

# HISTORIC INNS AND PUBS OF YORK



*A tour of York's oldest and most historic inns and pubs with the chance to sample some of their delights!*

## **The Story of Jocundius**

In the Middle-Ages there was a young novice monk or canon at St Leonard's Hospital called Jocundius. One day he went out into the town, visited the fair, and succumbed to the temptations of drink. He was found drunk by two of his brethren, and taken back to St. Leonard's. For this breach of his monastic vows he was condemned to be bricked up alive. In his cell he slumped down against the wall, and being a heavy man it gave way under his weight. He fell through the wall and into the grounds of the adjoining St. Mary's Abbey. Here he quickly found a habit and was soon accepted as a novice. As the years progressed, his jovial nature endeared him to all, and he was eventually promoted to the post of Cellarer, in charge of the beer and wine cellars. One day he went to test the wine for a feast and failed to return, and unfortunately he succumbed to his old temptation and was found drunk in the cellar. The punishment again was severe and he was bricked up alive for a second time. He fell and again the wall gave way, this time he fell back into St. Leonard's Hospital. In his inebriated state he began to sing cheerfully and was heard by some of the brethren. Now at first they thought it was a ghost, but then seeing that he was alive they hailed it as a miracle – Jocundius had risen from the dead: now that very day the Prior of St Leonard's had died, and Jocundius' return from the dead could only mean one thing – he was destined by God to be their new Prior. So he was duly elected, and ruled for many years with a firm but kindly hand.

This story, though apocryphal does make the point that the Monasteries were among the first brewers of ale for mass public consumption, as they ran hostels or guest houses for travellers and pilgrims. In the Middle Ages there was a Taverners' or Vintners' Guild in York, and in the 14th century at least 30 of them were admitted as Freemen of the City, including the Brewer of St Leonard's Hospital.

## **Punch Bowl, Stonegate (outside)**

Though rebuilt in 1931, it goes back to 1675 as a coffee house. It was a meeting place for the Whigs (political party, origin of the Liberals) who drank punch, hence the name. The Tories preferred port and red wines. It has been licensed continuously since 1761, so it is the fifth oldest pub in York. It was the headquarters of the York Race Committee and the resort of York Minster bell-ringers in the 18th century.

## **Dating of Pubs**

Pub = public house. As most early ale houses were private houses, they were not regulated, but by the late 15th century some regulation was introduced for taxation purposes. Ale-house signs over the

door, often originally a bush or branch, (hence 'Bull and Bush') were compulsory from 1477. This is why so many pub names go back to the Wars of the Roses ('Rose & Crown', 'White Hart', 'Blue Boar', etc). By the mid 16th century there were 19,759 taverns or inns in England and Wales, or 1:187 people compared with 1:650 today. In York in the Middle Ages it is said there was a monastery for every day of the week, (7), a church for every week of the year (52) and a pub for every day of the year (365). This is not far wrong, as there were 7 major monastic houses, about 45 churches, and about 200 inns and alehouses.

When dating pubs, it is necessary to distinguish between the date of the building, which may be recent, and the date of licensing. So the Old Black Swan, Peasholme Green, and the Red Lion, Merchantgate, are old buildings of the 15th/16th century, and as such are probably the oldest buildings in York functioning as pubs, but have only become pubs relatively recently; while the Golden Fleece, Pavement, has been licensed continuously since 1668, but was rebuilt in the 19th century.

The oldest continuously licensed premises in York are:

1. Olde Starre, Stonegate – 1644
2. Golden Fleece, Pavement – 1668
3. Old White Swan, Goodramgate – 1703
4. Robin Hood (formerly Little John), Castlegate – 1733
5. Punch Bowl, Stonegate – 1761
6. Windmill, Blossom Street – 1770

## **Ye Olde Starre Inn, Stonegate (inside)**

The oldest continuously licensed premises is in York, going back to at least 1644, with a building of even older date, so it may go back to the mid 16th century. The earliest reference is of a printer, Thomas Broad, dwelling at Mistress Roger's house in Stonegate, over against the Starre in 1644.

Ye Olde Starre may be a reference to the Star of Bethlehem, guiding travellers to the Minster (and pub!); or to the crest of the Innkeepers company which is a 16 pointed Star. The main block at the back of the yard is mid 16th century, the left hand block is c.1600. Originally there was a coaching yard in front. But with the coming of the railways in 1840 this became redundant, and the yard was infilled with a shop fronting Stonegate, hence the long passage to the pub. The Starre had stabling behind leading to Lop Lane (now Duncombe Place) and this was used as stabling for circus and theatrical parties from the Theatre Royal; so the pub was a resort for actors.

The first recorded Landlord in 1644 was a staunch royalist, and as the City fell to the Parliament that year he was no doubt none too pleased to have to serve Roundheads. The pub was sold for £250 in 1662, and in 1683 it was inherited by Edward Thompson, grandfather of General Wolfe, who also owned the house that is now the Old Black Swan, Peasholme Green.

