



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Enstone parish

Economic History

Enstone's economy was long based on mixed farming, complemented by craft and retail activity particularly in Neat Enstone on the main Chipping Norton–Woodstock road.

Piecemeal enclosure was encouraged by late medieval population decline and by the growth of sheep farming, notably at Chalford and Broadstone in the north-west and at Ditchley in the south, where parkland was laid out around Ditchley Park. Arable open fields nevertheless remained dominant until enclosed in phases between 1713 and 1843–4. By the 16th century there were several substantial leasehold farms, and by the 18th the remaining copyholds (usually of several yardlands) had also been converted to leasehold, most farms continuing to be held of the manor and of the Ditchley estate into the 20th century. Several roadside inns were established from the 16th century, and although those and traditional retailing declined in the 20th, the former RAF Enstone aerodrome (reopened in 1975) became a focus of light industry.

The Agricultural Landscape

The parish's stonebrash soils supported extensive arable, with grassland concentrated close to the River Glyme and its feeder streams.¹ In the Middle Ages each settlement had its own open fields and commons, with Cotswold two-field systems the norm: Cleveley's two fields were mentioned c.1280,² and the same arrangement was found at Chalford, Lidstone, and Gagingwell.³ Enstone's own large north and south fields, mentioned c.1240, were later reorganized as the fields of Church and Neat Enstone, which by c.1300 functioned independently.⁴ Early enclosures (apart from small crofts around the hamlets)⁵ were concentrated at Ditchley, where medieval woodland clearance created both closes and open

¹ Young, *Oxon. Agric.* 5–6; J. Jordan, *A Parochial History of Enstone in the County of Oxford* (1857), 2; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883).

² D. Royce (ed.), *Landboc sive Registrum Monasterii ... de Winchelcumba* (1892–1903), II, 172–3. The existence of two fields was implied c.1250: *ibid.* 191.

³ Lobel, Dean and Chalford, 19 (incorrectly claiming the creation of a third field), 86, 90–1; Brasenose Archive, Lidstone 5–6; *Landboc*, II, 182; OHC, E36/3/11/E/1.

⁴ *Landboc*, II, 174; Bodl. MS North Adds c 7; above, settlement.

⁵ e.g. OHC, PAR97/10/1D/3–4 (Cleveley, 1341–4).

fields, later absorbed into Ditchley farm.⁶ Medieval open fields at Broadstone and Chalford were enclosed by the 16th century, while remaining open fields at Gagingwell and Radford were enclosed by agreement in 1713 and 1773. Those at Church and Neat Enstone were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1843–4,⁷ affecting over 2,000 a., and including commons described as ‘a wild district of ... furze, briars [and] stunted oaks’.⁸



A view of the narrow Glyme valley in Church Enstone.

Medieval Agriculture

In 1086 the abbot of Winchcombe's 24-hide Enstone estate was worth £18 (a fall from £20 in 1066). The demesne farm, presumably in Church Enstone as later, had three ploughteams run by six *servi*, while 36 tenants shared another 18 teams. The two hides held by Urso had another two ploughteams of which one was shared by five tenants, and since the manor as a whole had capacity for 26 teams it was apparently under-exploited. Fifty acres of meadow were complemented by pasture measuring four furlongs by two, and a 'waste' hide in Chastleton (not mentioned later) may have supplied additional grazing. A substantial area of

⁶ Below (medieval agric.); Spelsbury, econ. hist.

⁷ Below (1540–1800; since 1800).

⁸ E. Marshall, *An Account of the Township of Church Enstone, in the Parish of Enstone...* (1868), 8 n.; OHC, E36/3/2/C/1 (descripn in 1795).

woodland (measuring a league by half a league and four furlongs) was almost certainly located in Ditchley.⁹

Farming at Chalford was run partly from Dean (in Spelsbury), as part of the intensively exploited eight-hide Dean and Chalford estate. Reckoned to have capacity for eight teams, it actually supported 13 (five on the demesne and eight worked by tenants), while its overall value had risen from £7 in 1066 to £9. Scope for further expansion is suggested by the presence of woodland measuring a league by two furlongs. By contrast the separate three-hide Chalford estate had halved in value to £1 10s., despite operating at full capacity, and had only 4 a. of demesne meadow compared with 13 a. on the larger estate. The three-hide Radford estate had increased in value from £2 10s. to £3, and had five ploughteams on land with capacity for four, two of them on the demesne (run by two servi), and three run by tenants. Resources included 6 a. of meadow and a 3-a. spinney.¹⁰

By 1279 Enstone manor's demesne had expanded to a substantial five hides (c.600 a.), which possibly included land acquired by the abbey in the 12th and 13th centuries,¹¹ and which may (as in 1600) have already been enclosed.¹² Forty unfree tenants each held a yardland in return for seasonal services commuted to 5s. 3d. money rent, and a further 25 yardlanders were lifeholders paying slightly higher rents, their tenancies perhaps being a more recent creation. Sixteen free tenants occupied varied holdings of between $\frac{1}{3}$ yardland and over a hide, while a small group of eight cottagers presumably supplied additional wage labour.¹³ The preponderance of villein yardlands perhaps reflected abbey policy, although a minority of tenants acquired two yardlands by the 14th century.¹⁴ Chalford's lord Philip Fettiplace kept six yardlands in demesne (each yardland worth 13s. 4d. a year), and as well as some cottagers had a mix of free and unfree tenants who mostly occupied a yardland or less.¹⁵ In 1282 both the rents and the demesne (then totalling 171 a.) were let for 19 years to Henry Wale of Faringdon, at £1 15s. a year.¹⁶ The small Broadstone estate was entirely in tenant hands.¹⁷

⁹ DB, f. 157; Schumer, *Wychood*, 26–7; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 66; below. For several contemporary corn-grist mills, below (non-agric.: mills).

