

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

## Kiddington with Asterleigh parish

Introduction: Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings



*Kiddington Hall from the south-west, with the River Glyme in the foreground*

Kiddington with Asterleigh is a secluded rural parish between Enstone and Glympton, bisected by the river Glyme and, on the higher ground above the valley, by the main Chipping Norton to Woodstock road.<sup>1</sup> As well as the hamlets of Over and Nether Kiddington it contains, on the west, the largely deserted medieval settlement of Asterleigh (now a single farmstead), which until the 15th century had an independent parish church. Kiddington Hall, rebuilt in the 1840s, lies close to Nether Kiddington by the river, which was dammed to form a lake in front of the house during 18th-century landscaping. The parish's southern part has long been heavily wooded, and was shaped in part by medieval assarting.

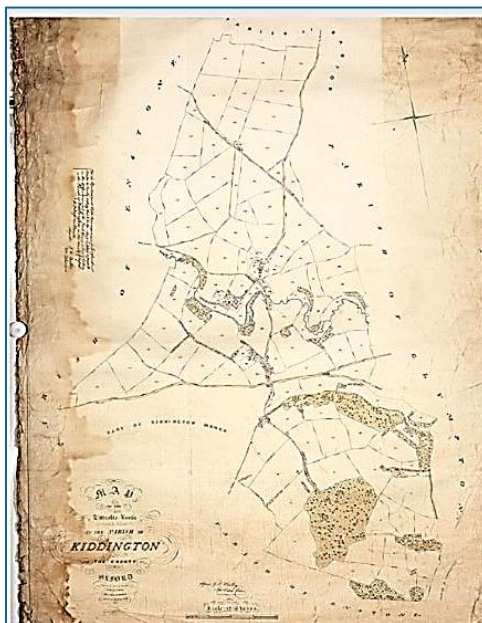
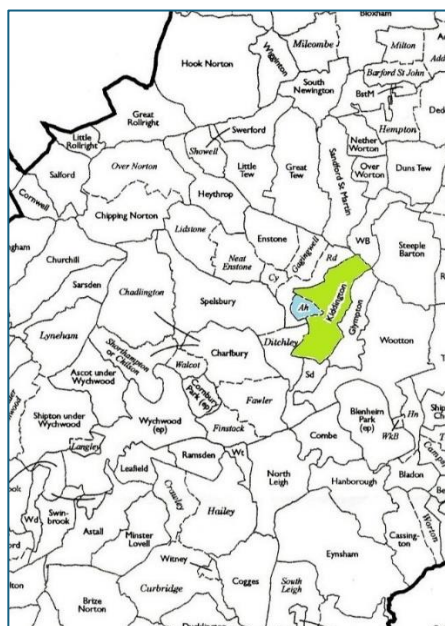
The combined population has rarely exceeded 300, and from the 13th century to the early 21st the parish was virtually all in single ownership, its resident lords including the Babingtons, Brownes, and Gaskells. Of those the Brownes (1609–c.1840) were prominent Roman Catholic recusants, whose private chapel (in the manor house) became a significant focus for Kiddington and beyond. The parish's economy was (and remains) predominantly agricultural, with relatively few trades or crafts, and modern development has been extremely limited, both Over and Nether Kiddington remaining essentially estate villages. The nearest market towns are Chipping Norton and Woodstock, respectively nine miles north-west and five miles south-east.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written in 2024–5.

## Parish Boundaries

The late 19th-century parish covered 2,190 a., its boundaries (which remain unaltered for civil purposes) mostly following fields and short stretches of road.<sup>2</sup> The northern boundary with Westcot Barton includes indentations suggesting that it originally followed open-field furlongs, while the eastern boundary with Glympton follows roads before cutting across the Glyme valley on the western edge of Glympton park. A stretch a little further south prompted controversy in the 18th century when the traditional perambulation route was twice blocked, although the boundary itself remained unaltered.<sup>3</sup> The south-eastern and south-western boundaries with Glympton, Stonesfield, and Ditchley (in Enstone) run through areas of woodland and wood pasture, where medieval assarting probably led to boundary adjustments.<sup>4</sup> A straight stretch between Ditchley's Box wood and Kiddington's 'great assarts' formerly followed a now-lost road or track mapped in 1726, which headed north-west towards Enstone, while the stretch just beyond saw minor adjustments between 1726 and 1851.<sup>5</sup> Further north, Asterleigh's curved western boundary probably also reflects early woodland assarting,<sup>6</sup> but was presumably established by 1307 when reference was made to Asterleigh manor's western boundary.<sup>7</sup>



Left: Kiddington and Asterleigh parish c.1850 (Asterleigh farm in blue).  
Source: Oxon. Atlas (ORS 67, 2010)

Right: Kiddington in 1851 (omitting Asterleigh), with north tilted slightly to left. (Oxfordshire History Centre 234/M (tithe map))

<sup>2</sup> OS *Area Bk* (1881); OS Map 6", Oxon. XXI (1884 edn); *ibid.* 1:25000, sheet 191 (2015 edn); OHC, 234/A and 234/M (tithe award and map, excluding Asterleigh); *Census*, 1881–2021, implying an unexplained reduction from 886 ha to 885 ha (2,187 a.) between 1981 and 1991. For the ecclesiastical parish (merged with Glympton and Wootton in 2003), below, relig. hist.

