

The White Hart



The White Hart in 2023.



*The White Hart was marked (circled in blue) on the 1819 Ordnance Survey drawing.
© The British Library Board.*

Although probably dating back into the 18th century (research suggests possibly the 1790s, although some reports date it to the 17th century), the White Hart Inn first made an appearance in records on an 1819 map produced by the Ordnance Survey, where the building was marked but not named. Twelve years later, in 1831, the Inn was included as Lot 5, along with a number of other properties, in an auction. From the poster for the auction we learn that the landlord at the time of the sale was Robert Jones.

*The 1831 sale notice.
Courtesy Llangollen Museum.*

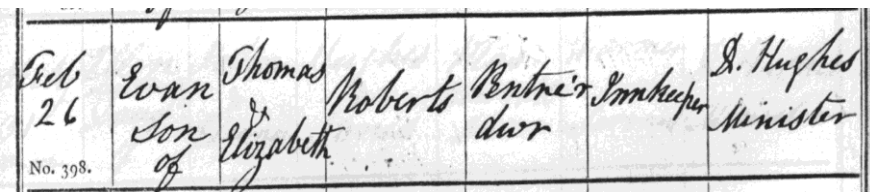
Lot. 5.—All that well-accustomed PUBLIC HOUSE called the WHITE HART, with several Pieces of Land adjoining, containing, 18A. 2R. 30P. at the Yearly Rent of £20, situate in the Parish of Llantysilio aforesaid, and adjoining the Turnpike Road leading from Llangollen to Ruthin, now in occupation of ROBERT JONES.

The Inn enjoyed a lively existence at that time, courtesy of the slate quarries of the district, where the majority of the (male) population were employed on hours of work amounting to probably about double the current accepted norm. Population in the area in those years was several times greater than currently (2023), and households generally accommodated maidservants, labourers and 'rockmen', as quarry workers were then known. Census lists reveal that each household on average accommodated any number up to nine or ten individuals, including the core family of between four and six.

The White Hart in those days housed anything up to ten people, including the publican and his family. To supplement what would have probably been a pretty meagre income, the family made full use of the garden for produce, including poultry and pork, and there is photographic evidence of erstwhile buildings which were no doubt for housing livestock. The Inn also had the use of the two fields opposite the house, known (still) as White Hart Fields, which provided pasture for sheep and the odd bullock for fattening.

The auction poster also mentioned that the 'well accustomed public house' adjoined the turnpike road leading from Llangollen to Ruthin, indicating that, although the new Horseshoe Pass had been built about twenty years earlier, the road through Pentredŵr was still acting as the main route to Ruthin.

We do know that, at the auction, the White Hart, along with many of the other houses offered, were purchased by the Tottenham Estate to add to their already extensive portfolio of properties. Usually a change of ownership would not affect the tenancy, but from the records we can see that not long afterwards Robert Jones was succeeded as landlord of the White Hart by Thomas Roberts. He and his wife Elizabeth were recorded as having their son Evan baptised at Llantysilio Church in February



The baptism of Evan Roberts in 1836.

1836. Their daughter Elizabeth had been baptised seven years earlier when the couple were living at Maesllyn and an older brother James had been born around 1826. As well as being an innkeeper, Thomas was also noted as being a cooper.

The 1841 Census showed the family living at the White Hart and the 1851 Census recorded all of them being still there, although 29 year old James was now a farmer of 18 acres, with wife Mary and two very young children, Thomas (2) and Jane (4m).

Age	Sex	Occupation	Marital Status	Age	Sex	Occupation	Marital Status
46	White Hart	Thomas Roberts	Head	61	Proper		
		Elizabeth	Wife	29	at home		
		James	Son	29	at home		
		Mary	Wife	29	at home		
		Thomas	Son	2	at home		
		Jane	Daughter	4m	at home		
Total of Persons		11		9			

Age	Sex	Occupation	Marital Status	Age	Sex	Occupation	Marital Status
		Thomas Roberts	Son	2	at home		
		Jane Clark	Daughter	4m	at home		
		Elizabeth Jones	Servant	24	at home		

The 1851 Census for the White Hart.

