

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Sarsden

Introduction: Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings



Sarsden Glebe from the west. The former rectory house was built by George Repton in 1818 and enlarged in 1834.

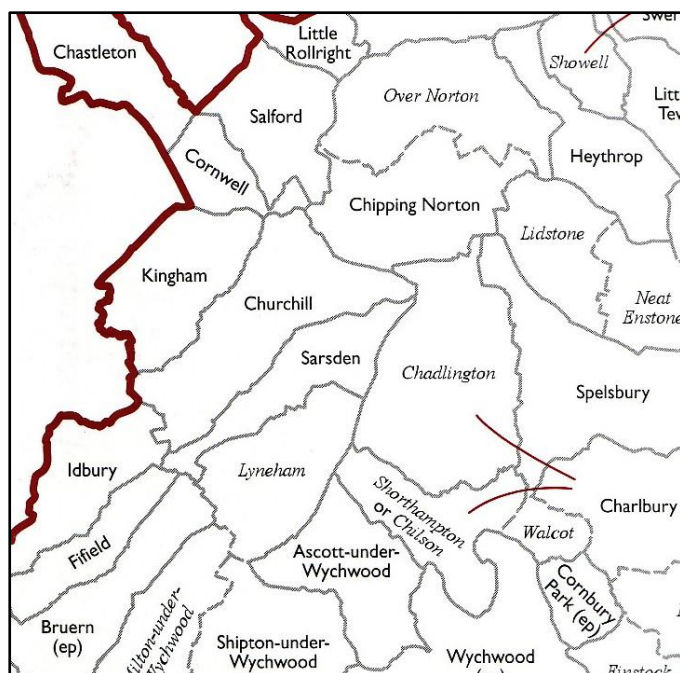
Sarsden is a secluded and thinly settled rural parish 3½ miles south-west of Chipping Norton,¹ stretching four miles from the low-lying Evenlode valley across the gently undulating Cotswolds. Its early medieval extent was greater, incorporating parts of neighbouring Chadlington, Chilson, and Pudlicote. The tiny village (reduced by 18th-century landscaping) developed near a crossroads on sloping ground facing north-west towards Churchill, where Sarsden's dead were buried from the Middle Ages; Sarsden's own poorly endowed church (rebuilt in 1760 and remodelled in 1823) adjoins Sarsden House (the former manor house), and was declared redundant in 1992. The Sarsden estate, broken up in 1922, included the whole parish save for the glebe, and was owned by mostly resident lords including the Hornes, Walters, and Langstons. The house itself was rebuilt or remodelled several times, most notably by the architects Humphry Repton (1752–1818) and his son George Stanley Repton (1786–1858), who also re-landscaped the surrounding 285-a. park, and designed

¹ This account was written in 2022–3.

several other scattered buildings including the former rectory house and a fashionable *cottage orné* deep in the woods. In the late 20th century Sarsden's population fell below 90, and for most practical purposes the parish was merged with Churchill.²

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT, AND BUILDINGS

Parish Boundaries



Sarsden parish c.1850.
Source: K. Tiller and G. Darkes (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire* (ORS 67, 2010).

Sarsden's 19th-century boundaries (unaltered in 2023) mainly followed the river Evenlode in the south-west, Sars brook (a tributary of the Evenlode) in the north-west, the Burford–Chipping Norton road in the north-east, and field boundaries elsewhere, indentations along the Lyneham stretch suggesting that the boundary there originally followed open-field furlongs. The northern boundary cuts through Sarsgrove wood (shared with Churchill), while a small projection into Fifeild in the south-west provided a loop of meadow on the Evenlode's west bank.³ The parish as a whole covers 1,431 a. (579 ha.),⁴ but must have been considerably larger in 1086 when Sarsden manor was assessed at 20 hides, and (on later evidence) included outliers in Chadlington, Chilson, and Pudlicote. Those were mostly separated from Sarsden by the 13th century, although detached woodland in Chilson

² Below (settlement; built character); landownership; relig. hist.

³ OS Maps 6", Oxon. XIX–XX (1885 edn); <http://my.westoxon.gov.uk/> (accessed June 2023); *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 163–4 (Lyneham), 315–16 (Fifeild). *Census*, 1981–91, notes a very slight reduction in area but no boundary change.

⁴ OS *Area Bk* (1881); *Census*, 2011; cf. *ibid.* 1831–71, estimating 1,770 a.

