



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Chastleton

Introduction: Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings



Chastleton House (left) with its entrance archway and the parish church tower (right).

Chastleton is a rural parish in the Cotswold hills, lying almost mid-way between Moreton-in-Marsh (Glos.) and Chipping Norton, and projecting into neighbouring Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, which surround it on three sides.¹ The small village, whose name refers probably to a nearby Iron-Age hillfort,² is now best known for Chastleton House, an imposing Jacobean mansion built for the wealthy lawyer Walter Jones (d. 1632) and acquired by the National Trust in 1991. The house's predecessor was owned and occupied by Robert Catesby (d. 1605), the leader of the Gunpowder Plot. A hamlet at Brookend in the north of the parish belonged to a separate manor owned in the Middle Ages by Eynsham abbey, but was largely deserted in the 15th century. The whole parish was enclosed early (in 1596), after which new outlying farmsteads were established in the former open fields. The economy remained predominantly agricultural until after the Second World War, when the small population failed to grow and the parish's picturesque stone houses increasingly attracted affluent incomers.

¹ This account was written in 2023–4.

² Possibly 'farm or settlement by a stone-heap': below (settlement: prehist. to medieval).

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT, AND BUILDINGS

Parish Boundaries

Chastleton parish projects north-westwards from the main body of the county as far as the Four Shire Stone, which until boundary changes in 1931 marked the meeting-point of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire. The present-day stone, an 18th-century limestone ashlar pillar erected before 1779 and restored in 2022,³ replaced a predecessor mentioned from the 16th century.⁴ Earlier markers included a ‘guild barrow’ mentioned in 969, where an assembly of the four shires met in the late 11th century,⁵ and possibly ‘Cetta’s tree’ (mentioned in 775).⁶ Five parishes still meet there,⁷ the converging boundaries resulting apparently from a late Anglo-Saxon division of common pasture.⁸ The parish’s inclusion in Oxfordshire (by 1086)⁹ most likely reflected early tenurial links, connected, perhaps, with a supposed 8th-century grant of land in Chastleton, Cornwell, Salford and elsewhere to Evesham abbey (Worcs.). Some Chastleton and Cornwell holdings remained intermixed into the 11th and 12th centuries.¹⁰

Given that intermixture, Chastleton’s later parish boundaries were perhaps only finally fixed in the late 12th or 13th century, and in the 19th covered 1,769 a. (716 ha).¹¹ The long north-eastern boundary with Little Compton (which was transferred from Gloucestershire to Warwickshire in 1844)¹² runs south-east from the Four Shire Stone along field boundaries and a short stretch of stream, indentations suggesting that it originally followed medieval open-field furlongs. Its course runs broadly parallel to the main Worcester–London road, which lies mostly just outside the parish. The short south-eastern boundary with Cornwell follows a prehistoric ridgeway which survives as a metalled road, while the long south-western boundary bordering Adlestrop (Glos.) and Evenlode (Glos.,

³ NHLE, no. 1303562 (accessed Oct. 2023); S. Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779), 556; www.fourshirestone.org.uk (accessed Oct. 2023). For views of c.1805, Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. a 42, ff. 2–3.

⁴ Leland, *Itin.* ed. Toulmin Smith, IV, 81; W. Camden (trans. P. Holland), *Britannia* (1610), Oxon. 4; R. Plot, *Natural History of Oxfordshire* (1677), 335.

⁵ Sawyer S.1325 (*gild beorh*); DB, f. 175v. (*Ildeberga*); R.C. Van Caenegem (ed.), *Eng. Lawsuits Wm I to Ric. I, Vol. I* (Selden Soc. 106, 1990), 29–30 (*Ildeberg*). Cf. G.B. Grundy, *Saxon Charters and Field Names of Gloucestershire* (1936), 128; A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, I (1964), 219; D. Hooke, *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England* (1998), 88–9; VCH Worcs. I, 254.

⁶ Sawyer S.109 (*cettantreo*); Hooke, *Landscape*, 87–8.

⁷ OS Maps 1:2500, Glos. XV.15 (1885 edn); 1:25000, sheet 45 (2005 edn), the former showing five more ancient parishes converging nearby.

⁸ Henmarsh: below (landscape).

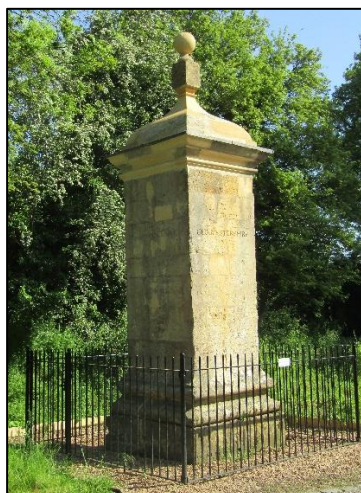
⁹ DB, ff. 156v.–157v.

¹⁰ Below, landownership; Cornwell, landownership; above, vol. overview.

¹¹ OS *Area Bk* (1881); estimated earlier at 1,640 a. (*Census*, 1831–41). For boundaries, OHC, tithe map; OS Maps 6", Oxon. VII, XIII and XIV (1885 and later edns); 1:25000, sheet 45 (2005 edn).

¹² Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 170; II, 441.

formerly Worcs.) returns to the Four Shire Stone along lanes and field boundaries.¹³ The Adlestrop section (in the south) was described in an undated late Anglo-Saxon charter, and the Evenlode section in charters of 775 and 969.¹⁴ Evenlode was transferred from Worcestershire to Gloucestershire in 1931, thus removing the Four Shire Stone's connection with Worcestershire,¹⁵ while Chastleton's own boundaries remained unaltered in 2024.¹⁶



(Left) The parish of Chastleton c.1850. Source: *Oxon. Atlas*.

