



**The Midhurst Society**

## **RED LION STREET, MIDHURST**

Red Lion Street, West side continuing from Church Hill

Bird Potter and Co, Malcolm Whiteheads,  
Midhurst Valet Service  
and Ewen House



(formerly listed as Premises 25 yards north of West Street)



[Van Glue Beauty; Comestibles  
(delicatessen and cafe); Richard Arnold  
(opticians). Formerly Ewens Sweets.]

### **Grade II**

One building, originally the Red Lion Inn. Now four shops or business houses with accommodation over. C17 or earlier timber-framed building, now faced with roughcast. First floor oversails. Tiled roof. Casement windows. Modern shop fronts. Malcolm Whiteheads has a gable with carved bargeboards and an iron bracket of the former inn-sign. Two storeys and attic. Seven windows. One dormer.

Listing NGR: SU8867421472

Extract from the **Sussex entries of the Victoria County History:**

"The next north (two shops) is a plastered building with a jettied upper story on curved brackets of the 17th century; it has modern windows. A longer building adjoining, now a house and two shops, was probably one tenement of early-17th-century date and was evidently an inn ('The Lion' ?). The southernmost part projects a little; it has a jettied upper story and a gablehead, the barge-boards of which are carved with a pierced foliage pattern. It is all plastered, as is also the northern extension, which is also jettied above the two modern shop-fronts. In front of the gable is the iron bracket for the former inn-sign."

In the **1901 Census**, William Gee is the licensed victualler at **The Red Lion Inn**, living there with his wife Rosa and 5 children. Also listed are six boarders, all male; five of them labourers.

**Midhurst Society member and writer Peter Sydenham** was evacuated to Midhurst during WW2. He is writing a four-volume series of memories of his time here, expanding his personal story to include other interesting facts about the District. This is an advance extract (edited) from *Midhurst WW Memoirs: 3. Lowest Times (1940-1943)*. In preparation for release late in 2021. [www.midhurstmemoirs.com](http://www.midhurstmemoirs.com)

*Mum learned of there being an empty old house in Red Lion Street. It was then known as the 'the house 25 yards North of West Street'.*

*The interior of the 16th or 17<sup>th</sup> century terrace house, cum shop, was then like stepping inside a Dickensian novel. There were few windows and they were small and filthy dirty. Inside there were dark narrow walkways through an amazing collection of old stuff that I now recognise as being Victoriana antiques.*

*There were no living rooms. It was just a shop that had been left at some stage with the previous owners rubbish. It was very bleak but by that evening it had become home. Mum was like that: get on with it and take what is on offer. This would have to do!*

*Upstairs, an area we into which we did not have access initially, there were numerous stuffed birds and animals, some under bell glasses, others dropping bits as they deteriorated. There were clocks, vases, pottery and porcelain all sitting on, and under, tables and credenzas, breakfast tables, side boards, sofas and more. Dust and heavy veils of white and dusty cobwebs were everywhere. The sole dirt-covered 25w light globe hanging in the middle of this lot gave the whole area a feel of a Miss Havisham's room in Charles Dickens 'Great Expectations'. It was clearly an over-filled store area of items, not an over-cluttered living space. There is evidence that the shop had been used by an estate auction business before WW2 so perhaps the owner or renter was looking forward to making a killing when these antiques were sold off one day? I often wonder who he was. Mum said the owner was the fishmonger around the corner in West Street and that was where she went to periodically pay the rent. If that was true then that would have been Mr Willshire, not Mr Farnes next door.. but memories go very wrong at times!*

*Downstairs a little more daylight penetrated the gloom from the large window fronting onto Red Lion Street. The comparative brightness made it easier to accept and study the surroundings we found ourselves in. We had use of a rather ancient toilet at the back of the building so at least there was no need to go out into the elements to do a job. There was also a Butler style porcelain sink with loads of surface cracks in it filled with dark and uninviting grime. But at least it had mains tap water downstairs – cold as ice in the winter. There was no bathroom or wash room. There was no scullery, kitchen cooking, dining area or bedroom. It had not been a place in which to live for many years since Medieval times when it was used as its name, the Red Lion Inn, implies.*

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Red Lion Street, West Side  
House of Anita and Tudor Craft  
[formerly Carver (tailor)  
now Wheelers Bookshop]

Grade II

House and shop. C16-17 timber-framed building now faced with roughcast. First floor oversails with curved brackets. Tiled roof. Sash windows on first floor with glazing bars intact. Modern shop window below. Two storeys. Two windows.

Listing NGR: SU8867221458



In the cellar (not accessible to the public) are two heads.



Simon Wheeler: "The head on the right is the older one. Celtic design (related to the old religion) in quite a soft sandstone and could be from anytime between the Iron Age and the Dark Ages, but likely from the time of the Roman occupation. The head on the left is medieval and of a much tougher stone. Origins unknown but both may have been in or on another building in the town or area. Either the keep on the hill, or the old Knights Hospitaller building would be likely candidates."

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Red Lion Street, West side  
Sussex House  
(Formerly listed as Shop on North  
corner of West Street)



Grade II

House. South portion. C18. Stuccoed. Modillion eaves cornice. Tiled roof. Glazing bars intact on first floor. On ground floor old fluted pilasters flank modern plate glass shop windows. Two storeys. Three windows. North end, originally a separate building, is a C16 timber-framed building with plaster infilling and diagonal braces. Stone plinth, cemented. First floor oversails on moulded bressummer. Tiled roof. Four-light shallow bay window projecting on corbels on first floor. Modern bay window on ground floor. Two storeys. One window.

