

## The Dog and Bear

*By Danny Coorsh*



Pub sign<sup>1</sup> 1986

The Dog and Bear has been at the centre of Lenham village life for hundreds of years and holds a commanding position on the village square. The building is Grade II listed and likely built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, although it now has a mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century facade. It is timber framed, with what was a corniced balcony to the centre supported by four iron columns. Although it can't be confirmed, the Dog and Bear may well have operated as a pub from when it was built.

The name Dog and Bear has its origin in bear baiting, which was a very popular blood sport at the time.<sup>2</sup> Bear baiting took place in what was called a bear garden; there was a large garden to the rear of the inn which could well have been used for this purpose. Beyond that was a field which old maps name as Bear Field and may have been where bears were kept.

There's no doubt that the Dog and Bear was an inn by the 1700's and there's long been a rumour that Queen Anne visited in 1704. Below an image of a farthing from Lenham<sup>3</sup>

A farthing from Lenham from 1664. Showing the name John Deede and a scene of bear baiting. The image to the left shows a chained bear and a dog jumping up to bait him.

The token is recorded in the British Museum  
<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG89778>



<sup>1</sup> The earliest documented evidence of the existence of the pub is most likely the depicted token

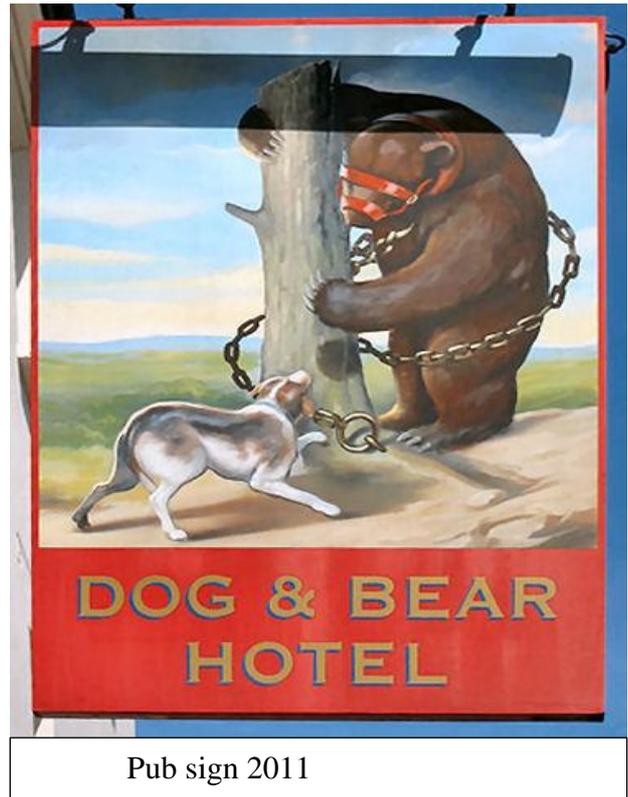
<sup>2</sup> The name, as the pubs itself, are an important piece in the jigsaw of Lenham's heritage.

<sup>3</sup> Courtesy of

[https://rarecoinsandtokens.co.uk/index.php?main\\_page=index&cPath=84\\_197\\_215&sort=20a&alpha\\_filter\\_id=76](https://rarecoinsandtokens.co.uk/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=84_197_215&sort=20a&alpha_filter_id=76), The coin was first described by G C Williamson "An old inn at Lenham still displays the sign of the Dog and Bear", published by William Boyne in 1889. Many thanks to Glen.

Her coat of arms<sup>4</sup> is still displayed outside, but it's not really been possible to prove that she definitely did visit. The inn was also where public meetings and auctions took place. The Kentish Gazette of 17<sup>th</sup> August 1768 advertised that Mr William Filmer of Lenham would be holding a house auction at the Dog and Bear later that month.

The Kentish Gazette also reported that a meeting took place at the Dog and Bear on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1792 to discuss applying to parliament to make the road between Maidstone and Ashford a turnpike road. The turnpike was approved by parliament in 1793. The route from London to Rye and Dover was another important coach route. The Dog and Bear certainly made the most of these local coach routes and was a coaching inn where travellers would stop to change horses or carriages during their trip.



Sometime around the mid to late 1800's, the pub was acquired by E Mason & Co Brewery, who were based in Maidstone. In those days, there were six two-stall stables on what is the current car park, along with a harness room, coach house, wood lodge and the open space of the present car park was delightfully called the Manure Yard. Carriages and horses will have entered the yard direct from Maidstone Road.

The newspapers of the 1800's have many reports of goings on at the Dog and Bear. In August 1810, the Kentish Gazette reported on a court case in which Reverend Hawker was accused of assaulting his tenant farmer, a Mr Brice, in the Dog and Bear. Mr Brice was awarded £60 in damages. The Kentish Gazette reported in July 1844 that Mrs Sayer, who had been the landlady of The Dog and Bear, was involved in a very nasty carriage accident on her way to Charing. In 1860, there were three arson attacks in the village, all in the same week; the second of these attacks was at the Dog and Bear. The Maidstone Telegraph of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1866 reported that Alfred Thompson, Thomas Davis, Henry Skinner and William Moon were charged with being drunk and guilty of violent behaviour outside the Dog and Bear on Good Friday. Mr Thompson was acquitted but the others were fined 40 shillings and 8 pence, or 2 months hard labour if they couldn't pay. Mr Skinner paid up; Mr Davis and Mr Moon were taken into custody to do their time. According to The Maidstone Telegraph of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1866, Mr Brenchley, who was the landlord at the time, accused Ellen Norris the cook and Lizzie Eason the barmaid of stealing from the till. The landlord marked some coins to try to catch the thieves. After being heard locally, their case was then sent to the quarterly county court.

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<sup>4</sup> Queen Anne's Code of Arms is also displayed above the north entrance in St. Mary's church; a reminder to potential papists that not the pope but the sovereign was in charge of the church.



The Buffs exercising in front of the Dog and Bear ( exact date unknown)

The coming of the railway meant the end of the coaching trade for the inn, but it continued as an important drinking establishment for the locals. Entering the pub from the Square in those days, on the left was the commercial bar, in front was the bar itself as now, plus a private bar and then to the right was the billiard room with the taproom behind it. Shepherd Neame purchased Masons Brewery including their pub estate in 1956 and the Dog and Bear has been a Shepherd Neame pub ever since.

During the pandemic of 2020/21 we hope for the easing of restrictions and look forward to life returning to normal, let's hope we all get to raise a glass in the Dog and Bear very soon, as Lenham locals have been doing for so long.