

Appendix C - Historical Development

1.1.7. A summary below highlights the key issues relating to key periods of development.

Prehistoric & Roman (c. 6000 BC - 5th Century AD):

- Early human activity on the Downs, including Neolithic farming and settlements.
- Establishment of Roman villas, indicating significant agricultural activity.
- Decline in population due to soil erosion and depletion from intensive farming.

Anglo-Saxon Period (c. 5th - 11th Centuries AD):

- Arrival of Anglo-Saxons, leading to the establishment of settlements of Lambourn, Upper Lambourn, Eastbury, and Bockhampton.
- Sheep farming emerges as a dominant economic activity.

Norman Conquest (1066 AD):

- Significant changes in land ownership following the Norman invasion.

Early Medieval Period (12th - 15th Centuries AD):

- Establishment of a market in Lambourn.
- Rebuilding of the Minster church.
- Significant impact of the Black Death on the population.

Later Medieval – Early Modern Period (16th - 18th Centuries AD):

- Continued growth and development of larger houses.
- Establishment of almshouses to support the poor.
- Significant agricultural changes, including enclosure of common lands.

19th Century:

- Rise of horse racing as a major industry.
- Construction of the Lambourn Valley Railway.
- Growth in population and services.
- Impact of the agricultural depression.

20th Century:

- World War II, with the construction of Membury Airfield.
- Post-war housing development and growth.
- Closure of the Lambourn Valley Railway.

Present:

- Lambourn remains a significant centre for horse racing.
- Challenges related to housing affordability and the impact of modern development.

1.1.8. Evidence for, and accounts of the history of the Parish of Lambourn are widely scattered amongst both archaeological and written sources. The earliest archaeological evidence (e.g. field systems, burials and hill forts) shows that there was widespread human activity on the Lambourn Downs from the late Neolithic period (approximately 6,000 years ago) when the land began to be cleared by the first farmers.

1.1.9. The remains of Romano-British field systems, many of which probably overlaid older fields, show the land continued to be cleared and was intensively cultivated. A substantial villa site at Maddie Farm seems to have been occupied into the 5th century A.D. and other villa sites have been identified within close vicinity.



Figure 3. Maddle Farm. Picture Taken in 2013 © Copyright Des Blenkinsopp [geograph.org.uk/p/3375385](https://www.geograph.org.uk/p/3375385)

- 1.1.10. The great pre-historic trackway, the Ridgeway, which runs to the north of the current parish boundary, connected these early settlements to the wider world. To the south, the Romans built Ermin Street, linking the tribal capital at Calleva (Silchester) to Corinium (Cirencester), whilst another road ran through what is now Oxford to Wantage and on towards Ermin Street.
- 1.1.11. With fertile soil and good communication links it might be expected that larger settlements would develop on the Downs, yet by the end of the Roman period the widespread population on the uplands had collapsed. Why? It seems likely that intensive farming and constant ploughing had eroded and depleted the soil, such that large-scale arable farming was no longer viable on wide areas of the Downs. Late Roman finds have been discovered in the upper valley of the River Lambourn which, along with 5th century Saxon artefacts, point to increasing numbers of people settling there from that period onwards.
- 1.1.12. Anglo-Saxon rule developed and expanded over the next 600 years, leaving an indelible impact on the Parish. Lambourn, Upper Lambourn, Eastbury and Bockhampton are all Anglo-Saxon names. The likely meaning of Lambourn – the lambs’ stream – points to the major land use, as do “Ewe Hill” and “Wetherdown”. The downs were ideal for sheep-farming, which formed the basis of the local and national economy for hundreds of years.

