KING'S HEAD

HOTEL, EATERY & COFFEE HOUSE

A BRIEF HISTORY

BY WILL SWALES

WELCOME

Welcome to a brief history of The King's Head, Richmond, Yorkshire. During the late spring and early summer of 2016 we had the good fortune to be able to revitalise and refurbish this fabulous building.

During the planning stage of this project we started to look hard at the building and its many historical attributes, at how some parts of the building had been added during its 300 years of existence. And whilst contemplating the small changes and additions we wanted to make, it dawned on me that we will only be its custodians for a generation or two at most. I can't foretell who will follow but started thinking about who had been its keepers in the past.

Therefore, we asked a good friend if he would research The King's Head and try to separate the fact from the fable; what's true and what has been elaborated during the story-telling process over the years.

What follows is the result of that research. It focuses on the highlights. We think it is as accurate as it can be, but we will always welcome comments and suggestions. Please feel free to take this booklet away with you. I hope you enjoy reading it, and that you also enjoy the hospitality and service we now provide at The King's Head.

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"...PURPOSE-BUILT AS A HOTEL, INTENDED FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF VISITING NOBILITY AND GENTRY WHO CAME TO RICHMOND?"

The recently refurbished private dining room at The King's Head.

A LEISURE CENTRE FOR THE NOBILITY AND GENTRY

"...he 'chucked' a waiter down the staircase at the inn causing him to break his leg."

The King's Head in Market Place, Richmond, Yorkshire, was built in about 1720 by Charles Bathurst, a wealthy land and lead-mine owner, whose family home was farther up the River Swale at Clints, near the village of Marske.

It is thought that the new property was the first brick building in Richmond, and was certainly grander than any other in the Market Place. The original purpose of the house isn't clear. It doesn't seem to have been used by Charles Bathurst, who in 1720 started building another grand house for himself, in York. It's possible that it was purpose-built as a hotel, intended for the exclusive use of visiting nobility and gentry who came to Richmond because of the town's growing reputation as a place of elite tourism and leisure.

The attractions were its picturesque setting, later to be captured by the artist J M W Turner, its walks by the river and to interesting castle and abbey ruins, its well-heeled surrounding neighbourhood, which was home to a high concentration of nobility and gentry living in fine houses, and its reputation for horse racing and race-horse breeding.

Clues to the relationship between Bathurst's grand house and the growth in tourism are found in a town plan dated 1724. The house is shown, but not named. However, immediately behind it is a building with a conical roof, named as Plasingdale. A later document of the 1700s refers to this building as a summer house called Plasendale, and another refers to the land around it as comprising a cockpit, bowling green and the Placendale Gardens.

It seems possible that these outdoor leisure facilities were part of Bathurst's grand house from the outset. Charles Bathurst didn't live long enough to enjoy the fruits of his investment in Richmond town. He and his wife both died in 1724, leaving their estate to three daughters and a son, Charles. Around this time, and perhaps earlier, the Bathurst house in Richmond was let to an innkeeper and became known as The King's Head Inn.

According to one story the younger Charles Bathurst 'chucked' a waiter down the staircase at the inn causing him to break his leg. When the innkeeper protested, Bathurst responded, 'put it on the bill.' On the death of Bathurst, sometime around 1740, ownership of The King's Head passed to his sister Mrs Jane Turner.

Robert Harman's Plan of Richmond, Yorkshire, 1724. Original held at the North Yorkshire County Record Office.

SIGNS OF THE INN

The name of The King's Head seems likely to have honoured King Charles II (reigned 1660 – 85) rather than the monarch at the time the inn was built, George I (1714 – 27).

Richmond had suffered terribly during the English Civil War and there was said to be great rejoicing in the town when the monarchy was restored by Charles II. It was Charles II who granted Richmond its charter for local government in 1668. And it was Charles II who recreated the extinct dukedom of Richmond, which he granted to one of his illegitimate children in 1675.

