

KINGTON ST MICHAEL

LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS

Located 4 km north of Chippenham, the village of Kington St. Michael lies 1 km west of the main A350 road connecting Chippenham with Malmesbury and the M4 motorway.¹ The road divides the parish to the west from its former tithing of Kington Langley to the east, which became a separate civil parish in 1866. In 1261-4 Kington St Michael and Kington Langley, along with other Glastonbury abbey estates in north Wiltshire, were removed from Chippenham hundred to form the hundred of North Damerham.² Easton Piercy, west of Kington St Michael, which was not a Glastonbury estate, lay in Thorngrove hundred in 1086, and Startley hundred in the 14th century; its tithingman attended Malmesbury hundred tourn as late as 1511.³ By the 17th century, if not earlier, it was regarded as a tithing within the parish of Kington St Michael.⁴ The ancient parish, including Kington St Michael and its tithings of Easton Piercy and Kington Langley, contained 3,935 a., 1,219 inhabitants and 220 houses in the 1850s, before it was broken up.⁵ Most aspects of Kington Langley's history are described above.

Two eminent antiquaries and scholars were natives of the parish and wrote extensively about it. John Aubrey (1626-97) was born and brought up at Lower Easton Piercy; John Britton (1771-1857) was born in a house near Kington St Michael church. A third, John Edward Jackson (1805-91), rector of nearby Leigh Delamere from 1845, noted and published many aspects of the Kingtons' history.

Boundaries and Parish Origins

The ancient parish of Kington St Michael as mapped in 1820 and 1842⁶ bordered eight other parishes – Langley Burrell (south), Hardenhuish (south), Leigh Delamere (north-west), Draycot Cerne (east), Sutton Benger (east), Stanton St Quinton (north-east), Yatton Keynell (west) and Chippenham (south and south-west). Several detached portions of Chippenham and Langley Burrell were located within the bounds of the parish;⁷ conversely, detached portions of Kington St Michael were located in Langley Burrell and Chippenham. The most significant was Peckingell, in Langley Burrell.

The possession of Peckingell by Kington St Michael is likely to have been of Saxon origin, pre-dating the grant of a Kington estate to Glastonbury abbey by a charter in 987. This arrangement was probably to enable Kington to power a watermill on the Bristol Avon for grinding its grain.⁸ The detached area was extended by the acquisition

¹ This account was written in 2023. A detailed history of the parish, by J.E. Jackson, was published in *WAM*, 4 (1858), 36-128, hereafter cited as Jackson, *Kington*.

² Above, Chippenham, introduction. The final separation of North Damerham from Chippenham was made about 1319. Just. Itin. 1/998A m. 40; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 124-5; Jackson, *Kington*, 40-41; *VCH Wilts*, v, 51-2.

³ *VCH Wilts*, xiv, 5-7.

⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 235-6; Jackson, *Kington*, 72. Aubrey believed that it had once been a parish.

⁵ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael; *VCH Wilts*, iv, 351; Jackson, *Kington*, 36.

⁶ *Printed Maps of Wilts.* (WRS 52), 108; WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

⁷ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

⁸ Below, Econ. hist.

of 115 a. of rich pasture known as Penicroft by the abbey in 1223 from John Burel, which became attached to the abbey's manor and thereby the parish. This land lay between the crofts owned by John de la Yate and John the Miller.⁹ It has been suggested that most isolated portions of parishes in the Chippenham area lie on alluvium along valley bottoms, indicating their original function as meadow lands for parent settlements, and this seems to be the case here.¹⁰ The inclusion of Peckingell in a charter of 'Langley' in 940, even though the charter's precise bounds are uncertain, implies that some such detached lands were of an early date, and secular and economic in origin.¹¹

The long southern boundary of the ancient parish (including Kington Langley) appears to have been established by 940, when it was described in the 'Langley' charter. This charter may describe the bounds of Kington St Michael and Kington Langley, but landmarks cannot be determined with certainty; some correspondence with bounds of Sutton Benger described in another charter may indicate that the Langley charter relates to Draycot Cerne as well as both Kingtons.¹² The apparent exclusion of Easton Piercy, which was not in the Saxon period part of the Kington estate, provides a further complication.¹³

For much of its length the boundary of the ancient parish followed watercourses, Stein Brook and Chissell Brook, although at the south-eastern corner it was defined by field boundaries and a lane (Jackson's Lane). The eastern boundary with Draycot Cerne and Sutton Benger was established pre-conquest.¹⁴ The straight northern border, marked by field boundaries, with Leigh Delamere, Stanton St Quinton and Yatton Keynell to the west likewise suggests an early date. The tithing boundary with Kington Langley, which from 1866 became the civil parish boundary, is irregular, following field boundaries and in places the main road and Day's Lane.

In 1882 a small part of Kington St Michael civil parish (with 2 inhabitants in 1891) was transferred to Chippenham.¹⁵ In 1971 Bolehyde Manor and land around it (locally part of Allington) was transferred from Kington St Michael to Chippenham Without.¹⁶

The parish of Kington St Michael developed during the Saxon period from a settlement first recorded in a 934 charter of King Athelstan, preserved by Glastonbury abbey, as *Kingtone* (and variously spelled thereafter, to 1249), suggesting a royal farm. It is likely that it was so named as it formed part of the Saxon royal estate of Chippenham that was established around 800. Kington probably supplied the royal household. The parish had no administrative function and appears to have been a Saxon creation.¹⁷

⁹ *Cart. Glastonbury*, iii, pp. 662-3.

¹⁰ W.J. Ford, *A Survey of the Archaeology of the Chippenham Area*, prepared by staff of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Museums Section, Library and Museum Service (unpublished, 1976), 6; *Cart. Glastonbury*, iii, pp. 662-3.

¹¹ Electronic Sawyer, S473.

¹² *WAM* 77, 68-9; *Arch. J.* lxxvi (1919), 253-5; Electronic Sawyer, S473; S.E. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Glastonbury Abbey* (2012), 380-5.

¹³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 235-6.

¹⁴ *VCH Wilts*, xiv, 75, 221.

¹⁵ *VCH Wilts*, iv, 351; Youngs, *Admin. Units*, 542.

¹⁶ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, 542.

¹⁷ Kelly, *Charters*, 351-2, *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 100; *WRS* 26, 37; *Wilts HER MWI5092*; below, *Landownership*.

The 934 charter granted 15 hides at *Kyngtone* to his faithful minister, Æthelhelm.¹⁸ The charter, a copy, contains no statement of bounds, perhaps deliberately in view of ambiguities over the identification of the estate created by further charters in 940 and 987.¹⁹ The 940 charter, of King Eadred (brother of Athelstan) at Chippenham, granted 30 hides at Langley to Wulfric (probably the brother of Abbot Dunstan).²⁰ Wulfric acted as reeve with general responsibility for the estates of Glastonbury abbey.²¹ Although the text is so complex and technical as to have been described as ‘nearly unintelligible’,²² it appears to relate to Kington Langley, part of Kington St Michael ancient parish until 1866, but to include both places together.²³ A hypothesis suggested to explain the difference in estate size in 934 and 940 is that two 15 hide estates with separate townships existed here prior to 940, one centred on ‘Kington’ (Kington St Michael) and the other on ‘Langley’ (Kington Langley). These estates were combined in the text of the charter in 940 and both were then referred to by one name, Langley.²⁴ By 1189, however, both places were together in Sully’s Inquisition under the name *Kincton*. Kington, thereafter, became the name for the whole estate and has persisted.²⁵

A third charter, of 987, is concerned with land at *Kyngtone* and is a diploma of King Æthelred relating to an estate previously purchased from King Edgar by Ælfswith, wife of Ælfheah (who may have been related to Wulfric). It granted 40 hides to Glastonbury abbey.²⁶ It has no boundary clause, and it seems unlikely to be authentic.²⁷ There is probably no foundation to Aubrey’s belief (presumably stemming from this charter) that Æthelred had resided at Kington.²⁸

The difficulties are compounded by Domesday Book, which records only 1½ hides at *Chintone*, identified as Kington St Michael,²⁹ but a Glastonbury abbey estate at *Langhelei* of 29 hides.³⁰ There can be little doubt that these together relate to the estate defined in 940 and embracing Kington St Michael with its tithing Kington Langley.³¹ Domesday also records two 5-hide estates at Easton Piercy.³²

The association with Glastonbury abbey meant that the parish was sometimes referred to as Kington *Monachorum* (1255) or *Moyne*.³³ The parish was also called *Minchinkinton* (1284, with later variants). The prefix *Minchin* (meaning ‘nun’) referred to the Benedictine priory of St Mary’s established in the parish by 1155. It is possible that the two names co-existed to distinguish between the landholdings in the parish of these two monastic houses. The suffix St Michael, by which the parish became known, apparently derives from the dedication, restoration, and development of the church in

¹⁸ Electronic Sawyer, S426. For discussion of this charter, and its relationship to the Langley charters, see L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (1996), 149-52.

¹⁹ Kelly, *Charters*, 353-4.

²⁰ Electronic Sawyer, S473.

²¹ Kelly, *Charters*, 58-59.

²² Kelly, *Charters*, 380-385.

²³ Kelly, *Charters*, 384; Jackson, *Kington*, 37, 47.

²⁴ Kelly, *Charters*, 384; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 151.

²⁵ N.E. Stacy (ed.), *Surveys of the estates of Glastonbury Abbey. c.1135-1201* (2001), 200.

²⁶ Sawyer, S.866.

²⁷ Kelly, *Charters*, 385, 522-526; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 151.

²⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 136.

²⁹ *VCH Wilts*, II, 153; *Domesday*, 187.

³⁰ *VCH Wilts*, II, 124; *Domesday*, 168.

³¹ *VCH Wilts*, II, 96; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 150.

³² *Domesday*, 179, 189.

³³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 134, 141, 428.

the 13th century (although the church has Norman origins) associated with the abbacy of Michael of Ambresbury, 1235–52.³⁴

Easton Piercy was not part of Kington Saxon estate and lay in a different hundred.³⁵ It was probably carved out of the waste of Yatton Keynell and annexed to Kington St Michael by the 11th century or later. Its name, *Estone* in 1086, the ‘east farm’, probably refers to its position east of Yatton Keynell. The suffix Piercy was from Fitzpiers or Piers, a family who occupied land there c.1250.³⁶

Landscape

Much of the civil parish lies on Cornbrash limestone, although Kellaways clay outcrops in the south of the parish, and in the north along a band running from Swinley farm in the east to Cromhall farm in the west.³⁷ The minor streams which drain the parish, trending north-west towards the Avon near Christian Malford, have formed modest valleys which have exposed the Forest Marble underlying the Cornbrash and deposited alluvium along the valley bottoms. The terrain, typical of the north-west Wiltshire Cotswolds, is undulating, mostly between 90 m. and 115 m. above Ordnance Datum, generally higher in the north and west of the parish than the east. Tor Hill, immediately south of the village, is a slight eminence, although lower than most land further north.

Aubrey noted the presence of ‘talk’ (talc) in local wells and springs,³⁸ and the plentiful presence of ‘formed stones’ (fossils) around Easton Piercy, ‘full of small cockles no bigger than silver half-pennies.’³⁹ He recorded five ‘medicated springs’ within the parish, including one at the manor house and another, called Marian’s well, in the park at Kington St Michael. A third was at the former priory and the fourth, Biddle-well, lay between the main village settlement and Swinley in the north of the parish. Maiden well’s location was unspecified, but was probably in Langley north field, near a mill sold to Glastonbury abbey by Jordan Fitzurse c.1261.⁴⁰

Lime-rich soils prevail across the parish, shallower and more freely draining where the Forest Marble outcrops, but heavier and clayey with impeded drainage over the Cornbrash and Kellaways clay.⁴¹ Aubrey described in detail the flora and fauna of the parish in the 17th century, enabling comparison with more recent periods. The species he logged (‘an abundance of sower plants’) suggest a number of plant habitats across the parish that included meadow (Adder’s Tongue Fern, My Lady’s Bedstraw), wet margins (Brooklime) and damp and shaded (Hart’s Tongue Fern).⁴² The local profusion of ‘sower’ plants helped to create good cheese.⁴³ Of particular botanical note was a meadow called ‘the Minchin’ between St Mary’s Priory and Easton Piercy (below

³⁴ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 100; *VCH Wilts*, iii, 259-262; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 134; below, Religious hist.; Wilts HER MWI5092. The earliest allusion to nuns in the name may be in 1249: *Crown Pleas 1249* (WRS 16), 190 (no. 193); and to St Michael in 1268: *Crown Pleas 1268* (WRS 65), 121 (no. 565), 124 (no. 580).

³⁵ Above, introduction.

³⁶ *PN Wilts.* (EPNS), 100-1; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 237; below, landownership, econ. hist.

³⁷ This para: <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/> (accessed 17 July 2023); OS 1:25,000 Explorer series, sheet 156 (1999 edn.).

³⁸ Royal Soc., MS/92, ms copy of Aubrey’s *Natural History of Wilts*, 46, 70-71, 84.

³⁹ Royal Soc., MS/92, 98; Aubrey, *Nat. Hist. Wilts.*, ed Britton, 42, 45; J. Aubrey *Three Prose Works*, ed J. Buchanan-Brown (Fontwell 1972), 325.

⁴⁰ Royal Soc., MS/92, 46; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 147.

⁴¹ <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/> (accessed 17 July 2023).

⁴² Royal Soc., MS/92, 8, 118-119.

⁴³ Royal Soc., MS/92, 300.

Priory Wood and either side of the stream), which survived as Minchin Piece when mapped in 1842.⁴⁴ Here Aubrey recorded 'there is infinite variety of Plants in it'.

Aubrey also chronicled local deforestation and its negative impact on animal species including pine martens, red squirrels and foxes. But he suggested that one of the finest oak woodlands in the county remaining was at Easton Piercy, where there was also the biggest oak specimen in the county.⁴⁵

Communications

The most important route through the parish runs north from Chippenham to Malmesbury, bisecting the settlement centres of Kington St Michael and Kington Langley. This is possibly *Ergespath* mentioned in the Langley charter bounds in 940. It was later mapped in 1653 as part of an agreement between Langley Burrell, Chippenham and Hardenhuish parish officers to discharge their statute highway responsibilities. The road was turnpiked in 1756 and disturnpiked c.1868.⁴⁶ It was classified A429 in 1922, and renumbered A350 and reconstructed as a dual carriageway to feed the M4 motorway junction 17 opened in 1971. As part of the development of Chippenham turnpikes the road branching from it through the settlement of Kington St Michael towards Hullavington was itself turnpiked, either in 1756 or under a continuation act in 1767/8, but perhaps only briefly, and probably to avoid toll evasion on the main road.⁴⁷

Aubrey describes 'old ways now lost; but some vestigial left' at Easton Piercy. One led north from an ancient cross by the pound (along the present Cromhall Lane), northwards past the manor house (now Manor farm) to Leigh Delamere.⁴⁸ This is shown as a lane until just north of the former manor house on the tithe map of 1842.⁴⁹ It is also visible on an 1885 Ordnance Survey map but thereafter became a footpath to Leigh Delamere.⁵⁰ Running southwards from the cross was a way to Allington, Aubrey described 'but of that no sign.'⁵¹ A footpath running south from that point, however, was mapped in 1885. Another ancient way left Easton from 'the gate at the brook' to Yatton Keynell. This may be Cromhall Lane, that runs westwards between Kington and Yatton Keynell, the brook then referring to the pond north of the manor depicted on the tithe map.⁵²

Other ways, shown on a map of 1773, include Stanton Lane leading to Swinley, towards Stanton St Quintin; and locally the most important in parochial terms, a trackway and two roads which crossed the Chippenham–Malmesbury road to connect with Kington Langley.⁵³ One of these may be the ancient trackway (described as such in 1518) that extended from Glastonbury abbey's estate at Kington St Michael to Peckingell within the parish of Langley Burrell.⁵⁴

⁴⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 143; WSA, TA/Kington St Michael, no.640.

⁴⁵ Royal Soc., MS/92, 131-2, 148; see also 144 etc.

⁴⁶ *WAM* 77, 68-9; *Wilts. Quarter Session Order Book 1642-1654* (WRS 67), 286; WSA, 118/53; *VCH Wilts*, iv, 257, 267, 269.

⁴⁷ *VCH Wilts*, iv, 257, 267.

⁴⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236.

⁴⁹ WSA, T/A Kington St Michael.

⁵⁰ OS 25-inch sheet Wilts XX.5 (1886 edn.).

⁵¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236.

⁵² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236.

⁵³ *Andrews' and Dury's Map, 1773*, pl. 13.

⁵⁴ 1518 survey. The lord of Langley Burrell claimed 12d. ancient rent from the manor of Kyngton in 1518.

Local routes were likely to be in a poor state before the 20th century. Britton described how before c.1800 'the roads to the village, branching from those called Turnpike Roads about a mile distant, were not easy to be passed over by carriages; for being only used by waggons and carts, they were worn into two deep ruts by the wheels, and another nearly equally deep by the horses.'⁵⁵

No railways or canals pass through the parish.

Directories of the 19th and 20th centuries do not record local carriers serving Kington St Michael, presumably because of its proximity to the nearest market town, Chippenham. Other 19th- and early 20th-century village carriers, from Hullavington, Stanton and elsewhere, probably called at Kington on their way to and from Chippenham. The National company began a motor bus service between Chippenham and Malmesbury in 1922, and in 1929 this was calling at Kington during four journeys each way on four or five days weekly.⁵⁶ The service between the two towns was continued by Western National from 1930 and by Bristol Omnibus after 1970. In 2023 a daytime hourly service between Kington and Chippenham was provided by Faresaver, a Chippenham bus company.

Population

In 1086 there were 24 tenants on the Glastonbury abbey estate at Kington; this rose to 56 in 1189.⁵⁷ In 1332 there were 48 taxpayers recorded for *Kyngton Michaelis*; Easton Piercy (as *Estone*) was included separately with Draycot Cerne.⁵⁸ Manorial court documents record that whereas 60 landless men paid capitage at Easter 1348, only 34 paid the following Easter, suggesting a large fall in the resident population (c.56%) as a result of the Black Death.⁵⁹ The 1377 poll tax recorded 93 adult taxpayers for Kington St Michael, implying that the population had not recovered in the intervening period.⁶⁰ In 1523 there were 21 inhabitants in Kington St Michael and 5 in Easton Piercy liable to taxation, a total comparable with the other North Damerham parishes.⁶¹ At the 1676 religious census 361 adult conformists and non-conformists were recorded for Kington St Michael, suggesting that the total population was then in excess of 500.⁶²

In the first national census of 1801 the total population of Kington St Michael ancient parish was 729 (including Kington Langley), or 358 for Kington St Michael and Easton Piercy only. These totals rose to 824 (395) in 1811, 969 (465) in 1821 and 1,173 (572) by 1841. The 19th century peaked in 1851 at 1,219 (625 for Kington St Michael and Easton Piercy combined, or 594 and 21 respectively).⁶³ Thereafter the population stagnated, falling to 457 in 1881 and 438 in 1891, after the loss of two residents in a boundary change. The population increased to 473 in 1911 but fell after World War I to only 437 in 1921. It recovered in 1951 to 476,⁶⁴ and had risen rapidly to 704 in 1961, but after falling a decade later it stabilised to c.700 at each subsequent census.⁶⁵

⁵⁵ J. Britton, *Autobiography*, 32.

⁵⁶ *The Years Between*, i, 56; *Roadways*, Sept. 1929, 272.

⁵⁷ *VCH Wilts*, iv, 10,

⁵⁸ *Wilts. Tax list of 1332* (WRS 45), 61, 104-5.

⁵⁹ Below, ????

⁶⁰ *VCH Wilts*, iv, 308.

⁶¹ TNA, E 179/197/155. This compares with Nettleton (26), Christian Malford (25), Grittleton (21). The property threshold was 20s.

⁶² *Compton Census* (ed. Whiteman), 128.

⁶³ *VCH Wilts*, iv, 351. The population of Easton Piercy was 41 in 1841, seemingly a century high.

⁶⁴ *VCH Wilts*, iv, 351.

⁶⁵ <https://apps.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityhistory/Census/ByYear> (accessed 17 July 2023).

Settlement

Amongst the earliest evidence for settlement at Kington St Michael are Mesolithic flints, found at locations in the north and south of the parish.⁶⁶ Similar flint assemblages have been found elsewhere in the Chippenham area at sites near the Bristol Avon (hunter-fisher groups of this period tended to settle on land adjacent to rivers or marshes).⁶⁷ A Neolithic flint scraper was found at Moorshall farm,⁶⁸ and Aubrey recorded finding in the west field by Easton Piers what was probably a Neolithic hand axe, 'as big as one's fist and of a kind of liver colour.'⁶⁹

Cropmarks of rectilinear and circular enclosures are visible on aerial photographs in an area east of the main settlement. These have not been dated, but it has been suggested that such marks in the vicinity are probably from the early farming period, 3,500-450 BC.⁷⁰ An enclosure and nearby pit, also undated, are recorded north of Nash Lane, in the north-east of the parish.⁷¹ Nearby Bronze Age pottery was found in Quarry Field (also on Nash Lane).⁷²

A Middle Iron Age settlement was indicated, north of Heywood, by an excavation ahead of a gas pipeline in 1998, while associated ditches to the north-west were Roman.⁷³ As part of the same excavations evidence of Romano-British settlement was found nearby, south of Cromhall farm, comprising ditches, postholes, a gully and two wells.⁷⁴ To the east of this site (and east of Down farm) an Iron Age/Roman rectangular enclosure has also been recorded on aerial photographs.⁷⁵

St Mary's, a small Benedictine priory of nuns, lay to the north-west of the main settlement area and to the east of Easton Piercy.⁷⁶ The priory buildings surrounded a square court, to the north of which was a chapel.⁷⁷ Aubrey sketched the site during the 17th century when it appeared still largely intact, but observed that the priory chapel which had been 'very fayre' was without glass, monuments, or chancel.⁷⁸ By the last decades of the 18th century the site was in use as a farmhouse.⁷⁹ Britton in 1803 described how one side of the quadrangle had been taken down and the remaining two had been so much altered that very little remained. The 'ancient hall' was in use as a kitchen, while the kitchen garden occupied the former graveyard. An archway that

⁶⁶ Wilts HER, MWI5059, MWI5069.

⁶⁷ Ford 'Survey', 4.

⁶⁸ Wilts HER, MWI2073.

⁶⁹ Royal Soc., MS/92, 93.

⁷⁰ Wilts HER, MWI45061; Ford 'Survey', 4.

⁷¹ Wilts HER MWI45059; MWI45060.

⁷² Wilts HER, MWI5079.

⁷³ Wilts HER MWI2077. South of Heywood to the north-west of the Gorse Linear features dateable to the Iron Age were excavated in 2007 at Chippenham Golf Course: Wilts HER, MWI5080. Various Roman finds have been made in the parish including Romano-British Pottery, West of Lodge farm and a Romano British Brooch, west of the settlement: Wilts HER, MWI5082; MWI2086; MWI2087; MWI5091.

