Coventry Coaching Inns (1839)

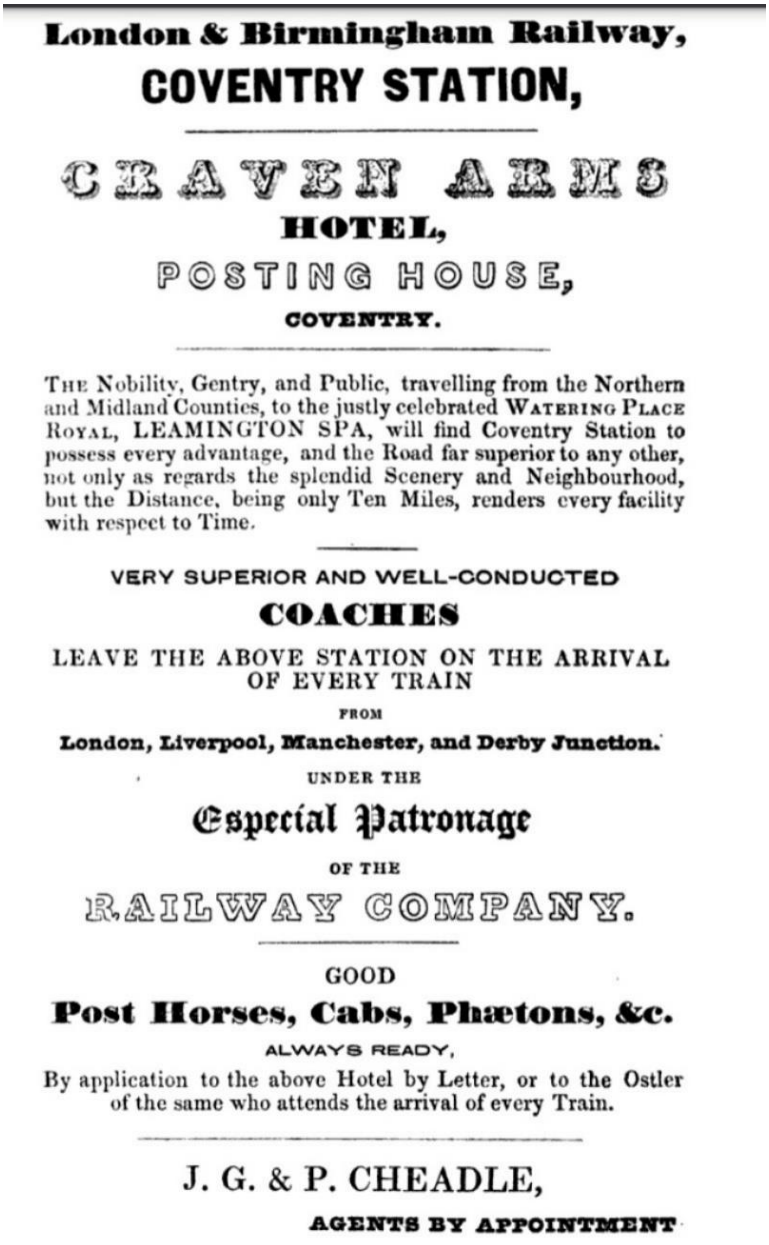
COVENTRY STATION.

18¼ Miles from Birmingham.

ARRIVAL of the TRAINS from BIRMINGHAM.		ARRIVAL of the TRAINS from RUGBY.	
Sundays.		*Sundays.*	
First Train	20m. past 2	First Train	3 p.m.
Week Days.		*Week Days.*	
First Train	50m. past 9	First Train	3 p.m.
Second Train	50m. past 12	Second Train	5 p.m.
Third Train	20m. past 2	Third Train	30m. past 8

Omnibuses attend the arrival of the Trains from the *Craven Arms* and *King's Head Arms.*

The Iron Road, 1838.



London & Birmingham Railway,

COVENTRY STATION,

CRAVEN ARMS

HOTEL,

POSTING HOUSE,

COVENTRY.

THE Nobility, Gentry, and Public, travelling from the Northern and Midland Counties, to the justly celebrated WATERING PLACE ROYAL, LEAMINGTON SPA, will find Coventry Station to possess every advantage, and the Road far superior to any other, not only as regards the splendid Scenery and Neighbourhood, but the Distance, being only Ten Miles, renders every facility with respect to Time.

VERY SUPERIOR AND WELL-CONDUCTED

COACHES

LEAVE THE ABOVE STATION ON THE ARRIVAL OF EVERY TRAIN

FROM

London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Derby Junction.

UNDER THE

Especial Patronage

OF THE

RAILWAY COMPANY.

GOOD

Post Horses, Cabs, Phætons, &c.

ALWAYS READY,

By application to the above Hotel by Letter, or to the Ostler of the same who attends the arrival of every Train.

J. G. & P. CHEADLE,

AGENTS BY APPOINTMENT

1838 – Note the error in this advert the 'J' should be a 'T' for Thomas. Coventry Standard - Friday 30 March 1838 (right), 11 May 1838 (below)

While long distance coaching was in retreat, coach proprietors were replacing their coaching connections with direct rail connections. In Coventry, like many others, the local coaching inns provided omnibuses to bring passengers from the station to the Inn.

However at Coventry the responsibility to attract customers arriving at the station fell heavily upon the shoulders of the Omnibus 'Cads'. We can imagine fiercely loyal types willing to get physical to ensure the success of their respective Inn.

The London & Birmingham Railway formed an agreement with two Coventry inns for the title of official agents, The Craven Arms and the King's Head. Unfortunately for all concerned this would lead to a protracted dispute – see below.

The two main Inn proprietor protagonists were: Cheadle, a name already known for coaches in the area, and the Proprietor of the Craven Arms, while the less well known, and apparently less well, Thomas Carter, was the ailing proprietor of the King's Head. George Hall of the Castle Inn and John Aston of the Commercial and City Hotel seem to have managed to stay out of the affray.

Here is an introduction to the four main Inns of Coventry.

