

## VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

# Spelsbury parish

## Economic History

Spelsbury's economy was long based on mixed farming complemented by woodland exploitation. Arable open fields dominated most of the parish in the Middle Ages, those at Ditchley being more irregular and less intensively exploited. Holdings were partly consolidated from the late Middle Ages and especially in the 18th century, when remaining copyholds (by then usually comprising several yardlands) were converted to leasehold; the exception was Dean, where small copyholds survived. Extinction of common rights at Ditchley by the mid 18th century was followed by parliamentary enclosure at Dean in 1779 and Spelsbury in 1803. A large home farm was created at Ditchley, but most holdings were farmed by tenants into the 20th century. Craft and retail activity was always limited, and declined in the 20th century.

### The Agricultural Landscape

Spelsbury, Taston, Fulwell and Dean each had their own open fields in the Middle Ages, those at Dean (and probably elsewhere) being organised in a two-field system.<sup>1</sup> Streamside meadow was complemented by pasture commons, the largest of which was the c.77-a. Spelsburydown (or 'sheep down').<sup>2</sup> Closes around the hamlets existed from an early date.<sup>3</sup> The field system at Ditchley (in an area of early assarting) incorporated a mix of open field furlongs and closes in which surrounding settlements long enjoyed common rights, as in many places on the fringe of the former Wychwood forest.<sup>4</sup> The parish's light and thin stonebrash soils were of modest fertility, being subject to 'blight and drought', and at Ditchley, where they were particularly poor, there was much rough grazing and woodland, much of the latter surviving in the 21st century.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, early woodland at Dean was largely cleared by the 13th century.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lobel, Dean and Chalford, 13; Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 11–14.

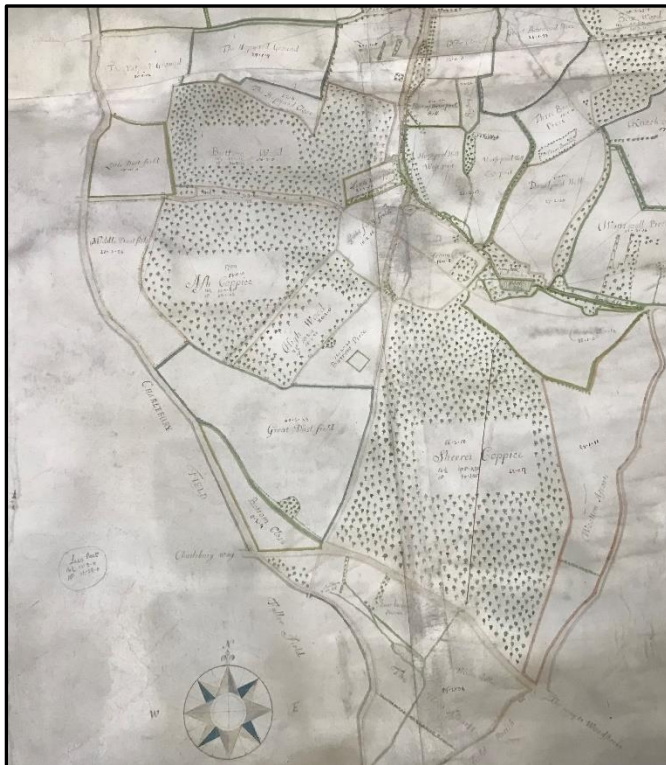
<sup>2</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 28-9 (1772 acreages).

<sup>3</sup> C. Fonge (ed.), *The Cartulary of St Mary's Collegiate Church, Warwick* (2004), p. 192 (crofts around Dean, 1392); OHC, E36/2/1/E/3; *ibid.* Dean and Spelsbury enclo. awards.

<sup>4</sup> D. Royce (ed.), *Landboc sive Registrum Monasterii ... de Winchelcumba* (1892–1903), I, 301; II, 170–1; OHC, E36/1/3/D/4; E36/1/3/D/16; Schumer, *Wychwood*, 49–53.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 34, 41v., 57, 155; OHC, E486/1/E1/1 (Ditchley in 1581).

<sup>6</sup> Below (medieval agric.).



Assart closes and woods in the south of Ditchley in 1726: map at OHC.

