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11 Castle Street, Conwy

Formerly known as Brickdall House & The Black Lion



Researcher: R L Castle
21.1.2010
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Updated -2015
See Blog

PLEASE NOTE ALL THE HOUSES IN THIS PROJECT ARE PRIVATE AND THERE IS NO ADMISSION TO ANY OF THE PROPERTIES

11 Castle Street, Conwy

Formerly known as Brickdall House & The Black Lion

A history of the house, its families and business's

1186 – 1292 The Abbey and the Castle

The land on which the building stands was once occupied by Aberconwy Abbey which was founded by the Cistercians in 1186. There is no evidence of earlier occupation and this seclusion would have been one of the desirable factors which led to the location of the Abbey in Conwy.

King Edward 1 required the monks to move their abbey to Maenan in 1283 in order that he could build one of his castles in Conwy together with its walled town. The castle and town walls were built in the period 1283 to 1292.

In 2012 a sherd of pottery (one of many) was unearthed by Dr Ian Brooks when he dug an exploratory trench in the rear courtyard of the Black Lion. This sherd has been dated as mid to late 13th century.

(Edwards, J Medieval and post medieval pottery. In Brooks, I.P. 2012 Archaeological Evaluation of 11 Castle Street, Conwy, Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd Client Report 2012/12).

It may therefore originate from the Cistercians or maybe those employed by Edward 1 to build his castle and town. This sherd is not in situ having been found in a later context it therefore only suggests activity in the area.

1401 The burning of Conwy Town

Supporters of Owain Glydwr burnt the town of Conwy in 1401 (CADW 1986 guide to Conwy Castle) leaving only the castle, town walls and St Mary's Church (once part of Aberconwy Abbey) intact. Rebuilding of the town took place and now the oldest surviving building in Conwy is Aberconwy House on Castle Street. Its timbers have been Dendro dated to 1420.

The next oldest house is 11 Castle Street.

1441 to 1589 The Hall House

The inscription on the wall over the front door reads “1589 JB E” This was previously understood to be the year the building was erected and to be the initials of John Brickdall and Em.Motley (his wife).

However, circa 2010 a sample was taken from one of the roof timbers. The sample was dendro-chronology lab tested and the results indicated that the timber was felled in the period 1441/42.

The dendro-chronology test was paid for by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

An archaeological assessment of 2009 by Govannon Consulting and Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd (Gwyn D Brooks, IP and Laws, K 2009 Archaeological Assessment of 11 Castle Street. Conwy. Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd Client Report 2009/7a) has asserted that the house was originally an urban 2 bay hall house with jointed crucks.

The conversion of the hall house to a stone walled storeyed hearth passage vicarage is assumed to be in 1589- hence the inscription on the outside wall.

An initial assessment by Richard Suggett from the RCAHMW is incorporated in the above archaeological assessment

1589 to 1707

Brickdall House -The Vicarage

John Brickdall was married on 10 May 1578 (not as widely reported 1589) according to the parish registers (reprinted by Alice Hadley). He was the vicar of Conwy from 1572-1607. The building was probably the vicarage.(not confirmed)

As stated above, it was probably John Brickdall who converted the house to a stone walled, storeyed, hearth passage property circa 1589.

John Brickdall was descended from Thomas Brickdall –the first Governor of Conwy Castle (1292 according to W H Jones in 1888 and supported by Hadley “ Conway Parish Register” page 364). The Brickdall’s were a prominent local family mentioned over several centuries in Conwy. They were apparently a very wealthy family.

John Brickdall died in 1607 –this was the year that the “Black Death” (bubonic plague) decimated the population of Conwy.

1607 The Court Book of Conway –extracts by W H Jones published in 1888 - William Evans (successor to John Brickdall) “took possession of the vicarage on 1 July 1607”

1707 A list of rents paid shown in the “ Bayllyffs of Conways Accounts “ includes a payment made for “ Mr John Brigdalls House” -Bangor University Archive

1798-1800 Chief rent of Brigdale House 7s 4d

The building was referred to as Brickdall House (or a variant) until late 19 century. –Llandudno Record Office (however see the 1789 reference to the Black Lion below)

18th Century to 1935

The Black Lion- The Coaching Inn

A major remodelling of the building took place in the 18 century- probably associated with the conversion to a public house.

