



Local History Collection

32 - The History of The Fifield Inn - Part 1

Autumn 2026

Researched & written by Sarah Grace

Most of the residents in Fifield and Oakley Green will probably have enjoyed a meal, a pint or two, a coffee, a chat, or joined in the regular pub quiz at some time or other at 'The Fifield Inn'. It is hard to believe that only a few years ago there were eight pubs in Fifield and Oakley Green - The Fifield Inn, The Prince of Wales, The Braywood Inn, The Rising Sun/ Sun and Stars, The Greene Oak, The Red Lion and The Hare and Hounds (originally called The Kings Arms) plus a Packhorse Inn at Mills Farm.



The White Hart, Fifield - circa 1980s

The Fifield Inn (formerly called The White Hart) was originally a 15th Century rural Inn, probably timber framed. Many such Inns were originally farmhouses. There may have only been a couple of rooms, one would have been used for brewing homemade beer and cider and the other likely to have had a fireplace suitable to gather around and for drinking and eating. The Oakley Green and Forest Green road was an ancient Packhorse and Drovers route, so the pub was likely to have accommodation and a field or fields suitable to host a Drover and his stock plus a stable for horses.

There was no running water locally so typical fare in such an Inn included; locally brewed ale which was consumed by all ages, small beer which was a weaker brew, cider and perry from local apple and pears. There was a very limited choice for food and a thick stew or potage would have been offered as well as dark, heavy bread made from local grains and

sometimes salted pork, bacon, river fish, mutton or pies where the thick pastry was the bowl. It is also likely that due to the proximity of Bray woods with all its Oak trees, that a flour made from acorns would be used to make flour for the very poor.

There was probably little change to the Inn for many years and in the late 1500's and early 1600's the Inn was neighbour to Fifield House and the Norreys family. William Norreys was 'Usher of the Black Rod' and his son, Sir John Norreys was 'High Sheriff' of Berkshire. The whole area remained heavily wooded and rural until the 1800's, the railways came to Windsor in 1849 and transporting livestock was easier and quicker by train, so the Drover's routes died out.

In 1864 the White Hart was advertised to be let and was up for sale in December 1899 as a Free House. Ex-publican Gary Smith tells me that there is still a brick at the back of the Fifield Inn dated 1899. Landlords in the 19th century included John Phipps (1854), George Moorcock (1870's) and James W Hopcroft (1876), John Skinner (1883), Charles Eggleton (1886), Geoffrey Simmonds (1898) and George Seymour (also Parish Clerk and Sexton) up until July 1900.

FIFIELD AND SLOUGH FREEHOLD PROPERTIES

Messrs. BUCKLAND and SONS

Have received instructions to SELL by AUCTION
at the Castle Hotel, Windsor, on
WEDNESDAY, February 14th, 1900, at 4 o'clock
precisely

THE recently erected FREEHOLD BEER-HOUSE known as the WHITE HART, FIFIELD, having large garden with sheds adjoining, let at £30 per annum. with possession at Lady Day, together with a FREEHOLD COTTAGE, with good garden, situate on the main road, and let to Mrs. Stevens at £6 10s. per annum; also AN ICE WELL situate in Wellington-street, Slough, in hand, but formerly let at £20 per annum.

Particulars and conditions of Sale to be obtained of Messrs. Goodacre, Harrison & Darrell, Solicitors, 109 and 111, High-street, Slough; 52, High-street, Windsor; and 10, Bush-lane, London, E.C.; and of Messrs. Buckland and Sons, Auctioneers, 4, Blooms square, W.C., and Windsor.

Pub Sale, 1900

It's worth noting that during 1895 the local Cookham Rural Council (no RBWM yet) spent time discussing the clean water in Fifield which continued to be drawn from wells and ponds in the area - there was no mains water in the area. So the safest drink was beer and ale!. Mr G Purnham was landlord until October 1901 followed by Mr Cornelius Phillips and then Mr Harry George Congdon in 1905. You may recognise the name Congdon as his memorial plaque is by the bar in the Fifield Inn. I will write a separate piece on Harry. By 1911 there were two beer retailers in Fifield and either William Simmonds or David White could have been landlord at the White Hart. By 1915 Mr David Galloway (son William killed in action in WW1) was landlord up until October 1920.

