



Rutland Local History & Record Society

Registered Charity No. 700273

Cottesmore Village Walk

September 2017 - Updated December 2020

INTRODUCTION

Records show that there has been a settlement in Cottesmore since the mid-11th century. Its name originates from Cott's Moor and is correctly pronounced 'Cotts' More'.

Cottesmore was a flourishing village at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 and is now one of Rutland's largest parish settlements. It is a typical English village grouped around the 800-year-old church of St Nicholas, and originally home to the Cottesmore Hounds. They were established at Exton in 1732 by Thomas Noel and moved to Cottesmore Hall in 1788 when they were purchased by Sir William Lowther.

Historically the area has been agricultural and part of the Exton Estate, the seat of the Earls of Gainsborough. Change came in the 1880s with the introduction of ironstone quarrying, a major source of employment for the next eighty years. The fields have now been restored to agricultural use, but signs of quarrying and the extensive rail system can still be seen.

War and the threat of war have been a strong influence on the development of the village since 1914. In WW1, eighty-six Cottesmore men went to war and seventy-six came back, and in 1938, RAF Cottesmore was established near the village. For over seventy years it was an important air base and during the Cold War it was part of the nation's nuclear deterrent. In 2012, it became Kendrew Barracks, home to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Anglian Regiment.

THE VILLAGE MAP

The map attached to this guided walk is based on the 25 inches to one mile Ordnance Survey 3rd edition map of 1928. Consequently, later buildings, extensions and demolitions are not shown. Numbers in the text, **[12]** for example, refer to locations identified on the map as **(12)**.

SAFETY

You are responsible for your own safety. In particular, Main Street is a busy main road. Please use the pavements and take great care when crossing the road.

THE WALK

The walk starts at the COMMUNITY CENTRE [1] in Main Street, behind the Sun Inn.

Walk down to the Sun Inn [2] which is a late 17th century grade II listed building. It would have been an important inn on the Stamford to Oakham to Greetham turnpike which passed through the village. A malt house at the rear, used in the beer brewing process, was destroyed by fire around 1915.

Bernard Harper lived here during the Second World War, when his parents were landlords. 'The War Years of my Youth' is his very interesting account of living in Cottesmore during WWII.



The Sun Inn in 2017

On the green near the inn there are two memorial benches, one of which is dedicated to the Bland family, owners of Bland's Coaches from 1929. There is also an information board which has details of two important people who lived in the village.

From the front of the Sun Inn, proceed along The Leas. Near here is the site of a shrunken medieval village.

On the right is Gainsborough Court [3], a sheltered housing complex which was originally established in 1974 on the site of a former farm.

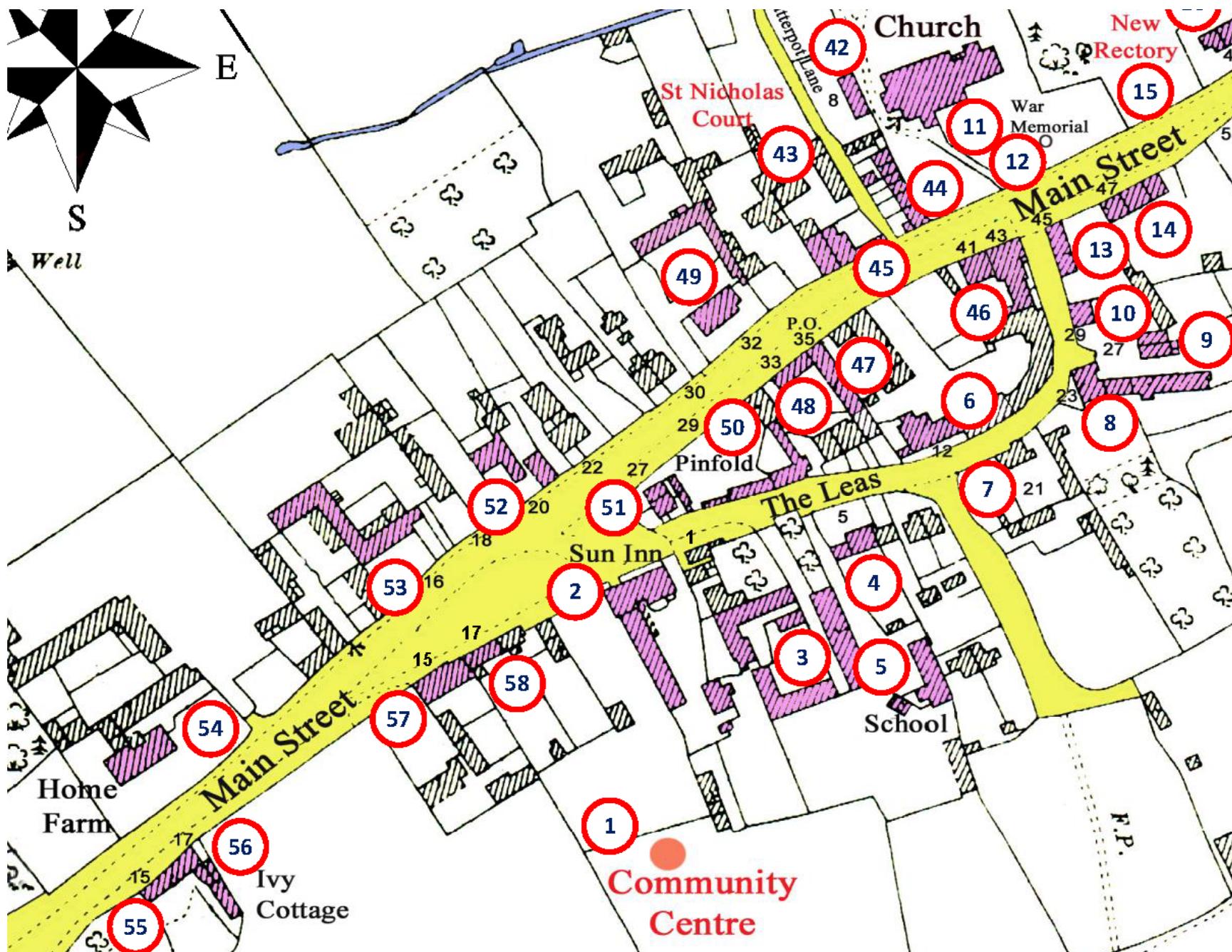
Further along on the right, is The Old School House at 5 The Leas, [4]. Behind this was the old junior school [5] which was just one room initially.

This Church of England school opened about 1855 in a stone building leased from the Earl of Gainsborough for juniors up to the age of eleven. At the closure of the Infants School in Mill Lane (see later), a brick extension was built in 1909 to house these children. The school closed in 1963 and was subsequently demolished when a new Church of England aided Primary School opened in Mill Lane. Many of the local residents still remember attending this school and their memories have been recorded by Cottesmore History and Archaeological Group.

12 The Leas [6] is one of the oldest buildings in Cottesmore. This early 18th century house with 19th century alterations has a Welsh slate roof, and just above the porch is a datestone with 'Thomas Jackson 1710'.

In the gardens of 21 The Leas [7] a Neolithic polished stone axe (4000 BC to 2500 BC) was found, made of rock quarried from the Penmaenmawr area of Wales, but its whereabouts are now not known.

Further along, at 23 The Leas, is April Cottage [8]. At one time, this was used for the weekly visit of the doctor, one of several locations that have been used for this purpose over the years. Granny Ireland ran a sweet shop from the front garden of Fox Cottage at 27 The Leas [9], but the shop itself was demolished some years ago. Many people remember this ramshackle shop with chickens scrambling on the floor and over the counter. At the back there used to be stabling.

