

CHRISTIAN MALFORD

THE PARISH of Christian Malford lies in the (Bristol) Avon floodplain and extends on to the Corallian ridge.¹ The church and settlement developed on slightly raised ground near a ford across the river, 6.5 km north-east of Chippenham. Christian Malford was a constituent of Startley hundred in 1084 and 1334,² but was later transferred to Glastonbury abbey's hundred of North Damerham.³

Avon is the name of two very small adjacent settlements (perhaps originally one) south of Christian Malford, close to the river, from which they take their name. The more northerly was a detached chapelry and tithing of Christian Malford;⁴ the more southerly was regarded in the medieval period as a manor within Bremhill,⁵ although in 1796 and later it was considered extra-parochial.⁶ It was in Chippenham hundred in 1281 and 1377.⁷ In 1885 the more northerly was transferred to Bremhill; in 1895 the more southerly combined with Tytherton Kellaways to form the civil parish of Kellaways.⁸ This article includes the history of both to 1885/1895, after which they are considered with Bremhill and Langley Burrell (which includes Kellaways) respectively.

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries and Parish Origins

The river Avon forms the western limit of Christian Malford parish and its boundary with Sutton Benger and Seagry. The northern and north-eastern boundary with Dauntsey extends some 3 km in long fairly straight sections following field boundaries. On the Clack escarpment where it borders Lyneham it follows tracks and an irregular course, perhaps reflecting medieval assarts. The long southern boundary with Bremhill makes frequent turns, following lanes (including part of Friday Street) and field boundaries. The two Avon territories were surrounded by Bremhill, defined by field boundaries and a meandering course of the Cade Burna, apart from the river to the west and Tytherton Kellaways to the south-west. The boundary between the two Avons appears to have been drawn around existing fields, suggesting that they had previously formed a single, roughly square, territory. The approximate bounds of the later parish of Christian Malford, as it continued until 19th-century changes, had been established by 940, when its course was described by clauses

¹ This article was written in 2020 and revised in 2024.

² *VCH Wilts*, II, 212; *VCH Wilts*, IV, 301; *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 5–6.

³ *VCH Wilts*, V, 70.

⁴ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 531, 535; for its extent WSA, T/A Christian Malford.

⁵ *VCH Wilts*, II, 89; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 124–5.

⁶ WSA, 1001/3; *VCH Wilts*, IV, 340; for its extent WSA, T/A Christian Malford: Avon.

⁷ *Collectanea*, (WRS. 12), 89 (no. 87); *VCH Wilts*, IV, 307.

⁸ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 342, note g; 344, note n.

appended to a charter.⁹ The area of the parish was 3,104 a. in 1881, reduced after the changes of 1884–95 to 2,918.¹⁰ In 2011 Christian Malford civil parish measured 2,686 acres.¹¹

The unusual parish name, which means ‘ford by a cross or crucifix’, is recorded as *Cristemal(l)eford* in 940, and with variants until the 15th century. By 1374 the name had been split, *Cristine Malford* with later variants, but Aubrey in the 17th century wrote *Christmalford*. By 1791 the present misleading form had been adopted, sometimes abbreviated to Xian Malford’.¹²

Landscape

Christian Malford village and the Avon hamlets lie along the east bank of the river Avon on its flood plain. Parts of the minor settlements at Swallett Gate and adjoining Dauntsey Lock (in Dauntsey) and beside Foxham (in Bremhill) lie within Christian Malford parish along its eastern boundary. Much of the terrain is low-lying between 50 m. and 60 m. above Ordnance Datum, but along its eastern edge the land rises steeply on the escarpment to 142 m. at Round wood, and 150 m. along the perimeter of the former Lyneham airfield. The principal bedrock geology across both settlements is Oxford clay, and superficial alluvial and extensive gravel deposits occur along the valley. In the 18th century the gravel was used in road construction and ‘for drains in the cold clay lands which border upon it.’¹³ Coral Rag Limestone outcrops along the prominent escarpment, which is heavily wooded in places. The parish is well known to palaeontologists because of fossil discoveries in the mid 19th century. Pits in the Jurassic Oxford Clay yielded thousands of specimens of well-preserved ammonites, fish and crustaceans. The most notable finds were squid-like cephalopods and belemnites (coleoids).¹⁴

In the area around Christian Malford and the Avons, lime-rich loamy and clayey soils predominate with slightly impeded drainage. The land is classed as highly fertile. To the east the drainage is more impeded and seasonally wet, featuring slightly acidic but base-rich loamy and clayey soils. To the west the soil is free-draining loam. In these areas the land is less fertile.¹⁵

The upper river Avon between Malmesbury and Chippenham is prone to flooding, and after heavy rain the meadows adjacent to the river at Christian Malford flooded. Until the mid 20th century, both the fields and bridges could become dangerous from the depth of

⁹ *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVI (1919), 255–9; date from Electronic Sawyer, S466.

¹⁰ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 535, 818 fns. 69 and 70; *Census*, 1881, 1891.

¹¹ *Census*, 2011.

¹² *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 67; *Domesday*, 167; *Crown Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre, 1249* (WRS. 16), 158, 159; *Feet of Fines 1377–1509* (WRS. 41), 122, 181; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 125; *Printed Maps of Wilts.* (WRS. 52), 8–9. Examples of the abbreviation Xian Malford include WSA, P1/H/371.

¹³ T. Davis, *General View of the Agriculture of Wilts.* (1794), 115.

¹⁴ Contemporary accounts include: - M. Pearce in *Jnl. of the Franklin Inst.* 34(3) (1842), 177–8; R. Owen in *Abstracts of the papers communicated to the Royal Soc. of London* 5, (1843), 505–7. Modern accounts: e.g., P.R. Wilby, *et al.* in *Geology Today*, 24 (3) (2008), 95–8; M.B. Hart, *et al.* in *Jnl. of Micropalaeontology* 38(2) (2019), 133–42; G.D. Price, *et al.* in *Palaaios*, 30(9) (2015), 645–54.

¹⁵ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>

water and strength of the current.¹⁶ Flooding, if it occurred during the summer months, potentially affected the hay harvest,¹⁷ and disrupted local transport links and other aspects of community life. Severe flooding was recorded in 1880, 1896, 1901, 1928 and 1929.¹⁸ After hatches to control the flow of water at Avon mill had failed, Wiltshire County Council in 1930 proposed a series of improvements to mitigate flooding, including removing trees and silt.¹⁹

In the 19th century a well in Christian Malford was claimed to have water containing minerals with curative properties. It was never successfully developed as a spa.²⁰

Communications

The ford from which the parish name derives is recorded in the 940 charter and probably crossed the Avon close to the church,²¹ implying that the present Church Road is an early east–west route. Two early north–south roads also cross the parish: Friday Street can be identified with *the Elde Strete* in the 940 charter, and Station Road appears to be a continuation of Hare Street in Bremhill, thought to refer to an Anglo-Saxon *herepath* or military road.²² A bridge in Christian Malford existed in 1268,²³ and may have stood close to the site of the later bridge on Main Road, since Sutton Benger high street, developed from the 12th century, is aligned on it.²⁴ A road from Christian Malford to Bradenstoke, presumably Main Road, was recorded in 1241.²⁵ Another Avon crossing is implied by Dodford, a farm beside the river recorded from 1255.²⁶

A turnpike road linking Pucklechurch and Mangotsfield, on the Bristol coalfield, with Christian Malford was enacted in 1756,²⁷ despite objections raised by a rival trust, the Sodbury and Marshfield Roads.²⁸ The present three-arch stone bridge spanning the Avon may have been built at the same time.²⁹ A short-lived turnpike trust was established in 1757 to

¹⁶ *Berks. Chronicle*, 29 Sept. 1827. See also occasional reports of flooding e.g., *North Wilts. Herald*, 5 July 1879; *Wilts. Times*, 27 May 1950.

¹⁷ *Wilts. Times*, 8 Mar. 1930.

¹⁸ *Swindon Advertiser*, 8 Mar. 1880; *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 28 Mar. 1896; *Wilts. Times*, 5 Jan. 1901; *Western Daily Press*, 3 Jan. 1928, 12 Dec. 1929. Fatalities reported, e.g., *Frome Times*, 21 Apr. 1880; *Wilts. Times*, 9 Jan. 1915, 17 Mar. 1917, 18 Aug. 1956; *Swindon Advertiser*, 12 Sept. 1902, 15 Jul. 1904; *North Wilts. Herald*, 17 Apr. 1880.

¹⁹ *Wilts. Times*, 8 Mar. 1930.

²⁰ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 386–8. J. H. P. Pafford, 'Spas and Mineral Springs of Wilts.', *WAM*, 55, 1–29.

²¹ *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVI (1919), 256; it may however have been located further downstream: see below, settlement, and note.

²² *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVI (1919), 258; *PN Wilts.* (EPNS) 87.

²³ *Crown Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre 1268* (WRS. 65), No. 231, 52. The case refers to a misdeed on the Christian Malford bridge but does not indicate if this bridge linked the parish to Sutton Benger.

²⁴ *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 223.

²⁵ *Cart. Bradenstoke priory* (WRS. 35), 64 (no. 148).

²⁶ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 67.

²⁷ 29 Geo II c.56; *VCH Wilts*, IV, 260.

²⁸ *CJ.* xxvii, 435–6, 445.

²⁹ *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 221; E. Jervoise, *Ancient Bridges of S. of England* (1930), 116.

maintain the road east of Christian Malford to Lyneham, Swindon and beyond,³⁰ but after this lapsed the Swindon, Calne and Cricklade trust took it on in 1790–1.³¹ The road was disturnpiked in 1875.³² Trustees' minute books and some tollgate leases of the Pucklechurch trust survive 1787–1874.³³

A plan by the county surveyor to replace the bridge over the Avon was rejected in 1811, although work on a 'new arch bridge' was apparently carried out in 1832,³⁴ and the bridge was widened in the 20th century.³⁵ The route of the former turnpike, called Main Road through the parish, became increasingly important and busy, linking Oxford, Swindon and Bristol; designated A420 in 1922/3 it was demoted to B-road status (B4069) after the M4 motorway between London and South Wales was opened parallel to it in 1971.³⁶ The motorway crosses the northern part of the parish close to Dodford farm, and bridges the Avon north-west of the village.

The village street plan is cruciform, defined by Station Road running from Main Road southwards towards Foxham, and crossed by Church Road running west and Orchard Leaze running east to Thornend. At the intersection the roads widen to form a triangular green, enclosed by hedges.

The Wilts & Berks Canal was dug across the parish in 1798–9, with a lock at Wood Common and Dauntsey lock and wharf (actually within Christian Malford parish) completed c.1801.³⁷ The canal followed a route similar to the later railway but ran further south east (and to the west of Melsome wood). Commercial traffic ceased about 1906, and the canal was abandoned shortly after. Work was ongoing in 2024 by a trust established in 1977 to restore sections of the canal.³⁸

The Great Western Railway (linking London, Swindon and Bristol) was completed in 1841 and crosses the parish. It runs north east to south west to the south of Christian Malford village, and crosses the river Avon just south of the site of Avon mill. The nearest station to Christian Malford was at Dauntsey, 5.5 km north east (and just within Christian Malford parish), which opened in 1868.³⁹ From this station a branch line to Malmesbury operated between 1877 and 1933, running north west close to the parish boundary.⁴⁰ After encouragement by Christian Malford parish council, a halt was opened 1km south of the village in October 1926,⁴¹ and provided accommodation for passengers only (not parcel or

³⁰ 31Geo II, c.66; *VCH Wilts*, IV, 260.

³¹ 31Geo III, c.121; *VCH Wilts*, IV, 263.

³² *LJ* xxviii, 518; *VCH Wilts*, 14, 221.

³³ WSA, 542/4–7.

³⁴ WSA, 1710/45.

³⁵ *VCH Wilts*, V, 176.

³⁶ *List of class I and class II roads and numbers*, (HMSO, 1923); WSA, F1/250/6/1, report 1971–2.

³⁷ L.J. Dalby, *Wilts. & Berks Canal*, 3rd edn. (Oakwood Press, 2000), 20–1.

³⁸ Local inf.

³⁹ *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 66.

⁴⁰ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 288.

⁴¹ WSA, 1563/1. e.g., 1 Oct. 1925, 3 May 1926; *Wilts. Times*, 9 Oct., 23 Oct. 1926. M. Oakley, *Wilts. Railway Stations* (Wimborne, 2004), 40; *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 66.

miscellaneous traffic).⁴² In 1954 the Avon rose very rapidly and caused the embankment between Dauntsey and Christian Malford halt to subside for an 80 yard stretch 'laying bare the down line'.⁴³ The halt was closed in 1965 after the withdrawal of stopping services between Bristol and Swindon. No physical remains are left of the halt on the trackside.⁴⁴ In 2024 the railway still provided a major link between London and Bristol, via Chippenham, the nearest station.

During the 19th century other attempts were made to build rail lines that would have affected the parish. In July 1864 bids sponsored by the Midland Railway for a line between Nailsworth via Malmesbury to Christian Malford were frustrated by an appeal from the Great Western Railway. Its continuation, a proposed North and South Wilts Junction Railway (Christian Malford through Calne to Basingstoke) also lapsed.⁴⁵

Population

Domesday book records 35 households and two slaves on Glastonbury's manor of Christian Malford.⁴⁶ In 1332, 53 inhabitants paid tax.⁴⁷ During the first wave of the Black Death (1348–9) 52 out of 79 landless men died, a mortality rate of 66% and the second highest on the Glastonbury Abbey manors.⁴⁸ The 1377 poll tax recorded 254 adult taxpayers for Christian Malford and 21 for the Bremhill portion of Avon.⁴⁹ In 1676 a total of 340 adult conformists and nonconformists was reported, suggesting a total population of over 500.⁵⁰

In 1801 the population of Christian Malford was 938. It fell to 878 in 1821 before rising to 1,179 in 1841,⁵¹ a total inflated by 150 labourers building the railway. After that the population fell again to 777 in 1881 and, after the transfer of Avon chapelry (population 125 in 1881) to Bremhill, decreased further to 568 in 1891. By 1931 depopulation had continued to 481, before the number of residents rose slightly to 520 in 1951. However, the population remained largely depressed until the construction of the M4 motorway offered faster commuting to Swindon, Bristol and beyond from the 1970s. In 2001 the population was 701, and 781 in 2021.

Settlement

⁴² *Official Handbook of Stations including Junctions, Sidings, Collieries, Works, &c., on the Railways in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1938), 130.

⁴³ *Wilts. Times*, 18 Dec. 1954.

