

# **NORTH MARSTON HERITAGE TRAIL**

# **MAP BOOK**

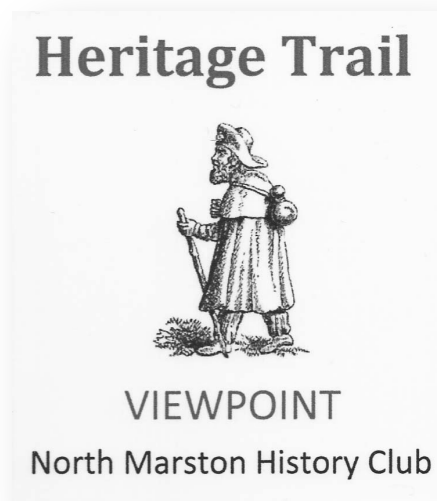
*A short walk around the village  
showing points of special interest*

North Marston History Club

# North Marston Heritage Trail

## *Introduction*

This is a short journey into North Marston's past. In the centre of this booklet is a map of the village. At key locations on the map are green symbols marked **W1** or **W2**; these are way markers that you'll find attached to telegraph poles, walls or railings (a way marker is shown in the picture below). They indicate a place of particular importance and for each viewpoint you'll find the relevant information in the notes and pictures in this booklet.



Using the map, walk to each way marker and then look at the notes; these will explain the history of that location.

Start at **W1**: you'll find it on the railings at the front of the *village hall*.

**W1** (the way marker is on the railings in front of the village hall)

Stand with your back to the village hall looking up the *High Street*, a scene that hasn't changed much in over 100 years. In the distance you'll see a large brick building facing you; this was once *Henry J Holden's* the tailors and we'll be heading to see that later.



*HJ Holden's at the top of the High Street in the early 1900s*

But first, look to your right and you'll see a sign for *Wheatsheaf Farm*. This old building was once the *Wheatsheaf Inn*, one of four pubs in the village. They are all marked on the map and we'll point them out as we get to them.



*The Wheatsheaf Inn*

Now look a bit further up the street on your right hand side. The brick cottage with the slate roof is called *Garfield House* and for many years it was the village *Police House*. Before the creation of the Thames Valley Police, the Buckinghamshire Constabulary placed constables across the

county and some villages had their own policeman. They were swapped between the villages every few years to stop them “going native”.



*Garfield House with a policeman standing at the gate*

*The small sign over the front door informed people it was a police house and the large notice-board to the left of the downstairs window carried official police notices  
(Note this picture was taken before the village hall was built)*

Now look behind you at the *village hall*. This is a memorial hall built in 1924 with money raised by public subscription. It cost £1,390 and commemorates the 22 young men of the village who died in the Great War of 1914-18. The hall was officially opened by *Lord Cottesloe* and has been the hub of village social activity for generations.



*An early picture of the newly-built Memorial Hall  
(Note the railings were not an original feature)*





*The chestnut tree being planted outside the Memorial Hall gates  
Look how big it is now!*

Now follow the map to **W2**; you'll find it on the post of the pub-sign outside *The Pilgrim* at the top of the *High Street*.

**W2** (the way marker is on the post of “The Pilgrim” pub sign)

In front of you is an impressive brick building with large wooden doors leading into a courtyard; it is called *Shakespeare House*. This was built in 1882 by *Henry John Holden* and was his family home, workshop and draper's shop from where he operated a successful tailoring business, drawing numerous tailors and their families to the village to work for him.



*Holden's tailoring premises*

The previous picture was taken in about 1900. There are three people standing in front of the courtyard gate and you can see the awning of the draper's shop on the right hand side, facing the road. *Holden's* was a very important part of the village economy for decades. A game that was once played by men leaving the pub was to flick pennies to see if they could get coins to rest on top of the decorated frieze that circles the building.

Now turn to your left and look at *The Pilgrim* pub. This was called *The Bell Inn* until 2010 and is probably the first of the four former pubs in the village; it is now the last. It is twice the size it once was: the door on the right hand side once led into a shoe-makers shop, and the shoe-maker and his wife, *James and Jane Garner*, ran both businesses. *The Garner* family lived at *The Bell* from 1883 to 1935, with *Jane* running it single-handed after *James* died in 1916.