In 1733 to advertise the pub, the landlord Thomas Bulman, erected a sign across the road. He made a written agreement with John Moore, a shoemaker, and George Ambler, a saddler, that he could fix his sign to their premises across Stonegate; he was to pay them 5/- each at Candlemas, but they had to spend it in his company (i.e. in his pub!)

## Site of Old George Inn, Coney Street

Now the shop, Next. Only part of gateway and pillar to coaching yard survives, as it was demolished in 1868. It was originally a medieval merchants' mansion of the 15th century, maybe near the site of the 'Bull' (later the 'Rose'), which was owned by the Mayor and Corporation. In 1459 it was "ordained that from this day forth, no aliens coming from foreign parts, shall be lodged within the said city, liberties or suburbs thereof, but only in the Inn of the Mayor and Commonalty, at the sign of the Bull in Conyng Street".

The 'George' first appears under Thomas Kaye, Sheriff of York in 1614. It had a large galleried quadrangle, and a fantastically decorated frontage with elaborate plasterwork. It was a major coaching inn in the 18th century and early 19th century, and many notables stayed here including Vanbrugh. One can imagine coaches tearing along Coney Street and turning sharply into the narrow entrance. When passengers on the roof complained that they nearly had their heads knocked off, the coachman would say 'Don't worry - there was over an inch to spare!'

Opposite, under the old British Home Stores was the:

### **BLACK SWAN**

It is a medieval building, rebuilt in 1790, to follow the new building line of Coney Street. The Black Swan is York's major coaching inn. In 1706 on 12 April, the first stagecoach from London to York left the Black Swan, Holborn, for this inn, at 5am. It took four days and ran Monday, Wednesday and Friday only. In 1786, the mail coaches first appeared, and by 1830 eighteen coaches daily left the Black Swan. In 1838 the time from London to York was down to 21 hours. There was stabling for 100 horses here.

#### **Stagecoaches included:**

- "Express" to Carlisle – Wednesday and Friday am
- "Tally Ho" to Carlisle – Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday
- "Rockingham" to Hull – every forenoon
- "Trafalgar" to Hull – every afternoon
- "Union" to Kendal – every morning
- "True Blue" to Leeds – every afternoon

Many notables stayed here including Dickens and the Bronte Sisters.

## **Via Spurriergate, back of St. Michael, Spurriergate to:**

### **King's Arms (Exterior)**

This is an early 17th century building. As it had no fireplaces or partitions originally, it may have been a custom house, or a warehouse. It had very thick walls to protect from floods. There is a legend that bodies of criminals laid out here before being hung from old Ouse Bridge.

King's Staith was a major quayside until the 19th century. It may refer to royal visits to nearby castle and Franciscan Friary, though the name only appears to be common from 17th century.

It was first recorded as a pub in 1783 or 1795 as King's Arms; then in the 19th century as 'Ouse Bridge Inn'. It reverted to its old name in 1974.

The inn sign depicts King Richard III, who as a boy grew up at Middleham Castle, and as Duke of Gloucester visited York frequently from Sheriff Hutton. He was very popular in York, and invested his son Prince of Wales in York Minster. He also halved York's tax burden.

The City Council sent men to help him at Bosworth, but to no avail and it is recorded in the Council Minutes, kept in the Council Chamber on old Ouse Bridge "that King Richard, late lawfully reigning over us, was through great treason piteously slain and murdered, to the great heaviness of this City".

## **Via King Street, to Castlegate:**

Look at the 'ROBIN HOOD', formerly 'LITTLEJOHN', which has been continuously licensed since 1733, and so is York's fourth oldest pub. It retains remnants of its coaching yard.

## **Red Lion, Merchantgate (Interior)**

The Red Lion is built on 13th century Foundations, with 14th-15th century superstructure and it is on the corner nearest Fossgate/Merchantgate. It has two side wings of c.1600. It has a reputed 13th century bread oven in the front bar, so it claims to be the oldest building used as a pub, though it has only been licensed since the 19th century. It formerly opened off Fossgate, which with Walmgate had 28 pubs. Merchantgate cut through in 1912 when Piccadilly was created.

It was formerly behind the Black Horse, Fossgate, and they both served the old pig market on Foss Bridge. The tethering rings for the pigs are still visible on the bridge. On the first floor there is a priest's hole between two bedrooms, with access through the chimney. There is a legend that Dick Turpin hid here and escaped through a window.

## **Via Fossgate and Lady Peckett's Yard to:**

### **Golden Fleece, Pavement (Interior)**

The second oldest continuously licensed premises – back to 1668. It takes its name from the wool trade, the staple trade of York from the 13th to the 17th centuries. The frontage is mid-19th century, but rear parts go back to 16th century, and are relics of a courtyard for coaches. The Golden Fleece was a major coaching inn in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The property once belonged to the Merchant Adventurers Guild before 1570s. The jetty of Thomas Herbert's House and Lady Peckett's Yard projects into the side passage. In 1667, Richard Booth, a York Merchant was allowed to mint his own copper halfpennies which are shown as produced "at the Golden Fleece". John Peckett, Lord Mayor 1702, and husband of Lady Peckett, owned the premises in late 17th - early 18th century.

