

The Park Hotel

The public house that is now known as The Wicked Lady stands between Sandridge and Wheathampstead on the main road across Nomansland at the junction with Dyke Lane (formerly Marford Lane) and opposite the cricket field. Its previous names have included 'King William' 'King William Inn', 'King William IV' and 'Park Hotel'. From the start, it was licensed as an alehouse and inn that took in lodgers, for which it was well placed on the main road.



The Park Hotel, probably in the 1930s

Perhaps the most notorious event that has taken place on Nomansland was in 1833, as described in Wikipedia.

On 30 May 1833, in a particularly brutal fight for the English heavyweight championship that lasted 3 hours and 6 minutes, James 'Deaf' Burke defeated Simon Byrne, the Irish champion. Byrne died three days later from his injuries. Burke was promptly arrested and tried for Byrne's murder, but was acquitted on 11 July 1833 and subsequently freed. A coroner's jury brought in a verdict of manslaughter against the principals, seconds, umpires and referees.

The Poor Rate Assessment of 1833 lists an alehouse at this location, calls it the King William Inn (King William IV reigned from 1830 to 1837) and values it and its associated land at £14 per year. The licensee was Cornelius Franklin, confirmed by White's Directory in 1837 and Pigots in 1839. He had been at the Queen's Head in Sandridge in 1826.

The 1841 census records Cornelius Franklin (aged 45) as 'Victualler' though without naming the inn. He lived with his wife Jane (40), daughter Sarah (20), John Torrey (*sic*?) a 65-year-old shoe maker, and Joseph Pettifoot (19) who may have been Torrey's indentured apprentice.

The 1841 Tithe map and Index list the 'King William Public House' owned by Ralph Thrale with Cornelius Franklin as licensee. The same two men are

named as owner and tenant of the large field behind the pub, which is named 'King William Mead'. The neighbouring arable fields are named King William Field, Near King William Field and Further King William Field, the latter three being owned by R. Oakley and tenanted by J. Oakley.

It has not been possible to find where Cornelius Franklin came from but there were other Franklins living in the area at this time so he may have been local or at least related to local people.

In the Poor Rate Assessment dated January 1841 the King William is one of the eight out of twenty licensed houses listed that are described as a 'public house'. It had a rateable value of £20, a figure exceeded by only two other alehouses in the parish, The Swan (at £28) and The Bull (£24), and significantly higher than many of the local beerhouses where the value was in single figures.

The Hertford and Bedford Reformer dated 27 August 1842 reported that Cornelius Franklin appeared as a witness in the case of Mary Carter who was charged with stealing a 'quantity of iron' valued at 10 shillings. James Shrimpton, a local dealer, described how Mary Carter had begged him to take the iron off her hands as her husband was in prison for stealing peas. Shrimpton took the iron to Cornelius Franklin at the King William 'with the intention of rewarding the ends of justice as prisoner's husband had offered me stolen property several times.' Franklin 'marked the iron for future identification' and Robert Bray, wheelwright of Wheathampstead, identified the iron as his property. Mary Carter was convicted and sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour.

Cornelius Franklin had a butcher's shop as well as running the King William and seems to have been in the habit of marking suspected stolen goods, as this report from the Herts Ad of 5 October 1844 demonstrates.

STEALING PORK.—On Monday, *William Hill*, a servant in husbandry to Mr. Cox, of Hill End Farm, Sandridge, was brought before J. Kinder, Esq., charged with having on the previous day (Sunday) stolen a piece of pork from the shop of Cornelius Franklin, of the King William public house, No Man's Land. The prosecutor stated that he had missed pork on several occasions, and suspecting the prisoner, he marked some. On the day mentioned, prisoner came to his house, had beer, and sat there for some time; on the family sitting down to dinner, he was observed to get up and go to the place where the pork was kept. Shortly afterwards he left the house, and proceeded across the common, followed by the prosecutor, who overtook him, and revealed his suspicions. The prisoner declared his innocence; but on being searched, a quantity of pork, the property of the prosecutor, was found hidden under his snock frock. Committed for trial.

Cornelius Franklin died in 1848. The Hertford Mercury dated 2 March 1850 included this advertisement. It shows that Franklin was brewing his own beer and the reference to a 'Large Booth, 30 feet by 20, with Boarded Floor and Canvass Cover' suggests that he held outdoor events in King William Mead.

Sale by Auction.

