

# Chapter 2

## About Lamerton

### 2.1 History of Lamerton Parish



#### pre-4000BC

There is evidence of human habitation in the area going back millennia; in the parish of Lamerton there are Stone Age barrows at Heathfield, an ancient stile and a 'longstone' near Tavistock; there is more extensive evidence of ancient settlements on nearby Dartmoor.

#### c.1700 BC – 1200 BC

The archaeological evidence from the Middle Bronze Age is dominated by that of agriculture and settlement; people lived in round houses and, in many places, divided the land up into regular systems of fields known as 'reaves' using stone boundaries.

#### AD 800 - 1100

It is thought that the typical Devon landscape of dispersed farms, embanked lanes and manorial estates emerged during the Anglo-Saxon period. There would have been large, cultivated fields with communally farmed open strips, and evidence of these can still be seen today such as north of Hilltown. By the time the Domesday book was written in 1086, what we now know as the parish of Lamerton was made up of 6 manors- Lamerton, Collacombe, Hurdwick, Ogbear, Ottery and Willestrew. Hurdwick was the farm belonging to the Abbey of Tavistock and as such would have been economically very important. In the first 1/4 of the 12th century, Ottery housed the leper colony operated by Tavistock Abbey.

#### Medieval Devon

Within these manorial lands, there were small settlements or hamlets, many of which have ceased to exist. It has been suggested<sup>1</sup> that the period between AD 1150 and 1350 was one of great colonisation of the Devon countryside. A distinctive feature of south-western farming was the longhouses and early enclosure of the open strips to produce long, narrow enclosures, edged by great hedge banks and lanes, creating the characteristic landscape still prevalent throughout the parish today.

Devon contains many of the oldest hedges in the country - as many as three-quarters of existing hedges could be of medieval origin.



Longhouse at Chaddlehanger

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<sup>1</sup> Professor W.G. Hoskins (1954)- a celebrated Devon historian

These small communities were connected through the network of deep-set lanes. The fact that many of the lanes lead from abandoned settlements towards Hurdwick indicates the importance of the Abbey Farm and the lesser importance of the town of Tavistock. Enclosure of fields with hedges would have been considered progressive husbandry by medieval landlords. It allowed better selective breeding and disease control for stock than was possible on common land. Hedges had other important benefits, including the regular production of wood fuel, and different species of tree and shrub were grown for toolmaking, hurdles and a multitude of other everyday uses. Further agricultural improvements from the fifteenth century onwards, especially by richer estates, led to the regularisation of many small medieval enclosures into larger fields.



The Parish boasted 2 mills in 1066 - signifying cereal crops were grown in the area; one remained in operation until around 1959.

Following Henry VIII's dissolution of Tavistock Abbey in 1539 - the Duke of Bedford acquired some land within the parish whilst most of Lamerton parish came into the ownership of Lord Fortescue, the Earl of Ebrington of Castlehill, North Devon. For over two hundred years the Fortescues received rent from their Lamerton estates. In 1897, they sold most of their lands within the parish at auction. During this period, properties in the Parish were modernised and farm buildings extended.

### **19th Century- the industrial revolution**

By the time of the first National census in 1801, Devon was still an agricultural society largely untouched by the industrial revolution that was transforming other parts of the country. Over the next 50 years there was a steep decline in the rural population as some moved away to the towns and cities for work or emigrated to the US and overseas colonies.

In 1844 a bridge was built over the R. Lumburn on Green Hill to replace the ford. In 1868, it was recorded that Lamerton comprised several manganese mines and quarries for slate.

Not all mine workings are recorded but at Collacombe Down, 3 mines were active in 1850.<sup>2</sup> However, by 1900 the mines of Tavistock and the Dartmoor fringes were worked out. The agricultural depression of the 1890s resulted in large estates reducing their workforce with disastrous effect for previously self-contained village communities like Lamerton. In the 20th century mechanisation slowly found its way into all aspects of life, further reducing the need for manual labour on the land. Before the introduction of Ordnance Survey referencing, fields or closes of land were known by a name. These names give an indication of the history of the area.

