

# Victoria County History of Gloucestershire, Volume 14

## Old Sodbury

Old Sodbury is situated 38 km. (24 miles) south of Gloucester and 18 km. (11 miles) north-east of Bristol. The Cotswold Edge runs through the parish, dividing the fertile plateau in the east from the pastoral lower land to the west. The parish contains extensive commons and greens, the largest of which is intercommoned with neighbouring parishes to the north. The name Sodbury, meaning *Soppa's burh*,<sup>1</sup> refers to the prehistoric hill fort known as Sodbury Camp, the principal feature of the parish. It stands upon the edge of the scarp, overlooking the valley below, and is bisected by the parish boundary with Little Sodbury. It is located near the Port Way, the ancient route that runs between Gloucester and Bath, while other important routes connected Cirencester with Bristol and Malmesbury and Chippenham with the Severn crossing at Aust. The river Frome rises in the parish and runs west towards Bristol, forming the northern boundary of the borough of Chipping Sodbury, established at the western end of the parish in the 13th century. The growth of Chipping Sodbury in the later 20th century has led to the expansion of the urban area into part of the ancient parish, but the remainder of Old Sodbury remains rural in character.

## Landscape, Settlement and Buildings

### Boundaries and Parish Origins

#### *The Ancient Parish*

The ancient parish of Old Sodbury was estimated to comprise 3,000 a. in 1803,<sup>2</sup> while in 1839 the tithe commissioners computed the parish to measure c.3354 a.<sup>3</sup> In 1881 and again in 1903 it was found to contain 3,729 a. (1,509 ha.),<sup>4</sup> the earlier estimates perhaps not incorporating the common land it shared with the neighbouring parishes of Little Sodbury and Horton. The ancient parish formed a narrow compact block measuring almost 5 miles across from east to west at its widest point, with a tail stretching to the north along the western boundary.

A perambulation of the boundaries of Old Sodbury was recorded in 1783,<sup>5</sup> and another in 1847.<sup>6</sup> Its boundary with Yate was defined by Brinsham Stream, which ran to the north of Hampstead farm, the ancient road from Chipping Sodbury

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<sup>1</sup> *EPNS*, XL, ??

<sup>2</sup> Rudge, *Glos.* II, 291.

<sup>3</sup> GA, GDR/T1/165.

<sup>4</sup> Census, 1881; OS 6", *Glos.* LXIX.SE (1903 edn).

<sup>5</sup> GA, D247/74, pp. 123–9.

<sup>6</sup> GA, D10361/1.

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to Wickwar, and the river Frome. From the point where the boundary with Yate met the boundary of Doddington, it followed ancient enclosures and the lane from Chipping Sodbury to Doddington, leaving the course of the lane to the north of Doddington rectory to continue eastward to the lane from Combes End farm to Doddington. From here it ran south-east across land that by 1839 had been incorporated into Doddington Park, but which had formerly been part of the unenclosed South field, depicted on a map of 1709.<sup>7</sup> Crossing the road to Bath, the boundaries continued to zig-zag around the line of the former headlands of the open fields as it ran east along the border with Tormarton. The straight lines of the border with Great Badminton and Little Sodbury to the east and north of Lyegrove house may indicate that the boundaries here followed the line of the ancient wall surrounding the estate. North-west of Lyegrove house, the parish boundary with Little Sodbury resumed a zig-zagging course to the west as it once again followed the line of strips within the open fields. Crossing the road to Bath once again, the parish boundary bisected Sodbury Camp in half, and continued west along the boundary of Old Sodbury Common Mead and then Sodbury Common. Crossing a watercourse that feeds the Frome, the boundary with Little Sodbury followed no features as it ran in a straight line across the unenclosed common. A mere stone at a point called in 1847 Dyer's Corner marked the point where Old Sodbury met Little Sodbury and Horton. From here, the boundary continued in a straight line north-west to the edge of an ancient enclosure, which it skirted until it met the boundary with Yate.

The parish contained four manors. The largest of these, Old Sodbury, was centred on the main area of settlement around the parish church, and comprised most of the parish. Kingrove occupied the south-west of the parish, which Cottelscombe, later known as Combes End, lay along the southern border with Doddington. The borough of Chipping Sodbury was also reckoned a manor.