⁴⁴ Oakley, *Wilts. Railway Stations*, 40.

⁴⁵ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 288.

⁴⁶ *Domesday*, 167.

⁴⁷ *Wilts. Tax List of 1332* (WRS. 45), xvi, 59–60.

⁴⁸ M. Ecclestone, 'Mortality of rural landless men before the Black Death: the Glastonbury head-tax lists', *Local Population Studies*, LXIII (1999), 26.

⁴⁹ C.C. Fenwick (ed.), *Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381* (2005), 12–13.

⁵⁰ *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 128.

⁵¹ This para: *VCH Wilts*, IV, 319, 344–5; *Census 1961–2011*; <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/asv2htm> (accessed 26 July 2024).

A small assemblage of microliths was discovered c.1954 in a gravel pit at Summerlands farm north of the village, implying mesolithic activity in the area.⁵² A boundary marker *hegeberghes* ('barrow by the hedge') recorded in the 940 charter may refer to a prehistoric barrow on the Bremhill boundary north of Foxham;⁵³ no trace of a barrow, however, has been found in fieldwork surveys.⁵⁴

The bounds attached to the 940 charter of Christian Malford seem to suggest that the original ford on the Avon, from which the settlement takes its name, was not at the site of the later bridge but at the south west corner of the parish, c.450 m. south of All Saints church.⁵⁵ The position of the church itself, at the west end of the village close to the river and some distance from the historic village core, implies settlement shift away from an area vulnerable to flooding, and abandonment of any river crossing that may have existed there. The churchyard has been extended, and the former boundary bank is visible to the south of the structure.⁵⁶ The present 15th-century village cross stands on the former green 500 m. north east of the church,⁵⁷ and the triangular green forms the nucleus of the medieval and later village.

Medieval earthworks denote settlement through the period.⁵⁸ The present settlement pattern is much the same as it was in 1773.⁵⁹ The village is centred south of Main Road, the route between Chippenham and Swindon that crosses the parish from Christian Malford bridge eastwards towards Dauntsey. The eastern end of Main Road, after the turning to Foxham (Friday Street) is known as Upper Town. At the western end, slightly north of the road, was Christian Malford mill. Most of the settlement lies to the south of Main Road on what is now Station Road, and along Church Road which runs west to the river from Station Road at the green.

Many of the farms and larger houses, some of which date from the 17th century, are sited on Main Road. Of the twelve local farms (excluding glebe) listed in the income tax valuation of 1910, the majority were accessed from Main Road. These comprised Beanfield farm, Mermaid farm, Malford farm, Paradise farm, Swallett farm, Ridgeway farm and Selstead farm. Of those remaining, Dodford farm was on Dodford Lane to the north of the main settlement and Friday Street farm and Thornend farm to the east on Friday Street.⁶⁰

⁵² WAM, 55, 330–2.

⁵³ *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVI (1919), 258–9.

⁵⁴ Wilts. HER, Barrow Bremhill/ Christian Malford, ST97NE600 (accessed 22 Sept. 2021).

⁵⁵ *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVI (1919), 256. This seems unlikely on topographical grounds, as there is no indication of a track leading to it; perhaps the bounds excluded the area comprising the later Rectory manor, which lay to the south of the church.

⁵⁶ RCHME, 'Avebury Project Medieval and Post Medieval Assessment: Parish Summary Sheet', (1996) No. 104/1996, Sheet: ST97NE. https://historiccengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/104-1996/RCHME-AveburyProjectMedievalAndPostMedievalAssessment_ParishSummarySheet (accessed 22 Sept. 2021).

⁵⁷ NHLE, 1018417.

⁵⁸ Wilts. HER, ST97NE611, Wilts. HER, Upper Town, ST97NE 612, Wilts. HER, Settlement, South west of the Homestead, ST98SE457; Wilts. HER, ST98SE455.

⁵⁹ *Andrews' and Dury's Map 1773* (WRS. 8), pl 14.

⁶⁰ WSA, L8/1/18, 1208/32.

Station Road continues southwards from the village, becoming Hare Street at West End (in Bremhill). The Avon hamlets, in 2024 comprising several farms and cottages, lie west of Hare Street as it continues towards Charlcutt.

During the 20th century new housing lined Station Road and Church Road, including the site of a former nursery and allotment gardens. Several new closes and cul-de-sacs were also added including Coronation Close to the north of Church Road (opposite All Saints church) and Lime Trees to the east. Part of the former village green was adapted to form a recreation ground. Development adjacent to Main Road was limited.⁶¹

The Built Character

Local rubblestone under stone slate roofs, sometimes with ashlar dressings or brick, characterises the older houses, although some have been roughcast or rendered, and reroofed with tiles. Brick is commonly used for cottages, but also for the prominent ornate Red House on the green. Malford House is one of only a few examples of surviving timber framing. The older village buildings are interspersed with much 20th-century housing and bungalows; and the wide tree-lined Church Road has a modern suburban feel.

A number of buildings within the parish are listed. They include the former 19th-century mill house on Avon Weir (which adjoined Christian Malford mill now demolished) and the former Mermaid inn (built as a farmhouse) on Main Road.⁶² Other listed buildings on Main Road include nos. 28, 35 and 36, and Malford House, all of which have origins in the 17th century.⁶³ Several listed farmhouses also adjoin Main Road: Beanhill Farmhouse, Swallett Farmhouse and Great Ridgeway Farmhouse, which dates from c.1700.⁶⁴ Other listed 17th- or 18th-century farmhouses are Brights, on the City, Thornend on Friday Street and Dodford Farmhouse, Dodford Lane.⁶⁵ All Saints church is the only grade I listed building in the parish.⁶⁶ Several monuments within the graveyard and the Old Rectory are also listed,⁶⁷ as is the former United Reformed Church, Avon Weir.⁶⁸

The only listed building in Avon (but now in Bremhill parish) is Carpenters Farmhouse.⁶⁹

LANDOWNERSHIP

Pattern of Landownership

⁶¹ OS Map 1:2500, ST 9678–9778 (1980 edn.).

⁶² NHLE, 1199629, 1022470.

⁶³ NHLE, 1199764, 1363779, 1022472.

⁶⁴ NHLE, 1199738, 1022471, 1283206.

⁶⁵ NHLE, 1199699, 1363776, 1022466.

⁶⁶ NHLE, 1199647.

⁶⁷ NHLE, 1363773.

⁶⁸ NHLE, 1022462.

⁶⁹ NHLE, 1022411.

Glastonbury abbey possessed Christian Malford from before 1066 until the Reformation, when it was acquired by the earl of Oxford. From 1575 it belonged to the Danvers family, until the death without issue of Anne Wharton in 1685, whereafter it was sold in 1705. It was sold again in 1733 to William Herbert, in whose family it remained until 1873. The estate was divided for sale in 1906 and again in 1913–14 into separate farms and smallholdings. There was also a small rectory manor and an estate that comprised the tithing of Avon.

Manors and Principal Estates

Christian Malford Manor: A later copy of a suspect charter of 940 claimed that Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, had received from King Edmund, ‘a place by Avon which by the common people, by a laudable custom, and with a noble allusion, call *Christemal-ford*’.⁷⁰ The charter was not inventoried in the 11th-century *Liber Terrarum* of Glastonbury, and Dunstan was not made abbot until 946.⁷¹ Nevertheless, by 1086 Christian Malford was a Glastonbury possession and paid geld for 20 hides.⁷²

The estate was taken by the Crown from Glastonbury abbey in 1539 and sold in 1544 to John de Vere, earl of Oxford (d. 1562).⁷³ In 1575 Sir John Danvers (d. 1594) bought the manor from Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford.⁷⁴ On his death, it was divided (or passed) between his sons, Henry Danvers, earl of Danby (1654) and Sir John Danvers (1655), a regicide.⁷⁵

Confiscated after the Restoration in 1660, the manor was granted in 1662 to Henry Hyde, viscount Cornbury, Sir Ralph Verney and others in trust for Eleanora and Anne Lee, daughters of Danvers’s granddaughter, Anne (d. 1659) who married Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley (d. 1659).⁷⁶ Eleanora Lee married James Bertie, earl of Abingdon; Anne (d. 1685), a noted poet, married Thomas, baron Wharton (d. 1715).⁷⁷ He remarried, and his heir Philip, by his second wife, inherited the estate. Philip had a reputation as a rake and allegedly lost the manor of Christian Malford in a card game to Thomas Boucher of Twickenham.⁷⁸ In fact the manor was purchased by Boucher (d. 1708) in 1705 for £17,070 from Baron Wharton.⁷⁹ It

⁷⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126.

⁷¹ ODNB, s.v. Dunstan [St Dunstan], accessed 17 Aug. 2024; *VCH Som.* II, 84; L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996).

⁷² *Domesday*, 167.

⁷³ *L&P Hen. VIII*, xix (1), 286 (g. 444.15); *Cal. SP Dom. 1547–80*, 224, 230; ODNB, s.v. Vere, John de, sixteenth earl of Oxford, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁷⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126; TNA, C 2/Eliz/D4/46. See also *VCH Wilts.* XIV, 68.

⁷⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126. See also *VCH Wilts.* XIV, 68.

⁷⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126; *Burke’s Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies*, (2nd edn., 1844) 304; Oct. 1661. *Cal. SP Dom Charles II, 1661–2*, 119.

⁷⁷ *Burke’s Peerage* xii pt 2, 606–8; A. Collins, *Peerage of England*, II (London, 1735), 356; ODNB, s.v. Wharton, Thomas, first marquess, politician, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁷⁸ *Burke’s Peerage* xii pt 2, 609–14; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126; ODNB, s.v. Wharton, Philip James, rake and politician, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁷⁹ *Wilts. N. & Q.* vii. 428–9; *Hist. Parl. Commons, 1690–1715*, III, 275; *Hist. Parl. Commons, 1715–54*, i. 478.

thereafter descended down the male line to Thomas (d. 1772), who sold it in 1733 to Robert Sawyer Herbert (d. 1769), second son of the earl of Pembroke.⁸⁰

At Herbert's death, the estate passed to his nephew Henry Herbert (d. 1811), from 1780 known as lord Porchester and from 1793 earl of Carnarvon.⁸¹ Although styled 'of Highclere in Hants and Christian Malford in Wilts,' Henry Herbert did not reside at Christian Malford as the house was ruinous.⁸²

The estate descended with the male line from Henry George Herbert (d. 1833) to Henry John George Herbert (d. 1849), who owned 2,325 a. of the 2,621 a. recorded in the tithe apportionment (excluding the 150 a. of Avon tithing).⁸³ The manor was later sold by Henry Howard Herbert (d. 1890), 4th earl of Carnarvon, in 1873.⁸⁴

By 1874 the estate belonged to the trustees of Sir Henry Meux (d. 1883), whose Commission of Lunacy hearing in June 1858 made him a *cause célèbre*.⁸⁵ In 1878 Meux's son, Henry Bruce Meux (d. 1900), visited the family's Wiltshire estates and met the major tenants with the estate trustees on his 21st birthday.⁸⁶ In 1889, after his father's death, Sir Henry was described as nearly the sole landowner in the parish.⁸⁷ In 1906 his widow disposed of the north Wiltshire Meux estates totalling over 20,000 a. The Christian Malford and Dauntsey estates were offered together, extending to c.5,600 a. At the auction, separate lots in the parish included Malford farm 264 a., Mermaid inn and farm 109 a., and Beanhill farm 119 a. However, the greater part of the combined estates was withdrawn from the sale and instead privately devised to Ferdinand Marsham-Townshend (d. 1915).⁸⁸ In 1911 Townshend was principal landowner and manorial lord of Christian Malford.⁸⁹ In 1913 he sold some of his estates at auction, including Dodford farm, which was offered 'together with the manor or lordship or reputed manor or lordship of Christian Malford.' The 381 a. dairy farm was described as 'generally acknowledged to be the finest farm in England' and was purchased by James Strong for £11,000.⁹⁰ The remainder of the estate was sold in 1914, including Paradise farm 200 a., Christian Malford wood 110 a. and several small dairy holdings 68a. and less.⁹¹ In 1935, the Strong brothers remained the principal landowners in the parish.⁹²

⁸⁰ WSA, 1171/97; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126; *Hist. Parl. Commons 1715–54*, II, 130–1.

⁸¹ WSA, 1171/97; *Hist. Parl. Commons 1754–90*, II, 612–13. See also, *Burke's Peerage* III, 46.

⁸² J. Waylen, *Hist. Devizes* (London and Devizes, 1859), 432.

⁸³ *Burke's Peerage* III, 46–8; *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 36–7.

⁸⁴ Som. Archives, DD/DRU/2/60; *Burke's Peerage* III, 47–8.

⁸⁵ e.g. *Wilts. & Glos. Standard*, 13 June 1874. Sir Henry's 'lunacy' was widely reported, e.g. *Bath Chronicle*, 24 June 1858; *Morning Chronicle*, 9, 15, 17, 11, 12, 18, 21, 28 June 1858; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 10, 17, 24 June, 8 July 1858. See also ODNB, s.v. Meux family, brewers, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

⁸⁶ *North Wilts. Herald*, 25 May 1878.

⁸⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889 edn.).

⁸⁸ *VCH Wilts.* XIV, 68; *WAM* 38, 524; *Wilts. Times*, 7 Apr. 1906, 6, 20 Oct. 1906; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.); WSA, 1208/32.

⁸⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.).

⁹⁰ *Wilts. Times*, 12 July 1913.

⁹¹ *Reading Mercury*, 20 June 1914.

⁹² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1935 edn.).

