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## A Heritage Asset Survey of the former 3 Tuns Public House, Whittall St, Kings Sutton

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# The former Three Tuns, King's Sutton

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Iain Soden BA MCI(A) and Charlotte Walker BSC ACI(A)

### Summary

The former Three Tuns Public House was probably built in 1690, but little of its interior survives unaltered. It subsumed an adjacent domestic property on the south around 1900, while buildings on the north were demolished before 1922. Of note in its interior are an over-mantel wall-painting in a first floor former bedroom, potentially of c1830, and an 18<sup>th</sup>-century spit-rack downstairs over a more recent fireplace.

### Introduction and background

The former Three Tuns Public House lies on the west side of the north- to south-aligned Whittall Street, at its northern junction with Bulls Lane and Richmond Street, King's Sutton (NGR: SP 4987 3626; Fig 1).

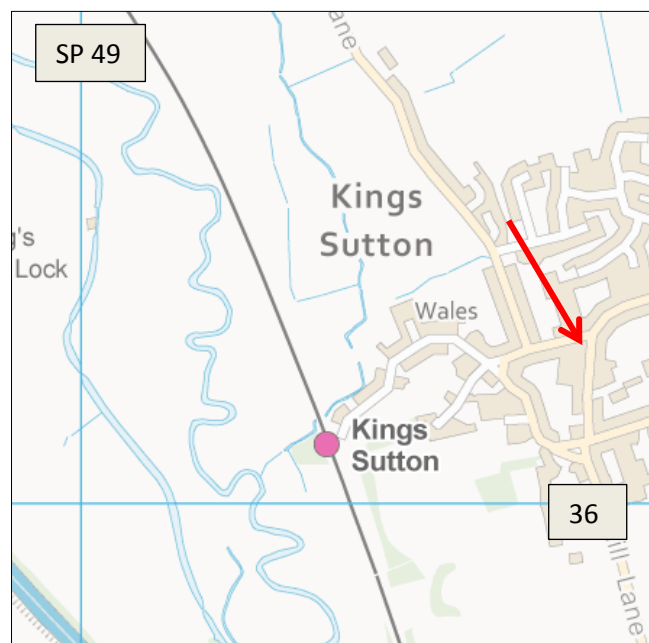


Fig 1: Site location; Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2015

The building closed as a public house in the recent past and is currently being converted into business premises by Mr Alex Cox, appropriately for his established Wine Company, which is relocating from nearby Farthinghoe.

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Although with origins in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the building is not statutorily listed. However, it lies in King's Sutton Conservation Area. As a former focal building within the village core, it was requested by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council, that an archaeological record of the building be made as a condition of the change of use consent. Accordingly Mr Cox commissioned Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd to carry out this record which was made in late January 2015.

### Historical Background



Fig 2: Kings Sutton Inclosure map, 1805 (NRO: Map 2994)

The earliest detailed map of the village is the 1805 Inclosure map. On the 1805 Inclosure map the site is part of two separate properties, both of which were described as house and garden on the accompanying schedule. The current public house car park north of the pub was occupied by a long range of buildings fronting onto Bulls Lane. The pub was named as the *Three Tuns* in the 1827 alehouse recognizances for the district; the proprietor was Alice Jennings (NRO: Box X2333).

In Whellan's Directory of 1849, A. Jennings, victualler was listed as the proprietor at the Three Tuns, presumably the same Alice Jennings as in 1827, although by 1869 it was Robert Fathers. The pub is marked (PH) on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884, although it is still shown as two separate buildings with only the northernmost building marked as a public house (Fig 3). By 1900 the pub is marked as a single building for the first time (not illustrated). By 1922 the building situated on the corner of Whittall Street and Bulls Lane had been demolished.

