# GLOUCESTERSHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

# CHELTENHAM BOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS

# PRESTBURY

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1998

TEXT & MAPS UPDATED TIM GRUBB 2007

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# Gloucestershire
### COUNTY COUNCIL
### *Sites & Monuments Record*

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## THIS REPORT

The Prestbury archaeological assessment was originally written in 1998. The text was reformatted and the maps redrawn in February 2007. The Prestbury information originally formed part of the larger report covering the whole of Cheltenham Borough and, as a result, maps and diagrams retain the numbering from this larger report.

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### A note about the maps

**The SMR maps in the original Historic Towns Survey (i.e Maps 9-11) are now out of date and have not been included within this revision although references to SMR numbers remain in the text. For up to date SMR information readers can contact the SMR on 01452 425705 or via email at archaeology.smr@gloucestershire.gov.uk. The other maps have been refreshed using current software and retain their original numbering as referred to in the text.**

### Original description of SMR maps

*SMR maps*: these maps show a selection of sites relevant to the discussion of the development of each town. The maps are not intended to provide a comprehensive gazetteer of all recorded archaeological sites in the settlements, and should therefore be only be used in the context for which they were produced. For further information about the archaeology of any area, the Sites and Monument Record should be consulted directly.

*Plan component maps*: these maps are intended to indicate the most likely areas of settlement in each town during the Medieval and Post-medieval periods, on the basis of present archaeological knowledge. They should not, however, be regarded as definitive, and the interpretations made will require revision as new evidence emerges from future work.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS USED IN THE TEXT

| | |
|---|---|
| Anon | Anonymous |
| c. | circa |
| C | Century [e.g. C12] |
| EH | English Heritage |
| GSIA | Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology |
| km | kilometres |
| m | metres |
| n.d. | Undated |
| O.D. | Ordnance Datum |
| O.S. | Ordnance Survey |
| PCNFC | Proceedings of the Cotteswold Naturalists Field Club |
| RCHME | Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) |
| SMR | Sites and Monuments Record |
| **SMR 12345** | An SMR site which is shown on the accompanying maps |
| SMR 12345 | An SMR site which is not shown on the accompanying maps |
| TBGAS | Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society |
| TRE | Tempus Rex Edwardus (ie. during the reign of king Edward the Confessor) |

## PERIODS REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

| | |
|---|---|
| Palaeolithic | 500,000 B.C. – 10,000 B.C. |
| Mesolithic | 10,000 B.C. – 4,000 B.C. |
| Neolithic | 4,000 B.C. – 2,200 B.C. |
| Bronze Age | 2,200 B.C. – 700 B.C. |
| Iron Age | 700 B.C. – A.D. 43 |
| Roman | A.D. 43 – 410 |
| Early Medieval | 410-1066 |
| Medieval | 1066 – 1540 |
| Post Medieval | 1540 – 1901 |
| Modern | 1901 – present |

## POPULATION FIGURES

The text for each town considered in the GHTS includes a section about the historic population of the parish in which the settlement lies. This information has been drawn from a variety of sources, mainly taxation returns, ecclesiastical returns and what can generally be referred to as censuses. The nature of these sources often makes it unclear what area was included within the survey, and in many cases suburban developments were excluded from the figures. It is also important to note that the accuracy of the information available is variable, and relates to a society which was not accustomed to the same degree of numerical accuracy demanded today. Some enumerations were the result of antiquarian interest in the growth of settlements and were included within descriptions of the nature of the town, as is the case with the figures given by Atkyns (1712) and Rudder (1779). Other population surveys were required by the ecclesiastical authorities, and in the case of Gloucestershire, there were a number of such surveys in 1563, 1603, 1650 and 1676. The 1563, 1603 and 1676 surveys were intended to indicate the number of communicants, papists and nonconformists in the parish. As the surveys were undertaken by the local clergy, there may well have been a temptation to play down levels of nonconformity. The 1650 survey was intended to give an indication of levels of pluralism, as well as to indicate the general size of the communities served.

The figures recorded in these surveys could be for communicants (i.e. anyone over the age of 16), men and women over 16, men, women and children, men over sixteen only, householders, households or families. In the case of Gloucestershire the figures generally relate to households, families and communicants. In order to gain a better indication of the true size of the population of a parish, calculations need to be made to convert communicants and households into men, women and children of all ages. It has generally been accepted that to convert households into individuals the given figure should be multiplied by 4.25, while to add children under 16 to the number of communicants the figure should be multiplied by 1.5, based on the assumption that children made up approximately 33% of the general population.

It is possible to view the figures arrived at by these means as simplistic but it has been shown that they generally fit quite well with data from other seventeenth century sources (see Whiteman A (ed.) 1986, *The Compton Census of 1676*, for a full discussion of the issues). It is not intended that the figures given in the following text should be seen as correct values, but it is hoped that the information will provide an approximate indication of the order of size of the parish at a time when there were few other sources of information available.

# THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

**town** *n.* **1.** a densely populated urban area, typically smaller than a city and larger than a village. **2.** a city, borough or other urban area.

**urban** *adj.* **1.** of, relating to, or constituting a city or town. **2.** living in a city or town. ~ Cf. **rural.**

## 1 Introduction

The Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey was undertaken between 1995 and 1998 by Antonia Douthwaite and Vince Devine of the Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service and was funded by English Heritage as part of a national programme of county-based extensive urban surveys of small towns in England. All of the 37 settlements included in the survey once had, or have now, some urban characteristics, and range in date and type from the Roman towns of the Cotswolds through to the Post-medieval industrial settlements of the Forest of Dean and Stroud valleys (Table 1). Not all the settlements are urban at the end of the twentieth century: some are now greenfield sites and others are small villages, although a few have survived as urban foci for modern communities. Both Gloucester and Cirencester were omitted from the project since they were identified by English Heritage as major historic towns, with a considerable history of archaeological investigation meriting individual and detailed study (English Heritage 1992).

The extensive urban surveys were designed as tripartite projects to include: the *enhancement of the county Sites and Monuments Record* (SMR), in order to provide a comprehensive database for each settlement, the preparation of *assessment reports* which would summarise the state of archaeological knowledge for each settlement and the design of a *strategy* for the management of the archaeology of each town to be implemented mainly through the planning system. The database is now held as part of the Gloucestershire SMR, while the assessment and strategy reports each take the form of separate volumes covering the administrative districts of Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Stroud and Tewkesbury. All three phases of the projects were based on the use of secondary, published sources, involved no fieldwork and were tightly constrained by the available resources.

Previous work on towns highlighting their archaeological potential and their vulnerability to development was undertaken in various parts of England, including Gloucestershire (Leech 1981), in the early 1980s. Changes in approaches to the management of the urban archaeological resource since then, particularly the greatly enhanced opportunities for its protection from the adverse effects of development through the planning system, prompted the new urban surveys of the 1990s.

## 2 The concept of urbanism

*A town is a permanent human settlement with two chief and essential attributes. The first is that a significant proportion (but not necessarily a majority) of its population lives off trade, industry, administration and other non-agricultural occupations. The second...is that it forms a social unit more or less distinct from the surrounding countryside* (Reynolds 1977, ix).

Although most people understand the term "town" in the modern context, the definition of urban areas in the past is far more varied, and modern concepts of urbanism tend to confuse more than they elucidate. For every period contemporary documents reveal a plethora of terms to describe settlements, depending upon their social, economic and legal status. Under the Roman empire there were seven distinct terms which could be used to place a settlement and its inhabitants in its context: *civitas*, *colonia*, *municipium*, *oppidum*, *urbs*, *vicus* and $\pi o\lambda\iota\sigma$ (polis). Any attempt to equate these words with modern terminology creates considerable confusion as there are just as many English terms to describe the status of any urban settlement: town, city, urban district, municipality, county borough, borough, any or all of which may or may not be a direct equivalent to the Roman terminology. Similarly, there are numerous Early Medieval and Medieval terms relating to settlements, including *vill*, *burghus*, *burh*, *wic* and *urbs*, some of which had very specific meanings while others are more difficult to define with precision.

This varied terminology has led archaeologists and historians to attempt to define urban status in terms of the roles towns played and their physical attributes which have survived in the archaeological record. This approach has been most successful in relation to settlements of the Early Medieval and Medieval periods, based on the work of Beresford (1967) and Biddle (1976), who have defined a town as a settlement possessing a combination of the following:

1) defences
2) a planned street system
3) market(s)
4) a mint
5) legal autonomy
6) a role as a central place
7) a relatively large and dense population
8) a diverse economic base
9) plots and houses of urban type (burgages and burgage tenure)
10) social differentiation
11) complex religious organisation
12) a judicial centre
13) the possession of a borough charter
14) a reference to the settlement as a *burgus* or representation by its own jury at the *eyre*
15) that it was taxed as a borough
16) that it sent members to any Medieval parliament

Table 1 illustrates where there is documentary evidence for some of the main urban characteristics of towns included in the Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey:

| Town | Defences | Market | Mint | Borough charter | Burgages/ burgess tenure | Legal autonomy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Berkeley | | 1086 | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Bishop's Cleeve | | | | | | |
| Bisley | | 1687 | | | | |
| Blockley | | | | | | |
| Bourton-on-the-Water | | | | | | |
| Chalford | | | | | | |
| Cheltenham | | 1226 | | | ✓ | |
| Chipping Campden | | c1180 | | 1154-89 | ✓ | |
| Cinderford | | 1869 | | | | |
| Coleford | | eC14 | | | | |
| Dursley | | 1471/2 | | C12 | ✓ | |
| Dymock | | 1225/6 | | C13 | ✓ | |
| Fairford | | c.1100-35 | | 1221 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Frampton-on-Severn | | 1245 | | | | |
| King's Stanley | | 1253 | | C13/14 | ✓ | |
| Lechlade | | 1210 | | c.1235 | ✓ | |
| Leonard Stanley | | 1307-27 | | | | |
| Lydney | | 1268 | | | | |
| Minchinhampton | | 1269 | | | ✓ | |
| Mitcheldean | | 1328 | | | | |
| Moreton-in-Marsh | | 1228 | | C13/14 | ✓ | |
| Nailsworth | | C18 | | | | |
| Newent | ? | 1253 | | C13 | ✓ | |
| Newnham | ? | C12 | | 1187 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Northleach | | 1219/20 | | c.1227 | ✓ | |
| Painswick | | 1253 | | | ✓ | |
| Prestbury | | 1249 | | C13 | ✓ | |
| St. Briavels | | 1208 | | C14 | ✓ | |
| Stow-on-the-Wold | | 1107 | | C12 | ✓ | ✓ |
| Stroud | | 1570-1607 | | | | |
| Tetbury | | 1211-1287 | | c.1211 | ✓ | |
| Tewkesbury | | 1086 | | 1086 | ✓ | |
| Winchcombe | ✓ | 1086 | ✓ | 1086 | ✓ | |
| Wotton-under-Edge | | 1252 | | 1253 | ✓ | |

