

British History Online – Parish of Claydon

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CLAYDON

Claydon chapelry lay in the north of Cropredy parish and included 1,199 acres at the northern tip of the county. In the later 19th century Claydon came to be regarded as a separate civil parish, and in 1932 its bounds were increased by the addition of the extra-parochial district of Clattercote. With that exception, however, the bounds of the modern parish and the ancient chapelry were probably the same. At the northern apex stood the Three Shire Stone; the western boundary with Warwickshire was marked in part by the long windbreak, 'Farn borough hedge', which was in existence in 1642; on the north-eastern boundary with Northamptonshire (named Boddington hedge in 1665) stood a hoar stone mentioned in 1551–2.

The chapelry lies almost entirely on the clays of the Upper Lias, although there is a small band of Middle Lias in its south-west corner. Claydon has some notable geological features: Plot wrote that its wells yielded rich golden firestone, used for carbines and pistols; that in Hoarstone furlong especially, the ground produced unusually large and separable asteria or star-stones; and that Claydon was also notable for examples of ammonites (fossils). In 1759 it was noted that in addition to those natural phenomena there was a small perennial spring in Claydon main street, which flowed plentifully in dry weather. This may be the well opposite Hillside House, at the south-east corner of the village, which until recent years supplied the village with water.

No sizeable stream passes through the chapelry: the Highfurlong Brook crosses its south-east tip, and two small and nameless tributaries flow along portions of its boundaries on all three sides. The field-name Radmore (Radmore pool occurs in 1642) in the south part of the chapelry suggests land liable to floods. The south-east portion of the parish was known as Lawnd Hill or (as in 1966) Lawn Hill; and the word 'Lawn' occurs in field-names in Claydon and Clattercote, in Cropredy Lawn in Cropredy, and in Lawn Hill Cottage in Appletree (Northants.). Probably the various names are ultimately derived from the former tenure of land in the area by the Priory of Laund (Leics.), rather than directly from the substantive 'launde' ('pasture'), itself the root from which that place-name stems. 'The Spellows shooting in to Boddington hedge' are mentioned in 1665 and some fields in Lawn Hill are given the name 'Spellow' in 1717, as are others nearby in Prescote in 1797; the names, like perhaps 'Spella House' two miles away in Boddington (Northants.), may denote the existence at some time of a 'speech hill'. The chapelry has almost no woodland.

Claydon is crossed by two railway lines, and the canal also passes close to the village. Lanes radiate from Claydon to Cropredy, Mollington, Farnborough, Fenny Compton, Upper Boddington, and Appletree (in Aston-le-Walls, Northants.). The first four of these represent pre-inclosure tracks; that to Fenny Compton was known at inclosure in 1776 as Warwick way, and separated two of the quarters of the open fields of Claydon. The lane to Appletree in time superseded an older track known in 1717 and 1776 as Warden way and in 1642 as Chipping Warden way which ran from Claydon village over Lawn Hill to Chipping Warden (Northants.); a public footpath on the line of Warden way was among those laid down at inclosure. The southern portion of the lane to Boddington was known in 1605 and 1776 as Hears or Hurds way, the northern portion and the lane to Appletree were created at inclosure. Considerable lengths of all the lanes remained in 1966 without hedges, although post-and-wire fences had recently been set up. Claydon contains several good examples of inclosure roads, notably the portion of the Boddington land between the railway line and canal feeder.

For the poll tax of 1377 only 37 Claydon inhabitants were assessed, rather fewer than for Little Bourton; in 1642, however, 57 inhabitants of 18 years or more took the Protestation Oath, and the population in the mid 17th century cannot have been much less than in 1801, when it was 235. According to the Vicar of Cropredy in 1808 there were 49 families and 223 souls. Thereafter there was a steady increase in population to 337 in 1841, the decade of greatest increase being 1831–41. The population then remained fairly static until it fell from 332 in 1871 to 300 in 1881, from which figure there was a remarkable drop to 239 in 1891, a reflection of the agricultural depression. There was a continuing decline to 199 in 1931, after which there was some increase.

Claydon village is built on the 'clay hill' from which the place-name, first recorded in 1109, was derived, and stands out above its surrounding fields, especially when viewed from the south. The church stands on an island site on the west side of the main street, at the highest point in the parish, 456 ft. above sea-level; from the village the ground falls to 400 ft. and less at the extremities of the chapelry.

The village consists for the most part of two storied houses of coursed rubble with Welsh slate roofs, casement and stone-mullioned windows, and brick stacks. The majority are probably 17th-century buildings in origin, but most have been altered and reconditioned in the 18th century and later. Though fairly well populated Claydon was not a prosperous village, and in 1665 it had no large house, no householder who was assessed on more than two hearths, and many who were discharged on account of poverty. In 1856 Bishop Wilberforce thought the cottages of Claydon were marked 'with every stamp of neglect and wretchedness', but such reproach is no longer valid: occasional brickwork and almost universal Welsh slate roofing have replaced decaying stone and neglected thatch. The last thatched cottage in Claydon was pulled down c. 1948. In at least one instance the materials of an old ironstone house have been successfully re-used. The largest single group of new houses in Claydon in 1969 was the fourteen cottages built by Banbury R.D.C. after 1945 at the north end of the village.

Manor Farm lies to the west of, and well back from, the Mollington lane at the south-west entrance to the village; it is a plain two-storied house of ironstone ashlar built on a three-unit plan, dating probably from the first quarter of the 18th century. In the 19th century an extension was built in brick. Hillside House, perhaps the most notable building in Claydon, and probably the former manor-house is a late-17th-century house of two stories in ironstone ashlar, of L-shaped plan; on each floor on the east front are five wooden mullioned and transomed casement windows. The Leys Farm, in the main street opposite the church, is an early-18th-century house of ironstone ashlar in two stories, consisting of a main range with a wing at the back. Deeds seem to confirm the local tradition that it was the Knibb family's house. Sundial Farm, also on the east side of the main street, was burnt down in 1894 and rebuilt in coursed ironstone rubble on an offset stone plinth. On the south gable end is a sundial dated 1797; on the north end is a bricked-up window of four lights under a square label. Further north, lying well back from the street, is another Leys Farm, a large brick house which bears the legend 'J.P. 1859' (for Joseph Preedy); the east front is of ironstone. The house opposite Sundial Farm was probably built c. 1700 but has undergone much alteration and addition.

