

KINGTON ST MICHAEL

Located 4 km north of Chippenham, Kington St. Michael village lies 1 km west of the main A350 road connecting Chippenham with the M4 motorway.¹ The road divides the parish to the west from its former tithing of Kington Langley to the east, which became a separate civil parish in 1866. In 1261–4 Kington St Michael and Kington Langley, along with other Glastonbury abbey estates in north Wiltshire, were removed from Chippenham hundred to form the hundred of North Damerham.² Easton Piercy, west of Kington St Michael, which was not a Glastonbury estate, lay in Thorngrove hundred in 1086 and Startley hundred in the 14th century; its tithingman attended Malmesbury hundred tourn as late as 1511.³ By the 17th century, if not earlier, it was regarded as a tithing within the parish of Kington St Michael.⁴ The ancient parish, including Kington St Michael and its tithings of Easton Piercy and Kington Langley, contained 3,935 a., 1,219 inhabitants and 220 houses in the 1850s, before it was broken up.⁵ Most aspects of Kington Langley's history are described above.

Two eminent antiquaries and scholars were natives of the parish and wrote extensively about it. John Aubrey (1626–97) was born and brought up at Lower Easton Piercy; John Britton (1771–1857) was born in a house near Kington St Michael church. A third, John Edward Jackson (1805–91), rector of nearby Leigh Delamere from 1845, researched and published many aspects of the Kingtons' history. The politician Jeremy Corbyn spent his early childhood in the village, 1949–56.⁶

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries and Parish Origins

The ancient parish of Kington St Michael, as mapped in 1820 and 1842,⁷ bordered eight other parishes – Langley Burrell (south), Hardenhuish (south), Leigh Delamere (north-west), Draycot Cerne (east), Sutton Benger (east), Stanton St Quinton (north-east), Yatton Keynell (west) and Chippenham (south and south-west). Several detached portions of Chippenham

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 Above, Chippenham, introduction. The final separation of North Damerham from Chippenham was made about 1319: TNA, Just. Itin. 1/998A m. 40; Aubrey, *Topog. Coll.* ed. Jackson, 124–5; Jackson, *Kington*, 40–41; *VCH Wilts*, V, 51–2.

³ *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 5–7.

⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed Jackson, 235–6; Jackson, *Kington*, 72. Aubrey believed that it had once been a parish.

⁵ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael; *VCH Wilts*, IV, 351; Jackson, *Kington*, 36.

⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 22 Aug. 2015.

⁷ *Printed Maps of Wilts.* (WRS. 52), , 108; WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

and Langley Burrell were located within the bounds of the parish;⁸ conversely, detached portions of Kington St Michael were located in Langley Burrell and Chippenham. The most significant was Peckingell, in Langley Burrell.

The possession of Peckingell by Kington St Michael is likely to have pre-dated the grant of a Kington estate to Glastonbury abbey in 987. This arrangement was probably to enable Kington to power a corn watermill on the Bristol Avon.⁹ The detached area was extended when the abbey in 1223 acquired 115 a. of rich pasture known as Penicroft from John Burel, which became attached to the abbey's manor and thereby the parish. This land lay between crofts owned by John de la Yate and John the Miller.¹⁰ As commonly in the Chippenham area, most of the detached portions of Kington parish lie on alluvium along valley bottoms, functioning originally as meadow lands.¹¹ The inclusion of Peckingell in a charter of 'Langley' in 940, though its bounds are uncertain, implies an early date, and a secular and economic arrangement.¹²

The long southern parish boundary (including Kington Langley) appears to be described in the 'Langley' charter of 940, but landmarks cannot be determined with certainty; the charter may relate to Draycot Cerne as well as both Kingtons.¹³ The apparent exclusion of Easton Piercy, not part of the Saxon Kington estate, provides a further complication.¹⁴

For much of its length the ancient parish boundary followed watercourses, Stein Brook and Chissell Brook, although at the south-eastern corner it was defined by field boundaries and Jackson's Lane. The eastern boundary with Draycot Cerne and Sutton Benger was established pre-conquest.¹⁵ The straightness of the northern border, marked by field boundaries, with Leigh Delamere, Stanton St Quinton and Yatton Keynell, suggests an early date. The tithing boundary with Kington Langley, which from 1866 became the civil parish boundary, is irregular, following field boundaries and in places the main road and Day's Lane.

In 1882 a small part of Kington St Michael civil parish (with 2 inhabitants in 1891) was transferred to Chippenham.¹⁶ In 1971 Bolehyde Manor and land around it (locally part of Allington) was transferred from Kington St Michael to Chippenham Without.¹⁷

The parish developed during the Saxon period from a settlement first recorded in a 934 Glastonbury abbey charter of King Athelstan, as *Kingtone* (and variously spelled thereafter, to 1249), suggesting a royal farm. It formed part of the Saxon royal estate of

⁸ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

⁹ Below, econ. hist.

¹⁰ *Cart. Glastonbury*, III, pp. 662–3.

¹¹ W.J. Ford, A Survey of the Archaeology of the Chippenham Area, prepared by staff of the Wilts. Archaeological and Museums Section, Library and Museum Service (unpublished, 1976), 6; *Cart. Glastonbury*, III, pp. 662–3.

¹² Electronic Sawyer, S473.

¹³ WAM 77, 68–9; *Arch. Jnl.* LXXVI (1919), 253–5; Electronic Sawyer, S473; S.E. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Glastonbury abbey* (2012), 380–5.

¹⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 235–6.

¹⁵ *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 75, 221.

¹⁶ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 351; Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 542.

¹⁷ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 542; its descent is described below, landownership.

Chippenham that was established around 800, and its name suggests that it supplied the royal household. The parish had no administrative function and appears to have been a Saxon creation.¹⁸

The 934 charter, which is not defined by bounds, granted 15 hides at *Kyngtone* to the king's faithful minister, Æthelhelm.¹⁹ The identification of the estate is uncertain,²⁰ as a second charter, of King Eadred (brother of Athelstan) at Chippenham in 940, granted 30 hides at 'Langley' to Wulfric (probably the brother of Abbot Dunstan),²¹ the reeve with general responsibility for the Glastonbury abbey estates.²² Its text, described as 'nearly unintelligible',²³ appears to relate to Kington Langley but to include also Kington St Michael.²⁴ It seems possible that two 15-hide estates with separate townships existed prior to 940, centred on Kington St Michael and Kington Langley, which the text of the 940 charter combined under one name, Langley.²⁵ By 1189, however, both places were referred to together as *Kinton*, and Kington thereafter has persisted as the name for the whole estate.²⁶

A third charter, of 987, has no boundary clause and seems unlikely to be authentic.²⁷ It purports to record a grant by Æthelred to Glastonbury abbey of a 40-hide estate at *Kyngtone*, previously purchased from King Edgar by Ælfswith, wife of Ælfheah.²⁸ Domesday Book records only 1½ hides at *Chintone*, identified as Kington St Michael,²⁹ but a Glastonbury abbey estate at *Langhelei* of 29 hides.³⁰ These together undoubtedly relate to the estate defined in 940 embracing both settlements.³¹ Domesday also records two 5-hide estates at Easton Piercy.³²

The association with Glastonbury abbey meant that the parish was sometimes referred to as Kington *Monachorum* (1255) or *Moyne*.³³ It was also called *Minchinkinton* ('nun Kington) from 1284, with later variants, referring to St Mary's Benedictine priory established in the parish by 1155. The two names may have co-existed to distinguish between the landholdings of these two monastic houses. The suffix St Michael, by which the parish became

¹⁸ Kelly, *Charters*, 351–2, *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 100; M. T. Clanchy (ed.), *Civil Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre, 1249* (WRS. 26), 37; Wilts. HER MWI5092; below, landownership.

¹⁹ Electronic Sawyer, S426; see discussion in L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: church and endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), 149–52.

²⁰ Kelly, *Charters*, 353–4.

²¹ Electronic Sawyer, S473.

²² Kelly, *Charters*, 58–9.

²³ Kelly, *Charters*, 380–5.

²⁴ Kelly, *Charters*, 384; Jackson, *Kington*, 37, 47.

²⁵ Kelly, *Charters*, 384; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 151.

²⁶ N.E. Stacy (ed.), *Surveys of the estates of Glastonbury abbey. c.1135–1201* (2001), 200.

²⁷ Kelly, *Charters*, 385, 522–6; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 151.

²⁸ Electronic Sawyer, S866. Aubrey's belief that Æthelred had resided at Kington is unfounded: Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 136.

²⁹ *VCH Wilts*, II, 153; *Domesday*, 187.

³⁰ *VCH Wilts*, II, 124; *Domesday*, 168.

³¹ *VCH Wilts*, II, 96; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 150.

³² *Domesday*, 179, 189.

³³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 134, 141, 428.

known, apparently derives from the dedication, restoration and development of the church in the 13th century associated with the abbacy of Michael of Ambresbury, 1235–52.³⁴

Easton Piercy, not part of Kington Saxon estate and in a different hundred,³⁵ was probably carved out of Yatton Keynell waste, and annexed to Kington St Michael by the 11th century or later. Its name, *Estone* in 1086, the ‘east farm’, probably refers to its position east of Yatton Keynell; the suffix Piercy was from Fitzpiers or Piers, a family who occupied land there c.1250.³⁶

Landscape

Much of the civil parish lies on Cornbrash limestone, although Kellaways clay outcrops in the south of the parish, and in the north along a band running from Swinley farm in the east to Cromhall farm in the west.³⁷ The minor streams which drain the parish, trending north-west towards the Avon near Christian Malford, have formed modest valleys which have exposed the Forest Marble underlying the Cornbrash and the deposited alluvium along the valley bottoms. The terrain, typical of the north-west Wiltshire Cotswolds, is undulating, mostly between 90 m. and 115 m. above Ordnance Datum, generally higher in the north and west of the parish than the east. Tor Hill, immediately south of the village, is a slight eminence, although lower than most land further north.

Aubrey noted the presence of ‘talk’ (talc) in local wells and springs,³⁸ and the plentiful presence of fossils around Easton Piercy, ‘full of small cockles no bigger than silver half-pennies.’³⁹ He recorded five ‘medicated springs’ within the parish, including one at the manor house and another, called Marian’s well, in Kington St Michael park. A third was at the former priory and the fourth, Biddle-well, lay between the main village settlement and Swinley to the north. Mayden well was probably in Langley north field, near a mill sold to Glastonbury abbey by Jordan Fitzurse c.1261.⁴⁰

Lime-rich soils prevail across the parish, shallower and more freely draining where the Forest Marble outcrops, but heavier and clayey with impeded drainage over the Cornbrash and Kellaways Clay.⁴¹ Aubrey described in detail the flora and fauna of the parish in the 17th century, enabling comparison with more recent periods. The species he logged (‘an abundance of sower plants’, which helped to create good cheese),⁴² suggest a number of plant habitats across the parish that included meadow (Adder’s Tongue Fern, My Lady’s Bedstraw),

³⁴ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 100; *VCH Wilts.*, III, 259–62; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 134; below, Religious hist.; Wilts. HER MWI5092. The earliest allusion to nuns in the name may be in 1249: *Crown Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre, 1249* (WRS. 16), 190 (no. 193); and to St Michael in 1268: *Crown Pleas of the Wilts. Eyre, 1268* (WRS. 65), 121 (no. 565), 124 (no. 580).

³⁵ Above, introduction.

³⁶ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 100–1; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 237; below, landownership; econ. hist.

³⁷ This para: <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/> (accessed 17 July 2023); OS Map 1:25000, sheet 156 (1999 edn.).

³⁸ Royal Soc., MS/92, ms copy of Aubrey’s *Natural History of Wilts*, 46, 70–1, 84.

³⁹ Royal Soc., MS/92, 98; Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed Britton, 42, 45; J. Aubrey *Three Prose Works*, ed J. Buchanan-Brown (Fontwell, 1972), 325.

⁴⁰ Royal Soc., MS/92, 46; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 147.

⁴¹ <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/> (accessed 17 July 2023).

⁴² Royal Soc., MS/92, 300.

wet margins (Brooklime) and damp and shaded areas (Hart's Tongue Fern).⁴³ Of particular botanical note was 'the Minchin', a meadow between St Mary's priory and Easton Piercy (below Priory wood and either side of the stream), which survived as Minchin Piece when mapped in 1842.⁴⁴ Here Aubrey recorded 'there is infinite variety of Plants in it'. Aubrey also chronicled local deforestation and its negative impact on animal species including pine martens, red squirrels and foxes. But he suggested that one of the finest oak woodlands remaining in the county was at Easton Piercy, where there was also the biggest oak specimen in the county.⁴⁵

Communications

The most important route through the parish runs north from Chippenham to Malmesbury, bisecting the settlement centres of Kington St Michael and Kington Langley. This is possibly *Ergespath* mentioned in the Langley charter bounds in 940. It was mapped in 1653 as part of an agreement between Langley Burrell, Chippenham and Hardenhuish parish officers to discharge their statute highway responsibilities. The road was turnpiked in 1756 and disturnpiked c.1868.⁴⁶ It was classified A429 in 1922, and renumbered A350 and reconstructed as a dual carriageway to feed the M4 motorway junction 17, opened in 1971. As part of the development of Chippenham turnpikes the road branching from it through the settlement of Kington St Michael towards Hullavington was itself turnpiked, either in 1756 or under a continuation act in 1767/8, but perhaps only briefly, and probably to avoid toll evasion on the main road.⁴⁷

Aubrey describes 'old ways now lost; but some vestigial left' at Easton Piercy. One led north from an ancient cross by the pound (beside the present Cromhall Lane), northwards past the manor house (now Manor farm) to Leigh Delamere.⁴⁸ This is shown on maps of 1842 as a lane until just north of the former manor house,⁴⁹ and survived in 1885, but thereafter was only a footpath to Leigh Delamere.⁵⁰ Running southwards from the cross was a way to Allington, which Aubrey described, 'but of that no sign'.⁵¹ A footpath running south from that point, however, was mapped in 1885. Another ancient way left Easton from 'the gate at the brook' to Yatton Keynell. This may be Cromhall Lane that runs westwards between Kington and Yatton Keynell, the brook then referring to the pond north of the manor depicted on the tithe map.⁵²

Other ways, shown on a map of 1773, include Stanton Lane leading to Swinley, towards Stanton St Quintin; and locally the most important in parochial terms, a trackway

⁴³ Royal Soc., MS/92, 8, 118–19.

⁴⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 143; WSA, TA/Kington St Michael, no.640.

⁴⁵ Royal Soc., MS/92, 131–2, 148; see also 144 etc.

⁴⁶ WAM 77, 68–9; *Wilts. Quarter Session Order Book 1642–1654* (WRS. 67), 286; WSA, 118/53; *VCH Wilts*, IV, 257, 267, 269.

⁴⁷ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 257, 267.

⁴⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 236.

⁴⁹ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

⁵⁰ OS Map 25", *Wilts*. XX.5 (1886 edn.).

⁵¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 236.

⁵² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 236.

and two roads which crossed the Chippenham–Malmesbury road to connect with Kington Langley.⁵³ One of these may be the ancient trackway (described as such in 1518) that extended from Glastonbury abbey's estate at Kington St Michael to Peckingell, locally within the parish of Langley Burrell.⁵⁴

Local routes were likely to be in a poor state before the 20th century. Britton described how before c.1800 'the roads to the village, branching from those called Turnpike Roads about a mile distant, were not easy to be passed over by carriages; for being only used by waggons and carts, they were worn into two deep ruts by the wheels, and another nearly equally deep by the horses.'⁵⁵

No railways or canals pass through the parish.

Directories of the 19th and 20th centuries do not record local carriers serving Kington St Michael, presumably because of its proximity to the nearest market town, Chippenham. Other 19th- and early 20th-century village carriers, from Hullavington, Stanton and elsewhere, probably called at Kington on their way to and from Chippenham. The National company began a motor bus service between Chippenham and Malmesbury in 1922, and in 1929 this was calling at Kington during four journeys each way on four or five days weekly.⁵⁶ The service between the two towns was continued by Western National from 1930 and by Bristol Omnibus after 1970. In 2023 a daytime hourly service between Kington and Chippenham was provided by Faresaver, a Chippenham bus company.

Population

In 1086 there were 24 tenants on the Glastonbury abbey estate at Kington; this rose to 56 in 1189.⁵⁷ In 1332 there were 48 taxpayers recorded for *Kyngton Michaelis*; Easton Piercy (as *Estone*) was included separately with Draycot Cerne.⁵⁸ Manorial court documents record that whereas 60 landless men paid capitate at Easter 1348, only 34 paid the following Easter, suggesting a large fall in the resident population (c.56%) as a result of the Black Death.⁵⁹ The 1377 poll tax recorded 93 adult taxpayers for Kington St Michael, implying that the population had not fully recovered in the intervening period.⁶⁰ In 1523 there were 21 inhabitants in Kington St Michael and 5 in Easton Piercy wealthy enough to be taxed, a total comparable with the other North Damerham parishes.⁶¹ At the 1676 religious census 361 adult conformists and non-conformists were recorded for Kington St Michael, suggesting that the total population was then in excess of 500.⁶²

⁵³ *Andrews' and Dury's Map 1773* (WRS. 8), pl. 13.

⁵⁴ BL Harl. MS 3961. The lord of Langley Burrell claimed 12*d.* ancient rent from the manor of Kyngton in 1518.

⁵⁵ J. Britton, *Autobiography*, 32.

⁵⁶ R.J. Crawley *et al*, *The Years Between*, I (1979), 56; *Roadways*, Sept. 1929, 272.

⁵⁷ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 10,

⁵⁸ *Wilts. Tax list of 1332* (WRS. 45), 61, 104–5.

⁵⁹ Below, econ. hist., farming.

⁶⁰ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 308.

⁶¹ TNA, E 179/197/155; cf. Nettleton (26), Christian Malford (25), Grittleton (21). The property threshold was 20s.

⁶² *Compton Census* ed. Whiteman, 128.

In the first national census of 1801 the total population of Kington St Michael ancient parish was 729 (including Kington Langley), or 358 for Kington St Michael and Easton Piercy only. These totals rose to 824 (395) in 1811, 969 (465) in 1821 and 1,173 (572) by 1841. The 19th century population peaked in 1851 at 1,219 (625 for Kington St Michael and Easton Piercy combined, or 594 and 21 respectively).⁶³ Thereafter the population fell to 457 in 1881 and 438 in 1891, after the loss of 2 residents in a boundary change. The population increased to 473 in 1911 but fell after World War I to 437 in 1921. It recovered in 1951 to 476,⁶⁴ and had risen rapidly to 704 in 1961, but after falling a decade later it stabilised to c.700 at each subsequent census.⁶⁵

Settlement

Amongst the earliest evidence for settlement at Kington St Michael are Mesolithic flints, found at locations in the north and south of the parish.⁶⁶ Similar flint assemblages have been found elsewhere in the Chippenham area at sites near the Bristol Avon (hunter-fisher groups of this period tended to settle on land adjacent to rivers or marshes).⁶⁷ A Neolithic flint scraper was found at Moorshall farm,⁶⁸ and Aubrey recorded finding in the west field by Easton Piers what was probably a Neolithic hand axe, 'as big as one's fist and of a kind of liver colour.'⁶⁹

Cropmarks of rectilinear and circular enclosures are visible on aerial photographs in an area east of the main settlement. These have not been dated, but it has been suggested that such marks in the vicinity are probably from the early farming period, 3,500–450 BC.⁷⁰ An enclosure and nearby pit, also undated, are recorded north of Nash Lane in the north-east of the parish.⁷¹ Bronze Age pottery was found nearby in Quarry field (also on Nash Lane).⁷²

A Middle Iron Age settlement was indicated, north of Heywood, by an excavation ahead of a gas pipeline in 1998, and associated ditches to the north-west were Roman.⁷³ As part of the same excavations evidence of Romano-British settlement was found nearby, south of Cromhall farm, comprising ditches, postholes, a gully and two wells.⁷⁴ To the east of this

⁶³ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 351. The population of Easton Piercy was 41 in 1841, seemingly a century high.

⁶⁴ *VCH Wilts*, IV, 351.

⁶⁵ <https://apps.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityhistory/Census/ByYear> (accessed 17 July 2023).

⁶⁶ Wilts. HER, MWI5059, MWI5069.

⁶⁷ Ford 'Survey', 4.

⁶⁸ Wilts. HER, MWI2073.

⁶⁹ Royal Soc., MS/92, 93.

⁷⁰ *Wilts. HER*, MWI45061; Ford 'Survey', 4.

⁷¹ Wilts. HER MWI45059; MWI45060.

⁷² Wilts. HER, MWI5079.

⁷³ Wilts. HER MWI2077. South of Heywood to the north-west of the Gorse Linear features of Iron Age date were excavated in 2007 at Chippenham Golf Course: Wilts. HER, MWI5080. Roman finds in the parish include Romano-British Pottery, West of Lodge farm and a Romano British Brooch, west of the settlement: Wilts. HER, MWI5082; MWI2086; MWI2087; MWI5091.

