

= Aldermaston =

Aldermaston / ʌldərməstən / is a mostly rural , dispersed settlement , civil parish and electoral ward in Berkshire , South @-@ East England . In the United Kingdom Census 2011 , the parish had a population of 1015 . The village is in the south the mid @-@ Kennet alluvial plain and bounds to the south Hampshire . It is roughly equidistant from Newbury , Basingstoke and Reading , centred 46 miles ( 74 km ) west @-@ by @-@ south @-@ west of London .

Aldermaston may have been inhabited as early as 1690 CE ; a number of postholes and remains of cereal grains have been found in the area . Written history of the village is traced back at least as far as the 9th century AD . The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicles show that the Ealdorman of Berkshire had his country estate in the village . The manor of Aldermaston was established by the early 11th century , when the village was given to the Achard family by Henry I ; the manor is documented in the Domesday survey . The village church was established in the 13th century , and some of the original Norman architecture remains in the building 's structure . The last resident Lord of the Manor , Charles Keyser , died in 1929 . The manor estate has been subsequently occupied by Associated Electrical Industries , the XIX Tactical Air Command , the Women 's Land Army , Collier Macmillan Schools , Blue Circle Industries , and the Compass Group , who ran it as a hotel and corporate venue . It was bought by the Praxis Group in 2013 for £ 4 @. @ 7 million and is now subject to plans for restoration that include 227 new homes in order to finance the restoration of the manor house and grounds .

The name " Aldermaston " is well known in connection with the UK 's nuclear weapons programme , as well as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament . The Atomic Weapons Establishment ( AWE ) , which develops , maintains , and disposes of the UK 's nuclear weaponry is in the parish . Built on the site of the former RAF Aldermaston , the plant has been the destination of numerous Aldermaston Marches . Until 2006 , the village was home to the Aldermaston Pottery , which was established by Alan Caiger @-@ Smith and Geoffrey Eastop in 1955 .

= = History = =

Evidence suggests that Aldermaston was inhabited in the 12th century CE , possibly extending back to 1690 CE . Radiocarbon dating on postholes and pits in the area show activity from 1690 to 1390 , 1319 to 1214 , and 977 to 899 CE . Wheat and barley grains have been found in these excavations . Tests show that most of the barley was dehulled , but that absence of such debris may mean that the cereal was brought in from other areas .

= = = Middle ages = = =

Before the 1066 Norman conquest of England , the land and properties of Aldermaston formed part of the estates of Harold Godwinson , the Earl of Wessex , who later became King Harold II of England . Harold 's assessment of Aldermaston valued the village 's 15 hides at £ 20 a year . As with much of the land seized by William the Conqueror after his arrival in England in 1066 , Aldermaston was held in demesne . His Domesday Survey of 1086 identified the existence of a mill , worth twenty shillings , and two fisheries , worth five shillings . During the rest of William 's reign , and that of his son William Rufus , Aldermaston was owned by the Crown .

The history of the Lords of the Manor of Aldermaston Court can be traced to Achard D 'Aldermaston , who was born in 1036 . Six families have had lordship of the Aldermaston estate . In the 11th century , Henry I gave Aldermaston to Robert Achard ( or Hachard ) of Sparsholt . In the mid @-@ 12th century , the Achard family founded the church of St Mary the Virgin . In 1292 , Edward I granted the right for the lord of the manor to hold a market in the village . Another charter was granted by Henry IV , with evidence that the market existed until approximately 1900 . The Achards also established an annual fair to observe the feast of St. Thomas the Martyr on 7 July .

Aldermaston was held by the Achard family until the 14th century , when it passed through marriage to Thomas De La Mare of Nunney Castle , Somerset . The De La Mare family governed

Aldermaston for approximately 120 years , until Elizabeth de la Mare ? whose male relatives predeceased her ? married into the Forster family . In about 1636 , the Forsters built a large manor house to the east of the church . The house incorporated parts of an earlier ( 15th century ) house , including the chimney stacks . The Forsters ' house was fronted by two porches , separated by a central section with seven bays . The porches had ornate Solomonic columns , similar to those at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford . The interior of the house featured a number of mythical statues , as well as artwork by Gaspard Dughet , portraits of William Congreve and Godfrey Kneller , and Tintoretto 's Esther Before Ahasuerus . The house 's Jacobean garden featured patterns of groves and avenues of oak , yew , Spanish chestnut and lime trees . In the early 18th century the Forsters oversaw the building of almshouses in Church Road . Built by R Dixon in 1706 , the houses became known as " Dixon 's Cottages " . The manor passed through the Forster family until 1752 , when the Forster lineage ended and the estate was inherited by Ralph Congreve , the husband of the last Forster 's grand @-@ niece .