(adjoining Wychwood forest) was still counted as part of Sarsden parish in 1609.⁵ For ecclesiastical purposes the parish was extended in 1953, and united with Churchill in 1992.⁶

Landscape

Like the neighbouring parishes of Churchill and Lyneham, Sarsden occupies both Lias Clay lowlands and limestone uplands, its steep-sided hills rising from the river Evenlode (at c.105 m.) and Sars brook towards a high watershed in the north-east, where a Bronze-Age bowl barrow and an Anglo-Saxon burial mound command wide views.⁷ The lower south-western areas (which reach 132 m. on the Lyneham boundary) lie on Charmouth Mudstone, partly overlain by alluvium, patches of river gravel, and other superficial deposits. There the heavy clay soils were generally left untilled, and until enclosure in 1788 were dominated by the furzy common pasture of Sarsden heath, which was separated from the river and streams by narrow bands of meadow and was interspersed with patches of wood.⁸ South and west of the village the upland scarp rises steeply from c.130 to c.180 m., resting on thin bands of Dyrham Siltstone, Whitby Mudstone, Clypeus Grit, and Chipping Norton Limestone, while the north-eastern plateau (set on White Limestone suitable for quarrying) reaches 200 m. The variable stonebrash soils of the higher areas provided the bulk of the open-field arable, which stretched in a continuous band from Sarsden down to Sarsden heath.⁹

Enclosure allowed Humphry Repton to create a new park within the parish's central area, superseding the earlier landscaping of c.80 a. of grounds south of Sarsden House, which in 1783 incorporated three fishponds.¹⁰ A 97-a. 'new park' was added further east, the overall amount of land kept in hand (including the 70-a. Sarsgrove wood on the parish's northern edge) increasing from 150 a. to 323 acres.¹¹ The present-day park, defined by hedgerows, fences, and stone walls, covers c.285 a. (115 ha.) of undulating ground around the house, and despite later modifications preserves many of the features introduced by Repton and his son between the 1790s and 1820s, including a serpentine lake adapted from the fishponds, considerable tree planting, several new buildings, and a remote new eastern entrance reached by a meandering carriage drive.¹²

⁵ DB, f. 159; Schumer, *Wychwood*, 22, 24, 45; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 215; below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape; medieval); relig. hist. (glebe and tithes); Chadlington; Chilson.

⁶ Below, relig. hist. (paroch. organizn).

⁷ Paragraph based on: OS Maps 1:25000, sheets 45 and 191 (2005–6 edns); Geol. Surv. Map 1:50000 (solid and drift), sheet 218 (2007 edn); *Oxon. Atlas*, pp. 8–9, 77; cf. *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 164; below (prehist. settlement).

⁸ OHC, Lo. VI/4 (1788 survey incl. maps).

⁹ Below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape; non-agric.).

¹⁰ OHC, Lo. VI/1, p. 230; Lo. VII/1 (map); below, landownership (manor ho.).

¹¹ OHC, Lo. VI/4, f. 1; Lo. VII/2 (map).

¹² NHLE, no. 1000503 (accessed June 2022); below (built character); landownership (manor ho.).

The parish is watered by the Evenlode and by Sars brook, fed in turn by springs flowing westwards or south-westwards, some from a spring-line through the village.¹³ By the mid 19th century the Langstons supplied Sarsden House and other estate properties from two pumphouses powered by metal waterwheels and from two separate water towers, replacing or supplementing earlier wells.¹⁴ Mains water was probably provided by the 1960s.¹⁵ Low-lying ground in the Evenlode valley is liable to flood, and in the 16th century tenants were fined for failing to scour ditches.¹⁶ Drainage works undertaken in 1818 by the Churchill-born geologist William Smith (1769–1839) involved straightening Sars brook, constructing sluices, and digging a new drainage channel,¹⁷ and land drainage was completed by James Langston in the 1850s.¹⁸

Communications

The parish's eastern boundary follows the Burford–Chipping Norton road (the modern A361), which was turnpiked in 1770 and disturnpiked in 1877.¹⁹ Branch roads crossing the parish in the 18th century led south-west to Bruern, north-west from Lyneham to Churchill, and westwards from Chadlington, all of them intersecting near Sarsden House and church.²⁰ The Bruern road's north-eastern part was then called Sarsgrove Lane and its south-western stretch Heath way,²¹ while the road from Churchill was Beggar Lane (probably from a 13th-century byname),²² and its continuation to Lyneham was Firstcome Pool Lane.²³ Only the Chadlington–Churchill road and most of the intersecting Bruern road survive as minor metalled routes (the latter running through the remains of the village), while the Lyneham route and the Bruern road's north-eastern stretch past Sarsgrove wood survive as bridle paths.

¹³ OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XX.2, XX.5–6 (1881–1922 edns).

¹⁴ HER, PRN 1697; 12591; W. Foreman, *Oxfordshire Mills* (1983), 115; TNA, MAF 32/917/97; cf. OHC, P432/3/Y2/3, plan of estate water pipes; *ibid.* RDC9/4/F3/1, estate water supply rent roll (1920s).

