

BREMHILL

BREMHILL is a large parish (6,165 a. before 19th-century changes) in north Wiltshire.¹ Bremhill church stands 3 km. north-west of Calne and 6 km. east of Chippenham. The ancient parish, 6.5 km. from north to south, 5 km. east to west, formed an approximate rectangle, except along its western edge, where Kellaways (formerly Tytherton Kellaways),² Avon (a detached portion of Christian Malford), and Tytherton Lucas (in Chippenham) intrude.³ Bremhill is the easternmost parish within Chippenham hundred. It lay wholly outside the medieval Chippenham or Pewsham forest in 1228,⁴ although in Domesday it had extensive woodlands, assessed at 2 leagues by 2 furlongs. The village of Bremhill is one of six small settlements scattered within the parish.

Highway was a chapelry within Bremhill parish by 1219, and remained so until 1952, although for civil purposes it was regarded as a parish by 1702.⁵ It lies detached from Bremhill, 3 km. east of the eastern parish boundary and separated by Hilmarton, into which civil parish it was merged in 1890. Never a constituent of Chippenham hundred, Highway lay in Cannings hundred in 1255 and perhaps in 1219.⁶ Its history is covered elsewhere.⁷

In 1883 a small tongue of land (50 a.) was transferred from Bremhill to Calne,⁸ and further small alterations were made in 1884, 1885 and 1890.⁹ In 1984 Tytherton Lucas was transferred from Chippenham Without parish to Bremhill,¹⁰ taking the area of the parish from 2,393 ha. in 1981 to 3,114 ha. in 1991.¹¹ The history of Tytherton Lucas is considered in this volume with Chippenham.

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries and Parish Origins

In addition to the small riverside territories of Avon, Kellaways and Tytherton Lucas along its western edge, Bremhill shares a boundary with Christian Malford to the north and four other ancient parishes: Calne to the east and south, Hilmarton to the east, Lyneham to the north-east and Sutton Benger to the north-west. Rivers define some of the boundaries: the (Bristol)

¹ This article was written in 2021 and revised in 2024; it was prepared in conjunction with a separate history, L. Ryland-Epton, *Bremhill Parish through the Ages* (Bremhill Parish History Group, 2021), which deals with certain topics in greater detail. Maps used include: OS Map 1:25000, sheet 156 (1999 edn.).

² *Andrews' and Dury's Map 1773* (WRS. 8), pl. 14 marks East Tytherton as 'Tetherton Kalloways or Kelways'.

³ Below, Chippenham, intro.; Langley Burrell, intro.

⁴ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 446–7.

⁵ *VCH Wilts*, VII, 197, 198; Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 532.

⁶ *VCH Wilts*, VII, 175.

⁷ *VCH Wilts*, VII, 197–8.

⁸ *VCH Wilts*, XVII, 29.

⁹ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 532.

¹⁰ Statutory Instrument 1984: 387, N. Wilts. parishes order.

¹¹ *Census* 1981, 1991

Avon forms the border with Sutton Benger, the Marden with Calne, and the Cowage brook with Calne and Hilmarton. Elsewhere the boundary takes an irregular course following enclosed fields and woodland edges, notably where it borders Avon, Kellaways and Christian Malford. The northern parish boundary, with Christian Malford and Avon, was defined in charters of reputed date 937 and 940; that with Sutton Benger (the river Avon) c.1100.¹²

The bounds of Bremhill encompassed the settlements of Bremhill, Foxham, Charlcutt, Spirthill and East Tytherton. It comprised 38 hides in the ownership of Malmesbury abbey by 1066.¹³ Within its limits also, but independent from it in 1066, was the small estate of Cadenham. Bremhill, first recorded as *Bremel* (and variants) in 937, appears to be a simplex name referring to brambles.¹⁴ The first element of Foxham refers to foxes and Spirthill to a spring.¹⁵ The name Cadenham appears to derive from the personal name *Cada*, and is associated also with the stream, the Cade Burna; Cadenham lies close to its source.¹⁶ Charlcutt refers to cottages occupied by free peasants (*ceorls*).¹⁷ Tytherton, shared by several nearby settlements, may refer to the land's fertility;¹⁸ alternatively it may derive from a verb *tydrian* meaning to propagate.¹⁹

Landscape

The western and northern parts of the parish are relatively flat and low-lying, and here the principal bedrock geology is Oxford Clay. Superficial alluvial and gravel deposits occur along the Avon and Marden valleys, and there are also narrow ribbons of alluvium (soil or sediment) beside the local streams, the Cowage Brook, Cade Burna and their tributaries. The Corallian Limestone ridge to the east and south-east of the parish forms steep escarpments and a high plateau, and beyond it to the east is a far more broken, intimate landscape. The hill's bedrock is the Hazelbury Bryan formation (Lower Calcareous Grit), overlain at Spirthill by a small outcrop of rock of the Highworth Grit Member. Along the eastern parish edge, north-east of Bremhill village, the action of the Cowage Brook and its tributaries has exposed the underlying clay.

Cowage Brook flows south into the Marden near Ratford at the southern tip of the parish.²⁰ The Marden flows north-west to join the Avon near Tytherton Lucas. Minor streams and watercourses rise along the escarpment and trend westward to the Avon. These are prone to flood in winter. At 134 m. above sea level, Wick Hill is the highest point along the ridge.

¹² *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVI (1919), 238–40, 255–9; *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 221.

¹³ C. and F. Thorn, *Domesday Book: Wiltshire* (Chichester, 1979), 22, 5; cf. Electronic Sawyer, S1038; *Reg. Malm.* I, 321–4. Disputed by D.N. Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), 41 n.57, 43; H.P.R. Finberg, *Early Charters of the West Midlands* (2nd edn. Leicester, 1972), no. 180; S.E. Kelly (ed.) *Charters of Malmesbury abbey*, 246–9.

¹⁴ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 86–7.

¹⁵ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 87–8.

¹⁶ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 87; Brown, *Stanley abbey*, 14.

¹⁷ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 87.

¹⁸ R. Coates, 'Tyther- as a Place Name Element', *Jnl. English Place Name Soc.* 43 (2011), 35–42; below, Langley Burrell, introduction.

¹⁹ R. Coates, 'Tyther- as a Place Name Element', 35–42.

²⁰ This para: OS Map 1:25000, sheet 156 (1999 edn.).

The foot of the escarpment is about 65 m. above Ordnance Datum, falling away gently to around 50 m. beside the Avon.

Across the claylands the soils are lime-rich loams with impeded or slowly permeable drainage and high or moderate fertility.²¹ The Corallian ridge produces slightly acid, less fertile soils. Most agricultural land in the parish is good to moderate, except along the steep sides of the escarpment. However, on the plateau itself and around Tytherton Lucas it is graded very good.²² There is little or no woodland on the clay, but Bremhill Grove near Wick Bridge and Avon Grove wood along the northern border are the largest of several compartments of woodland planted on the escarpment.²³

Communications

The lane running south from the Dauntsey direction to Foxham is referred to in a Saxon charter as *Elde Strete* ('the old made-up road'), and is a continuation of Friday Street in Christian Malford.²⁴ After it leaves Foxham on its way to Charlcutt, it is Hare Street, a name which may indicate an Anglo-Saxon origin.²⁵ It is possible that Hare Street would have been used in summer, when it was easy to cross the Cade Burna by Hare Street farm, but in winter a long detour may have been necessary, past Cadenham and up to Spirthill, to reach Charlcutt.

In 1474 Maud Heath, a widow then living in Kellaways, endowed to trustees her property in Chippenham, which was used to maintain and repair a causeway across the floodplain from Bremhill Wick to Chippenham. The route, some of it elevated on stone arches, was still in use in 2024. In Bremhill it runs from Wick Hill through East Tytherton, across the Avon at Kellaways, and then through Langley Burrell to Chippenham.²⁶ A monument was erected at Wick Hill in 1838 depicting Maud Heath as a market woman seated on a tall column, and has a verse penned by the Bremhill vicar, William Lisle Bowles.²⁷ It is likely that she was actually from the wealthy Bristol mercantile community, and that her intention was to establish or perpetuate an alternative route between London and Bristol through Bremhill avoiding the river crossing at Chippenham.²⁸

No road within the parish was turnpiked, and the settlements in Bremhill parish remain relatively isolated from major routes, although the A4 Bath road, called by the Bremhill incumbent in 1828 the 'great western road', passes 1 km. south of the parish boundary.²⁹ The Lyneham to Calne road (A3102) lies to the east and to the north is the M4

²¹ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/> (accessed 27 May 2021).

²² Natural England, *Agricultural Land Classification Map South West* (2011).

²³ OS Map 1:25000, sheet 156 (1999 edn.); satellite imagery.

²⁴ Electronic Sawyer, S466; below, Christian Malford, communications.

²⁵ *Arch. Jnl.* LXXV (1918), 82–3.

²⁶ WSA, 3448/1/1; *Coms. Of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-Eighth Report* (London: Parl. Papers, 1834 (606), xxii), 307–9; *Endowed Charities 1908*, 267–9. See also K. Taylor, *Dry Shod to Chippenham: A History of Maud Heath's Ancient Causeway in North Wilts.* (ELSP, 2012); *VCH Wilts*, IV, 256.

²⁷ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 180–1.

²⁸ L.M. Ryland-Epton and J. Chandler, 'Who was Maud Heath and what was her gift', forthcoming.

²⁹ Bowles, *Bremhill*, 73.

motorway. Away from the main roads, within the settlements that make up the parish, traffic was reported to be very light in 2014.³⁰

Bremhill parish was bisected by the Wilts & Berks Canal, in use here by c.1799–1800 and completed throughout in 1810.³¹ The route from north to south passes through Foxham, broadly following the base of the escarpment to the east. A wharf was built along its length at Foxham. In 1901 an aqueduct at Stanley failed, draining and rendering inaccessible the canal to the south. Commercial traffic ceased c.1906 and the canal was subsequently abandoned.³² A trust established in 1977 to reopen the canal had restored stretches at Foxham locks, and work was ongoing in 2024.³³

A short stretch (c.1 km.) of the main railway line between Swindon and Chippenham, opened in 1841, crosses the north-west edge of the parish, and a halt was built nearby, in Christian Malford parish, in 1925; it closed in 1965.³⁴ A station at Dauntsey (but in Christian Malford parish), 3 km. north of Foxham, was opened on the same line in 1868 and closed in 1965.³⁵ A halt at Stanley Bridge, 2 km. west of Bremhill village, was built on the Calne branch line in 1905 and remained in use until the line closed in 1965.³⁶ In 2024 Chippenham was the closest railway station to the parish. The parish was passed to the west by a railway branch line constructed between Chippenham and Calne and completed in 1863.³⁷ The line was closed in 1965 and was subsequently converted to a leisure facility. These transport developments may have negated the need for a village carrier to take people and goods to market; none is recorded in local trade directories.

Population

Domesday book recorded 45 peasant households in Bremhill and 12 slaves; a further 8 households and 2 slaves were noted for Cadenham.³⁸ Using a multiplier of 4.5 for households but regarding slaves as individuals, approximate total population figures of 220 for Bremhill and 45 for Cadenham are likely. A rent roll of the estates of Malmesbury abbey, 1283/4, listed 106 (customary?) tenants at its manor of Bremhill.³⁹ The 1377 poll tax recorded 176 adult taxpayers for Bremhill and 126 for Foxham, which perhaps equate to 450–500 total population.⁴⁰ In 1676 a total of 635 adult conformists and nonconformists was reported; this suggests a total population of over 1,000.⁴¹

³⁰ <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/751/Bremhill-Parish-Neighbourhood-Plan-Part-1-policies-evidence-context/pdf/bremhill-parish-np-p1-and-2-referendum-web-version.pdf?m=637103860151630000>

³¹ VCH Wilts, IV, 273–4.

³² R. Alder, *Chippenham and the Wilts. & Berks Canal* (Salisbury, 2011), 31–3.

³³ Local inf.

³⁴ M. Oakley, *Wilts. Railway Stations* (Wimborne, 2004), 40.

³⁵ Oakley, *Wilts. Railway Stations*, 48–9.

³⁶ Oakley, *Wilts. Railway Stations*, 121–2.

³⁷ VCH Wilts, IV, 287.

³⁸ *Domesday*, 169, 175.

³⁹ *Reg. Malm.* I, 162–9.

⁴⁰ VCH Wilts, IV, 307.

⁴¹ *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 129.

In 1332 and 1334 Bremhill's total for taxes levied in those years was a little over £15,⁴² the highest in Chippenham hundred apart from Chippenham itself, which was around £17. In 1334 there were 76 named individuals who contributed to the tax. In 1576 Bremhill and Foxham together paid just under £15,⁴³ from 25 named contributors; this was the highest total in the hundred apart from Chippenham borough and its tithings.

In 1801 and 1811 the population of Bremhill was 1,303, and this rose to 1,535 in 1831 and 1,550 in 1841.⁴⁴ In 1841 the total included 30 labourers building the railway. Thereafter, in common with most rural communities in Wiltshire, the population fell, to 1,163 in 1881 and further to 1,090 in 1891. This was despite a boundary alteration in 1885 that brought 125 residents of Christian Malford (Avon chapelry) into Bremhill parish. By 1931 depopulation had continued such that the total, 793, was little more than half of that a century earlier. After rising to 896 in 1951, the post-war total was static. The total declined to below 800 in 1971 and 1981. A slight rise in 1991, to 984, may be partly explained by the transfer of Tytherton Lucas into the parish in 1984. During the 21st century, the total remained between 900 and 1,000, and in 2021 the usual resident population was 931.⁴⁵

Although there are few reliable sources for population statistics before 1800, the impression given is of a comparatively large total for the area, which had perhaps doubled between the 14th and 17th centuries and increased more modestly by the beginning of the 19th. This increase was not sustained, and after a steady decline from the later 19th century had by 2000 reverted to its 17th-century level.

Settlement

There is some evidence of occupation at Bremhill in prehistoric times. A collection of Neolithic flint tools was discovered at Spirthill.⁴⁶ At Elm farm, Foxham, ditches from a field system of a prehistoric date were found in a geophysical survey.⁴⁷

The earliest evidence for settlement within the built landscape of the parish is the church of St Martin's at Bremhill which retains Anglo-Saxon elements. It has been suggested that Malmesbury abbey did not acquire Bremhill from the Crown but rather from an Anglo-Saxon thegn to whom the king had granted the estate in the 900s. The area around St Martin's and Manor Farm (now Bremhill Manor) and including a nearby spring exhibit the typical shape of an Anglo-Saxon oval enclosure built around a manor house and church. This shape is also clearly visible in the earliest maps of the village.⁴⁸ The village of Bremhill would have developed adjacent to the Saxon manor and church.

⁴² *Wilts. Tax List of 1332* (WRS. 45), 97–8; *VCH Wilts.* IV, 298.

⁴³ *Two Sixteenth-Century Taxation Lists* (WRS. 10), 58–9.

⁴⁴ This para: *VCH Wilts.* IV, 319, 342; *Census 1961–2011*; ONS estimate.

⁴⁵ Census 2021 from nomisweb.co.uk.

⁴⁶ *Wiltshire HER, Neolithic Flint, Spirthill, ST97NE103* (accessed 21 Oct. 2021).

⁴⁷ *Wiltshire HER, Prehistoric Ditches, Elm Farm, MWI76943* (accessed 21 Oct. 2021).

⁴⁸ S. Draper, *Landscape, Settlement and Society in Roman and Early Medieval Wilts.* (B.A.R. 419, 2006), 76–7; S. Draper, in R. Jones and S. Semple (eds.), *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England* (Tyas, 2012), 343–4.

Place-name evidence confirms that most of the small settlements within Bremhill parish had their origins in the Saxon period.⁴⁹ Bremhill itself, Avon, Foxham and Spirthill are all recorded in charters purported to be of pre-conquest date. Cadenham and Tytherton were Domesday estates, and Charlcott and Hazeland, although not recorded before the 13th century, have names of Old English derivation.

Some medieval earthworks lie at Foxham to the east of the church, including a hollow way and building platforms. There is also evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation at Foxham,⁵⁰ Bremhill Wick and Spirthill, where there are also other earthworks and a trackway.⁵¹

During the ownership of the estate of Bremhill by Malmesbury abbey, a grange was located close to the church.⁵² The barn at nearby Bremhill Manor (formerly Manor Farm), a partially extant medieval farmstead, may be a relic of the grange.⁵³ Another possibility is that the grange was incorporated into what became the vicarage.⁵⁴ At the Dissolution of the monasteries, the estate of Bremhill, along with the grange, was bought by Sir Edward Bayntun and maintained as a secondary family residence.⁵⁵ A 1612 survey of the estate describes their residence, a substantial twenty bay and two-storey building, standing to the south-west of the church.⁵⁶ In this case the grange and Bayntun house are likely to be at Bremhill Manor (Manor Farm) and not at the old vicarage now named Bremhill Court. However, Bremhill Court itself contains a medieval core, consisting of a hall house. Analysis of the timbers shows that some of the trees were felled during the 1320s. The building is likely to have been constructed by a person of status, whose identity is unknown.⁵⁷

The settlement pattern depicted on maps from the later 18th century has remained largely unchanged into the 21st.⁵⁸ Bremhill village is the most southerly of four settlements ranged along the high ground in the east of the parish, the others being Bremhill Wick, Charlcott and Spirthill. They are linked by meandering lanes, which ascend from crossings of the Marden at Hazeland and Ratford in the south, and descend beyond Spirthill in the north

⁴⁹ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS) 86–8, 91–2.