— NO MAN'S LAND,
BETWEEN ST. ALBAN'S AND WHEATHAMSTEAD.

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, Brewing Utensils,
Sweet Beer Pipes and Effects,
FOR SALE BY AUCTION, BY
Mr. GOUGH,
AT THE KING WILLIAM INN,
In the occupation of Mrs. Franklin.
On **WEDNESDAY**, the 6th March, 1850, at Eleven o'Clock,
without reserve,
By order of the Executors of the late Mr. Franklin.

The Furniture comprises Feather Beds; Four-post, Tent, and other Bedsteads, good Blankets, Dressing and other Tables; Mahogany Dining, Square, and Round Tables; Carpetting, Windsor and other Chairs, Linen, Glass, Mahogany Drawers, Looking Glasses, Barometer, Kitchen Requisites, long Deal Tables; **LARGE BOOTH**, 30 feet by 20, with Boarded Floor and Canvass Cover; excellent Brewing Copper, Coolers, Working Square, Mash Tubs, Sweet Beer Pipes, and numerous other Effects.

— May be viewed on the Morning of Sale: Catalogues may be had at all the principal Inns in the neighbourhood; on the Premises; and of Mr. Gough, Estate Agent, Valuer, &c., Cunningham Hill, St. Alban's.

Mrs Franklin must have given up the licence soon after her husband's death as the 1851 census shows that Charles Farnell (51), plumber and victualler, had taken over with his wife Jane (50). In addition there were three lodgers, two of whom were grooms and the third a horse trainer. It seems likely that they were involved in the horse-racing that took place on Nomansland Common and in Harpenden at this time.

The licence had changed hands again by 1853 when the Hertford Mercury dated 1 October reported that Charles Woodward of Wheathampstead was charged with stealing a silver watch belonging to Frederick Edwards of the 'King William public house, Nomansland'. This was very probably the same Charles Woodward who was working, aged 14, as an agricultural labourer at

Causewell (now Castle) Farm ten years before. Craven's directory of 1854 confirms that John Frederick Edwards held the licence of the King William.

The 1861 census shows that George Farr was licensee but he had been in place for some years before that. He appears to have been an enthusiastic cricketer, as shown by this scorecard from a match played in August 1855 (Herts Guardian 18 August). The scorer was not good at adding up.

REDBOURN v. NOMANSLAND.—On Tuesday the 10th inst., a match was played between 11 of each of these clubs at Nomansland, and won by the latter. After the game, T. Grimstead, Esq., and other gentlemen paid a very high compliment to Mr. G. Farr, landlord of the club-house for the pains he had taken to ensure the comfort and convenience of the cricketers.			
<i>Redbourn.</i>		<i>Nomansland</i>	
Pudephat c Farr.....	3	J Cox run out.....	4
Skilman c ditto	0	Blair b Pudephat	13
J Thoroughgood leg b w	5	Farr b ditto.....	12
G Thoroughgood b Wynn	7	Bruton c Skilman	1
Ashby c Smith	4	Snell b Grimstead	5
Dixon c Blain	5	Wynn std Skilman. ...	6
Grimstead not out.....	3	Lines leg b w.....	1
Cockle b Wynn.....	0	Smith b Pudephat	2
Sanders b Bruton.....	0	Hine b Grimstead.....	7
G Wells b ditto	3	H Cox b ditto.....	3
H Wells run out	0	Silvester not out.....	3
wides 4 byes 1	5	wides 3 byes 1	4
Total	35	Total	16

In the following year, the Herts Guardian dated 8 April reported that the cricket season of the Nomansland Cricket Club would commence on the following Monday and that 'The ground is in first rate order and a deal of trouble and expense have been bestowed by Mr Farr in bringing it to its present condition.'

The 1861 census shows that George Farr was 63 (and therefore in his late fifties when the cricket matches were played) and lived with his wife Sophia (60), son David (24) a gamekeeper, and unmarried sister-in-law Eliza Hirst (64). Ten years earlier, they had been at Bull Farm in Hamwell (now Amwell) where he farmed 30 acres and employed two labourers.

The 1862 Kelly's directory again lists George Farr as licensee and describes the William IV as a 'tavern'. He died in the same year and his widow Sarah (*sic*) took over the licence. She cannot have held it for long because there is a record of James Johnson transferring it to Thomas Archer in 1867. The Parish Records show that he and his wife Hannah's baby son Samuel was baptised the year before.