¹⁵ Above, Churchill, landscape etc. (landscape); cf. *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 164.

¹⁶ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XIX.12 (1881–1922 edns); TNA, SC 2/197/21.

¹⁷ G. Walton, 'A Note on William Smith's Drainage Works near Churchill', *Earth Sciences Hist.* 35.1 (2016), 221–6; cf. OHC, P432/3/Y2/1, abandoned proposal to flood the brook.

¹⁸ *Oxf. Jnl.*, 5 Dec. 1863.

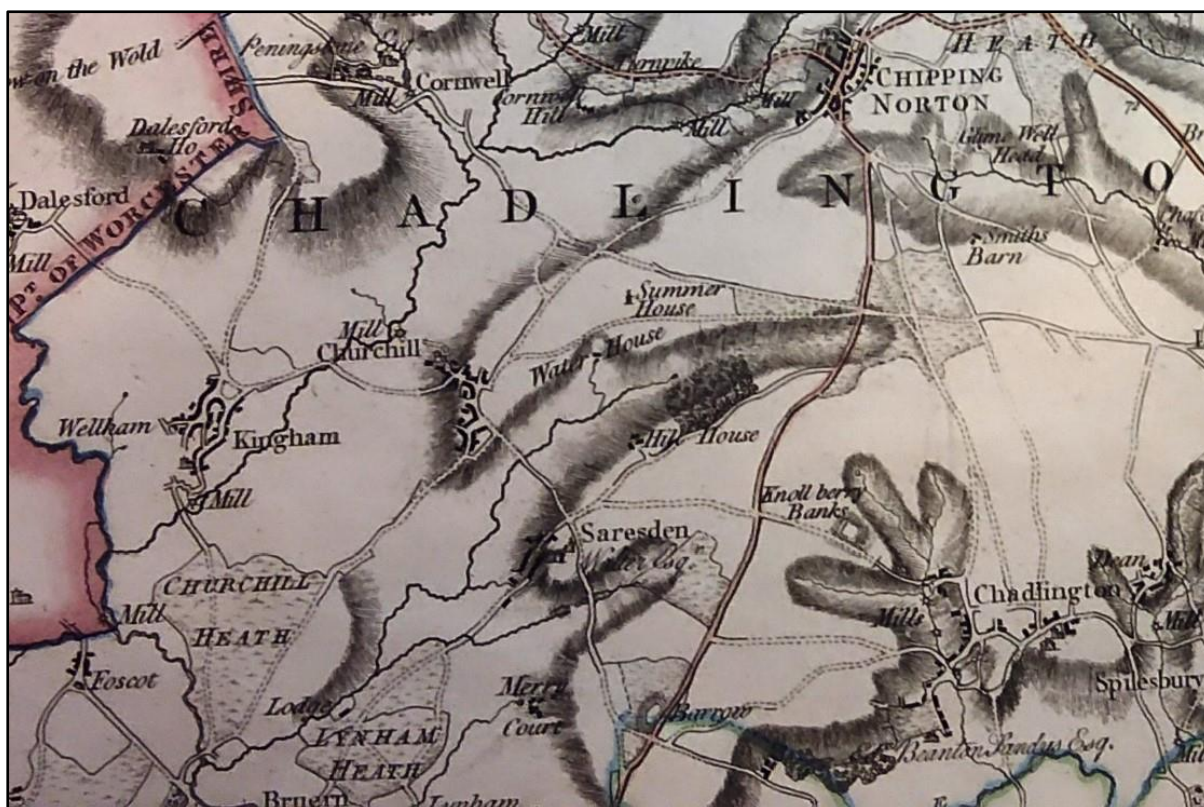
¹⁹ Above, vol. overview (roads); Chadlington, landscape etc. (roads).

²⁰ Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797); cf. OS Maps 1:25000, sheets 45 and 191 (2005–6 edns).

²¹ OHC, Lo. VI/1, p. 237; Lo. VI/7, no. 16; Lo. VII/2, no. 16 (map).

²² *Ibid.* Lo. VI/7, nos. 48, 125, 131; Lo. VII/2, nos. 48, 125, 131; cf. TNA, JUST 1/700, m. 5d. (Rob. le Begger).

²³ OHC, Lo. VI/7, no. 363; Lo. VII/2, no. 363.



Sarsden village in 1767, its roads and neighbouring settlements: detail from Thomas Jefferys' map of Oxfordshire.

