

VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

## Enstone parish

Social History

### Social Character and Communal Life

#### *The Middle Ages*

The parish's nine medieval settlements formed distinct agricultural communities, including (by c.1300) Church and Neat Enstone, which had earlier shared a field system.<sup>1</sup>

Winchcombe abbey exercised a unifying influence as lord except in Chalford, while the church provided another shared focus which, despite the presence of outlying chapels, seems to have attracted considerable lay involvement in the later Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> Links between those living in different settlements are reflected in small land transfers, and there was regular contact with people in neighbouring parishes and in the nearby town of Chipping Norton.<sup>3</sup> Wychwood forest (whose bounds long incorporated the south-eastern part of the parish) supplied a widely utilised source of grazing, wood, pottery, and illicitly acquired venison.<sup>4</sup>

In 1086 all the recorded settlements had the usual mix of *villani*, lower-status bordars, and slaves (who worked the demesnes), while on Winchcombe abbey's Enstone manor there were also, unusually for Oxfordshire, four free men or *liberi homines*.<sup>5</sup> A larger number of free tenants, albeit still a minority of the population, existed in most of the parish's settlements by c.1200,<sup>6</sup> and though Winchcombe abbey subsequently bought up some of their holdings,<sup>7</sup> leading freemen from the parish played a role in the administration of the hundred and of Wychwood forest in the mid to later 13th century.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Above, econ. hist.; below, local govt.

<sup>2</sup> Above, landownership; below, relig. hist.; local govt.

<sup>3</sup> Brasenose Arch., Lidstone 1–15; OHC, PAR97/10/1D/2–15; *Landboc*, II, 172–203; Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 31, 85–103; *Oseney Cart.* IV, pp. 230–1.

<sup>4</sup> Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 2, 7, 8, 20, 24, 30, 34, 57, 64, 67, 69; *VCH Oxon.* XIX, 16; HER, PRN 13236, below, local govt. For local 'wood ways', above, landscape etc. (communics).

<sup>5</sup> DB, ff. 157 and v., 161; *VCH Oxon.* I, 392. Only Urso's 2-hide estate (held of the abbey) lacked slaves, while Radford's 8 bordars outnumbered (unusually) its 2 slaves and 4 *villani*.

<sup>6</sup> e.g. Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 27–32; *Landboc*, II, 172–203; Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. c 43; OHC, PAR97/10/1D/1–22.

<sup>7</sup> *Landboc*, *passim*; above, landownership.

<sup>8</sup> *Oxon. Eyre*, 1241, no. 761; *Landboc*, II, 179–80; Schumer, *Oxon. Forests*, 15, 65, 84.

The great majority of the tenant population in 1279, however, comprised unfree yardlanders owing light labour services, alongside 16 cottagers (eight at Enstone and eight in Chalford).<sup>9</sup> The 24 free tenants comprised just over a fifth of the tenantry, of whom William de Coulonces held seven yardlands, and Ralph of Radford and Roger of Cleveley a hide (or four yardlands) each, while others held as little as a third of a yardland.<sup>10</sup> In reality landholding was more complex and more fluid, reflecting subletting and the availability of recently cleared assarts, which unlike standard villein holdings could be sold or divided between heirs. Unusually for the area, villein holdings passed to the youngest son by ultimogeniture.<sup>11</sup>

Early 14th-century tax lists suggest a fairly typical range of wealth, although by 1327 Neat Enstone, Chalford, Cleveley, and Ditchley had a higher proportion of better-off taxpayers (i.e. those paying 2s. or more) than did the other settlements.<sup>12</sup> The most affluent included Master Robert de Chalford (paying 8s. 10d.),<sup>13</sup> William Doket of Cleveley (6s. 9d.), and Richard le Mason of Neat Enstone (6s. 1d.), while William Smalchaf of Chalford, who paid 19s., was probably a demesne lessee.<sup>14</sup> By the 1340s (and perhaps earlier) some villein tenants acquired second yardlands, partly reflecting abandonment of holdings,<sup>15</sup> and difficult agrarian conditions probably contributed to occasional bequests of goods to Winchcombe abbey in return for grain.<sup>16</sup>

After the Black Death Winchcombe abbey's active estate management included investment in a large tithe barn in 1382, and even in the early 15th century it enforced its rights to servile dues.<sup>17</sup> The abbey's authority did not go unopposed, however. In 1378 a Radford tenant insulted its rent collector, and others failed to repair buildings or illicitly cut down trees,<sup>18</sup> while some unfree tenants left the manor to live in places such as Banbury, Great Rollright, and Little Compton (Warws.).<sup>19</sup> Further disorder was reflected in the indictment of three men from Gagingwell and Radford for unspecified felonies in 1387.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 739–42; above, econ. hist.

