50 pence

THE RH HISTORY GROUP

The Royal Oak, Dormansland

The story of the Royal Oak has its beginning in another local pub now long gone. In the early 19th century there was a beer house called the Black Horse situated on the corner of High Street and Hollow Lane, where the Memorial Hall now stands. This was run by Thomas Chantler and his wife Sarah. It appears that Thomas brewed on the premises as he is described as a brewer in 1841.

Thomas and Sarah Chantler originated from Norfolk and it is not clear what brought them to a remote corner of Surrey. They were here by 1810 as Thomas purchased a small plot of land from the commons commissioners in that year.
They had a daughter Sophia, born in Lingfield around 1816. There is no baptism record for her.
Thomas died on 24 February 1846 but his widow Sarah carried on as the beer shop keeper until her death on 12 October 1854, age 76.
Her daughter Sophia married George Greenwood at St Marks, Kennington on 26 July 1836.
George was born in Lingfield around 1813. There is no baptism record for him. In 1841 he was an agricultural labourer living with his wife Sophia and 2 year old daughter Mary with his in-laws at the Black Horse. Sophia was doubtless helping with the operation of the beer house. They were still at the Black Horse in 1851 with the addition of a second daughter, Jane. With the death of Sarah Chantler the Black Horse closed and the Greenwoods moved a short distance up the High Street to set up a beer house in the position of the Royal Oak where they were in business in 1861.

The first owner of the Royal Oak as such was Charles Absalom of East Grinstead. Charles was tenant of the Hope Brewery, East Grinstead in 1857, later becoming owner. The brewery was situated on the site now occupied by the fire station. Charles Absalom retired in 1877, being succeeded by his son in law John Dashwood who built up the pub estate to 20 before merging with Southdown brewery of Lewes in 1895 becoming the Southdown and East Grinstead Breweries. The bottling facilities at East Grinstead suffered a fire in 1912 and the company spent £4000 on a new bottling plant anticipating a boom in bottled beer and converted from steam to electric power. However this, and other grandiose expansion schemes, led to the company's eventual downfall. In 1920 the business was leased to Tamplins of Brighton leading to eventual

sale four years later. Brewing ceased at East Grinstead in 1920 but the malthouse remains as the premises of the local British Legion.
Tamplins had a large pub estate in Sussex and surrounding areas, eventually having 600 pubs and it continued until 1953 when it was bought by Watney's. The Tamplins name continued to be used for some time until the division was totally absorbed into Watney Mann (London and Home Counties Ltd). Drinkers at the Royal Oak then had the pleasure of drinking Watneys Red Barrel. Watneys merged with Grand Metropolitan Hotels in 1972 and later became a part of Scottish-Courage group.
The pub is now owned by Enterprise Inns.

Returns of licensed victuallers
The licensed trade has always given rise to much documentation. Often this is destroyed when it has fulfilled its purpose but occasionally certain items remain and end up in libraries or county record offices. Two such volumes survive for the Godstone petty sessions division of Surrey. These are the Returns of Licensed Victuallers of 1892 and 1904.

The volume prepared in 1892 has the very cumbersome but usefully descriptive title on the cover of:
Detailed return of Fully Licensed Houses and Beer Houses in the several petty sessional divisions showing whether such Houses are free or tied, the accommodation provided, the distance from the nearest Licensed Houses and the character of the persons frequenting such fully licensed houses or Beer Houses. February 1892. Issued by Clerk of the Peace's Office, Sessions House, Newington SE.

Royal Oak, Lingfield
Beer House
Owner Charles Absalom, East Grinstead
Licensee Lacy Watson, residing on the premises
Tied House Tied to Dashwood & Co. East Grinstead
No accommodation, no stabling
½ mile from Plough, ½ mile from Jolly Farmer
Frequented by working classes

A similar return was issued in 1904 with slightly more information.
Licensed for beer sales on and off
Poor rate assessment £30 gross £26 rateable
Owner Charles Absalom, East Grinstead
Licensee Lacy Watson, residing on the premises
Tied House Tied to Southdown Brewery Company
Nearest Houses ½ mile and ½ mile
Serves refreshments other than intoxicants
Accommodation 2 bedrooms
Stabling 2 horses
Sanitary facilities Yes
Frequented by working class

A national rating valuation survey (sometimes called Lloyd George's Domesday) was carried out around 1911. This gives interesting information on all properties in the

country but often in rather cryptic form. In the case of the Royal Oak the description page has unfortunately been left blank. The only details given are:

Royal Oak
Description: beerhouse
Extent: 32p 20yds
Occupier: L Watson
Owner Dominic Cronin Lecy of Southdown & East Grinstead Brewery Co,
Freehold
Tenancy yearly from October 1897, rent £30
Outgoings land tax 11s 4d
No description given.
Gross value £1600

The pub was licensed for the sale of only beer and cider until 1949, when a full licence was granted.

The following section gives details of the licensees, as far as is known.