Post World War II (WWII), Lamerton was to benefit from car and bus transport, giving people the opportunity to live at a distance from their work. Whilst still supporting 2 shops including a Post Office, a garage workshop with petrol pump on Greenhill, a Public House, and agricultural engineers - the community grew slowly.

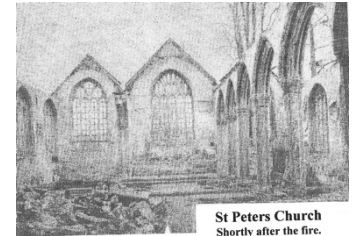
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<sup>2</sup>White's Devonshire Directory of 1850

## 2.2 Heritage Assets and Historic Buildings

Wealthy and influential Tavistock Abbey owned much of the Parish until its dissolution in the 15th Century, and there are many historical buildings and structures surviving. Central to the Parish was the Abbey Church of St. Peter.

According to the official Grade II listing St. Peter's has elements dating from late 14th /early 15th century. A fire in 1877 destroyed most of the church, save for the tower. Many monuments, graves and other historic remnants remain and these record the significance of the local manorial families within the parish. The area around the Church, now part of a Conservation area, contains remnants of the much earlier Church and its links to Tavistock Abbey.



Previously known as Church House, the Olde Priest's House is of 13th C origin, but was rebuilt in the 16th C and restored in 1934<sup>3</sup>

The Tremayne family were responsible for much of today's Grade 1 listed Elizabethan house and range of outbuildings at Collacombe manor house. There are 4 Grade 2 houses of



15th / 16th C origin in Chaddlehanger.

The Parish now has over 50 listed buildings and structures (See Appendix XII).

## 2.3 Location and Topography

Today the Parish lies between Dartmoor National Park to the NE and within the protected landscape of the Tamar Valley on the western edge of the Parish.

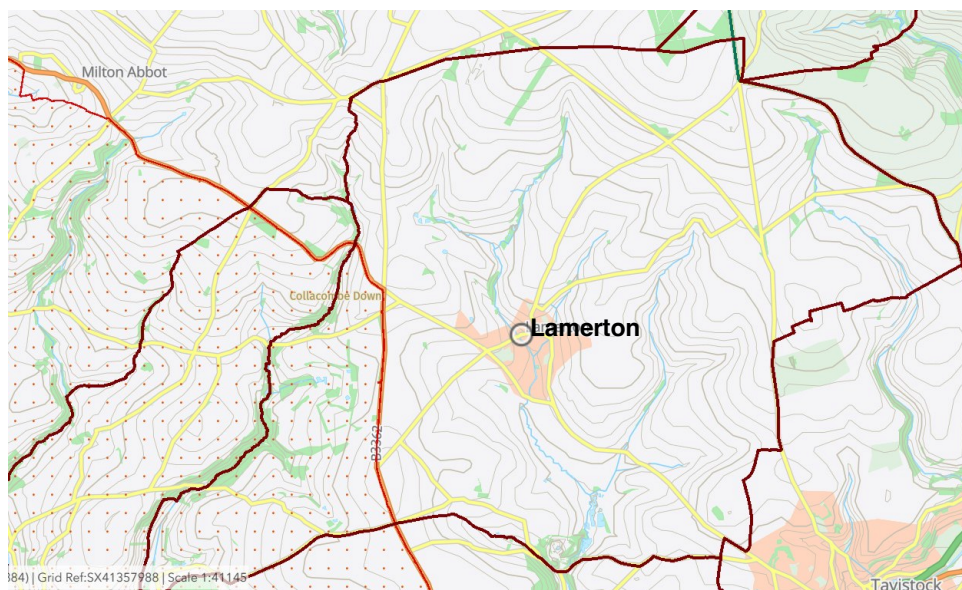


Fig. 2 Tamar Valley National Landscape dotted area <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Historic England Listing 1105743

<sup>4</sup> Copyright DEFRA magic map

The River Lumburn runs north to south through the village joined by a number of tributaries swelling its size. The low-lying ground on either side of the river and some of the streams running into it are prone to flooding and provide a necessary buffer for absorbing run-off from the hard surfaces of existing development.