**Table 1 Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: indicators of urban status in the Medieval period**

# 3 Urbanism in Gloucestershire

## *3.1 The Roman period*

The concept of urbanism is often considered to have been a continental imposition brought to Britain by the invading Roman army during the first century A.D. The geographer Strabo, writing during the late first century B.C. and the early first century A.D. implied that the backwardness of western Europeans outside Italy was due to their hunting and raiding way of life and that once they were converted to a settled agricultural existence, urbanisation would develop of its own accord (Wacher 1995, 33). However, there is evidence that some Iron Age hillforts and enclosures had begun to take on urban functions before the Roman conquest of A.D.43. The Iron Age settlements of Bagendon and Salmonsbury Camp in east Gloucestershire appear to have been densely populated, with streets, arrangements of dwellings and ancillary buildings, along with defences, and to have acted as centres of political, commercial and administrative activity (Friar 1991, 386). Compared with Roman towns they may still have been extremely primitive, and the imperial government would have been keen to establish towns on the Mediterranean scale which were an essential part of the Roman way of life, and also facilitated the tasks of administration, the collection of taxes, education and policing. Towns may also have been seen as a means of furthering the acceptance of the Roman government among the native population.

The earliest Roman towns to develop would have been those on which the administration of the province was based - the *civitates* and the *coloniae* - some of which were based on early forts, while others derived from settlements of veterans who were given land at the end of their period of military service (e.g. Gloucester). Smaller towns developed around the other early forts where merchants and other civilians gathered to service the army, or at other significant locations on the network of Roman roads, such as the Foss Way or Watling Street, to serve the imperial messenger service along with other travellers who would need somewhere to stop overnight, to eat and change horses, and possibly to trade. Unlike the civitates and coloniae, there is little evidence of planning in many such settlements, which are more likely to have developed organically.

The Roman small towns at Bourton-on-the-Water, Dorn, Dymock, Kingscote and Wycomb (Andoversford) were included in the historic towns survey. At Bourton there are suggestions of continuity of occupation from the Iron Age into the Roman period; the Iron Age enclosure of Salmonsbury Camp lies just over 1km to the east of the Roman small town. The Roman settlement was initially focused around a posting station (*mansio* or *mutatio*) on the Foss Way near its crossing of the River Windrush, but then spread eastwards towards Salmonsbury Camp. Dorn is also thought to have served an administrative function during the later part of the Roman period (the late third to fourth centuries), possibly as a site where the official taxes (the *annona*) were collected; the defences around the eastern part of the site may have been constructed at this time. The Roman settlements at Kingscote and Dymock may also have had military origins – there is a suggestion that there may have been an early fort at Dymock from which a small agricultural and metal-working settlement developed, while considerable material of first century date has been found at Kingscote which then developed into a market centre, covering about 200 hectares by the later fourth century. Unlike the other Roman settlements in Gloucestershire, Wycomb is not associated with any major road and it is thought to have grown up around a site of ritual or religious significance pre-dating the Roman conquest. A settlement would have developed there either to serve the pilgrims and visitors to the site, or as a market centre for surrounding communities which were often associated with ritual sites.

Some Medieval settlements in Gloucestershire may also have developed on sites of Roman activity, including Bisley where there is evidence for Roman ritual activity, possibly associated with the wells; King's Stanley, where there is evidence for a large Roman villa in the area of the later church; and Lydney which lies close to the Roman cult centre at Lydney Park. The nature of the relationship between the Roman and later settlements is not understood, and it is not clear to what extent the existence of Roman activity influenced the siting of later settlements.

The end of the Roman period in Britain is often thought to have been marked by a hiatus in urban life. There is little evidence for continuity of occupation in urban areas into the fifth century in the county, and it appears that the function of the towns died with the culture that they had been founded to sustain (Wacher 1995, 417). The fact that many sites were reoccupied in the later Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods may be due more to the fact that, by accident of geography, the sites were suitable for the economic and administrative functions of the period, just as they had been during the Roman period.

### 3.2 The Early Medieval period

The popular perception of the Dark Ages as one of deserted Roman towns, dilapidated villas and a reversion to barbarism still persists to a certain extent, and until 50 years ago academics were still debating the question of whether Anglo-Saxon towns existed at all. Roman towns fell out of use for a time, perhaps because they were too superficial an imposition on a society to which the idea of formal towns was alien. It is likely that the renaissance of internal and external trading networks prompted the increased centralisation of the production and sale of goods. From the eighth century specialist trading centres, such as Southampton and Ipswich, developed. Elsewhere the main impetus for urban development may have been a desire to control and promote economic activity, including the striking of coinage. A second important factor in the development of urban communities were the Scandinavian raids of the eighth and ninth centuries, which prompted Alfred and his successors to create the fortified settlements known as *burhs*. Some were established on the sites of Roman towns, while others were newly founded, but all were provided with defences of earth, timber or stone. The interest of the ruling elite in the promotion of towns gathered force throughout the later part of the Anglo-Saxon period, with increasing controls and prescriptions on the activities permitted within and outside urban areas: legislation of Edward the Elder and Aethelstan attempted to restrict trade to the towns, while the reform of the coinage by Eadgar in A.D.973 meant that the coins could only be struck in a burh.

The early church also played a significant role in the development of towns. From the seventh century onwards minsters were founded to serve as centres for the conversion and administration of large areas of England. A minster usually consisted of a church and outbuildings within an enclosure, served by a priest and a number of monastic or secular assistants. Such concentrations of priests would have required goods and services, which would in turn have attracted secular settlement to the area to serve those needs, and it is possible that these complexes may have provided the closest equivalent to towns in England until the creation of the burhs in the ninth century.

The tenth and eleventh centuries therefore saw the steady establishment of towns as centres of trade, finance, administration and ecclesiastical affairs, functions which continued into the post-Conquest period and have come to be viewed as indicators of urban status.

In Gloucestershire there is evidence that early minsters were founded at Tetbury, Berkeley, Cheltenham, Bishop's Cleeve, Blockley, Bisley, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe and it is possible that their existence played a significant role in the development of urban functions at those sites. Winchcombe is also the only example of a burh in Gloucestershire, founded in the seventh or eighth century at the site of an early minster which developed into a monastic house, with a Mercian royal palace and a mint, surrounded by a defensive enclosure. For a while during the early eleventh century, the settlement was important enough to stand at the centre of its own shire - *Winchcombeshire* - until it was incorporated into Gloucestershire c.A.D.1017.

### 3.3 The Medieval period

From the tenth to fourteenth centuries the process of urbanisation acquired momentum as first royal and then secular and ecclesiastical landlords began to promote existing villages to urban status, or to found completely new towns on virgin sites. Towns were important as a source of income from markets, taxes and tolls. Existing settlements had the added advantage of containing the remains of the Anglo-Saxon administrative structure, with military and fiscal obligations, and many were also episcopal sees. They housed large clusters of the population and many stood at important road junctions or river crossings. Artisans and merchants also found that the towns presented opportunities for the creation of wealth and the advancement of social status.

Medieval landowners were quick to promote the development of urban communities on their land, obtaining income from property rents and tolls levied on trade and commerce. This revenue could be controlled through the establishment of a market in a specific area within the settlement and in the period 1199-1350 around 2500 market grants were issued.

In addition to the foundation of a market, many landlords attempted to promote existing villages to borough status. The grant of a borough charter conferred a number of privileges of administrative, teneurial and legal character, the most important of which was the right to burgage or freehold tenure, for a rent and without labour services. In the period from 1199-1350 c.370 new boroughs were created by the king, lords and bishops. One of the most characteristic features of towns of this period is the burgage plot - long, thin strips of land extending back from the main street which allowed as many burgesses as possible access to the street frontage and the trade

which it afforded. In Gloucestershire at least 22 small towns acquired borough status during the Medieval period, with most charters being granted during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (see Table 2).

|  | TOWN | DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tewkesbury | by 1086 |
|  | Winchcombe | by 1086 |
| 2 | Chipping Campden | 1154-1189 |
| 3 | Newnham | 1187 |
| 4 | Berkeley | 1190 |
| 5 | Dursley | C12 |
|  | Stow-on-the-Wold | C12 |
| 6 | Tetbury | c.1211 |
| 7 | Fairford | c.1221 |
| 8 | Northleach | c.1227 |
| 9 | Lechlade | c.1235 |
| 10 | Wotton-under-Edge | 1253 |
| 11 | Dymock | C13 |
|  | Newent | C13 |
|  | Prestbury | C13 |
| 12 | King's Stanley | C13/14 |
|  | Moreton-in-Marsh | C13/14 |
| 13 | Minchinhampton | 1300 |
| 14 | Cheltenham | 1313 |
| 15 | Painswick | 1324 |
| 16 | St. Briavels | C14 |

**Table 2 Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: earliest documentary references to borough status.**

The units of settlement described as towns during this period were plentiful but remained very small, about 95% of the population of England was still rural, and the main difference between the new towns and the rural villages was that the former contained *a substantial proportion of traders and craftsmen whose services would be drawn on by the villagers of the surrounding area* (Palliser 1987, 55). This pattern of new foundations and promotions continued until the outbreak of the Black Death (1348-1369) which effectively curtailed the creation of new towns. Up to this time, town growth had been achieved mainly through the attraction of immigrants from surrounding rural populations, who were accommodated through the infilling of open areas and the sub-division of existing burgage or tenement plots.

