

Old Cambridge Inns

BY ENID PORTER

MANY old inns, once important in their day, have been swept away by the winds of change which have blown over Cambridge in the past 150 years. Many of these inns had only narrow frontages to the street, but gateways in these fronts led to long courtyards round which were tiers of open galleries which gave access to the main rooms. At the end of the yard was usually an archway leading to the stable yard which could be entered from a street at the back of the inn. In some cases these old yards have, in course of time, become public thoroughfares of which two at least — Rose Crescent and Falcon Yard — still bear the names of the inns to which they gave approach.

The *Rose Inn*, sometimes known as the *Rose and Crown*, disappeared in 1821. Occupying the site of an early students' hostel — *St. Paul's Inn* — its stable yard was entered from Trinity Street and led to the large courtyard which opened on to the Market Place. The inn buildings stood on both sides of what we know today as Rose Crescent, the oldest part being on the West side where Bacon's premises now are, although this entrance to the Crescent has been widened in this century. Above the present shop of Watches of Switzerland, Ltd. can still be seen the wrought iron balcony of the *Rose* from which election candidates used to make their speeches.

Adjoining the *Rose* and fronting on to Market Street stood another large and important inn, the *Angel*; the modern public house of that name, which occupied a part of the site, has only recently vanished in the development of the Barratt buildings. The *Angel* had, extending through to Green Street, a long yard occupied until a few years ago by the firm of Macintosh & Sons.

Also in Market Street, until it was demolished in 1848, was the *Black Bear*. This, too, had a large courtyard, now preserved in Market Passage, entered by a gateway in Sidney Street and extending under the inn buildings which were supported on oak pillars. A covered shelter was thus provided for carts and wagons. Inside the inn was a large assembly room used for dinners, exhibitions and election meetings and here Madame Tussaud once showed her collection of wax-work figures. Among the items displayed in her exhibition was "the most complete, truly wonderful and best conserved Egyptian mummy ever seen in Europe — 3,909 years old."

In Falcon Yard, off Petty Cury, we have a reminder of the ancient *Falcon Inn* with its galleried rooms overlooking the yard. The inn existed certainly as early as the 16th century for in 1504 its owner, Richard King of Wisbech, gave it, along with other property in Cambridge, to the Prior of Barnwell on condition that a requiem was sung at the Priory on the first Friday of every Lent for the souls of the donor, his wife and their respective parents.

Galleried inn yards provided an excellent setting for the performance of plays, the gentry watching from the galleries while humbler folk stood about the yard where the stage was erected. A play was acted at the *Falcon* in 1556 while at the *Black Bear*, in 1600, was performed an Interlude in which appeared a graduate of Corpus Christi College with an improper habit, having deformed locks of unseemly sight, and great breaches undecent for a graduate or scholar of manly carriage.

For this offence he was ordered by the University authorities to get his hair cut and was further forbidden to proceed with his studies.

Not far from the *Falcon*, at the corner of Petty Cury and St. Andrew's Street, stood the *Wrestlers*, with a fine carved timber frontage. Here, tradition has it, was born in 1631 Jeremy Taylor, an early pupil of the Perse School. He eventually became Bishop of Down and Connor and is remembered especially for his book *Holy Living and Dying*.

The *Cambridge Chronicle* of 30th November, 1749 advertised that "the Great Muscovy Bear" was to be baited on Monday, December 2nd at the *Wrestlers*, the entertainment to be concluded "with a scene worthy observations of the curious." The inn was pulled down in 1883 and a new Post Office erected on its site.

The Post Office which this new one replaced had been, since 1850, at No. 4 St. Andrew's Street. It, too, had occupied the site of a former inn — the *Brazen George* — whose yard is now Post Office Terrace and Alexander Street. The inn — its sign may be seen in the Folk Museum — was for many years a hostel for Christ's College.

At No. 4 Bridge Street stood, until 1911, the *Hoop*, earlier known as the *Bell* and once a much larger building than it was in its last days. It was a coach terminus and the headquarters of the Whig party. Inside the house was a large room in which, on occasions, plays were performed as, for example, on March 19th, 1830 when a University amateur performance of *Much Ado about Nothing* was given.

In 1854, when plans were being made for the formation of the A.D.C., it was proposed that rooms at the *Hoop* should be used for the production of the Club's plays. These rooms were, by then, being used for billiards, but adjoining them, over a stable, were two unused rooms to which access was either through the inn or by way of a side gate of the Hoop Brewery in Jesus Lane. The inn landlord agreed to let these premises at a reasonable rent and here the Club gave its first performance in the May Term of 1855.