¹⁰ DB, ff. 157v., 161.

¹¹ *Rot. Hund.* II, 739; above, landownership; below.

¹² Bodl. MS North Adds. c 2 (the 'farm ground', 1600); OHC, E36/3/1/E/1 (survey of 1634).

¹³ *Rot. Hund.* II, 739–40.

¹⁴ Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1–2.

¹⁵ *Rot. Hund.* II, 741–2.

¹⁶ Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 30, 87–8.

¹⁷ *Rot. Hund.* II, 739.

Expansion of cultivation is suggested by the field name ‘breach’, found in both Chalford and Cleveley.¹⁸ Assarting at Ditchley may have been under way as early as the 1160s (when the abbot of Winchcombe paid fines for unspecified forest offences), and in 1249 John le Fox held just over ½ a. of assart,¹⁹ although none was mentioned in 1279, and in 1272 Box wood remained large enough to have its own woodward.²⁰ The abbey was authorised to enclose 60 a. around Grim’s Ditch in 1276, however,²¹ and Box wood was reduced to a fragment by the 16th century and probably before 1350,²² while permission to clear a further 115 a. in 1307 led to the creation of ‘Winchcombe assarts’, described in 1609 as one ‘great field of arable ground’ and three closes of meadow and pasture.²³ Much (if not all) of the clearance was probably carried out by tenants, who paid assart rents to the abbey,²⁴ and by the 1340s peasant assarts changed hands regularly in the manor court, many of them held by outsiders. Some were up to c.30 a., but most only c.1–2 a.,²⁵ a few (and perhaps all) forming strips within furlongs and fields.²⁶

Mixed arable farming predominated until the Black Death. Archaeological finds at the rectory house site in Church Enstone included wheat grains, a legume, and a grass seed, and the lord’s corn and hay were mentioned in 1341–2, along with tenant barns and a cart shed.²⁷ Assarts (on poorer soils) were used mainly for oats,²⁸ and as later were probably sown every other year, allowing for common grazing by inhabitants of the royal demesne townships of Woodstock.²⁹ Livestock was moved between fields and commons along drove ways,³⁰ and Winchcombe abbey presumably maintained a sizeable sheep flock, given its investment in local fulling mills from c.1190.³¹ Pigs were pannaged in the lord’s wood,³² and

¹⁸ *Landboc*, II, 172 (Cleveley c.1280); Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 20, 92 (Chalford). Cf. Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 120 (a purpresture in Church Enstone).

¹⁹ *Pipe R* 1162–3 (PRS 6), 49; 1166–7 (PRS 11), 15; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 36.

²⁰ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 66, 123–4.

²¹ *Landboc*, II, 25–6, 170–1; *Cal. Pat.* 1301–7, 531; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 109 and n., 190; below (1535–1800).

²² In 1540 Box wood allegedly measured just 10 a. (TNA, SC 2/175/1, f. 27), but covered 39 a. in 1726 and 23 a. in 1841: OHC, E36/1/10/E/1; E36/1/10/M/1; *ibid.* tithe award and map.

²³ *Landboc*, I, 301–2; II, 26–8, 205–6; *Cal. Pat.* 1301–7, 531; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 109 and n., 190; OHC, tithe award and map, nos. 41, 44–6 (Winchcombe assarts).

²⁴ Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M4/3 (1350s); *Landboc*, II, p. lviii.

²⁵ Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1–2.

²⁶ *Ibid.* D678/1/M1/1/11.

²⁷ ‘Church Enstone Hall, Archaeological Evaluation Report’ (unpubl. Oxford Archaeology report, 2022), accessed (Aug. 2023) at <https://eprints.oxfordarchaeology.com/6199/>; Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1–2. For ‘Pesefurlong’ in Cleveley c.1280: *Landboc*, II, 172.

²⁸ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 36.

²⁹ OHC, E36/1/4/E/2; E36/3/1/E/2. For the grazing rights, *VCH Oxon.* XI, 186; above, vol. overview.

³⁰ Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 90 (‘west drove’); Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1 (‘drove’).

³¹ Below (non-agric.).

³² Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1.

firewood and deer were illicitly taken from Wychwood forest.³³ A poorly documented warren, possibly on Church Enstone common, supplied the abbey with rabbits.³⁴

Agricultural expansion had faltered by the 1340s, when several Winchcombe tenants abandoned their holdings.³⁵ Farmland was gradually consolidated in the 15th century, so that farms of two to four yardlands became standard, although subletting continued.³⁶ Even so Winchcombe abbey's investment in a large rectorial barn in 1382 (prompted by the local bailiff) suggests the continued importance of cereal production,³⁷ and the Ditchley assarts were taken back in hand probably before 1525, although the Enstone demesne (still in hand in 1421) was by then being leased.³⁸ Chalford's thin and stony soils supported substantial demesne flocks by the 1380s, and its open fields were enclosed as pastures before 1480, when Oriel College leased the manors of Over and Nether Chalford to Richard Croft and John Hey for £13 6s. 8d. a year.³⁹ Broadstone and Lidstone seem to have been similarly depopulated and largely enclosed before 1496.⁴⁰ Surviving pockets of woodland in Ditchley and Chalford were managed as coppices, Box wood being leased in 1377 at 13s. 4d. a year for 12 years.⁴¹

Farms and Farming c.1540–1800

Alongside smaller holdings, in the 16th and 17th centuries five large farms were leased usually to local gentry or substantial farmers. The c.745-a. Chalford farm was held until 1566 by the Penyston family of Dean and later by other outsiders, who presumably sublet it.⁴² Enstone farm, comprising c.541 a. of former demesne land, was held in 1634 (on a ten-year lease) by Robert Houlden of Church Enstone, gentleman, and Robert Boulton of Neat Enstone, husbandman, for £125 a year.⁴³ Brasenose College's Broadstone and Lidstone farms (respectively c.302 a. and c.176 a.) were held by Sir William Turner in 1664,⁴⁴ the former later kept in hand by the earls of Shrewsbury (then lords of Heythrop).⁴⁵ The Enstone

³³ Schumer (ed.), *Oxfordshire Forests*, 2, 7, 8, 10, 20, 24, 30, 34, 56–7, 64–5. For charcoal burning: below (non-agric.: crafts).