A couple of key dates in the history of the pub - the first was that in December 1883 the White Hart suffered a severe fire which destroyed the pub, furniture and stock, including a small grocery business - the second was that up until 1916 the White Hart had been part of the New Lodge Estate and this whole estate was sold in 1916 in 79 lots.

LOT 26 (Coloured Brown on Plan No. 1)

The Old-Established Beer House known as

"THE WHITE HART"

prettily placed opposite the entrance to Fifield House, of Brick and Tile construction, and containing Tap Room, Parlour, Kitchen, Cellar and Four Bedrooms.

The Timber and Tiled Outbuildings provide a Two-stall Stable and Lean-to Shed.

This Lot is let on a Repairing Lease expiring in 1928 to Messrs. Dymore Brown & Son, Ltd., with about Twenty Acres of Meadow Land, forming part of Lot 2, at a total rent of £61, of which, for the purposes of this sale, the sum of

£36 per annum

is apportioned to this Lot

SCHEDULE.

ORD. No.	DESCRIPTION.	ACREAGE.	TENANT.	NATURE OF TENANCY.	RENT.	REMARKS.
552pt	BRAY. Land and Premises	A. .299.	Dymore Brown and Son, Ltd	Lease expiring March, 1928	£36 0 0	Apportioned

Pub Sale, 1916

ANOTHER SERIOUS FIRE

A fire, which resulted somewhat disastrously, broke out early on Sunday morning last at Fifield, and caused no small excitement in the vicinity. The scene of the conflagration was the White Hart, Fifield, a large inn kept by Mr. John Skinner. On hearing of the outbreak, Colonel and Lady Clayton, who live directly opposite the beerhouse, at once went to the place and found that the fire had got a good hold. The Colonel collected a few men, after which he sent to Superintendent Iremonger and the Maidenhead Volunteer Fire Brigade. He gallantly headed the villagers, and at once set to work to endeavour to extinguish the flames. He placed a ladder against the burning building, and threw buckets of water on it from off the ladder. Lady Clayton ably assisted him, by handing to him the buckets of water. Unfortunately, however, the ladder gave way, and the Colonel fell to the ground. He was not badly hurt, but was rendered *hors de combat*, and had to leave the spot. Lady Clayton, too, sustained a sprained wrist. The greatest praise is due to Colonel and Lady Clayton for their efforts to stop the fire, although they were unsuccessful. The Maidenhead Fire Brigade attended with great promptitude, and at once set to work, and were not long ere they had pumped the pond dry. They then took their engine to the ornamental water in Colonel Clayton's grounds. The fire raged furiously, and in spite of the exertions of the firemen the house and almost all the furniture, together with the stock-in-trade of a small grocery business carried on by Mr. Skinner, were totally destroyed. Superintendent Iremonger and Constables Goddard, Dean, and Gould were on duty, and did what they could. Superintendent Iremonger has made enquiries as to the origin of the fire, and from these it seems that several men were in the White Hart taproom ten minutes before ten o'clock on the previous evening, and that at 10.5 the landlord made everything fast, and all appeared safe. He retired to rest, and at half past eleven o'clock, feeling unwell, he came down stairs to get some soda-water, and as he was doing so he heard a crackling noise. On opening the kitchen door he found the room

to be full of smoke. He shut the door and ran up stairs and removed his wife and infant (the latter only a month old) to a cottage near, and then called up Charles Hammond, a lad employed on the premises, who sleeps in the house, and William Banscombe, Thomas Goom, and Thomas Bignell. When an entry was effected into the kitchen, the dresser, containing three drawers, was discovered to be in flames. The boy Hammond pulled out one drawers, and the other men took the other part of the dresser to the back yard and threw buckets of water on to it until the fire had been put out. Hammond, in carrying his drawer along the passage found it too hot, as it burned his hands, and was obliged to drop it. It fell close to a cup-board in which were paper, firewood, coal, and several bundles of bean-stalks. All danger apparently over, the landlord again retired to rest; but at two o'clock in the morning he was awoke by a sense of suffocation by smoke. He again called up his boy and went towards the stairs, which he found to be on fire. At great risk they succeeded in descending, and at once gave another alarm of fire. Colonel and Lady Clayton, with others, were soon on the spot, and rendered aid as above described. One drawer in the dresser was called the Lumber Drawer, which contained boxes of Lucifer matches, dusters, and cloths for cleaning the petroleum lamps, and Superintendent Iremonger is of opinion that as the landlord went to the drawer during the evening with a candle, some sparks from the latter must have fallen on the rags, which probably remained smouldering until the kitchen door was opened, and the draught caused an outburst of flame. As to the second fire, the Superintendent thinks that when the boy dropped the drawer some portion of the fire fell into the cupboard, and ignited its contents. The building and its contents were destroyed, with the exception of two or three articles of furniture; and a little dog, which was in the landlady's bed-room, was burnt to death. The fire was out by five o'clock. The house, which is the property of Mr. P. S. Langton, Maidenhead, was insured in the Commercial Union Office, and the furniture and stock in the Phoenix Office.