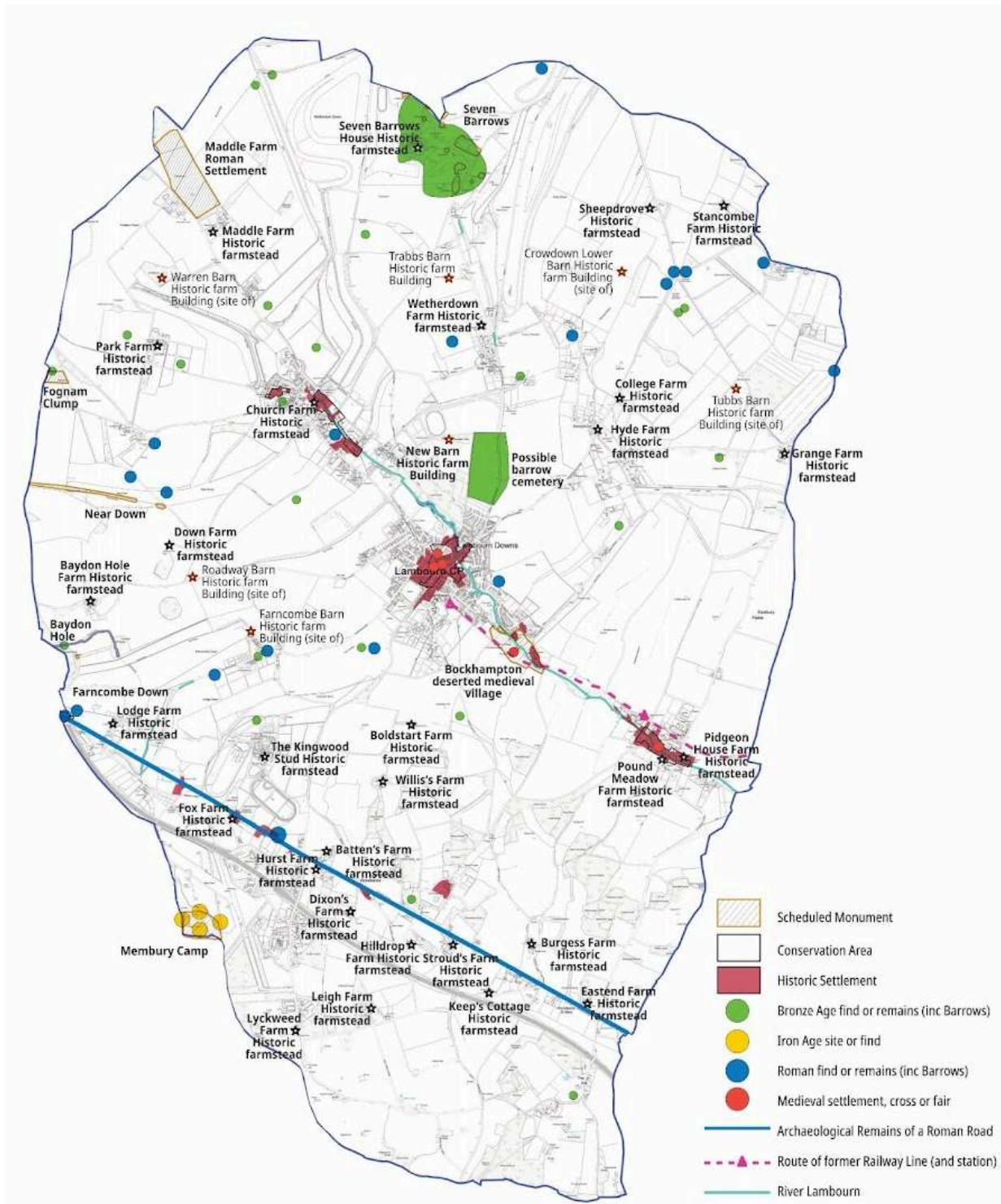


Figure 4. The Historic Environment of Lambourn (see Character Appraisal Appendix A for More Details)

1.1.13. The first written record of Lambourn is in King Alfred’s will in 889 A.D., in which Lambourn was one of three manors left to his wife, Ealswith. Perhaps not the most important of royal lands (those went to his sons) but rich enough to help support a royal widow.

1.1.14. The distinctive oval street pattern in the centre of Lambourn, outlined by Parsonage Lane, with its large sarsen stones, Big Lane, the Broadway

and Oxford Street, is based on the Saxon enclosure around the Minster, or mother, church. Within the enclosure there would have lived a small community of monks, nuns and priests, serving a wide congregation. A priest, Croc, is mentioned in 1017 and a 1032 charter of King Cnut endowed the existing church.