George Greenwood

George Greenwood who married Sophia Chantler is mentioned in the introduction. Although George is recorded as a beer house keeper in the census returns, his wife really ran the place as George was described as a farm labourer when he died of tuberculosis on 30 May 1865. A few months later, on 14 October 1865 Sophia then married Thomas Osborne, a carpenter of West Street and set up another beer house which became the Old House at Home. They married at Trinity Church in the parish of Trinity Grays. They gave their address as Grays Inn Road. It seems that they did not want to marry locally, possibly due to opposition from some quarter. By residing in Grays Inn Road for 3 weeks they could claim they were of that parish and could have the banns called at Trinity Church.

Peter Meades

The next licensee was Peter Meades who was born in Hurst, Berkshire in 1830, one of ten children of Joseph and Charlotte, and was baptised there on 28 November 1830. In 1841 he was living with his married sister Leah Green in Hurst. In 1851 he was a railway labourer at Godstone, probably having moved along the line in connection with the construction of the Reading to Tonbridge railway.
While at Godstone he married Mary Ann Brooker, age 27 in 1848. They later moved to Lingfield where Mary became a schoolmistress while Peter became a brickmaker. He probably knew Thomas Ingram who was a brickmaker and beer house keeper at Lingfield Common and this may have given him the idea of running a beer house when premises became available on the death of George Greenwood. Peter Meades later moved to Pulborough to run the Crown Hotel.

David Longley

David was born in Edenbridge, in 1859, son of Samuel, a labourer and initially became a butcher, working for Henry Bassett in Dormansland. He married Mary Ann Meades, daughter of Peter on 10 June 1872 who at the time was still at the Royal Oak. However soon afterwards Peter moved on to Pulborough and David Longley became licensee of the Royal Oak where he remained until 1879 before moving to the Blue Anchor, Godstone and later to the Haycutter, Broadham Green.

Henry Tebay
He was born in Kendal, Westmoreland around 1837 and first worked for a local farmer before becoming a farm labourer in Sedburgh, Yorkshire. He married at Kendal in 1855; his wife Amelia died in 1862 and for some reason he moved south and married Emma Watson at East Grinstead in 1866. In 1871 he was landlord of the Ship Inn, East Grinstead. Henry became licensee of the Royal Oak on 29 September 1879. He was a cattle dealer as well as beer house keeper. He died on 29 December 1884 at Tunbridge Wells general hospital of cirrhosis of the liver. His wife Emma died of cerebral haemorrhage on 12 February 1891 at the Royal Oak. Their son Henry, born in 1866 became a professional cricketer.

James Cordeux
James was born in Lutterworth, Leicestershire around 1835. In 1871 and 1881 he was a coachman and domestic servant, living in Godstone. He became licensee of the Royal Oak on 22 October 1883. In 1891 he was running the Bell Inn, at Shortgate, near Laughton, Sussex. His daughter Mary married William Burley who became licensee of the Dolphin Inn, Hastings.

Lacy Watson
Lacy is recorded as the daughter of Henry Tebay. However she was possibly a relative as she was born in London at 7 Fountain Court, Strand in the parish of St Clement Danes on 28 June 1861, daughter of Benjamin Watson, journeyman stonemason and Lacy née Davy. In 1871 she was living with Martha Watson, possibly a sister, a shopkeeper, in Greenwich but by 1881 she was working as a waitress at the Royal Oak and became licensee when James Cordeux left before 1891. She did not marry but had a son, Thomas born 10 October 1902. Tom Watson lived in Dormansland all his life (96 years) and became a well known local character. Lacy died on 20th August 1912 of multiple carcinoma and heart failure.

Albert Leigh
Albert became licensee after Lacy Watson and stayed for over 15 years. He married Beatrice Walker in 1912.

George William Skelton
He was licensee from around 1930 until 1937. It is not known where he came from but the Skelton surname is quite common in Yorkshire.

James Alfred Buckland
He was probably born in London in 1906 and took over the pub on 8 August 1937

Edgar Raymond Boyd
Edgar was licensee from 1st July 1940 until 1948

Alfred George Craft (Croft)
Alfred became licensee on 2nd September 1948

Sydney Hart
Sydney was licensee for 10 months from 17 November 1952 until 7 September 1953.

Maurice (Mick) James Colclough (Capt, RE retired)
Mick ,whose son Maurice was a former England rugby player, was licensee for some time from 1953. Mick, chairman of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, retired in 1979 after a spat with the licensee over increased rents.

'Chick'
A person called 'Chick' by the locals came for a short time. He may be Julian Chapuzot mentioned in the Electoral register for 1980.

Paul & Andrea Webb
They followed 'Chick' and were resident in the pub in 1985. They moved to the Abergavenny Arms at Copthorne.

Jim & Kathy Maitland
Were then licensees for a while before selling out to Jeff Gatton.

'Buster'
An American took over for a short time and tried to promote American beers but he did not last long.

Christine & Doug Keating
Were licensees for a year from 1997.

Ric Horne and Les
Arrived in 1998 and tried to alter the character of the pub into more of a restaurant but the change was not popular with the locals.

Dave & Julie Irving
Arrived in 2001 and stayed for 3 years.

Dave & Jenny Grundy
Were licensees from 2004 to 2006

Bob and Maggie Simpson
Took over in 2006 and were still licensees in 2010.

M S Verrall
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