The pub frontage has a sign for the Sun Office attached to it (Fig 9). The sign indicates that the building it was attached to had fire insurance, although it is not known whether the sign relates to the Three Tuns or whether it has been attached at a later date from another building. No evidence for an insurance for this building has been found in the relevant archives. The Sun Insurance Office was established as the Sun Fire Office in 1710, working initially in London but expanding throughout the country via a network of provincial agents by the later 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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Fig 3: First Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1884



Fig 4: Photograph of the Three Tuns, looking south along Whittall Street, late 19<sup>th</sup> century/early 20<sup>th</sup> century

A historic photograph of the pub frontage indicates that it has undergone very little exterior alteration on the front since c1900. It is not clear from the photograph in Fig 4 whether the Sun Fire Insurance plaque was present at this date.



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## The building

### *Exterior*

The former Three Tuns is constructed of a Banbury Marlstone variant using roughly-coursed rubble (Wood-Jones 1963, 240-2; Horsfield et al 2013, 117-8). It has a single extension in rather incongruous brick, awkwardly butted onto the rear. It is surmounted by a roof of Welsh slate and the chimneys at the ridge are all in brick.

The building appears to be in two distinct phases of development, the earlier of which appears to be the northern half. The later phase comprises rooms and a through-carriageway on the south.



Fig 5: Three Tuns' long building frontage, from across the road. The earlier phase is nearest the camera. Note the through carriageway at far left. The dotted yellow line marks the stonework change where the original eaves were raised and the current windows cut.

The old core of the building bears a date-stone of 1690, with a stylised (and weathered) three circles, taken to be the three tuns or barrels of the former pub name, suggesting it might have been built as an inn from the start. It also carries a Sun Alliance fire insurance plaque with the number 93148. This may be a leftover of the memory of the Great fire of King's Sutton (1785) but equally may not be original to the building and may have been moved as they have become sought-after antiques in recent decades. Relevant online records held by The National Archives and Northamptonshire Record Office have been consulted but no record of early Fire Insurance has been found for the building.

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Fig 6: The junction between phase 1 and 2



Fig 7: The old core of the building (1690)



Fig 8: date-stone of 1690 with three 'tuns'



Fig 9: Fire Insurance Plaque

None of the timber casement windows on the front date before the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and most are probably 20<sup>th</sup> century in date. The two windows flanking the front entrance are surmounted by relieving arches in stone, while a similar blocked example is discernible in the north gable at ground floor level, lost when a hearth and chimney were inserted.

A stepped-out notch in the front wall stonework just south of the principal block suggests that there may have been a major alteration or re-build, for reasons unknown, where the building range contains an inglenook fireplace and chimney. This whole block may be an extension although an absence of a clear joint might suggest it began as a planned ancillary block.

The building probably once had no proper first floor, but was most likely a floor in the eaves, with dormers, under a thatched covering. The thatch has been lost. The roofline has since been raised, as is indicated by changes in stonework under the eaves at the front façade, together with a change in the size of quoins at the front corners. Most telling is the angle of the old roofline visible in the north gable.

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Fig 10: the former roofline in the north gable; a butt-joint may mark a former window, or possibly an attic-level hatch into the lost adjacent building; note also the blocked window or fireplace lintel arch on the ground floor (arrowed)

A brick extension on the north-west (rear corner of the building), dates no earlier than c1900, based on the bricks used, and may be somewhat later. It is awkwardly fitted into the stonework of the gable and thus may have been a remedial rebuild, not a carefully planned extension. It is most likely that this was constructed when the former buildings on the corner with Bull Lane were demolished sometime before 1922.

Despite a long period used as an Inn or Public House, no evidence was seen for a cellar or former cellar access. If it began as a domestic home, it is likely to have had a cellar under either G1/2 or G6.

The secondary block on the south probably once housed stabling, staff, and incorporates a carriage-access to the yard behind. It is very plain externally and seems never to have had any other access, either onto the street or the yard behind. None of the windows appear to pre-date the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and may be later. There is a wide variation in pointing detail on the stonework of the rear, so the lack of evidence for any blockings may not be conclusive. The early maps show that this was once a separate property, becoming subsumed by The Three Tuns in the period 1884-1900. As a formerly separate (possibly domestic) property no separate documentation has been found. Its interior now owes little to this former identity.



