

# Thomas Roberts

1809 –1905

A brief view of his life  
and significant works



Victorian cameo  
no portrait discovered

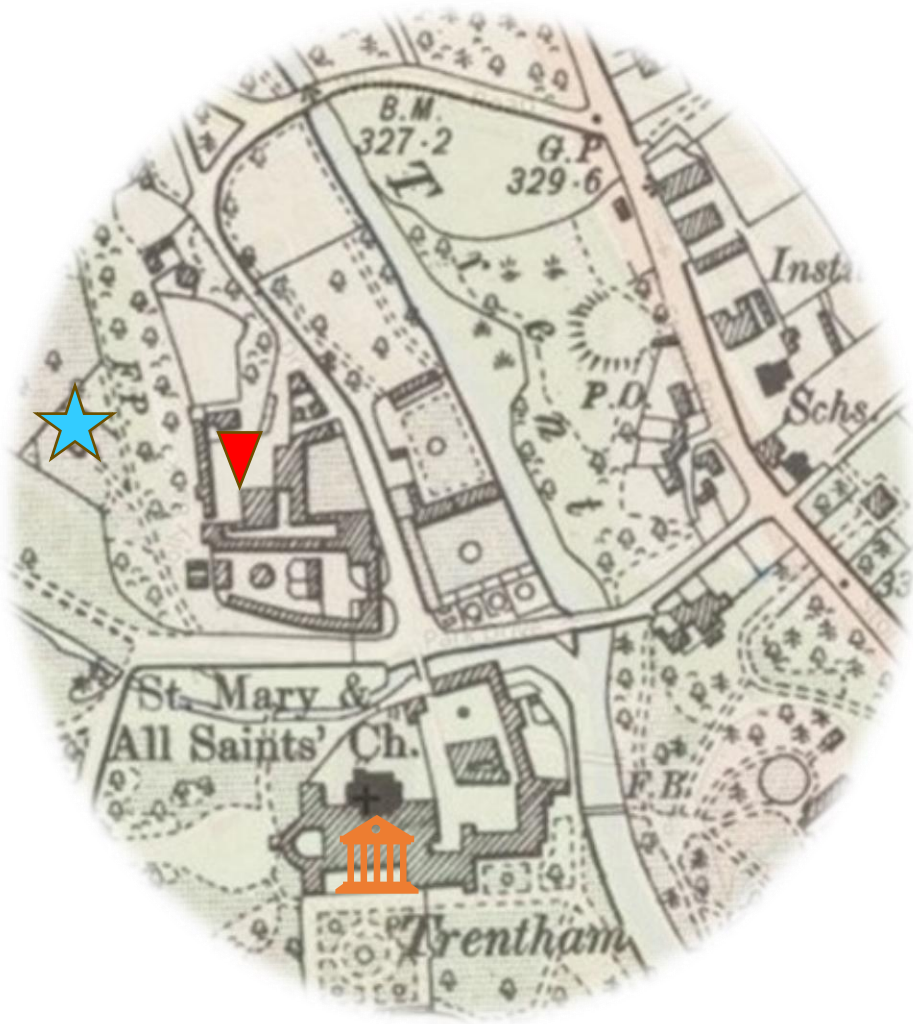
# Thomas Roberts' biography



No portrait of Thomas Roberts was found,  
but he lived in this house for many decades

- Thomas Roberts was born in Whitford near Holywell, Flintshire on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1809.
- He was apprenticed to an architect and builder in Holywell
- 1836 - work included involvement in the restoration and extension of Crewe Hall
- 1839 - appointed clerk of works for Trentham Hall while Charles Barry was still operating. Lived in New Inn Lane with his wife, Alice.
- 1840s - appointed surveyor to the estate and occupied this position under three Dukes of Sutherland.

# Thomas Roberts' biography continued



- The detached house known as the Surveyors House, overlooking the service yard, was his home for over 40 years.
- He was a staunch Wesleyan Methodist for over 70 years and supporter of this and similar worthy causes.
- He retired in 1897, when he was 87 years old.
- He died in Robin Hood's Bay in 1905, but was buried with his late wife in Trentham cemetery.
- His contribution to the built landscape of Trentham is his lasting legacy.

# Work beyond Trentham

All Thomas Roberts' work took place in and around Trentham and the Sutherland estate, apart from The Woburn Sands Literary and Scientific Institute Hall and Reading Room, which he designed in 1874.

It was built in four months at a cost of £607.

