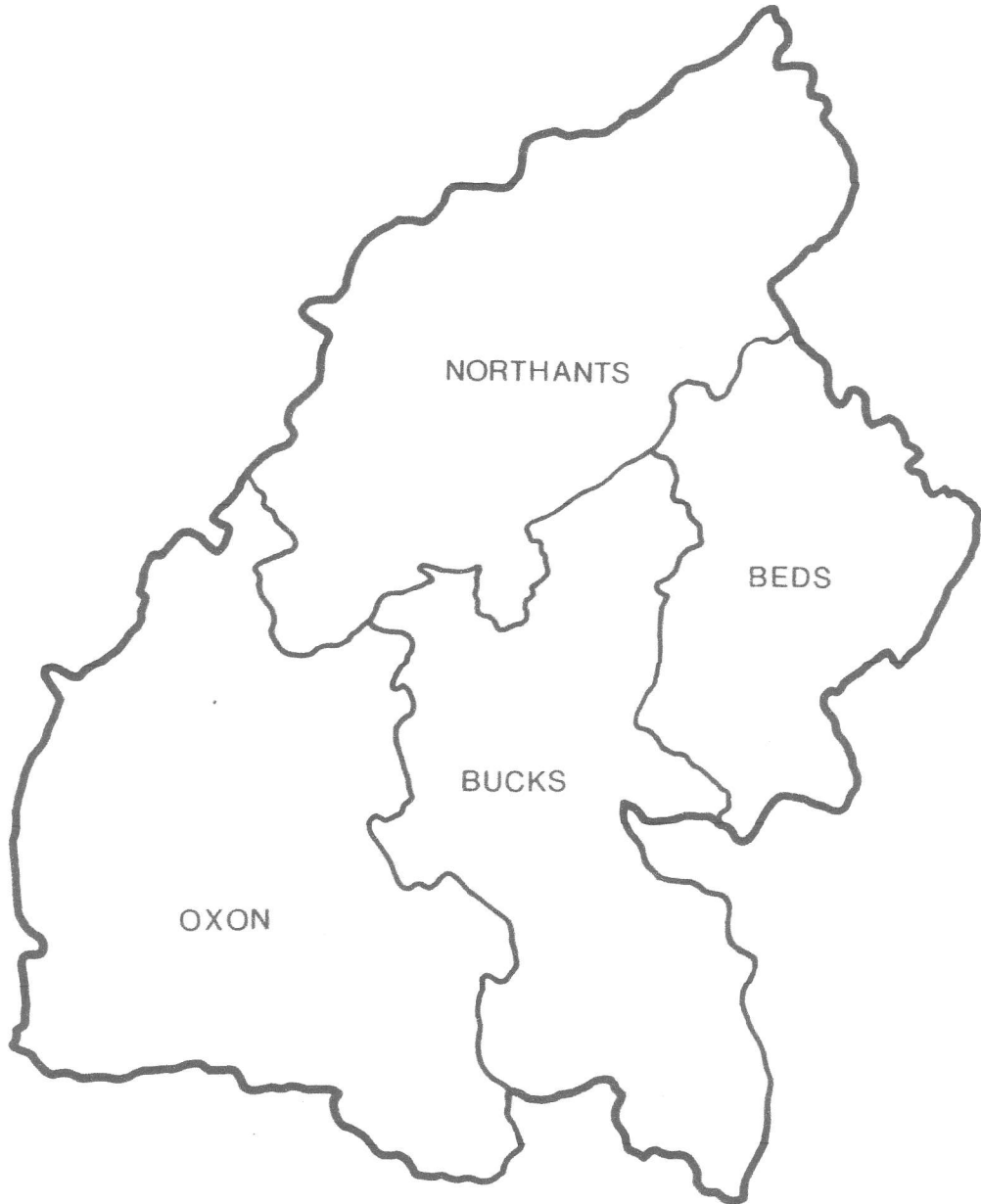


# C B A 9



## NEWSLETTER 8 1978

# COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

## REGIONAL GROUP 9

(Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire)

### NEWSLETTER No. 8 1978

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Book No.: ISBN: 0 903736 06 3

Oxford University Department for  
External Studies, Rewley House,  
3-7 Wellington Square,  
Oxford, OX1 2JA

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### **CHARNEY BASSETT, OXFORDSHIRE: VILLAGE SURVEY - J.M. Steane**

District: Vale of the White Horse

Former District: Faringdon Rural District

Hundred: Ganfield

O.S. 1 = 10,000 SU 39 SE, SU 39 NE

O.S. 1 = 2,500 SU 36943794  
SU 38943994

#### PHYSICAL SETTING

Geology: Situated on sands, clays and limestones of Corallian beds in the N half of parish. To the S of the parish are low-lying Kimmeridge clays covered in places by alluvium of the valley of the River Ock.

