Etwall Almshouses or Hospital, rebuilt in 1681 (SDDC collection).

Until the middle of the 20th century Etwall was a small village. Its historic core still retains a village feel despite the building of many new houses to the south-east, which caused the population to treble from 1,065 in 1951 to 3,339 in 1981. The village street used to be part of the busy Derby to Uttoxeter road, but the opening of the Etwall bypass in 1992 made the village quieter again. The biggest visible clue that Etwall is a local focus of population, serving a large hinterland, lies in the John Port comprehensive school **(28)**. The school, on the site of Etwall Hall at the south end of the village, currently serves more than 2,000 pupils. It was formed in 1978 by the amalgamation of the pre-existing County Secondary School (opened 1955) and the John Port Grammar School (opened 1956).

The name Etwall probably means "Eata's well", Eata being an Anglo-Saxon personal name. A well head survives by the parish church in the village centre **(20)**. Wells were often revered, so the positioning of the parish church next to the well strengthens the case for it being an important local well and the source of the place name. Could it be significant that St. Helen, to whom the church is dedicated, is associated with Holy Wells elsewhere? In Lancashire, for example, people threw pins into St. Ellen's and St. Helen's wells at Brindle and Sefton respectively, for good luck or for the granting of a wish (see The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England, by Robert Charles Hope, 1893).

The sites of the church and the well head would have appeared still more prominent when the road to Ash and Sutton on the Hill left the village between them. The church and well then marked the principal road junction in the village. In 1798, Sutton Lane was re-routed to enter the village at a T junction at the north end of Main Street, as it does today. The reason for the change is not clear. It may have been to help consolidate land holdings, or to afford greater privacy to the grounds of Etwall Hall. Today, the old route gives access to the "new" graveyard **(3)**.

The church itself **(19)** is an intriguing patchwork of different dates, substantially medieval, and is listed Grade I. Some stonework on the south side of the chancel is said to date from the Anglo Saxon period, but there seems to be no official recognition of this idea. The old churchyard lies mostly to the north. Sir John Port, in his will of 1556, ordered that the churchyard wall at Etwall be finished and given gates, and that the churchyard should be made even and level. New iron gates were erected at the entrance to the churchyard in 1824, but they were demolished in 1958 by a trailer that broke loose from its lorry. The churchyard today is a large, flat space with little to hold the attention of a visitor. There are no old trees and the headstones have been removed to the more modern churchyard.

The parish church of St. Helen, Etwall (SDDC collection).

However, shortcomings in the churchyard itself are more than amply redeemed by the crucial role it plays in providing a quiet, secluded and fitting foreground for Etwall's renowned almshouses **(4)**, sometimes known as "Etwall Hospital", founded in 1557 in accordance with the will of Sir John Port:

> **"…And also, I will, six of the poorest of Etwall Parish shall have weekly for ever twenty pence a-piece, over and besides such lodgings, as I, or my Executors, shall provide for them, in an Alms-house, which, God willing, shall be builded in or near to the Church yard at Etwall…"**

Sir John died suddenly in June 1557 and the almshouse for six people was duly built by his executors. The inmates were all to be men and were expected to observe a strict code of behaviour. For example, a list of regulations in 1687 declared that almsmen were to be expelled if they married. Well into the 20th century, the almsmen were bound to go to church daily, wearing their blue cloaks, silver badges and mortar-board type hats. Women became eligible for admission to Etwall Hospital in 1867.

Sir John's will also provided for a school to be set up in Etwall or Repton, to be taught by a priest. Repton was chosen as the site for the new school, but for many years the Hospital was in charge of its administration. The two charities became a Corporation by a Royal Charter of 1622, which provided for the number of almsmen to be increased from six to twelve, because the value of the original endowments had greatly increased. It was only in the 19th century that the two charities went their separate ways, Repton School eventually eclipsing the Hospital both in fame and fortune. The Hospital, "through length of time falling to decay", was rebuilt in

1681 in an old-fashioned style. Were its date not recorded over the central door, it would pass for being fifty years older.

