

# The History of The Crown in Church Lane, Lacey Green



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## Introduction

In 1972 Allied Breweries/Benskins Breweries, Watford sold The Crown Public House to Joyce & Co Builders (Crowell Hill) Ltd., who subsequently demolished the property and built three attached houses on the site, now called 1, 2 and 3 Crown Cottages. This ended a long history as one of the village's original beer shops, later developing into a public house, which played such an important and interesting role in the development, character and life of the village.



This photograph was taken from the Auction Sale Brochure.

Lacey Green is not mentioned in the Domesday Book like some other villages in the area, so it cannot claim to be an ancient settlement. The Architectural Historian who reviewed properties in Church Lane as part of the process leading to Church Lane being designated a Conservation Area in 1989, identified and dated part of Well Cottage as 16<sup>th</sup> Century. This has to be taken on face value although it is clear from maps and other old documents such as Court Rolls and Wills and Probates that there were people living in the area that is now Lacey Green at this time.

It appears unlikely that the property which ultimately became The Crown was one of the original cottages in Lacey Green but in the absence of hard evidence it is difficult to be certain. However, it was certainly one of the original cottages in Church Lane when the Lane was created.

## The Origins of the Property

The Buckinghamshire Map by Thomas Jeffery was initially published in 1770 following a survey carried out by John Ainslie during the period 1766 to 1768. Although highly speculative, this could show buildings in an area that could have become Church Lane at the time of the Enclosure Act in 1823 but it does not appear to show The Crown or its predecessor.

### The 1812 Boyce map

However, the 1812 Boyce Map clearly shows buildings in a location matching the location of The Crown or its predecessor.



Figure 1 Boyce Map

## The 1818 Lord Cavendish Map

The 1818 Map prepared for Lord Cavendish, prior to the 1823 Enclosure Act, clearly shows a cottage in the same location as The Crown with an outbuilding. In this map residential properties are coloured red and outbuildings black so it is possible to conclude, therefore, that the cottage was fairly small and the outbuilding relatively large. This is confirmed in later documents.



Figure 2 Lord Cavendish Map

Although not shown here the 1821 Map showing the proposed new formal road system around Church Lane confirms this as does the 1822 Ordnance Survey map although this is less clear.

### The 1823 Princes Risborough Enclosure Map

This copy of the 1823 Princes Risborough Enclosure Map shows The Crown or its predecessor as Allotment Number 702, with Owner/Occupier Joshua Dell, and is described as a House & Garden with 23 poles, freehold. It is interesting as it shows two buildings, similar to the Cavendish Map, although in this map both buildings are coloured black so it is difficult to identify which one is the cottage and which one is the outbuilding

However, although Joshua Dell is shown as the owner/occupier of this property, it is known that he also owned/occupied another larger property in the village and it appears unlikely that he lived in this predecessor to The Crown.

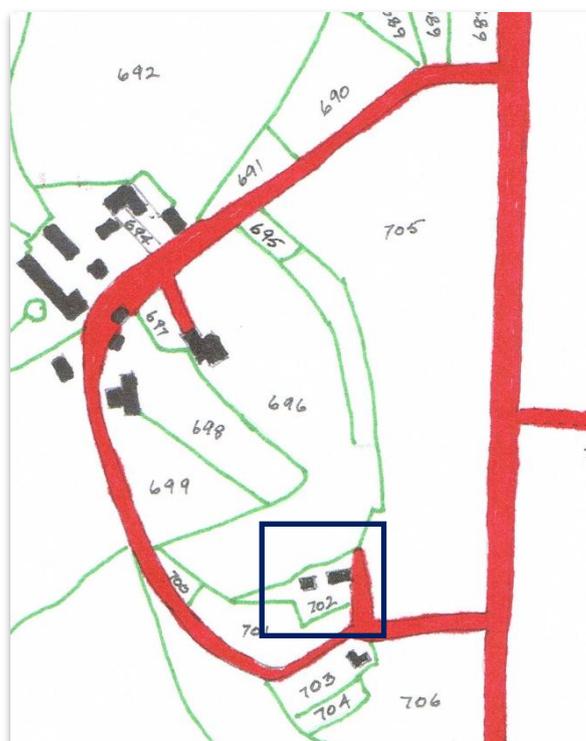


Figure 3 Copy of 1823 Enclosure Map

## Joshua Dell

A review of the 1821 Census shows only one Joshua Dell, as head of house, living in either Lacey Green, Loosley Row or Speen so it appears reasonable to assume that this was the same man. The inhabitants of the cottage are shown as 2 agricultural workers, 1 male 50+, 1 female 60+, 1 female 20+ and 1 female 5+ = 4.

A review of the Assessment of the Tax Rate for the Relief of the Poor in Princes Risborough – Upper Hamlets shows that a Joshua Dell was assessed for a property starting in 1795 at £0 10s 0d per year increasing gradually to £0 16s 3d by 1808. It remained at this level until 1821 when it increased to £1 4s 0d and then back to 16s 0d in 1828 and it appears to have stayed at about this level until 1832 when he appears to have been assessed at 16s 0d for the last time.

As other properties did not increase significantly at this time it is reasonable to assume that he acquired or was bequeathed an additional property which led to the increase in taxes.

So, who was Joshua Dell?

A review of the church records shows the following:

- i) Joshua Dell was baptised at St Mary's Church, Princes Risborough, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1760 – the son of William and Jane Dell.
- ii) Joshua Dell married Mary Parslow at St Mary's Church, Princes Risborough on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 1790 – witnesses Elizabeth Williams and Thomas Ayres.
- iii) Joshua Dell, widower, married Elizabeth Stone, widow, at St Mary's Church, Princes Risborough on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1795 – witnesses Thomas Dell and Thomas Ayres.
- iv) Joshua Dell, 86 of Parsonage Farm, Saunderton was buried at St John's Church, Lacey Green on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1843.

In the period 1790 to 1794 widow Stone in the Upper Hamlets was assessed for tax for the late John Stone but in 1795 she married widower Joshua Dell. From this year onwards, he is assessed for the tax. However, the assessment increases considerably in 1821 and it is possible to speculate that the increase in the assessment was due to the acquisition, by purchase, bequest or the building of a new cottage on allotment 702. This activity was not uncommon as the Enclosure Act approached.