The Norman and later Medieval town was thus an important instrument of political, administrative and economic control, flexible enough both to exert control over an area and to allow it to be exploited commercially. Through this process English towns were adapted to become a major economic force.

The Medieval small towns of Gloucestershire fit into this general pattern. A number of settlements in the central and eastern part of the county, such as Berkeley, Cheltenham, Tetbury, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe had begun to develop during the Early Medieval period, but the vast majority of the towns in the county owe their existence to the Medieval fashion for founding new markets and boroughs during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Table 3 shows the market towns in the county and the dates at which they received their market charters: 15% of all Medieval market grants were made during the twelfth century, and 55% during the thirteenth century.

|   | TOWN | DATE |
|---|------|------|
| 1 | Tewkesbury | by 1086 |
|   | Winchcombe | by 1086 |
|   | Berkeley | by 1086 |
| 2 | Fairford | c1100-1135 |
| 3 | Stow-on-the-Wold | 1107 |
| 4 | Chipping Campden | c1180 |
| 5 | Newnham | C12 |
| 6 | St. Briavels | 1208 |
| 7 | Lechlade | 1210 |
| 8 | Tetbury | 1211-1287 |
| 9 | Northleach | 1219/20 |
| 10 | Dymock | 1225/6 |
| 11 | Cheltenham | 1226 |
| 12 | Moreton-in-Marsh | 1228 |
| 13 | Frampton-on-Severn | 1245 |
| 14 | Prestbury | 1249 |
| 15 | Wotton-under-Edge | 1252 |
| 16 | Painswick | 1253 |
|   | Newent | 1253 |
|   | King's Stanley | 1253 |
| 17 | Lydney | 1268 |
| 18 | Minchinhampton | 1269 |
| 19 | Leonard Stanley | 1307-27 |
| 20 | Mitcheldean | 1328 |
| 21 | Coleford | C14 |
| 22 | Dursley | 1471/2 |
| 23 | Stroud | 1570-1607 |
| 24 | Bisley | 1687 |
| 25 | Nailsworth | C18 |
| 26 | Cinderford | 1869 |

**Table 3 Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: market charters by date**

Amongst the boroughs founded after 1086, some appear to have been added on to existing non-urban settlements, while others could have been new creations. Towns in the first category include Stow-on-the-Wold, Northleach, Moreton-in-Marsh, Chipping Campden, Wotton-under-Edge and possibly Dursley. Such settlements generally comprise a large market area which is sometimes triangular or square, and sometimes formed by widening the main street to allow stalls to be set up along its length, with burgage plots fronting onto all available sides. The earlier settlement, to which the borough was attached, can often be seen in a less regular pattern of property boundaries, usually clustered around the church. Towns of the second category include Fairford, Lechlade and Painswick. These settlements also have a well defined market area, but a more complex street pattern, incorporating more than one main street, with burgages also laid out along the subsidiary streets.

The history of the development of towns in the Forest of Dean, is rather more diverse. Some followed a pattern similar to those outlined above, of foundation and development around a market during the Medieval period and thus have a similar layout, such as Newent and Newnham; St. Briavels was connected closely with the development and administration of the Royal Forest of Dean. Other settlements – Coleford, Lydney and Mitcheldean - were the product of the industrial development of the Forest, based on the exploitation of its natural resources, particularly iron and coal.

The Stroud valleys, which would become such an important area of settlement during the Post-medieval period, show little evidence for urban development during the Medieval period, apart from areas at the edge of the Cotswold Scarp such as Dursley, Bisley and Painswick, where the settlement pattern is similar to that found elsewhere on the Cotswolds. The main reason for this is likely to have been the nature of the terrain, which was

mostly unsuitable for Medieval industries and agricultural exploitation, but which was ideally suited to Post-medieval advances in manufacturing techniques.

### 3.4 The Post-medieval period

The mid-sixteenth century marked a further important phase in the development of English towns. The dissolution of the Monasteries and the suppression of religious houses, especially friaries, chantries and pilgrimages had an enormous impact on urban life. Large areas of land and buildings were put up for sale, and were converted into houses or redeveloped by their new, secular owners. The economic impact on towns dependent upon church landlords or pilgrimage cults was therefore severe. Other factors also affected the success of the small towns founded during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Some failed because they had been poorly located, others because of direct competition from near neighbours, and yet others due to the economic changes of the period. Many of the towns which continued to flourish did so by specialising in a certain product at market, such as cheese, wool, grain or leather goods, while others specialised in a particular industry or manufacturing process.

During the later Medieval period changes to the industrial and commercial geography of England also had a significant effect upon the development of towns in the country. One of the main English exports up to the fourteenth century had been raw wool, which was shipped to the continent where it was made into finished cloth to be sold back to England. The wars with France in the early fourteenth century forced an end to this trade, providing the opportunity for the production of cloth to spread rapidly through the rural areas of England. Within a few years finished cloth had replaced raw wool as one of the country's main exports. Numerous small settlements began to develop in rural areas to service this trade, away from the constraints of the town guilds, which enabled cloth to be produced more cheaply, thereby competing with the Flemish weavers who had dominated the trade up to this time. These settlements were strikingly different from those of earlier towns; they were not confined within town walls and were often not connected to earlier settlements, but took the form of straggling developments along the sides of valleys. The new cloth industry thus allowed small rural settlements in favourable locations to develop into prosperous towns.

The effect of these economic changes was felt very strongly in Gloucestershire where the towns of the Cotswolds had specialised in the marketing of locally produced wool. Many of these towns, such as Northleach and Winchcombe, fell into decline during this time as they were not located in areas suitable for the manufacturing of woollen cloth. Prosperity spread instead to the valleys around Stroud where easy access to high quality Cotswold wool, to abundant supplies of fuller's earth, to water of a quantity sufficient to drive a number of mills and to Bristol as an outlet for the finished product allowed numerous small valley hamlets to develop into towns serving the cloth industry. Three kinds of English cloth were produced, the finest of which was broadcloth; kerseys were a lighter, cheaper and often coarser cloth and worsteds were the cheapest and did not require fulling. Gloucestershire held foremost place in the production of broadcloth, mainly due to the steep-sided valleys in the Stroud area which were well suited to the creation of reservoirs for the large fulling mills, and later for the dyehouses for the coloured cloth which supplanted the finished broadcloth. This is how settlements such as Chalford, Nailsworth and Stroud developed from the later fourteenth century, spread out along the sides of the river valleys and clustered around the mills. Within these towns evidence for the cloth trade is well preserved, not only in the form of large mill buildings, but in the architecture of the houses of the weavers, who produced the cloth, and the large, commodious dwellings of the clothiers who owned the mills, and distributed the wool to be woven.

In the Forest of Dean the settlements which developed during the Medieval period - Lydney, Newnham, Newent, Coleford and Mitcheldean - did not expand or develop greatly between the later Medieval period and the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, when new industrial techniques were developed and large scale mining operations began as the free miners were persuaded to sell their rights to speculators and entrepreneurs. This industrial activity was so concentrated in the area of Cinderford Bridge that a new town developed purely to service the requirements of the mine owners and their workers.

From the mid-seventeenth century the conglomeration of buildings and social classes which had characterised so many Medieval towns was superseded by the introduction of new urban styles from the continent, which reflected the growing prosperity of the period. The concept of large open circuses, squares and terraces of elegant town houses dominated the urban scene for the next two centuries, exemplified in the Gloucestershire context by the development of Regency Cheltenham, with its pump rooms, promenades, elegant terraces and town houses. Elsewhere the picture was not quite so pleasant, the industrial towns also had terraces, but these

were usually 'blind-backed' or 'tunnel-backed' with inadequate sanitation for the large families who occupied them. This form of dwelling can still be seen at Lydney and in the Oldbury development at Tewkesbury (although the houses have been modernised for modern use). Innovations in methods of transport also played an important role in the development of settlements, encouraging the separation of commercial, residential and industrial areas, as people no longer had to live in the same area that they worked. Most of the Gloucestershire small towns show some evidence of nineteenth century redevelopment, and most also have examples of Victorian civic pride in the form of public buildings such as libraries (Stroud) and town halls (Bisley, Stow-on-the-Wold, Nailsworth and Painswick).

## 4 Conclusions

Perhaps the most striking conclusion of this survey of the historic small towns of Gloucestershire is its demonstration that, despite documentary evidence of the Medieval or earlier origins of the majority of settlements, there is as yet very little archaeological evidence for most of them.

The town centre redevelopments of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s were not generally preceded by archaeological investigation and during this period many sites of high potential in the historic cores of small towns were destroyed without record. It was not until the later 1980s, and the advent of Planning Policy Guidance 16 (DoE 1990), that a more systematic approach to the archaeological evaluation and recording of sites in small towns became possible. Most recent large scale development has, however, tended to be away from the street frontages in the historic cores of towns, and the archaeological investigation in the latter areas has therefore been on a very small scale.

The summary of archaeological evidence provided by the Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey assessment reports and the policies contained in the strategies will, however, provide a good basis for ensuring that, in the future, sites of archaeological potential in small towns are managed appropriately and not developed without an assessment of the archaeological implications and implementation of suitable mitigation strategies.