Another ten years would see a change of landlord at the Inn, with the Census in 1861 recording Peter Roberts and his family as living there. Peter was 50 years old and described as Publican and Butcher. Mary was 42, with their children, Ann (16) and David (14), both born in Bryn Eglwys, John (11), Peter (9) and a young daughter Elizabeth (6), all born in Corwen. They had previously lived at Tŷ Mawr just outside Corwen, where Peter was a farmer of 12 acres, but moved to Pentredŵr some time after 1855.

Sadly, in 1862, Mary Roberts died, leaving the widowed Peter to bring up the younger children alone. She was buried in Llantysilio Churchyard. She unfortunately did not live to see her daughter Ann marry George Roberts from Llangollen a few years later, or to see her grandchildren Elizabeth Ann, Mary, Ann, Sarah Ann, Jane, Harriet, Thomas, Elizabeth and Edward. The first born of the children, Elizabeth Ann, died at just four months old in 1871, and was buried with her grandmother. Her sister Mary did not appear on the 1881 Census at the White Hart and so may also have passed away, but she could also have simply been somewhere else on the day of the Census.



Mary Roberts and her granddaughter Elizabeth's gravestone in Llantysilio Churchyard.

By 1881 George had become the publican at the White Hart and, as no record of Peter Roberts has been found, we can only assume that he had died by that date. George and Ann continued to run the Inn, but Ann passed away in February 1888 and was buried in Llantysilio churchyard.

She died at the age of 37, having given birth to at least 9 children within a decade. Probably following the death of Ann, George and his family left the White Hart and moved to Pen yr Erw in the Eglwyseg valley. George married Elizabeth (or Eliza) Davies in November of 1888 and they had another son James. After George Roberts left the White Hart Hugh Davies became the landlord, living at the Inn with his wife Elizabeth. They would run the White Hart for the next twenty five years. Whether the laws were stricter, Hugh Davies more lenient, or the taverns better patrolled by the police, is not clear, but there were several incidents of drunkenness and Sunday drinking reported under his watch.



Anne Roberts' grave in Llantysilio Churchyard.

PROHIBITED HOURS.
Hugh Davies was charged by Sergt. Wynn with keeping his licensed house open during prohibited hours, for the sale of intoxicating liquors, on April 1st. Sergt. Wynn said that he went on the morning Hart, "Pentredwr, about ten o'clock on the door of April 1st. Defendant's wife opened the door and witness went in and asked her if they had any travellers in the house. She replied that no one was there. He asked her if anyone else was in, and she replied "No, there's no one." He went into the front kitchen and found the bar open, and whilst he was there he heard a sound in the back room and found the back door unfastened and partly open. He went in and in a corner he found a man named Davies. On the table in front of him was a pint of beer. Witness asked him if it belonged to him, and he said "Yes." He asked him what he was doing in the neighbourhood and he said that he came for a drink as he felt very thirsty. Mrs. Davies, upon being asked why she had told him there was no one in the house, said she supposed she had a right to serve the man because he was a traveller. Witness told her he

Hugh Davies was charged with opening on a Sunday. Wrexham Advertiser, Saturday 2nd June 1900.

In February 1893, June 1900 and November 1901 Hugh Davies appeared at the Llangollen petty sessions, charged with opening the Inn and selling intoxicating liquors on a Sunday, although on at least one occasion it would appear that it was Elizabeth who was at fault.

No record has been discovered so far of Hugh and Elizabeth's children, but it would appear that they may have had at least one daughter, as on the 1901 and 1911 Censuses their grandson Edward Thomas was living at the White Hart. The 1911 Census showed that they had also adopted thirteen year old John Llewelyn

Pugh Johnson. An older former resident remembers her father telling lovely stories about Betsi Dafis (Elizabeth Davies) who ran the White Hart when he was growing up – she was a real character.

