BLENHEIM PALACE
EDUCATION

This is an introduction to Blenheim's Local History

This module is an historical overview of how Blenheim came to be in Woodstock, and the relationship between the Family and the local community.

*"The longer you can look back, the farther you can look forward."*

Winston Churchill, March 1944

# Stone Age (15,000BC – 2,500BC)

This period is divided into three periods, and each period is characterized by a specific development:

| PERIOD | CHARACTERISTICS |
|---|---|
| Palaeolithic or Early / Old Stone Age | Using wooden and stone tools |
| Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age | Nomad hunter-gatherer |
| Neolithic or Late / New Stone Age | Sedentary farmer |

Q: How do you know a site was used during the Stone Age?

A: There might be flint scatters and archaeological features that suggest the existence of farming settlements. Sites were encircled by henges or ditches.

Q Do you know a British Stone Age site?

A: Stonehenge in Wiltshire. The circle of stones is a famous visitors attraction.

There is no **Stone Age** evidence at Blenheim or Woodstock, but flint scatters were found around Cassington Mill. A bit further in Oxfordshire, there are the Rollright Stones (near Little Rollright) and the Devil's Quoits (near Stanton Harcourt).



# Bronze Age (3,000BC – 800BC)

This period is characterized by the use of metal. Moving from stone tools to metal implements marked the beginning of the Bronze Age.

| CHARACTERISTICS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|
| Toolmaking with copper and tin | Knives, swords, spearheads |
| Fabricating objects with bronze and gold | Brooches, pins, vessels for eating and drinking |
| Building with wood | Roundhouses: Wooden walls and thatched roof<br>Long Wooden boats |
| Making wheeled vehicles | War chariots pulled by horses |

Q: What is bronze?

A: It's a metal. It is a mixture of copper and tin. Copper and tin rust. Bronze doesn't rust.

Q Do you know a British Bronze Age site?

A: Grimspound in Devon. There are remains of 24 roundhouses.

There is no **Bronze Age** evidence at Blenheim or Woodstock, but copper wire ring straps and bronze daggers have been found in meadows in Oxford.



# Iron Age (800BC – 43AD)

This period is characterized by the use of iron. Moving from copper and bronze tools to iron tools marked the beginning of the Iron Age.

| PERIOD | CHARACTERISTICS |
|---|---|
| Improving farming methods with iron tools | Grinding farmed wheat with a quern-stone, cooking with pots on fire, farming sheep for wool |
| Living in clans and tribes on hill forts | Potters, weavers, metalworkers lived as a community |
| Building with wood | Roundhouses: Wooden walls and thatched roof<br>Long Wooden boats |
| Making tools with tin and steel | Blacksmiths, whitesmiths |

Q: What is iron?

A: It's a metal. It is a mixture of ironstone and limestone, which is hardened by heat. Iron is a hard material.

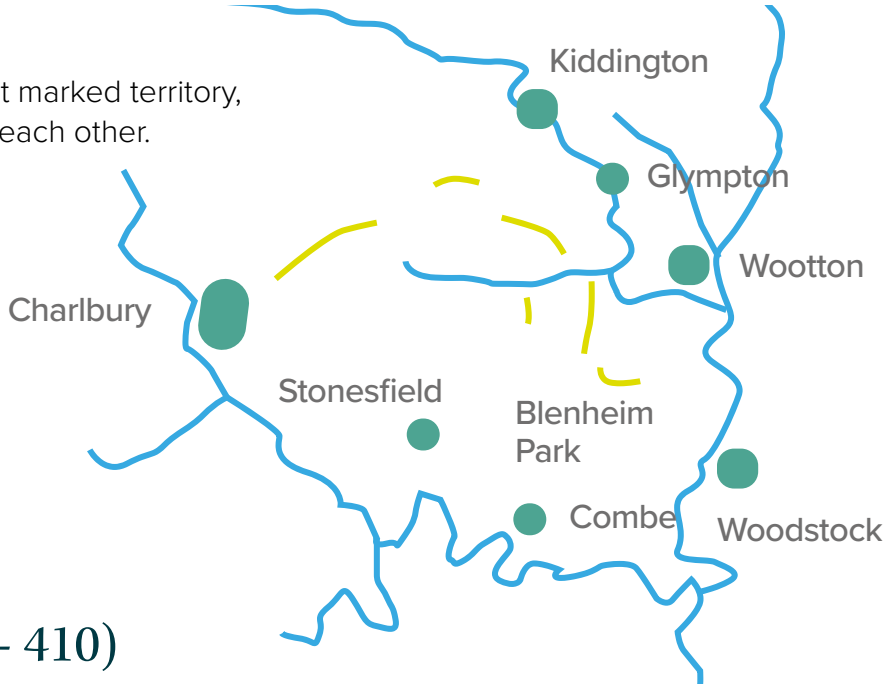
Q Do you know a British Iron Age site?

