

# HISTORIC PUBS HEADINGLEY



Moulds Hyde Park Hotel

## THE RED LION/HYDE PARK HOTEL

On the busy corner where the Hyde Park pub stands, overlooking the bustle of shops and traffic and the green space of Woodhouse Moor beyond, there's been a pub for more than 200 years. The present building dates from 1936, but its predecessors had at least two earlier well-known identities, first as the Red Lion inn, and then as Mould's Hyde Park Hotel. Rebuilt many times over the years, the pub's fortunes have ebbed and flowed, reflecting the constantly changing character of its surroundings and its customers.

The first inn, the Red Lion, probably started life in the late eighteenth century, serving the scattered community of Great Woodhouse as well as passers-by on the busy, rutted turnpike road from Leeds to Otley. The inn was certainly there by the early 1800s, part of a small cluster of buildings and shops at the northwest corner of the rough open land of Woodhouse Moor, in the area known as Wrangthorn (various spellings) or West End. It was in a great position for trade, not only from the road but from the Moor itself, popular over centuries for sports, fairs, parades, military exercises, and gatherings of all sorts, bringing thirsty customers to its door.

The inn stood right over the boundary between Headingley and Leeds and featured in the traditional 'beating of the bounds', when local people walked in procession round the Headingley township boundary to confirm its exact line. A rare description from 1838 gives the details: the procession stopped at the inn, a shilling's worth of ale was bought to hand out to everyone, the clerk mounted the boundary stone opposite and read the toast to Church and Queen, oranges were doled out to all the waiting children, and then boys were despatched to clamber through the inn and over its low roof to mark the boundary: a picturesque glimpse into the past.

By 1841, when the inn came up for sale after the death of its long-term landlord Richard Scholey, it was doing good business. It had its own brewhouse, stabling for 12 horses, and a pump in the yard with a 'never-failing' supply of water (no piped water yet). And its future prospects were exciting: all round the inn the old village life was giving way to new developments. The fields which bordered the Moor and the road over the hill to Headingley were being sold off and fine new mansions and villas built, attracting residents keen to escape the smoke and dirt of town. A smart cricket ground (the Victoria Ground) had been created next to the Moor, pulling in the crowds, while a major new attraction, the Zoological and Botanical Gardens, had just opened further out in Headingley. A new regular horse-drawn bus service to Far Headingley rattled past the inn six times a day and there were special buses out to the Gardens. In 1847 an extra toll bar with a chain was built across the turnpike next to the inn to catch all the new trade along the road, bringing everyone to a stop. When the inn came up for sale again in 1856 it could offer 'peculiar advantages', an extensive highly respectable clientele, and the opportunity for very profitable investment.



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The sale caught the eye of an enterprising young man called James Mould. Originally from Clifford, he had served as an 'under-butler' in the grandeur of Bowcliffe Hall, Bramham Park, but came to Leeds in 1854, aged 26 and newly married, to begin a new career. He started as landlord of the Green Parrot pub, an old clothiers' inn in Swinegate, a pretty rough spot where he got in trouble with the magistrates over opening hours, but he clearly had ambitions to launch a more upmarket business. He took on the Red Lion in 1856 and began to establish himself. The neighbourhood was on the brink of transformation: the Council purchased Woodhouse Moor in 1857 with plans to groom it to become Leeds's first public park, while Tommy Clapham's Royal Park opened next to the Moor in 1858, offering a range of fun and entertainment and spectacular events for the masses.

Initially James Mould kept the Red Lion as it was – remembered in 1860 as homely, with low ceilings yellowed by smoke, but where the hospitable landlord provided roomy armchairs, a snowy cloth on the table, and freshly cooked chops and potatoes! But James Mould had grander ideas – his training as under-butler must have set high standards. By 1861 he had changed the inn's name. The corner where it stood had some time ago acquired the prestigious name of 'Hyde Park Corner', it's said by

comparison with Hyde Park corner in London; Leeds people enjoyed the kudos of the name and it stuck. In 1861 James Mould renamed the old Red Lion as 'The Hyde Park Hotel' and began a process of rebuilding and extension which transformed the old low pub, squeezed in alongside a cluster of little shops, into an impressive three-storey building, facing on to Woodhouse Lane. By 1881 it offered bars and smoke room, a dedicated billiards room, a coffee room, a drawing room, a sale room above and eight bedrooms, together with a cab service from the yard with new 'first class' carriages for hire. The upstairs sale room meant property auction sales could be held there, as well as coroner's inquests and political meetings, so business was brisk.