### *Sodbury Parish*

The parish was combined with Chipping Sodbury in 1945 to form the new parish of Sodbury, with an area of 1553 ha. (3,836 a.).<sup>8</sup> The boundaries were altered in 1990 to follow more clearly delineated topographical features, such as roads and field boundaries. Agricultural land in the east and south of the parish was exchanged with Badminton, Tormarton and Doddington; former quarries to the west of Wickwar road were acquired from Yate; and a housing estate to the south-west of Culverhill

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<sup>7</sup> GA, D2700/QB17/8/1.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Health Order No. 104,708: County of Gloucester (Sodbury Parish) Confirmation Order, 1945; Census, 1951; 1971.

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was transferred to Dodington.<sup>9</sup> Despite the changes, the area of the parish remained 1553 ha.<sup>10</sup>

### Landscape

The Cotswold Edge which runs north-south through the middle of the parish divides it into two distinct halves. The eastern half of the parish, above the escarpment, lies on Oolitic limestones c.180m above sea level, on which were laid out the parish's ancient open fields. The area is still largely employed for arable agriculture. Lying c.90m below this, the western half of the parish forms a shallow valley for the river Frome, which rises in the scarp near the south-east boundary of the parish and is fed by numerous tributaries that leaves the pastoral plain liable to flood. Much of this land lies on Charmouth and Saltford Shale mudstones, interspersed with outcrops of limestone which has stimulated quarrying in the parish since at least the medieval period. To the north of the medieval borough of Chipping Sodbury, which was founded on a shallow hill on the western edge of the parish, outcrops of a variety of limestones has led to extensive modern quarrying along the boundary with Yate. The former site of Hampstead farm, in the north-west of the ancient parish, is in 2018 the location of a large quarry where 1m tons of limestone aggregate is extracted each year.<sup>11</sup> Sandwiched between the mudstone of the valley floor and the limestone of the Cotswold plateau, the escarpment comprises of Dyrham and Bridport sandstones, upon the well-drained soils of which stands the village of Old Sodbury.

The Cotswold Ridgeway, running along the crest of Old Sodbury Hill, formed the eastern boundary of the Forest of Horwood or Kingswood until its disafforestation in 1228.<sup>12</sup> Land to the west of the escarpment would have lain within the forest, possibly for several centuries before this date. The presence of a royal park in the parish before the Norman Conquest indicates that this was a hunting territory in the later Anglo-Saxon period,<sup>13</sup> and it has been suggested that this might date back at least to the 8th century.<sup>14</sup> Sodbury Common, which was formerly known as Horwood Common,<sup>15</sup> stretches from the northern boundary of the parish to the outskirts of Chipping Sodbury, with a thin tongue stretching east between the

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<sup>9</sup> Local Government Order, Northavon (parishes) Order 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Census, 2001; 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Hanson Aggregates, 'Chipping Sodbury Quarry Overview' <<https://www.hanson-communities.co.uk/en/chipping-sodbury-quarry-overview>> [accessed 5 Apr. 2018].

<sup>12</sup> *Cal. Ch. Rolls*, 1226–57, pp. 75, 84. For the history of the forest, see John S. Moore, 'The Medieval Forest of Kingswood', *Avon Past*, VII (1982), 6–16.

<sup>13</sup> *Domesday*, 450.

<sup>14</sup> Moore, 'Forest of Kingswood', 11.

<sup>15</sup> GA, D2071/L4; D892/T74; 247/74, pp. 123–9, 1783 perambulation of the manor. The name survives in Horwood Gate Farm, which stood by an entrance to the common.

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boundaries of Little Sodbury to the north and the medieval deer park to the south. Two ancient enclosures called the Mead Riding and the Stub Riding were carved out of the unenclosed common during the 13th century, the name riding indicative of large-scale woodland clearances. There were also commons at Colts Green, Buckets Hill and Kingrove, respectively to the south of the deer park and of the borough of Chipping Sodbury, while the large enclosures called Gaunt's Field and Flint Close, whilst held in private lands, were also subject to common rights during Lammas.<sup>16</sup> It seems likely that these commons were all once connected as a single large band of woodland covering the western end of the parish, gradually eroded by medieval assarting, and it is tempting to think that this land comprised a large part of the woodland measuring one league by league recorded at the time of Domesday. It is striking that the Common was labelled Horwood Forest on Greenwood's 1824 map of Gloucestershire.<sup>17</sup>