Charles II was depicted on the sign of The King's Head painted by the noted inn-sign artist Ralph Ellis (1885 – 1963). In 1936 the sign was loaned by the then owners, Richmond (Yorks.) Hotel Co. Ltd., to an exhibition of inn signs at the Building Centre in New Bond Street, London. A photograph of the inn sign (left) featured in the exhibition catalogue.

How far back in time before then the sign had featured Charles II is not known, but it is common for the subjects of successive inn signs to keep faith with their predecessors. A sign featuring Charles II remained at The King's Head until the early 2000s when it was replaced with one showing, curiously, a silhouette of the head of George III. This in turn has been replaced with one without any king's image.

The oldest inn sign at The King's Head is almost certainly the painted, carved oak sculpture of a bunch of grapes, which has been recently restored and still hangs above the main entrance.

Top: The King's Head, Richmond, inn sign loaned to a national exhibition in London in 1936 and featured in the catalogue.
Bottom: The oldest inn sign currently in use at The King's Head, Richmond.

EARLY VISITORS TO THE KING'S HEAD

The earliest surviving record naming The King's Head is from 1725, when it was visited by Edward Harley, son and heir of the 1st Earl of Oxford, and his considerable entourage.

He was returning from Scotland to his stately home near Cambridge, and was accompanied by a gentleman friend, a chaplain, and 10 servants. The party had a large coach drawn by six horses, plus another ten horses, most of which carried baggage.

A journal of their tour, written by the chaplain, noted, 'We set out from Barnard Castle half after nine, and in six hours twenty minutes came to a good inn at Richmond the 'King's Head' kept by one Haslam.' The journal also noted, 'In this part of the county the best horses are said to be bred, and everybody here is a born jockey.' This visit by the future 2nd Earl of Oxford is the earliest of several recorded associations between The King's Head and the aristocracy.

In May 1745, the Earl of Oxford's wife, Henrietta, stayed there. Her journal during her visit to Richmond recorded: 'Lay at the "King's Head", a tolerable inn.'

Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford. Painted by Jonathan Richardson. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