OPENING OF

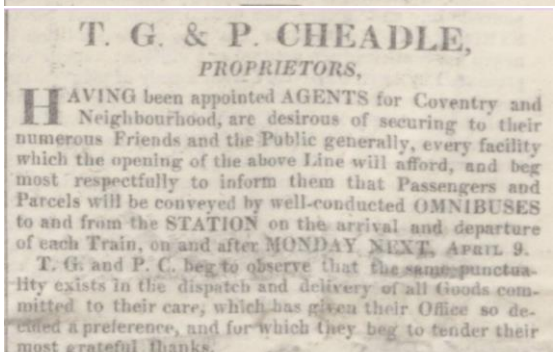
The London and Birmingham Railway.

CRAVEN ARMS HOTEL,

ROYAL MAIL

AND GENERAL COACH OFFICE,

HIGH STREET, COVENTRY.



T. G. & P. CHEADLE,

PROPRIETORS,

HAVING been appointed AGENTS for Coventry and Neighbourhood, are desirous of securing to their numerous Friends and the Public generally, every facility which the opening of the above Line will afford, and beg most respectfully to inform them that Passengers and Parcels will be conveyed by well-conducted OMNIBUSES to and from the STATION on the arrival and departure of each Train, on and after MONDAY NEXT, APRIL 9.

T. G. and P. C. beg to observe that the same punctuality exists in the dispatch and delivery of all Goods committed to their care, which has given their Office so decided a preference, and for which they beg to tender their most grateful Thanks.

For the accommodation of Parties preferring Railroad Travelling, T. G. and P. CHEADLE, being appointed Agents to the London and Birmingham Company, have established an OMNIBUS, for the Conveyance of Passengers and Parcels to and from the Coventry Station, on the arrival and departure of each Train.

Mr Thomas Cheadle, Licensee & coach proprietor, The Craven Arms, Coventry

Thomas Cheadle was licensee between 1838 - 1841 [1]. We are extremely fortunate to have two superb photographs of the Craven Arms early in the 1900s capturing much of the character that it would have had in the era of the 1830s and 1840s.

Unattributed photo of the Craven Arms Hotel, sometime early in the 20th Century. A higher level but reverse angle to the image below. (pubhistory.historiccoventry.co.uk)

Taken in 1900, this photo appears to be a nostalgic re-enactment of the earlier coaching age. The carriage appears to be restored and in good condition while the passengers are in their Late Victorian Sunday best. Note the men wear top hats and bowlers. Photograph of the Craven Arms Hotel. This was the old posting house & coach house at no 4 High St. Coventry. "C&W (M) 927 Photographer E H Appleby, 1900. (Culture Coventry Trust/Coventry Archives with permission)

Until 1811 this was the White Bear, an Elizabethan building and a coaching inn. On 11th September that year, C. Handasyd and H. Wakefield advertised in the *Covventry Herald* that they had taken over and completely rebuilt what was previously the White Bear. To quote: 'families of the neighbourhood and others who have been absolutely driven from the house by the miserable manner in which the business has been done are respectfully informed the house is now conducted in a very superior style'. In changing the name the new proprietors were distancing themselves from the previous ones. The hotel was the centre of many election conflicts as it was the Whig headquarters. Coventry's elections were conducted with such violence that ultimately it forfeited its status as a county. Harper (1902) states that the name was changed ‘out of compliment to the third Earl of Craven, who had then returned to live at Combe Abbey, a family seat near Coventry that had long been closed. His residence there brought much custom to the city and to the house. In 1838 the will of Jacob Hart, who was H. M. Consul to the Court of Savoy, gave this property to his son, Davis Hart, to hold in trust for his son, Simon Hart.” Licensee 1838 - 1841 Thomas Cheadle” [2].

Harper (1902) describes the premises in 1902, not to far distant from the time of the above photos: ‘The old inn remains just as it was in coaching days. There are the long yard, with stables of Elizabethan date, and the solid red-brick portions of the house, rebuilt in the time when George III was King, facing the narrow passage. Fronting on the street, the building is of old white-painted plaster. It was in front of the Craven Arms that the fatal accident, to Tom Peck, the guard of the " Eclipse " coach, happened. Opposite was one of the many coach

[1] https://pubhistory.historiccoventry.co.uk/main/pub.php?pg=craven_high
[2] https://pubhistory.historiccoventry.co.uk/main/pub.php?pg=craven_high

offices ; the scene, perhaps, of that story of the little girl being booked over-night at half-price, as the custom was. Her elder sister took the seat in the morning, when the book-keeper remarked to her mother, 'Your little girl has grown in the night.'

A rather more substantiated accident occurred to the Estafette coach, one of Chaplin's London to Birmingham coaches, that stopped at the Craven Arms in Coventry. This in the preceding months before the opening of the railway. 'About two o'clock on Sunday morning, an accident occurred on the road from Birmingham to London, which might have produced very disastrous consequences. As the Estafette, up-coach, was stopping to receive luggage the [Craven Arms] inn at Coventry, the horses started off at full speed, owing to the negligence of the parties who ought to have looked after them. Mr. Cheadle, one of the proprietors, who was on the box. succeeded in catching hold of one of the reins, by placing his foot on the back of one of the wheelers, but the reins were not buckled. This rein, however, was the one immediately required to turn the coach round a difficult corner, which was barely cleared. The wheels passed over the curbstone, and the jerk threw Mr. Cheadle into the street. There was now no one outside; the passengers having, most fortunately for themselves, been requested to dismount for the convenience of adjusting the luggage. But in the coach were a Captain Irwin, Mr. William Johnson (of this town), and two other passengers also from Manchester. One of the horses was so fine an animal to have been selected to assist in conveying the high sheriff to the coming assizes, and they were all well bred and in high condition. They presently went at a fearful rate, and boxes were flying off in every direction; yet the vehicle cleared all the turns in the town, the toll bar, the railway bridge, and several carts; and thus, although it was dark, they persisted in keeping on the wrong side of the road. They had now to mount a hill, when the passengers, except Mr. Johnson, took the opportunity afforded the decreased speed to jump out. Even at this period the horses were galloping, and the gentlemen were thrown down with much violence. Captain Irwin broke one of his ribs, and was subsequently taken back to Coventry. One of the other gentlemen escaped with some rather severe bruises; and the third was not at all injured. Mr. Johnson closed the doors, kept his seat and arrived safe at the end of the stage, where the animals instinctively stopped, as soon, after passing the exact place, as the rate at which they galloped down the hill would permit. Mr. Johnson was the most imminent danger imaginable at the crossing of the Sherbourne. At this place the trustees are making improvements. The river was much swollen with the thaw ; posts and rails formed the only protecting fence with which the present narrow bridge is furnished; and so close did the wheels pass to these, that one of the coach lamps was broken by striking them. (Leamington Spa Courier - Saturday 10 March 1838, p1.)

