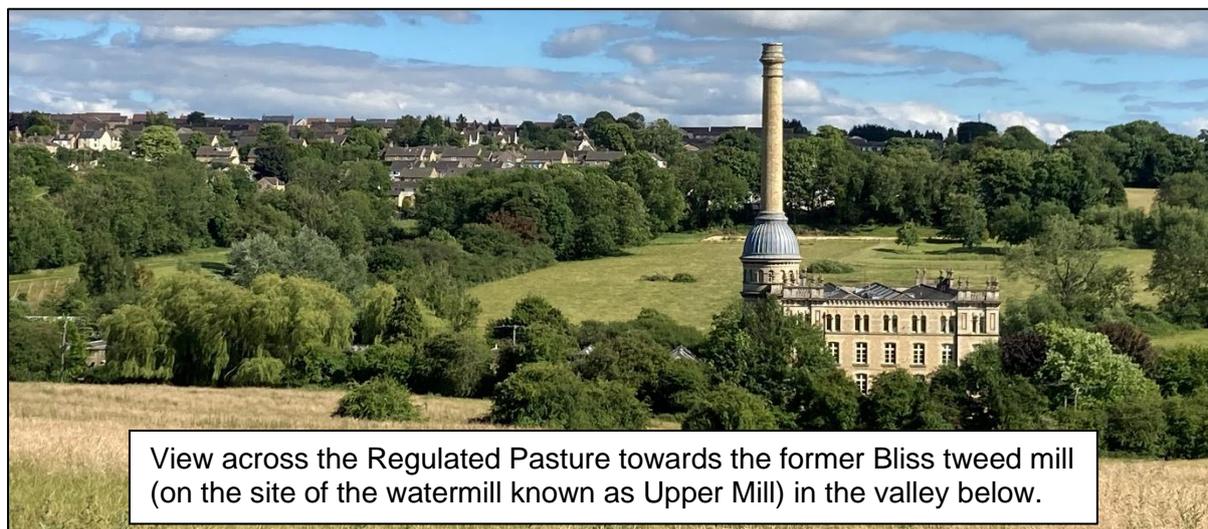




VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

## Chipping Norton

Agriculture



View across the Regulated Pasture towards the former Bliss tweed mill (on the site of the watermill known as Upper Mill) in the valley below.

From the Middle Ages to the 20th century Chipping Norton township and borough included over 2,000 a. of farmland surrounding the town,<sup>1</sup> comprising open-field arable, stream-side meadows, and common pastures supporting significant numbers of livestock. Fields, meadows, and commons were mostly enclosed in 1770, a further enclosure in 1849 leaving a single small common known as the Regulated Pasture, which survived into the 21st century. Mixed farming predominated throughout, combining sheep-and-corn husbandry with cattle rearing and dairying, while two long-lived water-powered corn-grist mills were briefly supplemented by a windmill on the town's northern edge. Most farmers lived in the town until the first enclosure, after which new farmsteads were established in the former open fields.

### The Agricultural Landscape

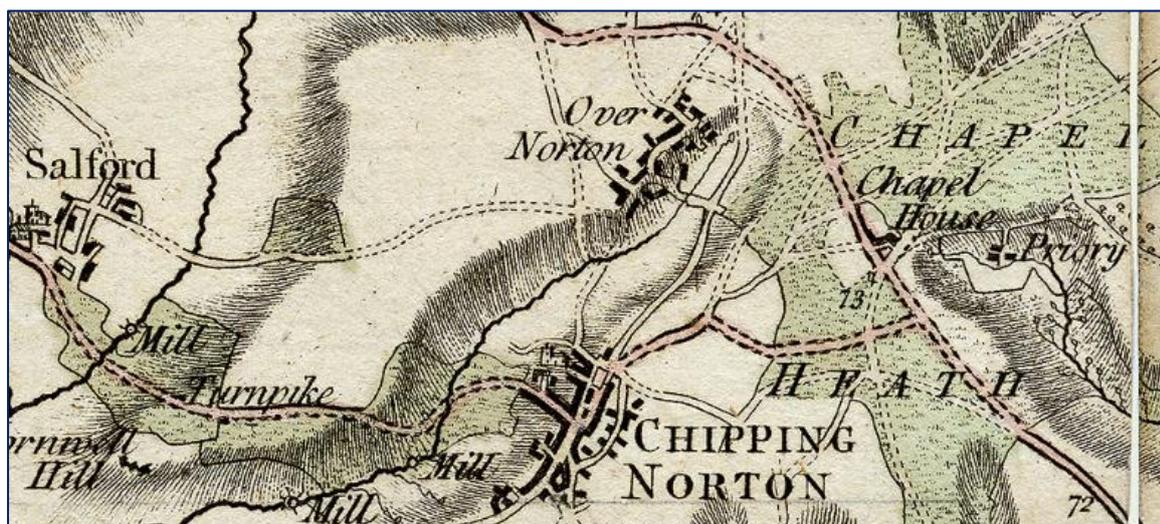
Typically for the Cotswolds, Chipping Norton's farmland was mainly arable, which accounted for three fifths of the agricultural land in 1769.<sup>2</sup> By the 13th century Chipping Norton had its own open fields, distinct from Over Norton's to the north:<sup>3</sup> East and West fields were

<sup>1</sup> Above, bdiies.