(Right) The Four Shire Stone.

Landscape

The parish rises from 127 m. at the Four Shire Stone in the north-west to 239 m. at Chastleton Barrow in the south-east, with much of Brookend lying at 130–50 m., and Chastleton village at 150–75 metres.¹⁷ The lowest ground in the north-west, called ‘Cenep’s marsh’ in 775,¹⁸ forms part of a much larger tract of sandy heath and clayey marsh formerly known as Henmarsh (‘marsh frequented by moorhens’), which was shared as common pasture by surrounding estates and parishes until each claimed its own portion in the late Anglo-Saxon period.¹⁹ That had apparently occurred by 969, when four successive boundary stones were mentioned along the northernmost part of the Chastleton–Evenlode boundary.²⁰ The parish’s central part (including much of Brookend) is situated on Jurassic Charmouth mudstone, with patches of clay, sand, gravel, and alluvium, the last in a shallow stream valley. Chastleton village and Hill Farm are both located on a spring line, where mudstones

¹³ For roads and lane, above, vol. overview (communications); below (communications).

¹⁴ Sawyer S.109; S.1325; S.1548; Grundy, *Saxon Charters*, 22–4, 126–31; Hooke, *Landscape*, 87–9.

¹⁵ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 173; II, 478; above.

¹⁶ www.oxfordshire.gov.uk (admin. areas map) (accessed Jan. 2024).

¹⁷ OS Map 1:25000, sheet 45 (2005 edn).

¹⁸ Sawyer S.109 (*cenepes mor*); Grundy, *Saxon Charters*, 126–7; Hooke, *Landscape*, 87–8.

¹⁹ Smith, *Place-Names of Glos.* I, 230; Hooke, *Landscape*, 77; C. Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495–1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages* (2012), 58, 61.

²⁰ Sawyer, S.1325; Grundy, *Saxon Charters*, 128; Hooke, *Landscape*, 88.

of Charmouth, Dyrham, and Whitby formations meet narrow bands of marlstone and Clypeus Grit, on ground which rises steeply from 150 to 190 metres. In the far south and east the land climbs further onto Chastleton Hill (above 200 m.), where Jurassic Chipping Norton limestone has long been quarried for wall stones, roadstone, and roof slates.²¹

The parish is drained by an unnamed stream rising from the springs at Hill Farm and in Chastleton village, which flows west through Brookend to the river Evenlode in Evenlode parish.²² The stream was dammed (probably in the 12th century) for a millpond close to the Evenlode boundary, which survives as earthworks,²³ and in 1487 (when the stream needed scouring) a stretch of it was known as Westheyes brook.²⁴ The digging of a new watercourse (flowing from Stainsbridge brook into a meadow called Forty Acres) was allowed by the lord of Chastleton in 1597.²⁵ Springs, ponds, and wells were important from an early date. One of the springs south-west of the village was presumably the ‘hart well’ mentioned in 755 and 969, lying in a valley called ‘hart combe’ (modern Harcombe),²⁶ while water conduits are recorded from 1655, some of them still surviving on the hillside above Chastleton House.²⁷ A ‘town pool’ mentioned in 1765 was dredged in 1834 but drained in 1871, to make way for the village school.²⁸ Spring water was piped to the outlying Chastleton Glebe (in Brookend) under an agreement of 1914, and to most estate properties in the village by the 1930s, although some outlying farms were then still ‘inadequately supplied’.²⁹ Mains water arrived in the parish in the 1950s.³⁰

Communications

The parish is skirted by two ancient long-distance routes, of which the main road from Worcester and Moreton-in-Marsh to Chipping Norton and Oxford (the modern A44) was

²¹ OS Map 1:25000, sheet 45 (2005 edn); Geol. Surv. Map 1:50000 (solid and drift), sheet 218 (2007 edn). For quarrying, below, econ. hist. (trades).

²² OS Map 1:25000, sheet 45 (2005 edn).

²³ Below, econ. hist. (milling).

²⁴ BL, Harl. Roll B13.

²⁵ OHC, E24/1/2D/7–8; below, econ. hist. (trades).

²⁶ Sawyer S.109 (*heortuuelle*); S.1325 (*heort wellan*); S.1548 (*hertes cumbes welle*); Smith, *Place-Names of Glos.* I, 212, claiming the spring in question was in Evenlode; *pace* PN Oxon. II, 341–2, offering an erroneous etymology. For Harcombe, OHC, E24/1/1D/8 (Harckum in 1596).

²⁷ OHC, E24/1/3D/6 (Conduite Close in 1655); Bodl. MS C17:49 (199), with a conduit marked in 1730; National Trust Heritage Records, 151030*1/MNA130892 (accessed online Nov. 2023).

²⁸ OHC, E24/1/6D/16–18; I. Hilton (ed.), *The Chastleton Diaries: Change and Continuity in the Nineteenth Century* (2011), 29; M. Dickins, *A History of Chastleton, Oxfordshire* (1938), 40; cf. OHC, tithe map, showing it next to Fox End.

²⁹ OHC, Acc. 5428, Box 48/37–41; *ibid.* Acc. 5576, Box 8/16; *Sale Cat., Chastleton Estate* (1936): copy in *ibid.* E24/1/1D/78. Home Fm drew its supply from a pond.

