

Further steps have been taken during the week in the demolition of one of Bacup's oldest landmarks in connection with the scheme for the improving and modernising the centre of the town, namely the old George and Dragon Inn which has many interesting historical features. We hear on the most reliable authority that there are deeds in existence in connection with the property that go back to the 16th century. It will come as a surprise to many of the rising generation to know that at one time the open river flowed along what is now known as Bridge Street the bridging of the river no doubt giving it its name. That the back portion of the old hostelry came to the rivers edge and stepping stones were used in order to reach it. There was also a kind of ford. There was no Rochdale Road as it is known today. The old main road to Rochdale ran along the bottom part of Yorkshire Street and then by way of Tong Lane and then over the hills, and down to Britannia Village. The old main road to Todmorden went up Lane Head Lane and came out in the Sharneyford district, and it is facing the two main roads that the front of the old George and Dragon has remained up to the present. With its quaint portico and well carved stone pillars it must have been at one period an interesting rendezvous for the farmers and other callers at the hostelry.

THE OLD COURTHOUSE

Another feature of great interest is that the room in the George and Dragon still in existence, is said to have been formerly used as the old courthouse and where a rope was stretched from a couple of hooks across the centre of the room to separate the magistrate and court officials from the general public. It is worthy of note that the portion of the room where the magistrates were said to sit was slightly raised, presumably to remind the rank and file they were face to face with the "powers that be". The George and Dragon must have been a useful and important hostelry, for it is said to also have had accommodation for those who were "in durance vile," in the shape of an old dungeon in the cellars of the building. The steps leading to the dungeon have been removed and the doorway built up for some time. It is also said that at another period there was a dungeon on the site of the old corn mill, and that here, too the old stocks also stood. The backyard of the dragon at one time was spacious and covered the site later occupied by Mr T Gibson's black pudding shop and other premises. Near by, it is also recalled a few stalls constituted a small market on Saturday night's. Truly, time works wonders and make inexorable demands, but all the same one cannot but feel a pang of regret that these old landmarks are disappearing. But so it is and must be. Hindrances and obstacles must give way to the needs of a new and more exacting civilisation. The transport problem cannot be played with either in Bacup or any other old fashioned town. A way must be made to accommodate the ever increasing traffic on our main road, and our local authority is called upon to do their share in the Bacup that is to be.

AN ANCIENT ADVERTISEMENT.

The oldest identifiable record we know of the old George and Dragon is an advertisement recorded in Jessop's "History of Methodism in Rossendale" were is quoted the following advertisement:-

Chapel to be built at Bacup in Lancashire. To be let. On Thursday, the 4th day of May, 1876, betwixt the hours of two and six in the afternoon at the house of Mr Roberts, the George and Dragon, in Bacup, midway in the turnpike road leading from Rochdale to Burnley. The stones to get, to hew, and wall. Also the carpenters work and joiners work for a new chapel at Bacup aforesaid at which time and place any person or persons, willing to undertake the performance of any or all the aforesaid work, are requested to attend, in order to deliver their proposals and to contract for the performance of the same. A plan of the building is ready for the inspection of artificers and others.

POSTED IN 1876

Mr Jessop states that the bill was pasted on the walls in Bacup in May, 1786 but does not give his authority. The Roberts family is still represented in Bacup and owns property in the town but whether they owned the "Dragon" we cannot say. During a considerable portion of last century it was the property of the Whittaker's of Broadclough the court rolls show that "John Whyttacior of Bacop" was one of two persons appointed either as greaves or "yerdes lokyrys" (herd lookers) in 1519 for "roustundall" (Rossendale). In 1662 a John Whittaker and a James Whittaker his brother evidently held considerable land in Bacup, for their total "Dukes rent" is shown £2.16s6d out of a total rent payable by tenants of £11.

PICTURESQUE PORTICO

By the revealing of the old portico at the George and Dragon, in the centre of Bacup there is material evidence to assist our imagination in what picture we can conjure up of bygone days in our vicinity. Whatever we think of it, the portico must have been picturesque in the old times. Full centred on all the main roads, its welcome sight would be a means of cheer to the traveller, either at the end of a journey, or as a proverbial milestone, and hence would be the nominal centre and standard for all local citizens in their comparisons abroad or in the homeland.

It would be "Home" that unequivocal balance of all things in the experience of men. Whatever we think antiquity has a beauty entirely its own that nothing else can replace, and whilst we pride ourselves on progress in culture, educational, moral or architectural, we can always take a delight and learn lessons from the things our fathers built and from their

thoughts and manner of living.

A SUGGESTION

To say the least, this old portico has set many of our older memories to test, and in this matter, whilst wonderful tales, are being unfolded very little is advanced upon the subject itself. One beautiful idea, however, has been suggested, namely, that an artist of local repute shall reconstruct in a drawing the old hostelry, as near as possible to the original. From what is revealed to the eye and by assistance from description of any plans or memories still left to us. If this can be accomplished, it would be a wonderful addition to our fund of local folklore, to be preserved unto posterity especially as the "Dragon" must pass into oblivion.