- 1.1.15. The administrative boundaries of the later parish were also established under Anglo-Saxon rule. The outline of the Hundred of Lambourn closely follows that of the combined modern parishes of Lambourn and East Garston. Each Hundred was based on the needs of 100 householders and smaller divisions, tithings, on 10. The tithings of Upper Lambourn, Eastbury and Hadley with Blagrove (Lambourn Woodlands) all evolved from these beginnings and form the basis of Parish wards today.

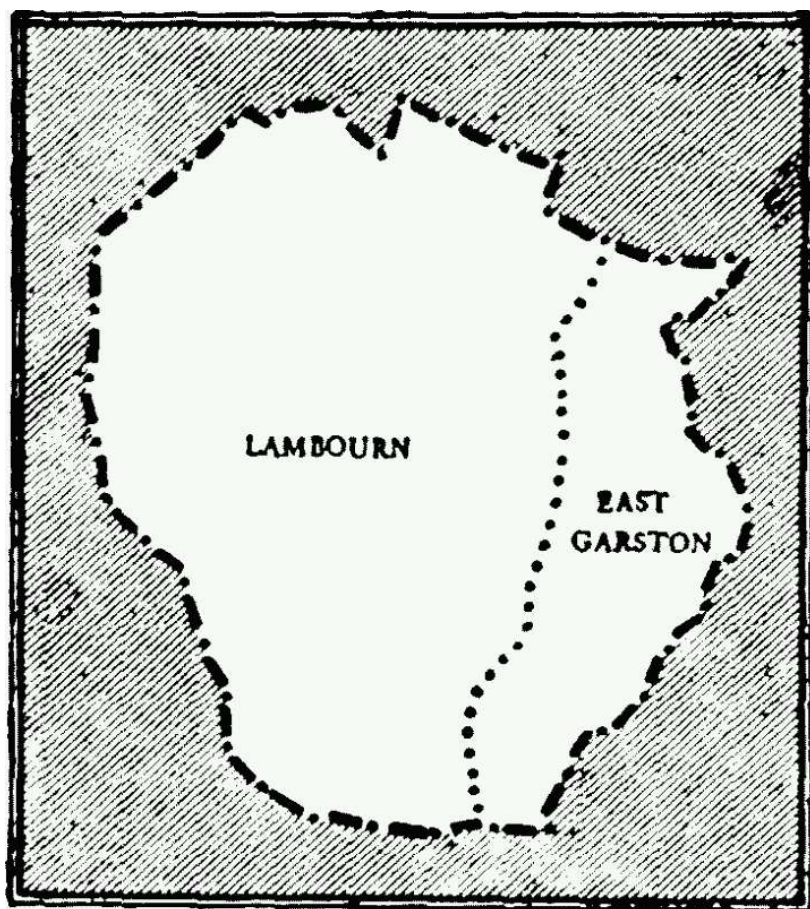


Figure 5. Index Map to The Hundred of Lambourn Source:
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol4/p246>

- 1.1.16. The impact of the Norman Conquest on Lambourn can be seen in the Domesday Book of 1086. The majority of the land was still held by the King but all the landholders changed. The area of the Parish of Lambourn, including Bockhampton, is recorded as having 156 households. The value of the land holdings had fallen since 1066, but all seem to be recovering by 1086.

1.1.17. In Lambourn itself, settlement appears to have developed initially along Oxford Street. By the later 12th century, Lambourn was prosperous enough to afford to rebuild the Saxon Minster - creating the Norman features familiar today, notably the west doorway and the sturdy pillars of the Nave – and expand. Distinctive burgage plots were laid out along the High Street, which suggests a plan to create a borough.

1.1.18. A charter for a market in Lambourn was granted in 1227 and the name Chipping Lambourn, indicating a market, was used from this time. There may have been a market prior to this, suggested by the siting of the marketplace beside the entrance to the Saxon church, and the charter simply confirmed its existence following a time of expansion in the marketplace area. A fair had been granted in 1219.