³⁰ OHC, RDC9/2/A5/3, p. 25; RDC9/2/A5/4, pp. 117, 121.

turnpiked in 1731 and disturnpiked in 1877.³¹ In the 10th century it formed part of the salt-distribution network from Droitwich (Worcs.),³² passing close to the present-day Four Shire Stone, and probably it had Roman origins, connecting a Romano-British nucleated settlement at Chipping Norton with that at Dorn (Glos.) on the Fosse Way.³³ Just outside the parish it intersects the modern A436, part of a Romanised prehistoric ridgeway which forms the south-eastern parish boundary with Cornwell. Called the ‘king’s army street’ and the ‘royal way to Northampton’ in Anglo-Saxon charters, that was later part of a route from Stow-on-the-Wold (Glos.) to Banbury,³⁴ the stretch from Stow to its junction with the Worcester road being turnpiked in 1755 and disturnpiked in 1877.³⁵



The pattern of roads around Chastleton, showing principally the former turnpike roads from Worcester and Moreton-in-Marsh to Chipping Norton and Oxford (north-west to south-east) and from Stow-on-the-Wold to Salford Hill (south-west to north-east), the last forming part of a longer route north-east to Banbury. Source: Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767).

Chastleton village itself lies at the intersection of two minor metalled roads which each connect with the Worcester road, one of them running eastwards towards Little Compton, and the other (called the churchway in 1596)³⁶ continuing northwards through Brookend, where a bridge over the stream may have existed by the 13th century.³⁷ Both

³¹ Oxford and Gloucester Roads Act, 4 Geo. II, c. 23; Annual Turnpike Acts Continuance Act, 1871, 34 & 35 Vic. c. 115; *Oxon. Atlas*, 102–3. For a 19th-cent. milestone, NHLE, no. 1053336.

³² Sawyer S.1325 (*sealt stræte*); Hooke, *Landscape*, 88; Blair, *A-S. Oxon.* 86; *Oxon. Atlas*, 28–9; above, vol. overview (communic).s).

³³ HER, PRN 29896; J. Timby, *Excavations at Kingscote and Wycomb, Gloucestershire* (1998), 390; *VCH Oxon.* XXI (forthcoming, Chipping Norton); info. (2023) from Paul Booth.

³⁴ Sawyer S.1340 (*cynges ferdstræte*); S.1548 (*regiam stratam de norhamtun*); *VCH Glos.* VI, 8; *VCH Oxon.* XXI (forthcoming, vol. overview); above, vol. overview (communic).s).

³⁵ Glos. and Warws. Roads Act, 28 Geo. II, c. 47; Annual Turnpike Acts Continuance Act, 1871, 34 & 35 Vic. c. 115; *Oxon. Atlas*, 102–3.

³⁶ OHC, E24/1/1D/8.

³⁷ Ibid. Acc. 5428, Box 1/36, no. 6 (Brookend bridge, 1779); cf. *ibid.* E24/1/2D/8 (Stainsbridge (i.e. stone bridge), 1597; *Rot. Hund.* II, 729, listing a Brookend tenant named Walter ‘at the bridge’ (*ad pontem*).

those roads were mapped in 1767 (the Little Compton one as a minor field path), along with a surviving track running south-eastwards to Cornwell via Chastleton Barrow.³⁸ The road leading into the village from the south may have originally taken a more direct course across the hillside opposite Chastleton House, being perhaps diverted to its present more circuitous (but slightly less steep) route during the Middle Ages.³⁹ The surviving metalled road from Kingham, which forms part the parish's western boundary, formed a late Anglo-Saxon 'beggar's way' and was called a 'street' in 949, while a branch heading west along an unmade track towards Evenlode was called a 'path' in 949 and Conygree Lane in 1775.⁴⁰ A track towards Evenlode past Harcombe House was called 'Typpylane' in 1596,⁴¹ and was perhaps the 'old way' noted on the Evenlode parish boundary in 969.⁴²

The main Worcester–Oxford road was a coaching route by the 1790s,⁴³ and by 1931 it was used by motorised buses between Chipping Norton and Moreton-in-Marsh, operated by The City of Oxford Motor Services Ltd. The nearest stop, however, was in Little Compton.⁴⁴ A weekly community bus between Chipping Norton and Oddington (Glos.) stopped in Chastleton village in 2024.⁴⁵ No resident carriers were recorded, although c.1900 one farmer was also a haulier.⁴⁶ Post was delivered by 1847 through Chipping Norton, switching by 1854 to Moreton-in-Marsh,⁴⁷ which was the nearest money order and telegraph office in 1883.⁴⁸ A sub-post office was opened in Chastleton village in 1908, run by the Skelchers, who later combined it with a shop. That closed in 1970, after which the parish had no post office.⁴⁹

Population

Chastleton's population has never been large, often falling below 100 people, and very rarely exceeding 200. In 1086 four estates had 17 recorded tenants between them, each of whom may have represented a household.⁵⁰ By 1279 there were at least 30 households (15 at

³⁸ Jeffreys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OS Map 1:25000, sheet 45 (2005 edn). The Cornwell route continues as a metalled lane outside the parish.

³⁹ On topographical grounds; and see below (settlement).

⁴⁰ Sawyer S.550 (*stige, stræt*); S.1548 (*lodreswei*); Grundy, *Saxon Charters*, 23; Smith, *Place-Names of Glos.* I, 212–13; OS Map 1:25000, sheet 45 (2005 edn).

⁴¹ OHC, E24/1/1D/8; cf. Jeffreys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OHC, tithe map. A lane from Brookend to Evenlode was also mapped in 1730: Bodl. MS C17:49 (199).

