't fenced off. *Were there trees there at that time?* There were some trees, but as I remember it there was trees right across the

bottom against the green, and it went down into steps and there was all gardens, and you grew in that. It was like a sandy beach there. And they say that if you go down there you can almost smell the sea.

Imagine you came out of the front door like in the picture and you would turn left, and back down to the ground level, and there is a path runs up to the left. We always used to call that the running path. I don't know why it's called that, but us kids used to try and run down there and it was all loose sand, and we invariably got out of our speed and fall in the sand. You go on the top there and you came on to a huge field. We found a lot of crab-apple trees. It is very heavily wooded now, but it was a field at that time because we used to play on it. On the top there was hundreds of rabbits.]

[question to Mr Timmings by his sister]. You know Shaws, (I never went up there all those years) was that in a cave? Yes, just the same, the one on top. And that one had got nine or ten children. *But it wasn't built on, because later on they built houses on the outside didn't they against the rock? They probably extended it outwards afterwards, but actually at that time they were only caves? What I could never fathom out, considering there was children brought up on top on that house, I cannot understand why there wasn't some tragedies over there. There was no fencing. It must have been very dangerous? I never remember anyone having a fall. Of course, people fall in canals, but they never did so much in them days because you were oriented towards the system.*

Appendix 9

[Transcript of part of tape

Mr & Mrs Reeves

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Bold: Mr Reeves

Normal: Mrs Reeves

This is a conversation recorded on February 13th, 1989 in Kinver with Mr and Mrs Reeves. Mr Reeves' grandparents lived in Crow's Rock around 1928 to 1932.

There were two decks there, two different houses one on top of the other and I'll give you an idea of what it used to be like. You look at an old tram and it was all this across the front, all the rooms were across the front, just at room depth into the rock and you had to go from one room to another to get to another to get to another

Were the rooms as big as they were in Holy Austin?

Oh yes, you could get a double bed in each one and a wardrobe and a dressing table

Is that two separate rooms there?

Yes. To look across the front you got, I think granny got 4 or 5 windows of about 4 foot square but there again there was another deck above us, I can't remember the people who lived in there. They've always had two names - Crow's Rock and Vale Head. Vale Head I believe has taken its name from the other side of the road, Kingsford Lane, where there used to be a farmland.

Was the area very similar outside as it is now or was it overgrown?

You wouldn't have recognised it then, there was a lovely orchard at the front, apples, pears, damsons, plums. On top of that there was plenty of rabbits around. You never went short of fresh meat. There were special rabbit traps, you could catch a rabbit alive in the garden. *That supplemented the diet a bit?* Oh yes. And there was just at the bottom lane at the other side of the road past Kingsford Lane when you get down there, there was a little bit of a farm or a smallholding. They used to supply the people around with eggs and milk and things like that. *What were their names?* All I can remember is Jim, I think it was Jim Field or something like that. It was right opposite the lane. It isn't there now. The lane, it's what leads up to that, like it used to be, because obviously the coalman used to drive more or less right up and all he had to do there... I've walked from here just down to the opening, about 25 - 30 yards with the coal. It was all level going where you used to come up with it.

In 1932 Mr Reeve's grandparents moved to Holy Austin Rock and occupied the house below the well on level 1, while Mr Reeves and his parents lived in the corner house. They were all there until around 1939 - 40. We looked first of all at a photograph of the corner house, the front door of which is to the left of the present flight of steps. 'When were these photographs taken?' 1934. 'And you've got a little porchway there, I haven't seen that in any other photograph.' No. 'What's that, corrugated iron top?' Yes. 'Is that a

water tap outside? Yes So you had mains water Yes, and gas So, was that the only water there, there wasn't any in the houses? Not in this one, the one round the corner had it inside.

Your parents moved into Holy Austin-did they have to do a lot of work to it? No, well what they did they just give it an extra coat of Walpamur, paint on the walls like to clean it up which wasn't bad because it had only been empty about a month. But did it to their own liking before they moved in. And my father and mother helped them out. With that soft rock did you get a lot of dust and things in the houses? Well the Walpamur held it back you see. What you used to do, you used to do it about once a year you see. I can remember dad doing it, it's about time we did the walls and he'd go out and he'd spend about a pound or one pound ten and buy the stuff. We'd come back and we'd get a hard broom, a really good hard bass broom and go over all the walls and the ceilings and everything. Clear the room out completely and do one room at a time. Then you get 90% of the loose stuff off and then you used go over it then with a couple of coats of Walpamur - dusty job. Once you got the Walpamur on, it used to hold it and bind it together. When you did it your walls were sealed more or less. Of course I mean there's no point in putting one coat on, with one coat you lost it, the first coat soaked right in. It used to soak in 1/4 of an inch at least. So you got to keep putting coat and coat on till you've built the layers up to stop the dust.

The windows were ordinary windows with ordinary glass but they've got bars in on this one. Was that to keep somebody in or to keep people out? The windows used to open, just open like ordinary windows, but they'd only open up to the bars to allow fresh air in. You hardly ever shut a window or a door even during bad time during the winter. Leave them open. It was a healthy life. Yes. Now that door there, what I would call a latch door? Yes. What we'd call a ledge and brace door. Now that was the front door was it? That was the front door. What are these flowers all around the outside? Rose trees. Rose trees climbing up the walls there? Around the windows, I bet that was pretty. There's a wire across there That's the clothes line. I wondered for a minute whether it was a power line but it wouldn't have been with gas. No, a clothes line. Look at this. Beautiful borders and flowers and things. It must have been very pretty. Oh yes. Considering the depth of the soil there was there, not much, it was just sandstone. You only got about three or four inches of soil but they used to grow.

This pathway up here It's all old bricks. And where did they come from? Anywhere, pick them up. Old quarries and things. I suppose that helped to keep the dust down outside We had to do something like that you know. It looks quite good, doesn't it really We had a bit of a rockery there, against the side of the porch. And you've got shovels there They're for dad's job, he was a beater. A ranger, for beating out fires, they called them beaters. Did you get a lot of fires? Well we did do, I mean he had some rangers here for four or five days at a time. Did you have numbers to the houses or was it just known as Holy Austin? Well, ours was no 1 & 2, my gran's was no 1, it was on the front opposite the car park. And we were no 2 around the corner. And the Shaws, that was no number at all. It went on the top and they sorted it themselves.

Were you very friendly together? Oh yes, I went to school with the lads and my sister went at the same time. So you were like a little community there. And the Shaw family, let's see, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 there was 5 sons and about 4 daughters. But there was two families of Shaws living on the top. Two brothers - elderly brothers, both been married but the one got I think it was about - 9 in the family and the other only got

MF the one. And of course he'd lost his wife, just the father and son used to live in the one, the one small one. [You don't mind me asking but who actually owned the rock houses, I mean who did you pay your rent to?] The National Trust. *Do you know how much the rent was?* We used to pay, I think we used to pay 7/6 a week at Holy Austin. (34.5p)

Now we're going to look at photographs of Mr Reeves' grandparents house below the well. Let's just go to the inside one. Which room is that? That's just inside the front door. That's the front door. That's the bedroom. And the one at the back here, you can't just see it, is another doorway into what they used to use as a pantry. Cut right into the sandstone rock. Nice and cool? Yes, very cool. Because these houses were very snug, weren't they. Yes. Warm in the winter and cool in the summer. In the summer you could put a pint of milk in the interior of the sandstone and it would keep perfect just like being in the fridge.

My mother and father used to have a little wooden frame with wire mesh gauge over, and that used to stand in the centre of the rock and it used to keep all these things cool and there were no flies or anything. In the centre of the rock you never saw a fly. It was too cold for them. I

Looking at this picture inside the front room, now we've got the gas mantle, so that was laid on, and it's got two chains on either side so it's a typical gas mantle, isn't it. Lovely. And the roof looks very sort of rough there. Yes it is, Just like whitewashed or stonewashed you know. What we used to call Walpamur in them days. So you used to do that to the walls just to make them to make them a little more attractive, otherwise they'd be what colour? Red. You can see the layers of the sandstone Can't you? Fascinating.

Were they light inside? They look very dark in this picture. Well, to an extent yes. This room had just the one big window in here and you can just see the window there the other side of the doorway for the bedroom. Now the bedroom had a little fireplace in it just the same, but the big fireplace over here where my gran used to cook all her stuff on was down this side, the old-fashioned black-lead grates with the two little hobs and everything on. That was coal presumably. Yes Where did the coal come from? How did you get it up there? Well, the fellow used to bring it up round the other side, on our end because he could drive more or less up within about 25 yards of the back door. The same fellow and the same firm still deliver us with coal. Really? Yes, his father and father before and now the sons do it. Mr Dick Morris.

The place where we lived in and that room that I told you that Gran kept all her tools and coal in, that is one big room now. Have you been in it? That was divided up into three. The front end, that's on the field side, was the kitchen and the middle part was my bedroom and the other part then was Gran's coal place and a store. And originally it was all one room and in the very very olden days, as far as I can recall anyway, it used to be a kind of a dance hall. It was 10, 15 yards long by 4 or 5 yards wide. There was one, two, three, four, five rooms in there.

So you have two living rooms in there? Yea, a kitchen and a living room, a scullery as we used to call it then where you used to do the cooking and washing up and things. Two, no three bedrooms. What did you have on the floors? Most of the floors was done in the red quarry tiles laid on ashes. It must have been difficult because it was uneven floors? Well that's what it is, you had to get it down as flat as they could then they put the bed of ashes down and then they put the quarries on. As they

used to use in old fashioned days, same as when they build houses, they used to build them with ash dust. Lino and just home made mats on the floor. Used to make them out of hessian sacks and bits of old cloth. *And was there enough room to have any large bits of furniture?* In the kitchen, we had the big cooking range, on top of that we got a big white wooden top table. Four of us could sit round comfortable with four chairs. There was a sideboard for all the crocks and everything to go into, and there was was two sideboards more or less in the one kitchen. It was a fair sized room could be 16 feet square that one big one.

Did you have the old fashioned brass bed, because they had those? We got round them, we had wooden frames then. You could go out and buy them. In mother's bedroom, she had a double bed, a chest of drawers and a wardrobe in her bedroom and a couple of small chairs. *Very big then weren't they? Oh yes Spacious?* In comparison to today's standard I would say they were slightly larger than today's rooms. Or some of those pokey little rough places you walk in today are like match boxes. *Did you have any problem with condensation, anything like that?* No.

There's an awful lot of trees up there now now. Oh yes, there's a terrific lot now to what there used to be. Was it all sort of fairly open? Yea, there was only a lot of fruit trees, damson trees and apple trees in there then, when we were up here. My grandad used to look after this part here and cultivate all this end, and my father used to do it round our side. *So those are the gardens?* Yea, what little bit of garden they had there, you know, just little bit of borders and things like that. Both my father and my grandfather were both gardeners. *Did they grow any vegetables at all then?* Round our side we did yes. And what used to water the garden was the overflow from the sink. It used to run from the sink down through a little pipe into like a big soakaway. When it overflowed it watered the garden. So we used to get plenty of moisture in the ground and plenty of good nourishing food. *Yes I bet. I know your dad was a landscape gardener, but looking at the gardens round there, normally it's just a rock and you go on to gravel isn't it, but there it's laid out like a proper garden. He was a landscape gardener was he?* Yes.

You see here, these are tables, they are all made out of silver birch and we used to serve teas upon those, during the weekends and in the summer. *Where did all the people come from?* All round the Black Country. We used to dish up a pot of tea for four with bread and butter and home-make cakes and jam for half-a-crown in old money. *That was good value then.* And people used to lap it up. If there was a family of four they'd have half-a-dozen cakes, about 7 or 8 slices of bread and butter and a pot of jam and a pot of tea and sugar and milk all laid on the table. And they used to pay half-a-crown for the lot. And they walked away pleased. Then people used to come just for a jug of tea and I took them four cups like. All that they used to get for two shillings and they used to get sixpence back when they brought the jug and cups back. My mother and I used to do most of the teas in the summer and of course I used to make all the cakes then when I was only 10 or 11 year old. I used to stop in Friday night, come home from school Friday night, and that was my night then, making cakes ready for the weekend during the summer. I think I used to make 100-150 small little cakes, and then cutting up bread. We had uncut bread then and I used to cut more slices out of a loaf than what they cut today, even on a thin slice. *There's a knack in it is there?* Yes. I cut up 6 loaves and used them.

We used to have a big kettle which was kept on the boil. It used to hold a gallon of water, we used to get that on the gas stove. That was put on Sunday mornings just after we'd finished dinner more or less. We used to cook dinner and do teas, jugs of tea every Sunday. *That's a job isn't it?* Yea, there was one cooking dinner and one looking after teas and stuff. *Did you know when the visitors were going to come, did they all arrive at the same time?* Oh no. They'd start at Sunday mornings at 10 o'clock and they'd go on all day then 'til 7 o'clock at night.

You know where the National Trust, where the Warden's house is, and that area where you go up to the ridge there, which is fairly wooded now, was it always like that? It's always been wooded, but not to the extent that it is today, it's more overgrown to what it used to be. It was a more open area. They've thinned it out a lot to what it used to be over the last few years. The wood has just outgrown itself a bit on the top, nothing to speak of, it's more or less just the same. You could still play a full football match. It's been knocked about a bit and eroded a bit but me and me dad, we used to play football and cricket up there, more or less a full size cricket pitch up there, we'd go and have a game of cricket, sometimes you'd see blokes going there with a golf club.

That was a clump of trees down by the Keeper's house, just in front of the Keeper's house at the front there. They've more or less always been there, of course they've grown to extend the area, but not much. They may have doubled the size but that's about all. That forest on the side there, by the Keeper's house, that had been kept under control and that's not extended at all it's just grown up that's all. They were only small trees at one time. The same as that other one where we had the huts underneath. There's always been a hut there underneath. They've renewed it and done it up.

Appendix 10

Transcript of part of tape

Mrs Taylor (née Reeves)

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mrs Taylor

This is a conversation recorded on the 22nd of July 1992 with Mrs Taylor, who lives in Telford, Shropshire. Her maiden name was Reeves and her family lived in Kinver for several years. There's an interview with her brother which was recorded in February 1989 which is already in the archive. Mrs Taylor and her mother and father and brother lived on the lower level of Holy Austin Rock, overlooking the present car park on Kingsford Lane, between 1933 and 1935, and her grandfather and grandmother lived on the next level just around the corner where the well is, and Mrs Taylor often refers to some excellent photographs that she has of the Rock houses. First of all though she told me how her family first came to Kinver long before they went to live at Holy Austin Rock.

My grandmother moved there about 1926 and my grandfather was a head gardener and he moved into Kinver to become head gardener at a house in Churchill where a family called Clark's lived and they had the little cottage opposite which went with the job. And I was about 6 then and when I was about 12 my father was out of work and we moved to Kinver to be near them because my father was also a gardener and my grandmother said "Well, there's jobs here, come over." So we moved over to Kinver. But we didn't move into the rock house then. The rock house was our second home, the first one was down a lane that leads towards Wolverly, a little bungalow down there, and then we moved up to the rock house 'cos my father got the job as ranger on the edge. We moved to Kinver in '32 and we moved into the rock house in the summer of '33. These pictures here were taken in April '34. *That's on the lower level isn't it? Oh yes That's the lower level one and that picture shows your mother and father then? That's right yes.*

And here right in this pile of rockery was a lovely well, but there was no water in it, but it was as round as a penny in solid red sandstone right to the bottom. My father used to roll a newspaper up and light it for people and he'd drop it down and it would flutter down and then you could see this round but how on earth it got there I just don't know but it would just about hold a slim man so it was chipped out, somebody had to go down, you can see the chip marks all the way round it, but it was rounded, straight all the way down. The people who'd occupied this before us, and I don't know who they were, they'd used it for dumping garden rubbish and that sort of thing.]←

Well now let's look at this photograph. We're looking at the lower level and on the right, the first entry on the right, there's this little porchway made out of wood and slats and things like that. So if you went in that door, that's your front door is it? Yes Now what was in there? Tell me what was in there. You went into the living room and on the left was the window, that window, and along the other wall leading left on the left wall was a large black fireplace, you know the things you did with black lead that sort of thing. I remember thinking "wasn't it marvellous to have hot water" because one side of the grate was a tank with a tap on the bottom and you filled this tank and your fire it kept the water hot and you got hot water not for drinking but for washing it was marvellous, we got water on tap. It was great in 1932. She used to put the kettle on, you know there was a bracket comes out from the top of the grate above the fire, bring it forward and put

your kettle on the hook and that was in a sort of little recess and on the side of that recess coming out like that there was a metal door. When you opened it, it was just a big hole in the rock and originally that had been a baking oven. People made their own bread. They'd light the fuel in there, sticks and straw and stuff and let it burn itself out and then they'd pop the bread in and cooked it and when you got bread with a black bottom, do you remember it, oven baked.* Used to make batch cakes my grandmother called them but my mother never made any but that was what it was originally meant for. Who put it in I don't know.