<sup>3</sup> OHC, PAR150/17/MS1/1; *ibid.* par. reg. transcript, miscellanea (app. A). For Glympton manor land in Kiddington, below, landownership.

<sup>4</sup> OHC, 234/A and 234/M; below, econ. hist.

<sup>5</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/M/1; *ibid.* 234/M.

<sup>6</sup> Below (settlement).

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1301–7, 531; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 109 and n; cf. Royce (ed.), *Landboc*, II, pp. 205–6.

The boundaries encompassed two separate 11th-century manors and the two formerly separate medieval parishes of Kiddington and Asterleigh, which were united in 1466 when Asterleigh church was decommissioned.<sup>8</sup> Both the manors and the parishes were most likely divided by the river Glyme, which continued as a hundred boundary until the 19th century, leaving the modern parish's north-eastern part (756 a.) in Wootton hundred and the rest in Chadlington hundred.<sup>9</sup> The two parishes also lay in different rural deaneries until their unification.<sup>10</sup> The 284-a. Asterleigh farm, comprising a wedge of land between the Chipping Norton road and the lane to Ditchley, was deemed in the 18th and 19th centuries to be tithe-free and effectively extra-parochial, although its exclusion was apparently based on misconceptions arising from long-term 17th- and 18th-century tithe agreements.<sup>11</sup> In 1866 it briefly became an independent civil parish of 296 a. under the Poor Law Amendment Act, but was reunited with Kiddington in 1895, creating the present-day civil parish of Kiddington with Asterleigh.<sup>12</sup>

The whole parish, along with much of west Oxfordshire, was taken within the bounds of Wychwood forest by Henry II, although the area east of the Glyme (including Nether Kiddington) was removed c.1219. The rest was theoretically excluded in 1298–1300, but even so the Crown repeatedly treated the woods south of the Chipping Norton road as lying within the forest, until Charles I was forced to accept its reduction in 1641.<sup>13</sup>

## Landscape

The river Glyme cuts a meandering path through the middle of the parish, flowing broadly south-eastwards. The valley bottom, site of Nether Kiddington village, the church, and Kiddington Hall, lies at c.100 m., the land rising up on either side (in many places quite steeply) to form a typically undulating Cotswold landscape. Over Kiddington, which adjoins the Chipping Norton to Woodstock road higher up the valley's southern slope, lies at c.135 m., and Asterleigh Farm, adjoining the deserted medieval settlement of Asterleigh, at c.140 metres. In the far north-east around Hell Hill the land reaches 150 m., falling back to c.120

<sup>8</sup> Below, landownership; relig. hist. The manors were effectively combined from the 13th century.

<sup>9</sup> OS *Area Bk* (1884); cf. *Book of Fees*, II, 821, 827; *Rot. Hund.* II, 734, 877. The whole parish was annexed to Wootton hundred's petty sessional south division in 1834 (OHC, QS1834/1/A16/1; *Census*, 1841–51), though the historical split continued to be noted.

<sup>10</sup> Below, relig. hist.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, IR 18/7727; OHC, 234/A and 234/M; below, relig. hist.

<sup>12</sup> *Census*, 1861–2021; *Union of the Civil Parishes of Kiddington and Asterleigh* (1895): copy in TNA, ED 21/14478.

<sup>13</sup> B. Schumer, 'The 1298/1300 Perambulations of Wychwood Forest – and after', *Oxoniensia* 69 (2004), 1–28; idem, *Wychwood*, 23–4, 78; idem, *Oxon. Forests*, 122, 128, 134, 156, 190; *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 250–1; below, econ. hist.

m. in the south and south-east.<sup>14</sup> The underlying geology is chiefly White Limestone, with strands of Sharp's Hill Formation, Chipping Norton Limestone Formation, and Clypeus Grit closer to the river.<sup>15</sup> The stonebrash soils, though variable, are free-draining and moderately fertile, suitable for cereals and grass.<sup>16</sup>

The medieval fields extended from the Chipping Norton road to the northern boundary, with meadow and pasture concentrated in the middle of the parish and on the riverside alluvium. Enclosure, completed in the 1680s, created a pattern of rectilinear hedged closes which still largely survives, while the area around Kiddington Hall is predominantly parkland, which was landscaped in the 18th century and extended northwards in the 19th. South of the Chipping Norton road the parish is dominated (as in the Middle Ages) by woodland and wood pasture, which extends westwards into Ditchley and eastwards into Glympton,<sup>17</sup> and as elsewhere on the Cotswold limestone a few small former quarries are scattered across the landscape.<sup>18</sup> Water was available from streams, isolated springs, and wells, although access on the higher ground was sometimes difficult even in the early 20th century, when wells for two new Over Kiddington council houses proved inadequate.<sup>19</sup> Piped water was supplied by the Kiddington estate from the 1880s–90s.<sup>20</sup>



*Looking down into the Glyme valley and Kiddington Hall from adjacent parkland.*

<sup>14</sup> OS Maps 1:25000, sheets 180 and 191 (2015 edn); cf. OHC, 234/A and 234/M.

