

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

## Spelsbury parish

### Landownership

Landownership was long dominated by the Beauchamps and their successors as lords of Spelsbury manor, which in the Middle Ages incorporated much of the parish. A wooded area at Ditchley formed a detached part of Bloxham manor (focused on Bloxham parish nine miles to the north), and by the late Middle Ages was part of a separate 'manor' of Ditchley, which in 1581 became the seat of the Lee family. They acquired Spelsbury manor in 1599 and added substantial estates in neighbouring Charlbury and Enstone, becoming lords of Enstone in 1660.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1720s George Lee, 2nd earl of Lichfield, built a lavish new mansion known as Ditchley House, which in 1766 became the seat of his descendants through marriage the Anglo-Irish Dillon family, Viscounts Dillon. The Dillon estate was partly broken up in the early 20th century when the house and over 2,000 a. (known by then as Ditchley Park) was acquired by Ronald Tree, MP, followed in 1953 by Sir David Wills of the Wills tobacco family. Wills established Ditchley Park as a centre for promoting Anglo-American relations and put most of the estate in trust.

A separate manor of Dean and Chalford, lying partly in Enstone, was established by 1066 and was owned by Oriel College, Oxford, from 1482 until the early 20th century, when it too was gradually broken up. The only substantial freehold was the rectory estate, appropriated by the collegiate church of St Mary at Warwick in 1392 and owned from 1546 to 1968 by Christ Church, Oxford.

### Spelsbury Manor to c.1600

The bishop of Worcester's 11th-century manor of Spelsbury originated probably in King Berhtwulf of Mercia's grant to Bishop Heahberht of 10 hides in Wychwood c.840–1.<sup>2</sup> Then as later it presumably included woodland in Charlbury and in the northern part of Ditchley,<sup>3</sup> as

<sup>1</sup> *VCH Oxon.* X, 135–6; above, Enstone, landownership.

<sup>2</sup> Sawyer S.196; DB, f. 238v. (wrongly including it under Warws.); *VCH Oxon.* I, 377 and n., noting that 'Speolesbyrig' was (incorrectly) described as a 15-hide estate in a list of early benefactions. Despite a recent reassessment, there seems no strong reason to doubt the identification of the Wychwood grant with Spelsbury: personal communication from Susan Kelly.

<sup>3</sup> OHC, E36/2/1/E/3 (Spelsbury woods, 1575); E36/2/2/F1/1 (Cockshoot in Henley grove); *ibid.* E36/1/1/D/10; B. Schumer (ed.), *Oxfordshire Forests 1246–1609* (ORS 64, 2004), p. 185 (no. 195); below, econ. hist.

well as land in Chadlington which eventually became the manor of Chadlington East End.<sup>4</sup> Spelsbury was subinfeudated before 1086 to Urse d'Abitot, passing on his death in 1108 to his son Roger. He was exiled c.1110 for the murder of a member of the royal household,<sup>5</sup> and c.1114 the manor came to Urse's daughter (reputedly called Emmeline) and her husband Walter de Beauchamp of Elmley Castle (Worcs.), whose family retained it until the 15th century. Walter was succeeded c.1131 by his son William (d. 1170), who was followed by his son and namesake (d. 1197), then by his grandsons William (who died a minor in 1211) and Walter (d. 1236).<sup>6</sup> Walter's second wife Angaret retained Spelsbury in dower until her death in 1280–3,<sup>7</sup> and was followed by Walter's grandson William (d. 1298), who had succeeded to the earldom of Warwick on the death of his maternal uncle William Mauduit in 1268.<sup>8</sup> Ela Longespée, widow of Thomas (d. 1242), 6th earl of Warwick, held Spelsbury in exchange for Sutton Coldfield manor (Warws.) from 1287 until her death a few months before William's.<sup>9</sup>

William's son Guy, earl of Warwick, died in 1315, three years after leading the abduction and execution of Edward II's unpopular favourite Piers Gaveston. Guy was succeeded by his young son Thomas (d. 1369), initially a ward of Hugh Despenser the elder, whose property (including that at Spelsbury) was attacked in the wake of the Contrariant uprising in 1322. By 1343 Thomas had granted the manor for life to Sir John de Lewknor (d. c.1356), lord of nearby Heythrop,<sup>10</sup> but soon after demised it to his younger son William de Beauchamp, Lord Bergavenny, who died in possession in 1411.<sup>11</sup> William's only son Richard was created earl of Worcester in 1420, and after his death two years later Spelsbury was held in reversion by his widow Joan, Lady Bergavenny.<sup>12</sup> On Joan's death in 1435 it reverted to Richard de Beauchamp (d. 1439), 13th earl of Warwick, whose son Henry, created duke of Warwick, was succeeded in 1446 by his infant daughter Anne.<sup>13</sup> On her death in 1449

<sup>4</sup> Above, Chadlington, landownership.

<sup>5</sup> ODNB, s.v. Abetot, Urse; J.A. Green, *The Government of England under Henry I* (1986) p. 177; Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, 439 (giving the date 1114).

<sup>6</sup> ODNB, s.v. Beauchamp, Walter (d. c.1131) and Walter (d. 1236); Keats-Rohan, *Domesday Descendants*, 314–15; *Book of Fees*, I, 449.

<sup>7</sup> ODNB, s.v. Beauchamp, Walter (d. 1236); *Cur. Reg.* XIX, pp. 360–1; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, p. 47; *Rot. Hund.* II, 746.

