

## **A Walk round Chinnor**

Our walk round the village starts at the largest and oldest building – the Parish Church of St Andrew. Although mostly 14<sup>th</sup> Century there are some considerable remains of an earlier building. It has an Early English (1140-1260) chancel arch and the West window lancets date from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

The church is full of ancient treasures: The wooden screen is reputed to be the sixth oldest in England. Fine memorial brasses, now wall mounted include, the oldest, a splendid, foliated cross circa 1338 to William de Leicester.

In the Lady Chapel there is the tomb of a knight in mailed armour circa 1300. In the Sanctuary there is some very fine stained glass in the North and South windows, these date from around 1350 when the chancel was built. The south windows show St Alban and St Lawrence holding his gridiron, reminding us of his martyrdom. Some smaller pieces of old glass are to be found incorporated into more modern windows in the church. The Royal Coat of Arms is of interest as, it is a double sided one – showing on one side the arms of Charles 11 and on the other those of George 11. The old font in the Children's corner is of Purbeck marble and was rescued from the churchyard some years ago.

The bells link the reigns of two Queens – the tenor was cast in the time of Queen Elizabeth 1 and the Sanctus in 1965 (The Churchill bell).

Opposite the church – the Rectory is probably the fourth to stand on or near this site. Formally a Stuart mansion, which housed for many years Sir Isaac Newton's library, stood here followed by a Regency Villa built in 1815 and demolished in 1962 to make way for a small housing estate as well as the present building.

## **The High Street**

Where 'Young Set' stands there used to be a Lace School. Chinnor was an important centre for lacemaking. Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the village had 4 lace schools and 268 lacemakers, many of them children. Lacemaking was an important source of income for family's dependent on low agricultural wages.

The Old Nelson was formerly a public house called the Lord Nelson.

The Pound House takes its name from the village 'Pound.' It used to cover land now occupied by the War Memorial and gardens. It was a place where stray animals were locked up – impounded. All that remains is a shrubbery besides the Church Hall entrance

The Old Manse and despite its appearance are 300 years old. Dillamores is so called because it was previously a grocery and hardware store owned by the Dillamore family.

Oral tradition has it that a number of men were killed on the paved area in front of the house during the Civil War. A contemporary written account (collected by Anthony Wood) described an attack by Prince Rupert of the Rhine's men on a house from which Parliamentary troops were routed and killed. It is impossible to say where this house

was, but it seems reasonable to link these two stories. Prince Rupert's raid of Chinnor took place in 1643 and was followed by the indecisive Battle of Chalgrove Field.

Chairmakes – Late 16<sup>th</sup> Century with a 18<sup>th</sup> century front. It was formerly a beer house called the Chairmakers Arms. Timber for chairmaking was stored in the yard in earlier days. The term chairmaker was used for anyone working on chairs, whether whole or in parts. Bodger, with its somewhat derogatory overtones, was applied mostly to the comparatively few men who worked in the woods. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and on into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a considerable number of men in the villages near High Wycombe made components for Windsor chairs, especially legs and spindles, work which they did in their spare time and in outbuildings in their gardens to supplement their low agricultural wages.

Cromwell Cottage has no connection with Oliver Cromwell though it may originally date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Reading Room was built in 1878 for the use of local men and boys with the aim of providing an alternative to the many public houses in the village. Newspapers and periodicals were available and there was a billiard table. In the 1920's its general use was changed to that of a public hall and women were admitted. It had for a time a resident caretaker.

The Congregational Church – Formally the Independent Chapel was built in 1805, the year of the Battle of Trafalgar. It is built in brick and flint with a stuccoed front. Brick and flint are much favoured local building materials in the absence of other building stone.

Near the Red Lion there is a 'weather' stone. There are a number of these stones to be found at the corners of the village.

### **Lower Road**

Turn left into Lower Road. Two of the buildings in this road are former schools. Number 45 used to house a private Dissenting school run by Mr Paul, the Congregational minister. It was for boys only and had 'boarders' who slept in a group of cottages in Springfield Gardens.

