

VCH GLOUCESTERSHIRE, VOL 13: REVISED DRAFT, MARCH 2015

A HISTORY OF
THE COUNTY OF
GLOUCESTER

VOLUME XIII

THE VALE OF GLOUCESTER

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THE VALE OF GLOUCESTER

THIS volume describes the history of thirteen ancient Gloucestershire parishes which all border or lie close to the river Severn or one of its tributaries, the Leadon.¹ Ten contiguous parishes form a block of land lying immediately north and north-west of Gloucester through which those rivers flow; they are Ashleworth, Bulley, Hartpury, Lassington, Maisemore, Norton, Rudford and Highleadon, Sandhurst, Tibberton and Upleadon. Two parishes below Gloucester, Elmore and Minsterworth, oppose each other across the Severn, and are separated from the main block by the ancient parish of Churcham (including Highnam and Over), which shares many of the characteristics of its neighbours, but whose history is given elsewhere.² Twyning is an outlier, 19km NNE of Gloucester and surrounded on all sides except the south by Worcestershire. Two small parishes, Bulley and Lassington, were absorbed by Churcham and Highnam respectively in 1935, and in the same year Rudford and its hamlet Highleadon, which had separate civil parish status from 1866, were reunited; in 1976 Rudford was renamed Rudford and Highleadon. With the exceptions of Elmore, which in 1885 gained 219 a. from Hardwicke,³ and Maisemore, which lost part of Alney island to Gloucester in 1967, the parishes included in this volume have undergone no major boundary alterations.⁴

LANDSCAPE

The bedrock geology beneath much of the area is Mercian Mudstone (formerly known as Keuper Marl), but east of a line running approximately from Minsterworth to Woolridge (in Hartpury) beds of Blue Lias overlie the marl, except in parts of Norton and Twyning. The Severn has formed a wide floodplain along which alluvium and gravels mantle the marls and shales, with tidal flood silts below Gloucester. Superficial alluvial deposits occur also in the Avon and Leadon valleys.

¹ This introduction was written in 2014. Statements not supported by footnotes are derived from evidence discussed and referenced elsewhere in this volume.

² *VCH Glos.* X, 11-29.

³ The history of that area, Farleys End, is given with Hardwicke, *VCH Glos.* X, 178-88.

⁴ Upleadon gained land from Newent and Pauntley in 1992, but this volume is concerned with the parish before this addition.

INTRODUCTION

The Severn wandering in its broad vale is the area's dominant topographical feature. At its Upper Parting, flanked by Sandhurst and Maisemore, the river divides to form an island, Alney, opposite Gloucester; nearby Maisemore weir is the usual tidal limit of its principal, west, channel. It is likely that the west channel as an alternative river course formed during inundation in 1483. The Leadon, which rises in Herefordshire and flows into the west Severn channel below Maisemore, drains with its tributary streams the typically low-lying country extending west and north towards the forest of Dean and the Malvern hills. Two other local rivers flowing from the east augment the Severn: the Warwickshire Avon at Mythe below Twynning, and the Chelt at Norton. Flooding, occasionally with dramatic consequences, is a perennial hazard along the rivers, tempering the lives and economies of those who have settled beside them, and who with floodgates, banks and dykes have sought to tame them. Land reclamation at Elmore and Minsterworth has connected former islets to the riverbanks, and the course of the Leadon was modified between 1861 and 1867 to improve drainage.

Beyond the extensive rich but vulnerable meadows the terrain is relatively flat and unremarkable, generally between 15m and 35m above Ordnance datum, but punctuated by distinctive hills, including Catsbury and Limbury in Hartpury, Foscombe hill in Ashleworth and Lassington hill. Here, and along prominent ridges overlooking the Severn, such as Sandhurst and Norton hills, Longridge in Ashleworth, and Woolridge in Hartpury and Maisemore, the land rises to 70m and higher. By contrast Corse Lawn is poorly-drained former marshland extending south from Corse and Staunton (formerly Worcs.) into Hartpury and Ashleworth.

In the Saxon and early medieval periods there were extensive tracts of woodland. West of the Severn that portion of Malvern forest known subsequently as Corse chase was probably heavily wooded, and formed an attractive resource for its monastic landlords. Large woodland quotas for Tibberton and Upleadon are recorded in Domesday Book. Here and elsewhere, including the parishes east of the Severn, woodland and woodland-clearance names abound, and the settlement pattern suggests large-scale assarting. In consequence the area became, and remains, quite sparsely wooded, restricted to coppice woods, brakes and coverts for shooting, and plantations on steep hillsides or other inaccessible places.

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One such wood, on Lassington hill, boasted until windthrown a celebrated oak and a pear tree, and has been a nature reserve since c.1972.

COMMUNICATIONS

A Roman road crossed the area leading north from Gloucester towards Worcester, and another probably led north-west towards Dymock. In places their alignments have been demonstrated archaeologically, but they are largely ignored by the subsequent and modern road network. The pattern of road communication which emerged was constrained by the Severn, which may once have been fordable at Stonebench in Elmore, Ashleworth quay, and Wainlode in Norton. Those fords fell out of use, but ferries plied between Elmore and Minsterworth, and between Ashleworth and Brawn in Sandhurst until the 20th century. A ferry also linked Twyning Fleet with Bredon (Worcs.) across the Avon. Access to Gloucester from the west and north-west was compromised by the formation of the west channel, so that by the 16th century two important bridging points, at Maisemore and Over (in Churcham) were established, served by causeways across Alney island. The Leadon must also have presented early travellers with an obstacle, since a 'long bridge' existed across it between Lassington and Morwent (in Hartpury) in the 11th century, which gave its name to a hundred.

The turnpiking in 1726 of four major routes out of Gloucester, to Chepstow (Mon.), to Hereford either by Ross on Wye (Herefs.) or Newent, and to Ledbury (Herefs.), affected parishes west of the Severn; a simultaneous initiative to turnpike Tewkesbury's main roads led to the realignment of the Worcester road across Shuthonger common in Twyning, and the Gloucester road through Cold Elm in Norton, superseding earlier routes by Bowbridge and Wainlode respectively. The Ledbury road through Maisemore and Hartpury, and the Chepstow road through Minsterworth, were rerouted by their turnpike trusts during the 19th century. All disturnpiked by 1880, those remained the principal routes into the motoring era.