## Medieval Agriculture

In 1086 the bishop of Worcester's 10-hide Spelsbury estate was worth £10, as in 1066. Arable farming was at full capacity (with four ploughteams on the demesne run by five *servi*, and 37 tenants sharing another 12 teams), while grassland included 32 a. of meadow and 36 a. of pasture.<sup>7</sup> The demesne land (as later) was probably mainly in Spelsbury, with a small acreage in Taston.<sup>8</sup> A substantial area of woodland, measuring a league and a furlong by seven furlongs, lay in the northern part of Ditchley, and apparently extended into Fulwell and Taston, where assarts were mentioned at a later date.<sup>9</sup> The intensively exploited eight-hide Dean and Chalford estate (partly in Enstone) was reckoned to have capacity for eight ploughteams, but actually supported 13 (five on the demesne and eight worked by tenants), while its overall value had risen from £7 in 1066 to £9. Thirteen acres of itemized meadow there was probably closely managed, while a 'grove' (*grava*) measuring a league by two

<sup>7</sup> DB, f. 238v.

<sup>8</sup> OHC, E36/2/1/E/3 (referring to 1575); OHC, enclo. award.

<sup>9</sup> DB, f. 238v.; OHC, E36/2/2/F1/17; E36/1/10/M/1; TNA, LR 2/189, f. 75; B. Schumer (ed.), *Oxfordshire Forests 1246–1609* (ORS 64, 2004), pp. 184 and n. (wrongly locating them in Charlbury), 188.

furlongs may have been coppiced.<sup>10</sup> Further woodland in and around Sheers Copse belonged to Bloxham manor.<sup>11</sup>

By 1279 Spelsbury's demesne comprised three carucates each worth £2 13s. a year;<sup>12</sup> the better land was worth 3*d.* an acre in 1315, but that on hillier ground just 1*d.*<sup>13</sup> Thirty-three unfree tenants each held a yardland in return for seasonal labour services, probably already commuted since valued at 9s. 8*d.* money rent. Ten half-yardlanders each paid 4s. 3½*d.* and six cottagers 2s. 8½*d.*, while six free tenants had holdings ranging from 6 a. (with a mill) to 3½ yardlands. The woodland was included within the bounds of Wychwood forest, but lay outside the forester's regard; it was then worth £2 a year, although in 1315 underwood from 70 a. of woodland was valued at just 6s. 8*d.*, perhaps an underestimate.<sup>14</sup> Only a single 6-a. assart was mentioned in 1279,<sup>15</sup> but it seems likely that most if not all of the assarts mentioned in the late Middle Ages (and reckoned at 157 a. in 1575) had been created before the Black Death, probably including those in the part of Ditchley attached to Bloxham manor.<sup>16</sup> At Dean and Chalford each yardland of the six-yardland demesne was worth 13s. 4*d.* a year, while nine unfree yardlanders each owed seasonal services valued at 10s. 2*d.* a year, and four cottagers each paid 10*d.*–2s. rent.<sup>17</sup> The woodland there had apparently already been largely cleared, and only 21 a. remained at Dean Grove in 1743.<sup>18</sup>

The Black Death apparently had only a limited short-term impact on the structure of farming. The demesne land at Dean (and probably at Spelsbury) was initially kept in hand,<sup>19</sup> and continued demand for land is suggested by local men renting assarts at Cote in neighbouring Charlbury.<sup>20</sup> By the 1450s–60s several holdings (including assarts) were in the lord's hand, however, and rent arrears mounted, while in 1485 much of the assart land was said to be untenanted and given over to the king's deer.<sup>21</sup> Half-yardland holdings remained the norm at Spelsbury, although at Fulwell and Taston yardland holdings were in some cases expanded to two yardlands between 1446 and 1485.<sup>22</sup> Dean's 140-a. demesne remained intact until it was eventually leased by 1502 (and perhaps considerably earlier),

---

<sup>10</sup> DB, f. 157v.

<sup>11</sup> Above, landownership.

<sup>12</sup> Para. based on *Rot. Hund.* II, 746–7.

<sup>13</sup> TNA, C 134/49, no. 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 747. For earlier refs to small assarts: Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 36–7, 120, 123.

<sup>16</sup> OHC, E36/2/2/F1/17; E36/2/2/F1/1–16; E36/2/1/E/3.

<sup>17</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 741.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; M. Lobel, *The History of Dean and Chalford* (ORS 17, 1935), 14, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1370–4, 98.

