

BOURTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Bourton Conservation Area was designated on 26 October 1994.

LOCATION

Bourton is a small, attractive village in the Parish of Much Wenlock. Most of the village lies in a hollow some four miles south west of Much Wenlock, straddling the B4378 Much Wenlock to Shipton road at the crossroads leading to Presthope to the west and Monkhopton to the east. The Conservation Area comprises the whole of the village from Bourton Manor and lodge southwards, including Hill Farm and Nos. 23-24, the former quarry and an area of land along the stream to the south, excluding Manor View, and part of the Presthope road, but excluding properties west of Nos. 11-12.



HISTORY

Bourton, a former Saxon settlement, derives its name from **burh**, meaning fortified place and **tun**, a township. By the time of the Norman Conquest of 1066 the manor was the property of St. Milburg's priory church in Much Wenlock. Bourton's Church of the Holy Trinity has its foundations in the 12th century but was much "restored" and extended around 1844 at the expense of Lady Wenlock.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries Richard Lawley purchased Bourton between 1543 and 1545. Ownership was passed down through the Lawley family who became baronets in 1641. Sir Robert Lawley, the 6th Baronet, was created first (and only) Baron Wenlock in 1831 before dying "*without issue*", on 10th April 1834. Bourton Manor, standing on the brow of the hill, has its origins in the form of the local yellow limestone built, Tudor style Bourton Cottage, which forms the core of Bourton Manor. In 1874 Norman Shaw substantially enlarged the 16th century Bourton Cottage in his characteristic rural style for the 2nd Lord Wenlock.

LANDSCAPE



Bourton is situated in a hollow in rolling countryside below and to the south east of Wenlock Edge, with land rising to the west, north and south. Meandering hedge lined lanes radiate out from the village towards higher ground rising dramatically from the settlement. Groups and individual trees are equally important to the

Conservation Area's rural appearance and character. Holy Trinity Church and Bourton Manor stand majestically on the higher ground to the north looking down towards the heart of the village below. The slopes and steep banks limit distant views and create a strong sense of enclosure. It is these changes of level, however, and the views that they provide within the village itself that are major elements of Bourton's distinctive character.

A small babbling brook, which runs from north-west to south-east through the hollow, forms a very attractive feature. It lies some way below the Presthoke road, surrounded by trees and gardens. Just to the west of the B4378 it disappears into a culvert, but re-emerges further east to run alongside the road, with bridges to front gardens creating an effect reminiscent of some Cotswold villages. An avenue of Chestnut trees, which were planted to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, line the road from Much Wenlock. Similarly, flowering cherries were planted for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II for every one of the children in the village at that time. Belts of trees, especially those along and above the roads, are an important element of the landscape.



BUILDINGS



The Conservation Area's strong historic and rural character and appearance owe a great deal to its buildings. With the exception of some modern farm buildings, there are very few 20th century structures. By far the oldest building is the Grade B listed Church of Holy Trinity. This is very much a small country church, with a 12th century nave and chancel and later alterations and rebuilding including 19th century windows, a Norman-style north aisle added in 1844, and a weather-boarded belfry.

The historic farmsteads make a major contribution to the Conservation Area. Bourton Hall Farmhouse, listed Grade II, is a large, irregular early 17th century house with prominent gables and central chimney, and 19th century alterations. The square dovecote to the north is also early 17th century and Grade II listed; it forms part of an excellent group of 17th, 18th and 19th century traditional farm buildings. Hill Farm has a



large, solid-looking house with a late 18th or early 19th century symmetrical front, and a good range of traditional buildings. Both of these historic farmsteads are a vital element of Bourton's special character.

Simple unspoilt vernacular cottages such as The Old Post Office, Nos. 20 and 21, and 23 and 24 together are equally important.

Though varying in date from the 17th to the 19th centuries, they are all of traditional local materials, forms and details. All these buildings have boundary walls in the same materials, which make their own distinctive contribution. School House, built as Bourton Charity School in 1819 by P. B. Lawley (later the 1st Lord Wenlock) has vernacular elements but is more obviously “designed”, predominantly of local stone but with the deliberately picturesque mixture of materials and simple decorative details often found in rural buildings of its date and type. Nos. 13 and 14, a later 19th century house, has similarities but is simpler.



Other 19th century buildings clearly show the decline of the local vernacular manner. The Old Shoppe is a mid-19th century picturesque half-timbered house, with a partly jettied first floor, a big chimneystack and a variety of architectural details, although it has a slightly "scraped", over-restored appearance. No. 28 is, apart from the use of local stone, a standard late Victorian design with sham timber framing which could be found in any part of the country. Bourton House and The Cottage is an undistinguished large Victorian brick house that

would look more at home in a suburban rather than a rural setting. The new school built by Lord Wenlock in 1901, and now converted to a house, is a distinctively Edwardian design that has nothing at all in common with the local vernacular.

