The Landmark Trust

NEW INN
PEASENHALL

History Album

Detail from Breugel's *Peasant Wedding, 1568.*

Original notes by The Architectural and Planning Partnership
September 1975
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KEY FACTS

Built: *c* **1460**

Listed: **Grade II**

Built by: **John Kempe (or the Abbot of Sibton)**

Restored: **1971-2**

Architect: **John Warren RIBA, Architectural and Planning Partnership**

Contractors: **William C Reade of Aldeburgh Limited**

Sub Contractor (Timber Restoration): **R T Mason FSA**

Opened as a Landmark: **1972**

2013 works to insulate & install heating in the Hall and combine High & Low End into a single Landmark:

Contractors: **Fairhurst Ward Abbotts**

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New Inn before restoration in 1970, and today. The high end is to the left, the open hall in the centre and the low end, with its later jettied extension to its service wing, to the right, with later cottages beyond. The buildings run roughly north/south: for simplicity, this account assumes the green side to be west and the rear of the Inn east.

Summary

Peasenhall has always been a quiet village, tucked away on a Suffolk byroad. In the Middle Ages, a mighty abbey stood nearby and the building we still know as New Inn overlooked a more significant crossroads. In the nineteenth century, the village became an example of 'rural industrialisation,' dominated by Smyths seed drill manufactory. Both abbey and drillworks have long since disappeared, but New Inn has survived them both.

Evidence of New Inn first appears1463, when Thomas, Abbot of Sibton Abbey, leased to John Kempe and his wife Alice a 'messuage called Newynne with two adjacent pightles' (pieces of land) for 6s 8d a year. From this it is clear that there was already a building overlooking the triangle of land now known as the Knoll, and the 'Newynne' may well have been called such to distinguish it from an earlier one on the site. As late as 1840, the land in front was simply a widening of the main road (The Street), like a village square. Inns (to be distinguished from ale houses) were becoming more common by the mid-15th century, as booming trade and a growing population increased the demand for overnight accommodation. Indeed, the monasteries and religious guilds were the biggest providers of such hostelries, often a source of pride to their village.

At first glance, New Inn differed little from the house of, say, a well-to-do merchant. Medieval houses all followed a similar pattern: a central open, communal hall with a central hearth, from which led at one end rooms on two floors for the family (the high end), and at the other, service rooms: the pantry for dry goods and the buttery for wet (the low end). New Inn differs from these standard arrangements in two ways. Firstly, the accommodation at the High End is larger than usual, forming a wing extending into the courtyard at the back. This was to provide rooms both for the innkeeper's family, and for the guests, who would have had the use of the fine solar on the first floor. Secondly, New Inn has a large cellar under the low end, for the brewing and storing the ale. This cellar may well pre-date the main structure.

In New Inn, as in all medieval houses, the heart was the open hall, with its elaborate display of carpentry and carving in the open roof and large windows. Here the guests would gather to drink and eat, and warm themselves at the central hearth. The food was prepared for them in a separate kitchen, across the rear courtyard. Round this courtyard were also the stables for travellers' horses and mules, as well as barns and haylofts. In its centre was the well.

It is hard to say how long New Inn operated as a hostelry. The rights passed through the Kempe family but when Sibton Abbey was dissolved in 1536, ownership of 'the Newyn' along with Farthing pightle (a small field) is granted to five individuals. In 1623, Robert and Raph Bateman divided the property between them, placing the hall and high end in separate occupation from the rest of the site, and leaving us a detailed description of its facilities. There was still a kitchen, brewhouse, bakehouse barn and stable, although no specific mention of ongoing use as an inn other than the name itself, which persists until at least 1733. New Inn became tenements and workshops, and slipped usefully and seamlessly into village life, joined by the later cottages added on either side.

Many alterations were made to the New Inn over the centuries. In the 16th or 17th century, a floor was inserted into the great open space of the hall and brick chimney flues were built in the hall and Low End. New plastered ceilings covered the timbers of open roofspaces. Additions were made at the southern end. Such ongoing alteration and division disguised the medieval character of the building. During WW2 the Knoll Cottages, as New Inn had come to be called, welcomed children evacuated from London. By 1958, however, the cottages had become so dilapidated that they were condemned as unfit for human habitation by Blyth Rural District Council, and threatened with demolition. Luckily, some memory of their medieval character lingered on, and the RDC took the trouble to find out more about the cottages before they met their fate. What they discovered resulted in the transfer of ownership of New Inn to the Landmark Trust in 1971, and we restored it 1971-2.

The 1970s restoration was a bold one, in that it sought to return the hall to its original late 15th-century form by removing the later inserted ceiling and chimney stack. This allowed the fabulous medieval roof structure to be revealed, complete with crown post. The quality of the post’s carving, and of other examples of joinery around the building, show that it was built with some pretension to grandeur. The bricks from the chimney were used to insert a brick panel at the high end of the hall, both to mark the position of the stack and to help support the compromised timber frame.

