

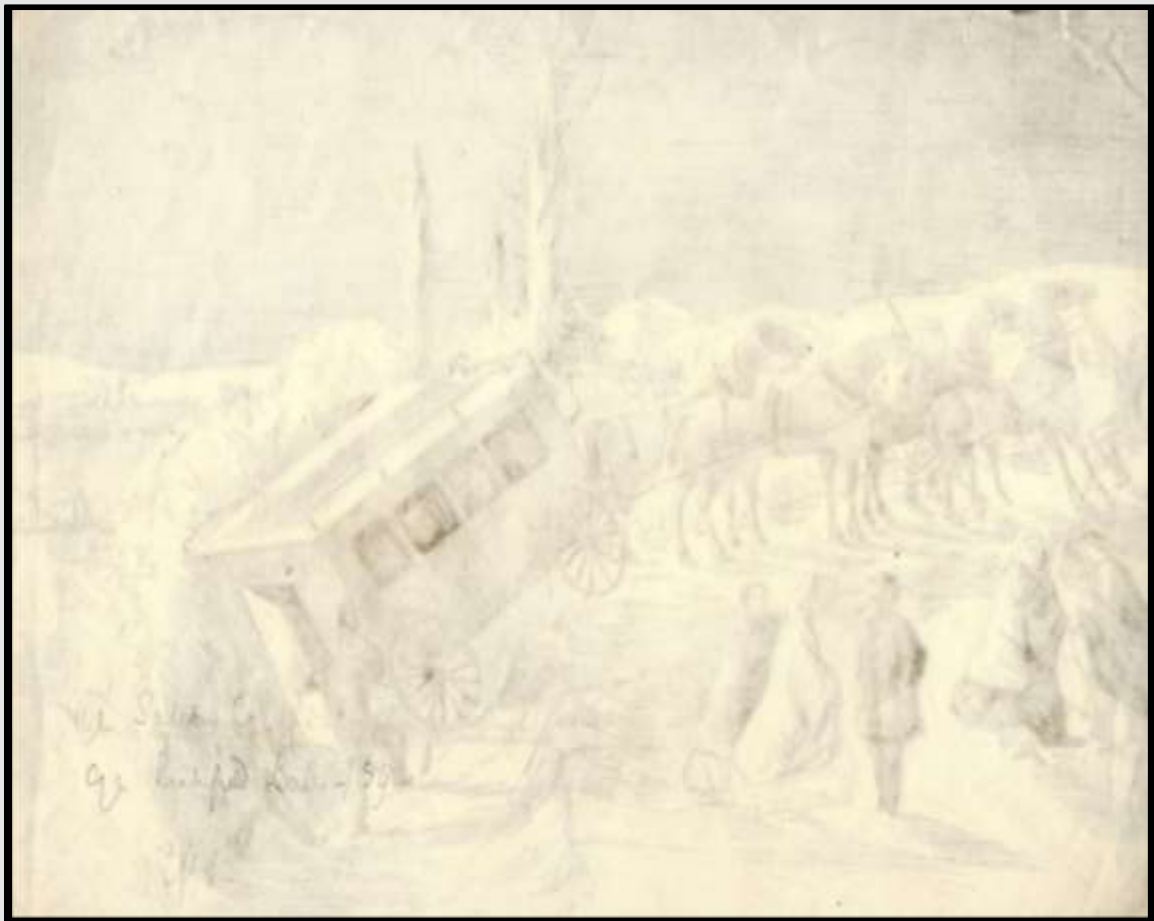
“THE SUTTON COLDFIELD CHRISTMAS BUMP, 1859”

(A Mystery?)

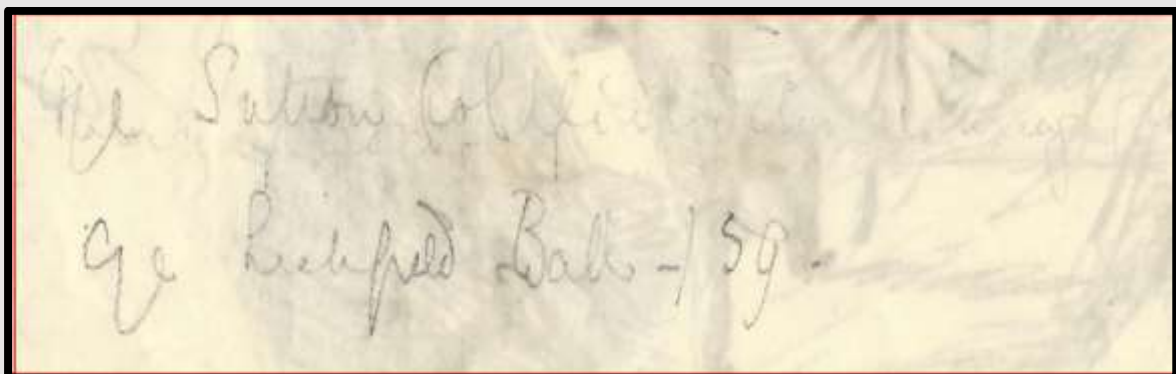
by
Janet Jordan

This print of a “Late 19c Pen and Ink Drawing, Coach & Horses in the Snow” was purchased from the internet in August 2023. There was no information as to its provenance and the pencilled notes on the reverse, which are very difficult to decipher, were suggested by the Seller as “The Sutton Coldfield Christmas Bump after Lichfield Ball, 1859”.