<sup>2</sup> 'Case of the Bailiffs and Burgesses of Chipping Norton ... relating to the intended enclosure ...' (1769): copy in Bodl. GA Oxon. 4<sup>o</sup> 115.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. BNC, Chipping Norton 3, Over Norton 4; below, Over Norton, econ. hist.

mentioned before 1230,<sup>4</sup> and before 1702 were sub-divided into four 'quarters' known (in the 1760s) as Sands or Heath, Whipwell, Lowsey Bush, and Churchill Bush. The whole, comprising 74½ yardlands or c.1,500 a., was enclosed in 1770, together with c.150 a. of common meadows or 'Lammas grounds' located mainly along the stream south-west of the town.<sup>5</sup> Some of those were lot meadows,<sup>6</sup> and perhaps included the 71 a. of demesne meadow in 'Hememedede' mentioned in 1302, which c.1450 was common after haymaking.<sup>7</sup>



Jefferys' map of Oxfordshire (1767), showing the pre-enclosure commons (in green) east and west of the town adjoining those in Over Norton township and Salford parish.

Common pasture totalled c.500 a. in the 1760s, divided between Great Common (150 a.), the Heath (150 a.), Southcombe (150 a.), and Vernhill (50 a.). Local tradition (established by 1612) maintains that it was granted to the town by the lord Richard Fitz Alan, earl of Arundel, in a charter perhaps issued in 1377,<sup>8</sup> and certainly pastures called Cleeve, 'Boysshrop', and Eleven Acres (mentioned from 1302) were common by the 1390s,<sup>9</sup> remaining so c.1450.<sup>10</sup> Enclosure in 1770 reduced the commons to 92 a. in Great Common and 74 a. at Southcombe, while the second enclosure (in 1849) left just 75 a. in Great

<sup>4</sup> BNC, Chipping Norton 10–11. For re-dating before 1230, cf. Dugdale, *Mon.* VI (1), p. 421.

<sup>5</sup> Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 2931; GA, D936/E/11, pp. 57–8; 'Case of the Bailiffs'; OHC, encl. award (1770); *ibid.* Acc. 6075 (1770 encl. map); below (1500–1800).

<sup>6</sup> TNA, PROB 11/214/314.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* C 133/104/21; *ibid.* SC 11/33.

<sup>8</sup> 'Case of the Bailiffs'; OHC, BOR1/14/MS/1, p. 1; TNA, C 93/4/1. For the charter's date, Ballard, *Notes*, 29.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, C 133/104/21; C 136/101/3; *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, II, C.2617.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, SC 11/33.

Common, known thenceforth as the Regulated Pasture.<sup>11</sup> That was still managed as common pasture in 2021, though reduced to under 60 a. by various sales.<sup>12</sup>

Old enclosures (reckoned at c.150 a. in 1769)<sup>13</sup> included medieval demesne pastures called Primdown, 'Wynyerd' (presumably once a vineyard), and 'Sederesclose',<sup>14</sup> whilst a 'park enclosed with walls' belonged to the castle in 1387.<sup>15</sup> Closes known as 'coneygrees', on the town's eastern edge, presumably once supported a medieval rabbit warren.<sup>16</sup> Woodland has always been scarce, with just 26 a. (called the Grove) recorded on the manor in 1616.<sup>17</sup>

## Medieval Farming

In 1086 the pre-urban Chipping Norton manor (including Over Norton and presumably Bartletts in Salford) was fully stocked with 21 ploughteams, of which ten were in demesne and were worked in part by 15 *servi*. The remaining 11 were shared by 22 *villani* and 16 bordars. As well as three mills, there was meadow covering 60 a. and pasture one league square, and the manor's annual value had increased from £16 in 1066 to £22.<sup>18</sup>

By 1138 the rectory estate alone included 5 yardlands of arable (possibly over 100 a.),<sup>19</sup> and in the 1180s the manorial demesne supported over 300 sheep. The manor as a whole was then worth £40 a year, from which annual pensions were paid to the abbeyes of Longvilliers (£10), Bruern (£5), and Saint-Josse (£5).<sup>20</sup> Cold Norton priory already owned a sizeable estate in the parish, confirmed as 348 a. in 1201 when it comprised a separate manor lying mostly in Over Norton.<sup>21</sup> The rest of Chipping Norton manor was worth £50 a year by 1272,<sup>22</sup> but only £46 in 1302, when the demesne farm (worth £9) included two gardens, dovecots, 400 a. of arable, 71 a. of meadow, four pastures, and a spinney. Free tenants outside the town owed rents and services worth almost £11 a year, whilst the urban burgesses (*burgencis*) paid nearly £7 annual rent combined. Customary tenants comprised

---

<sup>11</sup> OHC, encl. award (1770); encl. award and map (1849); Eddershaw, *Story*, 79, 98.

<sup>12</sup> J. Grantham, *The Regulated Pasture: a history of common land in Chipping Norton* (1997); below (since 1900).

<sup>13</sup> 'Case of the Bailiffs'.

<sup>14</sup> *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, II, C.2903; TNA, C 136/101/3; *ibid.* SC 11/33; SC 6/HENVII/491. Cf. above, landownership (castle), for vineyard; below (milling), for 'Seders mill'.

<sup>15</sup> *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, II, C.2617. No other record of it has been found.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. OHC, Simmonds I/1; *ibid.* Far LII/i/1–11; cf. P. Cavill, *A New Dictionary of English Field-Names* (2018), 88. 'Coneygre' in 1589: OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 58/2/23.

<sup>17</sup> OHC, BOR1/2/1D/5. For the name, Chipping Norton Guildhall, deed of 1566 in town clerk's safe; OHC, BOR1/2/1D/2.