Between 1753 and 1763 Claydon had three inns, in 1781 two, and later one only. Thomas Sabin kept the 'Mill and Plough' in 1781, probably the house bought on the death of Charles Sabin by Richard Smallbones, inn-holder of Warwick; Smallbones held the property, the later vicarage house, from 1814 to 1820. The 'Blackbird', mentioned in 1789, was probably the same as the 'Bird in Hand' kept by Richard Savage in 1794. One inn, the 'Malt Shovel', was recorded in 1841; in 1851 and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries there were two inns, the Sunrising Inn, opposite the church and beside the chapel, and the New Inn, later closed, an ironstone house on the east side of the village street, near Sundial Farm.

The village stocks (the repair of which is mentioned in 1821) stood at the east end of the Church Room, in what became part of the churchyard. The village pound appears to have been opposite the former New Inn.

Because of the comparative smallness of the parish, and the manner in which at inclosure the farms were laid out to stretch from existing farmhouses in the village, Claydon has only two outlying farms: Claydon Hay Farm, the most northerly house in the county, was built between 1776 and 1794 and Glebe Farm, a thatched cottage unfit for habitation in 1966, was built near the canal bank rather later.

Claydon was closely connected with the Knibb family of clockmakers which owned land there in the 17th and 18th centuries. Elizabeth Beere, a Claydon publican's daughter, mistress of one of the infamous 'Culworth gang' of the 1780s, was probably locally notorious.

Claydon's history is largely one of obscurity and poverty. The chapelry has lacked influential resident landlords and also resident gentry, and this is reflected in the modest size of the houses. In 1921 Claydon was the fifth, and in 1931 the second, most overcrowded parish in the Banbury registration district; its natives have endowed it with no important charities, and it could not avoid the compulsory establishment of a school board. The incumbents of Claydon have been unanimous in their views on the poverty of their parish, the harshest verdict

being that of R. T. Blagden in 1861, who described Claydon as 'a most neglected poverty-stricken place, notorious in the county for the numbers it sends to gaol'. Recollections of the 1900s bear him out.

Claydon long remained an unusually isolated village: even in the 19th century it was comparatively ill-served by carriers. Since 1945 a daily bus service to Banbury, and the advent first of electricity and then of mains water in the 1950s have made the village less isolated and more convenient. Some old landmarks have disappeared: the village carpenter and shoemaker did not survive the early years of the 20th century, and c. 1958 the village smithy, near the Methodist chapel, operated for nearly two centuries by the Mold family, finally ceased to function when the last Mold blacksmith left the village. In 1966 Claydon lacked a proper village hall, but had a cricket and football club, and a revived and flourishing village shop. Members of the professions had begun to retire there, Banbury commuters to live there, and in recent years visitors from pleasure craft on the Oxford canal have been frequently seen in the village street.

Manors and other Estates.

Claydon was not separately described in Domesday Book, being part of the Bishop of Lincoln's Cropredy manor, but then, as later, there were probably two manors in Claydon. The bishops remained overlords of both until their surrender of Cropredy in 1547.

The mesne tenant in 1086 of what was later called CLAYDON manor or LAUNDFEE was the Richard who held 3 hides of the Bishop of Lincoln within his Cropredy manor. He may be identified with the Richard of Newark who in or before 1109 gave two-thirds of his tithes in Claydon to Eynsham, later described as the tithes of 12 yardlands.

Richard of Newark was the predecessor, possibly the ancestor, of a family named de Dive which also held land at Balderton, near Newark-on-Trent (Notts.). Little is known of the family, and less of its connexion with Claydon. In 1166 William de Dive held 1 knight's fee of the see of Lincoln, and he or a successor of the same name occurs in 1174–6. A William de Dive held the Balderton fee in the early 13th century, and c. 1225 the heir of William de Dive held a knight's fee in Balderton, Claydon, and elsewhere. In 1239 John de Dive was tenant of Claydon, but in 1241 it was Ralf de Karewill and his wife Hawise (de Dive) who granted the holding to Laund Priory (Leics.). It was then said to consist of rather more than 12 yardlands and it was to be held of the grantees and of the heirs of Hawise, who may have been the relict of William or John de Dive. In 1279 Laund Priory held it of John de Dive, heir to William de Dive (d. by 1251), and Clattercote Priory held the estate of Laund in feefarm as $\frac{1}{4}$ knight's fee at a rent of 21 marks; of this sum, 1 mark was payable at one time by Clattercote direct to the bishop in lieu of reliefs, but the mark was granted by Bishop Grosseteste to Laund before 1253. There is no evidence that John de Dive himself or his coheirs (Disney and de Bussey) held any interest in Claydon after 1279. In 1316 the Prior of Laund was returned as the holder of a Claydon manor, but no further references to Laund's overlordship have been found, and Claydon was not among the Priory's possessions at the Dissolution. By 1404 the sub-tenants of Laundfee were the Raleigh family, holders of the other chief medieval estate in Claydon. Laundfee was again mentioned separately in a settlement of 1450 and in the inquisition of George Raleigh in 1546.

The descent of the mesne lordship of the second CLAYDON manor followed that of an estate in Wardington. One knight's fee in the two places was held of the see of Lincoln in 1199 and 1202 by Robert son of Ralph, in 1208–9 and c. 1225 by Ralph son of Robert, in 1247 by Guy son of Robert Fitz Wyth, and in 1279 by Guy's son John. The Fitz Wyth interest in Claydon was last recorded in 1279.

