

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

# Churchill

Economic History

Until the 20th century most of Churchill's inhabitants were employed in agriculture. The traditional sheep-and-corn husbandry characteristic of the Cotswolds was widely practised from the Middle Ages, with cattle and pigs reared on a significant scale, and haymaking a prominent feature owing to the parish's extensive meadows. A mix of freehold, leasehold, and copyhold tenures in the 16th and 17th centuries gave way in the 18th to short-term rack rents and leaseholds for lives, held from the Rolles who, as lords, enclosed the parish by Act of Parliament in 1788. Nine ring-fenced farms emerged following successive reorganizations, three of them run from the village, and six from outlying post-enclosure farmhouses. As elsewhere in the region, farming shifted from arable to dairying during the early 20th-century agricultural depression, and continued under new owner-occupiers following the estate's break-up in 1922. Watermills operated from the 11th to the 19th century, and the parish also supported the usual range of rural crafts and trades, including a short-lived 19th-century brickworks and some 19th- and 20th-century shops.

## The Agricultural Landscape

Two open fields existed in the 13th and 14th centuries, and possibly still in the 16th, when Alice Mullington (d. 1591) left corn in the 'over field'.<sup>1</sup> Within the fields, tenants' holdings lay dispersed amongst scattered strips and furlongs in the usual way.<sup>2</sup> By the 18th century the fields were arranged into seven 'quarters' called Cot, Fiddicksmoor, Hensdon, Quarhill, Ramwell, Swailsford, and Woodside, and covered 1,825 a. extending south-westwards from the Chipping Norton boundary to the 380-a. Churchill heath. The fields were still subject to a two- or three-course rotation of cropping and fallow, while the heath was open to cattle from 14 May to the end of harvest, when it was grazed with the open fields until its enclosure on 7 March. It also provided furze and thorns which were distributed amongst tenants by lot.<sup>3</sup> Meadows (reckoned at 170 a. in 1086) fringed the parish's extensive watercourses, and by

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 311 (mentioning E and W fields); *St Frideswide's Cart.* II, pp. 285–6, 295–6; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 43/1/85.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 40, f. 99 (vicar's glebe in 1722).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Lo. VI/1; L. Rose, *The History of Churchill* (1934), 50–5.

the 18th century were partly enclosed, although 84 a. (called Cot, Fiddicksmoor, Millham, and Shuttenham) were still allocated annually by lots. Pasture (120 a. in 1086) lay mostly on the higher ground, and was also partly enclosed and partly open, the 64-a. downs forming part of Woodside quarter. Each open-field yardland carried the right to common two horses, three cows, and 24 sheep.<sup>4</sup> Fields, commons, and meadows together accounted for four fifths of the parish on the eve of enclosure in 1788, and half of the enclosed farmland was worked as arable in 1870, dropping to a third in 1900.<sup>5</sup>



*Looking eastwards from the Swail brook on Churchill's boundary with Kingham. The house in the foreground was built for the railway crossing, and the church tower is just visible on the hill behind.*

No woodland was mentioned in 1086, and 10 a. belonging to the manor in 1298 (worth 4*d.* an acre) lay in Wychwood forest, where the manor's unfree yardlanders owed carrying services probably mostly for firewood and underwood.<sup>6</sup> An assignment of dower the following year, however, mentioned 14 a. of demesne wood, rising to 20 a. (all of it apparently within the parish) by the 1460s, when it was stripped of 300 oaks, 100 elms, and 50 loads of underwood.<sup>7</sup> An acre of wood belonging to St Frideswide's priory was let in the 1190s for 12*d.* a year, although another tenant paid only 6*d.* since the priory retained the right to cut wood to repair its plough.<sup>8</sup> Sixteenth- and 17th-century inhabitants regularly left timber and firewood,<sup>9</sup> some taken possibly from hedgerows, although a bequest of 10 loads of wood to the poor by William Clerk in 1553 suggests that not everyone had access, and in 1560 one inhabitant was in debt to the lord's woodward.<sup>10</sup> By the 1780s the manor included 121 a. of wood all kept in hand, including 27½ a. at Sarsgrove (adjoining larger woods in

<sup>4</sup> DB, f. 157; OHC, Lo. VI/1.

<sup>5</sup> OHC, QSD/A book 110; TNA, MAF 68/255; MAF 68/1851; below (parl. enclo. and later).

<sup>6</sup> TNA, C 133/85/1; *Rot. Hund.* II, 745.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 311–12; TNA, CP 40/881, m. 451. The byname 'woodward' was recorded in 1279: *Rot. Hund.* II, 745.

<sup>8</sup> *St Frideswide's Cart.* II, pp. 263–4.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 3/2/70; 296/1/32; 43/2/42, etc.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, PROB 11/36/256; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 183.323.