Standing apart from the village, Bourton Manor is a country house probably of 16th century origin, but was given its present appearance by the additions and remodelling designed by Norman Shaw in 1874. Shaw was one of the leading architects of his day. Bourton Manor is an example of the picturesque "Old English" style he made popular, with many gables, prominent roofs and chimneys, and a mixture of materials and period details. It is listed Grade II. The lodge in the same style is also by Shaw and is also listed Grade II.



MATERIALS

The local Wenlock stone used for buildings of all types from the church to farm buildings and boundary and retaining walls - such as those of the churchyard - is a vital element of Bourton's distinctive appearance. Wenlock limestone is used as roughly coursed rubble with lime mortar, being unsuitable for dressing. The church is also partly of sandstone and has sandstone ashlar dressings, windows etc.



A number of buildings have brick dressings and features such as the quoins and chimney shafts of Nos. 23 and 24 and School House, the brick piers to a cart shed at Hall Farm, and details such as the arches to openings of Nos. 19 and 20, Bourton Cottage and No. 30.

One bay of School House is entirely of brick, used to form a distinctive chequer effect. The Old Shoppe is of red brick and timber framing. Some buildings are wholly of red brick, notably No. 28, Bourton House and Bourton Cottage, the particularly strong red of the former school and a number of farm and other buildings. Bourton Manor has the widest variety of materials - Wenlock stone with ashlar dressings, pebbledashed brick, tile hanging, timber framing and elaborate brick chimneys - used to maximum "Picturesque" effect, which is typical of the Old English style. The Lodge is similar but with a more limited range of materials, and exposed brick rather than stone.

Roofs are predominantly of clay tiles. Most are old and hand-made, but a few buildings such as Hall Farmhouse and No. 30 have 20th century machine-made tiles. The majority are weathered to a mellow effect; the brilliant red tiles and ridge cresting of the former school make a marked contrast. School House and No. 28 have decorative bands of shaped tiles. Hill Farmhouse and one of its buildings, The Old Shoppe and part of Bourton Manor have 19th century slate roofs.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

The varied forms and details of buildings are an important element of the Conservation Area's visual and historic interest. Plans vary: houses such as School House, Nos. 13 and 14 and No. 30 have a regular, largely unbroken main elevation. Others are entirely irregular, with projecting wings and varying rooflines, such as Nos. 19 and 20 and Hall Farmhouse; most irregular of all is the rambling Bourton Manor, with its numerous wings and roofs. Most houses are 2-storey, but Hall Farmhouse is of 2 storeys and an attic, while Hill Farmhouse is the only 3-storey building.

Most buildings have gabled roofs. Some, such as Hall Farmhouse, have exposed rafters and purlin ends. A number, including the church and Bourton Manor, have bargeboards; The Old Shoppe has pierced timber finials, while No. 28 has shaped and pierced bargeboards, as does the porch of School House. Others, including Nos. 19 and 30, have plain, mortared verges to the gables. Some, including School House, Hill Farmhouse, and buildings at Hall Farm have hipped roofs. The dovecote at Hill Farm has a pyramidal roof and timber Glover (an open structure with arched sides for access for the pigeons).

Prominent chimneys are an important feature of the Conservation Area, especially in views across the village from the higher ground. Hall Farmhouse has a massive central stack of tall 17th century brick shafts, each with diagonal ribs and corbelled tops, arranged in a T-plan. The Old Shoppe has a big external stack of three diagonally set shafts with pilaster strips, a dog-tooth cornice and corbelling. Most elaborate of all are the chimneys of Bourton Manor. These are typically Old English: very tall, in a variety of

designs with shafts of complex shapes and dramatically oversailing tops. Many other buildings have more simply ornamented chimneys, such as those of School House.

Unsurprisingly the principal buildings have the most elaborate and sophisticated detail. The church has some simple Gothic windows and 19th century 2-light round-arched windows, all with mouldings and hood moulds and on the north side set in sunken panels; there is also an unusual cruciform window. Bourton Manor has Gothic-arched entrances, mullioned and transomed windows of moulded stone or painted timber with leaded upper lights, moulded exposed timbers and part of the first floor jettied out on brackets. The Lodge is a simpler version of this, with windows projecting on brackets. The Old Shoppe has some similar details.

