

KINGTON LANGLEY

THE CIVIL PARISH of Kington Langley was created in 1866 from an area of the ancient parish of Kington St Michael that lay east of the Chippenham–Malmesbury road (designated A350 since the 1970s).¹ The dispersed settlement in 2023 encompassed 30 a. of common, probably a remnant of ‘*Langlegh*’ or ‘*Langleyheth*’ from which the parish takes its name. Kington Langley is located on high ground 4 km north of Chippenham. In 1848, as a tithing of Kington St Michael, the village contained 1,642 a., and in 1885 as a civil parish it contained 1,498 a.² Many aspects of Kington Langley’s history before 1866 are considered in the account of Kington St Michael.

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries and parish origins

Although achieving parish status only in 1866, Kington Langley as Langley (*Langeleyghe*) was a Saxon estate existing by 940.³ By 1135 Langley was annexed to Kington St Michael, and they were considered together in Hilbert’s survey under the name *Kyngtona*.⁴ For the next several hundred years Langley existed as a tithing of Kington.

Historically the tithing was divorced from the main settlement around the church of Kington St Michael by the Chippenham–Malmesbury road (identified as *Ergespath* in the Langley charter bounds in 940). The settlement formed just north of the common of *Langlegh*, along the road comprising Plough Lane, the Common and Church Road, which was probably the boundary of the common. As *Langleyheth* the common was computed at 310 a. in 1518, and extended westwards to Heywood in Kington St Michael tithing.⁵

Several affixes distinguished the village from its neighbours. These included ‘North’ Langley, as the settlement lay north of Langley Burrell, and ‘Kington’ used both as a prefix and a suffix (Kington Langley and Langley Kington), since the village lay within the parish of Kington St Michael.⁶ ‘Fearne’ and ‘Fernhill’ were used as suffixes in the 16th and 17th centuries.⁷

¹ This account was written in 2023 and revised in 2024. A detailed history of the parish, by J.E. Jackson, was published in *WAM*, 4 (1858), 36–128, hereafter cited as Jackson, *Kington*. A popular history based on the research for this account, was published in 2024: L. Ryland-Epton, *The Kingtons: a History of the Ancient Parish of Kington St Michael with Kington Langley* (Gloucester, 2024).

² Kelly’s *Dir. Wilts.* (1848, 1885 edns.).

³ Electronic Sawyer, S473. For a discussion of the Saxon charters and boundaries, below, Kington St Michael, Settlement.

⁴ N.E. Stacy (ed.), *Surveys of the estates of Glastonbury abbey. c.1135–1201* (2001), 74; below, landownership. Aubrey, c.1670, referred to the settlement ‘Langley’ only: Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 11, 145–6.

⁵ BL, Harl. MS 3961; below, Kington St Michael, econ. hist.

⁶ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 101; Jackson, *Kington*, 47.

⁷ Jackson, *Kington*, 51.

However, ‘Langley’ also continued to be used as a single designation, sometimes including Langley Burrell. Thus in Speed’s map (1610), ‘Langley’ was used to denote both Langley Burrell and Kington Langley. Langley is also shown as one population centre.⁸ And as late as the 19th century ‘Langley’ was used to refer to both Kington Langley and Langley Burrell.⁹

Langley Fitzurse was described as a small manor ‘in Langley’ by John Aubrey. The Fitzurse manor house, already ancient c.1670, lay north and west of the common; it shared its name with the nearby hill that led to Langley from Kington.¹⁰ The estate was held by Urso at the time of Domesday, and by Fitzurse by 1166.¹¹ In 1518 *Langleyheth* was common to the Glastonbury abbey tenants and the owner of Langley Fitzurse.¹² Unsurprisingly ‘Langley Fitzurse’ was sometimes also used as a name for the settlement that grew around the common. Subsequently, the name ‘Langley Fitzurse’, not Kington Langley, was given to the ecclesiastical parish created in 1865.¹³ In 1866, however, the name Kington Langley was applied in preference when the civil parish was created. Both names continued in use for several decades, perpetuated by the continuing use of Langley Fitzurse for the ecclesiastical parish.¹⁴ Francis Kilvert also referred to Langley Fitzurse during the 1870s.¹⁵ The naming issue remained contentious in some quarters; the vicar J.J. Daniell was an ardent exponent of the usage of Fitzurse.¹⁶

In 1882 a portion of Kington Langley civil parish comprising Peckingell (population 27 in 1891) was reassigned to Langley Burrell.¹⁷ The civil boundary of Kington Langley was adjusted in 1883 and 1884.¹⁸

The parish as mapped in 1899 bordered five other parishes – Langley Burrell Without (south), Leigh Delamere (north), Draycot Cerne (east), Sutton Benger (east), and Kington St Michael (west).¹⁹

Landscape

The gently undulating terrain of Kington Langley is typical of the north-west Wiltshire Cotswolds.²⁰ Enclosed farmland prevails except around the village and in the north, where a large industrial and warehousing complex was constructed 2023–4 adjacent to M4 motorway junction 17, which impinges on the northern tip of the parish. A stream flows from south-west to north-east across the north of the parish from Kington St Michael towards the Avon

⁸ In J. Speed, *Theatrum Imperii Magnae Britanniae* (London, 1616).

⁹ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 12 Sept. 1822; *Morning Post* 13 Sept. 1822; *Taunton Courier*, 18 Sept. 1822 etc.

¹⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 146.

¹¹ *Red Book Exch.*, I, 223, note; below, landownership.

¹² BL, Harl. MS 3961.

¹³ Below, Religious Hist.

¹⁴ Youngs, *Admin Units*, I, 542; 29 & 30 Vict c 113; *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1875–1920 edns.).

¹⁵ Kilvert, *Diary*, *passim*.

¹⁶ Soc. Ants. Lib. JAC 006, f. 46.

¹⁷ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 344, note.

¹⁸ Youngs, *Admin Units*, I, 542; 25 Mar, 45 & 46 Vict c 58.

¹⁹ OS Map 6”, Wilts. XX (1899 edn.).

²⁰ OS Map 1:10000, ST 97 NW (1983 edn.).

at Christian Malford, and another, the Stein brook, forms the southern parish boundary and flows to the Avon at Kellaways. Small areas of woodland in the parish fringe the Stein brook, the southern edge of the village, and on either side of Day's Lane by South Sea Cottage. Much of the parish lies between 70 m. and 95 m. above Ordnance Datum, with the highest point (102 m.) along a ridge on either side of Plough Lane, and the lowest points (c.65 m.) where the two streams leave the eastern parish boundary. Cornbrash outcrops in the north of the parish, but the village and most land south of it is on Kellaways Sand, with areas of Kellaways Clay around Lower Swinley and Whitelands farms in the north, along the lower sloping land north-west of the village, and the lower ground in the south of the parish.²¹ Superficial alluvial deposits line the valleys formed by the streams. Soils around and to the south of the village are slightly acid loamy and clayey with impeded drainage, and seasonally wet along Jackson's Lane and the Stein brook.²² In the north of the parish beyond the stream are mostly freely draining shallow lime-rich soils.

*Communications*²³

Aubrey described how everything east of Kington St Michael to Draycot Cerne was common field in 1633.²⁴ It is likely that the lanes and paths through the current parish of Kington Langley largely developed as beaten trackways over open land. Their focus was probably the church, the main settlement centre of Kington St Michael and the rest of 'Langley' (Langley Burrell). In his brief description c.1670 Aubrey mentions a 'way' running through the middle of the village, on the north of which lay the (former) chapel of St Peter's.²⁵ This is probably Church Road which leads eastwards to the Swindon road (B4069), and is one of the three interconnected roads, comprising Plough Lane, the Common and Church Road, that provide the main spine through the village eastwards from Kington St Michael and the Chippenham–Malmesbury road (A350) to the B4069 that runs north from Langley Burrell. This is also broadly visible on a 1773 map. The Swindon road was described in 1653 as the highway commonly called Tedbury (Tetbury) or Malmesbury way, and led towards Sutton Benger.²⁶ It was turnpiked as far as Draycot Cerne in 1768 and disturnpiked c.1870.²⁷

Other important parish roads are Day's Lane, which runs north-west from Church Road to the A350, and existed in 1842; it may be named after Henry Day who held land along its length at the time.²⁸ Another local route, incomplete in 1842, was Ashes Lane, which runs south-east from Day's Lane to connect with the Common. Some minor roads were named or changed designation during the 19th century as the village developed and gentrified, including 'Devil's Lane', now Church Lane.

²¹ <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/> (accessed 21 July 2023).

²² <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/> (accessed 21 July 2023).

²³ See also below, Kington St Michael, Communications.

²⁴ Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 104.

²⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 146.

²⁶ *Wilts. QS Order Book 1642–1654* (WRS. 67), 286 (no. 854); WSA, 118/53.

²⁷ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 267; XIV, 75.

²⁸ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

The M4 motorway was opened north of the parish boundary in 1971, but part of the junction 17 intersection impinges on it. One consequence of the motorway's construction was that the minor road from Draycot Cerne to Stanton St Quintin was diverted on to a course through Kington Langley parish to link with the motorway junction.²⁹

A trackway shown as Watling Street on the 1773 map and leading east from the present Swindon Road is probably a jocular reference to the ancient trackway which linked Kent and Dover to the north-west of England.³⁰ On 1885 mapping 'Watling Street' (not so named) ends in a footpath that loops southwards towards Langley Burrell.³¹ The only other named way in 1773 is 'Broad Lane', used to denote part of the road to Draycot Cerne lying north of Watling Street where it widens. The 1773 map depicts the main line of the road going westwards and dividing; the other portion, a trackway marked by a dotted line, continues north to Draycot. This line became developed as the Swindon road. The map also shows some minor roads and footpaths still extant in 2024. 'Marhill', denoting the end of a way linking Kington Langley with 'Checkstoms' (Jacksoms) Lane, is probably Morell/ Morrell Lane, which was 'grass covered' by the mid 20th century and a footpath in 2024.³²

No railways or canals pass through the parish.

Directories of the 19th and 20th centuries do not record local carriers serving Kington Langley, presumably because of its proximity to the nearest market town, Chippenham. A bus service between Chippenham and Malmesbury began in 1922,³³ and a daily service from Chippenham to Swindon was operated by Bristol Tramways along the Swindon road in 1929 and 1939.³⁴ In 2024 Kington Langley was served by buses to Chippenham and nearby villages operated by Faresaver of Chippenham.³⁵

Settlement

Evidence of early human activity in the form of Mesolithic flint implements has been found in the parish south of the village and east of the A350. Mesolithic and Neolithic finds have also been found in a field called Pot Bridge, to the north of the village, east of Day's Lane and south of South Sea farm.³⁶ Pot Bridge has been the location of flint finds from the Bronze Age.³⁷

A ring ditch, possibly enclosing a Bronze Age burial mound or round house, is visible on aerial photographs taken in 2006 west of the Moors, adjacent to the A350.³⁸ Probable Iron Age or Romano-British rectangular ditched enclosures and fragments of land division have been identified by aerial photography north and east of Courtfields (north-west of the site of

²⁹ *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 75.