= = = Victorian era = = =

On Ralph 's death a second @-@ cousin of dramatist William Congreve inherited the manor . The Congreve Family owned the estate at the time of the 1830 Swing Riots . The rioters marched across Aldermaston , wrecking twenty @-@ three agricultural machines . Workers were so frightened by the riots that they left their machinery in the open in an attempt to limit additional damage . Around the same time , the River Kennet ( along the north side of the estate ) was made navigable between Reading and Newbury .

In 1843 , the manor house was destroyed by fire , news of which was carried in The Illustrated London News . The estate passed into the Court of Chancery and was purchased by Daniel Higford Davall Burr . In 1848 , Burr commissioned the building of a neoclassical mansion to the south west of the original building . Burr saved the 17th @-@ century manor 's wooden staircase , though all that remains of the building is a staircase to the cellar ( which is now home to a colony of bats ) . By 1851 the new building was complete , costing £ 20 @,@ 000 and having a Tudor @-@ like appearance . Burr held the estate until his death 50 years later , when was inherited by his son , who sold it in 1893 .

The buyer was wealthy stockbroker Charles Edward Keyser , who was preoccupied with the idea of keeping the village unchanged ? or , as he described it , " unspoilt " . He forbade advertisements , opposed all modernisation and refused to allow any expansion by the building of houses . He did , however , commission the building of a parish hall in 1897 and provided the village with a water supply , and the water fountain on the small village green was installed to commemorate Queen Victoria 's Diamond Jubilee . Keyser oversaw the restoration of the village almshouses in 1906 and 1924 , and defrayed the cost of a memorial oak tablet in memory of those killed in World War I. Of the 100 men from the village who served in the war , 22 were killed ( the highest percentage of town population in the country ) . The tablet bears the name of each man lost in action .

During Keyser 's lordship , John Marius Wilson 's Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales listed Adminston as a possible name for the village . On his death in 1929 , his wife , Mary , continued to occupy the house until she died in 1938 . The estate was auctioned off in September 1938 , and many lots were purchased by their occupiers . The manor house was bought by Associated Electrical Industries ( AEI ) for £ 16 @,@ 000 . One of the houses in the village is recorded as having fetched £ 1 @,@ 375 . As AEI 's chairman , Felix Pole became the de jure Lord of the Manor upon their purchase of Aldermaston Court .

= = = Post @-@ World War II = = =

During the 1940s RAF Aldermaston was created on the parkland at the southern end of the parish , with XIX Tactical Air Command stationed at the manor house . After World War II , the manor was returned to AEI who built the MERLIN reactor on part of the land . The reactor was opened on 6 November 1959 by The Duke of Edinburgh . With the opening of the Atomic Weapons Research

Establishment ( AWRE ) in 1950 , Aldermaston became synonymous with a number of CND marches .

In 1953 , Pole stepped down as Lord of the Manor and was succeeded by AEI 's senior representative , Thomas Allibone . Allibone held the position for 32 years , until Blue Circle Industries acquired the estate in 1985 . Allibone was succeeded by Tony Jackson , and the current Lord of the Manor is Andy Hall . Blue Circle could not gain planning permission in the grounds of the court , so the MERLIN reactor was demolished to make way for Portland House . With a full redevelopment of Aldermaston Manor , the £ 14 million office development became Blue Circle 's international headquarters and the complex was opened by Prince Richard , Duke of Gloucester .

= = = Toponymy = = =

The village of Aldermaston derives its name from *Ældremanestone* , *Eldremanestone* or *Hedremanestone* , the Old English for " Ealdorman 's Homestead " . The Ealdorman ? or Alderman ? was a person of extreme importance , equating to the modern @-@ day Lord @-@ Lieutenant of the County . Although his country estate was in Aldermaston , he would have spent most of the time in the original county town of Wallingford . The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle states that the first known Ealdorman of Berkshire , Aethelwulf , fought the Danes with Ethelred of Wessex at the nearby Battle of Englefield in 871 .