⁵⁰ Wiltshire HER, Medieval settlement, Foxham, ST97NE453 (accessed 21 Oct. 2021); RCHME, ‘Avebury Project Medieval and Post Medieval Assessment: Parish Summary Sheet’, (1996) No. 104/1996, Sheet: ST97NE. https://historicismengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/104-1996/RCHME-AveburyProjectMedievalAndPostMedievalAssessment_ParishSummarySheet (accessed 22 Sept. 2021).

⁵¹ RCHME, ‘Avebury Project Medieval and Post Medieval Assessment’; Wiltshire HER, Medieval Settlement earthworks, Spirthill, ST97NE467 (accessed 21 Oct. 2021); Wiltshire HER, Ridge and Furrow, West of Bremhill Wick, ST97SE461 (accessed 21 Oct. 2021).

⁵² *WAM* 35, 546.

⁵³ <https://historicismengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1363795> (Accessed 29 July 2021); Wiltshire HER, Manor Farm, MWI66586 (accessed 21 Oct. 2021).

⁵⁴ NWDC letter from the Chief Planning Officer to O.R. Cleg of The Old Vicarage, Bremhill, dated 30 Jan. 1986, inf. from Mr John Harris.

⁵⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 60.

⁵⁶ *WSA*, 122/1.

⁵⁷ M. Hurford, *et al.*, ‘Bremhill Court, Bremhill, Wiltshire: Tree Ring Analysis of Timbers’, Historic England Report: 77–2010 (Swindon, 2010); NWDC letter from the Chief Planning Officer to O.R. Cleg of The Old Vicarage, Bremhill, dated 30 Jan. 1986, inf. from Mr John Harris.

⁵⁸ *Andrews’ and Dury’s Map 1773* (WRS. 8), sheet 14; *Printed Maps of Wilts.* (WRS. 52), 108–9.

to Catcomb and Goatacre (in Lyneham). By contrast, another group of settlements stands below the ridge on the Avon flood plain, and ranged around linear commons or greens. These are Foxham, Cadenham, East Tytherton and the Bremhill portion of Avon.

After 1850 a number of communal buildings were constructed (or renovated) across the parish for religious worship and learning. Those for education included school buildings at East Tytherton and Bremhill during the 1860s and three reading rooms at Bremhill, Foxham and Charlcutt during the 1880s. A nonconformist chapel was built at Foxham in the 1850s, where two decades later the Anglican chapel was also rebuilt. The Anglican church at Bremhill was also renovated. A small number of cottages was built by the Bowood estate in the 1870s; however by the early 20th century lack of available housing was reportedly forcing families to move away. Despite the need identified by some in the community for housing the parish council was ambivalent about supporting the building of local authority housing. Modern development has been largely restricted to conversion, rebuilding and in-filling.

The Built Character

The Corallian ridge has been extensively quarried locally for ragstone and ironstone rubble to be used as building material, and clay for brickmaking is widely available in the Avon vale.⁵⁹ These local resources underpin Bremhill's built environment, supplemented after 1800, once the canal and then railway made movement easier, by materials, such as ashlar limestone, from further afield.⁶⁰ Kellaways Rock, a band of calcareous sandstone, is found along the Avon banks and has been exploited for building, notably the Maud Heath causeway footbridge at Kellaways.⁶¹ The influence of the Bowood estate is evident in much of the Victorian architecture in the parish, including the schools and reading rooms as well as housing, and Bremhill itself has the character of an estate village. There has been little 20th-century development in the parish, except for groups of houses at Foxham and in Bremhill village.

Late medieval fabric survives in Hazeland Farmhouse which, in common with several Bremhill houses (Carpenter's, Chesterman's and Elms Farmhouses, Old Orchard House), retains some timber framing under a thatched or stone slate roof. Also medieval is a large barn at Bremhill Manor, which may have been built by Malmesbury abbey for its grange nearby. In Bremhill village are two medieval crosses of ashlar masonry.

Of high-status houses in the parish one, Bremhill Court, the former vicarage, retains part of a three-bay hall dated to c.1325, but was extensively rebuilt c.1640, and again, with Gothick features, by Revd Bowles 1818–20. Cadenham Manor, of c.1690, replaced an earlier moated Hungerford house nearby, and may incorporate some features from it, as well as a 16th-century dovecote. The house is of five bays with ashlar front and adjoins 18th-century formal gardens. Tytherton House and Bremhill Manor are other substantial, ashlar-fronted houses, but of the early 19th century.

⁵⁹ This section depends principally on Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 179–81, 312, 336–7; NHLE, listings; Ryland-Epton, *Bremhill*, 17–25; and personal observation.

⁶⁰ I. Geddes, in Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 5; R.S. Barron, *Geology of Wilts*. (WAHNS, 1976), 64.

⁶¹ I. Geddes, *Hidden Depths* (Ex Libris, 2000), 101–2.

Within the parish are very many 17th- and 18th-century farmhouses, typically built of local rubblestone and generally under stone slate roofs. Examples are Glebe, Bencroft and Wick Bridge Farmhouses, and Grove and West End House. Several rubblestone cottages under thatch survive, including Bowood estate housing of the early 19th century (Red Oak Cottage and 2–3 Ratford Hill). An attractive group of later Bowood houses in Bremhill village, some dated 1872–5, are of coursed ironstone and brick under Bridgwater tile roofs.

Local red brick has been used for refronting and enlarging older houses, but also, and often with ashlar dressings, for 19th-century farmhouses (Lock, Cadenham Park), the chapels at Foxham and Spirthill, the Foxham inn, and most successfully at East Tytherton, where the Moravian line of chapel, manse and school of 1792–4 forms a most attractive group. One large industrial building, Hazeland mill, remains, of rubblestone and slate, three-storeys and five bays at the rear with extensions east and west. An 18th-century inn, the Dumb Post, is also of rubblestone.

LANDOWNERSHIP

Pattern of Landownership

Before the Reformation Malmesbury abbey possessed the manors of Bremhill, Foxham and Spirthill which, at the Dissolution, were acquired by Sir Edward Bayntun. From the 16th to the 20th century they were primarily held by non-resident lords. In the 20th century their estates were sold off as separate farms and smallholdings. Cadenham, a small Domesday manor within Bremhill parish, was acquired by the Hungerford family in 1486, and they retained it until the 18th century, after which it passed through various owners.

Manors and Principal Estates

Bremhill Manor: King Athelstan gave an estate at Bremhill to Malmesbury abbey c.935.⁶² However, the authenticity of the charter has been questioned.⁶³ A confirmation of the abbey's land and privileges by Edward in 1065 is also disputed.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, in 1066 and 1086 the manor of Bremhill was held by the monks of Malmesbury abbey. It paid geld for 38 hides.⁶⁵ The estate was surrendered to the crown in 1539 and acquired by Sir Edward Bayntun of Bromham (will pr. 1545), vice-chamberlain to five wives of Henry VIII, the following year.⁶⁶

⁶² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 60.

⁶³ The disputed charter was for 60 hides, and is probably only part of the original estate that came into the possession of Malmesbury abbey. *Reg. Malm.* I, 307–9; *VCH Wilts*, III, 213; Kelly, S.E. (ed.) *Charters of Malmesbury abbey* (Oxford: British Academy, 2005), 218–22.

⁶⁴ *Reg. Malm.* I, 321–4; above, landscape.

⁶⁵ *Domesday*, 169; *VCH Wilts*, III, 215.

⁶⁶ *VCH Wilts*, III, 227; *Hist. Parl., Commons*, 1509–1558, i. 403; TNA, PROB 11/30/431; ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

Sir Edward Bayntun was succeeded by his son, Andrew.⁶⁷ Andrew briefly lost control of his estates, after which financial difficulties led him to entail them to his brother Edward. However, the financial mismanagement continued, and on Andrew's death in 1564 his brother was involved in a court action to secure the inheritance. Andrew appeared excluded from the accession of Sir Edward Bayntun's estate in the *Visitation of Wiltshire* from 1565 and other genealogical histories thereafter.⁶⁸

Sir Edward Bayntun (d.1593) passed the estate to his son, Henry (d.1616), his eldest son, William, having allegedly been murdered by witchcraft in 1564.⁶⁹ Henry left money in his will to the church and poor of Bremhill, where he maintained a substantial house adjoining the church, although the principal family seat remained at Bromham.⁷⁰ The estate then descended to his son Edward (d. 1657), who was baptised at Bremhill in 1593, with a life interest to his wife, Lucy.⁷¹ The settlement of the manor of Bremhill, worth £700 annually, was subject to a legal dispute on the death of Lucy Bayntun, as she had transferred the estate to her kinsmen, possibly due to ill-treatment by her son who had allegedly stripped the manor house of all its furnishings.⁷²

Edward Bayntun commanded Wiltshire parliamentary troops during the Civil War, although following an argument with Sir Edward Hungerford in 1643, he moved briefly to support the king.⁷³ Royalist troops destroyed the Bayntun houses at Bremhill and Bromham in 1644 and 1645.⁷⁴ They were replaced by a house at Spye Park (Bromham).⁷⁵ Edward Bayntun was succeeded by his son, also Edward (d.1679), who was likewise active in support of parliamentary forces.⁷⁶ This Edward was succeeded by his son Henry (d.1691).⁷⁷ Henry Bayntun was only 27 and in considerable debt when he died, leaving the estate to his son John.⁷⁸ It was thereafter sold.

Joseph Haskins Stiles (d.1714) sometime merchant of Amsterdam, purchased the principal part of the estate by 1694 and was regarded as lord of the manor.⁷⁹ He was

⁶⁷ W. Harvey, *Visitation of Wiltshire, 1565* (Exeter, 1897), 4. See also Burke, *Commoners*, iv. 685. For Bayntun's financial problems 1544–1563: TNA, PROB 11/30/431; *Hist. Parl., Commons*, 1509–1558, i. 400; *ibid*, 1558–1603, i. 409–10; ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁶⁸ Burke, *Commoners*, iv. 685; *Hist. Parl., Commons*, 1558–1603, i.410; ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁶⁹ TNA, PROB 11/82/478; Burke, *Commoners*, iv. 685; *Wilts. N&Q*, 4, 72–8; ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024; L. Ryland-Epton, 'Murder by Witchcraft', *Sarum Chronicle*, 24 (2024), 16–31.

⁷⁰ TNA, PROB 11/128/544; ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024. See also Bowles, *Bremhill*, 197.

⁷¹ TNA, PROB 11/128/544; Burke, *Commoners*, iv. 685.

⁷² *Hist. Parl., Commons*, 1604–1629, iii, 164.

⁷³ ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁷⁴ *Cal SP Dom.* 1654, 43.

⁷⁵ *VCH Wilts*, VIII, 179.

⁷⁶ Burke, *Commoners*, iv. 685.

⁷⁷ TNA, PROB 11/361/323; ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁷⁸ TNA, PROB 11/405/348; ODNB, s.v. Baynton family (per. 1508–1716), gentry, accessed 17 Aug. 2024; *CJ*. 1688–1692, X, 10 Dec. 1692.

⁷⁹ WSA, 1171/85; *Hist. Parl. Commons*, 1715–54, ii. 116.

succeeded by his son Benjamin Haskins Stiles (d.1739).⁸⁰ In 1729 Stiles placed the manor in trust, in exchange for money,⁸¹ and after his death it was put up for sale by order of Chancery in 1742.⁸² In 1753 the estate, consisting of 3,778 a., was purchased for £57,500 by John Petty, earl Shelburne (d.1761), who also purchased nearby Bowood Park where he rebuilt the house.⁸³ The Bremhill estate was an attractive acquisition as the land had been neglected and provided significant potential for improvement.⁸⁴ It became the most profitable part of Lansdowne's holdings, raising £1,939 in 1786.⁸⁵

The estate passed to William Petty (d.1805), made marquis of Lansdowne in 1784 after serving as Prime Minister.⁸⁶ Outlying portions of the Bremhill estate were sold after 1788 to reduce debt, and by 1850 the holding had been cut to 3,368 a.⁸⁷ Further acquisitions probably followed, and by 1869 the Bremhill estate was recorded as 4,132 a., the second largest landholding in the family's Wiltshire portfolio.⁸⁸ William was succeeded by his son, John Henry Petty (d. 1809), who died without issue.⁸⁹ The estate passed to half-brother Henry (d.1863), who assumed the additional surname Fitzmaurice from 1818, to become Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd marquis of Lansdowne.⁹⁰ The estate then descended in the male line to Henry (d. 1866), Henry (d. 1927), Henry (d. 1936), and Charles, 7th marquis (d. 1944).⁹¹

A further sale of 582 a. was attempted in 1912, and another in 1919, when 1,900 a. was sold across the parish.⁹² Bremhill estate holdings, comprising eight farms and 1,500 a., were sold in 1947.⁹³

Cadenham Manor: In 1086 William Malbanc held Cadenham manor as tenant of Hugh of Avranches, earl of Chester.⁹⁴ It was a small estate and paid geld for 2 hides. The Studley family owned it from the late-13th century. In 1296 it was settled by John, son of Roger of Studley, on Laurence of Studley and Laurence's wife Anne in tail. The estate comprised c.137 a. of land.⁹⁵ In 1346 it was settled on John of Studley.⁹⁶ By 1421 it belonged to Alice Cricklade (d.

⁸⁰ WSA, 1171/85.

⁸¹ WSA, 212B/695.

⁸² *Lond. Gaz.* 20–23 Nov. 1742, 4; *London Evening Post*, 27–30 Nov. 1742, 3; *London Evening Post* 13–15 Nov. 1746, 2.

⁸³ WAM, 41, 509; *London Evening Post* 13–15 Nov. 1746, 2; 17–19 May 1753, 4. Acreage information from Simon, earl of Kerry, Bowood.

⁸⁴ Inf. from Simon, earl of Kerry, Bowood.

⁸⁵ Inf. from Dr Cathryn Spence, archivist at Bowood.

⁸⁶ *Complete Peerage*, xi, 671; *Complete Peerage*, vii, 438; *Hist. Parl.* 1754–90, i.408.

⁸⁷ Inf. from Simon, earl of Kerry, Bowood.

⁸⁸ Inf. from Dr Cathryn Spence, archivist at Bowood.

⁸⁹ TNA, PROB 11/1428/266; *Complete Peerage*, vii, 439.

⁹⁰ *Complete Peerage*, vii, 439–40.

⁹¹ *Complete Peerage*, vii, 441; *VCH Wilts*, VII, 118.

⁹² WMA, SC.14.7. Inf. re 1912 sale from Simon, earl of Kerry, Bowood.

⁹³ The farms were Hazelwood, Charlcote, Bencroft, Monument, Bremhill Wick, Bremhill field, and Ash Hill: *Wilts. Times*, 18 Oct. 1947.

⁹⁴ *Domesday*, 175; *VCH Wilts*, II, 134 n.

⁹⁵ *Feet of Fines Edw. I-II* (WRS. 1), 42.

⁹⁶ *Feet of Fines Edw. III* (WRS. 29), 81–2 (nos. 321, 326).

c.1457), daughter of John Studley, and wife of Thomas Cricklade, of Cricklade and Studley. On her death her estates, which included the manors of Cadenham and Studley, passed to her grandson, John Cricklade.⁹⁷

Edward Hungerford, son of Sir Edmund Hungerford of Down Ampney (Glos.), acquired Cadenham and Studley manors from John Cricklade in 1468.⁹⁸ In his will dated 1504 (pr. 1507) Cadenham, with the manors of Studley, Durnford and 'Staunton' (Stanton Fitzwarren?), descended to his son Robert (d.1517).⁹⁹ His son, known as Robert Hungerford of Cadenham (d. 1555/8, will pr. 1558), succeeded him. Robert bequeathed the estate to his eldest son, John, who died young, and it passed to his second son, Walter (d.1601).¹⁰⁰ The estate then descended in the male line, to John Hungerford (d.1636), Edward Hungerford (d. 1667), and Sir George Hungerford (d.1712).¹⁰¹ George Hungerford died in considerable debt, at least in part due to legal action against him by a younger son, Walter, and the Cadenham estate, of c.400 a., was sold.¹⁰² It was acquired by Devizes M.P., Benjamin Haskins Stiles of Bowden Park (d. 1739). In 1766 it was sold by order of Chancery. Haskins's principal heir, his nephew, Sir Francis Haskins Eyles Stiles, was also ordered to dispose of Haskins's manor at Bishop's Cannings.¹⁰³

By 1780 the estate was in the possession of Henry Grant. On Grant's death in 1812 William and Joseph Fry acquired the house and land, and jointly occupied the property from 1818.¹⁰⁴ An estate known as Cadenham Manor farm, comprising 185 a. in Bremhill and Christian Malford, was offered for sale in 1828.¹⁰⁵ It was put up for sale again in 1834, by which time it had been renamed Cadenham farm.¹⁰⁶ The entire estate was estimated to cover 267 a. in 1848.¹⁰⁷ By 1855 it was owned by Thomas and Edward Fry.¹⁰⁸ In 1874 Cadenham farm was sold, in lots, on the death of Thomas Fry.¹⁰⁹ William Henry Fry secured it by 1878, and on his death, in 1883, the estate known as Cadenham manor, comprising 156 a., was sold.¹¹⁰ Josiah Pocock possessed it from the early 1880s until the early 20th century,¹¹¹ and in

⁹⁷ WAM, 34, 388–9, 392–3; *Hist. Parl.*, 1386–1421, ii. 693–4. For descent of Studley Manor, *VCH Wilts*, 17, 74.