⁴² Sawyer S.1325 (*ealdan weg*); Hooke, *Landscape*, 88.

⁴³ *Univ. Brit. Dir.* (1793–8), II, 557.

⁴⁴ *City of Oxford and District Motor Bus Services: Motor Bus Timetable* (1931 edn): copy in OHC.

⁴⁵ <https://bustimes.org/services/v8-oddingtons-salford-chipping-norton> (accessed Feb. 2024).

⁴⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1895–1907 edns).

⁴⁷ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–54 edns).

⁴⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883).

⁴⁹ Smith, 'Post Offices'; below, econ. hist. (trades).

⁵⁰ DB, ff. 156v., 161; below, landownership.

Chastleton and 15 at Brookend),⁵¹ although only 23 taxpayers were recorded in 1316 and 19 in 1327, presumably omitting some householders who fell below the tax threshold.⁵² In 1377 the parish had 46 adult poll taxpayers, suggesting an actual population approaching 120,⁵³ but over the following century Brookend was reduced from 14 households to only four, as tenants moved away and houses were abandoned.⁵⁴ By 1523 the parish had only ten taxpayers, reduced to eight (following changes in taxation policy) in 1577.⁵⁵

Some 13 households were mentioned at enclosure in 1596,⁵⁶ slightly fewer than the 16 assessed for hearth tax in 1662.⁵⁷ In 1642 the obligatory protestation oath was sworn by 42 men aged 18 or over (suggesting an adult population of over 80),⁵⁸ and 83 adult parishioners were estimated in 1676.⁵⁹ From c.20 in 1738 and 32 in 1781,⁶⁰ the number of houses increased to 37 (occupied by 218 people) in 1801, after which the recorded population reached a peak of 250 in 42 houses in 1821, before declining steadily to 218 in 43 houses in 1861. A sharper fall to only 149 people and 36 houses by 1901 presumably reflected agricultural depression, while a steady recovery to 182 (in 43 houses) by 1921 was followed by a renewed decline to 101 (44 houses) in 1991. Thereafter Chastleton was grouped with Cornwell for census purposes,⁶¹ although a parish headcount in 2001 found 121 people living in 57 houses.⁶²

Settlement

Prehistoric to Medieval

Evidence for Neolithic activity survives on the southern slopes of Chastleton Hill, where a portal dolmen and a long barrow form part of a wider group of monuments erected alongside the prehistoric ridgeway forming the parish boundary with Cornwell.⁶³ Place names suggest

⁵¹ *Rot. Hund.* II, 729, including Chastleton's lord and Oseney abbey's landholding.

⁵² TNA, E 179/161/8–9. Chastleton and Brookend are not separately listed.

⁵³ *Poll Taxes 1377–81*, ed. Fenwick, II, 291.

⁵⁴ Below, econ. hist. (medieval); social hist. (Middle Ages).

⁵⁵ TNA, E 179/161/170; E 179/162/341.

⁵⁶ Below (settlement).

⁵⁷ TNA, E 179/255/4.

⁵⁸ *Prot. Retns.*, 82.

⁵⁹ *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 422.

⁶⁰ *Secker's Visit.* 40; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 327, p. 98.

⁶¹ *Census*, 1801–1991; below, econ. hist. (since 1800). From 2001 Chastleton and Cornwell were enumerated together: *ibid.* 2001–21, giving combined populations of 187 in 2001, 153 in 2011, and 145 in 2021.

⁶² West Oxon. parish headcounts 2001, archived at <https://web.archive.org> (accessed Nov. 2023).

⁶³ HER, PRN 1470; 2626; NHLE, nos. 1008403–4; D. Benson and P. Fasham, 'Field Work at Chastleton', *Oxoniensia* 37 (1972), 1–9. For the better-known Whispering Knights portal dolmen 4 km further along the ridgeway, *VCH Oxon.* XXI (forthcoming, Little Rollright).

that other prehistoric or Anglo-Saxon mounds perhaps existed elsewhere in the parish,⁶⁴ including at Kitebrook (possibly 'kite barrow'), which was recorded as 'Kytebarwe' in 1433 and 'Kyghteborroughe' in 1596,⁶⁵ unless the 'barrow' there was instead the natural hillock on which Kitebrook House stands.⁶⁶ In the early Iron Age a roughly circular hillfort (known later as Chastleton Barrow) was constructed on the summit of Chastleton Hill, overlooking the ridgeway. That encloses an area of c.1.4 ha with two entrances (north-west and south-east), and its single bank, apparently without a ditch, stands up to 4 m. high, built of limestone rubble faced with a drystone wall.⁶⁷ Evidence for Romano-British activity is so far limited to a few mainly surface finds of 3rd- and 4th-century coins and pottery, despite the presence of two long-distance routes used in the Roman period.⁶⁸

Chastleton Barrow's stone-faced rampart was evidently still visible in the early 8th century, when a charter referred to it as the 'old stone-heap fort'.⁶⁹ Chastleton's place name, also first documented in the 8th century, may refer to the same feature, its meaning possibly being 'farm (or settlement) by a stone-heap'.⁷⁰ A late 9th-century coin recovered from a trench dug in the lawn immediately north of Chastleton House suggests some pre-Conquest activity in the area of the later village, where a late Anglo-Saxon farm or hamlet may have developed beside a routeway on a spring line.⁷¹

By the late 11th century several small estates existed within the later parish, some of which were 'waste' and lacked tenants or settlement.⁷² Most inhabitants presumably lived in and around Chastleton itself, where the putative late Anglo-Saxon farm or hamlet evolved into a small Norman village with a church (founded probably before 1100), an adjacent manor house, and a village street.⁷³ By then it was often known as 'Chastleton in Henmarsh' (from the large common adjoining), or as 'Chastleton Bardulf' after its 12th- and 13th-century

⁶⁴ e.g. *lafercan beorh* ('lark barrow') and *lytlan beorhe* ('little barrow') on the Evenlode boundary in 969: Sawyer S.1325; Hooke, *Landscape*, 88–9.

