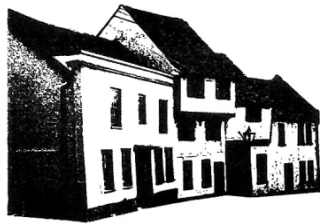


# FISHPOOL STREET RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



## NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2020

### Chairman's Notes - Anthony Oliver

Well - it is good to feel some relief from the "lockdown", but strange times continue. It is great to have the Lower Red open again - congratulations to David for all the "mitigating measures" he has implemented so well to keep operating. Thank you to everyone who has helped their neighbours, contributed to the VE Day celebrations, attended the various street coffee mornings or in any way boosted the great community spirit in the street.

Sadly, we are not yet able to arrange a social gathering for all and in order to have a delayed AGM at all it must be "virtually" via Zoom. This has been set for 29 September - you may even have received the formal notice before you read this. I should like to thank Anne Kuhne and Ann Stearn who are retiring from the committee for their years of valiant service and welcome Jack Halewood and Gordon Baisley who have agreed to be nominated to fill the vacancies.

Your committee has not been idle: we have had several meetings with councillors and Hertfordshire Highways to plead for improved signage during the temporary road closures and put forward ideas for permanent improvements to traffic management in the city and conservation area. We have also designed and had built a new website for the street which I hope can be released before the AGM.

The school re-opens and coaches return - but at least we have managed to arrange for the double decker buses to be retired from service. There are positive signs about the possibility of fewer coaches in the street in future, but change takes time. I hope you enjoy the rest of the newsletter especially Stuart's interesting history of the pubs.

### VE DAY IN FISHPOOL STREET



Thanks to so many residents for making an incredible effort for VE Day, given it was a new bank holiday and we were all in lockdown. The Street was adorned with union jacks (plus a Welsh flag!), bunting, cardboard statues of The Queen and neighbours mingled (safely at a distance) in the sunshine.

We were also treated to a special performance by Peter and Paula (from No 54) who kindly agreed, following the 3pm VE Day toast, to give us one of their talented musical performances!



Left - St Albans 1945 (courtesy of St Albans Museum) and Fishpool Street 2020



## LOST PUBS OF FISHPOOL STREET

Stuart (No 84) moved into Fishpool Street in June 1985 and his neighbour at the time was Wilf Grant. Wilf had rented 82 Fishpool Street from 1934 until his death in 2004 at a grand old age of 94 years. Wilf had been a brilliant raconteur and related great stories to Stuart of 'the 12 pubs in Fishpool Street'.

Consequently, in the early weeks of lockdown Stuart started a project for his grandchildren who live in Australia and California. Stuart has three granddaughters (Daisy and Islay in Sydney and Ella in San Francisco). In June the previous year, they had all visited Fishpool Street, en route to France for a family birthday celebration in The Tarn Region. The girls were fascinated by Stuart's terraced cottage in Fishpool Street, remarking how small and cramped the property was, given it had only one bathroom and loo.

Stuart has managed to track down the lost pubs of Fishpool Street as well as collate a photographic record for his grandchildren (and us), highlighting the different architectural periods. Sadly, only the magnificent Lower Red Lion remains today. The following article follows Stuart's research from the beginning to the end of the Street. Here's Stuart's story.

I started with The Black Lion at number 198 and The Blue Anchor at number 145 which have closed during my time in the Street. To my surprise I discovered The Unicorn at number 194 adjoining The Black Lion. I thought about the people that lived and worked in these old buildings and Census records provided an insight. The 1891 Census revealed George Slaughter and his wife Louise living at The Black Lion. George was recorded as a licensed victualler. They had a general servant, Annie Hedges who was just 16 years old. Also, in the property were John Harding, Harry Cordell, and Sarah Cotting all listed as boarders. John and Harry were both agricultural labourers and Sarah was a charwoman and widow.

By the 1901 Census things had drastically changed at The Black Lion. Joseph Hockley was recorded as a publican living with his wife Edith and their two children. They had a domestic servant, Annie Brown aged 18. Also living at 198/196 were 36 lodgers (both men and women). The predominant occupations were agricultural labourer, bricklayer labourer and pedlar. In addition, there was a shoemaker, a needlewoman and some hawkers.

Next door at The Unicorn, the 1891 Census revealed John Chapman and his wife Emily. John was recorded as a gardener and publican and his son James a page boy. There was also a domestic servant and housemaid with three lodgers listed as two farm labourers and one groom. By the 1901 Census, Arthur Belham had taken over the business and was recorded as a public housekeeper.

Gerald Sanctuary published a delightfully concise book entitled 'Fishpool Street-St Albans in 1984'. Gerald lists the inns and beerhouses of Fishpool Street. The Angel Inn was one of the largest and most important in St Albans. In 1756 it is recorded as having 15 beds and stabling for 50 horses. Now known as Manor Garden House (135). The Angel Inn was once much larger than it is today as old prints reveal. I decided to photograph the building on the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day as the front door was delightfully adorned with Union Flags.



Across the street is The Blue Anchor. In the 1891 Census John Caddington and his wife Elizabeth lived there. John was recorded as a brewer's labourer and publican. They had four daughters Fanny, Minnie and Ellen all listed as straw-hat machinists and Jane C Caddington as a dress maker. The hat making industry will feature regularly as we progress up the street.



