

London House



The building originally a drapers eventually became Old Woking Post Office. When this was closed in 2006, the premises were converted into a restaurant, now **London House Restaurant**. It appears to have been built as a timber framed building, possibly in the 17th or 18th centuries and is suggested that it was occupied at one time by the manager of the brewery next door. Very little remains of this original structure today.

There is more than one roof line which indicates that the building has undergone a number of alterations over the centuries until achieving its present form. The building is in three parts; the front being the original cottage with the next part constructed in the late 18th or early 19th century. An addition was put on to the back of the building in the mid 20th century followed by a further addition in the early 21st century.

When the building was converted into a restaurant, a well was discovered in the area of the present bar. This well has now been filled in but its presence would seem to confirm that the original building was probably a cottage fronting onto the street with the well at its back door.

Although the commentary to the 1719 John Remnant map contains of a list of all the then residents of the old Woking, it does not show who was living at the premises then. John Goater **JR3** may have been the occupier. The 1841 Tithe Map is more specific and the owner and occupier is shown as William Freeland & others **TM206/7**.

The Censuses 1851-1901 are also helpful as follows but there is no specific reference for 1841. Perhaps too William Kensett was not living at London House between 1851 and 1856.

1851

Walter Kensett, draper, his housekeeper Elizabeth Potter, William Jenner draper's assistant and a visitor, Susanna Kensett

The Court Rolls show Walter Kensett was admitted as tenant on 7th March 1856

1861

Walter Kensett, draper, clothier and outfitter, his housekeeper Emma Swayne, George Fairall draper's assistant and two house servants, John Albery and Emma Wood.

1871

Walter Kensett, linen draper, his wife Emma plus Jane Hone domestic servant and Harry Prescott draper's assistant.

1881 There is no reason to doubt that the premises continued to house a drapers in subsequent years. The census return for the High Street for 1881 shows the following two drapers but there is not indication as to which business was at London House.

Joseph Laker, draper and clothier, his wife Lydia and their children, Lydia, domestic, Agnes, draper's assistant, Arthur, corn merchant, Kate, draper's assistant, Charles and Ernest

and

Edwin Rowland, draper employing two apprentices, his wife, Caroline and their children, Ellen and Albert, Walter R Kelsey, draper's apprentice, Charles A Smythe, draper's apprentice and Mary Fisher, housekeeper.

On 11th November 1887 the tenancy of the property was transferred to Francis Muggeridge from Walter Kensett. The property is referred to in the Court Rolls as:

*All that customary cottage or tenement with the garden cartilage and appurtenances thereto belonging situate in Town Street in Woking adjoining the messuage formerly of Mary Tucker then of William Harvest since of Thomas Newman and now or late of Samuel Strong in the West (see **Ye Olde Brew House**) and to a messuage formerly of Sarah Bedford widow and since of Francis Albury and now or late of Jane Stevens on the East.*

When the fascia board over the front shop window were taken down in 2006 during the conversion to a restaurant a 19th century shop sign board was revealed. This was very faded and beyond renovation. The board carried the name *Muggeridge & Cole*. Either side of the name in scrolled writing was *haberdashers* and *drapers*.

1891

Francis Mugging (Muggeridge), draper, his wife, Jane, their daughter, Dora, a visitor Mary Philpott and a servant, Phoebe Ede.

1901 High Street

Francis Muggeridge, draper and outfitter, his wife Jane, their daughter Dora and Walter Linton boarder and draper's assistant.

1921-6 F Muggeridge draper and outfitter 1927-32 Hughes & Son draper and outfitter 1936-39 WB Gardener draper and outfitter **1948** JC Aker draper and outfitter **1949-57** FW Allen draper and outfitter **1964** FW Allen, draper and post office **1969** FM Latham draper and post office **WNM**.

In 1934 the plan of London House and its immediate neighbour hood was as follows:



The almost H shaped building is Ye Olde Brew House, the long almost tapering premises is London House. The Kingfield & Westfield WI scrapbook of 1949 records that the buildings to the east of London House and a corresponding house on the other side of Broadmead Road, Ivy House, were pulled down in 1948 so that the road might be widened to improve road safety at the then dangerous T junction. The spaces created are now filled by the restaurant's car park and a small commemorative garden with a mini roundabout at the road junction.

Although now converted from a shop to a restaurant, the new owners have retained the old painted sign on the outside, London House. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *London measure* as *a former practice of London drapers of allowing something above the standard yard in their measurements*. The practice apparently dates back to 1647 and other drapers often have the same sign. This would seem to indicate that although not in London, the previous drapers trading from the premises were prepared to offer the same beneficial terms as London drapers.

I am indebted to the present freehold owner of the building, Mr Richard Salvin for particulars of the history of the premises since 2006.

WNM Woking News and Mail Directories 1921-69

JR3 **John Remnant Map** of 1719

TM206 Woking Tithe Map of 1841

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