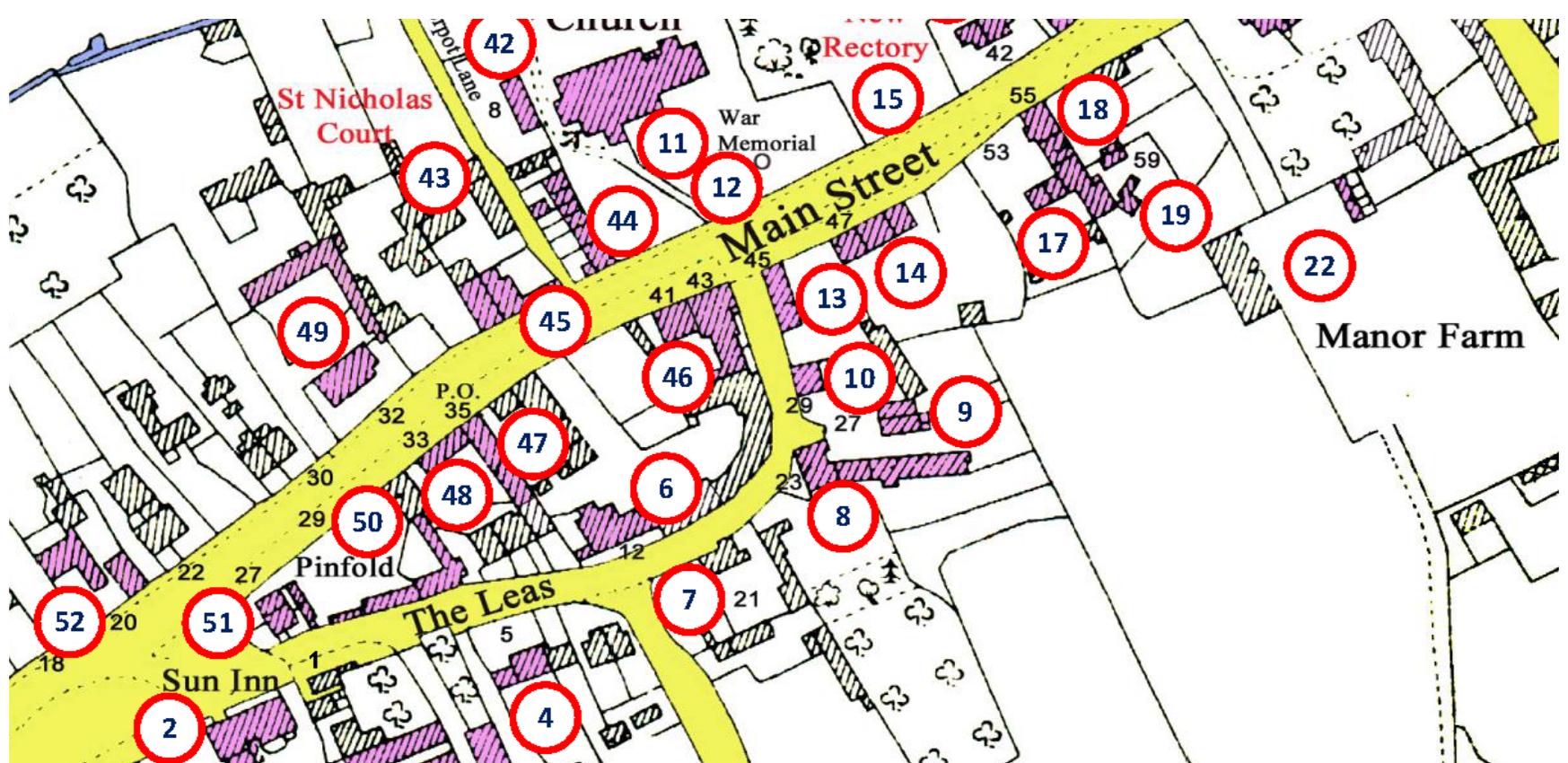


Next, on the right is Fountain's Cottage [10], once the home of William Fountain, a carpenter and undertaker who also made coffins here. Leave The Leas at its junction with Main Street. On the opposite side is St. Nicholas' Church [11], a grade II* listed building which has stood on this site for 800 years, and Patrons have included Henry IV, Henry VII and Charles II. It is well worth exploring if time allows. Inside, the connection with the military is very evident, the east part of the north aisle being the RAF memorial chapel. Within the churchyard is the listed war memorial [12], and the graves of Richard Westbrook Baker, the well known agriculturalist, and his family can be seen on the north side of the church, near the tower.



St Nicholas' Church circa 1930

Opposite the Church at 45 Main Street is Cob Cottage [13]. Formerly two cottages, this 18th century coursed rubble stone and thatched dwelling of 1½ storeys is grade II listed. Inside there are large, chamfered ceiling beams and an inglenook fireplace. In the 1930s the cottage was used as a surgery for a weekly visiting doctor when villagers paid 6 pence a week into the 'Sick & Divided Club'. After payments had been made to the sick, any surplus was divided among club members at Christmas.



Next is Dicks Cottage [14] at 47 Main Street, a 19th century grade II listed thatched cottage. At one time, this used to be three cottages. The house was named after Dick Stafford, an agricultural labourer.

Opposite, but hidden by trees, is the new Rectory [15] at 38 Main Street, which was built in the 1970s. It replaced the original rectory behind the church which is now a private dwelling. Evidence of a probable Saxon site was found here when excavations to remove a large tree were being carried out. Unfortunately, no artefacts survive.

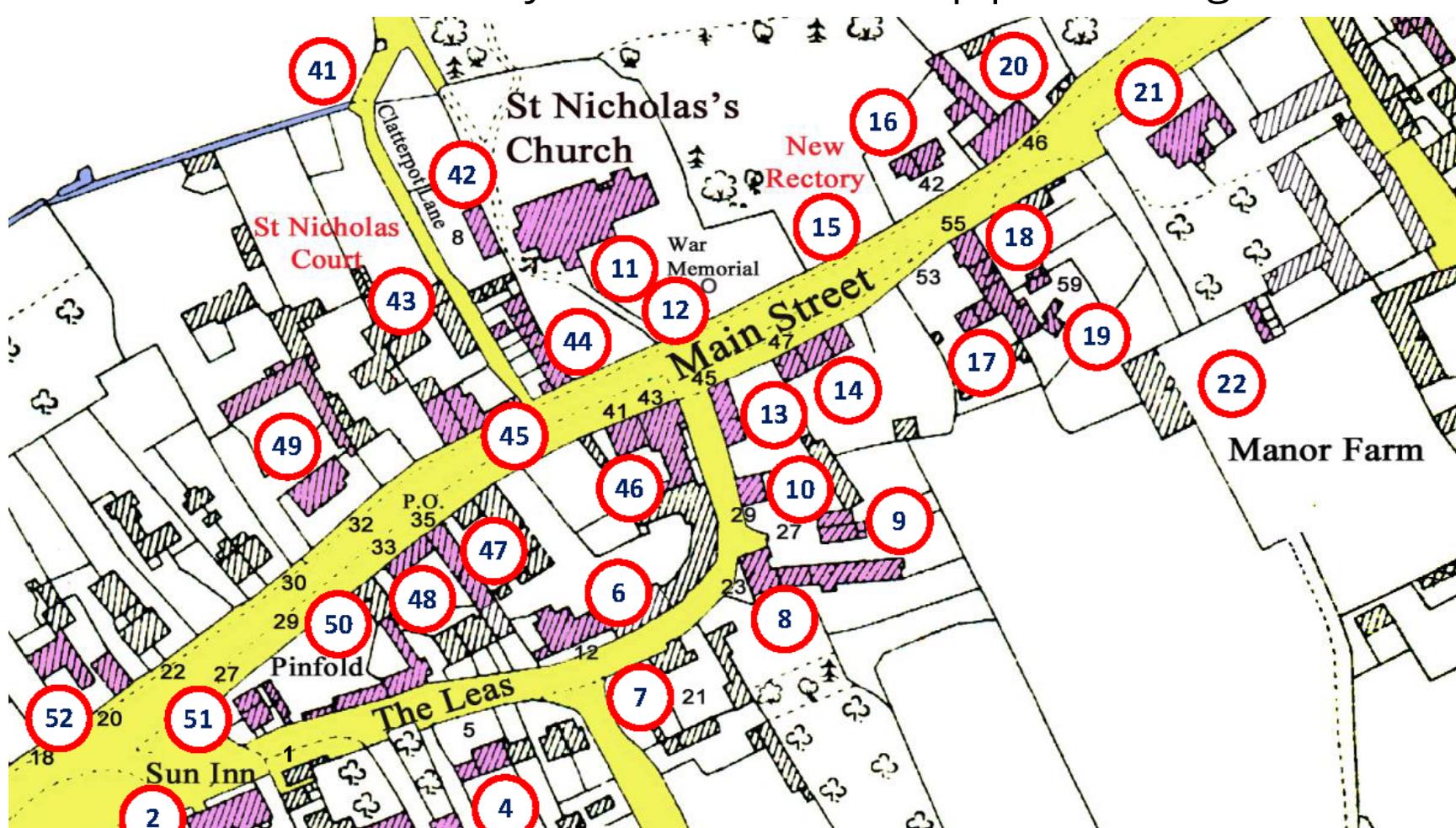
42 Main Street [16] was formerly a pair of mid-19th century cottages designed by Henry Roberts (1803-1876), an influential Victorian architect, well known for his work with a movement which promoted building designs for the working classes, for landowners and others to use.

Opposite is 53 Main Street [17], a late 17th, early 18th century Grade II listed thatched cottage.

The Faulklands [18] at 55 Main Street, is a grade II listed 18th century thatched cottage which used to be three separate cottages. It is named after the Faulkner family who once lived in the cottage nearest to the road.

59 Main Street [19] is another 18th century Grade II listed thatched cottage, visible through the garden of No. 55.

A little further along on the opposite side is The Anchorage at 46 Main Street [20], reputed to be the former Fox and Hounds public house. The 1871 census shows that Mary Laxton, aged 68, was the Inn Keeper. It has a stream running through the garden from the Camphor Dyke [41]. Another stream, known as 'The Rundle', ran down Main Street until the early 1900s when it was piped underground.

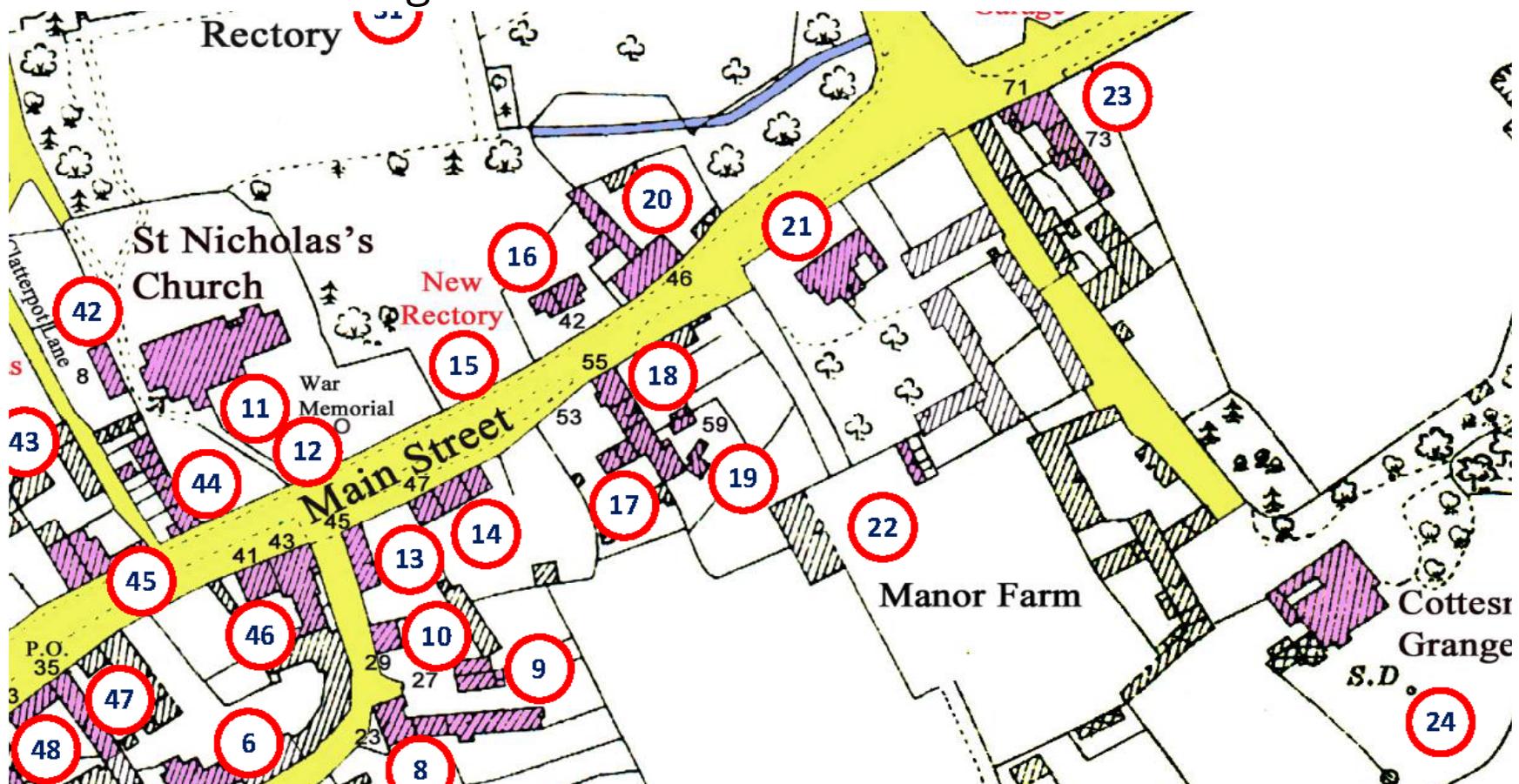


Adjacent to the entrance to Manor Farm is a pair of semi-detached buildings [21] with the date 1883, a coronet and the letter 'G' on a plaque, a reference to Lord Gainsborough whose Exton Estate once owned these properties.