Sarsden), and 90½ a. at Churchill heath, where names such as Dorrin's Lot (7¾ a.) and Hall's Knowl (42½ a.) suggest that some woodland parcels may have formerly been leased. By 1817 the total (still in hand) was 154 a.,<sup>11</sup> and a broadly similar amount remained until Churchill Heath wood was cleared around the 1950s. Sarsgrove wood and a few small plantations remained in 2024.<sup>12</sup>

## Medieval Farming

In 1086 Churchill manor was severely under-stocked, with only 12 ploughteams on land sufficient for 20. Its demesne farm covered three ploughlands, and nine tenant ploughlands were shared among 24 *villani* and 14 bordars. The manor's £10 annual value was unchanged from 1066, the income including tenants' rents and the proceeds of two mills and extensive meadow and pasture.<sup>13</sup> By the 13th century demesne and tenant lands probably lay intermixed in the parish's two open fields, which were presumably ploughed and fallowed alternately.<sup>14</sup> Grazing for cattle and sheep was available in the fallow field and in specified common pastures,<sup>15</sup> and the lord held additional demesne pasture, in which Nicholas Nowers confirmed Bruern abbey's right to graze eight oxen, eight cows, one draught animal, two sows, and 200 ewes annually alongside his own animals in 1239.<sup>16</sup> By 1298 the demesne arable covered four carucates (384 a.) valued at 3*d.* an acre (£4 16*s.* in total), whilst 20 a. of meadow was valued at the high sum of 6*s.* 8*d.* an acre (£6 13*s.* 4*d.*). Pasture, wood, and fishponds contributed a further 17*s.* 6*d.* towards the manor's total valuation of £35 16*s.* 6*d.*, suggesting that demesne farming yielded around a third of the lord's annual income, with tenants' rents and fines supplying the remaining two thirds.<sup>17</sup>

In 1299 Joan Nowers' third of the manor (assigned in dower) included a barn, sheepcote, fishpond, and garden, although the lord retained the malt kiln and bakehouse. Joan also claimed £5-worth of meadow at Millham as her marriage portion,<sup>18</sup> and the parish's extensive and highly valued meadows certainly suggest that haymaking was particularly profitable, although in the early 13th century Bruern abbey cultivated some former meadow for which it subsequently owed grain tithes.<sup>19</sup> In the 1280s the abbey's

<sup>11</sup> OHC, Lo. VI/4, p. 11; Lo. VI/9; Lo. VI/11, pp. 23–5; Lo. VII/1–2 (maps).

<sup>12</sup> OS Maps 6", Oxon. XIX–XX (1885 and later edns); SP 22 SE (1955 edn); *ibid.* 1:25000, sheets 45 and 191 (2005–6 edns).

<sup>13</sup> DB, f. 157; above (agric. landscape); below (milling).

<sup>14</sup> *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 311–12; *St Frideswide's Cart.* II, pp. 285–6, 295–6.

<sup>15</sup> Above (agric. landscape).

<sup>16</sup> *Oxon. Fines*, p. 107; cf. *ibid.* 119, granting the rector the right to graze 8 oxen and 2 cows.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, C 133/85/1.

<sup>18</sup> *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 311–12; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* III, pp. 365–6.

<sup>19</sup> *St Frideswide's Cart.* II, pp. 266–8. Cf. *Oxon. Fines*, p. 209 (mentioning 2½ yardlands of meadow claimed by the Nowerses in 1278).

parish operations were overseen by its granger,<sup>20</sup> and the Nowerses had a hayward,<sup>21</sup> while the medieval field name *Refham* (meaning ‘reeve’s hamm’ or meadow) suggests that the demesne farm was overseen by a reeve,<sup>22</sup> drawn presumably from amongst the manor’s unfree tenants. The unfree yardlanders each occupied 24 a. for 18d. rent, tallage, and several days’ labour service, including ploughing, harrowing, harvesting, haymaking, and carting. By 1298, however, most services may have been commuted to cash payments totalling 15s. per yardland.<sup>23</sup>

Mixed farming continued after the Black Death, though with an increased emphasis on sheep. In 1359 the lord John Nowers bought a flock of 249 wethers from Charingworth (Glos.), while his brother Roger’s debt to a London merchant in 1374 may indicate involvement in the wool trade.<sup>24</sup> By the 15th century the absentee Barentins leased the demesne, receiving £46 in tenants’ rents in the 1450s–60s, and investing in demesne and tenant buildings including a barley barn. Tenants enjoyed common grazing at the rate of four cows and 24 sheep per yardland, their most valuable livestock (judging from the payment of heriots) being horses, cows, and calves.<sup>25</sup> Holdings varied in size, those tenants cultivating multiple yardlands probably selling produce in local markets such as Chipping Norton and Stow-on-the-Wold (Glos.).<sup>26</sup> Farming practices were regulated by the manor court, which ordered the removal of nuisances and maintenance of shared resources.<sup>27</sup>

## The 16th Century to Parliamentary Enclosure

Enclosure for sheep farming seems not to have occurred on any scale until 1512 when, following the harvest, William Barentin enclosed 300 a. of arable and converted it to pasture. The land had formerly supported 16 inhabitants using three ploughs, who were left unemployed; its annual value, however, rose from £15 to a remarkable £41, probably in increased rents from sheep farmers. One of Barentin’s tenants enclosed a similar acreage (worth £12 a year) around the same time,<sup>28</sup> and sheep were also grazed on the parish’s

---

<sup>20</sup> TNA, JUST 1/705, m. 6; for its estate and grange, above, landownership (other estates).

