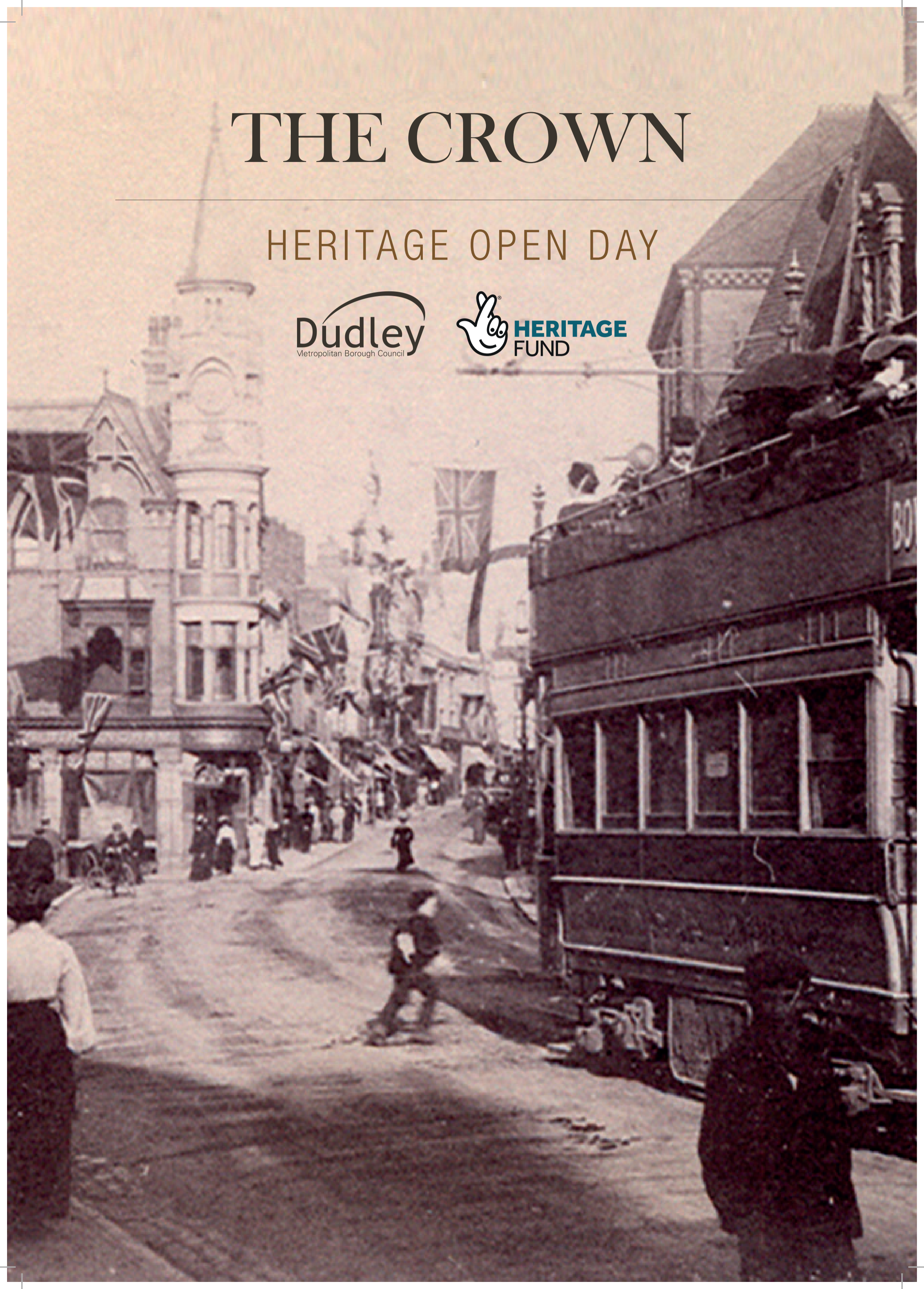


THE CROWN

HERITAGE OPEN DAY



ARCHITECTURE OF THE CROWN HOTEL

The Crown Hotel was constructed 1895-7 and was Grade II listed in 1996, meaning it is a building of special interest and warrants every effort to preserve it.

The building was designed by Joseph D Wood and probably built by Messrs. Harley and Son of Smethwick. The Clerk of the Works was Mr Bray of Smethwick.

It is a heavily decorated three storey building of stone and red brick built in the 'Gothic Revival' style. This style was mostly used in church architecture during the Victorian period, but extended to a limited number of commercial buildings such as university colleges and the St Pancras Hotel in London. The Crown was built to create a high profile for the brewery, its corner turret and spire providing a dramatic gateway to the oldest part of Wolverhampton Street.

It is a long, approximately rectangular, building located on a prominent town centre corner site, with one bay fronting Wolverhampton Street and four bays fronting Priory Street. The building retains most of its original external features and benefited from National Lottery funded improvements nearly 10 years ago, as part of Phase 1 of the Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative.

EXTERIOR

The ground floor has a public house frontage.



