

Hope in the 1850s

8. The Durham Ox

Next to William Middleton's farmhouse is another of the older buildings in the village. In 1850 it was a beer house known as the Durham Ox. The farmhouse would originally have had a similar roof line but at some stage the Middletons built a new larger front to their property and raised the roof to its current level.

William Middleton leased the Durham Ox from George Nuttall and sub-let it to the Hobson family. Doreen Sedgewick (nee Hobson) has put together a booklet for the Historical Society detailing her family's life at the inn. In 1850, as well as running the beer house, John Hobson was a farmer of 16 acres using the barns and yard behind the inn and leasing fields within the parish. There is a record of the ale accounts for 1842 giving details of how much individuals spent. Ale probably cost about 3d a pint and was important at a time when there was no piped water supply. It seems that the Hobson bought in their ale from G Crookes of Sheffield. Doreen was told that in the 1890s the beer used to be lined up on the bar in readiness for the gangs at work on the railway. Another family story was that children attending Hope school from Derwent and Hope Woodlands stayed at the Durham Ox during the week.

Like so many other families of the time the Hobsons had more than one occupation in order to make ends meet. They were also cordwainers (shoemakers) and in 1850, when John Hobson died, his son William carried on the business. Doreen also has the shoemaking account book. The Hobsons made cloth boots for John Wilson's wife for 9s/9d, new boots for Mrs Hadfield at 10/- and put a cap on Thomas Darwent's boots for 3d. The most expensive item was a leather bucket (waterkine) which cost Thomas Wain and Charles Bramwell 16/- . Elizabeth Hobson was also involved in shoe binding and used the account book in 1853 to record the sales which cost 1/-. It seems to have been a popular service.



Later the building was used for many years as a Post Office and as a bank.

Ann Price - from the original booklet by Doreen Sedgewick.