

HORNTON VILLAGE HISTORY TRAIL



The way we were

Take a look back at the fascinating working life of our village – who did what, where they traded and what skills and crafts allowed rural families to make a living over the centuries.



This circular walk shows you where tradespeople and craftsmen and women used to live and run their workshops, services and businesses. In all there are 30 potential places on this trail.

Please do remember to respect people's privacy and not to walk onto their property, nor look into their windows!

1 Langway Villa, Bell Street

Dressmakers Fanny and Julia Miles (late 19thc/early 20thc) lived here, having worked at Jubilee House for the family carpentry business, often making linings in linen for the coffins produced in the Miles' workshop.

2 Jubilee House, Bell Street

In 1861 William Miles set up a carpenters' and wheelwrights' business providing cart wheels, wagons, coffins and general carpentry. He increased the business until he employed 15-20 men of different crafts and skills.



At the back of the house were workshops and a wood store. Saw pits were located across the road. William was also the local undertaker for Hornton and other villages.

3 Grafton Rise, Bell Street

Percy Upton, shoe repairer (1950s). Three cottages, long-demolished, were set into the hillside behind Grafton Rise. The shoe repairer worked from one of these old thatched cottages until 1963.

4 Tournay House, Bell Street

George Percy Stanley, quarry owner and manager. The Stanley family bought the quarrying rights and managed the pits and small quarries around Hornton in the early 20th century.

There was originally a cottage where the garage is now, sold in 1881 to pay for the social and physical education of poor children.

5 Home Farm House, Bell Street

A working farm for several hundred years, it was owned and extended in 1661 by Thomas Hicks, a wealthy yeoman farmer. The farmyard was in front of the house where the road is now. In the 1920s Richard Robbins farmed here and bred shire horses.

6 Blacksmith's Cottage, Bell Street

Frederick Jeffs (c1930s) was the last black-smith in Hornton. He worked for three generations of the Miles family at Jubilee House.

7 The Old Church Rooms, Bell Street

This was the old village hall. When the Bellevue shop closed in 1980 Ann Hemmings moved the post office across the road to the Church Rooms. Julie Stanley took over the job from Ann and ran the post office here every Wednesday from 1995 until she moved it to her house. The post office closed in 2008.

8 Belle Vue, Bell Street

This was originally the Bell Inn, which was first registered in 1753 – the oldest public house in the village. The village courts were held here.



It became a wireless repair and electrical shop in the 1950s –1960s and also a general store and post office.

9 The Old Post Cottage, Bell Street

Kate Turner succeeded her mother in running Hornton's post office in the early 20th century and, at the time, was England's longest-serving postmistress. She also managed the telephone exchange, employing 16-year old Lily Hancocks to operate the system.

10 Bay Tree House (formerly Rose Cottage)

Jim Freeman, coal merchant. He took over from his father who started the business in 1922 and whose first coal wagon was a horse and cart. The coal came by train to Banbury and along the canal by barge.



11 Priscilla House, Bell Street

Robert Rainbow was the village baker in the early 20th century. He sold the bakery business to Laurence Evans in 1924 and it became the village shop, selling newspapers, sweets, greeting cards and knitting wool as well as groceries. The shop eventually merged with the post office, finally closing in 1980.

12 Spike's Cottage, Bell Street

Harry Spike, quarryman (c1930s) lived here. This row of cottages was built by the Ironstone Company for their workers. Harry Spike worked all his life in the quarry and, towards the end of his career, operated the quarry signal box at Wroxton.

13 Holloway House, The Green

This house was once the home of Thomas Sharman. Its lands included a working windmill at the top of Holloway, looking over the village. The mill was active until 1869, but it deteriorated and was finally bulldozed in the 1960s, along with the miller's cottage.

14 The Dun Cow pub, West End

Registered in 1854, this is the only remaining pub in the village. At one time it was also a butcher's and a girthmaker's, with a stable and hostelry next door where the first post office was located. The pub was later owned by the brewer Hunt Edmunds but is now a free house.

15 The Old Coach House garage, West End

This garage housed Mr Sumner's bus. Starting in 1911, three generations of the Sumner family ran a bus service to and from Banbury, for passengers, school runs and to collect grocery orders, until 1988.