→ [I remember the day we moved into the rock house my mother had a beautiful big carved sideboard, one of those big ones with three sections and a lot of mirrors at the back, all carved and it had got a lovely, carved, shaped top and they could not get the top onto the bottom because the ceiling was too low so up comes father with a chisel and hammer and cuts the ceiling out to fit. Of course you couldn't move it anywhere else, it had to stay there. *That was very convenient really.*

The ceilings were never coloured. We had all our walls done with the white, whitewash, but the ceilings were never covered because to begin with they weren't flat, it was almost as if water had shaped it, it was in waves the rock, only shallow, half-an-inch. *It's rather like the sand isn't it when the sea's been over it.* Because originally on Kinver Edge, now you can come across shells, originally there was water, you know I'm not talking about centuries ago, I'm talking about millions of years ago, and it was the water that did that, and we never covered ours.]

Let's get back to your front room again. As you go in through the door, what about the wall in front of you. Well the facing wall, that's where we put the big sideboard. What sort of furniture did you have? We didn't have anything like a sofa or a settee, but we had a set of chairs with, they were individual chairs with a carved back and a padded seat - the old-fashioned type. There was a couple of chairs under the table, the table in the centre, the old scrubbed white table, you had to put a cloth on. That was it more or less, there might have been - underneath the window there was a cupboard with a drawer on the top, two drawers on the top and two doors, you know that sort of half way up cupboard. That was about it. So where did you keep things like food? Well my mother had, in those days you had a wooden box with a wire mesh front, she had a large one of those - it kept the food cool and kept the flies away. Where did you keep that? In the kitchen. Beside the sideboard was a door leading into the bedroom and on the right-hand wall was another window. There was two windows in the living room. You went into the bedroom and there was a window on the right, it was just a square room in the rock sort of on the outside of the rock, so you that you'd get the light through the window and leading from that bedroom was a narrow passage that sloped up into what we called the ballroom. That was an interior room, no window. Why did you call it the ballroom. Because it was enormous, my father christened it the ballroom, big enough to hold a ball in here he said because it was huge. When I was young I used to put little plays and concerts on and all my friends joined in and it was that big that we could do that even with my brother's bedroom furniture in there was still room at the one side to put an imaginary stage and candles in jars and that sort of thing, to do that. A lot of fun. Yes it was.

There was just you and your brother, and that's all the family was it. Just the two of us. What about the size of that first room, how big was that? The living room. Yes. So what are we talking about, 14 by 12? Oh yes, and the bedroom was almost as big and then of course as I said the ballroom was enormous. Ceilings were? The one in the ballroom was very high, but they were normal height in living room and the first bedroom, and out of the ballroom you went through a doorway which had a door on it, the passageway

didn't have a door, and into the kitchen which had a flagged floor, you know, red flags and there was the gas cooker in there and a kitchen sink and water on tap. And from that kitchen you went through a little doorway which was shaped exactly like a coffin, we used to call it the coffin doorway, into my bedroom, which didn't have a door on but there was an outside door that you walked straight out into the garden from my bedroom and there was a window in it, that was a much smaller room.

The living room was lit by gas, the bedrooms weren't. There was gas in the kitchen for the cooker. I can't remember there being a gas light in there. Mother always had oil lamps available you know. *What about heating?* There was just the fire in the living room, no other heating. *So the bedrooms might have got quite cold?* Well, cool, but they never got icy, not in the way a modern house would because the red sandstone seemed to absorb the sunshine all through the summer and we got the benefit of that in the winter. And in the summer it was nice and cool because we got the winter cool. It was very pleasant, and I can never remember feeling dreadfully cold, we used to have oil heaters on cold nights that was just the atmosphere, the air you know, having a door and a window in my bedroom made it a bit cool, but it was an enormous piece of rock, it never got icy. *What did you burn in the stove, coal, wood?* Both, not just wood, my father, being a gardener, he was aware of the value of trees and he didn't go round cutting trees down or anything like that. If he found a piece of wood broken off he'd bring it home, but normally we had coal. Because beyond my bedroom was another cave which he stored his gardening tools and the coal in.

How did the coal get up there? It was delivered in those days, the coal men delivered the coal didn't they in sacks. There's a garden path down leading opposite our entrance door, right down the slope, and that led into a field and there was a cart track across this field which led to the main road, and the coal man came up with his horse and cart to the bottom of our garden gate and then he carried the coal in sacks. *So there's a front door on the right then a window then another window which looks into the kitchen then a door which goes into the kitchen then another door which goes into your bedroom then the bedroom window.* That's right *Then there's a big cave up there* Used as a tool shed

Now in this photograph we've got a paved path, is that paved or is it bricked - and that was already done when we went there *I see* Whoever had done it I don't know. *But the garden, you've got trailing roses.* You see my grandfather's house had no garden because it was very steep at the front, just had those steep steps. This garden was huge and father had part of it and grandfather had the other and between them they used to grow everything you could think of. They'd got fruit trees and they'd fruit bushes you know, elderberries, raspberries, blackcurrant, gooseberries and all the vegetables *There doesn't look like there's the room up there to do that* Oh yes, if you get a good gardener he can grow a lot in a very small space and my grandfather was a very good gardener.

My father liked his flowers more than his vegetables and, this is the delicate bit, you come out of there and down the path and there was the lavatory which was a bucket type. It wasn't a flush type so father had to empty it, he was quite glad of it on the garden. *That was inside the rock as well.* Oh yes, it had a wooden door and it had a wooden seat, and in those days it had two apertures *A two-one was it?* Yes. *So that's on the right of the house then, so you came out of the main door and turn left.* Looking at the house it was on the right, down a little curved path.

What about your grandmother's house, can we talk about that, did you know that very well? Oh yes of course. *So what was that like inside, was that as large or smaller?* It was smaller than ours, it was still two bedrooms and a living room *Can you walk me through that house as well, if you go in through the main door which is in the middle of*

the two windows. The two windows either side of the main door, is that all? Well, you go in there and directly you get in on the right, is another door that goes into the bedroom. That window on the right of the door is the bedroom. That is the living room On the left And they did have a sort of larder, off the living room to keep their food and that in. But her house was smaller than ours, because we moved in virtually the same time, we got the big one because of having a family and she got the small one.

Now you had a porch built over your front door. Had she got anything over hers? Oh yes, she had A very elegant one! It had a cast iron roof? (Photographs, Volume 1, page 10). Corrugated iron roof. Look at the bars on the windows! What were they for? I don't know, they were there already, perhaps they had small children the previous people. They were there already. This was my grandmother's tap. It's directly outside the door on a stand, on a proper wooden plinth and the porch was half wood, glass by the looks of it on the sides, and then this little pointed corrugated iron-I believe that was there when she moved in. Ours wasn't, my father put it up, a rough and ready thing, because eventually it did become covered in roses, that was the idea, it was just a structure for the roses. And that chimney, over there, that brick built chimney? Yes, that's her living room chimney.]

Can you sort of think about that room in your mind and tell me what was in it? You have a picture of it. (Photographs, Volume 1, page 11). That was an umbrella stand, and that was half the wing of an aeroplane when they made them in strips and glued them together. Because her son-in-law used to be in the RFC - the Air Force, and there was a sideboard there. Where's the front door? That's it. So we're coming through the front door which was a wooden, slatted front door with a sort of a latch, probably, was it? A latch and bolt, yes. A latch and bar. So you'd come straight in, on the right, that door on the right is into the bedroom. Yes. I see, then in front of you you've got the dresser, the table, the pictures and a lovely gas mantle and the glass surrounding it and two long chains, one to pull it up and one to pull it down. Yes! Normally they were situated over the table weren't they, you had to lean over the table to light them, so the chains were there for convenience. There's a tiny clock on the wall! Yes, my aunt, my grandmother's eldest daughter, bought her that back from the Black Forest at the end of the First World War 1920/21, and she had a most beautiful cuckoo clock from there as well, and all the workings were made of wood. My daughter has it now, of course it doesn't work, the wood shrunk to the point where it was longer feasible to mend it. These were two plastic love birds hanging on the end of the chain, I say plastic, they'd be celluloid in those days, wouldn't they? So she had a table and she's got lots of bits of chairs in there and so on. What do you have on the floor? Along with us there was linoleum down, and those rugs they used to make, rag rugs, they didn't have carpets, they had rag rugs, but they were lovely and thick when they were made. They were quite cosy if you had enough of them. Right. So we're in this room and looking with the front door behind us. Anything on the left? The firegrate - immediately the window was on the left - but on the left wall was the firegrate and it was arranged similar to ours, the black leaded type. Was there a door on that wall? No. There was a little door on that wall to this little larder affair, it was only like a rock cupboard with a little wooden door on it. It was a walk-in one, but quite small, you know, two by three, something like that.

[*Tell me about your grandparents, when they lived at Crow's Rock, Yes, I can't remember when they moved into Crow's Rock. I know, I used to go there when I was 11, I might have gone before then. So that would be '31? Looking back I can't remember how many years, I just know that in '33 they were in Holy Austin. I don't think they were there a long time, you know not 10 years or anything like that, I think it was only a few years. What was the house like there? It was a three bedroomed place,*

that was where they had that lovely larder I told you about, built into the rock. They had gardens sloping down from there. I remember there was a trap was in the garden and the trap, a round metal bin sunk to this level in the ground, with a lid that swung on a pivot, and my grandfather said it was there to catch rabbits. Once they got in they couldn't get out you see. I used to nip down there every morning to see if there was a rabbit because I was going to let it out and I never once found one.

But they had an orchard, they had damsons and apples which seemed to be the thing in those days. My grandmother used to bottle them and do all sorts of things with them for the winter you know. She was a great one for that, jam, and he had his vegetables. He loved his garden and he was a gentle man and he could sort of gently do his garden all day long and the most beautiful stuff used to grow, he was just a natural.

We'd been down to Crow's Rock to have a look and I was quite disappointed because I wanted my husband to see it, but we couldn't get in. It's all done up with quite high barbed wire isn't it? And we couldn't get through to go up to Vale Head.

I remember the little old lady who lived in Vale Head Rock, she was a Miss and I think her name was Nightingale. I can see her. She was a tiny little woman, very old-fashioned clothes right down to her ankles and boots that laced up and the sweetest nature, she was lovely. She lived there, she was born there and her parents had died there and she lived on there, she lived to be quite old. But I got a little Irish Terrier and she loved this little dog and whenever we met her, she used to go down on her knees and she used to hug this little dog and Judy the dog loved her and all, they used to have such a sweet match together. She was the sweetest person. If my gran, it was quite a long walk from Crow's Rock to the village for shopping, if my grandmother was going to the village she'd say "Do you want anything? I'll bring it with me" Alternatively, if she was going she'd ask grandmother. They didn't live in each others laps but they were good neighbours. I don't know what happened to her because we'd left the area by then. *So this lady lived where?* Above Crow's Rock - there was two rock houses in it. If you looked at Crow's Rock you saw Crow's Rock house on the left, and up higher, on the right, was Vale's Head. And they shared this lovely well.

The day the rock face fell at Crow's Rock. It was summer. As she went in through the door with grandad the rock face collapsed. Shortly after that up came the officials and condemned the house as being unsafe. It was the cave front that they used to use as a garden shed - it wasn't the house itself.

The besom man - he made besom brushes from birch twigs. His caravan was very very old and when he realised Crow's Rock was empty he simply moved in and he was there for some years before he died. And at one point a lady from Birmingham with two children moved in with him. Her name was Pat. This was in '31 or '32.

Let's turn back to Holy Austin Rock and this photograph which shows your grandparents house. There seems to be very little room for any sort of garden there. (Photograph Volume 1, page 10) This, the edges there, that's all they had because then it dropped down steeply that it couldn't have been cultivated. In any case my grandfather then was in his 60's. He was in no shape to do a lot of gardening, he just loved pottering about at the little garden he got round on our side But he's got one or two shrubs and things Oh yes he's got a rose up here. Climbing rose around the window. And is that ivy up over there, over the porch Yes, that's ivy. And under the window on both sides of the front door there's little stone borders with flowers and climbing things and so on and then on the left of the front door there's a little stone seat there, is that a stone seat or a wooden one? No, it's a wooden one, trunks for legs, you see what it is, my grandfather made it.

There's a little niche there, with a little figure. The little niche was there and grandmother filled it with that. Grandfather put the rock plants in. *It's lovely. Yes they look very comfortable don't they, very welcoming places.*

My mother used to do teas, bread and butter, jam and scones, and a pot of tea, ninepence each, old nine pence. Fruit and cream with it made it up to a shilling. In those days there were a lot of cycling clubs, and they used to come in from the Birmingham area, and there'd be 20 or 30 of them, and they would book ahead, and my mother would have teas for them all. It happened quite a lot. It was the cycling time of the century. You know the cars were few and far between and cycling was a nice speedy way to get around. *So how did they let her know, did they write to her* They would write to her, yes *So what was the address, the official address?* D'you know, I can't remember the number *I suppose there were only three of you up there, three families* Yes, you see there were two Reeves families, because my father being the son he had the same name as his father obviously, and the Shaws, so it was just a question of sorting it out with the postman. It was always the same old postman, he knew who was who. See, my grandfather was W.H my father was S.H so as long as the initials were there we got our mail. But it was just Holy Austin Rock, I'm sure it was.

So you had a lot of people coming to teas then Yes, weekends quite a lot throughout the summer. And my father built some tables, and here on this side of the rock we got a flat lawned area and he built rustic tables and seats and they sat out there, there was no room in the house, so if it rained we knew no-one would come, but if it was a nice day they would come and sit at the tables outside *Did you help with the preparation of the teas?* Oh, I had to help. In those days you didn't argue you helped. Not that it seemed a chore. I tell you why it didn't seem a chore at one point because my mother said to me "If we make enough money this summer, you and I will go to the seaside together and leave your dad and your brother here, you and I will go to the seaside! It was great and I worked like a tiger and sure enough come September off we went to Rhyl for a week. It was lovely. (Of course Mother made all her own jam and scones and cakes in those days, cream you had to fetch it didn't come tinned. But it was all good food and people came back time and time again. *Where did you get milk and cream and things like that from?* Oh, it was delivered. They brought the churn to the door with a lovely big scoop on a handle, remember them? Down into the churn, two pints today Mrs Reeves."

You, in fact, only lived there for how many years? From '33 to the beginning of '35 *So how old were you then?* In '35 I was in my 15th year. *So what was there to do for a 15 year old?* Oh, I had a friend who lived just down the lane and we walked a lot. It was the thing. You didn't miss television because you'd never seen it anyhow. Radios were mostly battery driven so that you didn't have them on all hours. In those days the battery was a square thing with a handle on it that you took away to be charged up every now and again. *Accumulator* Yes, that's right.

Oh we just walked around, and at 15 we found some boys to walk around with, there were always Boy Scouts, Kinver was a great place for Scouts. In fact my husband was one of them. We used to go and watch them as young girls, you know, it was lovely to see the scouts. We used to look forward to the weekend when they all came down. It was so innocuous and so innocent in those days. There was no question of - I can't remember my mother warning me, it was never necessary. You know, she never said "just be careful what you're up to." She never said that. She used to say "Be home by such and such a time" and I would be there because in those days you obeyed your parents. And it was a lovely place to walk.

When I stayed with my grandmother when I was 7 I'd go up Church Hill which is a long and lonely lane with my dog and on to Kinver Edge and I would very sedately walk all the way around the Ranger's house and back again and never thought anything of it. But if a child did it now you'd be horrified. *What was the Edge like then, has it changed a lot. Did you notice what sort of things were growing on the Edge in those days?* Well it was mainly heather and bracken. At the one side of the Edge by the sanatorium it's a lovely big huge bowl of a place and that was a picture in May with all the bluebells. There were so many bluebells the air was heavy with the scent. There is still a lot there but you know the bracken has taken over and it chokes everything, the bracken. There's a lot more greenery in the shape of small trees now than I remember then. I remember when I was younger you could see a lot further because there weren't the trees but that isn't a bad thing. And paths have changed, there's more people, they've made different paths and some, of course, cos the edges are steep, some have eroded, weather and people and they've change.

