

## Religious History

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The parish church at Chipping Sodbury was originally founded in the late 13th century as a chapel of ease to Old Sodbury.

### **Church Origins and Parochial Organization**

Although Chipping Sodbury was founded *c.*1218,<sup>1</sup> the church dates from later in the century, being dedicated by the bishop of Worcester in 1284.<sup>2</sup> The location of the church, to the rear of several burgage plots, and only accessed from the high street by a narrow lane, further suggests that it was founded much later than the borough. The first reference to the dedication of the church to St John the Baptist dates from 1519.<sup>3</sup>

As a chapel of ease, the church was served by a chaplain, appointed by the vicar of Old Sodbury. It appears to have exercised full parochial rights since the middle ages, with its font dating from the 15th century, and the churchyard was probably laid out at the same time as the church.<sup>4</sup> The earliest reference to burial at Chipping Sodbury dates from the early 16th century,<sup>5</sup> and registers recorded baptisms, marriages and burials are extant from the early 17th century.<sup>6</sup> The chapel had churchwardens by the early 16th century,<sup>7</sup> and probably long before this date.

Under the terms of the Queen Anne's Bounty Act of 1714,<sup>8</sup> the benefice was created a perpetual curacy with the grant of £1,000 in 1822.<sup>9</sup> It was made a distinct parish under the Extra-Parochial Places Act of 1857,<sup>10</sup> and the incumbent became a vicar under the Incumbents Act of 1868.<sup>11</sup> The benefice was united with Old Sodbury in 1955.<sup>12</sup>

### **Advowson and value of the living**

When the living at Chipping Sodbury became first a perpetual curacy and then a vicarage in the 19th century, the patronage remained vested in the vicar of

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<sup>1</sup> See Landscape, Settlement and Buildings: Boundaries and Parish Origins.

<sup>2</sup> WAAS, Register of Bishop Giffard, f. 209.

<sup>3</sup> WAAS, 008.7 BA3585, Will of Ellen Taylour, 1519.

<sup>4</sup> See Church Architecture.

<sup>5</sup> WAAS, 008.7 BA3585, Will of Ellen Taylour, 1519.

<sup>6</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219.

<sup>7</sup> GA, D2071/L6.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Geo. I stat. 2 c.10.

<sup>9</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty* (1826 ed.), 321.

<sup>10</sup> 20 Vict. c.19.

<sup>11</sup> 31 & 32 Vict. c.117.

<sup>12</sup> *Lond. Gaz.*, 4 Feb. 1955, 700–1.

Old Sodbury. The stipend of the curate was £6 13s. 4d in 1522,<sup>13</sup> and £14 11s. in 1650.<sup>14</sup> A terrier of 1680 recorded that the tithes of Chipping Sodbury had been compounded.<sup>15</sup> The parishioners were to pay 2d. for each burgage or backside containing a burgage, 1d. for every garden or orchard, and 6d. for each calf. The townsmen were also to pay 2d. for each acre held in the Mead Riding, and 4d. for each cow or rother beast pastured in the Stub Riding. In the early 18th century the curate was entitled to receive the fees usually due to the vicar, supplemented by a subscription, which together were said to be worth over £40 a year.<sup>16</sup> In the 19th century the vicar was entitled to a bottle of brandy or its value in cash when administering communion.<sup>17</sup>

The schoolmaster, Thomas Smith, was nominated to serve as the curate in 1822, with a stipend of £30, the Easter dues worth £20, and the surplice fees worth £16.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, a parliamentary grant of £1,000 was made to supplement the income of the benefice,<sup>19</sup> which now became a perpetual curacy. A gift of £200 was made in 1831 by Revd James Hardwicke, the vicar of Old Sodbury, matched by an equal grant from Queen Anne's Bounty.<sup>20</sup> Together, these raised the value of the living to £126 in 1831.<sup>21</sup> The benefice was further augmented with gifts totalling £400 in 1832,<sup>22</sup> and another gift of £200 by Hardwicke in 1833,<sup>23</sup> matched in both cases by parliamentary grants of equal amounts.<sup>24</sup> In 1851 the perpetual curate's income was said to amount to £130, comprising a permanent endowment of £85, dues and Easter offerings of £15, and a subscription of £30.<sup>25</sup> Another grant of £200 was made from Queen Anne's bounty in 1860,<sup>26</sup> and the gross income of the living was said to be £170 in 1874.<sup>27</sup> This was further augmented by an annual grant of £136 by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1882,<sup>28</sup> following which the gross income was said to amount to £297, including £91 paid from Queen Anne's Bounty, £60 charged upon the tithes of Old Sodbury, and annual fees of £10.<sup>29</sup> Another £47 was added to the

<sup>13</sup> *Military Surv. of Glos.* 1522, 3; TNA, PROB 11/21/38.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, C 94/1, f. 29v.

<sup>15</sup> GA, P300 IN 1/2; D2071/E41.

<sup>16</sup> *Benson's Survey.* 35.

<sup>17</sup> GA, P300 IN 1/3.

<sup>18</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>19</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty* (1826 ed.), 321.

<sup>20</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty* (2nd ed.), ccxiii.

<sup>21</sup> *Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues* (Parliamentary Papers, 1835 (67), xxii), 422–3.

<sup>22</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty* (2nd ed.), ccxiv.

<sup>23</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty* (2nd ed.), ccxvi.

<sup>24</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty* (2nd ed.), cclxxxiv.

<sup>25</sup> *Religious Census 1851*, 100.

<sup>26</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty* (2nd ed.), lxxv.

<sup>27</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.* (1874 edn.), 222.

<sup>28</sup> *Lond. Gaz.* 11 Aug. 1882, 3747; GA, P300 IN 3/2.

