



# The Chiddingfold Archive

## THE CROWN INN – A HISTORY

### EXHIBITION SUMMARY

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## **THE CROWN – A HOLY PLACE?**

It is widely held that the Crown was initially built by Cistercian Monks in the thirteenth century as a resting place for monks travelling between Salisbury (then called Sarum) and Canterbury.

There is some evidence to support this assertion – the well known local historian Rev. T S Cooper noted that in 1365 a shop close to the Crown is described as being close to the house of the parish priest. That the Crown was an Alehouse by then is beyond dispute but it does show that locally the connection was still made at that time.

And in the copy of a deed from 1383 now hanging in the Crown it is stated that the tenant shall have a duty of allegiance to the King and the Church lending further weight to a past religious connection.

Within local folklore it is said that there was once a tunnel between the Crown and St Mary's Church – despite many attempts this tunnel has never been found.

In 1847 the Crown was briefly owned by the then rector, Rev. J. L. Hesse. He paid £700 for it allegedly “in order to stop over-indulgence at the time of Divine Service”!

## **HOW OLD IS THE CROWN?**

There seems little doubt that a building known as the Hall stood on this site during the reign of Henry III (1216-1272).

It seems that the hall came into the ownership of one of the Andekneepes of Pockford (latterly, Enticknaps) - probably John, sometime before his death in 1343.

We know too that it was being used as an Alehouse by 1353 when Stephen Guleham was the tenant, and it is likely that his family were tenants before him because Alice Guleham, described as a retailer of ale, was fined in 1339 for infringing the ale assize – that is, selling ale for more than the lawful price (bread prices were also controlled in this way).

By 1483 the freehold had passed to Thomas Purvoche, owner of an adjoining property to the South since amalgamated with the Crown. His father was listed in 1440 as a common brewer and baker so we can assume that both parts of the current Crown were alehouses at that time.

The first reference to the building as the Crowne is in the will of Thomas Woodyer made in 1536.

A recent survey by the Wealden Buildings Study Group concluded that the older parts of the current building probably date back to the early part of the fifteenth century. Although given the margin for error, 1383 seems more likely. It has been suggested that this may have been when the Crowne was expanded to include accommodation and became an Inn as opposed to just an Alehouse.

## **A MURKY PAST**

In addition to the misdemeanours of what we imagine to be his mother, Stephen Guleham was sued by Robert Shurtere in 1372 for non-payment of twelve pence for a jar – essentially, a barrel of ale. And in 1377 his executor was sued for the non-payment of three shillings for a jar – this presumably of wine.

Richard and Agnes Gofayre who took on the tenancy in 1383 were also variously fined for infringing the ale assize (twelve pence) and later, for using false measures and selling ale without displaying a proper sign (fifteen pence).

It should be noted that Alehouses/Inns were obliged to display a garland (usually of hops) outside their establishment once a new brew was ready for assessment – then a “connor” would visit to assess the ale. One method of doing this was to spill the ale onto a bench and have the “connor” sit on it – if he subsequently found himself partially stuck to the bench, the ale was deemed to be good! Brewers were frequently fined for using the same hops to make more than one brew – effectively watering down their beer.

In 1339 there were two “connors” in Chiddingfold, Peter Kaldre and Richard Kembere. Kaldre lived in a property adjacent to the Crown that was later owned by Thomas Purvoche and became assimilated into the Crown.

## **ROYAL PATRONAGE**

It is recorded that King Edward VI accompanied by many of his high officials of state, the Duke of Suffolk, the Earls of Cobham and Warwick and some four thousand men camped on the Green on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1552. While it is not clear whether the King actually stayed at the Crown as is alleged, it is inconceivable that he and his officials did not avail themselves of its hospitality!

It is also alleged that Elizabeth I took refreshment at the Crown in 1591 while passing through Chiddingfold on her way from Loseley to Cowdray. This is based on an entry in the Queen’s expense roll for that journey in which it is recorded that a certain George Stanton was paid two shillings for carrying a tonne of wine from Ripley to Chiddingfold. Whether this was partly for her personal consumption or for her servants who are known to have passed through Chiddingfold is open to debate!