<sup>15</sup> <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk> (accessed Aug. 2024).

<sup>16</sup> [www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes](http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes) (Aug. 2024); Young, *Oxon. Agric.* 5–6 and map; Orr, *Oxon. Agric.* 64–5, 187, 189; TNA, MAF 32/914/198; *Oxon. Atlas*, p. 111; local information.

<sup>17</sup> Below, landownership (Kiddington Hall); econ. hist. (agric. landscape).

<sup>18</sup> e.g. OHC, 234/A and 234/M, nos. 5 and 89; OS Maps 6", Oxon. XXI (1919 edn); 1:25000, sheet 191 (2015 edn); below, econ. hist. (non-agric. activities).

<sup>19</sup> OHC, RDC13/2/A3/1, pp. 2, 23, 54; RDC13/2/A3/2, pp. 1–5, 66. A farmer's 'old water cart' was mentioned in 1666: OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 84/1/22.

<sup>20</sup> Below (settlement).

## Communications

The main Chipping Norton to Woodstock road (called Woodstock way in 1298) cuts through the middle of the parish from north-west to south-east, adjoining Over Kiddington and running close to the deserted settlement of Asterleigh.<sup>21</sup> An eastwards branch through Glympton (the modern B4027) formed part of a 17th-century route from Aberystwyth and Worcester to London, and both roads were turnpiked from 1729–30 to 1878,<sup>22</sup> a weighbridge and turnpike house being built at Over Kiddington, close to a roadside smithy and the long-established Chequers inn.<sup>23</sup> The parish's other roads, though now fairly minor, also provided significant links. That through Over and Nether Kiddington, descending into the valley down a steep hollow way, continues northwards to the Bartons and thence to Deddington and Banbury, while the intersecting road from Sandford St Martin to Glympton (which runs past Whitehouse Farm and forms a short stretch of parish boundary) connected with the Glympton turnpike, and in the 17th century was known as the London road. A north-westwards route to Great Tew (now a footpath only) and a minor road from Nether Kiddington to Radford both existed by 1601,<sup>24</sup> while the south-westwards road from Over Kiddington formerly continued to Charlbury, until its course across Ditchley Park was suppressed c.1705.<sup>25</sup> The bridge carrying the Barton road over the River Glyme in Nether Kiddington was rebuilt by Mortimer Ricardo of Kiddington Hall in 1847, becoming a county bridge soon after.<sup>26</sup>

Carriers to Oxford passed through twice a week by 1903 and still in 1939, while buses on the Oxford–Woodstock–Chipping Norton route stopped at Over Kiddington by 1922, run by City of Oxford and District Motor Bus Services. In 2024 buses on the same route stopped there up to 17 times a day.<sup>27</sup> A railway station at Charlbury (six miles away) opened in 1853, and in the 1850s–60s a carrier briefly ran a daily service to Woodstock Road station in Kidlington (on the Oxford–Banbury line).<sup>28</sup> In the 1940s farmers' road and rail

<sup>21</sup> OS Map 1:25000, sheet 191 (2015 edn); Schumer, 'Perambulations', 8, 13; *VCH Oxon.* XI, 121, 260; *Oxf. Jnl.* 9 Aug. 1823 (calling it the road to Birmingham).

<sup>22</sup> J. Ogilby, *Britannia* (1675 edn), Plate II; *VCH Oxon.* XI, 120–1; *Oxon. Atlas*, pp. 51, 102–3; Turnpike Act, 3 Geo. II, c.21.

<sup>23</sup> *Oxf. Jnl.* 15 Feb. 1800, 26 Dec. 1812, 5 Feb. 1814; OHC, 234/A and 234/M, no. 78; below, econ. hist. (non-agric.).

<sup>24</sup> Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OHC, 234/A and 234/M; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, no. 12 (glebe terriers); *ibid.* B.I/75 (London road); *ibid.* Cal. QS, IX, p. 391 (Gt Tew road).

