

EXPLANATORY NOTE

*This is a draft text of a history of the parish of **West Knoyle**, by John Chandler for the Victoria County History, for inclusion in the forthcoming Victoria History of Wiltshire, vol. 19: Mere and the Deverills. It is written to conform to the 2017 revision of the VCH Parish History Template. Inconsistencies, particularly in referencing, will be attended to before publication, and the text will be adjusted in the light of comments received on this draft. Abbreviations used in the notes follow the practice of earlier volumes; the most commonly used are TNA (The National Archives, Kew), MHS (Mere Historical Society) and WSA (Wiltshire & Swindon Archives, Chippenham). The published history will include a detailed map, but for the time being I have annotated the 1788 estate map to show the principal places referred to in the text. The map is on p.29 at the end.*

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John Chandler, 22 March 2019.

WEST KNOYLE

WEST KNOYLE church stands 4 km. east of Mere and 10 km. north of Shaftesbury (Dors.).¹ The parish, rhomboidal on an axis slanting north-east to south-west, is small (815 ha.)² relative to its neighbours, and its affix distinguishes it from East Knoyle, with which it shares a boundary. ‘Knoyle’ derives from the Old English word for ‘knuckle’, thought to describe the eroded relief of prominent Greensand ridges in the district.³ Alternative names were Knoyle Odierne (variously spelled), recorded in 1291 and denoting a 13th-century tenant, Hodierna;⁴ and Little Knoyle, recorded in 1408.⁵ The alternative names were still occasionally used in the 19th century.⁶ Although a small and sequestered community, a major trunk route (A303) between London and Exeter traverses its chalk downland north of the village, with a busy service area situated on its parish boundary with East Knoyle.

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries and Parish Origins

The boundaries described in charters of 948 and 956 appear to be coterminous with those of the modern parish.⁷ The long, straight eastern boundary with East Knoyle follows the line of a ditch described as ancient in the 10th century and, at its southern end, a stream. It turns west to pass over a hill (Cuff’s Knoll in 948) and then follows streams (Trough brook and Wolves’ brook) and

¹ This article was written in 2018. Maps used include OS 1” sheet XV (1811 edn.); 6” sheet Wilts. LXIII (1890 edn.); 25”, sheet Wilts. LXIII.7 (1901, 1925 edns.); 1:10,000, ST83SE, ST83SW (1984 edns.).XX

² *Census*, 2011.

³ *PN Wilts* (EPNS), 175.

⁴ *Tax. Eccl.* 181; below: landownership

⁵ *Cal. Pat.* 1405-8, 437.

⁶ Hoare, *Mod. Wilts.* Mere, 38.

⁷ This para: Finberg, *Early Wessex Chart.* 89, 93; *Arch. Jnl.* lxxvii, 19-22; for text.

<http://www.esawyer.org.uk> (accessed 16 Aug. 2018); OS 1:10,000, sheets ST 83 SE, St 83 SW.

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field boundaries to the south-western corner of the parish. Turning north it runs up a winterbourne which rises west of West Hill farm, and then a dry coombe (Chaddenwick Hill, earlier Nuns' Dene) by which the modern road climbs to the downland. The entire southern and western boundaries march with Mere. The northern boundary with Kingston Deverill and (until 1934) Monkton Deverill runs between two barrows across downland, to meet the ancient ditch just north of the road junction at Willoughby Hedge.

Landscape

The Mere Fault bisects the parish on an east–west line drawn between Manor Farm and West Hill Farm.⁸ The effect of this compressional fault has been to uplift the bedrock on its southern side by c. 100 m., so that Kimmeridge Clay is brought up directly against Chalk; the intervening strata of Gault and Upper Greensand outcrop only in a small area of the parish, part of The Warren east of Manor Farm.⁹ To the north of the faultline the chalk terrain of undulating downland and dry coombes rises quite steeply, affording long views northward to the Deverill valley and southward across Blackmore Vale (Dors.), to a high point of 219 m. at Willoughby Hedge. Here and elsewhere pockets of clay-with-flints and other superficial deposits overlie the chalk. South of the faultline the bedrock geology is uniform Kimmeridge Clay, overlain in places by river terrace and alluvial deposits formed by minor south-flowing headwaters of the Stour which drain the entire parish. The clayland terrain, wooded in places, falls from 120–140 m. around the village to 100 m. at the southern boundary near Bush Farm. East of Manor Farm ridges of Upper Greensand, the western end of Cleeve Hill (East Knoyle), intrude into the parish and rise to 229 m., its highest point. Soils north of the faultline are typical of chalk downland, rich in lime and traditionally associated with rough grazing, although arable cultivation is widespread; the loamy, more acidic soils of the poorer draining claylands south of the faultline are more suitable for grass, and therefore for dairying and rearing livestock.¹⁰

Spring water issuing near the manor house was used for medicinal purposes from c. 1672,¹¹ and Puckwell, a spring in woodland close to the village street, embodies in its name supernatural associations.¹²

Communications

Downland tracks, used by drovers and other long-distance travellers, traversed the north of West Knoyle parish in the 17th century and presumably much earlier; they may be prehistoric in origin.¹³ One of these, named London Road in 1736,¹⁴ entered the parish from Chicklade near Willoughby Hedge, where it was joined by a route from Hindon. It continued westward towards Kilmington and Bruton (Som.) across Charnage Down, where the road to Mere left it to descend the coombe.¹⁵ Despite the parish spending significant sums on maintaining it in 1743–4, it was

⁸ This para: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain> (accessed 5 Sept. 2018); OS Maps 6", ST 83 SE, ST 83 SW (1984 edn.).

⁹ Ibid., I. Geddes, *Hidden Depths*, 32, 184–5.

¹⁰ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes> (accessed 5 Sept. 2018)

¹¹ J. Aubrey, *Natural Hist. of Wilts.* (1847 edn.), 24.

¹² K. Jordan, *Haunted Landscape* (2000), 33.

¹³ Ogilby, *Britannia*, vol. 1, pl. ; above, Kilmington, communications; H.W. Timperley and E. Brill, *Ancient Trackways of Wessex* (1965), 59, 65; K.G. Watts, *Droving in Wiltshire: the trade and its routes* (1990), 35–6.

¹⁴ WSA 598/1L

¹⁵ *ibid.*; Andrews and Dury's *Map of Wilts.*, 1773.

reported still to be in very bad repair in 1745.¹⁶ Milestones were erected along it in 1750.¹⁷ In 1756 the roads from Kilmington and Mere were turnpiked as far as a milestone east of Willoughby Hedge by a trust based in Wincanton, which by 1773 had erected a tollhouse and gates where the Chicklade and Hindon roads meet.¹⁸ These roads were turnpiked between 1760 and 1762 by the Wilton and Amesbury trusts respectively.¹⁹ Between then and c. 1850 the roads meeting at Willoughby Hedge carried an increasing volume of traffic between London and south-west England,²⁰ although the economic impact on the parish was probably minimal. The road from Hindon was disturnpiked in 1870, that from Chicklade in 1871, and those from Mere and Kilmington in 1874.²¹ The tollhouse was occupied by a farm labourer in 1861, and the tolls were still being let in 1866;²² it was demolished between 1900 and 1923.²³

The road from Chicklade to Mere through West Knoyle parish was given A road status in 1933 as part of the A303, and was trunked in 1958.²⁴ A petrol station was trading at Willoughby Hedge before 1936.²⁵ Until the 1960s an AA call box stood in the fork of the junction with the Hindon road.²⁶ Road improvements to the junction, including rerouting the minor road from West Knoyle village eastwards to join the Hindon road, were carried out in 1968-9, and a cafeteria opened at the junction in 1970.²⁷ In 2018 the A303 through the parish remained a heavily used single-carriageway trunk road of strategic national importance.

In 1736, as in 2018, a minor road left Willoughby Hedge and ran south-westward downhill through New Close to Manor Farm and West Knoyle church, whence it continued as the village street as far as the tract of common pasture by Broadmead Farm.²⁸ It was referred to as Church Lane in a deed of 1873,²⁹ more recently as the Street. Near Broadmead Farm it bifurcated into uninclosed tracks, whose courses remained largely undefined in 1796, but were becoming established by 1829 and 1841.³⁰ By 1841 Sawpit Hill, continuing as Six Acre Lane, led north-west towards the Middles, and the lane which in 2018 led south towards Gillingham (Dors.) had been routed around Common Wood to the parish boundary.³¹

The lane which in 2018 struck west from the Street to East Hill and the Middles had been established by 1736; at the Middles it turned north to serve West Hill farm.³² By 1788 a track descending the Cleeve connected it to the Mere road.³³ Other lanes south of the Middles, to Charnage and Barrow Street, were undefined until the inclosure of West Hill Common during the 1740s,³⁴ although a bridge, Steane bridge, which was out of repair in 1568 and 1607, was the

¹⁶ WSA 2541/5, 32-3; WSA 383/298, letter 6 Apr. 1745.

¹⁷ above: Kilmington, communications: T. Morland, 'Two Wessex roadways', *Wiltshire Industrial Archaeology* 5 (1974), 30-4.

¹⁸ 29 Geo. II, c. 49; *VCH Wilts.* IV, 257, 269; *VCH Som.* VII, 211; Andrews and Dury's *Map of Wilts.*, 1773.

¹⁹ 1 Geo III, c. 37; 2 Geo. III, c. 39; *VCH Wilts.* IV, 257, 261-2.

²⁰ J. Chandler, *Stagecoach operation through Wiltshire*, 1980.

²¹ 32-33 Vic. c. 90; 34-35 Vic. c. 115; 36-37 Vic. c. 90; *VCH Wilts.* IV, 269-70.

²² TNA, RG 9/1323, f.36 v; *Bath Chronicle* 18 Oct. 1866, p. 4.

²³ OS 1:2,500 sheet Wilts. LXIII.4, 2nd edn. 1901; 3rd edn. 1925.

²⁴ <https://www.sabre-roads.org.uk/wiki/index.php?title=A303> (accessed 11 Oct 2018).

²⁵ J. Cherrington, *On the smell of an oily rag*, (1993 edn.), 83; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1939 edn.).

²⁶ OS 1:10,000 sheet ST83SE (rev. 1962).

²⁷ WSA F4/200/47; inf. ex M. Gilmour, Little Chef, 1984.

²⁸ WSA 598/1L; OS 1:10,000 sheets ST83SE, ST83SW (1984 edns.).

²⁹ WSA G9/150/13.

³⁰ WSA 3117/2; WSA 130/76/8; WSA T/A West Knoyle.

³¹ WSA T/A West Knoyle.

³² WSA 598/1L.

³³ WSA 135/6.

³⁴ WSA 598/1L; WSA 1617/West Hill, West Knoyle.

joint responsibility of West Knoyle and Mere Woodlands, so presumably crossed the stream marking the parish boundary in this area.³⁵

Long-distance waggoners and carriers used the downland road past Willoughby Hedge, especially after road improvements further west c.1811.³⁶ Stagecoaches between London and Exeter also used this route during the 1830s and 1840s, including in 1839 a mail coach.³⁷ No local carrier based in West Knoyle is recorded; the village was probably served by carriers operating from Mere or other local villages.³⁸ Occasional motor buses operated along the main road from 1931 or earlier until 1934; the service had resumed by 1939 and continued in 2018.³⁹ A bus serving the village operated briefly in 1949-50 and again in 1957-8, but was withdrawn.⁴⁰ In 2018 a flexible taxi-bus service linked the village with nearby towns.⁴¹

Population

Twenty households and three slaves were recorded in West Knoyle in 1086, 22 households in 1225, and 21 taxpayers in 1332.⁴² In 1377 60 adults paid the poll tax, and in 1676 there were 169 adult communicants.⁴³ Between 1801, when the population was 184, and 1881, when it stood at 199, the total never exceeded 210 (in 1811) nor fell below 180 (in 1851, when the decrease was attributed to emigration).⁴⁴ A sharp fall, to 158 in 1891, and further decreases in 1911 and 1921, brought the population down to 117 in 1931.⁴⁵ It had risen slightly by 1939 and in 1951 and 1961 was 131.⁴⁶ Thereafter the usually resident population fell to 110 in 1971, but had risen again to 159 in 2001, probably reflecting new housing development; in 2011 the population was 146.⁴⁷

Settlement

Never populous, settlement in West Knoyle has been concentrated around the church and former manor house, along the lane running south-westward from the church, and as scattered clayland farmsteads. Except at Willoughby Hedge, the chalkland north of the faultline appears never to have been inhabited.

Three prehistoric chalkland bowl barrows near Willoughby Hedge were excavated in the early 19th century, and one was extant and protected in 2018.⁴⁸ Another extant barrow, also protected, stands on the spur above the Warren.⁴⁹ A large barrow, c.18m in diameter in the 1950s but no more than 30cm high, stood beside the eponymous Barrow Street on clay; it

³⁵ TNA, SC 2/209/19; SC 2/209/34.

³⁶ D. Gerhold, *Road Transport before the Railways* (1993), 26, 59-61.

³⁷ J. Chandler, *Stagecoach Operation through Wiltshire* (1980), 3.

³⁸ e.g. Donhead in 1825: J. Chandler (ed.) *Wilts. Dissenters' Meeting House Certs.* (WRS vol. 40), xx, 108 (1123).

³⁹ R.J. Crawley and F.D. Simpson, *The Years Between*, vol. 3 (1990), 24, 204; C. Morris and A. Waller, *Definitive Hist. of Wilts. & Dorset* (2006), 129; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts* (1931 edn.).

⁴⁰ WSA 3113/2, meetings 1949, 1950, 1957, 1958.

⁴¹ <http://www.connectingwiltshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/C2W-Mere-3.pdf> (accessed 22 Oct. 2018).

⁴² *Domesday*, 171; Cazel, F.A. and A.P. (eds.) *Rolls of the Fifteenth for the Ninth Year of Henry III* (PRS, 1983), 85-6; D.A. Crowley (ed.), *Wilts Tax List, 1332* (WRS 45), 14.

⁴³ C.C. Fenwick (ed.), *Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, pt. 3 (2005), 19; A. Whiteman (ed.), *Compton Census*, 123.

⁴⁴ VCH Wilts, vol. 4, 351, 321.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 351.

