

Chipping Norton Heritage Trails - New Street

Start your walk on Sainsburys' corner at the top of New Street. Until demolition of this side in 1969, the top part of New Street was very narrow. However, the far side, with its long row of properties with bay windows, remains unchanged. The top three of these were all public houses: The George, The Blue Lion and the King William!



Question 1: How many projecting bays are there in the row?

Cross the road leading to New Street car park and look at the handsome stone building now housing the dental surgery. Its central section was the front of a fine house of around 1730 built on the site of the medieval manor



Photo courtesy of Chipping Norton Museum

house. The blue plaque tells us that, in the late 1900s, the whole building was a recording studio visited by many famous bands.



Question 2: What was the building used as before that? Hint: Look up at the stone parapet.

The magnificent building just below was probably also built on part of the manor site around 1730. It is now flats but was once the Kings Head inn. Look through the archway into the yard that was formerly surrounded with stables.



Question 3: How many windows are there in this splendid façade?

Walk on down to Dunstan Avenue. On the far corner is a round stone seat.

Question 4: What is this seat made from?



Close by is a pair of stone gate piers. These flanked the drive to the elegant house lived in by perhaps the greatest of Chipping Norton's 19th- century residents. William Bliss, who in 1835 took over the



running of the tweed manufacturing business established by his grandfather, became the town's biggest employer and a major benefactor. His 'Upper Mill' once lay behind his house but the spectacular Lower Mill, built in 1873 after a fire destroyed the previous mill, remains in the valley below the town. It ceased production of cloth

only in 1980 and has now been converted into luxury apartments.

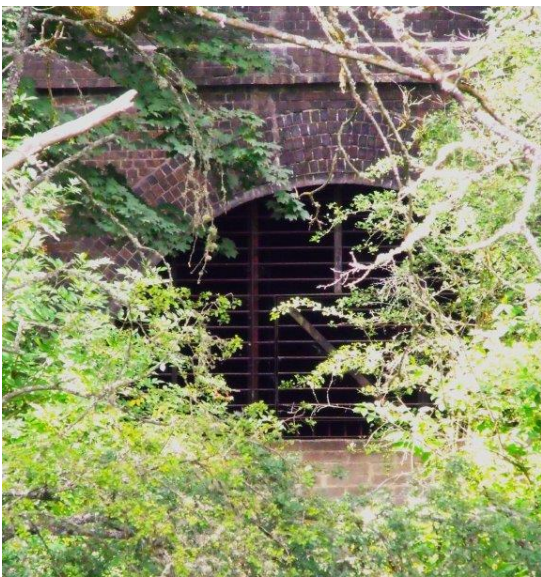
Just below these gates and lying well back is what was once the town's Quaker Meeting House. Can you see the two round-arched doorways – one for men and the other for women? This building replaced an earlier

structure in 1804.

Question 5: When was the previous meeting house built? Hint: Look at the oval plaque.



The Hawkyard family, who occupied the large private house at the bottom of the street for the first half of the 20th century, gave their name both to the house and to the part of the common it faces. However, the building was previously owned by William Bliss and was used to house some of his (possibly younger) workers. It has also been home to a community of nuns.



Crossing over, we continue along the road, through the avenue of ancient trees, with areas of the common on both sides.

Question 6: What type of trees are these? Hint: they provide us with shiny conkers.

Walk on down to the old railway bridge. Peering through the leaves, you can just see the entrance to the tunnel that extended the branch line on to Banbury in 1887. The station stood where Travis Perkins' yard now is. Continue a little further into Worcester Road and through the gates into the town cemetery. Follow the path round the former chapel and then clockwise up the slope. Ahead of you, at the top, you will see William Bliss's impressive tomb, prominently sited in the cemetery for which he had given the land.

Question 7: What was the name of William Bliss's wife?





Continue round the circular path until you reach this shiny granite memorial. It records the loss of a 24-year-old war pilot, Herbert Rutter Simms, who was shot down off Ostend in 1916 – a very early air casualty. The Royal British Legion has put information about many other war heroes on houses around the town. Leave the cemetery and return towards the town centre, perhaps pausing to admire the monumental chimney of Bliss Mill.



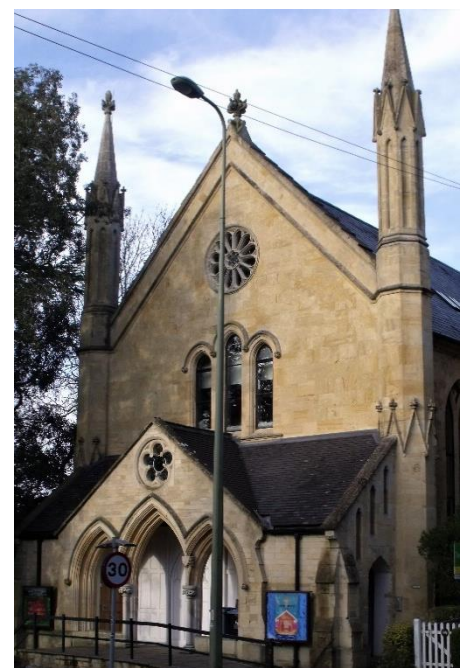
Passing the swings again we reach Penhurst Gardens, named after the National Children's Home school that formerly occupied the site. The pair of large semi-detached houses at the front was built by William Bliss to accommodate his married daughters and their families.



Question 8: In what year did Penhurst School close? Hint: walk up and look at the blue plaque between the bay windows.

Next, we pass the Baptist Church built in 1862 in front of

an earlier chapel of 1733, largely at Bliss's expense. Finally, as we continue back up New Street, glance under the archway into Distons Lane which is lined with some of the reputedly around 100 cottages built by this godly and benevolent employer to house his workers.



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Answers: 1. 14; 2. A (British) School; 3. 20; 4. A mill stone; 5. 1696; 6. Horse chestnuts; 7. Esther; 8. 2013.