Main entrance corner

The south west corner (main entrance) has a round turret on the first and second floors. The turret's windows have stone colonnettes (columns attached to a wall) between them. The turret is surmounted by a stone gabled clock tower with



colonnettes at the corners and crown detailing. Above the clock itself is an octagonal spire with a cast-iron finial on top.

Priory Street corner

At the other end, the north west corner (in Priory Street) has a first and second floor square wooden oriel (polygonal recess with windows projecting from a wall) with crown detailing between the first and second floor levels. It also has an iron finial on the spire.

Walls

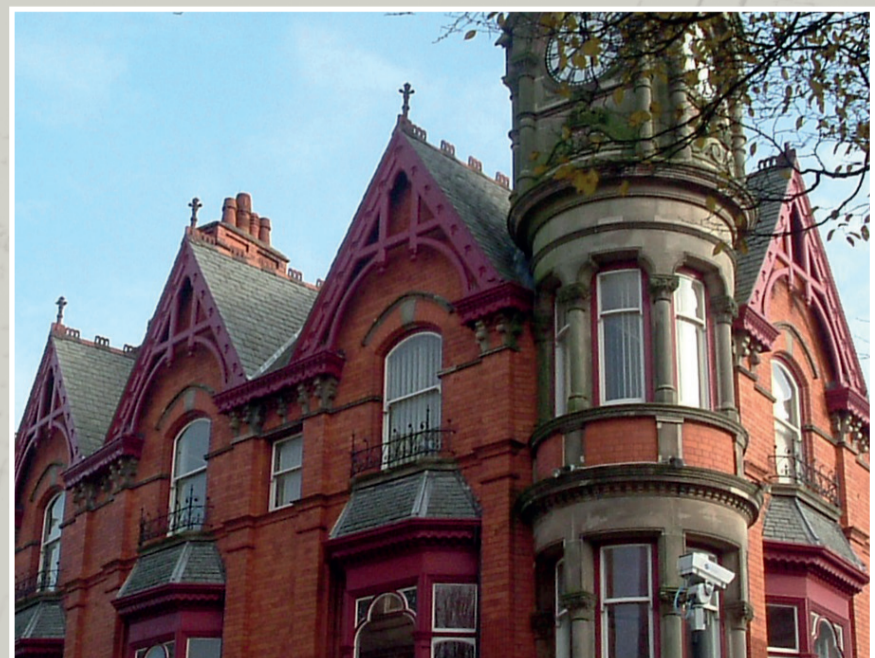
The ground floor bay windows are supported by walls of Ipswich glazing, together with stone colonnettes with capitals (moulded or sculptured tops of columns/pilasters/colonnettes) and shaft-rings.

The first and second floor red brick walls have panelled brick pilasters (rectangular columns attached to a wall) with stone capitals.

There is a moulded brick string-course (raised horizontal bands) at second floor cill level.

Roof

The building has a gabled Westmorland slate roof with pierced (decorated) ridge tiles and terracotta finials. Each bay is gabled at second floor level with bargeboards, wooden arched braces and pendants.



Ground Floor

MEMORIAL TOWER

Windows

The stained glass in the windows in the 1980s black and white photo has mostly disappeared, for example the fanlight above the main corner doors and also the first floor windows.