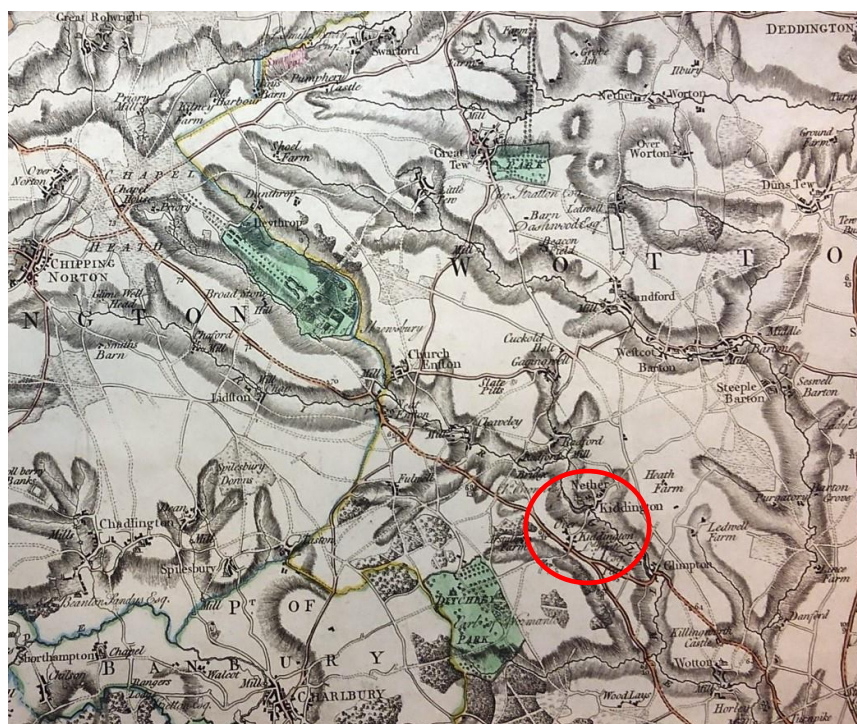
<sup>25</sup> Ogilby, *Britannia*, Plate II; OHC, E36/1/10/M/1; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1705–6, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> OHC, QS1847/4/A6/4; QS1855/4/F2/39; *ibid.* *County Bridges Repairable by the County Council* (1905), no. 79. For footpaths suppressed c.1842 in connection with Kiddington Hall's relandscaping, *ibid.* QS1842/1/A9/2 and 4; QS1843/1/A9/2.

<sup>27</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1903–39 edns); *City of Oxford and District Motor Bus Services Time Tables* (1922 and later edns): copies in OHC; bus stop timetable (2024).

<sup>28</sup> *VCH Oxon.* X, 128; XII, 182; *Billing's Dir. Oxon.* (1854); *Dutton, Allen & Co.'s Dir. Oxon.* (1863).

access was generally judged good or fair,<sup>29</sup> and Worcester to London trains still stopped at Charlbury in 2024, although by then most Kiddington commuters travelled by car.<sup>30</sup>



Roads around Kiddington (circled) in 1767, showing the main Chipping Norton to Woodstock turnpike skirting Over Kiddington, and the branch turnpike through Glympton. (Detail from Thomas Jefferys' Map of Oxfordshire.)

Letters were received through Enstone or Woodstock by the 1840s, and a sub-post office was opened at Over Kiddington in 1853, run (with a shop) by the village blacksmith in premises adjoining the Chipping Norton road. A wall box was installed at Nether Kiddington by 1895, and telephone calls could be made at the post office by 1931, although the nearest money order and telegraph office was still at Enstone.<sup>31</sup> After the Second World War the post office moved across the road to the former Chequers pub, and then to a shop (now Cedar House) adjoining its original location, before closing c.1991.<sup>32</sup> A 'thriving' village shop and post office continued in neighbouring Glympton in 2024, with another at Enstone.<sup>33</sup>

## Population

In 1086 Over Kiddington manor (which probably already included Asterleigh) had 17 tenant households and four slaves, while the smaller Nether Kiddington manor had six tenant households. Including the mill and the manorial centres there were probably over 25 houses

<sup>29</sup> TNA, MAF 32/914/198.

<sup>30</sup> *Census*, 2021 (online datasets); local information. All but 6% of households had at least one car.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, 'Post Offices'; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–77 edns); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1939 edns); TNA, RG 9/902, no. 46; OHC, 234/A and 234/M, no. 65; *ibid.* POX0193722 (photo).

<sup>32</sup> OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.7 (1881 and later edns); SP 4022 (1974 edn); *ibid.* 6", SP 42 SW (1955 edn); *London Gaz.* 29 Jan. 1992, p. 1556.

<sup>33</sup> 'Parish Profile: The Parish of Wootton, Glympton and Kiddington' [c.1924] (PDF accessed online May 2024); above, Enstone, landscape etc. (communications).

in all, suggesting a combined population of well over 100.<sup>34</sup> Numbers had increased by 1279 when there were c.40 recorded tenants including 14 freeholders, by then with a slightly higher number at Nether Kiddington; another two tenants lived in the small hamlet of Boriens, which straddled the Glympton boundary in the south-east.<sup>35</sup> Early 14th-century lay subsidies listed up to 28 taxpayers including the resident lords, again with slightly more at Nether Kiddington, although by 1377 the situation was reversed, with 25 adults noted at Over Kiddington and Asterleigh, but only ten at Nether Kiddington.<sup>36</sup> The figures, along with reduced manorial rents, suggest a marked population fall presumably following mid-century plagues,<sup>37</sup> and Asterleigh's long-term decline was probably already under way: in 1428 it had fewer than ten inhabitants, and in 1466 its church was decommissioned and its parish merged with Kiddington's.<sup>38</sup> The settlement's reduction to a single farm followed probably in the early 16th century, when Over Kiddington had six taxpayers and Nether Kiddington 11.<sup>39</sup>

