

WHITELOCKS OF LEEDS

In the north of England, just west of the cathedral city of York is Leeds. Its wealth industrial past is evident today in the large variety of well preserved Victorian buildings in the downtown core of the city. Much of the area is now pedestrian only and off each side of Briggate street are long narrow block long arcades. These “streets” have been glassed over with stained glass ceilings and many of the buildings share the same ornate cornice decorations, tying the whole street together. Today the area is a mixture of shopping areas ranging from Debenhams and Marks and Spencers to high-end luxury boutiques. The area is the centre of activity and a major draw for both visitors and residents alike.

Off Briggate Street, next to Marks and Spencers is the narrow Turks Head Alley and Whitelocks restaurant and luncheon bar. In the 1880's the concept of a luncheon bar was a new one and Whitelocks was one of the first. Both the alley and Whitelocks are long and very narrow. On one side are table and benches and along the other side is the bar, luncheon bar and restaurant.

Owned since 1944/5 by Scottish & Newcastle Breweries Ltd., Whitelocks is a popular Leeds location and maintained their reputation for top quality food. Needless to say the place was packed shortly after their 12:00 o'clock opening on Sunday. Jill Stocks took our order for drinks and their famous Yorkshire Pud filled with roast beef and told us she would come out and talk with us when things slowed down a bit. Jill also gave us a copy of the restaurant menu which has a short write-up about the history and the Whitelocks who started the Luncheon Bar and ran it for nearly 90 years.

The first licence was issued in 1715 to the “Turks Head” but the building is likely quite a bit older. Classic black and white Tudor where nothing is quite square and the beams reflect the shape of the ancient trees they were carved from. Low ceilings and lower doorways!! Inside the etched glass over the bar and along the luncheon bar dates from the 1880's and overall the place is as it was at the time the specialized glass work was installed. Prices were obviously stable enough to etch them into the glass panels!! “Sausages & Potatoes 3d” “Cheese & Biscuits 1d or Pies 2d”. There is currently a preservation order covering both the inside and outside of Whitelocks. There is conflicting information on how long the Whitelocks held the Turks Head licence. One source says for 90 years from 1854 to 1944. Jacqueline Whitelock Gill says it was first held by William Lupton Whitelock from 1866 to 1876 and then picked up again in the 1880's by William Henry Whitelock. It was William Henry Whitelock who in 1886 altered the bar to the format you see today. William Henry Whitelock's father was John Lupton Whitelock so the William Lupton Whitelock mentioned by Jacqueline likely should be John Lupton Whitelock.

According to the history, Whitelocks employed the Irish giant Thaddeus Myland as a doorman as at one time customers were required to wear dinner jackets to gain access to the bar. Dwarfs were reputed to have been employed as waiters as women were not allowed to stand at the bar and were therefore required to order drinks and food from their table.

William Henry Whitelock took over the license after Benji Wigglesworth and in turn his widow Clara (Jarvis) Whitelock ran the pub after 1909 with the help of her sons Lupton and Percy Whitelock. Lupton Whitelock achieved a national reputation as an accomplished flautist and Percy was a gifted oboist. This attracted a bohemian crowd resulting in Whitelocks becoming a major meeting place for this crowd in Leeds for many years. John Betjeman, the poet called it Leed's answer to Fleet Street's Old Cheshire Cheese only far less self-conscious. Author Stan Barstow gives Whitelock's a mention in his short story *Madge*. Madge is treated to a splendid meal on her first date with Edgar. They go to a 'real old music hall pub' in a narrow yard down an alley between two shops.

The concept of a luncheon bar was new and the firsts continued when the bar was the first to have electricity and an electric clock. At one time Hollywood style search lights were added at each end of the passage advertising the location of the bar to the whole of Leeds night crowd.

Percy Whitelock was the last to own the bar, taking over just before the Second World War in 1939. Clara (Jarvis) Whitelock died in 1940 and shortages of staff during the war and health problems finally resulted in Percy selling Whitelocks. In 1944 or 1945 the William Younger & Co. Ltd. (now Scottish & Newcastle Breweries Ltd.) bought the bar and continue to run it today.

Jacqueline Whitelock Gill writes in the *Yorkshire Ridings Magazine* [March 2001] about visiting Whitelocks and the flood of memories the place brought back to her. The pride she feels in lasting legacy her family contributed to the 'notional idyll we know as Victorian Britain' is evident. I was very pleased to experience Whitelocks myself and can attest to its mystique.

According our records this Whitelock family descends from James Whitelock who married Anne Lupton August 14,1833 in Calverley, Yorkshire. The family later moved to Armley, Yorkshire. John Lupton Whitelock was born there in 1834 and married Martha Robinson in Leeds in 1853. Their son William Henry Whitelock was married to Clara Jarvis in Leeds in 1876. Their three children were John Lupton Whitelock (1878-1941), Beatrice Ada Whitelock b.1884 and Percy Jarvis Whitelock b. 1889. This latter family is the one most associated with Whitelocks of Leeds. Jacqueline Whitelock Gill's grandmother was Beatrice Ada Whitelock who married Arthur Jackson. Their daughter Dorothy Whitelock Jackson was her mother.

Sources:R1212; R2261; R2299