

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Kiddington with Asterleigh parish

Economic History

Kiddington's economy has always been predominantly agricultural, with just a few rural trades and crafts and (in the 19th century) one or two shops, particularly on the main road past Over Kiddington. Farming was mixed, combining sheep, cereal production, and dairying in varying proportions. The arable lay mostly in open fields until the 1680s, when the Brownes' ownership of virtually the entire parish allowed them to enclose it by private agreement, and by the early 18th century most farms were let at commercial rents on relatively short leases. The Brownes and their successors also ran a sizeable home farm (latterly through bailiffs), and extensive woodland in the south of the parish was generally kept in hand. Other activities included small-scale quarrying and lime-burning, and a corn mill operated from the Middle Ages to the 18th century.

The Agricultural Landscape

Although long held together Nether and Over Kiddington manors seem to have retained separate open fields in the 1370s, when half of Nether Kiddington's demesne was cultivated each year (suggesting a two-course rotation with a half lying fallow), but only a third of Over Kiddington's.¹ By the 17th century the fields were administered together through a single manor court, which in 1648 ordered a twofold division for the forthcoming year with 'no pease field' and no hitching (a temporary cropping on the fallow). The arrangement suggests a continuing two-course rotation but with substantial flexibility from year to year.² There were then four named fields, two of which had apparently once belonged to Over Kiddington and Asterleigh, and two to Nether Kiddington, and which were probably divided by the river Glyme. All lay north of the Chipping Norton road, rising up onto the higher ground and extending as far as the parish boundaries.³

Common pastures were noted from the 13th century, one (at the 'moor') presumably near Moorlake spring north-west of the manor house.⁴ Grazing was controlled by the manor

¹ TNA, E 149/34, no. 8; above, landownership.

² OHC, SL161/1/CR/1; cf. *ibid.* B.I/51B (hitching in 1658); *ibid.* M2/4/X/5 (hitching every fourth year).

³ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, no. 12 (naming Nether Kiddington's East and North fields and Over Kiddington's West and South fields). For soils, above, landscape.

⁴ TNA, E 149/34, no. 8; *Oxon. Fines*, pp. 113–15; OHC, B.I/2–3; *ibid.* 234/A and 234/M (tithe award and map).

court,⁵ and Kiddington shared in the complex intercommoning (particularly on assarted land) enjoyed by several parishes on the eastern fringes of Wychwood forest. From the later Middle Ages those shared rights seem to have gradually fallen into abeyance, although they remained a source of dispute in the 1560s and 1730s.⁶ Kiddington's meadows, concentrated around the river, were probably also partly common, with some allocated by lot each year.⁷ A small enclosed meadow worth 1s. an acre was noted on Nether Kiddington manor in 1372, however, and in the early 17th century there was some further private meadow towards Radford and Glympton.⁸

The parish's southern part (south of the Chipping Norton road) was dominated by woodland interspersed with medieval assarts or clearances. Substantial woodland noted in 1086 was almost certainly in that area, which was included within the bounds of Wychwood forest from the mid 12th century to c.1300, and which was still often treated as subject to forest law until the forest's reduction in 1641.⁹ Piecemeal assarting by Over and Nether Kiddington's lords, under way by the mid 13th century, continued in the 1360s,¹⁰ and by 1609 the 'Sarts' comprised two enclosed 'great fields' and a rabbit warren, then kept in hand along with the adjacent woods of Hill Wood, Out Wood, and West Coppice. The woods and assarts combined were estimated at over 600 a., and the pattern remained similar in the 1850s, when the parish's only other woods were some scattered patches and plantations across its middle towards the river.¹¹ Asterleigh, between the 'great assarts' and the Chipping Norton road, was probably partly cleared and settled by 1086,¹² although some further assarting followed in the 13th century, leaving only the 40-a. Asterleigh wood across its middle.¹³ Whether the rest of Asterleigh was already enclosed or included some open-field land is unclear, although mention of the lord's 'enclosure' of Asterleigh in 1307 may indicate the former.¹⁴ North of the main road near Kiddington Hall, a second rabbit warren of unknown date is suggested by the 19th-century field names 'the warren' and 'warren hill'.¹⁵

⁵ OHC, SL161/1/CR/1; *ibid.* B.I/51B.

⁶ Schumer, *Wychwood*, 49–53; Royce (ed.), *Landboc*, II, pp. 205–6; OHC, E486/1/C/1; E36/1/9/L/1; *VCH Oxon.* XI, 125, 186; XII, 435.

⁷ OHC, 234/A and 234/M; TNA, C 6/374/9 (Foxes Lot and Stacys Lot).

⁸ TNA, E 149/34, no. 8; OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, no. 12.

⁹ DB, ff. 160–1 (woods 1 league by 3 furlongs and 5 furlongs by 1); above, landscape etc. (boundaries).

¹⁰ Schumer, *Wychwood*, 23–4, 32, 56, 64–5, 73; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 36–7, 50, 77, 82, 109, 122, 128, 134, 156; Royce (ed.), *Landboc*, II, pp. 205–6. Cf. *VCH Oxon.* XI, 125 (Glympton).