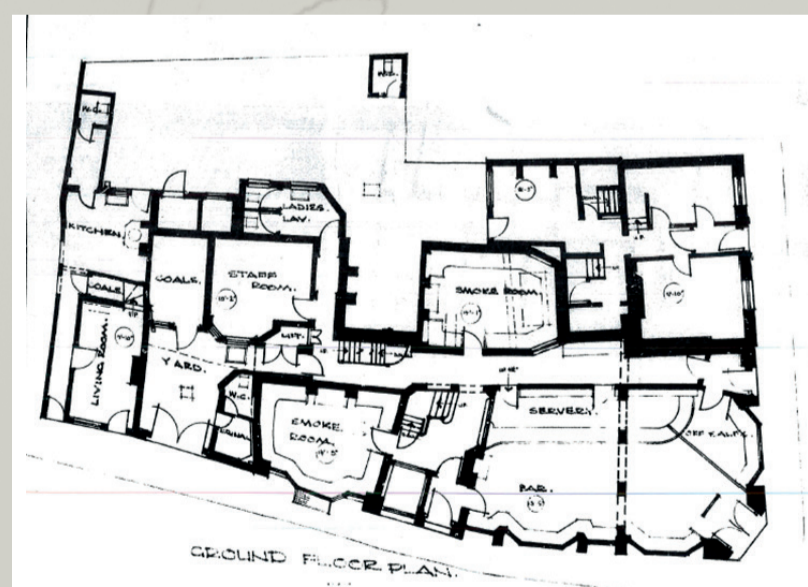
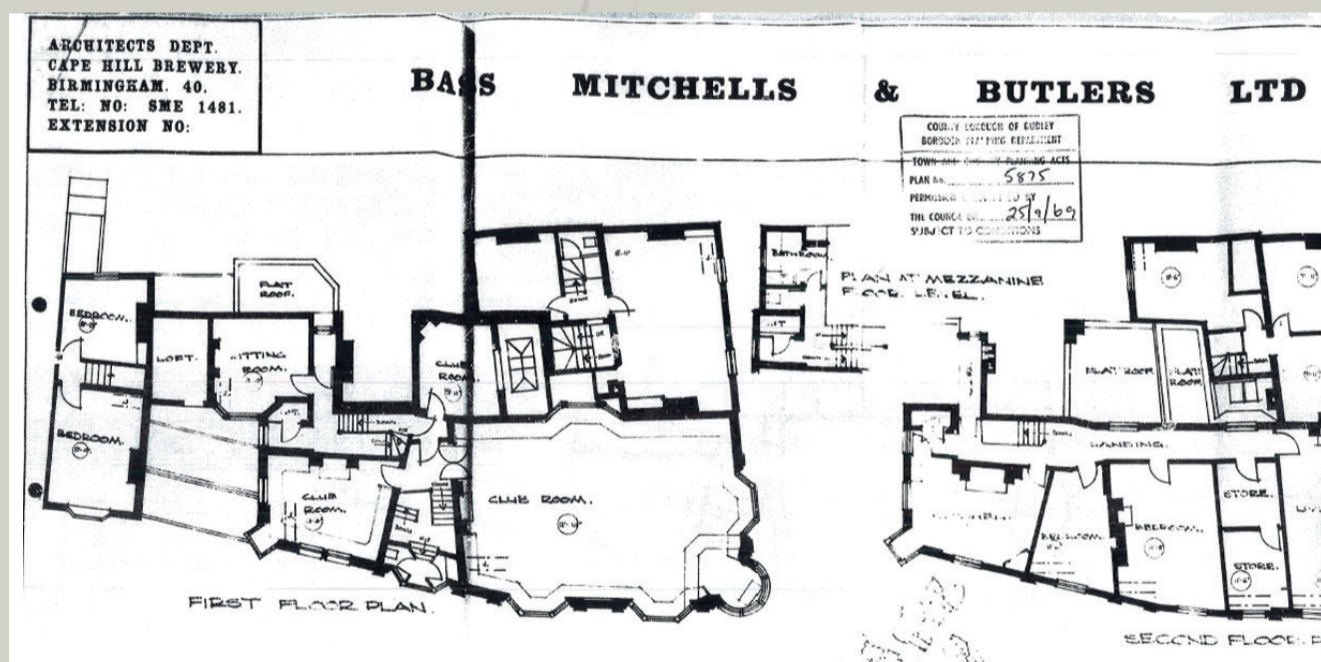
The first floor windows at the main entrance end have wooden canted (straight front with angled sides) bay windows with slate canopies and ornate iron cresting forming balconettes to the second floor windows. The left window of the Priory Street elevation has its own balconette and a pair of brick and stone lancets (narrow pointed arches) with drip moulds (projecting mouldings over arches to throw off rainwater) above the double rectangular windows.

The second floor windows have cambered (slightly pointed) arches with drip-moulds.



INTERIOR

No records have been found to describe the original internal layout, which has been altered over the years, but the original stairs remain intact. The large first floor 'clubroom' has an attractive plaster ceiling, a 'Crown' etched mirror and some external windows are also etched. The plans below show the layout in 1969, when the Crown included what is now 202 Wolverhampton Street next door.



Ground Floor

1819 - 1897 COACH & HORSES INN

Prior to the construction of The Crown Hotel a pub called the Coach & Horses occupied the site. The name of this pub probably reflects the days of horse-drawn carriages thundering along the road. The photograph indicates that it was built in the late 1700s/early 1800s.



Old Coach and Horses Inn, Wolverhampton Street. (Photographed in 1895..)

The building is situated on what was the original edge of Dudley's medieval settlement, as evidenced by the narrowness of this part of Wolverhampton Street. Records indicate that 'Smythelane', the original name of Wolverhampton Street, was already being developed in the 1300s - this is likely to be due to it being Dudley's main link with an ancient highway running from the town through Sedgley to Wolverhampton. As a turnpike (toll) road it had a large number of hotels, taverns and inns dotted along its length.



Left: 19th century copy of a 1787(?) map

The map, which is believed to represent the late 1700s, shows buildings on the corner of Wolverhampton Street and Priory Street. No records have been found to confirm what these buildings were in the 1700s, but they might be the Coach & Horses.

Below: Coach & Horses marked on the Roper map of 1855.



Ground Floor

MEMORIAL TOWER

Valuable Freehold Property in Dudley.

TO be SOLD by Auction, by Mr. PAYTON, on Friday the 12th day of August next, at the Dudley's Arms Inn, Dudley, precisely at two o'clock in the afternoon, and subject to such conditions as shall be then produced:—several valuable Freehold Dwelling Houses and Premises, with Outbuildings, Gardens, and Appurtenances, situate in Wolverhampton-street and Priory-street, Dudley, in the respective occupations of William Hale, Charles Bunn, James Cartwright, Abiather Bunch, Widow Huxley, Edward Marsh, Eli Blackham, Richard Fellows, and others.

