

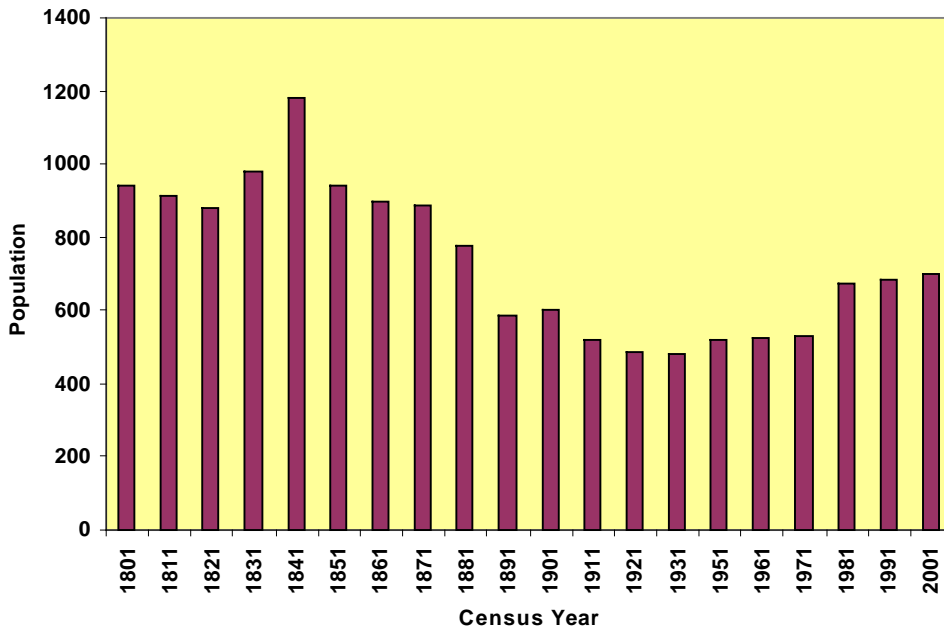
**Christian Malford in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

**Population**

The population Christian Malford has fluctuated throughout the centuries for varying reasons. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century the wool industry was at its height and the population peaked at 1179; in the 2001 Census it was 701. Upper Town was the site of ‘The City’, that once had many weaver’s cottages; the area is now pastureland.

Christian Malford was thriving in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, various setbacks such as the closure of a mill caused by a decline of the wool trade, the mechanisation of agriculture and the loss of numerous cottages, that housed the weavers and farm labourers, struck the village hard and led to a steady fall in the population. The population continued to fall because of the reduction of labour required to-service the large houses and the tendency for families to be much smaller.

Kelly’s Directory of 1939 listed ten private households, and thirty-two commercial residents, including farms. In 1981 there were 213 private households.



**Development.**

The old look of the village has changed rapidly. Thatched roofs disappeared a number of years ago, new properties have in-filled the gaps between existing buildings, and many of the old cottages have either been completely rebuilt or undergone substantial renovation.



**Christian Malford – Circa 1957**  
© Ordnance Survey

The council built houses in Orchard Leaze before the second World War and in Coronation Close in 1953.

The village began to reverse its population decline in the 1970's with the development of a private housing estate, Lime Trees. This development coupled with the opening of the M4 in October 1971 attracted many professional people to the village because of its ideal location for commuting to Bath, Bristol, Swindon and London.

There were two further small housing developments near the Post Office, in the 1980s that brought new people into the village.

Housing prices in the village have risen sharply since the 1970's (£3,000 to approx £300,000 today); this has meant that young people are being forced away.

### **Environment**

Agriculture was and still is the most common form of land use in Christian Malford.

Nothing has changed the landscape of the village so quickly as the death of the elm trees. In the 1970's Dutch elm disease ravaged them and none survived. The area now looks flat and uninteresting; it will be a lifetime, if ever, before a return to that former splendour. The oak trees also suffered from the drought of 1976 when the River Avon dried up. Another tree that has disappeared quickly is the lime. There was avenue of lime trees that stretched from the Comedy to the Church; a few remain but many became unsafe and were felled with the elms. The loss of trees encouraged the removal of miles of hedges in order to make larger fields, which are more conducive to modern intensive farming.

Large quantities of gravel were removed in antiquity as well as just before and after the second World War. The gravel pits were used for a few years by a ready mixer concrete firm but they had to import the gravel. The gravel pits site may be a future site for development.

### **Sanitation and Services**

Mains water and electricity were installed in the late 1930's; but most people used wells with hand pumps and oil lamps for many years afterwards. Mains sewerage was installed around 1965 but many outlying houses and farms still use septic tanks.

### **World War II**

RAF Lyneham was built in 1937 on the site of a moated manor house. During the war a German warplane flew by the Church and dropped its bombs narrowly missing the houses in Station Road.



### **Transport**

In 1960, the bridge was widened and the bump straightened to cater for the increase of traffic along the A420.

The fall of Dr Beeching's axe on the railways in the 1960's meant the closure of Malmesbury branch line and of Christian Malford Halt in 1965.

### **Public Houses/Inns**

**The Rising Sun.** The Rising Sun public house was once the village smithy. It used to sell railway tickets over the bar.

**The Mermaid Inn.** The original Mermaid Inn was built as a farmhouse by the Meux estate incorporating part of a much older building (circa 1400 AD). The licence was transferred from the first thatched Inn around 1870 and was run by the Newman family for over forty years. The old Mermaid Inn was destroyed by fire in 1903. An extension was built to the public bar in 1954. In January 1980, fire destroyed the stables at the new Mermaid Inn. This resulted in the construction of an extension to the lounge bar.