<sup>18</sup> DB, f. 160; above, landownership; below, Salford, landownership.

<sup>19</sup> *Hist & Cart. Mon. Glouc.* I, p. 223; II, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> *Pipe R* 1182 (PRS 31), 60; 1187 (PRS 37), 66–7; 1188 (PRS 38), 7; above, landownership (manor).

<sup>21</sup> BNC, Cold Norton 3; above, landownership (manor); below, Over Norton, landownership.

<sup>22</sup> *Close* 1268–72, 580–1.

25 yardlanders owing 10s. a year each, along with two half-yardlanders owing 2s. and 18*d.* respectively, plus custody of prisoners. Most tenants except for the burgesses also owed labour services, including carting, harvesting, hoeing, mowing, and ploughing.<sup>23</sup>

By 1331 the manor was worth £52 a year,<sup>24</sup> and following the Black Death (whose local effects are largely unrecorded) it was worth £44 in 1387, when Sir Richard Sergeaux's demesne stock totalled 8 oxen, 4 horses, and 394 sheep, and his sown land 15 a. of wheat, 15 a. of dredge, and 8 a. of peas.<sup>25</sup> By his death in 1393 the demesne contained only 80 a. of arable, 35 a. of meadow, and 18 a. of pasture (in a close at Primstown), the whole (with further common pastures and a garden) worth £2 13s. 10*d.*, while tenants' rents totalled £20 a year, plus 20 autumn services worth 2*d.* each.<sup>26</sup> The manor was subsequently divided amongst three owners, the Marney family's share being apparently in hand in the 1420s, when it was worth £14 18s. 4*d.* a year and included the 'site' of the manor (presumably the castle), 7 yardlands of arable containing 20 a. each, 30 a. of meadow and the same of pasture, and £9 in annual rents.<sup>27</sup> The Marneys' demesne was leased by 1434, the lessee in the 1440s–50s (William Elton) paying £8 a year.<sup>28</sup>

A survey of the whole manor c.1450 revealed the demesne farm buildings to be decrepit, amongst them two sheepcots, a barn, a cowshed, and a dovecot. All 71 a. of demesne meadow was common to tenants after haymaking, whilst demesne pasture comprised a mixture of closes and commons, and demesne arable covered 2 ploughlands or 160 acres. Only half was sown in any one year, implying that a two-course rotation was still followed. Customary and borough rents (including the customary tenants' commuted labour services) totalled almost £40, and the whole manor was worth just over £54 a year.<sup>29</sup> By 1485–6 demesne rents totalled £14 16s. 8*d.*, 'Chipping Norton' rents £21 0s. 11½*d.*, and 'Norton' rents £9 16s. 10*d.*: the combined income after expenses was £41 4s. 3½*d.*, of which the owner of each third-share of the manor received £13 14s. 9*d.*<sup>30</sup>

## Farms and Farming 1500–1770

Full-time farming by a few resident husbandmen and yeomen continued in the 16th century, alongside a much larger body of craftsmen and tradesmen practising husbandry part-time, of whom some grew barley for malting and brewing. Sheep-and-corn husbandry predominated,

---

<sup>23</sup> TNA, C 133/104/21. The manor is absent from the 1279 hundred rolls (*Rot. Hund.*).

<sup>24</sup> TNA, E 142/70/1.

<sup>25</sup> *Cal. Close* 1385–9, 339.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, C 136/101/3.

<sup>27</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XXI, p. 260; XXII, p. 255; above, landownership (manor).

<sup>28</sup> TNA, SC 6/1120/6–7; SC 6/1246/19.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* SC 11/33, dated to between 1422 and 1461.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* SC 6/HENVII/491.

with flocks of 20–60 sheep fairly typical, and flocks of over 100 not uncommon,<sup>31</sup> some of them managed by hired shepherds.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the largest flock was one of 600 owned by Thomas Penistone (d. 1556/7) of Dean in Spelsbury.<sup>33</sup> The chief crops were wheat, barley, oats, and peas, with sainfoin mentioned from 1693, and hemp grown primarily for ropemaking. Several inhabitants kept pigs, poultry, and bees, and some had horses and oxen (for traction), while small dairy herds produced milk, butter, and cheeses.<sup>34</sup> Sheep and cattle were also reared for the town's butchers and tanners, the husbandman William Smith (d. 1628), of West Street, perhaps tanning hides from his own livestock.<sup>35</sup>

The manor remained in divided ownership for much of the 16th century, the woolman Robert Busby obtaining leases of Sir William Compton's two-thirds of the manor before 1528 (for 40 years at £27 4s. 8d. annual rent), and of Lady Marney's third-share (for 41 years at £20 rent) in 1530. Following his eviction from the latter for non-payment and waste in 1537, he was succeeded as tenant by Sir Walter Walshe (d. 1538) and by Walter's widow Elizabeth,<sup>36</sup> whose step-grandson Sir Henry Compton let the whole demesne in 1566 to Edward Walford of Evenlode (Glos. formerly Worcs.) for 21 years, at £12 7s. 8d. rent plus 15 qrs a year of winnowed barley. The lease included both the castle site (with 'an old barn ... much in decay') and the New Street manor house, with its barns, stables, outhouses, and orchards; the farmland comprised 14 yardlands (c.280 a.) in the open fields (including 6 yardlands of former copyhold land), 95 a. of enclosed arable, meadow, and pasture, 26 a. of woods, and associated common pasture.<sup>37</sup>

Alleged attempts at enclosure by the lord Michael Chadwell in 1603 provoked opposition by townsmen, who destroyed hedges, fences, and gates, and trampled crops including woad.<sup>38</sup> Five years later (when some inhabitants reputedly still owed plough service)<sup>39</sup> the Chadwells separated some tenant farms and almost the entire demesne from the manor,<sup>40</sup> including the 'Primsdowns' (more than 100 a. of former demesne pasture adjoining the Great Common),<sup>41</sup> and the 'Boare lands', which in 1649 carried the right to graze 400 sheep and one bellwether (called the 'Boare flock') across Chipping Norton and

---

<sup>31</sup> OHC and TNA, Chipping Norton wills and inventories.