⁴⁶ England and Wales Register 1939, file WSNH (at least 124 names); Census 1951, 1961.

⁴⁷ Census, 1971-2011.

⁴⁸ Hoare, *Ancient Wilts*, I, 48; VCH Wilts. I (1), 195; Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1667, 1668, 1687.

⁴⁹ Hoare, *Ancient Wilts*, I, 254; VCH Wilts I (1), 195; Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1669.

perhaps owed its survival to use before 1800 as a windmill mound.⁵⁰ Extensive ploughed-out field systems and enclosures of probable prehistoric origin have been identified on Charnage and Keysley downs, impinging on West Knoyle's downland.⁵¹ A Roman 'pavement', implying a building, and associated small finds, were discovered during road-widening at Willoughby Hedge;⁵² and an intrusive burial of pagan Saxon age was excavated in one of the nearby barrows.⁵³ A late-Roman copper alloy strap end was discovered in the parish in 2013.⁵⁴

The proximity of church, former manor house and manor farm where lanes meet, at the junction of the arable hillside to the north and flatter pasture to the south, suggests that here was the main focus of the community established as a ten-hide unit before 948, and for some of the c.20 households recorded between the 11th and 14th centuries.⁵⁵ This seems to be corroborated by the presence of tofts within small irregular inclosures or crofts, characteristic of village earthworks, which were surveyed in 1989 opposite Manor Cottages and running south from Manor farm pond.⁵⁶ Although much of the south of the parish was common pasture, outlying medieval farmsteads are likely to have existed on the clayland. A group of fieldnames surviving in 1736 and later around Bush Farm appears to derive from the family name Dewcock (and variants) recorded between 1225 and 1394.⁵⁷ A close at the Middles recorded as Pinnocks as late as 1841 may be associated with Walter Pynnoke, the largest taxpayer in 1332.⁵⁸ East Hill Farm (formerly West Hill Dairy) was Struggs in 1796, recalling Roger Strug recorded in 1225.⁵⁹ Other topographical names found in medieval sources suggest that inhabitants lived by the pound (which fieldname evidence places place below West Hill farm), at the bridge and the gate, in the marsh, and up the hill.⁶⁰

By the early 18th century successive encroachments into the woodland and common pasture which lay south of the village had resulted in a typical pattern of common-edge settlement. Farmsteads and cottages stood in two irregular lines along the east and west sides of the remaining common, as well as at its northern end where it funnelled into the village street by Puckwell. The pre-1700 Broadmead Farm is a surviving example; later buildings have replaced others.⁶¹ Two farmsteads occupied sites remote from the village. Wood Farm, demolished before 1962, stood among fields inclosed before 1736 from Hang Wood;⁶² West Hill Farm is an early-18th century farmhouse, to which extensive later farm buildings were added after the open fields of Chaddenwick Hill were inclosed.⁶³ A few buildings in 1736 stood alongside the lane from the church to the common, including the former vicarage house and the surviving Yew Tree Cottage.⁶⁴ The lane running south from Struggs (East Hill Farm) as a green way towards the common was lined by at least three buildings in 1736, of which The Cottage survives as a substantial three-cell house.⁶⁵ On the chalkland a thatched field barn and associated buildings

⁵⁰ Hoare, *Ancient Wilts*, I, 254; *VCH Wilts* I (1), 195; Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1668.

⁵¹ *VCH Wilts*. I (1), 277 (109); Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1674, 1682, 1691-2, 1695, 1780.

⁵² Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1644-5.

⁵³ Hoare, *Ancient Wilts*. I, 48; *VCH Wilts*. I (1), 119; Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1651

⁵⁴ *WAM*, vol. 108 (2015), 225-6.

⁵⁵ Finberg, *Early Wessex Chart*. 89, 93; above, this section: population.

⁵⁶ Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1656; *ibid.*, plan of earthworks (RCHM, South Wiltshire Earthworks Survey, 1989).

⁵⁷ WSA 598/1L; Cazel, *Rolls of the Fifteenth*, 85; *Reg. Waltham*, 152.

⁵⁸ WSA T/A West Knoyle; *Wilts Tax List of 1332* (ed. Crowley, WRS 45), 14.

⁵⁹ WSA 3117/2H; Cazel, *Rolls of the Fifteenth*, 85.

⁶⁰ Cazel, *Rolls of the Fifteenth*, 85-6; *Wilts Tax List of 1332*, 14; *Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, pt. 3, 19; *Reg. Waltham*, 133. for the pound, below: econ. hist., agriculture.

⁶¹ NHLE, 1131114.

⁶² OS 6" sheet ST83SE (1962 edn.); WSA 598/1L.

⁶³ NHLE, 1199557; Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW164865.

⁶⁴ WSA 598/1L; NHLE, 1131112.

⁶⁵ WSA 598/1L; NHLE, 1199582.

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were erected beside the turnpike road before 1773 at Old Willoughby Hedge; the barn, reroofed in corrugated asbestos, survived in 2018.⁶⁶

The 19th century saw surprisingly little change to West Knoyle's settlement pattern.⁶⁷ Furze Patch, an ornate cottage, was built at the Middles after 1841;⁶⁸ and the school was positioned beside the village street in 1873 midway between the church and the farmsteads dotted around the former common.⁶⁹ A new rectory house was built in 1842 close to the former vicarage,⁷⁰ and Manor farm was expanded. During the 20th century, following the supply of mains water after 1906,⁷¹ a ribbon of housing extended piecemeal along the village street, beginning with two pairs of cottages (Manor Cottages) near the church, erected shortly before 1912,⁷² and a school house adjacent to the school.⁷³ Local authority housing was erected in 1946 at Stoney Bridge and in 1954 at Puckwell (on the site of a cottage known as Frickers in 1873),⁷⁴ and electricity first became available in the village c.1952-3;⁷⁵ old people's bungalows were added at Stoney Bridge c.1976.⁷⁶ Further housing to rent was provided during the 1970s at Puckwell and Oderne,⁷⁷ and private houses infilled the street, giving the village a coherent, if linear, centre away from the church and manor house complex.

Built Character

Fieldname evidence suggests that a quarry existed east of Manor farm where the Upper Greensand outcrops, and a chalkpit shown north of Longmead coppice on a map of 1788 may also have supplied local building material.⁷⁸ Grey glauconitic ragstone, such as was quarried at Wolverton and elsewhere in Mere parish,⁷⁹ is also prevalent in West Knoyle buildings, as random rubblestone or roughly coursed. Dressed limestone is found, not only in the church, but also in Manor Farm and elsewhere, including the field barn at Old Willoughby Hedge; it is likely that this was reused from the former manor house demolished in the mid-18th century. Rendered chalk cob construction was used at Furze Patch. Yew Tree Cottage is built of chalk and limestone rubble, and like most of the older houses, is thatched.

Apart from the church, heavily restored and altered in the 18th and 19th centuries, no medieval building is known to survive in the parish. Manor Farm incorporates two Tudor-arched doorways (one blocked) and other features, including a datestone 1555, believed to have been taken from the demolished manor house. It is the most substantial domestic building, later-18th century on a Tudor core, two-storey T-plan with the principal three-bay front facing east, and with interior panelling, doors and other fittings from the manor house.⁸⁰ Broadmead Farm also has a reset datestone, 1539, probably from the manor house, but the house is later, and perhaps typical of the farmsteads erected around the common c.1700. Of two or three bays,

⁶⁶ NHLE, 1283280, where it is dated 'probably early C18'. It is shown on Andrews and Dury's *Map of Wilts.*, 1773, and WSA 3117/2H (map of 1796), though not on WSA 135/6 (1788). For the reroofing, J. Longley, *My First 60 Years in West Knoyle* (Kindle ebook, 2014).

⁶⁷ WSA T/A West Knoyle; OS 25" sheet Wilts. LXIII.4, 1st edn. 18XX.

⁶⁸ NHLE 1318476 dates it to early 19th century, but it is not shown on WSA T/A West Knoyle, 1841.

⁶⁹ below: social hist., education.

⁷⁰ WSA D1/11/90; below: religious hist., patronage and endowment.

⁷¹ WSA 3113/2.

⁷² WSA 1260/4, p. 20.

⁷³ OS 1:2,500 sheet Wilts. LXIII.7, 2nd edn. 1901; 3rd edn. 1925.

⁷⁴ WSA G9/114/3-4; WSA G9/150/13.

⁷⁵ WSA 3113/2; Longley, *My First 60 Years*.

⁷⁶ WSA 3113/1, 1972-7 *passim*.

⁷⁷ Longley, *My First 60 Years*.

⁷⁸ WSA 135/6.

⁷⁹ Geddes, *Hidden Depths*, 190.

⁸⁰ NHLE, 1318477. Detailed ground-floor plan, 1827, in WANHS Lib MS 884 box 76 AQ7.

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built of rubblestone with casement windows under tiled roof, a fourth bay of dressed limestone was added in the 18th century.⁸¹

Two outlying farmhouses of c. 1700 survive in the parish and are listed. The Cottage, despite its name, is a substantial building of similar proportions to Broadmead Farm, but of render under thatch.⁸² West Hill Farm, of rubblestone and tile, may have been smaller, but has had substantial additions, and possesses extensive farm buildings, including a two-storey cart shed and stables of c. 1800.⁸³

Of smaller domestic buildings Yew Tree Cottage was originally a single-cell late 17th-century building, of one storey with attic, to which a second bay was soon added.⁸⁴ Nearby in the Street two other vernacular thatched cottages survive, The Meads and Thimble Cottage, the former rendered, the latter rubblestone. Furze Patch (renamed the Parish House) at the Middles, c. 1850 of rendered cob under thatch, has cottage orné features, including three-pointed Gothick fenestration.⁸⁵ An example of the humblest of cottage dwellings, the former vicarage house, was described c. 1860 when occupied by a shepherd as a small room about 14 feet square and 6 feet in height with a hearth fireplace, and for sleeping apartments the unceiled space in the roof between the rafters.⁸⁶ Its replacement, a two-storey, three-bedroomed brick house with Bath stone dressings, by G.G. Scott and W.B. Moffatt, was set back from the road on the adjacent glebe and erected in 1842-3.⁸⁷ Most houses and bungalows built since the 19th century have been conventional in style, including 'traditional' post-war semi-detached council houses. Two exceptions, built to striking modern designs, are Oxlease Farm, by Western Design Architects, built 2013-14 and reusing materials from the 19th-century farmhouse that it replaced;⁸⁸ and Copsford, at the Middles, a large 'eco-house' of timber construction, built in 2015.⁸⁹

LANDOWNERSHIP

PATTERN OF LANDOWNERSHIP

For nearly a millennium, from the 10th century until 1912, almost all land in West Knoyle was in single ownership controlled as one manor. Apart from a brief period during the 1540s the descent of this manor was straightforward. It was a possession of Wilton abbey from the late Saxon period until the abbey's dissolution. It then descended through members of the Willoughby family between 1546 and 1732, and the Hoare family thence until 1912, when it was sold in lots. Landownership was then divided between the principal farms, the lordship descending with Manor farm. Under the abbey there were mesne tenants, most notably members of the Hungerford family, 1353-1459. The abbey created a prebend in 1299, supported by a small portion of its West Knoyle estate; from the 1540s this was leased by its patron to the manorial lord, until the prebend was extinguished in 1869.

⁸¹ NHLE, 1131114.

⁸² NHLE, 1199582.

⁸³ NHLE, 1199557, 1131111.

⁸⁴ NHLE, 1131112.

⁸⁵ NHLE, 1318476; Wilts. Council planning app. S/1997/0268-9.

⁸⁶ WANHS Library mss 438, box 41.

⁸⁷ WSA D1/11/90.

⁸⁸ <https://www.westerndesignarchitects.com/portfolio> (accessed 8 Nov. 2018)

⁸⁹ <http://merewilts.org/merematters/14/Sept-14.pdf> (accessed 8 Nov. 2018)

WEST KNOYLE MANOR

King Eadred granted in 948 an estate of ten hides (*mansae*) at Knoyle to his minister Aelfheah; and his successor Eadwig granted the same estate in 956 to a vassal, Wiferth.⁹⁰ Before 1066 this estate, which may be identified from its bounds as West Knoyle,⁹¹ had come into the possession of Wilton abbey,⁹² which retained ownership until 1539.⁹³

By the 13th century, and probably earlier, an abbey tenant occupied a substantial landholding in West Knoyle. Hodierna Nequam, wet-nurse of Richard I, was granted land there by him upon his accession in 1189,⁹⁴ and she provided as an affix the alternative parish name, Knoyle Odierne. This holding had perhaps come into the possession of John Mauduit before 1220, when his widow claimed her dowry on 10 hides there;⁹⁵ and the Strug family held land there by 1225, when Roger Strug was taxed on livestock in the parish valued almost as highly as that of the abbess.⁹⁶ In 1236 his lands passed from Roger's widow, Elena, to Walter Strug,⁹⁷ and a John Strug paid tax in West Knoyle in 1332.⁹⁸ In 1318 William Huse was granted free warren on his demesne there,⁹⁹ but the abbess retained possession of two carucates in 1341.¹⁰⁰ In 1354 Thomas Hungerford acquired land in the parish,¹⁰¹ which he perhaps augmented through his two marriages, to Eleanor Strug and Joan Huse;¹⁰² and by 1421 his grandson Robert Hungerford had seisin of the manor.¹⁰³ Robert's widow Margaret sold her demesne in West Knoyle to Gregory Westeby in 1459,¹⁰⁴ and it, or another estate in the parish, had come into the possession of Catherine Berkeley (d. 1494), widow of Sir John, 3rd Baron Stourton, and subsequently of John Brereton;¹⁰⁵ it presumably passed in the same way as Berkeley farm, Kilmington, and other lands through Catherine's daughter, Werberga, to her husband, Sir William Compton (d. 1528), who employed a bailiff responsible for West Knoyle in 1522.¹⁰⁶

Following the dissolution of Wilton abbey, the manor of West Knoyle was granted to Hugh ap Harry of Preston on Wye (Herefs.),¹⁰⁷ who sold it on to John Marvyn, who in turn sold it in 1546 to Christopher Willoughby, illegitimate son of Sir William Willoughby of Turner's Puddle (Dorset).¹⁰⁸ Compton's freehold, principally Strug's farm, was included in the sale and, despite a legal challenge in 1558, was retained by the Willoughbys although maintaining its

⁹⁰ P. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (1968), 196 (no. 531); 223 (no. 666).