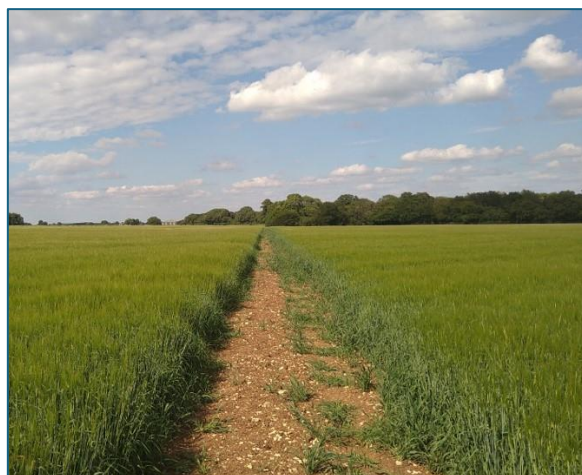
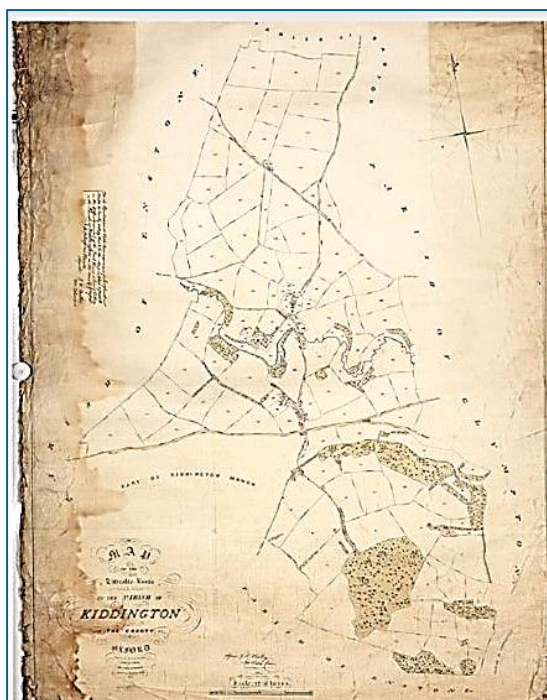
¹¹ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 190; OHC, 234/A and 234/M; *ibid.* E36/6/CR1/8 (presentment re warren, 1585). Another 38 a. of wood and assart in 1609 (held in three small parcels) belonged to Glympton manor: above, landownership (other estates).

¹² Above, landscape etc. (settlement).

¹³ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 50, 82, 122; Royce (ed.), *Landboc*, II, pp. 205–6; Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.6 (1899 edn, showing the then 13½-a. wood around a third of its 18th-century size).

¹⁴ Royce (ed.), *Landboc*, II, pp. 205–6.

¹⁵ OHC, 234/A and 234/M, nos. 103 and 136 (then pasture and arable).



Left: Kiddington in 1851 (Asterleigh omitted), showing the southern woodland set amongst medieval assarts (Oxfordshire History Centre 234/M). The open fields (enclosed in 1686) lay north of the Chipping Norton road, extending up to the northern boundary. Right: a view across one of the medieval assarts, with Out Wood beyond.

Piecemeal enclosure for sheep farming was under way by the 16th century, when some farms were amalgamated and the Babingtons laid some open-field arable to grass.¹⁶ Their successors the Brownes seem to have gathered some open-field arable into blocks, and in 1686 Sir Henry Browne enclosed the remaining open fields following exchanges with the rector and another freeholder.¹⁷ Any surviving common pastures and meadows were presumably enclosed at the same time, one or two later references to common rights referring perhaps to earlier leases or to residual rights in the assarts.¹⁸ The former open fields remained overwhelmingly arable in the mid 19th century, when 76 per cent of the parish (c.1,630 a.) was under crops, 10 per cent (216 a.) under grass, and 12 per cent (254 a.) wooded.¹⁹ The proportion of arable fell during the late 19th- and early 20th-century agricultural depression, but recovered after the Second World War.²⁰

¹⁶ I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–18* (1897), I, 330, 371; OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, no. 12a; below (medieval farming).

¹⁷ OHC, B.I/75; B.I/78; B.I/92; *ibid.* QSD/E/I, p. 103 (reciting exchange 1685/6). No later refs to open-field arable are known.

¹⁸ e.g. OHC, QSD/E/I, pp. 100–2; *ibid.* B.I/102 (lease 1691); *ibid.* OHC, E36/1/9/L/1, item 4.

¹⁹ TNA, IR 18/7727, mins 2 Aug. 1848; OHC, 234/A and 234/M (omitting Asterleigh).

²⁰ Below (since 1800).

