



How it all began at the Timber Batts

In the hundred of Stowting, within the parish of Elmsted, lies the manor of Bodsham and there at the green can be found the sign of the Timber Batts.

The property was built during the reign of Henry VII (1485 - 1509) in the year 1485, under the orders of John Honywood esq of Sene in Newington, near Hythe, who came to possess the parish of Elmsted in that year. The house was built for the bailiff of the Honywood estate to reside in. In 1512, one Thomas Stanton, bailiff and overseer resided here, and in 1546 one Thomas Gains bailiff of the Honywood estate lived here.

During his term of office Thomas Gains presented the following people to the assizes for committing certain offences against the statute. In 1551, one Thomas Hayward was presented, that being a cottager within the demesne he had not come to mend the roads for the space of five days as required, in 1552 John Homewood for keeping pigs without rings so that they tore up land belonging to Thomas Honywood esq. In August of the same year, Edmund Wilson, being a tenant that he should permit his son to break down the hedges of Thomas Honywood and others, for this offence Wilson forfeited 12d. in 1553, Wilson was again presented with his wife Mary for not coming to the parish church and in 1554 one Edgar Laurence was presented for receiving Michael Greene after prohibited hours.

By 1600, the property ceased to be used by the bailiff of the estate.

It was instead occupied by a number of tenant farmers for the purpose of growing hops. In 1608 one Jeremiah Wasden occupied the house with his wife Lucie and five children. In 1655,

one Thomas Martin resided here with his wife Maria, seven children and a woman called Amy Darsett, and in 1708 one William Solley lived here with his family, worked the farm and rented a plough share, all these and numerous others from 1600 to 1780 were tenant farmers, most of them kept livestock for dairy produce, with the odd exception who kept bees for honey. The majority attempted to grow hops, but the soil was poor and needing constant ploughing. All paid taxes or tithes. All were bound and answerable to the estate of Honywood. The manor of Elmsted and Bodsham had always brewed and administered ale to the poor of the parish which by 1770 numbered thirty.



Many of the hop growers occupying this house brewed ale for their own consumption but could not sell to others as licence prevented them. In 1780 with the consent of the estate and manor an ale and cider licence was granted to one Thomas Flynte farmer of the parish to sell his brew of ales to those living within the boundaries of Elmsted and Bodsham alone. The house became a registered but untitled ale house. Roads in and out of the parish were poor, so travellers were few and the necessity to sell to those outside the parish did not arise until well into the nineteenth century.

In 1833, with greatly improved roads a licence was granted to sell to the public in general. The house was given the title of the Prince of Wales. The first keeper of the inn was one Frances Waters a farmer and grazier of the parish. It remained in their families hands until 1894, though still controlled by the estate of Honywood. The land belonging to the inn was farmed till 1859 when it was taken over by George Waters, carpenter and beer seller of the parish. The inn remained part of the Honywood estate until 1960 when it was sold to a private buyer, one Edward Anning who carried out extensive refurbishments during the course of which in 1963 he changed the name to that of the present Timber Batts, said to be called so

because of a nearby timber yard that produced timber battens or batts.