Despite vastly increased traffic, especially along the A38 road between Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Worcester, and the A40 and A48 roads from Gloucester into Wales, only a few improvements were made to the major routes. Roads through Norton and Minsterworth were straightened during the 1920s and 1930s, a replacement bridge was

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completed at Maisemore in 1956, and Barber's bridge in Rudford was realigned in the 1960s. But 1962 saw the completion across Twyning of the M50, almost the first motorway to be completed in Britain, with a junction at Brockridge common. At Strensham (Worcs.) it joined the M5 from near Bromsgrove (Worcs.), which was continued southwards across Twyning's meadows to Tewkesbury in 1970 and Gloucester in 1971, thus reducing traffic along other main routes in the area. New roads across Alney island were built in 1974 and 1983 as part of a northern by-pass around Gloucester.

Riverborne traffic on the Severn below Gloucester benefited Elmore and Minsterworth, where resident mariners traded with Bristol Channel ports and Ireland until the Gloucester and Berkeley canal opened in 1827. Above Gloucester wharves or quays existed at Maisemore, Abload in Sandhurst, Ashleworth, and Wainlode in Norton. Ashleworth quay, probably of medieval origin, grew in importance after 1811, when a horse towpath was established alongside the river. The Hereford and Gloucester canal was built along the lower Leadon valley and opened between Over and Newent in 1795, with a lock at Rudford. It closed in 1881 and a railway between Gloucester and Ledbury was built along its course in 1885 but abandoned in 1964. A station at Barber's bridge near Rudford served the area, and the building has been preserved. A road bridge across the Leadon was opened in 1908 to give access to it from Hartpury. The Tewkesbury and Malvern railway was built across Twyning parish in 1864 and closed in 1963. The Gloucester and Dean Forest railway, built in 1851, crosses part of Alney island formerly in Maisemore, and a corner of Minsterworth parish; it remains open for freight and passenger traffic.

SETTLEMENT

By contrast with most Gloucestershire regions, very little prehistoric or Romano-British archaeology has been recorded from the area covered by this volume.⁵ A possible prehistoric round barrow has been identified at Prior's Norton, and several minor names in Ashleworth may denote barrows. Towbury is a prominent but unexcavated hillfort on the western edge of Twyning, and two possible Iron-Age inclosures have been identified beside the Leadon at Rudford, and in Churcham parish on the

⁵ Recent county surveys by T. Darvill, *Prehistoric Gloucestershire*, 2nd edn (2011); T. Copeland, *Roman Gloucestershire* (2011).

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Minsterworth boundary.⁶ Probable Roman farming settlements have been identified near Windmill hill in Elmore, where substantial marshland reclamation may have taken place at that period; near Ashleworth quay; and possibly also at Lassington and in the north of Hartpury parish. A high-status Roman villa has been investigated at Willington Court below Sandhurst hill.

The dominant settlement pattern that had emerged by the 11th century, and continued with some modification through the medieval period, was of individual farmsteads or small clusters of dwellings scattered within a landscape of woodland and wood pasture. That some of those farms may have originated early in the period of Saxon colonization is suggested by the Brittonic name Maisemore, 'great field', and Wallsworth in Sandhurst, perhaps 'the farm of the Briton'. Variant forms of a name Aldworth, 'old farm', occur in Ashleworth and Sandhurst, and the farms' pre-conquest owners may be enshrined in the parish names Ashleworth (*Æscel*) and Minsterworth (Gloucester abbey). West of the Leadon, from Bulley to Upleadon, this scattered pattern persists, little changed by Victorian and later development, and it remains the underlying theme elsewhere. Between the Leadon and the Severn the process of assarting woodland and waste has employed the characteristic name element '-end' to denote minor settlements in clearings.

Another prevalent type is the settlement around a green. At Twyning the triangular green is very large, whereas at Highleadon it is linear, with farmhouses set back in an informal row, and at Bishop's Norton it is funnel-shaped, with a pond. Three small greens developed around road junctions in Ashleworth, and others are or were Rudford green, Kenton green in Elmore and Cold Elm in Norton. On a larger scale informal or squatter settlements on or around commons are a feature of Eden's hill in Upleadon, Shuthonger common in Twyning, and notably Woolridge common, principally in Hartpury, where 18th- and 19th-century squatters evolved a nucleated village which has become the main parish focus.

A third feature is the riverside hamlet. Those along the tidal Severn, at Stonebench, Elmore Back and Weir green in Elmore, and at Duni in Minsterworth, were concerned with fishing, including the control of weirs. Upstream, at Ashleworth quay, Wainlode and Twyning Fleet, riverborne

⁶ *Trans. BGAS* 126 (2008), 188; *Glevensis*, vol. 13 (1979), 30-1.

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trade was the determinant. Small industrial communities developed in the 19th century beside the river at Sandhurst's brickworks and tar distillery.

Settlement shrinkage and movement have been commonplace. The early medieval focus of Hartpury, at Murrell's End, was replaced in the 12th century by the demesne complex around the parish church; that too by the 19th century had become remote from the populated areas. At Upleadon the church, farm and mill stand beside earthworks almost 2 km from the cross-roads around which the modern village has developed. Twyning, Norton and Rudford churches, likewise, stand aloof from most of their parishioners. The surviving fragment of Lassington church, its tower, overlooks only the former manor house, a large farm complex and village earthworks. Maisemore church became divorced from its settlement, perhaps in the 14th century, when a linear village appears to have been replanned further south; Minsterworth, too, is a semi-regular linear village, now much altered, as on a smaller scale is Overton in Maisemore. Tibberton village developed after 1800 through infilling between older houses along a minor road.