Most buildings have simply detailed openings with brick or stone segmental arches, often with stone projecting window sills. Some, such as School House and Bourton Cottage, have brick surrounds contrasting with the stonework. The Old School has chamfered stone lintels; Bourton House and The Cottage also have them, but painted. Windows and doors are generally recessed within the openings. Many buildings have simple vertically boarded doors, such as those of the Old Shoppe and Hall Farmhouse. A few have open-fronted porches with tile roofs, as at Hall Farmhouse and School House.



A wide range of traditional windows adds interest to the Conservation Area. Most are of painted timber. The Old Post Office and Hill Farmhouse have mullioned windows, some with transoms. Nos. 19 and 20 have 2-light casements with 4, 6 or 9 panes to each light, while Nos. 13-14 has lights of 12 small panes. No. 27 and Bourton House and The Cottage have casements with horizontal glazing bars. Hall Farmhouse has windows of most of these types, as well as one with small panes and Gothic arches. School House has quite unusual horizontally sliding sashes with vertical glazing bars. A small number of houses, including the Old Shoppe, have stained timber windows; those to the Old School and No. 30 are late 20th century.

THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Bourton is a small village with a very strong rural and historic character. Narrow roads with no footpaths and minimal lighting, lined with grass verges, hedges, trees and walls, and with a brook running alongside, steep banks and trees, farmsteads and other historic buildings are its major elements. Agriculture and residential are the predominant land uses; there is no industry. The church is the only remaining public building now that the school has been converted to a house. House names such as “The Old Post Office”, The Old Shoppe”, “The Smithy”, “The Old Inn” all elude to Bourton’s former independence. However, apart from farming, no commercial or industrial activities currently exist in the area.



Within the Conservation Area there are smaller areas of distinct individual character and appearance. The small, simple church standing in an unspoilt churchyard with many yews and other trees, isolated from the road behind a meadow and with fine views over trees to a ridge in the distance, could hardly be more rural. The churchyard is bounded by a stone retaining wall, with a simple oak and tile lychgate dated 1889, and is filled with old gravestones and monuments including a good early 19th century pedestal tomb and railings. Unfortunately the effect is spoilt somewhat by unattractive 20th century brick and asbestos farm buildings alongside the south-eastern edge of the churchyard. A track to Bourton Manor runs alongside the churchyard between stone walls. The churchyard adjoins the Manor grounds on the rising ground to the north-east, and the gables and chimneys of the house appear very close. This close association of church and country house away from the rest of the village is a very important element of Bourton's character and appearance.

Bourton Manor is the largest single building in the Conservation Area and has considerable visual impact from numerous viewpoints. Its grounds retain much of their 19th century layout and are important not only as the setting of the house but as part of the appearance and historic character of the Conservation Area. The drive is lined with low hedges, and an ashlar stone retaining wall surrounds the formal paved entrance courtyard. On rising ground to the north is a large area of ornamental planting of trees and shrubs (Lime, Wellingtonia, Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Yew, Rhododendron, Laurel etc.). The grouping of trees and shrubs of varying sizes, shapes and colours is very effective. To the south-east of the house a large Yew hedge separates the garden from an area of parkland with scattered mature trees including a fine Copper Beech. To the west a field between the house and the road, with a line of semi-mature Horse Chestnut trees along the roadside, completes the setting of Bourton Manor.

There are fine distant views from the churchyard to the south west over the main part of the village on the lower ground, with stone and brick buildings, roofs and prominent chimneys scattered among trees and gardens; further off the land starts to rise again with grass, hedges and small trees, Hill Farm and Nos. 23 and 24 making a very strong visual impact. Rolling countryside lies beyond.



From the lower end of the churchyard a very attractive path lined with trees and traditional iron park railings (unfortunately damaged and incomplete) runs down between fields to the village. To the north-west Bourton House and The Cottage are prominent on the ridge. The bottom part of the path is tightly enclosed by hedging and trees before emerging onto a small footbridge. Looking back there is a fine view of the church belfry.

The gently rising ground of the meadow bounded by a hedge separating the church from the road emphasises its rural character, and is a vital element of the Conservation Area. From the road there are attractive views across the meadow to the mature trees of the churchyard and Bourton Manor grounds framing glimpses of the church and house. Bourton Manor Lodge is prominent at the roadside on the northern edge of the

Conservation Area. It forms part of a small group of buildings with School House and the Old School, which are set back above the road behind high retaining walls and narrow grass verges, forming a strong contrast to the hedge and meadow opposite.

