

High Wych History – 69-70-71 - Tales of the Rising Sun.



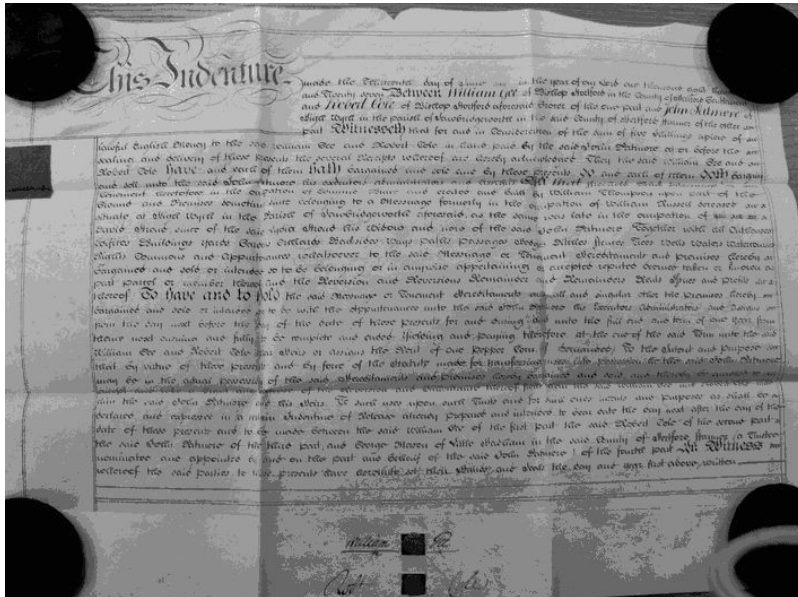
The Rising Sun in the 1920s

Once upon a time High Wych had two pubs, three if you count the Hand and Crown There might even have been a fourth one, the White Horse, of which some records speak. The question that then springs to mind is: how old is the Rising Sun? My honest answer is that I do not know. An indenture or document of sale, on show at the pub, dates from 1864. That document mentions Thomas Chaplin of Harlow. Thomas Chaplin was a Harlow brewer and his business existed until 1926 when it was taken over by Barclay Perkins who became Courage & Barclay which became Courage

The first person I found to be definitely associated with the Rising Sun was John Patmore. He is mentioned on a sales document dated 1827. The tithe map of 1840 mentions him as the owner of a house in High Wych and the 1841 census records him as a grocer. Next door, or at least on the previous record on the census, is Richard Rivers a baker. Baking and brewing often went together; remnants of a bakers oven were in fact found on the premises. So were Rivers and Patmore more than just neighbours?

B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1840 owner prefix	1840 owner forename	1840 owner surname	1840 owner suffix	1840 plot no	1840 name / description	1840 state of cultivation	1840 occupier prefix	1840 occupier forename	1840 occupier surname	1840 occupier suffix	1840 Acres	location
John	Patmore			409	House			John	Patmore			HW

Ownership of the Rising Sun did change a number of times between 1825 and 1865. The document from 1827 does say that John Patmore bought the business/house. But there is also an advert announcing an auction of a number of items amongst which is the Rising Sun itself. This followed the bankruptcy of a Joseph Rivers. Was this Joseph related to neighbour Richard. and or to the Nursery people? Did Patmore sell the business but remain as tenant? Bit of mystery there.



On the left the 1827 indenture - On the right the 1834 advert

VOTES for the COUNTY of HERTFORD.

