

South Oxfordshire's Hundreds

Many people will have heard of Hundreds through references in Parliament to the Chiltern Hundreds. A 'Hundred' is an ancient division of an English county. Each hundred had its own court. The 'hundred' may have referred to an area of one hundred hides of land.

The Chiltern Hundreds

Members of Parliament cannot vacate their seat, unless they die, are disqualified, elevated to the Peerage or Parliament is dissolved. In 1623 Parliament set up a means by which Members could resign by applying for a paid office to the Crown, which then disqualifies them from holding a seat in the House of Commons. So, when a Member of Parliament wishes to resign, they apply for appointment to the office of Crown Steward and Bailiff of the Chiltern Hundreds or the Steward of the Manor of Northstead, in Yorkshire.

The three Chiltern Hundreds are in Buckinghamshire and are Stoke, Desborough and Burnham. The position of Crown Steward and Bailiff of the Chiltern Hundreds was set up to maintain law and order in these areas that were once a natural wooded hiding place for outlaws in the 13th century, or maybe earlier. By the 17th century the post ceased to be needed although it was retained without duties or financial benefit to the holder.

South Oxfordshire's Chiltern Hundreds


The three Chiltern Hundreds were administered by the Crown as a Royal Bailiwick. From the middle of the 13th century, another Royal Bailiwick was created in the Chiltern Hills. It was made up of the Oxfordshire Hundreds of Binfield, Langtree, Lewknor, Pirton and half of Ewelme. These Hundreds had formed the Royal Manor of Benson. They now form the majority of South Oxfordshire district.

Binfield Hundred includes the parishes of Bix and Assendon, Caversham, Eye and Dunsden, Bolney (Harpsden), Henley-on-Thames, Rotherfield Greys, Rotherfield Peppard and Shiplake, in the 19th century. Rotherfield Greys maintains its Tudor manor house, Greys Court in the 21st century. Having been the property of the de Greye family, it is now in the ownership of the National Trust.

Langtree Hundred includes the parishes of Checkendon, Crowmarsh Gifford, Goring, Ipsden, Mapledurham, Mongewell, Newnham Murren, North Stoke, South Stoke and part of Whitchurch. At Mapledurham you can visit Mapledurham House and watermill. It is an Elizabethan manor house still in the ownership of the Blount family, but run by the Mapledurham Trust. The watermill is still in working condition.

Lewknor Hundred includes the parishes of Adwell, Aston Rowant, Britwell Salome, Chinnor, Crowell, Emmington, part of Kinsey, Lewknor, part of Lewknor-up-Hill, Stokenchurch and Sydenham. The only large house in the Hundred is Wormsley Park, which is now in Buckinghamshire. It was owned and restored by Sir John Paul Getty from 1986 until 2003 but is maintained as a strictly private estate.

Pirton (also recorded as Pyrton) Hundred includes the parishes of part of Ibstone, Pyrton, Pishill, Shirburn, South Weston, Stoke Talmage, Watlington and Wheatley. Two medieval houses survive in this Hundred. Stonor Park, owned by Lord Camoys and the Stonor family since the 12th century and a stronghold of Roman Catholicism, is regularly open to the public. Shirburn Castle is a 14th century moated building. It was owned by the Earls of Macclesfield until the early 21st century and is now managed by Beechwood Estates. It is not open to the public.

Ewelme Hundred includes the parishes of part of Benson, Berwick Salome, Britwell Baldwin, Britwell Prior, Chalgrove, Cuxham, Easington, Ewelme, Great Haseley, part of Ickford, Nettlebed, Newington, Nuffield, Swyncombe, Warborough and Warpsgrove. Nettlebed was the polling centre for South Oxfordshire in 1835 (See  on Oxfordshire's Hundreds map, page 3).



Extract from Cary/Stockdale map 1805

Oxfordshire's Hundreds



Based on Creighton/Walker map 1835