

West Dean Village History Trail

No 26

RED LION HOUSE (FORMERLY THE RED LION PUBLIC HOUSE)

Originally the site consisted of two farmhouses and a dairy, all built in the 1600s. The building was tiled in about 1680 and was possibly thatched before then. Traces of the stone dairy floor remain today. During the 1790s the building was modernised and the present frontage, which is in a quite different style from the rear building, was added. This addition has been attributed to the beginning of the construction of the canal.

It is not known exactly when the building became a public house but it was not always known as the Red Lion. It was the Crown Hotel in 1851, the Lion in the late 19th Century and became the Red Lion in 1905. The dairy did not stop, however. Mr Stone, the landlord from 1920 to 1940, still kept dairy cows as well as running the inn.



THE LION LATE 19TH CENTURY



THE RED LION, DATE UNKNOWN,
WHEELWRIGHT'S ON LEFT

The passage of the county boundary through the middle of the building has always been a notable feature and many landlords, particularly in the 20th Century, made the most of it as an attraction. An Echo reporter who visited in 1935, when movement of the county boundary was being considered, commented that the two counties had different licensing hours and was disappointed when the patrons did not troop into the other county for another half hour of drinking time. On another occasion some years before the county boundary really did matter. An inquest there was

well into proceedings before it occurred to the coroner to check whether he was in Hampshire. Neither the police officer nor the doctor in attendance knew, so the landlord was called. On being told he was in Wiltshire the coroner said he must stop the inquest because he could not hold it in the wrong county. The landlord reassured him all he had to do was move across to the Hampshire bar and carry on.

The Red Lion was bought by Romsey brewers Strong and Co at the Norman Court sale and remained in their ownership and their successors, Whitbread and Co, until 1990. After two private landlords it was sold as a private house and ceased to operate as a public house in November 1995.



THE RED LION WITH
STRONG & CO SIGN
BETWEEN THE TREES,
DATE UNKNOWN



THE RED LION
IN 1945