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Fig 11 : The plain front of the former added service range with carriage entrance. Note the butt-joint at the right.



Fig 12 : The rear elevation of the service range; the main block is covered by 20<sup>th</sup>-century accretions at the north end

### *Ground Floor Interior*

Entering through the former pub's front door on Whittall Street on the east, the main public bar took up most of the block. Once there may have been five rooms (G1-G5), but these had all been knocked into one, the interior having been given over to mock-Tudor applied decorative beams, redolent of box-framing in perhaps The Warwickshire Arden or the Cheshire plain, but totally out of place in the Northamptonshire stone-belt any time after the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Only the axial spine beams of the ceiling and a few joists are any older. A vestige of reed plaster in the ceiling above G5

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indicates what the interior must once have contained, but this had mostly long been replaced long ago.



Fig 13: The main pub interior; all internal walls taken out to improve circulation and finished with inappropriate decor

A large former inglenook fireplace marked the other end of the main block between G5 and G6, although this had been knocked through the former end wall to improve air circulation and provide views through the length of the block. Where the original stair once stood, to its side, was until recently the bar, together with a narrow passageway through into G6. A blocked rear door and adjacent window show that G4 once opened and looked out onto the rear yard, but these were blocked to create the pub bar. They may originally have served the foot of the first stair.



Fig 14: The knocked-through inglenook from the front (G5). The stair one stood to the right. Note the spit-rack (see below), glimpsed in G6 beyond

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Fig 15: Ground floor, phased; after Roger Coy Partnership

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Room G6 is plain, distinguished only by an added corner brick fireplace. This has a late 'Arts and Crafts' styling surround and mantelpiece, and so perhaps of inter-war date at the earliest, but just as possibly a modern revival piece. Above it is mounted an 18<sup>th</sup>-century oak spit-rack (for storing cooking spit parts; Ayres 1981, 30 fig 17). Local examples have been recorded at Cogges Manor Farm, and Great Haseley Oxon (Steane and Ayres 2013, 262, 427). While there is insufficient room for it ever to have been mounted above the inglenook, its natural home, its present location is above a fireplace potentially too small to have ever been used for cooking. It is therefore either in an unnatural mounting location or (possibly) has been brought in as an antique feature from elsewhere, either in the room or another building. It is also possible that it is *in situ*, and that the fireplace masks a larger, older cooking range location, to which the rack does in fact rightly belong.



Fig 16: G6 – Small corner fireplace and oak spit-rack above.

The remaining Ground floor rooms (G7-10) are all plain with, apart from substantial axial beams in the ceiling, no features of even moderate age or historical note. As part of the once-separate adjacent property, these rooms bear no surviving features relevant to their former existence.





Fig 17: A fully-restored spit-rack, for public consumption at a Shakespeare Birthplace Trust property, Stratford upon Avon.

### *First Floor Interior*

A steep stair rises from the corner of G6 over part of G7. It is boxed in with old tongue and groove boarding and in style may date from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. It opens into room F6, a function room in modern times, but which was perhaps previously divided into bedrooms of the adjacent property, to which they once belonged. It contains only an old fireplace in the rear (west) wall, but this long function room is otherwise devoid of anything other than modern features and decor.

In the main block above rooms G1-G5 were formerly three rooms (F1-F3) and a linking corridor designed to give privacy (F4). All of the dividing partitions were secondary and had been taken out at the time of recording, so are re-constructible only from the surveyors' plans and scars on floorboards.

Room F1 contained a secondary chimney from the inserted fireplace below, but nothing other of any age survives.