The Estafette was associated with trouble again after the opening of the railway, in a very different incident only five months later: 'An accident of a peculiar nature occurred on the London and Birmingham Railway, about one mile on this side of Denbigh Hall. Previous to the starting of the Birmingham mail train from the station in Euston Grove, it was discovered that three soldiers were in the Estafette Birmingham coach, which is conveyed by the train, they having paid their fares by that conveyance. By order of the railway superintendent they were removed from their position to one of the second class open carriages, when was ascertained that they were rather intoxicated, having been paid off from their regiments that day.

The train started, and on its arrival within about mile of Denbigh Hall, one of the men, named James Tiernan, having observed what he imagined was public house, declared with oath that he would not go a step further without something to drink, at the same time (whilst the train was full speed) he sprung from the carriage into the road.

It being nearly dark was not missed at the time, but on the arrival of the train Denbigh Hall his companions made known the circumstance, on which some of the officers of the company were despatched to the spot, where they discovered the man lying his back, and on examination found that the whole of his toes, boots and all, had been cut off by the train. Notwithstanding this, the unfortunate man on being roused got up, and persisted walking with them to Denbigh Hall, which feat he accomplished without the slightest apparent pain.

On his arrival, however, at that place he complained of violent pain in his feet and legs, and it was not until medical aid was called in that he became fully sensible what bad befallen him. He was placed on some straw in a stable, and, having had his feet dressed, remained there that night, and was conveyed to his destination at Birmingham. (Lincolnshire Chronicle - Friday 31 August 1838)

The Castle Inn

CASTLE HOTEL,

MARKET PLACE,

COVENTRY.

GEORGE HALL

EMBRACES the present opportunity of offering his sincere acknowledgments to COMMERCIAL GENTLEMEN and the Public generally, for the very liberal support he has so long experienced, and begs leave, most respectfully, to solicit a continuance of their favours, assuring them that every exertion will be made to render his Establishment worthy of their Patronage, by the strictest attention to their general Comforts, and adhering to the most Economical Terms.

Omnibuses to and from the Station on the Arrival and Departure of every Train.

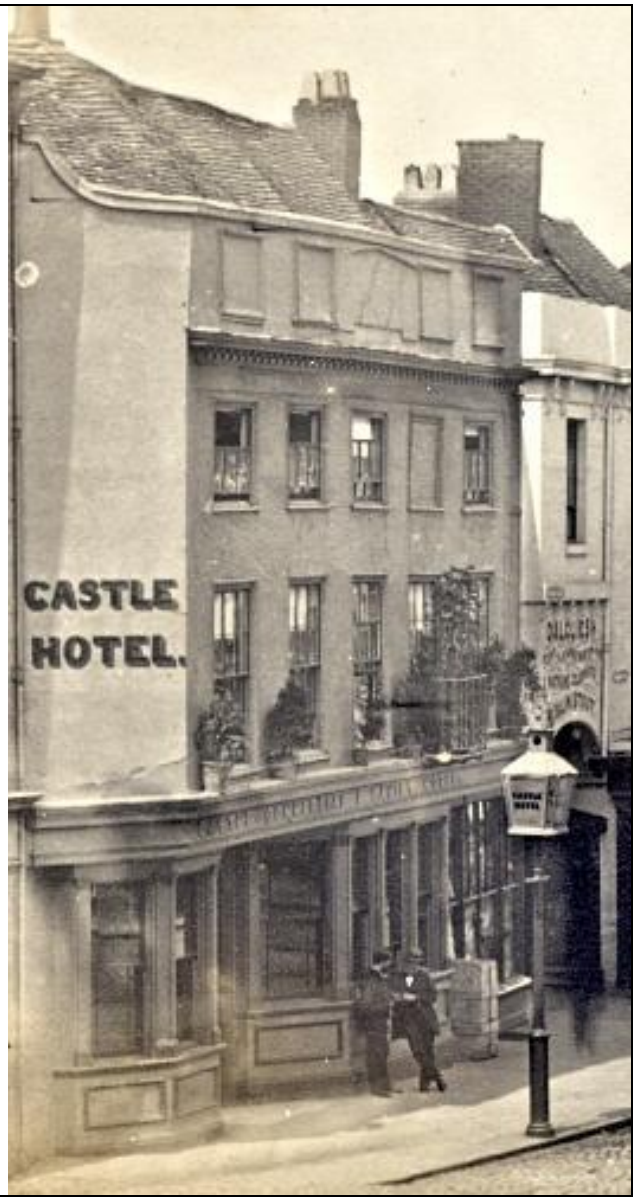
Coventry Standard - Friday 11 May 1838

Castle Inn. Cross Cheaping.

GEORGE HALL,

BEGS to inform his Commercial Friends and the Public in general, that an OMNIBUS will convey them to and from the COVENTRY STATION, on the arrival and departure of every Train on the 9th of APRIL.