The fact that the assessment returned to £0 16s 10d in 1828 may suggest that Joshua Dell disposed of the cottage on Allotment on 702 at about this time, possibly to a Thomas Hawes whose family lived in Court Cottage and this speculation may also be supported by the fact that Joshua Dell's wife, Elizabeth died and was buried on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1829.

A review of the 1831 Census does not show a Joshua Dell living in either Lacey Green, Loosley Row or Speen which indicates that he had either moved out of the area or, more likely, that he was now living at the age of about 74 in a property where he was no longer the head of the house.

## The Origins of The Crown

In November 1872, the Clerk of the Peace ordered the Chief Constable of Buckinghamshire to draw up a list of all the licensed houses in the county. This list clearly shows that The Crown was first licensed in 1830 although the first licensee was not named.

There is clear evidence that a Richard Weller, from W Wellers & Co Brewers of Amersham, purchased the property from a Thomas Hawes in 1831. It is possible to speculate that Thomas Hawes purchased the property from Joshua Dell in, or around, 1828 when Joshua Dell's Tax Assessment Rate reduced significantly and then sold it to Richard Weller in 1831.

Interestingly, Thomas Hawes is described in the 1831 Census as a sawyer, a trader and a retailer which almost certainly means that he was selling beer at this stage.

### The 1830 Beer Act

During its life both as a beer shop and a public house The Crown was a beer only premises with the barrels of beer kept cool in the cellar and served by hand without the use of a pump.

The origins of The Crown can almost certainly be found in the 1830 Beer Act.

*"By the early 19th century, encouraged by lower duties on gin, the gin houses or "Gin Palaces" had spread from London to most cities and towns in Britain, with most of the new establishments illegal and unlicensed. These bawdy, loud and unruly drinking dens increasingly came to be held as unbridled cesspits of immorality or crime and the source of much ill-health and alcoholism among the working classes.*

*Under a banner of "reducing public drunkenness" the Beer Act of 1830 introduced "beer houses", a new lower tier of premises permitted to sell alcohol. At the time, beer was viewed as harmless, nutritious and even healthy (it still is surely!). Young children were often given what was described as small beer, brewed to have a low alcohol content, as the local water was often unsafe. Even the evangelical church and temperance movements of the day viewed the drinking of beer very much as a secondary evil and a normal accompaniment to a meal. The freely available beer was thus intended to wean drinkers off the evils of gin, or so the thinking went.*

*Under the 1830 Act any householder who paid rates could apply, with a one-off payment of two guineas (roughly equal in value to £173 today), to sell beer or cider in his home (usually the front parlour) and even to brew his own on his premises. The permission did not extend to the sale of spirits and fortified wines, and any beer house discovered selling those items was closed down and the owner heavily fined. Beer houses were not permitted to open on Sundays. The beer was usually served in jugs or dispensed directly from tapped wooden barrels on a table in the corner of the room. Often profits were so high the owners were able to buy the house next door to live in, turning every room in their former home into bars and lounges for customers.*

*In the first year, 400 beer houses opened and within eight years there were 46,000 across the country, far outnumbering the combined total of long-established taverns, pubs, inns and hotels. Because it was so easy to obtain permission and the profits could be huge compared*

*to the low cost of gaining permission, the number of beer houses continued to rise; in some towns nearly, every other house in a street might be a beer house. Finally, in 1869 the growth had to be checked by magisterial control. New licensing laws were introduced making harder to get a licence, and the regime which operates today was established.*

*Although the new licensing laws prevented new beer houses from being created, those already in existence were allowed to continue and many did not close until near the end of the 19th century. A very small number remained into the 21st century. The vast majority of beer houses applied for the new licences and became pubs. These usually small establishments can still be identified in many towns, seemingly oddly located in the middle of terraced housing part way up a street, unlike purpose-built pubs that are usually found on corners or at road junctions.”*

Extract from Wikipedia

The fact that the first license was granted in 1830, the same year as The Beer Act, strongly suggests that The Crown was set up as a result of the Beer Act.

### **The purchase of The Crown in 1831**

In the search for old documents on The Crown this very important legal document and plan was discovered. It appears to prove conclusively that the property was purchased by a Mr Richard Weller in 1831.

The plan is quite large and it is very difficult to read when reduced in size. However, the heading reads as follows:

## **PLAN**

of

**PREMISES AT LACEY GREEN**

**PRINCES RISBOROUGH BUCKS**

***Purchased by Mr Richard Weller of Mr Thomas Hawes***

***in 1831 and the new part of the House added since.***

This is a plan of the premises and the surrounding land and describes the settlement of a dispute over a right of way and a pathway to Mr John Hawes Land Barn and it is dated 1846.



The statement on the plan reads as follows:

*“A dispute existed as to the right of way to his said land barn etc claimed by Mr John Hawes over Mr Wellers Yard which was open and without a fence on one side, and it was this day settled by his son in his presence and with his consent and also with my consent on behalf of Mr Weller and with the consent of John Stone Mr Weller’s Tenant marking out two lines with a mattock, as shown in red, on which it was agreed Stone should put a fence leaving the space between such fence and the Pond for a way to Mr John Hawes’s Land Barns etc.*

*This I immediately after communicated to Mr Brown, between whom and Mr John Hawes I understood some arrangement was about to be made as to the ownership of the said Land Barn etc numbered 6 and he expressed himself satisfied with it.*

*Signed Archd White 3 Dec 1846”*

**NB** Mattock - an agricultural tool shaped like a pickaxe, with an adze and a chisel edge at the ends of the head.

Whilst this is interesting, the important thing is that the heading of the plan describes that Richard Weller purchased the property from Thomas Hawes in 1831 and that the property had been extended since the purchase in 1831 and before this agreement in 1846.

