

## Historic Woodstock

Woodstock reaches back well over 900 years.

'New' Woodstock was founded around 1185 by King Henry II to house his retinue when he stayed in the Royal Palace of Woodstock.

The town expanded in the 18th Century during the building of Blenheim Palace which replaced the Royal Palace.

### The wall plaques

Many buildings in the town have a fascinating story to tell, and in 2011 a series of seven stone wall plaques was commissioned to highlight a few of these stories to make the history of Woodstock come alive for visitors and residents alike.

The plaques were commissioned from Oxfordshire sculptor, Giles Macdonald.

Giles worked the plaques in Portland limestone, the great classic building material of this country which weathers over time to a silver-grey colour, offering a gentle contrast to the Cotswold stone of Woodstock.

The plaques cover a wide range of interests, whether domestic, early industrial, literary or antiquarian.

We hope you will enjoy discovering the plaques around Woodstock.

For further information contact Woodstock Town Council on 01993 811216.

The project was overseen by West Oxfordshire District Council, Woodstock Town Council and Historic Woodstock. The project was entirely funded from private sources - including developer funding from West Oxfordshire District Council and Pye Homes Ltd. The stone was kindly donated by Joslins Stonemasonry of Long Hanborough.

## With the help of...

- Pye Homes Ltd and some local householders who kindly funded the plaques.
- Joslins Stonemasonry who generously donated the stone for the plaques.
- Woodstock Town Council and West Oxfordshire District Council who jointly managed the project.

# Historic Trail: Woodstock



**Joslins Stonemasonry Limited**  
Specialists in Restoration, Conservation, Carving and Stone Cleaning

April 2012.

Follow the trail of stone  
wall plaques to discover  
the history of some of  
**Woodstock's fine houses...**

# Woodstock wall plaques

**The Samson Press** ①, 11-13 Park Street, was founded by Joan Shelmerdine and Flora Grierson and run from these buildings from 1937-1967.

They commissioned and printed a wide range of illustrated works which have since become highly prized collectors' items.

Artists such as Iain Macnab and Gwenda Morgan were commissioned to produce wood engravings, lino-cuts and drawings and Edwin Muir was a noted poet published by the Press.

The press archives and equipment are now owned by the Bodleian Library.

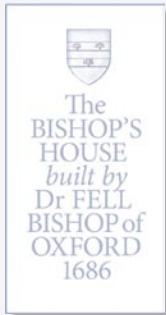
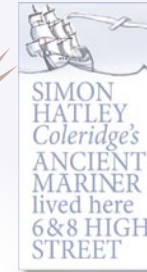
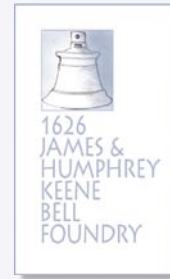
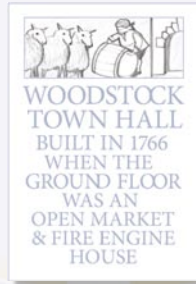
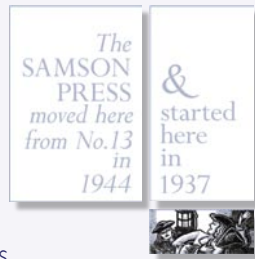
## The Bishop's House

② was the first rectory in Woodstock. It was built in 1686 by Dr John Fell, the Bishop of Oxford. He bought the land and built the rectory for £600, enabling the Rector to move closer to the busier part of his parish.

Dr Fell, who was also instrumental in founding Oxford University Press, oversaw the construction of many buildings in the county, including Tom Tower at Christ Church.

Dr Fell was, perhaps unfairly, commemorated by his student Thomas Brown, the satirist, in the rhyme 'I do not like thee Dr Fell, the reason why I cannot tell, but this I know and know full well, I do not like thee, Dr Fell' - after the latin poet Martial.

The Church Commissioners took over The Bishop's House in 1949 and it was sold as a private house in 1981.



**The Town Hall** ③ was built by George Spencer, the 4th Duke of Marlborough, in 1766. His coat of arms is above the main entrance.

The ground floor of the original building was open under the arches. A market was held under here and in the Victorian era the town's fire engines parked here. In 1898 the arches were filled in to create a council chamber and offices.

**The Bell Foundry** ⑤, located at 52 Oxford Street was founded in 1626 by James and Humphrey Keene. The bells cast here still ring in many local churches. Other industries once thriving in the town were glove making and polished steel jewellery production.

## The Ancient Mariner's House

⑥ Simon Hatley, haberdasher of hats and former Mayor of Woodstock, built the house at 6-8 High Street in 1708, allegedly with stone meant for Blenheim Palace.

His son, also named Simon, left the town to become a sailor and in 1719 he set sail for South America onboard the 'Speedwell'.

The Captain's book of the voyage records the shooting of an albatross and it is thought that Simon Hatley (son) was the mariner referred to in the poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

## Cromwell's House

⑦ at 28 High Street was built in 1640. Originally an inn, it encompassed houses 26-30 High Street.

The ancient mulberry tree still growing in the garden was planted in compliance

with a 1603 Act which required inns of a certain standard to plant mulberry trees as a condition of their licence.

It is rumoured that this is where Oliver Cromwell stayed during the siege of Woodstock Manor, although there is no written record of this.

**The Pest House** ④, now 23 Rectory Lane, was the old isolation hospital for infectious diseases. It was built in 1719 on what was then the perimeter of the town.

Victims of smallpox were cared for here in six separate rooms although the protection of healthy townspeople was probably more important than the care of the sick.

The property was sold in 1946 for £175.



**KEY:** P Parking i Information point and museum