³⁴ TNA, SC 2/175/1, f. 27 (dated 1540); cf. *Cal. Chart.* 1226–57, 360 (grant of free warren in 1251).

³⁵ Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1–2.

³⁶ Ibid. D678/1/M1/1/15; OHC, PAR97/10/1D/17–18 (1408); below (c.1540–1800).

³⁷ Above, landownership (rectory est.).

³⁸ TNA, SC 2/175/1, f. 27; Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/15 (lord's land and crops).

³⁹ Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 6, 100, 130–2.

⁴⁰ *Cal. Inq. p.m. Hen VII*, III, p. 536; above, landscape etc.

⁴¹ Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/6.

⁴² Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 73–84, 146–9, 152–3; Ch. Ch. Arch., Maps Enstone 1 (giving acreage in 1776).

⁴³ OHC, E36/3/1/E/1.

⁴⁴ Brasenose Archive, B0521; *ibid.* B 14.1-37 A 3; B 14.1/49A.

⁴⁵ OHC, QSD/L/112.

part of the Ditchley estate (c.466 a. of medieval assarts and woodland) was held in 1609 by Sir Henry Lee, lord of Spelsbury.⁴⁶ Its farmland, customarily reckoned at ten yardlands, was later leased with the Spelsbury portion of Ditchley for over £100, but there was a regular turnover of tenants (all of them outsiders), and the farm was kept in hand from c.1742.⁴⁷

Besides those large leaseholds, Enstone manor in 1540 had half a dozen free tenants occupying 17 yardlands between them (the largest single holding being six yardlands), while 21 customary tenants occupied another 68 yardlands, their individual holdings ranging from one to seven yardlands.⁴⁸ The customary land was held for up to three lives for entry fines and low rents,⁴⁹ though by the 1670s many copyholds were in the lord's hand, and by 1702 most had been converted to leaseholds.⁵⁰ Ongoing concentration of holdings meant that by 1777 there were just two occupiers in Church Enstone (each with 12½ yardlands), two in Cleveley (of whom one held 18 out of 20½ yardlands), three in Radford (with similar sized holdings), three in Lidstone (one with four out of five yardlands), five in Gagingwell (one with almost half the land), and nine in Neat Enstone (one with 12½ out of 28½ yardlands).⁵¹ Rising rents during the 18th century reflected increased profits,⁵² although the poor were badly affected by the cost of provisions.⁵³

Farming efficiency was facilitated by the adoption of leys and the division of open fields into so-called 'quarters' (as many as eleven in Neat Enstone), to facilitate more complex rotations.⁵⁴ Gagingwell's six landholders agreed to enclose the open fields in 1713, which then covered c.364 a. or just over 75 per cent of the township; three of the six apparently led the enclosure in conjunction with the earl of Lichfield's steward, the earl's successor formally giving his assent as lord as late as 1739.⁵⁵ The proponents claimed that land worth £3 per acre would be worth £10 once enclosed and planted with sainfoin, although the copyholders William and John Drinkwater (who jointly farmed 101 a.) complained that they had received inferior land and now had to drive their cattle further to the common. Even so within five years the land had more than doubled in value, and the three remaining copyholds were subsequently converted to rack-rented leaseholds.⁵⁶

⁴⁶ Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 190; OHC, E36/1/4/E/1 (acreage in 1727).

⁴⁷ OHC, E36/3/1/E/1; E36/3/1/E/2; E36/1/4/D/1–17; E36/1/4/E/1–5; *ibid.* QSD/L/112.

⁴⁸ TNA, SC 2/175/1, ff. 25–26v. Eighteen customary tenants held 1–4 yardlands, with just one each holding 5, 6, or 7 yardlands.

⁴⁹ OHC, E36/18/10/E/1 (dated 1674); E36/3/1/E/2 (dated 1718).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* E36/18/10/E/1–2; E36/3/1/E/2–3.

⁵¹ Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 72, f. 98; cf. OHC, QSD/L/112.

⁵² e.g. Oriel College Arch. DEL2; Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 281 (church estate).

⁵³ OHC, E36/3/2/C/1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* E36/3/11/C/1; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 448, f. 58; *ibid.* Neat Enstone enclo. award; H.L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (1915), 128.

⁵⁵ OHC, E36/3/11/C/1; E36/3/11/A/1–5; Bodl. MS C17:49 (111).

⁵⁶ OHC, E36/3/1/E/2.

