

Where did the people of Market Harborough and surrounding villages meet together in the nineteenth century? The church and the inn. These were the principle meeting places and sometimes we even find underground passages connecting one with the other! There is a saying from Denmark that 'it is better to sit in the inn thinking about the Church than to sit in the church thinking about the inn'.

The town newspaper, the Market Harborough Advertiser, mentions a number of local inns of the early 1880s, many of which survive to this day. Their archives supplied most of the notes for this article.

My first story refers to two inns in Harborough, the **Green Dragon** (formerly in Church Square) and the **Three Swans**, still in the High Street. It is a tale of attempted murder and suicide.

'Great excitement was caused here on Wednesday afternoon by a determined effort on the part of a man named Jarman to murder his wife and then to commit suicide. Jarman, although based in Leicester, had a stall at Harborough market as a sweetmeat confectioner and rented an outhouse at the Swans Hotel. Mrs. Jarman refused to settle in the town. About 2.30 pm while Jarman and his wife were packing a number of boxes in the back room of the Green Dragon Inn a dispute took place. Mrs. Jarman fled from the room covered in blood from a wound in the left side of her neck. Then Mr. Jarman attempted suicide by hacking at his throat in a most determined manner - they eventually recovered.'<sup>(1)</sup>

If we stay with the **Green Dragon** we find that in September 1881 a marriage took place between a young man named Johns, about thirty years of age and Mrs. Stevenson, the landlady who was over seventy. They went together to the Leicester races and came back as man and wife. Later the licence of the Green Dragon was transferred to the husband. <sup>(2)</sup> Is this what he had in mind all along I wonder?

The **Cherry Tree Inn** at Little Bowden was certainly a busy place in the nineteenth century and almost a community centre in its own right. Firstly there was entertainment. In 1880 we find: 'Lawrence's Great Allied Theatre now exhibiting in the Cherry Tree Paddock in the evening at 7.45 pm',<sup>(3)</sup> and in May of 1883, 'Ginnett's Circus gave two performances in the Paddock before good audiences'.<sup>(4)</sup> In the following month, June, we learn that, 'On Friday night Professor Wells of London gave a capital exhibition of fireworks in the Cherry Tree Paddock before a numerous and appreciative company, the whole however only occupying half an hour'.<sup>(5)</sup> I detect an air of disappointment in that final comment so it was a good thing that the Volunteer Band was in attendance for dancing 'to the late hours'.



Ken Day

THE THREE SWANS HOTEL  
c.1898

<sup>(1)</sup> Market Harborough Advertiser, 12 July 1881.

<sup>(2)</sup> Ibid, 20 September 1881.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ibid, 27 April 1880.

<sup>(4)</sup> Ibid, 22 May 1883.

<sup>(5)</sup> Ibid, 17 June 1883.

The Paddock at the Cherry Tree had always been well used for in 1861, 'a number of the members of Prince Albert's Leicestershire Yeomanry Cavalry met for drill on Tuesday last'.<sup>(6)</sup> This was in April and in May the members of the Albion Cricket Club met to practise, again in the Paddock.<sup>(7)</sup>

Not to be outdone, the **Greyhound** in Little Bowden became the headquarters in 1861 of the Little Bowden Mutual Improvement and Free Discussion Society. It was resolved on



THE GREYHOUND PUB WHEN IT WAS A SMALL, THATCHED COTTAGE BEFORE BEING REBUILT IN 1937 (MIDDLE RIGHT).

the 7th of February that the society would meet every Monday, presumably for its members to improve!<sup>(8)</sup>

Long before the days of the National Health Service it was necessary to provide for the cost of illness. You subscribed to Friendly Societies and Sick Clubs. Branches of these met in pubs throughout the area. But at Husbands Bosworth there was discontentment, for we read that in June 1880:

'On Monday last there was considerable stir in this village caused by the removal of the Sick Club from the **Red Lion** to the **Wheatsheaf**. The migration had been on the taps for sometime, but members at length with great unanimity decided on leaving the Red Lion. The exodus was marked with much enthusiasm, the members walking in procession and alternative singing and cheering'.<sup>(9)</sup>

THE BELL INN, COVENTRY ROAD, MARKET HARBOROUGH. (WHITE BUILDING ON THE RIGHT).



<sup>(6)</sup> Hinckley Journal  
13 April 1861.

<sup>(7)</sup> Ibid, 4 May 1861.

<sup>(8)</sup> Ibid, 23 February  
1861.

