

Oak, Thatch and Brick: House Building in Welford-on-Avon

Introduction

Welford-on-Avon has been built three times over, each time in a different material and by a different kind of builder. The first village was raised in oak, wattle and thatch by carpenters working for the tenants of a monastic and then an aristocratic manor. The second came in brick, first as chimneys and infill, then as new fronts, and finally as whole houses put up by local builders and speculators. The third, after 1930, came from the council and the developer, in standard brick, concrete tile and roughcast, on estates laid out around new cul-de-sacs. All three survive side by side, and a walk down the High Street passes through four hundred years of building methods in a few minutes.

This essay follows how Welford's houses were actually built: what they were made of, where the materials came from, who did the work, and how the work was paid for and controlled. It draws mainly on the archive of the Welford and Weston Local History Society, cited by folder and item number (for example 47/1–66 for the transcribed statutory list), and checks it against published records where those could be reached. It deliberately goes deeper than an earlier, shorter essay in this project, [Building Welford: A History of Housing in Welford-on-Avon](#), which traced the village's growth and the politics of new housing. Here the focus is on the materials and the makers.

The short version is this. Welford is a timber village on a stone footing, refaced in brick and roofed in straw. Its builders were local men until well into the twentieth century: the Hancox family in the eighteenth century, the Hawkins and Parriss firms in the early twentieth, D. Ritchie after 1945, and the Rimell thatchers of Binton throughout. Its building boom came late, after mains water arrived between 1956 and 1962, and it was shaped as much by drains and septic tanks as by taste.

The lie of the land

Welford's builders were working with what the ground gave them, and the ground gave them gravel, clay and a little grey limestone, but no good building stone. The village sits on the second of five gravel terraces that the Avon left along its valley after the last glaciations. A Society talk on the geology of the parish, given from handwritten notes some time after 1949, explains that these light, free-draining terrace soils were what drew settlers to the river in the first place, and that beneath them lie the Jurassic rocks of the Lower Lias: heavy blue Lias clay, "heavy & sticky for farming", and bands of grey Lias limestone (10/29).

That limestone was quarried at Binton, just across the river, and the speaker made a pointed observation about it. Much of Welford used it "partic. as base to walls, with half-timbering above". Binton's own cottages were built of it entirely, yet Welford's were not. The speaker's pencilled answer was "expense of transport", because the stone had to cross the river (10/29). The same notes mention Cotswold stone, "used a little as facing". Welford was therefore a timber village by economics as much as by tradition: oak was nearer and cheaper than stone, and the river that made the village pleasant also made stone dear.

The village plan that every builder had to fit was not a single street. The 1992 Conservation Area Study, prepared for Stratford-on-Avon District Council by Alan Smith and Partners, found that Welford had grown "around several separate nuclei" rather than one centre: the church and mill at the north-west, Post Office Green by the Bell, the Maypole Green at the south end of the High Street, and the former Welford Farm (now Manor Farm) at the end of Chapel Street (15/08). The river wraps the village on three sides, and the land rises gently to the south, so expansion could only go south and along the roads.

This pattern had consequences for building. The oldest houses stand in clusters around each nucleus, not in a continuous street. The gaps between them, mostly orchards, closes and market gardens, were what later builders filled. The study summed up the result: "The history of Welford since the 18th century has been one of continuous infill intensification and ribbon expansion north and south along the main road" (15/08). Its "Historical Growth" plan, shown later in this essay, maps that process.

Ownership mattered as much as geology. For most of its recorded history the land belonged to a single lord of the manor, from Deerhurst Priory and Tewkesbury Abbey to the Earls and Dukes of Dorset and the Barons Sackville. Most houses were held by copyhold or long lease rather than freehold. The Croft was held on a lease of 2,000 years granted in 1600, and Compton House appears in a list of copyholders as early as 1535 (11/30; 21/60). Tenants on these terms tended to repair and extend rather than rebuild, which is probably one reason so much early fabric survives: Welford's houses were patched, refronted and divided, generation after generation, rather than replaced.

Timber frame and thatch

The typical old Welford house is a box of oak timbers on a low stone wall, with its panels filled and its roof thatched. The statutory list describes it so often that the Society's transcriber called the formula "almost monotonous": "House. C17 with later alterations. Timber-frame with painted brick infill on rubble plinth; steeply pitched thatched roof with brick end stacks" (47/1–66). Of the 66 listed items in the parish, 45 are dated to the sixteenth or seventeenth century and 26 are still thatched. Almost all are one storey with an attic, two or three rooms long.



Nos 1–4 Chapel Row, Chapel Street: a seventeenth-century range of four timber-framed cottages under one continuous thatch, "one storey and attic" (Conservation Area Study, July 1992, fig. 54; archive 15/08).

How a frame was built

These are box-framed houses, not cruck houses. In a cruck building, pairs of great curved timbers rise from the ground to the ridge and carry the roof. In a box frame, upright posts carry a horizontal wall plate, and roof trusses sit on top. A survey of Stoneleigh published around 1970, copied into the Society's collection, by N. W. Alcock and colleagues, dates Warwickshire crucks mostly before about 1500, and box frames with square panels from about 1600 into the early eighteenth century (26/06). Welford's list entries fit the later type: "square framing", "exposed pegged box framing", trusses with "principals clasped and pegged at apex" (47/7; 47/39). No cruck has been recorded in the village.