*This picture from about 1900 shows the Bell Inn on the left and Garner's shoe-maker's (with a sign over the door) on the right  
The façade of the pub has changed little*

Now turn round and look across the *High Street*. Opposite stands *Manor Farm*, a brick building with three dormer windows. As its name implies, this was once the location of a large and ancient manor house that was demolished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The current farmhouse is probably built on its foundations. Its other claim to fame is this is the alleged source of the great fire of August 1705 that destroyed twenty-five houses. Charitable donations were collected from neighbouring towns and villages to help those left homeless. Some houses and cottages in the village still bear the evidence of the fire and a subsequent re-build as we shall see later.

Now walk along the narrow roadway to the left of *Shakespeare House*. The next way marker, **W3**, is on the wall of *Shakespeare House* towards the far end.

**W3** (on the wall of Shakespeare House facing on to the narrow roadway)

**W3** is where you can see three things that are linked to the enterprise and initiative of local individuals.

Firstly, look directly above the way marker at the brickwork below the frieze. If you look closely, you'll see that neatly etched into the brickwork are the initials of *Henry Holden*, his wife *Matilda* and nine children, as they were when *Shakespeare House* was built in 1882. (In fact, the *Holdens* went on to have thirteen children in all). In addition to being a major village employer, *Holden* was also churchwarden for forty years and an exemplary fund-raiser on behalf of the church. He was a good example of something the Victorians held in great regard: a self-made man. *Holden* was a businessman who became wealthy through hard work and prudence, despite having left school at only ten years of age.



*Two of the Holden family's initials in the brickwork*

Now turn and look at the gable of the building immediately opposite. Can you see the initials *AJF* painted at the top? These initials stand for *A J Franklin* who opened a shop here that was to become the most successful grocery shop in the village, trading until the late 1970s.

*Franklin* was an innovative shopkeeper; his shop had a walk-in fridge for fresh meat, years before they became common and it was also one of the first shops to provide van deliveries to neighbouring villages. In addition to being a successful shop, *Franklins Stores* was a social hub where people would gather and “put the world to rights”. The following picture shows just such a gathering.



*Men pose on the doorstep of Franklin's shop  
The man in shirt-sleeves sitting at the back on the right is Albert Franklin himself*

Our third example of personal enterprise and initiative is the village's first *post office and telegraph office*. You can see this a few doors to the left of *Franklin's* in the middle of the row of three small cottages (number 35). The first *post-office and telegraph office* was opened here by *Reuben Cheshire* in 1881 and must have been a boon to local businesses like *Holden's* as well as to the village in general. The telegraph was the Victorian equivalent to the internet, connecting North Marston to the rest of the world. In addition to being the village post-master, *Reuben Cheshire* was also the parish clerk and Sunday School Superintendent. When he retired, *Reuben* was succeeded by his son, *Alfred*, as the village post master.



*A young Alfred Cheshire in the doorway of the village's first post office  
(Note the signage over the window and doorway)*

We are now going to walk up *School Hill* to our next viewpoint. Follow the narrow roadway a few yards beyond the former *Franklin's Stores* and you'll come to *School Hill* on your left. **W4** is at the top of *School Hill* on a telegraph pole at the top on the right hand side. As you walk up the hill note the line of picturesque cottages, all rebuilt after the great fire of 1705 that swept up the hill, fanned by a strong wind. Wooden framed thatched cottages would have caught fire very easily so the buildings that replaced them were mainly built of brick and stone with slate or tiled roofs.

#### **W4 (on the telegraph pole at the top of School Hill)**

**W4** is a good viewpoint to see two of the village's most important institutions: the parish church and the school. But first, look at the little white cottage at the top of *School Hill* (number eleven). Note the date painted on its frontage. It was probably one of the houses rebuilt immediately after the great fire.

Next to the cottage stands *the village school*. The building you see today was completed in 1968 to replace a much older building that stood on what is now the playground (to the left of the present building). The school can trace its history back to the National School which was built in 1835 but this was substantially renovated in the 1890s. However, the conditions remained fairly primitive: the school did not get mains water until 1945!