³⁰ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael; *Andrews' and Dury's Map 1773* (WRS. 8), pl. 13.

³¹ OS, 25-inch sheet Wilts, XX.7 (1886 edn.).

³² W.J. Meers, *Historical Notes on Two Villages in Wiltshire, Langley Fitzurse and Draycott Cerne* (1956 edn.), 24; marked as a track on OS Map 25", Wilts. XX.5 (1886 edn.).

³³ Below, Kington St Michael, communications.

³⁴ *Roadways* (1929 edn.), 422; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1939 edn.).

³⁵ <https://www.faresaver.co.uk/timetables/63bbece8b2fc.pdf> (accessed 25 July 2023).

³⁶ Wilts. HER, MWI5060, MWI5062, MWI5063, MWI5064, MWI5066, MWI5074.

³⁷ Wilts. HER, MWI5077. Romano-British Sherds were also found here. Wilts. HER, MWI5086.

³⁸ *Wilts. HER*, MWI73855, MWI73856.

the former Fitzurse manor).³⁹ Slightly further south, east of Raglan Cottages, part of a possible Iron Age or Roman curvilinear ditched enclosure is also visible.⁴⁰ A possible prehistoric or Romano-British D-Shaped enclosure is visible as cropmarks east of Tor farm and west of the A350.⁴¹ Several Romano-British pottery finds have also been made in the parish, including in the area north of Courtfields.⁴² Ditches and pits of an unknown date were identified by a geophysical survey in the north of the parish, south-east of M4 junction 17.⁴³

Settlement in the late Saxon and early medieval periods of what became Kington Langley appears to have resulted from the clearance and cultivation of areas of woodland or wood pasture, the eponymous *Langlegh*. At least two linear estates emerged, the one extending from Fitzurse northwards from the present common to Swinley, the other including land in the south, from the Greathouse (Kin House) area and running into Langley Burrell. The Fitzurse estate, fragmented in the Norman period between two or more laymen, occupied a swathe of land between the estates acquired by Glastonbury abbey in Kington Langley and Kington St Michael; it consisted of freeholds within the court leet jurisdiction of Glastonbury's Kington manor.

As a result there is no single nucleated settlement within the parish, although the moated site recorded as Fitzurse Farm was clearly a high-status medieval farmstead.⁴⁴ Another *locus* of settlement must have been around the medieval chapel of St Peter, which stood 'about the middle of the village on the north side of the way'.⁴⁵

There is aerial photographic evidence of settlement earthworks, which may be medieval, and of ridge and furrow cultivation, in the area of the present village, including probable house plots situated near Silver Street and to the north of Farleigh farmhouse (both north of Church Road).⁴⁶ Little evidence supports a village tradition that a king once resided in Kington Langley,⁴⁷ and that a battle was fought there.⁴⁸

Many of the major village farms, and the two larger gentry houses, originated in the 17th century, either from piecemeal enclosure of former arable for pasture, or because Kington St Michael manor had fragmented. Farmsteads were still partially extant in 2024, along the main route through the village (Plough Lane, the Common and Church Road), and at more isolated locations, including Church farm (Church Road),⁴⁹ Lime Tree farm (the

³⁹ Wilts. HER, MWI73857, MWI73858, MWI73860, MWI7386, MWI5147.

⁴⁰ Wilts. HER, MWI73859.

⁴¹ Wilts. HER, MWI74182.

⁴² Courtfields finds include Romano-British Pottery (Wilts. HER, MWI5081). Romano-British Sherds have also been found at Pot Bridge, east of Day's Lane (Wilts. HER, MWI5086).

⁴³ Wilts. HER, MWI74862, MWI74863.

⁴⁴ Below, landownership.

⁴⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 145–6; below, Religious hist.

⁴⁶ Wilts. HER, MWI5100. Medieval small finds from various locations, including Wilts. HER, MWI5110, MWI5117, MWI5116, MWI5119); also medieval and post-medieval pottery with an undated enclosure north of Jacksom's Lane: Wilts. HER, MWI5150.

⁴⁷ WM Library, MSS.107, in which Walter Coleman in 1841 suggested to John Britton that Æthelred had lived in Fitzurse manor.

⁴⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 146; Britton, *Beauties Wilts.* III, 161; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 6.

⁴⁹ Wilts. HER, MWI34910.

Common),⁵⁰ Landley Gate (also known as Gate) farm on A350,⁵¹ and South Sea farm (Day's Lane).⁵² Many other 19th-century farmsteads have been demolished or were redeveloped as the local economy changed; these were located predominantly north-east of the settlement centre, near the A350 and at sites south-east of the village.⁵³

Greathouse (now Kin House) was built c.1699 for William Coleman. It was a manor house before being repurposed several times during the 18th–20th centuries.⁵⁴ It was visited by Francis Kilvert (whose family had resided there) during the 1870s, when it was a tenanted but nearly dilapidated farmhouse, and he described a few intact architectural elements, including mullioned and transomed windows.⁵⁵ The building was subsequently renovated and extended.⁵⁶

The 1773 map depicts a scattered village with some clustering adjacent to the former manor of Langley Fitzurse and the Chippenham–Draycot and Swindon road.⁵⁷ The most notable development in the latter area in the 18th century was the manor house on Lower Common, a former inn dated c.1700, converted for the Coleman family by 1829.⁵⁸ The house was visited by Kilvert on a number of occasions during the 1870s.⁵⁹

Development continued along the line of the Common (also known as Lower, Middle and Upper Common) in the early 19th century during a period of rapid population growth; this included Union chapel on Middle Common.⁶⁰ In the mid 19th century St Peter's church and the school were also built, to negate, 'the usual ill effects of ignorance and irreligion', that had been identified in the tithing because of its distance from the parish church at Kington St Michael.⁶¹ During the 19th and 20th centuries the Common became referred to as the village green.⁶² In 1867 a newspaper report called it a 'perfection of a village green'.⁶³

Small-scale development continued into the 20th century, including mid-century Dovey's Terrace and Wayside Close (off Day's Lane), and 1980s Fairleigh Rise (off Church Road). Development also occurred north of Plough Lane, near the junction with the A350, in the form of Moors Close and Plough Corner. South of the lane in 2024 there was a caravan site. There was also infilling during the 20th century in the triangle between Church Lane and Church Road, and redevelopment at the sawmill on Parker's Lane.

⁵⁰ *Wilts. HER*, MWI34925.

⁵¹ *Wilts. HER*, MWI34920; MWI55312, where wrongly called Langley Gate farm.

⁵² *Wilts. HER*, MWI66126.

⁵³ *Wilts. HER*, MWI66127, MWI66128, MWI66129, MWI66130, MWI66135, MWI66136, MWI66137, MWI66166, MWI66182–6; also demolished 19th century outfarm MWI66236, MWI66237, MWI66238.

⁵⁴ *Wilts. HER*, MWI34918; NHLE, 1022321; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 378; below, landownership; soc. hist.

⁵⁵ Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 214–15.

⁵⁶ Below, landownership; Built Character.

⁵⁷ *Andrews' and Dury's Map 1773* (WRS. 8), pl. 13.

⁵⁸ WSA, 873/144; NHLE, 1363854; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 21; Badeni, *Wilts. Forefathers*, 91.

⁵⁹ e.g., Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 214–15.

⁶⁰ NHLE, 1363855.

⁶¹ Jackson, *Kington*, 50–1. Below, soc. hist.

⁶² e.g. Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 214; Jackson, *Kington*, 47.

⁶³ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 13 June 1867.

In 2024 the settlement remained concentrated in linear fashion between the A350 and B4069 (Plough Lane, the Common and Church Lane), with some development north of this line around Ashes Lane and Day's Lane.

Population

Population estimates are difficult prior to the 19th century as totals were usually combined with Kington St Michael. However, the 1377 poll tax recorded 111 adult taxpayers separately for Kington Langley, more than for Kington St Michael.⁶⁴

In 1801 the tithing of Kington Langley had a population of 371. This rose to 429 in 1811 and 504 by 1821. These totals all exceeded those for Kington St Michael. In 1851 the population of Kington Langley was 601, and 604 in 1861, shortly before the creation of the ecclesiastical parish of Langley Fitzurse. The population slipped back to 550 in 1871, and subsequently fell to 529 in 1891 after a boundary change. The decline continued during the early 20th century, falling to 437 in 1921, before recovering to 476 by 1951.⁶⁵ Thereafter the population increased to 799 in 1981, fell slightly in 1991, then increased to 822 in 2011.⁶⁶

The Built Character

The only grade II* listed building in the parish is the Greathouse, (Kin House) at the eastern end of the village, adjacent (east side) to the B4069.⁶⁷ Opposite Kin House the Manor House, similarly constructed and dating from c.1700 with later enlargements, is also listed.⁶⁸

Other listed public buildings and amenities are St Peter's church and the adjacent war memorial, unveiled in 1920, but used to commemorate the dead of both world wars. The listing commends it as 'an eloquent witness to the tragic impact of world events on this community, and the sacrifice it made in the conflicts of the 20th century.'⁶⁹ Also listed are the Union chapel on Middle Common,⁷⁰ the 19th-century walls of the former pound on Middle Common, and three turnpike-era milestones, two on the A350 and the third on the B4069, Swindon Road.⁷¹ The two former village inns, the Plough and the Hit and Miss, which both have probable 17th-century origins, are also listed.⁷²

Buildings within the parish are typically constructed of rubblestone under stone slate or Bridgwater tiled roofs. Among the oldest surviving examples are St Peter's Cottages, 1 and 2 Church Lane, originally constructed in the 16th century and subsequently rebuilt.⁷³ Other domestic examples include 1–3 Manor Cottages and Sundial Cottage on Swindon Road.⁷⁴ Farmhouses, similarly listed and constructed, are Church Farmhouse on Middle Common,

⁶⁴ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 308.

⁶⁵ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 351.

⁶⁶ <https://apps.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityhistory/Census/ByYear> (accessed 17 July 2023).

⁶⁷ NHLE, 1022321; below, landownership.

⁶⁸ NHLE, 1363854, 1363854; below, landownership.

⁶⁹ NHLE, 1283658, 1443615. Wilts. HER, MWI34898,

⁷⁰ NHLE, 1363855. See also below, Religious Hist.

⁷¹ NHLE, 1198888, 1022319, 1198879, 1283624. Wilts. HER, MWI74862.

⁷² NHLE, 1283620, 1283664. See below, Social Hist.

⁷³ NHLE, 1363853. NHLE, 1022314 at same address.

⁷⁴ NHLE, 1198934, 1283629; also NHLE, 1022315, 1198866: Dovey Cottages and Newland Terrace Day's Lane.

which has 17th-century origins; Farleigh Farmhouse on Church Lane, dating from the 18th century; and South Sea Farmhouse, Day's Lane, which dates from the later 18th century but built on a 17th-century core and later extended to a design by Oswald Brakspear.⁷⁵ Unusually for the parish, Owl Cottage on Parker's Lane still retains a thatched roof.⁷⁶

LANDOWNERSHIP

Pattern of Landownership

All lands within Kington Langley were part of the Domesday manor of Kington St Michael.⁷⁷ Following the tripartite division of that manor in 1656 each portion consisted of lands in both Kington St Michael and Kington Langley. The three portions were managed separately and initially held their own courts. One portion, which passed to the heirs of Penelope Newman and was mapped as Edward Coleman's estate in 1770,⁷⁸ was mostly within Kington Langley and is considered here. The descents of the other two divisions are considered in the description of Kington St Michael.