The frame stood on a plinth of rubble, mostly the grey Lias from Binton, which kept the sill beam off the damp ground. The oak was cut and jointed in the yard, numbered, and raised on site, each joint held by oak pegs. Between the posts the carpenters left panels to be filled. The original infill was wattle and daub: hazel rods woven between staves and plastered with clay, dung and straw. A little survives. The list notes a "small triangular section of exposed wattle infill" at Baskerville Cottage in Church Street, and "wattle and daub plaster infill" in the roof of Restharrow and Avondale (47/7; 47/39). A villager writing about Cider Mill House in the 1970s pointed to a landing wall that had "the appearance of a wattle hurdle made of hazelwood intertwined — (now painted over with high gloss paint!)" (21/65).

There were variations. Tudor Vale on the High Street has close-studded framing on the ground floor and decorative framing above, a show of timber that only a prosperous builder would pay for, and the list dates it to the sixteenth century (47/58). Apple Trees had something else entirely: a "mud wall" of clay and straw "rammed down very hard" along its north end. A local writer who grew up there believed it was the only one in Welford, though he had seen them at Newbold, Blackwell and Tredington (10/02). Its stable, now gone, was "timber panels filled in with wattle & daub and thatched roof".

Inside, the houses were built around the hearth. The interiors the inspectors saw have flagstone floors, chamfered spine beams, open fireplaces spanned by heavy oak bressumers, and bread ovens built into the chimney: a plastered bulge at The Owl Pen, an oven with an iron door at Thorn Cottage (47/1–66). The stairs were steep and twisting. Gilda Gray, surveying old houses for the Society around 1970, found "two very narrow twisty staircases in true Welford fashion" at The Scullards (21/61).

Not every frame was a farmhouse. Tenpenny in Boat Lane, the smallest listed house, is a single-room timber cottage with a hipped thatch, built in the seventeenth century "By Overseers of the Poor", which is to say by the parish as housing for paupers (47/42). Gray noticed the opposite pattern elsewhere: "note how so many of Welford's houses are like this — very few built as labourer's cottages" (21/65). Many cottages began as yeoman houses and were later split. The Wynns, an Elizabethan house of the 1590s, was divided into three cottages, let weekly to the Blundell, Parsons and Marshall families in 1923, and turned back into one house after a sale in the 1930s (10/04; 11/30).

Thatch and the thatchers

The roofs were steep because thatch needs a pitch of about 45 degrees to shed water. What went on them changed over time. When Cider Mill House was stripped for restoration, the man who had lived there examined the old thatch "and found to my surprise that the original thatch consisted of rushes and not straw". He concluded that Elizabethan Welford "did their thatching with rushes grown on the River Avon" (10/03). Later roofs were wheat straw from the village's own fields. A newspaper columnist in the Society's cuttings recalled that when corn was cut by hand the long stubble served for thatch, the butts were undamaged by machinery, and "good thatch... would last 40 years" (54/103).



A thatcher at work on a Welford cottage, from a Walter Scott souvenir pack of twelve views sold for one shilling, catalogued by the Society as 1930 (16/25).

Thatching was a village trade with a few named families. The 1851 census tables for the area count two thatchers, both in Welford, alongside four bricklayers and nine sawyers and carpenters (01/49). In 1861 John Gould, aged 48, was a "house and rick thatcher" (48/04), and in 1891 Charles Horne was "farmer and thatcher" (48/07). Horne also ran a market garden and let rooms to summer visitors, a sign of how thin a living one craft could provide (46/37–95).

The bills survive for some jobs. In 1913 D. Cresswell, "Thatcher and Market Gardener" of Salford Priors, charged J. A. Matthews £16 for rethatching the cottage occupied by Mrs Johnson, "work & material", paid in three instalments; another Cresswell receipt for £8 covers a second Welford cottage (33/27; 45/43). In March 1940 John Rimell, thatcher, of Binton, took £5 "on a/c of rethatching roof of cottage" from Mr Howell of Welford (42/03). The Rimells were still at it a generation later: a Birmingham Post photograph of the 1970s shows David Rimell, 53, of Binton, dressing new straw with a wooden leggett around the eyebrow dormer of "the 500-year-old Vine Cottage" (13/19). The Society's catalogue of about 1979 lists an envelope item "D. Rimell thatching — 1974", which probably dates the photograph (19/21).



David Rimell, aged 53, of Binton, rethatching Vine Cottage, Welford, with a wooden leggett. Birmingham Post, 23 January, probably 1974 (13/19).

Six instant photographs taken in August 1980 record a complete rethatch of the cottage labelled "10p Cottage" in Boat Lane, with the church tower behind (24/30). The label is almost certainly a joke on Tenpenny, the overseers' cottage. The sequence shows the whole job: the worn coat stripped, the bare rafters, new battens, fresh straw laid from the eaves upward, and a finished roof with a decorated ridge.