VALUABLE
FREEHOLD AND COPYHOLD ESTATES,
A FREE PUBLIC HOUSE,
Well known by the sign of *The SUN, High Wych,*
WITH
**FIVE ACRES AND A HALF OF EXCELLENT
LAND,**
A convenient DWELLING HOUSE and
HOMESTEAD,
And 7 Acres of LAND;
ALSO, SIX CAPITAL COTTAGES,
And Eight Acres, Two Roads of rich Arable and
PASTURE LAND;
BY HENRY REE,
AT THE WHITE LION INN, SAWBRIDGEWORTH,
IN LOTS;
On WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1835, at 2 o'clock,
The property of Mr. Joseph Rivers, a Bankrupt:
THIS Valuable Property comprises all that
well-known free PUBLIC-HOUSE, called
"The Sun," together with a Grocer's Shop, a good
Brewery, convenient House, large Barn, Stabling,
and 5A. 2R. of very rich ARABLE LAND.
Near the above, a substantial-built Dwelling-
House and Homestead, and Seven Acres of rich
Arable and Pasture Land, called Cobbes.
Two substantial-built Freehold Cottages, with
large Gardens, in the occupation of George Spring-
ham and Michael Smith, at the low rent of 9l. 4s.
per Annum.
Four other substantial Cottages, with good Gar-
dens, in the occupation of Messrs. Smith, Halden,
and others, at the low rent of 16l. 8s. per Annum.
Also, several Pieces and Closes of rich Arable
and Pasture Land, most desirably situated adjoining
the high road, and presents a favourable oppor-
tunity for building, containing 8A. 2R.
May be viewed by leave of the tenants.—Parti-
culars may be had at all the principal Inns in the
neighbourhood; place of Sale; of—FONBLANQUE,
Esq., Bankrupts' Court; GEORGE SMITH, Esq.,
Solicitor, Quality Court, Chancery Lane, London;
and of Henry Ree, Appraiser, &c., Ware.

Around 1850 the Tyser family moved into the Rising Sun. At the 1851 census Joseph and Mary Tyser and four of their children were resident plus three lodgers. Joseph, born in Harlow in 1822, described himself as a beer retailer and baker. The Tysers had 6 more children whilst living at the pub some of which carried on in the business. Most important amongst these was Susan, born 1854 who carried on living and working at the Rising Sun until at least 1919. The Tysers did well. When Joseph died in 1892 he left £2445 to his children. Around 1915 the Tysers owned various properties in the village.

One can suspect John Patmore and Joseph Tyser or possibly their wives brewing on the premises but this must have ended when Thomas Chaplin bought the beer house. When Steve Prior, former landlord, did some maintenance work at the pub in the seventies however, he found a well which provided clear good quality water which could very well have been used for brewing

In the 1920s Fred, 'baker' White was in charge He had been an employee of the Tyser sisters and was the last one to combine bakery with beer retailing at the Rising Sun. White probably took over in 1926 when Barclay Perkins took over from Chaplin's. Just continuing as a baker more than likely was a more interesting business proposition. So from 1926 White left the pub and continued baking in the house opposite where today's 'Old Bakery' houses are situated. He owned large parcels of land locally, some formerly the property of the Tysers (including the windmill meadow). A member and later chair of the Parish Council Fred White passed away in 1948.

William Oakley bought the Rising Sun from Fred White on 16 May 1929 for £82.12s and 8d. If pub landlords are supposed to be larger than life he certainly qualified. Born in 1874 in Aylesbury by 1881 he had moved with his parents to London. He joined the Essex Regiment at quite young age but in 1894 in Cork, Ireland he was declared medically unfit to serve. Returning to London he married Emily Fraser in October 1897 at St George's. Hanover Square. William and Emily had 3 children Cyril, Alfred and William. Alfred and William died in childbirth or soon after. Cyril Oakley served in the Great War where he was wounded. He married Florence Barrett in Wandsworth in September 1919 but died less than a month later.



On the left William Oakley in the army - On the right William and Rose Oakley and their son Alf

In 1901 William (describing himself as a 'confectionary assistant') and Emily lived in Islington. Four years later he married Rose Elisabeth Chappell in High Wych. William and Rose quite possibly met in London where Rose worked for a while. High Wych then remained William's home for the rest of his life.

Having been declared medically unfit earlier did not stop William joining up in the Great War. In 1915 he joined the Essex Regiment. One year later he was transferred to the Rifle Brigade and served in Amritsar and Sialkot. A document dated Bombay, April 1917 shows him joining the International Order of Good Templars, an organization intent on 'preventing and reducing harm caused by alcohol and other drugs'.