Despite the terrain's suitability for emparking, the only medieval deer park to be licensed adjoined Gloucester abbey's demesne at Upleadon. Winchcombe abbey allowed a tenant to empark land at Twyning, and there may have been deer parks attached to Elmore Court and Lassington Court. Pleasure grounds were created to adorn new gentry houses at Minsterworth, Bishop's Norton and Tibberton in the 18th century, and Hartpury, Maisemore and Foscombe in Ashleworth in the 19th. W.P. Price, a Gloucester timber merchant who acquired Tibberton in 1839, embarked on a campaign of building farmhouses and cottages on his estate, which came to embrace also land in Bulley and Rudford. During the 20th century, apart from the small-scale private and local authority housing schemes which have infilled and enlarged existing settlements, a major housing development, Maidenhall, extended across the Highnam boundary into Lassington, to add more than 500 houses after 1977 to a previously uninhabited landscape. Twyning also experienced a dramatic increase, as commuter homes were built from the 1960s to benefit from easy motorway access. A third feature, since 1990, has been the creation of an extensive college campus, including residential, sporting and teaching complexes, around Hartpury House.

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BUILDINGS

Every parish included in this volume, apart from Minsterworth, retains medieval work in its church, although several underwent wholesale Victorian rebuilding and one, Lassington, was demolished apart from its Norman tower in 1975.⁷ Herring-bone masonry of the mid- or late-11th century is evident at Ashleworth, Hartpury and Tibberton, while at Upleadon a possible Saxon arch was removed in the 1870s. Of the smaller Norman churches Rudford is the least altered and Bulley, sympathetically rebuilt in 1886, the most richly decorated. The wide naves of Hartpury and Twyning, which had been a Saxon minster, suggest early importance, although most surviving details are much later. The hand of their monastic patrons is seen in the fine 14th- and 15th-century work at Ashleworth and Hartpury, notably the latter's 'butterfly' east window, and of the Guise family at Elmore, whose medieval and later tombs it contains. Most churches have kept their late medieval west tower (with spire at Ashleworth), even after drastic Victorian restoration of the fabric elsewhere, as at Maisemore, Norton and Sandhurst. No church escaped restoration, which in several cases rescued them from collapse, and the restorers were almost all local architects, with Gloucester or Cheltenham practices, or with local connections. The one new Victorian church, Minsterworth, is a distinguished building, the work of Henry Woodyer whose masterpiece is Highnam church nearby. The most elaborate assembly of churchyard monuments is at Elmore, close by a ruined mausoleum of the Guise family, and at Hartpury an unusual stone bee-shelter has been re-erected in the churchyard.

In common with much of lowland Gloucestershire, domestic architecture was predominantly timber-framed before c. 1700, and brick thereafter, although locally-sourced lias stone was also widely employed. Most surviving timber framing is found in 16th- and 17th-century cottages, generally with later brick or stone additions, and examples can be seen in most parishes described in this volume. Late medieval cottages, generally with cruck trusses, remain in Ashleworth, Elmore and Maisemore, and several farmhouses also retain crucks, notably the Apple Tree inn and Moorcroft House in Minsterworth, and four examples in Sandhurst. Medieval timber construction survives in higher-status houses also, including the former vicarage at Ashleworth (now Ashleworth Manor), Murcott Farm

⁷ This para: Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, *passim*.

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in Minsterworth, Brawn Farm in Sandhurst, and Gubberhill in Twyning, which is moated. Moats in fact were widespread, and although archaeological vestiges alone remain of most, a few enclose or adjoin later houses, such as Highleadon Court, Norton Court and Moat Farm in Upleadon.

The only major stone domestic building to survive from the later medieval period is Ashleworth Court, the house of a monastic grange; it employs local blue lias with ashlar dressings, and is largely unscathed. At Willington Court in Sandhurst part of a defensible solar range to a medieval hall survives. Little sumptuous building took place in the Tudor period, perhaps the result of relative poverty in dairying country.⁸ The exception, though much altered, is Elmore Court, of limestone ashlar partly re-used, dating from *c.*1580. Elsewhere the timber-framing tradition continued for the houses of farmers and minor gentry until the later 17th century. Good examples are The Hill in Hartpury, Abloads Court in Sandhurst, and Freemans Court in Twyning.

No mansions to rival those of the great Gloucestershire estates were built after the Restoration in the parishes this volume describes. But, taking their cue from Highnam Court nearby, brick-built country houses began to appear from around 1700. Lassington Court, replacing a manor house burnt in the Civil Wars, was followed by Hygrove House in Minsterworth, Shuthonger Manor in Twyning, and Wallsworth Hall in Sandhurst. Numerous farmhouses and smaller dwellings were built or rebuilt in brick throughout the area during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Of late-Georgian and Regency country houses built on new sites the earliest, of *c.* 1800, is Tibberton Court, although that stands close to the church and was later remodelled. Hartpury House and Maisemore Park, both of *c.* 1820, are ambitious houses by unknown architects, which occupy former farmland. In the 1850s and 1860s the hand of Gloucester architect James Medland is seen in several notable projects, including the rebuilding of Tibberton Court in Italianate style, Gothic at Twyning Manor and Meredith in Tibberton, and major additions to Elmore Court. Another prolific Gloucester architect, Thomas Fulljames, built for himself a High Victorian extravaganza at Foscombe overlooking Ashleworth and Corse Lawn. Guy Dawber's extensive Arts and Crafts reworking of Hartpury

⁸ L. Hall, in Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 79.

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House in 1896 represents the last essay in country house architecture in the area.

Housebuilding below gentry level during the 19th and 20th centuries can in part be explained by demographics. Although, in common with much of rural England, population crept up between 1801 and 1851 in most parishes, it fell back again everywhere during the decades to 1901, and had reduced further in all but four by the 1950s. Nowhere, therefore, experienced great demand for additional houses, and workers' cottages and council housing, when provided, were on a modest scale. Since 1951 the population totals of Elmore and Minsterworth have continued to decline, but elsewhere the numbers of houses and inhabitants have risen appreciably, most notably at Maidenhall in Lassington, Ashleworth, Tibberton, Twyning and Upleadon, and on the Hartpury college campus.