Rethatching "10p Cottage", Boat Lane, August 1980, with St Peter's tower behind: from worn thatch (top left) to stripped rafters and a finished ridge (bottom right) (24/30).

Stone, then brick

Stone was Welford's footing and its prestige material; brick was its improvement. Neither replaced timber all at once. Instead brick crept into the old houses part by part over two centuries, starting with the chimney and ending with the whole front.

Lias and stone slate

The grey Lias of Binton appears everywhere at ground level. Almost every listed cottage stands "on rubble plinth", and the old garden walls of Boat Lane and Church Street are built of the same thin, layered stone. Where money allowed, stone went higher. The Wynns and Cider Mill House both have tall stone chimney stacks topped with diagonally set brick shafts, and The Wynns kept "some of the original stone slats" on its roof into the 1970s (10/03; 10/04). The list confirms a "stone slate front pitch" there and a stack with stone quoins and "cluster of 4 diagonal shafts" (47/56). The church, by contrast, is built of coursed limestone and sandstone rubble with ashlar dressings, the only building in the village made wholly of stone (47/14).

The Lias quarries also fed bigger works. James Mills of The Hollies, farmer, timber merchant and agricultural engineer in the early nineteenth century, supplied and had cut "the stone

blocks used for the first railway in the world — the Stratford to Moreton tramway". Gray's notes say the stone "was quarried at Binton, sent by river to Stratford & cut on the wharf" (21/66). The southern part of Binton Bridges, rebuilt in 1804–9, is "coursed blue lias rubble with ashlar dressings and some repairs in red and blue brick" (47/8). Stone came to Welford by water when it came at all, and that is why it stayed a luxury.

Brick arrives

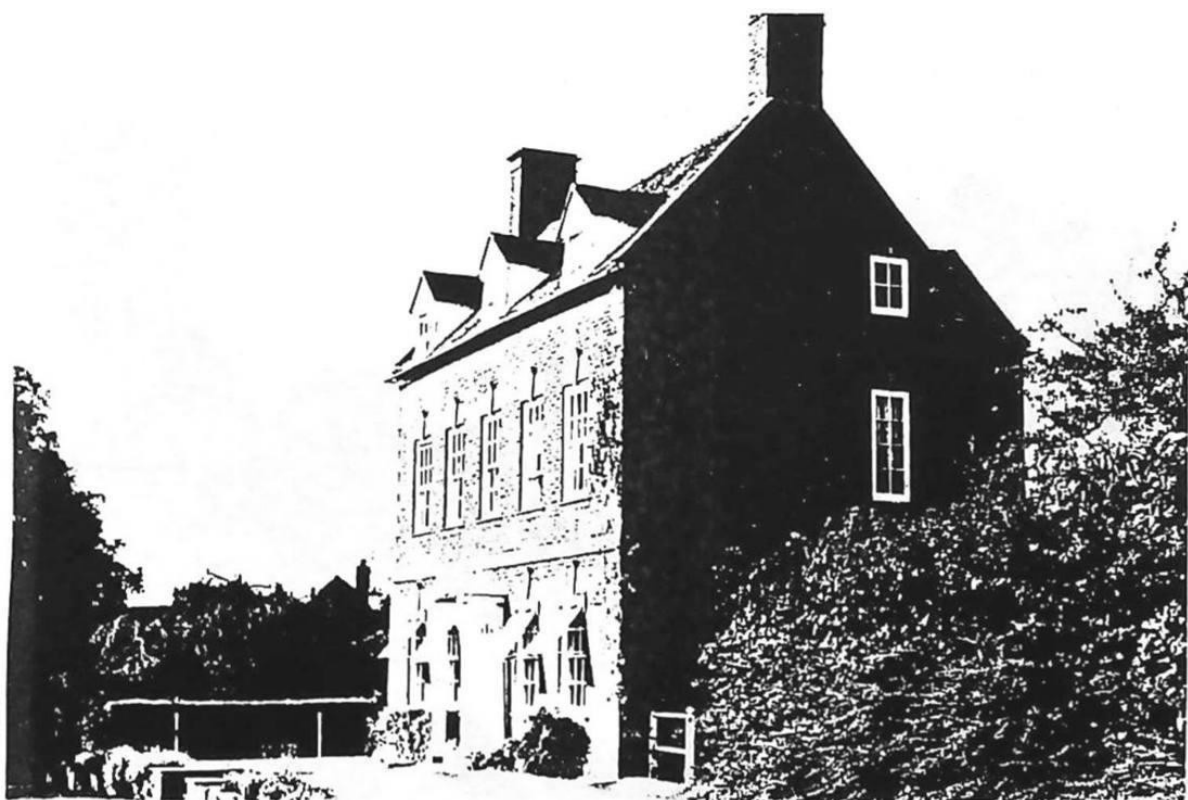
The first brick in most Welford houses was the chimney. A timber house with an open hearth needed a fireproof stack, and the list's recurring phrase, "brick end stacks", records brick chimneys added to or built with timber frames from the seventeenth century on. Next came infill. As wattle and daub failed, builders knocked it out, laid brick in the panels and limewashed it. The list calls this "painted brick infill", and it is now more common in Welford than surviving daub. The 1986 photographs of Glebe Cottage, shown below, catch both stages at once: old brick nogging in the upper panels and fresh render below.