<sup>21</sup> *Cal. Inq. Misc.* II, p. 530.

<sup>22</sup> *St Frideswide’s Cart.* II, pp. 266, 268; *PN Oxon.* II, 344, 463.

<sup>23</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 745; TNA, C 133/85/1.

<sup>24</sup> *Cal. Inq. Misc.* III, p. 132; TNA, C 131/192/3; C 131/192/13. Roger later bought Fifield manor: *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 322.

<sup>25</sup> Northants. Archives, FH 358–365. By the 18th cent. common rights were reduced to 24 sheep and 3 cows: above (agric. landscape).

<sup>26</sup> C. Dyer, *A Country Merchant, 1495–1520: Trading and Farming at the End of the Middle Ages* (2012), 76.

<sup>27</sup> Northants. Archives, FH 362–363.

<sup>28</sup> I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–18* (1897), I, 359–60, 384–5; *VCH Oxon.* II, 189; cf. above (agric. landscape).

commons, those guilty of over-pasturing (including Bruern abbey's lessee) being fined by the manor court.<sup>29</sup>

Arable farming nevertheless remained important, the cultivated area being sometimes extended by temporarily fencing off (or 'hitching') parts of the fallow field,<sup>30</sup> and not all tenants kept sheep. Holdings were typically sown with wheat, barley (some of it malted for brewing), and pulses, while other livestock included horses, beef and dairy cattle, and pigs. William Beard (d. 1589) left £14-worth of corn and hay, cattle and horses worth £16, and a few pigs and poultry, whilst Alice Coles (d. 1597) and William Minchin (d. 1598) left similar corn and stock along with small flocks of (respectively) nine and 30 sheep.<sup>31</sup> Apart from the large demesne lessees, most tenants probably still occupied between one and two yardlands, 14 inhabitants in 1577 being taxed on land and goods worth between £1 and £6.<sup>32</sup> Use of hired labour is hinted at in a woman's request that her son pay for the ploughing of an acre left to his sisters,<sup>33</sup> and debts in cash and kind reflect trading links (sometimes with quite distant places) and extension of credit.<sup>34</sup>

Production for the market encouraged the emergence by the 17th century of several large holdings occupied by wealthy newcomers such as George Dodford (d. 1639) and George Morecroft (d. 1649), who benefited from the temporary break-up of Churchill manor.<sup>35</sup> The lay impropiator Thomas Mullington (d. 1681) left goods worth the enormous sum of £742, including £120-worth of growing corn, and cattle and sheep totalling £40 each.<sup>36</sup> Most inhabitants farmed on a more modest scale, producing grain, milk, cheese, beef, wool, and bacon for consumption and sale: examples are the husbandmen George Horseman (d. 1671), Richard Alder (d. 1676), and John Haynes (d. 1686), who had separate wheat, barley, and pulse barns, and left 10s.-worth of dung for manuring the fields.<sup>37</sup> Pasture, meadow, and haymaking remained important: George Morecroft (d. 1661) left 'several parcels' of hay worth £25, while a survey of 1640 valued the parish's arable at £8 a yardland, but its pasture at £11.<sup>38</sup> Leases of demesne meadow attracted a premium in the 1630s, and the Walters (as lords) probably kept in hand only the manor's woodland.<sup>39</sup> Tenants still held by a mix of freehold, leasehold, and copyhold (the latter granted for up to

<sup>29</sup> Northants. Archives, FH 365–366; below, social hist. (1500–1800).

<sup>30</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 43/1/85.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 3/2/70; 296/1/32; 43/2/24.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, E 179/162/341; for the lessees, above, landownership (other estates); below, social hist. (1500–1800).

<sup>33</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 190.365.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 181.33; 181.166; 182.195; 185.286 (incl. Stretton-on-Fosse, Warws.).

<sup>35</sup> TNA, PROB 11/179/246; above, landownership (other estates); below, social hist. (1500–1800).

<sup>36</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 141/2/6; above, landownership (rectory).

<sup>37</sup> OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 33/3/31; 113/3/1; 298/2/59.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 44/4/14; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1639–40, 466; cf. above (medieval).