Thomas Archer was landlord of the King William in 1868. Under the headline 'Deficient measures' the Herts Ad dated 5 December grouped together five cases of landlords being charged with using short measures. Inspector Isgate gave evidence that, while Archer's pewter pots were accurate, 12 earthenware pots were found to be deficient. Despite his representative claiming that the earthenware pots were only for ornament, Archer was fined £2. 12s. with 12s. 6d. costs.

Thomas Archer was still at the King William in 1871. Aged 34, he came from Luton and lived with his wife Sarah (36) who was from Hampshire and their four children of whom the two youngest, aged 5 and 2, had been born in Wheathampstead. There were two servants, aged 22 and 13.

In 1874, yet another landlord of the King William appeared in court. On this occasion, the Herts Ad dated 16 May printed an unusually long report about Daniel Halsey being accused of selling intoxicating liquors out of hours on Sunday 26 April. The case hinged on whether the persons who had been served with beer were *bona fide* travellers. If they were, then, as an inn and alehouse, Halsey was obliged to serve them; if not, it was an offence to serve them.

These were the early days of agricultural labourers becoming organised and Constable Carter gave evidence that that he had been ordered to attend a meeting of the Agricultural Labourers Society on Nomansland on that evening. Arriving at 5.45, he found the King William 'thrown open and full of people'. On entering the taproom, he saw Halsey sweating, in his shirt sleeves, and with a pot of beer in his hand. There were more pots on the tables. While he saw four 'respectable-looking persons' with beer, he recognised at least nine others as local residents. He said that, when he entered the house, there was a 'general rush out'. He confirmed that there was 'a great gathering of agriculturalists' and several thousand people in the neighbourhood of the house. He said that Halsey had been the licensee for six months and there had been no trouble in that time.

Halsey's solicitor stated that he had served only the *bona fide* travellers and that the others had 'forced their way in'. When Halsey gave evidence, he said that he 'should remember the 26th of April last as long as he lived'. He and his wife had bolted themselves in the house and opened the door only when three horse-drawn traps arrived and demanded refreshments. He was obliged to serve them. He went to stable the horses but left the door unbolted and, when he returned, the house was crowded. A witness stated that 'the defendant seemed not to have the slightest control or management over it.' The Bench decided that 'the landlord was entirely powerless' and dismissed the case against him.

Nine men were then charged with being on the premises in prohibited hours on 26th ultimo. 'The defendants arranged themselves in a line before the Bench. They seemed, in appearance, to be a very unlikely set of men to bear the fines that might be levied upon them'. They offered a variety of excuses and one of them claimed that Constable Carter had picked on the poorest

men of the village. Two of the cases were adjourned, six of the men were fined 3s.11d and one was fined 4s.9d. They were allowed a week to find the money.

Daniel Halsey's tenure of the King William lasted only for another year. The licence was transferred and, on 3 July 1875, this advertisement appeared in the Herts Ad. It is significant that the heading refers to 'The Trustees of Mrs K.T.Dance.' In 1875, married women were not allowed to own property (the main Married Women's Property Act was passed in 1882) so Mrs Dance could not own the property directly. Similarly, the licence had to be issued to Mr Dance even though it was clear from the start that Mrs Dance would be the de facto manager. This is particularly important in the light of future events described below.

WHEATHAMPSTEAD.

THE TRUSTEES OF MRS. K. T. DANCE,

BEG respectfully to inform the inhabitants and gentry of Wheathampstead and neighbourhood that "King William the 4th" public house is now opened under entirely new management, as the **PARK HOTEL**, and they trust, by the respectable manner in which the house is worked, and the quality of everything supplied, to deserve support. Having a large bonded stock in Liverpool, their prices for quality will be unsurpassed.

Support is especially solicited to the excellent Stabling, Loose Boxes, Exercise and Training Ground attached to the Hotel, which is situated in the immediate centre of the late Mr. Leigh's celebrated pack of foxhounds. Particular attention will be given to hunters. Support is also respectfully solicited to the Cricket, Archery and Quoit Grounds.

Annual subscription to private select Cricket Ground, one guinea; to ground on Common, 5s. Annual subscription to private Archery Ground, one guinea; public ground, 5s. per annum, or 1s. an hour.

The Luton Band will play in the Hotel Grounds every Thursday, from 6.0 to 9.0 o'clock.

Ladies' Coffee Room. Cold Luncheons always ready. Hot Luncheons and Dinners supplied at the shortest notice.

