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OLDE BOAR'S HEAD



MIDDLETON



A GUIDE TO THE
OLDE BOAR'S HEAD

Produced by Middleton Archaeological Society



In the Olde Boar's Head, Middleton is fortunate to have a fine example of an early timber framed building, acknowledged by Historic England as outstanding, Grade II* listed and more recently by Rochdale Borough Council as one of four Middleton Golden Cluster buildings.

The pub has not yet been dated precisely and its builders and earliest occupants remain a mystery to local historians. The ancient buildings expert, Pevsner, mentioned a carved stone in the cellar dated 1632; however this has not been seen for many years. Some experts feel the building is more likely to have been dated to the 1590's. Due to continuous modification over the years, it is unclear whether the original form was two hall type structures or three or more small worker's cottages that were joined together as the site developed. There are remnants of two inglenook fireplaces and four front doors. The three gables have a quatrefoil (four leaf) decoration, the nearest Durnford Street being filled with wattle and daub. The middle gable is a later addition, there to enhance the buildings look.

The building was part of the Middleton Glebe (property and land donated by the lord of the manor to support the parish church). By 1737 it had become the Olde Boar's Head Inn, Edmund Hopwood its first licensee. In 1745, he hosted the local Jacobite supporters who used the establishment for fundraising appeals. In the 1820's the Inn became a post house for the Royal Mail and a stopping point for the Manchester/Rochdale express coach service.

A Sessions Room was built in the early 19th century and held petty sessions of the Middleton Court until about 1852. In 1888, the Rector of Middleton sold the building to Middleton Corporation who went on to demolish some outbuildings and develop Durnford Street. At this time, the Inn had accommodation for two travellers and stabling for their horses. In 1911, the council decided to demolish the Olde Boar's Head to build a new town hall but, thanks to a massive protest from lovers of the building they changed their minds. In 1980, Tudor Taverns took the lease of the pub from the landlord, Paddy Hannelly, but were refused permission to remove internal walls and make the pub open plan. Rochdale Borough Council carried out essential repairs in 1983. Three years later, local brewery J W Lees took over the lease from the council and undertook a massive restoration. This is the building we have today.

8. SPORTSMAN'S ROOM

Going into the Sportsman's room you can clearly see the construction of the box frame with the lath and plaster infills removed. The main post run from floor to ceiling with the beams jointed using pegged mortise and tenon joints. The 'green' oak would have warped within a few years of construction, but has now hardened as solid as steel. The front of the building tilts towards the main road and the drooping pub sign gives the pub characteristic charm.

9. GENTLEMAN'S ROOM

The wall between the Sportsman's room and the Gentleman's room is topped by another bressummer beam. The remains of the inglenook fireplace were removed when the brick chimney stack was built. The internal door was added in 1999. The Gentleman's Room is now fully accessible to Ladies.



This guide has been produced following a number of workshops held in the Olde Boars Head by members and friends of Middleton Archaeological Society.

The guide was written by Cliff Ivers and Liz Fairweather, edited by Anne Falloon and checked by local historian Geoff Wellens. Refurbishment details were provided by Douglas Newton and Rochdale Borough Council.

Sketch by Steve Whitworth.

Middleton Archaeological Society have compiled an archive of reports, plans and photographs of the building and intend to publish a full history in 2016. Go to www.middletonas.com for more details.

1. THE BAR AREA

Here you are actually standing at the rear of the original building. Look up towards the old pub sign you can see what used to be a bedroom window. The original building is a box-frame timber construction and, on the left, behind Perspex you can view an example of the panelling used to infill the box-frame. It consists of horizontal oak laths and lime based plaster mixed with straw. The large photograph of the pub is dated about 1880; the blurred figure at the door is either Sam Bamford's ghost or a local who nipped in for a pint whilst the photograph was taken!

Behind the photograph, there is a boarded-up door which was probably the back door of one of the original buildings. The metal window is rumoured to be a prison cell window. Prisoners could have been held here whilst awaiting trial in the Sessions Room.

