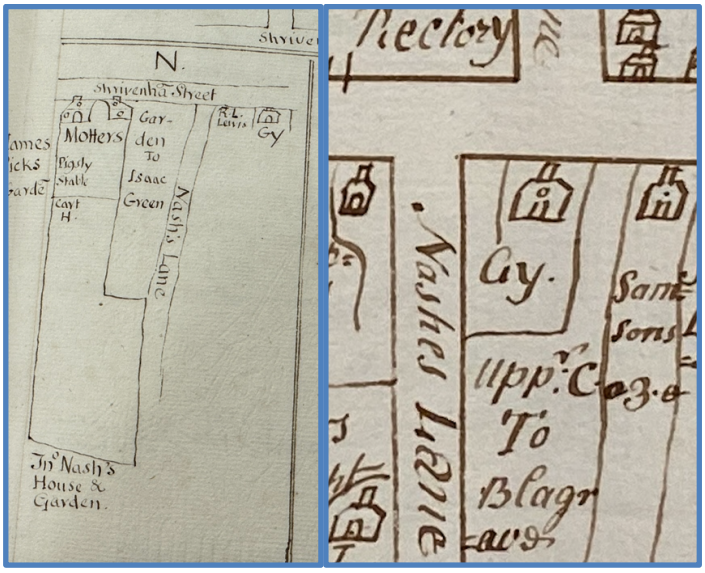
The Crown Public House, High Street, Shrivenham

By Neil B. Maw



The Lease Book of Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell of what became the Radnor Estate at Coleshill, contains some interesting information about the location of the Crown pub at Shrivenham. (RBA. D/EPB/E4 Folio 30). Although not immediately obvious as to where in the village the text is referring, research using other sources has been successful. The map extracts below are from a survey carried out for the Pleydell estate circa 1750.



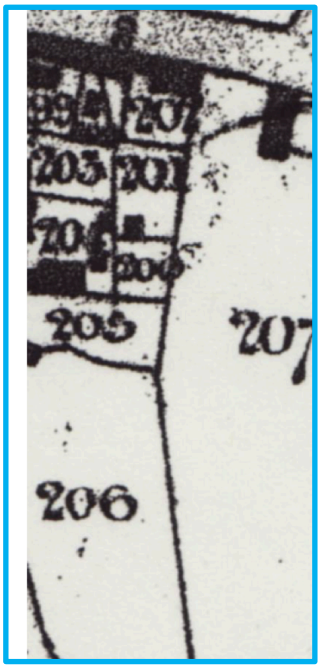
The land and property at the location was once owned by the Pleydell Estate. For more information on the Pleydells of Shrivenham, please see SHS Listing No: N360. The Lease is dated 16th April 1762 and refers to a dwelling and garden that was called Lewis's and was situated on the South side of the main street of Shrivenham. The two extracts above pinpoint the location which is on the corner of High Street and Nashes Lane, today called Hazell's Lane. The garden belonging was measured then using the old measurement of 8 Luggs, which equates to approximately 9m X 22m. The premises was formerly in the tenure of Henry Stanley.

The Lease was between Sir Mark and Daniel Stevens of Shrivenham who was a builder and was for the term of 99 years. It was Copyhold and agreed to be on the lives of Daniel's daughter Sarah who was married to Thomas Tuck, aged 23 and 24 respectively, and John Stevens aged 11 who was the grandson of Daniel. The description ends with the wording, '*And whereas the said messuage is ruinous, Tenant is to rebuild it this summer and to lay out at the least £20 in so doing. Tenant not to alienate nor abhabit, to keep in good repair the building and mounds and to permit landlord at all times to survey the same, and not to sell Ale nor strong liquor*.'

It's likely that the '*ruinous*' building standing previous was a timber-framed mediaeval structure that was in very poor condition. It's interesting to read the clause of not selling alcohol during the period of the 99 years lease as about 90 years later Henry Fuce, the owner of the property at the time, was listed as an Innkeeper and farmer. But it's not clear as to which Inn he was running. However, at the census of 1861, 99 years later, he's listed as '*The Crown Inn. Widower, Dairyman and Beer Seller*.' Could this just be co-incidence or perhaps Henry abiding by the terms of the original lease precisely?