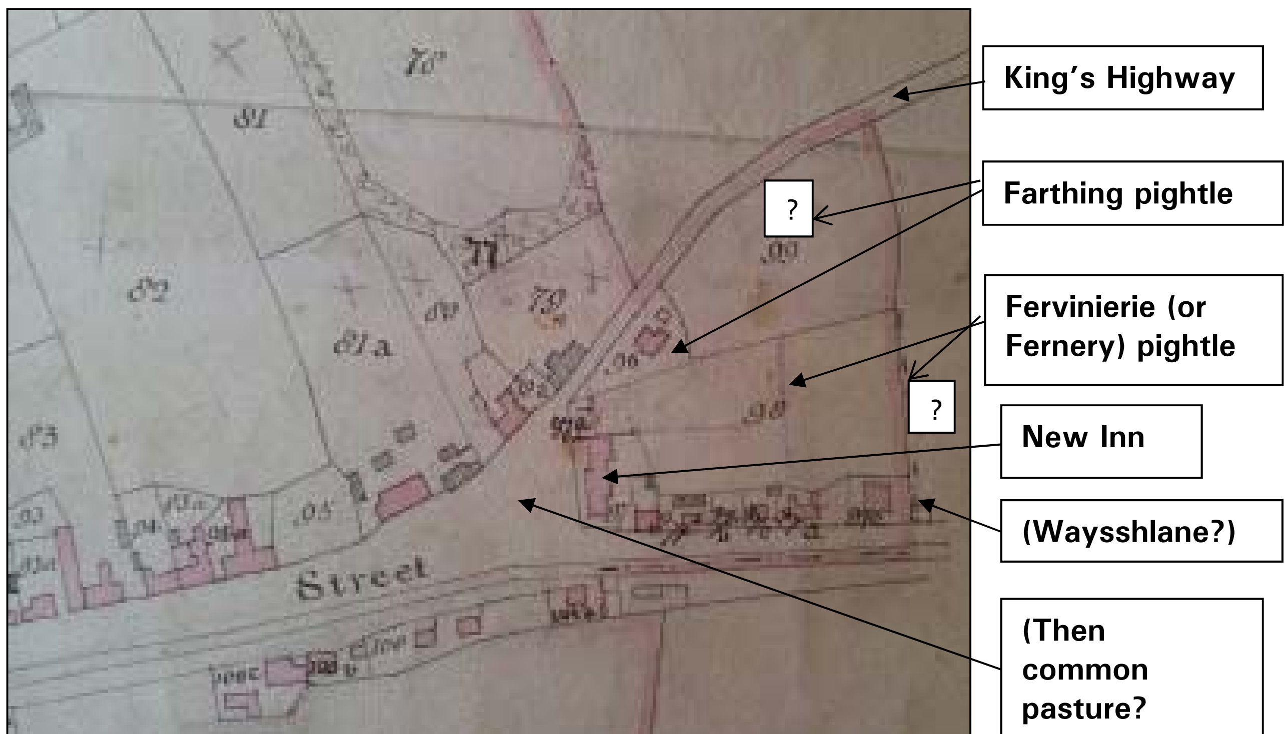
All later accretions were removed from the exterior, as were later ceilings and plaster. The original frame was found to be largely complete, albeit severely weakened by the insertion of dormer windows and subsidence. It was carefully braced back into position and repaired, making clear which was new timber. The roof was removed and the tiles rationalised, so that now plain clay tiles cover the medieval parts of the building and pantiles the ‘more recent’ additions, which include the 17th-century extension towards the green of the low end. The jaunty ‘coxcomb’ ridge tiles were reproduced from a surviving original. Clear evidence for the half-hip roof at the low end was found and so this was reinstated, a rare authenticated example in a medieval building.

For many years, New Inn functioned as two separate Landmarks, with shared use of the central hall, left unheated. By 2013, this arrangement had become unsatisfactory and so we decided to insulate the hall and install underfloor heating (fed by renewable energy via an air source heat pump) and a woodstove. To encourage its use further, the two lets were combined into a single Landmark for up to eight people.

Local tradition also called New Inn the Wool Hall, a building type honoured in Suffolk, but there is no evidence that any such formal function was ever attributed to it. In reality it is something rarer and more interesting, a forerunner of the great Coaching Inns which became such an important element of our country towns.

The History of New Inn, Peasenhall

New Inn, Peasenhall, first appears in the mid-15th century when, in October 1463, John Kempe and his wife Alice paid 6s 8d pa to Thomas, Abbot of nearby Sibton Abbey, for the lease of ‘a messuage called Newynne with two adjacent pightles, to the east Ferthynge Pightle (1 acre) and Fervinerie (4acres) all lying between a common watercourse on the south and the King’s Highway on the north, abutting on a lane called Waysshlane on the east and on common pasture on the west.’[1] Four centuries later, the field boundaries of the 1840 Tithe Map still allow the plots to be identified. The ‘common watercourse’ still exists as the stream that runs through the village, and there is even a house still called Farthings behind New Inn. In 1840, the triangular patch of grass known today as The Knoll is shown as an open space, almost like a village square. It might well once have been a green, or piece of common land, with the builders of the ‘messuage called Newynne’ taking care that the jettied front elevation faced this public space.



Tithe map of Peasenhall, 1840
IRO FC67/C3/5

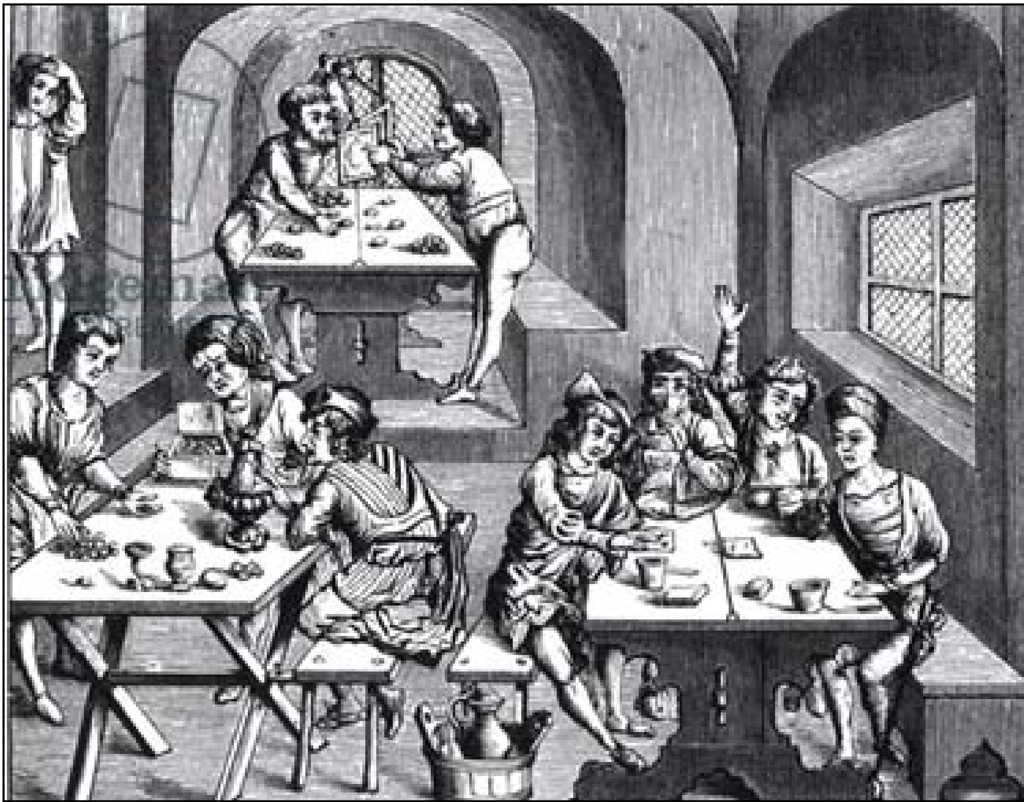
[1] Ipswich RO, HD/333/1 A ‘messuage’ is a dwelling house with outbuildings, curtilage, and any adjacent land for its use. A ‘pightle’ is a small field or enclosure near a building.

