



## 11 • Pubs

Currently, there are five public houses in this area: three in South Darent and two in Horton Kirby. All have been in existence for over 100 years (although The Bull is now a newer building).

### THE JOLLY MILLERS

The Jolly Millers in South Darent is mentioned in Kelly's Post

Office Directory of 1851 and could well have been in existence prior to that date. It is possible that its name derives from the millers in the area. There was certainly a flour mill on the River Darent by Mallys Place bridge in those days and of course the Paper Mill opposite was built on the site of a flour mill. During the early part of this century, it was connected with the Fire Brigade (see later chapter on this subject). In 1994 the pub is noted for its Karaoke

Nights and Barbecues, and the current licensee, Graham Robinson, has taken great pride in an excellent display of hanging baskets to complement this attractive old building.



*This photograph of The Jolly Millers can be dated to c 1910 from the name W J Gaunt over the butchers shop on the left.  
Photograph courtesy of Dartford Library*



*A group outside the Queen with Tom Turner as a boy (far right) c 1912  
Photograph courtesy of Megan and Tom Turner*

## THE QUEEN

The Queen in New Road, South Darenth presumably derives its name from Queen Victoria, during whose reign it originated as a beer house. When Trevor Floyd took over as landlord in 1969, there was an entrance to an old Roman flint mine in the back garden. He used it for growing mushrooms but it is now filled in. In 1988 The Queen extended down the hill into what had previously been a shop.

## THE SUN

The deeds of The Sun public house, South Darenth date back to March 1875 when it was acquired by Kidd's Brewery. Other sources indicate, however, that a



beer house existed on the site or nearby prior to that date, although a map dated 1865 shows no building there.

According to Kelly's Directory, from 1903 the licensee was William King, who was followed by Frederick Trigg. Both supplied horses for the local fire station and had horsedrawn taxis. The horses were kept in stalls at the side of the pub (now demolished to make the car park a little larger).

The viaduct has always dominated The Sun building and Trevor Carman told the sad story of how one day in the 1920s Mr King, his grandfather, was working with his horses when suddenly a railway sleeper was accidentally knocked over the parapet of the viaduct by railwaymen working above. It hit Mr King on the leg, which turned gangrenous and he died soon afterwards.

*The Sun, South Darenth  
Photograph courtesy of Trevor Manning*

Mr. Parker ..... Aug 13 ..... 1914

Dr. to **WILLIAM KING,**  
**CAB AND FLY PROPRIETOR,**  
 THE "SUN" INN, SOUTH DARENTH, KENT.  
 Near Farningham Road Station.

**LICENSED CARRIAGES LET OUT ON HIRE.**  
 Orders Promptly Attended to at Railway Stations.  
 SPECIAL CLOSED CARRIAGES FOR BALLS, &c.

Aug 3.	London Joe Oliver John Jones and three quarried.				14 0
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*The Fighting Cocks building has changed little over the years  
 Photograph courtesy of Trevor Manning*

A press cutting from the local paper of 1963 recalled a funny story that happened during the Second World War: *The then landlady, Mrs Collins, recalled two rather odd strangers entering the bar and asking for "beer". The locals looked uneasily from the two men to Mrs Collins and back and then challenged the strangers, "Are you German?". "They didn't answer", went on Mrs Collins, "but tried to run out. One got outside but the other man was caught inside and he pulled a gun out. I just dropped behind the bar! Anyway the men got him and gave him a beating, but he called the other man back. Then he told us he was a New Zealander and the other man was English and they were on an exercise from Sevenoaks to check the defences. I felt very sorry about it all afterwards, but they were disguised and used funny accents and asked for beer which the Germans would do".*

In 1994 Jean Cook is the licensee of this pub where there is often live music as Jean is a singer and her family are all musical. The Sun has been home to a Sea Anglers' Club for several years started up by Chris Mills, Roger Chambers and Chris Blake.

## THE FIGHTING COCKS

The building of The Fighting Cocks in The Street, Horton Kirby, is said to have originated in 1776 as a farmhouse, subsequently being converted to an ale house in 1818. The landlord at the time used to arrange cock-fights, hence the name. He was, incidentally, fined on

three occasions for keeping a gaming house. In those days, cock-fighting was OK but wagering on the result was illegal! A cock-pit existed at the inn until the middle of the 19th Century.