The Black Lion (courtyard and building at the rear ?) was at some time used as a pig market (weekly on a Monday morning)

The building became a posting-house and inn in the 18th century. (pre 1789)

Stables were in the rear courtyard and a secure “post room” for the mail bags was situated to the right of the front door. The post room was enclosed with framed panelling of the second half of the 18th century.

References

Norman Tucker “Conway and its Story” page 111

W Bezant Lowe “The Heart of North Wales” page 323

Charles Fairclough (author of the history of Gyffin Church) says in his private notes on the Black Lion that on the right hand side just inside the front door there used to be a small room or cubicle fitted with a very secure door, this was known as the “ Post Room”, in which the mails used to be kept.

An anonymous note found in Conwy Library in 2012 says” the mails were taken to the strong room in the Black Lion and here the horses were changed. There were stables at the rear and also some horses were stabled at the Castle Inn through an opening which is now walled up”

RCAHMW 1939 entry on Black Lion describes the “ locked post-room for the mail bags, enclosed with framed panelling of the second half of the 18th century” and shows the room on a plan of the building.

1789 Hugh Jones of Black Lion died aged 40 -Gwynedd Family History Book of memorials in St Mary’s Church

1790 mentioned in a draft lease “ Black Lyon then in occupation of Hugh Hughes “ (2009 Arch Survey)

1801 Alehouse Keepers recognizance, William Williams of the Black lion, 1801 -2009 Arch. Survey

1815 +1820 + 1827 William Williams –Jury service per Conway Court Book
(seen in Conwy Archive in 2012)

1827 + 1828 Wm. Williams of Black Lion named in sales ledger of Richard Thomas, chandler-seen
In Bangor University archive in 2012

1827 Edward Williams of Black Lion-Jury service per Conway Court Book –Conwy Archive

1828/9 Pigot Directory – Black Lion, Edw. Williams, Castle Street

1830 + 1831 Edward Williams of Black Lion – Jury Service per Conway Court book

1834 Robsons Directory lists Edward Williams as licensee

1835 Pigots Directory lists Edward Williams as licensee

1841 Census lists - Edward Williams, publican, aged 45
 Grace, wife aged 45
 + 5 others + Ellin Williams age 20 (daughter ?)

1844 licensee was John Davies –1844 Slaters Directory

1848 Elin Davies of Black Lion mentioned in sales ledger of Richard Thomas, Chandler -seen in Bangor University Archive in 2012

1850 licensee was John Davies per 1850 Slater’s Directory

1850 “Black Lion” is mentioned in Thomas Roberts Chronicles -1850 Mr Goodall
 -1851 Edward Williams
 -1852 Elizabeth Foulkes, servant

1851 Census lists -John Davies aged 50 Innkeeper
 -Ellen Davies aged 49 wife
 -3 x servants

1851 Edward Williams late of Black Lion died aged 58, 23.2.1851- St Mary’s memorial -(053)
 Gwynedd FHS
 (Thomas Roberts Chronicle (232) says he fell from a tree on 21.2.1851-he was born 1792
 and buried on 27.2.1851)
 In the same grave is Grace Williams who died in 1883.

1852 David Roberts, son of Thomas Roberts(corn dealer) Conway was married to Elizabeth Foulkes,
 servant at the Black Lion, Conway, 17 February 1852 –Thomas Roberts chronicle

1856 Slater’s Directory lists David Roberts as licensee

1859 Black Lion listing is David Roberts in 1859 Slaters Directory

1861 Census list includes an entry for David Roberts “ Inn Keeper, Castle Street” (no location)
 Elizabeth, wife, aged 30
 +5 family + 3 servants