<sup>8</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* III, p. 375; ODNB, s.v. Beauchamp, Wm, 9th earl of Warwick; *Complete Peerage*, XII (2), 367–8.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, CP 25/1/285/23, no. 180; E. Amt, 'Ela Longespée's Roll of Benefits: Piety and Reciprocity in the Thirteenth Century', *Traditio*, 64 (2009), 2–8.

<sup>10</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* V, pp. 398, 408; XII, p. 304; *Cal. Close* 1313–18, 491; 1318–23, 544; *Cal. Chart.* 1341–1417, 24; BL, Add MS 28024, f. 14; Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, p. 96; *Complete Peerage*, XII (2), 370–8; VCH Oxon. XI, 134.

<sup>11</sup> BL, Add MS 28024, f. 14; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XIX, p. 304.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, CP 25/1/291/65, no. 44.

<sup>13</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XXIV, pp. 359–60; XXV, pp. 212–13; XXVI, pp. 270–1.

both her lands and her title of countess of Warwick passed to her paternal aunt Anne, who in 1487 settled her estates on Henry VII.<sup>14</sup>

Spelsbury remained in Crown hands for over a century, and was leased to John Higford, a sewer of the king's chamber, for £32 5s. 4½d. a year in 1537, excluding woods, the warren, and courts leet.<sup>15</sup> Subsequent lessees included Thomas Seymour (attainted in 1549), Baron Seymour of Sudeley; Anne Seymour (d. 1587), duchess of Somerset; and Sir Henry Lee (d. 1611) of Quarrendon, who purchased the reversion in 1570 and timber rights the following year.<sup>16</sup> Manorial offices, including those of steward and warrener, remained in the royal gift, the stewardship being usually held with that of Shipton-under-Wychwood and Burford.<sup>17</sup> Lee, high steward of Woodstock and sometime champion of Elizabeth I, purchased Ditchley 'manor' in 1581, and in 1599 bought Spelsbury manor (in the name of his brother Cromwell Lee, d. 1601) from Sir John Fortescue, who had acquired it the same year. Spelsbury manor and the Ditchley estate descended together thereafter.<sup>18</sup>

### Ditchley 'Manor' to c.1600

The royal manor of Bloxham included extensive woodland at Ditchley in 1086. The eastern part (Kingwood) belonged to Stonesfield by the 1230s, but the western part south of Grim's Ditch (including Bottom Wood and Sheer's Copse) remained part of Bloxham manor under its later secular lords.<sup>19</sup> By the 14th century the Ditchley land seems to have been treated as a separate estate, which was augmented in 1379 when Sir Roger Beauchamp (d. 1380), as lord of Bloxham, bought a house and 44 a. in Ditchley,<sup>20</sup> possibly the yardland which Henry of Ditchley had held of Spelsbury manor a hundred years earlier.<sup>21</sup> The Bloxham Beauchamps were ultimately succeeded by the St Johns,<sup>22</sup> of whom Sir John St John sold Ditchley 'manor' to Thomas Brydges of Cornbury in 1541.<sup>23</sup> By 1551 it was owned by Thomas Gibbons (d. 1575), who leased the Enstone part of Ditchley from the Popes:<sup>24</sup> the

<sup>14</sup> *Complete Peerage*, XII (2), 378–84; *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, V, A.11056; *Cal. Close* 1485–1500, 90.

<sup>15</sup> *L&P Hen. VIII*, XII (1), p. 350; TNA, LR 2/189, f. 73.

<sup>16</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1555–57, 196–200; 1569–72, 69, 303; 1599–1600, 58.

<sup>17</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1476–85, 157; 1485–94, 405; 1599–1600, 226; *L&P Hen. VIII*, I, p. 373; IV, pp. 903, 1271; X, pp. 358, 527–8; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1603–10, 356; TNA, LR 2/189, f. 75.

<sup>18</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1599–1600, 113; S. Simpson, *Sir Henry Lee (1533–1611): Elizabethan Courtier* (2014), 125; below (Ditchley 'manor').

<sup>19</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1234–7, 57; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, pp. x, 9 n., 188–9 and nn.; B. Schumer, 'The 1298/1300 Perambulations of Wychwood Forest – and After', *Oxoniensia* 69 (2004), 12–13 (noting the incorrect statement in 1609 or later that Sheer's Copse was part of Steeple Barton parish); *VCH Oxon.* IX, 66; XI, 183, 186.

<sup>20</sup> *VCH Oxon.* IX, 59; TNA, CP 25/1/191/23, no. 10; *Complete Peerage*, II, 44–5.

<sup>21</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 747.

<sup>22</sup> *VCH Oxon.* IX, 59; *Complete Peerage*, II, 45.

<sup>23</sup> Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 2564; for Brydges, *VCH Oxon.* XIX, refs at p. 387.

<sup>24</sup> TNA, LR 2/189, f. 68; *ibid.* PROB 11/77/374 (Thos Gibbons, 1575); OHC, E36/2/1/E/1.