Field names and the evidence of deeds attest to the formerly wooded nature of the south of the parish, and to later extensive woodland clearance. Large enclosures near Kingrove Common included the Leys, the King's Leys, and King's Riding.<sup>18</sup> Several groves are recorded near the boundary with Doddington from the 13th century, and John Leland noted that a great plenty of wood remained in this part of the parish at the time of his visit in 1545.<sup>19</sup> Ellis Cottell held a large grove called Brankesworth, and was granted another in 1255.<sup>20</sup> This latter was still woodland in 1597,<sup>21</sup> but had been converted to pasture by 1672.<sup>22</sup> Brankesworth was also cleared of trees by the 17th century, after which date it was known as the Branch Hay.<sup>23</sup> Another piece of woodland, simply called the Grove, was enclosed in the late 15th century,<sup>24</sup> and had been converted to pasture by 1616.<sup>25</sup> A piece of land called the Ragge near Kingrove Common, first referenced in 1597,<sup>26</sup> also suggests woodland relating to the former forest.<sup>27</sup>

### Communications

#### Roads

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<sup>16</sup> GA, C/DC/E43.

<sup>17</sup> *Greenwood's Map of Gloucestershire* (1824).

<sup>18</sup> Many of these field names remained in use at the time of the 1839 tithe award: GA, GDR/T1/165.

<sup>19</sup> *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, 5 Vols. (London, 1907–10), V, 95.

<sup>20</sup> *Abstracts of Feet of Fines Relating to Gloucestershire 1199–1299*, ed. C.R. Elrington, no. 537.

<sup>21</sup> GA, D1571/F9.

<sup>22</sup> GA, C/DC/E/43/1.

<sup>23</sup> GA, D2700/NC/9/1.

<sup>24</sup> TNA, DL 29/638/10362.

<sup>25</sup> GA, D1699/2.

<sup>26</sup> GA, D1571/F9.

<sup>27</sup> GA, D2700/NC/9/1; D1610/E47.

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Old Sodbury has been an important waypoint on routes of national significance since ancient times. The Great Cotswold Ridgeway ran through the parish, following the crest of the Cotswold Edge between Bath and the West Midlands.<sup>28</sup> This route, known as the Bath Way, remained important through the Middle Ages and after. Another important route crossed this at right angles, descending the steep slopes of Old Sodbury Hill to connect Bristol with Chippenham and London. Local roads radiated from this crossing towards Doddington, Tormarton, and Marshfield. The borough of Chipping Sodbury was laid out on the Bristol road, the route of which was altered slightly to accommodate the new market. From here, roads travelled north to Gloucester and west to the Severn crossings at Aust and Redwick. In the late 17th century the road through Sodbury was considered part of the main route between the south-west and the south midlands.<sup>29</sup> Another road from Chipping Sodbury, travelling north-west over the river Frome to meet the ridgeway above Little Sodbury Hill, was part of a 'high route' that connected the market towns of the Cotswolds with Bristol, Gloucester and Tewkesbury.<sup>30</sup>

From at least the 18th century the Cross Hands on Old Sodbury hill, located at the crossing of roads to Bath, Bristol, Chippenham, Cirencester, and Marshfield, has been site of significance for travellers. The road from Cirencester to Bath was turnpiked in 1743.<sup>31</sup> The road from Chippenham was turnpiked as far as the Cross Hands in 1752.<sup>32</sup> The road from the Cross Hands through Old Sodbury and Chipping Sodbury towards Bristol was turnpiked in 1800.<sup>33</sup> The road to Marshfield was turnpiked in 1804.<sup>34</sup> These roads were amalgamated into a single trust in 1849,<sup>35</sup> and disturnpiked in 1873.<sup>36</sup>

The Bath road, now designated the A46, remains an important trunk route. Although the M4 motorway does not pass through Sodbury, its proximity has promoted the development of the parish as a dormitory for commuters, and has reduced the importance of the Chippenham road for long-distance travel.

### Railways

Until the early 20th century, the closest station to Sodbury was that at Yate. Prompted by the opening of the Severn Tunnel in 1886, the Great Western Railway

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<sup>28</sup> G.B. Grundy, 'The Ancient Highways and Tracks of Worcestershire and the Middle Severn Valley: Part I' *Archaeological Journal*, XCI (1934), 66–96.

