

Beer Houses and Public Houses

In 1851 the village had a population of 697, of whom 367 were male and 330 female.

There were five beer houses and three public houses. Beer houses were restricted to the sale of beer, ale and porter, cider and perry. The five beer houses have all become private dwellings and two public houses remain.

The Exeter Arms had, in 1851, Thomas Price as the Innkeeper. The Court of the Nassaburgh Hundred, of which Helpston is a part, was in earlier times held outdoors at Langdike Bush, and later the Court was held in more comfortable conditions here. A stabling area is still evident opposite, against the churchyard wall.

The Blue Bell had, in 1851, William Bradford as the Innkeeper, also with the trade of tailor. He was the father of Sir James Bradford who endowed the Almshouses and whose name appears on the earliest detailed census of 1841, being then 4 months old. It was about the same time that the Ancient Order of Foresters formed a branch here: Court 1134 Foresters Star. Meetings were held regularly and provided the foundation of an Annual Gala and Sports Day on May Day.

The Railway Inn (hotel) in Ginton Road had an Innkeeper, William Smith. It is on the Ginton side of the level crossing, now a residence numbered 86. All the indications are that it was earlier a farmhouse built between 1820 and the construction of the railway (early 1840s) and changed its use to an Inn following that development. It closed as a public house in 1958.

The Parting Pot was built in 1819 following the completion of the local Enclosure Act which was instrumental in the construction of Ginton Road from where it now meets Maxey Road. William Charity was its landlord in 1851, combining the business of beer selling with the trades of carpenter and butcher. The presence of a forge in The Nook would have attracted some casual business. It changed to residential use in 1955.

The Royal Oak in Woodgate was managed by John Cluff, with a business as a wheelwright employing four men. It can well be imagined a very suitable combination of business to have repair facilities for wagons and refreshments for the waggons. Its closure as a beer house was about 1930.

The Prince of Wales, now known as "The Feathers" in West Street was managed by a William Williams and my earliest records (about 1851) do not indicate any other business, except to sell beer. It held a central position in the village, which

was augmented as Ginton Road – West Street had since 1813 become an east-west highway between Ginton and Stamford.

The Queen's Head, also in West Street, where Thomas Price was licensee as well as being a butcher, became a private dwelling in 1959.

The other beer house in 1851 was the Fitzwilliams Arms, managed by a Samuel Wagstaff. It only appears in this particular census and information as to its precise location has not yet come to hand. It does not appear in any other available directory.

George Boyden

This article first appeared in the Helpston Chronicle in autumn 1988. In addition, Wainfleet House, on Woodgate, was also once a pub, the Axe and Cleaver; although again little is know about its history or when it converted to a residential house.