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# HISTORIC TOWNS IN CHELTENHAM BOROUGH (Map 1)

| | Definition | Market | Borough charter | Burgages/ burgess tenure | Legal autonomy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cheltenham | Small market town; Resort town | 1226 | | ✓ | |
| Prestbury | Small market town | 1249 | C13 | ✓ | |

The administrative district of Cheltenham was created during local government reorganisation in the early 1970s. The district is situated in the north of the county on the low-lying land of the Severn Vale, close to the foot of the Cotswold escarpment. Until the early 1990s it contained only the town of Cheltenham, but it now also incorporates the settlement of Prestbury, which together form one continuous urban area. Both developed as small market towns in the Medieval period, probably from earlier settlements, but Cheltenham rose to prominence during the eighteenth century when the medicinal nature of its saline waters was first recognised. Following a visit by George III and his family in 1788, the spa became increasingly popular with fashionable society, growing to rival Bath and becoming *the favourite resort of fashion, and the shrine of health* (Goding 1863). The spa town also became a favourite retirement place for Indian Army officers and others who had served the Empire abroad, which led to the foundation of a number of schools and institutions which have retained their importance to the present day. The economy of the area is today based on light industry and leisure.

Goding J 1863, *Norman's History of Cheltenham*.

Map 1: Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: Cheltenham Borough
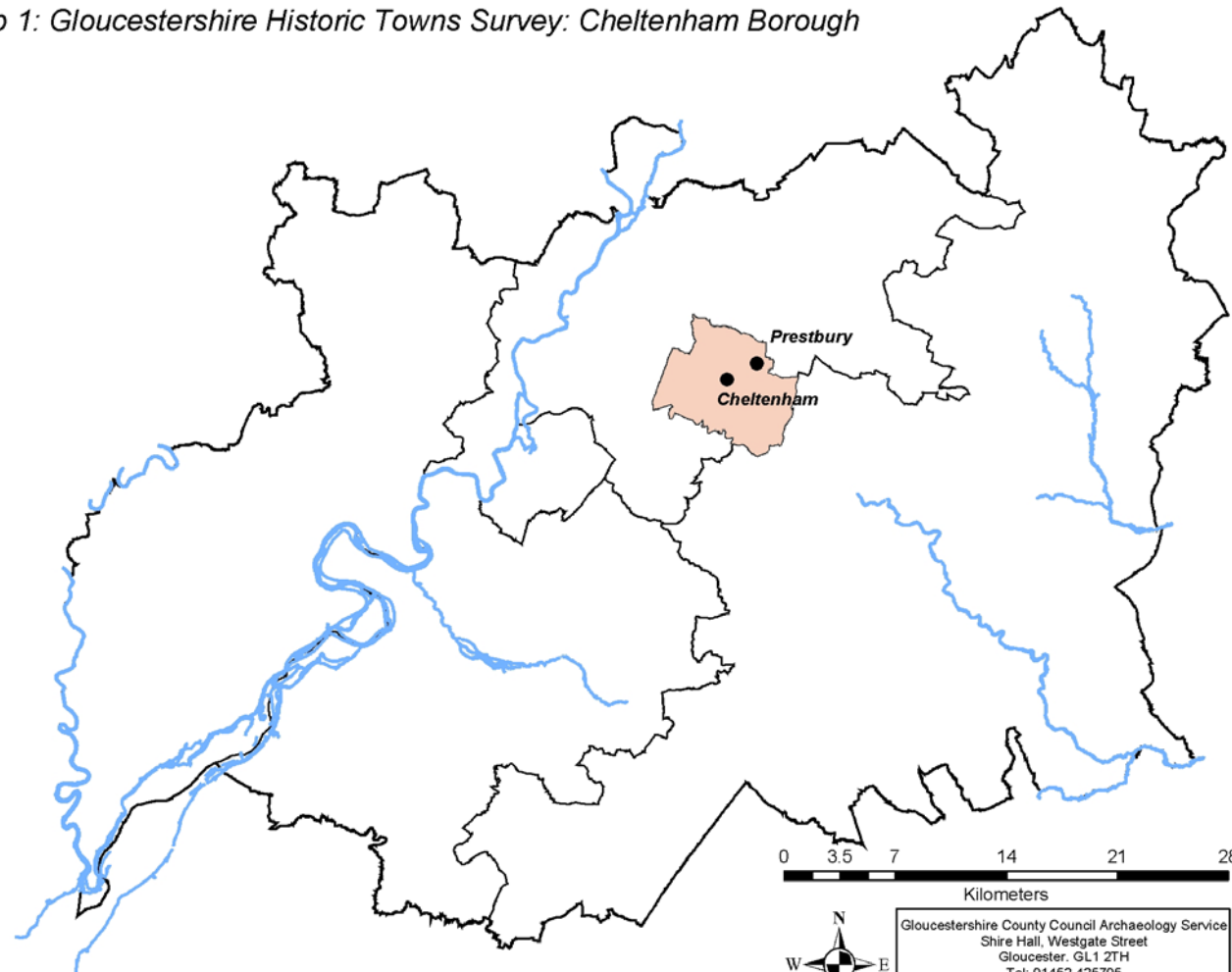
Prestbury

Cheltenham

0   3.5   7        14        21        28
Kilometers

# PRESTBURY

## 1 Introduction

Prestbury (SO 976237) is situated approximately 3km to the north-east of the centre of Cheltenham, on the old routeway from Cheltenham to Winchcombe. It stands on Lower Lias clays with a band of Cheltenham Sand to the west and an outcrop of Head Gravel to the north. The land on which the settlement lies slopes gently from 85m O.D. on the east to c.65m O.D. on the west. Originally a separate Medieval borough, within the last hundred years Prestbury has become a satellite settlement of Cheltenham, and together they now form a single urban area.

Prestbury was a small market town during the Medieval period, encouraged by the presence of the residence of the bishops of Hereford who owned the manor. As Cheltenham rose to prominence as a resort town during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Prestbury lost its status as a market centre, due to its proximity to the spa. However, the inhabitants managed to re-acquire some of their former prosperity by offering additional accommodation and entertainment for visitors to the spa, including the racecourse which lies immediately to the north-west of the town.

## 2 The Prehistoric period

Although there is no evidence for prehistoric activity within the area of the modern settlement, it has been suggested that Shaw Green Lane follows the line of an ancient trackway to Cleeve Hill (Cossens n.d., 3; Braunholtz n.d., 1).

## 3 The Roman period

Recent archaeological investigations in and around Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve to the north have revealed evidence of Roman settlement and field systems. To the east, on the Cotswold escarpment, there is extensive evidence of Roman activity, including settlements such as Wycomb near Andoversford (6km to the south-east) and villas such as nearby Withington to the south. It is therefore likely that evidence of Roman occupation may survive within the area of the modern settlement at Prestbury. The only direct evidence for Roman activity in Prestbury itself to date is in the form of eight sherds of pottery, part of a thick glass bottle or flask and a piece of iron slag found at SO 967239 at the southern end of The Burgage (**SMR 17938**).

## 4 The Early Medieval period

It has been suggested that land in Beckford and Cheltenham claimed in A.D.803 by Wulfheard, bishop of Hereford, from Deneberht, bishop of Worcester, included the thirty hides of land in Prestbury and Sevenhampton which the bishops of Hereford held at the time of the Norman Conquest (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 72).

## 5 The Medieval period

### 5.1 Domesday Book

Prestbury appears under the lands of the church of Hereford, in the hundred of Cheltenham. 18 villagers and five smallholders, a priest and a riding man are recorded along with 11 male and female slaves. 20 acres of meadowland and one league of woodland are also listed. The value of the manor TRE is given as £12, which had increased to £16 by the time of the survey (Moore 1982).

### 5.2 The placename

According to Smith (1964, 110), Prestbury means "the priests' fortified place" and is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *preost* and *burh*. The name is thought to reflect the fact that the manor was held by the bishop of Hereford, who had a fortified manor house there from the thirteenth century, or perhaps earlier. The name first appears as *into Preosdabyrig* c.899-904; by the time of the Domesday survey it had developed into *Presteberie* and by the thirteenth century it was *Presbery* (Smith 1964, 110).

### 5.3 The manor

By the time of Domesday Book (1086) the bishops of Hereford were in possession of the manor of Prestbury, which they held until 1560, when, during a vacancy in the see, the manor was seized by the queen and retained by the Crown (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 72). The manor at Prestbury was considered to be one of the richest possessions of the bishops of Hereford, ranking next to Bosbury in importance and wealth (Donovan 1937, 333). Llanthony Priory also owned some lands in Prestbury, and c.1164 bishop Robert of Hereford granted all the small tithes along with the tithes of the demesne to the prior of Llanthony, except for a portion held by the

dean and precentor of the abbey at Hereford. In 1292 the prior of Llanthony was granted free warren in his demesne at Prestbury (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 73).

The residence of the bishops of Hereford is believed to have occupied the site of the moated enclosure which lies 0.8km to the north of the centre of the modern town, at SO 39672246 (**SMR 460**). Documentary sources record that the bishops had a manor house in Prestbury from the thirteenth century, but pottery found during excavations at the moated site in 1951 indicates that there was a building on the site from the eleventh century. The site consists of two adjoining moated enclosures oriented north-west to south-east, which were both originally surrounded by a continuous earthen bank and an 8m wide ditch. The western end of the enclosure was investigated in 1951, and the foundations of a manor house were discovered. The building is thought to have had a timber upper storey including a solar and chapel above an aisled ground floor hall. A second building, thought to have been a kitchen, lay to the north-west of the hall, beside the moat, and a number of other structures, thought to have been outbuildings were also found. Contemporary documents record that a mill, brewhouse and dairy also stood within the western enclosure. Within the eastern enclosure was a *stable for carts next the gate, the ox house, the great stable, the pig-stye, the sow house, three barns and the fishpond*. Archaeological evidence recovered from the site indicates that the house was intensively occupied between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries (O'Neil 1956, 9-10). Today the northern part of the bishops' moated manor house survives, the moat defined by a slight earthwork, while the southern part was built over in the 1960s.