Also 20 lots of excellent Building Land, now used as Gardens, situate in Greystone Field, between Queen's Cross and Dock-lane; and a Piece of very eligible Building Land, called the Longlands, situate in Greystone Field aforesaid, in the occupation of Francis Downing, Esq. the whole of which will be laid out in suitable lots.

For further particulars apply to Messrs. Bourne and Sons, or to the Auctioneer, Dudley, where plans of the whole of the property may be seen.

Lot 8.—All that valuable old-established and well-accommodated Public-House, with the Outbuildings and Garden, known by the sign of the Coach and Horses, in the occupation of Eli Blackham, with a frontage to Wolverhampton-street of 13 yards, and to Priory-street of 28 yards 1 foot 6 inches.

This lot forms one of the most central and desirable situations in the town of Dudley for a good Inn, or for Retail Shops.

The earliest known landlord is Edward Turley in 1819. Eli Blackham was the landlord between 1822 and 1835 and in 1825 it appears the building was part of a sale of several properties in Wolverhampton Street and Priory Street. The building was up for sale again in 1832.

The Coach & Horses made the newspapers several times:

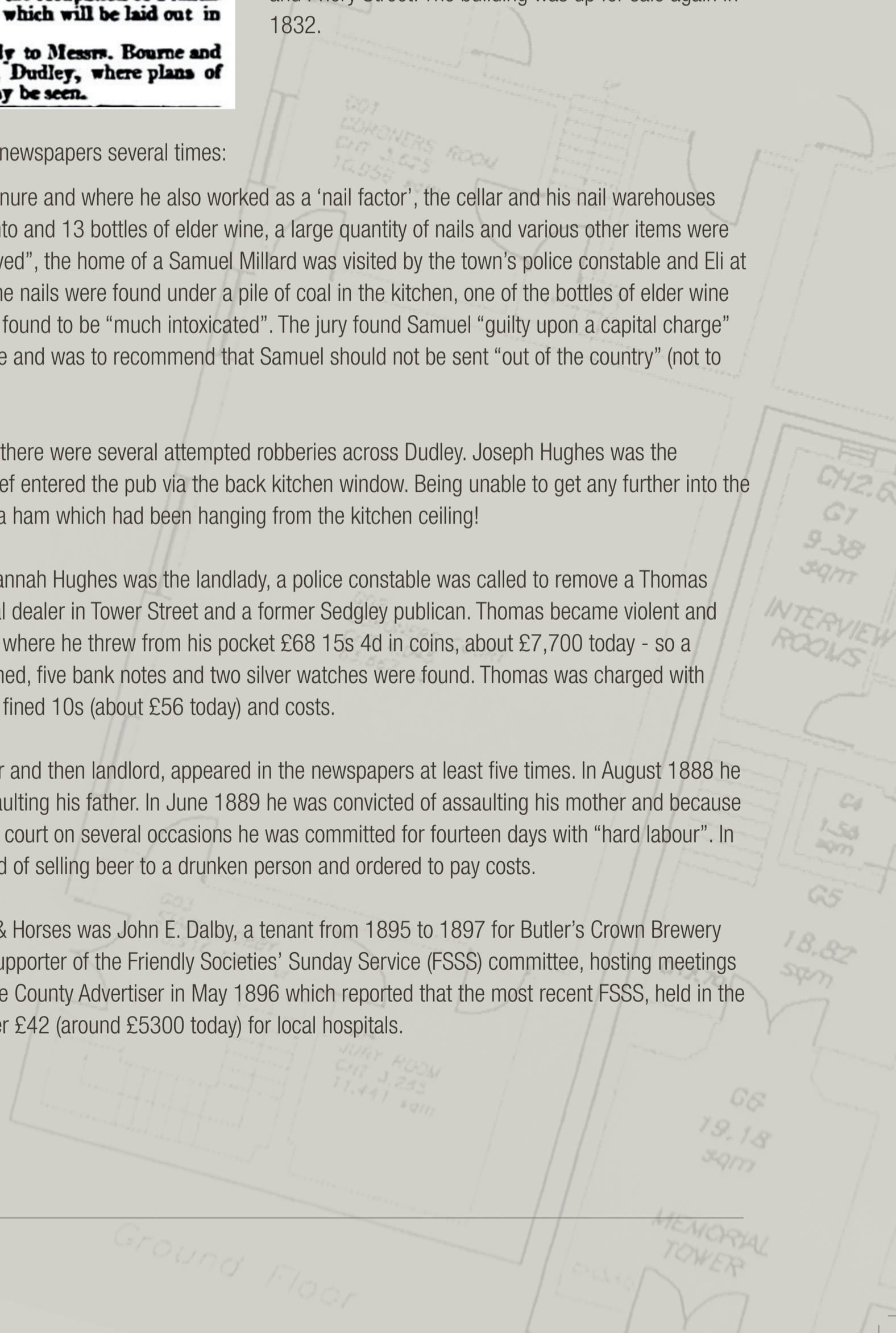
In January 1835, during Eli's tenure and where he also worked as a 'nail factor', the cellar and his nail warehouses in the back yard were broken into and 13 bottles of elder wine, a large quantity of nails and various other items were stolen. From "information received", the home of a Samuel Millard was visited by the town's police constable and Eli at 10am the following morning. The nails were found under a pile of coal in the kitchen, one of the bottles of elder wine was identified and Samuel was found to be "much intoxicated". The jury found Samuel "guilty upon a capital charge" but the judge spared him his life and was to recommend that Samuel should not be sent "out of the country" (not to Australia as a 'convict').