<sup>39</sup> *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1634–9*, pp. 6–7; for woodland, above (agric. landscape).

three lives), whilst a cottage and smallholding was let to the tailor Francis Lee (d. 1665) for 99 years.<sup>40</sup> Labourers were mentioned sporadically, the wealthy Thomas Mullington maintaining a servant's chamber and perhaps employing live-in farm workers.<sup>41</sup>

During the 18th century the Walters and their successors the Rolles reorganized the manor's tenures, introducing short rack-rented leases for around half the manor's open-field yardlands. One example was Grange Farm, let to William Brooks for 12 years from 1783 with 4¾ yardlands and 120 a., for a total annual rent of £75 13s. The remaining yardlands were still leased for lives (presumably on payment of sizeable entry fines), and on the eve of enclosure were held for small quitrents negotiated in the 1720s–30s. Several freeholders also paid nominal rents. Despite ongoing consolidation, only three out of 16 rack-rented holdings were then over 100 a., the parish's complex landholdings being reflected in the 1785 land tax, when Thomas Hailes paid on eight separate holdings and Thomas Boulter on seven. Farming practices varied. Grange farm was three quarters arable, whereas Elizabeth Boulter's 116-a. holding was four fifths grass, for which she paid an extra 2s. a year to the fieldsman to graze additional livestock beyond the traditional stints. Over all the manor covered 86¾ yardlands with commons for 170½ horses, 271½ cattle, and 2,054 sheep, and c.55 per cent of the cultivable land was cropped on a two- or three-course rotation of cereals, pulses, and fallow.<sup>42</sup>

## Parliamentary Enclosure and Later

In 1784 Denys Rolle unsuccessfully put the manor (and the wider Sarsden estate) up for sale, but then in 1787 gave notice of his intention to enclose Churchill, Sarsden, and neighbouring Lyneham.<sup>43</sup> A private Act was obtained that year, and the enclosure was completed in 1788. Rolle and his son John received around three fifths of the 2,216 a. awarded in Churchill, the lay impropriator receiving another fifth in lieu of glebe and tithes. Most of the rest was divided amongst c.20 freeholders, in allotments ranging from 54 a. to less than an acre.<sup>44</sup> On the Rolles' manor, 14 newly enclosed farms covering 1,661 a. in all were leased at rack rents for terms of between 12 and 18 years (starting in 1787), run from existing farmhouses in the village. The largest (the 388-a. Grange farm) was let to Henry Colbourn for an annual rent of £303, while five others covered 146–235 a. each. Ten further holdings (totalling 215 a.) were still leased for lives, and the whole estate (including demesne

<sup>40</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 169/3/20; TNA, C 8/311/152; below.

<sup>41</sup> OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 84/1/28; 141/2/6; 173/2/27.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Lo. VI/1; *ibid.* QSD/L/79; *A Particular of the Manors of Sarsden, Lyneham, etc.* (1786) (copy in BL, available online at <https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>).

<sup>43</sup> Oxf. Jnl Syn. 7 Aug. 1784, 20 Jan. 1787; *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 175; above, landownership.

<sup>44</sup> Sarsden Enclo. Act, 27 Geo. III, c. 27 (private); OHC, enclo. award; above, landownership (rectory).



woods and freehold rents) was valued at £1,779 a year. Arable remained concentrated in the newly enclosed open fields, with the old-enclosed grounds mostly put down to grass, although at Grange farm almost 40 a. of former pasture (called 'leasow') was under cultivation.<sup>45</sup> The farms were reorganized by the Langstons (as Churchill's new lords) in the early 19th century, incorporating several new outlying farmhouses. One such was Churchill Heath Farm, built for the rectory estate's lessee, but bought by John Langston in 1804–5.<sup>46</sup>



*Churchill in 1797. Detail from Richard Davis's county map showing the parish shortly after enclosure. Several outlying farmhouses were built soon afterwards.*

By 1850 James Langston leased c.2,000 a. in 12 separate holdings, and kept a further 500 a. (including 148 a. of woodland) in hand. Eight farms covered between 45 a. and 389 a. each, and employed 95 men and boys between them, the farmers coming mostly from in and around Churchill and the Cotswolds. The parish as a whole was roughly half cultivated and half pasture, with traditional meadow kept under grass, and crops restricted to the higher ground.<sup>47</sup> Cereals (wheat, barley, and oats) accounted for two thirds of the arable in 1870, and pulses and fodder crops (mostly turnips and swedes) the remaining third, while

<sup>45</sup> OHC, Lo. VI/4; Lo. VI/7; Lo. VII/1–2 (maps).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Lo. VI/9; Lo. VII/3–4 (maps); above, landscape etc. (medieval and later settlement); landownership (rectory).