<sup>10</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II, 739–42. For the Coulonces family, e.g. *Landboc*, II, 174–9, 200, 205, 530–1; OHC, PAR97/10/1D/1–2; TNA, E 179/161/8, rot. 3, m. 2d.; *ibid.* C 241/97/17.

<sup>11</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, E 179/161/8–10.

<sup>13</sup> For his appellation 'Master' (suggesting he was a cleric and a university graduate), e.g. Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 92; Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1.

<sup>14</sup> Lobel, *Dean and Chalford*, 29, 91–3.

<sup>15</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/1–2; above, econ. hist.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. *Landboc*, I, 168–9 (Wm atte Hall of Radford, 1323).

<sup>17</sup> e.g. OHC, PAR97/10/1D/16 (26s. 8d. marriage fines in 1408); Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/15; above, econ. hist.

<sup>18</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/4–8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* D678/1/M1/1/4.

<sup>20</sup> E.G. Kimball (ed.), *Oxon. Sessions of the Peace* (ORS 53, 1983), 60–6.

By the early 16th century the continued concentration of landholding had created a body of substantial leasehold farmers and copyholders occupying two to three yardlands each.<sup>21</sup> The wealthiest taxpayer in 1524 was Thomas Wisdom of Neat Enstone (probably a substantial copyholder), who was assessed on goods worth £25, while others assessed at over £10 included three in Radford and two each at Church and Neat Enstone. Some other inhabitants, however, were taxed on only 20s. (the minimum), and just under a fifth were assessed on wages, while others presumably fell beneath the tax threshold.<sup>22</sup>

Population turnover was high, the few longstanding families including the atte Halls, of whom William (of Lidstone) was of sufficient standing to serve as a king's bench juror and on tax-raising commissions between 1398 and 1404.<sup>23</sup> Even so few if any of the taxpaying families of 1327 remained in 1524.<sup>24</sup> Communal action included investment in the parish church, notably the building of a new tower in the 1530s, while in Gagingwell the erection of a large stone roadside cross may have similarly reinforced the inhabitants' sense of local identity.<sup>25</sup>

### **c.1535–1800**

Major landowners, particularly the lords of Enstone, continued to be influential in the 16th century and later, and from the 1660s the Lee family and their successors the Dillon-Lees had a seat at neighbouring Ditchley Park in Spelsbury, around which parkland and coverts were established for game rearing and hunting.<sup>26</sup> Lordly authority was emphasised in tenancy agreements granted by William Pope, requiring leaseholders to cart pit-coal from Bedworth (Warws.) to his seat at Wroxton.<sup>27</sup> Day to day power was delegated to stewards and their deputies, who drew up leases, officiated at manor courts, and collected rents.<sup>28</sup> Minor gentry included the Spelsbury landowner Thomas Gibbons (lessee of Enstone manor and rectory and the highest taxpayer in 1542), followed later by the Cole family also as longstanding rectory lessees.<sup>29</sup> The small number of resident freeholders (of whom there

<sup>21</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D678/1/M1/1/10–11; TNA, SC 2/175/1; above, econ. hist.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, E 179/161/170, which has slightly different figs than E 179/161/177; Broadstone, Chalford and Lidstone are omitted. A Thos Wisdom held 4 copyhold yardlands from Enstone manor in 1540: *ibid.* SC 2/175/1, f. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Kimball (ed.), *Oxon. Sessions of the Peace*, 72, 75, 78; *Cal. Fine* 1399–1405, 284, 292. By 1447 'Hall Place' was apparently abandoned: Brasenose Archive, Lidstone 18 (calling it a 'toft').

<sup>24</sup> TNA, E 179/161/9; E 179/161/170; E 179/161/177.

<sup>25</sup> Below, relig. hist.

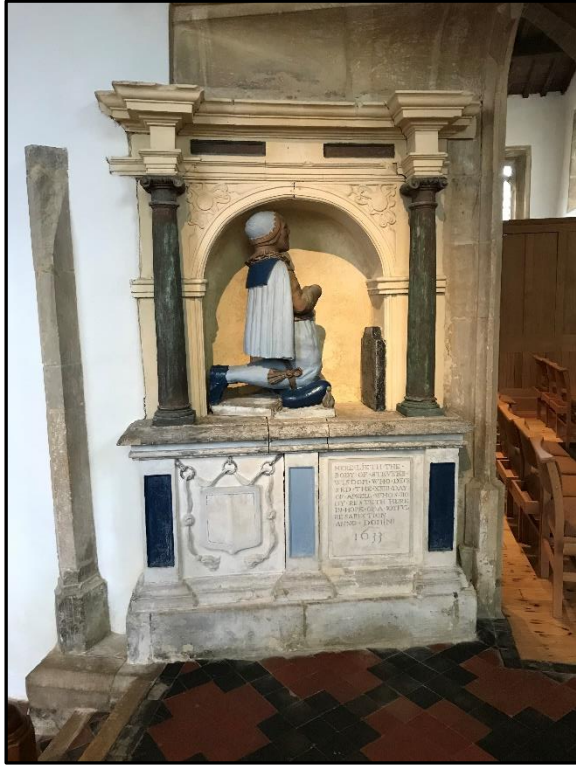
<sup>26</sup> Below, Spelsbury.