<sup>29</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.* (1885 edn.), 541.

value of the stipend by the commissioners in 1927,<sup>30</sup> and £25 more in 1929.<sup>31</sup> The gross income amounted to £334 in 1932, comprising £172 stipend from the commissioners, £87 from Queen Anne's Bounty, annual fees worth £8, and 379 from other sources.<sup>32</sup>

## **Clergy Houses**

Little is known about clerical accommodation in the town during the medieval period, although the parish's priests may have been housed in part of the guild house. For much of its modern history, the town was served by stipendary curates who were often employed elsewhere and did not reside in the town. When the living was created a perpetual curacy in 1822, the new incumbent was already the schoolmaster of the town's grammar school, and so accommodated in the schoolhouse.<sup>33</sup> Following his death in 1857, a vicarage house was built to the west of the town, on the road to Yate. This was sold c.1921.<sup>34</sup> The parish then had no house for the incumbent for around a decade, while funds were raised.<sup>35</sup> With proceeds from the sale of the old vicarage, grants from Queen Anne's Bounty, proceeds from fundraising events, and donations from parishioners, the church council had raised £3,590 of £3,760 by 1932,<sup>36</sup> when the new house was completed on the east side of Horseshoe Lane.<sup>37</sup>

## **Religious Life**

### **Middle Ages to Reformation**

As the church was not dedicated until more than half a century after the foundation of the borough,<sup>38</sup> the burgesses were presumably forced to attend the parish church at Old Sodbury until 1284. The enlargement of the church was commenced during the 14th century, but was interrupted, perhaps by the Black Death.<sup>39</sup> The rebuilding was completed over the course of the 15th century, comprising the north aisle, completed early in the century, the south aisle and porch, and two side chapels, all completed later in the century.<sup>40</sup> A tall tower of four stages was completed towards the end of the century. The substantial enlargement and

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<sup>30</sup> *Lond. Gaz.* 25 Oct. 1927, 6707.

<sup>31</sup> *Lond. Gaz.* 29 Oct. 1929, 6872.

<sup>32</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.* (1932 edn.), 1114.

<sup>33</sup> See Education.

<sup>34</sup> GA, GDR/F4/6/25.

<sup>35</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 2 Nov. 1929.

<sup>36</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 16 July 1932.

<sup>37</sup> GA, P300 IN 3/3.

<sup>38</sup> See Church Origins and Parochial Organization.

<sup>39</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1888–9), 38.

<sup>40</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1888–9), 38.

embellishment of church reflects both the piety and prosperity of the townspeople during the 15th century.<sup>41</sup> A large and ornate stone pulpit of this period suggests an appetite for preaching among the inhabitants of the town.<sup>42</sup>

The town's prosperity during the 15th century was reliant upon the cloth trade, and one of the side chapels was dedicated to the patron saint of weavers, St Katherine.<sup>43</sup> Further evidence of this 15th-century prosperity is provided by the town's chantry, founded in the Lady chapel in 1452.<sup>44</sup> The guild appointed a master or warden, had a common seal, and could acquire lands not held in chief up to the value of £10 a year. The guild used its revenue to maintain a chantry with two chaplains who celebrated divine service at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The lands held by the fraternity were managed by leasing them to laymen in return for a payment of rent.<sup>45</sup> A survey undertaken in the reign of Elizabeth found that the lands of the guild had been held by indenture for a term of years, by copyhold, and as tenants at will. The tenants were all also bound to pay 1*d.* a year for each house towards the employment of a clerk,<sup>46</sup> presumably the 'priest's silver' referred to in one tenant's indenture.<sup>47</sup>

Grants of land were made to raise funds for the maintenance of the church during the middle ages. In the 14th century it received 3*d.* a year from a piece of land called 'Bareland', which had frontage on the high street.<sup>48</sup> Early in the 15th century 3½ a. in the common meadow of Old Sodbury were conveyed to the church,<sup>49</sup> for which it paid a rent of 4*d.* or 1*lb* of cumin by the end of the century.<sup>50</sup> A lamp rent paid out of land called Standell to maintain a lamp within the parish church, worth 16*d.* by the time of its suppression in the reign of Edward VI, had presumably also been given to the church during the 14th or 15th centuries.<sup>51</sup> The lands and tenements belonging to the church were assessed at £12 12*s.* in the lay subsidy of 1524,<sup>52</sup> while the lands of the guild were valued at £13 a year in 1522.<sup>53</sup>

In the early 16th century the church was served by a curate, receiving a stipend of £6 13*s.* 4*d.*, and the two chantry chaplains, each receiving stipends of £6.<sup>54</sup> In 1534 the cure was served by Walter Squire, and the two chantry priests were

<sup>41</sup> Chipping Sodbury EUS, 11.

<sup>42</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1888–9), 39.

<sup>43</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1888–9), 39.

<sup>44</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1446–1452, 565–6; GA, D2071/E41.

<sup>45</sup> TNA, LR 14/1091; TNA, C 1/1157/39.

<sup>46</sup> TNA, E 134/15Eliz/Trin3.

<sup>47</sup> TNA, E 164/39.

<sup>48</sup> *The Cartulary of St Augustine's Abbey, Bristol* (GRS, 10, 1998), 406–7, Add. Docs 6–7.

<sup>49</sup> GA, D2071/L6.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, DL 29/638/10362.

<sup>51</sup> TNA, E 201/22/54.

<sup>52</sup> *Bristol & Glos. Lay Subsidy*, 141–3, 309–10.

<sup>53</sup> *Military Surv. of Glos. 1522*, 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Military Surv. of Glos. 1522*, 3.