<sup>47</sup> OHC, Lo. VI/11; TNA, HO 107/1732.

livestock numbered 73 horses, 261 cattle, 2,437 sheep, and 85 pigs.<sup>48</sup> Late 19th-century agricultural depression reduced the sown acreage to around a third by 1900, with wheat losing out to barley and oats, although cereals still accounted for two thirds of the overall crop. Sheep numbers fell to 1,552, suggesting that traditional folding on the arable was in decline, while numbers of breeding and dairy cattle increased to 468,<sup>49</sup> their milk transported six days a week from the railway siding and halt near Churchill mill.<sup>50</sup> Pig numbers also rose, prompting the establishment of a pig assurance association in 1907.<sup>51</sup> By 1910 the manor included nine leasehold farms of between 138 a. and 376 a., three of them (Churchill, Grange, and Mount) run from the village, and six (Churchill Grounds, Churchill Heath, Conduit, East Churchill Grounds, Rynehill, and Sarsgrove) from outlying farmhouses. All were sold at the manor's break-up in 1922, the majority to sitting tenants.<sup>52</sup>

Mixed farming with a strong pastoral bias continued under the farms' new owner-occupiers. By 1930 only around a quarter of the farmland was cropped, two thirds of it with oats, barley, and wheat, while the three quarters under grass supported 80 horses, 661 cattle, 1,069 sheep, 189 pigs, and 3,865 ducks, geese, and poultry. Between them the farms employed 58 workers.<sup>53</sup> A decade or so later two thirds of the land remained under grass, although wartime demand for cereals prompted the ploughing up of around a fifth of the pasture and its sowing with oats, wheat, and barley. Government inspectors generally found the farms to be good, and particularly commended the dairy at the Crudges' Churchill farm (then 182 a.), and Thomas Rose's pedigree dairy shorthorn herd at Churchill Heath (238 a.). By the early 1940s several farms had again changed hands, Churchill Grounds (187 a.) passing to the Gillsons of Cornwell manor, Grange farm (247 a.) to the cattle dealers and farmers Richard and John Kelland, and Rynehill (355 a.) to University College, Oxford, whose tenant George Morris agreed an initial seven-year lease at an annual rent of £500. Rynehill was a 'good farm on heavy land', where Morris bred pedigree beef and dairy cattle, raised sheep, pigs, and poultry, and sowed two fifths of the land mostly with cereals.<sup>54</sup>

Mixed farming continued after the Second World War, though as elsewhere the arable was gradually expanded to cover three quarters of Churchill's farmland by 1988, over 85 per cent of it sown with wheat or barley alongside smaller quantities of oilseed rape and fodder crops. Eight farms of over 100 a. each continued in 1970, when four concentrated on dairying, three on cereals, and one on pigs and poultry, the number of farms falling to six by

---

<sup>48</sup> TNA, MAF 68/255.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. MAF 68/1851; cf. Orr, *Oxon. Agric.* statistical plates.

<sup>50</sup> W. Hemmings, P. Karau and C. Turner, *The Banbury and Cheltenham Direct Railway* (2 vols, 2004), II, 356, 361–2; above, landscape etc. (railway).

<sup>51</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 17 Apr. 1907.

<sup>52</sup> OHC, DV/X/41 (with maps); above, landownership.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, MAF 68/3525; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1920–4 edns).

<sup>54</sup> TNA, MAF 32/911/82; Univ. Coll., EB7/71/C1/1.



1988. Sheep were largely eliminated, and the number of agricultural workers fell to 27–8.<sup>55</sup> Several farms changed hands, the sales of Sarsgrove (215 a.) and Rynehill (337 a.) in 1961 fetching high prices averaging £130–£133 per acre.<sup>56</sup> Some farmhouses were separated from their farmland, which was run from neighbouring parishes or by commercial contractors,<sup>57</sup> while the shift to arable left some former farm buildings unused, several of which were later converted to other purposes including residential, leisure, light industrial, and commercial.<sup>58</sup> Amongst other initiatives in the 2020s, Alex James operated a successful cheese-making business at Churchill Heath, and at Mount farm sheep were reintroduced on a small 11-ha. holding producing hay.<sup>59</sup> A livestock market transferred to Kingham station from Charlbury in 1955 closed the following decade.<sup>60</sup>

## Non-Agricultural Activities

In 1327 the lord Roger Nowers was licensed to hold a weekly Friday market and a three-day annual fair at Holy Trinity (which falls in May or June).<sup>61</sup> Neither was mentioned later, their failure due probably to competition from neighbouring Chipping Norton, although 13th- and 14th-century occupational bynames, including those of cooper, cordwainer, ironworker (Ferour), mason, pointer, smith (Faber), stonecutter, and tailor, suggest that the parish supported a fairly wide range of medieval crafts and trades.<sup>62</sup> A large 12th- or 13th-century ceramic cistern used for brewing ale was found in the village, and brewing continued in the 16th century.<sup>63</sup>

Stone and stone-slate quarrying also took place from the Middle Ages.<sup>64</sup> The field name Quarhill (north-east of the village) means ‘quarry hill’, and several quarries there remained active in the early 20th century, closing by the 1970s.<sup>65</sup> A house called ‘Slate Place’ (at ‘town’s end’) was occupied by Richard Mason in the 15th century, and a rough

<sup>55</sup> TNA, MAF 68/5189; MAF 68/6123.

<sup>56</sup> *Country Life*, 9 Nov. 1961, 4 Jan. 1962.

<sup>57</sup> e.g. *Sale Cat.*, *Grange Farm* (1972): copy in OHC, SC 188; WODC online planning docs, 20/03180/FUL (Mount Fm); OCC Register of Landowner Statements, no. 1797 (Cornwell estate) (accessed online).

