

COPIED

Listed Building Assessment

**The Three Horseshoes Public House
Old Marston, Oxon**

(In respect of application for Listed Building Consent for change of use to the property, undertaken on behalf of Allied Design Associates)

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Purpose of Report:

- 1. To confirm the age, history and ownership of the building, and assess the merits of the proposed extensions/alterations to its existing structure.*

1. Background Information

The Three Horseshoes Public House, situated in the village of Old Marston, Oxfordshire, a Grade II Listed Building, is an eighteenth century structure which is probably rebuilt and extended on the site of an older building of unknown significance. It consists of the main building on the southern side of a small yard, and an outbuilding to the north. It is currently the subject of required planning approval for change of use to a residential complex comprising three separate domestic units. This work is quite considerable, but takes very little away from the current existing structure. Very little will change in terms of the outward appearance of the existing building, and the main propositions concern considerable alterations to the interior.

Listed Building Consent is required for these alterations, and the purpose of this report is to investigate the historical significance of the building, to examine the merits of the proposed development alongside the need to conserve its structure for its future enjoyment and use as a historic building for domestic residential purposes.

2. Listed Building Status

The Three Horseshoes has been listed as a building of special architectural interest because of its group association with its surrounding buildings. The Listed Buildings Register describes the building as a 3-unit plan, and refers entirely to the external features of its architecture; it simply says that the interior was not inspected. Other buildings in the village were inspected internally, and this is due to the fact that their historical significance was much greater – such as the 16th century farmhouse, remodelled in the 1880s, (now known as 33 Oxford Road), where the manorial court had traditionally been held. It seems that, whilst the Three Horseshoes was a social focus for the village in times past, it has not been, and is not now, a focus for detailed and rigid conservation strategy to enable it to maintain a function and purpose that is relevant to the present time.

The Three Horseshoes appears to have been one of the many subjects of the extensive re-survey of listed buildings undertaken nationally in the 1980s, during a great emphasis on conservation planning and the preservation of areas of historical and architectural interest. During this time, many buildings were listed by association with other (often more important) buildings rather than on the basis of their single merit, and The Three Horseshoes is one such building.

It is clear from a listing perspective therefore that the proposed works will not affect the listed status of The Three Horseshoes in any way, nor detract from the reasons for which it was listed in the first place.

3. Historical Context and Function

Old Marston has a long tradition of agricultural and domestic settlement which dates back to pre-Saxon times. The name comes from the Saxon equivalent of Marsh-Town, and this is how the village would once have appeared, as a sort of island on a gravelly rise surrounded by water for much of the year round, and sometimes quite cut off due to the surrounding roads being flooded; a situation that does not appear to have changed until at least the later fourteenth century with improved field drainage methods, thus allowing the economic and agricultural expansion of the village. Initially the village would have been a very small hamlet with only very basic agricultural support, its houses and farmland probably covering only what is now the nucleus of the old village itself (Fig. 1).