Glebe Cottage, Church Street, at the start of its 1986 restoration. Brick nogging and the remains of wattle and daub show between the oak studs, and a later render patch covers part of the front (16/15).

The third stage was refronting. A timber house could be given a brick face to the street while keeping its frame behind. The north cottage at Cider Mill House "had a brick front put in about the time of George III" (10/03). Church House in Boat Lane, dated c.1684–94, is "painted brick with timber-framing to right return and rear", with a modillioned brick cornice to the street (47/13). Restharrow and Avondale were refaced in painted brick except at one end, where the timber frame still shows (47/39). The Stoneleigh survey noted the same thing across the county: Warwickshire is rich in timber buildings, "although many were cased in brick in the nineteenth century" (26/06).

The last stage was the house built of brick from the ground. Cleavers in Church Lane, formerly Church Farm, is the finest: a Georgian house of about 1740 in Flemish bond with ashlar dressings, a swan-neck pediment over Doric columns, and "rubbed brick flat arches with fluted ashlar key blocks" over sash windows. It is the parish's only Grade II* house (47/17; [British Listed Buildings](#)). Gray was told it "was never finished inside", perhaps because of the South Sea Bubble, more probably because of falling corn prices (21/62). The Hollies on the High Street was rebuilt in brick for the Holtom family in the 1790s. Harper Holtom, born in 1729, wrote in his book: "The first night me & my family slept in the new house was April 6 1795" (21/66). It is three storeys of Flemish bond on a rubble plinth, with a dentilled brick cornice and rubbed brick arches (47/46).



Cleavers, Church Lane, the former Church Farm: Flemish-bond brick of about 1740 and the parish's only Grade II house (Conservation Area Study, 1992, fig. 8; 15/08).*

Who made and laid the bricks

The archive does not locate a brickyard in Welford itself. It does preserve hints of one nearby. An undated field list for the Milcote and Weston farms of the Sackville estate names "Brick Kiln Ground", "Brick Kiln's Ground", "Brick Kiln Hill", "Little Kiln Meadow" and "Clay Pits" (08/13). These names suggest that bricks were once burned on the estate from the Lias clay, but the archive gives no date for the kiln, so this is an inference. Elsewhere in the district, the Society's copies of industrial archaeology surveys record small kilns at Bidford, Alcester and Studley in the nineteenth century, and the Mordaunts' Walton estate near Wellesbourne took advice on building its own kiln in 1847 but went on buying bricks in (03/21–31; 03/01–19).

The builders were local families. Woodward's notes record that the Hancox family, market gardeners in Welford since the 1560s, were also "the village builders in the 18th — & they built the WORKHOUSE" (21/64). The 1851 census counted four bricklayers in Welford (01/49). By the early twentieth century the names are Herbert Horace Hawkins, builder, who appears at a 1913 inquest, and the Parriss firm (13/42). In 1938 W. G. Parriss, "Builder and Contractor, also complete Funeral Undertaker", billed Mrs Booth of Virginia Cottage for taking down a chimney top and "re building in Cement Mortar", repairing a slate roof with "6 – 12" × 24 Blue Slates", and making two new wood window frames "with new Iron Casements" (01/48). The bill is a small record of a big change: cement had replaced lime, and Welsh slate brought by rail now sat on roofs that had once carried straw.

Enclosure and the Victorian village

The enclosure award of about 1802 did not build a single house, but it fixed where houses could later go. It replaced the open fields with hedged closes, set the main roads at 40 feet wide, and laid out private roads along the old headlands (01/66–73). One of the closes named in the award was Harris's Close, three acres belonging to the Duke of Dorset (01/66–73). A century and a quarter later it would become Millers Close and carry the village's first council houses (18/15). Headland Road, set out along "Long Headland", would carry the second. The earlier essay in this project describes the award in detail; for the builder its importance is that it created the frontages.

Very little was built on them for a hundred years. Welford's population fell through the second half of the nineteenth century, and new building was replacement and infill. What the Victorians did build is plain and recognisable. The 1992 study picked out "a charming 19th century terrace of four cottages" on the north side of Church Lane, and on Chapel Street "two Victorian brick terraces each of four" leading to the Wesleyan Chapel, all in red brick with slate or interlocking tile roofs (15/08). The Orchard in Church Street carries the date 1897 (15/08). These were the first Welford houses designed as standard units in rows, and they used materials brought in from outside: machine-made brick, Welsh slate and factory tile.



The nineteenth-century brick terrace of four cottages on the north side of Church Lane, the kind of standard row the Victorians added to the village (Conservation Area Study, 1992, fig. 9; 15/08).

