

The Two Brewers



The Two Brewers was in the building in the foreground on the right.
The photograph probably dates from after it closed in 1906.

The Grade 2 listed building in a prime position in the High Street nearly opposite the Bull Inn was for many years the Two Brewers. The first likely record of this pub is in the parish records for 1843 which show that William Rudd, beerhouse keeper, was the father of twins Emma Charlotte and Joseph William, both of whom were being baptised. His wife Charlotte is also recorded but the beerhouse in question is not named. Their son Philip was baptised three years later but again the beerhouse is not named.

The 1851 census shows William Rudd, aged 42, as a beershop keeper but again without naming the Two Brewers. However, he lived in the right location between the workhouse and the mill so it is reasonably safe to assume that he was at the Two Brewers and had been there in 1843. The census states that he was a widower living with his 19-year old straw-plaiting daughter, Ann, and three sons. The infant Emma died in 1845 and Charlotte in 1848.

The Hertford Mercury of 5 March 1853 reported an inquest at the Two Brewers following the suicide of Henry Smith, a labourer. He had been attended by the doctor for some time for 'disease of the lungs' (possibly TB). It sounds as though he also suffered from depression as the doctor had cautioned Smith's friends 'never to leave him alone'. However, he committed the fatal act by cutting his own throat when his wife had been 'compelled to leave him temporarily'. He survived 14 hours before expiring. The verdict was 'Temporary insanity'.

The 1861 census shows that Rudd's successor at the Two Brewers was his neighbour, James Arnold, aged 50. There were four adult males named 'James Arnold' living in Wheathampstead in 1841 and still in 1851 so it is easy to confuse them. For example, the Hertford Mercury dated 25 October 1851 reported an accident in which James Arnold, victualler, was thrown from his pony-and-chaise and

left with a broken leg. His age is not given so we cannot be sure which of the four possibilities he is. However, the James Arnold who is at the Two Brewers in 1861 is definitely the same James Arnold who is listed in the 1851 census as a boot and shoe maker living in the High Street.

In 1861, he is at the Two Brewers with his wife Elizabeth, aged 57, and an unnamed lodger who is a labourer on the railway that had arrived in the village eight months earlier. Arnold was brought before the court of St Albans Liberty Petty Sessions on 28 February 1863 on two counts, one for selling beer after 10 o'clock at night, the other for drunkenness and abuse to a police officer later that same evening. He was fined 10s., with 14s. 6d. costs on the first charge and 5s. on the second with 12s. costs, making £2 1s. 6d. together, which he paid.

"In answer to questions from the Magistrates, police-constable Knight said he was stationed at Wheathamstead for about eight years, and defendant had not the character for being a drunken man. He had always treated him civilly and cleared the company out of his house when desired.

Mr Blagg stated that the defendant had kept a public house at Wheathamstead for many years and this was the first time any complaint had been made." (*Herts Advertiser*, Feb. 28th 1863)

The Hertford Mercury of 20 March 1869 reported an incident of cruelty to a horse involving an employee at the Two Brewers. James Arnold's servant, Joseph Doby, was found guilty of 'working the horse when it was totally unfit for work. It had several wounds and a sack was covered over them to conceal them'. His employer is described in the report as 'a builder and beer-house keeper'. Inspector Chapman, appearing as a witness for the prosecution, testified that James Arnold, when approached about the case, 'appeared to be very ill and knew nothing about it'. Doby claimed to have been acting under orders. The defendant was fined 7s. 6d. with 12s. 6d. costs or seven days imprisonment with costs.

The 1871 census describes James Arnold as a retired boot and shoe maker aged 60, living in the village with his wife Elizabeth (60). The Herts Ad dated 30 August 1873 reports that the licence of the Two Brewers had been transferred from W. 'Allson' to William Green, so James Arnold must have left not long after the 1869 court case. The Bucks Herald of the same date stated that the licence was transferred from William 'Allen' to William Green. The 1871 census records a William Allen aged 44 living on Brewhouse Hill and working as a maltster so it is likely that the Bucks Herald had the right name for Mr Allen.

William Green stayed for just a few years. Kelly's directory for 1878 shows that James Westwood, blacksmith, was now the licensee; later evidence suggests that he took over in 1874, when he would have been 23 years old. Selling beer is a good complement to the thirsty work of a blacksmith and the forge was behind the beerhouse. In his lifetime, James was a bell-ringer, second-in-command of the fire brigade and a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters. He was also a long-serving (33 years) member of the volunteer battalion of the Herts and Beds militia.

