

# NOW and THEN

## The Original White Hart, Market Place.

The White Hart is probably Ringwood's oldest inn, although its earliest history is lost in time. Owners in the 18th century included Moses Kittier

followed by John Newman Jnr, who sold it to Richard Gibbs in 1773 with 'the garden and paddock lately converted into a bowling green and the pews in the parish church'.

Along with the Crown Inn, the White Hart was the most noted coaching inn in Ringwood. Sadlers directory of 1784 announced that Richard Gibbs was postmaster, with the mail coach leaving for London every Monday and Thursday evening. The Ringwood mail took the western letters to Salisbury and came in every night. The inn yard must have been a very bustling scene with Mr Gibbs having to oversee the ostlers and coachmen changing horses, the sorting of the Ringwood post and the welfare of passengers and other guests coming in for refreshment and a bed for the night.

In 1795 the 'desirable, commodious and well-accustomed inn' was sold for £900 to William Whitcher, by which time the bowling green had been incorporated into an 'excellent' garden. William died five years later, leaving the White Hart to his daughter Charity, an infant under the age of seven. It was not until 1817, when presumably this most eligible young lady came of age, that Charity was able to sell her inheritance for £3425, a considerable gain in value, possibly due to an increase in trade.

The White Hart was then owned

and run by three generations of the Travers family for the next 46 years. For many of these Mary, widow of John Travers II, was in charge of the property. The coming of the railway to Ringwood in 1847 must have affected her business with the loss of some coaches, although the railway also brought new customers. When Mary's son John took over in 1857 he appears to have had financial difficulties after taking out a mortgage on the inn and in 1863 he had to sell the White Hart to Robert Davy, a solicitor who lived in Church Hatch. Davy in turn soon sold the inn to John Morant, the Lord of the Manor of Ringwood.

John Morant or his tenant landlord Edmund Low made great alterations to the facade of the building, changing its Georgian appearance to the one we know today. The room over the archway (shown in the pre-1868 photo) was replaced with a mock-Tudor timber-frame

design with a steep pitched roof. The right-hand doorway was made into a window and the remaining entrance was given a fancy pediment bearing the date 1868, which remains to this day. The attractive iron canopy was added in the 20th century.

It was Victorian landlord Edmund Low who first introduced the story of the inn being the original White Hart. He claimed that Henry VII had given it the name after capturing a white deer named Albert whilst hunting in the New Forest. While it is very likely that Henry VII may have visited Ringwood, there is no evidence of a deer called Albert, surely the most



Pre-1868



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## The Original White Hart (cont.)

Victorian of names!

In any case there are far earlier records of inns called the White Hart dating back to the reign of Richard II, whose favourite badge was a white hart. However flimsy his Gothic tale, Low's publicity stunt appealed to his Victorian guests and contributed to the fame of the White Hart, which by this time had become known as a hotel very popular with anglers and other amateur sportsmen.

In 1916 John Morant sold off most of his Ringwood properties, including the White Hart. It was purchased by Dorchester



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brewers Eldridge Pope, who remained owners for the rest of the 20th century. Today the White Hart is owned by Marstons, who also now own Ringwood Brewery, and currently managed by Amanda Webb. It may no longer

boast a bowling green or garden but the old hotel still offers food, drink and accommodation to guests from far and wide.



Billhead from around 1868

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