The ruins of Sibton Abbey today.

Peasenhall and Sibton were already ancient settlements in 1463. Both feature in the Domesday Book. Sibton was the larger of the two communities through the Middle Ages: today, the ponds in the fields around are all signs of this lost activity. In the mid-15th century, St Mary's Abbey was at the height of its wealth and influence, its list of benefactors the longest in East Anglia. The country was studded with these wealthy and powerful monastic estates then: there is another, Leiston Abbey, just eight miles away, today in the care of English Heritage and still partially inhabited. Sibton Abbey lies just a mile or so east of Peasenhall (today, its ruins are privately owned). Sibton was a Cistercian house, founded in 1292 by William Cheney as a colony from Warden Abbey in Bedfordshire. The only fragment of this other once great house is another building now in the care of the Landmark Trust. The sister house at Sibton was home to a further abbot and twelve monks, who were visited once a year by the abbot from Warden, as required by the Cistercian statutes.

A 14th-century seal for the abbey shows the Blessed Virgin under a pinnacle and crocketed niche, with a flowering branch on each side of her, and a star on one side and a crescent moon on the other.

At its founding in 1292, Sibton Abbey was already endowed with parcels of land across twenty five Suffolk parishes, the Peasenhall messuage and pightles just one of many such holdings. It was common for additional lodgings for visitors to monastic establishments to spring up in the nearest village; indeed the monasteries were the main providers of accommodation for travellers in the Middle Ages. A surviving cartulary for Sibton from the 14th century shows the monastery had a 'hospice' of its own for guests, but this was at North Grange, a dairy farm on its estate. It seems a secular lodging block sprang up on monastic land in Peasenhall, perhaps well before the 15th century, and conveniently placed at a crossroads. By the 15th century, with the great expansion of trade on the roads, inns became a good business opportunity.



1517 woodcut of an inn. Note the simple trestle and benches; the earthenware beakers, the jug of ale in the tub on the floor.

***Peasant Wedding* (1568) by Pieter Breugel the Elder shows a village celebration in a typical setting. Village feasts at New Inn must have been similar.**

The next documentary reference to New Inn comes in 1476, when John Kempe passed to his son Edmund by enfeoffment[2] the right to rent 'all that messuage called 'Le New line [sic] with two pightells adjoining and appurtenances.'[3] The fact that the Inn was 'new' even in these early documents indicates either that there was at least one other hostelry in the village, or, more likely given the cellar described later, that the building known to us today replaced an earlier building. A Roll (the name given to a series of monastic records) dated 1479 also records the 'Newynne', and states that it was recently built by the Abbot and now rented by Edmund Kempe for 8s a year, with a fine (one-off payment) of 16s every time a new abbot was installed.[4] The increase in the rent suggests that the property had increased in value in the previous 13 years – business, perhaps, was booming.

In 1477, Edmund Kempe released the whole tenement to his son, another John Kempe along with Robert Brende of South Glenham, William Wright and Robert Snellyng of Sibton and William More of Peasenhall, for 20 marks and an annual rent now of 13s 4d. It is not clear whether this joint responsibility was a shared business opportunity, or whether New Inn was already a multi-occupancy dwelling? It is possible too that the further hike in rent may have been because the building had been extended, or other ancillary buildings added.

This John Kempe died soon after, for in 1478, John's widow, Isabella, passed the to her son Edward and the same partners the rights to

> 'a certain messuage called Le Newe Inne with two pightles adjacent thereto to the east which the said Edward Kempe lately acquired from…John Kempe his father, my late husband, with all appurtenances in Peasenhall and Sibton….'[5]

[2] Enfeoffment was the exchange of land or property for service, in a wholly or quasi-feudal sense.
[3] Suffolk RO FC67/L/3/2.
[4] The Sibton Abbey Estates: Select Documents 1325-1509, *Suffolk Records Society*, Vol II, 1960, p20.
[5] IRO HD/333/2

Thomas, 3rd Duke of Norfolk (1473-1554), who acquired Sibton Abbey in 1536. He was a prominent Tudor politician, uncle of Anne Boleyn and, perhaps ironically, ultimately an opponent of Edward VI's Protestant regime despite his willingness to profit from monastic property. (Hans Holbein)

In 1495, 'one tenement or messuage built by Edmunde Kempe with garden and pightle adjoining in Peasenhall'[6] was bequeathed to the village by Edmund 'in trust for various superstitious uses.' Superstitious then meant anything to promoting, or associated with, religious belief. In 1840, Plot 99 on the Tithe Map was still owned by the Churchwardens, and was probably Edmund's bequest, or at least a surviving part of it – any dwelling is long since lost, and Farthing pightle retains its own identity beyond this 1495 transaction. The coincidence of the Kempe involvement is rather misleading, however, for Edmund's bequest to the village was not New Inn, although its history can be traced through the documents in the Ipswich Record Office because it formed the basis of the Town Charities of Peasenhall. Cared for by a succession of churchwardens and overseers through the centuries, the income it generated was used for pious uses and charitable purposes: in 1495, to pay for candles to be lit in Peasenhall Church at 'the Sepulchre of our Lord' at Easter (Good Friday) and before the Blessed Virgin Mary on her festivals; 2s to be given annually to the curate of the parish church, 3s to the abbey, 6s at the installation of a new abbot and 3s 4d to the poor and needy of the town.

