

WEST LITTLETON

WEST LITTLETON lies 3 km NW of Marshfield and 8 km SSE of Chipping Sodbury.¹ ‘Littleton’, first recorded in 1221, and meaning ‘little farmstead or settlement’, denotes its size relative to its neighbour Tormarton, and the affix ‘West’ distinguishes it from the nearby parish of Littleton Drew (Wilts.).² The settlement, ranged around an irregular green, is small and secluded, set in typical south Cotswold farming countryside, and has enjoyed few amenities, although very close to important and busy thoroughfares. Much of its tenurial and ecclesiastical history has been closely associated with its larger neighbour to the north, Tormarton, and for service provision it has relied on the small town of Marshfield to the south.

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Boundaries and Parish Origins

West Littleton bordered four ancient parishes. Its southern and western boundaries, with Marshfield, and with Dyrham and Hinton respectively, run somewhat irregularly along ridges of high ground and meet at an acute angle where two apparently ancient routeways cross.³ They follow field boundaries and a lane. The western boundary may have been established by the 10th century, when the bounds of Dyrham were described.⁴ At its southern end it follows the present Bath–Stroud main road (A46) for 700 m. West Kington (Wilts.) borders West Littleton to the east, so that the parishes are divided by a short, predominantly straight stretch of the county boundary, which may also be assumed to be of Saxon origin.⁵ The northern boundary with Tormarton, which ran in straight alignments to incorporate an area of downland, was extinguished when West Littleton lost its parochial status. It too followed an established road for part of its course.

The parish, which extended some 3.7 km from NE to SW and 2 km from NW to SE, was irregular in shape and comparatively small (1,013 a. in 1931).⁶ Although anciently and until the 17th century regarded as a tithing within Tormarton, it was described as a ‘reputed’ parish c.1710,⁷ and continued to have civil parochial status until it was abolished and subsumed within Tormarton in 1935.⁸

Landscape

Most of the parish, including the village, lies at 180–190 m, rising above 200 m in Littleton Wood at its south-west corner. A headwater of the By Brook has its source north of the village and flows north-east, augmented by springs, leaving the parish at its lowest point, 145

¹ This article was written in 2020–2. Maps used include OS 1” sheet XXXV (1832 edn.); 6” sheet Glos. LXXIII (1903 edn.); 25”, sheets Glos. LXXIII. 7, 8, 11, 12 (1882–6 edns.); 1:10,000, ST77NE, ST77NW (1955 edns.); 1:25,000, Explorer sheet 155 (1997 edn.). The authors are grateful for information and assistance to local residents, in particular David and Caroline Adams, James Golob, Richard Knight, Maurice Wayne and Sally Young; and to Neil Stacy of Dyrham.

² *PN Glos*, iii, 51.

³ Below, communications.

⁴ G.B. Grundy, *Saxon Charters and Field Names of Glos* (1935), 118–24.

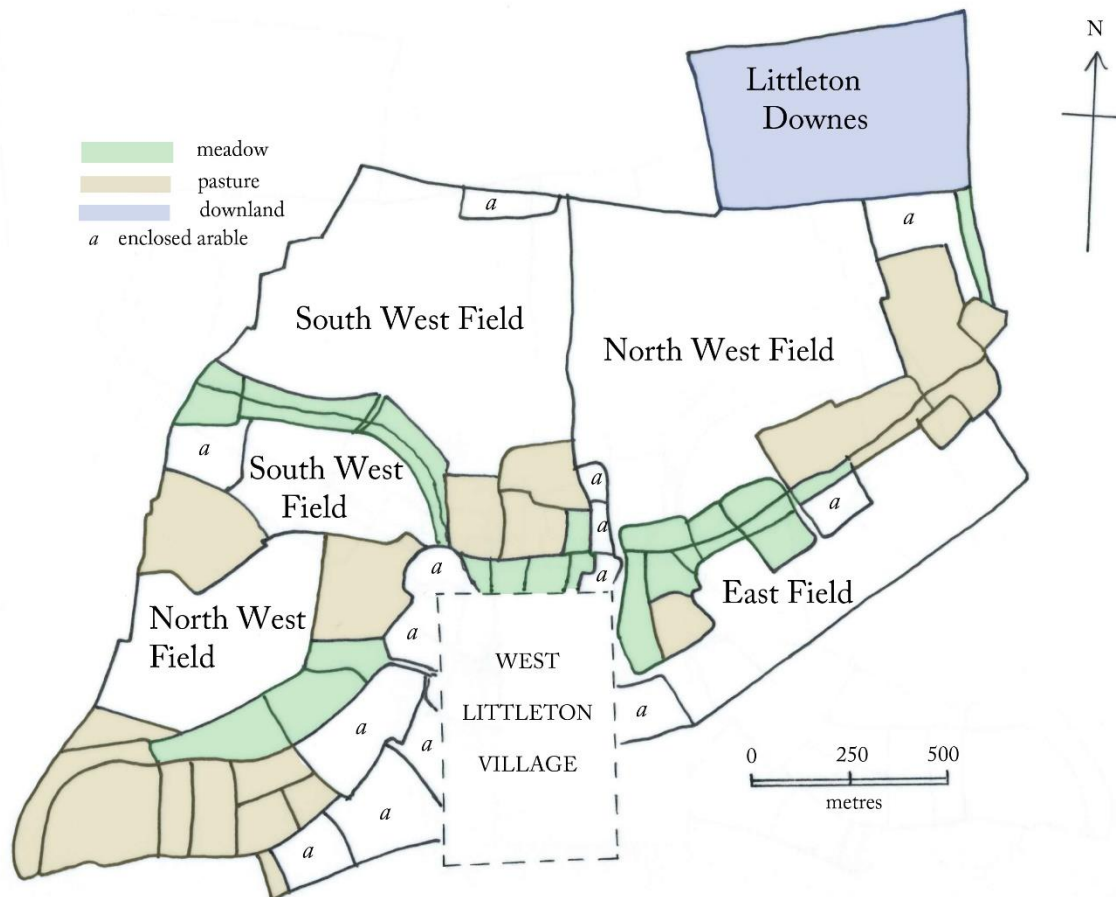
⁵ Marshfield takes its name (recorded 1086) from its position adjacent to this boundary: V. Watts (ed.) *Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (2004), 400.

⁶ Census, 1931; only two parishes in Chipping Sodbury RD then had smaller acreages.

⁷ BA, P.HTS/1/4/e, deed of 1654; Atkyns, *Glos*, 542.

⁸ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, 179,

m, in a steep-sided valley. Except along the valley sides and in the south-west corner of the parish, where mudstones outcrop, the bedrock is Oolitic Limestone of the Chalfield and Tresham Rock formations, overlain by superficial alluvial deposits only in the valley floor.⁹ Shallow lime-rich loamy soils prevail over much of the parish, north of the valley, but around the village and to the south the soils are more clayey and less well drained.¹⁰ From West Littleton Down there are long views east and south, across the parish and the Wiltshire claylands to the chalk downs beyond.



Sketch map redrawn from a map in the 1637 Welbeck Atlas, showing land use (white areas are open fields)

Communications

Significant routeways pass close to West Littleton on all four sides, although only two impinge on the parish, and the village itself is accessible for vehicles by a single minor road. The Bristol–Chippenham road (A420) runs 2 km south, the M4 motorway less than 1 km north, and a road described c.1690 as the highway from Gloucester to Marshfield passes within 400 m of the eastern boundary, and was turnpiked in 1804.¹¹

The Bath–Stroud road (A46) which runs along part of the western parish boundary has been claimed as a Roman road or Romanised trackway linking Bath with ancient ridgeways to the north.¹² It is recorded as a road from Bath to Gloucester in 1675,¹³ and was

⁹ <https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (accessed 29 Sept 2020)

¹⁰ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/index.cfm> (accessed 29 Sept 2020)

¹¹ Bod. MS. Top. c.2, f.95v; below, this section.

¹² I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (3rd edn, 1973), 143–4.

¹³ J. Ogilby, *Britannia*, i, pl. 11. The road is not mapped but its existence is noted at Tog Hill.

turnpiked in 1742 between Cirencester and the Somerset border north of Bath.¹⁴ It was rerouted in 1783 to the present line of the A46 from Oldfield gate southwards towards Lambridge in Bath, and disturnpiked in 1873.¹⁵ Oldfield turnpike gate, until 1824 or later, barred the road by Littleton Wood, the south-western tip of the parish.¹⁶ In 1922 the road was classified A46 and in 1946 it was trunked as part of the Bath–Lincoln road.¹⁷ At Littleton Wood it is crossed by a minor road from Dyrham to Marshfield, which has been identified (perhaps wrongly) as *Claeg Weg* ('the clay way'), a landmark on Dyrham's 972 charter bounds.¹⁸

The road across Tolldown, which defines part of West Littleton's former northern boundary, derives its name from a custom due from carts using it which was enjoyed by the manorial lord before 1267 and still in 1662.¹⁹ It was turnpiked in 1756 as part of a route between Pucklechurch and Christian Malford (Wilts.).²⁰ Its function may then have been to serve the Bristol coalfield, although by linking with other turnpikes it catered for long-distance travellers, and was described in 1818 as the road from Bristol to Malmesbury.²¹ It was disturnpiked in 1878.²²

The Marshfield turnpike trust, whose principal concern was the Bristol–Chippenham road from Tog Hill (in Doynton) to Chippenham, in 1804 turnpiked several local roads in the Marshfield area, including those to Old Sodbury via Tormarton, to Dyrham (bordering Littleton Wood), and to West Littleton.²³ The roads were disturnpiked in 1875.²⁴

A minor road from Hinton to Marshfield crosses the parish from north-west to south-east and serves the village. It existed in 1308 and was described in the 17th century,²⁵ although part of its course was altered and defined at inclosure in 1818.²⁶ Until that date the road north of the village comprised two stretches, Blatchley Hill Lane and Dunsdown Lane, which met on Blatchley Hill. The inclosure award stipulated that a lower, more direct line linking them below the hill should become a public road.²⁷ It also established Wallsend Lane, running NNE from Blatchley Hill as a public road, affording a direct route between the village and Tormarton;²⁸ this has not, however, been adopted and surfaced for general vehicular use. Other minor lanes named on 1880s mapping are Slaits Lane, leading south-west from the village and defining the parish boundary; Camp Lane, leading north-east; and Butts Lane, north west and south-west.²⁹ Milking Path, a footway leading south from West Littleton Down to Camp Lane, is recorded in 1766;³⁰ and Watering Lane, leading south from

¹⁴ Glouc. Roads Act, 16 Geo. II, c. 22.

¹⁵ Glos. Roads Act, 23 Geo. III, c. 106; Annual Turnpike Trusts Cont. Act, 36–7 Vic. c. 90.

¹⁶ GA, D1799/M22; OS Drawing 169 (1813); Bryant, *Map of Glos.* (1824). It later was moved further south.

¹⁷ <https://www.sabre-roads.org.uk/> (accessed 18 Nov. 2020); Trunk Roads Act, 9 & 10 Geo VI, c. 30.

¹⁸ Grundy, *Saxon Charters*, 123; disputed by Peter Kitson, letter to Neil Stacy, 1992.

¹⁹ *Cal. Pat.* 1266–72, 53; GA, D2700/NC10/1 Bdle.4, deed of 9 Aug. 1662; for an earlier instance of a toll exacted on roads in this area see V.C.M. London (ed.) *Cartulary of Bradenstoke Priory* (Wilts. Rec. Soc 35, 1979), 190 (no. 652).

²⁰ Glouc. and Wilts. Road Act, 29 Geo II, c. 56. The name Tolldown is coincidental, as it was in use by 1608: Notts. Arch. DD/4P/55/58.

²¹ *VCH Wilts.*, iv, 260; GA, D1799/E153.

²² Annual Turnpike Trusts Cont. Act, 41–2 Vic. c. 62.

²³ Chippenham Bridge Road Act, 44 Geo. III, c. 69 (Local & Personal). The intention in turnpiking minor roads was probably to dissuade toll evasion by travellers avoiding turnpike gates rather than to effect road improvement.

²⁴ Annual Turnpike Trusts Cont. Act, 38–9 Vic. c. 194.

²⁵ BL, Add. Ch. 7709; S. Mastoris (ed.), *Welbeck Atlas* (Thoroton Soc. Record Ser., 47, 2017), 131.

²⁶ GA, D1799/E153.

²⁷ GA, D1799/E153; this low-lying area was probably a driftway already used in dry conditions.

²⁸ GA, D1799/E153; it, or a track in a similar direction, is shown on earlier maps, e.g. Taylor, *Map of Glos.* (1777); OS Drawing 169 (1813).

²⁹ OS 25", sheets Glos. LXXIII. 7, 8, 11, 12 (1882–6 edns.).

³⁰ GA, D1799/M18; *ibid.* D1799/E153.

the Down along the eastern boundary, in 1840.³¹ Both were presumably used for managing stock on the downland.

A proposal entertained by the Wilts & Berks Canal Company in 1810–11 to build a canal from Wootton Bassett (Wilts.) to Bristol was soon abandoned. It would have involved excavating a tunnel between West Littleton Down and Dyrham.³²

No village carriers are listed serving West Littleton in county directories between 1856 and 1939. Bus services from Bath to Chipping Sodbury and to Malmesbury (Wilts.), and a motor coach service between Cheltenham and Bournemouth, were operating along the A46 by 1929.³³ The Bath to Chipping Sodbury bus service provided by Bath Tramways Motors served West Littleton village between 1945 and 1967.³⁴

A letter box was erected in the village in 1881,³⁵ but no reference to a post office has been found.