2. TURPIN'S ROOM



Heading towards the front door and turning right, you enter Turpin's Room, MIND YOUR HEAD! Dick Turpin, an Essex butcher turned highway robber, was hanged at York in 1739 for horse theft. He was made famous in a Victorian novel and this later notoriety led to many local myths, particularly relating to him and his horse, Black Bess, visiting local Inns. He is also reported by Sam Bamford to have frequented Middleton's Old Church Inn.

Have a look at the beam in front of you. It is part of the original inglenook fireplace and known as a bressummer

beam (it supports other beams). The wall behind the fruit machine conceals a bricked-up door to this part of the building. A baffle screen at either side of the fireplace blocked the draft and held benches inside the inglenook. Originally, the fire would have burned directly on the floor and a smoke hood would have funnelled smoke up through the roof. As coal replaced timber as fuel, brick chimneys and fire ranges were added.

The ceiling of the Turpin's Room appears to have been constructed later than the original building and is supported by chamfered oak beams. The wall painting is of Tonge Hall. Built in 1582, its remains are still on William Street. Tonge Hall has many similarities to the Boar's Head and you can see the use of black and white quatrefoil styling on both buildings.

3. LOUNGE

As you enter the lounge, notice the staircase with its large Jacobean style newel post. The stairs lead to the licensees' living accommodation and the attic. They have been crudely supported with an old cruck blade on the left, possibly recycled from another demolished Middleton building. Cruck blades were naturally curved pieces of timber used to support a different style of construction to the box frame of this pub.

The trap door in the floor leads to what has been christened 'The Dungeon'. This cellar has a stone flagged floor and walls running under the Turpin Room to the front wall. It is unclear if the cellar was a later addition or part of an earlier building. It used to have a window light opening onto the pavement, framed with stone mullions. There was also an opening or coal chute leading under the pavement which led to folk lore stories of a tunnel to the church yard. The alleged tunnel was to facilitate the transportation of condemned prisoners to the gallows whilst avoiding angry crowds. The wooden floor above the cellar was supported by reclaimed early oak timbers and was completely replaced due to rot in the 1990's.

4. SAM BAMFORD ROOM



Sam (1788-1872) was a famous local writer and radical thinker who led a band of neighbours to a parliamentary reform demonstration in 1819 that became known as the Peterloo massacre. We recommend you take the Sam Bamford tour to learn more about this dramatic event in Middleton's history.

Sam often frequented the Boar's Head where he held meetings and recitations of his poems in local dialect. In his book 'Early Days' (1849) he writes of his father Daniel fighting at the Boar's Head in the 'Thrashing Room'. The fight lasted two hours and ended with Daniel's powerful opponent being carried away by his supporters.

Again, referring to the turbulent times of the eighteenth century, he described how his grandfather Jeffery Battersby joined the 'Pretender's Party' at the Boar's Head. The Pretender was 'Bonnie' Prince Charles Stuart who laid claim to the crown of Great Britain. Battersby used his local knowledge to help collect the 'King's' Taxes in other words contributions from local people. Despite Stuarts Scottish army getting as far south as Derby, the Jacobite rebellion failed in 1745. Sam's grandfather was arrested for treason but was fortuitously released from Lancaster Gaol shortly after and continued his trade as a cobbler.

5. FISHERMAN'S ROOM



This room is dedicated to Middleton Angling Society which was formed in 1845 and used to meet at the Kings Arms pub until about 1934 when they moved to the Boar's Head. The specimen brown trout was caught by C Jackson at Chadwick and Smith's works in 1924 and weighs 2lbs 5¾ ozs. The roach next to it was caught by club president, T Howarth, in the same ear and weighs in at 1lb 4¾ ozs. The picture "Anglers Companion" was given to the society in 1923 by Mrs Wellens of the Kings Arms Pub. The Society is still in existence and fishes at Baguley Brow reservoir.