<sup>20</sup> *VCH Oxon.* X, 141.

<sup>21</sup> OHC, E36/2/2/F1/1–16; *ibid.* E36/2/2/F1/17; TNA, DL 43/8/19.

<sup>22</sup> OHC, E36/2/2/F1/17; TNA, DL 43/8/19.

although the 12-yardland Spelsbury demesne was leased in parcels for £13 13s. 4d. by 1435.<sup>23</sup>

Mixed arable farming remained the norm, but became less intensive in the late Middle Ages: at Dean the former demesne was over 70 per cent pasture in 1509, and by 1517 the lessee Thomas Haydock had converted the remaining 40 a. of arable to grass.<sup>24</sup> A rabbit (later hare) warren on Spelsbury manor was established by a grant of free warren in 1343, lying possibly north-east of Spelsbury village, and others may have existed at Dean and Ditchley.<sup>25</sup> Tenants were permitted to keep a generous 50 sheep per yardland,<sup>26</sup> and wills make many references to them (although generally in small numbers),<sup>27</sup> while inhabitants could also rent sheep from a parish flock maintained in support of the church.<sup>28</sup> Coppicing was organised on a ten-year cycle, with coppices leased to tenants by the 16th century; timber trees, however, were reserved to the lord, who felled many in the 1370s.<sup>29</sup> Markets (as later) probably included Woodstock.<sup>30</sup>

### Farms and Farming c.1551–1778

Several large farms emerged between the 16th and 18th centuries. Thomas Gibbons's Ditchley estate was held by his brother William and by subtenants, though at its sale in 1581 (when two thirds were left fallow) it was described as barren and worn out.<sup>31</sup> The purchaser Sir Henry Lee seems to have enclosed some 119 a. around Ditchley House as parkland,<sup>32</sup> and by 1689 the remaining Ditchley estate farmland (including 12 yardlands in Spelsbury and 10 in Enstone) was leased to the Spelsbury farmer Richard Howlett for £110 a year.<sup>33</sup> By the 1730s the Spelsbury parts of the farm were separately leased, and were later partly taken in hand and partly used to create New Barn farm, which measured 191 a. in 1772.<sup>34</sup> Common rights in Ditchley were largely extinguished by the mid 18th century.<sup>35</sup> At Dean the

<sup>23</sup> OHC, E36/2/2/F1/1.

<sup>24</sup> I.S. Leadam (ed.), *Domesday of Inclosures 1517–1518* (1897), I, 361.

<sup>25</sup> *Cal. Chart.* 1341–1417, 24; OHC, E36/2/2/F1/1; E36/2/1/E/1. For 'Coneygree' field names in Dean and Ditchley: HER, PRN 9317; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 189.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 68–9.

<sup>27</sup> e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 178.119; 179.184; 179.272; 179.326 (1530s–40s).

<sup>28</sup> Below, relig. hist. (church estate).

<sup>29</sup> Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 136, 156, 159; OHC, E36/2/2/F1/1–16; TNA, LR 2/189, f. 75.

<sup>30</sup> Certainly by 1584: VCH Oxon. XII, 328. For 16th-cent. links with Witney: *Witney Ct Bks*, 30–1, 73.

<sup>31</sup> OHC, E36/2/1/E/1; *ibid.* E486/1/E1/1.

<sup>32</sup> Above, landownership (Ditchley 'manor'; manor houses).

<sup>33</sup> OHC, E36/1/4/D/1. The farmhouse, next to Ditchley House but in Enstone parish, had been rebuilt in 1688: M. Cousins, 'Ditchley Park – A Follower of Fashion', *Garden History*, 39:2 (2011), 147.

<sup>34</sup> OHC, E36/1/4/D/2–17; E36/1/4/E/1–6; E36/1/8/D/1; Ch.Ch. Arch., T/Maps/SPE/1; above, Enstone, econ. hist.