⁷⁴ Wilts. HER, MWI2085, MWI2131, MWI2119.

site (and east of Down farm) an Iron Age/Roman rectangular enclosure has also been recorded on aerial photographs.⁷⁵

St Mary's, a small Benedictine priory of nuns, stood north-west of the main settlement area and east of Easton Piercy.⁷⁶ The priory buildings surrounded a square court, to the north of which was a chapel.⁷⁷ Aubrey sketched the site during the 17th century when it appeared still largely intact, but observed that the priory chapel which had been 'very fayre' was without glass, monuments or chancel.⁷⁸ Before 1800 the site was in use as a farmhouse.⁷⁹ Britton in 1803 described how one side of the quadrangle had been taken down and the remaining two so much altered that very little remained. The 'ancient hall' was in use as a kitchen, while the kitchen garden occupied the former graveyard. A chapel archway was still standing, but the chapel site was in use for pig sties.⁸⁰

It is likely that a rearrangement and enlargement of the core settlement of Kington took place during the later 13th century. In 1266 Henry III granted the abbot of Glastonbury the right to hold a Tuesday market and a September fair at Kington St Michael. According to Aubrey the market was held at the cross located 'at the Y goeing to the Priory', the junction of Grove Lane and Honey Knob Hill. Contemporary with the market grant, St Michael's church was restored and a steeple added, a new grange was built, and courts of the newly created hundred of North Damerham were sometimes held at Kington.⁸¹ The regular arrangement of tenement plots with continuous rear boundaries along the line of the village street suggests a planned addition to the settlement, perhaps to create a minor urban development to accompany the market. Earthworks, including possible house platforms, situated on Tor Hill south of the present village, support this contention of settlement shift.⁸²

Several farms which developed away from the areas of settlement are of Saxon or medieval origin. These include Moorshall (Moreshall) farm, near Leigh Delamere to the north-west of the parish, which Aubrey believed belonged to St Mary's priory.⁸³ It may have a Saxon origin, but is more likely to have been settled during the medieval period,⁸⁴ the current farmhouse dates from the 17th century.⁸⁵ Swinley, to the north-east of the parish was

⁷⁵ Wilts. HER, MWI44984. Another undated enclosure has been recorded north of Nash Lane, north-east of the parish. Wilts. HER, MWI45059. See also MWI45060.

⁷⁶ For the history of the priory, see VCH Wilts, III, 259–62.

⁷⁷ Wilts. HER, MWI2100; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 143–5; Jackson, *Kington*, 51–67; WAM, 25, 18–25.

⁷⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 143–5, pl. 218.

⁷⁹ Britton, *Beauties Wilts.* iii, 155.

⁸⁰ *Gent. Mag.* 1803 (2), 717. Britton transcribed his report to the *Gent. Mag.* in a later manuscript: WM Library, MSS 4080.

⁸¹ The hundred court is also likely to have been held there in 1263. In 1255 it was described as the hundred court of Kington, although North Damerham appears to have been created 1261–3 (VCH Wilts, V, 52, 70): Longleat, MSS 11244 (1275), 11273 (1300), 11215 (1306), 10633 (1335); Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 139, 142, 429; Dugdale, *Mon.* I, 45; Jackson, *Kington*, 39. By c.1780 the market had been discontinued for more than 200 years but the fair continued: Britton, *Beauties Wilts.* iii, 148–9.

⁸² Wilts. HER, MWI5092.

⁸³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 145.

⁸⁴ PN Wilts. (EPNS), 101; Wilts. HER MWI2108, MWI2109; Jackson, *Kington*, 46–7.

⁸⁵ NHLE, 1022328.

recognised as a distinct area by 1243,⁸⁶ and has been identified as part of the lands held by Urse in 1086 and Robert de Curtenai in 1189.⁸⁷ A medieval enclosure and pottery associated with settlement have been found at Upper Swinley farm.⁸⁸

Easton Piercy retains extensive archaeological evidence of the medieval settlement, including a bank running north to south in a field south of Manor farm, with possible house platforms and ridge and furrow.⁸⁹ Aubrey described the settlement c.1670 as comprising a manor house, chapel and cross. However, the chapel and cross had disappeared by the time he was writing.⁹⁰ A recommendation in 1976 that the medieval settlement features should be scheduled as an ancient monument had not (in 2023) been implemented.⁹¹

Easton Piercy manor house was demolished and rebuilt by the Langton family after they purchased it in 1623.⁹² In 1842 a field called Chapel Land lay adjacent and north-west of the former manor house (now Manor farm), an area also identified by Jackson in 1858.⁹³ Of the several farms which make up the hamlet, Cromhall farm has medieval origins although the farmhouse dates from the 17th century.⁹⁴ Lower Easton Piercy farm, once owned by Aubrey, and Upper Easton farm were developed from the 16th century.⁹⁵ Britton described Lower Easton farm c.1780 as an ivy-covered ruin, its doors and windows removed, and its floors decayed or fallen in. In one room were fragments of old armour.⁹⁶ Subsequently 'a snug modern building' was erected on the site.⁹⁷

After 1539 Glastonbury abbey's former grange at Kington, which lay slightly north-west of St Michael's church, was used as the manor house, and rebuilt by Nicholas Snell, the former abbey reeve who acquired the estate.⁹⁸ A map of 1773 depicts formal gardens, of which only a small part survives.⁹⁹ The manor house was replaced in the 19th century by Herbert Prodgers.¹⁰⁰ Aubrey mentions a park adjacent to the manor that included carp ponds, which was possibly a deer park upon which the abbot's tenants enjoyed the right of pasture; these rights were later rescinded by Nicholas Snell.¹⁰¹ This area lay to the west of the church and manor house, and extended north to a ditch in a close called 'Ryding', and south to include

⁸⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 427. See also Jackson, *Kington*, 46.

⁸⁷ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 200.

⁸⁸ Wilts. HER, MWI5112.

⁸⁹ Wilts. HER, MWI2098, MWI2126. An undated enclosure has also been recorded south-west of Lower Easton Piercy farm. Wilts. HER, MWI2125.

⁹⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 236–7.

⁹¹ Ford 'Survey', 10–11.

⁹² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 240. Wilts. HER, MWI66015.

⁹³ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael; identification confirmed by Jackson, *Kington*, 72–3.

⁹⁴ Wilts. HER, MWI2104; Jackson, *Kington*, 80. See also Wilts. HER, MWI65987.

⁹⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 240–1; Jackson, *Kington*, 78–80; Soc. Ants. Lib. JAC 006; notes on Easton Piercy; Wilts. HER, MWI66014, MWI66016. Jackson's descriptions are not entirely accurate.

⁹⁶ Britton, *Beauties Wilts.* iii, 156.

⁹⁷ WM Library, MSS 4080.

⁹⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 130.

⁹⁹ Wilts. HER, MWI2113; *Andrews' and Dury's Map 1773* (WRS. 8), pl.13.

¹⁰⁰ Soc. Ant., JAC 006; below, landownership.

¹⁰¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 130–1. WAM 89, 88–98.

the present Lodge farm and Haywood farm.¹⁰² A park, by then reduced to c.52 a., is included in a 1655 manor survey; it contained a lodge, possibly the site of the present Lodge farm.¹⁰³ However, the park was not depicted on Speed's Wiltshire map of 1610.

Other evidence of medieval settlement includes ridge and furrow.¹⁰⁴ Medieval finds include a stirrup ring discovered east of Priory Cottage¹⁰⁵

In 2023 settlement in Kington St Michael was centred on the linear village street, which becomes Honey Knob Hill to the north. The parish church and Kington Manor are located to the west of the older core of the settlement at the southern end of the street. During the later 20th century there was some infilling, and four cul-de-sacs (The Rydings, The Close, The Ham and Kyneton Way) were built either side of the street north of the main settlement.

The Built Character

Recalling the village in his youth, c.1780, John Britton noted, 'The cottages and the shops were of the humblest and poorest kind. With walls of rough undressed stone and mortar, thatched roofs, stone slabs from the quarries, or the bare earth for the floor, windows of varied forms and sizes, many of them papered or boarded, or with broken glass.'¹⁰⁶ Despite this assessment, several of these buildings on the village street survived to be grade II listed, albeit now mainly under stone slate or Bridgwater tile roofs, not thatch. The prevailing rubblestone and slates used in vernacular buildings come from local quarries of Cornbrash and Forest Marble, so that, it has been said, they are 'fashioned out of the earth on which they stand'.¹⁰⁷

Most notable of the listed buildings is a row of six almshouses to the west side of the village street, which bear the inscription, 'Isaac Lyte, born in this Parish, Alderman of London late deceased, built this Almshouse and endowed it A.D. 1675'. The design incorporates a regular six-gabled front with three-light ovolo-moulded stone mullion windows.¹⁰⁸ Also to the west side is the late 18th century Jolly Huntsman inn, with north side extension from 1880 and former malthouse to the rear of the original range.¹⁰⁹ North of the almshouses is a group of 17th-century houses (66–68), and further up the street another row of three houses (53–55), altered and extended, but reputed to have been a malt house.¹¹⁰ Near the church is a row of four (initially two) houses (86–89) that are dated 1751.¹¹¹

¹⁰² The Ridings (as well as First & Middle Riddings, Long Ridings, Upper Ridings) survived as field names in the 1840s: WSA, T/A Kington St Michael; the modern Ridings housing estate retains the name. See also Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 130–1; Jackson, *Kington*, 43–4. An undated bank recorded by Wilts. HER may be associated with this park. Wilts. HER, MWI2121.

¹⁰³ WSA, 873/140. An undated linear earthwork and a small square enclosure south of Lodge farm are conceivably connected to the possible park: Wilts. HER, MWI5145.

¹⁰⁴ Wilts. HER, MWI2128.

¹⁰⁵ Wilts. HER, MWI2110. See also MWI2142, MWI5160.

¹⁰⁶ Britton, *Autobiography*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ H. and R. Tanner, *Wilts. Village* (1939), 18.

¹⁰⁸ NHLE, 1283535. Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379; below, Social hist.

¹⁰⁹ NHLE, 1363826.

¹¹⁰ NHLE, 1363864, 1199132.

¹¹¹ NHLE, 1199225. Other listed buildings include no. 75. NHLE, 1022336.

The east side of the village street also retains a number of early houses, now listed. The Old Police House was adapted in 1889 from two early-mid 18th-century houses.¹¹² Of similar date are nos. 8–10 and 23, the latter of two storeys and an attic, double-fronted with cyma-moulded flush two-light mullion windows. The central door has a deep segmental hood on scrolled brackets.¹¹³ Listed houses of the 19th century include Laburnum House (22), which incorporates a three-window range,¹¹⁴ Hazeland House, nos. 3 and 3A, and no. 31, with a datestone 1811.¹¹⁵ Also on the street, close to the village hall, a good example of a 1935 design K6 telephone kiosk is grade II listed.¹¹⁶

St Michael's church is grade II* listed.¹¹⁷ The former vicarage (called the Old Rectory), lychgate and a number of mainly 18th-century monuments in the churchyard are also listed grade II or II*.¹¹⁸ The only other grade II* structure in the parish is Priory Manor, 17th-century and earlier, which incorporates elements of the former St Mary's priory. It is constructed of rubblestone with a stone slate roof and ashlar stacks. The main range of the house was formerly the prioress's lodging.¹¹⁹ The former stable range is also listed.¹²⁰ Stones taken from the demolished priory have been re-used in walls and farm buildings.¹²¹ Kington Manor dates from 1863 and is grade II.¹²²

A number of former and current farmhouses and buildings are also listed. On the village street are Home farm, of 17th-18th century date, and Manor farm, constructed late 18th to early 19th century, with barn and stable range.¹²³ Others include Manor farm (dated 1631, but largely of later construction) and its barn at Easton Piercy, and Upper Swinley farm, rebuilt in 1639.¹²⁴

LANDOWNERSHIP

Pattern of Landownership

¹¹² NHLE, 1022332.

¹¹³ NHLE, 1022331, 1199101.

¹¹⁴ NHLE, 1022333.

¹¹⁵ NHLE, 1022335, 1022330, 1199109.

¹¹⁶ NHLE, 1392028.

¹¹⁷ NHLE, 1283509; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379; below, Religious hist.

¹¹⁸ NHLE, 1363830, 1022338, 1199208, 1363827, 1363828, 1022339.

¹¹⁹ NHLE, 1022340; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379–80.

¹²⁰ NHLE, 1022341.

¹²¹ Tanner, *Wilts. Village*, 28–9.

¹²² NHLE, 1199164, 1022337; below, landownership.

¹²³ NHLE, 1022329, 1363863, 1022334.

¹²⁴ NHLE, 1022325, 1022326, 1022342. Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 380; below, landownership.

Kington was part of a Saxon royal estate that supplied a residence at Chippenham.¹²⁵ It was a Saxon creation rather than being based upon a pre-existing Romano-British estate.¹²⁶ The great majority of land in medieval Kington St Michael and Kington Langley was part of a manor owned by Glastonbury abbey, with a smaller estate held by the nuns of Kington. After the Dissolution the Glastonbury manor was held by the Snell family until the mid 17th century when it was fragmented by division among heiresses.

Manors and Principal Estates

The Glastonbury manor of Kington: The charters of 934, 940 and 987 relating to grants of land at Kington to Glastonbury abbey are contradictory and their authenticity has been doubted.¹²⁷ Domesday records only 1½ hides at 'Kington', held by Roger from Ralph de Mortimer in 1086 and formerly by Alwine from the abbot of Glastonbury.¹²⁸ It also includes 29 hides at 'Langley',¹²⁹ usually identified as Kington Langley.¹³⁰ The abbey held the manor and continued in possession until 1220 when it was granted to the bishop of Wells, but restored to the abbey in 1218.¹³¹ Thereafter it remained among the abbey's possessions until 1536.

The demesne at Kington St Michael was in hand, but 'running at a low ebb', in 1402 and was leased at some time in the later 15th century.¹³² Richard Snell was the bailiff and farmer by 1518,¹³³ and he or his son Richard were later reeve and later steward.¹³⁴ In 1518 the demesne consisted of 126 a. arable, 55 a. pasture, 40 a. meadow, 400 a. wood and 310 a. common.¹³⁵ It had been larger, as former demesne arable was noted among the copyholders' lands. There were only four freeholders: two laymen, the abbot of Malmesbury and the prioress of Kington. The first layman, John Saunders, held a tenement beside Heywood from John Bolehide; the second, Thomas Tropenell, held a virgate inherited from his father,¹³⁶ Christopher Tropenell, which in 1502 consisted of a messuage with 60 a. arable, 10 a. meadow and 20 a. pasture held for services.¹³⁷ A tenement in Malmesbury was part of the manor, held by the abbot of Malmesbury, but it was in disrepair and no rent could be distrained.¹³⁸ The prioress of Kington held two cottages in Langley from Kington St Michael manor.¹³⁹ With the

¹²⁵ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS) 100.

¹²⁶ Wilts. HER, <https://services.wiltshire.gov.uk/HistoryEnvRecord/Home/Index> (accessed 4/9/2022)

¹²⁷ Electronic Sawyer, S426, S866, S473. See Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 149–52; J. Scott, *Early history of Glastonbury* (c.1981), 114, 142; above, settlement.

¹²⁸ *Domesday*, 187.

¹²⁹ *Domesday*, 168.

¹³⁰ A location in Langley Burrell has also been suggested: Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 150–1; above, settlement.

¹³¹ Jackson, *Kington*, 39.

¹³² I.J.E. Keil, 'The estates of the Abbey of Glastonbury in the later Middle Ages' (Ph.D. thesis, Bristol, 1965), 148.

¹³³ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

¹³⁴ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3953–5; Jackson, *Kington*, 42.

¹³⁵ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

¹³⁶ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

¹³⁷ *Cal Inq. p.m. Hen. VII*, II, 439 (no.682).

¹³⁸ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

¹³⁹ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

exception of ½ a. leased to the churchwardens of Langley all other land in the manor was held by customary tenants as copyhold.¹⁴⁰

Richard Snell retained his lease under the Court of Augmentations and in 1543 purchased the manor for £803 17s. 2½d.¹⁴¹ He was succeeded by his son Nicholas Snell who built a new manor house on the site of the monastic grange.¹⁴² His rise was partly assisted by his marriage to Alice, daughter of John Pye of Rowden, which saw him promoted from minor gentry to become MP for Chippenham and sheriff of Wiltshire.¹⁴³ Nicholas Snell was succeeded by his son John (d.1587),¹⁴⁴ who obtained a licence to alienate lands in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley to John Tanner in 1578.¹⁴⁵ John Snell was followed by his son Thomas who died in 1612,¹⁴⁶ and his son Charles who died without issue in 1651.¹⁴⁷

Charles's estate was inherited by his surviving sister Mary, wife of Nicholas Gastrell, and the heirs of his two elder sisters Barbara Stokes and Penelope Newman.¹⁴⁸ This split inheritance precipitated a permanent division of the manor and initially resulted in courts being held in each portion.¹⁴⁹ The first two portions are considered here, the portion that descended from Penelope Newman to the Coleman family is considered under Kington Langley.¹⁵⁰ In 1655, the year before the division, a survey was compiled for the whole manor including lands in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley.¹⁵¹

Kington Manor – The Gastrell portion: The portion of the manor that descended to Mary Gastrell's son James was surveyed in 1664 and comprised: a demesne of 308 a. worth £148; 13 copyholders in Kington St Michael holding 173 a. worth £87; 13 copyholders in Kington Langley holding 156 a. worth £113 0s. 6d.; eight leaseholders in Kington St Michael holding 93 a. worth £63 0s. 6d.; and twelve leaseholders in Kington Langley with 112 a. worth £92 4s. 6d.¹⁵²

James Gastrell (d.1679)¹⁵³ left his estate to his nephew, James Power,¹⁵⁴ on whose death in 1704¹⁵⁵ his portion passed to James Aland Power of Chippenham.¹⁵⁶ When he died, 1715,¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁰ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

¹⁴¹ Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/GS/21; WSA, 473/196.

¹⁴² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 131.

¹⁴³ *Hist. Parl. Commons 1558–1603*, III, 411–12.

¹⁴⁴ *Hist. Parl. Commons 1558–1603*, III, 411.

¹⁴⁵ *Cal. Pat. 1575–8*, 464.

¹⁴⁶ Jackson, *Kington*, 44, will pr. 1613: TNA, PROB 11/121/732.

¹⁴⁷ Jackson, *Kington*, pedigree of Snell bet. pp. 44, 45.

¹⁴⁸ WSA, 473/196.

¹⁴⁹ WSA, 1305/125.

¹⁵⁰ Above, Kington Langley, landownership.

¹⁵¹ WSA, 873/140.

¹⁵² WSA, 1305/125.

¹⁵³ WSA, P3/G/264.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, C 8/341/44.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, PROB 11/485/188.

¹⁵⁶ TNA, PROB 11/485/188; TNA, C 8/341/44.

¹⁵⁷ WSA, 1187/4.

it passed to his brother Jonathan (d.1748)¹⁵⁸ and was then divided by Act of Parliament between his four married sisters: Elizabeth Gilpin, Margaret Clifford, Rebecca Knott and Sarah Coleman. A fifth sister, Grace Power, died unmarried in 1749 and the portion that she was to be allocated was divided among her sisters within the Act.¹⁵⁹

The share that passed to Elizabeth Gilpin (d.1755)¹⁶⁰ was inherited by her son Jonathan Power Gilpin (d.1790, Tellisford, Som.)¹⁶¹ and his son James Gilpin who broke up the lands and sold them in 1807.¹⁶²

Margaret Clifford (d.1754)¹⁶³ received Heywood farm, which was recognised as a discrete area as early as 1255 and 1285 when William de Haywood and Robert de Haywood quitclaimed lands to the abbot of Glastonbury.¹⁶⁴ Margaret passed Heywood to her three daughters, Elizabeth, Margaret and Sarah, before it descended to her relatives the Mascalls of Allington.¹⁶⁵ James Mascall, who had inherited by 1780,¹⁶⁶ was succeeded by his son James Mascall (d.1821).¹⁶⁷ It passed to his son, also James Mascall (d.1846),¹⁶⁸ then to his son Richard and then to Richard's four daughters Elizabeth, Sarah, Ann and Mary by whom it was sold to the Neeld estate at Grittleton in 1888.¹⁶⁹ It was sold again in 1898 at auction.¹⁷⁰ Harry Sage, who had also acquired Bolehide, held it in the 1920s.¹⁷¹ In 1943 Heywood farm, then consisting of 160 a., was leased by Daniel Singer from C.E. West of Bath and M. Du Cros of Bolehide.¹⁷² Heywood farmhouse is grade II listed; constructed in 1664 and extended during the 18th century.¹⁷³

Rebecca Knott's share was purchased by Joseph Neeld of Grittleton who held it in 1840.¹⁷⁴

Sarah Coleman was the wife of William Coleman (d.1739) who inherited the third of the original manor that passed to the heirs of Penelope Newman and descended with that portion of the manor.¹⁷⁵

¹⁵⁸ WSA, 1187/4.

¹⁵⁹ Act for The Partition of Jonathan Power's estate, 1783, 23 Geo. III, c.44.; WSA, P3/P/868.

¹⁶⁰ WSA, P3/G/651.