Three Horseshoes Public House, Old Marston

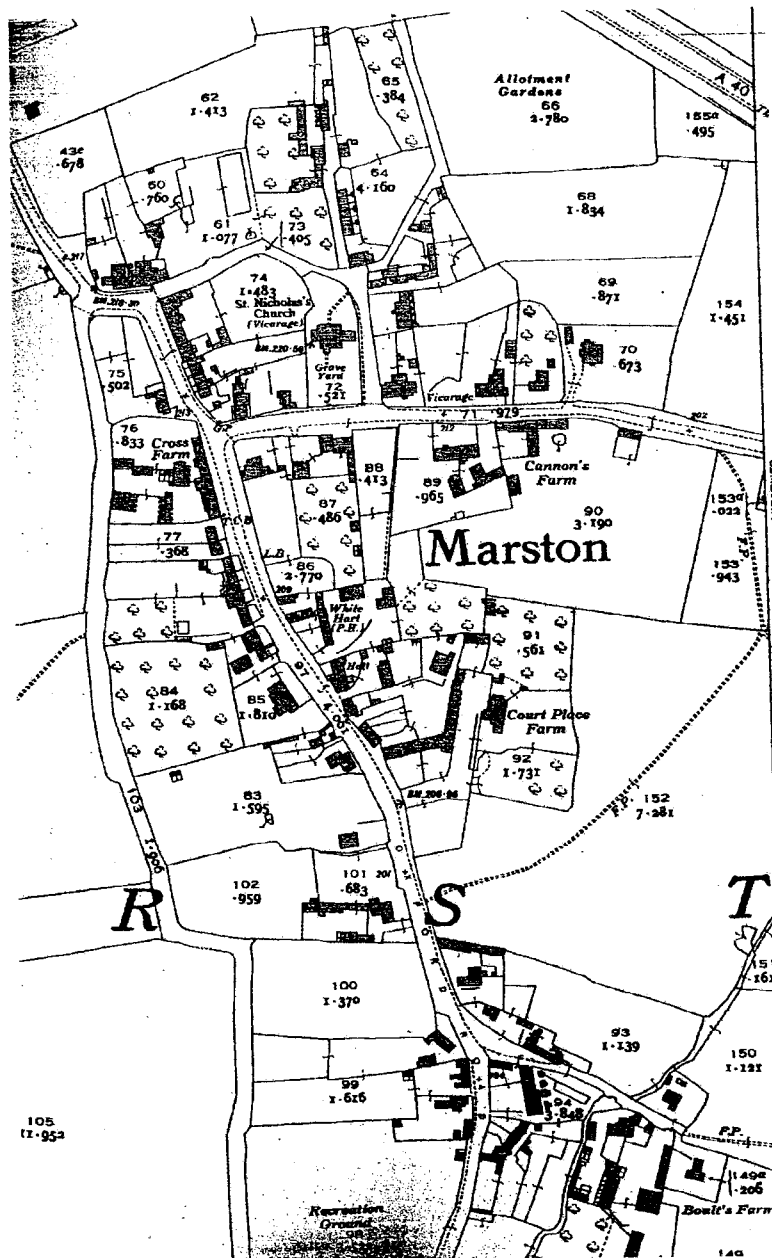


Figure 1: 1937 Ordnance Survey Map of Marston, showing likely extent of Saxon/Medieval settlement, running north-south between the northernmost church field boundary and the buildings to the northeast of field number 83, and east-west between the western side of Cross Farm and the eastern side of field 88

What is now the Three Horseshoes Public House stands well within the likely early settlement boundary, but the historical record does not suggest the existence of any important remains in the locality.

After the Norman Conquest, Marston became part of the manor of Headington, and never assumed its own administrative status (in spite of the fact it had its own church and parochial body). This means that there is very little other than a workaday history surrounding Marston itself, and this survives only in a very fragmentary state. It is 'community history', and as such has not warranted much in terms of preservation in the historical record. Hence, it is very difficult to

ascertain the exact origins of the building that is now the Three Horseshoes Public House. Much of the history of the village has been pieced together from disparate entries in records which are still now held outside municipal control, and which have been accessed to write the existing authoritative historical accounts, or else it has been constructed from tradition and memory gathered from local residents by local residents.

The main reason for the inaccessibility of archive material is due to the fact that the lands in Marston have traditionally been held by absentee landlords, with the only notable exception of the Croke family in the early to mid 17th century. Many parcels of land were held since medieval times by Oxford University, chiefly Brasenose College, and the close proximity of the settlement to the city walls of Oxford meant that any major landowners other than Oxford Colleges tended to live in the city itself or further afield, and so very few municipal archive deposits relate to Marston in terms of land holdings and transferrals.

Another reason is that the land in Marston seems to have been held by copyholders – chiefly yeoman farmers – and the village was at the centre of agricultural production and brewing (there were, and still are, three public houses in Marston itself, all in direct competition with one another). Many local farmers tended to be connected with the brewing industry, and so no direct ownership transactions can be easily traced. It is amongst this extremely vague and impersonal historical record that the history of The Three Horseshoes exists, largely lost in social memory, with the exception of the administrative records which were kept by the Courts.

The only real clues as to age and history of The Three Horseshoes can, therefore, be found in looking at the physical structure itself. Such observations, taken together with the scant information available to us about various buildings in the village which were in existence at the same time and just before The Three Horseshoes was built in its present form, give us the best picture of the function and purpose of the building.

