

Who lived in your house 100 years ago? When Edward VII was King and the Boer War a recent memory?

by James Evans (first published in 2007)

This list gives the names of the residents of Fishpool Street in 1907. *The Crow* (No.15) was still a pub with a blacksmith's shop at the back.

The Lower Red Lion and *Black Lion* were where they are now, but the *Royal Oak* at No. 58 has now disappeared, as has *The Unicorn* at No.194. But beer was being sold at No. 41 and No.150.

St Michael's Manor was still a private house. In the street were also a straw-hat manufacturer, builders, decorators, a wheelwright, a boot-maker, a confectioner, a butcher, a plumber, a carpenter, a coach-painter, a baker and a number of others simply described as 'shopkeeper'.

Mrs Annie Halsey at No. 76 was one of these and she also kept the post office. In 1907, a letter posted in St Albans by 3.15am would be delivered in London the same day. One posted in St Albans by 6.15am to a St Albans address would be delivered by first post (what's that?) the same day.

Needless to say, cars were a rarity and a 1907 advertisement for the Peahen Hotel offered horses and carriages from their stables including a 'coach and four' – work here perhaps for the coach-painter, wheelwright and farrier in Fishpool Street?

Only three (presumably horse-drawn) bus services ran, all to and from the High Street, one being from the third railway station St Albans then had in London Road.

But the main hospital (in Verulam Road) was within walking distance of Fishpool Street. It had 22 beds and dealt with out-patients, but only on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

As now, residents could walk to the bank, but there were only three plus one building society, the 'St Albans Permanent'.

If you robbed one of them, you were likely to come up before Samuel Ryder and/or Major-General Cherry-Garrard, both locals and magistrates for the town. The former had made a fortune from selling penny packets of seeds and was founder of the Ryder Cup. The latter was the father of Apsley Cherry-Garrard, who went with Scott to the Antarctic and wrote about it in his book *The Worst Journey in the World*.

If convicted, you could end up in the gaol near the City Station, which was still fully operational. (It was not closed until 1924 and now houses, among others, the local Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths).

In case of serious disorder, troops (including the Hertfordshire Imperial Yeomanry) were stationed in the town. Few will have foreseen that within a few years the First World War would start, resulting in the names on the war memorial attached to the wall of No. 52 Fishpool Street.

These are not all the dead of Fishpool Street, only those that lived in the Abbey Parish. Those that lived in that part of the street that lies in St Michael's Parish (roughly from the bend in the Street at around No.59) are commemorated in St Michael's Church.

Poignantly, many of the memorial names can be matched to those in the Kelly's Directory for 1907 (price one shilling), from which much (but not all) the above information is derived, with grateful acknowledgement.

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