EASTBURY
A BERKSHIRE VILLAGE

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Eastbury Millennium Association

Lambourn Valley Press

Eastbury: A Berkshire Village

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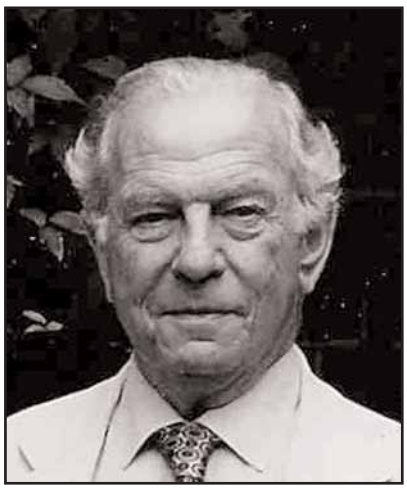
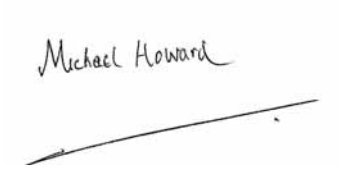


by Professor Sir Michael Howard
Emeritus Professor of Modern History,
Oxford University

The history of Eastbury is the history of England in miniature.

There has been a settlement here for about a thousand years. For eight hundred of them it was a grim, isolated, self-sufficient hamlet lost in bleak downland, owned by distant lords or prelates who were barely aware that it existed. Its inhabitants would have been more conscious of the hardship of their lives than the beauty of their surroundings. Then in the eighteenth century came the enclosures, the growth of local landowners and of local wealth. In the nineteenth century came the railways and connection with the national economy, although until the end of the century communication with the stations at Newbury and Hungerford was still restricted to foot or carrier over deeply rutted or muddy lanes. Then in the twentieth century Eastbury's isolation came to an end. The mechanisation of agriculture drained the village of agricultural labour. The growth of local light industry provided alternative employment; and ultimately the building of the M4 made Eastbury a feasible second home for Londoners and a much sought-after one for retired senior citizens.

Throughout these changes, Eastbury has remained a compact village surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside in England. Although it has lost its isolation, it is still a vibrant and lively community; not just a dormitory for exurbanites or a sunset home for the elderly. Just how vibrant is shown by the time and trouble the dedicated band of contributors have shown in compiling this volume. History shows us who we are, and how we got here. Thanks to them, now we know.



1 Introduction

This book is the result of the researches of a group of people from Eastbury—a small village of about 300 inhabitants bordering the River Lambourn, about 1 mile south-east of Lambourn village, in the north-western corner of Berkshire. It lies among the quiet rural scenery of the Lambourn Valley and the picturesque houses of the village fit well with the character of their surroundings. This book aims to give a taste of life in the village today and through its history.

For most of its existence Eastbury has been a small, isolated, agricultural community where, for the majority, life was a hand-to-mouth struggle to provide food and shelter for their families. As you pass through the village today, with its smart houses and neat gardens, it is difficult to believe that as recently as the 1930s there were still some children running through the streets bare-foot because their parents had no money for shoes. But the sense of remoteness remains, with quiet roads and a community which still relies on its own resources to a significant extent, though most goods and amenities now come from further afield.

The project to produce this book began, as so many similar projects did, with the intention of producing something to mark the Millennium. Many local people devoted time and effort to raising the necessary funds and organising celebratory events. Gathering material for this book began at the same time, but proceeded relatively slowly. In 2002, it was decided to make renewed efforts to achieve the original purpose, if a little late. With the enthusiastic assistance of a host of other contributors, a sub-committee of the Eastbury Millennium Association managed to push the work forward to produce the current volume within the space of just over twelve months.

So much material has been collected about the village and its history that only a small part can be presented in this book. However, all the material is being collated and referenced to form a village archive which it is hoped will prove of value to

Aerial view of the village 2000

generations to come.

The book begins by sketching out the historic events that have served to shape the village. It then presents a description of the village as it is today (2003), in the form of a walking tour. It goes on to bring aspects of life over the last 100 years or so into focus, and finally gives a little more of the flavour of the village through descriptions of a selection of different homes and some of the characters who have lived here.

We hope that you will enjoy this brief encounter with Eastbury and that you can share in the affection felt for this special piece of rural Berkshire by all those who have contributed to the project.

Children on Back Street (Pound Meadow) 1908

2 The Making of Eastbury

Iron Age brooch found in Eastbury

Eastbury has yet to feature as home to any major events that have served to shape the history of England—indeed it is hard to find reference to it except as an adjunct to Lambourn. But in its own quiet way Eastbury's history presents a revealing portrait of an English rural community from pre-Tudor times until the latter half of the 20th century, when changing work patterns and an improved transport network opened it up to wider influences and an influx of people who could not be regarded as 'local'.

The origins of the village are somewhat obscure. The name 'Eastbury' (or, variously, Estberi, Estbury, Esbery, Isbury) probably comes from the Anglo Saxon meaning a 'burgh or settlement to the east of Lambourn'.[1] The area appears to have been settled from pre-Roman times—a metal iron-age brooch was found in a field just north of the village. Many Roman coins have also been unearthed as well as Saxon artefacts.

A reference to the 'tithing of Eastbury' is found in a charter of King Canute, dating from around 1033, which relates to the rights for tithe etc of the minster and its priest at Lambourn[2] (believed to be one of the earliest documents relating to tithe). This requires 'each boor of Eastbury pay one sester of corn for church-shot' and 'from Eastbury two acres for tithing and one church-shot'.

There is no explicit reference to Eastbury in the Domesday Book, when the area would have been included in Lambourn Hundred. However a clear reference to 'Estberi' appears in 1164, when, for some reason, it was taken into the king's hands from its owner Ralph de Lanvalei, though it was restored to him in 1174. By the end of the 14th century Eastbury appears to have been quite a sizeable settlement. The taxable population of the village in 1381 was 101 souls, more than half the number for Lambourn village (180) and almost as many as Hungerford (123).[3] It probably means that the total population of the village at this time was around 150-200, but it is difficult to be precise because of

Eastbury at the time of the Enclosure Act 1776

widespread evasion of the poll tax in 1381.

John de Estbury acquired the manor estate and associated pockets of land between 1365 and 1370 (and also acquired his name!). He died in 1375 and his heir, confusingly referred to as John de Estbury senior, died in 1406 and referred to a 'chapel of St James' at Eastbury in his will. He bequeathed to 'the priest at Eastbury' the princely sum of 12d. The upkeep of the chapel was the subject of an altercation between the people of Eastbury and the vicar of Lambourn in 1544, when they argued that it should be maintained at his cost, while he denied all responsibility stating that the occasional provision of a curate was simply done as 'a favour'. The vicar's ire seems to have been aroused by the villagers having paid him a tithe calf 'full of lyese and by the estimation of his nebors skantly worth 2d'.[4] Soon after this the chapel fell victim to theft when in 1558 Lady Anne Parry and others stripped the roof of most of its lead 'by what right or title we do not know'.[5] It appears to have fallen into disrepair at the end of the 17th or early 18th century. There is a reference to the 'ruined chapel of St James' in 1786. Its location is believed to have been in the area now developed as Downs Close.

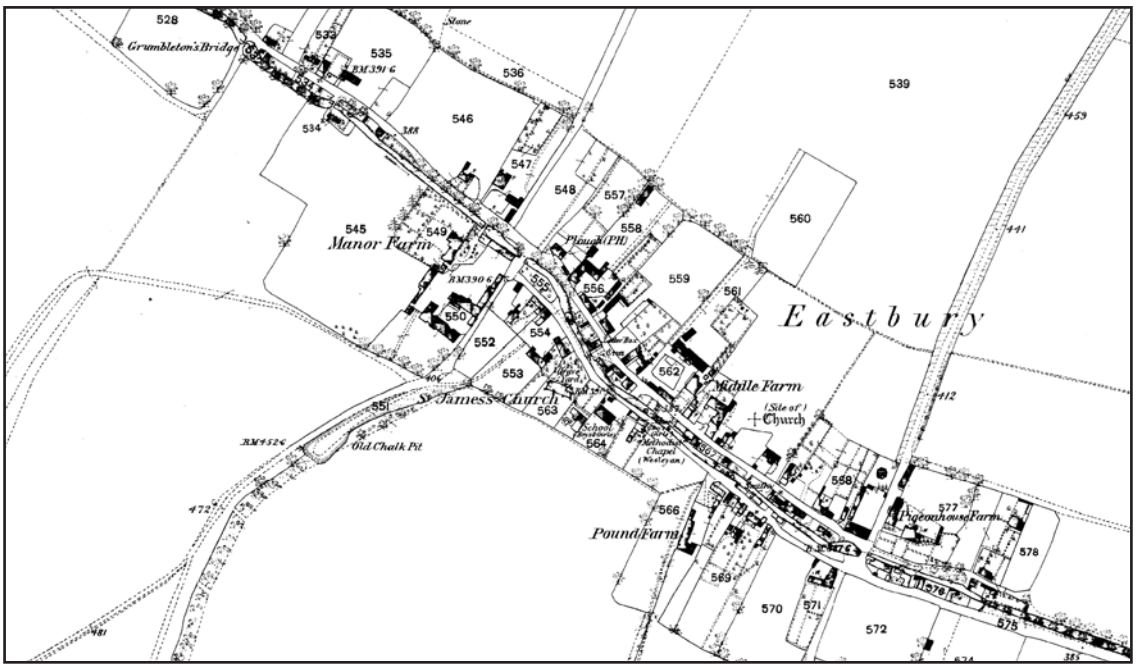
Eastbury from the Tithe Map 1846/48

A new church of St James, designed by the architect G E Street, was consecrated in 1853. It is built of flint in 13th century style and is described further in section 4.4.

St Antolin's Cross

Eastbury has an historic cross in the centre of the village—St Antolin's cross. The date 1562 appears on one side, though English Heritage show the base as dating from the 15th century.[6] The shaft and cross have been replaced over the years, with the most recent work on the shaft dating from the 1970s. In the 16th century it was stated that 'on Wednesday in the procession week the procession of Esbery goes to Gombleton Cross and meets the Lamborne procession and then both come to Esbery chapel'.[7] From at least the 16th century to the 19th the cross was an important site for preachers and others to spread their messages to the inhabitants of the village.

Life in the village had changed only slowly up to the start of the 19th century, with most people working on the land and very much dependent for their homes and their livelihoods on the local landowners. The pattern of farming had developed gradually, with



perhaps the most significant change coming in 1776 with the Enclosure Act, which redistributed the piecemeal holdings and most of the common land to the major landowners. But as the village entered the 19th century the pace of change began to increase.

At the beginning of the 19th century the population of Eastbury stood at around 330, with those people living in about 70 dwellings. The population rose slightly during the mid 19th century and then declined, reaching 254 in 1901, though the number of dwellings was virtually the same as 100 years earlier.

The start of the decline in the dominance of agriculture can be detected from the Census figures for the late 1800s. From 1800 to the end of the 1870s about 70% of the working population of the village was employed in agriculture. But then the proportion began to drop, reducing to just over 50% by 1901. This was followed by a much sharper fall during the 20th century. By 2001 the proportion of residents employed in agriculture was under 1%.

1st Edition
Ordnance Survey Map 1878

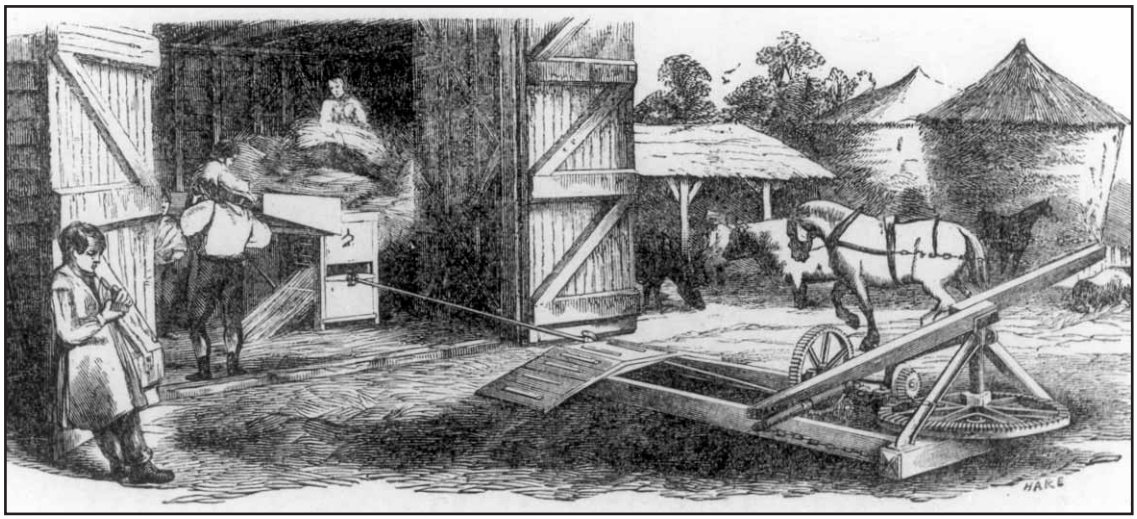
The decline in agricultural employment was driven by increased

Working the land

mechanisation. Alarm at the potential loss of jobs through the increase in the 'infernal machines' occurred early in the 19th century. Low wages and a succession of poor harvests in the late 1820s had led to increased hardship and poverty. The arrival of the threshing machine was viewed as the last straw by the down-trodden agricultural workers, potentially threatening further their ability to raise income from their labours. This provoked unrest across several counties of southern England during November 1830, and Eastbury witnessed riots by 'machine breakers' on the 23rd of that month. The first riots in Berkshire had occurred about a week earlier, with mobs gathering and visiting farms, demanding from their owners payment for the 'work' of destroying their threshing machines.

In the incidents affecting Eastbury, Charles Spanswick was first visited in the early hours of the morning[8] and, despite attempted prevarication, had his machine broken at a cost of two sovereigns and beer for the men. Later, in the early afternoon, a mob gathered and went first to farms in Great Shefford, Fawley and East Garston.[9] They then went to the farm of Jason Withers at Eastbury and told him they had come to break his machine. He said it had already been done, but they demanded two sovereigns all the same, which Mr Withers handed over. Charles Shearman, a yeoman of Eastbury, who had been called up to assist special constable Henry Spanswick, was attacked by the mob in Eastbury,

Barrett, Exall and Andrewes' two-horse power threshing machine, 1840



armed with bludgeons. In the ensuing fracas Shearman was badly struck about the head, but a number of the rioters were taken into custody by the special constables. While there was no further trouble in Eastbury, riots continued in other areas for a further week before petering out. Those arrested were tried at the Abingdon assize in January 1831. Ten were convicted of affray and assault in the Eastbury incident and were sentenced to terms of imprisonment of up to one year with the exception of Thomas Mackrell of Lambourn, perceived to be a ring-leader, who was deported to Australia.

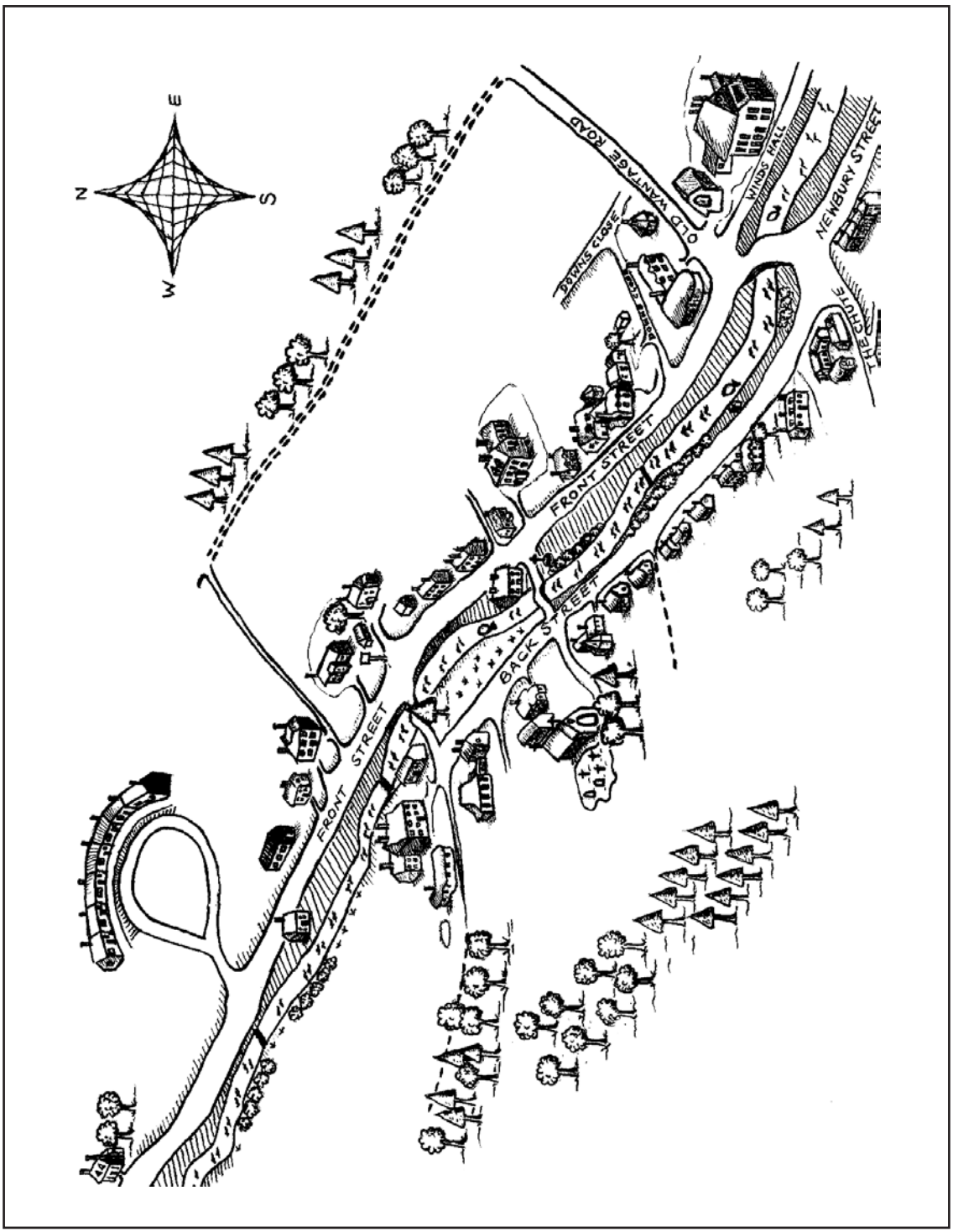
Until the end of the 19th century Eastbury, and indeed Lambourn, were remote and little-known villages in the extreme west of Berkshire. Few strangers visited, and those who did had the prospect of a nine-mile walk or drive along deeply rutted roads from the nearest population centres of any significance. This isolation seriously affected the prosperity of the villages and by the 1890s many buildings were in a state of disrepair or dereliction.[10] But in 1898, with the opening of the Lambourn Valley Railway, the area was connected to a major town (Newbury) by a fast and efficient transport system that brought the prospect of a much brighter future.

Although the Lambourn Valley Railway (later part of the Great Western Railway) was never a commercial success, it did significantly benefit the farmers and race-horse trainers of the area. It closed to passenger traffic in 1960, by which time most residents had deserted it in favour of the car and bus. But just over ten years later the village was affected by another transport development that probably had an even greater impact than the arrival of the railway—the opening of the M4 motorway. With easy access to junction 14, Eastbury suddenly became much more accessible to the wealthy living in London and other major towns served by the M4. Village houses started being purchased by commuters from Reading and Swindon and as second homes by those from further afield. The consequent impact on house prices and the increased competition for properties that come on the market has made it very difficult for local people to find property in the area. This, with the decline in agricultural employment, has

led to a major shift in the structure of the village community.

However Eastbury today does have a thriving local community, even if it would be unrecognisable to the residents of 100 years ago. Village life centres around events organised through the church, the pub and the village hall, and a good proportion of residents join in. Hopefully this enthusiasm and commitment will continue so that these remaining village institutions can survive and thrive through the next 100 years.

Train approaching Bockhampton Crossing 1950


N
E
S
W
FRONT STREET
BACK STREET
FRONT STREET
OLD WANTAGE ROAD
BROWNS CLOSE
WINDS MILL
NEWBURY STREET
THE CHUTE

3 Eastbury Street-by-Street

A walk around the village today is a brief, but rewarding, experience. If you arrive by car, it is possible to park at the Plough (and enjoy refreshments there before or after your exercise), so this is where our tour is assumed to commence.

The Plough dates from the 18th century, and is described in more detail in section 4.8. It provides a real social centre for the village, and its owners are very active in organising family events that are enthusiastically supported by a good cross-section of village residents.

Having parked, if you can postpone the attractions of the Plough to the end of your walk, you have two choices. The full village tour is about a mile in length and is the main tour described here. While this enables you to cover most of the key points of interest, it involves walking on stretches of narrow main road that require considerable care. If you would like to avoid this, or just prefer a shorter walk, then follow the Back Street loop (just over half a mile).

For the full walk, turn right up the main road through the village, keeping to the right hand side of the road, and watching the traffic! (N.B. For the Back Street loop, cross the road and the bridge and follow the description from the point marked below).

The Plough

Montague House

The first house on the right after the Plough is Chestnuts, the former home of an Indian Maharani. It was built in the late 1960s on land that had been part of Spanswick's Farm.

Cross the public footpath (which led to the old Eastbury Halt on the Lambourn Valley Railway, about 100 yards up the track) and you come to Montague House, a fine Georgian house from where you will often hear exotic birdsong emanating from the aviary in the back garden. Stay on the main road and next on the right is Poughley Cottage, one of the oldest houses in the village, believed to date from around the end of the 15th century (described further in section 5.4).

After a field you come to the village hall, a small wooden building that was erected in 1929/30 on land donated by Mr George Baylis of Eastbury Manor. In 2003 it was in a poor state of repair, but the village was trying to extend its use and planning some renovation work, so that it could serve again as a social centre for residents.

Beyond the village hall lies The Hermitage, a development of 9 sheltered houses built in 1960 (the first five) and 1972 (the remainder). It was established for the benefit of retired professional people and preference was given to service personnel and those returning from the colonies, but recently a number of

The Village Hall

village residents have been fortunate to be provided with homes in the close.

Next we come to another old property, Brigstock Cottage, sideways on to the road, which (in part) dates from the 17th century. This used to be two cottages, with a farmyard and large thatched barn next door (on the Hermitage site). Continue on the right hand side passing Gumbletons and Braeside and you come to The Benhams, a Victorian house occupying a fine elevated position. During the 1920s and 30s this was the home of the village doctor, who had his surgery in the building close to the road. Continuing on past Pennyhill House, you come to the last house in the village, Laburnham Cottage, which is believed to date from the mid 17th century and which is featured in section 5.7.

