

Tisbury and West Tisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan



Appendix 3 - A History of the Local TisPlan Area

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With thanks to the Tisbury History Society for the reproduction of historic photos of the Tisbury area.

The find of a small piece of 'starred agate' or Tisbury coral, *Isastaea oblonga*, in a 100,000 year old grave of a young girl in Kent, is evidence that Tisbury was visited by some of the earliest humans in Europe, as this agate has only been found in Tisbury.

Flints from early Neolithic settlement; pottery, flints and burial mounds from the Bronze Age and a stone circle with a central burial show that Tisbury was settled very early on as part of the great Wessex civilisation. The stones from this circle were moved in 1792 to form part of the 18C grotto built at Old Wardour.

The Iron Age is represented by the fort at Castle Ditches and field systems to the north of the village. Roman invaders left their mark locally in the form of the first quarrying at Chilmark, using the stone for the road from the Mendips, through Old Sarum to Winchester, which was heavily used for the transport of silver and lead. Recent archaeological finds are proving of great excitement to Wessex Roman specialists and more information of a possible Roman temple in the immediate area of Tisbury is to be published soon.

Tisbury village originated as a West Saxon settlement, beside the River Nadder and the area where the parish church of St John the Baptist now stands. Church Street and its immediate surrounds are regarded as having a high archaeological significance with links to a mid-Saxon monastery and burial ground. It was the Saxons who first called the area Tissebiri, derived from Tysse's Burh- Tysse, perhaps being the Saxon leader of that name who may have founded the settlement.

The first written evidence for Tisbury comes from a grant of land to Abbot Ecgnoth and his 'familia' or community at Tisbury Minster in 759AD, but the monastery was in existence by 705AD when a synod held under the chairmanship of Aldhelm (subsequently St Aldhelm) was convened. This was to discuss the creation of a diocese of Salisbury from parts of Sherborne and Winchester dioceses. This synod was called 'the Synod of the Nadder' and Tisbury is the most likely venue.

By that time the monastery held as much land in the Tisbury area as is now covered by the ecclesiastical parish of Tisbury. The focus of the monastery was around the church, a few farmsteads and the muddy little lane which ran up towards Hindon where there were a few dwellings in the upper part of what is now the High Street.



Figure 1 (front cover) - Tisbury Brewery workers

Figure 2 (above) - The Tithe Barn, Place Farm

Sadly, during the latter part of the first millenium Tisbury was destroyed by the raiding Norsemen, who killed all the monks and razed the monastery buildings to the ground. King Alfred, who finally drove the Norsemen away to the North, founded the Abbey of Shaftesbury for his daughter, and endowed it with much of the former Tisbury monastery lands, referred to in a charger dated 984AD. By the time the Normans arrived, Tisbury already had a stone Saxon church, the remains of which were probably incorporated into the Norman church of St John the Baptist, the building of which started in 1180. The stone for this was probably brought upstream on barges from local quarries.

During the early medieval period arable farming was important to the village economy, as was quarrying. Tisbury was very badly affected by the Black Death in 1349, losing 75 'customary tenants' and members of their families; there was a drop in the working population and subsequently a decline in the extensive cultivation of the land. Sheep farming became more profitable for landowners than arable, and a trade in wool developed, with home-working by women and a fulling mill in the village in the 1300's.

Cloth working continued in Tisbury for many years, culminating in the short-lived cloth factory at the south end of the Fonthill lake which employed, for a short while in the early 1800's some 200 workers. The main source of employment was in the many quarries in the area, which supplied stone for Salisbury Cathedral and the beautiful manor and large country houses in Wiltshire, and of course the stone for local cottages.

There was no market charter or grant for an annual fair for Tisbury, the nearest market being held at Hindon. A cross, said to be 'the market cross' stands in St John's churchyard, but there is no documentary evidence that Tisbury held a market. Perhaps travelling pedlars gathered together at the top of the High Street occasionally, where the cross is said to have been sited, and the local ale house there is called 'The Cross Inn', but this could have referred to the cross roads there.

However, Tisbury had many small businesses which were essential for the community – blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carters, candlemakers, bakers, millers,

tanners, brewers, carpenters, builders, weavers, roadmenders, hedgers. Many people were employed on the local estates at Fonthill, Pythouse, Wardour and Hatch and girls entered service on these estates at a young age.

Churchwardens, the constable and the overseers of the poor, ran the day-to-day parish business, from poor relief to pest control and the state of the highways. Manorial courts dealt with farm and cottage rents, tenancies, stray cattle, the problems of waste disposal, rules for the use of the common grazing land for tenants' sheep and cattle and the right to take stone, timber and fuel. Ecclesiastical courts ran the tithe contributions, and the King's judges administered the laws of the land, but were rarely seen in Tisbury. It was essential for the poor to have work and not to become a burden to the parish. Wages were low and did not improve for hundreds of years.