The one third of the fee which lay in Claydon was held of the Fitz Wyths by members of a family which took its name from Grimscote. Richard of Grimscote between c. 1150 and 1170 made a grant of land, apparently in Claydon, to Clattercote Priory. In 1247 Richard of Grimscote held $\frac{1}{3}$ fee in Claydon of Guy Fitz Wyth; he may be identical with the Richard of Grimscote son of Anselm of Grimscote who granted land in Claydon to Clattercote Priory c. 1260.) A Richard of Grimscote, probably identical with the one who appears in 1247 and c. 1260, held $\frac{1}{3}$ fee in Claydon in 1279, when his brother Anselm held 4 yardlands of him. Ralph of Plumpton, who was returned among holders of fees in Claydon, Williamscot, and Prescote in 1316, evidently held in Claydon; he is more likely to have been the representative of the Grimscotes than of the FitzWyths. If so, he held in wardship or marriage, for in 1327 Hugh of Grimscote was taxed on goods in Claydon,) and $\frac{1}{3}$ fee there was held by William of Grimscote in 1346.

This manor of Claydon had come into the hands of the Raleigh family by 1397, when Thomas Raleigh died in possession of it. Besides the Laundfee manor in Claydon, the Raleigh family also held of the see of Lincoln a manor in Great Bourton, and (in chief) a manor in Mollington. In 1427 Claydon was settled on Joan Raleigh (grand daughter of the Thomas who died in 1397) and her second husband Edward Brounfele: that couple, as the heirs of Thomas Raleigh, were returned in 1428 as holders of the fee formerly held by William of Grimscote. In 1450, Joan having died without issue, the reversion of Claydon and Laundfee after Brounfele's death was settled on Joan's cousin William Raleigh. William's descendants held it until 1611, when Sir George Raleigh sold it to John Blencowe and Richard Gostelow, who conveyed Claydon to Calcott Chambre of Williamscot in 1615.

Chambre was an active, though unsuccessful, figure in the early-17th-century land-market of the Cropredy area. As early as 1616 financial difficulties forced him to sell Claydon to James Enyon, a Whitechapel brewer, and also purchaser of Floore (Northants.). Enyon died in 1623, and his son and successor James (d. 1632) was followed by his only son, a third James, who was created a baronet in 1642. Sir James was killed in a duel later in 1642, and his only son had died young. Claydon was partitioned between Dorothy and Catherine, two of Sir James's three daughters, and Constance, his elder sister. In 1661 Dorothy and her husband Thomas Stanley of Cumberlow Green (Herts.) dealt with their third of the manor, perhaps by way of mortgage. In 1685 all three coheirs (Dorothy Stanley, widow, and her son Thomas; Dorothy's sister Catherine and her second husband Sir John Garrard; and William Wilmer, grandson of Constance Enyon by her first marriage to Robert Wilmer) were concerned in a transaction involving Claydon manor. In the same year the Garrard family are recorded as holding a house and 4½ yardlands in Claydon, and those parts of the Lawn hills, the Spellows, and the Sellow meadows assigned to Catherine at the partition. In 1690 the Garrards sold Claydon manor and 4½ yardlands to William Hindes of Hampton Gay. The rights of the other two coheirs had probably been acquired by the Garrards.

Claydon passed from William Hindes (d. 1706) to his only son Thomas, who was described as lord of the manor in 1718 and died in 1722–3. Thomas was succeeded in turn by his sons John (d. 1754) and the Revd. Thomas Hindes (d. 1768), who both died without issue. Thomas's relict Susannah kept possession for her lifetime, and was lady of the manor in 1787. The devisee in fee under her husband's will had been Richard Hindes (d. 1776) of Jamaica, son of another Thomas Hindes whose father, or possibly grandfather, was apparently a younger brother of the first William Hindes of Claydon; Susannah (d. 1798) was succeeded by Richard's only child, Anne, who married firstly in 1803 Henry Hill (d. 1803) and secondly in 1804 Henry Huguenin. With Anne Huguenin the Hindes connexion with Claydon, last mentioned in 1807, apparently came to an end.

In 1705 the Hindes holding in Claydon amounted to 4½ yardlands (a moderate sized farm) in the open fields and 64 acres in Lawn Hill, but at inclosure in 1776 Susannah Hindes held only a single tenement in Claydon village. There has been no effective lordship of this manor since 1717, when Thomas (I) Hindes broke up his family estate there. The Astell family ultimately came to own most of the former Hindes estate. The family can be traced in Claydon in the 17th century, perhaps in Cropredy even in the 14th century. Edward Astell (d. 1703) left a freehold in Claydon village to his eldest son Edward, and a leasehold in Lawn Hill (granted to him by William Hindes in 1700) to his second son John. John (d. 1734), who was more prosperous than his elder brother Edward (d. 1729), in 1717 bought ½ yardland from Thomas Hindes and the freehold of the 40 acres in Lawn Hill leased to his father. John left ½ yardland to his son John, who died in 1762 a mere husbandman, and the land in Lawn Hill to his son Isaiah. Before inclosure in 1776 Isaiah bought from Edward Montgomery of Chacombe 4 yardlands in Claydon which seem to correspond to 4 yardlands sold to William Gardiner of Adderbury and to James Knibb of Claydon by Thomas Hindes in 1717. Montgomery's father-in-law was Edward Buckerfield who had in 1717 purchased from his nephew, Thomas Hindes, Middle Lawn Hill and Lawn Hill Hooks. At inclosure Isaiah Astell received 93 a. in lieu of 5 yardlands; he died in 1781 leaving the estate to his son John (d. 1824), who in 1782, as 'a reputable farmer' had married Miss Harris of Wroxton, 'an agreeable and genteel lady, with a fortune of £6,000'. In 1801 John's brother William (also d. 1824) bought another 30 acres in Lawn Hill (probably the rest of the former Hindes estate there); William's son John (1782–1875) bought another small property in Claydon in 1841. This John's great-grandson Mr. Harry Astell of Appleton (Berks.) is the present representative of the family, whose members have since 1908 been absentee landlords in a village where for two centuries they were prominent. The farm-house attached to the former Hindes estate of 4 yardlands was Hillside House; when Astell bought it it was known as 'Gumery's', from its Montgomery owner.