## LOST PUBS OF FISHPOOL STREET

Next, I discovered The Blockers Arms at number 150. Madeleine Sansom had pointed me in its direction having noticed some lettering by the front door. Close inspection revealed the name 'Benskins' the old Watford Brewery. The pub name refers to the hat making industry. The 1871 Census reveals William Marsh resident with his wife and three children. Mr Marsh's occupation is recorded as a blocker. Hats were constructed using a wooden block as a template. Later the 1901 Census lists Ernest William Javaleau as a beer retailer and his daughter Beatrice as a straw-hat maker. By the time of the 1911 Census, Ernest is now recorded as a bricklayer.

Moving up The Street, I next photographed The Cock and Flowerpot at number 120. The alleyway at the side of this elegant building is of course 'Cock Alley'. However, some records show it as 'Cop Alley' (Wilf Grant always referred to it as this). The term 'Cop Alley' relates to a former building at the top of the alleyway in Kingsbury.

The Royal Oak Inn is at 58 Fishpool Street and still has the support for the pub sign in place. The 1901 Census lists Harold J A Jones as licensed victualler. The previously mentioned Ernest William Javaleau later became the landlord and died at number 58 in December 1921. Probate records reveal his entire estate was £192 17s 4d. The Royal Oak Inn closed its doors in 1962.

I contacted Sarah and Adrian Smith who live at 41/43 Fishpool Street as they are good friends and there was anecdotal evidence of number 41 being a former pub. They thought the name was possibly The Queen and, sure enough, this turned out to be the case. The 1866 Census lists Joseph Jeffs as a beer retailer and by 1871 he is listed as a publican. The 1901 Census has John Darby as a licensed victualler and jeweler and his son, John E Darby as a straw-hat blocker. John's sister Louisa is listed as a straw-hat finisher. Six other children lived at number 41 together with Florence Lewis a general servant. Sarah and Adrian told me that the bar in number 41 extended into number 43. Sarah very kindly forwarded a 19th Century photograph for my archive.

A little further up the Street I next photographed The Crow at number 15. The Crow had a history of young lodgers in the late 1980's and hosted many fine parties. I had the pleasure of attending one of these parties which started in The Lower Red Lion and ended in The Crow in the early hours.



## LOST PUBS OF FISHPOOL STREET

The Crow, The Blockers Arms and The Unicorn were all once owned by Benskins of Watford. In 1914, under pressure from Parliament and the temperance lobby, Benskins decided to close all three pubs in return for the payment of compensation. A total of 11 pubs were closed in St Albans that year with the approach of The First World War. Police records reveal that in 1901 there was one pub for every 165 people in the City of St Albans.

Gerald Sanctuary's book also led me to The Rule and Compasses Pub at number 2. This pub closed in 1906 and in the following year it was occupied by a boot maker. The 1901 Census listed William A Stokes as a licensed victualler and coachman, Eliza Stokes his wife and their five children. Also, in the house at that time was a boarder, Rose Peacock, a boot machinist. I assume Miss Peacock was instrumental in number 2 becoming a boot maker. Number 4 Fishpool Street was once part of the pub and in 1907 it became a shop.

Sadly, my research has so far not revealed the location of The Crane and The Mermaid which complete the list of the lost pubs. Perhaps other residents can complete the picture?

My research revealed that there were once four 'Red Lions' in close proximity to Fishpool Street. In addition to our surviving Lower Red Lion, the following pubs were mentioned: The Great Red Lion later called The Upper Red Lion at the corner of High Street and Market Cross (now Zizzi's Restaurant); The Rampant Red Lion on Holywell Hill which was lost in the mid-1760's; and The Little Red Lion on High Street which opened around 1790 and closed in 1910.

**Stuart Macer**



Special thanks to Stuart for this wonderful article, pictures and painstaking research. He would like to thank The St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society, the website [pubwiki.co.uk](http://pubwiki.co.uk) and Gerald Sanctuary's publication 'Fishpool Street-St Albans' for their help.

## GOOD NEWS ON HIGH-SPEED FIBRE BROADBAND (for some)

I've spent the decade I've lived on Fishpool Street trying in vain to get high-speed fibre broadband to my house at number 29, and since we moved in BT have told me repeatedly, "it's coming". Virgin Media have always said it's unlikely, as the middle portion of the street has no trunking for them to use, and they are reluctant to dig up the road to put some in (though the bottom of the street 190+ and the top between 2 and 18 seem connected).

However, I have some good news. Towards the end of June, I caught a BT Openreach engineer with his head in the junction box outside our window, and he explained he was testing cabling to get fibre running for the whole street. He told me the whole street should be online with fibre within six months. Just in time for Christmas. Now, we have heard this before, but this is the first time an engineer has been on the street putting the necessary cabling in.

Since then houses at 104, 106, 118, 120, and 122 along with 95 and 97 on the south side have been enabled for BT's standard fibre connectivity (though critically not what they now call Full Fibre). This gives these properties internet speeds of somewhere around 55Mb download and 15Mb upload.

The even numbered houses 124 to 194 and odd numbers from The Manor to 145 at the end of the street can all register on the waiting list for the same service.

Of course, this is still some way off the golden speeds of Full Fibre, which BT advertise as up to 900Mb. Furthermore, the new 5G mobile networks are likely to eclipse the speeds we can expect to see from BT (Three and EE both have plans for the area from what I understand). **Rich Wilson**