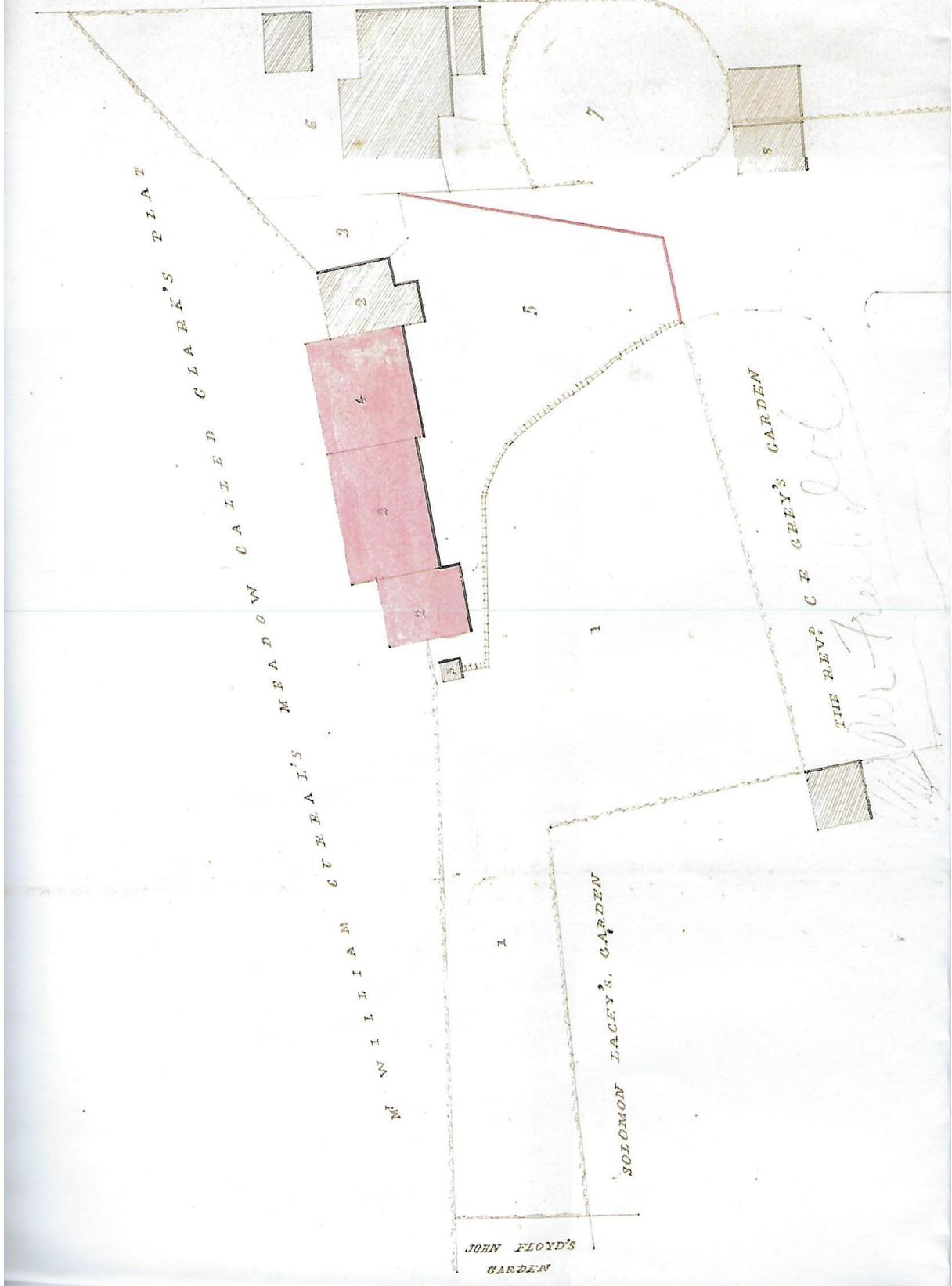
An expanded view of part of the plan allows a more detailed analysis of the property.

The References read as follows

1. Garden
2. Old House Outbuildings, Cellar and Pig Sty
3. Privy
4. New part of the House
5. Yard
6. Land Barn, Outbuildings and Pig Sty  
belonging to Mr John Hawes
7. A Common Pond
8. Mr John Hawes Stable

**NB.** It is not known when the pond was removed.

LATELY PURCHASED BY M<sup>r</sup> BROWN OF SIR WILLIAM LAWRENCE YOUNG BART



*Mr. F. C. Creey*

JOHN FLOYD'S  
GARDEN

SOLOMON LACEY'S GARDEN

THE REV. C. F. CREEY'S GARDEN

CLARK'S PLAT

M<sup>r</sup> WILLIAM CUTBELL'S

MEADOW

M<sup>r</sup> WILLIAM CUTBELL'S

6

3

2

4

2

2

2

1

5

7

8

1

## **The Landlords and Landladies**

### **Thomas and Caroline Hawes**

Thomas Hawes was born in Lacey Green in 1802 – son of John and Hannah Hawes who, it is believed, lived in Church Cottage, Church Lane, Lacey Green. He married Caroline Rixon, a widow of Loosley Row in 1828 and they had 5 children. As indicated previously, it is thought that he purchased the property that was to become The Crown from Joshua Dell in about 1828, it became a licensed house in 1830 and he was probably the first licensee and that he then sold it to William Weller the brewers of Amersham in 1831 but remained as the tenant.

The 1831 Census shows Thomas Hawes living with his wife and son and is listed as a sawyer, trader and a retailer. The 1834 the Tax Rate Assessments for the Relief of the Poor show Thomas Hawes as the occupier, with Messrs Weller as the owner and the premises are described as a beer shop with outbuildings – 30 poles. This continues until 1839 when this set of records ceased.

In the 1841 Census, Thomas Hawes is listed as a Publican and is shown with his wife Caroline and 4 children in a location in the Census near to the church.

After leaving The Crown, Thomas and his family appear to have left Lacey Green and in the 1851 Census Thomas Hawes is listed as farmer of 88 acres in Owlswick with Caroline his wife and 4 children and a servant. Caroline Hawes died in Owlswick in 1852 at the age of 46. In the 1861 Census Thomas Hawes is listed as a farmer of 82 acres in Owlswick living with 2 children and a niece. Thomas Hawes died in Longwick in 1866 at the age of 64.

They had 5 children in total as follows:

1. Benjamin Hawes – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1830 – father listed as a sawyer.
2. Sarah Hawes – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1832 – father listed as a sawyer.
3. Mary Ann Hawes – born and baptised in Lacey Green 1835 – father listed as a publican.
4. Susannah Hawes – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1840 – father listed as a publican.
5. Thomas Hawes – born in Monks Risborough in 1845 – baptised in 1846 in Lacey Green – father listed as a farm labourer.