The Kempes were still in possession of New Inn in 1529, when another John Kempe and his wife Margaret lease 'Le Newe Inne' with Farthing Pightle (now reduced to half an acre) to four others, including Thomas Cutting and John Chapelyn, both of Peasenhall.[7]

Meanwhile, the apparently benign rule of the Abbey over Peasenhall was about to change as Henry VIII's iconoclastic policy known as the Dissolution of the Monasteries took hold. From 1486, Peasenhall had been part of the Liberty (or private jurisdiction) of the Duke of Norfolk. In 1535, Henry VIII's commissioners valued Sibton Abbey at £250 15s & 7½d: as this exceeded the £200 threshold for the first tranche of abolition, the abbey escaped the initial round of dissolutions. Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, seems to have put in a placeman as

[6] IRO FC67/L/3/5 and following.
[7] IRO HD/333/3

Bundle of deeds for New Inn at Ipswich Record Office.

abbot, a William Flatbury, to oversee the monks whose numbers had by now dwindled to six.

In 1536, Norfolk duly bought the monastery and all its possessions from the Crown, a sale confirmed by Act of Parliament in 1539. The Abbot paid a further £200 for licence to two non-residency benefices: in return, Norfolk paid pensions worth £72 to the monks from his receipts of the abbey possessions the same year, so presumably some kind of deal was struck.

So it is almost certainly not a coincidence that 'the Newe Inne' next surfaces in the documents in 1535, the year that Sibton Abbey was valued by Henry's commissioners. In a confirmation of grant dated 13 December 1535, James Woode, clerke (and therefore possibly one of Thomas Cromwell's men) grants to John Chappelyn, his wife Katherine and Thomas Cutting, (all three already present from 1529), plus John Dallyng of Southelmham and Henry Cryspe of Laxfield:

> One messuage called Newe Inne in Peasenhall, with pyghtle on the east called Farthing Pyghtell containing by estimation 2 acres lying between Town Pightell of Peasenhall recently belonging to Edward Kempe on the north, and the common way [the Causeway?] leading from Peasenhall Street to Sibton Church on the south, abutting that pasture which lies opposite the messuage on the west, and the aforesaid Town Pightell recently Edward Kempe's containing 4 acres to the east.[8]

It is interesting that the property is '*called'* Newe Inne. Did it still function as such? The next document, dated 9 Sept 1608, is a confirmation of release of the messuage 'called the Newyn' by John Cooke of Framlingham, yeoman, to his heir Thomas Soldynge of Sibton. It still includes Farthing Pightle, which has now shrunk to one acre.

By 1623, Robert Bateman and Raph [sic] Bateman had bought New Inn from Thomas Cutting. A deed dated 18 October provides us with a valuable and

[8] Ipswich RO, HD/333/4

1675 feoffment (lease) of New Inn in 1675 by William Bateman, yeoman, of Wrentham to Thomas Copeland of Peasenhall, bearing Bat(e)man's signature. IRO, HD333/18

detailed description of New Inn at the time, as they divided the property between them:

> Deed dividing between Robert Bateman of Peasenhall & Raph Bateman of Gressenhall Norfolk, the messuage in Peasenhall called the Newe Inne, with all the houses, building, and yards belonging, with one pightell adjoining called Farthing Pightell, containing by estimation one acre lying in Peasenhall, all of which they purchased of Thomas Cuttinge of Kelsale.
>
> Robert Bateman and his heirs to have **the hall and parlour** with the chambers over them divided with a thick [?] wall from the other part of the said messuage allotted to the said Raph, with all other the houses and chambers situated on the north side of the said wall, together with **a mill house** likewise **divided with a wall from the barn and stable** allotted to Raph with part of the said yards and part of the said pightell called Farthinge Pightell as they are now doled out, and do lie between the town ground of Peasenhall on the north and and the other part of the said messauge and premises allotted to Raph on the south. One head thereof abutteth upon the common, right opposite against the said messuage towards the west.
>
> Raph Bateman and his heirs to have **the shop with a cellar and pantry**, divided by a wall from the rest of the said messuage which is allotted to Robert, with **the kitchen, bakehouse and brewhouse, barn and stable**, with so much of the yards and pightell as is divided by certain dooles newly erected and lies between the rest of the messuage and premises allotted to Robert on the north and on the King's Highway leading from Peasenhall to Yoxford on the south and abutteth the aforesaid common towards the west and on the aforesaid town land of Peasenhall on the east. Ralph reserves the right of ingress, egress and regress through his premises to Robert for purpose of fetching water from the well.[9]

From this we can glean that High End and the hall had become one dwelling for Robert Bateman and, it seems, the 'hall' was not yet ceiled. Ralph Bateman, presumably a kinsman, was moving into the village from Norfolk to take over 'the shop' (or workroom) above the cellar, with the rest of Low End (note too the survival of the traditional name for the room to store dry goods at the service end, the pantry). The ancillary buildings were to be divided between them, on either side of a wall, with Raph taking most of them. A detached kitchen is

[9]Document now in IRO, folder HD/333, from a transcript in by former county archivist D. Charman in 1958, now in Landmark's archive.

implied, as well as a separate brewhouse and bakehouse. Where, though, were the customers of the inn, if it still functioned as such, now to gather?

Farthing pightle is divided between them, apparently formalising an existing arrangement. Robert was to be allowed to come and go to take water from the well (presumably the same one that survives today). Intriguingly, his holding included a mill house, although it is hard to identify a watercourse in the immediate vicinity that could have powered a water mill, and a windmill in such a spot seems unlikely.

William Bateman confirmed Raph's tenure of his part of the building in 1627 'except one outbuilding called in English a shop[10] with on piece of land adjoining the house containing by estimation 1 rod, now held or occupied by Samuel Smyth or his assignees.'

The transcript then jumps to 1675, when William Bateman of Wrentham (perhaps a descendant) passes to Thomas Copeland the Elder of Peasenhall, gentleman,

> All his part of messuage, houses and other premises called the Newe Inne in Peasenhall and also his part of one piece of land called Farthinge Pightell in Peasenhall containing by estimation half an acre now in the tenure or possession of Edward Barrell or his assignees.

In 1723 (the same?) Thomas Copeland leaves in his will to 'his kinsman John Copland of Yoxford, Bachelor of Physic' various pieces of land, among which are 'tenements and yards in Peasenhall now in the possession or use of Thomas Green or his assignees', which may be New Inn though not named as such.