1861 Elizabeth Roberts –wife of David Roberts (late Black Lion) died aged 31-memorial in St Mary’s
 –Gwynedd FHS ref 166

- 1868 Slaters Directory lists Edward Williams as licensee
- 1871 Census lists Edward Williams as inn keeper aged 32 with his wife Grace aged 27, their 2 sons and a daughter. Also 2 servants and 1 boarder.
- (Williams affairs fell into disarray and he left in 1879-source ?)
- 1871 Agreement to lease the Black Lion, Conway for 7 years at a rent of £33 pa by Edward Williams of the Black Lion Inn, Conway from Robert Williams, Gyffin, farmer -see Conwy Archive website, Porter papers, ref CD4/10/7/5
- 1879 Edward Williams of the Black Lion Inn included in draft conveyance of the Black Lion Inn for a Consideration of £1210-details found online on Conwy Archive website in Porter papers ref CD4/11/11/45
- 1879 conveyance of the Black Lion from Edward Williams and the trustees of his estate to David Owen esq upon the liquidation of Edward Williams affair by agreement 1879 -2009 Arch. Survey)
- 1880 Licencee was Edward Williams (1880 Slaters Directory)-out of date ? see above
- 1881 Census lists Thomas Jones, Innkeeper/farmer, aged 57
Ellen, wife, aged 57
1 family, 1 servant and 2 boarders
- 1889/90 Suttons Directory- Thomas Jones, Black Lion, 11 Castle Street.
- 1890 Grace Ellen Jones of the Black Lion Inn –draft conveyance of property in High St, Conway - Conwy Archive website, Porter papers, ref CD4/11/11/102
- 1891 Census lists Thomas Jones, Licensed Victualler-aged 67,wife Ellen aged 68, a 9 year old grand-daughter, a nephew who was a railway clerk, a bar-maid daughter and her husband, a pig dealer, as well as two boarders who were also pig-dealers.
- 1891 Thomas Jones of the Black Lion Inn named as beneficiary in the will of Hugh Jones –Conwy Archive website, Porter papers, ref CD4/8/9
- 1892 Thomas Jones of the Black Lion Inn, Conway Innkeeper -his draft will names beneficiaries; wife Ellen Jones, daughter Grace Ellen Roberts and son Hugh Jones -Conwy Archive website, Porter papers, ref CD4/8/13
- 1893 Hugh Jones of the Black Lion Inn, Conway –mentioned in draft conveyance- Conwy Archive Website, Porter papers, ref CD4/11/38/29
- 1894 Will of Mrs Ellen Jones of the Black Lion Conway, widow -Conwy Archive website, Porter Papers, ref CD4/8/20

- 1894 Hugh Jones of the Black Lion Inn, Conway, farmer mentioned in conveyance of land in
 Glan Conwy -Conwy Archive website, Porter papers, ref CD4/11/38/32
- 1894 David Roberts, Black Lion died aged 61-St Mary's memorial-Gwynedd FHS ref 166
- 1895 Slater's Directory – Ellen Jones, Black Lion, Castle Street
- 1897 Conveyance shows Black Lion Inn sold by Hugh Owen (farmer) and Richard Owen to Ind Coope & co Ltd (with 2 other public houses) –see Conwy Archive website, Porter papers, ref CD4/11/11/180
- 1901 Census lists- Robert Foulkes, publican, aged 35, wife Sarah aged 36 , 5 family and 2 servants
- 1911 licensee was Hugh Jones (Conway Trades Directory)
- 1911 -1911 census –Hugh Jones-innkeeper
- 1913 Abstract of title of Hugh Jones of the Black Lion to premises in Gyffin 1913 -2009 Arch. Survey
- 1922 Licensee was Hugh Jones (Conway Street Directory)
- 1925 Hugh Jones of the Black Lion Inn, Conway (landlord) mentioned in an agreement to surrender a tenancy of a property in Eglwysbach-this also mentions Hugh Jones (deceased) – see Conwy Archive website, Porter papers, ref CD16/148
- 1929 Licensee was Hugh Jones (Conway Street directory)
- 1931 legal papers mention-Mary Ellen Jones of Black Lion Inn, Conway, widow
 -Grace Price, wife of Alexander Price of Black Lion Inn, Conway
 -estate of Hugh Jones of Black Lion Inn, Conway
 -see Conwy Archive, Porter papers, ref CD4/12/4/41
- 1932 Copes Directory – Black Lion Public House
- 1932 Bennetts Directory W H Morgan,Electrical Engineer, Castle Street (workshop at back of Black Lion ?)
- 1935 Weekly News report of 14.3.1935 said the Black Lion closed as an inn on 11 March 1935.
- 1935 Conveyance shows property sold by Ind Coope and Hooper Ltd to William Henry Morgan (a hotelier of Penmaenmawr ?) - 2009 Arch. Survey

1935 to circa 1958

The Shop -W H Morgan

The building was bought by William Henry Morgan in 1935 -he was an electrical engineer and operated his business from the outbuilding at the rear of the Black Lion. The outhouse building used to be stables.