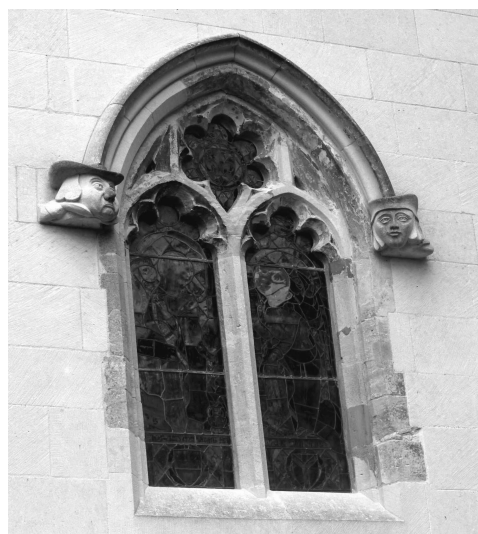
*The old school building just before being demolished in 1968  
The current school playground is where it once stood*

Turning back to the way marker, walk along the side of the hedge towards the church until you arrive at the gate to the churchyard. Stop here and look into the churchyard to your left. Can you see the sunken area of churchyard behind the line of trees and bushes? This is the site of *Schorne College*, a private school built by the vicar, *Dr Samuel James*. It operated from 1876 to 1910 and was an all-boys school exclusively for the sons of clergymen or senior military officers. In its heyday the school would have brought income and employment to the village and so was grudgingly tolerated even though it had been built on land purchased to extend the churchyard and was sited close to the church.



*Schorne College (note the gravestones in the foreground)*

Now look at *the church*. This building was greatly enhanced in the 15<sup>th</sup> century using money gifted by pilgrims visiting the shrine of *John Schorne*, a rector who died in 1314 and who was believed to have discovered a spring of water that had miraculous healing powers. We'll be seeing his *Holy Well* shortly. North Marston became a major pilgrimage centre and was even visited twice by *Henry VIII*. The church was further enhanced in the 1850s by *Queen Victoria* following a huge bequest to her from a local landlord and miser, *John Camden Neild*. If you look closely at the window on the tower you can see on either side a stone carving of a head. The scowling face on the left is the miser *Camden Neild* and the calm, pious face on the right is *John Schorne*.



*Neild on the left, Schorne on the right*

Feel free to enter the church and have a good look at the beautiful stonework, both inside and out. At the height of the pilgrimages, the church's income rose to the equivalent of £2.6m a year by today's values.

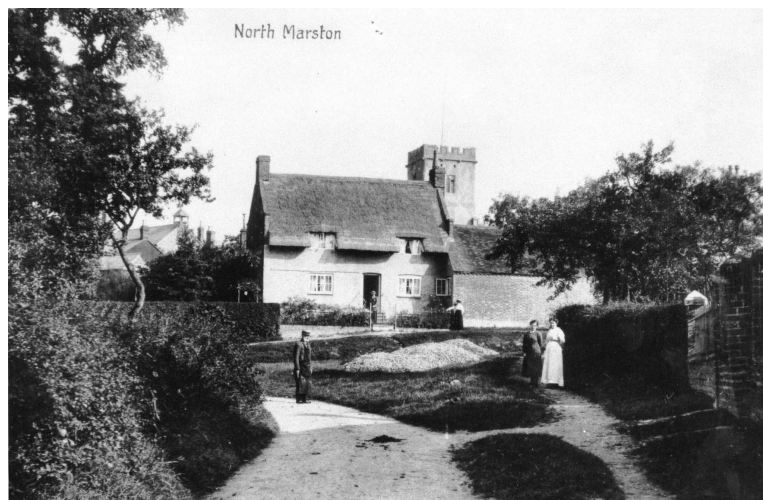
Returning to the churchyard gate, walk along the footpath that runs parallel to the churchyard and emerges at the top of *Church Street*. Opposite, on your left stands *Glebe Farm*, for centuries owned by the church. To your immediate right is a house called *The Matronage*. This was originally called *Vine Cottage* and was bought by *Dr James* in 1882 to provide care for the sick or very young boarders at *Schorne College*. The census of 1891 tells us that there were 12 Schorne College boys boarding at *The Matronage*.