LANDOWNERSHIP

The monastic control which prevailed over most of the area throughout the middle ages had its roots in the Saxon period. Minsterworth's name, recorded *c.*1030, may refer to pre-conquest involvement by Gloucester abbey, which also claimed to have possessed Hartpury since the 8th century. Twyning belonged to Winchcombe abbey before 1066, and Norton to St Oswald's minster (Gloucester); both may have helped to endow those houses at their foundations, in 798 and *c.*900 respectively. Ashleworth was an outlying possession of a pre-conquest monastery at Berkeley.

Principally under its reforming abbot Serlo (1072-1104) Gloucester abbey obtained or reaffirmed ownership of a compact group of manors extending some 12km north and west of the town to the former Worcestershire border. Those made a contiguous territory along the Leaden valley, which included Maisemore, Highnam, Hartpury, Rudford, Highleadon and Upleadon, as well as Abload (in Sandhurst) to the east and Churcham to the west. The abbey later acquired smaller estates in Bulley, Lassington and Tibberton, and scattered lands in Elmore and Minsterworth. Its substantial manor of Farley, which lay geographically within Elmore, formed a detached part of Hardwicke parish and was administered with the abbey's estate there.⁹

⁹ *VCH Glos.* X, 183.

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Three other Gloucestershire monasteries were significant landowners in the area. Winchcombe held the principal manor at Twyning until the Dissolution; and the former Norton prebend of St Oswald's, when that house was refounded as a priory c.1153, became its manor of Prior's Norton. St Augustine's, Bristol, received Ashleworth at or soon after its foundation in 1148. Llanthony, however, refounded beside Gloucester in 1136, and the Cistercian house at Flaxley, established c.1154, drew little revenue from land in the area, despite their proximity.

The monasteries also derived income from spiritualities. Only three of the thirteen benefices, Lassington, Rudford and Tibberton, were not appropriated. Of those that were, four benefited Gloucester abbey, three St Oswald's priory, and St Augustine's, Llanthony and Winchcombe had one apiece.

Much more remote ecclesiastical landlords were the archbishops of York, to whom after 1070 the Crown granted lands formerly belonging to St Oswald's. The archbishops retained overlordship of Lassington and held the manor of Bishop's Norton, as members of their barony of Churchdown. They were also tenants of a small estate in Brawn (Sandhurst).

By no means all land fell into religious hands. Overlordship of Elmore and Minsterworth, on opposite banks of the Severn below Gloucester, had passed by the 12th century to the honor of Hereford, and thence through the duchy of Lancaster, in 1399 to the Crown. Tibberton, and perhaps Bulley, also came to Lancaster, but from the lords of Monmouth. Sandhurst's overlordship is unclear, and there, as at Bulley and the archbishop's manor of Lassington, transient mesne tenants and partitions during the 12th and 13th centuries fragmented possession. Only at Elmore, where the Guise family acquired the manor in 1274, was lay ownership unbroken throughout the middle ages and beyond. Significant freeholds or sub-manors belonging to laymen also persisted alongside the monastic estates at Hartpury and Twyning.

The building campaigns undertaken on Gloucester abbey's manors by the redoubtable John de Gamages (abbot 1284-1306) included houses at Upleadon and Hartpury. Those have disappeared, but impressive late-medieval barns survive at both places, and at another Gloucester manor, Highleadon. Under Gamages' rule Maisemore village may have been replanned, and his choice of Hartpury as an occasional residence (the

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moated 'Abbot's Place') initiated a demesne complex beside the church which included dovecote, vineyard, orchards, barn and mill. At Ashleworth a surviving 15th-century grange, with court house and adjacent produce barn, close to both the church and a wharf on the Severn, is a legacy of St Augustine's abbey's estate management. Moated manor houses were constructed by ecclesiastical and lay landowners, and examples are known from Prior's Norton, Sandhurst, Tibberton, and possibly Lassington. A large tithe barn, probably of medieval origin, was demolished at Bishop's Norton in the 19th century.

At the Dissolution the revenues from most monastic estates in the area were channeled to support three new cathedral foundations. The Gloucester dean and chapter received the manors of Abload, Rudford, and Upleadon, with portions of Bulley and Tibberton; and the bishops of Bristol and Gloucester had Ashleworth and Maisemore manors respectively. The appropriated rectories were distributed to the bishops and chapters of both dioceses, and Twyning rectory went to Oxford. A courtier, Sir Thomas Chamberlayne, was rewarded with Bishop's Norton for his service, and two manors of suppressed monasteries were sold to royal favourites. Twyning went to Sir Ralph Sadleir, whose family retained it until 1624, and Hartpury to Sir William Herbert; but he rapidly sold it on to a local man, Walter Compton, in whose family it remained for over two centuries. William Read, another Gloucestershire man, bought Prior's Norton, which stayed with his heirs until 1702.

As commonly elsewhere, the local monasteries in the 1530s had for several decades, and perhaps longer, let their demesnes to farm on long leases, which continued or were renewed under the new owners. Abload's lessees from at least 1504 to 1620 were members of the Cox family, and the Lucys held Rudford until c.1708 through a series of leases for lives beginning in 1536. At Upleadon the Keys family, lessees from 1515, purchased the demesne in 1602; and at Twyning descendants of the pre-Dissolution steward, Edward Baugh, purchased the manor in 1624. At Ashleworth conflicting claims by leaseholders led to violence, and a dispute over post-1530s ownership and tenants' rights in Woolridge common, in Hartpury and Maisemore, was not resolved until 1809.