During the later part of that century, John Lewis was the inn-keeper and was known locally for his benevolence. He was said to throw hot money and raisins to the village children in cold weather. He also happened to have been convicted in June 1890 for selling adulterated whisky and was fined 11s 6d.

Since Nigel and Jenny Archer have run The Fighting Cocks it has had quite a menagerie of animals, such as goats, ducks, chickens and rabbits in the field going down to the river. There are games of bat and trap and once a year a team is invited over from France for the annual boules (French bowls) match.

## THE BULL

The Bull in Horton Kirby is well over 100 years old but has not always been in the same building. Its original deeds are dated May 1848 when The Bull was further along Lombard Street. The photograph is deceptive as the building looks nearer to the road junction than it is, but this is almost certainly what is now 12 and 13 Russell Terrace. The present

owner of Number 13, Evelyn Austin, confirms that the cellars, running under both houses are still there, although now boarded up. The Bull's landlord in the late 1890s was William Petty. If you look carefully at the inn sign on the photograph you will see his name thus dating the photo to this time. In Kelly's Directory of 1899 William Petty is listed as "Beer Retailer. Pony and Trap for Hire". When he died in 1899, Mrs Petty took over.



*The "Old" Bull in Lombard Street with Russell House on the left and Forge House on the right  
Photograph courtesy of Barbara Bradley*

It has been difficult to find out when the present building was constructed. Ivy Burnett who was a little girl at the time living in Lombard Cottages, told how her grandfather, William Wells, was a bricklayer who helped to build it. Jack Skinner who has a long memory of the pub and its many characters over the years, including Arthur Turner, the Waggoner on Court Lodge Farm, put the building at between 1906 and 1908 which would fit in with the fact that an OS map of 1909 shows a building on the corner. In the early days, Spencer Gentry who walked past The Bull every day on his way to school from his home at 5 Bexley Cottages well remembered stopping at the Jug Room to buy sherbet dabs and other sweets.

Since 1985 Alan and Sylvia Baker have run this pub along traditional lines with pub games including dominoes and crib as well as offering bat and trap during the summer in their beautifully kept garden. Their abundance of hanging baskets is also much admired. The Bull had a brief moment of fame when its garden was used for a live BBC TV broadcast during the Rail Link battle.

Prior to being called simply The Bull, the pub in 12 and 13 Russell Terrace was called "The Bull and Bavenstack". This unusual name derives from baven, which is a thin piece of split wood used by bakers to fire their ovens. Apparently, years ago stacks of "bavens" were sent on barges from this area to London for this purpose.

*The "New" Bull  
Postcard Collection*



## OTHER PUBS

There are still in existence two other buildings in Horton Kirby which used to be public houses and there may well be others in the parish. These are “The Royal Oak” in The Street, and “The Churchgate” next to the Church.



In 1913 Henry Johncock was listed as the landlord of The Royal Oak or, more accurately, as the “Beer Retailer”. If the sign on the accompanying photograph is looked at under a magnifying glass, the name Henry Johncock can be seen. After 1916 when the licence was lost, or rather “refused”, the building became a private dwelling but gradually fell into disrepair. In 1950 or thereabouts a Demolition Order was issued and the present very attractive house was built, almost from scratch, in the same style and appearance.

The Old Churchgate, next to the Church, is a very old building, some 400 years old and, at least for some part of that time, was an ale house. It is certainly mentioned in the Alehouse Keepers’ Recognizances of 1707, but it is not mentioned in the Licensing Records of 1885. The building is, however, still there (now known as The Cottage) and the present owner, Barbara Cannell, confirmed that it was an ale house and the cellars are still in existence. The bar was probably at the rear of the building as they are still digging up

old clay pipes in the back garden. One can imagine the locals 200 years ago, drinking their ale and smoking their clay pipes - whether before or after attending Church is not recorded!

It would be fascinating to conjecture that the large number of public houses at one time in Horton Kirby arose from the area’s connections with the smuggling “trade”. Horton Kirby used to be a staging post on the route of smuggled goods, particularly rum, being transported from Gravesend eventually to South London.

In 1994 our five pubs are all very much a central part of the social life of our parish. Each has its own character and its loyal band of regulars who appreciate the various charms of their own local.

*The Royal Oak, The Street  
Photograph courtesy of Dartford Library*

*Old Churchgate before its extension  
Photograph courtesy of Winnie Wells*