The fact that Thomas Hawes junior was born in Monks Risborough but baptised in Lacey Green suggests that in 1845 they had only just arrived in Monks Risborough and still had strong ties to Lacey Green.

However, whilst it is clear that Thomas Hawes had probably left The Crown sometime between 1844 and 1845, to become a farmer in Owlswick, it is unclear who replaced him. In the legal agreement dated 1846 described earlier, a John Stone is described as Mr Weller's tenant. It is not certain if he was the tenant of The Crown or some other property. At the time John Stone was a 26-year-old bachelor living with his parents in the Church Lane area and it is difficult to imagine him running The Crown in these circumstances. He did not marry until 1857, then aged 37 and spent most of the remainder of his life as a sawyer.

## **William and Sophia Floyd**

William Floyd was born in Lacey Green in 1824 and baptised at St Mary's Church, Princes Risborough, the son of Joseph and Jane Floyd (Tyler) originally of Lacey Green but then living at Meadle. Joseph at the time was a yeoman and ultimately owned the cottage and land which became the site for Hambye Close. He also became a grocer living in what is now Green Hedges.

The 1841 Census shows William Floyd living with his parents in the cottage on the Hambye Close site and working as a shoe maker. In 1847 he married Sophia Hawse at St John the Baptist, in Hillingdon, Middlesex. Sophia Hawse was the daughter of John and Hannah Hawse of Church Lane and she was born in 1824 and baptised in Lacey Green in 1825.

In the 1850 Rate Assessment William Floyd is listed as the occupant with William Weller as the owner of a property described as The Crown PH & premises – 30 poles. This is confusing because in the 1851 Census William Floyd is shown as living in Lane Farm and farming 20 acres. It has to be assumed that William Floyd was both a farmer and a publican, which was not uncommon in those days, but which property he lived in is unknown. Additionally, this 1851 Census does not list a Crown Public House or a publican in the area so it is possible to speculate that the Crown was run by William Floyd from Lane Farm with the help of his family. This is supported by the entry in the 1854 Kelly's Directory which lists William Floyd as a beer retailer and a farmer in Lacey Green.

The 1861 Census shows that the Floyd family had moved from Lacey Green to Penley Farm in Stokenchurch which had 170 acres. The 1871 Census shows that they had moved yet again, this time to a public house, the New Inn, in Padbury near Buckingham where William Floyd was both the innkeeper and a farmer of 9 acres. The 1881 Census lists their final move, this time to Tingewick Wood Farm, Tingewick, near Buckingham. They were to stay here until William Floyd died in 1900 and his wife Sophia in 1908.

During this busy lifetime they managed to have 12 children:

1. Lucinda Floyd – born in Lacey Green in 1844 - baptised in Lacey Green as the “Child of Sophy Hawes of Lacey Green”
2. Julia Anna Floyd – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1848 – father listed as a cordwainer. (shoemaker)
3. Cora Floyd – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1850 – father listed as a publican.
4. Joseph Floyd – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1852 – father listed as a publican.
5. John Floyd – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1854 – father listed as a farmer.
6. Thomas Floyd – born in Stokenchurch in 1857 - baptised in Lacey Green in 1861 – father listed as a farmer at Penley Farm.
7. Frederick Floyd – born in Stokenchurch in 1859 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1861 – father listed as a farmer at Penley Farm
8. Daniel Floyd – born in Stokenchurch in 1861- baptised in Lacey Green in 1861 – father listed as a farmer at Penley Farm

9. Emma Floyd – born in Stokenchurch in 1863 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1869 – father listed as a Stokenchurch farmer.
10. Hannah Dinah Floyd – born in Stokenchurch in 1866 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1869 – father listed as a Stokenchurch farmer.
11. Ada Floyd – born in Stokenchurch in 1868 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1869 – father listed as a Stokenchurch farmer.
12. Frank Floyd – born in Padbury in 1871 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1932.

From the above information it can reasonably be deduced that William and Sophia Floyd moved into The Crown after they were married in 1847 but before 1850 and that they had probably left for Stokenchurch sometime before 1857 when William West arrived. Whilst William Floyd started life as a shoemaker, which was a common occupation amongst the members of the large and diverse Floyd family at that time, he clearly was a farmer at heart but with a secondary love of beer!

### **William and Eliza West**

Born in Loosley Row in 1824 – son of George and Ann West. He married Elizabeth Reading in Little Missenden in 1849 and they had 6 children. The 1857 Tax Rate Assessment shows William West as the occupant with William Weller as the owner and the property is described as a house and garden. However, the 1861 Census lists William West as a Public House Keeper with wife Elisa and 4 children. In the 1871 Census William West is listed as a farmer with 86 acres in Radnage living with his wife and 6 children so it has to be concluded that he did not stay at The Crown for too long. In the 1881, 1891, 1901 Censuses he is listed as a farmer in Cadmore End with 100 acres living with his wife and a diminishing number of the original 6 children:

1. Dan West – born in West Wycombe in 1852 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1854 – father listed as a labourer.
2. George West – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1855 – father listed as a labourer at Nobles.
3. Sarah Jane West – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1860 – father listed as a publican.
4. Ann West – born in Radnage in 1863 - baptised in 1863 in Lacey Green – father listed as a farmer of Radnage
5. Arthur West – born in Radnage in 1866.
6. Jane West – born in Radnage in 1870 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1871 – father listed as a farmer in Radnage.

The fact that Ann West was born in Radnage suggests that the family had just moved from The Crown in 1863 but returned to Lacey Green to the church that they knew for the baptism.

William West appears to have died in 1902 and his wife died shortly after in 1905. Clearly, he was a publican in the early days of his married life he then became a farmer for the remainder of his working days.