It is common with historic buildings of varying ages that there is an often complex history of alteration, change of use, extension, reduction, rebuild and redesign that may have occurred over hundreds of years, and so one may see the relevance of unwinding their various structural phases and functions in order to ensure that this history is preserved for future generations to use and enjoy. This is not quite the case with The Three Horseshoes, which, although it has had a number of owners since it became a public house in the middle of the 18th century, does not appear to have changed a great deal at all until well into the 20th century. In fact, it outwardly appears to have undergone little obvious change since it was built in its present form.

4. History of Ownership

The Three Horseshoes has been a public house since at least the latter half of the 18th century. Prior to that time, the building appears to have been a forge. The next section will detail the reasons for supposing the existing structure to be built around an earlier one, single storey, and part of a complex including the adjacent former White Hart Inn, as there certainly seems to have been an earlier use and form of the building. This was most likely a forge, and the name 'Three Horseshoes' is a good indication for this.

The earliest date relating to the Three Horseshoes public house which can be found in the archive record is 1753. Figure 2, below, shows the traceable history of licensees:

Year To/From	Licensee
1753 - 1796	Thomas Smith
1798 - 1801	No Record
1802 - 1822	Robert Andrews
<i>No records between 1822 and 1856, but at some time the licence was granted to William Steel</i>	
1856 - 1863	Hannah Steel (Widow of William Steel)
1863	George Judge
1864	John Collingridge
1871	Sarah Collingridge (widow of John Collingridge)
1876	Thomas Collingridge (son of Sarah and John)
<i>No records between 1876 and 1889, but the licence seem to have passed between mother Sarah Collingridge and son, Thomas</i>	
1883	Sarah Collingridge
1887	John Roberts (also the bootmaker of the village)
1891 - 1911	Richard Gurden
1913 - 1921	William Matthews
1921 - 1928	George Richards
<i>No further records available except one for 1939, when the licence was Harry Willis</i>	

Figure 2 - Table of Owners/Landlords of The Three Horseshoes

An exhaustive search of the Licensed Victuallers Returns made to the Quarter Sessions and the minute books of the Petty Sessions show that the Three Horseshoes was consistently used as a public house from at least 1753, it never had its licence revoked, and that on the whole its landlords were law-abiding and free of trouble on their premises. Nothing remarkable appears to have ever happened there.

No law breaking is reported except perhaps that Sarah Collingridge, landlady of the public house in 1871, was allowed to keep her licence with a caution, which was probably for opening up to customers during Divine Service. This was something that more frequently occurred at the adjacent White Hart Inn, and seems to be the only thing which landlords in Marston did to break the rules - at least, the only thing they were found to be doing to break rules! The Sessions records show a fairly comprehensive list of crimes and misdemeanours, and the lack of entries concerning the public houses of Marston would indicate a dearth of alcohol related crime in the village - which possibly indicates that trade prospered within a peaceable community, and The Three Horseshoes was an example of a respectable village alehouse.

5. Map Evidence and Build History

A simple way to show the development of a building over time, and its association with other buildings nearby is to examine historic map evidence. There are four old Ordnance Survey maps available for Old Marston, excerpts of which are shown in Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 below, and it is clear from these that there has been no major external structural development of either the main building or its outhouse since at least 1876. Indeed, an inspection of the site shows that the whole complex is, in its present form (with the exception of the extended part to the east end of the main pub building), a single unit, and likely has been so ever since the pub was first licensed prior to 1753.

What the 1876 map also shows us is that the pub complex is in the same plot of land as the White Hart Inn (the long rectangular building lined north-south at right angles to the east of The Three Horseshoes).

