

A NOTE ON THE BECKFORD NAME

The use of the Beckford name is complicated, full of controversy and one we remain torn on. The history of England has good and bad in it. We obviously do not celebrate the abhorrent activities of The Beckfords over 250 years ago but do believe that history exists to be acknowledged and spoken about. It is our hope that, in doing so, we help to ensure we are all responsible for history and that terrible things are not repeated.

The Beckford family is a tale of social ambition, political aspiration, and limitless collecting. The activities of the family were all made possible by the profits of transatlantic slavery and the stolen labour of countless enslaved Africans.

The Beckford estate in which our first pub is situated belonged to William, who was the son of Alderman Beckford. Alderman (William) Beckford was once head of the family and owned 13 Jamaican plantations over 22,000 acres and claimed over 1,000 enslaved people as property. He was ostentatious with wealth, political power and married into one of the great aristocratic families of the time. Alderman died in 1770, when his son, William, was just 9 years old. William inherited everything.

In 2009 we took the reins of The Beckford Arms and inherited the beautiful building and the name that belonged to the pub. Since opening our first inn, we named our Bottle Shop after the pub and continue to use the Beckford name as part of our story because it is how we were known – not because we are celebrating or glorifying a particular historical anti-hero.

Slavery is something that is not in any way finished and confined to history. Modern slavery particularly affects women and children, and we are obviously more aware than most and so pay particular attention to our supply lines. But we must all do our bit and look out for any signs in our communities.