

Welcome to Throwback Thursday: Cheers to the Antwerp - sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

Thursday 26 March 2020

Today's post is Throwback Thursday: Cheers to the Antwerp. A chance to look back through time at the history of our locality and explore the rich heritage of the borough -sharing the collections and our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

For those of you who were able to come to the Local History Fair back in February at Bruce Castle Museum (many might not have been able to, as that weekend we were expecting those terrible storms), we thought it would be good idea to share one of the short talks from the Fair that we delivered, based on the research of colleagues and researchers from the Antwerp Arms Association.

At the Fair, we were celebrating as many anniversaries as possible – one anniversary was of this local business, very near to Bruce Castle and its park – The Antwerp Arms pub, in Church Road, Tottenham. It had been thought that the pub was nearing its 200th anniversary, but now we know for certain through documents held at Bruce Castle that it was definitely around as a pub 170 years ago. It might not have reached 200 years yet, but 170 years is still not a bad anniversary to celebrate!



Photograph taken in the early 1980s

Looking through the Archives at Bruce Castle has been one way to establish how long this pub has been in existence. One of the magnificent maps in the

Archive is the 1844 Tottenham Tithe Map. We know from that map that a lot of the area was still open farmland and countryside. Although nearby Prospect Place with their delightful Regency-style cottages dating from 1822 do appear on the map, the little terraced cottages now nestling alongside Church Road that we recognise still today do not exist at this point.

See far below – here is a much later OS map of 1864, which shows what the area was like 20 years later. The terrace of cottages with the pub (which eventually occupied two of the dwellings) can be seen just to the north of the map, looking over the grounds of Bruce Castle (marked 362 on the map), with Prospect Place to the west, looking over what is now Tottenham Cemetery (the open spaces marked 359 and 208). The pub would have been the first house in the row, to the east, next to the long gardens of Prospect Place (circled in red).



Its near neighbour would have been the parish church for Tottenham – All Hallows. Here is a view of the church from around that time: viewed from Church Lane.



We need to turn to other documents to help us pinpoint the date as closely as possible between 1844 and 1864 for when the pub building came into existence.

We know the building is listed in Church Road on the 1851 Census, where it is named as the Hope and Anchor (reference: HO107/1702 f360, p30) with William Saunders as beer retailer. Other local pubs listed in the 1851 Census were the Spotted Dog and the Castle Inn, both in Church Road but further east, down towards Tottenham High Road – so quite a few pubs in such a short stretch!

But here (far below) is the earlier evidence from the Archive of the same William Saunders running a beerhouse in 1850. He is listed in the document below in the Poor Rate Book for Tottenham in 1850.

FORM 1. PARISH OF *Tottenham, Lower Ward*

ARREARS.			RATE.				
Due or if Excused.			If Excused write the word Excused.	Name of Occupier.	Name of Owner.	Description of Property Rated.	Name or Situa
£	s.	d.	3	4	5	6	
			✓	<i>Samuel William</i>	<i>Thomas Peart Jun^r</i>	<i>House & Garden (Beerhouse)</i>	<i>Church</i>
			✓	<i>Benison John</i>		<i>House & Garden</i>	
				<i>Longdon William</i>		<i>do</i>	
			✓	<i>Wittaker John</i>		<i>do</i>	
				<i>Stuart June</i>		<i>do</i>	
			✓	<i>Powell Thomas</i>		<i>do</i>	

In the 1861 Census, there seems to have been a name change, as by then it was known as the Antwerp Arms, (reference: RG9/794, f77, p20) with Charles Mason as Beer Maker and Beer Seller.

So, from this evidence we know for sure that the pub was there in 1850, and we may yet find something else to provide further evidence of it being there between 1844 and 1850 – but for now we are satisfied that we can establish its 170 years of history.

There are a few myths that we can also dispel as well from this evidence. One is about how it is thought the pub acquired its name.

The story that most know is that in 1894, the brewers, Charringtons, were highly-commended in a brewery exhibition in Antwerp in the Netherlands. It is said the brewery named the pub in celebration. There was certainly ‘The Exposition International d’Anvers’, part of the ‘World’s Fair’ which took place in Antwerp in 1894. Although the brewery may well have won a prize there and had cause for celebration that year, they may have been just happy to already have a pub that they ran with this name. But as we have established, we know that the pub was called The Antwerp from 1861 at least, given its name is recorded in the Census.