The Park Hotel is four miles from St. Albans; five from Hatfield, and one from Wheathampstead Railway Station.

Carriages to order meet any Train.

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The transfer of the licence from Daniel Halsey was confirmed in the Herts Ad two weeks later.

This advertisement appeared on the same page of the Herts Ad as the one above. It shows that Mrs Burgess, licensee of the Swan, was holding a party for 'her friends in the vicinity' in the same week as Mrs Dance was opening the Park Hotel. We can surmise that Mrs Burgess did not welcome Mrs Dance's arrival and that her party was planned as a 'spoiler' for the competition.

MRS. BURGESS,

OF THE

SWAN INN, WHEATHAMPSTEAD,

BEGS to intimate to her friends in the vicinity that a **PARTY** will be held at **NO-MAN'S-LAND**, on **WEDNESDAY, the 7th, JULY INST.**

CRICKETING, QUOITING, AND OTHER RURAL SPORTS.

COLD COLLATION ON THE GROUND.

MUSIC IN ATTENDANCE.

Despite her ambitious prospectus, Mrs Dance, who was also carrying on the business of hotel-keeper at the Breck Hotel, Liverpool, and traded in both establishments, did not stay long enough to put her lofty intentions into practice. This advertisement appeared in the Luton Times on 18 December 1875, barely six months later.

SHORT NOTICE.

PARK HOTEL, NO-MAN'S-LAND,
Between St Albans and Wheathampstead.

Mr. RUMBALL

Is instructed to sell by Auction, on the premises,
on WEDNESDAY, December 22nd, at 10 o'clock,
by order of the proprietors,

THE Genuine Household FURNITURE, comprising bedsteads and bedding, blankets and linen, chests of drawers, marble top and other wash-stands, dressing glasses, tables, chairs, carpets, invalid's chair-bedstead, ladies' work tables, handsome secretaire, carved book case, chimney glasses, lamps, fenders and fire irons, quantity of books, engravings, glass, china, crockery, plated articles, and pewter measures, kitchen and dairy utensils, and other effects.

The stock of spirits in casks and bottles, 20 dozen of old port, 20 dozen pale sherry, 10 dozen champagne, 2 dozen of claret, cases of brandy, &c.

The out-door effects comprise corn bins, ladders, wheelbarrows, pig-troughs, iron hurdles and park gates; plated and brass mounted sets of harness, saddles, bridles, and horse clothing; Stanhope Phaeton; thoroughbred horse, capital fast-trotting cob, shorthorn heifer, in-pig sow, 9 fatting pigs, 3 goats, 6 geese, 9 ducks and 60 head of poultry; stack of barley with the straw, heap of manure, and numerous other effects.

May be viewed the morning of Sale, and Catalogues had on the premises, at the usual Inns, and of Mr. Rumball, Auctioneer, St. Albans.

The licence was transferred from John Dance to Charles William Gordon in January 1876 (Herts Ad 22 January). Possibly encouraged by the Dances' ambition, he placed this advertised in the Herts Ad of the same date.



If a report in the Herts Ad dated 25 March 1876 is anything to go by, Charles Gordon was unsuccessful in attracting the clientele he hoped for. William Ramsden (a misprint for Rainsden) of Sandridge was convicted of stealing a clock from the taproom of the Hotel. Evidence was given that the clock had gone missing on a Saturday evening, that Rainsden had been in the taproom that evening and that Police Constable Gibbs had found the clock when he searched Rainsden's cottage. Rainsden pleaded guilty but that he was 'tipsy and did not know what he was about.' He was sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labour.

This was a period of serious unrest among agricultural workers and the Herts and Beds branch of the recently-formed National Agricultural Labourers' Union held a series of well-attended meetings, one of which took place in the field behind the Park Hotel on Wednesday 25 October 1876, the day after a similar meeting in Hatfield. According to the Herts Ad of 28 October, both meetings were very well attended and some of the speeches made 'were of a very violent description'. The organisers were disappointed by the arrangements at the Park Hotel meeting as there was 'a counterattraction to the demonstration being permitted on the ground in the shape of stalls, roundabouts and shooting galleries' which were excessively noisy. Nevertheless, the speakers covered many subjects, including the need for higher wages and for better education for workers. The following wide-ranging resolution was passed unanimously.

