



Chipping Norton Town History Trail

Welcome to the Town Trail. We hope the information will make your walk around the town more enjoyable. On the reverse of this leaflet is a map showing the buildings with plaques on. On this side of the leaflet you can find additional information, and, in italics, directions. You will also find extra information about features not necessarily shown on the map. These will be highlighted.

Start with your back to the Town Hall steps.

1) The Town Hall: Within the Town hall there have been in the past, a Reading Room, a Magistrates Court, secure cells and a weighing machine.

2) The Co-op: The Society initially dealt solely with coal, but diversified into baking in 1868 and groceries in 1869. Over the succeeding years various other departments, such as hardware, furnishing, drapery, shoes, butchery, fish, tea rooms, confectionery, and chemist were opened in premises in the town centre, including some mobile shops serving rural communities. In 1968 it became part of the Oxford and Swindon Co-operative Society, and is now part of the Mid-Counties Co-operative Society.

Turn right around Bitter and Twisted, then at the bottom of the car park, turn right and walk along Market Street.

MARKET STREET: Previously known as Nether Row or Lower Side, this street contains some early remains of the medieval buildings that originally fronted the Market Place before Middle Row appeared.

Nos. 6-9 include some fine 15thC timbers and stone details. Also note the Britannia fire insurance plaque under the eaves of No.9.

When you reach The Chequers, turn left and walk down Church Street.

13) Almshouses: Henry Cornish stated that that these houses were to be for 8 poor widows of 'honest and Godly life and conversation.' Note the 9 chimneys, apparently for purposes of symmetry! They were converted to 4 dwellings in the 1950s and are still administered by Chipping Norton Welfare Charities.

14) Redrobe House:

15) Vicarage: The present vicarage was converted from the Victorian school, itself a rebuild of the original free grammar school on this site. The former large vicarage can be seen opposite. Charles Stewart Parnell, the Irish Leader, received part of his education from the vicar, Rev. Alexander Whishaw, headmaster of the school in the 1860s.

At the bottom of the hill, do visit the church, there are lots of interesting features and a guide inside. To continue the walk, turn left at the bottom of the road. Follow the path through barriers into:

16/17) Diston's Lane: As well as properties for Bliss workers, the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows Friendly Society also built houses here. Note, on the right, at the near end of the last terrace, a Barn Owl hole in the attic, indicating that this has previously been a barn.

At the end of Diston's lane, plaque 17 is on the building you will walk under.

Now turn right.

18) Bay Cottage: The oldest date stone in the town is sited between Nos. 63 and 65. Thomas Frayn was a yeoman who had progressed to an innkeeper in the High Street at the time of his death in 1671.

Penhurst: Originally a pair of semi-detached houses built by William Bliss for his son and daughter at the end of the

Turn Left and walk along the pavement.

Market Place The first bank in Chipping Norton opened in 1834 at No. 5 Market Place, on lower side as a branch of the Stourbridge and Kidderminster Banking Company. It was managed by Parsons and Rolls (both drapers) and John Atkins (seed merchant).

3) The White Hart: This property was re-fronted in 1725. Most of the other buildings in High Street were also given new facades in the early 18th C. They were all built on the original long, narrow burgage plots fronting the Market Place, laid out in the 13th C.

4) 20 High Street: Underneath this property there exists a 14th C stone-ribbed vaulted undercroft with carved corbel heads. It has stone-traceried windows and a fine moulded arched doorway with steps up to the street level, and is thought to have been a wine tavern.

Now look to your left, but stay on this side of the road.

5) The Blue Boar: The inn sign depicts the blue boar emblem of the De Vere family (who owned 1/3 of the manor of Chipping Norton) trampling on the white boar emblem of Richard III in revenge for confiscating their lands.

Continue along the narrow entrance to the market place and at the roundabouts note opposite:

6) The Police Station: This was built on the Victoria and Albert gardens situated in the 'V'-shaped piece of land between the Banbury and London roads. It was the oldest operational station when it closed in 2017.

Cross the road towards the old police station and keeping the wall on your right, walk up the Banbury Road until you reach the stone gates at the entrance to Norton park.

7) Cotshill:

Now turn round and walk back to the two roundabouts, Turn right, then cross the zebra crossing. Turn right, then, left into Spring Street.

If rather than turning left, you continue a short way you will find **The Masonic Hall** on your left. The lodge moved to this purpose built hall in 1898 from Albion Street.

Once in Spring Street find.

19thC. It was then called Monk's Dene.

In 1904 the National Children's Home opened a convalescent hospital here, which later became an orphanage. Renamed Penhurst School it catered for severely handicapped children, finally closing in 2012.

19) The Commons: (common owners, not common land). This land was gifted to the owners and occupiers of the town by Richard Fitzalan, Lord of the Manor of Chipping Norton in the 12thC.