The Fox family of Wroxton, which in 1966 had been established in Claydon for three generations, accumulated four farms there formerly held by different families. The nucleus of the first Fox acquisition was the 4 yardlands held in free alms by Clattercote Priory of Richard of Grimscote in 1279; after the Dissolution it passed ultimately

to the Boothby family, and Thomas Boothby sold 1½ yardland in Claydon to Nathaniel Savage (d. ante 1713), a Claydon yeoman. Four further generations of Savages held and enlarged the farm (7½ yardlands at inclosure) until its sale to Richard Curtis in 1807–9. The farm was sold by John Curtis in 1858 to the Revd. C. F. Wyatt of Broughton, who resold it in 1863 to the Revd. J. A. Gould of Bodicote; Andrew Fox bought it from G. E. Gould in 1895. The estate, in the south-west of the parish, is called Manor farm, but there seems to be no evidence connecting it with any former manorial estate in Claydon.

Sundial farm was purchased by Andrew Fox from J. C. Harris in 1898; the estate had been allotted to William Harris at inclosure in 1776, and can be traced to 1713 when Anthony Harris of Astrop (in King's Sutton, Northants.) had bought 3 yardlands.

Another part of the Fox estate, Butlin's farm, resulted from the consolidation of two earlier estates. William Brooks of Norton (Northants.) acquired in 1805–6 an allotment of 36 a. which had been George Orton's at inclosure, and before his death in 1844 doubled it by the purchase of another separate holding of 38 a. The farm thus created resembled those laid out at the inclosure in that it ran almost from the parish boundary to Claydon village itself. In 1901 Brooks's grandsons, G. A. and W. B. Butling, sold the farm to Andrew Fox's son Frederick.

The Leys farm (i.e. the more northerly farm of that name) was sold in 1911 under the will of Elizabeth Preedy to Alban, son of Andrew Fox. It represents an 18th-century holding of the Buswell family of Steeple Barton: John Buswell and his brother Martin received under the will (proved 1752) of their uncle Thomas Love Knibb 5 and 2¼ yardlands respectively. In 1794, after his death, John Buswell's farm was sold to Joseph Preedy of Steeple Aston and so came to Elizabeth Preedy.

Martin Buswell's estate, which in 1776 amounted to 3¼ yardlands and lay in Farnborough (Warws. as well as Claydon), was inherited in 1825 by John Buswell's two granddaughters, Sybilla Wheeldon, wife of a Stockport cotton-spinner, and her sister Hannah Sutton. A partition in 1827 gave the Claydon farm to the Wheeldons, but in 1865 Emma Sutton, granddaughter of both sisters, inherited the whole; she sold the farm in 1881, since when it has had several owners. The fields were in the 20th century separated from the farm-house and came to be held with Clattercote by Mr. J. W. Hillier. The farm-house (i.e. the more southerly farm called Leys farm) was apparently that occupied by the Knibbs before the partition made by Thomas Love Knibb.

The Holbeches of Farnborough and Mollington long held the rectorial tithes in Claydon as lessees of the bishops of Oxford. The gamekeepers' deputations for Claydon made by Henry Francis Mavor in 1821 and by the Revd. William Mavor (also of Woodstock) in 1828 and 1835 were probably on behalf of William Holbech. On the sale of the Oxford bishopric estates the Holbeches acquired the freehold, but sold it in 1914 to Mr. William Elkington, a member of a family long settled in the Cropredy district; his son later bought the Glebe farm in Claydon, thus preparing the way for another consolidation of holdings in the parish.

Economic History.

In 1279 the Grimscote estate in Claydon comprised 4 yardlands held in demesne, 9 held in villeinage at an annual rent of 5s. each, and 15 held by free tenants; there were 2 yardlands of glebe, rented at 4s. each. In 1241 and 1279 the Laund estate in Claydon comprised some 12 yardlands; in 1279 each was held in villeinage at an annual rent of 5s.

The medieval tax returns do not suggest a poor village: in 1327, when 11 people were assessed at the comparatively high figure of 34s. 8d., individual assessments ranged from 5s. 10d. (Hugh of Grimscote) to 2s. 2d.; and, considering Claydon's small population in 1377, its standard assessment of £2 15s. 3d. for later medieval taxes was high. By the 16th century, however, Claydon appears to have become less prosperous: for the 1523 subsidy 8 people were assessed at a total of only 10s. 10d., seven on goods and one at the landless labourer's rate of 4d. In the 17th century the general level of prosperity was lower than that of other Cropredy hamlets: for the hearth tax returns of 1665 12 people were assessed on a total of only 17 hearths, and 8 people were discharged payment, because of poverty, on 11 hearths; none was assessed on more than 2 hearths.

Even so, among a selection of probate inventories, may be mentioned those of Richard and George Knibb, Stacey (d. 1606), Felix Carter (d. 1619), and William Martin (d. 1667), all of whom left personalty at their deaths worth more than £130. In general they were mixed farmers, their wealth lying in both crops and stock. Richard Knibb

in addition left 'a little shop of mercery ware'. George Knibb, a grazier, left 14 cows and 73 sheep and lambs, and wool worth £13 6s. 8d. Other sizeable flocks noticed include those of Richard Carter (68 sheep) and John Knibb (44), though they are small compared with the 332 sheep of an 18th-century farmer, John Astell.