Population

Indicators of population prior to 1700 almost invariably combine West Littleton with Tormarton, so that it is impossible to arrive at a total for West Littleton alone. One exception, a taxation record of 1327, lists 10 payers in West Littleton compared with 18 in Tormarton, with the former assessed at a little more than half the latter.³⁶ In 1637 there were nine houses in the parish.³⁷ Four estimates exist from the 18th century: c.1700 there were said to be 12 families in West Littleton;³⁸ c.1710, 44 inhabitants in 11 households;³⁹ and 67 inhabitants in c.1735 and c.1775.⁴⁰

West Littleton's total population in 1801 was 100, rising by 1851 to 161; like most rural communities it declined thereafter, to 69 in 1901.⁴¹ After a small rise it fell further, to 65 in 1931.⁴² In 1939 there were 70 inhabitants in 17 households, but an additional 60 children and staff of an Islington (London) nursery were on holiday at Church farm when war broke out and remained as evacuees, there and at Dyrham.⁴³ After 1935 the population of West Littleton was not enumerated separately from Tormarton, but in 1950 there were 45 adults on the electoral roll, and in 1970 49.⁴⁴ In 2011 the total population was estimated to be c.70.⁴⁵

Settlement

On West Littleton Down a 'Celtic' field system of rectilinear enclosures, probably defined by stone walls, was discovered by aerial photography, and provides evidence of farming activity in the area during later prehistory.⁴⁶ Inhumations of five young males violently killed and thrown into a pit, one with a spearhead embedded in his spine, were excavated in the same area in 1968 and 1998–2000; they have been assigned a date within the Late Bronze Age,

³¹ BA, EP/A/32/25.

³² GA, Q/RUm/39/1; *ibid.* Q/RUm/39/5; *Glouc. J.* 22 Oct. 1810, p. 3.

³³ *Roadways*, Sep. 1929 edn., pp. 395–6, 42.

³⁴ <https://bristol-re.co.uk/bvbg/routes.asp?opt=P&IL1=WES014&IL5=&IL6=> (accessed 19 Nov. 2020). From 1965 the service terminated at West Kington.

³⁵ *Bath Chronicle*, 29 Sept 1881, p. 6.

³⁶ *Glos. Subsidy Roll, 1327*, 111.

³⁷ Mastoris (ed.), *Welbeck Atlas*, 131.

³⁸ *Parsons's Notes*, 282.

³⁹ Atkyns, *Glos.*, 542.

⁴⁰ *Benson's Survey*, 36; Rudder, *Glos.*, 530.

⁴¹ Census, 1801–1901.

⁴² Census, 1911–31

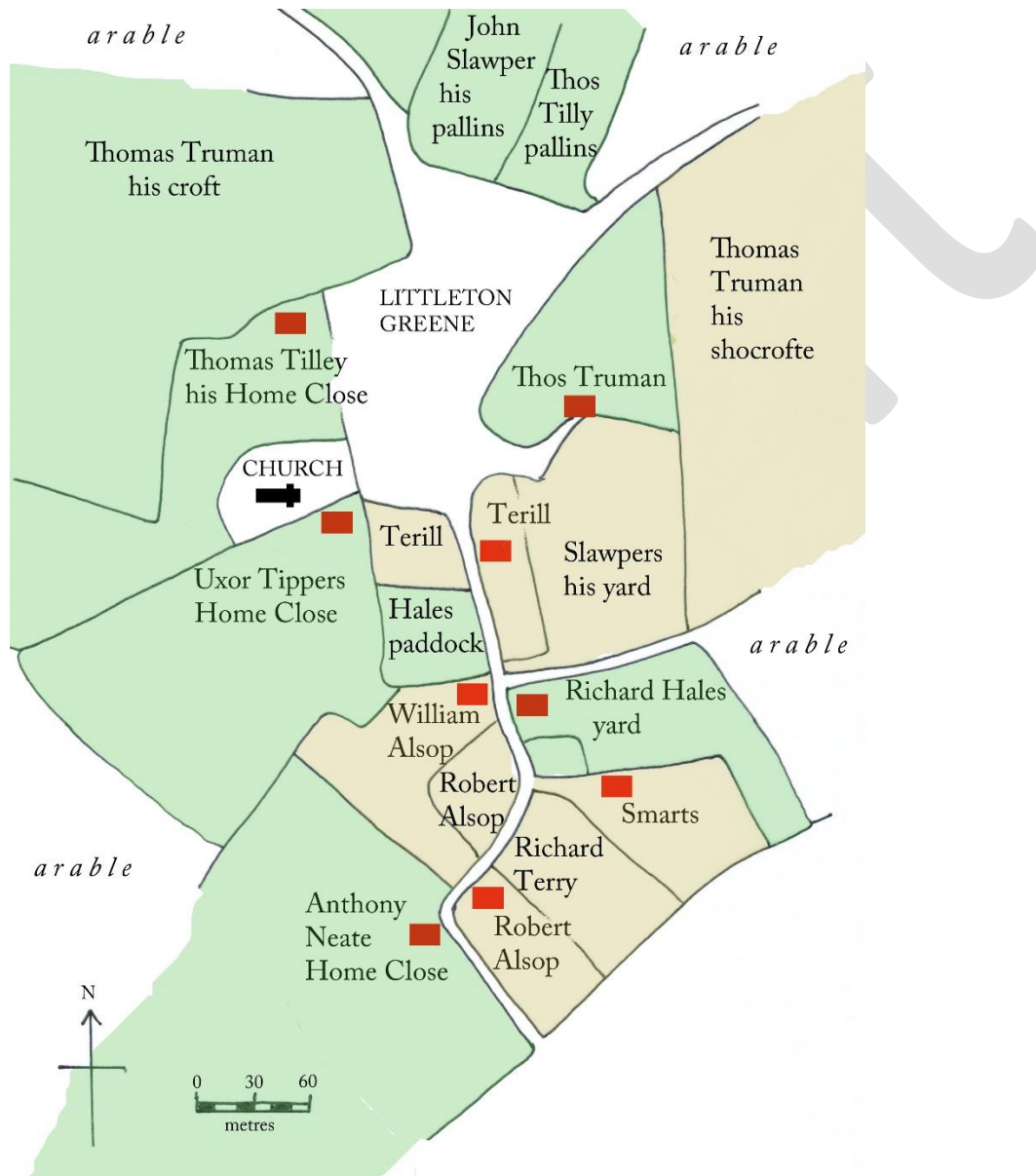
⁴³ TNA, RG 101/5120A, ODPG; GA, C/CE/C3.

⁴⁴ GA, Register of Electors, South Glos, 1951, 1971.

⁴⁵ *West Littleton, Village and Church* (2011), 5.

⁴⁶ RCHM, *Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Glos. Cotswolds* (1976), 120 and pl. 43; H.P.R. Finberg, *Glos. Landscape* (1975), pl. 10; S.Glos. HER, 204801.

c.1260–990 BC.⁴⁷ A round barrow of probable Bronze Age date was observed on West Littleton Down before 1832 and was extant in 1955.⁴⁸ A possible Iron Age hillfort, recorded in 1830 and surveyed in 1842, stands above the stream on the eastern parish boundary;⁴⁹ sometimes referred to as Hebdown Camp, by some authorities it has been dismissed as a geological feature partly covered by strip lynchets.⁵⁰ Romano-British occupation in the vicinity is suggested by the discovery of 2nd–4th century pottery fragments between West Littleton Down and the later village.⁵¹



⁴⁷ R.W. Knight, *et al*, 'Prehistoric skeletons from Tormarton', *Trans BGAS*, 91 (1972), 14–17; R. Osgood, *The Dead of Tormarton* (South Glos. Council, c. 2000).

⁴⁸ OS 1" sheet XXXV (1832 edn.); *Trans BGAS*, 79 (1960), 136; S. Glos HER, 204804.

⁴⁹ OS 1" sheet XXXV (1832 edn.); GA, D9125/2/5610 (copy of Northants. Archives DR/13/224, which is wrongly dated 1843, as confirmed by DR/13/225; accepted as a hillfort by S. Glos Council: <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archsearch/record?titleId=85377> (accessed 22 Nov. 2020).

⁵⁰ RCHM, *Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments*, 120; S. Glos. HER, 204807; 'Hebdown Camp' was attached to a second earthwork, mapped perhaps in error on OS 1" sheet XXXV; both were listed in *Proc. CNFC*, 6 (1877), 204.

⁵¹ RCHM, *Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments*, 120.

Sketch map redrawn from a map in the 1637 Welbeck Atlas, showing West Littleton village (pasture is coloured brown, meadowland, including paddocks, green, houses red)

Although not recorded until after 1200, its name implies that West Littleton existed as a settlement by the later Saxon period. It possessed a church by the 13th century, and by the 14th its population of at least ten households suggests a community of equivalent size to that in the 18th and 21st centuries.⁵² It was described as a hamlet in 1314.⁵³ The form of the settlement, as depicted on a map of 1637, and similarly – and more precisely – on 19th and 20th century maps, is that of a small nucleated village comprising farmsteads and cottages clustered irregularly around and intruding on a sloping polygonal common.⁵⁴ Lanes and paths radiate from the common in five directions, and that leading south, the minor road towards Marshfield, appears to have been deflected around closes and buildings, although by 1637 it took its present course. The church stands in its churchyard near the upper, western edge of the common, with a farmstead adjacent. Three other farmsteads and a substantial house occupy sites east of the meandering lane which crosses the common; and there are further older houses and cottages at the northern and southern approaches to the villages, including one more farmstead at the southern parish boundary. There is no evidence before the 19th century of outlying settlement in the parish away from the village nucleus nor, except perhaps south of the church, of settlement shrinkage or movement.

Comparison of maps suggests very little new building or losses of old buildings during the 19th or earlier 20th century. In 1919 the parish meeting agreed that there was no need for new housing as eight cottages were empty;⁵⁵ two were empty in 1939.⁵⁶ Several houses and agricultural buildings have been built on vacant plots at the southern end of the village and along Camp Lane since the 1950s. Away from the village Dunsdown House may have been built in the 1830s,⁵⁷ and Downs House in the 1890s.⁵⁸ A bungalow and several non-domestic buildings have subsequently been constructed along Dunsdown Lane.

A pound in good condition and remains of stocks survived adjacent to the green in 2021, but a pond nearby was filled in c.1970.⁵⁹ Electricity was supplied to the village in or shortly before 1952,⁶⁰ and mains water in 1954.⁶¹

The Built Character

In typical south Cotswold fashion nearly all West Littleton's farmhouses, older houses, cottages and agricultural buildings are of rubble limestone with stone dressings and quoins.⁶² Roofing materials are varied, including stone tiles, double Roman tiles and slates. The Old Farmhouse and Old Manor House, both 17th century, retain mullioned casements and hoodmoulds, whereas Manor Farmhouse and Home Farm (formerly Littleton House), both refronted c.1800, have sash windows. The 17th-century Church Farmhouse was refronted in the 18th century with Venetian windows and a central ashlar porch with squared Doric columns. The fifth farmhouse, West's Farm, appears in its present form to be later than the others, and is of squared masonry. Most retain ranges of rubblestone farmyard buildings, especially Home Farm and Church Farmhouse, where a cruciform 17th-century barn was remodelled after 1900; and there are 18th-century barns among groups of farm buildings in isolated positions near the eastern (Camp Barn) and western (Littleton Wood

⁵² below: eccl. hist; above: popn.

⁵³ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* v, 281 (no. 505).

⁵⁴ Mastoris (ed.), *Welbeck Atlas*, 131.

⁵⁵ GA, D11996, acc. 13121: parish meeting min. bk. 1894–1925.

⁵⁶ TNA, RG 101/5120A.

⁵⁷ BA, EP/A/32/25; it is not shown on OS 1" sheet XXXV.

⁵⁸ OS 6" sheet Glos. LXXIII (1903 edn).

⁵⁹ S. Young, *West Littleton Village and Church* (2011), 7; personal observation.

⁶⁰ West Littleton Village Hall minute book, 1935–70, penes Mr David Adams; information from Mr R.W. Knight.

⁶¹ GA, DA33 111/26.

⁶² This para: NHL descriptions of listed buildings; Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* I, 713-14; local inf.

Barn) extremities of the parish. The Limes, a remodelled 17th-century house near the southern end of the village, also has a large barn and outbuildings, which were used as a carpenter's shop. More recent housing in general respects the village's vernacular tradition.

Building stone was available from quarries within the parish. A large quarry existed in the 19th century west of Wallsend Lane,⁶³ and it was probably there in 1845 that four men and three boys working it were said to have been struck by lightning.⁶⁴ Smaller quarries are shown on a map of 1903 beside both Camp Lane and the lane leading east from West's Farm.⁶⁵

LANDOWNERSHIP

West Littleton was included in Tormarton manor throughout the Middle Ages and beyond,⁶⁶ despite some documents calling it a separate manor from at least 1267 onwards.⁶⁷ From c.1340 Tormarton descended with neighbouring Acton Turville, the two manors usually being administered together with a joint court.⁶⁸ Although the lordships remained united, the West Littleton lands on the estate were sold off from 1642 onwards, so that when the duke of Beaufort became lord in 1789, his only property there was ten cottages (none of which belonged to his grandson in 1840) as well as the Littleton Down common (89 a.) by virtue of his manorial rights.⁶⁹ Landownership in West Littleton has since remained fragmented, one farm becoming attached to the Dyrham estate in 1722.