Manors and Principal Estates

Kington Manor – The Newman/Coleman portion: The lands in the Glastonbury abbey manor of Kington St Michael that descended to Penelope Newman through the Snell family were principally in Kington Langley with significant parts in Kington St Michael, Allington and Langley Burrell. Her estate descended to the heirs of her three daughters: Margaret Stokes (wife of Edward Stokes), Anne Sadler and Dorothy Newman. Dorothy died unmarried and her share reverted to the heirs of her sisters.⁷⁹

Anne Sadler's portion in 1656 was in Allington (in Chippenham), Peckingell, now in Langley Burrell parish, and Kington Langley.⁸⁰ Her husband John Sadler held courts for their portion between 1658 and 1670.⁸¹ At Anne Sadler's death it was divided between her three daughters: Mariella, wife of Isaac Gale, Dorothy, wife of William Coleman and Margaret, wife of Thomas Stokes.⁸² Mariella and Isaac Gale's portion principally consisted of lands in Bolehyde. The descent of this portion is described under Kington St Michael.

Dorothy Sadler added to William Coleman's estate in Kington Langley when they married in 1675. Mariella Sadler (later Gale), William Coleman and Margaret Sadler (later Stokes) came to a separate agreement on the keeping of courts on this portion of the manor,

⁷⁵ NHLE, 1022318, 1198829, 1022316. Also barns at Church farm and South Sea farm: NHLE, 1283654, 1198872.

⁷⁶ NHLE, 1198902.

⁷⁷ L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: church and endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), 149–52.

⁷⁸ WSA, 873/141.

⁷⁹ WSA, 473/196.

⁸⁰ Jackson, *Kington*, 45; below, Langley Burrell, landownership.

⁸¹ WSA, 1305/125.

⁸² WSA, 873/125.

every third year, in a settlement of 1678.⁸³ Each party to the agreement was to have a key to a chest with three locks containing the court papers and title deeds. Two parts of this third of the manor were brought back together when Thomas, son of Thomas and Margaret Stokes, sold his share to his uncle William Coleman, heavily mortgaged, in 1712.⁸⁴

The share inherited by Margaret Stokes (daughter of Penelope Newman) in 1656 was mostly in Kington St Michael. Margaret married Edward Stokes (of Stanshawes, in Yate, Glos.). Edward, or his son also Edward, sold part of their share to John Sadler (mostly in Kington Langley) having previously leased it to him in 1659.⁸⁵ The remainder (mostly in Kington St Michael) was sold to one of the White family.⁸⁶ This simplified the ownership, and manor courts could alternate between the Colemans and Whites, for their shares.

William Coleman (d. 1691)⁸⁷ held the Greathouse and the majority of the lands in Kington Langley,⁸⁸ which he passed to his son William II (d.1739). William II also held lands in Shipton under Wychwood (Oxon.) which were inherited by his grandson from his first marriage, Edward Hastings Coleman (d.1772),⁸⁹ while the Kington Langley estate passed to Walter (d.1782),⁹⁰ the son of his second marriage to Sarah Power. This marriage returned dispersed parts of the manor through her marriage settlement.⁹¹ Walter was succeeded by his son Walter (d.1845), his son Walter (d.1885) and then his son Walter Thomlinson Coleman (d.1924), who left no legitimate heirs; in 1924 his property was divided and sold.

Two houses within this portion of the manor were known as manor houses. The Greathouse was depicted in 1842 as Farm House,⁹² and on an 1885 map as Manor Farm / Manor House.⁹³ The core of the house was constructed in 1699,⁹⁴ and it was extended in 1910.⁹⁵ The construction is of rubblestone with stone slate roofs and tall ashlar stacks on a courtyard plan, as its footprint appears on a 1770 map.⁹⁶ It has a formal nine-bay west front and the central door is a 1910 copy of the original south side door. The east front is wholly of 1907–10 with centre inscription recording work for C. Garnett esq. It was occupied by the Coleman family in the early 18th century before they moved to the Manor House. The house was leased, first to Mr Bright in 1741,⁹⁷ then the southern part to Henry Townsend in 1754,⁹⁸ before gradually becoming dilapidated and later repurposed as a textile factory.⁹⁹ It was

⁸³ WSA, 1305/125; 873/125.

⁸⁴ WSA, 1305/125; 873/125.

⁸⁵ WSA, 873/125.

⁸⁶ Below, Kington St Michael, landownership.

⁸⁷ WSA, 873/157.

⁸⁸ WSA, 422/1.

⁸⁹ WSA, 873/157.

⁹⁰ WSA, 873/157.

⁹¹ WSA, 873/129. and see below, Kington St Michael, the division of the estates of Jonathan Power.

⁹² WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, no.35.

⁹³ OS Map 25", Wilts. XX.6 (1885 edn.).

⁹⁴ WSA, 873/125.

⁹⁵ NHLE, 1022321.

⁹⁶ WSA, 1305/125.

⁹⁷ WSA, 2454/4.

⁹⁸ WSA, 873/127.

⁹⁹ Badeni, *Wilts. Forefathers*, 90–1. West Sussex Record Office, Add Mss 15,370.

bought and restored by Charles Garnett as a residence in 1909.¹⁰⁰ In 1960 it became a Leonard Cheshire Foundation Home but this closed in 2018.¹⁰¹ After 2020 it was converted into a hotel and renamed Kin House.¹⁰²

The Manor House in 1842 had lawn, offices, garden and yards,¹⁰³ and it was named in 1885 as Langley Fitzurse.¹⁰⁴ The core of the house was constructed c.1700 and extended later in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is of rubblestone with ashlar dressings and hipped stone slate roof, and was formerly the White Horse inn before the Coleman family converted it to be their principal residence when they vacated the Greathouse.¹⁰⁵ It was the birthplace of Francis Kilvert's mother.¹⁰⁶

Manor or reputed manor of Langley Fitzurse: Fitzurse farm, situated in Kington Langley at the northern edge of Upper Common, formed part of the 2½ hides held by Urse in 1086. In 1166 1½ knights' fees were held from the abbot of Glastonbury by Reginald, son of Richard Fitzurse,¹⁰⁷ one of the murderers of Thomas Becket.¹⁰⁸ The property passed to Reginald's daughter Maud on his death by 1175;¹⁰⁹ she had married Robert de Courtenay by 1174/5 when he held her father's lands by her inheritance.¹¹⁰ In 1198 Robert held one fee at *Edenewythe* and Kington as a military tenant of the abbot of Glastonbury.¹¹¹

At some time following Maud's death, unlike other portions of her estate,¹¹² Langley Fitzurse returned to a family named Fitzurse. In 1221 Jordan Fitzurse resisted paying scutage for 1½ knights' fees in 1221,¹¹³ for lands in Langley, Swinley and Clapcote (in Grittleton) which he held in 1248;¹¹⁴ the dispute had been resolved by 1243.¹¹⁵ Jordan in 1261 transferred a mill and pond at Maidenwell to Glastonbury abbey.¹¹⁶ Spanning the first outbreak of the

¹⁰⁰ Badeni, *Wilts. Forefathers*, 90.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/sep/26/leonard-cheshire-disability-charity-home-sell-off> (accessed 8/8/2023).

¹⁰² Wilts. Planning Application no. BR/20/014856/FP.

¹⁰³ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, 286.

¹⁰⁴ OS Map 25", Wilts. XX.6 (1885 edn.).

¹⁰⁵ WSA, 873/144A.

¹⁰⁶ NHLE, 1363854.

¹⁰⁷ *Red Book Exch.* I, 223.

¹⁰⁸ ODNB, s.v. Fitzurse, Reginald, one of the murderers of Thomas Becket, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

¹⁰⁹ ODNB, s.v. Fitzurse, Reginald, one of the murderers of Thomas Becket, accessed 17 Aug. 2024; L.J. Sanders, *English Baronies* (Oxford, 1960), 22–3. Watkin, *Great Cartulary of Glastonbury* (Som. Rec. Soc. 64, 1956), III, nos. 1210–1212

¹¹⁰ *Pipe roll, 1174/5* (Pipe Roll Soc. 22, 1897), 42 describes Courtenay's rights to Fitzurse lands in Northamptonshire. .

¹¹¹ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 244.

¹¹² Maud had a son, William Courtney who died without issue in 1215. On his death his mother's lands reverted to the descendants of the daughters of Richard Fitzurse: *VCH Essex*, VII, 149.

¹¹³ J. P. Carley, *The Chronicle of Glastonbury abbey* (Woodbridge, 1985 edn.), 214–15. *Sueneleue* (Swinley) is incorrectly located in Christian Malford.

¹¹⁴ M.T. Clanchy (ed.), *Civil Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre, 1249* (WRS. 26), 37–8.

¹¹⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 140, 247–8.

¹¹⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 147.

Black Death both John Fyzours and Richard le Fyzours acted as pledges for landless inhabitants of Kington St Michael in 1348 and 1350.¹¹⁷ In 1428 Robert Fusers, John Spene and John Byrd held lands and tenements in Kington Langley and Clapcote from the abbot of Glastonbury for one knight's fee;¹¹⁸ these formerly belonged to Robert Fysours.

Langley Fitzurse was at some time acquired by William Montague, from whom Sir Owen Hopton purchased it in 1566–7.¹¹⁹ Hopton died intestate in 1595,¹²⁰ intending that this portion of his estate should pass to his younger sons George, Ralph and William, but this was disputed by his elder brother Arthur and Arthur's son Owen in 1597.¹²¹ At this time Fitzurse was described as a manor or farm leased to William Butler and his heirs with reversion to George Hopton. The younger sons were initially successful, evidenced by William Hopton returning to Chancery in 1599 to resolve an ownership dispute with Thomas Tasburgh who held a lease granted by George Hopton.¹²² However, the property eventually descended to Arthur's son Robert, and his son Ralph, 1st baron Hopton.

Ralph Hopton, according to Aubrey, died childless and his estates were entailed to the daughters of his uncle Arthur Hopton, by whom they were sold to Bampfield Sydenham.¹²³ Sydenham's father Henry was described as 'of Langley Fitzurse' in his will dated 1647, so either he held a lease or the purchase was made earlier than Aubrey suggests.¹²⁴ In 1697 Bampfield Sydenham left his estate to his brother William and unnamed nephews and nieces.¹²⁵ It passed to Sydenham Tucker (d.1771) of Wrington (Som.), whose illegitimate daughter, Betty Smith, married William Bailey in 1777. In 1837 their eldest son Sydenham Bailey died in residence.¹²⁶ He was recorded as owner and occupier in 1842,¹²⁷ after which it was held by his children (Sydenham Wood Bailey, Sarah Manners, Betty Millard and Anne Robins) and his grandchildren.¹²⁸ It was leased to several different farmers in the mid 19th century,¹²⁹ before it was sold to Henry Wellesley, 1st earl Cowley, of Draycot House in 1865.¹³⁰ It was sold by Christian Arthur, 4th earl Cowley, to the sitting tenant, Eli Holder, in 1920, and he continued to run the sawmills there.