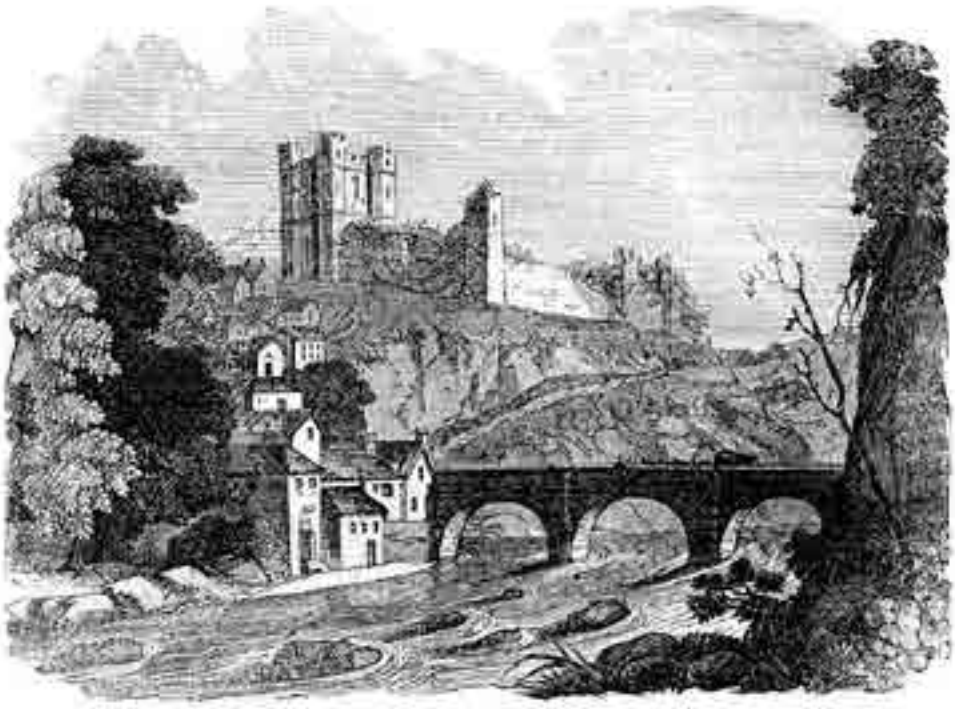
LINKS WITH THE DUKEDOM OF RICHMOND

"...as a token of the title's heritage, Charles II also granted his son ownership of the ruined Richmond Castle in Yorkshire."

The King's Head Hotel has some tantalising links with the dukedom of Richmond, which although named after the Yorkshire town and castle has for many centuries had only tenuous connections with them.

In Norman times Richmond was the centre of the largest and richest baronial estate in England. However, long before The King's Head was built, the title had become extinct three times, and the estate broken up.

The title was recreated in 1675 when King Charles II gave his three-year-old illegitimate son Charles the surname of Lennox and a string of titles, the chief of which was 1st Duke of Richmond, of the fourth creation. The ducal estate and stately home were established at Goodwood, near Chichester in Sussex. But as a token of the title's heritage, Charles II also granted his son ownership of the ruined Richmond Castle in Yorkshire.



Engraving of Richmond Castle.

THE 2ND DUKE'S INTEREST IN THE TOWN

The 1st Duke of Richmond died in 1723, not long after The King's Head in Richmond was built. He was succeeded by his son Charles Lennox, the 2nd duke (1701 – 1750).

Records show that the 2nd duke took some interest in Richmond, where his affairs were handled by his northern agent, a Mr Wharton. This was probably the same Mr Wharton, who in 1729 was recorded as a resident at The King's Head in Richmond.

An advertisement in the Newcastle Courant that year declared, 'This is to acquaint the Publick that Mr Wharton at The King's Head, in Richmond, keeps the well-known horse called Gigg, late Mr Robinson's of Easby, to be leap'd as usual at three guineas a mare and half a crown to the Servant; Attendance and Care necessary.'

The 2nd duke was an enthusiastic antiquarian and a noted developer of all his properties. He made repairs to the tower and walls of Richmond castle, and according to a London newspaper report in 1739 Mr Wharton excavated and exposed the old moat and drawbridge, upon which he built several houses. The impression is gained that Mr Wharton lived at The King's Head for part of the year, or at least whenever he was in town attending to the duke's interests.

Only one record has been found of the 2nd duke visiting the town. He was a Lieutenant General in the British Army, and he called at Richmond in January 1746 when returning southwards from his part in quelling the Scottish Jacobite Rebellion. A London newspaper, the St. James's Evening Post, reported:

'When his Grace was at Richmond… from whence he takes his title; he gave to the poor ten guineas; to the debtors in the jail half a guinea each, to the ringers two guineas. His Grace was met by the Mayor and Aldermen in their formalities, who provided an elegant entertainment for him at the Town Hall. The night concluded with bonfires and illuminations.'

Nothing was reported about where the duke spent the night, but it might reasonably be speculated that he and his entourage were accommodated at The King's Head.

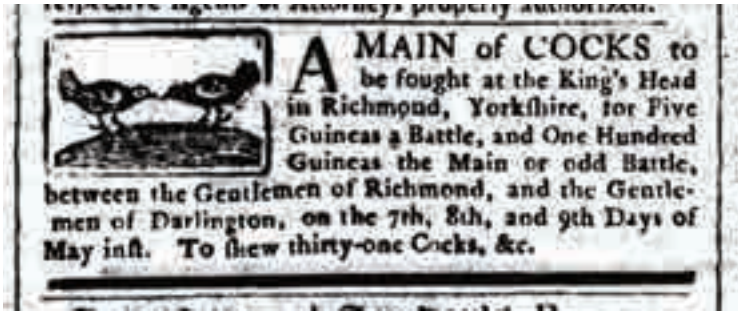
"His Grace was met by the Mayor and Aldermen in their formalities, who provided an elegant entertainment for him."

