

# The Black Horse pub - and how it became 'The Duke'

**A** Mr Emrys Jones who, back in the 1920s, wrote a series of articles for a local paper on the old inns of south Wales, had this to say about the Duke Of Wellington Inn in Cowbridge.

"I arrived in Cowbridge, and in a few seconds I was standing before the famous Duke of Wellington Inn, with its olde world charm and its small-paned bay windows.

"On your left inside is the smoke room, a narrow, low room: the kind of room in which our ancestors were wont to talk o' nights, and at one end stood a very ancient Welsh blanket chest, a very gem to warm the heart of any antiquary.

"More stylish and more costly dining rooms you may find in plenty, but I doubt whether you will find one anywhere more charming than the one in the 'Duke'.

"As you sit near the open fireplace with its huge oaken beam above, you may well imagine yourself back a century or so. Above the fire-

place, you will see a portrait of the Iron Duke, supported on either side by a pair of old-fashioned crossed swords. The old military air is maintained by crossed halberds at the other end of the room.

"This inn is so called, I was told, because the Duke of Wellington stopped here after the Battle of Waterloo, while on his way to visit the mother of the famous Welsh soldier, General Picton, who was killed in the engagement that broke forever the power of Napoleon.

"Before then, going back into the dim past, the old inn was known as the 'Black Horse', and a faded photograph remains to posterity, together with that of the peculiar looking town hall that existed in Cowbridge hundreds of years ago, when highwaymen rode at nights and held up the mail coaches on the Cowbridge Road.

"There is a legend that once a highwayman came to the outskirts of the town. He bribed a boy to take his horse through the toll-gate to the end of Cowbridge - he would be known had he come on horseback.

"Then he sauntered through the town like any other pedestrian

until he came to the 'Duke', or the Black Horse as it was known then.

"As he glanced through the window, he saw men sitting there with their gold, travellers who had come from one of the big towns. He was a daring fellow this highwayman, with his brace of pistols hidden under his long coat, and his ironical smile of devil-may-care.

"Without a second thought, he drew his pistol and killed one of the merchants, snatched up his bag of gold, and made off up the road to where his fretting mount stood ready for the long ride to freedom.

"He was never caught. And no wonder, for in those times it was a matter of days before a policeman could be sworn in! By the time the pursuer set out, the highwayman was hundreds of miles away.

"But the landlord of the 'Black Horse' had to suffer the highway man's deed. His licence was taken from him for a time, and when it was restored, he was commanded to wall up the window through which the highwayman shot, thus it remains to this day."

**BRIAN LEE**