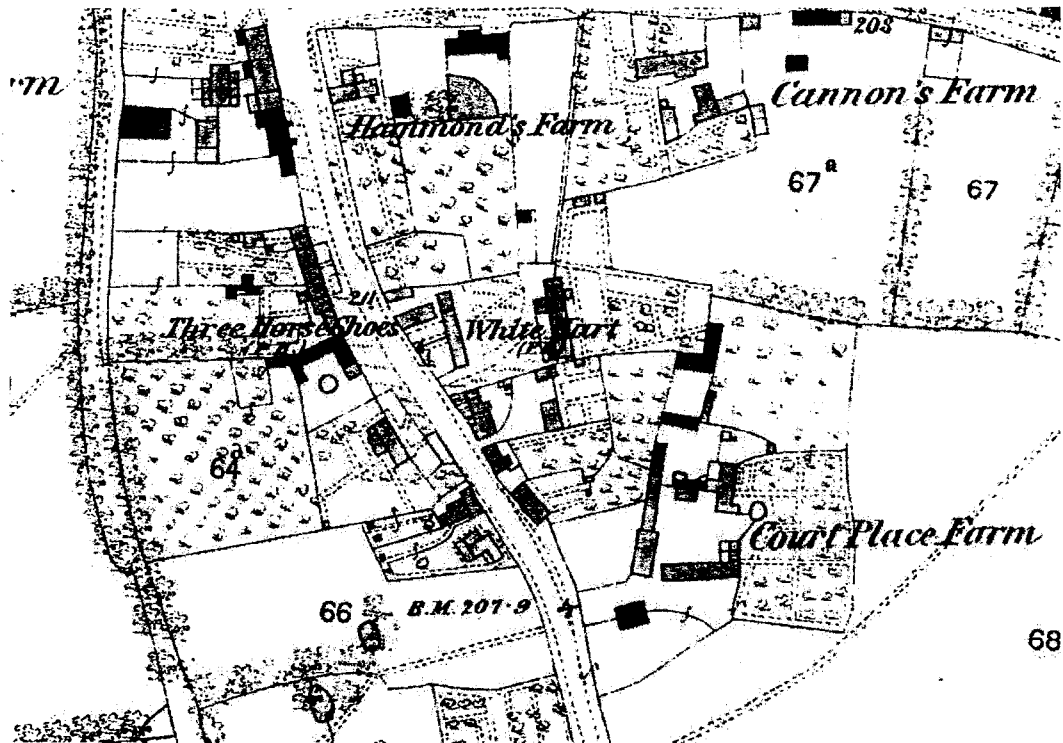


Figure 3 - taken from Ordnance Survey map 1876

This leads to the possibility that The Three Horseshoes, a forge before it was a pub, was associated in some way with the White Hart as, prior to it becoming a pub, that was a private house dating back to at least the 17th century. Indeed, there may have been a small farm existing there, which would explain the layout of the buildings. Further evidence for this is examined below.

The 1899 OS map (Fig 4, over) again clearly shows that this group of buildings are all part of the same plot, and there is a very small addition to the east side of the outhouse, but this is of negligible interest.