Christian Malford Rectory Manor: Courts were being held by 1474.⁹³ In 1608 the rectory glebe comprised c.120 a.,⁹⁴ which John Aubrey c.1670 described as a little manor belonging to the parsonage.⁹⁵ In 1848 it was claimed that, 'attached to the benefice are a copyhold of 60 acres held on lives, and a manor of which the rector is lord'.⁹⁶ As late as 1923 there were 21 copyholds, comprising small parcels of land totalling c.60 a., three cottages, a house with orchard and the Rising Sun inn.⁹⁷ In 1925 the rectory estate was put up for auction largely unsuccessfully; in 1946, the glebe comprising 165 a. of both arable and pasture was sold. The major part, known as Glebe farm (or Rectory farm) was sold to Ray Webley Wakefield for £3,250. Wakefield had previously leased the farm.⁹⁸

Avon Manor: By the late 14th century a manor of Avon (corresponding to the tithing and chapelry in Christian Malford) was in possession of Sir Edward of Cerne (d. 1393) from his marriage to Ellen (d. 1418), relic of Walter Pavely. On Edward's death, his son Edward (d. 1419), was declared his heir.⁹⁹ After Ellen's death, a moiety of the manor was granted to a coheir of Pavely, Cicely, wife of Sir William Cheyne.¹⁰⁰ Cecily outlived her husband and their eldest son, Edmund, and on her death the heirs to the estate were Edmund's young daughters, Elizabeth, Anne, and Cecily.¹⁰¹ The manor was later assigned to Anne, who married Sir John Willoughby.¹⁰² During Anne's minority it was held by her mother, Alice, and later her husband Walter Tailboys.¹⁰³ Anne's heir was her son Robert (d. 1502), who was created baron Willoughby de Broke in 1491; his heir was his son Robert (d. 1521).¹⁰⁴

The manor was in the possession of Sir Robert Long of Draycot Cerne at his death (d. 1581), when it was left to a son, Walter (d. 1610).¹⁰⁵ Walter's brother, Henry Long, was murdered by Sir Charles Danvers and Sir Henry Danvers, later earl of Danby, sons of Sir John Danvers (d. 1594), owner of Christian Malford. In the incident, the result of a long-running neighbours' feud, Sir Walter Long narrowly avoided death.¹⁰⁶

Despite the alleged attempts of Walter's second wife, Catherine, to disinherit Walter's son, John (d. 1636), by his first wife, John Long was in possession of the manor of Avon on

⁹³ Hants. Archives, 11M59/C1/22/1–8.

⁹⁴ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 100; *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 36–7.

⁹⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 125–6.

⁹⁶ Lewis, *Topog. Dict. Eng.*, (London, 1848), 607–12.

⁹⁷ WSA, 3608/Box 21.

⁹⁸ WSA, 1710/23, 1710/24, 3608/Box 21.

⁹⁹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVII, no. 314; TNA, C 138/38/33; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 52–3.

¹⁰⁰ *Cal. Close*, 1419–1422, 177.

¹⁰¹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XXIII, no 510.

¹⁰² Hoare, *Mod. Wilts. Westbury*, 26. The advowson was with Anne's Sir John Willoughby in 1451 and 1455. Phillipps, *Institutions*, vol. 1, 143, 146.

¹⁰³ Walter Tailboys was patron of Avon chapel in 1442: Phillipps, *Institutions*, 133.

¹⁰⁴ *VCH Wilts.* VIII, 150. Robert, Baron de Broke was patron in 1509. Phillipps, *Institutions*, 186.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PROB 11/63/502.

¹⁰⁶ WAM, 8, 239–40; Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. O. Lawson Dick, 170–1.

his death. His heir was his son, William.¹⁰⁷ William Long died without issue and the estate passed to brother, John Long of South Wraxall (d. 1652).¹⁰⁸

By 1688 Avon was in the possession of Sir Robert Long (d. 1692) and thereafter settled on his widow, Dorothy (d. 1710).¹⁰⁹ In 1796 Avon farm, as the estate was known, was owned by Sir James Tylney-Long (d. 1805) and tenanted by Hugh Beames. It comprised 248 a. of which 156 a. was at Avon, the rest in the parishes of Langley Burrell, Bremhill and Kellaways. The land in Avon comprised largely pasture and meadow, including some water meadow and withy along the river Avon, and 60 a. of arable.¹¹⁰ The farm passed to Sir James's sister Catherine (d. 1825), wife of William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, earl of Mornington, who was succeeded by her son William, 5th earl of Mornington (d. 1863). In 1842 he retained only 17 a. in Avon, the remainder belonging to the Marquis of Lansdowne.¹¹¹ In 1910 Avon farm, by then within Bremhill civil parish and comprising 193 a., was sold by the Marquis of Lansdowne to Mr G.A.H. White, on behalf of Wiltshire County Council, for £5,350.¹¹² By 1913 the farm had been broken up and let to seven smallholders.¹¹³

Other Estates: Avon: It has been suggested that land at 'Nene' mentioned in a charter from 974, from King Edgar to Ælfric, abbot of Malmesbury, was a mistake for 'Avene', meaning Avon.¹¹⁴ A confirmation of Malmesbury abbey's land and privileges by Edward in 1065 mentions Avon, but the charter is disputed.¹¹⁵

In the late 12th century Avon was held by William FitzPatrick, 2nd earl of Salisbury (d.1196), for a knight's fee.¹¹⁶ Geoffrey de Syfrewast held Avon during the abbacy of John Walsh (1222 × 1246).¹¹⁷ Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln (earl 1258–1311), held in Avon four hides as one knight's fee, for homage, relief and suit of court, hundred silver 3s. 4d., Peter's Pence 9d.; in addition he owed the king half one knight's fee.¹¹⁸

It is likely that this, the more southerly Avon territory, descended with Bremhill, in which parish it was sometimes reckoned to lie, from Malmesbury abbey to the Bayntun family. Sir Edward Bayntun was the owner during the 1650s, although some of the land was tenanted by John Long, lord of Avon manor (in Christian Malford).¹¹⁹ At some point before

¹⁰⁷ *Wilts. Inq. p.m.* 1625–49, 393–5; *Hist. Parl. Commons* 1604–29, V, 155–6; Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London, 1721), 75–6.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, PROB 11/222/685.

¹⁰⁹ WSA, 2943B/1/41; *VCH Wilts.* XIV, 77.

¹¹⁰ WSA, 2062/11. Hugh Beames was lessee c.1780: WSA, A1/345/110.

¹¹¹ WSA, T/A Christian Malford.

¹¹² *Wilts. Times*, 25 June 1910.

¹¹³ [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1913-01-20/debates/8799c73d-9f92-4f35-8479-00b5cca4f97f/SmallHolders\(Wiltshire\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1913-01-20/debates/8799c73d-9f92-4f35-8479-00b5cca4f97f/SmallHolders(Wiltshire)) [accessed 4 January 2021].

¹¹⁴ Finberg, *Early Wessex Chart.*, no. 310.

¹¹⁵ *Reg. Malm.* I, 321–4; above, Bremhill, boundaries and parish origins.

¹¹⁶ *Reg. Malm.* I, 277. [undated document]

¹¹⁷ *Reg. Malm.* II, 71–3.

¹¹⁸ *Reg. Malm.* I, 246. [undated document]

¹¹⁹ WSA, 473/52.

1796 the Long family acquired, by purchase or exchange, the more southerly Avon,¹²⁰ and by 1842 the 5th earl of Mornington owned all the land there (c.153 a.).¹²¹ At that time, Avon farm was tenanted by Alice Smith who held it until she died in 1866.¹²²

Other Estates: Hugh de Polsted held half a hide of freehold in 1189 which was held by Geoffrey de Maizey in 1201 as part of a knight's fee of four hides in Winterborne Monkton and Christian Malford in 1201.¹²³

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Farming

The reputed 940 charter of the lands of Christian Malford, which is almost certainly post-conquest but probably based on an Anglo Saxon original, records a withy bed, woodland with game enclosure and ploughland.¹²⁴

In 1086 Christian Malford had land for ten ploughs, 36 a. meadow, and woodland one league long by ½ league wide.¹²⁵ Farming was dominated by arable. One hundred years later, in 1189, Glastonbury abbey leased out plots of demesne land at Christian Malford.¹²⁶ Their Christian Malford land appears to have been particularly productive since it was ploughed three times a year (rather than the more traditional twice).¹²⁷ A large proportion of demesne output during the medieval period was being taken and sold in Bristol or elsewhere rather than retained for Glastonbury abbey.¹²⁸

By the end of the 12th century the virgate or half virgate had come to replace the hide as the standard unit of tenancy at Christian Malford.¹²⁹ The demesne was farmed with stock in 1189 when there were 16 oxen, but no other livestock present.¹³⁰ The demesne at Christian Malford was leased to Thomas Stock in 1518.¹³¹ At that time it consisted of the house, barn and barton with only 3 a. arable with 36 a. meadow and pasture.

¹²⁰ WSA, 1001/3; 2062/11.

¹²¹ *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 36–7; WSA, 2062/14 ('Long Wellesley' was probably William Richard Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, earl of Mornington).

¹²² *Ibid*; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 1 Feb., 8 Mar. 1866. Alice Smith farmed Avon farm from c.1836; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 2 June 1836; See also WSA, 969/34.

¹²³ N.E. Stacy (ed.), *Surveys of the estates of Glastonbury abbey. c.1135–1201* (2001), 204, 244. For the descent of this holding see VCH, Wilts, XII, 194.

¹²⁴ *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVII (1920), 255–9.

¹²⁵ C. and F. Thorn, *Domesday Book: Wilts.* (Chichester, 1979), 7,4.

¹²⁶ VCH Wilts. IV, 7.

¹²⁷ VCH Wilts. IV, 13.

¹²⁸ VCH Wilts. IV, 16–17.

¹²⁹ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 28–9.

¹³⁰ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 203.

¹³¹ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

The 1189 survey reveals that the number of tenants had nearly doubled since 1086, from 37 to 72.¹³² One tenant held a hide and two held half hides, there were 26 virgators and two tenants held half virgates, 11 held cottages (*cotsets*), 10 half cottages and 11 houses with crofts or other lands, nine tenants without houses held 18 a. which had formerly been part of the demesne and were leased by the half acre. Virgators paid rent of 3s., 4s. or 5s., and rendered ploughing, haymaking and harvesting works; most also had to carry to Bristol and elsewhere when required. Cottars could pay rent of 3s. and half-cottars 18*d.*, as an alternative to haymaking and harvest works. Those holding crofts or a few acres paid rent, between 4*d.* and 2s., and did not render services. In one instance two virgates with two houses were combined and downgraded to a single virgate, because they could not each support a household; and in three instances two tenants shared a 1½ virgate holding. Only one freeholder and the two millers within the parish held more than a virgate; one had a hide and two had half hides. Ploughing services reflected the three field rotation, an acre of wheat, another of oats, and the third fallow. The livestock of the tenantry is not mentioned in the 1189 survey, apart from Bradenstoke priory, whose virgate holding entitled them to pasture seven cows and a bull. On the demesne there were 16 oxen, which were claimed to be in a better condition than when the farmers received them.

The demesne yields and acreage sown in 1333 were: wheat 105 quarters harvested and 62 a. re-sown, oats 60 quarters and 71 a., barley, 18 quarters and 15 a., dredge 15 quarters and none re-sown.¹³³ From the harvested grain 10 quarters of barley and 6 quarters of oats were consumed by the *famuli* on the manor.¹³⁴ There were two ploughs with 17 oxen.¹³⁵

Plague caused a substantial fall in the number of landless men at Christian Malford, from 72 in 1348 to 13 in 1371 and eight in 1404, resulting in a move away from more labour intensive arable towards dairying.¹³⁶

In 1518 there were three freeholders and 52 customary tenants.¹³⁷ The virgate, half virgate, ferendel and cottage were the standard tenant holdings. Some had been divided so that some tenements held one sixth of a virgate, others had been agglomerated so that twelve tenants paid two or three heriots.

Arable land belonging to the demesne was contained in two fields in 1333.¹³⁸ These had been restructured by 1518 when multiple tenants held land in Benelfurlong Field, Little Field, Middle Field, North Field, West Field and Wodefurlong Field, or perhaps the tenants had always had access to arable in other fields.¹³⁹

Bradenstoke priory held a virgate in Christian Malford of Glastonbury by knight's service before 1189.¹⁴⁰ In 1236, alongside two mills within Christian Malford, the prior and

¹³² VCH Wilts. IV, 10; this para, Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 203-7.

¹³³ I. Keil, 'Estates of the abbey of Glastonbury in the later middle ages,' (Bristol PhD, 1964), 93.

¹³⁴ Keil, *Estates of Glastonbury*, 98.

¹³⁵ Keil, *Estates of Glastonbury*, 117.

¹³⁶ Longleat MSS. 11222, 10646 and 10651.

¹³⁷ BL, Harl. MS. 3961.

¹³⁸ Keil, *Estates of Glastonbury*, 205n.

¹³⁹ BL, Harl. MS. 3961.

¹⁴⁰ VCH Wilts. III, 281

canons of Bradenstoke held two meadows called Muleham and Scyrevemede and a virgate of land on which the prior's withy bed lay.¹⁴¹ The prior also claimed grazing rights, although this was disputed. In 1241, a final concord was made between the abbot of Glastonbury and prior of Bradenstoke. It allowed the canons to graze four oxen, 20 cows and two bulls with those of the abbot in an enclosure within the woodland. A further 20 pigs could graze the wood, although not during close season or pannage, presumably when other beasts were allowed to forage. Additionally, 60 goats were permitted on the north side of the road between Bradenstoke and the parish, and 100 sheep to the north and the south of the road from the prior's houses to the brook.¹⁴²

During the mid 17th century, the part of Avon owned by Sir Edward Bayntun was collectively cultivated on an open-field type system. Merestones were used to mark boundaries of the land worked by the lord and tenants and between the plots of tenants in common fields.¹⁴³ The tenants of Bayntun included John Long, owner of the other manor of Avon; whether this made the land management of Avon problematic is uncertain, but neither Long nor his heir attended the Bremhill manor court proceedings.

The fields used at this time for arable included 'common field', 'middle field', 'Pudnam field' and 'Avon field'. The cereal crops grown at Avon were not specified in the recording of the manor court. A conveyance from the period for property owned by the Long family refers to fields named within Bremhill court records (for example, Dole Mead, common field and middle field). They also refer to areas not referenced by Bremhill court records, such as the north field and south field (probably in Christian Malford, which were likewise managed on an open field system).¹⁴⁴

Drainage was a perennial problem as tenants were regularly directed to gripe (drain) their land.¹⁴⁵ Some grazing of cultivated fields, including Pudnam field, was allowed but numbers of animals and permitted dates were strictly managed.¹⁴⁶ Tenants were frequently charged by the acre in common arable fields for the services of a molecatcher.¹⁴⁷ Certain pastured areas at Avon, such as part of Dole Mead (between Christian Malford and Bremhill), were marshland. Dole Mead was communally managed and grazed by cows, oxen, sheep, geese and other fowl; it was fenced until the hay crop was taken.¹⁴⁸ Those with grazing rights were restricted by the number of animals they could graze and when they were allowed to put livestock onto pasture. Tenants of Avon with pigs were required to ring them, to prevent the animals from causing damage by rooting and foraging. However, no mention was made of pigs using Dole Mead or areas under cultivation.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴¹ Perhaps the gifts of Silvester Lovel and his father, Ralph: *Cart. Bradenstoke priory* (WRS. 35), 64– 6 (no. 149, 150, 151, 155).