Box Hedge Cottage

Cross the road and return towards the village. After a ford over the river you reach the thatched Box Hedge Cottage dating from the end of the 17th century. Beyond this you pass another historic property which can be seen over a footbridge, on Drake's Island. The date of this one is not known, but it looks as though it dates from the 17th century. In the middle of the last century it was home to the village shoe repairer.

The next property, Riverside Cottage, is believed to date from around 1635. It was thatched until 1935, when sparks from a

Drake's Island

passing steam engine sent the roof up in smoke. A little further on you will see the magnificent tall chimneys of Eastbury Manor. A manor is believed to have existed on this site since the 13th century, while the current building dates (in part) from the 15th century. Further detail on the manor and its history are presented in section 5.1.

Eastbury Manor
rear view

The Eastbury Christmas Tree

Beyond the Manor entrance, with its wooden bridge over the river, we come to the first of a number of converted barns, the Old Iron House. Formerly a barn housing Manor Farm ploughs and other machinery, it was converted in 1989.

Start of Back Street loop

Cross the bridge over the river and you will find yourself facing a public byway (to Ramsbury) that stretches up the hill. Another of the manor's converted barns (First Stone Barn) can be seen a short way up on the right of the bridleway.

Follow the metalled road round to the left just after the bridge. You are now on Back Street (also sometimes known as Church Street), a delightful narrow tarmaced road that follows the river almost to the end of the village.

The first home that you come to on Back Street is Spicers Farm. This consists of a late Victorian house linked to another of the converted barns—this one was converted in 2001. The patch of grass between the road and the river (part of Spicers Farm) is often used for village functions, including the annual duck race. The redwood tree at the western end serves as the village Christmas tree—it looks wonderful decorated with lights, which are switched on in a ceremony in early December.

Beyond Spicers Farm, after the driveway to Barns House, you come to another picture-book cottage, Fairchild Cottage. This is also featured in chapter 5.

Next to Fairchild stands the flint church of St James. At first glance you may suspect that this is very old, but in fact it was built in the early 1850s by a well-known Victorian architect, G E Street. Street was responsible for building or renovating a number of ecclesiastical buildings in this area, but made his name through the design of some important buildings in London, most notably the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand. His simple design for Eastbury church blends well with its surroundings. The church

Fairchild Cottage

remains in regular use though it no longer has its own dedicated clergyman—it now shares its vicar with St Michael and All Angels in Lambourn and All Saints in East Garston.

Enter through the gate to the church and see if the door at the end of the path is unlocked—it usually is. Inside, the church exhibits the same simple but attractive design as the exterior. Its most famous feature is the engraved glass Whistler window, dedicated to the poet Edward Thomas and located on the wall opposite the door. Further details of the window and the church

The Church of St James the Greater

Back Street c1903

are given in section 4.4.

Leaving the church, return to Back Street and turn right. Next on your right is another pair of buildings built by Street (in 1860), the old village school (to the left-hand side) and the master's residence, now known as Barrow Deep. Both this and the old

Back Street 2003

Horse and rider
passing the Primitive Methodist Chapel

school are now private dwellings, but further details of the school as it was are to be found in section 4.5.

Beyond the old school is the newest house on Back Street, Brook Cottage, built in sympathetic style in 1995. Next door is a much older property, East View Cottage, dating from the 17th century, attached to which (and now serving as a garage with bedroom above) is the original part of the Wesleyan Methodist chapel, built in 1814. The chapel was enlarged in 1859/60 and again in 1876, with the two earlier parts becoming the schoolroom. The more recent part of the chapel, with the thatched cottage behind, now form a private residence known as Frisky Place (named after a lady who lived here in the 1960s and '70s).

Beyond Frisky Place are three houses built during the 1960s on what had been a meadow belonging to Pounds Farm. Behind them is the village playing field, which occupies part of the village's Poors Furze trust land. This was granted to the village in 1911 to replace another area on Eastbury Hill, known as Poors Furze, which had been assigned as land for the village to collect furze (firewood) at the time of the Enclosure Act in 1776. This original area was a good distance away and so a 'swap' was done with this smaller (3 acre) plot in the village itself. It was used for allotments before becoming the playing field during the early 1970s, and it is still used for village recreation including football, the bonfire party and other gatherings.

Next along the road is Pound Meadow House, an attractive flint-faced dwelling of 18th century origin. Next door is Forge Cottage, of similar vintage. This house also now incorporates the small former Primitive Methodist chapel, dating from 1839. It ceased to be used as a place of worship in 1938.

Opposite and close up against the river, is the Old Forge. Built in the 18th century, it remained in use as a forge until the mid 1990s. More recently it has been used as artist studios/workshops, and currently serves as a wood-working workshop.

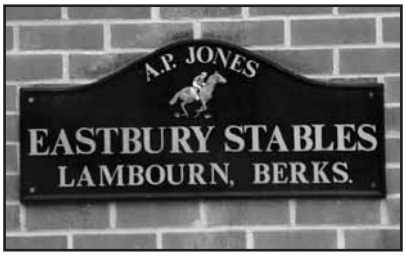
Next, to the right of the road, after a large modern house, is a side-facing dwelling, Garden Cottage, dating from 1744, with the distinctive bulge of a bread oven on the roadside wall. It was originally two cottages. It was thatched until the 1950s when the roof was tiled and the house was effectively converted into a bungalow. It was restored to its former two-storey state in the 1980s.

On the other side of the road is Caroline Cottage, completely demolished and rebuilt in the 1980s and subject to major extension in 2002.

Finally, on the right hand side as we reach the end of Back Street, are the Eastbury Cottage Stables. During 2002 the stables and the cottage on the site were renovated in preparation for a return to use as racing stables. The cottage is particularly attractive, and believed to date from the 15th or 16th century.

At the end of Back Street you have a number of options. For the main walk, cross the main road and river (take care!) and continue from the point marked ‘Continuation of main walk’ below. If you have time, go straight ahead from Back Street into Newbury Street—be careful along here as you are now on the main road.

Pound Meadow House



Eastbury Stables

On the right are the village's original council houses, built in the 1930s. In 1973 they all lost the ends of their back gardens when some new houses were built on the road christened Hayfield Court. Beyond the council houses, after a field, you come to a group of houses built in the early 19th century and which constitute Eastbury Newtown. These include the building that was, until 1969, one of the village pubs—the Queen's Arms. This is the second building of the row that you come to, painted white. There was a pub at this end of the village as far back as the 17th century (when it was called the King's Arms, then King and Queen's Arms), but the current building is clearly of later origin. Beyond this group of houses is the last remaining working farm based in the village, Coldborough Farm. This has lands of over 100 acres in the fields east of Eastbury, but it is best known for its egg production from its huge flock of chickens.

Turn back towards the village and follow the river on the other side of the main road. As you pass the 'Eastbury' sign, you come to some old cottages on your right. Most of these date from the 17th and 18th centuries and have interesting plots that straddle the river. The first of these houses, Bridge Cottage, was from 1954 to 1967 the home of Helen Thomas, the wife of the poet Edward Thomas (see section 6.8)—the window in the church is dedicated to the two of them. Before that it had been home to Diana Ross,

Merryleas

author of 'The Little Red Engine' (which was inspired by the Lambourn Valley Railway). The last of this row of cottages, Merryleas, was a fish and chip shop during the 1930s.

Reaching the bridge over the river, you now have a second optional detour to consider, though this is considerably shorter than the first and without the traffic! Winds Hall runs down the other side of Merryleas and the other cottages, passing Pigeon House on the left, and ending at the entrance to Mount Pleasant, a charming 18th century thatched property in an elevated position. Retrace your steps and now rejoin the main walk.

Mount Pleasant

Pigeon House

Continuation of main walk

At the road junction, proceed up the metalled road with the wall of Pigeon House on the right and the large thatched barn on the left. After a short distance, on the right, you will glimpse the magnificent frontage of Pigeon House. The oldest part dates from

Old Wantage Road
with columbarium on the left

Eastbury from Old Wantage Road

1620 and it is described further in section 5.2. Continuing up the lane, pass two thatched barns on your right and then after another 150 yards you come to the remains of a railway bridge that carried the Lambourn Valley Railway over the road and on towards Eastbury Halt. Walking another 300-400 yards up the road brings you to a point where you can enjoy a panoramic view of Eastbury and the Lambourn Valley.

Pigeon House Cottage

Retrace your steps and, after passing the remains of the railway bridge, note the octagonal dovecot (or 'columbarium') on your right, dating from about 1622 and once home to 999 pigeons (see section 5.2).

Beyond this you will find the converted barns of Stable House. The barn that borders the main road is of greatest interest—a superb example of a large 18th century barn (it has the date 1766 engraved on one of its beams).

The walk now proceeds down the main road—keep to the right and take care! Adjacent to the large barn lies Pigeon House Cottage, a delightful little cottage dating from the 16th (or early

17th) century that only just manages to fit on to its plot. Next door is a much more modern building, Whynot, which was one of the village shops until the late 1960s . The current building was constructed in 1950, after the previous historic thatched building that housed the shop was destroyed by fire.

On the left side of the road are four cottages clinging on to the narrow strip of land between road and river. The Cottage dates from the early 20th century, Rose and York Cottages from the early to mid 18th century and Waterloo Cottage from the late 18th century.

Continuing down the road, after passing a Victorian house on the right (the Laurels) you come to Timbers on the corner of Downs Close. This house was formerly two cottages and appears to be of 17th or 18th century origin. The extension behind (parallel with Front Street) was built in the 1950s, when the thatch of the original part of the house was replaced by tiles.

Cross Downs Close, a development of bungalows dating from the 1960s, and you come to another thatched property, Woodcote. This example dates from the 17th century and was unfortunate to have had its southernmost portion demolished by a tank during World War II (see section 5.8)!

Front Street, 1920s

Beyond Woodcote lies The Feathers (part of two buildings making up The Old Farm). This had a previous existence as one of the village's public houses (the Plume of Feathers) and as a dairy, but it is now a private dwelling. It is believed to date from the 18th century, while the building on the other side of the courtyard (Fiddlers Well) is from the 17th.

Next on the right is Middle Farm, a grand building dating from

The Feathers, 1960s

Middle Farm

the 17th century. It ceased to be a working farm in the middle of the last century, but previously had land that extended for about 200 acres over fields to the north of the village.

After a track on the right you reach the Old Post Office, the original part of which dates from 1714 according to a date on a beam in the house. This was the last of the village shops to survive, closing down only in 1990. Opposite it, on the left of the road, is The Old Bakery, of early 20th century origin, which baked bread until the mid 1950s. As well as a shop it served as the village petrol station from the 1950s to the early 1980s.

Returning to the right of the road, St James House, the former Vicarage, can be seen over a stretch of lawn. This was built in 1878. Before it was constructed it is believed that the vicar lived in the brick and flint building that is next in line on the main road, now called the Old Vicarage. This dates from 1792.

On the left of the road lies Cross House, a fine 18th century building that takes its name from the cross that stands in the small square in front of the house. This cross, the original part

The Old Vicarage

dating from the 15th or 16th century, used to be the scene for gatherings of village folk who came to listen to itinerant preachers or anyone with a message to proclaim.

Next to the Old Vicarage on the right hand side of the road is

The Cross and Post Office

Charleston Place, a former racing stable. At the start of the 20th century this was the village police station—Eastbury must have been an unruly place in those days to justify its own resident constable!

And now you find yourself back at the Plough. There is a warm welcome and a fresh pint waiting for you, so venture inside and stretch your weary legs just as the villagers of Eastbury have done for the last few centuries.

The Police Station, early 1900s

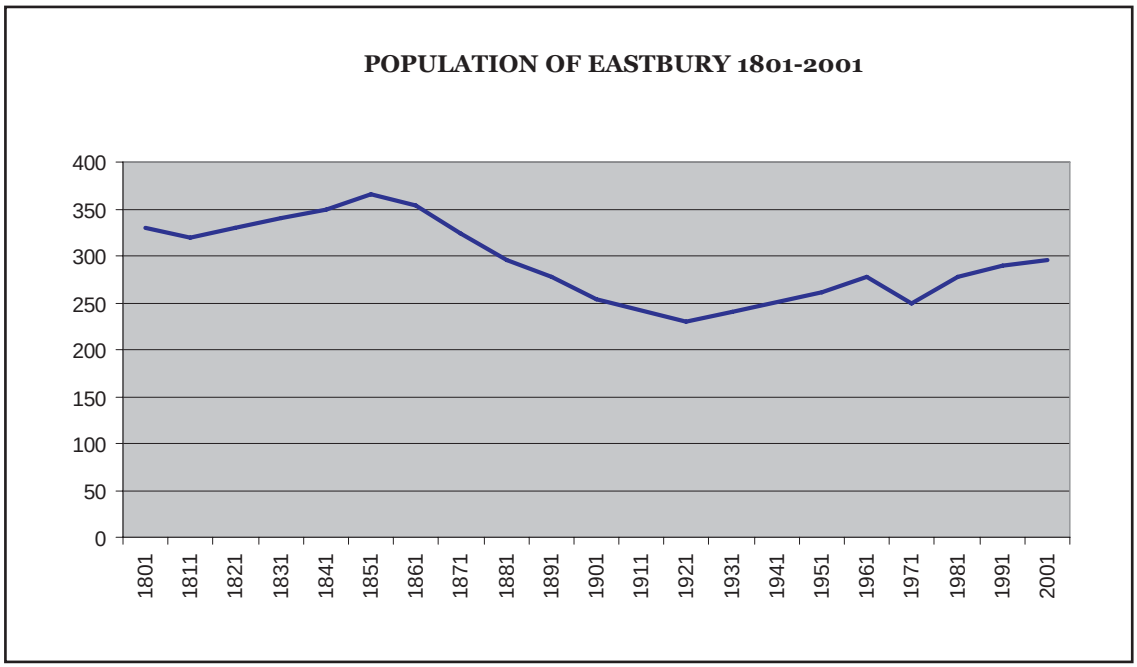
4 Life in Eastbury over the Last Century

This chapter will focus a little more closely on how Eastbury has developed over the last hundred years or so.

4.1 Population

Let's first try to paint a picture of the village at the turn of the last century. One important source of information to help with this is the 1901 Census of population, for which individual records have recently been released following the lifting of the 100 year confidentiality embargo. Appendix 1.2 presents some statistics from the Census, upon which the comments below are based.

The population of the village (strictly, the 'ecclesiastical parish of St James the Greater at Eastbury') is given in the 1901 Census as 254, which compares with a figure of almost 300 today. Prior to 1901 the population had been falling for the previous fifty years, from a peak of 365 in 1851. This 30% decline was the result of a reduction in the number of inhabited dwellings (from 87 to 71)



and a reduction in average household size (from 4.2 to 3.6 people per household). This mirrored a general trend during the second half of the 19th century towards smaller families and a reduction in the number of people required to work the land as farming became more mechanised. An even more dramatic decline can be observed for the neighbouring village of East Garston where the population dropped 42% over the same period. However, the average household size in both these villages was significantly lower than the average for the whole of the Hungerford Rural District (in which they were both located) which was 4.3 in 1901. Household sizes in the towns and larger villages tended to be bigger than in the smaller villages reflecting, in part, a slightly younger age structure in the more urbanised areas.

Despite the lower average household size in Eastbury in 1901 compared with Hungerford Rural District as a whole, its houses, on average, seem to have been larger. Only one third of Eastbury's houses had fewer than five rooms, whereas in the District as a whole the proportion was almost half. Eastbury's stock appears to have improved markedly during the last decade of the 19th century, as in 1891 nearly two-thirds of its houses had had fewer than five rooms.

In the 19th century people were far less likely to move away from their communities when they became adults than is the case today. In 1901 just over half the population of Eastbury had been born within 5 miles of the village, and only one quarter came from more than 15 miles away. However, mobility had been on the increase since around the 1860s. In both the 1851 and 1861 Censuses over three quarters of the population had been born within 5 miles of Eastbury and only 6% further than 15 miles.

During the 20th century the population remained fairly static at around 250 until the last 20 years, when it experienced a small increase, reaching almost 300 in 2001 (see Appendix 1.1). But although the population rose by under 20% over the course of the century, the number of houses increased by 75%. The average household size accordingly reduced from 3.6 in 1901 to just 2.3 in 2001.

4.2 Work

At the start of the 20th century for the majority of villagers 'work' meant toiling on the land. The 1901 Census shows just over half of the working population involved with some form of agricultural activity, though fifty years earlier the proportion had been even higher (about 70%). Those engaged in trades represented about one in six of those employed and those in service one in ten.

The agricultural industry remained the dominant influence on local employment until the 1940s, but by the early 1950s the three major farms that had supported the bulk of employment at the start of the century (Manor Farm, Pigeon House Farm and Middle Farm) had reduced to just one (Manor Farm). This, together with the impact of increased mechanisation, reduced the agricultural workers to a small minority. In place of this locally-based workforce came increasing numbers of people who worked outside the village, plus a number of retired folk. By 2001 the percentage of the population employed in agriculture had dropped to under 1%.

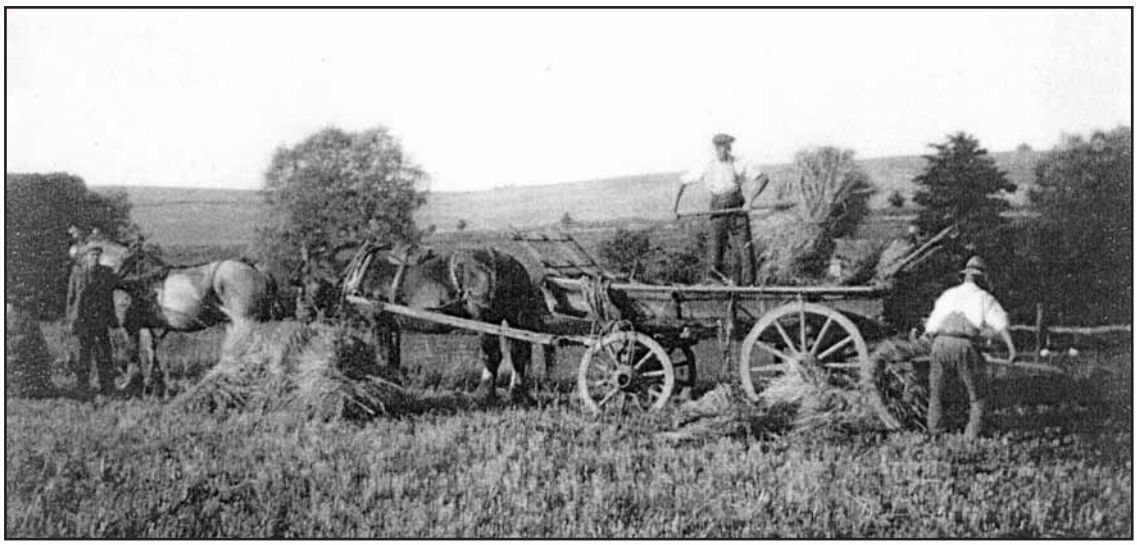
Work on the farms was hard and wages were poor, but for the long-standing workers rent-free accommodation was often

Ted Pontin at Manor Farm, 1930s

provided. The Manor Farm owned several cottages in the village which were let out to their staff depending on their position (for instance Fairchild Cottage was reserved for the head carter), but this meant that when they retired from their position they had to find somewhere else to live. In recent years this has not been enforced, so Ernie Ward for example was able to remain in Clifford House until his death. It may seem strange in today's world of flexible employment that whole families would go to work on the farm with a number working there for life, but these were really the last vestiges of a way of life that had existed since feudal times, when the villeins owed everything to their masters.

We have a few snippets about the lives of farm workers in the early years of the 20th century from the memories of Kenneth Spackman, who was born in Pigeon House Farm in 1913. He recalls Ephraim Dean, his father (Liddy Spackman)'s foreman at the farm: 'If dad wasn't out in the morning to give the orders Eph (as we used to call him) would come to the front door—he wouldn't knock or ring but just rattle the door. He did the garden and brought in any veggies that mother wanted. On a wet day he would saw fire-wood in the wood shed. Sometimes Eph would sit in a wheelbarrow, take off his boots and fix his 'toe rags'. Old farm workers didn't wear socks but wrapped their feet in rags. They used to wear heavy hob nailed boots, heavy corduroy

Returning home down the Chute

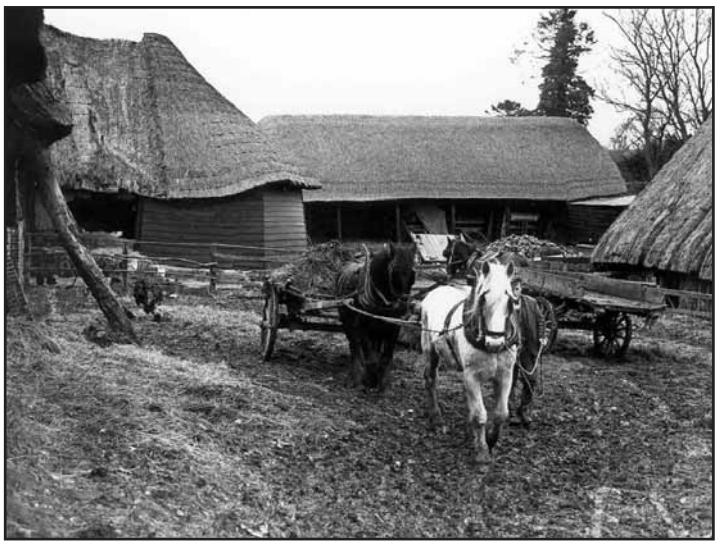


Harvesting, 1930s

trousers which they 'yorked up' by tieing a strap or string around the leg below the knees to keep the weight off the shoulders.'

He also remembers Bill Pizzy, another farm worker of the old school: 'We boys used to work with Bill in the cornfield, shocking up the corn sheaves. He didn't like working with us, we used to play up a bit and rush to get to the end of the row of sheaves, then have a rest and smoke. Bill once said 'You boys do caddle (rush). I've got two paces, this-un and stop'.'

Harvesting with a Berkshire Waggon, early 1900s



His father had three shepherds. He recalls: 'They worked very hard in those days. Sheep were kept in hurdled pens and a new pen was made almost every day while the sheep were grazing on the downs. The pens were carried three at a time on the shepherd's back, on a stake. The pens were put on clover or root crop. At lambing time small pens were made, providing shelter from the cold winds and when a shepherd saw a ewe was near lambing he would put her in one until her lamb was strong enough to feed. Other big jobs for the shepherds were dipping (in our own pool) and shearing (done by hand shears). A shepherd was once asked what they did for a doctor when away on the downs, to which the answer was 'we don't need no doctor, we allas dies a natural death'.'