Manor Farm [22] is the only remaining working farm of seven in the village. The Hollis family of Manor Farm have farmed on the Exton Estates for over 150 years. Other members of the family in Cottesmore were also builders, having built Hambleton Hall and Oakham Post Office. They also built the Cottesmore Hunt kennels and stables near Ashwell in 1889.

Honeypot Cottage and Sticky End [23] are two 18th century thatched cottages. Both are grade II listed. Through the side gate from Main Street was the area once known as 'Tap Yard', the location of one of the village wells. This was also the location of one of the five village air raid shelters in WWII.

Continue along Main Street, round the right-hand bend and then along Toll Bar to the junction with Exton Road. About 100yds along Exton Road the front elevation of Cottesmore Grange [24] can be seen on the right. The Grange is a grade II listed house which is mainly mid-19th century, but with origins of 1811. Richard Westbrook Baker (1797-1861) lived here from his appointment as steward to the Exton Estate in 1828 until his death in 1861. He is renowned for his services to agriculture and his efforts to improve the conditions of farm labourers. He originated the Small Allotment System in 1830, the first of which was near Ashwell Road in Cottesmore, and the well-known Rutland Plough was his invention. His Cottesmore Ploughing Meetings were held in the fields to the south of The Grange from 1828 to 1839 and he became High Sheriff of Rutland in 1842.



Further along Exton Road, but not part of this walk, is the site of the former Cottesmore House now occupied by Serenda Pet Care. The house was built about 1900 for Gerard Cecil Noel who lived there until his death in 1934. His widow, Madeline Edith Noel, continued to live in the house with their second son and his wife until 1940. Their first son, Lieutenant Thomas Cecil Noel, joined the King's Own Scottish Borderers and in the Great War was awarded the Military Cross. He died in action in 1918 whilst serving with the RAF and is buried in the Perth Cemetery at Zillebeke, Belgium.



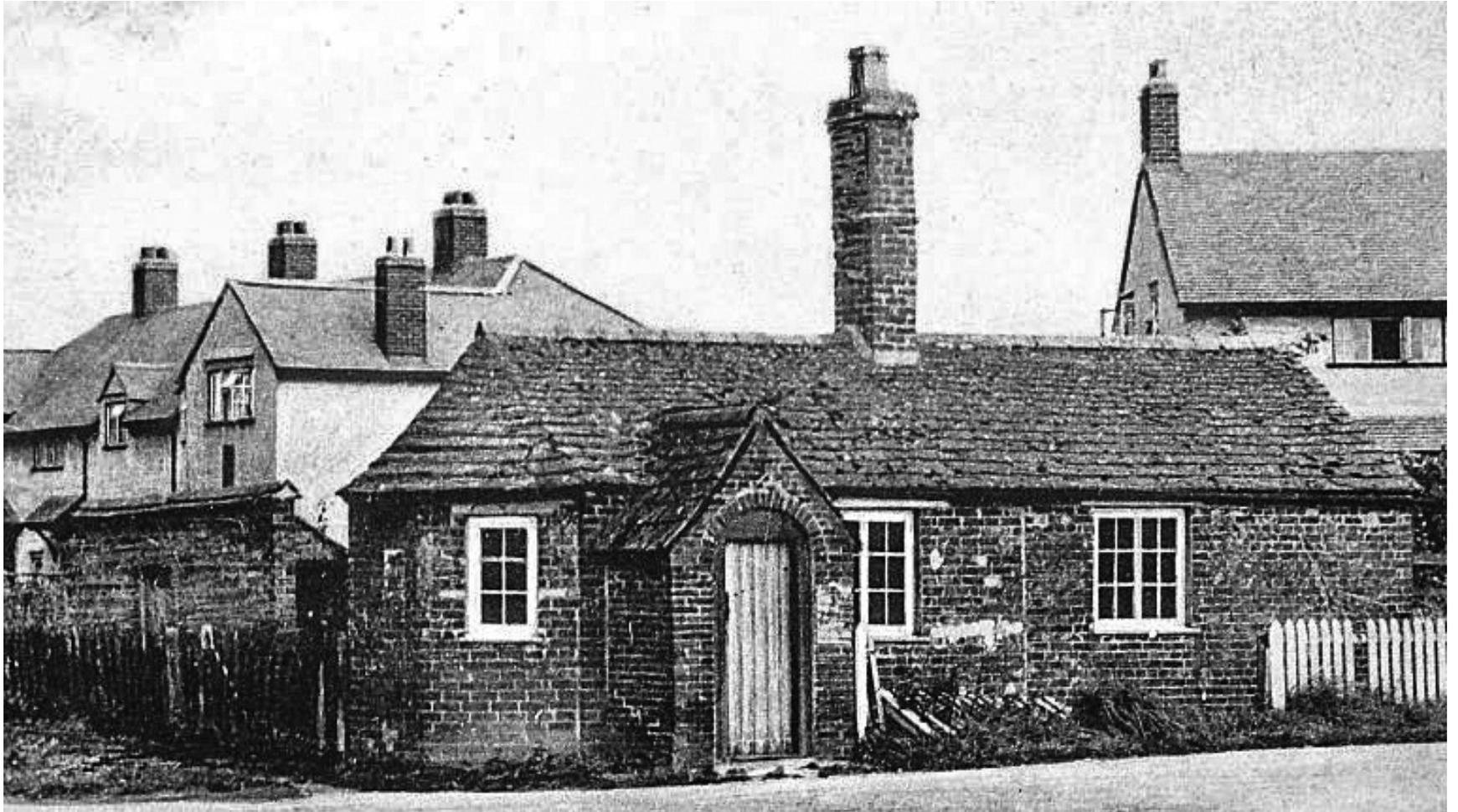
Cottesmore House circa 1920

Their second son, John Cecil Noel, born in 1906, was a Captain in the the Royal Artillery. In WW2 he was attached as a Flying Officer to the RAF and died when his aircraft went missing. He is one of four Cottesmore men in WW2 who lost their lives in service and is remembered on the War Memorial [\[12\]](#). Cottesmore House was requisitioned by the War Office in WWII and in 1944 it was occupied by the US 92 Parachute Maintenance Company, the rooms being stacked with parachutes for use in the 'D Day' landings. In the 1950s, the house was struck by lightning and set on fire. The remaining shell was subsequently demolished.

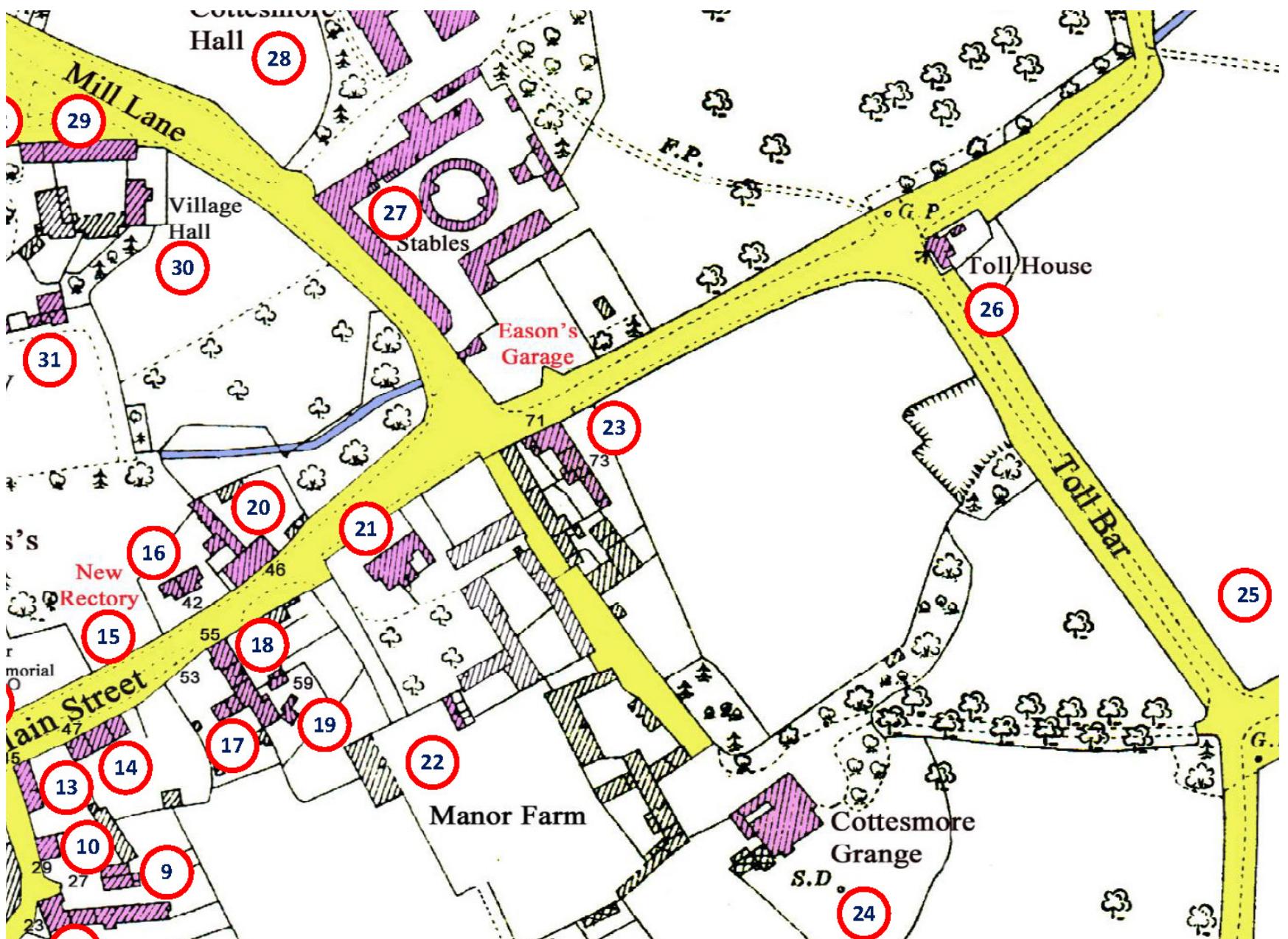
Gerard Cecil Noel was a cousin of the sixth Earl of Gainsborough of Exton Hall. The seventh and current Earl is Anthony Baptist Noel who inherited the title on the death of his father in 2009. The first creation of the title ended when Henry Noel, the sixth Earl died without heir in 1798. The Exton estate was then inherited by his nephew, Gerard Noel Edwards, who changed his name to Gerard Noel Noel. The title was revived in 1841 when Gerard Noel's eldest son Charles, Lord Barham, became the first Earl of Gainsborough of the second creation.