Mr. C. WALLER then moved the resolutions referred to, namely, (1) praying for the compulsory formation of school boards, (2) asking for the extension of household suffrage to the counties, (3) condemning the Turkish atrocities and calling for an autumnal session of Parliament, and (4) conveying an expression of admiration to the proprietors of the *Daily News* for their enterprize in having brought to light the atrocities in Bulgaria. The resolutions were moved in a very long address, in which the speaker denounced the Conservative party in general, and the Government and Lord Salisbury in particular.

Mr. AYRESS briefly seconded the resolutions, which were put to the meeting, and each one declared to be unanimously carried.

Alas, Charles Gordon was over-optimistic for by the end of 1876, despite having had a funfair in his field and less than a year after taking over the Park Hotel, he was bankrupt with liabilities of £2,000 and with 17 creditors, of whom Mrs Dance was one. In an ensuing court hearing he claimed that on taking on the hotel he had paid £400 for the furniture in the house which was in his view not worth half that sum; that he had paid £193.18s for the stock, again not worth it, and that he had paid £300 for the goodwill that was not worth the paper it was written on. He alleged that Mrs Dance had misled him by suggesting that there was an agreement of six and a half years on the house – this was denied by Mrs Dance – that when she had left she had done so without paying either tithes or taxes, and that she had driven all the trade away with the result that, since he had been in the house, his takings had not averaged more than 10s. or 12s. per week. He also claimed that since December 1875 he had paid Mrs Dance something like £700, principally through the sale of furniture.

As part of the enquiry and subsequent valuation, a witness retained to stay in the house for a week suggested that the property in the house having been valued at £150 would have raised less had it been for sale by auction, that any residuary property value was very small, that there was no goodwill attached to the property and that the takings did not amount to more than £1 per week. In his view it was a small public house, not a hotel. (See Appendix 1 for more about Mrs Dance.)

At the County Petty Sessions on 18 August 1877, Robert Helton applied for a Protection Order for the Park Hotel (Herts Ad 25 August). He was unsuccessful on that occasion because the paperwork was incomplete but, on reapplying the following week, he was granted a temporary licence. The report in the Herts Ad dated 1 September says that the licence was being transferred from James Marshall. If this is correct, he must have taken over from Charles Gordon and have held the licence for barely a year before passing it on to Robert Helton.

The Herts Ad of 25 August 1877 also reported a case of theft at the Park Hotel. Elizabeth Walmer was charged with stealing a pair of boots, value 8s., a flannel petticoat, value 4s., a hairbrush and a necktie from Robert Helton on 9 August. She and a man 'said to be her husband' had lodged at the hotel for six days in the previous week and Mrs Walmer had helped Mrs Helton with the housework. Constable Henry Gibbs gave evidence that, having received a report from Mr Helton, he had gone to the Railway Hotel in Wheathampstead where he had found the prisoner in the taproom and had arrested her. Mrs Walmer had said 'Don't lock me up. I did not intend to steal them. I meant to take them back.' She was found to be wearing the flannel and the hairbrush and necktie were in her pocket. The report goes on: 'The prisoner, who cried, pleaded guilty to the charge ... The Chairman remarked on the aggravated nature of the crime of stealing from a man who had taken the prisoner into his house and the Bench sentenced her to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.'

Kelly's directory of 1878 lists Robert Helton at the Park Hotel. The Herts Ad dated 4 May in that year reported a story that suggests that the Hotel was still attracting an undesirable clientele. William Rainsden of Sandridge was charged with refusing to leave when asked to do so and for assaulting Helton. In evidence, Helton said that Rainsden was drunk and 'making a disturbance by drinking other persons' beer.' He eventually 'put him out' but Rainsden then punched him at least twice. Rainsden had eleven previous convictions, including one for felony (probably the theft of a clock from the Park Hotel described above). He was fined the maximum £5 for each of the two offences, with the alternative of four months' imprisonment.

In October 1878, Helton was back in court, this time as a witness in a case (Herts Ad 19 October) where Reginald Read of St Albans had tried to sell him some 'jewellery'. Helton had said he 'did not need such trash as that' and sent for a constable. Read was convicted of 'hawking' without a pedlar's licence and was fined 10s with 16s. 6d. costs, or one month's imprisonment.

