

The Duke of Wellington in Woodside Green

By Henny Shotter

The Duke of Wellington's claim to fame (not the field marshal's, but the Public House) is that it was featured in a television programme in October 2011. It was part of a programme called 'Original Features' with the presenter Nick Knowles. Newspaper reports from that time make the point that Nick Knowles was not impressed by the original features which he found. This could be because the building is actually not that old. The efforts of the then owners Simon Mallett and Lesley Whittle to preserve the identity of the building as a 'public house' are past. The pub sign which for many years adorned the building and told a tale of merriment is gone today.



Like many other pubs the Duke of Wellington started off as a place where locals could get a pint at the door which is shown on this photo¹ from ca. 1890. The lady at the door quite possibly would have been Mrs. Turner.



¹ Photos courtesy of <http://www.dover-kent.com/2019-Project/Duke-of-Wellington-Lenham.html>

By the 1950ties the pub certainly had made itself a name, as the local hunt used to meet there.



The beer on sale came at that time from the Rigdens Brewery which was based in Faversham and operated after the take-over of the Star Brewery in Canterbury as ‘George Beers and Rigdens Ales and Stouts’.

The Bull, the Chequers, the Red Lion, The White Horse Inn in Sandway, the Harrow Inn are all listed as Public Houses in Melvilles Directory 1858 of Kent, whereas the Duke of Wellington does not feature there yet. In the Tithe Awards of 1839, a James Turner rents two properties in Woodside Green but he is neither identified as a shop owner nor a pub owner.

There is however an entry in the Lenham Parish records of a John Turner, who died on the 21 of November 1786 and his profession is given as ‘Innkeeper’. It is most likely that he was an innkeeper in the village of Lenham, possibly the husband of Mary Turner who is recorded as ‘Victualler’ at ‘The Chequers’ in 1789. She died on 21.11 1798 aged 75. Also in 1798, on the eighth of November a girl, born to another John Stedman (a son?) and his wife Mary, was baptised on the name of Catherine Stedman Turner. ‘Stedman’, the baby’s middle name is a farming family’s name known from Woodside Green, the hamlet which was served by ‘Duke of Wellington’.

The first documented landlord of the pub² so far is William Turner William (1826 - 1892 whose pewter tankard (engraved W. Turner, Lenham) found its way to an auction³.

The 1891 Census shows another William as the son of Henry Turner and Mary Ann Hughes. His birth date is given as about 1860 in Lenham.

² The current building was possibly built around 1880

³ See: <https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/victorian-pewter-pub-pot-loftus-309350447>

Much more recent are the memories of Gerald Neaves of Lenham who remembers the amateur boxer Mr. Turner as the landlord of the Duke of Wellington.⁴ In the 1930ties his son Patrick Turner took over the pub and the steak and kidney pie of his wife Pat became something to write home about. After the war the Green in Woodside Green was used for cricket matches and the players quenched their thirst at the Duke of Wellington. The last parish record to the Tuners at the 'Duke of Wellington' is for Jesse Turner who died in 1941 and for Jane Turner who died in 1949.

The pub closed down in 1999.

⁴ These memories are absolutely charming and can be read up here: <http://www.dover-kent.com/2019-Project/Duke-of-Wellington-Lenham.html>