

Bygone Taverns and Breweries

In last month's *Review* we recalled the Five Bells and the Red Lion, two ancient hostleries which were closed in mid-Victorian times. Some years later the Royal Oak, in the High Street, and the Swan (Dudswell) closed their doors. Then, a few years after the first World War, the Boot, the Stag, the Pheasant and the Edward VI public-house lost their licences. Yet another casualty was the George and Dragon in Castle Street; but it had no licence to lose, for it was a temperance hotel!

Berkhamsted—a town which once appointed an ale-taster annually—lost not only licensed houses but breweries as well. In 1892 sixty Berkhamsted men and boys were employed by brewers; there was also full employment for the cooper who made barrels in his little workshop in Castle Street.

THE MALTINGS

Today only the name of the old maltings in Chapel Street, now the Boy Scout headquarters, reminds us of the time when Berkhamsted was an important brewing town. The maltings belonged to the Swan Brewery, kept for many years by the Foster family. The smell of malt and hops was not confined to Chesham Road and Chapel Street; it filled the air, too, in Water Lane, where Locke and Smith's brewery flourished until shortly before the first World War. The business was taken over by Benskins, of Watford, and Berkhamsted then ceased to have a brewery of its own.

At a much earlier date, John Page, of the King's Arms, brewed his own beer, using furze from the Common for fuel. The King's Arms was afterwards supplied by Mr. Lane, the nurseryman, who had a small brew-house, probably on or near the site now occupied by the Post Office. Additionally, local farmers

brewed their own beer. Records suggest that the farmer at Castle Hill kept himself and his staff happy with home-brewed beer in the middle of the 19th century.

Times have changed, and everywhere the age of the small brewer is over, or almost over. Gone, too, are the days when, to quote a local writer, all the public-houses were open until the bells began tolling for church on Sunday morning. "The more devout on their way to church or chapel were frequently met by the unwashed British workman in a condition most unsuitable for religious worship, and one that would totally disqualify him as a member of the temperance brigade." So said Henry Nash, writing about Berkhamsted in the first half of the 19th century.

SIX CASUALTIES

Despite a substantial increase in the population, the number of licensed houses in Berkhamsted and Northchurch has fallen from over 30 to 25 since late Victorian times. There may be a further reduction in the near future.

It is probably true to say that no new public-house has been licensed in this district since the Rising Sun was built in mid-Victorian days. There was a proposal to provide a second public-house for Sunnyside, and a site was reserved for the purpose in Paxton Road, between George Street and Ellesmere Road, but no further action was taken. Despite housing developments on a much larger scale at Kitsbury, no public-house was provided for that area. Kitsbury had to be content with shops licensed to sell alcoholic drink for consumption off the premises.

Only two licensed houses have been rebuilt in modern times—the Brownlow Arms and the Old Grey Mare at Northchurch.

DOWN IN THE VALLEY

Up and down the country, after the first World War, hundreds of public-houses were declared redundant and lost their licences. In the old urban district the casualties were the Edward VI, the Boot, and the Stag.

The Edward VI (sometimes called the Henry VIII) stood in Mill Street, and afterwards became a private house. The adjoining stables and a loft, used as a threshing barn, were pulled down for the Music School. As with the Fish, which still adds interest to a much-changed Mill Street, the Edward VI was a favourite haunt of waggons on their way to the old watermill.

The Boot was also in the valley—in Castle Street. Afterwards it became an antique shop and is now a private house. The building is said to date from 1605;

it must have been altered a great deal in the meantime!

The Stag was a tiny public-house at the corner of the row of cottages beyond the old Technical School at Gossons End. It has been a private house for nearly 40 years, but the adjacent lane is still called Stag Lane.

A LINK WITH SNOOKS

Northchurch lost the Pheasant, a little public-house at the top of what was formerly called Thorn's Yard, now Duncombe Road. Incidentally, casualties were heavy among village public-houses; at Bourne End the number was reduced from three to two, and, farther along the main road, the Friend at Hand, where Snooks the highwayman is said to have called before he was hanged, was closed.

At an earlier date Dudswell lost its one and only public-house, the Swan. It is now a shop, facing the canal locks. In its heyday the Swan was a favourite port of call of boatmen.

Half a century ago the Royal Oak became a memory: this tiny beer-house, next door to the Sayer almshouses, was pulled down and the Gas Offices took its place.

So far, mention has been made only of licensed houses which may be remembered by old residents. No one alive today can recall such bygone hostleries as the Wheatsheaf and the Chaffcutters Arms.

THE WHEATSHEAF

We would not know of the existence of the Wheatsheaf but for a Bourne School document of 1754, which tells us that this hostelry, with its own brew-house, stood next door to the school. We cannot be certain whether it was on the site of Mr. Dickman's or Mr. Sharland's shop. The Bourne Schoolhouse, of course, is now the National Provincial Bank.

A hundred yards or so westward, it is believed, stood the Star and Garter (now Messrs. Potter's shoe shop). No documentary evidence is available, but the information was supplied many years ago by an elderly man who was not given to romancing.

Some years ago, when Mr. C. M. Cox gave the Local History Society the deeds of the old cottage which was pulled down to provide an entrance to Manor Close, it was found that the cottage was at one time called the Sun. It was not necessarily a public-house, but the name certainly suggests alcoholic connections!

THE CHAFFCUTTERS ARMS

Then there was the Chaffcutters Arms in Highfield Road, or the Pightle, as that old side-street was formerly called. A directory of 1824 tells us that John Howard was the landlord. Apparently the Chaffcutters Arms was converted into two cottages. A former tenant said that when repairing the cellar ceiling he was showered with sand which had accumulated between the floor-boards

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:—

April 26—May 2: Dickman.
May 3—9: Taylors.
May 10—16: Boots.
May 17—23: Figg.
May 24—30: Dickman.
May 31—June 6: Taylors.
Whit Monday: Figg.

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 column).

and presumably came from the bar parlour.

At Northchurch the name Bell Lane reminds us that the shop at the corner was formerly a public-house—the Bell. And nearby there must have been another public-house, called the Anchor. It is mentioned in evidence given in the law-suit which followed the enclosure of Berkhamsted Common in 1866. The landlord said it stood opposite the rectory and almshouses.

Whether the Talbot, mentioned in Dodderidge's survey of 1607, was a public-house is a matter for conjecture. It is a familiar inn name—but the owner was none other than the rector, Thomas Newman!

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