¹⁶¹ Somerset Heritage Centre, D/P/Tell/2/1/2.

¹⁶² WSA, 1305/125.

¹⁶³ TNA, PROB 11/808/481.

¹⁶⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 428.

¹⁶⁵ Jackson, *Kington*, 46.

¹⁶⁶ WSA, A1/345/243.

¹⁶⁷ WSA, P3/1821/31.

¹⁶⁸ WSA, P3/1846/24.

¹⁶⁹ WSA, 1305/125.

¹⁷⁰ WSA, 2623/68.

¹⁷¹ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1920, 1927 edns.).

¹⁷² TNA, MAF 32/39/34/6.

¹⁷³ NHLE, 101283587.

¹⁷⁴ Jackson, *Kington*, 46; WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

¹⁷⁵ Above, Kington Langley, landownership.

Kington Manor – The Stokes portion: One third of the original Kington manor held by Charles Snell passed in 1656 to Thomas the son of Barbara Stokes.¹⁷⁶ Thomas and his son Edward each held a moiety of this third of the manor during their lifetimes, including copyhold and leasehold lands totalling 234 a. in Kington St Michael and one copyhold of 1 a. in Kington Langley.¹⁷⁷ Their portion included the manor house at Kington St Michael which in Thomas's will he left to his wife, Jane, with provision for his son Charles who had 'an affliction to deprive him of sense and reason'.¹⁷⁸ The divided third of the manor was reunited by Edward's son John Stokes and valued in 1679,¹⁷⁹ before being sold to trustees for the marriage settlement between John Lawford of Stapleton (Glos.) and Jane Duckett.

In 1713 it was sold to Ayliffe White and in 1826 on the death of his grandson, also Ayliffe White, it was divided and sold to R.H. Gaby, N. Atherton and W. Whitworth.¹⁸⁰ Gaby's portion was in 1840 held jointly by Thomas and Mary Gaby and included Manor farm at Kington St Michael, leased to William Little.¹⁸¹ Whitworth purchased Lodge farm which descended in 1857 to his son-in-law William Peel of Manchester and was thereafter occupied by tenants.

Atherton's portion, including the manor house, was sold in 1856 to Thomas Clutterbuck.¹⁸² Herbert Prodgers purchased the manor house in 1862.¹⁸³ The present manor house was constructed for him in 1863, possibly by J. L. Pearson, and incorporated some details from the previous 16th-century house.¹⁸⁴ An inventory of the goods of James Power compiled in 1705 records the features of the 16th-century house: a hall, parlour, kitchen and pantry, each with a chamber above, a third storey with chambers over the hall, parlour and kitchen chambers, a brewhouse and a whitehouse containing two cheese presses and with a chamber above, a 'meal chamber' containing a meal tub; two inner and outer cellars contained barrels of wine.¹⁸⁵ Britton recalled that in his childhood at the end of the 18th century there was a fishpond well stocked with carp, eel and tench.¹⁸⁶

The Priory manor: The Benedictine house of nuns had been endowed at Kington St Michael between 1142 and 1155.¹⁸⁷ They continued to hold the manor until the Dissolution when the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* underestimated the lands at 100 a. arable held in demesne worth £1 13s. 4d., 36 a. meadow and pasture in demesne worth £3 13s. 4d., rents of free and customary tenants worth £3 18s. 6d. and the tithes of the rectory worth £6 13s. 4d.¹⁸⁸

¹⁷⁶ WSA, 473/196.

¹⁷⁷ Soc. Ants. Lib. JAC 006.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PROB 11/324/157, cited in *Wilts. N&Q*, V, 559, and Badeni, *Wilts. Forefathers*, 92.

¹⁷⁹ WSA, 84/47.

¹⁸⁰ Jackson, *Kington*, 45–6.

¹⁸¹ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

¹⁸² Jackson, *Kington*, 45.

¹⁸³ Badeni, *Wilts. Forefathers*, 93.

¹⁸⁴ NHLE, 1199164.

¹⁸⁵ WSA, 1305/125.

¹⁸⁶ Britton, *Autobiography*, 29.

¹⁸⁷ *VCH Wilts*, III, 259.

¹⁸⁸ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.) II, 113.

In June 1538 the remainder of the 21-year lease of the site was granted to Sir Richard Long (d. 1546), with the reversion to his nephew, Robert Long (d. 1581) of Draycot and Wraxall.¹⁸⁹ In 1545 accounts were presented to the Court of Augmentations by Robert Long, then the farmer, but the priory may have managed the demesne in hand as arrears were owed by a bailiff, William Harding.¹⁹⁰ The account presents customary rents amounting to £3 9s. 2d. from four messuages and two cottages in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley as well as temporalities and spiritualities in other parishes.¹⁹¹ The site of the manor contained orchards, gardens and dovecot valued at 6s. 8d., and the demesne included 196 a. 1 r. arable, 25 a. pasture and 9½ a. meadow, with rights to common pasture in Heywood. Robert Long held two enclosed pastures which the priory leased from Glastonbury abbey.

Richard Long's son Henry sold the manor to John Read for 40 marks in 1552.¹⁹² Read sold to John Taylor for £560 in 1556.¹⁹³ In 1576 Nicholas Snell, lord of the manor of Kington St Michael, appointed John Taylor 'of the Priory' as his executor.¹⁹⁴ In 1628 the Priory manor was sold by John Taylor to Thomas Tyndale (d. 1671) and his wife Dorothy 'of St Mary's priory' for £1,600.¹⁹⁵ In 1673 Snell's descendants James Gastrell, John Stokes, Mariella Sadler, Dorothy Sadler and Margaret Sadler brought a suit in Chancery against John Taylor and his son, also John Taylor, contesting the ownership.¹⁹⁶

William Heal (Hale) owned the farm by 1780 when it was leased to William Book.¹⁹⁷ Heal sold to Nathan Sutton in 1801 and it then passed to George and Robert Sutton who sold to Charles Bailey in 1858.¹⁹⁸ Bailey sold to Michael Ward in 1865 who in turn sold to John Neeld of Grittleton in 1870.¹⁹⁹ In 1943 the Grittleton estate leased the 228 a. of New Priory farm to D. Isaacs and the 270 a. of Priory farm to H. Adams.²⁰⁰ From the later 20th century it was home of the Reeve family.

The present house, Priory Manor, dates from the 15th century with considerable 17th-century remodelling.²⁰¹ It is of rubblestone with stone slate roof and ashlar stacks on an L-shaped plan with two storeys and attic. The main range was the prioress's lodging with the guest hall on the west side of the former cloister. The south wing is half of the original south side. There appears to have been a cloister with chapel on the north side, drawn by John Aubrey with the west front of the house in the 17th century. Significant renovation took place

¹⁸⁹ Jackson, *Kington*, 71; WAM, 43, 19–20.

¹⁹⁰ TNA, SC 6/HENVIII/3969.

¹⁹¹ TNA, SC 6/HENVIII/3969.

¹⁹² BL, Add.Ch. 36445.

¹⁹³ BL, Add.Ch. 36446.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, PROB 11/59/224.

¹⁹⁵ BL, Add.Ch. 36447.

¹⁹⁶ TNA, C 8/293/46.

¹⁹⁷ WSA, A1/345/243.

¹⁹⁸ WSA, 1305/131.

¹⁹⁹ WSA, 1305/131.

²⁰⁰ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/2 and 14.

²⁰¹ NHLE, 101022340.

in the early 1970s.²⁰² The house, 16th-century stable range²⁰³ and 18th-century barn,²⁰⁴ have grade II listing.

Easton Piercy manor: Easton Piercy, a manor and tithing in Malmesbury hundred, may have originated as the eastern farm of Yatton Keynell, but was a part of Kington St Michael parish by the 11th century.²⁰⁵ Ernulf held Easton Piercy (*Estune*) in 1086, and God held it before the Conquest. There were five hides and land for three ploughs with two in demesne.²⁰⁶

Easton Piercy manor may be the lands held by Peter de Estune in 1189 in the far west of Kington St Michael bordering Grittleton to the north and Castle Combe to the south.²⁰⁷ In 1242–3 John de Eistona held a quarter of one knight's fee in Estone from Walter de Clifford.²⁰⁸ John Aubrey spent his childhood at Easton Piercy which he inherited in 1652 and was forced to sell to cover his debts in 1670.²⁰⁹ The following account of the descent of the property from the 13th as far as the 17th century is drawn from Aubrey's notes of deeds in his possession.²¹⁰

Aubrey gives the full text of three, undated, 13th-century title deeds in which John the son of Peter Fitzpieres and William son of Peter Fitzpieres granted land to tenants within Easton Piercy in the mid 13th century, while Peter's daughter Joan received rents there from Radulph de Cocklebury.²¹¹ In 1258 the inquisition post mortem of Patrick de Chaworces included a fee in Eston, identified as Easton Piercy, held by Henry Scheynel, but this identification is doubtful.²¹² In 1307 John Cosham, son and heir of William de Cosham of Luckington, granted Richard de Cosham and Alice his wife a tenement in Easton Piercy.²¹³ In two undated documents Richard de Cosham and Alice his wife granted a messuage and virgate to John de Cosham which he then granted to Richard Clerk and Constantine his wife,²¹⁴ and Henry Keynell granted to John of Easton 6 a. in Old Easton (*Veteri Estona*) and a further three virgates in 'my fee of Easton'.²¹⁵

Aubrey again used deeds, since untraced, to show that Easton had passed to the de Yeovilton family by 1309.²¹⁶ William Seward and John le Heyr quitclaimed all their lands in Easton Piercy to John and Joan de Yeovilton in two documents which Aubrey considered

²⁰² WSA, 2512/150/82.

²⁰³ NHLE, 101022340.

²⁰⁴ NHLE, 101022341.

²⁰⁵ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS) 100–1.

²⁰⁶ *Domesday*, 179.

²⁰⁷ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS) 100–1.

²⁰⁸ *Feudal Aids*, II, 711 and 730.

²⁰⁹ ODNB, s.v. Aubrey, John, antiquary and biographer, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

²¹⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 237–41.

²¹¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 436–7.

²¹² *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, I, 113 (no.417).

²¹³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 444.

²¹⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 443–4.

²¹⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 444.

²¹⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 237–8.

earlier than their acquisition of a virgate in Yatton Keynell in 1275.²¹⁷ In 1307 John and Joan obtained a final concord confirming their right to Easton Piercy, for the first time described as a manor, with a carucate of land, in Yatton Keynell.²¹⁸ John received further land in Yatton Keynell in 1317,²¹⁹ but appears to have died by 1332 when Joan de Yeovilton was the second highest taxpayer in the combined assessment for Draycot Cerne and Easton.²²⁰ In 1333 Joan, daughter of Peter lord of Easton Piercy, acquired land from Ralph Cocklebury,²²¹ and she granted land in Easton the following year under the condition that the tenant attended the manor court.²²² In 1364 the manor was passed by Peter de Yeovilton to his sons Nicholas and Richard together with his lands in Somerset and Devon; this was done while he was abroad, and he retained the right to reclaim them should he return.²²³

Robert de Yeovilton obtained a general release from Thomas Lord Camoys from whom he had held Easton Piercy by knights' fee.²²⁴ In 1399 he then granted the manor, together with the manors of Yeovilton and Speckington (Som.) in fee to John Curtys, Roger Golde, John Milward, John Whyting, William Lovering and William Wylly.²²⁵ It remained in fee in 1428 when the court was held in the names of Thomas Dru, William Gore, Walter Clerk and others.²²⁶ The manor was in hand in 1443,²²⁷ when it was inherited by Thomas Payne of Rockbourne (Hants),²²⁸ a relation of Robert de Yeovilton,²²⁹ perhaps the husband of Margery daughter of a Peter de Yeovilton.²³⁰

In 1483 the manor was granted together with Speckington (Som.) to Sir Giles Daubeney by the prior of Bruton, Sir William Paulet, John Chenye of Pinhoe (Devon), Robert Stowell, John Hugyn, John Hayron and Thomas Hylling.²³¹ When Daubeney was attainted in 1484,²³² the manor, with a yearly value of £20, was granted to Ralph Willoughby.²³³

Aubrey recalls that the Lyte family had been the tenant farmers at Easton Piercy 'time out of mind' and that they had purchased the manor from Thomas Lord Buckhurst in 1574.²³⁴ In 1575 John and Thomas Lyte sold Easton Piercy manor to John Snell and Thomas his son for £385,²³⁵ having the previous year sold several peripheral parts to Nicholas Lyte of Leigh

²¹⁷ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 437.

²¹⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 437–8.

²¹⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 438.

²²⁰ *Wilts. Tax List of 1332* (WRS. 45), 61.

²²¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 438.

²²² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 438.

²²³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 439.

²²⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 439.

²²⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 439.

²²⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 440.

²²⁷ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 441–2.

²²⁸ *VCH Hants*, IV, 583.

²²⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 441.

²³⁰ *VCH Som.*, III, 169.

²³¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 442–3.

²³² *ODNB*, s.v. Daubeney, Giles, first baron Daubeney, accessed 17 Aug. 2024.

²³³ *Cal. Pat. 1476–85*, 428. Aubrey incorrectly dates this document to 1483.

²³⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 240.

²³⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 443.

Delamere.²³⁶ The manor descended with Kington St Michael to Thomas's son Charles Snell, who leased Easton Piercy on several short leases,²³⁷ before selling it to John Langton, merchant, of Bristol in 1623.²³⁸ William Langton transferred the property to Thomas Langton, 1662,²³⁹ and in 1704 Robert Langton sold the whole property comprising a messuage, two barns, an ox house, two gardens, two orchards, 46 a. arable, 37 a. meadow, 60 a. pasture and a seven-year-old wood, to Walter White of Grittleton.²⁴⁰

White sold Easton Piercy to John Eyles who took out a mortgage on the property in 1737.²⁴¹ Eyles sold it in 1740 to Paggen Hale,²⁴² who bequeathed it to his nephew William Hale (Heal) in 1755.²⁴³ Joseph Collett leased Manor farm from William Heal 1780–96,²⁴⁴ and sold it to him and John Redman in 1797,²⁴⁵ at which time Collett worked both Upper Easton and Lower Easton farms.²⁴⁶ Joseph Collett released his portion of the manor as a trust to Thomas Redman in 1803.²⁴⁷ Collett continued as resident farmer until his death in 1809,²⁴⁸ succeeded by his widow Jane,²⁴⁹ and by 1840 their son Henry Collett.²⁵⁰ A Benjamin Webb also purchased a portion of the manor in 1803, but died intestate in 1832; his heir was sought at a later sale in 1864.²⁵¹

The property remained divided between four members of the Redman family and the five sons of Joseph Collett in 1809.²⁵² It continued to be owned by the Redman and Collett families until in 1861 it was advertised for sale by auction at the Angel inn in Chippenham, comprising 270 a. pasture and arable, 8 a. wood, a malt house, agricultural buildings and one dwelling.²⁵³ Between 1861 and 1864 Thomas Harris Redman sold his portion to Henry and Joseph Collett, from whom it was purchased by Michael Ward in 1864. In 1865 Michael Ward leased the farm to John Clark at which time it comprised 150 a. arable and 60 a. pasture.²⁵⁴ It was purchased by the Neeld estate in 1870.²⁵⁵ It was managed with the Grittleton estate properties in Yatton Keynell in 1943 when it was leased to R. B. Awdry.²⁵⁶

²³⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 443.

²³⁷ WSA, 1305/126.

²³⁸ WSA, 1305/126.

²³⁹ WSA, 1305/126.

²⁴⁰ WSA, 1305/126.

²⁴¹ WSA, 1305/127.

²⁴² WSA, 1305/127.

²⁴³ WSA, 1305/127.

²⁴⁴ WSA, A1/345/244.

²⁴⁵ WSA, 1305/127.

²⁴⁶ WSA, A1/345/244.

²⁴⁷ WSA, 1305/128.

²⁴⁸ WSA, P3/1809/52.

²⁴⁹ WSA, A1/345/244.

²⁵⁰ WSA, TA/Kington St Michael.

²⁵¹ WSA, 1305/129.

²⁵² WSA, 1305/129.

²⁵³ WSA, 1305/128.

²⁵⁴ WSA, 1305/129.

²⁵⁵ WSA, 1305/128.

²⁵⁶ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/1

The grade II listed house was constructed in 1631 of rubblestone with ashlar dressings.²⁵⁷ The north range, which was the oldest part of the house, was taken down by Michael Ward after 1865 when it was photographed.²⁵⁸ Kilvert describes the house as ruinous in 1871, the 'great hall and the grand staircase both gone'.²⁵⁹ It was repaired for the Neeld estate c.1900.²⁶⁰

There were five farms at Easton Piercy: Manor farm, so-called by 2015, was known as Easton Piercy farm in the 19th century.²⁶¹ Another farm 200 m. to the west, called Upper Easton Piercy farm in 1886 and 2015, was Easton Piercy farmhouse in 1842. Cromhall farm, to the far west of the tithing, and Lower Easton Piercy farm have the same names throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and Oakfield farm is a 20th century development. Upper Easton Piercy was separated from the manor and sold to Nicholas Lyte of Leigh Delamere in 1574, then purchased by Benjamin Hinde c.1670 from whom it descended to Thomas Lowe.²⁶² Joseph Collett leased Lower Easton farm from William Heal 1780–95,²⁶³ and Joseph initially continued to hold the lease from William Skeat once he had acquired Easton Piercy farm, but it was relinquished to Isaac Ferris by 1805.²⁶⁴ William Skeat was himself in occupation by 1820 and continued until at least 1855.²⁶⁵ The farm was occupied by David Blake in 1867, 1885 and 1889.²⁶⁶ It had been taken over by William White by 1920 and he remained at the farm in 1943.²⁶⁷ Cromhall farm buildings were in the tithing of Easton Piercy, and comprised land within Kington St Michael and Yatton Keynell. A map of Easton Piercy farm, produced in 1801, shows Broom field crossing the boundary between the parishes.²⁶⁸ The farm was owned and occupied by Elizabeth Smith in 1840.²⁶⁹

Other estates

Bolehyde (Bullhides) farm: The Bolehyde family were important members of the Kington St Michael community in the early 14th century: Thomas Bolehyde witnessed deeds relating to lands in Easton Piercy in 1317 and 1333,²⁷⁰ and Thomas de Bolehyde acted as pledge for three landless workers in 1348.²⁷¹ Although Bolehyde has at times been styled a manor all evidence suggests that it was always a freehold tenement of Kington St Michael manor.

²⁵⁷ NHLE, 1022325.

²⁵⁸ Soc. Ants. Lib. JAC 006.

²⁵⁹ Kilvert, *Diary*, II, 20.

²⁶⁰ NHLE, 1022325.

²⁶¹ OS Map 1:25000, sheet 156 (2015 edn.); OS Map 25", Wilts. XX.5; WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

²⁶² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 241.

²⁶³ WSA, A1/345/244.

²⁶⁴ WSA, A1/345/244.

²⁶⁵ WSA, A1/345/244, and *Kellys Dir.* (1855 edn.).

²⁶⁶ *Kellys Dir.* (1867, 1885, 1899 edns.).

²⁶⁷ *Kellys Dir.* (1920 edn.); TNA, MAF 32/39/33.

²⁶⁸ WSA, 1305/130.

²⁶⁹ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael

²⁷⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 438.

²⁷¹ Longleat MS 11179.

Bolehyde farm was almost certainly the freehold tenement beside Heywood measuring one hide and leased by John Saunders in 1518 for the rent of two geese worth 8*d.*; this had formerly belonged to Thomas Bolehyde.²⁷² It was acquired by Nicholas Snell at the Reformation with the rest of Kington St Michael and appears to have been leased by Snell to William Gale (d.1606),²⁷³ described in his will as 'yeoman, of Bolhide' whose lease presumably descended through his son William (d.1632),²⁷⁴ and William's brother Edmond, to Edmond's son John of Avon, in Christian Malford.

Charles Snell sold Bolehyde in 1635 to John Gale of Bristol, son of John Gale of Avon.²⁷⁵ John Gale appeared in the Kington St Michael manor court in 1658 and was admitted to a copyhold tenement to himself and Mariella daughter of John Sadler.²⁷⁶ John Gale, merchant, leased Bolehyde to a group of other Bristol merchants in 1669.²⁷⁷ In 1672 and 1681 Joan Gale, John's widow, her brother in law Isaac, and three of her sisters-in-law, Rebecca, Ruth and Olive, all had some interest in Bolehyde and may at times have been resident, as from the mid 17th century it appears to have been variously a family residence for spinsters, widows or unmarried sons.²⁷⁸

In 1724 Isaac Gale, son of John and Joan Gale, and his wife Mariella appear to have been in sole possession of Bolehyde which they leased to William Coleman of Kington Langley.²⁷⁹ In 1757 their son Isaac and Mary his wife transferred the property to their son Isaac Gale (d.1778),²⁸⁰ from whom it passed to his son Isaac Sadler Gale (d.1792)²⁸¹ and his son, also Isaac Sadler Gale, known as Sadler (d.1841).²⁸²

In 1841 Bolehyde was held by the trustees of the estate of Isaac Sadler Gale, including his widow Catherine; the lands were leased to John Angel.²⁸³ He remained tenant until at least 1867; it was then held successively by Robert Cater, 1899, Harry Sage 1920,²⁸⁴ and H. Philip Du Cros, by 1927,²⁸⁵ whose widow remained in occupation in 1943.²⁸⁶ Between 1957 and 1967 the house and farm were owned by David Tylden-Wright who converted the stables in 1962.²⁸⁷ Andrew and Camilla Parker Bowles acquired the house in 1973, and sold it to Simon Dallas Cairns in 1986; he advertised it for sale in 2020.²⁸⁸

²⁷² BL Harl. MS 3961.