Coming to High Wych did cause William to settle down a bit. Rose and he had 3 sons, Alf John and Tom plus 3 daughters, Elsie Bertha and Iris. Prior to buying the Rising Sun licence he seems to have been a painter and decorator. All three girls went into service in London with wealthy people or the aristocracy. Elsie and Bertha worked for Mr & Mrs Stirling at Battersea House. Iris is on the census records as Ladies Companion to Lady Eliza Hotham in Chelsea from 1929 to 1939. She went on long trips abroad with her employer, Egypt for instance.

Not much documentation has come to light about William's time at the Rising Sun. In 1933 according to the Chelmsford Chronicle he testified in court. Oakley had been a passenger in a car where the driver had caused an accident through drink driving.

William Oakley passed away on 28 April 1939. Rose Elisabeth took over the running of the pub. From what we were told, she had been doing most of the work already! Now she also held the licence. There will be more about the Rising Sun in a second instalment to be published next month. Rose Elisabeth Oakley took over the Rising Sun's licence on 29 June 1939, an administrative change rather than a practical one. William had been spending more time consuming ale than selling it! Only 10 Weeks later, just after the outbreak of war, the 1939 Register lists Rose as residing at the pub together with sons Tom, a general labourer, and John a 'clothier's shop assistant' and two lodgers Fred and Florence Matthews.

Soon the Rising Sun would become even more crowded. Daughter Iris was asked to return home and help out. Naturally she obliged but understandably she did not like the idea very much. Iris also

worked at Holbrooks Engineering for a while. Soon after, even more residents turned up. By 1941 daughter Bertha had married Ted Prior with whom she had a daughter (Elizabeth) and a son (Michael). Bertha moved back home as well Ted Prior had been working at Dyson's the Bishops Stortford outfitters but had now joined the Royal Air Force.

This was of course a big change for the two children. Elizabeth, now no longer with us would often recall how she was carried to the wash house at the back to be bathed in a tin bath. Bertha and the two children lived at the Rising Sun until 1946. The older uncles, Tom and John, were of course very intriguing Tom was bit of a wild one recalls Michael. He hunted, he had a gun! Luckily Ted Prior often visited and took his children out. Rose Oakley meanwhile was liked by all for her kindness and her quick wit. 'We miss that spittoon' regulars complained. 'That's why it was taken away' she answered. Ted Prior later often helped out behind the bar. When a drinker complained to Ted about a fly in his beer, he quipped 'must be good beer then'.

In 1943 Iris married Sid Puncher Sid was born in Springhall Road in 1913. Initially he worked for his father's coal merchants business at Brook Farm, sometimes making his cart available to people who were moving house. Upon his marriage to Iris he moved into the Rising Sun.



Sid and Iris's wedding - Left to right: Sid's dad and mum, Kath Puncher, Sid and Iris, Rose Oakley, Tom Oakley and Reg Puncher. The two little girls are Rosslyn Rout and Elizabeth Prior.

For many years the Rising Sun had three rooms. Upon entering you went to the right to go to the 'taproom' which was where ale was originally served. Most present day customers remember it with a dart board. To the left was the 'parlour' originally Rose Oakley's living room later the bar. Only three types of beer were on offer: Courage Best, Directors and Mild. Guest beers only came much later. At the far end of the parlour was another little room which for a long while was a shop. School children came there to buy crisps or cans of coke through a little hole in the wall. Until 1952 there was no electricity, just gas light. Until the late seventies the only heating came from a paraffin stove. On cold wet winter days the potent smell of that paraffin was mixed with tobacco fumes from the cigarettes smoked by all those people standing there so close together. For a long while there was no ladies toilet



Sid and Iris



Sid and John

When in 1957 on Rose Oakley's death the licence passed to Iris, Sid started spending more and more time at the pub particularly helping out with the heavy work of handling the casks. For many years though he continued doing other jobs. As well as helping with his dad's coal business he gardened at the Manor of Groves and drove a school bus for handicapped children. Strange though it seems, Sid Puncher himself never held the licence. Until their retirement in 1987 the licence was held by Iris. Iris and Sid had two children John and Celia. Their first born, a girl, Sheila, tragically died in early childhood.