Three Horseshoes Public House, Old Marston

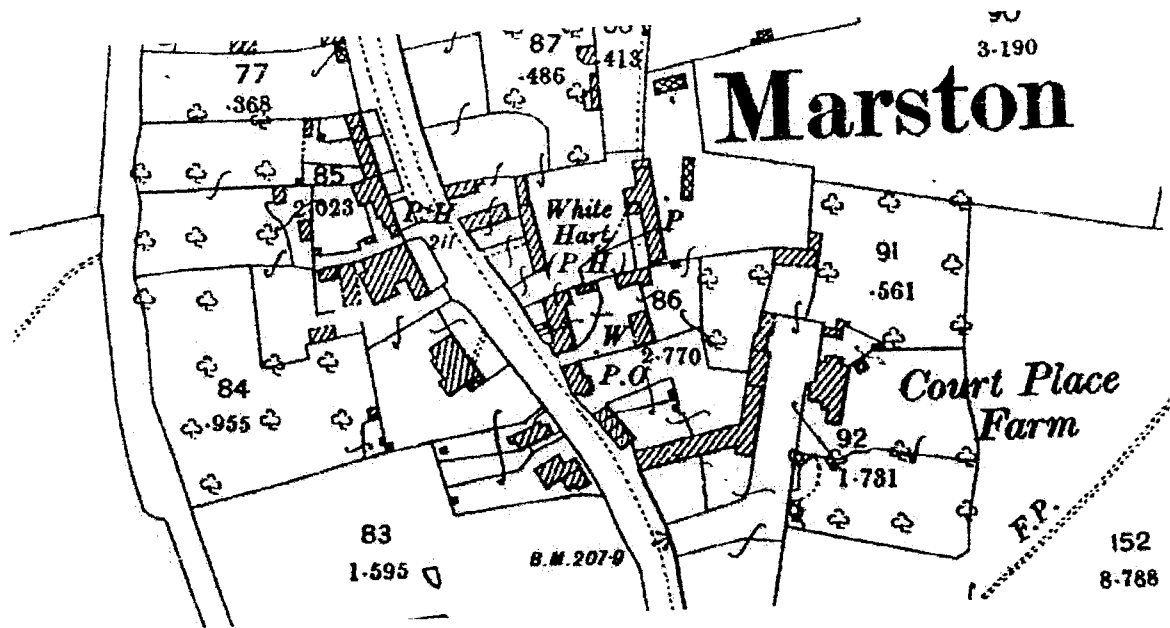


Figure 4 - Taken from the Ordnance Survey Map 1899

There is also an interesting plot of land just to the north of the outbuilding, which may have been included. Figure 11, below, is a photograph of the north west corner of the outbuilding, showing the remains of an abutting structure on its north elevation.

What this structure was is unclear to us now, since all visual remains of it have been lost except some vague traces in the masonry, and no evidence is available in the documentary archive. We do not know what form it took, nor when it was built, except that it was clearly earlier than 1876 since it does not appear on any map. We can, however, say that it was once part of a much more integrated set of buildings of which the Three Horseshoes played a key role, albeit in its earlier guise.

By 1921, as we can see from Figure 5 below, there is still no major external structural difference to the main pub complex of the Three Horseshoes. By 1937, as shown in Figure 6, the situation is still the same.

It would seem that the building, therefore, has not undergone any real external change since it became a pub.