## THE BUILDING

A deed of 1383 describes the building as an oblong hall with a chamber having a second floor at one end (South) and a kitchen and small room at the other (North), possibly also with a second floor. These side extensions stand slightly proud of the central main hall as is customary in Wealden buildings of this period. In the middle of the main hall there was a hearth and the smoke from it escaped through a hole in the roof.

The very fine “Crown Post” roof from circa 1400 still visible today is almost certainly from the very building described in 1383.

We know too that a building to the South of the Crown was integrated with it sometime after 1483. Most probably what is now the “Half Crown”.

A deed of 1548 mentions additions recently made to the Crown (“Le Croune”) – at that time it was owned by the Dennys family whose ancestors were French glass-makers. It is believed that this is when a second floor was put in above the main hall and the Inglenook fireplace added where the hearth had been.

The upper rooms so created retain their half-timbered walls and oak beamed ceilings. Originally, the plaster sections of these walls would have been painted but most of these elaborate decorations have been lost under successive coats of whitewash. Thankfully, in 1942, part of one of these paintings was uncovered when a section of whitewash fell away from a recess along the main corridor. This painting is thought to belong to a class of composition developed in Italy during the early renaissance period and is not common in England.

Quite when the additions were made to the rear that curve along Crown Walk is uncertain but the above deed suggests strongly that it was also probably around this time.

Similarly, quite when the current cellar was added is not known but it is unlikely it existed in 1383.

In more recent times (late seventeenth century) the upper front facade was tiled as was common at that time and pictures from the 1920s show it covered by Wisteria – this tiled façade hid the characteristic indented front of the central hall and aroused much interest among antiquarians. Necessary renovations in the early 1950s allowed a proper investigation to be undertaken and the tiles were subsequently removed to reveal the original exterior we see today.

The building remains a very fine example of a Wealden building circa 1400 with an Oak timber frame in-filled with clay and a magnificent Crown Post roof.

## 400 YEARS OF OWNERSHIP

**1477** The building is still owned by the Andekneeps of Pockford in the person of John Andekneep.

**1483** Ownership has passed to Thomas Purvoche

**1536** September 2<sup>nd</sup>. First reference to the building as the Crown in the will of Thomas Woodyer (Wodyer) who bequeathed it to “my wife Joan for life and then to my eldest son Thomas”

**1536** December 14<sup>th</sup>. Bequeathed to Thomas Wodyer. Joan Wodyer’s will reads “The Crown where I live to son Thomas Wodyer... my bell pot to son Davyd....best petticoat, best gown , my best kirtle...” to her daughters Alice Wodyer and Jane Petowe.

**1542.** Acquired by Roger Dennys (from Davyd Wodyer). The Manor Rental records ‘held freely at a yearly rent of seven pence a tenement called le Crowne’ together with a parcel of land where he had lately built part of a tenement called the Crowne at a yearly rent of four pence’ (probably the extension at the back adjoining Crown Walk) and ‘a parcel of land containing one rod facing the said tenement, called Antekneppe’ at a rent of three pence (mistakenly recorded at first as being for seven pence) - this being the land at the front, then a garden, where the sign now hangs.

**1562.** Bequeathed to grandson Richard Dennys

**1581.** Richard Dennys (gentleman) and wife Jane sell the property to Edward Osborne and William Peyto of Tugley in equal shares.

**1583.** The will of Edward Osborne of Farnest in Chiddingfold leaves his interest in “that tenement called by the signe of the Crown with all stables, barns, lands .... in Chiddingfolde” to his brother William.

**1584.** William Peyto dies leaving his interest to his daughter Jane who subsequently marries Henry Yalden (Yaldinge)

**1602.** Richard Conoway alias Gryffin purchases the property from Henry Yaldinge and his wife Jane. There is an obvious inconsistency here – what has happened to the Osborne half share in the property?

**1614.** Thomas Bentley, tenant of the Crown, is buried.

**1621.** John Whitehead buys the property from Richard Conoway .

**1642 & 1645.** John Whitehead (presumably the son) is cited for default in the Baronial Records

**1651.** By this date Robert Quennell has become the owner

**1659.** Robert Quennell dies and his eldest son (also Robert) succeeds his father.

**1682.** Robert Quennell dies and a charge for non-payment of taxes is made upon the Crown. How this is resolved is not clear but it seems from what appears below that the property then passed to his recently (1674) widowed sister, Jane Younge. But could something be missing?