A: Maiden Castle in Dorset. Hill forts are surrounded by Stone Age circular henges and Iron Age roundhouses. There is also evidence metalworking, animal farming, pottering, crops growing, etc.

There is evidence at Blenheim that the land was inhabited during the **Iron Age**. To the north side of the Park, there is what appears to be a segment of the North Oxfordshire **Grim's Ditch**.

Q: What is a Grim's Ditch?

A: It's a series of trenches that marked territory, and separated tribes from each other.




## Roman period (43 – 410)

The prehistoric period ended with the arrival of the Romans. The Roman Emperor Claudius invaded in the year 43. The Roman Empire stretched over the Mediterranean Sea. The Roman provinces were Hispania (today's Portugal and Spain), Gaul (today's France) and Britannia (today's England).

Q: Do you know a British Roman site?

A: The Roman baths in Bath. Hadrian's Wall.

When the Romans arrived, some of the Celtic tribes fled to Cornwall, Wales, and Scotland.

Q: Do you know a famous person who stayed and fought the Romans?

A: Queen Boudicca of the Iceni tribe. She raised an army and burned the town of Colchester.

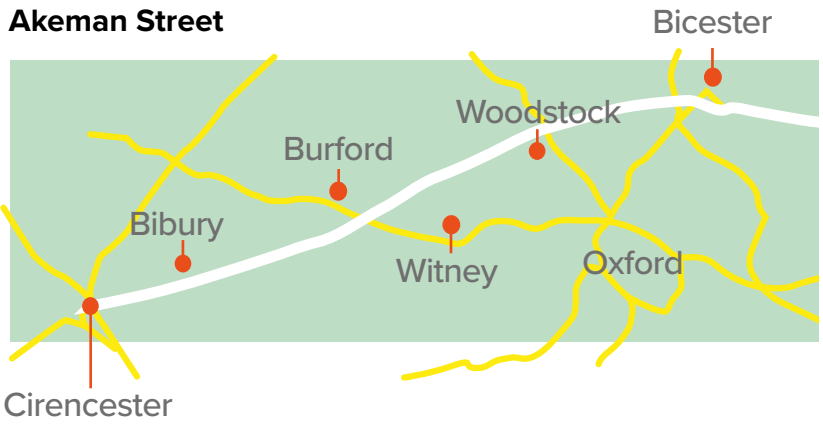
A place's name ending with –caster, –cester or –chester is a place that was founded on a Roman settlement. The Latin word *castrum* means a 'Roman fort'.

There is evidence at Blenheim and in the surrounding area that there were settlements during the **Roman period.** The Romans built roads. On the northwest side of the Park, there is a Roman road called **Akeman Street**. It is a segment of the road that linked *Alchester* (Bicester) to *Corinium* (Cirencester). Another major Roman road in the area is the Fosse Way. The Romans built villas. One of them was on the Blenheim Estate: the roman villa at **North Leigh.**

The people of Britannia were called Britons. Britons kept some of the Roman's culture.

Q: What are a few examples of the Romans' legacy in Britain?

A: **Roman numerals**, the **Latin alphabet**, and the **Christian faith**. Even the British £1 coin still bears the Latin words *decus et tutamen*. It means "glory and protection."




# Anglo-Saxon period (410 – 1066)

When the Romans left Britannia, the Angles (from today's Denmark) and the Saxons (from today's Germany and The Netherlands) came over and renamed Britannia, **Angle-Land** (England).

**King Alfred the Great** (r. 871-899) was known for being the first King of all Kingdoms: Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, East Anglia, Kent, Essex, and Sussex.

- King Alfred started the process of **central administration** of England: one king, one church, one currency, one language.
- He commissioned a series of historical records about the settlements in England called the **Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.**

Woodstock became the royal estate where King Alfred and King Ethelred II met their council, called the *Witan*.



A place's name ending with –burgh, –bury, or –brough is a place that was founded on an Anglo-Saxon settlement. King Alfred called the settlements, boroughs.

**King Edmund I** (r. 939-946) divided the kingdom into **shires**.

- Each shire was divided into **hundreds.** Each hundred was divided into 100 **hides**. A hide was the land of one household. Each shire was led by a *shire-reeve*. That is where the word **sheriff** comes from. A shire is known today as a **county**.

