

## THE ACORN INN

By Mike O'Hara

The closure of The Acorn Inn, Park Lane, in August of this year was mourned by its many regulars as the passing of what they affectionately regarded as a "proper" pub.

It also brings to an end a history of service to the village which has lasted centuries. In 1748 it was built onto a dwelling house that dated back to the late 1400s. Originally built as a tied-cottage on the Edward Cotone estate it was taken over as a woollen draper's in 1500 by Joseph Quedsted. Upon his demise his widow Martha took over the business, and when she died in 1543 her sons Daniel and Josias continued the family concern.

The Cotonos retained their title to the dwelling through the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1611 it was rented by the Widow Lambe, a milliner. In 1650 the Cotonos relinquished their interest by selling the property to a shoemaker named Jacob Buss, who in turn passed it on to his nephew James Thorpe.

By 1706 it was owned by a haberdasher named Cecily Pordage, whose business continued up to her demise in 1732. After a lengthy legal dispute between Cecily's four children, the property devolved to her son Robert, who sold it to a brewer named Isaac Oliphant. And this is where those of us with a taste for a refreshing pint start to lick our lips! Isaac contented himself with home brew for a period, but by 1748 he had not only extended the building considerably but had been granted a licence to sell ales. At first the brewer and tapster's business was simply known as "The Ale House" but was subsequently renamed as "The Acorn Ale House".

Under Isaac's stewardship the business became renowned and successful. Upon his death in 1781 his widow Sarah carried on the good work for another eleven years, finally leasing it in 1792 to a wheelwright named Joseph Studwell. In 1803 The Acorn changed hands yet again when Richard Pemble took it over. Richard was indeed a multi-tasker, being a draper, tailor, and "beer retailer". Quite the business man! Pemble left The Acorn in 1838, after which it was owned by Peter Kendall who rented it to the wonderfully named Witherden Wanstall.

Our next owner bears a name familiar to all drinkers – Edward Neame, a member of the Neame Brewery family. Edward ran the establishment until 1866. At this time the breweries of Shepherd and Neame merged and took over The Acorn. Their tenant was George Millgate, who was succeeded by Robert Terry.

And here is where our old friend the multi-tasker Richard Pemble's name reappears. His grandson Arthur Pemble took over as landlord of The Acorn in 1889. In fact multi-tasking seems to have been a family trait because the family were bakers, butchers, grocers, tailors and shoemakers. Not content with this they also ran the first village post office adjacent to The Acorn.

Arthur Pemble retired in 1902 and was succeeded for many years by Charles Edward Solly. During the period 1802 to 1890 the owners may well have employed managers to look after their interests as the Licence List reads as follows;

1802+ Isaac Williamson  
 1810+ George Duffell  
 1858 William Hayward  
 1867 Edward Hogbin

After the Second World War, in 1948, the landlord was E.M. Roberts who was succeeded in 1951 by A.L. Horne and in 1955 by Dudley Eric Ward. By 1974 the landlord was William Bodley, and in 1987 William James Lendrum.

The Acorn remained under brewery management until 2000, at which time it became a Free House owned by Brian Mitchell and managed by Tracy and Martin

Wakely. It was completely refurbished and a new kitchen put in, as well as a 40 seater restaurant to the rear looking out over the garden, plus an updated bar. The architect was Phil Dad.

The next licensees ran a successful Thai/English fusion in the restaurant until obliged to sell up for personal reasons.

In 2007 the present incumbents, Kath Balchin and Peter Robinson, purchased The Acorn and wrote what may be the final chapter in its history. With their disparate but complementary personalities, and Peter's long history in the licensed trade, they endeared themselves to the locals and made the restaurant justly famous. Their Sunday Roasts attracted the crowds and their large following of regulars hailed The Acorn as a "proper" pub ..... the highest compliment possible from the drinking fraternity. Success in the Thanet "Pub of the Year" awards soon followed. Their New Year's Eve celebrations attracted the crowds with entertainment and food funded by Kath and Peter as a thank you to their customers.

At the end of 2012 the Isle of Thanet Gazette reported "Plans have been submitted to convert the historic Acorn Inn into homes", but it was not until 2015 that Kath and Peter pulled down the shutters and started their well-earned retirement – a genuinely sad day for their patrons, who nonetheless wished them every happiness.

So The Acorn still stands, with Kath and Peter in situ and very much still part of the community. Will the cries of "Cheers! Good Health!" - ever ring out again on the premises?

[Much of the early history of the Acorn is rather suspect and needs much more research on it.]