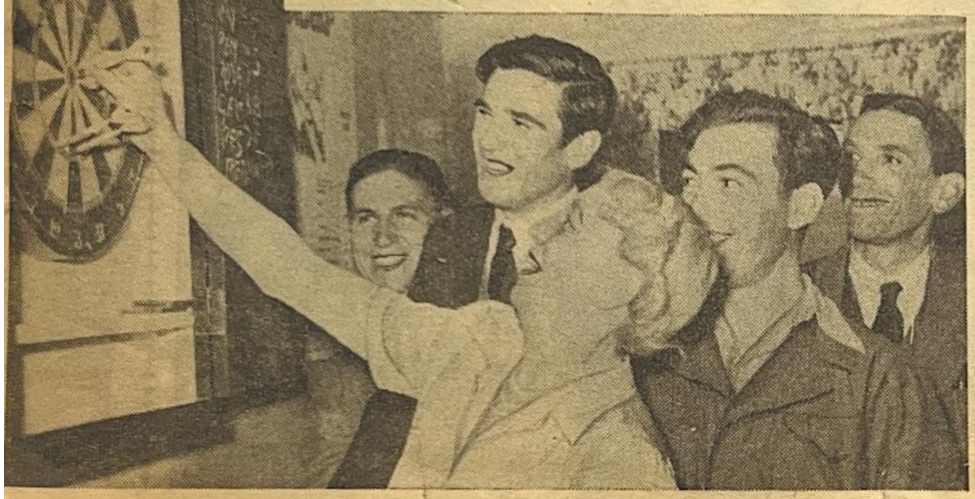
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Circa 1960s

Mrs Florence Starbuck, manageress of the George and Dragon that stood on the Barlestone Road and the top of Brascote Lane

WINNING HOSTESS

WORK is Mrs. Florence Starbuck's recipe for a contented mind. Manageress of the George and Dragon, Newbold Verdon, she is 70 years old, and when next March arrives she will have completed 50 years at the inn.

Silver-haired, fresh-faced, the years rest lightly on her. She is full of energy, and puts in a good day's work each day. Although her elder daughter, Mrs. E. Jones helps her to run the place, Mrs. Starbuck has certain jobs she earmarks for herself.



Mine Hostess Mrs. Starbuck flights a pretty dart.

In the cellar, winking brasses are a tribute to her housewifely pride. Gleaming furniture and shining glassware are the outcome of her efforts. Mrs. Starbuck thrives on hard work.

If she isn't around when people come in, inquiries are soon afoot. "Nice to have her with us," they say. And no wonder. For she's the sociable kind; ready to join in a game of darts. As for dominoes, she's beaten the local champion.

Fifty years ago, the George and Dragon was open all day. No cinemas, wireless or television then. "People made their own fun; it was jollier then," she says. "The men used to have bets who could eat the most plum pie or rabbit."

Beer was 3d., whisky 2d., and a glass of lemonade a penny. Cigarettes cost a penny a packet. Fivepence would buy a glass of beer, hunk of bread, farmer's cheese and onions.

Home again

Mrs. Starbuck comes into Leicester every week to shop. But she is always glad to get back to the house to which she is very much attached. It must be quite 200 years old, she says. Mellowed oak beams, low ceilings, doorways only 5ft. 8in. high and in the tap room a wide hearth—where once meat was roasted on a spit—with hobs either side and cupboards above, give it a picturesque air.

Mrs. Starbuck showed me a treasured tumbler left from her early days. Its ring is clear and tuneful as a bell.