⁷⁴ Wilts HER, MWI2085, MWI2131, MWI2119.

⁷⁵ Wilts HER, MWI44984. Another undated enclosure has been recorded north of Nash Lane, north-east of the parish. Wilts HER, MWI45059. See also MWI45060.

⁷⁶ For the history of the priory, see *VCH Wilts*, iii, 259-62.

⁷⁷ Wilts HER, MWI2100; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 143-5; Jackson, *Kington*, 51-67; WAM 25, 18-25.

⁷⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 143-5, plate 218.

⁷⁹ Britton, *Beauties Wilts*, iii, 155.

belonged to the chapel was still standing, but the site of the chapel was in use for pig sties.⁸⁰

It is likely that a rearrangement and enlargement of the core settlement of Kington took place during the later 13th century. In 1266, Henry III granted the abbot of Glastonbury the right to hold a weekly market at Kington St Michael every Tuesday and a fair in September. According to Aubrey the market was held at the cross located 'at the Y going to the Priory', the junction of Grove Lane and Honey Knob Hill. Within several decades of this grant, St Michael's church was restored with the addition of a steeple, a new grange was built, and Kington was being used as the location of the court of the newly created hundred of North Damerham.⁸¹ The regular arrangement of tenement plots with continuous rear boundaries along the line of the village street may be indicative of a planned addition to the settlement, perhaps to create a minor urban development to accompany the market. Earthworks, including possible house platforms situated on Tor Hill south of the village (adjacent to the present village) support this contention of settlement shift.⁸²

Several farms which developed at a distance from the areas of settlement are of Saxon or medieval origin. These include Moorshall (Moreshall) farm, near Leigh Delamere to the north-west of the parish, which Aubrey believed belonged to St Mary's priory.⁸³ It may have been of Saxon origins, but is more likely to have been settled during the medieval period;⁸⁴ the current farmhouse dates from the 17th century.⁸⁵ Swinley to the north-east of the parish was recognised as a distinct area as early as 1243 when Jordan Fitzurse's right to lands there was confirmed by Glastonbury abbey,⁸⁶ and has been identified as part of the lands held by Urse in 1086 and Robert de Curtenai in 1189.⁸⁷ A medieval enclosure and pottery associated with settlement have been found at Upper Swinley farm.⁸⁸

Easton Piercy retains extensive archaeological evidence of the medieval settlement, including a bank running north to south in a field south of Manor farm, with possible house platforms and ridge and furrow.⁸⁹ Aubrey described the settlement c.1670 as comprising a manor house, chapel and cross. However, the chapel and cross had disappeared by the time he was writing.⁹⁰ A recommendation in 1976 that the medieval settlement features should be scheduled as an ancient monument had not (in 2023) taken place.⁹¹

⁸⁰ *Gent. Mag.* 1803 (2), 717. Britton transcribed his report to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in a later manuscript: WM, MSS 4080.

⁸¹ The hundred court is also likely to have been held there in 1263. In 1255 it was described as the hundred court of Kington, although North Damerham appears to have been created 1261-3 (*VCH Wilts*, v, 52, 70). Longleat manorial account, 11244 (1275), 11273 (1300), 11215 (1306), 10633 (1335); Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 139, 142, 429; Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, I, 45; Jackson, *Kington*, 39. In Britton's time, the market had been disused for more than 200 years but the fair still continued, Britton, *Beauties Wilts*. iii, 148-9.

⁸² Wilts HER, MWI5092.

⁸³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 145.

⁸⁴ *PN Wilts*. (EPNS), 101; Wilts HER MWI2108, MWI2109; Jackson, *Kington*, 46-7.

⁸⁵ NHLE, 1022328.

⁸⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 427. See also Jackson, *Kington*, 46.

⁸⁷ Stacy, *Surveys*, 200.

⁸⁸ Wilts HER, MWI5112.

⁸⁹ Wilts HER, MWI2098, MWI2126. An undated enclosure has also been recorded south-west of Lower Easton Piercy farm. Wilts HER, MWI2125.

⁹⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236-7.

⁹¹ Ford 'Survey', 10-11.

The manor house at Easton Piercy was demolished and rebuilt by the Langton family after their purchase of it in 1623.⁹² The tithe apportionment map shows a field called chapel land adjacent and north-west of the former manor house (now Manor farm), an area also identified by Jackson in 1858.⁹³ Of the several farms which make up the hamlet, Cromhall farm has medieval origins although the farmhouse dates from the 17th century.⁹⁴ Lower Easton Piercy farm, once owned by Aubrey, and Upper Easton farm were developed from the 16th century.⁹⁵ Britton described how Lower Easton farm in his youth (c.1780) had been in a state of ruin – covered in ivy, its doors and windows removed, and its floors decayed or fallen in. In one room were fragments of old armour.⁹⁶ Subsequently ‘a snug modern building’ was erected on the site.⁹⁷

After the suppression of Glastonbury abbey in 1539, the abbey’s grange at Kington St Michael, which lay slightly north-west of St Michael’s church, was used as the manor house. It was rebuilt by Nicholas Snell, the former abbey reeve who acquired the estate.⁹⁸ Formal gardens are depicted on a map of 1773, of which only a small part survives.⁹⁹ The manor house was replaced in the 19th century by Herbert Prodgers.¹⁰⁰ Aubrey mentions a park adjacent to the manor that included carp ponds, possibly a deer park upon which the abbot’s tenants enjoyed the right of pasture; these rights were later rescinded by Nicholas Snell.¹⁰¹ This area lay to the west of the church and manor house, and extended north to a ditch in a close called ‘Ryding’, and south to include the present Lodge farm and Haywood farm.¹⁰² A park, by then reduced to c.52 a., is included in a 1655 manor survey; it contained a lodge, possibly the site of the present Lodge farm.¹⁰³ However, the park was not depicted on Speed’s Wiltshire map of 1610.

Other evidence of medieval settlement includes ridge and furrow.¹⁰⁴ Medieval finds include a stirrup ring discovered east of Priory Cottage¹⁰⁵

In 2023 the settlement of Kington St Michael was centred on the linear village street, which becomes Honey Knob Hill to the north. The parish church and Kington Manor are located to the west of the older core of the settlement at the southern end of the street. During the later 20th century there was some infilling and limited housing development on either side of the street north of the main settlement. This took the form of four cul-de-sacs: The Rydings, The Close, The Ham and Kyneton Way.

⁹² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 240. Wilts HER, MWI66015.

⁹³ WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael; the identification was confirmed by Jackson, *Kington*, 72-3.

⁹⁴ Wilts HER, MWI2104; Jackson, *Kington*, 80. See also Wilts HER, MWI65987.

⁹⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 240-1; Jackson, *Kington*, 78-80. Note Jackson makes some error in his description of the property. See also Soc.Ant., JAC.006: Jackson notes on Easton Piercy; Wilts HER, MWI66014, MWI66016. An undated enclosure has been recorded south west of lower Easton Piercy farm. Wilts HER, MWI2125

⁹⁶ Britton, *Beauties Wilts.* iii, 156.

⁹⁷ Transcribed by John Britton from *Gentleman’s Magazine* 1803 WM, MSS 4080.

⁹⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 130.

⁹⁹ Wilts HER, MWI2113; *Andrews’ and Dury’s Map, 1773*, pl.13.

¹⁰⁰ Soc. Ant., JAC006; below, landownership.

¹⁰¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 130-1. *WAM* 89, 88-98.

¹⁰² The Ridings (as well as First & Middle Riddings, Long Ridings, Upper Ridings) survived as field names in the tithe apportionment: WSA, T/A Kington St Michael. It is retained to the present day in the name of the Ridings development. See also Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 130-1; Jackson, 43-44. An undated bank recorded by Wilts HER may be associated with this park. Wilts HER, MWI2121.

¹⁰³ WSA, 873/140. An undated linear earthwork and a small square enclosure have been identified south of Lodge farm. Any connection to a possible park is, however, conjecture. Wilts HER, MWI5145.

¹⁰⁴ Wilts HER, MWI2128.

¹⁰⁵ Wilts HER, MWI2110. See also MWI2142, MWI5160.

Built Character

Referring to Kington St Michael in his autobiography John Britton noted, 'The cottages and the shops were of the humblest and poorest kind. With walls of rough undressed stone and mortar, thatched roofs, stone slabs from the quarries, or the bare earth for the floor, windows of varied forms and sizes, many of them papered or boarded, or with broken glass.'¹⁰⁶ Despite Britton's poor assessment of their architectural merit, several of these buildings on the village street are grade II listed, albeit now mainly under stone slate or Bridgwater tile roofs, not thatch. The prevailing rubblestone and slates used in vernacular buildings come from local quarries of Cornbrash and Forest Marble, so that, it has been said, they are 'fashioned out of the earth on which they stand'.¹⁰⁷

Most notable of the listed buildings is a row of six almshouses to the west side of the village street that bear the inscription, 'Isaac Lyte, born in this Parish, Alderman of London late deceased, built this Almshouse and endowed it a.d. 1675'. The design incorporates a regular six-gabled front with three-light ovolo-moulded stone mullion windows.¹⁰⁸ Also to the west side is the Jolly Huntsman inn. The inn is late 18th century in date and has a north side extension from 1880 with a former malthouse to the rear of the original range.¹⁰⁹ North of the almshouses is a group of 17th-century houses (66-68), and further up the street another row of three houses (53-55), altered and extended, but reputed to have been a malt house.¹¹⁰ Near the church is a row of four (initially two) houses (86-89) that are dated 1751.¹¹¹

The east side of the village street also retains a number of early houses, now listed. The Old Police House was created in 1889 from two early-mid 18th-century houses.¹¹² Of similar date are nos. 8-10 and 23, the latter of two storeys and an attic, double-fronted with cyma-moulded flush 2-light mullion windows. The central door has a deep segmental hood on scrolled brackets.¹¹³ Listed houses of the 19th-century include Laburnum House (22), which incorporates a three-window range,¹¹⁴ Hazeland House, nos. 3 and 3A, and no. 31, with a datestone 1811.¹¹⁵

In addition, on the linear village street is a grade II listed K6 telephone kiosk. The K6 was designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. An iconic design, this example has been identified as a particularly good specimen, that additionally benefits from its proximity to the village hall, post office and red-letter box, as well as the nearby listed buildings.¹¹⁶

St Michael's church at Kington St Michael is grade II* listed.¹¹⁷ The former vicarage (called the Old Rectory), lychgate and a number of monuments in the graveyard are also listed.¹¹⁸ Of particular interest is the group of nine monuments south-west of south aisle of the church, the best of which date from the early-mid C18 that are grade II*. The only other grade II* structure in the parish is Priory Manor, which

¹⁰⁶ Britton, *Autobiography*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ H. and R. Tanner, *Wiltshire Village* (1939), 18.

¹⁰⁸ NHLE, 1283535. Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379; below, Social hist.

¹⁰⁹ NHLE, 1363826.

¹¹⁰ NHLE, 1363864, 1199132.

¹¹¹ NHLE, 1199225. Other listed buildings include no. 75. NHLE, 1022336.

¹¹² NHLE, 1022332.

¹¹³ NHLE, 1022331, 1199101.

¹¹⁴ NHLE, 1022333.

¹¹⁵ NHLE, 1022335, 1022330, 1199109.

¹¹⁶ NHLE, 1392028.

¹¹⁷ NHLE, 1283509; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379; below, Religious hist.

¹¹⁸ NHLE, 1363830, 1022338, 1199208, 1363827, 1363828, 1022339.

dates from the 15th to 17th centuries and incorporates elements of the former Benedictine priory of St Mary's. The manor is constructed of rubble stone with a stone slate roof and ashlar stacks. The main range of the house was formerly the prioress's lodging.¹¹⁹ The former stable range is also listed.¹²⁰ Stones taken from the demolished priory have been re-used in walls and farm buildings.¹²¹ Kington Manor dates from 1863 and is grade II.¹²²

A number of former and current farmhouses and buildings are also listed. On the village street are Home farm, of 17th-18th century date, and Manor farm, constructed late 18th to early 19th century, with its barn and stable range.¹²³ Others include Manor farm (dated 1631, but largely of later construction) and its barn at Easton Piercy, and Upper Swinley farm to the north-east of the parish rebuilt in 1639.¹²⁴

LANDOWNERSHIP

Kington was part of a royal Saxon estate that supplied a residence at Chippenham.¹²⁵ It was a Saxon creation rather than being based upon a pre-existing Romano-British estate.¹²⁶ The great majority of land in medieval Kington St Michael and Kington Langley was part of a manor owned by Glastonbury abbey, with a smaller estate held by the nuns of Kington. After the Dissolution the Glastonbury manor was held by the Snell family until the mid 17th century when it was fragmented by division among heiresses.

The Glastonbury manor of Kington

The charters relating to the 10th century grants of land at Kington to Glastonbury abbey are contradictory and their authenticity has been doubted.¹²⁷ A charter of King Athelstan, dated 934, granting 15 hides at Kyngtone to Æthelhelm, survives in a 14th-century copy.¹²⁸ A charter of King Æthelred, dated 987 but probably spurious, granted 40 hides to the abbey.¹²⁹ A charter recorded in the 12th century by William of Malmesbury described 30 hides given by Wilfrid to the abbey in 940, confirmed by King Edmund.¹³⁰ However, this last grant may relate to a gift originally made by King Edmund to Wilfric of Langley within Kington (*Langelea id est Cunctun*) in 940.¹³¹

Domesday records only 1½ hides at 'Kington', held by Roger from Ralph de Mortimer in 1086 and formerly by Alwine from the abbot of Glastonbury.¹³² It also includes 29 hides at 'Langley';¹³³ usually identified as Kington Langley although a

¹¹⁹ NHLE, 1022340; Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379-80.

¹²⁰ NHLE, 1022341.

¹²¹ Tanner, *Wiltshire Village*, 28-9.

¹²² NHLE, 1199164, 1022337; below, Landownership.

¹²³ NHLE, 1022329, 1363863, 1022334.

¹²⁴ NHLE, 1022325, 1022326, 1022342. Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 380; below, Landownership.

¹²⁵ *PN Wilts*, 100.

¹²⁶ Wiltshire HER, <https://services.wiltshire.gov.uk/HistoryEnvRecord/Home/Index> (accessed 4/9/2022)

¹²⁷ See Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 149-52; above, Settlement.

¹²⁸ Sawyer, S.426.

¹²⁹ Sawyer, S.866.

¹³⁰ Scott, *Early history of Glastonbury*, 114 and 142.

¹³¹ Sawyer, S.473 and Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 149

¹³² *Domesday, Wiltshire* (Alecto edition), 72v.

¹³³ *Domesday, Wiltshire* (Alecto edition), 66v.

location in Langley Burrell has been suggested.¹³⁴ The abbey continued in possession until 1220 when it was granted to the bishop of Wells, but restored to the abbey in 1218.¹³⁵ Thereafter it remained among the abbey's possessions until 1536.

In 1518 the manor had a demesne leased to Richard Snell consisting of 126 a. arable, 55 a. pasture and 40 a. meadow, 400 a. wood and 310 a. common.¹³⁶ It had been larger as former demesne arable was noted among the copyholders' lands. There were only four freeholders: two laymen, the abbot of Malmesbury and the prioress of Kington. The first layman, John Saunders, held a tenement beside Heywood from John Bolehide, the second, Thomas Tropenell, held a virgate inherited from his father,¹³⁷ Christopher Tropenell, which in 1502 consisted of a messuage with 60 a. arable, 10 a. meadow and 20 a. pasture held for services.¹³⁸ A tenement in Malmesbury was part of the manor, held by the abbot of Malmesbury, but it was in disrepair and no rent could be distrained.¹³⁹ The prioress of Kington held two cottages in Langley from Kington St Michael manor.¹⁴⁰ With the exception of ½ a. leased to the churchwardens of Langley all of the rest of the land in the manor was held by customary tenants as copyhold.¹⁴¹

The demesne at Kington St Michael was in hand, but 'running at a low ebb', in 1402 and was leased at some time in the later 15th century.¹⁴² A Richard Snell was the bailiff and farmer by 1518,¹⁴³ and he or his son Richard were later reeve and later steward.¹⁴⁴ He retained his lease under the Court of Augmentations and in 1543 purchased the manor for £803 17s. 2½d.¹⁴⁵ He was succeeded by his son Nicholas Snell who built a new manor house on the site of the monastic grange.¹⁴⁶ His meteoric rise was partly assisted by his marriage to Alice, daughter of John Pye of Rowden, which saw him promoted from the lower ranks of the minor gentry to becoming an MP for Chippenham and sheriff of Wiltshire.¹⁴⁷ Nicholas Snell was succeeded by his son John (d.1587),¹⁴⁸ who obtained a licence to alienate lands in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley to John Tanner in 1578.¹⁴⁹ John Snell was followed by his son Thomas who died in 1612,¹⁵⁰ and his son Charles who died without issue in 1651.¹⁵¹

Charles's estate was inherited by his surviving sister Mary, wife of Nicholas Gastrell, and the heirs of his two elder sisters Barbara Stokes and Penelope Newman.¹⁵² The inheritance by these three families precipitated a permanent division of the manor and initially resulted in courts being held in each portion.¹⁵³ The first two portions are

¹³⁴ Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 150-1; above, Settlement.

¹³⁵ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 39.

¹³⁶ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

¹³⁷ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

¹³⁸ *Inq. p.m. Hen VII*, II, no.682 (find page within 411-458)

¹³⁹ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

¹⁴⁰ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

¹⁴¹ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

¹⁴² Keil, *Estates of the abbey of Glastonbury*, 148.

¹⁴³ BL, Harl. Ms. 3961.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, SC6/HenVIII/3953-3955 and Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 42.

¹⁴⁵ Somerset Heritage Centre DD/GS/21 and WSA 473/196.

¹⁴⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 131.

¹⁴⁷ History of Parliament, *Snell, Nicholas (d.1577) of Kington St Michael, Wilts.*

¹⁴⁸ History of Parliament, *Snell, John (by 1537-1587) of Kington St Michael, Wilts.*

¹⁴⁹ *Cal. Pat. 1575-8*, 464.

¹⁵⁰ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 44, will proved the following year TNA, PROB 11/121/732

¹⁵¹ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', pedigree of Snell of Kington St Michael, between pages 44 and 45.

¹⁵² WSA, 473/196.

¹⁵³ WSA, 1305/125.

considered here, the portion that descended from Penelope Newman to the Coleman family is considered under Kington Langley.¹⁵⁴ In 1655, the year before the division, a survey was compiled for the whole manor including lands in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley.¹⁵⁵

Kington Manor – The Gastrell portion.

The portion of the manor that descended to Mary Gastrell's son James was surveyed in 1664 and comprised: a demesne of 308 a. worth £148; 13 copyholders in Kington St Michael holding 173 a. worth £87; 13 copyholders in Kington Langley holding 156 a. worth £113 0s. 6d.; eight leaseholders in Kington St Michael holding 93 a. worth £63 0s. 6d.; twelve leaseholders in Kington Langley with 112 a. worth £92 4s. 6d.¹⁵⁶

James Gastrell (d.1679)¹⁵⁷ left his estate to his nephew, James Power,¹⁵⁸ on whose death, in 1704,¹⁵⁹ this portion of the manor passed to James Aland Power of Chippenham.¹⁶⁰ From James Aland Power (d.1715)¹⁶¹ it passed to his brother Jonathan (d.1748)¹⁶² and was then divided by Act of Parliament between his four married sisters: Elizabeth Gilpin, Margaret Clifford, Rebecca Knott and Sarah Coleman; a fifth sister Grace Power died unmarried in 1749 and the portion that she was to be allocated was divided among her sisters within the Act.¹⁶³

i. The share that passed to Elizabeth Gilpin (d.1755)¹⁶⁴ was inherited by her son Jonathan Power Gilpin (d.1790, Tellisford, Soms.)¹⁶⁵ and his son James Gilpin who broke up the lands and sold them in 1807.¹⁶⁶

ii. Margaret Clifford (d.1754)¹⁶⁷ received Heywood farm which was recognised as a discrete area as early as 1255 and 1285 when William de Haywood and Robert de Haywood quitclaimed lands to the abbot of Glastonbury.¹⁶⁸ Margaret passed Heywood to her three daughters Elizabeth, Margaret and Sarah, before it descended to her relatives the Mascalls of Allington.¹⁶⁹ James Mascall, who had inherited by 1780,¹⁷⁰ was succeeded by his son James Mascall (d.1821).¹⁷¹ It passed to his son, also James Mascall (d.1846),¹⁷² then to his son Richard and then to Richard's four daughters Elizabeth, Sarah, Ann and Mary by whom it was sold to the Neeld estate at Grittleton in 1888.¹⁷³ It was sold again in 1898 at auction.¹⁷⁴ Harry Sage, who had also acquired Bolehide, held it

¹⁵⁴ Above, Kington Langley, landownership.

¹⁵⁵ WSA, 753/140.

¹⁵⁶ WSA, 1305/125.

¹⁵⁷ WSA, P3/G/264.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, C 8/341/44.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, PROB 11/485/188.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, PROB 11/485/188; TNA, C8/341/44.

¹⁶¹ WSA, 1187/4.

¹⁶² WSA, 1187/4.

¹⁶³ Act for The Partition of Jonathan Power's estate, 1783, 23 Geo. III, c.44. and WSA, P3/P/868.

¹⁶⁴ WSA, P3/G/651.

¹⁶⁵ Somerset Heritage Centre, D/P/Tell/2/1/2.

¹⁶⁶ WSA 1305/125.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, PROB/11/808/481.

¹⁶⁸ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 428.

¹⁶⁹ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 46.

¹⁷⁰ WSA A1/345/243.

¹⁷¹ WSA P3/1821/31.

¹⁷² WSA P3/1846/24.

¹⁷³ WSA 1305/125.

¹⁷⁴ WSA 2623/68.

in the 1920s.¹⁷⁵ In 1943 Heywood farm, then consisting of 160 a. was leased by Daniel Singer from C.E. West of Bath and M. Du Cros of Bolehide.¹⁷⁶ Heywood farmhouse is grade II listed; constructed in 1664 and extended during the 18th century.¹⁷⁷

iii. Rebecca Knott's share was purchased by Joseph Neeld of Grittleton who held it in 1840.¹⁷⁸

iv. Sarah Coleman was the wife of William Coleman (d.1739) who inherited the third of the original manor that passed to the heirs of Penelope Newman and descended with that portion of the manor.¹⁷⁹

Kington Manor – The Stokes portion.

One third of the original Kington manor held by Charles Snell passed in 1656 to Thomas the son of Barbara Stokes.¹⁸⁰ Thomas and his son Edward each held a moiety of this third of the manor during their lifetimes, including copyhold and leasehold lands totalling 234 a. in Kington St Michael and one copyhold of 1 a. in Kington Langley.¹⁸¹ Their portion included the manor house at Kington St Michael which in Thomas's will he left to his wife, Jane, with provision for his son Charles who had 'an affliction to deprive him of sense and reason'.¹⁸² The divided third of the manor was reunited by Edward's son John Stokes and valued in 1679,¹⁸³ before being sold to form part of the marriage settlement between John Lawford of Stapleton (Glos.) and Jane Duckett.