So you used to go upon the Edge a lot with your friends then? Oh yes we had a Silver Jubilee of Mary and George and the bonfire was right on the Edge and I remember that night very, very clearly. Very clearly. It was as if it was last week *A lot of people there?* Oh, yes, yes, it was great fun. It was all innocent fun, there were no idiots throwing fireworks or people passing drugs round or drinking. It didn't occur to people to go up there with a drink. It was a long walk anyroad. But it was lovely round the fire, that was all there was, the fire and the good humour. That was all there was. People laughing and talking and.. *No food, no sausages* No litter, only the debris of the fire next morning and nature took care of that. That was '34.

In '37 we had the Coronation bonfire. That was again was on the Edge and the scouts took care of it, you know they built it and monitored it when it was alight because it was on very short grass, we always called it rabbit grass because my father said the rabbits nibbled it down to being short and very fine. And that easily caught fire and so the scouts were there to take care of it. On both occasions. The big scouts, you know, the Rovers. Kinver was a great place for scouts in those days. Of course the scout hut is still there.

[*Your father was a gardener* Yes. But while we were at the Rock House he was Assistant Ranger on the Edge. *How did he get to do that?* Well, he got the job as Assistant Ranger and the rock house went with the job, you know, like a tied cottage. *What did he have to do?* He had to pace the edge. He'd got to monitor it. In other words he'd got to watch for - there wasn't a lot of it - but vandalism. He talked to people and he was a great talker. He could tell people about the history of the Edge, he took an interest in it and also he had to fight the fires. When we had some hot summers we had some long, long fires. I've known him, you know, three days and three nights at a stretch beating the fire out. He came home one day and he was furious. Mother said "What's the matter with your face?" and "It's in the middle of beating the fire out," he said, "the steepest hill I've ever been up", he said, "someone shouted to me - 'Hey - stand still a moment, I want to take your photograph'" and he was furious about it. He really was. The trouble with heath fires, they burn underneath, they need a lot of monitoring even when the fire appears to be out you just need a little breeze and up it will come. Of course the surface of Kinver Edge and lots of places like it are made up of plant debris that, you know, dead plants, heather, bracken and it builds up, it really builds up and it's light and easily lighted. And a piece of glass can set a fire off, you don't need a careless match. And of course in those days there were no plastic bottles, everything was glass.]

Tell me about the Shaw family. They lived right up at the top of the rock, didn't they? Did you have anything to do with them? No, we knew them, we were neighbourly, but they were mostly boisterous boys and I tended to avoid them. *How many of them were there?* Oh, there was quite a few but I can't really remember how many. Five or six children. There was a daughter Barbara, I remember her. She was younger than me. And there was one, how on earth he got his name I don't know, we used to call him Jum or Jumbo. I don't know how he got his name but that was it. Then there was an older one. The oldest one I think was called Edgar. I remember him because at one time he courted an aunt of mine. Nothing ever came of it but they had a vague relationship for a while. I think it was simply because they were, they lived near each other.

There is very little known about what was inside their house. I never went in the house, but from the front it looked like quite an imposing villa-type house. Do you know what I mean? But I only ever looked at it from the gate, I wouldn't go up because of these boys, because they were mischievous, torments, you know what I mean, pull your hair or tweak your skirt or something and I was a bit timid then. I didn't go up there. But I would call from the gate "Tell your mum grandma would like to see her" that sort of thing. But I wouldn't go in. So I never really got near to that one.

Can you remember the front of the houses, the gardens for example. Did they have much garden up there? They wouldn't have that much work because it was on the rock but they would have narrow gardens like borders and that sort of thing. When I was stood by the gate there was a flat area there. I don't think they were gardeners though. It was a bit wild and with all those children, see, a play area was more important than a garden. *Can you remember what they looked like, Mrs Shaw for example?* Mrs Shaw was a short plump woman. She was a woman of her time, mothers tended to get plump then with multiple births particularly didn't they? She was a comfortable woman. She wasn't a fussy dresser, more times than not she wore a big apron, you know, which I suppose she needed, she probably spent most of her life cooking. She was a comfortable woman, she liked a little chat. She wasn't an ambitious woman, she didn't - as far as I knew she didn't go out to work. I suppose she had enough to do. And Mr Shaw I cannot remember. I can't remember Mr Shaw, I remember Mrs Shaw because she'd chat with mother or she'd chat with grandma.

It was a friendly sort of area was it, I mean everybody knew everybody else obviously Kinver was almost a closed village, everybody know everyone else and such a lot of families became inter-related. It wasn't until the war times when the evacuees came and that sort of thing that Kinver became wider socially and then the building started and all the nice green areas became covered in houses. *A lot of people used to come from Birmingham because it was a favourite.* Oh yes. I still remember before the war, you've got a place in Kinver called Potter's Cross and the buses came to Potter's Cross and I can remember Saturdays and Sundays queues five deep, a quarter of a mile on each road, because the Midland Red then said the number of people they brought in they would take out, and they would run till after midnight to get them back. Of course there used to be a tram.

There was a little museum by the sanatorium Did you ever go into it Yes, Rock House Museum. *What was it like?* A bit phoney. *Why was it phoney?* Well, I always thought it was because, I may be being unkind but all the saucepans and old things like that you know, I suppose you'd call them artefacts, A bit of Roman crockery *And who ran it do you know?* An elderly couple, I can't for the life of me remember their name. I think they charged you a penny to go in, I think. You know, you'd go in and come out feeling a bit dissatisfied that you hadn't had your pennyworth. And of course it was always

there when I was much younger so I wouldn't take the interest in it that I would now. So perhaps I missed something and I'm being a bit callous about it. But I always figured that it was a bit of a con really.

So you and the family left Holy Austin Rock. Was there any particular reason? Well, my father got a job as a gardener which was his love and he left. When was that? '35, I think. I know I was still at school because I used to travel quite a long way from Kinver to school. I used to go to a place called Brierly Hill. I used to go to Stourbridge and then to Brierly Hill. It's a long, long way. It is a long, long way, yes. But I passed an examination to go to that particular school and the school, believe it or not, the school paid my fares once a month. So there was no point in not going. How did you get there? By bus. I used to go down to Potter's Cross and catch the 10 minutes past 8 bus and I would catch the half-past 8 bus from Stourbridge to Brierly and then I'd got to come home at night. And when we first came to Kinver of course we used to live right down Kingsford Lane I'd got that long walk as well. And that was through the winter when it was dark.]

* Brierly Hill

Appendix 11

Transcript of part of tape

Mrs Rose Novak Holy Austin Rock 1949 - 1963

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mrs Novak

Lived in level 3 of Holy Austin Rock - they bought the 3 houses at the top of Holy Austin - father, Mr John Howell and grandmother, Mrs Rose Doyle. They bought the three houses in 1949. Mrs Novak married in 1954 and lived there with her husband until 1956 and then moved elsewhere in Kinver. When the left-hand house collapsed her father and grandmother lived in the middle and right-hand houses but finally left in 1963.

'We had a business in Birmingham, we had a green-grocer's there. My grandmother and father had lived there all their life, and so had I till that time. But we wanted to get out of the city and we saw this advertised and we came to look at it. And it was a very bad time to look at a place like that, it was a bad January, February, something like that, terrible, bitterly cold and I looked up there and I said "Oh that's it, I'm not going up there." Because it looked depressing, dark, it was a depressing day - looked like Castle Dracula perched up on top of a rock, bleak. But once you got there, it really was nice. They were like three separate cottages, two-room cottages, one up one down, but they let into each other. The two end ones had a big old-fashioned range in that you could burn coal, wood, anything in them. The centre one had I suppose you'd call it a Victorian tiled fireplace, you know the pretty tiles and things round. And so the centre one we had as a sitting room, the end one was the kitchen and the third one on the other end we just kept tables and chairs in for if it was bad and we had people for teas they could go in there instead of being outside. Because mostly people just sat out in the garden, with chairs and tables and there was two little summerhouses at either end which they could go in as well, which was quite nice. And the staircase of each of the three cottages was cut into the rock, into the solid rock - you can see the marks where they are now - and between the middle one and the far end one there was a little pantry cut into the rock, but the first one we used as a kitchen had got a big pantry almost half the size of this room cut into the solid rock. And there was a little tiny window about a foot by eight inches cut into the solid rock, the wall was about that thick, but it kept the pantry beautifully cool because it got no sunlight but the you^{give} the air coming through. And there was a sort of outhouse built on to the side with a wash copper in and you put a fire under and boil it, and a tap and sink.

The left-hand one, that was what we called the kitchen. The door was on the right, the window was on the left, the wall was right facing. And then you went in, there was a little tiny window that looked down the steps as you could always see us coming up the path, (down towards the left) only about a foot square. The big iron range was on the left, you went through there, there was a door at the back, and through that door the stairs turned sharply right, the pantry went straight ahead, the outhouse went straight to the left. Down the stairs you were at the wash boiler and the sink and the water tap.

The kitchen and the middle house connected through the bedrooms. The right-hand house, the end one, and the middle one connected through the downstairs, just behind the wall there was a door that led into the two. And in the middle one, the stairs was on the right-hand side on the back wall and on the left-hand side there was a little pantry, very high, cut into the solid rock.

Did you have any doors to the rooms?

Yes, they were heavy oak doors, thick, solid oak doors. There were quarry tiles on the floor. The sitting room had carpet down and we had a big carpet square in the kitchen but you would roll that up weekends and scrub the floor. We used to prepare the teas and that in there. I suppose the tiles were a bit cold but we covered them with rugs, except the end one, I mean we just scrubbed and cleaned those because of people traipsing in and out, you couldn't have anything down there that you couldn't clean well.

The walls were sandstone, plastered over, but the back wall that came right against the rock was covered with asphalt and it was pegged to the rock and then you painted over that. That was because the rock oozes water. Behind that it was sweating and oozing water down. The only trouble sometimes we had was with the flashing on the roofs - they were the three gable points, and where the gable points met the back of the rock sometimes water would ooze down the flashing there. That was always a bit of a problem there, could never seem to be quite correct that. And the rooms, the ceilings were like beams and plaster, exposed beams and plaster.

The houses were lit by gas. When it was hot in the summer you'd have the windows and doors wide open, at night-time you'd have the light on - and there's great big enormous moths used to come straight for the mantle - we used to get through more mantles. It was so strange because we'd come from electricity and them came into gas it was dreadful, absolutely dreadful. But you get used to it. It was piped gas, gas meter. And water from a tap, there was a well there somewhere. The well was dry. Apparently when they put in the pumping station this one and another one went dry - and this one was 180 feet deep, the second deepest one in Kinver. We used to get a lot of visitors in the summer, you know they was always looking down the well, and my father used to twist some paper and light it and drop it down so they could see it right to the bottom.

There used to be another set of caves. That was quite a big place; if anything it was bigger than the rooms of the other cottages but it was completely in the solid sandstone. There was a great big room; there was another big room at the back of that that must have been cut into that very big solid rock there. And there was a big range in this first one. There was a little tiny passage that led round into another room all cased in the rock. There was a little tiny one beyond that and you can see the hole that looks straight down to the bottom. That end cottage and that, there would have been a connecting door between those two and they blocked it up. We never knew that till the darned thing had fallen down. Must have been hidden behind the asphalt. No one was living in it - it was all ours - we had the whole lot. We used to use it for storerooms and that sort of thing. The hens' food and the pigs' food. We never knew until the whole place was pulled down that there would have been a connecting door between the two.]

Who lived in the rock below?

Nobody lived in the rock below but they used to come and do teas at the weekend the same as we did, but they had been inhabited.

[We used to grow everything in the garden. This was all flowers up here, and we planted fruit trees, apple and plum and pear. All here was damson trees and strawberry beds here. Down the bottom part we used to rent off the NT and the bottom field because that was access to it. We used to grow all sorts of vegetables, everything.

We were carrying orange boxes up to make nest boxes for the hens. We had a whole stack of them.

I'd got one each and father had got one in each hand, and these enormous black limousines drew up at the bottom and he says "Eh up, we've got visitors." And who should be the visitors but Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret and whoever there was with them. And they wanted to look around the rock houses. And of course you don't say no to them, do you. So my father says "Don't go empty-handed, get a box each and carry it up." Needless to say they didn't. But they came in, went all through the house, through the caves and all the way round. They were the same age as me - I was 23, Princess Elizabeth was 23, Princess Margaret would be 21. There was no warning at all. I don't even know what they were doing in this district. We had quite a lot of visitors up there but I think they were our most important ones.

There used to be a lot of visitors on those days and they'd want to look over the Rock, and my dad used to show them round and tell them some story - he used to tell them it was haunted. I think some of them believed him as well, but he could tell a good tale. They were quite interested. The only problem was the youngsters climbing - and of course it was like three pitched roofs and a chimney and of course it was a great temptation to throw something down the chimney. We used to have parties of ramblers and hikers and bikers.

In those days of course we hadn't got a lot of room in the houses - 'cos I mean we lived in the houses - so we used to have tables and chairs out on the front of the house. And if you had a rambling party, something like that, there was perhaps about 30 of them - so we used to pray for fine weather. And we'd sit them all outside, and of course they'd all got good appetites, you know, and of course you'd charge a set price for the tea which was about 1/6d in those days. And of course they'd wolf everything in sight and then they'd want more tea, more bread and butter - and the only way you'd stop that would be if you put the crusts on the plate! And that stopped them - they didn't ask for any more after that. Ooh - you never made a profit out of those because they'd eat you if you stood there long enough.

A lot came from Birmingham, Dudley, all places round. But of course when there were more cars about then, that stopped them a lot because they brought their own stuff with them, they didn't want a jug of tea or anything like that. Mostly it was when they came on the buses and they got off at Potter's Cross and walk up. We'd have queues of people waiting right out from the house, down the gate. The unfortunate thing about it of course there wasn't a proper toilet there, it was only one of those that you have to empty. We had mains water but no sewage. So of course you can't tell people they can't go to the toilet so we used to let them go but, my golly, we used to charge them a penny to go because we had to fill it with a chemical afterwards. It was round the back of the house - so in the winter it wasn't a walk, it was a two minute run round the back. And it was dark, and there always used to be an owl just on the path and as you were going it would go 'twit twod' and my golly you never run so quick in your life. It was eerie up there at night 'cos of course there was no lights, only your house lights. Talk about a two minute mile not a four minute mile round to the loo. But you could see right across to Brierly Hill and all the lights there - just looked like Blackpool. And then you'd get early in the

morning and it looked like you were on an island because it was just one sea of mist in the middle - you couldn't see anything. Really strange sometimes. But lovely. I loved it up there.]

Appendix 12

[Mr Wrigley

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mr Wrigley

Bold - Mrs Wrigley

This is a conversation recorded on the 27th September 1989 with Mr Ken Wrigley, a founder member of the National Trust Committee at Kinver in Staffordshire.

When we came on the National Trust there were only 4 members in 1928 including myself. *Who were they?* There was Mr Wilfred Perry, the father of the present chairman of the National Trust Committee, and T. Oliver Lee and Miss Rosalind Lee - those were the people who gave Kinver Edge to the village and there was a Mr Macmillan who was the first warden to be established on the Edge. His house was built round about 1922 and he was the first applicant to have it.]

Why did you become a member of the Committee? Well, they sent for me for the simple reason that the War Memorial was established up there and they decided to have it fenced round with railings and Mr Perry had got some extremely nice railings at his works at Old Hill and he decided to give these railings, and so he called upon me for my blacksmith to put them together and he did a little repair in places to put them together and establish them round the War Memorial. And of course I was the man in those days where they said well send for Wrigley if he can't do it it's no good going to anybody else and so everybody looked upon me and they asked me to join. *What was the purpose of the Committee?* Well, the purpose of the Committee was that they did what they possibly could in keeping the Edge in a reasonable condition because there was a tremendous number of visitors from the Black Country who came and still do today. Of course various things that had to be done and we had an Annual General Meeting at a café in the village, they all laugh at me when I say that now. Of course, there was a membership of something like about 18, I suppose.