Spelsbury part then comprised c.550 a., of which c.200 a. was held of Spelsbury manor in free socage.<sup>25</sup> In 1581 Gibbons's son and namesake sold the estate to Sir Henry Lee,<sup>26</sup> whose successors continued to lease the Enstone part (which they bought in 1647),<sup>27</sup> the combined Ditchley estate being managed as one along with Spelsbury manor's woods and assarts. In 1726 the combined Ditchley 'grounds' in Spelsbury and Enstone comprised 1,874 acres, with a further 44 a. (called Inotts) in Charlbury.<sup>28</sup>

### The Combined Estate from c.1600

In 1611 Sir Henry Lee was succeeded as lord of Spelsbury and Ditchley by his cousin Sir Henry Lee (d. 1631), 1st Baronet, of Quarrendon and later of Ditchley,<sup>29</sup> who with his wife Eleanor was commemorated by an elaborate marble and alabaster tomb-chest (with effigies) in the church.<sup>30</sup> Henry's son Sir Francis died of smallpox in 1639 (aged just 23), leaving a young son and namesake, and the family estates long remained under the direction of Francis's widow Anne (née St John, d. 1696), who married the Royalist cavalry commander Henry Wilmot (d. 1658), 2nd Viscount Wilmot of Adderbury and (later) earl of Rochester.<sup>31</sup> Her son Sir Henry Lee died also of smallpox in 1659, to be succeeded by his brother Sir Francis, who died aged 28 in 1667. His marriage to Lady Elizabeth Pope, daughter of Thomas Pope, 2nd earl of Downe, brought the Lees the lordship of neighbouring Enstone.<sup>32</sup>

Sir Francis was survived by his young son Edward (b. 1663), made earl of Lichfield on his betrothal to Charles II's illegitimate daughter Charlotte in 1674.<sup>33</sup> Edward, a Jacobite who retired from public life in 1688, was succeeded in 1716 by his son George (d. 1743), 2nd earl of Lichfield, by George's son and namesake (d. 1772), the 3rd earl, and by George's uncle Robert, the 4th and last earl.<sup>34</sup> On his death in 1776 the manor passed to the

<sup>25</sup> TNA, LR 2/189, f. 68; OHC, E36/2/1/E/1.

<sup>26</sup> OHC, O12/85D/1; *ibid.* E36/1/10/C/1. For Lee's further small purchases: Corbett, *History of Spelsbury*, 158–9.

<sup>27</sup> BL, Add. Ch. 55586 (1647).

<sup>28</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/E/1. Fee farm rent was still paid for assarts such as Fenny Chapel and Common Assarts in the 17th century: *ibid.* E36/1/11/F/4.

<sup>29</sup> ODNB, Lee, Sir Henry (1533–1611); TNA, PROB 11/159/546 (Sir Hen. Lee, Bt., 1631); *Complete Baronetage*, I, 78–9; OHC, par. reg. transcript.

<sup>30</sup> Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 481.

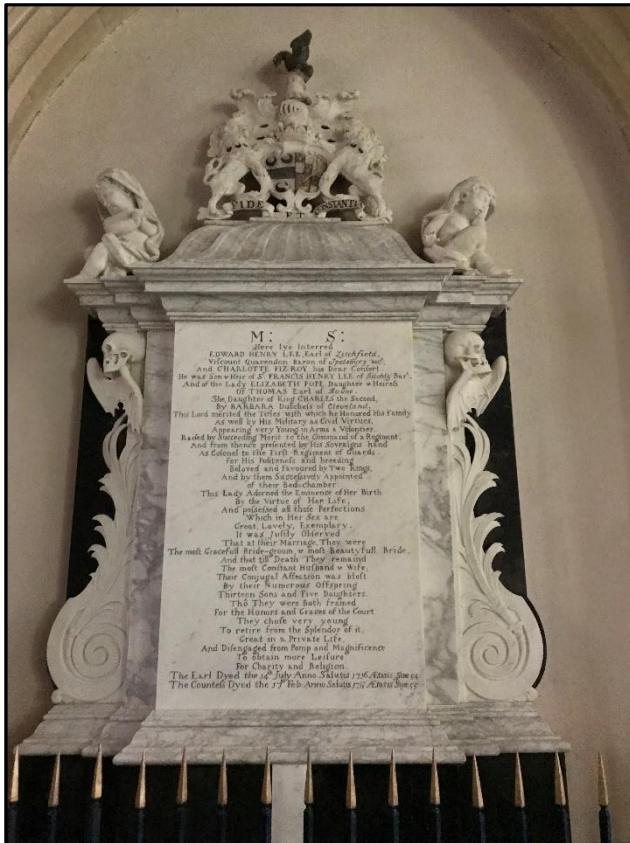
<sup>31</sup> ODNB, s.v. Wilmot, Henry, first earl of Rochester (1613–58); *Complete Baronetage*, I, 79; J.W. Johnson, "My Dearest Son": Letters from the Countess of Rochester to the Earl of Lichfield', *University of Rochester Library Bulletin*, 28:1 (1974), unpag.; OHC, par. reg. transcript.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, PROB 11/290/199 (Sir Henry Lee, Bt., 1659); OHC, par. reg. transcript; *Complete Baronetage*, I, 79; above, Enstone, landownership. From c.1592 to 1776 the Lees were also lessees of neighbouring Charlbury manor: *VCH Oxon.* X, 135.

<sup>33</sup> *Complete Peerage*, VII, 644–5; Johnson, "My Dearest Son", unpag.; H.A. Dillon, 'Some Familiar Letters of Charles II and James Duke of York Addressed to their Daughter and Niece, the Countess of Litchfield', *Archaeologia*, 58:1 (1902), 153–88.

<sup>34</sup> *Complete Peerage*, VII, 646–7.

