

# Alvington

## Introduction

This brief summary history and archaeology of Alvington has been compiled from information held by the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record (HER), with additional historical information taken directly from the Forest of Dean volume of the Victoria County History (Baggs and Juřica 1996 - referred to as VCH below for sake of brevity). Much further information is available from those sources. The complex sequence of development of the Clanna Estate is also available elsewhere (Lambert 2002).

The HER contains 64 records relating to Alvington, these include known archaeological and historic sites, listed and other buildings, findspots, and sites where archaeological investigations have taken place. There are 12 listed buildings recorded (see appendix), but no Scheduled Monuments.

## Prehistoric and Roman

The earliest occupation evidence for Alvington comes from flint finds recovered during fieldwalking by the Dean Archaeology Group and others in the north-west of the parish. These include Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age material from areas around Home Farm (HER 9750), near Cottage Farm (HER 9751), and to the east of Clanna Wood (HER 17608).

Highly important Roman sites are known nearby, including at Woolaston villa and Lydney Park temple; a major Roman road passed through what is now Alvington parish, and extensive remains are being recorded where new housing developments are being built near the Lydney bypass, so we know that the area was heavily utilised and certainly not peripheral during the Roman period. It is therefore surprising that there is only scant evidence of the period from Alvington itself.

Reclamation of land and the construction of sea banks along the Severn are likely to have started during this period (HER 20461, 21111). A small archaeological excavation to the south of the church in 2008 uncovered fragmentary evidence for structures, cobbled surfaces and ironworking residues of later Roman date (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century, HER 32486).

## The village and parish

The Parish was part of Herefordshire in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century but was joined to Gloucestershire by the early 13<sup>th</sup>, at which time it was also under the jurisdiction of the Forest of Dean. It was removed from the Forest in the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century (VCH).

In about 1145 the bishop of Hereford confirmed the grant of Alvington manor to Llanthony priory. This was the period of the civil wars between Stephen and Matilda and the grant mentions the recent devastation of the land and dispersal of the inhabitants, suggesting Alvington suffered at that time. It is possible that the ordered plan of the village, with a series of long home closes extending north-west and south-east from the main Gloucester-Chepstow road, was created soon after the grant (VCH). The name Duncastle may indicate that earthworks in the village survived from an earlier period (HER 27763).

At about the same time the priory built, or rebuilt, a church a short way south-east of the street. Alvington Church was recorded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as being dedicated to St Mary but by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century it had changed to its current dedication to St. Andrew. The current building is mostly 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century in date, with Norman elements, it was heavily restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (VCH).

Llanthony Priory's manor house at Alvington was recorded from the late 14th century, when between 1377 and 1401 repairs or alterations to a principal chamber, a lesser chamber, and outbuildings were made. Sir Robert Woodruff is thought to have built a new house at Alvington Court around 1600 (VCH), some of which is extant though much modified (HER 5145 and 33897). Elements of the earlier buildings were revealed at Alvington Court during an archaeological watching brief in 2009 (HER 33467).

Llanthony Priory attempted to establish markets and feast day fairs in the village in the 1260s and again in the 1390s but these presumably never became firmly established and had almost certainly lapsed by 1539 (VCH). The village certainly never developed into a market town.

The lower lying half of the parish contained the village, open fields and meadow land, whilst the upper (north-western) half of the parish, was woodland and common waste for much of the medieval period. The woodland provided the bulk of income from Alvington for both Llanthony Priory and the subsequent owners after the dissolution (VCH). Much of the woodland was recorded as being used for oak coppicing to produce charcoal in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and it is likely that this reflects usage for some considerable time before that (VCH). There are numerous probable charcoal platforms, just into Aylburton parish, in and around Hollywell Wood (HER 33246) and Pool Farm (HER 26154).

The higher land began to be enclosed in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century including, in 1606, the creation of a deer park surrounded by palings, to the north and east of modern Park Farm (HER 21922). The deer park had gone out of use and the land let to tenant farmers by at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (VCH).

## Communications

The Gloucester-Chepstow road, the main thoroughfare through the parish was, in origin, the Roman road from Newnham to Caerwent (HER 6212). 'Traces of Roman paving' is marked on early OS plans at the west end of the village but the source of this information is unknown. The route continues as the road from Gloucester to Chepstow to the current day. It is thought to still be on its original line through Alvington village but it probably ran to the north of the modern road to Bookend in Woolaston parish to the west. To the east it entered the parish across Woodward's Brook by Sandford bridge, which was recorded in 1322 and for the repair of which an Alvington man left money in 1490 (VCH). It formed part of the Chepstow turnpike from 1758 (HER 5907). In the early 1960s Sandford bridge was bypassed by a new stretch of road built to the south-east (VCH).

The broad gauge South Wales Railway opened through the parish in 1851, being converted to standard gauge in 1872 (HER 11185).

Mickla bridge, located on the lower Cone Brook, is a rare double clapper bridge, unfortunately of unknown date. It is thought most likely to be of 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century date (Historic England listing

1396378) but it may be earlier. It was first recorded by name in 1681, and first mapped in 1830 (HER 37639), the bridge was most recently restored in 2012 (HER 38161).