<sup>35</sup> OHC, E36/1/4/E/1–2; E36/2/22/D/1; E36/2/16/A/3–4; E36/1/1/L/1.

former demesne continued as a single farm, tenanted in 1743 (when it totalled 118 a.) by Joseph Walker. It increased further in size thereafter.<sup>36</sup>

More modest 16th- and 17th-century holdings were dominated by customary tenants of Spelsbury and Dean manors, individual tenants in Spelsbury, Fulwell and Taston occupying between ½ and three yardlands in 1551, and most having two yardlands or more. Many such farms included both former demesne land (called 'courtlands') and assarts.<sup>37</sup> Some 8½ yardlands of former demesne were attached to Spelsbury farm before 1649, and in 1726 the then nine-yardland holding was let for £100 a year.<sup>38</sup> Lifeholds were gradually converted to leaseholds, mainly in the mid 18th century,<sup>39</sup> and size of holdings subsequently increased.<sup>40</sup> The exception was Oriel College's estate at Dean, where most holdings remained modest, ranging from 2 a. to 80 a. in 1743.<sup>41</sup>

Sheep-corn husbandry was dominant,<sup>42</sup> with large numbers of sheep kept at Ditchley (where a wool house was mentioned in 1603).<sup>43</sup> The outgoing tenant there gave 400 sheep towards his rent in 1707,<sup>44</sup> and sheep from Ditchley was sold at the Chipping Norton, Charlbury and Woodstock fairs.<sup>45</sup> At Taston, Spelsbury, and Fulwell, crop rotations and open field divisions were reorganised c.1700–15 to facilitate the introduction of sainfoin (mentioned also at Ditchley in 1713) as a fodder crop.<sup>46</sup> Woodland remained important, though in 1573 Spelsbury manor's woodland north of Ditchley House (totalling c.381 a.) was said to have been 'spoiled' by the warrener George Whitton, who had made unauthorised gifts.<sup>47</sup> Woodland on the separate Ditchley estate was likewise in a bad state in 1581,<sup>48</sup> the poorly enclosed Sheer's Copse (c.100 a.) being 'decayed' as late as 1638.<sup>49</sup> Timber trees on tenants' holdings were carefully preserved, however,<sup>50</sup> and management of the lord's timber

<sup>36</sup> Oriel College Arch., S II I 19.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 68–73.

<sup>38</sup> OHC, E36/2/1/E/1; E36/2/11/D/4-11 (covering 1705–74).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. E36/2/1/E/14–15; E36/18/10/E/4; E36/1/10/E/3; A.G. Hann, 'Kinship and Exchange Relations within an Estate Economy: Ditchley, 1680–1750' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis, 1999), 84–7, 192–4.

<sup>40</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/MS/5; E36/1/10/E/4; E36/2/1/E/21.

<sup>41</sup> Oriel Coll. Arch., S II I 19.

<sup>42</sup> e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 300/4/67; 67/2/12; 153/4/25; 42/2/41; *ibid.* E36/2/11/D/5 (meal house and wool chamber at Manor Farm House, then called Spelsbury Farm, 1710); Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, f. 28v. (1,800 sheep shorn annually in 1799).

<sup>43</sup> OHC, E36/3/1/E/2. For Sir Hen. Lee's large flocks: S. Simpson, *Sir Henry Lee (1533–1611): Elizabethan Courtier* (2014), 122.

<sup>44</sup> Hann, 'Kinship and Exchange Relations', 240 n.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 141–2, 240. For livestock purchases from Banbury and Bicester, *ibid.* 241.

<sup>46</sup> OHC, E36/2/16/A/1–2; E36/1/4/D/5; E36/2/22/D/2; M.A. Havinden, 'Agricultural Progress in Open-Field Oxfordshire', *The Agricultural History Review*, 9:2 (1961), 76–7. For crop rotations at Ditchley: OHC, E36/1/4/E/4; Hann, 'Kinship and Exchange Relations', 78–9.

<sup>47</sup> OHC, E36/2/1/E/20; E36/2/1/E/3 (acreage in 1575).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. E486/1/E/1/1.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. E480/D1/3.

<sup>50</sup> e.g. TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 73v.–75 (in 1551).

and underwood improved thereafter:<sup>51</sup> in 1691–2 the earl of Lichfield's local wood sales brought in as much as £361, and in the 18th century sales raised c.£200 a year from Spelsbury alone.<sup>52</sup> Venison from deer raised in the park was sold or given to fellow gentry and other contacts.<sup>53</sup>



Woodland around Ditchley House in 1726: map at OHC.