Radford's three landowners arranged the enclosure of 603 a. in 1773,⁵⁷ while at Church Enstone in 1795 enclosure was felt unnecessary because the 'esteemed' farmer Nathaniel Kinch was the sole occupier (with over 1,000 a.), and was able to buy out the commoners for an 'easy sum'.⁵⁸

Farming was characterised by the mixed sheep-corn husbandry typical of the area. Crops included barley, wheat, oats, pulses and beans, and latterly artificial grasses and turnips.⁵⁹ Copyholders usually kept modest numbers of animals,⁶⁰ although Gagingwell's 'fair cattle' were mentioned in 1599,⁶¹ and some Radford farmers had large sheep flocks.⁶² Lords and large leaseholders put a similar emphasis on sheep grazing, sometimes employing shepherds.⁶³ Thomas Penyston (d. 1557), lessee of Oriel College's Dean and Chalford estate, had 600 sheep in 1545, which he moved between Chalford, Chipping Norton, and Swinbrook,⁶⁴ while at Ditchley large quantities of wool were sold in 1606.⁶⁵ Woodstock's townships made less use than earlier of their grazing rights on Ditchley's assarts by 1718, perhaps partly thanks to recent road diversions, and some farmland was taken to enlarge the park.⁶⁶



Sheep grazing in the west of the parish, looking towards Broadstone.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Burton III/v/1; and for pre-enclosure notes, *ibid.* E36/3/14/MS/1.

⁵⁸ Ibid. E36/3/2/C/1.

⁵⁹ Ibid. MSS Wills Oxon., Enstone wills and inventories; *ibid.* E36/1/4/D/7; *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1542–50*, 8; *Oxon. Inventories*, pp. 310–12; Oriel College Arch., DEL2.

⁶⁰ e.g. OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 65/1/59; 296/4/17; 149/2/2 (all listing c.23 sheep 1594–1660).

⁶¹ Ibid. PAR97/1/R1/1 (death of John Drinkwater, 'formosi peccores custos Gagingwell').

⁶² e.g. OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 10/5/43 (Ric. Cumming, 240 sheep and 33 cattle in 1591).

⁶³ For shepherds, e.g. *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1581–6*, 2; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 5/3/10.

⁶⁴ *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposns 1542–50*, 21–2; TNA, PROB 11/39/52.

⁶⁵ OHC, E36/3/1/E/2, notes at end. See also A.G. Hann, 'Kinship and Exchange Relations within an Estate Economy: Ditchley, 1680–1750' (unpub. Oxford Univ. DPhil. thesis, 1999), p. 107.

⁶⁶ OHC, E486/1/C/1; *ibid.* E36/3/1/E/2 (ment. lack of driftways incl. from Combe, Stonesfield, Charlbury); E36/1/4/E/1–2; E36/1/10/M/1; E36/1/12/E/1; above, landscape etc. (communic).

By 1777 cereal crops took up almost 50 per cent of the land at Broadstone, over 40 per cent at Gagingwell, Radford, Church Enstone and Cleveley, but as little as 20 per cent at Ditchley. Tithes of wool and lambs were worth between £10 and £12 7s. at Chalford and the Enstones, and between £3 5s. and £6 10s. elsewhere.⁶⁷ By the end of the century Kinch and others rotated turnips (grazed by sheep), barley, two years of clover and grasses, and wheat and oats, while Kinch himself used oxen for ploughing, and kept a sheep flock of 1,200.⁶⁸ Remaining pockets of coppice woodland were usually kept in hand by landlords,⁶⁹ and furze was gathered from the commons, some of it sold in Chipping Norton. Banbury and Witney also appear to have been significant markets for local produce.⁷⁰

Farming since 1800

The early 19th century saw rising profits and rents, despite Ditchley tenants suffering crop damage from rabbits and other game.⁷¹ The enclosure of the Enstones' fields and commons in 1843, promoted by the leading landholders, nevertheless took place amidst agricultural difficulties and rent remissions for the 'suffering occupiers of Oxfordshire'.⁷² There were then three large owner-occupiers in the parish as a whole: John Jolly, who farmed 527 a. in Cleveley, Viscount Dillon (279 a. of pasture and woodland at Ditchley), and Nathaniel Parsons, whose 492-a. holding in Radford included 256 a. of his own land. The largest tenant farmers were John Hooper (517 a. in Neat Enstone), Joseph Steel (497 a. in Church Enstone), Richard Hodges (432 a. in Chalford), and Thomas Claridge (312 a. in Lidstone). Another six tenants held 213–299 a., seven 101–196 a., and six owned or leased 25–84 a., alongside a handful of smallholdings under 20 acres.⁷³ Rents rose after enclosure, reaching a peak (as elsewhere) in the 1870s.⁷⁴

In the early 1840s over 80 per cent of the parish was arable and about 16 per cent pasture,⁷⁵ the parish's soils being well suited for wheat, barley, and oats, and providing good

⁶⁷ Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 72, ff. 93–6.

⁶⁸ Young, *Oxon. Agric.* 115, 311.

⁶⁹ Oriel College Arch., map of Chalford (1743); *ibid.* DEL2; OHC, E36/18/10/E/2; *ibid.* QSD/L/112.

⁷⁰ *Oxf. Ch. Ct Deposits 1581–6*, p. 2; 1609–16, pp. 50–1; Bodl. MS North Adds. c 15; J. Bolton and M. Maslen (eds), *Calendar of the Court Books of the Borough of Witney, 1538–1610* (ORS 54, 1985), p. 155.

⁷¹ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. c. 67, f. 211 (claiming an increase in rent from 18s. to 30s. per acre c.1805 to 1813); *ibid.* E36/1/10/E/5; E36/1/10/E/17; Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 281.

⁷² Enstone Enclo. Act 6 & 7 Wm IV, c.115 (1836); OHC, Church and Neat Enstone enclo. awards; Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 72, ff. 215–16.

⁷³ OHC, tithe award and map.

⁷⁴ Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 72, ff. 257, 320v.; OHC, E36/1/10/E/17.