## Via Shambles to King's Square:

### Old White Swan (Interior)

The Old White Swan is part timber framed, but mainly brick. The centre ranges from the 16th century, set back from street, with side wings mid-18th century. Frontage to Goodramgate was rebuilt 1771.

It was recorded as an Inn in 1703 – the third oldest continuously licensed pub. Various parts of it at various times were a pigsty, barbers shop, barn, etc.

The Gallery and Minstrel Bar show fine examples of timber framing and a former hayloft. A Roman column is preserved under a glass panel, but is not in situ.

The Old White Swan was in two parishes – Holy Trinity Kings Court, and Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, so paid two sets of rates. This caused many disputes, and in the early 17th century, a white line was painted through the courtyard and in through the kitchen door to show the boundary. In 1723 there was much searching for Papists and the parish constables spent 1/- in watching for Papists at night at the Swan! It was a major coaching and posting inn in late 18th-early 19th centuries.

In pre-railway days, it was much frequented by farmers and poultry dealers, who used to collect poultry around country districts and come to the Old White Swan to sell them at fixed times to their city clients.

## Along Goodramgate to:

### Angler's Arms (Exterior)

The exterior dates from around 1500, but was plastered over in the early 19th century. The name has changed from the 18th century 'Painters Arms', then 'Square & Compass', then 'Board', 'Anglers Arms' 1896, now 'Snickleway Inn' (1994). Note the deliberate misspelling to avoid breaking Mark Jones' copyright.

**Ghost Story of Marmaduke Buckle.** Born in 1697 of a wealthy family, Marmaduke was crippled. This was put down to the marks of the devil, and he was tormented and persecuted by his contemporaries. So he retreated upstairs and looked down on Goodramgate from a window. He was eventually driven to despair and suicide, and he hanged himself from a beam. He scratched in his room on plaster:

Marmaduke Buckle - 1697 1717. Not a vindictive ghost. It just looks down from his window, or causes a door to open or a light to go on.

## Via Bedern, Aldwark to:

### Old Black Swan, Peasholme Green (Interior)

This is a fine mid-16th century Merchants Mansion, possibly built by Sir Martin Bowes in 1560. It was extended by Sir Henry Thompson, (Lord Mayor 1663 & 1672). After the Red Lion it is the oldest building functioning as a pub in York, though not licensed until 19th century.

The interior is mainly mid-17th century, with the best living rooms on either side of the front passage; the back bar was the kitchen. A very fine staircase leads upstairs to the “Trompe D'Oeil” room. This means “Deceiving the eye”, and the room is so called because the woodwork is painted to look like elaborate panelling.

The house was the residence of the Bowes family in the 15th and 16th century. William Bowes, who was Sheriff in 1402 and Lord Mayor in 1417, owned it.

His great grandson was Sir Martyn Bowes. He eventually became Lord Mayor of London and goldsmith to Elizabeth I. He had a great love for York and gave to the City a Sword of State, which is still used on ceremonial occasions.

The house later passed to the Thompson family, who also owned the Olde Starre Inne on Stonegate. Henry Thompson, who was Sheriff in 1601, was a Wine Merchant. Edward Thompson, born in 1670, had a countryseat at the Old Hall, Long Marston, and used this house on Peasholme Green as his town house. His daughter Henrietta Thompson married Colonel Edward Wolfe in 1724 at Long Marston. Thereafter the couple resided at the house here on Peasholme Green, but in July 1726 moved to Westerham, Kent, where James Wolfe was born on 2 January 1727. So James Wolfe was presumably conceived in York, perhaps in the Old Black Swan! As General Wolfe, he died taking Quebec from the French, and so laid the foundations of British Canada.

This fact sheet has been provided by YorkWalk. Established in 1990, YorkWalk offers a programme of themed walking tours of York throughout the year. This information is intended to assist journalists with information on different York themes and has been written to give a flavour of York's themed walking tours.

Other tours include the Historic Toilet Tour, the Graveyard, Coffin and Plague tour, the Guy Fawkes Trail and the Bloody Execution Tour...to name just a few. [www.yorkwalk.co.uk](http://www.yorkwalk.co.uk)

**For more information and to book your stay in York:**

Visit [www.visitYork.org](http://www.visitYork.org)

Twitter: @visityork #yorkadventure #onlyinyork #visityork

**Media contact:** Kay Hyde, Head of PR & Communications.

Tel: 01904 554451 Email: [Kay.Hyde@makeityork.com](mailto:Kay.Hyde@makeityork.com)