



THE (ORIGINAL) DUKE INN

Think of the centre of Bratton today and you will be drawn to the striking frontage of The Duke public house. Yet this is not the original site, which stood further to the east as this historic map of 1808 shows. The photo from the late 1880s is of the original Duke Inn which was on a plot at the south-east corner of Sands Lands that was later annexed behind the high wall of Bratton House.

Records state that the building was first mentioned as early as 1688 but not as an ale house. It wasn't until the 18th century that mention is made of it being used as a "Church House" rented out by Bratton churchwardens. Strange as it seems today, church houses were a medieval institution functioning as the parish feasting hall and brewhouse. The purpose was separation from the church itself. For Bratton the central location was an added attraction.

So which Duke is the Inn named after? Well, the first mention of a Duke Inn in Bratton was in 1778. This was only thirty years after the Jacobite Rising at the Battle of Culloden in which The Duke of Cumberland played a prominent role. His other title was Prince William, third son of King George II. So it seems more likely, but not certain, the inn was named after him, rather than the Duke of Wellington, whose fame was much later.



The Duke Inn was very much at the centre of village life supplying refreshments to villagers undertaking their statutory duty to repair the roads and acting as a multi-purpose community centre. Around 1816 it was used as a temporary Sunday School for the Baptist Chapel and it was also used as an auction house and even a location for coroners' inquests.

By the 1880s, time was called as the vicar found that the upkeep of the building was a huge drain on his resources and it was possibly incongruous for the church to own a pub. So a deal was done and the owners of Bratton House, the Seagram family, bought it and the land became part of Bratton House garden. The Seagrams coincidentally owned a nearby property known as the White Horse Coffee Shop and they transferred the licence to this building and renamed the inn we see today as "The Duke".