

The George Inn

The Square, Mere, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 6DR



Heritage Statement

Proposed Alterations to both external & internal ground floor trade area

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1.0 Historical Context – Mere Town Centre

1.1 Mere is a small town (formerly a market town) lying at the extreme south-western tip of Salisbury Plain within Wiltshire, but close to the borders of Somerset and Dorset. It has a long history, as there is archaeological evidence suggesting settled farming in the area from as early as the Neolithic era. Although Roman artefacts have also been found in the vicinity, it is not possible to say whether the early settlements were continuous. Mere itself may have Saxon origins, since the name comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for a marsh or boundary and the settlement lies at the junction of three Saxon shire counties. Since, at the time of the Domesday survey, Mere was a tax-exempt royal estate, it does not feature in the Domesday Book, except for a few small holdings belonging to individuals.

1.2 The town is still dominated by Castle Hill, upon which Richard, son of King John and Earl of Cornwall, built a fortified castle in 1253. It was constructed from Chilmark stone and roofed with lead. After it ceased to be needed, from the early 15th century, it slowly fell into disrepair and then ruin, much of its stone being brought down the hill to be re-used for many of the town buildings. No visible remains can be seen today. It is probable that Richard obtained market rights for his manor and began leasing land to merchants and craftsmen in order to encourage the growth of a small town. The presence of a fulling mill by the early 14th century is evidence of the beginnings of cloth production at Mere.

1.3 A cottage industry in spinning and weaving and woollen cloth making was well established by the 16th century. Also, the King's hunting forest in the area ceased to exist, which meant that the land it had occupied could finally be turned over to farming. The area escaped fighting during the Civil War, although the town sided with the Parliamentarians and those known to have Royalist sympathies were persecuted, including the vicar, Dr Thomas Chafyn, who was imprisoned in 1645 and so badly treated that he died from the effects of his injuries shortly after his release. There was a 'Great Fire' in Mere in 1670 – four years after the one in London – and some 54 houses (mostly medieval ones) were destroyed.

1.4 A certain Francis Potter, born at Mere Vicarage in 1594, later became Rector of Kilmanton (Dorset). John Britton's *The Beauties of Wiltshire* (1801, pages 311-312) informs us that he "signalized himself by many ingenious inventions, and mechanical contrivances", including "many curious hydraulic machines, which were approved of by the Royal Society". He was also one of the first to propose "the notion of curing diseases by the transfusion of blood from one man into another".

1.5 From the late 17th century, flax spinning and weaving became another branch of cottage industry in Mere and the surrounding villages, but the town became an important local centre for linen weaving in the 18th century, with a flourishing trade in the import and export of cloth based at one of the houses in the Market Place/Square. Some of this flax was used for making 'English dowlas' (coarse linen) and bed 'ticking'; one merchant of Mere, James Harding, even succeeded in trading with Germany, Portugal and the American colonies. There was also an interesting agricultural trade in the form of water-cress growing, the quick-flowing streams in the neighbourhood being well suited to the cultivation of a pungent variety for which there was a ready market in London. By 1870, though,

the centre of supply for this industry had shifted to Surrey and Sussex. The flax and linen industries declined slowly until the mid-19th century and were replaced to some extent by silk spinning and throwing (1830 onwards), which continued until 1891. There was nevertheless much hardship and poverty, which in turn led to habits of drunkenness and became the catalyst for a growing Temperance Movement in the town from 1834.

1.6 In 1855, the Post Office Directory for Wiltshire related that Mere parish comprised 7,355 acres and a population of 2,991 (1,156 in the town). Flax spinning and silk throwing were still practised and the town streets had been lit by gas. There was a Tuesday market and two annual fairs, on 17th May and 10th October. Silk throwing still occupied about 300 people twenty years later. The 1875 Directory also mentioned that the soil was a mixture of clay, chalk and flint over a chalk and gravel subsoil, with the chief crops grown being wheat, beans and oats.

1.7 During the second half of the century, however, the town became sharply divided into distinct factions of ‘church’ and ‘chapel’ (Anglican/Non-conformist), with great intolerance displayed on both sides and each organizing separate social and sporting activities. In 1859-60, a railway line was constructed between Yeovil, Gillingham and Salisbury, bypassing Mere and leading to the decline of another significant local industry – the coaching and hospitality trade. This, coupled with a depression in agriculture and other trades caused the population to fall from the high point of 3,161 that it had reached in 1871; there continued to be a slow decline until after the Second World War. Isaiah Jupe’s silk mills had to close down in 1894, giving rise to what was locally known as ‘Black Saturday’ (the day of the closure announcement) and causing many families to move away in search of work elsewhere.

1.8 Limited economic recovery resulted from the opening of George Burden’s nursery business in 1899 and a Royal Wilton carpet factory in 1906, which continued until the Second World War. During the War an army camp was established near Manor Farm; this remained in use until 1947. The one section of Mere Society that flourished in the later 18th century and thereafter was the middle class of shopkeepers: the town filled with shops of many kinds and became the commercial centre of the surrounding rural area.

