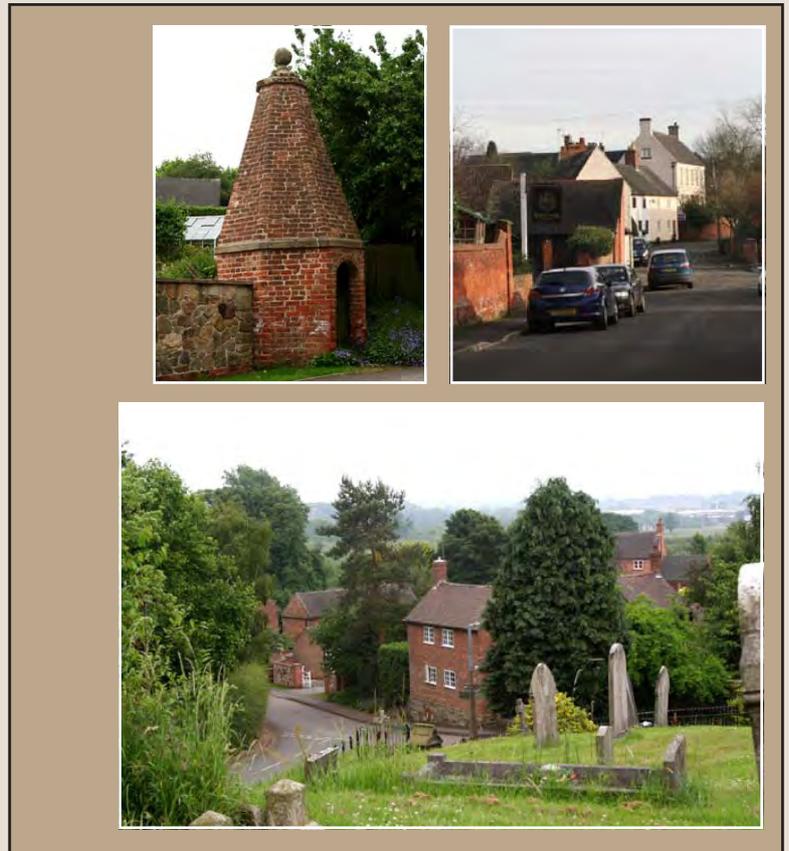


Smisby  
*Conservation Area*  
Character Statement



**2013**  
***CONSULTATION DRAFT***

**SOUTH DERBYSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

# Smisby *Conservation Area*

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# Smisby *Conservation Area*

## Introduction

This statement has been produced by Mel Morris Conservation for, and in association with, South Derbyshire District Council. It sets out the special historic and architectural interest that makes the character and appearance of Smisby worthy of protection. It also assesses the degree of damage to that special interest and thus opportunities for future enhancement. This document will be used by the Council when making professional judgements on the merits of development applications.

The Smisby Conservation Area was designated by South Derbyshire District Council on 13th July 1978.

## Summary

Smisby lies in south-east Derbyshire, only half a kilometre from the Leicestershire border, on a south-facing hillside overlooking the market town of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. It is approached via thinly-populated former common land, which is traversed by straight and featureless enclosure roads, which make Smisby feel cut off.

The village sits on a band of Bromsgrove Sandstone, distinguished by its reddish colour and fine-grained character. There are bands of sandstone outcropping in this area north of Ashby and it can be seen within Smisby as small outcrops on Forties Lane. It is classified as "highly permeable" sandstone and was good, productive land for agriculture. The subtle advantage in height over the "Ashby Wolds" provided a good vantage point and a defensive location for early settlers.

The majority of the village was owned by the Harpur Estate from 1660 and was sold off gradually from the 1950s onwards. Only a handful of buildings are still in estate ownership. Its identity, however, is not that of an estate village. As with many of the Harpur-Crewe estate villages in South Derbyshire, the buildings frequently exhibit evidence of their evolution, reconstruction and redevelopment over the centuries. There is little in the way of self-conscious estate design and estate building features are generally quite subtle.

The village is dominated by its parish church and adjacent manor house, which sit on the high ground at the west end of the village. The main street is characterised by a series of imposing farmhouses, of late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century design, set back from the road frontage, and a number of groups of terraced cottages.

The distinctive characteristics of Smisby can be summarised as follows:

- quiet and peaceful with little through traffic
- a nucleated medieval plan form with a winding Main Street and a narrow back street (Chapel Street), which meet at the parish church

- rural setting, with leafy rural approaches from the west
- verdant character at the west end of the village around the church of St. James, where there is a concentration of mature trees, wide verges and grassed embankments
- tight-knit development of cottages alternating with a few large farmhouses set within spacious plots
- a densely developed core where buildings are built in rows running parallel with the contours taking advantage of a south-facing aspect
- a strong sense of enclosure with plain brick elevations of buildings and tall, simple boundary walls lining the back of the pavement
- small groups of three or more terraced labourers cottages
- boundary walls of rubble sandstone
- a mixture of sandstone and soft red brick, often both occurring in the same building



## **Area of Archaeological Potential**

An area of archaeological potential has been defined through an assessment of the known archaeological, documentary and plan-form evidence of the settlement. It has been carried out as part of the review of each conservation area in consultation with the County Archaeologist, the Development Control Archaeologist and the Sites and Monuments Record Officer at Derbyshire County Council.

An area of archaeological potential may encompass both statutory designations (including Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Registered Historic Parks and Gardens) and other

non-statutory site information from the Derbyshire Sites and Monuments Record. It shows the probable extent of settlement and industrial activity during the medieval and/or post-medieval periods.

Within the area of archaeological potential there may be reasonable expectation that archaeological evidence relating to the medieval and/or post medieval periods may survive below ground.

Over the centuries, as settlements grow and develop, their focus may shift. Consequently, an area of archaeological potential need not necessarily coincide with the boundary of the conservation area.

## Conservation Area Analysis

### Historic Development

The development of Smisby seems to have arisen largely as a result of a combination of circumstances; its local mineral deposits, in particular iron ore, its wooded hillside location, providing fuel for the manufacture of iron products, and its relatively rich agricultural soils. A spring line was in the village and the town well was mentioned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as having excellent “pure spring water”.