<sup>29</sup> Ogilby, *Britannia*, 109–10 and plate 55.

<sup>30</sup> Abel Wanter, *History of Glos.*, Bod. Lib., MS Top. Glouc. 2, f. 96v.

<sup>31</sup> 16 Geo. II c.32.

<sup>32</sup> 25 Geo. II c.50; 18 Geo. III c.103.

<sup>33</sup> 39–40 Geo. III c.xlvi.

<sup>34</sup> 44 Geo. III c.lxix; 7 Geo. IV c.xii.

<sup>35</sup> 12–13 Vic. c.46.

<sup>36</sup> 36–7 Vic. c.90.

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proposed a more direct route between London and South Wales, leaving the existing line at Wootton Bassett and travelling west through Badminton and Winterbourne to rejoin the existing route near Patchway, to the north of Bristol. An Act was acquired in 1896, and construction began in the following year. The new line ran across the parish, passing to the south of Chipping Sodbury and Colts Green before entering a tunnel to the west of Chapel Lane, emerging to the east of Lyegrove House. At c.2.5 miles long, the tunnel under the Cotswold Edge was the most significant feat of engineering required in the construction of the railway. The new line opened on 1 Jan. 1903, and later that year a new station was opened, called Chipping Sodbury but actually located near Colts Green. The station, which was the busiest of the four stations along the new section of track, was closed in 1961, although the line remains open in 2018, serving Bristol Parkway and stations in South Wales.

Branching off from this line, an inland sorting depot called Wapley Common was built during the Second World War on land that straddled the Old Sodbury boundaries with Doddington and Yate. Begun in 1940, it was originally intended to serve as a site where goods could be quickly transported away from the vulnerable dockyards at Avonmouth.<sup>37</sup> By the time it was completed, in 1942, the threat to the dockyards had receded, and Wapley Common was instead largely used by American armed forces to store aircraft parts in the build up to D-Day. After the war the depot served as a naval depot, but by 1966 the railway lines had been removed.<sup>38</sup> The site was subsequently used as a depot for the Highways Agency, and was replaced with a new housing development in the early years of the 21st century.

### Buses

An omnibus ran through the village between Hawkesbury and Bristol once a week in 1894, when omnibuses running from Luckington and Sherston to Yate railway station also stopped in the village three days a week.<sup>39</sup> By 1897 the Hawkesbury omnibus also only ran as far as Yate station.<sup>40</sup> The opening of Chipping Sodbury railway station reduced the demand for omnibus travel, and by 1906 there was just one omnibus a week stopping in the village, running from Hawkesbury to Yate station.<sup>41</sup>

The Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company introduced a daily bus service between Old Sodbury and Bristol in 1921, stopping at Old Sodbury village, the Cross

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<sup>37</sup> Oxford Archaeology, 'Wapley Common Inland Sorting Depot, Yate, South Gloucestershire', (Unpublished report, 2009) <https://library.thehumanjourney.net/935/1/YATE%2008.pdfA.pdf> [accessed 7 Apr. 2018].

<sup>38</sup> OS, 1:2500, Sheet 7181 (1969 edn).

<sup>39</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1894 edn.).

<sup>40</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1897 edn.).

<sup>41</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Glos.* (1906 edn.).

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Hands, and Lyegrove. There were also daily buses to Malmesbury and Tetbury.<sup>42</sup> The Bath Tramways Company began running buses to Chipping Sodbury twice a week in 1927, stopping also at Old Sodbury and the Cross Hands.<sup>43</sup> By 1939 the Bristol company provided daily buses between Old Sodbury and Bristol, Cirencester, Malmesbury, and Tetbury, and the Bath company ran daily services to Bath.<sup>44</sup> In 1963 the renamed Bristol Omnibus Company ran daily services to Bristol, Chippenham, Malmesbury, and Swindon, and a bus to Bath four days a week.<sup>45</sup> In the late 1960s the Bristol company ran an express service between Weston-super-Mare and Oxford which stopped at the Cross Hands, but this had ceased to operate by 1970, perhaps as a consequence of the building of the M4 motorway.<sup>46</sup>