[*Where did the money come from to do the things you wanted to do to the Edge?* We had to rely upon Local Authorities who contributed every year, once a year, sums of money of what they could afford and I remember on many occasions that we employed a besom maker to make some besom brushes to establish the wages for the warden. Of course the warden's wages was very small in those days, probably £2.10s a week, which is £2.50 now. *What did he have to do?* There was various jobs that he had to do, clearing up and improving various parts of the Edge and also in particular to patrol the Edge because it was a vast area, some 200 acres, which was far beyond the warden's house but we were very short of money for years. I told you that we even had to make besoms to try and retain the money for the warden in the 20's and 30's. *Were those besoms made by the chap who lived in one of the Rock Houses?* Yes, he lived in Crow's Rock. He was a rather characteristic man, I can't remember his name but he lived with some young lady, and I always wished I'd kept a photograph that was in the press. I don't know whether the County Express would still retain that photograph in their files, but I always wished I'd kept it because this young person had a baby and went to Kidderminster to have it and it shows in the photograph the elderly man, the besom man, on the Rock and he said "The boy stood on the burning deck waiting for his girlfriend to arrive from hospital" and it always fascinated me. The Reeve's family was in Crow's Rock, the Bill Reeves that is here now, it was his mother and father. His father was the head gardener of Kinver House, the Clark family, and he lived in a bungalow opposite and then when he retired he went to live in Crow's Rock, and I always remember seeing a photograph of

when he was sat on a seat below the rock face where they came out of the doorway and he was sat on a bench which he had there and you looked right across Wolverley, Shatterford, Arley, and the sheep walked right around, and a lump of rock came out of the top, describing it as big as an Austin 7, and it dropped in front of him, dropped straight in front of him and never touched him. He was there and it showed you a photograph in the press where this monstrous rock was described as big as an Austin 7 was in front of him and he was still sat on the bench. Well the besom man followed after the Reeves family, the besom man did, but he used to have the besoms off the Edge and make them up, you've seen these besom brushes and that, and that used to bring us in money to pay the Warden's wages.]

They also asked me if I could make some seats for Kinver Edge and we got the blacksmith and the timber yard as well and I think the first order that I had was for about 24. We had to erect them and of course that was a very difficult task to park them all over the Edge, they were a terrific weight, I made them so that they were strong and even there's one or two of them knocking around now. Still there. *Shows good workmanship then.* Well they were 7 by 7 posts and the bars across and then the back part was angle rail, two-and-a-half angle rail with a back part on and that went underneath and those were bolted and then it went back to the post so no vandals were able to attack them in any way. *Did you have vandals in those days?* No. Everything was left intact. It was never interfered with whatsoever.

Of course people were living in the caves at this time weren't they? Oh yes. There were three or four families. *You knew them?* Oh yes, very, very well. I know the Shaws family. They were in Holy Austin Rock and his uncle was in the adjoining part, the Shaw's uncle, Jack Shaw, he was living in the adjoining part which was part brick-work added on to the caves. I mean I knew of Shaws there, bred and born there and went to the local boy's school and girl's school and my sister went with the girls to the girl's school in the Vicarage Drive, Kinver. *It was a big family wasn't it?* It was a big family. Something like about 8, I believe, 4 sons and 4 daughters. And then of course their uncle lived next door, Jack Shaw. Well I used to see him and he used to come and see me regular up to the last three years. He's now passed on. **He worked at the gasworks didn't he, that Mr Shaw?** Claud Shaw was the oldest son worked at Dudley gasworks, **The father worked at Kinver didn't he? Kinver gasworks.** It was all under the Gas Company you see. Stourbridge Gas and Dudley Gas and all the Shaws were connected but Edgar Shaw worked at Richard Thomas Baldwin's at Swindon, the works at Swindon: (iron works)

But I've got some wonderful photographs of inside the cave. *Where is that taken, that photograph?* *Two boys sitting on two chairs* Where the Shaws lived that was. There's their hearth and firegrate and their mantelpiece and there's the cuckoo clock on the wall. *What were the walls covered with?* The sandstone was distempered with a proper, to stop the shedding of the sandstone, to seal it together, but it was perfectly clean and beautiful. *When was that taken?* 1953. *So they've deteriorated a lot since then?* Oh yes, well, the National Trust Committee decided when it was no longer used after the last two people were re-housed, Mr and Mrs Doyle, that's the mother was 80 years of age and the son was 60. Well when these people left it was open to everybody and the National Trust Committee found that they were starting to be vandalised so we got a builder to brick up the doorway and brick up the windows and within a month after the whole lot was demolished, and it went on to deteriorate continually We had suggested putting a fence round it but it was too much of an expensive job and then I'm afraid they went from bad to worse. However it's going to be solved I don't know, but the Manpower Services spent 12 months trying to establish and shore it up and concrete various parts that were unsafe but even that was demolished by vandals. And so we

were fighting a losing battle. There was a pillar of red sandstone holding the biggest part of the roof and somebody went one night with a chain saw and cut out a bird's mouth out of the sandstone, and left about that much holding thousands of tons. It eventually collapsed and the whole lot caved in !! The whole lot caved in and I said "Well that's the end of it." The only answer for that today and as I've said this in the Committee is to blow it up and make it safe, because there's been so many accidents with children clambering on the top and falling 50 or 60 feet below. I see no other way but the Chairman said "Well, if ever we demolished the Holy Austin Rock, he would hate to think what the people of the Black Country would say about it". And I said to him in reply "Well if the Black Country people were so interested in Holy Austin Rock, they'd try and avoid it from being vandalised". And I certainly wouldn't recommend to spend the volumes of money that's been left to the National Trust by Kinver people to be spent on trying to build that up again. You see the wet's got in, for one thing, in the roof. There used to be a tree growing on the roof, a fir tree. There's photographs of it. But the wet got in, through all this vandalism, and softened the sandstone, made it unsafe.]

Discussion on vandalism, motorbikes etc.

There's a photograph here of the Rock House Cafe at Holy Austin. The photo is signed "thanking you, Tug Wilson". Who was Tug Wilson? Tug Wilson was a gentleman who played centre forward for West Bromwich Albion same time as Arthur Fitton and that's his family and some customers where he provided the teas outside. He used to run the café? Yes, in the 1950's. And that's on the very end of the Rock? Yes. On the lower level? Yes that's right. The brick built ones are on the higher level above? The brick part which was added on is this side where Edgar Shaw's uncle lived, Jack Shaw.

Appendix 13

Kinver Directories

The various directories available in the Kinver Public Library have been consulted. The results add a little to the available information by providing approximate dates.

- 1912 Harry Martindale, Ironmonger, High Street, Kinver (assumed to be the same Harry Martindale of the following entries)
- 1916 Harry Martindale, Refreshment Rooms, Holy Austin Rock
- 1921 Harry Martindale, Refreshment Rooms, Holy Austin Rock
Mrs Ellen Carrington, Refreshment Rooms, Kinver Edge
- 1924 Harry Martindale (as above)
Mrs Ellen Carrington (as above)
Jas Davies, Refreshment Rooms, Kinver Edge
- 1932 Harry Martindale (as above)
Mrs Carrington (as above)
- 1936 Mrs Elizabeth Reeves, Refreshment Rooms, Holy Austin Rock
James Lewis, Refreshment Rooms, Kinver Edge
- 1940 James Lewis (as above)

Appendix 1b: Rock houses at Sladd Lane, Wolverley (see Chapters 5 and 7)

In Journal 2 of the Cookley and Wolverley Historical Society, Geoffrey Gilley records an account of life in the Sladd Lane rock house recorded by Bill Thompson in 1976. Soon after his birth in 1910, his mother moved to Sladd Bank, where she died in 1948. Bill Thompson himself lived there with her and his elder brother from 1910 to 1936, when he married and moved away. What follows here is Gilley's article, based on Bill Thompson's own tape-recorded recollections.

'This rock house was larger than most and must have been cut for a large family. Bill describes it as having a large living room-kitchen which had a tiled floor, a pantry ten feet deep and nine feet wide cut into the rear and two large bedrooms leading off the living room. The only door was constructed in two halves so that, by opening the upper, ventilation could be provided since the window did not open.

In the living room was a cast iron black-leaded grate which burned more logs than coal, and it was on this that all cooking and water heating took place. The floor was paved with red tiles, and these were usually protected with a layer of newspaper, a common practice at that time. Lighting was provided by candles or, when his mother could afford it, by a paraffin lamp. Outside were two smaller caves, one fitted with a furnace for heating large quantities of water and the other used as a storeroom. Water was drawn from a well 85' deep.' (Cp HAR)

'Bill remembers his home as being very cosy inside and looked back upon his life there as idyllic. He grew up as a typical country lad and recounts how he caught rabbits and sometimes a pheasant in the woods above his home. He had a wide appreciation of the wild-life which abounded nearby and remembers how a robin used to fly into the house when the half-door was open and how a red squirrel would perch there sometimes. Many birds came to the nearby trees, including nightingales, which were regular visitors to the district until the Second World War.

Bill particularly recalls his mother's sense of humour when talking of her home. She would talk of tiles being blown off the roof after a storm or say she was thinking of having the roof thatched or a new back door fitted. It is clear that Bill found his life as a cave-dweller most satisfying and in many respects superior to the way he lived in a conventional house after his marriage.'

last
[Appendix 6

Transcript of letter from Miss M. J. Freeman of 6, Foreshaw Avenue, St Annes-on-Sea, Lancs, FY8 2HT, dated 31st August 1978

Dear Sirs,

I have been sent your booklet by my Aunty, who lives in the Midlands, and knew I would be interested to read it.

My parents bought Holy Austin Rock Cottages - the gabled part - from Mr Jack Shaw in 1939, we moved into it in early February 1939, and Mr Shaw left about a month later to live with his daughter, Mrs Maud Goode in Birmingham, this will tell you that in fact the Shaws lived there until 1939, NOT 1935, he had a son living in Wollaston at the time.

The following year we bought the other part of the top level and the middle level from Mr Harry Shaw - the father of the person you mention - Jack and Harry were brothers, there was, I think, another brother.

The film you mention was shown in America as well as this country because an American Airman came to see where it was filmed, and told us he remembered seeing "the body" - a dummy - fall from the large fir tree on the balcony at the back of the caves, he was really fascinated to stand on THE spot, do you think maybe the film was lost out in America and not Old ^{Hill} Well it was during the turmoil of the war wasn't it?

You mentioned the Well, we were told by the engineers from the Waterworks, it was the deepest PRIVATE well they had recorded in England, it WAS in fact a stream running through the rock, I have marked it on a rough sketch which I enclose. My parents had the piped water brought up for the catering business which they ran, I think it was in 1940, but the well wasn't dry then, Dad had it filled in later because he was afraid some person or animal would fall in one day.

Yes we did have rugs and even lino on the floors, and wallpaper on the walls, it was very cosy in Winter. Mr Harry Shaw had the piped gas taken to all the homes, he was a gas worker, as you probably know. I went to school in Kinver with Barbara Shaw, his youngest Daughter, and Betty Fairbridge from Astles Rock, she called it the Rock House, her Grandma was there.

The one old lady was still living at Crows Rock, and had a very fierce white terrier, I have been trying to remember her name, I think it was something like Mrs Shillingford, she was VERY down on children, especially with dogs, which I had.

I have several photos of Holy Austin Rock in our time, and an etching of Mrs Fletcher at the door of the lower level and Mr Fletcher at their well, done by a Mr A.S. Watkins who was a friend of my Fathers.

We left in late June 1946 as the business had got too much for my Mother, I was by then working in Barclays Bank Ltd Amble. We went to Kingswinford, moving here in 1957, where my ~~after~~ father died a year later and Mother died three years ago.

(Father-?)

My father did a Broadcast from and about Holy Austin Rock which was printed in the Listener, I think the programme was "In Britain Now" he had to repeat the story as they had an echo from the window and our dog was quite clear barking at the visitors, he had his kennel by a big tea room Dad built by the tree you mention and I have a photo of him there.

We used our Pantry - the first one with the window - as an air-raid shelter during the bombing, and when the landmines were detonated on Enville Common, breaking Marsh and Baxter's plate glass window in the Village, it blew our door open and a crack started between the rock and the built part of the cottage, but this never got any worse when we were there.

The Holy Austin was a monk and teacher - I always thought he was a Franciscan Friar - this was in some book which my father read, he taught the children from round about, maybe a legend.

I hope this will be of interest to you, I felt I must write after reading your booklet, which brought many happy memories.

Yours faithfully

M J Freeman
(Mrs M J Freeman {SS St J}?)

Keep?

Appendix(5)

Detail of Deed of 29th Jan, 1964;

Between the vendors

Alfred John Howell and Margaret Rose Novak

and the National Trust

Sale for £113.19s of the area of ground which was excluded in the 1917 deed and is described as:

"All those pieces or parcels of land in the Parish of Kinver in the County of Stafford being the sites of four messuges tenements or dwelling houses and a piece of garden ground near thereto formerly the property of Charlotte Shaw and shown on the plan."

Appendix 7

Transcript of letter from Mrs Vera Haycox of 47 Woodward Road, Kidderminster, Worcester and dated 3 November 1988.

Dear Madame

My friend gave me this cutting out of her evening Express & Star paper.

I am enclosing the photo of my grandmother Granny "Genner" who died there at the ripe old age of 96.

My parents took me as a small girl to see my aunt Alice Martindale who also lived and died there. I can remember the shining Black leaded grate as we went in.

Very pleased you are going to reopen the Kinver Edge Rock Houses again. Harry Genner's daughter came over twice from America and she & I went to look at them about 1970. She was deeply moved to see them all boarded up, picking up a stone; I am taking a small token of my English Home back, & dearly loved my village of Kinver.

My mother too was born at Kinver. Christened, Confirmed and married there, but not at the Rock Houses, she hoped to be buried there, but it wasn't possible.

I am 77 years old, hope this will help your research a little. Good Luck.

NB

1 Mrs Haycox enclosed a newspaper cutting from the News Record (USA) of 12th July, 1972 from which we discover:

Mrs Paul Davies is the cousin of Mrs Haycox

Mrs Davies is the daughter of Mr & Mrs J.H.Genner

Mr & Mrs Genner and Mrs Davies came to USA in 1909 when Mrs Davies was 9

Mr & Mrs Genner managed a tea room in Kinver—

J H Genner was an estate gardener for Tom Wills—

Mrs Genner was the daughter of Tom Wills! —

The cutting includes details of the Davies family

2 The photograph of Mrs Genner ('Granny') is in the National Trust Collection reference KIN/I.D. It shows Mrs Genner seated outside house B and next to the well. The well has had several repairs and is in a similar condition to Vol 1, p21 (top and bottom). The National Trust index suggests that the photographs is c. 1900.

Appendix 8

[Transcript of part of tape

Mrs Handley and Mr Timmins

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mrs Handley

Bold: Mr Timmins

This is a conversation recorded on the 6th February 1989 in Netherton in the West Midlands with Mrs Margaret Handley and her brother, Mr Bernard Timmings. Both of them were born in Kinver. Mrs Handley is the elder of the two and was born in 1911. They lived with their parents and their other brothers and sisters in Kinver Mill House as their father was at one time the miller there. (It would be very useful to have the booklet written by Bills and Griffiths on the Kinver Rock Houses and refer to the two photographs on page 12.) The bottom one shows two houses round the north-west corner of Holy Austin Rock with a well in between. There seem~~s~~ to have been at one time three houses here, but the middle and lower one were joined together, and this was the house that Mrs Handley's grandfather lived in, together with her Aunt Greta. And in the photograph this house is just below the well. Mrs Handley said there were passages and rooms behind these houses, one of which could take a four-poster bed, and another large room which she called the ballroom. In 1921, Aunt Greta married the local postman, Harry Martindale. He lived in the little two-roomed house above the well and after their marriage they moved around the corner to the lower rock house on level one, which is at the top of the present flight of steps overlooking Compton Road. They lived there until early 1932 and you can see this house in the top picture on page 12. When Mrs Handley was about 14, that was in 1926, she used to help her aunt and uncle with the teas that they served to the many visitors to the rock, and there were steps directly in front of the house down to the area below which was a private route through the gardens and a quick way to take the trays of tea down to the visitors. The other nearest access to the house was via the less steep path on the right-hand side. To the left of the sandy area at the base of the rock, bordering Compton Road there were apparently extensive gardens, and the present trees were fewer and very much smaller than they are now.

The conversation with Mrs Handley and her brother Mr Bernard Timmings starts with a description of her aunt's home which is on the right of the present flight of steps on level one. Although she does occasionally refer to the well around the corner and to a water tap which was erected near the well.