2nd earl's daughter Charlotte and her husband Henry Dillon (d. 1787), an Irish peer and 11th Viscount Dillon. Both the estate and the viscountcy then passed in lineal succession to Charles (d. 1813), who changed his name to Dillon-Lee, Henry (d. 1832), and Charles (d. 1865), who was succeeded by his brothers Theobald (d. 1879) and Arthur (d. 1892), the 16th viscount.<sup>35</sup> In 1873 the estate totalled 5,444 a., of which the Spelsbury parish part comprised 2,714 a. in 1910.<sup>36</sup>



The monument to Edward Lee, earl of Lichfield (d. 1716) and his wife Charlotte (illegitimate daughter of Charles II), in Spelsbury church.

Arthur's son Harold (d. 1932) bequeathed land and houses in Spelsbury to his relative Kathleen Dillon (d. 1958), a great granddaughter of the 13th viscount, who lived in Spelsbury village (latterly in Spelsbury House).<sup>37</sup> Harold's nephew and successor Arthur (d. 1934), the 18th viscount, sold the rest of the estate in 1933 to the Anglo-American Ronald Tree, Conservative MP for Harborough (Leics.) from 1933 to 1945, who hosted early

<sup>35</sup> *Burke's Peerage* (1935 edn); TNA, PROB 11/1551/238 (Chas., Viscount Dillon, 1814).

<sup>36</sup> *Return of Owners of Land: Oxon.* (1873); OHC, DV X/88. Cf. E36/1/10/M/4 (1849 estate map).

<sup>37</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., T/xiv/c.5 (1936 letter); *Burke's Peerage* (1935 edn); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1939 edn). For larger sales in Enstone: above, Enstone, landownership.

wartime weekend visits by the prime minister Winston Churchill.<sup>38</sup> Tree sold the estate in 1949 to Seymour Egerton, 7th earl of Wilton, who immediately auctioned off land in Taston and elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> The remaining 2,749 a. was bought in 1953 by Sir David Wills (d. 1999) of the Wills tobacco family, the Spelsbury part (1,929 a.) including Model farm, Home farm, Lower Taston farm, Lodge farm, New Barn farm, and woodland.<sup>40</sup> Wills gave the house and surrounding parkland (c.280 a.) to the Ditchley Foundation (established in 1958 to support the Trans-Atlantic Alliance), and the rest (latterly almost 4,000 a., including land in Cleveley in Enstone) to the H.D.H. Wills 1965 Charitable Trust. Both retained ownership in 2024.<sup>41</sup>

## Spelsbury and Ditchley Manor Houses

### *Spelsbury manor house*

Spelsbury's medieval manor house appears to be marked by a buried stone-rubble platform in Court Close, and by the foundations of a substantial rectangular building to the north.<sup>42</sup> Stone, stone-tiled, and timber buildings mentioned in the 15th century included an old hall, steward's chamber, kitchen, dovecot, and gatehouse, and the whole (which included a large garden) was protected by flood gates against inundation from a nearby spring-fed stream.<sup>43</sup> The house was 'decayed' by c.1500, and 50 years later was said to lie 'flat in the ground', the stones and timber having been carried away and sold;<sup>44</sup> nevertheless in 1575 a building called the 'court house or manor house' was leased to John Osbaldeston, gentleman, along with Court Close itself (estimated at almost 6 a.).<sup>45</sup> By then the manor's lessee and later lord Sir Henry Lee lived at Ditchley, and in the 17th century some of the stonework was possibly used to build the nearby Manor Farm House in Spelsbury.<sup>46</sup> Even so some ruins and foundations survived c.1718, when the court house was still remembered.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Banbury Advertiser*, 19 Oct. 1933; R. Tree, *When the Moon was High: Memoirs of Peace and War, 1897–1942* (1975), 130–51.

<sup>39</sup> *Banbury Guardian*, 22 Sept., 24 Nov. 1949; above; Enstone, landownership.

<sup>40</sup> *Sale Cat., Ditchley Estate* (1953): copy in OHC; *Banbury Advertiser*, 22 July 1953.

<sup>41</sup> J. Graham, *Ditchley Park: The Story of a House and an Institution* (1996), chs. 4 and 5; ODNB, Wills, Sir (Hugh) David Hamilton (1917–99); *ibid.* Hodson, Henry Vincent (1906–99); [www.ditchley.com](http://www.ditchley.com) (accessed Sept. 2024); Char. Com. website, nos. 309657 and 1117747 (accessed Sept. 2024); information from Mike Montagu.

<sup>42</sup> HER, PRN 1147; SMA 21 (1991), 82–5. Part of the remains are in the churchyard thanks to its extension in 1892 and again in 1913: OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 2014/1 (consecrations).

<sup>43</sup> OHC, E36/2/2/F1/1–3, 15. See also TNA, C 133/86, no. 1 (1298); *ibid.* C 134/49, no. 16 (1315).

<sup>44</sup> OHC, E36/2/1/E/1–2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* E36/2/1/E/3.

<sup>46</sup> Above, landscape etc. (built character).

<sup>47</sup> *Par. Colln*, III, 276.

