



Baked potatoes and beer at the 'Jolly Farmers'

OCCASIONAL
NOTES BY
'TOWNSMAN'

HOSPITABLE in the sunlight, with windows open to welcome it and roses blooming on the sill—what beerhouse looked more typical of the English countryside than the "Jolly Farmers" at Slades Hill before it was swept away lock, stock and barrel to make room for a more pretentious successor in 1935, only four years before the outbreak of the last war?

Today the rural beerhouse exists only in the fond memory of old-timers, its site, and that of the cottages on the left, remembered merely as part of the car park fronting the spacious, comfortable modern building standing well back from the road.

Hedge-lined

When the photograph was taken the road to Oakwood and beyond was unmarred by housing estates and there was no Tube station. Only a few homes trickled down the flank of Slades Hill, so that both behind the beerhouse, in front, and alongside it stretched vistas of open countryside seen mainly over the hawthorn hedges which lined what we then knew as the East Barnet Road—now Bramley Road.

From all parts of the district people came with their families to sit under the ivied shelter seen in the picture. In the taproom on the left of the central doorway beer was served through a hatch straight from the barrels which were perched on stilts in the cellar.

Tables and floors were of scrubbed wood and, in the winter, Emily, wife of Bill Slade, the licensee, served potatoes baked in their jackets to customers, who sat in front of a big fire at the kitchen range. At Christmas cakes and mince pies were part of the hospitality offered.

The parlour, the window of which can be seen behind the bench and

table in the centre, was always dressed in spotless white lace curtains, and housed the piano around which was centred many a homely evening in those carefree years before Hitler's war.

A hayloft, seen in the top right of the photograph, was built over the stable in which Mr. Slade's horse and cart were kept, and a yard stood on that side of the house.

A dozen years or so ago the "Gazette" reproduced in this column an old photograph taken outside the "Jolly Farmers" on the occasion of an outing made by customers to Bishops Stortford in one of David Heath's four-horse brakes. Nearly thirty people, who included Bill Slade, took part accompanied by the inevitable cornet player and, in this instance, by a concertina exponent.

That was before the first war, and one of the party told me that half a sovereign covered the whole cost, including dinner, tea and beer for the day . . . a far cry from days when half a quid buys barely three pints of bitter—pressurised and wishy-washy at that.

Breakfast beer

Before her death some ten years ago Mrs. Slade told me that beer at twopence a pint was sold from 6 a.m. till 11 p.m. in pewters and mugs, or in quart pots which were passed round customers at the table. Building workers who began work early in the morning would have beer with their breakfast.

The site of the "Jolly Farmers" had long been known as Frogs Bottom. Here Salmons Brook, which crosses the road just out of camera range on the left of the picture, once formed a "wash" at the foot of the hill. The beerhouse, she told me, then stood on the Enfield side of the "wash" and seems to have been run by Suckey Hill, for a pewter pot bearing her name was in existence. Sukey, perhaps misspelt here, was formerly a common name for women.

Road raised

When a bridge replaced the "wash" the level of the road was raised, putting the cottages considerably below it. At this time, said Mrs. Slade, the beerhouse was moved to the Oakwood side of the brook in one of a group of cottages built for his sons by farmer Emmanuel Slade, who presumably gave his name to the hill.

Chase Ridings, which turns off Slades Hill halfway up, traces the route of an old footpath which led past Mr. Slade's farm. The Slade family owned the "Jolly Farmers" from the early 1900's, when it was a "free" house. Soldiers, swinging hurricane lamps and escorted by mounted officers, helped themselves to bread and cheese out of a clothes basket held by Mrs. Slade without halting in their march to the Kaiser's war after August, 1914.

The licence was relinquished in 1935, when the beerhouse was rebuilt, and Mr. Slade took over the "Crown" at Waltham Abbey, where he died. The picture is in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. K. Phippen, of Trinity Street, Enfield.