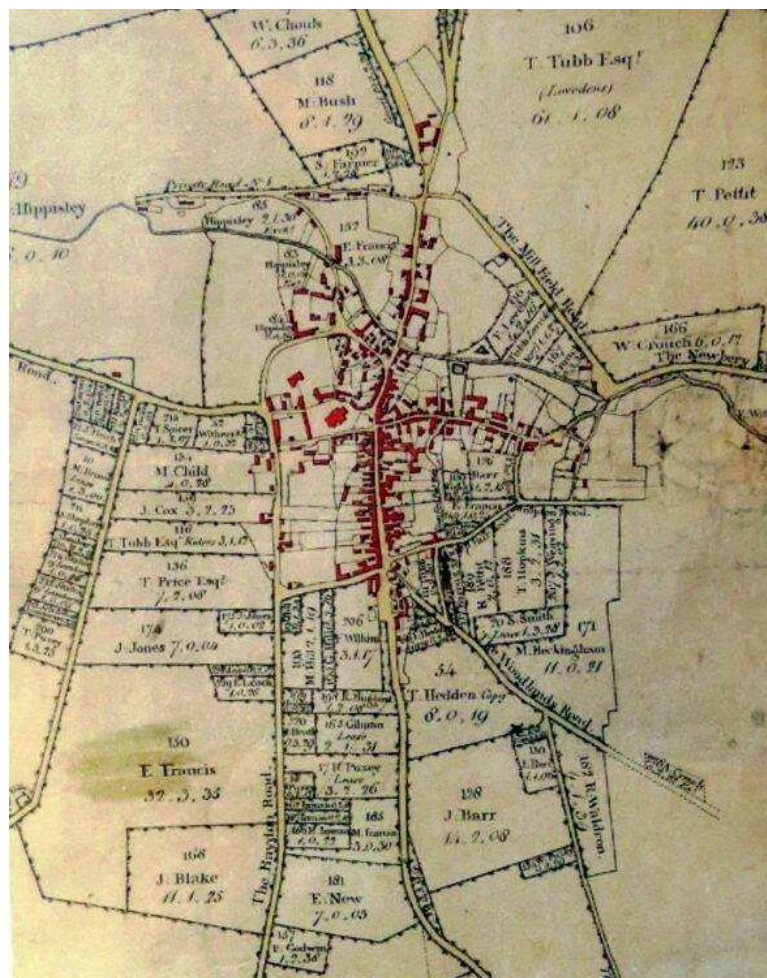


Figure 6. Chipping Lambourn, as Drawn in 1805

1.1.19. It is difficult to assess the effect of bubonic plague (the Black Death (1347 – 1350)) on Lambourn. In 1341 the Inquisitiones Nonarum noted that about 700 acres of land, previously cultivated, was not being worked due to the poverty of the parishioners. The pandemic can only have made things worse. Bockhampton certainly seems to have shrunk, although it was not abandoned at this time.



- 1.1.20. The population seems finally to have been recovering by 1381. The Poll Tax returns for Eastbury show a taxable population of 101, whilst Lambourn had 180, which may be underestimates, due to widespread evasion of this tax.
- 1.1.21. Economic recovery may also have been under way by 1446, when a charter for a weekly Friday market and two annual sheep fairs was granted by Henry VI. This confirmed, or perhaps reinvigorated, the previous market, and the market cross was erected at this time.
- 1.1.22. Whatever the state of the local economy, support for the poor was needed – the Almshouses in Chapel Lane (they have had several names but are usually referred to as Hardrett’s) were in existence during the reign of Edward IV (1461-70; 1471-1483) – and continued, with the foundation in 1502 by John Isbury, of the almshouses next door to the church.
- 1.1.23. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Lambourn continued to expand, with large houses being built (or rebuilt) throughout the parish, e.g. Lambourn Place (Lambourn); Rooksnest; Inholmes; (Lambourn Woodlands) Eastbury Manor; the Old Manor House (Upper Lambourn). Upper Lambourn, perhaps the least settled part of the parish and most involved in sheep farming, had some of the larger “yeoman” farms. The Market was once again re-chartered in 1669.