At enclosure several roads were realigned and short new stretches built, including through Sarsden heath in the south-west,²⁴ whilst Humphry and George Repton's alterations to Sarsden park included diverting the Bruern road away from Sarsden House²⁵ and abandoning former estate entrances, leaving several stone gatepiers lying disused beside public roads.²⁶ A single-arched stone bridge carries Beggar Lane across Sars brook, and footbridges were built as part of William Smith's drainage works.²⁷

No resident carriers were recorded, Sarsden's inhabitants relying presumably on those based in Churchill or Kingham. Post was delivered through Chipping Norton in the 19th century, and through Kingham or Churchill in the early 20th, when Churchill was the site of the nearest post, money order, and telegraph office. Wall letter boxes were provided at Sarsden cross by 1891, however, and at Sarsden Lodge by 1915.²⁸ A railway station on the main Oxford–Worcester line was opened two miles to the south-west in Churchill parish in 1855, and continued (as Kingham station) in 2023. Sarsden Halt, opened on the Chipping

²⁴ OHC, encl. award; Bryant, *Oxon. Map* (1824); OS Maps 1", sheets 44–5 (1828 and 1833 edns).

²⁵ e.g. OHC, Lo. VII/2 (1795); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.6 (1881 edn).

²⁶ Below, landownership (manor ho.).

²⁷ OHC, POX0572208; Walton, 'Drainage Works', 222–5.

²⁸ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–77 edns); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1939 edns).

Norton branch line in 1906, was also in Churchill parish c.1½ miles away, and closed in 1962.²⁹ A bus service to Chipping Norton ran through Sarsden village three days a week by 1939, with an additional Saturday evening service provided for cinema-goers. Weekly services to Stow-on-the-Wold (Glos.) continued in 2007, but by 2023 the nearest bus stops were at Churchill and Lyneham.³⁰

Population

In 1086 Sarsden manor had 97 recorded tenants, although most probably lived outside the later parish in Chilson, Pudlicote, and especially Chadlington.³¹ Except for some detached woodland those areas had all been separated by 1279, when the reduced Sarsden manor and parish had only 20 tenants. Some of the freeholders may have been non-resident, although the 14 unfree tenants presumably each represented a resident household.³² At least 24 landholders were assessed for taxation in 1306, 18 in 1316, and 14 in 1327, while in 1377 (after the Black Death) 48 adults aged over 14 paid poll tax.³³ Similar numbers may have remained in 1524–5, when 11–14 inhabitants paid tax, rising to 15 by 1543.³⁴

Parish registers (extant from 1575) suggest only limited population growth, and in 1662 only 16 households were assessed for hearth tax; 65 adults were noted in 1676, and the rector estimated 22 houses in the 1730s–50s.³⁵ The Walters reportedly demolished houses in the 1770s, leaving just 20 inhabited by 92 people in 1801.³⁶ The population peaked at 188 (in 33 houses) in 1851, then fluctuated between 133 and 176 (in 28–37 houses) until 1931, falling to 99 people (in 33 houses) by 1951 and to 65 (in 26 houses) by 1991. In 2001 (the last year in which Sarsden was separately enumerated) there were 83 people in 34 houses,³⁷ and in 2016 the electoral register listed 54 adults in 26 houses.³⁸

Settlement

²⁹ Above, Churchill, landscape etc. (communics).

³⁰ *Oxford and District Motor Bus Services Timetable* (1939 edn): copy in OHC, OXFO 388.3 (CIT); *Oxon. Public Transport Guide* (June 2007): copy in *ibid.* PA1133; www.villagerbus.co.uk (accessed Oct. 2022).

³¹ DB, f. 159; above (boundaries); below, landownership; econ. hist. (medieval).

³² *Rot. Hund.* II, 729–30. One of the freeholders was the abbot of Bruern.

³³ TNA, E 179/161/8–10; *Poll Taxes 1377–81*, ed. Fenwick, II, 291.

³⁴ TNA, E 179/161/170; E 179/161/177; E 179/162/227.

³⁵ *Ibid.* E 179/255/4; OHC, par. reg. transcript; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. d 557, f. 9; *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 421; *Secker's Visit.* 130.

³⁶ OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 563, f. 29; d 565, f. 87; *Census*, 1801. There were c.19 houses in 1788: below (medieval and later settlement).

³⁷ *Census*, 1811–2001. In 2011–21 Sarsden was included under Churchill.

³⁸ OHC, EL1/2016/1.