There is an equally strong contrast between the local stone, hipped roof and prominent chimneys of School House and the bright red brick and tiles and lead bellcote which give The Old School a slightly alien, urban appearance. Conversion to a dwelling has not drastically altered its appearance. The gardens of both properties, with mature shrubs and plants growing down over the retaining walls, add to the attractive appearance. The concrete garage to Bourton House opposite is a jarring note. The simple streetlights mounted on telegraph poles here and elsewhere in the Conservation Area are a characteristically rural detail that should be retained.

The road descends, enclosed between a steep wooded bank and Bourton House and The Cottage, before a sharp bend to the west between trees on either side cuts off views ahead. It then descends a steep bank towards the junction. There are views down across the picturesque roofs of Hall Farm to Hill Farmhouse rising above its surrounding buildings. Approaching the junction the road opens out to the south, as the bank becomes an open grassed area, with the Much Wenlock and Monkhopton roads running almost parallel alongside it, giving the junction itself an unusual layout. The dovecote, cartshed and other buildings of Hall Farm form a picturesque group. They tightly define the southern side of the Monkhopton road and together with No. 30, with its outbuildings on the opposite corner, make an effective contrast with the bank and trees along the Presthope road and the low undulating ridge enclosing the village to the west. The concrete boundary wall to No. 30 is alien to the traditional materials and character of the Conservation Area.

The Presthope road rises alongside No. 30 almost to first floor level, tightly enclosed between the building and a brick boundary wall on the southern side and the steep wooded bank on the north. The bank merges with the stone retaining wall and then the bank and hedge of Nos. 13 / 14. The house is set back and high above the road, and from some angles only its upper floor can be seen. Its unaltered front elevation, the trees and hedging around it, which provide a particularly attractive setting, and the hedge opposite are a major contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. Looking back towards the junction the trees and hedges dominate. There are views south-west across the valley of the stream below the road, to trees and the ridge. The valley has old willow trees, and there are glimpses across it of Nos. 27 and 28. Further west the road runs between trees, and the view ahead is closed off by a bend and steeply rising ground with a dense tree belt.

From the junction the road to Brockton runs south-west. Beyond the cartshed and No. 30 it opens out, with the buildings of Hall Farm set back behind a hedge. No. 27's position, on rising ground and at right angles to the road with a belt of trees rising above and behind, gives it some prominence when seen along the road; the leylandii hedge to the garden is alien to the traditional rural character of the Conservation Area. The trees enclosing the road on either side beyond No. 27 mark the boundary of the Conservation Area. Looking back, No. 13/14, set high and surrounded by trees, is very prominent, but the tall leylandii hedge to the rear of No. 30 is very much out of keeping.

The Monkhopton road is tightly enclosed on its northern side by banks, walls, buildings and trees with little or no views out. It begins with the grass bank rising to the Much Wenlock road. Against the bank a small 19th century stone pump house with a brick Gothic arch and pair of doors is an unusual historic feature. Beyond the open grassed area the road is tightly enclosed by trees and buildings as the bank merges into a grass verge and stone retaining wall with trees above. Bourton House Cottage is an attractive building in traditional local materials set behind the verge. Beyond it a heavily overgrown retaining wall and overgrown brick and stone building add to the green and "Picturesque" appearance. The small iron Dutch barn is less attractive. At this point the space opens out to an irregular grassed area backed by trees. Beyond this a stream emerges, running between a wide grass verge and the belt of trees now closer to the road. This stream crossed by a series of small bridges is one of the most distinctively rural features of the Conservation Area.

The southern side is also enclosed, but primarily by structures, with few trees, and less tightly, giving glimpses, through gateways and over walls, of other buildings and the landscape beyond. A variety of structures of different types, sizes and shapes provide visual interest. Farm buildings along the road and visible from it are a major element of Bourton's distinctive rural character. The long, low cartshed and squat, square dovecote are set back behind a narrow verge. The dovecote is at an angle; this, together with a slight bend, makes it a prominent feature closing distant views north-west along the road. Looking south-east the hipped roof of another traditional farm building along the roadside is prominent in the foreground, with more distant views closed by the slate roofs and very prominent chimney stack of the Old Shoppe against a backdrop of trees. Buildings and boundary walls are punctuated by a series of gateways. Between the dovecote and the gate to Hall Farmhouse stone boundary walls and an outbuilding are set well back from the road behind a broad hard-surfaced verge. A gateway adjacent to the dovecote gives a glimpse of the farmyard and buildings. Hall Farmhouse, set back behind a gravelled forecourt with a traditional painted timber gate, is one of the most attractive and historically important buildings in the Conservation Area. Beyond the gateway a boundary wall partly overgrown with ivy curving back out to follow the edge of the road is a particularly attractive feature of the street scene. There are other traditional buildings behind the wall.