Fosseway Coaches, based in Chippenham, introduced a daily service between Yate and Malmesbury in 1981, which also stopped at Old Sodbury.<sup>47</sup> The company also introduced a weekly service to Thornbury in 1986.<sup>48</sup> Westward Travel ran a daily service between Wootton-under-Edge and Yate calling at Old Sodbury.<sup>49</sup> The Bristol company, renamed Badgerline and later absorbed into the First group of companies, continued to provide frequent daily services to Bristol in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.<sup>50</sup> In 2018 there was no longer a direct service between Old Sodbury and Bristol. Services to Bath, Malmesbury, Stroud, Tetbury, Wotton-under-Edge, and Yate were provided in that year by Stagecoach West, replacing Wessex Connect, while Coachstyle of Nettleton (Wilts.) provided a service between Yate and Malmesbury.<sup>51</sup>

### Population

It was estimated that there were 120 communicants in the parish in 1551.<sup>52</sup> There were 47 households in 1563,<sup>53</sup> and 146 inhabitants in 1603.<sup>54</sup> There were 58 families in

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<sup>42</sup> BA, 39735/BRI/IM/PM/6.

<sup>43</sup> BA, 39735/BAT/IM/4.

<sup>44</sup> BA, 39735/BRI/IM/PM/7; 39735/BAT/IM/4.

<sup>45</sup> BA, 39735/BRI/IM/PM/7.

<sup>46</sup> BA, 39735/BAT/IM/5.

<sup>47</sup> BA, 39735/BRI/IM/PM/8.

<sup>48</sup> BA, 39735/BRI/IM/PM/8.

<sup>49</sup> BA, 39735/BRI/IM/PM/8.

<sup>50</sup> BA, 39735/BRI/IM/PM/10.

<sup>51</sup> Travelwest, < <https://travelwest.info> > [accessed 8 Aug. 2018].

<sup>52</sup> J. Gairdner, 'Bishop Hooper's Visitation of Gloucester', *EHR*, XIX (1904), 116.

<sup>53</sup> *Diocesan Populations Returns of 1563 & 1603*, ed. Alan Dyer and D. M. Palliser, British Academy, Records of Social and Economic Hist., new ser., XXXI (London, 2005), 166.

<sup>54</sup> *Diocesan Populations Returns of 1563 & 1603*, 336.

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1650,<sup>55</sup> and 107 people in 1676.<sup>56</sup> At the start of the 18th century Atkyns estimated the population to be about 200, accommodated in 48 houses.<sup>57</sup> Rudder suggested in 1779 that the population remained about the same,<sup>58</sup> but the 1801 census found the parish to contain 687 people. The population of the parish fluctuated during the early 19th century before reaching a peak of 871 in 1841, after which it gradually declined to 690 in 1891. The construction of the new railway line between London and South Wales served to swell the population to 1,332 in 1901, but this had fallen again to 763 in 1911. In 1931 there were 837 people living in the parish.

The parish was combined with Chipping Sodbury in 1945 to form the new parish of Sodbury.<sup>59</sup> The establishment of a new town at Yate to serve as an overspill for north Bristol also attracted an increased population to Sodbury, which had a population of 2,408 in 1951, an increase of a third since 1931.<sup>60</sup> The population remained stable for the next decade, measuring 2,439 in 1961, but grew by more than half to 3,836 in 1971, and increased again to 4,267 in 1981.<sup>61</sup> The population of the parish was recorded as 4,550 in 1991 after boundary changes had reduced it in size.<sup>62</sup> The population grew once again in 2001 to 5,066, and fell slightly in 2011 to 5,045.<sup>63</sup> The Old Sodbury Built-up Area, comprising the eastern half of Sodbury parish, had a population of 661 in 2011.<sup>64</sup>

### Settlement

Prehistoric settlement appears to have been focused upon the higher ground of the parish, on the ridgeway along the boundary with Yate and on the Cotswold plateau. Few traces of neolithic or Bronze Age occupation have been recorded in the latter area, although scattered flint finds may be evidence of early activity within the area,<sup>65</sup> perhaps associated with Bronze Age round barrows located along the parish

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<sup>55</sup> TNA, C 94/1, f. 30v; C.R. Elrington, 'A Survey of Church Livings in Gloucestershire, 1650', Trans. BGAS, 83 (1964), 97.

<sup>56</sup> *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 545.