The hotel's lounge.

COCK FIGHTING, HORSE RACING AND GAMBLING

Cock fighting at the pit behind The King's Head was extremely popular among the nobility and gentry, and on at least one occasion was allied to the town's horse racing meetings, as described in an article in the Newcastle Courant in June 1731, promoting a three-day meeting at Richmond from 30 June to 2 July.

After listing details of the racing rules, entrance fees and prize money of between £15 and £30, the article informed readers that on the morning of each race-day there would be a cock fighting match 'at Mr John Heslop's at the sign of The King's Head... betwixt the Gentlemen of Richmond and the Gentlemen of Bedale, showing 25 cocks each side, for two guineas a battle, and 20 guineas the main, or odd battle.'


A MAIN of COCKS to be fought at the King's Head in Richmond, Yorkſhire, for Five Guineas a Battle, and One Hundred Guineas the Main or odd Battle, between the Gentlemen of Richmond, and the Gentlemen of Darlington, on the 7th, 8th, and 9th Days of May inſt. To ſhew thirty-one Cocks, &c.

Newcastle Chronicle, 4 May 1771.
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www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

The inference from this advertisement is that The King's Head was not just a hostelry for the upper classes, but also a centre for their leisure and entertainment. Gambling, which is known to have been popular among the Georgian elite, was certainly provided for at the cock fights, and possibly also on the bowling green, and no doubt through other pastimes as well.

By 1771 the cock-fight at The King's Head was advertised in the Newcastle Chronicle (left) with a huge increase in prize money – now five guineas per battle and '100 guineas for the Main or odd Battle.' Thereafter prize money stabilised. It was exactly the same 30 years later when a poster promoted 'The Gentlemen's Subscription Main of Cocks at R Martin's Pit, Kings Head, Richmond, on Monday and Tuesday, the 20th and 21st of January 1800.' The poster was noted in a press report as being one among a collection of bill posters obtained by Hull Municipal Museum in about 1930. The poster was almost certainly lost when the museum was destroyed by a bomb during the Second World War.

SIR LAWRENCE DUNDAS

Sir Lawrence Dundas, 1st Baronet. Painted by Sir Thomas Hudson. Collection of the Marquess of Zetland, Aske, Richmond. By kind permission of the Marquess of Zetland.

The King's Head was purchased in 1765 by a dynamic entrepreneur and newly created baronet, Sir Lawrence Dundas.

Hailing from Kerse, Linlithgow, Scotland, Dundas had made a vast fortune by selling supplies to the British Army during the Seven Years' War against France (1756-63). He was created a baronet in 1762, after which he engaged on a spending spree throughout the country, buying grand houses and landed estates, especially where they gained him power and influence.

Richmond was of special interest because it had two parliamentary seats elected by just 273 men. The right to vote was gained by ownership of a qualifying house. Dundas simply bought a majority of the qualifying houses, thus buying the votes and ensuring the two MPs were in his pocket.

He also bought the nearby grand house and country estate of Aske Hall, which he liked so much that he developed it as his new principal home. Such was his wealth and power that he earned the nickname among aristocratic circles of 'The Nabob of the North.'

Sir Lawrence Dundas died in 1781, and was succeeded by his son Thomas Dundas. The King's Head would remain in the ownership of the Dundas family for 132 years.

A THEATRE AND A NEWS ROOM

Two events in 1788 indicated the emergence in Richmond of a greater emphasis on culture and literacy.