<sup>32</sup> e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 179.264; 139/1/8; 159/4/7; TNA, PROB 11/154/254.

<sup>33</sup> *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1542–50*, pp. 21–2; TNA, PROB 11/39/52, mentioning his 'lease of the common of sheep pasture called Waulcourte ... in the fields of Chipping Norton'.

<sup>34</sup> OHC and TNA, Chipping Norton wills and inventories; OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 69/1/47 (hemp); c. 145, f. 64; 67/3/23 (sainfoin). For hemp mill and ropemaking, above, urban econ. (1500–1800).

<sup>35</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 60/2/3; above, urban econ. (1500–1800).

<sup>36</sup> TNA, C 1/956/51–54; *ibid.* STAC 2/7, f. 167; STAC 2/24/173; above, landownership (manor).

<sup>37</sup> Chipping Norton Guildhall, deed of 1566 in town clerk's safe.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, STAC 8/98/2; below, social hist. (1540–1700).

<sup>39</sup> TNA, C 22/332/42.

<sup>40</sup> Above, landownership (other estates).

<sup>41</sup> CNM, summary of deeds for Primsdown; OHC, Acc. 6075 (1770 map); above, landownership (other estates).

Over Norton's commons.<sup>42</sup> Some 14 yardlands (six in Chipping Norton called the 'Farm lands' and eight in Over Norton) were still attached to the former New Street manor house in 1656,<sup>43</sup> but only the 'Farm lands' by 1763.<sup>44</sup> Freehold farms of comparable size, some of them perhaps also incorporating former manorial land, included an 8-yardland holding owned and run by the wealthy mercer Henry Cornish, who kept sheep and left c.£700 of farming stock at his death in 1650.<sup>45</sup> Another 7 yardlands were bought with a farmhouse in Goddard's Lane by Thomas Berry (d. 1639), passing to the yeoman Thomas Gibbs (as 'Berry's farm') in 1762.<sup>46</sup>



Two former farmhouses: Nos. 63–65 New Street (left) and College Place in West Street (right).

Almost all farms were run from the town until enclosure. In 1590 Eleanor Simkins' High Street farmstead including barns and a stable with a hayloft, presumably located within her burgage plot,<sup>47</sup> while notable 17th-century or earlier farmhouses survive in New Street, Spring Street, and West Street;<sup>48</sup> of those, Nos. 63–65 New Street was built probably for the prominent townsman William Diston (d. 1626), whose 2 yardlands supported 160 sheep.<sup>49</sup> On West Street was the farmhouse for the 4-yardland rectory glebe (now called Manor House), whose tenant c.1540 disputed his obligation to supply the vicar with sucking-pigs,<sup>50</sup> while in 1763 Thomas Crutch kept 14 horses, 24 cattle, and 'a great stock of sheep' on the farm.<sup>51</sup> Nearby College Place, the farmhouse for Brasenose College's single-yardland farm, was tenanted by the Holder family of shoemakers by 1566, followed by the Norgrove family

<sup>42</sup> Bodl. MS dd Dawkins C2/IA5/1.

<sup>43</sup> TNA, PROB 11/258/86.

<sup>44</sup> OHC, Acc. 6779, bdl 5, no. 12; TNA, C 5/383/118; above, landownership (other estates).

<sup>45</sup> TNA, PROB 11/214/314; *ibid.* C 3/441/17.

<sup>46</sup> OHC, Acc. 6779, bdl 2; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 115/3/9.

<sup>47</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 58/2/23; Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 57–9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 59; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 17/4/20. Cf. TNA, PROB 11/720/357; OHC, Far XXVIII/1–2.

<sup>50</sup> Above, landownership (other estates); OHC, SL167/1/D/2; TNA, C 1/989/61–62.

<sup>51</sup> GA, D936/E/11, p. 57.

of tanners,<sup>52</sup> while West End Farmhouse (43 West Street) belonged to a 3-yardland copyhold farm occupied by the Trout family, and bought as a freehold by Simon Trout in 1683.<sup>53</sup> At his death in 1702 Trout left corn, hay, and livestock worth £173, including 100 sheep and 12 cows.<sup>54</sup>

The boundaries between Chipping Norton's and Over Norton's commons were disputed in the 16th and 17th centuries, resulting in their fuller demarcation.<sup>55</sup> Management of the open fields and commons rested with the manor court, which appointed agricultural officers such as fieldsmen, haywards, and drivers to impound cattle and enforce the court's annual field orders (which survive from 1720). By then the open fields' four 'quarters' followed a four-course rotation of wheat, barley, fallow, and a 'hitching' of beans, peas, or vetches. Commons were open to cattle, horses, sheep, and pigs at various times of year; cattle had to be branded, and pigs ringed, whilst furze could only be taken from the Heath and Southcombe.<sup>56</sup> By the 1760s commons were stinted at four cattle or horses and 50 sheep for every yardland held in the open fields, and c.300 houses in the town each carried additional commons for two horses or cows, a benefit which the corporation pressed hard to see preserved at enclosure.<sup>57</sup>