Horses were relied upon to provide most of the power on the farms at that time. Three-horse (two furrow) or two horse (one furrow) teams would plough the land and three horse teams undertake the hard work of drawing the binder to cut the ripe grain and tie it in sheaves. The horses needed to be changed about every four hours to have a rest and a drink. After the sheaves had dried, the thrashing operation would commence—originally done by hand, but by the early years of the 20th century more commonly machine-assisted. Horses were also used for jobs

The back yard at Manor Farm

On the Downs with a 2 horse-power machine

such as carting feed and water to the sheep pens, transporting hay from the fields and coal and water to the fields to feed the steam-driven threshing machines (and, at Manor Farm, the massive steam engines that were used for ploughing).

While the men-folk of these families worked as carters, shepherds, gamekeepers or general labourers, their wives and daughters often acted as servants or helped with domestic duties. For them life was similarly tough. Servants would often live on the premises and be expected to be up before the family to prepare arrangements for breakfast, then work throughout the day to ensure that everything was clean and in order, that meals were properly prepared and served, and that guests were looked after. As with the men working on the farms, time off was rare (typically just half a day per week), yet this somehow proved sufficient for romances to blossom.

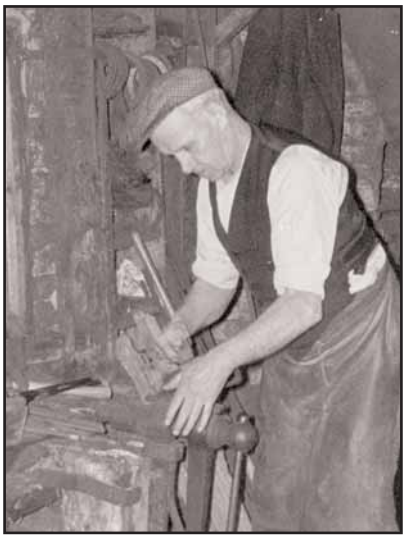
One industry that arrived in the village around the end of the 19th century was horse racing. Already well-established in Lambourn and Upper Lambourn, Walter Grieve opened Eastbury's first stable in the early 1890s, probably at Eastbury Cottage Stables at the eastern end of Back Street. He remained there until 1915, after which there is no record of a trainer in the village until the arrival of Major Charles Stevens at Eastbury House in 1923, who also

Training on the gallops

used the Eastbury Cottage Stables as his yard. It continued to function as a yard through various changes of ownership, to the present day, when it is run by Anthony Jones.

In about 1930 a second yard was opened at Barrett's Farm (now Charleston Place), next to The Plough on Front Street, by Raymond Harry Pulford. It continued to function as such until 2000 when it closed; the barn on the site was sold for conversion into a private dwelling.

Blacksmith at work



Until the 1940s most working people would work either in the village or close by. Aside from the agricultural employment, the village shops and pubs provided employment and a number of trades people were also present. Thatchers, carpenters, coal merchants, builders, shoe makers and blacksmiths (even a cycle agent!) were all represented. The forge on Back Street remained a going concern until the 1990s, though by this time most of the other trades had ceased.

At the start of the twentieth century there were few professional people living in the village—only the Vicar, Postman and three teachers. Just after the First World War Dr Charles Patterson arrived to set up the village's first (and only) surgery, at The Benhams, which operated until the 1930s. Today many more

professional people live in the village, but mainly work farther afield.

As well as their paid employment, most villagers had to work to provide much of their own food. The usual crops of vegetables were grown in their gardens or allotments (the allotments were located on Furze Trust land behind Pound Meadow) and many families had flocks of chickens and their own pig. Children of the time remember their trauma when the pig-killer arrived to despatch an animal that had often come to be regarded as one of the family.

4.3 Leisure

Leisure time was scarce for the villagers of 50-100 years ago. Most would work every day except Sunday, and the Sabbath would be dominated by going to church. During their limited leisure time they used to rely very much on home-grown activities for their entertainment.

In the early years of the last century there was often an 'Entertainment' laid on, frequently in the school house, where the local worthies would entertain with songs, recitations and musical pieces. The school remained a major venue for social functions until 1929/30, when the village acquired its village hall. George Baylis provided the land on which to site the hall and the men of the village did much of the building work. The village hall became the home for a range of social functions, including dances, plays and pantomimes. It also acquired a snooker table and had a very successful billiards team. The billiard club still runs today and has the distinction of being the longest running billiard club in the country.

The first visual entertainment was provided by Albert Quallington, who showed magic lantern slides in his carpenter's shop. To see moving pictures it was necessary to travel to Newbury or elsewhere—this was a popular evening outing in the days of the railway, but after it closed the bus did not run late enough to allow this to continue. The 1950s brought television

Cyril Sherman remembers.....The games we used to play

Cyril Sherman was born in the village in 1930 and spent all his boyhood there. He has some vivid memories of life in the days before the last war, a selection of which are presented in this chapter.

'The children played a variety of games in the roads, fields and on Pound Meadow. Here are some examples of what we got up to:

- Football and cricket: Pound Meadow; pick sides, coats down for goalposts; no bullying, no fighting.
- Fox and Hounds: two foxes run off, large kids riders, small ones hounds, when fox caught throw it to the pack.
- Racehorses: Pound Meadow; with Grand National course including water jump (water from river).
- Four wheel trucks: steerable; drive down both hills into the village, some kids as police to signal at the crossroads.
- Catapults: self-made, used stones from the railway line.
- Pooh-sticks: on the river, bridge to bridge.
- Whips and tops: on Front Street, boys and girls.
- Marbles: boys and girls.
- Hoops and sticks: boys and girls.
- Skipping: mostly girls.
- Hopscotch: mostly girls.
- Rafting: down river.
- Tobogganing: down Haycroft Hill when there was snow.
- Running around the bridges
- Rabbiting when cornfields were being cut, using curved sticks.
- Ratting when thrashing corn ricks, same sticks.
- Jumping from straw ricks or bale stacks.
- Scrumping, apples, pears and plums.
- Climbing tall trees: some could climb the telegraph poles and pluck the wires; one boy could climb the cross and sit astride the top to cheers from others and a reprimand if reported to the vicar.
- Tracking courting couples to see what they got up to on Sundays!'

Outing to the seaside, 1929

and several villagers claim to have been the first to have owned a set. In any event, the pioneers were certain of popularity as friends and acquaintances crowded into their sitting rooms to view the flickering screens.

Before the 1960s, holidays were rare for most Eastbury folk. Some had never travelled further than Newbury, though some lucky ones had managed to go on the railway to places like London or Birmingham for their honeymoon. There is a record of the occasional village outing to the seaside in motor buses during the late 1920s and 1930s, with Bognor and Southsea typical destinations.

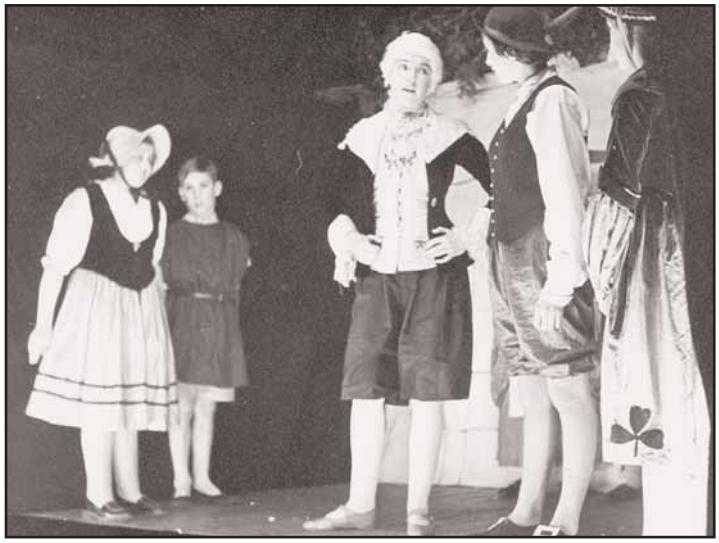
Eastbury has never made much of a mark in the sporting arena, though in addition to the successes of the billiard team, the Queens Arms darts team were pretty mean performers in the 1950s and '60s. The heyday of the football team was the late 1950s—they were champions of Newbury Distict Div II in 1957/58. Two years earlier, they had the distinction of winning and losing the cup on the same day. Having won the cup in the afternoon, the drink flowed freely that evening. The following day,

All dressed up for the grand parade
Silver Jubilee, 1935

to considerable alarm, they discovered the cup had disappeared. It turned up two months later in a water butt in the back garden of one of the players.

The football pitch used to be in a field off the Chute, above Eastbury House, while the changing rooms were the village hall.

The Eastbury football team
early 1950s

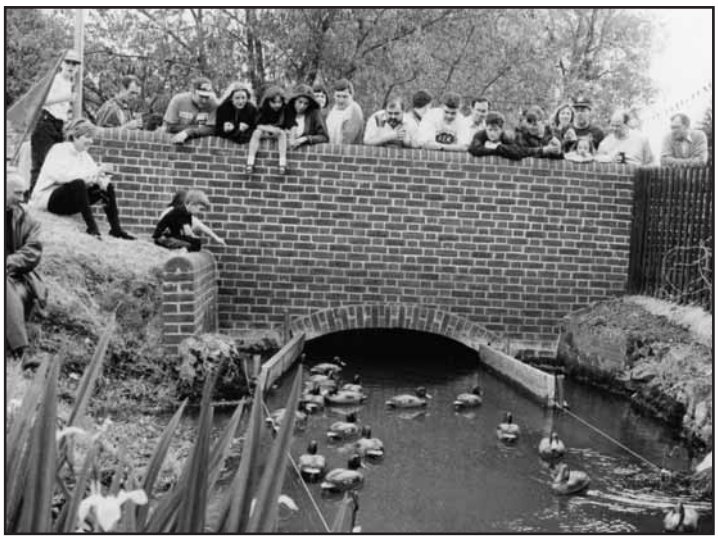


This meant that most of the team were out of breath from the long trek to the pitch before the starting whistle had sounded. In 1973 a group of villagers got together and managed to have the allotments (by then little used) converted into a playing field. The villagers raised funds to have the field levelled and seeded and to provide play equipment and goal-posts. The pitch was home to the Eastbury Wanderers, but the only opposition seemed to be a team from Lambourn. Sadly the football team is no more but the playing field continues to be used as a children's play area and for the annual bonfire night celebrations.

Eastbury has always been keen to mark big national celebrations. For the 1935 Silver Jubilee of King George V, most of the village turned out in fancy dress to celebrate. Events arranged to mark the Queen's Coronation and Silver Jubilee were similarly well supported, though the all-inclusive nature of these events seems to have diminished, as evidenced by the much smaller attendance at the Golden Jubilee events of 2002.

Though this aspect of community entertainment may have declined, many others continue to attract good support. The village hall and church committees provide a variety of concerts, plays and other social events of a high standard that attract wide support. The annual village fete usually attracts a good crowd

Village Pantomime 1956
'Little Red Riding Hood'



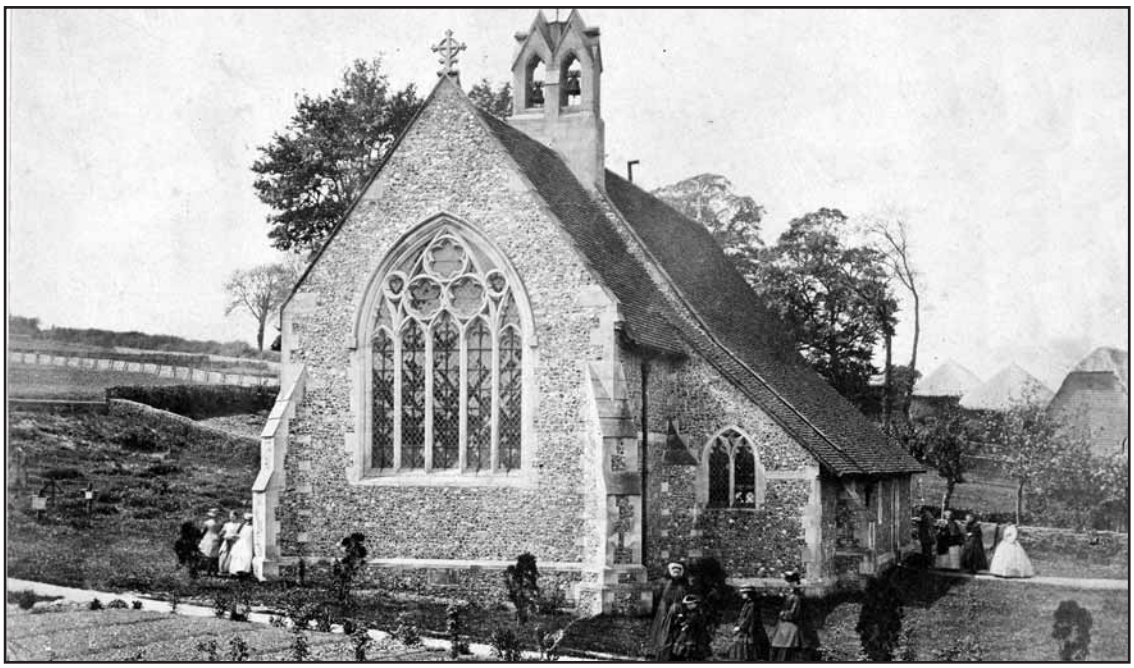
(provided that the sun is shining!), as does the Duck Race, held in late May opposite the Plough. And, since the mid 1990s, the village has taken the opportunity to dress up for the annual Summer Ball, which is always a sell-out, despite needing almost 200 people to cover its costs.

4.4 Religion

The church

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Eastbury had had a Chapel of St James at least from the 14th century, but this fell into disrepair during the 18th century. The current church of St James the Greater, plus the school and master's house, were all commissioned by Robert Milman, vicar of Lambourn, in the mid 19th century. While the £1000 needed to fund the building of the church was raised by public subscription, a large part of the total came from his private fortune. The work was undertaken by the architect George Edmund Street, with the church being consecrated on 9 April 1853, and the other buildings completed at the beginning of the next decade. Well known locally at the time, Street went on to become one of the most respected architects of his generation, and was responsible for several major ecclesiastical projects in London, as well as the Royal Courts of

The Duck Race



Eastbury Church, 1870s/1880s

Justice in the Strand.

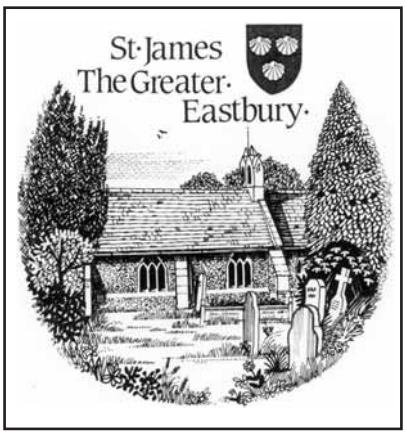
Rev Milman was a regular preacher at the church in its early days and was, by all accounts, a formidable character. Obviously not one to court popularity, he railed against the iniquities of horse racing, but nevertheless 'attended with great care to those employed in the trainers' stables'.[11] He moved to another (grander) parish in 1862 and later became Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, where he died in 1876.

Initially Eastbury remained part of the ecclesiastical parish of Lambourn, but in 1867 it was granted the status of its own ecclesiastical parish (though it remained part of the civil parish of Lambourn).

A new, rather grand, vicarage was built in 1878, and in the 1881 Census Rev George Forbes is shown to be living there with his wife, no children and no fewer than four servants! Life must have been pretty comfortable for him then, but alas his wife Charlotte died two years later—she is buried in the churchyard and has a window dedicated to her in the church.

Church interrior, 1930s

Today's residents don't remember any of the vicars before the Rev Mandell-Jones (1918-43). He was a fairly austere man and kept tight control on the affairs of the parish, but was generous and thoughtful in helping those in need. One appointment within his gift that must have been highly sought after was the position of organ blower, which carried the impressive salary of £1 per year! During his days as incumbent the church was very well attended, and virtually everyone in the village attended either the church or one of the chapels. In his later years he became very high church and there was lots of processing round the church and incense-swinging. After an illness he became quite disabled and confined to a wheel-chair, very reliant on support from his housekeeper/companion, Mrs Bailey. She is remembered with affection by those who were taught by her in the Sunday school and for the 'children's corner' that she ran in the church.



In 1944 Eastbury ceased to have its own dedicated clergyman when Rev Eric Whitworth arrived from Woodlands St Mary and retained responsibility for his previous parish, though he came to live in Eastbury. His responsibilities were extended further in 1958 when he also assumed responsibility for East Garston. As well as demonstrating his versatility by managing three parishes, he was also something of a virtuoso in church, playing the organ

Cyril Sherman remembers…. Children's Corner.

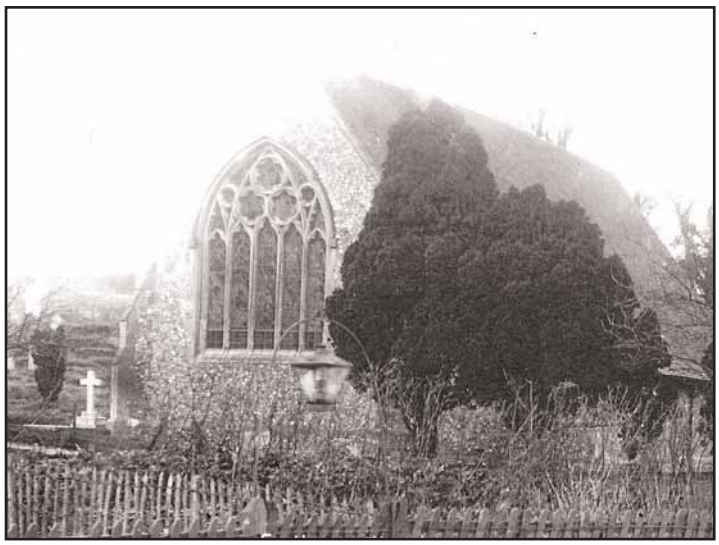
'It was held in the winter time to provide somewhere for children to go after school during the dark, cold nights. It would take place immediately to the right of the church door, by the font, at about 6 o'clock and consist of about 30 minutes of religious instruction. Typically there would be about 10 children. Going to children's corner was eerie because it was lit by candles only and the rest of the church was as black as your hat. Getting there could be eerie too. There was no lighting. There were huge, dark yews along the path to the church. They were old enough to have multi-stemmed trunks and to meet over the path. It was pitch black going up that path. Older boys would climb the yews and dangle string down so that it touched the faces of the children walking up the path to the church. I remember it was very frightening wondering what had touched your face. They also used to use the small hand torches we were sometimes given for Christmas. They would hide behind the multi-stemmed yews, put these torches into their mouths, blow up their cheeks and make moaning noises, sticking their lighted faces out at opportune moments. It certainly made us scream with fear.'

and leading the singing as well as performing all the regular vicar functions. He was well-liked and respected in the village, but this admiration did not enable Eastbury to buck the national trend of falling congregations, with numbers often only in low single figures.

His successor Rev Michael Clarke took over in 1964, and also served East Garston and Woodlands St Mary in addition to Eastbury. He lived in the Vicarage at Eastbury, but is buried at East Garston. On his retirement in 1983 Rev Bill Stewart, vicar of Lambourn, became responsible for the parishes of Lambourn, Eastbury and East Garston (by this time Woodland St Mary had closed). He continued to live in Lambourn and the Vicarage was


in celebration
of the lives of
EDWARD THOMAS
poet and
HELEN his wife

Eastbury Church, 1913



sold as a private residence. Services became less frequent in Eastbury church, as the three (ecclesiastical) parishes ran a coordinated schedule across different venues. Nevertheless, attendance at the fortnightly services in Eastbury has swelled in recent years so that it is now common to have congregations of 40 or more, with the church totally full for the major festivals.

A feature of the church that draws many visitors is the window dedicated to the memory of the poet Edward Thomas and his wife Helen. Helen lived in Eastbury during the last twelve years of her life (see section 6.8), and after her death in 1967, her daughter Myfanwy managed to arrange for Laurence Whistler to undertake the engraving. Her mother had been a huge admirer of his work. Myfanwy also set about the daunting task of raising the necessary funds—in the end over 600 people contributed. At the dedication of the window in 1971, an address and poems were read by Lord David Cecil and Edward Thomas's biographer, Prof George Thomas. The design shows a symbolic landscape, with lines from Thomas's poems floating across the scene.

The church window by Laurence Whistler dedicated to Edward and Helen Thomas

Methodism in Eastbury

Although the church is the only surviving religious meeting place, Eastbury had, for many years, two Methodist Chapels. The

Wesleyan Chapel was built in 1814 and closed in 1966, and the Primitive Chapel was built in 1839 and closed in 1938. Both were on Back Street and now form parts of private residences.

Methodism developed within the Church of England in the 1730s. Methodists continued to attend church services but also met with like-minded people at private houses for discussion, fellowship and prayer. Preachers went to places such as workhouses and prisons or into the open air to reach people who ordinarily would not have received religious instruction. Methodism was ahead of its time in giving free education and medicine to enable people to read the Bible and study for themselves, and with a desire to bring them out of poverty. By the time of John Wesley's death in 1791 and in the following few decades, Methodism was growing fast. At a time when many were starving because of unemployment due to the effects of the Enclosure Acts, population growth and the agrarian and industrial revolutions, Methodism was welcome.

There are stories of a Methodist by the name of Spanswick preaching fervently at the cross in Eastbury around the end of the 18th century. His sway with local people was suggested as a

The Wesleyan Chapel and School Back Street

reason why the church and church school were built in Eastbury. Thomas Bush, a prominent 19th century Lambourn Methodist, wrote[12] that an old preacher called Spanswick from Eastbury introduced Methodism to Lambourn. Certainly Thomas Spanswick is amongst the signatories of those registering meeting houses in Lambourn in 1792 and in Eastbury in 1794.[13] Thomas Spanswick is not a signatory for either of the chapels which were built at Eastbury, but a Charles Spanswick was closely associated with the Wesleyan Chapel from at least the 1830s to the 1860s.[14]

The Wesleyan Chapel was established in 1814 when land, together with a cottage, was bought and registered.[15] Richard Barrett, of Barrett's Farm, was the main signatory. The land for the Primitive Chapel was bought and registered in 1839 with Richard Lewis signing first.[16]

A friend of Rev Milman, reminiscing about when he arrived in Lambourn in 1850, remarked that 'The Dissenters practically had the command of the place'.[17] No doubt this included Eastbury which was then part of Lambourn Parish. At this time both chapels in Eastbury were in full swing. Both are known to have had day schools at some point and regularly had night classes. The Rev Milman's sister describes her brother's work as, 'Eleven years, toiling night and day to reform one of the wildest and most neglected parishes in the diocese of Oxford'.[18] She notes the erection of the church and school at Eastbury and tells how her brother took services in the two churches, gave lectures in outlying cottages and started night schools, presumably in an effort to provide an alternative to the facilities at the chapels.

