



**The Swan today**

In the early hours of 16 July 2013, a fire broke out in an upstairs room of The Swan, causing considerable damage to the roof. Inevitably, the water used by the fire brigade to extinguish the fire caused extensive damage downstairs. The pub was closed for 14 months while permission was sought from Historic England for repairs to the Grade II listed building and repairs were made; it reopened in September 2014. While the pub was closed, a mural was designed and created by local people and erected in front of the building. It shows some of the many famous (or notorious) people who have been associated with the village.



**After the fire**



## A brief history of The Swan

The Swan is 500 years old. It dates from the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century when it was a private house. It was built in the style of a late medieval hall house, so the front doorway was where it is now (though the present door is 18<sup>th</sup> century) and there was an open hall with a parlour on the left and a service area on the right where the kitchen is today.

The original parlour, which always had an upper storey, is now the bar and dining area. The beam across the bay window shows the groove into which the original shutters would have fitted, though the bay was added later. The inglenook fireplace, with its massive bressumer beam, dates from the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The riveted strap hinges on the door to the staircase behind the bar may be as early as 18<sup>th</sup> century, as is the door through to the toilet area. The brickwork on the back wall, which is the original outside wall, is infill dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The door in the passage through to the functions room is also 19<sup>th</sup> century but the hood above it, which was originally external, is probably 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the owners of the house built an extension to their home by knocking through the outside wall on the south (Sandridge) side of the building. This explains the step up at this point; the beams and timbers here were originally on the outside of the building, though the half-rail is modern. The fireplace and gable-end chimney date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the fireback is late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The upper floor was added in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century; the back part of this area is mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is not known when The Swan became an inn but the first publican we know of was John House in 1744. In the past, The Swan has had its own brewery, malt house, accommodation for travellers, barn, stables and smithy.

This information is based on an archaeological report written in October 2013, following the fire in the previous July. It can be found at [http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-481-1/dissemination/pdf/archaeol7-165390\\_1.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-481-1/dissemination/pdf/archaeol7-165390_1.pdf)

The report is very detailed, with 26 pages of text and 30 of photographs. It confirms that the worst of the fire damage was to a section of the roof that had been replaced in about 1900, though there was extensive water and some fire damage to the bar area.

**For a detailed history of The Swan, go to “High Street Map” on this website and click on “The Swan”.**

<http://www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk/highstreet/view-property.asp?pld=16>