By the early 1970s the Rising Sun had become one of only a handful of pubs in East Herts and West Essex still serving real ale and the only one to serve it by gravity dispense. I myself can still remember seeing Sid Puncher bend down for every single pint! People travelled for miles to sample his beautifully kept best bitter. So it was no wonder that CAMRA, the campaign for real ale started its local branch in High Wych Village Hall directly opposite the Rising Sun. Chris Bruton, CAMRA's national chairman at the time came down for the occasion and Sid provided three firkins of ale which all went.

Sid's reputation as a character was well deserved. Steve Prior, who took over in 1987 tells me "Sid in later years never turned the outside lights of the pub on. That would only encourage passing trade from people he didn't know. It was probably more to do with the electric bill as he was renowned for being careful"

Once when the Brewery surveyor was doing an inspection of the premises he asked Sid about the lack of washing facilities as there was no toilet/basin upstairs and just a butler sink by the back door. Sid told him he washed standing at the sink and the draught from the back door dried him off!

Regulars at the Rising Sun included many interesting characters; readers in the know may remember the name Buke! There were even some 'celebs'. such as rugby player Bill Beaumont and actor Brian Wilde from 'last of the summer wine'. Regulars were often treated as family. Barry Bowen remembers forgetfully leaving his dog at the Rising Sun one lunchtime. When he phoned to apologize and enquired how the animal was doing. Sid told him not to worry and pick up his pet in the evening.

Another regular customer often spent far longer than he should over his early evening pints. One day as the man was chatting with Sid, the front door burst open and the man's wife stomped in with dinner and cutlery. She plonked it on the bar by his pint saying "you spend so much time in here you may as well have your dinner here". The customer looked at the plate, then his wife and sheepishly said: "salt and pepper?".

A few years after taking over the pub Steve was replacing one of the floors upstairs and came down for a lunchtime pint. Uncle Sid was in the bar and asked him what he was up to. After hearing the explanation Sid then told him that many years previous he had dropped a half crown in the bedroom and it had gone beneath the floorboards. Steve said he'd keep an eye out. 'Sure enough I later found it exactly where he said it would be. I never did give it back and still have it stashed away somewhere.'

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Gazette



Sid and Iris call it time

GALLONS of beer was swilled on Thursday night at the Rising Sun pub, High Wych, to say cheers to retiring landlord, Sid Puncture.

Sid (75), has worked at the pub since 1957 and become so well known that regulars from as far away as Preston came to share a last farewell drink with their favourite landlord.

Things have changed little from when Sid and his wife Iris (85) took the pub over from Iris's father, Bill Oakley, the pub's landlord since 1929.

The pub still has bare wood floors and beer served straight from the barrel. Locals fondly nickname their local The Rising Damp.

Sid said: "Most people just know it as Sid's. I got a letter from a former regular in Australia, who addressed it to Sid's, High Wych, and it got here!"

"I am very sorry to have to leave. It was a lovely life.

"When we first started, there was no bar or ladies toilet. We just brought the beer straight from the cellar on a tray."

Iris added: "We didn't have lights either, just gas in the cellar and candles in the bar."

Sid and Iris are sad to leave their home and friends after so many years, but following

Iris's severe stroke, the couple separated for a year while Iris's daughter, Celia (40), looked after her mother at her home in Harrogate.

Sid now has a new full time job looking after Iris in their new council flat, which is specially fitted for disabled people.

Iris said: "It's difficult fitting all our belongings in to just two rooms after we have been used to seven

rooms at the pub."

Thanks to generous regulars the couple now have a new gas oven and the brewery presented the couple with a silver salver.