⁶⁵ BL, Harl. Roll B1; OHC, E24/1/1D/8. For the 'guild barrow', above (boundaries).

⁶⁶ Cf. M. Gelling and A. Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (2000), 145–51.

⁶⁷ HER, PRN 1468; NHLE, no. 1008402; VCH Oxon. II, 312–13; E.T. Leeds, 'Chastleton Camp, Oxfordshire, a hill-fort of the early Iron Age', *Antiq. Jnl* 11 (1931), 382–98; T. Copeland, *Iron Age and Roman Wychwood* (2002), 24–8, 43–5. For an erroneous antiquarian association with Danish Vikings and a battle fought in 1016, R. Plot, *Natural History of Oxfordshire* (1677), 335; Skelton, *Antiq. Oxon.* 2.

⁶⁸ Above (communics); VCH Oxon. I, 334; HER, PRN 1469; 9502; PAS website (accessed Nov. 2023), NARC-F4BD58; NARC-F4A680; SMA 25 (1995), 76–7.

⁶⁹ Sawyer S.84 (*aldan cestelbyrig*); Hooke, *Landscape*, 98–9. It was later obscured by earth and vegetation.

⁷⁰ Old English *ceastel* + *tūn*: Sawyer S.112; M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* (1997 edn), 153; V. Watts, *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (2004), 127. For considerable later confusion with Old English *ceaster* + *tūn*, giving medieval forms of the name indistinguishable from those of places called Chesterton, *PN Oxon.* II, 341.

⁷¹ SMA 25 (1995), 76–7; above (landscape; communics).

⁷² DB, ff. 156v., 157, 157v., 161; below, landownership; econ. hist.

⁷³ Below, landownership (Chastleton); relig. hist.

resident lords.⁷⁴ Thomas ‘on the corner’, taxed in 1327, possibly lived on the right-angled bend west of Chastleton House, if so suggesting that the lane from the south may already have been diverted.⁷⁵ Some tenants in 1279 were similarly named from the locations of their houses ‘at the spring’ and ‘at the ash tree’,⁷⁶ while Roger ‘up the hill’, taxed in 1316, lived perhaps near the later Hill Farm, where there are springs.⁷⁷ The rectory house, mentioned in 1459, stood presumably on its later site east of the church,⁷⁸ opposite which (on the lane’s south side) was a farmhouse belonging to Osney abbey.⁷⁹



Settlement earthworks of the medieval village of Brookend survive in the fields between Brookend House (left), standing on or near the site of the medieval manor house, and Little Brook House (right), formerly known as Kitebrook End Farm. A bridge may already have carried the lane across the stream (right) by 1279. Source: OHC, tithe map (1842).

Brookend, so called by 1316 presumably from the stream there,⁸⁰ originated on marsh and heath in the north of the parish, which was colonized for farmland and settlement both before and after its grant to Eynsham abbey c.1153.⁸¹ Most of the abbey’s 13 villeins in 1279 lived probably in the small village of Brookend, which grew up either side of a holloway near a bridge over the stream.⁸² Between 1363 and 1469 the settlement shrank from 14 households to only four, however, leaving earthworks in fields next to Brookend House, which stands on or close to the site of a manor house documented as such from the 15th

⁷⁴ *PN Oxon.* II, 341; below, landownership (Chastleton).

⁷⁵ *in Angulo*: TNA, E 179/161/9; above (communics).

⁷⁶ *de Fonte, de Fraxino*: *Rot. Hund.* II, 729.

⁷⁷ ‘Hupthehulle’: TNA, E 179/161/8.

⁷⁸ *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 330–2; below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

⁷⁹ Below, landownership (other estates).

⁸⁰ *Feudal Aids*, IV, 165; *PN Oxon.* II, 341. A potentially earlier reference occurs in an undated charter: *Oseney Cart.* IV, p. 327.

⁸¹ Below, landownership (Brookend); econ. hist. (agric. landscape). For studies of medieval Brookend, *Eynsham Cart.* II, xxv–ix; T. Lloyd, ‘Some documentary sidelights on the deserted Oxfordshire village of Brookend’, *Oxoniensia* 29/30 (1964/5), 116–28; C. Dyer, ‘Villages in crisis: social dislocation and desertion, 1370–1520’, in C. Dyer and R. Jones (eds), *Deserted Villages Revisited* (2010), 28–45; C. Dyer, ‘The Life of a Medieval Village, and its End: New Light on Brookend in Chastleton, Oxfordshire’ (forthcoming: draft article kindly shared by the author).

