



History of The White Horse, Romsey

The White Horse, a Grade II* listed hotel is one of only three late-medieval structures in Hampshire that were devised as purpose-built inns. The other two are the Angel Inn, Andover and the former George Inn at Alton. The White Horse is also one of only twelve inns in the country that can claim to have served continuously as a hotel since the 14th century. The name of The White Horse is also well established and recorded in documentation reaching back to 1572.

The origins of The White Horse in Romsey are thought to be as a guesthouse for Romsey Abbey in the 12th century. There are early stone cellars and ovens, which were renovated in Tudor times when the bulk of the present building was erected.

Despite its Georgian facade, the present building dates back from the times of Henry VIII. The historic core of The White Horse comprises two timber-framed ranges; one fronts the Market Place and includes the gatehouse, the other was a lodging area with a gallery giving access to three first floor rooms. On the walls of the building are several Tudor paintings. One is of a black Tudor Rose linked by a curved geometric design. Along a beam and once part of a larger painting is a decoration of Tudor dragons.

In 1610 a probate inventory for Lucilla Dixson lists a hall, great chamber, 3 gallery chambers, a parlour, a buttery and a kitchen.

The building was substantially altered in the 18th century. The timber framed street frontage, with its jetty, was replaced with a brick frontage. A second storey was added to the front range, with further accommodation provided in the new roof space and a second floor was also added plus a wooden framed-newel staircase. By 1776, The White Horse had 35 dormitory style beds, 6 rooms, stabling for 50 horses and room for 4 carriages; 2 large yards and its own brew house.

As with most old buildings, stories of ghostly haunting abound, with sightings in the cellars and along the first floor 'Mummers Gallery' that overlooks the original gateway to The White Horse.

An Inn of the importance of The White Horse, Romsey's principal hotel, clearly features much in the history of the town. Romsey was an important thoroughfare with stage coaches passing daily to London, Portsmouth, Southampton, Salisbury, Bath, Bristol and many other places westward.

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