

## The Pewter Pot and The Acorn

There has been much confusion over the last few years about the original name of the Pewter Pot. The earliest licensing for all our inns came under Dover because we were a Limb of this Cinque Port from at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Sadly, Dover has now lost all those early licences and so we can no longer trace anything before the early 1900s. We know from the old Church Wardens' accounts and from a 1678-9 map of the village that there were at least two inns in the Square, one of which was an older version of the Queen's Head, which stood on the same site as the present building.

Judging by its architectural details, the Pewter Pot was built in about 1680-90, along with several other Dutch gable houses in and around the Square. There was a suggestion in some literature printed in the 1970s saying it was built in 1647, but this is too early for this style of architecture. Perhaps there was an earlier house on the site, as with the Queen's Head property. The house had a stabling yard from very early on, which would suggest that it was a property of some significance. It is supposed to have begun trading as an inn around 1719, though where the researcher found this information is unknown.

However, we do not know its name at this date, but whatever it was, the landlord decided to change the name in 1824. He called it the "New Inn", which seems an odd name to give to a very well established inn. This name became available when the landlord of the original "New Inn" decided to change the name of his premises to the "Powell Arms", in honour of the new owner of Quex Park, who had just been made Lord High Sheriff of Kent.

What has now emerged during some recent research is that there was an inn trading "under the sign of The Acorn" between 1768 and 1817. This was definitely not the present Acorn, because this was only a very small cottage housing a labourer and his family at this time. We also know that the Queen's Head had stopped trading at this date and was listed as "three dwellings" in the 1840 tithe apportionments. The Queen's Head did not start trading as an inn

again until it was rebuilt in the 1850s by Cobb and next appears in the 1861 census under the name of the Queen's Head.

It is possible that there had been a lapse in trading at the Pewter Pot for a while, too, as there was at what later became the Queen's Head. The decision to rename the premises "The New Inn" in 1824 is the first confirmation of the name that we have.

The references connected with that early Acorn are:-

- 1768            A reference in the Kentish Gazette to the Inn being used by travellers (soldiers) with passes
- 1792 \*\*        Deeds for the sale of a property "commonly called or known by the name or sign of the Acorn" ... "in or near a certain street called Birchington Street"
- 1802            Reference in the Poor Books, when Isaac Williams was rated at "ye sign of ye Acorn"
- 1817            Reference in the Churchwardens' Accounts (p. 296) for an "assessment" (tax) for George Duffie at the "Acorn Public House" and also for John Sidders at the "New Inn"

The New Inn was used by the London Coaches for watering and stabling their horses during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. None of the other inns had sufficient space for their needs. The Inn continued to flourish and its decision to change its name in November 1961 to the "Pewter Pot" was probably because they wanted to update their image.

\*\* The deeds for this property are stored in the Whitfield Archives at Dover - (R / U487 / T35). A transcript of the deed is stored in the Whitfield File and the Acorn material in Birchington Heritage Trust Museum.