⁹¹ *Archaeol. J.*, 2nd ser. 27 (1920), 19-22.

⁹² *VCH Wilts II*, 91; *Domesday*, 171.

⁹³ TNA SC 6/HENVIII/3985, m.4.

⁹⁴ [Ref needed, prob *Pipe R* 1189-90 (Rec. Com.), 175 – see ODNB entry by Gillingham, and *WAM* 3, 30]

⁹⁵ *Cur. Reg.* IX (1220), 81.

⁹⁶ F.A. and A.P. Cazell (eds.), *Rolls of the Fifteenth . . .* (PRS n.s. vol. 45, 1983), 85-6.

⁹⁷ Fry (ed.), *Feet of Fines, 1195-1272*, 26.

⁹⁸ D.A. Crowley (ed.), *Wilts. Tax List, 1332* (WRS 45), 14.

⁹⁹ *Cal. Chart.* III, 371.

¹⁰⁰ *Non. Inq.* 168.

¹⁰¹ Elrington (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1327-77*, 102 (no. 417); cf Kirby (ed.), *Hungerford Cartulary* (WRS 49), 127 (no. 514), 128 (no. 518), 192-3 (no. 807).

¹⁰² Kirby (ed.), *Hungerford Cartulary* (WRS 49), xvi.

¹⁰³ Kirby (ed.) *Hungerford Cartulary, II* (WRS 60), 121 (nos. 1459-60).

¹⁰⁴ *Cal Close*, 1468-76, 65 (no. 248); *Cal Inq Misc (Chancery)*, VIII (1422-85), 192-3.

¹⁰⁵ *Cal Inq. p.m. Hen. VII*, I, 479 (no. 1122); *Complete Peerage*, XII, 303-4.

¹⁰⁶ *L. & P. Hen VIII*, 4 (2), 1944 (no. 4442 (5)); *VCH Som.* VIII, 74-5; above: Kilmington, landownership [p. 29 of typescript]

¹⁰⁷ *L. & P. Hen VIII*, 16, 458-9.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, 20 (2) 455-6; *Visit. Wilts.* 1565, 51; MHS 659 ('Willoughby directory', ts. by R Giles Browne).

identity until 1608 or later.¹⁰⁹ From Christopher the manor descended in 1571 to his son Henry, and in 1608 to Henry's son William, who died in 1648.¹¹⁰ From William the manor passed to his grandson William, who in 1655 was complicit in the Penruddocke rebellion, but escaped execution.¹¹¹ William's son, also William, inherited his father's debts with the manor on his death in 1677,¹¹² and mortgaged the demesne and most of the estate in 1693.¹¹³ He died in 1719, and the manor passed to his son William, then a minor, who died in 1731.¹¹⁴ William's heir was his brother Richard, who sold the manor and estate, still heavily mortgaged, the following year.¹¹⁵ It is probable that all the Willoughby lords were resident.

Henry Hoare of Stourhead (d. 1785), partner in the banking firm, purchased the manor from Richard Willoughby in 1732,¹¹⁶ but engaged him at West Knoyle as steward, perhaps until his death in 1763.¹¹⁷ Hoare retained the manor until 1783, when he settled it on his eldest grandson, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, the 2nd baronet.¹¹⁸ It passed at his death in 1838 to his half-brother, Sir Henry Hugh Hoare, the 3rd baronet, and on his death in 1841 to Sir Henry's eldest son, Sir Hugh Richard Hoare, the 4th baronet. He died childless in 1857 and was succeeded by his nephew, Sir Henry Ainslie Hoare, the 5th baronet.¹¹⁹ Sir Henry's cousin, Sir Henry H. A. Hoare, the 6th baronet, succeeded him in 1894, and sold the manor and most land in the parish in 1912.¹²⁰ The lordship was sold with Manor farm,¹²¹ and sold again in 1918, by Alfred F.G. Trim, without the lordship, to R.E. Newbury Coles; he farmed it until retirement in 1933, when it was sold again.¹²² The purchaser died in 1935 before completing the purchase,¹²³ and the farm was subsequently acquired by Howard Ewart Wort, the owner in 1942.¹²⁴

PREBENDAL ESTATE

Before 1291 West Knoyle chapelry was annexed to the church of North Newnton, which in 1299 was made a prebend of Wilton abbey, so that income from West Knoyle tithes and glebe benefitted the prebendary.¹²⁵ Until the dissolution the abbess usually presented prebendaries, and from 1547 until 1841, when the chapelry was disunited from North Newnton, the advowson belonged to the earls of Pembroke, who leased back the West Knoyle prebendal estate from the sinecure prebendaries in return for a pension of £9.¹²⁶ In 1535 the annual value of the estate was £8 16s., and £8 13s. 4d. in 1566.¹²⁷ At the latter date the earl's tenant was the lord of the manor, Christopher Willoughby, and this arrangement continued during the 18th century until Richard

¹⁰⁹ TNA, CP 40/1127, m. 7; TNA, C 3/187/8; Ch Inq pm ser ii, vol. 302, no. 110, 1049 [check]

¹¹⁰ *Ch. Inq. p.m.* 159 (81), 1011; *ibid.* (ser. 2), 302 (110), 1049; *Visit. Wilts*, 1623, 216-17; MHS 659.

¹¹¹ WSA P2/W/418; *WAM*, 13 (1872), 175-7.

¹¹² WSA P2/W/576.

¹¹³ WSA 212B/3644.

¹¹⁴ WSA 2653/1; see S.D. Hobbs (ed), *Gleanings from Wilts. parish regs.* (WRS 63), 266.

¹¹⁵ TNA PROB 11/643/39; WSA 383/297.

¹¹⁶ WSA 383/862.

¹¹⁷ WSA 383/297: Willoughby surveyed the manor as steward in 1758, and was on bad terms with Hoare in 1761. For his death, *Modern Wilts, Hund. of Mere*, 40.

¹¹⁸ WSA 383/297; 383/711-15; 383/912; K Woodbridge, *Landscape and Antiquity* (1970), 69-70.

¹¹⁹ WSA 3117/13; *Burke's Peerage* (1915 edn.), 1048-9.

¹²⁰ *Burke's Peerage* (1915 edn.), 1048-9; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.), 131; WSA 2132/130.

¹²¹ WSA 2132/130.

¹²² WSA 2132/132; 2132/135; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts* (1919 edn.).

¹²³ J. Cherrington, *On the Smell of an Oily Rag* (1993 edn), 89-90.

¹²⁴ TNA, MAF 32/49/283.

¹²⁵ *VCH Wilts X*, 133-5.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*; below, religious hist.

¹²⁷ *Valor Eccl. (Rec. Com.)*, ii, 107; *First Pembroke Survey*, ed. Straton, I, 297.

Willoughby's death in 1763, when Henry Hoare was granted the lease.¹²⁸ The arrangement only came to an end when, under a scheme of 1841 implemented in 1869, the prebend was abolished and income from its lands passed to the vicar of West Knoyle.¹²⁹

ECONOMIC HISTORY

FARMING

The Agricultural Landscape

Because the Mere fault crosses the parish there has always been an abrupt north–south divide between the chalkland hillslopes suitable for arable cultivation to the north, with rough downland beyond; and the dairying clayland pastures and meadowland with common waste to the south and woodland to the east. Piecemeal inclosure and encroachment across the clayland commons occurred in the 18th century and earlier, and the open arable fields and most remaining common pasture was inclosed by agreement between 1710 and 1743. Ancient woodland survived along the eastern fringe of the parish and was augmented after 1800. The arable acreage receded between the later 19th century and the 1930s, from more than 40 percent to less than 25 percent, but then increased after 1940 as the chalk downland was cultivated. New woodland was planted from the 1980s and existing coppice woodland was retained, so that the view down the hillside in 2019 was of a well-wooded vale. The village street funnels out at its southern end into the former common pasture, still uninclosed in part; but elsewhere on the clay small irregular hedged fields prevail, in contrast to the open tracts of arable north of the fault sloping up to the downs.

Before 1700

Field systems and inclosures of probable prehistoric date, observed as soilmarks impinging on the northern and north-western fringes of the parish, suggest early cultivation and stock-rearing across the downs.¹³⁰ A charter bound, the headland of the linch (*hlinces heafod*), implies that elements of such a field system were upstanding in the 10th century.¹³¹

In 1086, as in 956, West Knoyle was a ten-hide estate, of which 4½ hides were Wilton abbey's demesne at the latter date.¹³² There were then 11 villans and 9 cottagers (cotsets) with 5 ploughs, and 3 slaves on the demesne. Meadowland, expressed as 5 a., and pasture, expressed as ½ league x 3 furlongs, were recorded on the estate.

Tax paid on livestock in 1225 gives an indication of the manor's farming regime.¹³³ The abbess and one tenant, Roger Strug, were assessed at more than half (£11) the total valuation (£21), and none of the other 21 taxpayers was assessed at more than £1. There were 385 sheep on the manor, most belonging to the abbess (200) or Strug (150), and they also possessed most of the 35 oxen, the abbess having 18 and Strug 10. Strug and all but one of the smaller tenants

¹²⁸ *First Pembroke Survey*, ed. Straton, I, 296; WSA, 2057/S30, pp. 67-70; WSA 1553/25, p. 189.

¹²⁹ WSA D1/36/4/1, no. 12; below, religious hist.

¹³⁰ *VCH Wilts.* I (1), 277 (109); Wilts. Arch. Service HER, MW1674, 1682, 1691-2, 1695, 1780.

¹³¹ <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/666.html#> (accessed 26 Nov. 2018); *Arch Jnl.* 77 (1920), 21.

¹³² This para: *Domesday Book*, 171.

¹³³ This para: Cazell, F.A. and A.P. (eds.) *Rolls of the Fifteenth for the Ninth Year of Henry III* (PRS, 1983), 85-6.

kept one or more of the 39 cows on the manor, besides other cattle, and about half also had one or two draught animals, presumably horses (*averus, iumentum*). The abbess had no cows, and no other animals were assessed for tax, apart from seven pigs. Oxen and other draught animals were valued at 3s. each, cows at 2s. 6d., pigs at 6d., and sheep at 4d. The evidence of this tax list suggests that the abbess and Strug were principally involved in arable farming and running sheep for manuring, typical of south Wiltshire chalkland manors, whereas the tenantry, apart from their labour services, were occupied in dairying on the clayland.

The freehold built up by Thomas Hungerford from 1354 amounted to c.240 a. in 1459 and 1494, made up at the former date of 100 a. arable, 60 a. pasture, and 80 a. wood; there was also a small area of meadowland and grazing for 200 sheep.¹³⁴ When sold in 1546 to Christopher Willoughby it consisted of a four-yardland farm called Struggs, a yardland called Pinnocks, and two five-acre cottage holdings, Collins and Gammaclives; the tenements and cottages probably all stood in the west of the parish, at the Middles and East Hill Farm.¹³⁵

At its dissolution in 1539 Wilton abbey was receiving almost half its West Knoyle manorial revenue from the lessee of the demesne, John Pyke, and it is likely that he had been farmer since 1523 or earlier, when he was assessed for tax at more than four times any other inhabitant.¹³⁶ In common with other south Wiltshire manors, West Knoyle in 1535 paid the abbey a proportion (about one-third) of its rent in kind, in wheat, barley and oats, as well as geese, capons and a calf.¹³⁷ Customary tenants in 1539 paid £8 6s. 11d. in rents and commuted labour-services, and free tenants £6 8s. 8d. in rents, although £4 of this was from the former Hungerford holding, which subsequently belonged to William Compton.¹³⁸

From a survey of the prebendal estate taken in 1566, and from later estate maps, it appears that the demesne arable lay contiguously in the north-east of the parish in three open fields, West, Middle and East, which ran north–south down the hillside from the London road to the faultline where the chalk gives way to clay near the church and manor house.¹³⁹ To their west, extending as far as Chaddenwick Hill, lay the tenantry fields, which thus exploited the remainder of the chalkland south of the road. A meadow, Broadmead, lay west of the village. By 1691 Broadmead and Longmead were inclosed meadows, and the demesne included closes – Wood furlong and Church furlong – taken from the southern edge of the open arable lands closest to the village.¹⁴⁰

After 1700

The inclosure of the open fields had not progressed very far by 1710, since the prebendal estate still included 24 a. dispersed in the fields of the demesne;¹⁴¹ but by 1736 all the demesne arable lay in large inclosures.¹⁴² In the previous year the parsonage barn, which had stood near the church in Play Acre, was demolished by Richard Willoughby, who built a less obtrusive four-bay replacement, 60 x 20 ft. with threshing floor and porch, behind the manor farm on the edge of one of the recent inclosures, New Close.¹⁴³ The tenantry arable on West Hill all still lay open in

¹³⁴ above, landownership; *Cal. Inq. Misc. (Chancery)*, VIII (1422-85), 192-3; *Cal. I.P.M. Hen. VII*, 1, 479. In 1466 it was said to include 3 messuages and 4 tofts; in 1494 7 messuages.

¹³⁵ TNA, C 3/187/8; WSA 3117/2H.

¹³⁶ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3985. m. 4; TNA E 179/197/167/13.

¹³⁷ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), ii, 110; cf J. Hare, *A Prospering Society* (2011), 89.

¹³⁸ TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/3985. m. 4; above, landownership.

¹³⁹ *First Pembroke Survey*, ed. Straton, I, 297; WSA 598/1L.

¹⁴⁰ WSA, 212B/3644.

¹⁴¹ WSA, 2057/S30, p. 67.

¹⁴² WSA, 598/1L.

¹⁴³ WSA, 2057/S30, p. 68.