Other documented names include Aldermaston ad Pontem ( 11th century ) , Aldremanneston ( 12th century ) , Aldremaneston ( 13th century ) , Aldermanston and Aldermanneston Achard ( 14th century ) , and Aldmerston ( 19th century ) .

= = Government = =

Historically , Aldermaston was a hundred , though for a period it was within the Theale hundred . By the 19th century , the hundreds had been superseded by other sub @-@ divisions . From then on , Aldermaston was , at times , part of the Bradfield Poor Law Union and Sanitary District , and the registration sub @-@ districts of Mortimer ( late 19th century ) and Bucklebury ( early 20th century ) . It was at all times an ecclesiastical parish and acquired civil parish status in the 1890s .

The civil parish council is elected by every resident on West Berkshire elections . It is in the area of West Berkshire unitary authority . The electoral ward of Aldermaston includes the neighbouring parishes of Wasing , Brimpton , Midgham , and Woolhampton . The ward is the smallest in West Berkshire by population . The ward 's councillor is Dominic Boeck , who represents the Conservative Party .

Aldermaston is under the catchment of Thames Valley Police and is covered by the Brimpton Neighbourhood Policing Team . In a meeting with Aldermaston Parish Council , the police reported that 57 criminal offences were reported to have taken place in the parish between 2009 and 2010 . Of this , the majority was theft from non @-@ dwelling properties . Vehicle crime had dropped by 57 % on the previous year but violent crime had risen from four to six incidents . Five of these crimes were reported to be domestic violence . There have been no reported cases of robbery in Aldermaston since 2006 .

= = Geography = =

Aldermaston is in West Berkshire , about 2 miles ( 3 @.@ 2 km ) from the Hampshire boundary . The village is 1 mile ( 1 @.@ 6 km ) south of the A4 road that links the parish with Newbury and Reading . The main road in Aldermaston , The Street , is part of the A340 road and links the village with Pangbourne and Basingstoke . The course of Ermin Street , the Roman road that linked Calleva Atrebatum ( Silchester ) with Glevum ( Gloucester ) via Corinium Dobunnorum ( Cirencester ) runs south of the village , but none of the road survives in the area .

At the southern end of The Street is a small triangular village green called The Loosey ? supposedly named after a " Lucy " who planted the oak tree which stands on the green . The Loosey

is the site of a Roman well , discovered in 1940 by a cow that almost fell down it . The Loosey was previously home to the village maypole ( which was often climbed by Daniel Burr 's monkey ) and a drinking fountain erected by Charles Keyser to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria .

The River Kennet and River Enborne flow through the parish . The confluence of the rivers is approximately 0 @. @ 6 miles ( 0 @. @ 97 km ) north of the village . The Kennet and Avon Canal forms part of the parish 's boundaries with Woolhampton and Padworth .

Sections of Grim 's Bank are in the parish . Part of the earthwork in the AWE complex survives at a height of 3 @. @ 3 metres ( 11 ft ) and with a ditch 0 @. @ 9 metres ( 3 @. @ 0 ft ) deep .

### = = = Geology = = =

The landscape of Aldermaston is influenced by Paices Hill and Rag Hill , which are extremities of the chalk formation the North Wessex Downs as part of the Thames Basin Heaths . The topography of the land in the parish generally slopes northward to the River Kennet .

The soil in the parish is high in clay . Due to the parish 's location within the Kennet Valley there is a high concentration of alluvium , with the content largely determined by the London Clay Formation , the Bagshot Formation , and the Bracklesham Beds .

### = = = Flooding = = =

The quite flat low clay of Aldermaston 's north has with exceptional rainfall led to flooding certain populous streets on three occasions ? 1971 , 1989 , and 2007 . The flood in 1971 caused by torrential rain was exacerbated by the non @-@ porous tarmac and buildings of the Atomic Weapons Establishment which managed for the first time to overwhelm its balancing ponds . This happened again in July 1989 , when an average of 6 inches ( 150 mm ) of rain was deposited across the parish in two hours ; water rose 5 feet ( 1 @. @ 5 m ) above the ponds and broke through a brick wall . The destroyed wall was rebuilt with 17 grilles to avoid another build @-@ up of water . A donation of £ 10 @, @ 000 was given to the village by Blue Circle .