*What was it like inside, can you remember what the rooms were like? It was just sandstone. These two rooms here, they were side by side. One was the kitchen come front room and that was a bedroom **to the right**. And that was all sandstone and there was like a fireplace where there was usually a great big fire, a really great big fire. It was a coal fire. *Where did the coal come from?* Well I think it came from down Kinver. *So how did you get it up here?* It was delivered in sacks. But it was a tremendous great big fire. Used to be lovely in here. **During the summer months they were extremely cool and in the winter they were quite warm and you know why don't you?** That being sandstone all the way round, it was like a huge storage heater. **The sun being on it all summer, meant it held the heat, and by the time it was cooled off it kept cool in the summer.** There was a great big range. They had the gas in by about 1925. *That made a difference didn't it?* It did. I think the rooms were tiled,*

perhaps with red tiles but I can't remember. The walls weren't rough, they were like sort of cleaned off. **If you look at them now they are much the same as they was except where the vandals have scraped into them. If you can imagine the sort of scrapings up there, that's as it was.** And the chimney from this here went right up through the rocks, through up by where Shaws is. **If you look carefully and see where the smoke's been coming up, there was actually a chimney built on to that with normal bricks.** In our Aunt Greta's kitchen, which was the kitchen-come-front room, I mean they didn't have proper furniture then did they? They had tables and chairs and they had a big dresser there, like a Welsh dresser. There was what could have been a sink underneath that window there but I can't remember where they got their water from. **For a lot of houses of that era it was quite a common practice to put one tap in the yard even locally. So everyone would use it. I remember there was a tap between four wasn't there?** But my Uncle Harry brought the water up and there was a tap somewhere there, and he put the tap water in. *For the pipes* I remember mother telling me that everyone had said he shouldn't have done that because he put steel pipes in where in them days everybody was using lead. **But he was doing the right thing as we know today. Before then where did they get their water from?** From the well I think. I can't remember the well. It could have been that the well was there but this part wasn't there. The top part wasn't there. Because we lived up by a place called Greyfields and they got a well there and we used to have to drop a bucket there on a rope.]

Aunt Greta's house there, it would be the kitchen as well, wouldn't it. We say it was the front room but it was a proper kitchen. They had a great big table in the middle. Because there were big rooms there, quite big. She put one of those sofas in. And there was a table. I know she got a great big mirror and it was supposed to be off the Titanic. It had a big gold frame and it was gigantic. She had a sewing machine. **Everyone had sewing machines then. Every house had one.** In the bedroom she had a dressing-table, an old fashioned one, and a wash-stand. She got two double beds in there because she got two children. *Where did you sleep when you stayed there?* We often only went when Aunt Greta was on her holidays and we slept in the beds, and if she was there, she would put a bed on the sofa and that sort of thing. She had a big, feather bed. It was nice. And that was underneath that window there because they got two windows, one in the sitting room (or general room) and one in the bedroom. It was all smooth walls. *Were they whitewashed walls?* No, they were just sand. There was a little pantry affair but it wasn't whitewashed or nothing was it? *So the walls were just left their natural colour?* I seem to remember somebody might have whitewashed part of it at one point. It might have been the pantry. There wouldn't have been much point of it because the sand was always falling away. We were always sweeping sand up.

Did you have carpets down on the floor? No, they just had rugs. **Podged rugs as they were in those days. Pegged rugs?** Pegged or podged. *How were they made?* You get a piece of hearden. This might be an unusual name to you but it was virtually sacking. A piece of sacking that they called hearden bags in them days, that was the old name for them, I don't know why but it was hearden. What they used to do was to cut any piece of woolly cloth into pieces about this long, about 4 inches, about 3/4 inch wide and they used to use what they used to call a podger. It had a little handle on the side and a point on the front and a clamp on the side. You pushed it through and pulled it through and it went in and out. They used to make a pattern up of these little loops. And they would stop at the top and any extra long ones they would cut them off with the scissors into an even length. They would back it with another piece of sacking that would stop the bits coming out. We sometimes referred to them as podge rugs because of the podger. There was

another simpler form of podgery that was just pushed through. *Was it similar to a crotchet hook?* Well it was something like that but instead of having to hook it through, this little lever would catch hold of the piece and pull it through and this would save going through both sides. It would push and pull it. *Is this particular to this area?* Possibly. I do know, that when I worked away up in the North of England just after the war in a project up in West Hartlepool and they would do a similar thing up there but they used to call them hooky mats. But they used to weave it. But of course what they would do, they used to draw a pattern on it first of all - they would put a row a red and perhaps make a flower of it sometimes. But they would always draw it on in pencil or crayon or something. *And you would use any sort of material that was available?* Anything really - woolly material and I mean knitted wool like cloth. In the latter years down on the farm I did some rugs with nylon stockings.

Did you help make the teas they used to make? Did they do that every day or just weekends? Well if anybody came, every weekend yes, but holidays, that was the most that was. When I helped my Aunt, my Granny would come to the cottage, she used to say, 'Go and see if there are any people who have come off the trams.' And we would see the first people come off and of course this was when they used to get the kettles on for the teas. They used to charge for the jug, about 6 pence I think, but you got to pay for it on the jug, I always remember that. You used to have teas with cake, jam, bread and butter and a pot of tea was one and six. They got a great big pot/kettle. I can tell you what they boiled the water in - it has just come to me! It was a huge black pot with a brass tap on it, and it was sort of that shape and that was on the fire and there was a long brass tap that was always shiny. They would keep that fairly hot so that when they wanted a quick boil up they would probably take it out and put it in a kettle. I can see it now, as clear as a bell, but right opposite that door in that picture Uncle built some posts up and some tables out there, it was to the right of them. He built it out there - it was called a tea arbour - and there was cover over it in timber.

What was in the gardens? He grew a lot of potatoes and I remember my mother was not very happy about it because we had earth toilets of course in them days. Imagine that you have come out and the steps are in front of you, if you turned at that path, it goes way down doesn't it? Now the toilet used to be at the end there, but the kids were put on there to take the pennies, because at the tearoom you had to pay a penny to use the toilet, which was fair do's. But I remember my mother saying very well that Uncle Harry used to use the toilet deposits to grow his potatoes in. He grew some very nice potatoes.

It had some lovely gardens, all roses at the front. You would go down a little path and it was all loganberries. I used to go down this path instead of going down the front, and I always used to help myself to some loganberries. There were some little bits of steps down there. My uncle used to get a big branch of a tree and put it right across and that would make the step and put the earth behind it. That held the step each time. I remember thick branches. Now that went to the bottom but I can't remember how you got out. There was some steps down, not regular steps. There was a bit of slope and then some steps. It leads out on to the road. I used to go through that way because of the loganberries. *It is very similar now isn't it?* Very similar. Somebody used to take ponies up and down there and charge them for rides. It used to take it into Hyde Lane, right opposite, but it wasn't fenced off. *Were there trees there at that time?* There were some trees, but as I remember it there was trees right across the

bottom against the green, and it went down into steps and there was all gardens, and you grew in that. It was like a sandy beach there. And they say that if you go down there you can almost smell the sea.

Imagine you came out of the front door like in the picture and you would turn left, and back down to the ground level, and there is a path runs up to the left. We always used to call that the running path. I don't know why it's called that, but us kids used to try and run down there and it was all loose sand, and we invariably got out of our speed and fall in the sand. You go on the top there and you came on to a huge field. We found a lot of crab-apple trees. It is very heavily wooded now, but it was a field at that time because we used to play on it. On the top there was hundreds of rabbits.]

[question to Mr Timmings by his sister]. You know Shaws, (I never went up there all those years) was that in a cave? Yes, just the same, the one on top. And that one had got nine or ten children. *But it wasn't built on, because later on they built houses on the outside didn't they against the rock? They probably extended it outwards afterwards, but actually at that time they were only caves? What I could never fathom out, considering there was children brought up on top on that house, I cannot understand why there wasn't some tragedies over there. There was no fencing. It must have been very dangerous? I never remember anyone having a fall. Of course, people fall in canals, but they never did so much in them days because you were oriented towards the system.*

Appendix 9

[Transcript of part of tape

Mr & Mrs Reeves

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Bold: Mr Reeves

Normal: Mrs Reeves

This is a conversation recorded on February 13th, 1989 in Kinver with Mr and Mrs Reeves. Mr Reeves' grandparents lived in Crow's Rock around 1928 to 1932.

There were two decks there, two different houses one on top of the other and I'll give you an idea of what it used to be like. You look at an old tram and it was all this across the front, all the rooms were across the front, just at room depth into the rock and you had to go from one room to another to get to another to get to another

Were the rooms as big as they were in Holy Austin?

Oh yes, you could get a double bed in each one and a wardrobe and a dressing table

Is that two separate rooms there?

Yes. To look across the front you got, I think granny got 4 or 5 windows of about 4 foot square but there again there was another deck above us, I can't remember the people who lived in there. They've always had two names - Crow's Rock and Vale Head. Vale Head I believe has taken its name from the other side of the road, Kingsford Lane, where there used to be a farmland.

Was the area very similar outside as it is now or was it overgrown?

You wouldn't have recognised it then, there was a lovely orchard at the front, apples, pears, damsons, plums. On top of that there was plenty of rabbits around. You never went short of fresh meat. There were special rabbit traps, you could catch a rabbit alive in the garden. *That supplemented the diet a bit?* Oh yes. And there was just at the bottom lane at the other side of the road past Kingsford Lane when you get down there, there was a little bit of a farm or a smallholding. They used to supply the people around with eggs and milk and things like that. *What were their names?* All I can remember is Jim, I think it was Jim Field or something like that. It was right opposite the lane. It isn't there now. The lane, it's what leads up to that, like it used to be, because obviously the coalman used to drive more or less right up and all he had to do there... I've walked from here just down to the opening, about 25 - 30 yards with the coal. It was all level going where you used to come up with it.

In 1932 Mr Reeve's grandparents moved to Holy Austin Rock and occupied the house below the well on level 1, while Mr Reeves and his parents lived in the corner house. They were all there until around 1939 - 40. We looked first of all at a photograph of the corner house, the front door of which is to the left of the present flight of steps. 'When were these photographs taken?' 1934. 'And you've got a little porchway there, I haven't seen that in any other photograph.' No. 'What's that, corrugated iron top?' Yes. 'Is that a

water tap outside? Yes So you had mains water Yes, and gas So, was that the only water there, there wasn't any in the houses? Not in this one, the one round the corner had it inside.

Your parents moved into Holy Austin-did they have to do a lot of work to it? No, well what they did they just give it an extra coat of Walpamur, paint on the walls like to clean it up which wasn't bad because it had only been empty about a month. But did it to their own liking before they moved in. And my father and mother helped them out. With that soft rock did you get a lot of dust and things in the houses? Well the Walpamur held it back you see. What you used to do, you used to do it about once a year you see. I can remember dad doing it, it's about time we did the walls and he'd go out and he'd spend about a pound or one pound ten and buy the stuff. We'd come back and we'd get a hard broom, a really good hard bass broom and go over all the walls and the ceilings and everything. Clear the room out completely and do one room at a time. Then you get 90% of the loose stuff off and then you used go over it then with a couple of coats of Walpamur - dusty job. Once you got the Walpamur on, it used to hold it and bind it together. When you did it your walls were sealed more or less. Of course I mean there's no point in putting one coat on, with one coat you lost it, the first coat soaked right in. It used to soak in 1/4 of an inch at least. So you got to keep putting coat and coat on till you've built the layers up to stop the dust.

The windows were ordinary windows with ordinary glass but they've got bars in on this one. Was that to keep somebody in or to keep people out? The windows used to open, just open like ordinary windows, but they'd only open up to the bars to allow fresh air in. You hardly ever shut a window or a door even during bad time during the winter. Leave them open. It was a healthy life. Yes. Now that door there, what I would call a latch door? Yes. What we'd call a ledge and brace door. Now that was the front door was it? That was the front door. What are these flowers all around the outside? Rose trees. Rose trees climbing up the walls there? Around the windows, I bet that was pretty. There's a wire across there That's the clothes line. I wondered for a minute whether it was a power line but it wouldn't have been with gas. No, a clothes line. Look at this. Beautiful borders and flowers and things. It must have been very pretty. Oh yes. Considering the depth of the soil there was there, not much, it was just sandstone. You only got about three or four inches of soil but they used to grow.

This pathway up here It's all old bricks. And where did they come from? Anywhere, pick them up. Old quarries and things. I suppose that helped to keep the dust down outside We had to do something like that you know. It looks quite good, doesn't it really We had a bit of a rockery there, against the side of the porch. And you've got shovels there They're for dad's job, he was a beater. A ranger, for beating out fires, they called them beaters. Did you get a lot of fires? Well we did do, I mean he had some rangers here for four or five days at a time. Did you have numbers to the houses or was it just known as Holy Austin? Well, ours was no 1 & 2, my gran's was no 1, it was on the front opposite the car park. And we were no 2 around the corner. And the Shaws, that was no number at all. It went on the top and they sorted it themselves.

Were you very friendly together? Oh yes, I went to school with the lads and my sister went at the same time. So you were like a little community there. And the Shaw family, let's see, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 there was 5 sons and about 4 daughters. But there was two families of Shaws living on the top. Two brothers - elderly brothers, both been married but the one got I think it was about - 9 in the family and the other only got

MF the one. And of course he'd lost his wife, just the father and son used to live in the one, the one small one. [You don't mind me asking but who actually owned the rock houses, I mean who did you pay your rent to?] The National Trust. *Do you know how much the rent was?* We used to pay, I think we used to pay 7/6 a week at Holy Austin. (34.5p)

Now we're going to look at photographs of Mr Reeves' grandparents house below the well. Let's just go to the inside one. Which room is that? That's just inside the front door. That's the front door. That's the bedroom. And the one at the back here, you can't just see it, is another doorway into what they used to use as a pantry. Cut right into the sandstone rock. Nice and cool? Yes, very cool. Because these houses were very snug, weren't they. Yes. Warm in the winter and cool in the summer. In the summer you could put a pint of milk in the interior of the sandstone and it would keep perfect just like being in the fridge.

My mother and father used to have a little wooden frame with wire mesh gauge over, and that used to stand in the centre of the rock and it used to keep all these things cool and there were no flies or anything. In the centre of the rock you never saw a fly. It was too cold for them. I

Looking at this picture inside the front room, now we've got the gas mantle, so that was laid on, and it's got two chains on either side so it's a typical gas mantle, isn't it. Lovely. And the roof looks very sort of rough there. Yes it is, Just like whitewashed or stonewashed you know. What we used to call Walpamur in them days. So you used to do that to the walls just to make them to make them a little more attractive, otherwise they'd be what colour? Red. You can see the layers of the sandstone Can't you? Fascinating.

Were they light inside? They look very dark in this picture. Well, to an extent yes. This room had just the one big window in here and you can just see the window there the other side of the doorway for the bedroom. Now the bedroom had a little fireplace in it just the same, but the big fireplace over here where my gran used to cook all her stuff on was down this side, the old-fashioned black-lead grates with the two little hobs and everything on. That was coal presumably. Yes Where did the coal come from? How did you get it up there? Well, the fellow used to bring it up round the other side, on our end because he could drive more or less up within about 25 yards of the back door. The same fellow and the same firm still deliver us with coal. Really? Yes, his father and father before and now the sons do it. Mr Dick Morris.

The place where we lived in and that room that I told you that Gran kept all her tools and coal in, that is one big room now. Have you been in it? That was divided up into three. The front end, that's on the field side, was the kitchen and the middle part was my bedroom and the other part then was Gran's coal place and a store. And originally it was all one room and in the very very olden days, as far as I can recall anyway, it used to be a kind of a dance hall. It was 10, 15 yards long by 4 or 5 yards wide. There was one, two, three, four, five rooms in there.

So you have two living rooms in there? Yea, a kitchen and a living room, a scullery as we used to call it then where you used to do the cooking and washing up and things. Two, no three bedrooms. What did you have on the floors? Most of the floors was done in the red quarry tiles laid on ashes. It must have been difficult because it was uneven floors? Well that's what it is, you had to get it down as flat as they could then they put the bed of ashes down and then they put the quarries on. As they

used to use in old fashioned days, same as when they build houses, they used to build them with ash dust. Lino and just home made mats on the floor. Used to make them out of hessian sacks and bits of old cloth. *And was there enough room to have any large bits of furniture?* In the kitchen, we had the big cooking range, on top of that we got a big white wooden top table. Four of us could sit round comfortable with four chairs. There was a sideboard for all the crocks and everything to go into, and there was was two sideboards more or less in the one kitchen. It was a fair sized room could be 16 feet square that one big one.

Did you have the old fashioned brass bed, because they had those? We got round them, we had wooden frames then. You could go out and buy them. In mother's bedroom, she had a double bed, a chest of drawers and a wardrobe in her bedroom and a couple of small chairs. *Very big then weren't they?* Oh yes *Spacious?* In comparison to today's standard I would say they were slightly larger than today's rooms. Or some of those pokey little rough places you walk in today are like match boxes. *Did you have any problem with condensation, anything like that?* No.

There's an awful lot of trees up there now now. Oh yes, there's a terrific lot now to what there used to be. *Was it all sort of fairly open?* Yea, there was only a lot of fruit trees, damson trees and apple trees in there then, when we were up here. My grandad used to look after this part here and cultivate all this end, and my father used to do it round our side. *So those are the gardens?* Yea, what little bit of garden they had there, you know, just little bit of borders and things like that. Both my father and my grandfather were both gardeners. *Did they grow any vegetables at all then?* Round our side we did yes. And what used to water the garden was the overflow from the sink. It used to run from the sink down through a little pipe into like a big soakaway. When it overflowed it watered the garden. So we used to get plenty of moisture in the ground and plenty of good nourishing food. *Yes I bet.* I know your dad was a landscape gardener, but looking at the gardens round there, normally it's just a rock and you go on to gravel isn't it, but there it's laid out like a proper garden. *He was a landscape gardener was he?* Yes.

You see here, these are tables, they are all made out of silver birch and we used to serve teas upon those, during the weekends and in the summer. *Where did all the people come from?* All round the Black Country. We used to dish up a pot of tea for four with bread and butter and home-make cakes and jam for half-a-crown in old money. *That was good value then.* And people used to lap it up. If there was a family of four they'd have half-a-dozen cakes, about 7 or 8 slices of bread and butter and a pot of jam and a pot of tea and sugar and milk all laid on the table. And they used to pay half-a-crown for the lot. And they walked away pleased. Then people used to come just for a jug of tea and I took them four cups like. All that they used to get for two shillings and they used to get sixpence back when they brought the jug and cups back. My mother and I used to do most of the teas in the summer and of course I used to make all the cakes then when I was only 10 or 11 year old. I used to stop in Friday night, come home from school Friday night, and that was my night then, making cakes ready for the weekend during the summer. I think I used to make 100-150 small little cakes, and then cutting up bread. We had uncut bread then and I used to cut more slices out of a loaf than what they cut today, even on a thin slice. *There's a knack in it is there?* Yes. I cut up 6 loaves and used them.

We used to have a big kettle which was kept on the boil. It used to hold a gallon of water, we used to get that on the gas stove. That was put on Sunday mornings just after we'd finished dinner more or less. We used to cook dinner and do teas, jugs of tea every Sunday. *That's a job isn't it?* Yea, there was one cooking dinner and one looking after teas and stuff. *Did you know when the visitors were going to come, did they all arrive at the same time?* Oh no. They'd start at Sunday mornings at 10 o'clock and they'd go on all day then 'til 7 o'clock at night.

You know where the National Trust, where the Warden's house is, and that area where you go up to the ridge there, which is fairly wooded now, was it always like that? It's always been wooded, but not to the extent that it is today, it's more overgrown to what it used to be. It was a more open area. They've thinned it out a lot to what it used to be over the last few years. The wood has just outgrown itself a bit on the top, nothing to speak of, it's more or less just the same. You could still play a full football match. It's been knocked about a bit and eroded a bit but me and me dad, we used to play football and cricket up there, more or less a full size cricket pitch up there, we'd go and have a game of cricket, sometimes you'd see blokes going there with a golf club.

That was a clump of trees down by the Keeper's house, just in front of the Keeper's house at the front there. They've more or less always been there, of course they've grown to extend the area, but not much. They may have doubled the size but that's about all. That forest on the side there, by the Keeper's house, that had been kept under control and that's not extended at all it's just grown up that's all. They were only small trees at one time. The same as that other one where we had the huts underneath. There's always been a hut there underneath. They've renewed it and done it up.

Appendix 10

Transcript of part of tape

Mrs Taylor (née Reeves)

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mrs Taylor

This is a conversation recorded on the 22nd of July 1992 with Mrs Taylor, who lives in Telford, Shropshire. Her maiden name was Reeves and her family lived in Kinver for several years. There's an interview with her brother which was recorded in February 1989 which is already in the archive. Mrs Taylor and her mother and father and brother lived on the lower level of Holy Austin Rock, overlooking the present car park on Kingsford Lane, between 1933 and 1935, and her grandfather and grandmother lived on the next level just around the corner where the well is, and Mrs Taylor often refers to some excellent photographs that she has of the Rock houses. First of all though she told me how her family first came to Kinver long before they went to live at Holy Austin Rock.

My grandmother moved there about 1926 and my grandfather was a head gardener and he moved into Kinver to become head gardener at a house in Churchill where a family called Clark's lived and they had the little cottage opposite which went with the job. And I was about 6 then and when I was about 12 my father was out of work and we moved to Kinver to be near them because my father was also a gardener and my grandmother said "Well, there's jobs here, come over." So we moved over to Kinver. But we didn't move into the rock house then. The rock house was our second home, the first one was down a lane that leads towards Wolverly, a little bungalow down there, and then we moved up to the rock house 'cos my father got the job as ranger on the edge. We moved to Kinver in '32 and we moved into the rock house in the summer of '33. These pictures here were taken in April '34. *That's on the lower level isn't it? Oh yes That's the lower level one and that picture shows your mother and father then? That's right yes.*

And here right in this pile of rockery was a lovely well, but there was no water in it, but it was as round as a penny in solid red sandstone right to the bottom. My father used to roll a newspaper up and light it for people and he'd drop it down and it would flutter down and then you could see this round but how on earth it got there I just don't know but it would just about hold a slim man so it was chipped out, somebody had to go down, you can see the chip marks all the way round it, but it was rounded, straight all the way down. The people who'd occupied this before us, and I don't know who they were, they'd used it for dumping garden rubbish and that sort of thing.]←

Well now let's look at this photograph. We're looking at the lower level and on the right, the first entry on the right, there's this little porchway made out of wood and slats and things like that. So if you went in that door, that's your front door is it? Yes Now what was in there? Tell me what was in there. You went into the living room and on the left was the window, that window, and along the other wall leading left on the left wall was a large black fireplace, you know the things you did with black lead that sort of thing. I remember thinking "wasn't it marvellous to have hot water" because one side of the grate was a tank with a tap on the bottom and you filled this tank and your fire it kept the water hot and you got hot water not for drinking but for washing it was marvellous, we got water on tap. It was great in 1932. She used to put the kettle on, you know there was a bracket comes out from the top of the grate above the fire, bring it forward and put

your kettle on the hook and that was in a sort of little recess and on the side of that recess coming out like that there was a metal door. When you opened it, it was just a big hole in the rock and originally that had been a baking oven. People made their own bread. They'd light the fuel in there, sticks and straw and stuff and let it burn itself out and then they'd pop the bread in and cooked it and when you got bread with a black bottom, do you remember it, oven baked.* Used to make batch cakes my grandmother called them but my mother never made any but that was what it was originally meant for. Who put it in I don't know.

→ [I remember the day we moved into the rock house my mother had a beautiful big carved sideboard, one of those big ones with three sections and a lot of mirrors at the back, all carved and it had got a lovely, carved, shaped top and they could not get the top onto the bottom because the ceiling was too low so up comes father with a chisel and hammer and cuts the ceiling out to fit. Of course you couldn't move it anywhere else, it had to stay there. *That was very convenient really.*

The ceilings were never coloured. We had all our walls done with the white, whitewash, but the ceilings were never covered because to begin with they weren't flat, it was almost as if water had shaped it, it was in waves the rock, only shallow, half-an-inch. *It's rather like the sand isn't it when the sea's been over it.* Because originally on Kinver Edge, now you can come across shells, originally there was water, you know I'm not talking about centuries ago, I'm talking about millions of years ago, and it was the water that did that, and we never covered ours.]

Let's get back to your front room again. As you go in through the door, what about the wall in front of you. Well the facing wall, that's where we put the big sideboard. What sort of furniture did you have? We didn't have anything like a sofa or a settee, but we had a set of chairs with, they were individual chairs with a carved back and a padded seat - the old-fashioned type. There was a couple of chairs under the table, the table in the centre, the old scrubbed white table, you had to put a cloth on. That was it more or less, there might have been - underneath the window there was a cupboard with a drawer on the top, two drawers on the top and two doors, you know that sort of half way up cupboard. That was about it. So where did you keep things like food? Well my mother had, in those days you had a wooden box with a wire mesh front, she had a large one of those - it kept the food cool and kept the flies away. Where did you keep that? In the kitchen. Beside the sideboard was a door leading into the bedroom and on the right-hand wall was another window. There was two windows in the living room. You went into the bedroom and there was a window on the right, it was just a square room in the rock sort of on the outside of the rock, so you that you'd get the light through the window and leading from that bedroom was a narrow passage that sloped up into what we called the ballroom. That was an interior room, no window. Why did you call it the ballroom. Because it was enormous, my father christened it the ballroom, big enough to hold a ball in here he said because it was huge. When I was young I used to put little plays and concerts on and all my friends joined in and it was that big that we could do that even with my brother's bedroom furniture in there was still room at the one side to put an imaginary stage and candles in jars and that sort of thing, to do that. A lot of fun. Yes it was.

There was just you and your brother, and that's all the family was it. Just the two of us. What about the size of that first room, how big was that? The living room. Yes. So what are we talking about, 14 by 12? Oh yes, and the bedroom was almost as big and then of course as I said the ballroom was enormous. Ceilings were? The one in the ballroom was very high, but they were normal height in living room and the first bedroom, and out of the ballroom you went through a doorway which had a door on it, the passageway

didn't have a door, and into the kitchen which had a flagged floor, you know, red flags and there was the gas cooker in there and a kitchen sink and water on tap. And from that kitchen you went through a little doorway which was shaped exactly like a coffin, we used to call it the coffin doorway, into my bedroom, which didn't have a door on but there was an outside door that you walked straight out into the garden from my bedroom and there was a window in it, that was a much smaller room.

The living room was lit by gas, the bedrooms weren't. There was gas in the kitchen for the cooker. I can't remember there being a gas light in there. Mother always had oil lamps available you know. *What about heating?* There was just the fire in the living room, no other heating. *So the bedrooms might have got quite cold?* Well, cool, but they never got icy, not in the way a modern house would because the red sandstone seemed to absorb the sunshine all through the summer and we got the benefit of that in the winter. And in the summer it was nice and cool because we got the winter cool. It was very pleasant, and I can never remember feeling dreadfully cold, we used to have oil heaters on cold nights that was just the atmosphere, the air you know, having a door and a window in my bedroom made it a bit cool, but it was an enormous piece of rock, it never got icy. *What did you burn in the stove, coal, wood?* Both, not just wood, my father, being a gardener, he was aware of the value of trees and he didn't go round cutting trees down or anything like that. If he found a piece of wood broken off he'd bring it home, but normally we had coal. Because beyond my bedroom was another cave which he stored his gardening tools and the coal in.

How did the coal get up there? It was delivered in those days, the coal men delivered the coal didn't they in sacks. There's a garden path down leading opposite our entrance door, right down the slope, and that led into a field and there was a cart track across this field which led to the main road, and the coal man came up with his horse and cart to the bottom of our garden gate and then he carried the coal in sacks. *So there's a front door on the right then a window then another window which looks into the kitchen then a door which goes into the kitchen then another door which goes into your bedroom then the bedroom window.* That's right *Then there's a big cave up there* Used as a tool shed

Now in this photograph we've got a paved path, is that paved or is it bricked? Bricked - and that was already done when we went there *I see* Whoever had done it I don't know. *But the garden, you've got trailing roses.* You see my grandfather's house had no garden because it was very steep at the front, just had those steep steps. This garden was huge and father had part of it and grandfather had the other and between them they used to grow everything you could think of. They'd got fruit trees and they'd fruit bushes you know, elderberries, raspberries, blackcurrant, gooseberries and all the vegetables *There doesn't look like there's the room up there to do that* Oh yes, if you get a good gardener he can grow a lot in a very small space and my grandfather was a very good gardener.

My father liked his flowers more than his vegetables and, this is the delicate bit, you come out of there and down the path and there was the lavatory which was a bucket type. It wasn't a flush type so father had to empty it, he was quite glad of it on the garden. *That was inside the rock as well.* Oh yes, it had a wooden door and it had a wooden seat, and in those days it had two apertures *A two-one was it?* Yes. *So that's on the right of the house then, so you came out of the main door and turn left.* Looking at the house it was on the right, down a little curved path.

What about your grandmother's house, can we talk about that, did you know that very well? Oh yes of course. *So what was that like inside, was that as large or smaller?* It was smaller than ours, it was still two bedrooms and a living room *Can you walk me through that house as well, if you go in through the main door which is in the middle of*

the two windows. The two windows either side of the main door, is that all? Well, you go in there and directly you get in on the right, is another door that goes into the bedroom. That window on the right of the door is the bedroom. That is the living room On the left And they did have a sort of larder, off the living room to keep their food and that in. But her house was smaller than ours, because we moved in virtually the same time, we got the big one because of having a family and she got the small one.

Now you had a porch built over your front door. Had she got anything over hers? Oh yes, she had A very elegant one! It had a cast iron roof? (Photographs, Volume 1, page 10). Corrugated iron roof. Look at the bars on the windows! What were they for? I don't know, they were there already, perhaps they had small children the previous people. They were there already. This was my grandmother's tap. It's directly outside the door on a stand, on a proper wooden plinth and the porch was half wood, glass by the looks of it on the sides, and then this little pointed corrugated iron-I believe that was there when she moved in. Ours wasn't, my father put it up, a rough and ready thing, because eventually it did become covered in roses, that was the idea, it was just a structure for the roses. And that chimney, over there, that brick built chimney? Yes, that's her living room chimney.]

Can you sort of think about that room in your mind and tell me what was in it? You have a picture of it. (Photographs, Volume 1, page 11). That was an umbrella stand, and that was half the wing of an aeroplane when they made them in strips and glued them together. Because her son-in-law used to be in the RFC - the Air Force, and there was a sideboard there. Where's the front door? That's it. So we're coming through the front door which was a wooden, slatted front door with a sort of a latch, probably, was it? A latch and bolt, yes. A latch and bar. So you'd come straight in, on the right, that door on the right is into the bedroom. Yes. I see, then in front of you you've got the dresser, the table, the pictures and a lovely gas mantle and the glass surrounding it and two long chains, one to pull it up and one to pull it down. Yes! Normally they were situated over the table weren't they, you had to lean over the table to light them, so the chains were there for convenience. There's a tiny clock on the wall! Yes, my aunt, my grandmother's eldest daughter, bought her that back from the Black Forest at the end of the First World War 1920/21, and she had a most beautiful cuckoo clock from there as well, and all the workings were made of wood. My daughter has it now, of course it doesn't work, the wood shrunk to the point where it was longer feasible to mend it. These were two plastic love birds hanging on the end of the chain, I say plastic, they'd be celluloid in those days, wouldn't they? So she had a table and she's got lots of bits of chairs in there and so on. What do you have on the floor? Along with us there was linoleum down, and those rugs they used to make, rag rugs, they didn't have carpets, they had rag rugs, but they were lovely and thick when they were made. They were quite cosy if you had enough of them. Right. So we're in this room and looking with the front door behind us. Anything on the left? The firegrate - immediately the window was on the left - but on the left wall was the firegrate and it was arranged similar to ours, the black leaded type. Was there a door on that wall? No. There was a little door on that wall to this little larder affair, it was only like a rock cupboard with a little wooden door on it. It was a walk-in one, but quite small, you know, two by three, something like that.

[*Tell me about your grandparents, when they lived at Crow's Rock, Yes, I can't remember when they moved into Crow's Rock. I know, I used to go there when I was 11, I might have gone before then. So that would be '31? Looking back I can't remember how many years, I just know that in '33 they were in Holy Austin. I don't think they were there a long time, you know not 10 years or anything like that, I think it was only a few years. What was the house like there? It was a three bedroomed place,*

that was where they had that lovely larder I told you about, built into the rock. They had gardens sloping down from there. I remember there was a trap was in the garden and the trap, a round metal bin sunk to this level in the ground, with a lid that swung on a pivot, and my grandfather said it was there to catch rabbits. Once they got in they couldn't get out you see. I used to nip down there every morning to see if there was a rabbit because I was going to let it out and I never once found one.

But they had an orchard, they had damsons and apples which seemed to be the thing in those days. My grandmother used to bottle them and do all sorts of things with them for the winter you know. She was a great one for that, jam, and he had his vegetables. He loved his garden and he was a gentle man and he could sort of gently do his garden all day long and the most beautiful stuff used to grow, he was just a natural.

We'd been down to Crow's Rock to have a look and I was quite disappointed because I wanted my husband to see it, but we couldn't get in. It's all done up with quite high barbed wire isn't it? And we couldn't get through to go up to Vale Head.

I remember the little old lady who lived in Vale Head Rock, she was a Miss and I think her name was Nightingale. I can see her. She was a tiny little woman, very old-fashioned clothes right down to her ankles and boots that laced up and the sweetest nature, she was lovely. She lived there, she was born there and her parents had died there and she lived on there, she lived to be quite old. But I got a little Irish Terrier and she loved this little dog and whenever we met her, she used to go down on her knees and she used to hug this little dog and Judy the dog loved her and all, they used to have such a sweet match together. She was the sweetest person. If my gran, it was quite a long walk from Crow's Rock to the village for shopping, if my grandmother was going to the village she'd say "Do you want anything? I'll bring it with me" Alternatively, if she was going she'd ask grandmother. They didn't live in each others laps but they were good neighbours. I don't know what happened to her because we'd left the area by then. *So this lady lived where?* Above Crow's Rock - there was two rock houses in it. If you looked at Crow's Rock you saw Crow's Rock house on the left, and up higher, on the right, was Vale's Head. And they shared this lovely well.

The day the rock face fell at Crow's Rock. It was summer. As she went in through the door with grandad the rock face collapsed. Shortly after that up came the officials and condemned the house as being unsafe. It was the cave front that they used to use as a garden shed - it wasn't the house itself.

The besom man - he made besom brushes from birch twigs. His caravan was very very old and when he realised Crow's Rock was empty he simply moved in and he was there for some years before he died. And at one point a lady from Birmingham with two children moved in with him. Her name was Pat. This was in '31 or '32.

Let's turn back to Holy Austin Rock and this photograph which shows your grandparents house. There seems to be very little room for any sort of garden there. (Photograph Volume 1, page 10) This, the edges there, that's all they had because then it dropped down steeply that it couldn't have been cultivated. In any case my grandfather then was in his 60's. He was in no shape to do a lot of gardening, he just loved pottering about at the little garden he got round on our side But he's got one or two shrubs and things Oh yes he's got a rose up here. Climbing rose around the window. And is that ivy up over there, over the porch Yes, that's ivy. And under the window on both sides of the front door there's little stone borders with flowers and climbing things and so on and then on the left of the front door there's a little stone seat there, is that a stone seat or a wooden one? No, it's a wooden one, trunks for legs, you see what it is, my grandfather made it.

There's a little niche there, with a little figure. The little niche was there and grandmother filled it with that. Grandfather put the rock plants in. *It's lovely. Yes they look very comfortable don't they, very welcoming places.*

My mother used to do teas, bread and butter, jam and scones, and a pot of tea, ninepence each, old nine pence. Fruit and cream with it made it up to a shilling. In those days there were a lot of cycling clubs, and they used to come in from the Birmingham area, and there'd be 20 or 30 of them, and they would book ahead, and my mother would have teas for them all. It happened quite a lot. It was the cycling time of the century. You know the cars were few and far between and cycling was a nice speedy way to get around. *So how did they let her know, did they write to her* They would write to her, yes *So what was the address, the official address?* D'you know, I can't remember the number *I suppose there were only three of you up there, three families* Yes, you see there were two Reeves families, because my father being the son he had the same name as his father obviously, and the Shaws, so it was just a question of sorting it out with the postman. It was always the same old postman, he knew who was who. See, my grandfather was W.H my father was S.H so as long as the initials were there we got our mail. But it was just Holy Austin Rock, I'm sure it was.

So you had a lot of people coming to teas then Yes, weekends quite a lot throughout the summer. And my father built some tables, and here on this side of the rock we got a flat lawned area and he built rustic tables and seats and they sat out there, there was no room in the house, so if it rained we knew no-one would come, but if it was a nice day they would come and sit at the tables outside *Did you help with the preparation of the teas?* Oh, I had to help. In those days you didn't argue you helped. Not that it seemed a chore. I tell you why it didn't seem a chore at one point because my mother said to me "If we make enough money this summer, you and I will go to the seaside together and leave your dad and your brother here, you and I will go to the seaside! It was great and I worked like a tiger and sure enough come September off we went to Rhyl for a week. It was lovely. (Of course Mother made all her own jam and scones and cakes in those days, cream you had to fetch it didn't come tinned. But it was all good food and people came back time and time again. *Where did you get milk and cream and things like that from?* Oh, it was delivered. They brought the churn to the door with a lovely big scoop on a handle, remember them? Down into the churn, two pints today Mrs Reeves."

You, in fact, only lived there for how many years? From '33 to the beginning of '35 *So how old were you then?* In '35 I was in my 15th year. *So what was there to do for a 15 year old?* Oh, I had a friend who lived just down the lane and we walked a lot. It was the thing. You didn't miss television because you'd never seen it anyhow. Radios were mostly battery driven so that you didn't have them on all hours. In those days the battery was a square thing with a handle on it that you took away to be charged up every now and again. *Accumulator* Yes, that's right.

Oh we just walked around, and at 15 we found some boys to walk around with, there were always Boy Scouts, Kinver was a great place for Scouts. In fact my husband was one of them. We used to go and watch them as young girls, you know, it was lovely to see the scouts. We used to look forward to the weekend when they all came down. It was so innocuous and so innocent in those days. There was no question of - I can't remember my mother warning me, it was never necessary. You know, she never said "just be careful what you're up to." She never said that. She used to say "Be home by such and such a time" and I would be there because in those days you obeyed your parents. And it was a lovely place to walk.

When I stayed with my grandmother when I was 7 I'd go up Church Hill which is a long and lonely lane with my dog and on to Kinver Edge and I would very sedately walk all the way around the Ranger's house and back again and never thought anything of it. But if a child did it now you'd be horrified. *What was the Edge like then, has it changed a lot. Did you notice what sort of things were growing on the Edge in those days?* Well it was mainly heather and bracken. At the one side of the Edge by the sanatorium it's a lovely big huge bowl of a place and that was a picture in May with all the bluebells. There were so many bluebells the air was heavy with the scent. There is still a lot there but you know the bracken has taken over and it chokes everything, the bracken. There's a lot more greenery in the shape of small trees now than I remember then. I remember when I was younger you could see a lot further because there weren't the trees but that isn't a bad thing. And paths have changed, there's more people, they've made different paths and some, of course, cos the edges are steep, some have eroded, weather and people and they've change.

So you used to go upon the Edge a lot with your friends then? Oh yes we had a Silver Jubilee of Mary and George and the bonfire was right on the Edge and I remember that night very, very clearly. Very clearly. It was as if it was last week *A lot of people there?* Oh, yes, yes, it was great fun. It was all innocent fun, there were no idiots throwing fireworks or people passing drugs round or drinking. It didn't occur to people to go up there with a drink. It was a long walk anyroad. But it was lovely round the fire, that was all there was, the fire and the good humour. That was all there was. People laughing and talking and.. *No food, no sausages* No litter, only the debris of the fire next morning and nature took care of that. That was '34.

In '37 we had the Coronation bonfire. That was again was on the Edge and the scouts took care of it, you know they built it and monitored it when it was alight because it was on very short grass, we always called it rabbit grass because my father said the rabbits nibbled it down to being short and very fine. And that easily caught fire and so the scouts were there to take care of it. On both occasions. The big scouts, you know, the Rovers. Kinver was a great place for scouts in those days. Of course the scout hut is still there.

[*Your father was a gardener* Yes. But while we were at the Rock House he was Assistant Ranger on the Edge. *How did he get to do that?* Well, he got the job as Assistant Ranger and the rock house went with the job, you know, like a tied cottage. *What did he have to do?* He had to pace the edge. He'd got to monitor it. In other words he'd got to watch for - there wasn't a lot of it - but vandalism. He talked to people and he was a great talker. He could tell people about the history of the Edge, he took an interest in it and also he had to fight the fires. When we had some hot summers we had some long, long fires. I've known him, you know, three days and three nights at a stretch beating the fire out. He came home one day and he was furious. Mother said "What's the matter with your face?" and "It's in the middle of beating the fire out," he said, "the steepest hill I've ever been up", he said, "someone shouted to me - 'Hey - stand still a moment, I want to take your photograph'" and he was furious about it. He really was. The trouble with heath fires, they burn underneath, they need a lot of monitoring even when the fire appears to be out you just need a little breeze and up it will come. Of course the surface of Kinver Edge and lots of places like it are made up of plant debris that, you know, dead plants, heather, bracken and it builds up, it really builds up and it's light and easily lighted. And a piece of glass can set a fire off, you don't need a careless match. And of course in those days there were no plastic bottles, everything was glass.]

Tell me about the Shaw family. They lived right up at the top of the rock, didn't they? Did you have anything to do with them? No, we knew them, we were neighbourly, but they were mostly boisterous boys and I tended to avoid them. *How many of them were there?* Oh, there was quite a few but I can't really remember how many. Five or six children. There was a daughter Barbara, I remember her. She was younger than me. And there was one, how on earth he got his name I don't know, we used to call him Jum or Jumbo. I don't know how he got his name but that was it. Then there was an older one. The oldest one I think was called Edgar. I remember him because at one time he courted an aunt of mine. Nothing ever came of it but they had a vague relationship for a while. I think it was simply because they were, they lived near each other.

There is very little known about what was inside their house. I never went in the house, but from the front it looked like quite an imposing villa-type house. Do you know what I mean? But I only ever looked at it from the gate, I wouldn't go up because of these boys, because they were mischievous, torments, you know what I mean, pull your hair or tweak your skirt or something and I was a bit timid then. I didn't go up there. But I would call from the gate "Tell your mum grandma would like to see her" that sort of thing. But I wouldn't go in. So I never really got near to that one.

Can you remember the front of the houses, the gardens for example. Did they have much garden up there? They wouldn't have that much work because it was on the rock but they would have narrow gardens like borders and that sort of thing. When I was stood by the gate there was a flat area there. I don't think they were gardeners though. It was a bit wild and with all those children, see, a play area was more important than a garden. *Can you remember what they looked like, Mrs Shaw for example?* Mrs Shaw was a short plump woman. She was a woman of her time, mothers tended to get plump then with multiple births particularly didn't they? She was a comfortable woman. She wasn't a fussy dresser, more times than not she wore a big apron, you know, which I suppose she needed, she probably spent most of her life cooking. She was a comfortable woman, she liked a little chat. She wasn't an ambitious woman, she didn't - as far as I knew she didn't go out to work. I suppose she had enough to do. And Mr Shaw I cannot remember. I can't remember Mr Shaw, I remember Mrs Shaw because she'd chat with mother or she'd chat with grandma.

It was a friendly sort of area was it, I mean everybody knew everybody else obviously Kinver was almost a closed village, everybody know everyone else and such a lot of families became inter-related. It wasn't until the war times when the evacuees came and that sort of thing that Kinver became wider socially and then the building started and all the nice green areas became covered in houses. *A lot of people used to come from Birmingham because it was a favourite.* Oh yes. I still remember before the war, you've got a place in Kinver called Potter's Cross and the buses came to Potter's Cross and I can remember Saturdays and Sundays queues five deep, a quarter of a mile on each road, because the Midland Red then said the number of people they brought in they would take out, and they would run till after midnight to get them back. Of course there used to be a tram.

There was a little museum by the sanatorium Did you ever go into it Yes, Rock House Museum. *What was it like?* A bit phoney. *Why was it phoney?* Well, I always thought it was because, I may be being unkind but all the saucepans and old things like that you know, I suppose you'd call them artefacts, A bit of Roman crockery *And who ran it do you know?* An elderly couple, I can't for the life of me remember their name. I think they charged you a penny to go in, I think. You know, you'd go in and come out feeling a bit dissatisfied that you hadn't had your pennyworth. And of course it was always

there when I was much younger so I wouldn't take the interest in it that I would now. So perhaps I missed something and I'm being a bit callous about it. But I always figured that it was a bit of a con really.

So you and the family left Holy Austin Rock. Was there any particular reason? Well, my father got a job as a gardener which was his love and he left. When was that? '35, I think. I know I was still at school because I used to travel quite a long way from Kinver to school. I used to go to a place called Brierly Hill. I used to go to Stourbridge and then to Brierly Hill. It's a long, long way. It is a long, long way, yes. But I passed an examination to go to that particular school and the school, believe it or not, the school paid my fares once a month. So there was no point in not going. How did you get there? By bus. I used to go down to Potter's Cross and catch the 10 minutes past 8 bus and I would catch the half-past 8 bus from Stourbridge to Brierly and then I'd got to come home at night. And when we first came to Kinver of course we used to live right down Kingsford Lane I'd got that long walk as well. And that was through the winter when it was dark.]

* Brierly Hill

Appendix 11

Transcript of part of tape

Mrs Rose Novak Holy Austin Rock 1949 - 1963

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mrs Novak

Lived in level 3 of Holy Austin Rock - they bought the 3 houses at the top of Holy Austin - father, Mr John Howell and grandmother, Mrs Rose Doyle. They bought the three houses in 1949. Mrs Novak married in 1954 and lived there with her husband until 1956 and then moved elsewhere in Kinver. When the left-hand house collapsed her father and grandmother lived in the middle and right-hand houses but finally left in 1963.

'We had a business in Birmingham, we had a green-grocer's there. My grandmother and father had lived there all their life, and so had I till that time. But we wanted to get out of the city and we saw this advertised and we came to look at it. And it was a very bad time to look at a place like that, it was a bad January, February, something like that, terrible, bitterly cold and I looked up there and I said "Oh that's it, I'm not going up there." Because it looked depressing, dark, it was a depressing day - looked like Castle Dracula perched up on top of a rock, bleak. But once you got there, it really was nice. They were like three separate cottages, two-room cottages, one up one down, but they let into each other. The two end ones had a big old-fashioned range in that you could burn coal, wood, anything in them. The centre one had I suppose you'd call it a Victorian tiled fireplace, you know the pretty tiles and things round. And so the centre one we had as a sitting room, the end one was the kitchen and the third one on the other end we just kept tables and chairs in for if it was bad and we had people for teas they could go in there instead of being outside. Because mostly people just sat out in the garden, with chairs and tables and there was two little summerhouses at either end which they could go in as well, which was quite nice. And the staircase of each of the three cottages was cut into the rock, into the solid rock - you can see the marks where they are now - and between the middle one and the far end one there was a little pantry cut into the rock, but the first one we used as a kitchen had got a big pantry almost half the size of this room cut into the solid rock. And there was a little tiny window about a foot by eight inches cut into the solid rock, the wall was about that thick, but it kept the pantry beautifully cool because it got no sunlight but the you^{give} the air coming through. And there was a sort of outhouse built on to the side with a wash copper in and you put a fire under and boil it, and a tap and sink.

The left-hand one, that was what we called the kitchen. The door was on the right, the window was on the left, the wall was right facing. And then you went in, there was a little tiny window that looked down the steps as you could always see us coming up the path, (down towards the left) only about a foot square. The big iron range was on the left, you went through there, there was a door at the back, and through that door the stairs turned sharply right, the pantry went straight ahead, the outhouse went straight to the left. Down the stairs you were at the wash boiler and the sink and the water tap.

The kitchen and the middle house connected through the bedrooms. The right-hand house, the end one, and the middle one connected through the downstairs, just behind the wall there was a door that led into the two. And in the middle one, the stairs was on the right-hand side on the back wall and on the left-hand side there was a little pantry, very high, cut into the solid rock.

Did you have any doors to the rooms?