Listing NGR: SU8867121444

[now South Downs Property Solutions and  
Sussex House Boutique; formerly Stedmans, ladies & gentswear]

Extract from the Sussex entries of the Victoria County History:

"The building west of this block at the corner of Lion Street is modern but the next north of it in the narrow part of the street next the island may be of 15th or early-16th-century date, judging from the moulded bressummer to the jettied upper story: it is a small building with a frontage of about 16 ft. and has timberframing to both stories."

Red Lion Street  
Harveys Bottle and Jug

(Formerly listed as Maxines Restaurant, MARKET SQUARE.  
Previously listed as Elizabeth House, MARKET  
SQUARE)

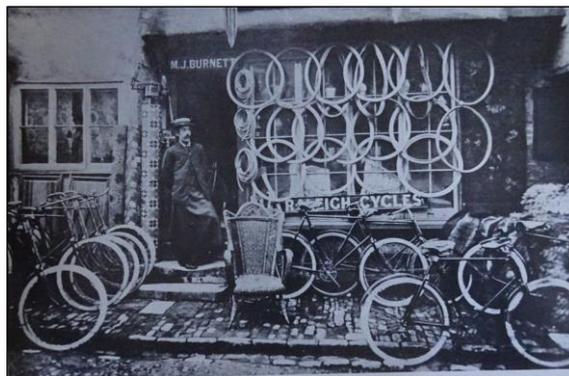
GV II listed 18.6.59

House and restaurant. C17 or earlier timber-framed building with plaster infilling and curved braces. First floor jettied. Projecting gable ends east and west jettied. Tiled roof. Casement windows. The north wall has two exposed fireplaces of another house which adjoined there. Two storeys and attic in gables. Two windows.

Listing NGR: SU8869121459



[The building is now a residence and has reverted to its former name: Elizabeth House. Originally it was one of three Tudor cottages, with gabled ends facing the Market Square. The two cottages to the north were demolished to make way for the War Memorial. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century this one was occupied by a bicycle repairman (photo from the Charles White Collection). When the bicycle man died circa 1948 the building was restored, and timber framing was revealed – along with oak panelling and tempera mural paintings thought to date from the late 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century. The building was later used by the National Provincial Bank and then it became a coffee tavern.]



(Photos of the 'Fresco Room' courtesy of West Sussex CC)

Extract from the Sussex entries of the Victoria County History:

"The shop and house next north [of the Swan Inn] appears to date from earlier in the 17th-century than the inn. The walls are plastered: the east and west ends have jettied upper stories and projecting gable-heads. There was another building north of it and its present north wall was the party wall. It is of ancient timber-framing with curved struts, and two fire-places are exposed; the upper has moulded brick jambs and a four-centred head."

Extract from Southern Weekly News, Feb 1949:

"A discovery of great artistic as well as antiquarian interest is being made now in the ancient West Sussex town of Midhurst. It may be described shortly, if not technically, as the most beautiful timber framing of a small domestic building that I, as a member of the Sussex and Brighton Archaeological Societies, have yet seen in the county. "The house forms the northern apex of a triangle of old buildings which inconveniently divides the otherwise broad Church Hill into two narrow lanes. With its high pitched, gabled roof, its overhanging storeys, its deeply worn outside stairway, its narrow cobbled footpath, it is a veritable model of 'Ye Olde Englysshe Christmas card' house.

[Following the death of Matt Burnett, the bicycle-man, the property was sold to Mr. A. C. Visick who is clearing the clutter and renovating and restoring.]

"The auctioneers (Messrs Knight and Son) pointed out to the purchasers that the place was sold subject to a ground rent of sixpence a year for ten thousand years. The object was to retain for the seller the Parliamentary vote attached to the site. This lease began in 1760, so the new purchasers have still to face responsibility for those sixpences for the next 9,800 years or so." **G.A.**



From an undated and uncredited newspaper cutting:

"The opening of the Tudor Rose, a tea and coffee tavern, tomorrow at Elizabeth House, Midhurst, rated by many eminent historians as one of the most valuable examples of Elizabethan architecture in the country, has realised an ambition for a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Judge. When Elizabeth House, a former bank, was offered for sale it provided their ideal opportunity. The new home of Norman, Susan and their four-year-old daughter Sarah, has a fascinating history. It is noted for the beautiful craftsmanship of its timbering and its old walls made of wattle and hazle twig mixture, parts of which have been uncovered and framed. In an upstairs toom are some fine tempera murals, probably executed in the 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The murals consist of skilfully etched drawings of lion, fox, grapes and the Tudor Rose which has given the tavern its name."

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### Red Lion Street, The Swan Inn



GV II 18.6.1959

This building and Elizabeth House adjoining are all that remains of an island block in Red Lion Street which ran north from the former Market House in South Street. Public House. C17 or earlier timber-framed building, altered at later dates and now faced with stucco. First floor slightly jettied. Gable at north end of west front. Tiled roof. Casement windows. The south end is a C19 addition. Two storeys. Four windows.

Listing NGR: SU8869121446

(Formerly listed under MARKET SQUARE (west side))

Extract from the Sussex entries in the Victoria County History:

"The Swan Inn and an adjoining building are the remains of a 17th-century island north of the market hall and west of the market square. The inn has plastered walls and the upper story of most of the east front is jettied, but the south block is modern."

From Harvey's website:

"First established as a coaching inn in 1460, the Swan retains much of its antique charm."

[From research done by Tim Rudwick]

Known to have been a pub since 1811.

1845: John Lithgow

1895: Mrs Mary Letti

1895: Henry Petter

1911: Henry Russell



With grateful thanks to Digby Furneaux for the interior photographs (March 2021)

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