¹⁴² *Cart. Bradenstoke priory* (WRS. 35), 64 (no. 148).

¹⁴³ WSA, 473/52. e.g., 13 Oct. 1651, 17 Oct. 1655.

¹⁴⁴ WSA, 473/52. e.g., 21 Apr. 1652, 11 Oct. 1652, 16 Apr. 1654. See also WSA, 1081/25.

¹⁴⁵ WSA, 473/52, e.g., 13 Oct. 1651, 21 Apr. 1652, 11 Oct. 1652, 12 Apr. 1654, 17 Oct. 1655.

¹⁴⁶ WSA, 473/52, e.g., 3 Apr. 1657.

¹⁴⁷ WSA, 473/52., e.g., 4 Apr. 1651, 21 Apr. 1652.

¹⁴⁸ WSA, 473/52, 4 Oct. 1654.

¹⁴⁹ WSA, 473/52, 13 Oct. 1656.

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, probate inventories of the Stiles family, yeomen of Avon, suggest mixed farming, dairy, sheep and arable. Livestock (which also included oxen and pigs) necessitated large amounts of hay for winter feeding. Crops included oats, and in the 18th century barley. In 1688 the family were also cutting withies.¹⁵⁰ The prevalence of locally grown barley may have encouraged the presence of maltsters.¹⁵¹ As with most local farms, the family were making cheese.

In 1677 farming on the Christian Malford glebe was likewise mixed, with 57 a. of the c.120 a. being arable.¹⁵² The 1712 probate inventory of Thomas Ody who farmed the parsonage lands reveals that he was growing barley, wheat, beans, and oats. He also owned a small dairy herd and over 100 sheep.¹⁵³

On the Longs' Avon manor rent roll of 1688, the withies and rushes along the river Avon were leased to four individuals and raised the half-yearly rent of £1 1s. 9d.¹⁵⁴

At the computation of tithes in 1842, Christian Malford (excluding Avon) comprised 435 a. arable that included a few acres of withy beds and 2,044 a. meadow with a further 143 a. woodland; at Avon 150 a. comprised 67 a. arable and 83 a. pasture.¹⁵⁵ In 1867 the chief crops were wheat and beans.¹⁵⁶ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, directories described almost the whole parish as pasture.¹⁵⁷

In 1831 there were 91 families employed in agriculture, compared to 54 chiefly employed in trade, manufactories and handicraft.¹⁵⁸ By 1881, of the 182 men with specified occupations in the census return, 93 were employed in agriculture. The majority of the 22 women with occupations were working in domestic service. However, a further 12 were employed in agriculture.¹⁵⁹

In 1843 Dole Mead in Christian Malford and Bremhill (24 a.) was enclosed.¹⁶⁰ In 1874 Christian Malford was listed in government returns on the acreage of common land as having no wastes.¹⁶¹ However, a further 124 a. of meadow adjacent to the river Avon was enclosed in Seagry and Christian Malford in 1883, the latest enclosure award for the county.¹⁶²

Christian Malford was a predominantly pastoral farming regime in 1866 with 565 dairy cows, 717 sheep and 342 pigs.¹⁶³ Grains were sown on 250 a. of which the majority was

¹⁵⁰ WSA, P3/S/1039, P3/S/682.

¹⁵¹ WSA, P3/B/1119, P1/R/199, P3/S/114.

¹⁵² *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 101.

¹⁵³ WSA, P3/O/76.

¹⁵⁴ WSA, 2943B/1/41.

¹⁵⁵ *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 36–7, 72; WSA, T/A Christian Malford.

¹⁵⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.).

¹⁵⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889, 1911 edns.).

¹⁵⁸ *Census*, 1831.

¹⁵⁹ *Census*, 1881.

¹⁶⁰ WSA, 1710/50, A1/210/56/EA 161. *Wilts. Inclosure Awards* (WRS. 25), 51.

¹⁶¹ *Return of Acreage of Waste Lands subject to Rights of Common; Common field Lands in each Parish of England and Wales in which Tithes have been commuted under Tithe Commutation Acts* Parl. Paper No. 85 Parliament 1874, 227.

¹⁶² WSA, 1710/51; *Wilts. Inclosure Awards* (WRS. 25), 4, 116.

wheat, peas and beans, 67 a., and root crops, 142 a, were mostly grown as cattle feed along with 74 a. of grass and vetches,¹⁶⁴ 1817 a. were given over to permanent pasture. Sheep numbers had fallen to 107 by 1880, while other crop and livestock numbers remained similar.¹⁶⁵ In 1920 the area given over to grains had fallen to 138 a., peas and beans remained steady at 62 a., but root crops fell to 40 a., the total number of cattle remained steady at 683, there were no sheep and pig numbers had halved to 187.¹⁶⁶

Of the twelve local farms (excluding glebe) listed in the income tax valuation of 1910, ten were owned by the Meux estate. These comprised Malford, Paradise, Dodford, Swallett, Summerhill or Brights, Ridgeway, Friday Street, Bittlesea, Selstead and Thornend farms. The remaining two were Mermaid farm owned by Warn and Sons, the brewery which owned the Mermaid inn and Beanfield farm, which had been sold by the Meux estate in 1906.¹⁶⁷ The Meux estate provided 18 a. of allotments in 1910. It also owned 131 a. of woodland in the parish.¹⁶⁸

During the 1860s the incumbent, Robert Vanbergh Law, reported that women usually worked on local farms between 7 am and 6 pm with two hours off for meals.¹⁶⁹

Forestry

In the early 14th century some tenants kept pigs in large numbers as a commercial venture: Richard Terry was distrained for allowing 34 pigs into the lord's woods in 1308.¹⁷⁰ In 1333 there were 40 pigs on the demesne.¹⁷¹ Most pigs were kept for domestic consumption, pannage payments from the tenants amounted to 2s. 8d. in 1518.¹⁷²

In 1518 Glastonbury abbey had the woods at Christian Malford in hand, measuring 361 a.; they were coppiced, with 20 a. taken each year valued at 10s.¹⁷³

As usual the woodland in Christian Malford was retained in hand by the manor estate (rather than being tenanted). Elm trees were sold from the estate woods 1807–8 and 1811.¹⁷⁴

Fisheries

A fish weir (*stagio gurgitis*) between two islands to the north of Dodford mill, and the fishing rights that had formerly been held by Richard de Sow, were purchased by Henry de Forde and John Davy of Curry Rivel (Som.) along with other lands in 1350.¹⁷⁵ Presumably the weir

¹⁶⁷ WSA, L8/1/18, 1208/32.

¹⁶⁸ WSA, L8/1/18.

¹⁶⁹ *Royal Com. On Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture. Second Report, Appendix (Evidence from Assistant Coms)* (Parl. Papers, 1868–9 (231, 4202, 4202–1), xiii), 303.

¹⁷⁰ Longleat MS. 11253.

¹⁷¹ Keil, *Estates of Glastonbury*, 81.

¹⁷² BL Harl. MS. 3961.

¹⁷³ BL, Harl. MS. 3961.

¹⁷⁴ WSA, A1/345/109, inland revenue assessment 1910 etc. *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 16 Feb. 1807, 22 Feb. 1808, 21 Mar. 1808, 14 Oct. 1811.

¹⁷⁵ Longleat MS. 11222.

was at the site marked in 1886 by a weir and footbridge on the west bank of the Avon to the north the old mill pond.¹⁷⁶ Fishing rights on the Avon between Christian Malford and Dauntsey were leased by the abbot of Glastonbury to Henry Lang in 1518.¹⁷⁷ Bradenstoke priory leased fishing right in 1531 along with its mills.¹⁷⁸

Mills

At Domesday, 1086, Glastonbury abbey possessed two mills on its Christian Malford estate, valued at £2.¹⁷⁹ A mill was held with one hide of land by Ebradus from Glastonbury Abbey in 1189 for £1 5s and all services.¹⁸⁰ Reginald de Dodford held a second mill with half a hide for £1 10s. and ploughing 6 a.¹⁸¹ In 1340/1 the rectory received the tithes of two corn mills, 13s. 4d. and one fulling mill 5s.¹⁸² In May 1350 Henry de Forde and John Davy of Curry Rivel gave the entry fine of £10 for a messuage, a ferendel, two virgates, the mill and fishing rights at Dodford.¹⁸³

In 1232 Bradenstoke priory held two mills, meadows and a reed bed nearby, the gifts of Ralph Lovel and his son Silvester. Glastonbury abbey complained that Bradenstoke did not fulfil its feudal obligations for the property, an issue not resolved until 1287. The problem was probably exacerbated by the fact that the mills at Christian Malford paid 16s. for tithes in 1229 (suggesting that their combined revenues were £8 or £4 each), much higher than rents recorded by Glastonbury's other mills.¹⁸⁴ In 1328 a mill, messuage and virgate of land at Christian Malford was rented by Glastonbury abbey to Nicholas de Knoel for 40s.¹⁸⁵ Later, in 1338, Richard ate More gave 9 a. of meadow near the mills to Bradenstoke priory. One mill was St Johns by the 'High Bridge'. At its Dissolution Bradenstoke priory had one grain and one fulling mill at Christian Malford, with meadows and a cottage.¹⁸⁶

From the 1750s until the 1780s Christian Malford mill was occupied by the Simeon family.¹⁸⁷ According to land tax returns, Rodolph Simeon was the occupier and John Grant was owner of Christian Malford mill from 1781–8, after which Rebecca Simeon occupied it until 1792. In 1793 it was in use by William James.¹⁸⁸ The building was later reconstructed as a cloth mill.

¹⁷⁶ OS map, 25", Wilts, XX.4 (1886 edn.). These are to the north of the mill as the text specifies, the other mill in the parish, Avon mill, also has adjacent islands and a weir, but these are to the south.

¹⁷⁷ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, SC 8/HenVIII/3986.

¹⁷⁹ *Domesday*, 167.

¹⁸⁰ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 204.

¹⁸¹ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 205.

¹⁸² *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, 169.

¹⁸³ Longleat MS.11222

¹⁸⁴ A. Lucas. *Ecclesiastical Lordship, Seigneurial Power and the Commercialization of Milling in Medieval England* (London: Routledge 2016), 153–7.

¹⁸⁵ *Abstracts of Wilts. Inquisitions Post Mortem, Edward III*, 18.

¹⁸⁶ *Cart. Bradenstoke priory* (WRS. 35); VCH Wilts. III, 281; TNA, SC 8/HenVIII/3986.

¹⁸⁷ WSA, A1/345/109, P3/S/1371 (which implies that it was acquired from grandfather Richard Burgess (though Burgess's will (TNA, PROB 11/690/329), does not mention a mill).

¹⁸⁸ WSA, A1/345/109.

The abbot of Malmesbury's customary tenants in Foxham and *Northavene* ground corn in the mill at [south] Avon, held by Geoffrey de Syfrewast (1222 × 1246).¹⁸⁹ Geoffrey's son Roger quitclaimed the two mills under one roof in [south] Avon to William, abbot of Malmesbury (1260 × 1296).¹⁹⁰ The two mills belonging to Malmesbury abbey were listed in a survey compiled 1283/4.¹⁹¹

Although it was used for fulling in the 18th century, land tax returns suggest, somewhat ambiguously, that during the last quarter of the century Avon mill was owned by John Tanner and family or leased by them from Hugh Beames, and used to grind grain until 1798 when it reverted back to its previous use.¹⁹²

Textiles

At Christian Malford, eighteen weavers, two tailors, one fuller and one merchant were noted in the 1379 poll tax assessment, suggesting that a vigorous domestic cloth industry had already developed from an early date.¹⁹³ Fulling was presumably carried out at one of Bradenstoke's mills at this date, as it was later.¹⁹⁴ Probate documents indicate clothmaking, including serge, was being carried out in the 17th and 18th centuries.¹⁹⁵

By 1794 Christian Malford mill had been acquired by Thomas Etheridge and rebuilt for clothmaking. The mill was exonerated from land tax after 1799, presumably because the charge had been redeemed by the payment of a lump sum (allowed under law after 1798).¹⁹⁶ In 1813, described as a superfine cloth factory, the mill was put up for auction,¹⁹⁷ and the building was acquired by William Lanfear, who had previously been in business in Calne.¹⁹⁸ After his death in April 1860, the Christian Malford mill was offered at auction but failed to sell; it was put up for sale again in September with the suggestion that it could be repurposed as a paper or flour mill. It was described as a six-floored building, with dimensions 136 feet by 24 and powered by two waterwheels (one breast shot and one undershot, generating 32 h.p., the head of water extending 1½ miles). The estate also included a dwelling house, three cottages, a small farm, 33 a. grazing land and a dye-house adjacent to the mill building, which had been tenanted.¹⁹⁹ It apparently did not sell, and by 1885 the mill had been demolished.²⁰⁰

¹⁸⁹ *Reg. Malm.* II, 71-2.

¹⁹⁰ *Reg. Malm.* II, 94-6.

¹⁹¹ *Reg. Malm.* II, 207.

¹⁹² WSA, A1/345/56, A1/345/110; K.H. Rogers, *Wilts. and Som. Woollen Mills* (Edington, 1976), 76.

¹⁹³ C.C. Fenwick (ed.), *Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381* (2005), 70-1; cf. *VCH Wilts.* IV, 122.

¹⁹⁴ *VCH Wilts.* III, 281.

¹⁹⁵ WSA, P3/C/350 (serge maker, 1671), P1/B/686 (serge maker, 1701), P1/T/194 (mercator, 1686), P1/8 Reg/88 (clothier, 1735), P1/7Reg/146A (narrow weaver, 1726); TNA, PROB 11/564/139 (clothier, 1718), PROB 11/262/517 (broad weaver, 1657).

¹⁹⁶ WSA, A1/345/109; Rogers, *Wilts. and Som. Woollen Mills*, 75.

¹⁹⁷ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 10 May 1813. Noted the building had been erected in the previous 20 years.

¹⁹⁸ Rogers, *Wilts. and Som. Woollen Mills*, 75.

¹⁹⁹ *Wilts. & Glos. Standard*, 7 Apr. 1860; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 13, 20, 27 Sept. 1860. Sale particulars: WSA, 137/125/72.

²⁰⁰ Rogers, *Wilts. and Som. Woollen Mills*, 75.