The new Hospital appears to comprise twelve identical cottages fronting a courtyard. One of them, however, at the north west corner, is slightly bigger than the others, and is said to have been for the Master of the Hospital's own occupation. But there is also a thirteenth cottage, entirely hidden from view at the north east corner and not directly accessible from the courtyard. It is said to have been for the use of a nurse living there, who cooked and washed for the almsmen (F. C. Hipkins, Repton and its Neighbourhood, 1892 and 1899). This would only leave eleven cottages for almsmen, but a further detached row of four cottages had been added to the east of the original twelve around 1714, which perhaps ensured that the number of cottages available to almsmen was never less than twelve. A porter was added to the establishment in 1849.

Each house comprised a living room with a fireplace, a second small room partitioned off, and a bedroom over the whole reached by a winding stair alongside the chimneystack. The four additional cottages of c1714 were built to the same plan by Francis and William Smith of Warwick. There was much ill-feeling when the Rev. William Beer, Master of the Hospital, built himself a fine new house in 1812, using money appropriated from the Port Charity. The house, known as Etwall Lodge **(35)**, stands on Willington Road about half a mile from the Hospital. It bears the arms of Sir John Port and was built at the (then) enormous expense of £3,000. It is now a Grade II listed building.

In front of the hospital is a splendid set of wrought iron gates, originally made for the main entrance to the Hall **(26)**. They are early 18th century and are attributed to the well-known ironsmith Robert Bakewell (1682-1752). They were dismantled when the Hall was taken down in 1955 and lay idle until their re-erection at the Hospital thirty years later. Close examination betrays that they were not made for their current site. They are too large, asymmetrically placed, and lack the masonry piers that accompanied them on their original site. Nonetheless, the hospital is a fitting place for them, and they add greatly to the grace and dignity of the buildings. The remainder of the railings across the front of the Hospital were erected in 1849, with gates that were locked by the porter every night at nine o' clock in summer and eight o' clock in winter.

Just west of the original churchyard there is another relic of the old Hall, this time of a more pathetic nature. It is a length of 17th century garden wall **(2)** that once bounded the formal garden on the east front of the Hall. The garden comprised six squarish plots bounded by clipped hornbeam hedges, three on each side of a main walk running eastwards from the Hall towards the church. Following purchase by the County Council, the Hall was demolished in 1955, and the sprawling John Port School has now engulfed the site of the house and grounds. An old fishpond has been preserved.

The origins of Etwall Hall **(1)** are unknown, but it is assumed to have been built by the Port family in the 16th century. It was John Port the Elder (d1541), that established the family's holdings in Etwall, by his marriage to Jane Fitzherbert in 1495 and the acquisition of former Fitzherbert property

Etwall Hall c1905. Courtesy of Ripley Library / www.picturethepast.org.uk. From the L. J. Wood collection.

in Etwall, Burnaston, Trusley and Hilton. His father Henry Port (d1512), grandfather of Sir John who founded the School and Hospital, had been a Mayor of Chester, but came to live in Etwall and was buried there.

Sir John Port the Elder prospered under King Henry VIII. He helped to found Brasenose College Oxford in 1512 and was knighted in 1523. He was one of the panel of judges that tried Sir Thomas More and Ann Boleyn, leading to the execution of them both in 1535 and 1536. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries he was rewarded by the grant of the former Welbeck Abbey and Beauvale Priory lands in Etwall, thus greatly increasing his estate. Etwall church, with seven acres of arable land, had been given to Welbeck Abbey in 1140, while the manor of Etwall was granted to Beauvale Priory by John of Gaunt in 1370. The younger Sir John Port, founder of the almshouses, built on the successes of his father and further increased the family estates.