A house marked on an 1885 map as 'Fitzurse Farm (remains of manor house)'¹³¹ was described by Aubrey as 'a very ancient-built house, with a great hall and moated about'.¹³²

¹¹⁷ Longleat, MSS 11179 and 11222.

¹¹⁸ *Feudal Aids*, V, 258.

¹¹⁹ TNA, C 2/Eliz/H10/48.

¹²⁰ ODNB, s.v. Hopton, Sir Owen, administrator, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

¹²¹ TNA, C 2/Eliz/H10/48 and TNA, C 78/112/9.

¹²² TNA, C 2/Eliz/H10/48.

¹²³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 146.

¹²⁴ PROB 11/202/115.

¹²⁵ TNA, PROB 11/436/410.

¹²⁶ TNA, PROB 11/1887/146

¹²⁷ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, no.244.

¹²⁸ W. J. Meers, *Kington Langley Past and Present*, (1937), 7.

¹²⁹ WSA, 969/10; 969/12.

¹³⁰ WSA, 969/8.

¹³¹ OS Map 25", Wilts. XX.6 (1885 edn.).

¹³² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 146.

Map evidence records an L-shaped building with eastern and northern ranges. No illustration of Fitzurse Farm is known. It was noted as an ordinary farmhouse by Jackson who recorded faint traces of the moat in 1858;¹³³ these were also visible in the 1930s when the house had been demolished and the medieval barn remained.¹³⁴ The north, west and east sections of the moat were depicted on the tithe map;¹³⁵ by 1885 most of the eastern arm had been filled.¹³⁶ A sword with a silver hilt was found when the west section was partially drained in the early 1850s.¹³⁷ The site and outbuildings were used by the Draycot estate for sawmills in the late 19th century before being developed for housing in the later 20th century.¹³⁸

Other Estates

Swinley farms: Swinley was recognised as a distinct area as early as 1243 when Jordan Fitzurse's rights to lands there were confirmed by Glastonbury abbey;¹³⁹ it has been identified as part of the lands held by Urse in 1086 and Robert de Curtenai in 1189.¹⁴⁰ Upper Swinley, the more significant farm, is located in Kington St Michael while Lower Swinley formed part of the new parish of Kington Langley.

Swinley was in possession of the Leversage family by 1569 when it was leased to Richard Brown of Kington St Michael.¹⁴¹ William Coller acquired it first by a lease in 1583 from Grace Leversage of Frome (Som.), and Edmund her son,¹⁴² and again from Edward Hungerford by another lease in 1623.¹⁴³ William Coller may have rebuilt part of the farm; a reset date stone in the gable reads 'WC 1639'.¹⁴⁴ Anthony Hungerford sold Swinley to John Coller in 1651.¹⁴⁵ George Estcourt purchased Swinley from William Coller's widow and son in 1652.¹⁴⁶ George certainly carried out some reconstruction at Swinley, as in 1664 he described it as 'lately erected and newly built by himself'.¹⁴⁷ In 1672 it passed to his son Richard Estcourt (d. 1686) as part of his marriage settlement to Elizabeth Bailiffe of Monkton, and later to their son George (d. 1712).¹⁴⁸ Following George's death Upper Swinley was leased by his two sisters: Mary, who married William Alexander of Great Somerford in 1714, and Ann, who

¹³³ Jackson, *Kington*, 48.

¹³⁴ Meers, *Kington Langley Past and Present*, 7.

¹³⁵ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, no.244.

¹³⁶ OS Map 25", Wilts. XX.6 (1885 edn.).

¹³⁷ *Arch. Jnl.* X (1853), 64.

¹³⁸ WSA, 2062/31.

¹³⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 427.

¹⁴⁰ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 200.

¹⁴¹ *Wilts. N&Q*, II, 352–3.

¹⁴² WSA, 212B/3615.

¹⁴³ M. E. Light, 'Estcourt of Swinley', *Wilts. N&Q*, II, 354.

¹⁴⁴ NHLE, 101022342.

¹⁴⁵ Light, 'Estcourt of Swinley', 357.

¹⁴⁶ Light, 'Estcourt of Swinley', 399–400.

¹⁴⁷ Light, 'Estcourt of Swinley', 402.

¹⁴⁸ Light, 'Estcourt of Swinley', 402–3.

married May Pinchin of Northfield, Langley Burrell, in 1718.¹⁴⁹ Mary's daughter, Elizabeth Alexander, mortgaged her share to Mrs Frances Scrope of Castle Combe in 1742.¹⁵⁰

The ownership of Upper Swinley had passed to the Neelds of Grittleton by the 1840s and then through a succession of leaseholders: Miles Edmund 1840,¹⁵¹ David Rumming 1867,¹⁵² John Wiltshire 1885,¹⁵³ Edward Bush 1920,¹⁵⁴ and Charles Bush 1939.¹⁵⁵ In 1943 the Grittleton Estate leased the 177 a. of Upper Swinley farm to C. Bush, and W. Harroway owned and occupied 121 a. at Lower Swinley.¹⁵⁶

Upper Swinley farmhouse has 17th-century origins, and was remodelled in the later 18th and mid 19th centuries.¹⁵⁷ It has an L-shaped plan, constructed of rubblestone with stone slate roof, ashlar end stacks and large front ridge stack.

Langley Gate and South Sea Farms: The Longs of Draycot Cerne held a substantial estate in Kington Langley. In 1773 James Long surveyed his lands there, which had formerly belonged to Anne Maynard, including Langley Gate farm and South Sea farm.¹⁵⁸ Anne Maynard had purchased a sequestered mortgage of Benjamin Haskins Stiles (c.1740) from the Court of Chancery, and this passed to trustees by her will proved 1772.¹⁵⁹ Sir James Long paid the trustees £6,600 for the Kington Langley Estate in 1773.¹⁶⁰

The estate passed successively to James Long, from 1784 styled Tylney-Long (d. 1794), James Tylney-Long (d. 1805), and then his sister Catherine Long, who inherited Draycot Cerne manor and in 1812 married William Wellesley-Pole.¹⁶¹ Catherine, known from 1812 as Catherine Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, was succeeded in 1825 by her son William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, who became earl of Mornington in 1857. William (d. 1863), devised his lands in Draycot Cerne and Kington Langley to his cousin Henry Wellesley, 1st earl Cowley (d. 1884), from whom they passed to William, 2nd earl Cowley (d. 1895), and Henry, 3rd earl Cowley (d. 1919). Christian, 4th earl Cowley, sold the Draycot estate in 1920. Draycot House and park were sold to Philip Ashworth. By 1923 they had passed to Herbert Dixon (cr. baron Glentoran 1939, d. 1950) who sold that estate in 1946 at which time it was broken up.

The two farms had a succession of tenant farmers: by 1840 Langley Gate farm was leased to Thomas and Sarah Bailey, then to Isaac Lane (1851) and to James and John Millard (1853).¹⁶² The sitting tenants in 1920 were Arthur Bryant and John Reeve. South Sea farm was

¹⁴⁹ Badeni, *Wilts. Forefathers*, 95.

¹⁵⁰ WSA, 212B/3619.

¹⁵¹ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

¹⁵² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.).

¹⁵³ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1885 edn.).

¹⁵⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1920 edn.).

¹⁵⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1939 edn.).

¹⁵⁶ TNA, MAF, 32/39/34/3-4.

¹⁵⁷ NHLE, 101022342.

¹⁵⁸ WSA, 1001/1H.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, PROB 11/980/32.

¹⁶⁰ WSA, 190/1.

¹⁶¹ For descent of the Longs: *VCH Wilts.* XIV 77-8.

¹⁶² WSA, 969/10.

leased successively to Henry Day (1839),¹⁶³ Gough (1851), Smith (1861) and Louis Carnley (as the Draycot Estate Office – 1900 to 1907).¹⁶⁴ In 1943 South Sea farm,¹⁶⁵ then consisting of 50 a., was leased to Charles Hart (the sitting tenant in 1920) and Langley Gate farm, 175 a.,¹⁶⁶ had been sold to Walter Collins.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

The medieval economic history of Kington Langley to 1540 is considered with that of Kington St Michael.¹⁶⁷

Until the 20th century Kington Langley was the poor relation of Kington St Michael. Agriculture was dominant and weavers and wage labourers formed a significant proportion of the population. From the mid 20th century the dispersed settlement pattern in Kington Langley has been attractive to commuters; the fortunes of the two parishes have reversed.

Post-Medieval Farming

All Kington Langley tenants held arable lands in open fields in 1518,¹⁶⁸ but these had been entirely enclosed by 1655.¹⁶⁹ There were 28 houses and 8 cottages in Kington Langley in 1655 which housed 38 copyholders, who held 756 a. 3 r. 16 p. worth annually £191 7s. 6d.; another 21 leaseholders occupied 131 a. 3 r. 19 p. worth £36 5s. 3d.¹⁷⁰ There were at least 203 a. 3 r. 23 p. of arable, 252 a. 2 r. 22 p. of pasture, 149 a. 1 r. 7 p. of meadow, 24 a. 0 r. 5 a. of heath and 3 a. of woodland. The remainder comprised 90 a. 1 r. 9 p. of yards, gardens orchards and closes around the houses, and other assorted closes, downs, plots and grounds with no specified purpose. The eight cottagers, three copyholders and five leaseholders each had less than half an acre.

The pattern of dispersed housing around areas of common is evident by 1770 and doubtless existed earlier.¹⁷¹ All arable had been enclosed at Kington Langley before parliamentary enclosure, but the piecemeal process left a jigsaw of holdings. In 1861 an order of exchange was issued between William Coleman, who held more than one-third of the original manor, and William Wellesley-Pole, whose holdings included Langley Gate and South Sea farms.¹⁷²

Between 1655 and 1841 the balance of agricultural land in Kington Langley shifted from arable to pasture: by the mid 19th century there were 1,030 a. of pasture and 542 a.

¹⁶³ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

¹⁶⁴ WSA, 969/34.

¹⁶⁵ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/4.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/12.

¹⁶⁷ Below, Kington St Michael, econ. hist.

¹⁶⁸ BL, Harl MS 3961.

¹⁶⁹ WSA, 753/140.

¹⁷⁰ WSA, 753/140.

¹⁷¹ WSA, 873/141.