Medieval Farming

In 1086 the two manors between them contained arable for $8\frac{1}{2}$ ploughteams (probably over 1,000 a.), 14 a. of demesne meadow, extensive woodland, and two mills. Both manors had risen in value since 1066, Over Kiddington from £3 to £4 a year, and the smaller Nether Kiddington manor from £1 10s. to £2. Even so they were apparently under-exploited, Over Kiddington supporting $4\frac{1}{2}$ ploughs on land for six, and Nether Kiddington two ploughs on land for $2\frac{1}{2}$. Both included land in demesne (respectively employing two ploughs and one), and a total of ten *villani* and 13 lower-status bordars ran the remaining ploughs. Slaves (four in all) were recorded only at Over Kiddington, which by then almost certainly included assarted land at Asterleigh.²¹

By the early 13th century Nether Kiddington manor had been expanded to at least five carucates or ploughlands, either through intensive assarting and/or through absorption of areas not included in 1086. Over Kiddington and Asterleigh manor (at 5–6 carucates) remained similar to earlier, further implying that Asterleigh was already substantially cleared before 1086.²² In 1279 Over Kiddington and Asterleigh supported ten unfree villein households holding a total of nine yardlands, while eight free tenants (including the smith and miller) held just over seven. Nether Kiddington had 16 villein yardlanders and a cottar (with 1 a.), plus six freeholders (including the rector and another miller) holding $4\frac{1}{2}$ yardlands in all. Another villein held $\frac{1}{2}$ yardland in the part of Boriens included within Kiddington parish. The Over Kiddington villeins owed 3s. rent, customary renders in kind, fairly heavy labour services, and tallage when demanded, their combined obligations valued at 11s. 8d. each. Free rents were much lighter and more varied, ranging from William de la Mar's 2 lbs of pepper (worth 16d.) for two yardlands to Adam the miller's 22s. for the Nether Kiddington mill and $\frac{1}{2}$ yardland. Several freeholders (including Adam) also owed light labour services. The lord kept a total of four carucates (c.480 a.) in demesne, his combined income from Over Kiddington manor (including £5 from the demesne farm) exceeding £13.²³ His successors remained the parish's wealthiest taxpayers in the early 14th century, assessed on movables worth £20 in 1306; by contrast no tenants paid on more than c.16s.-worth, although the gap was less pronounced in 1316 and 1327 when the lords' assessments were lower, and several other inhabitants were assessed on £5 or more. The villages' combined payment of

²¹ DB, ff. 160–1; for Asterleigh, above, landscape etc. (settlement); above (agric. landscape).

²² *Book of Fees*, I, 317–18; cf. *Rot. Hund.* II, 734, 852 (wrongly entered under Combe), 877, listing c.7¼ hides under Nether Kiddington and 6¼ under Over Kiddington and Asterleigh.

²³ *Rot. Hund.* II, 734, 852–3, 877. Though placed under Combe, the names from Ric. Vidua to Adam Molendinator on p. 852 belong under Nether Kiddington, followed by the Kiddington part of Boriens: *VCH Oxon.* XII, 84n. For other free tenants, above landownership (other estates).

£3 11s. 3d. in 1334 placed them amongst the county's less prosperous places, though in line with their neighbours.²⁴

Crops included winter wheat and summer corn and small quantities of oats,²⁵ and both Lettice de Saussay and the freeholder Fray Punchard grazed livestock.²⁶ Villeins owed the lord a day's sheep-washing and shearing (as well as customary renders of eggs and a hen), and a freeholding family with the byname shepherd (le bercher) featured amongst the parish's wealthiest freeholders in 1316 and 1327.²⁷ Expansion of farmland through woodland assarting was under way by the mid 13th century, some of it probably by tenants,²⁸ although the larger-scale clearances seem to have been undertaken on the lords' initiative, creating sizeable enclosures which (in contrast to some neighbouring parishes) remained separate from the open fields.²⁹ Even so the woodland itself remained a valuable asset, the Over Kiddington and Asterleigh woods being worth 20s. a year in 1279, while at Nether Kiddington the lord could take wood for repair of buildings and fencing subject to the royal foresters' agreement. Both Thomas de Williamscot and Joan de Saussay appointed woodwards, and villeins' services included wood carriage and a days' nut collecting.³⁰ Kiddington and Asterleigh villagers were also amongst those accused in 1272 of carrying off 'infinite cartloads ... and bundles' of wood from the nearby royal woodland, while others were implicated in deer poaching.³¹

Despite the impact of 14th-century plagues both manors retained land in demesne in 1372, by which time Over Kiddington's had been increased to three carucates. Possibly that reflected lack of tenants, especially as only a third of the demesne was cultivated, while rental income seems to have fallen by over 30 per cent since the late 13th century.³² Asterleigh's depopulation was probably already under way, culminating in the dissolution of its parish in 1466, although some Asterleigh people possibly moved to Over Kiddington rather than further afield, thereby remaining tenants of the manor.³³ Asterleigh's consolidation into a single farm was probably completed in the 1510s, when the lessee William Slaymaker threw its three remaining farms together and evicted the subtenants.

²⁴ TNA, E 179/161/8–10; Glasscock (ed.), *Subsidy 1334*, 236, 242; *Oxon. Atlas*, p. 53.

²⁵ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 36–7, 77 (in assarts).

²⁶ *Cur. Reg.* IX, p. 344 (involving Sape in Glympton); *Oxon. Fines*, pp. 113–15.

²⁷ *Rot. Hund.* II, 734; TNA, E 179/161/8–9.

²⁸ e.g. the small plots of 2 a. or less held by free tenants in the 1250s: Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 36–7, 122; cf. *Rot. Hund.* II, 734.