Helton was soon having difficulty in the recruitment of satisfactory staff and in making ends meet. The Herts Ad dated 28 June 1879 reported that a man named Smith was seeking unpaid wages of £8.12s.11d. claiming that when hired in March 1878 he had been promised 10s. per week plus board to work about the house and on a small portion of land. However, up until 9th July he said he had received only 2s.6d., with Helton pleading that 'he had put his money out' and would settle as soon as he had the cash. For his part Helton maintained that there had never been an engagement with wages and that Smith had loitered about the premises until given permission to exercise the horse, something he did for three weeks. It was then agreed that he should remain at board only and he received a quantity of bacon valued at around £2. Smith acknowledged that he had left Helton's service in July but explained that on the day in question, having been sent by Mrs Helton to buy sheep's liver, he had returned to say that he could not get the liver and had bought six pounds of rump steak as he could not eat liver. Although he was requested to take the meat back he had run away and did not return until January. Helton alleged that Smith did very little work and that when he 'felt the heat too much' he had claimed that he was tired and had to go home and lie down. The judge felt that the evidence on both sides was highly unsatisfactory and that the services rendered by Smith would, with the board, be worth 2s.6d. per week. With Smith having received in kind and money £1.10s. out of £2.10s it was ruled that he should receive £1.

It was probably Helton's financial problems that led to his giving up the licence; it was transferred to Abel Munt either late in 1879 or early in 1880. He lasted barely a year; the Hertford Mercury dated 20 November 1880 records that a Protection Order for the Park Hotel had been granted from Abel Munt to George Carter. Munt moved on to become a licensed victualler at the Saracen's Head in Hemel Hempstead (1881 census). It appears that this too did not work out; he was a gardener in 1891 and a florist in 1901.

The 1881 census confirmed that the Park Hotel was occupied by George Carter (63) publican, his wife Margaret (60), both of whom came from

Hertford, and their son George (22), who had been born in Bromley. The census also lists Mary Ann Poynton, a 23-year-old milliner born in Norfolk, and describes her as their daughter but this has not been confirmed.

George Carter stayed at the Park Hotel for longer than his predecessors. Kelly's directories for 1881 and 1890 confirm that he was still there. However, it appears that Margaret died sometime in the 1880s because there is a record of a George Carter marrying Sarah Field in St Albans in 1888 and the 1891 census says that the licensee and Head of Household was Sarah Carter, aged 37 and described as 'wife'. The census also lists grandsons Albert (6) and Bertie (4) Carter, both born at Symondshyde, and lodger Harry Philpott (60), an agricultural labourer from Codicote.

A report in the Herts Ad dated 14 January 1893 states that 'George Carter, of the King William IV, otherwise the Park Hotel' was summoned for keeping his house open in prohibited hours on 25 December. The defence solicitor produced a doctor's certificate that Mr Carter was 'an old man and in such bad health that it was advisable he should not attend.' Constable Gibbs gave evidence that he had found six men in the taproom at about 11.00 am on Christmas morning and that there were pots of beer on the table. As in an earlier case, the defence argued that three of these men were *bona fide* travellers so, as an inn and alehouse, it was legal to serve them with a pot of ale at that time. The others were local men who were delivering some greens and some sugar to the Hotel. When giving her evidence, Sarah Carter, described as the wife of the landlord, said that her husband had held the licence for 13 years. The case against Carter was dismissed. Three of the six men were convicted of being on licensed premises in prohibited hours and were fined.

The Carters persevered with the business. Kelly's 1895 directory states that: 'This hotel is beautifully situated for the convenience of commercial gentlemen and cyclists where they will find every accommodation at the most moderate prices'.

George Carter died in November 1895 at the age of 77 having held the licence for about 15 years. A notice appeared in the London Gazette in April of the following year inviting creditors or others with an interest in his estate to make appropriate submissions.

The merry-go-round of licensees started again almost at once and the name reverted to the King William. The Herts Ad dated 19 June 1897 records that the licence was being transferred from John Compton to Fred Cheyne. It must be assumed that Compton had taken over from the Carters.

In November 1897 the hotel was put up for sale by the Harpenden Brewery as a freehold public house. It was described as:

'a brick and slated detached house, occupying a prominent corner position and comprising an enclosed foreground, with carriage drive, porch entrance and seats. Bar, parlour, tap room, kitchen and scullery; four bedrooms on

first floor and two attics. There is a detached dairy and open corrugated shed adjoining. Also a large enclosed stable yard with skittle alley; 5 horse stable yard and loft, car lodge and straw house, four capital loose boxes, harness room &c.'