Soils: Charney itself is on brown calcareous soil, a fine loamy or clayey material over limestone. On the N of the parish are patches of gleyed, brown earths and Cherbury Camp is surrounded by silty alluvium over peat. South in the flood plain of the Ock is clayey alluvium.

Water Supply: A number of small streams including the Cern with wide marshy banks flow from the NW to SE towards the River Ock. This bisects the parish as it flows in an easterly direction towards the Thames at Abingdon. The parish is in fact surrounded by streams.

Relief: The site of the village is low lying about 215ft. above sea level and only 10 to 15ft. above the banks of the River Ock. The ground drops slightly to the N on the edge of the built up settlement and this would be enough to explain the place name (island O.E. 'ey'), by the Cern. This riverside site is in contrast to the prehistoric focus of settlement in the area which was a mile to the N on gently rising ground in and around the valley fort of Cherbury.

#### DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

The Place Name. The first element is 'Cern'; probably of pre-English origin and may mean 'rock' or 'stones'. Charney means 'Cern Island'. Bassett probably derives from a family which held land here in the C15th. Charney Wick means 'Dairy farm' and supplied Abingdon abbey during the middle ages with cheeses.

There is an early description of the bounds of Charney in a document purporting to be a list of lands granted to Abbot Rethune of Abingdon by Coenwulf, King of Mercia in 811 AD. The bounds follow the present parish boundaries and include references to streams, drainage channels and a stone bridge (probably over the Cern in the NW corner of the parish).

At the time of the Domesday Survey Charney, assessed at 2 virgates and valued at £6, formed part of the possessions of Abingdon Abbey. There was also half a hide held by Warin.

Later Manorial history. Charney continued in the possession of the monks of Abingdon. The manor of Basses, later corrupted into Basset, was in origin a copyhold tenement of the Abbey's manor of Charney. It belonged in the C15th to a family called Rokys. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries the abbey's estate here was worth £54 3s. 2d. per annum. It was held by the Corfen family of Reading, then successively by the Paulet, Dunch and Keck families. During the early C19th it went through a series of sales but in 1833 became the property of the Pusey family of Pusey. The Berks County Council purchased it for small holdings in 1909 and in 1974 it became the property of the new Oxfordshire.

#### PLAN ELEMENTS

There were two focal points of settlement in the early history of the village, distinguished by the two place-names Charney Basset and Charney Wick. Of the two the nucleus to the N centred on the village green is likely to be the earlier. Its plan is 'organic' and the property boundaries shown on the 1765 pre-enclosure map (which have now been largely built over) show an untidy group of irregularly shaped plots with houses on them, sprawling round the two lengths of lane which converge on the present High Street at the village cross. Those to the N are served by a back-lane which becomes a field path. There is some suggestion of a regular layout of those to the S of the present White House.

Charney Wick, 'the dairy farm', comprised three elements, St. Peter's Church, the manorial grange of Abingdon Abbey (now the Manor House) and the Mill; they are all grouped by the crossing of the River Ock shown as a ford on the 1765 map and as a bridge on the 1804 enclosure map. It is apparent that the course now (1977) followed by the mill leat was the main stream of the River Ock in the C18th.

Sometime probably in the C17th or early C18th an increase of population was housed by a linear spread of very narrow holdings on the long tongue of Cow Common which spread from the Cern to the village in the N, dividing the N from the E field.

The one obviously planned element within the village was the New Road driven through earlier property boundaries in the mid-C19th by the Pusey family completing the triangle of roads in the village centre. Along this on the N side were laid out pairs of estate cottages and a school was attached on the S side.

Modern infilling has occurred along the ends of the crofts originally butting on to the back lane to the N. A second group of modern houses has been built on the W side in the area between the field path leading westwards to Goosey through the Ock meadows and the New Road. Also a small estate on both sides of Orchard Close has been inserted in the low lying land between the village centre and Charney Wick.