⁷⁵ OHC, tithe award and map (excl. non-titheable land).

turnip land for sheep.⁷⁶ In 1866 the overall count of 2,842 sheep was by far the highest in Chadlington hundred, and the parish also had the most pigs, though only a middling number of dairy cows.⁷⁷ Individual farms nevertheless saw some variation. Lidstone farm was said to be good root, barley and stock land, the grass improvable by drainage,⁷⁸ while at Ditchley the emphasis was on turnips and stock, although artificial fertilisers (including Peruvian guano) were brought in later in an attempt to improve the soil.⁷⁹ Woodland accounted for only two per cent of the parish in the 1840s, that at Chalford having been partly grubbed up, and the landscape remained arable-dominated after enclosure, despite the establishment of several small plantations.⁸⁰

The national farming recession of the late 19th century brought the usual difficulties,⁸¹ and rents fell from c.1880.⁸² Landowners took a number of farms in hand, notably Albert Brassey of Heythrop, who kept his 'world renowned' Oxford Down sheep and pedigree shorthorn cattle at Broadstone Hill farm and Chalford Oaks.⁸³ On smaller farms traditional methods lingered, including the use of plough oxen (bred at the Malt Shovel in Cleveley), and men and women carried out 'breast ploughing' to turn in the stubble without animal assistance.⁸⁴ Corn and sheep remained important despite an increase in dairying,⁸⁵ sheep being taken to market at Oxford, Stow-on-the-Wold, and Banbury, and wool sent to Charlbury and later Thame. Milk was sent to Charlbury station early in the century, but was later mainly retailed locally (including in Chipping Norton), while road truck distribution of livestock took over from rail and droving by the 1930s.⁸⁶ Some inhabitants (including women and children) worked as bark strippers in Heythrop's woods during the First World War,⁸⁷ and walnuts were produced in Enstone before the trees were felled in the 1930s–50s, to supply wood for radio and television cabinets and for luxury car veneers.⁸⁸

By the early 1940s the state of local farming varied and agricultural employment was much reduced.⁸⁹ Most farmers were judged capable, Nathaniel Parsons of Radford

⁷⁶ Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 2.

⁷⁷ TNA, MAF 68/53.

⁷⁸ Brasenose Archive, Valuation Book No. 3 (1869).

⁷⁹ OHC, E36/1/10/E/7; E36/1/10/E/17 (guano in 1880).

⁸⁰ Oriel College Arch. DEL2; OHC, tithe award and map; Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 1.

⁸¹ Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 72, f. 328; C. Miller (ed.), *Rain and Ruin: the Diary of an Oxfordshire Farmer, John Simpson Calvertt, 1875–1900* (1983), 67–8, 187.

⁸² OHC, E36/1/10/E/17; E36/1/10/F19/4.

⁸³ TNA, RG 12/1179 (census 1891); *Oban Times*, 5 Sept. 1885; *Oxf. Jnl*, 6 Aug. 1892 and (esp.) 6 Oct. 1909; *Sale Cat., Chalford Oaks Farm ... Pre-Bred Stock* (1899): copy in OHC.

⁸⁴ *Lifting the Latch*, 70; E. Corbett, *A History of Spelsbury* (1962), 258–9.

⁸⁵ TNA, RG 12/1179; Orr, *Oxon. Agric.*, statistical plates; OHC, E36/1/10/P/1; E36/18/14/N2/1.

⁸⁶ *Lifting the Latch*, esp. 45–6, 52, 159–60, 167, 191–2; TNA, MAF 32/912/84.

⁸⁷ *Lifting the Latch*, 55.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 60. For walnut trees on the rectory estate in 1805, Ch. Ch. Arch., Enstone 37.

⁸⁹ Following two paras based on TNA, MAF 32/912/84.

(chairman of the district farming committee) being 'very sound if conservative', while at Gagingwell Gilbert and Noel Hunt had very good crops and yarded stock, and like others ploughed up land for the war effort. George and Frank Henderson ran their 90-a. mixed holding at Oathill farm very intensively with 84 a. of crops, 45 cattle, 60 sheep, 24 pigs and 1,900 chickens, besides manufacturing poultry appliances. George's 1944 book *The Farming Ladder* made the farm famous, and by 1956 it had received over 12,000 visitors and produced 54 pupils, of whom 36 went on to own their own farms in various places.⁹⁰

By contrast Harry Ellard, the wealthy owner-occupier of Old Chalford and Broadstone Hill farms, suffered from an 'insufficiently progressive' bailiff who provided substandard management, despite Ellard spending lavishly on equipment. Ellard's plan for an agricultural college came to nothing, and from the 1950s much of his produce supplied his members' only club in Solihull (near Birmingham).⁹¹ Some other farmers were judged 'slapdash', notably the partners at Chalford Oaks (who kept a large dairy herd and retailed milk), and many smaller holdings were run by part-time farmers lacking experience and capital. Some 423 a. in the north of the parish was lost to the military aerodrome in 1941.⁹²

The mid to later 20th century saw some further consolidation of holdings. Ellard (d. 1983) made considerable additions to his existing arable, stock and dairy holding in the 1940s–50s, only the 323-a. Leys farm remaining tenant-occupied in 1985,⁹³ and Old Chalford was subsequently kept in hand, mainly as arable.⁹⁴ The Ditchley estate had a single main tenant by the 1990s, while the Great Tew estate (which also bordered Enstone) farmed the remaining agricultural land in the north. The c.600-a. Radford estate remained owner-occupied by the Parsons family, who latterly diversified into leasing office space and holiday lets in converted outbuildings. By 1998 the last dairy herd was gone, and agriculture (much of it involving share-farming agreements) focused on cereals, oilseed rape, flax, fodder beans and peas. At Gagingwell and Cleveley Robert Brickell kept sheep, shire horses and cattle on grassland, his family retaining the holding in hand in 2023.⁹⁵ A factory chicken

⁹⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1939); S.P.B. Mais, *Our Village Today* (1956), 83–5; G. Henderson, *The Farming Ladder* (1944).