In 1713 it was sold to Ayliffe White and in 1826 on the death of his grandson, also Ayliffe White, it was divided and sold to R.H. Gaby, N. Atherton and W. Whitworth.¹⁸⁴ Gaby's portion was in 1840 held jointly by Thomas and Mary Gaby and included Manor farm at Kington St Michael leased to William Little.¹⁸⁵ Whitworth purchased Lodge farm which descended in 1857 to his son-in-law William Peel of Manchester and was thereafter occupied by tenants.

Atherton's portion, including the manor house, was sold in 1856 to Thomas Clutterbuck.¹⁸⁶ Herbert Proegers purchased the manor house in 1862.¹⁸⁷ The present manor house was constructed in 1863 possibly by J. L. Pearson, for Herbert Proegers, incorporating some details from the previous 16th-century manor house.¹⁸⁸ An inventory of the goods of James Power compiled in 1705 records the features of the 16th-century house: a hall, parlour, kitchen and pantry, each with a chamber above, a third storey with chambers over the hall, parlour and kitchen chambers, a brewhouse and a whitehouse containing two cheese presses and with a chamber above, a 'meal chamber' containing a meal tub, two inner and outer cellars contained barrels of

¹⁷⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts* (1920), 136, and (1927) 138.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, MAF/32/39/34/6.

¹⁷⁷ NHLE, no.101283587, Heywood farmhouse.

¹⁷⁸ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 46 and WSA, TA Kington St Michael.

¹⁷⁹ Above, Kington Langley landownership.

¹⁸⁰ WSA 473/196.

¹⁸¹ Society of Antiquaries, JAC.006.

¹⁸² TNA, PROB 11/324/157, cited in *Wilts. N&Q.*, vol. 5, 559, and Badeni, *Wiltshire Forefathers*, 92.

¹⁸³ WSA, 84/47.

¹⁸⁴ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 45-6.

¹⁸⁵ WSA, TA Kington St Michael.

¹⁸⁶ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 45.

¹⁸⁷ Badeni, *Wiltshire Forefathers*, 93.

¹⁸⁸ NHLE, no.1199164, Kington Manor.

wine.¹⁸⁹ Britton recalled that in his childhood at the end of the 18th century there was a fishpond well stocked with carp, eel and tench.¹⁹⁰

The Prior manor

The Benedictine house of nuns had been endowed at Kington St Michael between 1142 and 1155.¹⁹¹ They continued to hold the manor until the Dissolution when the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* underestimated the lands at 100 a. arable held in demesne worth £1 13s. 4d., 36 a. meadow and pasture in demesne worth £3 13s. 4d., rents of free and customary tenants worth £3 18s. 6d. and the tithes of the rectory worth £6 13s. 4d.¹⁹²

In June 1538 the remainder of the 21-year lease of the site was granted to Sir Richard Long (d. 1546), with the reversion to his nephew, Robert Long (d. 1581) of Draycot and Wraxall.¹⁹³ In 1545 accounts were presented to the Court of Augmentations by Robert Long, then the farmer, but the Priory may have managed the demesne in hand as arrears were owed by a bailiff, William Harding.¹⁹⁴ The account presents customary rents amounting to £3 9s. 2d. from four messuages and two cottages in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley as well as temporalities and spiritualities in other parishes.¹⁹⁵ The site of the manor contained orchards, gardens and dovecot valued at 6s. 8d., the demesne included 196 a. 1 r. arable, 25 a. pasture and 9½ a. meadow as well as rights to common pasture in Heywood. Robert Long held two enclosed pastures which the Priory leased from Glastonbury abbey.

Richard Long's son Henry sold the manor to John Read for 40 marks in 1552.¹⁹⁶ Read sold to John Taylor for £560 in 1556.¹⁹⁷ In 1576 Nicholas Snell lord of the manor of Kington St Michael appointed John Taylor 'of the Priory' as his executor.¹⁹⁸ In 1628 the Priory manor was sold by John Taylor to Thomas Tyndale (d. 1671) and his wife Dorothy 'of St Mary's Priory' for £1,600.¹⁹⁹ In 1673 Snell's descendants James Gastrell, John Stokes, Mariella Sadler, Dorothy Sadler and Margaret Sadler brought a suit in Chancery against the John Taylor and his son, also John Taylor, contesting the ownership.²⁰⁰

William Heal (Hale) owned the farm by 1780 when it was leased to William Book.²⁰¹ Heal sold to Nathan Sutton in 1801 and it then passed to George and Robert Sutton who sold to Charles Bailey in 1858.²⁰² Bailey sold to Michael Ward in 1865 who in turn sold to John Neeld of the Grittleton estate in 1870.²⁰³ In 1943 the Grittleton Estate leased the 228 a. of New Priory farm to D. Isaacs and the 270 a. of Priory farm to H. Adams.²⁰⁴ From the later 20th century it was home of the Reeve family.

¹⁸⁹ WSA 1305/125.

¹⁹⁰ Britton, *Autobiography*, 29.

¹⁹¹ VCH, Wilts, III, 259.

¹⁹² *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.) II, 113.

¹⁹³ WAM, iv, 71; WAM, xlili, 19-20.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, SC 6/HENVIII/3969.

¹⁹⁵ TNA, SC 6/HENVIII/3969.

¹⁹⁶ BL, Add.Ch.36445.

¹⁹⁷ BL, Add.Ch.36446.

¹⁹⁸ TNA, PROB 11/59/224.

¹⁹⁹ BL, Add.Ch.36447.

²⁰⁰ TNA C8/293/46.

²⁰¹ WSA A1/345/243.

²⁰² WSA 1305/131

²⁰³ WSA 1305/131

²⁰⁴ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/2 and 14.

The present house, Priory Manor, dates from the 15th century with considerable 17th-century remodelling.²⁰⁵ It is rubble stone with stone slate roof and ashlar stacks on an L-shaped plan with two storeys and attic. The main range is the prioress's lodging with the guest hall on the west side of the former cloister. The south wing is half of the original south side. There appears to have been a cloister with chapel on the north side, drawn by John Aubrey with the west front of the house in the 17th century. Significant renovation took place in the early 1970s.²⁰⁶ The house, 16th-century stable range²⁰⁷ and 18th-century barn,²⁰⁸ have grade II listing.

Easton Piercy manor

Easton Piercy, a manor and tithing in Malmesbury hundred, may have originated as the eastern farm of Yatton Keynell, but was a part of Kington St Michael parish by the 11th century.²⁰⁹ Ernulf held Easton Piercy (*Estune*) in 1086, God held it before the Conquest, there were five hides and land for three ploughs with two in demesne.²¹⁰

Easton Piercy may be the lands held by Peter de Estune in 1189 in the far west of Kington St Michael bordering Grittleton to the north and Castle Combe to the south.²¹¹ In 1242-3 John de Eistona held a quarter of one knight's fee in Estone from Walter de Clifford.²¹² The antiquarian John Aubrey spent his childhood at Easton Piercy which he inherited in 1652 and was forced to sell to cover his debts in 1670.²¹³ The following account of the descent of the property from the 13th to 17th centuries is drawn from Aubrey's notes of deeds in his possession.²¹⁴

Aubrey gives the full text of three, undated, 13th-century title deeds in which John the son of Peter Fitzpieres and William son of Peter Fitzpieres granted land to tenants within Easton Piercy, in the mid 13th century, while Peter's daughter Joan received rents there from Radulph de Cocklebury.²¹⁵ In 1258 the inquisition post mortem of Patrick de Chaworces included a fee in Eston, identified as Easton Piercy, held by Henry Scheynel, but this identification is doubtful.²¹⁶ In 1307 John Cosham, son and heir of William de Cosham of Luckington, granted Richard de Cosham and Alice his wife a tenement in Easton Piercy.²¹⁷ In two undated documents Richard de Cosham and Alice his wife granted a messuage and virgate to John de Cosham which he then granted to Richard Clerk and Constantine his wife,²¹⁸ and Henry Keynell granted 6 a. in Old Easton (*Veteri Estona*) and a further three virgates in 'my fee of Easton'.²¹⁹

Aubrey again used untraced deeds to show that Easton had passed to the de Yeovilton family by 1309.²²⁰ William Seward and John le Heyr quitclaimed all their lands in Easton Piercy to John and Joan Yevilton in two documents which Aubrey

²⁰⁵ NHLE, no.101022340, Priory Manor.

²⁰⁶ WSA 2512/150/82.

²⁰⁷ NHLE, no.101022340, Priory Manor.

²⁰⁸ NHLE, no.101022341, Stable range at Priory Manor.

²⁰⁹ *PN Wilts*, 100-1.

²¹⁰ *Domesday* (Alecto ed.), 70.

²¹¹ *PN Wilts*, 100-1.

²¹² *Feudal Aids*, II, 711 and 730.

²¹³ *ODNB*, Aubrey, *John (1626-1697)*, accessed 21 Nov. 2022.

²¹⁴ *Aubrey Topog. Colln.*, 237-41.

²¹⁵ *Aubrey Topog. Colln.*, 436-7.

²¹⁶ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, I, no.417 (find page, between 110-117)

²¹⁷ *Aubrey Topog. Colln.*, 444.

²¹⁸ *Aubrey Topog. Colln.*, 443-4.

²¹⁹ *Aubrey Topog. Colln.*, 444.

²²⁰ *Aubrey Topog. Colln.*, 237-8.

considered earlier than their acquisition of a virgate in Yatton Keynell in 1275.²²¹ In 1307 John and Joan obtained a final concord confirming their right to Easton Piercy, for the first time described as a manor, with a carucate of land, in Yatton Keynell.²²² John received further land in Yatton Keynell in 1317,²²³ but appears to have died by 1332 when Joan de Yeveltone was the second highest taxpayer in the combined assessment for Draycot Cerne and Easton.²²⁴ In 1333 Joan, daughter of Peter lord of Easton Piercy, acquired land from Ralph Cocklebury,²²⁵ and she granted land in Easton the following year under the condition that the tenant attended the manor court.²²⁶ In 1364 the manor was passed by Peter de Yeveltone to his sons Nicholas and Richard together with his lands in Somerset and Devon while he was abroad; he retained the right to reclaim them should he return.²²⁷

Robert de Yelverton obtained a general release from Thomas Lord Camoys from whom he had held Easton Piercy by knights' fee.²²⁸ In 1399 he then granted the manor, together with the manors of Yeovilton and Speckington (Som) in fee to John Curtys, Roger Golde, John Milward, John Whyting, William Lovering and William Wyllly.²²⁹ It remained in fee in 1428 when the court was held in the names of Thomas Dru, William Gore, Walter Clerk and others.²³⁰ The manor was in hand in 1443,²³¹ when it was inherited by Thomas Payne of Rockbourne (Hants),²³² a relation of Robert de Yelverton,²³³ perhaps the husband of Margery daughter of a Peter de Yeovilton.²³⁴

In 1483 the manor was granted together with Speckington (Som) to Sir Giles Daubeney by the prior of Bruton, Sir William Paulet, John Chenye of Pinhoe (Devon), Robert Stowell, John Hugyn, John Hayron and Thomas Hylling.²³⁵ When Daubeney was attainted in 1484,²³⁶ the manor, with a yearly value of £20, was granted to Ralph Willoughby.²³⁷

Aubrey recalls that the Lyte family had been the tenant farmers at Easton Piercy 'time out of mind' and that they had purchased the manor from Thomas Lord Buckhurst in 1574.²³⁸ In 1575 John and Thomas Lyte sold Easton Piercy manor to John Snell and Thomas his son for £385,²³⁹ having the previous year sold several peripheral parts to Nicholas Lyte of Leigh Delamere.²⁴⁰ The manor descended with Kington St Michael to Thomas's son Charles Snell, who leased Easton Piercy on several short leases,²⁴¹ before

²²¹ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 437.

²²² Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 437-8.

²²³ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 438.

²²⁴ Crowley, *Wiltshire tax list of 1332*, 61.

²²⁵ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 438.

²²⁶ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 438.

²²⁷ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 439.

²²⁸ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 439.

²²⁹ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 439.

²³⁰ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 440.

²³¹ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 441-2

²³² *VCH Hants*, IV, 581-6 [find exact page, footnote 34].

²³³ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 441.

²³⁴ *VCH Somerset*, III, 169.

²³⁵ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 442-3.

²³⁶ *ODNB*, Daubeney, Giles, first Baron Daubeney, 1451/2-1508.

²³⁷ *Cal. Pat. 1476-85*, 428. Aubrey incorrectly dates this document to 1483.

²³⁸ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 240.

²³⁹ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 443.

²⁴⁰ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 443.

²⁴¹ WSA 1305/126.

selling it to John Langton, merchant, of Bristol in 1623.²⁴² William Langton transferred the property to Thomas Langton, 1662,²⁴³ and in 1704 Robert Langton sold the whole property comprising a messuage, two barns, an ox house, two gardens, two orchards, 46 a. arable, 37 a. meadow, 60 a. pasture and a seven-year-old wood, to Walter White of Grittleton.²⁴⁴

White sold Easton Piercy to John Eyles who took out a mortgage on the property in 1737.²⁴⁵ Eyles sold it in 1740 to Paggen Hale,²⁴⁶ who bequeathed it to his nephew William Hale (Heal) in 1755.²⁴⁷ Joseph Collett leased Manor farm from William Heal 1780-1796,²⁴⁸ and sold it to him and John Redman in 1797,²⁴⁹ at which time Collett worked both Upper Easton and Lower Easton farms.²⁵⁰ Joseph Collett released his portion of the manor as a trust to Thomas Redman in 1803.²⁵¹ Collett continued as resident farmer until his death in 1809,²⁵² succeeded by his widow Jane,²⁵³ and their son Henry Collett by 1840.²⁵⁴ A Benjamin Webb also purchased a portion of the manor in 1803, but died intestate in 1832, and his heir was sought at a later sale in 1864.²⁵⁵

The property remained divided between four members of the Redman family and the five sons of Joseph Collett in 1809.²⁵⁶ It continued to be owned by the Redman and Collett families until in 1861 it was advertised for sale by auction at the Angel Inn in Chippenham, comprising 270 a. pasture and arable, 8 a. wood, a malt house, agricultural buildings and one dwelling.²⁵⁷ Between 1861 and 1864 Thomas Harris Redman sold his portion to Henry and Joseph Collett, from whom it was purchased in turn by Michael Ward in 1864. In 1865 Michael Ward leased the farm to John Clark at which time it comprised 150 a. arable and 60 a. pasture.²⁵⁸ It was purchased by the Neeld estate in 1870.²⁵⁹ It was managed with the Grittleton estate properties in Yatton Keynell in 1943 when it was leased to R. B. Awdry.²⁶⁰

The grade II listed house was constructed in 1631 of rubble stone with ashlar dressings.²⁶¹ The north range, which was the oldest part of the house, was taken down by Michael Ward after 1865 when it was photographed.²⁶² Kilvert describes the house as ruinous in 1871, the 'great hall and the grand staircase both gone'.²⁶³ It was repaired for the Neeld estate c.1900.²⁶⁴

²⁴² WSA 1305/126.

²⁴³ WSA 1305/126.

²⁴⁴ WSA 1305/126.

²⁴⁵ WSA 1305/127.

²⁴⁶ WSA 1305/127.

²⁴⁷ WSA 1305/127.

²⁴⁸ WSA A1/345/244

²⁴⁹ WSA 1305/127.

²⁵⁰ WSA A1/345/244

²⁵¹ WSA 1305/128.

²⁵² WSA P3/1809/52

²⁵³ WSA A1/345/244

²⁵⁴ WSA TA/Kington St Michael.

²⁵⁵ WSA 1305/129.

²⁵⁶ WSA 1305/129.

²⁵⁷ WSA 1305/128.

²⁵⁸ WSA, 1305/129.

²⁵⁹ WSA 1305/128.

²⁶⁰ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/1

²⁶¹ NHLE, no.1022325, Manor farmhouse.

²⁶² Society of Antiquaries, JAC.006.

²⁶³ W. Plomer, *Kilvert's Diary*, (John Cape, London, 1969) v.2, 20.

²⁶⁴ NHLE, no.1022325, Manor farmhouse.

There were five farms at Easton Piercy: Manor farm is so called on the 2015 Ordnance Survey map but was formerly known as Easton Piercy farm on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey and Upper Easton Piercy on the tithe map.²⁶⁵ Another farm 200 m. to the west is called Upper Easton Piercy farm on the 2015 and 1886 Ordnance Survey maps and Easton Piercy farmhouse in the tithe apportionment. Cromhall farm, to the far west of the tithing, and Lower Easton Piercy farm have the same names throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and Oakfield farm is a 20th century development. Upper Easton Piercy was separated from the manor and sold to Nicholas Lite of Leigh Delamere in 1574, purchased by Benjamin Hinde c.1670 from whom it descended to Thomas Lowe.²⁶⁶ Joseph Collett leased Lower Easton farm from William Heal 1780-1795,²⁶⁷ and Joseph initially continued to hold the lease from William Skeat once he had acquired Easton Piercy farm, but it was relinquished to Isaac Ferris by 1805.²⁶⁸ William Skeat was himself in occupation by 1820 and continued until at least 1855.²⁶⁹ The farm was occupied by David Blake in 1867, and David Blake 1885 and 1889.²⁷⁰ It had been taken over by William White by 1920 who remained at the farm in 1943.²⁷¹ Cromhall farm buildings were in the tithing of Easton Piercy, and comprised land within Kington St Michael and Yatton Keynell. A map of Easton Piercy farm, produced in 1801, shows Broom Field crossing the boundary between the parishes.²⁷² It was owned and occupied by Elizabeth Smith in 1840.²⁷³

Other estates

Bolehyde (Bullhides) farm

The Bolehyde family were important members of the Kington St Michael community in the early 14th century: Thomas Bolehyde witnessed deeds relating to lands in Easton Piercy in 1317 and 1333,²⁷⁴ and Thomas de Bolehyde acted as pledge for three landless workers in 1348.²⁷⁵ Although Bolehyde has at times been styled a manor all evidence suggests that it was always a freehold tenement of Kington St Michael manor.

Bolehyde farm was almost certainly the freehold tenement beside Heywood measuring one hide leased by John Saunders, that had formerly belonged to Thomas Bolehyde, for the rent of two geese worth 8*d.* in 1518.²⁷⁶ It was acquired by Nicholas Snell at the Reformation with the rest of Kington St Michael. It appears to have been leased by Snell to William Gale (d.1606),²⁷⁷ described in his will as 'yeoman, of Bolhide' whose lease presumably descended through his son William (d.1632),²⁷⁸ and William's brother Edmond, to Edmond's son John of Avon, in Christian Malford.

²⁶⁵OS, *Explorer 156* (2015), OS 1st ed. 25" XX.5, WSA, T/A/Kington St Michael.

²⁶⁶Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* 241.

²⁶⁷WSA A1/345/244

²⁶⁸WSA A1/345/244

²⁶⁹WSA A1/345/244, and *Kellys Dir.* (1855), 66.

²⁷⁰*Kellys Dir.* (1867) 288, *Kellys Dir.* (1885) 103, and *Kellys Dir.* (1899) 121.

²⁷¹*Kellys Dir.* (1920) 136, TNA, MAF/32/39/33.

²⁷²WSA, 1305/130.

²⁷³WSA, T/A/Kington St Michael

²⁷⁴ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 438.

²⁷⁵ Longleat, 11179.

²⁷⁶ BL Harl. Ms 3961.

²⁷⁷ TNA, PROB/11/108/440.

²⁷⁸ WSA, P3/G/123.

Charles Snell sold Bolehyde to John Gale of Bristol, son of John Gale of Avon in 1635.²⁷⁹ John Gale of Bristol appeared in the Kington St Michael manor court in 1658 and was admitted to a copyhold tenement to himself and Mariella daughter of John Sadler.²⁸⁰ John Gale of Bristol, merchant, leased Bolehyde to a group of Bristol merchants in 1669.²⁸¹ In 1672 and 1681 Joan Gale, widow of John Gale, her brother in law, Isaac, and three of her sisters-in-law, Rebecca, Ruth and Olive, all had some interest in Bolehyde and may at times have been resident, as from the mid-17th century it appears to have been variously a family residence for spinsters, widows or unmarried sons.²⁸²

In 1724 Isaac Gale, son of John and Joan Gale, and his wife Mariella appear to have been in sole possession of Bolehyde which they leased to William Coleman of Kington Langley.²⁸³ In 1757 their son Isaac and Mary his wife transferred the property to their son Isaac Gale (d.1778),²⁸⁴ from whom it passed to his son Isaac Sadler Gale (d.1792)²⁸⁵ and his son, also Isaac Sadler Gale, known as Sadler (d.1841).²⁸⁶

In 1841 Bolehyde was held by the trustees of the estate of Isaac Sadler Gale, including his widow Catherine; the lands were leased to John Angel.²⁸⁷ He remained tenant until at least 1867; it was then held successively by Robert Cater, 1899, Harry Sage 1920,²⁸⁸ and H. Philip Du Cross, by 1927,²⁸⁹ whose widow remained in occupation in 1943.²⁹⁰ Between 1957 and 1967 the house and farm were owned by David Tylden-Wright who converted the stables in 1962.²⁹¹ Andrew and Camilla Parker Bowles acquired the house in 1973, and sold it to Simon Dallas Cairns in 1986, who advertised it for sale in 2020.²⁹²

The grade II listed house has an L-shaped plan, the main front range being mid-17th century and the rear range perhaps 16th-century in origin. It is built of rubble stone with ashlar dressing and a stone tiled roof.²⁹³ Norman Wilkinson redesigned the gardens, and Axford and Smith, builders, of Bath remodelled the house for H. Philip Du Cross in 1927/8.²⁹⁴

Peckingell farm

In 1518 two tenants held two virgates in Peckingell, had common rights in Peckingell meadow, were exempt from paying the hundred penny and one paid a rent of 6*d.* to the Prior of Bradenstoke.²⁹⁵ Peckingell farm was transferred to Langley Burrell in 1884.²⁹⁶

²⁷⁹ WSA, 441/1

²⁸⁰ WSA, 1305/125.

²⁸¹ WSA, 422/1.

²⁸² WSA, 422/1.

²⁸³ WSA, 422/1.

²⁸⁴ WSA, 422/1.

²⁸⁵ Jackson 'Kington St Michael', 87.

²⁸⁶ WSA, 1187/5, GRO, Deaths Register, 1841, Q4 Nov-Dec.

²⁸⁷ WSA, T/A/Kington St Michael

²⁸⁸ *Kellys Dir. Wilts*, (1867) 288, (1899) 121, (1920) 136.

²⁸⁹ WSA 422/MS/8

²⁹⁰ TNA, MAF 32/39/34/7.

²⁹¹ WSA, G3/770/252.

