

## 12. Middlebridge Street Miscellany

### **Tudor Cottage and a Tailor**

Several old properties in the street had projecting windows at pavement level, particularly on the north side, where small retail shop and workshop enterprises were carried on in front rooms. Some of these survived well after WW2. One such is Tudor Cottage that housed a café/tea room into the 1960s.

In the mid-1800s Harry Newman, a tailor, lived and worked in Tudor Cottage (number 21). When sitting in the window seats and sewing away Newman had a good view across the street to what was then a dangerously deep, fast running, and unfenced, Holbrook Stream. Newman rescued the occasional child from drowning in the stream, an infrequent but regular occurrence, and he received commendations for his prompt actions. Several inquests were held in the Three Tuns.

The long delayed safety scheme to have railings erected along the south side of the street, despite repeated complaints from numerous sources, is well recorded. After at least 100 years of public concern, the scheme was being advertised in 1868. But Newman for one spoke out against the proposed iron fence not only regarding cost, which was a common complaint. He probably had little faith in the railings being able to deter the adventurous young, and pointed out that such railings would make it more difficult for him to get at the children to save them.

### **The business end of Middlebridge Street**

In the late-1800s the list (not exhaustive) is impressive - greengrocer, shopkeeper, butcher, seedsman, carpenter, currier, whitesmith, blacksmith, baker, brewer, beer retailer (seven in 1867 alone!), stonemason, painter, flour-dealer, cooper, bricklayer, basket-maker, rope and twine manufacturer, tailor, boot and shoemaker, tanner, oil merchant, builder, bookbinder, jeweller, skin-dresser, bill-poster, hardware dealer and furniture maker. Add to that a church, three schools, three pubs, abattoirs, two tanneries, a large timber yard and saw mill and other unrecorded activities, and we have a street with a story to tell.

*Ted Mason*

## The Nowes Charity

The 18th century was a time of general growth in literacy in England which was assisted by the foundation of charity schools. Early in the century Mr John Nowes, of Lee, decided that poor boys were worth educating and he left his 200-acre farm at Lee, in Romsey Extra to three trustees. They were 'to apply the clear yearly rent in schooling, clothing and apprenticing 40 poor boys; to be children of parents in communion with the Church of England and to wear gowns and caps of blue cloth'. Twenty of these boys were to be taught in Romsey, ten at Yeovil and ten at Fisherton Anger near Salisbury.

There is no record of the first days of the school but by 1756 the annual trustees' meeting recorded the names of the boys being taught. The location of the school at that time is not clear – Mrs Suckling, Romsey's local historian at the beginning of the twentieth century, was told by another Romsonian that the school was held at a house in The Horsefair. The Charity progressed very well and by 1841 the finances were such that the Trustees decided to buy land in Middlebridge Street and erect a building to house the school and the master. It became known as 'The Flint House'. White's Directory of 1859 describes the charity thus:

The present schoolmaster is allowed £40 a year for teaching the 20 free scholars and the privilege of educating other boys for his own advantage. The free boys are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, drawing etc. Each of them has yearly a blue cloth cap, coat and waistcoat, leather breeches, four pairs of worsted stocking, two pairs of shoes and two pairs of collars and bands. Apprentice fees of £20 are now usually awarded by the trustees.

Soon after this, however, the funding of the Charity changed. Lord Palmerston, engaged in acquiring farm land adjacent to his estate, bought the farm at Lee in 1862 and the trustees invested the proceeds in an estate at Dibden Purlieu, for which they also needed a mortgage - just as the agricultural depression began. The charity's funds never recovered. In 1875 it was agreed that the school should be closed and the master retired with a pension. The boys were transferred to Romsey National School in 1876.

From this time until 1909 there was no mention of boys'

education at the Trustees' meetings– only the continued problems with the poor state of the farms at Dibden Purlieu, which were sold in that year. After the sale the charity was reorganised and by 1914 there were new governors and new rules. Both girls and boys could be assisted in various ways, with grants for clothing, or to enable them to attend further education. The Romsey Advertiser in 1915 listed the names of the children who were awarded scholarships to the Eastleigh Pupil Teacher Centre and who were to be assisted with expenses. They added 'This gift by the Charity is the first amount the Governors have been able to expend for the benefit of children since 1882'.

With shrinking funds the Charity continued to support children with small grants until it was wound up, the Charity Commission deregistering it on 21st March 2011. The remaining money was distributed amongst the Romsey schools.

*Pat Genge*

### **The Blacksmith's Arms**

On the 29th May 1855 Charles Bailey needed to raise money. He was mine host of The Blacksmith's Arms that used to stand at the very bottom of Middlebridge Street not far short of the main bridge over the River Test. As security, he seems to have pledged all his worldly goods, and an inventory was made for the loan agreement. By this time, apparently, The Blacksmith's Arms was not a very successful hostelry, as this inventory indicates that, in order to make a decent living, Charles Bailey was a grocer, baker and smallholder as well as brewer.

According to the inventory, the building comprised a shop, tap room (where he sold his home-brewed ale), kitchen and sitting room with three bedrooms upstairs and a cellar below. Outbuildings included a bakehouse (where he baked the bread he sold in the shop), storehouse, brewhouse, stable and smoke loft. Somewhere amongst them there was a yard. Charles Bailey also had a small holding in Waldron Lane, where there were stables, a slaughterhouse, a carhouse and other such buildings. It can be deduced that, at various times, he grew wheat, kept and slaughtered pigs and smoked bacon: and he owned at least one horse.

The inventory also suggests a rather marked contrast between the private and public areas. Downstairs, the sitting room had the indulgence of chimney ornaments, flower pots and books as

well as a mahogany horse-hair sofa. There were two flap-up dining tables complete with six cane chairs, one of them with arms. A tea table had a display of tea caddy and tea set and Mrs Bailey had two work boxes to hand. The bedrooms were adequately furnished, one sounding quite delightful with dimity furnishings. In contrast, the tap room was stark, and the counters and shelves of the shop were cluttered with an odd assortment of items, while on the floor was an unhealthy mix of flour and offal bins. Let us hope the home-brewed ale and home-baked bread were good.

In the 1851 Census, when he was 39 years old, Charles Bailey was described as a baker and brewer. The three-bedroomed dwelling was home to Charles, his wife and three young children, then all under ten years of age, together with his 24 year old brother and 22 year old sister who worked for him as baker's assistants.

They must have been a busy family group. Perhaps one person could keep an eye on both the shop and the tap room, but there was also the bread to be baked, the ale to be brewed and the smallholding to be attended to. Did Charles Bailey fall suddenly ill that he needed to raise a loan?

In 1931 the building was demolished to make way for the Romsey ByPass.

*Barbara Burbridge*