

## **History of the village of Bloxham.**

Bloxham, a picturesque village nestled in the heart of North Oxfordshire, boasts a rich history that stretches back centuries. Its name dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> Century CE and is derived from the Old English "Blocc's Ham" meaning "the home of Blocc", but there are no records suggesting who "Blocc" is.

### **Early Settlement and Medieval Growth**

Finds of flints and polished stone axeheads around the village and a long barrow on the Milton Road, show that humans were around the area in Neolithic times (over 4000 years ago). The village's strategic location along the Sor Brook tributary attracted early settlers, including Bronze Age people (3,000 to 4,000 years ago) with barrows and flint finds, extensive Iron Age settlements (2,000 to 3,000 years ago) and the Romans, established farms and a burial site on the Tadmarton Road between the 1st and 5th centuries CE. Following the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons (410 to 1066 EC) established a more permanent settlement, laying the foundation for the Bloxham we know today. Christianity was established in the area by St. Birinus in 630 CE. The Domesday Book of 1086 CE records the village of "Blochesham" and provides valuable insights into Bloxham's medieval past, recording six mills and a thriving trade in wool and corn. Its name was subsequently recorded as "Blocchesham" in 1142 CE, "Blokesham" in 1216 CE, and finally Bloxham in 1316 CE. The village's strategic importance as a hub for commerce and agriculture contributed to its growth and prosperity during this period. By 1155 CE, Bloxham had 2 manors – The Royal Manor (later Beauchamp) and the St. Amand Manor. By 1377 CE, the village had 325 villagers contributing to the poll-tax system. By the 15th century, St Mary's Church had become one of the grandest parish churches in southern England, showing Bloxham's medieval wealth.

### **Architectural Gems and Notable Landmarks**

Bloxham's rich history is reflected in its impressive collection of historic buildings and landmarks. The magnificent St. Mary's Church, with its soaring 198-foot spire, stands as a testament to the village's medieval wealth and architectural prowess. Its origin is felt to be under the patronage of the Crown, but was passed to Eton College in the reformation. The earliest surviving parts of St Mary's building are 12th century, although most of the present building is from the 14th and 15th centuries. The church's intricate stonework and stained glass windows offer a glimpse into the craftsmanship of generations past. Other notable landmarks include the 14<sup>th</sup> century "Old Courthouse", a historic building that once served as the centre of local governance, now the Bloxham Village Museum.

### **Bloxham Feoffees and Village Governance**

The Bloxham Feoffees, a group of local yeomen, played a crucial role in the village's governance and development from the medieval period onwards. Tasked with managing the village's resources and ensuring the well-being of its inhabitants, the Feoffees were responsible for maintaining bridges, assisting the poor, and overseeing various aspects of village life. The Feoffees are still a working charity in the village.

### **Modern Developments and Community Spirit**

While Bloxham has embraced modern amenities and conveniences, it has retained its strong sense of community and its commitment to preserving its heritage. In 1549 Bloxham was in the Bucks & Oxon rising against the Edwardine Reformation, a period of religious upheaval. In the 17th century, the village had many weavers' cottages and the area was known for weaving a fabric called plush. In 1600, the Great Bridge (now Old Bridge) is swept away. In 1804 the turnpike road from Banbury to Chipping Norton is formed; it was classified as the A361 in 1922, the longest 3 digit "A" road in the UK. In 1875, the Banbury and Cheltenham Direct Railway opened a railway station on the south side of Bloxham, the railway subsequently closed in 1964. All Saints' School, a Church of England public school now known as Bloxham School, was founded in 1853 is at the centre of the village. In 1902 mains water and drains are installed in the village. In 1910, a bus service is started and in 1902 mains water arrives in Bloxham. In 1941, Barford St. John airfield opened with various billets and supporting buildings in an around Bloxham. The 1960s saw a rapid growth in Bloxham. Today, the village is a busy bustling community, with a primary & secondary school, shops and pubs. Bloxham stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of its residents and their dedication to preserving the unique character of their village. Its rich history, architectural treasures, and strong community bonds make it a truly special place to live and visit.