Tormarton (and West Littleton) Manor to c.1340

Eight hides at Tormarton (including West Littleton) held by Alric in 1066 passed by 1086 to Richard the legate, who may have been a Domesday commissioner.⁷⁰ Afterwards, the estate belonged to Ernulf de Hesdin, lord of Acton Turville, with which it presumably descended until 1165, when part of William Fitz Alan's barony was obtained by Geoffrey de Ver (d. 1170), who had married Isabel (née de Say), the widow of William's father William Fitz Alan (d. 1160).⁷¹ Geoffrey was overlord of Tormarton in 1166,⁷² as was Henry de Ver (possibly Geoffrey's grandson) in 1213 and 1236, under whom the manor was held as two knights' fees.⁷³ By 1314 the overlordship belonged to John de Willington,⁷⁴ lord of Yate manor, with which it descended until at least 1437.⁷⁵

⁶³ GA, D1799/E153; OS 6" sheet Glos. LXXIII (1903 edn).

⁶⁴ *Glouc. J.* 31 May 1845, p. 1.

⁶⁵ OS 6" sheet Glos. LXXIII (1903 edn).

⁶⁶ West Littleton, therefore, never had a manor ho. For 'Old Manor Ho.', above, landscape etc.

⁶⁷ e.g. *Cal. Pat.* 1266–72, 53; TNA, SC 8/264/13176; *Glos. Feet of Fines 1360–1508*, pp. 145, 151; GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, deeds 17–18 Aug. 1789.

⁶⁸ e.g. Notts. Archive, DD/4P/52/60–6; DD/4P/55/58; GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdls 2, 4; above, Tormarton, local govt.

⁶⁹ GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, deeds 17–18 Aug. 1789; BA, EP/A/32/25; cf. GA, Q/REL, Grumbolds Ash hundred, West Littleton 1776–1832.

⁷⁰ *Domesday*, 465; H. Tsurushima, 'Domesday interpreters', in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies XVIII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1995* (1996), 206–7.

⁷¹ H. Barkly, 'Testa de Nevill returns for the county of Gloucester', *Trans. BGAS* 12 (1887–8), 264–7; *Complete Peerage*, X, App. J, 113; above, Acton Turville, landownership; cf. *Pipe R* 1165 (PRS 8), 14.

⁷² N. Stacy (ed.), *Cartae Baronum* (Pipe Roll Soc. N.S. lxii, 2019), 95, 122; *Red Book Exch.* (RS), I, 274, 298, where Tormarton is perhaps accounted for twice, firstly as part of Matt. of Tormarton's 5 fees held from Geoff. de Ver, and secondly as his 2 fees belonging to Wm Fitz Alan's Wilts. barony: cf. Barkly, 'Testa de Nevill', 266.

⁷³ *Book of Fees*, I, 50, 440; Barkly, 'Testa de Nevill', 267.

⁷⁴ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* V, p. 281.

⁷⁵ Below, Yate, landownership; e.g. *Inq. p.m. Glos.* 1302–58, 284, 322; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVII, p. 347; XXIV, pp. 452–3; *Cal. Close* 1396–9, 166–7; cf. *VCH Glos.* XIII, 250. Jn de Willington reportedly held Tormarton from the honor of Keevil (Wilts.) in 1327 and 1331, although in both years he had custody

Tenancy of the manor belonged in 1166 to Matthew of Tormarton,⁷⁶ the River family ancestor who temporarily forfeited his lands for killing a man in a duel, Robert Fitz Harding occupying them in that year.⁷⁷ Matthew or Maihel, who witnessed a deed in 1183,⁷⁸ granted lands in Tormarton to Bradenstoke priory (Wilts.), but by 1196 had been succeeded by his son Walter, who with his brother Maurice gave further property and rights there to the canons before 1207. By 1224 the manor had passed to Walter's son John of Tormarton,⁷⁹ who was dead by 1240, when dower in Tormarton and West Littleton was assigned to his widow Katherine.⁸⁰ His son Richard de la River (d. by 1250) was followed by his son Richard,⁸¹ who was granted a weekly market, an annual fair, and free warren in Tormarton in 1254,⁸² and was succeeded between 1288 and 1303 by his son John de la River (d. c.1314). John's heir was his infant son John,⁸³ during whose minority the manor, subject to the dower of the older John's widow Denise (d. 1347),⁸⁴ was placed in the custody of the overlord John de Willington, who forfeited his estates for rebellion in 1322–3.⁸⁵ John de la River attained his majority in 1333,⁸⁶ and by 1340, when he was a knight, was also lord of Acton Turville.⁸⁷

Tormarton, (West Littleton), and Acton Turville Manors from c.1340

Sir John de la River, a soldier who campaigned in Scotland and the Holy Land, established a chantry in Tormarton church, where he was buried after 1364. He was succeeded by Sir Henry de la River, perhaps his nephew, who came of age before 1384, served as knight of the shire from 1394, and died in 1400 during his second term of office as sheriff.⁸⁸ Later that year his son Thomas settled Tormarton and Acton Turville manors on his marriage to Isabel (née Russell), widow of William le Scrope (d. 1399), earl of Wiltshire, who following Thomas's death by 1409 married successively the MPs Sir John Drayton (d. 1417) and Stephen Hatfield.⁸⁹ Isabel (d. 1437) was succeeded by her son Maurice de la River (d. by 1468),⁹⁰ whose daughter Agnes was interested in the manors with her husband Thomas Vachell in 1464.⁹¹ Maurice's heiress was Isabel de la River,⁹² apparently his granddaughter by a son named Robert. She married Sir John St Loe (d. 1499) of Stowey (Som.) and afterwards

of the manor during the minority of Jn de la River: *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VI, p. 475; VII, p. 230; below (this section). For the honor, above, Acton Turville, landownership.

⁷⁶ *Red Book Exch.* (RS), I, 274, 298.

⁷⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1266–72, 53; *Pipe R* 1165 (PRS 8), 14; 1166 (PRS 9), 79; F.B. Welch, 'Gloucestershire in the Pipe Rolls', *Trans. BGAS* 57 (1935), 86.

⁷⁸ J.H. Round (ed.), *Ancient Charters* (PRS 10, 1888), 81; TNA, E 210/377.

⁷⁹ *Rot. Chart.* 169; *The Cartulary of Bradenstoke Priory*, ed. V.C.M. London (Wilts. Rec. Soc. 35, 1979), pp. 129, 166, 190; *Cur. Reg.* XI, 299.

⁸⁰ *Close* 1237–42, 191.

⁸¹ *Bradenstoke Cart.* p. 129; *Cur. Reg.* XX, 223.

⁸² *Cal. Pat.* 1247–58, 288; *Cal. Chart.* 1327–41, 270.

⁸³ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* V, p. 281; *Bradenstoke Cart.* p. 132; *Feudal Aids*, II, 249. For Jn as son of Ric., *Glos. Feet of Fines 1300–59*, p. 143.

⁸⁴ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* IX, p. 4; TNA, SC 8/70/3482; *Glos. Feet of Fines 1300–59*, p. 143; cf. *Glos. Subsidy Roll, 1327*, p. 111. The younger Jn's mother was named Amice: *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VII, p. 316; *Cal. Close* 1330–3, 524.

⁸⁵ *Abbrev. Rot. Orig.* I, 263; TNA, SC 6/1148/12; SC 8/70/3482; SC 8/264/13176; *Complete Peerage*, XII(2), 647; cf. *Glos. Subsidy Roll, 1327*, p. 111.

⁸⁶ *ODNB*, s.v. Ryvere, Sir Jn.

⁸⁷ *Glos. Feet of Fines 1300–59*, p. 131; above, Acton Turville, landownership.

⁸⁸ *ODNB*, s.v. Ryvere, Sir Jn; *Cal. Pat.* 1396–9, 467; *Hist. Parl.* s.v. Sir Hen. de la River.

⁸⁹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XX, p. 243; *Hist. Parl.* s.v. Sir Hen. de la River, Sir Jn Drayton; *Complete Peerage*, XII(2), 734; *Glos. Feet of Fines 1360–1508*, pp. 87, 109.

⁹⁰ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XXIV, pp. 452–3; *Cal. Close* 1435–41, 90; *Glos. Feet of Fines 1360–1508*, p. 131; TNA, C 140/24/26.

⁹¹ *Glos. Feet of Fines 1360–1508*, p. 151; cf. *ibid.* p. 145; Notts. Archive, DD/P/121/1.

⁹² *Cal. Inq. p.m.* (Rec. Com.), IV, 339; TNA, C 1/10/233.

Sir Edward Wadham,⁹³ with whom she lived at Tormarton in 1510.⁹⁴ Described as lord in 1522,⁹⁵ he survived Isabel (d. 1541), dying in 1547, when the manors reverted to the St Loes, passing from Isabel's grandson Sir John (d. 1559), MP for Somerset and Gloucestershire, to his son Sir William, also an MP and royal officeholder, subject to the life interest of Sir John's widow Margaret in the manor house and demesne.⁹⁶

In 1559 Sir William St Loe married secondly Elizabeth Cavendish (née Hardwick) of Chatsworth (Derbs.), the renowned 'Bess of Hardwick', who inherited all his estates at his death in 1565. She married fourthly in 1568 George Talbot (d. 1590), 6th earl of Shrewsbury, and retained the manors until her death in 1608.⁹⁷ However, by 1591 an interest in them belonged to her daughter Mary (née Cavendish) with her husband Gilbert Talbot, 7th earl of Shrewsbury, which in 1592 they conveyed to Mary's elder brother Sir Charles Cavendish,⁹⁸ an MP who was later seated at Welbeck Abbey (Notts.).⁹⁹ He granted leases in Tormarton, West Littleton, and Acton Turville in 1609,¹⁰⁰ and remained lord until his death in 1617, when the manors descended with Welbeck to his son Sir William, who was created viscount Mansfield in 1620, earl of Newcastle in 1628, and marquess of Newcastle in 1643.¹⁰¹ A prominent Royalist, in 1647 his estates were sequestrated, 'Tormarton' (presumably including West Littleton and Acton Turville) being sold by Parliament in 1652 to the regicide Edward Whalley.¹⁰²

The marquess was restored to his lands and title in 1660,¹⁰³ and in 1664, having disposed of his West Littleton farms,¹⁰⁴ he conveyed 'Tormarton manor' (evidently including the lordships of Tormarton, West Littleton, and Acton Turville) with its remaining estate to Francis Topp of Tormarton, who was created a baronet in 1668.¹⁰⁵ Sir Francis died c.1671, when his son and heir Sir John was a minor in the guardianship of his mother Elizabeth until he came of age in 1684.¹⁰⁶ He died c.1731, leaving two daughters and coheiresses Elizabeth and St John, of whom the latter was dead by 1737, when her half-share belonged to her second husband Thomas Peach (d. 1770) of Dingley Hall (Northants.), from whom it descended with Dingley to his son-in-law John Hungerford.¹⁰⁷ John, who had already inherited Elizabeth's half-share on her death unmarried c.1768,¹⁰⁸ changed his name, and as

⁹³ Leland, *Itin.* (ed. Toulmin Smith), V, 98; *Parsons's Notes*, 259; Rudder, *Glos.* 774; F.A. Wood, *Collections for a Parochial History of Chew Magna* (1903), 129; P. Riden, 'Bess of Hardwick and the St Loe inheritance', in P. Riden and D. Edwards (eds), *Essays in Derbyshire History Presented to Gladwyn Turbutt* (Derbs. Rec. Soc. 30, 2006), 83–4.

⁹⁴ *L&P Hen.* VIII, I, 241.

⁹⁵ *Military Surv. of Glos. 1522*, 1.

⁹⁶ Riden, 'Bess of Hardwick', 84, 92, 95; *Hist. Parl.* s.v. Sir Jn St Loe, Sir Wm St Loe; TNA, PROB 11/31/478; PROB 11/42B/23; *ibid.* STAC 4/2/49. Sir Jn's father was Nic. St Loe (d. 1508).

⁹⁷ Riden, 'Bess of Hardwick', 80–106; TNA, PROB 11/48/200; *Complete Peerage*, XI, 713; GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 2, copy of ct roll 1596; Notts. Archive, DD/4P/55/58; cf. TNA, C 2/Eliz/R9/60.

⁹⁸ Notts. Archive, DD/P/121/3–5; *Complete Peerage*, XI, 714–15. Any residual rights in the manor belonging to the earl and countess and their heirs were released to Sir Chas in 1615: Notts. Archive, DD/P/6/1/21/7; DD/P/50/73; DD/4P/35/4.

⁹⁹ Notts. Archive, DD/P/85/10; *Hist. Parl.* s.v. Sir Chas Cavendish.

¹⁰⁰ GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdls 2, 4.

¹⁰¹ Notts. Archive, DD/P/6/1/19/14; GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdls 2, 4, leases 1622–36; *Complete Peerage*, IX, 521–6.

¹⁰² *ODNB*, s.v. Cavendish, Wm; *Cal. Cttee for Compounding*, I, 85, 87, 224, 278–9, 516, 610; III, 1736.

¹⁰³ *LJ* 11, 171.

¹⁰⁴ Below (other estates).

