

of the parish formed part of the extensive Banbury manor of the Bishop of Lincoln, and part of Sibford Gower manor came into the hands of Oseney Abbey at Oxford c1235, and was held by the abbey until the Dissolution in 1539.

By Letters Patent of 28 August 1270 (the fiftieth year of the reign of Henry III) issued at a royal court at Marlborough, John Soudan, canon of Lincoln, was granted 'simple protection, without clause, for three years'. Is it stretching the imagination too far to suggest that Canon Soden may have been brought up on the bishop's manor at Swalcliffe and that he was drawn to the latter's attention as a likely young man to be education for the priesthood?

Though once again not providing direct evidence of the Sodens' residence at Swalcliffe, the Warwickshire Lay Subsidy Roll of 1332 shows John Soten of Radway being assessed at one shilling on his moveable goods. Radway and Swalcliffe are no more than half a day's journey apart, so John may well have come from the family at Swalcliffe.

Here it would help to understand some of the conditions in which our ancestors lived if we could give some indication of the population at this time and the conditions under which they held their land. Attempts have been made to estimate England's population, but they show wide discrepancies. All that can be said is that in the fourteenth century it seriously declined,