Return to Toll Bar with The Sycamores, a former Police House [25] at 21 Toll Bar, on the right.

A single storey toll house stood on the site of 11 and 12 Toll Bar [26], but it was demolished in the 1930s. It was originally built as a two-storey dwelling to collect tolls on the Oakham to Greetham turnpike road which was established by Act of Parliament in 1794-5.



Cottesmore Toll House circa 1950



On the right is Rogues Lane which is named after an itinerant's camp which was set up here in the 1800s. The lane leads to Kendrew Barracks, formerly RAF Cottesmore. The St Nicholas cemetery extension can be found a short way along this lane and can be visited if time permits. It has 89 burials of RAF personnel from WW2. Most of these graves are those of young men from many parts of the Commonwealth who lost their lives in local aircraft crashes whilst undergoing training. This part of the cemetery is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Commonwealth War Graves in St Nicholas' churchyard extension

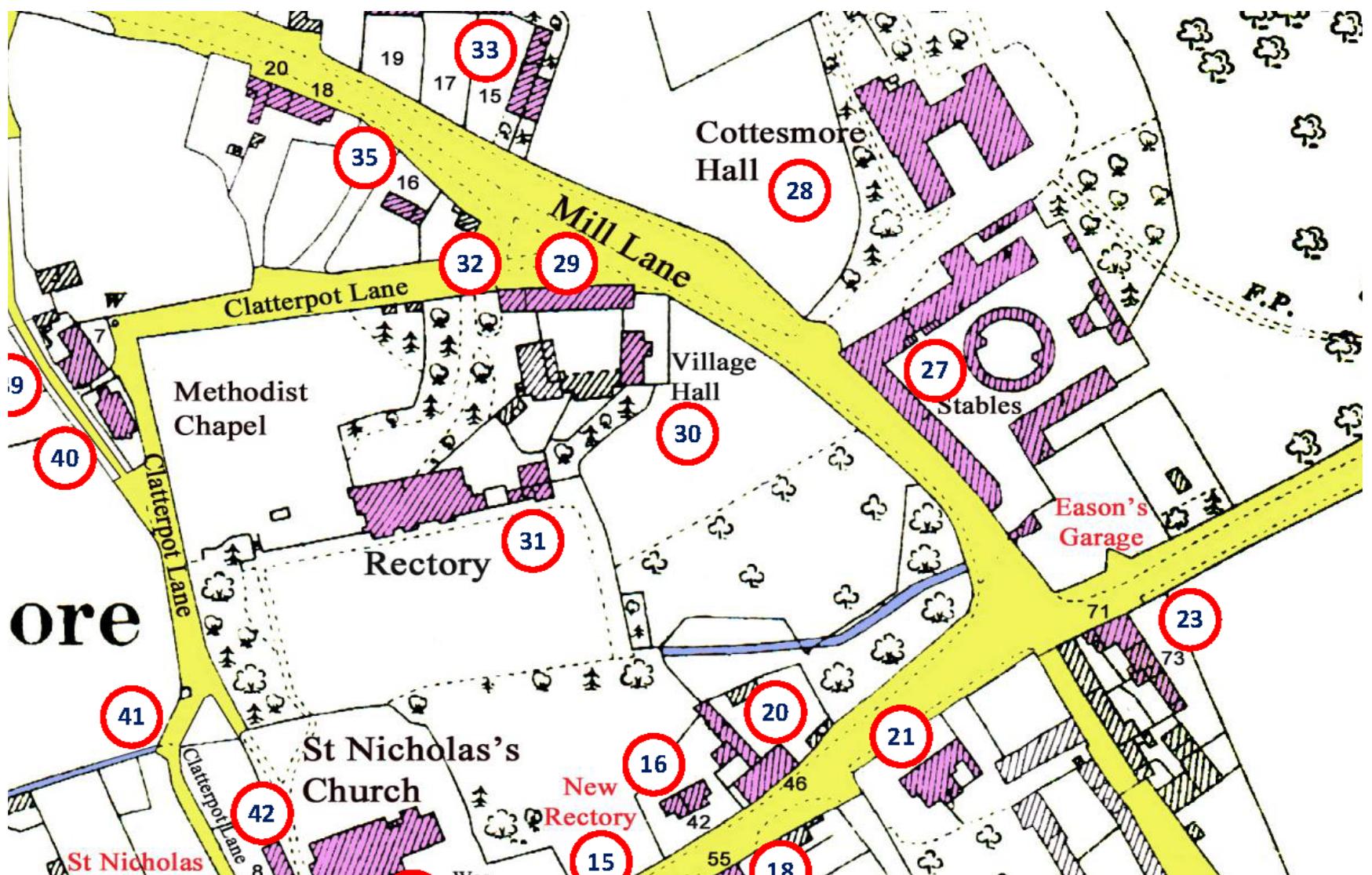
The construction of RAF Cottesmore began in 1936 in response to heightened tension in Europe and the re-armament of Germany and opened on 11th March 1938. In September 1943, the US HQ Troop Carrier Command arrived at the base which then became known as USAAF Station 489. The towing aircraft and gliders of this Command carried US paratroopers to the D-Day Landings in Normandy in June 1944 and Operation Market Garden in Holland in September 1944. From 1957 to 1969, Victor and later Vulcan bombers were stationed here as part the nuclear deterrent force. The last aircraft at the base were the Panavia Tornados from 1980 to 1999 and then the Joint Force Harriers until 2009. It was then announced that the station would be closed as part of defence spending cuts. In April 2012, it was renamed Kendrew Barracks after Major General Sir Douglas Kendrew.

From Rogues Lane, walk along Main Street towards Colin Easson's Garage and petrol station on your right. Cottesmore hounds were located in a building here before moving to their new kennels near Ashwell in 1890. Turn right into Mill Lane. On the right are the surviving grade II listed stables and outbuildings [27] of Cottesmore Hall, now converted to dwellings. An enclosed horse exercise ring in the centre was demolished some years ago.



Cottesmore Hall Stables before restoration

There had been a manor house on the site of Cottesmore Hall [28] since the early 15th century when it was owned by the Durant family. Two hundred years later it had passed to the Harrington family and then to the Fanshaws who were related to the Noels of Exton.



The original house was replaced in the 18th century by the Noel family for rent by the nobility as a hunting lodge. By the end of the 19th century the Lowther family was occupying the Hall and the Dowager Countess Lonsdale lived there until her death in 1917. She was the mother of Lord Lonsdale of Barleythorpe Hall, after whom the Lonsdale Belt in boxing is named. He was also founder of the Automobile Association and known as 'The Yellow Earl'.



Cottesmore Hall in 1906

The Earl of Gainsborough sold the Hall In 1927 to the Marchioness of Bute. The following year it caught fire during renovation and was severely damaged.