During one night in June 1846 there were several attempted robberies across Dudley. Joseph Hughes was the landlord at this time and the thief entered the pub via the back kitchen window. Being unable to get any further into the building, the thief took off with a ham which had been hanging from the kitchen ceiling!

In January 1876, when Miss Hannah Hughes was the landlady, a police constable was called to remove a Thomas Froggatt. Thomas was a general dealer in Tower Street and a former Sedgley publican. Thomas became violent and was taken to the police station, where he threw from his pocket £68 15s 4d in coins, about £7,700 today - so a considerable sum. When searched, five bank notes and two silver watches were found. Thomas was charged with being drunk and disorderly and fined 10s (about £56 today) and costs.

Albert Hawthorne, pub manager and then landlord, appeared in the newspapers at least five times. In August 1888 he was fined 5s and costs for assaulting his father. In June 1889 he was convicted of assaulting his mother and because he had already been before the court on several occasions he was committed for fourteen days with "hard labour". In June 1895 Albert was convicted of selling beer to a drunken person and ordered to pay costs.

The last landlord of the Coach & Horses was John E. Dalby, a tenant from 1895 to 1897 for Butler's Crown Brewery Ltd of Birmingham. He was a supporter of the Friendly Societies' Sunday Service (FSSS) committee, hosting meetings including one reported on by the County Advertiser in May 1896 which reported that the most recent FSSS, held in the castle courtyard, raised just over £42 (around £5300 today) for local hospitals.



THE CROWN HOTEL 1897 TO DATE

Construction

In August 1895 the County Advertiser newspaper reported that a “Mr Ward had applied on behalf of Butler’s Crown Brewery Limited, of Birmingham, for the sanction of the magistrates to re-construct the Coach & Horses Inn. He stated that if the application were granted, the company proposed to build a hotel fitted with commercial, dining, coffee rooms and all the accessories necessary to a hotel. In support of the application Mr Ward pointed out the close proximity of the Public Hall tramway and the County and Police Courts to the proposed hotel. In reply to the magistrates, Mr Ward said the premises would neither be a gin palace nor spirit vaults”.



The plans were approved in September 1895. The Coach & Horses was gradually taken down as the new inn was erected. It was a difficult task for the builders, as the new building had to be set back to a “new building line” in both streets, and a contract had been signed to the effect “that business was to be carried on without let or hindrance”.

By April/May 1897 The Crown was open for business.

The Crown was named as such for two possible reasons: either to reflect the brewery’s title, or because 1897 was Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee year.

In 1898 Butler’s Crown Brewery Ltd merged with Henry Mitchell & Co Ltd to form Mitchell & Butler’s Ltd.

John E Dalby - first landlord

Mr Dalby continued as landlord during the 1896-97 construction period. He continued to host Friendly Societies’ Sunday Service (FSSS) meetings such as a “well attended” July 1897 FSSS planning meeting. This was reported on by The Herald, which was apparently “found to be in an encouraging state of forwardness and everything points to an increased amount of success attending the committee’s efforts”.

In May 1897 the Herald also reported on a presentation made at The Crown to “Mr Wallington (postmaster)... presented by the postman connected with the town and sub-offices with a pair of cut glass decanters and a dozen glasses, as a wedding present to his daughter, Miss Clara Lucy Wallington, whose marriage takes place next week. There were 45 subscribers and the presentation was made by Mr T Bayliss, senior postman. On the glasses are the initials ‘CLW’ and ‘1897’. Mr Geo. Dalby also made Mr Wellington a present of a Swiss clock”. What a nice gesture.



James F Gordon - landlord from late 1897/early 1898 - 1911. Committee member of the Dudley Licensed Victuallers' Association



James Gordon

Newspaper articles show James Gordon and his wife Laura were good hosts with groups regularly using the club/assembly room on the first floor. James was described as a “genial” landlord who also took a leading part in the FSSS movement. Dudley Herald reported on the following:

In March 1898 “an enjoyable and interesting gathering took place of ‘Non-Coms’ [non-commissioned officers (NCO)] of the Dudley Volunteer Corps on Thursday evening...host and hostess Gordon provided an excellent repast”(meal).

In September 1898 “the first annual dinner of the Dudley Branch of the Amalgamated Society of House Decorators and Painters was held on Tuesday evening, at the Crown Hotel...after an excellent repast had been disposed of, a toast list was gone through, interspersed with songs...”.