Henry Jones and Henry Dawson;<sup>55</sup> Dawson may still have been at the church in 1543.<sup>56</sup> John Glover was curate of the church by 1540, possibly aided by another priest, Nicholas Dynscom,<sup>57</sup> when the chantry priests were John Gloucester and William Bowman.<sup>58</sup> Bowman had been replaced by Henry Nele in 1544,<sup>59</sup> who was later granted a pension of £1 10s. a year.<sup>60</sup> However, in 1546 the two chantry priests were said to be Leonard Brown and John Elvune.<sup>61</sup>

Testamentary evidence of the early 16th century reveals the continuing strength of the cult of saints during the early 16th century. Ellen Taylour bequeathed a spoon to the altar of St Katherine and her best gown to the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1519.<sup>62</sup> Richard Colymore, who had paid for the building of the window in the north chapel under which he was later buried,<sup>63</sup> left gifts the altars of St Clement, St Katherine, St Nicholas, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Trinity, and the high altar of the church in 1523.<sup>64</sup> Margaret Smyth left altar cloths for the altars of St Katherine and the Lady chapel in 1532.<sup>65</sup> Her will also hints at the importance of music in the church at this time, leaving the substantial sum of £4 for the purchase of a new antiphoner. The survey of the guild of Chipping Sodbury in 1546 recorded that they maintained an organ player in the church, who received a stipend of 13s. 4d. a year.<sup>66</sup>

### Reformation to Civil War

Craftsmen travelling between Lollard groups in Bristol and Coventry may have introduced the inhabitants of Chipping Sodbury to their ideas,<sup>67</sup> but there is little evidence of heretical belief before the Reformation. Although Foxe records the burning of a Protestant martyr at Chipping Sodbury in 1508, there are no other sources for the event.<sup>68</sup> Foxe's source, a Bristol-based distributor of Lollard and Protestant texts called Richard Webb, was a native of Chipping Sodbury who also

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<sup>55</sup> Hockaday Abs. General 1534-1536.

<sup>56</sup> GA, GDR, Wills, 1543/25.

<sup>57</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>58</sup> WAAS, 802 BA2764, f. 209.

<sup>59</sup> CCED, ID 159261; TNA, E 179/28/1a.

<sup>60</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 49 (1927), 107.

<sup>61</sup> TNA, E 301/22/54; E 301/23/68; *Trans. BGAS*, 8 (1883-4), 277.

<sup>62</sup> WAAS, 008.7 BA3585, Will of Ellen Taylour, 1519.

<sup>63</sup> Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 295.

<sup>64</sup> TNA, PROB 11/21/38.

<sup>65</sup> WAAS, 008.7 BA3585, Will of Margaret Smyth, 1532.

<sup>66</sup> TNA, E 301/21/56.

<sup>67</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1971), 142.

<sup>68</sup> John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (1576 edition) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011), VI, 940, <<http://www.johnfoxe.org>> [accessed 26 Feb. 2019]. *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1971), 145.

provided accounts of Tyndale's time at Little Sodbury.<sup>69</sup> Tyndale was employed in the household of the lord of the manor, Sir John Walsh, who also welcomed other reformist preachers into his home.<sup>70</sup> Other prominent gentry families of the neighbourhood, in particular the Poyntzes of Iron Acton, were also sympathetic to reforming ideas, and the strong connections between the merchants of Chipping Sodbury and Bristol would also have introduced the new ideas into the town.<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, there are few hints of any strong support for Protestantism during the early years of the Reformation. The burning of another Protestant reputed to have taken place at either Chipping Sodbury or Little Sodbury is certainly apocryphal.<sup>72</sup> One testator of 1543 left money in her will for a priest to pray for her soul for one whole year,<sup>73</sup> and another of the same year enjoined his executors to distribute the residue of his estate for the health of his soul and of all Christian souls.<sup>74</sup> The curate William Ramsey, who was later instituted vicar of Old Sodbury, may have been another important conduit for Protestantism into the parish, and in 1546 he witnessed a will with an explicitly Protestant statement of faith.<sup>75</sup> The survey of the guild undertaken in that year recorded that it still employed two chantry priests, and also maintained 4 obits a year, worth 2s. each.<sup>76</sup> Besides the organ player, already noted, the guild employed its own steward, with a stipend of 13s. 4d., and made payments of 8s. 8d. and 6s. 8d. respectively for keeping its ornaments and for maintaining a clock in the church. The total revenues of the guild were put at £18 19s. in 1546, but in 1548 its lands were valued at £1 2s. 4d. a year.<sup>77</sup> The guild had ornaments and goods worth £6 13s. 4d., and 23oz. of plate and jewels valued at £4 12s.<sup>78</sup> The guild was dissolved in 1548.<sup>79</sup>

John Glover, who had been curate in 1540 and was also the curate at Yate in 1548,<sup>80</sup> was once again the curate at Chipping Sodbury in 1551, when it was recorded he was unable to respond to any questions concerning the articles of faith.<sup>81</sup> John Man was curate in 1554.<sup>82</sup> The vicar of Old Sodbury, John Ball, also served the cure at Chipping Sodbury and Dodington.<sup>83</sup> He was presented by the churchwardens in

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<sup>69</sup> *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (2001), 57.

<sup>70</sup> See Little Sodbury, Religious History.

<sup>71</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1971), 151; 115 (1997), 13–5.

<sup>72</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 90 (1971), 154.

<sup>73</sup> GA, GDR, Wills, 1543/25.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, PROB 11/30/416; GA, GDR, Wills, 1543/7; TNA, PROB 11/30/87.

<sup>75</sup> GA, GDR, Wills, 1546/164.

<sup>76</sup> TNA, E 301/21/56.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, E 301/22/54; *Trans. BGAS*, 8 (1883–4), 277.

<sup>78</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 8 (1883–4), 277.

<sup>79</sup> See Social History, Charities.

<sup>80</sup> CCED, ID 151570.

<sup>81</sup> *EHR*, XIX (1904), 116.