The Census from 1841 listed Henry Fuce as 35 years of age and a Farmer. However, we know from successive census information that this is an error and he was in fact 49. The Berkshire Chronicle newspaper for 3rd August 1844 listed the sad news that he had lost his eldest son William on 28th July, age 17. Also, from the tithe survey of 1844, it is just possible to make out that Henry Fuce owned five tenements in total (cottages) and rented some agricultural buildings (stables and a yard) located on the left, half-way down Hazell's Lane on the other side of the seven cottages belonging to the Barrington Estate. (See SHS Listing No: N115). He also rented the field directly attached to it that continued on down the lane. We know from the Will of Henry Moulden, (NA. PROB 11/1884/233) that he bequeathed his property (likely

the five tenements) to Henry Fuce, who was the nephew of his wife, Sarah Moulden. (Both died July 1837). At the time of the tithe survey, all five tenements were rented out and Henry Fuce and his family occupied the property known today as the Old Post Office. (17 High St SHS N2553).



From the Tithe Survey 1844. No 199 = Owner: Henry Fuce – 3 tenements. No 201 = Owner: Henry Fuce – 2 tenements. No 205 = Owner John Blagrave. Occ: Henry Fuce – Stabling & Yard. No 206. Owner: John Blagrave. Occ: Henry Fuce - Field

Sometime between 1844 and 1851, Henry Fuce decided to open his public house. The next census in 1851 listed him as an Innkeeper and Farmer of 24 acres (He rented four fields from the Barrington Estate), but at that point we did not know under what name, or sign, his Inn operated. However, in the 1861 census it is very clear when he is listed as, '*The Crown Inn, Widower, Dairyman and Beer Seller.*' (SHS Listing N1515). His wife Ann died and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 30th August 1860, aged 60. The Beckett Estate Map of 1866 showed that Henry Fuce was the owner of the property, the Public House and Premises, but it was old information as he too had died in 1865 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 22nd June.

The Census for 1871 provided the information that the pub was being kept within the family when Henry Fuces' daughter Jane and her husband Thomas Stevens, took over the licence. (SHS Listing N1533). The Reading Mercury for 7th October 1871 listed in the Court Petty Sessions that the licence for the Crown was transferred from Thomas Stevens to Joseph Wheeler. The North Wilts Herald for 9th October 1871 carried an announcement that Mr Stevens was to sell by auction, on the premises, *'all his neat and useful household furniture.'* He didn't move far away because he was called as a witness to a libel court case at Reading Assizes in March 1878. Some years earlier, a Barrington Estate tenant farmer of Broad Leaze Farm, George Butler, was heard to make false and malicious comments whilst drinking in the Crown Pub, against Lord Barrington's Agent, William Warren. Thomas Stevens confirmed that he had heard the remarks whilst he was landlord there. William Warren won his case.



The Crown pub in the far distance circa 1910 from the SHS Paul Williams collection

Towards the end of his tenure, Joseph Wheeler suffered the loss of his wife Selina who died at the age of 42 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 8th August 1881. The census of that year listed a large amount of people at the pub, including three daughters and a son, four boarders and two visitors. But the following year was a happier time for him when a newspaper announced the union of Joseph Wheeler, who was described as a Farmer and Inn Keeper, to Hannah, the widow of the late Thomas Prince, at St Andrew's Church, Shrivenham on 25th February. (Swindon Adver 4th March 1882). Joseph Wheeler had been at the pub for 12 years, but the following year after his re-marriage he left and the licence was taken over by William Walker. (Reading Mercury 7th July 1883). But sad events were to continue when

having just taken over the pub, William Walker died suddenly on 5th August the same year. The announcement in the Witney Express dated 23 August, stated that he was aged 46. His wife, Mary Ann took over the licence and she too re-married a Mr Bartlett Woodbridge a year later. (Swindon Adver 20th Sept 1884). But sadly, at the age of 35, Bartlett died five years later and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 28th January 1889. Widowed twice, Mary Ann left the pub the following year when it was reported that the licence was passed from her to William Rowlands. (Faringdon Advertiser 5th April 1890).



The Crown pub in the 1970s. Photo by the late Roy Selwood.

The Census of 1891 listed William and his wife Ann with their two daughters Ann and Mary; and son William. It was during the Rowland's tenure that the infamous case of double murderer John Carter of Watchfield took place. After his execution at Reading Gaol in December 1893, the inquest took place on the remains of Carter's second wife Elizabeth. Just before he went to the scaffold, he confessed to her murder and told the police where her body might be found at Broad Leaze Farm on the Longcott road. The inquest was held at the Barrington Arms, Shrivenham and William Rowland was one of the jurors. Another event involving the law was reported by the Swindon Advertiser on 15th September 1905. Horse dealer James Richens had drank himself into a bad state in the Crown pub and had refused to leave when asked. He was duly charged, fined and sentenced to 14 days hard labour.