Not far from the *Hoop*, until the middle of the last century, were a number of alehouses on Quayside, among them the *Ship*, the *Union*, the *Cutter*, the *Anchor* and the *Jolly Waterman*. These served the needs of the lightermen who brought goods to Cambridge by river and of the porters who unloaded the barges and lighters by Magdalene Bridge. Some idea of the size of at least one of these inns can be gathered from an advertisement of 1852 which announced the forthcoming sale of the *Jolly Waterman* and described the house as having 9 bedrooms, a taproom, back parlour,

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The Black Bear Inn, Market Street which was pulled down in 1848. Its yard is now Market Passage.

kitchen and cellar together with four-storied granaries, excellent stables and storage space for 300 tons of coal.

There were a number of alehouses, too, in Silver Street at which the men working on the boats proceeding to Newnham Pool could quench their thirst: the *Cock*, the *Three Crowns*, the *Black Lion*, the *Wheatsheaf*, the *Queen Adelaide* (later re-named the *Victoria*) as well as the *Anchor* which still stands.

In Trumpington Street was the important *Bull Hotel*, now a hostel of St. Catharine's College. Built in 1828 on the site of a smaller inn named the *Black Bull*, which had been in existence since the reign of Edward IV, the *Bull* was once the terminus of several London to Cambridge coaches, as was also the nearby *Sun* which stood opposite the gateway of Trinity College and which was demolished in 1840.

On a site between St. Catharine's College and the old King's Lane, which lay further north than does the present one, was the *White Horse*, not to be confused with another *White Horse* which is now the Folk Museum. Because dons and undergraduates met at the Trumpington Street inn in the 15th century to discuss the movement for religious reform which had begun in Germany, it was nicknamed "Little Germany." Among those who attended the meetings was Robert Barnes, Prior of the Augustinian Friars in Cambridge, and Miles Coverdale; an old settle, with bookcases below, found later in the inn and now preserved in the Museum of Archaeology, became known as "Miles Coverdale's Seat." Another Protestant reformer, Thomas Cranmer, was also connected with a Cambridge inn — the *Dolphin* — for he married the niece of the landlord's wife. This inn was probably the one which stood facing Jesus Lane at the end of what is now All Saints Passage, though it was once known as Dolphin Passage. But there was

another *Dolphin* — sometimes called the *Crown and Dolphin*, on what is now the New Court of Corpus Christi which was built in 1823. This inn was, in medieval times, St. Bernard's Hostel, attached to Queens' College until it was sold to Corpus in 1534.

Until early in this century there were in Cambridge far more inns and public houses than the 156 listed in the current edition of Kelly's Directory which includes those in Trumpington, Cherry Hinton and Chesterton. In a Register of Soldiers' Billets now in the Folk Museum and covering the years 1847 to 1895, no fewer than 470 local taverns are named at which, by law, soldiers had to be accommodated. Over 30 of these were in Newmarket Road which, today, can boast only 11 public houses.

The number of licensed premises which still existed in Cambridge in the early part of this century was of great concern to members of temperance organisations. In a Social Survey written in 1904 reference was made to the statistics contained in a leaflet issued by the Cambridge Licensing Reform Committee which revealed that, in one 796-yard stretch of Newmarket Road there was a public house to every 36 yards, while from the foot of Castle Street to the beginning of Huntingdon Road there were no fewer than 11 alehouses, one to every 51 yards of street. The Committee would, doubtless, have been consoled by the rapidity with which many of these houses have disappeared since 1904.

In Bridge Street alone at least 14 ancient inns have vanished in the past hundred years, among them the *Black Swan*, the *Barley Mow*, the *Spotted Leopard*, the *Cock and Magpie*, the *Blue Bell*, the *Globe*, the *Marquis of Granby*, the *Half Moon*, the *Salutation* and the *Freemasons Tavern*. The last-named was also known successively, in its day, as the *Royal Oak*, the *Flying Stag* and the *Wild Man* before it became a private residence, Lindum House. It is inter-

esting to record that the present occupier of the premises has re-named them the *Flying Stag*.