<sup>82</sup> GA, GDR, Wills, 1554/47.

<sup>83</sup> See Old Sodbury, Religious History.

1563 for not holding services at the proper times, and for being 'not a very decent reader of the word of God'.<sup>84</sup> Ball remained at Old Sodbury until his death in 1568,<sup>85</sup> but John Guydyng was curate at Chipping Sodbury in 1565.<sup>86</sup> The curate William Helye witnessed a will in 1569.<sup>87</sup> The churchwardens presented that the catechism was not read in the church in 1572, when two parishioners were presented for not coming to church to receive the Eucharist.<sup>88</sup> The various lands held in trust for the maintenance of the church, which by the late 16th century comprised three tenements and 3 a. of meadow in Chipping Sodbury, and 3½ a. of meadow in Old Sodbury, were granted by the churchwardens to feoffees c.1577, who were to pass the revenues to the bailiff and burgesses solely for use of repairing the church.<sup>89</sup> This was the basis of the church lands charity.<sup>90</sup>

John Harris was the curate in 1605.<sup>91</sup> Thomas Stevens, who was curate of Chipping Sodbury between 1617 and 1629, was presumably a relation of the lords of the manor.<sup>92</sup> Walter Osborne occurs in the records as curate between 1632 and 1640;<sup>93</sup> he was later vicar of Wapley and Codrington.<sup>94</sup>

### 1640s to 1800

The church was temporarily occupied as a powder house c.1642.<sup>95</sup> John Barnsdale signed the staunchly Presbyterian *Gloucestershire Ministers' Testimony* as minister of Chipping Sodbury in 1648.<sup>96</sup> Despite this, when he married in the following decade, probably after he had left Chipping Sodbury for Frampton on Severn, he was said to have done so according to the ancient liturgy of the Church of England, and he conformed after the Restoration.<sup>97</sup> Toby Davis left £2 a year in 1654 for the preaching of four sermons a year in the church of Chipping Sodbury by the ministers of Old Sodbury and Tockington, perhaps a reflection of the poor provision of curates during the period.<sup>98</sup> A Baptist congregation had been established at Chipping Sodbury by 1656, when James Nobbs was described as the minister.<sup>99</sup> The

<sup>84</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>85</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxliii.

<sup>86</sup> GA, GDR, Wills, 1565/85.

<sup>87</sup> GA, GDR, Wills, 1569/147.

<sup>88</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>89</sup> GA, D2071/L6; D2071/L11.

<sup>90</sup> See above, Social History, Charities.

<sup>91</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219.

<sup>92</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219.

<sup>93</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219.

<sup>94</sup> CCED, ID 159398.

<sup>95</sup> GA, D2071/A3.

<sup>96</sup> *Glos. Ministers' Testimony* (London, 1648); *Glos. N&Q*, I, 329–31.

<sup>97</sup> *Calamy Revised*, 30.

<sup>98</sup> TNA, PROB 11/237/627.

<sup>99</sup> *The Records of the Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640–87* (BRS, 27, 1974), 300.

congregation sent representatives to both an association which usually met at Gloucester or Cirencester, and to Thomas Collier's Western Association.<sup>100</sup>

Following the Restoration the church at Chipping Sodbury was probably served by the vicar of Old Sodbury in person. Edward Potter, vicar of Old Sodbury from 1645 until his death in 1676, may have been in sympathy with the nonconformist tendencies within the town, being presented in 1669 for his refusal to wear the hood.<sup>101</sup> His successor at the vicarage, John North, also served the cure at Chipping Sodbury himself for many years,<sup>102</sup> as well as being the schoolmaster at the grammar school between 1684 and 1690.<sup>103</sup> Nonconformity remained a strong presence within the town after the Restoration. In 1669 six men were presented for not paying the accustomed dues to the church, and for not attending services.<sup>104</sup> During the Indulgence of 1672, the house of John Kibble was licensed for Baptist meeting, and another resident of the town, Samuel Webb, was licensed as Baptist teacher.<sup>105</sup> The Compton Census recorded 51 nonconformists residing in Chipping Sodbury in 1676,<sup>106</sup> representing 11 per cent of the total recorded population of 475.<sup>107</sup> The Baptist congregation was still headed by James Nobbs, who remained there until 1682, when the Baptist congregation at Broadmead in Bristol referred to a 'defect' in him.<sup>108</sup> Thomas Jennings, who had been ejected from Brimpsfield in 1660 and subsequently become a preacher of the Broadmead congregation,<sup>109</sup> was seconded to be the preacher at Chipping Sodbury early in 1683, and he was permanently settled upon the congregation there in 1687.<sup>110</sup>

As well as the members of the Baptist church, the Compton figures probably also included a number of Quakers. The Quakers were certainly established in the town by 1682, when they recorded a number of *Sufferings* for their faith.<sup>111</sup> Many of these sufferings comprised having goods distrained for the payment of fines for attending proscribed meetings and for not attending worship in the parish church, although Nathaniel Osborne was said to have been held prisoner in the county gaol for almost eight years. The consistory court records of the diocese reveal a concerted campaign against Dissenters between the years 1681 and 1686: five individuals were

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<sup>100</sup> G.F. Nuttall, 'Association Records of the Particular Baptists', *Baptist Quarterly*, 26 (1975–6), 16–7.

<sup>101</sup> See Old Sodbury, Religious History.

<sup>102</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219.

<sup>103</sup> CCED, No. 159338; Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>104</sup> GA, GDR/217.

<sup>105</sup> *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates*, 59.

<sup>106</sup> *Compton Census*, 536.

<sup>107</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 101 (1983), 135.

<sup>108</sup> *The Records of the Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640–87* (BRS, 27, 1974), 269.

<sup>109</sup> *Calamy Revised*, 297.