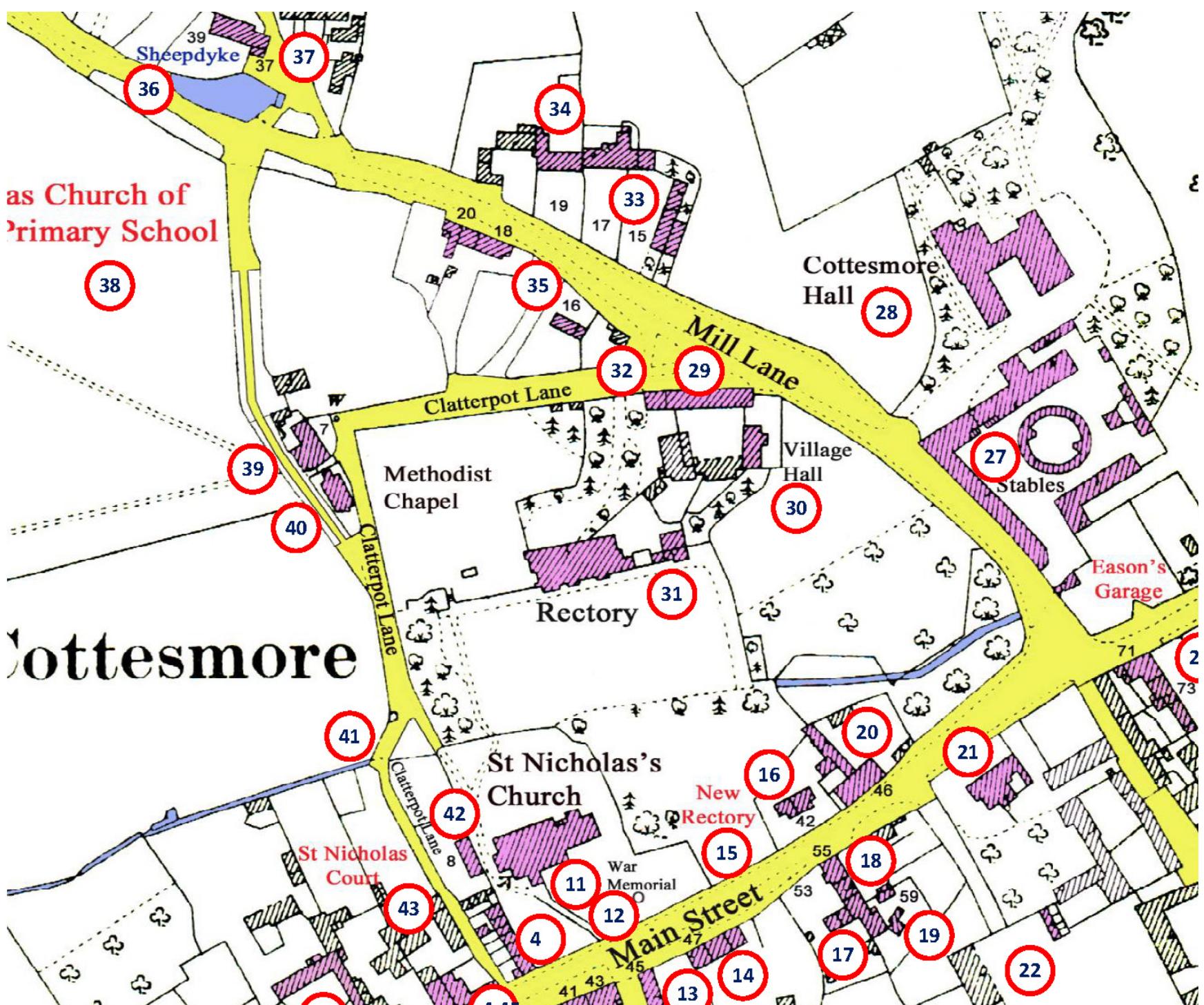
Cottesmore Hall fire in 1928

Following restoration, it was occupied by nuns for a short time before being used as a base for evacuees from 1939 until 1943. During this time, a school for the evacuees was also established at the Hall. In 1944 US paratroopers were billeted here. After the War, the Hall was left empty and in 1960 a corn drying plant was installed in part of the building. The last remains of the Hall were demolished in 1974 to make way for a housing estate.

Further along Mill Lane on the left, at the entrance to Clatterpot Lane, is The Tithe Barn [29]. Originally this was a long barn owned by the Church and dates back to the 15th century. The barn was converted in 1974 using some materials from the demolished Hall. Note the dovecote built into the end of the former barn for nesting pigeons and doves. These birds were kept for their flesh, eggs and dung.

There was also an infants school to the rear of the barn [30]. This was the first purpose-built school in Cottesmore to provide Church of England education and was supported by the Rector of Cottesmore.

It closed in 1910 and the pupils were then transferred to the school in the Leas. It then became a Reading Room and subsequently the Village Hall. It was demolished about 1956.



Just past the Tithe Barn, on the left-hand side of Clatterpot Lane, is the entrance to the Old Rectory, now a private residence and known as Clatterpot House [31]. This three-storey house is mainly of 19th century origin although some of it dates from a much earlier period. It is not listed. Janet Erskine Stuart was born at the Rectory in 1857, the thirteenth child of the Rev Andrew Stuart. As a young girl, she moved away from the Church of England and by the age of 22 had become a nun in the Society of the Sacred Heart at Roehampton. In 1911, she became the Superior General, head of the whole Society of the Sacred Heart. She died in 1914 and is buried in Roehampton.



Cottesmore Rectory in 1926

The Old Brew House [32], adjacent to The Tithe Barn, is believed to have been a brewery at one point and then the wash house for the Rectory. Continue along Mill Lane. On the right-hand side, at 15-17 Mill Lane, is The Farrier's House [33], formerly Sunnyside. This is an 18th and 19th century grade II listed house, with Welsh slate and pantile roofs. It belonged to the Earl of Gainsborough until 1965.

Lilac Farmhouse at 19 Mill Lane [34] is a part thatched and part slate 18th century house which is grade II listed. This property is still part of the Exton Estate. The Faulkner family who lived here delivered the milk and papers to the village and also to Market Overton, Greetham and Exton. The farm was the location of another village well. Evidence of late Anglo-Saxon and medieval occupation has been found in the grounds of this house. 245 sherds of pottery were recovered as well as iron slag and furnace lining, confirming that the area was also a metal working site.

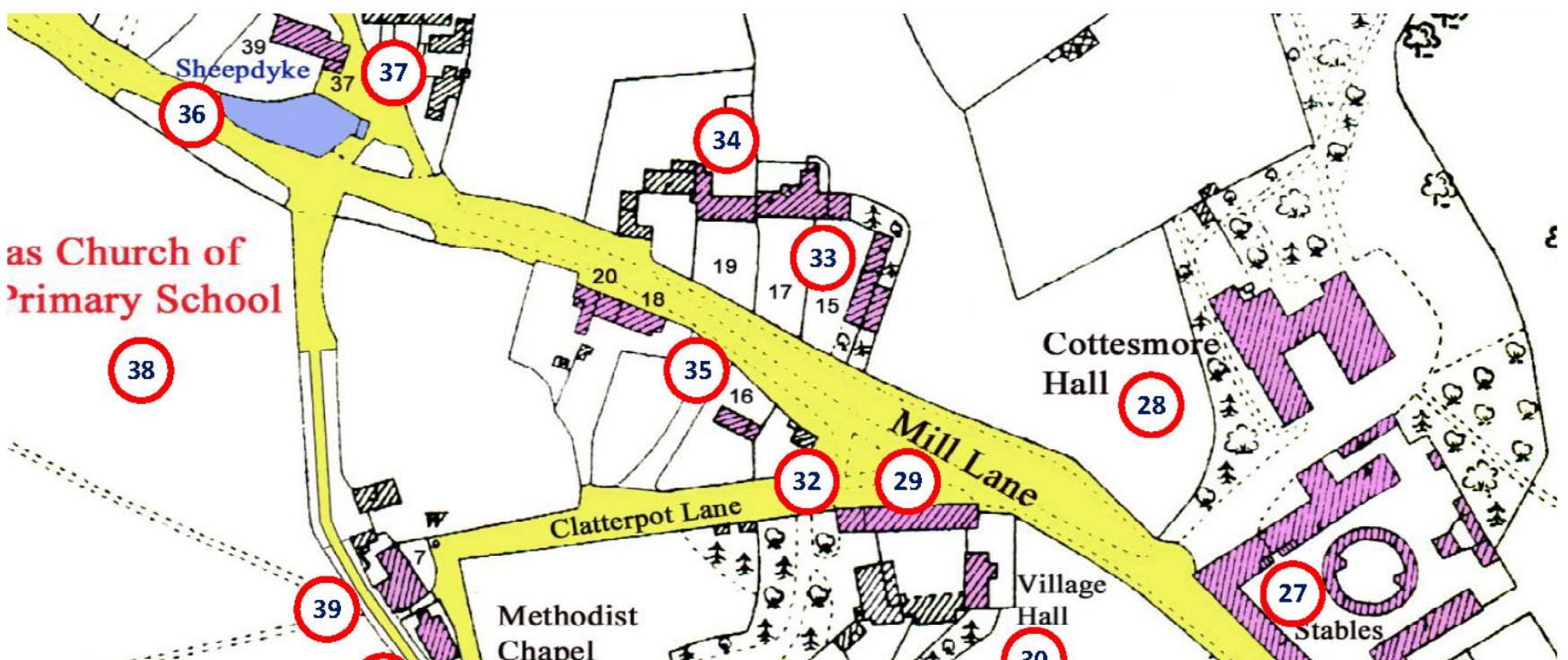
Opposite are 16, 18 & 20 Mill Lane [35], all grade II listed thatched cottages. 16 Mill Lane has a datestone over the door with 'T.B.A. 1734'. 18 & 20 Mill Lane are mainly 18th century with 15th and 16th century origins.

Beyond the new houses built on the land formerly belonging to Lilac Farm is the site of the old Sheepdyke [36] on the right. Turn right just before the former Sheepdyke and ahead are 37 and 39 Mill Lane [37], previously two 18th and 19th century grade II listed cottages with a mixed thatch and pantile roof. All the other cottages here were demolished in 1948 to be replaced by new houses.

The Sheepdyke was a brick lined pond with edging stones, ownership of which was shared among local farmers. This was the Cottesmore washdyke. About two weeks before shearing, sheep were washed here to clean their fleece. It eventually dried up due to the ironstone quarrying in the area and was filled in, in the early 1950s.