By the early 18th century Avon mill was used for fulling by William Fry. Its output was the lowest of the five mills in the Chippenham area, producing just 2 of the 119 cloths manufactured in one quarterly period. It provided services to one clothier, Robert Fry, probably a relative of William.²⁰¹ The mill was tenanted in the 1750s by the Pinnegar family,²⁰² and for several decades to 1798 was a corn mill, when it was converted for clothmaking and rented by clothier Uriah Tarrant.²⁰³ According to a news report in 1827, soldiers were stationed around the mill when shearing machines were first introduced (probably in 1798), to prevent large numbers of out of work 'shearmen' from committing acts of arson.²⁰⁴

Avon mill was acquired c.1821 by the Marquis of Lansdowne, and in 1822 the machinery, cloth and other effects of the mill were auctioned under a distress warrant for unpaid rent.²⁰⁵ Uriah Tarrant, who had fathered a number of illegitimate children by local women, was imprisoned for debt but released in November 1822.²⁰⁶

The lease of the 'lately rebuilt' Avon mill, comprising a ground floor and four lofts, 95 feet by 20 with a capacity of 20 cloths a week, was advertised in both Wiltshire and Yorkshire from April 1822. The trade, it was stated, had been carried on in the parish for upwards of twenty years, and 'the children and working people of the neighbourhood are accustomed to the business'.²⁰⁷ In 1829, a year after William Lanfear occupied it,²⁰⁸ it was reported that owing to fluctuations in the cloth trade, the mill had 'not generally done half the work of its waterpower'.²⁰⁹ It ceased operating after 1848 and was sold by the Marquis of Lansdowne in 1910.²¹⁰

Despite the Wiltshire cloth industry contracting after 1800, 61 families out of a total of 205 in Christian Malford, or 30% of the total, were employed in trade, manufactories or handicrafts in 1821. This compared with only 11% of families at neighbouring Bremhill. All families in Avon chapelry were employed in agriculture.²¹¹

²⁰¹ WSA, A1/525.

²⁰² WSA, P3/P/888, P3/P/1047.

²⁰³ Rogers, *Wilts. and Som. Woollen Mills*, 76; WSA, A1/345/56 (Tarrant is taxed as proprietor 1801–7, George Beames as owner, 1808–20).

²⁰⁴ *Berks. Chronicle*, 29 Sept. 1827.

²⁰⁵ *Bath Chronicle*, 11 Apr. 1822; *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 13 May 1822, 10 Feb. 1823. WSA, A1/345/56. The Marquis of Lansdowne was taxed as proprietor from 1821.

²⁰⁶ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 28 Nov. 1822.

²⁰⁷ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 22 Apr., 29 Apr., 6 May, 13 May, 5 Aug. 1822; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 12 Aug. 1822.

²⁰⁸ WSA, A1/345/56

²⁰⁹ *Berks. Chronicle*, 29 Sept. 1827.

²¹⁰ WSA, 1225/36.

²¹¹ *Abstract of Answers and Returns for taking Account of Population of Great Britain (Enumeration Abstract; Parish Register Abstract)*, 1821 (Parl. Papers, 1822 (502), xv).

Although both mills were producing cloth in 1848,²¹² in 1839 only Christian Malford mill (and not Avon mill) was listed as a woollen manufactory. It employed 3 males, 15 females, and 3 13–14-year-olds.²¹³ Local cloth manufacture appears to have ceased by 1859.²¹⁴

Other Trades

Probate records show edge tool makers and blacksmiths worked in the parish during the 18th century, but that they used a grinding mill outside the parish, in Seagry.²¹⁵

Probably because it lay on important roads, the parish developed a large retail and service sector relative to its size. In the 1620s and 30s this included alehouses or inns and a retailer of tobacco.²¹⁶ In 1859 the parish accommodated five shopkeepers, four inns or beer retailers, four boot or shoemakers, together with a baker, tailor, and post office.²¹⁷ In 1935, reflecting its position on an important road, trades included a motor and cycle works and refreshment rooms.²¹⁸

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Character

Although a relatively large parish (3,104 a. in 1859), its population was centred on the village of Christian Malford.²¹⁹ Until the 20th century the parish was primarily owned by one absentee landowner, who did not take an active interest in support of the community. This absence was blamed for the lack of educational provision in 1818.²²⁰ Social leadership was instead provided by incumbents, such as the rector Robert Vanbergh Law, who instigated a school in 1856 and church renovation in 1860 and 1870–2. In the period 1800–50 the decline of the local cloth trade and pressure on agricultural wages spawned social agitation in the parish, sometimes tacitly directed against the rector. In November 1830, associated with the Swing riots, a mob of 200–400 men (depending on the report) assembled in front of the rector's house to protest about low wages, but were persuaded to disperse by magistrates who suggested that their demands would be met. According to reports, later refuted, the yeomanry

²¹² Lewis, *Topog. Dict. Eng.*, (London, 1848), 607–12.

²¹³ *Return of Mills and Factories which have neglected to transmit Returns to Inspectors, 1837–38; Number of Persons employed in Cotton, Woollen, Worsted, Flax and Silk Factories of United Kingdom* (Parl. Papers, 1839 (41), xlii), 152–3, 156.

²¹⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.) refers to none.

²¹⁵ TNA, PROB 11/809/260, WSA, P3/P/688 both refer to Seagry grinding mill. Other Christian Malford edge tool makers: WSA, P1/P/449, P3/P/813, P3/P/614, P3/P/752. Blacksmiths: WSA, P3/P/698, P1/P/668, P1/P/611.

²¹⁶ *Tradesmen in Early Stuart Wilts.* (WRS. 15), 27 (no. 260), 28, (no. 276), 100 (no. 1275).

²¹⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

²¹⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1935 edn.).

²¹⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

²²⁰ As blamed by the rector Revd J E Readon: *Educ. of the Poor Digest*, 1023.

was also called.²²¹ Four years later a group of men, women and children occupied the church and later burnt a hay rick in a disturbance in opposition to the New Poor Law.²²² Work on building the railway through the parish may have provided short-lived economic respite for local labourers, but the presence of ‘navigators’ in the parish also caused friction.²²³ Although no Anti-Corn Law meetings took place in Christian Malford, parish residents were noteworthy in their speeches at meetings in neighbouring villages.

In 1846 the *Wiltshire Independent* sent a reporter to Christian Malford to test the veracity of claims made in the *Morning Post* that local wages were good, and that the poor were in a satisfactory condition, supported by a branch of the Wiltshire Friendly Society and a ‘Provident Society’ established by the rector. The *Wiltshire Independent* found weekly wages for agricultural labourers at a ‘miserable’ level of 8s. and suggested that by encouraging them to subscribe to societies it would deprive the poor of their ability to pay local traders.²²⁴ These challenging economic circumstances may have contributed to nine people, including four children, being sponsored in 1845 to emigrate to Australia.²²⁵ In 1857–8, a further three men were supported to have done the same.²²⁶

Avon mill c.1800 was apparently grinding wheat gleaned by local labouring families, suggesting that they were attempting ‘makeshift’ rather than resorting to parish relief.²²⁷ There was no charitable provision for the poor, according to returns made in 1786–8,²²⁸ and no local friendly society was noted in poor law returns in 1803 or 1818.²²⁹ In the absence of these alternatives to poor relief, community action was sometimes taken. In an extremely cold January in 1838, parishioners collected nearly £30 which was used to purchase coal to be distributed among the poor.²³⁰

Communal Life

During the 17th century John Aubrey reported that Christian Malford was ‘famous’ for its midsummer revels, which took place at the church house on the village green.²³¹ While little aside from the revels is known about leisure activities within the parish before the 19th century, the village had alehouses from at least the 1620s and an inn from the 1660s. These hostelries, along with the church and later chapels, are likely to have been the focus of communal life.²³²

²²¹ *London Courier and Evening Gaz.* 1 Dec, 3 Dec. 1830; *Hants. Chronicle*, 6 Dec. 1830. See also, E. Newman, ‘The Anti Corn Law League and the Wilts. Labourer, Aspects of the Development of Nineteenth Century Protest’, in G. Mingay (ed.) *Land, Labour and Agriculture, 1700–1920* (London, 1991), 101.

²²² *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 13 Nov. 1834.

²²³ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 21 Nov. 1839.

²²⁴ *Wilts. Independent*, 26 Feb. 1846.

²²⁵ *Poor Law Coms.: Appendices to Eleventh Annual Report* (Parl. Papers 1845 (Cd. 660), xxvii), 129.

²²⁶ *Poor Law Board: Tenth Annual Report* (Parl. Papers 1857–58 (Cd. 2402), xxviii), 234.

²²⁷ *Berks. Chronicle*, 29 Sept. 1827.

²²⁸ *Charitable Donations, 1786–88*, 1344.

²²⁹ *Poor Law Abstract, 1804*, 562–3; *Poor Law Abstract, 1818*, 494–5.

²³⁰ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 11 Jan. 1838.

²³¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 125.

²³² *Tradesmen in Early Stuart Wilts.* (WRS. 15), 31; WSA, P1/H/371 refers to an unnamed inn in 1666.

In 1727 a vestry meeting agreed that four men ‘and no other person or persons’ could sell ale and beer within the parish. The same meeting, presumably attempting to regulate alcohol consumption, adopted a plan (possibly not followed through) to create a parish lockup, to be built at the end of the church house.²³³ Efforts to control alcohol consumption continued in the 19th century. In 1828 William Wheeler was fined over £12 for selling alcohol without a licence.²³⁴ In 1837, the rector, Robert Vanbergh Law, reported the keeper of the Jolly Butcher beer shop for serving alcohol after hours.²³⁵ The landlord in 1859 was Samuel Stokes, but by 1938 the site was the post office.²³⁶

The Rising Sun on Station Road was a beershop from at least 1867.²³⁷ By the early 20th century it was owned by the rector; in 1913 the lessee was Wilkins Bros. and Hudson, and later Ushers Brewery who subsequently acquired the freehold.²³⁸ Organised leisure activities, including darts, took place at the Rising Sun.²³⁹ The principal parish hostelry was the Mermaid inn, a converted 18th-century farmhouse on Main Road, which during the 19th century was the venue for tithe commissioners’ meetings, auctions, coroners inquests, political meetings and hunt meets.²⁴⁰ It was sold by the Meux estate in 1906,²⁴¹ continued as an inn through the 20th century, but in 2023 was converted to housing.²⁴²

The parish had a village cricket team from the 1850s and a football team from at least 1905.²⁴³ In 2024 part of the old village green was still in use as a recreation area which provided a venue for village cricket and football, as well as a children’s play area.²⁴⁴ In 2012, ‘Malford Meadow’ a 11a. community meadow, orchard and allotment, was opened adjacent to the church.²⁴⁵ Other community leisure facilities have included a reading room, closed by 1925, and a village hall, opened in December 1925 after a period of fundraising events including fetes.²⁴⁶

Education

In 1818 four ‘schools’ of between 6 and 12 pupils were operating under the care of an old woman.²⁴⁷ A fifth school was provided by a schoolmaster with between 30 and 40 in attendance. The rector lamented that due to the lack of local gentry, he could not raise money

²³³ WSA, 1710/32, back of vol. 31 May 1727.

²³⁴ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 4 Dec. 1828.

²³⁵ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 6 Apr. 1837.

²³⁶ *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.); *Wilts. Times*, 7 May 1938.

²³⁷ *Census*, 1871; *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.), 246.

²³⁸ WSA, 3608/Box 21; 1710/22; 1075/400/133a.

²³⁹ *Wilts. Times*, 8 Nov. 1952.

²⁴⁰ e.g., *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 2 Nov. 1837, 20, 27 June, 18 Oct. 1839, 12 Feb. 1846, 31 Sept. 1857, *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 5 Oct. 1885; *North Wilts. Herald* 16 Dec. 1872, 26 Jan. 1880, 29 Nov. 1880.

²⁴¹ WSA, 106/3.

²⁴² NHLE, 1022470; personal observation.

²⁴³ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 2 Sept. 1858, 26 July 1866; *Swindon Advertiser*, 10 Feb. 1905; *Wilts. Times*, 25 Mar. 1933, 2 Dec. 1933.

²⁴⁴ <https://www.christianmalford.org.uk/recreation-ground/> [accessed 7 Oct. 2021].

²⁴⁵ <https://www.christianmalford.org.uk/malford-meadow/> [accessed 7 Oct. 2021].

²⁴⁶ WSA, 1710/42/36, dated 8 Jan. 1925; *North Wilts. Herald*, 24 Dec. 1925.

²⁴⁷ This para: *Educ. of the Poor Digest*, 1023; WSA, 1710/46. e.g., 12 Oct. 1788, 7 Dec. 1788.

to provide a schoolroom large enough 'for the adoption of the new system of education' or enough income to cover a salary for a schoolmaster. Many local children were also employed in two local cloth manufactories. A Sunday school (previously supported by poor rates) instructed 100 local children supported by a legacy from Revd William Willes.

By 1834 a National school had opened, instructing pupils in religion, reading, writing and accounts and the girls in needlework.²⁴⁸ Overseers' accounts indicate the salary of a schoolmaster was being met by poor rates in the late 1820s and early 1830s.²⁴⁹

A new building was added in 1856, financed by funds raised locally at the prompting of the incumbent, Robert Vanbergh Law.²⁵⁰ Law and other members of his family contributed £111 of the £238 raised. The total building cost was £268. The Earl of Carnarvon, owner of Christian Malford manor, made the largest donation, of £50.²⁵¹ According to notes at the back of the churchwardens' accounts, the builder Mr Millar made no charge for his services but accepted a 'present' of £5.²⁵²

In 1859 the school included a schoolroom and separate classroom 'with board floor, parallel desks and good light and ventilation'; it provided accommodation for between 100 and 130 pupils, taught by a trained master and three pupil teachers. The school was deemed successful in both discipline and instruction, which had the effect that children were drawn from the surrounding areas and tended not to leave school prematurely. The establishment was also able to send pupil teachers out to neighbouring schools.²⁵³ However, in 1868 the Revd C. R. E. Awdry, of nearby Draycot Cerne, claimed that boys educated at Christian Malford 'are not nearly so useful for field work as others; the farmers won't have them.'²⁵⁴

In or about 1876 Revd Law applied the capital of the Willes endowment against the costs incurred in building the school; he resigned the living soon after.²⁵⁵ After Law died in 1884 the Charity Commissioners tried for several years unsuccessfully to reclaim the amount of the endowment from the executors of Law's estate.²⁵⁶ In 1898/9 there were 81 children regularly attending the school. Its operation was funded by government grants and £60 from voluntary contributions from the community, but it did not benefit from any endowments.²⁵⁷

There was a night school in the parish in 1868 with 65 (including three under the age of 12) on the register, the largest reported in the county. However, several difficulties were

²⁴⁸ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 328.