<sup>57</sup> Atkyns, *Glos.* 675.

<sup>58</sup> Rudder, *Glos.* 679.

<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Health Order No. 104,708: County of Gloucester (Sodbury Parish) Confirmation Order, 1945; Census, 1951.

<sup>60</sup> The population of the area comprising the new parish in 1931 was 1,810; Census, 1951.

<sup>61</sup> Census, 1961; 1971; 1981.

<sup>62</sup> The population of the new area comprising Sodbury parish in 1981 was 3,896; Census, 1991. Local Government Order, Northavon (parishes) Order 1988.

<sup>63</sup> Census, 2001; 2011.

<sup>64</sup> Census, 2011.

<sup>65</sup> South Glos. HER; PAS, GLO-487098.

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boundary with Tormarton.<sup>66</sup> Quarrying on high ground to the north of Chipping Sodbury revealed a late Bronze Age socketed axe.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast to the scant evidence of settlement in the earlier period, there is significant evidence of Iron Age occupation in the parish. In particular, the large multivallate hillfort that straddles the parish boundary with Little Sodbury at the crest of the Cotswold scarp has been described as ‘probably the best hillfort in Northavon [now South Gloucestershire]’.<sup>68</sup> Once thought to be Roman in origin, it is now widely accepted to date from the Iron Age.<sup>69</sup> The rectangular hillfort, known locally as Sodbury Camp, comprises a double rampart and ditch on three sides, with the west side left partly open to overlook the valley floor below. Within the ramparts is enclosed an area measuring approximately 4.5 ha. (11 a.). A second hillfort called Sodbury Camp was recorded on a map of 1777 on the ridge of higher ground that runs along the boundary with Yate to the north of Chipping Sodbury. Although it was apparently still extant in the early 20th century, when it was described as a univallate earthwork, but it could not be identified in 1962, and the area was subsequently quarried.<sup>70</sup> Other Iron Age artefacts have been found in this area of the parish, including a brooch and a coin.<sup>71</sup> The two camps appear to be associated with nearby important routes which presumably date from at least this period. The hillfort on Sodbury Common lay next to the road to Wickwar which, at least from the early medieval period, was a salt way, connecting Old Sodbury with Worcestershire. Sodbury Camp, on the escarpment, lies near the road which since at least Roman times has connected Bath with Cirencester and the Cotswolds.

It has been suggested that a network of Romano-British farms would have been strung along the Cotswold Edge from Marshfield northwards.<sup>72</sup> Little evidence of Roman settlement has so far been found within Old Sodbury, although a rectangular ditched enclosure at Bennett’s Gorse, to the east of the road to Tormarton, may be evidence of this settlement pattern.<sup>73</sup> That Sodbury Camp and the higher ground above the scarp continued to be occupied during the Roman period appears to be confirmed by the discovery of eight Roman coins, dating from between the 2nd and the 4th century, in or near Sodbury Camp. In the valley floor, the group of fields called the Chessels, lying below Sodbury Camp, might also be suggestive of a site of Roman occupation. Elsewhere on the plain, Roman tile

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<sup>66</sup> South Glos. HER.

<sup>67</sup> South Glos. HER.

<sup>68</sup> Chipping Sodbury Extensive Urban Survey.

<sup>69</sup> NHLE, No. 1002486; South Glos. HER, 2103; RCHME, *Ancient and Historical Monuments in the County of Gloucestershire Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds* (London, 1976), 103–4.

<sup>70</sup> South Glos. HER; Barry Cunliffe, ‘Gloucestershire and the Iron Age of southern Britain’, *Trans. BGAS*, CII (1984), 9.

<sup>71</sup> South Glos. HER; PAS, CCI-680703.

<sup>72</sup> Catchpole, Thesis, Appendix D: Chipping Sodbury, citing Russett.

<sup>73</sup> South Glos. HER.

