

Soulbury History

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Overview

Soulbury is a parish consisting of 4,226 acres, of which 855 acres are arable land, 2,948 acres permanent grass, and 77 woods and plantations. The soil and subsoil are of clay. The chief crops are wheat, oats, beans, and roots. The parish is very irregular in shape. A narrow strip of it, stretching to the north-east, borders on Bedfordshire and is bounded for a short distance by Watling Street. This is the highest part of Soulbury, an elevation of 533 ft. above the ordnance datum being reached at one point. The land here is chiefly heath and woodland, including part of Bragenham Wood and Stockgrove Park. Lipscomb, writing about 1840, says that Bragenham, which was formerly a hamlet of Soulbury, 'has long since formed one large grazing farm and manor house with a single tenant,' there being no vestige of village or hamlet. To the south-west of Bragenham the parish becomes very narrow and is crossed by the Ouzel, which also forms the boundary for some distance. The land in this district is from 253 ft. to 282 ft. above the ordnance datum. To the west of the river and approximately parallel with it is the Grand Junction Canal.

The village of Soulbury is small and scattered. It contains a number of timber-framed cottages, most of which date probably from the 16th and 17th centuries, but all of them have been much altered and added to. Lovett's charity school, built in 1724, is of red brick with gauged dressings and wooden transomed windows. The projections over the doors are supported by carved brackets. At the Green, to the north of the village, are some 17th and 18th-century cottages, mostly refaced in brick.

The manor-house of Chelmscott, the residence of Mr. F. T. Bagshawe, lies near the canal. It contains the remains of what appears to be a 14th-century chapel, which belonged to an adjoining house, the home of the Lucys, now demolished. This chapel was probably built in 1343, when Geoffrey de Lucy received a licence to have a chapel in his manorhouse of Chelmscott. It was much altered, and probably adapted as a dwelling-house in the 17th century, being used as a farm-house in the middle of the 19th century. The walls are of stone, with renewals or alterations in brick. Within there are remains of niches and piscinae, and some of the roof beams are ancient.

In the extreme south of the parish is Liscombe Park, which was from the 13th century the home of the Lovetts, but is now the property of Mr. E. W. Robinson. There was a capital messuage standing here as early as 1250, but the present house was built in the second half of the 16th century. It was much altered in the two following centuries, particularly by Sir Jonathan Lovett in the latter part of the 18th century, and has been roughcasted. Adjoining it are the remains of a 14th-century chapel, now connected with the house and used as a billiard room. The original windows remain, though much restored. A licence was granted to Robert Lovett in 1304 to found a chantry in the chapel newly built at his manor-house. Service was performed in it in the 18th century, and

marriages were celebrated in it before the alteration of the marriage laws. It was later used as a laundry and storehouse.

In the park is a small moated mound.

An Inclosure Act for Soulbury was passed in 1772.

Manors

The main manor of Soulbury, later known as *LISCOMBE* (Lychescumbe, Lyscumb) *MANOR*, was held before the Conquest by eleven sokemen, who could sell. In 1086 Payn held it as 5½ hides and three-quarters of a virgate of William son of Ansculf. The overlordship of this manor, which formed part of the honour of Dudley, descended with that of Hoggston (q.v.), of which manor Liscombe was directly held as late as 1594, when the last mention of the overlordship occurs.

In 1192 Ralt Gibwin had a knight's fee in Liscombe and Soulbury, but there is no other trace of this family in Soulbury. In the year 1199 Philip Maunsel is mentioned in connexion with Chelmscott. By an early and undated charter to Woburn Abbey John Maunsel refers to his and his ancestor's fee in the town of Soulbury, another John Maunsel and Walter Maunsel being among the witnesses. In the first half of the 13th century Walter Maunsel held a knight's fee in Soulbury, which is probably the manor of Liscombe, of which John Maunsel was possessed at some time during the same period, though whether before or after Walter is not evident. Before 1250 the manor was in possession of Geoffrey Maunsel, Alice widow of the said John Maunsel then having dower in it. In that year William Ingeram brought a suit against Henry Maunsel and