<sup>27</sup> OHC, E36/3/1/E/1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*; E36/3/1/CR/1–5; A.G. Hann, 'Kinship and Exchange Relations within an Estate Economy: Ditchley, 1680–1750' (unpub. Oxford Univ. DPhil. thesis, 1999), 109–10; below, Spelsbury, landownership.

<sup>29</sup> Above, landownership.

were eleven in 1754) included the Wisdom and Marshall families, who were cottage landlords on a small scale.<sup>30</sup> Amongst leading farmers, the Gagingwell yeoman Stephen Wisdom (d. 1633) is commemorated by an unusual stone memorial in the south aisle of the church, in which he kneels before his own gravestone.<sup>31</sup>



Memorial to Stephen Wisdom in the parish church.

Such people apart, the bulk of the population until the mid 17th century comprised customary tenants with small to medium-sized holdings,<sup>32</sup> and in 1662 almost a third of inhabitants were judged too impoverished to pay hearth tax.<sup>33</sup> Long-resident farming families included the Boltons, Busbys, Drinkwaters, Fawdreys, and Wisdoms, whose members played a role in the regulation of open-field agriculture and served as churchwardens or overseers.<sup>34</sup> The late 17th and early 18th century saw further consolidation of holdings and a growing number of landless cottagers, creating a starker divide between tenant farmers and labourers.<sup>35</sup> Landowners such as the Marshalls accordingly took a leading role in parish government, alongside larger farmers and innkeepers.<sup>36</sup> Labourers' poverty was reflected in

<sup>30</sup> *Oxon. Poll, 1754*, 55, 59; OHC, E36/3/7/M/1.

<sup>31</sup> Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 309; TNA, PROB 11/164/41.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, SC 2/175/1, ff. 25–7; OHC, E36/3/1/E/1; above, econ. hist.

<sup>33</sup> TNA, E 179/255/3.

<sup>34</sup> OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. Enstone wills; *ibid.* PAR97/4/F1/1; PAR97/4/F1/1–2; *ibid.* E36/3/1/CR/1–5.

<sup>35</sup> OHC, E36/3/1/E/1–2; above econ. hist.

<sup>36</sup> OHC, ARCH/2/B1/22; *ibid.* PAR97/4/F1/1.

rising poor rates,<sup>37</sup> efforts at self-help including a Friendly Society established in 1786, which had 74 members by 1802.<sup>38</sup>

Despite those problems, Neat Enstone's position on a main turnpike road brought through-traffic and visitors and created money-making opportunities for innkeepers, traders and craftsmen.<sup>39</sup> In the 1630s the entrepreneurial Thomas Bushell (d. 1674), whose relatives leased the rectory estate,<sup>40</sup> established a whimsical grotto, hermitage and gardens known as 'Bushell's Rock' on his copyhold land in the Glyme valley.<sup>41</sup> Royal visits in 1635–6 brought a stream of visitors, and Charles I took a hand in stamping out local opposition to the associated re-routing of a road and erection of a boundary wall.<sup>42</sup> The complex included fountains, water spouts, and other curiosities, and a restoration by (or for) the young earl of Lichfield (as lord of Enstone) in 1674 added an island with elaborate joke fountains, the hermit's chamber being converted into a banqueting house.<sup>43</sup> By the 18th century the site was leased to Neat Enstone innkeepers,<sup>44</sup> of whom Rice Prickett of the Litchfield Arms (lessee in 1775) renovated it as a resort for gentry gatherings, and in 1791 held a Whitsun cake and ale feast there, bringing in morris dancers from outside the parish.<sup>45</sup> The landlord of the Talbot (later Enstone House) at Neat Enstone's southern end meanwhile accommodated the Friendly Society and the meetings of a bowling club.<sup>46</sup>

### **Since 1800**

Nineteenth-century parish society was mainly divided between substantial tenant farmers and landless labourers and their families, with a small number of publicans and craftsmen.<sup>47</sup> The Dillon family, the major landowners,<sup>48</sup> were largely absent in the first half of the century, although Charles Dillon (the 14th Viscount Dillon) supported establishment of a school in

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<sup>37</sup> Below (welfare).

<sup>38</sup> *Oxon. FS*, pp. 131–2.

<sup>39</sup> For regular burials of travellers and vagrants, OHC, PAR97/1/R1/1–2.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, PROB 11/192/134 (John Bushell, 1644); *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 167; above, landownership (rectory est.).