### Farms and Farming 1770–1900

Despite public opposition orchestrated by the corporation,<sup>58</sup> enclosure of Chipping Norton's fields and most of its commons (together with those of Over Norton and Salford) took place in 1770 under a private Act of 1769, promoted by a group of local landowners. The enclosure left the township with only 166 a. of common land (92 a. at Great Common and 74 a. at Southcombe), with an additional 20 a. at Southcombe awarded for the use of the poor. Some 1,800 a. within the township was redistributed overall, of which 387 a. went to the dean and chapter of Gloucester cathedral (309 a. for extinguished tithes and 78 a. for the rectory glebe). Other large recipients were John Watson (122 a.), Thomas Gibbs (118 a.), Brasenose College (115 a.), and George Tilsley (103 a.), with five others awarded 50–100 a., and up to 30 people awarded less. The vicar received 5 a. as glebe, with another 5 a. in Over Norton.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 217–19; BNC, Chipping Norton 36–50; above, urban econ. (1500–1800).

<sup>53</sup> OHC, BOR1/2/1D/2; Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 213–17; above, landownership (other estates).

<sup>54</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 67/3/23.

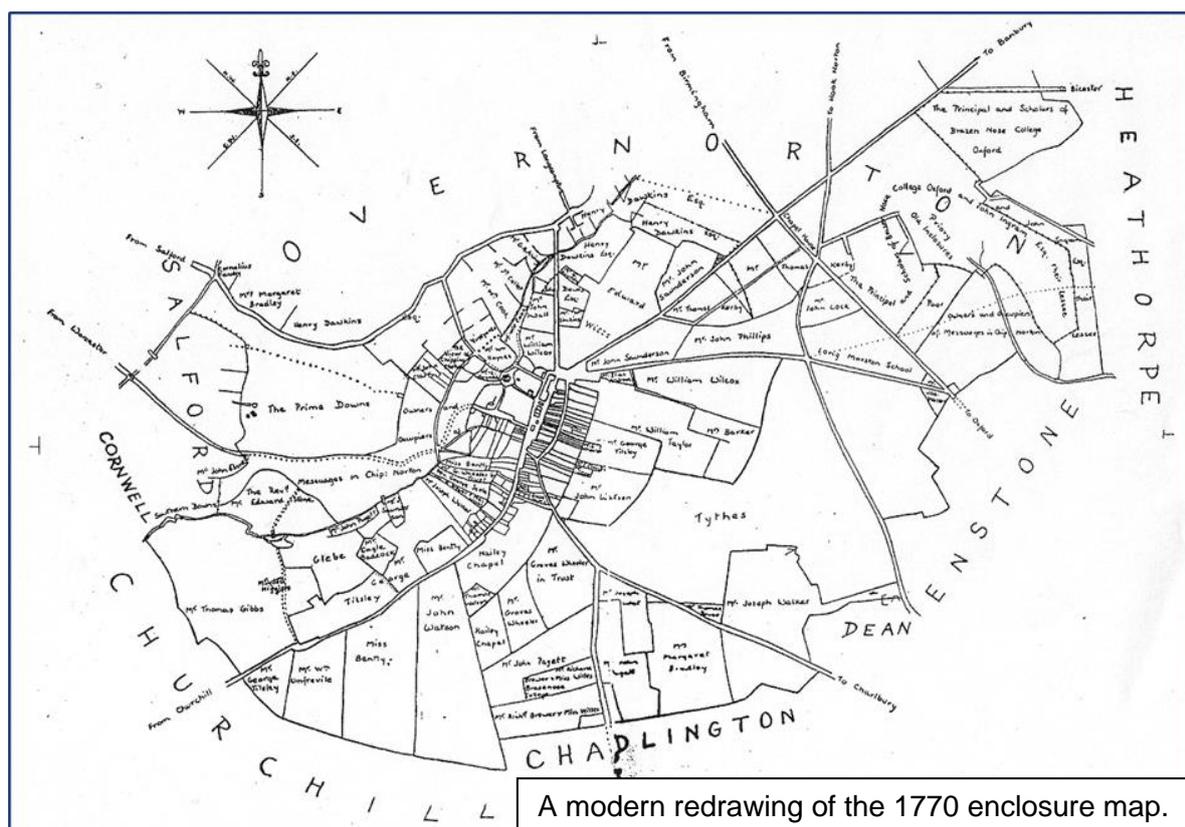
<sup>55</sup> TNA, C 8/113/67; below, Over Norton, econ. hist.

<sup>56</sup> OHC, BOR1/3/A1/1.

<sup>57</sup> GA, D936/E/11, p. 58; 'Case of the Bailiffs'.

<sup>58</sup> 'Case of the Bailiffs'; below, social hist. (18th cent.).

<sup>59</sup> Chipping Norton and Salford Enclosure Act, 9 Geo. III, c. 75 (private); OHC, enclo. award (1770); *ibid.* Acc. 6075 (1770 map).



