

LVSA Lambourn Valley - Scattered Archaeological records

Historic Character

This zone is the southern side of the valley from Lambourn and Farn Combe to Welford, split into two parts by the adjacent HECZ *WDNR*. Historically, this zone was mostly covered by open fields with areas of downland southwest of Lambourn, East Garston and Maidencourt. Small areas of ancient woodland and common existed south of Welford Park. Welford's open field was enclosed into irregularly-shaped fields by the 18th century, probably through piecemeal enclosure. The open field of East Garston had been enclosed into regularly-shaped fields by the 18th century, probably created through an agreement between farmers. The remaining land was enclosed into fields by acts of Parliament in the early 19th century. Small areas of downland southwest of Lambourn and East Garston remained unenclosed. Settlement was almost entirely absent with only four farms in the zone. All were located near the edge of the zone; Westfield Farm lay near the valley floor within early enclosures at East Garston, and the other farms were sited near the top of the valley slope. The only parks in the zone were Welford Park and a minor parkland at Oakhanger House. The zone was crossed by roads and tracks linking the valley floor and watershed giving a very sinuous, open grain to the landscape.

Agricultural mechanisation from the mid-20th century led to changes in the landscape as existing fields were amalgamated, either through boundary removal or reorganisation. Although some historic features such as hedgerows have been removed, this process has had a less dramatic effect than in other parts of the district as many historic fields were already fairly large and regular. Some historic fields, including a group of Parliamentary enclosures at Eastbury, survive in the present farming landscape. Downland areas remain unenclosed. Despite changes to the majority of fields in this zone, the character and grain of the landscape remains largely intact.

Historic Environment

Although HER records exist across the zone they are not common and are unevenly distributed, with most at the northern and southern end and few in the centre. Records are dominated by cropmarks, many discovered by the National Mapping Programme and the Berkshire Downs Survey, and finds. Some excavation and survey has been carried out by local archaeological groups.

Prehistoric activity is documented by finds and cropmarks, but this is not as widespread or extensive as in adjacent parts of the Lambourn valley. Only a single early prehistoric find has been recovered from the zone, a Mesolithic tranchet axe from Coppington Down. Cropmarks of probable Bronze Age round barrows have been mapped west and south of Dore's Farm and immediately south of Eastbury, with less certain examples at Farn Combe. A Bronze Age artefact scatter was located by fieldwalking north of Wickham and other finds were recovered near Hungerford Gap south of Lambourn. Only one Iron Age find has been recovered from the zone, a rare Italian brooch from Windmill Farm. Some level of activity during this period is indicated by cropmarks of field systems of later prehistoric/Romano-British date that have been mapped at Lodge Down, Coppington Down and near Eastbury. The most extensive area is between Dore's Farm and Eastbury, and includes boundaries, trackways and a possible pit cluster.

In addition to the activity indicated by the field-systems, Romano-British finds have been recovered from Hatchet's Corner, Hungerford Gap, southwest of Bockhampton, near Wickfield Copse, Weston, Oakhanger House and Welford Park. No other features of this date have been excavated.

Historic Environment Character Zone

Early medieval records are rare and consist only of a strap fitting found near Bockhampton, a knife from Welford and a 6th - 7th century saucer brooch found immediately south of Eastbury. Late medieval records are slightly more common and include a 16th century timber-framed house at Welford, pottery found during building at Hayfield Court, Eastbury, and lynchets on West Field Down, East Garston. The lynchets were excavated in the 1930s and seem to have been formed in the 15th century. It has been suggested that Wickfield Farm is a deserted medieval village, but no physical remains of a settlement have been found at the site yet.

The only recorded post-medieval feature is Farncombe Windmill. This stood on Farncombe Down into the 20th century, but was demolished when Windmill Farm was constructed. The mill site itself is grassed-over and has not been developed and it is possible that below-ground deposits relating to it survive. The three historic farms remain occupied but nothing is known of the nature of the buildings at each farm.

Undated human remains have been found at two locations. Part of a skeleton was found at Windmill Farm near the findspot of the Iron Age brooch and an inhumation without grave goods was found during building works at Hayfield Lodge, Eastbury.

Historic Environment Potential

Deposits of Bronze Age to Romano-British date may exist across the zone, particularly where there are cropmarks of potential barrows and field systems. The preservation of deposits may be varied, as most of the zone has been ploughed since the medieval period and this may have truncated archaeological layers. Deposits related to medieval settlement may be encountered at Wickfield Farm. The origin of the other three farms is unclear and any deposits relating to early occupation at these sites could help in understanding their history and development. Nothing is known about the nature of the historic building stock at the farms and it is possible that significant buildings or structural elements might exist.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- The open aspect of this zone is part of its historic character; will this be maintained with changing agricultural practices?
- Intensive modern agriculture threatens the resource on buried archaeological sites.
- Ancient woodland has not been well managed in recent years and this poses a threat to its survival.
- There is a need to ensure that any new tree planting avoids the visually and archaeologically erosive impacts of recent plantations. Where possible opportunities to soften the impact of recent plantations should be encouraged.

Research Priorities

- What was the nature of land use in the earlier Prehistoric period?
- Do the locations of the Bronze Age burial mounds tell us anything about the use of the landscape in this period?
- Where are the Romano-British settlements and how do they relate to the extensive field systems?
- Do medieval occupation deposits survive at Wickfield Farm?
- Do buried remains of the windmill survive at Farncombe? What date was this structure?
- What are the origins of the farmsteads in the zone?
- What is the nature and date of the burials recorded at Windmill Farm and Hayfield Lodge?