

History of Sewell House



- 26 Church Plain is a Grade II listed property that dates from the early 17th century but stands on a much earlier foundation.
- The house was originally part of the adjoining property, number 27, but was probably divided in the 18th century.



- In 1930 the property was bought by the well-known local historian, Harry Beale Johnson. He decided to make the house an attraction to celebrate the life of Anna and the story of Black Beauty.
- Johnson made alterations to the external appearance of the house using ancient beams, tiles, bricks and windows from houses in the Rows that were demolished as part of the slum clearance scheme in the 1930s.
- With the help of local architect Arthur Ecclestone, the front of the house was rebuilt, and by 1932 they had brought the front window and door out to the pavement. The mullioned window (vertical divisions) came from a demolished property in Row 51. The carved wooden panel above the window, with the date 1641, also came from a Row house.
- Unfortunately, Johnson died in October 1932 at the age of 43 from pneumonia, which he caught while working on the roof of the house.



- The property was then bought by a local solicitor and leased to Toc H, the international Christian movement, who opened it as their headquarters and clubroom.
- They embellished the ground-floor mullioned window with two Toc H symbols. These can still be seen today.
- In the 1970s the house was bought by a local businessmen to become the offices of the Great Yarmouth Press Agency in 1976.
- In 1980 the building became an art gallery/museum, then had several uses including an antique and gift shop and a tea room (Kirsty's Cakery, which is now next door!).
- On 24th November 2022 the building was officially opened as an information centre for Redwings Horse Sanctuary.
- In July 2023 the house was visited by Her Majesty Queen Camilla.



Thank you to Colin Tooke, local historian, for compiling this information.