Pressure on the remaining commons was increased by growing population and new house-building, with new field orders enacted in the manor court between 1806 and 1810 ultimately restricting rights to houses standing at the time of enclosure.<sup>60</sup> In 1821 both commons were open to cattle and horses between May and November, and to sheep from 8 November to 1 February, with pigs always excluded.<sup>61</sup> Further erosion of common rights followed: the Southcombe poor allotment was divided in 1848 into 81 parcels rented out as allotments,<sup>62</sup> and under a second parliamentary enclosure in 1849 the rest of Southcombe common was enclosed in 38 parcels, and 17 a. in the west of Great Common in 54 parcels. Great Common's remaining 75 a. survived as the 'Regulated Pasture', in which grazing rights were awarded to 53 owners in 85 stints,<sup>63</sup> each stint comprising commons for one cow, ox, gelding, or mare, or for two ewes or wethers when sheep were admitted. Stocking was overseen by field reeves elected annually by the stint owners. Sales of stints (no longer tied to houses) reduced the number of owners to 27 by 1897, when the Regulated Pasture

<sup>60</sup> OHC, BOR1/3/A1/3; Ballard, *Notes*, 31.

<sup>61</sup> *Laws and Orders made by the Jury at a Court Leet and Court Baron ... of the Borough of Chipping Norton ... 15th of October, 1821* (printed by G.M. Smith of Chipping Norton, 1821): copy in BL.

<sup>62</sup> Grantham, *Regulated Pasture*, 14–22; below, social hist. (welfare).

<sup>63</sup> OHC, encl. award and map (1849).

covered only 63 a. following sales for roads and the railway, and William Bliss's purchase of 3½ a. for a new town cemetery in 1881.<sup>64</sup>

Following the first enclosure, farmsteads were increasingly built outside the town in the former open fields. Glyme Farm, so called by 1799,<sup>65</sup> began as an outlying farmhouse on the dean and chapter of Gloucester cathedral's estate, which in 1839 was let in two parts as Glyme farm (252 a. run by John Tilsley) and Parsonage farm (134 a. run by William Fowler, still from the rectory farmhouse in West Street).<sup>66</sup> Both were sold to their tenants c.1850.<sup>67</sup> Meads Farm was built for the Gibbs family before 1777,<sup>68</sup> and Folly, Primdown, and New Chalford Farms existed by 1841, with Oldner Farm following soon after.<sup>69</sup> The largest farm by 1851 was John Gibbs' Meads farm (320 a.), followed by New Chalford (257 a.), 44 West Street (244 a.), Parsonage (210 a.), Primdown (134 a.), Glyme (111 a.), and West End farms (100 a.), each variously employing between three and 14 labourers.<sup>70</sup> Thirty years later six farmers worked a total of 1,608 a. and employed 68 men and boys, the largest holdings being John Busby's Rock Hill farm (417 a.) and Frederick Thomas Keck Guy's 370 a., farmed from 44 West Street.<sup>71</sup> In 1885 Glyme farm (still 111 a.) was bought by the Chipping Norton Co-operative Society.<sup>72</sup>

Farming remained mixed throughout, with a half-cross of the Leicester and Cotswold breeds of sheep favoured c.1810.<sup>73</sup> The wealthy carrier Thomas Gibbs (who rented an 80-a. farm) left substantial quantities of hay, wheat, barley, oats, peas, beans, and vetches at his death in 1778,<sup>74</sup> while a currier claimed a government bounty for 91 stones of flax grown in 1797 and 96 stones in 1798.<sup>75</sup> Around a tenth of the township's working families were said to be directly employed in agriculture in 1831,<sup>76</sup> and in 1851 farming accounted for 15 per cent of all recorded employment.<sup>77</sup> A threshing machine at nearby Chalford (in Enstone) was destroyed during Swing riots in 1830,<sup>78</sup> and a Chipping Norton branch of the agricultural workers' union was formed in 1873.<sup>79</sup> Agricultural depression in the final decades of the 19th

<sup>64</sup> Grantham, *Regulated Pasture*, 33–43.

<sup>65</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 159/3/33.

<sup>66</sup> GA, D936/E/160, pp. 13–14; cf. *ibid.* D936/E/3/1, pp. 113–14.

<sup>67</sup> Above, landownership (other estates).

<sup>68</sup> CNM, summary of deeds for 4 Goddard's Lane.

<sup>69</sup> TNA, HO 107/879; OHC, B107/2D/25.

<sup>70</sup> TNA, HO 107/1732. Wm Searle of New Street farmed 447 a. in Chadlington: cf. *ibid.* RG 9/909.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* RG 11/1520; cf. *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883).

<sup>72</sup> OHC, BOR1/22/D/2.

<sup>73</sup> Young, *Oxon. Agric.* 310–11.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, PROB 31/682/443; *Oxf. Jnl.*, 5 Aug. 1780; OHC, monumental inscriptions transcript, B26, differentiating him from the farmer Thos Gibbs (d. 1786) of Meads Fm, M20.

<sup>75</sup> OHC, Cal. QS, III, 605.

<sup>76</sup> *Census*, 1831.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, HO 107/1732; above, urban econ. (19th cent.).

<sup>78</sup> Pearson, *Bygone Days*, 52; *Cheltenham Jnl.*, 6 Dec. 1830.