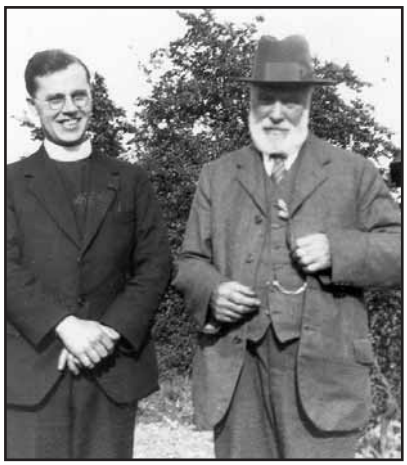
There were many branches of Methodism. Of the two represented in Eastbury, the Wesleyan branch was closer to the Church of England; the Primitive branch tended to be more spontaneous and passionate, attracting working people more than the former. This seems to have been the case in Eastbury in that of the nine signatories on the Primitive Chapel registration, six cannot write their names; out of the eleven signatories on the Wesleyan Chapel registration, seven are yeomen or gentlemen and all can sign their names.

The chapels thrived separately but were helpful to each other when they could be. In 1932 The Deed of Union amalgamated all the Methodist branches. In Eastbury the two chapels carried on with their own, separate congregations for a few more years, but the departure from the village of a leader at the Primitive Chapel probably brought the matter to a head. The Primitive Chapel closed and the two congregations met together at the Wesleyan Chapel.

The Wesleyan Chapel

Richard Barrett was the steward of the Wesleyan Chapel for a number of years and was closely associated with it from its building in 1814 until his death in 1858. The cottage which stood on the land bought for the chapel was renovated and let and the rents used against monies borrowed to cover the building work. The chapel was built adjoining what is now called East View Cottage. Elijah Bew became steward around the time Richard Barrett died. Like Richard, he remained very much involved with the chapel for the rest of his life. He had the chapel extended to twice its length in 1859/60. In 1876, finding insufficient space to accommodate the congregation and day, evening and Sunday schools, a new chapel was built between the original chapel and

The Primitive Chapel



Albert Quallington and one of the Methodist Ministers

the cottage. The old chapel became the schoolroom and the new building the chapel. The schoolroom was equipped for education and the new chapel was graced with new pulpit, rail, pews and harmonium.[19]

It is generally agreed that the woodwork in the Wesleyan Chapel was unusually fine. Elijah Bew had been a carpenter earlier in his life, and it was he who oversaw the building work. It seems likely that Francis Quallington, a carpenter, worked on the building too. He was living in the cottage behind the chapel by 1881, along with his family which included his son Albert. The Quallington family continued its association with the chapel until it closed.

It is unclear who took over the stewardship of the Wesleyan Chapel when Elijah Bew died, but most likely it was Henry Carter, whose obituary in 1922[20] notes that he was a Wesleyan Steward, lay preacher and Sunday school teacher. Albert Quallington was a practising lay preacher for many years, and probably took over after Mr Carter. Albert's daughter, Kate Perris, ran the chapel for its last thirty years, after his death.

The Primitive Chapel

Richard Lewis probably ran the Primitive Chapel at first. Charles Day, who had also signed the registration, was running it in the 1850s and 1860s.[21] In 1905 William Kinchin, William Somerton and John Dean became the chapel committee. Mr Somerton was soon given a note permitting him to take services at the chapel when occasionally required and not long after was thanked for arranging and supporting the renovation and partial reseating of the chapel. In 1906 new trustees had to be found, although amazingly one original signatory of the registration was still alive and willing to continue as a trustee, namely Isaac Earley of East Garston.[22] William Kinchin and William Somerton were amongst those who became trustees. Mr Kinchin ran the chapel until his death in 1907 when Mr Somerton took over.[23] Most likely he continued running the chapel until his death and then his son Albert took over. The chapel closed in 1938 and was sold to Vic Alderton in 1939.

There are many happy memories of the Methodists at Eastbury. Those from Methodist families remember Kate Perris's Sunday school lessons. Even when the Primitive Chapel still held services, there were insufficient children to have its own Sunday school, so the youngsters joined those at the Wesleyan schoolroom. In later years Kate Perris gave Sunday school lessons in the chapel as there were only two pupils. The ingredients had not changed: children's hymns, with Kate pedalling, playing and singing away at the harmonium, Bible stories and prayers. The Sunday School Anniversary services continued to the end—the children had to learn recitations or songs to perform at the chapel services. Children from other Sunday schools came to swell the numbers and to join in the tea and games between services on Sunday.

Percy Bew's cottage loaf rolls are a favourite association with the chapel. He brought these down from his bakery in Woodlands St Mary in a huge wicker baker's basket. On the Monday evening following the Harvest Festival services there would be a brief prayer and hymn and then the fruit and vegetables which had decorated the chapel would be auctioned off. These auctions were attended by Methodist and Church of England folk alike; no one wanted to miss out on one of Percy's rolls. On one occasion some children pooled their money and bought a bunch of carrots. They proceeded to munch these noisily through the rest of the sale, so in succeeding years produce was not handed over until the close. The highlight of these events was the sale of Percy's rolls at the end of the auction. Their fame had spread far and wide and everyone was ready with their penny to buy one, but only one each because they were so popular.

Each Sunday there were two services, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The Hungerford Circuit issued a quarterly plan which listed the preachers for each service in each chapel in the circuit. There were two circuit ministers, and later when congregations had generally declined, one. He took Communion at each chapel in the circuit once each quarter. Circuit lay

preachers took most of the services, often walking or cycling miles each way to the chapel. These lay preachers would be given meals where they preached—Kate Perris provided teas for lay preachers almost every Sunday.

Children found some preachers more interesting than others, but it is good to know that there was a printed notice on the pulpit at Eastbury Chapel reminding preachers not to forget the children listening, and indeed many preachers would insert an amusing or childish anecdote into their sermon. Sermons, like prayers, were not written but spontaneous, from the heart. Services always included many hymns. Children remember enjoying the joyful happiness of Methodist services.

The 19th century saw the blossoming of Methodist chapels and the 20th century saw their decline. A Lambourn lay preacher of the time of the decline said forty chapels in a 20 mile radius of Lambourn closed during his lifetime. The Wesleyan Chapel at Eastbury closed when, owing to ill-health, Mrs Perris was unable to carry on running it in 1966. Numbers had dwindled and there was nobody to take over from her. It was sold in 1967 to Mrs Tanner of East View.

4.5 Education

Before the early 1800s, there were very few schools in England, and no national structure of education. Most of the schools that did exist were established by religious or charitable organisations, principally the church itself, or foundations established by wealthy individuals. Education was primarily focused on scripture and basic literacy. Attendance at school only became compulsory in 1870; from then on the state increasingly took control of the structure of educational provision.

The beginnings of formal education in Eastbury were the legacy of one John Sargent who owned land in the village in the late 18th century. When he died in 1792, he left a piece of land to the south of Back Street (with ‘gardens, orchards and appurtenances’), together with the rental income from two adjacent plots worth £9

and £2 a year, which he put in trust for the creation of a school house. The trustees were to build a school to educate 25 children of the poor inhabitants of the village free of charge, and build a school house for the master, who would have the enjoyment of the garden and orchard. Out of the £11 total income of the trust, the master would receive a £10 annual salary, with the remaining £1 per year being used for repairs and maintenance.

The first school master was appointed by the trustees; thereafter the vicar of Lambourn had the responsibility for appointment. He had to be a 'Protestant layman' and his principal duty was instructing the children in the catechism and reading them the scriptures. Nearly 50 years later, a report of the Commissioners on Charity and Education in 1839[24] showed that these arrangements were still effective. The annual income of £11 was regularly received, and the master's salary duly paid. The two pieces providing rental income were owned by John Fairchild (£9 per year) and Sir Francis Burdett (£2). This latter plot was a small part of the Burdett family's interest in Eastbury, and of his family's involvement in Victorian education.

Eastbury School, 1920s

Inside the schoolroom, 1930s

Most schools in the first half of the 19th century operated on what was called the Monitorial System. Older children, usually in their teens, were chosen as monitors. The teacher taught lessons to the monitors who in turn taught and tested their allotted group of pupils. The head teacher supervised, and imposed discipline when necessary. All pupils were educated together, and did the same (basic) school work.

We know from the census that Thomas Gilman, aged 30, was schoolmaster in Eastbury in 1841. He was succeeded by William Humphries and his wife Martha, who taught during the 1850s; William also served as Parish Clerk. By 1859, the original school building was 'ruinous' according to a submission by the trustees to the Charity Commissioners. A proposal to build a new school was approved on 20 December 1859. This was to be 'under government inspection and in union with the National Society'. The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church had been founded in 1811 by Andrew Bell, an Anglican clergyman, and its schools were known more simply as National Schools. From 1833 parliament granted an annual sum to help the Society build schools.

Eastbury National School was built about 1860 on the site of John Sargent's school[25], along with a new house for the master; much of the cost was met by Robert Milman, vicar of Lambourn, out of his private fortune. A school playground was built on part of the land which had produced £9 income, reducing the yield to £7-10s; by the late 1860s, this plot had passed from the ownership of John Fairchild to the Newbury Brewery Company.

John Sargent's school was not the only focus of education in mid-19th century Eastbury. Both of the village's Methodist chapels organised evening classes for local working men. Among others, Charles Spanswick took classes at the Wesleyan Chapel for over 20 years, and Elijah Bew for over 40 years. The chapels also ran day schools. Elijah noted in 1876 that it was found necessary to build a new chapel 'not having sufficient accommodation for the day and Sunday school'. The old chapel was converted into a school room, and the new chapel (now Frisky Place) was built alongside. A sliding door or shutter connected the two buildings, so that when it was open the children could remain in the school room but take part in services in the chapel. Elijah Bew and a Swindon girl named Miss Susan Ann Wright took classes at that point.

Wild West Eastbury 1954

The Old School

The quality of education in rural schools in the middle of the 19th century was not generally very high. In 1861, a Royal Commission on the Present State of Popular Education in England reported that many elementary subjects were badly taught; that attendance was extremely irregular, many children not attending at all; most boys left school at the age of ten or eleven; and there were insufficient places for all children in the country. In 1870, the Elementary School Act (the 'Forster Act') made school attendance to age 12 compulsory, although this was not universally or consistently enforced.

The Schoolroom, 1950s

The Old School Barn

During the 1880s, pupil numbers at Eastbury School were between 30 and 40 regular attenders. In 1881 Miss Julia Carr, a 30 year old schoolmistress from Reading, was lodging next door to the Vicarage, and probably taught at the school—at this time the Master's house was rented out to Thomas Vockins, an agricultural labourer, and his family. In 1883, Miss Sarah Jane Phipps, originally from Bexleyheath in Kent, appears for the first time as mistress at the school: she stayed until the early 1890s, lodging in the school house with Vockins. She married his son, also Thomas and 8 years her junior, in the summer of 1893. They moved to Trowbridge where he was working as a railway guard in 1901. Thomas Vockins (senior) died in early 1899.

The administration of John Sargent's Charity was eventually combined with that of seven others in Lambourn in 1892. At the time, the charity's income appears to have increased to £9 again. Besides the £7-10s per year rental income and Sir Francis Burdett's £2, there was an additional income of £1-10s from a barn and land held by John Kent. This may well have been the 'school barn', which was in use by the pupils in the early years of the 20th century.

Those years saw a series of schoolmistresses: Miss Caroline Porter was in charge from 1900 to 1905, Mrs Tozer from 1906 to 1914,

Mrs Denyar in 1915 and Miss A M Flower from 1916 until the late 1920s. In 1911, the average attendance was 60 children. In 1916, the Newbury Weekly News reported that the school was closed for nearly a month during April because of a measles outbreak in the village.

In the early 1930s, Miss D Henderson took over as schoolmistress, followed by Mrs M Gibson and then in 1936 Miss

Cyril Sherman remembers....
The Great School Strike

'Three years after I began school there was a strike. The school barn was left open so that we could use it to play in when it was cold or wet; there were low brick walls to support the roof beams, and we used to put planks on them and play see-saw. One day, with all the senior boys in the barn, the big boys shut the doors and locked us all inside. We smaller boys didn't really know what was going on, but were told to sit on the low walls and stay put. When we didn't go in for lessons, the teachers came to find us. The big boys began to chant, 'We go on strike, And do what we like, Eastbury boys are we!' The vicar, who had a pointed chin, came to see if he could get us out, and the big boys chanted at him, 'Long nosed, pickéd chin, Enough to make the devil grin.'

At home time, we began to get a bit restive, and boys began leaving the barn. We didn't know, but Miss Raybould, her father and Miss Holmes were all outside to round us up. I remember creeping out with another boy and bumping into Miss Raybould's father. All but two of us were caught and taken back into school for a dressing down and caning, with the two 'escapees' being caned the next morning. Some months later the older boys and girls were transferred to Lambourn School, and from then on all pupils transferred to Lambourn at the age of 11 or 12, instead of staying at Eastbury School until they were 14.'

Eastbury's Wilder infants
Alf and Bert Wilder, 1924

Mary Raybould arrived as head teacher supported by Miss Eva Holmes (in charge of infants). Miss Raybould moved into the school house with her retired parents, on her arrival in April 1936. Miss Holmes came from Chieveley and lodged with the Pontins in Fairchild Cottage. She cycled over from Chieveley every Sunday evening, returning on Friday. She married Harold Pearson during the Whitsun holidays of 1941; he had arrived in the village in 1938 or 1939 to cut timber for George Baylis. She left the school in October the year after her marriage.

The curriculum of the day was perhaps predictable. The younger children were focused on 5Rs: reading, writing and arithmetic, together with religion and royalty. The younger children learned to write using small blackboards, white chalk and a duster. As they got older, they were introduced to history, geography and nature study—all the children enjoyed walks around the village and the downs to study flowers, plants and animals. Boys and girls were strictly segregated, going into the school room through different doors when the big school bell was rung (it could be heard as far away as Newtown) and sitting apart in class.

Freda Pearce, who attended the school in the 1930s, recalls that there were then about 50 children in the school. A curtain across the room divided the infants aged 5-7 from the older children. She remembers sewing and knitting, and making puzzles. She made her own summer dresses as homework. The little gardens in front of the school building were tended by the children as part of their school work. When children were unwell, they often couldn't be sent home because their mothers were working, and so they were taken into the school house where Miss Raybould's mother looked after them.

Mary Raybould loved the children but administered the cane when she had to. She paid for musical instruments and percussions for the school and formed a band which excited great applause at Christmas school concerts in the Village Hall. One boy of the time, Ken Salt, later became a drummer with the Royal Berkshire Regiment: he marched through Newbury when the Regiment received the freedom of the town. In the summer, she

taught country dancing on the school lawn.

Miss Raybould was succeeded in 1947 by Mrs Brear (soon to remarry and become Mrs Lewis), and then two years later Miss D Bradford arrived as head-teacher. Her 11 years at the school saw increasing uncertainty over its viability, despite the fact that there were 47 pupils on the roll in Jun 1950. During January-March 1950, Eastbury Juniors and Infants seem to have combined with Woodlands St Mary Juniors and Infants, firstly at Woodlands St Mary and then, because the facilities were better, back at Eastbury. However, these years were not without excitement as well. The school log records that on 21 November 1952 the Duke of Edinburgh drove through the village, and the children cheered him; Queen Elizabeth had succeeded to the throne on the death of her father just months before. A new stove was installed on 26 Nov 1954, and flush lavatories were ready for the start of term on 8 Jan 1957.

But the days of Eastbury School were numbered. On 23 June 1958, the school log has the simple entry: 'Closure considered, too few children'. In January 1959 a valuer from the Diocesan Board arrived to value the school and school house. The school was again temporarily combined with Woodlands in February of that year, Miss Bradford taking 12 children up there from Eastbury

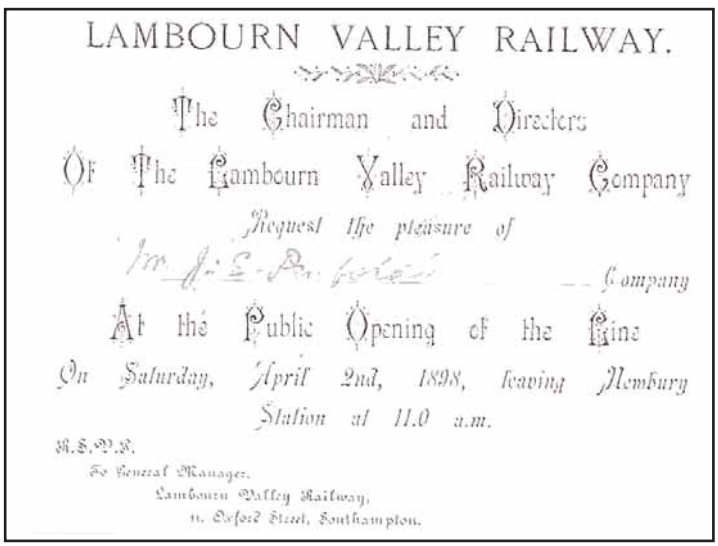
Miss Bradford and her class

each day. But in 1961 Woodlands School came under threat of closure too. Miss Bradford moved to East Garston School, and a new head, Mrs Plumridge (the District Education Officer's wife), started in September 1960, probably brought in to supervise the school's closure. There were 19 on the roll that term. This had dwindled to 14 two years later. Eastbury School closed permanently on 31 December 1962.

4.6 Transport

Until the end of the 19th century access to Lambourn and Eastbury had involved a long and difficult journey from Hungerford or Newbury over poorly maintained tracks. Carriers operated services from Lambourn to the neighbouring major towns. In 1830 services were run to Newbury (twice a week), Wantage (twice a week) and Marlborough (once a week). By the 1880s services were more frequent, with a four times a week Omnibus service to Newbury, supplemented by Carriers to Newbury (five times a week), Hungerford (three times a week), and Wantage (twice a week). However the difficulties of access resulted in imported goods being in short supply and expensive, and the village continued to be little more than a rural backwater.

Things changed dramatically with the arrival of the railway in


LAMBOURN VALLEY RAILWAY.

The Chairman and Directors
Of The Lambourn Valley Railway Company
Request the pleasure of
Company
At the Public Opening of the Line
On Saturday, April 2nd, 1898, leaving Newbury
Station at 11.0 a.m.

R.S.V.P.
To General Manager,
Lambourn Valley Railway,
11, Oxford Street, Southampton.

Invitation to the public opening of the Lambourn Valley Railway, 1898

Eastbury Halt

1898. The Lambourn Valley Railway Company had begun work on a line from Newbury to Lambourn ten years earlier[26] but it ground to a halt in June 1890. After much wrangling and abortive attempts to restart the project, it eventually got underway again in February 1897, with a grand opening on 2nd April 1898. There was much celebration at stations along the route and at Eastbury there were 'fluttering flags and cheering school-children'.[27]

Eastbury Halt was located up a track opposite Eastbury Manor (adjacent to Montague House). It had just a small open shelter, which must have felt cramped with two people inside, so clearly it was never expected that Eastbury was going to generate much traffic. Indeed, Robertson and Simmonds in their book on the railway make the comment that '...[the] locals preferred to tell the time by the trains rather than travel by them. It is said that Eastbury church congregation ... upon hearing the Sunday evening train leave the station, could content themselves that the service would soon be over.'[28]

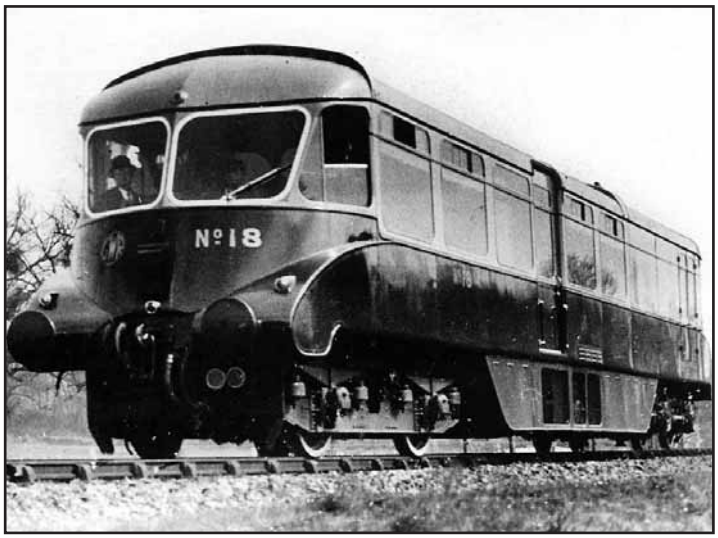
When the line opened, 3 trains a day operated in each direction on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 4 on Thursday, 5 on Saturday and none on Sunday. The journey to Newbury took 41 minutes and cost 1s (2nd class single), and to Lambourn was 5 minutes, costing 2d. A Sunday service started in 1912, by which

time the line was operated by the Great Western Railway (having taken it over in 1905).

After a shaky (and unprofitable) genesis, the line achieved a more healthy financial state during the 1920s. However, this was to be short-lived. The bus was cheaper and more convenient and from the late 1920s siphoned traffic away from the railway. Passengers fell by more than half between 1928 and 1938, and continued their sharp decline after the end of the war. By 1958 passenger receipts were just £4,768, which compares with £32,849 in the peak year of 1926.[29] In 1960 the inevitable happened. The line closed to passenger traffic on 4th January.

Although the line was not a commercial success, it had huge benefits for the people of the valley. As soon as it opened coal prices dropped significantly, and the flow of people and goods to and from Newbury transformed the previously remote outposts of Eastbury and Lambourn. Not until the opening of the M4 motorway in 1973 was there a single event that had such a dramatic impact on life in the village.

Many residents from the 1950s and earlier retain fond memories of the railway. It operated in a very different manner from mainline train services today. If regular travellers, including



Diesel railcar near Eastbury c1939

One of the earliest cars in the village

children travelling to school, were late to the station the train would usually wait for them to appear. Not that passengers needed to actually go to a station as the train seemed quite prepared to pick people up anywhere along the line. It was a very friendly atmosphere and everyone knew everyone else.