Lovett's School, Soulbury

others, who had forcibly ejected him from the manor, although it had been demised to him for a term of years by Geoffrey. Later in the same year Geoffrey gave and confirmed Liscombe to Paul Pever, to be held for the annual rent of a pair of gold spurs. In 1262 Henry Maunsel quitclaimed one and a quarter knights' fees here to John Pever, son of Paul, to be held for the same rent as above. A second John Pever, son of the first, was a minor in the king's wardship in 1274, and was lord of Soulbury and Liscombe about ten years later.

The actual date at which the manor passed to the family of Lovet or Lovett is not apparent, but in 1304 Robert Lovett was lord of Liscombe. Robert Lovett acquired many small parcels of land in Soulbury about this time, the earliest conveyance being in 1297, when William de Castello quitclaimed to him a messuage, a carucate of land and 33s. 4d. rent. In 1314 Robert settled the manor on himself and his wife Sarah in survivorship with remainder to his son John. William son of John Lovett held the manor in 1364. The name of Roger Lovett, son of William, occurs in 1422, and he presented to the church in 1435. About 1478 John Lovett, great-grandson of Roger, died seised of Liscombe, leaving as heir his brother Richard, who soon after sued the widow, Anne Lovett, for wrongfully detaining deeds relating to the manor. Richard held the manor till his death in 1505, his heir being Richard son of his brother William. Laurence Lovett, son of the second Richard, afterwards held, and was succeeded at his death in 1576 by his son Francis. Francis made a settlement of the manor in 1580, when he married Anne Crispe; he died in 1594, leaving a son Robert. Robert Lovett was sheriff of the county in 1610, and was knighted. His son Robert was also sheriff, in 1663, and held the manor until his death, in 1699, when Edward Lovett, brother and heir, succeeded him. Jonathan Lovett, representing a younger branch of the family, to which, in



Lovett. Argent three wolves passant sable.

default of male heirs, the inheritance had passed, held Liscombe in 1743. He was succeeded by his son of the same name, who was created a baronet in 1781. At the death of Sir Jonathan Lovett, without male heirs, in 1812, his daughter Elizabeth inherited Liscombe. She died in 1855, having left it by will to her cousin Phillips Cosby Lovett. His son William Gough G. Lovett succeeded in 1891, but died two years later, leaving as heir his brother Percival Cosby Ernest Lovett, who held until 1907, when he sold the property to Mr. Ernest W. Robinson, the present lord of the manor.

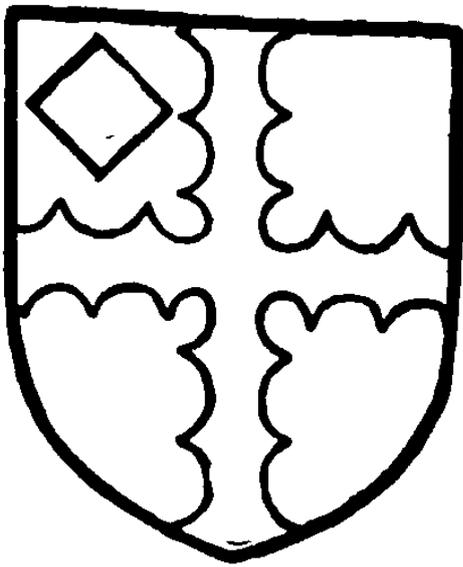
In 1283–4 John Pever claimed view of frankpledge in Liscombe and quittance from suit at the hundred court, alleging that his father and grandfather had also enjoyed these privileges.

