

The Greyhound Pub

It may seem surprising to residents of a town much of which is a conservation area, that a fine old pub at the heart of the town was demolished as recently as 1988.

Dating from about 1660 the original Greyhound pub was destroyed in a fire in 1672. It was rebuilt and renamed the White Horse but it reverted to its original name in the 18th century. It stood opposite the Fordingbridge bookshop where Fox and Sons estate agent now stands. The interior of the building had, as would be expected of a building dating from the 17th century, a grand wooden staircase and panelled rooms. It was later refaced with brick which gave the exterior a Georgian appearance.

It was popular with fishermen and in the cellar had a constantly running spring of clear water. This was used to keep bottles cold and also as a pen for keeping fish and bait fresh. So much water bubbled up that it was enough to supply the whole town and it fed the old lead town pump that was sited in the corner between the bank building and the pub. Fordingbridge museum still has the pump in storage and hopes to put it on display sometime in the future. In the days of horse drawn transport the pub had plentiful stabling and during the 18th and early 19th century was the main coaching inn for the town with regular coaches to places like Bournemouth and Salisbury. The coming of the railway in 1866 heralded the end of long distance horse drawn travel although a horse drawn omnibus would greet each passenger train and transport people to the Greyhound and this was still operating as late as 1926.

The pub had grounds that stretched down to the river and between the wars it had flourishing tea gardens. These adjoined tea gardens at the neighbouring temperance pub the Albany, where the Augustus John statue is and those at the Riverside Hotel, which is now Caxtons Décor. Old photographs show elegant looking tea gardens where you could also hire a rowing boat or a punt.

In 1830 the pub was invaded by anti-machinery rioters who gave themselves a bit too much Dutch courage at the expense of the landlord. Eight years later a whole sheep was roasted in the triangle outside what is now the bookshop to celebrate the coronation of Queen Victoria.

When the pub was demolished it became an unsightly gravel car park that rather blighted the centre of the town. In two archaeological digs that were carried out on the site in 1989 and 1997 the remains of buildings dating back to 13th century were discovered. In 2001 the new flats and town houses that now occupy the site were built.

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