



OLD HOUSE AT HOME, DORMANSLAND

Background

In the mid 19th century the only fully licensed inn in Dormansland was the Plough which in 1861 was managed by Ambrose Glover who resided at the premises with his wife Rosina and 6 children including a 2 year old daughter Alice¹. They had 2 servants and an ostler. As was common at the time, people often had several strings to their bow. Ambrose was described as a higgler and publican. (A higgler is a person who buys up poultry and dairy produce and supplies in exchange for petty commodities from the shops in town). Alice eventually became the licensee and remained so until the 1930s. Other pubs in the area also had multi-tasking landlords. In 1861 the Star, Lingfield was run by Charles Head, described as victualler and builder employing 27 men and 3 boys² while the Prince of Wales at Baldwins Hill had Eliza Lewis, 'wool dealer, parchment maker and innkeeper'.³

For many centuries it had been traditional for farmhouses and larger houses to have their own brewing facilities to supply beer to their household and the many manual workers which they employed. However by the mid 19th century these ties were being broken and the working classes had to look elsewhere for their liquid refreshment. In 1805 excise duties on malt and hops were £10m and spirit duties were £5m. As the total excise duties of the country were £22.5m, alcohol was roughly one half of national taxation from all sources. In 1825: spirit duty was reduced from 11s 9d to 7s per gallon; it doubled spirit sales but reduced beer consumption. The Beer Act of 1830 removed all duties on beer and allowed any ratepayer to open a beer house for a licence fee of 2 guineas paid direct to the excise authorities. They were allowed to open between 05.00 and 22.00. Duty on malt was retained, thus catching all brewers, including 'home' brewers.

Thus the greater demand for beer was met by the establishment of many beer houses. However, by the Wine and Beerhouse Act of 1869 the justices' responsibility for licensing all houses selling intoxicating liquor was restored. It was still easier to obtain a licence for beer sales only.

During the period of deregulation at least two beer houses had appeared in Dormansland. One was the Black Horse which existed in the 1840-1850's period near the site of the present Memorial Hall, run by Thomas Chantler who was described as a brewer⁴ then by his widow Sarah.⁵ This one had disappeared by 1861 but another premises described simply as 'beer house' managed by George Greenwood had appeared in Dormans Street (now High Street), later becoming the Royal Oak.⁶ George's wife Sophia was Thomas Chantler's daughter. His presumed success led to the establishment of further beer houses.

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Local competition appeared when a beer house known as the Jolly Farmers⁷ was set up (now demolished, next to the parish room). It was recorded in the 1871 census and remained until the early 20th century when was closed by the licensing authorities because of mismanagement. The premises were bought by Charles Smeed and run as a shop for some years.

In 1871 there is also a 'beer shop' in Quakers Platt in which Thomas Osborne, carpenter resided.⁸ One can imagine that he occasionally left his carpentry work to fill a customer's jug or maybe it was his wife Sophia's job to do so. Sophia was his 'common law' wife and was actually the widow of George Greenwood.

The 1872 Licensing Act required the licensee's name to be displayed above the door together with details of the licence held. There was also a legal requirement for all licensed premises to have a recognised name and in 1873 the premises appear in the Quarter Sessions records as the Old House at Home, licensed as a beer house. It remained a beer house until 1949, when a full licence was granted. The Old House at Home is a name given to a number of 19th century pubs and is probably derived from a popular Victorian song the refrain of which is:

*T'was not for its splendour that dwelling was dear!
T'was not that the gay or noble were near
O'er the porch the wild rose and woodbine twined
And the sweet scented jasmine wav'd in the wind
Yet dearer to me than proud turret or dome
Were the halls of my fathers, **the old house at home.***

From 1881 to 1884 the local pubs received a major boost in trade during the construction of the Oxted to East Grinstead railway. The village housed a large influx of labourers as lodgers in the already overcrowded cottages. The 1881 census gives many instances of a small primitive cottage containing husband, wife and several children with up to three railway labourers as lodgers. Some well-meaning local people including Emma St Clair set up a 'Navy Mission', or Industrial Christian Fellowship in a hut opposite the station. Later, a small building for social gatherings was built nearby. It also contained a library but it was probably not appreciated that most of the labourers were illiterate. The 'Institute' as it became known did not serve alcohol and as the labourers were better paid than the local agricultural workers, much of their money was doubtless spent in the local beer houses. When railway construction finished the mission hall was moved to adjoin the social hall and was used by local people until 1939. This building still existed in a derelict condition in a corner of the cricket field until 2009 when it was burnt down by vandals.