<sup>110</sup> *The Records of the Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640–87*, 43, 242, 246, 266–7.

<sup>111</sup> BA, SF/B/7/2.



presented in 1681,<sup>112</sup> 27 in 1682,<sup>113</sup> 16 in 1683,<sup>114</sup> 27 in 1684,<sup>115</sup> six in 1685,<sup>116</sup> and 30 in 1686.<sup>117</sup> In total 81 individuals were presented for the offences of not attending church, not taking the sacrament, or not paying the church rates during these years, more than a quarter of them being presented for more than one offence. The offenders included Phillip Cambridge, presented for seven offences between 1681 and 1685, when he was hanged for taking part in Monmouth's Rebellion.<sup>118</sup> John Kibble, whose house had been licensed for meetings in 1672, was presented in 1683 and again in 1686 with his 'pretended wife' and required to prove the legitimacy of their marriage.<sup>119</sup> Four of the men presented may previously have served as bailiffs of the town.<sup>120</sup> A Quaker meeting house was licensed in 1690,<sup>121</sup> probably the house in Brook Street that was demised to several prominent Quakers in 1692.<sup>122</sup> This was certainly the house licensed for Quaker meetings in 1698, and the Baptists licensed a new house for meetings in the following year.<sup>123</sup> This may have been the house in Hounds Lane licensed by the Baptists in 1709,<sup>124</sup> on a site where they would remain until the 20th century. During the early years of George I's reign, and perhaps earlier, their minister was one William Clisson.<sup>125</sup> The apothecaries Christopher and Ebenezer Ludlow, who were prominent members of the congregation, may also have acted as pastors.<sup>126</sup>

After the Glorious Revolution there were fewer presentations, although an individual was presented in 1689 for disorderly behaviour in church on a day of thanksgiving.<sup>127</sup> Despite the Act of Toleration, disputes over church rates still led to controversy. In 1700 three Quakers were presented at the consistory court again for not paying the church rate.<sup>128</sup> In 1713 several Quakers, including the former bailiff Peter Hardwick, objected to a rate levied for the building of the new churchyard

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<sup>112</sup> GA, GDR/241, 55, 165.

<sup>113</sup> GA, GDR/244, 81–2; GDR/245, 59–60.

<sup>114</sup> GA, GDR/247, 82–5.

<sup>115</sup> GA, GDR/255, ff. 13–5, 24v–25v.

<sup>116</sup> GA, GDR/255, ff. 34v, 40v.

<sup>117</sup> GA, GDR/255, ff. 43v–45, 48–48v; GDR/259, ff. 28–29v.

<sup>118</sup> GA, GDR/255, f. 40v.

<sup>119</sup> GA, GDR/247, 90; GDR/255, f. 50v.

<sup>120</sup> They were David Tanner (bailiff in 1660–1), Thomas Weare (1665–6), William Jones (1673–4), and Stephen Smith (1675–6): GA, D2071/E16; D2071/L10; TNA, C 6/228/58.

<sup>121</sup> *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates*, 59.

<sup>122</sup> BA, SF/B/D/2/1–4.

<sup>123</sup> *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates*, 59.

<sup>124</sup> *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates*, 59.

<sup>125</sup> John Evans *et al*, 'the Baptist Interest Under George I', *Trans. Baptist Historical Society*, 2 (1910–1), 99.

<sup>126</sup> BA, 41360/4/2.

<sup>127</sup> GA, GDR/259, f. 84v.

<sup>128</sup> GA, GDR/259, ff. 132–132v.

wall.<sup>129</sup> They had refused to attend a vestry meeting held in the church to discuss the rate, necessitating the minister and churchwardens to find them in the Bell inn, where the Quakers still refused to sign the order to levy the rate. They later objected that the rate had not been properly made by the bailiff according to custom, and that the revenues of the church lands were intended to defray the cost of maintenance of the church. One of the Quakers started a long and costly suit against the rate at the consistory court of the diocese, which ultimately found for the vestry.<sup>130</sup>

During the 18th century the town's church was again served by curates. William Bishop, a native of the town, was curate in 1714.<sup>131</sup> He was succeeded in the following year by John Shellard, curate at Chipping Sodbury from 1715 until 1724,<sup>132</sup> and also schoolmaster at the grammar school.<sup>133</sup> John North died in 1722, and his successor as vicar of Old Sodbury, William Hughes, was frequently in conflict with Chipping Sodbury's Quakers concerning the non-payment of tithes. In 1728 Hughes distrained three horses belonging to the Benjamin Ogborne and valued at £12, and sold them for £6 6s., the value of the unpaid tithes.<sup>134</sup> There were further disputes during the 1730s and 1740s,<sup>135</sup> although Hughes himself claimed c.1740 that he had chosen not to proceed against ten Quakers from whom he had never received any tithes rather than to sue them.<sup>136</sup> Hughes may have been serving the cure directly in the early years of his incumbency, but in 1735 he appointed Francis Gold, the schoolmaster, as his curate.<sup>137</sup> Robert Coates was curate at Chipping Sodbury from 1744 to 1781, as well as rector of Little Sodbury from 1750.<sup>138</sup> Six new bells, cast by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester, were hung in 1753.<sup>139</sup> Accommodation in the church was increased in the late 18th century with the construction of a large gallery.<sup>140</sup> From 1786 the vicars of Old Sodbury, first Christopher Nicolls and then Charles Neve, appear to have served the cure at Chipping Sodbury themselves.<sup>141</sup> By his will of 1793, William Winstone bequeathed £10 to the parish for the preaching of a sermon in the parish church,<sup>142</sup> worth 10s. a year in the early 19th century.<sup>143</sup> The corporation

<sup>129</sup> GA, GDR/B4/3/1096. See Church Architecture.