Many of the Tudor and later owners and lessees had close links with Gloucester and took leading parts in its government. That had begun before c.1500, when Walter Rowden owned an estate in Bulley. Walter, a

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lawyer, and his brother Richard, a mercer, both served turns as Gloucester's mayor. Richard Pate, the city's recorder and MP, leased Minsterworth in 1566 and Norton rectory in 1568; John Jones, alderman and diocesan registrar, was lord farmer of Bulley and Lassington, and lessee of an estate in Tibberton in the early 17th century; and Henry Brett, another Gloucester MP, held Ashleworth demesne from 1622. This trend is partly explained by the creation of the inshire, described below, whereby between 1483 and 1662 Gloucester and the adjacent hundred were granted the status of a county apart from Gloucestershire. It has been calculated that more than half of Gloucester's aldermen before the Civil Wars held property outside the city in the inshire.¹⁰ Politically it was important for the city's oligarchic rulers to be settled in the inshire, thereby denying control to the neighbouring Gloucestershire gentry who opposed their county status. Acquisitions in the countryside by Gloucester citizens continued during the interregnum, including those of a lawyer, Walter Windowe, who leased an estate in Tibberton by 1650, and Thomas Pury MP, who acquired Minsterworth manor in 1653.

The oldest and most influential gentry dynasty in the area, the Guises of Elmore, were among several royalist families to lose their estates during the interregnum and then regain them. Others were the Bretts at Ashleworth, the Lucys at Rudford, the Cravens at Twyning, and the Brownes at Upleadon. The Cookes of Highnam saw their manor house at Lassington burned down. Despite the loss of the inshire in 1662 Gloucester citizens continued to own and occupy estates there, taking on the mantle of landed gentry themselves. Their ranks were joined in the 18th century by Nicholas Webb at Bulley and Maisemore, and by Thomas Burgis and Charles Barrow MP at Minsterworth. Other notable Gloucester men spent wealth acquired by trade on Georgian country houses, including Benjamin Saunders at Wallsworth in Sandhurst, Edward Elton at Tibberton, and William Singleton at Bishop's Norton. At Twyning an Evesham solicitor, William Law Phelps, inherited the Puckrup estate and rebuilt the house. Meanwhile the Guise family extended their holdings to include Lassington, Rudford and Highleadon; and Hartpury fell under the control of the Berkeleys, and from them passed by marriage to another aristocratic family, the Cannings of Worcestershire. They demolished the derelict medieval house and built on a new site.

¹⁰ P. Clark (ed.), *Transformation of English provincial towns 1600-1800* (1984), 319.

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During the 19th century Gloucester money had the greatest impact on the pattern of landed estates in the area. Two Gloucester bankers, Merrott Stephens and James Wood, were buying land before 1830 in Maisemore, Bulley, Tibberton and Upleadon, and a third, Charles Evans, by his wife's inheritance, owned Hygrove House in Minsterworth. Timber merchant and entrepreneur William Philip Price, who acquired Tibberton court in 1839, added much of Bulley, Rudford and Highleadon in 1839 and 1871 to his estate; meanwhile purchases by another Gloucester timber merchant, Charles Walker, and his son, in Brawn, Sandhurst and Bishop's Norton, created an extensive landholding along the Severn's east bank. The successful and prolific Gloucester architect, Thomas Fulljames, acquired from his father in 1847 the lease of Ashleworth and created during the 1860s the Foscombe estate, centred on a new mansion to his own design.

Although some large landowners, the Guises of Elmore and the Walkers of Norton, maintained their position, most reduced their holdings after 1919 and their estates were broken up. In a few cases they were replaced by successful farming families, such as the Chamberlaynes of Maisemore and Ashleworth, but in many cases their lands were dispersed and their houses were put to institutional use. Tibberton Court became a school, Wallsworth Hall a children's nursery and later an art gallery, Puckrup a hotel, Hygrove House an insurance office and then a nursing home, and Hartpury House a hospital and subsequently an agricultural college.

ECONOMY

The pre-conquest legacy of woodland, wood-pasture and seasonally flooded valleys, which was typical across the area, was exploited by its medieval landlords to generate income from a mixed farming regime. The computed value of most estates, where given, fell between 1066 and 1086, but this was followed by a century or more of concerted assarting and clearance, 'ridding' as it was enshrined in fieldnames, which were carefully regulated where, as in Ashleworth and Maisemore, they impinged on existing rights. Where successful this increased the acreage available for arable cultivation, as implied by the large open Ridding field in Bishop's Norton, but at Tibberton arable farming contracted in favour of pasturing. The value of land for cultivation varied; on Elmore's demesne in 1326 almost

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three-quarters of the arable was inferior to the rest. Open-field farming on a three-course rotation was normal, and the principal crops were wheat, barley and pulses, with some oats, rye, hemp and flax.

Severnside manors possessed large expanses of rich meadowland, across which intercommoning might be regulated, as on Minsterworth Ham and Corn Ham in Minsterworth. Elsewhere, between Hasfield and Ashleworth, and on Alney island between Maisemore and Gloucester, shared meadows led to protracted disputes. Periodic flooding was taken for granted, and at Minsterworth in the 13th century its likelihood was written into the customs governing the Ham; in several manors scouring ditches and maintaining floodgates were frequent concerns of their courts. Norton tenants successfully reduced their rents in 1424 after flood damage, and profits from meadows at Minsterworth and Sandhurst were sometimes reduced as a result of flooding.

Livestock was evidently important to most medieval manors' economy. Around 1500 Gloucester abbey ran c.320 ewes on its Abload manor in Sandhurst, and at nearby Bishop's Norton the tenantry's sheep totalled 950. Flocks were overwintered at Abload and Maisemore and driven to summer pastures on the Cotswolds. Sheepcots or berceries were recorded at Abload, Norton and Upleadon. Dairying is not well recorded in medieval records, although, if the Abload tenants' render of 155 stones of cheese (nearly one ton) in 1504 to Gloucester abbey kitchen is typical, production must have been considerable. Pigs, for which pannage known as tack was paid, and poultry were kept by very many tenants, and honey was produced in Hartpury, Abload and Upleadon.