Whether Hugh or Elizabeth died, or simply moved away, we have not been able to discover, but at some time in the 1910s the tenancy of the White Hart was taken on by Thomas Pierce. However, his tenancy was short lived as the 1921 Census shows his widow Elizabeth (63) and son David (23) living there. David was recorded as a farmer but they were probably acting as landlords of the Inn as well. A document from the Tottenham Estate records in 1926 records the tenants of the Inn as being the Representatives of the late Thomas Pierce.



The date of this photograph of the White Hart is unknown. Could the older gentleman in the doorway be Peter Roberts or Hugh Davies?

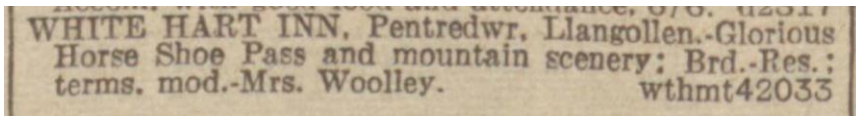
A document at the Denbighshire archives from 1933 details the tenancy of the White Hart Inn, Pentredwr being arranged between C.L.W. Tottenham of Plas Berwyn Llangollto and Trevor Parry of Penymynydd Farm, Minera. It seems to have been a short tenancy as 1936 would see a major catastrophe befall the building, when John Jones was the licensee. He and his staff were woken at two o'clock in the morning by shouts of fire, to find the furniture and the oak beams blazing. John Jones had heard noise in the kitchen and left his bed to investigate. On opening the door he was confronted by dense volumes of smoke. He roused his wife who was overcome by shock. Mr Jones wrapped her in a blanket and carried her through the flames to safety. With difficulty everyone else also managed to escape. However, although the fire brigade arrived they were unable to save the building.



The report on the fire by the Western Mail, 25th May 1936.

The White Hart was evidently rebuilt by the Tottenham Estate as two years later in 1938 the Inn was let to William Cameron Woolley. It would not, however, re-open as a public house. The White Hart sadly lost its

licence soon after the outbreak of the Second World War. The Woolleys rented out rooms for holiday accommodation, advertising in the Liverpool newspapers to attract guests. The pub then metamorphosed through a number of different functions, including a café, periodic lodgings, a permanent residence and finally a holiday let, enjoyed by many visitors over the years.



The Liverpool Echo, Wednesday 10th May 1939.

After the Second World War the White Hart became the home of the Woods family. Some of the residents in the village recall the Woods being in the White Hart in the early 50s and renting the rooms as holiday accommodation. Another memory is that their daughter (Betty?) married the butcher from Llangollen. Moving into the 1960s and the Park family took up residence. Again local memories recall Frank Park and his wife, with Charles and Richard Park, the two sons, living there.

In the 1960s there was a plan to redevelop the village of Pentredwr. Firstly homes were to be built on the land in the centre of the village owned by the Pickett family. Post office Terrace would then have been demolished. Part of the plan would have been to bring mains water to the valley and cease using the natural water supply. In addition, the Council bought the White Hart (possibly off the Tottenham Estate), and planned to locate a sewage plant on the extensive garden, adjacent to

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FORTHCOMING AUCTIONS

JUNE 27, 1972, at the BRIDGEND HOTEL, LLANGOLLEN, at 6.30 P.M.

LOT 1. By order of the Wrexham Rural District Council: The Freehold Detached House formerly known as The White Hart Inn, Pentredwr, Llangollen.

LOT 2. By order of the owner and in conjunction with Messrs. A. Avery & Son, Llangollen, the small town house No. 7 John Street, Llangollen.

LOT 3. By order of Mrs. N. Tomlinson, the attractive Detached superbly positioned freehold Bungalow, Green Bank, Dolywern, near Llangollen.

LOT 4. By order of Mr. R. T. O. Griffiths, Freehold Building Land, located at Hill Street, Newbridge, near Wrexham. Outline planning permission granted for 4 Detached Bungalows.

