

PUBS AND PUBLICANS IN BRINKLOW

Brinklow has always been well-supplied with alehouses. In this, it has been no different to any other community of a like size; the brewing and selling of ale has its roots in antiquity, and for centuries, workers have gathered in sociable groups after their labours over a jar. Originally, the Maltster, who supplied the malted grain for both beer and vinegar, was a high-status member of the community. Not all of the present public houses are mentioned in the sources available for research, such as censuses, directories, etc, and we have no way of knowing if the alehouses which were suppressed in the 17th century are the same as the ones we patronise today. Almost certainly they were not, or if any were, they were probably informal places, someone's kitchen given over to the quaffing of home-brew of varying qualities.

The rural working man drank ale; it was all he could afford, and until the late 17th century, only cities were allowed to have taverns, where wine could be sold as well as beer and ale. The gentry and affluent middle classes drank at home, or more infrequently in larger coaching inns when roads became less dangerous and more conducive to travel. The late 18th century began the great coaching era, and consequently alehouses vied for the custom of travellers, offering where possible facilities for horses, and private sitting rooms where the better-off could refresh themselves away from the local rabble; many a lounge bar and snug have their origins in this segregation of the classes, and echoes of the practice still exist. Visitors to Brinklow are usually found in the superior decor (and higher prices) of the Lounge, whereas most locals prefer the spit-and sawdust sociability of the Bar.'

Two of the earliest known pubs in Brinklow seem to be The White Lion and The Plough, now a private house in Broad Street, and still trading as a pub in 1850. A direct ancestor of many people still living locally was James Liggins, who possibly after an advantageous marriage to an Esther Glover, daughter of John Glover of Blaby, Gent, had an interest in both, and later in The Boat Inn, Easenhall.

The land upon which The White Lion stands was once known as Wale's Charity Lands, having been left to the Mayor and Aldermen of Coventry in 1624 by Thomas Wale on condition that they gave 40s per annum (a vast sum then) from the rents to the poor of Brinklow. Coventry Corporation then leased it to various persons, with conditions as to its upkeep, as a business proposition. These tenants then sublet, using the rents as income, a common practice. In an Indenture (contract) of 1794 between the Mayor and Commonalty of Coventry and John Hodgins of Brinklow, the previous tenants of the land and buildings upon it (named as "a ruinous cottage"), are Thomas Lichfield, David Cotton, Dorothy Marshall, Charles Morris, Bartholomew Howe, Thomas Heath and William Parnall. John Hodgins would seem to have acquired the lease in 1794, and this was renewed in 1811 for twenty-one years until 1832 on condition that he laid out £100 for erecting, building and maintaining "a good messuage (dwelling) and outbuildings", namely The White Lion Inn, by 1813. For this, £2 per annum was to be paid "before the Lord Mayor's Door in Cross Cheaping in the said City commonly called The Mayor's Walk".

In the Indenture, which is extremely long and complex, the White Lion is named as being such in 1809, so probably "the ruinous cottage" was a drinking den long before the present

superior building was erected. In 1809, Jeremiah Jones was clearly the sub-tenant from John Hodgins, in association with Thomas Checkland and James Liggins; Jeremiah soon went bankrupt owing money to Thomas, and his goods and share were sold off to pay off his creditors; James Liggins was the best bidder, and so obtained a controlling share in the business, at a cost of £250. By 1818, he had sold his share to William Payne, who died in 1820, leaving it to Georgiana and Anne Payne. It then passed to John Brown (1821) who sold it to John Cryer in 1826. In 1828 until at least 1837, the proprietor of the White Lion was William Cluley, but it doesn't seem to have given him a particularly good living, as after his death his wife, Ann was reduced to living in Rugby Workhouse. Subsequent proprietors were J. Hughes (1850-) Michael Spawton (1872-) who combined it with his business as a corn-dealer, T. Garret (1900-), Thomas Bartlett(1921-), Ernest Woodward (1936-) and William Lee (1940-)

Mr. Alan Turner, who now lives in Coventry, remembers a time, about 1918, when during summers he stayed at the White Lion for holidays, and as a boy encountered _the cockerel who liked his tittle". Apparently this Rhode Island Red, "high-stepping and red of face, would saunter down from the field beyond the bowling greens, stroll through the back door, up to the drip tray in the tap, and drink his fill. This happened every day about noon, and according to Mr. Turner "no one interfered." Afterwards, he returned to the field, his step "faltering a bit", to give the hens "the sharp end of his beak".