Ten years later, John Copland sold his part of New Inn (named as such) to Reginald Rook of Peasenhall, cordwainer (a maker of fine shoes). Rook had bought the other part from Thomas Foreman in January 1727/8. On 5 May 1733,

[10] This rather surprising qualification 'called in English a shop' is because dictionaries record the first use of 'shop' in its modern sense as not found until the 1680s. The word comes from Old English 'scoppa' meaning a shed or booth for trade or work, and is presumably the sense here and in the 1623 document above.

Rook, perhaps overextended, mortgaged 'the New Inn' and Farthing Pightle to John Clayton of Peasenhall, gentleman. The occupancy of the premises had become fragmented: the whole building was 'in the several tenures or occupations of … Reginald Rook, Thomas Foreman and Thomas Green or their assignees.' (There is a more recent tradition that the Inn has been known as the Wool Hall, but no documentary evidence to date has been found to support the idea that it was ever used for the wool trade, even if inns were often used informally for such trading purposes.)

Through the 18th and early 19th centuries, cottages were added to either end of the central New Inn range. In 1809, a Methodist chapel was built on the SE corner of Fernery pightle, and other cottages sprang up along the road between it and New Inn, now known as Chapel Road. In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act required the conversion of the traditional tithes in kind payable to the Church of England in to cash equivalents. As mentioned above, the resulting Peasenhall Tithe Map and its associated apportionment records provide a snapshot of New Inn's occupants in 1840.

By cross referencing these names with the 1841 census returns, the varied occupations of the inhabitants of Chapel Row can in theory be identified – however, confusingly the 1841 census has two separate entries, on non-consecutive pages for those in residence at Chapel Row on the night of the census. The names found in the tithe apportionment crop up, variously, on both pages, which therefore do not seem to be recording opposite side of the street. (Census recorders walked along the streets house by house. In their rather tedious task, they recorded each separate household, but rarely the specific house name or number, which is why names are typically needed before the researcher can identify a particular building. We are lucky that Chapel Row was noted in the margin for Peasnhall in 1841!)

Tithe map of Peasenhall, 1840
IRO FC67/C3/5

The occupants/owners of each plot are as follows:

96: John Wright owns, James Harsent occupies
97: Harriet Baines (or Barnes) owns House & Garden
97: William Eastaugh occupies and owns [97 has double entry]
97a John Sillett occupies, John Ludbrook owns House & garden
97b Quinton Eagle owns & occupies
97c William Hawes occupies, Robert Hawes owns
97d Robert Brown owns and occupies
97 e Trustees of Dissenting Chapel own & occupy
98 William Eastaugh owns & occupies (arable) [or is this Farthing Pightle?]
99 Owned by Churchwardens. = Edmund Kempe's bequest?

Page 18 of the census tell us that William Eastaugh (plot 97) was a grocer, and the building on the corner, now Weaver's Tearooms, has indeed been a general store in living memory. John Ludbrook (who owns 97a) was a blacksmith, living next door to William Howell another blacksmith, then William Brown whose occupation is illegible and his schoolmistress wife, then Edward Husser the blacksmith – then Grocer Eastaugh.

From later trade directories as well as the Tithe apportionment, we learn there were two inns in 19th-century Peasenhall, both on the north side of the Street: the Angel (whose name at least survives today in the Angel Gallery), run for many years by the Rose family, and the Swann, run for a similarly long time by the Haywards.

There is no mention of a New Inn, and we are forced to the conclusion that any such activity in our New Inn had long since ceased. The rest of the detail of Peasenhall's occupants and daily life lies waiting in the censuses for family and local historians to piece together.

Peasenhall was certainly thriving in the 19th century thanks to the establishment in 1800 of James Smyth & Sons, manufacturers of seed drills and sowers. They became by far the largest employer in the village, employing 400 at their peak and operating from a site behind St Michael's Church (even if the Smyths themselves worshipped at the Methodist Chapel). The Smyths' success turned Peasenhall into an industrial rural settlement, its population rising from 532 in 1801, to a height of 930 in 1871, before it began to decline.

The business survived a devastating fire in 1923 and finally closed in 1967, its former influence still marked today in the village signs.

Some of Smyth & Sons' employees in 1880 – plus donkey.

Entering the 20th century, the village was thriving. It had three village bands (string, brass and black and white minstrels) and a football club. In 1902, the community was rocked by a notorious murder, of a young woman called Rose Harsent, a servant in Providence House, some distance down The Street from New Inn. It gained its notoriety in part because the murderer was never successfully identified, in part at the time because the prime suspect was one William Gardiner, Methodist preacher, husband, father of six children, foreman at Smyths – and Rose's lover the year before her death. Gardiner was tried twice in Ipswich for the crime, but both times the jury failed to reach a verdict. He is one of the few people in English legal history to have been tried for murder but never formally acquitted. He died in 1941.

On the outbreak of WW2 in 1939, Peasenhall welcomed evacuees from London. One, Jim, later stayed in the Landmark, and wrote remembering his time at New Inn:

> '[The cottages] of course had no electric[ity], gas, water or toilets. The water was obtained from the pump in the yard. The cooking was on a big old iron range in the kitchen where bread and cakes were made on Wednesday and Saturdays. The toilets were a row of wooden huts standing roughly where the garages are now. They had a wooden board with a hole in the middle and a bucket underneath, the board was riddled with woodworm and I was always worried it would break and I'd fall in the bucket! The cottage had a small garden at the front, the road [The Knoll] ran in front of the cottages and across the road was a large hut which was the WI. Behind the hut was the blacksmith's workshop where I sometime pumped the bellows for him. The Tearooms was a General Store. The butcher's shop also slaughtered their own meat. The bakery in the lane at the back also made sweets. Although life and times were hard then I was quite happy living here then.'

By the 1950s, when they were acquired by Blyth Rural District Council, the cottages had become so derelict they were condemned as unfit for human habitation. Although alteration and division had long since disguised the medieval character of the building, some memory of it lingered on. Architect Robert Wemyss Symonds, FRIBBA FSA, who lived in Peasenhall in the Ancient House campaigned to save it and fortunately encouraged the RDC to find out more about the Knoll Cottages (as they had come to be known) before their proposed demolition. Sadly, Robert Symonds died in 1958 and there is a plaque to his memory in St Michael's Church.