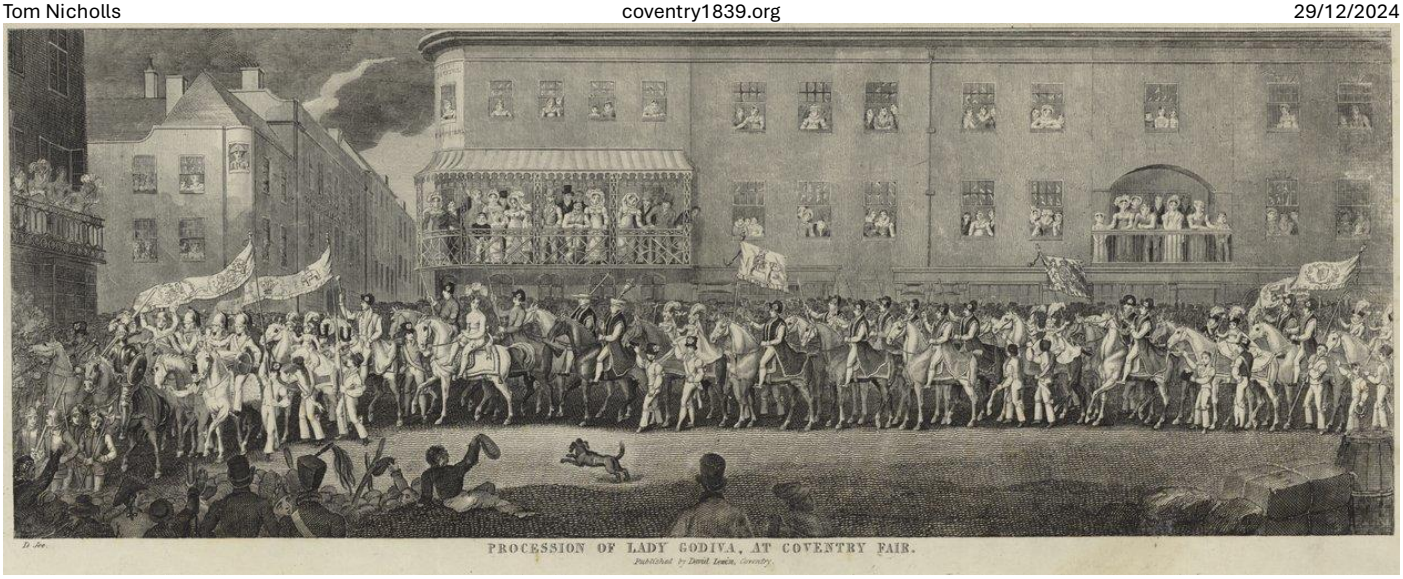
Coventry Herald - Friday 06 April 1838, p1



Right: The Castle Hotel, c1860, Joseph Wingrave photograph (https://pubhistory.historiccoventry.co.uk)

Commercial & City Hotel

This Hotel had a very prominent position in the centre of Coventry which is certainly part of the reason that it gained prominence in the 1869 Godiva procession print. However the City Hotel wasn't an agent for the London & Birmingham Railway. Image (detail, left) from Benjamin Poole's 1869 *History and Antiquities of Coventry*. (detail right) The same view by Thomas Stevens, c. 1879 in Silk. Christchurch gallery.



The final incarnation of the same view by David Gee.

According to contemporary adverts, alongside the other hotels and inns, it provided an 'omnibus' to the station.

OPENING
OF THE
London and Birmingham Railway.

VISITERS TO COVENTRY
WILL FIND
GOOD ACCOMMODATION
AND MODERATE CHARGES,
AT THE
COMMERCIAL & CITY HOTEL,
CROSS CHEAPING,
Pleasantly situated in the centre of the City, within five minutes walk of the Railway Station, and near the Post Office.
JOHN ASTON,
PROPRIETOR.
AN OMNIBUS TO AND FROM THE STATION.

Coventry Standard - Friday 11 May 1838

COMMERCIAL AND CITY HOTEL,
CROSS CHEAPING.
JOHN ASTON

BEGS to return his sincere and grateful thanks for th kind and liberal support he has received since his res dence at the CITY HOTEL, and respectfully informs hi Friends and the Public that he has now added to his Esta blishment, for their better accommodation, an extensiv YARD, comprising GIG-HOUSES, STABLING, loos Boxes, &c.; also ample Stable-room is reserved for hi Agricultural Friends, who are assured that a careful Hostle will be in attendance.

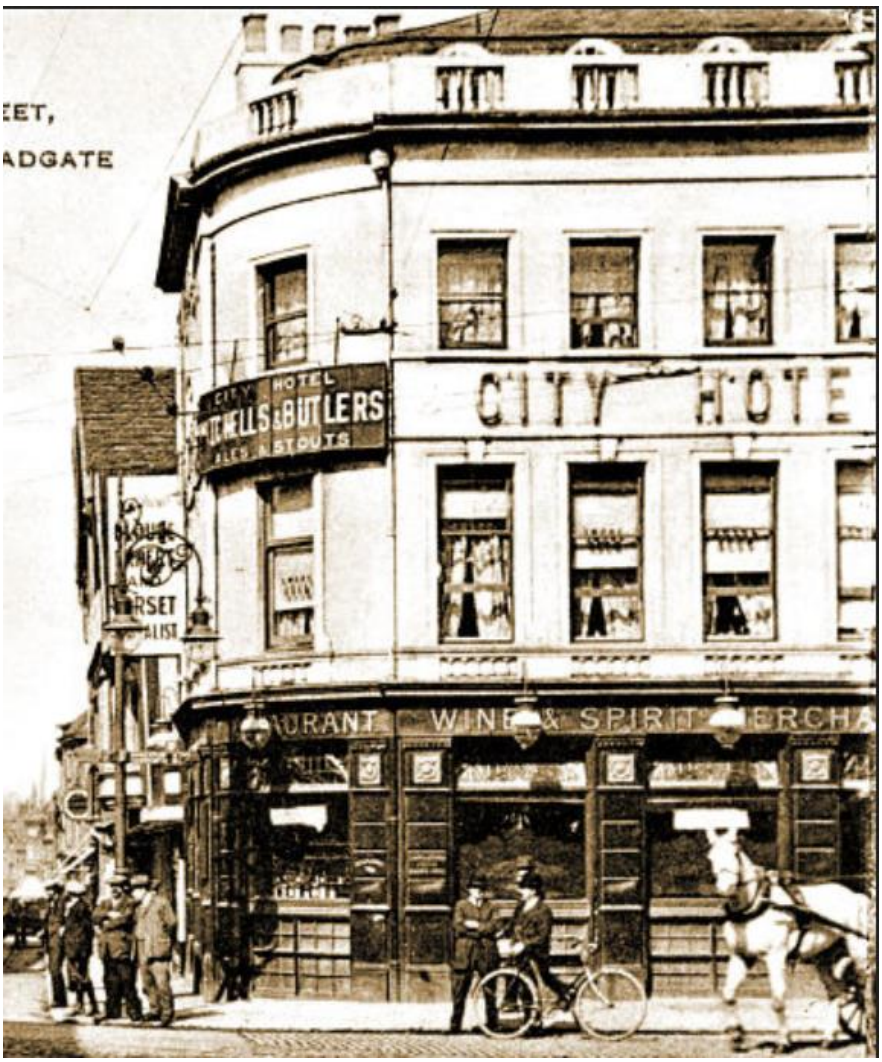
Commercial Gentlemen will find cleanliness, excellen Beds, good Wines and Spirits, and every domestic comfort

The Hotel is pleasantly situated in the centre of the City within a few minutes' walk of the Railway Station, and nea the Post Office.