Accompanying the opening of a theatre, which is now restored and is one of Britain's oldest operational theatres, was the opening, as reported by local author Christopher Clarkson, of a 'News Room' at The King's Head, where 'all strangers of respectable appearance are admitted.' He added the free puff, 'This room is a commodious apartment... where all travellers, either on pleasure or business, meet with good accommodation and civil treatment, on moderate terms.' Newspapers from London and the provinces were available, and the enterprise was supported by voluntary contributions from the townsfolk. At this time, the bowling green behind the hotel seems to have fallen into disuse, and on it stood a kennel for a pack of beagles.

ARISTOCRAT WHO HELPED HIMSELF FROM THE LARDER

Another aristocratic guest at The King's Head to record the visit in a diary was John Byng, later to be the 5th Viscount Torrington, of Bedfordshire.

Staying two nights in 1792, he described the innkeeper, Richard Martin, as 'a very civil old man,' and seemed happy with his 'newly painted room,' but was not content with his dinner, which consisted of 'stale salmon and butter'd chops that did not make my chops water.' After his meal he went for a walk to Easby Abbey, and on returning to The King's Head helped himself from the larder to 'a cold shoulder of lamb... a gooseberry pye... and a good bottle of port.' He surmised that he 'never dealt better.'

"a cold shoulder of lamb... a gooseberry pye... and a good bottle of port."

The renovated ballroom set for a wedding.

THE OWNER'S NEW TITLES AND A NEW BALLROOM

In 1794, Sir Thomas Dundas, owner of The King's Head was created Baron Dundas. He also purchased from a fellow peer the rights to the earldom of Orkney and the lordship of Zetland, an old Scottish name for Shetland.

He became Lord Lieutenant of Orkney and Shetland. He was a prominent Freemason and might have influenced the decision of the Richmond Freemasons Lodge, named the Lennox Lodge in honour of the dukes of Richmond, to move their meeting place to The King's Head.

A major development of The King's Head occurred in 1813, after the demolition of the adjacent King's Arms Inn to create a new street, King Street, leading into Market Place. Along the newly exposed King Street elevation of The King's Head, a row of large windows was installed providing light for a new first-floor ballroom. It was accessed by a new grand staircase, which was installed at the same time.

The ballroom created a new opportunity for The King's Head to compete against the town's Assembly Room and to host any of the grand events for which Richmond was by now well known.

The staircase dates from 1813.

A VISIT BY J M W TURNER

Local legend has it that among the famous guests at The King's Head was the artist J M W Turner.

He is said to have commented it was 'the finest hotel in Richmondshire,' although evidence of this is elusive. His published letters include one sent from Richmond, but not specifically The King's Head, in July 1816, which was when he was working on illustrations for Thomas Dunham Whitaker's two-volume An History of Richmondshire. Turner's contribution to this grand project is said by some critics to have marked his transition from topographer to artist, and was the beginning of his fame. It is entirely plausible that he stayed at The King's Head.

COACHING DAYS AT RICHMOND

A typical mail-coach scene of the period.

Although Richmond was not on any of the major roads of the 1700s and 1800s, its importance as a destination for visitors meant it became a necessary stage on coaching routes passing through the region.

And so we find in a North Riding trade directory of 1828, at the height of the coaching era, that The Express coach between London and Glasgow called at The King's Head on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons, travelling in both directions. The north bound was destined to cross the Pennines through the towns of Brough and Appleby, while the southbound headed for York.

In 1829, local newspapers advertised another coach, The Courier which left The King's Head six days a week at 4am, calling at Catterick Bridge, Bedale, Ripon and Harrogate, en route to Leeds for 12 noon to be in time for coaches leaving for all major cities. The return coach from Leeds arrived at Richmond at 9.30pm.

SOCIETY BALLS AND THE NEW EARL OF ZETLAND

"150 of the most distinguished and fashionable personages..."

Newspaper advertisements and reports indicate that society balls and dinners at The King's Head were especially popular during the tenure of innkeeper John Stuart, between 1829 and 1838.