What the RDC discovered, from the documents transcribed by the county archivist, of the true nature of the structure that lay beneath the later changes eventually resulted in the transfer of the New Inn range to the Landmark Trust in 1971. As well as restoring the hall range as holiday lets, Landmark then also acquired and renovated the adjoining 19th-century brick cottages and tearoom to let residentially. In 1977, Landmark bought the rest of the Knoll, which now, since the closing of the track that ran across it, now serves as the village green. The modern bungalow on the green was subsequently sold to a private owner.

New Inn in the 1930s, with inserted windows, doors and dormer. Note too the large brick chimney stack projecting above the roof from the hall, and removed during the 1970s restoration.

New Inn in 1971, by now known as Knoll Cottages. Its medieval character is hardly apparent behind later render and inserted window frames.

The evolution of New Inn

At the heart of New Inn is the two-bay hall with a crown post and collar purlin roof, open to the rafters. This was a communal space, where household and travellers alike would have gathered for refreshment, trade and good company. There would have been a 'high' end, possibly nearer the fire and better lit by the large windows and with the best chambers behind, and a 'low' end, with two doors leading through to service rooms across a passage. For forty years after the original restoration by Landmark, the Inn was divided into two Landmarks, known as High End and Low End. A third Landmark, known as the Cottage, lay to the south of Low End. Although New Inn is now unified once more, the names have stuck to describe the areas of the Inn, the high end containing the finest bedchamber and the low end lying beyond the two fine four-centred arched doors leading out of the hall.

Since the volume enclosed by the hall was ceiled over, probably in the late 17th century and converted into a cottage, much original evidence has been lost, but no sign of a primary chimney flue for the hall has been found and some of the rafters showed signs of smoke blackening. It therefore seems likely that the hall originally had an open hearth in the floor. The position of this hearth is open to some debate; during Landmark's original 1970s restoration, the view was that it was at the high end of the hall, roughly in front of where the woodstove now stands. However, an open hearth at one end of an open hall would be very unlikely, and it is possible that the 1970s analysts stumbled upon some other feature that they wrongly assumed was the hearth, or perhaps was a later, interim position for a hearth with a smoke hood, destroyed when the later brick chimney stack was inserted and the hall ceiled over.[11] A position in the middle of the hall would have been much more typical, the smoke circulating among the rafters until it found its way out through a louvred opening – but any evidence for

[11] A smoke hood was a timber-framed structure built within an open hall to channel the smoke up to and out of the roof. A brief, transitional feature before bricks became sufficiently affordable to build brick flues, very few smoke hoods survive today.

A finely carved spandrel in doorway from the hall to the low end, and the moulded wall plate on the jettied wall plate to the 17th-century extension to low end.

this has not survived either, so it now seems safest to say that we do not know where the hearth originally was.

So far, so standard. However, two particular features distinguish New Inn from the typical medieval hall house with cross wing commonly built in Suffolk in the 15th century. Firstly, the cross wing (at the high end of the hall) extends roughly east - that is, to the rear of the building - considerably further than normal. Although it is not possible to be certain that this extension is contemporary with the date of the original building, it is certainly very close to it. Evidence of door fixings and mortices for external support indicates that this rear wing had an external entrance at first floor level accessed by an external wooden staircase – a common enough feature of inns and lodging blocks. To evoke this in the 1970s, the original door opening was given a fixed external panel in the form of a simple door. The small window in this door, constructed in a deliberately later style, is a positive assertion that we have no precise knowledge of the exact form of the original door or staircase.

The second unusual feature is at the low end - that is to say, the south end of the building – where there is a large brick cellar (kept locked but empty today). This was no doubt used for the storage of ale and provisions at a cool and stable temperature. Its brick and stone walls start beneath the sole plate of the low end partition. This indicates that the cellar was either constructed as part of the primary construction phase of the *c*1460 Inn, or predates the existing building, the only trace, perhaps, of an earlier inn. The presence of a small, Gothic alcove well-crafted in stone lends credence to this latter theory, which might also explain the name of the existing building. Stone is rare in East Anglia, and its presence adds to the hypothesis that the inn may originally have been built by the abbey.

Whoever built it, the moulding of the central truss and the beautiful handling of the crown post in the roof of the hall is a clear demonstration that they built the new inn with some pretensions to quality. The carved timber detailing was

The strange doodled wall painting in the cottage adjoining low end, which seems to be based on '1688'. This was the year of the so-called Glorious Revolution when the nobility effectively deposed Catholic James II in favour of Protestant William of Orange and his wife, Mary. Perhaps the painting is in celebration of the event.

The well-constructed stone and brick cellar beneath the low end, with its alcove and brick vault. The sole plate of the cottage above can be seen resting on the walls of the cellar (left) proving that the cellar is contemporary with, or possibly predates, the low end of the hall.

carefully placed to be seen from the table at the high end. The carved door heads of the doorways at the low end of the hall and the later mutilated crown post and collar purlin structure in the solar (now the main bedroom in the high end) also support this interpretation of a high quality building.

By looking at contemporary accounts of inns and applying these to the form of the building, we can imagine the disposition of accommodation at the New Inn. The hall, with its continuously burning fire, was the principal room and here the guests were welcomed, warmed and served. The cellar, with its cool, stable temperature, provided storage for the ale, and the service rooms at the low end also provided storage for food and drink. These rooms were known as the buttery (for liquid provisions) and the pantry (for dry goods). The chambers above were perhaps used for servants and/or guests. The solar, or first floor chamber, at the high end was the principal chamber, available to guests or possibly to the master of the house. Alternatively, guests or master were able to use the extension of the cross wing, with the ground floor room beneath the solar probably also available for guests.

It was not uncommon, in larger halls of the period, and in inns, to find a second, detached, more utilitarian open hall fronting on to the rear courtyard, for use as a kitchen, since cooking fires were a great fire hazard in a timber-framed building. In picturing the New Inn at the height of its activity as a hostelry, the courtyard at the rear would probably have been surrounded by other buildings which provided stabling for horses and mules, and storage for their hay and fodder; a brewhouse; a bakehouse and perhaps even a slaughter house. The yard itself would have provided a safe place for carts and goods, and held a well.

