

Preston Past: The Castle Hotel On Cheapside, Market Square.

by Paul D. Swarbrick



Image 1

Originally known as the Castle Inn and was built in 1623, the Castle Hotel was situated in Cheapside opposite the Market Square and is shown in Image 1. It was very much a favourite hostelry in the centre of the town for many Prestonians. This was also the chosen establishment for the meeting place of many building societies and insurance companies of Preston and the surrounding areas.

The whole building, especially the interior had a style of grandeur about it and Peter Whittle in his 'History Of Preston' (1837) wrote... "The Castle Inn, in the Market Place was erected in 1623 and was at that time deemed to be an elegant build-

ing. A fine chimney piece was placed in a room over the gateway, consisting of a frontispiece (over the fireplace) carved with a mass of miniature columns, arches, niches and caryatids, piled up to the ceiling. The columns were after the Grecian style of architecture. This piece of work was executed by Lawrence Winstanley, carver in Preston."

To have an idea of How the hotel appeared in earlier times, image 2 shows the Castle and Commercial Hotel Watercolour by Edwin Beattie

One of the notable events held at the Castle Hotel in 1865 was on the completion of Preston's, new Town Hall, when one hundred and fifty of the workmen involved with the Town Hall construction were entertained to a considerable lunch paid for by the Corporation and the contractors. I hesitate to think that this could happen in this day and age.

Around 1910 the Castle Hotel was purchased by the Refuge Assurance Company, was transformed into commercial premises and was then known as 'Castle Chambers'. During the years following the change of use companies and shops were to occupy the various units the building was divided into. In the early part of the twentieth century the Football League were to take up tenancy in part of the premises and remained there for some years. In the main photograph above of the Castle Hotel, it can be seen that the premises on the lower

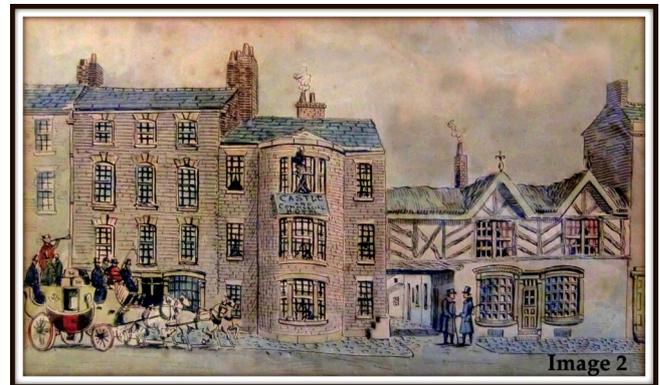


Image 2



Image 3

right of the image is the Argenta Meat Company based in Oldham who, interestingly, eventually became Dewhurst's The Master Butchers.

Also in this image the underpass to the left of the butchers that would originally lead to the courtyard behind the hotel and eventually became a narrow thoroughfare leading to the premises of the Lancashire Evening Post for use of their vans to collect newspapers from the presses for delivery.

In the early 1990's, following the closure of Castle Chambers in 1989, the whole of the building was remodelled and was replaced by shops as it is today. One small feature still remains though and that is a small 'spur stone' at the junction of two of the shops and this is illustrated in the image below. I wonder how many people pass this every day on Cheapside in Preston and never really notice it. Image 3 illustrates the remaining existence of one of the spur stones of the former underpass.

Most of the images in this series of articles are from the [PHS Image Gallery](#) and by courtesy of the outstanding [Preston Digital Archive](#) which is an online archive of images of Preston's past.