Although that story may now be proven not to be true, we can nonetheless find reminiscences in our collections about going to the pub, written by locals, and retelling that story. If we ignore that part of the reminiscence, please still do take delight in the recording of tales and observations of characters who frequented the Antwerp Arms pub in the 1950s, as told by former Friend of Bruce Castle, Jim Clark (1925 – 2018). Here is what Jim observed, looking back to 1955 (and writing in 1995), in his own words:

The “Antwerp Arms” 1955/56

“It was like an old time country pub, in fact it is advertised as a country pub today [in 1995]. It is situated at the top end of Church Road, Tottenham, close by the cemetery and a well-hedged footpath (Prospect Place). The park opposite could be the village green. Its name derives from the Antwerp Ale Festival whose

influence extended far and wide. It was established as a public house in 1896 and had previously been a residence.

Sparse enough inside, more homely than cosy; a very small public bar on the left and a poky saloon bar, if it could boast such a title, on the right. Beer and wine could be bought in this pub but spirits were not sold. At week-ends though, delicious hot saveloys were on sale, also a variety of sandwiches.

The landlord, Vernon, I don't remember his surname, rather a forbidding person, stocky, bald, glasses and moustache, gave me the impression that he was near the end of his patience with people. He was quite a keen cyclist and of course being a publican his free time for private pursuits was very limited. His wife was of a more approachable disposition and we preferred to be served by her if possible, "we" being my brother, his friend and myself and we were often in the Antwerp of a Sunday evening for drinks, saveloys and entertainment.

There was an indifferent piano against the east wall and Sid, the pianist, played capably on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Sid was a large gentleman in a grey suit, he was totally blind, and had a wonderfully cheerful personality. One of his tunes was "*If I had my Way*" and he usually ended the evening with "*Side By Side*" and there was no shortage of strong tuneful voices (not ours) to make those Sunday evenings pleasant occasions. There was a stout lady in a purple overcoat who had a loud high-pitched voice who often dominated the singing. There was a strong sense of community there and we, though clearly outsiders, were made to feel welcome amongst them.

During the week it was a different scene. The darts team were practising or rather just playing haphazardly; we were asked if we would like to join but declined. The player we took to be the captain was a tall thin man in a threadbare suit and a trilby hat which he never took off. He had no teeth which proved, as I secretly remarked, that you don't need teeth to play darts. Another member was a small mild-looking man with pale blue eyes who wore a sports jacket about four sizes too large for him and a huge pair of trousers which probably kept his chest warm but may have been a little tight under the arms. There was also a well-built 'tough', but how he could reckon up the score! No sooner was the third dart in the board than he sharply announced the total. Nineteen—double fourteen—treble seventeenNINETYEIGHT! He shouted and he was never wrong. The dart board is in the same position (in 1995) and I believe it is the same black scoreboard which is still in use today.

A smartly-dressed young man, his girlfriend and his silent father were also quite regular customers. The smartly-dressed young man did not have a voice to match; he liked to 'talk big'. On one occasion he was telling the world at large how a friend of his had just bought a bungalow for "eighteen thaarsand quid" (houses in Tottenham were going for £2-3,000 at the time); this catch phrase became to us his nickname. One man a local cobbler used to drink more than his fill and become very merry sometimes.

The pub pest. His name was Jack, not Tottenham-born to judge by his slightly rural accent. He was obviously retired and not hard up, there was a hint of the military about him. His hobby seemed to be 'annoying other people'

particularly Vern, the landlord whom he addressed as “Skipper.” In conversation with us one evening he asked my brother (younger than me) if I was his son! I could see the funny side of this question but my brother was very far from amused. Well, at least he was not malicious and very much a part of the general scene.

One hears of the “Happy Hour” in pubs today and many were the happy hours we spent on a Sunday evening and other times in the Antwerp Arms. It was often after returning home from a week-end on the Thames aboard our friend’s boat and it rounded off the week-end nicely before resuming work on Monday morning.

I go out for a drink only rarely nowadays though this is still my favourite pub in Tottenham.’

For those of you who don’t know The Antwerp, now run as a community pub, here’s a glimpse of it today, looking over the beautiful crocuses towards Bruce Castle.

(photograph credit: with thanks to Antwerp Arms Association and photographed by Justin Hinchliffe)



Another post tomorrow.
Keep well.

Best wishes
From all at Bruce Castle

Deborah Hedgecock
Curator

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