Sale particulars for all above properties available from Agents.

The auction notice in the Liverpool Daily Post, Saturday 3rd June 1972.

the planned development. The planned development never happened and the Council had lumbered themselves with the White Hart building. So in June 1972 the Council included the former inn as the first lot in an auction of properties held at the Bridgend Hotel in Llangollen. Whether it was sold is not clear, but we do know that the next family to live at the White Hart were the Naylor family, Keith and Marilyn and their three children.



Sean Naylor with his brother and sister outside the White Hart in the 1970s.

It was whilst the Naylor's were at the White Hart that another fire occurred. Colin Edwards recalls the fire vividly. 'I remember the fire at the White Hart. It was the morning of the 16th November 1974. The White Hart was lived in by Keith and Marilyn Naylor, although only Marilyn was at home at that time. She was American, and had one of the new-fangled electric blankets, and had left it on in the bed in the morning. The blanket had a fault and had set the bed

and the whole house on fire. The fire brigade struggled to put out the fire and the White Hart was gutted, with the collapse of the whole roof at the northern end of the building. Local farmer Trevor Hughes had a go at the local councillor, pointing out that some of the building may have been saved if the fire brigade had had a mains water supply to use, instead of having to pump water up from the stream.

In 1976, having been repaired, and with a new roof, the White Hart was up for sale again, being purchased by Arthur and Eileen Davies, who still live there today (2023). The final chapter in the story of the former inn is theirs.

'Prior to our acquiring the house in 1976 it functioned as a second home. The passing years and the multitude of users, together with the somewhat cavalier quality of décor, gave the property a somewhat unappealing appearance. The main living room was lined with wall cabinets of a somewhat bold pillarbox red, each containing bedding of uncertain age and appearance. The cupboards extended into the kitchen, which housed a sink unit and a 'counter' (which transpired to have been used to butcher the carcasses of various livestock) and an ancient AGA.

The living room housed a modern tiled fireplace set into the façade of a large bulk of masonry of about 8ft by 3ft. The appearance was bizarre and comical. Early work involved the use of a sledgehammer into the front of this construct, the removal of which revealed yet another 'wall' through which extended a form of brick tunnel, acting as a flue leading from the fireplace. Demolition of this later wall revealed a final void into which the smoke eventually passed and which had, over many years, deposited soot of about 2 to 3ft in depth. Complete excavation and

probing finally revealed a large inglenook which now occupies pride of place in our living room.

Further exploration uncovered another smaller flue duct from a small fireplace situated in the side of the main construct. This flue extended upwards and joined the main flue. It is believed that this secondary flue is a rare example, and was probably used by the family for cooking etc. when the main grate was not in use. This room served as the main public bar, the access door to which had been boarded over. Further renovation of the 'bar' revealed an oak framed window that overlooked the rear room (aka the bungalow) which had been added about a century ago. The window had been filled with rubble and plastered over. The latter having been removed, the original window frame was revealed, refurbished and reglazed. The rear extension was divided into two 'rooms' by means of plasterboard, as were all of the internal walls. Removing the plasterboard revealed a room of about 20ft by 10ft, which was subsequently refurbished.

The lean to extension which housed the kitchen was accessed down 3 very steep steps. It was single storey, had not been keyed into the main building and was in poor condition and so it was subsequently demolished, making way for a modern extension affording room for a kitchen and utility/vestibule, with a second floor double bedroom and bathroom.

This is just a brief glimpse at the challenges faced when renovating an old building like the White Hart, with our entire family having to live in the new kitchen – all other downstairs rooms being in a state of 'improvement'. Over the several years spent in renovations numerous passers by stopped to recount their personal memories of the old building, either as occupiers or as visitors enjoying the amenities of such a lovely area'.

*By Arthur and Eileen Davies, Colin Edwards,
David Crane and Heather Aspinwall.*



*Outside the
White Hart
in the
1930s.*