Gig-Houses and Loose Boxes to Let.—An Omnibus t and from the Station.

Coventry, August 29, 1839.

John Aston was the Licensee until 1841 when Mrs Ann Aston took over, perhaps his widow, who was there until 1845. The photo right, evidently in the 20th Century, shows the building still operating as a hotel but perhaps now gaining more business as a pub.

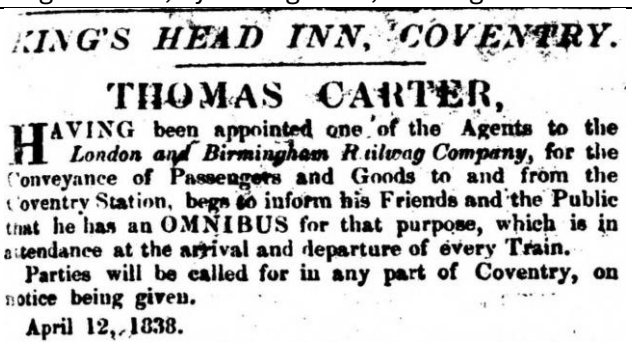


Detail from https://www.pubhistory.historiccoventry.co.uk/main/pub.php?pg=city_hotel

Mr Thomas Carter and the King's Head Inn

The great Duke of Wellington breakfasted in the old house, November 28th, 1823, on returning from a shooting party at Beaudesert, the Staffordshire seat of the Marquis of Anglesey, with whom he had been at shooting parties of a very different character, in the Peninsula and at Waterloo.

Not to be confused with the better known building of 1870, the King's Head Inn, here shown in Thomas Rowlandson's identifiable style, at the somewhat earlier date of 1799. Note 'Peeping Tom' from the Godiva myth painted looking out from an upper storey. Print credit: 'Rowlandson, Published. 27th August.1799, by W. Wigstead, Charing Cross.'



KING'S HEAD INN, COVENTRY.

THOMAS CARTER,

HAVING been appointed one of the Agents to the *London and Birmingham Railway Company*, for the Conveyance of Passengers and Goods to and from the Coventry Station, begs to inform his Friends and the Public that he has an OMNIBUS for that purpose, which is in attendance at the arrival and departure of every Train.

Parties will be called for in any part of Coventry, on notice being given.

April 12, 1838.

Coventry Herald, Friday 13th of April 1838

Left: detail from David Gee's image (above) showing the King's Head to the right. Comparison with Rowlandson's image (above) shows the same 'Peeping Tom' pub sign. Harper (1902) describes this as an effigy, 'next door to the King's Head, but built into a blank window of that rebuilt hostel. If tailors dressed thus in Saxon days, they must have been gorgeous persons. But the effigy, fooking like that of an Admiral from some comic opera, is not older than a century and a half, and is perhaps a portion of a figure carried in the Godiva processions that at intervals have paraded Coventry's streets for many years past''.
A difference however is the absence of the first building in Rowlandson's image (far left).

Thomas Carter would appear to have been a significant member of the Coventry community from the 1820s onwards, certainly the King's Head maintained its status as a prominent Inn and Hotel in the centre of Coventry.
Fate however would appear to have been unkind to him and his family. He lost his 7 year old daughter in 1831 and by 1838 he was wanting to sell his business due to ill health. This eventually went through after three years (1841).
When the Omnibus difficulties kicked off how much he was aware of the actions of his agent Podmore is not recorded.

FOR IMMEDIATE SALE.

THE IMPORTANT

FREEHOLD PROPERTY,

FORMING

THE KING'S HEAD INN,

IN THE CITY OF COVENTRY,

Long justly celebrated as one of the best Family, Commercial, and Posting Houses in the Neighbourhood, and situate in the immediate locality of one of the First Class Stations of the *London and Birmingham Railway*.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,

BY MESSRS.

MARGETTS & SON,

Coventry Herald - Friday 15 June 1838

The King's Head is most conveniently situated in the centre of the City of Coventry, comprising 30 good-sized lofty chambers and servants' bed rooms, 9 sitting, drawing, and dining rooms, large dimensions, and equal in comfort to any private apartments, market room, 49 feet by 16ft. 6in., commercial room, well-constructed bar, tap, coach-office, the usual description of domestic offices on a good scale, superior arched cellaring, adapted for wholesale stores, most excellent coach-horses, capital stabling and loose boxes for about horses, very roomy corn, bay, and straw granaries, large yards, together with every other requisite convenience proportionate to an establishment of great extent, calculated for executing the business with economy, dispatch, and respectability.

The Property commands a frontage of 51 1/2 feet to Smithford Street, and feet to Hertford-street, (the direct road from, and within short distance of, the most important Railway Station for the towns of Warwick, Leamington, Coventry, and the surrounding district,) is in the immediate neighbourhood of the principal manufacturers' warehouses, contiguous to Cross Cheaping, where the markets are held, and desirably situated for all the cross posting towns tin the country, the whole combining to render this Establishment the most suitable in the city for the accommodation of the nobility, gentry, commercial and trading community, and not only are the premises sufficiently capacious, and so judiciously arranged for such accommodation, without contusion or inconvenience, but even a valuable portion of them might be applied to other purposes, without in the least abridging their capabilities for an Inn.

The yards and sites of the buildings contain 2465 square yards. Also (with, or separate from, the above property), all those three messuages or tenements, with well-lighted workshops, outbuildings, yard, and appurtenances, situate in Vicar-lane, in the said City of Coventry, adjoining one of the yards of the Inn, and now in the several occupations of Mr. Gibbons, **Joseph Carter**, **Charles Podmore**, and William Green. The yard and site of these buildings contain 270 square yards. The ill state of health of the present possessor of the Inn rendering his retirement desirable, early possession thereof may be had, and the purchaser accommodated with the valuable and appropriate household, choice cellar of wines and spirits, superior post horses, carriages &c., at a furniture fair valuation, and one-half of the purchase money may remain on mortgage at per cent. The Property is well worth the attention of any person wishing to possess first-rate Inn, and affords an opportunity of purchasing one rarely to be met with. For a view apply the Premises; and for any further particulars, and to treat by Private Contract, to the Auctioneers, at Coventry gr Warwick, or Messrs. Woodcock, Twist, and Son, Solicitors, Coventry. Bedworth, Warwickshire. Valuable freehold property.