<sup>130</sup> [Thomas Hayter], *An Examination of a Book Lately Printed by the Quakers... So far as the Clergy of the Dioceses of Oxford, Gloucester, and Chester are concerned* (London, 1740), 19–21.

<sup>131</sup> CCED, No. 146556.

<sup>132</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219.

<sup>133</sup> GA, Q/SO/4/3.

<sup>134</sup> BA, SF/B/7/2.

<sup>135</sup> GA, GDR/B4/3/1097–1101.

<sup>136</sup> [Hayter], *A Book Lately Printed by the Quakers [concerning Gloucester]*, 21.

<sup>137</sup> CCED, ID23887.

<sup>138</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219; CCED, No. 142277.

<sup>139</sup> H.T. Ellacombe, *Church Bells of Glos.* (Exeter, 1881), 63; GA, GDR/V5/366/13.

<sup>140</sup> Rudder, *Glos.* 675.

<sup>141</sup> GA, GDR/V1/219.

<sup>142</sup> GA, GDR, Wills, 1793/61.

<sup>143</sup> *17th Rep. Com. Char.* 387–8.

of the town presented the church with a new chalice, two patens and a flagon in 1813, all of parcel-gilt and inscribed 'The gift of the Bailiff and Bailiff Burgesses'.<sup>144</sup>

In 1735 the Baptists acquired land adjoining their meeting house, where they built a new chapel with an adjoining burial ground later in the same year.<sup>145</sup> Bishop Benson estimated that the town's nonconformist population amounted to 90, comprising 50 Baptists and 40 Quakers, representing 8 per cent of his estimate of 1,200 for the whole town.<sup>146</sup> Benson's estimates suggest Chipping Sodbury had the 16th largest number of nonconformists of Gloucestershire's towns, and the 11th largest nonconformist population as a proportion of the total population.<sup>147</sup> Benjamin Francis, the noted Welsh hymnist, was Baptist minister at Chipping Sodbury from 1756 to 1759.<sup>148</sup> A field called Northfield Leys was conveyed to trustees in 1760, the profits from which were to be used to support the minister at the Baptist chapel.<sup>149</sup> Houses were licensed for Dissenters' meetings in 1799 and 1800, although on both occasions no denomination was recorded.<sup>150</sup> Another meeting house was certified in 1818 by Richard Tyndale, schoolmaster,<sup>151</sup> which may indicate its use for the Baptists' Sunday school.<sup>152</sup> Over the course of the 19th century the Baptist congregation at Chipping Sodbury established missions in the neighbouring parishes of Old Sodbury, Little Sodbury, Codrington and Yate, some of which were later established as separate chapels.<sup>153</sup>

Until the late 18th century Roman Catholicism was apparently weak in chipping Sodbury, and Benson only recorded the presence of one 'perverted' Papist in 1735.<sup>154</sup> The arrival of the Paston family at Horton Court, where they maintained a private chapel, provided the area with a focus for Catholic worship later in the century,<sup>155</sup> and the returns of Papists reveal that there were four Catholics at Chipping Sodbury in 1767, and 11 in 1781.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>144</sup> J.T. Evans, *Church Plate of Glos.* (Gloucester, 1906), 47.

<sup>145</sup> GA, D6717/4/3; D6717/4/18.

<sup>146</sup> *Benson's Survey*, 34.

<sup>147</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 101 (1983), 135.

<sup>148</sup> R.T. Jenkins, 'Francis, Benjamin (1734–99), hymnist, Baptist minister', *the Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940*, ed. J.E. Lloyd and R.T. Jenkins (London, 1959), <<https://biography.wales/article/s-FRAN-BEN-1734>> [accessed 1 Mar. 2019].

<sup>149</sup> GA, D6717/4/5.

<sup>150</sup> *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates*, 59–60.

<sup>151</sup> *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates*, 60.

<sup>152</sup> See above, Education.

<sup>153</sup> See Old Sodbury, Religious History; Little Sodbury, Religious History.

<sup>154</sup> *Benson's Survey*, 35.

<sup>155</sup> *Trans. BGAS*, 77 (1958), 119; George Oliver, *Collections Illustrating the History of the Catholic Religion in the Counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucester* (London, 1857), 115–6.

<sup>156</sup> *Returns of Papists, 1767. Vol. 2: Dioceses of England and Wales except Chester*, ed. E.S. Worrall (Catholic Record Society Occasional Publications, 2. 1989); Parl. Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/7/261, 620.

## Since 1822

The perpetual curate presented after the income was augmented by parliamentary grant was Thomas Smith, the town's controversial schoolmaster.<sup>157</sup> Smith served the town in both roles until his death in 1857. He was assisted by stipendary curates, with a stipend of £80 in 1838, which had fallen to £70 two years later.<sup>158</sup> In 1846 the assistant's stipend was increased to £100, with a grant of £35 a year from the Society for Promoting the Employment of Additional Curates in Populous Places,<sup>159</sup> £25 from the Poor Law Union, and annual subscriptions of £40 raised from the congregation.<sup>160</sup> The church had accommodation for a congregation of 400 people in 1831.<sup>161</sup> In 1838 the Swan inn was purchased by Sarah Neve, the widow of the former Anglican vicar of Old Sodbury. A Catholic chapel was established in one of the outbuildings, while the inn was converted into the presbytery.<sup>162</sup> The church was endowed by Neve with £50 a year,<sup>163</sup> and served by Benedictine monks from Ampleforth and Downside until 1928, when a secular priest was appointed to serve the church.