Other newspaper articles on gatherings in late 1898 include:

Lushingtons - according to The Herald on 13 February 1897 these were various ‘courts’ with a philanthropy objective to create a fund for the relief of brothers (fellow members) in distress. The courts wished to make clear that their purpose was not “for the purpose of drinking”! In November 1898 Court No.3 had an “official visit...to Host Gordon... Several gentlemen were initiated, and expressed their pleasure at the reception accorded them. During the evening songs, recitations, and musical selections were rendered by Messrs Colbourne, Whitworth, Doughty, Gordon, Luke, Harrington and W. Whitworth. Votes of thanks were passed to Host Gordon...”;

FSSS - “A goodly number of members of friendly societies and others assembled... last night, at a smoking concert*, the proceeds of which are to be handed over to Mr J. E. Dalby...who for a number of years acted as secretary to the FSSS. Mr J. F. Gordon very kindly placed the spacious assembly room of the hotel at the disposal of the committee and it was gratifying to know that there was a great demand for tickets. Alderman M. Smith presided and a lengthy programme, contributed to by well-known ‘talent’ was very creditably given”;

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE DUDLEY FRIENDLY SOCIETIES' SUNDAY SERVICE COMMITTEE.
A SOCIAL EVENING AND SMOKING CONCERT
Is arranged to be held at the
CROWN HOTEL, WOLVERHAMPTON STREET,
On FRIDAY EVENING, July 15th, at 8 o'clock.
Chairman - **Mr ALDERMAN M. SMITH.**
ADMISSION FREE. All Members of Friendly Societies Cordially Invited.

*‘Smoking concerts’ were live performances, usually of music, before an audience of men only and were popular during the Victorian era. These social occasions were instrumental in introducing new musical forms to the public. At these functions men would smoke and discuss politics while listening to live music.

Another ‘smoking concert’ was held in December 1898 for the Dudley Post Office staff who “were exceedingly busy and on Wednesday evening last they had a little well-earned recreation, in the shape of a smoking concert...”.

Other gatherings reported on during the next 10 years or so included the: quarterly Dudley and Cradley Heath District AOF; the Amalgamated Union of Bakers and Confectioners of GB and Ireland; the annual Anvil and Vice Trade Association; the Dudley Angling Society Annual Smoker; the National Federation of Blast Furnacemen; the Dudley branch of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks annual ‘social’; the Midland Counties Trades Federation special meeting; and the Dudley & District Licensed Victuallers’ Protection Association annual meetings (the Dudley & District Licensed Victuallers’ Association started in about 1845).

In March 1902 however the Birmingham Daily Gazette reported that “At Dudley County Court yesterday the County Court bailiff, James Price, sued James F. Gordon...for damaging five of his hats. Plaintiff said defendant snatched it off his head and painted it. He subsequently damaged four more of his hats. Defendant emphatically denied it. The painters, he said, who were in his house at the time, painted the hat. The plaintiff only sued him because some of the customers dared him to do it. His Honour said that the plaintiff had had his hats damaged, but not, in his opinion, by defendant, for whom he gave judgement.”

James Gordon died in February 1911, aged 43, after a week's illness. His wife continued as the manager of the Crown until 1920.

Sid Bowser - landlord from 1930 - 1951. Ex-professional footballer.

Sid was born in Handsworth, Birmingham in 1891 and was married to Gertrude. He had been a successful professional footballer, playing for West Bromwich Albion (WBA) from age 17 during 1908 - 1924 (excluding 1915-1919 - see 'Football and WW1' inset). Between 1908 and 1913 he scored 44 goals in 123 appearances and between 1914 and 1924 he scored a further 20 goals in 208 appearances. With WBA he won the 2nd Division Championship in 1910/11 and was the leading goal scorer with 24 goals. In the 1919/20 season the club were champions of Division One, with Sid scoring 10 goals. He played once for England in 1919, against Ireland in Belfast which was a 1-1 draw. In 1924 he moved to Walsall FC for a transfer fee of £1000. After 28 appearances he retired from football, in 1927. He died in Birmingham in 1961.