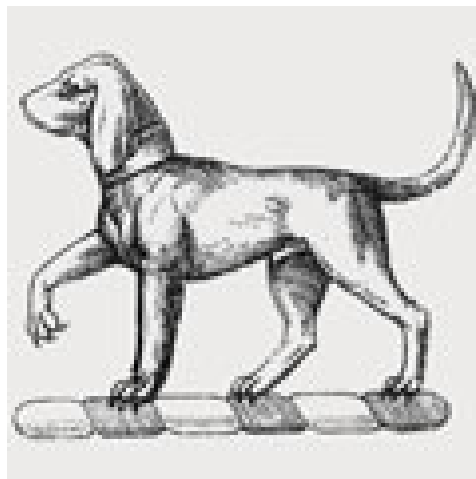
1.9 There was a post-war expansion in population and house-building and Mere began to prosper again with a wide range of businesses and small industries, including a now nationally significant wine importing business in 1973. Just as with the railway in 1859, however, in the 1970s the construction of the A303 bypass took passing trade away from Mere and half of the shops disappeared very soon afterwards. Only in recent years has Mere again begun to prosper, thanks largely to an influx of affluent early retirees, many of whom came from the Home Counties.



Views of Castle and Salisbury Streets, Mere (itravel.co.uk/beenthere-donethat.org)

2.0 The George Inn – Historical Context and Significance

2.1 The George Inn is believed to date back to *circa* 1580. It was built with an ‘L’ plan layout from limestone rubble, which was subsequently mostly rendered over. It retained its original name until 1867, after which it was renamed the ‘Talbot Hotel’ or ‘Talbot Commercial Inn’, the reference being to the black Talbot dog (an ancestor of modern foxhounds) that featured in the crest of the Grove family (depicted below), owners of the building in the 19th century.



2.2 Prior to the foundation of a Diocese of Salisbury in 1091, half of the revenue of the church at Mere had been granted by the Crown to the earlier Diocese of Ramsbury. Early in the twelfth century, King Henry I had granted the other half to Salisbury Cathedral, so in effect the entire revenue of Mere Church was vested in the Dean of Salisbury and this continued thereafter for close on eight centuries! The Dean became Rector of Mere Parish and received all of its ‘greater’ tithes – that is, a tenth of the income from corn, grain, hay and wood – as well as possession of a number of properties in the town that had previously been granted as endowments to the church. This compact estate actually constituted another Manor in Mere, smaller than the Manor of Mere which had been granted to the Earls (later Dukes) of Cornwall, but with the same powers in all other respects.

2.3 A 1649 survey of this ecclesiastical manor’s estate in 1649 included the parsonage, numerous cottages and 119 acres of land. One of these possessions was “a tenement, garden and little plot of ground called Shitbrooke, adjoining Deans Orchard, with half an acre in common fields, tenure Christopher Phillips, innholder, known as The George, valued at £20.”

2.4 The customs of the Manor included a restriction upon any stranger purchasing property, who could not do so without the consent of the Lord and all the other tenants. The enforcement of this, along with the general policing of the manorial estates, was the responsibility of a Manorial Court made up of all the copyholder tenants. They met in a building known as the ‘Cross House’ (old Market Hall), but when this subsequently became ruinous they switched to the George Inn.

2.5 In 1651, the George Inn gained its main and lasting claim to fame when King Charles II, fleeing in disguise after losing the final battle of the Civil War, dined there during his journey from

Trent to Hele House. He was meant to be disguised as Jane Lane's servant, William Jackson. He was also said to have left behind a cap, stocking and handkerchief which were later preserved at nearby Zeals House, the ancestral home of the Grove family. The following account is extracted from *Boscobel; Or, the Compleat History of the Most Miraculous Preservation of King Charles II After the Battle of Worcester* (4th Edition, 1725):

“ON the 3d of *October*, His Majesty (having given Colonel *Wyndham* particular Thanks for his great Care and Fidelity towards him) left *Trent*, and began his Journey with Colonel *Philips*, and personating a Tenant's Son of his, towards *Hele*, attended by *Henry Peters*, (afterwards Yeoman of the Field, to His Majesty,) and riding before Mrs. *Cunningsby*. The Travellers passed by *Wincanton*, and near the midst of that Day's Journey, arrived at *Mere*, a little Market Town in *Wiltshire*, and dined at the *George Inn*; the Hoast, Mr. *Christopher Philips*, whom the Colonel knew to be perfectly honest.

“THE Hoast sate at the Table with His Majesty, and administ[e]red Matters of Discourse, told the Colonel, for News, that he heard the Men of *Westminster*, (meaning the Rebels,) notwithstanding their Victory at *Worcester*, were in a great Maze, not knowing what was become of the King, but (says he) it is the most received Opinion that He is come in a Disguise to *London*, and many Houses have been searched for Him there; at which His Majesty was observed to smile.

