

The Great House

'The Great House' formerly known as 'The Wellington Arms' was built during the reign of Elizabeth 1 (1558-1603) in the year 1589. Below is compiled a list of former innkeepers. The first recorded in 1615.

1615 - Eleanor Quayfe	James 1	(1603-1625)
1648 - Daniel Dunster	Charles 1	(1625-1649)
1651 - Johnathan Staymaker	Interregnum	(1649-1660)
1689 - Charlotte Staymaker	William 111	(1688-1702)
1701 - Elizabeth Staymaker	William 111	(1688-1702)
1731 - Francis Cooch	George 11	(1727-1760)
1745 - Roland Swallow	George 11	(1727-1760)
1760 - Elias Hoste	George 11	(1727-1760)
1765 - Henry Prince	George 111	(1760-1820)
1772 - George Darby	George 111	(1760-1820)
1781 - Cedric Quy	George 111	(1760-1820)
1790 - Samuel Evertree	George 111	(1760-1820)
1802 - Joseph Chadwicke	George 111	(1760-1820)
1809 - Frances Chadwicke	George 111	(1760-1820)
1815 - Elias Chadwicke	George 111	(1760-1820)
1821 - Thomas Higgins	George 111	(1820-1830)
1828 - Martha Higgins	George 111	(1820-1830)
1835 - Frederick Stapley	William 111	(1830-1837)
1850 - William Stapley	Victoria	(1837-1901)
1874 - Walter Tickner	Victoria	(1837-1901)
1890 - John Barden Shoemith	Victoria	(1837-1901)
1905 - Thomas Barrett	Edward 111	(1901-1910)
1907 - William Stevens	Edward 111	(1901-1910)
1909 - James Playfoot	Edward 111	(1901-1910)
1934 - Herbert Fudge	George 11	(1910-1936)
1948 - Harold Green	George 11	(1936-1952)
1954 - H.A. Hill	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)
1959 - R. Pace	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)
1962 - James Hodges	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)
1979 - Peter Rayner	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)
1983 - Kenneth L.M. Burke	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)
1985 - Kenneth L.M. Burke	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)
1990 - Brian & Florence Chaffer	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)
2003 - Martial & Natasha Chaussy	Elizabeth 11	(1952-)

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'The Great House' formerly known as 'The Wellington Arms' was built during the reign of Elizabeth 1 (1558-1603) in the year 1589. When it was first built it was originally two farm cottages, known as Jenk's Cottages, forming part of a farm estate. At this date the cottages were thatched with an upper jettied floor. The first recorded owner of the cottages is one Cedric Quayfe who is recorded as a farmer and hop grower of the parish of Hawkhurst.

In 1615, records show that a licence was granted to one Elanor Quayfe, wife of Cedric, and that she was licenced to sell to the public, ales and ciders only, six days a week excepting Sundays. Cedric Quayfe continued to grow and brew the hops in one cottage while wife Elanor retailed them from the other. A tradition that lasted for many years.

During the early seventeenth century records show that extensive alterations were carried out to the cottages to form them as one. This is evidenced by a sale inventory of 1651 when the property was purchased by one Jonathan Staymaker, a farmer and beer retailer of the parish of Hawkhurst, and is described as "one tenemente formerly Jenks Cottages". The house was for many years following this period known as 'Staymakers' even after Staymaker died in 1715 aged 94.

In the 1740's Hawkhurst was immortalised by an infamous gang of smugglers known as the Hawkhurst gang. Certain members of the gang were known to have used the 'Ale House' now known as 'The Great House', for in the Home Counties Magazine an extract taken from an earlier book called 'The King's Cutters and Smugglers' was published that states "Two known members of the Hawkhurst gang, one Thomas Kemp and another William Gray both wanted for housebreaking and highway robbery, were judged to be seen leaving the 'Brewster' known by name as 'Staymakers'". These were the words spoken by an informer, one Jacob Pring, at the trial of the two men who had denied being in the area. Both men with two other gang members were hung at Chichester in 1749.

In 1815 the house underwent further alterations and renovations, and the sign of the 'Wellington' hung in honour of the Duke of Wellington and to commemorate his victory at Waterloo.

'The Great House' has been a favourite stopping place for travellers for many years particularly hop-pickers. It has seen and undergone many changes since it was first built but has still managed to retain its original charm and character. So stay awhile, enjoy the fayre and reflect on those bygone days.