⁸² Above (communics). Tenants included Walter at the bridge (*ad pontem*): *Rot. Hund.* II, 729.

century but perhaps established much earlier.⁸³ A separate freehold farm or hamlet on Chastleton manor was known by 1395 as 'Foukenend', after the Fulk or Fouk family. That possibly adjoined Evenlode west of Brookend, where an isolated watermill (built probably in the 12th century) was last mentioned in 1489.⁸⁴

Development from 1500

At enclosure in 1596 the parish had 13 inhabited houses and cottages, nine of them at Chastleton and four in Brookend, with perhaps ten further empty dwellings.⁸⁵ Chastleton House replaced the earlier manor house in 1607–12 (on the same site), while the Greenwood family's large 'mansion' (a successor to the Osney abbey farmhouse) stood almost opposite across the lane, until its demolition in the 1840s. Brookend manor house (later called Brookend House or Place) had resident lords in the late 16th and early 17th century,⁸⁶ while nearby Castle Cottage, which stands within the Brookend village earthworks, was perhaps the farmhouse known as Widdowes' (after its tenant) in 1637.⁸⁷

Hill Farm, on high ground south-east of Chastleton village, was established by 1667, and perhaps occupies a medieval site. In 1697 it was 'new erected', and in 1739 it was called Hill House.⁸⁸ Other outlying farmsteads were established in the former open fields soon after enclosure. A 'mansion' at Brookend (called Morehall in 1647) was probably the later Grove Farm, named from an adjacent wood,⁸⁹ while the 17th-century Durham's Farm in Brookend was so named by 1754, after a family present in the parish by 1523.⁹⁰ Middle and Lower Brookend Farms both existed by 1730, the former probably to be identified with a farmhouse called Whitehill in 1708, and the latter succeeding the medieval watermill.⁹¹ A few new houses beside the Worcester road included the first Kitebrook House (soon after 1780) and a pair of cottages near the Four Shire Stone (shortly before 1799),⁹² while Chastleton

⁸³ Below, landownership (Brookend); econ. hist. (medieval); social hist. (Middle Ages); HER, PRN 28438. A mistaken tradition of a separate deserted medieval village near Grove Farm stems from confusion with Grove Ash in Sandford St Martin: Lloyd, 'Brookend', 127–8; VCH Oxon. XI, 176; *pace* I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–1518* (1897), I, 328–9; M. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England* (1954), 380.

⁸⁴ TNA, CP 25/1/191/24, no. 48; below, landownership (other estates); econ. hist. (milling). For Fulk or Fouk, Oxon. *Fines*, p. 123; *Oseney Cart.* IV, p. 328; *Feudal Aids*, IV, 161; TNA, E 179/161/8.

⁸⁵ OHC, E24/1/1D/8.

⁸⁶ Below, landownership (Chastleton; Brookend; other estates).

⁸⁷ OHC, E24/1/2D/17; below (built character); landownership (Brookend; other estates).

⁸⁸ OHC, E24/1/1D/55–6; E24/1/6D/1–2; above (prehist. to medieval).

⁸⁹ OHC, E24/1/3D/5; E24/1/3D/13; cf. *ibid.* tithe award and map, locating some of its fields (e.g. Moors and Moors Meadow). For the wood, below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape).

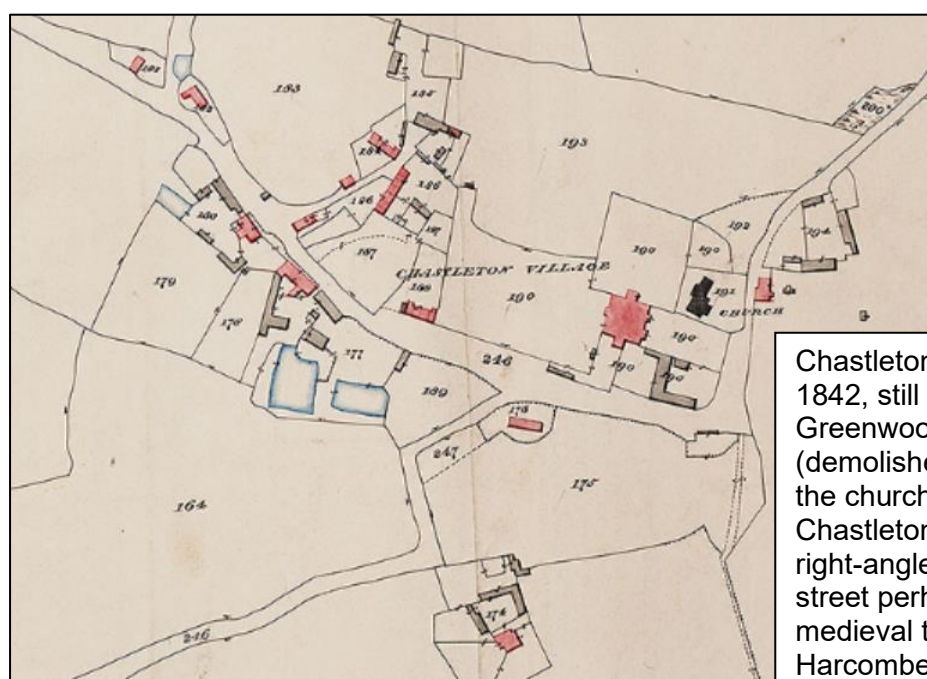
⁹⁰ OHC, E24/1/3D/24; TNA, E 179/161/170; below (built character).

⁹¹ Bodl. MS C17:49 (199), also showing fields called Whitehill; OHC, E15/1/D/8; cf. *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 143/2/18. For mill, below, econ. hist. (milling).

⁹² Below, landownership (other estates); GA, D1447/1/263b.