Both The_Dun Cow (now private housing) and The Bull's Head are mentioned in the 1837 Glebe Terrier as properties obliged to pay tithes for the upkeep of the rector and for Poor Relief, in common with all other owner occupiers in Brinklow. Proprietors of the Dun Cow were : Thomas Curtis (1837-) Edward Barker (1872/1880-)who also acted as a cattle dealer, Thomas Smith (1896-) W.H. Yates (1900-) and Herbert English (1936-)

Proprietors of The Bull's Head were Thomas Thompson (1837-), Thomas Haswell (1866-), Joseph Haynes (1871-),William Rowe, who combined it with horse breaking (1880-) Isaac Boyes (1921-) Oscar Varnish)1925- and Frank Hammond (1936-). In 1900, the Oddfellows, a friendly society into which everyone paid a small sum, and received financial help in times of sickness, met every month in the Bull's Head. Mr. Bill Smith also remembers the "Hanging Jacks" performing there in the early 1920s, hard men from the canals and roads who earned the price of a pint by allowing themselves to be chained and hung upside down to see how quickly they could get free. In the 1930s and 40s, another "sick club" flourished for a while in the Bull's Head, and many people will remember the "sick visitor" who made sure no one claimed fraudulently; woe betide anyone "on the sick" who was seen out after 9 o'clock at night.

The earliest mention of The Raven is surprisingly only 1850; it merits no mention in the census before 1880, but the building is plainly older than that. It is still a comparatively small pub, so perhaps it was a pub of the "alehouse kitchen " type, and never a coaching inn. Not every proprietor paid to be featured in directories, so absence from these isn't necessarily significant, but absence from the early censuses is puzzling. The building was clearly there, and someone was living in it, but without a name or a known landmark, it is difficult to establish who that person was. In 1850, it was being run by a T. Glenn, followed by Miss Hannah Buggins (1866- but who appears to own the land in the 1837 Glebe Terrier)

Thomas Shepherd (1871-), Mrs. Ellen Seymour (1896-), Frank Griffin (1921-), G. Goggerty (1924-), and Rudolph Bartlett (1936-). In 1900, The Female Friendly Society met in the Raven once a month.

In 1837, The Half Moon and Seven Stars was owned by Sir Grey Skipworth, but was run by George Blundell. At various times in its career, it doubled as a Post Office, an informal magistrate's court, and an office for the local registrar. At one time, there appears to have been a slaughterhouse behind it. Subsequent proprietors were Jonathan Mullis (1866-) Edward Beamish (1880-) George Templeman (1896-) W. West (1900-) Frederick Cox (1921-) Mrs. Cox (1927-) and Charles Scampton (1936-)

In 1830, the Beerhouse Act made it legal for any householder to sell beer from his or her own home, on payment of two guineas, and so we can be fairly certain that Brinklow had an abundance of beersellers. In 1866, Richard Adkins is listed as a grocer and Beer Seller, in 1861 and 1871, Thomas Wolfe managed to reconcile his duties as Methodist Lay Preacher with that of Beer Seller and agent for Insurance, a Liberal Club once stood next to South View, and the Institute Building at the bottom of Broad Street once housed a Conservative Club, and later a Working Man's Club. In the Institute, dinners, dances, concerts and other club meetings were a regular feature of village life; one elderly resident remembers that the road outside was strewn with straw before a dance, to muffle the noise of horses' hooves, which suggests that visitors came then, as now, from far and wide to enjoy Brinklow's social life.