Coventry Standard - Friday 25 May 1838, p1.

A robbery at the King's Head in 1839 reveals some interesting internal details – 'Samuel Petitt, book keeper at the King's Head Inn, deposed that Saturday, about half-past ten o'clock, he paid James Gayton his wages; took the money out of a desk the coach office, in the presence of the prisoner James Gayton ; he could see inside the desk ; some notes and silver watch lay insight; there were two parcels in the office; one was directed, "Mr Thorp to be left till called for;" the other was directed, "Thos. Johnson, passenger, London ;" he (witness) locked

up the office about a quarter before eleven o'clock ; all was safe; when he went to the office between seven and eight on Sunday morning, the door leading from the yard was unlocked ; on entering, found both the desks in the office had been broken open, also the two parcels, quantity of pastry, and a letter were lying on the floor ; he examined his own desk, and found the money (amounting to about £95) and the watch were gone.

Mr. Carter said he was at his desk, in the coach office, between 9 and 10 o'clock on Saturday night; there was bag in it, containing, he thought, from £4 to £8 in silver; when he went to it Sunday morning it was all gone.

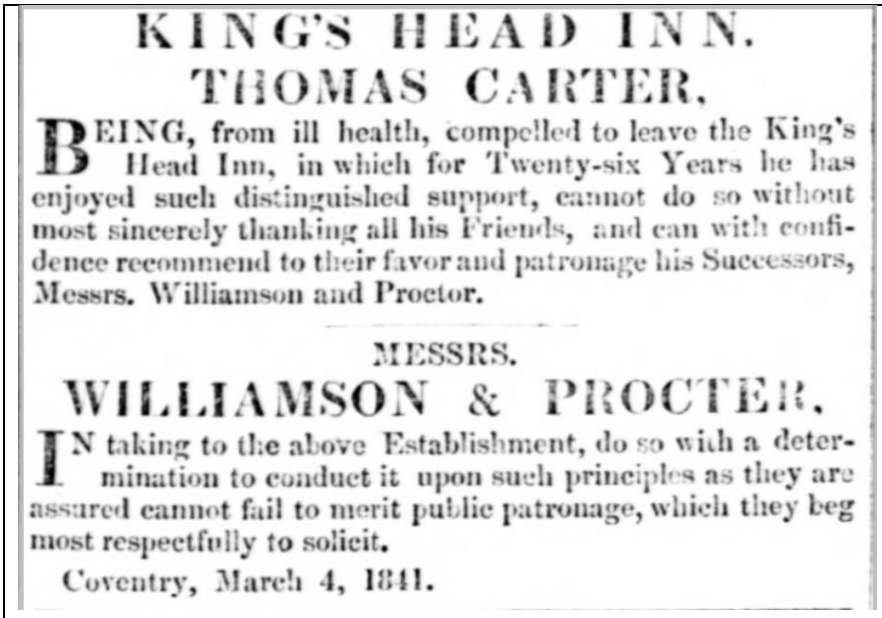
John Peasnell Mr. Carter's post boy came home about 12 clock Saturday night; he put his horses up and went into the kitchen ; the chambermaid was there; while he was there a gentleman came up by the train ; a Mr Wilding brought his luggage; he left the chambermaid, Susan French, and Wilding in the kitchen, and went out go to bed a little after one o'clock; was going across the yard he heard somebody getting over the wail leading from Laing's yard ; was going up stairs, Thomas Gayton and Blackwell came to the bottom of the stairs; when witness got stairs he heard Thomas Blackwell, and Wilding talking the bottom ; he recognised their voices ; Blackwell came to the stairs, and Thomas and Willding followed ; witness was getting into bed; Blackwell began to undress ; the other two did not; Wilding pulled off his shoes; Thomas Gayton and Wilding then went down stairs, under the pretence of going the privy; they took candle and lanthorn with them ; Blackwell got into bed ; witness lay awake for about minutes, but heard no more of and Wilding; he then went sleep; when he got in the morning, about seven o'clock, Thomas Gayton, Wilding, and Blackwell were all bed together.

Mary Payne is cook at the King's Head; she hung up six hams in the King's Head kitchen this day week; she saw them last Thursday. Witness now saw a ham produced by Mr. Prosser, which she said was one of the hams which she hung up, and was the property of her master, Mr. Carter.

Robert Atkins, horse keeper, saw James Gayton come out of the cads' stable with a ham his hand, which he said he had found under the manger ; saw him take it up the yard, but does not know where took it.

The prisoners were remanded for further examination till Thursday. **Coventry Standard - Friday 27 December 1839 p3.z**

In March 1840 James Gayton received the sentence to 15 years transportation while Thomas Gayton and Wilding got 10 years. In 1841 Carter finally sold the King's Head to Williamson & Proctor.



KING'S HEAD INN.

THOMAS CARTER.

BEING, from ill health, compelled to leave the King's Head Inn, in which for Twenty-six Years he has enjoyed such distinguished support, cannot do so without most sincerely thanking all his Friends, and can with confidence recommend to their favor and patronage his Successors, Messrs. Williamson and Proctor.

MESSRS.

WILLIAMSON & PROCTER,

IN taking to the above Establishment, do so with a determination to conduct it upon such principles as they are assured cannot fail to merit public patronage, which they beg most respectfully to solicit.

Coventry, March 4, 1841.

E.H. Woodcock the Mayor of Coventry attended the 'housewarming dinner' of the King's Head adding some degree of status to the reopening in 1841. Although it was the tradition, it is somewhat ironic given Carter's failing health and it being his reason for selling the business, a toast was made to the his and his wife's health. Woodcock did however state: 'All must remember the great kindness, civility, and attention which they invariably met with when they had the management of this hotel: at least, I for one, for I can with truth declare that when it was in their hands I always entered it with pleasure and left it with regret.'