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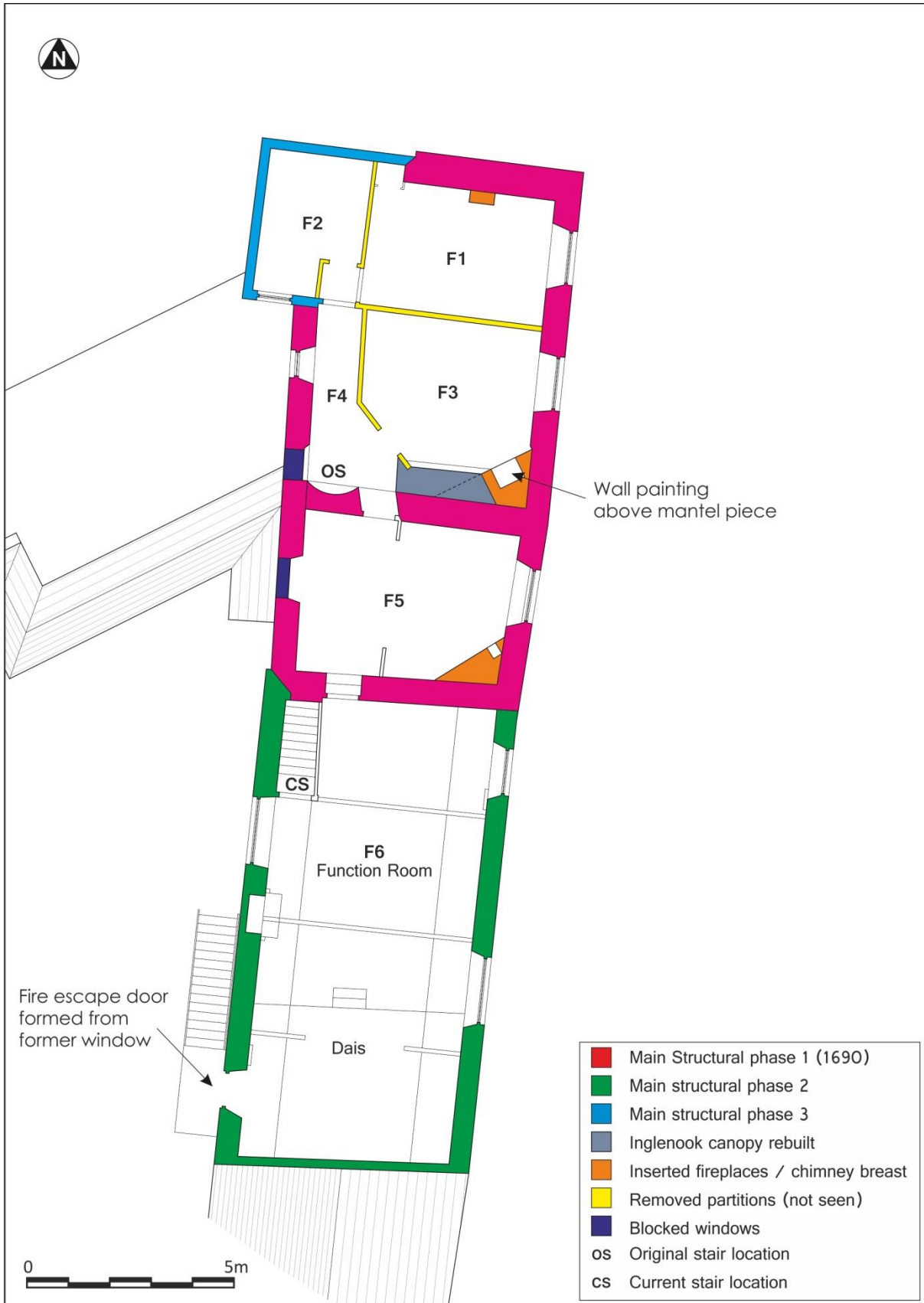


Fig 18: First Floor, phased; after Roger Coy Partnership

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Room F3 and the adjacent corridor once were part of the same room and the old plaster was still *in situ* for the west, east and a corner wall; that on the south had been lost. Several layers of white and light blue lime-wash survive. In the corner of F4 was a small blocked window and a scoop hollowed out of the south wall face. These mark the location of the former tightly winding stair up from G4 below at the side of the inglenook fireplace. The window would have lit a quarter-landing.

Within what became room F3 lay a corner fireplace, which was probably secondary, designed to feed into the original inglenook flue, but which at this level had itself been rebuilt.