According to the Yorkshire Gazette, a New Year's Eve Ball on 31 December 1834 was attended by '150 of the most distinguished and fashionable personages of the town and neighbourhood,' The report included a long list of the elite of the area, headed by the owners of The King's Head 'the right hon. Lord and Lady Dundas'. Lord Dundas at this time was Lawrence Dundas, the 2nd Baron, who had inherited the title and estates in 1820.

On the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838, Baron Dundas was created Earl of Zetland as reward for his late father's financial assistance to the royal family. The earl died in 1839 and was succeeded by his son Thomas, 2nd Earl of Zetland, who was also Lord Lieutenant of the North Riding of Yorkshire.

The exterior of The King's Head.

COACHING TRADE IN DECLINE

By 1840, the beginnings of a nationwide railway network had significantly affected the schedule of coaches calling at The King's Head.

A North Riding trade directory for that year shows that The Express coach between London and Glasgow was no longer listed. The Courier, now went only as far as Ripon three mornings a week, leaving at 6am. The route to Leeds was now via The Van to Catterick, where it would meet The Telegraph travelling in the morning to Leeds and in the evening to Newcastle. There was also now The Omnibus, which went from Richmond to Darlington at 6.30am, returning in the evening.

A CONCERT BY FRANZ LISZT

Franz Liszt.

There was great excitement among Richmond's elite circles on 27 January 1841 when the internationally famous, virtuoso pianist Franz Liszt rolled into town as the star of a touring concert party.

According to the diary of a party member, the Welsh musician and singer John Orlando Parry, the tour was rather chaotic, as the Richmond audience discovered. Having performed two concerts in a day – at Sunderland and Durham – the party set off for Richmond the next day, arriving at 'the hotel' at 2.15pm, nearly two hours late for their scheduled concert. By this time half the audience had gone away, leaving about 90 people.

During the concert, the performers took turns to entertain in the ballroom and eat a hasty lunch in an adjoining room. It was noted that they received no encores. The audience included the party of the Countess of Zetland, who Parry described as 'a nice lady-like woman.'

CELEBRATORY BALLS ALL YEAR

In the 1840s and later, grand balls were held the year round at The King's Head for of all manner of celebrations.

Examples in the summer months included those for race-horse owners and trainers at the conclusion of meetings at Catterick, and for militia officers after exercises by the North Riding Yeomanry.

RICHMOND
WINTER ASSEMBLIES.
THE FIRST WINTER BALL will be held on THURSDAY, the 18th of December, 1845, at Mr. Hill's, the KING'S HEAD INN, Richmond. The Second on WEDNESDAY, the 11th of February, 1846.

Yorkshire Gazette, 29 November 1845.
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www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

Winter assemblies were also very popular. An advertisement in the Yorkshire Gazette of November 1845 promoted two winter assemblies to be held in December and February, which no doubt would have attracted the high-society clientele for which the inn had long been associated. Music was frequently provided by the Richmond Quadrille Band, and sometimes, after supper at midnight, dancing reportedly went on until 4am.

THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY

Coach services to and from Richmond continued to change in order to synchronise with the services of the expanding railway network.

By 1845 the Leeds Intellingencer newspaper advertised The Royal Telegraph coach, which left The King's Head in Richmond at 9.30am, to call at Crakehall, Bedale, Ripon, and Harrogate, and arrive in Leeds at 5pm in time for trains to London, Birmingham and Manchester.

The railway came to Richmond in 1846. The line branched from the York-to-Newcastle line south of Darlington, and terminated on the south bank of the River Swale, opposite Richmond town. For ease of access to the town, the railway company built a road-bridge over the river and constructed a new road up to the town. A horse-drawn omnibus service from The King's Head met every train.

ELEVATION TO A MARQUESS

Illustration of the Marquess of Zetland, Vanity Fair, 31 July 1886. © National Portrait Gallery.