²⁹² *The Tatler*, 26 June 2020 (<https://www.tatler.com/article/bolehyde-manor-for-sale>, accessed 2/12/2022)

²⁹³ NHLE, no.1283450, Bolehyde Manor, Allington.

²⁹⁴ WSA 422/MS/8

²⁹⁵ BL Harl. Ms 3961.

²⁹⁶ *Kelly's Dir Wilts*, (1895 edn.), 126; below, Langley Burrell. 7.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

The royal Saxon estate centred upon Kington St Michael supplied the nearby royal residence at Chippenham.²⁹⁷ There was always a mixed farming economy although the balance between arable and pasture shifted from rather more arable in the 13th and early 14th centuries to a gradual increase in pasture during the following centuries. Wood was sourced from Heywood and several small coppices. Meadow was not abundant and Peckingell, a detached portion of the parish on the river Avon, provided additional meadow. Small areas of common grazing were located within the dispersed settlement at Kington Langley, a substantial area of common to the south of Langley main street towards Jackson's Lane and between Heywood and the A350.

Agriculture was always the dominant land use and area of employment. Few residents were engaged in trades, crafts or service industries until opportunities for employment in Chippenham became accessible in the later 20th century and the village has increasingly become a residential area for commuters working in Chippenham.

Agriculture

Medieval Agriculture (including Kington Langley)

Kington provided food and revenues for the King's residence at Chippenham but had no royal administrative functions.²⁹⁸ Most of the lands within both Kington St Michael and Kington Langley had been granted to Glastonbury abbey by 1066 and continued to provide produce and revenues to the abbey until the Reformation.²⁹⁹ The manor of Easton Piercy appears to have been the eastern farm of Yatton Keynell and later annexed to Kington St Michael. Kington St Michael and Kington Langley had substantial areas of demesne arable and small flocks of sheep before the 13th century which gradually gave way to enclosed pasture cattle.

By 1086 the Glastonbury abbey held eleven hides in demesne, with four ploughs and four slaves.³⁰⁰ There were three freeholders with three ploughs: Urse had two and a half hides, Roger had two hides less one virgate and Ralph with one and a half hides. The remainder of the abbey's 29 hides were worked by 15 villeins and five bordars with eight ploughs. A second Roger held one and a half hides, indistinguishable from the Glastonbury lands before the Conquest, but held from Ralph de Mortimer in 1086.³⁰¹ Roger's lands comprised 4 a. meadow, 6 a. wood and a mill paying 2s rent, with one plough, one slave, two bordars.

In 1171 the demesne was leased with stock of 24 oxen, two boars, 36 pigs and 250 sheep at a rent of £8.³⁰² In 1189 three freeholders held three virgates, two hides and two and a half hides. The priest held a virgate and another was granted to the upkeep of the chapel at Langley.³⁰³ Nine tenants held half a hide for rent and services: four for light services of carriage, five for weekly agricultural services, 18 tenants each

²⁹⁷ S. Draper, *Landscape, settlement and society in Roman and Early Medieval Wilts* (2006), 107.

²⁹⁸ S. Draper, *Landscape*, 107.

²⁹⁹ VCH Somerset, II, pp.82-99 (check for exact page references)

³⁰⁰ Alecto Domesday, Wilts, 66v.

³⁰¹ Alecto Domesday, Wilts, 72v.

³⁰² Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 74.

³⁰³ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 200-3.

held a virgate and 11 half a virgate, all gave rent, services and churchscot. Seven tenants held crofts, all paying rents and four also rendering services. Emma de Meisi, perhaps from Christian Malford, held a purpresture of 30 a. and the tenants of Kington Langley held 40½ a. of furze in common. In 1189 the stock on the demesne had reduced to 16 oxen and 1 horse, and the surveyor noted that 100 sheep and 20 pigs which were supposed to be part of the demesne had not been received by the farmer.

In 1198 the farm of the manor was worth £36.³⁰⁴ In 1201 in addition to services the rents of tenants were worth £6 9s. 0d.; 34 hens given as churchscot and the livestock on the demesne consisted of 16 oxen, one horse, 100 sheep, six pigs and a boar.³⁰⁵ During the abbacy of Abbot Michael, 1235-53, a new grange was built.³⁰⁶

The demesne was leased in 1258,³⁰⁷ but was again in hand in 1287.³⁰⁸ There was a general move away from demesne production between 1275 when 181 a. were sown with various grains, including 90 a. wheat,³⁰⁹ and 1333 when 78.2 a. were sown, and only 37.2 a. with wheat.³¹⁰ A shift from cattle to sheep corresponded with the reduction in arable production: there were 23 oxen, and 111 adult sheep in 1275,³¹¹ 8 oxen and 177 sheep in 1333.³¹² Sheep flocks were managed collectively across the Glastonbury abbey estates in North Damerham hundred: in 1333 there were 177 wethers, but no ewes at Kington, whereas at Grittleton there were 51 wethers and 201 ewes.³¹³

During the first wave of the Black Death 34 out of 61 (56%) landless men died in the year April 1348 to April 1349.³¹⁴ Many of those remaining took on vacant holdings and the available landless workforce declined from 60-70 men in the later 13th and early 14th centuries to fewer than ten in the later 14th and 15th centuries.³¹⁵ This contraction of available labour necessitated an increase in the shift from grains to livestock. The transition from villein to copyhold tenure occurred during the 15th century: in 1408 and 1451 several tenants were admitted to hold land in villeinage,³¹⁶ whereas by 1518 all customary tenants held land granted by copy of court roll.³¹⁷

In 1518 the demesne was leased to Richard Snell and comprised 126 a. arable in two fields, 20 a. meadow at Peckingell, 65½ a. of meadow and pasture in several locations, 400 a. wood at Heywood and a share of 310 a. of common at Langley.³¹⁸ The same survey records four free tenants. Two had agricultural holdings: John Saunders who held a tenement at Heywood and Thomas Tropenell who held a virgate, while the abbot of Malmesbury and prioress of Kington each held a messuage.³¹⁹ The customary holdings at Kington consisted of one half-hide, four virgates, fifteen half-virgates and one cottage, at Langley customary tenants held five half-hides, twelve virgates, two half-

³⁰⁴ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 239.

³⁰⁵ Stacy, *Surveys of Glastonbury*, 259-60.

³⁰⁶ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 39.

³⁰⁷ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 39.

³⁰⁸ Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', 39-40.

³⁰⁹ Keil, *Glastonbury estates* (PhD thesis), 93.

³¹⁰ Longleat ms. 11244

³¹¹ Longleat ms. 11244

³¹² Keil, *Glastonbury estates* (PhD thesis), 117 and 129.

³¹³ Keil, *Glastonbury estates* (PhD thesis), 129-30.

³¹⁴ Longleat, ms. 11179. Ecclestone, M, 'Mortality of rural landless men before the Black Death: the Glastonbury head tax lists', *Local Population Studies*, 63 (1999), 26.

³¹⁵ Longleat mss. 10645, 11212, 10729.

³¹⁶ Longleat, mss. 10659 and 10729.

³¹⁷ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

³¹⁸ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

³¹⁹ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

virgates and two cottages, another two virgates at Peckingell were administered with Langley.³²⁰ The virgates and half-virgates were of such different sizes that it is difficult to assess any original scheme based upon arable acreages. There had been very little agglomeration and only four tenants held more than one unit of land. There were 1,201 a. arable divided between the Glastonbury abbey demesne and the abbot's tenants of Kington St Michael and Kington Langley.

The priory manor, belonging to the prioress of Kington, had 16 oxen in 1308 when the demesne was worked in hand.³²¹ In 1499 the manor contained a dovecot, garden and orchard as well as 42 a. of arable in the North Field, 61½ a. in the West Field, and 96 a. in the East Field as well as unspecified amounts of meadow and pasture.³²² It was still under direct management in 1536 and comprised 196 a. arable, 25 a. pasture, 9 a. meadow.³²³ There were ancient common pasture rights in Heywood and two pieces of meadow in Paschecroft and Rydon leased from Kington St Michael manor.

Post-medieval Agriculture and Farms

The first post-medieval enclosure appear to have been made on the manor of Kington Priory by the farmer John Reade who brought a case against Nicholas Snell and 30 inhabitants of Kington St Michael who gathered to break down hedges and fences erected on the meadows and pasture of in 1548.³²⁴ Besides breaking the enclosures, which had been established four years previously, they carried away 40 cartloads of 'stone called slate'.

Nicholas Snell's opposition to the enclosures was not principled. Nicholas had succeeded his father in 1547 and his aggressive style was noted by John Aubrey who commented on his enclosure of part of the West Field depriving the copyhold tenants of lands to the extent that where they could formerly keep a whole plough they were reduced to a half.³²⁵ The whole field was not enclosed and tenants continued to be admitted to copyholds containing lands in three fields; in 1559 William Jakes's copyhold contained 2 a. in the North Field, 2 a. in the East Field and 7 a. in the West Field.³²⁶ The West Field included the area described in 1655 as Lesser West Field, 52 a., Greater West Field, 56 a., the two parts of the Park, each 23 a., and at least part of the 88 a. called Ridings,³²⁷ in 1840 an area of 45 a. still carried the names Upper and Lower West Field.³²⁸ Snell's enclosures were challenged by the inhabitants of Kington St Michael and Kington Langley in 1558, when he was accused of enclosing Heywood and not permitting customary rights of access to his own tenants or those of the Priory manor, and having created a warren on Langley Heath.³²⁹

The Kington St Michael manor court rolls throughout the 1560s and 1570s contain references to the consequences of Nicholas Snell's enclosures, as the tenants were repeatedly fined for taking wood and pasturing animals in areas where they had

³²⁰ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

³²¹ Longleat, ms. 11252

³²² Devizes Museum, Mss 4109.

³²³ TNA, SC6/HenVIII/3969.

³²⁴ TNA, STAC/3/2/8.

³²⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 131.

³²⁶ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³²⁷ WSA, 753/140.

³²⁸ WSA, TA/Kington St Michael, numbers 733 and 734.

³²⁹ TNA, STAC/4/5/43.

formerly held common rights.³³⁰ Not all enclosures were detrimental to the customary tenants who, in 1560, were allowed to arrange the enclosure of the Down among themselves and then to make exchanges with freeholders without reference to the court.³³¹

The open fields were partially enclosed at Kington St Michael by 1655 and most tenants held a combination of arable in the open fields and in closes.³³² There were 34 houses in which lived 31 copyholders, holding in total 478 a. 3 r. 16 p., worth £82 2s. 6d. each year, as well as 17 leaseholders whose 103 a. 3 r. 9p. was worth £24 6s. 0d. annually. Only William Tanner and Richard Brown held both copyholds and leaseholds. The arable land was divided between 125 a. 1 r. 8 p. in the common fields and 171 a. 1 r. 7 p. in closes.

All of the arable had been enclosed by 1664.³³³ Copyhold remained as a form of tenure in Kington St Michael until at least 1744 and perhaps later.³³⁴ In Easton Piercy a map of 1801 indicates that Broom Field, which included lands belonging to Lower Easton Piercy and Cromhall farms, crossed the parish boundary and was shared with Yatton Keynell, an arrangement no doubt much older than the map.³³⁵ At the end of the 18th century Easton Piercy manor comprised approximately half of the tithing and was made up of 169 a. 3 r. 27 p. arable, 74 a. 3 r. 2 p. pasture, 14 a. 1 r. 24 p. meadow and 7 a. 2 r. 30 p. woodland.³³⁶

The wills of the inhabitants of Kington St Michael, in contrast with those of Kington Langley, do not mention cloth and looms and none were described as weavers. There were 246 people employed in Kington St Michael in 1811 of whom 204 were employed in agriculture and 42 in other assorted trades, crafts and professions.³³⁷ Many of Kington St Michael's inhabitants who had a trade or occupation also had agricultural holdings. William Browne (d. 1627) had tools in his blacksmith's shop worth £1, grain worth £30, a plough worth £3, two cows and a pig, and in his house there was a buttery and a cheese press.³³⁸ The inventory of the goods of James Power compiled in 1705 records a whitehouse containing two cheese presses.³³⁹ In 1850 Britton noted that cheese was manufactured in greater quantity than butter.³⁴⁰

In 1841 there were 1,220 a. of pasture and 1,043 a. arable, entirely enclosed, with no common.³⁴¹ In 1866 land use was in favour of arable with 255 a. wheat, 157 a. barley, 14.5 a. oats, 129 a. turnips and over 100 a. mixed beans and root vegetables, but with considerable livestock: 202 cattle, 504 sheep and 171 pigs.³⁴² The balance was similar in 1880 although the cattle had almost doubled to 391.³⁴³ The number of cattle continued to increase to 451 in 1900 and sheep to 763, pigs remained at 186, but the arable had declined to 127 a. wheat, 110 a. barley, 87 a. oats, 63 a. turnips and 58 a. of other

³³⁰ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³³¹ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³³² WSA, 753/140.

³³³ WSA 1305/125.

³³⁴ WSA, 1305/125.

³³⁵ WSA, 1305/130.

³³⁶ WSA, 1305/130.

³³⁷ T. Davis, *General view of the agriculture of Wiltshire* (London, 1813), 227.

³³⁸ WSA, P3/B/296.

³³⁹ WSA 1305/125.

³⁴⁰ Britton, *Autobiography*, 30.

³⁴¹ Britton, *Autobiography*, 30.

³⁴² TNA, MAF/68/73.

³⁴³ TNA, MAF/68/721.

vegetables.³⁴⁴ By 1920 cattle had continued to increase to 457, sheep had declined to 373 and pigs to 95, while wheat saw an increase to 267 a. barley fell to 71 a. with fewer than 10 a. devoted to each of the remaining crops.³⁴⁵

Britton, writing in 1850 in old age about his childhood, believed that the whole parish was poorly drained and that agricultural improvements, such as merging smaller farms, were only made in the early 19th century.³⁴⁶ However, in 1943 poor drainage was still regarded as a problem, notably at Heywood farm, Lower Easton Piercy farm, and Manor farm.³⁴⁷

Family farms, usually held on short leases, of between 80 and 270 acres have been a feature of arable and pastoral farming in Kington St Michael. In 1943 the 16 farms holding land in Kington St Michael ranged in size from 47 a. to 309 a. at an average of 173 a.³⁴⁸ The two largest, Yatton Manor farm, 276 a., and Allington Manor farm, 309 a., were based in adjacent parishes and held lands but not buildings within Kington St Michael.³⁴⁹ Additionally there was a market garden of 5.5 a. owned by G. Farr.³⁵⁰

By the mid 20th century many of these farms were too small to remain independently viable and several farms had been incorporated into holdings in other parishes: Lodge farm, south of the village, comprised 163 a. in 1943 when it was held by W Collins of Langley Gate farm, Kington Langley;³⁵¹ and Cromhall and Upper Easton Piercy farms were both part of larger holdings in Yatton Keynell.³⁵² New Priory farm, Upper Swinley, Marshall farm and Priory farm had become part of the Grittleton estate, although they were still worked by leaseholders.³⁵³

Commons, Parks and Woods

The common called Langley Heath contained 310 a. in 1518. Walter Williams paid 16*d.* for the shrouds of the pollarded oaks growing on Langley Heath in 1538.³⁵⁴ Twenty years later Langley Heath, described as 'the common of North Langley' was said to have been degraded by Nicholas Snell's creation of five or seven artificial burrows for the commercial farming of rabbits.³⁵⁵ No warren has been identified in Kington Langley and the field name Conygar Hill to the west of White Wood may be the site of the 16th-century warren.³⁵⁶ It appears that Langley Heath occupied an area bordered by Heywood in the west, the parish boundary to the south and east and closes abutting Plough Lane to the north.

³⁴⁴ TNA, MAF/68/1861.

³⁴⁵ TNA, MAF/68/2995.

³⁴⁶ Britton, *Autobiography*, 29-31.

³⁴⁷ TNA, MAF/32/39/34/6, 11 & 12.

³⁴⁸ TNA, MAF/32/39/34/1-16.

³⁴⁹ TNA, MAF/32/39/34/15-16.

³⁵⁰ TNA, MAF/32/39/34/17.

³⁵¹ TNA, MAF/32/39/34/12

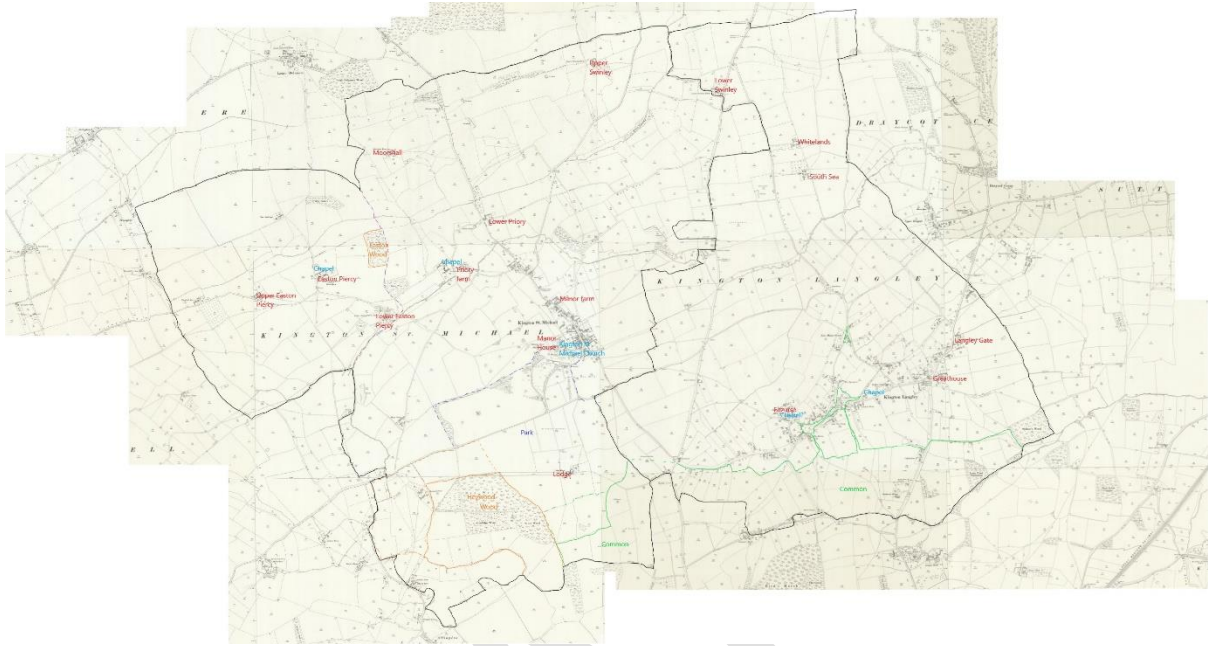
³⁵² TNA, MAF/32/39/34/1 and 5.

³⁵³ TNA, MAF/32/39/34/2, 3, 8 and 14.

³⁵⁴ TNA, SC6/HenVIII/3954.

³⁵⁵ TNA/STAC/4/5/43.

³⁵⁶ WSA, TA/KingtonSt Michael, plot number 788.



Conjectural map of the woods, commons and parks in Kington St Michael and Kington Langley c.1540.

Heywood contained 400 a. in 1518, with 25 a. of coppiced underwood harvested each year worth 13s. 4d.³⁵⁷ In 1536 profits from old oaks and underwood amounted to £2 8s. 7d.³⁵⁸ Payment by the customary tenants for pannage in Heywood was 1d. for a cow or pig and ½d. for a calf in 1518,³⁵⁹ but appears to have been fixed at 16d. per [CHECK] two decades later.³⁶⁰ These customary rights of pasture within the wood were curtailed when Nicholas Snell enclosed the wood, then described as 200 a., in 1558.³⁶¹ After a series of offences over the following decade punitive fines were set for tenants who continued to take wood or pasture their pigs there without licence in 1569.³⁶² The newly enclosed wood was not entirely reserved to the lord of the manor and some customary tenants leased portions of former woodland as pasture: Robert Lumbe leased 2½ a. newly enclosed by Heywood in 1562.³⁶³

Inwood was mentioned in a deed of 1269 copied by John Aubrey, in which cottages in Kington Langley blocked a road between Inwood and 'La Sterte', as it was accessed through the courtyard of the grange; it may be the land that was later emparked.³⁶⁴ A wood called Inwood, containing 25 a., produced pasture and underwood worth 13s. 4d. in 1536.³⁶⁵

Each manor or farm maintained an accessible area of coppice wood for fuel and fencing. Priory wood was given to the nuns at Kington Priory by Sir John of Easton.³⁶⁶ It measured 4 a. 3 r. 32 p. in 1840.³⁶⁷ Easton Piercy manor retained a wood of its own,

³⁵⁷ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

³⁵⁸ TNA, SC6/HenVIII/3953.

³⁵⁹ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

³⁶⁰ TNA, SC6/HenVIII/3953-3955.

³⁶¹ TNA, STAC/4/5/43.

³⁶² WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁶³ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁶⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 143.

³⁶⁵ TNA, SC6/HenVIII/3953.

³⁶⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 143.

³⁶⁷ WSA, T/A/Kington St Michael, number 633.

known as Easton Wood; it measured 7 a. 2 r. 30 p., while Lower Easton Wood measured 1 a. 0 r. 19 p. and the 3 a. 0 r. 18 p. belonging to Upper Swinley farm was known as the Great Wood.³⁶⁸

A park belonging to the abbey was mentioned in a dispute between the abbot and Jordan Fitzurse in 1243.³⁶⁹ Tenants of Kington were obliged to make repairs to the park at the court leet held in April 1648.³⁷⁰ The park adjacent to Kington House was known as the Greater Part, containing a lodge and 22 a. 3r. 30 p., and the Lesser Part containing 30 a. 3 r. 10 p. in 1655.³⁷¹ Aubrey states that the park contained a well called Marian's well and a 'noble carp pond', and described its establishment by Nicholas Snell shortly after the Dissolution.³⁷²

Mills, Crafts and Industry

The medieval manor of Kington was served by Bide Mill at Kington Langley and a mill at Peckingell belonging to the abbot of Glastonbury.³⁷³ Kington Priory had a water mill which was in ruins by the end of the 15th century and a horse powered mill within the Priory.³⁷⁴ Aubrey recalled an old inhabitant of Priory Down who believed his house was constructed on the site of the former mill.³⁷⁵

Several full- or part-time blacksmiths lived in Kington St Michael, including Thomas Harder (d.1619)³⁷⁶ and William Browne (d.1627).³⁷⁷ A blacksmith's workshop in the centre of Kington St Michael on the west side of the High Street opposite Rose Cottages was owned by Elizabeth Smith of Cromhall farm in 1840.³⁷⁸

Stone was quarried in Kington St Michael in 1518 when John Coke held land beside the quarry in the East Field.³⁷⁹ In 1558 a group of rioters from Kington St Michael who broke into lands belonging to the former Priory dug up 40 cartloads of slate.³⁸⁰ Quarries were noted as landmarks or points of reference in the 16th-century manor court rolls at Odgarston and Quarre Deane.³⁸¹ John Aubrey mentioned that excellent 'plank stones' were to found in Easton Piercy.³⁸² Old and disused quarries were noted on Ordnance Survey maps in the late 19th century at Lodge farm, Moorshall Cottages, Upper Swinley farm, beside the A350 at California Cottages, on the opposite side of Days Lane to South Sea farm.³⁸³

Markets and Fairs

³⁶⁸ WSA, T/A/Kington St Michael, numbers 548, 646 and 693.