Figure 3 (above) - St John the Baptist Church, Church Street

In 1650 villagers petitioned for an ale house to be licensed near the church, which became the Crown Inn. The cottages around the church were mainly 16thC, including the range known as the church houses, to the west of the church. The Boot Inn is another old ale house. During the 1700's both sides of the High Street were built up, and there was settlement along Hindon Lane, Cuffs Lane, Court Street, Duck Street, Vicarage Road, and the Causeway, all in local stone. A workhouse was built in Church Street, where the Brewery now stands. Later in the 18th and early 19thC the Quarry area was developed and Tisbury House was built, followed by some Regency and Italianate style houses in the 1840's at the upper end of the High Street.

All through the 18C wages had remained low and indeed reduced further in the early 1800's. With the introduction of the Enclosures Acts, which lost the agricultural labourer the opportunity of running a cow, some sheep and a pig on common land, the standard of living for the rural poor created a society of hungry, dissatisfied people. Tisbury was not immune to this, and became the focus for the Pythouse riots, when agricultural labourers, terrified of losing their jobs with the introduction of farm machinery, such as threshing machines (these provided work during the winter months), rioted in November 1830. The Hindon Troop of the Yeomanry Cavalry, a local militia, was brought in to control the riot which occurred on land belonging to John Benett of Pythouse.

They arrived too late to save the threshing machines, but managed to stop the riot, causing considerable damage to the rioters, many of whom were arrested and carted off to Salisbury – a witness reported that blood trickled out of the wagons all the way there. Many were transported to Tasmania, for life, others for terms of ten to fourteen years. Local village names included Willy Sanger, Thomas Rixon, Will Gray and James Mould. James Turner, the blacksmith, received a life sentence. Many Tisbury families suffered real deprivation as a result of these sentences. The foreman of the jury was Mr John Benett. Wages failed to rise.

In the later Victorian period the layout of the village changed, with the introduction of the brick built brewery on the site of the old workhouse, and the realignment of the lower part of the High Street with its uniform range

of shops by-passing the old Causeway. This gave a better, wider street, leading down to the new Tisbury railway station and the site of the dairy co-operative where milk could be sent by rail to the capital. Park Road and the Avenue were created, providing new, more modern housing and by the beginning of the First World War Tisbury was a thriving community with its own doctor, infants' and national schools (the Infants in the High Street, and the National School in what is now the Hinton Hall).

There had been a couple of private schools during the latter part of the 19thC, the Academy and the High School for Girls, and a school was run in the workhouse for 20-30 children, which gives an indication of how many people the workhouse had to house. In 1868 the new Poor Law Union Workhouse was opened on Monmouth Hill, where a new road had been driven through from the Crown Inn at the end of Church Street.



Image 4 (above) - The former brewery (now residential apartments), Church Street

Tisbury has a strong history of non-conformism from the late 1600's onwards, with the first chapel built by the quarrymen, an elegant square limestone building just off the upper High Street. A Mrs Turner from Trowbridge then arrived and built another in 1781 on the corner of Weaveland Road and the High Street. Zion Hill Congregationalist Church was erected in 1842 to accommodate the two non-conformist communities with the old chapel used as a Dame school during the week and a Sunday school on Sundays.

The members of the Methodist sect had been using the club room of the Crown Inn for meetings, but this became too small for their members and they built a chapel in the Quarry, until in 1902 they had grown large enough to erect a new Methodist Church in the High Street. Two other non-conformist chapels in the area were in Hatch and Tuckingmill. Meanwhile the Roman Catholic community which had remained very strong indeed despite persecution following the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16thC, were eventually able to worship freely, both at Wardour Chapel and in their own Roman Catholic Church in Station Road.

In the 20thC, Tisbury survived the First World War, in spite of sending many young men off to fight, and losing some 47 of them. The years of the depression followed, and then the 2nd World War, when again Tisbury men went off to defend their country and the Americans moved in, temporarily. During the 2nd WW, the large rooms which had been built above the old church houses in Church Street and used by the school for carpentry and cooking lessons, were leased to Dent's Gloves and used for glove making. This ceased soon after the War ended. Some new manufacturing businesses were created, including the match box factory.

Parmiters in the Station Yard, which had produced agricultural machinery there for many years, continued to provide employment for local people. This has now closed, and there is now no large manufacturing business in the area, although there are a number of smaller, successful businesses employing local people. There is a continued decline in the agricultural employment, but the quarry still operates.

Tisbury is still growing, there are more households, and a number of people commute from Tisbury to stations up and down the SW railway line and into London, some on a daily basis. New houses have been built and the shops are thriving. The village continues to evolve, and still has its own particular mix of locals and incomers.



Image 5 (top) - Tisbury High St from The Square, early C20th
Image 6 (bottom) - St John's Infant School on the High St, pre 1908