In 1650 the prebendal glebe lay in the west, south, and north parts of the Claydon field. These probably corresponded to the three 'sides' or 'quarters', named first in 1711, Hill Field, Lawn Hill, and Hay Field quarters. In 1776 Hill Field and Hay Field quarters were separated by Warwick way (the track to Fenny Compton, Warws.), Hay Field and Lawn Hill quarters by a hedge along the south side of which now runs the footpath (established at inclosure) from the north end of Claydon village to Lower Boddington (Northants.); the division between Hill Field and Lawn Hill quarters followed the line of the hedge which now runs parallel with and immediately to the west of the Cropredy lane.

Most of the township has a heavy clay soil, which provides good pasture for dairy farming. In the early 17th century common of pasture was allotted on the basis of common for 3 horses, 5 beasts, and 40 sheep for each yardland. The arable was sown with the usual cereals, though oats are rarely mentioned. Most men grew peas, but vetches were rare in Claydon.

At the time of inclosure in 1776 there were 150 a. of old inclosure, 32 a. in and around the village itself, and 118 a. (Lawn Hill grounds) in the south-east corner of the parish. The latter area appears to correspond with that in which Laund Priory, and Clattercote Priory its tenant, had once held land, and is described in 1703 as 'those inclosed grounds of Claydon commonly called Lawn hills and meadows'. The early inclosures may have included some of the common allegedly inclosed by Simon Raleigh, lord of the manor, in the mid 16th century. The Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Oxford, owners (and at that time still direct exploiters) of Clattercote, between 1547 and 1551 brought a Star Chamber suit against him about his inclosures.

An Act for the inclosure of Claydon Field, 'and a certain piece of land and ground called the Hay' (apparently the northernmost part of Hay Field quarter) was obtained in 1776, and the award was made the same year. Forty yardlands or 1,024 a. were inclosed: 31 allotments were made to 23 persons, the largest being those to replace rectorial tithe (162 a.), and to Richard Savage (161 a.), to John and Martin Buswell (91 a., 67 a.), and to William Harris (83 a.). Eight other allotments ranged from 44 to 18 acres.

Land in Claydon passed completely out of the hands of gentry families when the Holbeches sold their farm in 1914. Long before that the Hindes' estate had shrunk almost to nothing, and the Boothby's to a mere two fields; although a few gentry families from time to time held land in Claydon they did so only for short periods, were not resident, and had no real connexion with the village. In 1785 nearly 50 per cent of Claydon was owner-occupied, in 1794 nearly 55 per cent, in 1811 only 35 per cent, and by 1831 no more than 45 per cent. The church property in the parish was leased, and in addition Martin Buswell's successors leased his farm, and the Preedy's always leased their Claydon land.

By the 19th century Claydon had become a village of small farmers. The ownership of land there had probably already become diffused before the subdivision of the lordship of the manor: in 1611, for instance, when selling the manor, the Raleighs had sold off 2 yardlands to Thomas Nicholes, a Claydon husbandman, and another 2 yardlands to the Hawten family; and an important partition of 8 yardlands was made by T. L. Knibb in 1747. Between 1776 and 1820, however, over one-tenth of the acreage of Claydon was consolidated into larger holdings; allotments of 18 a. made at inclosure to William Southam, of 40 a. to George Orton, of 9 a. to Thomas Gulliver, of another 9 a. to John Thompson, as well as a portion of old inclosure and part of James Knibb's allotment of 44 a. were bought by the Harris, Savage, Collins, and Astell families. The effect was not to create a few large freeholds, but to make small freeholds less small and to reduce the number of holdings of less than 50 acres.

A combination of freehold and leasehold land, or of more than one leasehold, might make possible the creation of fairly large farms; there was one of each kind in 1851 but such farms were only temporary. Even with the two larger farms, Claydon in 1851 contained ten men described as farmers, a fairly high number for a parish with under 1,200 a. of cultivable land; the acreages they held ranged from 60 to 290. In subsequent lists the number of farmers in Claydon has only once sunk below eight, and has often risen to eleven or even twelve. During the 19th and early 20th centuries small tenant farmers were often the leaders of Claydon.

Though Claydon has in modern times usually been considered a poverty-stricken village occasionally its farmers managed to do well. Around 1850 W. J. Astell ran a flourishing mixed farm, taking land on lease in near-by parishes, and sending butter to market in London every week. Even so the poverty of Claydon people in general is well attested and the sudden drop in population in the 1880s suggests that it was hard hit by the agricultural depression.

At the beginning of the 20th century only 22 per cent of the total cultivated area in Claydon was arable land. Of the arable in 1914 roughly 30 per cent was under wheat, 15 per cent under oats, 14 per cent under barley; swedes and turnips, potatoes and mangolds were also grown in small quantities. It is estimated that the total number of cattle per 100 acres in 1914 was roughly 29, and of sheep 53. Although a small amount of grassland was ploughed up at the beginning of the Second World War there was still very little arable around Claydon village. The chief crops were oats, wheat, and beans. In 1939 there were 11 farms in Claydon, only two of them (Manor farm and Clattercote Priory farm) above 150 a.

Until the mid 20th century the population of Claydon consisted almost entirely of farmers and farm-workers and the usual ancillary tradesman and craftsmen. The collar-making industry of Cropredy does not seem to have spread to Claydon. Early references to occupations suggest a predominantly agricultural village, an impression confirmed by the 1841 census. In 1851, of the 72 heads of households in the parish, 10 were farmers, 28 were farmlabourers, and of the rest, apart from 4 connected with the canal, 2 paupers, and 3 whose occupations are unknown, most were either carriers, tradesmen, or craftsmen, and 9 were labourers on the railway then under construction. In all there were in Claydon in 1851 59 agricultural labourers. In the mid 20th century the Banbury Aluminium works and other industries recruited labour in Claydon as elsewhere in the district.

