



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Chastleton

Local Government

Manor Courts and Officers

Courts for Chastleton manor's free and customary tenants were held by the late 13th century. One of the villeins then served as reeve,¹ and a hayward was mentioned in 1347.² No actual court rolls are known before 1507, when five men formed the homage and a field order was issued,³ and in a dispute c.1540 the lord Sir Richard Catesby reportedly destroyed court papers produced by Launde priory (Leics.) as owner of one half of the manor, in an attempt to claim it for himself.⁴ Courts presumably continued in 1596, when there were still copyholds,⁵ and a pound for stray animals existed in 1607.⁶

Henry of Fretherne and Eynsham abbey held their respective Chastleton and Brookend estates directly from the lord of Hook Norton in 1279, Henry owing suit to Hook Norton's manor court twice a year.⁷ The abbey's Brookend estate may have been recognized as a separate manor by 1329, although no courts are known before 1379;⁸ thereafter several court rolls survive for the period 1382–1499, when the court generally met once or twice a year. Officers included a bailiff and up to three rent collectors, while business encompassed field orders and suppression of nuisances as well as regulation of the manor's tenancies.⁹ In 1387 the court imposed a leyrwite (fine for fornication) on a bondswoman, and by 1482 the manor had its own pound.¹⁰

Attendance at Chadlington hundred court (theoretically every three weeks) was owed both by Henry of Fretherne and by the lord of Chastleton in 1279, when the latter's representative paid 5*d.* wardpenny and 8*s.* for the sheriff's tourn. An annual view of frankpledge for the hundred was held at Chastleton by the bailiff of the earl of Gloucester (as lord of the hundred), who collected 4*s.* certainty money and any fines.¹¹ Those views

¹ *Rot. Hund.* II, 729.

² Bodl. MS dd Ch. Ch. c 26, OR 11.

³ TNA, SC 2/197/24B; for ct rolls of similar date, *ibid.* SC 2/207/68; SC 2/207/91.

⁴ OHC, E24/1/1D/37–8; above, landownership (Chastleton).

⁵ OHC, E24/1/1D/7; E24/1/3D/1–2; above, econ. hist.

⁶ OHC, E163/D/1.

⁷ *Rot. Hund.* II, 729; above, landownership (other estates).

⁸ *Ibid.*; BL, Harl. Roll A43.

⁹ TNA, SC 2/197/14; BL, Harl. Rolls B1, B11–14. For ct business, above, econ. hist. (medieval); social hist. (Middle Ages).

¹⁰ TNA, SC 2/197/14; BL, Harl. Roll B13.

¹¹ *Rot. Hund.* II, 729.

continued in 1547–9, when Chastleton's tithingman paid 12s. certainty money, 5d. wardpenny, but nothing for hidage, and fines were imposed for a breach of the peace, failure to scour ditches, and stray animals.¹²

By 1596 Robert Catesby claimed his own view of frankpledge as lord of Chastleton,¹³ and in 1737 a court leet for the 'manor of Chastleton and Brookend' (convened by the lord John Jones's steward) fined Ellen Biggs, owner of the Greenwood estate, for an encroachment on the waste. Similar views were held until at least 1817, manorial officers in 1754 including a constable and two tithingmen, one each for Chastleton and Brookend. In 1776 the court ordered a footbridge to be built across a stream, and in 1817 it agreed the construction of a new pound at the village's north end, close to the blacksmith's shop.¹⁴

Parish Government and Officers

Two churchwardens were mentioned in 1530 and 1635,¹⁵ although by 1670 their election had lapsed 'for some years', and the archdeacon demanded that new ones be appointed along with two sidesmen.¹⁶ In 1688 they were to convene a parish meeting to give notice of a church rate for rebuilding the church tower.¹⁷ A parish clerk buried in 1629 was also a pauper,¹⁸ though in 1817 the rector considered the clerk's duty 'trifling', adding that with a 3-guinea salary and £1 in fees he was 'well paid for what he does'.¹⁹ A parish constable and a collector for the poor (then doubling as a churchwarden) were mentioned in 1642,²⁰ and overseers of the poor in the 1680s, their successors in the 1790s renting cottages for the poor.²¹

Vestry minutes survive from 1846, two overseers being elected in 1847 alongside a guardian of the poor and two constables. In 1851 two surveyors of the highways were also elected, and in 1854 auctioned off soil scraped from the parish's roads.²² A decade later Chastleton became part of the new Chadlington Highway District, but was transferred almost

¹² TNA, SC 2/197/20–1; cf. *ibid.* LR 2/189, f. 109v.

¹³ OHC, E24/1/1D/7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* E24/1/CR/1–2; *ibid.* Acc. 5428, Box 1/35–9, 50–1. For Biggs, above, landownership (other estates).

¹⁵ *Visit. Dioc. Linc.* II, 45; OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 40, f. 90.

¹⁶ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 23, f. 169.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 104, f. 45c.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* par. reg. transcript, burial 1629.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. d 576, f. 69.

²⁰ *Prot. Retns.* 82. The parish constable in 1688 was a village blacksmith: above, social hist. (1500–1800).

²¹ OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 204.59; TNA, PROB 11/391/206; GA, D1447/1/263b; above, social hist. (welfare).

²² OHC, PAR60/2/A/1.

immediately to Moreton-in-Marsh Highway District (dissolved in 1890).²³ A special vestry meeting called in 1882, to consider a scandal surrounding the rector, was attended by ‘a more than usual number of the ratepayers’, who resolved to refer the matter to the bishop.²⁴

Under the 1894 Local Government Act the vestry’s civil functions passed to a new parish meeting, which met initially at the village school and which was chaired (until his death in 1897) by F. Hubert Freer of Kitebrook House.²⁵ From 1916 the meeting nominated four out of seven trustees of the parish charities,²⁶ and continued in 2024.²⁷ The parish belonged to Chipping Norton Poor Law Union from 1834, Chipping Norton Rural District from 1894, and West Oxfordshire District from 1974.²⁸

²³ *London Gaz.* 8 Jan. 1864, p. 102; 1 July 1864, pp. 3341–2; OHC, QSH/6; QSH/10.

²⁴ OHC, PAR60/2/A/1; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 1764; above, relig. hist. (since 1789).

²⁵ OHC, PAR60/3/A1/1; *Evesham Standard*, 27 Mar. 1897.

²⁶ OHC, PAR60/13/A2/1; above, social hist. (welfare).

²⁷ <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk> (accessed Feb. 2024). Parish meeting records have not been located.

²⁸ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 394; *Oxon. Atlas*, 144–5, 150–1.