Roberts would later draw up plans for the Trentham Institute, which had a similar purpose.



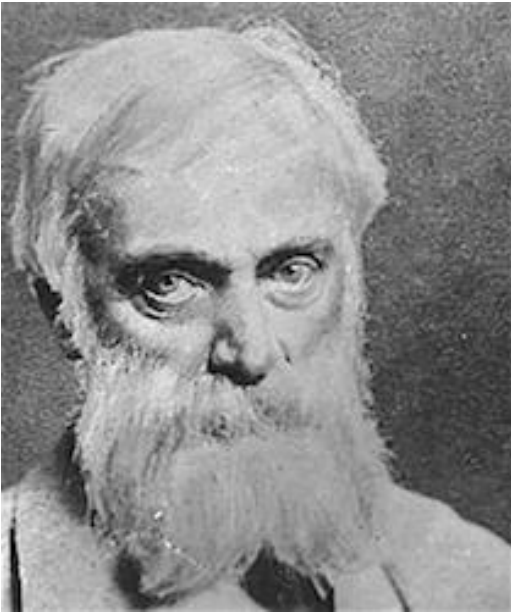
Woburn Sands Literary and Scientific Institute Hall and Reading Room



# Thomas Roberts – Estate surveyor

As the estate surveyor, Thomas Roberts was responsible for maintaining, modifying and designing many of the buildings on the Trentham Estate.

He worked closely with both Charles Barry and George Devey to ensure their designs were carried out as they wished by the clerk of works and builders.



George Devey



Charles Barry

The author of George Devey's biography describes how Devey worked with Thomas Roberts through correspondence and plans being sent backwards and forwards as amendments were made.

# Trentham estate cottages

Roberts had no formal training as an architect, but his work gradually expanded from surveying into design and planning. From the 1870s he was the estate's principal architect.

He had worked closely with George Devey to ensure his buildings were completed in the style that Devey preferred. A style that became reflected in Roberts' own designs.



These cottages on Longton Road, designed by Roberts for estate workers, display gables, tall chimneys and timber framing as decorative elements.

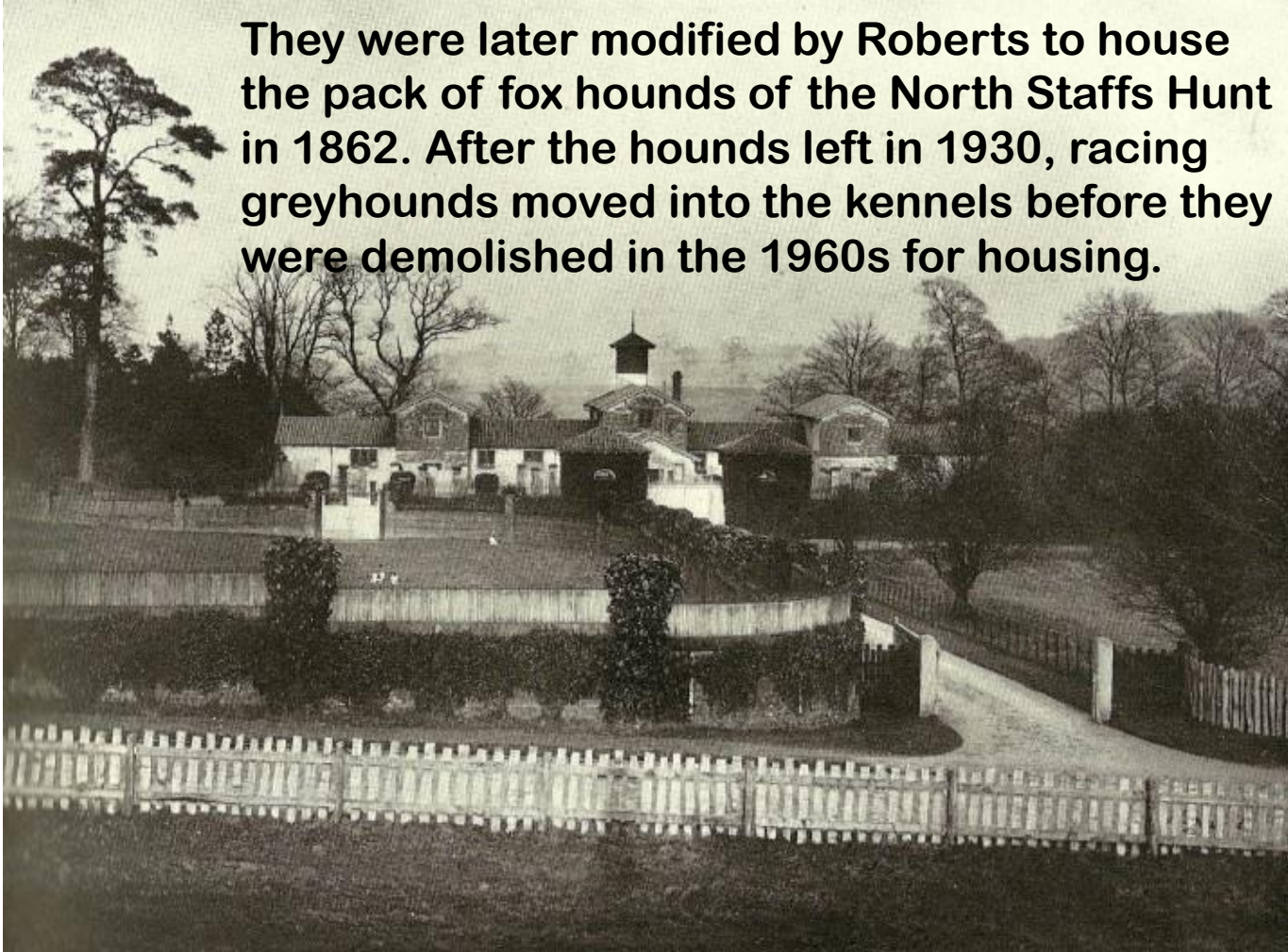
Elements that would be repeated in other distinctive estate buildings designed by Roberts in and around Trentham. Some have disappeared but many survive.