²⁴⁹ WSA, 1710/47. Mr Warry's £5 salary was paid yearly e.g., 3 June 1827 and yearly accounts 25 Mar. 1831.

²⁵⁰ WSA, 1710/30; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.).

²⁵¹ WSA, 1710/30. See also WSA, 1710/33.

²⁵² WSA, 1710/33.

²⁵³ *Account of Wilts. Schools*, 1859, 15.

²⁵⁴ *Royal Com. on Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture Second Report, Appendix (Evidence from Assistant Coms.)* (Parl. Papers 1868-9 [Cd C.4202], xiii), 660.

²⁵⁵ *Endowed Charities* 1908, 281.

²⁵⁶ *Endowed Charities* 1908, 281-2.

²⁵⁷ *Return for each Public Elementary School inspected in England and Wales, of Denomination, Accommodation, Average Attendance, Annual Grant, Income and Expenditure, 1898-99* (Parl. Papers 1900 [Cd C.315], ??), 856.-verify vol no.

recorded as impeding its administration, including the distance required to travel to the site and the problem of finding teachers, 'especially for girls'.²⁵⁸

Questions arose over the ownership of the school premises in the absence of formal title papers.²⁵⁹ Between the 1920s and 1940s the probable owner of the site, Hugh Marsham-Townend, refused to co-operate over the issue. Although he was not prepared to claim the site nor considered himself entitled to it, he refused to give away the property he never thought was his in the first place.²⁶⁰ The ownership of the site was finally vested in the rector and churchwardens under the statute of limitations.²⁶¹

A small cottage was provided for the accommodation of the teacher under the control of the rector. It was not always needed and was consequently occupied for long periods by farmworkers employed by the rector or by the tenant of the church farm. In 1953 the rector had a debt of £112 on the cottage. He appealed to the parochial church council who took on responsibility for the property and discharged the debt.²⁶² In 1978 the cottage was sold.²⁶³ The school was granted controlled status in 1951.²⁶⁴

There was no separate educational provision for Avon.

Social Welfare

William Lucking held a cottage in 1518 called the *Almeshouse* beside the church.²⁶⁵

In 1653 the inhabitants of Christian Malford complained to Quarter Sessions that so many people required relief within the parish that it was impossible to relieve them all. It suggested to the court that the neighbouring parish of Seagry had so few that it might contribute to the cost of Christian Malford poor. Two justices were asked to investigate.²⁶⁶

In 1776 the cost of parochial poor relief was £337, which rose to £791 by 1803.²⁶⁷ Disbursements were particularly high in times of high food prices, such as in 1799/1800 when welfare expenses reached £888.²⁶⁸

In 1803 those in receipt of permanent relief were overwhelmingly children.²⁶⁹ A total of 183 people received support, which equated to 20% of the 1801 population of 938.²⁷⁰ However, the level of deprivation was below that of neighbouring Bremhill, whose economy

²⁵⁸ *Royal Com. on Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture Second Report* (1867). Appendix pt. 1. (Parl. Papers 1868–9 [Cd C.4202], xiii), 231, 322.

²⁵⁹ WSA, 1710/42.

²⁶⁰ WSA, 1710/42, 3 Jun. 1925, 10 Dec. 1947.

²⁶¹ WSA, 1710/42, 18 Dec. 1947.

²⁶² WSA, 1710/33.

²⁶³ WSA, 1710/42, 20 Feb. 1978, 16 May 1978, 11 Oct. 1978, 17 Oct. 1978, 2 Nov. 1978, 21 Dec. 1978.

²⁶⁴ WSA, 1710/42, 12 Jun. 1951.

²⁶⁵ BL, Harl. MS. 3961.

²⁶⁶ *Wilts. QS Order Book 1642–1654* (WRS. 67), 302.

²⁶⁷ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 562–3.

²⁶⁸ WSA, 1710/46.

²⁶⁹ Of 153 only 30 were over 14: *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 562–3.

²⁷⁰ *VCH Wilts.* iv, 344; *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 562–3.

was more heavily reliant on agriculture. Fifteen people also received relief who were from outside the parish, possibly because Christian Malford lay on an important transport route.²⁷¹

Relief was generally given within the community, in the form of weekly payments and rent and one-off expenses, particularly shoes. Medical expenses, such as a surgeon and the services of a midwife or incidentals related to smallpox were also covered.²⁷² During a particularly hard winter in 1796/7, over 50 individuals were given clothing in the form of serge or linen cloth or both. Several also received shoes, waistcoats and blankets.²⁷³

In 1833 government returns showed that Christian Malford had agreed a plan with local magistrates under the Agricultural Labourers Employment Act to employ the poor.²⁷⁴

The rising cost of relief in the 18th century probably contributed to the decision to convert the church house to a workhouse in 1764. It was in operation in 1776 and had a capacity of 30 inmates, but was discontinued by 1803.²⁷⁵ In the late 1820s some incidental overseers' expenses suggest that there was an attempt to reopen the workhouse prior to the enactment of the new poor law.²⁷⁶ The use of workhouses was unpopular locally, as up to 100 people were involved in a riot in 1834 in protest at the adoption of the new poor law, which made workhouses the only support available to the poor.²⁷⁷

Charities and Friendly Societies: No charities for the poor were recorded by charity commissioners in 1908.²⁷⁸ However, in 1842 a Christian Malford branch of the Wiltshire Friendly Society was opened. Within four years its membership had grown to 200.²⁷⁹ In 1886 membership still stood at 127, by which point a youth section had also been created.²⁸⁰ The society was still celebrating its anniversary in 1895 by a procession around the village followed by a sermon and members' dinner.²⁸¹ The Septennial Club Friendly Society, based at the Mermaid inn, was established in 1853.²⁸²

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Church origins and parochial organization

²⁷¹ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 562–3.

²⁷² WSA, 1710/44–6.

²⁷³ WSA, 1710/46.

²⁷⁴ *Return of Parishes which have agreed Plans for Employment of the Poor* (Parl. Papers 1833 (144), xxxii); the Act was 2 and 3 Will. IV c.96.

²⁷⁵ WSA, 1710/45, 19 May 1764; *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 562–3; *Poor Law Abstract*, 1777, 484.

²⁷⁶ WSA, 1710/47 e.g., 11 Mar. 1827, 13 Nov. 1829.

²⁷⁷ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 13 Nov. 1834.

²⁷⁸ *Endowed Charities*, 1908, 280–1. For Willes legacy, above, education; below, religious life.

²⁷⁹ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 23 July 1846.

²⁸⁰ *North Wilts. Herald*, Friday 30 July 1886.

²⁸¹ *Swindon Advertiser*, 3 Aug. 1895.

²⁸² *Friendly Societies, Industrial and Provident Societies, and Trade Unions. Reports of the Chief registrar of Friendly Societies, for the year ending 31st December 1876* (Parl. Papers 1877 (?)), 461. It was perhaps the Mermaid Club which commemorated its anniversary on Whit-Tuesday: *Swindon Advertiser*, 17 June 1878.

All Saints was presumably established as a proprietary church by Glastonbury abbey on its Christian Malford estate. It is not recorded in Domesday book, but the church retains 12th-century architectural features, and was a possession of Glastonbury abbey until 1199, when the advowson was apportioned with the rectory manor to the bishop of Bath and Wells.²⁸³

Avon was a chapelry of Christian Malford,²⁸⁴ and a chapel had been built by 1249.²⁸⁵ There is no recorded dedication or description. It is recorded from the 14th to the 17th century but was subsequently destroyed.²⁸⁶ It does not appear on a map of 1796 and its site is unknown,²⁸⁷ although correspondence from Revd Willes in 1781 suggests it had ‘formerly stood somewhere near Farmer Beames’s Dwellinghouse’. Hugh Beames was the tenant of Avon farm, so the small chapel may have stood in the farmyard, like that at Bremilham.²⁸⁸

Christian Malford in 2024 was a parish in the rural deanery of North Wiltshire (formerly Chippenham), diocese of Bristol.²⁸⁹ In 1966 the benefices of Christian Malford, Sutton Benger and Tytherton Kellaways were joined.²⁹⁰ In 2024 the parish was a constituent of the benefice of Draycot, comprising Christian Malford, Kington Langley, Seagry, Sutton Benger, and Tytherton Kellaways.²⁹¹

Advowson and Church Endowment: Glastonbury abbey held the advowson of Christian Malford until 1199 when it passed to the bishops of Bath and Wells, who continued to present to the living until 1829.²⁹² By 1859 it was in the gift of the bishop of Gloucester and Bristol,²⁹³ and when the see was divided in 1898 the bishop of Bristol presented until the 1980s. By 1989 the patron was the dean and chapter of Sarum.²⁹⁴

In 1340/1 the rectory comprised a house and two carucates of land, worth £15, a dovecot 6s. 8d., an orchard 3s. 4d., rents £2 10s. services 10s., hay £2 15s., pasture 10s. perquisites of court 10s., tithes of two corn mills 13s. 4d. and one fulling mill 5s., tithes of linen and hemp 7s., tithes on dairy, eggs and poultry £1 3s., mortuary payments and offerings £2, in total it was worth £26 13s. 4d.²⁹⁵

By custom, established by the early 16th century, cottars at Christian Malford gave the rector 9d. as a death duty and did not pay any heriot to the lord of the manor.²⁹⁶ The value of

²⁸³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126.

²⁸⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 53.

²⁸⁵ *Crown Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre, 1249* (WRS. 16), 190.

²⁸⁶ Phillipps, *Institutions*, I, 28, 45; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 53.

²⁸⁷ WSA, 1001/3, 2062/11; below, this section, advowson.

²⁸⁸ WSA, 2943B/2/83, 23 Nov. 1781; *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 11–13.

²⁸⁹ WSA, 3608/Box 21, etc.

²⁹⁰ *VCH Wilts*. XIV, 226.

²⁹¹ *Crockford* (2020–21 edn.), 966; <https://draycot.weebly.com/> (accessed 29 July 2024).

²⁹² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126; R. Gilbert, *Clerical Guide or Ecclesiastical Directory* (London:, 1829), 62

²⁹³ *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

²⁹⁴ *Crockford*, (1898 edn.), 1769; *Crockford*, (1889/90 edn.), 751.

²⁹⁵ *Non. Inq.* 169.

²⁹⁶ BL, Harl. MS. 3961.

the tithes received by the rector from Bradenstoke priory's mills at the Dissolution was £6 13s. 4d.²⁹⁷

The 1672 Christian Malford glebe terrier listed a residence with an adjoining 80 a. of arable, pasture and meadow and a further 15 a. of pasture. The glebe also included eight other houses with land and five cottages.²⁹⁸ In the terrier of 1704, the rector Henry Margetts asserted his ownership of two cottages in dispute.²⁹⁹

In 1711, the living was valued at £27.³⁰⁰ Following commutation in 1842, the tithes of Christian Malford were commuted to a tithe rent-charge of £730 to the vicar Robert Vanbergh Law for great and small tithes. The sum included £30 for tithes on 122 a. of glebe.³⁰¹ Around 10 a. of land had previously been sold to the Great Western Railway.³⁰²

In 1851 the living of Christian Malford was worth £730, plus £200 income from the glebe.³⁰³ In 1859, the living was worth £800.³⁰⁴ By 1911 this was reduced to a net income of £600, including the revenue from 100 a. of glebe.³⁰⁵ Before 1912 some glebe was farmed, as Glebe farm, by the incumbent.³⁰⁶ In 1925, when the farm was offered at auction, the annual value of the glebe was recorded as £270.³⁰⁷

Although the auction was unsuccessful, some glebe property, including cottages and the Rising Sun inn, were sold during the 1920s,³⁰⁸ and the farm was bought by its tenant at auction in 1946. Several other lots were also offered, including 52 a. known as Botany and Lushes Leaze, which were sold to Jesus College, Oxford.³⁰⁹ According to an inventory of church property in 1956, all that remained of the glebe from the 1946 sale was 3 a. comprising part of Malford farm.³¹⁰

In 1333 and 1348, the patron of Avon chapelry was John Pavely, and in 1349 his son, John. Sir Edward of Cerne, owner of the manor of Avon, presented in 1383.³¹¹ After lapsing to the bishop of Salisbury in 1441, in 1442 it was with Walter Tailboys, of Kyme, Lincolnshire. In 1452 Avon chapel was the gift of John Willoughby of Broke. In 1509 the advowson was again briefly with the bishop before patronage was with Robert Willoughby.³¹² The chapel was worth 33s. 4d. in 1535.³¹³

²⁹⁷ TNA, SC 8/HenVIII/3986.

²⁹⁸ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 101.

²⁹⁹ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 101–2.

³⁰⁰ J. Ecton, *Liber Valorum & Decimarum* (1711), 344.

³⁰¹ *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 36–7.

³⁰² WSA, T/A Christian Malford.

³⁰³ TNA, HO 129/253.

³⁰⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

³⁰⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.).

³⁰⁶ *Wilts. Times*, 21 Sept. 1912; *North Wilts. Herald*, 4 Oct. 1912. See also WSA, 3608/Box 21.

³⁰⁷ WSA, 3608/Box 21; 1710/34.

³⁰⁸ WSA, 3608/Box 21.

³⁰⁹ WSA, 1710/23, 1710/24, 3608/Box 21.

³¹⁰ WSA, 1710/34.

³¹¹ Phillipps, *Institutions*, I, 28, 45, 49, 68; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 53.

³¹² Phillipps, *Institutions*, I, 1, 2, 132, 133, 186, 187.

³¹³ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.) II, 139.

