

## The History of the Osborne View Hotel

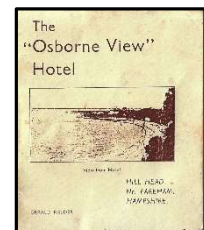
The Osborne View Hotel was built in about 1870. The original building was the two-level brick structure on the east side (see right) which extended down to the land leading to beach. There was a large stable for horses at this beach level on the west side, accessed from the down slope at the end of Old Street. The property was owned by Henry Miles who lived in Southsea and later by John Cooke. In those days it was said that the beer came from the Mews brewery in Newport IOW who had a royal warrant to supply Queen Victoria when she was in residence at Osborne House. It was believed that the beer was delivered by sailing barge which was grounded at low tide on the beach in order to deliver it to the Osborne View Hotel.



In 1892 Henry Miles and John Coke sold the hotel by auction to John Robert Fielder, owner of the Titchfield brewery for £700. The Fielders owned a dozen pubs in the Titchfield area at that time. About the turn of the century, John Sammons and his wife Miriam were running the pub. Their great granddaughter (Sally Instone, nee Loader) still lives in Hill Head.

In the following years the Osborne View became a centre for other village activities. Auctions of both property and land were held in the hotel including selling-off the plots along Hill Head Road. Inquests were also held of people who were found drowned off the coast including sadly three children in 1912 from a capsized dinghy off the harbour. The inquest would be held in public, and the local doctor would examine the body and try to establish the cause of death. In 1927, a public enquiry was held in the hotel to discuss the sea defences and risk to the sand road below the cliff.

In the late 1930's the hotel was extended on its west side, with a lounge, private (men only) and public bars, a restaurant with four large hotel suites below. Gerald Fielder was managing the hotel, and he published a leaflet (see right) to generate new business. In included prices: an overnight apartment including breakfast was 7s/6d and dinner cost 3s/6d. A week's stay was advertised for 4 guineas.



At this time, Dennis Copp became the landlord. During the War he was drafted, and the bar was run by



At 1945, 1945: From left to right: Flight Lieutenant Roy Toulson, 417 Squadron Officer - Major John Cook, Lieutenant Peter Warren, Major Roger Courtney, CWO Lieutenant David Stone, Captain David Bickley, Sergeant.

his wife. A detachment of the Special Boat Service (SBS) (see left) was

billeted in private houses in Hill Head and the officers met at the Osborne View Hotel which acquired the air of an unofficial officers' mess. It also provided quarters for Roger Courtney, the leader of the SBS on his visits. It was also used by the troops who reportedly traded salmon for beer



over the bar. The fish had been "acquired" from over the bridge by the harbour using explosives! This probably explained why the harbour gates were in such a poor state after the war, that they had to be replaced. The picture right, shows Dennis in the public bar. That opposite shows the Copp family celebrating VE day on the lawn behind the hotel in May 1945.



In the early 1950's the licence was transferred to Di Captain and his wife, and the pub really became the "local" and regularly used. The couple were very welcoming and had well known visitors including Alf Ramsay, soon to become England's football manager. In 1958, Di permitted the Hill Head Sailing Club to open a private bar below the hotel which the Club members organised. During the 1960's the Club used the hotel restaurant to hold their AGM meetings under the leadership of commodore Col. Alston. On another occasion Uffa Fox gave a talk to members in the restaurant which was well remembered.

Regular customers to the “Os”, as it became known, were treated by Mrs Captain to free snacks on Wednesday evenings and at closing times were availed by Helen with “ain’t you got no homes, no beds to go to?”. Other regular were Mrs Cooke and Mrs Bodenman who often called for a draught after closing the shop at Cooks Stores opposite. They had their tipple in the Off Licence instead of in the bar, rather irregularly and were usually joined by Tony Pink after he closed the chandlery. The view opposite shows the pub from the front on a winter’s day in about 1960.



In 1961, the Osborne View was sold to Whitbread’s. Following several changes in landlords over the following years, Hall & Woodhouse took over the business. They purchased the land on the opposite side of the road and made it into a carpark. Dr Loughborough had his surgery in the south-east corner.

In 1991, Hall & Woodhouse appointed Ian & Jenny Readman to run the tenancy. They rejuvenated the pub, modifying the bar layout and adding the large model of the Queen Mary liner. They also got local help in cutting back the weeds from the beach side and turning it into a garden extension. They introduced events for the locals including a very successful meat draw on Sunday evenings and organised a football team, who played against local leagues.

In these years the bedrooms downstairs were only used by the staff. In about 2000, Hall and Woodhouse purchased the adjacent house on the east side of the Osborne for staff accommodation. This was sold off privately in about 20009 and the house re-built.

Ian & Jenny left to run the Crofton pub in 2001, and Richard & Denise took over the tenancy.

In more recent years, Hall & Woodhouse commercialised the pub and it became less of a local, but clearly attracted visitors from far and wide.

#### **Acknowledgments by John C Lewthwaite:**

Much of the above has been provided by old friends of the Osborne View. In particular, in date order:

- Phil Surridge (the original building)
- Ben Loader (Sally Instone’s brother. John Sammons’ grandchildren)
- John Wolstenholme (details of auctions & inquests),
- Margaret Pink (the leaflet & tariffs)
- Jennifer Copp (views of the bar and the pub)
- Rod Massingham (SBS officers),
- Ian Readman (from his times as landlord)

It is intended to expand on this brief overview of the history. John would welcome any contributions. Please contact him on 01329 663202 or by email [johnlew.imaa@gmail.com](mailto:johnlew.imaa@gmail.com).