³⁶⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 140.

³⁷⁰ WSA, 1305/125.

³⁷¹ WSA, 753/140.

³⁷² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 130-1. Note: Marian Well and Maiden Well (Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 432) were different wells.

³⁷³ Above, Kington Langley, mills.

³⁷⁴ Devizes Museum, Mss 4109.

³⁷⁵ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 236.

³⁷⁶ WSA, P3/H/139.

³⁷⁷ WSA, P3/B/296.

³⁷⁸ WSA, T/A/Kington St Michael

³⁷⁹ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

³⁸⁰ TNA, STAC/3/2/8.

³⁸¹ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁸² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 236.

³⁸³ OS, 25" Wiltshire XX, 1-2, 5-6 (1885).

In 1266 Henry III granted the abbot the right to hold a market at Kington St Michael every Tuesday and an annual fair for three days held 28-30 September.³⁸⁴ Tolls of £1 1s. 8½d. and £1 4s. 6d. were paid at the Michaelmas fairs in 1314 and 1335.³⁸⁵ In 1518 revenue from the fair was thought to be '16s. or more';³⁸⁶ in 1536 it was recorded as 12s., the following year 5s. and in 1538 the entry recording 5s. profit was struck through.³⁸⁷ The fair was mentioned once in the 16th-century manor court rolls when in 1564 tolls of £1 6s. 8d. were paid.³⁸⁸

The market and fair are thought to have been held on or near the recreation ground between Grove Lane and Honey Knob Hill.³⁸⁹ This tradition receives some support from John Aubrey who recalled the market held at the cross on a Friday selling "fish, eggs butter and such small gear" and that the Michaelmas fair, held at the same location was famous for ale and geese.³⁹⁰

Other Trades

Kington St Michael had very little medieval retail, two tapsters who sold beer were amerced in the hundred court in 1418.³⁹¹ In the 1560s and 1570s the manor court regularly recorded three brewers, who often acted as tipplers, and one or two bakers.³⁹² Walter Williams was admitted to a property called the Killing House in 1564, which was probably the village slaughterhouse, and a butcher, Richard Welsted, was in Kington St Michael until 1574 when he moved to trade in Kington Langley instead.³⁹³ Richard Powre, a merchant, was regularly fined for selling at excessive prices 1569-1577.³⁹⁴

Despite the presence of the market and fair, and the brewers and bakers, Kington St Michael did not develop as a commercial centre, although a small number of retailers continued to service the immediate needs of the community in the following centuries: a butcher John Milsham, died in 1648,³⁹⁵ and two bakers left wills: Robert Ponting, in 1744,³⁹⁶ and Henry Taylor in 1747.³⁹⁷

John Skelton, butcher, leased 8 perches of land in 1664 from John Gastell which was probably the site of his shop.³⁹⁸ Several craftsmen and retailers had more than one occupation or business, presumably because there was insufficient demand to concentrate on a single activity. John Britton's father may have been typical of a class of men working as a shopkeeper, maltster, small farmer and baker.³⁹⁹

In 1867 a small number of craftsmen and retailers serviced the needs of the village: Amelia Barnes, a baker and maltster; David Rimming, a baker and farmer; Maria Granger, a beer seller; Thomas Sealy, a blacksmith and carpenter; Henry Smith, a blacksmith; Joseph Dyer, a carpenter and wheelwright; George Gainey, a shopkeeper

³⁸⁴ Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, I, 45.

³⁸⁵ Longleat, ms. 10655 (1314), 10633 (1335).

³⁸⁶ B/L Harl. Ms 3961.

³⁸⁷ TNA, SC6/HenVIII/3953-3955.

³⁸⁸ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁸⁹ Conversation with local historian Tim Storer.

³⁹⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.*, 139.

³⁹¹ Longleat, ms. 10657; for later inns and public houses, below, Social hist..

³⁹² WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁹³ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁹⁴ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

³⁹⁵ WSA, P1/M/165.

³⁹⁶ WSA, P1/P/765.

³⁹⁷ WSA, P1/T/441.

³⁹⁸ WSA, 1305/125.

³⁹⁹ J. E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael, general history of the parish', *WAM*, IV, (1858), 110.

and butcher; John Jones, William Whittle and George Wiltshire, all shopkeepers; John Sealy, a tailor; William Compton, a thatcher.⁴⁰⁰ In the mid 20th century residents were able to purchase wireless equipment and cycling accessories from Stanley Lee's grocery and draper's shop.⁴⁰¹

A post office was established on the east side of the High Street between Rose Cottages and Manor farm by the wheelwright Charles Dyer by 1885.⁴⁰² Although a village shop continued to operate in 2023 the post office closed in 2008.⁴⁰³

Carrying services were provided by farmers including Andrew Slade of Cromhall farm in 1895.⁴⁰⁴

SOCIAL HISTORY

The taxation returns for medieval and Tudor Kington indicate a community of agriculturalists who met the threshold for taxation without being wealthy enough to make large contributions. In 1332 Kington St Michael (as *Kyntone Michaelis*, including Kington Langley) had 48 taxpayers, only two of whom, Roger Russel (19s. 1¼d.) and John Fitz Ours (12s.) paid more than 6s. 8d. Easton Piercy (as *Estone*) was included separately with Draycot Cerne.⁴⁰⁵ A list of taxpayers for Kington (*Mighels Kynton*, that excluded Kington Langley) in 1545 listed four payers, including Thomas Hull, curate, and Richard Snell, gentleman, who paid £5. Snell was the highest taxpayer in North Damerham hundred and one of the highest-rated taxpayers in the county.⁴⁰⁶ Richard Snell had leased the demesne of Kington St Michael from Glastonbury abbey in 1517.⁴⁰⁷ Later, in 1543, his son Nicholas purchased the manor of Kington.⁴⁰⁸ After his father's death, Nicholas was listed as the principal taxpayer for Kington and Langley (Kington St Michael and Kington Langley) in 1576. He was rated £20. Only two others were assessed at over 40s., Robert Colman and Robert Tayler.⁴⁰⁹ In 1545 Easton Piercy was listed with Burton Hill as *Eston*. Of the four names listed one, Agnes Light (Lyte?) valued at 10s. is likely to have been resident in the hamlet, the others in Burton Hill (Malmesbury).⁴¹⁰

After the division of the manor of Kington St Michael in 1656, in 1736 eight names were listed for Kington St Michael as qualified to serve on a jury.⁴¹¹ These included freeholders, Ayliffe White, Jonathan Power, Isaac Gale, Sadler Gale and Robert Harrington, all listed as gentleman.⁴¹² Easton Piercy was recorded separately with just one person eligible, Isaac Lane a yeoman leaseholder.⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁰ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1867), 288.

⁴⁰¹ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1939), 182.

⁴⁰² *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1885 edn.).

⁴⁰³ <https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/2065820.kington-st-michael-residents-devastated-by-post-office-closure/> (accessed 4 August 2023)

⁴⁰⁴ *Kelly's Dir., Wilts.*, (1895), 123.

⁴⁰⁵ *Wilts. Tax list of 1332* (WRS 45), 61, 104-5.

⁴⁰⁶ *Two Sixteenth Century Tax Lists*, (WRS 10), 26.

⁴⁰⁷ BL., Harl. Ms. 3961.

⁴⁰⁸ Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/GS/21 and WSA, 473/196.

⁴⁰⁹ *Two Sixteenth Century Tax Lists*, (WRS 10), 56.

⁴¹⁰ *Two Sixteenth Century Tax Lists*, (WRS 10), 29. For the Lyte family's association with Easton Piercy see Landownership.

⁴¹¹ *Wilts. Quarter Sessions and Assizes* (WRS 11), 136

⁴¹² *Wilts. Quarter Sessions and Assizes* (WRS 11), 136.

⁴¹³ *Wilts. Quarter Sessions and Assizes* (WRS 11), 142.

The fracturing of the estate, and the church living generally being held in plurality, meant that during the second half of the 18th century, if not before, no churchman or gentleman was likely to be resident. In his autobiography, John Britton, considering the 1780s, observed, 'Without a regular churchman to advise and admonish, or a magistrate, or private gentleman residing in the principal house of the village, the inhabitants were undisciplined, illiterate, and deprived of all good example; whilst those who were constitutionally idle and dissipated had no check on their conduct and became too often promoters of bad habits in the young.'⁴¹⁴ Similar concern was expressed by others, including Canon Jackson in the 19th century, although Jackson focused on the hamlet of Kington Langley, at some distance from St Michael's Church at Kington St Michael.⁴¹⁵ The incumbency of Edward Awdry and the purchase of Kington St Michael manor by Herbert Prodgers in 1863 led to change in the 1850s and 1860s, as the manor house and school at Kington St Michael were demolished and rebuilt, slum dwellings were pulled down (including the childhood home of John Britton), St Michael's church was 'renovated' and a separate church built at Kington Langley. Both Awdry and Prodger took a keen interest in local affairs.⁴¹⁶

Education

The first school in the parish was probably at St Mary's priory, a Benedictine convent established by 1155. John Aubrey, in connection with the priory, wrote 'in those days there were not schools for young ladies as now, but they were educated at religious houses' and he suggested that girls educated at St Mary's priory were likely to have been taught 'confectionary, surgery, physick, writing, drawing &c.'⁴¹⁷ In his *Natural History of Wiltshire*, he further recorded that in the old hedges around the lands of the priory were a significant number of berberry-trees 'which I suppose the nunnes made use of for confections, and they taught the young ladies that were educated there such arts.'⁴¹⁸

In 1730, Sarah Bowerman, a widow of St Andrew's, Holborn (Middlesex), made a bequest in her will that £5 a year be payable in perpetuity by the trustees of Christ's Hospital in London to the schoolmaster at Kington St Michael for the education of poor children in reading, writing, accounts and the catechism.⁴¹⁹ The endowment is outlined on a plaque within the parish church. It is likely that the school was established the following year and employed a schoolmaster, Daniel Yealf, who, at his death in 1779 (according to a memorial inscription in the church), had been a schoolmaster in Kington St Michael for 48 years. Yealf was also the vestry and parish clerk.⁴²⁰ After Yealf's death, the fund was for some years unapplied.⁴²¹ However, by 1818 the school funded by

⁴¹⁴ J. Britton, *Autobiography of John Britton FSA* (London: Self, 1850), 29.

⁴¹⁵ J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 50. Britton quotes a local farmer in 1850: 'I am sorry I can say nothing in favour of the habits and manners either of the farmers of this village or the poor people. All have been neglected, and are grossly ignorant, in every way. For fifty years there was no resident gentleman or clergyman, with the exception of Mr Coleman, who has been too quiet to interfere'. J. Britton, *Autobiography of John Britton FSA* (London: Self, 1850), 29.

⁴¹⁶ See introduction, religious history, local government and education below.

⁴¹⁷ Aubrey, *Natural History*, 57; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 12-13.

⁴¹⁸ Aubrey, *Natural History*, 57.

⁴¹⁹ TNA, PROB 11/641/342.

⁴²⁰ *Memorial Inscriptions of Wilts.* (WRS 53), 21.

⁴²¹ The curate was unable to provide information on the church in bishop's visitation queries in 1783 and the archdeacon noted funds were unapplied in 1787. Likewise, charitable returns made by churchwardens in 1786 suggested they could not state in whom the charity was vested. WSA, D/3/14/1; *Wilts. Returns to the Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS 27), 129; *Abstract of the Returns of Charitable*

Bowerman's bequest was attended by 10 'small' children. Its teacher continued to receive £5 from Christ's Hospital. A further 50 'very small' children attended three or four, likely dame, schools. Sixty children attended a Sunday school, and an additional Sunday school was planned.⁴²² John Britton noted c.1825 that the Bowerman-funded school resembled a nursery more than a school, while suggesting, 'what can be done these days for £5 p.a.?'⁴²³ In 1834 charity commissioners reported that the longstanding schoolmaster taught as many children as were sent to him by the minister and churchwardens. Children were taught reading, writing and arithmetic.⁴²⁴

Two daily schools were recorded in Kington St Michael with Easton Piercy (excluding Kington Langley tithing) in government returns of 1835. Their combined attendance was 30 boys and 10 girls. Both were recorded as supported by subscriptions, and Sarah Bowerman's bequest was not mentioned.⁴²⁵

By 1840 a school was built in Stubbs Lane, at the eastern end of the churchyard.⁴²⁶ However, by the 1850s the accommodation was identified in a government report as too small to supply the needs of the parish.⁴²⁷ In 1869 new premises were provided, principally financed by the squire, Herbert Prodggers, for a new Church of England school, comprising a schoolhouse to accommodate 102 pupils and three teachers together with a teacher's residence; these were completed on the northern side of the lane leading to the church (subsequently the village hall and shop).⁴²⁸ The school was built without a parliamentary grant, but by 1872 it was in receipt of annual funding of £33 15s. 0d. and attended by an average of 70 children. According to the same report, a second school in Kington St Michael received a small annual grant and was attended by ten pupils.⁴²⁹ However, returns for 28 April 1871 only recorded one school within the tithing.⁴³⁰ In 1888-9 the school was attended by an average of 51 scholars. It was principally supported by subscriptions (£57) and a parliamentary grant (£37). The £5 annual Bowerman annuity was also used to help pay the cost of the school.⁴³¹ By 1897, however, the annual payment from Bowerman's charity had for some years been split between the Church of England school at Kington St Michael and the National School at Kington Langley, formerly a tithing of Kington St Michael. This arrangement was officially sanctioned by the order of the charity commissioners in 1899.⁴³² In 1905 the endowment was used by both schools for a

Donations for the Benefit of Poor Persons, made by the Ministers and Churchwardens of the several parishes and townships in England and Wales 1786-1788 (Parl. Papers, 1816 (511), 1344-5.

⁴²² *Educ. of the Poor. Digest*, 1030.

⁴²³ WA, MSS.4080.

⁴²⁴ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 329.

⁴²⁵ *Educ. in England Abstract, 1835*, 1040.

⁴²⁶ WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael.

⁴²⁷ *Account of Wilts. Schools*, 1859, 29.

⁴²⁸ *Devizes and Wilts. Gazette*, 19 Aug 1869.

⁴²⁹ Committee of Council on Education: Report, Appendix, 1872-3 (Com. Papers, 1873(C.812 C.812-I Vol 24, 771), 505.

⁴³⁰ *Return of Civil Parishes in England and Wales under Education Act, of Population, Rateable Value, Number of Schools and Scholars in Attendance* (Parl. Papers, 1871 (201, LV), 420-1.

⁴³¹ *Return of Public Elementary Schools Examined Showing Accommodation, Average Attendance etc. 1888-9* (Parl. Papers, 1890 (403, LVI)), 282.

⁴³² *Endowed Charities, 1908*, 591 TNA, ED 49/8204. 0208

school prize fund.⁴³³ In 1903 Herbert Prodgers signed over the site of Kington St Michael school and teacher's dwelling house to the diocese.⁴³⁴

In 1912 the number of children who could be accommodated in the school was reduced from 72 and 38 infants to 57 and 38 infants, a total of 95.⁴³⁵ The school grounds were extended in 1913.⁴³⁶ Inside, the accommodation for elementary-aged pupils meant that classes 1 and 2 were taught in the same room, divided by a 5ft screen in 1924. However, the combined classes contained 42 pupils, well within the capacity of 57.⁴³⁷ Despite the issues which may have been caused by sharing accommodation in the school, the Board of Education received a good inspection report for classes 1 and 2 in 1922.⁴³⁸ In 1921 the adjoining village hall was registered by the Board to instruct domestic subjects (not specified).⁴³⁹ A similar registration was made in 1914 for the Congregational chapel.⁴⁴⁰

By 1929 overall school numbers had dropped to 60, and by 1939 were as low as 41, though they were bolstered with the addition of 17 evacuees.⁴⁴¹ In the early 1940s, numbers rose again, and the Department of Education permitted the parish to utilise the parish room as school accommodation.⁴⁴² Pupil numbers reached 70 in 1949. Later in 1956, senior pupils (aged 11-15) were transferred to Chippenham Secondary Modern School, causing pupil numbers to drop once more to 46 pupils aged 5-11 who were taught in two classes. By 1961 numbers had risen; the school applied for an extra part-time teacher, and it was decided to use the village hall in the mornings to provide additional space. By 1967 numbers had fallen again, the village hall was no longer required, and the part-time teacher no longer justified. In 1969 the number on roll was just 30.⁴⁴³

In 1970, with 39 pupils, the part-time post was re-instated, and by 1972 numbers had sufficiently increased for the village hall to be used again for school accommodation. A mobile classroom was installed the following year. Housing development during the early 1970s perpetuated pressure on school accommodation. In 1975 the head teacher was told that it was not practicable to provide her with a room, and she was offered the use of the cloakroom or kitchen instead. The children had no outside space for organised games. Colonel Showers offered the use of his neighbouring field during the winter, though he asked the children to be careful with the mare and donkey. He later also allowed the use of the field in summer, though it would have to be shared with the cows.⁴⁴⁴

By the mid-1970s the school was described as 'probably the worst school in the north of the county' due to the cramped conditions.⁴⁴⁵ In 1976 Daniel Awdry MP visited the school at the request of the managers, and a plan for a new office and store room

⁴³³ WSA, L2/152.

⁴³⁴ WSA, 3941/14.

⁴³⁵ TNA, ED 21/18455

⁴³⁶ *N. Wilts Herald*, 1 Aug 1913; 3941/14; Bound volume titled *Kington St Michael Parish Register Chest*, viewed by kindness of Colin Labourche (2023).

⁴³⁷ TNA, ED 21/42268.

⁴³⁸ TNA, ED 21/42268.

⁴³⁹ TNA, ED 70/2546.

⁴⁴⁰ TNA, ED 70/2546.

⁴⁴¹ WSA, F8/500/157/1/1.

⁴⁴² TNA, ED 21/63294.

⁴⁴³ WSA, F8/500/157/1/2.

⁴⁴⁴ WSA, F8/500/157/1/2.

⁴⁴⁵ *Wilts Gaz and Herald*, 7 July 1977.

was proposed. In the same year, the LEA presented the school with a plan for the construction of a new school at The Ridings, at the other end of the village. By May 1978, there were 83 pupils on roll, and the build was progressing well. Problems arose during the building work when contractors went into liquidation. However, approximately 80 pupils were welcomed into the new school on 11 Oct 1978. Pupils were reportedly delighted with the new accommodation, particularly the electric hand dryers and the overhead projector. In 1980 the school, with its newly planted site, was visited by the Secretary of State for Education, Mark Carlisle.⁴⁴⁶

In 2023, the voluntarily controlled Kington St Michael Church of England Primary School had 136 children on roll, drawn from the parish of Kington St Michael, surrounding villages and housing developments in Chippenham. In addition to the head teacher, it had nine teachers and ten teaching assistants on its books.

Welfare

There are no overseers' accounts surviving for Kington St Michael. Aubrey stated that in his grandfather's day (Isaac Lyte d.1659) there had been no necessity for poor rates.⁴⁴⁷ Despite this, in 1670 17 households in Kington St Michael were exempt from the hearth tax and 23 in Kington Langley, and it is likely that parochial poor relief had started by then.⁴⁴⁸ However, the presence of the Lyte Almshouse and other charities available for the local poor from the 17th century also suggests that the parish had some flexibility to offset parochial welfare.⁴⁴⁹

According to newspaper reports, in 1827 one of the principal landowners, Nathan Atherton, had divided 30-40 a. of tithe free land for the poor of Kington St Michael into $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ a. allotments 'paying himself the poor rates for them'.⁴⁵⁰ The scheme may have been short-lived as Atherton is listed as the occupier of all lands he held in the parish in 1840.⁴⁵¹

For the period Sep 1829 – Sep 1830, overseers at Kington St Michael provided detailed evidence (for all tithings) to a Lords Select Committee on their welfare expenditure. The most significant outlay was on the maintenance of the old and infirm, which cost £266 2s. 0d. and secondly £168 19s. 7d. on widows, single women and orphans unable to earn sufficient income. It was noted that local wages were 9s. but if unemployed a labourer with a wife and three children would receive 9s. 6d. (if bread was 1s. 6d. a gallon) with a further 1s. 6d. per week for every additional child. Consequently, perhaps, a further £104 10s. 1d. was provided to 27 individuals or families 'to make up the amount of their earnings sufficient for their maintenance.' £61 5s. 6d. was spent on house rents for 26 families and individuals and £26 14s. 6d. on maintaining paupers in 'lunatic asylums'. The parish retained a doctor for £20.⁴⁵²

Abstractions on welfare specifically for Kington St Michael, as distinct from Kington Langley, are made difficult as figures were often combined. For example, in government statistics in 1822, figures were given for Kington St Michael separately for

⁴⁴⁶ WSA, F8/500/157/1/2; *Wilts Gaz and Herald*, 7 July 1977.

⁴⁴⁷ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 10.

⁴⁴⁸ TNA, E 179/348/206.

⁴⁴⁹ See Kington St Michael, Charities.

⁴⁵⁰ *Devizes and Wilts. Gaz.*, 15 Nov 1827.

⁴⁵¹ WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael.

⁴⁵² *Select Committee of House of Lords on Poor Laws and Petitions Praying for Relief from Paperism. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix etc.* (Parl, Papers, 1831 (227, VIII)), 296.

1816-19 and 1821 but merged with Kington Langley in 1820.⁴⁵³ Later they were combined in 1826-7 and separated in 1828-9.⁴⁵⁴

In 1901, the Wiltshire Cottage Home for Epileptic Girls by Guardians of the Poor was opened in Kington St Michael with three patients removed from Chippenham Workhouse. It was hoped that the new home would improve the conditions in which 'epileptics' were housed.⁴⁵⁵ The home was in operation until at least 1935.⁴⁵⁶

Friendly Societies

There were no friendly societies recorded in Kington St Michael in 1818.⁴⁵⁷ However, later in 1857 a branch of the Wilts Friendly Society was established at Kington St Michael.⁴⁵⁸ In 1860 members attended a church service and processed to Tor Hill, where a tent had been erected. Thereafter 80 members and friends had dinner, and were entertained by a brass band, dancing, a cricket match and sports.⁴⁵⁹ Afterwards a separate branch was established in Kington Langley, but annual celebrations were taken together.⁴⁶⁰ A 'St Michael' branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters was instituted for Kington St Michael in 1888, based at the White Horse Inn. It held its first meeting the next year.⁴⁶¹ By 1911, it had 97 members and funds of £751.⁴⁶²

Charities

In 1664, William Woodrooff [*sic*] left 20s. a year to the poor (to be paid to those most in need on 18 September) and 10s. a year to the vicar to preach an anniversary sermon.⁴⁶³ Another 17th-century bequest, by Dorothy Newman, provided an annuity of £6, which was paid to the poor on St Thomas's Day.⁴⁶⁴ This was distributed by churchwardens on the advice of the minister among the deserving poor 'without diminution of their monthly allowance'.⁴⁶⁵ By 1834 it had been combined with bequests by sisters Margaret and Merrill Sadler and Dorothy Coleman (wife of William Coleman) née Sadler to provide bread for the deserving poor (on a scale from one to three loaves based on family size).⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁵³ Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix; Supplemental Appendix (1819-22) (Parl. Papers 1822 (556), v. DXVII), 187.

