

In the Lambourn Valley – East Garston and Eastbury

An easy 4.5m (7k) walk, ideal for seeing snowdrops in season. Parking and refreshments at East Garston Community Shop SU365766 package.hotspots.float OS Explorer Map 158.

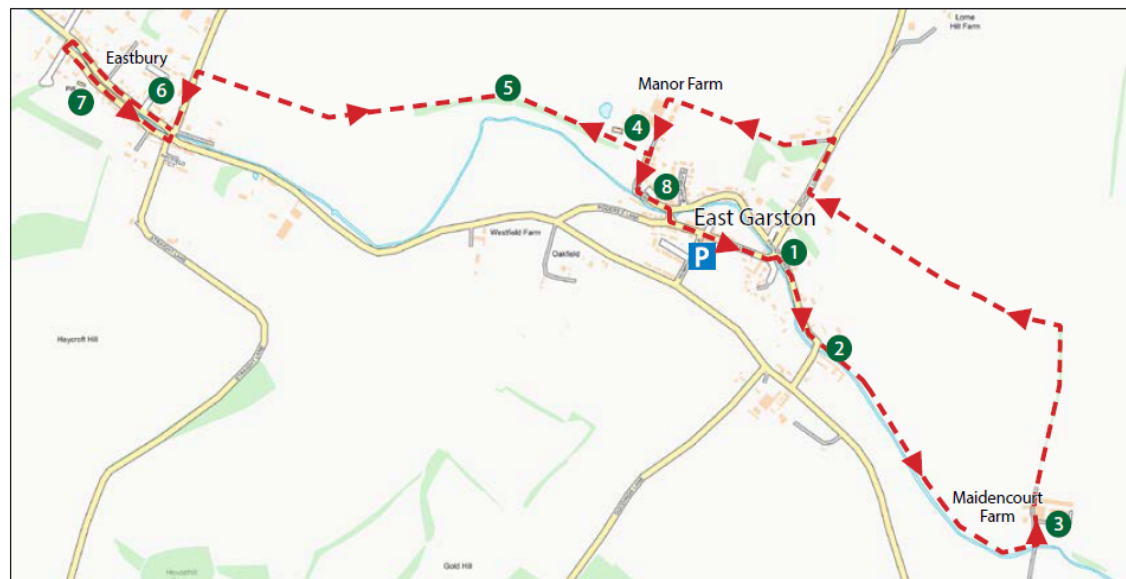


The Lambourn Valley is a great place to see snowdrops. They can be found blooming extensively in the road verges and woodlands and along the banks of the river. Our common wild snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, was first brought to this country from Europe in the late 16th century by monks. It became established in the wild during the next 200 years and is an important pollen source for newly emerging bees in early spring.

1. Farming and horse breeding have been important to the area of **East Garston** since the Anglo-Saxon period. Asgar ('the spear of God'), from whom the village derives its name, Asgar's Tun, was severely wounded at the Battle of Hastings defending the English standard. He was procurer of horses for the king and had extensive landholdings here, all of which he lost to the Normans.

From the car park turn right into the village street and follow the road out of the village, keeping straight ahead on the Lambourn Valley Way towards Shefford before the road turns sharply to cross the river.

2. The Lambourn Valley Way runs 22 miles from Uffington hillfort to Newbury following the course of a 1970's Christian Aid charity walk visiting all the



valley churches. The path was officially established in 1992.

At the next junction, turn left to walk through Maidencourt Farm and steadily rise onto the Downs.

3. Maidencourt Farm dates from the 19th century, but there are records of a manor on the site in the 12th century. The red and blue bricks were probably made locally. At the top of the hill, look out at the view of the Lambourn Downs and the valley and villages below.

Turn left at the next junction following the path to a lane. Turn right for a short distance and then left by farm buildings onto tracks leading to Manor Farm. Turn left through the farmyard towards the church.

4. The Church and Manor Farm are probably built on the site of the medieval manor. The house is Grade II listed. All Saints' Church is a Late Norman (1190AD) cruciform building of flint. Victorian restoration includes stained glass, a wall painting of the Tree of Jesse, and a reredos Nativity painting all by Nathaniel Westlake.

Just beyond the church driveway find and follow the Lambourn Valley Way to the right along the route of a disused railway to the village of Eastbury.

5. The Lambourn Valley Railway closed in 1960. It ran from Lambourn to Newbury, connected with the main Devon to London line and was opened in 1898. Some relics of the railway can be spotted along the path.

On reaching a metalled road, turn left and shortly right to walk along the main street of Eastbury village, following the northern bank of the River Lambourn.



6. In Eastbury there are many old buildings ranging from small cottages to large medieval barns with thatched roofs, flint walling, red brick and timber

framing. The manor house with its tall chimneys is 17th century. The family of a great Lambourn benefactor, John Estbury, acquired the manor in the 1360's.

After passing the pub, cross over the river to the left and follow the small back lane on the southern bank.

7. The Church of St. James the Greater dates from 1851 and has flint walls and a tiled roof. On the opposite side of the river, by the road there is a fine medieval preaching cross.

Reaching the junction, cross over to find the Lambourn Valley Way back to East Garston leaving the lane to the right.

8. In East Garston follow the village roads and look at the many fine buildings constructed from local materials including flint and sarson stone. The decorative blue glaze on some of the bricks has been obtained by firing at a high temperature along with glass bottles, bracken and salt.

Margery Slatter