The motor car was a rare sight in Eastbury until after the Second World War. Before then, children would play their games of whips and tops quite happily in the main street, only rarely disturbed by the passing of a motor vehicle. Only a handful of villagers had cars (just 8 before the war) but, as elsewhere, during the 1950s traffic began to increase significantly. Luckily Eastbury is not on a through route, so even today the roads are relatively quiet, and the M4 is close enough to allow easy access to the west and east, but far enough away not to disturb the rural calm.

During the 1970s and '80s the bus service to Newbury came under threat as passenger numbers dwindled. Thankfully today, with the help of grants from West Berkshire Council, there is a good service, running hourly for most of the day and giving access to Newbury Town Centre, the hospital and shopping areas south of the town.

4.7 Shops

During the latter half of the 19th century, and for much of the 20th, Eastbury managed to support five or six shops. By the 1960s only three remained—the Post Office, the Bakery-cum-petrol station and the General Stores (now WhyNot). The dairy (at The Feathers), the fish shop (at Merryleas) and another grocer's (site unknown) had by then closed. By the early 1990s all the shops had gone.

The General Stores

The General Stores was located at the eastern end of the village, next to Pigeon House Cottage. From around 1860 to 1887 this was run by Miss Eliza Bew, the older sister of Elijah Bew. She was described as a 'Draper and Grocer' in the street directories. On

The Quallington family, 1902

her death in 1887 the shop was run for a short while by her assistant, Ada Wright, before being acquired by Henry Spanswick (also described as Draper and Grocer). He ran it until 1900, when Albert Quallington took it over. Mr Quallington was a carpenter, and the business expanded to encompass carpentry as well as

'Quallington Carpenter'
J R R Tolkien, 1912

drapery and grocery. His carpentry skills were also put to use in coffin-making and he acted as the village undertaker. JRR Tolkien, author of the 'Lord of the Rings', visited Eastbury in August 1912—his sketch of Mr Quallington's shop is reproduced opposite.

Albert Quallington died in 1937 and the shop passed to Mrs Kate Perris, Albert's daughter. The range of goods on sale expanded still further, indeed it was said that you could buy anything at Mrs Perris's shop—if she did not have it she would get it for you. She continued to run it until May 1949 when the charming building was gutted by fire. Although she lost much of her stock, she temporarily moved to the old Wesleyan school on Back Street, while a new building was constructed on the shop site. Moving back to the new shop in 1951 she continued to trade for a further 15 years before it passed to Mr and Mrs Lumsden, when it became an antique clock repair shop. This closed around the end of the 1960s and the shop was converted into a private house.

The Post Office

The Post Office was sited opposite the cross in the centre of the village in a building that dates (in part) from 1714. It had a door that opened directly on to the main road (now bricked up). Henry

Kate Perris outside the General Stores, 1930s

The Post Office, 1930s

Carter was appointed as Eastbury's first sub-postmaster in about 1882—prior to that time the post to and from Eastbury was handled in Lambourn. Mr Carter's trade was that of grocer and baker, and before coming to Eastbury he had worked in Huntley and Palmer's in Reading. In the 1901 Census two of his five children were engaged in baking and another was the village postman. His business seems to have prospered as by 1903 Kelly's Directory lists him as a farmer based at Middle Farm, where he farmed until ill health forced his retirement in the early 1920s.

The Post Office,1954

The job of postmaster had passed to George Brown who, in 1908, moved to the Bakery over the road. Charles Parker then acted as postmaster for almost the next 20 years. Ernest Pointer was there for the next 10, followed by John Lancaster in the late 1930s. Mr Wall and Mr Martin followed before Oliver Stratton, an ex-London policeman, and staunch communist, took over. Villagers remember him wanting to start a youth club, but this was fiercely resisted as it was feared he would use it as a vehicle for recruiting to the party!

Clem Welch took over the Post Office in 1952 and remained there until 1965. As well as the normal Post Office functions, he sold bread (in competition with the bakery opposite—the Welchs' bread came from Lambourn), groceries and fruit/vegetables,

Sketch of the building believed to have been the original bakery

frozen food, cigarettes and newspapers/magazines. Mr Welch also ran a very successful delivery operation. After the Welchs came a succession of owners—the Browns, Elders, Hagyards and Wroaths. None managed to keep going for more than a few years.

In the 1980s the Post Office became the village's only shop, but making a living from it was increasingly difficult. James Rowland managed to keep going until 1987, when he sold it to Colin and Joyce Gowans. But after Colin died in 1989, Joyce found it too much to continue with on her own, and so the last village shop closed in April 1990.

The Bakery

Many of the older houses in the village have bread ovens where families baked their bread. Before coal was widely available the poorer families gathered gorse from Poors Furze (up the Wantage Road, near the Grange) and took it in turns to light their oven and cook not only for themselves but also for their neighbours. But this was hard work, and increasingly people came to rely on buying their bread from shops. In the 1840s and 50s the principal bakers in the village were Charles Pettit, who may have been based in a cottage on the site of what is now The Old Bakery, and Thomas Kent, who was at Merryleas. By 1861 Anthony King had joined them, baking at what was later the Post Office. Charles Pettit ceased to trade around 1867. Henry Carter, at the Post Office, appears to have been the principal baker in the 1880s and early '90s, before Frederick Hughes set up business, again, possibly at the cottage on the site of the Old Bakery.

George Brown took over baking at the Post Office in 1903, but in 1908 appears to have moved across the road to the Bakery. Sometime in the next fifteen years the old cottage must have been demolished and a purpose-built bakery constructed on the site. The Brown family kept the bakery business until 1945 when they sold it to Frank Pounds who moved from East Garston.

On the side of the building nearest the cross there was a coke store and garage for the two vans. There was also a furnace that

heated steam pipes to heat the ovens. Between the furnace and the shop there was the bakery. In the loft upstairs was a store for flour, which came down a chute into the dough mixer. The mixer was powered by a Lister 1½ horsepower engine—when bread was being made it could be very noisy in there. The engine also used to pump up ground water for adding to the flour.

The shop entrance faced directly on to the road. It was not very light inside and there was usually no one to be seen behind the L-shaped counter. Customers had to ring a bell to attract attention.

The bakery used to deliver to East Garston and Lambourn in competition with the bakery at Lambourn. It had two alternating rounds so that customers received deliveries every two days. It stopped baking bread in the late 1950s because of competition from the supermarkets.

Unusually, the bakery also sold petrol. After it ceased bread production petrol sales became its main line of business. Leonard and Irene Weller took it over in 1960, but it was not a great commercial success. Mr Weller caused controversy in 1972 when he applied to have the petrol pumps moved from the Newbury side of the Bakery to the area by the village cross but in the face of strong local protest the application was refused. In 1977 the

The Bakery

Wellers bought the Plough and in the early 1980s the business at the Bakery was wound up and it was sold to become a private house.

4.8 Pubs

Today the village can boast but a single pub, the Plough, in the centre of the village. Until the 1960s it also had the Queen's Arms, at the eastern end, in Eastbury Newtown. And in the 19th century there appear to have been two other premises that acted as Pubs or beer houses at some time—the Plume of Feathers on Front Street and the White House (now Garden Cottage) on Back Street.

The Plough dates from some time in the 18th century, probably around the 1750s. The Enclosure Map of 1776[30] shows a building of roughly the right size and positioning within the plot, so its origin appears to pre-date that. At that time the property and land were owned by an Edward Quelch, whose occupation was given in his will as 'victualler' and 'inn-holder'. In 1776 he would have been aged 38 (baptised 1738 in Welford, Berks), so he could have been in possession of the premises for several years before 1776 (he was certainly resident in Eastbury in 1761 when he had his first child)—was he perhaps the Plough's first landlord?

Mr Quelch died in 1803 and the inn then passed to his daughter Mary, the wife of Jason Withers, whose occupation was given as

The Plough, 1950s

Dennis and Madeline White and staff of the Plough, 2001

'maltster'. Mr Withers died in Eastbury in 1824 (and his wife in 1829), but it is not known whether he ever actually ran the inn. His will of 1820 identifies William Mildenhall as the then landlord. It is featured in Pigot's Trade Directory for 1830, when the landlord was William Kinchin. For some reason (and in contrast to the Queens) it then seems to have had quite a turnover of landlords, with at least 18 in the years 1830-1930. After that things were rather more stable, with the Cottrells running it from 1930 to the 1960s, followed by the McGraths, Ken Thackaway and then the Wellers from 1977 to 1996 (Leonard and Irene Weller until 1987 and then their son Graham and his wife Shirley for the remainder). Dennis and Madeleine White have owned and run it from 1996.

It was very small in the days before the Wellers. The main bar was barely wide enough to allow a game of darts—the players had to virtually stand in the fire grate on one side of the room to throw the darts into the board on the opposite wall. And someone had to guard the entrance door in case someone came in and got a dart in the eye! But Graham and Shirley Weller had the pub considerably extended during the early 1990s, and added a

restaurant, to make it much the same as it is today.

The Queen's Arms closed in 1969, but is remembered with affection by several of the village's longer-term residents. The building (now a private house) appears to be of 19th Century vintage, but an earlier building must have existed somewhere at the eastern end of the village as it is referenced in Samuel Dabbe's survey of 1664,[31] when it was called the King and Queen's Arms. It was subsequently called just the King's Arms, and became the Queen's Arms during the 19th century.

Through much of the 19th century the Queen's was run by a single family, the Titchiners. Joseph Titchiner had it in 1841. After his death in the mid 1850s his wife Harriet took over and then it passed to their son William, who ran it from the 1870s until 1909.

During the 20th century the most colourful proprietors appear to have been the Kellys. They ran it from around 1930 until the late 1950s. Mr Kelly was a former jockey who died in a car crash in 1942. Mrs Kelly ran the business alone after his death and gained a reputation as much for her eccentricity as the quality of her ale. She rode an enormous sit-up-and-beg bike that had no brakes, so she had to jump off at high speed and run alongside it, often ending up flat on her back.

She served her beer straight from the barrel, but frequently ran out and had to go cap in hand to the Queen's in East Garston to ask them for some until the drayman came again. Chickens were to be seen sharing the tables with the locals, but she was most famous for her turkeys, that she kept at the back of the pub. They all had names and she would drive them through the bar and walk them up the road to the green to graze. Unsurprisingly, the pub darts team was called 'the turkey trotters'.

She had a lodger, Bill Brown, and she used to leave him some food when she went out and also asked him to feed the animals. He was a big man with a hearty appetite who worked in the stables, so she was alarmed to return one day to find his dinner untouched. He hadn't found it and had eaten the chicken food

instead! After his death he was cremated—she kept his ashes in an urn on a shelf in the bar.

After Mrs Kelly the pub passed to George Wiltshire and then to a Mr Garnier who had it for just 10 months before Ben and June Cox arrived in 1964. They were from Abingdon and this was their first pub. It was an Ushers pub at that time but later passed to Watney Mann. They did a roaring trade, catering not just for Eastbury people but for many from the surrounding area. They had four lodgers, all stable lads, and they turned part of the adjoining cottage into a restaurant. Mrs Cox served breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner. The pub had a very warm atmosphere and the darts team continued to be very successful. One day the girls' team wanted to play the men, but they were one short. Ben volunteered to play for them, but they insisted he had to dress up. He shaved off his moustache and donned the required outfit and even his regulars did not recognise him. He went up to the Plough for a drink and still wasn't unmasked!

So it was a sad day for Eastbury when the Coxes bid farewell in 1968 to take on the Ibex at Chaddleworth. The Queen's Arms had just one further landlord, who stayed less than a year, before it was sold to become a private house.

The third pub in the village, which was operating during the latter half of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th, was the

The Queen's Arms, 1960s

Plume of Feathers, on Front Street, known in its early years as the Prince of Wales. The building remains and is now a private dwelling (the Feathers). It was run as a pub-cum-grocer's-cum-farmhouse by Jehu Kent, from sometime between 1855 and 1861. It retained its hybrid function when it passed through the hands of John Jones, John Batt and Charles Cook during the 1870s and '80s before being acquired by Thomas Spanswick in 1888, who was to remain as landlord until ill-health forced his retirement in 1919. Mr Spanswick was a popular figure during his long tenure and, if things were getting a little dull, he would reach down his violin to cheer them up. He also acted as the village pig-killer and was a skilful thatcher. It continued as a pub through much of the 1920s but ceased to trade as such when acquired by the Rossingtons, when it became a farm-cum-dairy. They became the main suppliers of milk to the village during the 1930s and their herd of cows would be a regular sight walking along Front Street and down Winds Hall to a field at the end where they used to graze.

The most obscure of the former hostelries (known only by repute) is the White House, located in part of the building on Back Street now known as Garden Cottage. It may have been an informal beer-house and have operated for only a short time. None of the contributors to this book had any first-hand memory of it, so it is unlikely to have been in operation later than about 1920.

Ben Cox with Johnny Morris
Queen's Arms, 1960s

Plaque on Cross House

4.9 Infrastructure

Street lighting came early to Eastbury—a plaque on the wall of Cross House records the fact that it was provided in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's jubilee. However, maintaining the lights appears to have been something of a struggle as in 1900 the Newbury Weekly News records events laid on to raise funds 'for the efficient lighting of the Jubilee lamps in the village during the winter nights'. By the 1920s (possibly earlier) the struggle proved too much and after sunset the village was once again plunged into darkness.

Mains water did not arrive in the village until about 1935 and electricity not until 1938. Houses were still being connected up during the 1950s. Mains sewerage arrived in the early 1950s. Before then, households were reliant on their privies, and older residents can remember the weekly task of digging holes in the garden to get rid of the waste. Several houses that bordered the river were able to avoid this task by having privies that overhung the stream, but this may not have done much for the water quality! Nor did they stop using their privies when the river ran dry, contributing to an unpleasant pong that was common to many villages in the valley.

The first telephones started to appear in the village in the early 1920s. Dr Patterson appears to have had the first (Lambourn 7) followed by George Baylis (Lambourn 20). At the beginning of the 1930s Mr Pointer had one, available for public use, at the Post Office.

During the 1930s the roads were maintained to a standard that would be envied by today's residents. This was largely thanks to the labours of the resident road-man, Mr Annetts, who kept the roads and verges in immaculate shape.

4.10 War

The First World War left its mark on Eastbury, as attested by the names on the war memorial in front of the church. No fewer than

War Memorial in front of the Church

14 young men were killed in action, with almost one in five families losing a loved one. Thankfully the toll in the Second World War was less severe, with just two residents losing their lives, though this was of little consolation to the families of Frank (Bunt) Spackman (of Brigstock Cottage, who was killed at sea on the way to North Africa) and Hal Rikard-Bell (of Bridge Cottage, an RAF airman).

During WWII Eastbury had its own Home Guard platoon, under Corporal Ernie Ward. Several of the women also did their bit, engaged on Firewatch Duty up the hill from the village. There were a lot of Prisoners of War held in camps at Baydon, nearby—Germans and Italians. The Italians used to work in the village, cleaning out the river and working on the farms.

The Americans, stationed at Membury Airfield, were popular in the village. When they passed through they used to bring cans of food and toss them to the children—delicacies unobtainable by the locals. They also used to allow the villagers to go to see their films at the Airfield cinema, which they got well before they were released to British cinemas.

In about 1942, the Canadian Army arrived in the area. One day they were out on night manoeuvres with their tanks and were travelling from Lambourn down the Lambourn-Newbury road. No lights were allowed and when they reached Eastbury they were unfortunate to meet army trucks coming through the village the other way. Eastbury's narrow road was not wide enough for a tank and a truck to pass each other. The tank first damaged the fence at Laburnham Cottage; then the hedge and gatepost at Joelah (Pennyhill House) and then The Benham's garage and waiting room-cum-surgery wall. It raked Barrett's Farm and the fence at the bottom of the vicar's orchard and splintered a window frame in the Post Office. The Feathers was grazed a bit. Then the gate and sloping part of Woodcote were taken out. The tank went through the outhouses, a continuation of the roof, coming to a stop in Woodcote's kitchen. The tank reversed out of the kitchen and brought down the children's bedroom above as everything collapsed. The tank then continued on taking down the

Cyril Sherman remembers....
Frank 'Bunt' Spackman

Bunt was married in 1938 and lived in part of Brigstock and became father of two little girls. Attached to Brigstock was a farmyard with a barn with two stables inside. Also attached was a large wooden shed with a corrugated iron roof used by Bunt to rear young calves. They were fed on milk powder dissolved in warm water. He showed me how to get them to drink. I had a box to sit on, put the pail with milk on the floor between my legs, put one hand in the part-filled pail of milk and when the calf put its mouth in the milk I raised two fingers into its gummy mouth. It would then suck the milk into its mouth and I had to hold tight to the pail and resist being knocked off the box. Bunt always gave lots of praise.

On one occasion on a very cold Saturday while riding on the tractor at plough Bunt put me in the driving seat and said, 'Keep going straight while I walk to get warm'. I thought I was really good and got praise from Bunt and then I discovered that the tractor didn't need steering because one front wheel was in a deep furrow, but I still walked home six feet tall .... and frozen.

At the start of the war Bunt was called up for military service and joined the Tank Regiment. Following a visit home on leave, he was waiting by The Plough for the bus and called to me in Back Street opposite 'Come on Squirrel, come and say goodbye,' but I was too choked to reply and could only shake my head. We waved to one another when he was on the bus, never to meet again.'

fence and hedge to the east of Woodcote, turning the donkey house on its roof, and demolishing sundry other fences and railings that threatened to impede its passage.

Charlie O'Neill and family lived at Woodcote then, and the two boys were asleep in their bedroom above the kitchen when the tank arrived. Canadian soldiers brought the boys, wrapped in blankets, down from the wrecked bedroom. Charlie O'Neill always said of them, 'Decent lads, decent lads.'

On VE Day in 1945 the village organised a spontaneous bonfire party on Pound Meadow. A huge stack of wood was built and households donated jam jars and candles—the jam jars were painted blue and red so that when the candles inside were lit they shone red, white and blue. The bonfire was set ablaze and most of the village participated in joyous singing and dancing around the flames.

4.11 Natural Environment

The River Lambourn

The River Lambourn is Eastbury's most significant natural feature, and contributes greatly to the village's special character. A true spring-fed stream, it flows intermittently, typically from around New Year to September (from Candlemas to Michaelmas), and remains dry for the rest of the autumn. However, this pattern is subject to a lot of variation. Some years the river doesn't flow at all; in others, it has been known to flow without a break for 15-18 months. Its reappearance after a dry spell is always a welcome sight, and a source of comment and pleasure.

The Lambourn rises near Seven Barrows on the Wantage Road; it is supplemented by springs which rise in Upper Lambourn and in Lynch Wood. Below Eastbury, there are further springs, most notably between Maidencourt and Great Shefford.

The main factor in determining the flow of the river is the level of winter rainfall, which percolates down through the chalk hills around Lambourn, raising the underground water table. Water extraction at the Fognam Down pumping station above Upper Lambourn has an obvious impact on the underlying water table. Population increases in the valley as a whole have increased

The River Lambourn in Eastbury

demand and water extraction totals have probably doubled over the last 30 years. However, this increase stabilised and actually began to reverse after a separate water supply was provided for Great Shefford in 1991.

The preservation and health of the River Lambourn is important in a broader context than Eastbury and the other villages in the valley. Along with the River Kennett, the Lambourn was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1995. The Lambourn is also a candidate Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. Both rivers are nationally important chalk rivers. Their upper reaches (above Newbury) are characterised by clean, chalky water flowing over a gravel river bed. The river provides an ideal environment for water crowfoot, which produces abundant flowers in the Eastbury stretch during June and July. The gravelly river bed is an excellent habitat for a range of fish, including the internationally important bullhead and brook lamprey, brown trout, grayling, stone loach and minnow. The Environment Agency regards these features as warranting recognition of the Lambourn as a site of international importance.

Because of the nature of its source, the maximum volume of flow has been well adapted to the size and shape of the river bed for centuries. Many of the older cottages in the village were built at the river's edge, with floors only a foot or so above maximum river level. The villagers knew that in normal times there would be little danger of flooding. Even today, the river is mostly well-behaved, flooding only slightly onto Back Street at times of high levels. More Eastbury properties are affected by rising groundwater than by the level of the river.

However, what the river bed cannot cope with is the combination of full natural flow and massive additional water from heavy rain. This was the freak combination which occurred on 26 May 1993. Overnight, a heavy storm circled the valley, and an inch or more of rain fell. During the early hours, all this rain began washing down the valley sides, bringing mud, silt and soil with it.

The Great Flood

The river could not cope. Eastbury villagers awoke to find the already swollen river lapping along Back Street. By 7.30 am, Back Street was under water; and by 8.30, the river had completely broken its banks on both sides. In the centre of the village, both Back Street and Front Street were completely inundated. Brave but forlorn-looking villagers struggled though the brown and sludgy water to assess the damage.

Emergency boats appeared. The local TV company helicoptered in a film crew and an intrepid reporter adopted the time-honoured stance of delivering his piece to camera outside the Plough up to his knees in water. Firemen were filmed—and shown later on the TV news—clambering into Caroline Cottage over the stable door. Ernie Ward, who had lived in the village for 75 years, said it was the worst flood he could remember.

And then it was gone. By early afternoon, all that was left was a thick and stinking layer of sand, silt and mud and the task of clearing up. Many houses took months to recover and be restored.

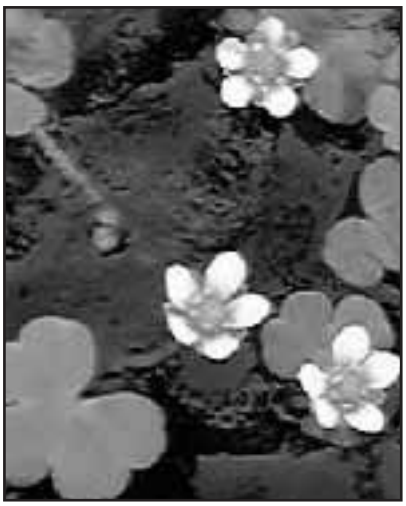
The flood of 1993

Insurance companies took a hammering.

The future of the Lambourn in Eastbury

The Environment Agency and English Nature point out in their Habitat Action Plan for Berkshire Rivers that: 'In their natural state rivers are dynamic systems, continually modifying their form. However, in many cases their ability to rejuvenate and create new habitat has been reduced or arrested by flood defence structures'. It can also be argued that the combination of various official agencies charged with responsibility for different aspects of the river, and protection measures applied without an integrated management framework, can be damaging in their own way.

- The authorities regard the water crowfoot (ranunculus) as a major indicator of the health of the river, and welcome it flourishing through the summer months. But Eastbury villagers know that it seriously impedes water flow and raises the river level. They are just as likely to see it as a weed; and welcome the sight of Environment Agency contractors cutting



Water crowfoot

it out.