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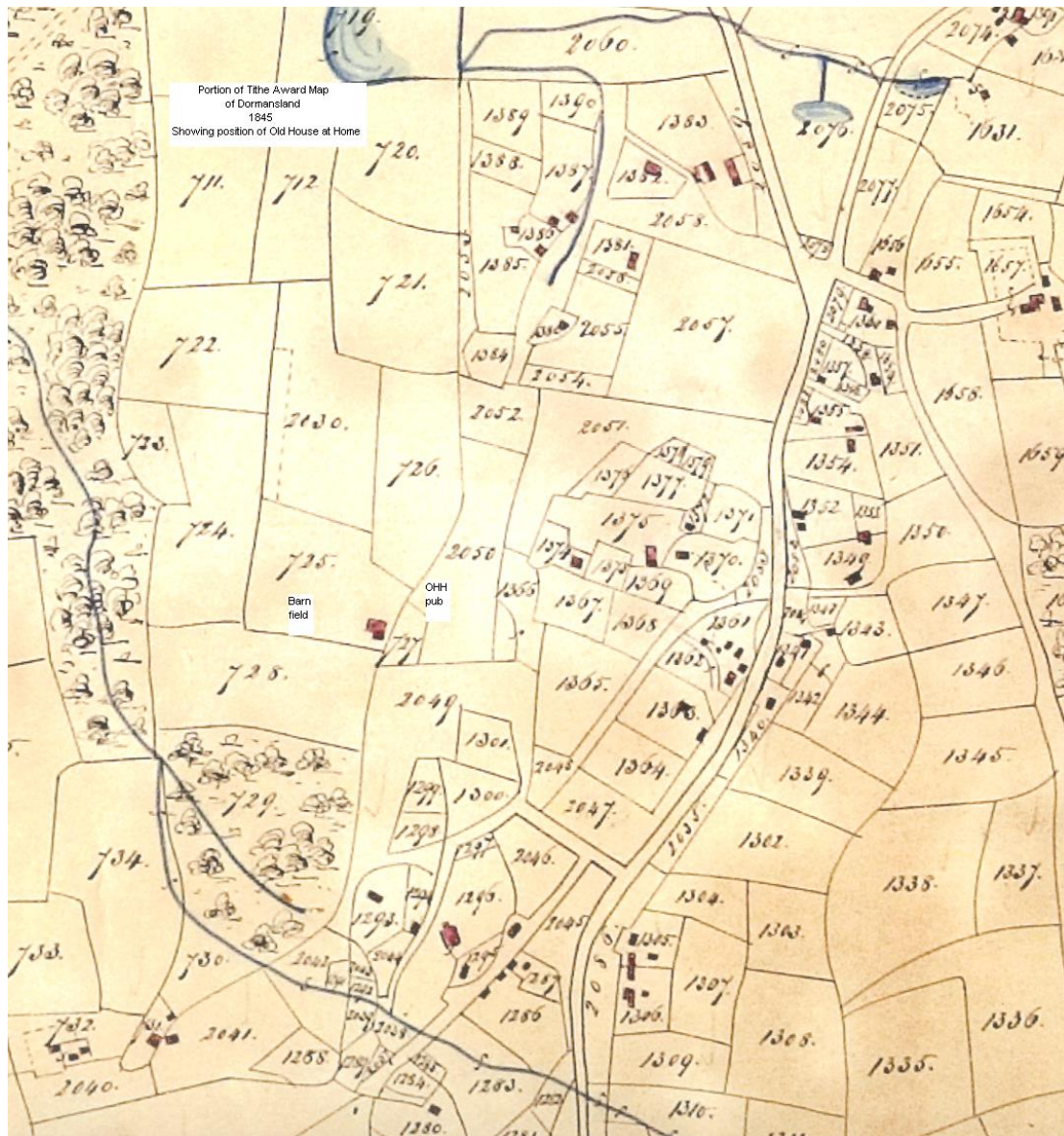