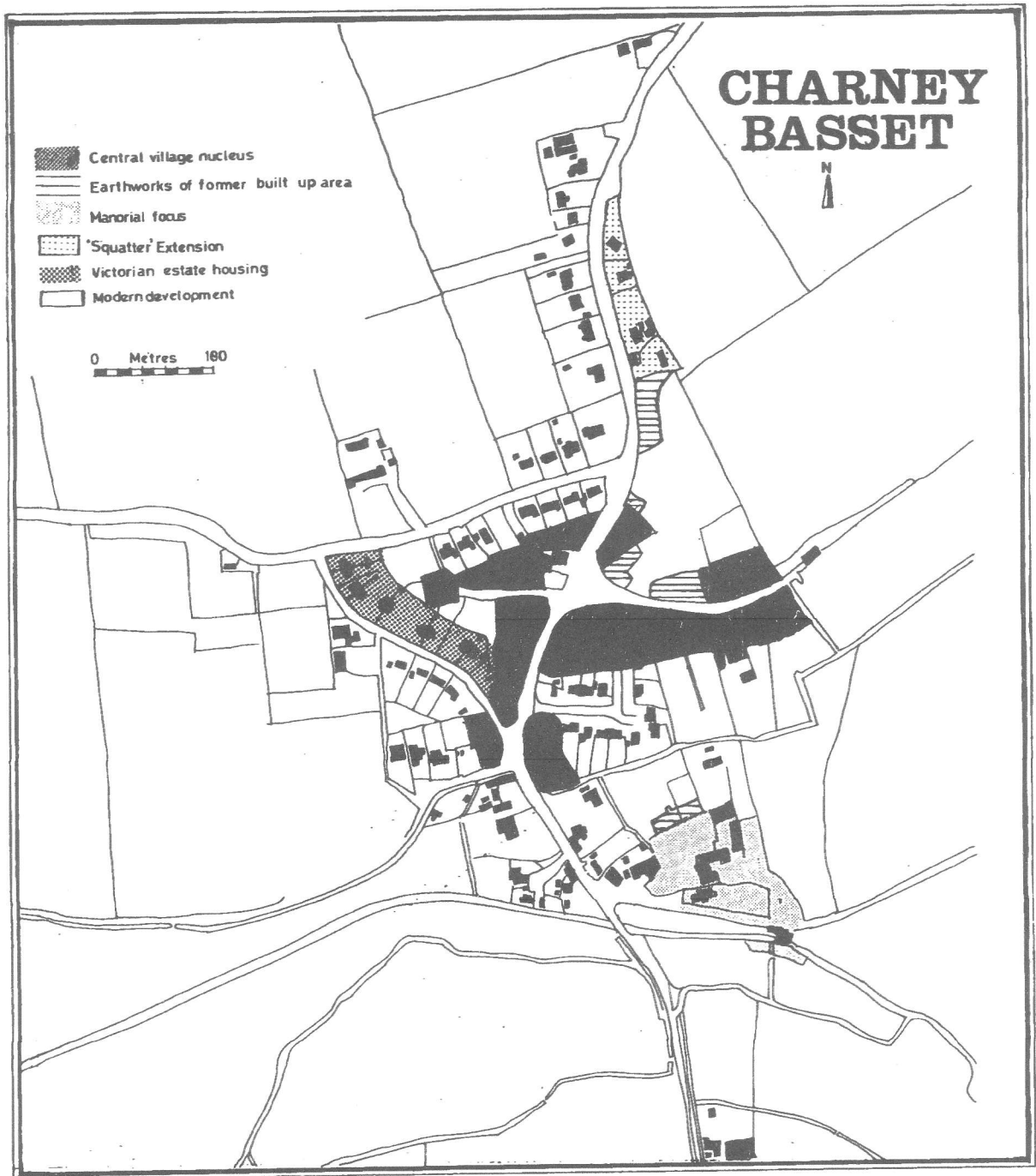


Figure 25

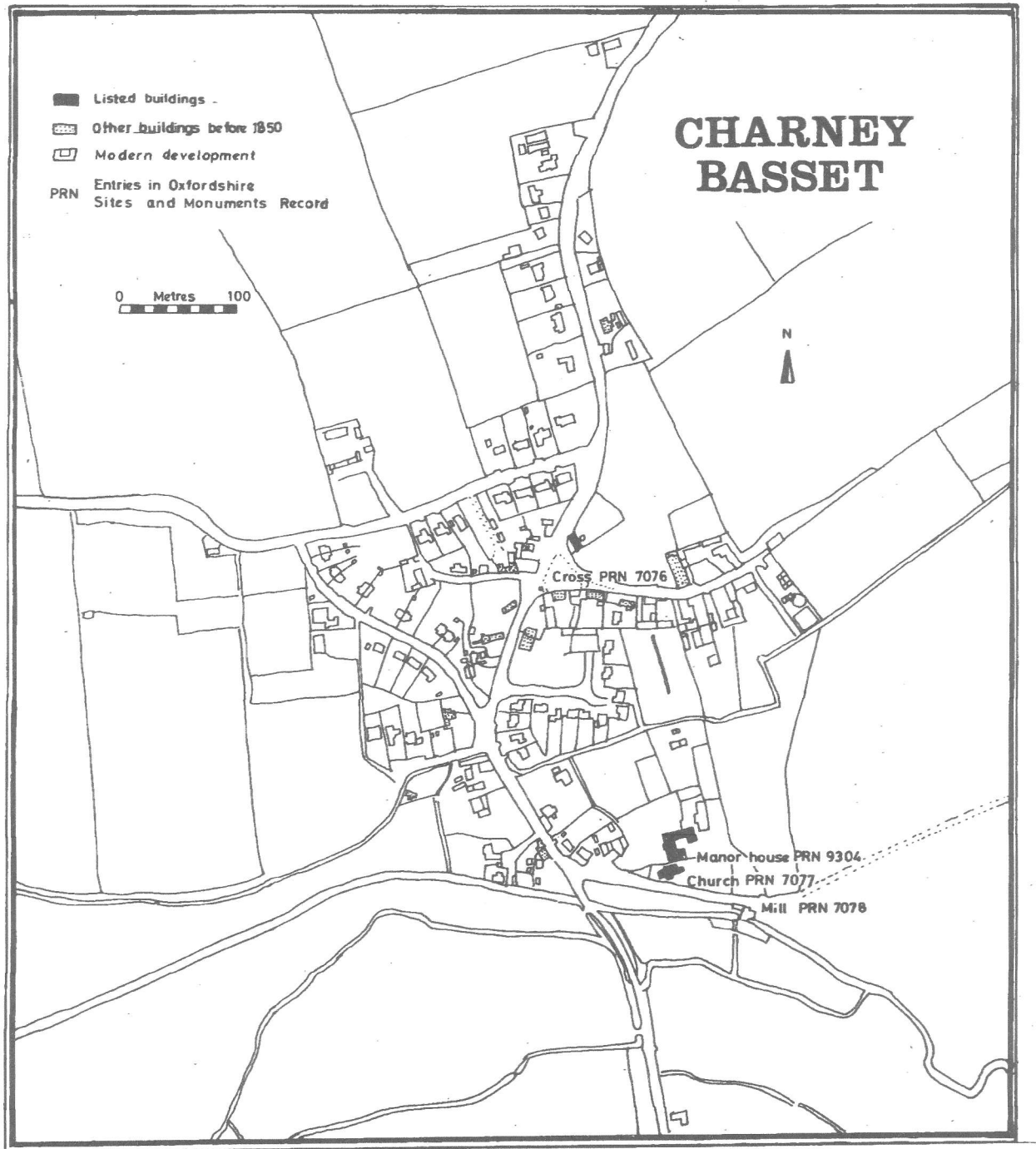


Figure 26

## BUILDINGS

The oldest surviving building is the parish church of St. Peter, formerly a chapel of Longworth (PRN 7077). It is of corallian limestone, rough-cast, with stone quoins and stone slated roof. It consists of nave, chancel, N aisle and a rectangular, early C17th bellcote turret over the W end. The nave has portions of Norman work including the S doorway and the tympanum which has been re-set in the N Chancel wall. There is an Early English style window in the S chancel wall, an Early English font; one decorated window in the S nave wall. A short, two-bay arcade and N aisle was added in the late C15th and the church was reroofed and embattled. The screen and pulpit are also C15th work. The church fits into the narrow sliver of land between the monastic grange and the course of the River Ock.

The abbots of Abingdon had a grange at Charney. The S wing of the present Manor is the late C13th solar wing of their hall-house (PRN 9304). It is a two-storied rectangular stone structure with a rectangular projection to the E. The ground floor has small slit windows, a pointed doorway leading to the former house and a fireplace with shouldered lintel. The upper floor contained the solar and chapel and both are lit by two light windows. Roof with tie beams, crown posts and four way struts. A grade 1 listed building.

The remains of the village cross consisting of cap, shaft and base are probably medieval (PRN 7076). Now the War memorial, and the base has been renewed (Grade II listed building).

Home Farm, four bays and T-shaped in plan; central two bays are half-timbered work of c.1600-1650 with stone chimney stack and staircase wing. It was extended one bay each way in the late C17th or early C18th. Stone was used and the windows were mostly renewed.