Today, England is made up of 27 administrative counties and 48 ceremonial counties.

*Vubeztob*, as the Anglo-Saxons called Woodstock, is in the county of Oxford; in Oxford-shire.




# The Norman period (1066 – 1154)

William Duke of Normandy invaded England in 1066 with his followers. The Normans established a new system of land management.

**King William I** (r. 1066-1087) was best known as William the Conqueror.

- King William established a **parliament**.
- King William built many **castles** to control the land.
- King William commissioned the **Domesday Book**.

In the Domesday Book, Woodstock appeared as *Wodestoch*, which means a "clearing in the woods" in old English. Woodstock remained a royal place. **Woodstock Forest** was one of the five **royal forests** in the county. The other forests were Wychwood, Cornbury, Stowood and Shotover.

His descendants spent much time at Woodstock.

- **King Henry I** (r. 1100-1135) enclosed the park in 1110 with a 7-mile-long **stone-wall**. It was the first forest **enclosure** in England.
- **King Henry II** (r. 1154-1189) visited the Manor of Woodstock with his lover Jane Clifford. She was known as *Fair Rosamund*. The site of their visits is known as **Fair Rosamund's well.**
- King Edward III's wife, **Queen Philippa of Hainault**, enjoyed her time spent at the Royal Park of Woodstock. **Queen Pool** was named after her.

King Henry II gave Woodstock a Royal Charter in 1179, which allowed Woodstock to hold a market and a fair.

# Blenheim and Woodstock

**Today, Blenheim Palace is the home of the 12th Duke of Marlborough.**

- The house was built for his ancestor, **John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough**.
- John Churchill was a **soldier**. He was Captain-General of the English Army. He fought in the War of the Spanish Succession. His first significant victory was at the **Battle of Blenheim** in 1704.
- Queen Anne (r. 1702-1714) rewarded him for this military victory. She gave him land and money to build himself a home. The land was the Royal Park of Woodstock and the Hundred of Wootton. The money was a total of £240,000. The home is this palace.

**Woodstock attracted many visitors during the building of Blenheim Palace and this trend has grown year on year since 1705.**

- Tourists lodged at **coaching inns** like the Bear Hotel and the Marlborough Arms.
- Woodstock was known for two trades: **glove-making** and **metalworking**.
- There were lots of sheep and deer in Woodstock. Their skin was used to make gloves.
- Steel jewellery makers made shoe and belt buckles, scissors, buttons, and sword hilts.

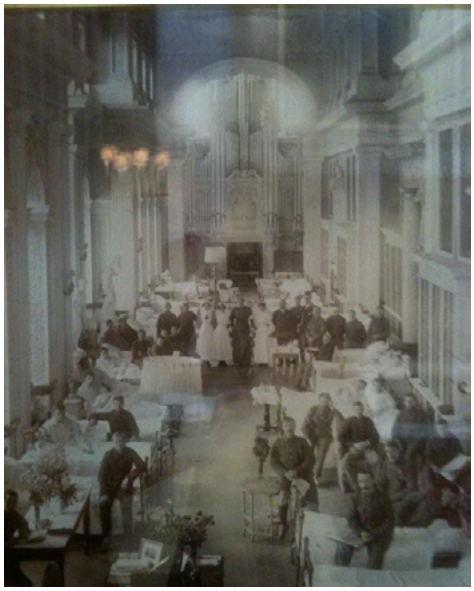
# The Dukes of Marlborough and Woodstock

- George, 4th Duke of Marlborough paid for the building of the **Town Hall** in 1766.
- Caroline, 4th Duchess of Marlborough endowed the **alms-houses** in 1796.
- John, 7th Duke of Marlborough supported the building of schools. Woodstock National School (1854-1985) was built on Blenheim land. he school was reorganised as primary school in 1940, and the senior pupils were moved to **The Marlborough School**. In 1968, the remaining pupils were moved to **Woodstock Primary School. Bladon School** was founded in 1858, and it was known as The Duchess of Marlborough School.




- George, 8th Duke of Marlborough set up the **Woodstock Railway Company** in 1888. He built a railway line from Kidlington to Blenheim. It operated between 1890 and 1954.
- Charles, 9th Duke of Marlborough was **Mayor of Woodstock** on three occasions.
- John, 10th Duke of Marlborough was **Mayor of Woodstock** from 1937 to 1942.
- Mary, 10th Duchess of Marlborough was **Mayoress of Woodstock** from 1946 to 1952. She was also Councillor on the Woodstock Borough Council.
- James, 12th Duke of Marlborough is a **Town Councillor** on the Woodstock Town Council.