In 1851 there were three services every Sunday at the parish church, with a combined average attendance of c.650, included approximately 100 Sunday scholars who attended both the morning and afternoon services.<sup>164</sup> The church could accommodate 652 people, of which 30 were free seats.<sup>165</sup> The Baptist chapel could accommodate 300 people, with half of the sittings available for free.<sup>166</sup> There were two services every Sunday at the chapel, averaging a combined attendance of approximately 370,<sup>167</sup> led by Revd Francis Hammond Roleston, the minister at Chipping Sodbury between 1850 and 1869.<sup>168</sup> The Quaker meeting house could accommodate 120 people, but on Census Sunday in 1851 its attendance was just three.<sup>169</sup> At the town's Catholic church there were two services every Sunday, averaging a total attendance of 60 people.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> See Education.

<sup>158</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>159</sup> Society for Promoting the Employment of Additional Curates in Populous Places, *Report* (London, 1847), 16.

<sup>160</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>161</sup> *Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues*, 422–3.

<sup>162</sup> NLHE, 1442596.

<sup>163</sup> George Oliver, *Collections Illustrating the History of the Catholic Religion in the Counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucester* (London, 1857), 120.

<sup>164</sup> *Religious Census 1851*, 100.

<sup>165</sup> *Religious Census, 1851*, 100.

<sup>166</sup> *Religious Census, 1851*, 100–1.

<sup>167</sup> *Religious Census, 1851*, 100–1.

<sup>168</sup> BA, 41360/4/2.

<sup>169</sup> *Religious Census, 1851*, 100.

<sup>170</sup> *Religious Census, 1851*, 101.

The assistant curate's stipend fell to £75 in 1852, and rose again to £95 in 1855, the different values reflecting fluctuations in the value of grants by the curate's Aid Society and of subscriptions by the local parishioners.<sup>171</sup> Services in the parish church were accompanied by an organist, who in 1864 had a salary of £10 a year.<sup>172</sup> The dilapidated state of the church was a cause of serious concern in 1865.<sup>173</sup> Following the appointment of Jonas P. F. Davidson in 1866,<sup>174</sup> the first incumbent to hold the title of vicar, it was decided to effect a complete restoration of the fabric of the church. The work took 13 months, and cost £4,000, part of which was supported by a grant of the Incorporated Church Building Society.<sup>175</sup> The 18th century gallery and box pews were removed, and the interior was uniformly re-pewed, increasing the number of sittings within the church by 130,<sup>176</sup> to a total of 515, including 79 for children.<sup>177</sup> A new and larger organ was also installed.<sup>178</sup> The church was reopened in May 1869,<sup>179</sup> and the new church was presented with the gift of a chalice by the vicar.<sup>180</sup> In 1886 the six bells were re-hung, and in 1888 a new lectern was purchased by the parish, and a parishioner donated a new Bible to the church.<sup>181</sup>

The congregation at the Baptist chapel numbered 51 in 1867, with 112 children attending the Sunday school.<sup>182</sup> The arrival of a new minister at the chapel coincided with an increased congregation of between 30 and 40 people in 1875.<sup>183</sup> The combined membership of the chapel at Chipping Sodbury and its associated meeting at Old Sodbury numbered 104 in 1877, which was an increase of 11 from the previous year.<sup>184</sup> Following the establishment of a separate chapel at Old Sodbury,<sup>185</sup> the membership at Chipping Sodbury numbered 98 in 1884.<sup>186</sup> The New Hall was built in the High Street in 1886, to provide better facilities for the Sunday School and the Band of Hope.<sup>187</sup> In 1889 the church had 56 members.<sup>188</sup> The congregation

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<sup>171</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>172</sup> GA, P300 VE 2/3.

<sup>173</sup> GA, P300 VE 2/3.

<sup>174</sup> *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 10 Nov. 1866.

<sup>175</sup> LPL, ICBS 6749.

<sup>176</sup> *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 29 May 1869.

<sup>177</sup> LPL, ICBS 6749.

<sup>178</sup> *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 29 May 1869.

<sup>179</sup> *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 29 May 1869.

<sup>180</sup> J.T. Evans, *Church Plate of Glos.* (Gloucester, 1906), 47.

<sup>181</sup> GA, P300 VE 2/3.

<sup>182</sup> BA, 41360/4/2.

<sup>183</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 20 May 1875.

<sup>184</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 23 May. 1877.

<sup>185</sup> See Old Sodbury, Religious History.

<sup>186</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 5 June 1884.

<sup>187</sup> BA, 41360/4/2.

<sup>188</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 18 June 1889.

numbered 59 in 1956.<sup>189</sup> The New Hall was converted for use as the Baptist Chapel in 1965.<sup>190</sup> Plans to sell the old chapel in Hounds Lane fell through, and the building was instead incorporated into the new church centre complex built as an extension to the New Hall c.1984.<sup>191</sup> By 1988 the membership of the church had risen again, to 181, and new accommodation was necessary. The chapel in the High Street was extended to the rear in 1990, with seating for 400 people.<sup>192</sup>

The Quaker meeting house was decertified as a place of worship in 1937,<sup>193</sup> by which time it had already been acquired by the local Women's Institute for use as their hall.<sup>194</sup> It was used as the Kingdom hall of a local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses for a time, before becoming a private residence.<sup>195</sup>

During the 20th century the parish church maintained three altars, one in the chancel and one each in the two side chapels.<sup>196</sup> A new chalice and paten, both of silver parcel-gilt, were presented c.1923, paid for by subscribers as a thanksgiving for peace.<sup>197</sup> The benefice was united with Old Sodbury in 1955, and subsequently has become part of the grouped benefice of Sodbury Vale, together with Little Sodbury and Horton.<sup>198</sup> The highest attendance in 2011 number 126, of whom 27 were 15 or under.<sup>199</sup>

### **Church Architecture**

The original 13<sup>th</sup> chapel was built in the Early English style by the master mason Ralph Gogun of London (d. c.1294), whose services had been lent to Sir Thomas de Wayland by Roger Bigod, 5th earl of Norfolk.<sup>200</sup> This chapel would have been much smaller than the modern church, although it occupied the same site.<sup>201</sup> It had no tower, although it probably had a small bellcote or turret.<sup>202</sup> Some original 13th-century features are still extant within the church, including the chancel arch, part of

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<sup>189</sup> GA, D6717/2/1.