¹⁷² TNA, MAF 11/182/1927.

arable.¹⁷³ In 1866 there were 107½ a. sown with wheat, 49 a. with barley, 7½ a. with oats, 43½ a. with beans, 12¾ a. with peas, 74 a. of assorted root vegetables and 900 a. of pasture, fallow land, vetches, meadow and clover.¹⁷⁴ The balance of arable crops remained similar in 1920: 103¾ a. of wheat, 50½ a. barley, 41½ a. oats and 44 a. root vegetables.¹⁷⁵ There was a greater change in livestock numbers: in 1866 there were 211 dairy cows and 65 calves and other cattle, 305 sheep with 58 lambs and 215 pigs.¹⁷⁶ Cattle numbers had shown a small increase by 1880, with 164 dairy cows and 100 other cattle, and this trend continued to 171 dairy cows and 135 other cattle in 1920. Sheep numbers declined to 128 adults and 31 lambs in 1880 and none were kept on any farm by 1920. Pig numbers fell almost by half to 133 in 1880 and thereafter remained stable with 120 animals in 1920.¹⁷⁷

In 1943 there were 17 farms in Kington Langley.¹⁷⁸ The largest, South Sea farm (432 a.) was leased from Lord Glentoran and Trinity College, Cambridge.¹⁷⁹ Langley Gate farm (206 a.) was owned and occupied by W L Collins,¹⁸⁰ and Limes farm (113 a.) was leased from Coleman's estate.¹⁸¹ The remainder ranged from 5 a. to 92 a. and were largely owner occupied. Leases for short periods at high rents resulted in a lack of modernisation of farm buildings, and the poor drainage observed by Britton a century earlier remained unresolved.¹⁸² In 1943 particular criticism was levelled against both of the Swinley farms,¹⁸³ Fairleigh farm,¹⁸⁴ Marsh farm,¹⁸⁵ and Limes farm.¹⁸⁶

Forestry and commons

The commons in Kington St Michael parish, which lay mostly in Kington Langley tithing, had measured 310 a. before enclosure began during the 16th century.¹⁸⁷ The largest area, Langley Heath common to the south of the village, had been enclosed by 1770.¹⁸⁸ In 1840 its memory was preserved in 'heath' field names on either side of Swindon Road.¹⁸⁹ The three remaining commons, Upper, Middle, and Lower Common, defined Kington Langley's settlement pattern with houses and public buildings set back from them.¹⁹⁰ These commons were a valuable communal resource for the poorer tenants; in the 19th century Middle Common alone

¹⁷³ Britton, *Autobiography*, 30.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, MAF 68/74.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, MAF 68/2995.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, MAF 68/73.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, MAF 68/721, and MAF 68/2995.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/1–20.

¹⁷⁹ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/4 and 18.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/12.

¹⁸¹ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/15.

¹⁸² Britton, *Autobiography*, 30.

¹⁸³ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/3–4.

¹⁸⁴ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/13.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/14.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, MAF 32/39/33/15.

¹⁸⁷ Below, Kington St Michael, econ. hist.

¹⁸⁸ WSA, 873/141; 1001/1.

¹⁸⁹ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

¹⁹⁰ OS, 25", 1885, Wilts. XX, 6.

consisted of more than 3 a. and housed the pound for stray animals. In 1647 the hayward's allowance was confirmed as 1*d.* for every ten sheep pastured within the commons and lanes of Langley.¹⁹¹

In 1655 three copyholders each held 3 a. in closes or rough pasture called Woodlands, indicating some former wooded area.¹⁹² But most requirements for wood and timber appear to have been met from hedgerow trees and imports, and the farms did not have the small patches of woodland characteristic of those in Kington St Michael. In 1840 a wood called Sydney's wood, belonging to Revd Ashe and tithe free, measured almost 11 a.¹⁹³

Despite containing almost no significant woodland, timber trees were produced as a commercial crop in hedgerows, being reserved to the Draycot estate on their leased farms in Kington Langley and adjacent parishes. Standing timber was sold at auction in 1830.¹⁹⁴ Most timber from the estate was processed at Fitzurse farm sawmill, where Eli Hodder was the resident timber merchant by 1895.¹⁹⁵ The sawmill continued to operate until 1935.¹⁹⁶

Mills, Crafts and Industry

All references to medieval mills on Kington manor appear to refer to Bide Mill in Kington Langley or Peckingell mill. No mill was mentioned in the Glastonbury abbey surveys of 1135–1201 or 1518, although there were areas in the North field called Millepath and Millefurlong.¹⁹⁷

A mill was present in 1086, held by Roger from Ralph de Mortimer.¹⁹⁸ Jordan Fitzurse sold a mill at Maydenwell to the abbot of Glastonbury in 1261 for £1 6*s.* 8*d.*¹⁹⁹ Miles son of Miles of Langlegh granted land adjacent to Bide mill to the Abbot in 1224.²⁰⁰ Robert at Churcheye held the lease of a water mill for £3 in 1314.²⁰¹ In 1335 it was held by John the son of Robert de Herton for £10 13*s.* 4*d.*²⁰² In 1408 the mill was held by John Filleigh who was ordered to make repairs under penalty of a 40*s.* fine; the hallmoot entry is annotated with a note that the property had been taken into the hands of the lord.²⁰³

The millers were regularly presented at the court leet for over-charging the tenants: Robert Trueman was fined 3*d.* in most years between 1563 and 1573.²⁰⁴ Robert may have

¹⁹¹ WSA, 1305/125.

¹⁹² WSA, 753/140.

¹⁹³ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, no. 1.

¹⁹⁴ WSA, 137/125/12.

¹⁹⁵ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts*, (1895).

¹⁹⁶ Meers, *Kington Langley Past and Present*, 7.

¹⁹⁷ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*; BL, Harl MS 3961.

¹⁹⁸ *Domesday*, 187.

¹⁹⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 433–4.

²⁰⁰ A. Watkin, *The Great Charters of Glastonbury*, III, (Frome, 1956), 664.

²⁰¹ Longleat, MS 11216.

²⁰² Longleat, MS 10633.

²⁰³ Longleat, MS 10659.

²⁰⁴ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

leased the mill to William Bright who was fined 4*d.* in 1574 and John Compton who paid 4*d.* in 1575 before Robert returned, paying 3*d.* in 1577.²⁰⁵

Bide Mill was occupied by Mary Swayne at her death in 1621,²⁰⁶ and it was leased for a term of lives to Simon Necke in 1655, paying an annual rent of only £1 10*s.*, whereas his copyhold tenement was worth £63.²⁰⁷ The mill was no longer used by 1842 when Isaac Salter and Joseph Collett held land at Byde Mill Pasture and the remains of a leet were indicated on the tithe map.²⁰⁸ Foundation walls remained there in 2023.²⁰⁹

The mill at Peckingell was listed in the survey of Kington St Michael in 1655 as part of the lord's demesne, but with no tenant or annual value.²¹⁰ Its history is described with that of Langley Burrell.²¹¹

Britton's assertion made in 1850 that 'there has never, in fact, been a loom in this parish' is contradicted by the wills of 17th- and 18th-century residents.²¹² William Jones,²¹³ broadweaver, left his loom worth £2 to his grandson in 1614 and Mary Swayne of Bide Mill left her loom to her son Thomas in 1621.²¹⁴ Clothmaking was carried out by the poorer inhabitants. The weaver John Hodson was so poor that his clothing was sold to pay for his funeral expenses in 1626.²¹⁵ Later weavers included John Scott, broadweaver, 1626,²¹⁶ Thomas Tanner, broadweaver, 1671,²¹⁷ John Shipway, sergemaker, 1704,²¹⁸ Daniel Amyatt, weaver, 1707,²¹⁹ and Thomas Goodwin, serge weaver, 1735.²²⁰ A weavers' factory established at the Greathouse operated between 1778 and 1808.²²¹ It was a substantial employer and new cottages were built on Swindon Road to accommodate workers.²²²

For some inhabitants weaving and other cloth related trades were part-time activities. In 1603 Thomas Batten had cheese vats and an 'ossett loom',²²³ and in 1623 William Ashley was described in his will as a clothworker, but left a cow and 12 sheep.²²⁴ Another cloth worker, John Ashly *alias* Launder, a fuller, was resident in Kington Langley at the time of his death in

²⁰⁵ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

²⁰⁶ WSA, P3/S/170.

²⁰⁷ WSA, 753/140.

²⁰⁸ WSA, T/A Kington Langley.

²⁰⁹ Personal observation.

²¹⁰ WSA, 753/140.

²¹¹ Below, Langley Burrell, econ. hist., mills.

²¹² Britton, *Autobiography*, 30.

²¹³ WSA, P3/IJ/26.

²¹⁴ WSA, P3/S/170.

²¹⁵ WSA, P3/A/35.

²¹⁶ WSA, P3/S/220.

²¹⁷ WSA, P1/T/161.

²¹⁸ WSA, P3/S/895.

²¹⁹ WSA, P1/A/202.

²²⁰ WSA, P1/G/498.

²²¹ Below, soc. hist.

²²² Meers, *Kington Langley Past and Present*, 21.

²²³ WSA, P3/B/3. 'Osset' may be a type of cloth (OED), but perhaps refers to a 'one-seat' or narrow loom.

²²⁴ WSA, P3/H/208.

1648.²²⁵ William Brite, a serge weaver, had 17 dairy cows and wheat and barley in his barn when he died in 1722.²²⁶

Other household manufacturing evidenced in the wills of Kington Langley residents included cheese presses owned by Edith Hawkins and Joan Watts in 1605,²²⁷ and Edward Bell's malt mill, 1630.²²⁸

Retail

Few retailers appear in early records. In 1574 the butcher Richard Welsted, who had previously been trading in Kington St Michael, was presented at the court leet by the tithingman of Kington Langley,²²⁹ and again in 1576 along with a baker also working in Langley.²³⁰ Charles Taylor was ordered to repair his bakehouse at courts baron in 1645 and 1646.²³¹ Francis Dovey, a butcher of Langley, died in 1708.²³²

In the mid 19th century a number of craftsmen and retailers serviced the needs of the village.²³³ Jeremiah Ash a shopkeeper, Lewin Hadrill and Arthur Parnell, beer sellers, George May a farmer and butcher, Jesse Cole a farmer and butcher and Saul Cole a baker and maltster were engaged in retail in 1867 although most had other occupations. George Little was sub-postmaster in 1895 when the community was also served by a grocer, beer retailer, shop keeper, blacksmith, wheelwright, mason and three carpenters.²³⁴

A nursery had been established by George Humphries, florist and nurseryman, by 1895 and was still owned by a George Humphries in 1939.²³⁵

A post and telephone call office was operating in Kington Langley by 1920.²³⁶ The post office, managed by Hilda Bird in 1939,²³⁷ was located at Mill Cottage, 4 The Barton, on Upper Common.²³⁸ It is shown on a map revised in 1984, but not on one revised in 1998.²³⁹

Services

Carrying services were provided by farmers including John Russell in 1875.²⁴⁰ In 1920 Edgar Little, George Tucker and Thomas Tucker advertised as hauliers.²⁴¹

²²⁵ WSA, P1/A/87.

²²⁶ WSA, P3/B/1208.

²²⁷ WSA, P1/H/27 and P1/W/16.

²²⁸ WSA, P3/B/321.

²²⁹ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

²³⁰ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

²³¹ WSA, 1305/125.

²³² WSA, P1/D/229.

²³³ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts*, (1867 edn.).

²³⁴ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts*, (1895 edn.); for an account of inns and pubs, below, Social hist.

²³⁵ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts*, (1895, 1939 edns.).

²³⁶ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts*, (1920 edn.).

²³⁷ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts*, (1939 edn.).