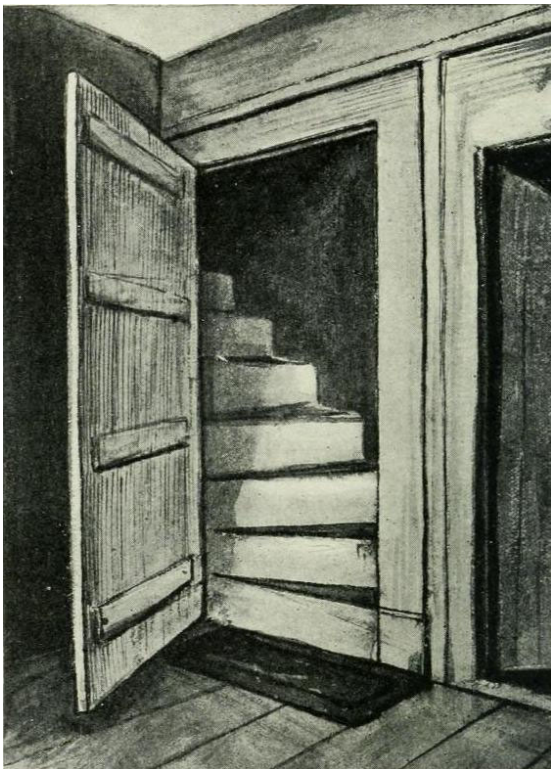
“AFTER Dinner mine Hoast familiarly asked the King, *if he were a Friend to Cæsar?* To which His Majesty answered, *Yes*; Then said he, *Here's a Health to King CHARLES*, in a Glass of Wine, which His Majesty and the Colonel both pledged; and that Evening arrived in safety at *Hele*. And His Majesty since His happy Return has been pleased to ask, *What was become of His honest Hoast at Mere?*” (pages 96-97)



Charles II escaping with Jane Lane, disguised as her servant William Jackson

2.6 A similar account was offered in later works, such as J. W. Clayton's *Personal Memoirs of Charles the Second* (Volume 1, 1859, page 316) and *Boscobel: A Narrative of the Adventures of Charles the Second after the Battle of Worcester* (2nd Edition, 1859), which adds that "At the George Inn at Mere nothing of old date remains but a stone staircase in the interior of the house, pointed out by the landlord as King Charles's stairs" (page 65).

2.7 Allan Fea's interesting books *The Flight of the King* (1897, 2nd Edition 1908, pages 136-139) and *After Worcester Fight* (1904, pages xxii and 138-139 plus plate) offer a few further details, as well as the interesting old images which are reproduced below. He tells us that the George Inn had been "a good deal modernised" since Charles's time, with the oldest surviving part facing the yard at the back. Little else was left that was contemporary with the story, except for a huge fireplace remaining in the bar parlour and the flight of stone steps leading to the first floor – "but why the stairs in particular should be associated with the 'merry monarch' we are at a loss to conjecture."



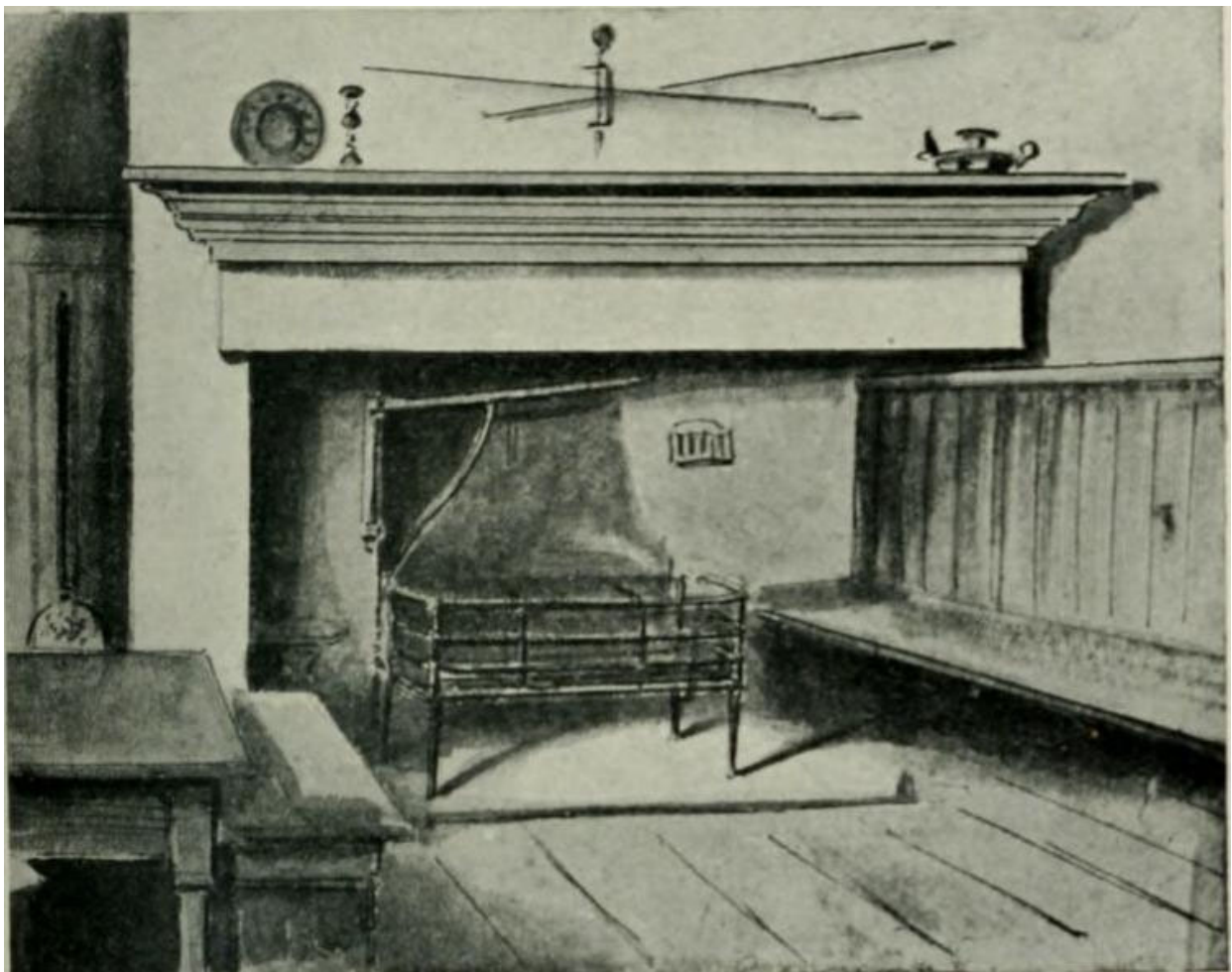
Illustrations from Allan Fea's books showing 'King Charles's Stairs' and the items allegedly left behind by King Charles II at the George Inn, Mere