The Band room. This building which is now used by Chinnor Silver Band was formally the British School. It was founded by the British and Foreign Schools Society, a Non-conformist organisation in 1841 for boys at first; after 1870 it was a mixed school. It was closed in 1893 and the children transferred to the National School.

Across from The Bird in Hand is Mill Lane. The village windmill stood near here. It was a post mill dating from 1789 and was in use up to 1920s. It was dismantled in 1967 and taken to East Anglia; recently the working parts of the mill have been returned to Chinnor and a scheme to re-erect the mill near the school has been proposed.

Mill Lane school was opened in 1974 to cater for the ever-increasing number of children as more new estates were built and the village population increased.

Mill Lane and the unmade track into which it leads are both parts of the Lower Icknield Way. (There is some uncertainty about the origin of its name, some people associate it with the Iceni, Boadicea's tribe). A parallel route – the Upper Icknield Way – or Ridgeway is one of the ancient British trackways and has probably been used ever since in this part of England was first settled 4000 years ago. It was used as a drove road for sheep and cattle coming from the west. In dry weather it seems that drovers used the Lower Icknield Way which runs along the spring line; the upper route being more used in winter when the lower path became waterlogged. One theory is that this lower road is Roman in origin, but it could be much older and contemporary with the Upper Icknield Way.

### **Station Road**

Turn up Station Road; The Doctors Surgery was first built in 1967 to an award-winning design by the architect Peter Aldington. It is now being extended.

St Andrew's School. The first phase of the school buildings was opened in 1967 followed by another in 1970. The campus also includes a special unit for Autistic children as well as the Chinnor branch of the County Library.

Station Garage used to be a Mission Hall having originally been built in the 1840's as the Primitive Methodist Chapel.

The Black Boy: The present building replaced an earlier one which was burned down in 1932. The old Black Boy was said to have been visited by Charles 11 when he was fleeing from the Parliamentarians after the Battle of Worcester, but it is very unlikely that he could ever have visited Chinnor. The name Black Boy recalls Charles 11 with his very dark colouring and could have been chosen as a token of a new-found loyalty at the Restoration in 1660.

The Forge is a timber-framed building with a thatched roof. The forge itself was housed in the small building at the side.

The Methodist Church – The Bourne Memorial Church, so named in honour of Hugh Bourne the principal founder of Primitive Methodism. The Chapel was blown down within two months of its opening and was replaced by the present building in the following year – 1873.

The Old School: was formally the National School, controlled by the Church of England. It was opened in 1860 – G E Street was the Architect. In 1979 it was converted to dwelling houses.

The Crown. It was in this building that the Manorial Courts were held from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The last one took place in 1817. The Crown was also the place where the Chinnor Feast was held in the past, when, on Easter Monday, bread and ale were given out to the people of the village by the Rector.

Siarey's Sawmill. Here parts for the Mulberry Harbour used in the Invasion of Europe in 1944 were produced.

Cement Works. These works were first built in 1908 to produce lime by Mr W E Benton. Later cement was produced. It became an important source of employment for village men as an alternative to agricultural labour which had been the mainstay of the village up to that time. Lime was burnt on the site in kilns, one of the original lime kilns still exists although no longer in use.

Railway. Just below the Cement Works is the site of Chinnor Station (where the track turns off into the Cement Works). The Princes Risborough to Watlington Railway Line was opened in 1872, it was taken over by the Great Western Railway in 1884. Passenger traffic ceased in 1956 although the track is still used to carry raw materials to the Works.

Chinnor Hill. Covered with magnificent beech woods which provided the raw materials for the chairmaking industry in the past, it now provides, under the care of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire Naturalist Trust, some 65 acres of pleasant downland country open to the public. There is a Nature Trail round the Reserve.

The skeleton and grave goods of a Saxon warrior are said to have been recovered from a tumulus on The Plain on top of the hill.

From the Plain one has a splendid view of Chinnor and Vale of Aylesbury