Prehistoric, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon Settlement

Undated scatters of stone and flint tools and weapons suggest prehistoric activity and possibly occupation over a long period, some of the earliest finds including Neolithic barbed-and-tanged arrowheads.³⁹ A Bronze-Age bowl barrow 35 m. in diameter stands on Sarsden down on a slight north–south ridge facing eastwards, while a similar barrow c.800 m. north-west at ‘Squire’s Clump’, overlooking the village, was either re-used or newly created as a burial mound in the Anglo-Saxon period, and reportedly contained two skeletons found in a sitting position, each occupying a separate chamber. Beech trees were planted around it in the 18th century when it became a landscape feature.⁴⁰

By the 8th or 9th century Sarsden (like its neighbours) probably belonged to the developing royal estate centred on Shipton-under-Wychwood, but by 1086 it had emerged as an independent 20-hide manor with a considerable population, extending into neighbouring parishes.⁴¹ Ecclesiastically it became dependent on neighbouring Churchill (also reckoned at 20 hides), which retained burial rights into modern times:⁴² the Anglo-Saxon place names Churchill (*Cercelle*) and Sarsden (*Cerceden*) share a common derivation, possibly meaning ‘hill with or near a church’ and ‘valley of the church’ respectively, although the ‘church’ element of both etymologies is doubtful. More secure is Sarsden’s second element ‘denu’ (meaning a long valley), which perhaps referred to the valley of the Sars brook between the two places.⁴³ Whatever the case, the site of Sarsden church and of the neighbouring manor house, set on rising ground overlooking the brook, is the most likely focus of the mid 11th-century settlement.

Medieval and Later Settlement

Medieval settlement probably remained concentrated along the Bruern road, within a presumed village close to the church and adjoining manor house. One 12th-century cottage lay on the village’s right-hand edge (*exitus*),⁴⁴ while the 13th-century ‘de fonte’ family lived

³⁹ *VCH Oxon.* I, 239, 266; HER, PRN 5256; 8798; 26324.

⁴⁰ NHLE, nos. 1015171; 1009426 (accessed June 2022); HER, PRN 2282; 2289; *VCH Oxon.* I, 244, 266; II, 346; D.B. Harden, ‘Scheduled Monuments in Oxfordshire’, *Oxoniensia* 19 (1954), 143; A. Mudd, ‘Round Barrows of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds’, *SMA* 14 (1984), 50, 52–3. The skeletons were supposedly discovered during an excavation by the earl of Ducie in the late 19th or early 20th century, but no details are known.

⁴¹ *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 8–9, 42–3; above (popn); below, landownership.

⁴² Below, relig. hist. (paroch. organizn).

⁴³ *PN Oxon.* II, 343, 375; A.D. Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place Names* (revised edn, 2011), 115, 406; V. Watts, *Cambridge Dict. of English Place-Names* (2004), 139, 528. For an alternative derivation based on ‘tumulus’ or ‘barrow’, above, Churchill, landscape etc. (prehist. settlement).

⁴⁴ *Eynsham Cart.* I, p. 123 (‘unum bordarium quod Alard tenuit, quod iacet iuxta terram ecclesie in dextera exitus ville’).

presumably by one of the several springs which line the Bruern road, feeding Sars brook.⁴⁵ The village was never large, however, with perhaps 25–30 houses at its height in the early 14th century and only c.16 by the 1660s,⁴⁶ while the 1689 fire which burned down Sarsden House perhaps also affected other buildings, since the earliest surviving houses date from the late 17th century. Amongst them are cottages on the Bruern road c.600 m. south-west of Sarsden House.⁴⁷ Further changes to the village plan probably resulted from 18th-century landscaping of the surrounding estate, the rector reporting in 1771 that the village was ‘yearly decreasing’ in size as houses were demolished.⁴⁸ Even so county maps of the 1760s–90s show a compact cluster of houses on both sides of Bruern road, close to the church and manor house.⁴⁹ Only 19 houses can be identified at enclosure in 1788, when Sarsden House was within sight of just four other dwellings including the rectory house, two farmhouses, and a cottage. Another group of 11 cottages lay further south along the Bruern road, seven of them (on the road’s north-west side) called ‘Little London’, and including the surviving Cobblers and Sarsden Cottage. Four ‘very old cottages’ lay opposite on the road’s south-east side, but were later demolished.⁵⁰



Sarsden House and park in 1795. Detail from Oxfordshire History Centre, Lo. VII/2.

⁴⁵ *Rot. Hund.* II, 730; TNA, E 179/161/8–10.

⁴⁶ Above (popn). John Leland visited in the 1540s, but said nothing about the village itself: Leland, *Itin.* ed. Toulmin Smith, V, 74.

⁴⁷ At ‘Little London’: below (built character). For fire, below, landownership (manor ho.).

⁴⁸ OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 563, f. 29; below, social hist. (1500–1800).

⁴⁹ Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797).

⁵⁰ OHC, Lo. VI/1, p. 237; Lo. VI/4, ff. 1–9 (incl. maps); Lo. VII/1–2 (maps); below (built character).