Mr Vincent Winfield, whose son Leslie was born at the pub, followed as landlord and by 1928 Mr Arthur John Snapes was landlord and later transferred to Mr Thomas James Snapes. In 1933 Mr Percival George Coleman was landlord for the next 20 years and in 1939 The White Hart had a phone (Maidenhead 2112!). In March 1953 Mr Reginald Sidney Ward, who was a retired HM Customs and Excise Officer in Southampton, became landlord.

He died in February 1957 after a 7 month illness and Mr Sidney Cornwell took over in March 1957. He was followed by Mr A R Wallbank in 1958 and Mrs Ethel Marion Reynell in 1959. In early 1960 Mr Reginald William Roberts took over, he was an Australian who had worked on a sheep farming station in Australia, and had come to Maidenhead in 1934 then served in WW2 receiving the Military Cross for bravery in Action in the Far East. His wife took over on his death in August 1962.

To transform pub



**The new family at the White Hart, Fife
(from left to right): Marilyn Sayle, Alan Sayle, and
six-year-old daughter Sara.**

Mr. Alan Sayle and his wife Marilyn, who took over the White Hart at Fife on Tuesday, face quite a challenge. They intend to turn the currently rather dilapidated pub into a lively thriving business.

Plans include a complete re-decoration with new furniture and bar. Their intention is to transform the pub into a country style inn with comfortable furnishing and friendly service. Marilyn, who is a keen cook, plans to offer home-made lunches once they are properly settled in.

At the moment the attractive white inn is set in an over-

grown garden but all this will soon change as plans for a beer garden complete with children's swings and attractive rustic furniture get under way.

This move represents a completely new career for both Alan, who was formerly a police officer, and Marilyn, who was a nurse. However they do see similarities in the work as they both are happy working with people and feel that the pub will offer a service to the community.

With their six-year-old daughter Sara they hope to make their home in the village for quite some time.

I then find a bit of a gap in my research on landlords, so I'd be delighted to receive any news of landlords between 1962 and 1979. I believe that around 1965 Mrs Janet Bennett was landlady and around 1966, Jim (Jock) and Ethel Macque/McCue/McHugh/MacHugh/McKew/McKue from Scotland were landlords.

At that time the pub sold beers and ales from a tap straight out of the barrel, the only food served was sandwiches and beer. Ales and crisps were sold through a hatch, like a small off-licence which kids were able to use. A local resident told me that at that time most locals would pop in the pub for a drink, it was very sociable. Local rumour says that Ethel died in the living room of the White Hart which is unconfirmed at this time.

Alan and Marilyn (Tup) Sayle took over as landlords in October 1979 and the White Hart was a Morland Brewery pub. Alan was an ex-policeman and Tup (short for "Tuppence", a name given to her by her parents when she was a small child) had been a nurse. The pub included a Lounge bar and Public bar with a dart board (The White Hart was part of

the local Dart's League from 1979-1983), an open fireplace, a small kitchen, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, and parlour. In other words it was just like a house, although the men's customer toilet was outside in a wooden hut in the garden, the women's toilet was inside and all very basic. Planning permission was granted in 1981 and both the stores and bar space were demolished with car parking being extended and larger inside toilets built as well as a kitchen, in fact the whole building was restored in some way or other. Tup took on the role of cooking and chefs were employed.

A "NEW" HART

THERE was a special opening ceremony at the White Hart, Fifield, on Wednesday, August 10, to mark the completion of the recent extension and re-furbishment of the pub.

The managing director of Morland Breweries, Mr. Charles Brooks, welcomed guests, while Mr. Jim Dymore Brown, whose family sold the pub to Morland in 1918, had the honour of pulling the first pint of beer, in the new lounge bar.