²⁷³ TNA, PROB 11/108/440.

²⁷⁴ WSA, P3/G/123.

²⁷⁵ WSA, 441/1.

²⁷⁶ WSA, 1305/125.

²⁷⁷ WSA, 422/1.

²⁷⁸ WSA, 422/1.

²⁷⁹ WSA, 422/1.

²⁸⁰ WSA, 422/1.

²⁸¹ Jackson, *Kington*, 87.

²⁸² WSA, 1187/5, GRO, Deaths Register, 1841, Q4 Nov-Dec.

²⁸³ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

²⁸⁴ *Kellys Dir. Wilts.* (1867, 1899, 1920 edns.).

²⁸⁵ WSA, 422/MS/8.

²⁸⁶ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/7.

²⁸⁷ WSA, G3/770/252.

²⁸⁸ *Tatler*, 26 June 2020.

The grade II listed house has an L-shaped plan, the main front range being mid 17th century and the rear range perhaps 16th-century in origin. It is built of rubblestone with ashlar dressing and a stone tiled roof.²⁸⁹ Norman Wilkinson redesigned the gardens, and Axford and Smith, builders of Bath, remodelled the house for H. Philip Du Cros in 1927/8.²⁹⁰

Peckingell farm: In 1518 two tenants held two virgates in Peckingell, had common rights in Peckingell meadow and were exempt from paying the hundred penny; one paid a rent of 6*d.* to the Prior of Bradenstoke.²⁹¹ Peckingell farm was transferred to Kington Langley and then to Langley Burrell in 1882.²⁹²

ECONOMIC HISTORY

The royal Saxon estate centred upon Kington St Michael supplied the nearby royal residence at Chippenham.²⁹³ There was always a mixed farming economy although the balance between arable and pasture shifted from mainly arable in the 13th and early 14th centuries to a gradual increase in pasture during the following centuries. Wood was sourced from Heywood and several small coppices. Meadow was not abundant and Peckingell, a detached portion of the parish on the river Avon, provided additional meadow. Small areas of common grazing were located within the dispersed settlement at Kington Langley, on a substantial area of common to the south of Langley main street towards Jackson's Lane and between Heywood and what later became the A350.

Agriculture was always the dominant land use and area of employment. Few residents were engaged in trades, crafts or services until opportunities for employment in Chippenham became accessible in the later 20th century and the village became increasingly a residential area for commuters working in Chippenham and elsewhere.

Farming

Medieval Farming (including Kington Langley): Kington provided food and revenues for the King's residence at Chippenham but had no royal administrative functions.²⁹⁴ Apart from Easton Piercy, most land within Kington St Michael and Kington Langley had been granted to Glastonbury abbey by 1066 and continued to provide produce and revenues to the abbey until the Reformation.²⁹⁵ Both communities had substantial areas of demesne arable and small

²⁸⁹ NHLE, 1283450.

²⁹⁰ WSA, 422/MS/8.

²⁹¹ BL Harl. MS 3961.

²⁹² *Kelly's Dir Wilts.* (1895 edn.); below, Langley Burrell, boundaries and parish origins. The history of Peckingell is considered with Langley Burrell.

²⁹³ S. Draper, *Landscape, settlement and society in Roman and Early Medieval Wilts.* (2006), 107.

²⁹⁴ S. Draper, *Landscape*, 107.

²⁹⁵ *VCH Somerset*, II, 90, 98.

flocks of sheep before the 13th century, which gradually gave way to enclosed pasture for cattle.

By 1086 Glastonbury abbey held 11 hides in demesne, with 4 ploughs and 4 slaves.²⁹⁶ There were 3 freeholders with 3 ploughs: Urse had 2½ hides, Roger 2 hides less a virgate and Ralph 1½ hides. The remainder of the abbey's 29 hides were worked by 15 villeins and 5 bordars with 8 ploughs. A second Roger held 1½ hides, indistinguishable from the Glastonbury lands before the Conquest, but held from Ralph de Mortimer in 1086.²⁹⁷ Roger's lands comprised 4 a. meadow, 6 a. wood and a mill paying 2s. rent, with one plough, one slave and two bordars.

In 1171 the demesne was leased with stock of 24 oxen, 2 boars, 36 pigs and 250 sheep at a rent of £8.²⁹⁸ In 1189 3 freeholders held 3 virgates, 2 hides and 2½ hides respectively. The priest held a virgate and another was granted to the upkeep of the chapel at Langley.²⁹⁹ Nine tenants held half a hide for rent and services: 4 for light services of carriage, and 5 for weekly agricultural services; 18 tenants each held a virgate and 11 half a virgate, all gave rent, services and churchscot. Seven tenants held crofts, all paying rents and four also rendering services. Emma de Meisi, perhaps from Christian Malford, held a purpresture of 30 a. and the tenants of Kington Langley held 40½ a. of furze in common. In 1189 the stock on the demesne had reduced to 16 oxen and 1 horse, and the surveyor noted that 100 sheep and 20 pigs which were supposed to be part of the demesne had not been received by the farmer.

In 1198 the farm of the manor was worth £36.³⁰⁰ In 1201, in addition to services, the rents of tenants were worth £6 9s. 0d.; 34 hens were given as churchscot and the livestock on the demesne consisted of 16 oxen, 1 horse, 100 sheep, 6 pigs and a boar.³⁰¹ During the abbacy of Abbot Michael, 1235–53, a new grange was built.³⁰²

The demesne was leased in 1258,³⁰³ but was again in hand in 1287.³⁰⁴ There was a general move away from demesne production between 1275 when 181 a. were sown with various grains, including 90 a. wheat,³⁰⁵ and 1333 when 78 a. were sown, and only 37 a. with wheat.³⁰⁶ A shift from cattle to sheep corresponded with the reduction in arable production: there were 23 oxen, and 111 adult sheep in 1275,³⁰⁷ 8 oxen and 177 sheep in 1333.³⁰⁸ Sheep flocks were managed collectively across the Glastonbury abbey estates in North Damerham

²⁹⁶ *Domesday*, 168.

²⁹⁷ *Domesday*, 187.

²⁹⁸ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 74.

²⁹⁹ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 200–3.

³⁰⁰ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 239.

³⁰¹ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 259–60.

³⁰² Jackson, *Kington*, 39.

³⁰³ Jackson, *Kington*, 39.

³⁰⁴ Jackson, *Kington*, 39–40.

³⁰⁵ Keil, 'Estates of Glastonbury Abbey', 93.

³⁰⁶ Longleat, MS 11244.

³⁰⁷ Longleat, MS 11244.

³⁰⁸ Keil, 'Estates of Glastonbury Abbey', 117, 129.

hundred: in 1333 there were 177 wethers, but no ewes at Kington, whereas at Grittleton there were 51 wethers and 201 ewes.³⁰⁹

During the first wave of the Black Death 34 out of 61 landless men (56%) died in the year April 1348 to April 1349.³¹⁰ Many survivors took on vacant holdings so the available landless workforce declined from 60–70 men in the later 13th and early 14th centuries to fewer than ten in the later 14th and 15th centuries.³¹¹ As available labour contracted there was a shift from grains to livestock. The transition from villein to copyhold tenure occurred during the 15th century: in 1408 and 1451 several tenants were admitted to hold land in villeinage,³¹² whereas by 1518 all customary tenants held land granted by copy of court roll.³¹³

In 1518 the demesne, leased to Richard Snell, comprised 126 a. arable in two fields, 20 a. meadow at Peckingell, 65½ a. of meadow and pasture in several locations, 400 a. wood at Heywood and a share of 310 a. of common at Langley.³¹⁴ The same survey records four free tenants. Two had agricultural holdings: John Saunders held a tenement at Heywood and Thomas Tropenell held a virgate, while the abbot of Malmesbury and prioress of Kington each held a messuage.³¹⁵ The customary holdings at Kington consisted of 1 half-hide, 4 virgates, 15 half-virgates and 1 cottage; at Langley customary tenants held 5 half-hides, 12 virgates, 2 half-virgates and 2 cottages; another 2 virgates at Peckingell were administered with Langley.³¹⁶ The virgates and half-virgates were of such different sizes that it is difficult to assess any original scheme based upon arable acreages. Very little agglomeration had occurred and only four tenants held more than one unit of land. There were 1,201 a. arable divided between the Glastonbury abbey demesne and the abbot's tenants of Kington St Michael and Kington Langley.

The priory manor, belonging to the prioress of Kington, had 16 oxen in 1308 when the demesne was worked in hand.³¹⁷ In 1499 the manor contained a dovecot, garden and orchard as well as 42 a. of arable in the North field, 61½ a. in the West field, and 96 a. in the East field, as well as unspecified meadow and pasture.³¹⁸ It was still under direct management in 1536 and comprised 196 a. arable, 25 a. pasture, and 9 a. meadow.³¹⁹ There were ancient common pasture rights in Heywood and two pieces of meadow in Paschecroft and Rydon leased from Kington St Michael manor.

Post-medieval Farming and Farms: The first post-medieval enclosure appears to have been made on Kington Priory manor by the farmer John Reade. He brought a case against

³⁰⁹ Keil, 'Estates of Glastonbury Abbey', 129–30.

³¹⁰ Longleat, MS 11179. M. Ecclestone, 'Mortality of rural landless men before the Black Death: the Glastonbury head tax lists', *Local Population Studies*, 63 (1999), 26.

³¹¹ Longleat, MSS 10645, 11212, 10729.

³¹² Longleat, MSS 10659, 10729.

³¹³ BL, Harl MS 3961.

³¹⁴ BL, Harl MS 3961.

³¹⁵ BL, Harl MS 3961.

³¹⁶ BL, Harl MS 3961.

³¹⁷ Longleat, MS 11252.

³¹⁸ WM Library, MS 4109.

³¹⁹ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3969.

Nicholas Snell and 30 inhabitants of Kington St Michael who gathered to break down hedges and fences erected on the meadows and pasture in 1548.³²⁰ Besides breaking the enclosures, established four years previously, they carried away 40 cartloads of 'stone called slate'.

Nicholas Snell's opposition to the enclosures was not principled. He had succeeded his father in 1547 and his aggressive style was noted by John Aubrey who commented that his enclosure of part of the West field deprived the copyhold tenants to the extent that where they could formerly keep a whole plough they were reduced to a half.³²¹ The whole field was not enclosed and tenants continued to be admitted to copyholds containing lands in three fields; in 1559 William Jakes's copyhold contained 2 a. in the North field, 2 a. in the East field and 7 a. in the West field.³²² The West field included the area described in 1655 as Lesser West field, 52 a., Greater West field, 56 a., the two parts of the Park, each 23 a., and at least part of the 88 a. called Ridings;³²³ in 1842 an area of 45 a. still carried the names Upper and Lower West field.³²⁴ Snell's enclosures were challenged by the Kingtons' inhabitants in 1558, when he was accused of enclosing Heywood and not permitting customary rights of access to his own tenants or those of the Priory manor, and having created a warren on Langley Heath.³²⁵

Manor court rolls throughout the 1560s and 1570s refer to the consequences of Nicholas Snell's enclosures, as the tenants were repeatedly fined for taking wood and pasturing animals in areas where they had formerly held common rights.³²⁶ Not all enclosures disadvantaged the customary tenants who, in 1560, were allowed to arrange the enclosure of the Down among themselves and then to make exchanges with freeholders without reference to the court.³²⁷

The open fields were partially enclosed at Kington St Michael by 1655 and most tenants held a combination of arable in the open fields and in closes.³²⁸ There were 34 houses in which lived 31 copyholders, holding in total 478 a. 3 r. 16 p., worth £82 2s. 6d. each year, as well as 17 leaseholders whose 103 a. 3 r. 9p. was worth £24 6s. 0d. annually. Only William Tanner and Richard Brown held both copyholds and leaseholds. The arable land was divided between 125 a. 1 r. 8 p. in the common fields and 171 a. 1 r. 7 p. in closes.

All arable had been enclosed by 1664.³²⁹ Copyhold remained as a form of tenure in Kington St Michael until at least 1744 and perhaps later.³³⁰ In Easton Piercy a map of 1801 indicates that Broom field, which included lands belonging to Lower Easton Piercy and Cromhall farms, crossed the parish boundary and was shared with Yatton Keynell, doubtless a much older arrangement.³³¹ Before 1800 Easton Piercy manor comprised approximately half

³²⁰ TNA, STAC 3/2/8.

³²¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 131.

³²² WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³²³ WSA, 873/140.

³²⁴ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, 733, 734.

³²⁵ TNA, STAC 4/5/43.

³²⁶ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³²⁷ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³²⁸ WSA, 873/140.

³²⁹ WSA, 1305/125.

³³⁰ WSA, 1305/125.

³³¹ WSA, 1305/130.

of the tithing and was made up of 169 a. 3 r. 27 p. arable, 74 a. 3 r. 2 p. pasture, 14 a. 1 r. 24 p. meadow and 7 a. 2 r. 30 p. woodland.³³²

The wills of Kington St Michael inhabitants, in contrast with those of Kington Langley, do not mention cloth and looms and no-one was described as weaver. In Kington St Michael in 1811, of 246 people employed, 204 were in agriculture and 42 in other assorted trades, crafts and professions.³³³ Many of Kington St Michael's inhabitants who had a trade or occupation also had agricultural holdings. William Browne (d. 1627) had tools in his blacksmith's shop worth £1, grain worth £30, a plough worth £3, two cows and a pig, and in his house there was a buttery and a cheese press.³³⁴ James Power's inventory of goods compiled in 1705 records a whitehouse containing two cheese presses.³³⁵ In 1850 Britton noted that cheese was manufactured in greater quantity than butter.³³⁶

In 1841 there were 1,220 a. of pasture and 1,043 a. arable, entirely enclosed, with no common.³³⁷ In 1866 land use was mainly arable with 255 a. wheat, 157 a. barley, 14½ a. oats, 129 a. turnips and over 100 a. mixed beans and root vegetables; but there was also considerable livestock, with 202 cattle, 504 sheep and 171 pigs.³³⁸ The balance was similar in 1880 although the number of cattle had almost doubled to 391.³³⁹ The number of cattle continued to increase to 451 in 1900 and sheep to 763; pigs remained at 186, but the arable had declined to 127 a. wheat, 110 a. barley, 87 a. oats, 63 a. turnips and 58 a. of other vegetables.³⁴⁰ By 1920 there were 457 cattle, only 373 sheep and 95 pigs. The wheat acreage had increased, to 267 a., while barley fell to 71 a., with fewer than 10 a. devoted to each of the other crops.³⁴¹

Britton, writing about his childhood in old age in 1850, believed that the whole parish was poorly drained and that agricultural improvements, such as merging smaller farms, were only made in the early 19th century.³⁴² However, in 1943 poor drainage was still regarded as a problem, notably at Heywood farm, Lower Easton Piercy farm, and Manor farm.³⁴³

Family farms of between 80 and 270 a., and usually held on short leases, have been a feature of arable and pastoral farming in Kington St Michael. In 1943 the 16 farms holding land in Kington St Michael ranged in size from 47 a. to 309 a. at an average of 173 a.³⁴⁴ The two largest, Yatton Manor farm, 276 a., and Allington Manor farm, 309 a., were based in adjacent

³³² WSA, 1305/130.

³³³ T. Davis, *General View of the Agriculture of Wilts.* (2nd edn. London, 1813), 227.

³³⁴ WSA, P3/B/296.

³³⁵ WSA, 1305/125.

³³⁶ Britton, *Autobiography*, 30.

³³⁷ Britton, *Autobiography*, 30.

³³⁸ TNA, MAF 68/73.

³³⁹ TNA, MAF 68/721.

³⁴⁰ TNA, MAF 68/1861.

³⁴¹ TNA, MAF 68/2995.

³⁴² Britton, *Autobiography*, 29–31.

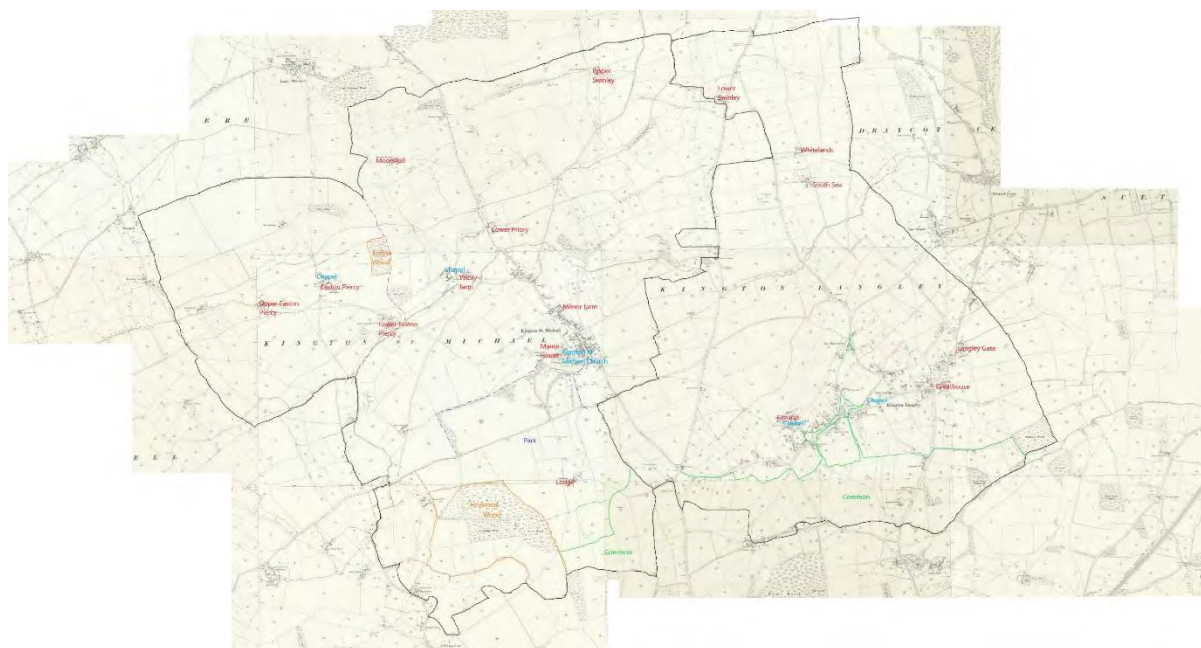
³⁴³ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/6, 11 & 12.

³⁴⁴ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/1–16.

parishes and held lands but not buildings within Kington St Michael.³⁴⁵ Additionally there was a market garden of 5½ a. owned by G. Farr.³⁴⁶

By the mid 20th century many of these farms were too small to remain independently viable and several had been incorporated into holdings in other parishes: Lodge farm, south of the village, comprised 163 a. in 1943 when it was held by W Collins of Langley Gate farm, Kington Langley,³⁴⁷ and Cromhall and Upper Easton Piercy farms were both part of larger holdings in Yatton Keynell.³⁴⁸ New Priory farm, Upper Swinley, Marshall farm and Priory farm had become part of the Grittleton estate, although they were still worked by leaseholders.³⁴⁹

Commons, Parks and Woods: Langley Heath common contained 310 a. in 1518. Walter Williams paid 16*d.* for the shrouds of the pollarded oaks growing there in 1538.³⁵⁰ Twenty years later Langley Heath, described as ‘the common of North Langley’ was said to have been degraded by Nicholas Snell’s creation of five or seven artificial burrows for commercial rabbit farming.³⁵¹ No warren has been identified in Kington Langley and the field name Conygar Hill to the west of White wood may be the site of the 16th-century warren.³⁵² It appears that Langley Heath occupied an area bordered by Heywood in the west, the parish boundary to the south and east and closes abutting Plough Lane to the north.



³⁴⁵ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/15–16.

³⁴⁶ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/17.

³⁴⁷ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/12

³⁴⁸ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/1 and 5.

³⁴⁹ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/2, 3, 8 and 14.

³⁵⁰ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3954.

351 TNA, STAC 4/5/43.

³⁵² WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, 788.

Conjectural map of the woods, commons and parks in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley c.1540.