⁹¹ https://solihulllife.files.wordpress.com/2022/04/harry_ellard_web.pdf (accessed Jan. 2023)

⁹² TNA, MAF 32/912/84; *Sale Cat., The Former RAF Station Enstone* (1957): copy in OHC; above, landscape etc.; below, social hist.

⁹³ *Sale Cat., Broadstone Estate* (1985): copy in OHC; above, landownership.

⁹⁴ e.g. *Country Life*, 22 Sept. 2016.

⁹⁵ G. Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone* (1999), 76–7; info. from Barbara Shaw of Gagingwell (June 2023).

farm in large sheds at the north-western edge of Enstone aerodrome was established in 1988 and enlarged in 2015.⁹⁶

Non-Agricultural Activities

Corn Mills, Fulling, and Fishing In 1086 Enstone manor included four watermills worth 19s. a year, with another at Chalford (worth 3s. 4d.), two at Dean and Chalford (worth 5s.), and one at Radford (worth just 20d.).⁹⁷ All of them were presumably on the River Glyme, although at least one of the Dean and Chalford mills lay outside the parish in Dean (in Spelsbury parish),⁹⁸ while one of the Enstone mills was probably in Cleveley, where Winchcombe abbey added a fulling mill c.1190.⁹⁹ Two men called 'miller' (*molendinarius*) were tenants of Enstone manor in 1279,¹⁰⁰ and men of the same name were mentioned in Neat Enstone, Cleveley and Radford in 1316,¹⁰¹ while Robert the fuller ('le Folur') was a tenant of Cold Norton priory in Chalford in 1279. An unspecified mill belonging to Over or Nether Chalford manor was mentioned in 1438.¹⁰²

By 1540 (and possibly much earlier) Radford's mill had also been converted for fulling, stimulated presumably by west Oxfordshire's burgeoning textile industry.¹⁰³ It was changed back to a corn mill c.1790, and ceased to function c.1910.¹⁰⁴ Chalford's corn mill was rebuilt before c.1830, when it had an insufficient water supply for its two stones, and it was later converted into a short-lived bone mill.¹⁰⁵ A corn mill at Upper Cleveley was abandoned by c.1915, though that at Lower Cleveley continued until after c.1949, the mill house having been rebuilt in 1789 and the mill refitted with three pairs of stones in 1883.¹⁰⁶ Lidstone mill, mentioned in 1584, was rebuilt probably in the early 18th century, its 24-ft wheel amongst the largest in the county. Its water supply was badly affected by the construction of Chipping Norton's waterworks at Old Chalford in 1900, however, forcing the

⁹⁶ *Oxford Mail*, 31 Dec. 1986 and 18 Jan. 1988; https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8009b4e5274a2e8ab4dd13/Application_Variation_-_Variation_Notice_Issued_PDF_Copy.pdf (accessed Nov. 2023).

⁹⁷ DB, ff. 157, 157v., 161.

⁹⁸ Below, Spelsbury, econ. hist.

⁹⁹ *Landboc*, I, 195; II, 189–91.

¹⁰⁰ *Rot. Hund.* II, 740.

¹⁰¹ TNA, E 179/161/8.

¹⁰² *Rot. Hund.* II, 742; Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 113–14.

¹⁰³ TNA, SC 2/175/1, f. 26. For manufacturing, VCH Oxon. XIV, 78 (Witney); XXI, forthcoming (Chipping Norton); A. Catchpole et al., *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town* (2008), 86.

¹⁰⁴ OHC, QSD/L/112; *ibid.* DV/X/50; *Oxf. Jnl.*, 6 Nov. 1790; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1907 edn).

¹⁰⁵ Oriel College Arch. DLR 5; *Gardner's Oxon. Dir.* (1852); TNA, RG 9/912; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883 edn).

¹⁰⁶ Foreman, *Oxon. Mills*, 104; OHC, DV/X/50, listing Upper Cleveley mill only; R.M. Marshall, *Oxon. Byways* (1949), 95–6.

corporation to buy the premises, which also ceased to function by c.1925.¹⁰⁷ A mill in Church Enstone, mentioned in 1547, belonged later to the Marshall family, and was still grinding until the First World War.¹⁰⁸

Bynames suggest the presence of two fishermen in 1279, operating probably in Enstone manor's fishery in the Glyme (mentioned in 1540).¹⁰⁹ A large pond at Old Chalford (probably also of medieval origin) was kept in hand for its fish by Oriel College in 1694, but by the 1830s was almost dry. A series of ponds at the rectory site in Church Enstone (surviving as earthworks) may have been created in the 17th century primarily for ornamental use.¹¹⁰

Crafts, Trades and Retailing Early craft and retail activities were mainly of common type. A blacksmith operated in Church Enstone in the 13th and 14th centuries, and Colin 'le ferur' of Chalford in 1279 was presumably another.¹¹¹ Charcoal burners based mainly in Ditchley probably supplied the 'coal' used in the Enstone smith's forge in 1341.¹¹² By then small-scale brewers were active in the Enstones, Gagingwell, and Radford,¹¹³ and the bynames Weaver and Tailor appear in Cleveley c.1280 and 1345.¹¹⁴ Men called Slater and Mason were probably involved in stone extraction and building work,¹¹⁵ and in 1600 tenants of Church Enstone claimed the right to dig for 'mortar' on Enstone farm ground.¹¹⁶ Slate quarrying in Gagingwell was facilitated by enclosure in 1713,¹¹⁷ and there was a small quarry in Broadstone.¹¹⁸ A tenant penalised for digging on the waste in 1341 may have been extracting turves for fuel, an activity claimed as a customary right in 1600.¹¹⁹

