

Building Report

The Three Crowns And Sugar Loaf

Wolverley Road, Franche

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Introduction

This report was undertaken as part of the Historic Kidderminster Project. Information has been gathered from deeds at Worcester Record Office and from papers and books at Kidderminster Library. The Three Crowns and Sugar Loaf was situated where the road from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth crosses the road from Bewdley to Wolverley. It was a landmark pub for the best part of two centuries, but became a casualty of redevelopment in 1977. A new pub retained the old name. If the original building was still standing today, it would surely have merited consideration for listing.

History

There is a small island there to handle with modern heavy traffic, but two hundred years ago pack animals must have stopped at the Three Crowns and would rest there on their way between Bewdley and the Black Country. The date of construction must have been between 1776 and 1803.

By 1776 Benjamin Cope had purchased the land on which the pub was to be built. (WRO BA4600/891) In 1803 the poor rate list shows him owning and occupying a pub, stable and gardens. (WRO BA4766/1) He also erected a malt house at the rear of the premises which served the pub for many years, and it is now a fine private house.

Benjamin Cope was a clock and watch maker according to his will held at Worcester Record Office. A watch and a clock made by him are listed in specialist publications by Baillie and Loomes respectively. The watch is identified as from Franche in 1786, a clue that the Three Crowns had indeed been built by then.

Cope was a churchwarden of St. Mary's Church. (Kidderminster Library, St Mary's Collection ref: L726.5094) Yet he chose the name of The Three Crowns and Sugar Loaf, the Three Crowns representing the Papal tiara and the sugar loaf a Bishops mitre - a strange choice for a protestant! (T.C. Grove) Perhaps this was some kind of joke at the expense of Catholics. It is worth remembering that annual Orange marches to St Mary's church continued into the 1830s. (p102, Gilbert, 2004)

One of the incidents that occurred in the olden days was when two young chaps stole a sheep belonging to one of their friends. Although the landlord had prepared and cooked the sheep he did not see the funny side of it and informed on them to the

authorities. The young men were transported to Australia where apparently they thrived and kept in touch with the old country. (Nickson)

The pub changed hands between various family members until it was sold by auction in March 1863 to Edward Turbill for £700. (WRO BA5278/55) By 1889 the Three Crowns was owned by the Brewers Investment Company associated with Showells Brewery Company, in 1898 the owner was George Oseland who often complained about the horse muck around the pub left by the nearby stables. In 1921 George Oseland sold the pub to Ada Jefford wife of James Jefford landlord of The Clarendon at the bottom of Comberton Hill. (Collection of deeds held with old Kidderminster museum collection now managed by Bewdley museum.)



Photo taken on its last day 13.07.77 - courtesy of Nick Lowndes

During the second world war preparations for D-Day, the pub became a convenient stop for the passing American military. This was spotted by the local youngsters who were given fruit and sweets by the generous GI's. (John Baker)

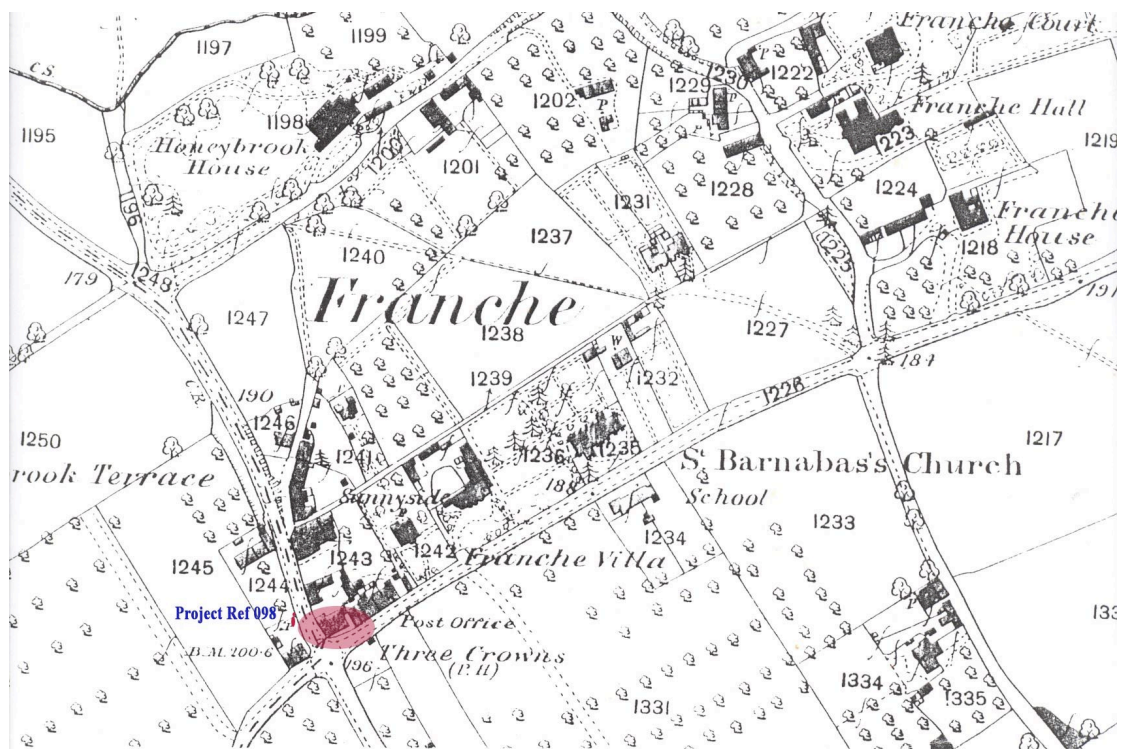
The Three Crowns was a traditional pub with a small lounge bar on the right, a public bar on the left with a piano and a small 'family room' behind that, and outside toilets in the back yard. After the 2nd World War the pub and its surrounds were bought by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries on 10th January 1946. The site contained a row of terraced houses fronting the Wolverley Road and a large detached house, Franche Villa. It was ripe for development and in 1977 the old pub was demolished along with the other properties, and a brand new pub with the same name opened on Friday July 14th, just a few yards down the Wolverley Road. The last landlady was Dorothy Flynn who retired on the same day.

In 2003 the Three Crowns was upgraded to be one of Banks's Pathfinder pubs, it has one large main room and a restaurant which serves meals all day. The Three Crowns

and Sugar Loaf is very successful thanks to its strategic position and the fact that it has moved with the times.

Description

The notice for the auction of the lease of the pub in December 1880 gives a description. It had a large 'Bar Parlour', and large kitchen with bay windows, smoke room, scullery, club room and six bedrooms, with capital cellaring, brew house, store rooms, stabling, shedding, piggeries, large open yard with gateway entrance and workshops. The lease was for six years and included a large well-fruited garden, and a lawn and alcove on the opposite side of the road. (WRO BA5278/36)



Three Crowns 1885 - OS ref: 816781

Bibliography

- “Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World”, Volume 1, G. H. Baillie
- “Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World”, Volume 2, Brian Loomes (1989)
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- “The History of Franche”, Charles Nickson. (Kidderminster Library ref: L942.441)
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- John Baker, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/71/a5562371.shtml