<sup>58</sup> e.g. WODC online planning docs, 17/03741/FUL (Churchill Heath Fm); 20/03180/FUL (Mount Fm); 21/00592/FUL (Rynehill Fm).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 21/04104/PDET28 (Mount Fm); 22/01773/FUL (Churchill Heath); [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex\\_James\\_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_James_(musician)) (accessed July 2023).

<sup>60</sup> VCH Oxon. X, 145; R. Mann, *The History of Churchill and Sarsden* (2013), 128.

<sup>61</sup> *Cal. Chart.* 1327–41, 8.

<sup>62</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 745–6; TNA, E 179/161/8–10; VCH Oxon. XXI, 94–5.

<sup>63</sup> D.A. Hinton, ‘A medieval cistern from Churchill’, *Oxoniensia* 33 (1968), 66–70; Northants. Archives, FH 363; TNA, SC 2/197/20–1.

<sup>64</sup> Above, landscape etc. (built character).

<sup>65</sup> *PN Oxon.* II, 344, 462; OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XIV.14 (1922 edn); 1:2500, SP 2925 (1979 edn).

mason was mentioned in 1579,<sup>66</sup> while 18th- and 19th-century quarrying provided building stone for several resident masons.<sup>67</sup> Lime kilns existed near Quarhill in the 1820s.<sup>68</sup>

A manorial bakehouse and malt kiln were mentioned c.1300, and bakers from the 16th century, one ('an old woman') reportedly causing the village fire of 1684.<sup>69</sup> Other craftsmen and traders in the 17th and 18th centuries included a maltster, and several butchers, carpenters, cordwainers or shoemakers, tailors, and weavers, of whom John Billet (d. 1717) left 'weaving tackle' worth £7.<sup>70</sup> William (d. 1719) and Richard Freeman (d. 1721) were village blacksmiths, followed by John Smith (d. 1777), father of the geologist William Smith (b. 1769).<sup>71</sup> By 1841 there were four blacksmiths, of whom Daniel Smith (1790–1864) later had two apprentices.<sup>72</sup> A forge 'on the waste' belonged to the manor in the 1780s, and in 1804–5 there was a second smithy on the rectory estate.<sup>73</sup> The newly built 19th-century forge near the church was sold with the manor in 1922, when it was bought by the sitting tenant Charles Blake. By the 1950s it was a motor garage and petrol station run by Frederick Williams,<sup>74</sup> and it continued as a repair garage in 2024.



Churchill's forge (left) and adjoining motor garage.

<sup>66</sup> Northants. Archives, FH 358; FH 361; TNA, PROB 11/62/83.

<sup>67</sup> Quarries: OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 40, f. 99; *ibid.* Lo. VI/11; masons: *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 68/1/28; TNA, HO 107/878; *ibid.* RG 9/910.

<sup>68</sup> Bryant, *Oxon. Map* (1824); cf. OHC, Lo. VI/11, p. 14 (Limekiln ground).

<sup>69</sup> *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 312; TNA, SC 2/197/20; below, social hist. (1500–1800).

<sup>70</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 77/3/40, and Churchill wills, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 79/4/30; *ibid.* Cal. QS, I, 183b; *ibid.* Burton II/viii/1–2; *ODNB*, s.v. Wm Smith.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, HO 107/878; HO 107/1732.

<sup>73</sup> OHC, Lo. VI/1, p. 260; *ibid.* Fi. III/i/15.

<sup>74</sup> *Sale Cat., Sarsden Est.* (1922), p. 41: copy in *ibid.* Fi. XIV/ii/2; *ibid.* RDC9/3/F6/2; RDC9/3/F7/2; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.1 (1881–1922 edns); for the bldg, above, landscape etc. (medieval and later settlement; built character).

Eighteenth-century victuallers included John Brown (d. 1728) and (in the 1750s) Ann Newman, whose daughter Elizabeth (d. 1781) and son-in-law William Gardner (d. 1773) ran the village's Chequers pub.<sup>75</sup> A second pub, run by William Widdows (d. 1773), may have later closed,<sup>76</sup> although by the 1900s Charles Widdows (probably a descendant) sold beer from the house now called Ferrimans, then owned by Green's brewery of Stow-on-the-Wold (Glos.). The business continued under Richard Ferriman in the 1920s–30s.<sup>77</sup> The Langston Arms Hotel at Kingham railway station, opened in 1880, was also licensed, and in the 20th century was leased to (and later owned by) the Stroud Brewery Co., until its conversion into a care home in 1985.<sup>78</sup> The Chequers remained open in 2024, when it was owned by Sir Tony Gallagher of Sarsden House.<sup>79</sup>



*The Chequers pub.*

Robert Harvey (d. 1762) was a grocer, and in the 19th and 20th centuries a grocer's shop on High Street served also as the village post office, until the shop closed in 1977.<sup>80</sup> Other 19th-century shops included a second grocer's and a baker's, but were more short-lived.<sup>81</sup> Around a fifth of families were chiefly employed in trade in 1811, falling to 12 per cent by 1831, and ten years later the parish supported seven shoemakers (including four

<sup>75</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 117/1/38; *ibid.* QSD/V/1–2; *ibid.* par. reg. transcript.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* QSD/V/1–2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* DV/X/41, no. 15; *ibid.* RDC9/3/F6/2; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1903–39 edns); for ho., above, landscape etc. (built character).