16 The Berries, West End

Edwin (Eddie) Clifford lived here in the 1940s/50s. As well as his job as a quarry worker he was also a Master Thatcher and village gravedigger.

17 Spring Cottage, West End

This was originally an alehouse but it was closed when the owner, Mrs Rainbow, and her family became staunch Methodists.

18 West End House, West End

John Webb (late 19th century) was a shoe and boot maker, coming from a long family tradition in the trade. He had a small workshop above the current garage at Holloway Cottages and was a senior figure in Hornton.

19 The Yews, Church Lane

Sisters Miss Maud and Miss Beatrice Beesley lived here in the 1920s. They were dressmakers, and clothes repairers, also making linen linings for coffins. They never married. Earlier, Charles Webb, a watch and clockmaker, also lived and worked in this house.

20 St John's Church

The raised tomb to the right of the porch is that of Thomas Hicks Wells. The inscription describes him as a wine merchant travelling to and from Oporto. He lived at Hornton Grounds and we believe he stored wine in the cellars there in the early 19th century.

21 Corner of Church Lane

Frank Stanley, butcher. Frank ran a butcher's here in 1930s/40s. At Christmas time he was at full stretch with as many as 30 pigs to kill and joint. This was the time of the 'Pig Club' - a WWII initiative to encourage householders to keep pigs.

22 Linden Cottage, The Green

Bill Freeman gave haircuts to gents and boys and he often cut hair on the Green in good weather. Bill was also a stonemason, a bookies' runner, ran a taxi service and often chauffeured for village weddings.

23 Sunnyside, Millers Lane

Once an off-licence run by John Robbins, it later became used as a doctor's surgery. Doctors based at Shenington would hold surgeries in Hornton two days a week in various sitting rooms. Long before the NHS, people had to pay for their treatment according to their means and walk all the way to Shenington to fetch their medicines.

24 The Methodist Chapel, Millers Lane

This was built by the villagers in 1884-5 on land given by the Miles family. Masons and quarrymen worked on the building of the chapel after their day's work, as did many others. Richard Rainbow, a postman, walked twenty miles a day and after that he mixed concrete.

25 The Old Red Lion, off Millers Lane

This public house was first registered in 1772. In 1876, publican William Beesley and his wife Elizabeth were paid £500 'of lawful British money' for the building and adjoining barn and garden on Millers Lane. Hunt Edmunds sold the Red Lion in 1950, boasting in the sale advertisement that it was 'the only fully licenced house in Hornton'. It later became a private house.



26 The Gables, off Millers Lane

James Wheeler (late 19th century) was a farmer and landowner. The Wheeler family did most of the threshing in the Hornton area, owning two or three such machines. James Wheeler also invented a new type of steam-driven threshing machine.



27 Cherry Orchard, Millers Lane

In 1796 John Cleaver, a stonecutter and quarry owner, lived here. Later it was used as cottages with cellarge, and converted into a pub and off-licence aptly called 'The Case is Altered'.

28 Proffitts House, Millers Lane

This Grade II* house originally dates from the medieval period and was a working farm for many centuries. Alban Wheeler, a smallholder, lived here from 1946 to 1989 and brought his cows to the Green to graze, selling milk from a churn into customers' jugs. He also supplied milk to United Dairies for several years.

29 Cromwells, Eastgate

It was rumoured that Oliver Cromwell stayed in this 17th century house. It was later use to provide lodging for quarrymen and then Italian prisoners in WWII.

30 Copse Cap Barn, Eastgate

Lionel Gibbs, blacksmith, bought the derelict barn in 1958 to open a branch of the family business. The first job was to reroof the barn and convert it into a metalworking workshop.

POSTCARDS OF OLD HORNTON



Top left
This working windmill once overlooked the village, but was demolished in the 1960s
Hornton Church Fete 1935
Harvesting, 1925
Cromwells, c1950, then two farm cottages

Top right
Bell Street, showing the village shop at Priscilla House

Far left
Cows grazing on the Green, before being taken to the Pound

Near left
Mr Freeman and Mr Robbins drilling spring wheat