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fragments have been found north of Chipping Sodbury,<sup>74</sup> and Roman coins have been found south of the town,<sup>75</sup> and south of Old Sodbury village.<sup>76</sup>

There was an Anglo-Saxon estate belonging to the bishops of Worcester by the 8th century, and the name *Soppanbyrg* was first recorded in a charter of c.903.<sup>77</sup> The open fields and commons that were shared by Old Sodbury and its smaller neighbour to the north suggests that these were laid out before Little Sodbury was detached as a separate estate. Little else can be deduced about Anglo-Saxon settlement in Old Sodbury. The estate was granted to a priest in the 8th century, and it has been suggested that this represents the foundation of a minster here, perhaps standing on the site of the modern parish church.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, the estate had been appropriated by laymen by the 9th century, and no priest was recorded in the parish in 1086, perhaps indicating that any former ecclesiastical foundation had not survived into the 11th century.<sup>79</sup> A royal deer park had also been established in the parish by the time of Domesday, perhaps on the site of the modern Park farm.

The principal settlement of Old Sodbury lies on the shallow lower slopes of the escarpment, concentrated upon lanes that run to the north and south of the main road. This used to take a direct route from the junction at the Cross Hands, making a steep descent of the escarpment into Old Sodbury village before continuing west to Chipping Sodbury. Another lane travels south-west from the Cross Hands junction towards Doddington, from which two lanes turn north and run in parallel to return to the main road. Of these two lanes, the western lane is now called Chapel Lane, while the eastern lane became the route of the Chipping Sodbury road, affording a less precipitous descent of the escarpment than its predecessor. The two lanes cross the main road, becoming respectively Cotswold Lane and Church Lane, climb up to a point where they converge at the northernmost point of the village, approximately midway up the escarpment.

To the north of this point where the two lanes converge, on a small promontory overlooking the Frome valley below it, stands the parish church. Although the oldest parts of this church date from the 12th century, it may occupy the site of an older church. The medieval manor complex formerly stood near the west end of the church, but had been demolished by the time of John Leland's visit in 1545.<sup>80</sup> Its location is perhaps indicated by possible house platforms and fishponds in the field to the west of the church, the site still reached from Chapel Lane by a

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<sup>74</sup> R. P. Wright, 'Roman Britain in 1953: I. Sites Explored: II. Inscriptions', *Journal of Roman Studies*, XLIV (1954), 109.

<sup>75</sup> South Glos. HER.

<sup>76</sup> PAS, GLO-47870E; GLO-9DCDE3.

<sup>77</sup> Sawyer, S 1446; Harmer, *Select English Historical Documents*, 25–7, 57–9; EPNS.

<sup>78</sup> Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600–800* (Cambridge, 1990), 156–7.

<sup>79</sup> Francesca Tinti, *Sustaining Belief: The church of Worcester from c.870 to c.1100* (Farnham, 2010), 241.

<sup>80</sup> *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, 5 Vols. (London, 1907–10), V, 94, 102.

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holloway.<sup>81</sup> A field called the Upper Court Orchard which formerly stood to the south of the church may have been named for the former manor house.<sup>82</sup> A large farmhouse called the Hayes House was erected on a site nearby the medieval church in the early 17th century.<sup>83</sup> Other than the parish church, no medieval buildings are known to survive. However, earthworks to the south of the manorial complex, in the triangular area between the lanes and the main road, may be the remains of former house plots, or they may be garden enclosures of tenements lining the two lanes.<sup>84</sup>

Several buildings dating from the 16th and 17th centuries may occupy the sites of medieval tenements. At the southernmost extent of the village, on the main road, stands the house called Camers. Although it was apparently rebuilt in the early 17th century, it had comprised part of the estate of Westbury College until the latter's dissolution.<sup>85</sup> To the west, a 17th-century house now called No. 1 The Green stands on the north side of the junction of Cotswold Lane and the Chipping Sodbury road.<sup>86</sup> On the south side of the Chipping Sodbury road, the Dog inn and Blair Cottage both also date from the 17th century.<sup>87</sup> Further south, along Chapel Lane, the origins of Village farm, now occupied by Overdale School, may also predate its 17th-century exterior,<sup>88</sup> as might another substantial house to its east, later the site of a brewery and subsequently demolished.<sup>89</sup> The principal focal points of settlement in the 19th century were the junctions of Cotswold Lane and Church Lane with the road to Badminton, with the cottages becoming more dispersed as the lanes travelled further from these points.<sup>90</sup>

The road to Chipping Sodbury provided another focus of settlement with a number of cottages and farm houses lying along its length, of which Blanchard's is certainly of medieval origin.<sup>91</sup> Settlement along the road and around the edges of Colts Green, across which it runs, is suggestive of purpresture and squatting by cottages, and presentments for encroachments were made in the 18th century.<sup>92</sup> Several large farmhouses of probable medieval origin lay on the outskirts of Chipping Sodbury. Settlement in the rest of the parish was dispersed. The former manor houses of Coombs End and Kingrove may have been the focus for small

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<sup>81</sup> South Glos. HER.