²³⁸ <https://media.onthemarket.com/properties/10294045/1346853052/document-0.pdf> (accessed 10 Aug 2023).

²³⁹ OS, 1:25,000 series, Pathfinder sheet 1168 (1986 edn.); Explorer sheet 156 (1999 edn.).

²⁴⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts*. (1875 edn.).

²⁴¹ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts*, (1920 edn.).

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Character

Kington Langley's social character has changed markedly since it achieved parochial status in 1866.²⁴² A commentator in 1858 disdainfully described the village thus: 'this distance from clerical superintendence and the wholesome discipline of Church and School, having been found to produce the usual ill effects of ignorance and irreligion, testified by numerous and increasing cases brought before magistrates and boards of guardians, as well as by Sabbath breaking and irregularities of various kinds.' Typical of these activities, and contributing to this view, was perhaps the riot that occurred after the revel in 1822.²⁴³ When local elites and Anglican clergy built a church and school during the 1850s, hoping to dilute the influence of the locally thriving nonconformity, the vast majority of around 600 inhabitants were of the labouring class, households supported by agricultural labourers wages.²⁴⁴ In 1955 school managers objected to the inspectors' assumption that the village consisted mainly of farmers and agricultural workers, stating that most parents worked either in factories and offices or with firms in Chippenham or at the aerodrome.²⁴⁵ By 1964 the influence of agriculture was further eroded when the number of pupils fell to 29, attributed to farming families leaving the area.²⁴⁶ In the 21st century the parish had a significant number of large houses and appeared relatively affluent.²⁴⁷

Communal Life

From its creation, Langley Fitzurse School became a venue for communal village activities, such as the Penny Readings mentioned by Francis Kilvert.²⁴⁸ In 1926 a village hall was opened on Church Road, funded by donations,²⁴⁹ and this proved immediately popular for whist drives, skittles, dances and family celebrations.²⁵⁰ An adjacent recreation ground was added in the 1960s and the building was replaced in 1991.²⁵¹ In 2024 the village hall was administered by the Kington Langley Village Hall charity, and provided a venue for local groups including the Kington Langley Women's Institute, Film Society and Croquet Club.²⁵² A weekend

²⁴² For earlier aspects of Kington Langley's soc. hist., see below, Kington St Michael, Social hist.

²⁴³ Jackson, *Kington*, 50–1; for the revel, below, religious hist.

²⁴⁴ WSA, F8/600/166/1/22/1; below, education, relig. hist.

²⁴⁵ WSA, F8/600/166/1/3/1, 26 Jan. 1955; the 'aerodrome' was presumably RAF Hullavington.

²⁴⁶ WSA, F8/500/166/1/1, 7 Sept. 1964.

²⁴⁷ Above, introduction.

²⁴⁸ WSA, 2042/1, diary of J.J. Daniell (selected entries in Meers, *Historical Notes*, 12–19); Kilvert, *Diary* I, 299.

²⁴⁹ *Wilts. Times*, 12 June 1926; WSA, G3/760/635.

²⁵⁰ e.g. *Wilts. Times*, 31 Oct. 1931, 4 Feb. 1933, 23 Nov, 7 Dec. 1935, 26 Feb. 1938, *North Wilts. Herald* 23 Dec. 1937, 22 Apr. 1938.

²⁵¹ WSA, 1184A; <https://www.klvh.org/history/> (accessed 2 May 2023).

²⁵² <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/1002086/what-who-how-where> (accessed 02 May 2023); <https://www.klvh.org/> (accessed 02 May 2023).

Scarecrow Festival fundraising event was inaugurated in 2000 and continued in 2024 to be held annually each June.²⁵³

There were five guest beds and stabling for two horses in Kington Langley in 1686, and four innkeepers were recorded in 1739.²⁵⁴ Kington Langley manor house was formerly the White Hart inn, which was converted by 1829.²⁵⁵ The house dates from c.1700 with extensions in the 18th century.²⁵⁶ The Plough inn, Plough Lane, was established by 1768 and was the only Kington Langley inn marked on a map of 1773.²⁵⁷ It appears also on a map of 1840.²⁵⁸ It dates from the 17th century,²⁵⁹ and a tradition was current in 1956, but presumably apocryphal, that Oliver Cromwell slept there on his way to Malmesbury during the Civil Wars. In 1853 its signboard read, 'In hope we Plough: In hope we sow; By hope we all are led; We who live here, sell spirits and beer; Hoping to get our bread'.²⁶⁰ It was listed with one other beer retailer in a directory of 1859 and subsequently.²⁶¹ It closed in 2018 and the site was purchased by the adjacent Plymouth Brethren congregation.²⁶² By 2022 three attempts had been made to register the premises as a community asset and Kington Communities Enterprise was attempting a fourth, on the basis that the village had 'no pub, no club, no shop, post office or anything more adventurous than a village hall'.²⁶³ The Hit or Miss inn in Day's Lane, so-called in 1887, was a beer house by 1864, and is shown as such on a map of c.1921; it was listed in a directory of 1935 but had closed before 2022.²⁶⁴

Education

No school was recorded for Kington Langley tithing (as distinct from Kington St Michael) in 1818.²⁶⁵ However, by 1833 it had one daily school attended by 21 children of both sexes.²⁶⁶ Its location is unknown, but by the 1850s a mixed-sex elementary school was in operation at the Union chapel, accommodating 30 pupils.²⁶⁷ Nonconformist support for this school probably prompted action by the incumbent of Kington St Michael and others to create not only a new church, but also a school affiliated with the Church of England, which until then was lacking.²⁶⁸

²⁵³ <https://www.scarecrows.biz/> (accessed 30 Oct. 2024).

²⁵⁴ WAM 84, 86, 88.

²⁵⁵ WSA, 873/144.

²⁵⁶ Meers, *Historical Notes*, 21; NHLE, 1363854.

²⁵⁷ *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl*, 13 June 1768; WSA, 1075/001/67; valuation: WSA, 1895/522.

²⁵⁸ WSA, 873/144a, 144b.

²⁵⁹ Meers, *Historical Notes*, 21.

²⁶⁰ Soc. Ants. Lib., JAC 006, f15.

²⁶¹ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 and later edns.).

²⁶² <https://whatpub.com/pubs/WNW/12303/plough-kington-langley> (accessed 1/12/2022).

²⁶³ <https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/19891846.kington-langley-community-battles-save-former-pub/> (accessed 4 May 2023).

²⁶⁴ WSA, 1895/513, 1075/001/71; OS Map 25", *Wilts.* XX.11, (1921 edn.); *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1935 edn.).

²⁶⁵ *Educ. of the Poor. Digest*, 1030.

²⁶⁶ *Educ. in England Abstract*, 1835, 1040. 3 (return made in 1833).

²⁶⁷ The Union chapel was only completed in 1835 and cannot, therefore, have been the school's location in 1833: TNA, ED 103/45/16.

²⁶⁸ Jackson, *Kington*, 50–1.

Plans for the new school were drawn up in 1856. The site was 100 yards from the Union chapel school, on land donated by Viscount Wellesley of Draycot House and vested in the vicar of Kington St Michael, Edward Awdry, and the churchwardens.²⁶⁹ A grant application made to the Lords Committee of Council on Education envisaged a school room 27 ft. 3 ins. by 16 ft. and a separate classroom of 12 ft. by 12 ft. with casement windows, a stone tiled roof and a floor of deal board and oak sleepers. The architects were John Darley and Sons of Chippenham. The estimated cost, including a schoolhouse, was £354 5s. A £116 parliamentary grant was supplemented by others from the National Society and Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Board. Viscount Wellesley, Joseph Neeld of Grittleton House, Walter Coleman of Kington Langley and Robert Martyn Ashe of Langley Burrell also contributed. The school, which accommodated 68 pupils, was completed in 1857,²⁷⁰ and was described as ‘two very fair rooms, board floors, desks parallel.’ The children were described as decidedly intelligent, although instruction and discipline were unsystematic.²⁷¹ By the 1870s, if not before, the school was known as Langley Fitzurse school.²⁷²

The original plan included a teacher’s residence but sufficient funds were not raised. By 1858 plans had been drawn up by John Darley and Sons for a two-storey house, with a parlour, kitchen and scullery downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs, at an estimated cost of £200. The National Society turned down a grant application, despite Revd Awdry’s protestations, that, ‘the want of a Residence is seriously felt, the Mistress having to walk to and from Chippenham, upwards of two miles’. He argued that parishioners and property owners had already helped to build a church and school room during the previous four years and were now less able to help financially. Following fund-raising a parliamentary grant of £58 was awarded, and in 1859 Pinnegar of Tytherton was contracted to build the schoolhouse for £130. Pinnegar’s detailed accounts ran to a considerably higher sum, but included payment for fixtures and fittings to the teacher’s house and for work on the ‘offices’. The work was completed by 1860.²⁷³

In 1871 58 pupils were in attendance, in premises that accommodated 68.²⁷⁴ But based on population Kington Langley in 1872 was assessed as requiring accommodation for 98 pupils; pressure was exerted to expand capacity but resisted locally.²⁷⁵ School accommodation had been expanded by 1886,²⁷⁶ however, and by 1888–9 there were 87 students attending regularly. A £76 parliamentary grant provided principal funding for the expansion, with a

²⁶⁹ WSA, F8/600/166/1/1/1.

²⁷⁰ TNA, ED 103.45.16; ED 21/18454.

²⁷¹ *Account of Wilts. Schools*, 1859, 29.

²⁷² TNA, ED 21/18454.

²⁷³ WSA, F8/600/166/1/22/1.

²⁷⁴ *Return of Civil Parishes in England and Wales under Education Act, of Population, Rateable Value, Number of Schools and Scholars in Attendance* (Parl. Papers, 1871 (201, LV), 420–1.

²⁷⁵ TNA, ED 21/18454.

²⁷⁶ Meers, *Historical Notes*, 22.

further £20 10s. raised from fees and £21 15s. from subscriptions or rates.²⁷⁷ In 1899 an infant classroom was added for 30 pupils, increasing provision to 133.²⁷⁸

By 1897 the annuity paid from a 1730 legacy by Sarah Bowerman to provide for a school in the ancient parish was divided between the Church of England school at Kington St Michael and the National School at Kington Langley,²⁷⁹ and the charity commissioners officially sanctioned this arrangement in 1899.²⁸⁰

The education authority in 1957 suggested closing the school, and proposed in 1961 to build a new school on a different site, opposite the western end of Dovey's Terrace. School managers strongly objected on the grounds that this was less central than the existing site and the approach would be via a very narrow lane. In 1963 the plan was postponed and subsequently failed to materialise.²⁸¹ Numbers on roll had increased by 1998 to 100, with four teachers and four support staff. A new school hall was built in 2004.²⁸²

In 2023 Langley Fitzurse Church of England Primary School was a voluntary controlled school. It had seven teaching staff and seven teaching assistants. In 2018 it had 91 pupils on roll and was rated good in an Ofsted inspection. In November 2020 the school federated with Stanton St Quintin Primary School.²⁸³

Social Welfare

Charities: There was no friendly society recorded in returns in 1818.²⁸⁴ However, societies and charities functioning in Kington St Michael before 1866 may have catered also for Kington Langley.