Now walk down *Church Street* until you reach a School traffic sign on the grass verge immediately outside a building on the right hand side called *Yeoman Cottage*. (**W5** is attached to the back of the School sign).

<p><b>W5</b> (on the back of the School traffic sign in Church Street)</p>
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**W5** is a viewpoint for some of the village's oldest buildings.

You are standing next to *Yeoman Cottage* which for many years was one of the four village pubs. In those days it was called *The Arm'd Yeoman* and it ceased trading in 1911 after at least a century, possibly much longer; the cottage was built in the early 1600s.



*A view of The Arm'd Yeoman taken from Schorne Lane, opposite*



Now look across the road to the left of *Schorne Lane*. The cottage set back with a long garden frontage is *Abbotts Cottage*, another one of the oldest buildings in the village. It is possible it is built on foundations that would have been here when pilgrims visited the village in the 1400s, and indeed may have been one of the hostelries that would undoubtedly have been here to provide shelter and refreshment. It stands on the route linking *Schorne's Holy Well* and the church that held his shrine which means that hundreds of pilgrims will have passed its doors over the centuries.



*Abbotts Cottage (left) when it was two dwellings, one thatched and the other tiled*

Now look across to the other side of *Schorne Lane* where there is a long timber-framed building called *Burnaby House*. This, too, is an old building and was affected by the great fire of 1705 as accounts of the time detailed the damage and this included “house, barn, stables and outhouses...of Mr Burnaby.” It is likely the fire stopped at *Burnaby House* due to the gap created by *Schorne Lane* which meant it couldn't reach *Abbotts Cottage* and the other buildings further up *Church Street* on that side.



*Burnaby House when it was a working farm-house*

Immediately to the right of *Burnaby House* from where you are standing is *Cromwell Cottage*. This is clearly another very old building but close examination reveals a mismatch between the bottom half and the top half. It is believed that during the fire of 1705, *Pilgrim's Cottage* lost all of its upper floor which was re-built, but not to the exact line of the structure below.



*A picture of Pilgrim's Cottage taken in the late 1970s showing how the first floor is out of alignment with the ground floor*

*Pilgrim's Cottage* is another of the old buildings with foundations centuries old and like *Abbotts Cottage* might once have provided shelter and refreshment to pilgrims in the 1400s and early 1500s.

Now cross the road and walk down *Schorne Lane* to the *Wesleyan Methodist Church*. You'll find **W6** on the railings on the road side.

## W6 (on the railings next to the Wesleyan Methodist Church)

**W6** is a viewpoint for two places of spiritual significance.

The first is the *Wesleyan Methodist Church*, built on the site of an old malting house used as the first Methodist Church in the 1820s, Methodism having arrived in the village in the early years of the 1800s. The present church building was opened in 1864 and soon attracted large congregations along with the Primitive Methodist Chapel in *Quainton Road* (which we'll see later). By the 1850s, the combined attendance at the two Methodist churches trebled that of attendances at the parish church. Methodism was to have a major impact on the spiritual, social and educational well-being of village residents for over 150 years. The Wesleyan Methodist Church held its last service in 2004 since when there has been a close partnership between the Methodists and Anglicans in the village and all worship at *St Mary's church*.



*Sunday School members pose outside the front door of the Wesleyan Church in the early 1900s*

The second place of spiritual significance, and one that pre-dates Methodism by centuries, is the restored *Holy Well* on the site of the spring discovered by John Schorne. If you look down *Schorne Lane* (which used to be called *Holy Well Lane*) you can see it at the apex of a road leading down to a farm. The miraculous cures associated with this water drew hundreds of pilgrims to the village between the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century and the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. For many years this was also the prime source of water for the village and was an open cistern with steps

leading down to the water. This proved dangerous and, after a drowning in 1861, the covered well was locked and a hand-pump installed next to it. When mains water arrived in the village in the 1930s the well and its pump were no longer needed and it fell into disrepair. Since then, it has been renovated a number of times, the last renovation being in 2005. Visit the well and see if you can make the devil appear out of the boot!



*Two young ladies pump water from the well in 1923*

We are now going to **W7**. Go back to *Church Street* and then turn left, down towards the main road. Turn right and look for a telegraph pole on the right hand corner. **W7** is on the pole and marks the viewpoint for former commercial sites in the village.