Figure 7. Lambourn Place Shaded in Red

- 1.1.24. Whilst there were signs of prosperity for some, there was also evidence of need. Hardrett’s Charity continued to receive support and various other charitable endowments were made around the parish, e.g. Christiana Organ; Pools Furze in Eastbury; Platt’s Meadow in Hadley (Lambourn



Woodlands). In 1754 parishioners successfully petitioned the Earl of Craven, Lord of the Manor, to build a Pest House, where those suffering from infectious diseases such as smallpox could be isolated. All signs of a remote community doing what it could to help itself.

- 1.1.25. In the latter part of the 18th century a rising population, growing industrialisation and the impact of war put increasing pressure on food supplies and raised prices. This spurred changes to agricultural practices. The Parish of Lambourn contained a mixture of both enclosed and traditional open fields, the latter particularly on the downs to the north. In the tithings of Hadley and Blagrove to the south, the woodland had never been completely cleared and the scattered farms were surrounded small fields and woods, some based on ancient assarts, or the result of piecemeal non-parliamentary enclosure. Between 1776 and 1806 four Acts of Parliament (for Eastbury, King's Heath, Upper Lambourn and Lambourn) allowed the enclosure of up to 60% of the Parish by 1816, changing the way the land was managed.
- 1.1.26. In this remote parish, there were few alternatives to working on the land. As food prices rose, so did the Poor Rates levied by parishes. The introduction of the Speenhamland System (1795) meant even employed men were forced to claim parish relief. A run of bad winters and poor harvests, and the arrival of a cheap threshing machine triggered local men to join the Swing Riots of 1830-31. Farms in Eastbury and Lambourn were attacked, and one Lambourn man was transported.
- 1.1.27. As a result of the Riots, a Royal Commission was set up in 1832 to investigate the Poor Laws. Rev. Henry Hippisley, owner of Lambourn Place, responded on behalf of Lambourn to the Commission's survey of the state of local poor relief. From his answers, we have a picture of land use in the Parish: 11,700 acres of arable; 800 acres of sheep down; 700 acres of woodland; 300 acres of meadow. It appears about 20% of the parishioners were in receipt of some sort of help from the Parish authorities. By this time Lambourn had established its own workhouse, which had 22 inmates.
- 1.1.28. In 1835, under the New Poor Law, Lambourn's Workhouse was expanded and in 1841 had 137 inmates, 97 of whom were children, but within 10 years it had closed, and recipients of Poor Relief were sent to the Hungerford Workhouse. By 1855 the site had become Stork House Racing Stables.
- 1.1.29. The Craven family had acquired both the Ashdown estate and the manor of Lambourn by 1651. Successive Earls had an interest in breeding and racing horses and race meetings were held on Weathercock Hill and Row Down throughout the 18th and, intermittently, the 19th century. The last Lambourn race meeting was in 1878. Initially the races were contests between aristocratic owners, whose horses were privately trained, but by the early 19th century there were independent, public trainers in



Lambourn. The deep, unploughed downland turf was ideally suited to training gallops and the success of Lambourn trainers encouraged the growth of training yards in both Upper Lambourn and Lambourn. Moreover, between 1855 and 1861 Lambourn horses won the Derby [twice] the Oaks and the St. Leger. Census returns during this period showed an increasing number of people with jobs in racing or its associated trades.