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1736 in more than 300 strips,¹⁴⁴ and the new manorial owner, Henry Hoare, who had purchased West Knoyle in 1732,¹⁴⁵ set about buying in his tenants' copyholds so as to inclose their arable and extinguish common rights, and then re-let or sold them on new terms.¹⁴⁶ He is said to have spent £32,800 on purchasing the manor and reversions.¹⁴⁷ The work of inclosing West Hill was planned in 1740 and was nearly complete by early 1743.¹⁴⁸

The high downland, north of the London road, was rough pasture, described in 1736 as Willoughby sheep slaite.¹⁴⁹ South of the arable at this date, across the claylands, was a broad tract of inclosed meadow and pasture, and to its east was woodland, Hang Wood, and further pasture grounds formerly rabbit warrens and a quarry. Beyond the inclosed land, running south to the parish boundary, was extensive common pasture, West Hill Common, Old Common and New Common, which included small areas of arable encroachments and, in the south-east corner, a larger farm complex of arable and pasture closes, Wood Farm. West Hill Common before inclosure was intercommoned with Mere.¹⁵⁰

Agreement to inclose West Hill Common, c.200 a. in the south-west corner of the parish, was struck between Richard Willoughby, in his role as Hoare's steward, and the tenantry in 1742; the latter acquiesced on condition that Old Common, c.76 a., remained open and commonable.¹⁵¹ The inclosure of West Hill Common included a realignment of lanes to Barrow Street and Charnage in Mere, and created large allotments west of the Barrow Street lane, with smaller divisions to the east.¹⁵² Following a court baron decision in 1743, Old Common, the area around the later Bush Farm and then 'very much incumbered with wood and thorns', was cleaned and let to a tenant, and the rent therefrom assigned to parish poor relief.¹⁵³ The area of New Common adjacent to Hang Wood was inclosed before 1736, but a large portion known as 'Tenants New Common' remained open, funnelling north-eastwards from Old Common towards West Knoyle village street.¹⁵⁴ Both were still uninclosed in 1796, but New Common had been divided by 1841 and Old Common was mostly woodland, later known as Common Wood.¹⁵⁵

During the last decades of Willoughby ownership landholding in West Knoyle was complex and fragmented. In 1719 34 leaseholds and 13 copyholds were in place, a few dating back to the 1650s.¹⁵⁶ Around half were held by seven tenants, who each possessed three or four holdings, and a further 21 held one each. Hoare's policy during the 1730s of buying in the reversions and granting new leases in order to effect inclosure resulted in a simpler pattern.¹⁵⁷ In 1755 and 1758 the number of tenants had reduced to 17, of whom 10 were cottagers.

Despite a somewhat fractious relationship,¹⁵⁸ Richard Willoughby by the time of his death in 1762 had successfully consolidated Henry Hoare's West Knoyle agricultural interest

¹⁴⁴ WSA, 598/1L.

¹⁴⁵ Above, landownership.

¹⁴⁶ WSA 383/297, Particular of the several tenements bought since 1733.

¹⁴⁷ *Letters of Henry Hoare*, ed. Dodd (WRS, 71), 416.

¹⁴⁸ WSA 383/298, plan by Roger Helleker, 1740/1; *ibid.*, letter 22 Jan.1743, Willoughby to Hoare.

¹⁴⁹ This para: WSA, 598/1L.

¹⁵⁰ WSA 383/298, letter Willoughby to Hoare, 15 Feb. 1745/6.

¹⁵¹ WSA 383/298, letter Willoughby to Hoare, 5 June 1742.

¹⁵² WSA 1617/West Hill plan.

¹⁵³ WSA 383/298, copy of ct. baron, 8 Apr. 1743; *ibid.*, letter, Willoughby to Cox, 13 Aug. 1743. For the position of Old Common, WSA 1617/West Hill plan.

¹⁵⁴ WSA 598/1L.

¹⁵⁵ WSA 3117/2H; WSA TA/West Knoyle.

¹⁵⁶ WSA 383/359

¹⁵⁷ WSA 383/297: Particular of the several tenements . . .

¹⁵⁸ WSA 383/297, letter 17 Oct. 1761, Willoughby to Faugoin: 'As I am unhappily forbid all correspondence and intercourse with your master Mr Hoare . . .'

into four substantial farms.¹⁵⁹ Largest was the demesne, Manor farm, tenanted by generations of the Rumsey family from the 1740s or earlier until the 1860s, and computed at 757 a. in 1788 and 714 a. in 1806, which occupied much of the northern and eastern parts of the parish, including the larger share of the arable chalk hillside. West Hill farm, described as the new farm in 1758, extended across the former tenantry arable to the west of the parish and down on to the clay; 567 a. in 1781 and enlarged to 640 a. by 1806, it was farmed by Thomas and then John Lampard until 1785 and then by William White. White was probably related to the Rumseys of Manor farm by marriage,¹⁶⁰ and in 1820 the tenancy was held by William White Rumsey. Broadmead farm, referred to in 1806 as New Common farm, 115 a. in 1788 but enlarged to 195 a. by 1829, comprised principally several small leaseholds amassed by John Hillier before 1758, and the enclosed northern portion of New Common. It continued to be farmed by the Hillier family until the 1840s. Wood farm (in 1829 and 1875 called Woodhouse farm), south of Hang Wood, 67 a. in 1788, was held by Edward Shepherd in 1763, and remained in his family until c.1830, with the death of another Edward Shepherd.¹⁶¹

At least 12 cottages and smallholdings had been erected on the waste along the eastern and western edges of the tenantry common by 1788, and two of these developed into substantial leasehold farmsteads.¹⁶² What became Bush farm, between the southern edge of the common and the Mere boundary, began as a messuage newly erected by Thomas Cary in 1729,¹⁶³ and it passed through successive generations of his family until Alfred Cary in the 1840s.¹⁶⁴ Thomas Cary incurred Richard Willoughby's anger for illegally cutting wood in the Old Common in 1742,¹⁶⁵ but he, or a later namesake, enlarged and improved his holding, acquiring small leaseholds and building a house, two barns and two granaries.¹⁶⁶ In 1806 the farm comprised 46 a., and in 1829 and later 84 a.¹⁶⁷ Oxlease farm, the holding of Thomas Ricketts from 1780 or earlier until at least 1806, and then John Riddick until the 1850s, was the only other common-edge farmstead to acquire a significant acreage, 22 a. in 1806, 42 a. in 1841.¹⁶⁸

The pattern of agricultural landholding in West Knoyle changed little during the 150 years of Hoare ownership, 1762–1912. After 1861 and until c.1880 tenancy of Manor farm passed from John Rumsey to Robert C.R. Godwin, and during this period Broadmead and Wood farms were taken into it; but after 1880 Broadmead farm, including most of Wood farm, was farmed separately again.¹⁶⁹ After 1848 Thomas Gough took over West Hill farm and for a time during the 1870s also had Bush farm.¹⁷⁰ Before 1907 West Hill farm was divided into two unequal portions, creating West Hill dairy (146 a. in 1912), which was also known as East Hill farm.¹⁷¹ It occupied pasture in the centre of the parish, but included also 46 a. of arable land on the chalk hillside between Manor farm and West Hill farm.¹⁷² Tenancies of all the farms changed

¹⁵⁹ This para. derived from analysis of surveys and maps, principally WSA 130/76/8; 135/6; 383/297; 383/305; A1/345/248; TA/West Knoyle.

¹⁶⁰ WSA 2653/4, marriages 22 May 1791, 20 Feb. 1793; Rumsey family, see MHS, 677..

¹⁶¹ WSA wills, P2/1830/73.

¹⁶² WSA 135/6; 3117/2H.

¹⁶³ WSA 383/593.

¹⁶⁴ Sources as previous para.

¹⁶⁵ WSA 383/298, letters 22 Jan. 1742/3 (where he refers to Cary as 'the old fornicator'), 13 Aug. 1743, 6 Apr. 1745 (in which he blames 'the falseness and villainy of that old rascal' for losing Willoughby the friendship of Hoare).

¹⁶⁶ WSA 383/302.

¹⁶⁷ WSA 383/305; 130/76/8.

¹⁶⁸ Sources as previous para.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, RG 9/1323, f. 36v; *ibid.*, RG 10/1965, f. 101v; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.*, 1867, 1875, 1880 edns.; WSA 2710/1.

¹⁷⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.*, 1848 and later edns.; TNA, HO 107/1850, f. 45v; WSA 2710/1.

¹⁷¹ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.*, 1907, 1911 edns.; WSA 1260/4.

¹⁷² WSA 1260/4.

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c.1880 and again following the 1912 sale.¹⁷³ At this date, apart from numerous smallholdings, the six farms together totalled 1,798 a., of which Manor farm (741 a.) and West Hill farm (463 a.) were the largest.¹⁷⁴ The three entirely clayland farms, Broadmead (219 a.), Bush (130 a.), and Oxlease (99 a.) had no arable.¹⁷⁵

Throughout this period the two principal farms, Manor and West Hill, practised the mixed sheep and corn husbandry typical of the Wiltshire chalkland. West Hill farm's acreage in 1781 was c.60 percent arable, c.20 percent downland and c.20 percent pasture or meadow.¹⁷⁶ Manor farm had more downland and pasture, and slightly less arable.¹⁷⁷ In the parish in 1788, 1829 and 1841 the proportions of arable (43-5 percent) to pasture (55-7 percent) were similar, with c.750 a. under cultivation.¹⁷⁸ The clayland farms also had small acreages of arable on their inclosures on the former West Hill common,¹⁷⁹ but by 1875 Bush and Oxlease farms were entirely pasture, and Wood and Broadmead nearly so.¹⁸⁰ At this date the arable acreage in the parish had fallen to 38 percent (636 a.) and it fell further, to 22 percent (360 a.) by the time of the 1912 sale.¹⁸¹

Under difficult farming conditions between the wars the acreage under cultivation declined further, from 201 a. in 1926 to 94 a. in 1936,¹⁸² but dairying in the parish seems to have remained profitable.¹⁸³ West Hill dairy had abandoned its arable by c.1931,¹⁸⁴ and when Manor farm changed hands in 1933 cultivation was reduced to 150 a., on a four-course rotation of wheat, fallow or roots, barley or oats, and clover.¹⁸⁵ John Cherrington, the new tenant, intended to convert run-down arable land to dairying, and to introduce machinery, although he left in 1935. His was the first tractor in the parish.¹⁸⁶ The owner of Broadmead farm (220 a.), Edwin Hamlett, sold it in 1940 to Jesus College, Oxford, who retained it until 1965.¹⁸⁷

Wartime requirements resulted in land being brought back into cultivation, so that in 1942 the proportion of arable, 636 a. to pasture, 735 a., was exactly the same as a century earlier.¹⁸⁸ By then there were eight tractors in the parish and all farms had piped water but no electricity, except Manor farm, which had a private electricity supply but relied on wells for water. All farms had cattle, 372 in total in the parish, of which 198 were dairy cows, and nearly all kept poultry, but almost the only sheep, 200, were on Manor farm. The tenants were variously criticised for lack of initiative, drive or expertise, and in one case for laziness, although wartime shortage of labour was clearly a mitigating factor. Virgin downland north of Willoughby Hedge was cleared with machinery and ploughed as part of the war effort.¹⁸⁹

At Manor farm the wartime owner, Howard E. Wort, was succeeded by J Sydney Bain until 1970, when he sold to Richard L.S. Norris, who was still farming there in 1984.¹⁹⁰ By 1993

¹⁷³ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.*, 1875, 1880, 1885, 1911, 1915 edns.; TNA, RG 10/1965, ff. 94-101v; *ibid.*, RG 11/2079, ff. 27-34.

¹⁷⁴ WSA 1260/4.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ WSA 383/297, particular of Lampard's farm, 1781.

¹⁷⁷ WSA 383/297, undated survey, key to 1788 estate map (WSA 135/6).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; WSA 130/76/8; *ibid.* T/A West Knoyle.

¹⁷⁹ WSA 3117/2H.

¹⁸⁰ WSA 2710/1.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*; WSA 1260/4.

¹⁸² TNA, MAF 68/3319; MAF 68/3814.

¹⁸³ J. Cherrington, *On the Smell of an Oily Rag* (1993 edn.), 82.

¹⁸⁴ Land Utilisation Survey, Map 1", sheet 121 (Wells and Frome).

¹⁸⁵ Cherrington, *On the Smell of an Oily Rag*, 76-92

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁸⁷ Jesus Coll. Archives, ES.WL. 7/1/1; inf. ex Robin Darwall-Smith, Archivist, Jesus Coll.

¹⁸⁸ This para: TNA, MAF 32/49/283.

¹⁸⁹ J. Longley, *My First 60 Years in West Knoyle* (e-book, 2014), location 433.

¹⁹⁰ WSA 3113/1, note 13 Apr 1970; phone directories 1948-84.

Mr Paul Yates was the owner, although not living in the farmhouse, and as Broad Oak Game Farm he continued in 2019 his principal business of rearing game and shooting.¹⁹¹ The other principal arable farm in the parish, West Hill farm, belonged to John B. Wilson in 1942 and was farmed by him until c.1976, when it was bought by Sir Patrick Kingsley (1908-99), a noted cricketer, who served as secretary and keeper of records for the Duchy of Cornwall.¹⁹² He was succeeded by his son, Mr Ian Kingsley, the farmer in 2019.¹⁹³ Post-war arable acreage declined from 476 a. in 1946 to 236 a. a decade later, but then increased, and totalled 217 ha (536 a.) in 1986. During the same period dairy and other cattle reduced from 572 in 1956 to 352 in 1986, while sheep numbers doubled, from 232 to 465.¹⁹⁴ In 1990 and 2015 all former downland north of the A303 was under arable cultivation.¹⁹⁵

Since the 1950s, when there were six dairy herds in the parish, all the clayland farms have diversified to other uses.¹⁹⁶ West Hill dairy (East Hill farm) was owned and farmed by Leonard Mitchell, c.1938 until 1976, when the farm was fragmented, and its arable taken over by Mr John White of Charnage.¹⁹⁷ J.M. Longley and Son, after dairying at Broadmead during the 1960s, developed a turkey rearing business at Wood farm c.1980 until 2010.¹⁹⁸ Bush farm was sold to Mr Colin Ellis, baron Seaford, in 1994 and developed as a bison farm, with camping, retail and exhibition facilities. Oxlease farm was sold in 2010 and the farmhouse demolished and replaced.¹⁹⁹

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

In 1086 there was woodland, expressed as ½ league x ½ league, recorded in West Knoyle.²⁰⁰ The parish lay within the bounds of Selwood forest until 1300, and was represented at forest inquisitions in the 13th century and perhaps at the forest eyre of 1187-90.²⁰¹ Henry the forester was among the inhabitants taxed in 1225, and Knoyle wood is recorded in 1279.²⁰² In 1459 the Hungerford holding in West Knoyle included 80 a. of woodland, and c.1535 Wilton abbey usually derived an annual income of 5s. from the sale of wood on its manor.²⁰³

Most woodland in the parish probably always lay along its eastern boundary, where Hang Wood survives, and is regarded as one of the botanically richest areas of ancient woodland in Wiltshire.²⁰⁴ The likelihood that woodland formerly extended further south is suggested by the name Wood (or Woodhouse) farm; its farmland, inclosed before 1736, adjoins Hang Wood in a position isolated from the main settlements.²⁰⁵ The portion of New Common abutting Hang

¹⁹¹ Local inf.