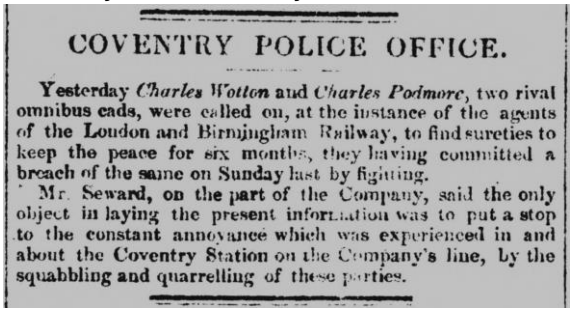
Omnibus wars with the opening of the Coventry Railway Station…

The railway station at Coventry opened in 1838 was to the south west of the city, as it was then, on the Warwick Road. Several Coaching Inns were *kind enough* to offer their services to arriving and departing passengers in the form of Omnibuses which ran between the station and their particular hotels and coaching inns.

T.G. and P. Cheadle, the coach proprietors operating from the Craven Arms, and Mr Carter of the Kings Arms, were both contracted agents to the railway company having agreed to provide omnibuses to meet trains arriving at the station. In addition so did a George Hall of the Castle Inn.

The competition however soon turned ugly. Inevitable perhaps given that 'snaring' a customer at the station meant also revenue for the associated coaching inn; inns that were likely otherwise looking at a loss of revenue due to the fall in longer distance coach travel. It would appear that there were many more scuffles prior to the resulting reports below which were only made after the situation had brewed to a good temperature between Podmore (King's Head) and Wotton (Craven Arms).

The Omnibus services had commenced with the opening of the station in May, 1838 but I imagine that the troubles started within a month or so as with in a few months it was described as a 'constant annoyance'.

Coventry Herald, 6th July, 1838  COVENTRY POLICE OFFICE. Yesterday *Charles Wotton* and *Charles Podmore*, two rival omnibus cads, were called on, at the instance of the agents of the London and Birmingham Railway, to find sureties to keep the peace for six months, they having committed a breach of the same on Sunday last by fighting. Mr. Seward, on the part of the Company, said the only object in laying the present information was to put a stop to the constant annoyance which was experienced in and about the Coventry Station on the Company's line, by the squabbling and quarrelling of these parties.	Yesterday **Charles Wotton** and **Charles Podmore**, two rival omnibus cads, were called on, at the instance of the agents of the London and Birmingham Railway, to find sureties to keep the peace for six months, they having committed a breach of the same on Sunday last by fighting. Mr. Seward, on the part of the Company, said the only object in laying the present information was to put a stop to the constant annoyance which was experienced in and about the Coventry Station on the Company's line, by the squabbling and quarrelling of these parties.

In August there was still 'squabbling' occurring at the station and our protagonists were up before the Magistrates. Cheadle who was perhaps the bigger of the two 'houses' suggested that the matter should be dealt with by the two proprietors directly, between himself and Mr Carter.

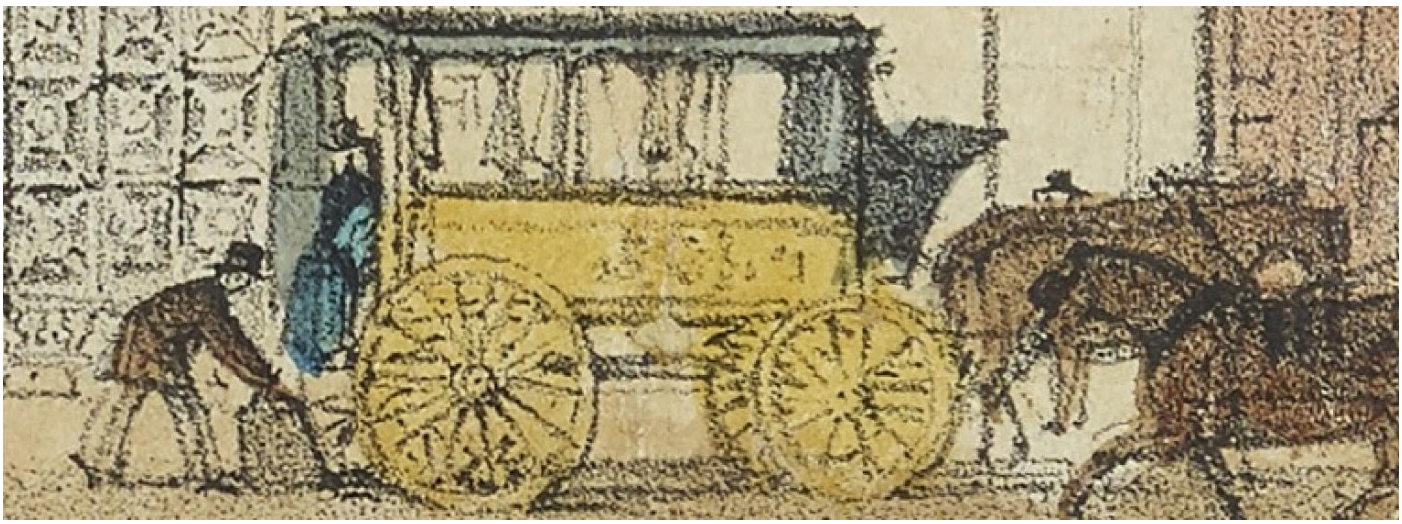
'THE RIVAL CADS AGAIN – **Charley Wootten** appeared to answer the complaint of "Tushey" **Podmore**, who charged him with having called him ugly names, pushing him, threatening to draw his teeth, and spitting in his face at the Railway Station. Plaintiff and defendant described themselves as conductors to the "**King's Head**," and "**Craven Arms**," Omnibuses to and from the Coventry Station, and it appeared that the collision arose out of a mutual haggling about obtaining fares. Podmore, however, was proved to have provoked the assault of which he complained, and therefore the information was dismissed. In doing so the Mayor observed, that the Magistrates must not be plagued time after time with these disgraceful quarrels, otherwise it would end in something much more serious than they were aware of, especially as both parties were already under recognisance to keep the peace. Such conduct must also prove injurious to the respective houses for which they were employed, and extremely disagreeable at the Station where these squabbles took place.

