

POWELL ARMS

In 1619, John Sutton, Yeoman, who lived at St Nicholas-at-Wade, also owned the house that stood on the site of the Powell Arms. In later documents the house is described as belonging to Henry Spratling, who was an Innkeeper. It was owned by Francis Cobb in 1850, who besides being a brewer from Margate was also a very successful banker.

Originally the Powell Arms stood on a much larger plot of land, but in the late 1600s the 3 rod (3/4 of an acre) piece to the west of the inn had become the site of what was later known as 'Laburnum House' and now as 'Mulberry's Tea Rooms' built by John Jarvis, Landlord of New Inn (as the Powell Arms was originally called – see below).

When the Powell Arms first traded as a brew house it was called 'The New Inn', suggesting that there was at least one other property selling ales in the Square at that date.

1710 onwards – in the Overseers' Poor Books, it is often referred to as "Blew's", which was the name of the landlord.

1768 – The brew house was kept by Stephen Elliott.

1802 – Anthony May was the landlord

1813 – Mr May – landlord (see file labelled 1813, Powell Arms)

1823 – The name of the house was changed from the New Inn to the Powell Arms, in honour of Squire John Powell Powell of Quex Park, who was made High Sheriff of Kent that year. The Parish Vestry meetings used to begin in the church for the first 15 minutes, then the minutes would state, "The Vestry retired to the New Inn / Powell Arms for the remainder of the meeting." The Churchwardens' accounts frequently show these visits in terms of amounts spent on 'beer and bred' at the inn when they met to set the new 'assessment' or parish rate. The parishioners were always charged for these refreshments – almost the only perk that was available to the people who served the parish on a voluntary basis.

The Powell Arms is the oldest Inn in Birchington – the Grade II listing schedule for the property is not totally accurate, as several new pieces of evidence have now been uncovered. The document states:-

“ Circa 1840 (The building is much older than this)

- 3 storeys – painted bricks

- Hipped tiled roof (The roof actually consists of a front and rear apexed structure facing east and west, with four valley roofs facing

north and south, filling the centre of the building. In the late 20th century all the roof structures were covered with what looks like lead, but is probably a very sturdy roofing felt, made it look from the air as if it has a flat roof.)

- Guttering is supported on cast iron brackets
- 3 cambered sashes, 2 double-hung
- Sashes on the first floor
- Modern bar front”

No attempt appears to have been made to inspect the inside of the property when it was listed, particularly the attics and cellars. These give several clues to a much greater age.

The earliest reference to the New Inn in the Churchwardens' accounts is in 1611, when the Vestry Meeting 'retired to the New Inn' after initially starting off in the church. As usual the refreshments were charged to the sess levied on the parishioners, ostensibly to fund the 'Poor Relief'!

The brickwork at the rear of the building is in both Flemish Bond and some random bonding.

1854 30th September – Jane Blew, wife of Landlord of the Powell Arms, died at Thanet Union Workhouse aged 79 years.

1861 census – John Wilson (54) and son Francis (22) – Landlords

1873 – 10th April - Oliver WANSTALL aged 36 of the Powell Arms was buried in All Saints Churchyard

1878 – His wife is listed in Kelly's Directory as the Publican of the Powell Arms

LANDLORDS - From Kelly's Directories

- 1885-6 Edward Milgate
- 1897-9 James Knell
- 1900 Edward Walter Knell
- 1906-7 Wm Hogbin
- 1911-17 Albert Haddaway
- 1920-27 T. A. Read
- 1928-34 Thomas Awbery
- 1935-48 Alfred Finch
- 1951-87 Arthur Walter Finch (son of Alfred)