

Eccleshall

Staffordshire

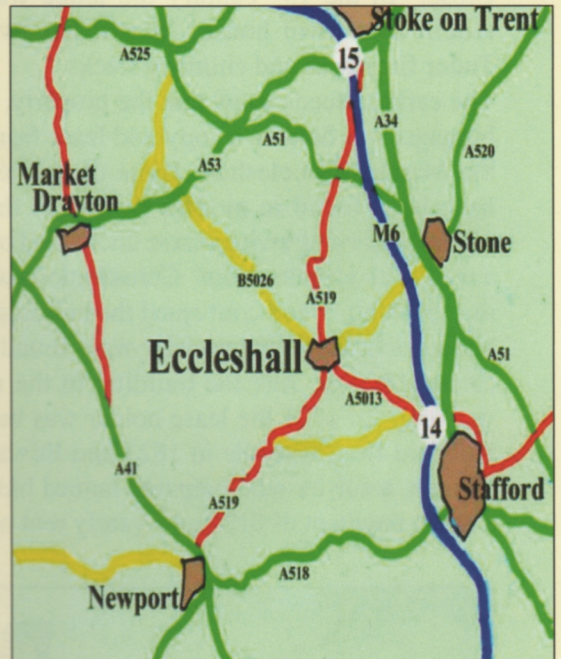


*Eccleshall,
a unique country
town of
historical interest*

**The story of some of
the town's
historic buildings**



**High Street
South Side**



**Produced by
The Ecclian Society**

*'dedicated to the preservation and
enhancement of Eccleshall,
a unique country town of
historical interest'*

17, 19 and 21, High Street, Grade II Listed

Before 1793 there were three separate cottages on this site. Early tenants included a seamstress, a shoemaker, a felt maker, Sir John Pershall's tithe man, John Eardley, a wagoner, a butcher and Robert Turner, who built his cottage for £100.

Number 17 was an ale house believed to have been called the Cock Inn. A trapdoor led down to the cellar where the stillages for the beer casks and the channels in the floor to take away accidental spillage are still in existence.

Mr Tunncliffe, a draper, purchased the three cottages in the last decade of the 18th century. In 1793 he converted them into one building. This development can be dated fairly accurately thanks to the discovery of shop bills and messages bearing that date. The papers had been used by a plasterer to fill a gap at the foot of the stairs. Tunncliffe fitted a Georgian façade with a round attic window.



Number 19 has a plain stuccoed surround, a cornice hood and a heavily battened oak door. There was originally a horse and cart access to the backyard through an entry between numbers 19 and 21. The arched passage-way was narrowed to form the present entrance to number 19 but the outline of the arch is still evident at the rear of the premises. In the back buildings are two large copper boilers by an open fireplace. It is thought that these were used for dyeing fabrics for the shop. Number 21 was a draper's for over 150 years. In 1821 Emery and Tunncliffe had stock worth over £2000 at a time when a farm labourer might earn 14 shillings (70 pence) a week. Census returns show that Henry Garlick worked at the shop from 1851 until at least 1891 and as proprietor for the last thirty years. Mr and Mrs Alfred Lees bought the shop and house in 1940. They retired at the end of World War 2. In the post-war years number 17 was used as a branch of The National Provincial Bank. The door was where the bay window is at present. Alfred's son, Kenneth and his wife Betty, carried on the business until 1985, although they sold numbers 17 and 19 as a single dwelling in 1976. Since 1985 number 21 has had a variety of commercial uses.



The Crown, 23, High Street, Grade II Listed

The Crown is one of the oldest buildings on the High Street dating from the early 16th century. This is a cruck frame house with three bays facing the street. The cruck frames are still evident in the upper rooms. Outside, the large sandstone foundation blocks can be seen. The cellars are extensive and have arched brick roofs. Stables and cowsheds behind the building indicate that farming was one of the activities carried on here. In the middle of the 17th century James Paddy worked in metal and was also the innkeeper. It was an

inn and public house from then until the end of the 20th century when it became a doctors' surgery. The building was carefully adapted and retains many of its original features.

In the 18th and 19th centuries the cowsheds and stables catered for the needs of The Crown's customers. At this time Eccleshall was a major staging post on the coaching route from London to Wales and the North West. During the prosperous early 19th century the building was transformed. It was given a bay-windowed, brick-built front and its first floor was extended out over the pavement. The colonnade has four round-headed bays with moulded



keystones. The alterations provided two public meeting rooms upstairs and the covered arcade for market traders.

The Crown became a local public house and in the mid 19th century its kitchens could cater on a grand scale. From 1841 to 1880 the landlady was Mrs Elizabeth Walters. Lord Stafford annually used The Crown for his rent dinners. It was noted that in 1868 Mrs Walters and her four servants provided the harvest dinner for nearly two hundred farmers and their labourers.



The Royal Oak, Grade II Listed

This is the oldest public house in Eccleshall. In 1640 it was called The Garland, but by 1670 it had become The Three Tuns. Its present name commemorates the Civil War adventure of Charles II when, in 1651, he allegedly escaped capture by hiding in an oak tree after the Battle of Worcester. The building is much older than the event it celebrates. It is thought that the Lancastrian Queen Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, and her son Edward, the Prince of Wales, who were staying at the castle as guests of

Bishop Halse, visited the inn to encourage their supporters before the battle of Blore Heath during the Wars of the Roses in 1459. The Yorkists won the battle and the Queen and the Prince fled.