¹⁰⁵ GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, deeds 13–14 Oct. 1664; bdl 2, deeds 28 Mar. and 6 Apr. 1664; *Complete Baronetage*, IV, 44.

¹⁰⁶ GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 2, deed 25 Mar. 1671; TNA, PROB 11/351/457; Hockaday Abs. ccclxxix, Tormarton.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, C 11/1497/56; *ibid.* PROB 11/688/14; PROB 11/959/165; *Hist. Parl.* s.v. Jn Peach Hungerford.

¹⁰⁸ GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, admin. of Eliz. Topp 1768; cf. *ibid.* D2700/QB17/9/1.

John Peach Hungerford, MP for Leicestershire, sold the manors in 1789 to Henry Somerset, 5th duke of Beaufort.¹⁰⁹ Since then successive dukes of Beaufort have been lord in Tormarton, West Littleton, and Acton Turville.¹¹⁰

Other Estates

In 1642 the earl of Newcastle sold a farm in West Littleton to Anthony Neate of Chippenham (Wilts.), whose son Thomas sold it in 1670 to Nicholas Reed of Yatton Keynell (Wilts.). His great nephew John Reed of Marshfield conveyed it in 1722 to William Blathwayt of Dyrham,¹¹¹ whose descendants owned 115 a. in West Littleton in 1766,¹¹² 148 a. in 1840,¹¹³ and 170 a. (including 133 a. on Dunsdown farm) in 1910,¹¹⁴ which they retained as part of their much larger Dyrham estate until after 1939.¹¹⁵ Another farm sold by the earl in 1642 to his tenant William Alsop continued in his family for more than a century.¹¹⁶

The remaining five West Littleton farms on the manor were sold in 1664 to the Bristol merchant John Willoughby (d. 1673),¹¹⁷ whose son Samuel retained at least two of them at his death in 1680.¹¹⁸ Their individual descents have not been traced, but, apart from the Blathwayts, members of the Fisher, Frankcom, and Osborne families were the chief landowners in 1776, and the Baldwins, Hilliers, Osbornes, and Wests in 1832,¹¹⁹ the Wests having purchased from the Fishers in 1794–5.¹²⁰ Those four families owned respectively 237 a., 151 a., 136 a., and 239 a. in West Littleton in 1840.¹²¹ Although the Hilliers (313 a.), Osbornes (167 a.), and Baldwins (63 a.) remained the principal proprietors with the Blathwayts in 1910,¹²² all the farms were either broken up or amalgamated into larger holdings over the following century.¹²³ Much land in West Littleton was purchased by the Badminton estate in 1944 and later, but most had been sold by 2022.¹²⁴

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Until the later 20th century West Littleton's economy appears to have been entirely derived from agricultural production and the trades and activities relating to it, generally following a mixed regime of arable cultivation and sheep and cattle rearing. Stimulated by easy access to the nearby motorway from the 1970s, some residents work elsewhere, and non-agricultural small businesses have been established.

Medieval Agriculture

¹⁰⁹ *Hist. Parl.* s.v. Jn Peach Hungerford; GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, deeds 17–18 Aug. 1789.

¹¹⁰ e.g. GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 5; BA, EP/A/32/25; *Kelly's Dir Oxon.* (1863 and later edns); cf. *Complete Peerage*, II, 55–8.

¹¹¹ GA, D1799/T28.

¹¹² *Ibid.* D1799/M18; cf. D1799/P8.

¹¹³ BA, EP/A/32/25.

¹¹⁴ GA, D2428/1/58.

¹¹⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1939 edn).

¹¹⁶ GA, D5400/1/1; GDR wills 1663/176, 1663/224.

¹¹⁷ GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, deed 29 Jan. 1663/4; TNA, PROB 11/341/391.

¹¹⁸ TNA, PROB 11/363/38.

¹¹⁹ GA, Q/REL 1, Grumbolds Ash hundred, West Littleton 1776, 1832; cf. Rudder, *Glos.* 530; Bigland, *Glos.* II, 823; Rudge, *Hist. of Glos.* II, 298.

¹²⁰ GA, D185/5/28.

¹²¹ BA, EP/A/32/25.

¹²² GA, D2428/1/58; cf. *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1910 edn).

¹²³ cf. *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1914–39 edns); sale partics. in GA, D11996; D12572/1; below, econ. hist., agriculture since 1800.

¹²⁴ Information from Mr R.W. Knight, Marshfield.

West Littleton is not separately described in Domesday book, and the earliest indication of its agricultural economy comes from an extent dated 1321–2.¹²⁵ On the demesne at that date was a house with barn and cattle-shed. Its land consisted of 220 a. of arable, of which 80 a. was reckoned to be worth 3*d.* per acre, and the remainder 2*d.* Of 60 a. of meadow, 40 a. was worth 1*s.* 4*d.* and 20 a. 1*s.* per acre. The underwood and pasture of 40 a. of woodland was worth 6*s.* 8*d.* Two tenants held a yardland and half-yardland in fee, and there were eight customary tenants holding a yardland each, one holding a half-yardland, and three with 7 a. each. Most also rented portions of the demesne at 4*d.* per acre,¹²⁶ and the customary tenants performed labour services (*bedrips*), as did three of the four cottagers.

There was a demesne house within a close in 1494, when it was broken into and the culprit arrested.¹²⁷ Between 1491 and 1496 four customary holdings changed hands, each of one tenement and one yardland.¹²⁸ During this period at least eight tenants owned flocks of sheep, one having 60 and three others 44 apiece.¹²⁹ They were required to fold their sheep on the lord's demesne, thus manuring it, and not on their own land.¹³⁰ They were also required to keep in repair two walls dividing their tenements from the open fields.¹³¹

Although the evidence is derived from a later map,¹³² on which the nomenclature is confused, it is likely that in the medieval period there were two large open fields, east and west, divided by a boundary running north from the village. Both had the stream with riverine meadows crossing them, so that effectively each field was divided into two, giving rise to descriptions such as 'eastfield called southfield' and 'westfield called northfield'.¹³³

Agriculture, 1600-1800

Ten copyholders were occupying the majority of West Littleton's farmland in 1608, apart from woodland in the south-western corner of the parish and a small leasehold held at rack rent.¹³⁴ No demesne land is recorded at this date. There were still ten copyholds a generation later, in 1637, and to all but one belonged a house adjoining the green or the lane running south from it.¹³⁵ Over 450 a. of arable remained uninclosed, mostly in the north, west and south-east of the parish, and a further 84 a. was downland on which the tenants enjoyed beast leazes. Closes of arable and pasture lay around the village, and to its south-west and east; and inclosed meadows lined the stream which traverses the parish in its valley from west to east.¹³⁶ The downland, usually known as Toldown at this date, was common pasture between February and September, and subject to a winter lease.¹³⁷

The copyholds varied in size, but two of the larger have been recorded in detail. That held by John Frye in 1608 was granted in 1630 to John Sloper, and totalled 143 a., of which 48 a. lay in the two common fields, 16 a. in two arable closes, and the remainder was inclosed pasture and meadow, with six beast leazes on Littleton Down.¹³⁸ Anthony Neate of the Old Farmhouse, a copyholder in 1637, purchased his holding of c.117 a. in 1642, which included 60 a. in the east and west common fields, 6 beast leazes and 11 closes.¹³⁹ The largest

¹²⁵ This para: TNA, E 142/24, rot. 12.

¹²⁶ This demesne land, totalling c.130 a., was additional to the 220 a.

¹²⁷ Bodleian Lib. MS Rawl. B 317, f. 29.

¹²⁸ Bodleian Lib. MS Rawl. B 317, ff. 17v.-37.

¹²⁹ Bodleian Lib. MS Rawl. B 317, ff. 19, 26v.

¹³⁰ Bodleian Lib. MS Rawl. B 317, ff. 19, 33.

¹³¹ Bodleian Lib. MS Rawl. B 317, ff. 22v, 33v.

¹³² S. Mastoris (ed.), *Welbeck Atlas* (Thoroton Soc. Record Ser., 47, 2017), 131 (map of 1637).

¹³³ E.g. GA, D1799/T28, deed of 17 Mar 1715.

¹³⁴ Notts. Archives, DD/4P/55/58.

¹³⁵ Mastoris, *Welbeck Atlas*, 131.

¹³⁶ Mastoris, *Welbeck Atlas*, 131.

¹³⁷ GA, D2700/NC10/1, deed of 1 May 1632; Notts. Archives, DD/4P/55/58.

¹³⁸ GA, D2700/NC10/1, deed of 23 July 1630; there is a discrepancy in the acreage totals.

¹³⁹ GA, D1799/T28, deed of 20 May 1642; above, landownership: other estates.

copyhold, that of Richard Hales in 1637, included a several furlong of 22 a. taken from the west field, another close of almost 30 a. and other inclosed lands, totalling c.80 a.¹⁴⁰

Apart from Neate's, a second holding was purchased in 1642 by its tenant, William Alsop, whose possessions were inventoried after his death in September 1663.¹⁴¹ He owned 340 sheep worth £75, harvested wheat and other grain valued at £80, and sown wheat worth £20, as well as £20 of hay. His six oxen and a horse were valued at £40, and six cows and twelve other cattle at £37. Nathaniel Osborne, who had purchased another West Littleton holding before 1687, died in May 1691 with 54 a. of growing corn, 4 wheat ricks, 19 head of cattle, 2 horses and 140 sheep and lambs.¹⁴² His son, also Nathaniel, inherited and a survey showed that his lands comprised 42 a. in the east field, and 46 a. in the west field, with a further c.48 a. distributed in 8 closes.¹⁴³ The Osbornes farmed Manor farm by 1738 and probably earlier.¹⁴⁴

The process of piecemeal inclosure was ongoing in the 17th century. Four closes of pasture, formerly wood ground and totalling 25 a. were described in 1630,¹⁴⁵ and in the same year deeds refer to additional rent for land converted to tillage.¹⁴⁶ Upper and Lower New Tynning are referred to in a deed of 1657,¹⁴⁷ and somewhat later, before 1715, a new inclosure was taken from the northern part of the west field and sown with French grass (sainfoin).¹⁴⁸ Such improvements were probably small scale, however, as comparison of the Neate holding when sold in 1642 with a survey in 1766 (by when it was part of the Dyrham estate) suggests that only two small inclosures had been added to the ten listed at the earlier date, and that two of these had been thrown into one.¹⁴⁹ The 1766 survey also names five furlongs in each of the two open fields, and lists 26 selions or small groups of selions dispersed within them.

Between 1776 and 1800 no major changes in the pattern of occupancy or ownership occurred to alter West Littleton's agricultural regime.¹⁵⁰ Most land was distributed between eight and ten owners, who generally resided in nearby parishes, and was farmed by members of four families. One large estate was sold (to John West of Hinton, in Dyrham) in 1794 and this resulted in a change of tenant,¹⁵¹ but tax assessments through the period remained constant, and a second survey of the Blathwayt (Dyrham) holding in 1780 revealed no change from that of 1766.¹⁵²

Agriculture since 1800

In 1801 out of a total acreage of 1,050 a. one-third (345 a.) was under arable cultivation, principally growing wheat (120 a.), barley (79 a.) and oats (55 a.), with some potatoes, peas and turnips.¹⁵³ Landholdings remained largely unchanged until inclosure in 1818, and farming was dominated by the inter-related Hillier and Osborne families, William Eyles and John Baldwin.¹⁵⁴ Eyles farmed West's land, but the others came to own most of their farmland.¹⁵⁵ Inclosure of the remaining 253 a. of openfield and other uninclosed land was

¹⁴⁰ Mastoris, *Welbeck Atlas*, 131.

¹⁴¹ above, landownership: other estates; GDR inventories 1663/290.

¹⁴² GDR inventories 1691/107.

¹⁴³ GA, D1799/T28, undated particular of Nath. Osborne's estate.

¹⁴⁴ pers. comm. Sara Craig.

¹⁴⁵ Notts. Archives, DD/4P/52/64.

¹⁴⁶ GA, D2700/NC10/1, deeds of 23 July 1630, 1 May 1632.

¹⁴⁷ GA, D5400/1, deed of 17 Aug. 1657.

¹⁴⁸ GA, D1799/T28, deed of 17 Mar. 1715.

¹⁴⁹ GA, D1799/T28, deed of 20 May 1642; D1799/M18, 1766 survey.

¹⁵⁰ This para: GA, Q/5/14/2/1/15.

¹⁵¹ GA, D185/5/28.

¹⁵² GA, D1799/E50.

¹⁵³ *1801 Crop Returns for England*, I, 179.

¹⁵⁴ GA, Q/5/14/2/1/15. William Hillier was James Osborne's son-in-law: BA, EP/V/4/106/4, baptism 30 Jan. 1771; BA, P/Tor/R/3/a, marriage 21 Mar. 1790; pers. comm. Sara Craig, 2022. On the inter-relationship of West Littleton farming families, see S. Young, *West Littleton Village and Church* (2011), 16–30.

¹⁵⁵ GA, Q/5/14/2/1/15.

subject to a private agreement in 1816 and was implemented in 1818.¹⁵⁶ Nearly half (121 a.) of the land affected lay open in the northern part of the east field, but there was also a furlong (Rownham field, 21 a.) in the south-eastern corner of the field. The west field had 41 a. remaining open north of the stream, and 55 a. south of the stream, all of which land was inclosed in four allotments. In consequence the Blathwayt property was consolidated in the west of the parish, the lands of Baldwin and West in the east, and those of Hillier and Osborne primarily in the centre, though still somewhat scattered.¹⁵⁷ Littleton Down (89 a. in 1840) was not affected by this agreement, nor were tithe payments extinguished.