Gloucester abbey's estates were surveyed during the 1260s, revealing the various categories of tenants and the multitude of onerous renders, labour services and harvest boonworks to which they were subjected.¹¹ Very few tenants were free, and most held a yardland (usually 48 a.) or more commonly a half- or quarter-yardland. Monday-men and cottagers held 6 a. or fewer. Works required of tenants were graded according to tenure, and given a monetary equivalent, suggesting that commutation to a money payment was taking place. At Minsterworth a slightly earlier survey records commutation of many services, and money payments in lieu of works were paid at Bishop's Norton before 1400, but commutation at

¹¹ Discussed by R.H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society* (1966), 131-8; R.H. Hilton, *English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford 1975), 139-60.

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Ashleworth may not have occurred until the 1430s. Monastic demesnes were leased, as elsewhere, but on most Gloucester abbey manors, and on Winchcombe's Twyning manor, this was not recorded until after 1500. The archbishop of York's Norton tenants were leasing his demesne by 1400, but St Augustine's, Bristol, retained Ashleworth and brought in 'improvers' before 1480, who became *de facto* lessees. Consolidation of tenancies after 1400 can be recognized at Norton and Tibberton.

No significant changes to agricultural practice are evident in the early modern period. In most parishes the acreage of arable equalled or exceeded that of pasture until the 18th century, and openfield cultivation was widespread. Land exchanges and piecemeal inclosure eroded the open fields after 1700, but the process was not uniform. At Hartpury, where much had been inclosed early, by 1784 no land remained open, whereas at Norton the open fields were largely intact in 1800. Wheat, beans and barley were the principal crops and, perhaps because arable production was retreating, there appears to have been little innovation. Parliamentary inclosure, where it was imposed, generally took place between 1780 and 1810, but much inclosing continued by agreement, to be tidied up by late awards, at Tibberton in 1851, Sandhurst and Minsterworth in 1865, Maisemore Ham in 1867 and Corn Ham in 1871. Alongside inclosure went consolidation and reduction in the number of farms, and also attempts to improve drainage on vulnerable land, especially along the Leadon at Rudford and Tibberton from c.1770, and on Corse Lawn in Ashleworth, which was inclosed in 1798.

The growing importance from 1600 or earlier of livestock husbandry, dairying in particular, put pressure on common pastures and meadows, so that eligibility and stinting were strictly controlled at Minsterworth and Sandhurst. Sheep too were kept in large numbers, flocks of between 300 and 500 being recorded in various places. Evidence from probate inventories suggests that mixed farming was usual, tenants deriving their wealth from a variety of crops and livestock, often in roughly equal proportions. Although the declining proportion of arable to pasture acreage was by no means uniform, it occurred everywhere. At Elmore by 1791 less than one-eighth of the parish was cultivated, and under 10 per cent at Minsterworth in 1839. Elsewhere the trend was less marked, down to one-third or one-quarter at Ashleworth and Maisemore, although in many places no dramatic fall occurred until the 1870s and 1880s.

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Many farms were rebuilt during the 19th century by improving landlords, such as W.P. Price at Rudford and Tibberton, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who erected a model farm at Maisemore in 1860. At Sandhurst in 1920, in order to encourage small-holding, Gloucestershire County Council bought several farms to lease to tenants. Dairying had become the principal farming activity before 1900, and continued to dominate through much of the 20th century. A noted cattle-breeder brought celebrity to the area by establishing a prize-winning Aberdeen Angus herd at Maisemore Park between 1897 and 1951. Sheep and, increasingly, poultry were farmed in large numbers in many parishes. During the Second World War pasture land was ploughed, reversing the decline in arable, and that trend continued.

The cultivation of apples and pears for cider, perry, and occasionally vinegar, was practised across the whole area. Medieval orchards are recorded at Duni in Minsterworth and Tibberton; and at Elmore the prior of Llanthony reserved for himself the best apples. Hartpury, where the abbot of Gloucester had an orchard on his demesne, is reputed to take its name from the hard perry pears grown there. At Lassington in the 17th century, and Sandhurst in the 18th, orchards were planted on former open fields, and on one Minsterworth estate leaseholders were required to plant apple and pear trees. In the early modern period and until *c.* 1900 hardly a farmstead can have been without an orchard nearby, with cider house and mill, producing largely for domestic and local consumption. Commercial cider and perry orchards also flourished in Elmore, Minsterworth and Tibberton in the 19th and 20th centuries, the latter's cider held in high esteem. After 1900 the acreage of orcharding declined, very rapidly from the 1950s, and many post-war housing developments occupy former orchards. In Hartpury, mindful of its heritage, the cultivation of rare species of pear has been encouraged since the 1990s.

Other fruit was seldom grown in quantity, although Elmore and Minsterworth had notable plum orchards, cherry-growing is suggested by an Upleadon fieldname recorded in 1627, and there were two hopyards in Sandhurst in the 18th century. The abbot of Gloucester had a vineyard at Hartpury, and another was recorded at Brawn in Sandhurst in 1199.

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Medieval landowners, including the abbeys and the Crown, exploited the Severn's rich harvest by building and operating fish-weirs.¹² Three spanned the river between Minsterworth and Elmore, and two beside Gloucester crossed to Alney island, where Maisemore tenants worked them. A further pair was built between Ashleworth and Brawn, in Sandhurst, although the latter may have been short-lived. Medieval fish-weirs are also recorded near Rudford mill and below Lassington on the Leadon. Unpopular because they hindered river traffic and caught underweight fish, the Severn weirs were outlawed after 1535 and dismantled.

Fisheries were recorded in 1086 at Brawn and Duni (Minsterworth), and fisheries, fishing rights and fishermen feature at Severn and Leadon riparian settlements in the medieval and later periods. Minsterworth tenants, where fishing was most prevalent, held customary rights to fish a certain stretch of river by long net and trap; fishing rights elsewhere were often leased, and sometimes disputed. Although prized lamprey and sturgeon were caught, salmon fishing had become by the 19th century the principal and most lucrative occupation. Nocturnal elvering, net-fishing for immature eels each spring, became a profitable pastime long practised along this reach of the Severn and continues, though regulated.