Alwin, a man of Eddeva the Fair, held a manor in Soulbury before the Conquest; in 1086 Gozelin the Breton held it as 1½ hides and one-third of a virgate. This manor is later known as *CHELMSCOTT* (Chaumindescote, Chalmundescote, xii cent.; Chelnundescote, Chelmincote, xiii cent.). From the time of the Domesday Survey until 1590 it follows the same descent as the manor of Cublington (q.v.), but was retained by Richard Corbett when he alienated Cublington, and henceforward descended with Linslade Manor (q.v.), in connexion with which it is mentioned in 1862. In 1276–7 Geoffrey Lucy was reported to have appropriated to his own use a piece of water in Chelmscott, formerly common. His descendant received a grant of free warren (in his lands here in 1332. In 1550, when a suit occurred between lessees of the manor, a witness, Richard Hyde, stated that one of the parties, Francis Temple, had leased to him the warren of coneyes belonging to the manor for the annual payment of 66s. 8d. and forty couple of coneyes. A mill worth 16s. was included among the appurtenances of the manor in 1086. When Geoffrey Lucy made proof of age in 1288 one of his witnesses from this parish, John Michel, said that he remembered the year of Geoffrey's birth at Chelmscott because he had sold the said Geoffrey's father a mill six months before and had never received any money for it. In the suit of 1550, before referred to, 'Stapleford mill' was declared to be parcel of this manor; a mill of this name still exists in the parish.

Two-thirds of a virgate in Soulbury which Hugh de Beauchamp held in 1086 may possibly have become part of Chelmscott Manor later, since Hugh de Beauchamp's manor of Linslade (q.v.), almost the only other land which he held in this county, was afterwards held, as Chelmscott was, by the Lucys and their descendants.

Before the Conquest Almar, a man of Brictric, held land in Soulbury which he could not sell but by consent; at the Survey Roger held it of Miles Crispin as 1 hide and 1½ virgates. This land, later the manor of *BRAGENHAM* (Bragnam), became attached to the honour of Wallingford with the other holdings of Miles Crispin, and was held of that honour as late as 1300. The overlordship is not afterwards mentioned.

The sub-tenant in the 13th century was Henry Danvers, who let the manor as a fifth part of a knight's fee. In 1284 it was held by John Danvers, who held of John Neyrnut, holding of Reginald de Beauchamp, who held of the Earl of Cornwall. The names of the mesne lords are not afterwards mentioned, and John Danvers held, apparently direct, in 1302 and 1316. By 1346 the manor had passed to Robert atte Welle. In 1388 Sir Reginald Grey de Ruthyn died seised of this manor which he had settled on himself and his heirs in 1380. Bragenham was held by the Greys, afterwards Earls of Kent, until the death of Richard Earl of Kent in 1524. William Sharpe, chaplain to Richard, had held the manor on a life-grant under that earl. The earl's step-brother and heir, Sir Henry Grey, held the manor in 1526, but it afterwards came to the king's hands, a transference which was possibly connected with Sir Henry Grey's refusal to assume the peerage owing to lack of money. In 1560 the queen granted Bragenham to Richard Champion and John Thompson, and in the following year it was conveyed by John Thompson and Dorothy his wife to John Saunders. Thomas Saunders conveyed to John Smith in 1576–7, and four years later it passed from John Smith to Lawrence Meridale. Edmund, son of Lawrence, died seised of Bragenham in 1621 and his son Edward Meridale held the



Leigh. Gules a cross engrailed with a lozenge argent in the quarter.

manor as late as 1659, in which year he sold it to Richard Reeve. The manor was in possession of the Theed family by 1702 and in 1734, the entail having been broken, the property was purchased of them by the Hon. Charles Leigh, by whom, apparently, it was bequeathed to his nephew, Edward Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh. Lord Leigh died in 1786 and his sister and heir, the Hon. Mary Leigh, held Bragenham until her death in 1806. The

estate then passed to the Adlestrop branch of the family, the Rev. Thomas Leigh and James Henry Leigh holding Bragenham in 1806 and 1812. Chandos Leigh, who succeeded his father James Henry Leigh in 1823, was lord of Bragenham about 1847, but the property was afterwards sold, and in 1862 Colonel Henry Hanmer of Smewnes in Great Brickhill held it as a farm; he had also extensive brick and tile works here. Sir Wyndham C. H. Hanmer, bart., still owns land in the parish. A grant of the site of the manor was made to Sir Francis Bryan, kt., and others in 1529 for twenty-one years, but it was included in the grant of the manor made in 1560 and was afterwards held with it. A windmill was among the appurtenances in 1734.