¹⁹² MHS, 790, p. 36. Who was Who, [check]

¹⁹³ Local inf.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, MAF 68/4182; MAF 68/4552; MAF 68/5004; MAF 68/6032.

¹⁹⁵ Edina land use maps, 1990, 2015.

¹⁹⁶ J. Longley, *My First Sixty Years*.

¹⁹⁷ MHS, 790, p. 39; local inf.

¹⁹⁸ Inf ex Mr J Longley.

¹⁹⁹ Local inf.

²⁰⁰ *Domesday Book*, 171.

²⁰¹ *VCH Wilts*, 4, 414-15, 449.

²⁰² Cazel, F.A. and A.P. (eds.) *Rolls of the Fifteenth for the Ninth Year of Henry III* (PRS, 1983), 85; *PN Wilts* (EPNS), 177.

²⁰³ *Cal. Inq. Misc. (Chancery)*, VIII (1422-85), 192-3, citing grant recorded in *Cal. Close* 1468-76, 65, 106; *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), ii, 110. Cf TNA SC 6/HENVIII/3985, m.4, where 'great trees' (grossis arboribus) were excepted and kept in hand when the demesne was leased.

²⁰⁴ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1002563.pdf>; it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

²⁰⁵ WSA, 598/1L.

Wood and Wood farm, and also inclosed before 1736, is shown at that date on a map as well wooded, and timber trees growing on it were valued at £400 in 1733.²⁰⁶ Another area of medieval woodland is probably represented by Longmead copse, west of the village, since Wood furlong, recorded in 1566, lay nearby.²⁰⁷ The Old Common, in the south of the parish adjacent to Bush farm, included nine doles of wood in 1743, and was ‘very much incumbered with wood and thorns’.²⁰⁸

Richard Willoughby’s estimate of his demesne woodland in 1740 was 100 a., which must have included Hang Wood, Longmead copse and Old Common.²⁰⁹ Hang Wood, 58 a. in 1766, was divided into four compartments: Hang Wood itself lay east of the stream, and from north to south Ragg coppice, Cock Road, and New coppice lay west of the stream.²¹⁰ In 1797 oak wood felled out of Hang Wood totalled more than 28 tons and was sold for £85 13s.; Longmead and Old Common yielded mainly faggots.²¹¹ By 1806 Hang Wood had been reduced to 49 a., and Longmead was then 13 a.²¹² Their acreages remained the same in 1841, but by then a plantation of 11 a. at Puckwell had been added and, with 28 a. at Old Common and smaller plots, the demesne woodland in hand totalled 107 a., and in the parish as a whole 115 a.²¹³ These totals remained constant in 1875 and 1890,²¹⁴ and were similar at the 1912 sale, when the woods were divided between four lots, Hang Wood (60 a.) with Manor farm, Longmead (14 a.) with West Hill dairy, Puckwell (10 a.) with Broadmead farm, and Common wood (29 a.) with Bush farm.²¹⁵

Little change had occurred to the extent of West Knoyle’s woodland by the 1930s,²¹⁶ but Hang Wood, which was regularly cropped for fencing, was reduced in the 1960s.²¹⁷ Plans to clear fell the wood before 1974 and to plant conifers in 1980 met opposition and were withdrawn.²¹⁸ It was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1986.²¹⁹ In 1993 the Woodland Trust purchased Puckwell, by then semi-natural woodland, and most land between it, the parish boundary and Hang Wood (57 ha, 142 a.) in order to create the Mackintosh Davidson Wood; planting of broadleaf trees began in 1995 but areas have been left as grassland to maintain a wood-pasture ecosystem.²²⁰ The acquisition was enabled through a gift donated to commemorate the association between Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) and members of the Davidson family, and was the result of the sale of a Mackintosh painting.²²¹

MILLS

²⁰⁶ Ibid.; WSA 383/397, Particular of the several tenements bought since 1733.

²⁰⁷ C.R. Straton (ed.), *First Pembroke Survey*, i, 297.

²⁰⁸ WSA 383/397, letter, Willoughby to Cox, 13 Aug. 1743; *ibid.*, copy of court baron, 8 Apr. 1743.

²⁰⁹ WSA 383/397, Particular of the several tenements bought since 1733.

²¹⁰ Ibid., Plan of Hang Wood, 1766; WSA 212B/3661.

²¹¹ WSA 383/301.

²¹² WSA 383/305.

²¹³ WSA T/A West Knoyle.

²¹⁴ WSA 2710/1; WANHS Lib, box 57, mss 662.

²¹⁵ WSA 1260/4.

²¹⁶ Land Utilisation Survey, Map 1”, sheet 121 (Wells and Frome).

²¹⁷ Longley, *My First 60 Years*, location 808-12.

²¹⁸ Ibid.; WSA 3113/1, 1980-2 *passim*.

²¹⁹ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1002563.pdf> (accessed 15 Jan. 2019).

²²⁰ <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/woodfile/543/management-plan.pdf?cb=65ae9a7b9c6c4e47aceb4d5ee92313e5> (accessed 15 Jan. 2019).

²²¹ Ibid.; Longley, *My First 60 Years*, location 830-4.

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A mill in West Knoyle, with messuage, land and meadow (12 a.), was conveyed in 1346,²²² and a watermill was included in land transactions in 1590 and 1608.²²³ Although no mill or mill site is depicted on maps of 1736 and later, and no reference has been found to its miller, a Mill Close is recorded in surveys between 1719 and 1758,²²⁴ and this is located on a map of 1841 beside the stream south of Puckwell, indicating perhaps the former mill site.²²⁵ Mill Hays is shown on maps of 1796 and 1841 as lying south of the Middles.²²⁶ A tradition current before 1812 and c.1830 recalled that a windmill had been erected on a prehistoric barrow within this field, and that it was also known as Windmill Ground.²²⁷ No other evidence for this windmill has been found and it does not appear on 18th-century maps.

CRAFTS AND SERVICE TRADES

West Knoyle's proximity to the range of provisions and services available from its neighbour Mere has resulted in proportionately very few of its inhabitants pursuing a non-agricultural livelihood. John Lewis was a linen-weaver in 1639.²²⁸ A butcher in 1563, carpenters in 1619 and 1636, a saddler in 1739, and a shopkeeper in 1833 are recorded in probate records.²²⁹ Leases were granted to a blacksmith in 1741 and a tailor in 1743.²³⁰ Occupations recorded in 19th-century census records include thatcher, glover, carpenter, blacksmith, shoemaker, baker and shopkeeper.²³¹ The smithy, occupied by Henry and then George Hazzard between 1867 and 1889, stood at the road junction by West Hill dairy, and was still in use in 1915;²³² it fell down c.1940.²³³ Samuel Matthews served the village between 1867 and 1899 as its baker and grocer, and Mabel Riddick was running a post office in a cottage near the rectory by 1907; combining the office with a shop, she was still trading in 1939.²³⁴ Subsequently, until 1978 or later, Ivy Riddick ran a post office from her house at Stoney Bridge.²³⁵ In common with many rural communities, apart from small businesses run from home or using farm buildings, including equestrian, game-rearing, holiday accommodation and (eclectically) the bison centre, the livelihoods of most of West Knoyle's economically active inhabitants in the 21st century were pursued elsewhere.²³⁶

SOCIAL HISTORY

²²² *Wilts Feet of Fines, Edw. III* (ed. C.R. Elrington), 81 (322).

²²³ TNA, CP 25/2/241/33ELIZ1HIL, 3518 [check]; CP 43/103, ro. 191 [Check]

²²⁴ WSA 383/359; 383/297; 383/99, p. 206.

²²⁵ WSA T/A West Knoyle, nos. 169-71: The site is at NGR ST 853 313.

²²⁶ WSA 3117/2H.

²²⁷ Hoare, *Ancient Wilts*, I, 254; MHS, 3280D.

²²⁸ *Wilts. Notes & Queries*, vi, 123.

²²⁹ WSA P2/G/12; P5/1618/19; P2/IJ/104; P2/M/1019; P2/1833/40.

²³⁰ WSA 383/298; cf. 1746 survey: WSA 383/99, pp. 208-10.

²³¹ TNA, HO 107/1850, ff. 38-45v; RG 9/1323, ff. 30-7; RG 10/1965, ff. 94-101v; RG 11/2079, ff. 27-34; RG 12/1627, ff. 27-9.

²³² *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.*, 1867, 1875, 1880, 1885, 1889, 1911, 1915 edns.; OS 25", sheet Wilts. LXIII.7 (1901, 1925 edns.).

²³³ M.W. Mitchell, *An Informal Hist. of W. Knoyle* (1978), 13 (copy in MHS 4635).

²³⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.*, various edns., 1867-1939; OS 25", sheet Wilts. LXIII.7 (1901, 1925 edns.).

²³⁵ Longley, *My First 60 Years*, location 898; OS 1:10,000, sheet ST 83 SE (1984 rev.).

²³⁶ Local inf.; Longley, *My First 60 Years*, location 721.

SOCIAL CHARACTER

The totals of 11 villan and 9 cottage households recorded in 1086 may be compared with a list of taxpayers in 1225, where 13 individuals pay sums of 10s. 3d. or more, and 9 pay 8s. or less.²³⁷ In 1225 Roger Strug paid £5 3s., not far short of the abess of Wilton (£5 17s. 2d.) and six times more than the next highest payer (17s. 6d.). In 1332 one of the 21 taxpayers paid almost twice as much as any other.²³⁸ The 1381 poll tax included 11 married farmers, 3 married labourers, 4 servants and 5 others.²³⁹ Not only do these lists suggest a stable medieval population of around 20 households, with one dominant; but the same hereditary surnames recur, including three of the most prominent – Strug, Pinnock and Dewcock – still found as fieldnames on a map of 1796.²⁴⁰ The social structure was similar in 1523/4, when the demesne lessee, John Pyke, was assessed on goods four times more highly than any of the other 12 payers; 6 labourers and 5 servants were also taxed.²⁴¹

For over two centuries, 1546-1763, the resident Willoughby family dominated West Knoyle, as landowners and manorial lords until 1732 and then as steward.²⁴² In 1576 members of the family were assessed at 55 per cent of the parish total, in 1641 at 50 per cent, and in 1642/3, when 37 inhabitants were taxed, William Willoughby paid 38 per cent of the total (£7 10s. of £19 16s.); one other paid £2 15s, 11 paid between 7s. and 12s., and the other 24 between 1s. and 6s. 6d.²⁴³ As sole landowners the Willoughbys could be authoritarian, as in their strict control over access to the church gallery which they had paid for;²⁴⁴ and disparaging of their social inferiors, including the vicar, the curate, a neighbouring squire and some of their tenants.²⁴⁵ Geographically, too, they were aloof, since their large manor house and farm stood in the east of the parish well apart from the tenantry farms in the west and the cottagers fringing the southern commons.²⁴⁶

After 1763 there was no resident landlord, so that the parish hierarchy was headed by the two principal farmers, around six smaller farming tenants, and twenty or more households living in cottages held by copy or lease, and of insufficient means to pay the land tax.²⁴⁷ The arrival of a resident vicar in 1841 provided a new figure of authority.²⁴⁸ In 1851 almost the whole population was dependent for its livelihood on the three principal farmers, who employed 64 labourers (out of a total population of 180).²⁴⁹ At this date around 30 households were headed by farm labourers, but this total had halved by the end of the century, as the population fell and occupations became more diverse.²⁵⁰ The 1912 sale, which included 19 cottages as well as the farms, fragmented land ownership, and some dwellings were demolished as the population continued to decline.²⁵¹ Farm mechanisation and diversification, coupled with fast, easy access to neighbouring towns via the adjacent trunk road, new housing and the renovation of old, including farm building conversions, to modern standards, have all turned West Knoyle into a

²³⁷ Domesday, 171; Cazell, F.A. and A.P. (eds.) *Rolls of the Fifteenth for the Ninth Year of Henry III* (PRS, 1983), 85-6.

²³⁸ D.A. Crowley (ed.), *Wilts Tax List, 1332* (WRS 45), 14.

²³⁹ C.C. Fenwick (ed.), *Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, pt. 3 (2005), 19.

²⁴⁰ WSA 3117/2.

²⁴¹ TNA E 179/197/167 part 13; for John Pyke as lessee, TNA SC 6/HENVIII/3985, m.4.

²⁴² above: landownership.

²⁴³ G.D. Ramsay (ed.) *Two Sixteenth Century Taxation Lists* (WRS 10), 158; *WAM*, 38 (1914), 600, 606-7.

²⁴⁴ WSA 2541/5, f. 38v.

²⁴⁵ WSA 383/298, letters 22 Jan. 1742/3, 6 Apr. 1745, 15 Feb. 1745/6.

²⁴⁶ WSA 598/1L.

²⁴⁷ WSA 383/305 (1806 survey); WSA T/A West Knoyle (1841); WSA A1/345/248.

²⁴⁸ Below: Religious Hist, Religious life.

²⁴⁹ TNA, HO 107/1850, ff. 38-45v.

²⁵⁰ TNA, RG 12/1627, ff. 27-9; above: Introduction, population.

