

The Woodman's Arms

By Amy Myers

The Woodman's Arms, situated in what is now the Faversham Road, closed early in the twentieth century, probably in 1915. The First World War laid many restrictions on the sale of alcohol, with tax and opening hours affected and – sin of sins – beer was often watered down. In 1915, however, William Glover, then 45 years old, thought he was doing pretty well until it came to renewing his licence. Under the 1904 Licensing act alehouses could be closed down even through no fault of the landlord, and William Glover's case was referred to the local Compensation Authority. Renewal had been refused because he served such a tiny community, a mere 14 houses, with 43 inhabitants, which, he was told, could hardly be said to be a living. William Glover objected strongly. He protested that he had sold 60 barrels of beer in the year, he enjoyed his way of life and moreover he worked as a gardener as well as running his alehouse. But no more seems to be known about the Woodman's Arms although hopefully William Glover received his compensation.

He had not run the Woodman's Arms for long. In 1911 the poet Edward Thomas (who knew the area well as he had lived in Bearsted for a while) published a book on the Icknield Way, and referred casually to 'Robert Philpot's Woodman's Arms above Lenham'. Robert Ifield Philpott (spellings vary) had been the owner of the Woodman's Arms for many years, at least since the census of 1881 in which he was living at the Woodman's Arms with his wife Ann. He died in the late autumn of 1911 aged 81 and was buried in Lenham churchyard on 3rd November.

William Glover must have been his successor and it was a natural choice, for although only 11 years old at the time he appears in the 1881 census as a 'boarder' at the home of Caroline and Charles Philpott in Lenham's West Street. Charles Philpott was then 46 and in all probability either Robert's son or a close relation. So how did eleven-year-old William Glover get to Lenham when he was born in Saltwood? Answer: so was Robert Philpott so the connection might lie in that. The Ifield in Robert Philpott's full name might also be significant in that there were several Ifields living in Lenham in the second half of the nineteenth century.

What happened to William Glover when he left the Woodman's Arms? Is the name given to the row cottages there, Glovers Cottages, as a result of the alehouse's last landlord a clue or coincidence? Someone must know the answers.