<sup>41</sup> OHC, E36/3/1/E/2, p. 44 (location, with sketch plan); Bodl. MS Rawl. D 815c, f. 22; C. Thacker, 'An Extraordinary Solitude', in S. Raphael et al., *Of Oxfordshire Gardens* (1982), 27–48; S. Wass, 'The Enstone Marvels Rediscovered', *Garden History* 45:2 (2017), 176–92. The name 'Enstone Marvels' appears to be later.

<sup>42</sup> *Cal. SP Dom.* 1635, 366; 1637, 198; *The several speeches and songs at the presentment of Mr. Bushells Rock to the Queenes majesty Aug. 23 1636*: copy in Bodl. Wood 537 (no. 13).

<sup>43</sup> Bodl. MS Rawl B 400e, ff. 21v.–23; R. Plot, *Natural Hist. Oxon.* (1705 edn), 241–4; Thacker, 'An Extraordinary Solitude', 47–8.

<sup>44</sup> e.g. OHC, E36/3/8/D/10 (dated 1724).

<sup>45</sup> *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 1 July 1775; *Oxf. Jnl*, 24 May 1777, 19 May 1791; J. Jordan, *A Parochial History of Enstone in the County of Oxford* (1857), 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 21 June 1773, 6 June 1774.

<sup>47</sup> Above, econ. hist.

<sup>48</sup> OHC, tithe award; above, landownership.

1837.<sup>49</sup> The Marshall family were resident in Church Enstone,<sup>50</sup> and in the west of the parish a gentleman's residence at Broadstone Hill was occupied by the Revd Richard Goddard (d. 1844), rector of Draycot Foliat and vicar of Kemble (both Wilts.).<sup>51</sup> A handful of owner-occupiers included the Jolly family, who ran a successful long-distance waggon business from Neat Enstone and farmed in Cleveley.<sup>52</sup>

John Jolly (d. 1823) acted as treasurer of the Friendly Society,<sup>53</sup> whose members amassed sufficient funds by c.1804 to lend £130 at interest towards church repairs.<sup>54</sup> Even so the lack of lordly oversight and inhabitants' independence of spirit sat ill with the newly arrived vicar Joseph Sibley in 1831, who complained of a 'wild uncultivated ... village' with a 'lawless' (and strongly Nonconformist) population 'ignorant of the respect due to their superiors', allegedly given to drunkenness and 'intemperance'.<sup>55</sup> Real hardship certainly existed, and in the early 1830s even 'hard-working labourers' could only afford to live on bread and potatoes, which was 'not living'.<sup>56</sup> The large crowd which destroyed a threshing machine at Chalford Farm during the 1830 Swing riots and which confronted the duke of Beaufort at Heythrop Park was probably mainly made up of outsiders, but nevertheless reflected local discontent.<sup>57</sup> The decay of Bushell's waterworks by 1807 and their demolition c.1846<sup>58</sup> probably took away some employment opportunities, although far more damaging to Enstone's role as a roadside service centre was the local arrival of the railway in the 1840s–50s.<sup>59</sup>

In the second half of the 19th century the Dillon family were more often resident at Ditchley, and played an increasingly active paternalistic role.<sup>60</sup> The 13th Viscount Dillon's grandson Constantine was vicar from 1878 to 1890, promoting Church Temperance events and a winter soup kitchen,<sup>61</sup> while the Dillons, Brasseys, and other local gentry supported

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<sup>49</sup> Below (educ.).

<sup>50</sup> TNA, PROB 11/1724/286 (Wm Marshall Hacker of Enstone, 1827); OHC, Church Enstone enclo. award (Revd Edw. Marshall attending mtg); above, landscape etc. (built character).

<sup>51</sup> Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. e 174; *Pigot's Dir. Oxon.* (1830 edn); TNA, PROB 11/2006/67 (Ric. Goddard); E. Marshall, *An Account of the Township of Church Enstone...* (1868), 66; *Alumni Oxon. 1715–1886*; above, landownership.

<sup>52</sup> *Pigot's Dir. Oxon.* (1830 edn); above, landscape etc. (communications); econ. hist.

<sup>53</sup> Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 391.

<sup>54</sup> OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 660, f. 175; *ibid.* PAR97/4/F1/2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* b 38, f. 84v.

<sup>56</sup> P. Ashbridge, *Children of Dissent* (2008), 151.

<sup>57</sup> *Cheltenham Jnl*, 6 Dec. 1830.

<sup>58</sup> Thacker, 'An Extraordinary Solitude', 48; above, econ. hist. For what may be re-used fragments in Church Enstone: Wass, 'The Enstone Marvels Rediscovered', 185–9.

<sup>59</sup> Above, landscape etc. (communications).

<sup>60</sup> e.g. *Oxf. Times*, 5 Mar. 1864 (blanket club); *ibid.* 10 Apr., 2 Oct. 1880; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 5 July 1893; Bodl. GA Oxon. c 317/8 (sponsorship of Diamond Jubilee celebrations, 1897).

