

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE SWAN

by Eileen M. Bowlt

The Swan Public House is in the news at the moment as the well-loved and long-established hostelry has been acquired by Café Rouge and is about to become a restaurant. The proposed changes to the listed building will not affect the historic parts of the structure and the greatest concern has been about the loss of the name. As we go to press, we understand that the new owners have agreed to call it 'Café Rouge at the Swan' to retain some continuity. We hope that the letter written by this Society, as well as the outcry from 'regulars' has helped to bring about this compromise.

The Swan was not always a licensed house. It was built around 1500 according to the inspector of ancient buildings who visited it in October 1936, and the earliest documentary reference is in a Terrier (land survey) made of the Manor of Ruislip in 1565. John Walleston, the largest landowner at the time, owned five cottages on the west side of the High Street 'in one of which he lived'. The cottages lay between the corner of Sharps Lane, then called New Street Lane and what is now The Oaks, probably including a cottage, known at the beginning of the twentieth century as Mrs Goodison's shop, that was demolished when the alley beside The Swan was widened in 1935.

Of John Walleston's other cottages, one became The George and was demolished in 1939 when the present George, now a Harvester Restaurant, was built. The Swan and two buildings (both now B.S. Hall's estate agents) remain. The Enclosure Map of Ruislip (1806) shows a space between The Swan and the other cottages. The sixteenth century portions of the Estate Agent's offices are hidden behind early Victorian additions at the front. A third Victorian cottage called Naylor Cottage partially filled this space.

Fig. 1 shows part of The Swan on the extreme left, Naylor Cottage and the Victorian frontages to the other two sixteenth century cottages.



Fig. 1

By 1747 the cottage had become a licensed house called The Swan, with Elizabeth Houghton as licensee. The following year the Nicholl or Nicholas family took over and ran it until the 1780s, when Samuel Naylor is found there. Samuel Salter, the Rickmansworth brewer already owned the premises by 1807¹ when a Samuel Nailor (sic) was still the licensee and The Swan remained a tied house until recent times as breweries were taken over one after the other. The Cannon Brewery of Clerkenwell purchased Salters in 1920.

Development of the building

For a time in the 1820s the sign was changed slightly to The White Swan. However, more important changes were made to the building. The sketch plan (Fig. 3) made by the inspector of ancient buildings in 1936 shows that the southern wing is the oldest part of the building with an eighteenth century extension at the back. The adjoining gabled wing was either rebuilt or added c1600. The chimney stack is in this wing. There is a narrow extension to the north side, dating from the eighteenth century with modern additions in front and behind.

¹ London Metropolitan Archives: DRO 19 E3/1 (Ruislip Valuation 1807)

More recent alterations to the building can be traced through the following photographs.

Front Cover -

The Swan in the early twentieth century. Note the narrow alley between Mrs Goodison's shop on the left and The Swan. The side wall and chimney of Naylor Cottage can be seen on the extreme right. The sign saying 'Ye Olde SWAN INN / Refreshment Room' is fixed onto the gable end of the c1500 wing. A porch has been built onto the c1600 wing. It is interesting to see that The Swan like The George was selling teas to trippers who came tearing into Ruislip either by bicycle, or on the Metropolitan Line trains after 1904.

Fig. 2 - The High Street looking north. This photograph, probably taken during the First World War, shows an enlarged and enhanced porch.

Fig. 4 - By 1970, when this picture was taken, Naylor Cottage had been demolished and The Swan had been extended.

Fig. 5 - A view in the 1970s or early 80s, when the former, smaller road sign had been replaced by the present intrusive sign and Ind Coope were the brewers.

There have been further internal alterations since.

Village Pub

An inventory was taken of the furniture, fixtures and effects at The Swan in 1914, when William Shafto was selling them to Ernest Walter Linger, the new licensee.

There were four bedrooms, stairs and back stairs, a sitting room with a stuffed squirrel in a case, a spirit room, scullery, lobby, larder, kitchen, tap room, tea-room, bar parlour, private bar, public bar, cellar and stable. Recreational activities such as darts, dominoes, a ring board and a Spoof board, were provided in the tap room. What ever is a Spoof board? Draughts and cribbage boards were kept in the bar parlour. There were 13 chairs and two large telescopic dining tables in the tea-room.

Outside at the front, there was a rustic seat, flower boxes and a flag staff. A garden furnished with rustic tables and chairs, trestle tables and deal forms must have made a pleasant area for visitors when the weather was clement.

The Swan sounds to have been a typical village pub, attractive to locals and day trippers alike. It may well be again in its new guise.



Fig. 2

1. Name and situation of Monument : *Old Swan Inn, at N.W. junction of High St and Manor Road.*

2. General appearance : (a) No. of storeys. *Two. + cellars*
 (b) Building materials. *Plastered timber framing, partly tile faced; brick.*
 (c) Roofs. *Tile.*

3. Historical development, Description, Photograph and Special features (if any) :

The gabled, S.E. range, is of c.1500, with an 18th c. extension at the W. end, and a modern east frontage. c.1600 the wing adjoining it on its N. side, was added or rebuilt. Early in the following century a wing was added to the north, to be extended westwards in recent years. The whole of the projecting front to the east is modern, and the interior generally has been converted for use as an hotel.

The N. wall of the 17th c. wing has exposed timber framing. The other walls have been faced with rough cast, tile, or brick.

The interior has stop chamfered ceiling beams, and, on the first floor, a considerable amount of exposed timber framing. At first floor level, in the N. wall of the 17th c. wing, is a blocked three-light window with moulded mullions

The roof to the S. range has a braced central purlin, heavy, stop chamfered wall posts; and big curved braces to the wall plates. The 17th c. wing has a 'green post' roof with curved braces to the side purlins.

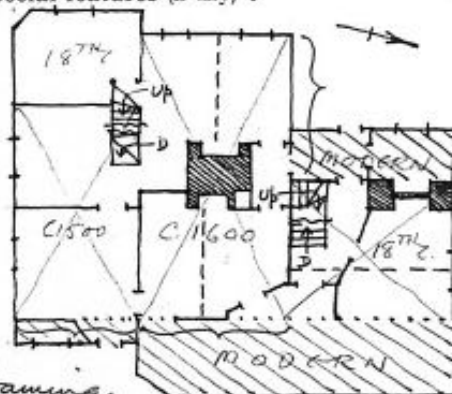


Fig. 3

The description and sketch plan of the development of the building, made in October 1936 by G.E. Chambers



Fig. 4



Fig. 5