An outlying watermill existed in the 11th to 13th centuries,⁵¹ but otherwise the earliest outlying houses were probably Sarsden Lodge in the south-west, Parsonage Farm near Sarsgrove wood, and New Farm (later Kennels) east of the later park. Of those Sarsden Lodge existed by 1603 when it was occupied by Richard Taynton,⁵² while Parsonage or Sarsgrove Farm (called Hill House in 1767) was built possibly for its tenant Thomas Pratt (d. 1780).⁵³ New Farm was so called in 1783, when it was recently built.⁵⁴ Most houses added after enclosure also lay away from the village, since continued landscaping of the park involved the further demolition (or screening) of buildings within view of Sarsden House.⁵⁵ One such was the rectory house, replaced in 1818 by the present-day Sarsden Glebe beyond the Churchill road, c.½ mile north of the church.⁵⁶ Settlement remained scattered in the early 20th century despite a doubling of house numbers to 38, of which three belonged to the rector and the rest to the Sarsden estate.⁵⁷ Small clusters of dwellings existed at Sarsden Lodge, at ‘Little London’ and elsewhere on the Bruern road, on the approaches to Churchill, and in Sarsgrove wood, where the Dower House (built c.1825–30) had been subdivided.⁵⁸ Several other isolated houses were later demolished, amongst them Kennels (formerly New Farm), Greengates, and Pond Cottage in Sarsden park,⁵⁹ whilst a temporary hutted camp built on the parish’s north-eastern edge during the Second World War was also removed.⁶⁰ Electricity was available by 1939,⁶¹ and settlement remained thin and dispersed in 2023.⁶²

The Built Character

Most of Sarsden’s older buildings are of coursed limestone rubble with stone-slatted roofs, and date from the late 17th century onwards.⁶³ Some thatch survives, and was perhaps more common until 19th-century improvements,⁶⁴ while regular use of brick and Welsh

⁵¹ Below, econ. hist. (milling).

⁵² OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 65/2/54; below, econ. hist. (16th cent. to parl. enclo.).

⁵³ Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 146/2/43; below (built character). Part of the Sarsden estate until 1834 when it was given to the rector in exchange: below, relig. hist. (glebe).

⁵⁴ OHC, Lo. VI/1, p. 232.

⁵⁵ For Repton’s diversion of the Bruern road away from Sarsden Ho., above (communic).s).

⁵⁶ Below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

⁵⁷ OHC, DV/X/41; TNA, RG 14/8250; *Census*, 1911 (listing only 37 hos).

⁵⁸ OS Map 6”, Oxon. XX (1923 edn); below (built character).

⁵⁹ By the 1970s: OS Maps 1:2500, SP 2922 (1979 edn); SP 3023 (1975 edn).

⁶⁰ OS Map 6”, SP 32 SW (1955 edn). For billeting of soldiers on the estate, below, social hist. (since 1800).

⁶¹ *Kelly’s Dir. Oxon.* (1939).

⁶² OS Maps 1:25000, sheets 45 and 191 (2005–6 edns).

⁶³ For Sarsden Ho. (the manor ho.), below, landownership; for rectory hos and church, below, relig. hist. All NHLE citations accessed June 2022.

⁶⁴ e.g. OHC, P6/16D/1 (1492). For improvements under Jas Langston (d. 1863), below.

slates presumably post-dates the opening of the railway in 1853. Windows are generally casements under wooden or stone lintels, although some are mullioned in stone surrounds. More than three fifths of houses in 1662 were assessed on only one or two hearths, and most estate cottages remained small in the 1920s.⁶⁵ The parish is nonetheless notable for several distinctive and high-quality houses designed for James Langston's Sarsden estate by George Repton in the early 19th century, when much of the older housing stock was replaced or improved.⁶⁶

Amongst older dwellings, the neighbouring Cobblers and Sarsden Cottage at 'Little London' date from the late 17th or early 18th century, and judging from their near-identical plan and appearance may have been built as a pair. Four-bayed with a central ridge-stack, both are single-storeyed with attics lit by 'eyebrow' dormers under thatch, and both have thatched lower ranges to left and right. At Cobblers, the stack connects to a projecting semi-circular bread oven at the rear.⁶⁷ Both were formerly subdivided, estate workers in the early 20th century occupying two rooms upstairs with a living room and pantry below.⁶⁸ Neighbouring houses at 'Little London' replaced earlier predecessors in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁶⁹



Sarsden Cottage in 2022.

⁶⁵ TNA, E 179/255/4; *Sale Cat., Sarsden Est.* (1922), pp. 11–12: copy in OHC, Fi. XIV/ii/2.

⁶⁶ Below. Langston was renowned for his renovation of estate hos and bldgs: *Oxf. Jnl*, 5 Dec. 1863.