⁹⁸ *Wilts. Pedigrees* (Harl. Soc. cv/cvi), 95; WAM, 34, 404.

⁹⁹ TNA, PROB 11/14/305.

¹⁰⁰ W. Harvey, *Visitation of Wiltshire, 1565* (Exeter: Pollard, 1897), 25; *Wilts. Pedigrees* (Harl. Soc. cv/cvi), 95; TNA, PROB 11/41/270, PROB 11/171/417; *Hist. Parl. Commons*, 1509–58, ii. 412; *Hist. Parl. Commons* 1604–1629, iv. 833–4.

¹⁰¹ *Wilts. Pedigrees* (Harl. Soc. cv/cvi), 95; *Hist. Parl. Commons*, 1690–1715, iv. 438–9.

¹⁰² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 63; TNA, PROB 11/539/375; *Hist. Parl. Commons*, 1690–1715, iv. 438–9.

¹⁰³ Sir Francis also disposed of Bowden Manor and an estate at Corsham also owned by his uncle. *Wilts. N&Q*, VIII, 150–1; *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 17 Mar. 1766; *VCH Wilts*, VII, 189; TNA, PROB 11/695/345.

¹⁰⁴ WSA, A1/345/56.

¹⁰⁵ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 30 Oct. 1828.

¹⁰⁶ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 17 Apr. 1834.

¹⁰⁷ WSA, T/A Bremhill, 1848.

¹⁰⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1855 edn.).

¹⁰⁹ *Wilts. Independent*, 15 Jan. 1874.

¹¹⁰ W.E. Owen & Co.'s *Directory for the Counties of Wiltshire, Som., with the Cities of Bristol and Bath* (Leicester: W.E. Owen & Co., 1878), 24; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 25 Oct. 1883. See also WMA, SC.7.73.

¹¹¹ *Wilts. Times*, 20 Dec. 1919; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889, 1911 edns).

1910 the owner was Edgar Shipp.¹¹² It was later purchased by Edward Allen Bryning (c. 1927) and sold on his death in 1945.¹¹³

Foxham: Foxham is mentioned in a deed of 1065 (perhaps spurious) in which Edward the Confessor confirmed the possessions of Malmesbury abbey.¹¹⁴ A grant of five virgates at Foxham was made to Malmesbury abbey in 1270 by three sisters of the former holder.¹¹⁵ Abbot Osbert was granted a ½ hide at Foxham.¹¹⁶ In 1422 property at Foxham formed part of the assets of Robert Broke, a London vintner. Later in 1478 property in Foxham was settled on Agnes Leversegge, widow of Robert Leversegge.¹¹⁷ In 1536 the manor was obtained by Sir Edward Bayntun.

The Marquis of Lansdowne obtained the estate in the 18th century. The family kept the possession until 1888, when Foxham farm was sold to the Small Farm and Labourers Land Company for £4,500, to be divided into smallholdings.¹¹⁸ In 1910 the remainder of the Foxham estate, c.1050 a., was sold. It included West End farm, Avon farm, Avon mill, Elm farm, Godsell farm, Gate farm, pasture at Lower Cadenham and Harestreet farm. The sale raised £34,452.¹¹⁹ Foxham farm was sold by the Small Farm and Labourers Land Company in 1914.¹²⁰

Spirthill: Malmesbury abbey owned Spirthill by the end of the 13th century.¹²¹ In 1536 it was acquired by Sir Edward Bayntun and retained in the family until the Marquis of Lansdowne purchased it during the 18th century. In 1912 the family attempted to auction several properties in Spirthill and Charlcutt. Spirthill farm, along with Charlcutt farm and Tucks farm failed to reach their reserve price.¹²² The Spirthill estate was later sold by auction in 1919 as part of a sale of outlying portions of the Lansdowne estate.¹²³

Other Estates: On the death of Sir George Hungerford in 1712, the Hungerfords of Studley Manor retained a small landholding in Bremhill. This was passed through the family to Henrietta Hungerford (d. 1820) who married John Crewe (d. 1835), later Lord Crewe.¹²⁴ He

¹¹² WSA, L8.1.25. See also Kelly's *Dir. Wilts.* (1923 edn.).

¹¹³ Kelly's *Dir. Wilts.* (1927 edn.); *Wilts. Times*, 5 May 1945; 18 Oct. 1945.

¹¹⁴ *Reg. Malm.* I, 321–4. It has been disputed by D.N. Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays in Political, Cultural and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge, 1992), 41 n. 57, 43; H.P.R. Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 2nd edn (Leicester, 1972), no 180.

¹¹⁵ *Reg. Malm.* I, 529–30; II, 180–3; *VCH Wilts*, III, 221.

¹¹⁶ *VCH Wilts*, III, 218.

¹¹⁷ *Feet of Fines 1377–1509* (WRS. 41), 83, 156.

¹¹⁸ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 18 Oct. 1888; *Salisbury Times*, 23 Mar. 1889.

¹¹⁹ Inf. from Dr Cathryn Spence, archivist, Bowood.

¹²⁰ *Wilts. Times*, 23 May 1914.

¹²¹ *VCH Wilts*, III, 221.

¹²² Inf. from Dr Cathryn Spence, archivist, Bowood.

¹²³ WMA, SC.9.5.

¹²⁴ *VCH Wilts*, XVII, 74.

was succeeded by Hungerford Crewe (d.1893).¹²⁵ Crewe's landholding in Bremhill comprised c.92 a. in 1848, a fraction of his total acreage of over 20,000 a. across five counties.¹²⁶ From 1867 until his death he was reckoned to be one of the largest landowners in Bremhill, along with the Marquis of Lansdowne and the Poynder family.¹²⁷ His Bremhill lands passed to his nephew, Robert Offley Ashburton Milnes (d.1945) (afterwards Crewe-Milnes) who was created earl of Crewe in 1895 and marquis of Crewe 1911.¹²⁸ The Crewe land, Bencroft farm, comprised 159 a. in 1910.¹²⁹ It remained in Crewe's ownership until at least 1939 and may have been sold on his death in 1945.¹³⁰ It was then acquired by the Marquis of Lansdowne and subsequently sold with much of his Bremhill property in 1947.¹³¹

Thomas Henry Allen Poynder (d. 1873) of Hartham Park, Corsham, had acquired land in Bremhill by 1867 and was one of the three largest landowners in the parish.¹³² He was succeeded by his brother Sir William Henry Poynder (d.1880) who passed the land to his nephew, John Dickson (d.1936). In 1888 Dickson assumed the additional surname to become John Poynder Dickson and was created baron Islington in 1910 when his landholding comprised c.235 a. It is likely that he sold his property in Bremhill when the Hilmarton estate was put up for sale in 1914.¹³³

A portion of Avon was sometimes regarded as lying in Bremhill, and sometimes as extra-parochial. Its history is considered with that of Avon in Christian Malford.¹³⁴

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Farming

In 1086 there was land in Bremhill for 30 ploughs, 12 a. of meadow and woodland 2 leagues × 2 furlongs.¹³⁵ Cadenham had 2 ploughlands, 5 a. meadow and woodland 2 furlongs × 1 furlong.¹³⁶ The Bremhill rents in kind in 1283/4 comprised 19 quarters 4 bushels of wheat and 36 quarters of barley for brewing, 17 quarters 2 bushels of mixed barley and rye for bread, 68 quarters of oats for brewing and 78 quarters of oats for consumption from Bremhill with a further 26 quarters of wheat for bread from Foxham.¹³⁷ Some customary payments were given

¹²⁵ VCH Wilts, XVII, 74.

¹²⁶ WSA, T/A Bremhill, 1848; *Complete Peerage*, iii, 537.

¹²⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867, 1875, 1889 edns.).

¹²⁸ *Complete Peerage*, iii, 535; VCH Wilts, XVII, 74.

¹²⁹ WSA, L8.1.25.

¹³⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1939 edn.).

¹³¹ WSA, L8.1.25; *Wilts. Times*, 18 Oct. 1947.

¹³² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.). They also held land in Hilmarton: VCH Wilts, IX, 53.

¹³³ *Complete Peerage*, xiii, 115; VCH Wilts, IX, 53; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1875, 1911 edns.); WSA, L8/1/25; *Wilts. Times*, 23 May 1914.

¹³⁴ Below, Christian Malford, introduction and landownership.

¹³⁵ *Domesday*, 169.

¹³⁶ *Domesday*, 175.

¹³⁷ *Reg. Malm.* II, 204-6.

in kind in 1283/4, 8 quarters 4 bushels of wheat and 156 hens were given as churchscot and 1,080 eggs were paid as part of the Easter rents.¹³⁸ Customary works were worth £38 14s. 4d.

A survey of Bayntun land in Bremhill, Spirthill and Foxham tithings provides a useful snapshot of farming in 1612.¹³⁹ On the demesne the only arable was a ground of 50 a. called the Moore, whereas there were 226½ a. of pasture, 115 a. meadow and 57½ a. coppice woodland. Almost all tenants held by copy, in Bremhill tithing 28, Spirthill 32 and Foxham 29, and a typical yardland included pasture and meadow predominantly, with a few acres of arable. In Bremhill tithing most arable appears to have been held in closes and grounds, although some acres remained opened in Bremhill field. In Spirthill, where copyholders typically also held an acre or more of woodland, some arable lay open in Sand field, but in West field were closes. Foxham by contrast seems still to have been working three open fields, Avon, Middle and Pudenharn.

An early attempt to create a floated water meadow beside the Avon at Draycott's Mead and Dole Mead appears to underlie a complaint made in 1630–1 in the manor court.¹⁴⁰

It was reported in 1676 that the manorial lord, Sir Edward Bayntun, annually planted 100 quarters of wheat and 100 quarters of barley, oats, peas and beans on the land he farmed in the parish.¹⁴¹ During the 17th century there was also a hopyard in the parish.¹⁴² The mix of crops was little altered in 1801 when the main items cultivated were wheat, barley and oats. Other produce included peas, potatoes and beans.¹⁴³ In 1801 872 a. of the parish was under arable,¹⁴⁴ out of a total area of c.5,920 a. At tithe commutation in 1848 farming was mixed; of tithable land (1,296 a.) there was 254 a. arable, 939 a. meadow and 102 a. wood.¹⁴⁵ Later in the century, wheat, barley and beans dominated local arable production and continued to do so well into the 20th century.¹⁴⁶ In 1981, arable production was centred on wheat, barley, potatoes and maize. There was also some small-scale market gardening of vegetables.¹⁴⁷

Bremhill's wastes, according to 17th-century court records, were traditionally used for grazing cattle, sheep, horses, geese and other livestock. Pigs were ringed, implying that they foraged the commons.¹⁴⁸ In 1776 389 a. of Stockham Marsh was inclosed, and 318 a. awarded to the incumbent, so that tithes were thereby exonerated on 3,831 a., either by allotment of land or conversion into a tithe rent charge.¹⁴⁹ Under a later act of 1843, 24 a. of Dole Mead in

¹³⁸ *Reg. Malm.* I, 199.

¹³⁹ WSA, 122/1.

¹⁴⁰ J.H. Bettey (ed.), *Wilts. Farming in the 17th Century* (WRS. 57), xxxi.

¹⁴¹ *Bayntun Commonplace Book* (WRS. 43), 39.

¹⁴² *Bayntun Commonplace Book* (WRS. 43), 46.

¹⁴³ 1801 Crop Return.

¹⁴⁴ 1801 Crop Return.

¹⁴⁵ *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 24 (no. 37).

¹⁴⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867, 1889, 1911, 1927, 1939 edns.).

¹⁴⁷ WSA, 3071/40/4.

¹⁴⁸ WSA, 473/52.

¹⁴⁹ WSA, 1154/20, 1154/31, A1/210/27/ EA 10; WMA, 25, 31.

Christian Malford and Bremhill was inclosed. Of this, 19 a. was awarded to the Marquis of Lansdowne.¹⁵⁰ By 1874 there was no area of waste remaining in Bremhill parish.¹⁵¹

Many probate inventories from the 17th century onwards included the utensils of cheese making, such as cheese presses, tubs, vats and racks, indicating its importance to local farming.¹⁵² In 1796 William Marshall reckoned the 'narrow loaf cheese' of north Wiltshire was 'high in fashion',¹⁵³ and cited among local producers 'Mr Rich, of Foxham... a skilful and attentive dairyman, whose cheese has long been held in the highest estimation, and which is, in reality (this year at least), the most uniform, and the most highly flavoured dairy of cheese I have anywhere tasted'.¹⁵⁴

Cheese was largely produced on the farm until the last quarter of the 19th century.¹⁵⁵ Bremhill dairy farms in the 1840s were generally small, and cheesemaking was largely the preserve of farmers' wives.¹⁵⁶ The farms included Leekshedge in Spirthill, which comprised 123 a. when sold in 1934.¹⁵⁷ There were still two farms with a dairy herd in the late 20th century.¹⁵⁸

From 1753 until after 1900 most farmers were tenants of the Bowood estate. In 1830 a parish committee listed 61 local farmers in an area of 6,070 a. which included Bremhill, Wick, Spirthill, Foxham, Studley and Tytherton. Several farms listed were of 12 a. or less. Eight women were recorded, who farmed a total of 750 a. and employed 26 labourers.¹⁵⁹ A trade directory in 1859 recorded 29 commercial residents in Bremhill as farmers out of a total of 45.¹⁶⁰

In 1890 there were 15 smallholders in the parish of whom 13 were leaseholders.¹⁶³

In 1910 there were 22 farms of over 100 a. Of these 19 were farmed by tenants of the Marquis of Lansdowne and one by a tenant of Lord Islington. The remaining two farms were Cadenham Manor, owned and occupied by Edward Shipp, and Gotshill farm held by Edwin Hayes of Foxham.¹⁶⁴ In 1919 the Bowood estate put several dairy and arable farms in Bremhill

¹⁵⁰ WSA, 1154/34; WAM, 25, 51.

¹⁵¹ *Return of Acreage of Waste Lands Subject to Rights of Common* (London: Parl. Papers, 1874), 226.

¹⁵² e.g. WSA, P3/K/29, P1/T/92, P3/IJ/109, P3/K/70, P3/O/24, P3/B/1077.

¹⁵³ W. Marshall, *Rural Economy of Gloucestershire*, II (London, 1796), 161.

¹⁵⁴ Marshall, *Rural Economy*, 156.

¹⁵⁵ VCH Wilts, IV, 224.

¹⁵⁶ *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (London: Parl. Papers, 1843), 61.

¹⁵⁷ WSA, 776/23.

¹⁵⁸ WSA, 3071/40/4

¹⁵⁹ WSA, 1171/21.

¹⁶⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

¹⁶¹ TNA, MAF 68/73.

¹⁶² TNA, MAF 68/74.

¹⁶³ *Return of Allotments and Small Holdings in Great Britain* (London: Parl. Papers, 1890), 443.

¹⁶⁴ WSA, L8.1.25.

up for sale, but only a proportion sold.¹⁶⁵ By 1943 there were 61 farms in the parish, but only 22 were over 100 a. The largest were Manor farm 200 a., Charlccote farm 215 a., and Spirthill farm 260 a.¹⁶⁶

The post-war period saw a decline in agricultural employment and the consolidation of farms. This was probably exacerbated in 1947 when most Bowood property in Bremhill was sold, including Hazelwood, Charlccote, Bencroft, Monument, Bremhill Wick and Bremhill Field farms.¹⁶⁷ By 1981 there were only eight farms remaining in the parish: Castles, Vines, Glebe, Pocock, Cubbins, Spechar, Lower Hanger and Mount Pleasant farms. Lower Hanger and Mount Pleasant were owned by the Bowood estate.¹⁶⁸

In 1821 286 local families out of a total of 330 were chiefly employed in agriculture.¹⁶⁹ A committee of farmers in 1830 reckoned that 187 able-bodied male labourers were expected to be employed in Bremhill and Studley. Farms also engaged 20 old men and 45 boys.¹⁷⁰ Numbers excluded the children of farmers, women and additional labour employed at harvest time. The Bowood land agent in 1843 reported that women made up only a small proportion of the number employed in agriculture in Bremhill but accounted for as much as half the workforce during harvest time.¹⁷¹ Men generally worked 12 hours a day and women between 9 and 10.¹⁷² The majority of local households were dependent on agricultural earnings. In 1881 most of the adult male population of Bremhill was still working in farming.¹⁷³

Low wages and high unemployment were a sporadic problem in Bremhill in the late 18th and early 19th century.¹⁷⁴ In 1830, with weekly wages for the able-bodied at 8s. in winter and 9s. in summer, parish farmers agreed to employ specified numbers of labourers based on the size of their landholdings. Farmers also requested a reduction of their rents from the main parish landowner, the Marquis of Lansdowne, to enable them to pay better wages.¹⁷⁵ Revd Bowles was reported to have raised the wages he paid on the glebe land to 10s. and 12s. respectively, and other local farmers followed.¹⁷⁶ However, the effects were short-lived, as wages generally remained low and poor rates remained high.¹⁷⁷

Schemes to improve the condition of the poor, prompted partly by Anti-Corn Law agitation in the 1840s, included allotments provided by the Bowood estate, which made 500 a.