The Parish comprises a mix of open inland plateau, inland elevated undulating land and river valley slopes and combs - all of which contribute to its distinctive identity, composed mostly of undulating farm land given over almost entirely to pasture. The features common to all 3 classifications include rolling and undulating pastoral cultivation with sloping valleys affording extensive views, sinuous network of minor roads, hedge banks, sparse settlement pattern of villages and hamlets with scattered isolated houses and farm.

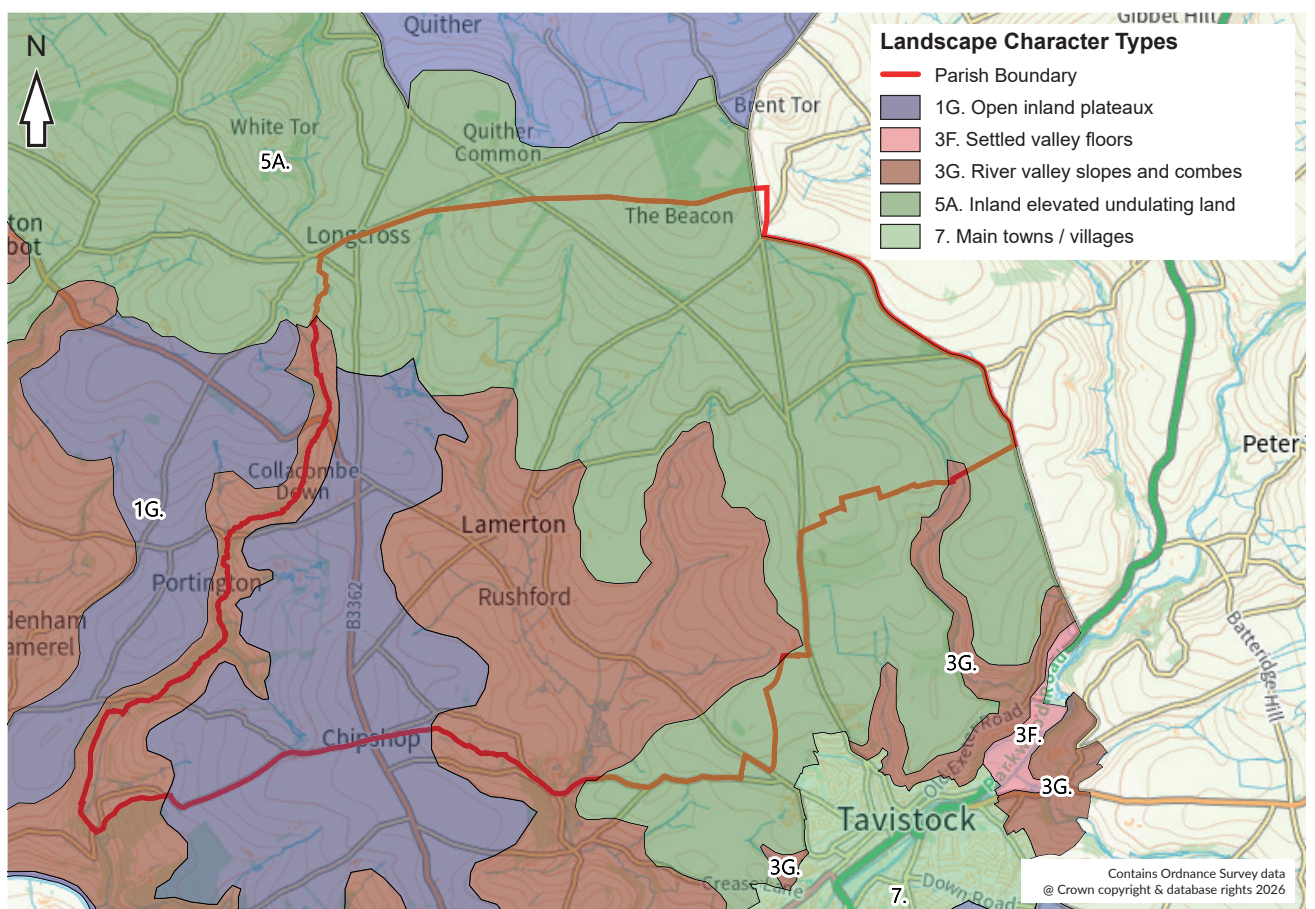
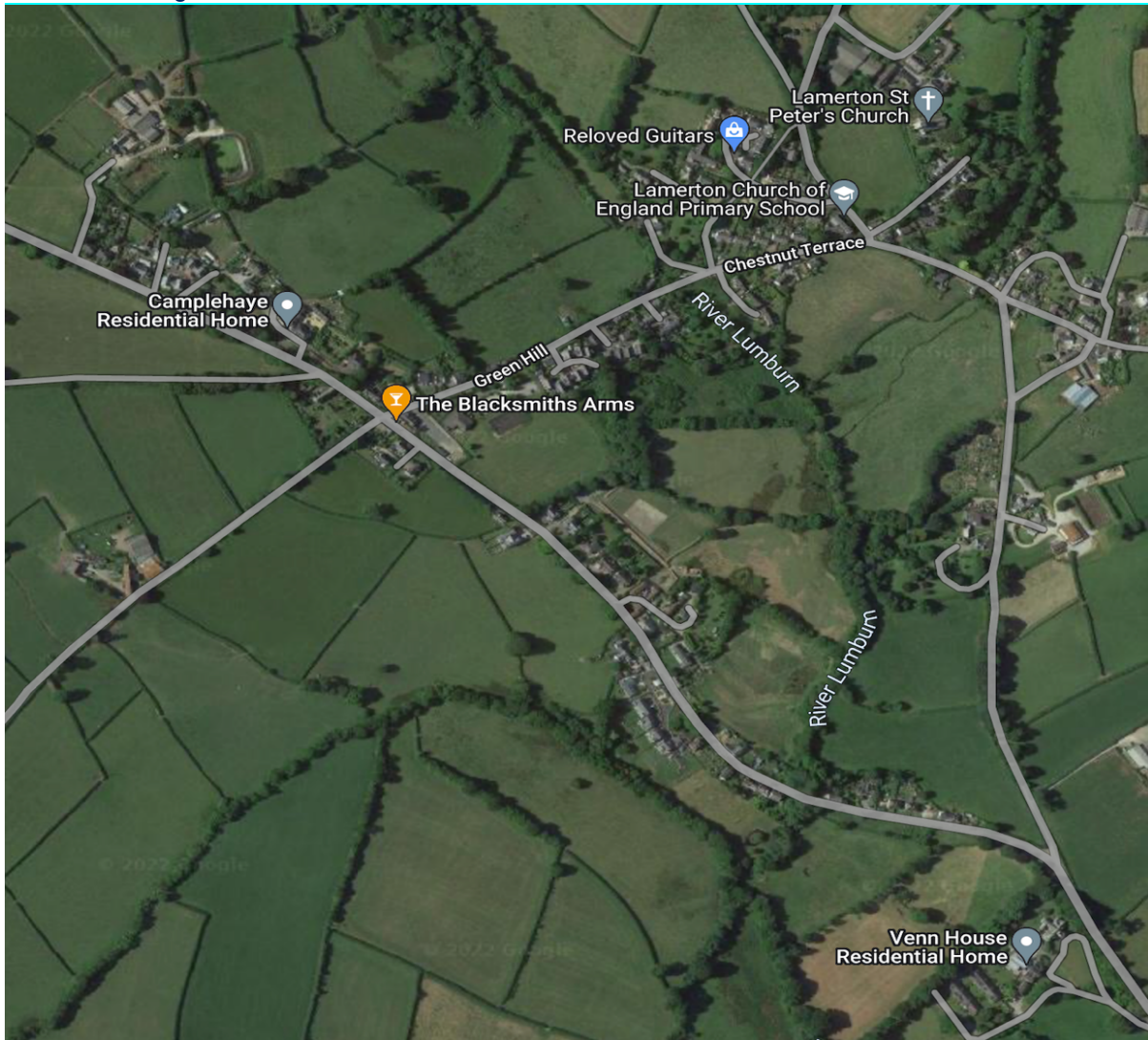