The Victorians also remade old houses to suit new ideas of comfort and respectability. The Rectory, an Elizabethan brick and timber house remodelled in the early eighteenth century, was "thoroughly repaired" in 1869, when it gained sash bay windows and a coat of stucco (21/63). The Ashes on the High Street got a roughcast front with applied timber framing about 1900, a mock version of the real frame behind it (47/43). Four Gables was "modernized" about 1910 by a Miss Rodgers", who took out "the old chimneys & lead windows" and put in sashes (21/64). Fire forced other changes. The Boat Inn in Boat Lane, a sixteenth-century house used by bargemen until 1873, burned in 1890 and was rebuilt as a private house (21/56).

At the bottom of the market, repair was cheap and functional. In November 1912 S. Bryan, "House Painter & Decorator, Glazier, &c." of Welford, quoted Mrs Matthews £4 17s 6d to do up a rundown cottage: take out the leaded lights "& reglaze with zinc bar work", fit iron opening casements, whiten the ceilings, colourwash the walls, "mend lath & plaster between doors" and limewash the pantry throughout (33/28–29). That is how most Welford cottages were maintained for three centuries: patched, limewashed and reglazed, not rebuilt.

The last Victorian change was the slow move from the old houses to the pretty ones. As early as 1915 George Wright complained that 38 new dwellings had gone up in twenty years, mostly of "the inevitable red brick which is not beautiful", and that cottages were being bought by outsiders (25/07). The other side of that story is that incomers began restoring old houses. Compton House, once a farmhouse and later an oil and ironmongery store, had its timbering "covered with stucco" until a later owner altered it and exposed the frame (21/60).

By the twentieth century the visible timber frame stopped being a sign of poverty and became something people paid to show.

Council houses and weekend bungalows, 1918–1945

Between the wars two new kinds of builder arrived in Welford: the plot developer and the rural district council. Both built in brick and roughcast, and both were resented.

The developers came first. When the old estates broke up after 1918, John Wright "bought up so much of Welford and divided it up into small pieces", as Gray put it, including Church Farm (21/62). Building plots went to auction. In March 1924 nine plots on Bidford Road and Headland Road were offered as sites "for moderate sized residences or week-end cottages", together with four new roughcast bungalows (11/30). Sale particulars of the 1920s show what the new middle-class house looked like. The Retreat, offered in 1927, was "well built of Brick with stucco and Timber facings & tiled roof", with a verandah, a bathroom with hot and cold water, and a garage for two cars (11/30). A pair of houses in Chapel Street, sold in 1923, were "double fronted, built of brick and rough-cast" (11/30). The timber was now decoration on a brick wall.

The council's first houses in Welford were at Millers Close. The archive does not give their date, but they were standing by September 1935. That month an unsigned contributor to the Evesham Journal, headed "Conservation or Disfiguration?", lamented the village of fifty years before, "indeed pretty with its picturesque old houses and cottages", and listed what had spoiled it: strangers, "townsmen in search of the simple life", gardens laid out like a city park, notice boards, lighting poles, wireless masts, and "the Council houses at Millers Close" (20/01). In October 1938 Woodward noted that Harris's Close had become Millers Close "with the council houses built on it", and that an old footpath was "now merged in the road through the Council Houses" (18/15).

Welford was in Gloucestershire and in Marston Sicca Rural District until 1931, when it passed to Warwickshire and Stratford-on-Avon Rural District. Which council built Millers Close is not recorded in the material examined here. What the archive does show is how bare the services were. At Weston-on-Avon, less than a mile away, council houses built in the late 1930s were fitted with light points because mains electricity was expected "within a few months". The tenants waited about fourteen years, and on the night the power was switched on their wiring still was not finished (50/101). In 1955 the Weston council houses drew water from a communal tank filled by the council's water cart, because the wells had been condemned (50/105). Welford itself had electricity by 1929, but as late as May 1956 a newspaper reported that none of the 800 villagers had piped water and that open sewers ran across the fields to the Avon (61/01; 01/13).

The new houses therefore went up on the same terms as the old: a well or pump, a cesspit or earth closet, a copper for washing. Brick and slate had changed the look of the village before water and drainage changed how anyone lived in it. Building almost stopped during the Second World War, and the Society's 1979 catalogue lists a cutting titled "Welford — 1938 (effect of 'development')", a sign that the argument had already started before the real expansion came (19/21).

Post-war estates, 1945–1990

After 1945 Welford was built faster than at any time in its history, and it was built in closes. Between 1951 and 1962 about 90 new dwellings went up, raising the total in the parish to about 340, so that about a quarter of the village's homes were less than eleven years old (19/44).

The council's closes

The Rural District Council led. A house-by-house notebook titled "People in Welford 1950" already numbers Headland Close 1 to 22 alongside Millers Close (01/56). The work went to local firms. When Jack Marshall, a lifelong villager and bell-ringer, died, his obituary recalled that "after the war he worked as a bricklayer for local builder D Ritchie. He helped build many rural district council dwellings in the building boom period following the war" (01/26–33).