Heywood contained 400 a. in 1518, with 25 a. of coppiced underwood harvested each year worth 13s. 4d.³⁵³ In 1536 profits from old oaks and underwood amounted to £2 8s. 7d.³⁵⁴ Payment by the customary tenants for pannage in Heywood in 1518 was 1d. per cow or pig and ½d. per calf,³⁵⁵ but appears to have been fixed at 16d. two decades later.³⁵⁶ These customary pasture rights were curtailed when Nicholas Snell enclosed the wood, then described as 200 a., in 1558.³⁵⁷ After recurring offences punitive fines were set in 1569 for tenants who continued to take wood or pasture their pigs there without licence.³⁵⁸ The newly enclosed wood was not entirely reserved to the lord and some customary tenants leased portions of former woodland as pasture: Robert Lumbe leased 2½ a. newly enclosed by Heywood in 1562.³⁵⁹

A 1269 deed mentioned Inwood, in which cottages in Kington Langley blocked a road between Inwood and 'La Sterte', as it was accessed through the courtyard of the grange; Inwood may be the land that was later emparked.³⁶⁰ A wood called Inwood, containing 25 a., produced pasture and underwood worth 13s. 4d. in 1536.³⁶¹

Each manor or farm maintained an accessible area of coppice wood for fuel and fencing. Priory wood was given at an unknown date to Kington priory by Sir John of Easton.³⁶² It measured c.5 a. in 1840.³⁶³ Easton Piercy manor in 1840 retained its own wood, known as Easton wood; it measured c.8 a., while Lower Easton wood measured 1 a. and the 3 a. woodland belonging to Upper Swinley farm was known as the Great wood.³⁶⁴

A park of the abbey was mentioned in a dispute with Jordan Fitzurse in 1243.³⁶⁵ Kington tenants were obliged to make repairs to the park at the court in April 1648.³⁶⁶ The park adjacent to Kington House was known as the Greater Part, containing in 1655 a lodge and 22 a. 3r. 30 p., and the Lesser Part containing 30 a. 3 r. 10 p.³⁶⁷ Aubrey states that the park contained a well called Marian's well and a 'noble carp pond', and described its establishment by Nicholas Snell shortly after the Dissolution.³⁶⁸

³⁵³ BL Harl. MS 3961.

³⁵⁴ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3953.

³⁵⁵ BL, Harl MS 3961.

³⁵⁶ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3953–5.

³⁵⁷ TNA, STAC 4/5/43.

³⁵⁸ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁵⁹ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁶⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 143.

³⁶¹ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3953.

³⁶² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 143.

³⁶³ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, 633.

³⁶⁴ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael, 548, 646, 693.

³⁶⁵ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 140.

³⁶⁶ WSA, 1305/125.

³⁶⁷ WSA, 873/140.

³⁶⁸ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 130–1, 432 (Marian Well and Mayden Well were different wells).

Mills, Crafts and Industry

The medieval manor of Kington was served by Bide Mill at Kington Langley and a mill at Peckingell belonging to Glastonbury abbey.³⁶⁹ Kington priory had a water mill, in ruins by 1500, and a horse powered mill within the priory.³⁷⁰ Aubrey recalled an old inhabitant of Priory Down who believed that his house was constructed on the site of the former mill.³⁷¹

Several full- or part-time blacksmiths lived in Kington St Michael, including Thomas Harder (d.1619)³⁷² and William Browne (d.1627).³⁷³ A blacksmith's workshop on the west side of the High Street opposite Rose Cottages was owned by Elizabeth Smith of Cromhall farm in 1840.³⁷⁴

Stone was quarried in Kington St Michael in 1518 when John Coke held land beside the quarry in the East field.³⁷⁵ In 1558 rioters from Kington St Michael broke into lands of the former priory and dug up 40 cartloads of slate.³⁷⁶ Quarries at Odgarston and Quarre Deane were noted as landmarks or points of reference in the 16th-century manor court rolls.³⁷⁷ John Aubrey mentioned that excellent 'plank stones' were to be found in Easton Piercy.³⁷⁸ Old and disused quarries were noted on 1880s maps at Lodge farm, Moorshall Cottages, Upper Swinley farm, beside what is now the A350 at California Cottages, on the opposite side of Days Lane to South Sea farm.³⁷⁹

Markets and Fairs

In 1266 Henry III granted the abbot of Glastonbury the right to hold a Tuesday market at Kington St Michael and a three-day fair.³⁸⁰ Tolls of £1 1s. 8½*d.* and £1 4s. 6*d.* were paid at the fairs in 1314 and 1335.³⁸¹ In 1518 revenue from the fair was thought to be '16s. or more';³⁸² in 1536 it was recorded as 12s., the following year 5s. and in 1538 the entry recording 5s. profit was struck through.³⁸³ The fair was mentioned once in the 16th-century manor court rolls when in 1564 tolls of £1 6s. 8*d.* were paid.³⁸⁴

The market and fair are thought to have been held on or near the recreation ground between Grove Lane and Honey Knob Hill.³⁸⁵ This tradition receives some support from John Aubrey who recalled the market held at the cross on a Friday selling 'fish, eggs butter and

³⁶⁹ Above, Kington Langley, mills.

³⁷⁰ WM Library, MS 4109.

³⁷¹ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236.

³⁷² WSA, P3/H/139.

³⁷³ WSA, P3/B/296.

³⁷⁴ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

³⁷⁵ BL, Harl MS 3961.

³⁷⁶ TNA, STAC 3/2/8.

³⁷⁷ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁷⁸ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236.

³⁷⁹ OS, 25" Wiltshire XX, 1-2, 5-6 (1885).

³⁸⁰ Dugdale, *Mon.* i, 45.

³⁸¹ Lingleat, MSS 10655 (1314), 10633 (1335).

³⁸² BL, Harl MS 3961.

³⁸³ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3953-5.

³⁸⁴ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁸⁵ Information from Mr Tim Storer.

such small gear' and that the Michaelmas fair held at the same location was famous for ale and geese.³⁸⁶

Other Trades

Very little is known about trades in medieval Kington, but two tapsters who sold beer were amerced in the hundred court in 1418.³⁸⁷ In the 1560s and 1570s the manor court regularly recorded three brewers, who often acted as tipplers, and one or two bakers.³⁸⁸ Walter Williams was admitted to a property called the Killing House in 1564, probably the village slaughterhouse, and a butcher, Richard Welsted, was in Kington St Michael until 1574 when he moved to Kington Langley.³⁸⁹ Richard Powre, a merchant, was regularly fined for selling at excessive prices 1569–77.³⁹⁰

Despite the market and fair, and the brewers and bakers, Kington St Michael did not develop as a commercial centre, although a small number of retailers continued to service the immediate needs of the community in the following centuries: a butcher John Milsham, died in 1648,³⁹¹ and two bakers left wills: Robert Ponting, in 1744,³⁹² and Henry Taylor in 1747.³⁹³

John Skelton, butcher, leased 8 perches of land in 1664 from John Gastell, which was probably the site of his shop.³⁹⁴ Several craftsmen and retailers had more than one occupation or business, presumably because there was insufficient demand to concentrate on a single activity. John Britton's father may have been typical of such people, working as a shopkeeper, maltster, small farmer and baker.³⁹⁵

In 1867 the craftsmen and retailers servicing village needs included bakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, shopkeepers, a maltster, beer seller, wheelwright, butcher, tailor and thatcher.³⁹⁶ By 1939 residents were able to purchase wireless equipment and cycling accessories from Stanley Lee's grocery and draper's shop.³⁹⁷ A post office was established by the wheelwright Charles Dyer by 1885 on the east side of the High Street between Rose Cottages and Manor farm.³⁹⁸ Although a community shop was operating in 2023 the post office had closed in 2008.³⁹⁹ Carrying services were provided by farmers including Andrew Slade of Cromhall farm in 1895.⁴⁰⁰

³⁸⁶ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 139.

³⁸⁷ Longleat, MS 10657; for later inns and public houses, below, Social hist.

³⁸⁸ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁸⁹ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁹⁰ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁹¹ WSA, P1/M/165.

³⁹² WSA, P1/P/765.

³⁹³ WSA, P1/T/441.

³⁹⁴ WSA, 1305/125.

³⁹⁵ Jackson, *Kington*, 110.

³⁹⁶ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1867).

³⁹⁷ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1939).

³⁹⁸ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1885 edn.).

³⁹⁹ <https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/2065820.kington-st-michael-residents-devastated-by-post-office-closure/> (accessed 4 August 2023).

⁴⁰⁰ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1895).

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Character

The taxation returns for medieval and Tudor Kington indicate a community of agriculturalists who met the threshold for taxation without being wealthy enough to make large contributions. In 1332 Kington St Michael (including Kington Langley) had 48 taxpayers, only two of whom, Roger Russel (19s. 1¼d.) and John Fitz Ours (12s.) paid more than 6s. 8d. Easton Piercy was included separately with Draycot Cerne.⁴⁰¹ A list of taxpayers, for Kington St Michael only, in 1545 listed four payers, including Thomas Hull, curate, and Richard Snell, gentleman, who paid £5. Snell was the highest taxpayer in North Damerham hundred and one of the highest-rated taxpayers in the county.⁴⁰² He was the demesne lessee in 1517,⁴⁰³ and in 1543 his son Nicholas purchased the manor of Kington.⁴⁰⁴ Nicholas was the principal taxpayer for both Kingtons in 1576, rated at £20. Robert Colman and Robert Tayler were the only two others assessed at over 40s.⁴⁰⁵ In 1545 Easton Piercy was listed with Burton Hill (in Malmesbury). Of the four names listed one, Agnes Light (Lyte?) valued at 10s. probably resided in Easton, the others in Burton Hill.⁴⁰⁶

In 1736 eight names were listed for Kington St Michael as qualified to serve on a jury.⁴⁰⁷ These included freeholders Ayliffe White, Jonathan Power, Isaac Gale, Sadler Gale and Robert Harrington, all described as gentleman.⁴⁰⁸ Easton Piercy was recorded separately with only Isaac Lane, a yeoman leaseholder, eligible.⁴⁰⁹

Because the principal estate fractured in the 1650s, and the church living was generally held in plurality, by c.1750 or earlier no churchman or gentleman was likely to be resident. John Britton, considering the 1780s, observed, 'Without a regular churchman to advise and admonish, or a magistrate, or private gentleman residing in the principal house of the village, the inhabitants were undisciplined, illiterate, and deprived of all good example; whilst those who were constitutionally idle and dissipated had no check on their conduct and became too often promoters of bad habits in the young.'⁴¹⁰ Jackson expressed similar concern about Kington Langley in the 19th century.⁴¹¹ The 1850s and 1860s witnessed change, when Edward Awdry became incumbent and Herbert Prodggers purchased Kington St Michael manor. The manor house and school were demolished and rebuilt, slum dwellings were pulled down (including the childhood home of John Britton), St Michael's church was 'renovated' and a

⁴⁰¹ *Wilts. Tax list of 1332* (WRS. 45), 61, 104–5.

⁴⁰² *Two Sixteenth Century Tax Lists* (WRS. 10), 26.

⁴⁰³ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

⁴⁰⁴ Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/GS/21; WSA, 473/196.

⁴⁰⁵ *Two Sixteenth Century Tax Lists* (WRS. 10), 56.

⁴⁰⁶ *Two Sixteenth Century Tax Lists* (WRS. 10), 29. For the Lyte family's association with Easton Piercy, above, landownership.

⁴⁰⁷ *Wilts. Quarter Sessions and Assizes* (WRS. 11), 136

⁴⁰⁸ *Wilts. Quarter Sessions and Assizes* (WRS. 11), 136.

⁴⁰⁹ *Wilts. Quarter Sessions and Assizes* (WRS. 11), 142.

⁴¹⁰ J. Britton, *Autobiography*, 29.

⁴¹¹ Jackson, *Kington*, 50; . Britton, *Autobiography*, 29 quoted a local farmer in 1850 expressing similar views.

separate church was built at Kington Langley. Both Awdry and Prodger took a keen interest in local affairs.

Communal Life

During the 16th century the communal life of the parish was centred largely on the church. Aubrey described the local significance of the church ale at Whitsun. 'Here the Howsekeepers met and were merry and gave their Charitie: the young people came too, and had dancing, bowlings, shooting at buttes, &c.' Revels probably also took place at the three-day Michaelmas fair which, according to Aubrey, was 'much resorted unto by the young people, famous for ale and stubble geese.'⁴¹² Communal activities are mentioned in manorial court records 1559–77, including instances of cards and ball games: 'stuffball', 'stafball' or 'staffball', and '*pila pedale*' (football).⁴¹³

John Britton (b. 1771) recalled Kington St Michael in his youth as quiet and dull, speculating that no inhabitant was likely to have even purchased a newspaper or magazine before 1780.⁴¹⁴ In his account the village was periodically brightened by visits from a clothier and a 'Mountebank Doctor'. This 'itinerant quack' had a companion called 'Merry-Andrew', 'a sort of clown, or buffon, whose office and duty was to submit to the horse-whip, to tumble, leap, dance, make grotesque faces, and parley badinage and vulgar jokes with his equally accomplished master.'⁴¹⁵

John Aubrey mentioned hounds for hunting hares being kept before the Civil War by Charles Snell.⁴¹⁶ Britton recalled that during winter months the village was enlivened by the Duke of Beaufort's fox-hounds and Sir James Tylney Long's harriers.⁴¹⁷ The Beaufort hunt continued to meet periodically at Kington St Michael during the 19th century, including at the Plough Inn, Kington Langley.⁴¹⁸

Another local pastime was fishing. Aubrey records 'several ponds in traine' and a 'particular noble carp pond' in the park of the manor house.⁴¹⁹ Traditionally the park had been available in common to Glastonbury abbey tenants, but Nicholas Snell curtailed these rights after he purchased the manor. Britton trespassed to fish these ponds as a boy when they still teemed with carp, once narrowly avoiding being shot by Squire White.⁴²⁰ Ponds south of the manor house near Stubbs Lane remained in 2023.

Although quiet, Kington, according to Britton, had a public house on the west side of the highway through the village during his youth. Only the White Hart inn is recorded on the 1842 tithe map, but this was set back from the highway on the east side (opposite the present

⁴¹² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 10, 139.

⁴¹³ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1; staffball, etc, was a form of hockey.

⁴¹⁴ Britton, *Autobiography*, 32.

⁴¹⁵ Britton, *Autobiography*, 33.

⁴¹⁶ Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 60.

⁴¹⁷ Britton, *Autobiography*, 33.

⁴¹⁸ e.g. *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 25 Nov. 1848, 28 Oct. 1865; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 17 Mar. 1842.

⁴¹⁹ Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 63; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 130.

⁴²⁰ Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 63.

Jolly Huntsman public house).⁴²¹ It was listed in an 1859 directory alongside three other beer retailers and, in 1867, alongside two.⁴²² The White Hart was occupied in 1875 by Thomas Aland & Co., beer retailer and maltster.⁴²³ By 1911 it was both a public house and blacksmith (run by Herbert Marin).⁴²⁴ By 1931 the licensee, Usher's Brewery, described it as in a 'dilapidated' condition and subsequently closed it and transferred the licence to the nearby White Horse (now the Jolly Huntsman).⁴²⁵ The buildings were later sold.⁴²⁶

A malthouse stood on the site of the present Jolly Huntsman in 1842.⁴²⁷ As the White Horse, it provided a venue during the second half of the 19th century for meetings of the local branch of the National Agricultural Union, the St Michael branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters and inquests. By then it had probably already become the main drinking establishment within Kington St Michael, despite possessing only a beerhouse licence until 1931.⁴²⁸ The White Horse was used for auctions and meetings of the Kington St Michael Thrift Club during the 20th century.⁴²⁹ It was renamed the Jolly Huntsman in the 1970s.⁴³⁰

A branch of the Primrose League was established by the wife of the squire, Emily Prodgers, by 1886 and operated until 1888 or later.⁴³¹ A reading room was started in Kington St Michael by 1910, open to men over 15. In 1912 after a decline in membership opening hours were reduced.⁴³² In the early 20th century there were also parish coal and clothing clubs.⁴³³

A parish hall, later known as the village hall, was established by 1903 adjacent to the (now former) school. Until 1946, when he gave it to the parish council, the hall belonged to G.M. Thompson.⁴³⁴ After the school closed in 1978, protracted negotiation with church authorities led to the school and teacher's house becoming a new village hall in 1993.⁴³⁵ By 2020 both the old and new village halls were entrusted to the Parish Room Charity for which the parish council was the custodian trustee.⁴³⁶ In 2023 regular users of the facilities included Acorns Pre-school and the Women's' Institute, and groups for salsa dancing and dog training.⁴³⁷ The parish council purchased a seven-acre site for a playing field to the north of

⁴²¹ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael.

⁴²² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859, 1867 edns.).

⁴²³ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1875 edn.).

⁴²⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.). By 1915, it was run by Henry Martin. *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

⁴²⁵ *Wilts. Times*, 11 Apr. 1931.

⁴²⁶ *Wilts. Times*. 22 Aug. 1931, 5 Sept. 1931.

⁴²⁷ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael.

⁴²⁸ *Wilts. Times*, 17 Aug. 1889, 4 Feb. 1899, 8 May 1897, 11 Apr. 1931; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz*, 8 May 1897.

⁴²⁹ e.g. Auctions, *Wilts. Times*, 6 Jan. 1951, 24 May 1952. Thrift club *Wilts. Times*, 22 Dec. 1934.

⁴³⁰ <https://www.jollyhuntsman.com/> [accessed 01 May 2023].

⁴³¹ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz*, 6 May 1886, 12 & 14 Aug. 1886, 28 July 1887. Also reported 16, Aug. 1888, 20 Aug. 1888.

⁴³² *Kington St Michael Parish Register Chest*, volume in possession of Mr Colin Labouchere (2023).

⁴³³ *Kington St Michael Parish Register Chest*.

⁴³⁴ WSA, 1787/1/1, pp. 32–3.

⁴³⁵ WSA, 3941/5, 3941/14.

⁴³⁶ WSA, 3941/14; Registered Charity No. 274550.

⁴³⁷ https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/village_hall-17916.aspx (accessed 1 May 2023)]

the village on Grove Lane during the 1980s; this was made a QEII field in 2011.⁴³⁸ A community woodland, Nymph Hay wood, was established in 1997.⁴³⁹

A further communal space within the parish was operating in 2023, provided by the Kington St Michael Club, a social club that offered both a bar and lounge available for private hire and hosting regular events.⁴⁴⁰

Education

According to John Aubrey, Kington priory provided schooling for young women. 'In those days,' he wrote, 'there were not schools for young ladies as now, but they were educated at religious houses'. He suggested that girls were likely to have been taught 'confectionary, surgery, physick, writing, drawing &c,'⁴⁴¹ and he recorded that in the old hedges around the lands of the priory were a significant number of berberry-trees, 'which I suppose the nunnes made use of for confections, and they taught the young ladies that were educated there such arts.'⁴⁴²

In 1730, Sarah Bowerman, a widow of St Andrew's, Holborn (Middlesex), bequeathed £5 a year payable in perpetuity by the trustees of Christ's Hospital in London to the schoolmaster at Kington St Michael for the education of poor children in reading, writing, accounts and the catechism.⁴⁴³ The school was probably established in 1731 and employed a schoolmaster, Daniel Yealf, who at his death in 1779 had reputedly been a schoolmaster in Kington for 48 years. Yealf was also the vestry and parish clerk.⁴⁴⁴ After his death the fund was for some years unapplied,⁴⁴⁵ but by 1818 the school funded by Bowerman's bequest was attended by 10 'small' children, and its teacher continued to receive £5 from Christ's Hospital. A further 50 'very small' children attended three or four, probably dame, schools. Sixty children attended a Sunday school, and an additional Sunday school was planned.⁴⁴⁶ John Britton noted c.1825 that the Bowerman-funded school resembled a nursery more than a school, while suggesting, 'what can be done these days for £5 p.a.'⁴⁴⁷ In 1834 the charity commissioners reported that the longstanding schoolmaster taught as many children as were sent to him by the minister and churchwardens. Children were taught reading, writing and arithmetic.⁴⁴⁸

⁴³⁸ https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/sport_and_recreation-17916.aspx (accessed 1 May 2023); QE field no. WT273760.

⁴³⁹ https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/sport_and_recreation-17916.aspx (accessed 1 May 2023).

⁴⁴⁰ <https://ksmsocialclub.com/> (accessed 1 May 2023).

⁴⁴¹ Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 57; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 12–13.

⁴⁴² Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 57.

⁴⁴³ TNA, PROB 11/641/342; plaque in church.

⁴⁴⁴ *Phillipps Monumental Inscriptions, 1822* (WRS. 53, 2000), 21.

⁴⁴⁵ WSA, D/3/14/1; *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 129; *Charitable Donations, 1786–88, 1344–5*.

⁴⁴⁶ *Educ. of the Poor. Digest*, 1030.

⁴⁴⁷ WM Library, MS 4080.

⁴⁴⁸ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 329.

