

## WELCOME TO THE ORMONDE GUESTHOUSE



### THE ORMONDE GUESTHOUSE HISTORY

Former Railway Tavern public house, later renamed as the Ormonde tavern. Late 19th, early 20th century. Two storey, 3 bay semi symmetrical arrangement with projecting terminal end bays, timber framed gables to projecting bays. Slate roof, 1st floor timber framed. Ground floor Ruabon brick with stone dressings to window heads, cheeks and cills, casement windows with leaded transome lights. This building is now the Ormonde Hotel. "Ormonde" (1883–1904) was an English Thoroughbred racehorse, an unbeaten Triple Crown winner, generally considered to be one of the greatest racehorses ever. He also won the Champion Stakes and the Hardwicke Stakes twice. At the time he was often labeled as the 'horse of the century'. Ormonde was trained at Kingsclere by John Porter for the 1st Duke of Westminster. His regular jockeys were Fred Archer (who features on the sign outside the hotel in the correct colours) and Tom Cannon. After retiring from racing he suffered fertility problems, but still sired Orme, who won the Eclipse Stakes twice.

It has been suggested that "Ormonde's" sire was the model for "Silver Blaze" in the **Sherlock Holmes** story of the same name, first published 1892. In the same way, "Colonel Ross" in the story is said to be based on one of the **Grosvenors** - the first Duke of Westminster. Eaton Stud bred



"Ormonde" with Fred Archer up. Fred Archer (1857-86) had 21 Classic winners and was Champion Jockey 13 of his 17 years, before tragically committing suicide in 1886. To keep his weight down for racing he used "Archer's mixture", a powerful laxative made up by Dr J. R. Wright of Newmarket. At the end of his life he returned home ill having lost twelve pounds in less than a week, and shot himself in a fit of delerium.

many great names in racing notably "Sceptre", "Peregrine", and "Bend Or". The latter being the sire of "Ormonde". In 1880 the Epsom Derby was won by "Bend Or" and "Robert the Devil" was placed second however a few weeks after the running of the Derby an objection was made by the owners of "Robert the Devil": "on the ground that Bend Or was not the horse he was represented to be, either in the entry or at the time of the race." A groom suggested that "Bend Or" (ridden to a win by Fred Archer) had been replaced by a disguised "Tadcaster" (also from the Eaton Stud). Bearing in mind that the groom, one Richard Arnull, had been fired by Westminster and was working out his notice when he made the allegation, it might have been construed as a mischievous, even malicious, attempt to embarrass his employer. After much publicity the claim was dismissed by the Jockey Club, although the groom maintained that a substitution had occurred for the rest of his life - as did his two sons, who also worked at Eaton. Like "Silver Blaze", "Bend Or" was marked with a distinctive white "blaze" on his face. In the Holmes story the horse is disguised by covering this blaze, and after Holmes solves the mystery wins a race still disguised. Research by Mim Bower of Cambridge University (Institute for Archaeological Research), first published in 2012, compared DNA of "Bend Or" (his skeleton was preserved at the Natural History Museum) to that of "Tadcaster" descendants. Both chestnut colts were by the stallion Doncaster but "Bend Or" was out of "Rouge Rose" and "Tadcaster" was out of "Clemence". And the DNA results show that the 1880 Derby winner was out of "Clemence" making the winner not "Bend Or" but "Tadcaster". The two had indeed been switched, either as foals or later

- the skeleton known as "Bend Or" is most probably that of "Tadcaster".  
So the Conan-Doyle story "Silver Blaze" seems to be based on a suitably  
Sherlockian mystery that really occurred.



"Azure, a Bend Or", the arms of the Grosvenors prior to the heraldic case of [Scrope v. Grosvenor \(1389\)](#). The case was heard at [St Johns](#) in Chester.