By 1136, the bishops' manorial holdings also included Prestbury Park, a large area of parkland in the north-west of the parish, which was kept well stocked with game for the bishops to hunt. By 1535 the park had become so neglected that the bishop considered destroying it altogether. In the later sixteenth century 100 deer were recorded as roaming the park, but by 1611 they had all gone (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 68).

Documentary references to the manor house mainly detail repairs and alterations: in 1289 the bishop kept Christmas at Prestbury, necessitating repairs to the buildings, including the making of a chimney in the kitchen, the mending of a furnace, repairs to the oven and repairs to a drawbridge; in 1344 an extensive list of *dilapidations* to the buildings was drawn up, and accounts for the repairs have survived, which include the rebuilding of the chapel, rectifying *defects in the lord's chamber* and much work on the outbuildings (O'Neil 1956, 21-22).

The prior of Llanthony also had a house in Prestbury, known by the mid-thirteenth century as The Court. The exact location of this house is unknown, although it may have stood on the moated site at Noverton to the south-west of the settlement (**SMR 5444**), where traces of structures including a great hall c.20m long and possible fishponds were revealed during rescue excavations in the 1970s (Spry 1991, 33). By 1538 the house was located next to the church, and had become known as the manor house or rectory (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 73). This may have been due to the increased isolation of the bishops' manor house at the northern end of the settlement following the decline of the market in The Burgage. A tithe barn (**SMR 5443**) *recently built* stood near the gate of the prior's house, and was still standing in 1823.

### 5.4 The status of the settlement

The use of the name The Burgage for the street which runs north-south from Lake Street to Tatchley Lane to the west of the church, suggests that part of the settlement at Prestbury had borough status, and by the thirteenth century surviving documents make a distinction between the borough of Prestbury and the rest of the village. The area of the medieval borough is thought to have been The Burgage, but by the sixteenth century Bowbridge Lane and the north side of Deep Street had also been incorporated. It is likely that tenants who did not have burgage tenure built their houses in the rest of Deep Street and along the High Street (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 68).

The Red Book of Hereford records c.1285 that there were thirty tenants each holding a burgage in Prestbury, along with other tenants who were living in the borough (Beresford and Finberg 1973, 115). At this time, burgesses formed one of the largest groups of inhabitants in the settlement and paid a rent 3s higher than was usual for a burgage elsewhere (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 74).

### 5.5 The church

It is possible that a church may have existed in Prestbury at the time of the Norman Conquest, or possibly even before, as a priest is recorded in Domesday Book. Prestbury church is dedicated to St. Mary (**SMR 8377**) and the earliest identifiable parts of the present structure appear to be the western tower, which was begun in the

thirteenth century and completed in the later fourteenth century, and the chancel arch which has also been dated to the fourteenth century (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 79). The church is thought to have been largely rebuilt in the fourteenth century, and thoroughly restored in the later nineteenth century.

In 1136 bishop Robert of Hereford gave the church at Prestbury, with its dependent chapel at Sevenhampton, to Llanthony Priory, which also appears to have appropriated the rectory. In the thirteenth century the prior granted his tithes to the priest serving the cure along with half a yardland and half a house (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 78).

In the *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas taken in 1291, the value of the church was given as £6 3s 4d, which had risen to £12 6s 8d in 1535 (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 78).

### 5.6 Markets and fairs

In 1249 the bishop of Hereford was granted the right to hold a weekly market in Prestbury and an annual fair for three days at the beginning of August. The market is thought to have been held in The Burgage, and the number of burgage tenants recorded c.1280 indicates that the market was flourishing at this time. The grant was confirmed in 1394. In the fifteenth century the market is thought to have started to decline, following which an attempt was made to revive it during the early sixteenth century (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 76).

A documentary reference of 1398 to Scop Street may indicate shops; at the same date a house in The Burgage is referred to as the bakehouse, which may also indicate some form of commercial establishment (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 77).

### 5.7 Trade and industry

#### 5.7.1 Agriculture

Agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of the settlement until the nineteenth century. In the twelfth century the lands of the bishops of Hereford alone included pasture for 400 sheep, and by 1240 there were thirty head of cattle in demesne (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 74). Crops known to have been grown at Prestbury at this time include wheat, barley and oats. It has been suggested that dairy farming may have been as important as arable, and in 1275 cheese was being sold from the town (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 76).

#### 5.7.2 Mills

In 1292 it was recorded that the bishop of Hereford had a water mill at Prestbury, which was held in demesne by 1344. In 1389 the prior of Llanthony was leasing a mill from the bishop; it is thought that this may have been Lower Mill (**SMR 7357**), which stood close to the church and the house of the priory, on the small stream which runs through the village. In 1506 and 1536, records show that the bishop's mill was still held by a lessee (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 76-77). Prestbury did not play a role in the Gloucestershire cloth industry, and it is thus likely that the mill was used for grinding corn, rather than for fulling.

#### 5.7.3 Other trades

In c.1290 it was recorded that there was a forge in the bishop's manor of Prestbury (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 77); no other information relating to medieval trades has survived. It is, however, likely that many of the occupations listed by Smith in 1608 (see section 6.5.3 below), were long-standing; they included husbandmen, labourers, tailors, butchers and bakers.

### 5.8 The fire

It is said that The Burgage was destroyed by fire during the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509), an event referred to by Leland in 1546: *The Town hath been larger than it is now, and hath be sumwhat defacid with chaunce of fier.* Atkyns (1712, 605) and Rudder (1779, 604) both refer to a similar event, but infer that the entire town was consumed, not just the area known as The Burgage. It appears that a number of houses in The Burgage were destroyed by fire in the later fifteenth or early sixteenth century, but it is unlikely that the entire settlement was destroyed.

# 6 The Post-medieval period

*Prestbyri is a praty Townelet standing a mile este south este from Chiltenham yn Gloucestershire. Sum say that it was of old tyme a market Towne, and had Fraunchesis. It is now made a Market Towne agayne a 20 yeres syns* (Leland 1546, quoted in Latimer 1889/90).

## 6.1 The manor

After the manor passed to the Crown in 1560, it was granted to a succession of secular landlords, starting in 1564 with Sir Thomas Chamberlayne. It was at this time that substantial alterations were made to the manor house, including the conversion of the undercroft of the chapel into a living room, with a decorated plaster ceiling and an ornate stone fireplace; the chapel itself became another living room, while the great hall, which by this date was slightly outmoded, was turned into domestic offices (Elliot 1992/3, 19).

Accounts of the Civil War make brief reference to Prestbury, and it is recorded that a troop of Roundheads took shelter in the manor house in 1643 on their way to the siege of Gloucester (O'Neil 1956, 11).

After the mid-seventeenth century there is very little information available about the manor and manor house, and it is thought that the house was left unoccupied until it was only useful as a quarry for building materials. In 1762 what remained of the house was sold, the sale description recording: *Two pieces of Pasture Ground.....being the scite of the manor of Prestbury... and called by the name or names of the Mannor or Manor Closes* (Elliot 1992/3, 21).

Rudder (1779, 604) considered the loss of the patronage of the bishops of Hereford to have been a major factor in the decline of the settlement in the Post-medieval period, following which *the town soon fell into the condition of a country village, and has continued so ever since.*

## 6.2 The status of the settlement

There is no evidence to suggest that the borough of Prestbury survived beyond the medieval period, and it is possible that borough status was lost following the fire recorded to have taken place in the reign of Henry VII. During the later Post-medieval period Prestbury was overtaken in importance and size by the development of Cheltenham and gradually became a satellite settlement of the spa town.

## 6.3 Ecclesiastical history

### 6.3.1 The church of St. Mary (SMR 8377)

In 1676 repairs were carried out to the church and tower, which had to be buttressed at the south-west corner in 1698 with stone taken from the manor house. Following an earth tremor in 1795 a fissure developed in the south wall of the tower and additional buttresses had to be added in 1829. By the mid-nineteenth century the church had become too small for the congregation, despite the addition of a west gallery at the end of the eighteenth century, and the construction of a north gallery in 1827. A south gallery was also added some time before 1864, and buttresses had been added to the tower c.1824 following the discovery of a large crack in its side. The church underwent a *drastic restoration* 1864-1868 under the auspices of G.E. Street, during which the north and south aisles were extended to flank the chancel and all the windows were given stained glass (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 79; Verey 1980, 321-322).

In 1704 it was recorded that the vicarage had been lately largely rebuilt as it had been in a ruinous condition, so that it now comprised six bays, along with outbuildings including a brewhouse, barn, stable and cowhouse. The house appears to have been again rebuilt in the later eighteenth century, for in 1807 a document stated that the rebuilding had taken place about forty years before. This vicarage was finally sold in 1955, and a new brick building was constructed on part of the original garden (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 78).

### 6.3.2 Nonconformity

In the Diocesan Survey of 1676 ten nonconformists were recorded in the parish of Prestbury, and in 1684 one Quaker is known to have been living there. In 1735 ten nonconformists were again recorded in the parish, and were described as Anabaptists; eight houses were also registered for nonconformist worship in the period 1798-1838, and one of these, in 1838, is known to have belonged to a Methodist meeting. The Methodists

were established at Prestbury by 1835, flourishing for a time, but in 1850 plans to build a chapel were dropped. The first nonconformist chapel to open in Prestbury was thus the Congregational chapel in Deep Street (**SMR 20387**), which opened in 1866, and which had a resident minister by 1878. At the turn of the century the congregation numbered around 18, and by the 1960s it had risen to c.31.

In 1964 Roman Catholic services were held on Sundays in the Women's' Institute Hall, the congregation being served from St. Gregory's, Cheltenham (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 80).

### 6.4 Markets and fairs

*How long it continued to be considered as such [a market town] does not appear, but I apprehend not a great while afterwards* (Rudder 1779, 604).

