



Best Western

# W The George Hotel



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## The History

The George takes its name from St George, and in the nineteenth century the hotel's sign depicted St George and the Dragon. The earliest reference to The George is made by George Farquhar, the famous dramatist, who stayed there in 1707 whilst quartered as a recruitment officer. It was here in fact that he wrote his plays, "The Recruiting Officer" and "The Beaux Stratagem"; the latter of these was actually written about life at The George itself and characters were based on the family who ran the inn at the time.

The George of the eighteenth century would have been a coaching inn with an archway in the centre through which the coaches passed to reach the inn-yard behind. This would have been blocked in soon after the coaches stopped running and now forms the main entrance to the hotel. The building would have been galleried, and Snape's map of 1781 shows it as a compact square of buildings around a courtyard – the entrance being on Bird Street.

Over the archway there was a balcony which was used at election times for candidates to address people gathered in the street below. The George was always associated with the Whig faction whilst The Swan opposite was staunchly Tory. The two inns were the headquarters for their respective parties at election times and the post-boys always wore jackets of the appropriate colour: blue for The Swan and buff for The George. The commercial and political rivalry that existed was forcibly expressed; blows were frequently exchanged and in the 1826 election The George had all its front windows smashed.

Inns had many uses at this time. In an age before offices, businessmen used them as meeting places, coroners held inquests in them and official bodies such as turnpike trusts used them for assemblies. They were busy in the evenings as social venues (The George had its Assembly Room), and twenty four hours a day there would be a stream of coaches and private carriages coming and going.

The proprietor between 1800 and 1820 was one Thomas Webb; one of the largest horse-keepers in the Midlands. He supplied horses not only for the coaches and post-chaises running from The George but also for many hostelries in the city. He was a Whig of course, a man of considerable ability who went on to become Mayor of Lichfield. When the railway system was established in 1838, travel by stage coach disappeared and The George was rebuilt and reinvented as an "hotel" rather than an "inn" with provisions for persons to stay for more than a day or two. In January 1865, a Lodge of Freemasons (St John's Lodge of Lichfield) was founded and met on a monthly basis, in what is now called The Garrick Suite, for 100 years. Under private ownership, the manager was always invited to join the Lodge, but when taken over by a group, the masons were instructed to quit and they re-established themselves at The Tamworth Masonic Rooms.

In the summer of 2000 The George Hotel was purchased by Michael Webb – some coincidence. He just has to be the great, great grandson of the above Thomas Webb! Over the past few years The George has been restored to its former glory - all the existing bedrooms have been completely refurbished and 9 brand new bedrooms have been added, making a total of 45. The delightful Regency Garrick Suite is now used for meetings, wedding receptions and banquets and the new adjoining private bar has proved to be a great asset. Michael Webb, together with his wife Jean, also own the 4 star Best Western Premier Moor Hall Hotel & Spa in Sutton Coldfield, Best Western The Gables Hotel in Falfield, Bristol and Broads Travel Group which is next door to The George on Bird Street and also in Mere Green, Sutton Coldfield.

At the heart of this privately owned group of companies, Webb Hotels & Travel, is the philosophy of personal service and attention to detail which means always putting the customer first.

