

H J Holden and the village tailors

Henry John Holden was one of the most influential men in Victorian North Marston. His tailoring company was a major local employer and was the reason many tailoring families moved into the village: some are still here to this day. This picture shows one of the tailors, “Joe” Holden, at work on his tailoring bench.



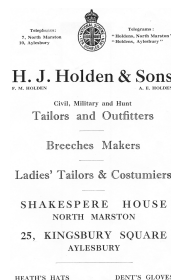
Born in 1837, the year of Queen Victoria’s coronation, Holden was the classic Victorian model of a self-made man who, by virtue of hard work and dedication, raised himself from a humble start to become a wealthy and influential pillar of society. He built Shakespeare House in the centre of the village as both his family home and the centre of his business. This picture shows him sitting outside Shakespeare House on the occasion of the wedding of his daughter, Fanny, in 1902.

His wife was Matilda Buckingham, the daughter of a local butcher. She bore him thirteen children. When Matilda died Holden commissioned a beautiful stained glass window in the church in her memory.



After a near-death experience, Holden became much involved with the church, both as a warden for forty years and a very successful fund-raiser. When he died in 1926 his family commissioned a memorial window in the church.

Apart from general tailoring, Holden specialised in hunting wear. His customers, from all over the country, included the Rothschilds and members of the Royal Family. He had a shop in Aylesbury as well as in North Marston at Shakespeare House.



The Holden family name lives on in the village, but probably his most lasting memorial is Shakespeare House, testimony to his importance and influence. To this day you can see the initials of his family etched into the brickwork.