# Building Modifications - The Kennels

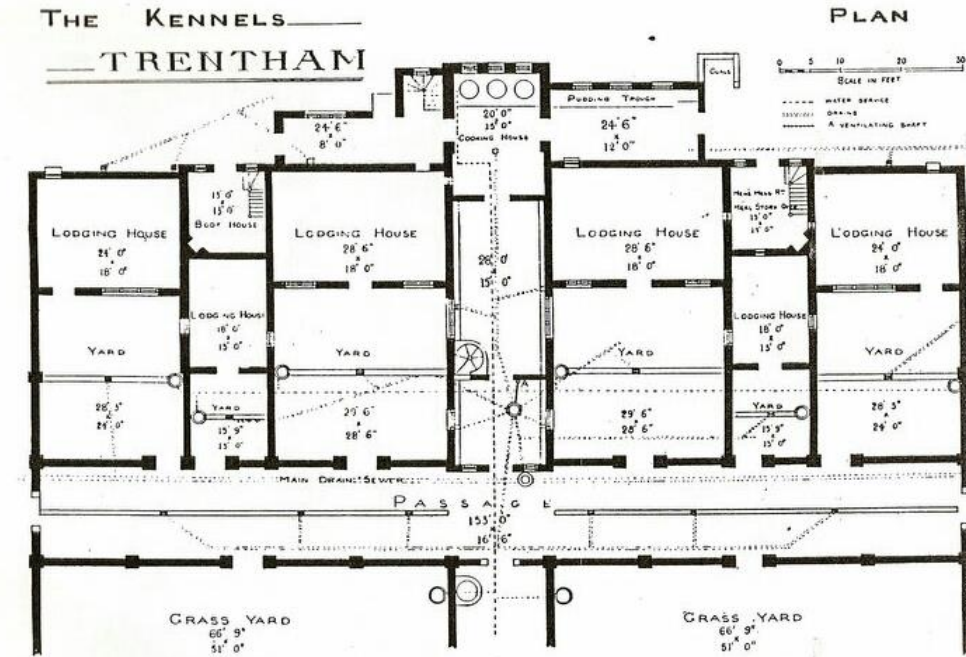
The Kennels, sited off Whitmore Road, were designed by Charles Barry in the 1840s, under instructions from the son of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke, without his permission.

They were later modified by Roberts to house the pack of fox hounds of the North Staffs Hunt in 1862. After the hounds left in 1930, racing greyhounds moved into the kennels before they were demolished in the 1960s for housing.



The Kennels  
In 1919

Kennels Cottage  
also  
Roberts' design





# Trentham Village – Hunt Stables

When the Trentham Inn on Stone Road closed in 1868 the North Staffordshire Hunt moved into the vacant premises.

The two stable blocks on either side accommodated the horses and the grooms lived in part of the former inn.