## **George and Sarah West**

Born in Loosley Row (Wardrobes) in 1824 - son of George and Ann West and brother of William West. Married Sarah Biggs in 1848 in Reading and in 1851 was a farm labourer at Widmer Farm and in 1861 he was a carter living in Coombs before taking over the Crown Public House from his brother for a short period. This is evidenced by the entry in the 1867 Tax Rate Assessment where he is listed as the occupant of a public house and garden on a plot of 30 poles, owned by William Weller. However, by 1871 he had moved to The Golden Cross Public House in Saunderton with his wife and 2 children. Unfortunately, he died in 1876 aged only 50. They appear to have had three children in total as follows:

1. Owen Frederic West – born in Coombs in 1857.
2. Herbert West – born in Coombs in 1860 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1860 – father listed as a labourer in Coombs
3. Pamela West – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1863 – father listed as a publican.

His widow Sarah moved back to Lacey Green and in 1881 she was the housekeeper at Gracefield with her 2 children, Pamela as a domestic servant and Herbert as an agricultural labourer. It is possible to speculate that she moved to Gracefield as it had been owned by the Reverend Oliver James Grace who was also the Rector at Saunderton Church. In 1891 she appears to have moved to one of the 3 cottages then comprising Wimble End and is listed as a lace maker and in 1901 she was still living at Wimble End but this time “living on her own means”. She died in Lacey Green in 1903.

## **Henry and Sarah Parslow**

Born in Hughenden in 1838 the son of Henry Parslow, a chair maker, and his wife Caroline. He was the eldest of 6 children and started work also as a chair maker. Henry Parslow married Sarah Wharton of Hughenden in 1858. She was born in Naphill in 1835 the daughter of William Wharton, a labourer, and his wife Charlotte. In the 1861 Census Henry and Sarah Parslow are shown as living in Hughenden with one daughter Elizabeth aged 6 months and Henry Parslow was still employed as a chair maker. However, in the 1869 Kelly's Directory he is listed as beer retailer in Lacey Green. In the 1871 Census he is described as a chair maker but no mention of being a publican but as living in the location of the Crown with his wife and 5 children.

In the 1873 Tax Rate Assessment the occupant is shown as Henry Parslow with the owners as Messrs W E & G Weller and the property is described as a Public House & Premises – 30 poles. In 1881 Census Henry Parslow is listed as a butcher and publican and at this stage they have 4 children living at home.

In 1883 Henry Parslow died at the age of 44 and he was buried at St John's Church, Lacey Green.

Henry and Sarah Parslow had the following nine children:

1. James Parslow – born and baptised in Hughenden in 1858 – died in Hughenden in 1859 – father listed as a chair maker.
2. Elizabeth Charlotte Parslow – born and baptised in Hughenden in 1861 – father listed as a chairmaker.
3. Jane Grace Parslow – born in Hughenden 1862 and baptised in Hughenden 1863 – father listed as a chairmaker.
4. James Augustus Parslow – born and baptised in Hughenden 1864 – father listed as a chair maker.
5. Agnes Mary Parslow – born in Hughenden 1866 – baptised in Lacey Green in 1866 – father listed as a publican.
6. William Henry Parslow – born and baptised in Lacey Green 1868 – father listed as a publican.
7. Emma Parslow - born in Lacey Green 1869 and baptised in Lacey Green in 1872 – father listed as a publican.
8. Alice Eleanor Parslow – born and baptised in Lacey Green in 1872 – father listed as a publican.
9. Alfred Parslow – born and baptised Lacey Green 1875 – father listed as a publican.

Although the records show that Agnes Parslow was born in Hughenden in 1866, she was baptised at St John's Church in Lacey Green in December 1866 with her father Henry described as a publican, and this is reasonably firm evidence that the Parslow family had moved to The Crown by 1866. This is in conflict with the 1867 Tax Rate Assessment which shows George West as the publican at The Crown. However, the most likely explanation is that whilst the baptism is almost certainly an accurate date the Tax Rate Assessment was probably carried out in 1865/6 and not published until 1867.

It is interesting that Elizabeth Parslow, listed in the 1861 Census and born in the April of that year, is no longer listed as a family member in the 1871 Census. Records show that she lived with her mother's brother and his wife, James and Susan Wharton, who ran The Harrow Public House in Hughenden. Elizabeth married Richard Ripley, a farmer's son in 1885 and at the time she was still living as a spinster in The Harrow. It is intriguing that she had left home so early in life (before she was 10 years old) even though James and Susan Wharton did not appear to have a family of their own. In fact, it appears that most of the Parslow family left home at an early age and it is not certain if this was for financial reasons, accommodation reasons or just the norm at the time.

Clearly, Sarah Parslow took over the Crown after her husband died and the 1891 Census lists her, at the age of 53, as a licensed victualler and living with her daughter Alice, aged 19 who was a lace beader. The 1901 Census lists Sarah Parslow at 65 as a publican and laundress with her daughter Alice at 29 as a washerwoman. The 1910 Finance Act Return shows the Crown as being owned by Messrs Weller & Co Amersham, the occupant Sarah Parslow and it is described as a Beer House and Premises on a plot measuring 1 rod and 3 poles. The final

Census in 1911 lists Sarah Parslow at the age of 75 as the publican but living with her granddaughter Dorothy Parslow who was a school teacher. The 1915 Kelly's Directory lists Mrs Sarah Parslow as a beer retailer although the information for this Directory was probably compiled in 1913/14. Sarah Parslow died in 1916 at the age of 81 and was buried at St John's Church, Lacey Green.

It would appear that the Parslow family ran the Crown Public House for almost 50 years.

### Lawrence and Emily Brown



Arthur Lawrence Brown was born in Bradenham in 1883 the son of Rose Brown. By 1901 at the age of 17 he was living in Naphill with his grandparents and he was working as a brick moulder. In 1908 he married Emily Sarah Janes, who was born in Lacey Green in 1882 the daughter of Abel, a wood sawyer, and Ellen Janes. In the 1901 Census she is shown as living at home and at the age of 18 working as a lace beader. Her father died in 1896 and so her mother, Ellen Janes, is shown as the head of the house and working as a charwoman. The 1911 Census shows Lawrence and Emily Brown living with her mother, Ellen Janes and her two sons. By this time Lawrence and Emily have two daughters and Lawrence was employed as a brickmaker.

By kind permission of Mr Barry Macey

The Register of Licenses granted in the Division of the Three Hundreds of Aylesbury shows that Arthur Lawrence Brown was granted a temporary license commencing on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915 and a full license commencing on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1915, for The Crown, Lacey Green.

