

# THE VILLAGE PUB



WHAT DELIGHTFUL IMAGES are conjured up. The sign swinging on the wind at night from its gibbet above the door, screeching noisily.

The hearty landlord serving thirsty harvesters at the end of a sweaty day, or cricketers celebrating a big victory on the green. The darts team striving to beat the neighbouring village or the club annual supper full of tradition and the dominoes and cards to pass a quiet evening. Or the big event, where the auctioneer sells the farm or property at the symbolic drop of the hammer. The centre of social life where you could meet anyone and everyone.

Yes, it all took place in the village pub. We in West Pinchbeck had no shortage of pubs in the thirties. I can recall then, spread over four miles, serving a population of less than two thousand. One for every two hundred people.

The eleventh at Money Bridge I never knew; it had been bought up and closed by the squire, Ted Sneath, who did not countenance strong drink.

Many of them were ale houses. A front parlour furnished with hard wooden settles foggy with pipe tobacco smoke.

There was not enough trade to make a living so often the ale house keeper cultivated his piece of land or worked on a farm during the day and his wife, the landlady, tended it during the day while the landlord took over at night.

The largest were the Horse and Jockey at one end of the village and the New Bridge at the other. The Cross

Keys was always busy, as was the Fisherman's Arms at the Pode Hole end. The Rose and Crown, the Roe-

buck, the Peacock, the Fisherman's Boy spaced out between the rest meant one didn't have to walk far on a wet night to find solace and shelter and on the outskirts the Wheatsheaf and the Three Horseshoes helped the thirsty traveller on his way.

Time and history has changed the landscape. Drinking laws have made the economies of running a pub dependent on the food trade and the only remaining hostelries are the Fisherman's Arms at Pode Hole and a spasmodic New Bridge Inn. The rest have disappeared completely, some turned into private houses, some demolished and rebuilt into housing complexes, some into blacksmiths yards, others simply disappeared.

*by Reg Dobbs*

My own local, the Peacock, which gave its name to my address, Peacock Lane, is now a private house, recalling its heritage by its name, Peacock House. Its landlord, C C Swain, forgotten but remembered by me as a source of illicit drugs, Woodbine Star and Park Drive, five for twopence in a paper packet.

The biggest loss is the Horse and Jockey which gave its name to that end of the village and until recently maintained the traditions of a village pub - darts team, club suppers, property sales and a hub of social life.

Now that there are more commuters dwelling in the village than ever before it is unbelievable that the village pub has disappeared, never to return.

Perhaps it is due to changing habits. The six-pack from the supermarket refreshing the football match on television or the omnipresent motor car taking us away from our roots and neighbours.

Certainly it is one of the biggest changes in our village life over fifty years.

"A pint of old and mild please landlord."