‘The Building

There is a certain local tradition that the Old House at Home is of some antiquity, some suggesting that it dates from the 16th century. However, the building itself does not appear on early detailed maps of the area, the Commons Enclosure map of 1816 or the Tithe Award map of 1845 and appears to have been built in the mid 19th century.

Prior to 1816, the parish of Lingfield contained several unenclosed common lands, Lingfield Common, Nan’s Common, Felcourt Heath, Dorman’s Land, Beacon’s Heath and Woodgate’s Green. By the Lingfield Commons Enclosure Act of 1809, these lands were enclosed and provision made for certain rights of way. One such was a private way from what is now the bend at the lower end of West Street to Crowhurst Land Barn. It was still a private way in 1845 as no road corresponding to West Street is shown on the Tithe Award map of this date. The latter map indicates the owner and occupier of every plot of land within the parish. The position of the Old House at Home is in plot 2050 (see map on page 3) which was one of several in the area recorded as unoccupied.

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A portion of the Tithe Award map of 1845.

This shows the position of the Old House at Home, in plot 2050, opposite Barn Field. Plot 2047 is now occupied by the church. Plot 1656, the position of the present memorial hall, is the Black Horse beer house. West Street now roughly follows the line of the stream coming down from the top of the map.

Local histories relate that a person known as ‘Old Quaker’ purchased lands in the area and then allowed certain agricultural labourers to build simple dwellings. The area subsequently became known as ‘Quakers Platt’, initially with rather ill-defined boundaries. However, there is no documentation to support this hypothesis and the land was probably subdivided and cottages built by private individual transactions. Certainly a number of well built permanent cottages appeared in the same area from the 1850s and it is likely that the Old House at Home was built at this time, or shortly after, possibly as a pair of cottages.. The 1841 census lists only one property with the address of ‘Quakers Platt’ whereas in 1851 there were many more. Until the end of the 19th century and beyond, many properties in the area had no specific address, making detailed historical research quite difficult. At this time and well into the 20th century ‘Quakers Platt’ was used as an address for many

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houses in the area from the present Platt to the lower end of West Street. However it is clear that a number of cottages were built in Quakers Platt from the mid 19th century. A pair of such cottages became amalgamated to form the present pub.



The Old House at Home in the 1930s

The Public House

It is not clear where beer house keepers initially obtained their beer, but they soon became owned by, and tied to, local breweries.¹⁰ By 1876, the Old House at Home was owned by, and tied to, the Lashmar Brothers' Crown Brewery at Oxted. In 1882, this was bought by Martin and Company's Black Eagle brewery of Westerham. This company had a long and complicated history which can be traced back some 200 years. A relevant date is 1862 when Robert Martin formed a partnership with Benjamin Collard Bushell. Although Robert Martin died in 1866 and Benjamin Bushell purchased his partner's interest from Robert's widow Sarah, the brewery traded as Martin & Co. for another 16 years. To expand his business, in 1882 Bushell took another partner, George Wadley who had a number of brewing connections. It was at this point that they purchased the business and goodwill of Lashmar Brothers who traded from the Crown Brewery at Oxted, another firm with ancient origins. Further expansion by Bushell resulted in the company becoming by 1902 Bushell Watkins and Smith.⁹ The Plough and Jolly Farmer were tied to Edward & Henry Kelsey of Culverden Brewery, Tunbridge Wells. One branch of the Kelsey family were farmers in Dormansland, owning Crowhurstland Farm in West Street. The remaining Dormansland pub, the Royal Oak was privately owned by Charles Absalom of East Grinstead but was tied to Dashwood and Co. East Grinstead, later the Southdown Brewery Company.