¹⁶⁵ e.g. Charlccote farm remained part of the Bowood estate: WSA, SC.14.7; *Western Daily Press*, 18 July 1919; *Wilts. Times*, Sat 18 Oct. 1947.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, MAF 30/32/12.

¹⁶⁷ WSA, 1975/134/4; *Wilts. Times*, Sat 18 Oct. 1947.

¹⁶⁸ WSA, 3071/40/4.

¹⁶⁹ *Abstract of Answers and Returns under Act for taking Account of Population of Great Britain (Enumeration Abstract; Parish Register Abstract)* (Parl. Papers, 1821), 357.

¹⁷⁰ WSA, 1171/21.

¹⁷¹ *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (London: Parl. Papers, 1843), 61.

¹⁷² *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (London: Parl. Papers, 1843), 62.

¹⁷³ http://www.visionofbritain.org/unit/10400338/cube/OCC_ORDER1881

¹⁷⁴ below, soc. hist.

¹⁷⁵ WSA, 1171/21.

¹⁷⁶ *Bath Chronicle*, 9 Dec. 1830; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 11 Dec. 1830.

¹⁷⁷ By the end of 1830 an additional rate was required to relieve the poor: WSA, 1154/80. 29 Dec. 1830.

available across Calne and Bremhill, in 1843, to nearly 700 tenants.¹⁷⁸ By 1885 the acreage had risen in Bremhill alone to 527 a., let to 777 tenants.¹⁷⁹ Allotments were between 0.5 a. and 2 a. and tenants chiefly grew potatoes, cabbage, wheat and barley.¹⁸⁰ Tenants of allotments at Foxham were given notice prior to the sale of the Foxham estate in 1910.¹⁸¹ In 1947 a number of plots were sold by the Bowood estate.¹⁸² By this stage some allotments were rented out to local farmers.¹⁸³

Woodland Management

The Bremhill area was heavily wooded in the 11th century, and also included 4 a. of *spineti*, spinney or thorns.¹⁸⁴ Stanley abbey exploited the woods for its timber and minerals and as pasture for livestock.¹⁸⁵ Before 1228 woodland in Bremhill may have fallen within the jurisdiction of Chippenham forest, although almost all lay outside its bounds.¹⁸⁶

Medieval assarting for arable and pasture grounds probably limited woodland to higher slopes in the east of the parish, such as Innick's wood at Spirthill, in which many copyholders in 1612 had a share.¹⁸⁷ At this date the demesne woodland (57½ a.) lay in Honeybed, Hazeland and Bremhill Grove woods, and these remained the principal areas of woodland into the late 19th century.¹⁸⁸

In 1848 there was 102 a. of tithable woodland in the parish.¹⁸⁹ The Bowood estate sold small parcels of woodland in 1863,¹⁹⁰ but in 1910 the Marquis of Lansdowne was still estimated to hold 151 a. of woods in hand.¹⁹¹ Timber felled by Bowood in Bremhill and Foxham was sold several times in the 19th century.¹⁹² When Bowood auctioned its Bremhill estate in 1947 Hazeland wood, comprising c.47 a. and Bremhill Grove c. 31 a., made up of oak trees with coppice, were included,¹⁹³ also in 1947 timber to the value of £4,768 was offered for

¹⁷⁸ *Hants. Chronicle*, 24 Apr. 1843.

¹⁷⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Feb. 1846; *Wilts. Independent*, 12 Feb. 1846; *Morning Post*, 12 Feb. 1846; *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, (London: Houses of Commons Papers, 1843) 63–4; *First Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Housing of the Working Classes* (London: Parl. Papers, 1884–5), 539.

¹⁸⁰ *Hants. Chronicle*, 24 Apr. 1843.

¹⁸¹ Inf. from Dr Cathryn Spence, archivist at Bowood.

¹⁸² WSA, 1975/134/4.

¹⁸³ WSA, 1975/134/4. This included tenants of Manor farm, Hazeland farm and Mr W.E. Godwin, who had a small farm at Ratford.

¹⁸⁴ *Domesday*, 169; Brown, *Stanley abbey*, 56–7.

¹⁸⁵ Brown, *Stanley abbey*, 126.

¹⁸⁶ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 408; only 2 a. lay within the 1300 bounds: *VCH Wilts*, IV, 413.

¹⁸⁷ WSA, 122/1.

¹⁸⁸ WSA, 122/1; OS Map 6", Wilts. XX, XXI, XXVI (1889 edns.).

¹⁸⁹ *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 24 (no. 37).

¹⁹⁰ This was Hazeland wood and Honey Bed, both of 7.5 a. *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 1 Jan. 1863.

¹⁹¹ WSA, L8.1.25.

¹⁹² e.g. *Hants. Chronicle*, 17 Mar. 1806; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 11 Apr. 1850.

¹⁹³ WSA, 1975/134/4.

sale from the estate woodland.¹⁹⁴ A number of farms also held small parcels of woodland, some of which were used for 'poles and coppice of considerable value'.¹⁹⁵

Mills

In 1086 three mills at Bremhill were valued at £2 6s. There were also two parts of a mill at East Tytherton and one part of another at either East or West Tytherton (Tytherton Lucas).¹⁹⁶ A mill at Avon in Bremhill existed in 1268.¹⁹⁷ One mill is listed in a survey of Malmesbury abbey's lands in 1283/4.¹⁹⁸

Hazeland mill on the Marden formed part of the Malmesbury abbey estate. In 1534 it was listed as a grist and tucking (fulling) mill,¹⁹⁹ and at the Dissolution it came into the possession of Sir Edward Bayntun. Walter Webb was lessee in 1612, holding the grist and tucking mill by a lease granted in 1534.²⁰⁰ By 1643 it was leased by the Bayntun family to Robert Taylar, a clothier.²⁰¹ It remained in Bayntun possession and appeared on the manor rent roll in 1659–79. The mill was leased to Mr Sheppard (1659–61), Gabriel Brabbins (1670–1), Robert Brookes (1671–8) and John Hale (1678–9). It was then described as a grist mill, although fulling stocks at the site were rented out 1670–2, suggesting that its dual use for corn and textiles was continuing, intermittently at least.²⁰²

Hazeland mill was acquired along with other property in Bremhill by the Bowood estate, in whose possession it remained until the 20th century. After the demise of the cloth trade, the building was used solely as a grist mill until 1965.²⁰³ In 1855 the miller was Jacob Archer.²⁰⁴ For much of the early 20th century the miller was Francis Pavy.²⁰⁵ The Pavy family employed several workers at the mill and also farmed 14 a. attached, which may have been the site of the original tentering racks.²⁰⁶ The machinery remained in working order for several decades after the 1960s conversion of the building to a residence.²⁰⁷

Textiles

¹⁹⁴ *Western Daily Press*, 17 Oct. 1947.

¹⁹⁵ WSA, 1975/134/4. e.g. Bencroft farm and Hazeland farm.

¹⁹⁶ *Domesday*, 169, 177, 181.

¹⁹⁷ *Crown Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre, 1268* (WRS. 65), 117; below, Christian Malford, econ.hist.

¹⁹⁸ *Reg. Malm.* II, 207.

¹⁹⁹ NHLE, 1022431.

²⁰⁰ WSA, 122/1.

²⁰¹ TNA, PROB 11/191/381.

²⁰² *Bayntun Commonplace Book* (WRS. 43), 46–7. Michael Feats, 'fuller' in his 1679 will, possessed Stanley abbey 'grist mill', according to the manor rent roll The inventory of 'fuller' William Hort from 1672 suggests that he too was also working grain on his death: WSA, P3/F/161; *Bayntun Commonplace Book* (WRS. 43), 44; WSA, P3/H/468.

²⁰³ NHLE, 1022431.

²⁰⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1855, 1867 edns.).

²⁰⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915, 1927, 1939 edns.).

²⁰⁶ *Wilts. Times*, 19 Apr. 1924, obituary of Mrs M.A. Pavy. See also WSA, L8.1.25.

²⁰⁷ WSA, 3071/40/4.

An early fulling mill belonged to Stanley abbey in 1189.²⁰⁸ By the early 18th century there were four fulling mills reported in or near the parish: Hazeland, Scott's (Tytherton Lucas), Stanley, and Avon.²⁰⁹

Hazeland mill was used for fulling cloth in the 17th century and until c.1838, when it ceased, presumably due to the collapse of the local trade.²¹⁰ In 1612 the mill possessed two pairs of fulling stocks and a rack close containing five racks.²¹¹ The inventory of Hazeland clothier, John Tayler, in 1635 listed large amounts of wool, yarn and textiles.²¹² In 1727 there were 47 pieces fulled at Hazeland by miller and fuller Peter Lane in the period April to October, the most significant output of any mill in the area.²¹³ On his death in 1748, Lane left a good-sized estate which included bonds, securities, capital and several cottages in Calne.²¹⁴ The will of Thomas Wells, fuller, of Hazeland mill, (pr. 1742) suggests that the mill was used for both corn and textiles.²¹⁵

During the 17th and 18th centuries broadcloth and serge weaving in Bremhill was undertaken predominantly by men.²¹⁶ There is also evidence of silk throwing.²¹⁷ Many local women at this period supported textile manufacture and contributed to household incomes by spinning wool into yarn.²¹⁸

Other Trades

Shoemaking was carried out in Bremhill during the 18th and 19th century.²¹⁹ In 1831 59 adult males were engaged in retail and handicrafts,²²⁰ and in 1859 tradesmen in the parish included blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter, and basket maker.²²¹ Fifty years later wheelwrights and basket makers had disappeared, and farmers continued to dominate the commercial listings.²²² By 1981 there was little handicraft or industry left in the village.²²³

²⁰⁸ K.H. Rogers, *Wilts. and Som. Woollen Mills* (Edington, 1976), 89.

²⁰⁹ WSA, A1/525.

²¹⁰ As evidenced by fullers and clothiers located at Hazeland Mill. e.g. WSA, P1/T/92, P3/W/846, P3/L/422, P3/W/627; TNA, PROB 11/191/381. Fulling appears to have continued until at least 1838 when a quantity of cloth was stolen from the mill. *Wilts. Independent*, 4 Jan. 1838; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 18 Jan. 1838. See also Rogers, *Woollen Mills*, 88–9; J. De L. Mann, *Cloth Industry in the West of England 1640–1880* (Oxford, 1971).

²¹¹ WSA, 122/1.

²¹² WSA, P1/T/92.

²¹³ WSA, A1/525. Lane was described in his will as a fuller. WSA, P3/L/422.

²¹⁴ WSA, P3/L/422.

²¹⁵ WSA, P3/W/846.

²¹⁶ WSA, P3/S/12, P3/T/89, P3/T/176, P3/T/322, P3/W/81, P1/12Reg/317, P1/T/513, P3/H/457, P3/D/116, P3/B/1294, P1/T/513.

²¹⁷ WSA, P3/H/1189.

²¹⁸ As revealed in probate inventories of local widows. e.g. WSA, P3/K/70.

²¹⁹ WSA, P3/D/116, P3/1856/53, P3/T/572; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859, 1867 edns.).

²²⁰ http://www.visionofbritain.org/unit/10400338/cube/OCC_PAR1831

²²¹ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

²²² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

²²³ WSA, 3071/40/4.

In 1956 the firm of Jenkins and Lancefield was engaged in coachbuilding at the stable yard and coach house of Bremhill Vicarage.²²⁴

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Character

Bremhill is characterised by dispersed farms and small settlements across its nearly 6,000 a.²²⁵ Its high ranking within its hundred in medieval taxation records, in terms of population and taxable wealth,²²⁶ was doubtless the result of its size rather than any unusual prosperity. It was a largely agricultural society, mostly controlled by a single monastic landlord.

A rental of 106 Malmesbury abbey tenants (thus excluding Cadenham), probably made 1283/4, enables the relative size of the settlements to be gauged.²²⁷ Foxham was the most populous, with 29 tenants, followed by Bremhill Wick (19) and Spirthill (16). An unnamed list of 11 (perhaps Charlcutt) was linked to 9 at Hanger Park (?Highway). Bremhill itself had 10 tenants, Hazeland 6, and the Bremhill portion of Avon also 6. In Spirthill, Charlcutt and Avon most tenants paid the same amount, but elsewhere there was more variation, usually with one tenant paying much more rent than his fellows.

In a list of 76 taxpayers in 1332 a fairly broadly spread of wealth may be identified.²²⁸ Payments ranged between 8*d.* and just under 13*s.* Almost one-quarter (18) paid less than 2*s.*; half (38) paid between 2*s.* and 5*s.*; and a little over one-quarter (20) paid more than 5*s.* Only 4 individuals paid more than 9*s.*

A smaller sample of 25 taxpayers, in 1576, in Bremhill and Foxham, shows greater disparity,²²⁹ with two individuals, Edward Bayntun (£4) and Walter Hungerford (£2 13*s.* 4*d.*), paying far more than the next six highest, at between 10*s.* and 16*s.* 8*d.*, with a further ten paying 5*s.* or more, and three paying less. Four payers, including Bayntun and Hungerford, were assessed on lands, and the others on goods.

From the 17th century the estate owners, apart from the Hungerford family on the Cadenham estate, were non-resident. In their place, vicars of Bremhill such as William Lisle Bowles provided social leadership within the community.²³⁰ Bowles in particular provided a link between the Marquis of Lansdowne and the parish, and this probably contributed to the Lansdownes' support of local causes, such as the establishment of a school in Foxham.

Tenant farmers and farm workers made up the bulk of Bremhill's population in the 16th and 17th centuries, with social continuity provided by long-standing families such as the

²²⁴ *Wilts. Times*, 16 Nov. 1956.

²²⁵ The acreage is given as 5,665 by the vicar in 1866 (WMA, MSS.438) and 5,920 a. in *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

²²⁶ above, population.

²²⁷ *Reg. Malm.* I, 162–9; date suggested in *VCH Wilts*, III, 221n.

²²⁸ *Wilts. Tax List of 1332* (WRS. 45), 97–8.

²²⁹ *Two Sixteenth-Century Taxation Lists* (WRS. 10), 58–9.

²³⁰ Bowles was a magistrate until he resigned in 1831: *Hants. Chronicle*, 6 June 1831.

Norbonnes, Oliffs and Gingells.²³¹ In the 1820s Bowles reported that the village was made up of some, 'independent English freeholders farming their own estates – some renting tenants – all supporting numerous agricultural labourers and their families.'²³² He blamed early marriages and associated local population growth for a 'superabundance of labourers' and the pushing down of wages. There were high levels of local deprivation during the early 19th century with up to one-third of residents receiving permanent or occasional relief.²³³ However, there is limited evidence of class conflict. The agitation associated with the Swing riots in 1830 may have been avoided by Bremhill farmers voting to raise labourers' wages on the same day that civil disorder was reported in Christian Malford.²³⁴ Although Bremhill was the location of one Anti-Corn Law League meeting in 1846, its effects were not long-lasting.²³⁵

In 1866, the Bremhill vicar characterised local people as, 'sober, honest, social-able' but as 'poor scholars' and hinted at their slow intellect.²³⁶

Communal Life

The low population and scattered settlements restricted community life until the 19th century, although the church at Bremhill provided the venue for local government and a few public events. The church choir or Sunday school pupils were often the primary focus for these activities, including the communal Christmas celebrations sponsored by Revd Bowles between 1819 and 1837.²³⁷ In the 1880s the congregations and choirs of Bremhill and Foxham churches enjoyed an annual excursion sponsored by the Marquis of Lansdowne.²³⁸

Local friendly societies observed their own feast days. The Dumb Post Friendly Society's activities included dinner and a procession from the Dumb Post inn twice around the cross outside the church to the Bell and Organ inn. A 'Foxham revel' traditionally took place on the Sunday after the feast of St John the Baptist (24 June), probably to commemorate the dedication of the local chapel. A Spirthill feast was also observed 'when all neighbours interchange visits'.²³⁹

There was a temperance club run among the Moravians at East Tytherton in 1866.²⁴⁰

During the 1890s concerts were held in Bremhill School,²⁴¹ and the reading room was used during the early 20th century by the Conservative Club and as a venue for pursuits such

²³¹ *Two Sixteenth-Century Taxation Lists* (WRS. 10), 27–8, 55, 58–9; WSA, 473/52.

²³² Bowles, *Bremhill*, 21.