### ***Ditchley manor house (demolished 1720–2)***

The medieval manor house at Ditchley (mentioned in 1450) stood close to the site of its 1720s successor.<sup>48</sup> Much alteration or rebuilding was undertaken in preparation for a visit by Elizabeth I in 1592, a date commemorated on a lead waterspout.<sup>49</sup> Surrounding woodland was enclosed in a poorly documented deer park most likely created by Sir Henry Lee before 1611, which by c.1701 covered c.119 a. enclosed within a stone wall; a rabbit warren within the park had its own wall.<sup>50</sup> In 1609 the complex was described as a ‘fair house ... with gardens and orchards’, and in 1664 there was ‘a pretty bowling green’.<sup>51</sup> The house itself then had 34 hearths, putting it amongst the county’s largest.<sup>52</sup>

A drawing of c.1674 shows a single-storey stone-built hall lit by tall windows, with castellated square towers at each end; one of those formed the main entrance, approached along a causeway across a water-filled ditch or a moat.<sup>53</sup> The hall interior was adorned by stags’ antlers (later transferred to the new house) acquired during hunting jaunts by James I and Prince Henry in 1608 and 1610.<sup>54</sup> Attached timber-framed buildings with large chimney stacks formed a courtyard, presumably the ‘low, ancient, timber house’ mentioned in 1664;<sup>55</sup> one side was multi-gabled, containing a second entrance and (probably) the chapel mentioned in the 1630s and later, while a row of pentice-roofed structures was apparently in-line with the main range.<sup>56</sup> An upper-storey long gallery mentioned in 1718 was at least 29 yards long,<sup>57</sup> and in the 1680s–90s works were carried out on a clock house, wash house, dove house, and stables. Landscaping from 1688, undertaken by Edward Lee after his withdrawal from public life, included the creation of a mount and two arbours, while features retained after 1720 included a great pool or pond north of the house and (probably) a walled kitchen garden just over the parish boundary in Enstone.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Ditchley House (later Ditchley Park)***

<sup>48</sup> OHC, Mas. III/i/1; *ibid.* E36/1/10/M/1; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, p. 189; *Hearne’s Colln*, VI, 188; M. Cousins, ‘Ditchley Park – A Follower of Fashion’, *Garden History*, 39:2 (2011), 153 and Fig. 6 (John Loveday stated in 1734 that its location was where the menagerie then stood).

<sup>49</sup> *Hearne’s Colln*, VI, 192. For the ‘Ditchley’ portrait of Elizabeth: *ibid.* 189; *Country Life*, 9 Sept. 1933.

<sup>50</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/M/6; E36/18/10/E/3 (acreage c.1701); E36/1/10/M/1; Cousins, ‘Ditchley Park – A Follower of Fashion’, 147; *idem*, ‘Ditchley Park – from Park to Pleasure Ground’, *Garden History*, 41:1 (2013), Fig. 7; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, p. 189.

<sup>51</sup> Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, p. 189; E.S. de Beer (ed.), *The Diary of John Evelyn...* III (1955), 382–3.

<sup>52</sup> *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 172; *Oxon. Atlas*, pp. 96–7.

<sup>53</sup> Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. d. 314, f. 129.

<sup>54</sup> *Hearne’s Colln*, VI, 188–9.

<sup>55</sup> de Beer (ed.), *Diary of John Evelyn*, III, 382–3.

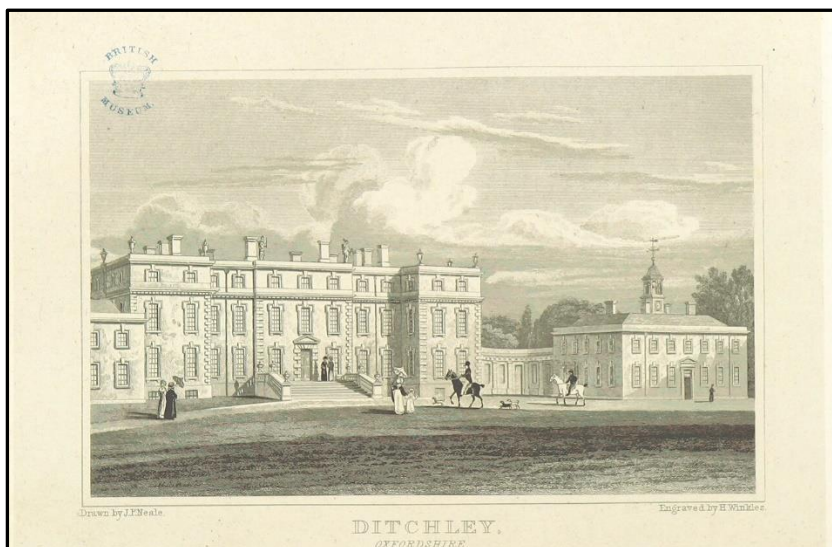
<sup>56</sup> Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. d. 314, f. 129; for chapel, OHC, par. reg. transcript; below, relig. hist.

<sup>57</sup> *Hearne’s Colln*, VI, 189.

<sup>58</sup> Cousins, ‘Ditchley Park – A Follower of Fashion’, 146–7, 154.