In July 2007 , torrential rain flooded some of the traditional village centre and primary school . The storm coincided with the annual Glade music festival and jeopardised the event . The festival gates were temporarily closed while organisers assessed the flooding , which submerged one of the stages . The festival 's car park was incapacitated , with thousands of revellers stranded in the village and surrounding lanes .

The floods also hit the Church of England primary school , with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service evacuating pupils and staff from the school in life rafts . The evacuation used four rafts , rescuing pupils and teachers from the school through windows . The 165 people ( 140 pupils and 25 members of staff ) were taken uphill to the parish hall , where blankets and sleeping bags had been provided .

Ian Henderson , a police constable at Thames Valley Police stated that the emergency services were " really stretched because of what happened over the county and the Glade event " , that " the [ A340 ] junction was two or three @-@ foot under water " , and predicted that " a lot of householders [ would be ] homeless . "

### = = = Demography = = =

The 1831 census showed that 68 % of the employed population of Aldermaston were working class or " labourers and servants " . 20 % were middle class ( " middling sorts " ) , 10 % were upper class ( " employers and professionals " ) and 2 % were unclassified .

In 1887 the population of the parish was 528 . By 1896 , the population had grown to 585 . The population fluctuated steadily around 550 until the 1950s and 1960s , when a population explosion resulted in the 1961 UK census reporting 2 @, @ 186 residents in the parish . This coincides with the opening of the Atomic Weapons Establishment in the early 1950s , and the majority of this figure counts residents in the parts of Tadley within the parish of Aldermaston ? between 1901 and 1961 ,

368 houses were built in the parish .

A number of parish border changes occurred in the first half of the 20th century , including the net loss of 307 acres ( 124 ha ) to Beenham and Woolhampton on 1 April 1934 alone . By 2001 , the parish population had reduced to 927 .

The 2001 United Kingdom Census identified that 99 @. @ 3 % of householders in the parish as white . In 2005 30 % of parish residents lived in the village . Of the 70 % outside the village , 30 % lived at Aldermaston Wharf , 20 % in the local mobile home parks , 10 % in the Falcon Fields development and 10 % in " other outlying areas " . Falcon Fields is a housing development on the southern border of the parish , completed in the early 2000s . Ravenswing and Pinelands are mobile home parks near the Hampshire border . Raghill is an industrial area to the east of the parish , which has some light residential developments .

The average age of residents in the parish is approximately 50 with 31 @. @ 5 % of residents in the 45 ? 64 age group . The average age of residents of Aldermaston Wharf is 30 @. @ 7 , and in the mobile home parks the average age is 53 @. @ 9 . Of these , 53 @. @ 3 % were female . This is in contrast with the 2001 census data , which showed that 49 @. @ 8 % were female .

In 2005 , 3 % of the parish population were unemployed and 25 % were retired . The retirement figure increased in the Pinelands and Ravenswing areas , with a statistic of 42 % . Most residents ' places of work are in surrounding towns , with their location in the parish largely dictating where to look for work . The 2005 survey identified that residents in the south of the parish ( Falcon Fields and Ravenswing / Pinelands ) travel towards Tadley and Basingstoke whereas those further north in the parish tend to find work in Reading , Newbury and London .

= = Economy = =

Historically , the main source of industry in Aldermaston has been agriculture . According to the 1831 census , approximately 66 % of working men ( aged 20 and over ) were employed in some form of agriculture . The next highest industry by workers was " retail and handicrafts " , which employed approximately 20 % . Employment categories in the 1881 census were more discreet ; just 20 % of working men identified their employment as agriculture . 30 % however , were listed as " general or unspecified commodities " . In this census , women 's employment was also documented . Of the 137 working women in the parish , 40 ( slightly fewer than 30 % ) worked in domestic services , whereas 82 ( approximately 60 % ) were of an unknown occupation .

= = = Agriculture = = =

In about 1797 a schoolmaster living in the village cultivated the Williams pear . The schoolmaster ( either Mr Wheeler or his successor , John Stair ) was the original cultivator , but the pear ( a cultivar of the European Pear ) was named after Richard Williams of Turnham Green , who grew several grafts of the original tree . On 5 December 1956 , a plaque commemorating the tree was unveiled on the wall of the village school .