<sup>78</sup> *Sale Cat., Sarsden Est.* (1922), p. 24; OHC, RDC9/3/F6/2; below, social hist. (welfare).

<sup>79</sup> Info. from Sir Tony Gallagher (Sept. 2023).

<sup>80</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 36/1/26; R. Mann, *The History of Churchill and Sarsden* (2013), 128; above, landscape etc. (communications).

<sup>81</sup> *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847); TNA, RG 9/910 (Lardner's); RG 11/1519; OHC, Lo. IX/6; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–95 edns) (Pearce's).

apprentices), two tailors, a butcher, a carpenter, and a cooper.<sup>82</sup> A brickmaker working at the manorial clay pits and brick and pipe kiln near Rynehill Farm presumably supplied the Langstons' building and drainage projects until the works closed c.1880,<sup>83</sup> while the demesne woods provided employment for sawyers, woodmen, and gamekeepers. Gloving, dressmaking, and sewing were significant cottage industries for women and girls, who also worked as laundresses and charwomen.<sup>84</sup> Kingham station and Sarsden Halt (both within the parish) employed porters, signalmen, and a station master, while by the 1930s Frederick Wells ran a motor garage and car-hire business.<sup>85</sup>

The 20th century saw a gradual decline in local crafts, shops, and services. Occupations in the 1920s–30s included baker, carpenter and wheelwright, insurance agent, and newspaper reporter, whilst Alfred Pearce (d. 1931) was a dealer in scrap materials. The village remained predominantly agricultural in the 1960s, when the farrier George Watkins had over 120 horses on his books, and Charles Duester (d. 1966), 'one of the last all-round village craftsmen', was a retired thatcher, hedger, ditcher, gardener, and horse trainer.<sup>86</sup> In the 21st century a few specialist businesses operated from converted farm buildings in the village (including at Mount Farm, since converted to housing), and in 2024 a small retail and business park called Langston Priory Workshops occupied the site of the former cattle pens near Kingham station.<sup>87</sup> Another business park lay alongside the railway line south of the station. At Churchill heath self-catering holiday lodges (opened 2004) replaced an earlier caravan site, while a nearby angling lake occupied a former sand pit.<sup>88</sup>

*Milling* One of two mills on Churchill manor in 1086 lay along Swail brook on or near the site of the later Churchill mill, which continued as a water-powered corn-grist mill until 1897.<sup>89</sup> The other lay on the river Evenlode at Standbow bridge, but fell out of use during the Middle Ages. In the 12th century it was a freehold occupied by Stephen de Punsent, whose nephew Robert claimed it against Dionisia de Mora (possibly of Northmoor) in 1210. The mill may

---

<sup>82</sup> *Census*, 1811–31; TNA, HO 107/878.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, HO 107/1732; *ibid.* RG 9/910; RG 10/1456; OHC, Lo. VI/11, pp. 20–1, 25; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.5 (1881 edn); above, landscape etc. (built character). The kiln was disused in 1881: TNA, RG 11/1519.

<sup>84</sup> TNA, HO 107/1732; *ibid.* RG 9/910; RG 10/1456; RG 11/1519; RG 12/1178.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* RG 13/1398; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1939); above, landscape etc. (railway).

<sup>86</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1899–1939 edns); OHC, OXO001119 (MT\_101-4), broadcast interview with George Watkins, 29 Apr. 1973 (online at <https://heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk>); *Oxf. Times*, 17 Aug. 1962.

<sup>87</sup> WODC online planning docs, 23/00178/FUL; above, landscape etc. (railway).

<sup>88</sup> WODC online planning docs, 04/0600/P/FP; 22/02045/FUL; [www.bluewoodlodges.com](http://www.bluewoodlodges.com) (accessed Sept. 2023); OS Map 1:2500, SP 2622 (1979 edn).

<sup>89</sup> DB, f. 157; below.

have continued in the 1270s–90s, when Nicholas the miller occupied an 8-a. holding as a free tenant, but no later references have been found.<sup>90</sup>

Churchill mill belonged to the manor, and was worth 2½ marks (£1 13s. 4d.) a year in 1298, when it had an associated fishery distinct from the demesne fishponds.<sup>91</sup> In 1518 it was leased with other land (including the manorial site) to Peter Tanner, who was convicted in the manor court of taking excessive tolls,<sup>92</sup> and in 1612 it was held by the rectory estate's owner or lessee John Gostwick, who sublet it to Richard Harris.<sup>93</sup> In 1616 the mill was amongst the manorial properties sold by Sir Christopher Hatton to Sir Robert Rich, passing later to the Morecrofts until it was reunited with the manor by Sir William Walter (d. 1694).<sup>94</sup> Later lessees included Richard Baker (d. 1738), Thomas Andrews (d. 1789) and his son Thomas (d. 1809), and Harry Phipps (d. 1841), who in 1817 was convicted of using false weights,<sup>95</sup> and whose widow Hannah (d. 1865) initially took over the lease. She was followed before 1852 by James Taylor, c.1858 by William Williams (d. 1901) of Little Rollright,<sup>96</sup> and before 1887 by William's son Edward, under whom steam power was introduced.<sup>97</sup> In 1897 the earl of Ducie (as lord) sold the mill to Charles Baring Young (d. 1928) of Daylesford (Glos.), who closed it and left it to the Kingham Hill Trust, which he established to run Kingham Hill school.<sup>98</sup>

The mill building dates probably from the 18th century (when it was L-shaped and straddled the mill leet), and under the Langstons it was extended and a separate miller's house built opposite. The leet was drained and the mill gear removed during the 20th century, the buildings being converted into private residences.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>90</sup> DB, f. 157; *Cur. Reg.* VI, 41, 61, 94–5; *Rot. Hund.* II, 746; *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 312.

<sup>91</sup> TNA, C 133/85/1; *Cal. Close* 1296–1302, 312.

<sup>92</sup> Northants. Archives, FH 363–364.

<sup>93</sup> *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposits* 1609–16, pp. 39–40.

<sup>94</sup> Northants. Archives, FH/D/D/A/3105; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 44/4/14; TNA, PROB 11/444/79; above, landownership.

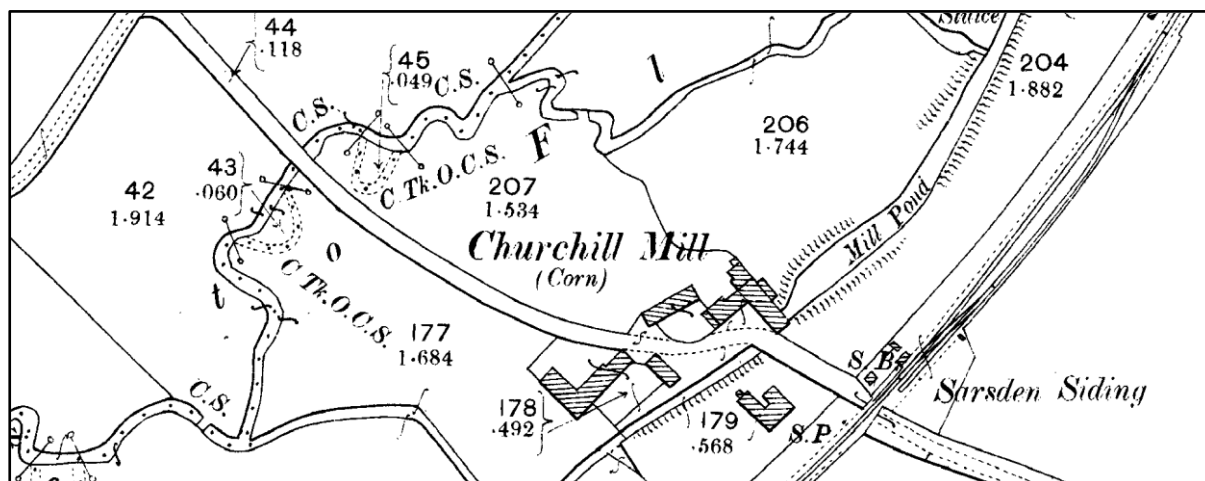
<sup>95</sup> OHC, Fi. I/26; *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 9/1/49; *ibid.* Lo. VI/1, p. 260; Lo. VI/4, p. 23; Lo. VI/7; Lo. VI/9; *ibid.* Cal. QS, IX, 209; *ibid.* Churchill and Kingham par. reg. transcripts; Mann, *Hist. of Churchill and Sarsden*, 97–9.

<sup>96</sup> *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–54 edns); *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852); OHC, Lo. VI/11, p. 13; *Oxf. Jnl.*, 4 Oct. 1851, 27 Mar. 1858; TNA, RG 9/910, no. 128.

<sup>97</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–95 edns); TNA, RG 12/1178, no. 103; Mann, *Hist. of Churchill and Sarsden*, 100–1.

<sup>98</sup> OHC, DV/X/41, no. 32; *ibid.* RDC9/3/F6/2; RDC9/3/F7/2; Mann, *Hist. of Churchill and Sarsden*, 101–2; below, Kingham, social hist. (educ.).

<sup>99</sup> HER, PRN 1525; OHC, Lo. VII/1–2; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.1 (1881–1922 edns); W. Foreman, *Oxfordshire Mills* (1983), 104; Mann, *Hist. of Churchill and Sarsden*, 99, 102.



Churchill mill. From OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.1 (1899 edn).