Two 'Returns of Licensed Premises', issued by the Clerk of the Peace's office, Sessions House, Newington survive for 1892¹⁰ and 1904¹¹. The first page of the 1892 edition has the very informative title:

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‘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.’

1892: Old House at Home, Dormansland

Beer House

Owner B C Bushell & Co. Westerham

Licensee Ann Ridgers, residing on the premises

Tied House Tied to Bushell

No accommodation, no stabling

100 yards from Jolly Farmer, ½ mile from Royal Oak

Frequented by low class of labourers

1904: Old House at Home, Dormansland

Licensed for beer sales on and off

Poor rate assessment £20 gross £17 rateable

Owner Bushell Watkins & Smith, Westerham

Licensee Ann Ridgers, residing on the premises

Tied House Tied to Bushell

Serves refreshments other than intoxicants

Accommodation 2 bedrooms

Stabling none

Sanitary facilities

Frequented by working class.

These returns give details of accommodation and the nature of the clientele. In 1892 both the Old House at Home and the Jolly Farmers were frequented by ‘low class of labourers’ whereas the Royal Oak had just ‘working classes’. In 1904 the Old House at Home had risen in status in joining the Royal Oak to attract ‘working class’ clientele whereas the Jolly Farmer was still frequented by ‘low labouring classes’.

The present building is clearly based on two previously separate cottages separated by a party wall. It seems likely that the alteration was done between 1892 and 1904 thus giving the ‘accommodation’ of two rooms. At some time a single story extension was added to the right hand side.

1909 Valuation Office Records

The Finance (1909-1910) Act provided for a levy and collection of a duty on the increment value of all land in the United Kingdom. The main object of the Act was to tax that part of the capital appreciation of real property which was attributable to the site itself, i.e. excluding that arising from crops, buildings and improvements paid for by the owners. In this way private owners were required to surrender to the State part of the increase in the site value of their land which resulted from the expenditure of public money on communal developments such as roads or public services. The Act gave rise to a series of over 90,000 books (often called Lloyd George’s Domesday) giving interesting details of all properties in the country. Increment value duty was repealed by the 1920 Finance Act.

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The relevant entry is:¹²

Old House at Home, Dormansland (inspected by F G Hurst)

Description: public house and premises

Rateable value £21

Occupier: Mrs Ridgers

Owner: Bushell Watkins & Smith Ltd

Freehold

Occupiers tenancy quarterly

Rates and taxes paid by occupier

Insurance and repairs: paid by owner

Description:

Ground floor; bar, living room, cellar, tap room, kitchen and scullery combined. Large outside tea room in timber and corrugated iron. Cement brick and tiled building. Timber coal shed. Old timber stable used as bottle store, shed, brick urinal and WC. Brick WC in garden. First floor 3 bedrooms, Fair repair.

Mr Fleck's valuation £1300, deduct market value of site at 8/6 per ft £30

Value £1270

It is possible that one or more of the outside buildings had been carpentry workshops used by Thomas Osborne or his predecessors.

Upkeep of the pub was the brewer's responsibility who paid five shillings for materials in 1909, £2-2-8 in 1911 and twelve shillings in 1913¹³. Thus the building must have been in quite a sound condition.

The Breweries

It is not clear who initially supplied the beer. The original beer shop may have sold beer brewed on the premises.

It is known that the pub was owned by and tied to Lashmar Brothers' Crown Brewery at Oxted by 1875.¹⁴

The Old House at Home is mentioned in an indenture of 1876 dissolving the partnership of John Lashmar and William Turner Lashmar of the Crown Brewery, Oxted. William purchased most of the business from John for £10,000. It included the Crown Brewery, and 10 public houses including the Old House at Home, let at £17 per annum.¹⁵

In 1882, the Crown Brewery was bought by Benjamin C Bushell of the Black Eagle Brewery, Westerham which had by 1902 become Bushell Watkins and Smith.⁹ Bushell, Watkins and Smith continued as an independent company until 1948, when Taylor, Walker & Co. bought a controlling interest under the condition that Westerham Brewery continued to trade under its own name and the Black Eagle Brewery remained open for 3 years. In the event it continued for 17 years, not closing until 1965. In the 1950s it was producing 1600 barrels a week. In 1951, beer was sold at one shilling (5p) a pint!