Locally @- @ farmed wheat was milled at Aldermaston Mill until the 1920s . In existence at the time of the Domesday survey , the mill was previously called the " Kingsmill " , and at one time supplied flour to Huntley & Palmers in Reading . Now known as The Old Mill , it was owned by Wasing 's Mount family throughout the 18th and 19th centuries . William Mount let the mill to Francis Webb ( 1797 ? 1811 ) , Mr Sherwood ( 1811 ? 1820 ) , Mr King ( 1820 ? 1824 ) , Mr Waldren ( 1824 ? 1828 ) , Mr Mathews ( 1828 ? 1848 ) , and William Gilchrist ( 1848 ? 1856 ) . Gilchrist ( Mathews ' business partner ) bought the mill from Mount in 1856 using money inherited from his brother 's death the previous year . Owning it outright for approximately a year , he drowned in the River Kennet in 1857 after visiting the Angel public house in Woolhampton . Joseph Crockett purchased the mill in an auction the same year , before it was acquired by a Richard Sisling of Godalming in 1858 . In approximately 1860 , the mill was purchased by the Kersley family . Between then and 1885 , it was operated by Anthony Kersley , a miller and maltster who employed " six men and a boy , a carter , several domestic servants and a governess " . Kersley 's son , also named Anthony , ran

the mill until 1895 . That year , Walter Parson bought the mill and operated it until approximately 1897 . Charles Keyser subsequently oversaw restoration on the mill building which " had been untenanted for upwards of three years " . He let the mill out to a Mr Iremonger from 1901 . Iremonger used the mill until the late 1920s , shortly before Keyser 's death . After Keyser had died and the Aldermaston estate had been divided and sold , his widow , Mary , approached Evelyn Arlott to run the mill as a tea room and guesthouse . The Arlott family purchased the mill in approximately 1939 , after the death of Mary Keyser .

In 1939 , there were seven farms on the Aldermaston estate ? Forsters Farm , Village Farm , Church Farm , Upper Church Farm , Raghill Farm , Park Farm , and Soke Farm . These accounted for approximately 75 % of the estate 's land . Aside from these , there were six smallholdings within the parish but outside the land owned by the court . These were Springhill Farm , Court Farm , Strawberry Farm , Circus Farm , Ravenswing Farm , and Frouds Farm .

Of these , Church Farm and Forster 's Farm remain in operation . Upper Church Farm was originally known as Harry 's Farm , after a William Harry who died in 1544 .

= = = Pubs and brewing = = =

The local pub is named The Hind 's Head in honour of the Forster family crest . Built in the 17th century and originally operating as a coaching inn , the establishment was named The Pack Horse during the De La Mare and Forster lordships and The Congreve Arms throughout the Congreves ' ownership .

The building has a large black and gold clock set into the gable , and a small bellturret upon which is a gilt fox @-@ shaped weather vane . The bell was intended to be rung as an air @-@ raid siren during the Second World War . In the early 19th century the pub 's signboard carried the arms of the Congreve family , as well as branding for a company named " Adams " . In the British Parliamentary Papers of 1817 , the Committee on the State of the Police in the Metropolis reported evidence of a John Adams ? a Reading @-@ based distiller and hop merchant ? who competed for business against Simonds ' Brewery . By 1850 , the pub brewed beer on @-@ site ; a brewery was built as an out @-@ building behind the main pub building . John Knight produced beer at the pub for 40 years , selling it for 2d . The brewery building is still in existence , with the wooden louvres still operational . The building is now the pub 's kitchen . In the 1970s , the pub was owned by Whitbread . In the mid @-@ 1990s the pub was taken over by Gales Brewery ( having previously been a free house ) , later becoming tied to Fuller 's Brewery on their acquisition of Gales in 2006 . In the 1970s , the pub was home to the Kennet Folk Club .

The pub has its own gaol @-@ house , the lock @-@ up , at the rear . Built out of red brick , the small single @-@ storey building has a shallow domed roof . The inside of the lock @-@ up measures approximately 7 @. @ 5 feet ( 2 @. @ 3 m ) by 6 feet ( 1 @. @ 8 m ) , and is enclosed by a studded door with a grille . It was last used in 1865 and its drunk inhabitant burnt himself to death trying to keep warm . The lock @-@ up was designated as a Grade II listed building in April 1967 . On 11 September 2010 the lock @-@ up was opened to the public as part of the Heritage Open Days scheme .

