

SAWBRIDGEWORTH HISTORY.

THE FEATHERS.

A Long Lost Sawbridgeworth Inn.

The 'Feathers' was formerly an Inn situated in Knight Street, however, there are no readers of this article who will remember it, as it closed as an Inn approximately 200 years ago.

The 'Feathers' began life as a modest timber framed building and probably dates to the middle of the 17th century. This is inferred by the survival of several features in the original framework. Elm wood is used throughout the structure with the timbers being of moderate size, and the jointing between the joists and the bridging beams are comparable with an early date.

It is probable that the original roof was thatched, and that the shingles now seen were a later replacement. Of interest is a large truss within the roof which must have come from a barn or similar, and is thus an early example of recycling.

When first constructed, the 'Feathers' was almost certainly a private dwelling. However, about the year 1690, a major extension, doubling the width of the building facing onto Knight Street took place, and it was from this time onwards that the building definitely became an Inn, and took the name of 'The Feathers'. It is of interest to note that there were another two Inns almost adjacent. Just across Church Street stood the 'Bull' Inn, and opposite in The Square was the 'Bell and Feathers'. Like 'The Feathers' both of these are also long gone as Inns, but it must have been busy at that time with the horse drawn coaches constantly arriving and departing.

The first written reference to the 'Feathers' comes from the year 1699. On 28th March that year, a mortgage is recorded from Henry Bride to James (Jas) Cornelius, where Henry's son George Bride is noted as living on the premises. The premises being then recorded as 'the name or sign of The Feathers'.

In the year 1703, James Cornelius, who was a 'Yeoman Warder' at the Tower of London, finally took possession of the property. Unfortunately, just a couple of years later James died, and he was buried at Whitechapel on 20 May 1706. James was succeeded by his nephew Thomas Cornelius who was a 'Blacksmith'. However, in 1711, Thomas sold the 'Feathers' to a 'Baker' named Tobias Gibson, at which time it was recorded as the 'Plume of Feathers'. The Inn being sold for the sum of £64 10s 0d.

Between 1711 and 1724, Tobias Gibson, through a series of transactions, leased a Barn and a Yard to go with the property, and in 1724 the owner was now recorded as Andrew Littell, a 'Miller'.

Andrew Littell is an interesting character. He appears in local history with a number of variations of his surname, also being called Andrew Little and Andrew Littler.

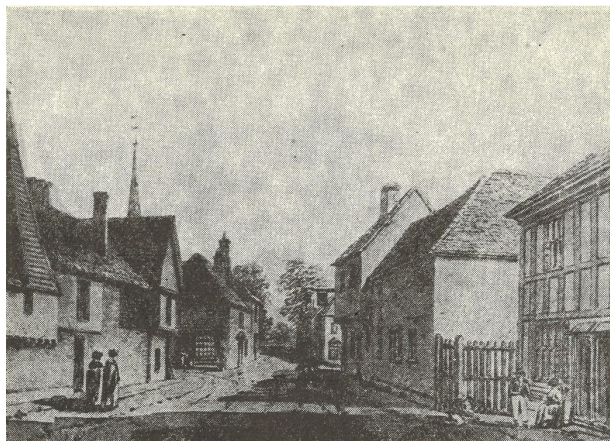
In 1720, Andrew was recorded as the owner of Sawbridgeworth Mill, and in 1729, he was recorded as owning Sheering Mill. He does not seem to have been a caring Miller as there are records of numerous successful litigations at the Courts of Sewers following damage to neighbouring properties at both mills following shoddy and cheap maintenance works.

Andrew was not just a 'Miller', but also a 'Maltster'. The circumstantial evidence therefore, is that he was also brewing his own beer at the rear of the 'Feathers'. This would make perfect sense. Although the records for the 'Feathers' are missing for 100 years after 1724, by 1737, Andrew had died and was succeeded by his son Nathaniel at the Mill. Logically therefore, Nathaniel also would have inherited the 'Feathers'. It was about this time that the Inn apparently changed its name to the 'Rose and Crown'.

In 1789 a John Perry was recorded as occupying the Inn.

In the years 1826 and 1827, the Inn was sold twice. These sales noted that the property was formerly known as both the 'Plume of Feathers' and the 'Rose and Crown', but was now a private house together with a 'shop, warehouse, stable, yard, garden and pump'. The building's role as an Inn was clearly over. It is noteworthy that the 1806 Hertford Quarter Sessions also make no mention of either the 'Feathers' or the 'Rose and Crown', implying that the Inn had ceased to exist before that date, and a picture of 1834 definitely shows the property to be residential. It has remained residential/commercial to the present day.

With the Inn no longer existing, this history has come to an end.



Knight Street, with the 'Feathers' on the left of the picture, dated 1834



The 'Feathers' as it looks in 2018

Today, the site of the 'Feathers' Inn is occupied by a double-glazing company and a building society and rather surprisingly, the main building is not listed. There is however, a plaque set into the wall nearby, erected by Chappell Estates who renovated the property in 1985, to commemorate the Inn.



Wall Plaque in Knight Street

When you next walk down Knight Street, look for this sign and try to imagine what the area here was like 200 years ago.

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