The corner fireplace had side-pieces in brick but it contained a plain Regency cast-iron hob-grate and fire-basket, of perhaps 1820-30, decorated only by a Greek key-fret design, lending it an air of the contemporary Greek-revival (Ayres, 1981, 54; Calloway 2012, 187). Above this were glimpsed patches of an overmantel polychrome wall-painting covering an area c1m x c800mm beneath limewash layers and wall-paper.



Fig 19: the south side of room F3; fireplace and wall-painting to left, stair to right

It is unclear what the over-mantel wall painting depicts. It may be religious or secular. In date it is probably contemporary with the fireplace, which probably predates the subdivision of the upstairs rooms. The fireplace may be as early as c1780 (and one must keep in mind the fire which destroyed a huge part of the village in 1785), although the regency detailing the hob-grate and fire-basket suggests the whole assembly is as late as c1830.

However, it is notable that Mr Cox in his new offices has undertaken to retain the chimney-piece plaster *in situ*, on which the wall painting is drawn, and protect it through the remainder of the works. Thereafter, it will either be retained beneath dry lining for future attention, or further uncovered, consolidated and conserved by an appropriately experienced conservator.

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Fig 20: Three details from the overmantel wall painting (L-R)– a ?cherubic wing?, a ?sunburst motif?, a classical volute in red with fan-trails

No other historic features were apparent on the first floor. The roof structure at this end contains a single King-post truss with integral threaded iron bolt (typical of agricultural buildings), putting the creation of the current roof into the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with (as a consequence) the ceilings and the former room-divisions of F1, F3 and F4. Given the other local structural changes which went on c1900- before 1922, the present roof probably dates to that period.

### Conclusions

This building began as typical three-cell vernacular building of the area, built probably in 1690, when it may straightway have been opened as an Inn, The Three Tuns. It comprised Kitchen (G1-2), Hall (G4-5) and Parlour (G6). It has since been much altered. the nearest published equivalent in plan is perhaps that of Home Farm (1699) in Williams Scot (Wood-Jones 1963, 108 fig 24).

There was an adjacent, probably secondary property, which was a domestic building, to the south, of which little but the basic plan survives. Creation of the current stair involved the joining of these two buildings, on map evidence in the period 1884-c1900. Another adjacent range of buildings on the north are known to have stood from pre-1805 until before 1922.

The upstairs was probably not directly heated originally, except benefiting from radiated heat from the inglenook canopy. A fireplace with cast-iron hob-grate was, however inserted into the corner of F3, around 1790 to 1830 to feed into the same chimney. Above the mantelpiece was executed a wall-painting as a focal point of the room. This occurrence is not unknown in small vernacular buildings both nationally, known as *'furnishing pictures'* (Ayres 1981, 172) more specifically in the region (Steane and Ayres 2013, 407-12), but is nevertheless a notable survival locally, in what is known as *'Banburyshire'*.

Following the moving of the original stair from G4/F4 to G6/F6, room F3 was divided off and given privacy, but not before the inglenook canopy was rebuilt, perhaps because it was leaking smoke and gases into the room. The inglenook below was later taken out of service, necessitating new downstairs fireplaces in the gable of G1 and the corner of G6.

It is unclear whether the building lost its original roof in the Great Fire of King's Sutton (15 July 1785), which is known to have completely destroyed over 40 houses (Wood-Jones 1963, 235 n2).



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However, the main structure to the current roof is no earlier than the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (and as surmised, is most likely of c1900-22). It is possible that the building lay empty for a generation in want of a roof, or that there was an intermediate roof between 1785 and c1900. The first seems unlikely, given the importance of this focal location in a village which was popular in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century for its medicinal wells (Wood-Jones 1963, 10-11). The second is impossible to prove. More likely the building survived the fire intact, to be altered much later out of domestic need (and a nagging awareness in the village of the combustible nature of thatch). It is perhaps in that period immediately post-1785 that a grateful owner took out Fire Insurance for the first time.

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