Three Horseshoes Public House, Old Marston

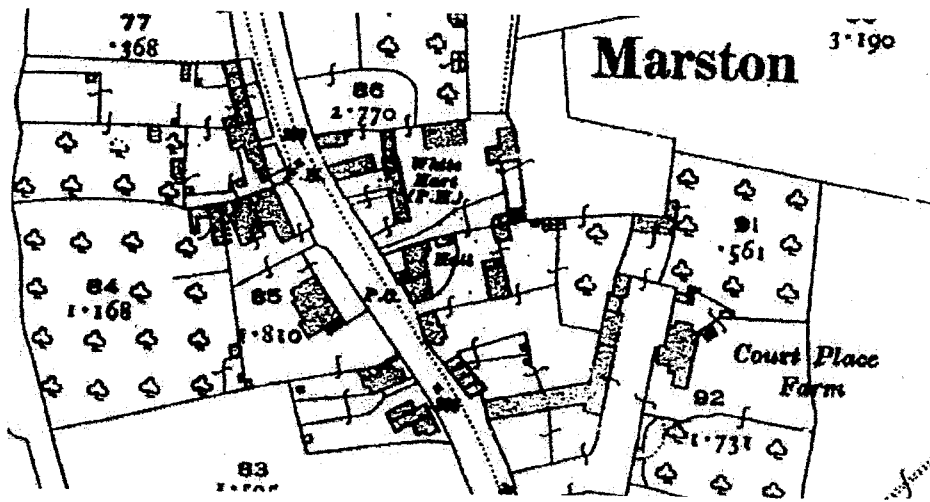


Figure 5 - Taken from Ordnance Survey Map 1921

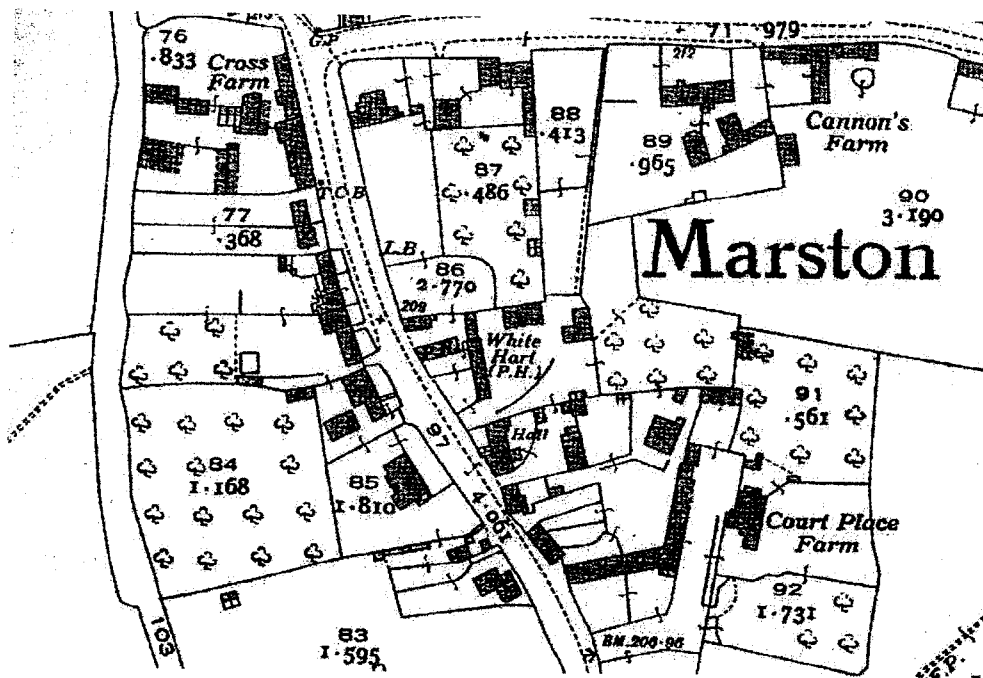


Figure 6 - Taken from Ordnance Survey map 1937

The modern extension to the eastern end of the main pub building, shown in Figure 7 below, provides a false impression of enclosure with regard to the pub yard. In reality, there would have been a way round the eastern end of what is now the Three Horseshoes, leading to the White Hart.

When the access ways to each of these buildings were changed is impossible to determine without some kind of visual documentary evidence, but if the theory of the two separate pubs originally forming a larger whole with domestic and industrial buildings (of which there was almost certainly one that was a forge), then it is likely that the access to what became the White Hart may originally have been through what is now the yard of the Three Horseshoes.

The path to the main door of the White Hart as shown on each of the maps may well have been constructed when the original house became a pub. The present access arrangements do not make sense if the buildings were always independent of each other.



Figure 7 - Looking East towards the yard - note the modern extension to the rear of the yard, blocking what was possibly the original means of accessing the dwelling which became the White Hart. The slope leading up to the yard surface, which is characteristic of drainage facility, is an indication that there would have been a need to sluice the yard and prevent slipping, something which would have been essential where horses were being led to and from on a regular basis.

Figure 8, below, illustrates the likelihood that the Three Horseshoes was originally a single-storey building. Since the upper half of the external masonry has been rendered, it is difficult to ascertain whether it is of different construction to the ground floor.



Figure 8 - Diagonal view of south elevation/west end wall, showing slope angle of likely earlier building

The upper storey looks too regular in comparison with the ground floor, and the windows appear to be much later.

This is again shown in Figure 9:



Figure 9 – View of south elevation, showing 'irregular' join between ground and first floor storeys

This would support the idea that the building may originally have been a forge, prior to its inception as a pub in the middle of the eighteenth century.

It is possible that the present building is constructed around, and thus incorporating part of, an earlier one (including re-use of materials where necessary), but since the external finish gives little clue, and it has not been possible to inspect the inside, this is inconclusive.

Taken together with the layout of the buildings, the fact that they are listed as a group, and map evidence, however, it seems quite possible.

As to its present appearance, the Three Horseshoes is really quite incongruous in its setting whilst it is a public house. All previous associations with other buildings have been lost, and were it not for the signage the frontage would appear to give the impression of two or three houses in a small terrace. This is illustrated in Figure 10, and again we can see the irregularity between the upper and lower storeys, although due to the added presence of doorways, this is not as clear as in the rear elevation shown above.

It would be quite reasonable to suggest that nothing would be lost from converting the building to three separate units, since that is what it appears to be at a glance.