It is first documented in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the Domesday Book but it is quite possible that Smisby as a settlement may have existed before this time. The origins of the name “Smidesbi” are Old Norse, meaning “the smith’s farm”. At Domesday (1086) the land was under the lordship of Nigel of Stafford. It was a small farming settlement most notable for its large area of woodland pasture, ½ league long and 6 furlongs wide, which equates to just over 1 square mile.

In the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century the manor was held by the Shepey family, in whose hands it remained until the early 1500s when the manor passed, by marriage, to the Kendall family. George Kendall bought the manor of Smisby from the senior branch of the family in about 1560 and it remained with the Kendall family until it was sold in 1660 to the ancestors of Sir John Harpur of Calke.

There was probably a manor house on this site from the 14<sup>th</sup> century but the earliest origins of the standing building, lying to the immediate west of the church, are 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is a handsome, tall, tower-like building, of three storeys plus an attic storey, situated on an outcrop of sandstone, and commanding good views of Ashby to the south. The main house of the Harpur family was close at hand, so from 1660, the Kendall's old manor house became a tenanted farm. Many of the surrounding buildings would have been constructed whilst it was a tenanted farm. It remained in the hands of the Harpur-Crewe family until it was sold in 1978.

The family maintained a firm grip on ownership of the land in the parish and there were only a handful of freeholders within the village until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1827 Draft Enclosure Award lists four main freeholders. In practice this meant that there was little change or expansion of the village or its farms and quite considerable tight-knit development within the confines of the village, as small cottages and ancillary buildings were squeezed between Chapel Street and Main Street. A common occurrence is that buildings

were rebuilt on an identical footprint, a good example being the Methodist Chapel of 1845, which was built on the footprint of a barn and stackyard. Even as late as 1900, very little of the south side of Main Street had been developed. This was traditionally the area devoted to the villagers' crofts, which were located both behind and between the farmhouses.

A chapel was built in Smisby before the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century, probably by the lord of the manor. The earliest standing part of the present church of St. James is 13<sup>th</sup> century, but it may have been built on the site of the earlier chapel. In 1271 the chapel became a "chapel of ease", one of eight dependent on the mother church at Repton. A "chapel of ease" was one where parishioners could worship to save them from having to travel to the parish church. The Augustinian canons of Repton Priory would have taken services for each chapel. However, as it was the furthest chapel from Repton, the Smisby chapel acquired separate rights of baptism and burial of people living in the village and it was generally regarded as a parochial chapelry. At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries the chapel was confiscated by the crown and sold on. At some time prior to 1780 the chapel with its endowments was acquired by the Hastings family and a plan of 1735 survives showing the chapel and a separate farm to its south-east, now Myrtle Lodge Farm, which may have been the site of the original parsonage.



*St. James Church at Smisby*



*Smisby Manor*

The manor house is situated alongside the present church. Manor house and chapel were probably initially closely linked until the chapel and its endowments were given to the Priory of Calke, and thereafter to Repton. After that time, the development of the manor house and the church site were independent.

Up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the church had been approached from the south via a narrow stone walled passage between two separate gardens that appear to have belonged to the manor house. Eventually, part of the garden to the east of the passage was taken into the churchyard and was developed as a new entrance, up a wide flight of steps, which remains today (listed grade II). Later, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the whole of this eastern garden land was taken into the churchyard, to create the lofty, open churchyard that we see today. An engraving of Smisby Church of 1790 shows quite clearly the tall walls surrounding the manor in the foreground with a view of the church in the background. These walls have buttresses and a small building with typical Elizabethan or Jacobean stonework, no longer present. This engraving shows that the garden was small and self-contained (see 1827

enclosure map) and the pavilion appears to have formed the corner of the original garden, with a separate courtyard related to the farm.

The lordship of Smisby was originally part of the parish of Hartshorn and a fragment of land in Smisby, at the east end of the village including Hillside Farm, remained within Hartshorn parish until 1883 when it was officially joined to Smisby. Visually there is no physical evidence that they grew separately under the different parishes.

Between the medieval period and the 1820 Enclosure Act small parts of the open fields were gradually enclosed as the strips were amalgamated into groups through exchanges of land. The Enclosure Act and Award for Smisby were quite late, the Act in 1820 and the Award in 1827, although large areas had been enclosed in private enclosure agreements before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is plenty of evidence of the medieval open field system in and around Smisby, with “ridge and furrow”, the plough lines of the medieval plough, surviving in the fields both to the north and south of the village. The three open fields were 1) to the immediate north of Chapel Street and to the east of the main Ashby–Ticknall road (Park Field), 2) to the south west of the church (Windmill Field) and 3) to the north of the church as far as the Hartshorne road (Broomhill Field). To the north-east of the village was the Common, where locals had grazing rights. It started off as a large area but over time land had been appropriated from the Common and enclosed and there had been dwellings built on the edges, such as those at The Forties. By the time of the 1825 draft Enclosure Award a large swathe of land on the southern side of the Common had been enclosed, the land in the ownership of Sir George Crewe.

Medieval villages had areas of land, known as crofts, associated with the principal houses within the village. The “toft” was the homestead and the “croft” was the long, thin parcel of land used by the occupier of the homestead as an enclosed smallholding for containing livestock. They were originally laid out as part of the planned medieval settlement, and were distinct from the outlying moors, commons, waste and open fields. The “crofts” are important spaces that were integral to the medieval settlement. Within Smisby the crofts were situated on the south side of Main Street with a “tongue” to the south-east of the Ashby-Ticknall road. Beyond these, to the south, were the villagers’ hay meadows.

The plan form of the village is “nucleated”, with a series of roads radiating out from the churchyard along Main Street, Forties Lane and Annwell Lane.

Forties Lane (pictured right), at the west end of the village, was known as “The Forty Lane” in 1830 and “Hollow Lane” in 1825. This road is a deep, sunken lane (a hollow-way), set within a cutting between part-wooded, steep banks, and appears to have been channelled straight through the bedrock, rather than worn through over passage of time, although it is an ancient route. Occasional outcrops can be seen, at high points along the lane. This road is skirted by a footpath



running through the adjacent field to the east, probably a high-level pedestrian route developed to avoid the wet ground of the road below. The road itself must have been a

drove road, which originally petered out where it reached the edge of Smisby Common.

The Main Street was one of two routes running roughly east-west. Main Street had a number of large properties fronting it. The dating evidence of these larger farmhouses suggests that most were built in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, probably shortly after the Harpur estate took over ownership of the manor and its lands and when they were able to invest in the fabric of the village.

Parallel with Main Street and to the rear of the properties was a back lane (now Chapel Street), terminating at the church. Between these two streets was at least one access alley or “ginnel”, which is still preserved as Nelson Place. This may have originated as an access path created by the occupiers of properties fronting Main Street to create an easy route to the open field (Park Field) beyond the back lane.

Clustered between Main Street and Chapel Street and roughly in the centre of the village are a large group of cottages and buildings, built near to The Smisby Arms. This was once even more densely developed; a terrace of three cottages behind the Smisby Arms, in the area that now forms its car park, was pulled down in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The present road structure had been laid out between 1820 and 1825 as part of the Enclosure of the open fields and commons. The main road leading from Ashby to Ticknall (the present B5006) was the principal new road and several roads were created to the east and west, just north of Smisby. Although the main road running east-west through Smisby had never been a significant thoroughfare it had led, via Forties Lane, up to Smisby Common. The creation of the new road effectively by-passed the village and Forties Lane became principally an access road to a few cottages and the neighbouring fields. The medieval nucleated plan form of the village is not immediately obvious because the main Ashby-Ticknall road (1820-25) was overlaid onto the existing road network and took the focus of the village away from the church.

The small buildings that hug the north side of Chapel Street were located on old encroachments, built probably from the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, on the very edge of the open field (Park Field). None of the standing buildings appear to be of any great age although Rose Dene, Chapel Street, retains its central chimney stack and sawtooth brick eaves suggesting late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century origins. The south side of Chapel Street has distinctive ranges of narrow buildings running parallel with the road. These probably started off life as ancillary buildings to the main farms on the Main Street frontage although many of these buildings are now cottages. One of these buildings, The Cottage, is set back from the road frontage, although it runs parallel with it. It has a stone chamfered plinth and is probably 17<sup>th</sup> century in origin. The alignment may represent an earlier building line, and with a shortage of available building land, the current buildings that line the pavement may be encroachments onto the road. A large range was described in the 1825 draft Enclosure award as a “Cart Hovel”. One of these ranges survives as Truro Cottage, Chapel Street.



*View looking down ginnel at Nelson Place*

Descending the hill southwards down Forties Lane, the road opens out where it meets Chapel Street and then opens out again where it meets Main Street into a larger space where there is a small green. At one time during the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a small cottage located at the junction of Chapel Street and Forties Lane, which appeared on the Enclosure map, although it had disappeared by the date of the 1880 Ordnance Survey map. This was the location of the village pinfold by 1880, a walled enclosure where straying livestock could be temporarily penned-in by the “pounder”. The former existence of a pinfold is a reminder of the importance of stock rearing and the limited availability of common pasture within the parish.

At the junction of Forties Lane and Main Street there was also a village cross or similar feature, denoted on the 1827 map, which has today been replaced with a 20<sup>th</sup> century war memorial, a tall fir tree and a lamppost.

A National School was founded by Sir George Crewe c1845 and shortly after his death Sir John Crewe spent over £100 on transforming a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse into the school buildings, which held 60 children. By 1905 the village school had been rebuilt on the south side of Main Street (now a private Day Nursery). It was built by the County Council for 120 pupils and Sir John Crewe’s school was converted to a parish hall and Sunday School. In 1979 a fragment of the old building was built into the current Village Hall.



*The Harpur Crewe coat of arms still remain on this old sign, although the property has changed hands*

The Wesleyan Methodists erected a chapel in 1845, which is now redundant and boarded up. It is used as a warehouse. The Town well was situated in the centre of the village. Other interesting buildings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century include a steam mill, and the miller’s house, which still stand on the south side of Main Street. This was separate from the local windmill to the west of the village and known as *Wonder Mill* in 1857.

Although Smisby has only the numbers of properties associated with a hamlet it had managed to sustain buildings during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that are more typical of larger villages. These included a lock-up, a pinfold, several pubs, the village school and post office, a church and a chapel. During the previous centuries the village was considered to be fairly remote and it therefore needed these services. In particular, the more isolated villages were often required to provide temporary means of confinement for law-breakers, until they could be brought before the proper authorities, and for this reason the lock-up was built in 1790. However, the small size of the village has meant that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it has not been able to sustain either the school or the chapel, and no more than one village pub.

## Approaches

The main approach into Smisby is along the Ticknall to Ashby road (B5006), although it seems to slice past the village. Along this road, the character is dominated by its rural setting. Large fields with thick, mature hedgerows of holly and hawthorn characterise the immediate landscape. On entering the village the thick holly hedges, supplemented by stone and brick walls, continue into Main Street.

More minor rural routes into the village run along Forties Lane and Annwell Lane. The



*Approach into Smisby along Forties Lane*

approach road along Forties Lane plunges for most of its length down a hollow-way, between high-sided banks, through a tunnel of trees, as far as the church of St. James, where it immediately opens out. This was a principal approach, before the new road was created circa 1825, and gives the greatest sense of arrival, marked by several road junctions, which meet in front of the church, and by features such as the war memorial and the Round House.

Annwell Lane becomes wider where it enters the conservation area, and wide grassy verges and plump native hedgerows provide a sharp contrast with the red brick buildings and stone boundary walls of Manor Farm as the road rises to the brow of the hill, just in front of Smisby Manor.

## Views and Landmarks

Every conservation area has a multitude of changing views, both close-range and more expansive, too numerous to cover comprehensively in a document of this scope. This section describes a selection of general and more specific views that are likely to impress themselves most strongly in a visitor's experience of the conservation area. Some of the viewpoints referred to are included in the conservation area map included in this document.

The landform falls away from north to south across the settlement. As a result, there are frequent glimpses of the rooftops of buildings on the rising land. The main views of



*View from the churchyard looking down Main Street & to Ashby-de-la-Zouch in the distance*

rooftops are from Main Street looking north and looking from the churchyard across the village to the east.

Views can be glimpsed between the buildings on the south side of Main Street looking downhill to gardens and former crofts and to the fields beyond. These views are often channelled by the long rows of buildings, cottages and former agricultural buildings that run at 90 degrees to the street (pictured right). The close physical connection between the long, narrow garden and croft plots and the fields beyond emphasises the rural setting of the village.