Local Government.

Two overseers of the poor were appointed annually. From 1819 to 1827 there was also a permanent manager of the overseers' office who was paid from £5 to £5 10s. a year. In 1827 it was agreed to allow the overseers £3 a year—£1 to the overseer accounting for the summer and £2 to the overseer accounting for the winter.

The money spent by the overseers was raised by levy, usually 6s. in the pound, producing between £30 and £37. In 1831 there were 18 rate-payers. In 1776 £62 10s. was spent on the poor, in 1783–5 an average of £75, and in 1803 £186. The increase in total expenditure was about average for the hundred but in 1803 expenditure per head and rates were rather less than in the rest of Cropredy parish. From the overseers' accounts, however, it appears that 1800–1 had been the worst year in Claydon's history: nearly £366 was spent, a figure not exceeded in 1817, a year of distress generally, or in a local crisis in 1821. Like Wardington Claydon had a bad year in 1828 but from 1832 expenditure fell steadily. After 1834 Claydon was included in Banbury Poor Law Union.

Relief to the poor was given both in money and kind. Coal and clothes were provided regularly, bread when it rose above a certain price; on one occasion a gift of 6s. was made for clothing in order that a girl might keep her place of service. Some houses for the poor were maintained by the overseers; maintenance included glazing, thatching, which cost nearly £9 in 1816, and white-washing. In 1821 the overseers contributed towards the cost of building two cottages and in 1807 they allowed over £4 for furniture. They frequently paid rent for houses and lodgings. Regular payments were made to the disabled and bedridden and for nursing, money was available for midwives and the lying-in month, and the doctor's bill rose to over £13 in 1826. Expenses for pauper's funerals included the cost of tolling the bell, and of bread, cheese, and ale at the wake; in one case the goods of the deceased, valued at £2, were offset against expenses.

The roundsman system was in operation in Claydon by 1800. Pauper labour was allocated to farmers, one of whom in 1831 objected to the number of labourers he had to use, with the result that the overseers had to pay for 2½ days work done by two men whom he had turned off. In 1828 the justices stated that payments for roundsmen would in future be disallowed, but their ruling seems to have been totally ineffective. Some able-bodied poor were employed on the highways and were paid by the surveyor. In 1831 head money was reduced by 1s. because wages had gone up by 1s. Although a book was bought in 1801 for registering parish apprentices there is only one instance of a boy being apprenticed; it cost £14, apart from his clothes.

The money spent by the constable and thirdborough, as he was called, came from the overseers; out of this he paid the county rate until 1818, after which it was paid directly by the overseers. In 1794 a vestry was summoned

to discuss the provision of a pound, and in the following year over £7 was spent on wood and work. In 1799 the constable bought a pair of handcuffs. He also paid for catching vermin. Claydon, together with Epwell and Drayton, was obliged to provide one man for the militia, and in 1810 the overseers paid over £2 towards Claydon's share of the £10 to provide a substitute for a man drawn by ballot to serve in the Oxford Old Militia. The constable attended meetings at Banbury for drawing for the cavalry and militia; he went to ten such meetings at Banbury and Broughton in 1811.

Church.

Claydon church dates from at least the 12th century, and was a dependent chapelry of Cropredy until 1851, when Claydon (with Mollington) was created a perpetual curacy. The living was thereafter in the gift of the Bishop of Oxford and was endowed with glebe valued in 1852 at £200 a year gross, £198 net. In 1863 Claydon was created a separate perpetual curacy, and the endowment of the joint living was divided. The endowment of Claydon benefice comprised chiefly some 55 a. of glebe, namely the allotments in lieu of tithe (39 a.) and of glebe (32 a.) received by the Vicar of Cropredy at the inclosure of Claydon in 1776, less 8½ a. advantageously sold to the East and West Junction Railway in 1872, and a further 4 a. devoted to allotments. In 1877 Claydon was allocated £100 a year by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. In 1928 the benefices, but not the parishes, of Claydon and Mollington were reunited. In 1931 the new curacy had a total annual value of about £470, more than twice its value between 1851 and 1863.

The first known curate of Claydon was William Coppoke, who in 1526 was Cropredy's worst-paid curate. Richard Polley (1577–85) was one of those who subscribed to the Elizabethan settlement, and he was followed apparently by a relation, Christopher Polley, who was described in about 1590 as a 'nonpreacher'. From 1594 at least, when William Saunderson was curate, and for most of the 17th century Claydon shared a curate with Mollington. Saunderson was presented for not catechizing the young every Sunday and on Holy Days. In 1669 the churchwardens described their curate as 'painful in his calling', but in 1678 they presented the Vicar of Cropredy for failing to supply a resident curate, which they declared Claydon had had under previous vicars; moreover the vicar held only one service on Sunday, did not catechize, failed to administer the Sacrament duly, and failed to observe Holy Days and fasting days. In fact the curate at that date seems to have served Claydon, Mollington, and Wardington. As a result of the 1678 complaint the Peculiar court ordered the vicar to provide for Claydon a resident curate who would serve Mollington also for a salary of £30 a year. The vicar seems to have complied and curates for Claydon and Mollington are recorded in 1681–7, 1696–1701, in 1739, and in 1797–1808. The curate was presented in 1685 for teaching a school at Williamscot without licence, and for marrying several persons without banns or licences. In 1692–3 the churchwardens described their curate as 'sober and conformable'. In 1739 the curate's salary was still £30 a year, in 1808 £32 10s., and in 1814 £35.

As elsewhere in Cropredy parish the service of two or three cures by ill-paid, and often transitory, curates took its toll: in 1808 the average number of communicants in Claydon was only ten, and in 1838 even fewer—they are the 'grex rarior' of a despondent inscription on a communion flagon given in that year.