2.8 Fea goes on to talk of how Colonel Philips was having a drink with the landlord in the inn's cellar, when the latter noticed the disguised king standing aloof from the others and invited him to drink to the King's health. When he observed some hesitation in his response, the landlord expostulated with the colonel as to what type of fellow he had brought with him! The sources cited by Fea are George Bate's *Elenchus Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia, (Part II, Tract 3)* (1658) and Sir

Richard Baker's *Chronicle of the Kings of England* (1670), but James Heath's *A Chronicle of the Late Intestine War* (2nd Edition, 1676) also gives a similar account:

“...The King in his way to *Salisbury*, came to a Town called *More* [Mere] to the *George* at one *Christ[opher] Philips*, an acquaintance onely of the Colonel's, where drinking in the Celler, the Host seeing the King stand off (as a Servant) said, Thou look'st like an honest Fellow, here's a health to the King; who unreadily answering it, made the man expostulate with the Colonel what Fellow he had brought...” (Part II, page 300)

2.9 Thus it is clear that we have two slightly differing accounts preserved – the second being a less relaxed version of events than the first – of what actually took place on that far off day at Mere! Thereafter it would appear that no other momentous events occurred at ‘the George’ and it settled down to a peaceful existence purely as a comfortable local hostelry.



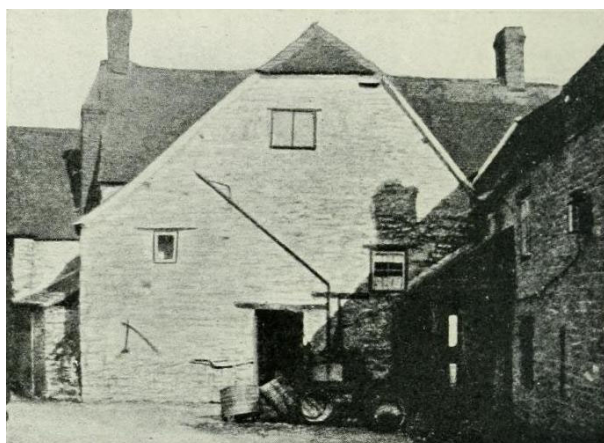
A fireplace in the bar-parlour at the George Inn from Allan Fea's 'The Flight of the King'

2.10 There is an order of King Charles II dated 29th December 1657, which made a grant to Colonel Robert Philips (or ‘Phelips’) of all the demesnes (houses and lands) of the Manor of Mere, together with the barton (farmyard), sheep pasture and parkland there for thirty-one years from Lady Day (25th March) 1658. *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine, Vol. XXIX, 1896-97* (page 244) stated the reasons for the gift:

“This is in consideration of his many faithful services done to our royal Father of blessed memory, and to ourselves against our Rebels of England, especially in his late concealing us, and helping us to escape out of their hands; and also in consideration of the continual unwearied endeavours of him, and also of his wife Agneta Phelips, to doe us service with the utmost hazard of their lives and fortunes...”

2.11 By the 18th century, the roads through Mere had become reasonably good, so – since the village lay along the main London to Exeter road – a daily coach and wagon service was established through it. The older inns, including the George, prospered as a result. An old house was rebuilt opposite the George Inn in 1711 to become the ‘Old Ship Inn’. Although the Wincanton Turnpike Trust had built a new turnpike road down Hazzards Hill and right into the centre of Mere in 1760, several of Mere’s inns seem to have been established well before that event, suggesting that some traffic had already been taking a diversion off the old rough trackway that ran across higher land on Mere Down.