The church of St. James sits elevated on a bank to the west of the village and the tower is a local landmark prominent amidst the dense settlement pattern, and visible from a few key locations within the village; at the east end of Main Street, near Ivanhoe House, and from the footpath off the B5006 near Hillside Lodge. When there is no leaf cover the tower can be glimpsed through the trees from Chapel Street and from the public footpath north of Chapel Street.



*Left - view of the church tower from Derby Road  
Above - in the winter the church tower is more prominent, visible from the public footpath above Chapel Street*

The south part of the churchyard lies on a high bank above the road and the elevation of the church enables good views to the south from the churchyard towards Ashby-de-la-Zouch and, in the winter, across the village to the immediate east.

Along Main Street and Chapel Street views are confined by the shallow winding curve of the streets and narrow sections with pinchpoints. Picturesque views unfold as the roads change direction, sharply on occasion. The village lock-up (pictured right) is an important local landmark, but only prominent from short range on Main Street.



## Spaces

The wide junctions of the lanes at the west end of the village merge and create informal, semi-rural spaces. Together with the churchyard on the bank nearby, the junction of Main Street and Annwell Lane is the principal open space within the village.

The war memorial (pictured right) is now located at the centre of this space, but this was probably once the site of the village cross. Defining this space are the tall walls of Hasbury Cottage, the rubblestone boundary walls of Pitts Farm, supplemented with tall hedges, and the rubblestone boundary walls of the churchyard, which retain the bank above and which altogether create a striking enclosure. This is one of the most memorable spaces with the strongest identity within the conservation area. A large copper beech dominates the junction of Chapel Street and Forties Lane and the green character of the space is enhanced by the wide grassy verges and the rising land of the grassed churchyard.



The churchyard is a semi-public open space where the elevated position of the village can be appreciated.



*The main open space in Smisby where Main Street meets Annwell Lane, Chapel Street & Forties Lane*

## Building Materials and Details

Local geology and availability of building materials directly influenced the form and appearance of Smisby. The range of materials found in the village and the way in which they were used in local building details is intricately linked with local identity. The appendix lists the special and typical traditional building details encountered within the conservation area, and is supplemented by photographs, to provide a snapshot of the local vernacular details.

### Stone

Smisby is built on a band of Bromsgrove Sandstone, a pale pinkish brown colour where it outcrops. This is classified as highly permeable sandstone. The area has a series of bands of

Bromsgrove Sandstone along the 160-170 metre contour. The oldest standing properties within the village were built from local stone. The boundary walls surrounding Manor Farm are typical of the large blocks of soft pink sandstone, heavily eroded in places. The church and Manor Farm were built from evenly coursed sandstone with a wide variation in colour from dark pink to buff. There is no sign of stone quarrying within the village but there were small quarries to the north and north-east of the village at Pistern Hill (this was used in the building of Calke Abbey 1701-4) near Daniel Hayes Farm and Southwood. These were probably the sources of the local stone up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There are no signs that stone was being quarried locally in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.



Many of the smaller, older cottages were built from rubblestone, with larger regular blocks incorporated for quoins. The use of rubblestone in the village may have been more extensive, displaced by the fashion for brick in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the boundary walls still retain sections of rubblestone. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century brick was more prestigious as a building material than rubblestone. The early 18<sup>th</sup> century and Georgian houses within Smisby were built from brick.

The earliest buildings would have been timber-framed on rubblestone plinths but there are no surviving examples of timber-framing. Rubblestone plinths can still be seen and may occasionally indicate the former presence of a timber-framed building.

The use of brick combined with large sections of rubblestone retained from earlier buildings on the site is a distinctive characteristic of this region of South Derbyshire and was quite prolific in Smisby and nearby Ticknall, which was also owned by the same estate. It appears to be an estate response to the desire to build economically. Where old buildings of rubblestone were heightened or enlarged, a patchwork of different materials has often resulted, illustrating the archaeological development of the buildings e.g. 1 Rose Cottage, Chapel Street, the farm buildings at Manor Farm, No.2 School Row, The Poplars, Hasbury Cottage and Firtree Cottage.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when transportation of heavy goods radically improved, imported stone was reserved for dressings for windows and doors. Stone window dressings can be seen at both Rotherwood and Hillside Farmhouse. Its use, however, is very limited in Smisby.

## **Brickwork**

Brick is now the dominant material in the village. A small lane, a northern extension of Forties Lane, was named "Brick Kiln Road" in 1825, indicating that there was probably a marl pit and brick kiln nearby.

The local clay pits at Ticknall, owned by the Harpur-Crewe estate, provided a high-quality material for brick-making supplemented by more localised brick manufacture, where bricks would have been made in temporary clamp kilns. Local clays would have also been used to produce clay roofing tiles, although the instances of red clay plain tiles surviving are limited, as they were less durable than the Staffordshire blue clay tiles, which were brought into this part of Derbyshire from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Brickwork was used in the early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century for structural details such as corbelled eaves. Sometimes, these are plain with several courses of brick projecting one above the other. Sometimes they incorporate “dentilled” brickwork, where each alternate header brick projects to create a decorative effect. In a number of cases the header bricks are laid diagonally to produce a “sawtooth” pattern. There are examples of each of these fashions within Smisby. Several properties incorporate dentilled brick eaves where the bricks were laid on edge, a detail that is found in other villages developed by the Harpur estate.

Raised brick bands can be found on a number of properties, a decorative detail that is found in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There are examples at Pitts Farm, Ivanhoe House and Hillside Farm (both the latter partially disguised by later render).

In a number of instances brickwork was limewashed to provide a “sacrificial” weatherproof coating, e.g. nos. 1-3 Main Street. Traces of limewash can still be seen in sheltered places, such as under eaves. The practice of limewashing has now died out and many cottages that were once limewashed, such as Nos.1 and 2 Main Street, have been rendered.

The Harpur estate frequently used rounded moulded bricks in their buildings and these can be seen on the chimney stacks at School Row and the terrace known as Nelson Square (pictured right). At Nelson Square they are used in combination with square buff pots which the estate frequently used.