²⁵¹ WSA 1260/4

typical south Wiltshire rural community, deriving much of its prosperity from income earned elsewhere.²⁵²

COMMUNAL LIFE

Five parishioners were fined in 1594 for playing bowls (*globos*) and other games during feast days and church services.²⁵³ A close adjacent to the church was named Playshott in 1598, and Play Acre in 1693 and later.²⁵⁴

William Willoughby in 1655 convened at the manor house a week's long foxhunting meeting, in which many local gentry participated, and which involved also dancing at night to a fiddler.²⁵⁵ Richard Willoughby in 1746 proposed establishing a pack of harriers jointly with his East Knoyle neighbour.²⁵⁶ Within three years of the South and West Wilts Hunt being constituted, it gathered at West Knoyle church, in 1827, and by 1842 harriers were meeting at Willoughby Hedge gate.²⁵⁷ This became a frequent assembly point for hunting through the 19th century, long after the gate was removed, and as late as 1950.²⁵⁸ Damage caused by the hunt was a source of annoyance to local farmers in the 1930s.²⁵⁹

A reading and recreation room was opened in the parish in 1901, and a library operated from the school in 1902. The former schoolroom was purchased for the parish council in 1950 as a village hall; it housed a branch of the county library until 1960.²⁶⁰ The hall was refurbished before 2017, and in 2018 accommodated a range of meetings and activities, including a social club.²⁶¹ A beerhouse-keeper lived in the parish in 1851,²⁶² but no other evidence has been found for the existence of a public house, although Thomas Penny, a copyholder from 1725, is described in a survey of 1746 and a lease of 1753 as a victualler.²⁶³

An annual ploughing match was held at Willoughby Hedge from 1943 or earlier; by the following year the association that organised it had combined with another from Fonthill, and thereafter the match was held at various venues usually outside West Knoyle parish.²⁶⁴ Motorcycle scrambling at the Warren and grass-track racing at Willoughby Hedge began c.1950 and continued into the 1960s; in 1953 and 1956 the kidney-shaped course hosted national grass-track championships and attracted up to 6,000 spectators.²⁶⁵ A pow wow celebrating native American culture has been held every July from c.1997 at Bush Farm Bison Centre.²⁶⁶

To Henry Willoughby (c.1574-1639), younger son of the manorial owner Henry (d. 1608), is attributed a poem, *Willobie his Avis* (1594), which is notable as including the earliest reference in literature to William Shakespeare, with whom Willoughby may have been

²⁵² J. Longley, *My First 60 Years in West Knoyle* (e-book, 2014); local inf.

²⁵³ TNA, SC 2/209/30, 4 Mar 1594.

²⁵⁴ *Place-Names Wilts.* (EPNS), 483; WSA 212B/3644; position shown on WSA 135/6.

²⁵⁵ *WAM* 13, 178.

²⁵⁶ WSA 383/298, letter 15 Feb.1745/6.

²⁵⁷ *Bath Chronicle* 29 Nov.1827, p. 3; *Salisbury & Winchester Jnl.*, 24 Dec.1842, p. 4; cf. *VCH Wilts*, IV, 372.

²⁵⁸ *Western Gazette*, 27 Oct. 1950: p. 6.

²⁵⁹ J. Cherrington, *On the Smell of an Oily Rag* (1993 edn.), 85-7.

²⁶⁰ below: education; WSA 3113/1.

²⁶¹ <http://westknoyle.org/village-hall.html> (accessed 13 Nov. 2018)

²⁶² TNA, HO 107/1850, f. 43v.

²⁶³ WSA 383/297, 1758 survey; WSA 383/99, 1746 survey; WSA 383/298, lease 25 Mar. 1753.

²⁶⁴ *Wilts. Times*, 23 Oct, 1943, p.3; *Western Gazette*, 17 Nov. 1944, p.2.

²⁶⁵ *Western Gazette*, 10 Feb. 1950, p. 8; *Daily Herald*, 31 Aug. 1953, p. 5; *Wilts. Times*, 1 Sept. 1956, p. 2; C. May, *Grass-track racing through the years* (c.1965), p. 21.

²⁶⁶ <https://www.bisonfarm.co.uk/Events.html> (accessed 13 Nov. 2018).

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acquainted.²⁶⁷ Samuel Scott (1702-72), landscape and seascape painter, ‘the English Canaletto’, leased land in the parish during the 1750s.²⁶⁸ Richard Willoughby (d. 1763) lord of West Knoyle was portrayed as ‘Justice Willoughby of Noyle’, by his friend Henry Fielding in the novel *Tom Jones* (1749).²⁶⁹ Stephen Hyde Cassan (1789-1841), episcopal biographer, was stipendiary curate of West Knoyle 1823-31.²⁷⁰ John Cherrington (d. 1988), farming broadcaster and television presenter, wrote in his autobiography about his time as tenant of Manor farm, 1933-5.²⁷¹ Susan Hill, novelist, used Hang Wood and other West Knoyle locations in her 1970 psychological novel of childhood, *I’m the King of the Castle*, having lived intermittently in the village.

EDUCATION

There was no schoolmaster in the parish in 1662,²⁷² and in 1783 the curate reported that there was then no school in West Knoyle, nor ever had been in the remembrance of the inhabitants.²⁷³ There was a day school in the parish in 1818 and 1833, attended by 15 children at the former date and 12 at the later.²⁷⁴ Before c.1860 there had been a dame school in the parish, but by then the mistress was dead.²⁷⁵ There had also been a Sunday school supported by the vicar.²⁷⁶ Although in 1859 there was no school, and children attended at Mere,²⁷⁷ by 1861 a day school had been established in the former vicarage house, under the charge of a mistress who also lived there.²⁷⁸ In 1862 money from Willoughby’s charity supported it.²⁷⁹ A schoolmistress lived in the parish in 1871, but inspection in that year recommended that a new school be built to accommodate 38, subsequently increased to 56 by including children from Barrow Street (in Mere).²⁸⁰

A National school consisting of a single brick-built classroom, 28 x 16ft, opened in 1875 on a site adjoining the village street purchased from the Hoare estate in 1873.²⁸¹ The managers had difficulty in retaining a schoolmistress, nine resigning during the school’s first 16 years, probably because of the poor living quarters.²⁸² Continuity was achieved in 1891 when the rector’s daughter was appointed schoolmistress, but inefficiency and poor attainment were repeatedly censured by inspectors until she resigned in 1900 to move away with her parents.²⁸³ Another unsettled period ensued, with seven teachers between 1900 and 1905, and critical inspection reports, but from 1905, when the managers authorised the building of a house for the mistress next to the school, there were only two headmistresses, until Matilda Fowles (née Greedy) resigned in 1922 after 12 years in post.²⁸⁴

²⁶⁷ *ODNB*. The conventional date for his death before 1605, has been challenged by R. Giles Browne, who identifies him with Henry Willoughby, d. 1639: MHS, 658.

²⁶⁸ WSA 383/297, 1755 and 1758 surveys; *Oxford DNB*.

²⁶⁹ H. Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones: a Foundling*, vol.1 (1975 edn.), 458.

²⁷⁰ WSA D/1/8/1/2-3; *Oxford DNB*.

²⁷¹ J. Cherrington, *On the Smell of an Oily Rag* (1993 edn.), 76-92.

²⁷² WSA D1/54/1/3, no. 24, 7th title.

²⁷³ *Returns to Vis. Queries, 1783* (ed. Ransome, WRS 27), 134.

²⁷⁴ *Educ. of the Poor Digest*, p. 1030; *Education in England Abstract, 1835*, p. 1040.

²⁷⁵ WANHS Library mss 438, box 41.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Account of Wilts. Schools, 1859*, p. 29.

²⁷⁸ WANHS Library mss 438, box 41; TNA, RG 9/1323, f. 33.

²⁷⁹ WSA 2541/10.

²⁸⁰ TNA, RG 10/1965, f. 101v; TNA ED 21/18603.

²⁸¹ WSA F8/500/160/1/1, pp. 1, 89; WSA 3113/5.

²⁸² WSA F8/500/160/1/1-2.

²⁸³ *ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*; TNA, ED 21/18603.

Although intended to accommodate 56 pupils (later reduced to 28) attendance rarely exceeded 40, and by 1897 was on average fewer than 19. Between 1900 and 1915 the number on roll fluctuated between 24 and 40, and the average attendance between 21 and 34.²⁸⁵ Evening classes in dressmaking and technical skills commenced at the school in 1902, attracting ten pupils to each, and basket-making was taught in 1905.²⁸⁶ The resignation of Mrs Fowles in 1922 led to the school remaining closed for two months and a proposal, vigorously opposed by parishioners, for its permanent closure.²⁸⁷ Average attendance during the 1920s was 23.²⁸⁸ A second proposal by the education authority in 1926 to close the school and bus pupils to East Knoyle was approved, and the school closed in April 1927.²⁸⁹ The school premises were purchased in 1950 for use as a village hall, using money raised by the Victory Fund.²⁹⁰

SOCIAL WELFARE

Christopher Willoughby (d. c.1681), a merchant of Bishopstone (south Wilts.),²⁹¹ in 1678 endowed a charity to benefit the poor of Salisbury and West Knoyle, and for other purposes, which was administered by Salisbury corporation.²⁹² Three named West Knoyle beneficiaries were to receive £4 or £3 annually, £11 in total, and upon their decease successors were to be elected by the parish.²⁹³ In 1714 a charity table was purchased to hang in the church, and in 1805 two households were paid £1 each from the fund for bringing up families without poor relief.²⁹⁴ In 1833 the sums were still being paid to three recipients, ‘the most orderly and religious poor persons in the parish’, but by 1906, when administered by the vestry, the £11 total was sometimes divided between four.²⁹⁵ Thereafter three or four recipients were paid most years up to 1949.²⁹⁶ The charity was registered with the Charity Commission in 1965 and still operated in 2018; no payments had been made during the previous five years, and funds were stated to be held in trust for an emergency situation.²⁹⁷

The inquiries of 1833 and 1906 discovered no other charities for the poor in the parish, and no others specifically for West Knoyle were registered with the Charity Commission in 2018.²⁹⁸

In 1646 the manorial lord, William Willoughby, refused to pay poor rates and was ordered by quarter sessions to submit to assessment.²⁹⁹ In 1650 the curate, who had become old and infirm, appealed for poor relief to quarter sessions, who ordered the parish to support him.³⁰⁰ Offerings resulting from the four annual communion services were disbursed to the poor; in 1716 sums of between 6s. and 7s. were distributed quarterly to between six and eight people.³⁰¹

²⁸⁵ WSA F8/500/160/1/1; TNA, ED 21/18603.

²⁸⁶ WSA F8/500/160/1/2, pp. 81, 152; WSA 2541/13.

²⁸⁷ TNA ED 21/42419; WSA 3113/2.

²⁸⁸ TNA ED 21/42419.

²⁸⁹ TNA ED 21/42419; WSA 3113/2; WSA F8/500/160/1/3.

²⁹⁰ WSA 3113/5; WSA 3113/1.

²⁹¹ His will is TNA, PROB 11/365/263; the identity is confirmed by WSA A1/418 (‘late of Bishopston’).

²⁹² *Charities Report, Wilts, 1819-37*, 396-8; *VCH Wilts*, VI, 173.

²⁹³ *Charities Report, Wilts, 1819-37*, 396-8; WSA 2541/10.

²⁹⁴ WSA 2541/10.

²⁹⁵ *Charities Report, Wilts, 1819-37*, 396-8; *Endowed Charities Wilts (South)*, 1908, 273-6; WSA 2541/12.

²⁹⁶ WSA L2/156.

²⁹⁷ Char. Comm. 239614.

²⁹⁸ *Endowed Charities Wilts (South)*, 1908, 273-6; <http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk> (accessed 11 Nov. 2018)

²⁹⁹ *Wilts. QS Order Bk, 1642-54* (ed. Slocombe, WRS 67), 58-9 (no. 166).

³⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 193-4 (no. 563).

³⁰¹ WSA 2541/5, f. 6v.

A ‘parish house’, perhaps a poorhouse, stood in 1736 close to the parish boundary near the Charnage road.³⁰² In 1758 it was said to be ‘a harbour for idle people’ and its demolition was proposed.³⁰³ It is not shown on maps of 1788 or later.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Although it was regularly referred to as a parish church, West Knoyle remained a chapel-of-ease to North Newton in the Vale of Pewsey until 1841; the two parishes supported a prebend in Wilton abbey during the middle ages, and a sinecure prebend in the gift of the earls of Pembroke thereafter. In consequence West Knoyle before 1841 was served by impecunious curates appointed by a distant vicar, and because they were pluralists or through lack of amenable accommodation, many lived elsewhere. Between 1841 and 1930, when the benefice was combined with Mere, resident clergy served the parish. The church, apart from its tower, is largely a Victorian reconstruction of the medieval predecessor.

CHURCH ORIGINS AND PAROCHIAL ORGANISATION

West Knoyle chapel is first recorded in 1291, although some surviving fabric may date from earlier in the 13th century.³⁰⁴ By 1291, and until 1841, it was annexed to the church of North Newton, another Wilton abbey manor, distant 40 km north-east, and remained a chapelry.³⁰⁵ In 1299 North Newton, with West Knoyle, was attached to Wilton abbey as a prebend, and a vicarage ordained in 1308.³⁰⁶ West Knoyle was served by chaplains or curates appointed by the vicar.³⁰⁷ In 1841 West Knoyle was disunited from North Newton, the chapel became a church, and a vicar was appointed.³⁰⁸ The sinecure prebend (or rectory) fell vacant in 1869 and thereafter, under the scheme of 1841, it was combined with the vicarage, so that subsequent West Knoyle incumbents were rector and vicar.³⁰⁹ In 1929 a scheme combined the benefices of Mere and West Knoyle upon the next vacancy of either, which occurred in 1930, when West Knoyle became vacant.³¹⁰ In 2019 the parish formed part of the benefice of Mere with West Knoyle and Maiden Bradley, served from Mere.³¹¹ The dedication of the church to St Mary the Virgin dates only from the 1920s, and no earlier dedication has been found.³¹²

Advowson, Endowment and Vicarage

³⁰² WSA 598/1L, no. 27.

³⁰³ WSA 383/297, 1758 survey.

³⁰⁴ *Tax. Eccl.*, 181; Nat. Heritage List 1199597; leaflet in church.

³⁰⁵ *Tax. Eccl.*, 181; *VCH Wilts*, 10, 133.

³⁰⁶ *VCH Wilts*, 10, 133.