The central village nucleus around the green contains some of the older and more interesting buildings, most of them built of limestone rubble and thatch. They include the C17th two-storey, five-bay house (No. 7) with projecting two-storey gabled central porch. Behind is a single storey and attic, thatched cottage. The cottage adjoining the White House to the E is C17th/18th, two storeys, stone-tiled roof. That opposite the Chequers Inn is of the same date, two-storeys, rubble stone, thatched roof swept down between the upper windows (Grade II listed building). The farmhouse nearly opposite No.7 is of the late C18th-early C19th, of two storeys, rubble stone and brick dressings, toothed brick eaves and has a six-bay W front. The White House is late C18th/early C19th of two storeys, four-bay front with upper windows, casements, and ground floor sashes. Next to it is an C18th, three-bay barn, weather boarding on brick base, half-hipped thatch roof and central entrance acting as a foil for the cross. Manor Farm has been through many alterations and additions but has basically an early C19th farmhouse of limestone with a low pitched slate roof. One barn to the S is probably C17th in date. The barn to the N with a steep pitched roof might have been the original dwelling. Opposite the Chequers Inn is a terrace of cottages in limestone rubble, two-storey with dormer windows cut into the thatch, C17th in date. The Chequers Inn is c.1850 with coursed limestone walls and brick quoins, roofed in Welsh slate.

The group near the church includes two cottages to the W of the C18th, single-storey and attic, colour washed rubble, thatched roof; and a further L-shaped cottage of two storeys, rubble and brick, thatched, about 100 yds. to W of the last. Bridle Cottage along the path to Goosey was probably



originally a pair of 'one up, one down'; roof of Stonesfield slate, colour washed limestone rubble.

The row of Pusey estate cottages is probably the group with most architectural distinction in the village. With their steep pitched gables lit by pairs of narrow pointed windows, triple groups in the ground floors, tiled roofs capped by triangular serrated ridge tiles, coursed sandstone rubble-walls and open-work timber porches. The strange little lavatories with cross-shaped ventilation slits and hipped gables and the charming gothic castellated and trefoil headed louvres on the outhouses, presumably chimneys for boilers, are particularly noteworthy. The school is in similar style, dates from c.1850 in coursed limestone/sandstone; three-light square-headed mullioned windows and plate tracery in the S end of the hall. The tiled roof has an identical gothic louvre to the one already noticed.

Chalet styled four-bedroomed houses have been recently built on the N side but fortunately as yet the view stretches unbroken across large fields to the wood surrounding Cherbury Camp to the N. Here the village has been mercifully contained.

#### OPEN SPACE

There is a small triangular-shaped green with the village cross on it.

#### EARTHWORKS

The field on the E side of the green contains 'humps and bumps' indicating the remains of former houses and walls. These are indicated as still existing on the 1765 and 1803 maps.

There is a major field monument of the pre-Roman Iron Age, Cherbury Valley fort, a mile to the N of the village which the parish boundary makes a remarkable diversion to include. Ancillary earthworks have been noticed on air photographys lying to the E of the fort.

A linear mound which seems to be the boundary between E field and the long tongue of Cow Common, can be seen behind the long dribble of squatters houses to the N of the village (see above).

The mill leat has two by-pass sluices one above the bridge, and one below, now blocked.

#### INDUSTRIAL FEATURES

There is a walled sheep dip immediately in front of the church.

The water mill site, mentioned in Domesday was unoccupied by structures in 1765 and 1803. The present building (PRN 7078) is timber framed with weather boarded cladding and tiled, hipped roof. The interior has machinery typical of a small country mill, complete except for the breast, short water-wheel itself. Mid-C19th in date.

Smithy (PRN 7075) is shown on 6" OS Map 1960 at SU 37929460.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Cherbury Valley fort has had its entrance examined on the E side. The



interior has suffered badly from ploughing but the monument has recently been laid down to grass.

No evidence of Roman or early Saxon settlement is known in the parish at present.

The modern village appears to lie on top of the medieval settlements. It has only contracted in the triangle of land to the N of the village green. The earthworks here may well be post-medieval in date since houses show on the 1765 and 1803 maps.

#### LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION

The more important buildings in the village are now listed as being of Architectural or Historic importance under Section 54 of the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act.

The village centre is at present under discussion for designation under the 1967 Civic Amenities Act.

Cherbury Fort is a scheduled ancient monument.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The village has considerable architectural and historic interest. It is likely to attract elements of the public interested in visiting the mill which the O.C.C. D.M.S. plan to open eventually and the Manor House, pleasantly situated near the River Ock. The fort at Cherbury also deserves to be better known but the footpaths connecting it to the village are largely overgrown or ploughed. These could perhaps be opened up if sufficient local interest is shown.

The proposed designation of the village as a conservation area is to be welcomed but it is hoped that future developments will preserve the present long and open view to the N where the woods round Cherbury can be seen..

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