## Boundaries

The majority of traditional boundaries within the conservation area are formed from rubblestone walls and on occasion these have been heightened or repaired in brick. Although random rubblestone is the main building material there are examples of coursed stone walls around the perimeter of The Orchard.

Brick boundary walls appear to have been introduced into the village from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Several of the old brick walls have a moulded stone coping, such as the swept copings in front of Ivanhoe House. There are also examples of copings dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which are generally moulded and triangular, in red or blue brick.



## Lintels and cills

The most common types of lintel are:

- the segmental brick arch. This is found throughout the village on buildings such as 3 Main Street, Myrtle Lodge Farm, Firtree Cottage and Pitts Farm. It is generally found in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century on the smaller domestic buildings. This was the simplest and easiest lintel to construct as the taper was accommodated wholly in the mortar joints, without the need to cut the brick.
- the wedge stone lintel. During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wedge lintels were commonly used in South Derbyshire although they had generally died out by around

1860. There are plain examples at Hillside Farm and more decorative examples at Rotherwood, which incorporate a raised keystone.

On the uppermost floor there was often no need for a brick lintel and the brickwork was supplemented either by a simple timber lintel, providing the support required, or the brickwork was carried directly on the window frame, relying upon the strength of the window frame. There are several examples of these practices (e.g. The Mill and School Row).

In combination with the segmental brick arches, stone cills were not normally used, relying on the simple weathering properties of the brickwork, even on the more substantial properties (e.g. Pitts Farm and Ivanhoe House). Generally, in Smisby the more substantial houses and farmhouses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have dressed stone cills (e.g. Rotherwood and Hillside Farm).

## Roofs

The earliest roofs in Smisby would have been either thatched or tiled. The roof pitches associated with thatch and clay tiles vary between a minimum of 35 degrees and a more typical pitch of 45 degrees. In general the older the roof, the steeper the roof pitch.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the pitched roofs often had “coped gables”, where a parapet was added at each gable-end and finished with stone. Examples of this detail survive at Ivanhoe House. Elsewhere the gabled roofs have predominantly a simple detail known as a “plain close verge”.

Welsh slate appeared in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was ideal for hipped roofs and those that needed a shallower pitch. There is one surviving example at Rotherwood. The use of Welsh slate within Smisby was fairly short-lived. In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century plain clay tiled roofs came back into fashion and most new buildings were being built with machine-made red Rosemaries, which were readily available. These were used on the Village School.

## Conservation Area Description

**Main Street** has a strong character dominated by contrasting elements; long sections of high walls enclose gardens and private spaces. These alternate with large gaps, such as the school playground frontage, and wide passages and crofts between narrow ranges of buildings. Tall brick boundary walls and brick buildings line the edge of the pavement. The intermittent pattern of enclosure contributes to the picturesque character of the street. The old **Lock-Up** is a key building in views looking west towards the church. The road twists and turns and there are sharp bends where it joins Annwell Lane.

Main Street is wide, with a pavement on both sides, and is a hard-edged environment with few private gardens visible from the street. The eye is led up Main Street, following the rising ground, into Annwell Lane, which is altogether more rural in character, with grass verges



lining the road. Tall stone boundary walls beyond the verge mask some of Smisby Manor from general view.

**St. James Church and Smisby Manor** and its farm stand virtually alone on **Annwell Lane**, an important historic group, set apart from the remainder of the village, with few signs of twentieth or twenty first century influence. Both the church and the manor house are located away from the road, on the high ground, overlooking Ashby to the south. The manor farm buildings are largely contained within two courtyards, with early stone footings and walls supplemented by later phases of building in soft red brick. The walls are mostly plain, with occasional relief from high-level, round, ventilation openings (now glazed).



The largest properties that front Main Street are the former farmhouses. Unlike many other villages in South Derbyshire, there seems to have been little expansion of the farms after the enclosure of the open fields, perhaps because enclosure occurred so late and the agricultural boom had slowed. The largest farms, **Ivanhoe Farm, Hillside Farm** and



*Ivanhoe Farmhouse*



*Hillside Farmhouse*

**Manor Farm**, had large courtyards of farm buildings, which survive more-or-less in their original configuration, although there has been some loss of agricultural character at Hillside Farm and, to a lesser extent, at Ivanhoe Farm. The smaller farms have generally lost their farm buildings or they have been much altered by conversion to dwellings. The former farmbuildings are less easy to spot on Chapel Street. There is one surviving agricultural building on Main Street that is still in semi-agricultural use, which is adjacent to Poolcroft. This is particularly important within the village, not only because it is a strong and prominent element of the streetscape, running parallel with the road, but also for its plain, utilitarian character, which is now a comparatively unusual sight.

There is a marked contrast in scale between the farmhouses and their former ancillary buildings and the terraced workers cottages. In one of the most memorable views, Hillside Farm rises above Nos.1-3 Main Street, the terrace of cottages on the street frontage.

A number of buildings, such as **1-3 School Row**, were built with the gable end abutting Main Street. As well as these, outbuildings running at 90 degrees to the road can be seen



*1-3 School Row*



*1-3 Main Street*

behind Poolcroft, at Ivanhoe Farm and the former mill. These buildings may trace the footprint of earlier buildings on the same axis and the stone footings of earlier buildings can sometimes be seen. This alignment maximised the amount of square footage whilst enabling access to the rear of each croft from the frontage. The Mill house, Poolcroft, Hasbury Cottage, The Poplars and The Cottage all abut the road without a private frontage. This is a distinct characteristic of many of the smallest cottages within the village.



Whilst the smallest cottages appear to have been located to make best use of the available space, the larger properties were clearly located with more thought. A good example is **Pitts Farm** (pictured left), which appears to have been positioned back from the road so that it is more imposing.



*Former farm building at Poolcroft with remains of earlier stone wall preserved at the base*

Terraces of cottages have a strong presence in the village. Rows of cottages are conspicuous and share common features - dentilled or sawtooth brick eaves, segmental brick arches and casement windows. **Nos. 1-3 School Row**, which predates the school, appears to have been built on a narrow croft and may incorporate 17<sup>th</sup> century remains. The row of cottages at **1-3 Main Street** has a strong character and is a focal point in views along the street. The buildings may be early 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin, or sit on the footprint of an older building.