## Farming since 1779

Dean's enclosure in 1779 may have been promoted by Oriel's tenants, since the college itself was content to allow beneficial leases to continue.<sup>54</sup> The result was a consolidation of formerly scattered and intermixed holdings,<sup>55</sup> the chief beneficiary being the college's lessee at Manor farm, which absorbed several smaller holdings in 1820 and covered 382 a. by 1834.<sup>56</sup> Spelsbury, Fulwell and Taston were enclosed in 1803, bringing a significant increase in land values and rents,<sup>57</sup> and by 1817 (with one exception) the 13 farms on the Dillon estate were all over 100 acres. William Nobes and Ellis Fowler held 386 a. and 243 a.

<sup>51</sup> e.g. OHC, E36/1/11/E/2; E36/1/11/F/1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. E36/18/10/F1/3; E36/18/10/E/4; E36/1/11/F/1, nos. 4 and 5; Hann, 'Kinship and Exchange Relations', 114.

<sup>53</sup> OHC, E36/1/13/MS/1; *ibid.* PAR246/10/X/1 (sale of venison, 1795).

<sup>54</sup> Dean Enclo. Act, 19 Geo. III, c. 62 (Private Act).

<sup>55</sup> J.L.G. Mowat, *Sixteen Old Maps of Properties in Oxon.* (1888), map of Dean (1743); OHC, encl. award.

<sup>56</sup> Oriel Coll. Arch., DLR 5; *ibid.* DELL 1, 4 and 7; Ch. Ch. Arch., T/Maps/SPE/6; *Oxf. Jnl.* 22 Oct. 1859 (retirement of farm bailiff).

<sup>57</sup> Spelsbury Enclo. Act, 42 Geo. III, c. 81 (Private Act); Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, f. 51v.; OHC, E36/2/1/E/21 (Dillon farms, 1804).

respectively in Spelsbury, and Edward Hyatt 210 a. at Fulwell, while Edward Kimbell occupied the 366-a. New Barn farm and John Roach the 272-a. Ditchley farm, both of which lay partly in Enstone. Rents fell in the early 1820s as elsewhere,<sup>58</sup> though the Dillons raised significant income from sales of timber, underwood, and bark.<sup>59</sup> In Dean the small Dean grove (20½ a.) was enclosed by private agreement in 1824–5 (all but 3 a. in the south being apportioned to Oriel), having previously been inconveniently divided into strips held by Oriel's and Christ Church's tenants.<sup>60</sup>

A significant change came c.1855, when some 600 a. at Ditchley was taken in hand and an up-to-date farm complex erected at Model Farm. By 1871 the holding had increased to c.900 a.,<sup>61</sup> and later in the century the Dillons invested in infrastructure such as pumping engines and water pipes.<sup>62</sup> Oriel College's tenants at Dean still held 423½ a. on beneficial leases in 1872, but by 1881 668 a. was let at rack rent and only a single 15-a. copyhold survived. Some 450 a. was let to Alfred Neild, who also held land under Christ Church and farmed 1,000 a. overall.<sup>63</sup> The late 19th-century agricultural depression brought the usual fall in rents and some increase in dairying, but sheep continued to be kept in large numbers (2,771 in 1896 compared to 2,606 in 1866).<sup>64</sup> Chipping Norton was then the main market, though neighbouring Charlbury was gaining ground, its railway station used for transporting produce.<sup>65</sup>

Farming remained at a low ebb in the 1920s–30s (when there were c.10 main farms), falling rents prompting Christ Church to take Spelsburydown farm in hand and to lay it largely to grass.<sup>66</sup> At Ditchley, Ronald Tree concluded that a five-course rotation had failed to maintain fertility on the near 1,000-a. home farm, and from 1934 he focussed on producing high-quality milk from pedigree Guernseys, laying the poorest arable to long-term leys. A profitable pig business supplying a Kidlington bacon factory was shut down with the onset of war, because of the difficulty obtaining feed.<sup>67</sup> Other farms were then in a mixed state, many of them managed by tenants lacking knowledge of arable farming, although Spelsburydown farm (489 a.) was in the hands of a pair of energetic men who ploughed up a considerable

---

<sup>58</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/E/5.

<sup>59</sup> e.g. *ibid.* E36/1/11/F/1; E36/1/11/E/1; *Bucks. Herald*, 16 Apr. 1853.

<sup>60</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 58–79; Oriel Coll. Arch., DLR 5.