<sup>61</sup> *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* (1915), 647; *Oxf Jnl*, 6 and 10 June 1885; P. Horn, 'The Chipping Norton Deanery Magazine for 1888', *Cake and Cockhorse* 10:4 (1986), 92. For earlier Temperance teas, *Oxf. Times*, 13 June 1863.

entertainments in the National school, the harvest home tea, and Sunday school treats,<sup>62</sup> as well as involving leading farmers in their shoots and fox hunts.<sup>63</sup> Albert Brassey allowed village feasts and celebrations to be held in the tithe barn,<sup>64</sup> and the Revd Edward Marshall (d. 1899) gave blankets to the poor and supported the school, as well as commissioning a spring-fed memorial fountain (designed by G.E. Street and carved by Thomas Earp) to his wife Eliza in 1856.<sup>65</sup> Other activities included cricket,<sup>66</sup> although drinking remained a significant social pastime, with pubs in the two Enstones and latterly in Lidstone, and a beer shop for a time in Cleveley.<sup>67</sup> The Friendly Society was disbanded in 1864, to be succeeded by a medical and benefit society in 1869 and by a branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters in 1886.<sup>68</sup> Many inhabitants at that date had still been born in the parish or nearby villages.<sup>69</sup>



The spring-fed memorial fountain commissioned by Revd Edward Marshall in 1856 in memory of his wife, and designed by G.E. Street.

Enstone remained the parish's main social centre in the early 20th century, when for the shoemaker's son Mont Abbott the two Enstones and neighbouring Cleveley together formed 'our Enstone'. A certain rivalry existed between youngsters from different hamlets.<sup>70</sup> The Abbotts lived in a rented cottage 'down alley' by Neat Enstone green, and were part of a

<sup>62</sup> *Chipping Norton Deanery Magazine*, Feb. 1883; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 2 Oct. 1880, 2 Mar. 1881, 6 June 1883, 23 July 1884.

<sup>63</sup> C. Miller (ed.), *Rain and Ruin: The Diary of an Oxfordshire Farmer John Simpson Calvert 1875–1900* (1983), 32, 54, 57, 78, 109, 169, 180, 185, 188; G.T. Hutchinson, *The Heythrop Hunt* (1935).

<sup>64</sup> *Lifting the Latch: A Life on the Land*, as told to S. Stewart by Mont Abbott of Enstone (2003 edn), 85.

<sup>65</sup> G. Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone* (1999), 26; Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 309; below (educ.).

<sup>66</sup> e.g. *Oxf. Times*, 23 July 1864; *Oxon. Weekly News*, 28 Nov. 1888.

<sup>67</sup> *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852); *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–69 edns); *Kelly's Oxon. Dir.* (1883 and later edns). For drunks being put in the stocks in the mid to late 19th cent., E. Corbett, *A History of Spelsbury* (1962), 259.

<sup>68</sup> *Oxon. FS*, pp. 131–2.

<sup>69</sup> e.g. TNA, RG 12/1179.

<sup>70</sup> *Lifting the Latch*, 5, 110.

close network of mutual assistance which largely revolved around women.<sup>71</sup> Church and pub were social mainstays, and Chipping Norton provided additional entertainment, while some youngsters cycled as far as Oxford.<sup>72</sup> Friendly Society membership grew from 76 in 1900 to 129 in 1910, and annual club day celebrations were a major social event, involving a hired band and fun fair.<sup>73</sup>

The First World War, in which 27 Enstone men were killed, saw a short-lived prisoner of war camp established at the Litchfield Arms in Neat Enstone,<sup>74</sup> and hastened social change. Women and boys stepped in to perform agricultural and other work, with war widows amongst those making ends meet by potato picking in the hard winter of 1918.<sup>75</sup> For the vicar William Palmer the war also emphasized the need for a real living wage and for better education and housing, rather than for charity from the Church or the owners of great houses.<sup>76</sup> After the war women took their place for the first time in the church choir and bellringing team, and in 1921 formed a local branch of the Women's Institute, which raised funds to build a village hall the following year.<sup>77</sup> A further symptom of change was the arrival of motor traffic, which stopped children playing on the street.<sup>78</sup> By the 1920s many inhabitants worked outside the parish, notably at the Morris Motors plant at Cowley in Oxford.<sup>79</sup>



Memorial window to Enstone's First World War dead.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 5–17.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 99, 109, 111.

<sup>73</sup> *Oxon. FS*, p. 132; *Lifting the Latch*, 27–33, 57; Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop', incl. photos.

<sup>74</sup> Plaque in church; TNA, FO 383/506.

<sup>75</sup> *Lifting the Latch*, 86.

<sup>76</sup> *Gore's Visit*, p. 413.

<sup>77</sup> *Lifting the Latch*, 93, 142; Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop', copy of handwritten notes in OHC (1955 with later additions).

