

BIRMINGHAM YARD BY JANET BURTT AND PETER CLARKE

Just off Castle Square, and within sight of The White Hart and The Castle, was a centre of industry in Benson – Birmingham Yard. No-one knows quite why it has that name – it could be that the coaches to Birmingham had their horses shod there, or that the work done there was ‘Brummagen’ (ie metal) work.

At the turn of the 20th century it was owned by Mrs Lane, who lived at Lane House in Castle Square with her brother, William Frampton. An ancestor of theirs was the inventor of the Frampton Steam Plough.

Henry Lane, who rented Birmingham Yard – apparently no relation to his landlady – was shown in Kelly’s Directory of 1876 as a blacksmith and by 1899 additionally as the landlord of The Three Horseshoes. The majority of the Lane’s business was concerned with horses and farm implements. Henry died in 1903 and his wife, Ellen (known to her family as Granny Ellen), became head of the family. She was herself recorded as a blacksmith in Kelly’s Directory of 1915.

They had four sons: Albert, George Joseph (‘Joe’) and Ernest stayed in Benson and took on Birmingham Yard when their father died; the fourth and eldest son, Henry William, who allegedly had ‘problems’, was banished by his mother to a small shoeing shop in Warborough. The entrance to the Yard had to be at least a wagon’s width to take the horse drawn traffic in and out.

There were other businesses in Birmingham Yard by 1915 – Charles Lewendon, also the landlord of The Farmer’s Man, was described as a millwright in Kelly’s of that year. He was also known as a wheelwright and carpenter by members of the Lane family. Kelly’s also records John West, builder, in the Yard who was apparently the son of Mr West, the farmer in Castle Square.

(See plan of Birmingham Yard below)

BIRMINGHAM YARD in the 1930s