No serious archaeological study was made of the Hall prior to demolition, so our knowledge of its evolution is based on the superficial evidence of photographs and drawings, and the hit-and-miss documentary evidence. Examination of 19th century floor plans at the County Record Office, currently lost, might give further clues. Meanwhile, a 16th century origin for the house seems plausible and would be consistent with its planning around a progression of courtyards, with the house and its farm buildings in close proximity to one another. The discovery of a supposed priest's hole in the 19th century would also support a 16th century date.

However the house as pulled down in 1955 had clearly been re-worked in the early 18th century and the Cotton family estate records suggest that Francis and William Smith of Warwick were the architects responsible. In 1714 they were paid over £90 for the work of various craftsmen "at my house at Etwall more than by agreement", i.e. beyond the work originally contracted for. Unfortunately, details of the work done by the agreement or contract have not survived, but the work done "more than by agreement" is likely to have been only a small percentage of the whole. A four-figure sum of work therefore seems entirely plausible, which would be enough to pay for a radical re-working. The main front was framed by two balustraded towers, giving presence and unique identity to a house that was otherwise not particularly distinguished. This frontage faced south over a small park. As part of the modernisation scheme, Robert Bakewell provided "2 pieces

of Iron pallisados & gates, one on each side of ye court at Etwall" in 1714, which are probably those shown in a "Country Life" photograph of 1899.

The Hall was built partly of stone, said to have been quarried from the ruins of Tutbury Castle by the Parliamentarian Sir Samuel Sleigh of Ash, who bought the Etwall estate of Sir Edward Mosley in 1646. Mosley had bought it just five years earlier from Sir William Gerrard, a descendant of the Port family. The Gerrards were Roman Catholics, which would explain the alleged priest's hole. Sleigh's heiress Mary took the Hall and estate into the Cotton family, which kept it until the mid 20th century.

The village itself comprises a main street with several subsidiary offshoots. The southern end of the Main Street, by the church and well, is broad **(24)**, suggesting a former village green or market place, though there is no documentary evidence of an early market at Etwall. Church Hill is a northern continuation of this space **(18)**, and was once broader. Part of Church Hill was taken into the gardens of the Rectory **(17)** at the Enclosure of Etwall in 1798.

The topography of the south end of the village is odd, with several unexplained features. Why did Willington Road enter the village via a strange dogleg route by the pinfold **(32)**, shown on early Ordnance Survey plans? What are the origins of the grandly-named Portland Street **(30)**, which was formerly known as Dog Lane? Was it once a route through to somewhere? Was it an encroachment on a former open area? Or was it an early backland development in the croft of someone's house?

The Spread Eagle Inn **(27)**, whose premises dominate the west side of Portland Street, today seems unhappily cast adrift in the sea of hard surfacing that dominates this part of the village. There were formerly other buildings around it, including a malthouse to the rear and a shop on the corner of Willington Road. The malthouse was demolished in the 1960s.

The pub itself formerly had arched windows and a thatched roof with eyebrow dormers. The thatch was replaced by tiles in 1912 and there have been many other changes since. One of the Finderns of Findern married the daughter of Sir John Port I, and the Spread Eagle was part of the Findern family arms. On the opposite corner of Willington Road is a three storey building of an urban character, brick with stone dressings, built by Etwall builder R. Platts in 1883 **(25)**.

Georgian buildings predominate on the Main Street. On the north-western side, pride of place goes to the Old Rectory **(17)**, a very substantial house with its main frontage facing the church. Its original design, with four bays of windows, was altered in the 19th century to a two bay arrangement, but the original configuration was reinstated in the 1990s. A

The Old Rectory, Church Hill (SDDC collection).

large Victorian extension has been demolished.

On the opposite side of Main Street there is a succession of handsome and interesting buildings, which must be chiefly responsible for "the appearance of extreme respectability" credited to Etwall in Bulmer's Trade Directory of 1895. The most outstanding among them are a group of three conjoined houses at the northern end (Nos. 82, 84 and 86 Main Street) known as Etwall Lawn, The Old Red House and The Limes respectively **(12)**. These are all Grade II listed buildings forming an impressive group, though it is thought that they were once two houses or even just a single house. Early Ordnance Survey plans show a simple "embryonic" park (or "lawn") to the east of them **(34)**, apparently created by the removal of old field boundaries, and now built over.