There is a core of buildings between Main Street and Chapel Street where the tight grain of development has resulted in a higgledy-piggledy character. There were originally four rows of housing, running along the contours between Chapel Street and Main Street, and accessed off the ginnel now known as Nelson Place. Of these, three rows still survive, represented by Smisby Arms, The Cottage and Blue Cottage. The reason for this dense, tight-knit pattern of development is not clear. It was assisted by the rising land, which enabled each south-facing cottage to have a reasonable amount of daylight. **Nelson Square** may have been named after Admiral Lord Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), and may date from around that time, although "The Cottage", which is part of the row, has a stone chamfered plinth and may be 17<sup>th</sup> century in origin.

The evolution of the village is difficult to unravel and there are other examples, such as **Channel Cottage** and **The Cottage**, Main Street, where modern 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations may be concealing their historic origins.

Although it was secondary in importance, **Chapel Street** has a much straighter alignment than Main Street and the two streets are quite different in character. Chapel Street is narrower, the buildings are smaller in scale and line the street more emphatically, creating a tighter visual framework. Some of the buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century may have encroached onto the road further than their predecessors contributing to the present narrow built-up frontage. The frontage was once even more densely packed; a long range of buildings fronted the road behind Fir Tree Cottage and a further long “barn” range was replaced by 7 and 8 Chapel Street.



*Views along Chapel Street*

The character of the rural setting of the village, dominated by hedgerows, continues in part along Chapel Street, where many of the properties on the northern side of the street share golden privet hedges and a wide grassy verge, distinctive features in views towards the church.

Trees are particularly important within the western part of the conservation area. At the west end of Main Street a large Corsican pine sits between the Lock-up and Hasbury Cottage. Further pines line the northern perimeter of Pitts Farm where it joins Chapel Street. The Harpur-Crewe estate planted Corsican pines in other settlements that they owned, most notably Ticknall, but also in Swarkestone. They may well have planted these trees in Smisby for their picturesque effect. The large copper beech tree at the west end of Chapel Street is an impressive landmark tree, situated on a wide section of verge, with a great canopy that stretches over the road. Self-seeded trees and overgrown hedgerow trees at the top of the bank crowd over the road on Forties Lane creating a dramatic tunnel.

## Loss and Damage

The concept of conservation areas was introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967, as an acknowledgement of the need to conserve the “cherished local scene” in the face of accelerated change following the Second World War. It was not intended that development should be prevented, but rather that settlements should develop over time in a way that reflects and strengthens their special character. At Smisby, some of the undesirable changes

described below predate the designation of the conservation area in 1978. The designation was put in place as a safeguard against further harmful development, so far as this could be achieved by the need for planning permission.

In defining the character of the conservation area we can also identify instances where the village has suffered alterations or losses that either individually or cumulatively have diluted this character. It is hoped that identifying these will help householders, designers and the planning authority to reverse some of the damaging alterations and to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

**Loss of and alteration to boundary walls**

There are several uncharacteristic boundary walls and gates where personalised designs, such as the use of undulating red brick walls with scalloped parapets and semi-circular niches, detract from the character of the village. This is out of place in Smisby where the brick boundary walls were generally treated plainly. Concrete boundary walls have on occasion supplemented or replaced more traditional forms of enclosure.



*The lowered boundary wall and car park fronting the Smisby Arms create a hole in the frontage of Main Street*

The pattern of enclosure has been damaged where there are obvious gaps in the frontage, such as the car park to Smisby Arms. The use of timber palisade fencing along the corner of Main Street and Chapel Street has created a weak corner, with a very poor sense of enclosure compared with the rest of the village. Close-boarded fences, such as that adjacent to the Lock-up, are also out of place.

**New development**



*Garages to 17-21 Chapel Street detract from the setting of the conservation area*

There are a few instances where new development does not relate to the predominant character of the conservation area. Nos. 17-21 Chapel Street, are set back from the road and are fronted by a row of garages at street level (below left). They are particularly prominent because they are set on slightly higher land than the rest of the properties on Chapel Street. The row of garages, with off-street parking in front, is particularly poorly designed, robs the street of formal enclosure and looks

out of place. They do not follow the traditional settlement pattern along Chapel Street where buildings were placed close to the edge of the road, creating a tight framework. Although outside the conservation area boundary, they have a significant impact on the character and setting of Chapel Street.

Other 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings along the north side of Chapel Street are partially hidden by tall walls and hedges and mature gardens, and have less impact on the character of the street.

## **Public realm**

The street lighting column on the green at the junction of Annwell Lane and Main Street is particularly unsightly, built from concrete with a repair in galvanised metal, it now doubles up as a signpost. Alongside this lighting column is a tall fir tree which has grown to such an extent that it now blocks one of the most important views of St. James Church, which was once in direct line of sight from Main Street. The tree is of no amenity or wildlife value. The whole of the green triangle is defined by a series of timber posts with a linked chain. At the centre is the war memorial which is further separated from the public domain by a set of railings. The result of all these separate features is a cluttered environment that detracts from the simple, open, rural character of the space.

At the west end of the village concrete kerbs have been introduced to define the edge of the road, where there were previously no kerbs or pavement. This is out of place along largely rural lanes.

## **Colour of buildings**

Whilst a number of the historic buildings within the village were traditionally either painted in limewash or rendered, in one particular instance on Chapel Street, a cottage that has been painted bright blue creates an over-bearing, negative impact on the street. More muted colours that are more representative of traditional paint colours, achieved originally by mixing natural pigments such as ochre, umber and blood, are more appropriate and more in keeping with the character of Smisby.

## **Loss of building details**

There has been an overwhelming loss of historic window and door joinery within Smisby, except on the handful of listed buildings. In many instances stained hardwood or uPVC had replaced traditional timber joinery.

Where there are new buildings within the conservation area, these have largely incorporated traditional styles of joinery and make a positive contribution, although in some instances the traditional timber joinery installed as part of an approved scheme has been subsequently replaced in uPVC.

The original proportions of windows on some of the cottages have occasionally been altered with the creation of long “picture” windows, such as at The Cottage, Nelson Square and Hasbury Cottage, Main Street. No. 3 Main Street and Rotherwood are good examples where most of the historic casement and sash windows survive.

The plethora of replacement uPVC and stained hardwood windows is the single most

damaging alteration to the original character of the village.