After the creation of the joint curacy in 1851 the curate lived at Mollington, and Claydon suffered in consequence by having fewer services than Mollington. In 1860 there were no more than seven communicants at a monthly service, and the curate was complaining of troublesome dissenters. The old 'vicarage-house' at Claydon was quite unsuitable for occupation, and the first two incumbents of Claydon after its separation from Mollington in 1863 quickly resigned on account of the inconvenience caused by the absence of a residence and the consequent necessity of renting unsuitable accommodation in local farm-houses.

In 1867, however, the vicar, G. W. Palmer, bought a house for £200 from his landlord and presented it to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners as a benefaction in the favour of the living. He had resided at Claydon since 1864 and had had no other charge. There was a swift improvement in the religious life of the village. In a year and a half attendance at the morning and evening services rose from 30 and 80 to 60 and 150 respectively. Winter Bible classes, held twice a week for men, were regularly attended, and singing classes were held for the young. Even so in 1872 Palmer reported that about half the adults in the village did not go to church, and there were four to five families of 'absolute dissenters.' In 1878 he was holding two services with sermons on Sundays, catechized every Sunday, administered the Sacrament monthly and on festivals, and held a mission service in Advent; out of a population of 300 there were 16 regular communicants, and 27 habitual absentees from church. Out of 63 householders, 51 were church-goers and 12 were dissenters.

After the reunion of Claydon and Mollington benefices in 1928 the vicar resided at Mollington, but after 1934 at Claydon. In 1958 Claydon parsonage-house was sold and the incumbent once more lived in Mollington.

The parish church of ST. JAMES THE GREAT is a small building of local stone consisting of nave, chancel, north aisle and chapel, west tower, and south porch. There is no division between nave and chancel.

The nave and north aisle date from the late 12th century, and are separated by an arcade of three bays. The north chapel, lighted by lancet windows, was added during the early 13th century. The chancel was so much altered in the 19th century that the date of its original construction is now difficult to determine. The small west tower with its saddleback roof, unusual in Oxfordshire, was added in the 14th century.

The subsequent history of the fabric was uneventful until 1860; only once, c. 1620, do 17th century churchwardens' presentments refer to the church being in need of attention, and Rawlinson c. 1718 thought it 'dark, but in tolerable repair'. The iron work on the main door into the nave bears the date 1640; some repairs were carried out in 1753 and 1795. By 1856, however, Bishop Wilberforce found the church 'in a wretched state internally—rather picturesque but pewed quite up to Communion rails and all sordid'. In 1860 an extensive restoration was begun. William White of Wimpole Street was the architect and Richard Wilson of Wardington the builder; except for the tower, the church was found to be in a much worse condition than had been thought, and was rebuilt on new foundations. The roof was reconstructed in oak, only a few of the old timbers being found fit for reuse; part of the north aisle was enlarged and rebuilt. The church was re-seated and the accommodation was increased from 89 sittings (26 free) to 156 sittings (123 free). New windows were inserted in the chancel: that of three lights in the east wall by Wailes of Newcastle, and two in the south wall by Lavers and Baird (one a memorial to Mrs. Tait, the curate's widow). North Oxfordshire craftsmen executed the reredos of coloured alabaster, the pulpit, the sedilia of Caen stone, and the eagle lectern, altar (of oak), and carved oak font cover. The former three-legged wooden font was replaced by one of stone. The total cost was £542, raised by subscription. Wilberforce preached at the reopening in March 1861 and found the restoration 'very nicely done and the church very pretty'.

After 1861 the only work recorded on the fabric was the repair of the chancel in 1922. During the incumbency of Francis Symes-Thompson (1907–11) an ambitious scheme of mural paintings (containing scenes from the life of St. James) in nave and sanctuary was attempted, but these were not thought satisfactory and were washed over. Other additions in the Tractarian tradition made by Symes-Thompson in 1908, apparently in advance of a faculty, remained in 1966, including the curtains round the altar, the small red marble table in the sanctuary, and a reproduction of Holman Hunt's picture 'The Light of the World'. Electric light was introduced in 1950; from 1957 the church was heated by electric heaters, which replaced a coke stove.

The church contains mural tablets in memory of the Buswell family; there are several floor slabs to members of the Knibb family.

An American harmonium (Story and Clark, Chicago) was installed in the 1890s, replacing a similar instrument.

The church plate reflects the former poverty of the parish; it includes a pewter plate of c. 1749, a silver tankard flagon of 1832, presented to the church in 1839 in place of a pewter vessel, and a silver chalice and paten of 1855.

According to Rawlinson, Claydon church possessed a peal of four bells; but in 1852, as in 1966, the peal was of three bells only. Two were cast in 1609 and 1611 and the tenor, originally cast in 1756, was recast in 1910.

The clock, first mentioned in 1744, is a one-day hour-striking weight-driven mechanism of an early type, originally with a crown wheel and foliot escapement; it has no dial. It has been much repaired by local craftsmen: some time in the 18th century its mechanism was altered to an anchor escapement with a long pendulum. The clock ceased to function in 1859; after repair it was set going again on the ground floor of the tower in 1906. In 1910 Messrs. White provided it with steel ropes and increased its running time to 26 instead of 16 hours; it was repaired again in 1950.

In the mid 18th century Claydon church was adorned with a painted sundial.

The churchyard was enlarged on the south by the addition of 21 perches of glebe land (then a cottager's garden) given by the vicar in 1876; this may have been the site of the old parsonage-house. After 1945 the churchyard was further enlarged; in 1948 George Goode (d. 1949) by will left £100 for its upkeep. Within the churchyard stands a church room, built of ironstone, which was originally the Claydon day school; it bears the date 1840 on its east end.

The registers date from the year 1569. They are not complete, the principal gap being in the marriage and burial registers between 1604 and 1634.