Architecturally there are a number of features in the restoration which are of interest in relation to the original building. It will be immediately apparent that there is a distinct difference between the timber studding on the west and east sides of the hall. The west side, more public in facing the village green, is

constructed of better quality, well-finished timber and a greater number of studs. The jetties (or projecting first floors with their nicely rounded joists on show) are also reserved for this public elevation, where the wattle and daub panels are carefully set flush with the faces of the studs to expose the timber to view, and some of the timbers are moulded. The panels were brought forward flush with the timber frame, so that the limewash finish coloured both studs and panels, and provided a continuous weatherproof surface. At the rear, the quality of the timber is very much lower.

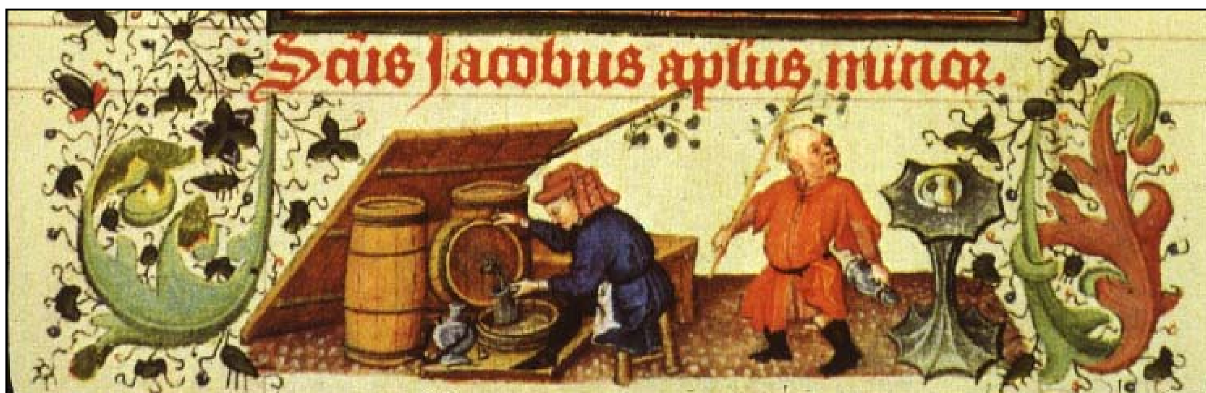
The subsequent architectural history of the New Inn is typical of that of thousands of medieval halls. The custom of open fires disappeared in favour of an inserted first floor offering more privacy and new brick chimney stacks that changed the sky-line of every village in England in the 16th and 17th centuries. This was exactly what happened at New Inn. First, a massive brick stack was added at the high end of the hall, which was ceiled over to provide rooms in the former roof space above.

Around the same time, though not necessarily contemporaneous, changes also took place at the southern end of the building. Here a completely new bay was added, with its own massive brick chimney stack adapted to service one of the low end rooms and the cottage next door, and this extension included a small false cross wing projecting out towards the green. The southernmost wall of this later extension now forms the division between the two main ground floor rooms of the low end. A panel of this party wall in the adjoining cottage side has the figures '1688' inscribed in a flowing hand and repeated as a pattern. This date is possibly the date of construction of this section of the building.

Subsequently the hall was both extended rearwards with a series of small outshoots and divided internally with various new windows and doors introduced, to form three cottages, divided between various tenants.

Plastered ceilings hid the timbered roofspaces and external studwork was rendered over for less rough, but more insulated, finishes. Stairs were added and dormers cut into the roof, one in particular in the centre of the west side doing such structural damage that the subsequent settlement necessitated the lifting of the whole of the western wall in the 1970s reinstatement. Such ad hoc changes were made with little respect for the fabric, and thus the condition of building inevitably declined.

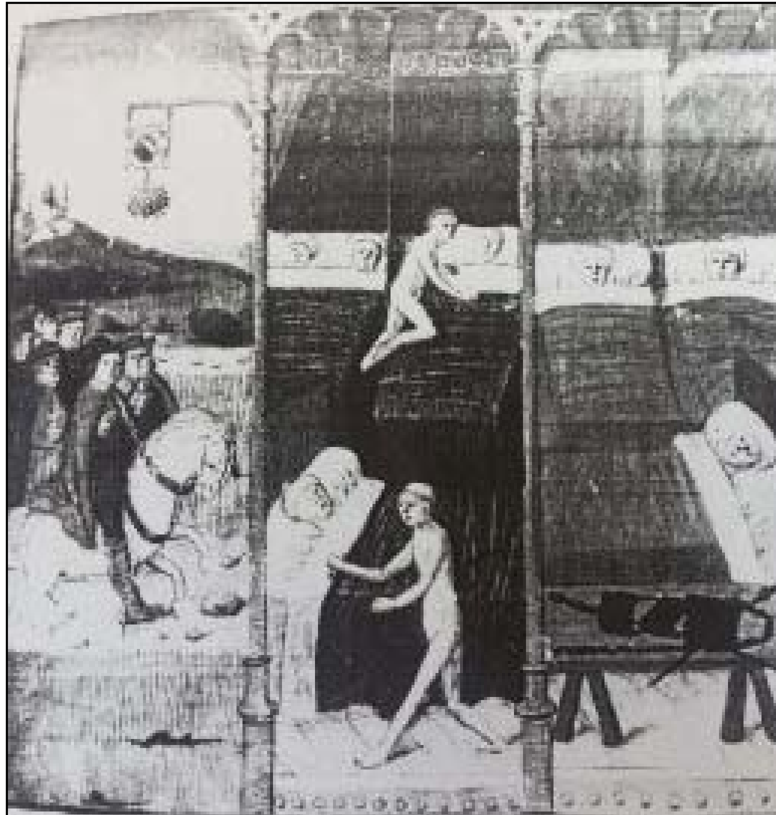
The marginalia of illuminated manuscripts provide vivid glimpses of medieval life. Here, a brewmaster practises his craft in 1437 (the grille above his head was a traditional sign for ale); bread baking and drawing ale from a barrel, from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves (1440).