During the 18th and 19th centuries The Royal Oak was one of Eccleshall's several coaching inns. The Royal Mail Coach carried Irish mail the 280 miles from London via Eccleshall and Chester to Holyhead. This use of the inns was fairly short lived, however, because in 1812 the renowned engineer Thomas Telford improved the A5 route so much that Eccleshall was by-passed. The



long-distance trade dwindled away and was replaced by shorter carriage links to railway stations in Norton Bridge, Stafford and Stone. Eccleshall's inns then declined and became public houses. The land on the south side of the Royal Oak car park was for many years a bowling green and the head quarters of the Eccleshall Bowling Club.

In 1860 a large first floor assembly hall was built adjoining the main building. This was used by the Court of Petty Sessions as well as for private functions and public events like the Boxing Day Farmers' and Traders' Ball.

The long-standing market of local produce

was held under the arches of The Royal Oak and The Crown until a market hall was built across the road in 1884. Influential local men like Henry Millward, maltster, and Samuel Yates, wine and spirits merchant, had been landlords. In recent times landlords have included Geoff Hurst, the England footballer, and Mr and Mrs Colin Rawlins.



35, High Street

Despite its present appearance, this is probably the location of the oldest building on the High Street. The first known building was a 12th century lodge to Usulwall Manor, which was then on the site of Usulwall Close. In the 15th century the lodge was rebuilt as a town house. It still has two Tudor fireplaces and chimney stacks.

The earliest deeds show that the property, a burgage, was held on a copyhold lease from the Manor of Eccleshall. Hints of its past have been found in modern times. In the 1930s charcoal drawings were uncovered on a wall in an upstairs room. Consultations with the Victoria and Albert Museum dated them from the 15th century and confirmed the building's early date. In the 1950s 18th century round-ended bottles and white wig powder were found in one of the ancient cupboards. The 18th and 19th century records link the building to the major Eccleshall occupations, farming and leather working. In 1781 the lease holder was butcher John Hawkins. Later occupiers were George Hubbard from Chedale in 1823 and Edward Barlow from Stone in 1827. After him William Clinton, a currier who prepared tanned hides for use in the leather trader, held the property for a down payment of £12 and a yearly rent of 6d. Clinton died in 1836 and when his family died



out in 1883 the Court of Chancery sold the lease to Charles Bennion, a butcher. At that time the property had a slaughter-house, stables and other outbuildings, yard and garden. Martin Hart, a butcher and Fire Captain, rented the property from Charles Bennion. His son Charles bought the lease in 1926. In 1952 Charles Hart sold the property to a butcher, Stanley Greaves. In recent times the building's business use has changed frequently.

The Old Fire Station, Grade II Listed

In August 1891 a public-spirited document was signed between neighbours John Hawkins and John Challinor. This was an agreement to resite the boundary between the Old Fire Station and number 35. Hawkins had agreed to move his boundary line to give the extra space needed for an engine house and building.

This distinctive building was erected by a Mr Heywood in the mid 19th century specifically as a fire station. It had two horse-drawn “Merryweather” fire-fighting hand pumps. They were bought by public subscription.

One, “Eagle”, is on display at the fire station on Newport Road, Eccleshall; the other, “Owl”, is in the County Museum at Shugborough.

In the 19th century there was a drill for coping with fires. Whoever spotted a fire ran to the house of the nearest voluntary fireman shouting, “Fire! Fire! Fire!” The fireman, having ensured that it was not a false alarm, ran and rang the alarm bell which was on the station roof, to summon his colleagues to the emergency. These local workmen dropped whatever they were doing and raced to the station. They commandeered horses to pull the pumps to the fire. The owner of the horses was paid later. Local lads were paid to man the pumps.

At the end of the 19th century Martin Hart, a butcher and tenant of number 35, was appointed to be the first Fire Captain. He led a team of retained volunteers and kept the horses stabled behind his shop, very close to the station ready for use in a crisis. This also meant he was usually first

to respond and therefore ensured his payment. Fire fighting continued in this way throughout two world wars. During the Second World War an air raid siren was mounted on the station roof and the key kept on a hook in the Police Station.

After 1945 the fire station continued in use under the control of the County Fire Service. Telephones and new equipment were introduced. The dedicated volunteers continued, and still continue, at the business end of the operation. In 1984 a new fire station was built on Newport Road. The old station closed and although the building has since been put to a variety of new commercial uses, its appearance has changed very little.



Peel House, 45, High Street, Grade II Listed

The first record of a building on this site shows that in 1696 a house here belonged to Sir Thomas Pershall. He leased it to a widow, Ann Griffiths, and she sub-let it to Robert Baggaley a shoemaker who rented a workshop and stable from the widow. He had an apprentice and servants working for him.

The present imposing Georgian style building dates from the early 19th century. Built by a lawyer, its size and self importance is embellished by its bold Doric-columned doorway.



Staffordshire County Council bought the house for use as the police station. Initially the establishment comprised a sergeant and two constables but later increased to two sergeants and five constables. The building served as the area police station for most of the century. It was sold in 1998, the police having moved to their modern office on Stone Road. The police station and the court room were then refurbished as a house and apartments, the main residence being appropriately named "Peel House."



By the 1870s it had come down in the world and was again one of Eccleshall's several shoe making establishments owned by Charles Ankers. Subsequently Ankers sold the property to John Henry Glover, a shoe dealer.

During the 20th century trade gave way to authority. Between 1851 and 1892 the town's police station and lock-up had been in Stafford Street, next to the Kings Arms. In 1892 it was moved, initially to 49, High Street. In the early Edwardian years of the 20th century a magistrates' court and cells were built behind number 45. In 1911