The pub will be staying in the family, Iris's nephew, local carpenter, Steve Prior (38), and his wife Janny have

taken over.

Father of three girls, Sadie (17), Sophie (13) and Claudie (6), Steve promises that the traditional flavour of the pub will remain.

"It's going to be quite a challenge, and I'm really looking forward to it," he said.

In 1985 Iris had a stroke and subsequently spent about a year in Harrogate being looked after by daughter Celia. She returned to High Wych but it soon became clear that something 'had to give'. So Sid decided to retire, new specially fitted living quarters were found in Mansfield and nephew Steve Prior was called upon to take over.

Sid and Iris's farewell in November 1987 must have greatly impressed them. The locals clubbed together to buy the couple a very practical and much appreciated present: a gas oven. Local newspapers, there were still several of those then, reported it all in great detail. Nine months later aged 81 Iris passed away. Sid had 10 years of happy retirement. He attended many events at the Rising Sun. In 1993 his 80th birthday was cause for great celebration. He died five years later in 1998



Jenny and Steve Prior took over the Rising Sun Licence in 1987. Steve, a nephew of Sid and Iris, was a carpenter by trade. They took up residence together with their three daughters, Sadie, who was 17, Sophie 13 and Claudie 6. Steve's experience of the beer trade was, so he says, 'as a consumer rather than a retailer.' Courage Best and Directors were his favourites. 'Before we took the pub' he writes, 'if I'd had a hard day Jenny used to pop down and get me a few pints: aches and pains cured! Later on, Dr. Lewis even used to send some of his patients in. As landlord I can definitely attest to someone coming in for a pint of Directors on his recommendation! 'The pub was full of characters and I certainly remember Dr. Lewis as one of these.'

Steve's friend Tony, who ran the Fox in Rye Street, wrote them a reference which 'gave the impression that we knew what were doing. We were quite surprised when Courage agreed. Sid was helpful and kept an eye on quality control.' The Rising Sun did however remain a 'tied house' and Courage, the brewery was keen to have a Fosters Lager Pump installed. Steve and Jenny resisted and when in 1989 the 'Beer Orders' came in, a recommendation to loosen the ties between pubs and the big brewers, they saw their chance and broke free. The Rising Sun became a 'Free House' in other words a Public House owned independently of the breweries that supply it. Guest Beers could now be introduced. That same year an application was lodged to introduce a beer garden. This was not without controversy. There was one petition in favour and one against. Permission was eventually granted in April 1989.



The Rising Sun stuck to what it was best known for: proper tasty ale served in the correct manner in a cosy and friendly atmosphere. An article in the Herts & Essex Observer of 7 January 1999 pulled out all the lyrical stops and wrote "the deafening sound of arcade machines and the smell of chips is strangely absent here. The walls echo the recounting of country tales and laughter of regulars gone by and as the afternoon slips into evening and the pub begins to fill; the sounds of yesteryear comes to life.' Meanwhile, Steve could indulge his passion for real ale and started ordering beer from across the country, mainly from small micro breweries. 'One year we turned over in excess of 300 barrels, a barrel being 288 pints. That's 1200 nine gallon firkins. No wonder I suffer with my back!'



From the left: Nigel Rivers, Fred Kempthorne, Sid Puncher and Andy Aberly aka 'Andy the Gas', picture taken on occasion of the very first Rising Sun Vegetable Competition.

Jenny Prior in particular was well appreciated. All the locals sang her praises. For many years she was a committed Parish Councillor. She was involved in traffic calming, renovation of the war memorial and the play ground and pedestrian crossing.

Steve takes up the story again: 'I remember my time at the Rising Sun with great fondness although, living over the shop can be tough. It's like having a party at your house 365 days a year and sometimes you just ain't in the mood. Sadly Jenny was taken ill in August 2003 and passed away in April 2004.'