Beyond the farm building alongside the road, the stone wall continues as a retaining wall softened by plants growing along the top and down the face, but with an unattractive wire fence on top. On the opposite side of the road the stream and wide grass verge continue. The path to the churchyard crosses the stream on a small brick bridge. Beyond this point the space opens out again. Nos. 19 and 20 and The Old Post Office are set well back behind stone retaining and boundary walls; No. 19 has a particularly attractive front garden. They form an interesting group of traditional dwellings with the mixture of materials and details characteristic of Bourton. A bend and a belt of trees cut off any view out along the road. Looking back towards the village centre the dovecote and trees around it close the view.

Opposite the Old Post Office the track to Hill Farm is confined between a stone wall and The Old Shoppe. Close to the road is a small 19th century brick stable building, and other traditional stone buildings can be glimpsed alongside the track. Nos. 23 and 24 can be seen across the adjacent field; the hedge around the garden is an important

contribution to the landscape. The view of a large 20th century farm building is rather less attractive. The Old Shoppe presents a picturesque appearance fronting directly onto the road, but the reconstituted stone garden wall does not compare well with the local stone walls opposite, and the white-painted stones along the verge are very prominent in distant views of the building.

On the northern side of the road is steeply rising ground with the remains of a hedge alongside the road. At the top is an old brick wall, and north of this the roof and chimney of Bourton Manor Lodge can be glimpsed through the trees. Unfortunately the end wall of an unattractive 20th century farm building next to the churchyard spoils the view. To the south is another view of Hill Farm. In the eastern part of the bank is an old quarry hidden by trees which contains a 19th century brick building and old timber and corrugated iron buildings. They are part of the historic character of Bourton connecting to past activity. Opposite the quarry entrance the road is lined with trees. The trees and rising ground are particularly important elements of this part of the Conservation Area's appearance.

The road continues out to the south, with the hedge on its eastern side and the stream to the west forming the Conservation Area boundaries. Views west across the stream are dominated by Hill Farm, and particularly by the tall mass of the farmhouse rising above the buildings; the stone wall to its garden is an important element of the complex of traditional structures. From the edge of the Conservation Area there is a particularly good view northwards across to Bourton Manor on the rise, with trees and parkland in front, and other buildings and trees scattered at different levels across the rising ground. Fields rise behind the village to a belt of trees. The extent to which the unique character and appearance of Bourton is determined by its landscape setting is particularly clear from this viewpoint.

PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT

In the 18th century farms and cottages were on both the higher ground and on either side of the brook. The scattered pattern of development is largely unchanged since then, though by the late 19th century only a few buildings remained on the high ground. These include Bourton's principal buildings, Holy Trinity Church and Bourton Manor, which stand in spacious grounds set apart from the village, separated from the main road by fields and trees. To the front of Bourton Manor and nearer to the road is the contemporary Bourton Lodge. Opposite Bourton Hall Lodge and fronting the main road leading down to the village stands School House and the former school of 1901 also Shaw-styled and attractively detailed. This group of buildings is separated from the rest of the village by a steep slope and a bend in the road down to the crossroads. There are no continuously built-up frontages. Most houses face onto one of the roads, and are generally set in large gardens with fields to the rear. At the crossroads there are buildings on the west and south corners. To the north and west is a loosely knit group of dwellings. No. 30 faces the main Much Wenlock road but has its gable end against the Presthope road. The former garage site separates it from No. 27, which exceptionally is sited at right angles to the road. Behind them No. 28 is isolated away from the roads in its garden, while Nos. 13-14 is set on a bank above the Presthope

road. Nos. 11-12 further along the Presthope road marks the eastern extremity of the Conservation Area.



To the south Bourton Hall Farm, a large and varied group of traditional buildings including barns, cartshed and a dovecote, occupies a prominent position. The farmhouse complex is a dominant element of the village, fronting on to two roads. The Dovecote, together with the adjoining former farm outbuildings, has been converted to residential

use. Agricultural buildings and boundary walls dominate the southern side of the Monkthopton road with Hill Farm well set back from the road and to the south-west of Bourton Hall Farm.



The Old Shoppe, a 19th century building fronting directly onto the Monkthopton road at the corner of the drive to Hill Farm, is something of an exception to the general pattern. On the northern side Nos. 19-21 form a distinctive group set well back from the road behind a wide verge, the brook and front gardens. West of the path to the church the pattern is more varied, with boundary walls to an overgrown area of land, a small Dutch barn and an outbuilding, and Bourton Cottage on the roadside.

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