²⁹ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 82, 128, 190; Royce (ed.), *Landboc*, II, pp. 205–6; Schumer, *Wychwood*, 24, 56, 64–5; above (agric. landscape).

³⁰ *Rot. Hund.* II, 734, 877; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 46; cf. TNA, E 149/34, no. 8 (valuing Nether Kiddington's woods at 6s. 8d. a year in 1372). For 14th-cent. coppicing, Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 134, 156.

³¹ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 22, 24, 67, 82; below, social hist.

³² TNA, E 149/34, no. 8; cf. *Rot. Hund.* II, 734, 852–3, 877.

³³ Above, landscape etc. (popn; settlement); below, relig. hist.

Piecemeal conversion of arable to pasture (presumably for sheep farming) was then also under way in Kiddington, where Edmund Hasilwood converted 24 a. in 1515.³⁴

Farming c.1520–1800

In 1523–4 the parish's highest taxpayers (excluding the lord Thomas Babington) were John Andrews (assessed on goods worth £16), John Brewse (£13), Henry Mason (£11), and William Slaymaker, William Colgrove, and John Colman (£6–£7 each).³⁵ All were presumably large-scale farmers: Mason (d. 1541) bequeathed over 40 sheep, a few cattle, and small quantities of wheat and barley, while Slaymaker or a descendant (d. 1558) left goods worth the exceptional sum of £133, including over 300 sheep grazed presumably on his newly converted pastures in Asterleigh.³⁶ A sheep house was built there before 1601.³⁷

Similar mixed farming continued throughout the 17th century, with wheat and barley the principal crops alongside peas, vetches and oats.³⁸ Much was still grown in the open fields as well as in the large enclosed assarts, and probably also in demesne closes around the manor house.³⁹ The farmer John Norris (d. 1666) owed £20 to 'the maltman', along with small sums to Woodstock mercers, butchers, and bakers, although some small-scale domestic malting was also carried out within the parish.⁴⁰ Sheep were mentioned frequently, albeit seldom in flocks of more than 20–80,⁴¹ and in the mid 17th century the manor court enforced a stint of 20 sheep per yardland to prevent over-grazing.⁴² John Slaymaker (who occupied 3–4 yardlands) nevertheless had over 100 sheep in 1626, and in the 1590s Kiddington was one of several parishes grazed by a similarly-sized Enstone flock.⁴³ Cattle were kept for dairying and small-scale cheese-making, and many inhabitants had a few pigs and poultry, while orchards were mentioned occasionally and one farmer made cider.⁴⁴ Wealthier farmers included Richard Chamberlain (d. 1619) and John Sperrin (d. 1630), each with goods worth over £180, while the 'gentleman' Thomas Sibsey (d. 1677) left crops worth

³⁴ I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–18* (1897), I, 330, 371; above (agric. landscape).

³⁵ TNA, E179/161/170; E 179/161/175; E 179/161/177; E179/161/194; cf. *ibid.* E179/162/227 (subsidy 1543). Babington was taxed on £20 in lands.

³⁶ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 178.168; 181.238; 183.128 (Joan Slaymaker); above (medieval farming). Slaymaker was also the Babingtons' woodward: OHC, E36/6/CR1/1.

³⁷ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, no. 12d verso.

³⁸ Paragraph based on *ibid.* MSS Wills Oxon., Kiddington wills and inventories.

³⁹ *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, nos. 12a–e; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 190; above (agric. landscape).

⁴⁰ OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 84/1/22.

⁴¹ e.g. *ibid.* 299/3/6; 30/2/41; 144/1/28; 298/3/11; 300/1/39.

⁴² OHC, SL161/1/CR1; *ibid.* B.I/51B.

⁴³ *Ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 60/1/13; *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposits 1589–93*, pp. 50–1.

⁴⁴ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 84/1/22 (cider); 300/1/39 and 149/4/1 (cheese); TNA, C 6/374/9 and OHC, QSD/E/I, pp. 99–100 (orchards).

(exceptionally) over £250.⁴⁵ Markets presumably included Woodstock, Chipping Norton, and possibly Banbury,⁴⁶ and a widespread network of credit is suggested by the numerous instances of debts owed to or by testators, which in some cases made up the bulk of their probate valuations.⁴⁷

The Babingtons' conversion of some arable to pasture in the 1550s may imply their involvement in sheep farming,⁴⁸ and their successors the Brownes also farmed directly, Sir Henry (d. 1639) leaving his son all his sheep and livestock and all his corn 'of whatsoever grain'.⁴⁹ His daughter-in-law oversaw the home farm during the Interregnum, growing grain, hay, pulses, and oats despite the 'troubles and iniquities' of the times, and keeping a few cattle.⁵⁰ Leases for lives were by then superseding copyholds, a house, close, and yardland being let for three lives or 99 years in 1641 for the high entry fine of £72.⁵¹