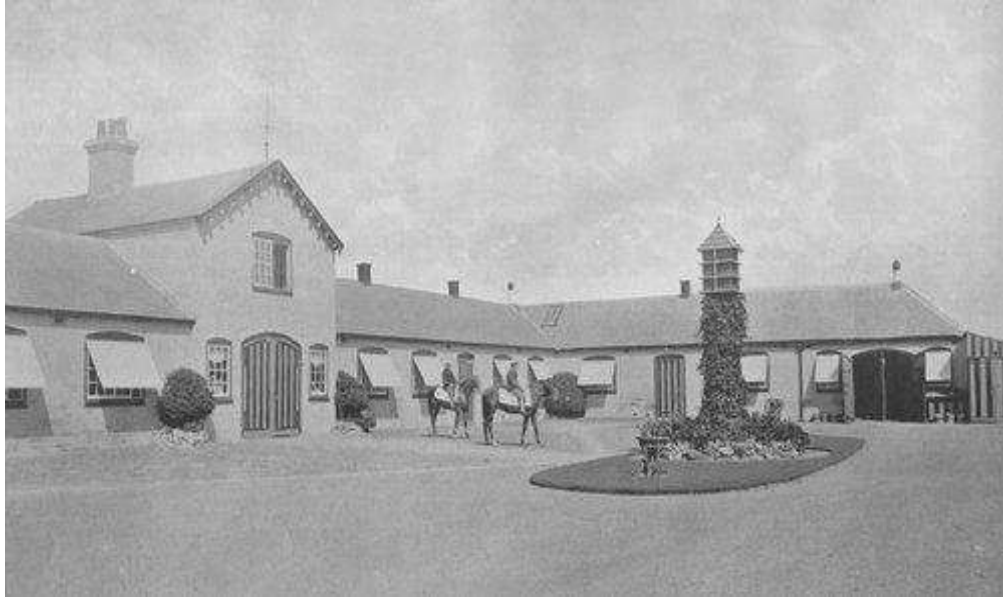


Figure 8. Stork House Racing Stables Depicted in 1895. Source: <https://lambourn.org/pictures-from-racing-illustrated-1895/>

- 1.1.30. The population of the parish expanded in the 19th century (although it did fluctuate) and services developed. Gas lighting was available in Lambourn from 1867. A police station was built in the High Street in the 1880s and the Magistrates Court (Petty Sessions) met monthly. Eastbury had its own police station by 1900. Two manual fire appliances had been acquired in the late 18th century and continued to be used in Lambourn. There was a flurry of religious activity. It was said of the parish in 1851 “The Dissenters practically had command of the place” and all villages in the parish had at least one Methodist chapel, all built after 1826. The Anglican church also grew, with the ecclesiastical parish of Woodlands St. Mary being formed in 1837 (the current church was built in 1852) and that of Eastbury in 1867, fourteen years after the consecration of its church. St. Luke’s Chapel in Upper Lambourn was consecrated in 1868. Schools were started in Lambourn, Eastbury and Woodlands St. Mary. Under the Local Government Act of 1894 Lambourn became a civil parish as we know it today, with the new Parish Council taking on a variety of civic duties.
- 1.1.31. The apparent prosperity of the parish, due in part to the development of racing, could not offset the impact of the agricultural depression of the late 19th century. The market died away in the 1870s, although two

annual sheep fairs continued. John Footman wrote in 1893 of cottages which “have been left without repair until the roofs fall in”.

1.1.32. “9 miles from anywhere, the road to nowhere and a capital place to wear out old clothes” was how local solicitor J. Barnes described Lambourn in 1881. He supported a railway line linking Lambourn to Newbury (see Figure 9), but the project, initially started in 1873, had failed to materialise, largely because of fears it would not pay. Construction did begin in 1888, but a contractual dispute delayed completion, and it was not until 1898 that the inaugural run was made. An immediate benefit was a fall in the price of coal. Racehorse trainers recognised the advantages of transporting horses by rail and their business kept the enterprise going. Taken over by Great Western in 1905, the Lambourn Valley Railway then enjoyed a profitable decade, with both passenger and goods traffic increasing (the latter included coal, mail, milk and racehorses). Use of the railway by the Racehorse Training Industry (RTI) helped to keep it going, but as private car ownership increased the railway declined. Although boosted again by wartime military needs, the Lambourn Valley Railway struggled in the postwar period and eventually closed to passengers in 1960.

