

80 Westgate (previously 75 Westgate)



Photograph of Tansley's Wine store at 80 Westgate, and the entrance to Prospect Yard. ©Wakefield Libraries Photographic Archive

The history of 80 Westgate has not been straightforward to uncover, as in the early censuses it seems that it was not listed as 'Westgate' but as Prospect Yard which is the yard that runs north under the carriage entrance on the east of the building. However two photographs on Wakefield Libraries photographic archive identified the building as 'Tansley's Wine Stores'. An advertisement appeared in the Wakefield and West Riding Herald on 16th April 1892 *'The Wine Stores... John Tansley begs to inform the residents of Wakefield and District that he has commenced business in the Wine and Spirit Trade including Ale and Stout in Cask or Bottle. After over 22 years experience with Mr. Wm. Fennell, his matured judgment and knowledge of the Trade in all its branches will ensure for his Patrons the Highest quality and full values for any orders they may entrust to his care...'* He was selling port at 2s a bottle, Scotch Whisky at 3s 6d a bottle, half pints of pale ale at 1s 6d per dozen, and half pints of London stout at 1s 6d per dozen.

Born in Loughborough, Leicestershire about 1850, the son of a hosiery warehouseman, by the time John Tansley was 20 years old he was in Wakefield with his widowed mother and was employed as a wine merchant's clerk¹ - presumably by William Fennell whose shop was at 33 Westgate. He was

¹ 1871 census, Teall Street.

clearly a trusted employee, and 20 years later in 1891, married and with a large family he was described as a wine merchant's cashier and was living in a substantial house on Snow Hill View, St John's.²

The Register of Licences Granted shows him as the licensee in 1892 and 1893, licensed to sell beer, wines, spirits and sweets 'off', but mentions the owner as being Miss Megson of Field Head.³ His new business was sited in a convenient position, immediately opposite the Co-operative building on Bank Street, with the Union Club to the west (now the Playhouse building) and Prospect yard to the east. In the same year that Tansley opened his wine store, he submitted plans to the Council for an extension on the ground floor over the pavement, enlarging the retail area of the shop.⁴ It seems his business prospered and his advertisements appeared in the local newspapers throughout the 1890s and into the 1900s. In 1894 he advertised that besides selling wine and spirits he was also a cigar merchant, and ale and stout bottler. He claimed to be purveyor to her Majesty's Government, and delivered wine 'in the Country by our own drays'.⁵ He advertised two specialities: 'Tansley's Old Glenlivet' (T.O.G) whisky and Tansley's 'Golden Malt Ale, - ye ale of ye olden time'.⁶



1888 map of the north side of Westgate showing 75 (80) Westgate and Prospect yard to the east.

The 1897 Electoral roll for North Westgate Ward describes John William Tansley's place of abode as Westgate, so the family may have been living above or behind the shop. The qualification to vote however was freehold houses in Prospect yard.

By the time of the 1901 census the Tansley family, now consisting of John, age 50, and his wife Jane, five sons and two daughters plus two domestic servants were living in a large semi-detached villa 'Northfield' on Blenheim Road in St John's. Two of the sons were working as wine merchant's travellers, presumably in the business. The same census for Westgate goes straight from Prospect yard to Howarth's yard, so it seems that the premises had become a lock-up shop by this date and it is listed as such in the 1911 census summary.

In 1902 Tansley was still advertising the business at number 80, but also at Westgate Station Cellars.⁷ The Register of Licences shows that just two years later the licence was transferred to Frederick Greasley Kilbourn on 5 July 1904, and the following year the business was up for sale: 'Mr Oswald Kilburn (Messrs Saville & Kilburn) offered wine & spirit merchant's property 80 Westgate,

² 1891 census, 6 Snowhill View, Bradford Rd.

³ 1891 census: Field Head Cottage, Eliza J Megson, widow age 76.

⁴ West Yorkshire Archives: WWD9, Box 44, Plan 3072, 1892

⁵ Wakefield and West Riding Herald 22 September 1894.

⁶ Wakefield Free Press, 29 January 1898.

⁷ Wakefield Express, 15 March 1902.

*shop, storerooms and offices, two-storied warehouse, stables, bottling warehouses, storerooms in Prospect Yard, occupied by Messrs Tansley & Co, together with the offices above the shop also fronting Westgate, in the occupation of Miss Williamson, as typewriting and copying offices, Mr W H Glover architect and the Yorkshire Dragoons and the five cottages in Prospect yard occupied by Messrs H Brunt, J Green, C Hirst, W Padgett, and G Ainsworth: the gross rental being £170. Property also withdrawn, the highest bid being £2200.*⁸ It is unclear why John Tansley decided to leave the business and the properties, which were considerable. By the time of the 1911 census he was living in Vernon Road, Leeds, age 60, described as a bottle merchant and importer. He died on 24 September 1924, leaving only £25 9s, which seems a small amount for what had been a prosperous business enterprise.