Football and WW1

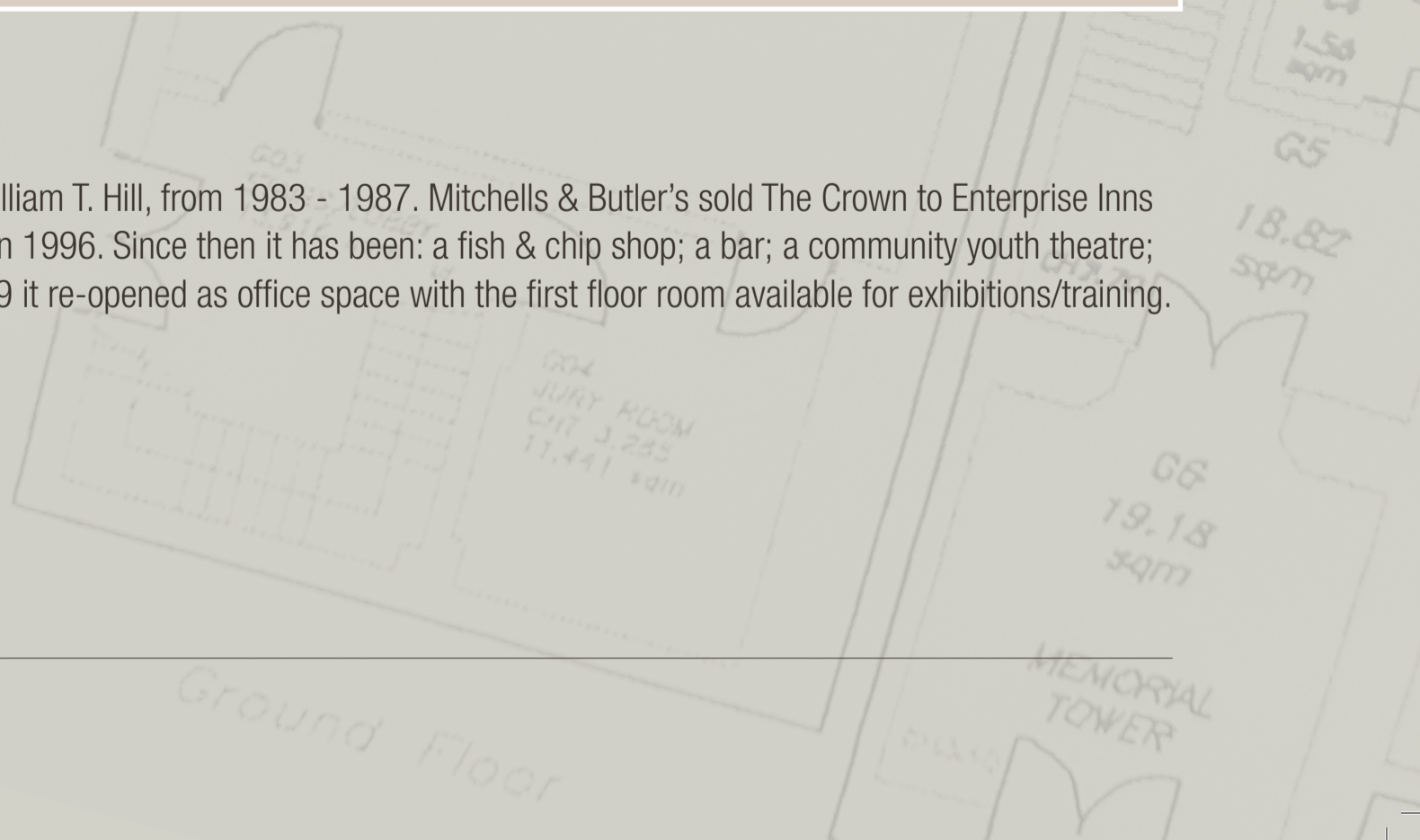
Attendances at league games fell dramatically during the second-half of the 1914-15 season because of the impact of the First World War. Most professional footballers were on a one year renewable contract and initially the Football Association /clubs prohibited players from joining up. As a result, players were getting some bad press. Eventually players who were not married were released from their contracts.

It was decided that the Football League would not operate in the 1915-16 season. As football players only had contracts to play for one season at a time, they were now out of work. It has been estimated that around 2,000 of Britain's 5,000 professional footballers now joined the armed forces.

No records have been found to indicate that Sid joined up so presumably he found work locally.

1980s to date

The last known landlord was William T. Hill, from 1983 - 1987. Mitchells & Butler's sold The Crown to Enterprise Inns in 1991 but it closed as a pub in 1996. Since then it has been: a fish & chip shop; a bar; a community youth theatre; and a coffee shop. In early 2019 it re-opened as office space with the first floor room available for exhibitions/training.



A SHORT HISTORY OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

In the late 11th century, just after the Norman Conquest, the current castle was built and soldiers arrived in the village of Dudley. Word would soon have got round, encouraging traders into the village to sell, among other things, wine, cider and ale. Records indicate that taverns would have started to appear (with the permission of the baron) and the village would have started to develop into a small town.

In addition, ale and ale-brewing was part of monastic life for centuries. This connection between the church and the evolution of beer could suggest considerable religious influence on the English drinking habit. It is believed that the church was consistently lenient on those who got drunk on 'ecclesiastical malt', and in the old Roman calendar there were about 95 saints days, or holidays, where alcohol consumption appeared to be encouraged. The proceeds of church ale sales were donated to the poor.

The obvious profits made by the church led others to open their own ale-houses where they brewed their own ale and became their own landlord. By the late 1600s drinking alcohol was widely accepted and integrated into society, but drunkenness was not.

In the late 1700s the local government, the 'Court Leet', authorised police constables to enforce its rule that those over-indulging at ale houses were fined 5 shillings or, if they had no money, they were forced to sit in the stocks in front of the town hall (site of the fountain in Market Place) for six hours.