Another pub in the parish , The Butt Inn , is located approximately 1 @. @ 25 miles ( 2 @. @ 01 km ) north @-@ east of the village . The pub is named after the archery butts that were located in the fields opposite the pub . The Falcon Inn was on the southern border of the parish . The pub , which closed in 2009 , was demolished in 2011 to improve traffic flow to AWE . In 2013 , the adjacent petrol station was rebuilt , extending onto the pub site .

The Aldermaston Brewery was established at Aldermaston Wharf in 1770 , and was demolished in the 1950s . It was replaced with a cable factory , which was demolished in 1990 .

= = = Cricket bats = = =

Old Village Farm ( on Fishermans Lane ) is now the location of a wood yard , used since the 1930s to prepare local willow for the production of cricket bats . The trees are grown at Harbour Hill Copse

, where 70 trees are felled annually for this purpose . There are approximately 1000 trees growing at any given time . The workers at the yard cut the wood into approximate bat shapes , then cure the wood in a kiln . The clefts of wood are then shipped to India where the final manufacturing can be undertaken under moisture @-@ controlled conditions .

The yard would take on three up @-@ coming cricketers for the winter , in the hope that the hard work would " toughen them up " to get them picked for the England cricket team . One year the yard had help from Frank Tyson , Alan Moss , and Peter Loader . The following year they hosted three Davids ? David Kaufman , David Spragbury , and David Gibson .

The wood yard was featured on A Question of Sport , when cricketer Graham Gooch took part in the programme 's " Mystery Guest " round . Gooch endorsed the bats made from Aldermaston willow , which were sold by Surridge . When he scored 333 runs against India at Lord 's in the 1990 test season , the Turbo 333 bat , made from Aldermaston wood , was launched in his honour .

In the 1960s , Blue Peter aired a short documentary on the cricket bat production entitled " The Life of a Cricket Bat " . It was presented by Christopher Trace .

= = = Pottery = = =

In 1955 , the Aldermaston Pottery was established on the main street by studio potters Alan Caiger @-@ Smith and Geoffrey Eastop . The pottery was renowned for tin @-@ glazed and porcelain wares , which used scrap wood from the Village Farm woodyard to fire the kiln . The pottery closed in 2006 . It had previously scaled back its output in 1993 due to Caiger @-@ Smith 's partial retirement after the 1992 recession .

= = = Atomic Weapons Establishment = = =

The Atomic Weapons Establishment ( AWE ) , for which Aldermaston has become known , is less than 1 mile ( 1 @. @ 6 km ) south of the village . The establishment is where the UK designs and manufactures Trident missiles , and where decommissioned and redundant nuclear weapons are dismantled . In April 1958 , the first Aldermaston March was held . The march saw around 3 @, @ 000 protesters march from London to Aldermaston over four days , with a total attendance of 12 @, @ 000 at the establishment 's gates . The 50th anniversary of the event was marked on 24 March 2008 with the " Bomb Stops Here " protest , attended by Vivienne Westwood and CND president Walter Wolfgang . The 2008 demonstration was the biggest protest staged by CND in ten years . Until 2005 , AWE discharged " pre @-@ treated waste water " into the River Thames at Pangbourne via an 11 @. @ 8 miles ( 19 @. @ 0 km ) pipeline which runs under roads and fields within the parish . A water processing facility was installed on @-@ site in 2006 , though the Pangbourne Pipeline remains in situ .

= = = Other businesses = = =

Lafarge Aggregates owns various sites in the parish . In 1974 the village won an appeal against Pioneer Concrete 's application for gravel extraction near the village . Similar events took place in March 2003 when hundreds of local residents protested against an application of gravel extraction by Lafarge . Larfarge 's initial appeal , in April 2003 , was turned down by West Berkshire Council . A further application to extract aggregate at the Wasing Estate was due to be decided in 2010 . One former extraction site , Butts Lake Quarry , is now a nature reserve and the flooded lakes have been identified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is now operated by the Berkshire , Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust . The reserve contains specimens of trees such as alder , cherry , hawthorn , oak , and willow . Examples of reeds present include typha latifolia , phragmites australis , mentha aquatica , and lythrum salicaria . Numerous species of bird nest in the reserve , including the common teal , shoveler , warbler , kingfisher , water rail , and nightingale .