Fig. 3 Map of Landscape Characteristics



Fig 5. Modern village <sup>6</sup>

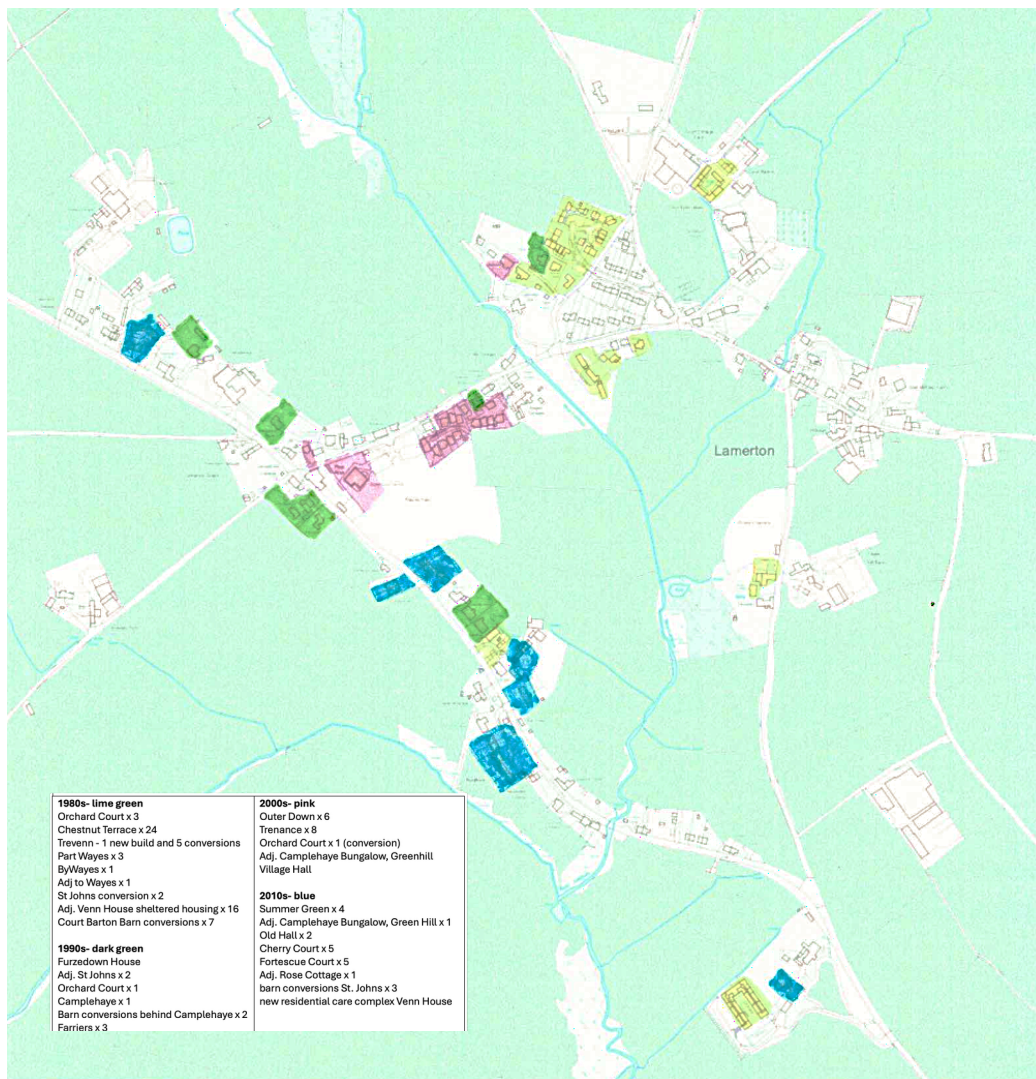


Whilst there has been very limited development outside of the village of Lamerton, in the last 80 years, almost imperceptibly, in the village, houses have filled in the gaps between older cottages and farm houses fronting the roads around the village. Starting in the 1930s with some council houses at Rushford and near Camplehaye, 24 more council houses were built along and to the north of Green Hill in the 1950s. In the 1970s, there was infill development at Hilltown, followed by Church Avenue. Over the succeeding 4 decades, the village has continued to grow.