# Woodstock and Blenheim during the First World War



- The 9th Duke of Marlborough served in the **Army** for the first two years of the war. He served in the **Government** for the rest of the war.
- Many stately homes were turned into military hospitals. During the first year of the war, the house was used as a **convalescent hospital.** It opened on 17th September 1914 and closed on 31st May 1915.
- The park and gardens were used as a national **allotment** where vegetables grew instead of flowers.

# Woodstock and Blenheim during the Second World War

- The 10th Duke of Marlborough welcomed 400 schoolboys from **Malvern College** who were evacuated from their school. They lived at the Palace from September 1939 to July 1940.
- From 1940 to 1945, Blenheim Palace was requisitioned by MI5. Nissen huts were built in the Great Court.
- In Woodstock, a **British Restaurant** was opened to offer meals to residents.
- Queen Pool was used to practice the landing of an **amphibian vehicle** in preparation for **D-Day**.




Today, the Blenheim Estates covers 12,000 acres of land. About 2,000 acres lie within the stone-wall. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

**Winston Churchill** was the **British Prime Minister** during the Second World War.
He was one **the greatest political leaders** in British and world history.




- He was **born** at Blenheim Palace on 30 November 1874.
- He **spent a lot of time** (school holidays, Christmas) at Blenheim. He visited his grandparents (7th Duke and Duchess) and his cousin (9th Duke) very often.
- He **proposed** to Clementine at the Temple of Diana in 1908.
- In 1965, he died and was **buried** at St Martin's Church in Bladon.

**Winston said of the 1st Duke of Marlborough's victory at the Battle of Blenheim: "It changed the political axis of the world."**

Q: Why is Winston Churchill significant in history?

A: His wartime speeches and leadership made him very popular around the world. His speeches still resonate with today's influencing people. The current £5 note shows Winston with one of his most famous wartime quotes: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat." On the top right corner appears a small circle representing the Marlborough Maze and spells out B-L-E-N-H-E-I-M.




**Winston said of Blenheim Palace: "I am proud to be born at Blenheim."**

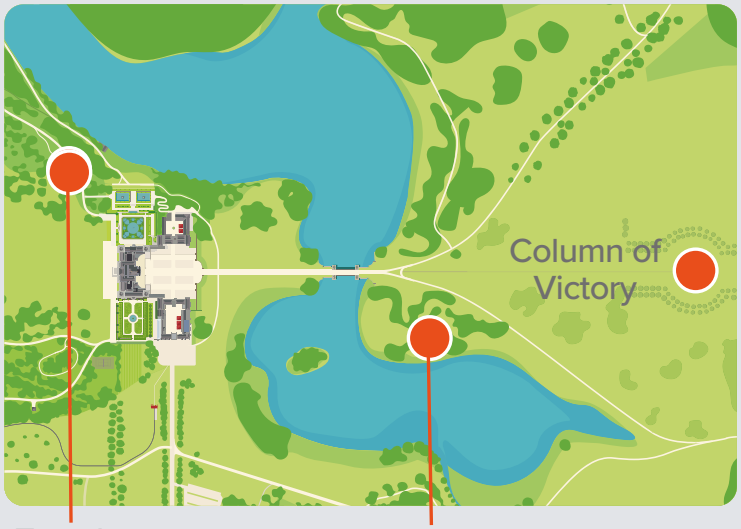
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*"Understanding the Past is instrumental to better appreciate the Present and to better prepare the Future."*

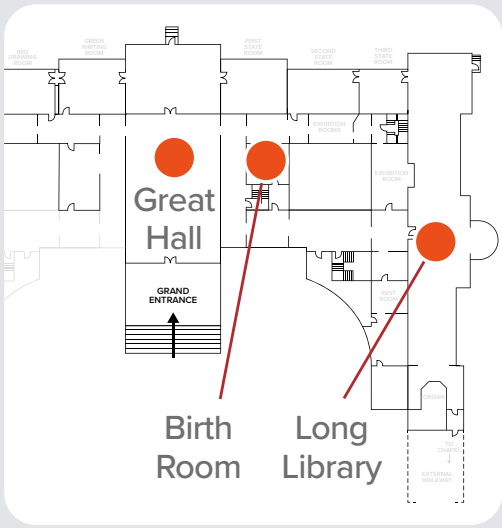
Blenheim Education Statement

## Points of interest:

### At Blenheim:




### Inside the Palace:




### In Woodstock:

