



Marlborough Blue Plaque Walk: narrative

The text below provides a narrative for some of the detail that can be seen along the route of the Blue Plaque walk.

Section 1: Town Hall to Patten Alley

For this section of the walk go along the narrow path on the north wall of the Town Hall until you reach the arch (by Henry George estate agents) into Patten Alley, which leads to St Mary's church.

Patten Alley is named after an overshoe to raise the wearer from the mud.

Section 2: Patten Alley to The Green

The main walls of St Mary's Church are 15th century but it was reroofed after the Great Fire in 1653. Its austere interior is a unique example of a puritan preaching house inside a medieval church. A stone pillar in the west wall turned red by the intense heat, is a reminder of the severity of the fire.

Continuing along Patten Alley you come to The Green where the 17th century house, no29 on the left is where William Golding lived and the Blue Plaque (A) is on the wall.

Section 3: The Green

The Green was the original Saxon centre of Marlborough and in the 18th and 19th centuries it was the working class area of the town with industries and ale-houses, rather than inns.

The house on the east side, to the left of the stone building with Doric columns, was the home of a hand weaver and had first floor windows along its entire length.

The avenue of limes crossing part of The Green dates from about 1840.

Section 4: Silverless Street

Returning along Silverless Street there are, on the left two small timbered cottages, built after the 1653 fire, which show that medieval jettied (overhanging) upper stories persisted into the late 17th century. Note the tiny oriel windows on carved brackets.

Section 5: Kingsbury Street

From Silverless Street turn down into Kingsbury Street. The houses on the corner were built after the Great Fire in traditional style with plaster fronts over timber frames: Dormer House is an attractive example.

Looking up the hill, to the left hand side of the road there are two attractive mid-18th century houses set at right angles to the street.

Section 6: along to Chandlers Yard

The architectural assortment of the north side of the High Street is best seen from the opposite side of the High St. Many apparently 18th century buildings are facelifts on 1653-4 properties. Some have parapets disguising the steeply pitched roofs which no longer pleased 18th century eyes. The pent-houses with pillars mentioned by Pepys originally ran the length of the street on both sides.

The buildings opposite the Town Hall are examples of Georgian refronts with Venetian windows. Cavendish House has an oak staircase of 1653-4.

Section 7: Chandlers Yard to Castle & Ball

The quiet alleys leading off this group of buildings are typical of housing in the old Borough. Chandlers Yard is almost unchanged from the 17th century, with original first and second floor windows on both sides containing original glass.

The Merchant's House is one of the best examples of a house built after the 1653 fire, with largely original windows and interior details, including a fine panelled room on the first floor. Its restoration is an ongoing project and it is open to the public.

Section 8: Castle & Ball

The Castle & Ball has been the site of an inn since 1745.

The Blue Plaque commemorating the Battle of Marlborough in 1642 is on the wall just to the right of the gateway through to the hotel's car park.

Section 9: on to Hughenden Yard

The long tile-hung building (nos 114-116) was until the 18th century, Marlborough's principal inn, the "White Hart". Blue Plaques (C & D) commemorate the visit of Shakespeare's company and the visit of Samuel Pepys.

Old Hughenden Yard, with its group of small shops, was the site of a brewery, defunct since the 1920's. An upper door to the brewhouse and a hoist may be seen.

Brewing was significant in Marlborough in 1865 with two breweries in the High Street. In 1899 Reed & Co.'s brewery was called the Anchor brewery and Dixon's brewery at no. 109 High Street was called the Marlborough brewery in 1917, and belonged to Usher's Wiltshire Brewery Ltd.

Section 10: Hughenden Yard to the Library

An intricately carved door next to no 105 shows the history of Marlborough back to King John, and on the gables of the 1925 building are carved uplifting messages.

The Library was built in 1853 as St Peter's School. Eglantyne Mary Jebb, founder of "Save the Children Fund", once taught here and is remembered by Blue Plaque (E).

Section 11: The Library to the A4

The modest buildings on the north side of St Peter's Church are a nearly intact street of vernacular architecture. Many of the ground floor elevations remain untouched.

Section 12: round to College entrance

Follow the Bath Road (A4) on the east/north side of the road, and then cross over at the pedestrian crossing to the south side of the road at the Marlborough College gates.

Blue Plaque (F) for the Statutes of Marlborough is to the right of the gate, and in the background is the first building of the College, which used to be the Castle Inn.

Section 13: back to St Peters

Retrace your steps back to St Peter's Church on the south/west side of the road, crossing the road at the pedestrian crossing. Then make your way around the west/south side of the church to its main entrance.

St Peter's Church dates from about 1460, its porch from about 40 years later. The church survived the fire of 1653 but the interior of fine box pews and a gallery did not survive a massive Victorian facelift.

Cardinal Wolsey was ordained here in 1498 with Blue Plaque (G) being displayed on the wall by the main entrance.

Section 14: St Peters to No 48 High St

Taking care, cross over to the south side of the High St through the opening in the wall around the church and walk back along the High St.

At no 48 (The Food Gallery), on the wall to the left of the coffee shop, is Blue Plaque (H) commemorating the Great Fire of 1653 which started at the premises, at or around this location, of Francis Freeman, a tanner.

Section 15: No 48 High St to Figgins Lane

Carry on along the south side of the High Street and you will pass the Ivy House, previously a hotel but now used by Marlborough College as accommodation.

This Georgian building with venetian windows, was built in about 1760.

Section 16: Figgins Lane to the Priory

Carrying on further along the High Street you first pass the Merlin Hotel, built in the late 18th century it is a fine example of local skills in baroque decoration.

Then you reach the entrance to Priory Gardens and The Priory itself set well off the High St. The Priory, an 1820 house overlooking the gardens, is reached through a pair of doors in a glazed walkway in the modern building. The house, in a style known as Strawberry Hill Gothic, is on the site of a 14th century Carmelite friary.

Section 17: From the Priory to Angel Yard

Carrying on along the High Street you pass the entrance to Hilliers Yard and the Waitrose supermarket with a stone frontage preserved from the town's corn exchange, and which was subsequently used as the fire-station house and a cinema.

Section 18: Angel Yard to 3 & 4 High St

Passing the entrance to Angel Yard and the Ailesbury Arms (now converted into mixed business and residential use) you reach the end of the High Street.

At nos 3 & 4, restored after a disastrous fire in 1998, a Blue Plaque (I) commemorates the Hancock brothers, two local inventors.

Section 19: Nos 3 & 4 High St to Town Hall

This final section returns you to the Town Hall by crossing back over the High Street at the pedestrian crossing.

The current Town Hall, designed in 1882 by local architect C E Ponting, was built in 1990-02, but there has been a Town Hall on this site since 1656.

The on-line version of this 'narrative' for the Blue Plaque walk can be viewed at www.marlborougharea.org/Marlborough+Blue+Plaque+walk+narrative and a PDF of the material can be downloaded from www.marlborougharea.org/dl370.