**W7** (on the telegraph pole close to the junction of Church Street and the High Street)

Whilst **W6** offered a glimpse of sites of spiritual significance in days gone by, **W7** takes us to the former commercial centre of the village.

At one time, fairly close to where this telegraph pole stands, was the site of the *village forge* where successive blacksmiths plied their trade, the last of whom was *Henry White*.



*Henry White standing outside the forge*

Meanwhile, and almost directly opposite, was *Holden's Garage*. This was run by *Malcolm Holden*, grandson of *H J Holden* the tailor. It was a petrol station as well as motor and cycle engineers. It sold radio sets, batteries, bicycles and paraffin. *Malcolm Holden* also ran a taxi service



*Holden's Garage in the 1930s with a car parked outside: just beyond the car is a Shell petrol pump (The Forge can be seen on the opposite side of the road)*

Immediately next to the *Forge* stood *Baker's Stores* (you can see its window in the picture above). *Baker's Stores* was a grocery shop founded in 1897 by *James Baker* but for most of its years it was run by his two spinster daughters, *Emily and Ida*. It was a popular shop with children as it sold sweets and crisps. When it closed it became a residential house but, as you can see when looking at it nowadays, the shop frontage is largely preserved.



*Ida Baker stands at the gate of Baker's Stores,  
probably in the 1920s or 1930s*

The next commercial premises along this side of the road were those of *Holden's Tailors Shop*. We saw it in an earlier picture looking up the High Street where you could see its awning over the pavement. If you look closely at the side of *Shakespeare House* nowadays you can see where the doors and windows of the shop once were. This was a very popular shop attracting customers from far and wide.

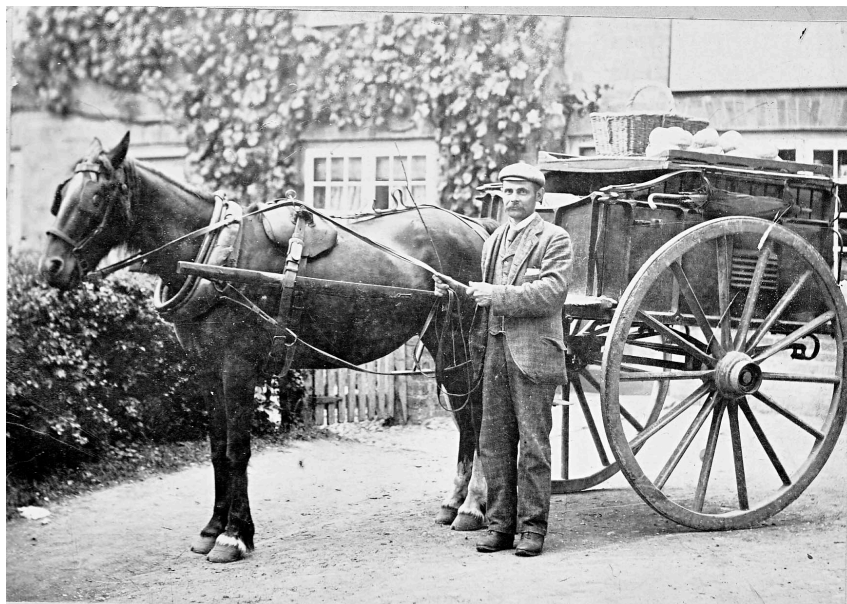


*Holden's Tailors shop on the High Street in the early 1900s*

It's now time to cross the High Street and walk back towards the village hall. You'll find **W8** on a brick gate-post outside a house on the left hand side called *The Old Bakery*.

**W8** (on the brick gate plinth outside The Old Bakery in the High Street, on the left hand side of the road walking towards the village hall.)

There are two key places of interest at **W8** and both concern the production of bread. As you might assume, a property called "*The Old Bakery*" is exactly what it says. In fact there were other bakeries in the village but this was by far the largest and busiest, distributing bread all around the village and beyond. At the back of the property, now demolished, were tall chimneys from the ovens and the smell of baking bread would fill the air from early morning. The last of the long line of bakers to run the business was *Tom Seaton*, a journeyman baker who bought the business in 1930 when his boss, *Henry Cheshire*, retired after being the village baker for 53 years. *Seaton's* bakery finally closed in the early 1950s by which time it was delivering bread to villages for miles around.