³⁰⁷ Below, this section, religious life.

³⁰⁸ *Lond. Gaz.* 21 Sep. 1841, p. 2346-7. Until 1868 he was perpetual curate appointed by the prebendary.

³⁰⁹ *Lond. Gaz.* 21 Sep. 1841, p. 2346-7. J.S. Stockwell, the prebendary, died in 1869: *VCH Wilts*, 10, 133. Incumbents in 1877 and 1883 described themselves as rectors and vicars: *Crockford Clerical Dir.* (1877 edn.), 479; *ibid.* (1883 edn.), 602.

³¹⁰ *Lond. Gaz.* 18 June 1929, p. 4022-4; *Crockford Clerical Dir.* (1933 edn.), 197.

³¹¹ <https://salisburycalling.org/pray-serve-grow/placement-churches/mere-west-knoyle-and-maiden-bradley/> (accessed 19 Jan. 2019).

³¹² *Kelly's Dir. Wiltshire* (1923 edn.), 132.

The advowson of the prebend belonged to Wilton abbey until its dissolution, and then to the earls of Pembroke with the lordship of North Newnton.³¹³ The earl still held the advowson when the prebend was abolished in 1869.³¹⁴ The prebendaries presented vicars to the living, who usually resided at North Newnton, although between 1573 and 1611 Henry Willoughby presented.³¹⁵ After West Knoyle was disunited from North Newnton in 1841 and the prebendary abolished, the advowson of West Knoyle belonged to the earls of Pembroke, who presented on each occasion until 1930.³¹⁶ After 1930 the bishop of Salisbury presented to the combined benefice.³¹⁷

The value of the chapelry was assessed in 1291 at £4, and in 1341 at £4 4s., derived from tithes and glebe.³¹⁸ In 1535 its was assessed at £8 12s. 8d.³¹⁹ After the reformation, in return for presenting to the prebend, the earls of Pembroke required the prebendaries to lease back to them the prebendal lands which, in the case of West Knoyle, they then sub-let to the manorial lords, the Willoughbys and later the Hoares.³²⁰ In 1566 Christopher Willoughby paid annual rent of £8 13s. 4d. for the West Knoyle prebendal or rectorial glebe, tithes and offerings; and in 1709 William Willoughby took them on a 99-year lease, which was then reissued to Henry Hoare in 1763, for which they paid £11 to the earl and £9 to the prebendary.³²¹ In 1841 the rectorial tithes were commuted for a rent-charge of £273 16s.³²²

The prebendal glebe in 1341 consisted of 20 a. arable, 3 a. meadow, a close and dovecote, and pasture worth 10s.³²³ In 1566 there was a close and coppice, 4 a. meadow, 24 a. arable scattered in the open fields, and pasture for 6 cattle and 120 sheep.³²⁴ More inclosed pasture (17 a.) was held in 1709, and the arable acreage totalled 25 a., but the stint for cattle and sheep remained the same.³²⁵ An agreement in 1780 set the total of glebe at 48 a. including a provision that 24 a. arable, formerly dispersed on the demesne, was to be allotted in a single parcel.³²⁶ This was laid out on either side of the lane running uphill from Manor Farm.³²⁷ A barn belonging to the glebe in Play Acre was replaced by Richard Willoughby in 1735 by another in New Close, of four bays, 60 x 20 ft., reusing materials from its predecessor.³²⁸ It was agreed in 1781 to substitute a new barn, of slightly larger dimensions, on the original site in Play Acre;³²⁹ it is likely, however, that it was never built, as no structure is depicted on Play Acre on later maps.³³⁰

The vicarial glebe in 1705 consisted of no more than a garden, 1 a. meadow and the churchyard, with rights of feeding livestock on the commons.³³¹ The vicar also received all tithes apart from corn and hay, £2 annually from Willoughby's charity, and an augmentation of £10 given by a previous Lord Pembroke.³³² Richard Willoughby in 1746 denied that the vicarage had

³¹³ *VCH Wilts*, 10, 133, where presentations are described.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134-5.

³¹⁶ *Crockford Clerical Dir.* (1877, 1883, 1898, 1909, 1930 edns.).

³¹⁷ *Lond. Gaz.* 18 June 1929, p. 4022-4.

³¹⁸ *Tax. Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), 181; *Inq. Non.* (Rec. Com.), 168.

³¹⁹ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), ii, 107.

³²⁰ *VCH Wilts*, 10, 134.

³²¹ *First Pembroke Survey*, ed. Straton, i, 297; WSA 2057/S30, 67-8.

³²² WSA T/A West Knoyle.

³²³ *Inq. Non.* (Rec. Com.), 168.

³²⁴ *First Pembroke Survey*, ed. Straton, i, 296-7.

³²⁵ WSA 2057/S30, 67-8; copied in WSA 383/297.

³²⁶ WSA 383/297, 1780 terrier.

³²⁷ WSA T/A West Knoyle, parcels 47a, 47b.

³²⁸ WSA 2057/S30, 68.

³²⁹ WSA 383/297, 1780 terrier; *ibid.*, bond 16 Apr. 1781.

³³⁰ WSA 135/6; WSA 3117/2H; WSA T/A West Knoyle.

³³¹ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers*, ed. Hobbs (WRS, 56), 232-3 (no. 444).

³³² *Ibid.*

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ever had feeding rights, although he conceded him a small allotment (less than 1 a.) when West Hill common was inclosed.³³³ Willoughby also claimed, improbably, that the vicar profited £60 annually from West Knoyle, but paid the curate £10.³³⁴ In 1841 the vicarial glebe totalled under 5 a., of which 2 a. had recently been purchased for the erection of a new vicarage house.³³⁵ At a date between 1841 and 1869 the vicar's endowment was augmented by the interest from a £300 grant by Queen Anne's Bounty, and a further £100 contributed by J.S. Cardew, the resident vicar.³³⁶ After 1869 he also received the income from the former prebendal or rectorial glebe.³³⁷

Clergy Houses

A messuage at West Knoyle was included in the glebe in 1341.³³⁸ In 1538 the chimney of the parsonage house required expenditure of £1 6s. 8d to make the building habitable by the curate.³³⁹ It, or its successor, was described in 1705 as a little dwelling-house with a skilling joined to the north end.³⁴⁰ In 1841 it was a single room 14 x 14 ft. and 6 ft. high, with hearth fireplace, and sleeping accommodation in the roof space; a woodhouse and lumber room were separate.³⁴¹ J.W. Cardew, vicar from 1841, built a substantial replacement of brick and stone in 1842-3, and this served as the rectory house until it was sold under the 1929 scheme.³⁴²

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Very little can be discovered about the religious life of medieval West Knoyle. Chaplains appointed by the vicar, or at the prebendary's behest,³⁴³ are not recorded in bishop's registers, and the names of only two are known, Richard Burbach in 1394 and Thomas Powell in 1538.³⁴⁴ The 1394 visitation reported, apart from laity incontinence, only that the chancel roof needed repair and that no offerings were made on dedication day.³⁴⁵ Whether or not in consequence of the disrepair it is clear from the tower and nave north windows that substantial work was undertaken on the church during the 15th century.³⁴⁶ The discovery in the parish of a pilgrim badge commemorating St Edith may suggest devotion by a late-medieval parishioner to the shrine of the saint in Wilton abbey.³⁴⁷ One prebendary, the noted poet, bibliographer and antiquary John Leland (c.1503-52), attempted in 1538 to have his vicar indicted for neglecting the parishioners, and almost certainly visited West Knoyle.³⁴⁸ A chalice weighing 9 oz. was the

³³³ WSA 383/298, letter 15 Feb. 1745/6, Willoughby to Hoare. The allotment is shown on WSA 1617/West Hill, West Knoyle.

³³⁴ Ibid. The £10 was presumably Lord Pembroke's augmentation.

³³⁵ WSA T/A West Knoyle; WANHS Lib. MS 438, box 41, 3.

³³⁶ WANHS Lib. MS 438, box 41, 3.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ *Inq. Non.* (Rec. Com.), 168.

³³⁹ TNA, C 1/841/21.

³⁴⁰ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers*, 232 (no. 444).

³⁴¹ WANHS Lib. MS 438, box 41, 3.

³⁴² Above, landscape, settlements and buildings: built character; WSA D1/11/90; *Lond. Gaz.* 18 June 1929, p. 4022-4.

³⁴³ As occurred in 1538: TNA C 1/841/21.

³⁴⁴ *Reg. Waltham* (Cant. & York Soc.), 133; TNA, C 1/841/21.

³⁴⁵ *Reg. Waltham*, 152.

³⁴⁶ Below: church architecture.

³⁴⁷ *WAM*, vol. 97 (2004), 293-4.

³⁴⁸ : TNA C 1/841/21; J.P. Carley (ed.) *John Leland De Viris Illustribus* (2010), xcvi.

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only plate in the church in 1553.³⁴⁹ A parishioner in 1559 couched her will in pre-Reformation terms, bequeathing her soul to Mary and the company of heaven, and the revenue from a cow to maintain a taper before the rood.³⁵⁰

The names of 11 curates serving West Knoyle between 1625 and 1834 are known.³⁵¹ Several moved on to other Wiltshire livings, or held more than one curacy in local parishes. John Thaine Frowd (d. 1826) of Chicklade was a notable pluralist, combining his duties at West Knoyle from 1789 with curacies at Fonthill Bishop and Berwick St Leonard, and the living of Kemble in north Wiltshire (now Glos.).³⁵² Samuel Clarke, curate in 1783, was vicar of Chirton; he lived at Horningsham and served also Hill Deverill.³⁵³ John Rugge's undistinguished career took him from curacies at Monkton Deverill, Knook and Sedghehill between 1623 and 1637, then to West Knoyle c.1639 until 1649 when, infirm and destitute, he was ordered to receive weekly relief.³⁵⁴ In 1668 the parish was served by neither vicar nor curate.³⁵⁵ One of two curates who also served Mere, Stephen Hyde Cassan, lived in Mere vicarage house.³⁵⁶ Cassan (1789-1841) curate of West Knoyle 1823-31, had moved from Frome, where he was involved in a scandal, and during his curacy published scholarly collected biographies of the bishops of Salisbury, Winchester, and Bath and Wells.³⁵⁷ It is likely, as was asserted c.1860, that no curate had resided in the parish between 1773 and 1841;³⁵⁸ and Richard Willoughby may have been justified in his criticism of inadequate religious provision in the 1740s: 'he [the vicar, William Barford] gives a little coxcomb £10 a year to do the duties of the church *in part*, in a most scandalous and impudent manner.'³⁵⁹

Thomas Hickman (d. 1659), active royalist rector of Upton Lovell, settled in West Knoyle after his sequestration in 1647, and his family, despite their impoverishment, continued in the parish for several generations.³⁶⁰ Willoughby's charity endowment of 1678, although principally for the poor, included provision for an annual sermon and payment to the vicar (typically £2) and parish officers.³⁶¹ Surplus funds from the charity accruing during the 18th century were spent on improvements about the church, including the bells, porch, books and gallery.³⁶² In 1719/20 the parish registers and other documents were deliberately burnt and destroyed by intruders entering the churchwarden's house where they were kept.³⁶³ Churchwardens' accounts survive 1711-60, and show that communion was then celebrated four times yearly.³⁶⁴ A new chalice with cover and a flagon were given to the church in 1727.³⁶⁵ A campaign of repairs and alterations to the church was undertaken 1717-40, especially in 1724 when a singers' gallery was erected largely at the Willoughbys' expense, and in 1739, for a new font, repairs to the pulpit and

³⁴⁹ WAM, vol. 12 (), 366.

³⁵⁰ WSA P2/3Reg/182A; see WAM vol. 98 (2005), 86.

³⁵¹ Clergy of Church of England Database.

³⁵² Ibid., E.R. Barty, *Chicklade and Pertwood* (1955). He owned land in Sedghehill : *VCH Wilts*, 13, 172.

³⁵³ *Returns to Vis. Queries, 1783*, ed. Ransome (WRS, 27), 133-4.

³⁵⁴ Clergy of Church of England Database; *Wilts. QS Order Book*, ed. Slocombe (WRS, 67), 193-4 (no. 563)

³⁵⁵ WSA D1/54/3/2, no. 42.

³⁵⁶ S.H. Cassan, *Lives and Memoirs of the Bishops of Sherborne and Salisbury . . .* (1824), dedication page.

³⁵⁷ ODNB.

³⁵⁸ WANHS Lib. MS 438, box 41, 3.

³⁵⁹ WSA 383/298, letter 15 Feb. 1745/6, Willoughby to Hoare.

³⁶⁰ WSA 2601/8; WAM, vol. 32, 186-9, 347-8.

³⁶¹ WSA 2541/10;

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ WSA 2653/1; details transcribed in *Gleanings from Wiltshire Par. Regs.*, ed Hobbs (WRS 63), 266.

³⁶⁴ WSA 2541/5.

³⁶⁵ J.E. Nightingale, *Ch. Plate of Wilts.*, 61.