Inclosure had almost no effect on the pattern of ownership, and the five farms passed within families to spouses and children.¹⁵⁸ There were in 1831, in addition to these five, and one smallholder, 20 agricultural labourers among the adult male population, and only four men otherwise employed.¹⁵⁹ No new outlying farmsteads were built, so that in 1840, when tithe commutation took place, all the farmhouses remained within 300 m. of each other on either side of the lane leading south from the village green.¹⁶⁰ Thomas Gigg, of West farm (238 a.) and Charles Snell Baldwin of Upper farm (237 a., now Old Manor House), had the largest acreages in 1840; the other three, Thomas Webb (now Old Farmhouse), Thomas Hillier (now Littleton House) and William Osborne (now Manor farm) each had 136-150 a. Arable cultivation had almost doubled between 1801 and 1840, to 669 a., with only 222 a. of meadow and pasture, and 6 a. of woodland.¹⁶¹ Littleton Down was described as inclosed downland, and belonged to the manorial lord, the duke of Beaufort (who held no other land in the parish); the five farmers and another held 58 beast leazes in total on the common between May and September, and the duke let winter feeding to a tenant.¹⁶²

In 1851, when the parish population reached its zenith of 161, 35 men and boys were farm labourers, and only three adult males had other occupations.¹⁶³ The five farmers together employed 42 labourers, but two, Thomas Hillier and William Shellard (replacing Thomas Webb), also farmed land beyond the parish.¹⁶⁴ By 1866 the acreage under cultivation had reduced to 433 a., of which 292 a. were growing grain crops and 141 a. others, mainly roots.¹⁶⁵ In addition there were 63 head of cattle, including 8 dairy cows, 69 pigs, and no fewer than 710 sheep and 345 lambs.¹⁶⁶ In 1871, when the population had dropped to 116, the farmers employed 37 labourers, and there were 26 living in the parish.¹⁶⁷ The Baldwin, Hillier, West and Osborne dynasties continued; in fact Eleanor Osborne, widowed prematurely in 1855, was still farming at Manor farm in 1901, aged 83.¹⁶⁸

Alongside the five established farms, a sixth, on Dunsdown Hill, had been established by 1887.¹⁶⁹ Dennis Wookey was succeeded there before 1901 by John Bond, and later by Gilbert Bond until after 1927.¹⁷⁰ The Old farm, part of the Dyrham estate, was offered for sale in 1894, when c.100 a. of its 150 a., mostly in the west of the parish, were arable.¹⁷¹ West's farm, whose land lay mostly along the eastern side, and which was auctioned in 1896, had a

¹⁵⁶ GA, D1799/E153.

¹⁵⁷ GA, D1799/E153.

¹⁵⁸ Analysis of GA, Q/5/14/2/1/15. One incomer, Collatinus Rawlings, was in fact the husband of Mary Snell, whose family was related to the Baldwins: BA, EP/V/4/139/4. Another, Thomas Gigg, was Robert West's brother in law: TNA, HO 107/1956, f. 339v.

¹⁵⁹ *Census*, 1831.

¹⁶⁰ BA, EP/A/32/25.

¹⁶¹ BA, EP/A/32/25.

¹⁶² BA, EP/A/32/25.

¹⁶³ TNA, HO 107/1956, ff. 334-41v.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, HO 107/1956, ff. 334-41v. Both claimed about 50 a. more than they had in 1840; Charles Baldwin may also have included land elsewhere.

¹⁶⁵ TNA, MAF 68/26.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, MAF 68/26.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, RG 10/2578, ff. 16-21.

¹⁶⁸ GDR, R8/1855/70; TNA, RG 13/2408, f. 92v.

¹⁶⁹ GA, Q/RER/1887/Thornbury.

¹⁷⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1889-1927 edns.); TNA RG 13/2408, f. 91v.

¹⁷¹ GA, D11996, sale cat. 1894.

smaller proportion of arable, c.107 a. of its 238 a. total.¹⁷² Both farms were still entitled to beast leazes on Littleton Down, 12 to West's and 4 to the Old farm. In 1896 also, 371 a. was under arable cultivation in the parish, of which 277 a. were grain crops, representing a small decrease during the previous 30 years; the number of sheep (200) and lambs (223) showed a steep decline, offset by a large increase in pigs (163), dairy cows (33) and other cattle (94).¹⁷³

The Old farm house stood unoccupied in 1901, but its land remained part of the Dyrham estate, and in 1909 was being farmed from Dunsdown by Gilbert Bond.¹⁷⁴ By 1906 Henry Rennock ran a smallholding of 34 a. from Old farm, and remained there until 1939 or later.¹⁷⁵ West's farm's acreage had reduced to 171 a. by 1909; its owner since 1906 or earlier was Frank Skinner, and he remained there until 1920.¹⁷⁶ Manor farm, after Eleanor Osborne's death in 1905, passed to her sons William and Henry, who purchased the freehold from mortgagors in 1913 and retained it until 1944.¹⁷⁷ Home farm (Littleton House) was farmed by George Blake from the 1890s, but Thomas Hillier retained ownership until his death in 1910.¹⁷⁸ It then passed to his son, also Thomas until 1920, when Blake purchased it from him at auction; Thomas was still there in 1939.¹⁷⁹ Likewise Church farm was retained by the Baldwins until put up for auction in 1920, although let to tenants by 1901.¹⁸⁰

In 1909, most of West Littleton's land (c.713 a.) was in the hands of four farms (Home, 243 a.; West's, 171 a.; Manor, 166 a.; Dunsdown, 132 a.), with smaller holdings attached to Church and the Old farms.¹⁸¹ Little changed through wartime, but in 1920 West's, Church, Home, Old, and Littleton Wood farms were all sold.¹⁸² Three of the four larger farmers remained, however, and the only major newcomer was Ralph Champion, who farmed West's through the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸³ During the 30 years to 1926 arable acreage had declined to 269 a., of which 200 a. were cultivated for grain.¹⁸⁴ The number of sheep (274) and lambs (255), and of dairy cows (44) and other cattle (102) all showed small increases, but there were fewer pigs (46). Poultry farming at Church farm was significant, accounting for 5,820 fowls and 118 other birds. Farming remained labour intensive, employing thirty farm workers, including two casual, three women and five boys.¹⁸⁵

A survey, c.1936, showed that most arable land in the parish lay north of the village across the former east and west open fields on either side of Wallsend Lane, with smaller areas south of Dunsdown Lane and along the southern boundary with Marshfield east of the village.¹⁸⁶ In 1942 a report into West Littleton's four principal farms found them all well managed.¹⁸⁷ Blake & Son's Home farm, the largest (324 a.), maintained a flock of breeding ewes, fattened lambs, produced milk and had well cultivated arable growing wheat and oats. Dyrham's tenanted Dunsdown farm (218 a.) likewise grew wheat and oats on good arable, but the pasture was only fair and the farm was rather short of stock. Champion's West (i.e. West's) farm was similar, but fairly well stocked for a mixed farm. Manor farm was short of labour and had been allowed to 'go back' by a previous tenant, but by then was productive

¹⁷² GA, D1799/E216.

¹⁷³ TNA, MAF 68/1609.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, RG 13/2408, f. 92; GA, D2428/1/58, 805.

¹⁷⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1906–1939 edns.); cf. GA, D11996, sale cat. 1931.

¹⁷⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1906–1919 edns.); GA, D2428/1/58, 806–7; *Wilts. Times*, 1 May 1920, p. 6.

¹⁷⁷ GA, D11996, sale cat. 1944, special conditions of sale.

¹⁷⁸ Note by Rosemary Landrett, 16 Aug 1980, in West Littleton church visitors book, penes Mr David Adams, churchwarden.

¹⁷⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1894–1939 edns.); *Western Daily Press*, 24 Sept. 1920, p. 6.

¹⁸⁰ GA, D2428/1/58, 797–8; *Wilts. Times*, 6 Oct. 1920, p. 6; TNA, RG 13/2408, f. 92v.

¹⁸¹ GA, D2428/1/58, 783–814.

¹⁸² *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1910–1919 edns.); *Wilts. Times*, 1 May 1920, p. 6.; 6 Oct. 1920, p. 6; *Western Daily Press*, 24 Sept. 1920, p. 6.

¹⁸³ *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1919–1939 edns.).

¹⁸⁴ TNA, MAF 68/3295.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, MAF 68/3295.

¹⁸⁶ *Land Utilisation Survey*, sheet 111 and part of 110 (1939).

¹⁸⁷ TNA, MAF 32/109/223.

and well managed. All the farmers had lost their grazing rights on Littleton Down when it was requisitioned by the R.A.F. as a decoy airfield.

Manor farm, auctioned in 1944,¹⁸⁸ was farmed by Arthur and Frank Knight and then Arthur's son John Knight until 2017.¹⁸⁹ When the Dunsdown farm tenant retired in 1947 it was taken by William Pullin, who remained there until his death in 1985.¹⁹⁰ Three of the other farms also continued as long-term farming businesses until the mid-1970s (G. Blake and previous family members at Home farm 1890s-c.1977; J.T. Stephenson at Upper farm c.1955-c.1976; and C.D. Gwyther at West farm c.1959-c.1973). Of these only West farm continued as a working farm. Church farm, only 11 a. in 1956 when it was auctioned,¹⁹¹ was held by D.K.E. Mainwaring c.1966-c.1977, when it was acquired by Charles Farquhar (d. 1980),¹⁹² whose son-in-law Richard Meade owned it until his death in 2015.¹⁹³

Because West Littleton was assessed with Tormarton after 1935 no separate agricultural statistics are available. Agricultural census data for 2000, 2004 and 2010 show that West Littleton remained an area of mixed farming, with beef and dairy cattle, sheep and extensive arable cultivation, principally growing wheat, spring and winter barley and oats. Livestock farming was practised more in the south and east of the parish and arable more in the north and west.¹⁹⁴ There remained two working mixed farms based in West Littleton until 2017, when Manor farm was sold following the death of John Knight.¹⁹⁵ West farm was in 2021 a livestock and poultry farm occupied by S. and W. Bush, which also offered holiday accommodation.¹⁹⁶

Other Trades and Industries

Apart from one carpenter, William Smart, whose will was proved in 1636, no trades not directly associated with farming have been discovered in the parish before 1800.¹⁹⁷

Very few West Littleton inhabitants during the 19th century derived their livelihood from non-agricultural occupations.¹⁹⁸ Four men and three boys were working in a quarry in 1845 when they were injured by a lightning strike.¹⁹⁹ A quarry is shown on maps of 1882 and later north-east of Dunsdown Lane and north-west of Wallsend Lane.²⁰⁰ A shopkeeper was in business in 1841 and still in 1863, and two brothers, tailor and shoemaker, lived at Dunsdown in 1851. Joseph Orchard was a carpenter in 1834,²⁰¹ and the family firm traded also as wheelwrights and blacksmiths until the 1860s, when the carpentry business passed through various hands to Thomas Jones by 1885, and then his son Herbert Jones after 1906 and until 1939 or later. William Callow was a blacksmith during the 1870s and 1880s, working presumably from a smithy on the green (The Forge in 2021);²⁰² the carpenters in 1840 occupied premises south of the church (on the site of St James Grange in 2021), but by 1901 had relocated to a house and barn along the southern approach to the village (The Limes in 2021).²⁰³ No other tradesmen are listed in directories to 1939.

Two businesses had premises in Dunsdown Lane in 2021. Cameron Sports Cars, dealing in sales and servicing of Porsche cars, was established in former agricultural

¹⁸⁸ GA, D11996, sale cat. 1944.

¹⁸⁹ This para: analysis of British Phone Books via Ancestry.

¹⁹⁰ *Wilts. Times*, 13 Sept. 1947, 6; Nat. Probate Cal., 1985.

¹⁹¹ *Wilts. Times*, 21 July 1956, 12.

¹⁹² <https://www.thepeerage.com/p7089.htm>.

¹⁹³ <https://www.thepeerage.com/p7090.htm#i70894>.

¹⁹⁴ <https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/agcensus>.

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.voycepullin.co.uk/salesandmarkets/documents/181117KnightCatalogue.pdf> (accessed 4 Dec. 2021); local information.

¹⁹⁶ <http://www.westfarmbandb.co.uk/> (accessed 4 Dec. 2021); local information.

¹⁹⁷ GDR wills, 1636/142.

¹⁹⁸ This para: Census, 1841–1891; *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1856–1939 edns.)

¹⁹⁹ *Glouc. Jnl.*, 31 May 1845, 1.

²⁰⁰ OS 25", sheet Glos. LXXIII. 7 (1882 and later edns.); above, built character.

²⁰¹ BA, P.Tor/R/2/a, entries for 23 Feb. 1834.