In 1959 Taylor, Walker & Co. was acquired by Ind Coope. The Bushell, Watkins and Smith division went into voluntary liquidation in 1961. The Black Eagle Brewery and 97 licensed houses were transferred to the Friary Meux division of Ind Coope (London) on 1st October 1962. The brewery continued to function until 1965; it then became a depot for Ind Coope (Friary Meux Ltd) before being demolished in 1989.

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Ind Coope eventually became Allied Breweries. Shepherd Neame bought 33 public houses from Allied in 1990.¹⁶

However, at some time in the 1990s the pub was owned briefly by Ashdown Inns, a small local pub company. They went into liquidation in 1996.

The Licensees

Thomas Osborne

In the 1871 census Thomas Osborne, 64, carpenter, is recorded as living with his wife Sophia, 54 at the beer shop, Quakers Platt. It is clear that this is not the Jolly Farmers which is listed separately. The lack of a name for the beer shop is not unusual. It was only after the Wine and Beerhouse Act of 1869 that the responsibility for all houses serving intoxicating liquor was returned to the Justices and all pubs were required to have a name. Initially the beer house would have been a source of pocket money for Sophia who probably served the beer (possibly home brew?) from her kitchen.

Thomas, son of Thomas Osborne, farmer had previously been married to Martha Glover but she died of phthisis on 28 October 1862. Although Thomas was born in Withyham, he was a carpenter in Westerham for at least 20 years until Martha's death in 1862. There on no record of Thomas marrying his second 'wife' Sophia.

Sophia died on 26 December 1871, of disease of the liver and kidneys and anasarca. Had she drunk too much of her home brew? She was buried at Dormansland Baptist chapel on 30th December.

Sophia was born around 1821 in Lingfield, daughter of Thomas Chantler, brewer and Sarah. In 1841 Thomas Chantler was running the Black Horse beer house in Dormansland. He died in 1846 but his widow carried on the business. She was assisted by her daughter Sophia and son in law George Greenwood. Sarah died in 1854 and the Greenwoods presumably had to move out; in 1861 we find them at 'the beer house', now the Royal Oak. George is described in the census as a beer house keeper and his wife as landlady. George's death certificate of 1865 describes him as 'farm labourer', so the beer house was run mainly by his wife Sophia. The widowed Sophia then took up with the widower carpenter Thomas Osborne living in Quakers Platt and transferred her beer selling skills to this new address.

Thomas moved to Newick and died of pneumonia and heart disease in 1873

James Divall

In 1873 the Old House at Home first appears by name in the Licence records of Godstone Petty Sessions with James Divall as licensee. The owner was James Grantham of Croydon who describes himself as 'dealer'.

David Chesson

Messrs Lashmar became owners of the Old House at Home in 1875, with David Chesson as licensee. In 1871 David had been a butcher's assistant, working for the local butcher Bassett and was still a butcher when he married Louisa Roffey in January 1875. It is possible that the pub was only open in the evenings and David Chesson continued with his butchering occupation during the day.

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James Hollands

James Hollands became licensee on 19th June 1876. The 1881 census shows that the pub had become more of a business and less of a subsidiary occupation, the occupant James Holland, 36 being described as beer house keeper. He was living with his wife Philadelphia, 26 who he had married in 1875. By 1885 James had prospered sufficiently to enable him to purchase a nearby freehold cottage and for a few years a variety of sub-tenants occupied the pub:- George Gratwick in 1885, Richard Harling in 1888 and Henry Ridgers in 1890. Henry was also employed at Norton's Farm, where he died as the result of an accident on 26th December 1890. The inquest held on 29th December returned the verdict that he died by misadventure due to injuries received by the explosion of a gun which he was loading.