The Sheepdyke circa 1910



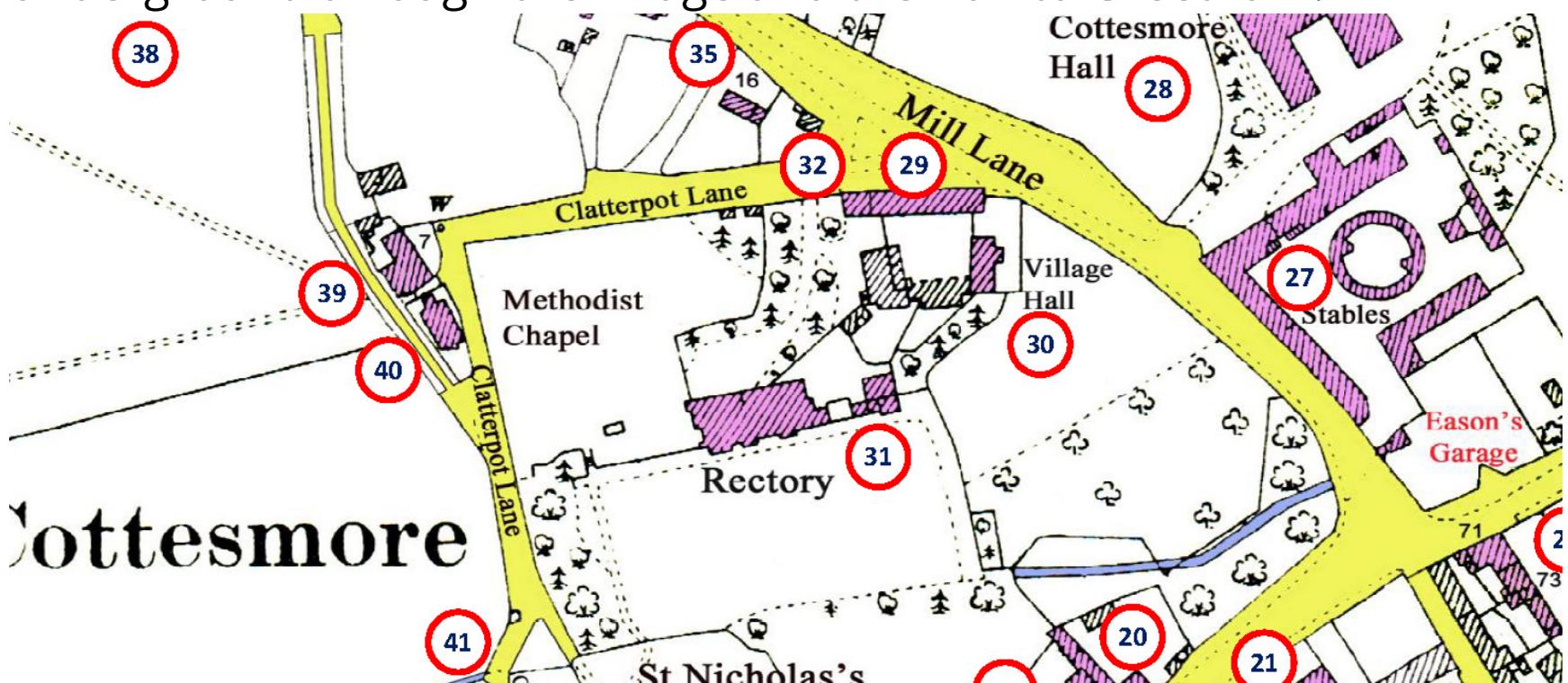
Leave Mill Lane and walk down the un-named footpath at the side of St. Nicholas' C of E Primary School [38]. This leads to Clatterpot Lane, probably so called because of the clattering of pots at the former Bakery, the site of which was where the lane meets Main Street.

On the left is the rear of 7 Clatterpot Lane [39], a grade II listed cottage of the 18th century with a Collyweston slate roof. This is another Exton Estate property. Immediately after this is a former Primitive Methodist Chapel [40] which opened in 1890 and closed in 1964. It was converted to a private dwelling sometime after 1970. During the war, the US paratroopers based at the Cottesmore camp referred to this as 'Sunshine Corner'.



Cottesmore Primitive Methodist Chapel circa 1930

Further down Clatterpot Lane and on the left, is the back gate to the churchyard. To the right is an area known as the Camphor Dyke [41]. This was where villagers used to do their washing and was liable to flooding. Camphor Dyke is part of a stream which now runs mainly underground through the village and then on to Greetham.



Continue down Clatterpot Lane and again on the left is Little Cottage [42] at 8 Clatterpot Lane. This cottage was previously known as Hope Cottage and was once owned by the Exton Estate. The current owners have a datestone of 1725 for the cottage.

Several thatched cottages opposite Little cottage have been demolished and the area is now a modern development known as St. Nicholas Court [43].



Former cottages at the Main Street end of Clatterpot Lane

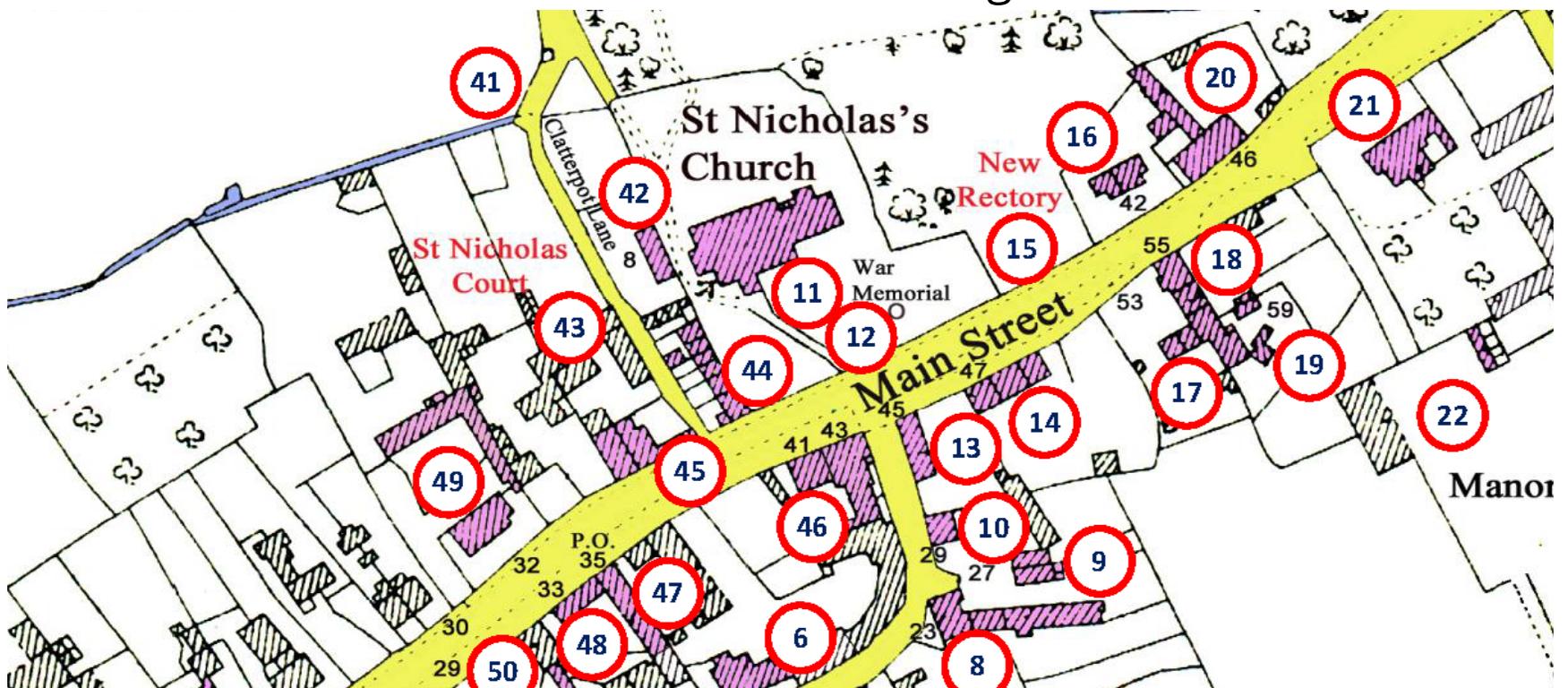
On approaching Main Street there is a commercial building on the left. Originally this was the site of five cottages [44].

Immediately on the right is the present Post Office and shop. Excavations in 1998 on the adjacent land revealed finds indicating a boundary ditch from the Iron Age as well as Roman, Late Saxon, Early Medieval and Late Medieval domestic activity. The village bakery was originally located on this site [45].



Collard's 'Central Stores' in Main Street, now 'The Chip Shop'

On the opposite side of Main Street, to the left of the bus shelter, is 'The Chip Shop' at 41 Main Street [46]. These premises and the house to the left (43 Main Street) have been occupied by a number of commercial enterprises including a delicatessen and latterly a butcher. Earlier, 41 Main Street was Collards the grocers.



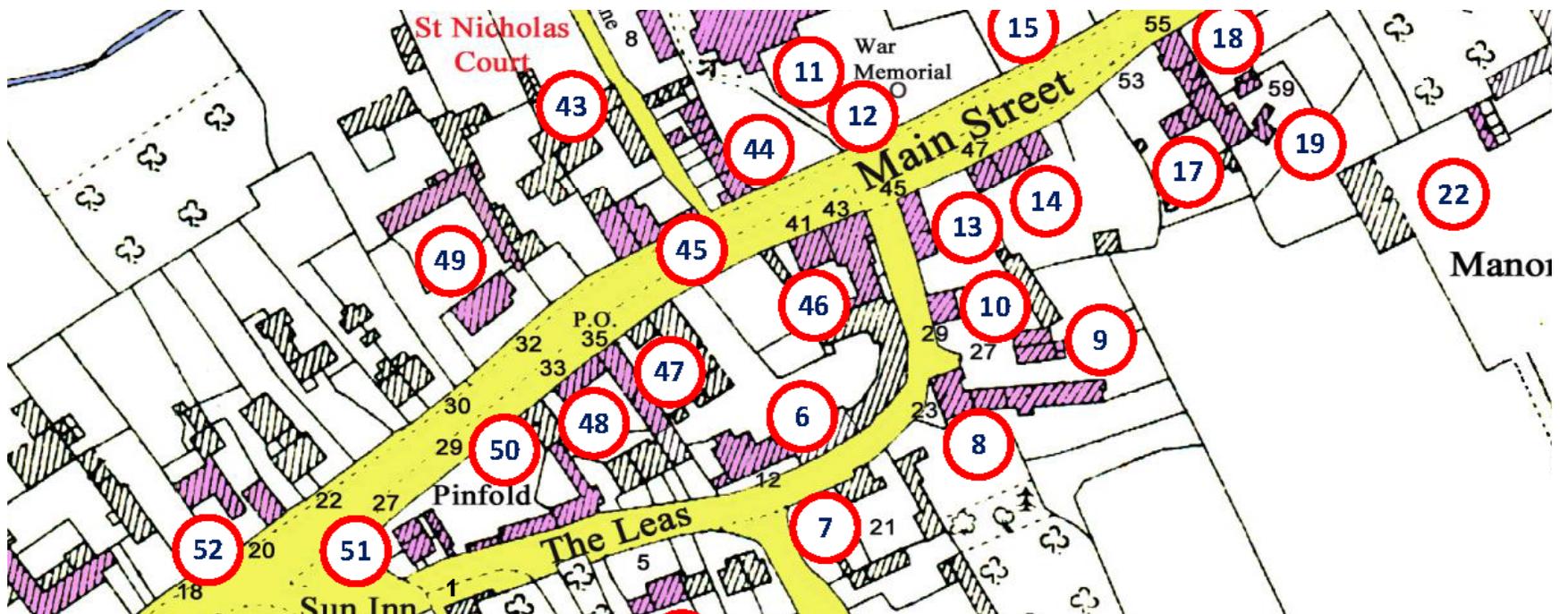
On leaving Clatterpot Lane, turn right. A little further up and again on the left is the old Post Office at 35 Main Street [47]. The first mention of a Post Office in Cottesmore is in 1908 when Charles Bond was known as the Postmaster and Fancy Stationer, but it was not until 1916 that he was able to deal with money orders and the village had a telephone. Letters were then arriving from Oakham twice a day at 6.55am and 1.45pm and were dispatched at 11.40am and 6.25pm. In 1928 Charles Winter was the Postmaster and after his death his wife continued the business until around 1959 when the Post Office was transferred into the new building across the road.