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<sup>6</sup> Google Earth

Fig 6. Map showing development within village since 1980 <sup>7</sup>



## 2.5 Demographic Growth within the Parish

### Period 1901 - 1960

In 1901 the population of the Parish of Lamerton stood at 640. By 1921 the population had dropped to 545 and in 1951, after WWII it stood at 559.

### Period 1961 and 2020

In keeping with national trends and the post war baby boom, the population of Lamerton grew steadily from 591 in 1961 to 737 in 2001, an increase of 25%. This figure rose to 859 by 2011.

The 2021 census records a population of 887, a growth of 3.26% since 2011. This is below the average for West Devon as a whole (6.6%), but in line with current planning policy most of the expansion of housing has been focused in Plymouth and towns that have facilities and public transport connectivity. However, the total growth in population in the Parish during the last 100 years (1921 – 2021) is around 63%.

<sup>7</sup> Extract from OS Map (provided by WDBC)

The 2021 Census shows that when compared with national averages, the proportion of the population in West Devon aged over 65 is significantly higher whilst the proportion under 15 is significantly lower.

Children and young people in rural Devon are at greater risk of social isolation which has consequences for their emotional and physical health and wellbeing. Factors impacting their ability to access education, recreational facilities and services include public transport and heavy reliance on school bus transport that can make it difficult to participate in extracurricular activities due to infrequent public bus services and fewer youth clubs/activities within smaller settlements.

For the secondary school age group, limited opportunities, boredom and low self-esteem impacts on their wellbeing and can lead to high-risk activities including antisocial behaviour, substance misuse and self-harm as well as tension with other residents.

This is in line with the local perception of an ageing population caused by increased life expectancy, and people retiring to the area, with younger potential residents being priced out of both rental and owner-occupied markets and / or leaving for better educational and employment prospects. Lamerton has very limited opportunities for those with higher qualifications, and as a consequence, some commute out of the area (in some cases working away for all or part of the week).

These demographic pressures are factors contributing to the increasing need for both low-cost affordable housing and the need for housing suitable for older residents seeking to downsize but remain within the community.

## **2.6 Housing Growth**

The population of the Parish of Lamerton is currently living in 360 households (recorded by WDBC) in the Parish; around 2/3rds of those households (233) are situated in the village. The number of dwellings in the village has increased by over 150 over the last 80 years. This represents an increase of 160% in the number of dwellings (a much greater expansion than in the population).

- 94% are houses or bungalows of which 72% are owned by the occupier(s);
- 71% of homes provide 3 or more bedrooms

Table 1: Housing type

House type	Lamerton	England
1 bed	7.2	11.6
2 bed	21.8	27.3
3 bed	38.6	40
4 + bed	32.5	21.1

Table 2: Housing tenure

housing tenure	Lamerton	England
owned outright	54.4	32.5
owned with mortgage/loan/shared ownership	17.9	29.8
social rent	11.3	17.1
private rent or living rent free	16.5	20.6

The majority of residents live in their own homes. However, as more people are living in smaller households than historically, this adds to the pressure for housing.

The 2021 Census shows over 70% of households consist of a single family and 23% of those consist of only 1 person. Putting these statistics together, it can be seen that many properties have unoccupied bedrooms most of the time.

Table 3: Housing Occupancy

No in household	Lamerton	England
1 person	23.4	30.1
2 persons	47.4	34
3 persons	14.6	16
4 or more persons	14.6	19.9

With less than 2% of housing in the parish being a second home, this cannot be seen as a significant factor in housing availability.

The population density in West Devon is 51 persons per square kilometre, compared with a national average of 712. This emphasises the rural nature of the area. With a median age of 52, and 29.7% of the population being aged over 65, both reflect an aging population that is above the national average. Only 14.4% of the population are 15 or under, 3.4% lower than the national rate.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> ONS Data

## 2.7 Economic activity

### Employment and incomes

Over half the adult population is economically inactive with only 1.2% due to unemployment. Overall, the employment rate in the area is higher than average. Many of the older residents although of retirement age still work, many in agriculture, making the profile of the local economy slightly different from national statistics.