Mr. Seward, on the part of the Railway Company, said that so great was the annoyance at the Station, arising out of the disputes between these persons, that the subject was already before the Managers in London; and if any more of it took place, he was assured that the agency would be removed.

Mr. Cheadle said, he very much regretted that the Magistrates should have their time occupied in hearing these cases so repeatedly, and for his own part if Mr. Carter would agree with him, he would take the thing up in another manner if anything of the kind occurred again, by summoning both parties for causing obstruction to that business, which it was their duty to facilitate.'

Coventry Herald, Friday, 24th August 1838.

What did these Omnibuses look like?



I imagine that the Coventry omnibuses were the lighter smaller types carrying perhaps 9 inside and 3 outside. I say this due to the short journey and limited numbers of passengers, the latter another reason for the conflict. Above: a curtained or open Omnibus at Euston Station, 1838. Below: detail from ‘The London and Taunton Omnibus on the Open Road’ by John Cordrey. Bottom Left: ‘New Omnibus’ Coloured lithograph by H.B. (John Doyle), 1841. Bottom right: ‘New State Omnibus, or the Man wot is Cad…’ 1834. John Doyle

Cads

While ‘Hackney’ carriages, which included both types of cabs and coaches, had been around since the early 1600s, the term omnibus was relatively new in 1830s. The name ‘cad’ was given to the conductors of omnibuses but how or why is not immediately clear. Cad has a somewhat complicated etymology with early use relating to someone of lower rank, but appears by the 1830s to have been a name associated with casual workers.

While I am aware of instances of coach drivers and guards having been guilty of over loading coaches, these instances were predominantly in relation to travellers on the ‘outside’. The stage coach laws addressed this problem and stage coach proprietors names had to be marked on the side of the carriage so that overloading could be reported. This was a serious offence especially since the consequence could be to tip the coach over.

		
Punch, September 28, 1861	A very smart London cad of the 1880s	‘A test of gallantry’ – ‘Will any Gent be so good as for to take this young lady on his lap’ Leech, 1845

There are two myths associated with cads’ ‘dodgy’ practices. The first is the ‘shouldering’ of passengers inside. This was possible since the omnibus’ had bench seats. Because benches don’t have seat dividers it was apparently possible for the unscrupulous cad to ‘squeeze’ extra people in. The design of the vehicle with a rear entrance is also thought to have been part of problem, unsuspecting travellers not realising until too late that the interior was already full.

Another problem was the apparent arbitrary nature of fares, something that also required a law of ‘fixed fares’ to keep them under control. The cad of course, as with the bus conductor, collected the fares.

The cad’s role was somewhat different from the old coach guard. In a much more cut throat business than the old long distance coaches, the omnibuses plied for trade on the streets; the passengers would only travel a short distance, so there was a greater emphasis on numbers carried. Certainly in urban setting there were more commuters, with less luggage than longer travels. Single deck omnibuses didn’t require the cad to assist passengers to their seats on top, as the old guard would have done and handling luggage was a less demanding, well at least on the urban routes.

The omnibuses that served the Coventry railway station, unlike the London ones, were all specifically plying for trade for their respective inns. The cad in such circumstances may have held considerable responsibility for not just conveying the travellers from A to B, as was normal, but bringing them to the hotel or inn for which the omnibus worked thus increasing the inn’s trade. Luggage was probably stowed on the roof.

Local Carriages to Coventry

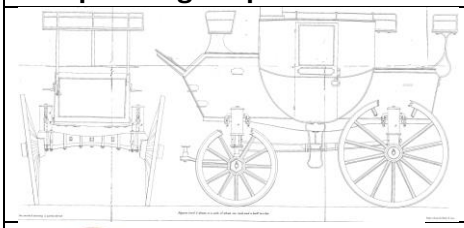
Alan Bates' directory gives us data for 1836 for local carriages for Coventry. Bates' data includes the seating arrangements as required by the licencing law from which we can infer the carriage type.

Destination	Coach Proprietor	Licence no.	Coach Type	Notes
Atherstone	J. Baraclough	7096	4-5	I return journey daily
Coleshill	C. Farr & Co.	7107	9-3	I return journey Friday only
Daventry	W. Goodman & Co.	6927	4-2	I return journey Friday only
Leamington	W. Price	7085	7-5	I return journey daily
	A. Packwood & Co.	7089	4-8	2 return journeys daily
	C. Price & Co.	7090	4-8	I return journey Monday to Saturday
Lutterworth	R. Wormleighton	6953	7-2	I return journey Friday only
Nuneaton	W. Johnson	7092	4-2	I return journey Monday to Saturday

From this data we can sort these carriages into three probable types. The 4-inside traditional coach type and the omnibus are fairly definite interpretations but the 7 seater inside it less so.

Seats(inside/outside)	Coach Type	Description
4-2 / 4-5 / 4-8	Stage Coach	Post or Fly, light coach 4-inside variable no. outside numbers
7-2 / 7-5	Small 'Diligence'	Possibly a three inside coupe with a 4-inside body and roof seats
9-3	Small Omnibus	10 inside – bench seats (one for the cad) and 3 on the roof

Suggested Vehicles to match the local carriages

Sample image of possible match	Notes
	4-2 / 4-5 / 4-8 : Traditional 4-inside coach or post coach. A light weight form of stage coach popular in the mid 1830s. Post coaches, depending on the number of additional fitted seats 'outside', were licenced to carry a varying number of passengers on their roof and front and rear box seats.
	7-2/7-5 : Since the traditional stage coaches could only carry 6 inside at the most the 7-inside carriages must have been of a different form. Small diligences, like this, Malle Postes model[3] (left), might seat 7 inside with 3 in the coupe and 4 behind. A carriage like this might have a coupe with a bench seat for three people facing forward and a rear door opening to two bench seats on opposite sides (longitudinally), seating four. Seats could be added on top.
	9-3 : This is most likely the smaller but common form of omnibus in the 1830s. In urban areas this was common for a time although in most peoples' minds omnibuses were the larger type of carriages. John Doyle's image is satirical, as are all of his images but it gives us a good impression of the carriage type. Three central windows with 3 outside seats next to the driver.

[3] https://www.lot-art.com/auction-lots/DILIGENCE-DE-VOYAGE-OU-MALLE-POSTE-MAQUETTE/239-diligence_voyage-18.4.21-osenat