Population was rising again by the mid 17th century, when Over Kiddington contained at least 11 houses and Nether Kiddington ten, the overall population possibly exceeding 100.<sup>40</sup> Over 40 houses were listed in 1755,<sup>41</sup> and in 1801 there were 39 accommodating 189 people, rising a decade later to 235 people in 43 houses (28 in Over Kiddington and 15 in Nether Kiddington). The population peaked at 305 (in 57 occupied houses) in 1861, but thereafter fell inconsistently to 237 in 1901, 181 in 1921, 159 (in 47 houses) in 1961, and 115 in 1991.<sup>42</sup> Later censuses grouped Kiddington with Glympton, the combined population in 2021 totalling 190 in 80 households.<sup>43</sup>

## Settlement

### *Prehistory to 1066*

Early activity is suggested by Neolithic surface finds particularly in the parish's southern part,<sup>44</sup> and at least two Bronze-Age round barrows survive in the same area, suggesting that

<sup>34</sup> DB, ff. 160–1. The Domesday description seems to have included only a part of the later Nether Kiddington manor (c.1½ hides compared with the later 5 hides): below, landownership.

<sup>35</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 734, 852–3 (wrongly listed under Combe), 877; below (settlement).

<sup>36</sup> TNA, E 179/161/8–10; *Poll Taxes 1377–81*, ed. Fenwick, II, 289, 291, 333.

<sup>37</sup> For rents, TNA, E 149/34, no. 8; below, econ. hist.

<sup>38</sup> *Feudal Aids*, IV, 201; VI, 380; below, relig. hist.

<sup>39</sup> Below (settlement); econ. hist.; TNA, E 179/161/170; E 179/161/194.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, E 179/255/3, f. 50; E 179/255/4 pt 1, f. 69; *Prot. Retns*, 130 (48 male adults incl. the rector, lord, and 5 servants); *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 422 (70 'conformists').

<sup>41</sup> OHC, QSD/E/I, pp. 230–4; cf. *ibid.* pp. 99–104; *Secker's Visit.* 88; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 564, f. 247.

<sup>42</sup> *Census*, 1801–1991. Asterleigh's popn in 1871 was 38 in 7 houses (mostly farm cottages).

<sup>43</sup> *Census*, 2001–21; [www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/draw](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/draw) (accessed Oct. 2024).

<sup>44</sup> HER, PRN 1225; 1725; 2442; 12281; 1724 (enclosure). For a flint axe further north, *ibid.* 10764.

the landscape there was more open than later.<sup>45</sup> Sections of the late Iron-Age Grim's Ditch cut across the parish west of Grimsdyke Farm, continuing through what is now Out Wood and Hill Wood; a nearby banjo enclosure (Tomlin's Gate) has produced Middle Iron-Age pottery, and a separate rectangular enclosure survives within the woods, both sites being possibly associated with livestock farming.<sup>46</sup> Another Iron-Age enclosure complex may have existed east of Over Kiddington village overlooking the River Glyme,<sup>47</sup> and Iron-Age pits have been noted north of Rectory Farm.<sup>48</sup> A Roman farmstead, ditched but apparently timber-built, has been identified near Pump Copse to the south of Asterleigh, close to a surviving spring with pottery scatters and possible enclosures close by.<sup>49</sup> A late Roman coin hoard (with coins mostly minted c.388–95) was found further south near Big Park wood, not far from the nearby villa at Ditchley (in Enstone).<sup>50</sup>

Little is known about Anglo-Saxon settlement in the parish, save for the apparent resurgence (as in neighbouring Ditchley and Glympton) of woodland in its southern part.<sup>51</sup> An estate at Kiddington (Cydda's *tūn*) was reportedly granted to Worcester priory by King Offa of Mercia in the 780s, however,<sup>52</sup> and an estate centre for what became Nether Kiddington manor existed (with associated tenant housing) by the 1060s, most likely located in the river valley on the site of the present-day village, and perhaps already with its own church.<sup>53</sup> Kiddington's second 11th-century manor may have included settlement at Asterleigh, whose name (the eastern *lēah*) implies assarted wood pasture: though not recorded before the Conquest the site has yielded early 12th-century pottery, and as it had an independent church by c.1200 it, too, probably existed in some form by the time of Domesday Book.<sup>54</sup> Some of the manor's other 11th-century tenants may have already lived in the vicinity of Over Kiddington, although evidence is lacking.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 1729; 1730; 2281; for the broader pattern, Schumer, *Wychwood*, 9–11.

<sup>46</sup> HER, PRN 17189–91; 1727; 2399; T. Copeland, 'The North Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch: a Fieldwork Survey', *Oxoniensia* 53 (1988), 277–92; idem, *Iron-Age and Roman Wychwood* (2002), 50–2, 62–3, suggesting that Tomlin's Gate was still in use at the Ditch's construction; *SMA* 12 (1982), 154–5.

<sup>47</sup> HER, PRN 9196; for nearby pottery (some extending into the Roman period), *ibid.* 27557; 27596.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 17209.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 1722; 17207; 27559 (rotary quern); 27561 (late Iron-Age to Roman pottery).

<sup>50</sup> HER, PRN 1723; 17275; above, Enstone, landscape etc. (settlement).