He let the shop at the front of the Black Lion

- a) As a sweetshop operated by the Currans (Irish family)
- b) As a teashop operated by his ex-wife Bessie Jones. The" tearoom" business started in 1952 and was open between Easter and September. It occupied the "Siambur Fawr" – the large chamber.

The daughter of William Henry Morgan is Jean Morgan Roberts who is a well known professional artist with a business on Castle Street opposite the Black Lion. Jean was born in the Black Lion which makes her a "Conwy Jackdaw". She reports that the Black Lion has its own well, Elizabethan fireplaces, walled garden, stone steps up to the town wall and a cellar which is rumoured to conceal a secret escape tunnel which leads under the town wall to the quay. One of the bedrooms over the passageway had a trapdoor in the floor.

However, in May 2012, Miss A E M Jones, the current owner says there is now no sign of such a trapdoor. There is a gap in the floor of the adjoining room where at one time (see 1953 Royal commission) there was a staircase.

References

- 1936 Bennetts Business Directory- W H Morgan, electrical engineer, Castle Street
- 1939 Kelly's Directory-Wm. Hy. Morgan, electrical engineer, (Trydan), 11 Castle Street
- 1948 Wales Trade dir-W Morgan,Electrical Engineer, Castle St.

1958 to circa 2000

Teashop/antiques -the Wilkes family

The Black Lion was sold circa 1958 to Ann Wilkes-Jones who with her parents operated an antiques business –this incorporated a teashop with sales of books and giftware.

1964 Owned by Miss Wilkes who ran an antiques business from it -2009 Arch. Survey

1969 Llandudno Directory – HWA Wilks, Black Lion, Castle Street

Adverts for this business appeared in the Conwy Town Guide for 1960, 1962 and 1971/2. The business is mentioned in a report of a 1976 survey made by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. The business closed towards the end of the 1970's and the building was left empty.

Circa 2000 to 2008

Renovations by Ian Hughes

In 2002 the Black Lion was sold by the Wilkes family to Ian Hughes who has a car body repair business in Mochdre. The building remained unoccupied during Ian's ownership. Ian had the outside of the building re-plastered in 2005 and his engineers made the metal jackdaws which perch on the roof. Other works included re-roofing, new floorboards in part, grounds clearance in the rear court yard backing onto the town wall and removal of a large amount of debris from within the building.

2008 to date

Renovations by Ms AEM Jones

Ian Hughes eventually sold the Black Lion to Miss Angharad E M Jones (an accountant) of Anglesey in April 2008 -she is the current owner.

The Black Lion remains empty, boarded-up and in dis-repair (as at 2012)

A planning application (0/37096 in 2010/11) for change of use, repair and refurbishment to a dwelling house including the erection of a new car port to back of site was refused by Conwy CBC. (the previous use was that of a tea shop and before that, a shop)
A further planning application was made in March 2012.

Miss Jones has said that she eventually hopes to live in the property.

RLCastle

21.1.2010

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Appendix 1 Black Lion Innkeepers (not necessarily owners)
for the years before the leasehold was sold to Ind Coope & Co Ltd in 1897

1790 Hugh Hughes

1801 - 1827 William Hughes

1827 – 1841 Edward Williams

1844 – 1851 John Davies

1856 – 1861 David Roberts

1868 – 1879 Edward Williams

1881 – 1892 Thomas Jones

In 1897 The Black Lion leasehold was sold by Hugh Owen (farmer) to Ind Coope & Co Ltd

Licensees as tenants of Ind Cope & Co Ltd 1897 to 1935

1901 Robert Foulkes

1911 – 1929 Hugh Jones