The 1924 Kelly's Directory lists Lawrence Brown as a beer retailer in Lacey Green.

Unfortunately, Lawrence Brown was killed in a motorcycle accident in Devon on the 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1924 and both his Death Certificate and his Probate list his address as the Crown Inn, Lacey Green. Clearly, the tenancy transferred to his wife Emily because the Register of Licenses granted in the Division of the Three Hundreds of Aylesbury shows that Emily Sarah Brown was granted a full license for The Crown commencing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1924. The 1928 Kelly's Directory lists Mrs Emily Sarah Brown as a beer retailer in Lacey Green, as do the Kelly's Directories in 1931, 1935, and 1939, with this last date identifying her address as the Crown P H. In the 1939 National Registration Book, prepared at the start of the war to identify members of the population in preparation for enlistment, rationing, identity cards etc., it shows that The Crown was occupied by Emily Brown, her daughters Gladys Margaret and Alice Irene May and son Wilfred Brown. A fifth occupant is redacted due to the 100-year confidentiality rule.

The 1945 Register of Voters in Lacey Green shows The Crown occupied by Emily Brown and her married daughters Gladys Kirby, Alice Macey and Nancy Phillips.



The Register of Voters in Lacey Green for 1950, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970 and 1972 shows The Crown occupied by Emily Brown and her son Wilfred.

This photograph shows Emily and Wilfred together with their neighbour Harry Barefoot of Park Cottage

By kind permission of Mr Barry Macey

Emily Sarah Brown died in 1972 at the age of 90 and her son Wilfred Lawrence J Brown died in 1984 at the age of 69.



It appears that Lawrence and Emily Brown and their son Wilfred ran The Crown for about 57 years. A truly remarkable record! However, when you consider that Emily Brown appears to have brought up four daughters and a son, with just the help of her mother, during the period 1924 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War as well as running the Crown, it becomes an even more remarkable story.

By kind permission of Mr Barry Macey

Laurence and Emily Brown had the following children:

1. Kathleen Ellen Brown – born in 1908 – married Harry Church in 1937 – died in 2005.
2. Gladys Margaret Brown – born in 1910 – married Petty Officer Jack Kirby of Loosley Row in 1943 – died in 2000.
3. Alice Irene May Brown – born 1912 – married RAF Service Policeman Leonard Stanley Macey 1940 – died in 1962.
4. Wilfred L J Brown – born in 1915 – unmarried – died in 1984
5. Nancy J Brown – born in 1920 – married Flight Sergeant Vivian Stanley Phillips of Penarth in 1944.

All four daughters were married at the Methodist Church in Lacey Green.

## Summary of the Tenants of The Crown

Thomas and Caroline Hawes – 1830 to 1844/45

William and Sophia Floyd – 1847/49 to 1854/55

William and Elizabeth West – 1855/56 to 1863

George and Sarah West – 1863 to 1866

Henry and Sarah Parslow – 1866 to 1883

Sarah Parslow – 1883 to 1915

Lawrence and Emily Brown 1915 to 1924

Emily Brown 1924 to 1972

**Note:** There is a gap between Thomas Hawes and William Floyd. It appears to be reasonably clear Thomas Hawse had moved to Owlswick by 1845, but William and Sophia Floyd did not marry until 1847 so it is unlikely that they moved into The Crown before then. In the legal document dated 1846, John Stone, a young bachelor, is described as the tenant. Maybe this was a temporary arrangement whilst a more permanent solution was found.

## **The Role of The Crown**

Although it was not the only public house in the village in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it certainly would have played an important social, cultural and economic role in village activities. In its day it would have been as important as the village shop and the Church.

It has to be remembered that at this time in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century few people were able to read, there was limited access to newspapers anyway, and radios, televisions, telephones etc did not exist. The local village public house was a central communication centre for working class village residents and their activities.

The Crown would have given its customers, almost entirely male in those days, the opportunity to learn about important local and national news, forthcoming local activities and job opportunities. Additionally, public houses like The Crown, also became the social centres in the village where working class men of all age groups met and socialised and discussed the issues of the day.

However, as time passed more residents learned to read and with the arrival of the radio and the telephone the role of the public house changed into a more exclusive social centre for both men and women but still with an important role in stimulating social networks at a local level. Nevertheless, it still played an important role in village activities. For example, it is known that before water was piped into Lacey Green in 1934 The Crown provided the children from the village school with drinking water and in later years it provided the Lacey Green & Loosley Row Cricket Club teams with match teas and after match refreshments.

The fact that two sets of Landlords/Landladies ran The Crown for over 100 years in total appears to suggest that this was more than just a local business providing an income and living for the tenants. It appears to suggest that it was an integral part of village life and its activities and that the Landlords/Landladies understood the importance of this.

Today, with the arrival of televisions, motor cars and mobile phones, most public houses have become restaurants both for village residents and outsiders.

## **The Owners of The Crown**

### **Thomas Hawes – 1830 - 1831**

As described earlier it is known The Crown was licensed in 1830 and that Thomas Hawes sold the property to William Weller, Brewers of Amersham in 1831. It is possible to speculate that he purchased the property in 1828 and that he started selling beer in 1830 before he sold the property.

### **Messrs W Weller & Co – 1831 - 1929**

William Weller, a maltster from High Wycombe purchased a small brewery in Amersham in 1773 which he left to his two sons John and William when he died in 1802. They took over

and started a programme of expansion by buying beer and public houses, now known as “tied houses”, and increasing brewing capacity to meet the increased demand. To finance this expansion programme, they appear to have developed a fairly novel financing system.

Based on limited evidence, it is possible to speculate that in the early days members of the Weller family purchased beer and public houses and rented them to the brewery. This provided the family member with a safe and profitable “in-house” investment and allowed the Brewery to minimise its asset base and bank debt.

So, this first purchase of The Crown was made by a Richard Weller, a member of the Weller family, on behalf of the Weller Brewery.

This expansion programme continued until both John and William died in 1834 and the brewery passed jointly to their sons Edward and William. They continued to successfully expand the business into the tied trade market through to 1850 when Edward died. At this stage the brewery, which then ceased to be a joint concern and fell into the sole ownership of William Weller, had become the most important business in Amersham.