The pub has been greatly enlarged and completely redecorated. There are two new bars, a lounge bar and a games bar where customers can play bar billiards and other traditional games.

The kitchen has been extended and re-fitted and the pub will now be offering carvery meals during weekday lunch times. On Fridays and Saturdays there will be cooked meals including steaks available in the evenings. On Saturday and Sunday evenings diners will be able to enjoy the White Hart's own seafood special.

The licensees at the White Hart are Alan and Marilyn Sayle. They came to Fifield in October 1979 in what is their first venture into pub management. Prior to that, Alan was a policeman in Maidenhead for 14 years and Marilyn was a state registered nurse. She will now be responsible for all the cooking. They have two children, Sara and Anthony.

The car parking space has been extended, but the pub still retains its beer garden. Playground equipment is going to be installed so that customers can bring their children. Morland company secretary, Mr. Bernard Harrington, said: "We aim to provide more space and comfort, and better catering facilities without losing the character of the premises."

When the couple came to the pub, it had already been marked down for an extension, as part of Morland's programme to update and improve their public houses. Contractors were finally able to start work last February and they have just finished, a month ahead of schedule.



Licensees Alan and Marilyn Sayle are pleased as Punch with their "new" White Hart.



The menu then included dishes such as ploughman's, scampi, steak, chilli, goulash as well as a Sunday roast and the month before Christmas a number of locals would be invited to dinner and in return they would decorate the pub in preparation for Christmas. There was also a fancy dress theme for New Year's Eve and after midnight the drinks were 'on the house' and the White Hart Olympics held in the car park.

The addition of cooked food completely changed the clientele, so as well as the regular local custom the hot food selection attracted corporate customers. Alan and Tup's son, Anthony, was born at the pub and his pram would regularly be seen in the pub garden. There wasn't a garden until the renovations and then bench seating, fruit trees and children's swings were added (children were legally not allowed into the bar and Alan always kept a jar of lollipops on the bar for them) as well as Alan's aviary of canaries, finches and Quails (whose

eggs were sold from the pub) and 2 dogs, a Labrador gun dog and a Portuguese Estrelle mountain dog as well as two goats; Heidi and Dorothy, who would make themselves known to regulars in the garden to try to get fed crisps and sandwiches. The 'star' of the show was Rocky the grey and yellow Cockatiel who would ride on the back of the Labrador. Rocky would also sit in the fruit trees in the garden and wolf whistle at female customers as they came in the pub and eventually could mimic the sound of a mobile phone, much to many customers amusement.

I'm told that the greatest 'wind up' played on Alan was the 'official' letter he received from the local 'council' advising that his aviary was a health hazard as it was located too close to the kitchen. Alan approached the local Parish Council to voice his dismay and eventually the 'Save Sayle's Quails' was set up to save his aviary and birds. The whole thing was a hoax and many were 'in on' the joke but Alan was not informed until later by his wife Tup when they were dining with the local barrister 'Rumpole'. The 'wind up' had lasted a couple of months and many feared 'reprisals'.

A few locals may also remember the Muscovy duck owned by Jerry Wilcox (who lived next door to Garden Cottage, Fifield Road), the duck would walk up to the pub twice a day at opening time to drink an ashtray of beer. If the doors to the pub were still closed then the duck would peck on the door to come in and many a time Alan would stop traffic on the Fifield Road to allow the duck to cross the road and a few times the duck would 'waddle' home after the drink! Another visitor to the pub was Alan and Tup's daughter Sara who rode her pony Sonny from its stabling at Fifield Farm. The pony would come into the bar to drink an ashtray of Guinness alongside the locals.

Another feature that was 'changed' during their time at the pub was the chimney, which was blown down in a storm in early 1990's. The bricks landed in an empty space in the car park

between two parked prestigious cars. The chimney was rebuilt but shorter. During their time at the White Hart, Alan and Tup would fund raise for many local charities including Guide dogs for the Blind and Thames Valley Police.

AROUND BRAY

From Kuwait to rural Fifield



AFTER surviving bomb blasts, arranging army convoys to transport banquets and managing 57 chefs at the Kuwait Hilton, running the White Hart, Fifield, provides a different and welcome challenge for its new owners.

"To work for ourselves is the fulfilment of a life's ambition," said Mr. Peter Protheroe who took over the running of the pub in Fifield Rd with his wife Susan one month ago.

