

## **SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL RECORDS FOR THE OLD FORGE HOTEL AND ITS LOCK-UP**

### **Information about the Lock-up, otherwise known as Bridgetown Gaol**

The Manor of Berry Pomeroy had its own small prison, or lock-up, in Seymour Place, at the rear of what for many years was the Court's annual meeting place, The New Inn, now the Four Seasons Guest House. This Lock-up is now part of The Old Forge Hotel.

#### **(1) The Lock-up was designated a Grade II listed building in 1986.**

It is described as follows:

"Lock-up. Probably C18th or early C19th. Local limestone and slate rubble. Barrel-vaulted stone rubble roof clad in mass concrete which probably replaces slate roofing. Small square single cell building in the form of a lean-to adjoining the back of a cart-shed. There is a straight masonry joint between the two buildings at upper level only. The South front has a doorway to the left, the lintel replaced with a concrete lintel. An iron grille door is to be re-instated. To right a rectangular window opening with stone frame; the sandstone jambs have been reused, they are hollow-chamfered and with glazing grooves; the sandstone lintel has been roughly chamfered to match and the grantee chill is also chamfered. The window has iron bars without glazing. It appears on Ellit's map of Bridgetown, 1825 which shows the house and smithy to the south (The Old Forge Guest House) not to have existed at that time.

Source: English Heritage.

#### **(2) Courtbook for the Manors of Berry Pomeroy and Bridge Town 1843-1932.**

The Manorial Court for the Manors of Berry Pomeroy and Bridge Town was held at the Four Seasons Hotel (formerly called The New Inn). Anyone sentenced to imprisonment would have ended up in the Lock-up. The court dealt with administering the 'custom of the Manor'. Court Baron covered the legal dealing with land transfers, surrenders and other matters. The court delivered appropriate punishment for offences and minor misdemeanours. The most common misdemeanour is a lack of upkeep of paths. A record in 1856 shows that the orchard at the Forge itself wasn't the most salubrious of locations. It states

"That the Jury regret to find the open cess pit in the orchard of the New Inn (now the site of The Old Forge) notwithstanding the presentment of the Jury for several years past, is in the same unhealthy state as hitherto and the Jury hope that steps be taken immediately to abate the nuisance.'

The Court had actually lost its power of detention in the seventeenth century, so its not too surprising that there are no records in the book of anyone being held prisoner. The Court minutes do record that World War One prisoners were held at Bridgetown, but not in the prison.

When looking at the records it seems that the residents of Bridge Town were very well behaved (just like today!) Very little business was attended too and in some years none at all. We hear in the court minutes of 1921 that the Jury finds "No necessity for repairs to prison as there is no crime in B'town."

The following are the final statements in the Court Records referring to the Lock-up.

1929 That in the interest of the manor, the old prison should be placed in a good state of preservation so the public be permitted to view it.

1930 That we regret the recommended action of the Jury in their last presentment, in respect of the prison, has not been adopted.

1932 That the Jury are of an opinion that if a suitable door was placed at the entrance to the jail that it would be greatly appreciated by all who are interested in the history of the ancient Manor.

The 1986 listing states: An iron grille door is to be re-instated.

### **(3) Auction including Lock-up**

On instructions from His Grace the Duke of Somerset in 1949, 73 properties in Bridgetown which formed part of his Berry Pomeroy Estate were put up for auction. The historic Lock-up was included in the sale. (See details below.)

The cell remains in the private ownership of Julie and Mike today as part of The Old Forge Hotel!

### **Information about The Old Forge Hotel**

These records help us to date the building and subsequent development of The Old Forge Hotel. Copies are attached.

#### **1825 - Elliot's Map (copy attached.)**

The Lock-up is shown on this map surrounded by an orchard. The map does not show the building and smithy to the south of the lock-up (that is now The Old Forge Hotel) which indicates they didn't exist in 1825.

#### **1841 - England Census (copy attached.)**

This Census shows that a man named John Gilham, thirty years of age, was registered as the Smithy at the Old Forge. This suggests main buildings of The Old Forge Hotel were built between 1825 and 1841.

#### **1851 - England Census (copy attached.)**

This Census shows that John Gilham, now aged 43, is also an Inn Keeper as well as a Blacksmith. His wife (Dorothy aged 37), son (John aged 13) and daughter (Elizabeth aged 10) also live with him. Business must have been good.

#### **27th January 1905 - Advert in Western Times (copy attached.)**

Wheelwright & Blacksmith's shop, Bridgetown. To be LET from March 25th next, a large, well-lighted SHOP, with good 5-roomed Dwelling-house and Vegetable Garden adjoining. The above affords an opportunity seldom met with to a steady young man, who could work up an excellent business in a short time, as shoeing smith or wheelwright, or the two combined. Apply Messrs. Michelmores and Sob. Land Agents, Gate House. Totnes.

#### **1949 - Auction Instructions**

One of 73 properties on auction on the instructions from the Duke of Somerset as follows:-

"No. 8 St. John's Cottages.

An Old-World Stone-built and Slated SMITHY COTTAGE, with Smithy Stores and Large Garden attached. Capable of economic modernisation and offering a most attractive Detached Cottage Residence in an ideal situation.

The Accommodation includes:-

3 Large Bedrooms,  
Living Room-Kitchen  
Store. Central Archway to Smithy. Smithy  
Wash-house with W.C.  
Cobbled Driveway. Old Town Lock-up Cell at side.

Let to Mrs. H. Atwill on a yearly tenancy from 25th March 1907 at £18 15s 0d per annum, Tenant paying Rates."