In the early 1890s the former inn and the stable blocks were rebuilt in the timber frame style then favoured by the estate.

Thomas Roberts was responsible for the design of this building and the adjacent Institute and school.



The building was demolished in 1965 for road widening



# Trentham Village – Trentham Institute

The Institute was erected in 1894 on the site of the old Trentham Inn.

Designed in the Kentish vernacular style by Thomas Roberts.

Aimed at the educational improvement of villagers by its benefactor, the 4th Duke of Sutherland, facilities included:

- \* billiard room
- \* stocked library and reading room
- \* Meeting and class and craft rooms
- \* kitchen and refreshment bar
- \* quarters for a tenant caretaker.

The building was demolished in 1965 for road widening.





# Trentham Village – Trentham School

Opened in 1877, a new school building for boys, was funded by the Duke of Sutherland on the Stone Road, between the Institute and the Mausoleum.

Designed by Thomas Roberts in the familiar Trentham style with timber features.

A girls' school was added in 1896 and extended in 1902 to accommodate infants.

The school closed in 1962.



Trentham School c 1965 shortly before demolition

# New building - Wesleyan Methodist Church

In the early 1880s the Duke agreed to a request from tenants for a local Methodist chapel and instructed Thomas Roberts, a Methodist himself, to prepare the plans. Building materials were procured from the estate workshops.



The foundation stone for the church was laid on 17th May 1883 and it was completed by the end of the year, having cost about £500 to build. In 1887 a separate school room was built again designed by Roberts.



# Estate buildings – \*Hargreaves Lodge, Whitmore Road

The lodge, located at the corner of Whitmore Road and the carriage drive through \*Hargreaves Wood, was designed by Roberts and built in 1896.

\* Sometimes named Highgreaves





# Estate buildings – St Luke's Church Tittensor

St. Luke's church was designed by Thomas Roberts. The foundation stone was laid on 18 June 1880 by Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland in the presence of the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII.

The church was consecrated by the Bishop of Lichfield in the presence of the Prince of Wales on 27 December 1881.





# Estate buildings – Tittensor Vicarage

Tittensor Vicarage was initially the Schoolmasters House (designed by George Devey) and built at the same time as the school in 1861. With the building of St Luke's Church, it was decided to convert the building into a vicarage and the designs for its extension and modifications were undertaken by Roberts in 1881- 1882.



The building was sold in the 1919 Sutherland Auction and purchased by the Vicar and Churchwardens of St Luke's Church.



# Estate Buildings – Tittensor New Manor House

This building was originally known as Tittensor Cottage and designed by George Devey in the late 1850s.

By the early 1870s Thomas Roberts had drawn up several plans for rebuilding the property and the design selected involved costs of over £3,000.

The property had seven bedrooms, various family rooms, a billiards room and several stables and other outbuildings.

It was occupied by Dr Hayes and his family for over 40 years and purchased by them in the 1914 Sutherland Auction.



# Tittensor Chase House

This substantial property was built in 1856/7 and looks like an Elizabethan Manor House.

George Devey drew up plans for this property but his biography suggests that his plans were not used and that Thomas Roberts was responsible for the design of the property that was built.

Initially Tittensor Chase House was occupied by George Loch the Estate's Land Agent and subsequently became the home of Cromartie and Millicent Leveson-Gower, until he became the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Sutherland on his father's death.





# Tittensor Chase House continued

Tittensor Chase House was sold in the 1914 Sutherland Auction when it was described as “one of the most beautiful estates in England” and consisted of 546 acres with various properties and farms as well as the main house itself.

It was purchased by Mr Gresham Copeland, a partner in the Copeland Spode pottery business for £18,900.

Today the building is converted into residential apartments.





# Estate buildings – The Dairy and Dairy House

## Thomas Roberts' last major assignment

In the 1890s plans were drawn up to replace the old dairy designed by Charles Barry and located in the service yard with new premises, located inside the perimeter of Trentham Park.

Designed by Thomas Roberts the plans aimed to improve conditions for the production of butter and cheese for the estate and to provide accommodation for the dairy maids

The striking octagonal dairy with distinctive timbering had a slate shelf running round the interior and an exterior verandah.

The adjoining dairy house included rooms for churning and butter making, with a kitchen, scullery, pantry and sitting room, with bedrooms on the first floor.



This image shows the Dairy House after it had been extended in the 1920s



**Produced for Heritage Open Day 2025  
By the Trentham Heritage Project  
Thank you for watching**