<sup>190</sup> GA, D6717/3/3, I, 145.

<sup>191</sup> GA, D6717/4/13.

<sup>192</sup> GA, D6717/4/18.

<sup>193</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 22 May 1937.

<sup>194</sup> See Social History.

<sup>195</sup> *Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker*, No. 37.

<sup>196</sup> Ga, GDR/V5/366/13.

<sup>197</sup> Ga, GDR/V5/366/13.

<sup>198</sup> See Parish Organization.

<sup>199</sup> 2011 Parish Spotlights: Chipping Sodbury, Diocese of Gloucester, <<https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Wotton-160160-Chipping-Sodbury-St-John-the-Baptist.pdf>> [accessed 29 Sep. 2018].

<sup>200</sup> Morris, Coldstream, and Turner, 'The West Front of Tintern Abbey Church, Monmouthshire', *Antiquaries Journal*, 95 (2015), 139.

<sup>201</sup> Chipping Sodbury EUS, 11.

<sup>202</sup> Chipping Sodbury EUS, 11.

the northern arcade of the nave, which may once have led into a transept, and the piscina.<sup>203</sup>

The church was substantially rebuilt in the Perpendicular style in the later middle ages, evidence of the prosperity of the town during this period.<sup>204</sup> The tower was probably built c.1500.<sup>205</sup> The church was of a sufficient size to house visitations of the deanery of Hawkesbury.<sup>206</sup> The two arcades which run along either side of the central aisle have only slightly smaller dimensions. At the east end, the chancel was flanked by chapels on the north and south, and the church contained altars dedicated to St Clement, the Holy Trinity, St Nicholas, St Katherine and our Lady.<sup>207</sup> The north chapel was remodelled in the 15th century, the stairs in its north-west corner the only extant evidence of the rood screen installed at this date.<sup>208</sup> A beautifully-carved polygonal stone pulpit was erected in the late 15th century.<sup>209</sup> Richard Colymore had a stained-glass window made in the church before 1522,<sup>210</sup> presumably the one beneath which his tomb of 1523 lies in the north chapel,<sup>211</sup> and he also left money in his will for the building of the south porch.<sup>212</sup> The inner doorway of the south porch is dated 1526.<sup>213</sup>

There is little extant evidence of architectural work dating from the early modern period, although a two-light window opening into the north aisle was installed at the charge of Toby Davis (d. 1654) in the mid 17th century.<sup>214</sup> In the early 18th century Bishop Benson noted that the inhabitants of the town were responsible for the maintenance of the whole church, including the chancel.<sup>215</sup> In the late 18th century there was a large gallery within the church, and the tower held six bells, and a clock with chimes.<sup>216</sup> A window in the north aisle contained an image of St George vanquishing the dragon.<sup>217</sup> There was an organ in the church in the early 19th century.<sup>218</sup> The church was comprehensively restored in 1868–9 by G. E. Street, who

<sup>203</sup> Chipping Sodbury EUS, 11; Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 294.

<sup>204</sup> Chipping Sodbury EUS, 11; Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 294.

<sup>205</sup> Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 294–5.

<sup>206</sup> Worc. Cath. Lby, A1, *Registrum sede vacante*, 285, 430; *Registrum*, ff. 64, 119, 140a, 225a.

<sup>207</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>208</sup> Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 295.

<sup>209</sup> Litzenberger, *English Reformation and the Laity*, 28; Chipping Sodbury EUS, 11; Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 295.

<sup>210</sup> Hockaday Abs. cccxlii.

<sup>211</sup> Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 295.

<sup>212</sup> TNA, PROB 11/21/38.

<sup>213</sup> Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 295.

<sup>214</sup> Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 295; TNA, PROB 11/237/627.

<sup>215</sup> *Benson's Survey*, 34.

<sup>216</sup> Rudder, *Glos.* 675.

<sup>217</sup> Rudder, *Glos.* 675.

<sup>218</sup> GA, D2071/A8.

also added a vestry at the north-west of the church.<sup>219</sup> The bells were re-hung in 1984 to mark the 700th anniversary of the dedication of the church. A crack was discovered in one of the bells, which had to be recast in 1983.<sup>220</sup>

No record of an agreement between the mother church at Old Sodbury and the inhabitants of the chapelry for the latter to have their own churchyard is extant. Extant wills from the early 16th century refer to burial within the chapel,<sup>221</sup> and the first reference to the churchyard dates from 1538, when Thomas Francombe requested burial there in his will.<sup>222</sup> In the early 18th century a footpath across the churchyard was part of a route from the town to Yate and Wickwar.<sup>223</sup> By this date the churchyard was said to be six feet higher than the lane which ran along its eastern boundary. As the churchyard was still unenclosed at this date, it posed a risk to travellers, several of whom had fallen down the steep slope. Consequently, a boundary wall three feet high was built from the churchyard gate to the brook in 1712.<sup>224</sup> The churchyard remained in use until 1865, when a new cemetery was laid out to the north of the town.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 294.

<sup>220</sup> GA, GDR/F1/1/1983/2384, 2449.

<sup>221</sup> WAAS, 008.7 BA3585, Will of Ellen Taylour, 1519.

<sup>222</sup> WAAS, 008.7 BA3585, Will of Thomas Francombe, 1538.

<sup>223</sup> GA, GDR/B4/3/1096.

<sup>224</sup> GA, GDR/B4/3/1096.

<sup>225</sup> GA, P300 VE 2/3.