

Oxfordshire

1-3 BELL STREET (MONK'S)

1-3 Bell Street (which includes 2 Market Place) is one of the most prominent shop sites in Henley, and is currently (2009) occupied by Starbucks coffee shop and Crew Clothing. The premises can be traced back to at least 1748, and for almost 200 years housed drapery businesses.

The census of 1841 (the earliest to survive) records that **George Young**, a linen and wool draper, haberdasher and hosier lived there with his wife, three young daughters, two apprentices and two servants. By 1851 there were two more children and an apprentice called **Charles Monk** had joined the firm. These were rented premises, as their sale in 1852 states that they were 'in the occupation of George Young'. In 1861 four daughters were helping in the shop, where Charles Monk continued to work as an assistant. It would appear that George Young died before the 1871 census was taken, since his widow Harriet, aged 63, was then head of the household. Charles Monk was no longer employed as an assistant, and seems to have continued in the business in a more senior role (see below). By 1881 Harriet Young had been succeeded by her daughter Harriet, who had three helpers and a servant.



Left: the south end of Bell Street in the 1890s. Monk's clothing shop is the three-storey corner building on the left of the picture. (Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive). Right: the site today

A street directory of 1887 described the premises as occupied by Young and Monk, linen and woollen drapers. By 1901 Charles Monk, then a widower aged 73, was head of the household, thus ending over 50 years of occupation by the Young family. Charles Monk was a JP and a man of some standing in the town, and the premises became known as Monk's Corner. He employed his son Henry as manager, and had four assistants. Henry remained there until 1946.

In the mid 1950s the old Regency-style building was demolished and rebuilt in a broadly similar manner, with sash windows and a stuccoed façade. The drapery business was succeeded by a newsagents, a decorating supplier, and a branch of the electrical retailers Curry's. The 1990s saw the arrival of Boots Photographic Shop and Bonus

Print, before the current coffee shop and clothing store started trading there in the early 21st century.

Sources: Censuses; published 19th-century trades directories; Emily J Climenson, *A Guide to Henley-on-Thames* (1896); research into Bell Street properties by Ann Cottingham

Jill Kendal, Mary Barrett and Antonia Wellesley Davies (Henley Census Group)

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