Two daily schools were recorded in Kington St Michael with Easton Piercy (excluding Kington Langley tithing) in 1835, with combined attendance of 30 boys and 10 girls. Both were supported by subscriptions and Sarah Bowerman's bequest was not mentioned.⁴⁴⁹

A school was built in Stubbs Lane, at the eastern end of the churchyard by 1840,⁴⁵⁰ but in 1859 a government report identified the accommodation as too small to supply the parish needs.⁴⁵¹ In 1869 new premises were provided, principally financed by the squire, Herbert Prodgers, for a Church of England school to accommodate 102 pupils and three teachers, together with a teacher's residence; the school and house were built on the northern side of the lane leading to the church (subsequently the village hall and shop).⁴⁵² The school was built without a parliamentary grant, but by 1872 it was in receipt of annual funding of £33 15s. 0d. and attended by an average of 70 children. According to the same report, a second school in Kington St Michael received a small annual grant and was attended by ten pupils.⁴⁵³ However, an 1871 return recorded only one school within the tithing.⁴⁵⁴ In 1888–9 the school was attended by an average of 51 children. It was principally supported by subscriptions (£57) and a parliamentary grant (£37). The £5 annual Bowerman annuity was also used.⁴⁵⁵ By 1897, however, the annual payment from Bowerman's charity had for some years been split between the schools at both Kingtons, and this arrangement was officially sanctioned by order of the charity commissioners in 1899.⁴⁵⁶ In 1905 the endowment was used by both schools for a school prize fund.⁴⁵⁷ In 1903 Herbert Prodgers signed over the site of Kington St Michael school and teacher's dwelling house to the diocese.⁴⁵⁸

In 1912 the number of children who could be accommodated was reduced, from 72 and 38 infants, to 57 and 38 infants, a total of 95.⁴⁵⁹ The school grounds were extended in 1913.⁴⁶⁰ Inside, the accommodation for elementary-aged pupils meant that classes 1 and 2 were taught in the same room, divided by a 5ft screen in 1924. However, the combined classes contained 42 pupils, well within the capacity of 57.⁴⁶¹ Despite the problems of sharing accommodation, the Board of Education received a good inspection report for classes 1 and 2 in 1922.⁴⁶² In 1921 the adjoining village hall was registered by the Board to instruct domestic

⁴⁴⁹ *Educ. in England Abstract*, 1835, 1040.

⁴⁵⁰ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael.

⁴⁵¹ *Account of Wilts. Schools*, 1859, 29.

⁴⁵² *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.* 19 Aug. 1869.

⁴⁵³ *Committee of Council on Education: Report, Appendix*, 1872–3 (Com. Papers, 1873(C.812 C.812–I Vol 24, 771), 505.

⁴⁵⁴ *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.

⁴⁵⁵ *Return of Public Elementary Schools Examined Showing Accommodation, Average Attendance etc.* 1888–9 (Parl. Papers, 1890 (403, LVI)), 282.

⁴⁵⁶ *Endowed Charities*, 1908, 591; TNA, ED 49/8204. 0208

⁴⁵⁷ WSA, L2/152.

⁴⁵⁸ WSA, 3941/14.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA, ED 21/18455

⁴⁶⁰ *North Wilts. Herald*, 1 Aug. 1913; 3941/14; *Kington St Michael Parish Register Chest*.

⁴⁶¹ TNA, ED 21/42268.

⁴⁶² TNA, ED 21/42268.

subjects (not specified),⁴⁶³ and a similar registration was made in 1914 for the Congregational chapel.⁴⁶⁴

By 1929 overall school numbers had dropped to 60, and by 1939 were as low as 41, though they were bolstered with the addition of 17 evacuees.⁴⁶⁵ In the early 1940s numbers rose again, and the Department of Education permitted the parish to utilise the parish room as school accommodation.⁴⁶⁶ Pupil numbers reached 70 in 1949. In 1956 senior pupils (aged 11–15) were transferred to Chippenham Secondary Modern School, and pupil numbers fell once more to 46 aged 5–11, taught in two classes. By 1961 numbers had risen. The school applied for an extra part-time teacher, and decided to use the village hall in the mornings to provide additional space. By 1967 numbers had fallen again, the village hall was no longer required, and the part-time teacher no longer justified. In 1969 the number on roll was just 30.⁴⁶⁷

In 1970, with 39 pupils, the part-time post was reinstated and by 1972 numbers had sufficiently increased for the village hall to be used again for school accommodation. A mobile classroom was installed the following year. Housing development during the early 1970s put pressure on school accommodation. In 1975 the head teacher was told that it was not practicable to provide her with a room and she was offered the use of the cloakroom or kitchen instead. The children had no outside space for organised games. Colonel Showers offered the use of his neighbouring field during the winter, though he asked the children to be careful with the mare and donkey. He later also allowed the use of the field in summer, though it would have to be shared with the cows.⁴⁶⁸

In the 1970s the school was described as ‘probably the worst school in the north of the county’ due to the cramped conditions.⁴⁶⁹ In 1976 Daniel Awdry MP visited at the managers’ request, and a new office and store room were planned. Also in 1976 the local education authority presented a plan to build a new school at The Ridings, at the other end of the village. Despite a problem caused when contractors went into liquidation, about 80 pupils were welcomed into the new school when it opened in October 1978. Pupils were reportedly delighted with the new accommodation, particularly the electric hand dryers and the overhead projector.⁴⁷⁰

In 2023 the voluntarily controlled Kington St Michael Church of England Primary School had 136 children on roll, drawn from the parish of Kington St Michael, surrounding villages and housing developments in Chippenham. In addition to the head teacher, it had nine teachers and ten teaching assistants on its books.

Social Welfare

⁴⁶³ TNA, ED 70/2546.

⁴⁶⁴ TNA, ED 70/2546.

⁴⁶⁵ WSA, F8/500/157/1/1.

⁴⁶⁶ TNA, ED 21/63294.

⁴⁶⁷ WSA, F8/500/157/1/2.

⁴⁶⁸ WSA, F8/500/157/1/2.

⁴⁶⁹ *Wilts. Gaz. & Herald*, 7 July 1977.

⁴⁷⁰ WSA, F8/500/157/1/2; *Wilts. Gaz. & Herald*, 7 July 1977.

No overseers' accounts survive for Kington St Michael. Aubrey stated that in his grandfather's day (Isaac Lyte d. 1659) poor rates had been unnecessary.⁴⁷¹ Despite this, in 1670 there were 17 households in Kington St Michael exempt from the hearth tax and 23 in Kington Langley, and parochial poor relief had probably started by then.⁴⁷² The Lyte Almshouse and other charities available for the local poor from the 17th century gave further support over and above parochial welfare.⁴⁷³

According to newspaper reports, in 1827 one of the principal landowners, Nathan Atherton, had divided 30–40 a. of tithe free land into $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ a. allotments for the poor of Kington St Michael 'paying himself the poor rates for them'.⁴⁷⁴ The scheme may have ended by 1842, when Atherton occupied all lands he held in the parish.⁴⁷⁵

Kington St Michael overseers provided detailed evidence (for all tithings) to a Lords Select Committee on their welfare expenditure for the period Sept. 1829 – Sept. 1830. The most significant outlay was on the maintenance of the old and infirm, which cost £266 2s. 0d., and £168 19s. 7d. had been spent on widows, single women and orphans unable to earn sufficient income. It was noted that local wages were 9s. but if unemployed a labourer with a wife and three children would receive 9s. 6d. (if bread was 1s. 6d. a gallon) with a further 1s. 6d. per week for every additional child. Consequently, perhaps, a further £104 10s. 1d. was provided to 27 individuals or families 'to make up the amount of their earnings sufficient for their maintenance.' £61 5s. 6d. was spent on house rents for 26 families and individuals and £26 14s. 6d. on maintaining paupers in 'lunatic asylums'. The parish retained a doctor for £20.⁴⁷⁶

Abstractions on welfare provided specifically for Kington St Michael are made difficult as figures were often combined with those for Kington Langley. Government statistics separated the two in 1816–19 and 1821 but combined them in 1820.⁴⁷⁷ Later they were combined in 1826–7 and separated in 1828–9.⁴⁷⁸

In 1901, the Wiltshire Cottage Home for Epileptic Girls by Guardians of the Poor was opened in Kington St Michael with three patients removed from Chippenham Workhouse. It was hoped that the new home would improve the conditions in which 'epileptics' were housed.⁴⁷⁹ It operated until at least 1935.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 10.

⁴⁷² TNA, E 179/348/206.

⁴⁷³ See Kington St Michael, Charities.

⁴⁷⁴ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 15 Nov. 1827.

⁴⁷⁵ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael.

⁴⁷⁶ *Select Committee of House of Lords on Poor Laws and Petitions Praying for Relief from Pauperism. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix etc.* (Parl. Papers, 1831 (227, VIII)), 296.

⁴⁷⁷ *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix; Supplemental Appendix* (1819–22) (Parl. Papers 1822 (556), v. DXVII), 187.

⁴⁷⁸ *Account of Money expended for Relief of Poor in England and Wales, 1824–29. 1830–1.* Paper 83. Vol 11. 217.

⁴⁷⁹ *Western Daily Press*, 3 Sept. 1901.

⁴⁸⁰ Listed in *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1903, 1927, 1935 edns.).

Friendly Societies: There were no friendly societies recorded in Kington St Michael in 1818.⁴⁸¹ However, a branch of the Wilts Friendly Society was established in 1857.⁴⁸² In 1860 members attended a church service and processed to Tor Hill where a tent had been erected. Thereafter 80 members and friends had dinner, and were entertained by a brass band, dancing, a cricket match and sports.⁴⁸³ Afterwards a separate branch was established in Kington Langley, but annual celebrations were taken together.⁴⁸⁴ A 'St Michael' branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters was instituted for Kington St Michael in 1888, based at the White Horse Inn. It held its first meeting the next year.⁴⁸⁵ By 1911, it had 97 members and funds of £751.⁴⁸⁶

Charities: In 1664, William Woodrooff [sic] left 20s. a year to the poor (to be paid to those most in need on 18 September) and 10s. a year to the vicar to preach an anniversary sermon.⁴⁸⁷ Another 17th-century bequest, by Dorothy Newman, provided an annuity of £6 which was paid to the poor on St Thomas's Day.⁴⁸⁸ This was distributed among the deserving poor by churchwardens on the advice of the minister 'without diminution of their monthly allowance'.⁴⁸⁹ By 1834 it had been combined with bequests by sisters Margaret and Merrill Sadler and Dorothy Coleman (wife of William Coleman) née Sadler, to provide bread for the deserving poor (on a scale from one to three loaves based on family size).⁴⁹⁰

An almshouse for two women was created in 1221 within Kington priory, and maintained by the crown.⁴⁹¹ Other almshouses were created by the bequest of Isaac Lyte of Mortlake, Surrey, during the 17th century, who left £600 for building six almshouses in Kington St Michael (will proved 1673).⁴⁹² His will also provided a rent charge of £21 per year, from lands in Corston (in Malmesbury), for the maintenance of six poor unmarried men of the parish in the almshouses.⁴⁹³ An extract from his will was placed in the parish register in 1692.⁴⁹⁴ Later, Thomas White of London left £200 in his will in 1821 for the use and better

⁴⁸¹ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 495.

⁴⁸² *Wilts. Independent*, 15 Apr. 1858.

⁴⁸³ *Wilts. Independent*, 19 July 1960.

⁴⁸⁴ e.g. *Wilts. Independent*, 23 July 1874; Soc. Ants. Lib. JAC 006, f. 12.

⁴⁸⁵ Court no 7708. *Wilts. Times*, 13 Oct. 1888. *Devises & Wilts. Gaz*, 15 Aug. 1889.; *Reports of Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies*, 1890; Appendix, 1890–1. Paper no 310 310–I 310–II. Vol 79, 495, 651. P.254.

⁴⁸⁶ *Friendly societies, workmen's compensation schemes, industrial and provident societies, and trade unions. Reports of the chief registrar of friendly societies for the year ending 31st December 1911, 1912–13*, paper 123–I–XII. No vol. p. 859

⁴⁸⁷ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 139; *Phillipps Monumental Inscriptions*, 1822 (WRS. 53), 21.

⁴⁸⁸ *Phillipps Monumental Inscriptions*, 1822 (WRS. 53), 21.

⁴⁸⁹ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 330.

⁴⁹⁰ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 330; Soc. Ants. JAC 006, f. 21r.

⁴⁹¹ Soc. Ants. JAC 006, f. 32.

⁴⁹² TNA, PROB 11/342/531.

⁴⁹³ *Phillipps Monumental Inscriptions*, 1822 (WRS. 53, 2000), 21; *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 330–1.

⁴⁹⁴ *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 138.

maintenance of the poor occupying the houses. A total of £259 was invested in annuities. The dividends were shared among the almspeople by the churchwardens.⁴⁹⁵

John Britton suggested c.1825 that the charity had been in the hands of negligent trustees who had caused the premises to decay. He also indicated that almspeople were no longer restricted to 'poor old Batchelors'.⁴⁹⁶ This suggests that it was proving difficult to find suitable almspeople. In 1902 two almshouses were being tenanted 'until the vacant houses are wanted'.⁴⁹⁷ In 1905 only three of the six homes were in use in the way planned, two were vacant and one was tenanted by the wife of a previous incumbent.⁴⁹⁸ By the 1950s almspeople could be single men or women or married couples.⁴⁹⁹

In 1901 the charities founded by William Woodrooff, Isaac Lyte, Margaret Sadler, Thomas Taylor and Thomas White were combined and placed under the administration of six trustees, including the vicars of Kington Langley and Kington St Michael, one member of the parish council from both parishes, and two others co-opted (in the first instance Walter Coleman and George Capener).⁵⁰⁰ In 1905 the funds from the charity were distributed in doles to 45 people in Kington St Michael and 30 in Kington Langley.⁵⁰¹ In 1917 the number of recipients was 44 and 36 respectively. By 1947, under the auspices of Kington St Michael United Charities, pensions to almspeople had been commuted to a £2 gift allotted to each almshouse.⁵⁰²

Plans in 1956 to extend the almshouses to the rear to provide a kitchen, toilet and bathroom were not accomplished until 1962.⁵⁰³ In 2008 further alterations were made to each end property, to adapt them for disabled tenants or couples. Additional cottages were purchased in 2010.⁵⁰⁴ The combined charities, known as Kington St Michael United Charities, had in 2023 the objective to provide housing for the elderly and needy, the primary activity to maintain the nine almshouses to a high standard.⁵⁰⁵

Buckland's Coal Fund was established by the will of Joseph Whale Buckland in 1916 (one of its first trustees being Ernest Edward Buckland of New Priory farm). The fund distributed coal to the 20 poorest families of Kington St Michael (including the six tenants of the almshouses) on Christmas Day using £100 of funds invested in 'West Australia Stock'. The legacy was vested in several trustees usually including the vicar of Kington St Michael. In 1950, while coal was still rationed, £4 in money was distributed among 16 recipients.⁵⁰⁶ The

⁴⁹⁵ *Endowed Charities*, 1908, I, 589.

⁴⁹⁶ WM Library, MS 4880.

⁴⁹⁷ WSA, L2/152.

⁴⁹⁸ WSA, L2/152.

⁴⁹⁹ WSA, G3/132/59.

⁵⁰⁰ WSA, 1187/31. Char. Comm. order 2512 I, 28 Aug. 1901.

⁵⁰¹ WSA, L2/152.

⁵⁰² WSA, L2/152.

⁵⁰³ WSA, G3/132/59.

⁵⁰⁴ https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/almshouses_and_allotments-17916.aspx (accessed 1 May 2023).

⁵⁰⁵ See <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/201283/charity-overview> (accessed 1 May 2023).

⁵⁰⁶ WSA, L2/152, 1187/32.

legacy was still being distributed in 1983, but its administrator knew very little about it, its terms or the capital invested.⁵⁰⁷

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Kington St Michael was a vicarage from the 13th century, which included the chapelries of Kington Langley and Easton Piercy. Kington St Michael priory, a house of Benedictine nuns, lay within the parish, but most aspects of its history are treated elsewhere.⁵⁰⁸ Kington Langley, a stronghold of nonconformist dissent, became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1865, after the church of St Peter was built there in 1855. The history of nonconformity there, and of the established church from the 1850s, have been described above.⁵⁰⁹

Church Origins and Parochial Organisation

The church of St Michael has Norman origins and was originally a possession of Glastonbury abbey. It was renovated under Michael of Ambresbury, abbot of Glastonbury, during the 13th century.⁵¹⁰ John Aubrey assumed that the abbot was responsible for its dedication and thereby provided the parish of Kington with its suffix.⁵¹¹ The chapel of St Peter, recorded in the 16th century, was doubtless built to serve Kington Langley because of its distance from the parish church. St Peter's chapel was converted to a dwelling by 1670, and the chapel bell moved to Fitzurse farm.⁵¹²

Easton Piercy tithing possessed its own chapel and graveyard. According to Aubrey the edifice had a turret on which were mounted two small bells. The structure, which occupied a toft called chapel-hay, was pulled down c.1640.⁵¹³ In 1842 a field called Chapel Land lay adjacent and north-west of the former manor house of Easton Piercy.⁵¹⁴ Jackson, writing in 1858, observed that the upper end of this field was characterised by an uneven surface which marked the location of the chapel, and human bones were occasionally found.⁵¹⁵ This chapel site is marked on 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps.

Kington priory was founded before 1155.⁵¹⁶ Nothing remains of its buildings above ground, except for the 15th-century structures on the west side of the cloister and the earlier frater or refectory on the south side. Altered by successive owners, these became part of the farmhouse at Priory farm, 1 km north-west of the village. The site was investigated by Sir Harold Brakspear, who published a full description and plan.⁵¹⁷

⁵⁰⁷ WSA, 1187/32.

⁵⁰⁸ *VCH Wilts*, III, 259–61.

⁵⁰⁹ Above, Kington Langley, religious hist.

⁵¹⁰ Jackson, *Kington*, 39.

⁵¹¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 134; Jackson, *Kington*, 36.

⁵¹² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 145, 146.

⁵¹³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 236.

⁵¹⁴ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael.

⁵¹⁵ Jackson, *Kington*, 72–3.

⁵¹⁶ *VCH Wilts*, III, 259.

⁵¹⁷ *Archaeologia*, LXXIII, 244–52; *WAM*, 43, 18–25; history of the priory: *VCH Wilts*, III, 259–62.

A singular chapel or mausoleum was created by Walter Coleman (d.1782) from 1778. The parish register for St Michael's records at Coleman's death in May 1782, 'Buried – NB. The body was afterwards removed to a mausoleum built by himself at Kington Langley.'⁵¹⁸ The mausoleum was unfinished on his death and Coleman left a bequest for its completion.⁵¹⁹ The structure appears as a chapel on the 1842 tithe map, but had disappeared by the 1880s.⁵²⁰ Francis Kilvert, a descendant of Walter Coleman, mentioned it in 1876 as the 'site of the old chapel and burying place where my great-grandfather was laid to rest'.⁵²¹ The site, at the north side of the Common just before its junction with Plough Lane, was still called Old Chapel field in 2023. On the opposite side of the lane in 1842 was 'Chapel field', which may be associated with it or an earlier graveyard.⁵²²

After the loss of Kington Langley (under the designation Langley Fitzurse) to become a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1865,⁵²³ another ecclesiastical boundary change was made to Kington St Michael in 1885 to help create Chippenham St Paul's ecclesiastical parish.⁵²⁴

Kington St Michael was in Malmesbury deanery until 1887, when it was transferred to Chippenham.⁵²⁵ In 1979, a united benefice was created from the parishes of St Paul's Chippenham with Langley Burrell and Hardenhuish, held in plurality with Kington St Michael.⁵²⁶ In 2023 Kington St Michael was part of the benefice of Bybrook, comprising Kington St Michael, Biddestone, Castle Combe, Grittleton, Littleton Drew, Nettleton, North Wraxall, Slaughterford, West Kington and Yatton Keynell.

Advowson and Church Endowment: During the late 12th and early 13th centuries there was an acrimonious attempt to unite the abbey of Glastonbury with the see of Bath and Wells. As part of the resolution to the dispute the advowson of Kington was given to the bishop in 1219.⁵²⁷ The advowson was the subject of a subsequent dispute between the bishop and the abbey. When the dispute was settled in 1275, the bishop, Robert Burnell, secured the advowson.⁵²⁸ However, Kington priory made an exchange with the bishop in 1291, whereby the priory gave the bishop all its Berkshire lands in West Compton, Aldworth, Hodcott in West Ilsley, and Newenham in Warfield; the hundred of Compton; and the patronage of the

⁵¹⁸ WSA, 1187/5.

⁵¹⁹ TNA, PROB 11/1090/204. For the circumstances (including the involvement of Sarah Stephens) see J. Badeni, *Past People in Wilts. and Glos.* (Norton Manor, 1992), 56–60. Badeni was unaware that Walter Coleman and Sarah Stephens married in 1762: London Met. A, P82/GEO2/012.

⁵²⁰ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael; OS Map 25", Wilts. XX.5 (1886 edn.).

⁵²¹ Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 244.

⁵²² A graveyard is suggested by Meers, *Historical Notes*, 21.

⁵²³ 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.

⁵²⁴ Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 54.

⁵²⁵ *Crockford* (1868, 1894, 1939, 1967–8 edns.). Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 529, 542 incorrectly lists Kington St Michael's and Kington Langley (Fitzurse) remaining within Malmesbury deanery after 1887.

⁵²⁶ Lond. Gaz. 47987, 25 Oct. 1979; *Crockford* (1980–2 edn.), 1191.

⁵²⁷ *VCH Som*, II, 89–90.