2.12 Another survey of the Dean of Salisbury’s Manor at Mere in 1771 included many copyhold properties (held on a nominal rental basis for the lives of three named people and reverting to the Lord of the Manor upon the death of the last), but there were also a few let on more conventional tenancies. The most important of these was a prime property: “one house or tenement known by the name of the George Inn, with a brewhouse, stable and small garden, now [in] the tenure of W[illia]m Hallett, with a cottage next to it.” Again, like many other commercial properties, the inn had a two-acre paddock of ground attached to it, which lay on the other side of the Dean’s Orchard.

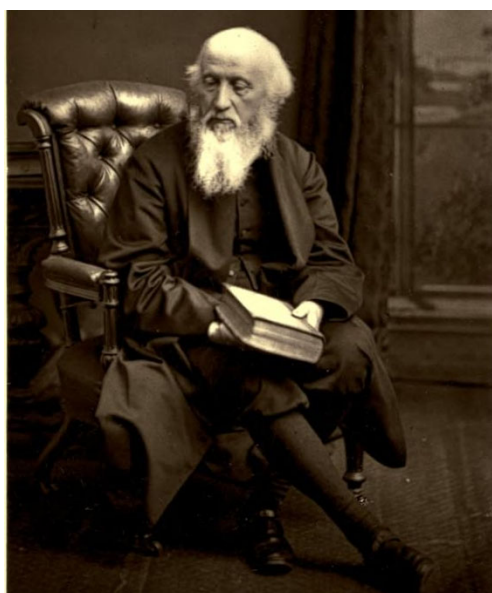


Comparison of the rear of the George Inn in the 1890s (Fea) and today

2.13 William Barnes was a linguist, philologist, antiquary and artist who ran two schools in Mere in the earlier part of his career, before being ordained as a Church of England minister in 1847. He was also a noted poet, who wrote over 800 poems in his lifetime, including some in the Dorset dialect. Another of his published works was an impressive and comprehensive English grammar, which quoted from more than seventy different languages! He left Dorchester in 1823 to set up a school in the Old Cross Loft, the first floor of the medieval market hall. He had a difficult start, being young and new to the area, but he was a very good teacher and by August that year had 24 pupils. Four years later, he was able to set up a boarding school in the Chantry House, which continued until 1835, when he left Mere to open a new school in Dorchester.

2.14 The following passage suggesting an association between William Barnes and the George Inn (here named ‘the Talbot Inn’) comes from Alan Chedzoy’s *William Barnes: A Life of the Dorset Poet*, published in 1985 (page 43):

“As spring came on, he was more able to take walks round the town. An April evening stroll would take him from the Market House, which stood in the Square, up to the Talbot Inn where, perhaps, a team of horses were bringing the London Mail to a clattering halt. The little town had only recently received a much-needed boost to its economy by being selected to serve as a staging post for the newly-developing coach service between London and Exeter. Social life in the town centred round its inns, two of which were of some antiquity. Barnes rarely visited the Ship Inn, for it would not have been considered proper for a young schoolmaster to be seen in a place noted for low company and cock-fighting. The Talbot, however, or the ‘Old George’ as it was sometimes called, might serve as a venue to meet a parent bringing his son into Mere for the first time. Besides, the antiquarian which was now stirring in Barnes liked to hear of the associations of that old inn with Charles II. Apparently, when the King was on the run and going about the country incognito, he had lunched at the Talbot. The landlord was a loyalist but a cautious man; he had enquired of his guest as to whether he was ‘a friend to Caesar’ and, on hearing that he was, had induced the still-disguised king to drink a health to himself.”



William Barnes, the Dorset poet (Wikimedia)

2.15 Throughout the 19th century the George/Talbot Inn was a centre for sales of property and timber and other goods by public auction. It is noteworthy that an advertisement for the sales by auction of bankrupt publican Harry Coleman's personal effects on 19th November 1807 and of a large dwelling-house in Mere's Market Place on 23rd February, 1808 (which appeared in the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* for 16th November and 15th February respectively) were to be held at the *Talbot Inn* in Mere, whereas by 1822 the 'George' name was coming back into use (which then held sway until 1867 or 1868).

2.16 A certain John Green, gardener, nurseryman and seedsman of Tisbury (near Hindon), regularly sold his 'Early Fulham' and 'Green's Early' cabbage plants at the George Inn on Mondays, from at least 1822 until at least 1858, placing regular advertisements for the same in the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*. He claimed that these were "far superior to any other sort in this country for quickness in growth" and they were "warranted not to run up to seed".

2.17 The inn's white rendered frontage, with plain tiled roof and window shutters on the ground floor, can be seen on a drawing of Mere Market Place dated *circa* 1850 (reproduced below); this appearance remained little changed until the 1920s, when the mock timber framing was added to the upper floor.



2.18 In 1861, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who had recently taken over the management of Church estates from the diocesan authorities, chose to dispose of the holding at Mere, agricultural land prices being high at that time. On 8th August, the Commissioners conveyed various properties in Mere that the Grove family had been leasing for more than 300 years to Eleanor Grove, wife of William Chafin (or Chafyn) Grove, for £11,235. As well as the Parsonage Farm and much of the rest of Church Street, the sale included the George Inn.