A clothing charity (the Clothing Society) existed between 1778 and c.1808 at Greathouse (Kin House). Established by Sir James Long of Draycot Cerne, its objective was two-fold, to employ the local poor and to provide free uniforms to domestic servants starting in service (thus negating the need to dock their wages).²⁸⁵

No charities providing for people experiencing poverty were reported for the tithing of Kington Langley in government returns in 1818.²⁸⁶ However, under the legacy of Thomas Taylor of Draycot Cerne (will proved 1729) provision was made for the relief of the poor of Langley annually on St Thomas's Day.²⁸⁷ In 1834 the 20s. rent charge of the endowment was paid to Mr Belcher, a baker at Langley, from whose premises bread was distributed by

²⁷⁷ *Return of Public Elementary Schools Examined Showing Accommodation, Average Attendance etc.* 1888–9 (Parl. Papers, 1890 (403, LVI)), 282.

²⁷⁸ TNA, ED 21/18454.

²⁷⁹ Below, Kington St Michael, Social hist.

²⁸⁰ *Endowed Charities*, 1908, 591; TNA, ED 49/8204. 0208.

²⁸¹ WSA, F8/600/166/1/3/1.

²⁸² <https://langleyfitzurse.wilts.sch.uk/school-history/> (accessed 7 May 2023).

²⁸³ <https://langleyfitzurse.wilts.sch.uk/> (accessed 11 July 2024).

²⁸⁴ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 495.

²⁸⁵ WSA, 873/144b; West Sussex RO, Add Mss 15,370; for its significance as a local industry, above, econ. hist.

²⁸⁶ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 495.

²⁸⁷ WSA, P3/T/505; *Phillipps Monumental Inscriptions*, 1822 (WRS. 53), 21.

churchwardens.²⁸⁸ In 1901 charities founded by William Woodrooff, Isaac Lyte, Margaret Sadler, Thomas Taylor and Thomas White, which served the entire ancient parish of Kington St Michael were combined and administered by six trustees, including the vicar of Kington Langley and one member of the parish council.²⁸⁹ In 1905 funds were distributed in doles to 30 people from Kington Langley parish,²⁹⁰ and to 36 in 1917. By 1947, under the auspices of Kington St Michael United Charities, pensions to almspeople had been commuted to a £2 gift to each almshouse.²⁹¹

Before 1931 a charity was administered in Kington Langley from the legacies of W.B. Lane and R. Selman. Between 1931 and 1951, c.£5 from these funds was credited to the Union chapel at Kington Langley quarterly.²⁹²

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Kington Langley became an ecclesiastical parish in 1865, having previously been a chapelry of Kington St Michael ancient parish. Most aspects of its earlier religious history, apart from nonconformist activity explicitly linked to it, are described under Kington St Michael.

Church Origins and Parochial Organization

The chapel of St Peter's at Kington Langley, with a half-acre of ground around it, is recorded in 1518 in a terrier of the estates of Glastonbury abbey,²⁹³ but it had been converted to a dwelling by 1670 and its bell moved to Fitzurse farm.²⁹⁴ According to Aubrey, the original chapel of St Peter's stood 'about the middle of the village on the north side of the way'.²⁹⁵ There is a tradition that St Peter's Cottages, on Church Road, occupied the chapel site. Canon Jackson also observed in 1867 'some slight vestiges of which [the chapel] are still pointed out in one of the cottages, not far from the modern little church also called St Peter's.' However, there is no strong evidence of medieval work within the cottages now to support the hypothesis.²⁹⁶ The Ordnance Survey in the 1880s marked the chapel site north-east of the present church (west of St Peter's Cottages) between Church Lane and Church Road.

Jackson's derogatory observations about irreligion in the parish, quoted above,²⁹⁷ may have been shared by Edward Lewis Clutterbuck of Hardenhuish, through whose exertions a

²⁸⁸ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 330.

²⁸⁹ Below, Kington St Michael, social hist.; WSA, 1187/31. Char. Comm. order 2512, I, 28 Aug. 1901.

²⁹⁰ WSA, L2/152.

²⁹¹ WSA, L2/152.

²⁹² WSA, L2/152.

²⁹³ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

²⁹⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 145, 146.

²⁹⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 146.

²⁹⁶ NHLE, 1022314; J.E. Jackson, 'Ancient chapels, &c., in Co. Wilts', WAM, 10, 288; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 9, 10; above, settlement.

²⁹⁷ Jackson, *Kington*; above, soc. hist.

new church, St Peter's, was built at Kington Langley within a few months and consecrated in April 1855.²⁹⁸ Its dedication revived the name of the former church. The site was provided by one of the principal landowners, Walter Coleman, who also donated £50. Other subscribers included Robert Ashe of Langley Burrell, Joseph Neeld of Grittleton, Viscount Wellesley and Mr Sheppard, who all contributed £100.²⁹⁹

Kington Langley was in the deanery of Malmesbury until 1887 when it was transferred to Chippenham.³⁰⁰ In 2023 Kington Langley was part of the benefice of Draycot, which included also Christian Malford, Draycot Cerne, Seagry, Sutton Benger and Tytherton Kellaways.³⁰¹

Advowson and Church Endowment: From its consecration until the creation in 1865 of the separate ecclesiastical parish of Langley Fitzurse, the alternative name for Kington Langley, worship was officiated by curates from Kington St Michael.³⁰² Thereafter until 1909 the patronage of the vicarage of St Peter's, Kington Langley (Fitzurse) was with the vicar of Kington St Michael.³⁰³ From then it was transferred to the bishop of Bristol.³⁰⁴

In 1867 the vicarage was worth £123. The vicar of Kington St Michael was the impropriator of the vicarial tithes to the amount of £193; the great tithes which amounted to £117 were possessed by Earl Cowley.³⁰⁵ By 1889, Cowley's great tithe amounted to £103 and the vicarage was worth £110 gross.³⁰⁶ In the 20th century the income was augmented and was worth £200 net by 1915.³⁰⁷

Clergy houses: The grade II listed former vicarage of Kington Langley was located on Upper Common.³⁰⁸ It was sold in 1933 and in 2023 was called Greystones.³⁰⁹ A new vicarage was subsequently built adjacent to St Peter's Church.³¹⁰

Religious life

When St Peter's Church was dedicated in 1855 a newspaper noted that due to the distance from the parish church (and the school) attendance, 'had grown rather out of fashion

²⁹⁸ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 20 Oct. 1853; 26 Apr. 1855.

²⁹⁹ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 20 Oct. 1853; 26 Apr. 1855.

³⁰⁰ *Crockford* (1868, 1894, 1939, 1967–8 edns.). Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 529, 542 incorrectly lists Kington St Michael and Kington Langley (Fitzurse) remaining within Malmesbury deanery after 1887.

³⁰¹ *Crockford* (2022–3 edn.), 996.

³⁰² Curates included J.J. Daniell: Meers, *Historical Notes*, 11; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.), 437. For establishment of ecclesiastical parish: Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 542; *Return of Parishes Divided and Districts Assigned to Churches Under Church Building Acts, 1863–66* (Parl. Papers, 1867 (529, liv), 12).

³⁰³ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867, 1889, 1903 edns.).

³⁰⁴ Meers, *Historical Notes*, 11; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

³⁰⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.).

³⁰⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889 edn.).

³⁰⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

³⁰⁸ NHLE, 1283598.

³⁰⁹ *Wilts. Times*, 25 Mar. 1933.

³¹⁰ WSA, 2042/12.

amongst the population, who seemed disposed to adopt meeting-houses amongst themselves, without being very particular as to the denomination.³¹¹ Another press report opined: ‘We should be guilty of a *suppressio veri* did we not mention that the Dissenters have zealously laboured in this otherwise neglected locality, and we trust that their efforts will be recognised in a friendly and Christian spirit.’³¹² The new church of St Peter’s had 232 of its 256 sittings free, probably to encourage attendance away from the three nonconformist chapels within the parish.³¹³ This compared favourably with Kington St Michael where only 70 of the 380 sittings were free.³¹⁴ However, from 1858 the number of congregants was recorded and indicates that church attendance was often low. On Easter Day 1859 only 12 communicated.³¹⁵

The church, at first served by a curate,³¹⁶ by 1865 had as its vicar John Jeremiah Daniell,³¹⁷ an accomplished writer whose works included histories of Chippenham and Warminster. While curate and vicar of Kington Langley, Daniell kept a register and diary of events which provides an insight into the life of St Peter’s and the village community during the period 1858–68.³¹⁸

Kington Langley revels, celebrated the Sunday following the feast of St Peter (29 June) were described by John Aubrey in 1670 as ‘one of the greatest Revells in these parts.’³¹⁹ Kilvert recounted that Edward Awdry (vicar of Kington St Michael) had heard from a resident that ‘the old folk used to say the Revel was about one Thomas a Becket’, presumably as a consequence of Reginald Fitzurse being one of his murderers.³²⁰ This is doubtful since the revel’s traditional date associated it with the feast of St Peter. Aubrey recounted that such revels traditionally took place in the church house of a parish where, following a night of fasting and praying, officers were chosen for gathering money for charitable uses. He then described Old John Wastfield of Langley informing him he had been ‘Peterman’ at the revels during the reign of Elizabeth I.³²¹ Aubrey does not mention a church house at Kington Langley, so it is likely that the Langley revels took place within the church rather than in an associated building.³²² The revels persisted after the church had been converted into a cottage but became entirely disassociated with any religious observance. In 1822 the Kington Langley revels precipitated a major riot.³²³

According to tradition Church Lane, which passes the north side of St Peter’s church and leads to the top of Silver Street, was once known as Devil’s Lane and frequented by the

³¹¹ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 26 Apr. 1855.

³¹² *Wilts. Independent*, 26 Apr. 1855.

³¹³ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 26 Apr. 1855.

³¹⁴ TNA, HO 253/129.

³¹⁵ WSA, 2042/1; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 12–19.

³¹⁶ *Kelly’s Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.).

³¹⁷ *Crockford* (1868 edn.).

³¹⁸ WSA, 2042/1; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 12–19.

³¹⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 11, 146.

³²⁰ Kilvert, *Diary*, II, 21.

³²¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 10–11, 146. A John Wastfield was buried at Kington St Michael in 1651.

³²² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 125.

³²³ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 12 Sept. 1822; *Morning Post* 13 Sept. 1822; *Taunton Courier*, 18 Sept. 1822, etc.

devil.³²⁴ A trackway, Old Coffin Lane, leads from Parkers Lane, Kington Langley to Kington St Michael, and would have been used to transport corpses from Kington Langley to St Michael's parish church before 1855.