The present-day Ditchley House is the county's largest 18th-century mansion after nearby Blenheim and Heythrop. Built in Palladian style for George Lee, 2nd earl of Lichfield, in 1720–2, with interiors completed later, it stands facing south-eastwards on a hill offering distant views of Blenheim and Oxford.<sup>59</sup> Its core comprises a central 7-bay block with projecting 2-bay wings, all of 2½ storeys. That basic plan was designed by James Gibbs, following the layout of Buckingham House in London and of Gibbs's own short-lived Canons (Middx);<sup>60</sup> Gibbs's involvement may, however, have been largely restricted to the initial phases, and much input came from the master mason Francis Smith (d. 1738) of Warwick, who had already built the north-east pavilion or stable block before Gibbs became involved in the project.<sup>61</sup> A matching pavilion was subsequently added on the south-west, both pavilions topped by hipped roofs and slender cupolas, and linked to the main house by curving single-storey colonnades. Stone came partly from the old house and from local quarries (including one in Fulwell), roofing lead from Derbyshire and London, and over 86,000 bricks for the inside walls were bought from a Bladon lime-burner.<sup>62</sup>



J.P. Neale's view of Ditchley House, c.1818.

<sup>59</sup> For other accounts: *A New Oxford Guide* (1759 and later edns); C. Burlington et al., *The Modern Universal British Traveller* (1779), 237–8; *Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire... Official Guide* (1963 edn); A. Oswald, 'Ditchley, Oxfordshire – I & II', *Country Life*, 9 and 16 June 1934; J. Cornforth, 'Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire – I & II', *Country Life*, 17 and 24 Nov. 1988; Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 296–301; NHLE, no. 1251422 (Ditchley House incl. flanking pavilions, accessed Sept. 2024).

<sup>60</sup> Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 296.

<sup>61</sup> OHC, E36/1/12/Y/1; *ibid.* E36/1/12/F/11; A. Gomme, 'Architects and Craftsmen at Ditchley', *Architectural History*, 32 (1989), 85–104; ODNB, Smith, Francis (1672–1738).

<sup>62</sup> OHC, E36/1/12/Y/1; E36/2/22/D/3; E36/1/4/F/3; A.G. Hann, 'Kinship and Exchange Relations within an Estate Economy: Ditchley, 1680–1750' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis, 1999), 125.



The house as first built had 10 principal rooms on each floor, with two great stairs and four back stairs, cellars, and basement service rooms. The hall (31½ ft by 35 ft) had a 34-foot high ceiling, and connected to a saloon to the north.<sup>63</sup> Those rooms and the almost self-contained family apartments were largely completed by 1727, though the state rooms on the house's west side were only begun in 1736 and were not quite finished at the earl's death in 1743.<sup>64</sup> The south-western of the two semi-detached pavilions contained a chapel which latterly took on a parochial function.<sup>65</sup> Lavish interior decoration involved the Italian stuccatori Vassalli, Artari and Serena; William Kent and Henry Flitcroft (in the hall, which was modified in 1779–80 when decorative festoons were removed); and Flitcroft and Henry Cheere in the state rooms.<sup>66</sup> A curved conservatory by Richard Varden, connecting the main house to the west wing, was added in 1837.<sup>67</sup>

By 1918 Ditchley House was in a poor state, with 14 of its rooms (including state rooms) not in everyday use.<sup>68</sup> The most important pictures and some of the furniture were removed in 1933 after the death of the 17th Viscount Dillon,<sup>69</sup> but over the next two years Ronald Tree and (above all) his wife Nancy, an interior decorator, restored, altered and refurnished the interiors, working with the architect Paul Phipps. The refurbishment included the American innovation of installing numerous and comfortable bathrooms and well-appointed servants' bedrooms, as well as central heating and electric light, while the conservatory was replaced with a colonnaded quadrant.<sup>70</sup> Adaptations for use by the Ditchley Foundation in 1956–62, by the architect Charles Geddes Hyslop, included restoration of the 'derelict' west wing, and in 2006 Alec Cobbe restored and redecorated the hall. Additional internal restoration followed from 2014.<sup>71</sup>

The landscape setting of the new house included three radiating avenues to the south (two of them in Enstone parish), and a 700-ft-long gravelled terrace on the north side added in 1729, which followed the line of Grim's Ditch.<sup>72</sup> A menagerie (or aviary) was added c.1733, and the avenues extended and new cuttings or 'lights' created through the woods in

<sup>63</sup> J. Gibbs, *Book of Architecture* (1728 edn).

<sup>64</sup> Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 300; Gomme, 'Architects and Craftsmen'.

<sup>65</sup> Below, relig. hist.

<sup>66</sup> OHC, E36/1/12/F/12–13; Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 298–301.

<sup>67</sup> Cousins, 'Ditchley Park – from Park to Pleasure Ground', 52–4.

<sup>68</sup> OHC, E36/1/12/E/8.

<sup>69</sup> *Country Life*, 13 May and 9 Sept. 1933 (sales and bequest to the National Portrait Gallery); Tree, *When the Moon was High*, 37–8.

<sup>70</sup> Tree, *When the Moon was High*, 40–4; J. Cornforth, 'Ditchley Revisited', *Country Life*, 24 Oct. 1985; ODNB, s.v. Lancaster [née Perkins; other married names Field, Tree], Nancy Keene (1897–1994); *Sale Cat., Ditchley Estate* (1953), incl. photos.

<sup>71</sup> Graham, *Ditchley Park*, 30–1; Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 297–8.

<sup>72</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/M/1 (1726 map); E36/1/10/M/2 (1745 map). Para. based on Cousins, 'Ditchley Park – A Follower of Fashion'; idem, 'Ditchley Park – Pioneering Planting', *Garden History*, 40:1 (2012), 117–56; idem, 'Ditchley Park – from Park to Pleasure Ground'.