⁵²⁸ *VCH Wilts*, III, 260; *VCH Som*, II, 90–91; *Hist. MSS Com. Rep. Wells*, I, 167–8, 311–12, 359–60, 472.

chapel of Hodcott.⁵²⁹ In exchange, the bishop gave the priory one acre of land in Kington St Michael, lying in the east field in the 'Goldthawe', situated between the prioress's land and property owned by Richard Carpenter, along with tithe of the rectory and right of presentation to Kington vicarage.⁵³⁰

The patronage was again with the bishop in 1395 (possibly during a vacancy, as no prioresses' names occur between Isabel Huse in 1327 and Alice More in 1431), but was back with the prioress by 1402 when the living was awarded to Richard Whete.⁵³¹ It remained with the priory thereafter until 1533 when Thomas Hull was presented.⁵³² Surprisingly given the poverty of the priory, Hull does not seem to have ministered to both parishioners and, as their priest, to the nuns.⁵³³ Following the Dissolution, in 1567 the patronage was with Nicholas Snell, purchaser of the abbey's Kington estate.⁵³⁴ In 1612 it was with Lady Catherine, widow of Sir Walter Long, the priory having been purchased by Richard Long of Wraxall. In 1663 Benjamin Hine, probably the steward of the estate, presented to the living.⁵³⁵ Thereafter its patronage was with the Longs of Draycot for two centuries.⁵³⁶ Sometime before 1898, the advowson was sold to Henry Samuel Adrian (younger brother of Adam Huskisson Adrian, vicar from 1897),⁵³⁷ and by 1915 the advowson of Kington St Michael was with the bishop of Bristol.⁵³⁸

There is no record of endowment to the chapel of St Peter's, Kington Langley.⁵³⁹ However, a terrier of Glastonbury abbey estates in 1518 records that the churchwardens of St Peter's at Kington Langley held ½ a. around the church under a 90-year lease.⁵⁴⁰

The chapel at Easton Piercy was granted in 1319 by John de Gyvleton (Yeovilton, Som.) to Ralph de Cromhale.⁵⁴¹ No incumbent is thereafter recorded.⁵⁴²

The living of Kington St Michael was valued at £20 in 1291 and 1341, two-thirds of which at the latter date was deemed to come from tithes.⁵⁴³ In 1341 the rectory was worth £20, comprising a house, a carucate of land and an acre of meadow worth £2 4s., rents and services £1 16s., tithes of hay and lambs £5 3s. 4d., mortuary payments and offerings £2 6s. 8d., wool £8

⁵²⁹ Dugdale, *Mon.* IV, 398; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257–1300, 405; *Hist. MSS Com. Rep. Wells*, I, 151.

⁵³⁰ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257–1300, 405; *VCH Wilts*, III, 260.

⁵³¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1391–1396, 548; Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 89; *VCH Wilts*, III, 259–62.

⁵³² Phillipps, *Institutions*, I, 107, 110, 125, 132, 165, 166 (patron incorrectly given as prior de Kyngton), 181, 194, 203.

⁵³³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 144, names 'Parson Whaddon' as the last priest to officiate at the priory.

⁵³⁴ Phillipps, *Institutions*, I, 223.

⁵³⁵ Phillipps, *Institutions*, II, 7, 27; *WAM*, 43, 19–20; Jackson, *Kington*, 71.

⁵³⁶ Phillipps, *Institutions*, II, 42, 51, 54, 89, 90; from the mid 19th century see *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* e.g. (1859, 1898 edns.).

⁵³⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1898 edn.); TNA, RG 9/196, f. 36r (1861 census).

⁵³⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

⁵³⁹ The ref. in *VCH Wilts*, III, 260 to a 'rector of Kington Langley' in 1298 is probably an error for Langley Burrell.

⁵⁴⁰ BL, Harl. MS 3961.

⁵⁴¹ Phillipps, *Institutions*, I, 17.

⁵⁴² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 236.

⁵⁴³ *Tax. Eccles.* 189; *Non. Inq.* 169.

10s.⁵⁴⁴ The tithes of the rectory c.1535 were worth £6 13s. 4d.⁵⁴⁵ Robert Long, who farmed the priory, also held the farm of the 'rectory' in 1545 when its value remained the same.⁵⁴⁶ A terrier from the late 16th century records the glebe as a house with garden, home close, 4 a. of arable land adjoining, 9 a. of arable land in the East field, and 6 a. of arable land in the Ham.⁵⁴⁷ By 1704 the glebe included a dwelling, barn, stable and pigsty; grounds included 3 adjoining closes of approx. 7 a.; a close called Swinsell of 6a.; 5 a. called Vicarage ham; and two plots of ½ a. lying in an enclosure of Thomas Stokes, near the Malmesbury highway.⁵⁴⁸ Tithes since the late 16th century had comprised the tithe hay of Langley (likely Kington Langley) and two tenements in Peckingell, plus the predial tithe of Kington Langley and Peckingell.⁵⁴⁹ In 1887 the glebe extended to 20 a. and its annual rent was worth £33.⁵⁵⁰

In the church survey of 1649–50, the value of the Kington St Michael living was noted as £60, although due to the 'insufficiency' of the incumbent, Richard Hine, he was in receipt of £45 with the residue paid to Nicholas Peirce.⁵⁵¹ In 1711 the value in the Queen's books was recorded as £8 9s. 4½d.⁵⁵² The living in 1754 was valued at £90 per annum and £100 by 1788.⁵⁵³ In 1842 the tithe was commuted to a rent-charge of £370 to the impropiator William Richard Arthur Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, and £450 to the vicar, Charles Henry Hodgson. Tithes on 247 a. were covered by annual payment of 6s. 8d. to the vicar.⁵⁵⁴ By 1889 the living was worth £350 per annum gross from the tithe rent charge, £386 including the 20 a. of glebe.⁵⁵⁵ In 1894 its net worth was recorded as £282,⁵⁵⁶ and it was £277 in 1915, by when the glebe land had been reduced to 8 a.⁵⁵⁷

Clergy houses: A house and land valued at 44s. belonged to the rectory in 1341.⁵⁵⁸ A residence for the vicar of Kington St Michael was listed in glebe terriers from the 16th century to the south-west of the parish church situated on the south side of Stubbs Lane.⁵⁵⁹ In 1663 the premises comprised parlour chamber, parlour, malt loft, buttery, kitchen, a chamber over the parlour and another over the buttery.⁵⁶⁰ The structure was remodelled during the tenure of

⁵⁴⁴ *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, 169.

⁵⁴⁵ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.) II, 113.

⁵⁴⁶ TNA, SC 6/HENVIII/3969.

⁵⁴⁷ WSA, D1/24/119/1.

⁵⁴⁸ WSA, D1/24/119/4.

⁵⁴⁹ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 223–4; WSA, D1/24/119/1–4.

⁵⁵⁰ *Return of Parishes all Glebe lands in England and Wales* (Parl. Papers, 1887 (307, lxiv), 54. .

⁵⁵¹ WAM 41, 9.

⁵⁵² J. Ecton, *Liber Valorum and Decimarum* (London, 1711), 315.

⁵⁵³ J. Ecton, *Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticorum* (1754 edn.), 403; J. Ecton and J. Lloyd, *Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus: an Improved Edition* (London, 1788), 313.

⁵⁵⁴ *Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS. 30), 66; WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael; TNA, IR 30/38/156, IR 29/38/156.

⁵⁵⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889 edn.).

⁵⁵⁶ *Crockford* (1894 edn.), 47.

⁵⁵⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.).

⁵⁵⁸ *Non. Inq.* 169.

⁵⁵⁹ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS. 56), 223–4.

⁵⁶⁰ WSA, P3/H/353.

Benjamin Griffin c.1712–16 when the ashlar east front was added. It was altered in the 19th century, additions including a gable plaque on the range at the rear that reads *Nisi Dominus 1897*.⁵⁶¹ It was described in 1787 as ‘a pretty good house in tolerable repair.’⁵⁶² The house is now called the Old Rectory and is grade II listed.⁵⁶³ In 2023 the team rector for Kington St Michael was not resident in the parish.

Religious life

Three clerks are recorded for the period during which the abbot of Glastonbury held the patronage: William St Faith (*de Sancta Fide*) (c.1173),⁵⁶⁴ Jordan Cortile (c.1247–69)⁵⁶⁵ and Walter de Schamel (1253).⁵⁶⁶ In 1253 a mandate was given to Berard de Nimpha, papal writer, to imprison Schamel for life and deprive him of his benefice.⁵⁶⁷ The tenure of Cotel as rector of Kington was also troubled and his relationship with the abbot of Glastonbury was at times strained. The abbot on occasion deprived Cotel of common pasture for his cattle, obstructed a road between Inwood and ‘La Sterte’, and built houses at Kington Langley. An agreement was finally made in 1269 whereby Cotel released the abbot from all damages incurred by building and quitclaimed all rights of pasture at Inwood. In return he retained a right to run pigs with the abbot’s own at Inwood (provided he used the abbot’s courtyard to gain access). After harvest the rector was also allowed to graze his cattle with those of the abbot in La Sterte and he had a right of road for all carriages.⁵⁶⁸

After the advowson was acquired by Kington priory, the prioress presented William de la More to the living in 1316.⁵⁶⁹ Richard Thomelyn was presented in 1349, and Roger Knyght in 1387.⁵⁷⁰ In 1392 Knyght was suspended from the vicarage after he confessed grave faults to the bishop.⁵⁷¹ During this period miscreants were sometimes sent to the priory as penance for sexual immorality.⁵⁷² Richard Whete became vicar following the resignation of William Staunden, and in 1405 the living was awarded to John White.⁵⁷³ In 1408 White exchanged livings with William Malle, vicar of Chieveley (Berks.).⁵⁷⁴ Malle exchanged his office with John Rasyn, vicar of Letcombe Regis (Berks.) the next year.⁵⁷⁵ In 1415 Rasyn exchanged with James Grene, chaplain of a chantry in St. Edmund’s, Salisbury.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁶¹ NHLE, 1363830.

⁵⁶² WSA, D3/14/1.

⁵⁶³ NHLE, 1363830.

⁵⁶⁴ Jackson, *Kington*, 81; list of incumbents displayed in church.

⁵⁶⁵ Jackson, *Kington*, 81; *Cal Papal Reg.* I, 246.

⁵⁶⁶ *Cal Papal Reg.* I, 303.

⁵⁶⁷ *Cal Papal Reg.* I, 303.

⁵⁶⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 142–3, 430–1.

⁵⁶⁹ *Reg. Martival*, I, 64.

⁵⁷⁰ Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 46, 72.

⁵⁷¹ *Reg. Waltham*, no 91.

⁵⁷² *Reg. Waltham*, nos. 1014, 1101, 1129.

⁵⁷³ Phillipps, *Institutions*, I, 89, 92.

⁵⁷⁴ *Reg. Hallum*, no 37.

⁵⁷⁵ *Reg. Hallum*, no 59.

⁵⁷⁶ *Reg. Hallum*, no 544.

The priory was viewed with some affection in the locality, Walter Jeffrey, parson of Langley Burrell (d.1532), left 6s. 8*d.* to dame Cecily Bodenham, the prioress, and 12*d.* to each of her nuns.⁵⁷⁷

Richard Hine (or Hind or Hynd) was presented to the living in 1612,⁵⁷⁸ and was vicar for over 50 years through the Civil War and Interregnum. However, by 1650 it was noted that the parish 'hath for a long tyme been voyde of an able godlye orthodox minister', and services had been lately taken by Nicholas Peirce, who received £15 from the living, the residue continuing to be paid to Hine.⁵⁷⁹ On his death in 1663 Hine left bequests to his seven children and sixteen grandchildren. His estate was worth £93. Hine's most valuable asset were his books.⁵⁸⁰ Aubrey said [of Hine] 'Our old vicar of Kington St Michael, did sing his sermons rather than reade them.'⁵⁸¹

Hine was replaced by John Ferris, who had previously been vicar of Sutton Benger. Ferris held the living in plurality with Biddestone.⁵⁸² On his death, his replacement Richard Humphreys likewise held St Michael's in plurality.⁵⁸³ Humphreys's memorial on a flat stone is inscribed in Latin.⁵⁸⁴

Benjamin Griffin was appointed vicar of Kington St Michael in 1712.⁵⁸⁵ He died in 1716 and is commemorated on the north wall of the chancel. A graduate of New College, Oxford, Griffin was credited with rebuilding the vicarage (and another in Colerne, where he had formerly been vicar), his memorial noting they were 'ample monuments to his publick spirit'. The memorial further claimed 'his life was short, but exemplary'.⁵⁸⁶ In his will Griffin requested that he be interred privately and with as little expense as possible. He left a bequest of 40s. to be shared among the poor of Kington St Michael and Ditteridge, where he was also rector.⁵⁸⁷

In 1751 William Harington, vicar from 1716, left a half crown to every poor housekeeper in the parish.⁵⁸⁸ During his incumbency the church tower was demolished and replaced, and his name was inscribed on one of the recast bells.⁵⁸⁹ He is buried in the south-west part of the churchyard.⁵⁹⁰ After his death his wife gave a silver paten to the church.⁵⁹¹ Like most of his predecessors, John Scrope, vicar from 1751, also held another living, as rector

⁵⁷⁷TNA, PROB 11/9/260.

⁵⁷⁸ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 117107.

⁵⁷⁹ WAM 41, 9–10.

⁵⁸⁰ WSA, P3/H/353.

⁵⁸¹ Aubrey, J. *Brief Lives* (1898 edn. ed. A. Clark), I, 154.

⁵⁸² *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 22762.

⁵⁸³ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, 51005. Held in plurality with Draycot Cerne and Tytherton Kellaways.

⁵⁸⁴ *Memorial Inscriptions of Wilts.* (WRS. 53), 21.

⁵⁸⁵ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 25664; Phillipps, *Institutions*, II, 51.

⁵⁸⁶ *Memorial Inscriptions of Wilts.* (WRS. 53), 19.

⁵⁸⁷ TNA, PROB 11/561/192.

⁵⁸⁸ TNA, PROB 11/789/423; Phillipps, *Institutions*, II, 54.

⁵⁸⁹ Jackson, *Kington*, 83; Walters, *Church Bells of Wilts*, 111.

⁵⁹⁰ Jackson, *Kington*, 88.

⁵⁹¹ Jackson, *Kington*, 83.

of Castle Combe.⁵⁹² Scrope was also a scholar, and lord of the manor of Castle Combe from 1774 until his death in 1778.⁵⁹³

Edmund Garden was vicar from 1779 until his death aged 92 in 1824.⁵⁹⁴ Garden's father had been the tutor of Sir James Tylney Long (the patron of the living) and the Garden family were on friendly terms with Long.⁵⁹⁵ Archdeacon Cohan observed in 1787 that Garden (who was also a reader at Grays's Inn) only resided in the parish for two or three months a year. In his absence services were taken by a curate, John Kemble (one of several employed at Kington St Michael since the 16th century),⁵⁹⁶ who resided in the vicarage.⁵⁹⁷ Garden's long absences from the parish persisted and he leased out the vicarial tithes.⁵⁹⁸ On his death he was resident of Kington St Michael and of New North Street, Red Lion Square, Middlesex.⁵⁹⁹ Garden was also perpetual curate of St Botolph without Aldgate, London.⁶⁰⁰ It was remarked on his death that he had been a reader at Gray's Inn for 60 years. The *Evening Mail* also noted 'He was a man of the most benevolent disposition, and his long life was passed in the practice of every Christian virtue.'⁶⁰¹

Edward Awdry, a graduate of St Catherine's College, Cambridge, was incumbent of St Michael's from 1856 until 1896. He retired to Chippenham and died aged 92 in 1903.⁶⁰² Awdry was a friend of the diarist Francis Kilvert, who frequently visited the parish and occasionally preached in St Michael's church.⁶⁰³ Awdry made a significant impact during his tenure, including the major renovation of St Michael's church and the creation of St Peter's at Kington Langley. He also took a keen interest in parochial governance and was perpetual chairman of the vestry committee.⁶⁰⁴ His obituary stated 'No priest was ever held in greater reverence, love and esteem by his flock, than Mr Awdry whose kindly, generous and courteous disposition will long be cherished by his old parishioners'.⁶⁰⁵

During the tenure of Awdry, Kilvert recounted that in 1875 Mrs Prodgers (Emily, wife of Herbert Prodgers) and her children were represented in a new glass window in the parish church. The window was titled 'Suffer little children to come unto me'. Kilvert observed, 'The whole thing is the laughing stock of the village and countryside.'⁶⁰⁶ The east window, signed Cox and Son, remained in 2023 and also depicts the Nativity and the Ascension.

⁵⁹² *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 76138

⁵⁹³ Jackson, *Kington*, 81; G. P. Scrope, *History of ... Castle Combe* (1852), 352.

⁵⁹⁴ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 92718.

⁵⁹⁵ WSA, 2943B/2.

⁵⁹⁶ e.g. *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 83464, 152865.

⁵⁹⁷ WSA, D3/14/1; *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 128.

⁵⁹⁸ WSA, 109/938, 777/12.

⁵⁹⁹ TNA, PROB 11/1687/293; *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 6, 7 June 1824; *Evening Mail*, 4 June 1824.

⁶⁰⁰ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 92718.

⁶⁰¹ *Evening Mail*, 4 June 1824.

⁶⁰² *Crockford* (1868, 1894 edns.); *Alumni Cantab.* 1752–1900, Vol 1, 103.

⁶⁰³ e.g. Kilvert, *Diary*, II, 167; III, 115, 176–7.

⁶⁰⁴ WSA, 1187/15.

⁶⁰⁵ *Wilts. Times*, 23 May 1903.

⁶⁰⁶ Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 150, 152.

In 1676 the church at Kington St Michael had 331 communicants.⁶⁰⁷ According to the newly installed curate, John Kemble, divine service in 1783 was taken each Sunday morning and afternoon and during the week on Wednesday and Friday. Communion was celebrated monthly. However, due to the newness of the post he declined to provide the number of communicants who attended worship.⁶⁰⁸ In 1851 Sunday services continued to be held morning and afternoon. The average number of the congregation was 260 in the morning and 330 in the afternoon, including 70 Sunday scholars at both services. The congregation recorded on Census Sunday was lower, but according to the resident curate this was due to the wet weather and half the parish residing 1½ miles from the parish church.⁶⁰⁹

A number of bequests were administered by the vicar and churchwardens, of which many were in 2023 noted on benefaction boards in the nave adjacent to the entrance.⁶¹⁰ In his 1664 will (pr. 1670), William Woodruffe left an annuity of 30s. from the rent charged on property in Chippenham. He allocated 10s. to pay the vicar to preach a sermon on 18 September at Kington St Michael parish church, 'in remembrance' according to his will 'of God's mercy in preserving me in a wonderful manner from drowning at Peckengell Bridge on 18 September 1656.' In his preaching the minister was instructed to 'excite and stir up the people to be mindful of mercies returned. And to be in all holy obedience and thankfulness for the same'. The rest of the annuity was given to the poor on the same day.⁶¹¹ An annual sermon was still being preached in 1834.⁶¹² By 1905 the sermon was given by the vicar 'or some other clergyman'.⁶¹³ In 1783 the archdeacon ordered churchwardens to enquire into the endowment of the school and to put a board in the church describing the charity.⁶¹⁴

Local tradition suggests that there is a mass grave for victims of the Black Death immediately south of the chancel.⁶¹⁵

Nonconformity: Pre-1850s references to Kington St Michael parish may include nonconformist activity in Kington Langley. There were reported to be 30 nonconformists in Kington St Michael in 1676, by which time the parish had an active Quaker community.⁶¹⁶ In 1672 a Quaker, John Gingell of Kington St Michael, was prosecuted for non-payment of tithes, following a complaint by the vicar, John Ferris.⁶¹⁷ According to the *Wiltshire Friends Suffering Book*, Gingell was sued after refusing to pay 30s., after which Ferris 'had taken from him one horse worth £6'. Gingell was later imprisoned for four months in 1684 for refusing to

⁶⁰⁷ *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 128.

⁶⁰⁸ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 128.

⁶⁰⁹ TNA, HO 129/253.

⁶¹⁰ Above, soc. hist.

⁶¹¹ TNA, PROB 11/332/274; *Charitable Donations, 1786–88, 1344* (where wrongly dated 1694).

⁶¹² *Endowed Charities, 1908*, 589.

⁶¹³ *Endowed Charities, 1908*, 589.

⁶¹⁴ WSA, D3/14.

⁶¹⁵ Information from Mr Colin Labouchere, Mar. 2023.

⁶¹⁶ *Wilts. N&Q*, III, 536; *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 128. No local Quaker congregation was included in a list of conventicles, 1669: *Trans. Salisbury Field Club*, 1, 36–44.