Yes, they were heavy oak doors, thick, solid oak doors. There were quarry tiles on the floor. The sitting room had carpet down and we had a big carpet square in the kitchen but you would roll that up weekends and scrub the floor. We used to prepare the teas and that in there. I suppose the tiles were a bit cold but we covered them with rugs, except the end one, I mean we just scrubbed and cleaned those because of people traipsing in and out, you couldn't have anything down there that you couldn't clean well.

The walls were sandstone, plastered over, but the back wall that came right against the rock was covered with asphalt and it was pegged to the rock and then you painted over that. That was because the rock oozes water. Behind that it was sweating and oozing water down. The only trouble sometimes we had was with the flashing on the roofs - they were the three gable points, and where the gable points met the back of the rock sometimes water would ooze down the flashing there. That was always a bit of a problem there, could never seem to be quite correct that. And the rooms, the ceilings were like beams and plaster, exposed beams and plaster.

The houses were lit by gas. When it was hot in the summer you'd have the windows and doors wide open, at night-time you'd have the light on - and there's great big enormous moths used to come straight for the mantle - we used to get through more mantles. It was so strange because we'd come from electricity and them came into gas it was dreadful, absolutely dreadful. But you get used to it. It was piped gas, gas meter. And water from a tap, there was a well there somewhere. The well was dry. Apparently when they put in the pumping station this one and another one went dry - and this one was 180 feet deep, the second deepest one in Kinver. We used to get a lot of visitors in the summer, you know they was always looking down the well, and my father used to twist some paper and light it and drop it down so they could see it right to the bottom.

There used to be another set of caves. That was quite a big place; if anything it was bigger than the rooms of the other cottages but it was completely in the solid sandstone. There was a great big room; there was another big room at the back of that that must have been cut into that very big solid rock there. And there was a big range in this first one. There was a little tiny passage that led round into another room all cased in the rock. There was a little tiny one beyond that and you can see the hole that looks straight down to the bottom. That end cottage and that, there would have been a connecting door between those two and they blocked it up. We never knew that till the darned thing had fallen down. Must have been hidden behind the asphalt. No one was living in it - it was all ours - we had the whole lot. We used to use it for storerooms and that sort of thing. The hens' food and the pigs' food. We never knew until the whole place was pulled down that there would have been a connecting door between the two.]

Who lived in the rock below?

Nobody lived in the rock below but they used to come and do teas at the weekend the same as we did, but they had been inhabited.

[We used to grow everything in the garden. This was all flowers up here, and we planted fruit trees, apple and plum and pear. All here was damson trees and strawberry beds here. Down the bottom part we used to rent off the NT and the bottom field because that was access to it. We used to grow all sorts of vegetables, everything.

We were carrying orange boxes up to make nest boxes for the hens. We had a whole stack of them.

I'd got one each and father had got one in each hand, and these enormous black limousines drew up at the bottom and he says "Eh up, we've got visitors." And who should be the visitors but Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret and whoever there was with them. And they wanted to look around the rock houses. And of course you don't say no to them, do you. So my father says "Don't go empty-handed, get a box each and carry it up." Needless to say they didn't. But they came in, went all through the house, through the caves and all the way round. They were the same age as me - I was 23, Princess Elizabeth was 23, Princess Margaret would be 21. There was no warning at all. I don't even know what they were doing in this district. We had quite a lot of visitors up there but I think they were our most important ones.

There used to be a lot of visitors on those days and they'd want to look over the Rock, and my dad used to show them round and tell them some story - he used to tell them it was haunted. I think some of them believed him as well, but he could tell a good tale. They were quite interested. The only problem was the youngsters climbing - and of course it was like three pitched roofs and a chimney and of course it was a great temptation to throw something down the chimney. We used to have parties of ramblers and hikers and bikers.

In those days of course we hadn't got a lot of room in the houses - 'cos I mean we lived in the houses - so we used to have tables and chairs out on the front of the house. And if you had a rambling party, something like that, there was perhaps about 30 of them - so we used to pray for fine weather. And we'd sit them all outside, and of course they'd all got good appetites, you know, and of course you'd charge a set price for the tea which was about 1/6d in those days. And of course they'd wolf everything in sight and then they'd want more tea, more bread and butter - and the only way you'd stop that would be if you put the crusts on the plate! And that stopped them - they didn't ask for any more after that. Ooh - you never made a profit out of those because they'd eat you if you stood there long enough.

A lot came from Birmingham, Dudley, all places round. But of course when there were more cars about then, that stopped them a lot because they brought their own stuff with them, they didn't want a jug of tea or anything like that. Mostly it was when they came on the buses and they got off at Potter's Cross and walk up. We'd have queues of people waiting right out from the house, down the gate. The unfortunate thing about it of course there wasn't a proper toilet there, it was only one of those that you have to empty. We had mains water but no sewage. So of course you can't tell people they can't go to the toilet so we used to let them go but, my golly, we used to charge them a penny to go because we had to fill it with a chemical afterwards. It was round the back of the house - so in the winter it wasn't a walk, it was a two minute run round the back. And it was dark, and there always used to be an owl just on the path and as you were going it would go 'twit twod' and my golly you never run so quick in your life. It was eerie up there at night 'cos of course there was no lights, only your house lights. Talk about a two minute mile not a four minute mile round to the loo. But you could see right across to Brierly Hill and all the lights there - just looked like Blackpool. And then you'd get early in the

morning and it looked like you were on an island because it was just one sea of mist in the middle - you couldn't see anything. Really strange sometimes. But lovely. I loved it up there.]

Appendix 12

[Mr Wrigley

Italics: M Ford (interviewer)

Normal: Mr Wrigley

Bold - Mrs Wrigley

This is a conversation recorded on the 27th September 1989 with Mr Ken Wrigley, a founder member of the National Trust Committee at Kinver in Staffordshire.

When we came on the National Trust there were only 4 members in 1928 including myself. *Who were they?* There was Mr Wilfred Perry, the father of the present chairman of the National Trust Committee, and T. Oliver Lee and Miss Rosalind Lee - those were the people who gave Kinver Edge to the village and there was a Mr Macmillan who was the first warden to be established on the Edge. His house was built round about 1922 and he was the first applicant to have it.]

Why did you become a member of the Committee? Well, they sent for me for the simple reason that the War Memorial was established up there and they decided to have it fenced round with railings and Mr Perry had got some extremely nice railings at his works at Old Hill and he decided to give these railings, and so he called upon me for my blacksmith to put them together and he did a little repair in places to put them together and establish them round the War Memorial. And of course I was the man in those days where they said well send for Wrigley if he can't do it it's no good going to anybody else and so everybody looked upon me and they asked me to join. *What was the purpose of the Committee?* Well, the purpose of the Committee was that they did what they possibly could in keeping the Edge in a reasonable condition because there was a tremendous number of visitors from the Black Country who came and still do today. Of course various things that had to be done and we had an Annual General Meeting at a café in the village, they all laugh at me when I say that now. Of course, there was a membership of something like about 18, I suppose.

[*Where did the money come from to do the things you wanted to do to the Edge?* We had to rely upon Local Authorities who contributed every year, once a year, sums of money of what they could afford and I remember on many occasions that we employed a besom maker to make some besom brushes to establish the wages for the warden. Of course the warden's wages was very small in those days, probably £2.10s a week, which is £2.50 now. *What did he have to do?* There was various jobs that he had to do, clearing up and improving various parts of the Edge and also in particular to patrol the Edge because it was a vast area, some 200 acres, which was far beyond the warden's house but we were very short of money for years. I told you that we even had to make besoms to try and retain the money for the warden in the 20's and 30's. *Were those besoms made by the chap who lived in one of the Rock Houses?* Yes, he lived in Crow's Rock. He was a rather characteristic man, I can't remember his name but he lived with some young lady, and I always wished I'd kept a photograph that was in the press. I don't know whether the County Express would still retain that photograph in their files, but I always wished I'd kept it because this young person had a baby and went to Kidderminster to have it and it shows in the photograph the elderly man, the besom man, on the Rock and he said "The boy stood on the burning deck waiting for his girlfriend to arrive from hospital" and it always fascinated me. The Reeve's family was in Crow's Rock, the Bill Reeves that is here now, it was his mother and father. His father was the head gardener of Kinver House, the Clark family, and he lived in a bungalow opposite and then when he retired he went to live in Crow's Rock, and I always remember seeing a photograph of

when he was sat on a seat below the rock face where they came out of the doorway and he was sat on a bench which he had there and you looked right across Wolverley, Shatterford, Arley, and the sheep walked right around, and a lump of rock came out of the top, describing it as big as an Austin 7, and it dropped in front of him, dropped straight in front of him and never touched him. He was there and it showed you a photograph in the press where this monstrous rock was described as big as an Austin 7 was in front of him and he was still sat on the bench. Well the besom man followed after the Reeves family, the besom man did, but he used to have the besoms off the Edge and make them up, you've seen these besom brushes and that, and that used to bring us in money to pay the Warden's wages.]

They also asked me if I could make some seats for Kinver Edge and we got the blacksmith and the timber yard as well and I think the first order that I had was for about 24. We had to erect them and of course that was a very difficult task to park them all over the Edge, they were a terrific weight, I made them so that they were strong and even there's one or two of them knocking around now. Still there. *Shows good workmanship then.* Well they were 7 by 7 posts and the bars across and then the back part was angle rail, two-and-a-half angle rail with a back part on and that went underneath and those were bolted and then it went back to the post so no vandals were able to attack them in any way. *Did you have vandals in those days?* No. Everything was left intact. It was never interfered with whatsoever.

Of course people were living in the caves at this time weren't they? Oh yes. There were three or four families. *You knew them?* Oh yes, very, very well. I know the Shaws family. They were in Holy Austin Rock and his uncle was in the adjoining part, the Shaw's uncle, Jack Shaw, he was living in the adjoining part which was part brick-work added on to the caves. I mean I knew of Shaws there, bred and born there and went to the local boy's school and girl's school and my sister went with the girls to the girl's school in the Vicarage Drive, Kinver. *It was a big family wasn't it?* It was a big family. Something like about 8, I believe, 4 sons and 4 daughters. And then of course their uncle lived next door, Jack Shaw. Well I used to see him and he used to come and see me regular up to the last three years. He's now passed on. **He worked at the gasworks didn't he, that Mr Shaw?** Claud Shaw was the oldest son worked at Dudley gasworks, **The father worked at Kinver didn't he? Kinver gasworks.** It was all under the Gas Company you see. Stourbridge Gas and Dudley Gas and all the Shaws were connected but Edgar Shaw worked at Richard Thomas Baldwin's at Swindon, the works at Swindon: (iron works)

But I've got some wonderful photographs of inside the cave. *Where is that taken, that photograph?* *Two boys sitting on two chairs* Where the Shaws lived that was. There's their hearth and firegrate and their mantelpiece and there's the cuckoo clock on the wall. *What were the walls covered with?* The sandstone was distempered with a proper, to stop the shedding of the sandstone, to seal it together, but it was perfectly clean and beautiful. *When was that taken?* 1953. *So they've deteriorated a lot since then?* Oh yes, well, the National Trust Committee decided when it was no longer used after the last two people were re-housed, Mr and Mrs Doyle, that's the mother was 80 years of age and the son was 60. Well when these people left it was open to everybody and the National Trust Committee found that they were starting to be vandalised so we got a builder to brick up the doorway and brick up the windows and within a month after the whole lot was demolished, and it went on to deteriorate continually We had suggested putting a fence round it but it was too much of an expensive job and then I'm afraid they went from bad to worse. However it's going to be solved I don't know, but the Manpower Services spent 12 months trying to establish and shore it up and concrete various parts that were unsafe but even that was demolished by vandals. And so we

were fighting a losing battle. There was a pillar of red sandstone holding the biggest part of the roof and somebody went one night with a chain saw and cut out a bird's mouth out of the sandstone, and left about that much holding thousands of tons. It eventually collapsed and the whole lot caved in !! The whole lot caved in and I said "Well that's the end of it." The only answer for that today and as I've said this in the Committee is to blow it up and make it safe, because there's been so many accidents with children clambering on the top and falling 50 or 60 feet below. I see no other way but the Chairman said "Well, if ever we demolished the Holy Austin Rock, he would hate to think what the people of the Black Country would say about it". And I said to him in reply "Well if the Black Country people were so interested in Holy Austin Rock, they'd try and avoid it from being vandalised". And I certainly wouldn't recommend to spend the volumes of money that's been left to the National Trust by Kinver people to be spent on trying to build that up again. You see the wet's got in, for one thing, in the roof. There used to be a tree growing on the roof, a fir tree. There's photographs of it. But the wet got in, through all this vandalism, and softened the sandstone, made it unsafe.]

Discussion on vandalism, motorbikes etc.

There's a photograph here of the Rock House Cafe at Holy Austin. The photo is signed "thanking you, Tug Wilson". Who was Tug Wilson? Tug Wilson was a gentleman who played centre forward for West Bromwich Albion same time as Arthur Fitton and that's his family and some customers where he provided the teas outside. He used to run the café? Yes, in the 1950's. And that's on the very end of the Rock? Yes. On the lower level? Yes that's right. The brick built ones are on the higher level above? The brick part which was added on is this side where Edgar Shaw's uncle lived, Jack Shaw.

Appendix 13

Kinver Directories

The various directories available in the Kinver Public Library have been consulted. The results add a little to the available information by providing approximate dates.

- 1912 Harry Martindale, Ironmonger, High Street, Kinver (assumed to be the same Harry Martindale of the following entries)
- 1916 Harry Martindale, Refreshment Rooms, Holy Austin Rock
- 1921 Harry Martindale, Refreshment Rooms, Holy Austin Rock
Mrs Ellen Carrington, Refreshment Rooms, Kinver Edge
- 1924 Harry Martindale (as above)
Mrs Ellen Carrington (as above)
Jas Davies, Refreshment Rooms, Kinver Edge
- 1932 Harry Martindale (as above)
Mrs Carrington (as above)
- 1936 Mrs Elizabeth Reeves, Refreshment Rooms, Holy Austin Rock
James Lewis, Refreshment Rooms, Kinver Edge
- 1940 James Lewis (as above)

Appendix 1b: Rock houses at Sladd Lane, Wolverley (see Chapters 5 and 7)

In Journal 2 of the Cookley and Wolverley Historical Society, Geoffrey Gilley records an account of life in the Sladd Lane rock house recorded by Bill Thompson in 1976. Soon after his birth in 1910, his mother moved to Sladd Bank, where she died in 1948. Bill Thompson himself lived there with her and his elder brother from 1910 to 1936, when he married and moved away. What follows here is Gilley's article, based on Bill Thompson's own tape-recorded recollections.

'This rock house was larger than most and must have been cut for a large family. Bill describes it as having a large living room-kitchen which had a tiled floor, a pantry ten feet deep and nine feet wide cut into the rear and two large bedrooms leading off the living room. The only door was constructed in two halves so that, by opening the upper, ventilation could be provided since the window did not open.

In the living room was a cast iron black-leaded grate which burned more logs than coal, and it was on this that all cooking and water heating took place. The floor was paved with red tiles, and these were usually protected with a layer of newspaper, a common practice at that time. Lighting was provided by candles or, when his mother could afford it, by a paraffin lamp. Outside were two smaller caves, one fitted with a furnace for heating large quantities of water and the other used as a storeroom. Water was drawn from a well 85' deep.' (Cp HAR)

'Bill remembers his home as being very cosy inside and looked back upon his life there as idyllic. He grew up as a typical country lad and recounts how he caught rabbits and sometimes a pheasant in the woods above his home. He had a wide appreciation of the wild-life which abounded nearby and remembers how a robin used to fly into the house when the half-door was open and how a red squirrel would perch there sometimes. Many birds came to the nearby trees, including nightingales, which were regular visitors to the district until the Second World War.

Bill particularly recalls his mother's sense of humour when talking of her home. She would talk of tiles being blown off the roof after a storm or say she was thinking of having the roof thatched or a new back door fitted. It is clear that Bill found his life as a cave-dweller most satisfying and in many respects superior to the way he lived in a conventional house after his marriage.'

Appendix 2: Recollections: (Sladd Lane and elsewhere)

Fig. A2.1: Extract from the Yorkshire Post, 02/07/2007.

[Not available in the digital version of this thesis]

Fig. A2.2: Extract from The Kidderminster Shuttle, 02/07/2007.

[Not available in the digital version of this thesis]

Fig. A2.3: Extract from the Stourbridge News, July 2010.

[Not available in the digital version of this thesis]