Three men of Brictric and a man of Wiga held 3½ virgates in *HOLLINGDON* (Holendone, Holedene, xi–xii cent.) before the Conquest, and in 1086 the land was held by Payn of William son of Ansculf. This land probably became absorbed in the manor of Liscombe, also held by Payn, as lands at Hollingdon were invariably included among the appurtenances of that manor.

At the Survey Countess Judith held a hide and 3½ virgates in Hollingdon, her sub-tenant being Torchil, who had held the land in the time of the Confessor.

A third entry relating to Hollingdon in 1086 records that Nigel held a virgate there of Miles Crispin.

In 1291 the priory of Tickford held a messuage (*a dwelling house with outbuildings and land assigned to its use*) and 2 virgates of land in Soulbury which Walter Maunsel had formerly held, and from which a rent of 6s. 8d. was received. The priory held these lands until it was dissolved; they were granted in 1526, with other of the priory possessions, to Cardinal Wolsey, and in 1532, after his attainder, to the new college at Oxford.

The Abbots of Woburn held land in Soulbury from an early date. Stephen granted them view of frankpledge in their lands which they held here of the gift of Henry de Clinton and Hugh Malet. Later, probably in the early 13th century, John Maunsel granted to them in free alms the land which they had formerly held of him and his ancestors here. The abbey continued to hold the lands until the Dissolution.

There remain two other entries in the Domesday Survey concerning holdings in Soulbury, the subsequent history of which is not apparent. Azelina wife of Ralf Tailgebosch held half a hide there of the king, valued at 10s.; two Englishmen held it, as they had done in the time of King Edward. Lastly, of the land of Lewin of Nuneham, Godwin the bedell held half a hide of the king. Alric Bolest had held it before the Conquest, and he who held in 1086 said that 'after the coming of King William it was forfeit.'

Magna Britannia

Soulbury was described in 1806 in 'Magna Britannia' as follows:

SOULBURY, in the hundred of Cotslow and deanery of Muresley, lies on the Bedfordshire side of the county, about three miles north-west of Leighton-Busard and about five miles south of Fenny-Stratford. The manor was in the Mansells during a great part of the thirteenth century. It is now (together with the manors of *Liscombe* and *Hollington*, hamlets in this parish) the property of Sir Jonathan Lovett bart. whose ancestors were possessed of them as early as the reign of Edward the Second, [Footnote: A fine of this estate was then levied on the marriage of an ancestor of Sir Jonathan Lovett's, with one of the Tourville family.] probably by purchase from the Mansells. Sir Jonathan Lovett, the present proprietor, was of a younger branch of the family who had been settled for a long period at Kingwell, in the county of Tipperary. Upon the failure of the elder branch he succeeded to the Buckinghamshire estate, and in 1781 was created a baronet. The seat at Liscombe is a quadrangular building; one side is occupied by a chapel which, by the style of its architecture, appears to have been built about the middle or latter end of the fourteenth century; the house is of much later date, no part of it appearing to be older than the reign of Queen Elizabeth: the windows have been modernized. Among the portraits at Liscombe are several of the Lovett family; a half length of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk [Footnote:- Inscribed "Carolus Brandon dux Suffolciæ, præses Henrici oct. qui fuit (ex parte matris) frater Humphridi Tyrrell domini de Thornton in com. Buck. Qui Humphridus sponsavit filiam unicam et hæredem Roberti Ingleton domini de Thornton cancellarii se ci regis & unius prædicti regis concilii privati."], with a pink in his hand; the first Earl of Bedford, a half length, on board, dated 1555; Sir Nicholas Crispe, in armour; Sir Edmund Verney, standard bearer to King Charles I. who was slain at Edghill; Archbishop Sancroft; Titus Oates, &c. In the parish church are some monuments of the Lovetts.