### **Empty and neglected redundant buildings**



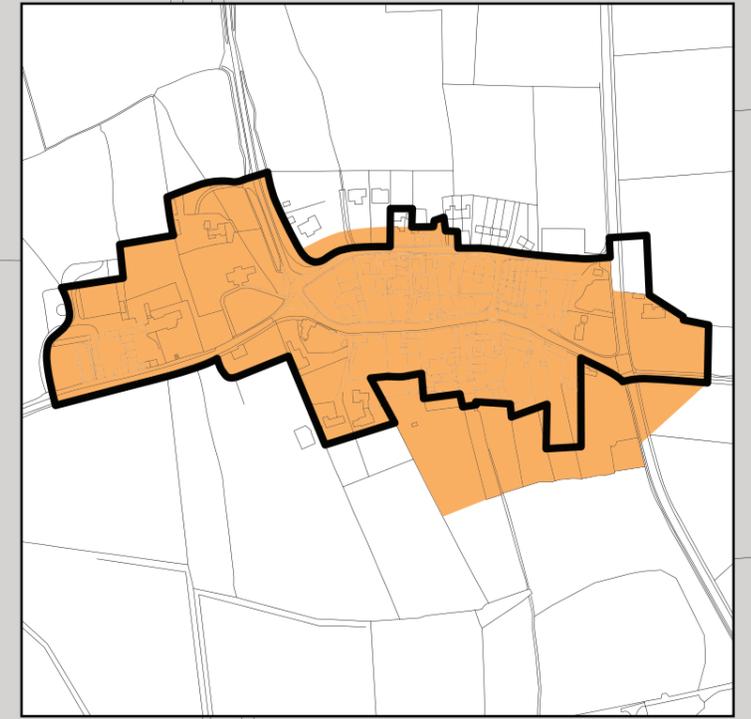
The former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel has been boarded up and is in poor condition (pictured left). The former steam mill is in poor condition, although it still retains its machinery.

### **Loss of agricultural character and identity**

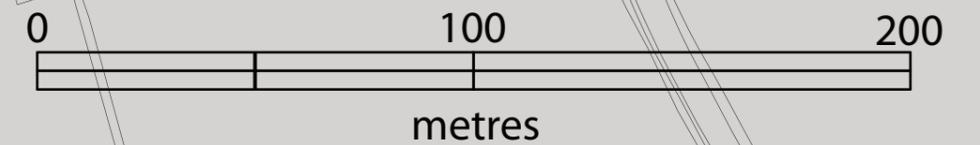
Smisby was once dominated by its small farms and agricultural buildings, but this character has been depleted. The rugged character and charm of former farmyards has been largely lost, as the majority of the farm buildings have been converted to residential use. In many cases the distinct historic agricultural uses are no longer identifiable (e.g. the former farm buildings to Hillside Farm).

# Smisby Conservation Area

Designated : 13th July 1978



-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Open spaces
-  Principal views
-  Architectural landmarks & focal points
-  Listed buildings
-  Other buildings which contribute positively to the special architectural or historic character
-  Areas of high archaeological potential



# Appendix

## Distinctive Architectural Details

### SMISBY



## Checklist of details

The details in this appendix illustrate those building elements that help to define Smisby's particular character. These may be common everyday vernacular details found repeatedly throughout the conservation area or may be more exceptional, consciously designed features.

This appendix may prove useful in providing inspiration for new development, whether traditional or contemporary, if used with care. Paradoxically, the outstanding architectural details of a conservation area may not be the ones that are most typical of the area. They often belong to the important key buildings of a village and may look out of place on smaller buildings in subordinate locations. The majority of buildings in the conservation areas of South Derbyshire are plainly and simply detailed.

### Boundary treatments

- Tall, red brick walls with triangular and half-round red clay copings, and more formal walls with shaped stone copings
- Random rubble sandstone walls
- Coursed sandstone walls with chamfered triangular copings

### Roof types and details

- Pitched roofs with raised moulded stone-coped gables
- Pitched roof with corbelled and dentilled verges
- Staffordshire blue clay tiles
- Pitched roofs with plain close verges
- Hipped tiled roofs with bonnet clay tiles to the hips

### Chimney stacks and pots

- Square brick chimneys with moulded brick corners
- Two oversailing courses of red brick
- Buff-coloured square pots, favoured by the Harpur Crewe estate
- Brick chimneys with engaged flues

### Walls

- Plain raised brick bands
- Combination of brick and older patches of stone
- Corbelled brick eaves, sometimes embellished with "sawtooth", or dentilled or moulded brickwork
- Dentilled brick eaves with bricks laid on edge
- Brickwork with roundels
- Large blocks of rubble sandstone with remnants of chamfered plinths

### Windows

- Two-pane casement windows
- Multi-paned timber casements, some within chamfered frames
- Small-paned vertically sliding sash windows

### Lintels and cills

- Segmental brick arched windows in red brick
- Moulded stone window surrounds (formerly mullioned and transomed windows)
- Brickwork without cills
- Stone wedge lintels and stone cills
- Timber lintels, painted white

## Checklist of details (cont'd)

### Doors

- 
- 
- 

### Street Furniture

- 
- 
-

## **BOUNDARY TREATMENTS**

### **Walls and railings**



Brick walls - moulded triangular brick copings at 4 Main Street (above left) and tall brick wall with moulded triangular brick copings at Rotherwood (above right). Salt-glazed terracotta copings to gatepiers at Poolcroft (top left).

Below - stepped brick wall with swept, moulded, stone copings at Ivanhoe House, Main Street.





Above left and top right - cast iron railings and gates with spear-headed finials at St. James Church.  
Above right - hooped steel railings with finials at Hamilton House, Chapel Lane.

Below left - coursed sandstone boundary to Smisby Manor, with chamfered double-course stone coping. Below right and bottom - rubble sandstone walls, one mortared, the other laid semi-dry.



## ROOF TYPES AND DETAILS



Below - gable-fronted elevation of the former chapel on Chapel Lane. The corbelled and dentilled brick verge continues part way along the front elevation.



The majority of roofs within Smisby are steeply pitched and finished with a plain close verge, where the tiles simply overlap the brickwork or render (see example on the left).

The raised gable at Ivanhoe House (above) is finished with a moulded stone coped parapet, a common detail in the outlying villages, but this is the only surviving example of this roof type within the village.





