

THE PUBS OF PERRANWELL

Most of our pubs started off life as simple alehouses selling their distinctive ale from fermented malt or barley brewed on the premises. Beer was introduced in the 15th century and made by adding hops to the ale. Cider from local farms and smallholdings was also sold and in the 18th century, gin introduced from the Netherlands, became popular and cheap, but led to drunken orgies. Inns distinct from alehouses were more sophisticated and offered wine and spirits, often offering stabling for horses and lodging for travellers. During the heyday of copper and tin mining in the mid 19th century there were five pubs in the parish of Perranarworthal.- The Prince of Wales [now Prince Regent House in the centre of the village], the Royal Oak, the Anchor and Hope on Cove hill, the Norway Hotel at Perranwharf and the Miners Arms at Bissoe.

The earliest record of these pubs dates from 1704, when the Plume of Feathers, renamed the Prince Regent in 1811 and later the Prince of Wales, was a place for changing horses on the mail service from London to Falmouth. This route assumed national importance when the home port of packet ships carrying mail and passengers to British possessions overseas was moved from Plymouth to Falmouth in 1688. Initially the mail was carried on horseback as the roads were muddy tracks, which became quagmires in winter. This was put right in 1754 when the Truro Turnpike Trust improved the main roads so as to be suitable for coaches. The Plume of Feathers then became a coaching Inn, where tired horses were stabled and fresh horses were provided. By the turn of the 18th century a regular four horse mail service was operating daily from Falmouth to Exeter covering the distance in a day.

This service continued until 1828, when the main road was rerouted across the Carnon valley on a causeway to Perranwharf, then along the Kennall valley, thus bypassing the village of Perranwell. To cater for the change the Norway Hotel was built at Perranwharf replacing the then Prince of Wales as a mail coaching Inn. The Norway was so-called after the Norwegian ships, which unloaded timber at Restronguet Pool by the Pandora, which was then rafted up to Perranwharf on high tides and "pickled" or seasoned in timber ponds near the Norway. By this time Falmouth was a thriving port and the packet boat service had expanded to serve many destinations in the Americas and Europe, so the passing trade at the Norway of mail, passengers and goods was brisk. Even after 1863, when steam was replacing sail and packet ships were moved from Falmouth to Southampton and Liverpool, the Norway retained its importance as a popular stopping point for coaches and cars as it is today.

As the population of Perranwell increased in line with the development of the rich copper mines of neighbouring Gwennap, the Crown Inn was rivalling the Plume of Feathers, until its brewhouse caught fire in 1788 and the pub burnt down. It was rapidly rebuilt and renamed the Royal Oak, which is the well patronised pub that we see today. The Anchor and Hope occupied a 17th cottage on Cove Hill beside the old main road to Falmouth and it closed around 1880 shortly after the closure of the Foundry. No doubt it was not favoured by the local Quaker residents and their Temperance society. The Miners Arms would have served the labourers striving to make a living by tin streaming in the Bissoe valley.

It was reported in 1811 that the three Perranwell pubs were fined for allowing tippling or the sale of undoubtedly smuggled brandy. Again in 1828 these pubs collaborated to provide dinner on the table prompt at 2pm for all those attending Moggys fair. This would seem to be a cattle fair held at Perranwell on the 27th September. Little is known about the Miners Arms, certainly operating in the 1880's, except that in 1810 the innkeeper kept a bull and bull baiting was regarded as a local sport.

In fact village pubs in the 18th and 19th centuries were the focal point of social life for menfolk as it was accepted wisdom of the time that women should stay at home caring for their large families. Gaming with cards and dice was rife, skittles common and cock fighting

not unknown. Government inspectors had the power to close an establishment if excessive drunkenness and prostitution was reported. This did happen in 1863, when the Prince of Wales was closed owing to repeated punch ups and drunkenness on the part of the Welsh labourers building the Truro to Falmouth railway.

Owing to the rampant immorality, drunkenness and prostitution blamed on the pubs, particularly in the towns, a Beer act was passed in 1830, which allowed any householder on the payment of 2 guineas to buy a licence to sell beer. The intention was to divert drinking of cheap gin to more wholesome beer. The result was that a huge number of beer shops or kiddleywinks sprang up as cheap competition to the pubs. They were immensely popular with the railway labourers and miners, but to curb the excesses new licensing laws were introduced in 1869, substantially similar to those operating today.

I have used a large number of sources, but would very much welcome further contributions or corrections from people with more information about our pubs. Also any information about Moggys fair.

Chris Burton. March 2011.