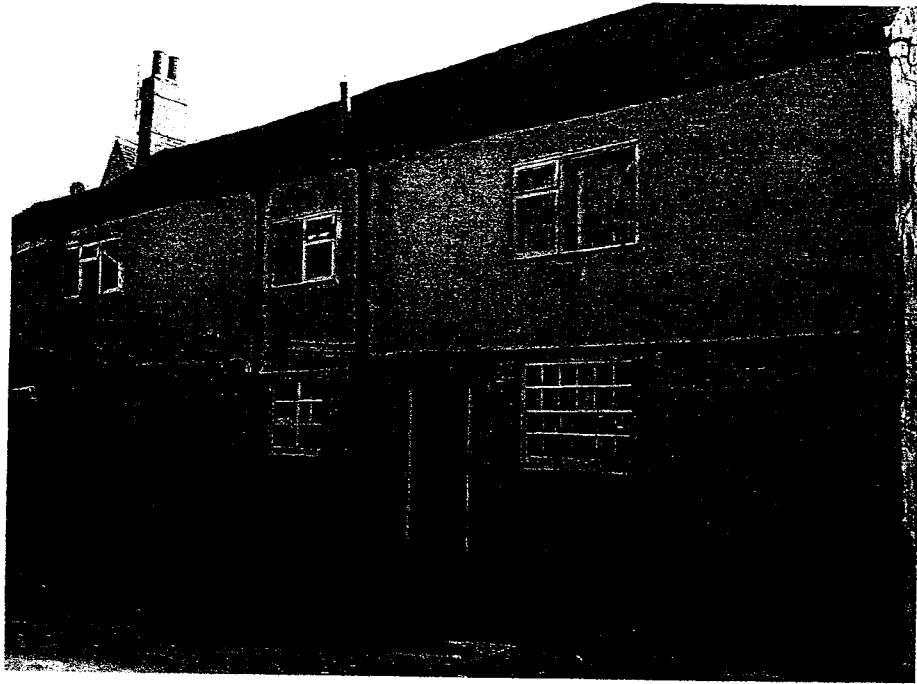


Figure 10 – Diagonal view of north elevation

The presence of earlier buildings surrounding the outhouses discussed above is shown here in Figure 11, below.



Figure 11 – Corner of north and west elevations of outbuilding

The brick remnants are visible in the north elevation, and the surface of that wall is by no means properly faced, indicating that there was once something butting up against it. The wall running northwards at right-angles away from the outbuilding is of a later date.

6. Conclusions

The Three Horseshoes has a clear place in the history of Marston. Many licensees have resided and worked there, and prior to its guise as a pub, the building may well have had at least one prior function, as a forge serving the village. All but a very few traces of its earlier history have now vanished, leaving only clues behind; in layout and dimension. Listed Building status has been granted, but only because the building has a place within its surrounding group that is of historical value. The adjacent house, formerly the White Hart Inn, has been decommissioned as a pub, and hence the function of the group of buildings has now been consigned to history.

Life cycles of buildings are just that – change is to be expected and welcomed. There is no historically significant reason why the Three Horseshoes should not be developed in the way that has been proposed; in fact the building itself would seem to lend itself ideally to that purpose without detracting from its value as a historic building.

What should, however, be observed in changing the use of the building is the relevance of its former history. The preservation of the outward appearance of the building is essential to this. The outbuilding would be best incorporated into the new design for three residential units, and the fact that there has been a forge and a pub on the site reflected, perhaps, by leaving some remains of the pub sign and suggesting the history of the building in its name – “Horseshoe Cottages” or something similar would help to preserve this history, in the same way that placenames suggest history of a locality.

In spite of its clear place in history, it should be noted that the history of the Three Horseshoes pub is not sufficient to restrict or prevent it having a new identity and phase in the history of the village.

8. References

1. Victoria County History 1957 “A History of Oxfordshire” Vol 5, Oxford University Press
2. Honey, D “An Encyclopaedia of Oxford Pubs, Inns and Taverns” – Oakwood Press
3. Quarter Sessions Deposits Vols 1 to 4
4. Petty Sessions Minute Books Vols 1 to 9