<sup>78</sup> *Lifting the Latch*, 33–5.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, HLG 49/1194 (1928); *Lifting the Latch*, 184.

During the Second World War the RAF aerodrome at Enstone (opened in September 1942 and actively used 1943–7) brought an influx of military personnel from outside the area, including from overseas. Used mainly as a satellite of No. 21 Operational Training Unit (at Moreton-in-Marsh), it was provided with a concrete runway and ancillary grass runways, a control tower, perimeter track, hangars, and brick huts, which in December 1944 accommodated 947 service men and women.<sup>80</sup> A local Home Guard unit was led by Thomas Worth, proprietor of Worth's Motor Services. Land girls supplied important agricultural labour, and women helped with air raid precautions and with evacuees.<sup>81</sup> Local organisations in the 1950s included a football club, horticultural society, British Legion, mothers' union, and young farmers' club, while a youth club was formed in 1959, its hall set up next to a small parish playing field established in 1945 on land given by Reginald Tree.<sup>82</sup>

A shortage of housing immediately after the war led several families to squat on the disused RAF base, and lack of affordable housing remained an issue in 1967 and later, despite increased council-house building in the 1940s–60s. By the late 1960s more affluent newcomers were using Charlbury railway station to commute to Oxford or London, and though most also formed local connections,<sup>83</sup> in 1977 the population comprised three main groups: incoming retirees, mobile younger people (including some weekenders), and those born locally. The last group, numbering about 150 families or a third of the total, lived mostly in council housing on the Cleveley Road in Neat Enstone. Some local employment was provided by the aerodrome industrial estate, the National Westminster Bank training college at Heythrop (established in 1969), and the road transport sector,<sup>84</sup> although community cohesion was undermined by scattered settlement and by heavy traffic on the road through Neat Enstone.<sup>85</sup>

Thereafter the proportion of the population renting from the local authority fell substantially from 28 per cent in 1981 to 18 per cent in 1991, partly reflecting government policy, and though 12 per cent of households were still accommodated in social housing in 2011, only 2 per cent was then owned by the district council. Some 45 per cent of those in employment were then in managerial, administrative or professional occupations,<sup>86</sup> and in

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<sup>80</sup> K. Delve, *The Military Airfields of Britain: Northern Home Counties* (2007), 121–2; *Lifting the Latch*, 168, 176; Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes, *Oxfordshire within Living Memory* (1994), 188. For surviving infrastructure: above, landscape; econ. hist.

<sup>81</sup> *Lifting the Latch*, 173, 186, 231; Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop'.

<sup>82</sup> OHC, PC97/A1/1; PC97/A2/1; Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop'. For football: e.g. *Oxon. Weekly News*, 26 July 1922.

<sup>83</sup> Local information; *Oxford Mail*, 24 Feb. 1967 and 29 Oct. 1988; Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone*, 12–13.

<sup>84</sup> J. Sykes, *Enstone: Report and Policy Statement* (1977): copy in OHC; below, econ hist.

<sup>85</sup> *A Profile of the United Benefice of Enstone and Heythrop* [c.1992]: copy in OHC. For traffic see also: Sykes, *Enstone: Report and Policy Statement*.

<sup>86</sup> *Census*, 1981–2011 (incl. online datasets).

the early 2020s some wealthy incomers (particularly those living part-time in outlying hamlets) were attracted to the area by the nearby Soho Farmhouse members' club in Great Tew.<sup>87</sup> Younger and working-class residents were overwhelmingly concentrated in Neat Enstone, where community activities continued, and where a large and well-equipped parish hall opened at the Paddocks in 2015, next to an existing volunteer-run sports and social club, and adjoining a 5-a. playing field owned by the parish council.<sup>88</sup> A monthly newsletter established in 1985 also continued.<sup>89</sup>

## Education

A schoolmaster was mentioned in 1685, and another died before 1744.<sup>90</sup> Several small schools were run by poor women in 1808, and some boys attended schools in Great Tew, Charlbury, or Chipping Norton,<sup>91</sup> while by 1815 some 30 girls and 20 boys were taught in three day schools also run by 'poor people', a few others attending Methodist and Baptist Sunday schools in the parish.<sup>92</sup> In 1836–7 the curate William Chapman secured the erection of a single-roomed National School for boys and girls at Church Enstone, on land leased for a peppercorn rent from Viscount Dillon;<sup>93</sup> lack of funds led to the boys' school's temporary closure c.1856, when the local landowner Revd Edward Marshall agreed to pay the master's salary for two years,<sup>94</sup> but by 1872 it had 86 pupils.<sup>95</sup> Evening classes had little success because of the scattered population.<sup>96</sup>

In 1872 the vicar John Jordan oversaw the voluntary closure of the 'very inefficient' National school, paving the way for its reopening the following year as a board school catering for all religious denominations. Attendance of 65 in 1874 was 20 below capacity, mainly because children from the outlying hamlets attended nearer schools in other parishes. In 1876, however, a purpose-built boys' and girls' school for 114 pupils (including 23 from Spelsbury) was opened in Neat Enstone on land compulsorily purchased from Viscount Dillon, the existing Church Enstone school becoming an infants' school for 80

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<sup>87</sup> Local information.

<sup>88</sup> <https://enstoneparish.org/parish-hall-introduction> (accessed Aug. 2023); local information.

<sup>89</sup> Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone*, 67–8; <https://enstone-pc.gov.uk/enstone-ensign/> (accessed Oct. 2023).

<sup>90</sup> OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 708, f. 121; Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 4271. Skelton, *Antiq. Oxon.* 6 suggested (without evidence) that the small room over the church porch may have been used as a schoolroom.

<sup>91</sup> OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 707, f. 62.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. c 433, ff. 86–7.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. b 121, f. 19; *ibid.* tithe award and map, no. 267; Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 293–4; *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852).

<sup>94</sup> Ch. Ch. Arch., MS Estates 72, f. 310.

<sup>95</sup> TNA, ED 2/363.

<sup>96</sup> *Wilb. Visit.* 54; OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. c 332, f. 176; c 347, f. 162; c 359, f. 157v.; P. Horn, 'The Chipping Norton Deanery Magazine for 1888', *Cake and Cockhorse* 10:4 (1986), 92.

pupils.<sup>97</sup> A master's house was added at Neat Enstone in 1887, and the school itself was enlarged in 1899 and again in 1924, when it took in the infants upon the closure of the Church Enstone school. Both schools received generally good reports in the early 20th century, and gardening was added to the curriculum for older children in 1911.



Senior children attended Charlbury school from 1932, and two years later Neat Enstone had 85 pupils,<sup>98</sup> some of the more able (and better-off) leavers going on to Bloxham or Burford grammar schools.<sup>99</sup> The school continued as a mixed local authority primary in 1997, when it had 65 on the roll, and was considerably extended by the erection of a new classroom, head's office, and staff room, replacing temporary buildings. In 2022 it had 86 pupils including a recently added nurse class, and was valued by parents for its small size.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> TNA, ED 2/363, no. 7; ED 21/14432; ED 21/14433; *Oxf. Jnl*, 14 Oct. 1873; *Retn Public Elem. Schs* (Parl. Papers 1877 [C 1882], lxxvii), pp. 342–3; *Rep. of Educ. Cttee of Council* (Parl. Papers 1880 [C 2562-I], xxii), p. 675; Brooks, *Pevsner N&W*, 310, noting Neat Enstone school's 1875 datestone.

<sup>98</sup> OHC, CC4/77–78; TNA, ED 21/14433.

<sup>99</sup> *Lifting the Latch*, 21.

<sup>100</sup> *Witney Gaz.* 7 May 1997; [www.enstone.oxon.sch.uk](http://www.enstone.oxon.sch.uk) (accessed Sept. 2023), incl. Ofsted rept (2022); Ofsted rept 1997 (copy in OHC).

A small Roman Catholic school opened at Radford in 1841 was attended by a few children from there and nearby Gagingwell, but from 1854 catered mainly for orphans from Birmingham, London and elsewhere. As many as 20 local children attended in 1897 out of a total of 50 pupils, but only nine in 1903.<sup>101</sup> The establishment became a 'middle class [Catholic] boarding school' in the early 1920s, and closed in the 1950s, being later used as a study centre for intending priests and junior nuns.<sup>102</sup>

## Welfare

During the Middle Ages Winchcombe abbey was obliged to distribute 9 qrs of corn a year in alms (later commuted to 10s.) in return for its appropriation of the rectory estate in 1309.<sup>103</sup> The payment was discontinued at the Reformation, though a church estate built up through piecemeal late medieval gifts continued to generate small sums for the poor into the early 19th century, as well as income for church repair.<sup>104</sup> Three cottages in Clevely belonging to the estate were still used as pauper accommodation in the 1820s, along with one in Neat Enstone formerly used as a pest house, while another estate house in Clevely was used as a parish workhouse from 1742 until 1826.<sup>105</sup> A poor box in the church was mentioned in 1580, and in the 18th century offertory money was distributed by the vicar and churchwardens.<sup>106</sup>

A beef charity established in 1728–30 by the Radford yeoman Benjamin Marten (d. 1716) was used to buy 7½ a. in Kiddington and 1 a. in Gagingwell, the rent supplying £6 a year in 1738. In the 18th and early 19th century beef was distributed in the church porch at Christmas and Easter to 20 poor families, the number increasing by c.1850 to reflect a rise in rent.<sup>107</sup> Other endowed charities included £50 from Robert Lee (d. 1776), earl of Lichfield, which was used in 1785–9 to clothe poor children for service outside the parish.<sup>108</sup> Christmas money for the poor was provided by two bequests in the 1840s, one of which (left by the Revd Richard Goddard) was distributed in bedding by the vicar, and lasted for ten years, The other, left by Thomas Davis, was managed by the churchwardens with the church

<sup>101</sup> TNA, ED 2/363, no 7; TNA, RG 10/1458; *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852); below, relig. hist.

