

## **Midsomer Norton Audio Trail - Number 1 High Street**

*[Ambient sound: historic meeting, historic auction, rugby match, modern live music, modern restaurant]*

“New life in the Old Dog!” shouted the local papers in June 2021, reporting on the makeover of the Greyhound pub into the new Hound Lounge. Unfortunately, the Hound Lounge wasn't to last - the pandemic was a difficult time for local businesses.

The beautiful Italianate building you see today was the work of Thomas Harris Smith, a prominent figure in Midsomer Norton who was also responsible for the building housing the Natwest Bank next door. We'll meet him again shortly.

The building we're looking at now occupies the site of an older Greyhound Inn. A sketch from the late 1700s shows that this original building was longer in length, with a steep roof, gables, and lots of windows. There's evidence that there was once a Manor House on this site too, and some historians think that the Manor House may even have been one and the same building as the Old Greyhound Inn, just with a change of use over the years.

The Greyhound, whether the old one or the new one, traditionally offered a meeting place for the community when important decisions were made. In 1828 it was at the

old Greyhound that a church committee decided to pull down the crumbling body of St. John's Church in order to rebuild it bigger and better. When the Tithe Barn was sold in 1886, the auction was held at the new Greyhound. And in 1936 a meeting was called to form the town's rugby club - the Greyhound became the club's first headquarters.

As the 20th century became the 21st, The Greyhound remained a popular pub, whilst its cellar became an influential part of the town's thriving music scene – first as Reg's Wine Bar and then The Wunderbar. The intimate gig setting gained a reputation for giving new and upcoming acts the chance to perform.

The Greyhound has changed beyond recognition over the centuries, yet it continues to thrive – today, the grand old building is home to retailers offering colourful designer textiles and Korean food. The new businesses sit below the watchful eye of the perky little white greyhound who still sits proudly on the balcony. Can you see him, standing guard over the top end of the High Street? There is “new life in the old dog” after all.