Nonconformity.

In 1696 Simon Butler (b. 1631) and his son Simon were presented as popish recusants, and though no Claydon papists are mentioned in a return of 1708, the Vicar of Cropredy reported one Claydon family in 1739.

The village was the only one in Cropredy parish to have a long-established Quaker family. The head of a Quaker family reported in 1739 was probably the weaver Joseph Collins (d. 1782), who came from Heyford (Northants.) and had a small freehold in Claydon. His descendants lived in Claydon for many generations and did not disappear from the area until the 1880s. The family were lessees of the vicarial glebe.

In 1821 an Independent missionary preacher named Ball began to preach at Claydon; he was closely followed by another missionary preacher, T. Styles, possibly assisted by the well-established Independent community in Bourton. By 1824 there was a congregation of about 50 persons, possibly meeting in the house of Elisha Gubbins which had been registered as a meeting-house in the previous year. The congregation seems to have been short-lived and it was Primitive Methodism which took firmest root in the village. In 1835 the preacher Joseph Preston visited Claydon and in 1839 the house of William Smith was registered for meetings by the minister of the Banbury Primitive Methodists. In 1851 a chapel was said to have been founded in 1837, but it was only in 1846 that the chief local landowner Henry Wheeldon conveyed land for the erection of a Primitive Methodist chapel. The chapel was attended by people from neighbouring parishes, particularly Farnborough and Wormleighton (Warws.). In 1851 it had 45 free sittings and 45 others, but attendance on the day of the census (46 in the morning and 50 in the evening) suggests that the society had not expanded much. The leader of the society was John Tarver, a Claydon carpenter. There was a small Sunday school.

In 1854 the incumbent said that the inhabitants of about 20 houses in Claydon and Mollington attended the chapel; and in 1860 that about half the labouring population of the two villages were dissenters and that most of the other half habitually attended chapel. Four years later there were said to be four to five families of 'absolute dissenters' in Claydon alone and in 1866 there were six.

An inscription on the chapel records its enlargement, but in view of the small size of the building it possibly refers only to the addition of a porch. The Claydon chapel was not served by a resident minister and its needs were in 1969 supplied by the Methodist minister of Banbury.

Education.

From 1574 until its closure in 1851 Claydon had the right to send three boys to the free grammar school at Williamscoth. Claydon also had the right under the will (1764) of John Freckleton of Farnborough (Warws.) to send 15 children to a school endowed by him in Farnborough. Because of their relative distances it is not surprising that in 1824 the full quota from Claydon were attending Farnborough school and none Williamscoth. A school-house is mentioned in Claydon in 1711, but a school there is next mentioned only in 1808, when an unendowed school, teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic 'encouraged by the subscriptions of the landholders of the place' was reported there; it had about 10 boarders (some from outside the parish) and 30 day pupils. The school, apparently of a high standard, was perhaps run by Charles Sabin of Claydon, schoolmaster, after whose death in 1812 or 1813 the school was described as one of those 'merely kept by old women'. In 1818 there was no day school at Claydon, but a Sunday school for 25 children; the means of education for the poor were reported as insufficient. By 1833, however, there were two dame schools, attended respectively by 10 boys and 21 girls, all instructed at their parents' expense; there was also a Sunday school in which 38 children were taught free. A school maintained by William Holbech of Farnborough for the combined needs of Mollington and Claydon in 1854 was doubtless held in the building, now the church room but formerly a school, built in

1840; the census of 1851, however, returned only nine schoolchildren. After the separation of the benefices in 1863 children from Mollington no longer attended the combined school in Claydon and in 1872 the vicar complained that although he was still in control of the school the means for its support were altogether inadequate.

The Claydon and Clattercote School Board was compulsorily set up in 1875; two years later a State elementary school for 80 pupils was established on a site belonging to H. Wheeldon. In 1878 the curate complained that the Board allowed a certain amount of religious instruction not by a clergyman; this he attributed to spite against Charles William Holbech of Farnborough, Archdeacon of Coventry, and himself because he would not hand over an old charity without a guarantee of religious instruction. The school in 1902 had an average attendance of 40 children. Slightly fewer children attended in 1906. In 1939 the income (c. £15) from the endowments of Calcott and Freckleton, mentioned above, was being distributed to schoolchildren for good conduct.

The school was closed in 1948. In 1965 the younger children attended Cropredy school, and the older ones travelled to Banbury; the 1877 school building, incorporating the master's house, had been sold.

Charities for the Poor.

In c. 1611 Richard Wayde and William Browne were presented by the churchwardens of Claydon for converting into money a gift of cattle which a Mr. Webb had made for the benefit of the poor. Browne died that year and the churchwardens were anxious that the money should be preserved.) In 1752 four trustees of funds for the poor of Claydon purchased for £72 ¼ yardland in the open fields, which was exchanged at inclosure in 1776 for 6½ a. in Lawn Hill quarter. In 1808 the land and a cottage belonging to the chapelry were let for £12 10s. which was distributed to the poor at Christmas. In 1825 it was let for £18, and the money was used to purchase coal for poor families. In 1890 it was stated that the cottage must have been sold and that its rent had not been paid for many years. The income from the land alone in 1891 was 10 gns. In 1916 the trustees were concerned that the coal had always been given equally to all poor householders without distinguishing wage-earners from the old and needy. In 1931 the land was let for £15 a year, the money being used to purchase coal for 20 people. By will dated 1948 George Goode (d. 1949) gave c. 3 a. to the Claydon trustees. In 1951 the land was sold and the money invested. In 1967 30 people received £38 17s.

By will proved 1752 Thomas Love Knibb bequeathed £40 to the churchwardens of Claydon for the use of the poor. In 1786 the charity comprised a house and land, and, together with land given by William Martin at an unknown date, was providing £6 9s. a year; by 1825 both charities were probably lost.