<sup>82</sup> The first reference to the orchard dates from the early 17th century: GA, D2066/1. It can be identified on the tithe award map of 1839: GA, GDR/T1/165. An adjacent field is probably the Lower Court Orchard referred to in the early 18th century: GA, D871/M4.

<sup>83</sup> GA, D2066/1; NHLE, No. 1135877.

<sup>84</sup> South Glos. HER.

<sup>85</sup> *L&P Hen. VIII, XIX (I)*: 1544, 175–76; BA, AC/AS/1/1. Below, Landownership.

<sup>86</sup> NHLE, No. 1129239.

<sup>87</sup> NHLE, Nos. 1120242, 1135769.

<sup>88</sup> NHLE, No. 1320897.

<sup>89</sup> GA, GDR/T1/165; OS, 6", Glos. LXIX.SE (1886 edn); 1:10,000, (1982 edn).

<sup>90</sup> BL, OS Drawings, Chippings Sodbury (1816); GA, GDR/T1/165; OS, 6", Glos. LXIX.SE (1886 edn).

<sup>91</sup> NLHE, No. 1129236.

<sup>92</sup> GA, D247/74, pp. 16–18.

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hamlets.<sup>93</sup> Although there is little evidence of such hamlets extant now, by the 19th century, and probably earlier, isolated farms lay along a lane connecting Combes End with Kingrove and Chipping Sodbury. Hampstead Farm, in the north of the parish, also had medieval origins. The medieval deer park was cleared of woodland in the 16th century, and its lodge remodelled as a large farmhouse. Two other farms of 17th-century origin stand between the former park pale and the boundary of Sodbury Common.

There was little settlement in the east of the parish, above the scarp. The medieval lodge of the park at Lyegrove, near the boundary with Badminton, was altered to serve as a mansion house in the early 17th century. It subsequently served as one of the principal residences of the lords of the manor. The 17th-century coaching inn called the Cross Hands stands at the crossroads of the Bath and Chippenham roads. Another inn, called the Plough, stands to the north of it.

The construction of the railway line through the parish led to a large increase in houses recorded in Old Sodbury, with an increase from 179 in 1891 to 240 in 1901.<sup>94</sup> Many of these must have been temporary accommodation for the railway workers, however, as the figure had fallen again to 174 in 1921.<sup>95</sup> The opening of the railway nevertheless stimulated new housebuilding, particularly in the area around the station on the south of the Badminton road.<sup>96</sup> Large villas were erected along the road between the station and Chipping Sodbury on small allotments taken out of the commons near Smarts Green. In 1931 there were 207 houses in Old Sodbury parish.<sup>97</sup> Sodbury Rural District Council acquired a site to the north of Colts Green and erected a row of houses there in 1936.<sup>98</sup> There was also piecemeal infilling elsewhere in the village.

Following the creation of Sodbury parish in 1945 there was extensive development on agricultural land formerly in Old Sodbury parish surrounding the borough of Chipping Sodbury.<sup>99</sup> The village of Old Sodbury remained largely unchanged in 1955,<sup>100</sup> but by the 1970s the lanes comprising the village centre were lined with large new houses, reflecting the village's new role as a home for commuters. The upgrading of the Badminton road had also required the demolition of several cottages along its length.<sup>101</sup> Outside the village core settlement remained sparse, but a row of new houses were erected to the east the Cross Hands by 1978.

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<sup>93</sup> BLHE, No. 1312989.

<sup>94</sup> Census, 1891; 1901.

<sup>95</sup> Census, 1921.

<sup>96</sup> OS, 6", *Glos. LXIX.SE* (1903 edn.).

<sup>97</sup> Census, 1931.

<sup>98</sup> GA, DA33/100/29.

<sup>99</sup> See Chipping Sodbury, settlement.

<sup>100</sup> OS,

<sup>101</sup> GA, P300a PC1/12; OS, 1:2500, ST7581 (1978 edn.).