1735–43.<sup>73</sup> The 3rd earl added a walk and grotto to the west of the house in 1744, and in the 1750s (following small land purchases) created a more naturalistic landscape incorporating a Chinese and a classical temple, a sham spire, and a 'Chinese' bridge across the pond. A 'rotunda' temple (by Stiff Leadbetter) was added in 1759–63, followed by a major enlargement of the park southwards and eastwards in 1764–71, expanding it to c.264 acres. The enlargement was accompanied by removal of the formal terrace north of the house and by erection of paling fencing and lodges, including a 'Gothic' southern entrance lodge (now Lodge Farm).<sup>74</sup> A map of 1776 shows a seat in a tree west of the house, which presumably offered views of the new layout.<sup>75</sup>



The  
'Gothic'  
Lodge  
Farm.

Charles Dillon, the 12th viscount, created a 75-a. informal pleasure ground north of the house c.1801–6, with some input from J.C. Loudon, while Charles's son Henry and his wife added a tree-lined avenue south-east and south-west of the house.<sup>76</sup> The single-storeyed Kiddington Lodge and the two-storeyed Charlbury Lodges date from this period.<sup>77</sup> Box Wood (in Enstone) was grubbed up and added to the main park in 1854, taking its size to c.321 a., while woodland clearance north of the house facilitated the creation of New Park.<sup>78</sup> Minor planting and other works followed, and in 1935–9 Geoffrey Jellicoe created

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<sup>73</sup> NHLE, no. 1251513 ('Gas house, now electricity substation, probably formerly a menagerie', misdating to c.1745).

<sup>74</sup> OHC, E36/1/12/F/14 and 16; Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); NHLE, no. 1262767 (Lodge Farmhouse, accessed Sept. 2024). For other lodges of this period (now lost): Cousins, 'Ditchley Park – from Park to Pleasure Ground', 44.

<sup>75</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., Maps Enstone 1.

<sup>76</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/M/6; OS Map 1", sheet XLV (1833 edn).

<sup>77</sup> NHLE, no. 1262765 (Kiddington Lodge), with apparently 18th-cent. gate piers (no. 1251427); *ibid.* 1251428 and 1262766 (Charlbury Lodge, North and South).

<sup>78</sup> OHC, E36/1/11/E/1.

formal gardens around the house for Ronald Tree, his work including the restoration of the north-side terrace and the moving of the 1750s classical temple to the terrace's west end.<sup>79</sup>

## Dean Manor

Dean manor followed the same descent as the manor of Chalford in Enstone (described above), passing to Oriel College, Oxford, in 1482.<sup>80</sup> Medieval lords such as Richard of Duckmanton (alias Richard of Dean, fl. 1279) and the Lewknor family were locally based, and so, too, were some lessees or sub-lessees under Oriel College, amongst them Thomas Penistone (tenant 1535–56), Martin Culpepper and his widow Joyce (tenants 1604–19), the Oxford MP Thomas Rowney (d. 1759), and Joseph Walker and his widow Elizabeth (tenants 1768–1818), followed by Thomas Evans (resident 1818–60) and the Neild family, including Alfred Neild (tenant 1876–1908).<sup>81</sup> A small freehold called Cowbridge farm was added in 1820, and by 1910 the college's Spelsbury estate totalled 695 acres.<sup>82</sup> It was sold in 1921, mostly to the sub-tenant Brig.-Gen. Charles Winser (d. 1961), who lived initially in Dean House and later at nearby Butts Green (in Chadlington) and at Dean Buildings.<sup>83</sup> Winser sold the remaining 385 a. in one or two lots in 1957,<sup>84</sup> and in 1989 the house was sold with just 42½ acres.<sup>85</sup>

## Dean Manor House

A manor house existed by 1279, and was called a 'mansion house' in the early 16th century.<sup>86</sup> The 'very old and ruinous' house was demolished by Oriel College's lessee Edward Hill c.1706 and replaced by a compact 2½-storeyed square-built dwelling with a hipped roof and dormered attic, its five-windowed front featuring rusticated quoins and a central front door atop a flight of stairs, surmounted by a shell cover. Rooms included a hall,

<sup>79</sup> Tree, *When the Moon was High*, 40, 45; G. Jellicoe, 'Ronald Tree and the Gardens of Ditchley Park: the Human Face of History', *Garden History*, 10:1 (1982), 80–91; ODNB, s.v. Jellicoe, Sir Geoffrey Alan.

<sup>80</sup> Above, Enstone, landownership. For a map of 1743: J.L.G. Mowat, *Sixteen Old Maps of Properties in Oxon.* (1888).

<sup>81</sup> Rot. Hund. II, 741; Cal. Pat. 1370–4, 98; Oriel Coll. Arch., DELL 1 and 2; TNA, PROB 11/134/196; PROB 11/1609/276; Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, pp. 73–4; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1907 edns); *Cheltenham Chron.* 12 Sept. 1908.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, PROB 11/213/647; Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 72; OHC, DV X/88. The estate was reckoned at 673 a. in 1743: Oriel Coll. Arch., S II I 19.