Above and top - a number of the former farmsteads of the 18th and 19th centuries are grouped around courtyards. The adjoining hipped, tiled roofs have special clay bonnet tiles at the hips (4 Main Street and Manor Farm).

Right - the octagonal roof of the Lock Up, built entirely in brick, and surmounted by a large ball finial, is a distinctive feature of the village. It was one of several lock-ups of this pattern in the locality.



## CHIMNEY STACKS & POTS



Many of the chimneys within Smisby were built or adapted in the 19th century by the Harpur Crewe estate.

Above - moulded brick chimneys with two oversailing courses at School Row. Top right - corbelled chimney with rounded moulded brickwork at a Harpur Crewe property on Nelson Square.

Right and far right - chimneys with engaged brick flues at Smisby Manor.



The Harpur Crewe estate favoured square buff pots, as found at The Poplars (right).

Plain stacks also occasionally have a strong presence - such as the large square stack at Pitts Farm (far right).



## WALLS



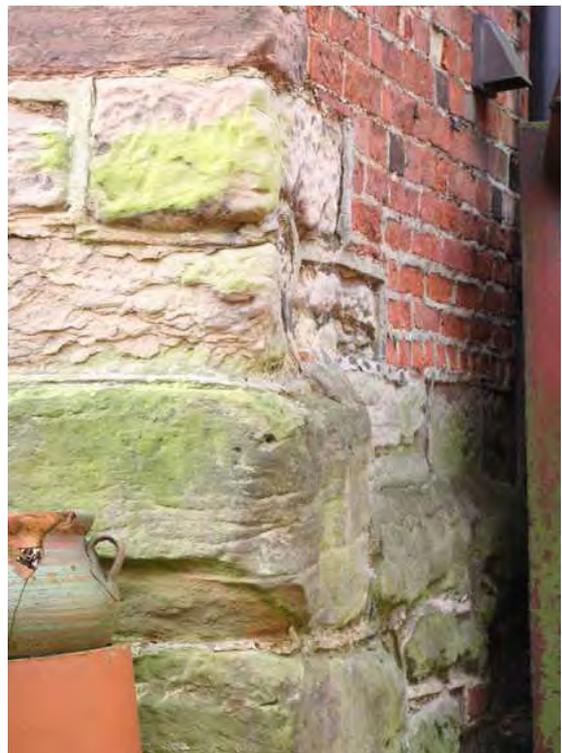
Brick buildings within Smisby have few embellishments.

Above - raised horizontal brick band at Pitts Farm.



Left - high-level roundels at Manor Farm were probably added for ventilation and to enable barn owls to roost, rather than as pitching eyes. They are now glazed.

There are few surviving stone buildings. Where they do survive, there are sometimes original 17th century details, such as moulded window surrounds and mullions (below left - Hasbury Cottage) or chamfered stone plinths (below right - The Cottage, Nelson Square).



## WALLS - Eaves details



Left - brick-on-edge, laid as a dentilled and corbelled brick eaves at Firtree Cottage, Chapel Lane and Ivanhoe House (below left).

Each alternate brick projects to create a decorative effect.

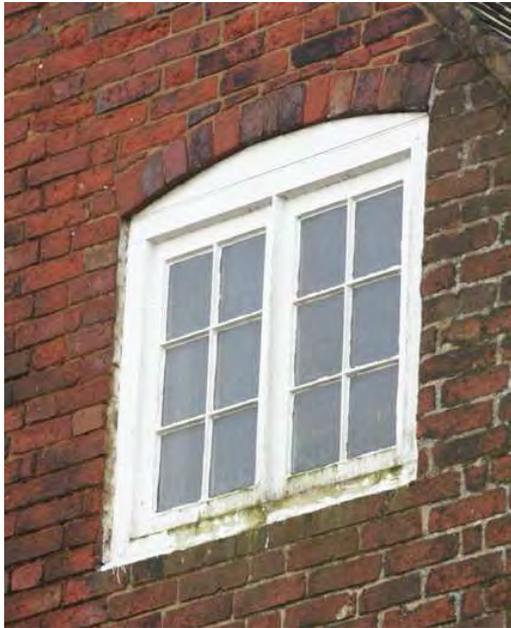
Below - sawtooth brick eaves at 1 Main Street. "Sawtooth" brickwork is another decorative detail found in several places within the village. The remnants of faded yellow limewash can still be seen clinging to the brickwork.



Above left and right - dentilled brick eaves at The Poplars and the barn on Main Street.

Left - moulded brick eaves laid in a dentilled pattern at Rotherwood.

## WINDOWS



Above left - side-hinged casement windows, recessed within a chamfered frame (Firtree Cottage, Chapel Street).

Above right - multi-paned casement at Smisby Manor.

Right - modern casement window based on an historic style (Rotherwood House).

Bottom left and right - multi-paned casement windows with flush-fitting frames (3 Main Street and Ivanhoe House).





The larger houses, such as Rotherwood (left) and Hillside Farm (bottom left) had multi-paned vertically sliding sash windows in the Georgian period. The sash window boxes in both houses are hidden, set within a rebate behind the rendered brickwork, enabling as much light as possible to flood the room beyond.

Below and bottom - high-level, four-light and two-light casements within chamfered frames. In each case the window has a painted timber lintel.



## LINTELS AND CILLS



Where economy was important, and for utilitarian buildings, lintels were simple in form - a segmental arch (left), formed by a single course of “header” bricks.



Stone wedge-lintel with raised keystone used at Rotherwood (left). Wedge-shaped stone lintels were very popular in the first half of the 19th century.

### Cills

Most of the buildings that incorporate wedge stone lintels also have stone cills (illustrated on the previous page).

Many of the smaller brick cottages, with segmental brick arches, had no cill, such as that at 3 Main Street (right).



## DOORS



Above - early 19th century doorcase with narrow pilasters and cornice (Ivanhoe House). The boarded and battened door is 20th century.



Boarded doors with scratch mouldings, within garden walls, are a feature of Main Street (left). Below - heavy-duty, old, boarded, cross batted and studded door at the Lock Up.



## STREET FURNITURE

Right - ER wall-mounted post box, c 1960s

Below: K6 telephone box (designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott), unlisted