Britain 's first roadside petrol filling station was opened by The AA on the Bath Road near Aldermaston on 2 March 1919 . The following year , one villager requested that a pump be installed

by his house . " Chuffer " Ford , who lived in The Forge with his wife Olive , was told by Keyser that it must be " behind a wall and recessed " . A hole was cut in the brick wall beside Ford 's yard to house the Shell @-@ branded pump . The location of this pump is marked by a square hole in the present wall . Ford 's business offered other motoring services , with signage reading " vacuum , oil , and cycles " .

There is a number of small businesses in the village , including a hairdressing salon , a software development company and the village shop . In the 1970s the hairdressers was a music shop , which was opened by Terry Wogan . Before this it was a cooperative village stores started by Charles Keyser .

There are two business parks in the parish ? Calleva Business Park ( on the Berkshire / Hampshire border ) and Youngs Industrial Estate ( on Paices Hill ) . The latter opened in the early 1980s , and is the location of Paices Wood Country Parkland , a wildlife project sponsored by English Nature .

In 2007 Aldermaston won the Business Category Award in the regional final of the Calor Village of the Year competition . The judges stated that the village " has a very successful business community " and that " local businesses are well @-@ supported by villagers and in return these businesses support village activities " . In addition to the business award , the village was announced as the Overall Winner of the Calor " Berkshire Village of the Year " competition in 2006 , as well as category winners in the " Building Community Life " , " Business " , " Young People " and " ICT " categories .

= = Architecture = =

The majority of houses in the village were built between the 17th and late 19th centuries , including examples of Victorian Gothic architecture . Only one house has been built on the village 's main street since the early 20th century . The parish hall , built in 1897 , is predominantly flint and brick .

Most of the houses in the village are Grade II listed buildings , and many were built using local red and blue bricks . In total , 51 structures in the parish are listed , including gatepiers , greenhouses , a tomb , railings and a wall , the village telephone box and Aldermaston Lock .

= = Culture = =

Since the early 1800s , Aldermaston has held a candle auction every three years . The open auction starts with a horseshoe nail driven through a tallow candle an inch below the wick and lit in the parish hall . The lot is the lease of Church Acre , a plot of 2 acres ( 0 @. 81 ha ) granted to the church in 1815 after the Inclosures Act . The proceedings are overseen by the vicar and churchwardens , who drink rum punch throughout the auction . Traditionally , the churchwardens smoked clay pipes during the event .

The parish hall often holds other events , such as plays produced by the village 's own amateur dramatics society . The society , known as The Aldermaston Players , have staged fundraising events in the village 1966 . In 1976 , the parish hall hosted an episode of the BBC 's Any Questions ? .

The village , along with the neighbouring parish of Wasing , holds an annual produce show at The Old Mill . The show , which was previously held behind the Hind 's Head pub , hosts produce competitions in approximately 100 classes . In the 1990s , a team of gardeners formed from the produce show entered the Chelsea Flower Show . They won a silver gilt in the Best Courtyard Garden Award in two consecutive years , for gardens named " Calma " and " Time Lords " .

Since 1957 there has been an annual performance of the York Nativity Play from the 15th century York Mystery Cycle . The play follows a script by E. Martin Browne with carols by William Byrd , Johannes Eccard , and Michael Praetorius . The performances are at the Church of St Mary the Virgin in early December , and the actors are local people who have appeared in the play for many years . In 1964 , the play was recorded and broadcast by the BBC Home Service under the title of Star Over Aldermaston . One member of the production team was David Shute .

Aldermaston was mentioned in Plum Pie ( 1966 ) by P. G. Wodehouse ? " Every now and then we



march from Aldermaston , protesting like a ton of bricks ... And then we sit a good deal . " This was a reference to the demonstrations of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament ( the Aldermaston Marches ) which took the form of marches from Aldermaston to London ( apart from in 1958 , when the march went from London to Aldermaston ) . This was an annual march from 1958 to 1963 . Aldermaston was the original location of The Glade Festival . The 2007 event was jeopardised by torrential rains and flooding but cautiously went ahead . In 2009 , the festival moved from the area and was held near Winchester . Since 2006 , the village has held a blues festival known as " Blues on the Meadow " .

The parish of Aldermaston forms a group with the local parishes of Wasing and Brimpton . The three share a monthly Parish Magazine featuring stories from churches , organisations , schools , businesses and various miscellany .

= = Transport = =

Aldermaston railway station is in Aldermaston Wharf , 1 @.@ 5 miles ( 2 @.@ 4 km ) from the village itself . The station is managed by National Rail and served by First Great Western services between Reading and Newbury .