⁶⁷ NHLE, nos. 1053275; 1367831; OHC, POX0196039; POX0196048.

⁶⁸ *Sale Cat., Sarsden Est.* (1922), p. 11; A. Watkins, *Churchill and Sarsden: A Portrait in Old Photographs* (1988), 15.

⁶⁹ OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XX.5 (1881–1922 edns); SP 2822 (1979 edn). The semi-detached Lowfields and Touchstone (OHC, POX0196041) are probably mid 19th-cent.

Surviving 18th-century farmhouses are larger than the ‘Little London’ cottages, though similarly unpretentious in design. The L-shaped Parsonage (formerly Sarsgrove) Farm has a symmetrical three-bayed front of two storeys and attics, with a central hipped-roof porch flanked by three-light casements and integral end stacks. The interior ground-floor rooms retain chamfered spine beams and oak panelling, an inglenook fireplace incorporating a semi-circular bread oven, and an oak winder staircase continuing to the attics.⁷⁰ At Sarsden Meadows on the Bruern road the house was separated from its barn in the late 19th century and was subdivided in the 20th, its three-bayed and two-storeyed central range (with integral end stacks) formerly lit by plain 19th-century casements with wooden lintels. An adjoining one-and-a-half-storeyed cottage has a baffle entry around a central chimney stack, flanked by late 19th-century segmental-headed casements and gabled half dormers. The buildings were restored to single ownership by c.2016 when the main two-storeyed part was radically remodelled, featuring stone-surround casements under dripmoulds, and a new off-centre doorway under a stone hood on brackets.⁷¹

A farmhouse a little way north (occupied in the 1780s–90s by Thomas Shirley) was rebuilt or substantially remodelled in the early 19th century, and is now known as the Agent’s House. Considerably grander than its neighbour, it is two-storeyed with cellars and attics and has a double-pile plan with a roof valley between the ranges. The symmetrical three-bayed entrance front (facing east) fronted the Bruern road before its diversion, and features sashes in plain stone surrounds, gabled dormers, and a central doorway and fanlight under a flat-roofed wooden porch decorated with trefoils. A similar doorway to the rear (now roadside) range was later infilled, while a low service range adjoins to the south.⁷²

Rebuilding of the Agent’s House probably formed part of the Langstons’ ambitious remodelling of the estate, which also included the construction by George Repton of a new rectory house and lodge in 1818,⁷³ and c.1825–30 of a fashionable *cottage orné* (now The Dower House) deep in Sarsgrove wood, built for James Langston’s unmarried sisters. The picturesque design was in the style of John Nash, and features acutely pointed gables with cusped bargeboards, rows of tall stone (formerly brick) chimneys, and an entrance loggia supported on ‘primitive’ bark-covered columns. Similar rustic columns and a bark-covered lintel support a gabled projection containing a five-bay semi-circular bay window facing

⁷⁰ NHLE, no. 1300854; HE Arch., England’s Places 4970_012 (photos of 1964); for plan, OHC, Lo. VII/2, no. 43 (1795); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.2 (1881–1922 edns). The lord Jas Langston gave it to the rector in 1834 in exchange for other lands: below, relig. hist. (glebe).

⁷¹ NHLE, no. 1300821 (accessed June 2022, but evidently predating the c.2016 remodelling); OHC, Lo. VII/2, no. 27; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.6 (1881–1922 edns); WODC online planning docs, 14/01837/HHD. Formerly Sarsden Fm, let to Sampson Pratt (retired 1819): below, econ. hist. (parl. enclo. and later).

⁷² NHLE, no. 1367796; OHC, Lo. VII/2, no. 123; WODC online planning docs, 07/2009/P/FP.

⁷³ Above (landscape); below, landownership (manor ho.); relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

south-west, whilst to the south-east a five-light canted bay window is covered by a bracketed canopy. Inside, Repton's drawing room displays the influence of Sir John Soane in its groined ceiling and four elliptical arches. The house was restored by Stanley Peters in 1951 and was altered and extended in the 1980s–90s,⁷⁴ and around the same time an adjoining stable block (contemporary with the house) was converted to residential use. An entrance lodge on the wood's edge was demolished before 1979, though another (adjoining the Burford–Chipping Norton road just over the parish boundary) survives.⁷⁵