<sup>(9)</sup> Market Harborough  
Advertiser, 22  
June 1880.

**The Bell** coaching inn survived into the 1900s in Coventry Road. In former times the fare must have been very acceptable for, on a pane of glass in the window of the public dining room was cut with a diamond:

'A. W. Bryan breakfasted here August 10th. 1764, and, admiring the Harborough loaves ate 16 of them with great pleasure.'

Someone then added underneath 'Had a pretty good stomach'.<sup>(10)</sup>

Was it at the Bell I wonder, where two ladies complained that their beds had been damp. To which the landlord replied to the effect that it must have been from the perspiration of the two people who slept in them the night before last.

Hoteliers today have to build into their prices the cost of items stolen by departing guests. Did the landlord of the **Freemasons Arms** in Harborough do the same? In March 1880:

'A man styling himself a traveller took lodgings at the hotel and soon after he went to bed some money and other articles were found to be missing. The suspicion which at once attached to the man in question was magnified to a certainty when it was discovered that his bedroom was empty and the window open.....A dark silk umbrella with a heavy handle and a pair of leggings were left behind.'<sup>(11)</sup>



THE ANGEL HOTEL,  
HIGH STREET,  
MARKET HARBOROUGH.

For many years clubs and societies have used the inns in the district for their annual dinners. For example, the **Black Horse** at Foxton was the venue in 1883 for the church choir's dinner. Mrs. Monk, according to custom, put on the table a good supply of old English fare which was thoroughly enjoyed. The evening was spent in a pleasant and sociable manner. The girls of the Sunday School had new frocks presented to them. The boys had not been forgotten for Dr. Dickinson handed out hats.<sup>(12)</sup>



Not to be outdone, the members of the Market Harborough Rifle Volunteer partook of a substantial dinner provided by Mr. Limbert at the **Angel Hotel** in Harborough. When dinner was over a number of songs and glees were sung by the different members and a good evening was enjoyed by all.<sup>(13)</sup>

In our current newspapers we read reports of after hours drinking. Nothing has changed for in 1882 George Kendall and Job Clark pleaded guilty to a charge of being on the licensed premises of the **Royal Oak** at Great

<sup>(10)</sup> Bland J, Bygone Days in Market Harborough ( ) p37.

<sup>(11)</sup> Market Harborough Advertiser, 9 March 1880.

<sup>(12)</sup> Ibid, 16 January 1883.

<sup>(13)</sup> Ibid, 23 November 1880.

Bowden when such premises ought to be closed. Defendants pleaded ignorance. They had taken their beer into a cowshed thinking they were safe but were found by the police. Fined 6 shillings each!<sup>(14)</sup>

Did you know that a ghost walks in Kibworth? During a party at the **Coach and Horses** the local miller was downing quantities of gin for a bet. To try to make his lose, his pals gave him double measure. He drank on and won the bet, only to drop dead or so it seemed. But there was a suspicion that he might have been buried alive for noises were heard coming



THE THREE SWANS HOTEL IN COACHING DAYS. FURTHER ALONG THE HIGH STREET IS THE COACH AND HORSES INN DEMOLISHED IN 1901 ALONG WITH ROWS BUILT IN ITS YARD AND WATERFIELD PLACE TO MAKE SPACE FOR ABBEY STREET.

from his coffin. It seems those who heard were too scared to do anything, for the burial went ahead. The miller's spectre was subsequently seen!<sup>(15)</sup>

We began with the Three Swans and we end there. Little is ever recorded of the innkeepers themselves but a future local historian will certainly record the time of Mr. John Fothergill as landlord of the Three Swans in the 1930s and 40s. He described himself as 'The most famous innkeeper in England'. He wore a cloak, top hat and buckled shoes as he walked about the town and enjoyed being rude to people he did not like in his bar, especially ladies who ordered their chauffeur to pull up at the front door while they entered the hotel to use his lavatory. So, we allow him our last story of 'goings on..' and it concerns the inn's wonderful wrought iron sign.

<sup>(14)</sup> Ibid, 3 January 1882.

<sup>(15)</sup> Palmer R, Folklore of Leicestershire & Rutland ( ) p205.

<sup>(16)</sup> Fothergill J, My Three Inns ( ) p139.

An old woman told him 'as how she remembered when working in the Swans, one evening there was a party upstairs and they were drinking. One gentleman in a red hunting coat climbed out of the window and sat on one of the swan's backs which fell down with him to the ground and the swan's beak stuck into his heart and he died...'<sup>(16)</sup>