

11 Castle Street, Conwy

Formerly known as Brickdall House & The Black Lion Inn

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

1190 – 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. The Cistercian monks left their parent abbey, Strata Florida, Cardiganshire in 1186 and initially settled in Rhedynog Felen near Carnarfon. They moved to Aberconway circa 1190 (certainly before 1192) There is no evidence of earlier occupation of the land at Aberconwy and this seclusion would have been one of the desirable factors which led to the location of the Abbey in Conwy.(see The History of Aberconway Abbey by Rhys W Hayes)

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. They actually moved to Maenan in 1284. 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 commissioned and paid for by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in about 2010.

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.

Dr Ian Brooks has reported that there is a “paper by R Turner (Turner, R.C.1995 Robert Wynne and the Building of Plas Mawr. Cylchgrawn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru 29, rh2. 177-209). This suggests that John Brickdall sold a garden plot to Robert Wynn in 1588/89, which was incorporated into the developing Plas Mawr (Turner 1995, 180). The dates suggest that the proceeds from the sale of the garden may have been used to buy and/or develop Brickdall House but this is speculation.

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. This was when a first floor and chimneys were inserted.

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 (number 210)

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 ?)

1841 E Williams, Black lion, Castle Street -1841 Robsons Directory

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
- 1853 Slaters Directory-John Davies, Black Lion, Castle Street
- 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
- 1874 E Williams, Black Lion, Castle Street – 1874 Worralls Directory
- 1875 E Williams, Black Lion, Castle Street – 1875 Cassey's Directory
- 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
- 1882 North Wales Express of 13 October 1882 mentions Thomas Jones, the landlord of the Black Lion inn
- 1883 Thomas Jones, Black lion – 1883 Slaters Directory
- 1885/86 Postal Directory –T Jones, Licensed Victualler and Farmer, Black Lion, 11 Castle Street
- 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 Hugh Jones is described as licensee of the Black Lion, Conway in the Weekly News and Visitors Chronicle of 30 November 1894-below
- 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
- 1895 Weekly News of 12 July 1895 reports a mourner at a local funeral was Mr Hugh Jones (Black Lion Inn, Conway)

- 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
- 1897 Weekly News of 19 February 1897 describes transfer of license of Black Lion Inn, Conway to Mr Robert Foulkes
- 1899 Weekly News of 3 March 1899 mentions Robert Foulkes of the Black Lion
- 1899 licensee was Robert Foulkes-1899 Bennetts Directory
- 1901 Census lists- Robert Foulkes, publican, aged 35, wife Sarah aged 36 , 5 family and 2 servants
- 1901 Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald of 11 October 1901 reports court case against Sarah Foulkes of the Black Lion, Conway
- 1902 Weekly News of 9 May 1902 mentions Robert Foulkes, landlord of the Black Lion Inn.
- 1902 Weekly News of 11 July 1902 reports the temporary transfer of the license of the Black Lion to Hugh Jones
- 1902 Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald of 8 August 1902 reports the full transfer of the license of the Black Lion to Hugh Jones.
- 1903 Weekly News of 18 December 1903 reports the death of Robert Foulkes at his house in Gyffin. Aged 37, he was the late proprietor of the Black Lion Inn, Conway
- 1903 Carnarvon and Denbigh herald of 13 February 1903 describes the wedding of Miss Nellie Jones, the daughter of Mr E (?) Jones, the landlord of the Black Lion Inn, Conway
- 1904 Weekly News of 30 September 1904 reports a court case where Hugh Jones, proprietor of the Black Lion Inn, Conway and tenant of Cae Halen Farm prosecuted 2 poachers
- 1905 Carnarvon and Denbigh herald of 13 October 1905 reports that one of the Conservative candidates for the municipal elections is Mr Hugh Jones (Black Lion Inn)
- 1906 Report of funeral in Weekly News of 5.1.1906-Hugh Jones, Black Lion attended
- 1909 Welsh Coast pioneer of 27 May 1909 mentions Hugh Jones of the Black Lion, Conway
- 1910 Welsh Coast Pioneer of 27 January 1910 mentions Hugh Jones, Black Lion
- 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

1914 Hugh Jones-Conway Official Directory

1917 Proprietor was Hugh Jones- Bennetts Directory

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

Local solicitor and historian, Ms Catherine Williams said on 14.1.2014 that Mrs Price, whose family ran a garage business in Conwy, was at the Black Lion in the early 20th century

North Wales Weekly News article of circa 1986 claims that Mrs Margaret Chalcroft was the licensee Of the Black Lion (dates not known but after 1912)

1932 Bennetts Directory W H Morgan,Electrical Engineer, Castle Street (workshop at back of Black Lion ?) –tenant?

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

Ind Coope owned the Black Lion from 1897 to 1935. The Blue Bell Inn next door was demolished and rebuilt as the present Blue Bell public house in 1935 by Ind Coope. To prevent competition, the Black Lion was sold with an alcohol prohibition clause which lasts for all time. (source- Ms. AEM Jones)

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 plan) there was a staircase. The well is under the floor of the 19th century extension (which would have been outside the building in earlier times) There is a large "simde fawr" in one downstairs room in the main house and an 18th century screen.

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 2002 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 Ians 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 Angharad EM 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 and boarded-up (as at 2013)

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 and the struggle with the planning authorities continues.

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

In September 2013 some protective building works were carried out on the exterior (front/side only) by Scharer Conservation of Betws y Coed

- the exterior render was removed and replaced with a suitable lime-based mix.
- some oak lintels were replaced.
- there were many masonry repairs
- new cast iron gutters and downpipes were fitted
- some non-slatted roof areas were protected with lead
- the central chimney stack was taken down, re-built and rendered
- the exterior was protected with up to seven coats of limewash in the traditional way
- the windows, bargeboards, security boards and vehicle passageway doors were painted

Miss AEM Jones the owner has set up a webpage at www.11-stryd-y-castell-conwy.co.uk

Ray Castle

21.1.2010

Last updated February 2014

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 – 1853	John Davies
1856 – 1861	David Roberts
1868 – 1879	Edward Williams
1881 – 1892	Thomas Jones
1893 – 1895	Hugh Jones

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

Owners of the Black Lion

1897	Hugh Owen (farmer)
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Licenses as tenants of Ind Coope & Co Ltd 1897 to 1935

1899 - 1902	Robert Foulkes
1902 – 1929	Hugh Jones