⁴⁵⁴ Account of Money expended for Relief of Poor in England and Wales, 1824-29. 1830-1. Paper 83. Vol 11. 217.

⁴⁵⁵ *Western Daily Press*, 3 Sep 1901.

⁴⁵⁶ Listed in *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* editions 1903, 1903, 1927, 1935.

⁴⁵⁷ *Poor Law Abstract*, 1818, 495.

⁴⁵⁸ *Wiltshire Independent*, 15 Apr 1858.

⁴⁵⁹ *Wiltshire Independent*, 19 July 1960.

⁴⁶⁰ E.g. *Wiltshire Independent*, 23 July 1874; SA, JAC 006 f12.

⁴⁶¹ Court no 7708. *Wilts Times and Trowbridge Gaz*, 13 Oct 1888. *Devizes and Wilts. Gaz*, 15 Aug 1889.; Reports of Chief Registrar of **Friendly Societies**, 1890; Appendix, 1890-1. Paper no 310 310-I 310-II. Vol 79, 495, 651. P.254.

⁴⁶² Friendly societies, workmen's compensation schemes, industrial and provident societies, and trade unions. Reports of the chief registrar of friendly societies for the year ending 31st December 1911 1912-3, paper 123-I-XII. No vol.p859

⁴⁶³ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 139; WRS, 53,21.

⁴⁶⁴ WRS, 53,21.

⁴⁶⁵ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 330.

⁴⁶⁶ *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 330. See also SA, JAC/006 f21r.

An almshouse for two women was created in 1221 within the priory of St Mary, which was maintained by the crown.⁴⁶⁷ Other almshouses were created by the bequest of Isaac Lyte of Mortlake, Surrey, during the 17th century, who left £600 for building six almshouses in Kington St Michael (will proved 1673).⁴⁶⁸ His will also provided a rent charge of £21 per year, from lands in Corston (in Malmesbury), for the maintenance of six poor unmarried men of the parish in the almshouses.⁴⁶⁹ An extract from his will was placed in the parish register in 1692.⁴⁷⁰ Later, Thomas White of London left £200 in his will in 1821 for the use and better maintenance of the poor occupying the houses. A total of £259 was invested in annuities. The dividends were shared among the almspeople by the churchwardens.⁴⁷¹

John Britton suggested c.1825 that the charity had been in the hands of negligent trustees who had caused the premises to decay. He also indicated that almspeople were no longer restricted to 'poor old Batchelors.'⁴⁷² This circumstance likely arose from the difficulty of finding suitable almspeople. In 1902 two of the almshouses were being tenanted 'until the vacant houses are wanted'.⁴⁷³ In 1905 only three of the six homes were in use in the way planned, two were vacant and one was tenanted by the wife of a previous incumbent.⁴⁷⁴ By the 1950s almspeople could be single men or women or married couples.⁴⁷⁵

In 1901 the charities founded by William Woodrooff, Isaac Lyte, Margaret Sadler, Thomas Taylor and Thomas White were combined and placed under the administration of six trustees, including the vicars of Kington Langley and Kington St Michael, and one member of the parish council from both parishes and two others co-opted (in the first instance Walter Coleman and George Capener).⁴⁷⁶ In 1905 the funds from the charity were distributed in doles to 45 people in Kington St Michael and 30 in Kington Langley.⁴⁷⁷ In 1917 the number of recipients was 44 and 36 respectively. By 1947, under the auspices of Kington St Michael United Charities, pensions to almspeople had been commuted to a £2 gift to each almshouse.⁴⁷⁸

The almshouses were extended to the rear to provide a kitchen, toilet and bathroom by 1962 (although planned in 1956, funding and problems with contractors had delayed the work).⁴⁷⁹ In 2008 further alterations were made to each end property, to make them appropriate for disabled tenants or couples. Additional cottages were purchased in 2010.⁴⁸⁰

The combined charities are known as Kington St Michael United Charities (charity no. 201283). The stated objective of the charity in 2023 was to provide housing

⁴⁶⁷ SA, JA006 f32.

⁴⁶⁸ TNA, PROB 11/342/531.

⁴⁶⁹ WRS, 53, 21; *Commission of Inquiry into Charities in England and Wales: Twenty-eighth Report* (Parl. Papers 1834 (606), xxii), 330-1.

⁴⁷⁰ WRS 63, 138.

⁴⁷¹ *Endowed Charities, 1908*,

⁴⁷² WA MS4880.

⁴⁷³ WSA, L2/152.

⁴⁷⁴ WSA, L2/152.

⁴⁷⁵ WSA, G3/132/59.

⁴⁷⁶ WSA, 1187/31. Charity Commission order? 2512 I, 28 Aug 1901.

⁴⁷⁷ WSA, L2/152.

⁴⁷⁸ WSA, L2/152.

⁴⁷⁹ WSA, G3/132/59.

⁴⁸⁰ https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/almshouses_and_allotments-17916.aspx [accessed 01 May 2023]. For

for the elderly and needy, its primary activity to maintain the nine almshouses to a high standard.⁴⁸¹

Buckland's Coal Fund was established by the will of Joseph Whale Buckland (one of its first trustees was Ernest Edward Buckland of New Priory farm) in 1916. The legacy distributed coal to the 20 poorest families of Kington St Michael (including the six tenants of the almshouses) on Christmas Day from £100 of funds invested in 'West Australia Stock'. The legacy was vested in several trustees usually including the vicar of Kington St Michael. In 1950, while coal was still rationed, £4 was distributed among 16 recipients as money.⁴⁸² By 1983 the legacy was still being administered, but the administrator responsible for the distribution informed the minister of Kington St Michael that she knew very little about the fund, what the capital was invested in or the terms of the trust which created it.⁴⁸³

Communal Life

During the 16th century the communal life of the parish was centred largely on the church. Aubrey described the local significance of the church ale at Whitsun. 'Here the Howsekeepers met and were merry and gave their Charitie: the young people came too, and had dancing, bowlings, shooting at buttes, &c.' Revels probably also took place at the three-day fair granted to the parish in 1266 on Michaelmas, according to Aubrey 'much resorted unto by the young people, famous for ale and stubble geese.'⁴⁸⁴ Mentions of communal activities are recorded in manorial court records 1559-1577, which include instances of cards and ball games- 'stuffball' or 'stafball' or 'staffball' and 'pila pedale'.⁴⁸⁵

In his autobiography the antiquarian John Britton (b. 1771) recalled Kington St Michael in his youth as quiet and dull, speculating that no inhabitant was likely to have even purchased a newspaper or magazine before 1780.⁴⁸⁶ In his account the village was periodically brightened by the visits of a clothier and a particular 'Mountebank Doctor'. This 'itinerant quack' had a companion called 'Merry-Andrew', 'a sort of clown, or buffon, whose office and duty was to submit to the horse-whip, to tumble, leap, dance, make grotesque faces, and parley badinage and vulgar jokes with his equally accomplished master.'⁴⁸⁷

John Aubrey mentioned hounds being kept before the Civil War by Charles Snell for hunting hares.⁴⁸⁸ Over a century later, during winter months the village was enlivened, according to the further recollections of Britton, by the Duke of Beaufort's fox-hounds and Sir James Tylney Long's harriers.⁴⁸⁹ The Duke of Beaufort's hounds continued to meet periodically at Kington St Michael during the 19th century, including at the Plough Inn, Kington Langley (then in Kington St Michael).⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸¹ See <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/201283/charity-overview> [01 May 2023].

⁴⁸² WSA, L2/152, 1187/32.

⁴⁸³ WSA, 1187/32.

⁴⁸⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 10, 139.

⁴⁸⁵ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

⁴⁸⁶ J. Britton, *Autobiography of John Britton FSA* (London: Self, 1850), 32.

⁴⁸⁷ J. Britton, *Autobiography of John Britton FSA* (London: Self, 1850), 33.

⁴⁸⁸ Aubrey, *Natural History of Wiltshire*, 60.

⁴⁸⁹ J. Britton, *Autobiography of John Britton FSA* (London: Self, 1850), 33.

⁴⁹⁰ E.g. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 25 Nov 1848, 28 Oct 1865; *Devizes and Wilts. Gazette*, 17 Mar 1842.

Another local pastime was fishing. Aubrey records 'several ponds in traine' and a 'particular noble carp pond', in the park of the manor house.⁴⁹¹ Traditionally the park had been available in common to tenants of Glastonbury abbey, but these rights were curtailed by Nicholas Snell after his purchase of the manor. Britton fished (angling and baiting) in these ponds as a boy (trespassing) when they still teamed with carp, once narrowly avoiding being shot by Squire White.⁴⁹² Ponds south of the manor house near Stubbs Lane remained in 2023.

Several brewers are noted in manorial recording 1562-1578.⁴⁹³

Although Britton recalled the village being quiet, he did note that there had been a public house on the west side of the highway through Kington St Michael during his youth. The White Hart Inn is the only public house recorded in the tithe apportionment map of 1840 for Kington St Michael tithing. However, this is unlikely to have been the hostelry of Britton's recollection as it was set back from the highway on the east side of the road (opposite the site of the present Jolly Huntsman public house).⁴⁹⁴ It was listed in a directory of 1859 alongside three other beer retailers and, in 1867, alongside two.⁴⁹⁵ The White Hart was listed in 1875, occupied by Thomas Aland & Co., beer retailer and maltster.⁴⁹⁶ By 1911 it was both a public house and blacksmith (run by Herbert Marin).⁴⁹⁷ Twenty years later, in 1931, it was described as in a 'dilapidated' condition by Usher's Brewery who held the licence. They subsequently closed the establishment and transferred the licence to the nearby White Horse (now called the Jolly Huntsman).⁴⁹⁸ The buildings were later sold.⁴⁹⁹

The site of the present Jolly Huntsman is shown as a malthouse on the tithe apportionment in 1840.⁵⁰⁰ As the White Horse, it provided a venue for meetings of the local branch of the National Agricultural Union, the St Michael branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters and inquests during the second half of the 19th century, by which time it is likely to have already become the main drinking establishment within Kington St Michael, despite possessing only a beerhouse licence until 1931.⁵⁰¹ The White Horse was used for auctions and meetings of the Kington St Michael Thrift Club during the 20th century.⁵⁰² It was renamed the Jolly Huntsman in the 1970s.⁵⁰³

A branch of the Primrose League was established by the wife of the squire, Emily Prodgers, by 1886 and operated for several years.⁵⁰⁴ The objects of the league were to uphold religion, maintain the constitution, 'keep the ascendancy of the British Empire' and to preserve the rights of property. 'To sum up all: to be faithful to our God, loyal to

⁴⁹¹ Aubrey, *Natural History of Wiltshire*, 63; Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 130.

⁴⁹² Aubrey's *Natural History of Wiltshire*, 63.

⁴⁹³ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

⁴⁹⁴ WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael.

⁴⁹⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1859 edn.), 437-8, (1867 edn), 288.

Kelly's Dir. Wilts. (1875 edn.), 569.

⁴⁹⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1911 edn.), 129. By 1915, it was run by Henry Martin. *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.), 130.

⁴⁹⁸ *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 11 April 1931.

⁴⁹⁹ *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*. 22 Aug 1931, 5 Sep 1931.

⁵⁰⁰ WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael.

⁵⁰¹ *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 17 Aug 1889, 4 Feb 1899, 8 May 1897, 11 April 1931; *Devizes and Wilts. Gaz.*, 8 May 1897.

⁵⁰² E.g. Auctions, *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 6 Jan 1951, 24 May 1952. Thrift club *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 22 Dec 1934.

⁵⁰³ <https://www.jollyhuntsman.com/> [accessed 01 May 2023].

⁵⁰⁴ *Devizes and Wilts. Gaz.*, 6 May 1886, 12 & 14 Aug 1886, 28 July 1887. Also reported 16, Aug 1888, 20 Aug 1888

our Queen, proud of our country, honest and just in our dealings, united by ties of affection and common interests to our brethren across many seas.⁵⁰⁵

A reading room was started in Kington St Michael by 1910, open to men over 15. In 1912, after a decline in membership opening hours were reduced.⁵⁰⁶ In the early twentieth century there were also parish coal and clothing clubs.⁵⁰⁷

A parish hall, later known as the village hall, was established by 1903 adjacent to the (now former) school.⁵⁰⁸ On the closure of the school during the late 1970s, the school and teacher's house became a new village hall in 1993, after a protracted negotiation with church authorities.⁵⁰⁹ By 2020 both the old and new village halls were entrusted to the Parish Room Charity (Registered Charity No. 274550) for which Kington St Michael Parish Council was the custodian trustee.⁵¹⁰ In 2023 regular users of the facilities included Acorns Pre-school and the Women's' Institute, and groups for salsa dancing and dog training.⁵¹¹ Kington St Michael Parish Council purchased a seven-acre site for a playing field to the north of the village on Grove Lane during the 1980s which was made a QEII Field in 2011 (no. WT273760).⁵¹² A community woodland, Nymph Hay Wood, was established in 1997.⁵¹³

A further communal space within the parish was operating in 2023, provided by the Kington St Michael Club, a social club that offers both a bar and lounge which is available for private hire and hosts regular events.⁵¹⁴

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Kington St Michael was a vicarage from the 13th century, which included the chapelries of Kington Langley and Easton Piercy. Kington St Michael priory, a house of Benedictine nuns, lay within the parish, but most aspects of its history are treated elsewhere.⁵¹⁵ Kington Langley, a stronghold of nonconformist dissent, became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1865, after the church of St Peter was built there in 1855. The history of nonconformity there, and of the established church from the 1850s, have been described above.⁵¹⁶

Origins and Status of the Parish Church

The church of St Michael has Norman origins and was originally in the possession of Glastonbury abbey. It was renovated under Michael of Ambresbury, abbot of

⁵⁰⁵ *Devizes and Wilts. Gaz*, 6 May 1886.

⁵⁰⁶ Bound volume titled *Kington St Michael Parish Register Chest*, viewed by kindness of Colin Labourche (2023).

⁵⁰⁷ Bound volume titled *Kington St Michael Parish Register Chest*, viewed by kindness of Colin Labourche (2023).

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⁵⁰⁹ WSA, 3941/5, 3941/14

⁵¹⁰ WSA, 3941/14.

⁵¹¹ https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/village_hall-17916.aspx [accessed 01 May 2023].

⁵¹² https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/sport_and_recreation-17916.aspx [accessed 01 May 2023].

⁵¹³ https://www.kingtonstmichael.com/kingtonstmichael/sport_and_recreation-17916.aspx [accessed 01 May 2023].

⁵¹⁴ <https://ksmsocialclub.com/> [accessed 01 May 2023].

⁵¹⁵ *VCH Wilts*, iii, 259-61.

⁵¹⁶ Above, Kington Langley, religious hist.

Glastonbury, during the 13th century.⁵¹⁷ John Aubrey later assumed that the abbot was responsible for its dedication and thereby providing the parish of Kington with its suffix.⁵¹⁸ The chapel of St Peter, recorded in the 16th century, was doubtless built to serve Kington Langley because of its distance from the parish church. St Peter's chapel was converted to a dwelling by 1670, and the chapel bell moved to Fitzurse farm.⁵¹⁹

The tithing of Easton Piercy possessed its own chapel and graveyard. According to Aubrey the edifice had a turret on which were mounted two small bells. The structure which occupied a toft called chapel-hay was pulled down c.1640.⁵²⁰ The tithe apportionment map shows a field called chapel land adjacent and north-west of the former manor of Easton Piercy.⁵²¹ Canon Jackson, writing in 1858, observed that the upper end of this field was characterised by an uneven surface which marked the location of the chapel and human bones were occasionally found.⁵²² This location is also marked on 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps as the site of a chapel.

The Benedictine priory of St Mary's at Kington St Michael was founded before 1155. Nothing remains of its buildings above ground, except for the 15th-century structures on the west side of the cloister and the earlier frater or refectory on the south side. Altered by successive owners, these structures form part of the farmhouse at Priory farm, situated about three-quarters of a mile north-west of the village. Part of the site was excavated by Sir Harold Brakspear, who published a full description and plan.⁵²³

A singular chapel or mausoleum was created by Walter Coleman (d.1782) from 1778. The parish register for St Michael's records at Coleman's death in May 1782, 'Buried – NB. The body was afterwards removed to a mausoleum built by himself at Kington Langley.'⁵²⁴ The mausoleum was unfinished on his death, and Coleman left a bequest for its completion.⁵²⁵ The structure appears as a chapel on the tithe map for Kington St Michael in 1840, but had disappeared by the first large-scale edition Ordnance Survey map.⁵²⁶ It was mentioned as 'site of the old chapel and burying place where my great-grandfather was laid to rest', in an entry for 1876 in the diary of Francis Kilvert, a descendant of Walter Coleman.⁵²⁷ The site was still in 2023 called Old Chapel Field. It lies at the north side of the Common just before its junction with Plough Lane. On the opposite side of the lane is a field called Chapel Field on the tithe map, which may be associated with it or an earlier graveyard.⁵²⁸

⁵¹⁷ J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 39.

⁵¹⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 134; J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 36.

⁵¹⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 145, 146.

⁵²⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236.

⁵²¹ WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael.

⁵²² J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 72-3.

⁵²³ *Archaeologia*, lxxiii, 244-52; W.A.M. xliii, 18-25. For a full history of the priory please see *VCH Wilts*, iii, 259-262.

⁵²⁴ WSA, 1187/5.

⁵²⁵ TNA, PROB 11/1090/204. Coleman's will specified that he be interred with Sarah Stephens (whose body should be removed from the graveyard at KsM 'as privately as possible') The episode is detailed in J. Badeni, *Past People in Wilts. and Glos.* (Norton Manor, 1992), 56-60. Badeni was unaware that a marriage ceremony was performed between a Walter Coleman and Sarah Stephens at St George the Martyr Church, Holborn in 1762. See, London Metropolitan Archives, London, P82/GE02/012.

⁵²⁶ WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael.

⁵²⁷ Kilvert, Vol iii, 244.

⁵²⁸ A graveyard is suggested by Meers, *Historical Notes on two Villages in Wiltshire: Langley Fitzurse & Draycott Cerne*, 21.

After the loss of Kington Langley (under the designation Langley Fitzurse) to become a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1865,⁵²⁹ another ecclesiastical boundary change was made to Kington St Michael in 1885 to help create Chippenham St Paul's ecclesiastical parish.⁵³⁰

Kington St Michael was in the deanery of Malmesbury until 1887, when it was transferred to Chippenham.⁵³¹ In 1979, a united benefice was created from the parishes of St Paul's Chippenham with Langley Burrell and Hardenhuish, that was held in plurality with Kington St Michael.⁵³² In 2023 Kington St Michael was part of the benefice of Bybrook comprising Kington St Michael, Biddlestone, Castle Combe, Grittleton, Littleton Drew, Nettleton, North Wraxall, Slaughterford, West Kington and Yatton Keynell.

Advowson & Church Endowment

During the late 12th and early 13th centuries there was an acrimonious attempt to unite the abbey of Glastonbury with the see of Bath and Wells. As part of the resolution to the dispute the advowson of Kington was given to the bishop in 1219.⁵³³ The advowson was subject of a subsequent 13th-century dispute between the bishop of Bath and Wells and the abbey of Glastonbury. When the dispute was settled in 1275, the bishop, Robert Burnell, secured the advowson.⁵³⁴ However, Kington St. Michael priory later made an exchange in 1291 with the bishop. In that transaction the priory gave the bishop all its Berkshire lands in West Compton, Aldworth, Hodcott in West Ilsley, and Newenham in Warfield; the hundred of Compton; and the patronage of the chapel of Hodcott.⁵³⁵ In exchange, the bishop gave the priory one acre of land in Kington St Michael, lying in the east field in the 'Goldthawe', situated between the prioress's land and property owned of Richard Carpenter, along with tithes of the rectory and right of presentation to the vicarage of Kington.⁵³⁶

The patronage was again with the bishop in 1395 (possibly when the post of prioress was vacant, as no names occur between Isabel Huse in 1327 and Alice More in 1431), but was back with the prioress by 1402 when the living was awarded to Richard Whete.⁵³⁷ It remained with the priory thereafter until 1533 when the living was given to Thomas Hull.⁵³⁸ Surprisingly given the poverty of the priory, Hull does not seem to have ministered to both parishioners and, as priest, to the nuns.⁵³⁹ Following the dissolution of the monasteries, in 1567 the patronage was with Nicholas Snell, who had purchased the Glastonbury abbey estate of Kington St Michael.⁵⁴⁰ In 1612, it was with Lady

⁵²⁹ Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 542; *Return of Parishes Divided and Districts Assigned to Churches Under Church Building Acts, 1863-66* (Parl. Papers, 1867 (529, liv), 12.

⁵³⁰ Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 54.

⁵³¹ *Crockford* (1868 edn.), ? (1894 edn.), cvii, (1939 edn.),? (1967-8 edn.), 1626, 1632. Note Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 529, 542 incorrectly lists Kington St Michael's and Kington Langley (Fitzurse) remaining within Malmesbury deanery after 1887.

⁵³² *Lond. Gaz.* 47987, 25 Oct. 1979. *Crockfords* 1980-2, 1191.

⁵³³ *VCH Som*, ii, 82-99.

⁵³⁴ *VCH Wilts*, iii, 260; *V.C.H. Som*, ii, 90-91; *Hist. MSS. Com. Rep. Wells*, i, 167-8, 311-12, 359-60, 472.

⁵³⁵ *Dugd. Mon.* iv, 398; *Cal. Chart. R. 1257-1300*, 405; *Hist. MSS. Com. Rep. Wells*, i, 151.

⁵³⁶ *Cal. Chart. R. 1257-1300*, 405; *VCH Wilts*, iii, 260.

⁵³⁷ *Cal. Patent. R. 1391-1396*, 548; Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 89; *VCH Wilts*, iii, 259-262.

⁵³⁸ Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 107, 110, 125, 132, 165, 166 (patron incorrectly given as prior de kyngton), 181, 194, 203.

⁵³⁹ Aubrey names 'Parson Whaddon' as the last priest to officiate at the priory. Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 144.

⁵⁴⁰ Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 223.

