

Have you seen these birds?

Five years ago, Peter Laflin shared his memories of the The 'old' Retreat. He recalled how his brother Paul and Mum Delphine used to enjoy Vimto and crisps in the garden on Sunday evenings whilst his Dad was in the bar. At the time of writing this we can visit pubs again and sit outside in the sunshine or enjoy a meal inside. He also shared that his father had been a regular and on Saturdays would take his brother's records and record player along for an evening



of music. Previously locals had had to make do with live music from the piano.

Apparently recorded music made a welcome change. Personally, I look forward to being able to hear live performances again.



In our May newsletter Neil wrote about The Crown, so I thought we should balance things up with a look at the history of our other pub, The Retreat. Of course, prior to 1934 Stowupland had many more Inns, Taverns and public houses as Neil knows well, having researched the history of many in the local area. The following has been put together from his notes and other items held

in Stowupland's LHG Archives.

In these days when many villages are losing their locals, visitors passing though Stowupland may be unaware that we still have two pubs. They may see The Crown on the A1120 but remain ignorant of The Retreat, sitting peacefully as it does on The Green.



View showing the original Retreat

The building we see today is only 50 years old but beer has been sold on the site for over 200 years. However, the original beer house and its surrounding buildings looked very different. The thatched building in the centre of this



picture is thought to date back over 300 years, whilst the part with a tiled roof was a later addition being added during the 1800's. The long thatched cottage on the left is where this cockerel and ducks can be seen from the pub's car park

The Retreat is an intriguing pub name and LHG members have discussed how the name arose. Was there a military link or did it arise from common usage as a place where working men retreated to. We know that in 1738 a John Dent erected a Blacksmith shop with a 'traverse on part of the Lords Waste in Thorney green' and that a successor added a 'Beerhouse' which became the first Retreat.

During the 19th century gin became a popular drink. Apparently because it was easy to distil was cheap and more potent than the beer of the day. Beer on the other hand was seen as not only safer to consume than gin but also because of the brewing process was safer than the water to drink. So, in 1830 in an effort to reduce the consumption of gin the government introduced the Beerhouse Act This created a new kind of licenced drinking establishment that did not have to provide accommodation but could only sell beer or cider, no strong spirits or fortified wines. The license was relatively cheap (2 guineas or less than £200.00 in modern takings) and it is claimed that in some places nearly every other house held a licence to sell beer.

By the 1840's there was still a blacksmith on The Green associated with the Beer house. Doubtless being able to sink a pint or two whilst waiting for your horse to be shod was a great attraction. Although their locations are not known for sure, there was competition other sellers of alcoholic beverage, for instance we know that in 1855 there was a Henry Raffe who was also a wine merchant, and in 1869 there were William Sutton and Charles Warner, and of course The Crown.

Many publicans combined a second business with their beer business, for as Neil pointed out, although the husband's name was over the door it was often the wife who took care of the beer. We have the names of publicans from 1858 and some of their alternative means of increasing their income. First John Miller who was also a fowl

dealer, then for a year from 1862 we have a woman recorded as publican, Mrs Powell, before Robert Wilden took over for 3 years till 1866. We then have a gap in the record till Edward Palmer in 1869, he was also a fowl dealer. Thomas Stebbings took over in 1881 for a couple of years, till Henry Soames n 1883 to 1888.

Whilst the early beer houses did their own brewing it wasn't long before brewing companies started buying up the independents to sell their own mass-produced beers. Stevens & Co of the Stowmarket Brewery were the first to take over The Retreat. Then in 1865 they sold it on to Philips Brothers and subsequently in 1882 it was bought by Edward Greene, a brewer of Bury St Edmunds. Five years later this became Greene King.



Leigh Wilden

After this change in ownership we see longer tenancies. From 1888 till 1924 another poultry man, George Frederick Wilden ran the Retreat and then Leigh Wilden.



The Retreat's Quoits Team in 1931

Does anyone still play Quoits? In 1931 The Retreat had a successful team and I love the press cutting we have showing 11 of the team (all men) posing with their cup and all wearing a variety of hats.



1957 wedding of Leigh Wilden's daughter to Wilfred Hennessey

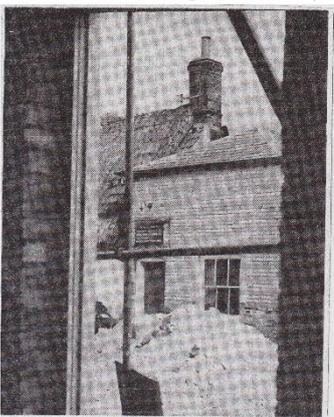
In 1959 his Leigh Wilden's daughter Audrey married Wilfred Hennessey. Audrey was well known locally as a church organist and choir mistress, she also taught piano. (Our own Christine Williams remembers her daughter being taught the piano.)

In 1960 a full license was granted to The Retreat and in 1966 Rowland James and his wife Marjorie took over. The following year the iconic picture appeared in the press of a horse being served a pint in the bar. Unfortunately, our copy of the press cutting is very poor quality and the Pubs copy is currently hidden away behind a heavy wooden cupboard. Does anyone know why a horse might have been enjoying a beer?

During construction of the new Retreat looking back to the old

Two years later The 'Old' Retreat was demolished to be replaced with the new

modern 70's style public house we recognise today.



Do pub teams still play cribbage? We have a photo showing 6 smiling players, cheerful even though they apparently lost to a team from the Stowmarket Railway Tavern.



The Stowmarket New Retreat cribbage team during their match against the Railway Tavern, Stowmarket, which they lost 2-1 in the Stowmarket Cribbage League. The team is: Capt. Don Barton, Bill Rowe, Laurie Hazlewood, George Blitcher, Bill Laverne and Cecil Hayward. MARCH 1976

During the 1970's some regulars of the 'new' Retreat suggested that many local people wanted to celebrate the end of harvest, but did not want to attend a traditional church harvest festival. The James' and the Rev. Whitefield got together and agreed to hold a Pub Bar 'Altar' service. After the service the produce was auctioned off and the proceeds were donated to the O60's club for their Christmas meal.

In 1985 Mr and Mrs Hawkins relocated from the Morning Star in Lowestoft, but we have nothing from this period.

Do you have memories or photos of activities at either the Crown or The Retreat. We would love to add any photos or copies of them to our Archives for future generations to see. Local historians rely a lot on press cuttings to add to our knowledge of the past and with more on-line reporting there is a real risk that valuable knowledge of local history is being lost.

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