²⁰² Marked on OS 25", sheet Glos. LXXIII. 11 (1882 edn.);

²⁰³ BA, EP/A/32/25; Inf. From Mr M. Wayne, The Limes.

buildings in 2008.²⁰⁴ Limestone Age, trading as Boniti, opened premises opposite Dunsdown House in 2009, trading in stone and other building materials for interior design.²⁰⁵ An equestrian eventing yard established at Church farm by Olympic gold medallist Richard Meade (d. 2015) was in 2021 continued by his son Harry, also a champion event rider.²⁰⁶

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Character and the Life of the Community

As a small society of between nine and twelve households, all living within 500m of each other throughout its history until the 19th century, West Littleton has not developed, or at least not recorded, the range of communal activities to be found in more populous parishes. Its tenurial and religious histories have been closely aligned with those of its neighbours Tormarton and Acton Turville, and it has also relied on the adjacent small town of Marshfield for services and education. In 1327, when the overlord paid double the tax levied on each of seven tenants, who all paid similar amounts and presumably held a yardland each, the impression is of a community of small farmers of broadly equal status; there were two others who paid less tax, and an unknown number exempt.²⁰⁷ Later taxes, of 1524 and 1525, suggest that wealth was less evenly divided; of 15 taxpayers 3 paid more than two-thirds of the total amount levied in tax.²⁰⁸ At this period West Littleton paid only around one-fifth as much as its neighbour Tormarton. In c.1710 and c.1775 there were six freeholders.²⁰⁹

After 1800 there was some consolidation of holdings, so that four or five families, mostly interrelated, came to dominate village agriculture and society.²¹⁰ West Littleton occasionally was served by its own curate, as in 1851,²¹¹ but more often the rector of Tormarton, or a curate in his absence, performed duties for both communities.²¹² In 1851 over half the population (54%) had been born in the parish, and still half in 1881, falling to 38% in 1901.²¹³ Most of those born elsewhere were natives of neighbouring or nearby places. Between 1836 and 1860 there was an unusually high number of illegitimate births recorded in the parish, 16 in all. Two mothers each produced three, and three members of one family produced five.²¹⁴

Communal events, including fetes and flower shows, took place during the 1920s and earlier,²¹⁵ and the Brethren chapel may have been used for social gatherings.²¹⁶ In 1926 a village hall was erected on the green, and a fete held to raise funds to equip it.²¹⁷ During the 1930s the hall was used for whist drives and dances, social evenings and Christmas parties, table tennis and darts.²¹⁸ After 1945 it was used by a Mothers' Union, a village arts league and the county library, but whist drives were the main social events held in it through the 1950s. In 1952 it was said to be the property of the village, governed by trustees and a freely elected committee. In 1953 a television set was loaned for the coronation celebrations held all day in the hall. Although the hall continued to be used for events until c.1969, a change in

²⁰⁴ <https://www.cameronsportscars.com/about-us/> (accessed 4 Dec 2021); local information.

²⁰⁵ <http://boniti.com/> (accessed 4 Dec 2021); local information.

²⁰⁶ <http://www.harrymeade.com/> (accessed 5 Dec. 2021).

²⁰⁷ *Glos. Subsidy Roll, 1327*, 111.

²⁰⁸ *Bristol & Glos. Lay Subsidy, 152–3*, 317.

²⁰⁹ Atkyns, *Glos.*, 542; Rudder, *Glos.*, 530.

²¹⁰ Above, *econ. hist.; agriculture since 1800*.

²¹¹ *Religious Census of 1851*, ed. Munden, 107.

²¹² Below, *religious hist.: religious life, since 1600*.

²¹³ *Census, 1851, 1881, 1901*.

²¹⁴ BA, P.Tor/R/2/a; *Census, 1841, 1851* (Louisa Walker, Eliza Hudson, Mary, Harriet and Martha Clifford). In total 40 illegitimate births were recorded in Tormarton and West Littleton, 1813–99.

²¹⁵ GA, D11996, Harvest Festival Poster, 1912; BA, P. Tor/ChW/2/2.

²¹⁶ GA, D11996, 1920 sale cat.

²¹⁷ *Western Daily Press*, 6 Sept. 1926, 8.

²¹⁸ This para: West Littleton Village Hall minute book, 1935–70, penes Mr David Adams.

licensing regulations, lack of local support and unwillingness to serve on the committee led to its closure in 1970 and the removal into store of its equipment. The building was subsequently demolished and rebuilt as the clubhouse for Marshfield football club.²¹⁹

Social and fund-raising events were also held in aid of the church, including fetes, garden parties and sales between 1949 and 1959, open gardens, 1985–2009 or later, madrigal recitals, 1986–93 and later, village sales, 1978–80 and coffee evenings, 1981–5.²²⁰ A community project in 2010 to conserve and research the churchyard monuments attracted outside funding and involved local schoolchildren, who also participated in a village trail.²²¹

No record has been found of an inn or other drinking establishment in the parish. The Tolldown inn, built in 1700 and named the Crown by 1738, and colloquially known more recently as ‘Annie Cowley’s’, stands just north of the parish boundary (in Dyrham and Hinton) and was frequented by West Littleton villagers.²²²

West Littleton village green has been the venue for hunting meets since 1907 or earlier. In that year and subsequently the Bath and County Harriers met there; the Beaufort Hunt is recorded meeting there from 1913, and it has also been a venue for the Wick and District Beagles.²²³ In the 21st century the hunt has sometimes met there on Christmas eve, and clay shoots, pony club and other equestrian events have been held in the parish.²²⁴

West Littleton received international media attention in 1995, when the private lives of actors Hugh Grant and Liz Hurley, who were then renting Littleton House, became a matter of public curiosity.²²⁵ In 2005 a party held at Church Farm and attended by the Princes William and Harry attracted widespread controversy on account of an alleged indiscretion by the latter.²²⁶

Education

No record of a school in West Littleton has been found before 1823, when a Sunday school was commenced.²²⁷ In 1833 this school was supported by the rector and 15 children of both sexes were taught.²²⁸ The Sunday school still existed in 1851, when 24 scholars attended church morning and afternoon.²²⁹ One of the farmers, Thomas Hillier, employed a resident governess for his three children in 1841 and 1851,²³⁰ but a day school for boys and girls was not opened until after 1853.²³¹

The school occupied and adapted two of a row of four parish cottages, said to have been built in 1825, on the green at the head of Camp Lane.²³² It existed by 1856, and the mistress in 1861 was Jane Merchant, wife of the parish clerk.²³³ She had been replaced before 1871 by Fanny Baldwin, daughter of a retired West Littleton farmer, Joseph Baldwin.²³⁴ In 1872 the school catered for 19 infants, which was regarded as sufficient accommodation;

²¹⁹ S. Young, *West Littleton Village and Church* (2011), 6; information from Mr R.W. Knight, Marshfield.

²²⁰ West Littleton PCC minute books, 1946–88, and related files, penes Mr David Adams, churchwarden.

²²¹ Young, *West Littleton Village and Church*, 14–15.

²²² GDR, R8/1722/252; GA, D1799/X12; D1799/E98; Information from Mr R.W. Knight, Marshfield.

²²³ *Somerset Guardian*, 5 Jan 1907, 6; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 1 Nov. 1913, 3; Information from Mr R.W. Knight, Marshfield.

²²⁴ *Bristol Evening Post*, 2 Jan 2009; *Wilts. Times*, 22 Dec. 2011; West Littleton PCC minute books, 1946–88, and related files.

²²⁵ *Daily Mirror*, 24 Feb. 1995, 11.

²²⁶ *Observer*, 16 Jan. 2005.

²²⁷ *Educ. of Poor Digest*, 315; *Educ. Enq. Abstract*, 319.

²²⁸ *Educ. Enq. Abstract*, 319.

²²⁹ *Religious Census of 1851*, ed. Munden, 107.

²³⁰ TNA, HO 107/357/4, f. 5; HO 107/1956, f. 339

²³¹ *Glos. Chronicle*, 16 Apr. 1853, p. 3, implies that it had then been designed but not built.

²³² BA, EP/A/32/25; S. Young, *West Littleton Village and Church* (2011), 5, but a building is shown on the site on the 1816–18 inclosure map: GA, D1799/E153.

²³³ *Kelly's Dir. of Glos.* (1856 edn.); TNA, RG 9/1744, f. 20.

²³⁴ TNA, RG 10/2578, f. 19.

eight older children attended Marshfield National school.²³⁵ By 1879 Rhoda Merchant, Jane's daughter-in-law, was the mistress, and when she died in 1885 her 'small semi-private school' closed.²³⁶ By then some children had already preferred schooling at Marshfield, and by 1886 14 of the 16 children living in West Littleton were attending school there.²³⁷ After some debate it was decided not to reopen the school, and thereafter, at least until 1927, most West Littleton children attended Marshfield school.²³⁸ Despite this, some teaching may have resumed at the former school, as Rhoda's 19-year-old daughter Annie was still living there in 1891 and described herself as a school mistress.²³⁹ The school building, renamed Old School House, was standing in 2021.

Social Welfare

Elizabeth Frankcom (d. 1800) left by her will proved in 1801 £210 on trust to the vicar of Marshfield and rector of West Littleton, one-third of the interest to purchase and distribute wearing apparel to poor women of West Littleton not receiving alms, annually on 21 Dec.²⁴⁰ Calico and serge for making gowns and coats were given by the chapelwarden to two and sometimes three women from 1801 until 1828 or later.²⁴¹ The bequest was subsequently administered by the Charity Commission, which paid £1 15s. annually from 1911 until 1964 or later, generally for the benefit of four women.²⁴² No benefactions are recorded before Frankcom's.²⁴³

James Gale (d. 1886), a retired London publican whose wife Ann was a West Littleton native,²⁴⁴ left £200 in trust, the interest to be shared at Christmas annually by three men and three women from West Littleton and three men and three women from Tormarton.²⁴⁵ Following Ann's death in 1889 payments began in 1890, and were still being paid in 1964, yielding annually from 1911 £2 5s.²⁴⁶

The Frankcom and Gale charities were combined c.1970 with two originating in Tormarton to form the Tormarton and West Littleton United Charities, to provide for the needy at the discretion of the vicar and two co-opted trustees.²⁴⁷ It no longer existed in 2021.²⁴⁸

In 1776 the parish spent £33 in out-relief for its poor, and £27 in 1786, rising to £48 in 1803, when five paupers regularly and eleven occasionally received relief.²⁴⁹ Expenditure had risen further by 1813, to £57, rising to £66 in 1819; in 1815 four parishioners were regularly relieved, and fourteen occasionally.²⁵⁰ During the 1820s annual expenditure peaked at £100 in 1827, but then fell back and was £65 in 1829, climbing again to £126 in 1834 and then falling to £43 in 1836.²⁵¹

²³⁵ Ibid. ED 2/190/4.

²³⁶ *Kelly's Dir. of Glos.* (1879, 1885 edns.); TNA, RG 11/2510, f. 18; ED 2/190/4.

²³⁷ TNA, ED 2/190/4.

²³⁸ Ibid.; *Kelly's Dir. of Glos.* (1889–1927 edns.); a few attended Dyrham school: information from Mr R.W. Knight, Marshfield.

²³⁹ TNA, RG 12/1995, f. 13v.

²⁴⁰ TNA, PROB 11/1358/155; mon. in ch.

²⁴¹ BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/1; *18th Rep. Com. Char.* 294–5, 377.

²⁴² BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/2.

²⁴³ Bigland, *Glos.* II, 823.

²⁴⁴ TNA, HO 107/1581; TNA RG 11/986, f. 124v.; Nat. Probate Cal., 1886.

²⁴⁵ BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/2.

²⁴⁶ BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/2.

²⁴⁷ Undated typescript in West Littleton PCC files, penes Mr David Adams, churchwarden.

²⁴⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission> (accessed 2 Dec. 2021).

²⁴⁹ *Poor Law Abstract, 1804*, 176–7.

²⁵⁰ *Poor Law Abstract, 1818*, 150–1; *Rep. Select Comm. on Poor Rate Returns* (Parl. Papers 1822 (517)), 57.

²⁵¹ *Poor Law Returns (1830–1)*, 68; *Poor Law Returns (1835)*, 67; *Poor Law Com. 2nd Rep.* app E, 122–3.

West Littleton entered Chipping Sodbury poor law union in 1836,²⁵² and in 1851 there was one family from the parish in the union workhouse at Yate – a servant, Eliza Hudson, and her three illegitimate children.²⁵³ The parish in 1840 owned a row of four houses and another single house on the green, presumably to accommodate the poor.²⁵⁴ An elderly widow was receiving parish relief in 1881, and another in 1891.²⁵⁵

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

West Littleton was and remains a chapelry of Tormarton parish with its own chapel-of-ease served in the Middle Ages by a chaplain and later by either a stipendiary curate or Tormarton's rector. The chapel, notable for its 13th-century bell and bellcote, was heavily restored in 1855–6 to designs by T.H. Wyatt. Nonconformity was almost entirely absent until the late 19th century, when Christian Brethren briefly had their own chapel. From 1983 the Anglican chapelry formed part of a wider united benefice centred on Marshfield.