¹⁰⁷ Oriel College Arch. DELL4F; OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 201.82 (Wm Fearn, miller, 1641); *ibid.* E228/1/D/40; *ibid.* FAR I/1–7; Foreman, *Oxon. Mills*, 111; HER, PRN 35; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 27 Feb. 1901.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, SC 2/197/20; OHC, E36/3/1/E/1; E36/3/7/M/1; *ibid.* Marshall VII/vi/11; *ibid.* DV/X/50; Kelly's Dir. Oxon. (1883 and later edns); Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop', copy of handwritten notes in OHC (1955 with later additions), for later restoration; Foreman, *Oxon. Mills*, 104; *SMA* 42 (2012), 62–6, mentioning sheepwash.

¹⁰⁹ *Rot. Hund.* II, 739; TNA, SC 2/175/1, f. 27. Ralph le Fysere held land in Cleveley before c.1280: *Landboc*, II, 187–8.

¹¹⁰ Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 17–18; Oriel College Arch. DLR 5; HER, PRN 9318 and 4397; above, landownership (other estates); info. from James Bond (2023).

¹¹¹ *Cal. Close* 1247–51, 324; *Rot. Hund.* II, 740, 742; Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1.

¹¹² Schumer (ed.), *Oxon. Forests*, 2, 7, 56–7, 64–5; Gloucestershire. Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1.

¹¹³ Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1.

¹¹⁴ *Landboc*, II, 187–8 (Hugh le Webbe); Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 204.

¹¹⁵ e.g. *Landboc*, II, 187–8; Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1.

¹¹⁶ e.g. Bodl. MS North Adds. c 2.

¹¹⁷ OHC, E36/3/11/C/1; E36/3/12/A/1–3. Cf. *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 92.324 (Ric. Franklin, slatter, Neat Enstone, 1696).

¹¹⁸ Brasenose Archive, B0521 and B0313 (dated 1671 and 1862); B 14.1/37a3 (Quarry Piece).

¹¹⁹ Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1; Bodl. MS North Adds. c 2.

Trades mentioned in the 16th to early 18th centuries included butcher, baker, shopkeeper, carpenter, tailor, hatter, cordwainer, weaver, dyer, and mercer.¹²⁰ An inn existed in Neat Enstone, on the main Oxford road, before 1580, and by the mid 17th century there were at least two inns there, increased to three by 1705. One, described as ‘good’,¹²¹ was probably The Talbot, which in 1689 included a kitchen, parlour, and ten named rooms including ‘the Talbot’, ‘the King’s Head’ and ‘the Lion’.¹²²



The former Talbot inn, now a care home.

A further small inn was established at Cuckold’s Holt in the north of the parish before 1696,¹²³ and by the late 18th century the parish usually had seven hostelries, which were supported by small-scale malting.¹²⁴ The Talbot (later renamed Enstone House) and the Litchfield Arms (formerly the White Hart) were updated from the mid 18th century, supplying post-chaises to the gentry.¹²⁵ An oatmeal maker and a farrier, mentioned in 1698 and 1725 and both living in Enstone, probably also benefitted from passing trade,¹²⁶ while a grotto-

¹²⁰ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon., Enstone wills and inventories; *ibid.* PAR97/1/R1/2; TNA, SC 2/197/20; Bolton and Maslen (eds), *Calendar of the Court Books of the Borough of Witney*, p. 196; Bodl. MSS Ch. Oxon. 4259–4260.

¹²¹ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 186.156 (Wm Hartley, innholder, 1580); 48/1/8 (Thos Newman, yeoman and innholder, 1664); 298/2/39 (Mark Huckvale, innholder and husbandman, 1666); *ibid.* PAR97/1/R1/1, burials 1609 (Bolton fam. of ‘the inn’ at Neat Enstone); *ibid.* E36/3/1/E/3.

¹²² *Ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 62/3/15 (John Stone, innholder, 1689). 62/3/15

¹²³ *Ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 107.279; *ibid.* QSD/V/1; VCH Oxon. XI, 209, 223–4.

¹²⁴ OHC, QSD/V/1–3; *ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 93.312 (Hen. Ely, maltster, of Church Enstone, 1706); Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 4262 (malto. in Church Enstone, 1728).

¹²⁵ OHC, E36/3/1/E/2; E36/3/10/Y/1–2 (plans of Litchfield Arms, 1876–97); *Oxford University and City Herald*, 2 Apr. 1808; Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 16; Enstone Local History Circle, ‘A History of Enstone and Heythrop’, photo of Litchfield Arms; above, landscape etc. (communics).

¹²⁶ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 205.32 (oatmeal maker); 209.72 (farrier).

cum-visitor attraction established between the two Enstones in the 1630s presumably provided additional work for craftsmen, labourers and victuallers.¹²⁷



The former inn
at Cuckold's
Holt, Gagingwell.

Despite those developments, in 1801 less than 5 per cent of the population was engaged chiefly in trade, manufacturing, or crafts,¹²⁸ and in 1841 craft and retail activity was still concentrated in the two Enstones. Church Enstone had several blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, and shoe makers, two shopkeepers, a fellmonger, a saddler, a tailor, a brewer, and a publican. At Neat Enstone there were masons, blacksmiths, shoe makers, a wheelwright, a joiner, a plumber, a plasterer, a saddler, an ostler, a collar maker, and a tailor, along with two grocers, a butcher, a brewer, an innkeeper and two publicans. Cleveley had a smattering of masons and carpenters.¹²⁹ In 1857 there were still six pubs and several 'good' shops,¹³⁰ and the inn at Cuckold's Holt hosted agricultural auctions.¹³¹ A shop in Neat Enstone, run from c.1862 by Joseph Adams, moved to new purpose-built premises (Adams' Stores) c.1888,¹³² although by then the variety of occupations was gradually diminishing, despite the continued presence of a number of shopkeepers.¹³³ Around the same time a small quarry in Radford (owned by the Marshall family) sold stone mainly for highway repairs.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ Below, social hist.