By 1891, James Hollands had become licensee of the White Hart at Selsfield Common in the parish of West Hoathly. He was living with Jane Budd, 39, who is described as housekeeper and domestic servant. He died of pulmonary tuberculosis on 10th March 1895. Interestingly, James' wife Philadelphia married bigamously at Etchingham on 18 September 1889. Her husband was Herbert Edwin Osborne, 30.

Ann Ridgers

Possibly as a result of her widowhood Ann sought local employment and by 1891 she was licensee of the Old House at Home where she remained until her death in 1912.

Ann Ridgers née Kenrick was born at Morton, Shropshire in 1840, daughter of David Kenrick, sawyer. She married Henry Ridgers, age 28, coachman at Binfield, Berkshire on 20 March 1869. Henry's job, a groom and/or coachman took him to various addresses around the country. He was working in London in 1881 and he ended up at Norton's Farm, Lingfield where, on 26 December 1890 he had a fatal accident as mentioned above.

In 1891 Ann's 7 year old niece Ada Annie Heritage was living with her. In 1901, another niece, Fanny Kendrick was in residence. Ann was also supplementing her income with 3 boarders, Frank Morley, James Nicholls, railwayman and Richard Brown, glazier.

During Ann's incumbency the annual sales of beer was around 180 casks, 200 dozen pint bottles and 25 quart bottles. She initially paid rent to the brewery of £17 per annum; by 1910 this had increased to £25.¹³

Ann died on 31st December 1912, age 69, of rupture of an aneurism of the aorta. An inquest was held on 3rd January 1913. Probate was granted on 14 January 1913 to Harriet Kenrick, spinster, who may have been another niece. The value of Ann's effects were £146-6s 2d.

Henry Boorer

On 20th January 1913 Henry Boorer, son of Benjamin Boorer, landlord of The Greyhound, Lingfield became licensee.¹⁷ Henry Boorer apparently promoted off sales as the sale of bottled beers increased from 25 quart bottles in 1911 under Ann Ridgers' management to 1825 in 1915 under Henry's management. He may have been selling some of this bottled beer through his father at the Greyhound (to the possible annoyance of Mellersh and Neale, the owners). The returns to the brewery show some fluctuations in sales which were

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outside the control of the landlord. Beer sales were depressed in the 1916-1918 period when a large proportion of the village menfolk were away in WW1. By 1918 Benjamin Boorer had retired and Henry returned to manage the Greyhound.

George Henry Deal

In 1918, the Old House at Home was managed by George Henry Deal, initially with his wife Annie but she died on 10th February 1919 of carcinoma of the breast. Her mother Emma Shilling was in attendance.

George Henry Deal was born on 26th February 1872 at Ewell, near Dover, the son of George Henry Deal, an illiterate agricultural labourer. He married Annie Maria Shilling at Ulcombe parish church on 22nd June 1894. After Annie's death in 1919 George remained a widower for 8 years. He then married Alice May Buck, age 39, widow, daughter of Joseph John Williams, butcher, at St John's, Dormansland on 21st November 1927. George claimed that his father was a 'railway official'. This may be a euphemism for porter, which was probably his peak achievement before his death in 1902. The depression of 1929 shows up in decreased beer sales being around 80% of those a few years earlier. George remained landlord until his retirement in 1938.

Charles Harold Gooding

The new landlord was Charles Harold Gooding who originated from Dartford. He became licensee on 14 December 1938. Until this time the premises had remained a beer house. Charles Gooding soon applied for a wine licence which was granted on 13 March 1939 subject to two conditions:¹⁸

- [1]. No British or Empire wines obtained from brewers other than Bushell Watkins and Smith Ltd. would be supplied under the licence.
- [2] A ladies' lavatory would be constructed inside the building.