Before coming to Fifield the couple (pictured right), worked on the P & O and Cunard liners and in various Hiltons in the Middle East.

At the Kuwait Hilton with a banqueting facility of 2,000 Mr. Protheroe was the executive chef while Mrs. Protheroe organised the training of the 350 hotel staff.

In Fifield the couple appre-

ciate the slower pace." Here it is nice to be able to make sure everything has the personal touch," he said. Mrs. Protheroe said while abroad they had missed the simple things such as newspapers and delivery of the post but in turn: "We miss the sunshine and the swimming pools but then we do not miss things like bombs."

In Kuwait in 1984 they had to deal with the bombing of the U.S. embassy opposite the Hilton.

After managing an inn in Somerset and then golf centres at Hawthorn Hill and near Bracknell the couple decided to take on the challenge of running their own business.

In 1986 they were awarded "caterers of the year" and in 1988 and 1989 reached third place nationally as "wine restaurateurs of the year,"



A White Hart ashtray !

One of the corporate customers using the White Hart remarked to Alan that if ever they thought of selling to give them first refusal, so Alan and Tup sold to Peter and Sue Protheroe in October 1994. Alan then turned his hand to start up a chauffeur business and Tup returned to nursing and was Matron at Holyport Lodge until retirement in 2007. Tup still lives in Holyport.

Peter and Sue Protheroe joined the White Hart with previous experience as caterers. Peter had survived bomb blasts, arranging army convoys to transport banquets and worked at the Kuwait Hilton Hotel managing over 50 chefs. The pair had also worked for P & O and Cunard liners and several Hilton Hotels in the Middle East. Peter had been Executive chef at the Kuwait Hilton and Sue had been responsible for the staff training. After returning to the UK, Peter and Sue managed a pub in Somerset then golf centres at Hawthorn Hill and near Bracknell. In 1986 they had been awarded 'Caterer of the Year' and in 1988 and 1989 they reached third place nationally as 'Wine restaurateurs of the Year'.

Peter and Sue Protheroe, 1994

One of the biggest changes to the White Hart during Peter and Sue's time at the pub was the name change to the Fifield Inn in February 1995 and the building of the veranda with vines. Later in 1995 Peter and Sue won Morland's Brewery 'Caterer of the Year' award beating 399 other pubs and introduced Sunday evening Jazz with the Keith Vitty Century Band. Other notable events included a Guinness and Oyster evening, Arabic buffet, French Bistro, Italian nights, pig roast and Jazz, Greek Bouzouki night, German oom pah pah nights, Peter's ice sculptures and charitable events such as 'Cheers day and raffle' in aid of the Licenced Victuallers. Peter and Sue had a boxer dog who is remembered for opening and eating bags of crisps! In 2000 Peter and Sue left the Fifield Inn and moved to the South Coast.

What's in a name?

IN a sign of the times The White Hart this week became The Fifield Inn.

With three White Harts within a three mile radius, pub owners Peter and Susan Protheroe (pictured right) felt it was time for a change to clarify which pub was which.

"Frequently you get four people going out for a drink and find two in one White Hart and two in another," said Mr. Protheroe.

"And it works the other way, in that people book at other White Harts and come here."

He said on one occasion last year the pub had booked a party of 27 who ended up in the White Hart in Winkfield and then had to ring up to find their way to the Protheroe's.

He said the continued use of a white hart in the new pub sign was to maintain the connection with the Royal Forests of Windsor but there were plans to design a crest for the pub.

In a re-naming ceremony on Wednesday night a ribbon was cut by Mr. Cyril Castle, pub regular for the last 40 years.



Peter and Sue Protheroe re-naming the pub in 1995

When Peter and Sue left the Fifield Inn during 2000 the next publican was John. If anyone has his surname please let me know!. I believe John did not have any experience as a publican and he was joined by his partner at weekends. Certainly he was advertising for staff in April 2000 - chefs, waiting staff, lunchtime cover etc. During his time at the Fifield Inn he introduced a musical sing along twice a month as well as the usual Sunday night Jazz sessions. There were psychic and mystic evenings along with tarot and palm reading.

By May 2001 the Fifield Inn was under the new management of Gary Smith and Helen Haggerty and in the Winter Newsletter I will continue the story of the Fifield Inn up to the present day.



Gary Smith and Helen Haggerty, street party 2011