The Morning Post dated 30 November reported that the freehold of the Park Hotel with five acres of land, let at an annual rent of £29, changed hands for £2,350.

The licence soon changed hands again; the Herts Ad dated 15 January 1898 reported that a Protection Order for the King William II (*sic*) had been granted from Frederick Cheyne to John Oxondale. He lasted for less than two years; the 1901 census shows that the Park Hotel (note the change of name again) was occupied by John Brown (42), publican, his wife Phoebe (35), their sons William (14) and Edward (12) and daughter Frances (9). Kelly's Directory for 1902 confirms that Brown was still there

The Minutes of the County Licensing Committee 1904 record the Park Hotel being owned by Glover & Sons, with a full licence and an annual value of £28. This was a similar rate to that of The Bull, slightly less than The Bell & Crown and The Railway Hotel (£30 and £32 respectively) and greater than that of The White Swan (£24). Although less than that of The Tin Pot (described as 'beer on' and valued at £30) it appears that, despite the remarks of the valuer at the time of the Gordon bankruptcy, the Park Hotel was one of the grander establishments in the village and not merely 'a small public house.'

John Brown must have moved on; the 1910 Kelly's directory records John Lemon at the Park Hotel, while the 1911 census shows that Arthur Bassill (43), who came from Chelsea, was the licensed victualler with his wife Susannah (38). Also living at The Park Hotel were Susannah's father George Stone (62), their son Edward (11) and daughter Minnie (16).

In yet another change of hands before 1914, Kelly's records that Charles William Cook was licensee in that year.

In the 81 years from 1833 to 1914, the King William/ Park Hotel had had at least 21 licensees. Two of them, Cornelius Franklin and George Carter, between them accounted for 33 of these years, so the other 19 averaged roughly 30 months tenure each.

Postscript

The Park Hotel was sold at auction by the Hatfield Brewery in 1920. The auction catalogue described it as follows.



The Wicked Lady



The Park Hotel was renamed The Wicked Lady some time after the appearance of the film of that name in 1945 in which Margaret Lockwood, a star of the post-war British cinema, played the role of Lady Elizabeth Ferrers. When carrying out her nefarious highway activities, she rode her horse across Nomansland to her home in Markyate, in between resisting the lustful advances of her co-star, James Mason.

Appendix 1

Mrs Dance's background, while not directly relevant to the Park Hotel, provides an interesting perspective on the role of women and the ownership of property and management of licensed premises at this time, when the Married Women's Property Acts (1870 and 1882) were only just becoming law.

Before her marriage in 1869 to a much older man, a deed had been executed that conveyed her future husband's property on the farm he then owned in Worcestershire together with some shares belonging to his intended wife to her, free of the debts and control of her husband. Subsequently with a portion of the money from the sale of the farm, the Breck Hotel in Liverpool was purchased in their joint names and Mrs Dance carried on the duties of a hotel keeper. When the Park Hotel was purchased in April 1875, again in their joint names, she traded at both establishments before they sold both properties and bought the Pyrgo Arms in Eastwick, a village just north of Harlow.

The Hertford Mercury dated 2 February 1878 reported a case heard at Bishops Stortford County Court which reveals the complexities of Mr and Mrs Dance's financial affairs. The press report is headlined 'A Long Litigation Ended at Last' and starts 'This was a running down case which has been before the court for a long period and the circumstances must be pretty well known to many of our readers'. This particular hearing concerned the ownership of a horse but included evidence of a charge against Mr Dance for the recovery of moneys relating to repair work allegedly commissioned by him at the Park Hotel and to profits accruing from the hotel in Eastwick. Mrs Dance gave evidence that her husband was aged 76, extremely ill, and unable to give evidence himself. A medical certificate was produced. In her evidence, she maintained that she had continued the separate account set up before her marriage, that she paid all takings and profits into this account and that, while her husband's name appeared over the door of the different houses they had purchased, he played no part in the running of them. She claimed that while all the houses, including the Park Hotel, had been purchased in their joint names, licences were always taken out in her husband's name because the magistrates would not otherwise grant them. In the event, the judge, Mr Justice Beales, stated that 'To his mind, the case was as clear as could be, that the property dealt with was her property. There was no doubt she was the best manager of the two (laughter). She had given her evidence very clearly and distinctly; she produced all and concealed nothing.' The court concluded that the marriage settlement should not be upset and that Mrs Dance should not face a potential loss of £2,000.