

# Pub's history celebrated in new book

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A 16TH century Groombridge pub that was once a smugglers' meeting place has been celebrated in a new book for resisting the temptation to modernise.

The Crown Inn, which is believed to have been built in 1585 but is possibly older, has been included in a new book called *Licensed To Sell*, which has been produced by English Heritage.

The tome, which claims the pub is a "vibrant institution", says the fashion for gutting and re-opening watering holes has left just a couple of hundred interiors across the country with any historic value.

The Crown was highlighted alongside Snaregate's Red Lion and the East Kent in Whitstable as Kentish pubs that have stuck to their roots.

The Crown, a bed and breakfast run for nearly four years by Peter and Pauline Kilshaw, was picked out for retaining its wooden-beamed bar.

Mrs Kilshaw said very little was known about the Crown's history because the records were kept in the Speldhurst Church which burnt down in the 1700s.

## Smuggling

But what is known is that it was probably a private house to start with, the infamous Groombridge Smuggling Gang met there to plan their activities during the 18th century and its name was briefly changed to the White Hart in the 1920s.

Quirkily, as it is in the oldest part of Groombridge it is also technically in Kent whereas the main village lies beyond the Sussex border.

A proud Mrs Kilshaw was delighted the pub's character had been recognised by English Heritage.

She said: "I would never dream of changing it."



**UNCHANGED:** The bar area at the Crown Inn at Groombridge