²³³ There were 26 in the workhouse and 102 adults and 228 children relieved in the community permanently. A further 93 were occasionally relieved. The population of Bremhill was 1,303 in 1801. *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 560–1; http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10400338/cube/TOT_POP [accessed 25 July 2019].

²³⁴ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 25 Nov. 1830, 2 Dec. 1830; WSA, 1171/21.

²³⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Feb. 1846; *Wilts. Independent*, 12 Feb. 1846; *Morning Post*, 12 Feb. 1846.

²³⁶ WMA, MSS.438

²³⁷ e.g. *Bath Chronicle*, 6 Jan. 1820; *Hants. Chronicle*, 3 Jan. 1825; *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 4 Jan. 1836, 16 Jan. 1837.

²³⁸ e.g. to Weymouth in 1883. *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 16 Aug. 1883.

²³⁹ WMA, MSS.438.

²⁴⁰ WMA, MSS.438.

²⁴¹ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 16 Jan. 1890.

as whist drives.²⁴² Members of the reading room also enjoyed outings, such as by charabanc to Weymouth.²⁴³

Friendly Societies. By the early 19th century there were two friendly societies with a combined membership of 105. This rose to 130 during the Napoleonic Wars and 186 in 1863 when funds were valued at £359.²⁴⁴ One friendly society was based at the Dumb Post inn;²⁴⁵ it was said to have been founded in 1815, although the inn was likely to have provided its venue since 1770. In 1837 some of its funds were stolen.²⁴⁶ The society was dissolved in 1865, although the vicar stated that two friendly societies were in operation in 1866.²⁴⁷ A society called the Young Friendly Society existed at Bremhill in 1855.²⁴⁸

As well as friendly societies, there were 'penny a week clubs'. Local labouring families paid subscriptions for clothes, shoes and blankets.²⁴⁹ In the 1860s there were also clothing and coal clubs in Bremhill and Charlcutt.²⁵⁰

Inns and Alehouses. In 1781 the vestry complained about 'the swarm of ale-houses'.²⁵¹ The most important inn in the parish was the Dumb Post. The derivation of its name has been a source of conjecture. In 1878 the tradition was reported that, while the inn originally had no sign, 'the landlord of that day, compelled by circumstances though against his will, to give his house a distinctive sign named it – perhaps in jest, perhaps in annoyance – from some old post that stood near'.²⁵² In the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as being the base for the friendly society, it provided a venue for local auctions and hunt meets,²⁵³ and in 1845 for the tithe commissioners.²⁵⁴ In 1846 newspapers reported that it was the planned location of an Anti-Corn Law League meeting, which instead took place outside the church.²⁵⁵ From 1859 the landlord was William Palmer, and from 1877 his widow, Sarah.²⁵⁶ By 1889 to c.1911 it was run by his son Francis.²⁵⁷

²⁴² WSA, 1154/51.

²⁴³ WSA, 1154/51. e.g. 10 Oct. 1921.

²⁴⁴ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 560–1; *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 494–5; *Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies in England* (London: Parl. Papers, 1864), 159.

²⁴⁵ *Return Relating to Friendly Societies enrolled in Counties of England and Wales and Scotland* (London: Parl. Papers, 1837), 27.

²⁴⁶ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 2 Feb. 1837.

²⁴⁷ *Registrar of Friendly Societies in England: Annual Report* (London: Parl. Papers, 1866), 10; WMA, MSS.438.

²⁴⁸ *Wilts. & Glos. Standard*, 27 Oct. 1855.

²⁴⁹ *Bath Chronicle*, 6 Jan. 1820.

²⁵⁰ WM Library, MSS.438.

²⁵¹ WSA, 84/36.

²⁵² WMA, XVII, 318.

²⁵³ For example: - *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 19 Sept. 1808; *Wilts. Independent*, 7 Mar. 1839; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 20 Mar. 1851; *Wilts. Times*, 18 Oct. 1947, 11 Dec. 1948, 3 Dec. 1955.

²⁵⁴ *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 22 Mar. 1845.

²⁵⁵ *Sheffield Independent*, 14 Feb. 1846.

²⁵⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.); *Wilts. Times*, 24 Nov. 1877.

²⁵⁷ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 24 Jan. 1889; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.).

The Dumb Post was owned by the Bowood estate until 1947 when it was sold.²⁵⁸ The original sign was replaced by the brewery in 1954, leading to a protest by some residents.²⁵⁹ In 2024, it was one of only two public houses in the parish.²⁶⁰

The Foxham inn was established by 1947.²⁶¹ During the 1950s it had a popular darts team and was the location of a local thrift club.²⁶² In 2024 it also provided accommodation.²⁶³

Village Halls, Reading Rooms and the Women's Institute. Three reading rooms were established in the parish by Lord Fitzmaurice with his brother the Marquis of Lansdowne, at Bremhill, Charlcutt and Foxham.²⁶⁴ The Bremhill library and reading room was opened in 1882, the Charlcutt reading room in 1883 and Foxham the following year.

In 1915 the Bremhill reading room librarian was John Palmer. It was later run by his wife. Despite declining membership by the 1920s, and temporary closure in 1925,²⁶⁵ it remained in use during the 1930s.²⁶⁶ Until 1918 it was still financially supported by the Lansdowne family as well as by subscriptions from members.²⁶⁷ The institute thereafter was in a weak financial position and fundraising took place.²⁶⁸ The situation was partly blamed on 'disorder which frequently prevails'.²⁶⁹ The building was later converted to residential use.

In 1915 the Charlcutt library and reading room librarian was Miss Aspeck.²⁷⁰ It was still a charity in 1952 but the building was later put to other use.²⁷¹ The Foxham reading room was operating as a village hall and free library in 2024.²⁷²

Despite an identified need for a village hall expressed in 1924 by Lord Fitzmaurice, there was none in Bremhill until the school closed in 1969 and was converted for the purpose.²⁷³ In 2024 Bremhill village hall was providing a venue for community events such as concerts and drama productions.²⁷⁴ A village hall was opened at East Tytherton in 1924.²⁷⁵

In 1959 the Spirthill and Charlcutt Women's Institute was formed.²⁷⁶ It became the Bremhill and District WI by 1969.²⁷⁷ Events were held regularly, including talks and activities

²⁵⁸ *Wilts. Times*, 20 Sept. 1947; WSA, 1974/134/4.

²⁵⁹ *Wilts. Times*, 17 Apr. 1954.

²⁶⁰ The other was the Foxham Inn. <https://thedumb-post.com/> [access 10 Mar. 2021].

²⁶¹ *Wilts. Times*, 16 Aug. 1947.

²⁶² e.g. *Wilts. Times*, 13 Jan. 1951, 12 May 1951, 15 Dec. 1951, 24 Oct. 1951, 30 Jan. 1954, 26 Nov. 1955.

²⁶³ <https://thefoxhaminn.co.uk/> [access 10 Mar. 2021].

²⁶⁴ I. Slocombe, *Wilts. Village Reading Rooms* (Salisbury, 2012), 59.

²⁶⁵ WSA, 1154/51, 8 Mar. 1925.

²⁶⁶ Slocombe, *Wilts. Village Reading Rooms*, 59, 61–2, 68; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915, 1939 edns.).

²⁶⁷ WSA, 1154/51.

²⁶⁸ WSA, 1154/51. e.g. 9 Mar. 1920.

²⁶⁹ WSA, 1154/51 17 Oct. 1921

²⁷⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

²⁷¹ Slocombe, *Wilts. Village Reading Rooms*, 61–2.

²⁷² <https://www.bremhillparish.org/foxham> [accessed 24 Feb. 2020].

²⁷³ *North Wilts. Herald*, 5 October 1924; NHLE, 1283562.

²⁷⁴ WSHC, BRE.004 Ephemera; <https://sites.google.com/site/bremhillvillage/village-hall> [accessed 05 mar 2021].

²⁷⁵ *North Wilts. Herald*, 5 October 1924.

²⁷⁶ WSA, 2283/17.

²⁷⁷ WSA, 2283/17; 2283/9 The same accounts book was used from 1959–1970 without note of the name change.

such as carol singing, skittles and bring-and-buy sales. In 1981 a royal wedding tea took place in the vicarage garden.²⁷⁸ By 1960 there were 26 members.²⁷⁹ However, attendance dwindled by the late 1980s,²⁸⁰ and the institute was discontinued in the early 1990s.

The Tytherton Women's Institute was created at East Tytherton in 1924 and met at the newly created East Tytherton village hall. Its regular activities included demonstrations, talks and excursions.²⁸¹ In 2024 East Tytherton WI was still regularly meeting, its membership drawn from both the village and the wider Chippenham area.

In the 1960s a Tytherton Village Hall Club met twice a week for activities including skittles; a bar was also opened on those nights.²⁸²

Education

There was a school at Bremhill in the late 16th century run by Mr Collier, who later became vicar at Bremhill around 1596.²⁸³

In 1803, poor law returns listed a school of industry in the parish with 25 children.²⁸⁴ By 1818 educational provision was relatively good. There was a school established by the Marchioness of Lansdowne at Foxham for 72 children; another run by the wife of the local parish clerk which served 20; and two or three dame schools each containing eight or nine. In addition Revd Bowles ran a Sunday school for 40 boys and Mrs Bowles another for 50 girls. At East Tytherton a Moravian school accommodated four boys and girls.²⁸⁵

In 1835 three Sunday schools were identified, one each for Anglicans, Wesleyans and Moravians.²⁸⁶

A new Bremhill National school was built in 1846 which included accommodation for a schoolmaster; this was paid for by a parliamentary grant of £150, and £173 raised by local promoters.²⁸⁷ The simple design consisted of one school room 30 × 15 feet with an area adjoining of 15 × 12, to provide for 100 children. Pupils had use of a small schoolyard with toilets at one end. The master's accommodation was connected to both the schoolroom and the schoolyard.²⁸⁸ Ten years later the school was deemed fair. There were 40–50 children taught by 'an untrained mistress of fair abilities'. The curriculum was narrow, primarily reading, writing and arithmetic. Pupils regularly attended church services, and scripture lessons were given at school several times a week. The children also had regular singing

²⁷⁸ WSA, 2283/6

²⁷⁹ WSA, 2283/9.

²⁸⁰ WSA, 2283/2.

²⁸¹ WSA, 2276/8. See also 2276/9–13, 23.

²⁸² WSA, 2276/14.

²⁸³ WSA, D1/42/20; cf. Bowles, *Bremhill*, 169.

²⁸⁴ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 560–1.

²⁸⁵ *Educ. of the Poor Digest*, 1020.

²⁸⁶ *Abstract of Answers and Returns on State of Education in England and Wales*, Volumes I, II, III (London: Parl. Papers, 1835), 1030.

²⁸⁷ *Committee of Council on Education: Minutes, Correspondence, Financial Statements, and Reports of H.M. Inspectors of Schools, 1854–55* (London: Command Papers, 1854–5), 234; Board of Education. *Statement . . . of public elementary schools which have received building grants . . .* (London: Command Papers, 1902), 138.

²⁸⁸ WSA, 782/14.

practice.²⁸⁹ The school at Foxham which had been established by the Marchioness of Lansdowne accommodated 40–50 scholars and was rated ‘satisfactory though the standard of attainment is not very high’.²⁹⁰

By the early 1860s both schools were supported by an annual government grant.²⁹¹ In 1866 night schools were also operating over the winter months in Bremhill and Charlcutt.²⁹² In 1875 there were three state-maintained schools in the parish. These were the Bremhill National school, Foxham school and another at Charlcutt, both affiliated to the Church of England.²⁹³ The capacity of local schools was 345, although attendance was considerably lower, at 160. The best attended was at Bremhill.²⁹⁴

By the end of the 1890s the school at Charlcutt had closed, attendance having declined to seven.²⁹⁵ Foxham was shut in 1930. Bremhill school also came under pressure to close from 1967, as the accommodation was deemed inadequate with little opportunity for development. The proposition met with local opposition, the school being described as, ‘an integral part of our rural community,’²⁹⁶ but after sustained pressure the school was closed in 1969.

A Moravian girl’s boarding and day school was opened at East Tytherton in 1794, under headmistress Ann Grigg, with six boarders and seven day-pupils. The school admitted children from Moravian and non-Moravian families alike.²⁹⁷ In 1859 a government report stated: ‘At the hamlet of East Tytherton there is a Moravian Settlement, and about 20 to 30 children are taught in a nice little thatched room with a wooden floor, by a mistress of the Moravian persuasion.’²⁹⁸ The commitment by the local Moravian church to providing education to local families was reinforced by the building of a new day school in 1870–1 on the site of the old school room.²⁹⁹ Ten years later schools inspector Revd S. Fraser declared it one of the few he had assessed which were deemed efficient. The school declined government

²⁸⁹ WSA, F8/500/37/1/1; *Account of Wilts. Schools*, 1859, 10; *Committee of Council on Education: Minutes, Correspondence, Financial Statements, and Reports of H.M. Inspectors of Schools, 1854–55* (London: Command Papers, 1854–5), 235.

²⁹⁰ *Account of Wilts. Schools*, 1859, 10; *Committee of Council on Education: Minutes, Correspondence, Financial Statements, and Reports of H.M. Inspectors of Schools, 1854–55* (London: Command Papers, 1854–5), 235.

²⁹¹ *Committee of Council on Education: Report, Appendix, 1862–63* (London: Command Papers, 1863), 502–3.

²⁹² WMA, MSS.438.

²⁹³ *Committee of Council on Education: Report, Appendix, 1875–76* (London: Command Papers, 1876), 647–8.

²⁹⁴ Attendance was 65 at Bremhill, 12 at Charlcutt, 45 at Foxham and 44 at East Tytherton. *Statement of Schools in receipt of Parliamentary Grants, Grants paid to School Boards under Section 97, Elementary Education Act, School Board Accounts and List of Loans, 1895–96* (London: Command Papers, 1896), 244; *Endowed Charities 1908*, 138–9.

²⁹⁵ *Statement of Schools in receipt of Parliamentary Grants, Grants paid to School Boards under Section 97, Elementary Education Act, School Board Accounts and List of Loans, 1899–1900* (London: Command Papers, 1900), 255.

²⁹⁶ WSA, F8/600/37/1/3/1.

²⁹⁷ C. Figes, 1743–1993: *250 Years of the Moravian Settlement at East Tytherton* (London, nd. [1993]); N. Pocock, *Wiser than we Deserve* (London, 2009).

²⁹⁸ *Account of Wilts. Schools*, 1859, 15.

²⁹⁹ Pocock, *Wiser than we Deserve*, 125.

funding,³⁰⁰ although by the end of the 1880s it had begun to accept a small parliamentary grant.³⁰¹ A decade later this had increased six times over and the number of children in regular attendance had more than doubled. The school buildings could accommodate 102, and in 1897/8 it was the most popular school in the parish with an average attendance of 52, which rose to 69 in 1906.³⁰² Also in 1906 the local education authority took over the running of the school,³⁰³ and it was later named Maud Heath Primary School.

The Moravian boarding school for girls at East Tytherton continued to operate into the 20th century. In 1921 it had 60 pupils of whom 43 were boarders. The premises comprised a dwelling house, schoolhouse, South View (a secondary residence) and an army hut fitted up as a gymnasium which also doubled as an assembly room for lectures, concerts and clubs.³⁰⁴ The school closed just before the outbreak of World War Two. By 2000 the school of the Maud Heath school roll had dwindled and in 2005 it was closed.³⁰⁵

Social Welfare

In 1692 22 people were in receipt of outdoor relief at a monthly cost of £2, and the parish in 1674/5 paid for an apprenticeship.³⁰⁶ In 1776 the cost had risen to £738. Of this £81 was spent on the provision of rents.³⁰⁷ Overseers' accounts suggest that in 1801 the parish was paying rent contributions for c.117 households which totalled over £131.³⁰⁸

In 1781 the vestry planned to provide poor relief only within a new workhouse, created from the conversion of the church house.³⁰⁹ Its stated objective was that 'the aged and other impotent may be with all humanity protected: the able kept to reasonable labour and employment: the industrious encouraged: the idle coerced: the profligate, as far as practicable, reclaimed: and the contumacious and incorrigible up to the Justice of the Law.'³¹⁰ The workhouse quickly proved inadequate at accommodating all those seeking relief. In 1803 only 26 were relieved in the workhouse compared to 330 on permanent outdoor relief. Another 82 were occasionally relieved.³¹¹ In 1829 the vestry directed that no able-bodied person should be admitted into the workhouse.³¹² This seems to have been adhered to as, at the creation of the

³⁰⁰ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education (England and Wales); with appendix. 1881–82* (London: Parl. Papers, 1882), 285.

³⁰¹ *Return of Public Elementary Schools 1888–9* (London: Parl. Papers, 1890), 282.

³⁰² *Statement of Schools in receipt of Parliamentary Grants, Grants paid to School Boards under Section 97, Elementary Education Act, School Board Accounts and List of Loans, 1897–8* (London: Command Papers, 1898), 254; *Board of Education. List of Public Elementary Schools . . . 1906* (London: Command Papers, 1907), 666

³⁰³ *Newbury Weekly News and General Advertiser*, 11 Oct. 1906.

