

JIM'S JAUNT

Stanton under Bardon & Ibstock

by Jim Reay

I boarded a Roberts Coaches 120 from St. Margaret's Bus Station Bay SL at 11.13, a bus that runs every day except Sunday, but Saturday is the best bet to be sure all venues are open. I alighted on Main Street, Stanton under Bardon, adjacent to the village school and opposite to Saint Mary & All Saints Parish Church, situated on the corner of (and I kid you not) Everard Crescent. Prior to the building of this church in 1908, the nearest Anglican Church was 1½ miles away in the village of Thornton, although there was a chapel in the village. The village pub wasn't too far down the road, in the direction the bus was travelling, and it was almost opening time.

Stanton-under-Bardon is first documented as Stantone in the Domesday Book, a name deriving from Old English words of Stan, meaning stone, and Tun, meaning village. The local Cliffe Hill Quarry has been producing granite since the 1860s, but obviously, judging by the name of the village, the potential for mineral extraction was recognised much earlier. By 1285, the name of the village had changed to Stanton Subtus Berdon; (Subtus = Latin for beneath). Presupposing the convention that cartographers generally place north at the top of maps and the fact that the village is roughly 1½



First stop, would you believe it?



The Old Thatched Inn, Stanton under Bardon

miles due south of Bardon Hill, maps literally show the village to be Stanton under Bardon. The village is effectively sandwiched between Old Cliffe Hill Quarry to the east and New Cliffe Hill Quarry to the west, both of which have provided a welcome source of employment over the years.

The Old Thatched Inn is believed to have originated as a 16th century farmhouse, which a onetime resident farmer opened to sell locally brewed ales to supplement his income from the land. Formerly The Crown Inn, it was renamed in the 1970s, and is now dubbed by locals as The Thatch. The main entrance, to the rear of the pub, leads down a short corridor, to the left of which is a large L-shaped lounge/restaurant which incorporates an area once occupied by a skittles long alley; to the right is a cosy snug, whilst straight ahead is the public bar/games room with pool table and darts board. Exposed ceiling timbers throughout and vestiges of inglenook fireplaces add to the enduring rural ambience. Off the games room is a paved patio with picnic tables, and to the rear, next to the car park, is a fenced off lawned garden, also with picnic tables. This Marston's house serves one regular Real Ale (Pedigree) and occasionally has an additional guest beer.

Leaving The Thatch I crossed diagonally left over Main Street and took the public footpath between houses opposite and very soon encountered my first yellow way-marker post (YWP) and stile. The route was straight ahead, keeping close to the back garden hedgerow to my right until turning right at another YWP and again keeping near to the back gardens to my right until arriving at, but not going through, a metal kissing gate, but turning left instead. I fairly soon arrived at another kissing gate, which I went through, and took the footpath almost immediately to my left over the footbridge into the woods. The way through the woods was well defined by a basic fence either side of the footpath. These woods form a shielding crescent around the edge of New Cliffe Hill Quarry overlooking Stanton under Bardon. This quarry opened for

business in 1988 and, as the woods don't feature in earlier O.S. Maps, I would assume they were either planted at that time or soon after. Emerging from the woods the footpath continued more or less in a straight line close to the hedgerow to my right until reaching the road known as West Lane. I turned right over the Mineral Railway Bridge, adjacent to the New Cliffe Hill Quarry entrance, then immediately left to rejoin the footpath. I kept close to the railway cutting until it became an embankment and veered off to the left and the footpath continued straight on until I turned right up a flight of steps made out of railway sleepers. At the top of the stairs I turned left following the footpath until I came to another similar stairway taking me down to a pedestrian level crossing over the railway tracks. I went through the gate to my left then turned right across the field keeping the hedgerow to my right. At this point the route was barely discernable and somewhat overgrown, but continued straight on, through a gap in the hedge a few yards in from the corner of the field before joining a really easy to follow dirt road. At the end of the dirt road, I crossed a private concrete road for works traffic and straight on with hedgerow to my left until reaching and turning sharp left at the YWP. I found myself on Ellistown Terrace Road where I turned right, then about 150 yards on, turned left into Pretoria Road, recognisable by its blue Unsuitable for Motor Vehicle sign. At this point more akin to Bridle Way than a road, it does ultimately become a metalled road upon entering the Ibstock built-up area. Shortly after passing between the cemetery on the right and the allotment gardens on the left, the road becomes Curzon Street and The Waggon & Horses is visible ahead.