Catherine, widow of Sir Walter Long, the priory having been purchased by Richard Long of Wraxall. Later, in 1663, Benjamin Hine, likely steward of the estate, presented the living.⁵⁴¹ Thereafter its patronage was with the Longs of Draycot for two centuries.⁵⁴² However, sometime before 1898, the advowson was sold to Henry Samuel Adrian (younger brother of Adam Huskisson Adrian, vicar from 1897).⁵⁴³ By 1915 the advowson of Kington St Michael was with the Bishop of Bristol.⁵⁴⁴

There is no record of endowment to the chapel of St Peter's, Kington Langley.⁵⁴⁵ However, a terrier of the estates of Glastonbury abbey in 1518, records the churchwardens of St Peter's at Kington Langley held $\frac{1}{2}$ a. around the church under a 90-year lease.⁵⁴⁶ From the consecration of the new church in 1855 until the ecclesiastical parish was created in 1865, worship was officiated by curates from Kington St Michael.⁵⁴⁷ Thereafter until 1909 the patronage of St Peter's vicarage belonged to the vicar of Kington St Michael.⁵⁴⁸ From then it was transferred to the bishop of Bristol.⁵⁴⁹

There was a chapel at Easton Piercy by 1319, when it was granted by John de Gyvleton (Yeovilton, Som.) to Ralph de Cromhale.⁵⁵⁰ No incumbent is thereafter recorded, and the chapel was destroyed c.1640.⁵⁵¹

The living of Kington St Michael was valued at £20 in 1291 and 1341, two-thirds of which at the latter date were deemed from tithes.⁵⁵² In c.1535 the tithes of the rectory were worth £6 13s. 4d.⁵⁵³ Robert Long, who farmed the priory, also held the farm of the 'rectory' in 1545 when its value remained the same.⁵⁵⁴ A terrier from the late 16th century records the glebe as a house with garden, home close 4 a. of arable land adjoining 9 a. of arable land in the East Field and 6 a. of arable land in the Ham.⁵⁵⁵ By 1704 the glebe included a dwelling, barn, stable and pigsty, grounds included 3 adjoining closes of approx. 7 a. Furthermore, a close called Swinsell of 6a., 5 a. called Vicarage ham and two plots of $\frac{1}{2}$ a. lying in an enclosure of Thomas Stokes, near the Malmesbury highway.⁵⁵⁶ Tithes had comprised since the late 16th century the tithe hay of Langley (likely Kington Langley) and two tenements in Peckingell, plus the predial

⁵⁴¹ Phillipps, *Institutions*, ii, 7, 27; WAM, xlili, 19-20; J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 71.

⁵⁴² Phillipps, *Institutions*, ii, 42, 51, 54, 89, 90. For patronage from the mid-19th century see *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* e.g. (1859 edn., 1898 edn.), 437, 936.

⁵⁴³ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1898 edn.), 121; TNA, RG 9/196, f. 36r (1861 census).

⁵⁴⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.), 140.

⁵⁴⁵ Note *VCH Wilts*, iii, states that when prioress Amice of St Mary's priory died, in 1298, the 'Rector of Kington Langley' was appointed to oversee the bishop's interests during the period of vacancy. This is likely made in error as the reference refers to Langley, and as such to the St Peter's, Langley Burrell.

⁵⁴⁶ BL, Harl. MS. 3961.- check ref. Noted by Mark.

⁵⁴⁷ Curates for Kington Langley included JJ Daniell. Meers, *Historical Notes on two Villages in Wiltshire: Langley Fitzurse & Draycott Cerne*, 11; Post Office Directory of Wilts, 1859, 437. For establishment of ecclesiastical parish see Youngs, *Admin.Units*, I, 542; *Return of Parishes Divided and Districts Assigned to Churches Under Church Building Acts*, 1863-66 (Parl. Papers, 1867 (529, liv), 12.

⁵⁴⁸ Patronage recorded in directories e.g., *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1867 edn.), 291; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889 edn.), 940; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1903 edn.), 123.

⁵⁴⁹ W.J. Meers, *Historical Notes on two Villages in Wiltshire: Langley Fitzurse & Draycott Cerne* (1956), 11; *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.), 129.

⁵⁵⁰ Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 17.

⁵⁵¹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 236.

⁵⁵² *Tax. Eccles.* 189; *Non. Inq.* 169.

⁵⁵³ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.) II, 113.

⁵⁵⁴ TNA, SC6/HENVIII/3969.

⁵⁵⁵ WSA, D1/24/119/1.

⁵⁵⁶ WSA, D1/24/119/4.

tithe of Kington Langley and Peckingell.⁵⁵⁷ In 1887 the glebe extended to 20 a. and its annual rent was worth £33.⁵⁵⁸

In the church survey of 1649-50, the value of the living of Kington St Michael was £60, although due to the 'insufficiency' of the incumbent, Richard Hine, the vicar was in receipt of £45 with the residue paid to Nicholas Peirce.⁵⁵⁹ In 1711 the value in the Queen's books was recorded as £8 9s. 4½d.⁵⁶⁰ Fifty years later, in 1754, the living was valued at £90 per annum and £100 by 1788.⁵⁶¹ In 1842, the tithe of Kington St Michael was commuted to a rent-charge of £370 to the impropiator William Richard Arthur Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, and £450 to the vicar, Charles Henry Hodgson. On 247 a. tithes were covered by annual payment of 6s. 8d. to the vicar.⁵⁶² By 1889, the living was worth £350 per annum gross from the tithe rent charge, £386 including the 20 a. of glebe.⁵⁶³ In 1894 its net worth was recorded as £282.⁵⁶⁴ By 1915 the glebe land had been reduced to 8 a.⁵⁶⁵

Religious life

Three clerks are recorded for the period in which the abbot of Glastonbury held the patronage: William St Faith (*de Sancta Fide*) (c.1173),⁵⁶⁶ Jordan Cotel (c.1247-69)⁵⁶⁷ and Walter de Schamel (1253).⁵⁶⁸ In 1253 a mandate was given to Berard de Nimpha, papal writer, to imprison Schamel for life and deprive him of his benefice.⁵⁶⁹ The tenure of Cotel as rector of Kington was also troubled, and his relationship with the abbot of Glastonbury was at times strained. The abbot on occasion deprived Cotel of common pasture for his cattle, obstructed a road between Inwood and 'La Sterte' and built houses at Kington Langley. An agreement was finally made in 1269 whereby Cotel released the abbot from all damages incurred by building and quitclaimed all rights of pasture at Inwood. In return he retained a right to run pigs with the abbot's own at Inwood (provided he used the abbot's courtyard to gain access). After harvest the rector was also allowed to graze his cattle with those of the abbot in La Strete and he had a right of road for all carriages.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁵⁷ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS 56), 223-4; WSA, D1/24/119/1-4.

⁵⁵⁸ Return of Parishes all Glebe lands in England and Wales (Parl. Papers, 1887 (307, lxiv), 54. .

⁵⁵⁹ *WAM* 41, 9.

⁵⁶⁰ J. Ecton, *Liber Valorum and Decimarum* (London, 1711), 315.

⁵⁶¹ J. Ecton, *Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticorum* (1754 edn.), 403; J. Ecton and J. Lloyd, *Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus: An Improved Edition of the Liber Valorum; containing an account of the valuation of all the livings in England and Wales* (London, 1788), 313.

⁵⁶² *Abstracts Wilts. Tithe Apportionments* (WRS 30), 66; WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael; TNA, IR 30/38/156, IR 29/38/156.

⁵⁶³ *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1889 edn.), 936.

⁵⁶⁴ *Crockford* (1894 edn.), 47.

⁵⁶⁵ In 1915, Kelly's Directory also recorded the value at £277. *Kelly's Dir. Wilts.* (1915 edn.), 140.

⁵⁶⁶ J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', *WAM*, Vol 4 (1858), 81. William St Faith is also recorded as the first rector of St Michael's on a list displayed in the nave of the church.

⁵⁶⁷ J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', *WAM*, Vol 4 (1858), 81. Cortel is first mentioned in 1247 when a license was given to Joran Cortile, rector of Kington, in the diocese of Salisbury to hold an additional benefice. However, it is not clear if this is Kington St Michael. *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Quoted in Sources for VCH XX.*

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⁵⁶⁸ *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ire*, Vol 1, p. 303.

⁵⁶⁹ *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ire*, Vol 1, p. 303.

⁵⁷⁰ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 142-3, 430-1.

From the late 13th century, after the advowson was acquired by Kington St. Michael priory, the prioress presented William de la More to the living in 1316.⁵⁷¹ Later, Richard Thomelyn was presented in 1349, and Roger Knyght in 1387.⁵⁷² In 1392 Knyght was suspended from the vicarage after he confessed grave faults to the bishop.⁵⁷³ During this period miscreants were sometimes sent to the priory as penance for sexual immorality.⁵⁷⁴

Richard Whete became vicar following the resignation of William Staunden and in 1405 the living was awarded to John White.⁵⁷⁵ In 1408 White exchanged livings with William Malle, vicar of Chieveley (Berks.).⁵⁷⁶ Malle exchanged his office with John Rasyn, vicar of Letcombe Regis (Berks.) the next year.⁵⁷⁷ Later still in 1415, Rasyn exchanged with James Grene, chaplain of a chantry in St. Edmund's, Salisbury.⁵⁷⁸

Richard Hine (or Hind or Hynd) was presented to the living of Kington St Michael in 1612,⁵⁷⁹ and was vicar for over 50 years through the civil war and interregnum. However, by 1650 it was noted that the parish 'hath for a long tyme been voyde of an able godlye orthodox minister', and services had been lately taken by Nicholas Peirce, who received £15 from the living, the residue continuing to be paid to Hine.⁵⁸⁰ On his death in 1663 Hine left bequests to his seven children and sixteen grandchildren. His estate was worth £93. Hine's most valuable asset was his books.⁵⁸¹ He was interred in the churchyard at St Michael's.⁵⁸² Aubrey said [of Hine] 'Our old vicar of Kington St Michael, did sing his sermons rather than reade them.'⁵⁸³

Hine was replaced by John Ferris, who had previously been vicar of Sutton Benger. Ferris held the living in plurality with Biddestone.⁵⁸⁴ On his death, his replacement Richard Humphreys likewise held St Michael's in plurality.⁵⁸⁵ Humphreys's memorial on a flat stone is inscribed in Latin.⁵⁸⁶

Benjamin Griffin was appointed vicar of Kington St Michael in 1712.⁵⁸⁷ He died in 1716 and is commemorated on the north wall of the chancel. A graduate of New College, Oxford, Griffin was credited for rebuilding the vicarage (and another in Colerne, where he had formerly been vicar), his memorial noting they were 'ample monuments to his publick spirit'. His memorial further described 'his life was short, but exemplary.'⁵⁸⁸ In his will Griffin requested that he be interred privately and with as little expense as

⁵⁷¹ Canterbury and York Society The Register of Roger Martiva, vol 1, 64.

⁵⁷² Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 46, 72.

⁵⁷³ Canterbury and York Society Register of John Waltham no 91.

⁵⁷⁴ Canterbury and York Society Register of John Waltham no 1014, 1101, 1129.

⁵⁷⁵ Phillipps, *Institutions*, i, 89, 92.

⁵⁷⁶ Canterbury and York Society Register of Robert Hallum no 37.

⁵⁷⁷ Canterbury and York Society Register of Robert Hallum no 59.

⁵⁷⁸ Canterbury and York Society Register of Robert Hallum no 544.

⁵⁷⁹ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 117107.

⁵⁸⁰ WAM 41, 9-10.

⁵⁸¹ WSA, P3/H/353.

⁵⁸² Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 138.

⁵⁸³ Aubrey, J. (1898). 'Brief Lives,' Chiefly of Contemporaries: A-H. United Kingdom: At the Clarendon Press, vol1, 154. Ed Andrew Clark.

⁵⁸⁴ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 22762.

⁵⁸⁵ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, 51005. Held in plurality with Draycott Cerne and Tytherton Kellaways.

⁵⁸⁶ *Memorial Inscriptions of Wilts.* (WRS 53), 21.

⁵⁸⁷ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 25664; Phillipps, *Institutions*, ii, 51. (in one volume but page numbers end then restart).

⁵⁸⁸ *Memorial Inscriptions of Wilts.* (WRS 53), 19.

possible. He left a bequest of 40s. to be shared among the poor of Kington St Michael and Ditteridge, where he was also rector.⁵⁸⁹

In 1751 William Harington, vicar from 1716, left a half crown to every poor housekeeper in the parish.⁵⁹⁰ During his incumbency the church tower was demolished and replaced, and his name was inscribed on one of the recast bells.⁵⁹¹ He is buried in the south-west of the churchyard.⁵⁹² After his death his wife gifted a silver paten to the church.⁵⁹³ Like most of his predecessors, John Scrope vicar of Kington St Michael from 1751, also held another living, being rector of Castle Combe.⁵⁹⁴ Scrope was also a scholar, and lord of the manor of Castle Combe from 1774 until his death in 1778.⁵⁹⁵

Edmund Garden was vicar from 1779 until his death aged 92 in 1824.⁵⁹⁶ Garden's father had been the tutor of Sir James Tylney Long (the patron of the living) and the Garden family were on friendly terms with Long.⁵⁹⁷ According to the observations of archdeacon Cohan in 1787, Garden only resided in the parish for two or three months a year (he was also a reader at Grays's Inn). In his absence services were taken by a curate, John Kemble (one of several employed at Kington St Michael since the 16th century),⁵⁹⁸ who resided in the vicarage.⁵⁹⁹ Garden's long absences from the parish persisted and he leased out the vicarial tithes.⁶⁰⁰ On his death, he was resident of Kington St Michael and of New North Street, Red Lion Square, Middlesex.⁶⁰¹ Garden was also perpetual curate of St Botolph without Aldgate, London.⁶⁰² It was remarked on his death that he had been a reader at Gray's Inn for 60 years. The *Evening Mail* also noted 'He was a man of the most benevolent disposition, and his long life was passed in the practice of every Christian virtue.'⁶⁰³

Edward Awdry, a graduate of St Catherine's College, Cambridge, was incumbent of St Michael's from 1856 until 1896. He retired to Chippenham and died aged 92 in 1903.⁶⁰⁴ Awdry was a friend of the diarist Francis Kilvert, a frequent visitor to the parish, and on occasion Kilvert preached sermons at St Michael's church.⁶⁰⁵ Awdry made a significant impact during his tenure which included the major renovation of St Michael's church and the creation of St Peter's at Kington Langley. He also took a keen interest in parochial governance and was perpetual chairman of the vestry committee.⁶⁰⁶ His obituary stated 'No priest was ever held in greater reverence, love

⁵⁸⁹ TNA, PROB 11/561/192.

⁵⁹⁰ TNA, PROB 11/789/423; Phillipps, *Institutions*, ii, 54.

⁵⁹¹ J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 83; Walters, *Church Bells of Wilts*, 111.

⁵⁹² J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 88.

⁵⁹³ J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 83.

⁵⁹⁴ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 76138

⁵⁹⁵ J.E. Jackson, 'Kington St Michael', WAM, Vol 4 (1858), 81; G. Poulett Scrope, *His. of ...Castle Combe* (1852), 352.

⁵⁹⁶ *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 92718.

⁵⁹⁷ WSA, 2943B/2.

⁵⁹⁸ E.g. *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 83464, 152865.

⁵⁹⁹ WSA, D3/14/1; *Wilts. Returns to the Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS 27), 128.

⁶⁰⁰ WSA, 109/938, 777/12.

⁶⁰¹ TNA, PROB 11/1687/293. His Middlesex address was also given in his death notices which were extensively published in the metropolitan press, e.g. *Bell's Weekly Messenger* – 06, 07 June 1824; *Evening Mail* - Friday 04 June 1824.

⁶⁰² *Clergy of the C of E Database*, ID 92718.

⁶⁰³ *Evening Mail*, 4 Jun 1824.

⁶⁰⁴ *Crockford* (1868 edn.)? *Crockford* (1894 edn.), 47; *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 1752-1900, Vol 1, 103.

⁶⁰⁵ E.g. *Kilvert Diaries*, ii, 167, iii, 115, 176-7.

⁶⁰⁶ WSA, 1187/15.

and esteem by his flock, than Mr Awdry whose kindly, generous and courteous disposition will long be cherished by his old parishioners'.⁶⁰⁷

During the tenure of Awdry, Kilvert recounted that in 1875 Mrs Prodgers (Emily, the wife of Herbert Prodgers) and her children were represented in a new glass window in the parish church. The window was titled 'Suffer little children to come unto me'. Kilvert observed, 'The whole thing is the laughing stock of the village and countryside.'⁶⁰⁸ The east window, signed Cox and Son, remained in 2023 and also depicts the Nativity and Ascension.

In 1676 the church at Kington St Michael had 331 communicants.⁶⁰⁹ A century later, in 1783, according to the newly installed curate, John Kemble, divine service was taken each Sunday morning and afternoon and during the week on Wednesday and Friday. Communion was celebrated monthly. However, due to the newness of the post he declined to provide the number of congregants who attended worship.⁶¹⁰ In 1851, Sunday services continued to be held morning and afternoon. The average number of communicants was recorded as 260 in the morning and 330 in the afternoon, including 70 Sunday Scholars at both services. The congregation recorded on Census Sunday was lower, but according to the resident curate this was due to the wet weather and half the parish residing a mile and a half away from the parish church.⁶¹¹

A number of bequests were administered by the vicar and churchwardens of Kington St Michael, many of which were in 2023 displayed on benefaction boards in the nave adjacent to the entrance.⁶¹² In his 1664 will (pr. 1670), William Woodruffe left an annuity of 30s. per annum from the rent charged on property in Chippenham. He allocated 10s. to pay the vicar to preach a sermon annually on the 18 September at Kington St Michael parish church, 'in remembrance' according to his will 'of God's mercy in preserving me in a wonderful manner from drowning at Peckengell Bridge on 18 September 1656.' In his preaching the minister was instructed to 'excite and stir up the people to be mindful of mercies returned. And to be in all holy obedience and thankfulness for the same'. The rest of the annuity was given to the poor on the same day.⁶¹³ An annual sermon was still being preached in 1834.⁶¹⁴ By 1905, the sermon was given by the vicar 'or some other clergyman'.⁶¹⁵ In 1783 the archdeacon ordered churchwardens to enquire into the endowment of the school and to put a board in the church describing the charity.⁶¹⁶

Local tradition suggests that there is a mass grave for victims of the Black Death immediately south of the chancel.⁶¹⁷

Nonconformity

⁶⁰⁷ *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 23 May 1903.

⁶⁰⁸ Kilvert's Diaries, iii, 150, 152.

⁶⁰⁹ *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 128.

⁶¹⁰ *Wilts. Returns to the Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS 27), 128.

⁶¹¹ TNA, HO 129/253.

⁶¹² See also social history.

⁶¹³ TNA, PROB 11/332/274. Date given erroneously as 1694 by *Abstract of the Returns of Charitable Donations for the Benefit of Poor Persons, made by the Ministers and Churchwardens of the several parishes and townships in England and Wales 1786-1788* (Parl. Papers. 1816 (511), 1344.

⁶¹⁴ *Endowed Charities (County of Wilts) Report* (Parl. Papers 1908 (273), lxxx), 589.

⁶¹⁵ *Endowed Charities (County of Wilts) Report* (Parl. Papers 1908 (273), lxxx), 589.

⁶¹⁶ WSA, D3/14/.

⁶¹⁷ Information provided by Colin ... [Mar 2023].

Pre-1850s references to Kington St Michael parish may include nonconformist activity in Kington Langley. There were reported to be 30 nonconformists in Kington St Michael in 1676, by which time the parish had an active Quaker community.⁶¹⁸ In 1672 the Quaker, John Gingell of Kington St Michael, was prosecuted for the non-payment of tithes, following a complaint by the vicar, John Ferris.⁶¹⁹ According to the *Wiltshire Friends Suffering Book*, Gingell was sued after refusing to pay 30s., after which Ferris 'had taken from him one horse worth £6'. Gingell was later imprisoned for four months in 1684 for refusing to worship at the parish church.⁶²⁰ During the same year his home, the former priory of St Mary, was used as a Quaker meeting house.⁶²¹ The location of the meeting was probably convenient as it was close to the village, but far enough away to avoid constant oversight. In 1696 the Quaker burial of John Gingell of the priory of St Mary, Kington St Michael, was recorded, one of a number of Quakers from the parish whose interments were documented.⁶²²

In 1686 churchwardens' presentments recorded that the parish had a long list of people who did not receive communion.⁶²³ Later, after the enactment of the Act of Toleration in 1689, Charles Barrett had his dwelling in Kington St Michael registered as a meeting house.⁶²⁴ The Kington Quaker Particular Meetings were associated with those of Brinkworth with Chippenham, Slaughterford and Corsham.⁶²⁵ However, the location of its meetings was rotated amongst its members, who resided in Kington as well as Sutton Benger, East Tytherton, Stanton St Quinton and Langley Burrell.⁶²⁶

The persecution of local Quakers continued into the 18th century. Notably, the Quaker preacher Roger Cook had goods confiscated by agents of James Long, impropiator of the benefice of Kington St Michael, annually from 1707 until his death in 1718.⁶²⁷

The development of nonconformity abated for several decades, and no dissenters were recorded in the parish for bishop's visitations queries in 1783.⁶²⁸ However, in the 19th century religious nonconformity in the parish developed rapidly. An Independent meeting house was first registered at a dwelling in the occupation of James Miles in Kington St Michael in 1823.⁶²⁹ Two separate meeting houses were further registered in domestic places in the village within three days of each other

⁶¹⁸ *Wiltshire Notes & Queries* Vol. iii, 536; A. Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 128. No local Quaker congregation were listed in "Sarum Diocese, with the Peculiar of the Deann of Sarum Conventices in, 1669" *Trans. of Sal. Field Club*, vol 1, 36-44.

⁶¹⁹ J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, (London, 1753), II, 44.

⁶²⁰ WSA, 1699/18.

⁶²¹ As recorded in the *Suffering Book* in connection with the prosecution of Charles Barret the younger of Kington St Michael. WSA, 1699/18.

⁶²² *Wilts Notes & Queries*, 5, 281. See also *Wilts Notes & Queries*, 5,6,7.

⁶²³ WSA, D/1/54/11/..

⁶²⁴ J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, (London, 1753), II, 44; *WN&Q*, Vol 2, 181; *Wilts. Dissenters Meeting House Certificates* (WRS 40), 7; WSA, A1/110/ H1699. See also VCH Wilts, iii, 117.

⁶²⁵ K.S.T. Kay, *Society, Schism, and Sufferings: the first 70 years of Quakerism in Wiltshire*. PHD, 2006. University of the West of England. 111.

⁶²⁶ K.S.T. Kay, *Society, Schism, and Sufferings: the first 70 years of Quakerism in Wiltshire*. PHD, 2006. University of the West of England. 107-8.

⁶²⁷ WSA, 1699/18. Cook was called 'a publick friend' i.e. a preacher in the logging of his death in the *Sufferings Book* and at his burial (*Wilts Notes & Queries*, 6, 132.).