Next is the Old Smithy [48] at 33 Main Street which, as its name indicates, was previously the village blacksmith's workshop. William Hollis was the blacksmith here in 1851.



Main Street in 1906. Blacksmith's workshop on the right

On the right is Church House Farm at 32 Main Street [49]. This was formerly part of a farm owned by the Fountain family. For this reason, 32a Main Street, the converted barn at the rear, is known as Fountain's Barn.

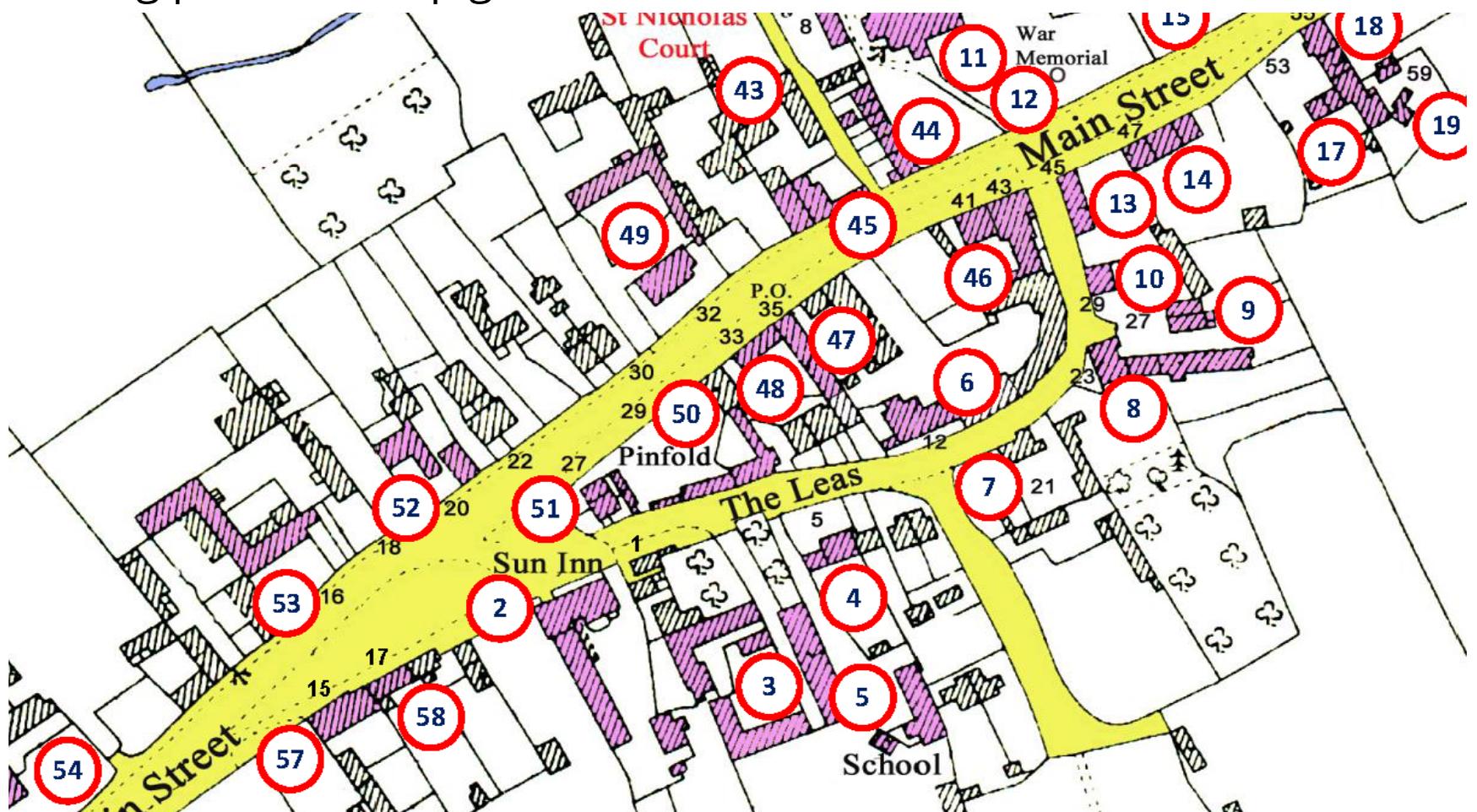


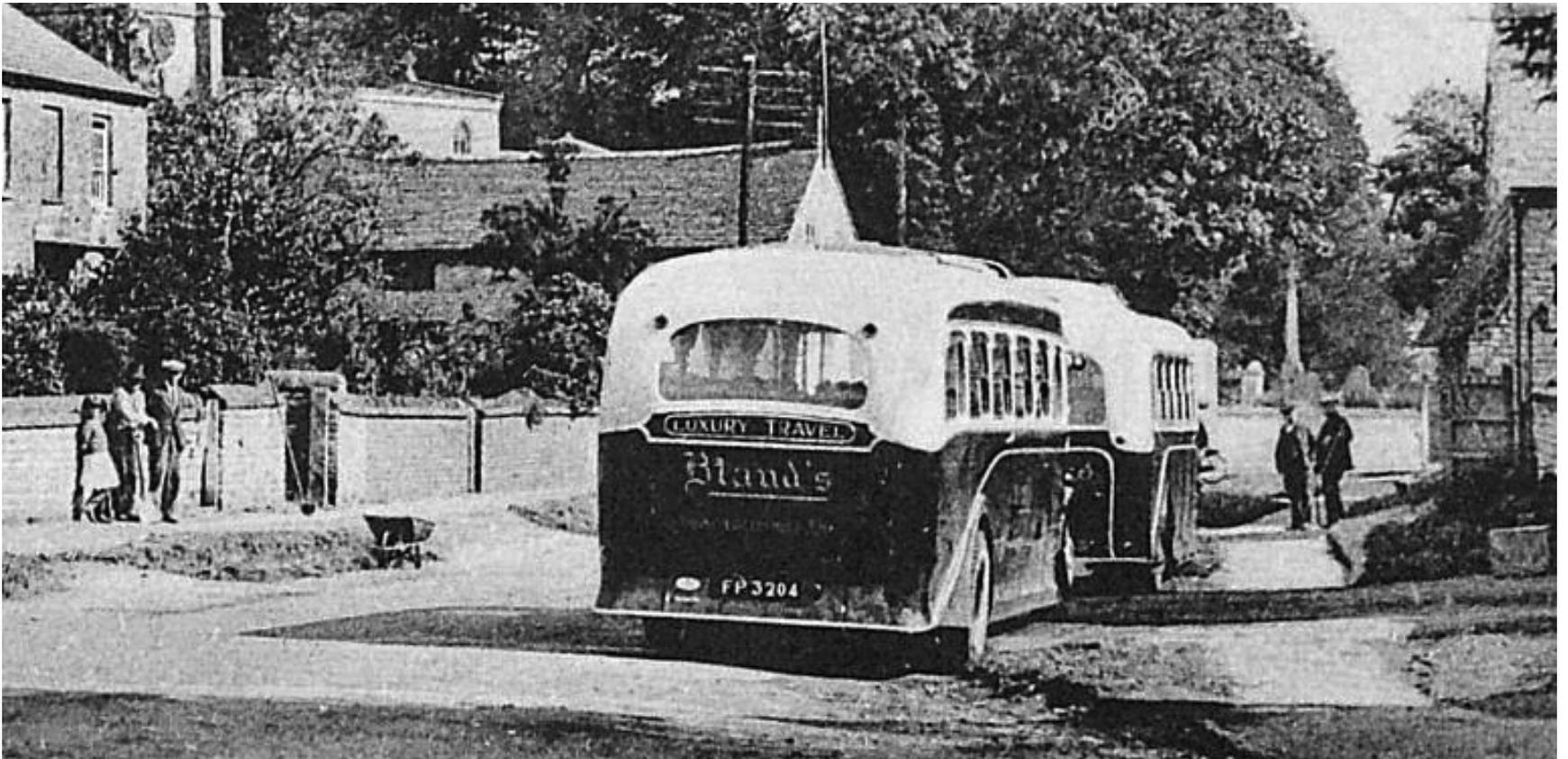
Opposite is Pinfold House at 29 Main Street [50], a relatively new house on the site of the village Pinfold. This was an enclosed area for holding animals found straying from their owner's land, or which were found grazing on the common without common rights. The animals were only released when a fine had been paid to the 'Pinder', an officer of the lord of the manor. Entering the pinfold to release the animals without permission was an offence which was punished by a fine, imprisonment or both. Pinfolds were also used by drovers passing through the village whilst taking their stock to market. They could pen their animals overnight for a small fee.

Later, this area, between Main Street and The Leas, was used by Bland's 'Pride of Rutland' Coaches. This company was founded in 1929 by Reginald H Bland. The Bland family lived at Holly Cottage (27 Main Street) [51], on the corner of Main Street and The Leas. This Grade II listed cottage dates from the 18th century and has a Collyweston slate roof. To the rear is a long building, also with a Collyweston slate roof, running along the side of The Leas and used by the coach company.

Continue along Main Street. On the right is Reed Cottage at 20 Main Street [52]. This is a 17th century thatched house and is grade II listed. It was formerly the butcher's premises, including his slaughterhouse. At the side there used to be a small cottage called Pump Cottage. Villagers came here for their water and the pump was known as 'Isaac's Pump'.

