

MARLBOROUGH, Wiltshire - Extract from National Gazetteer, 1868

"**MARLBOROUGH**, a parish, post and market town, and municipal and parliamentary borough, locally in the hundred of Silkley, but exercising separate jurisdiction, county Wilts, 10 miles W. of Hungerford, and 14 E. of Devizes. It lies about 6 miles off the Berks and Hants line of railway, with which it is connected by a branch line, starting from Savernake station. This town is supposed by Camden to have been the *Cunetio* of Antoninus, and subsequently took the name of *Marlbridge*, or *Marleberg*, from the marl or chalk hills by which it is surrounded. At the time of the Domesday Survey it was held in royal demesne, and had a church, but the castle was not built till the subsequent reign. In the baronial war of John, the castle was alternately held by the king and the barons, and seems to have been an occasional residence of subsequent sovereigns till the time of Henry VII, and to have formed part of the dowries of several queens.

There was also a royal residence at Ogbourne, about a mile and a half from the town. Henry III. held a parliament here, which enacted the laws relative to the police of the kingdom, commonly called the "statutes of Marlebridge", and from that time till the reign of Charles I., the assizes were held here. In the civil war of the 17th century, it was garrisoned by the parliamentarians under the Earl of Essex, but was surprised by General Wilmot, who, in December, 1642, captured here above 1,000 prisoners and a great quantity of military stores. The castle and borough were granted by Henry VIII. to Edward Duke of Somerset, and have descended by intermarriage to the Marquis of Ailesbury. The castle having fallen into decay, the Dukes of Somerset, of the Seymour family, erected a large house on its site, subsequently converted into the Castle Inn, which has recently given place to the Marlborough College, which forms a considerable mass of buildings at the western extremity of the High-street.

This institution, originally founded with the object of giving a liberal education to the sons of clergymen on economical terms, was incorporated by letters patent in 1845, and received a second charter in 1849, by which latter half of the pupils may be sons of laymen. It has a chapel, dedicated to St. Michael, built in 1847 by Blore, and subsequently decorated by Butterfield, designed solely for the use of the pupils, who average about 500. The Archbishop of Canterbury is perpetual visitor, the Bishop of Salisbury is president of the council. A modern school has recently been attached to the college for the education of youths not intended for the Universities.

The town, which stands on the Bath road near the banks of the river Kennett, consists chiefly of one spacious street, running from E. to W., which is paved, and lighted with gas. On the N. side of the principal street, chiefly shops, is a penthouse projecting in front of the houses, and serving for a promenade in wet weather. The houses are for the most part large and well-built, the more modern of stone and brick, and the older of wood, ornamented in front by curious carved work. It contains a market-house, erected by the corporation in 1790 on the site of a former one, over which is the townhall. There are also assembly rooms, a council room, and court-house, the county bridewell, four commercial banks, and a savings-bank. The public reading-room, situated in High-street, was opened in 1854, and has a library attached, belonging to the Marlborough Reading and Mutual Improvement Society, established in 1844.

The town derives considerable advantages from the establishment of Marlborough College, which has considerably added to the business. The trade is principally in corn, meal, coal, malt, bacon, butter, and cheese,

of which two last vast quantities are sent every week to London. The chief industries carried on are malting, brewing, rope and sacking making, tanning, and wool-stapling. The population of the municipal borough in 1851 was 3,908, and, in 1861, 3,684; that of the parliamentary borough, which includes the parish of Preshute, in 1851, was 5,135, and, in 1861, 4,893.

It returns two members to parliament, and is a borough by prescription, first chartered by John in 1205. Under the Municipal Reform Act it is governed by a mayor, who is also returning officer, 4 aldermen, and 12 councillors, with the style of "mayor and burgesses of the borough and town of Marlborough". The new borough has an area of 3,983 acres, and a revenue of about £1,000, chiefly arising from rents. The franchise is enjoyed by all £10 householders, but the chief influence is with the Marquis of Ailesbury, of Tottenham Park. Marlborough is the headquarters of the county militia, and the head of a Poor law Union, embracing 13 parishes. The union workhouse, which is situated in the parish of Preshute about half a mile N.W. of the town, is a building of white Bath stone. Marlborough is also the seat of New County Court and superintendent registry districts. To the S. of the town is the ancient Forest of Savernake, and on the N. of it are the open downs, about 500 feet high.

The livings are St. Mary's, a vicarage* in the diocese of Salisbury, value £100, in the patronage of the bishop, and St. Peter's with St. Paul's, a discharged rectory, value £130, also in the patronage of the bishop. The church of St. Mary is a neat stone edifice, with an ancient tower and Norman doorway, but considerably damaged during the civil war in 1641. The church of St. Peter, which stands at the western extremity of the High-street, is a commodious structure with a lofty square tower, surmounted by battlements and pinnacles. The interior was completely restored in 1863. The Independents, Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists, and Baptists, have places of worship. Edward VI.'s free grammar school, founded in 1551, has a revenue from endowment of £205, with exhibitions at both Universities. Judge Foster and Walter Harte, the poet and historian, who wrote the life of "Gustavus Adolphus", were pupils of this school. There are also National schools for boys and girls.

The monastic institutions, of which no remains now exist, were a Gilbertine priory, founded in the reign of John, and dedicated to St. Margaret, the revenue of which, at the Dissolution, was returned at £38 19s. 2d., and was then given to the Stringers. A convent of Whitefriars, established in 1316 by the merchants of the town; a Trinitarian Friary, founded in the reign of Henry III.; St. John's Hospital, founded in the reign of Henry II., and St. Thomas's in that of Henry III., and annexed to the Priory of St. Margaret in the time of Richard II. The Churchill family take from this place the titles of duke and earl, as representatives of the great soldier, the first duke. It also gave the title of earl to Chief Justice Ley.

Among the distinguished natives of the town were Henry of Marlborough, a monk and English historian of the 14th century, and Dr. Henry Sacheverell, of political celebrity, whose father was rector of St. Peter and St. Paul. Market days are Wednesday and Saturday, of which the former is only for vegetables, but the latter has long been celebrated for its abundant supply of grain, cheese, meat, &c. Fairs are held on the 11th July for horses and wool, 22nd August for lambs, horses, and cows, and 23rd November for horses, sheep, and cattle; also, two statute fairs for hiring servants, one on the Saturday before Old Michaelmas, and one after. Races take place in July."