Sir Henry's grandson Henry (d. 1689) bought up a surviving freehold in 1667–8, and in 1686 enclosed the parish's remaining open fields following exchanges with the rector and the other main freeholder.⁵² At least 51 a. of his own land had already been enclosed, and from 1690 a consolidated block of c.340 a. (not necessarily all kept in hand) was subject to a series of family mortgages.⁵³ By 1717 Sir Charles Browne (d. 1751) kept in hand a rather smaller area around Kiddington Hall, together with the woodland in the south. The rest of the manor comprised nine leasehold farms let at between £20 and £133 a year for up to 21 years, along with the mill, the Chequers inn, and 14 cottages, one of which was still held for lives at 2s. 6d. a year and a £20 entry fine. Asterleigh farm (occupied by Edward Righton) was let for £104 10s., and the pattern remained similar in 1755 when there ten farms and 29 cottages (the latter all on yearly tenancies).⁵⁴ Thereafter the number of large leasehold farms shrank to four or five as their size was increased and slightly more land was taken back in hand, while outside the estate the 80-a. glebe farm and a surviving 41-a. freehold were also tenanted, until the latter became part of the estate c.1806.⁵⁵

⁴⁵ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 78/1/33; 300/1/39; 149/4/1 (incl. £15 in wool). Since Sibsey's will mentioned his 'master' Henry Browne he perhaps oversaw the Brownes' home farm.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 153/3/51; 296/3/35; 84/1/22.

⁴⁷ e.g. *ibid.* 60/1/19 (Thos Styles); 136/3/24 (Mary Johnson); 296/3/35 (Edm. Cox); 153/3/51 (John Terry, with debts far outweighing his assets).

⁴⁸ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, no. 12a (conversion of former glebe).

⁴⁹ Ibid. B.I/48.

⁵⁰ Ibid. B.IV/1; B.IV/7; TNA, C 5/430/22.

⁵¹ OHC, B.I/49.

⁵² Above, landownership (other estates); above (agric. landscape).

⁵³ OHC, B.I/75; B.I/78–9; B.I/82–3.

⁵⁴ Ibid. QSD/E/I, pp. 99–104, 230–4 (the latter also listing two cottages built by the parish); TNA, PROB 11/809/394. For related leases, OHC, B.I/77; B.I/91–2; B.I/102; B.I/109–110.

⁵⁵ OHC, QSD/L/172–3; above, landownership (other estates). The five main manorial farms were probably (as later) Asterleigh, Home, Gate or Turnpike, Assart (or Wood), and Whitehouse.

Arable may have been increasing by the 1690s when one new 255-a. enclosure was entirely under crops,⁵⁶ and in 1713 the tenant farmer William Tomkins was accused of ploughing up ancient meadow and pasture, which he claimed was permissible given his high rent and so long as he sowed sainfoin or other grasses before the end of his tenancy.⁵⁷ A similar regime may have been practiced on Asterleigh farm in 1754, when the tenant George Bustin (d. 1778) was required to plant some sainfoin alongside his corn.⁵⁸ Sheep remained important, however, Ann Clements' flock of over 100 being worth far more than her wheat crop in 1730.⁵⁹ The woods were kept in hand by the Brownes and Browne-Mostyns, who appointed gamekeepers.⁶⁰ Timber for repairs and fencing was allowed to tenant farmers upon application,⁶¹ and poorer inhabitants also relied on the woods, one 'poor old man' who had gone into Asterleigh wood for kindling being found dead with a half-bound faggot nearby in 1788.⁶² During the later 18th century Lady Mostyn's husband Edward Gore (d. 1801) allegedly 'wasted the Kiddington estate very much', though the damage was 'not so much as to give Lady Mostyn any legal remedy'. Presumably it was also temporary, since the family continued to run the estate and its home farm successfully into the early 19th century.⁶³

Farming since 1800

Charles Browne Mostyn took over the estate's running c.1804, at first with no steward or bailiff. In 1814 he oversaw the harvesting of 750 a., reduced to 670 a. two years later when he remarked that the rise in corn prices had helped farmers greatly and 'reduced the panic'.⁶⁴ He withdrew from direct farming in 1828,⁶⁵ but by 1851 his successor Mortimer Ricardo had 280 a. back in hand, along with 207 a. of woodland. The farmland was run from the later Park Farm near Over Kiddington, with another farmyard adjoining Kiddington Hall,⁶⁶ while the woodland (overseen by an estate woodman) provided both for the estate and for occasional wood sales, including that of 200 oaks, pollards and maiden trees felled in 1805.⁶⁷

⁵⁶ OHC, B.I/78.

⁵⁷ TNA, C 6/374/9; OHC, B.I/91 (lease at £62 10s. a year). Sainfoin was grown by 1691: OHC, SL161/1/D/1.

⁵⁸ OHC, B.I/102; *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 99.32.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 122/3/40.

⁶⁰ e.g. *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 17 Dec. 1785; 11 Sept 1790.

⁶¹ TNA, C 6/374/9 (also mentioning unauthorized use); OHC, B.I/102.

⁶² *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 12 Oct. 1788. For wood-stealing, OHC, Cal. QS, IX, pp. 76, 85, 254.

⁶³ *Tusmore Papers*, ed. L.G. Wickham Legg (ORS 20, 1939), p. 47; below (since 1800).

⁶⁴ Leics., Leicester and Rutland RO, DG39/1655; DG39/1850; DG39/1867; DG39/1925; OHC, QSD/L/172–3.

⁶⁵ *Oxf. Jnl*, 30 Aug., 13 Sept. 1828.

⁶⁶ OHC, 234/A and 234/M.

⁶⁷ *Oxf Jnl*, 16 Feb., 29 June 1805; 19 Aug. 1826.

The main tenant farms were Asterleigh (285 a. in 1851), the outlying Whitehouse or Whiteway (314 a.) in the north, Turnpike or Gate farm (341 a.) in Over Kiddington, Home farm (285 a.) in Nether Kiddington, and Assarts (later Wood) farm (191 a.) in the south. The rector's Glebe or Rectory farm (sometimes in hand but usually tenanted) was c.83 acres.⁶⁸ The farm pattern remained little altered throughout the 19th century, long-term tenants including the Granthams and Radfords at Whitehouse farm, the Sanderses at Asterleigh and later at Gate farm, and (by the 1880s) Robert Craddock at Wood farm. Thomas Stanbridge (d. 1852) of Home farm was also Browne Mostyn's and Ricardo's agent and steward, while Park farm was run by bailiffs including John Scott (1860s–80s) and Thomas Fane (1890s–1910s).⁶⁹ In 1861 the chief farms employed 37 male labourers and 17 boys, roughly equivalent to the number of adult labourers recorded in the parish,⁷⁰ and in the 1870s (when there was a Kiddington branch of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union) wages were fairly typical for the area, at 12s.–13s. a week.⁷¹



Asterleigh Farm in 2024, showing some of its extensive former farm buildings.

Farming followed the earlier mixed pattern, at first with a strong arable bias.⁷² Stock on Thomas Kinch's Asterleigh farm in 1811 included barley, wheat, and oats, over 300 sheep and lambs (folded partly on the arable), 12 in-calf heifers, and 14 pigs, along with ploughs, harrows, dung carts, and dairying equipment. Other large farmers (including Browne Mostyn) practised similar husbandry, and by 1814 Asterleigh farm had a threshing machine and a winnowing machine, with others recorded on Whitehouse and Park farms by the 1820s. Sheep included Leicester and Gloucestershire breeds, while markets (all within 'easy reach')

⁶⁸ OHC, 234/A and 234/M; cf. *ibid.* QSD/L/172–3; *ibid.* PAR150/17/MS1/2; TNA, HO 107/878; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847 and later edns); *Billing's Dir. Oxon.* (1854).

⁶⁹ TNA, RG 9/902; RG 10/1447; RG12/1172; RG13/1390; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1864–77 edns); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1907 edns). For Stanbridge (also the Turvilles' agent for Idbury), TNA, IR 18/7727, 30 Nov. 1848; *Oxf. Jnl.*, 26 July 1817, 21 Aug. 1830; Leics., Leicester and Rutland RO, DG39/413; DG39/806–8; DG39/814.

⁷⁰ TNA, RG 9/902, incl. 4 shepherds; cf. *Oxon. Atlas*, p. 117.

⁷¹ P. Horn (ed.), *Agric. Trade Unionism in Oxon. 1872–81* (ORS 48, 1974), 23, 37, 63; a few places nevertheless paid slightly more.

⁷² TNA, IR 18/7727, mins 2 Aug. 1848 (76% arable).

included Chipping Norton, Woodstock, and Oxford.⁷³ The national depression of arable farming from the later 19th century resulted, as elsewhere, in a shift towards pastoralism: the proportion of arable (76 per cent in 1851) fell to 58 per cent by 1890 and to 54 per cent by 1910, while grass increased from 10 to nearly 44 per cent. Cattle numbers rose sharply (to 222 in 1890), and sheep numbers from 1,585 to nearly 2,000,⁷⁴ although the Kiddington area played a relatively small role in the county's milk production, partly because of the distance from the railway.⁷⁵ Arable farming, though reduced, remained significant, with at least 277 a. under barley in 1910, 207 a. under wheat, and 196 a. under oats, alongside smaller quantities of beans, peas, and high-quality potatoes.⁷⁶ Kiddington also occupied good turnip land, with 240 a. under turnips or swedes in 1867 and 131 a. in 1910.⁷⁷ Some changes in tenancy may have reflected agrarian difficulties,⁷⁸ although Joseph Sanders remained at Gate Farm and John Haynes at Home Farm in the early 20th century, alongside John Bell at the newly established Grimsdyke Farm. Asterleigh farm was taken in hand from c.1920.⁷⁹

The broad pattern remained similar in the early 1940s, when Park and Asterleigh farms (538 a. combined) were run by a farm manager, and the other farms remained tenanted. Arable was still focused on wheat, barley, and mixed corn (542 a.), with 45 a. of potatoes and 212 a. of fodder crops, while livestock totalled 313 cattle, 761 sheep and lambs, 103 pigs, and 1,552 poultry, alongside 31 working horses. Park farm alone had 376 sheep including some pedigree Hampshire Downs, kept by H.M. Gaskell partly as a hobby. Railway access was reckoned 'fair', and government inspectors rated Home and Whitehouse farms as grade A and the others as broadly adequate. By then most had a motor tractor, and in all employed 36 farm workers including three women, perhaps the same three Women's Land Army members who remained in 1950.⁸⁰ The general post-war resurgence of arable was evident by the late 1960s when Kiddington and Glympton parishes combined were 69 per cent under crops, producing chiefly barley (1,354 a.) and wheat (618 a.) together with some oats (77 a.), potatoes (91 a.), sugar beet (39 a.), and fodder crops. Cattle numbered over 800 and sheep over 970, alongside 583 poultry and over 1,800 pigs

⁷³ *Oxf. Jnl*, 12 Jan. 1811, 14 May 1814, 26 Mar. 1825, 10 Mar. 1827, 7 June, 13 Sept. 1828, 13 Aug. 1831. Whitehouse Fm had no sheep in 1825: *ibid.* 26 Mar. 1825.

⁷⁴ OHC, 234/A; TNA, IR 18/7727, mins 2 Aug. 1848; *ibid.* MAF 68/141; MAF 68/426; MAF 68/1281; MAF 68/2421. Pig numbers fell slightly from 214 to 131.

⁷⁵ Orr, *Oxon. Agric.* 66, 69. For a 'milkman' at Asterleigh Fm in 1901, TNA, RG 13/1390, no. 39.

⁷⁶ TNA, MAF 68/2421; Orr, *Oxon. Agric.* 71, 189.

⁷⁷ TNA, MAF 68/141; MAF 68/2421; Young, *Oxon. Agric.* 5–6; *Oxf. Jnl*, 21 Aug. 1830.

⁷⁸ For a 25% rent rebate in 1893, *Cornishman*, 24 Aug. 1893, p. 4.

⁷⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883 and later edns); OHC, DV/X/55; *ibid.* Woot. P.C. III/vi/1. Grimsdyke Fm (with a new farmhouse) succeeded a 19th-cent. cottage: OHC, 234/A and 234/M, no. 53; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.11 (1899–1922 edns).

⁸⁰ TNA, MAF 32/914/198; MAF 68/4323. For Gaskell's flock, cf. J. Dimpleby, *A Profound Secret* (2005 edn), 420; OHC, POX0635851.

and piglets.⁸¹ Under the Robsons, the Kiddington estate's potential was also maximized in other ways. By 2009 let property produced £437,700 a year, with substantial further returns from farming, the shoot, the conference facilities created in Kiddington Hall's converted stable block, and wedding receptions held in the orangery.⁸²

The estate's sale and division in 2010 led to some reorganization,⁸³ with the bulk (Sir Alec Reed's share) administered through a Reed subsidiary (Juxon Ltd), and overseen by a farm manager based latterly at Grimsdyke Farm. In 2025 all except Whitehouse farm was run as a single estate using hi-tech precision machinery, allowing much work to be performed by just two people, while redundant farm buildings were gradually adapted to other uses. Arable predominated, producing wheat, spring and winter barley, oilseed rape, and some peas or oats, while sheep (overseen by a grazier based at Park Farm) were grazed on c.400 a. of grass, along with some beef cattle. The extensive woodland (c.400 a. in all) was sustainably managed. The separate Kiddington Hall estate was mostly parkland.⁸⁴

Milling and Non-Agricultural Activities

Over Kiddington manor had a corn mill (worth 5s. a year) by 1086, perhaps shared with Nether Kiddington, whose lord received 20*d.* a year from 'part' of a mill.⁸⁵ By 1279 both manors had their own mill, each held with ½ yardland: Over Kiddington's was then let for 12s. 5*d.* a year, and Nether Kiddington's for 22s. and four days' reaping services. By 1372 only the Nether Kiddington mill remained, let for a mere 6s. 8*d.*⁸⁶ That continued in use in 1717, when it was let with a house and two meadow grounds for £14 a year, but by 1755 it had apparently gone.⁸⁷ Like its predecessors it presumably lay somewhere along the River Glyme, but the site is otherwise unknown. The byname 'fuller' was recorded in the 1320s,⁸⁸ though there is no evidence that either mill was ever adapted for fulling.

Other medieval bynames (perhaps already hereditary) included Coleman (charcoal burner) and Chapman,⁸⁹ but only a handful of rural trades was recorded later. Blacksmiths were mentioned from the 13th century, Robert Elyman (d. 1695) leaving goods worth £14 10s. along with £70-worth of debts owed him, while William Hatton (d. 1790) had contacts in

⁸¹ TNA, MAF 68/5046; no separate Kiddington figures were given.

⁸² *Country Life*, 9 Sept. 2009, pp. 112–113.

⁸³ Above, landownership.

⁸⁴ Information (Jan. 2025) from Matthew Fielden, Kiddington farm manager; WODC online planning docs (conversion of fm bldgs). Whitehouse farm was scheduled to be taken in hand from Sept. 2025.

⁸⁵ DB, ff. 160–1.

⁸⁶ *Oxon. Fines*, pp. 113–15 (dispute in 1241); *Rot. Hund.* II, 734, 852 (wrongly listed under Combe); TNA, E 149/34, no. 8.

⁸⁷ OHC, B.I/8; B.I/59; B.I/90; B.I/96; *ibid.* QSD/E/I, pp. 99–100, 230–4.

⁸⁸ TNA, E 179/161/9 (in both Over and Nether Kiddington).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* (Nether Kiddington); both names continued into the 16th or 17th century.

Woodstock and property in Claydon, and left £50 to his daughter.⁹⁰ By the mid 19th century the smithy adjoined the main Chipping Norton road at Over Kiddington, where the blacksmith George Hunt and his successors the Burgesses combined it with the village post office and a grocer's shop.⁹¹ Carpenters were mentioned occasionally from the 18th century,⁹² and wheelwrights (who presumably also benefited from passing road traffic) from the 19th, the Ivings family of wheelwrights briefly operating in partnership with William Hollis, and continuing in the 1910s. By then they were based at the former Chequers inn at Over Kiddington,⁹³ which was established as a roadside inn by the 1670s and continued until the 1860s, briefly reopening as a refreshment room (under its old name) in the 1930s.⁹⁴ Other resident craftsmen included one or more tailors, of whom William Hancorne (d. 1667) was engaged in small-scale farming, while Anthony Ryman (d. 1750) invested in land transactions.⁹⁵ A mason was mentioned in 1706,⁹⁶ and fieldnames point to small-scale quarrying and lime-burning, the former probably carried out from the late Middle Ages.⁹⁷

Only six out of 33 families were primarily supported by trade in 1811,⁹⁸ though in the 1840s the parish had a blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter, shoemaker, butcher (at the Chequers), and two tailors, alongside another six carpenters, two butchers, and five masons resident as lodgers. By 1861 there were three grocer's shops (including that at the post office) and two shoemakers (Robert Burborough and George Busby), along with the blacksmith and wheelwright, the publican at the Chequers, the tollhouse keeper, and the schoolmaster and his wife. Four women (mostly wives of agricultural labourers) worked as laundresses and two more as gloveresses (presumably as outworkers), with some others employed as servants in the main farmhouses. In addition a significant number of inhabitants were directly employed by the squire H.L. Gaskell, including 13 female and two male servants at Kiddington Hall, and the butler, gardener, gamekeeper, and grooms.⁹⁹

Many village crafts disappeared by the turn of the century, the last shoemaker by 1915, and the blacksmith and wheelwright by 1928. The post office shop and its neighbour

⁹⁰ *Cur. Reg.* XIV, p. 350 (Hen. *fabrus*); *Rot. Hund.* II, 734; OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 20/5/7; 136/2/2; *ibid.* SL35/9/7/D/24.

⁹¹ OHC, 234/A and 234/M, no. 65; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–77 edns); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1931 edns); TNA, RG 9/902, no. 46.

⁹² OHC, BOR4/3/1/A4/1; *ibid.* PAR150/17/MS1/2.

⁹³ TNA, HO 107/878; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–77 edns); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1924 edns); OHC, DV/X/55 and DV/VIII/201, no. 51.

⁹⁴ J. Ogilby, *Britannia* (1675 edn), Plate II; TNA, C 5/97/79; *ibid.* RG 9/902; RG 10/1447; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–77 edns); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1935–39 edns).

⁹⁵ OHC, B.I/49; B.I/77 (Thos Yoxon); *ibid.* MSS Wills Oxon. 33/2/5; 147/5/12.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* BOR4/3/1/A4/1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 41, no. 12 (Lime Pit); *ibid.* 234/A (Stone Quarry ground, Quarry ground, Lime Kiln ground etc.); NHLE, no. 1020966 (Asterleigh DMV, accessed Dec. 2023).

⁹⁸ *Census*, 1811.

⁹⁹ TNA, HO 107/878; *ibid.* RG 9/902; cf. OHC, PAR150/17/MS1/2; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–77 edns).

continued,¹⁰⁰ the post office moving to the former Chequers pub by the 1950s, and later to the roadside shop adjoining its original location.¹⁰¹ After the post office's closure c.1991 the premises briefly became a cane furniture and basketware shop and tea room until that too closed c.2012.¹⁰² Businesses in 2024, all in converted farm buildings, included an equine law firm in Nether Kiddington, a stone carving business at Park Farm, and a luxury bridal studio and a luxury outdoor furniture store at Gate Farm in Over Kiddington, while the former school was let as a holiday home.¹⁰³



*The post office shop fronting the Chipping Norton road at Over Kiddington (c.1930s-40s), with a second shop on the right. The post office was formerly run by the village blacksmith, who had premises adjacent.
(Oxfordshire History Centre, POX0193722)*

¹⁰⁰ TNA, RG 12/1172 (still mentioning a carpenter and mason); RG 13/1390 (mentioning an estate carpenter); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1939 edns).

¹⁰¹ Above, landscape etc. (communications).

¹⁰² www.google.co.uk/maps (street views 2008–22, accessed Oct. 2024); <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/04645865>.

¹⁰³ <https://equinelawuk.co.uk>; www.bernardjohnson.co.uk; <https://elliesanderson.co.uk/stores/kiddington-woodstock>; <https://luxury-outdoor-living.co.uk>; www.cotswoldsaway.co.uk (all accessed Oct. 2024).