Thomas Dundas, 2nd Earl of Zetland, died in 1873 leaving no children. The titles and estates, including ownership of The King's Head, went to a nephew, Lawrence Dundas, who at that time was MP for Richmond.

In 1889 Lawrence Dundas, the 3rd Earl of Zetland, was appointed to the very senior post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He served for three years, and at the conclusion he was granted another elevation in the peerage, becoming the Marquess of Zetland. He was also made Earl of Ronaldshay, which became a courtesy title of his eldest son. The marquess was the provincial grand master of the Freemasons in the North and East Ridings. He was also an enthusiastic sportsman, and was Master of the Zetland Hunt for thirty-five years.

HAILSTONES LIKE RIFLE BALLS

The fabric of The King's Head suffered greatly during an extraordinary hailstorm that struck the town during a busy Saturday afternoon in July 1893.

Newspapers throughout the country reported that shoppers and market traders ran for cover when hailstones the size of eggs thundered onto the roads and pavements, causing widespread damage and personal injury. But the buildings around the Market Place did not provide the expected refuge.

The wind fired hailstones through windows 'like rifle balls' sending breaking glass flying in all directions and damaging anything they hit in the rooms. It was estimated that up to 200,000 panes of glass were smashed in the Richmond area. Many houses lost all their windows, and at The King's Head the damage was assessed at 175 panes of glass.

THE ERA OF THE BANK

From 1894 Lawrence Dundas, Marquess of Zetland, directed his affairs away from national politics and towards local affairs.

He became an alderman on the North Riding County Council, and was elected Mayor of Richmond in 1895 and 1896. The King's Head was becoming less relevant to his interests, so he brought an end to the family's 132 years of ownership. In November 1897 the freehold was bought by a Newcastle wine merchant which set up The North Yorkshire Hotels Co.

Profits were probably hard to find during the Great War, which might explain why the owners let a part of the building to Lloyds bank. The firm occupied a substantial part of the ground floor, and created a grand separate entrance on the front elevation of the building near the corner with King Street. The Bank proudly announced the opening of its new Richmond branch in February 1916.

The bank entrance, which is no longer used.

ANOTHER CHANGE OF HANDS

The post-war economic depression proved too difficult for North Yorkshire Hotels, which sold The King's Head in 1928, shortly before the company went bust.

The hotel was bought by Richmond (Yorkshire) Hotels Co., which was formed especially for the acquisition by a local baronet Sir Henry Lawson, of Brough Hall, near Catterick. Lawson already owned The Bridge House Hotel at Catterick Bridge, and after investing in a substantial renovation of The King's Head started promoting the two hotels together.

It's not clear how long Lloyds Bank remained within The King's Head building, but it had certainly gone by the 1960s.

THE KING OF NORWAY DROPS IN FOR A DRINK

In July 1973, when The King's Head was part of Swallow Hotels, a division of Vaux Breweries of Sunderland, the hotel received a brief visit by King Olaf V of Norway.

He was the Colonel in Chief of the Green Howards Regiment, and he called in for a refreshing soft drink when he was in town to open the regiment's new museum in the Market Place.

Portrait of a mystery woman at The King's Head.

THE CURIOUS PAINTING OF THE LADY IN RED

In 1982 The King's Head was purchased by a local businessman, John Sharp, who the following year acquired some unidentified and unsigned portrait paintings from the early 1700s, and hung them as part of a redecoration scheme.

The best of them was a very large, full-length, unsigned portrait of a lady wearing a gold-embroidered, red gown. With a frame measuring 2.3 metres by 1.4 metres, it now hangs above the staircase leading up from the first-floor landing; on one of the few wall spaces large enough to accommodate it.

Subsequent changes in ownership of the hotel resulted in knowledge of the painting becoming lost in the passage of time. Because of its undoubted age, the idea developed that it could have been part of the original decorations of the hotel, leading to some interesting speculations about the identity of the mysterious lady.