The council's own costing for the next scheme survives. On 15 September 1958 Stratford-on-Avon Rural District Council priced "say, 20 houses at Headland Road site" (19/01). The figures show what a council house was made of in money:

Item, per house	Cost
Building contract (Bearley "Gregory house" price of £1,414, plus 5%)	£1,485
Road works	£120
Site and legal charges	£36
Architect, quantity surveyor and clerk of works	£43
Total	£1,684

The council would borrow the whole sum over 60 years at 6%, which with management and repairs meant an annual charge of £118 2s 9d. The inclusive weekly rent came to £2 15s 8d. A note added that if some houses were earmarked for slum clearance, a government subsidy of £22 1s a year would cut the rent by 8s 6d a week (19/01). The design was not drawn for Welford at all: it repeated the council's last scheme at Bearley, plus inflation. That is the essence of post-war council building. Standard plans, standard brick and tile, and a cul-de-sac road were laid down wherever the council could buy a field.

By about 1960 a survey counted three council estates: Headland Rise with 22 homes, Headland Close with 21, and Millers Close with 21 houses and 6 bungalows (20/06). The county planner who inspected the village in April 1962 singled them out for praise: "The local council are the exception, their houses being set around new cul-de-sac roads" (19/44).

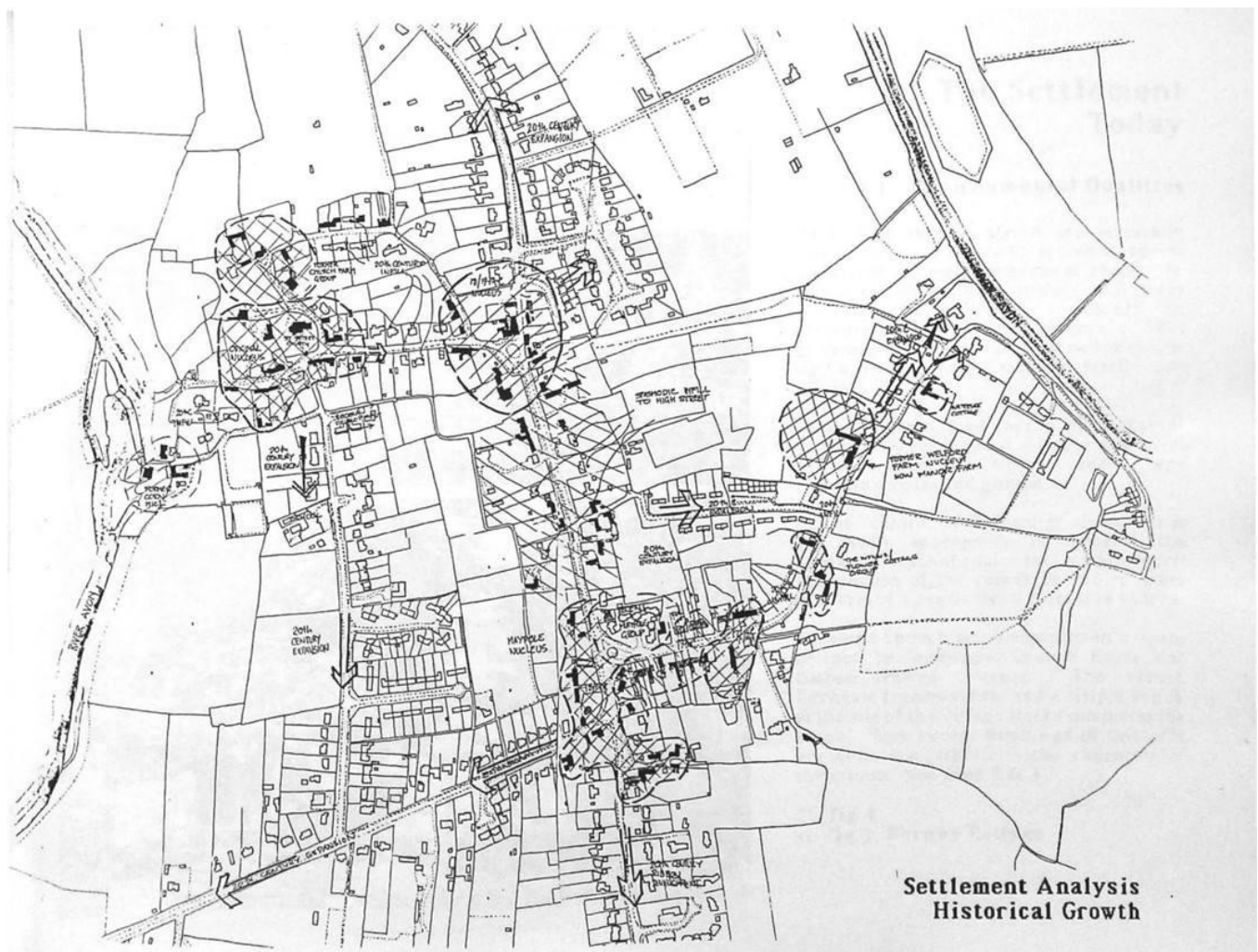
The private bungalow

The exception was to the private bungalow. The 1962 report found nearly 50 new dwellings around Barton Road and Headland Road, almost all "private bungalows or semi-bungalows", and a ribbon of the same along Binton Road. Inspectors complained of development "far too cramped for a rural village and below normally accepted space and day lighting standards", of "an excessive number of bungalows", and of roofs whose pitch "was far too flat" (19/44). The steep thatched roof at 45 degrees had become a shallow one of concrete tile, and the change was the clearest visual break in the village's building history.