<sup>61</sup> TNA, HO 107/1732; *ibid.* RG 9/910; OHC, E36/1/6/E/1; P. Horn, 'Aspects of Labouring Life: The Model Farm at Ditchley, 1856–73', *Cake & Cockhorse*, 6:1 (Autumn, 1974), 13. For a photo of the bldgs, *Sale Cat., Ditchley Park* (1953): copy in OHC.

<sup>62</sup> OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XXI.5 (1881); OHC, E36/1/13/Y/1.

<sup>63</sup> *Account of Estates Belonging to Oriel College, Oxford, 1881* (1881); TNA, RG 11/1519.

<sup>64</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/F19/4; Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 82, ff. 192–3, 213; TNA, MAF 68/53; MAF 68/1623; Orr, *Oxon. Agric.*, statistical plates. For a sheep wash at Dean: OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.8 (1881).

<sup>65</sup> Orr, *Oxon. Agric.*, 74; Corbett, *Spelsbury*, 277 (for 1920s).

<sup>66</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., T/viii/b.101; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1931 and later edns).

<sup>67</sup> *Country Life*, 12 Oct. 1940.



acreage for the war effort. At Fulwell farm (425 a.) the tenant improved a 'wet, sticky and unkind brash' by heavy manuring.<sup>68</sup>

Modernisation at Ditchley after 1953 included the demolition of most of the Victorian buildings at Model Farm and erection of large machinery sheds.<sup>69</sup> Mixed farming continued to be combined with woodland exploitation and (from the late 1960s to 1990s) the planting of several thousand native trees for landscaping and conservation.<sup>70</sup> In 2024 the Ditchley estate's farming arm M.D. Hamilton managed over 2,500 a. of farmland and c.870 a. of woodland in Spelsbury, Charlbury, and Enstone, the estate's trees supplying a wood-chip boiler which from 2013 heated properties on the estate. Livestock included c.150 sheep and c.100 cows, of which a quarter were rare-breed White Park cattle.<sup>71</sup> Spelsburydown farm saw a shift c.1950 from dairying to beef cattle, sheep, and pigs, but by 2024 the c.800-a. holding was entirely given over to cereals.<sup>72</sup>



Modern farm buildings at Model Farm, Ditchley.

## Non-Agricultural Activities

### *Mills and Fulling*

A Spelsbury mill worth 4s. 2d. a year in 1086 was probably the later Coldron mill on Coldron brook (south-west of the village), which was well established by the 13th century when it was held by the Colthurnes as free tenants. Adam Colthurne paid £1 4s. rent in 1315, the mill

---

<sup>68</sup> TNA, MAF 32/918/99.

<sup>69</sup> OS Maps (various edns).

<sup>70</sup> 'Ditchley Park: Parkland Plan' (unpubl. Askew Nelson Ltd report, 2014), pp. 40–1: copy at Ditchley Park; OS Maps (various edns).

<sup>71</sup> Info. from Robert Hobill (farm manager) and Mike Montagu.

<sup>72</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., T/viii/b.101; info. from Robert Hobill.



and its meadow closes being later leased with ½ yardland, for which Stephen Harris paid a £45 entry fine and £10 rent in 1660.<sup>73</sup> The mill appears to have been chiefly used for grinding corn, but may occasionally have been adapted for fulling, one Adam ‘le fulur’ of Spelsbury being mentioned in the 1250s, and William Jordan, fuller, in 1554.<sup>74</sup> The surviving building is apparently 18th-century. The mill largely ceased operation c.1907, its wooden (elm) gear being removed in the 1930s, though a new wheel was installed by a private owner in 2014, producing electricity.<sup>75</sup>

A separate mill at Dean (also on Coldron brook) existed by 1086, when there were two mills perhaps under a single roof. A grist mill there was mentioned in 1779, and continued until the 1920s;<sup>76</sup> the 2½-storey millhouse is 18th-century (extended in the 20th), and in the 1980s retained its metal waterwheel and much of its gear.<sup>77</sup> A possible medieval windmill mound (overlain by ridge and furrow) has been identified c.315 m. south-west of Dean House.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Crafts, Trades and Retailing***

Charcoal burners were active at Ditchley in the Middle Ages, and ale was brewed on a domestic scale,<sup>79</sup> while 16th- to 18th-century occupations included those of butcher, baker, tailor, weaver, ironmonger, carpenter, mason and glazier.<sup>80</sup> A maltster (Thomas Coling) was active in Dean in 1688.<sup>81</sup> The Chequers Inn in Spelsbury was established c.1764, replacing an earlier hostelry, and hosted periodic timber auctions.<sup>82</sup> In 1898 it was described as a ‘good old-fashioned country inn’, and soon after Viscount Dillon leased it to Hall’s Oxford

<sup>73</sup> DB, f. 238v.; *Rot. Hund.* II, 747; OHC, E36/2/13/D/1-4; *ibid.* E320/D/1; TNA, C 134/49, no. 16; *ibid.* LR 2/189, f. 68v.

