

Good Old Days Walking Tour (Pub Crawl!)

The meeting in July was a little different as we met Paul outside the Guildhall in Worcester and he took us around the centre of Worcester to see some of the 400 Ale Houses, Inns and Coaching Houses that used to be in Worcester, hence the title. ☺



We started at the Guildhall as this is where the licencing for these establishments were arranged. At one time the Council employed an Ale Taster to check on the quality of the ales being provided to the public. Many of these were adulterated with water, which may include sewage! So not necessarily a very good job. Taken with the fact that the poor ate oysters, with their drink from the river that was filled with sewage as well, made drinking and eating in these establishments a bit of a

gamble at times.

Paul told us that an Ale House only sold ales, an inn could sell spirits as well and some food and that the Coaching House provided drinks, food and accommodation.

Paul pointed out that the building Costa is now in, used to be the Golden Lion, hence the Lion in the image. Inside you can see a replica of the death mask of a famous traitor William Guise, who posed as a Royalist, was said to have overheard a Parliamentary plot to overthrow Oliver Cromwell. He passed this information to Cromwell and his troops during the battle of Worcester in 1651. The actual death mask is out the back of the building and can be seen if you ask.



From the High Street we walked down past Debenhams and turned down Bank Street towards Crowngate, where we stopped outside JoJo Maman Bebe, which used to be the Berkeley Arms and where the two chemists Mr Lea and Mr Perrins would drink after work, their shop and warehouse being between Bank Street and Broad Street and we were told all about the creation of Worcestershire Sauce.



The shop still has many of the ornate tiles that adorned the Berkeley Arms. From here we walked through Crowngate to its entry on Broad Street. Here we were told about the Coaching Houses of Worcester, which were all on either the North/South road between the Foregate and the Sidbury Gate or the East/West road from Bridge Gate to St Martin's Gate.

Paul showed us how Crowngate sympathetically built the Arcade by keeping the Georgian frontage of the Unicorn.



Opposite the Unicorn is the Crown Hotel, which was another Coaching House. This is now a Wetherspoons pub and again has been sympathetically renovated. The original passageway for the coaches can be seen in the image below and still has the original floor with smooth stones for the coach wheels and bricks down the middle to allow the horses to gain traction. The lamps above the passage are original as well. The second image is of the window down the passage where the tickets for the coaches were dealt with.



Sir Edward Elgar set up a Glee Club in the Crown, which was a Gentleman's Dining Club, not a Comedy Club as they are now!

The King Charles was originally a much larger building that went all the way down to the Cornmarket and back to the City Walls Road and in 1577 was the City home of Lord Berkeley, of Spetchley and Berkeley Castle. It was burnt down in the 18th Century and Lord Berkeley moved out at that time. It is also famed for its association with King Charles during the Civil War.

We then walked along to the Eagle Vaults on the corner of Friar Street and Pump Street. Despite its looks this was an early 18th Century Pub but could even be a bit older. In the Victorian times the outer tiling was added and other internal features, changing the character of



the pub but it is now a fine example of a Victorian Pub. Unfortunately, the tiles were made elsewhere and they did not use the fine Worcester Porcelain factory to create them.



Moving along Friar Street we came to the Cardinal's Hat, which is one of 2 pubs that believe they are the oldest pub in Worcester, the other being the Farrier's Arms in Fish Street. The Cardinal's Hat was originally the brewhouse for one of the Priors in the City in the 11th or 12th Century and became a pub in 1497. The Farrier's Arms has been a pub since the Middle Ages.

We ended our tour at Ye Olde Talbot, which in the Civil War was the Quartermaster's Store for the County Royalists, it being near the Sidbury Gate. However, unfortunately it caught fire and the gunpowder stored in it blew up destroying much of the building. And on that note, we finished our potted history of the pubs of Worcester. Paul imparted far more information about the pubs and other buildings we passed by that I can get into this short news item or can recall! He spoke to us for nearly 2 hours, without any notes whatsoever, the man has an incredible memory of brilliant historical facts.

