

## Acc 2580 Wheatley Hospitality

Travellers depended on Wheatley for shelter, hospitality and fresh horses. It was a 'service station' for two main roads and it has a memory of 20 inn names. The London to Oxford road passed over Shotover (Old Road), replaced by a new road in the 1700s along the present A40 valley. The London to Worcester road ran across Park Hill, towards Stanton and Islip. At the fork of the two roads, *The King's Arms* made up for falling trade on one side with rising trade from the other: see picture. (Edward VIII drank there as Prince of Wales).

A road ran behind *The Plough*, where packhorses and horses could take the High Street ('Wheatley Street') for Shotover or follow the sheep drovers over the hill behind Elton Crescent and by Coombe Wood to the top of Ladder Hill.

Alcohol has always been licensed and taxed. The old Church licences had a wax or lead seal (bull), making *The Bull* England's commonest pub name. Next most popular in England was *The George*: Ours in Wheatley was opposite the Manor House, next to the Old Parsonage, and at the start of the Shotover road. Some Georges were pilgrim hostels: northwest of Wheatley until 1536 lay St Frideswide's shrine at Oxford, and southwest lay St Birinus's shrine at Dorchester. *King and Queen*, *White Hart* and *Crown* may be nearly as old as *The George*, the *Crown* being the Royal Mail Posting Office for 200 years from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

The *George* and *Crown* were our oldest inns. The *King and Queen* (the William and Mary sign of 1980 now shows Charles and Henrietta) and the *White Hart* were close behind. Mail was delivered and collected at the *White Hart*, 1650-1750, before the *Crown* took over, 1750-1860. Railways and telegraph wires on poles replaced mail stagecoaches and beacons; a *Post and Telegraph Office* opened on Station Road on the High Street crossroad. The Hundred Court (the ancient County Court) and church tax (Tithe) court met preferably at an inn with a cellar where a felon might be remanded overnight, as reputedly at the *King's Arms*.

The original *White Hart*, was named from the badge of Yorkist Richard II, and Yorkist (from our war of the red and white Roses) windows illuminate Waterperry church. The Powells of Forest Hill lost the inn through their debt to a son-in-law, the poet John Milton. Plotters stiffened loyalty with liquor there before they buried a Catholic widow's body at midnight, Twelfth Night, 1630, in Holton Church. It was a serious crime and the Bishop of Oxford made the landlord do public penance.

'Superstitious use' of *White Hart* land, probably Catholic or Nonconformist worship, was a village scandal in 1700. One elderly villager remembers her grandmother saying that the *White Hart* burned down around 1850. As Parish Councillors in the 1970s, after council meetings, we would gather at the *White Hart* to sink our disagreements in a friendly pint.

*Hostelries*, *Hospitals*, and *Hotels* all offer shelter. The Good Samaritan took the injured man to an inn. During the Civil War, 1642-6, *The Bell* and other inns nursed and buried casualties at parish expense. When the King reinforced bridge defences, Wheatley homes and inns quartered soldiers for a quartermaster's *billet* (chitty), redeemable after victory. During World War II an inn housed Wheatley's mortuary. Railway passenger VIPs waited at the *Railway Hotel* for carriages from Garsington Manor, Cuddesdon Palace and Shotover House. A *Railway Tavern* downhill, (later *Sandpiper* and *Common Room*), was nicknamed '*The Rampant Cat*'.

Long before that, *The Swan* stood on Louse Hill, above Crown Square, *The Chequers* at the bottom of Friday Lane, *The Maidenhead* at Mitcheldene, High St, and *The Red Lion* became New Club.

Bypassed and lonely, *The Crown* stretched itself to *Crown Tap* (Doctor Fleury's house on Church Road) from where 'Crown Lane' still cuts through to the new turnpike (London Rd). A coffee house needed no licence. The Millers of Shotover paid for building *The Merry Bells* to create jobs and to tackle the nationwide alcohol problem; indirectly it gave Wheatley a village hall. *Willowdene*, *The Bridge* and *The Rose and Lilly* were private hotels.

**Stop Press:** *The King and Queen* 2013, in the picture are Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, after 20 years of Charles I and Henrietta, who replaced William III and Mary: bets are now being taken for the next contenders ... *Wills and Kate* ?

*Contributed by: John Fox, Nov 2013, Jan 2014*