<sup>102</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1915 and later edns); notes on Radford Mission in possession of VCH. For the context, below, relig. hist.

<sup>103</sup> *Landboc*, II, lxiv; *Valor Eccl.* II, 459.

<sup>104</sup> *Rep. Com. Char.* 249–50; OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 555, f. 203v.; d 574, f. 112v.; below, relig. hist.

<sup>105</sup> *Rep. Com. Char.* 251; OHC, E36/3/3/A/1; *ibid.* PAR97/2/A1/1.

<sup>106</sup> OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 187.94 (Wm Bourne, vicar); *Secker's Visit.* 59; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 327, p. 102 (1778).

<sup>107</sup> TNA, PROB 11/551/346; *Rep. Com. Char.* 250–2; *Secker's Visit.* 59; OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 558, f. 216v.; d 574, f. 112v.; c 327, p. 102; Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 284–7, 302–6.

<sup>108</sup> OHC, PAR97/4/F1/2, ff. 30–4. For other, smaller bequests (partly misappropriated by the churchwardens for building a gallery in the church): Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 299–302; below, relig. hist.

estate.<sup>109</sup> A Friendly Society was established in 1786,<sup>110</sup> and allotments totalling 37 a. were made to the poor at enclosure in 1843, at first providing rental income, and used later as allotment gardens.<sup>111</sup>

Despite such initiatives the bulk of Enstone's poor relief costs were met directly from parish rates. Expenditure rose from less than £20 in the 1660s, £46 in 1723, and £109 in 1753 to £232 in 1776, the third highest sum in the hundred.<sup>112</sup> By 1783–5 it was £318, and in 1803 £600, of which £158 was spent on 18 people in the parish workhouse. A further 48 adults and 113 children were then receiving permanent out relief, and 46 others occasional help,<sup>113</sup> and in the 1810s–30s expenditure remained second only to Hook Norton and Chipping Norton within the hundred.<sup>114</sup> Payments included sickness relief, and money for clothing to enable individuals to go into service.<sup>115</sup> Primary responsibility passed in 1834 to Chipping Norton poor law union, but local rates (documented until 1886) remained high, averaging £623 a year in 1841–5.<sup>116</sup> More voluntary late 19th-century initiatives included Anglican coal and clothing clubs subsidised by the church estate.<sup>117</sup>

The Foresters club provided sick pay and helped to cover funeral expenses as late as the 1940s, and the Marten and Davis charities also continued into the 20th century, the former distributing £11 13s. 1d. in cash to 18 recipients in 1958.<sup>118</sup> In 1998 it was absorbed into the Enstone Relief in Need Charity, which in 2021 made grants totalling £3,060, mainly to help those living with a disability, to supplement winter fuel payments, and to help parents with childcare costs.<sup>119</sup> Neat Enstone had two resident doctors by 1920, and an Enstone infant welfare centre was established in 1943. By the early 21st century, however, the nearest medical services were in Charlbury and Chipping Norton.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 306–7; OHC, PAR97/13/A1/1–4 (1874–1933); TNA, PROB 11/2006/67 (Revd Ric. Goddard, 1844); PROB 11/2066/84 (Thos. Davis, 1847).

<sup>110</sup> *Oxon. FS*, pp. 131–3; above (1535–1800; since 1800).

<sup>111</sup> OHC, Church and Neat Enstone enclo. awards. There were additional allotment gardens at Cleveley, Gagingwell and Lidstone: *ibid.* PC97/A2/1–19.

<sup>112</sup> OHC, PAR97/4/F1/1; *Poor Abstract*, 1804, pp. 400–1.

<sup>113</sup> *Poor Abstract*, 1804, pp. 400–1.

<sup>114</sup> *Poor Rate Retns*, 1822, p. 136; 1825, p. 171; 1830, p. 159; 1835, p. 154.

<sup>115</sup> OHC, PAR97/2/A1/1 (1820s).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* PAR97/5/F2/1–104; Jordan, *History of Enstone*, 387.

<sup>117</sup> OHC, PAR97/13/A1/1.

<sup>118</sup> *Lifting the Latch*, 56–7, 173; *Oxon. FS*, pp. 131–2.

<sup>119</sup> Binns (ed.), *The Story of Enstone*, 34; Char. Com. website, no. 264476 (accessed Aug. 2023).

<sup>120</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1920 and later edns); Enstone Local History Circle, 'A History of Enstone and Heythrop', incl. photos; local information.