The Coach & Horses, Ibstock



The Whimsey Inn, Ibstock

Ibstock was recorded as Ibestoche in the Domesday Book but the village name is thought to date back to an earlier Anglo-Saxon period when villages were often named after the Chieftain. Ibba was an Anglo-Saxon name, and as the Stoc meant a little hamlet or settlement, the toponym Ibstock has the literal meaning of Ibba's settlement. Earlier evidence of continuous human occupation over thousands of years has been unearthed hereabouts stretching way back to Mesolithic-Neolithic times in the form of scatters of worked flint, pottery and coins. Archaeological finds support indications of tile manufacturing during the Roman period, undoubtedly facilitated by the fact that both coal and clay were readily available. The post Roman period saw the settlement become a chiefly farming community, continued by the Normans and essentially sustained until the enclosure of the Parish lands at the conclusion of the 18th century. In due course employment diversified into manufacturing, included a domestic framework knitting industry, which itself declined in the second half of the 19th century with the move towards factory production. In 1825 Ibstock's first coal shaft was sunk and, in common with other villages in this area of North-West Leicestershire, Ibstock became a coal mining community. Brick manufacturing, for which Ibstock became most renowned, had commenced by the

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Ibstock War Memorial



The Boot, Ibstock

» from pg 25

beginning of the 1830s. The enterprise was launched as a subsidiary of the colliery as a way of utilising clay extracted during mining. The pit closed in 1928 but the brick making company gained national and international renown and still trades to this day.

The Waggon & Horses is listed in CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors as: "A pub with a regionally important historic interior". It is a uniquely traditional village local, at least 300 years old and unscathed by the passing of time. The unspoiled three-roomed interior consists of a traditional public bar to the right of the entrance corridor, which is the only room with a servery. The public bar's unpretentious ambience is enhanced by uncovered quarry tile floor, plentiful photographs showing Ibstock in bygone times and a solid fuel heating stove with stovepipe rising to join the chimney just below first floor level. To the left of the entrance corridor is the door to the lounge bar, with "Telephone" inscribed large across its middle rail, as apparently this room is where the pub's telephone used to be. This room also has uncovered quarry tile floors plus an open fireplace and seating which came from the former chapel next door. The lounge is also known as the snug, but as the locals suppose it to be for those with an unsocial disposition, they refer to it as the Mardy Room. Larger than the other two rooms put together, through the second door on the left, is the pool room with one central pool table

and rudimentary fixed bench seating along the right hand side wall. Apparently this room was formerly the living quarters, but sometime around the 1930s, it was used as a doctor's surgery; a splendidly ingenious inducement to motivate persons with Latrophobia (a fear of doctors) to overcome their anxiety. Out back is a partially covered courtyard with timber garden furniture. The house serves one regular beer (Draught Bass) and two changing guest beers which on this occasion were Robinsons Trooper and Shipyard American IPA.

Turning right from The Waggon & Horses I continued to the traffic island at the end of Curzon Street from where The Ram Inn was visible straight ahead along High Street. As it didn't sell real ale I didn't tarry and moved swiftly on to The Whimsey Inn, 300 yards further along High Street, on the corner of Gladstone Street.

The Whimsey Inn has an open plan interior that appears to have formerly been four rooms now knocked through to form one large unevenly shaped room. The once traditional interior is now almost entirely transformed with a contemporary look belying its longevity, which is more discernible when viewed externally. One enduring internal clue to the pub's real age are the vestiges of a central inglenook fireplace which now has an inset solid fuel heating stove. The inn consists of a central bar and drinkers' area with an area dedicated to diners each side and a pool room with one pool-table to the rear of house. Outside is a lawned garden and paved area furnished with picnic tables. Marston's Pedigree was the one and only real ale.