Fieldnames suggestive of medieval woodland management occur widely across the region, but the most extensive ancient woods were to be found west of the Leadon, at Tibberton and Upleadon, and clothing Woolridge, the high land between Leadon and Severn, in Hartpury and Maisemore parishes. Gloucester abbey carefully managed and exploited Woolridge and depleted Upleadon, and Tibberton's woods were devoured to fire medieval ironworking forges. By the 16th century most manors retained only small acreages of coppice, timber and hedgerow wood, sufficient for demesne and tenantry needs; but Woolridge, despite ownership disputes and the deprivations of deer, remained heavily wooded until the 1660s, when much of it was felled to supply fuel for iron smelting. The cultivation of osiers, in beds known as pershes, was a local speciality, recorded in the 14th century at Elmore, the 16th at

¹² T. Moore-Scott, 'Medieval fish weirs on the mid-tidal reaches of the Severn river,' *Glevensis*, 42, 2009, 31-44.

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Maisemore and Minsterworth, and the 19th at Lassington. The Persh estate at Maisemore was an important asset of Gloucester abbey.

New planting and better management accompanied the Victorian gentry's predilection for shooting, so that game coverts and brakes were added to many estates, including those of the Guise family at Elmore, W. P. Price's land extending across Tibberton and Rudford, and the hilly terrain between Sandhurst and Norton. Timber production was another economic incentive for landowners, who sold standing trees at auction or, as at Hartpury after 1883, established their own timber yards. Woodland was also managed for amenity; the Price family created an arboretum at Tibberton during the 1920s, and Gloucester corporation acquired the woods on Lassington Hill in 1930 for public access.

Three mills were recorded in the area in 1086, at Upleadon and Rudford on the Leadon, and Norton on the Chelt. The unpredictable power of the Severn could not be harnessed here to turn a mill, so those medieval riverside communities that built a watermill, Abload in Sandhurst and Duni in Minsterworth, did so on a tributary stream. Gloucester abbey owned a mill at Hartpury, on the Leadon, and the Crown held Tibberton mill, on a Leadon tributary. Gloucester abbey's mill at Over (Churcham) served its tenants in Maisemore, and perhaps their other manors, but from the 13th century windmills appeared on hillsides overlooking the vale, at Ashleworth, Murrell's End in Hartpury, Lassington, Bishop's Norton, Tibberton, Brawn in Sandhurst, Twyning, and two each at Elmore and Minsterworth. None survives, and some perhaps were short-lived; Ashleworth's windmill had collapsed by 1491. The watermill at Upleadon had been converted for iron-forging before 1700, but was later rebuilt as a corn mill. Like Hartpury and Norton, which both continued milling into the 20th century, its building survives. Rudford mill, briefly converted to steam power, closed before 1870, but also survives; whereas Tibberton mill, engine-powered and in use until 1973, was derelict by 2000.

Apart from the usual trades and occupations found in rural communities, including domestic weavers, tailors, smiths and wheelwrights, most non-agricultural occupations involved mineral extraction or the river. Idiosyncratic exceptions have been chairmaking in Victorian Norton, a tar distillery on the Sandhurst riverbank which operated between 1860 and 1971, and, since 1953, an apiary and beekeeping equipment business at

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Maisemore. Stables, studs and horse-riding suppliers have sprung up in the area, influenced by Hartpury College's focus on equine studies. The model farm buildings at Maisemore Court were converted from 1992 into business units.

Iron-working forges were in use at Tibberton in the 15th century or earlier, and medieval quarries at Ashleworth were winning stone for building and lime-burning. Quarries on Woolridge in Hartpury continued in use until the 19th century. Their stone was shipped from Ashleworth quay for building projects in Gloucester in the 16th century, and limekilns were working near the Woolridge pits before 1800. Brickmakers exploited the alluvial clays from the 18th century and established works and kilns on Alney island, near Upper Parting on the Sandhurst riverbank, beside the river at Elmore, and on the edge of Corse Lawn in Hartpury, where extensive flooded brick pits remain as fishing lakes. Large-scale gravel extraction began south of Twyning Green during the 1960s.

Shipwrights lived at Elmore and Minsterworth in 1608, and boatbuilding continued at the latter until the 20th century. The riverside osier beds supplied basketmakers in several parishes, whose products doubtless included fish-traps and baskets for local fruit-pickers. Riverborne traffic gave employment at the wharves and quays, including a long-established coal merchant's yard beside Maisemore bridge.

ADMINISTRATION

The hundredal allegiance of the communities included in this volume was unusually complicated.¹³ In 1086 three places, Rudford, Tibberton and Upleadon, lay in Botloe hundred, whose meeting-place was north of Newent, close to its border with Pauntley.¹⁴ The major constituents of that hundred were Newent and Dymock. To the south Bulley, Duni and Minsterworth lay in Westbury hundred, which extended down the Severn to Newnham, and to Mitcheldean in the forest.¹⁵ Lassington and Morcote in Hartpury formed, with adjacent Highnam and distant Preston, a small hundred named Longbridge after the Leadon river crossing near Murrell's

¹³ This para: J.S. Moore, *Domesday book 15: Glos.* (1982).

¹⁴ *VCH Glos.* XII, 5-6.

¹⁵ For the history of Westbury hundred, see *VCH Glos.* X, 1-5.

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End where it met.¹⁶ Twyning lay in a hundred named Greston, which embraced the Winchcombe area and was later absorbed into Kiftsgate. Ashleworth was a distant outlier of Berkeley hundred. The remaining Domesday estates all lay in Dudstone hundred, a large territory which surrounded Gloucester, and met at Wotton, not far outside the city boundary.¹⁷ Brawn, Elmore, Maisemore, Norton, Sandhurst, Highleadon and two estates at Morwent, the precursor of Hartpury, were all in Dudstone. One consequence of this arrangement was that the parish of Rudford (which included Highleadon) lay partly in Botloe hundred and partly in Dudstone.