³⁰⁴ WSHC, BRE.004 Ephemera.

³⁰⁵ <https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/7412011.ghost-school-set-to-be-closed/> [accessed 27 November 2020].

³⁰⁶ *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 26, 293; Bowles, *Bremhill*, 199.

³⁰⁷ *Abstracts of the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor*, (London: Parl. Papers, 1776), 188.

³⁰⁸ WSA, 1154/38.

³⁰⁹ WSA, 84/36.

³¹⁰ WSA, 84/36

³¹¹ *Poor Law Abstract, 1804*, 560–1.

³¹² WSA, 1154/80, 4 June 1829.

Calne Poor Law Union in 1835, there were only 18 inmates and the population was exclusively made up of children and the aged.³¹³

Aside from rent contributions, outdoor relief was given in several ways, such as by 'pays' and one-off expenses, predominantly for clothing and shoes.³¹⁴ It also included medical care which was provided from at least 1763.³¹⁵ In 1782 the doctor was paid £16.³¹⁶ During periods of high unemployment men were employed repairing the public highways.³¹⁷ In winter 1835/36 labourers were paid in money and bread.³¹⁸ In 1816 a roundsman type system was used, whereby the unemployed were sent in rotation to local farmers, who paid labourers 6d. per day, made up by overseers with a daily contribution of 10d. Different rates applied to single men and women. Labourers were warned that, 'all those that go out of the parish to work in the SUMMER is not to expect so great a pay as them which work constantly at home in the parish.' The parish used a similar system in 1828.³¹⁹

Charities for the Poor: Charity provision to the poor within Bremhill parish was limited until the 19th century. A charity created by the will of Dr John Townson or Tounson, to provide several almshouses in Calne for use by residents of Calne, Bremhill, and Highworth parishes, appears by 1786 no longer to have benefited Bremhill,³²⁰ and may never have done so.³²¹ The Charity Commission reported in 1905 that the provision had since been made available by the Trust to local people, but, 'there appears to be no desire on the part of the inhabitants of Bremhill to be admitted to the almshouses.'³²² Three cottages which had by popular tradition been given over by the Hungerford family for similar use had also never been used.³²³ The amount of charitable donations for the poor under the direction of parish officers between 1813 and 1815 was nil.³²⁴

There were occasional one-off gifts from the estates. In 1789 the Marquis of Lansdowne gave £20 to the poor of Bremhill.³²⁵

³¹³ WSA, H/4/110/1, 5 Apr. 1835.

³¹⁴ WSA, 84/36; 1154/38.

³¹⁵ WSA, 1195/28.

³¹⁶ WSA, 84/36, 1 Apr. 1782.

³¹⁷ e.g. WSA, 1154/80, 28 Nov. 1828, 1 Dec. 1840.

³¹⁸ WSA, H/4/110/1, 4 Nov. 1835.

³¹⁹ WSA, 1154/80, 13 Dec. 1816, 4 Jan. 1828.

³²⁰ *Charitable Donations, 1786–88, 1340–1.*

³²¹ *Coms. Of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-Eighth Report* (London: Parl. Papers, 1834 (606), xxii), 307.

³²² *Endowed Charities 1908*, 138; *VCH Wilts*, XVII, 114.

³²³ *Coms. Of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-Eighth Report* (London: Parl. Papers, 1834 (606), xxii), 307.

³²⁴ *Abridgement of Abstract of Answers and Returns relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England and Wales...*, 495.

³²⁵ *Bath Chronicle*, 12 Feb. 1789.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Malmesbury abbey controlled the religious life of Bremhill until the early 13th century, when the patronage of Bremhill church was transferred to the bishop of Salisbury along with those of Highway chapel, annexed to Bremhill, and the chapel at Foxham. It was one of the most valuable livings in the diocese. Nonconformity flourished from the mid 17th century, despite local persecution, firstly with the arrival of Quakers, and then by Methodists and Moravians who established chapels during the 18th and 19th century. However, by the late 20th century, only the Moravian chapel at East Tytherton remained in use.

Church Origins and Parochial Organization

Although no church at Bremhill is recorded in Domesday Book, Saxon masonry and an enclosure around the structure suggest it may have been a 10th-century foundation by Malmesbury abbey, or an earlier Anglo-Saxon minster, a royal foundation serving *villae regales* at Calne or Chippenham or both.³²⁶ Foxham and Highway were medieval chapels within the parish of Bremhill.

The rights of Malmesbury abbey to Bremhill with its chapels was confirmed by Pope Eugenius III in 1151, reconfirmed by Anastasius IV in 1153 and Adrian IV in 1156 with Spirhill and Highway both named.³²⁷

Revd Bowles believed that Foxham chapel was built for the convenience of the Hungerford family, whose seat, Cadenham manor, was nearby. But Edward Hungerford only acquired Cadenham in 1468, by when a chapel of Foxham had existed for at least 250 years.³²⁸ The history of Highway chapel, which was converted to residential accommodation during the 1970s,³²⁹ is described elsewhere.³³⁰

Until 1974 Bremhill was part of Avebury deanery; in 1974 the parish, renamed Bremhill with Foxham in 1952, was transferred to Calne rural deanery.³³¹ In 1983 a new benefice was created of Bremhill with Foxham and Hilmarton.³³² Later, in 1993–4, Derry Hill, Bremhill and Hilmarton were amalgamated in another.³³³ Since 2010 the churches of St Martin's, Bremhill and St John the Baptist, Foxham have been part of the Marden Vale benefice, along with Christ Church at Derry Hill and Holy Trinity and St Mary the Virgin at Calne and St Peter at Blackland.³³⁴

³²⁶ VCH Wilts, III, 215; WAM, 96, 82; S. Draper, *Landscape, Settlement and Society in Roman and Early Medieval Wilts.* (B.A.R. 419, 2006), 76–7.

³²⁷ *Reg. Malm.* I, 249, 356 and 364.

³²⁸ Bowles, 158; below, advowson and church endowment.

³²⁹ Pevsner, *Wilts.* (2nd edn. 1975), 268.

³³⁰ VCH Wilts, VII, 198.

³³¹ Youngs, *Admin Units*, I, 532.

³³² WSA, 1154/65.

³³³ WSA, D/166/18.

³³⁴ <https://www.mardenvale.org.uk/> [accessed 27 May 2020]; *Crockford* online edn. [accessed 13 July 2020].

The parish registers for christenings, burials and marriages at St. Martin's, Bremhill survive from 1590.³³⁵ According to a memorandum in the glebe terrier of 1588 there were 43 baptisms, 20 marriages and 38 burials in the three years to May 1588.³³⁶ For sixty years, 1590–1659 entries were recorded by Jeffrey Pinnel (*sic*) and Robert Jenkins.³³⁷ Parish registers also survive for christenings and burials 1850–1911 at St John the Baptist, Foxham.³³⁸

Advowson and Church Endowment: The position of Malmesbury abbey within the diocese was unusual. Since the 7th century it had fallen under papal jurisdiction and was thereby exempt from the control of the local bishop. In 1191, during the abbacy of Robert of Melûn, the Pope confirmed the appropriation of several churches, including Bremhill. After Melûn's death and particularly the translation of Richard Poore as bishop of Salisbury a move was made to end this exemption which, Poore argued, undermined his position. In 1218 Pope Honorius III ordered an examination and a compromise was reached in 1219 whereby the abbey's exemption remained, but the bishop was given the manor of Highway, the advowsons of Bremhill and Highway, and the chapel at Foxham.³³⁹ A vicar of Bremhill is first recorded in 1299.³⁴⁰

The Bremhill living was supported by great tithes and considered to be a good one. In 1677 two glebe terriers were taken, for Bremhill and Highway. These show that the vicar had various plots in Bremhill that were composed of - Cunniger (later Conyer) 6 a., Furlong 9 a. with a plot adjoining it of 4 a., land neighbouring Whitly Brook 5 a. and a 30 a. plot called Broad mead. Added to this were parcels of land in Highway totalling 22 a. with a further 30 sheep leazes, 5 beast and 1 horse leaze, together with a house and barn; the house was evidently for the use of the curate who provided duties at Highway chapel. Bremhill had its own parsonage house.³⁴¹ The median income for Wiltshire clergymen in the late 17th century was a little over £80, whereas John Tounson, vicar 1639–87, earned £300 from the Bremhill living.³⁴²

In 1775 the enclosure of Stockham Marsh commuted the tithe for land and payments were fixed at 5s. per acre, on 3,831 a. Fixed payments were less valuable as time went on.³⁴³ However, on the appointment of Nathaniel Hume in 1782 it remained the most valuable living in the gift of the bishop of Salisbury.³⁴⁴ By 1828 the living was still described as 'very considerable'.³⁴⁵ In 1848 the vicar's remaining tithes were valued at £88; they were commuted

³³⁵ Bowles, *Bremhill*, 195–6; WSA, 1154/1–12, 1154/41–9, 1154/61–4.

³³⁶ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 53.

³³⁷ *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 26.

³³⁸ WSA, 1154/13–14.

³³⁹ *VCH Wilts*, III, 219; *VCH Wilts*, VII, 197–8; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 60.

³⁴⁰ Phillipps, *Institutions*, vol. 1, 2.

³⁴¹ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 53–4.

³⁴² D.A. Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger: Parsons and Parishioners, 1660–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40.

³⁴³ 15 Geo.III c.72; WAM, 25, 31; Britton, *Beauties of Wilts*. III, 170.

³⁴⁴ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 11.

³⁴⁵ *Bath Chronicle*, Aug. 1828.

in the same year.³⁴⁶ By 1859 the joint living of Bremhill with Highway was worth £506.³⁴⁷ By 1915 it was £360.³⁴⁸ In 1939 its net yearly worth was £450 with 209 a. of glebe.³⁴⁹

Foxham chapel received endowments from both the Hungerford and Bayntun families (who owned the manors of Bremhill and Foxham after the Dissolution).³⁵⁰ In 1558 Sir Andrew Bayntun gave the chapel of St John the Baptist two houses called Church House and Priest House and parcels of land, Chapel Hay and Butt Hay.³⁵¹ A further endowment, during the reign of James I, by the Hungerfords, Sir Edward Bayntun and Mr Essington, included land assigned for the maintenance of a minister. The Bremhill incumbent, however, was under no legal obligation to provide one, although this was disputed in a long-running court case between Sir George Hungerford and Revd Tounson that began in 1666 in the consistory court and ended at the exchequer court.³⁵² Later reports suggest that this endowment was lost for want of trustees.³⁵³ In 1783 the vicar reported that the chapel was 'endowed by a private person with £3 a year, but being no part of the original endowment, and the stipend by no means adequate, it has been for several years given up'.³⁵⁴ The duties at Foxham were sometimes supplied voluntarily by the vicar of Bremhill.³⁵⁵ After the chapel was rebuilt and re-consecrated, in 1880, regular services resumed.³⁵⁶

Clergy Houses: The Bremhill parsonage house lies to the south of the church. In 1677 it included a house, orchard, barn and stable.³⁵⁷ The structure has a 15th-century core and was altered in the 17th century.³⁵⁸ There was also a church house in Bremhill in 1612 maintained by the churchwardens.³⁵⁹ It, or another, existed in 1781.³⁶⁰

On his appointment to Bremhill living in 1804, William Lisle Bowles, 'rendered [the parsonage] famous in his verse'.³⁶¹ Following Bowles's gothick embellishment of the house and garden the parsonage became extolled by other poets, such as Robert Southey, and in the

³⁴⁶ WSA, T/A Bremhill, 1848.

³⁴⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

³⁴⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

³⁴⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1939 edn.).

³⁵⁰ Sir George Hungerford (d.1712) referred it as 'my chapel': Bowles, 26, 158, 201.

³⁵¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 63; Bowles, *Bremhill*, 264; WSA, 1154/26, 1154/91.

³⁵² *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 26; Bowles, *Bremhill*, 158. For the court case, Spaeth, *Church in an Age of Danger*, 81, 86–97.

³⁵³ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 17 Apr. 1834.

³⁵⁴ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 45.

³⁵⁵ e.g. by Mr Collier (17th cent.) and William Bowles and Henry Drury (19th): Bowles, *Bremhill*, 201–2; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1855 edn.), 19; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 17 Apr. 1834; WSA, 1154/27.

³⁵⁶ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 15 Feb. 1883.

³⁵⁷ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 53.

³⁵⁸ NHLE, 1022418.

³⁵⁹ WSA, 122/1.

³⁶⁰ Above, social hist, social welfare.

³⁶¹ *The Saint James Magazine*, ii (London, 1850), 52.

press of the period.³⁶² However, the additions were not to all tastes; in describing his grounds, the poet Thomas Moore commented that Bowles, ‘had a good deal frittered away its beauty with grottos, hermitages and Shenstonian inscriptions’.³⁶³ Most of Bowles’s garden adornments have subsequently been removed.³⁶⁴ In 1952 the vicar, Revd Bradbury, found the parsonage far too large,³⁶⁵ and it was subsequently sold. By 2020 the vicar of Bremhill lived in Derry Hill.³⁶⁶

In 1607 it was asserted ‘there is a house at Foxham for the vicar to dwell in’,³⁶⁷ The 1612 survey records that the tenants of Foxham claimed to hold freely the chapel, two small plots of land, the priest’s house and two other houses belonging to it, and a church house.³⁶⁸ There is no mention of a vicar or curate living at Foxham after the 17th century.

Religious Life

Robert de Portesham (d.1420), who requested burial in the chancel before the image of St Martin, left the residue of his goods and chattels for a priest to say masses in Foxham chapel, where he had probably been the priest.³⁶⁹ In 1520 Christopher Bayley requested burial in the chancel of Bremhill parish church before the image of St Martin; he left £1 to the fabric of the building and 1s. to the ‘usual lights’.³⁷⁰

The employment of curates was necessary to provide duties within the church and two chapels, at Highway and Foxham. In 1677 one curate was based at Highway but by 1835 two were employed at a cost of £150.³⁷¹

In 1783 two services were held each Sunday during the summer but only one during the winter, in the morning.³⁷²

The first recorded Bremhill incumbent was Johannes Hackenye in 1299.³⁷³ Bowles noted his weekly provisions in 1308 which included 21 loaves of bread, 42 gallons of ale, 6 cartloads of hay, 7 bushels of oats and 2 quarters of wheat. Seemingly finding the grant excessive, he quipped ‘such a vicar might be considered the prototype of [Alexander] Pope’s parson, “much bemus’d by beer”’.³⁷⁴

³⁶² e.g. *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, No. 854, 1837, 193–5; *The Weekly Entertainer*, 24 Oct. 1814, 841–4; *Gent. Mag. Sept.* 1814, 203–4. See also C.C. Southey (ed.), *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey* (New York, 1851), 544.

³⁶³ J. Russell (ed.), *Diary of Thomas Moore*, II (London, 1853–6), 153. Bowles was evidently not aware of Moore’s private feelings.

³⁶⁴ NHLE, 1022418; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 180.

³⁶⁵ WSA, 1154/66.

³⁶⁶ <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/9617/> [accessed 29 June 2020].

³⁶⁷ *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 26.

³⁶⁸ WSA, 122/1.

³⁶⁹ TNA, PROB 11/2B/219.

³⁷⁰ TNA, PROB 11/20/24.

³⁷¹ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 54; *Report of the Commissioners Appointed by His Majesty to Inquire into the Ecclesiastical Revenues of England and Wales* (Parl. Papers, 1835), 826–7.

³⁷² *Bishop’s Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 44.

³⁷³ Phillipps, *Institutions.*, vol. 1, 2.

³⁷⁴ Bowles, *Bremhill*, 142.

Some incumbents had a good relationship with local elites, such as Thomas Collier, vicar for 40 years until his death in 1639. Collier entrusted Sir Edward Bayntun, his 'ever honoured' friend and 'benefactor', to be the overseer of his will.³⁷⁵ Not all, however, enjoyed the most cordial relations with local elites or their parishioners. William Nauseglose was deprived of the living in 1554 in favour of William Hand, whose patron was Robert Hungerford of Cadenham.³⁷⁶ During the 17th-century John Tounson, was 'one of the most litigious clerics in Wiltshire'. He raised many complaints during his tenure, including actions over the non-payment of tithes during 20 years from 1664 against 19 defendants, including Sir George Hungerford and Joanne Hale, leader of the local Quaker meeting house.³⁷⁷

The most notable incumbent of Bremhill was William Lisle Bowles (1762–1850), who was appointed in 1804. He achieved celebrity as a poet before 1800, particularly for his sonnets,³⁷⁸ and influenced several notable poets, including the young Samuel Taylor Coleridge. His later poems, according to an assessment by the Royal Society of Literature, 'did not belie the promise of his youth', sentiments Coleridge reiterated.³⁷⁹ Bowles was also known for his prose, encompassing church matters, education, antiquities and history, including a history of Bremhill.³⁸⁰ Some of the sermons he preached at Bremhill were also published.³⁸¹ He is mostly remembered for his ten-volume collected works of Alexander Pope, which included his somewhat pugnacious commentary. On its publication he engaged in a public and ill-humoured debate with Lord Byron on the topic of Pope.³⁸²

Bowles took an interest in music, particularly church music, and although he was not an accomplished musician the Bremhill choir was particularly active during his ministry.³⁸³ In 1834 he composed a hymn which the choir sang at a service in aid of a fund for building and enlarging churches.³⁸⁴ Bowles used his poetry within his ministry and in his broader work

³⁷⁵ TNA, PROB 11/182/408.