After the 1770 Enclosure, only 124 acres of the original gift of 500 acres remained. Later, in 1806 "the Corporation" ruled that only owners and occupiers of property at the time of the 1770 Act were entitled to any common rights. A second Enclosure in 1849 awarded 54 quarter acre plots to individuals with small claims, and a Regulated Pasture of 75 acres was set aside of which 85 stints (grazing rights) were allocated. Field Reeves were elected annually to administer the pasture until 1932, at which time this was changed and the land was vested in Life Trustees under the Law of Property Act 1925. The land is now rented to tenant farmers and the Town Council, but the public have rights to "air and exercise". There are 10 owners of the 85 stints, The Town Council, Midcounties Co-operative Society, The Baptist Chapel and 7 individuals.

Continue to the entrance to the cemetery.

Cemetery Lodge: The land for the town's cemetery was given in 1881 by William Bliss Esq. being part of the land belonging to the common owners, on which a chapel and a lodge was to be built. The land was consecrated in February 1882.

Bliss Mill: The Bliss family came to Chipping Norton from Stroud in 1762 and Thomas Bliss became associated with William Fowler, a local clothier. Thomas started his own business in 1786 initially making tilt covers and horse blankets. He was succeeded by his son William in 1790 who changed the cottage industry into a factory based business, opening the Upper Mill in 1804. He then converted an old flour mill on the Common into the Lower Mill. After a disastrous fire in 1872, William Bliss II rebuilt the mill to a design by George Woodhouse of Bolton, which is what we see today. The Bliss family, who had been great benefactors of Chipping Norton, left the town in 1895 and the mill continued under new management, providing much-needed local employment. It finally closed in the 1980s and afterwards was converted to apartments.

8) Hospital: A new War Memorial Hospital was built in 2011 in the London Road, but with much reduced facilities.

Continue along Spring Street.

As you pass Church Lane there is the opportunity to visit the

CASTLE BANKS follow the lane past the red house and the banks are on the right.

This site is a scheduled ancient monument containing the remains of a motte and bailey castle with later additions, and associated fishponds. The early motte built in the 11thC by Ernulf de Hesdin, a Norman, is thought to have been sited where The Mount now stands. However later 12th C buildings were erected with an extended bailey surrounded by ditches and ramparts, built by the Fitzalan family of Clun (Lords of the Manor). It was still inhabited in 1268 but in poor condition by mid-15th C.

Return to Spring Street and continue.

Title End: Spring Street lies on the spring line between the alternating layers of limestone, clay and marlstone. The abundance of springs appearing in this area resulted in the former name of Tite End (tite being a water source).

9) The Theatre:

After the Theatre, turn left around.

10) The Chequers:

Walk up the hill and turn right when you are level with The Blue Boar.

11) GUILDHALL: The Royal Charter of 1607 was granted by James I to give the town borough status and to allow it to elect a Corporation of burgesses and bailiffs to govern itself.

When the new Town Hall was built in 1842 it replaced this building, which was then sold.

Walk straight ahead toward the market place.

12) MIDDLE ROW: These buildings started to appear from the middle of the 15th C, probably due to the need for more premises as the town prospered. They began as temporary shops: an encroachment in the centre of the large market place, later becoming more permanent structures. The town gaol was sited near here.

Cross the road and walk back up the hill.

20) Quaker Meeting House:

21) British School:

At the top of the hill, turn right and walk along West Street.

22) The Manor House: This was a farmhouse belonging to the Fowler family from 1859 to 1874. William Fowler gifted the working men's allotments to the town in 1892.

23) Rowell's House: William Rowell was an eminent local figure, engineer, contractor, JP, Councillor and Mayor of this town. His ironmongery business, 7 High Street, was inherited from his father Robert who started it in 1873. His family also founded the Hub Ironworks in Albion Street which existed from 1920 to 1982.

If you continue to The Leys you can find-

The Pest House: A small cottage building, situated originally in open fields beyond the edge of the town, is now surrounded by other houses near the top of The Leys. It was provided by the Overseers of the Poor for the isolation and nursing of people with smallpox.

Cross the road and walk back towards the town. Just after the road called the Green.

24) College Place: Brasenose College owned several pieces of land in and around Chipping Norton. This site included all the land behind College Place up The Green to the Burford Road. 'Brasenose Villas' were built as the first council houses by Chipping Norton Town Council.

Continue towards the centre of town.

25) Hitchman's Brewery: William Hitchman founded the brewery in 1759. The brewery buildings extended up the burgage plot behind these premises, across the back lane, now Albion Street, and up the hill now called Hitchman Drive. The brewing of beer ceased in 1932 but the firm continued to trade in mineral waters, wines and spirits until 1970.