Reverse of Drawing showing pencilled notes



One assumes this accident or “Bump” must have taken place between Lichfield and Sutton Coldfield, perhaps on a return journey from a night out. The appearance of water in the background might lead one to think the site could be beside one of the pools in Lichfield or, maybe, a lake in Sutton Park. And, if the Seller’s guess at the word ‘Christmas’ is correct, no wonder there is snow on the ground.

But we have a mystery here.

So, were there any Balls taking place in Lichfield in 1859? The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) reveals in the Wolverhampton Chronicle & Staffordshire Advertiser issue of Wednesday, 28th December 1859, that there were, in fact, two taking place during that Winter.

The first, The Staffordshire Yeomanry Ball, was very comprehensively reported, as follows:

On the assembling of the Queen's Own Royal Yeomanry for permanent duty in Lichfield, in September last, the officers determined on giving an invitation ball on a liberal scale, and probably on no similar occasion did so numerous a company ever meet together as in the Guildhall on Tuesday [i.e. 20th or 27th December], the number present being about 500, including members of the most influential families in this and the adjoining counties. The number of invitations issued was about 1,000. The company began to arrive at half-past nine, and continued till about twelve o'clock. The hall has undergone a thorough repair, and on Tuesday evening it presented a most brilliant appearance. The decorations were appropriate, consisting of shields bearing the arms and motto of the regiment, "Pro aris et focus", flags of all nations, military trophies, &c., arranged by Mr. Pickard with great taste, under the able direction of Adjutant Davis. The management of the refreshment department was entrusted to Mr. Dunn, of the Swan Hotel, and the provision for the occasion was profuse, and of the choicest description. Lady Bagot's band, twelve in number, under the above direction of Mr. Allen, was most effective, and their performances elicited general commendation. The following was the selection for the evening: Waltzes: Maud, Clotilda, Dream of the Rose, Undine, Moss Rose, Satanella. Gallops: Antelope, Arabian, Avalanche, Highlanders, Yeomanry. Quadrilles: Macbeth, Sicilian Vespers, Charlestown, June, Dinorah, Satanella. During the dances, the various military costumes of the gentlemen, mingling with the costly and superb dresses of the ladies, rendered the scene very imposing.

This article went on to list the names of many of the gentry who attended, notable Sutton names being Paget, Bagot, Hartopp, Dugdale, Wilkinson, Webster, Bedford and Webb. It said that dancing was kept up until five o'clock in the morning and that the company left the Guildhall without the slightest confusion, ending one of the most brilliant and splendid reunions that ever took place in the ancient city of Lichfield!

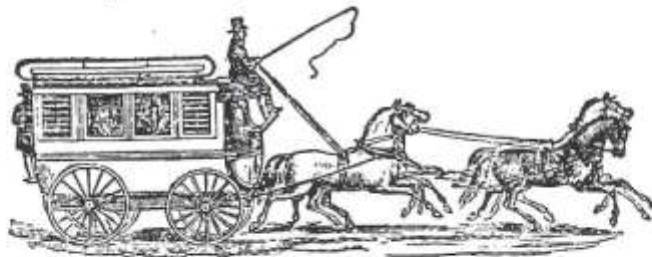
The second event, The County Ball, was also reported in the same issue:-

This fashionable assembly was held in the Guildhall, Lichfield, on Thursday last [i.e. 22nd December], and was numerously attended. No less than 343 were present, a number largely in advance of any similar meeting. The lady patroness was the Countess of Shrewsbury and Talbot; and the stewards Lord Alexander Paget, Mr. Meynell Ingram, Mr Oakley, and Mr. Cunliffe Shawe. Lady Bagot's band, under the direction of Mr. Allen was in attendance. Mr. Williams, of the George Hotel, supplied the refreshments, and the other arrangements were similar in character to those of Tuesday, detailed above.

Once again, a list of names followed.

It is not certain that either of these two Balls were the ones in question. But, it is obvious that there was an omnibus accident. The suggested date of 1859 is likely to be near enough if the style of omnibus depicted in the print is compared with the following advertisement in the *Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham in 1866*, which is very similar, showing four horses being driven by Wm. Sheppard & Sons. It is interesting to note the raised area in the roof which allowed better headroom for inside passengers.

**WM. SHEPPARD & SONS,
OMNIBUS, CAB, & CAR PROPRIETORS**



**SWAN WITH TWO NECKS MEWS,
100, Aston Street, Birmingham;
AND KING'S HEATH, NEAR MOSELEY.**

First-class Carriages for Weddings, in scarlet or blue liveries, with bay or grey Horses; Vehicles for Private and Pic-Nic Parties. Post Horses and Carriages let for hire.

J. F. & A. SHEPPARD, Proprietors.

Advertisement from Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham 1866

According to Roger Lea in his “History Spot” on this website under *Omnibuses* [271], Sheppard ran a service once a day in 1854 to Birmingham, stopping at the Three Tuns.

It would be interesting to know the names of the characters in the print. They must be gentry; the women in their crinoline ball gowns and the men in dress suits, possibly concealing a military uniform under their coats. The omnibus would have been hired for the evening but “the Bump” would have been a most unpleasant experience for all concerned.

We are left not really being able to say with any certainty the actual date of the event, the place it happened or the names of the people concerned. If you can shed any light on it, please let the writer know.

This simple drawing makes us realise how precarious even a simple trip to Lichfield used to be!



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