Average earnings in West Devon are 79% of the national average income for full-time employees (2023 figures). Average disposable household income is £21,775, slightly higher than the national average of £21,359. It is calculated that 20.1% of children live in relative poverty in the area compared with a national figure of 18.9%.

There is no mains gas available within the Parish making households dependent on electricity, oil and bottled gas. The cost of these energy sources adds to the cost of living, as well as the cost of transport- mostly running at least 1 vehicle.

The cost of housing:<sup>9</sup> August 2025- the average house price in the area is £307,000 compared with the UK average of £273,000. In West Devon, the cost of a 3-bed semi-detached property is rising faster than other types of housing. The average price of a flat or maisonette is £157,000. For first time buyers, the average price paid in West Devon was £249,000.

Rents: In the last 12 months to September 2025, average monthly rents have risen by 2.4% to £822.00. This compares with the UK average of £1,354.

This results in an average house being 12 times the average household income, and average rent is equivalent to 46% of average household income.

Nationwide, the number of people working on agricultural holdings is declining year on year: In 2024/5, 60% of such workers are farmers, business partners, directors and spouses; 40% of principal farmers and holders were aged 65 or older, whilst only 15% were under 45. Regular workers have also decreased whilst there has been a rise in casual work.

In the South West Region, <sup>10</sup> the average farm size in 2024 was 68 hectares- this is the second smallest average farm size of all English regions. Predominant farming activities in the region are grazing livestock (47% of regions' holdings), general cropping (22% of regions' holdings).

In 2024, around 22% of all those in the UK working in agriculture were based in the South West region, <sup>11</sup> and as noted in Chapter 1 many other residents are dependent on agriculture related employment (e.g. equipment supply and maintenance, retail and tourism).

Tourism is an important part of West Devon's economy and within the parish there is a wide variety of holiday accommodation on offer from bed & breakfast, self-catering cottages and lodges.

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<sup>9</sup> UK House Price Index from ONS and HM Land Registry Data

<sup>10</sup> DEFRA statistics June 2025

<sup>11</sup> DEFRA statistics June 2025

Visitors swell the numbers using existing facilities. Tourism not only contributes to the local economy but provides employment. Lower paid employment attracts some into the parish for work principally providing care in the 2 residential homes in the village, or to individuals in their homes.

Rates of employment: according to ONS data from June to August 2025 the national rate of employment for 16 to 64 year olds is 75.1% and the unemployment rate for the same period is 4.8%. In West Devon only 53.3% of this demographic are economically active whilst the economically inactive include retired and unemployed.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.8 Facilities and Services**

The village of Lamerton is fortunate to have some excellent facilities for use by the local population which include the following:-

### **Social**

The Community Centre is located in the village and has a large and a small function room, fully equipped changing room, referee's room and a fully fitted kitchen to enable catering for over one hundred people. The rooms are hired out to clubs and 12 other organisations during most of the week, both in the day and most evenings. The large room in particular is in great demand as an indoor sport and play area for the village school children and by the badminton club. It is also used regularly for birthday parties, wedding receptions and various ad hoc and annual fund raising and social events.

### **School**

The Lamerton Primary School provides education to children between the ages of 5 and 11. Although it is a small school with limited space (a maximum of 56 students) it has an excellent performance record and is thriving and attracts children from outside the parish. As a consequence of its limited capacity some children living in the village attend school in Tavistock.

### **Children's Play Areas**

Within the grounds of The Community Centre there is a small well-equipped play area for children of primary school age or younger. The equipment includes swings, a slide, a climbing frame and a roundabout.

### **Green spaces**

As well as being an indoor venue, the Community Centre includes a sizeable playing field which incorporates a full-size football pitch. The playing field is also used by the village school throughout the year and by the community as a whole for outdoor fund raising and social activities. A Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) has been erected in the playing field for use by residents and the school.

### **Other Facilities**

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<sup>12</sup> Our source ONS data 2021 Census

There is one shop in the Parish, situated at the petrol service station on the B3362, a mile north of the pub in the village. It operates as a general convenience store as well as selling petrol and diesel. The range of goods it offers has significantly increased in the last 12 months under new ownership and is popular with many living in the parish as well as serving those commuting through the Parish.