Leaving The Whimsey I turned immediately right up Gladstone Street for a short distance to The Boot Inn, a traditional locals' pub dating back to at least 1840, and records show that at that time it was kept by an Elizabeth Deacon. Now part of the Enterprise Inns Pub Company Group its discernibly once smaller rooms are now knocked through to form one U-shaped room enveloping a central bar. On the first floor, the former function room is now accommodates two pool tables. There is a lawned beer garden with picnic tables plus children's swings and climbing frame. This pub serves 3 regular beers in the form of Marston's Pedigree, Morland Old Speckled Hen and Sharp's Doom Bar.

From The Boot Inn, I turned right and right again at the end of Gladstone Street along Melbourne Road then right again into Central Avenue. Ibstock's splendidly impressive war memorial soon loomed large in the middle of the crossroads formed at the junction with West Walk and East Walk. Ibstock Central was to my left just after passing West Walk Launched towards the end of 2015, Ibstock Central is the former Ibstock Working Mens Club. Essentially



Ellistown Working Mens Club



Central Club

opened by the colliery. The Colonel built two terraces of houses for his employees and this was the beginning of modern Ellistown. Had the settlement evolved a decade earlier it could well have been called Joeltown since in 1863 the then family name of Joel was changed by deed poll

to Joel-Ellis. When the Colonel died in 1897, his estate, colliery and brickworks were administered by trustees under Orders of the Court of Chancery until 1936, after which the colliery and brickworks became separate companies. The Ellistown Brick and Pipe Company closed shortly before WW2 and Ellistown Colliery closed December 1986.

Ellistown Working Mens Club is the only remaining location in the village certified to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises. The main entrance is accessed down the drive to the right of the club or from the large rear car park. The main bar is to the rear of the club whilst to the front of house is a large concert room with a central timber dance floor and a stage set in the corner of the room. Draught Bass was the one real ale on sale.

Leaving the club I returned to the nearby bus stop and caught a bus back to Leicester. So these six venues stuck out on the periphery of Leicester CAMRA Branch area had only six real ales between them. This extraordinary situation stems partly from the fact that four of the venues only served one real ale, but a secondary factor was the recurrence of the same beers at several places. Notwithstanding the meagre choice of real ales available I would nonetheless encourage anyone pay a visit

Cheers,

Jim Reay

family friendly, it also aims to attract all comers. To the front of house is the large refurbished public bar, known as the main bar, with facilities for darts, pool and Sky Sports available on three big screen televisions. To the rear an absolutely huge concert room is now divided into two by folding doors. By far the smaller front part is known as Monkey Central, again sub-divided into two zones having on one side a state-of-the-art children's soft play region and on the other a seating area with tables and chairs for parents. The remaining back part is still an extremely large concert/function room. Real Ale is available in the form of Marston's Pedigree; one firkin is delivered each week but when it's gone it's gone until restocked.

Leaving Ibstock Central, the Arriva 15 bus stop, to begin my journey home, was just to my right on the corner of West Walk. Please be aware that there isn't a bus directly from Ibstock back to Leicester. You'll need to change at Ellistown to link up with the hourly Arriva 26. It's also worth noting that on a Saturday the last Arriva 15 from outside Ibstock Central leaves at 17.40 and the last Arriva 26 from outside the Ellistown Working Mens Club leaves at 18.12. I alighted in Ellistown, on Midland Road, at the first bus stop after turning left at the roundabout. I walked back to the roundabout and past a closed pub called The New Ellistown (formerly known as The South Leicester Hotel) which stands on the land of the original White Hill Farm, a name mirrored in the adjacent Whitehill Road. I continued straight along Whitehill Road to the first bus stop on the left hand side, where I would catch the Arriva 26 bus destined for Leicester. I realised that I had some time to wait for the next bus so I wandered the short distance up the road to Ellistown Working Mens Club.

Ellistown is named after Colonel Joseph Joel-Ellis, who sank the Ellistown Colliery there in 1873, soon after which a brickworks was

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