⁶²⁸ *Wilts. Returns to the Bishop's Visitation Queries 1783* (WRS 27), 128. Note the curate who made the return had only recently moved to the parish.

⁶²⁹ *Wilts. Dissenters Meeting House Certificates* (WRS 40), 100; WSA, D1/9/2/1.

during 1824. All three were associated with J.E. Good of the Endless Street Chapel, Salisbury.⁶³⁰

In 1835 a building called Bethesda in the possession of Benjamin Rees, George Tanner and others was registered for worship in Kington St Michael.⁶³¹ The Bethesda Chapel, Honey Knob Hill, was Independent. Erected in 1835, it included a separate school room.⁶³² The chapel was, like the Union Chapel, in shared ownership and administered by trustees.⁶³³ The Bethesda Chapel, Kington St Michael was closed and converted to domestic use probably by 1985.⁶³⁴

According to returns on census Sunday in 1851, 70 attended the Bethesda chapel, in Kington St Michael, and unlike the parish church all the sittings were free.⁶³⁵

Clergy houses

A house and land valued at 44s. belonged to the rectory in 1341.⁶³⁶ A residence for the vicar of Kington St Michael was included in glebe terriers from the 16th century to the south-west of the parish church on the south side of Stubbs Lane.⁶³⁷ In 1663 the premises comprised parlour chamber, parlour, malt loft, buttery, kitchen and a chamber over parlour and another over the buttery.⁶³⁸ The structure was remodelled during the tenure of Benjamin Griffin c.1712-16 when the ashlar east front was added. It was altered in the 19th century, additions including a gable plaque that reads *Nisi Dominus 1897* to the range at the rear.⁶³⁹ It was described in 1787 as 'a pretty good house in tolerable repair.'⁶⁴⁰ The house is now called the Old Rectory and is grade II listed.⁶⁴¹ In 2023 the team rector for Kington St Michael was not resident in the parish.

Church architecture

St Michael's church comprises a nave, north and south aisles, chancel, south porch and tower to the west. Elements of the church date from the 12th century.⁶⁴² Surviving Norman portions include the wide arch between the nave and chancel and the columns beside the door.⁶⁴³ The building was probably remodelled during the tenure of Michael of Amesbury as abbot of Glastonbury 1235-52; adaptations included the addition of a spire to the original tower (likely Norman).⁶⁴⁴ The 13th-century chancel with piscina and south aisle remain. Abbot Michael reputedly appears in an effigy as a gargoyle on the outside north wall.⁶⁴⁵ John Aubrey's sketches of the church four centuries later

⁶³⁰ *Wilts. Dissenters Meeting House Certificates* (WRS 40), 105; WSA, D1/9/2/1; *The Baptist Magazine*, Vol XVII (1825), 18; *Salisbury & Winchester Journal*, 16 August 1824.

⁶³¹ *Wilts. Dissenters Meeting House Certificates* (WRS 40), 139; WSA, D1/9/2/1.

⁶³² TNA, HO 253/129.

⁶³³ Designated as such in the Tithe Apportionment in 1840. WSA, D/1/25/T/A/Kington St. Michael.

⁶³⁴ Holden, *Wilts, Noncon. Chapels and Meeting Houses*, 123.

⁶³⁵ TNA, HO 129/253.

⁶³⁶ *Non. Inq.* 169.

⁶³⁷ *Wilts. Glebe Terriers* (WRS 56), 223-224.

⁶³⁸ WSA, P3/H/353.

⁶³⁹ HER, 1363830.

⁶⁴⁰ WSA, D3/14/1.

⁶⁴¹ HER, 1363830.

⁶⁴² Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 378-9.

⁶⁴³ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 378-9.

⁶⁴⁴ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 134; J. Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire: Displayed in Statistical, Historical and Descriptive Sketches*, III (London: J.D. Derwick, 1801), 150. Note, Aubrey's sketch of the window formerly in the tower, with chevron arches is suggestive of this date.

⁶⁴⁵ *Wilts N&Q*, 1, 261

suggest that it was a significant spire topped with a weather cock;⁶⁴⁶ the tower, however, was in such a poor condition, that he suggested it 'will shortly fall'.⁶⁴⁷ The tower and spire eventually collapsed during the great storm in 1703. After being given diocesan permission to rebuild the tower minus the spire in 1723, it was replaced c.1726.⁶⁴⁸ On Christmas day 1990 part of the tower collapsed in high winds while a service was being conducted, injuring four people.⁶⁴⁹

In 1755 the north aisle was rebuilt, although it has been suggested that windows in the aisle appear to be of an earlier date.⁶⁵⁰ The church was described by Archdeacon Cohan as in 'tolerable repair' in 1787.⁶⁵¹ However, by 1822 it was noted that the north side of the church had given way and it was 'out of its perpendicular direction'.⁶⁵²

In 1858, following the induction of Edward Awdry as incumbent, the church was renovated under the direction of architect, John Henry Hakewill, and the builder E. Miller of Seagry. The arches were strengthened, the roofs to the nave and south aisle replaced, galleries were removed, and the vestry room to the north of the chancel was rebuilt. The pews were removed, and open sittings provided. The number of sittings was increased to 319. Several 'debased' windows were replaced. One in the south aisle was used to commemorate John Aubrey and John Britton whose initials appear in a knot, and another was created as a memorial to the curate Edward Rowlandson in the chancel. The estimated cost was £800 but was exceeded. The expense was met by donations from the principal owners and residents of land. These included the Earl of Mornington and the vicar.⁶⁵³ The edifice was later described as 'terribly over restored'.⁶⁵⁴ In 1874 Francis Kilvert recorded that the roof of the chancel had been lately raised and a new east window had replaced an early English one.⁶⁵⁵ The new east window by Cox and Sons was financed by Herbert Prodggers and purportedly depicts his wife and children.⁶⁵⁶ The Grade II listed lychgate, by H Brakspear, was erected in memory of Prodggers by his widow, Emily in 1917.⁶⁵⁷

John Aubrey described one of the church bells of Kington St Michael dating from around 1600 as having been stolen 'about 1649', at the same time as another was stolen from Sutton Benger.⁶⁵⁸ He also stated that a legacy from Adam Milsham was used for a clock and chimes that included £10 for their maintenance. 'A smyth was clerke in the

⁶⁴⁶ SAL, JAC/006, f. 16.

⁶⁴⁷ Aubrey's sketches of the tower show it had a number of large cracks. Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 134. SAL, JAC/006, f. 19.

⁶⁴⁸ WSA, D/1/61/1/A/113; *Devizes and Wilts. Gaz.*, 21 Jan 1858, 3; *Wilts N&Q*, 1, 260-1; J. Britton, Aubrey's *Natural History of Wiltshire*, 99-100.

⁶⁴⁹ The incident was reported in newspapers nationwide including:- *Daily Mail*, 26 Dec, 4 1990; *Dundee Courier*, 26 Dec 1990, 8; *Sandwell Evening Mail*, 26 Dec 1990, 2; *Birmingham Mail*, 26 Dec 1990, 2.

⁶⁵⁰ HER, 1283509; Cherry and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 281. Dating of aisle comes from notes in the parish registers. WSA, 1187/4 see also *Gleanings from Wilts. Parish Registers* (WRS 63), 138.

⁶⁵¹ WSA, D3/14/1.

⁶⁵² *Memorial Inscriptions of Wilts.* (WRS 53), 21.

⁶⁵³ *Devizes and Wilts. Gaz.*, 21 Jan 1858, 3; *Church Rambler*, vol 2, 1878, 505-6, 513-14. See also <https://images.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/luna/servlet/detail/LPLIBLPL~34~34~100350~115266> <https://images.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/luna/servlet/detail/LPLIBLPL~34~34~100360~115267> [accessed 09 Mar 2023]. The addition of memorials to Aubrey and Britton have been the result of a suggestion published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol 202 (1857), 203.

⁶⁵⁴ Orbach and Pevsner, *Wilts*, 379.

⁶⁵⁵ Kilvert, iii, 86.

⁶⁵⁶ Kilvert's *Diaries*, iii, 150, 152. The window is noted in the Jackson papers as being replaced by Herbert Prodggers. SAL, JAC/006, f. 20.

⁶⁵⁷ HER, 1022338.

⁶⁵⁸ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 138.

troublesome times, and converted the iron of the chimes to his owne use, A clocke the Parish hath gott lately again.⁶⁵⁹ Following the demolition of the church tower in 1724, the bells were recast by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester. They were inscribed with the names of the vicar and churchwardens and further with good wishes to the neighbourhood and church.⁶⁶⁰ Payments were made for ringing the curfew bell until 1867.⁶⁶¹ A tradition, later recounted by Francis Kilvert, was that the church bells at Kington St Michael were rung on the slightest provocation.⁶⁶²

Interred within the church are Richard Aubrey, Esq., Sir Thomas Snell, Sir Charles Snell, Thomas Tyndale, Esq. and his wife Dorothy, and Nicholas Gastrell.⁶⁶³ In the south aisle, John Power of Kington, a 'practitioner of physic' (died 1647).⁶⁶⁴

St Michael's church is Grade II* listed.⁶⁶⁵

The parish registers were described by Aubrey in the 17th century as 'one of the fairest in the countrey'.⁶⁶⁶ They survive from 1563.⁶⁶⁷ The registers are notable for plague entries. One dated 4 May 1582 records 'here the plague began' and another 6 August notes 'here the plague rested'.⁶⁶⁸ Registers record the creation of seats for use by specific families from 1620.⁶⁶⁹

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Manorial government

Kington St Michael and Kington Langley tithings were part of Chippenham hundred at Domesday and remained within the hundred until North Damerham hundred was established at the end of the 13th century.⁶⁷⁰ The tithing of Easton Piercy was in Thorngrove hundred in 1084. By the early 14th century it was in Startley hundred and by 1377, along with the other Startley tithings (with the possible exception of Christian Malford) Easton Piercy was in Malmesbury Hundred.⁶⁷¹

The medieval manor, which included both Kington tithings, was administered at a court held at Kington St Michael. A court baron styled as a hallmoot was held twice each year at Michaelmas and Hockday. A court leet and view of frankpledge was held the same day. In some years the hundred court for North Damerham hundred was also kept at Kington St Michael at the same times as the hallmoot.⁶⁷² At other times the hundred court took place at Grittleton. It is unclear whether this was arranged by rotation or for convenience. In 1304 the manorial account recorded that £6 1s. 9d. was raised from the villeins at a court of recognition that may have been held at a different

⁶⁵⁹ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 138; *Gleanings from Wilts. Parish Registers* (WRS 63), 137.

⁶⁶⁰ K.R. Clew, *Kington Michael a Brief Guide* (1981); Walters, *Church Bells of Wilts*, 318; WSA, 2683/4, 1187/33; Britton, *Aubrey's Natural History of Wiltshire*, 99-100.

⁶⁶¹ WSA, 1187/1.

⁶⁶² Kilvert's *Diaries*, iii, 176. See also, Badeni, *Wiltshire Forefathers*, 94.

⁶⁶³ Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire*, 151.

⁶⁶⁴ Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire*, 151

⁶⁶⁵ HER, 1283509.

⁶⁶⁶ Aubrey, *Topog. Colln.* ed. Jackson, 137.

⁶⁶⁷ WSA, 1187/1-18. *Gleanings from Wilts. Parish Registers* (WRS 63), 136-38.

⁶⁶⁸ WSA, 1187/1.

⁶⁶⁹ *Gleanings from Wilts. Parish Registers* (WRS 63), 136-8.

⁶⁷⁰ See introduction to volume, *Chippenham Hundred*.

⁶⁷¹ VCH, *Wilts*, 14, 5-8.

⁶⁷² Longleat manorial account, 11244 (1275), 11273 (1300), 11215 (1306), 10633 (1335).

session to either the hallmoot or hundred courts, as well as an additional court held by the cellarer.⁶⁷³

Each manor held by Glastonbury abbey appears to have had their own reeve, while a bailiff oversaw all manors plus Winterbourne Monkton, Badbury (in Chiseldon) and Ashbury (Berks.). The manor courts were presided over by the bailiff and a steward. The progress of officers in a circuit around the Glastonbury bailiwicks usually took place in the same order and extended beyond North Damerham hundred; beginning at Nettleton, it then moved to Grittleton, Kington St Michael, Christian Malford, Winterborne Monkton, Badbury and Ashbury, with Idmiston and Damerham added from the early 1330s.⁶⁷⁴ They were usually assisted by one reeve (*prepositus*),⁶⁷⁵ although occasionally two might be appointed, as in 1314.⁶⁷⁶

Kington St Michael at times acted as a hub for the Glastonbury abbey manors in North Damerham hundred and consequently hallmoots for Christian Malford were held at Kington St Michael on 1 Nov 1407 and 19 May 1408, on the same days as the Kington St Michael hallmoots.⁶⁷⁷

In 1417-18 the law hundred (tourn) was held at Kington St Michael with business conducted for Kington St Michael, Kington Langley, Christian Malford (east and west tithings), Nettleton and Grittleton. The tithingmen of each of these tithings made presentments.⁶⁷⁸

Tithingmen for Kington (St Michael) and (Kington) Langley attended the hundred court in 1480, reporting tapsters, brewers, a minor brawl and the prioress of Kington for failure to maintain access routes.⁶⁷⁹

A court book covering the period 1558-77 includes entries for a combined manor court for Kington St Michael and Kington Langley quarterly, with court leets held at Hockday and Michaelmas. One or two tithingman were routinely appointed for either Kington St Michael and Langley, although in 1565 John Necke made presentments for both tithings.⁶⁸⁰ The court regularly selected two waywardens to act for Kington and two for Langley, in addition to two affeerors to act on behalf of both tithings. In 1570, field supervisors and supervisors of the sheep were also selected. Field supervisors were again selected in 1572. These additional appointments, no doubt, related to cases of trespass of animals. The court leet heard cases of trespass and debt up to 39s. 11d., and also of assault, highway maintenance and breaking the assize; and the court baron cases arising from hedges and field boundaries. Tenants (the homage) were responsible for the stocks and cucking stool while the lord for the rook net. Aside from regular items, noteworthy issues at the court leet included the regulation of enclosures and admittance into land newly enclosed, excessive tolls charged by the miller, card and ball games. One brewer, Edith Brown, a widow, and her daughters were suspected of witchcraft in 1574, an accusation which is unlikely to have resulted in more than mild censure as she was subsequently recorded as a brewer again the following year.⁶⁸¹

The court book for 1644-50 shows that the courts divided into separate sessions for the leet and baron. These were held on the same day at Michaelmas and Hockday. An

⁶⁷³ Longleat manorial account, 11271 (1304), Longleat hundred court, 10657 (1418)

⁶⁷⁴ Keil, *Glastonbury estates* (PhD thesis), 60.

⁶⁷⁵ Longleat, account, 11272 (1302), 11215 (1306), 10633 (1335).

⁶⁷⁶ Longleat, account, 11216.

⁶⁷⁷ Somerset Heritage Centre, T/PH/lon/2/29/10659 microfilm copy of Longleat court roll.

⁶⁷⁸ Requires reference from Mark.

⁶⁷⁹ Longleat, hundred court, 10746.

⁶⁸⁰ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

⁶⁸¹ WSA, CC/Bish/459/1.

additional court baron was held 1 May 1647 to deal with an admission and surrender by Nicholas Snell to himself and Thomas his son. It is likely this unusual court was summoned specifically for this transaction involving members of the Snell family, holders of the manor. Court leet activities during this period focused on issues concerning highways and ditches. To this end two supervisors of the highway were annually appointed. By 1644, the court leet had stopped recording the names of butchers, bakers and brewers. At the Hockday court in 1647, the tenants of Kington St Michael were ordered to repair the stocks. By the next court (Michaelmas 1647) they had still not made the repairs and the inhabitants of Langley were required to construct stocks of their own.⁶⁸²

Once the manor of Kington St Michael had been divided among the heirs of Charles Snell in 1656, the manor court was also divided in an extremely unusual way, with at least one interested party holding a separate court for their third. John Sadler held a court baron explicitly stated to be for 'his property or share of the manor' on three consecutive months in 1658, at each of which James Gastrell surrendered copyholds. Sixteen further courts baron were held between April 1660 and August 1670, at which almost all the business was transfers of copyholds with a few repairs, but no appointments of officers or leet business.⁶⁸³ Although a subsequent court book has not survived in the possession of Wiltshire archives or Wiltshire Museum, the latter possess typed transcripts compiled in 1913 of several court proceedings held for Kington St Michael between 1757 and 1894. These notes, if accurate, suggest the coheirs of the manor later combined their court proceedings.⁶⁸⁴

Aubrey gives extracts of a court baron held at Easton Peircy 1428; however, no subsequent evidence of manorial government exists for the manor.⁶⁸⁵

Parish government

No separate vestry minutes for Kington St Michael have survived before 1854. There are no overseers' or highway surveyors' accounts and no churchwardens' accounts prior to the 20th century. These make meaningful abstractions about parochial governance difficult before 1854.⁶⁸⁶ However, a memorial in the parish church commemorating Daniel Yealfe who died in 1779, having held the position of vestry clerk from *c.*1729, suggests that a vestry committee with administrative support was operational from 1729 if not before.⁶⁸⁷

Overseers provided returns to parliament on welfare expenditure when requested from 1776 (the earliest date at which returns were required) and supplied detailed evidence (for all tithings) to a Lords select committee on their welfare

⁶⁸² WSA, 1305/125.

⁶⁸³ WSA, 1305/125.

⁶⁸⁴ WM, MSS.807/1. They were deposited by G.A.H. White, a Chippenham solicitor and historian, so are presumably authentic (inf from Ms J. Schon, Wilts. museum).

⁶⁸⁵ Aubrey *Topog. Colln.*, 439.

⁶⁸⁶ Note, Highway surveyors appointed for each tithing at courts leet in both 16th and 17th centuries when much of the business of the courts related to the maintenance of highways.

⁶⁸⁷ Note, the memorial records he was 'vestry clerk' for 50 years [WRS 53, 21 states 30 years whereas WAM 4, 87 states 50 years] and 'parish clerk' for 16. A 'parish' clerk is likely to have held duties that concerned the maintenance of the church rather than parochial government. However, these roles were often combined.

expenditure 1829-30.⁶⁸⁸ These show that between 1776 and 1834 the parish was providing out-relief (including medical care) above what was required under statute, while also regularly pursuing litigation on settlement and removals; this implies that attempts were being made to manage parochial welfare administration effectively. The parish entered Chippenham poor law union in 1835.⁶⁸⁹

Expenditure was sometimes listed in government statistics for Kington St Michael separately from its tithing, Kington Langley. For example, in government statistics in 1822, figures were given for Kington St Michael separately for 1816-19 and 1821 but merged with Kington Langley in 1820.⁶⁹⁰ Later they were combined in 1826-7 and separated in 1828-9.⁶⁹¹ It is possible, therefore, that decades before the creation of Kington Langley civil parish (in 1866), aspects of its parochial administration were being managed independently from Kington St Michael.

Kington St Michael vestry minutes have survived from 1854 until the body's abolition and the parish council's creation in 1895.⁶⁹² From 1857 the vestry was chaired at all but a few occasions by the rector, Edward Awdry. Aside from meetings at Lady Day to elect churchwardens, overseers, guardians of the poor and highway surveyors or waywardens, vestry meetings were held five to eight times each year. In addition to the regular office holders, from 1860 two collectors and assessors of taxes were selected, and in 1861 two constables were nominated. In 1875 a deputy overseer was appointed at a salary of £5 per annum. An examination of the minutes across 40 years shows selection for these roles tended to remain in the hands of a small number on the vestry committee. The number of vestry meetings was reduced after 1889 during Awdry's late old age.⁶⁹³

The administration of Lyte's almshouses was a recurring theme at vestry meetings, particularly following the death of an inmate.⁶⁹⁴ If more than one candidate was suggested, each would be proposed and seconded and then their individual merits debated, leading to the election of one man. In 1858 a motion was carried whereby 'no parochial relief be given to inhabitants of the alms-houses except in cases of illness'. It is pertinent that in the minutes all members of the vestry were addressed as 'Mr' while the applicants for the almshouses were addressed by name only. The committee laid down strict rules about the tenancy of a room. In 1874 it was ordered that 'anyone leaving their room for 3 months will be considered as vacating it and no lodgers are allowed to reside with inmates.'⁶⁹⁵

The upkeep of roads was another perennial concern. In 1863 rates were raised for general road repairs and the building of a bridge in 'Swindley' (Stanton?) Lane.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁸⁸ *Select Committee of House of Lords on Poor Laws and Petitions Praying for Relief from Paperism. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix etc.* (Parl. Papers, 1831 (227, VIII)), 296. Poor Law Returns e.g. 1804, 563-3; 1818, 494-5.

⁶⁸⁹ Youngs, *Admin. Units*, 702-3.

⁶⁹⁰ *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix; Supplemental Appendix (1819-22)* (Parl. Papers 1822 (556), v. DXVII), 187.

⁶⁹¹ *Account of Money expended for Relief of Poor in England and Wales, 1824-29. 1830-1. Paper 83. Vol 11.* 217.

⁶⁹² WSA, 1187/15. In several places a number of pages have been cut out e.g. between 22 Apr 1875 and 25 Mar 1876, suggesting there has been some editing of the volume.

⁶⁹³ WSA, 1187/15. 26 Mar 1860, 21 Feb 1861, 25 Mar 1862 21 Apr 1862. In 1855, two overseers and two waywardens were selected for Kington and two for each officer for the tithing of Kington Langley. 25 Mar 1855. Kington Langley was not subsequently mentioned. A sexton was paid £3. 5s. in 1860 9 April 1860.

⁶⁹⁴ WSA, 11/87. E.g. 14 Mar 1870 10 Mar 1885.

⁶⁹⁵ WSA, 1187/15. 5 Jan 1874.

⁶⁹⁶ WSA, 1187/15. 11 June 1863.

The following year a portion of the poor rates was used to offset road maintenance. In October 1871 the vestry considered road widening and building a bridge over the brook near Collett farm. To reduce costs, the highway surveyor was requested to ask landowners in the parish for subscriptions.⁶⁹⁷

No parish council minutes have been deposited in the Wiltshire archives for the period before 1938.⁶⁹⁸ However, between 1894 and 1938 the meetings were recorded in a single minute book, anecdotes from which were published in the *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser* in 1938. These show that the parish council originally comprised six councillors. Its first chairman was Louis Robins of Easton Piercy.⁶⁹⁹ In 2023 there were nine councillors and monthly meetings were held on the third Thursday of each month apart from August and December.⁷⁰⁰ Minutes of council and annual meetings (held each May) were available online in 2023 from 2015.

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⁶⁹⁷ WSA, 1187/15.

⁶⁹⁸ For the later period see WSA, 1787/1 (1938-1963), 1798/2 (1963-1978).

⁶⁹⁹ *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 17 Dec 1938.

⁷⁰⁰ See <https://www.kingtonstmichaelparishcouncil.gov.uk/about/> [accessed 31 Jul 2023].