

AN ALEHOUSE INVENTORY OF 1765

Luke Millar

The market town of Cowbridge, in the heart of the Vale of Glamorgan, was one of the principal towns in pre-Industrial Revolution South Wales, situated on a main highway through this rich agricultural district. Although small (the population was only 705 in 1781) it was prosperous with, by the eighteenth century, an Anglo-Welsh flavour. The Glamorgan Archive Service holds several inventories dating from the 1760s which relate to properties in the town and I would like to draw attention to one which lists the contents of an alehouse.

The inventory of 'William Howard, Victualler' forms part of an indenture, and is written linearly without punctuation. The following transcript quotes only so much of the legal wording as is necessary to give the style of the document. It appears to be a schedule of the furnishings of a small inn which omits fixed items; thus the kitchen list includes a gridiron, but there is no mention of a grate, nor is any built-in furniture included, such as settles. It also leaves out the furnishings of some rooms; hence the 'parlour' is mentioned only in relation to another room. Presumably these would have been the landlord's private quarters. The contents of three bedrooms, presumably for the accommodation of guests, is recorded.

The existence of a 'brewhouse' is of itself no indication that this was an inn, but William Howard's designation as 'victualler' defined him as a landlord, while the presence of thirteen casks, and four 'stillings' in the cellar, indicate liquor volumes far in excess of any domestic needs. The emphasis in the two main rooms, the 'kitchen' and the 'hall', seems to be mainly on the service of customers. There are chairs and stools to seat about twenty people, and of the chairs, thirteen are described as 'twig', which refers to basket-work. Six of these chairs were in the bedrooms — it is likely they would have been of the open rather than the canopied type. A near contemporary inventory of the Old Hall at Cowbridge contains a curious reference to '2 Twig plate warmers' in the kitchen.

The cooking and brewing equipment appear sparse. Because of the legal accountability of the tenant, it is unlikely that anything would have been omitted; presumably William Howard would have to make up any deficiencies himself. The very basic description of items is evident in the descriptions of various tables. One is described as a 'small long table', suggesting that the term 'long table' was a generic one. The small round tables could have had tripod pedestals or been of the traditional three-legged 'cricket' type, and the larger of gate-legged pattern. The two small round tables in the 'kitchen' were probably common drinking or alehouse tables for the use of customers. The bedroom furnishings are typical of the period; each bedroom had blue Scots plaid curtains. The windowless 'Dark Room' contained a 'dust bed', almost certainly a bed filled with chaff.

William Howard was evidently the proprietor of a small inn of a type which prevailed in the days before the near-monopoly of the 'Common Brewer' and was based on a developed kitchen rather than the more formal bar, with its counter and separate servery. Although there is no stabling, such inns generally supplied accommodation to farmers bringing stock

to markets and fairs, often travelling many miles on foot, and requiring both refreshment and a night's rest before returning home.

This Indenture made the first day of June in the year of our Lord one Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty ffive — Between William Howard of the Town of Cowbridge in the County of Glamorgan Victualler of the one part and John Edmond of the Town of Cowbridge aforesaid Esquire of the other part . . . All those goods chattels and Furniture and implements of Household Particularly in the schedule herein after mentioned . . . in the Dwelling House of the said William Howard at Cowbridge

...

In the Kitchen: One Dresser, eight Pewter Platters, nineteen pewter plates, one Pewter Bason, one Cullinder, one cover, one Tin Coffin, six earthen Plates, three Pewter Quarts, six Pewter Cans, one small Long Table, five Joint Stools, two small round Tables, one Cupboard, one Chest, six Twig Chairs, three leather Ditto, five brass Candlesticks, four Iron Ditto, one Iron Toaster, one brass Pistle and Mortar, two Brass pepper Boxes, one Grid-Iron, one pair of Tongs, Poker and Shovel,

In the Hall: One large round Table, two middle size Ditto, six wooden bottom Chairs, two maps, two dozen of pictures,

In the Lower Room: Two large casks, two small Ditto, ffive Tubbs, four pailles, one Tundish, one small brass Boyler, one iron pot, one Tin Kittle, one Horse to Dry Cloathes,

In the Cellar: Nine Casks, four Stillings,

In the Chamber over the Kitchen: Two feather Beds, two Bedsteads, four blankets, four Sheets, two Bolsters, one quilt one rug and two pair of Blew Plod Curtains, one Cabinet, two leather bottom chairs one twig Ditto,

In the Chamber over the Parlour: one feather Bed, Bedstead and its appurts one pair of Blew curtains one Bolster two pillows, two Blankets, two sheets, one White Quilt, one Chest, two small square Tables Six Twig Chairs, two small looking Glasses, Six pictures,

In the Dark Room: one Dust Bed, two Blankets, one Rug, one Bolster,

In the Chamber over the Cellar: one feather Bed, Bedstead, one Bolster one Rug two Blankets one pair of Blew Plod Curtains, one Twig Chair,

In the Brewhouse: one large Vate, one middle size Ditto, one small Tub one Bucket . . .

. . . Bargained and sold goods was delivered by the within named William Howard to the within named John Edmond by giving and delivering to the said John Edmond one pewter plate marked

W^HA in the name of the whole goods sold, in the presence of

Thos. Lewis

Watkin Morgan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to the Glamorgan Record Office for permission to publish this document and in particular Mrs Moore the archivist for assistance. The reference number for this indenture is DD/ED 182.