



## VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

# Churchill

## Local Government

### Manor Courts and Officers

Ratification of an agreement by 18 of the parish's freemen c.1254 suggests attendance at local courts and familiarity with legal proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Courts for Churchill manor raised 6s. 8d. a year in 1298,<sup>2</sup> and continued in the 15th and 16th centuries, when they dealt with upkeep of tenants' buildings, open-field regulation, and customary tenancy transfers, including the payment of heriots and entry fines.<sup>3</sup> Copyhold grants imply their continued existence under the Hattons and Walters, although the later court rolls may have perished in a fire at Sarsden House in 1689.<sup>4</sup> Medieval and later courts were presumably held at Churchill manor house, still called the 'court house' in the 18th century, although as it was then being used as a dairy the courts may have moved elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> A hayward was mentioned in 1325, and a constable in 1377 and in the 1630s–60s.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1270s Churchill's lords and tenants were also required to attend the twice-yearly county court, the sheriff of Oxfordshire's twice-yearly tourn, and Chadlington hundred's three-weekly courts and annual view of frankpledge. By the 16th century the hundredal views were held in the parish, the tithingman (as earlier) paying fixed sums for cert money, wardpenny, and hidage, while inhabitants were presented for such offences as assault or breaking the assizes of bread and ale.<sup>7</sup> The views apparently lapsed by the later 17th century.<sup>8</sup>

### Parish Government and Officers

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<sup>1</sup> *St Frideswide's Cart.* II, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 745–6; TNA, C 133/85/1.

<sup>3</sup> Northants. Archives, FH 358; FH 361–366 (ct rolls to 1540).

<sup>4</sup> TNA, C 8/311/152; *N&Q*, 12th ser. IX, 132; below, Sarsden, landownership (manor ho.).

<sup>5</sup> *Par. Colln.* I, 94; above, landownership (manor ho.).

<sup>6</sup> *Cal. Inq. Misc.* II, p. 530; *Poll Taxes 1377–81*, ed. Fenwick, II, 305; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1635–6, 308; 1639–40, 466–7; TNA, E 179/255/4.

<sup>7</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 746; TNA, SC 2/197/20–1; *ibid.* LR 2/189, f. 110; Glos. Archives, D 9125/3/26, f. 45v.

<sup>8</sup> *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 26; above, vol. overview (govt).

Two churchwardens were mentioned in 1530, and in the 1630s raised taxes for the church's repair in consultation with a dozen or so leading inhabitants.<sup>9</sup> A small endowment in land (c.2 a after enclosure) also contributed to their church expenses, while their other duties included distribution of charitable relief.<sup>10</sup> In the late 18th and early 19th centuries they additionally acted as sequestrators of the benefice, either alone or with the incumbent.<sup>11</sup> By the 19th century one was chosen by the parish and one by the vicar in the usual way, an annual Easter vestry (held in one of the schoolrooms) continuing for that purpose after the establishment (by 1915) of a parochial church council. By the early 20th century the churchwardens were also regularly assisted by sidesmen.<sup>12</sup> Other parish officers included overseers of the poor (mentioned from the 17th century) and surveyors of highways, who at enclosure in 1788 received allotments for road-mending.<sup>13</sup> No early minutes or accounts of parish officers have been found, although overseers' accounts naming the recipients of the poor's stock were certainly being kept in 1759.<sup>14</sup>

Under the 1894 Local Government Act the vestry's civil powers passed to a parish council of six members, who continued to appoint the parish's two overseers.<sup>15</sup> By the 1890s the council's clerk was the former schoolmaster George Orford (d. 1910), who also served as joint assistant overseer with Lyneham and Sarsden, and was succeeded in both roles by the headmaster of the mixed school William Anson.<sup>16</sup> In 1976 Churchill's parish council was united with Sarsden's, Churchill being represented by five members, and Sarsden by one.<sup>17</sup> For ecclesiastical purposes, Churchill and Sarsden retained a separate parochial church council following the benefice's unification with Kingham and Daylesford in 1979, and from 1992 two churchwardens were elected for the united Churchill and Sarsden ecclesiastical parish.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Visit. Dioc. Linc.* II, 44; *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1629–34*, p. 69; above, social hist. (1500–1800).

<sup>10</sup> Above, social hist. (welfare); relig. hist. (glebe).

<sup>11</sup> OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. b 8, f. 148; b 37, f. 42v.; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. c 136, f. 130; above, relig. hist. (relig. life).

<sup>12</sup> OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 38, f. 61v.; *ibid.* PAR66/2/A/1; PAR66/3/A/1–3; *Tewkesbury Reg.* 26 Apr. 1930, 7 Apr. 1951, 23 Apr. 1955.

<sup>13</sup> OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 65/4/21; 6/5/3; *ibid.* enclo. award.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. d 555, f. 139v.; above, social hist. (welfare).

<sup>15</sup> *Oxf. Chron.* 17 Nov. 1894; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 16 Apr. 1924.

<sup>16</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1939 edns); *Oxon. Weekly News*, 13 July 1910; above, social hist. (educ.).

<sup>17</sup> *Roundabout* [Churchill and Sarsden par. newsletter] (Dec. 1975): copy in OHC, SZ CHURb/052; <https://churchillandsarsden-pc.gov.uk> (accessed Oct. 2023).

<sup>18</sup> OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 1879, Order in Council; church guide-book (c.2000 edn), 11: copy in *ibid.*; *Oxf. Dioc. Year Book* (2009), 65–6; above, relig. hist. (paroch. organizn).

Churchill belonged from 1834 to Chipping Norton Poor Law Union, from 1894 to the newly formed Chipping Norton Rural District, and from 1974 to the new West Oxfordshire District, which in 1999 designated the whole village a conservation area.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 394; *Oxon. Atlas*, pp. 145, 151; *Census*, 1981; WODC website (Oct. 2023).