Chapel Origins and Parochial Organization

By 1221 West Littleton had a chaplain,²⁵⁶ and its Anglican chapel (dedicated to St James by 1851)²⁵⁷ retains 13th-century fabric.²⁵⁸ That originated as a chapel-of-ease within Tormarton parish, perhaps with baptism and burial rights from foundation (certainly by 1662 and 1558 respectively).²⁵⁹ One set of registers was kept for Tormarton and West Littleton.²⁶⁰ Chaplains and later curates were appointed by Tormarton's rectors, who paid them a stipend worth £6 in 1522 and 1546, £40 in the 18th century, and often £70 in the 19th.²⁶¹ Tithes from West Littleton worth £45 a year c.1735²⁶² and commuted in 1840 for a rent charge of £220 belonged to Tormarton's rector, as did the West Littleton glebe, which comprised only the ¼-a. churchyard.²⁶³ No record of any clergy house in West Littleton has been found, although a 'poor cottage' extant c.1662 was reportedly built on part of the churchyard c.1602.²⁶⁴

Tormarton with West Littleton parish (included in Bitton deanery in 1291, but Hawkesbury deanery by 1535)²⁶⁵ was enlarged in 1344 to take in the formerly independent parish of Acton Turville, the living of which (a rectory) was appropriated to the newly founded chantry in Tormarton parish church and replaced with a vicarage in the gift of the chantry's warden, who was also Tormarton's rector.²⁶⁶ After the Dissolution rectors continued to present Acton Turville's vicars until 1663, and by the 18th century the vicarage

²⁵² Youngs, *Admin. Units*, 179.

²⁵³ TNA, HO 107/1956, f. 575v; her daughters were baptized at West Littleton in 1841, 1844 and 1847: BA, P.Tor/R/2/a.

²⁵⁴ BA, EP/A/32/25.

²⁵⁵ TNA, RG 11/2510, f. 18v.; RG 12/1995, f. 14v.

²⁵⁶ *Pleas of the Crown for Glos.* 35.

²⁵⁷ *Religious Census of 1851*, ed. Munden, 107.

²⁵⁸ Below (church archit.).

²⁵⁹ *Valor Eccl.* II, 491; GDR wills 1558/76; BA, EP/V/4/139.

²⁶⁰ BA, P.Tor/R/1–4.

²⁶¹ GA, Hockaday Abs. cclxi; *Military Surv. of Glos. 1522*, 1; *Parsons's Notes*, 281; Atkyns, *Glos.* 542; GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, surv. 9 May 1788.

²⁶² *Benson's Survey*, 36.

²⁶³ *Parsons's Notes*, 282; BA, EP/A/32/25.

²⁶⁴ *Parsons's Notes*, 282. Perhaps parochial accommodation for the poor, but this is not clear. It does not appear on the 1637 map: S. Mastoris (ed.), *The Welbeck Atlas: William Senior's maps of the estates of William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, 1629–1640* (Thoroton Soc. 47, 2017), 131.

²⁶⁵ *Tax. Eccl.* 221; *Valor Eccl.* II, 491; Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 188 (also detailing later transfers to different deaneries).

²⁶⁶ *Reg. Bransford*, 306–8; *Cal. Papal Regs*, IV, 300–1; below (relig. life).

had effectively been merged into the rectory, rectors instead paying a stipendiary curate to serve on their behalf, sometimes one man for both parochial chapels of Acton Turville and West Littleton.²⁶⁷ Following Acton Turville's constitution as a separate parish in 1870,²⁶⁸ Tormarton's rectors often served both the parish church and West Littleton chapel in person.²⁶⁹ In 1983 the benefice of Tormarton with West Littleton was united with that of Marshfield with Cold Ashton to form the 'Cotswold Edge' united benefice.²⁷⁰

Religious Life

From the Middle Ages to the Restoration

West Littleton's earliest known chaplain was Thomas, whose servant was hanged for murder in 1221.²⁷¹ Nothing is known of his medieval successors, unless they included Thomas Katour of West Littleton who was ordained in 1346.²⁷² Despite the presence of a priest on the manor in 1086,²⁷³ Tormarton's rectors are not recorded until the 13th century, of whom Simon Marsh (fl. c.1260) held property in Ampney Crucis.²⁷⁴ Few of his successors were graduates,²⁷⁵ although William de Stawell (rector 1293–1319) was licensed to study for a year in 1311.²⁷⁶ From 1344 rectors had additional responsibilities as patron of Acton Turville and warden of Sir John de la River's chantry of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parish church, overseeing its four chaplains (one of whom perhaps also served West Littleton), two clerks, and three choristers.²⁷⁷ As wardens, rectors were obliged to be resident until 1423, when the statutes of the chantry were altered to allow absentee wardens, whilst also reducing the number of chaplains to three and removing the requirement for music at certain Masses. The then rector and warden John de la Bere,²⁷⁸ a later dean of Wells and bishop of St David's, held the rectory of St Martin's, Oxford, in plurality, but he resigned Tormarton before June 1429.²⁷⁹

The next recorded chaplain of West Littleton was Nicholas Casebryke, who served the cure in 1522 under the rector John Woolacombe,²⁸⁰ and Patrick Drury, 'curate of Littleton' in 1540, was presumably the priest named Patrick to whom Woolacombe (d. 1548) left money and clothing in his will.²⁸¹ Woolacombe was succeeded as rector by Edward Wykes, probably a son of the MP Nicholas Wykes (d. 1558) of Dodington.²⁸² He was found remarkably learned in 1551, when his curate James Wickham answered well,²⁸³ although he was neither a

²⁶⁷ *Benson's Survey*, 36; GA, Hockaday Abs. xcvi, cclxi, ccclxxix.

²⁶⁸ GA, D2700/SA/1; Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 188.

²⁶⁹ Below (relig. life).

²⁷⁰ *London Gaz.* 28 Jun. 1983, p. 8525; <http://tormarton.org/cotswold-edge> (accessed Mar. 2021).

²⁷¹ *Pleas of the Crown for Glos.* 35.

²⁷² *Reg. Bransford*, 268.

²⁷³ DB, f. 168v.

²⁷⁴ *The Cartulary of Bradenstoke Priory*, ed. V.C.M. London (Wilts. Rec. Soc. 35, 1979), pp. 98, 127, 129, 131, 132, 138–9.

²⁷⁵ cf. GA, Hockaday Abs. ccclxxix; Emden, *OU Reg. to 1500*.

²⁷⁶ *Reg. Giffard*, 433; *Reg. Reynolds*, 89; *Calendar of the Register of John de Drokenesford, Bishop of Bath and Wells*, ed. Bishop Hobhouse (Som. Rec. Soc. 1, 1887), 20.

²⁷⁷ *Reg. Bransford*, xxxviii–ix, 84–6, 305–8; *Cal. Papal Pets*, I, 118–19; *Cal. Papal Regs*, IV, 300–1; above, Acton Turville, Tormarton, relig. hist.

²⁷⁸ *Cal. Papal Regs*, VII, 283–4.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 470, 532; VIII, 273; Emden, *OU Reg. to 1500*, I, 556–7.

²⁸⁰ *Military Surv. of Glos. 1522*, 1. Casebryke may be identified as West Littleton's chaplain from his stipend: above (chapel origins).

²⁸¹ GA, Hockaday Abs. ccclxxix; GDR wills 1547/53.

²⁸² GDR, D1/288; *Hist. Parl.*, s.v. Nic. Wykes; cf. GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, deeds 14 May 1542, 8 Dec. 1548. The inscription on a lost brass to him in Tormarton church appears to contain significant errors: *Parsons's Notes*, 281; Bigland, *Glos.* III, 1336.

²⁸³ J. Gairdner, 'Bishop Hooper's Visitation of Gloucester', *EHR* 19 (1904), 116.

graduate nor a preacher.²⁸⁴ A later curate Edward Ward witnessed two West Littleton wills in 1578 and 1580.²⁸⁵

Following Wykes's death in 1591 his successor John Baber was presented to the rectory by a relative as patron for a turn.²⁸⁶ A doctor of divinity and prebendary of Exeter cathedral, Baber came from Chew Magna (Som.), the vicarage of which he held in plurality with Tormarton, also becoming chancellor of Gloucester diocese and a chaplain in ordinary to the king.²⁸⁷ No recusants were reported in the parish in 1603,²⁸⁸ and Baber remained rector until his death in 1628, when he was buried in the chancel of Tormarton church.²⁸⁹ West Littleton was served by the curate William Michell in both 1612 and 1619.²⁹⁰

The next rector Robert Payne was an Oxford scholar (a natural philosopher) for whom Tormarton was intended as a sinecure by his friend the earl of Newcastle, to whom he acted as chaplain and secretary. His long absences from the parish almost resulted in his suspension in 1632 and probably inspired Chancellor Parsons's later comment that 'there was little or no preaching afore the wars of King Charles I, and there was only a sermon once a month, which was begun to prevent meetings of Dissenters'. Appointed a royal chaplain in 1642, Parliament ejected him from the living in 1646 allegedly for deserting it during the siege of Gloucester in 1643 and afterwards going to live in the Royalist garrison at Oxford.²⁹¹ Payne was replaced by James Stephenson, a Scottish preaching minister who in 1647 ousted West Littleton's curate William Jaques. Stephenson signed the Presbyterian *Gloucestershire Ministers' Testimony* in 1648 but lost the rectory in 1650 for refusing to swear the *Engagement*.²⁹²

Since 1660

At the Restoration Tormarton rectory was given to John Wyatt, chaplain to the duke of Newcastle, who was imprisoned for debt and from 1680 until his death in 1686 held it in plurality with Hatherop.²⁹³ Two nonconformists were reported in the parish in 1676.²⁹⁴ Wyatt was succeeded by James Bernard (1686–1719),²⁹⁵ who was 'troubled by a stammering and impediment in his speech'. Serving West Littleton chapel initially monthly, he increased his duty to twice a month in response to the opening of a Dissenting chapel close by (presumably in Marshfield), but returned to monthly services before 1716, when he was presented for neglect of duty.²⁹⁶ Under his successor Lewis Bradley (1719–35), West Littleton was served by the curate Richard Wilson.²⁹⁷ In 1725 Elizabeth Hale was granted a faculty for a new pew in West Littleton chapel despite an objection from William Blathwayt of Dyrham that one of the two old seats it would replace belonged to his farm called Reeds.²⁹⁸

Bradley (d. 1735) was succeeded as rector by Philip Bliss, who from 1769, when he was chaplain to Hugh Boscawen, 2nd Viscount Falmouth, was also rector of Dodington.²⁹⁹

²⁸⁴ GA, D2052/1 (Tormarton).

²⁸⁵ GDR wills 1580/23; 1580/158.

²⁸⁶ GA, D2700/NC10/1, bdl 1, deed 6 Jun. 1591; GA, Hockaday Abs. cclclxxix.

²⁸⁷ *Alum. Oxon. 1500–1714; Hist. Parl.* s.v. Jn Baber (d. 1644); *Parsons's Notes*, 281.

²⁸⁸ *Eccl. Misc.* 88.

²⁸⁹ TNA, PROB 11/155/569; *Parsons's Notes*, 281; Bigland, *Glos.* III, 1336.

²⁹⁰ *CCED*, no. 159234.

²⁹¹ *ODNB*, s.v. Payne, Rob.; *Walker Revised*, ed. Matthews, 175–6; GA, Hockaday Abs. cclclxxix; *Parsons's Notes*, 280.

²⁹² GA, Hockaday Abs. cclclxxix; *Calamy Revised*, ed. Matthews, 463.

²⁹³ GDR, D1/288; GA, Hockaday Abs. cclclxxix; *VCH Glos.* VII, 95.

²⁹⁴ *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 535.

²⁹⁵ GDR, D1/288; GA, Hockaday Abs. cclclxxix.

²⁹⁶ GDR, B4/1/1576; *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates*, 130.

²⁹⁷ GDR, D1/288; *Alum. Oxon. 1500–1714*, s.v. Bradley; BA, P.Tor/R/1/a.

²⁹⁸ GA, Hockaday Abs. cclclxi; GDR, F1/4; above, landownership (other estates).

²⁹⁹ GDR, D1/288; GA, Hockaday Abs. cclclxxix; *CCED*, no. 40345.

Bishop Benson deemed Tormarton ‘an immoral parish’ during his incumbency, when West Littleton chapel (with its own bible, surplice, and silver cup) was served every Sunday alternately in the morning and afternoon. Its curates included William Alsop,³⁰⁰ later rector of Langridge (Som.), who was buried at West Littleton in 1750 and commemorated with a wall monument,³⁰¹ and Bliss’s son William, who succeeded his father at Dodington on his death in 1775, when the patron John Peach Hungerford of Dingley (Northants.) instead presented Dingley’s rector Edward Griffin (d. 1777) to Tormarton.³⁰²

Newdigate Poyntz (rector 1777–1825) was licensed to be absent from Tormarton from 1818 until his death in 1825, during which period the whole parish was served by his son Nathaniel as curate with a £200 stipend.³⁰³ Poyntz was succeeded by Lord William George Henry Somerset (rector 1826–51), the sixth son of the 5th duke of Beaufort, who deputed much of his parochial work to curates, few of whom stayed more than a few years.³⁰⁴ An infamous pluralist with three Welsh rectories (all in the duke’s gift) as well as Tormarton and a canonry in Bristol cathedral, giving a combined annual clerical income of £3,142, the *Bristol Times* reported on his funeral in January 1851 with an editorial calling for livings to be held ‘by working men, and not by those who are the depositories for the accumulated patronage of noble families’.³⁰⁵ In March of the same year, when West Littleton chapel (with 86 sittings, 50 of them free) was served by its own curate Francis Fowler, Sunday services attracted congregations of 57 in the morning and 82 in the afternoon, including 24 Sunday scholars at both.³⁰⁶ Fowler lodged in West Littleton in the household of Thomas Osborne.³⁰⁷

The new rector, James Stuart Murray Anderson, was a former chaplain to the queen and preacher at Lincoln’s Inn.³⁰⁸ During his incumbency Tormarton church and both its parochial chapels were restored and enlarged, West Littleton’s in 1855–6.³⁰⁹ Anderson presented new communion plate to the chapel in 1856,³¹⁰ when he was made an honorary canon of Bristol cathedral.³¹¹ In 1858, however, the rectory was sequestrated owing to his debts and the work of the parish entrusted to curates, Anderson moving firstly to Brighton (Sussex) and later to Bonn in Germany.³¹² Following his death in 1869 he was replaced as rector by Edward John Everard, who was instituted to the reduced living in 1870 after Acton Turville’s removal from the parish.³¹³ Six years later Everard sued his *locum tenens* (a Dr Horlock) for damage caused to the interior of Tormarton rectory house by his menagerie of pet animals which included 27 white mice, a monkey, and a hawk ‘allowed to range about the place’.³¹⁴ Otherwise Everard served in person, as did his successor Joseph Buckley (1880–2), although the Irishman Richard Brent Neville (1882–1904) preferred to employ curates including his son Richard.³¹⁵ By 1882 a small stone building in West Littleton was used as a

³⁰⁰ *Benson’s Survey*, 36; BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/1.