William Weller died in 1859 and the brewery was divided between his sons William, Edward and George and once again the new generation of Wellers concentrated on extending the brewery’s tied estate. Edward died in 1890 and William died in 1908 and so George, at the age of 65, took over sole ownership of the business through a complex share purchasing scheme. It appears that from this point onwards the business stagnated although a number of motorised lorries were purchased to supplement the old drays, this was as far as the improvement went. In 1914 the brewery’s bottling factory was closed and the famous “Wellers Entire” was sent to outside contractors instead. George Weller ceased to take an active interest in the business after 1919 and its management was taken over by his son who did not have a financial interest in the business.

Although things appeared to continue normally, it came as a great shock to population of Amersham when George Weller announced in the summer of 1929 that he intended to sell the brewery and all of its tied property, thought to total 133 tied houses, at auction as a single lot. This was achieved in September 1929 when the business was sold to Benskin’s Brewery, Watford for £360,000.

Benskins closed the brewery in the following year.

### **Benskin’s Brewery, Watford – 1929 - 1957**

Benskins had its roots in the brewery founded in Watford by John Pope, a local miller and baker around 1693. The brewery was inherited by his second son, Daniel Pope in 1722, and passed to Daniel's sister Sarah Pope and her husband William Dyson in 1741 at his death.

For the next three generations part of the brewery was inherited by a John Dyson (son, grandson, and great-grandson of Sarah Pope and William Dyson) each of whom bought out his co-heirs. When the third John Dyson died in 1867 the brewery was sold at auction to retired London hotelier Joseph Benskin and Watford draper William Bradley for £34,000. Bradley soon left the partnership, and in 1870 Benskin continued alone.

Upon Joseph's death in 1877, the management of the brewery passed to his widow Maria, and their second son John Pusey Benskin. His third son Thomas Benskin became a partner in 1884, bringing to the company James Panton of the Wareham Brewery in Dorset, reputed to be the first person to study scientific brewing at University College, London. Thomas' son Eric Seagrave Benskin later became a director, and Colonel William Briggs, husband of Doris Benskins was appointed to the board in 1908, latterly becoming chairman.

The brewery that was taken over by Benskin and Bradley in 1867 was one of the smaller Hertfordshire brewers of the time, with 42 tied houses in its estate. However over the following ninety years Benskins became predominant in the area, ultimately acquiring all other Watford breweries; Healey's in 1898, Sedgwick's in 1923, and Wells' Watford Brewery in 1951. Healey's had previously, in the months prior to its acquisition, purchased the Victoria Brewery on St Albans Road from the Chesham Brewery. Benskins rose to become the only regional brewer Hertfordshire ever produced, and during its life its estate included pubs, beer houses and off-licences not only in its home county, but as far afield as Sussex, Essex, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent and Greater London.

The brewery remained a family business until a take-over bid was accepted from Ind Coope on 13 March 1957. At the time of the sale to Ind Coope, the Benskins estate numbered 636 pubs and hotels, and 16 off-licences.

### **Ind Coope – 1957 – 1961**

The roots of Ind Coope can be traced back to 1799 when Edward Ind acquired the Star Brewery in Romford, Essex. The brewery had been founded by George Cardon in 1709.

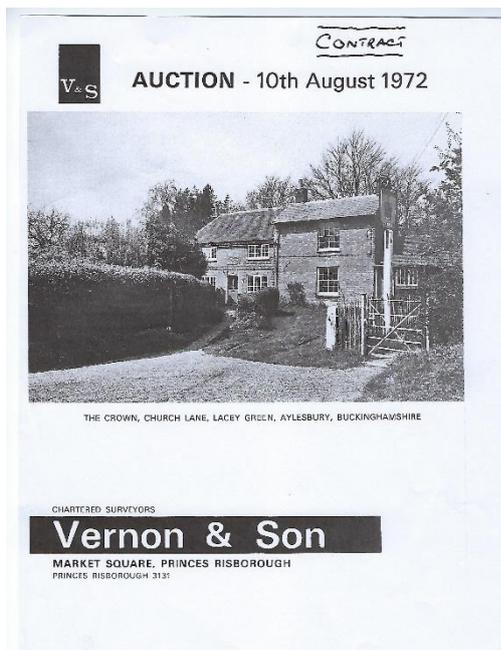
Ind, Coope & Co was founded in 1845 when Octavius Coope and George Coope joined with Edward Ind as Ind Coope. They opened a brewery in Burton-on-Trent in 1856.

Ind Coope merged with Samuel Allsopp & Sons in 1934 and acquired Benskins Brewery, Watford in 1957.

### **Allied Breweries – 1961 – 1972**

This was the result of the merger between Ind Coope Brewery, Burton, Ansells Brewery, Birmingham, and Tetley Walker, Brewery, Leeds. It is understood that these breweries operated somewhat independently under the overall ownership of Allied Breweries

Benskins/Allied Breweries sold The Crown in 1972.



## The Sale of The Crown

The Crown was auctioned by Vernon & Son of Market Square, Princes Risborough on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1972 at the George & Dragon, High Street, Princes Risborough, at 6.15 pm.

The successful bid was £17,950 by Joyce & Co of Desborough Road, High Wycombe and the purchase was completed on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1972.

The property was freehold and it was sold by Benskin's Watford Brewery Ltd/Allied Breweries (UK) Ltd either as a licensed or de-licensed premise.

If it was sold and maintained as a licensed premise then the vendors imposed a number of conditions including the exclusive purchase of beer from the vendors for twenty years from date of purchase.

The Justice's Licence was renewed at the Annual Meeting in February 1972 on an undertaking that no trading would take place on the property until certain alterations relating to the provision of inside toilets and bathroom had been carried out.

The Auction details describe the property as follows:

### THE GROUND FLOOR

Snug Bar	10ft 6ins x 10ft 4ins	Inglenook fireplace
Pantry	13ft 6ins x 8ft 5ins	Stainless steel sink unit with cupboards under, built in cupboard, cupboard under the stairs, door to cellar door to staircase.
Living Room	14ft 9ins x 13ft 9ins	Quarry tiled floor, tiled fire place, built in cupboards.
Cellar	12ft 5ins x 9ft 5ins	

### THE FIRST FLOOR

Staircase Landing

Bedroom 1	18ft 1ins x 14ft 7ins	Hatch to roof space
Bedroom 2	11ft 2ins x 10ft 9ins	
Bedroom 3	13ft 7ins x 9ft 6ins	

### THE OUTSIDE

Outbuilding of timber with tiled roof	Store :	11ft 9ins x 9ft 6ins
Outside WC and urinal	Woodshed:	12ft x 4ins x 10ft x 0ins

THE GARDENS are of useful size and are laid to lawns with holly hedges.