¹²⁸ *Census*, 1801.

¹²⁹ TNA, HO 107/878.

¹³⁰ Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 16.

¹³¹ e.g. *Banbury Guardian*, 22 July 1852.

¹³² Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop'. The shop continued in 2023.

¹³³ TNA, RG 10/1458; RG 11/1521; RG 12/1179; RG 13/1400; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883 and later edns).

¹³⁴ OHC, Burton III/iv/2 (1859–1902).



The village shop
in Neat Enstone.

In the early 20th century limited local retailing was supplemented by thrice-weekly Co-op deliveries and by other vans from Chipping Norton and elsewhere.¹³⁵ Two successful transport businesses were established in the 1920s, Worth's starting as a car and bicycle repairer, and flourishing later (in different premises) as a bus and coach provider and petrol station,¹³⁶ while a garage run by John Venvell developed into a successful national livestock haulage company.¹³⁷ A modern smithy in Cleveley repaired farm equipment in the 1950s.¹³⁸ The late 20th century saw the usual pub closures, including of the Litchfield Arms c.1971, and in 2023 only two pubs remained, one in Church Enstone (The Crown Inn) and one in Neat Enstone (The Harrow Inn).¹³⁹ Enstone House was converted first to an hotel and by 1989 to a care home.¹⁴⁰

A significant development was the establishment of an industrial estate at Enstone aerodrome from the 1970s, supplying local employment.¹⁴¹ The Worcester-based Mole family purchased a large part of the then disused airfield from the Crown in 1957, setting up

¹³⁵ *Lifting the Latch*, 99.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 141, 231; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1924 and later edns); Mais, *Our Village Today*, 80–1; Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop', incl. photos; *Oxf. Times*, 24 June 1960; OHC, OXO000783 (1988 interview with Ric. and Paul Worth); above, landscape etc. (communic).
¹³⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1920 and later edns); *Lifting the Latch*, 192, 231; Mais, *Our Village Today*, 81.

¹³⁸ Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop'.

¹³⁹ *Oxford Mail*, 16 May 1974 and 26 Feb. 1993; local information.

¹⁴⁰ OS Map 1:2500, SP3724 (1975 edn); WODC online planning docs, ref. W89/2332.

¹⁴¹ For employment: e.g. J. Sykes, *Enstone: Report and Policy Statement* (1977): copy in OHC; Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone*, 15.

a company called Enstone Enterprises to exploit it for commercial purposes.¹⁴² Part of the land continued to be farmed, and the runways began to be used by gliding clubs and light aircraft, with flying use increased in the late 1980s despite local opposition.¹⁴³ Meanwhile Esso Petroleum bought part of the site (including the main runway) in 1962 for fuel performance testing, which continued until 1986.¹⁴⁴ Industrial premises on the aerodrome's east side, housed partly in Second World War buildings,¹⁴⁵ were upgraded in 1994, along with a nearby grain mill producing animal feed.¹⁴⁶ Businesses then included paper recycling, plastic moulding (employing 25 local staff), building trades (including timber roof-truss manufacture), car repair, HGV driver training, off-road driving, and a retail market.¹⁴⁷ Subsequent occupiers included a shooting school, and c.12 businesses continued there in 2023.¹⁴⁸ along with half a dozen enterprises (including a café in a renovated wartime hut) on a small site in Gagingwell.¹⁴⁹ Production of Formula 1 racing cars began in 1991 in the far east of the parish, on the site of a former concrete works close to Oathill Farm.¹⁵⁰ By 2022 that had over 900 employees, many of them living in the area.¹⁵¹



A re-used
Second World
War building in
Gagingwell.

¹⁴² *Oxf. Mail*, 13 May 1986 and 2 Apr. 1987. For ownership in 2017 (and a dispute with the Great Tew estate over access): <https://vlex.co.uk/vid/leven-holdings-ltd-v-841086152>, case no. D30BS285 (accessed Nov. 2023).

¹⁴³ *Witney and District Historical and Archaeological Society Newsletter* (Dec. 1978), p. 10; *Oxf. Mail*, 13 May 1986, 2 Apr. and 9 May 1987, 2 Aug. 1989, 8 Sep. 1992; Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone*, 14; M.J.F. Bowyer, *Action Stations Revisited. The Complete History of Britain's Military Airfields: No. 2 Central England and the London Area* (2004), 137.

¹⁴⁴ *Oxford Mail*, 13 May 1986.

¹⁴⁵ Bowyer, *Action Stations Revisited*, 137.

¹⁴⁶ *Oxf. Times*, 8 July 1994.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 1 July 1994.

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.theoxfordshireshootingschool.co.uk/>; <https://suite.endole.co.uk/explorer/postcode/ox7-4np> (both accessed Nov. 2023).

¹⁴⁹ <https://suite.endole.co.uk/explorer/postcode/ox7-4ef> (accessed Nov. 2023).

¹⁵⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_Enstone (accessed Nov. 2023); *Oxf. Mail*, 19 Sep. 2023 (extension); Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone*, 76.

¹⁵¹ <https://www.the-race.com/formula-1/alpine-will-exceed-900-staff-in-push-to-match-big-f1-teams/>; <https://enstone-pc.gov.uk/renault-formula-1-team/> (both accessed Nov. 2023).