⁶¹⁷ J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, (London, 1753), II, 44.

worship at the parish church.⁶¹⁸ During the same year his home, the former priory, was used as a Quaker meeting house.⁶¹⁹ The location was probably convenient as it was close to the village, but far enough away to avoid constant oversight. In 1696 the Quaker burial of John Gingell of the priory of St Mary, Kington St Michael, was recorded, one of a number of Quakers from the parish whose interments were documented.⁶²⁰

In 1686 churchwardens' presentments recorded that the parish had a long list of people who did not receive communion.⁶²¹ After the 1689 Toleration Act Charles Barrett had his dwelling in Kington St Michael registered as a meeting house.⁶²² The Kington Quaker Particular Meetings were associated with those of Brinkworth with Chippenham, Slaughterford and Corsham.⁶²³ However, the location of meetings rotated amongst its members, who resided in Kington as well as Sutton Benger, East Tytherton, Stanton St Quinton and Langley Burrell.⁶²⁴

The persecution of local Quakers continued into the 18th century. Notably, the Quaker preacher Roger Cook had goods confiscated by agents of James Long, impropiator of the benefice of Kington St Michael, annually from 1707 until his death in 1718.⁶²⁵

The development of nonconformity appears to have slowed for several decades, and no dissenters were recorded in the parish in 1783.⁶²⁶ However, in the 19th century religious nonconformity in the parish developed rapidly. An Independent meeting house was first registered at a dwelling occupied by James Miles in Kington St Michael in 1823,⁶²⁷ and two more were registered in domestic premises in the parish within three days of each other during 1824.⁶²⁸

In 1835 the Bethesda Independent chapel, in the possession of Benjamin Rees, George Tanner and others was certified for worship.⁶²⁹ Erected in 1835 at Honey Knob Hill, it included a separate school room,⁶³⁰ and was, like the Union chapel in Kington Langley, in shared ownership and administered by trustees.⁶³¹ It was closed and converted to domestic use probably by 1985.⁶³²

⁶¹⁸ WSA, 1699/18.

⁶¹⁹ WSA, 1699/18, recorded in Charles Barret the younger's prosecution.

⁶²⁰ *Wilts. N&Q*, V, 281. See also *Wilts. N&Q*, V, VI, VII.

⁶²¹ WSA, D/1/54/11.

⁶²² J. Besse, *Sufferings*, II, 44; *Wilts. N&Q*, II, 181; *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 7; WSA, A1/110/H1699; *VCH Wilts*, III, 117.

⁶²³ K. Taylor, 'Society, Schism, and Sufferings: the first 70 years of Quakerism in Wiltshire' (PhD thesis, 2006, Univ. West of England), 111.

⁶²⁴ K. Taylor, 'Society, Schism, and Sufferings', 107–8.

⁶²⁵ WSA, 1699/18; *Wilts. N&Q*, VI, 132: Cook was described as 'a publick friend' i.e. preacher.

⁶²⁶ *Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS. 27), 128 (but the curate making the return was a newcomer).

⁶²⁷ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 100; WSA, D1/9/2/1.

⁶²⁸ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 105; WSA, D1/9/2/1; *Baptist Magazine*, XVII (1825), 18; *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.* 16 Aug. 1824.

⁶²⁹ *Wilts. Meeting House Certs.* (WRS. 40), 139; WSA, D1/9/2/1.

⁶³⁰ TNA, HO 253/129.

⁶³¹ WSA, T/A Kington St. Michael.

⁶³² J. Holden, *Wilts. Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses* (2022), 123.

According to returns on census Sunday in 1851, 70 attended the Bethesda chapel in Kington St Michael, whose sittings were all free, in contrast to those of the parish church.⁶³³

Church architecture

St Michael's church, which is Grade II* listed,⁶³⁴ comprises nave, north and south aisles, chancel, south porch and west tower. Elements of the church date from the 12th century,⁶³⁵ including the wide Norman arch between nave and chancel and the columns beside the door.⁶³⁶ Remodelling, probably during Michael of Amesbury's abbacy of Glastonbury 1235–52, included a spire added to the original (probably Norman) tower.⁶³⁷ The 13th-century chancel with piscina and south aisle remain. Abbot Michael reputedly appears in effigy as a gargoyle on the outside north wall.⁶³⁸ John Aubrey's sketches of the church four centuries later suggest a significant spire topped with a weather cock;⁶³⁹ the tower, however, was in such a poor condition, that he suggested it 'will shortly fall'.⁶⁴⁰ The tower and spire did eventually collapse during the great storm in 1703. Rebuilding of the tower, without a spire, was approved in 1723 and effected c.1726.⁶⁴¹ On Christmas day 1990 part of the tower collapsed in high winds while a service was being conducted, injuring four people.⁶⁴²

In 1755 the north aisle was rebuilt, although windows of an earlier date may have been retained.⁶⁴³ The church was described by Archdeacon Cohan as in 'tolerable repair' in 1787.⁶⁴⁴ However, by 1822 the north wall had subsided and it was 'out of its perpendicular direction'.⁶⁴⁵

In 1858, following Edward Awdry's induction as incumbent, the church was renovated by the builder E. Miller of Seagry under the direction of architect, John Henry Hakewill. The arches were strengthened, the roofs to nave and south aisle replaced, galleries removed, and the vestry room north of the chancel was rebuilt. The pews were removed, and open sittings provided. The number of sittings was increased to 319. Several 'debased' windows were replaced. One of the new windows in the south aisle commemorates John Aubrey and John Britton, whose initials appear in a knot, and another in the chancel is a

⁶³³ TNA, HO 129/253.

⁶³⁴ NHLE, 1283509.

⁶³⁵ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 378–9.

⁶³⁶ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 378–9.

⁶³⁷ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 134; Britton, *Beauties Wilts*. III, 150. Aubrey's sketch of a tower window suggests a Norman date.

⁶³⁸ *Wilts. N&Q*, I, 261

⁶³⁹ Soc. Ants., JAC 006, f. 16.

⁶⁴⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 134; Soc. Ants., JAC 006, f. 19. Aubrey's depicts large cracks.

⁶⁴¹ WSA, D/1/61/1/A/113; *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz*, 21 Jan. 1858, 3; *Wilts. N&Q*, I, 260–1; Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 99–100.

⁶⁴² Widely reported, e.g. *Daily Mail*, 26 Dec, 4 1990; *Dundee Courier*, 26 Dec. 1990; *Sandwell Evening Mail*, 26 Dec. 1990; *Birmingham Mail*, 26 Dec. 1990.

⁶⁴³ NHLE, 1283509; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379; WSA, 1187/4 (for date of aisle); see also *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 138.

⁶⁴⁴ WSA, D3/14/1.

⁶⁴⁵ *Memorial Inscriptions of Wilts.* (WRS. 53), 21.

memorial to curate Edward Rowlandson. The £800 estimated cost was exceeded. The expense was met by donations from the principal owners and residents of land, including the Earl of Mornington and the vicar.⁶⁴⁶ The church was later described as ‘terribly over restored.’⁶⁴⁷ In 1874 Francis Kilvert recorded that the roof of the chancel had been lately raised and a new east window, paid for by Herbert Prodgers, replaced an Early English one.⁶⁴⁸ The Grade II listed lychgate, by H Brakspear, was erected in memory of Prodgers by his widow, Emily, in 1917.⁶⁴⁹

Thomas Wastfelde (d.1516) made a bequest of 3s. 4d. to repair the bells, 4d. to Our Lady's light, 4d. to the rood light and 2d. to every other light in the church.⁶⁵⁰ John Aubrey reported that a Kington church bell of c.1600 was stolen c.1649, at the same time as another was stolen from Sutton Benger.⁶⁵¹ He also stated that a legacy from Adam Milsham for a clock and chimes included £10 for their maintenance. ‘A smyth was clerke in the troublesome times, and converted the iron of the chimes to his owne use, A clocke the Parish hath gott lately again.’⁶⁵² During the tower replacement in 1724 the bells were recast by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester, and inscribed with the names of the vicar and churchwardens, and good wishes to the neighbourhood and church.⁶⁵³ Payments were made for ringing the curfew bell until 1867.⁶⁵⁴ A tradition, later recounted by Francis Kilvert, was that the church bells at Kington St Michael were rung on the slightest provocation.⁶⁵⁵

Interred within the church are Richard Aubrey, Sir Thomas Snell, Sir Charles Snell, Thomas Tyndale and his wife Dorothy, and Nicholas Gastrell;⁶⁵⁶ in the south aisle, John Power of Kington, a ‘practitioner of physic’ (died 1647).⁶⁵⁷

The parish registers were described by Aubrey in the 17th century as ‘one of the fairest in the countrey’.⁶⁵⁸ They survive from 1563.⁶⁵⁹ The registers are notable for plague entries: one dated 4 May 1582 records ‘here the plague began’ and another 6 August notes ‘here the plague rested’.⁶⁶⁰ Registers record the creation of seats for use by specific families from 1620.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁴⁶ *Devizes & Wilts. Gaz.*, 21 Jan. 1858, 3; H. Lewis, *The Church Rambler* (London, 1878), II, 1878, 505–6, 513–14. The addition of memorials to Aubrey and Britton was suggested in *Gent. Mag.* (1857), 203.

⁶⁴⁷ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts.*, 379.

⁶⁴⁸ Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 86, 150, 152; Soc. Ants., JAC 006, f. 20; above, religious life,

⁶⁴⁹ NHLE, 1022338.

⁶⁵⁰ TNA, PROB 11/18/324.

⁶⁵¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 138.

⁶⁵² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 138; *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 137.

⁶⁵³ K.R. Clew, *Kington St Michael: a Brief Guide* (1981); Walters, *Church Bells of Wilts.*, 318; WSA, 2683/4, 1187/33; Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed. Britton, 99–100.

⁶⁵⁴ WSA, 1187/1.

⁶⁵⁵ Kilvert, *Diary*, III, 176; Badeni, *Wilts. Forefathers*, 94.

⁶⁵⁶ Britton, *Beauties Wilts.* III, 151.

⁶⁵⁷ Britton, *Beauties Wilts.* III, 151.

⁶⁵⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 137.

⁶⁵⁹ WSA, 1187/1–18. *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 136–8.

⁶⁶⁰ WSA, 1187/1.

⁶⁶¹ *Gleanings from Wilts. Regs.* (WRS. 63), 136–8.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Manorial government

The medieval manor, which included both Kington tithings, was administered at a court held at Kington St Michael. A bi-annual court baron styled a hallmoot was held at Michaelmas and Hockday. A court leet and view of frankpledge was held the same day. In some years the hundred court for North Damerham hundred was also kept at Kington St Michael at the same times as the hallmoot.⁶⁶² At other times, whether by rotation or for convenience is unclear, the hundred court took place at Grittleton. In 1304 the manorial account recorded that £6 1s. 9d. was raised from the villeins at a court of recognition that may have been held at a different session to either the hallmoot or hundred courts, as well as an additional court held by the cellarer.⁶⁶³

Each Glastonbury abbey manor appears to have had its own reeve, while a bailiff oversaw all manors plus Winterbourne Monkton, Badbury (in Chisledon) and Ashbury (Berks.). The manor courts were presided over by the bailiff and a steward. The progress of officers in a circuit around the Glastonbury bailiwicks usually took place in the same order and extended beyond North Damerham hundred; beginning at Nettleton, it then moved to Grittleton, Kington St Michael, Christian Malford, Winterbourne Monkton, Badbury and Ashbury, with Idmiston and Damerham added from the early 1330s.⁶⁶⁴ They were usually assisted by one reeve (*prepositus*),⁶⁶⁵ although occasionally two might be appointed, as in 1314.⁶⁶⁶

Kington St Michael at times acted as a hub for the Glastonbury abbey manors in North Damerham hundred and consequently hallmoots for Christian Malford were held at Kington St Michael on 1 Nov 1407 and 19 May 1408, on the same days as the Kington St Michael hallmoots.⁶⁶⁷

In 1417–18 the law hundred (tourn) was held at Kington St Michael with business conducted for Kington St Michael, Kington Langley, Christian Malford (east and west tithings), Nettleton and Grittleton. The tithingmen of each tithing made presentments.⁶⁶⁸

Tithingmen for Kington (St Michael) and (Kington) Langley attended the hundred court in 1480, reporting tapsters, brewers, a minor brawl and the prioress of Kington for failure to maintain access routes.⁶⁶⁹

A court book covering the period 1558–77 includes entries for a combined manor court for Kington St Michael and Kington Langley quarterly, with court leets held at Hockday and Michaelmas. One or two tithingmen were routinely appointed for either Kington St

⁶⁶² Longleat, MSS 11244 (1275), 11273 (1300), 11215 (1306), 10633 (1335). The complexities of the hundredal divisions are described above, introduction.

⁶⁶³ Longleat, MSS 11271 (1304), 10657 (1418)

⁶⁶⁴ Keil, 'Estates of Glastonbury Abbey', 60.

⁶⁶⁵ Longleat, MSS 11272 (1302), 11215 (1306), 10633 (1335).

⁶⁶⁶ Longleat, MSS 11216.

⁶⁶⁷ Somerset Heritage Centre, T/PH/lon/2/29/10659, microfilm copy of Longleat court roll.

⁶⁶⁸ Requires reference from Mark.

⁶⁶⁹ Longleat, MSS 10746.

Michael or Langley, although in 1565 John Necke made presentments for both tithings.⁶⁷⁰ The court regularly selected two waywardens to act for Kington and two for Langley, in addition to two affeerors to act on behalf of both tithings. In 1570 field supervisors and sheep supervisors were also selected; field supervisors were again selected in 1572. The court leet heard cases of trespass and debt up to 39s. 11d., and also of assault, highway maintenance and breaking the assize; and the court baron heard cases arising from hedges and field boundaries. Tenants (the homage) were responsible for the stocks and cucking stool while the lord was responsible for the rook net. Aside from regular items, noteworthy issues at the court leet included the regulation of enclosures and admittance into land newly enclosed, excessive tolls charged by the miller, card and ball games. One brewer, Edith Brown, a widow, and her daughters were suspected of witchcraft in 1574, an accusation which is unlikely to have resulted in more than mild censure as she was subsequently recorded as a brewer again the following year.⁶⁷¹

The court book for 1644–50 shows that the courts divided into separate sessions for the leet and baron. These were held on the same day at Michaelmas and Hockday. An additional court baron was held on 1 May 1647 to deal with an admission and surrender by Nicholas Snell to himself and Thomas his son. This unusual court was probably summoned specifically for this transaction involving members of the Snell family, holders of the manor. Court leet activities during this period focused on issues concerning highways and ditches, and two highways supervisors were annually appointed. By 1644 the court leet had stopped recording the names of butchers, bakers and brewers. At the Hockday court in 1647 the Kington St Michael tenants were ordered to repair the stocks. By the next court (Michaelmas 1647) they had still not made the repairs and the inhabitants of Langley were required to construct stocks of their own.⁶⁷²

Once Kington St Michael manor had been divided among the heirs of Charles Snell in 1656, the manor court was also divided in an extremely unusual way, with at least one interested party holding a separate court for their third. John Sadler held a court baron explicitly stated to be for 'his property or share of the manor' on three consecutive months in 1658, at each of which James Gastrell surrendered copyholds. Sixteen further courts baron were held between April 1660 and August 1670, at which almost all the business was transfers of copyholds with a few repairs, but no appointments of officers or leet business.⁶⁷³ Although a subsequent court book appears not to have survived, Wiltshire Museum possesses typed transcripts compiled in 1913 of several court proceedings held for Kington St Michael between 1757 and 1894. These notes, if accurate, suggest the coheirs of the manor later combined their court proceedings.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷⁰ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

⁶⁷¹ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

⁶⁷² WSA, 1305/125.

⁶⁷³ WSA, 1305/125.

⁶⁷⁴ WM Library, MSS.807/1, believed to be authentic, as deposited by G.A.H. White of Chippenham (inf from Ms J. Schon).

Easton Piercy lay in Thorngrove hundred in 1086 and later in Startley hundred; but its tithingman attended Malmesbury hundred tourn as late as 1511.⁶⁷⁵ Aubrey gives extracts of a court baron held at Easton Piercy in 1428; however, no subsequent evidence of manorial government exists for the manor.⁶⁷⁶

Parish government

No separate vestry minutes for Kington St Michael have survived before 1854. There are no overseers' or highway surveyors' accounts and no churchwardens' accounts prior to the 20th century. These make meaningful abstractions about parochial governance difficult before 1854.⁶⁷⁷ However, a memorial in the parish church commemorating Daniel Yealf (d. 1779), having held the position of vestry clerk from c.1729, suggests that a vestry committee with administrative support was then functioning.⁶⁷⁸

Overseers provided returns to parliament on welfare expenditure when requested from 1776, and supplied detailed evidence (for all tithings) to a Lords select committee on their welfare expenditure 1829–30.⁶⁷⁹ These show that between 1776 and 1834 the parish was providing out-relief (including medical care) above what was required under statute, while also regularly pursuing litigation on settlement and removals; this implies that attempts were being made to manage parochial welfare administration effectively. The parish entered Chippenham poor law union in 1835.⁶⁸⁰

Government statistics from 1816 and later suggest that, decades before the creation of Kington Langley civil parish (in 1866), aspects of its parochial administration were being managed independently from Kington St Michael.⁶⁸¹

Kington St Michael vestry minutes have survived from 1854 until the body's abolition and the parish council's creation in 1895.⁶⁸² From 1857 the vestry was chaired on all but a few occasions by the rector, Edward Awdry. Aside from meetings at Lady Day to elect churchwardens, overseers, guardians of the poor and highway surveyors or waywardens, vestry meetings were held five to eight times each year. In addition to the regular office holders, from 1860 two collectors and assessors of taxes were selected, and in 1861 two constables were nominated. In 1875 a deputy overseer was appointed at an annual salary of £5. An examination of the minutes across 40 years shows selection for these roles tended to

⁶⁷⁵ *VCH Wilts*, XIV, 5–7; above, introduction.

⁶⁷⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, ed. Jackson, 439.

⁶⁷⁷ Highway surveyors were appointed for each tithing at manor courts leet in 16th and 17th centuries.

⁶⁷⁸ Note, the memorial records he was 'vestry clerk' for 50 years and 'parish clerk' for 16.

⁶⁷⁹ *Select Committee of House of Lords on Poor Laws and Petitions Praying for Relief from Paperism. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix etc.* (Parl. Papers, 1831 (227, VIII)), 296. Poor Law Returns e.g. 1804, 563–4; 1818, 494–5.

⁶⁸⁰ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 702–3.

⁶⁸¹ Above, *Social Hist.*, welfare.

⁶⁸² WSA, 1187/15. Some pages have been removed, e.g. between 22 Apr. 1875 and 25 Mar. 1876.

remain in the hands of a small number on the vestry committee. The number of vestry meetings was reduced after 1889 during Awdry's late old age.⁶⁸³

The administration of Lyte's almshouses was a recurring theme, particularly following the death of an inmate.⁶⁸⁴ If more than one candidate was suggested, each would be proposed and seconded and then their individual merits debated, leading to the election of one man. In 1858 a motion was carried whereby 'no parochial relief be given to inhabitants of the almshouses except in cases of illness'. The committee laid down strict tenancy rules. In 1874 it was ordered that 'anyone leaving their room for 3 months will be considered as vacating it and no lodgers are allowed to reside with inmates.'⁶⁸⁵

The upkeep of roads was another perennial concern. In 1863 rates were raised for general road repairs and the building of a bridge in 'Swindley' (Stanton?) Lane.⁶⁸⁶ The following year a portion of the poor rates was used to offset road maintenance costs. In October 1871 the vestry considered road widening and building a bridge over the brook near Collett farm. To reduce costs, the highway surveyor was requested to ask landowners in the parish for subscriptions.⁶⁸⁷

Post-1894 Local Government

Although not deposited in the Wiltshire archives, a single minute book for the period 1894–1938 recorded parish council meetings, and anecdotes from it were published in 1938.⁶⁸⁸ These show that the parish council originally comprised six councillors, and its first chairman was Louis Robins of Easton Piercy. Council minutes 1938–2012 have been deposited, recording the usual range of parish responsibilities and concerns.⁶⁸⁹ D.B. Corbyn, father of the politician Jeremy Corbyn, was a parish councillor 1949–54.⁶⁹⁰ From the 1940s meetings were generally held four or five times each year with an annual parish meeting each Spring. In 2023 there were nine councillors and meetings were held on the third Thursday of each month apart from August and December.⁶⁹¹ Minutes of council and annual meetings (held each May) were available online in 2023 from 2015.

⁶⁸³ WSA, 1187/15. 26 Mar. 1860, 21 Feb. 1861, 25 Mar. 1862 21 Apr. 1862. In 1855, two overseers and two waywardens were selected for Kington and two for each officer for the tithing of Kington Langley. 25 Mar. 1855. Kington Langley was not subsequently mentioned. A sexton was paid £3. 5s. in 1860 9 Apr. 1860.

⁶⁸⁴ WSA, 11/87. e.g. 14 Mar. 1870 10 Mar. 1885.

⁶⁸⁵ WSA, 1187/15. 5 Jan. 1874.

⁶⁸⁶ WSA, 1187/15. 11 June 1863.

⁶⁸⁷ WSA, 1187/15.

⁶⁸⁸ *Wilts. Times*, 17 Dec. 1938.

⁶⁸⁹ WSA, 1787/1/1–6.

⁶⁹⁰ WSA, 1787/1/1, pp. 61–125 *passim*.

⁶⁹¹ See <https://www.kingtonstmichaelparishcouncil.gov.uk/about/> (accessed 31 July 2023).