What made the boom possible was water, and what limited it was drainage. In May 1956 no Welford house had piped water. By 1962 about 260 of the parish's dwellings were on the main. But there was still "no proper sewerage system", and every new house relied on a septic tank. The county recommended that building be "severely restricted pending the completion of the proposed drainage scheme", with special control in the old streets and a "green line" around the village beyond which only agricultural dwellings would be allowed (19/44; 01/13).

Quiney's Leys and the orchards

The estates took the orchards. A survey dated September 1964 recorded "Quiney's Leas estate — 30 in process of building" (20/06). Quiney's Leys was a field opposite the garage that German prisoners had partly cleared in the First World War for a playing field that was never made. In 1919 Mr Sabin, back from the war, planted it with fruit trees for its owner, Mr Stanley. A local history draft notes that damsons, plums and apples from those trees were still fruiting in gardens and on verges after the houses went up (08/01–19). The same happened across the village: the 1992 study's growth plan marks almost every gap between the old nuclei as "20th century infill" or "20th century expansion" (15/08).



"Settlement Analysis – Historical Growth": the 1992 study's plan of Welford, with the old nuclei cross-hatched and arrows marking twentieth-century expansion and ribbon development along Headland Road, Barton Road and Binton Road (15/08).

Old houses were sometimes cleared to make room. Rest Awhile and The Nook, a pair of "genuine old brick, tiled and half timbered Cottages" offered for sale in 1927, have a later note in the margin of the Society's sale book: "Now Weston Close" (11/30).

By 1987 the shape of the new village shows in the register of electors. Of 1,027 voters, 111 lived on Binton Road and 78 on Barton Road, the two ribbons of bungalows. Another 62 lived in Millers Close and its bungalows, 51 in Headland Rise, 48 in Quiney's Leys and 43 in Headland Close. The old core streets held fewer: 42 in Church Street, 20 in Boat Lane and 14 in Mill Lane (30/05). Those six roads alone held 393 voters, well over a third of the village, mostly in houses built since 1945 on old orchards, market gardens and closes.

Restoration, conservation and new building since 1960

From the 1960s the most skilled building work in Welford was not new building but restoration, and the rules for new building were rewritten to make it look old.

Listing and the over-restored village

The old houses were protected in stages. A first statutory list in 1952 covered 19 items. The provisional list issued in November 1960 recorded 54 buildings, 22 of them in the non-statutory Grade III, and opened with a backhanded compliment: "an extremely pretty and well-known village but it is now residential in character and a large number of cottages have been somewhat over-restored" (13/03; 30/07). The 1972 resurvey added 28 more entries, and today's list holds 66 (47/1–66). The conservation area was designated in 1969 (47/667).

Restoration was itself a building trade, with its own firms and methods. A series of photographs taken in 1986 shows Glebe Cottage in Church Street, which the Society believed began as a priest's house, during renovation by C. Padbury & Son, "Property Renovation, Building Contractors & Shopfitters" (16/14–17). In the first pictures the old tile roof still sags over panels of crumbling brick and wattle. In the last, the roof is stripped to its rafters, the oak frame stands open, the gable is wrapped in plastic and propped with raking timbers, and stacks of new concrete blocks wait on the verge. Thorn Cottage underwent an "extensive 1991 restoration", Virginia Cottage an "extensive 1990 restoration" (47/57; 47/60). Barns became houses. In 1985 the Society surveyed four for the national SPAB Domesday Survey of Barns, and two of them, Baskerville Cottage barn of about 1630 and The Barn House in Chapel Street, were already homes (14/10).



Glebe Cottage stripped to its frame in 1986: bare rafters, open oak studs, a propped gable under plastic, and new concrete blocks stacked by the contractor's van (16/17).

The 1992 Conservation Area Study took stock of the result. About forty buildings in the conservation area were timber framed and thatched, out of about 145. "Thatched roofs and timber framed walls with rendered infilling give the impression of dominating Welford," it observed. "In reality there is also much red brick, painted brick and render. Apart from thatch there are equal amounts of plain tile and Welsh slate roofing. There are some unusual early interlocking clay tiles as well as modern interlocking concrete tiles" (15/08). It disliked suburban frontages, Leylandii screens and concrete bollards, found Barton Croft "a little severe", and regretted that the new houses at Montagues Corner had not shaped the Maypole Green into a proper space. It liked Pear Tree Close at the end of Duck Lane, whose thatch and render had "an interesting 'Arts and Crafts' feel" (15/08).