**1684.** Jane Younge is described as a tenant of Mrs Stubbs (widow of Sheffield Stubbs of Rodgate) in the list of those required to provide arms (soldiers) within the Hundred of Godalming. Is this something to do with the charge on the property, or could it refer back to the unaccounted for “Osborne half”?

**1693.** Jane Younge dies leaving the house she had lived in called “the Crowne Inne with , outhouses, edifices and buildings, garden and gate room .... to her brothers Thomas and Arnold Quennell for life ... and then to her brother John Quennell of Loxwood for life, and then to nephew John Quennell ... and his heirs for ever ...”

**1699.** Jane’s nephew sells his reversionary interest in the Crown to Henry Searle who subsequently dies in 1713.

**1718.** Arnold Quennell dies and the Quennell family’s interest passes to Henry Searle’s daughter Anne, wife of Henry Fish.

**1762.** Henry Fish’s grandson Harry inherits the property on his grandmother’s death.

**1793.** John Palmer is the owner and sells it to Edward Puttock.

**1811.** Richard Burdock of Milford purchases the property having already purchased Thorn Bush Inn in 1803.

**1847.** It is purchased by the then rector, Rev. J. L. Hesse. On his death, it passes to his only surviving child, Mrs Montague White of Haslemere.

### **From just before World War II**

From 1931-1935 the Crown was owned by John Bertram and his wife Gladys Le Gros.

They sold it in 1935 to Mr & Mrs Edward Davis. The property included an off-licence (Thorn Cottage) and all the land behind.

At the outbreak of the War, Harold Mullard remembers that the Davis’ took over the gardens of the newly requisitioned Brockhurst for food production. He remembers them keeping 4 horses, 50 pigs, 2 flocks of chickens, 2 goats for milk and some ducks. They also grew vegetables including sweetcorn – something of a rarity from seeds given to him by a Mrs Steele, a long term guest who brought them with her from America. It seems that rationing didn't dent business at all!

In fact, the Crown was a thriving business during the war and it was particularly popular with the soldiers billeted here and later, German Prisoners of War!

## Since the War

**1949** The Crown was bought by Carrs (London) Ltd

Carrs (London) Ltd owned a number of restaurants and it was their trademark to install a Sedan Chair in each – the one they installed at the Crown is a particularly rare eighteenth century example.

Altogether they lavished some £100,000 on the Crown (£3-7 million now depending on which index you use). It was during this refurbishment that permission was given to investigate behind the tile hanging and subsequently, for it to be removed to expose the original front. Carrs also installed the wood panelling in the dining room that became such a much admired feature

**1961** Bought by Manfield Hotels

James Manfield of the Manfield shoe family originally bought the Crown for his wife to run, setting up Manfield Hotels with the two of them and his mother-in-law Mrs D.L. Foster as directors. He was a keen motor racing driving and eventually sold to concentrate on his racing.

**1965** Bought by the three Canadian business people.

David Shirriff and Keith McCord served with the 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Regiment during WW2 and were stationed in Chiddingfold before seeing active service in Sicily and the Italian mainland. They had fond memories of the Crown having drunk there during the War and when they picked up a copy of Country Life in Toronto and saw that it was to be auctioned, they decided to buy it!

Their business partner was Keith McCord's sister Barbara Pickup: her husband had served in the Queen's Own rifles and had also spent many happy months in the South of England before being wounded three times while serving in France and Germany.

The three Canadians hired Angus Lamont to run the Crown for them giving him free rein to make of it what he could – quite an opportunity for the young 25 year old!

Angus entered into formal partnership with the Canadian owners in 1972 and gradually took over the business.

**1982** The Crown is sold to Searcy Group

The Searcy catering, hospitality & restaurant group was privately owned by Richard & Nigel Goodhew and had interests in many top restaurants working with Michelin starred chef Richard Corrigan, won prestigious catering contracts at places top London venues such as the Royal Opera House and the National Portrait Gallery and provided the catering at some of the most prestigious of businesses.

They sold Searcy in 2007 but have retained their ownership of the Crown.

## **SOURCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Rev TS Cooper's History of Chiddingfold (1911)

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