³⁷⁶ WSA, D1/2/16.

³⁷⁷ Spaeth, *Church in an Age of Danger*, 87.

³⁷⁸ Bowles' published poetry included *Sonnets Written Chiefly on Picturesque Spots during a Journey* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1789); *Coombe Ellen* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1798) and works which reflected his broader social concerns *Verses to John Howard, F.R.S. on his State of Prisons and Lazarettos* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1789); *Verses on the Benevolent Institution of the Philanthropic Society, for Protecting and Educating the Children of Vagrants and Criminals* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1790).

³⁷⁹ *Gent. Mag.* (Jun 1850), 674; G. Garland (ed.), *A Wilts. Parson and his Friends: The Correspondence of William Lisle Bowles* (Boston and New York, 1926), 17–26.

³⁸⁰ Bowles, *Bremhill*; *Hermes Britannicus* (London, 1828); *Annals and Antiquities of Lacock abbey* (London, 1835); *Thoughts on the Increase of Crimes, the Education of the Poor, and National Schools* (Salisbury, 1815); *Vindiciæ Wykehamicæ; or, A vindication of Winchester college* (Bath, 1818); *The Life of Thomas Ken D.D. Deprived Bishop of Bath and Wells*, 2 vols. (London, 1830–31). His religious work included: *Paulus Parochialis... a Series of Sermons* (London, 1826) and *On the Positions and Incomes of cathedral Clergy* (London, 1838).

³⁸¹ e.g. W.L. Bowles, *The Church and the Parochial School: a Sermon Preached at Bremhill* (Calne, 1823).

³⁸² W.L. Bowles (ed.), *The Works of Alexander Pope in Verse and Prose*, 10 vols. (London, 1806). For the debate: J.J. van Rennes, *Bowles, Byron and the Pope Controversy* (Amsterdam, 1927); R. Moody, *Life and Letters of William Lisle Bowles: Poet and Parson* (Sailsbury, 2009), 118–33.

³⁸³ Garland, *Wilts. Parson and his Friends*, 7–11.

³⁸⁴ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 24 Apr. 1834.

within the community. His *Little Villager's Verse Book* incorporated verses initially written for use in the instruction of children at Sunday school in Bremhill.³⁸⁵

In 1836 it was reported that Bowles spent £400 annually on supporting charities,³⁸⁶ and he had previously reduced the tithes paid to him by Highway.³⁸⁷ His sermons were sometimes published for the benefit of causes close to his heart, such as national schools.³⁸⁸ In 1828 he was appointed canon residentiary at Salisbury cathedral, where he resided each winter. In 1845 he resigned from the living at Bremhill and retired to Salisbury.³⁸⁹

Bowles died in 1850, and his successor, Henry Drury, observed, 'I imagine his prose will survive his verses.'³⁹⁰ Bowles was, however, described as 'unremitting in his professional duties, zealous in the education of the poor and in every respect an exemplary.'³⁹¹

Incumbents often combined the post with other roles within the diocese. Bowles' predecessor, Nathaniel Hume, was precentor of Sarum and Henry Drury was archdeacon of Wiltshire from 1862. Drury had previously been appointed chaplain to the House of Commons in 1857.³⁹² He died suddenly in 1863 and was commemorated by a stained-glass window at Bremhill in 1864.³⁹³ Drury's replacement, Charles Harris, was also made archdeacon of Wiltshire before being promoted to bishop of Gibraltar.³⁹⁴ Edward Eddrup, incumbent from 1868 until his death in 1905, was canon of Salisbury and had been principal of Salisbury Diocesan Training College.³⁹⁵ His death was memorialised by a new east window in 1927.³⁹⁶

Several vicars apart from Bowles produced literary works of a religious nature. These included sermons published by Matthew Frampton, vicar 1747–82, and Edward Eddrup.³⁹⁷

Protestant Nonconformity: Quakerism was present in Bremhill at Charlcutt by the 1660s. Local Quakers were persecuted from the 1660s until the 1750s,³⁹⁸ but some parish elites were

³⁸⁵ *The Little Villager's Verse Book* (London, 1826), preface.

³⁸⁶ *Bath Chronicle*, 5 May 1836; widely reported, e.g. *Limerick Chronicle*, 18 May 1836; *Glos. Chronicle*, 7 May 1836; *Hants. Chronicle*, 2 May 1836.

³⁸⁷ e.g. *Bristol Mirror*, 1 Jan. 1831.

³⁸⁸ Bowles, *Church and Parochial School*.

³⁸⁹ Garland, *Wilts. Parson and his Friends*, 9.

³⁹⁰ *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 20 Jan. 1866.

³⁹¹ *Gent. Mag.* (Jun 1850), 675.

³⁹² ODNB, s.v. Drury, Henry, Church of England clergyman, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.; J. Britton, *Beauties of England and Wales*. xv (1814), 534.

³⁹³ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.); *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 19 Nov. 1864.

³⁹⁴ ODNB, s.v. Harris, Charles Amyand, bishop of Gibraltar, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

³⁹⁵ *Salisbury Times*, 17 Nov. 1905.

³⁹⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1939 edn.).

³⁹⁷ M. Frampton, *A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1769); M. Frampton, *A Sermon Preached at the Anniversary of Natives of the County of Wilts. in St Augustine's Church, Bristol* (Marlborough, 1776).

³⁹⁸ J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, II (London, 1753), 41–2; *VCH Wilts*, III, 116; *Wilts. N&Q*, II, 168–9; WSA, 1699/18; WSA, 1699/17.

prepared to be sympathetic.³⁹⁹ In 1690, shortly after the enactment of the Act of Toleration, a Quaker meeting house was licenced at Charlcutt.⁴⁰⁰ It was administratively important within north Wiltshire: alongside weekly ‘particular’ meetings, ‘monthly’ meetings provided a governing body to congregations in Bromham, Calne, Charlcutt, Devizes, Marlborough and Purton.⁴⁰¹ However, after 1700 Quaker pre-eminence in the area declined, as Methodist evangelists preached in the open air at Foxham during the 1740s and a Moravian church was established by 1745.⁴⁰² Nonetheless, monthly meetings continued in Charlcutt until 1775. Quakerism’s popularity had by then diminished so significantly across Wiltshire that all the county’s monthly meetings were merged into one.⁴⁰³ In 1783 the incumbent reported that the meeting house was disused and only three or four Quakers were left in the parish.⁴⁰⁴

Between 1790 and 1852 17 dissenters’ meeting houses were licensed within the parish of Bremhill.⁴⁰⁵ These were primarily domestic or adapted buildings, and not all premises were registered for a particular sect. Some, such as the Mormon establishment at Charlcutt licensed in 1849 under the influence of the controversial Mormon elder, John Halliday, were probably short-lived.⁴⁰⁶

The first Methodist establishment registered for Bremhill was at Studley in 1812.⁴⁰⁷ Wesleyan Methodists were reported to have held services at Foxham in the open air from 1821.⁴⁰⁸ Later, a red-brick Wesleyan chapel was constructed at Spirthill in 1828.⁴⁰⁹ In 1844 it provided a meeting place for labourers and farmers to discuss agrarian distress.⁴¹⁰ By 1851 the minister was Philip Hadrill, an agricultural worker, who was probably related to members of the Hadrill family associated with an earlier meeting house there.⁴¹¹ On census Sunday 1851 the attendance was 40 for the morning service and 60 during the evening.⁴¹² From 1912 the chapel was solemnized for marriages.⁴¹³

³⁹⁹ Including Sir Edward Bayntun and Sir Edward Hungerford: *VCH Wilts*, III, 120; K. Taylor, *Society, Schism and Sufferings: the first 70 years of Quakerism in Wiltshire* (PhD thesis: University of the West of England, 2006, 64–8. In 1674 it was noted Bayntun had not attended communion at Easter or Whitsun for the preceding five years: WSA, D/1/54/6/3/30.

⁴⁰⁰ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 3.

⁴⁰¹ WSA, 1699/115, 1699/75–8; *VCH Wilts*, III, 126–7.

⁴⁰² Preachers at Foxham included John Cennick, originally a Wesleyan but later a Moravian, who established the Moravian church at East Tytherton: J. Cennick, *Life of Mr J. Cennick* (Bristol, 1745), 38; *VCH Wilts*, III, 130–1.

⁴⁰³ *VCH Wilts*, III, 127; WSA, 1699/78.

⁴⁰⁴ *Bishop’s Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 44.

⁴⁰⁵ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 40, 51, 52, 63, 70, 73, 93, 117, 121, 154, 157, 161, 165, 167, 168.

⁴⁰⁶ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 165. For John Halliday: *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 29 May 1845. *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1855 edn.) omits the Mormon establishment, but includes a Primitive Methodist chapel.

⁴⁰⁷ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 40, 70.

⁴⁰⁸ *Wilts. Times*, 5 June 1880.

⁴⁰⁹ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 121.

⁴¹⁰ *Wilts. Independent*, 26 Sept. 1844.

⁴¹¹ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 51.

⁴¹² TNA, HO 129/254.

⁴¹³ WSA, 2053/41.

A second red-brick Wesleyan chapel was built at Foxham in 1855.⁴¹⁴ The chapels were overseen by local boards of trustees who appointed the posts of treasurer and steward, responsible for the day-to-day organisation.⁴¹⁵ By 1958 there were 17 trustees of Spirthill chapel.⁴¹⁶ In 1977 many of the trustees' responsibilities at Spirthill were taken over by the local church council at Monkton Hill, Chippenham, as the Spirthill society was deemed too small to have its own.⁴¹⁷ It is likely that the Foxham board of trustees was likewise superseded, as the trustees of Foxham chapel had already by then been meeting at Monkton Hill for many years.⁴¹⁸ From 1978 the Spirthill property committee, which dealt with the maintenance of the fabric of the chapel, was merged with that of Foxham.⁴¹⁹

Spirthill chapel was reportedly in need of renovation in 1960.⁴²⁰ A new organ was bought, electric lighting installed and some renovation took place in 1960–1.⁴²¹ However, further repairs were quickly required and by 1964 the new organ was riddled with woodworm and unrepairable.⁴²² The problems continued.⁴²³ In 1982, with a diminishing congregation and the fabric again requiring repair, Spirthill chapel was closed.⁴²⁴ It was sold for £2,800 and converted for domestic use.⁴²⁵ The structure is Grade II listed.⁴²⁶

At Foxham lighting was installed in 1957.⁴²⁷ Foxham chapel likewise experienced problems with declining numbers and many worshippers coming from outside the parish.⁴²⁸ By 1962 the trustees (only one of whom lived in the settlement) identified that Foxham chapel 'was in need of help'.⁴²⁹ It later closed and became a private house.⁴³⁰ Spirthill and Foxham chapels had both belonged to the Wiltshire Missions circuit and the Chippenham and Brinkworth Methodist circuit.⁴³¹

Of two properties licensed for Primitive Methodists during the 1840s, one is likely to be a chapel listed in Bremhill in an 1855 directory.⁴³² A chapel was later built at Stanley

⁴¹⁴ Date on building.

⁴¹⁵ Spirthill chapel: WSA, 2783/10; Foxham chapel: WSA, 3083/187.

⁴¹⁶ WSA, 2053/44.

⁴¹⁷ WSA, 2783/10, 29 Sept. 1977.

⁴¹⁸ WSA, 3083/187. All meetings between 1948 and 1970 are listed as taking place at Monkton Hill.

⁴¹⁹ WSA, 2783/10, 29 Sept. 1978.

⁴²⁰ WSA, 2783/10, 24 Oct. 1960; 19 May 1961.

⁴²¹ WSA, 2783/10, 19 May 1961, 23 Oct. 1961; 19 Oct. 1964.

⁴²² WSA, 2783/10, 19 Oct. 1964; 18 Oct. 1965. After further repairs the chapel was reported in good repair in 1966 (8 Nov. 1866).

⁴²³ e.g. WSA, 2783/10, 29 Sept. 1978, 13 Nov. 1981.

⁴²⁴ WSA, 2783/10, 23 Oct. 1982.

⁴²⁵ WSA, 2783/10, 13 Oct. 1983.

⁴²⁶ NHLE, 1199325.

⁴²⁷ WSA, 3083/187.

⁴²⁸ WSA, 3083/187, 18 Feb. 1958

⁴²⁹ WSA, 3083/187, 13 Mar. 1963.

⁴³⁰ WSA, 3083/187.

⁴³¹ Requires verification.

⁴³² *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 157, 165; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1855 edn.).

c.1865.⁴³³ It formed part of the mid Wiltshire Methodist circuit, but was later converted for residential use.⁴³⁴

From 1896 both the Stanley and Foxham chapels were active in the promotion of teetotalism, through the Band of Hope movement.⁴³⁵ Until 1910 weekly meetings took place at Foxham, and children and teenagers were encouraged to sign pledges of abstinence.⁴³⁶ Both Stanley and Spirthill chapels also supported a Sunday school in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁴³⁷ At Spirthill a planned school room was not built.⁴³⁸ From 1903 Stanley Methodists were linked to the Christian Endeavour youth movement, which by 1904 had an active local membership of 25.⁴³⁹

A Moravian settlement was established at East Tytherton in 1745 by John Cennick. The chapel and manse were rebuilt 1792–3, and shortly afterwards a girl's school was added.⁴⁴⁰ The chapel had a capacity of 200. In 1783 Revd Nathaniel Hume stated that the Moravian congregation was large.⁴⁴¹ On census Sunday 1851 105 people attended morning service and 128 in the evening; a further 19 children attended the Sunday school.⁴⁴² The Moravians were active in promoting good causes.⁴⁴³ The Moravian church, manse and church cottage are Grade II* listed.⁴⁴⁴

Revd Bowles noted that, in an extensive parish such as Bremhill, the Moravian establishment at East Tytherton provided 'no officious intrusion' and could be considered subsidiary to the Church of England.⁴⁴⁵ He was friends with the Moravian minister, Lewis West, but less tolerant of other nonconformist sects.⁴⁴⁶ Occasionally, sentiments were expressed by local nonconformists against the established church, but it is likely that relationships were amicable.⁴⁴⁷ Indeed, evidence suggests that congregations moved quite freely between the dissenting chapels and the Church of England.⁴⁴⁸ In 1921 the Bremhill vicar, Arthur E.G. Peters, was given leave to use Spirthill chapel for week-night worship with

⁴³³ Date on building.

⁴³⁴ WBR 8471.

⁴³⁵ *Wilts. Times*, 4 Dec. 1897; WSA, 3083/189.

⁴³⁶ WSA, 3083/188. Children as young as 5 signed or the book was signed on their behalf, in breach of Band of Hope guidelines: WSA, 3083/189

⁴³⁷ Stanley: WSA, 1907/143; *Wilts. Times*, 15 May 1897; Spirthill: *Wilts. Times*, 14 Aug. 1880; WSA, 2783/11.

⁴³⁸ WSA, 2783/11.

⁴³⁹ *Wilts. Times*, 12 Mar. 1904.

⁴⁴⁰ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 312; NHLE, 1363796.

⁴⁴¹ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 44.

⁴⁴² TNA, HO 129/254.

⁴⁴³ e.g. collecting money for the Crimean War Patriotic Fund: *Wilts. Independent*, 14 Dec. 1854.

⁴⁴⁴ NHLE, 1363796.

⁴⁴⁵ Bowles, *Bremhill*, 153.

⁴⁴⁶ Bowles, *Bremhill* only mentions the Moravians. On his religious intolerance: his pamphlet *Plain Narrative of Some Circumstances Attending the Sickness and Death of Ann Nichols, A Poor Woman, Late of the Parish of Bremhill* (copy in WSHC, BRE.922); Bowles, *Bremhill*, 153–7; Garland, *Wilts. Parson and his Friends* (Boston & New York, 1926), 10.

⁴⁴⁷ e.g. Mr Turk at Spirthill chapel: *Wilts. Independent*, 26 Sept. 1844.