During the late 16th and early 17th century Avon chapel was leased out by the Long family, owners of the manor of Avon.³¹⁴ In 1622 it was leased to John Hungerford of nearby Cadenham manor.³¹⁵ In 1646–7 the Avon chapel, including tithes and glebe lands were sold by John Long to Robert Hungerford (grandson of John Hungerford).³¹⁶ Later, Walter Hungerford's (d. 1754) will bequeathed 'my parsonage of Avon' to Robert Blaake, son of his sister Katherine. Robert Blaake died childless.³¹⁷ In 1842 tithes for Avon tithing were commuted to a rent-charge payable to Hungerford Crewe, Lord Crewe.³¹⁸

Clergy Houses: In 1518 a cottage was occupied by Richard Huntely, chaplain, who probably served at Avon chapel, although it is also possible that he was a chantry priest at Christian Malford.³¹⁹

The rector of Christian Malford was provided with a glebe house or rectory fit for a residence to the east of All Saints Church.³²⁰ It was remodelled in 1816 by John Provis of Chippenham. The structure is Grade II listed.³²¹ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mortgages were taken out to repay loans for improvements to the rectory and the Glebe farm.³²² By the late 1940s the rectory was reported to be in a ruinous condition and proposals were drawn up for its sale.³²³ In 1953 a new rectory was built, designed by Oswald Brakspear, at a cost of £4,500. The old rectory was sold with some difficulty for £1,600.³²⁴

The churchwardens of Christian Malford held a piece of land measuring 61 × 20 feet on which a church house had been built in 1518.³²⁵ In the 17th century John Aubrey noted that the parish had 'a very faire church howse'.³²⁶ It was later used as the parish workhouse and was subsequently demolished.³²⁷

Religious Life

The first recorded rector of Avon was Henry Attenforde in 1333, slightly before an incumbent was recorded at Christian Malford in 1348. The last rector at Avon may have been Henry Hawke in 1535.

In common with many, incumbents of All Saints had notable or challenging experiences through the Civil War and Interregnum. John Still had his £250 preferment in

³¹⁴ WSA, 1081/18, 1081/16, 1081/21, 1081/23.

³¹⁵ WSA, 1081/23

³¹⁶ WSA, 1081/25.

³¹⁷ TNA, PROB 11/809/256; WAM, 24, 219.

³¹⁸ *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 36–7.

³¹⁹ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

³²⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

³²¹ WSA, D/1/11/27 (plans not implemented precisely); NHLE, 1363773.

³²² WSA, 1710/25.

³²³ WSA, 1710/26.

³²⁴ WSA, 1710/27, 1710/33.

³²⁵ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

³²⁶ *Aubrey, Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 125.

³²⁷ *Aubrey, Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 126.

Christian Malford sequestered in 1644.³²⁸ His position was taken by William Dolman, reputed to have been a soldier who was 'rough and careless in the parish.' Dolman allegedly maintained his position by force, levying whatever rates he chose collected by armed servants.³²⁹ He died and was buried at Christian Malford in 1653.³³⁰ Still regained his benefice in 1661, but only after the parsonage had been left 'ruinous' and 'havock' had been made of the timber on the glebe.³³¹ Still died the next year and left the poor of Christian Malford £20 in his will.³³² Still's successor was William Piers, archdeacon of Wells and son of William Piers, bishop of Bath and Wells, who had his preferments similarly sequestered. Thereafter Piers (the younger) was 'forced out of mere necessity for subsistence... to marry an ordinary woman with very small estate, to turn farmer or rather day-labourer upon it.' He was purportedly imprisoned at Ilchester for being godfather to a child named Charles, and 'he was forced to hang out a glove and beg the charity of the town for subsistence.' Piers became the rector of Christian Malford in 1662. He later provided a fund for overseers and churchwardens, most probably to be loaned to parishioners in times of need.³³³

A curate at Christian Malford was employed from 1679.³³⁴

Several incumbents had successful careers in the church. Baptist Levinz was presented to the rectory in 1682 but was later installed as bishop of Sodor and Man in 1685. Levinz, 'a handsome but intolerably proud man',³³⁵ was evidently unhappy with his diocese, which remunerated him an amount only equal to his Christian Malford living.³³⁶ Unlike many incumbents, he did not leave anything in his will (proved 1693) to the benefit of his parishioners.³³⁷ In the early 20th century the incumbent, Jonathan Mayne, was an honorary canon of Bristol cathedral and the rural dean of Chippenham.³³⁸ He was active in the community as chairperson of the Chippenham board of guardians and Christian Malford parish council. On his death in 1912, after 22 years as the rector of Christian Malford, churchwardens collected contributions for a stained-glass window to be placed in the church in his honour.³³⁹

Another notable incumbent was William Willes, who was rector of Christian Malford for over 60 years until his death in 1815.³⁴⁰ In 1762 Willes was made chaplain to James, earl of Salisbury.³⁴¹ In 1789, his father also granted him the office of registrar and scribe of the acts of

³²⁸ WSA, 1710/31; *Walker Revised*, ed. Matthews, 380.

³²⁹ *Wilts. N&Q*. 7, 548; *Walker Revised*, ed. Matthews, 380.

³³⁰ *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 59.

³³¹ *Walker Revised*, ed. Matthews, 380; WSA, 1710/31.

³³² TNA, PROB 11/308/365.

³³³ *Walker Revised*, ed. Matthews, 317; *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 59.

³³⁴ WSA, D/1/17/3/4.

³³⁵ *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, 8 (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1907), 65.

³³⁶ ODNB, s.v. Levinz, Baptist, bishop of Sodor and Man, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

³³⁷ TNA, PROB 11/416/124; cf. Henry Margetts, TNA, PROB 11/484/24; Francis White, TNA, PROB 11/819/188.

³³⁸ WSA, 3608/Box 21.

³³⁹ WSA, 3608/Box 21; *Wilts. Times*, 31 Aug. 1912.

³⁴⁰ WSA, 161/124, 161/144; *Alumni Oxon.* (1715–1886), 4, 1558.

³⁴¹ WSA, 161/144.

the archidiaconal court.³⁴² Willes took an active interest in the local community, attending vestry meetings, Christian Malford manor court proceedings and providing to the physical needs of his parishioners, such as by repairing the home of Nathaniel Pinker in 1776.³⁴³ On his death Willes was commemorated in Christian Malford church with a large monument by T. King of Bath.³⁴⁴ He left £10 in his will to the poor who frequently attended church and a £100 mortgage taken out by the local turnpike, in trust with the minister and churchwardens, to support the Sunday school with prayer books.³⁴⁵ The Sunday school was still functioning in 1836, despite an allegation in the local press that the parish had no Sunday school and therefore local children would grow up ‘and practice every species of diabolical wickedness’. This was refuted by correspondents who included Revd William Lisle Bowles of nearby Bremhill.³⁴⁶ The Christian Malford incumbent, Robert Vanbergh Law, did not appear to join the debate.

In 1723 Revd William Itchener entered a pamphlet discourse with the theologian William Whiston.³⁴⁷

Pews were built for church singers in 1719.³⁴⁸ A barrel organ was bought in 1839 with money raised from contributors, who included the Earl of Carnarvon and the rector, Robert Vanbergh Law. Another organ, built by Bevington and Sons, was bought following further fundraising in 1860.³⁴⁹

In 1783 religious services were conducted at the church twice on Sundays throughout the year and on the three feast days of Christmas, Easter and Good Friday. There were usually between 20 and 30 communicants.³⁵⁰ Later, possibly exaggerated, figures given for census Sunday in 1851, stated 300 congregants attended the morning and afternoon service, and there were 90 Sunday scholars in the morning and 80 in the afternoon. The seating capacity of the church was recorded as 542,³⁵¹ although in 1889 it was described as 330.³⁵²

Nonconformity: Although only one nonconformist was reported in the parish in 1676,³⁵³ in 1684 seven parishioners were excommunicated for not attending church. One of the seven, John Bernard, was absolved from the excommunication 30 years later by Revd Itchener.³⁵⁴

³⁴² WSA, 161/144.

³⁴³ WSA, 1171/97; WSA, 1710/45. Willes was later reimbursed in 1776.

³⁴⁴ NHLE, 1199647.

³⁴⁵ TNA, PROB 11/1571/82.

³⁴⁶ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 23 June 1836, 30 June 1836, 7 July 1836, 15 June 1836

³⁴⁷ W. Itchener, *A Defence of the Canon of the Old Testament* (London, 1723), responding to Whiston's *A Supplement to Mr. Whiston's Late Essay Towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament* (1723).

³⁴⁸ WSA, 1710/32.

³⁴⁹ WSA, 1710/30, 21 July 1839, 2 Dec. 1860, 10 Dec. 1860.

³⁵⁰ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 66–7.

³⁵¹ TNA, HO 129/253.

³⁵² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889 edn.).

³⁵³ *Wilts. N&Q.* III, 536; *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 128.

³⁵⁴ *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 60.

Quakers were living in the parish during the 1660s and later.³⁵⁵ A Quaker meeting house was registered in the parish in 1707 by Walter and William Pryce.³⁵⁶ Ten years later they were among several Quakers in Christian Malford and Avon chapelry prosecuted for non-payment of church rates.³⁵⁷ On Walter's death in 1733 he left money to the local poor and the Quaker congregation in nearby Charlcutt.³⁵⁸ No Quakers were noted in the parish in 1783.³⁵⁹

An unlicensed meeting house for 'Methodists', most likely referring to the local independent or congregationalist assembly, was reported in the parish in 1783. According to the vicar of nearby Sutton Benger, their meetings were addressed by a 'variety of illiterate preachers.' He continued, 'many of their followers seem to be regular well-meaning but mistaken people'.³⁶⁰

His description was disingenuous. The Congregational minister, William Jay, was at Christian Malford before moving to the Argyle chapel at Bath in 1791, where he became one of the most admired preachers of his day.³⁶¹ Jay trained for the ministry under Cornelius Winter and, while his student, often preached at Christian Malford.³⁶² When he came to the parish as an ordained minister during the 1780s, he hoped 'to find abstraction and to pursue my improvement.' He did not get the solitude and reflection that he evidently required. A lack of access to books and his great popularity as a preacher meant, 'I was urged constantly to preach abroad', so that he later recollected, 'my design and expectation failed me in no small degree'.³⁶³

Cornelius Winter was another distinguished dissenting minister with local connections.³⁶⁴ Ordained at Christian Malford, he later created a seminary within the parish, 'I had my eye upon them [the congregation] as a proper people with whom my young friends might with advantage take their first exertions.' Winter said of Jay when he was employed in the village after ordination, 'I never supposed he would continue with them'.³⁶⁵ At Winter's suggestion Jay's farewell sermon at Christian Malford in 1789 was published.³⁶⁶

The old Independent chapel was taken down and rebuilt in 1836. On census Sunday in 1851 the new building, with a capacity of 170 sitting and 40 standing, attracted a congregation

³⁵⁵ Christian Malford Quaker burials from the 1660s in *Wilts. N&Q.*, V, VI, VII; also in WSA, 1699/18.

³⁵⁶ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 14. It was perhaps in Avon, as William Price is described as 'of Avon' in Christian Malford from 1715: WSA, 1699/18.

³⁵⁷ *A Brief Account of the Many Persecutions of the People Called Quakers in the Exchequer, Ecclesiastical and Other Courts* (London: J. Sowle, 1736), 150.

³⁵⁸ WSA, P1/P/704.

³⁵⁹ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 67.

³⁶⁰ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 67, 192.

³⁶¹ ODNB, s.v. Jay, William, Congregational minister, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

³⁶² ODNB, s.v. Jay, William, Congregational minister, accessed 17 Aug. 2024; C. Jay, *Recollections of William Jay* (1859), 49.

³⁶³ Jay, *Recollections*, 49. See also *VCH Wilts.* III, 133–4.

³⁶⁴ J. Waylen, *Hist. Marlborough* (1854), 486–94; *VCH Wilts.* III, 131.

³⁶⁵ *VCH Wilts.* III, 133–4.

³⁶⁶ *A Farewell Sermon Preached at Christian Malford, on Sunday November 29, 1789* (Bath, 1789), advertised in *Bristol Mercury*, 1 Mar. 1790.

of 50 in the morning and 56 in the evening. There was no Sunday school,³⁶⁷ but a schoolroom was added in 1909.³⁶⁸ The structure is Grade II listed and was converted before 2024 for residential usage.³⁶⁹

A Wesleyan meeting house was registered in 1822. In 1827 a dwelling was registered in Avon at the home of John Cole for Wesleyan Methodists and endorsed by Revd John Baker of Salisbury.³⁷⁰

A Primitive Methodist meeting was recorded at a dwelling house in 1851. The preacher, Thomas Taylor, took services morning and evening, and his congregation averaged 34.³⁷¹ Taylor was an agricultural labourer, residing in Friday Street, in 1851, but was described in 1861 as both a woodman and primitive preacher. The chapel was later reported to have occupied two cottages near Bright's farm. It was demolished by 1938.³⁷²

Church Architecture

John Aubrey's harsh assessment c.1670 of All Saints church, Christian Malford, as having 'nothing of antiquity left but some stalls left around the chancel' is inaccurate.³⁷³ The stalls were in fact removed by the mid 19th century, but the church retains a Norman font bowl and a Norman arch above the north doorway.³⁷⁴ The chancel dates from the 13th century, and the south aisle and arcade from the 14th. Much of the fenestration is of 14th- or 15th-century date and there are good medieval rood and aisle screens. The south porch and nave and south-east chapel roofs are of the 15th century. A west tower was added in the early 18th century. In 1722/3, the five church bells were sent to Gloucester to be recast as six. The rector, Revd Itchener, contributed £20. After the bells were rehung it was agreed to give Ambrose Pullen 40s. annually for life to look after them. Money was also made available to provide a 'good floor' to the belfry.³⁷⁵ The bells were rung each year on 5 November to mark the gunpowder plot.³⁷⁶

In 1860/1 the gallery was removed and open pews substituted. The aisles were paved and work was completed on the tower. The £151 cost was covered by church rates and several donations, including from the rector, Vanbergh Law, and the Earl of Carnarvon.³⁷⁷ Despite this work, in 1870 the church was described as 'in a dangerous condition: the north wall threatens to become a speedy ruin.'³⁷⁸ During the subsequent renovation, under architect Ewan Christian, services were moved into the Lady Chapel and south aisle. The extensive

³⁶⁷ TNA, HO 129/253.

³⁶⁸ *Wilts. Times*, 7 May 1938.

³⁶⁹ NHLE, 1022462.

³⁷⁰ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 98, 114.

³⁷¹ TNA, HO 129/253.

³⁷² *Wilts. Times*, 7 May 1938.

³⁷³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 125–6.

³⁷⁴ This para: Orbach and Pevsner, 233–4; NHLE, 1199647; WSA, 1710/32, notes at back of volume.

³⁷⁵ WSA, 1710/30, back of volume. 7 Aug., 13 Nov., 22 Nov. 1722, 19 Apr. 1783; accounts for 1723 and 1724 at front.

³⁷⁶ WSA, 1710/33.

³⁷⁷ WSA, 1710/30. 23 June 1860.