When compared to the plan prepared in 1846 little appears to have changed.

## **A Summary of the History of The Crown**

The origins of the property that subsequently became The Crown are unknown but if the Boyce Map is to be believed it may have been built by at least 1810 although there is every chance that it may have been older than this. However, factual evidence to date is very limited and it has not been possible to trace its origins back further than this. The 1846 legal document indicates that both this and the adjoining property included sizable pig sties which was common in this part of the Chilterns in this period and may indicate the original purpose of the property.

It is certain that The Crown was granted its first license in 1830 almost certainly as a result of 1830 Beer Act which enabled house rate payers to start selling beer from their houses fairly easily and cheaply. Additionally, it is also clear that running a beer shop or public house in those days was not a full-time occupation and a husband/wife team could manage both a full-time job and a beer shop.

It is certain that Weller & Co, the brewers from Amersham, purchased the property in 1831 and that it was initially called a beer shop. It is understood that this usually meant that, in those utopian days, local residents took their beer jugs to The Crown, purchased beer and returned home to drink it. It is believed that the property was enlarged sometime after it was purchased by Weller & Co, exact date unknown, but in the 1841 census Thomas Hawes is listed as a publican and not as a beer seller which probably means that the property had already become a public house by then. In the 1850 Rate Assessment the property is listed as The Crown Public House which confirms this conclusion.

After the first landlord, Thomas Hawes left in about 1845, a number of new relatively short-term tenancies followed until Henry and Sarah Parslow arrived in 1866. Although Henry Parslow died in 1883, it is believed that Sarah Parslow carried on running The Crown until 1915, which is a period of almost 50 years.

The new tenants were Lawrence and Emily Brown and their tenancy of 57 years proved to be even longer than the Parslows. Unfortunately, Lawrence Brown died in 1924 but Emily Brown, in later years with the help of her son Wilfred, continued to run The Crown until it was sold in 1972.

It remains a mystery as to why The Crown remained a beer only public house thereby severely restricting its development and financial success. In post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Britain the market in which public houses operated started to change quite radically with many customers seeking food as well as drinks when they visited their local.

This latest development probably spelt the end for The Crown. The cost of improving the property and its facilities to modern standards and the requirements of the Justices Licence Renewal, e.g. restaurant, kitchen, indoor toilets, etc. was probably prohibitive and hampered by the limited land available for the development of the property into a larger and more economic premises. The lack of car parking space and its location off the main road must have been additional major reasons determining its closure.

This was a sad end to an intriguing and interesting story that has to be an integral part of the history of Lacey Green.

## The Epilogue

On the front page of the September/October 1977 edition of the village magazine Hallmark there is a drawing of The Crown by Barry Macey, grandson of Lawrence and Emily Brown and inside there is an article by Kathleen Church daughter of Lawrence and Emily Brown.

One senses that Kathleen Church, who lived in The Crown for many years, loved both The Crown and Church Lane. Her memories are important as they describe and record life in an earlier and very different era. Therefore, in this respect, the drawing and the article constitute a fitting epilogue to this history of The Crown and to the important role that it played in the life and development of the village and its residents.



### Cover Story By Kathleen Church

*“The cover picture will remind many ‘Hallmark’ readers of the most picturesque corner of Lacey Green as it was a few years ago.*

*St. John’s Church, with its Scots pine trees, the old cottage in Church Lane, and the belt of larch and fir trees opposite. The Crown Inn standing back from the road, the lovely old cherry tree – in which red squirrels and green woodpeckers nested – fragrant with blossom in Spring, laden with juicy, black fruit in summer (those luscious cherry pies!) and by the front door, the glossy dark green bay tree, which provided leaves for countless decorations and flavourings.*

*Mr & Mrs Lawrence Brown took over the licence of the Crown in 1915 and after she became a widow, Mrs Brown, with the help of her mother, Mrs Ellen Janes, carried on the business and brought up her family of five children, in all remaining at the crown for 57 years.*

*In the early days the Inn belonged to Wellers of Amersham, and the beer, in 36 gallon wooden casks, was brought on a brewers dray by sleek brown horses, with gleaming harness and brasses, and two draymen, after trundling the barrels up the cobbled path, would carefully slide them down into the cool cellar, then drink their customary free pint, stow away the money for the supplies into pockets under their aprons and continue on their way to the Pink & Lily and return to Amersham.*

*Some older residents may remember that during their schooldays, when there was no drinking water at the school, it was custom for the boys and girls to run around to Mrs Brown’s for a ‘drink of water’, which she always cheerfully supplied. Those were the days when children could play in safety on the road in front of the school.*

*The Crown was well known locally, as for many years Mrs Brown and her family provided teas every Saturday for the visiting cricket and football teams, the day usually ending with a ‘sing song’ around the piano. During the 1940’s it was not easy to maintain the Crown’s reputation for ‘the best teas in the league’, when flour, bread, tea, sugar, butter and other fats were rationed and slices of bread, cakes and lumps of sugar had to be counted. Many cup celebrations were held at the Crown, and in the Summer, the garden, with its old fashioned scented roses, was a favourite rendezvous for family parties.*

*In this part of the garden – not visible in the cover picture, there are now three new houses, and part of the vegetable garden which extended behind the two cottages in Church Lane, is now included in the property of ‘Black Firs’.*

*Mrs Brown’s son and two daughters still live in the village, as well as two grandsons (one of whom sketched the cover picture), and also two great grandchildren. One wonders how much the village will have changed by the time that they grow up.*

*Our thanks to Barry Macey for his cover drawing reminding us of an old corner of Lacey Green. I can vouch for the excellent cricket teas served at the Crown in the 1940’s ration days. Editor”*

Extract from Hallmark by kind permission of the Editor and Mr Barry Macey

**Laurence Rostron  
2018**