The Red House, 84, Main Street (SDDC collection).

"The Limes" looks early 19th century, while the Old Red House has a mid 18th century façade masking an older house. Etwall Lawn appears to have 17th century origins, largely masked by an early 19th century frontage in a Regency or "cottage ornee" style. It has a music room of c1930 with ceiling beams from the demolished Chaddesden Hall. These three enigmatic houses would repay further study and investigation. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries they were occupied by relatives of the Harpur Crewe family of Calke, whose family archive at the County Record Office may reveal more of their history.

Etwall Lawn, Main Street (SDDC collection).

A handful of other pre-Georgian houses lies scattered around the village. They include the timber framed houses known as Lawn Cottage **(13)** and 48-50 Main Street **(21)**. Other houses look as though they main contain secrets, e.g. 5, Church Hill, whose chimneystack placed off the ridge hints at potential early origins **(5)**.

Piers Ridding **(7)** and the Gables **(6)** both appear to contain 18th century work, with later remodelling. The Old Post Office at 42 Main Street **(23)** has an early 19th century frontage to an older house; its shaped gables are a village landmark. Other significant Georgian properties on the Main Street include the "Hawk and Buckle" public house at no. **22** on the plan (the buckled hawk was the Cotton family crest); no. 22 (Pear Tree Farm) at no. **29** on the plan; no. 56 (Blenheim Farmhouse) at no.**16** on the plan; and nos. 58 and 78 (**15** and **14** on the plan respectively). There is an attractive early 19th century villa on the corner of Sutton Lane known as "Wychwood" **(9)**.

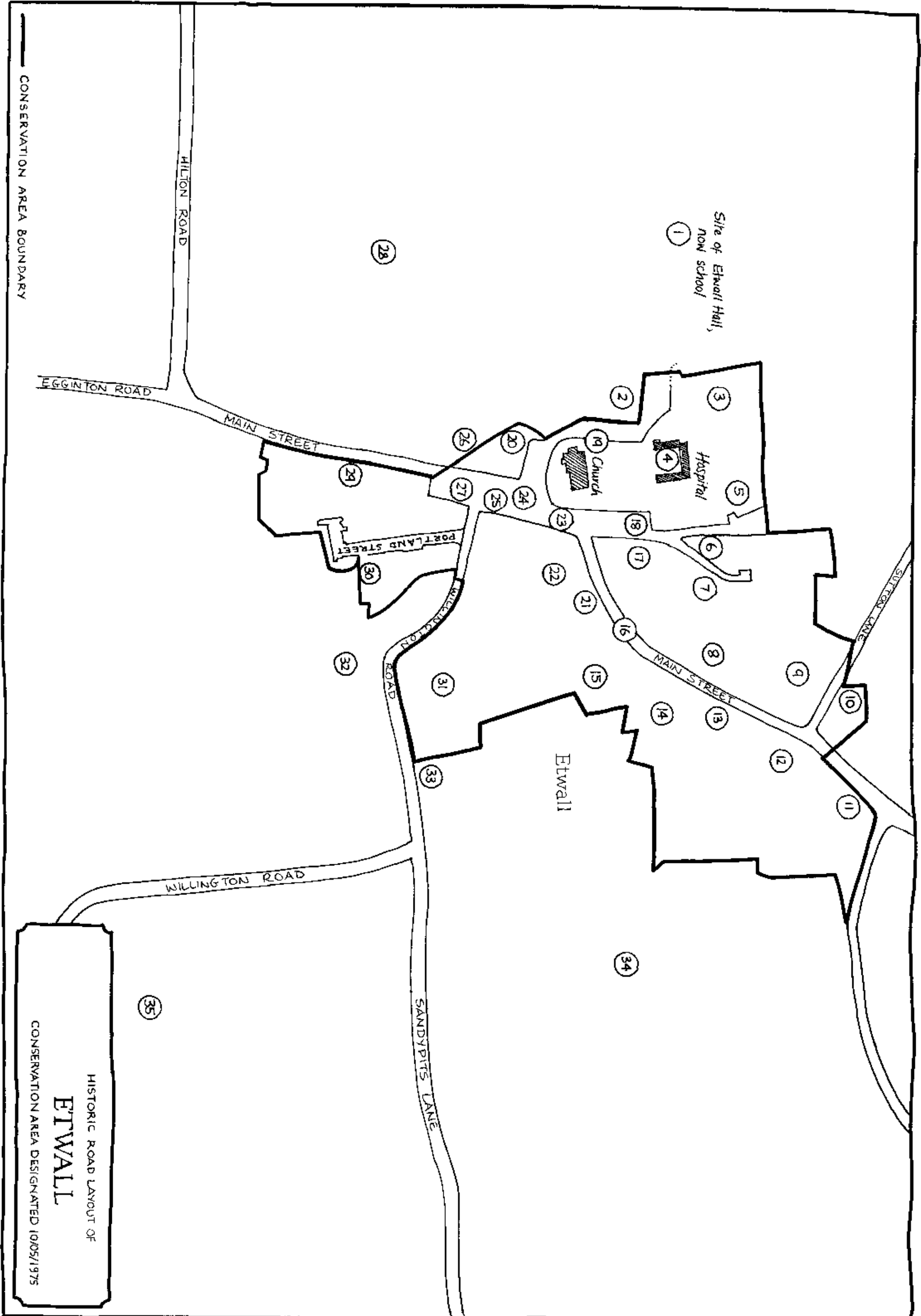*42 Main Street, a landmark property of the village (SDDC collection).*

Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the conservation area are few in number and modest in scale, a probable reflection of the village's stagnant population in the 19th century. They include "The Walnuts" **(10)** and "The Mount" **(11)** at the north end of the village, and the little parish room on Main Street **(8)**. The most evocative group of buildings from this period comprises the terrace of brickyard labourers' cottages nos. 25 – 41 Willington Road **(33)**, accompanied by the adjacent Methodist Chapel of 1883 **(31)**. The previous Methodist Chapel of 1838, originally built on land belonging to Blenheim Farm, survives at the back.

South of the village, outside the conservation area, there are some imposing Victorian residences on Egginton Road. These were built for wealthy gentlemen who could travel to Derby and Burton by train after the railway came to Etwall in 1878. Following the advent of the Railway, the Mickleover and Etwall Gas Light and Coke Company was established. The Gasworks and sidings were located adjacent to the railway bridge in Heage Lane, north of the village. Close by, at the junction of Heage Lane and the main road, was the Etwall Cheese Factory established c1874, on the site of the current Etwall Garage. Milk was collected from local farms and cheese was manufactured on a factory scale, replacing previous production on the farms.

Philip Heath and Terry Gotch .

If you require a copy of this information in another language, braille or large print format please contact the Customer Services Manager 01283 595784.

Site of Etwall Hall,
now school

① ① ③ ② ③

HILTON ROAD

EGGINTON ROAD

MAIN STREET

② ②⑥ ②⑨ ② ⑩ ⑲ Church ④ Hospital

②⑦ ②⑤ ②④ ②③ ⑤

PORTLAND STREET ③⑩ ⑱ ⑥

⑰ ⑦

②② ②① ⑯ ⑧

③② ③① ③ ⑮ ⑨ MAIN STREET

⑭ ⑬ ⑩

WILLINGTON ROAD

③③ ⑫

Etwall ⑪

SUTTON LANE

WILLINGTON ROAD

SANDYPITS LANE

③④

③⑤

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

HISTORIC ROAD LAYOUT OF

ETWALL

CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATED 10/05/1975