Further along on the right-hand side is Fir Tree Farmhouse at 16 Main Street [53]. This is a grade II listed thatched house dating from the late 17th / early 18th century. The outbuildings included a milking parlour and pigsties.

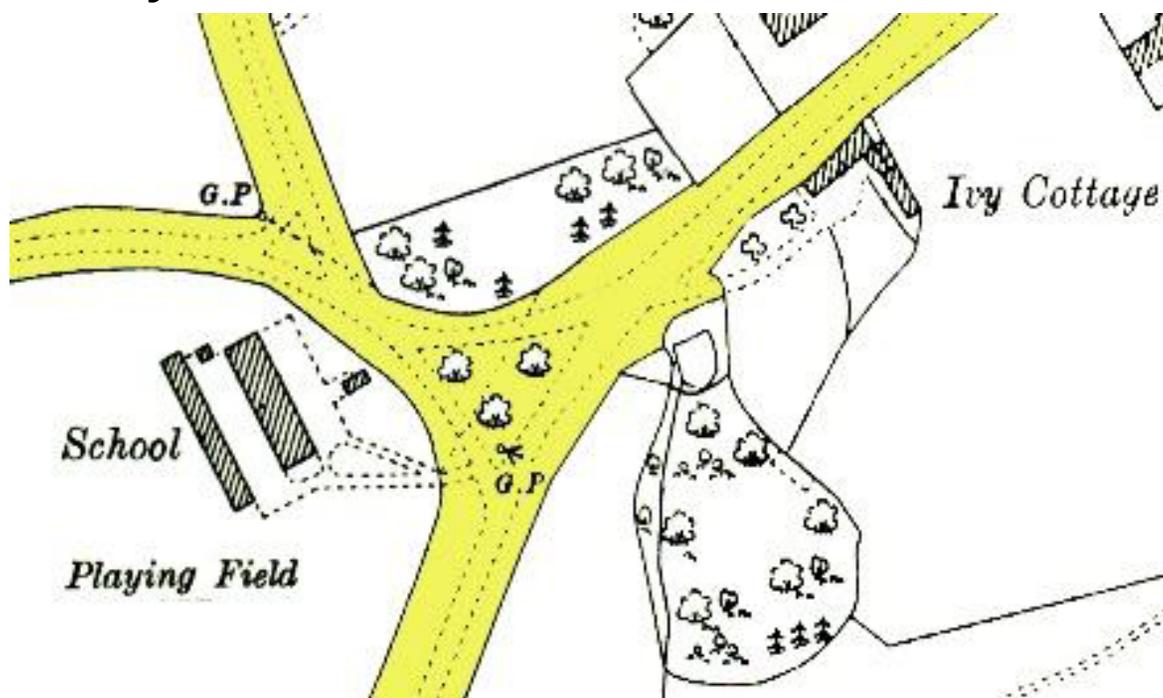




Bland's 'Pride of Rutland' Coaches in Main Street in the 1930s

Next on the same side of Main Street is Home Farm [54]. This is an 18th century house and is grade II listed. It was extended in the early 20th century and has a modern tiled roof. As its name suggests, this was formerly a farm, although it ceased to be active as such about 1985. The barns and cowsheds were later converted, and the farmyard and adjacent field (now The Spinney) were developed about 2000. This farm originally was part of the Exton Estate.

At the west end of Main Street, but not part of this walk, is the junction with the roads to Oakham, Ashwell, Barrow and Market Overton. Between Oakham Road and Ashwell Road is Wenton Close, a housing development built in the 1960s and named after the lost hamlet of Wenton, once part of Cottesmore. This was the site of the Cottesmore Central School, the first of three such schools established in Rutland just after the First World War. They were 'Central' because they were central to the villages they served and were established to provide a higher standard of education than was available at the all-age village elementary schools.



The location of Cottesmore Central School

Construction of Cottesmore Central School started in 1919, and it was built using surplus WWI army huts, the school itself opening in October of 1920. It had a capacity of seventy-five pupils, aged eleven to fourteen, divided into three forms in three classrooms. In addition, there was a domestic science room and a woodwork room. The first Head was John William Cattell. He was supported by three full-time teachers together with part-time needlework, domestic science and woodwork teachers who were also teaching at the Oakham and Uppingham Central Schools.

In the early years the children from outlying villages of Stretton, Whitwell, Empingham, Burley and Thistleton were given bicycles by the County Council. Those parents who were able were expected to pay half the cost. Children living in the near-by villages of Ashwell, Barrow, Market Overton and Greetham had to walk to the school. The arrival of a regular omnibus service in the 1920s eliminated these methods of travelling to and from the school. The Central School closed after the Second World War and Cottesmore pupils then attended Oakham Central School. A new Central School was also built at Great Casterton in 1939.

It was during ironstone quarrying in this area in 1906 that a small hoard of Late Bronze Age axes and other tools was found, dating from about 700 BC. The hoard is now in the Rutland County Museum.

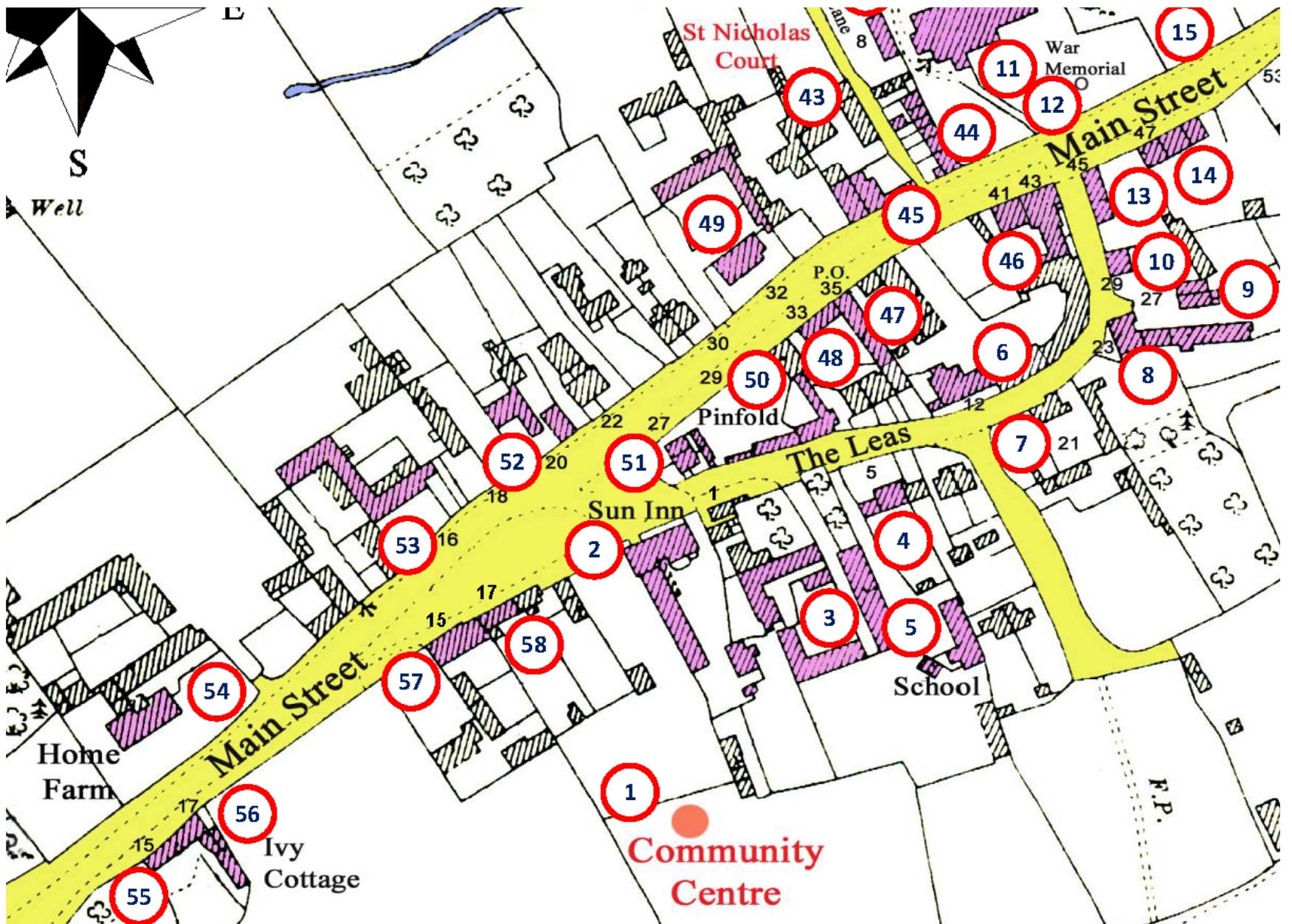
Following the cessation of hostilities at the end of the First World War captured German field-guns were presented to towns and villages throughout England as trophies and in recognition of their efforts in the National War Savings Scheme. Cottesmore was no exception and the field-gun was located on the green at the front of the Central School. The fate of this gun is not known, but as time went on communities did not want grim reminders of how their brave soldiers had fallen and most guns quietly disappeared. Those that were left in 1939 were commandeered as scrap metal for a new war effort.



Turn back along Main Street towards The Sun Inn. On the right-hand side is The Thatch at 5 Main Street [55]. This is a grade II listed 18th century thatched cottage.

Mr H.D. Smith, headmaster of the Central School lived here in the 1930s. He also lived at Ivy Cottage next door [56]. It was here that a Mrs Challoner ran the 'Scottish Tea Gardens'.

Central School pupils with the Cottesmore WW1 field gun



Also on the right is The Limes at 15 Main Street [57]. This is an 18th century cottage with pantile roof and is grade II listed. The man in charge of the horses working in the nearby ironstone quarries once lived here. Visit the Rocks by Rail museum which is nearby, on the road from Cottesmore to Ashwell to learn more about the history of quarrying in the area.

Next door is 17 Main Street [58]. This is another grade II listed cottage of 1775. It has a Collyweston slate roof with stone coped gables. These are the oldest examples of terraced houses in the village. Notice the datestone with 'John Abbey, 1775' over the door.

Now walk back to the Community Centre [1] and the end of the walk. Many thanks to Cottesmore History and Archaeological Group for information provided.

Robert Ovens
 Rutland Local History & Record Society
 September 2017