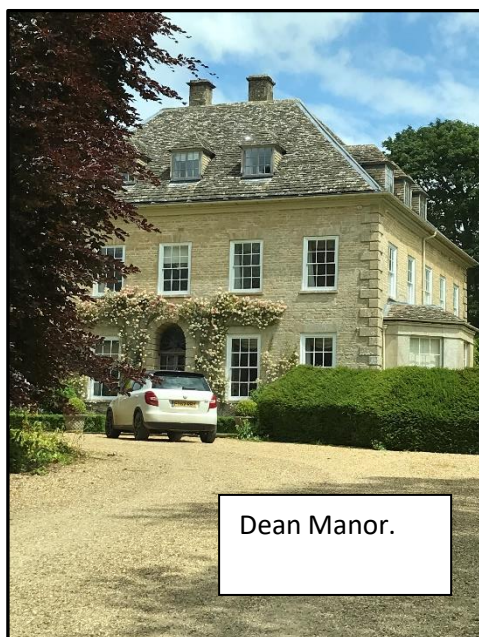
<sup>83</sup> Oriel Coll. Arch., estates bursar's report (1991); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1920 and later edns); *Cheltenham Chron.* 30 Aug. 1947.

<sup>84</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., T/viii/b.101; and for earlier small sales, *ibid.* T/Maps/SPE/12.

<sup>85</sup> Sale Cat., Dean Manor (1989): copy in OHC.

<sup>86</sup> Rot. Hund. II, 741; Oriel Coll. Arch., DLR 5; Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 75.

little and great parlours, and a kitchen, the upper floor served by great and back stairs. A 1½-storey side wing (with an inscribed corner stone bearing a date apparently 1702) housed a pantry, dairy and brewhouse.<sup>87</sup> By 1841 the ground-floor rooms had been reconfigured as a breakfast room, library, drawing room, dining room, and servants' hall, the latter accommodated by building a detached brewhouse and dairy. The upper floors included 15 bedrooms.<sup>88</sup> A three-windowed single-storey bay was added to the original (south) entrance front before 1880, and the entrance (with a new arched doorway) switched to the west side.<sup>89</sup> A semi-circular driveway to the west of the house was added in the later 20th century, by which time four of the 12 bedrooms were part of a self-contained second-floor flat.<sup>90</sup> Roof dormers on the west side were added after 2002.<sup>91</sup>



## Rectory Estate and Tithes

The rectory estate (valued at £13 6s. 8d. a year in 1291) was appropriated by the collegiate church of St Mary, Warwick, in 1392, passing to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1546.<sup>92</sup> The estate included part of the rectory house complex south of the church (the rest of it transferred to

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<sup>87</sup> Oriel Coll. Arch., DELL 1 (31 Dec. 1705 lease, incl. drawing); *Sale Cat., Dean Manor* (1989): copy in OHC (incl. photos); NHLE, no. 1251419 (Manor House, mentioning an inscribed corner stone on the subsidiary range with a date interpreted as being '1702').

<sup>88</sup> Oriel Coll. Arch., DLR 5.

<sup>89</sup> NHLE, no. 1251419 (Manor House); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.8 (1881 edn).

<sup>90</sup> OS Map 1:2500, SP3422 (1976 edn); *Sale Cat., Dean Manor* (1989): copy in OHC.

<sup>91</sup> NHLE, no. 1251419 (photo of 2002).

<sup>92</sup> *Tax. Eccl.* 311; C. Fonge (ed.), *The Cartulary of St Mary's Collegiate Church, Warwick* (2004), pp. 187–192, 414; L&P Hen. VIII, XXI(2), 335, 338; below, relig. hist.

the vicar), a cottage and yardland in Dean, two other cottages, c.6 a. in Taston, and tithes.<sup>93</sup> Christ Church received 157 a. in lieu of glebe and tithes at Dean's enclosure in 1779 and 386 a. at Spelsbury's enclosure in 1803, the whole estate comprising 549 a. in 1910.<sup>94</sup> The rectory buildings were partly demolished in 1468 (leaving a barn and small cottage), while a detached farmstead north of Dean hamlet was established by c.1700 and possibly earlier.<sup>95</sup> Lessees of the estate included members of the Osbaldeston family (who lived in Chadlington) and, from 1666 to 1881, the Lee family and their successors the Dillons;<sup>96</sup> the rent was fixed at £13 6s. 8d. a year plus 5 qrs of wheat and 20 qrs of malt, though much larger sums were paid by local farmers as sub-lessees.<sup>97</sup> The estate was enlarged to 570 a. by the purchase in 1921 (from Oriel College) of a house called Spelsburydown, and was sold to David Wills in 1968, passing in 1999 to his daughter Catherine (d. 2022). In 2023 it was sold to John Hartz of Manor House, Chadlington Eastend.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Oxon. Eyre*, 1241, p. 92; BL, Add. Ch. 55587; Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 5, 23; Oriel Coll. Arch., S II I 19; above, landscape etc.

<sup>94</sup> OHC, Dean and Spelsbury enclo. awards; *ibid.* DV X/88; Ch. Ch. Arch., Maps Spelsbury 2.

<sup>95</sup> *Cartulary of St Mary's*, p. 195; Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 5, 21, 34; *ibid.* *Sale Cat., Spelsbury Downs Farm, Dean* (1968); NHLE, no. 1262797 (barn NNE of Spelsburydown); above, landscape (settlement).

<sup>96</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 1–5; *ibid.* rectory leases.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* MS Estates 82, ff. 19–24; OHC, E36/2/7/D/1; E36/2/17/D/1–2.

<sup>98</sup> *Sale Cat., Spelsbury Downs Farm, Dean* (1968): copy in Ch. Ch. Arch.; information from John Hartz. For separate cottage sales: Ch. Ch. Arch., rectory leases; Maps Spelsbury 12.