

# A Brief History

Within the parish of Wootton there were a number of hamlets- Dornford, Hordely, Old Woodstock, Woodleys, Starveall and Ludwell.

## Key Dates

### **Bronze Age**

Copping Knowle Barrow, Glympton

### **Iron Age**

Grim's Dyke, Woodleys

### **Roman-British Era**

**Lower Dornford Farm**, situated to the north east of the village, to the east of the River Dorn. Settlement in the area can be traced back to the Romano-British era, when the military road known as **Akeman Street** was built to the south of the current village centre, running east-west, connecting St Albans with Cirencester. Dornford might mean 'hidden ford.'

**The Hordley estate** was owned by the Gregory family from the **mid-16th** century, but in **1811** was sold to the Duke of Marlborough, becoming part of Blenheim estate, along with the estate of Dornford, similarly acquired in **1787** and **1790**.

**950 Wootton** appears in the centre of an Anglo-Saxon Royal Estate. Early names include **Oitone**

(**1086**) and **Wuttun (1274-9)** meaning a village by the wood. Surrounded by an Anglo-Saxon royal estate and Wychwood Forest.

Possibly in the **12<sup>th</sup>** century the two estates in and around the village of Wootton were combined to form the **Manor of Wootton**. Owned ultimately by the King, the Manor of Wootton was for much of the **Middle Ages** combined with the Manor of Woodstock, and administered directly by Royal officials

**1216** Alianore, Countess of Salisbury inherits Wootton lands from her late husband, William Paynel

**1233** King Henry 111 inherits Wootton

**1237** St Mary's Church granted 10 local oaks by the crown to construct the church tower.

Though much of the land of the parish was of relatively poor quality - with thin soils overlying the Great Oolite limestone formation - medieval Wootton was an agricultural settlement, with crops grown using the **open field system**. There seem to have been two, the West Field lay to the south-west of the village.

**1582 John Templar** of Wootton Will left "**Wootton North Fields**" an acre of land assigned for the maintenance of lamps and orbs in the church" Rush Lights were made from rushes and tallow.

**1638** 2p "paid to Duke to go to Wootton to inform the town of Wootton to prevent the coming of one suspected to be sick of the plague."

**1687** a boulting mill was recorded in the Bake House

1688 Quarter Sessions grants a "Badger licence" to Laurence Redhead of Wootton.

**1705** the manor of Wootton, as part of Woodstock manor, was granted to John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, as part of the great estate that would be named after the battle of Blenheim, in which Churchill had been the victorious leader.

**1705** Farmer Hornes' son appointed Overseer of the Poor

**1769** Wootton Inclosure Act, enclosed farms for 6 key landowners and villager lost scattered land holdings

**1787** Rev Charles Parrott left an endowment for a village school for 12 poor boys.

**1837** Titenford Bridge built, becoming Raisonford Bridge.

**C1840** The wide Ford at the west end had a bridge built.

**1841** West End Bridge built

**1856** Milford Bridge built, formerly known as Milkford bridge.

**1858** Primitive Methodists Church, Castle Corner

**1877** Wootton's First Flower Show

**1914-1919** First World war, 117 Wootton residents joined up and 26 died in Action. See Church Memorials

1937 Electricity was introduced

1939-1945 Second World War, see St Mary's Church Memorials

1966 Wootton was awarded "Tidiest Village"

**1967 Burditch pavilion** built becoming a focal point for the flourishing **Sports Club and Youth Club**.

### **Economic History**

Older house names in Wootton illustrate local industries such as a working Mill, Home Farm, Gloving Cottage, The Forge, Horseshoes Inn, Baking House, Kings Head and Wheelwright Cottage. Many cottages dated in the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries housed agricultural labourers and cottage industries such as gloving. Other trades included a coalmen, brewer and shoe maker.

**Killingworth Castle** had to "have stables for horses and hay for fodder" as a toll road inn. It

is said that the pub hosted Winston Churchill when he test drove cars and stopped for a tippie

**Post war** Villagers commuted to Oxford for work either on the Cowley bus to Morris motors or were working in Oxford University and today some in London.

## **Evolving Places in Wootton**

**"Wootton Whitechurch"** in the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was the common name of the village, the Church would have had a white limestone mortar. The church remains a prominent landmark.

The mill on the Glyme at the south end of the village is probably one of the two mentioned in Domesday, and both it and the mill at Old Woodstock continued in use into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The mill at Hordley was out of use by 1800, while a further mill, at Dornford was gone by the 1630s

**The George**, renamed the **New Inn** is now the **Duke of Marlborough**. **The Weathercock**, renamed the Three Horseshoes. **King's Head House** also known as **"Middle House."**

The original High Street became Chapel Hill due to the former Wesleyan Chapel.

**1945 22 houses were condemned by the local authority as uninhabitable.**

**1947** The playing field at Burditch was bought by the parish council.

**1950** Rural District Council identifies 95 houses in need of urgent repair and drainage.

**1951** Wootton Mill converted into a dwelling

**1953** A main piped water supply was laid with an elevated " Braithwaite" tank near Wootton's Turn.

**1958** There were 2 "**derelict cottages**" on Zion's Hill and "**miserable cottages**" were refurbished into a delightful residence.

**1960s** 26 new council homes were built on allotments in Milford Place.

**Late 1970s** infilling of village streets with private houses along Castle Road, Burditch Bank & Manor Court in a variety of styles and materials.

## **WATER SUPPLY**

Wootton relied on a network of wells for their water until 1955. In 1972, the Post Mistress living in the forge recalls having to pay for well water on a Radio Oxford interview.

**Should we map our old wells with names like Slutt Wells!?**

## **Notable Wootton Residents**

In **1874 Christopher Holloway** lived at Hillside and lead an Agricultural Revolt with over 1000 rural labourers meeting in Wootton to ask for a wage rise to lift them out of the poverty line. Holloway was a lay preacher in the Methodist Chapel in Chapel Hill. Despite being "locked out" by landowners and threatened with eviction, Holloway assisted those in need to migrate to Sheffield for higher paid jobs and after visiting New Zealand, helped many to emigrate.

**1879** Elizabeth Rowland of Holly Bank married the famous country life diarist, Revd Francis Kilvert in St Mary's Church and there is a plaque in the Church.

## **Demographics**

**1086** Domesday survey a population of **45** grew with steadily despite some heavy depopulation in the **14<sup>th</sup>** century due to the plague and growing to over **1250** in **1851** when Old Woodstock was part of the parish and coinciding with the growth of the local gloving trade in Woodstock. In 1894 Old Woodstock became part of the Borough of Woodstock, leaving Wootton's population to decline to 548 by 1931. Rising to 700 adults in 1951.

*Do you know how many people live in our parish and what their ages and occupations are? Would this information be useful for the future of our Neighbourhood?*

## **Wootton Traditions & Community**

### **May Day**

As late as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the boys made a rough bower for the May Queen from poles and carried her round in it. The children collected bunches of flowers, and paraded around the village, sang songs including;

"Gentleman and ladies  
We wish you a Happy May,  
Come kiss my face and smell my mace,  
And give the Lord and Lady something"

**Wootton's Feast** was held on the last weekend and Monday of September from Castle Road to the Killingworth Castle. This coincided with The Flower Show.

### **The Flower Show**

Founded in 1877, The Flower Show is still thriving!