

The Hussar beerhouse

By Amy Myers

The Hussar beerhouse was sold at auction and its licence revoked on 25th January 1912. By the outbreak of war in 1914 its premises had become our present post office run by John Hughes whose family ran it for many decades to come. However, when the Hussar sprang



Officers of the 11th Hussars, ca. 1856
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:11th-hussars-officer-1856.jpg>

into being is not clear. Its name is an unusual, but not unknown, name for a pub. The theory in one Dictionary of Pub Names ¹ is that the name probably comes from the 11th Hussars (Prince Albert's Own) Regiment, famous for its part in the Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854.

Another possibility is that the name of the Hussar in Lenham stems from the late eighteenth century when Kent suffered from the fear of invasion from

France after 1778 when France declared its support for America in its War of Independence. All routes to London were carefully guarded² and there were many military camps of which Lenham Heath was one, with Lenham village becoming a handy source of off-duty pleasure. The peace treaty was signed seven years later and Lenham Heath camp was no longer active. William Carter, one of the disbanded soldiers stationed there, wrote an elegy in its honour in 1785, including what might have been a tribute to the Hussar:

¹ Wordsworth Reference Series

² *Sarah Baker and her Kentish Theatres*, Jean Baker, from J.R. Western's *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century*.

‘The sun-burnt soldier at an alehouse door

‘Pays from his scant purse his last night’s score

‘And as his host a parting draught bestows

‘The cum’brous belt o’er his broad shoulder throws

‘Adjusts his knapsack shakes his landlord’s hand

‘His musket grasps and takes his silent stand.’³

If that alehouse was indeed the Hussar, its publican remains nameless. More is known of its later publicans. In 1911 Alfred Pluck was a publican⁴ there, and later he moved on to Harrietsham. In 1886 as a corporal in the Royal Scots (Lothian) Regiment he had won a Good Conduct prize. Unfortunately the words good conduct could not be applied to all the Hussar’s publicans. On 30th December 1892 the *Kent & Sussex Courier*⁵ reported the distressing case of the then tenant of the Hussar, Thomas Bramble, on the grounds that he was not a fit and proper person to hold the licence, as the beerhouse was frequented by persons of bad character, thieves and prostitutes. Evidence was produced to this effect by the police that ‘the roughest element of the place used the house’. It seemed an open and shut case – except that it turned out that the tenant at the time had not been Thomas Bramble but 27-year-old Robert Goodbody and the licence had since changed hands. Thomas left the hearing without a stain on his character and the licence was duly renewed.

A happier tale is that of the splendidly named Augustus Worledge who was the licensee in 1907. Born in 1866 in Plymouth, he had married Emmeline Bauckham in the Medway area in

³ *Epistle from the Disbanded Subaltern: the Camp at Lenham, 1785*

⁴ www.pluckrose.org

⁵ Dover Kent Archives

1906. In 1909 a happy event took place at the Hussar when Emmeline gave birth to their son, also splendidly named Augustus.

Today the only visible sign of the history of the Hussar is part of the word Taproom in the brickwork that used to be the rear of the beerhouse and is now private property. In the Hussar's time the premises were much larger than they are for today's post office, described in the auction details as consisting of a shop, parlour, kitchen, scullery, living room, large club room and four bedrooms with cellar etc.⁶ When the Hussar was up for sale, John Hughes had the choice of buying that or the Chequers which was also on the market.⁷ He chose the old Hussar to be not only his post office but his family home and now Lenham has both Chequers and the post office as thriving and indispensable amenities.

⁶ Thank you to Helen Ferguson for the information

⁷ Thank you to John Hughes' daughter, Jean Peter for Information