

Extract from an article in the Eastern Daily Press - Tales of the Pye Road Pubs (Thwaite)



For the first time in several centuries the old Buck's Head at Thwaite served no beef or turkey on Christmas Day.

It's now The Walnut Tree on becoming vegetarian, new owner Jan Wise believing the old name to be inappropriate.

Her decision is even more justified by the fact that the inn was a Suffolk centre for cock fighting, one of the cruellest and bloodiest of creature 'sports'.

Cockerels often fought to death or injury, usually with metal spurs augmenting their natural weaponry. Winning owners earned prize money, spectators profit on their bets.

This sample advertisement in an Ipswich newspaper probably attracted scores, if not hundreds, of punters:

“At Thwaite Buck's Head, on Wed., 8th Feb, 1749, there will be a Main of Cocks, fought between Edw'd Corbould of Thwaite & Paul Perkins of Blakenham, to shew eleven on a side & to fight for two guineas a battle . . .”

Cock fighting was made illegal in England and Wales as early as 1835, Scotland as late as 1895, but continued illicitly for a while in remote places.

Edward Corbould, owner of the home-side fighting cocks, was probably both a meat eater and poor accountant when it came to tax matters.

Landlord of Thwaite Queen's Head, which has long since disappeared from the scene, he was taken to Ipswich gaol in April 1740, "charged with a debt to His Majesty of 500 pounds."

We don't know any more about him, but the final story of the Queen's Head is well documented. Closed and derelict for many years, it was advertised for sale in 1910.

New York architect Phelps Stokes bought the timber-framed building and had its beams numbered and shipped in 688 crates across the Atlantic.

The rebuilt Queen's Head became part of a mansion that now looks down on Long Island Sound from a hilltop near Greenwich, Connecticut.

Writing from memory, a similar building was taken from Stoke Ash to Massachusetts, its site eventually becoming the recently-improved car park opposite the popular White Horse.