New building in old clothes

Since 1990 new housing in Welford has been built by housing associations and regional developers rather than the council or local builders. Holland Meadow on Barton Road, ten shared-ownership homes opened in 1991, was developed by English Villages Housing Association and built by Westbury Partnership Homes (29/18). The neighbourhood plan the village adopted in 2017 includes a "Design Excellence" policy for new homes ([Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan](#)). The district council's design guidance of 2019 names the area's traditional construction as timber frame, brick and stone, and its traditional roofs as plain tile, Welsh slate, straw thatch and stone tile, which is a fair summary of the four centuries traced in this essay ([Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Development Requirements SPD Part E](#)).

The newest houses show both the guidance and the market at work. Property listings describe Badgers Close as built by Spitfire Homes in 2016, and Milcote Close as ten homes of Spitfire's "Bespoke Collection" completed in 2020 ([Primelocation](#); [Zoopla](#)). A 2019 trade article on a four-home scheme in the village describes a mock-Tudor design using oak and a clay roof tile chosen to suit the setting ([Specification Online](#)). Braeburns, a private road of detached houses and dormer bungalows on Barton Road by Brookworth Homes, was marketed with guide prices between about £1.15 million and £1.875 million ([Savills](#)). These pages could not be opened directly for this essay, so their details come from search summaries and should be checked before being relied on.

Conclusion

Welford's houses record a sequence of trades as much as a sequence of styles. The carpenter and the thatcher built the first village from local oak, hazel, clay and straw on a footing of Binton stone. The bricklayer arrived with the chimney, then filled the panels, then refaced the fronts, and finally built whole houses like Cleavers and The Hollies. The council's architect and the local contractor added standard brick houses in cul-de-sacs, and the speculative builder added bungalows along the roads, once mains water made them possible and septic tanks made them tolerable. Since the 1970s the restorer and the conservation officer have had as much say as anyone.

The materials tell the same story in reverse. Rushes from the Avon gave way to wheat straw, straw to Welsh slate and plain tile, and tile to concrete. Now new houses are again specified in clay tile and oak, and the timber frame, once the mark of a poor cottage hidden under stucco, is the thing every new house in Welford is asked to resemble.

Sources

Archive references (folder/item) are to the Welford and Weston Local History Society scans in the "Claude 1000" folder. The main items used:

Ref	Item
01/13	Sunday Mercury, 27 May 1956: no piped water in Welford or Weston
01/26–33	Obituary of Jack Marshall, bricklayer for D. Ritchie; 1988 starter-homes debate

01/48	W. G. Parriss, builder, bill to Mrs Booth, 1938
01/49	1851 census analysis tables
01/56	"People in Welford 1950" notebook
01/66–73	Enclosure award abstract, c.1802
03/01–19; 03/21–31	Walton estate accounts; Alcester-area industrial archaeology survey (brick kilns, lias quarries)
08/01–19; 08/13	Quiney's Leys recollections; Milcote and Weston field names
10/02–05	House notes: Apple Trees mud wall, Cider Mill rush thatch, The Wynns
10/29	Talk notes on the geology of Welford
11/30	Sale particulars notebook, 1815–1956
13/03; 30/07	Provisional list 1960; statutory list 1967
13/19	Birmingham Post photograph of David Rimell thatching Vine Cottage
14/10	SPAB Domesday Survey of Barns, Welford, 1985
15/08	Welford-on-Avon Conservation Area Study, July 1992
16/14–17; 16/25	Glebe Cottage restoration photographs, 1986; Walter Scott view pack, c.1930
18/15	Woodward's schedule of footpaths, 1938 (Millers Close council houses)
19/01	Rural District Council rent calculation, Headland Road, 1958
19/21	Society catalogue, c.1979
19/44	County planning report on Welford, 1962
20/01	Woodward's commonplace book, c.1932–1943 (Evesham Journal, 28 Sept 1935)
20/06	House surveys, c.1960 and Sept 1964
21/22–66	Woodward's anecdotes and Gilda Gray's house notes, c.1970
24/30	Rethatching "10p Cottage", Boat Lane, August 1980
25/07	George Wright, "Looking Backward", 1915
26/06	Alcock, Braithwaite and Jeffs, "Timber-framed buildings in Warwickshire: Stoneleigh village"
29/18	Holland Meadow opening, 1991
30/05	Register of electors, 1987–88
33/27–29; 42/03; 45/43	Thatching bills (Cresswell 1913–14, Rimell 1940); S. Bryan's repair specification, 1912
47/1–66	Transcribed statutory list of 66 listed buildings
48/04; 48/07	Census transcripts, 1861 and 1891
50/101; 50/105	Weston council houses: electricity and water, 1950s

Web sources (several sites could not be opened from this environment; where that happened, details were taken from search summaries and are flagged in the text):

- [Building Welford: A History of Housing in Welford-on-Avon](#), the earlier essay in this project
- [Welford-on-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2017](#)
- [Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Development Requirements SPD Part E: Architectural Style, Construction and Materials](#)
- [Cleavers, Welford-on-Avon, British Listed Buildings](#)
- [Picturesque village development enhanced with Marley, Specification Online, 2019](#)
- [Braeburns, Barton Road, Savills](#)

- Property listings for Badgers Close and Milcote Close: [Primelocation](#), [Zoopla](#)