⁴⁴⁸ *Wilts. Times*, 5 June 1880.

the proviso that it ‘must not be used for the teaching of any doctrines or practices contrary to Methodist Standards’.⁴⁴⁹

Church Architecture

St. Martin’s Church comprises a west tower, north and south aisle, nave and chancel. It is constructed of ashlar and ironstone rubble, and the roof is of stone slate. The church’s origins are Anglo-Saxon, with the main construction taking place c.1200 and in the 13th and 15th-centuries.⁴⁵⁰ The tower is probably of 13th-century origin, then buttressed and re-fronted in the 15th. The church was restored and reopened in October 1850.⁴⁵¹ This renovation included the removal of a singing gallery and rebuilding of the nave and chancel arches.⁴⁵² It is likely that the rood-loft was removed at the same time.⁴⁵³ An addition was made to the churchyard in 1856 and a new window by Hardman was added in 1864 to commemorate Revd Henry Drury.⁴⁵⁴ St. Martin’s has six bells, all cast at different times.⁴⁵⁵ It is grade I listed.⁴⁵⁶

Questions over the obligation of the vicar of Bremhill towards St. John the Baptist chapel at Foxham probably contributed to it declining periodically into decay.⁴⁵⁷ By the 1820s the original chapel had again fallen into disrepair,⁴⁵⁸ and Revd Bowles paid for repairs to its roof in 1825.⁴⁵⁹ In 1833 money was raised locally, partly through the efforts of Bowles, and the structure was extensively renovated.⁴⁶⁰ At its reopening it was reported that nearly 1,000 people attended, including 300 accommodated inside. The Marchioness of Lansdowne made a gift to the chapel of a bible, prayer book and cloths for the pulpit and communion table. The chapel was not consecrated for burials until 1838.⁴⁶¹

Although identified as ‘picturesque’, the building was later deemed to have no architectural features worth saving, and it was rebuilt to a design by William Butterfield, 1878–80 for £2,300. The cost was covered by subscriptions which included £850 from the Marquis of Lansdowne, £400 from the vicar of Bremhill, Edward Eddrup, and £100 from the former vicar Charles Harris, by then bishop of Gibraltar.⁴⁶² The structure comprises a stone single-roofed nave and chancel, a slender west tower and a wooden porch. It has a stained

⁴⁴⁹ WSA, 2053/42.

⁴⁵⁰ NHLE, 1199069; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 179.

⁴⁵¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 60.

⁴⁵² H. Lewis, *The Church Rambler* (London, 1878), 412.

⁴⁵³ It existed in 1828 but had disappeared by 1878: Lewis, *Church Rambler*, 413.

⁴⁵⁴ *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 19 Nov. 1864; *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.); WSA, D/1/60/5/53.

⁴⁵⁵ Lewis, *Church Rambler*, 415; WSA, 1154/25, 1154/50, 1195/30.

⁴⁵⁶ NHLE, 1199069.

⁴⁵⁷ e.g. in 1672 a case was brought against the vicar for neglecting the chapel and allowing it to decay: WSA, 1154/91.

⁴⁵⁸ Bowles, *Bremhill*, 158.

⁴⁵⁹ Bowles, *Bremhill*, 202.

⁴⁶⁰ *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 21 Apr. 1834; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 17 Apr. 1834.

⁴⁶¹ *Wilts. Independent*, 11 Oct. 1838; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 18 Oct. 1838; WSA, D/1/60/2/22.

⁴⁶² NHLE, 1283495; *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.); *Wilts. Times*, 22 May 1880. See also, WSA, 1154/58.

glass east window which was previously in Bremhill church. In 2020 it had grade II* listed status.⁴⁶³

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Manorial

A rent roll of the estates of Malmesbury Abbey, 1283/4, divided its manor of Bremhill into eight areas (Bremhill, Hazeland, Bremhill Wick, Spirthill, *La Hangre* (?Highway), Spirthill, Foxham, Avon, and an unspecified location, perhaps Charlcutt) which may have coincided with 13th century tithings.⁴⁶⁴ £16 12s. 7½*d.* was paid to the abbot, 10s. to the kitchener and 4s. to the pittancer.⁴⁶⁵ The tithingman of Avon was obliged to attend the court leet at Bremhill at Hockday and Martinmas.⁴⁶⁶ The profits of two courts leet, called *turnis* (tours), were assessed at £2 14s. in 1283/4.

Bremhill is referred to in a 13th-century Malmesbury document as ‘our hundred’, which suggests that the abbey had view of frankpledge, and perhaps higher rights which it considered gave it hundredal jurisdiction (as Glastonbury exercised in North Damerham).⁴⁶⁷ The lord of Bremhill manor held a court and view of frankpledge. Court records exist for 1545–57, 1565–1612, 1615–38, 1651–7 and 1694–1742.⁴⁶⁸

Three tithingmen for Bremhill, Foxham and Spirthill were elected at the 16th-century courts leet. Women were elected on several occasions and did not always appoint surrogates; Avice Clifford made presentments in 1588, Elizabeth Archard in 1592, Joan Butler in 1595 and Frizia Stratton in 1599.⁴⁶⁹ Reeves were appointed at the Michaelmas court for each tithing with a small number of women selected. Two highway inspectors were appointed for each tithing, their selection was only recorded in one third of courts and it is likely that they were usually appointed by the parish; a woman, Alice Spackman, was appointed in 1595. One constable was appointed each year. The other officers whose appointments were recorded occasionally were four supervisors of Stockham Marsh appointed in 1568, a field warden for Foxham (1573), two breakers of fields (1575), a hayward who apparently served the whole manor and whose appointment was noted on four occasions 1566–1575.

In 1651 a view of frankpledge and court baron was held in April; the manor court met in August and December, and both a view and manor court were also held in October. In 1653–7 the view of frankpledge and manor court were held in April and October.⁴⁷⁰ A tithingman was selected for each of the tithings of Bremhill, Foxham, Spirthill and Charlcutt. Infractions presented were largely minor, and selection to the post of tithingman may have

⁴⁶³ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 336.; NHLE, 1283495.

⁴⁶⁴ *Reg. Malm.* I, 162-9.

⁴⁶⁵ *Reg. Malm.* I, 194-5.

⁴⁶⁶ *Reg. Malm.* II, 72.

⁴⁶⁷ *Reg. Malm.* II, 72.

⁴⁶⁸ WSA, 84/35, 473/52, 122/1, 1171/85; BL, Add Ms 37270.

⁴⁶⁹ This para: BL, Add Ms 37270.

⁴⁷⁰ An additional manor court was held in Mar. 1655.

been used to encourage good behaviour. In October 1651, on the day Thomas Hayward was elected as tithingman for Foxham, he was fined by the court for not doing his share to repair local roads, and warned that unless he scoured his ditches by November he would face another fine.⁴⁷¹ A single hayward was appointed annually for Foxham and four for Stockham. This was later reduced to two. A hayward for Hanger Marsh was also nominated in 1657. As well as maintaining hedges and fences, haywards also served notice when livestock should be taken on and off the wastes, and collected fines for infringements. Overseers were additionally named for the commons at Foxham in 1653, 1655 (with Dole Mead), 1657; Stockham 1654–5, Catcombe and Charlcutt with Siderow in 1657. Overseers were authorised to impound cattle grazing without rights. Most manorial business was tenurial, but the homage also presented defaulters and those who neglected to repair boundaries, fences, highways, or bridges, or to scour ditches.⁴⁷²

No direct record of a court held for Cadenham, Foxham or Spirthill manors has survived.

Parish

In the 18th and 19th centuries parochial administration was divided into the four tithings of Bremhill, Foxham, Spirthill and Tytherton with Studley. Access to parish meetings to set poor rates was often restricted to churchwardens, overseers and sometimes ‘paymasters’. Meetings were held in the church vestry at Bremhill until the 1860s, after which Bremhill school was principally used.⁴⁷³

Until the early 1830s vestry recording and overseers and highway accounts were regularly audited by two magistrates, mainly at Quarter Sessions.⁴⁷⁴

In 1819 a select vestry was established.⁴⁷⁵ If initiated under the Sturges Bourne Acts,⁴⁷⁶ the vestry did not strictly follow their provisions. It may have been a short-term measure and no select vestry minutes have survived.

Constables. Following legislation in 1842 the role of tithingman was abolished and a constable selected instead for each of the four parish tithings.⁴⁷⁷ By 1868 the parish had increased the number of annually selected constables to eight,⁴⁷⁸ but the use of parish-appointed constables ceased by 1874.

⁴⁷¹ WSA, 473/52.

⁴⁷² WSA, 473/52.

⁴⁷³ WSA, 1154/80, 1154/29.

⁴⁷⁴ WSA, 1154/80, e.g. 31 Dec. 1806, 27 May 1807, 5 Apr. 1815, 3 Apr. 1816; 1154/81. e.g. 22 Oct. 1823, 26 Oct. 1826, 28 Oct. 1829. See also WSA, 1154/38, 1154/39, 1154/40, 84/36.

⁴⁷⁵ WSA, 1154/80, 17 Dec. 1819.

⁴⁷⁶ 58 Geo III c.3 and 59 Geo III c.12.

⁴⁷⁷ WSA, 1154/80, 3 Nov. 1842.

⁴⁷⁸ WSA, 1154/29, 25 Mar. 1869.

Overseers of the poor: Bremhill parish appointed overseers from at least 1649.⁴⁷⁹ By the late 18th century four overseers were selected annually, one each for the tithings of Bremhill, Foxham, Spirthill and Tytherton with Studley, principally from amongst local farmers.⁴⁸⁰ They were responsible for collecting poor rates and disbursements to those receiving relief within the community.⁴⁸¹ A parish workhouse was separately maintained. In 1841 the overseers included one woman, Sarah Hancock, who was selected for Foxham.⁴⁸² Four overseers continued to be appointed into the 20th century, drawn mainly from local farmers.⁴⁸³

From 1828 a general overseer, John Rawlings, was appointed at a salary of £50. He was responsible for, 'the care of the workhouse, and of the roads, in the different tithings and the care thereunto'.⁴⁸⁴ In 1831 James Hancock was employed in the role at an increased remuneration of £60. However, the following year Henry Hodges was contracted for only £20.⁴⁸⁵ Hodges had previously served as an overseer.⁴⁸⁶ He continued in post until 1835 when poor law administration passed to the newly formed Calne Poor Law Union. The union later alleged that Hodges had made false accounting entries; a prosecution was dismissed but he was ordered to pay back £53.⁴⁸⁷ In 1836 he became parish clerk.⁴⁸⁸

The parish employed an assistant overseer to collect poor rates from the 1880s, if not before. In 1884 Joseph Carpenter held the position on a salary of £20, but was replaced by D.M. Eatwell in the same year, who later combined the role with that of parish clerk.⁴⁸⁹ Eatwell remained in post until 1918.⁴⁹⁰ In 1926 the parish increased the salary of the assistant overseer to £49.⁴⁹¹

From 1837, or possibly 1835, two guardians were selected for the board of the Calne Poor Law Union.⁴⁹²

Surveyors of the highways: Up to six surveyors of the highway were selected. Like parish overseers, surveyors were responsible for particular tithings and were often local farmers. Unlike overseers, they could remain in post for several years. Women occasionally served in

⁴⁷⁹ *Wilts. QS Order Book 1642–1654* (WRS. 67), 170–1.

⁴⁸⁰ WSA, 1154/80.

⁴⁸¹ WSA, 1154/38, 1154/39, 1154/40.

⁴⁸² WSA, 1154/80, 23 Mar. 1841.

⁴⁸³ WSA, 141/9, e.g. 17 Mar. 1919.

⁴⁸⁴ WSA, 1154/80, 18 Apr. 1828.

⁴⁸⁵ WSA, 1154/80, 25 Mar. 1831, 12 Apr. 1832.

⁴⁸⁶ WSA, 1154/40.

⁴⁸⁷ WSA, H/4/110/1, 12 Aug. 1835, 14 Aug. 1835, 19 Aug. 1835, 26 Aug. 1835.

⁴⁸⁸ *Return of Officers Whose Incomes are Paid from Poor Rates in England and Wales* (London: Parl. Papers, 1849), 233.

⁴⁸⁹ Eatwell replaced Edward Hodges who had died: *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.); WSA, 1154/29. 27 Sept. 1884, 26 Apr. 1886; *Wilts. Times*, 12 Jan. 1895.

⁴⁹⁰ WSA, 141/9. 17 Apr. 1918.

⁴⁹¹ WSA, 141/9. 5 Nov. 1926.

⁴⁹² There is a discrepancy: see WSA, 1154/80, 30 March 1837; WSA, H/4/110/1, 27 Mar. 1835. See also, *Return of Number of Parishes in every Union formed under Poor Law Amendment Act, Number of Guardians, and Number of Contests at Annual Elections* (London: Parl. Papers, 1876), 95.

the role, including Ann Pegler, selected in 1857, who ran a farm in Foxham.⁴⁹³ Meetings of surveyors took place in the church but occasionally in other venues such as the Dumb Post inn.⁴⁹⁴ In 1836 the parish rejected an offer to join with Hilmarton and Calne to employ an individual to superintend their highways.⁴⁹⁵ The annual selection of surveyors, later known as waywardens, continued until 1880, but the number of appointees was reduced to two from the 1860s.⁴⁹⁶

Expenditure by surveyors, responsible for the construction and maintenance of local highways and bridges, rose and fell dramatically, dependent on need.⁴⁹⁷ Rates chargeable for work also fluctuated.⁴⁹⁸ Stone was quarried locally, often within the tithing itself. In 1837 the vestry agreed to pay damages to ‘persons occupying land wherein stones are quarried for the repair of the roads.’⁴⁹⁹ During a period of high unemployment, local men were employed on the roads,⁵⁰⁰ and provided with beer while working.⁵⁰¹

In 1831 the vestry decided to create one account for improving the roads rather than continue raising funds within the separate hamlets. However, the occupiers of each tithing were only expected to assist with the haulage of materials within their tithing.⁵⁰² The fund was sometimes used for expenses unrelated to highways, including payments for sparrows’ heads.⁵⁰³ In 1839 Joseph Hatherell was paid £10 from this account towards the costs associated with his emigration to America; the reason for this was not given.⁵⁰⁴

Churchwardens: Two churchwardens were annually selected.⁵⁰⁵ Their responsibilities mostly pertained to church maintenance, but their presence was generally requested at meetings of overseers. It is likely that they often acted alongside overseers to relieve local poverty.

Poor Law Administration: Poor relief was the pre-eminent concern of local government throughout the 18th and early 19th century. The parish did not resort to ‘farming’ the poor; instead relief was administered by unpaid overseers and salaried parish officers. The amount spent on poor relief rose from £738 in 1776 to £1,688 by 1803.⁵⁰⁶ However, it fluctuated sharply during the latter stages of the Napoleonic Wars, from £2,423 in 1813 to £1,220 in

⁴⁹³ WSA, 209/3–6.

⁴⁹⁴ WSA, 1154/80, 1154/81.

⁴⁹⁵ WSA, 1154/80, 21 Apr. 1836.

⁴⁹⁶ WSA, 1154/29.

⁴⁹⁷ Over £90 in 1786, but generally much less, and only £17 in 1806: WSA, 1154/81.

⁴⁹⁸ e.g. WSA, 1154/80, 15 Feb. 1838, 21 Apr. 1840.

⁴⁹⁹ WSA, 1154/80, 31 Aug. 1837.

⁵⁰⁰ e.g. WSA, 1154/80, 28 Nov. 1828, 1 Dec. 1840.

⁵⁰¹ WSA, 1154/81.

⁵⁰² WSA, 1154/80, 7 Oct. 1831.

⁵⁰³ WSA, 209/3–6.

⁵⁰⁴ WSA, 1154/80, 28 Feb. 1839.

⁵⁰⁵ WSA, 1154/80.

⁵⁰⁶ *Abstracts of the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor*, (London: Parl. Papers, 1776), 188; *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 560–1.

1815, while expenditure for other parochial purposes remained static.⁵⁰⁷ Variations can be attributed partly to a local economy dependent on agriculture and good harvests rather than to good governance. For example, in 1831 the wheat price rose to £3 6s. 0d. a quart, and the cost of Bremhill's welfare likewise rose, to £2,852; when wheat prices plummeted to £2 6s. 0d. in 1834 the value of relief fell to £1,930.⁵⁰⁸ However, rates generally decreased after the Calne Poor Law Union was formed in 1837. In the four years to 1842, the amount collected in poor rates averaged £1,197.⁵⁰⁹

Post-1894 Local Government

The Bremhill parish council's first meeting took place in January 1895, with Mr C.T. Pavy elected as chairman.⁵¹⁰ It was made up of six elected councillors.⁵¹¹ In 1901 the local councillors were Jacob Vines (farmer), Charles Pavy (miller), Frances Freegard (farmer), John Palmer (carpenter), Charles Knapp (mason) and John Summers (labourer). In the early 20th century matters discussed by the parish council centred primarily on the provision and upkeep of locks, bridges and roads, delivery of water supplies and the management of Maud Heath's Trust.⁵¹² At the end of both world wars housing provision for the working class was a particular concern.⁵¹³ Minutes of council meetings exist and have been deposited covering the period from its inception to 2018.⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁷ Other expenditure was £320 for both 1813 and 1815. *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 494–5.

⁵⁰⁸ T. H. Baker, *Record of Seasons of Prices and Phenomena* (London, 1911), 271–5; WSA, 1154/40.

⁵⁰⁹ *Return of Value of Property Assessed to Poor Rates, 1840–41; Amount of Money levied for Poor Rates on each Parish in England and Wales, 1839–42* (London: Parl. Papers, 1844), 184.

⁵¹⁰ *Wilts. Times*, 12 Jan. 1895.

⁵¹¹ *Wilts. Times*, 22 Dec. 1894.

⁵¹² WSA, 141/9.

⁵¹³ WSA, 141/9, 6 Sept. 1919, 19 Dec. 1919, 6 Sept. 1946

⁵¹⁴ WSA, 141/9, 141/10, 141/11, 141/13, 141/15.