The licence was transferred to Frederick Fisk on 2nd May 1906, and he advertised his business as a 'wine a spirit merchant, bottler of fine ales and extra stout'.⁹ He had experience in the business being a brewer's drayman, and his father a brewer's traveller.¹⁰ He had married Nellie Mary Smith in 1902, and her name is recorded as licensee for a shop at 90 Westgate as a beer 'off', so presumably they were running both shops together. The obituary for Frederick Fisk in 1955 describes him as a director of H. B. Clark whose brewery on Westgate was founded in 1906. The date may be coincidental, but it is possible that H. B. Clark had bought 80 Westgate and installed Fisk as the licensee.

In 1933, the business was once again for sale, advertised on the 6th May in the Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer: *'Saville & Kilburn, for auction at the Woolpacks, May 26th, the old-established shop premises known as Fisks Stores, 80 Westgate in the occupation of Messrs Daniel Higson Ltd, wholesale & retail wine & spirit merchants and beer bottlers with dwelling house, warehouses and stores, also the beer bottling factory in Prospect yard occupied by Joseph Wood & Son.'* Daniel Higson Ltd was a Liverpool based brewery owning a number of public houses in the area. However a letter enclosed in the Register of Licences from Crystal Spring Table Water Co. Ltd dated 25th June 1936 draws attention to the company's purchase of 80 Westgate from Mr Fisk on 15th October 1934. The list of transfers of licences are shown as Harry Willey on 7 November 1923, Jack Davies Cottrall on 2 July 30, Percy Jacques Cliff on 3 January 1934, Norman Darnborough on 4 August 1943, and finally George Barton on 2 July 1954 after which time the licence may have lapsed and the premises used for other purposes.

Council Planning applications record changes of use in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century. By 1984 it was a fast food restaurant and In 2012 'Sizzlers' fast food was in the front part of the building and the entrance to Quest nightclub was through the entrance to Prospect yard (which had previously been the entrance to Rooftop Gardens). The appearance of the frontage was to be improved by removing the large extractor fans, and an ugly illuminated sign removed. 'Hedroom' bar was to be entered through the area behind Sizzlers, with the bar and dance floor on the first floor and toilets on the second floor.

Before John Tansley set up business at 80 Westgate, in the 1891 census James Hutchinson was at 1 Prospect Yard, with his wife; miller and corn and seed merchant, age 35, born Little Bolton Lancs. However he placed a notice in the 17th October 1891 issue of the Yorkshire Post advertising for an

⁸ Wakefield & West Riding Herald:, 8 July 1905.

⁹ Wakefield Advertiser & Gazette, 13 November 1906.

¹⁰ 1901 census, 59 Denby Dale Road.

experienced miller and using the address of 80 Westgate. He may have been living in Prospect Yard and using the frontage to Westgate as a shop. The shop at 80 Westgate, and 1 Prospect Yard may have been the same building, with the entrance to the shop on Westgate, and the entrance to the residential property in Prospect Yard.

Following the property back in time, a detailed map of Westgate in 1888, shows 'White and son, civil engineers' at the premises, now with the previous numbering of 75. Joseph Tolson White was mining engineer for the Cardigan Estates which covered from Thornes, parts of Alverthorpe, Stanley, Morley etc through to Headingley and Kirkstall. He was also a land agent, selling properties such as Stonehouse's Mill. He had died in 1878, but it seems his son had taken over and continued the business.

The 1881 census is also unclear about how the premises were used. Listed as 'Prospect Yard (Refreshment House)' were Charles Walsh age 62, a clogger employing 2 men, with his wife, 3 teenage grandchildren, a domestic servant and a barmaid. It seems likely that the refreshment house would face on to Westgate, with Charles Walsh's clogging business behind it. The barmaid, Ann Whitley, age 23, was presumably working in the refreshment house, which was an establishment which sold tea, coffee and light refreshments for consumption on or off the premises. This was in the period when the temperance movement was growing, and may relate to that, although refreshment houses could be licensed. Charles Walsh's businesses did not succeed, and notices in the London Gazette in 1883 show he was made bankrupt owing nearly £2000 with assets of only £92. He died just a few years later in 1887.

Charles Walsh had been on the premises for at least ten years; in the 1871 census, there is no mention of a refreshment house, but he was there with his wife, mother-in-law and a domestic servant. There were also three boarders two of whom were young unmarried men, a clogger and a shoemaker - so it seems that Walsh's business was sufficient to keep the three of them busy. There was also a married clerk who was a boarder.

Charles Walsh may have taken over the business from John Cavill (or Carill) who appears in the 1861 census as a shoemaker age 58, with his wife Elizabeth who is described as an 'office keeper'.

We can be less sure about the previous censuses until it is possible to carry out further research in the Archives - there is much more to be learnt!