*Henry Cheshire's horse-drawn delivery round  
(Note the loaves of bread piled high in the cart)*



*After closure, the bake-house became derelict  
In this picture you can see at the back of the house the building for the ovens with its tall chimney*

One of the previous owners of the bakery was *James Watkins*. In 1888 his son, *Charles Watkins*, bought the windmill that once stood immediately opposite in the grounds of *The Mill House*. If you stand with your back to the *Old Bakery* and look across the road you can see *The Mill House*, a large detached Victorian building set back from the road. The windmill that stood in the grounds of *The Mill House* was a type of windmill called a smock mill and had been relocated from another site to the north of the village by 1832, over 50 years before *The Mill House* was built. In the 1850s the mill was converted from a smock mill to a tower mill, like the one in Quainton. The mill was finally demolished in 1892, bringing an end to a tradition that spanned hundreds of years. All that remains is part of the base of the windmill now used as a garden store in the back garden of *The Mill House*.



*The windmill at North Marston in the 1870s*



It's now time to walk to the next way marker, **W9**, which you'll find on a telegraph pole in *Quainton Road*. Walk towards the village hall and the road on the left of the village hall is *Quainton Road*. **W9** is a short walk down on the right hand side, opposite *Prune Cottage*.

**W9 (on the telegraph pole in Quainton Road opposite Prune Cottage)**

**W9** is a marker guiding you to four sites of historical importance, although only one can be seen clearly from where you are standing....*Prune Cottage*. Built as a wedding gift for his daughter by *Mark Ward* in 1890, and named after the fruit trees in the garden, *Prune Cottage* is better known by many of the older village residents as *Miss Cox's Shop*.

The *Quainton Road* area has always been the most populous part of the village, but people who lived in this part of the village were somewhat looked down upon and indeed in years gone by were known as "*down-towners*". *Quainton Road* was a residential road: *Miss Cox's* was set up in the front room of *Prune Cottage* and was open until the early 1960s. It sold biscuits, sugar, tinned goods, paraffin, sweets and cigarettes behind a large wooden counter. You can see where the shop window would have been on the right hand side.



*Cox's shop window on the right hand side at Prune Cottage*

To see our next places of historical interest you'll need to walk further down *Quainton Road*: they are marked on the map. The first of these is the *parish barn* or "*threshing barn*" built in 1888 and paid for by public

subscription. As you walk along *Quainton Road* it stands on the right hand side, almost opposite the entrance to *Shepperd's Close*. The builder was local man *John Price* who erected it at a cost of twenty six pounds. It was built so that farm labourers had somewhere to thresh their own harvest.



*The Threshing Barn or Parish Barn*

While *John Price* was building the *Parish Barn*, his brother *Mark* was preaching at our next place of interest, the *Primitive Methodist Church*. A private house since the late 1940s, the *Primitive Methodist Church*, for a century beforehand, had been a very popular place of worship. You'll find the building, now called *Chapel House*, down the *Quainton Road* on the left hand side beyond *Shepperd's Close*. After enlargement in 1872, the *Primitive Methodist Church* had a claimed capacity of three hundred. *Mark Price* was a strong, charismatic preacher and the *Primitive Methodist Church* was known as "*Mark's Chapel*".



*Members outside the Primitive Methodist Church*



*Mark Price*

The folk attending the *Primitive Methodist Church* are very unlikely to have been regular visitors to our next point of interest; the fourth of the village's ale-houses, *The Sportsman's Arms*. Never licensed as a public house *The Sportsman's Arms* only sold beer. If you walk further along the *Quainton Road* past the *Primitive Methodist Church* on the left hand side you'll see *The Sportsman's Arms* set back from the road at the end of a paved drive. It ceased trading in 1953.



*The Sportsman's Arms in the 1920s*

That's the end of our Heritage Tour and we hope you've enjoyed it. If you are interested to find out more please buy our village history book, ***The North Marston Story***, in the village shop. Thank you.



North Marston History Club