³⁰¹ BA, P.Tor/R/1/b; *CCED*, no. 24452; Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* I, 713.

³⁰² GDR, D1/288; GA, Hockaday Abs. cclxi; ccclxxix; *Alum. Oxon. 1715–1886*; *CCED*, no. 140752.

³⁰³ GDR, D1/288; GA, Hockaday Abs. ccclxxix; *Alum. Oxon. 1715–1886*.

³⁰⁴ GDR, D1/288; GA, Hockaday Abs. cclxi; ccclxxix; Bigland, *Glos.* III, 1338.

³⁰⁵ *Bristol Times*, 13 Oct. 1849, 25 Jan. 1851.

³⁰⁶ *Religious Census of 1851*, ed. Munden, 107. Tormarton and Acton Turville each had separate curates.

³⁰⁷ TNA, HO 107/1956.

³⁰⁸ *Alum. Oxon. 1715–1886*.

³⁰⁹ *Glos. Chron.* 9 Aug. 1856; below (church archit.).

³¹⁰ *Glos. Ch. Plate*, 138.

³¹¹ *Alum. Oxon. 1715–1886*.

³¹² GDR, D16/3/24; GA, Hockaday Abs. ccclxxix; *Bristol Times*, 29 Sept. 1869.

³¹³ GDR, D1/288; *Glouc. Jnl.* 19 Mar. 1870; above (chapel origins).

³¹⁴ *Bristol Mercury*, 12 Aug. 1876; *Glouc. Jnl.* 12 Aug 1876.

³¹⁵ GDR, D1/288; GA, Hockaday Abs. ccclxxix; *Bristol Times*, 16 Feb. 1889, 16 Aug. 1890; *Glos. Echo*, 7 Jan. 1904.

nonconformist chapel by Christian Brethren who had a larger chapel in Marshfield.³¹⁶ Owned by the Hillier family, it was advertised for sale in 1920 as the ‘chapel or village hall’, worship having ceased there probably a few years earlier.³¹⁷

Thomas Bowen (rector 1904–12) exchanged livings with Vernon Holt (1912–45), vicar of St Nicholas with St Leonard in Bristol.³¹⁸ In September 1912 two choral evensongs were held in the chapel to celebrate Harvest Festival.³¹⁹ During the First World War Holt was absent from the parish owing to his role as an army chaplain,³²⁰ and from 1915 to 1918, when there was a Sunday school, the parish was entrusted to a curate.³²¹ Holt returned to Tormarton in 1918 and remained rector until his death in 1945, when he was buried in West Littleton churchyard.³²² His successor William Byron Thomas (1945–54) was followed in turn by Oscar Phillips (1954–60) and the last rector Denis Bartlett Hall (1961–6), a former colonial bishop and assistant bishop in Canterbury diocese.³²³ From 1968 the parish was served by Marshfield’s vicar as priest-in-charge with a curate resident in Tormarton.³²⁴ That arrangement was formalized in 1983,³²⁵ and in 1993 Judith Creighton, one of the first ordained women in Bristol diocese, was appointed.³²⁶ In 2021, when West Littleton chapel remained one of four places of worship in the ‘Cotswold Edge’ united benefice, services were held there usually once or twice a month often using the Book of Common Prayer.³²⁷

Minute books of West Littleton parochial church council exist 1946–88; much of the council business was concerned with fundraising events.³²⁸

Chapel Architecture

West Littleton chapel is a small building dating originally from the 13th century but heavily restored in 1855–6 to designs by T.H. Wyatt. Constructed from coursed limestone rubble with ashlar dressings and stone slated roofs, it comprises nave and chancel to which a south porch and north-east vestry were added in the 1850s, when the building was re-roofed and the nave enlarged. A distinctive feature retained from the medieval chapel is a massive limestone ashlar bellcote crowning the eastern gable of the nave.³²⁹

The earliest fabric dating from the 13th century comprises a pinnacled and crocketed niche above the south doorway decorated with three mask corbels and containing a mutilated statue of the Virgin Mary; the bellcote (reconstructed in 1855–6) which has an octagonal pyramidal canopy and still houses a 13th-century bell; and perhaps also the chancel walls. The chapel may have been refenestrated in the 15th century, judging by three

³¹⁶ OS Maps, 1:2500, Glos. LXXIII.12 (1882); LXXIII.16 (1882); cf. *Religious Census of 1851*, ed. Munden, 25, 106–7, perhaps listing the Marshfield chapel, but the West Littleton one evidently did not yet exist.

³¹⁷ GA, D2428/1/58, no. 858; *ibid.* D11996, sale catalogue, Home Farm etc., 1920; S. Young, *West Littleton Village and Church* (2011), 6–7: accessed online (Mar. 2021).

³¹⁸ BA, EP/A/3/322; *Clifton Society*, 7 Nov. 1912; *Glos. Chron.* 9 Nov. 1912.

³¹⁹ GA, D11996, poster, 1912.

³²⁰ BA, EP/A/8/5; *Glos. Chron.* 15 Sept. 1917.

³²¹ *Crockford’s Clerical Dir.* (1920), 519, 1055; BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/2.

³²² Grave marker in churchyard.

³²³ BA, EP/A/3/322; *Crockford’s Clerical Dir.* (1965–6), 503, 973, 1221; *London Gaz.* 1 Sept. 1961, p. 6413.

³²⁴ *Crockford’s Clerical Dir.* (1969–70), 684, 1023, 1769; (1977–9), 825.

³²⁵ Above (church origins).

³²⁶ *The Times*, 2 Sept. 1993, 18; information from Mr R.W. Knight, Marshfield.

³²⁷ www.westlittleton.com (accessed Mar. 2021).

³²⁸ West Littleton PCC minute books, 1946–88, and related files, penes Mr David Adams, churchwarden.

³²⁹ Unless indicated, following description based on: NHLE, ‘St James’s Church’, no. 1288601 (accessed Mar. 2021); Verey and Brooks, *Glos. I*, 713; Young, *Village and Church*, 10–15; *Glos. Chron.* 9 Aug. 1856; Lambeth Palace Libr. ICBS04924 (chapel groundplan by T.H. Wyatt, 1855–6); www.stjamesmonuments.org (accessed Mar. 2021).

Perpendicular windows which appear to pre-date Wyatt's scheme. The east and west windows are pointed and the nave south-east window is square-headed, each with paired or triple trefoil-headed lancets and hoodmoulds. Little else is known about the pre-1855 chapel, except that its roofing was defective in 1563,³³⁰ and the bell and a weathercock were repaired in 1779 and 1802 respectively.³³¹ Several 18th- and early 19th-century marble wall monuments were carried over to the new building, and perhaps also a Victorian Royal Arms painted on a metal sheet.³³²

In 1855–6 a major restoration was carried out to designs by the Salisbury diocesan architect T.H. Wyatt, who had previously worked on Tormarton parish church and Acton Turville chapel. Work was largely funded by voluntary subscription, although the Incorporated Church Building Society made a grant. Only the chancel walls remained intact, the nave being entirely rebuilt, enlarged, and re-pewed to increase the number of sittings to 138 (93 of them free). A new pointed and chamfered chancel arch was constructed, and new Perpendicular-style windows placed in the north and south walls of both the nave and the chancel, the latter also gaining a pointed north doorway opening into a new north-east vestry with a chimney. On the south side of the nave a new gabled south porch with a pointed-arched opening was erected to shelter the south doorway, which was reconstructed with a four-centred arch and a new heavy wooden door. The whole chapel was re-roofed, the nave with arched braces and collars, and the chancel ceiled with moulded ribs. Wyatt designed a new wooden pulpit and octagonal stone font, and the east window was filled with stained glass by William Miller. New wall paintings of the Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer either side of the chancel arch in the nave have since been lost. Electric heating was installed in the church in 1963.³³³ Later work was nearly all remedial, including repairs to the spirelet and a new weather cock in 1991 following storm damage,³³⁴ roof repairs in 1993, when the medieval bell was restored at the Whitechapel foundry, electrical rewiring in 1996, and conservation of the wall monuments and churchyard tombs in 2010 costing almost £50,000.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Manorial Government

Tormarton and West Littleton were usually regarded as a single manor,³³⁵ and this is sometimes explicitly stated.³³⁶ Occasionally, however, as in 1344, West Littleton was distinguished from Tormarton as a separate manor,³³⁷ and in 1321–2 the pleas and perquisites of its court (3s. 4d.) were computed separately from those of Tormarton (13s. 4d.).³³⁸ In 1491–6 separate courts were held for West Littleton, Tormarton and Acton Turville, but took place on the same day or consecutive days once or twice each year, in spring and sometimes in autumn.³³⁹ Business at these courts included surrenders and admissions, distraints for overstocking, fines for dilapidated buildings, orders relating to agricultural management, and the swearing of affeerers. An instance of housebreaking was also reported. The only court rolls to survive are from these years, 1491–6.³⁴⁰ In 1816 at

³³⁰ GA, Hockaday Abs. cclxxix (GDR vol. 20, p. 17). No image or detailed description of the building has yet been found.

³³¹ BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/1.

³³² J. Loosley, 'Royal Arms in Bristol and Gloucestershire Churches', *Trans. BGAS* 135 (2017), 30.

³³³ West Littleton PCC minute book, 1946–73, penes Mr David Adams, churchwarden.

³³⁴ West Littleton PCC files.

³³⁵ Above, landownership; Acton Turville was sometimes included.

³³⁶ GA, D2700/NC/10/1, bundle 2, deed of 20 Sept. 1609 (Littleton within the manor of Tormarton); cf Cal. Inq. p.m. V, p. 281 (no. 505); NA, DD/4P/55/58.

³³⁷ TNA, CP 25/1/287/41, no. 342.

³³⁸ TNA, E 142/24, rot. 9, 9v.

³³⁹ Bodleian Lib. MS Rawl, B 317, ff. 17v.–37.

³⁴⁰ Bodleian Lib. MS Rawl, B 317, ff. 17v.–37.

inclosure the duke of Beaufort claimed to be the reputed owner of the manor of West Littleton,³⁴¹ a claim reiterated as recently as 1993.³⁴²

Parish Government

No records of parish administration prior to 1894 are known to survive apart from a volume of churchwardens' accounts, 1770-1820.³⁴³ One payment for killing vermin in 1791, and disbursements, 1801-3, in respect of Frankcom's charity,³⁴⁴ are the only entries not concerned with the church fabric and maintenance.

Post-1894 Arrangements

As a civil parish, West Littleton was a constituent of Chipping Sodbury rural sanitary district from its formation in 1875 until 1894, when the latter became a rural district.³⁴⁵ The parish remained within Chipping Sodbury RDC until 1935, when West Littleton was abolished as a civil parish and entered the enlarged parish of Tormarton. In the same year the RDC was renamed Sodbury RDC, and included Tormarton until 1974, when the RDC was abolished. Tormarton, including West Littleton, then became a civil parish within Northavon district of Avon county until 1996, when the county was abolished and Tormarton was included within the Cotswold Edge ward of South Gloucestershire unitary authority.³⁴⁶

In 1894 a parish meeting was established and George Blake was elected chairman; he held the chair each year 1904-25.³⁴⁷ The meeting was held annually and elected a chairman and two overseers. William Osborne served as overseer continuously 1897-1921. A waywarden was elected 1896-8, but not thereafter. Business included the county rate, housing and footpaths. Minutes of the meetings survive 1894-1925, but were held later, as a letter was sent by the parish to the RDC in 1927.³⁴⁸ After 1935 West Littleton was included in the business of Tormarton parish council.³⁴⁹

³⁴¹ GA, D1799/E153.

³⁴² Letter, 25 June 1993, from Humberts (Badminton estate agents), penes Mr David Adams.

³⁴³ BA, P.Tor/ChW/2/1.

³⁴⁴ Above, social hist.

³⁴⁵ This para: Youngs, *Admin. Units*, 179, 188, 557, 610, 611.

³⁴⁶ Avon (Structural Change) Order, 1995: S.I. 1995: 493.

³⁴⁷ This para: GA, D11996 (acc. 13121): West Littleton parish meeting minute book.

³⁴⁸ *Western Daily Press*, 4 Oct. 1927, p. 4.

³⁴⁹ BA, 40740/1/a-b.