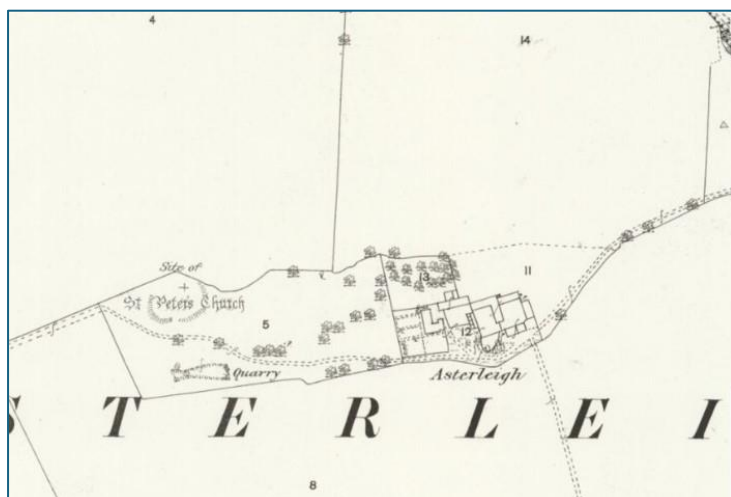
<sup>51</sup> Below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape); Schumer, *Wychwood*, 23–7; *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 8.

<sup>52</sup> *PN Oxon.* II, 358; below, landownership.

<sup>53</sup> DB, f. 161; below, landownership; relig. hist.

<sup>54</sup> *PN Oxon.* II, 359; Schumer, *Wychwood*, 43–6; *Oxoniensia* 18 (1948), 67–9; below, landownership; relig. hist. Perhaps named in relation to the early estate centre at Spelsbury c.3 miles west: below, Spelsbury, landscape etc.

## Medieval and Later Settlement



*Asterleigh in 1880  
(OS Map 1:2500,  
XXI.6 (1881 edn)).*

*House platforms lie  
between the church  
site and the surviving  
farm buildings, along  
with a west-east  
hollow way marking  
the village street.*

By the 13th or 14th centuries houses at Asterleigh were arranged along a west–east street, with the church at the north-west end and (possibly) a pond on the east. The manor house has not been identified and had gone by the later 14th century, but most likely lay near the church. The site as a whole occupies the crest of a south-facing slope, with a spring and small watercourse in the valley below. At least ten house platforms have been identified, but depopulation was advanced by the early 15th century and was compounded by the church's closure in 1466.<sup>55</sup> Conversion for sheep farming followed in the early 16th century, when two out of three remaining houses were removed by the tenant, and thereafter Asterleigh remained a single farm centred on premises at the former village's east end.<sup>56</sup> Five or six labourers' cottages noted in the 1860s–70s formed part of the same complex.<sup>57</sup>

Medieval settlement was otherwise focused on Over and Nether Kiddington and on the tiny hamlet of Boriens in the south-east, which straddled the Glympton boundary and was probably created through woodland assarting. Four or five tenants were listed there in 1279, but the hamlet was abandoned in the late 14th or early 15th century, its name preserved in that of neighbouring Berring's wood.<sup>58</sup> Nether Kiddington church and manor house (later Kiddington Hall) probably both occupied their current site by the late 12th century, with tenant housing aligned (as later) along the road to Middle Barton, and possibly along what is now the main Kiddington Hall driveway. Over Kiddington's roadside layout was probably also established by the 13th or 14th century, both along the current main street (which meets the main Chipping Norton road), and along the north-west branch past present-day Park Farm, which formerly continued across the Glyme and past the manor

<sup>55</sup> HER, PRN 853 ; NHLE, no. 1020966; SMA 10 (1980), 85–6 (incl. plan); above (popn); below, relig. hist. The site has been successively damaged by quarrying, ploughing, and tree-planting.

<sup>56</sup> I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–18* (1897), I, 330, 371; below, econ. hist.

<sup>57</sup> *Census*, 1871–81; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.6 (1881 edn).

<sup>58</sup> Schumer, *Wyche*, 47; VCH Oxon. XI, 120–2, 125–7; *Rot. Hund.* II, 853, 876; TNA, E 179/161/8 (s.v. Nether Kiddington).

house and church.<sup>59</sup> The base and shaft of a probably 15th-century limestone cross survives where those two roads fork.<sup>60</sup>



Left: Nether and Over Kiddington in 1767 (Jefferys' Map of Oxfordshire), showing the Glyme, the lake created in front of Kiddingington Hall, and the Chipping Norton road skirting Over Kiddington's main street. Right: Nether Kiddington's NE end, rising up from the river along the Barton road.