Charles Gooding fell foul of the law in 1942 when, on 16 November 1942 at a Court of Summary Jurisdiction sitting at Oxted he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for 'unlawful possession of government property' on 26th June 1942. On 1st December 1942 the conviction was quashed on appeal.¹⁹

It appears that there were many Canadian soldiers stationed nearby and they used the pub as a trading post for goods which they had acquired from army and other sources. On 26th June a local police officer had visited and found various items of army clothing in the pub and assumed that they were held by the landlord.

A full Justices' licence was eventually obtained on 14th February 1949.

Charles Gooding lived with his wife Dorothy who was previously a Mrs Brooks. One of Charles' stepsons John Edward Brooks, 22, of HM Forces married Jane Halloway at St John's, Dormansland on 25th February 1948, he gave his address as 'Old House at Home'.

Jonathan Charles Cusden

Jonathan Charles Cusden was born on 30th June 1912 at 215 High Street, Streatham, son of Jonathan Cusden, master builder (age 67) and Gertrude Maria née Jarvis. (age 32). He became licensee on 19th June 1950.¹⁸

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In 1951 Jonathan Charles Cusden, his wife Doris Lilian and Gertrude M Cusden, Jonathan's mother appear on the electoral roll together with Alice M Jarvis who may have been a niece. Alice remained in residence until 1959.

Cusden was known locally as Johnny²⁰ and was one of the first publicans to offer food. His meals became famed far and wide and people booked for weeks ahead.

In 1957 Johnny organised a firework display from his flat roof in conjunction with a bonfire in the recreation ground. After school, his two children Roger and Alan used to play in the recreation ground with the Browning's children from Little Bassetts.

Doris Lilian Cusden

Jonathan's wife Doris Lilian Cusden became licensee on 3rd February 1964¹⁸ and remained until at least 1970. Latterly she was assisted by her son Alan until his marriage on 11th January 1975 to Allison Taylor of Felbridge. Another son, Roger John Howard Cusden, architectural assistant, had married Jennifer Lorna Gilpin of Box Cottage on 30th September 1967.

The following entries are taken from the electoral register and assume that the resident was the licensee.

Dennis A Blake

Dennis A Blake was licensee from about 1975 to 1985, living with his wife and son Andrew S Blake

John Pilkington

John Pilkington was licensee in 1987, living with his wife Leslie.

Jack T Bryant

In 1988 and 1989, Jack T Bryant was assisted by his wife Sheila.

Ian R Wallwork

Ian R Wallwork was licensee in 1991, living with his wife Sylvia. In 1992, Sarah Wallwork is also in the register, presumably a 21-year old daughter.

Chris Daw

Ian Wallwork had apparently moved away or died by 1993 as 1993 Chris & Sylvia Daw are residents, presumably licensees. Roger, Sarah, Philip Wallwork were also residents. Philip was 21 on 30th March 1993.

The situation was the same in 1994.

Colin Ankcorn

Colin Ankcorn was licensee in 1995 and 1996, living with Maureen J Temple. They had married by 1998.

Philip Bushell

Philip Bushell is recorded in 2000

Trevor Jobson

Became licensee in 2000 and left in April 2011. He undertook logging and agricultural work for a short time then became landlord of the Kentish Horse, Mark Beech.

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The pub was then managed for 9 months by James who hailed from Devizes, then by a succession of short term managers before being taken over by Mick, who also had the Hay Waggon at Hartfield.

Lee Cook

Became licensee in October 2013.

Guide Books

The Old House at Home has featured in a number of guide books for thirsty tourists.

Friary Meux

The Friary Meux division of Ind Coope published a guide book to their pubs in the 1980s (price 90p) in which the Old House at Home is described as:

Recently refurbished pub in the centre of the village. Buttermilk exterior with a very well decorated bar and separate restaurant inside. Lunchtime and evening pub food and an à la carte restaurant, Sunday lunch, real ales, real fires, pub garden, pool table.

