

Ale Houses in Ewelme

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When every man's house was his pub....

Before the Dark Ages through medieval times and beyond, ale was consumed in vast quantities by our ancestors. From monasteries to home brewers (and brewster's - ale wives), every community was producing a fairly palatable nutritional and safer drink than the water supply. Ale was simply made with grain, water and fermented yeast, but the introduction of hops from the Continent in the 15th century greatly improved the quality of the brew - then known as beer.

..... and gin was 'Mother's Ruin'.

Gin became increasingly popular in England amongst all social classes after 1688 after the government restricted brandy and wine imports from France. In 1690 the monopoly of the London Guild of Distillers was dissolved, enabling anyone to set up their own gin distillery, the taste for which, in Georgian times, resulted in an addiction to the 'gin craze' especially amongst the poor. It was cheap. A pint of gin was cheaper than a pint of beer, and quickly offered a release from the miseries of life. Sold everywhere from grocers and street markets to barbers and brothels, it was also regarded as a cure-all for every sort of malady, and even given to children! Drunkenness resulted in crime reaching epidemic proportions, when prostitution, brawls, robberies violence and murder became rife. Gin was decried by the magistrates as *'the principal source of all vice and debauchery committed among the inferior sort of people.'* Artist William Hogarth's well known 'Gin Lane' print drawn in 1751 illustrated the gruesome results of over imbibing. By the early 19th century drink-fuelled crime in London was out of control and beyond the policing capabilities of the Bow Street Runners. Also, a sober workforce was essential in the burgeoning industrial revolution. Therefore, in 1830 the Duke of Wellington's government decided to counter cheap gin consumption by encouraging the home brewing and sale of beer - which was regarded as a healthier option. Certainly, a lesser evil, and of which even the budding temperance movements approved!

The Beer Act of 1830 abolished duty on beer and allowed any householder to apply for a license to sell beer and cider from their homes, (convenient for the male householder to continue pursuing his trade). The beer could be a home brew or bought from large brewery companies who paid the annual 2-guinea license fee. Alternatively, travelling brewers could be employed to produce the house ales. The opportunity was seized and by 1836 there were 46,000 beer shops/ale houses in the country. Busy premises issued Tavern Checks - tokens with the publican's name stamped on the back. However, these could only be spent with the named licensee. A new landlord would not honour his predecessors!

In 1847, there were two established fully licensed inns in Ewelme that sold beer, wines and spirits - The Lamb Inn run by carrier Joseph Bond, and The Greyhound Inn kept by butcher Thomas Garlick. Taking advantage of the new legislation two beer houses were set up to cater for the thirsty - The Coach & Horses and The Shepherds Hut. George Glanville sold beer at The Coach & Horses now the present-day 'Old Coach House' adjacent to the former Greyhound Inn. As with many older village cottages, the property was divided into three one-up one-down dwellings, plus an attached smithy. George is recorded in the 1851 Census as aged 28, a blacksmith journeyman, with his wife Charlotte plus three children. In 1861 and 1871 The Coach & Horses was run by Thomas Brookland, an

agricultural labourer and beer seller, but he seems to be the last. By 1881 none of the three separate occupants kept up the beer house.

For some years in the mid-19th century the Glanville family ran both beer houses. At The Shepherds Hut the 1847 the Ewelme Directory lists George's brother John Glanville as a beer retailer and journeyman carpenter, he later becoming a master carpenter and joiner. During the 1850s his daughter Elizabeth took over the running of the beer house, and also kept a shop. In 1861 Elizabeth married Joseph Lewendon, a master tailor from Benson, and they held the license until 1882. A photograph of The Shepherds Hut's sign taken in 1900 shows Henry Winfield as a '*Licensed retailer of beer to be consumed on or off the premises.*' Henry was the foreman on the watercress beds, so the lady by the door is probably his wife Sarah who ran the 'house'. (Also keeping it in the family her uncle Joseph Coles held the beer license before them). Whether the Glanville's and their successors brewed their own ale or bought it from The Lamb or The Greyhound is unclear. The Shepherds Hut in the early 20th century obtained beer from The Lamb and was able to obtain a full license when The Lamb was demolished in 1942 for the extension of an RAF Benson runway. In the 1950s a full license was granted to any surviving beer houses.

The great demand for beer in the area prompted Brakspear Brewery of Henley to buy the house called 'The Views' in Eyres Lane as a depot to house a manager and store barrels in the cellars. The barrels were towed on wagons by steam engines from Henley, and from 'The Views' two horse-drawn drays made daily deliveries to the numerous inns, pubs and beer houses in the neighbourhood.

[Robert Thomas Franklin moved from Hill House to The Views in 1895 and in 1901 is recorded as 'manager of a brewery stores'. In 1919 he is recorded as 'an agent'. He left in 1926 after his wife Helen died.]

Ewelme Village Archive