2.19 By 1867, Joseph Ball had become the new landlord of the George Inn and the following year the inn again began to be called the ‘Talbot Hotel’ or the ‘Talbot Commercial Inn’. This name then stuck until the original name was readopted in 2003.

2.20 By the mid-19th century, several coaches and quite a few private carriages passed through Mere on a daily basis and there were no less than five inns there that offered accommodation and transport; but then the Salisbury and Yeovil Railway Company built the new line between Salisbury and Gillingham that bypassed Mere. This resulted in a gradual decline of the coach trade that may have been responsible for the demolition of the ‘White Hart’ (also in the Market Place or Square) in 1862 and the conversion of the ‘Swan Inn’ (in existence by 1647) to a private dwelling a few years after.

2.21 The *Western Temperance Herald*, on 1st March 1870, reported thus:

“On walking down the hill, passing along the street and standing near the new clock-tower in the Market-place, the eye catches sight of the three inns, clustered near together, all of which have peculiar names. One is the ‘Ship’, altho’ 30 miles from sea; another is the ‘Talbot’, a kind of animal known only to the Heraldist; and the third is the ‘Angel’, but whether of light or darkness the sign-board informs us not. Noticing three or four newly-built houses, your commissioner was informed that they have been lately erected on the site of two other inns, which had been purchased and then pulled down.”

2.22 Since, apparently, Mere at that time had the reputation of being “a very drinking place” and since this was a Temperance Movement magazine, the writer added “This seems a sensible way of getting rid of such nuisances...”!

2.23 Tom Norris was one of the Talbot Hotel’s longest staying landlords, apparently arriving in 1893, after the bankruptcy of the previous innkeeper, William Hacker, and staying until 1925. It is his name that appears on most of the available postcard views of the inn. He was a brewer and a wine and spirit merchant as well as a licensed victualler. Many examples survive of bottles and earthenware jugs that bore his name and that of the Talbot Hotel; pictures of some of them can be seen in the Mere Museum section of the ‘Wiltshire Treasures’ website.

2.24 A listing of all known innkeepers, publicans or landlords of the George Inn/Talbot Hotel between 1649 and 1940 (with a few thereafter) is provided in the table at the end of this heritage statement (pages 19-21), along with notes as to the source of the information and other information, where available. A series of historical drawings and photographs showing the inn’s appearance during the past 165 years is also included within the architectural section below.

2.25 King Charles II’s flight via the George Inn is now commemorated in the Monarch’s Way walking trail that passes through Mere.

applied the kind of neo-Tudor styling seen on so many public houses built in the interwar period and disguised its true character and materials. Fortunately, these remain visible at the rear of the inn and on the upper part of the north gable end.



View of the 'Talbot Commercial Inn' c. 1905 by Frederick Holmes, with the Ship Inn on the right and the Mere to Gillingham horse bus approaching (Mere Museum); note the lower structure at the corner, now removed



The postcard on the left above was sent in August 1921, showing that the half-timbering was then still not present; the most likely date for its application would seem to be after the departure of the Norrises in 1925

The second image (above right) shows a cattle market taking place in the Square in the early 20th century, with the Talbot Inn on the left, including a rare glimpse of its south gable-end wall

3.4 The George Inn falls within the boundaries of the Mere Conservation Area and was added (as the ‘Talbot Hotel’) to the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest on 7th July 1989 at grade II.

3.5 The listing text refers to substantial modifications in the 19th and 20th centuries, including extensions to the left and several to the rear. We have seen above that the inn was already described as “a good deal modernised” by 1897 and the English Heritage assessment concludes that the interior ground floor was “completely modified” during the 20th century, yet the building, “although heavily modified, maintains its overall form, and holds a vital townscape position”. Thus it is the building’s external envelope, rather than its internal arrangements and fixtures, that were regarded as the justification for its listing in July 1989.



A postcard view produced shortly after the application of the false half timbering; the ground floor’s sliding sash windows were replaced with casements and the window shutters were also removed

3.6 To this may be added its obvious historical interest in the context of King Charles II’s visit in 1651, its inclusion in the Dean of Salisbury’s Manor and its importance as one of the earliest surviving buildings in the town, as only the Chantry in Church Street and the churchyard cross pre-date the 16th century. The building also occupies a prominent position at the heart of the historic town and forms part of a key group of buildings of historic significance and architectural value. It is noteworthy that it features prominently in most postcard views of the town, as the Market Place or Square can be seen as the architectural and historic hub of the town, where some of its best historic buildings are clustered together.

3.7 Old photographs up to the 1950s showed a lower wing attached at the north-eastern corner of the building, perhaps originally a small cottage, which seems to have been absorbed into the inn by the late 19th century (see photographs on page 14 above). All that now remains of this is a couple of buttresses on the north gable wall of the original building and the alcove left by a former first floor fireplace. The long western wing, containing the beer cellar, stores and (in the attic storey) living accommodation, is a 20th century addition, dismissed in the listing text as “not of special interest”.



