

1 Church Street

The History of a House

by Nigel Willcock



When we moved into 1 Church Street in April 2001 I was told that it was built in 1850; that the cellar had previously had a walnut door connecting it to a tunnel leading to the Unitarian Chapel and that it and number 3 Church Street had once been a single building. There was even supposed to be a ghost called Martha !.

I was of course therefore hooked on finding out as much as I could.

Maps of 1850 definitely showed a building on the site which could have indicated that the house was built before 1850 although strangely La Tama which has an earlier date stone was not shown in this map.

The clearest evidence was from the Tithe Map of 1838 (Lancashire Archive) which showed plot 192 on the site with a building roughly the footprint of numbers 1 & 3 Church Street and an outbuilding. Once again there was no sign of La Tama. The key references Church Tavern, Beerhouse, Outbuilding and Yard. It was occupied by John Duckworth, there were Duckworth's associated with the property until at least 1894.

A Tavern was distinguishable from an Inn at this time because it served wine whilst an Inn served beer & ale. The term Public House or Pub came later. The landlord at the Church Tavern in 1839 was John Unsworth which is mentioned in Rev. Bullock's book *The History of Cockey Moor* otherwise Ainsworth.

That was the last direct reference to the property that century as the houses on Church Street were not numbered in the 1881 Census, this is very unusual and I wrote to Stuart Walker (local historian) who was surprised but verified this. There was a mention of the Jolly Carters (now La Tama) with the Head Beer Seller named as Ellen Monks. In the 1901 Census John W. Gibson a Greengrocer occupied the house with his wife Mary, although it does not indicate if he traded from this property or was a greengrocer in some other premises.

I managed to get some of the deeds and paperwork from my solicitors dating from 1923 which although sketchy does allow better linking of the facts. In July 1923 Martha Ann Brooks (could this be the Martha mentioned in paragraph 1 ?) sold the property to the Makin sisters Emily & Annie. Annie later married Benjamin Addle a Confectioner which may have been the first time that the property was used as a shop. Interestingly the Makin sisters sold the shop to the Rigby sisters (Elizabeth, Alice & Dora) in 1934 for £230; this is the first time that the property is actually referred to as a shop. The dirt track behind the property is called Ash Pit in this year - it had to be kept in good repair and allow

horse carts, waggons and vehicles laden or unladen and to drive cattle and other beasts along and over it.

In 1946 Harold Hornby bought the property from the Rigby sisters for £530. Harold was referred to as an Oil Refiner living at 3 Arthur Lane. We were delighted that some of Harold's family have been able to provide additional information remembering baking ovens in what is now the kitchen and very busy Saturday mornings as people queued for their cakes and bread. They have also been able to describe the layout of the building at that time which was very different to now. James Haslam, Grocer, bought the property for £600 and sold it to George & Margaret Shaw for £700. From 1954 to 1964 it was owned by Harriet Falconer (Spinster) who paid £800 for it. She also had an interest in number 3 & 5 Church Street during this time. In 1966 it became Bryan & Rothery, a Chemist shop. It was last an electrical retail business trading as Ross Electrics and many people remember buying their televisions there and then going back to have them repaired years later. I do not have any documentation relating to this period. I do however remember finding many of the old television tubes in the cellar when we moved in.



Last year we had the double cellar tanked and turned into habitable accommodation. We excavated the old steps laying to rest the myth of the tunnel to the chapel unfortunately but fascinatingly finding over 100 bottles. Sadly most were broken but the four pictured did survive, one being a Blacking Jar (used for blacking fire places and steps) dating from c 1830.



If anyone else would like to add any memories or information I would be delighted to hear from them.