By 1780 there were numerous maltsters in town, including two in 'Hampton Street' (an early name for Wolverhampton Street). Maltsters prepared malt from grain, usually to brewers' specifications, as opposed to brewers, who turned the malt into beer.

By 1800 the Court Leet had appointed two 'Ale Tasters', effectively early trading standards officers. No records have been seen that tell us how many applicants there were for these two jobs!

Records indicate that in Dudley in the early 1800s there were about 107 taverns, inns and public houses. The population of the town was 15,000-20,000, so one for about every 140-190 people.

Mining and iron-working, the occupations of many in Dudley, was thirsty work. Weak beer was provided to them, usually in significant amounts, as it was considered purer than the local water at that time. However during the 1800s some town fairs had to be abolished due to hard drinking resulting in rowdiness.



A story goes that a Dudley Constabulary Force, 7th Division was founded in 1840. 'Specials' were appointed to uphold the law and assemble immediately when called upon to do so by the ringing of St Thomas's church bells. The specials were nearly all landlords, or in other alcohol-related roles. The 'team' would meet regularly at each other's houses to discuss the problems of law and order until the early hours so would have found it difficult to answer any 'call to action' which apparently never came. The arrangement was regarded by the town as a huge joke.

Left: Old Hen and Chickens, Castle Street (now Ladbrokes)



Old Town Hall, built 1653, demolished by 1860 and replaced by the Drinking Fountain in 1867

Ground Floor

MEMORIAL TOWER

Beerhouse Act 1830

The intention of the Duke of Wellington's beer act was to increase competition between beer brewers, leading to lower prices (also helped by the removal of duty on beer) to encourage people to drink beer instead of strong spirits. A reason for this was because a "gin craze" had developed by the late 1700s and the upper classes had become increasingly critical of the widespread drunkenness among the lower classes.

Under the act any resident could purchase a licence for two guineas (about £225 today) enabling them to brew and sell beer in their own beerhouse. These were generally very basic terraced buildings with no running water or toilets, few chairs or stools, only candles for lighting and a barrel of homemade beer on the table - the only comfort a fire. However the beerhouse was often nicer than people's homes - the industrial revolution had brought people into towns from the countryside, often to live in crowded slums.

Within five years the pre-act 107 taverns, inns etc increased to 227. This equates to one for about every 100-140 people. The act had little effect on the consumption of spirits and also led to disorderly drinking dens and "wobble shops" (unlicensed premises). The act was denounced as promoting drunkenness and was subsequently revised many times.

As at August 1895 there were "316 persons licensed for the sale of intoxicating drink" which for a population of 45,740 "gave one house for the sale of intoxicants for every 144 of the inhabitants".



The Old Woolpack, which stood on Market Place opposite New Street (demolished 1960)

Temperance Movement

The Temperance Movement emerged in the 1820s, being a social movement against the consumption of alcohol. Participants in the movement typically criticise alcohol intoxication, or promote complete abstinence (teetotalism). The 1830s saw a massive growth in temperance groups. Dudley had its own Temperance Society with a Temperance Hall in the High Street.

Move towards brewery-owned public houses

Town brewers gradually acquired public houses in which to sell their own beers and subsequently improved their properties with the profits. By the end of the 1800s there were several major breweries in the town, but it is recorded that at one point some of the home-brew pubs produced more beer than Holden's and Batham's put together.

1908/9 Licensing Bill

In early September 1908 a meeting at the Crown was attended by the licensed trade of Dudley in connection with planned demonstrations in Hyde Park, London, on Sunday 27 September in opposition to a licensing bill. The bill sought to: close a third of all pubs in England and Wales; further reduce Sunday opening hours; and prohibit women from working in pubs. The bill was considered by some to be temperance related. 750,000 people converged on London including, it seems, a Dudley contingent of at least 150. The resolution speech argued that the bill would "fail to promote the cause of temperance, violate property rights previously encouraged by the state, increase unemployment, and interfere with the reasonable liberty of the community". Ultimately the bill was defeated.

Julie A Clarke, Dudley Heritage Volunteer, August 2019.

Acknowledgments

Hitchmough's Black Country Pubs - The People, life and Times of Black Country Pubs (longpull.co.uk); Dudley Archives; 'An Illustrated Chronicle of Dudley Town and Manor' by John Hemmingway; 'The Pubs and Breweries of the Old Dudley Borough' by John Richards; 'Inns & Inn Signs of Dudley' by Mark WH Fletcher; Wikipedia - various; 'Dudley - The Mediaeval Town' by JS Roper; 'Golden Years of Dudley' by True North Books Ltd; breweryhistory.com; vintagefootballers.com; England Football On-line; wba.co.uk; spartacus-educational.com; ancestry.com; 'Tales of old Dudley' by Paul Robinson; 'Dudley Through Time' by Peter Glews; ECCO: The..Dudley...directory, or, merchant and tradesman's useful companion...'; 'Victorian Architecture' by James Stevens.