

THE WHITE HART

Both the White Hart and the Castle are mentioned in the Road Books of the late eighteenth century — these were the equivalent of the later Bradford's railway timetables and listed the facilities for coach travellers throughout England. During the coaching era the Shrubb family seem to have been the innkeepers of the White Hart and held positions of respect and authority.

JOHN SHRUBB at the White-Hart at BENSON,
AND
JOHN PERRY at the Star Inn in OXFORD,
Hereby give NOTICE,
THAT NOBLEMEN, GENTLEMEN, and OTHERS,
may by them be supplied with neat four-wheeled
POST CHAISES, and able Horses, at Nine-pence
a Mile, or four Horses and Chaise at Fifteen-pence, upon
any Turnpike Road: And they hope Gentlemen will re-
member that they are the first Proprietors of Post Chaises that
undertook to run at this Price from Oxford either upwards
or downwards: For which Reason though others have since
been obliged to come into it, yet they humbly hope that
those Gentlemen, who have already encouraged them, will
continue their Favours, which will be gratefully acknow-
ledged by their obedient, humble Servants,
JOHN SHRUBB,
JOHN PERRY.

Newspaper advertisement for coach services from the White Hart 1758

John Shrubb can be traced in the Victuallers' record from 1754, James Shrubb appears in 1801 and Sarah Shrubb in 1822. This last lady managed both the White Hart hotel and one thousand acres of land and is said to have welcomed the Duke of Wellington on his return from Waterloo when he changed horses at Benson. Ann Crook had succeeded here in 1852.

The White Hart was the home of the Bensington Driving Club which was established in 1807. It consisted of twenty-five members elected by ballot, each of whom undertook to drive from London to the White Hart at least twice in the year. The admission fee for membership was £10, a considerable sum in those days.

Competition from the railways in the nineteenth century killed the coaching trade and the White Hart dwindled into a pub with its surplus accommodation turned into private residences. In the twentieth century, the growth of motoring, particularly touring motor coaches brought customers back and the White Hart resumed occupation of the whole building. However, in the 1980s, the hotel closed and the building was converted to apartments.