³⁷⁸ WSA, 1710/30, unidentified news cutting, 22 Sept. 1870.

restoration involved rebuilding the west gable and window and most of the north and east walls, 'new and open roofs' to the nave and chancel, a new chancel arch, two new windows in the chancel; other windows in the nave were restored. The church also received a new north porch and buttress, a new pulpit, reading pew, lectern, new pavements, hangings under the east window and a curtain from the belfry door. The £1,487 cost was raised by subscribers, from church rates (£300), contributions from the diocese (£100) and money raised at village concerts (£38). The biggest single contributors were the Earl of Carnarvon (£250), trustees of Henry Meux (£160), Vanbergh Law (£100), T.H.R. Poynder and William Poynder (£100 each) and the Marquis of Lansdowne (£50). The builder, Mr Millar, who had formerly undertaken repairs *gratis* in 1860, in 1872, while again making no charge, accepted a 'present' of £20. The restored portions of All Saints church were opened 5 May 1872.³⁷⁹

During the 1930s cracks appeared in the church's structure, and plans were made to underpin the tower.³⁸⁰ In 1945 the new incumbent, Revd W.H. Barbswell, found the Lady Chapel in a deplorable condition, with its walls propped up, both outside and inside. These were subsequently underpinned, and a new altar and floor added. Renovations were completed the following year to the design of Oswald Brakspear. The cost was met by local donations, a diocesan grant of £100 and loans of £500 and £300 from the Pilgrim Trust. Many human remains were discovered and re-interred.³⁸¹ In 1959 new churchyard gates were given to the parish in memory of Gwendoline Marion Wakefield.³⁸² Heating was installed (or replaced) in 1977.³⁸³

Several incumbents are commemorated in the church including Robert Vanbergh Law, rector 1835–77, memorialised in a north-side chancel window.³⁸⁴

The Christian Malford parish registers for christenings, burials and marriages survive from 1653.³⁸⁵ Earlier volumes were allegedly burned in a fire at the curate's lodging in 1693.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Manorial government

A reeve (*prepositus*) was present in 1189.³⁸⁶ By 1265 this officer had been replaced by a bailiff who was present until the Dissolution.³⁸⁷ A hayward (*messor*) made presentments on behalf of the homage at the hallmoot, 1265–1518.³⁸⁸

³⁷⁹ WSA, 1710/30. See also WSA, 1710/33, 1710/37.

³⁸⁰ WSA, 1710/36.

³⁸¹ WSA, 1710/33, 1710/36.

³⁸² WSA, 1710/33.

³⁸³ WSA, 1710/36.

³⁸⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911, edn).

³⁸⁵ WSA, 1710/1–14, 3403/1–4.

³⁸⁶ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 203.

³⁸⁷ Longleat ms. various, for instance 10683, 10779, 11182 and 11223.

³⁸⁸ Longleat ms. various, for instance 10683, 10779, 11182 and 11223. BL Harl. Ms. 3961.

Christian Malford was divided into a west tithing and an east tithing each of whom made presentments at the North Damerham hundred court in 1311.³⁸⁹ Merchets and chevage were claimed in 1313.³⁹⁰

A court book or rolls have survived for Christian Malford manor 1314–16, 1500–1699, 1749–1825, 1837, 1841, and 1852.³⁹¹ In the mid 18th century, courts leet and views of frankpledge for the manor generally took place biannually in April and October. By 1800 this had typically become an annual occurrence. A court baron was held sporadically.³⁹² A tithingman was selected annually.

The chief postholder of the manorial court during the 18th century was the manor bailiff, who was generally appointed for several years. Appointees included Richard Bath 1749–55, Ralph Gale 1755–75, Charles Weston 1775–89, Henry Viveash 1789–98 and William Collins 1806–25.³⁹³ The Christian Malford court selected both a tithingman and a constable. The distinction in their roles was not made apparent. A hayward was also designated.

The issues presented often concerned building and repairing bridges, maintaining stiles and scouring ditches. In 1803 many of the 23 presented to make repairs to buildings had not complied by the following court.³⁹⁴ The court occasionally asked the surveyors of the highways (appointed by the parish) to make specific improvements to roads or bridges.³⁹⁵ Much of the business transacted concerned the admittance and surrender of copyholds.

Customs of the manor were presented in 1614. These included several where the rights of women were more actively upheld than elsewhere. A widow enjoyed her husband's estate even if he had been 'stained' by treason or felony. A copyholder's daughter who was named heir could also marry without licence, nor by so doing did she break the agreement, 'for she is a headholder her husband is not.' Furthermore, 'our Custom is that when a widow doth live unchaste that appertaineth unto the Ecclesiastical Court for that our Custom have not to do with it, but for her Living she shall Injoy it by Our Custom'.³⁹⁶ This latter provision was removed from customs transcribed in the manor court book 1749–1825.³⁹⁷ In both versions of the customs, a tenant could lose his copy without forfeiting his agreement.

By the 15th century there was a separate manor court for the rectory estate,³⁹⁸ whose lord was the rector. The business at the court baron held in the 18th and 19th centuries was almost exclusively tenurial. It was often held only when required, such as when a tenant died; several years could elapse between courts and no court baron was in fact held 1808–36. Several courts were held to enable William Willes (d. 1815), incumbent for over 60 years, to

³⁸⁹ Longleat ms. 10767.

³⁹⁰ Longleat ms.10654.

³⁹¹ TNA, SC 2/200/56A; C 116/273; WSA, 1171/97, 663/14.

³⁹² WSA, 1171/97, courts baron e.g., 3 Aug. 1752, 24 Oct. 1783.

³⁹³ Ralph Gale is first referred to as Richard, apparently in error.

³⁹⁴ WSA, 1171/97, 29 Apr. 1803, 14 Oct. 1803.

³⁹⁵ WSA, 1171/97, 20 Oct. 1749, 9 May 1753.

³⁹⁶ WAM, 41, 174–7.

³⁹⁷ WSA, 1171/97, inside cover.

³⁹⁸ Hants. Archives, 11M59/C1/22/1–8: ct. rolls 1474–6, 1505–9, 1518–20, 1526–57; WSA 3608/box 21: ct. book 1727–1904. See also WSA, 161/32, 3958/1, 415/210.

organise the tenurial arrangements of his children.³⁹⁹ In 1745 Charles Trimmell was admitted to the copyhold of his father who had hanged himself.⁴⁰⁰

A bailiff and occasionally a tithingman were appointed for the Christian Malford rectory manor. The homage presented the customs of the estate in 1744.⁴⁰¹ The last entry of the court was in 1904.

There are no surviving court records of a manor of Avon. However, the Bremhill part of Avon was owned by Sir Edward Bayntun and tenanted by John Long; Long and his heirs thus owed suit of court to Bayntun,⁴⁰² and Avon tenants are found in Bremhill manor court records 1651–7.⁴⁰³

Parish government

No separate vestry minutes for Christian Malford have survived, but complete overseers' accounts are available 1665–1721, 1773–9, 1788–1800, 1824–34, and churchwardens' accounts 1666–1761, and 1766–1921.⁴⁰⁴ These also contain information on a number of vestry meetings, particularly the annual selection of parish officers.⁴⁰⁵

The close collaboration between manorial, parochial and ecclesiastical authorities is evident in the churchwardens' accounts. These contain some lists of tithingmen and petty constables from 1681 (although the tithingmen list is damaged), but crucially they refer to vestry meetings from the 1670s into the first half of the 18th century at which both parochial and manorial postholders were elected.⁴⁰⁶ Some disbursements to the poor made at parish meetings are also noted within churchwardens accounts.⁴⁰⁷

Overseers' accounts record that two overseers were selected during the 17th and early 18th centuries, rising to four by c.1780. By the 1810s, the numbers had reduced to two. Overseers were sometimes women.⁴⁰⁸ Close co-operation between parochial and manorial bodies persisted in the late-18th century. Signatories suggest that manorial officeholders also took an active role at the vestry: Charles Weston, bailiff 1775–89, often signed off on monthly disbursements.⁴⁰⁹ The manorial constable and tithingman often attended the selection of overseers, which continued into the 1830s.⁴¹⁰

³⁹⁹ WSA, 3608/box 21, e.g., 6 Oct. 1775, 9 Dec. 1785, 8 Nov. 1804.

⁴⁰⁰ WSA, 3608/box 21, back of the court book and 16 Sept. 1745.

⁴⁰¹ WSA, 3608/box 21, 19 Oct. 1744. See also, WAM 41, 176–7.

⁴⁰² WSA, 473/52, e.g., 13 Oct. 1651, 11 Oct. 1652, 18 Apr. 1653.

⁴⁰³ WSA, 473/52.

⁴⁰⁴ WSA, 1710/44–7, 1710/32–3.

⁴⁰⁵ WSA, 1710/32, e.g. 30 Mar. 1730, 7 Apr. 1729, 22 Apr. 1728, 3 Apr. 1727.

⁴⁰⁶ WSA, 1710/32, e.g. meetings 1 Apr. 1689, 13 Apr. 1696, 6 Apr. 1702, 18 Apr. 1704, 22 Apr. 1717, 15 Apr. 1723 selected two churchwardens, overseers, a constable and tithingman. Others, e.g., 23 Mar. 1667 also elected highway surveyors.

⁴⁰⁷ WSA, 1710/32, back of book, e.g., 3 Nov. 1720.

⁴⁰⁸ WSA, 1710/44, 5 Apr. 1675, 16 Apr. 1677, 28 Apr. 1723; 1710/46, 13 Apr. 1789. See also 1047/47.

⁴⁰⁹ WSA, 1171/45.

⁴¹⁰ e.g., WSA, 1710/45, 3 Apr. 1774, 8 Apr. 1776, 20 Apr. 1778, 5 Apr. 1779. e.g., WSA, 1710/46 5 Apr. 1790 25 Apr. 1791, 25 Mar. 1799. WSA, 1710/47. e.g., 30 Mar. 1832.

In 1713 it was agreed that the parish clerk be paid 40s. annually to provide a barrel of beer for inhabitants on Easter Monday for the selection of parish officers.⁴¹¹

In 1664/5 19 people received poor relief. In 1667/8 relief totalled £79 19s. 6d. which rose to £85 19s. 7d. by 1703/4.⁴¹² The cost of those in receipt of relief increased during the 18th century to £341 in 1776 and £791 in 1803.⁴¹³ After climbing to £1,142 in 1814 (during the Napoleonic wars), costs were reduced to just £752 in the following year. The number relieved also fell dramatically from 104 to 58.⁴¹⁴ During the early 1830s the cost of poor relief remained well below 1814 levels, at between £658 and £876.⁴¹⁵

In 1704 disbursements included a number associated with a smallpox epidemic, including for a pest house in a building owned by a Mr Stratton. These included payments to Stratton of over £1 'for the house and firing when people had the smallpox' and the provision of fuel and food.⁴¹⁶ In 1792 the parish poor rates, which had paid for a doctor attending the poor from 1776, bore the cost of a mass inoculation of 150 by Dr Underwood.⁴¹⁷

In the 1790s some quarterly expenses of a Sunday school were met by the poor rates.⁴¹⁸ The necessity of charging the school to the parish may have prompted the incumbent, Revd William Willes, to leave a legacy to the school in his will.⁴¹⁹

The number of expenses for warrants and removal orders suggest that the parish was actively using settlement legislation to ensure relief was paid only to those with an appropriate settlement. Because it lay on significant transport routes the parish may have received a higher proportion of the transient poor.

Two churchwardens were annually selected, one of whom was nominated by the incumbent.⁴²⁰ Two surveyors of the highway were selected from 1667.⁴²¹ However, accounts for surveyors have only survived for 1831–2. In 1831 disbursements were only made for highway repair; activity the following year focused on constructing 'the new arch bridge', and costs rose from £14 2s. 11d. to £38 4s. 10d.⁴²²

The more southerly Avon was not listed in poor law returns for 1776, but was recorded separately as an extra-parochial place in the Chippenham hundred in poor law returns 1783–5, 1803 and 1818.⁴²³ A 1796 estate survey of this Avon also denotes it as extra-parochial.⁴²⁴ However, it was treated as a parish in the creation of poor law unions after the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 and joined the Chippenham Poor Law Union formed in

⁴¹¹ WSA, 1710/32, back of volume, memo. 6 Apr. 1713, 2 May 1711, 1 Apr. 1715.

⁴¹² WSA, 1710/44.

⁴¹³ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 562–3.

⁴¹⁴ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 494–5.

⁴¹⁵ *Poor Rate Returns*, 1830–4, H.C. 444 (1835), xlvii, 210.

⁴¹⁶ WSA, 1710/44, May 1704.

⁴¹⁷ WSA, 1710/46, 25 Mar. 1792.

⁴¹⁸ WSA, 1710/46.

⁴¹⁹ TNA, PROB 11/1571/82.

⁴²⁰ WSA, 1710/32–3.

⁴²¹ WSA, 1170/32. e.g., 4 Apr. 1670, 5 Apr. 1672; 1710/44, 4 Apr. 1681.

⁴²² WSA, 1710/45.

⁴²³ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1804, 530; *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 494–5.

⁴²⁴ WSA, 2062/11.

December 1835. This parish of Avon was abolished in 1895 to help make Kellaways civil parish.⁴²⁵

There are no surviving parish records for this Avon, if any existed. However, a highway rate was collected in 1690, and disbursements 1690–3 show the highways of Avon were repaired by Sir George Hungerford of nearby Cadenham manor.⁴²⁶ In 1796 the repair of ‘the road’ was completed by the tenant of Avon farm.⁴²⁷

The more northerly Avon was administratively part of Christian Malford.

Post -1894 Local Government

Parish council minutes are only available from 1919. Footpaths were a regular item at meetings during the first half of the 20th century and a footpaths and stiles committee was created.⁴²⁸ The parish supported the provision of council housing in the period between the wars, and was active in pressing for improvements in water, sewerage, electric lighting and the provision of public telephones. These efforts were sometimes frustrated by costs, such as the arrangement of streetlights in 1931, or a lack of support from other stakeholders such as the rural district council.⁴²⁹ However, the parish council was successful in persuading the railway company to provide a halt.⁴³⁰

Council meetings took place at the schoolroom during the early 20th century.⁴³¹ In 2024 meetings took place monthly at the village hall.⁴³²

⁴²⁵ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 531.

⁴²⁶ WSA, 2943B/1/27.

⁴²⁷ WSA, 2062/11.

⁴²⁸ WSA, 1563/1.

⁴²⁹ WSA, 1563/1. 25 Oct. 1931, 13 Nov. 1931.

⁴³⁰ WSA, 1563/1. e.g., 1 Oct. 1925, 3 May 1926

⁴³¹ WSA, 1563/112.

⁴³² <http://www.christianmalford.org.uk/meetings/> (accessed 29 July 2024).