During the early Post-medieval period Prestbury's market declined, and by c.1700 it had been allowed to lapse, despite an attempt to revive it in the early sixteenth century (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 76). This revival is probably what Leland referred to when he recorded that *It is now made a market toune againe a 20 yeres syns*. The proximity of the settlement at Prestbury to Winchcombe and the burgeoning spa town of Cheltenham are likely to have been significant factors in the decline of the market and fairs.

### 6.5 Trade and industry

#### 6.5.1 Agriculture

As described above, the mainstay of Prestbury's economy until the mid-nineteenth century was agriculture, both arable and pastoral. In the seventeenth century the new crop of tobacco was introduced. It was being grown in and around Prestbury in the 1620s and its cultivation continued up to 1664 and probably later, despite the heavy penalties placed upon its production in England (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 76).

During the nineteenth century there were extensive orchards in and around Prestbury, and the first edition Ordnance Survey 25": 1 mile map (1880) shows just how numerous these orchards were. Another feature of nineteenth century Prestbury was the cultivation of market gardens, which became increasingly numerous from the 1850s onwards. In 1856 there were 3, by 1880 this had risen to 6 and in 1906 there were 8; numbers did not decrease until the end of the Second World War, when building land was at a premium (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 76).

#### 6.5.2 Mills

Lower Mill (**SMR 7357**), which may have been operating from the later fourteenth century, fell out of use sometime between 1885 and 1894. By 1919 it was being used as a laundry, which had closed by 1923, after which the land was used for a private house (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 77).

#### 6.5.3 Documentary evidence

In his survey of *Men and Armour for the County of Gloucestershire in 1608*, Smith listed 15 servants, 16 husbandmen, 12 labourers, 3 carpenters, 3 tailors, a slatter, a smith, a weaver, a baker and a butcher. By the later eighteenth century there was also a cordwainer, and during the nineteenth century the number of traders increased dramatically following the development of Cheltenham spa. In a guide of 1836, traders listed included 5 butchers, 3 cordwainers, 5 carpenters, 7 plasterers, a bricklayer, a cooper and 6 painters. During the later nineteenth century shoemakers, grocers, coal dealers and general stores all start to appear in the trade directories for Prestbury (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 77).

The nineteenth century saw an increase in the professional and leisured classes, drawn to the spa at Cheltenham, which corresponded with a decline in the proportion of the population involved in agriculture, trade and industry. In 1811 there were 87 families employed in agriculture, 37 in trade and industry and 14 in other areas; in 1831 this had changed to 65 families in agriculture, 68 in trade and industry and 71 in other forms of employment (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 77).

### 6.6 Prestbury spa

In the mid-eighteenth century a chalybeate spring, discovered in the north-west corner of the parish, was found to have medicinal properties, and an attempt was made by a Dr. Linden to prove that they were of greater value to the health than those at Cheltenham. By 1751 Lord Craven, on whose land the spring rose, had provided hot and cold baths and lodgings for people who wished to take the waters. Unfortunately, Hyde Spa never became as

popular as those in Cheltenham, and did not survive beyond the eighteenth century. The spring is said to have been visible in 1909, but could not be found in 1931 (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 70).

In or before 1844 a centre known as the Prestbury Establishment was opened to promote the use of cold water for the cure of various diseases. It had closed by 1846 (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 70).

Other springs in the area of Prestbury have been found to have chalybeate qualities. One rises on Marle Hill, and another, which rises at Noverton, gained a reputation for healing ailments of the eye. However, neither of them gained a large clientele (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 70).

### 6.7 The influence of the development of the spa at Cheltenham

#### 6.7.1 Prestbury and Cheltenham

Cheltenham's development as a fashionable spa resort had several contradictory effects upon Prestbury. The market and fairs declined in the face of the competition posed by those at Cheltenham and Winchcombe, but the settlement profited from the lack of accommodation available in the spa resort itself, gradually becoming a favoured residential area, set at the foot of the Cotswolds and close to the racecourse.

#### 6.7.2 The Grotto

*The Grotto is decorated with shells and fossils of various kinds, very tastefully arranged, the windows are Gothic and filled with painted glass; the floor is tesselated and convex mirrors adorn the walls. Its exterior is pleasingly shaded with gadding shrubs, which gives the whole a solemn and impressive effect...* (Guide to all Watering and Seabathing places, 1803 quoted in Jackson 1987, 4).

By 1784 a house in Mill Street, which had a garden with grottoes, a pavilion and a Chinese temple was described as a tea-drinking house. By the early nineteenth century this same establishment, which by then had become known as The Grotto (**SMR 19160**), was listed in the Cheltenham Guide as one of the main attractions of the village, to which many visitors would drive to take tea in the afternoons. Unfortunately the establishment had become an inn by the 1820s, acquired a bad reputation for rowdy behaviour and was closed down by the late nineteenth century (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 71). All that remains of the establishment today is a 2m high late eighteenth century carved stone pedestal at SO 9686420497.

#### 6.7.3 The Pittville estate and other housing developments

Cheltenham's Pittville Pumproom is situated on the southern boundary of the parish of Prestbury, and part of the Pittville estate, which was built from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, lies in Prestbury. Throughout the nineteenth century, the development spread northwards into Prestbury so that by 1880, the vicar of Prestbury was able to observe that there were three distinct divisions within the parish: the village and Noverton, the middle class dwellings along Prestbury Road and the wealthy Cheltenham suburb of Pittville (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 71).

#### 6.7.4 Cheltenham racecourse

There was a racecourse at Prestbury Park in the 1830s and the town had a strong association with racing throughout the nineteenth century. In 1902 the Cheltenham Racecourse Company bought Prestbury Park, a grandstand and clubhouse were built in 1908 and a racecourse station, on the main railway line, opened in 1912 (Elrington, Morgan and Herbert 1972, 71).

## 7 The modern settlement

The centre of the modern settlement at Prestbury has remained almost unchanged in form since the later Medieval period. Although the majority of buildings date to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a few earlier structures have survived, including The Priory, the earliest part of which is a fourteenth century timber-framed hall of four bays, while No.37, The Burgage is thought to date to the later sixteenth century, despite considerable eighteenth and nineteenth century rebuilding. The village has long been a favoured residential area, reflected in the high proportion of substantial seventeenth century and later houses, and it has gradually become a suburb of the borough of Cheltenham. Between the First and Second World Wars the number of houses in the parish increased rapidly, and a small housing estate was built at Lower Noverton. The houses of this phase of development are mostly brick-built semi-detached and detached suburban dwellings. During the 1950s a large housing estate was built between Bouncer's Lane and Prestbury Road and by 1961 the number of houses in Prestbury had increased by half. The main feature of this period of expansion was the construction of groups of semi-detached brick houses and bungalows, although the building of larger detached houses in

various styles also continued. By 1964 the area of the parish between the centre of Cheltenham and the village was almost completely built up, although little expansion has taken place to the north or east of the settlement.

## 8 Population figures

| Date | Communicants | Households | Families | Nonconfor-mists | Inhabitants | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1551 | 160 | | | | *c.240* | Percival |
| 1563 | | | 54 | | *c.230* | Percival |
| 1603 | 300 | | | | *c.450* | Percival |
| 1650 | | | 60 | | *c.255* | Survey of Church Livings |
| 1676 | 177 | | | 10 | *c.276* | Compton Census |
| 1712 | | | 100 | | 445 | Atkyns |
| 1779 | | | | | 400-500 | Rudder |
| 1801 | | | | | 485 | |
| 1851 | | | | | 1314 | |
| 1901 | | | | | 1393 | |
| 1997 | | | | | 7725 | |

**For a full explanation of this table, please see page 5 above.**

## 9 Plan analysis

### 9.1 Discussion (Maps 12, 13 and 14)

*This delightful village lies about two miles north of Cheltenham, and is so secluded by orchards and trees, as to form a sylvan scene round almost every house. Here are some very neat dwellings, where lodgings may be procured; and the hotel is infinitely superior to what might be expected in such a sequestered spot* (Guide to all Watering and Sea Bathing Places, 1803 quoted in Jackson 1987, 4).

The Medieval and Post-medieval settlement at Prestbury was composed of three main elements - the manor house of the Bishops of Hereford, The Burgage and the area around the church - and the relationships between them are not yet fully understood. Charter evidence granting lands at Prestbury to the bishops in the later ninth century has been taken to suggest that there might have been a house (**Area 1**) and settlement (**Area 3**) there by that time. However, it has also been suggested that the church at Prestbury (**Area 2**), which stands 0.8km to the south of the manor, may have had a pre-Conquest origin and thus it might also have acted as a focus for settlement.

The moated manor house of the bishops of Hereford (**Area 1**) stood about 0.8km to the north-west of the settlement which developed near the church. It was ideally positioned to act as a stopping point on the long journey from Hereford to London, and stood reasonably close to the area of the thirteenth century borough. The main route from Cheltenham to Winchcombe ran along The Burgage and Bowbridge Lane during the earlier Medieval period, and this area is thought to have been the main focus of commercial activity at this time. It was in this area that the thirteenth century borough lay (**Areas 8** and **9**) and it is also likely to have been the site of the Medieval market from 1249 (**Area 4**). Evidence for burgage plots fronting on to the east and west of The Burgage can be seen on early maps of the settlement, and has also been preserved within the modern property boundaries in that area. Although settlement around the church is recorded from the twelfth century, it does not appear to have had the same status as that in the area of The Burgage, and it is likely that tenants who did not have burgage rights built their houses in this area, along Deep Street and the High Street (**Areas 10-13**). It is likely that medieval occupation also stretched along part of Mill Street, possibly as far as Mill Lane and along the southern side of the High Street towards Noverton Lane. The church is likely to have controlled the land to the east, between Mill Street and the High Street. There are no documentary references or archaeological evidence for Medieval settlement in the area of the bishops' manor house (**Area 3**), and it is therefore possible that the residence may have been relatively isolated from the town once it had developed.

