

ROUNABOUT RINGWOOD & SURROUNDING VILLAGES

NOW and THEN



**Old Bank House
Market Place**

Early 1950's

The property now called Old Bank House is thought to have been built around 1720 by the Willis family who lived in neighbouring Church Hatch. It was originally known as the Crown Inn. Throughout the 18th century it was recognised as Ringwood's premier coaching inn, boasting a large yard with stabling for twenty horses.

However in 1801 its landlord was declared bankrupt and all his stock was put up for auction. By this time the inn was owned by Stephen Tunks, a wealthy brewer who then transferred the licence of the Crown to an inn at Friday's Cross. He set about remodelling the old Crown into a house for himself, its central position in the Market Place no doubt reinforcing Tunks's own central position in Ringwood society. It was probably at this time that the building was faced with its unusual yellow mathematical tiles, which are tiles fitted together to look like bricks.

Stephen Tunks was a banker as well as a brewer and part of his house became used as 'The Ringwood & Hampshire Bank', for which he issued his own bank notes. The imposing side door facing onto the lane between his house



and what is now Lambert & Wiltshire suggests this may have been the entrance for banking customers.

Unfortunately following the death of Tunks in 1821 his bank failed, causing Ringwood residents much hardship. Six years later his house was put up for auction along with his many other assets, and was purchased on behalf of Mrs Sarah Brown, a wealthy widow who lived there till her death in 1832. According to the auction details, adjoining this property was the banking house of Fryer & Co of Wimborne.

The house continued to be occupied part residentially and partly by a bank owned by Messrs Ledgard of Poole. In 1861 there was consternation again in Ringwood when this bank also failed. The Wilts & Dorset Bank stepped in to open a branch under the management of Henry Rumsey, who lived with his large family in the adjoining house. This time the bank was successful and in the mid 1880 transferred to the High Street, later to become Lloyds bank. The old bank house became a completely



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private residence until after the 1st World War. It was then used as the offices of the newly formed Ringwood & Fordingbridge District Council until 1936 when new offices were built in Christchurch Road.

The old photograph shows the building on a market day probably around 1950 when it was being used by The Ringwood Wholesale Company. Soon afterwards it became an estate agency, for many years known as Ormiston, Knight & Payne. In the 1960s and early 1970s the building fell under threat of demolition for a new road scheme which fortunately never took place. However the planning blight meant the building was allowed to deteriorate until, by the time Prudential estate agents vacated it in 1989, it was in a ruinous state. For several years it remained an eyesore until it was purchased by developer Peter Cheal, who restored it to its former glory by converting it into four private apartments. It was Mr Cheal who renamed the building Old Bank House, reflecting its past partial use in the 19th century.