Three major changes affecting those hundreds occurred during the medieval period. Longbridge hundred is not recorded after 1086,¹⁸ and two of its constituents, Morcote and Lassington, were subsequently in Dudstone (later Dudstone and King's Barton) hundred. At a date after 1399 a hundred was formed comprising the lands of the duchy of Lancaster.¹⁹ This withdrew Bulley and Minsterworth (including Duni) from Westbury hundred, and Tibberton from Botloe. Governance of the enlarged hundred of Dudstone and King's Barton was changed by Richard III's 1483 charter to Gloucester, which created a 'county of the town of Gloucester', embracing the town and entire hundred within its jurisdiction.²⁰ That administrative unit, known as the inshire, survived until 1662, when Dudstone and King's Barton hundred was removed from Gloucester's control and returned to Gloucestershire county.

Dudstone hundred, which in 1287 included 43 vills,²¹ was granted by Edward II in 1316 at fee farm to the abbot of Gloucester, for an annual render of £12.²² The liberty of King's Barton, which the abbot also held at fee farm intermittently by 1244 and continuously from 1345,²³ was regarded separately until *c.* 1500,²⁴ but thereafter Dudstone and King's

¹⁶ S, Draper, 'Morcote in Hartpury and the Domesday Geography of Longbridge Hundred', *Trans. BGAS* 129 (2011), 139-45.

¹⁷ *VCH Glos.* IV, 388.

¹⁸ J.S. Moore, in *Trans. BGAS* 129 (2011), 106 (1988), 100.

¹⁹ *VCH Glos.* X, 1, n.4.

²⁰ *VCH Glos.* IV, 2, 54-7, 113.

²¹ TNA, JUST 1/278, rott. 62-4.

²² *Cal. Fine*, 1307-19, 304.

²³ *VCH Glos.* IV, 59-60, 390-1.

²⁴ e.g. *Cal. Pat.* 1446-52, 42, 48, 561.

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Barton were generally regarded as a single hundred.²⁵ The places included in this volume which lay in the combined hundred²⁶ accounted for 26 per cent of tax levied on it in 1524,²⁷ and 30 per cent of the men mustered in 1539.²⁸ In 1509 Gloucester abbey appointed a bailiff of the hundred for life and in 1525 granted the reversion after his death.²⁹ After the Dissolution the Crown granted leases of the hundred,³⁰ until 1611 when it was sold to George and Thomas Whitmore, whose family still held it in 1771.³¹ Three high constables of the hundred, including men from Elmore, Sandhurst and Maisemore, were appointed annually, 1672-9,³² reflecting perhaps the tripartite division, upper, middle and lower, by which in the 18th century it had come to be administered.³³

Ecclesiastically the parishes lying west of the Leadon (Bulley, Minsterworth, Rudford, Tibberton and Upleadon) fell within the medieval diocese of Hereford, but Lassington was in some respects treated as a peculiar of the archbishops of York.³⁴ The other parishes were in Worcester diocese. All transferred to Gloucester diocese upon its formation in 1541, where they remained in 2015, although between 1836 and 1897 they formed part of the combined diocese of Gloucester and Bristol.

At manor and parish level business was transacted by courts and vestry in the usual way, with few unusual features. Some Gloucester abbey tenants were required to attend halimote courts in Gloucester in the 1260s, and Bishop's Norton was administered from 1290 onwards as a member of the barony of Churchdown. For convenience small manors, such as Rudford and Highleadon, combined courts with neighbours; in 1679 Lassington shared a constable with Highleadon and three other manors. For several manors no evidence of courts being held after 1600

²⁵ GBR, B 2/1, ff.226v, 230v; Glouc. Cath. Lib., Reg. Abb. Braunche, f. 188; cf M.A. Faraday, *Bristol and Glos. Lay Subsidy of 1523-1527* (Glos Rec. Ser. 23, 2009), 70, n. 4, 88, n. 1

²⁶ Elmore, Hartpury, Lassington, Maisemore, Norton and Sandhurst; Rudford and/or Highleadon were sometimes included.

²⁷ Derived from Faraday, *Lay Subsidy*, 70-88.

²⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), 271.

²⁹ Glouc. Cath. Lib., Reg. Abb. Braunche, f. 188; *ibid*, Reg. Abb. Malvern, I, f. 245.

³⁰ TNA, E 310/14/52, f. 18.

³¹ *VCH Glos.* IV, 391; Rudder, *Glos.*, 207.

³² GA, Q/SO 1, ff. 14, 41v, 74, 102v, 129v, 185v, 200.

³³ Rudder, *Glos.*, 38-42.

³⁴ This para: F.A. Youngs, *Guide to Local Admin. Units of England*, I, 159-92, 778-9.

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has been found, while others, such as Abload, atrophied in the 18th century when there was little copyhold business to transact. At Tibberton and Maisemore courts continued until the 1860s or later, and Ashleworth's last recorded court was held in 1908. Many parishes provided indoor relief by maintaining a poorhouse or workhouse, and most subscribed to Gloucester infirmary. Parishes within Dudstone and King's Barton hundred benefited from a charitable bequest by Giles Cox of Abload, established in 1620 to provide poor relief. An unusual responsibility given to Elmore's churchwardens from 1580 was the repair of sea defences.

With the formation of poor-law unions in 1835 the Dudstone and King's Barton parishes joined the Gloucester union, except Hartpury, which with its western neighbours, Highleadon, Rudford, Tibberton and Upleadon, went to Newent.³⁵ Ashleworth also joined Gloucester, Twyning went to Tewkesbury, and Bulley and Minsterworth to Westbury on Severn. All poor relief, therefore, was administered from union workhouses outside the area. Most parishes then entered the corresponding rural districts based on Gloucester, Newent and Tewkesbury; but Bulley and Minsterworth went to East Dean and United Parishes rural district until 1935. In that year Minsterworth transferred to Gloucester, and Twyning to Cheltenham rural districts; Bulley, absorbed into Churcham, was henceforth administered by East Dean rural district. In 1974 Twyning and the Gloucester rural district parishes apart from Elmore transferred to Tewkesbury borough; Elmore joined Stroud district, and the Newent and East Dean parishes went into Forest of Dean district.

³⁵ This para: Youngs, *Guide*, I, 159-92, 605-12.