During the later Medieval period, the market fell into decline, possibly due to a fire said to have destroyed most of the buildings on the eastern side of The Burgage during the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509). Another significant factor which would have affected the market was the re-establishment of the Cheltenham to Winchcombe road along the street to the south of the church (Deep Street and the High Street), which

subsequently became the focus of activity within the settlement. Shortly after this the area of the borough had expanded to incorporate The Burgage, Bowbridge Lane and the northern side of Deep Street.

The house owned by Llanthony priory is thought to have been situated at Noverton (**Area 5**) during the earlier Medieval period, but in 1538 the house is recorded as standing to the west of the church (**Area 6**), with a grange barn, *newly built*, near the gate. This grange is thought to have been on the site of, or even to have been partly incorporated into, Reform Cottage, while The Cottage in Mill Street is thought to have been a guest house attached to the priory's house. It has also been suggested that the land in front of Reform Cottage was the monks' private burial ground, but there is no information available at present to support this theory. By the sixteenth century the priory's house had become known as the manor-house or rectory, and it was not until 1788 that a wall was built to separate the house from the church. The houses now known as The Priory and The Prior's House contain the remains of a fourteenth century four bay hall which has various additions and alterations of sixteenth and seventeenth century date.

Lower Mill (**Area 7**), which is thought to have been the mill recorded as belonging to the bishops of Hereford in 1292, and which was being leased to the prior of Llanthony in 1389, stood to the north-west of the church and priory house, and is thought to have given its name to Mill Street. There was still a mill on the site at the end of the nineteenth century (shown on the Ordnance Survey first edition 25": 1 mile map of 1880), but it has since been demolished and the site developed for housing.

Because of its proximity to Cheltenham, Prestbury came to provide 'overflow' accommodation for the visitors who came to drink the waters during the height to the spa's popularity. Even after the waters had lost their popularity, Prestbury was considered a desirable area in which to live, close to Cheltenham, but with access to the countryside. For this reason Prestbury contains more large houses of seventeenth and eighteenth century date than is usual for a suburban settlement. The continued expansion of Cheltenham had a dramatic effect upon Prestbury, causing the number of houses in the parish to double during the early nineteenth century (**Areas 24-30**). Bouncer's Lane had been extended southwards towards Cheltenham by 1824, and New Barn Lane had been named by 1828, by which time scattered groups of houses had begun to be put up along Prestbury Road and Bouncer's Lane. The churchyard was also encroached upon at this time, with houses being built on the north side of the High Street, and the south side of Mill Street (**Area 15**).

Twentieth century development around Prestbury has been rapid, and today almost all the available land between Cheltenham and Prestbury has been developed, creating one large urban area. For a more detailed discussion of the modern development of the settlement, please see section 7 above.

### 9.2 Plan components

#### 9.2.1 Medieval (Map 12)

1. The manor house of the bishops of Hereford
2. The church and churchyard of St Mary
3. Area of possible settlement associated with the bishops' manor house
4. Site of the medieval market in The Burgage
5. Noverton moated site, possible the pre-sixteenth century house of the Priory of Llanthony
6. Llanthony Priory's house, from the sixteenth century onwards
7. Site of the Lower Mill
8. Probable area of burgage plots within the borough, fronting on to the west side of The Burgage
9. Probable area of burgage plots within the borough, fronting on to the east side of The Burgage
10. Possible area of medieval settlement to the west of Deep Street
11. Possible area of medieval settlement to the south of the High Street
12. Possible area of medieval settlement between the High Street and Mill Street
13. Possible area of medieval settlement to the north of Mill Street

#### 9.2.2 Post-medieval (Map 13)

14. The church and the reduced churchyard of the nineteenth century
15. Area of nineteenth century infilling of the original churchyard
16. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the west of The Burgage
17. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the east of The Burgage
18. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the west of Deep Street

19. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the west of the church
20. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the north of Mill Street
21. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the north of Mill Street
22. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the east of the church
23. Area of Post-medieval settlement to the south of the High Street
24. Area of Post-medieval development to the south of Noverton Lane
25. Area of Post-medieval development to the east of Bouncer's Lane
26. Area of Post-medieval development to the north of Prestbury Road
27. Area of Post-medieval development to the west of Bowbridge Lane
28. Area of Post-medieval development to the east of Bowbridge Lane
29. Area of Post-medieval development to the east of Bowbridge Lane
30. Area of Post-medieval development to the north of Shaw Green Lane

## 10 Future research

Recent archaeological investigations in the area suggest that evidence for Roman activity may have survived in the area of the modern settlement of Prestbury. Although many of the features of the Medieval settlement at Prestbury are described in surviving documents, there is little archaeological evidence for their existence, and it is likely that remains of the Medieval and later periods may survive beneath the modern settlement. The following themes are priorities for future archaeological investigation:

1. Roman settlement: a recent watching brief identified Roman finds which may be indicative of settlement.
2. The early episcopal seat: documentary sources suggest that the bishops' manor house was founded in the ninth century A.D., but there is no archaeological evidence to corroborate this. Further investigation of the moated site may help to answer some of the questions raised by the surviving sources.
3. The early church: the date of the foundation of St. Mary's church at Prestbury is unknown. It is possible that there may have been a pre-Conquest foundation on the site, as a priest is recorded in the Domesday Book entry for Prestbury. Unfortunately, the nineteenth century restoration and rebuilding of the church has obscured many architectural details.
4. Medieval settlement: the location and date of the earliest settlement at Prestbury is unknown. It has been suggested that it may have stood to the north of the modern village around the site of the bishops' manor house. Alternatively, it might have grown up around the site of the present church, which may have had a pre-Conquest origin. If the settlement did not originate around the church, the date of its development and its relationship with the manor house need to be explored.
5. The Medieval borough: the extent and character of the burgage tenements laid out along The Burgage are poorly understood due to the nature of modern development in the area. It is, however, likely that the lines of boundaries between the plots along with other domestic features, will have been preserved as buried features which might be revealed by further investigations in the area.
6. Later history: documentary sources suggest that there was a fire in the town during the reign of king John, but there is at present no archaeological evidence to substantiate these records. Any investigation along The Burgage might produce evidence to support the theory.

## 11 Sources

### 11.1 Primary historical sources

There are few original documents relating to Medieval activity at Prestbury, which mainly take the form of charters and grants. These have not been consulted directly, but where they are referred to in the text, the information has been drawn from secondary (published) sources.

### 11.2 Secondary historical sources

Prestbury has been covered by the Victoria County History for Gloucestershire, and there has been some interest in the history of the settlement prompting a number of short books, pamphlets and articles. The settlement also appears in the works of the eighteenth and nineteenth century antiquaries, as well as meriting entries in the Cheltenham Guides from the later eighteenth century onwards.

### 11.3 Archaeological sources

Archaeological investigation in Prestbury has focused mainly on the site of the Medieval moated manor houses. Excavations were undertaken at the bishops' residence between 1937 and 1951 in advance of proposed development over the western part of the site, and again in the later 1980s and 1993, in advance of extensions to the original housing development. These investigations explored different aspects of the manor house and its

enclosure, as well as providing information about subsidiary structures associated with it. The moated site at Lower Noverton was first investigated in 1965, and was then more fully excavated prior to the development of the site for housing in the early 1970s. There has been little other archaeological investigation of the area of the Medieval town, and many features of the earlier settlement are poorly understood as a consequence.

### 11.4 Maps

The earliest available maps of Prestbury are the 1842 tithe map and the first edition Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map of 1880, which clearly illustrate the extent of the settlement before the twentieth century housing estates and other development took place to the south of the village.