Modern photograph of the north end of the inn, showing remains of the cottage’s external walls and first floor fireplace, with the rubble stone exposed at attic level

3.8 It would seem that the modifications included the destruction of the enclosed ‘King Charles’s Stairs’ and the large open fireplace illustrated in Allan Fea’s 1897 book, although there is still a large chimneybreast between the south-east lounge and the entrance passage.

3.9 A study of the survey floor plans of the existing building show substantial surviving portions of a wall of substantial thickness which would have been the original west outer wall of the main (eastern) building. It is clear that there has been considerable remodelling in the areas now occupied by the bar, kitchen, toilets and circulation areas. On the first floor, the more substantial walls of the original building are again evident on the plan, with the old outer wall on the west side punctured by four bedroom doorways but with the central chimneybreast intact.

3.10 The proposed external courtyard trade area scheme involves mainly cosmetic changes, removing all the non-permanent structures including picket fences and jumbrella. The major part of the works would involve landscaping to remove a pronounced slope whilst at the same time creating a

self-contained environment for patrons to enjoy in good weather. The creation of a two tiered stepped terrace, contrasting hardstand materials and the inclusion of a small dwarf wall with a timber arch entranceway, will have little to no impact on the historic fabric of the building. However the benefits will be significant and provide an external space for local and destination patrons to enjoy. Note: it is the intension not to key in the new dwarf wall to that of the existing structure.

3.11 The proposed internal changes area again all cosmetic, replacing in the main carpets and vinyl flooring materials. The most intrusive change would be the cleaning up of timber beams and timber panelling, whereby we are recommending a very fine sandblasting to breathe life back into the painted or blackened timbers



The small uninviting external trade area, located within the carpark on the North elevation of the public house

3.12 Overall we believe the scheme would have no impact upon the current external fabric of the building, for which the building was placed on the Statutory List in 1989, or upon the existing arrangement of the ground floor spaces. It is therefore concluded that the proposed works will have no detrimental effects upon the existing surviving historic character or features of the listed building, but will rather serve to improve the extent and standard on offer at the inn, to visit for drinks or a meal.



Typical examples of existing timber panels and beams

To be SOLD by PUBLIC AUCTION, at the Talbot Inn, Mere, in the county of Wilts, on Tuesday the 23d day of February, 1808, at five o'clock in the afternoon, by J. JEANS, unless previously disposed of by Private Contract, of which due notice will be given,—A substantial and commodious DWELLING-HOUSE, situate in the Market-place of the Town of Mere, with garden and convenient offices belonging, of which the purchaser may be accommodated with immediate possession.

The house is spacious and well adapted for carrying on an extensive trade, in which it has been heretofore eminently successful. The property is held under the Marquis of Bath, by Lease determinable with three healthy lives, subject to a small reserved rent.

For viewing the premises application may be made to Mr. Edward Butt, of Mere; and to treat for the purchase, to Messrs. Messiter, Wincanton.

[498]

Advertisement placed in the Salisbury and Winchester Journal for 15th February 1808

Date	Source	Inn Name	Occupant Names, Description, Age, Notes
1649	Survey	The George Inn	Christopher Phillips, innholder
1651 (3/10)	Various books	The George Inn	Christopher Philips, 'Host'
1771	Tenancy records	The George Inn (with brewhouse)	William Hallett [innkeeper]
1803 (2/5)	Salisbury & Winchester Journal (SAWJ)	The George Inn	Henry Coleman, butcher and publican (bankrupt by November 1807, when his household furniture, beer stock, cows, etc were auctioned)
1807, 1808	SAWJ	The Talbot Inn	Not mentioned
1822	Register of Alehouses	The Talbot	Not mentioned
1841	Census	Unnamed (Market Place)	James Ayals, publican, 20; wife Catherine, 20
1851	Census	Unnamed (Market Place)	Joseph Oxley, innkeeper, 31; wife Hannah, 26; one servant
1855	Post Office Directory	Old George Commercial Inn & Posting House	Mrs. Hester Dowding (Robert Dowding was a farmer, dairyman and maltster in the village, too)
1859, 1860	Traveller's Handbook/The Draper and Clothier	The George Inn	Mrs. Hester Dowding
1859 (1/1)	SAWJ	The George Inn	Samuel Titt of the George Inn, Mere, married Sarah Coles
1860 (21/4)	SAWJ	The George Inn	Samuel Titt – charged two men with being drunk and disorderly