## Industry

There was a mill on Alvington manor in 1086 and in the early 13th century and 1318 Llanthony priory had a fulling mill there, somewhere near the village. Iron was worked at Alvington in 1086 when the tenants of the manor owed a render of 20 blooms of iron. Lands called Cinderhill, by Small brook on the south-west boundary (HER 21921), and Cindermead, by the lower Cone brook on the south boundary (HER 21918), recall those activities, but the iron industry may have deserted Alvington by the 13th century when no inhabitants figured in lists of forge owners of the Forest area (VCH).

Rowley Mill (HER 5630), on Cone Brook, by Spout Lane, was recorded on the manor estate in 1413 and comprised two grist mills under one roof in 1539 (VCH). A forge at the site belonged to the manor estate in the 18th century and until 1805. This may have been a forge first recorded in 1646. In 1809 the paper maker Thomas Morris bought the lease but by 1879 it was used as a board mill, continuing until its closure soon after 1927 (VCH).

A fulling mill was recorded at Barnage Grove 1548, probably on the same site as the later Barnage Forge (HER 5631) which belonged to the manor estate c. 1695, when it was already described as decayed (VCH). It operated through the 18<sup>th</sup> century but probably not far into the 19<sup>th</sup>. There are now no visible signs at this site other than a former pond.

Lower Cone Mill (now Colne Mill, HER 12584), downstream of the Chepstow road, was supplied by a leat from a pond just above the road, which survives as a partial earthwork (HER 5820). It was apparently always worked as a corn mill. It was probably the mill with a tan house recorded c. 1645 and it continued in use as a corn mill until 1920 or later (VCH). The 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century mill owner's house survives (HER 12584).

Another mill recorded in 1548 was possibly on the site of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Clanna forge, converted into a grist mill in 1818. Before 1879 the mill was rebuilt to manufacture paper board. Called Clannaweir Mill, it continued in use until at least 1887 (VCH, HER 6314, 21331).

Evidence of medieval and later activity, including iron working, was recovered from a proposed development site off Clanna Road in the village during trial trenching in 2016. Further investigation may happen at this site in due course (HER 48672).

Undated but probably post-medieval quarries are recorded in the parish at Home Wood (HER 9589), near Colne Mill (HER 21923), and near Duncastle Farm (HER 21924). There are also numbers of small extractive pits, suggestive of early extraction, over the parish border near Aylburton Lodge (HER 33251).

## Clanna

The estate and landscape at Clanna underwent a complex sequence of development, detailed for the Forestry Commission by Lambert (2002, HER 22040). The following is a short summary.

Clanna, established by the late 16th century, was probably the only early dwelling apart from buildings at forge sites on Cone brook. Before inclosure in 1814 two small cottages were built on encroachments from the common, one near the Hewelsfield boundary north of the later Clanna woods and another, which was enlarged as the farmhouse of Cottage farm after the inclosure, north of Woodward's brook. After the inclosure three new farmsteads were established. Barnage Farm, under the ridge at the north-west, was built shortly before 1828. Glebe Farm, on a high part of the former common at the north end of the parish, and Park Farm, at the south end of the former park, were probably both built before 1830 (VCH).

The Clanna Woods estate combined industrial use and ornamentation. Although there was a park here since the late 16th century, the ornamentation of Cone Brook and the woodlands really began in the early 19th century. The lake and some landscaping was carried out between 1813 and 1830. Between 1884 and 1919, the woods were further ornamented with extensive planting, additional water features, a new walled garden and an elaborate Old English garden within the earlier walled garden. Later in the 19th century further estate buildings were added around Clanna, but the mansion itself was demolished in the early 1950s. The estate was acquired by the Forestry Commission in 1956 and a programme of felling and planting was instigated (VCH, Lambert 2002).

Features recorded on the HER include the mansion (21920), walled gardens and glasshouses (HER 26158), an icehouse (HER 9590), embanked ponds (HER 9920), and other buildings shown on early OS maps (HER 9592).

## References

Baggs A P and Juřica A R J, 'Alvington', in *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 5, Bledisloe Hundred, St. Briavels Hundred, the Forest of Dean*, ed. C R J Currie and N M Herbert (London, 1996), pp. 5-14. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol5/pp5-14> [accessed 9 October 2018].

Lambert D, 2002, Clanna Woods: outline history of the development of the designed landscape, assessment and summary options appraisal. Typescript report for Forestry Commission.

## Appendix – Listed buildings in Alvington recorded on the Gloucestershire HER

HER No.	Area Description
8297	St. Andrews Church. 13th - 14th century with Norman features and remains of churchyard cross (LBII)
12582	Early 19th century gate piers and boundary walls, Severn Lodge, Church Lane (LBII)
12583	Early 19th century Globe Inn, Clanna Lane (LBII)
12584	Late 18th or early 19th century Colne Mill House, Colne Brook Lane (LBII)
12585	17th and 18th century Duncastle Farmhouse (LBII)
12586	The Old Parsonage, dating from 1889 (LBII)
12587	Early 19th century Hill House and Ravley House, Smallbrook, (LBII)
12588	Nos 1 & 2 Tudor Cottages, possibly 16th century, Swan Hill (LBII)
21215	Early 19th century Severn Lodge, Church Lane (LBII)
33897	Alvington Court, Alvington
35169	Post medieval monument to William Lewis in the churchyard of St Andrew
37639	Double clapper bridge of 17th or 18th century date known as Mickla Bridge (LBII)