Real Ale in Surrey

CAMRA, 1983, £1.25

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Ind Coope, Bitter, Burton (H) *hand pump*

Good country pub noted for its food

Pb, Gdn, Db, Sn, Lu, Eve, Res (*abbreviations explained in book*)

Real Ale in Surrey

CAMRA, 1985 £1.95

Old House at Home, The Platt, Lingfield

Ind Coope bitter, Burton (H)

Country pub with a small cosy restaurant

Public bar

Real Ale in Surrey

CAMRA, 1987, £1.00

Old House at Home, 65 West Street, Dormansland

Ind Coope, Burton (H)

Principally renowned for its cuisine.

Public bar, saloon bar, dartboard, snacks, meals

East Surrey Pub Guide

CAMRA, 2005, £4.95

Old House at Home, 63-65 West Street, RH7 6QP

OS 402422

☎ (01342)832117

Shepherd Neame Master Brew, Best Bitter, Spitfire, seasonal beer (occasional)

This friendly old inn is hidden away on the western side of the village, but is worth visiting for its unspoilt architecture and especially good beer and food. Note that some of the beers are served from casks behind the bar. The pub dates from the 16th century and is essentially one bar, with darts being played in a small room off to one side. The upper part of the pub houses a restaurant serving a wide range of good quality home made food, although note

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that this is not available Sunday evening. The well-beamed lounge area features a real fire and is very cosy in winter. No piped music is played in the pub, although there is occasionally some music played live. Formerly a Friary Meux pub, it was bought by Shepherd Neame in 1991.

NB the author of the above was deceived by the fake timbers.

Surrey Pubs

Richard Keeble, 1965, BT Batsford, London

Old House at Home, Dormansland tel Lingfield 117

Brewer: Ind Coope

Special drinks: draught cider

To find this pub you will simply have to ask when you reach Dormansland for the route defies description. However, it is worth the effort and you can park your car in a large car park opposite.

In the saloon bar there is some very old and interesting furniture, but if you look upwards don't be too alarmed to see a pink elephant hanging upside down. It really *is* there.

An interesting item on the menu may be stockpot soup at 1s, and a good portion of bacon, egg and chips costs only 4s 6d. To wash it down Skol Export Lager is available.

The Drinking Man's Guide to Surrey Pubs

John Booth, Midas Books, 1976

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Ind Coope

The Old House at Home, Dormansland is interesting for its name alone. What combination of qualities, what quirk of history, what illuminating drama of social life has gone into the making of such a name? Even now, no doubt, the alert reader is anticipating an explanation and we applaud such alertness, although we have to confess that we have no idea of – or real interest in – the secret of how the Old House at Home came by its name.

The real point of interest is the pub itself and this can be found by taking the road from Edenbridge towards Lingfield or, perhaps, Reigate – better still, ask for directions in Dormansland. This may not make it easier for you but it will greatly assist the writer of this report. After a series of abortive attempts, you may (God willing) find yourself travelling through a housing estate and will almost certainly experience a growing certainty that you are completely lost. Courage, my friend, salvation is at hand – the Old House at Home is only seconds away.

The pub has a rather odd appearance and is not unlike the houses which surround it. At a glance, it looks rather like a private house, a piece of typical stockbroker folly from the 20's, the mark of a well-to-do butcher, faith cultural aspiration perhaps.

Inside, it has a kind of phoney charm with lots of country house-type bric-a-brac and unconvincing beams. Barrels appear to be set into the counter, giving birth to the wish that they were real, mounted on the counter and capable of dispensing the real article. The beer served here, though, is from Ind Coope and is the usual pressurised or containerised brew the major brewers know we prefer. The pub itself is rather jolly with an amiable landlord and a reasonable collection of customers – apart from one or two undesirables such as journalists. It's a good place for sporting chat and one can usually enjoy a fresh argument over what the Australians did at Lords in 1948 or what is likely to happen in the 2.30 at Lingfield – that charming but treacherous course is conveniently near.

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References

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10. SHC QS5/10/22
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12. TNA IR58/69650/873
13. CKS U3603 (an only partially catalogued collection of many documents relating to Bushell Watkins and Smith)
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