- In recent years, the river bed itself has suffered—perhaps partly as a result of the inundation of 1993—and is now in some places covered with silt and mud instead of clean gravel. This provides more footing for weed. And together the weed and the silt hinder the annual reappearance of the trout.
- The impact of changes to surface drainage arrangements in Lambourn are currently causing controversy.

Despite its generally benign nature, and the rarity of dramatic occurrences such as the 1993 floods, the Lambourn requires careful but active management to ensure its healthy survival.

Flora and Fauna

Beyond the river itself, Eastbury and the surrounding downland slopes host an important variety of plant, animal and bird life, an ecosystem typical of relatively unspoilt chalk downs in southern England.

There are three conservation areas around Eastbury. The Strawberry Fields and the Cleeve Hill reserves are managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and the Watts reserve is managed and owned by BBOWT. All are now SSSIs and provide examples of wild flowers and butterflies that thrive on chalk downland.

Water vole

Although the village and its immediate surroundings are home to a wide range of trees—including many fine mature specimens—estimates suggest that around 40% of the trees in the area were felled during the last 100 years. Most of this clearance has been in favour of extending arable farmland. Despite this, populations of both roe and fallow deer have increased; and these have been joined by the smaller muntjac. Originally introduced by the 11th Duke of Bedford to Woburn Park in the early 1900s, these escaped into the wild in the 1920s and are now common across southern England.

The population of badgers—a protected species despite

Muntjac deer

controversy over their contribution to TB in cattle—is increasing, and there are at least 12 setts in the Eastbury area. The numbers of foxes rise and fall, probably reflecting the prevalence of fox mange. Stoats, weasels, brown hares and field voles are common. But bank voles suffer from the removal of hedges. Along the river banks, water voles are rare, and where they appear are too often the victims of mink. During 2002, however, two or three water vole families survived in Eastbury, despite apparently losing some young to weasels.

Changing farming methods have led to reduction or loss of some bird species. Stone curlews and corncrakes have disappeared; and it is many years since a nightjar was heard in Eastbury. The yellowhammer's song 'little bit of bread and no cheese' is heard infrequently. But two wonderful species of bird have returned. Buzzards nest locally, and can be seen in groups of up to five wheeling over the downs. In spring, their courtship flight, swooping low, turning and soaring in pairs, is a delight to see. Red kites have also returned; they are seen less often, but can sometimes be spotted flying with the buzzards.

Kestrels are common, easily noted hovering by the sides of roads. Sparrowhawk numbers have increased over the last few years, and they can often be seen swooping by hedges and catching small birds on the wing. Larks also seem to be more common, perhaps helped by increasing set-aside, providing a habitat where they can raise their broods undisturbed. Tawny owls can be heard most nights in the village.

Sparrowhawk

Modern agricultural methods, inappropriate and wholesale trimming and herbicide spraying of verges by the local authority have all contributed to the decline in native flower species. Many rare plants have been lost in recent years. Despite this, Eastbury has a wonderful abundance of primroses, anemones and, of course, bluebells in the adjacent woods. In Coronation Wood, Lords Wood and Cleeve Wood above Eastbury it is possible to find wild flowers that are 'ancient woodland indicators' and suggest that woodland has existed for over 400 years. Such plants include many varieties of orchid, including early purple, tway

blade, butterfly and common spotted orchids. Other interesting examples include sweet woodruff, archangel and moschatel or 'town hall clock' (which has five faces, for North, South, East and West and one facing upwards). Chiltern gentians in the Strawberry Fields are very rare elsewhere in Southern England, but persist with the help of badgers' fur carriage—they can be seen along the badger paths.

Some of the beautiful butterflies found in the conservation areas are very rare elsewhere: Duke of Burgundy, Holly blue and Adnis blue, dark green fritillary, green hair streak and orange tip.

It is to be hoped that more sympathetic farming methods will encourage increased diversity of habitat and a consequent increase in the variety of wild plants, animals and birds in the years to come.

Red kite

5 Eight Eastbury Homes

This chapter gives some further detail on a selection of Eastbury's most interesting homes and the people who lived there. They have been chosen to give a flavour of the housing and lives of the different strata of Eastbury society.

5.1 Eastbury Manor

The current Eastbury Manor dates, in part, from Elizabethan times, but it is thought that there was an earlier manor on the same site. It was the 'seat of power' in the village until well into the last century, with the Manor Farm providing employment, and housing, for many of the villagers. Today the farm is a separate enterprise and with the aid of modern machinery can manage by relying mainly on contract labour, while the Manor itself is currently rented to tenants.

The first reference to the Eastbury Estate (which, presumably, included the original manor) is in the mid 12th century, when it

Eastbury Manor from the east, 1950s

was in the possession of a Ralph de Lanvalei.[32] During the 13th century the manor was divided, but in the early years of the following century most of it was purchased by the Wanting family. The 'manor of Eastbury' was settled on John de Wanting and his wife Margaret in 1325. It remained in the family until 1365 when the first John de Estbury secured it by nefarious means (see Section 6.1). His son, the second John de Estbury, died without children in 1406 and it passed through various hands before being granted to Fulk Bourchier, lord of Wantage in the mid 15th century. Eastbury then followed Wantage in the Bourchier family until 1540. After passing briefly through the hands of three subsequent owners, it was acquired in 1553 by John Clarke of Ardington, with John Coxhead. The Clarke family acquired the whole in 1579 and it remained with them (plus the manor of Ardington) until 1685, when it was purchased by the Jones family of Ramsbury. It remained with their descendants (later the Burdetts) until 1919, when it was purchased by George Baylis, who had been the tenant there since 1900. It remains with his descendants to the present day.

From (at least) the beginning of the 17th century to 1919 the manor was let to tenants (presumably wealthy ones!). Edward and Alexander Cleve held it from John Clarke in 1602,[33] when it was clearly a very large farm, consisting of 12 'yard lands', where a 'yard land' is a unit of production of several acres (up to 60 in Lambourn, but less in the more productive areas). Thus the farm probably extended to over 500 acres at that time. In the early 1660s it was in the hands of Gyles Spicer, who is shown in the 1663 Hearth Tax returns as occupying a property with nine hearths—by far the grandest in the village (the next was Samuel Dabbe, the owner of Pigeon House Farm, with four hearths).

Gyles died in 1664 and his will and an inventory of his goods survive[34] and provide an interesting insight into the manor and its estate at that time. The value of his goods came to £1250, a considerable sum in those days. It details the contents of a six-bedroom dwelling plus servants quarters, two living rooms, a kitchen, milk house, meat house, cheese loft, two butteries and two store rooms. His farm animals and crops include 14 cart

Manor, East frontage

horses, 39 cows and calves, 41 pigs, a large flock of sheep, bees and poultry and a considerable quantity of wheat, barley, peas, oats and corn. His machinery consisted of one wagon, three carts, three ploughs and five pairs of harrows.

By the 19th century the Manor Farm had expanded to 1000 acres and it was tenanted for much of the century by two of the wealthiest families of the neighbourhood, the Liddiards (1841?? (probably earlier)-1877)[35] and the Spackmans (1882-1899), who had another branch of the family at Pigeon House Farm. In 1900 the tenancy passed to George Baylis, who was at the manor for the next 42 years, prospering on the success of his modern farming methods and keen eye for quality livestock. Sir Francis Burdett, the absentee landlord, decided to dispose of his estates in the Lambourn Valley in October 1919. As well as Eastbury Manor these included Pigeon House Farm and several further farms in neighbouring East Garston. He gave preference to his existing tenants and George Baylis accordingly acquired the manor, its estate and the Lordship. The sale particulars offer the following description of the Manor interior, in the colourful language of the time.

William and Elizabeth Spackman

'The chief feature of the former character of the old house is the noble carved oak chimney-piece in the principal room on the ground floor, which is lined throughout with Tudor panel wainscoting in perfect condition. This beautiful specimen of the Renaissance period, consists of an overmantel of three panels, supported by Ionic pilasters, and divided by finely carved Atlantes supporting the entablature, which, with other enrichments, present an exceedingly effective artistic composition. In spite of mutations, the house still retains many of its stately stone mullioned windows and original leaded quarries, carved barge-boards, pendants and other old features, which give a peculiarly picturesque and old-fashioned aspect to the whole structure.'

Today the Manor remains in the hands of George Baylis's descendants. It is once again let to tenants, and at the time of writing was undergoing restoration and re-landscaping of its grounds.

5.2 Pigeon House

The oldest part of Pigeon House (formerly Pigeon House Farm) dates from 1620, when it was built by Thomas Gifford, a merchant tailor from London whose initials appear above the entrance door. Local folklore has it that it was built on a site previously belonging to the monks of the Priory of Wallingford—it is said that the site was a favourite haunt for the monks on account of the excellent sport to be found in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately no contemporary sources have been found to verify this. Indeed, it is believed that the land had been in the ownership of the Gifford family for hundreds of years prior to 1620.[36] The existence of a pigeon-house (or 'columbarium') on the site supports the possibility of there having been monks in the area, as these were commonly owned by Monasteries. The current columbarium is of 17th century origin, but may have replaced an earlier structure. But if there were monks present, were they from Wallingford? A document in the Public Records Office relates to a transfer of land by John de Estbury to the Priory of Wallingford

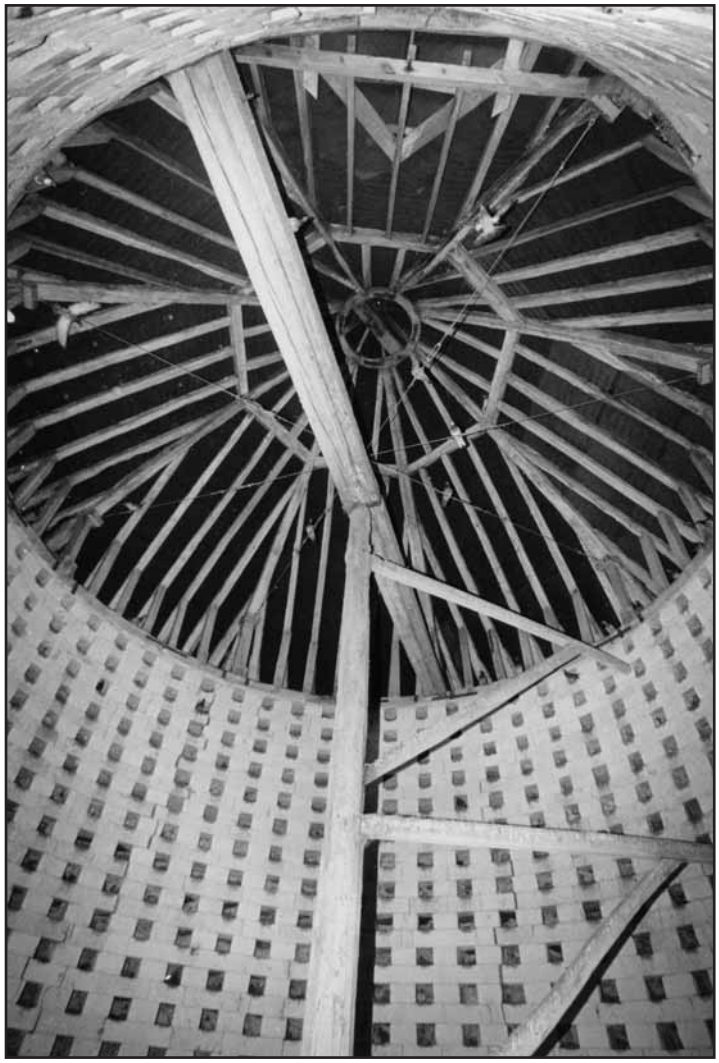
and, although this does not relate to Eastbury (it was land in Oxfordshire), it does demonstrate a connection between John and the Priory. But the only actual record of land holding by monks in Eastbury that has been uncovered comes from the Muster Rolls of 1522, which record land belonging to 'the fraternitie of Abingdon'. So it is possible that it was Abingdon rather than Wallingford monks that were the visitors to the village. Or perhaps both sets were present. Unfortunately it requires more research to provide answers to these questions.

The current columbarium is on the other side of the Old Wantage Road from the house, and dates from about the same time as the house. It is a fascinating building, octagonal and made from local materials with a clay-tiled roof. The interior is circular and lined with chalk blocks which contain nest holes for 999 pigeons. A stout oak post in the centre revolves a framework with a 'potence' attached to it, giving easy access to the pigeon nurseries.

In 1621 the farm was inherited by Thomas Gifford's son John, who chose to back the wrong side during the Civil War (he served as a major in King Charles I's army) and so had his lands sequestered by Parliament in 1646. The house and lands were put up for sale by the Treason Trustees in 1652, and were purchased by Gifford's nephew, Samuel Dabbe, in 1653. Dabbe was a London merchant, born in 1616. He authored a remarkable document which is now held in Reading Library, a survey of his lands, dating from 1654, with later additions on rents and accounts, and which has been transcribed by Gwen Parker.[37] It provides a fascinating insight into the life of a well-to-do Eastbury resident of that time, and the particular pedantic nature of Mr Dabbe.

He writes:

> *'To Mannadge my ffarme at Iseburey*
>
> The ffirst thing you doe, Marke out you ffeild Land after this Manner: get you maide one Iorne Marke of your ffirst two letters, being S-D, then sawe out aboute 100 pieces of wood



Interior of the columbarium

two feete and a halfe in length a peece and four inches squaire making one end of it sharpe to drive into the ground…you may burne the peeces of wood at Hombe and thay will be the redeyer for your youse when you come into the feilde takeing some too or three of the ouldest men in the Towne to Deyrect you beside this booke and inveyte them to Dinner and Supp with you: if they be poore then give unto them 12d. apiece besides theire vitells.'

Little is known of Pigeon House Farm during the 18th century,

The oldest part of Pigeon House dating from 1620

but during the 19th it had lands of over 400 acres and was occupied by George Waldron from the 1840s to the 1860s, then passing into the hands of the Spackman family in 1867. Mr Clare Spackman died in the 1870s and his wife Elizabeth carried on with the farm with the help of her son Joseph and five daughters until Joseph assumed full responsibility in about 1883. The house passed to Frederick Alderton, a retired steward of an asylum, in about 1898, when it was re-christened The Hermitage. But it appears from entries in the Berkshire Street Directories that the farm lands remained with the Spackman family, and were managed by another Elizabeth Spackman, widow of the William Spackman who had lived at the Manor. She lived in Montague House, which was the farmhouse for a farm of about 100 acres, so together the lands at this time would have extended to about 600 acres.

Elizabeth's son, William Liddiard Spackman, moved to The Hermitage in about 1907 but his mother continues to be shown as 'Farmer Pigeon House Farm' until 1920, when 'Liddy' is shown as farmer for Pigeon House Farm and his mother for Montague House Farm alone. This probably reflects the purchase of Pigeon House Farm with 307 acres by Liddy Spackman from Sir Francis Burdett, at the great 'Burdett sale' in October 1919.

In 1928 Liddy Spackman fell on harder times and moved out of Pigeon House Farm to Pounds Farm, down Back Street. Miss Gladys Caird, a moneyed lady from Dundee, bought Pigeon House and was to live there until her death in the late 1960s. She was an invalid and had a live-in lady companion. Gladys Wilder worked as her housekeeper from 1933 until Miss Caird's death, and remembers her as fair, but rather austere and expecting a lot from her staff. She was very wealthy but was also one who watched every penny—when she had her hair done she always seemed to be 6d short of the right money! However she made one very conspicuous act of generosity with her bequest of a large sum to found the Eastbury Hermitage, which continues as a memorial to her.

Brigadier and Mrs Morley followed Miss Caird into Pigeon House,

Liddy and Ilma Spackman at Pigeon House Farm with children, 1913

but at this point the columbarium, stables and barn on the other side of the Old Wantage Road were sold separately. Mrs Morley remained there until 1976 when Pigeon House was acquired by the current owners, the Blackwell family.

5.3 Cross House

This handsome house is often featured in photographs of the village along with the cross from which it derives its name. It is believed to have been built during the late 18th century by Jason Withers who in 1789 bought land and property from Elizabeth Spicer, widow of Thomas Spicer.

From baptism and marriage records it appears that Jason was newly married at that time. He and his wife Mary (nee Quelch), went on to have seven children, including Jason and George (see section 5.6). He had extensive land holdings and leased land at Baydon and East Garston. One of the bells in Lambourn church bears the inscription 'Recast by John Warner and Sons Ltd London 1892. Thomas Spicer and Jason Withers Ch Wardens James Wells Aldbourn Fecit 1804'.

Jason Withers's last will, dated May 1820, indicates that Aaron Moody was then living at Cross House. In the event that his wife

needed to live there after his death the will declares 'I hereby give my said wife the two beds, bedding blankets and all other furniture in my best bedroom with a proper quantity of sheets and pillowcases necessary for the change of two beds. Also my plate, 6 chairs, 2 armchairs, a chest of drawers, dressing table, glass and all other such articles of furniture and culinary utensils which may be necessary ...'. As well as noting that his son Edward was well settled at Bailey Hill Farm outside Baydon, he left 'the premises called the Plow Inn ...now in the occupation of William Mildenhall' to his son Jason. He had acquired the pub and the Forge (and land at East Garston) from his father-in-law Edward Quelch. The link with the Forge was maintained as the Tibbs family, from a long line of blacksmiths, lived at Cross House for a long period in the mid 19th century.

The Withers family appears to have owned Cross House well into the 19th century. In 1880 Jason's grandson Edward (son of Edward) was the joint owner with his mother Jemimah. In 1884 Edward emigrated to New Zealand, and this may have been when the house was sold.

From about 1902 until about 1912 members of the Bew family lived there. After that, it seemed to change occupants quite frequently and had a spell as a private boarding house during the First World War. From the 1930s until 1971 it was home to Ernest Emmans, for many years the local insurance agent. He had one of

the first cars in the village, an Austin 7. In fact he had a series of Austin 7s—he never drove anything else.

5.4 Poughley Cottage

Poughley Cottage, located beyond the Plough on the road to Lambourn, is believed to have been built sometime between 1480 and 1520. As it shares its name with nearby Poughley House, the home of the Seymour family in the 1500s, it may well share an association with them. In a will dated 1565, William Seymour, of Inholms (in Lambourn Woodlands), names John Seymour of Poffley, Eastbury, as overseer of his estate until his eldest son comes of age.

The rooms in the cottage are all 15 feet square, suggesting that it may have been built as a mediaeval timber-framed hall-house, intended for use by a yeoman farmer or possibly the younger son of land-owning parents. The confirmatory evidence of roof timbers blackened by rising smoke from open fires is absent, but there is evidence that the current roof timbers are 50 years younger than the rest of the cottage, which may mean that the original was destroyed, possibly by fire. The dimensions of 15 feet square is typical of a hall-house as this was the width of four oxen and a plough, which would have been housed in one half of the

Poughley Cottage

cottage with the family living in the other half.

From the inside the cottage still has some of the wattle-and-daub construction visible in its walls. Its chimney and inglenooks are later additions, and it still has the inglenook seats, a bread oven and a ham loft for smoking meat.

During most of the past century the cottage was tenanted, in the ownership of Eastbury Manor.

5.5 Fairchild Cottage

Located next to the church along Back Street, this is the most photographed cottage in the village. Its wooden frame, and thatched roof coming low to the ground, make it appear as though it has been unchanged for centuries. Its origins are in the 16th or 17th centuries, and for most of the 19th and 20th centuries it served as housing for workers at Manor Farm. Typically the cottage would accommodate 7 or 8 people, but in 1881 no fewer than 10 were recorded as living there!

For much of the 20th century it was home to the Pontin family; Ted, Alice and their daughter Maureen. Ted was Head Carter at Manor Farm and the cottage went with the job. Ted's first wife

Fairchild Cottage

died and he married Alice in 1933—she was to live in Fairchild Cottage for 65 years! Ted was up every morning at 5.30 to feed the horses before returning for breakfast. When the farm was mechanised in the early 1950s the working horses were slaughtered—it broke Ted's heart and he returned home in tears after the last one was led away. Although Ted died in 1975 Alice was able to remain in the cottage until 1998, when she moved to Stockcross for the last four years of her life.

The house was 'modernised' during the mid 1930s. This involved turning the scullery into a kitchen, and the coal cellar into a lavatory. There was no running water in those days—water was collected from a well in the garden with a force pump. The bath was filled by bucket and they bathed by the open fire. Oil lamps and candles provided the only illumination. This all changed when they were connected to mains water and electricity in 1938, but little else was done to the cottage in the remainder of the time Alice lived there.

In recent years when some work was being done on the cottage an extra room was found above the upstairs bedrooms. Alice's only reaction to this was to say 'Thank heavens they didn't find it earlier or they would have given me an extra evacuee during the war'!

5.6 Middle Farm

Middle Farm was one of the three major farms in the village during the 18th and 19th centuries. The oldest parts of the house are believed to date from the 17th century, but surprisingly for such an impressive listed building little is known about its origins or much of its history. The stables, also listed, date from the 18th century. The part facing Front Street (the earliest part) seems originally to have been a 'two up two down". It was completely renovated by its current owner in 2002.

It has connections with the Withers Family (see also section 5.3 on Cross House). Robert Withers and his wife came to Eastbury from Wiltshire in the early 18th century and it is with their great

grandsons, Jason and George that the clearest links with the house can be found. George was probably born in the house in 1808, Jason possibly at Cross House in 1796.

The Withers were an established family and clearly had money. They made a number of acquisitions in the village around the turn of the 18th century and also expanded their holdings through marriage into the Quelch family. Jason's farm at Eastbury was visited by the machine breakers in November 1830 (see chapter 2). In the census of 1861 both Jason and George are described as farmers with holdings of about 200 acres.

It is possible that George was also farming in East Garston as he was left the land leased from Sir Francis Burdett in his father's will. Jason died in 1869 and George must also have given up farming at around that time as he is described in the 1871 census as a 'retired farmer'. It is unclear whether it was George or Elijah Bew (see section 6.2) that was living at Middle Farm at the time of the 1871 Census, but if not at the farm he was probably living close by.

By the time of the 1881 census Elijah Bew was certainly in residence followed in 1902 by Henry Carter, Eastbury's first postmaster. Soon after the First World War Francis Spackman

Middle Farm, 1920s

began farming there. He was married to George Baylis's sister, so in the 1920s the three grandest homes in the village (the Manor, Pigeon House and Middle Farm), plus Montague House, were all in the hands of the Baylis and Spackman families. Francis Spackman moved on in the mid-1930s, and the longest tenure of the house since the Second World War was by Mrs Ann Hanbury, who lived there from 1972 until 2001.

