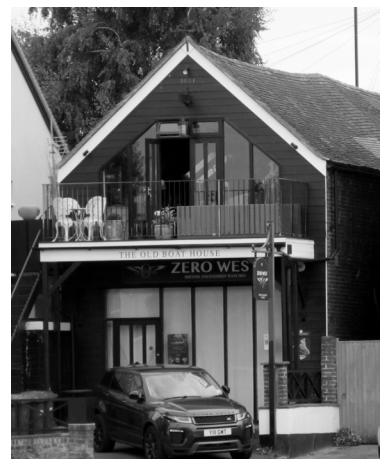
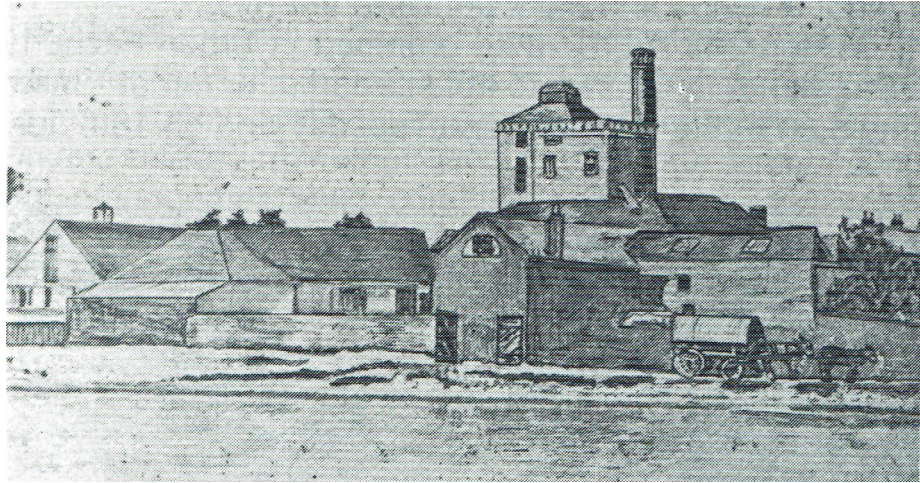

The Old Boathouse **by Christine Bury**

Standing tall along Bridgefoot Path in Emsworth is a wooden building on two floors. Painted black, it is now the headquarters of Zero West Watches. High up on the structure is a plaque giving a date of 1631. Is The Old Boathouse really that old? The Stuart King, Charles I, was on the throne. He became monarch in 1625 but quarrelled with Parliament and prorogued and later dissolved them.





Emsworth Brewery in the 19th century

We do not know for certain when the building was constructed but there is a reference to an aleconner in Emsworth during the 17th century. Aleconners were Crown Officers authorised to test and certify the quality of the beer brewed. While such an early date seems unlikely for our building we can definitely date the premises back to the late 18th or early 19th century because at one time it was the stables and an access route to a brewery which stood in what is now the South Street car park.

This brewery can be traced back to 1794 when George Whicher is listed as the brewer and maltster. He had been in business since 1788, the same year in which he married Olive Mower. The couple had eight children, one of whom Sarah was long lived and died in 1897 aged 101. Seventy six years earlier in 1821 Sarah married William Hipkin of Stoughton. William seems to have impressed Sarah's father because the two set up a joint coal merchant business in the 1820s. Did this Hipkin go into the brewery business as well? It is possible because George died in 1848 and the brewery is recorded as being in business in 1855 under the name Whicher and Hipkin. Throughout the 19th century the brewery seems to have been known as the Crown Brewery. Albert George Hipkin took over between 1867 and 1884 and later it was run under the name of Hipkin & Co from 1885 to 1896.

Sarah and William are thought to have died childless but Albert George Hipkin born in

Sussex must have been a relation. He is described in the 1881 census as a brewer and maltster.

Hipkin's brewery was a distinctive landmark with its tall chimney and another Bridgefoot Path building, which juts out into the Mill Pond, is the old malthouse, now the property of Emsworth Slipper Sailing Club.

Noel Kinnell and Arthur Hartley took over the brewery in 1896 and the complex became known as Emsworth Brewery or The Brewery, Emsworth.

The Kinnell and Hartley Brewery owned several public houses, including the Coal Exchange and Town Brewery. Mr Kinnell lived in Seafield, the mansion on the west side of the Mill Pond. The estate included a farm and its former dairy, now fronted by Fiscal House. The former Coach House is now the Envisage dentist.

Noel Kinnell was a wealthy man. The plaque in the Promenade wall opposite the Emsworth Slipper Sailing Club of which he was President reads: *"This tablet records the gratitude of the inhabitants of Emsworth to Noel E W Kinnell, Esq, JP, CC, of Seafield Emsworth for his public spirited generosity in defraying the whole of the expense of the erection of this seawall & promenade after the purchase of the Mill Pond in 1925 by the Warblington Urban District Council of which he was for 25 years a member & for 6 years chairman."*

The brewery was sold in 1928 on the death of Mr Kinnell and it was subsequently demolished. The buildings in Bridgefoot Path remained and the old stables metamorphosed into premises for small workshops. Some people will remember Pinedemonium while others may well recall George Gray and his motor body business.

Andrew Brabyn and his partner Graham Collins at Zero West Watches have remodelled the interior to display their innovative watches. The Old Boathouse is not only their shipping depot, R&D lab, customer service centre and design studio but it is their HQ developed during the Covid lockdown. Inside, besides the watches, there are pistons, pipes and bits of metal, some larger than others. At present these include a custom, British-built motorbike courtesy of Foundry Motorcycles and a complete salvaged MkIX Spitfire Merlin engine doubling as a table. Atop the table is a model of a Dambusters Lancaster bomber.

The Old Boathouse, Bridgefoot Path, which has stood for centuries is set for a bright future in the 21st century.

Sources

Brewery History Society, Kinnell & Hartley Ltd
Old Emsworth, David J Rudkin
Zero West Watches, www.zerowest.watch