<sup>74</sup> Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 36–7; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 180.208.

<sup>75</sup> Kelly’s Dir. Oxon. (1907 and later edns); Corbett, *Spelsbury*, 238 (claiming occasional use until 1914); Witney Gaz. 22 Jan 1987; <https://spelsbury.org/history/coldron-mill/> (accessed June 2024); WODC planning portal, ref. 21/02999/HHD (‘History of Coldron Mill’).

<sup>76</sup> DB, f. 157v.; OHC, enclo. award; Kelly’s Dir. Oxon. (1924 and 1928 edns); OHC, POX0061651 (online at <https://heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk>).

<sup>77</sup> NHLE, no. 1251421 (with photo) (accessed Nov. 2024); W. Foreman, *Oxon. Mills* (1983), 106.

<sup>78</sup> HER, PRN 13763.

<sup>79</sup> e.g. Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 57, 64–5; OHC, E36/2/2/CR/43 and 29.

<sup>80</sup> e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 295/2/60; 181.334; 196.169; 204.196; 197.91; 205.325; 107.178; 53/1/21; *ibid.* par. reg. transcript; *Witney Ct Bks*, 73. For a butcher (‘bocher’) in 1536: F.W. Weaver and G.N. Clark (eds.), *Churchwarden’s Accounts of Marston, Spelsbury, Pyrton* (ORS 6, 1925), 50.

<sup>81</sup> M.S. Gretton (ed.), *Oxon. Justices of the Peace in the 17th Century* (ORS 16, 1934), 89.

<sup>82</sup> OHC, E36/2/12/D/3–5; *ibid.* QSD V/1–4; *Oxf. Jnl.*, 27 Feb. 1830, 22 Dec. 1866, 26 Dec. 1874, 7 Jan. 1882.

Brewery Ltd,<sup>83</sup> but it was destroyed by fire in 1924.<sup>84</sup> A short-lived beerhouse at Dean was noted in the 1870s–80s.<sup>85</sup>

An early 19th-century Taston blacksmith also made clocks (supplying one to Ditchley Park), but otherwise craft and retail activity remained limited, employing just 59 people in 1801 compared with 390 engaged in agricultural work.<sup>86</sup> Stone slate was dug periodically in Fulwell,<sup>87</sup> and in the second half of the 19th century there were a few stone masons, while leather glove-making was a significant employment for women, at least from the 1840s until the 1880s.<sup>88</sup> Bricks were apparently made at Ditchley for occasional estate use in the 19th century, and there was a small lime kiln in Dean.<sup>89</sup> Mineral extraction was carried out near Grove Lane in the 1960s by Hoveringham Gravels Ltd, the diggings being subsequently used for landfill waste.<sup>90</sup> A handful of small businesses in 2024 included a software design company in Dean (established in 2010) and a home-based greengrocer in Spelsbury.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> OHC, E36/2/12/D/5.

<sup>84</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 25 Sept. 1924.

<sup>85</sup> e.g. TNA, RG 10/1456 (1871); RG 11/1519 (1881).

<sup>86</sup> C.F.C Beeson, *Clockmaking in Oxon.* (1989), 127; *Census*, 1801.

<sup>87</sup> W.J. Arkell, *Oxford Stone* (1947), 149.

<sup>88</sup> TNA, RG 9/910; RG 10/1456; RG 11/1519; RG 12/1178.

<sup>89</sup> OHC, E36/1/10/M/6 (showing shed built of 'Ditchley bricks', 1857). For the lime kiln in Dean: OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.8 (1881).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* MT 78/206, no. 29; MT 78/256, no. 14; MT 78/304, no. 42; MT 78/305, no. 5; *The Post*, 30 May 1997.

<sup>91</sup> Local information.