5.7 Laburnham Cottage

This is the last house in the village on the road to Lambourn. It is believed to have been built in the mid 17th century, but no documents survive relating to its early years. In 1764 it was sold to William Spanswick who in 1801 passed it on to his son, also named William Spanswick. His daughter Hannah married John Hamblin, a carpenter, and they lived there with William until his death in the early 1840s. The Hamblins remained there (with son James taking over the carpentry business after John died in the 1850s) until the end of the century. It was owned by William Spackman at the turn of the century and appears to have been rented out (including, from 1913, to the village policeman, PC Barnard) until 1920 when it was purchased by Elijah Day. Born Elijah James MacCrill, it is understood that his name was considered too grand for his position as valet, or 'Gentleman's

Laburnham Cottage

Gentleman' where he worked at Bockhampton Manor, and he was asked to change it to Day.

In 1945 the cottage passed to his daughter, Eva Henrietta (Hettie) Day, who taught at Lambourn school and struck terror into the hearts of pupils and staff alike. It was Miss Day who bought the very first car sold by Brown and Warren's Garage in Lambourn and she would drive to the school down the middle of the road—heaven help anyone who got in her way! Myfanwy Thomas, who taught with Miss Day, tells the story of how she used to buy food for Hettie when she was ill. She was comforted by the thought that Hettie must be looking after herself as she always ordered the most expensive cuts of meat, until she discovered that the meat was not for Hettie but for her huge family of cats. Miss Day died in 1977, but to many of the older inhabitants of the valley the cottage is still known as 'Miss Day's cottage'.

5.8 Woodcote

The oldest parts of this house are believed to date from the 17th century. It is of timber-frame, brick, wattle-and-daub construction with a thatched roof with sides sloping down to about five feet from the ground. Before the building of Downs Close the land to the front of the house was an orchard with apples, pears and plums. There was also a chicken run with a chicken house in it.

Charlie Little was an archetypical Eastbury country man who came to live in Woodcote in the 1920s with his wife Charlotte and old English sheepdog Patagonia. He and his brother Fred, who lived in Lambourn, had spent many years under contract looking after a vast flock of sheep on the Falkland Islands. Charl, as he was known, was about 5ft 8in tall with a full set of trimmed greyish whiskers and twinkling dark eyes. He wore dark clothes with a battered type of trilby hat and boots. He looked like the advertisement for Digger Tobacco. In his field, where Downs Close is now, he had a large timber and thatched barn, pig sties and a timber and thatched donkey house with stabling for several donkeys and harnesses.

Charl died about 1936 and an Irishman, Charlie O'Neill, came to live there with his wife and two children. During the War, soon after the end of Woodcote was demolished by a tank (see section 4.10), Charlie was working on the willows by the river opposite the house. A crowd of children was gathered around watching. Charlie was up in one of the willows when his eight year old son Franny started sawing his way through the branch his father was standing on. The branch reached out over the river and the children gaped unbelievingly waiting for the inevitable to happen. Charlie came down to the ground a bit quick, or rather to the water, and everyone roared with laughter. Franny was completely out of control with laughter. Charlie picked himself up, took Franny by the scruff of the neck, and marched him indoors to bed. Charlie returned and looking round said, 'Now where was I?' and the children all shouted back, 'In the river,' and laughed some more. Through the laughter a sound came from behind them.....

Charlie O'Neill rides a bike with one wheel
And the spokes are exceedingly bent..
One day in the town, the bike let him down,
And arse over head he went.

Thus piped Franny whose mischievous little face grinned down

Woodcote

through the wreckage of what had once been the roof of the part of Woodcote that had just been demolished by the tank. Charlie rushed across the road and into the house shouting, ‘Don’t move, don’t move!’ and having rescued Franny proceeded to give him a good beating, more out of relief at having rescued him from falling to his death in the wrecked house than out of anger.

Today Woodcote has recovered from its encounters with the tank, the Littles and O’Neills, and now looks peaceful and relaxed behind its copper beech hedge.

Some things never change...

Protests over new development:
The following is taken from a record of the Berkshire travelling assize, dated 1248[38].

'An assize comes to declare whether Henry of Hinton, Walter of Berleg and Henry Hereward have unjustly raised a certain dike in Eastbury to the nuisance of Richard of Brockton's free tenement in the same village, whereon he complains that by that dike he is obstructed so that he cannot go to his common of pasture with his beasts nor cart his hay and corn as conveniently as he used to do. Henry and the others come and say nothing to stay the assize.
The jurors say that Henry and the others have not raised that dike unjustly to the nuisance of Richard's free tenement in that village as the writ says, because they say that the dike was raised in Henry's separate [enclosure] and that Richard never could do carting where that dike is raised except by Henry's grace and permission. So it adjudged that Henry and the others [are] without day and Richard takes nothing by this assize but is in mercy for a false claim by surety of Robert of Wasing.'

Flooding from the Lambourn stream—indignation at inaction by the authorities:
The following appeared in the Newbury Weekly News, July 1903.

'STREAM OVERFLOW. The extraordinary rise of the springs which, so far as can be remembered, is quite unprecedented at this period of the year, has caused great inconvenience to the inhabitants of cottages situate near the Lambourn stream (at Eastbury in particular)... several families having to live upstairs, owing to the water coming in on the ground floor, and the roads in some parts can only be traversed by getting over the boots in water. The principal cause of all this inconvenience and discomfort is the fact of the weeds in the stream having been allowed to grow to such an extent as to almost fill up the bed. Considerable indignation has been generally expressed at the inaction of the authorities having power in the matter, in allowing the nuisance to continue without any proceedings being taken. The Parish Councils do not appear to have any power, but there surely must be some authority able to deal with the matter.'

Train Disaster
From the Newbury Weekly News, February 1901

'DEPLORABLE END OF A FAVOURITE DONKEY. -- The driver and passengers by the last train from Newbury on Friday evening noticed a slight jump on the wheels, between Eastbury and Bockhampton, but nothing further was thought of the matter till the engine cleaner saw the front of the engine and noticed some blood and hair. A party immediately returned to the place where the jump had been noticed, and found an unfortunate donkey across the line, head and feet severed. The unlucky animal had strayed on the line, not having been stabled as usual. It was the property of Mrs Thompson, of the Vicarage, and was quite a useful pet.'

The Rooks

Stand or sit outside at Eastbury and what do you hear? Certainly more cars than you would have heard a hundred years ago and, if the wind is in a certain direction, the droning sound of the motorway. You will not hear horses and carts, but the sounds of hooves are still common, albeit lighter than the farm horses of a hundred years ago. The sound of children at play can still be heard even if the demise of the school means that the sound of playground excitement is missing. The church bells still chime on Sundays when there is a service. The ripple of the river is still there, with the splashing of ducks and moorhens. And what else? If you are outside for any length of time you will hear, along with the welcome songs of so many birds, the raucous sound of the rooks, as they must have been heard for centuries.

In years gone by rooks were considered vermin and boys would use catapults to shoot them while they were young and tender enough for cooking. The wings, breast and legs of a rook could be used to make a pie, boiled in a pot with onions and carrots. The cooked meat, hard boiled eggs, vegetables and some liquor were put into a pie dish and covered with pastry. Rook pie smelt awful when the crust was cut into, and looked even worse sitting dark-looking on the plate, but it was delicious to eat, especially with boiled potatoes.

A London man, Mr Fuller, appeared in the Lambourn Valley area at about the start of World War II to purchase pigeons (among other things). After a while the pigeons became scarce. Frank Pounds, a farmer's son, was a good shot and jokingly said, 'What about some black ones?' Mr Fuller asked what he meant and Frank said, 'Rooks'. Frank was asked to get about 12 for the next week, and after those first 12 Mr Fuller reported he would take as many as Frank could supply. Frank asked what Mr Fuller was doing with them and was told that the chef at The Dorchester Hotel was turning them into pate. What an auspicious ending for Eastbury's rooks!

6 Some Eastbury Characters

A brass of the first John de Estbury in Lambourn Church

6.1 John de Estbury

It is perhaps misleading to profile a single John de Estbury as an Eastbury character, as there were at least five John de Estburys living in the area between the mid 14th and mid 16th centuries. Only two can really be classed as Eastbury folk however, the remainder being based in Lambourn (including the John de Estbury that established the Isbury almshouses in 1501).

The first Eastbury-based John comes to our attention in the 1360s, when he set about acquiring acquired Eastbury Manor and its estate, through a mixture of opportunism and under-hand dealing. The manor had been in the hands of the Wanting family, but in 1360, on the death of William de Wanting, ownership passed to his sister Joan de Wanting, who was an idiot. She was placed in the custody of John de Estbury[39] and in 1365 he acquired a large slice of the estate from her on the pretext that she had regained her sanity. He acquired further portions from her, and from others that held shares in the estate, in 1367 and 1369.

On his death in 1372 the entire holding was entered among his lands. However, justice caught up with him at this point and the grants he had acquired from Joan de Wanting were disallowed. His heir was his son, another John de Estbury, who was left to re-acquire the whole manor and its estate by more legitimate means. He was clearly a very wealthy man and is listed in the Poll Tax entries for 1381 as having a taxable assessment of 13s 4d, the highest by some margin in the whole of what is now the parishes of Lambourn, East Garston and Hungerford. This wealth enabled him to purchase the remaining parts of the Eastbury Manor estate, which he had completed by 1396. He died, without children, in 1406, and the manor then passed to Ralph Arches, the grandson of his sister Edith.

Elijah Bew's initials and foundation stone Methodist Chapel

6.2 Elijah Bew

Do any historical research into Eastbury and the name Elijah Bew crops up over and over again. As his obituary says, he had long 'been intimately connected with the religious and public life of the village and neighbourhood.' Born in Woodlands St Mary in the mid 1820s, he was an apprentice carpenter to his father by the time of the 1841 census. He went on to be a farmer, land agent and valuer of great repute, acting for such as Sir Francis Burdett, the absentee Lord of Eastbury Manor.

Mr Bew was farming 200 acres in Eastbury in 1861, probably at Barrett's Farm, his late father-in-law's farm. He had married Sarah Barrett seven years previously. They had moved from Barrett's Farm by 1871, probably to Middle Farm—they were certainly in Middle Farm in 1881. Elijah stayed there until a year or so before his death when he moved to Cross House. Sarah and he had a daughter and a son ten years apart. Sarah died in 1883, and he married again, but his second wife Mary Ann died aged 49 in 1892. Elijah died in 1903.

Methodism played an important part in Mr Bew's life; it seems his family were all Methodists. His name first appears in the records of the Wesleyan Chapel at Eastbury in 1854, the year he married, and thereafter is always present until his death almost fifty years later. He most likely met his first wife through Methodism as her father, Richard Barrett, was closely linked to the Eastbury Wesleyan Chapel, contributing much time and money to the cause and acting as a steward and a teacher for many years. Elijah Bew followed in his footsteps.

Mr Bew was responsible for the Wesleyan Chapel being enlarged in 1859/60 and again in 1876. His untidy but careful notes in an old chapel account book explain why the work was considered necessary, what was done, how much it cost and how the monies would be raised. He was obviously proud of the work and this is further displayed in his drafts of a report describing the second extension for the Newbury Weekly News. He concludes, 'The

whole work is well done, and has been carried out under the direction of Mr E Bew.'[40] No doubt the experience he acquired as a carpenter in his early years helped.

He appears to have been the chapel steward from the 1850s until his death. He taught the men's evening classes, held in the chapel, for several decades,[41] and was also a teacher at the chapel day school, teaching three to seven year olds (at least in the 1870s). He was a steward of the Hungerford Circuit (of which Eastbury was part) and many times chapel steward for one or more of East Garston, Shefford Woodlands, Lambourn and Upper Lambourn. It appears that whenever there were not enough people to run things, he filled in.

For many years he was a Guardian of the Hungerford Union for the Parish of Eastbury, an overseer of the poor. He attended meetings regularly and is reported to have used great discretion in dealing with cases which came up for consideration. His name appears on behalf of Eastbury in a Charity Commission document of 1892 bringing together eight local charities for administrative purposes.

He was a juror on the Homage Jury of the 'Courts Baron' of The Manor of Eastbury (the local manorial court that considered events and misdemeanours occurring within the manor boundaries) from 1856 until his death, only missing one of the juries which took place in those years. He was a District Councillor for Eastbury Ward 1900/01 when, at the age of 75, he appears to have stepped in to replace a long serving councillor.

He was the enumerator for Eastbury for the 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 censuses of population. His recording, particularly in respect of addresses, was frustratingly deficient (for the modern researcher), but then he almost certainly did not have these longer term requirements in mind when he completed his returns and he, of course, knew where everyone lived.

He was fondly recalled as 'lijah Bew by fellow Methodists in the village. He is remembered to have had a cheerful disposition and

a love for children. In 1901, at a musical entertainment to raise money for street lighting in the village, he was reported to have, 'roused the risible faculties of the audience intensely in his humorous reading'. There were entertainments at the chapel periodically too, and it is good to think of 'lijah taking part as well as reporting to the local paper on them.

6.3 George Baylis

George Ferguson Baylis was born in Bradfield, Berks and moved to Eastbury Manor with his sister, Annie Baylis, in 1900 at the age of 26. He came from a farming family, the eldest son of another George Baylis, who farmed at Wyfield Manor, near Boxford. George senior was one of the outstanding agriculturalists of his day and was at one time the largest grower of barley in the country. George junior inherited many of his father's farming instincts and was also a great barley grower, though Eastbury Manor is not an ideal farm for the production of good barley. His enterprise in running an efficient arable operation is exemplified by his purchase (from the United States) of what is reputed to have been the first combine harvester used in this country.

As well as success with arable crops he was a very astute judge of cattle and built up an impressive herd. His milk churns

George Baylis (in bowler hat) at Coronation celebratrion, 1937

constituted the main commercial traffic at Eastbury Halt for the railway.

As with many successful businessmen he was not to be trifled with. In 1901 an old tramp stole two swedes, value 2d, from one of Mr Baylis's fields. He was ordered to answer for his crime at the Magistrates Court, but did not attend as he was in the Hungerford workhouse. After two further attempts to hear the case, when the villain still failed to appear, the charge was dismissed. However an example of his softer side was provided when in the 1930s a young girl, Sylvia Hillier, fell off her bicycle in front of him having just been to the Post Office to buy the week's supply of corn for the family's chickens. The corn went all over the road and she frantically tried to scoop it up as they were too poor to be able to buy any more that week. Mr Baylis picked her up, took her into his yard and filled her sack with his own corn, warning her not to ride her bicycle again until she could control it. When Sylvia got home her mother thought she had been shoplifting, as she had twice as much corn as her money would have paid for!

He had a huge area (for his day) under cultivation, extending to well over 2000 acres at its peak, and comprising Eastbury Manor Farm, Bockampton Manor Farm, Leckhampstead Manor Farm, Place Farm, Lambourn and White House Farm, Upper Lambourn.

He was a regular visitor to the Red Lion pub in Lambourn, and during 'George's hour' no one else was allowed to pay for a drink. He travelled there in his horse and trap and for the return journey, with Mr Baylis often a little the worse for wear, he relied on his trusty horse to find the way home.

George Baylis died in March 1942 at the age of 67. He had returned from his fields one day feeling unwell, but had still insisted on taking his usual evening trip to Lambourn. On returning to Eastbury Manor he became seriously ill and died forty-eight hours later.

6.4 Freddie Quarterman

Freddie is best remembered for living in a tree. His tree was an elm trunk which lay horizontally in Pounds Meadow. Much of the branches end of it had been chopped off and about three-quarters of what was left of the trunk was hollow from the roots end. This is where Freddie lived during the summer months. He had a piece of sacking over the entrance and if this was drawn across, then everyone knew he was in residence.

Freddie was born in 1863 in the Bradfield Union workhouse and spent most of his childhood and early adult life in West Ilsley. He worked as an agricultural labourer and by the time of the 1901 census he had arrived in Eastbury, working as a carter on a farm. What made him settle in Eastbury and when and why he took to living rough are not known. Certainly, by the 1920s he was an Eastbury village tramp.

Before taking up residence in his tree Freddie had lived in East View (then derelict), along Back Street and then in an out-house attached to Middle Farm, when Frank Spackman was there. At some point after Frank Spackman sold Middle Farm, Freddie took to sleeping in the tree during the summer months and going to the Hungerford workhouse for the winter.

When the nights became too cold and Freddie decided it was time to go to the workhouse, he would go to Mr Pointer at the Post Office, give him his watch, his knife, any money and other personal belongings to look after, and ask him to telephone the workhouse. The workhouse would then send transport to collect Freddie. Once there he would be stripped and his clothes burnt and after a good cleansing he would be given a new set of clothes, which would last him until he arrived at the workhouse the following winter. When he deemed it warm enough to live outside again, Freddie would leave the workhouse and walk back to Eastbury to resume residence in his hollow tree trunk.

Freddie's personal possessions included his watch, his knife and

Freddie Quarterman

his wood saw. He had a shoulder bag which was probably made out of old horse nose bags. He used to do rook starving, scaring rooks away from crops. He would be asked to do the job and be given some money to buy provisions with a promise of more when he came back. He would go off over the downs towards Wantage to Mr Baylis's fields and keep the birds off the crops. He probably originally worked for Mr Spackman doing this. Freddie also earned money by catching rabbits and selling them, although it was wise to smell the rabbit, especially inside, before buying from Freddie; he did not seem to mind how old they were and would sell anything even if he had found it dead. He had to have permission from Mr Spackman and Mr Baylis to catch rabbits on their land, but if he was rook starving he was allowed to catch rabbits too. He used to catch the rabbits with wire, setting traps when rook starving and collecting them the next day.

Living outdoors, Freddie did all of his cooking there. He might ask for some embers from a fire at the allotments and then use a stick to rake glowing embers out the bottom of the fire and pull them together near the path next to the allotment. He would set a can filled with water from a bottle in his pocket on top of the embers, take a strip of bacon and some bread out of his pocket and put the bacon and the piece of bread on to a stick each. Holding the bacon over the fire he would catch the drips of fat from it as it cooked onto the bread. He would take tea leaves and then some sugar from bits of paper in his pocket and stir these with a stick into the water in the can. The smells of the bacon and the hot tea were marvellous; it was an enviable meal.

Freddie would be given food and tea by the villagers. He used to go into Kate Perris's shop for odds and ends, and Kenneth Spackman remembers him calling at the back door of Pigeon House and his mother giving him bread and cheese or left-overs and tea in a jam-jar. He was given old bread at the bakers. He called on Mrs Sherman, his neighbour at Pound Meadow House, and asked with success for an old shirt. People were fond of Freddie and pleased to be able to help him.

He had a bad stutter and it usually took him a while to get out

what he wanted to say. Consequently he used to be teased by some of the children. Cyril Sherman recalls:

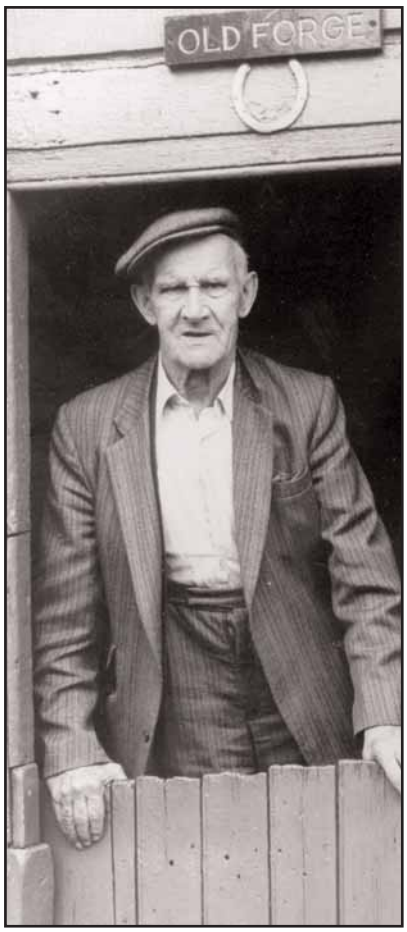
> 'I remember once, before I started school, coming home from Sunday morning service with my brother and some other big boys. Someone said, 'Where's old Freddie, let's see if he's there.' His sacking was across the entrance to the hollow tree so we knew that he was there. The big boys went through the fence and some of them climbed on to the trunk and jumped up and down and gave poor Freddie a rude awakening. They jumped down and ran like hell as Freddie rushed out of his hollow shouting and throwing his stick after them. As they passed me back out on the road, two of the boys took my hands and I flew along between them as they ran. I looked over my shoulder and saw this raggety old thing flying across the paddock at a tremendous rate. Poor Freddie had a lot to put up with from some of us children. My father got very upset if he knew that we had been involved.'

Freddie had one or two favourite spots where he could be found. He was often to be seen up the Old Wantage Road. He would appear at the bakery at 3am when Bill Crook arrived to light the fire in the stoke hole, on the far end of the building near to Cross House. He was allowed to sit on a box in the stoke hole to warm himself. He often used to sit on the steps of the cross in the square. He was a kindly man and offered sweets to children, though most refused them because they came out of his pocket!

Freddie disappeared at the end of the 1930s. He appears to have gone to the Hungerford workhouse for the winter as usual but his condition must have deteriorated as he was transferred at some point to the County Council Emergency Hospital at Wallingford, where he died in 1940, aged 77.

6.5 Vic Alderton

Vic Alderton was, for over 60 years, the village blacksmith and farrier. During that time he met most of the people who mattered in racing and was respected by all of them.



Vic Alderton

He was born in Kennett, Suffolk in 1897—his father had a pub with a forge out the back.[42] He started training as a blacksmith at the age of 10, and became a private smith to trainer Major C H Stevens at Rottingdean in the early 1920s. Major Stevens moved to Eastbury in 1923 (to live in Eastbury House) and asked Vic to come with him. Vic only agreed to come for a few weeks 'to see how it worked out', but ended up staying considerably longer. He married his Suffolk bride that same year and in 1926 was called back to Suffolk to take over the family business. But when he gave his notice, Major Stevens said, 'You're worth more to me' and agreed to pay him £4 per week plus £10 per winner—he had 33 and a half winners that year! That was phenomenal money for a farrier, and he was soon able to save enough to buy the Forge (on Back Street), Forge Cottage and the business from Alf Little in the late 1920s. Some years later he purchased the old Primitive Methodist Chapel to use as his garage-cum-store.

Many famous race horses were shod by Mr Alderton and his son Roy, including Battleship (Grand National winner 1938), Snow Night (Derby winner 1974), and Mr. Frisk (Grand National winner 1990). Shoes from a number of the great horses are fixed to the door of the Forge. As well as shoeing horses, Vic turned his hand to replacing the metal rim on the large cart-wheels. This involved heating the metal rim in the fire, fixing it to the wheel mounted on a wooden platform and then, with the help of two men, throwing buckets of water over the hot iron to cool it and fix it to the rim. The huge clouds of steam created provided great delight for the village children.

