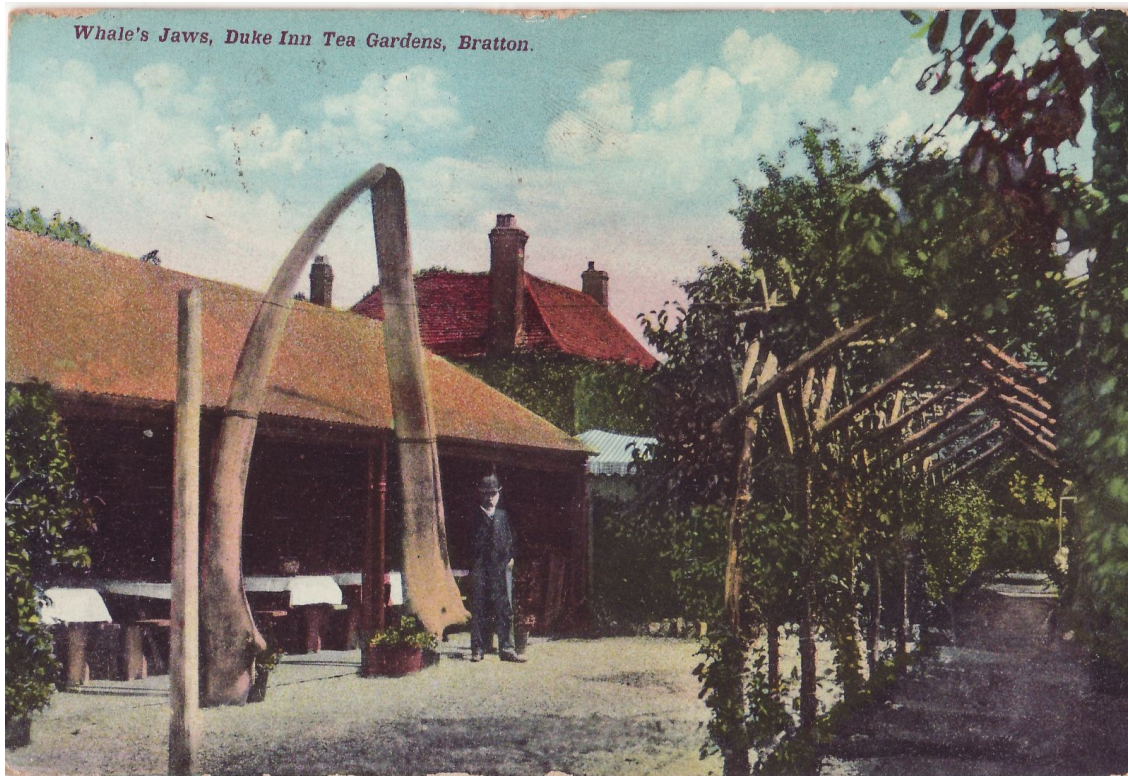




Bratton's Whale Bones

The Duke Inn

How a pair of enormous whale bones ended up in a village miles from the sea in the land-locked county of Wiltshire has been the subject of much research and speculation over the years.

However, they are commonly thought to have been brought back from a sea voyage by Captain Edward Smallcombe in about 1908. His family, who brewed wines and spirits at the Royal Oak and The George in Westbury, also owned The Duke in Bratton at that time.

Some seaside pubs used whalebones to make an attractive entrance to enhance their trade, and this may have prompted Captain Smallcombe to do the same at The Duke. They were originally erected at the entrance to the tea gardens of the Duke Hotel but were removed during renovations to the gardens in the 1980s. Following an enquiry about their whereabouts from Nick Redman, an expert in the field, they were located under the village cricket pavilion that was, at that time, located at Fitzroy Farm. Bratton Cricket Club used to play at Fitzroy Farm but now play at Bratton Recreation Ground.

After a fundraising campaign, the late Billy Gale, a farmer at Fitzroy Farm and also chairman of the parish council, made a frame for the bones. He then organised a group of villagers including his two sons to re-erect the 15 ft (4.5 m) very heavy jaw bones at the entrance from the pub car park to the garden of The Duke, about 20 feet from their original location. They were unveiled by Mr Redman on 8th April 1995. Cavities which originally contained muscles can be seen near the knuckles.