Glebe was built in a vacant Brookend field as a replacement rectory house c.1790.⁹³ New building in Chastleton village included a cottage, workshop, and malthouse c.1740 and a cottage erected beside the ‘town pool’ in 1765,⁹⁴ and during the 18th century the number of houses in the parish overall rose from c.20 to more than 30, eight of which were stated to be in Brookend.⁹⁵

The number of houses rose still further in the early 19th century,⁹⁶ when Brookend House and Kitebrook House both replaced earlier dwellings, although the former rectory house beside the church was removed in 1835 and the Greenwoods’ mansion house soon after 1845, leaving only its dovecot.⁹⁷ New village buildings included a possible communal bakehouse erected c.1850 (and restored by the National Trust in 2010–11),⁹⁸ a terrace of four cottages (Blue Row) built c.1830–40, the school of 1871 (replacing the ‘town pool’), and a rectory house built next to it in 1935.⁹⁹ Three cottages and a lodge were constructed near Chastleton Glebe in 1919.¹⁰⁰



Chastleton village, as mapped in 1842, still showing part of the Greenwoods’ mansion house (demolished soon after) opposite the church, which itself is next to Chastleton House, within the right-angled bend in the village street perhaps referred to in a medieval tenant’s name. Harcombe House stands on its own at the bottom and the ‘town pool’ is shown top left. Source: OHC, tithe map.

⁹³ Below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.). No bldgs existed there in 1730: Bodl. MS C17:49 (199).

⁹⁴ OHC, E24/1/6D/3; E24/1/6D/8; E24/1/6D/10; E24/1/6D/16–18; for the pool, above (landscape). The 1765 cottage (probably no. 181 on the 1842 tithe map) no longer survives.

⁹⁵ *Secker’s Visit.* 40; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 327, p. 98; *ibid.* E24/1/MS/2.

⁹⁶ From 37 in 1801 to 45 in 1851: *Census*, 1801–51.

⁹⁷ Below (built character); landownership (Brookend manor ho.; other estates); relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

⁹⁸ HER, PRN 13441; National Trust Heritage Records, 151070 / MNA131285. No documentary evidence for its use as a communal bakehouse has yet been found.

⁹⁹ Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 251; below (built character); social hist. (educ.); relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

¹⁰⁰ Below (built character).

The 20th century saw little further new building, the total number of dwellings remaining almost static,¹⁰¹ although a few bungalows or small houses appeared in new locations outside the village,¹⁰² and from the 1990s several barns and other agricultural buildings were converted for habitation.¹⁰³ In the north, Lower Brookend Farm was demolished between 1961 and 1975, its site becoming part of a neighbouring farmyard straddling the Evenlode boundary,¹⁰⁴ while The Cook's House replaced Middle Brookend Farm in 2018–20.¹⁰⁵ Chastleton village itself was designated a conservation area in 1995.¹⁰⁶

The Built Character

Chastleton's older houses, none of them much earlier than 1600, are mostly built from a mixture of limestone and marlstone rubble (both presumably quarried in the parish), and some have ashlar dressings. Roofs are mainly of local stone or concrete slate, although Westmorland and Welsh slates were introduced in the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, and some cottages remain thatched.¹⁰⁷ Timber framing is found only in a few agricultural buildings, of which the recently-converted 18th-century Tithe Barn was originally weatherboarded with a double butt-purlin roof.¹⁰⁸ Stone footings and glazed clay roof tiles excavated in Chastleton House's east garden show that the medieval manor house was stone-built, and in 1574 it contained heraldic window glass. It was replaced by the present-day Chastleton House in 1607–12, which survives virtually unaltered along with its contemporary arched gateway, garden walls, and outbuildings, and has been described as Oxfordshire's 'outstanding' Jacobean dwelling.¹⁰⁹ The adjacent church (of 12th-century origin) is the parish's only known standing medieval building.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Some 44 in both 1901 and 1991: *Census*, 1901–91.

¹⁰² e.g. Grove End (replaced c.1999 by Chastleton Place) and Brookdene (replaced c.2010 by Chastleton Leaze): WODC planning docs, W99/1167 (Grove End); 09/1413/P/FP (Chastleton Leaze) (accessed online Nov. 2023); OHC, POX0189966 (Grove End, c.1930s). No council houses were built.

¹⁰³ Below (built character).

¹⁰⁴ HER, PRN 2774; OS Maps 1:2500, SP 2330 (1975 edn); base map (2023, accessed online).

¹⁰⁵ Below (built character).

¹⁰⁶ www.westoxon.gov.uk (accessed Dec. 2023).

¹⁰⁷ For overviews: WODC, 'Conservation Area Character Appraisal: Chastleton', and 'Proposals for Preservation & Enhancement: Chastleton' (both accessed at www.westoxon.gov.uk Dec. 2023); Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 250–2; NHLE (accessed Dec. 2023). Elm Tree Cottage and Fox End were still thatched in 2024, and No. 2 The Lane, Splatts Farm, and White Horse Cottage were formerly thatched: Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. c 485/1 (photos 1957); NHLE, no. 1283924 (White Horse Cottage).

¹⁰⁸ NHLE, no. 1053365. Its name is fanciful, although it was originally appurtenant to the neighbouring former rectory house (Chastleton Glebe).

¹⁰⁹ Below, landownership (Chastleton: manor ho.); *SMA* 25 (1995), 76–7 (excavns); Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 246.

¹¹⁰ Below, relig. hist. (church archit.).

Several farmhouses and cottages are of 17th-century date, all with characteristic mullioned windows and hoodmoulds. Durham's Farm and Fox End have two-unit plans, whilst Dower House, Elm Tree Cottage, Grenemore, Hill Farm, and Home Farm each have three units, Elm Tree Cottage and Hill Farm containing lobby entrances, and Grenemore a cross passage. Castle Cottage, Grove Farm, and Harcombe House were all originally L-planned.¹¹¹ Some of those were presumably among the seven houses assessed on between one and four hearths in 1665, when another two houses had eight hearths, the Greenwoods' house 11, and Chastleton House 15.¹¹² Slightly later in date are No. 2 The Lane and Old Post Office/Home Farm Cottage, a former farmhouse with the date 1708 scratched onto a wooden lintel, whilst Splatts Farm (which has casement windows) is of c.1750. A rubblestone barn attached to Grenemore's north end is dated 1761, while a square stone dovecot of 1762, formerly belonging to the Greenwood family's mansion, survives as an eyecatcher in the field opposite Chastleton House.¹¹³



17th-century housing: Elm Tree Cottage (left) and Grenemore (right).