<sup>79</sup> P. Horn (ed.), *Agric. Trade Unionism in Oxon. 1872–81* (ORS 48, 1974), 53. Cf. below, social hist. (1800–1914).

century prompted the usual shift towards pastoralism, the parish's head of cattle (including those in Over Norton) almost doubling between 1870 and 1900. Nonetheless sheep numbers fell by a fifth, in part reflecting falling wool prices. Roughly half the farmland remained under crops, particularly wheat, barley, oats, and turnips.<sup>80</sup>

## Farms and Farming Since 1900

By 1910 most farmland was occupied by just three or four farmers, of whom John Busby of West End Farmhouse worked 529 a. leased from five different landowners. His son Henry, of New Chapel Farm at Southcombe, farmed 289 a. under two owners, while Herbert Blake rented the 288-a. Meads farm from Thomasine Gibbs. Glyme farm (171 a. including 61 a. at Oldner) was kept in hand by the Chipping Norton Co-operative Society,<sup>81</sup> but for several years failed to generate a profit, and was sold in 1940 with its 54 Dairy Shorthorn cattle, 72 Hampshire Down sheep, and 24 pigs.<sup>82</sup> Sheep numbers overall (following local trends) more than halved between 1900 and 1920, though the head of cattle remained stable,<sup>83</sup> with at least two farmers in 1939 specializing in dairying.<sup>84</sup>

The Second World War saw some pasture converted to arable, but several small dairy herds remained in 1942, when the largest farms were Meads (341 a.), Glyme (215 a.), New Chalford (165 a.), and West End (163 a.). Three county council-owned smallholdings (Fowlers Barn, Rockhill, and Tank farms) each covered 69–75 a., and three poultry farmers kept a total of 2,098 birds. Most farmland in the 1940s was rented,<sup>85</sup> but by 1970 just over half in Chipping and Over Norton was owner-occupied, rising to two thirds in 1988; there were then 24 agricultural holdings employing a total of 70 people, of which nine were over 100 a. (40 ha.), and 15 were run part-time. Two thirds of agricultural land was arable (90 per cent of it sown with wheat and barley), and pigs (8,258) far outnumbered both cattle (599 including 109 in milk) and sheep (743).<sup>86</sup> By 1991 only 30 Chipping Norton inhabitants worked in farming,<sup>87</sup> and in the early 21st century Glyme farm specialized in producing organic pasture-fed lamb,<sup>88</sup> while New Chalford and Meads remained traditional mixed farms growing cereals and rearing livestock.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> TNA, MAF 68/255; MAF 68/1851.

<sup>81</sup> OHC, DV/X/40; cf. *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1911).

<sup>82</sup> M. Bee and P.W. Tyrrell, *The Chipping Norton Co-operative Society 1866–1968* (2000), 20–1.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, MAF 68/1851; MAF 68/2985 (both including Over Norton).

<sup>84</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1939).

<sup>85</sup> TNA, MAF 32/910/102.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* MAF 68/5189; MAF 68/6123.

<sup>87</sup> *Census*, 1991.

<sup>88</sup> *Chipping Norton News* (Sept. 2014).

<sup>89</sup> Local info.

The Regulated Pasture continued to be managed for its stinholders, who numbered 25 in 1910. The annually-elected field reeves were replaced in 1932 by three trustees holding office for life; c.2 a. was sold for a cemetery extension the same year, and in 1939 some 4 a. adjoining New Street was enclosed as a recreation ground. From 1952, to conform with government legislation prohibiting the mixing of differently-owned cattle, the grazing of the Regulated Pasture was let to one or two local farmers, who paid rent to the stinholders.<sup>90</sup> The system (still overseen by the life trustees) continued into the early 21st century, when 58 of the 85 stints belonged to the town council, 17 to the Midcounties Co-operative Society, and the rest to eight or so individuals.<sup>91</sup>

## Watermills and Windmill

**Medieval Mills and Upper Mill** In 1086 Chipping Norton manor had three watermills rendering a total of 62*d.* a year,<sup>92</sup> and presumably there were still three c.1200, when the lord William Fitz Alan let his 'middle mill of Norton' for 5*s.* annual rent.<sup>93</sup> One was probably Priory mill in Over Norton (later incorporated into Cold Norton manor), while the two mills remaining on Chipping Norton manor included one apparently 'below the castle'.<sup>94</sup> In 1387 the mills were called 'New' and 'Seders' (the latter after a former tenant),<sup>95</sup> but by 1398 one was ruinous,<sup>96</sup> and in the 15th century only one remained, attached to Elizabeth Marney's third-share of the manor and worth 30*s.*–40*s.* a year.<sup>97</sup> That was presumably the later 'Over' or 'Upper' mill south-west of the town,<sup>98</sup> its 16th-century millers including William Chance (d. 1577) and Simon Shelfox (d. 1583).<sup>99</sup>

The mill was detached from the manor in 1608, remaining in the hands of the Chadwell family until at least 1656.<sup>100</sup> Seventeenth-century millers included William Littleford (d. 1621)<sup>101</sup> and John Phillips (d. 1688),<sup>102</sup> whose successor in 1711 (another John Phillips)

---

<sup>90</sup> Grantham, *Regulated Pasture*, 56–80. For a dispute over public access in 1904, below, social hist. (1800–1914).

<sup>91</sup> *Chipping Norton Town Guide* (2006), 12; *Chipping Norton News* (Apr. 2014).

<sup>92</sup> DB, f. 160.

<sup>93</sup> *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, II, C.2903; TNA, C 146/2903 (undated, but c.1150 x c.1210, and perhaps most likely c.1205: cf. above, landownership (manor)).

<sup>94</sup> *PN Oxon.* II, 368 (*molendino sub castello de Norton*, 1268); TNA, CP 25/1/189/16, no. 21; below, Over Norton, econ. hist.

<sup>95</sup> *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, II, C.2617; TNA, C 146/8198.

<sup>96</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVII, p. 397; TNA, C 136/101/3.

<sup>97</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XXI, p. 260; XXII, p. 255; TNA, SC 11/33; above, landownership (manor).