Over the centuries Cambridge has lost many quaintly-named taverns which doubtless added interest to the streets with their appropriately-painted signs: the *Labour in Vain*, for example, in Russell Street, the *All Round My Hat* in St. Mary's Street; the *Chip Axe* on Market Hill; the *Every House in Town* in New Street; the *Bleeding Heart* in James Street; the *Hearts Ease* in Emmanuel Street; the *Paul Pry* in Portugal Place, with another in Tennis Court Road; the *Spotted Cow* in Northampton Street; the *Jolly Ragman* in East Road; the *Merry Boys* in St. John's Street; the *True Blue* (once the *Lord Nelson*) in Sidney Street; the *Hole in the Wall* in St. Mary's Street; the *Cardinal's Cap* in Guildhall Place, to name but a few. A still earlier *Cardinal's Cap* was demolished in 1830 to make way for the Pitt Press. It had a Coffee Room in which, it was advertised in 1797, "the Gentlemen of the University" would find "a neat and convenient room" supplied with newspapers and where "tea, coffee, jellies, etc." could be obtained.

It is interesting, when walking about the streets of Cambridge today, to recall what inns and alehouses once stood on the sites of present buildings. Many of the old premises were, in addition to those already mentioned, demolished to make way for Colleges: parts of St. Catharine's, for example, lie on the sites of the *White Swan*, the *Three Horseshoes* and of the inn which was kept by the carrier Thomas Hobson — the *George*. Magdalene College has absorbed the sites of the *Chequers*, the *Black Boy*, the *Star* and the *Green Pele*. The building of the Union Society led to the disappearance of the *Prince Albert*, which was at

No. 2 Round Church Street, and of the *George Hotel*, from which set out the coach to Birmingham and which itself replaced an earlier *George* at No. 12 Bridge Street. On the site of the Senate House once stood the *Green Dragon*, the *New Angel* and the *Devil's Tavern*, the last-named being the first Post House from which set out the first coach to London.

Despite the disappearance, however, of so many inns and public houses, even in the past thirty years or so, Cambridge still fortunately possesses several which can lay claims to antiquity even if, in some cases, their buildings have been modernised. In Benet Street still stands the *Eagle*, originally the *Eagle and Child* which was a Post House in 1688, while in Trinity Street is still the *Blue Boar* at which an Eton boy, in 1576 "died suddenly at cock fighting" through it seems, "laughing exceedingly". We still have, among others, the *Pickarel* in Magdalene Street where the bridge porters used to pass their time cock fighting while waiting for the boats to come in to be unloaded; the *Little Rose* in Trumpington Street; the *Fort St. George* which once stood on an island, and the *Green Dragon* in Chesterton which, so a licence granted in 1630 stated, had been "an ancient victualling house" and was "very fit to be an inn" since it could receive 20 men and horses.

Only recently was the *Three Tuns* where Pepys drank — though it was called the Central Hotel in its last days and had no licence — replaced by the Midland Bank on Peas Hill, and it is sad to see the *Lion* in Petty Cury, once so important a coaching inn, reduced to its present state and with the threat of demolition hanging over it through the proposed alterations to central Cambridge.

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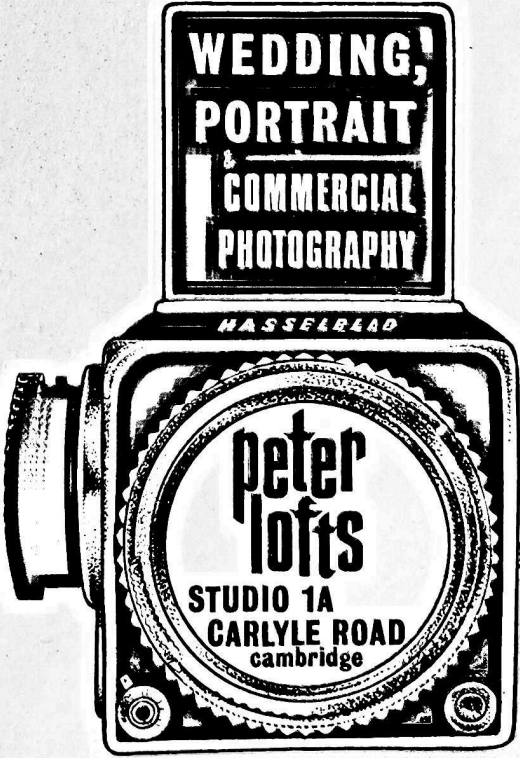
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