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THE TOWN'S BYGONE TAVERNS

Found at the Five Bells Inn

Recently, when alterations were being made to the former Five Bells Inn (now the shop of Norman Clarke Ltd.), an interesting discovery was made. Pasted on a hidden door and barely readable under a coat of whitewash was a small sheet of paper—a handbill, or perhaps a newspaper cutting—printed as follows:

STATE LOTTERY

Begins drawing 17th September. Persons in the Country may be supplied with Tickets or Shares, on the same terms as if present, by sending their Orders (with Remittances) by Post or otherwise, to RICHARDSON, GOODLUCK & Co.'s (the Contractors) Office, The Corner, Bank Buildings, Cornhill; and facing the King's Mews, Charing Cross, London.

Advantages of the present Lottery, which is formed on the most popular Principles: the Lowest Prize is £20. The first 1,000 Blanks, £20 Each; and there are At this point the paper is torn, but amounts of £20,000 and £10,000, presumably the first and second prizes, are discernible.

A COACHING INN

The announcement must be at least 136 years old, for to the best of my knowledge state lotteries in the United Kingdom were abandoned in 1823. Until that year lotteries were a recognised means of raising revenue and were from time to time authorised by Parliament.

A hostelry, I suppose, was just the place to exhibit a state lottery notice. It probably provoked as much chatter and raised as many hopes as football pools and premium bonds at the present time.

To me, however, the notice was interesting because it recalled a coaching inn

which ceased to function over 90 years ago. The notice was probably pasted up by Stephen Holloway, "mine host" in the 1820's, who at that time was blissfully unaware that within twenty years the railway would end the "coaching days" and deprive him of profitable business.

Not that the Five Bells depended upon travellers. It may not have been so fashionable as the King's Arms, the Crown, and the Swan, but in early Victorian days it was the headquarters of the town band, and the weekly practises formed the basis of a social club.

POPULAR RESORT

That great Victorian teetotaller, Henry Nash, wrote: "All the most respectable portion of society made a point of attending. After the band had performed a selection of its choicest music, and had borne with good humour some friendly criticisms, the more social features of the club were introduced.

The cheerful song and the merry jest were never wanting; at times the sedate oracle would command attention, when difficult questions pertaining to political or social matters would receive satisfactory solutions. For a stranger visiting Berkhamsted and to have missed the opportunity of an introduction to this select gathering, was sometimes considered a misfortune, as such an occasion was favourable for learning what manner of men her chief citizens were.

"Each public-house had one night in the week for these special social meetings. If any important business was pending, it could only be successfully brought to an issue at some of those meetings. Most of the parish business was there discussed and matured ready for final approval at Vestry. So thoroughly had this practice become established that for a young man starting in life and declining to conform with this custom, was to render his chances of success somewhat doubtful."

DISTURBANCE

At one period the Five Bells is said to have been famous—or notorious—for bouts between bare-fisted fighters in the yard behind the inn. Of that we have no written or printed evidence, but the last chapter in the history of the Five Bells is told in an early issue of the *Berkhamsted Times*.

In the 1870's, John Loader applied for a new licence, and it was stated that ten years earlier the Five Bells was closed because the then tenant "did not know how to do his duty and assist the police on the occasion of a lot of navvies making a disturbance in it".

The rector, headmaster and other leading residents expressed their "decided conviction that a diminution rather than an extension of the number

of public-houses is most desirable," and a new licence was not granted.

Incidentally, one of the last orders of the Berkhamsted Corporation, way back in 1659, was that not more than six alehouses be licensed to draw or sell beer or ale within the borough "without the consent of the major parte of the whole Company".

As late as 1830 the number of inns and public-houses in the town could be counted on the fingers of two hands. Thereafter the number multiplied and in Castle-street alone there were seven public-houses and off-licenses. Between 1830 and 1890 the population doubled and the number of public-houses and off-licenses increased four-fold.

The Five Bells was therefore a casualty at a time of expansion. It figures prominently in old engravings, with its overhanging sign, appropriately showing five bells, in the foreground. Until recently I feared that no photograph of this old inn existed, but one was given to the Local History Society a short time ago.

Under a small "Good Stabling" notice appears a sign adorned not by five bells, as shown in the engraving, but simply by the words "The Five Bells: Whittingstall Ales". The board was suspended from what appears to have been a simple iron projection, not the sturdy wooden structure which now supports an electric clock and is fondly believed to have held the inn sign.

THE RED LION

It is interesting to note that, on the opposite side of the street, the One Bell still retains the "One" to differentiate it from the Five Bells Inn which ceased to exist some 90 years ago. There are hundreds of inns and public-houses named The Bell up and down the country, but One Bell must be very rare. Is it the only one?

Only a short distance from the Five Bells stood another old public-house, the Red Lion. The name Red Lion Yard lingers on, but the public-house closed its doors over 80 years ago. The building was afterwards a greengrocer's-cum-off-licence, and then Mr. East's furniture shop until it was pulled down before the second World War and replaced by the Midland Bank.

The Red Lion was the unofficial headquarters of the Volunteers, and before Clarence-road was made, circuses were held on the long strip of land which stretched from the back of the Red Lion towards Butts Meadow.

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

Opposite, the White Hart occupies an historic site. Here, I understand, stood the Saracen's Head, which was among the properties given to Berkhamsted School by John Incent and the Berkhamsted Brotherhood some 18 years before the licence for the Free School was granted in 1541. No doubt you have noticed that the White Hart, which is nearly a century old, bears the coat of arms of Berkhamsted School.

Cobb, in his "History of Berkhamsted," says that the inn called "The Sarson's Head" in olden times became

EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Local Arrangements

Arrangements for the emergency supply of medicine now operating in Berkhamsted is as follows:—

CHEMISTS' ROTA

The week-day evening (6-7 p.m.) and Sunday morning (11.30 a.m.—12.30 p.m.) service rota adopted by Berkhamsted Chemists for the dispensing of medical prescriptions, is as follows for the current month:—

March 29—April 4: Dickman.
April 5—11: Taylors.
April 12—18: Boots.
April 19—25: Figg.
April 26—May 2: Dickman.

LIBRARY OPENING TIMES

The Berkhamsted Branch of the County Library is open in Prince Edward Street on the following days and times:—

Monday—10 a.m.—1 p.m.; 2 p.m.—7.30 p.m.
Tuesday—10 a.m.—7.30 p.m.
Wednesday—CLOSED.
Thursday—10 a.m.—1 p.m.; 2 p.m.—7.30 p.m.
Friday—10 a.m.—1 p.m.; 2 p.m.—7.30 p.m.
Saturday—10 a.m.—1 p.m.; 2.30 p.m.—5 p.m.

(Continued from previous columns.)

the George in Henry VIII's reign, and was afterwards called the Prince's Arms.

Cobb mentions, too, the "Cokkie" inn which stood in this part of the town, and says it may have given Cokkie or Cox's Lane (now King's Road) its name. But a reference to John Cocke's "tenement with a backside at Cockes lane end" in a survey of 1607 suggests a family-name origin.

Berkhamsted had many other forgotten or half-forgotten hostelries and public-houses: the Sun, the Wheat-sheaf, the Star and Garter, the Royal Oak, the Edward VI, the Stag, the Boot, the Chaffcutters Arms, etc.

If you have a thirst for further knowledge, I hope to slake it in next month's Review.

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