The 1881 census lists James (30), a blacksmith from Digswell, his wife Mary Ann (30) born in Wheathampstead, and their three children John (8) Ernest (3) and Ellen (1) at the Two Brewers.

James's brother William (18) lives with them and works as a house decorator. He later married Minnie Gray, daughter of the licensee at the Red Cow, and took that licence in 1902.

In 1891, James and Mary Ann were living with four sons, Henry (16), Ernest (13), Lionel (5) and Stanley (2). Ten years later, five of their children were at home: Thomas (28), a house painter, Henry (24), also a blacksmith, Lionel (15), Stanley (12) and Hilda who was 9 years old.

Life at the Two Brewers seems to have been quiet during this time though James Westwood was assaulted when he was having a drink at the White Hart in Welwyn in March 1893. The landlord, Mr Deards, had asked him to help with ejecting three men who were being 'quarrelsome and disorderly'. He was 'roughly handled' and 'knocked about very much' both in the pub and afterwards on his way home. The three men were convicted, two of them who had previous convictions being imprisoned without the option of a fine.

James came from a family of blacksmiths and beerhouse keepers. His grandfather John Westwood, his uncle John Westwood and his father Thomas were all blacksmiths in 1851. In 1861 Thomas was also licensee of the Steam Engine beerhouse in Welwyn in 1861 by which time he was described as a whitesmith (a worker in tin and pewter). He died in 1865 and James' brother Thomas took over the beerhouse, named the 'Steamer' in the 1871 census. In the same census, a Sarah Westwood is listed as keeper of another beerhouse in Welwyn. This appears to have been James' mother, Thomas's widow. James, aged just 20, is listed as a 'smith master' employing one man, and head of a household at the 'Steamer' beerhouse whose licensee is his brother Thomas aged only 18. Two more brothers live in the house and they have a visitor, Mary Ann Gray, daughter of the licensee of the Red Cow in Wheathampstead, who married James two months later.

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'Hounds and Horses by The Bull Hotel at Wheathampstead'
By E.F.Holt dated 1902

The Two Brewers is the building in front of the church. A sign showing the name of the owners, Pryor Reid, is just visible on the front gable. The figure standing by the gate is James Westwood. On the left, the man with his waistcoat showing is Thomas Myles, landlord of The Bull.

Following the passing of the Balfour Act in 1904, the Two Brewers became a candidate for closure on the grounds of redundancy. At the Licensing Meeting for the St Albans Division in March 1906, it was stated that there were nine other licensed houses within a quarter of a mile and 'all were better class houses than the one in question'. Mr Westwood did not object to closure so a provisional licence was granted and the matter was referred to the Compensation Authority. At its meeting in July, the Licensing Authority confirmed that the licence was 'extinguished'.

James Westwood died on 3 October 1906 at the age of 56 having been licensee at the Two Brewers for 32 years. He was a well-respected pillar of the community, as was demonstrated in the manner of his passing. He was given a most impressive military funeral with full honours and plumed horses conveyed the hearse the short distance between the Two Brewers and St Helen's Church. An armed escort of 80 volunteers of the 1st Herts Battalion, Volunteer Beds Regiment, marched respectfully behind. Regimental colours were displayed in the church and three volleys were fired over the open grave with massed bugles sounding the Last Post.¹ It was a funeral the like of which had not been seen in the village for many years.

The Two Brewers closed as planned. Westwood's estate was awarded compensation of £32, one pound for each year of his tenure, and Pryor Reid was awarded £218.

This advertisement for an auction by Harding & Son of St Albans appeared in the Herts Ad on 20 October 1906.

A BRICK, PLASTER, and TILED FREEHOLD PROPERTY, lately known as "The Two Brewers," situate on the western side of the main street, with large yard and garden at the side. The House contains shop, sitting-room, store-room, kitchen, 3 bedrooms, and 2 attics.

In the yard is a timber and tiled Blacksmith's Shop.

Adjoining the House is a **BRICK, PLASTER and TILED FREEHOLD COTTAGE,** containing one room up, one down, and scullery.

This Lot has the important frontage of 108 feet to the main street.

Also

The auction was held on 2 November and Pryor Reid, the brewers and owners of the freehold of the premises since 1869, sold the property for £530 to Mr Julian Pearce.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ *Herts Advertiser*, 13 October 1906.

ⁱⁱ *Herts Advertiser*, 10 November 1906.