<sup>98</sup> Called Over mill in 1649 and Upper mill by 1711: TNA, PROB 11/258/86; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 145/2/1. For location, below.

<sup>99</sup> OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 185.440; 58/1/30.

<sup>100</sup> OHC, BOR1/2/1D/2; *ibid.* Acc. 6779, bdl 2, deed 13 Dec. 1654; TNA, PROB 11/258/86; above, landownership.

<sup>101</sup> OHC, BOR1/2/1D/2; *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 298/5/29; *ibid.* par. reg. transcript, burial 1621.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.* Acc. 6779, bdl 2, deed 13 Dec. 1654; OHC, par. reg. transcript, burial 1688.

left the freehold to his son John,<sup>103</sup> still miller in 1733.<sup>104</sup> It was perhaps disused by 1795 when the 'old materials' from the mill and mill house (excepting the stone walls) were offered for sale at auction,<sup>105</sup> and in 1810 the cloth manufacturer William Bliss acquired it for conversion to textile manufacture.<sup>106</sup>



Davis' map of Oxfordshire (1797), showing both Upper (right) and Lower (left) Mills, south-west of the town, and the Rock Hill windmill, north-east of the town.

**Lower or Nether Mill** A freehold watermill known as 'Nether mill' in 1614 and 'Lower mill' by 1708 stood c.750 m. downstream of Upper mill towards the township's western edge,<sup>107</sup> and was probably the mill which Thomas Gibbons sold to five Over Norton men in 1580, when it was occupied by Henry Andrews.<sup>108</sup> By 1711 it belonged (with land called 'Gibbons piece') to the roper William Taylor,<sup>109</sup> whose family retained it until 1764 when it was acquired by the Revd Edward Stone (d. 1768). His son of the same name insured it in 1789,<sup>110</sup> and in 1795 sold it to the miller Thomas Kench (d. 1810), whose family retained it until 1821 when it was a 'very capital' mill 'lately rebuilt on a new and improved principle'.<sup>111</sup> The new owner Richard Cooper sold it in 1837 to the miller, farmer, and baker Edward

<sup>103</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 145/2/1.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. BOR1/5/A1/1, f. 82. For a suicide there, *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 22 Jun. 1756.

<sup>105</sup> *Oxf. Jnl*, 10 Jan. 1795. It appears on Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797).

<sup>106</sup> Above, urban econ. (19th cent.). Subsequently known as Bliss's 'lower mill' in relation to his New Street premises, but not to be confused with the older Lower or Nether mill further downstream (below).

<sup>107</sup> OHC, par. reg. transcript, burial 1614; *ibid.* BOR1/3/F1; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. XIV.14 (1881).

<sup>108</sup> BL, Add. Ch. 59184.

<sup>109</sup> TNA, PROB 11/520/101.

<sup>110</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 213.213; *ibid.* Acc. 6779, bdl 10; LMA, MS 11936/361/558534 (insurance); CNM, Rock Hill folder, draft will of Wm Taylor 1776. For Stone, below, social hist. (1500–1800). For the Taylors' adjoining hemp mill, above, urban econ. (1500–1800).

<sup>111</sup> OHC, Acc. 6779, bdl 10; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 267/1/11; *Oxf. Jnl*, 26 May 1821.

Hartley, who conveyed it in 1862 to John Turbeville Gibbs (d. 1876) of Meads Farm.<sup>112</sup> The last recorded miller was David Hannis in 1871, and by 1887 the mill house was a private residence.<sup>113</sup> No buildings remained by 1979.<sup>114</sup>

**Windmill** A stone-built windmill at Rock Hill (formerly Windmill Lane) on the town's northern edge existed by 1792,<sup>115</sup> and in 1800 had two pairs of millstones.<sup>116</sup> Millers were mentioned in the 1820s and 1840s,<sup>117</sup> and in 1863 (when it was offered for sale) it was reportedly 'well situate for business'.<sup>118</sup> By 1886, however, it had long since been dismantled.<sup>119</sup> A wooden cap purportedly salvaged from it was donated to the town's museum in 1986.<sup>120</sup>



The wooden cap purportedly salvaged from the Rock Hill windmill and now in Chipping Norton Museum.

<sup>112</sup> OHC, Acc. 6779, bdl 10; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847); Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (Warws.), ER6/182/2; *Oxf. Jnl*, 2 Aug. 1876.

<sup>113</sup> TNA, RG 10/1457; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1887).

<sup>114</sup> OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. XIV.14 (1922); SP2926 (1979); W. Foreman, *Oxfordshire Mills* (1983), 104 ('ruins on site and mill stone').

<sup>115</sup> Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 4195; *Oxf. Jnl*, 15 Aug. 1863. Cf. Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797); Foreman, *Oxon. Mills*, 125. For Windmill Lane, *Oxon. Weekly News*, 27 Jan. 1886; D. Eddershaw, *Chipping Norton Street Names* (1999), 26–7.

<sup>116</sup> *Oxf. Jnl*, 12 Apr. 1800.

<sup>117</sup> TNA, PROB 11/1663/249; *Oxf. Jnl*, 25 May 1822; *Pigot's Nat. & Comm. Dir. Oxon.* (1842); *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847).

<sup>118</sup> *Oxf. Jnl*, 15 Aug. 1863. Cf. OHC, CH/CN/II/1–2.

<sup>119</sup> *Oxon. Weekly News*, 27 Jan. 1886.

<sup>120</sup> Object with label in CNM; *Chipping Norton News* (Mar. 1986).