The overall layout of Nether and Over Kiddington changed little thereafter, and though the later Middle Ages may have seen some shrinkage, growing population was prompting new building by the 17th and 18th centuries. The number of tenanted cottages rose from 14 in 1717 to 31 in 1755, easily offsetting the loss of the mill,<sup>61</sup> while the outlying Wood (formerly Assarts) Farm, in the far south near the Stonesfield boundary, existed by 1691,<sup>62</sup> and Whitehouse Farm (on high ground in the north of the parish) by 1767.<sup>63</sup> By the early 19th century settlement at Over Kiddington extended from the Chipping Norton road (site of the smithy, inn, and turnpike house) to Park Farm or just beyond, with a few isolated cottages (since removed) to the south of the Chipping Norton road at Balhall Bottom. Housing at Nether Kiddington extended along the Barton road both north and south of the bridge, although buildings along the access road to Kiddingington Hall were removed in the 1840s in connection with the Hall's rebuilding and relandscaping. Cottages adjoining the Over Kiddington smithy (on the Chipping Norton road's south side) were added around the same time,<sup>64</sup> and c.1921–2 a couple of pairs of council houses were added further west.<sup>65</sup> Otherwise neither village saw much modern infill or expansion, save for enlargement of farm complexes at Asterleigh, Nether Kiddington, and (particularly) Park Farm, and conversion of

<sup>59</sup> Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OS Maps 1", sheet 45 (1833 edn); 1:25000, sheet 191 (2015 edn); OHC, QS1842/1/A9/2, plan; *ibid.* 234/M.

<sup>60</sup> HER, PRN 4759.

<sup>61</sup> OHC, QSD/E/I, pp. 99–101, 230–4; above (popn).

<sup>62</sup> OHC, SL161/1/D/1; OS Maps 1", sheet 45 (1833 edn); 1:2500, *Oxon. XXI.15* (1881 and later edns); cf. Schumer, *Wychwood*, 56.

<sup>63</sup> Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OHC, 234/A and 234/M, no. 236.

<sup>64</sup> Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OS Map 1", sheet 45 (1833 edn); OHC, 234/A and 234/M. Those behind the present-day bus stop have been demolished.

<sup>65</sup> Below (built character).

some redundant farm buildings to domestic use in the late 20th and early 21st century.<sup>66</sup> New outlying sites included Rectory Farm, which began as a field barn and cottage in the mid 19th century, and Grimsdyke Farm by the track to Out Wood, established (with a new farmhouse) by c.1910 on the site of another 19th-century cottage.<sup>67</sup>

A stone drinking fountain was provided at Over Kiddington in 1859,<sup>68</sup> and a private reservoir for the Kiddington estate was built on the park's north-eastern edge in the 1880s–90s, supplying piped water to most (but not all) of the estate's farms and some cottages.<sup>69</sup> The council houses were initially excluded, prompting tenants to tap the estate's supply illegally, though in the 1950s the estate served those too under an arrangement with the RDC.<sup>70</sup> Electricity was introduced to the estate's buildings only from 1949.<sup>71</sup>

## The Built Character

Most of the parish's domestic buildings (Kiddington Hall apart)<sup>72</sup> are modest cottages and farmhouses of 17th- to 19th-century date, the only entirely 20th-century additions being the pair of Over Kiddington council houses. Nearly all the buildings are of coursed or uncoursed limestone rubble with stone- or Welsh-slate roofs, although thatch survives on a single-storeyed cottage by Over Kiddington cross, and was once more common,<sup>73</sup> while brick was used in some farm buildings by the late 19th century.<sup>74</sup> Windows are mostly simple casements headed with timber lintels or plain segmental relieving arches. Finds at Asterleigh suggest that the medieval villages were also stone-built,<sup>75</sup> and the later pattern of small estate cottages was well established by the 1660s, when over three quarters of the parish's houses were taxed on only one or two hearths.<sup>76</sup> By then all or most had floored-over halls with chambers above, and some larger houses had parlours, along with the usual attached outhouses.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>66</sup> OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.7 (1881 edn); SP4022–4122 (1974 edn); [www.google.co.uk/maps](http://www.google.co.uk/maps) (accessed Dec. 2024); below (built character).

<sup>67</sup> Below, econ. hist. (since 1800); relig. hist. (endowment).

<sup>68</sup> Below (built character).

<sup>69</sup> OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.6–7, 10–11 (1899 edn), also marking pumps; OHC, RDC13/2/A3/1, pp. 2, 5, 54, 98, 142; TNA, MAF 32/914/198.

<sup>70</sup> OHC, RDC13/2/A3/2, pp. 60, 249–50, 254; RDC9/2/A5/5, p. 129. For cess pits at the new council houses, OHC, RDC13/2/A3/1, p. 189.

<sup>71</sup> J. Dimbleby, *A Profound Secret* (2005 edn), 286; TNA, MAF 32/914/198. For gas, *London Gaz.* 22 July 1938, p. 4748.

<sup>72</sup> For Kiddington Hall, below, landownership (manor houses); for church, below, relig. hist. (church archit.).

<sup>73</sup> NHLE, no. 1053099 (Cross Cottage, accessed Dec. 2024); for other examples, OHC, POX0193704; POX0193706; POX0193717; *ibid.* OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 449, no. 3 (outbldgs).

<sup>74</sup> e.g. at Asterleigh farm: WODC planning docs, 24/02099/FUL, Heritage Statement.

<sup>75</sup> *Oxoniensia* 18 (1948), 67–9; *SMA* 10 (1980), 85.

<sup>76</sup> TNA, E 179/255/3, f. 50; E 179/255/4 pt 1, f. 69; another 5 houses had 3–6 hearths.