Hyde Park Corner, 1905

James Mould became a well-known local figure, prominent in the Leeds Rifles, the local volunteers, and winning special mention. By 1872 he must have felt ready to step back from his active role and advertised for a new landlord to take over. Nine years later he put the hotel up for sale, pushing the point that it had a monopoly of local trade, but it looks as though it did not sell or he changed his mind, and by 1891 James Mould's son, Arthur James, had taken over as landlord. He had trained as a solicitor but must have decided to follow in his father's footsteps, prompted perhaps by his wife who, as the daughter of the landlord of the Skyrack pub, knew the trade.



Hyde Park Corner, c1910

By the turn of the century the hotel was prospering, benefitting from the growth of the neighbourhood and increasing passing traffic. The old horse buses had been replaced by horse trams in 1871, then by the unpopular steam trams, followed in 1899 by electric trams along the main road and then on the intersecting cross route. There was a terminus at Hyde Park Corner, right next to the hotel. Two fine parades of local shops were built on the opposite corners, attracting more shoppers and custom. The photos of the time show the hotel in splendid form, with window boxes of flowers and draped curtains, and with the name 'Mould's' now proudly displayed on its frontage.

Arthur James Mould proved a popular figure as landlord, with strong sporting interests: a keen member of the Oak Bowling Club (at the Original Oak pub) and an enthusiastic follower on foot of the Bramham Hunt (a link with the family's past). But he died suddenly in 1902, and James Mould died in 1908 in York, ending the family connection: both are buried in the family grave at Lawnswood. By the 1920s the Hotel was in other hands and came up again for sale. It was finally bought by the brewery Ind Coope and Allsop of Burton-on-Trent who owned other pubs in Leeds and had plans to expand. They took the view that the old hotel was cramped and not up to modern standards and made the decision to demolish and rebuild from new.



Hyde Park Hotel, 1937 © Leeds Library & Information Service

The new Hyde Park Hotel opened in April 1936, acclaimed for its design and modern facilities. It was set back from the road, perhaps to allow for future road-widening - constantly on the cards but not carried through. The exterior was in 'traditional English Inn' style, with Tudor half timbering, but inside was right on-trend. The entrance hall, the bars (one for men only, another second class with an outside entrance) and the lounge featured black glass and stainless steel alongside more traditional mahogany. Careful attention had been paid to good lighting and central heating, though open fires were also provided, and the décor was 'light and cheerful'. The cellars had been designed and equipped to the latest standards. The hotel won praise from the Licensing Magistrates for its modern comforts, which were seen as encouraging their vision of the public house as a hospitable place for social meetings, food and refreshments, rather than just for the consumption of alcohol! There was some continuity as the licensee was James Ives who had run the old hotel since 1925.

This rather smart hotel, planned to meet the needs of motorists and visitors as well as serving a settled local population, was forced in later years to change and adapt, like the surrounding streets, to an influx of students and young people, constantly moving

on. It lost its hotel function a long time ago – the upstairs rooms are empty now – and the art deco features of the interior seem to have disappeared. The area acquired a ‘hippy’ feel in the ‘60s and ‘70s and a landlord from that time, Ted Carroll – an ex-Rugby League player for Hunslet who had another career as a very distinctive TV and film extra – is still remembered with affection. Round about the pub the environment changed with the demolition of the fine row of shops opposite (where giant billboards stand now) and of the row of older small shops along Woodhouse Street, though a few ancient buildings survive. Just like its predecessors, the pub (now owned by the Stonegate Group) stands in a strategic position for enduring popularity: by the road and close to the Moor.

### **Eveleigh Bradford**

Local Historian, 2022

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