1.1.33. The building of the railway did help to support Lambourn’s economy and affected housing - St. Georges and St. Agnes Terraces were built for railway workers. The period 1837 – 1914 had seen the construction of several other small terraces, for example Sunny Bank in Lambourn, and some larger, “villa” properties, as well as the rebuilding of Inholmes in 1905, but a major expansion of housing did not take place until after World War I, when the Housing Acts of 1919 and 1924 encouraged local councils to build houses. Northfields, Mill Lane and Bockhampton Road were developed in the interwar period, with further houses being built in Eastbury, Upper Lambourn and the Woodlands.

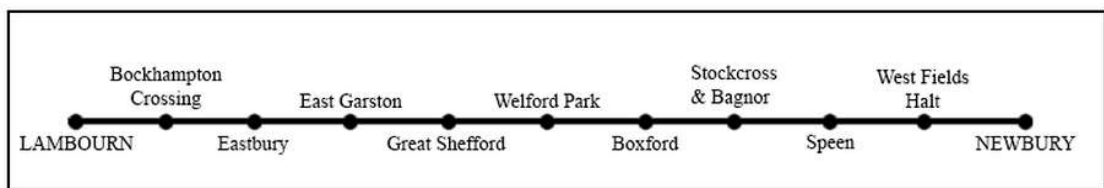


Figure 9. Lambourn Valley Railway Line

1.1.34. During the 1920s and 1930s increasing numbers of National Hunt racehorses were trained in the parish. The Mandown Gallops were bought and laid out by the Nugent family, providing improved training facilities. These continue to serve the RTI today, having been taken over by Jockey Club Estates in 2006. In 1927, responding to the demand for transporting racehorses by road, Sir Hugh Nugent set up Lambourn Racehorse Transport. His business, originally based on Lambourn High Street,



expanded to include the building of horseboxes, and later a variety of other specialist vehicles (e.g. mobile libraries) and tractor cabs.

- 1.1.35. Following the outbreak of World War II, the government requisitioned 500 acres of land in Lambourn Woodlands in 1941 to build Membury Airfield, one of a line of temporary airfields. The clearance and levelling of the land permanently changed its appearance and use. The airfield became operational in late 1942, when it was allocated to the U.S. Army Air Force. At the end of the war the airfield reverted to the RAF and was declared inactive in 1947, after which the land passed into private hands.
- 1.1.36. The redundant airfield buildings were initially used for storage and light aircraft made use of the runways. Campbell Aircraft developed gyroplanes here. The M4, which opened in 1971, cut across the site and Membury Service Station was built on its northern edge. Lambourn Tractor Cabs, employers of 300 people from the local area, relocated from the centre of Lambourn to the airfield in 1977 and bussed employees to their factory. When the business closed in 1982, Thames Valley Eggs moved onto the site. Another agricultural business, Ridgeway Grain (now Trinity Grain), was established nearby in the late 1970s. Increasing numbers of businesses have been set up on the old airfield itself and associated, scattered sites along Ermin Street. By 1991 a Protected Employment Area (PEA) had been established. There has never been a unified management of the PEA, and a variety of businesses now operate from it. Class B8 use (Open storage and warehousing) is dominant.
- 1.1.37. Housing development has continued throughout the last 75 years. Since the opening of the motorway, the proximity of Junction 14 and the increase in car ownership, all the settlements have attracted residents who work outside the parish. The price of housing has made it difficult for those in lower paid jobs, particularly in racing, to find homes locally. New social rental property was built in the 1960s and 70s in Lambourn, Eastbury and Lambourn Woodlands alongside a period of growth in the private market. Farmyards in the centre of Lambourn were sold for housing (e.g. Tubbs Farm Close) and later, industrial sites were also developed. The closure of the railway line (the last train from Lambourn ran in 1960) also released land for light industrial use (e.g. Cravats and the Lambourn Group). When these companies closed between 1990 and 2010, additional housing was built.
- 1.1.38. Given its remote position – “the road to nowhere” – the parish has always had to be self-sufficient to a greater or lesser extent. Local government reorganisation in 1974, which truncated the old County of Berkshire, and the creation of the small Unitary Authority of West Berkshire in 1998, left Lambourn as a border parish, neighbouring Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. Today it is a Rural Service Centre and continues to provide a range of services for surrounding communities.