Parish registers for christenings and burials at St Peter's Kington Langley exist from 1855. Marriages are recorded separately from 1865.³²⁵ The incumbent in 1956 reported that until comparatively recently the registers had been very carelessly kept.³²⁶

Nonconformity: Dissenters' meeting houses were registered at the homes of Isaac Bowsheer and Henry Milsum in 1701.³²⁷ In 1740, John Cennick (Methodist, but later Moravian, evangelist) recorded preaching to a 'prodigious multitude' on Langley Common. Richard Adams was also purportedly evangelising there in the same year.³²⁸ A meeting house was registered in Kington Langley in 1742 at the home and barn of Richard Dovey, although a connection with Cennick is difficult to establish and Dovey may have been an active Quaker.³²⁹

In Kington Langley in 1823 Wesleyan meetings were recorded at the dwelling of John Gough, a labourer, and linked with the minister William Griffith.³³⁰

In 1834 a house occupied by James Piniger (Pinnegar) in Kington St Michael (possibly Kington Langley) was registered. It was affiliated to Charles Williams, a dissenting minister of Salisbury.³³¹ The following year the newly constructed Union chapel, built by Pinnegar, was registered on Middle Common, Kington Langley in the occupation of William Tanner, Benjamin Pegler and others and associated with the minister Benjamin Rees.³³² It was built by subscriptions on land purchased for £16,³³³ and vested in trust for use by Moravian, Baptists and Independent denominations. When it opened in September 1835, administered by trustees, it was claimed that it was the only place of worship for two miles and that its opening indicated 'the improved state of public feeling' given the harsh treatment of Cennick a century earlier, when a roof was ripped off the building in which he was preaching.³³⁴ In 1851 112 worshippers, including 34 scholars, attended morning service, and 84 in the evening. The chapel accommodated 110, of which 76 sittings were free, and was said to be generally filled to capacity for divine worship.³³⁵ The Union chapel celebrated its centenary in 1935 with services and a public tea. Guests came from a number of congregations including Baptists,

³²⁴ Meers, *Historical Notes*, 27.

³²⁵ WSA, 2042/2 (baptisms), 2042/3 (burials), 2373/2 (marriages).

³²⁶ Meers, *Historical Notes*, 12.

³²⁷ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 10, 11; WSA, A1/250.

³²⁸ *Baptist Magazine*, lvii (London, 1865), 40, 90.

³²⁹ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 25; WSA, A1/250. Inf. from Mr Tim Couzens (Mar 2023).

³³⁰ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 101; WSA, D1/9/2/1.

³³¹ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 137; WSA, D1/9/2/1. A James Pinnigar occupied a cottage on Day's Lane in 1840.

³³² *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 139; WSA, D1/9/2/1; plaque on building 'Union chapel 1835' and 'J. Pinnegar Builder'.

³³³ *Wilts. Times*, 22 June 1935.

³³⁴ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 8 Oct. 1835; WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

³³⁵ TNA, HO 129/253.

Congregational and the Moravians of East Tytherton.³³⁶ The Union chapel is Grade II listed and in 2024 remained in use.³³⁷

In 1843 a Primitive Methodist chapel was registered in Silver Street, Kington Langley, and opened in 1844, in the occupation of John Smith and others.³³⁸ In 1851 it attracted 60 worshippers in the afternoon and again in the evening.³³⁹ It was closed in 1987,³⁴⁰ and was converted for domestic use during the 1990s by D.M. Mullis.³⁴¹

Although much antagonism towards dissenters abated after the 1850s, latent distrust appears to have persisted. In 1862 the vicar of Kington St Michael objected to a group of Primitive Methodists singing over the grave of David Hulbert at his funeral. Thereafter they sang outside St Peter's graveyard.³⁴² In 1867 Jeremiah Ashe, who presided over the Union chapel, refused to pay church rates.³⁴³ Kilvert later recounted that, 'Miss Large was obliged to confess with shame and annoyance that Jerry [Jeremiah] Ashe, the Methodist preacher of Langley Fitzurse, had been allowed to officiate at the Moravian Chapel at East Tytherton'.³⁴⁴

In 2015 the Chippenham congregation of Plymouth Brethren moved to new premises on a site in Malmesbury Road in Kington Langley.³⁴⁵

Church architecture

St Peter's, Kington Langley, which was consecrated in 1855, was designed by Charles H. Gabriel of London and Calne and built by Mr Miller of Seagry, who had renovated several neighbouring churches.³⁴⁶ It is constructed from local 'Kington' stone with Bath stone dressings, and comprises nave, chancel, and vestry. The church was built without stained glass, a circumstance according to one account that was partially compensated for by illuminated texts of the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Commandments on either side of the chancel arch and under the east window.³⁴⁷ In 1861 a coloured east window was added in the chancel as a memorial to Edward Lewis Clutterbuck through whose exertions the church was built.³⁴⁸ Further stained glass was subsequently inserted in the 20th century.³⁴⁹ The organ by Griffen and Stroud of Bath dates from 1899. St Peter's church is Grade II listed.³⁵⁰

³³⁶ *Wilts. Times*, 22 June 1935.

³³⁷ NHLE, 1363855.

³³⁸ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 158; WSA, D1/9/2/1; TNA, HO 129/253 (erection date).

³³⁹ TNA, HO 129/253.

³⁴⁰ J. Holden, *Wilts. Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses* (2022), 122.

³⁴¹ Information from Mr David Martin Mullis, 2023.

³⁴² WSA, 2042/1; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 12–19.

³⁴³ Below, local govt., parish govt.

³⁴⁴ Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 73; *North Wilts. Herald*, 21 June 1935; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 2 May 1867; *The Liberator*, 13 (1867), 103.

³⁴⁵ <https://theplymouthbrethren.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/PBCC-Hall-Locations.pdf> (accessed 18 Mar. 2023); above, Chippenham, relig. hist.

³⁴⁶ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 26 Apr. 1855, 3; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 10.

³⁴⁷ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 26 Apr. 1855.

³⁴⁸ WSA, 2042/1; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 12–19.

³⁴⁹ Meers, *Historical Notes*, 20.

³⁵⁰ NHLE, 1283658.

Modifications were made to the west end of the church before 2022 to create a green room, kitchen and toilet facilities.³⁵¹

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Manorial government

The Elizabethan court book for Kington St Michael, covering 1559–77, divides presentments made by the tithingmen of Kington Langley and Kington St Michael into separate sections, but presentments made by the leet jury and homage are not divided. The division of tithingmen is likely a purely technical division between the two tithing jurisdictions. Certainly, for all other purposes the manor was a single unit.³⁵² Deeds and copies of court rolls of the 17th century generally refer to the two settlements as a single manor.³⁵³

Parish government

Before 1866 Kington Langley was administered as a tithing of Kington St Michael. In 1855 two overseers and two waywardens were appointed by the Kington St Michael vestry to serve Kington Langley. One guardian of the poor was also selected to represent the village on the board of the Chippenham poor law union. The selection of officers for Kington Langley was not subsequently mentioned in Kington St Michael vestry minutes and it is likely that the administration of the tithing was thereafter delegated to a subcommittee (or unofficial vestry committee) within the village of Kington Langley, held at the church of St Peter's.³⁵⁴

Kington Langley was created a civil parish in 1866. From 1866 until 1894 local government rested with the vestry committee. However, no vestry minutes were kept or have survived prior to 1879.³⁵⁵ There are also no accounts for overseers or highway surveyors.

At what was probably the first Easter vestry, in 1867, an attempt was made by local dissenters, including Jeremiah Ashe of the Union chapel, to subvert the proceedings by suppressing the churchwardens' accounts and refusing the church rate as, 'an unwanted assumption of ecclesiastical tyranny.'³⁵⁶ This failed. However, compulsory church rates were abolished in 1868 in any case, and subsequent minutes suggest that the men thereafter became part of the committee and served as elected parish officers: Ashe was elected a guardian and waywarden.³⁵⁷

³⁵¹ <https://draycot.weebly.com/kington-langley.html>; <https://langleyfitzurse.wilts.sch.uk/our-church/> (accessed 19 Mar. 2023).

³⁵² WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁵³ WSA, 422/4, 545/1, 873/140; below, Kington St Michael, local govt.

³⁵⁴ WSA, 1187/15. 25 Mar. 1855; below, Kington St Michael, local govt.

³⁵⁵ WSA, 2042/17. A note states that there was no record of accounts prior to 1879. After the creation of the parish council in 1895 the same volume continued to be used for church purposes only.

³⁵⁶ WSA, 2042/1; WM Library, MSS.1845, 6; Meers, *Historical Notes*, 18; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 2 May, 1867.

³⁵⁷ Nonconformists were Jeremiah Ashe (minister), Richard Selman (carpenter), James Millard (farmer), Benjamin Kington (farmer), and William Lane and Thomas Millard described as 'gentlemen'.

Vestry minutes kept from 1879 suggest that meetings took place annually to elect parish officers and audit churchwarden's accounts. The maintenance of the church otherwise dominated discussions. Parish officers comprised one or two overseers, one or two waywardens and a guardian of the poor. The overseer was annually selected, perhaps reflecting the arduous nature of the role, whereas the waywarden and guardian tended to be selected for longer periods. A sexton was also employed.³⁵⁸

Post-1894 Local Government

Parish council minutes have survived and been deposited for the period 1894 to 1961.³⁵⁹ At the first parish council meeting at the schoolroom, on 4 Dec 1894, nine parish councillors were selected. After 1901 Jacob Selman was the chairman until 1919.³⁶⁰ During the first few years items discussed tended to be routine – appointment of parish officers, administration of charities, and condition of local footpaths.³⁶¹ Later concerns were regularly raised over sanitation, and by 1915 a sanitary committee was formed.³⁶² In 1917 Mr Gale was appointed to the combined post of assistant overseer, clerk to the parish council and collector of the special sanitary rate.

Following the First World War the need to improve local sanitation, water supply and roads continued to be discussed. The parish council identified the need for new housing and after the construction of the village hall in 1926 became involved in the management of this amenity.³⁶³ After the Second World War housing was again a significant issue, although the location of development was cause for disagreement.³⁶⁴ In 1960 a further proposed development of 70 homes and a new school was 'a matter of concern' for the parish council and a petition was started.³⁶⁵

In 2024, the Kington Langley parish council comprised nine councillors. Monthly meetings took place at the Union chapel.³⁶⁶ Minutes of council and annual meetings from 2017 (generally held in April) were available online in 2024.

³⁵⁸ WSA, 2042/17. Parish officers were last selected 26 Mar. 1894. WSA, 981/1 lists overseers.

³⁵⁹ WSA, 981/1–2.

³⁶⁰ WSA, 981/1. 29 Mar. 1901, 13 Jan. 1919.

³⁶¹ WSA, 981/1. e.g. 20 Dec. 1897 etc.

³⁶² WSA, 981/1. e.g. 15 July 1901, 28 Apr. 1902, 27 Oct. 1902, 6 Feb. 1905 etc. 19 Apr. 1915.

³⁶³ WSA, 981/1. 17 Mar. 1919, 17 Oct. 1927, 30 Sept. 1929, 3 Feb. 1930, 20 Apr. 1936, 18 Jan. 1937 etc.

³⁶⁴ *Wilts. Times*, 28 Dec. 1946, 1 Feb. 1947, 11 Feb. 1950.

³⁶⁵ *Bristol Evening Post*, 19 Sept. 1960, 19 Oct. 1960.

³⁶⁶ <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgParishCouncilDetails.aspx?ID=346> (accessed 04 Aug. 2023); <https://kingtonlangley.org/meetings/> (accessed 04 Aug. 2023).