Neo-classical architecture is largely confined to Brookend House and Kitebrook House, the former built for William Harbidge probably c.1812, to replace the earlier Brookend manor house. The latter was built for the Chipping Norton wine merchant and maltster W.S. Hitchman c.1849, before being greatly enlarged (in the same style) for F.H. Freer in 1891. Both have symmetrical entrance fronts faced in limestone ashlar, sash windows, and hipped

¹¹¹ NHLE, nos. 1367787 (Castle Cottage); 1198124 (Dower House); 1053364 (Durham's Farmhouse); 1053331 (Elm Tree Cottage); 1053334 (Fox End); 1053332 (Grenemore); 1053369 (Harcombe House); 1367786 (Hill Farmhouse); 1053370 (Home Farmhouse); WODC online planning docs, 15/01670/LBC (Home Farm); 19/02916/HHD (Grenemore). The name Dower House is probably fanciful, perhaps originating in the 1890s when Mary Whitmore-Jones briefly lived there (below, landownership: Chastleton Ho.).

¹¹² *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 186–7.

¹¹³ NHLE, nos. 1053339 (No. 2 The Lane); 1367764 (Old Post Office/Home Farm Cottage); 1367788 (Splatts Farmhouse); 1053333 (barn). For dovecot, below, landownership (other estates).

Welsh-slate roofs.¹¹⁴ Blue Row, a symmetrical and Welsh-slatted terrace of four estate cottages in Chastleton village, was built c.1830–40, presumably for the lord J.H. Whitmore Jones, and blends plain pedimented neo-classical cross-wings with a Tudor-arched central passageway and mullioned windows.¹¹⁵ Chastleton Glebe, built for Patience Adams c.1790, was originally also neo-classical, with sash windows and (by 1837) a mansard roof, but was heavily remodelled in Tudor Gothic style in 1865 for the rector George Nutting, to designs by the London architect Augustus Browne.¹¹⁶



Old School built in 1871 (left) and Glebe Cottages built in 1919 (right).

Most later 19th-century building was sympathetic to the local vernacular, including the compact village school (now Old School) of 1871, featuring stone coping, stone-mullioned windows, and a prominent external chimneystack.¹¹⁷ In the early 20th century the Jacobethan Cotswold style was employed for additions and alterations at Chastleton Glebe for William Cooke Kettle, as well as for a new lodge (Glebe Lodge) and a row of three gabled and originally thatched estate cottages (Glebe Cottages) which were erected for him in 1919.¹¹⁸ Hill Farm was remodelled in a similar style in the 1930s (to designs by Conrad Birdwood Willcocks),¹¹⁹ and a new gabled and roughcast rectory house (now Old Rectory) was built in the village in 1935, designed by Thomas Rayson.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Below, landownership (Brookend; other estates).

¹¹⁵ NHLE, no. 1283919 (Nos. 1–4 Blue Row); Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 251.

¹¹⁶ Below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

¹¹⁷ Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 251; below, social hist. (educ.).

¹¹⁸ Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 251; below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.); inscripn (WCK 1919) on Glebe Cottages; for photos, OHC, POX0189948 (lodge); POX0190057, POX0189943 (Glebe Cottages). Kettle's architect has not been identified.

¹¹⁹ *Ideal Home*, Mar. 1946; NHLE, no. 1367786.

¹²⁰ Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 251; below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

Very little new building took place in the decades following the Second World War, and the few entirely new houses, such as Chastleton Place (c.1999), are mostly traditional in style and materials, with rubble walls and stone or concrete slate roofs.¹²¹ Notable barn conversions include Hogg's Barn (c.1996) and Tithe Barn (c.2009),¹²² while Home Farm and Chastleton Glebe were both extensively remodelled in keeping with the local vernacular, the former c.2015–20 for the celebrated architect John Pawson (to his own designs),¹²³ and the latter (ongoing in 2024) for Gregor and Carolina Fiskén, to designs by Christian Fleming.¹²⁴ Startlingly different is The Cook's House at Middle Brookend Farm, designed by Charlie Luxton for Prue (later Dame Prue) Leith and John Playfair, and built in 2018–20 out of metal, timber, and limestone rubble, with large expanses of glass. Described by the architect as 'a contemporary reimagining of the Palladian-inspired villa', the main two-storey house is rectangular with a veranda and a roof terrace. A rebuilt rubblestone barn serves as a dining room and library, leading to single-storey offices and guest accommodation set around a courtyard.¹²⁵

¹²¹ WODC planning docs, W99/1167.

¹²² Ibid. W96/0242 (Hoggs Barn); 09/0508/P/FP (Tithe Barn).

¹²³ *The Guardian*, 1 Oct. 2019; *Town & Country*, Apr. 2019; *House & Garden*, 11 May 2022.

¹²⁴ Below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

¹²⁵ WODC planning docs, 18/01160/FUL; <https://charlieluxtondesign.com/buildings/gloucestershire-farmhouse/> (accessed Nov. 2023); info. (2023) from Dame Prue Leith and John Playfair.