Four weeks later High Wych Church was standing room only for the funeral service. Afterwards there was a get together in the Memorial Hall. I still remember a moving eulogy from Paul Stephenson. Jenny is also commemorated by a dedicated bench on the playing fields. A friend of High Wych she is called there. She was.

Steve carried on working at the pub for a while, but as he himself says 'my heart went out of the whole thing so I sold up, moved to London for a while before retiring to beautiful Devon'.

The people who in 2006 took over the reins were the Cunninghams. Garry, wife Sharon and daughter Lauren fully appreciated the legacy they had bought into but for very practical reasons some changes just had to be made. New flooring heating and decorations were introduced, the three rooms made into one open planned area, lovely oak panelling was put up and the beer garden outside improved. Most importantly new racking for the barrels enabled continued but easier serving of the ale, but still at gravity dispense. Initially some, and I must confess I was amongst those, found it all a bit too 'high tech' and yes there was a bit of a contrast with those three pokey rooms of years gone by, but you definitely could get used to it. After all it's the quality of the beer and the good company you come for at the Rising Sun. Strangely one of the writers in 'Pints of View' the CAMRA magazine wrote an article mentioning the refurbishment in connection with the 'National Inventory' in what could have been taken as a negative context. Gareth Emmanuel wrote a letter in protest. That's how loyal Rising Sun locals are!

A lot of the traditions started by Sid, Iris, Steve and Jenny were carried on. The Rising Sun has won the 'CAMRA Pub of the year' title numerous time and has been mentioned in the Good Beer Guide' ever since 1974. One important tradition still alive today is the vegetable competition. Hayley Erica Bird has fond memories of her father taking part in this.



From left to right: Martin and Louise Greenaway with their prize winning pumpkins, Gary and Sharon Cunningham at a Rising Sun 'Beach Party'.

Barry Bowen, one of many who have been regulars in the pub drinking there right through Sid, Steve and Gary's tenures testifies: 'We are not an easy bunch to please and resist change like many do. However, the modernisation that Gary undertook (new floors and ceilings, removal of the staircase to open up the pub, extensive replacement of timbers with traditional oak beams, etc) has turned it into a warm and open pub welcomed by all those who might well have been sceptical of any change.

What Gary also did was to maintain the "beer from the wood" character but extend it to a wider, award-winning range of beers as well as draught lager and ciders, all of which has made the pub welcoming to women and younger drinkers in addition to the 'old boys in the corner', of which I am one!! All in all, much more of a modern community public house for High Wych.'

Gary has now more or less retired and daughter Lauren carries on the tradition albeit with one important difference: a quality cuisine restaurant has opened. Barry Bowen again: 'If anything was going to test the "locals" ability to stomach change then surely it was this! It is early days, but already the restaurant has a great reputation for its food and appealing environment upstairs, and

seeing the pub busy with new faces has to be a good indicator for a pub that cherishes traditional values whilst keeping up with the changing needs of a local community of which the pub remains at the heart.'



For a closing quote now let's once again turn to Steve Prior: 'The customer variety was(and is!) amazing: bankers, builders, surgeons, musicians, sportsmen and actors. You could(and can!) get whatever you needed or whatever you needed done. Advice is available whether you need it or not. I remember Graham Drage telling Marcus Russell not to risk his secure pensioned teaching job for rock band management. A few years later those very same two were standing at the bar. Marcus had been driven down from London and his chauffeur was waiting in the village car park to take him home in a very large Mercedes. Marcus was then manager of Oasis. The two were still great friends.'

Sources for the three Rising Sun articles were: Barry Bowen, Gary Cunningham, Celia Puncher, Steve and Michael Prior, Paul Stephenson, Wikipedia, Ancestry.co.uk, the Rising Sun Facebook page and website and County Archives aka HALS. The complete version of the Rising Sun Story will be published on line at <http://vandebilt.co.uk/history/> Help with this continuing series will be very much appreciated. Phone me at 01279725468 or e-mail me at theo@vandebilt.co.uk with suggestions, corrections or ideas for future projects.