Other commissions by Repton included the now-demolished Pond or Keeper's Cottage, a bow-ended and thatched dwelling similar to that designed by Nash at Blaise Hamlet (Bristol).⁷⁶ The earlier Greengates or Burford Lodge, possibly also by George or Humphry Repton, was a small hipped-roof cottage with a bay window and dormer and a porch on rustic columns, but was removed during the 20th century,⁷⁷ while another estate cottage (added c.1830) was the two-bayed and two-storeyed Drive Cottage, built in Tudor Gothic style and featuring an oriel window with latticed lights.⁷⁸ The most unusual 19th-century structure, however, is the wayside cross erected at the junction of the Bruern and Churchill roads. Once presumed to be medieval, it was more likely constructed for James Langston from reused medieval masonry, taken possibly from Sarsden and Churchill parish churches when they were rebuilt in the 1820s. A large base of six octagonal steps leads to a short limestone shaft with gabled canopy, sitting on an octagonal plinth with blind cinquefoil-headed panels.⁷⁹ Later cottages were more severely functional in design, notably the bleak and isolated Iron Buildings of 1832 south of Sarsgrove wood,⁸⁰ while Home Farm (inserted

⁷⁴ Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 454; NHLE, no. 1200341; D. Crone and D. Cummins, 'The Dower House, Sarsgrove Wood, Oxfordshire: Heritage Statement' (Oct. 2021), amongst WODC online planning docs, 21/03510/HHD; 'Cottage Ornee, Sarsgrove House, Oxfordshire', *Connoisseur* 138 (1956), 222–5; N. Temple, 'Sarsden, Oxfordshire', *Jnl of Garden Hist.* 6 (1986), 108–10; O. Bradbury, *Sir John Soane's Influence on Architecture from 1791* (2015), 67, 69–71; cf. below, relig. hist. (church archit.).

⁷⁵ NHLE, no. 1053281; OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XX.2 (1881–1922 edns); 6", SP 32 SW (1955 edn); 1:10000, SP 32 SW (1979 edn); Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 454.

⁷⁶ Temple, 'Sarsden', 101, 107.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 96; OHC, POX0196043; POX0196049.

⁷⁸ NHLE, no. 1200339; WODC online planning docs, 22/02263/LBC (plans and elevations). The architect is unknown.

⁷⁹ Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 453; NHLE, no. 1053279; B.J. Marples, 'The Medieval Crosses of Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia* 38 (1973), 302–3, 308; N. Doggett, 'The Wayside Cross at Sarsden: A 19th-Century Folly?', *Oxoniensia* 53 (1988), 347–50; N. Doggett, 'An Early 18th-Century List of Churchyard Crosses in Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia* 63 (1998), 250. Illust. in Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. a 68, no. 453 (1825); HE Arch., England's Places 4970_015 (photos of 1944–67).

⁸⁰ *Salé Cat.*, *Sarsden Est.* (1922), p. 8; HE Arch., England's Places 4970_009 (photos of 1964); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.2 (1881–1922 edns); datestone. The name derives from the building's iron-framed roof: info. from Amanda Ponsonby (Apr. 2023). In 1881 both cottages were occupied by shepherds: TNA, RG 11/1519, nos. 30–1.

200 m. north-east of Sarsden House) is in an unimaginative Cotswold style.⁸¹ Sarsden Lodge was rebuilt by Langston for his leading farm tenant and bailiff Matthew Savidge.⁸²



*Sarsden's
wayside cross
in 2022.*

The few new 20th-century houses include three pebble-dashed and tiled estate cottages (two of them semi-detached) on the road north of the wayside cross,⁸³ while the more substantial Norrells at 'Little London', built in the 1950s, is of painted brick under concrete tiles.⁸⁴ Early 21st-century additions include a large agricultural machinery store on vacant ground north-east of Sarsden House, constructed around an open courtyard in the style of a traditional Cotswold barn, and using local stone and reconstituted stone slates.⁸⁵ Several existing dwellings were also extended and improved.⁸⁶

⁸¹ *Sale Cat., Sarsden Est.* (1922), p. 7; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.6 (1881–1922 edns); WODC online planning docs, 17/03261/HHD (incl. photos).

⁸² *Oxf. Times*, 9 Apr. 1864; below, econ. hist. (parl. enclo. and later).

⁸³ By 1922: OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XX.6 (1922 edn); *Sale Cat., Sarsden Est.* (1922), p. 12; WODC online planning docs, 17/02985/HHD; 19/01415/HHD; OHC, POX0196074.

⁸⁴ OS Map 1:2500, SP 2822 (1979 edn); WODC online planning docs, 12/0875/P/FP. Also 1 and 2 Lowfield Cottages, completed in 1951: OHC, RDC9/3/F6/2.

⁸⁵ WODC online planning docs, 16/01152/FUL; Google Earth images (accessed Nov. 2022). From the air it has the appearance of a grand country house.

⁸⁶ e.g. Sarsden Lodge Cottages: WODC online planning docs, 12/1453/P/FP; 13/0525/P/FP; 14/01450/HHD.