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### 12.2 Maps

Tithe map and apportionment, 1842

Ordnance Survey first edition 25": 1 mile map, 1880

Gloucestershire
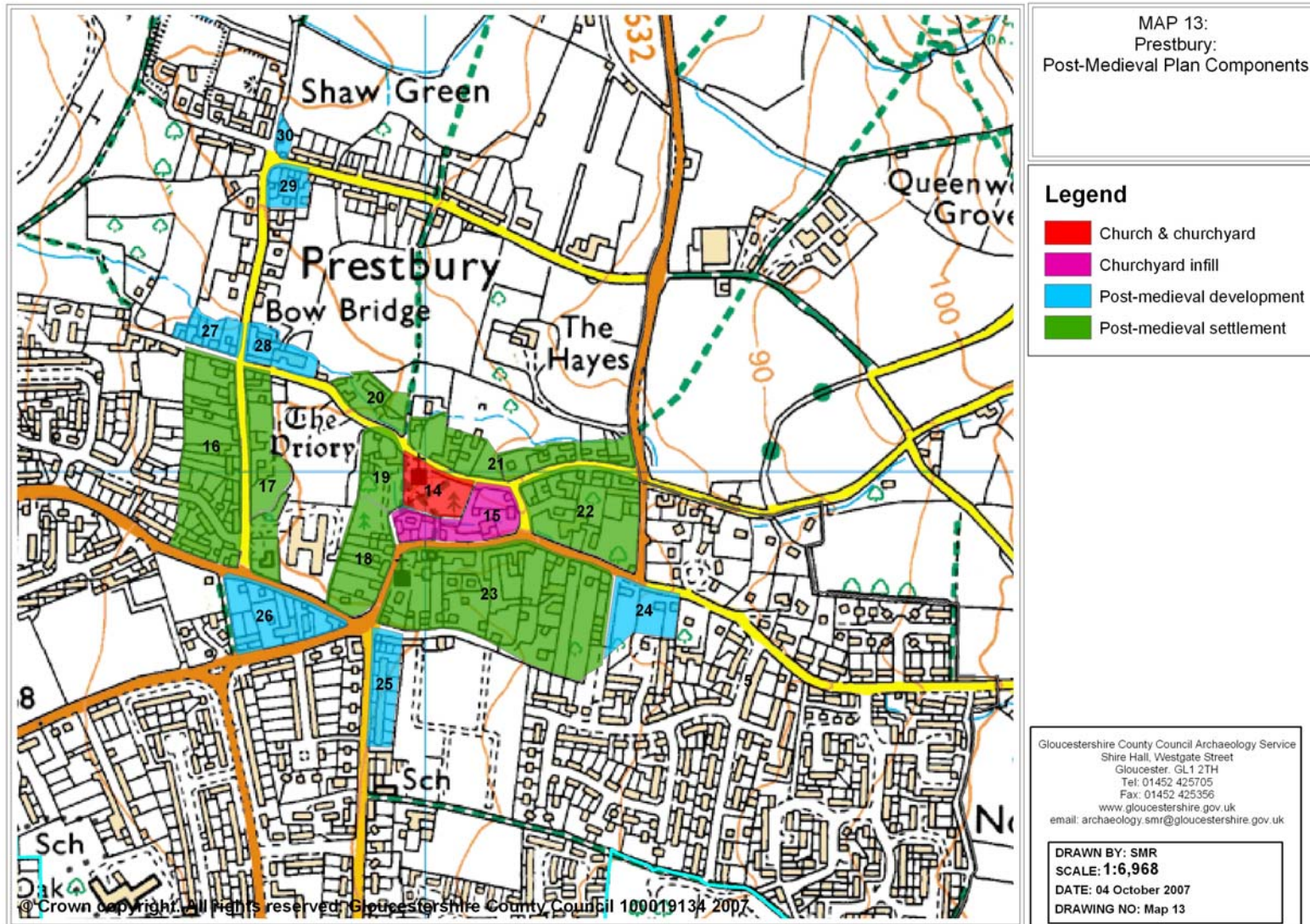COUNTY COUNCIL
Sites & Monuments Record
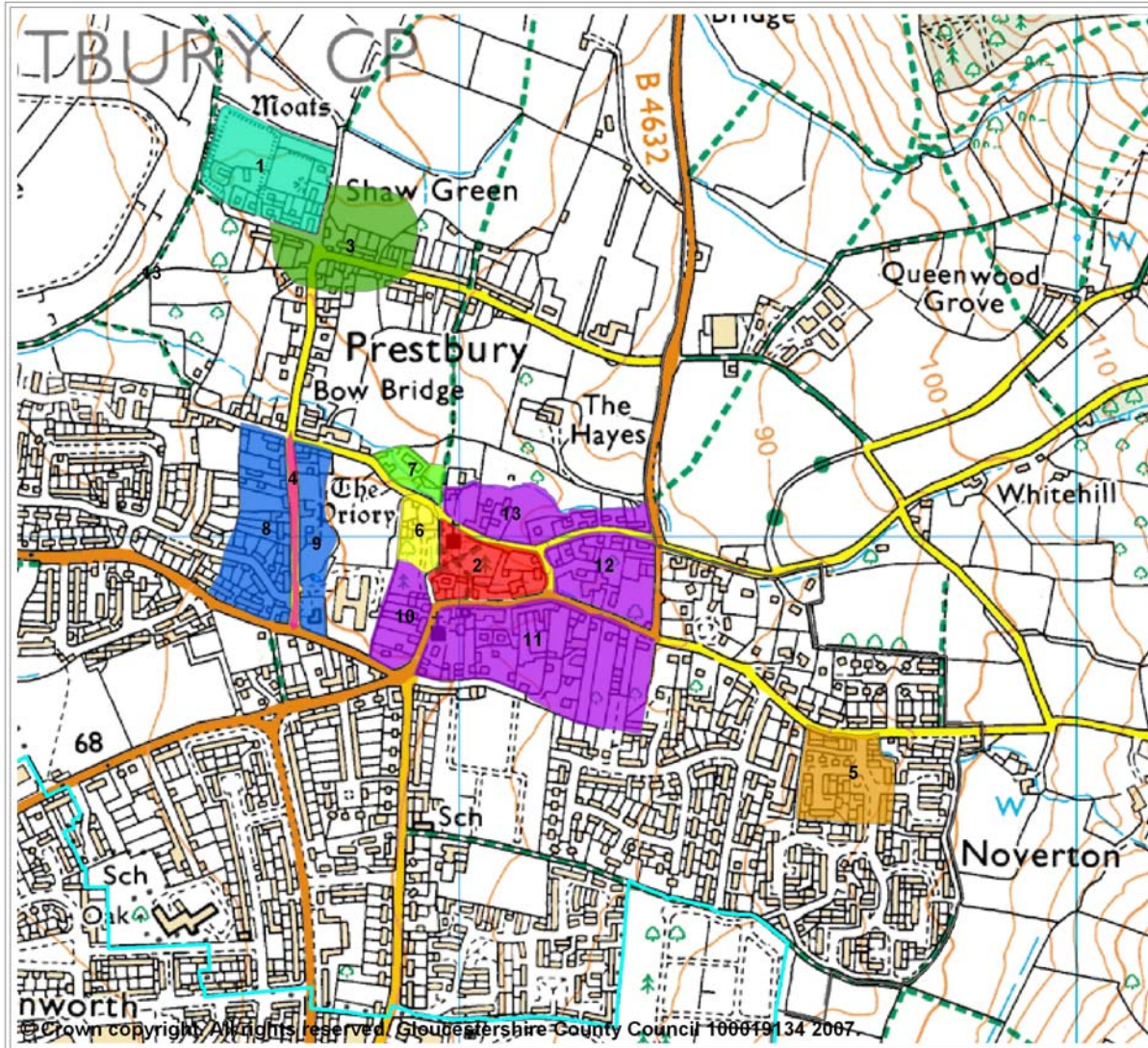
MAP 12:
Prestbury:
Medieval Plan Components

Legend

Burgages
Church & churchyard
Early settlement
Manor house
Market place
Mill
Noverton moated site
Other medieval settlement
Priory House

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DATE: 04 October 2007
DRAWING NO: Map 12

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MAP 13:
Prestbury:
Post-Medieval Plan Components

Legend

- Church & churchyard
- Churchyard infill
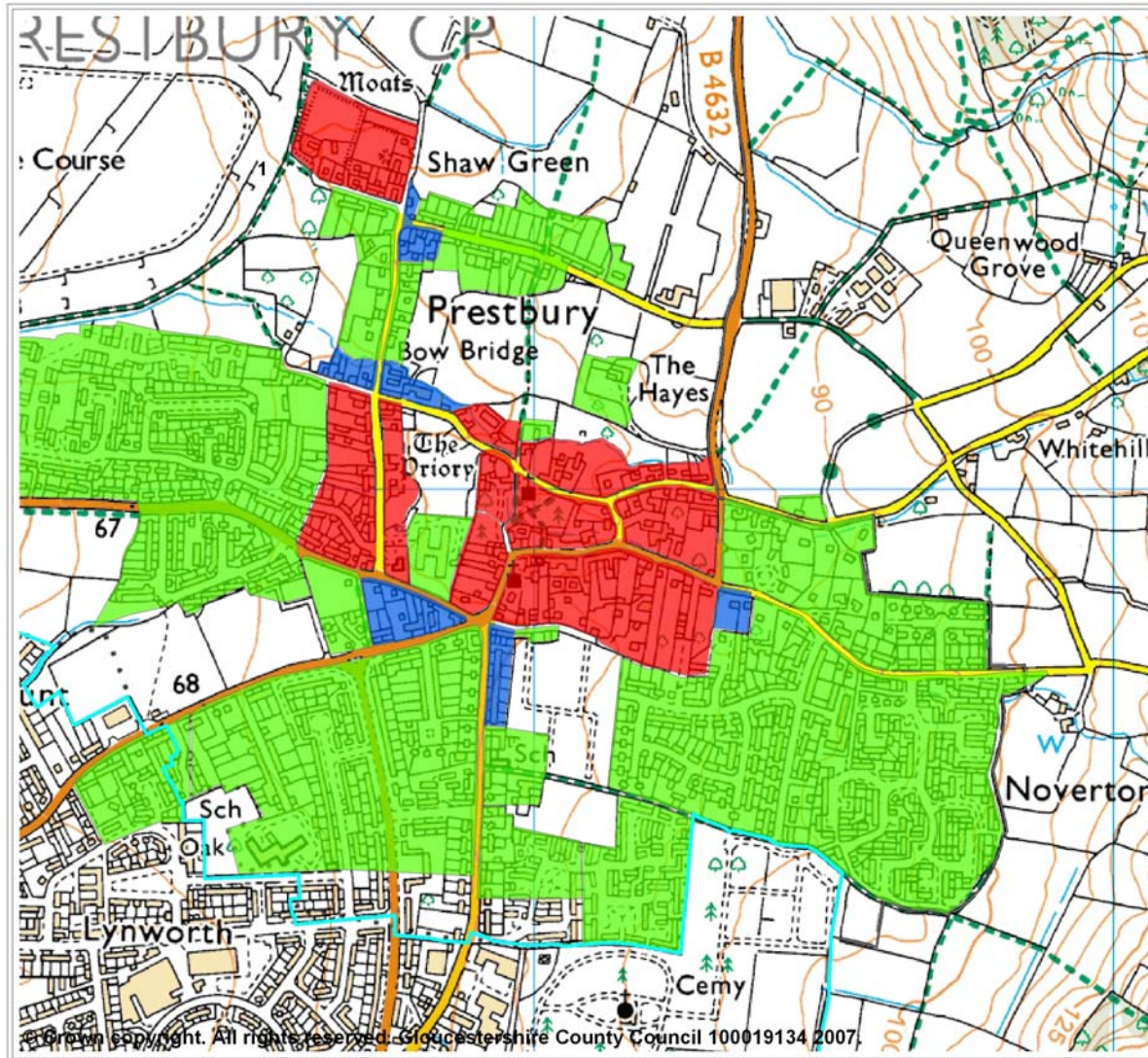- Post-medieval development
- Post-medieval settlement

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Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL
Sites & Monuments Record

MAP 14:
Prestbury:
Development By Period

Legend
Medieval
Post Medieval
Modern

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DATE: 04 October 2007
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