

Bishop Lloyd's Palace

A Grade 1 Listed building in the heart of Chester



HISTORY MONOGRAPH No 5 – BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE AND THE YACHT

Bishop Lloyd's Palace (or 'Bishop Lloyd's House') has had many different owners and uses in the past 400 years, but none more colourful than when it was an Inn during the 18th century.

From about 1750 to 1783 Bishop Lloyd's House was an inn, of some distinction, called the Yacht (or Yatch). There were two inns by this name. The Lower Yacht on the corner of Nicholas Street is the better known, continuing into the 20th century, but has been obliterated by the construction of St Martin's Way. The Upper Yacht only lasted about thirty years, and during that time had five publicans, Thomas and John Hart, then Thomas and John Carter and lastly Simeon Leet.

In 1758 it was referred to as the New Yacht and was run by Thomas Hart, but in March 1759 it was announced he was handing over the business to his brother John at Midsummer. John Hart had previously been butler to Sir William Bunbury. The Upper Yacht was frequently used for auctions, and in March 1772 the materials from old houses in Gloverstone were sold there; in June that year second-hand china was being auctioned. An occultist had an apartment there in 1770.

In February 1775 John Hart moved to the White Lion on Northgate Street (now the entrance to the Forum), which had been run by Mr George Smith. He took up a partnership with Mr Smith's sons Richard and Daniel, to run coaches to Holyhead and London. Thomas Carter took over the Yacht.

He had been cook to Sir Watkin Williams Wynne. Carter it seems decided he too wanted to be in the coach business.

Rival Coaching Inns

In April 1776 both Carter at The Yacht and Hart at the White Lion were advertising coach services to Holyhead and London, in direct competition. Hart opened a booking office on Crook Street and Carter opened one across the road on Watergate Street. Thomas Carter greatly extended the Yacht for the purpose and built stables. It was a sizeable undertaking involving a number of coaches, at least thirty horses, and staff to drive them and ride pillion. Arrangements were made with inns along the routes, for changes of horses, and partnerships formed with companies at the London and Holyhead ends of the network. A coach could set off at five in the morning and get to Holyhead by evening; London coaches took two days.

The rivalry began to get quite aggressive, with Carter being unable to run to Holyhead 15th April due to skulduggery by the competition at one of the posting stations, and by June denying any pique or animosity in his efforts. By August there was an advertising war between the two companies, covering the front and back pages of newspapers with adverts.



The Chester Civic Trust

Bishop Lloyd's Palace
51/53 Watergate Row, CHESTER CH1 2LE
www.chestercivictrust.org.uk

On 25th February 1777 they published letters of protest; Carter complaining about ungracious invectives and allegations to pomposity in his adverts, and Hart about a deal having been struck with Holyhead gentry to support a price war. Also it seems that Hart and the Smiths, whose coaches travelled to London via Whitchurch and Shrewsbury had long argued against going via Nantwich, Stafford and Coventry, which Carter had done successfully.

The advertising resumed normal brevity and carried on for another 18 months, but it was Carter who lost out in the end. His wife died 4th November 1777. Then his outgoings and turnover got the better of him.

Bankrupt

On 15th December 1778 a commission of bankruptcy was set up to resolve his debts, and his effects were put up for auction.

Described as “now or late of city of Chester innholder, dealer and chapman”, he was required to surrender his assets to the Commissioners who would call creditor’s meetings at The Yacht to make full disclosure and dissolution of his estate and effects. In his stead, his brother John, (from the Harp at Conway) took over the Yacht.

In the new year an advertisement appeared: *to be sold by auction at the Yatch Inn Wednesday 6th January 1779 upwards of 30 seasoned horses for the machine pulling and farming business, with harnesses and four post chaises, part of the effects of Thomas Carter late of the above inn.*

On 7th March 1780 Simon Leet, formerly at the Py’d Bull in Northgate Street, took over The Yacht. However he died in October 1783 and his widow Elizabeth moved to the Lower Yacht. Bishop Lloyd’s Palace was instead to be opened as a school for young ladies.

Tom Welsh

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