For many years the village cricket team was run from the forge. Vic's prowess with bat, ball, card, cue and dart earned him a high reputation away from racing; he got to the final of the News of the World Darts championship. Helped by his son and grandson, Vic's business prospered and he continued to work until well into his eighties. In the 1970s he passed the business to his son, Roy, who continued to run it as a farrier's until his own retirement in 1992. Vic continued to live in Forge Cottage, and thus 'keep his hand in', for many years. He passed away in 1992.

Arthur Salt

6.6 Arthur Salt

A hero of the First World War, Arthur Salt came to Eastbury in 1926 after his marriage to Beatrice King, and was to live here for the remainder of his days. Born at Combe, near Hungerford, in 1894, he moved to Newbury at the age of 12 and when war broke out in 1914 he volunteered for the Royal Berkshire Regiment. He was sent to France and spent his 21st birthday in the trenches. Soon afterwards he was severely wounded in the battle of Loos, when half his face was blown away.[43] The following is the story of his wartime experience, taken from a Newbury Weekly News report on his death in 1969.

> 'Sent to capture slag heaps, Mr Salt remembered reaching the top when a bullet entered his right cheek and went out of his left, losing his hat as he spun round. When he regained consciousness darkness had fallen and he started to crawl until he again lost consciousness. He remembered looking up, sometimes seeing darkness, sometimes daylight, from the hole, filled with muddy water, into which he had fallen. He was told afterwards that he had lain there for four days and nights during which time the Germans had re-taken the ground, before being driven back again by the British, all believing him dead. His next conscious moment was hearing a voice saying 'One's here, but I think he's had it.' Then, seeing him still alive, his rescuers carried him what seemed miles away to an underground hospital dug-out. One of the happiest days of his life, he used to say, was when someone tied a label on him saying 'This one for Blighty."

After 14 months in hospital having the left side of his face rebuilt he was discharged from the army on a disability pension. When he moved to Eastbury he went to work on the farm of Mr C Denton, and continued to work for the Denton family until his retirement in the late 1950s.

He lived at Elm View, on Back Street, which had virtually no garden, so he rented an allotment on Pound Meadow close by

Ernie Ward

where he could grow his vegetables and, even more importantly, empty the contents of his lavatory bucket! The allotment also came in useful during the Second World War when Arthur had an air raid shelter there—the only person in Eastbury to have one. He built it himself; his experiences during the First war must have helped. Basically he dug a hole, had blast walls, corrugated iron roof and earth over that. Everyone went to inspect it.

Luckily his experience of the Second World War was a lot less traumatic than the First, and he never had cause to use his shelter. After the war he moved to the Council Houses and lived there through his retirement until his death in 1969 at the age of 75.

6.7 Ernie Ward

Ernie Ward was born in 1904 and lived in Eastbury or Lambourn all his life. All 70+ years of his working life he worked for the Baylises at Manor Farm. He married Dorothy in 1928, his wife working for Mrs Baylis for 50 years. For many years Clifford House (now Spicers Farm) was occupied by the Ward family which comprised Ernie and Dorothy and, at various times, their four children John, Pamela, Clifford and Barry.

On his own admission he was a duffer at school and George Baylis took him out of school at the age of 12. His first job was chopping firewood but he soon 'graduated' to general farm work. To present generations Ernie's early working life sounds like something from the Third World. He would talk matter-of-factly about driving (i.e. walking) cattle from Eastbury to Newbury and on as far afield as Andover. When he started work the only power came from horses. There were 15 on the farm and, having got up at quarter to five in the morning, Ernie would open the gate allowing them on to the road where they trotted down to the farm for their early feed. He would speak about the introduction of steam engines, the earliest of which would power cables which hauled a plough across a field. In due course such engines were replaced by tractors but, as Ernie would observe, 'you still got wet, only faster!' as they had no cabs for protection from the weather.

Wages were low (25 shillings a week) and he supplemented his income by catching rats for which a bonus of twopence a tail was paid. In later life he admitted that he hid a few away to bring out again the following week.

Still, life was not without its lighter moments, and Ernie would laugh about the increasingly tipsy day he and two mates had spent at Weymouth riding the donkeys. It culminated in Ernie leaving his false teeth in Savernake Forest (later recovered and, it is rumoured, put straight back in his mouth again when found!). He would also talk of the night he incurred Dorothy's wrath when he returned home with the Christmas goose, minus its head, following a cycling mishap en route from Lambourn.

In retirement he continued to get up at a quarter to five having been used to getting to work at seven o'clock for 73 years. Dorothy died in 1980. Ernie's neighbour at Fairchild Cottage was churchwarden Mrs Alice Pontin. It has been suggested that the long-lived widowhood of both was nurtured by a querulous serenity based on six month's warfare (usually provoked by an observation about Alice's bell ringing) followed by six months of peace. Two lovely people fondly remembered by many villagers today.

Helen Thomas in the year of her marriage to Edward

6.8 Helen Thomas

Helen Thomas[44] came to live in Bridge Cottage, Eastbury, in 1954 and stayed there for the last 12 years of her life. Accompanied by her daughter Myfanwy, who taught for 21 years at Lambourn School, she rejoiced in the simple rural life and the pretty cottage. In her last days she became bed-ridden, but was still able to appreciate the birdsong that wafted into her bedroom.

Helen Noble was born in Liverpool in 1877, but had moved several times before coming to the Wandsworth Common district of London in the early 1890s. It was here that she met her future husband, Edward Thomas, in 1895. He shared her love of the country and wanted to be a writer—Helen's father, who was a

Helen at Bridge Cottage, 1960

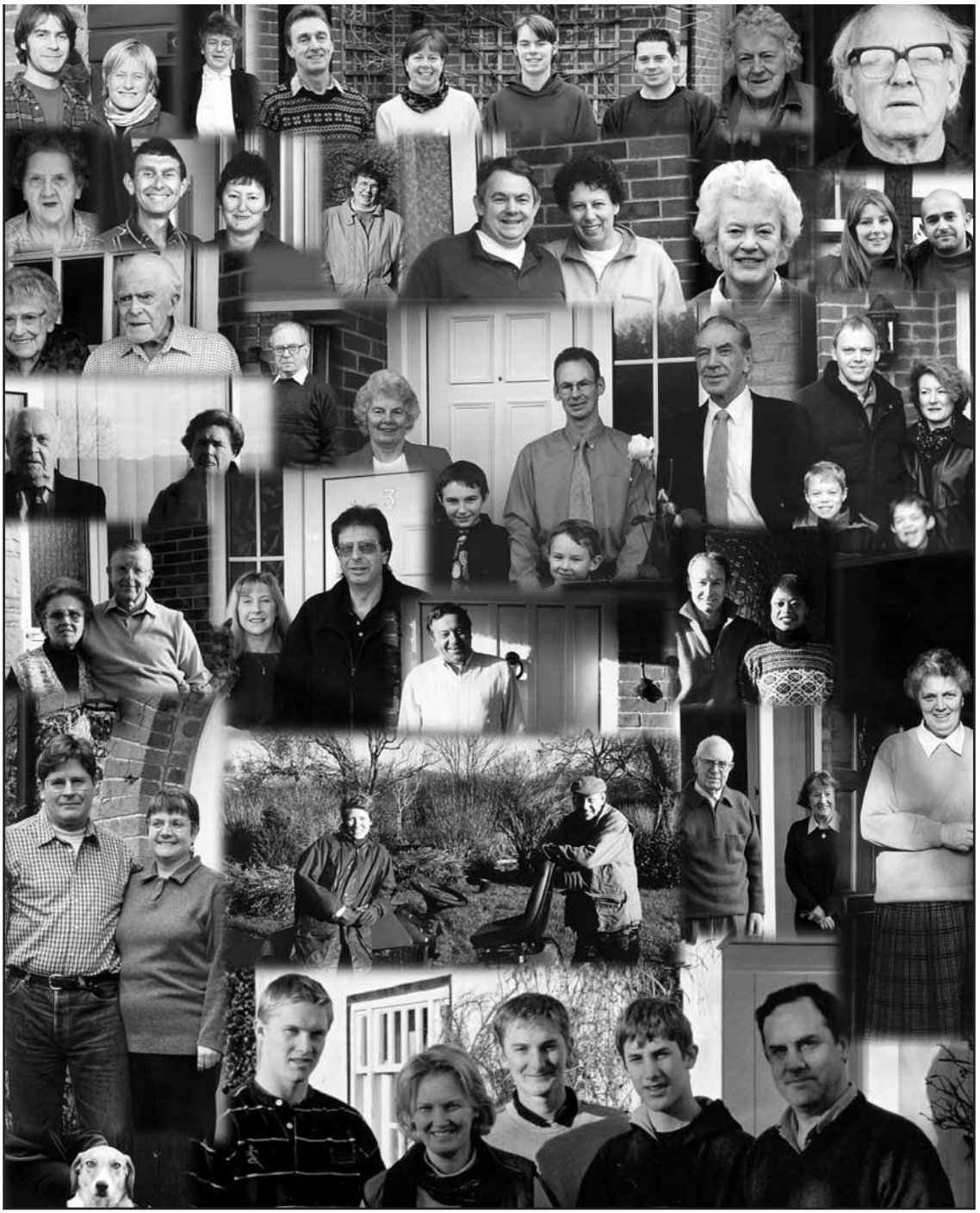
literary critic, had taken the young Edward under his wing. Helen and Edward married in 1899. They had three children, Merfyn (born 1900), Bronwen (1902) and Myfanwy (1910). Helen was a constant inspiration to Edward as he began to establish himself as a writer and then later as a poet (he did not write his first poem until December 1914), but they were very poor and she struggled to run the home on the meagre and irregular earnings that came from his writing.

At the onset of the First World War Edward was considering taking his family to live in America, but decided instead to join the Artists' Rifles in July 1915. The following year he was commissioned in the Royal Artillery and left for France in January 1917. Tragically he met his end at the battle of Arras on Easter Monday of the same year. Helen's world was shattered and she was to spend much of the rest of her life promoting his work. Not that she was without fame in her own right. In 1926 she published the first of her two volume autobiography, 'As it Was', on her life up to January 1900, and for several weeks it was amongst the best-sellers. The sequel, 'World Without End', which covered her life with Edward from 1900 until he departed for the front in 1917, came out five years later and for a short time Helen became something of a celebrity.[45]

She was friendly with many literary figures of the time, including D H Lawrence, who once came to stay with her. She held him in awe and appreciated his advice, though she was disturbed by his occasional blunt speaking. Reading his published letters, after his death, she was delighted to read the words written to a friend of his, 'I have met Helen Thomas. I like her'.

When she came to Eastbury she was 77 but was still active in her garden and in attending theatres in Oxford and Newbury. She loved her cottage, describing it in a letter to a friend: 'As for this cottage…it shapes into an adorable home. It is a most darling place ancient and gnarled and nooky and cornery and full of character and warmth'. She died at the cottage in 1967. The window in the church by Laurence Whistler (see section 4.4) remains as a memorial to her life and that of her beloved 'Edwy'.

7 People of Eastbury in 2001




SAN FRANCISCO

Appendix 1.1: The Population of Eastbury 1381-2001

Year	Population	Households	Notes
1381	*155*	61	Estimated from 1381 Poll Tax returns[46]
1522	*150*	45	Estimated from Muster Rolls[47]
1663	*200*	53	Estimated from Hearth Tax Returns[48]
1801	*330*	*66*	Estimated from 1801 Census total for Eastbury + Bockhampton[49]
1811	*320*	Not known	Estimated from 1811 Census total for Eastbury + Bockhampton[50]
1821	*330*	*71*	Estimated from 1821 Census total for Eastbury + Bockhampton[51]
1831	Not known	Not known	Census data not yet found
1841	350	83	Census[52]
1851	365	87	Census
1861	353	83	Census
1871	324	80	Census
1881	295	73	Census
1891	277	74	Census
1901	254	71	Census
1911	Not known	Not known	Census data not yet found
1921	230	Not known	Census
1931	240	Not known	Census
1941	Not known	Not known	No Census during WWII
1951	261	Not known	Census
1961	277	Not known	Census (from Oxford Diocesan Calendar 1970)
1971	*250*	Not known	Estimated from Electoral Rolls
1981	*277*	116	Census Small Area Statistics, Enumeration District 11DPBA07
1991	*290*	*123*	Census Small Area Stats, Enumeration Dist 11DPFS09 x 0.93[53]
2001	*295*	*125*	Estimated from Electoral Rolls
Figures in *italics* are estimated			

Appendix 1.2: Population Statistics for 1851, 1901 and 1991

Dwellings			
	1851	**1901**	**1991**
Inhabited	87	71	125
Uninhabited	2	7	NA
Total	**89**	**78**	**NA**
<5 Rooms	NA	28	30
% <5 Room	NA	39%	24%

Occupation (1991 not available)				
	1851	%emp	**1901**	%emp
Farmer	14		9	
Machine Propr'tor	0		2	
Ag Labourer	103		49	
Ag Total	**117**	**69%**	**60**	**56%**
Servant	12		7	
Housekeeper	2		5	
Service Total	**14**	**8%**	**12**	**11%**
Baker/Grocer	7		10	
Innkeeper/Brewer	3		4	
Carpenter	1		2	
Thatcher	1		0	
Shoemaker	3		1	
Tailor/Dressmak'r	3		1	
Charwoman	0		3	
Blacksmith	11		2	
Trades Total	**32**	**19%**	**23**	**21%**
Teacher	2		3	
Postman/Teleg'ph	0		2	
Policeman	0		1	
Professions Total	**2**	**1%**	**6**	**6%**
Other	4	2%	6	6%
Total Employed	**169**		**107**	

Households by size (%)			
Size	**1851**	**1901**	**1991**
H'hlds	*87*	*71*	*125*
1	3%	15%	30%
2	21%	25%	35%
3	20%	15%	13%
4	17%	15%	14%
5	15%	8%	7%
6	13%	8%	2%
7	3%	4%	0%
8	3%	6%	0%
9	2%	0%	0%
10	1%	0%	0%
11	1%	1%	0%
>11	0%	0%	0%
Av'ge Size	4.2	3.6	2.3

Age structure (%)			
Ages	**1851**	**1901**	**1991**
Eastbury Pop	*365*	*254*	*290*
0-14	35%	32%	19%
15-29	24%	20%	15%
30-44	19%	19%	20%
45-59	9%	16%	17%
60-74	11%	9%	19%
75+	2%	4%	10%
Average Age	28	31	41

Birthplace: distance from Eastbury (miles)				
	0	**1-5**	**6-15**	**>15**
1851	**181**	**107**	**56**	**21**
%	50%	29%	15%	6%
1901	**74**	**65**	**51**	**63**
%	29%	26%	20%	25%

Notes:

1. Figures for 1851 and 1901 for Eastbury are derived from individual enumeration returns.

2. Figures for 1991 for Eastbury come from the Census Small Area Statistics, ED FS09. Unfortunately, at the time of going to press these were the latest available because of a delay in publishing results from the 2001 Census at this scale.

Appendix 2: Vicars of Eastbury

Eastbury's church of St James the Greater was consecrated in 1853, though it did not have its own parish until 1867. The curates and vicars since its consecration are as follows:

1853-54	Richard Fort (curate)
1854-67	Arthur Majendie
1867-70	J C Roberts
1870-76	Henry David Grantham
1876-79	Walter Mills
1879-84	George Frederick Forbes
1885-88	Thomas Waters Burridge
1888-1901	Bernard Tyrell Thompson
1901-08	Alan Matheson
1908-17	Bertram Best Woolrych
1918-43	Cecil Holt Mandell-Jones
1944-64	Eric Watkinson Whitworth (with Woodlands St Marys, + East Garston from 1958)
1964-83	Michael Clarke (with Woodlands St Mary's + East Garston)
1983-	William J Stewart (with Lambourn + East Garston)

Revd Stewart and friend

Notes and references

1 The Place Names of Berkshire. Rev Walter W Skeat. Clarendon Press 1911. Pg 22. N.b. Margaret Gelling in The Place Names of Berkshire Pt 3 (The English Place Names Society, 1976, pg 831) says its probable meaning is 'the manor to the east of Bockhampton'.

2 History of Lambourn Church. John Footman. 1894. Pg 16-18, quoting original ref from Chapter house Books, St Paul's, W.D.16. pg366.

3 The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381, Part 1. Carolyn C Fenwick (Ed). British Academy 1998.

4 'Kennet Country'. Fred S Thacker. Blackwell 1932. Pg 247.

5 An Inquisition at Speenhamland, 1562. Berkshire Records Office Ref D/QI Q7/3

6 National Monuments Record ref 039385. English Heritage, 2001.

7 Victoria County History, Berkshire, volume 4. William Page and P H Ditchfield (eds), St Catherine Press, 1924, pg 252

8 Berkshire to Botany Bay. N E Fox. 1995? Pg44.

9 Berkshire Machine Breakers. Jill Chambers. 1999. Pg 72-73

10 Footman pg 1-2

11 Footman pg 194

12 Footman pg 138

13 Wiltshire Record Office Ref D1/2/29

14 Hungerford Circuit Schedule Books 1837-1894. Berkshire Records Office Ref D/MC 10/4A/1-3.

15 Indenture: Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, PRO Ref C54 9438

16 Indenture: Primitive Methodist Chapel, PRO Ref C54 15,864

17 Footman pg 150

18 Footman pg 149

19 Account book for the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Eastbury. Berkshire Records Office ref D/MS 6/1B/1. Plus Hungerford Circuit Schedule Books 1837-1894, BRO ref D/MC 10/4A/1-3.

20 Newbury Weekly News 16 February 1922

21 Hungerford Circuit Schedule Books 1837-1894. Berkshire Records Office ref D/MC 10/4A/1-3

22 There is a picture of Isaac Early in 1911, aged 104, in "East Garston Past and Present", East Garston Millennium 2000 Committee, 1999, pg 26.

23 Minutes Book, Methodist Chapel Trustees, Hungerford Circuit 1899-1908. Berkshire Records Office ref D/MC 11/1A/3

24 Reports of the Commissioners on Charity and Education: Berkshire 1815-1839. Pg33. Lambourn Parish Archive

25 Victoria County History, Berkshire, volume 4 pg 266.

26 'The Lambourn Branch'. Kevin Robertson and Roger Simmonds, Wild Swan Publications, 1984. Pg 4

27 Newbury Weekly News, 7 April 1898.

28 Robertson and Simmonds pg 98

29 Robertson and Simmonds pg 163

30 Map of the Enclosure Act 1776, Lambourn Parish Archive

31 A Transcript of 'A Surveigh of Lands, by Samuel Dabbe', Gwen Parker, 1988 (unpublished). Original document held in Reading Local Studies Library

32 Victoria County History, Berkshire, volume 4, pg 259

33 Berkshire Records Office Ref D/EX 51 E2, 'A Booke of the Yarde Lande within the Parish of Lamborne and the Severall Values of the Same Yarde Lands made in the 44th Yeare of the Reigne of Queene Elizabeth'.

34 Berkshire Records Office Ref D/A1/120/137, 137a

35 Mrs Mary Liddiard, widow of William Liddiard, married Francis King in 1870, but they remained at the manor for a further eight years.

36 Samuel Dabbe, in his Surveigh of Lands of 1654, claims that the land had been in the ownership of the Gifford family for five hundred years. There were, indeed, Giffords recorded as resident in Eastbury in the two earliest surviving lists of residents - the Poll Tax list of 1381 and the Muster Roll of 1522.

37 A Transcript of 'A Surveigh of Lands, by Samuel Dabbe', Gwen Parker, 1988 (unpublished)

38 'Roll and Writ file of the Berkshire Eyre 1248'. The Selden Society 1973. M T Clanchy (Ed). Pgs 61-2

39 Victoria County History, Berks, vol 4, pg 259

40 Drafts in Berkshire Records Office Ref D/MS 6/1C/1; Newspaper article in Newbury Weekly News July 1876.

41 Register of Infants Section of Eastbury Wesleyan Day School 1878; Berkshire Records Office ref D/MS 6/8/1. Register of Eastbury Wesleyan Evening Classes 1880/1, BRO ref D/MS 6/8/2

42 Many details extracted from article in The Sporting Life, 16 January 1984

43 Newbury Weekly News, 20 November 1969.

44 Details taken from 'Time and Again' by Helen Thomas (edited by Myfanwy Thomas), Carcanet New Press, 1978

45 In 1988 Carcanet Press issued the two books, plus some extra material, in a single volume entitled 'Under Storm's Wing'. Subsequently published in paperback by Paladin books, 1990.

46 Following Russell's assumption that (nationally) 33% of the population was under 14 in 1377 ('British Medieval Population', p46), assume 35% were under 15 in 1381. Eastbury's adults (aged 15+) registered for tax in 1381 were 101, hence estimated population (without allowing for any non-recording of adults) is 101 x 100/65 = 155.

47 Using a factor of 10/3 to inflate the listed residents, following the method used by Wrigley and Schofield (The Population History of England 1541-1871: A reconstruction. E A Wrigley and R S Schofield. Edward Arnold, 1981. Pg 568)

48 Derived by inflating the number of household heads with 1 or more hearths for 1663 (53, n.b. it was 52 in 1664) by an average household size of 3.78, taken from Wrigley and Schofield pg 571 (relating to England excluding London for 1695).

49 Estimated from 1801 Census figures for Eastbury + Bockhampton (Population 398, inhabited

dwellings 79, taken from 'Topographical and Statistical Details of the County of Berks', J Marshall, 1830). From Baptism records for 1796-1805, Eastbury baptisms were 82% of Eas+Boc total, and for burials over same period were 84%, so assume population was 83% of total. C.f . 1841 Census when Eastbury was 82% of combined total.

50 Estimated from 1811 Census figures for Eastbury + Bockhampton (Population 386), using same proportion as for 1801/1841, viz 83% (see previous ref).

51 Estimated from 1821 Census figures for Eastbury + Bockhampton (Population 398, families 87, inhabited dwellings 85), using same proportion as for 1801/1841, viz 83% (see previous ref).

52 Registrar General's Censuses of Population 1841-1901 - figures for Eastbury taken from Enumeration Records.

53 1991 Census Small Area Statistics Enumeration District (ED) 11DPFS09 contains 10 dwellings outside Eastbury village. From the 2002 Electoral Roll these represented 7% of the total dwellings in the ED. Accordingly the Eastbury household and population figures for 1991 are taken as 93% of the totals for the whole ED.

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