The impropriate rectory, which formerly belonged to Woburn abbey, is now the property of Sir Jonathan Lovett. The curacy, or donative, is in the gift of the crown, but the Lovett family have been allowed to enjoy the patronage ever since the year 1642, when Sir Robert Lovett left the sum of 40 *l.* per annum. as an augmentation of the curacy to be paid by his heirs, on condition that they should be allowed to nominate the curate, whose salary was before only 8 *l.* per annum. A charity school for 24 children was founded by the Lovett family in 1714. The manor and liberty of Soulbury, with the hamlet of Hollington was inclosed pursuant to an act of

parliament passed in 1772, when an allotment of land was assigned to the impropiator in lieu of tithes. The other hamlets in this parish are *Liscombe* (already spoken of) *Bragenham*, where was formerly a chapel of ease, and *Chelmscote*. The manor of Bragenham is the property of the Hon. Mary Leigh, whose family purchased it of the Theeds in 1735. The manor of Chelmscote has passed with that of the neighbouring parish of Linslade, and is now the property of Andrew Corbet esq.

In a distant part of this parish, near Great-Brickhill, is Stockgrove, the seat of Edward Hanmer esq. whose manor of Smewnes extends partly into this parish.

The people of Soulbury

Maunsell

Walter **Maunsell** was born circa 1166. He was the son of [Sir Robert Maunsell](#) and [Joice Dauncey](#).^{2,1} He married [Hawise de Somerie](#), daughter of [John de Somerie](#) and [Hawise Pagnell](#).¹ He died circa 1250.

He was Napkin Bearer to the King. He held the Serjeanty of Little Missenden, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, the Manors and lands of Soulbury, near Leighton Buzzard, Buckinghamshire, and of Ingepenne, Berkshire, and lands in Staffordshire by the service of Marshalling in the House of the King. He donated some of the lands of Ingepenne to the Priory of Tickford.

Philip **Maunsell** was the son of [Walter Maunsell](#) and [Hawise de Somerie](#).² He died, without issue.

Henry **Maunsell** was the son of [Walter Maunsell](#) and [Hawise de Somerie](#).² In 1276 he held the presentation to the benefice of Soulbury.¹

Glossary

Frankpledge

Frankpledge was a system of joint [suretyship](#) common in [England](#) throughout the [Early Middle Ages](#), and [High Middle Ages](#). The essential characteristic was the compulsory sharing of responsibility among persons connected in [tithings](#).

Virgate

The virgate, yardland, or yard of land (Latin: *virgāta [terrae]*) was an English unit of land. Primarily a measure of tax assessment rather than area, the virgate was usually (but not always) reckoned as $\frac{1}{4}$ hide and notionally (but seldom exactly) equal to 30 acres

Hide

The hide was an [English unit](#) of land measurement originally intended to represent the amount of land sufficient to support a household. It was traditionally taken to be 120 acres (49 hectares), but was in fact a measure of value and [tax assessment](#), including obligations for food-rent (*feorm*), maintenance and repair of bridges and fortifications, manpower for the army (*fyrð*), and (eventually) the *geld land tax*. The hide's method of calculation is now obscure: different properties with the same hidage could vary greatly in extent even in the same county. Following the [Norman Conquest](#) of [England](#), the hidage assessments were recorded in the [Domesday Book](#) and there was a tendency for land producing [£1](#) of income per year to be assessed at 1 hide. The Norman kings continued to use the unit for their tax assessments until the end of the 12th century.

The hide was divided into 4 [yardlands](#) or [virgates](#). It was hence nominally equivalent in area to a [carucate](#),^[1] a unit used in the [Danelaw](#).

Carucate

The carucate or carrucate ([Medieval Latin](#): *carrūcāta* or *carūcāta*)^[1] was a medieval unit of land area approximating the land a plough team of eight [oxen](#) could [till](#) in a single annual season. It was known by different regional names and fell under different forms of tax assessment. Began to appear in England in the 9th century.