<sup>77</sup> e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 144/1/28; 60/1/19; 60/1/13; 12/3/34; 26/2/1; 33/2/5.

Houses of probably 17th- to early 18th-century origin include the single-storeyed School Cottage at Nether Kiddington, Asterleigh Farm, and Cross Cottage, Gate Farm, and the former Chequers inn at Over Kiddington, all of them with end-stacks. The Chequers (an inn by 1675)<sup>78</sup> retains chamfered ceiling beams with ogee stops and a wooden chamfered fireplace lintel, and like the other larger houses is built on an L-plan, with a former stair tower at its rear. Both Asterleigh Farm and Gate Farm (named from the nearby former turnpike gate) were extended in the 19th century, the latter acquiring a canted bay window and a pair of 1½-storey rear wings.<sup>79</sup> Home Farm Cottage at Nether Kiddington bears the inscription WN 1794, perhaps for the freeholder William Newman,<sup>80</sup> while surviving farm buildings (many now converted to other uses) include a 17th- and 18th-century complex of former barns and stables close by, and a former courtyard arrangement at Gate Farm.<sup>81</sup> Park Farm, which became the estate's home farm by the early 19th century, includes a sizeable three-storey farmhouse, behind which is a large complex of stone-built agricultural buildings and some former cottages, much expanded during the mid 19th century and again in the 20th.<sup>82</sup>



Top left: Gate Farmhouse. Top right: estate cottage dated HLG (Henry Lomax Gaskell) 1868. Bottom left: former water fountain (dated 1859) next to the former Chequers inn. Bottom right: one of two pairs of former council houses on the Chipping Norton road (built c.1921-2).

<sup>78</sup> J. Ogilby, *Britannia* (1675 edn), Plate II; below, econ. hist. (non-agric.).

<sup>79</sup> NHLE, nos. 1198615; 1367898; 1053099; 1283735; 1053100 (all accessed Dec. 2024). For Asterleigh's farm bldgs, WODC planning docs, 24/02099/FUL, Heritage Statement.

<sup>80</sup> For Newman, e.g. OHC, QSD/L/172; *ibid.* E28/11/D/1.

<sup>81</sup> NHLE, nos. 1053097 and 1198622 (barns NE of Home Fm Cottage); 1053098 (stable NE of Home Fm Cottage); cf. OHC, 234/A and 234/M. For conversions, below (built character).

<sup>82</sup> OHC, 234/A and 234/M; OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.7 (1881 edn); SP4022–4122 (1974 edn); below, econ. hist. (since 1800).

Nineteenth-century estate housing at Over Kiddington includes a terrace of four at the street's northern end (dated 1844), and two broadly contemporary gabled houses by the Chipping Norton road, the westernmost one incorporating a formerly thatched range running back from the road. Their single-storey bay-windows recall their later use as shops.<sup>83</sup> Henry Lomax Gaskell (squire c.1855–89) added three pairs of Tudor Gothic cottages (dated 1858–61) along Over Kiddington's main street, and a new Tudor Gothic school and teacher's house (1856) at Nether Kiddington,<sup>84</sup> and probably also donated a gabled former water fountain (dated 1859) next to the Chequers inn, its rounded archway featuring a vermiculated keystone. The style looks more 18th- than 19th-century, and possibly the stonework was re-used from Kiddington Hall or park.<sup>85</sup> Other new building included the rectory house at Nether Kiddington, remodelled by E.G. Bruton in 1878 with an irregular five-bay front, and the nearby Kiddington Hall entrance lodge, part of Sir Charles Barry's remodelling of the main house from the 1840s.<sup>86</sup> The two pairs of limestone-built former council houses on the Chipping Norton road, erected c.1921–2,<sup>87</sup> are in local vernacular style, with a central dormer gable and ridge- and end-stacks. One has since been remodelled to include a tall round-headed window in the central gable, while its garden wall has piers with lion-shaped finials and metal railings. Other new building mostly comprised extensions to existing houses and conversion of farm buildings to domestic or business use,<sup>88</sup> generally using local styles and materials, although no conservation area was created. A telecommunications mast by the Chipping Norton road, erected c.1997, is shielded by trees.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> OS Map 1", sheet 45 (1833 edn); OHC, 234/A and 234/M; *ibid.* POX0193717 and POX0193722 (thatch and shops); below, *econ. hist.* (non-agric.).

<sup>84</sup> *Datestones*; below, *landownership*; *social hist.* (*educ.*).

<sup>85</sup> OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.7 (1881 edn); unpubl. report by Heather Horner and Sally Stradling (Jan. 2024).

<sup>86</sup> Below, *landownership* (manor houses); *relig. hist.* (rectory ho.). The lodge itself was added after 1851: OHC, 234/M.

<sup>87</sup> OHC, RDC13/2/A3/1, pp. 2, 8–9; not shown on OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.7 (1922 edn, revised 1919).

<sup>88</sup> e.g. at Home, Gate, and Asterleigh Farms: WODC online planning docs (accessed Jan. 2025).

<sup>89</sup> WODC online planning docs, W97/0071 (accessed Jan. 2025).