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reading desk, and mural inscriptions.³⁶⁶ The 1739 changes were connected with improvements to the chancel carried out in that year by Richard Willoughby.³⁶⁷

Services were held every Sunday morning in 1783, and the sacrament quarterly, when ten or twelve usually communicated.³⁶⁸ The curate reported that through Henry Hoare's munificence the church was in good repair, and in point of neatness and decent ornaments the equal of any in the diocese.³⁶⁹ By contrast, c.1860 the vicar stated that the bells were cracked and the whole church was in a dilapidated state, and needed to be entirely renewed.³⁷⁰ Wholesale restoration and rebuilding took place in 1878-9 at an estimated cost of £1,450, which increased accommodation from 93 to 118.³⁷¹

The arrival of a resident vicar in 1841, James Walter Cardew, probably resulted from the initiative of Joseph Stockwell, rector of Wilton and a protégé of Lord Pembroke, who undertook a similar reform at North Newnton after becoming prebendary in 1829.³⁷² In 1864 the vicar officiated at two full services with sermon each Sunday, to an average congregation of 30, and celebrated communion every six weeks.³⁷³ Cardew was succeeded on his death in 1872 by Edward Inman, who oversaw the church restoration, and moved to Gillingham (Dors.) to become vicar in 1882.³⁷⁴ West Knoyle was served by five rectors between 1883 and 1930, four of whom had previously served elsewhere in south Wiltshire.³⁷⁵ In 1898 under Samuel Mangin, who had a Tractarian background,³⁷⁶ services were held twice or thrice each Sunday, including communion, with additional services on many saints' days; there were generally no more than nine communicants, including the rector's family.³⁷⁷ Robert Usher, his successor in 1900, held only one service on Sundays but started a weekday service in 1901 without initial success, and instigated various community activities.³⁷⁸ The last rector of West Knoyle, Samuel Handcock, had retired to Shaftesbury (Dors.) in 1921 after a long clerical career, including more than a decade in South America.³⁷⁹ While serving West Knoyle from 1925 he was also excavating Shaftesbury abbey, the site of which he owned.³⁸⁰ His death in 1930 led to the benefice combining with Mere.³⁸¹

Nonconformity

There were no recusants or protestant nonconformists reported in the parish in 1668, 1676 or 1683,³⁸² and the curate in 1783 stated that there were no papists or dissenters whatever.³⁸³ Dissenting meetings in dwellinghouses were certified for Independents in 1798, and for

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; an account of building the gallery, and strict instructions for access and its use, is misplaced on f. 38v.

³⁶⁷ *Modern Wilts., Mere Hundred*, 39; below, church architecture.

³⁶⁸ *Returns to Vis. Queries, 1783*, 133-4.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ WANHS Lib. MS 438, box 41, 2.

³⁷¹ WSA D1/61/29/2; WSA 2541/8.

³⁷² Cf *VCH Wilts.*, vol. 10, 135; vol. 15, 304.

³⁷³ WSA D1/56/7.

³⁷⁴ *Crockford Clerical Dir.* (1870, 1877, 1883 edns.); *WAM*, 42 (1924), 607.

³⁷⁵ *Crockford Clerical Dir.* (1883, 1898, 1909, 1918, 1923, 1930 edns.).

³⁷⁶ G. Herring, *Oxford Movement in Practice* (2016), 311.

³⁷⁷ WSA 2541/1.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; WSA 2541/13.

³⁷⁹ *WAM*, 45 (1930), 110-11.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ Above, this chapter: Advowson, Endowment and Vicarage.

³⁸² WSA D1/54/3/2, no. 42; *Compton Census* (ed. Whiteman), 169; WSA D1/54/10/4, no. 14.

³⁸³ *Returns to Vis. Queries, 1783*, 133.

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Methodists in 1811 and 1825, but no meeting-house was certified in the parish.³⁸⁴ John Riddick, a Methodist signatory in 1811 and 1825, was the tenant of Oxlease farm.³⁸⁵ The vicar reported in 1864 that ‘meetingers’ held preachings in a cottage and might claim to be dissenters.³⁸⁶ In 1978 it was believed that part of a stone wall recently demolished at Oxlease farm had belonged to a nonconformist chapel there.³⁸⁷

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

West Knoyle church, since the 1920s dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, consists of nave and chancel, with west tower and south porch, built of dressed limestone under a tiled roof.³⁸⁸ Of the building recorded in 1291 only two lancet windows in the chancel and a trefoiled piscina are surviving features. Three windows and a blocked door on the north wall of the nave are late medieval, as is the three-stage tower with west door, Perpendicular windows and a sheela na gig gargoyle.³⁸⁹ The chancel underwent extensive alterations to ‘Italianize’ it in the early 18th century, largely at the expense of William and Richard Willoughby.³⁹⁰ The porch was repaired in 1767. Watercolours of 1804 show the church exterior before Victorian restoration, when its dimensions were 66 ft. x 16 ft. 3 in. and with no arch partitioning nave from chancel.³⁹¹ Restoration by J. Mountford Allen of Crewkerne 1878-9 included removing the west gallery, restoring the tower and porch, completely rebuilding the nave and chancel, extending the chancel 8 ft. eastwards and erecting an organ chamber.³⁹² The floors were replaced, heating apparatus incorporated, woodwork repaired or replaced and the churchyard levelled. The church has undergone little structural alteration subsequently, although the tower arch was screened in 1901, electric lighting was introduced in 1952, and the reredos was removed in 1962;³⁹³ before 2015 the nave was re-roofed and the Henry Willis 1879 organ restored.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MANORIAL GOVERNMENT

The abbess of Wilton was taking the perquisites of her court baron at West Knoyle in the 1530s, including penalties for stray livestock.³⁹⁴ The West Knoyle tithingman or his deputy attended three-weekly courts and biennial courts leet for Mere hundred between 1567 and 1627, although he was frequently amerced for non-attendance.³⁹⁵ His presentments included debts, assaults, illegal gaming, and a bridge out of repair. It is possible that West Knoyle courts were held with

³⁸⁴ *Meeting House Certs.* (WRS 40), 50 (no. 523), 68 (no. 710), 107 (no. 1118), 108 (no. 1123).

³⁸⁵ Above: econ. hist., agriculture, since 1700.

³⁸⁶ WSA D1/56/7.

³⁸⁷ M.W. Mitchell, *An Informal Hist. of W. Knoyle* (1978), 14.

³⁸⁸ This para: Nat. Heritage List 1199597; leaflet guide in ch.; personal observation.

³⁸⁹ <http://www.sheelanagig.org/wordpress/west-knoyle/> (accessed 21 Jan. 2019).

³⁹⁰ Above, religious life.

³⁹¹ WAM, 40 (1918), 170. The NE view is WANHS. Lib. DZSWS:1982.399. Dimensions from *Modern Wilts., Mere Hundred*, 39.

³⁹² WSA D1/61/29/2; WSA 2541/8.

³⁹³ WSA D1/61/39/4; D1/61/101/106; D1/61/111/2.

³⁹⁴ *Valor Eccles.* li, 107; TNA, SC6/HENVIII/3985, m.4.

³⁹⁵ TNA, SC 2/209/19-41.

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those of Baverstock c.1605 and later.³⁹⁶ Although records of the court baron do not survive before 1783, it is clear from a survey taken at a court in 1719 and from later records that the usual business of copyhold and leasehold admissions and surrenders was conducted there in the 17th and 18th centuries.³⁹⁷ A court in 1743 concerned itself with letting common land to support the poor.³⁹⁸ Courts baron were held annually each autumn 1783-1846, for which presentments recording routine business, including the appointment of a hayward, survive 1783-1813.³⁹⁹ Court proceedings, with those of other Stourhead manors, are recorded, 1796-1910.⁴⁰⁰ All relate to property transfers, although after 1846 only five West Knoyle admissions and surrenders occur, all transacted out of court.

Stocks, described as ancient, survived outside the churchyard gate in 1924, but had disappeared by 1928; their last occupant, reputedly, was Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) while visiting the church.⁴⁰¹

PAROCHIAL GOVERNMENT

West Knoyle vestry was in dispute with William Willoughby, the manorial owner, in 1646 and, separately, was ordered by quarter sessions to pay poor relief to an impotent curate in 1650.⁴⁰² From its endowment in 1678 disbursements from Willoughby's charity were entrusted to the churchwardens and vestry, who were still responsible for it in 1906.⁴⁰³ Vestry business between 1711 and 1759, especially highway repairs in 1743, are recorded in a volume of churchwardens' accounts. Surveyors were appointed, and payments were made to the hayward, but settlement removals and other matters appear to have been entrusted to the constable of Mere hundred, who was recompensed by the vestry, the parish not electing one of its own.⁴⁰⁴ West Knoyle entered Mere poor law union in 1835, and thereafter a guardian appointed by the vestry attended board meetings.⁴⁰⁵ Vestry minutes survive 1879-1911, when secular business was restricted to electing overseers, a waywarden and guardian; after 1894 only church matters were considered.⁴⁰⁶

POST-1894 ARRANGEMENTS

Between 1894 and 1934 West Knoyle was a constituent of Mere rural district, and from 1934 until 1974 Mere and Tisbury rural district.⁴⁰⁷ It then entered Salisbury district until 2009 when Wiltshire became a unitary local authority.

A parish meeting was convened in June 1894, and in 1895 a public enquiry confirmed that this, rather than a parish council, was to be established.⁴⁰⁸ The parish meeting, which was usually chaired by the vicar, elected overseers and appointed a salaried assistant overseer, whose role was combined with clerk in 1914. In 1902 the meeting appointed a guardian, and in 1910 a school manager. The meeting liaised with the rural district council over roads, water

³⁹⁶ WSA 332/246, Baverstock ct. book 1604-6; although endorsed that it includes West Knoyle presentments, it contains no entries.

³⁹⁷ WSA 383/359; 383/297.

³⁹⁸ WSA 383/298, copy of ct. baron, 8 Apr. 1743.

³⁹⁹ WSA 383/360; 383/322.

⁴⁰⁰ WSA 3117/13.

⁴⁰¹ *Wilts. Times*, 29 Sep. 1928; cf. *WAM*, 33 (1903), 75.

⁴⁰² *Wilts QS Order Book, 1642-54*, ed. Slocombe (*Wilts. Rec. Soc.* 67), 58-9 (no. 166), 193-4 (no. 563).

⁴⁰³ WSA 2541/10; above, *Social hist: social welfare*.

⁴⁰⁴ WSA 2541/5

⁴⁰⁵ WSA H12/110/1. pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰⁶ WSA 2541/12.

⁴⁰⁷ *VCH Wilts*, 4, 335

⁴⁰⁸ This para: WSA 3113/2.

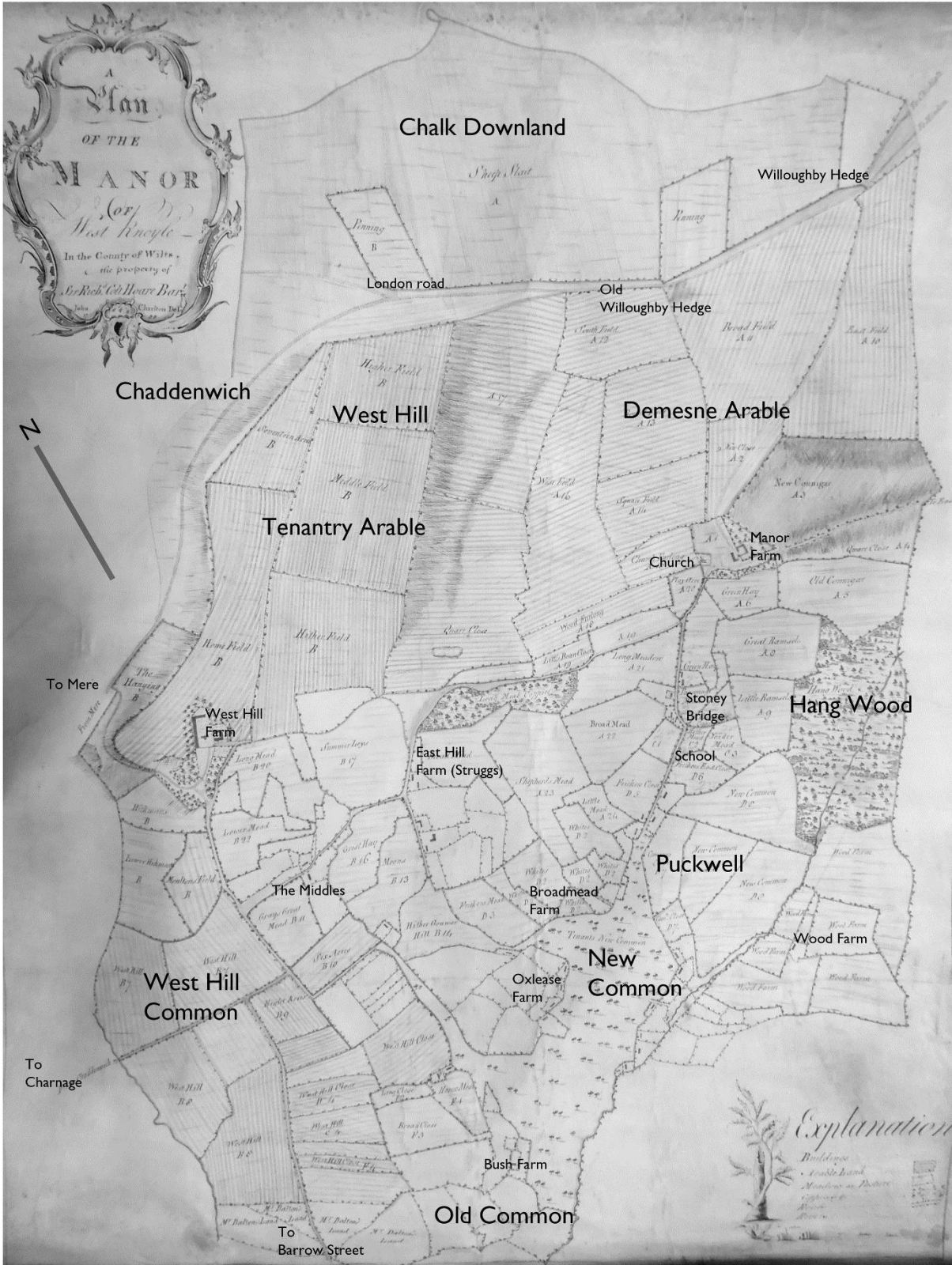
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supply and housing, and with the county council over the school closure. In 1927 it contributed to the cost of a motor fire engine for Mere. Minutes of only one meeting (in 1936) held between 1931 and 1948 exist, and thereafter, with the inauguration of a parish council, the parish meeting was held annually until 1958.

West Knoyle parish council has met regularly since 1949, when elections to it were first held. Business transacted until 1958 often overlapped with the parish meeting, and included bus services and the conversion of the former school to a village hall.⁴⁰⁹ J.S. Bain of Manor farm, the first chairman, served until 1970 when he retired and moved away. The council has discharged the usual duties of a parish council, including consultation on planning, housing and road traffic matters, and between 1980 and 1982 discussed proposed changes to Hang Wood. In 2018 there were five parish councillors, who met four times during the year.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ This para: WSA 3113/1.

⁴¹⁰ <http://westknoyle.org/parish-council.html>.



1788 estate map of West Knoyle, annotated to show principal features (WSA 135/6)