1861 (8/8)	Sale to Eleanor Grove	The Old George	Bought from Ecclesiastical Commissioners for £11,235
1861 (9/2)	SAWJ	The George Inn	J. Goldsbrough of the George Inn married Ellen Maltby
1861	Census	Unnamed (Market Place)	John Goldsbrough, hotel keeper, 25; wife Ellen, 24; waitress Mary Vincent, 21
1867	Post Office Directory	The George Inn	Joseph Ball (no description)
1868 (March/April)	SAWJ	Talbot Hotel	Joseph Ball - advertising for a general servant and "good plain cook"
1869 (16/1)	SAWJ	Talbot Hotel	Joseph Ball – providing a "first class repast" for the members of the Mere Down Coursing Club
1869 (29/4)	SAWJ	Talbot Hotel	Joseph Ball's daughter Sarah marries James Campbell (20 th)
1871	Census	Talbot Inn, Market Place	Joseph Ball, innkeeper, 55; wife Sarah, 50; 'Boots' Thomas Herridge, 22
1875	Post Office Directory	Talbot Hotel, Commercial Inn & Posting House, Market Place	Joseph Ball, publican (also appears in newspaper advertisements in 1868 and 1873)
1878 (12/7)	Western Gazette	Talbot Hotel	William Hacker of the Talbot Hotel, Mere, married Hannah, widow of the late Robert Jenkins of Salisbury, on July 1st
1880 (18/6)	Western Gazette	Talbot Hotel	Son born to wife of W. M. Hacker on June 11th
1881	Census	Talbot Hotel (Market Place)	William Hacker, innkeeper and Greenwich Naval Pensioner, 44; wife Hannah, 35; servants included a 'boots': Henry Ames, 16; ostler: Joseph Dennis, 48
1883 (6/3)	Bill at Mere Museum	Talbot Commercial Inn	William Hacker
1889 (15/2)	Western Gazette	Talbot Inn	Barmaid = Louisa Palmer
1891	Census	Talbot Hotel (Market Place)	William Hacker, innkeeper, 54; wife, Hannah, 46; six children; barmaid: Kate Mould, 27; 'boots': Thomas Coward, 18
1893 (24/11)	Western Gazette	Talbot Hotel (also Lamb Hotel, Hindon)	William Hacker, victualler, bankruptcy notice 8/11/1893; he owned a barn at Hindon in July 1884
1893 to 1925	Mere Museum	Talbot Hotel	Thomas (Tom) John Norris said to be the landlord between these dates; the Museum holds a 2-gallon spirit jar, a green glass beer bottle and a glazed earthenware jug of 1897 (Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee souvenir) all carrying the "T. J. Norris" name; two also state "The Talbot Hotel, Mere". Tom J. Norris also appears in

			the 1903 and 1915 editions of Kelly's (Post Office) Directory.
1897 (16/4)	Western Gazette	Talbot Hotel	T. J. Norris bought the entire stock and business of Hartgill & Humby, wine/spirit/ale merchants of Castle Street, Mere on 10th
1901	Census	Talbot Hotel (Market Place)	Tom J. Norris, licensed victualler and brewer, 34; wife Eleanor M., 34; five children; barmaid: Gertrude S. Withers, 22; 'boots': Clarence B. Morgan, 16 – plus nursemaid and general servant
1904 (19/4)	Western Daily Press	Talbot Hotel, Mere	Lieutenant-Colonel James Roch Edwards "of" the Talbot Hotel had died at Salisbury on 3 rd March; he perhaps lived at the hotel as a long-term guest?
c. 1905	Mere Museum (photograph)	Talbot Commercial Inn	T. J. Norris – his and the building name appeared on numerous postcard views of the late 19 th /early 20 th centuries, including one of c. 1921 (walls still white rendered and shutters at ground floor windows)
1911	Census	Talbot Hotel	Tom John Norris, hotel proprietor, 44; wife Eleanor May, 44; three children (son Tom Henry, 21, "assisting in the business"), one visitor and one domestic servant
1912	<i>Early Motor Vehicle Registration in Wiltshire, 1903-14</i> (2006), pp 229, 274, 383	Talbot Hotel	Tom John Norris is recorded as the owner of a 15 hp Panhard open car from 8/1/1912, registration AM-1973; and from 22/1/1914 of a 20 hp, five-seater Ford with open touring body (AM-3496); his 20-year-old son Francis Rowland had a two-twin Douglas (AM-2398) from 10/5/1912
1925 (6/3)	Western Gazette	Talbot Hotel	Advertisement for a "Cook-General" and chambermaid: "Apply Mrs. Norris"
1927	Mere Museum (photograph)	Talbot Inn	A postcard view shows a crowd of people waiting outside the Talbot Inn to go on an outing: enough of the inn can be seen in the background to establish that by this date it had been given its 'makeover' with false half timbering on the upper floor frontage
1929 (15/3)	Western Gazette	Talbot Hotel	R. Harvell – advertising for a cook
1940 (15/10)	Western Morning News	Talbot Hotel	R. Harvell – advertising for a chambermaid (no later mentions found)
c. 1955	Francis Frith Archive	Talbot Hotel	Photographs now show the Hall & Woodhouse name
c. 1960s?	Mere Museum	Talbot Inn	Jack and Dorothy Hardcastle, innkeepers (photograph, no date)

c. 1970	Mere Museum	Talbot Hotel	Peter & Joan Brewer (business card)
1989 (7/7)	Listing Text	Talbot Hotel, The Square	Placed on Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest at grade II
2003	Facebook	The George Inn	Date when the pub's name changed back to 'The George Inn' – 136 years later!
2011 (21/9)	Trip Advisor website	The George Inn	Pat & Jan Kearney took over as the landlords

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