The village is on the A340 road , and has nearby access to the A4 road and the M4 motorway . Newbury Buses route 104 serves the village , with services terminating in Newbury , Calcot and Reading . The 2005 Parish Plan identified a need for a relief road near the village . A report was presented in 2009 evaluating the problems caused by HGV traffic through the village , and described solutions which included support from Newbury MP Richard Benyon .

The nearest operating airstrip , Brimpton Airfield , is less than 1 mile ( 1 @.@ 6 km ) west of the village , within AWE 's restricted airspace . RAF Aldermaston ceased to operate as a civilian airport in 1950 .

The village is 1 @.@ 5 miles ( 2 @.@ 4 km ) south @-@ east of the Reading Marine Company 's headquarters on the Kennet and Avon Canal , which provides waterway links to London ( via the Thames ) and Bristol ( via the River Avon ) .

= = Education = =

The parish of Aldermaston has two primary schools . Aldermaston Primary School is a Local Authority @-@ run Church of England school in Wasing Lane and has about 150 pupils . It was established in 1836 and originally located in Church Road , moving to the present site in 1988 . The school uses the names of the manor 's squires in its house system .

The Cedars is a private school opened in 1992 in the former buildings of the Church of England school . The school has approximately 40 pupils enrolled .

Alder Bridge Steiner School , although located in Aldermaston Wharf , is within the parish of Padworth . Padworth College is situated on the border of Aldermaston and Padworth parishes .

= = Religious sites = =

= = = Parish church = = =

The Church of England parish church of Saint Mary the Virgin and was built in the mid @-@ 12th century . The Norman building was altered throughout the following millennium , particularly in 13th , 14th , 15th and 17th centuries . The 12th @-@ century building now comprises the current nave , with additions seen in the Forster Chapel and chancel ( 13th century ) , the steeple ( 14th century ) , and vestry ( 17th century ) . The 17th @-@ century Jacobean pulpit is an unusual heptagonal design . Various additions were made to the structure in the 14th and 15th centuries , primarily to the walls and ogee windows . A scratch dial was added to the south @-@ west buttress in the 14th century .

The church features architecture by Edward Doran Webb and stained glass by Charles Eamer Kempe . The Forster Chapel , a lady chapel added to the south face in the 13th century , contains the alabaster effigial monument of Sir George Forster and his wife Elizabeth which was built in 1530 . Evidence suggests that the chapel may originally have been a chantry dedicated to St Nicholas . The roundel windows in the north wall date from the 13th century and are the oldest glass in Berkshire .

The tower has a peal of eight bells dating from 1681 to 1900 . The current organ , which has 16 stops , was installed in 1880 .

Individuals buried in the churchyard include squires Charles Keyser ( 1847 ? 1929 ) and Daniel Burr ( c.1811 ? 1885 ) , schoolmaster John Stair ( c.1745 ? 1820 ) , and Maria Hale ( 1791 ? 1879 ) .

#### = = Sport = =

Aldermaston has a number of sports teams . The village cricket team , Aldermaston Village CC , play at nearby Wasing Park . The club , which first played in 1786 as " The Gentlemen of Aldermaston " , originally played at a pitch at Aldermaston Court . The ground was lost when the airfield was built . Sir William Mount , 2nd Baronet , the grandfather of British Prime Minister David Cameron , allowed a cricket pitch to be established on a portion of his Wasing estate . The original football club played next to the cricket pitch . The club 's strip was sponsored by Mr. George L Heighton , the proprietor of the village shop .

Aldermaston Rugby Club and A.F.C. Aldermaston both play their home games at the Recreational Society at AWE . Tadley RFC is in the parish , about 1 @.@ 5 miles ( 2 @.@ 4 km ) from the village .

Aldermaston Raceway , a banger racing , demolition derby and stock car venue , Fleet Motor Club , is the relocation of the Aldershot Raceway which closed in 2007 . A course for off @-@ road 4x4 trials is close to the Raceway .

#### = = Notable people = =

Thomas Allibone , Lord of the Manor ( 1953 ? 1985 )

Alan Caiger @-@ Smith , the studio potter , founded Aldermaston Pottery

Duncan Grant , painter , lived in the village with Paul Roche for the last few years of his life , and died in the village

Felix Pole , Lord of the Manor ( 1939 ? 1953 )

Paul Roche , poet , lived in the village