First, a story emerged that it could be the only known portrait of a Richmond woman, Frances l'Anson, who was thought to be the subject of the popular Georgian song 'The Lass of Richmond Hill'.

NOT THE LASS NOR THE DUCHESS BUT MAYBE AN OLD MASTER

During research for the first edition of this booklet in 2016, it was noted that the face of the lady in red appeared to be almost identical to that of Sarah Lennox, Duchess of Richmond (1705-51), as portrayed in an authenticated painting of her by an 'old master', Jonathan Richardson (1667-1745).

It was therefore speculated that The King's Head painting could have been made to portray the duchess, and was copied from the Richardson portrait by a lesser artist of the period. In 2018 this idea was brought to the attention of a distinguished, London-based art historian who was prompted to trace The King's Head painting's provenance through specialist archives. It was discovered that the painting had not appeared at The King's Head until 1983, having been purchased in January that year at Christie's of London. It was also shown that the sitter was neither Richmond's Lass nor its duchess. Originally the painting had hung in the mansion house of Squerryes Court in Kent, home to the Warde family, and it was thought to portray a family member, a Mrs Clayton East.

Christie's had catalogued the painting as being of the period of Jonathan Richardson and, intriguingly, as possibly partly or wholly his work. Retired antique dealer Gerry Pratt, of Richmond, now known to be the purchaser at the Christie's sale, recalled that the Richardson connection was not overemphasised by Christie's, and that this was reflected in the hammer price of £700. However, the painting was also examined at this time by an expert from the National Portrait Gallery, whose assessment, now preserved in the gallery archives, used the more positive term 'attributed to Jonathan Richardson'.

The apparent similarity between the portrayals of the lady in red and the Duchess of Richmond is now explained by comparison with other Richardson paintings of women, many of whom were depicted with a strikingly similar face. Whether the lady in red is a genuine old master or not, it remains an important and much-admired feature of The King's Head today, and the unravelling of its mystery is now part of the hotel's modern history.

Sarah Lennox Duchess of Richmond with Charles, 2nd Duke. Painted by Jonathan Richardson © Goodwood House. By permission of the Trustees of the Goodwood Collection.

THE REMARKABLE OLGA JACOBS

Olga Jacobs pictured in 2016.

'Olga's Bar', the cocktail bar alongside the first-floor function room at The King's Head, is named in honour of one of the hotel's most-popular employees, Mrs Olga Jacobs, who retired in 2012, aged 90, after a remarkable 45 years of service.

An experienced bar worker before joining The King's Head team in 1967, Olga worked mainly at evening functions, where she set the standards and served at the top table. It was Olga who served orange juice to King Olaf of Norway when he visited the hotel in 1973. From the age of 65 she reduced her hours but couldn't bear to give-up completely the job she loved so much. After finally retiring 25 years later she continued to visit The King's Head as a customer, and remained a firm favourite with staff old and new. The cocktail bar that had always been her domain became affectionately known as 'Olga's Bar'.

In 2014, news of a once-mentioned dream of Olga's to serve in The Woolpack pub of her favourite TV soap, Emmerdale, reached the producers of another TV show, Surprise, Surprise. And so one day Emmerdale star Chris Chittell (Eric Pollard) turned up at The King's Head to surprise Olga and whisk her away to the Emmerdale studios near Leeds. There she starred in a specially devised scene with all her favourite characters. Next came a trip to the Surprise, Surprise studio in London to record the show that would broadcast her scene at The Woolpack and create her moment of national TV celebrity.

The Coaching Inn Group purchased The King's Head in 2015, and in November that year Olga was guest of honour at the official naming of Olga's Bar. In 2016 the bar was given a makeover and a new nameplate as part of a major refurbishment of the hotel. In 2018, at the age of 95, Olga remains a much loved and respected regular customer of the hotel.

The hotel was completely renovated in 2016.

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