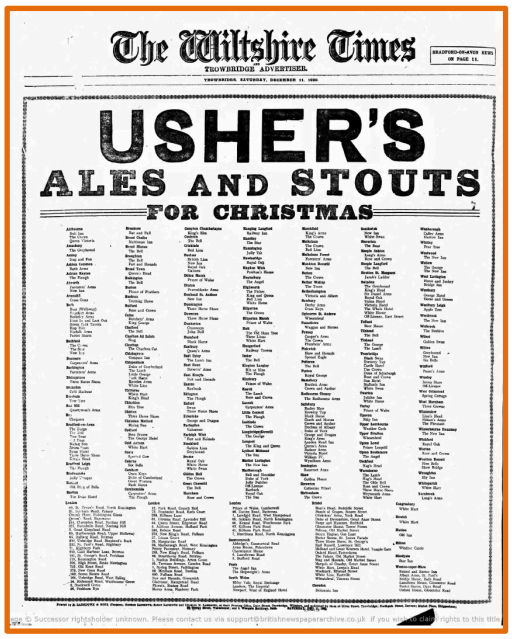
After a long tenure, William Rowland died and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 29th May 1917 aged 74. The North Wilts Herald newspaper dated 1st June carried the headline, '*Death of an Old Inhabitant*.' The article gave more detail, '*he came to this village nearly 50 years ago with the late John Skurray, and had held the licence of the Crown Inn for over 27 years. He was well-known and respected by a large circle of friends*.' The licence of the pub was transferred to Ann Rowland which is confirmed by the Swindon and District Directory of 1927. She died in February 1932, aged 76 and her family placed a note in the North Wilts Herald dated 4th March, thanking everyone for their floral tributes and sympathy. The same newspaper also printed a short article about her funeral that was held at Shrivenham church.

We know at this time that the Crown Inn was owned by J. Wadley & Co of Brewery Street, Highworth. What is not known as yet, is when the pub was acquired by them. The year after William Rowland died, J. Wadley & Co was purchased by Ushers Brewery of Trowbridge and the pub was included in the sale. The Electoral Register for Shrivenham for 1933 provided the information that Francis Daniel Skinner and Eva Skinner were then running the pub. It was to be quite a long tenure until Francis died in 1949 and the Parish Burial Register showed that he was buried on 7th February. Eva carried on as the licensee until 1952 when Ernest Walter Dillworth took over, and he was listed in the Electoral Register with Ernestine Mary Dillworth and Walter Dillworth. It's not certain what the relationship was between them. The register for 1965 showed that they were still there then.

Changes to the format of the Electoral Register in the late 1970s, in that the business name was no longer included, made it more difficult to follow the line of progression. However, in 1978, the sequence of the listing for the High Street, made it obvious that the licensee was John G. Hill and Dorothy M. Hill. This is confirmed by an advertisement in the Parish Magazine collection at the Heritage Centre, Memorial Hall, Shrivenham, from a 1977 edition, that showed the names of Doll and George. But it's not certain if they took over directly after the Dillworths. Another magazine dated January 1982, showed the names, Ivy and Hilary Warren, who were there until at least July 1985. The advert also confirmed that the pub was owned by the Whitbread Brewery.

There have been numerous other licensees in the period between the mid 1980s and the present day. And if you can add any further information or would like to comment on this article, please contact us at:

info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk



The Wiltshire Times

TROWBRIDGE ADVERTISER.

USHER'S

ALES AND STOUTS

FOR CHRISTMAS



Shaw
Golden Fleece
Shrewton
Catherine Wheel
Shrivenham
The Crown
Bristol
Boar's Head,
Bunch of Grap
Cricketers' Arn
Duke of Devor
Forge and Har
pstead
sington
Park

Above: Advertisement by Ushers in the Wiltshire Times dated 11th December 1920 listing all the pubs that belonged to them. Lower box - The Crown listed. Below: The Crown Pub located at the top of Hazell's Lane on the right. Photo by Neil B. Maw



The Crown Inn in 2022 is no longer a business and has been extended at the rear and is now a domestic property. In the immediate years before this it was a popular and well-run restaurant and bistro. But the pandemic of March 2020 took its toll and after the mandatory closure that became known as '*Lockdown,*' it re-opened for a short period but was closed again.