Life in a late-medieval inn

The term ‘inn’ was a very specific one in the late medieval period and beyond, meaning, in today’s parlance, a hostelry offering food and lodgings for travellers. It should be distinguished from alehouses (serving ale and springing up easily and transiently, often run by the women who brewed the ale, often in their private dwellings) and taverns (serving wine, which was expensive, found more often in towns and attracting a more sophisticated clientele than alehouses). In terms of numbers, alehouses were by far the most common. A survey in 1577 found some 20,000 establishments across the country of which 90% were alehouses and most of the remainder inns, with just 340 taverns. They were an essential part of the community, but also somewhat subversive of authority in their potential for drunkenness and other misbehaviour.

Ale and beer must also be distinguished. The 15th-century clientele at New Inn would have been drinking ale, since hops were not yet introduced from the Low Countries until the end of the century. Ale was brewed using faster acting, warm fermentation, the yeast floating to the top of the brew. Beer was fermented at a lower temperature, the yeast sinking to the bottom and took longer to brew. Both used malted barley and cereal grains to provide the starch for the fermentation of the yeast, but as an alternative to the bittering effect of hops, ale was flavoured instead with ‘gruit’, a variable mixture of simple herbs like mugwort, yarrow, ground ivy, horehound and juniper. Spices like ginger, caraway, aniseed and nutmeg were also sometimes used, although these would have been expensive. Together with ale’s low level of alcoholic content, the gruit also helped act as a preservative. Due to the boiling process required to brew it, ale was generally safer than water to drink. It was also an important source of nutrition through the centuries, hydrating rather than intoxicating, and drunk by everyone throughout the day, including children (who might drink weaker ale brewed from malt used a second time, and known as ‘small beer or ale’).



Arrival and sleeping-quarters at a hostelry. The inn can be recognised by the sign hung outside. Even well-to-do travellers, arriving on horseback, had to make do with communal sleeping quarters – and it seems, from this illustration at least, were quite happy to hop into bed naked together.

(Illustration from N Ohler *The Medieval Traveller* (1989), uncited source.)

From the 13th century onwards there was a progressive expansion, spatially and numerically in the provision of ale and, later, the establishment of inns and hostelries.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, there was an enormous expansion in the ale trade due both to the increasing population and growing inland and export trade, and national routes criss-crossed the country for wool and cloth especially. New market centres sprang up, and merchants and traders away from home were in need of refreshment and a bed for the night. Well placed on the route to the East coast ports and the routes to take cloth and raw wool for finishing in the Low Countries, New Inn at Peasenhall would have benefited from and facilitated this new context.

To attract passing trade, a sign might be hung outside. Customers could buy simple food as well as drink, and it is clear from the 1623 description that New Inn had all the facilities required to serve food and drink, with 'kitchen, bakehouse and brewhouse. Abuses of quality and measure of fare were widespread; the ale-wives and inn-keepers are archetypical characters of sly cunning in medieval literature. Edward III had to introduce a statute constraining "hostelers and herbergers" to sell food at reasonable prices, and ale-conners were employed to assess the quality and measures of ale throughout the period.

Furnishings in inns varied according to standards, and could range from feather pillows and fur rugs, to straw pallets, or even bracken. Beds were almost always shared with whoever was staying the night, usually for at least two people, often as many as ten people. The artists Duhrer was shown a bed for fifty in Brussels, but this was possibly intended for drunken guests. Moreover, people usually slept naked. The expression 'giving someone a cold shoulder' came from turning away when you had talked enough or just wanted to get some sleep.

With several beds in a small space and multiple occupants, there were bound to be awkward or happy encounters. Stories and comedies mirror the social realities of the scene: lighting was dangerous and expensive, candles still a luxury. There were few chamber pots: most went outside if they needed to relieve themselves at night, and could easily lose their way on their return. *Drunken Barnaby's Four Journeys to the North* was a set of popular mid17th-century ballads which ran to several editions, a bawdy travelogue originally in pig Latin (soon, of course, translated) that recorded the supposed exploits of one Barnaby Harrington at inns and alehouses the length and breadth of the land. It is a satirical glimpse of life on the road, but no doubt with a grain of truth. It can be read in full online, but as a random sample:

BARNABY'S JOURNAL. 23

Thence to Lonesdale, where I view'd
An hall, which like a tavern show'd;
Neat gates, white walls, nought was sparing,
Pots brimfull, no thought of caring:
They eat, drink, laugh, are still mirth making,
Nought they see that's worth care taking.
Thence to Cowbrow, truth I'll tell ye,
Mine Hostess had a supple belly,
Body plump, and count'nance cheerful,
Reeling pace (a welcome fearful),
Like a drunken hag she stumbled,
Till she on her buttocks tumbled.
Thence to Natland, being come thither,
He who York's contempts did gather,
Gave me harbour; light as feather,
We both drank and eat together,
Till half tipsy, as it chanced,
We about the maypole danced.

Barnaby gathers and glories in the more disreputable behaviour, but we can also envisage the drinkers more innocently singing and playing traditional games like chess, backgammon and draughts. The walls of inns were traditionally decorated with hung tapestries or other cloths or possibly painted. Floors tended to be stone or mud strewed with rushes, rugs or carpets might have been thrown over furniture or hung on the walls. The furniture would have been mostly of oak:

rough table tops on trestles, benches, chests for utensils and drinking vessels, high-backed settles for protection from draughts and four-legged joint stools.

Drinking vessels were often made of leather, known as "black jacks"; made from a single piece, doubled and sewn at the edges, with a projecting piece beyond the stitching to form the handle, and a circular piece sewn in to form the base. Inside, the vessel was coated with pitch for proofing and preservation, which is how larger examples such vessels came to be known as pitchers. The pitcher was used to fill the customers' smaller leather cups, earthenware beakers, or wooden tankards. There was no glass; this would have been too expensive, since it was largely imported until the late sixteenth century. Food would have been eaten from a wooden platter known as a trencher, or even from a thick slab of bread, using a wooden spoon and knife; forks were not in general use until the late 16th and 17th centuries.

While it seems that New Inn, built c1460, enjoyed a relatively brief period in use according to its nomenclature, this was context from which it sprang. From at least the 17th century, however, it had been absorbed seamlessly into the village life, as homes and workshops for the inhabitants.

Top: The southern end of the New Inn range before restoration.
Below: Work well underway on New Inn itself.

Restoration of New Inn in 1971-2

Based on notes by The Architectural and Planning Partnership, September 1975

It is very interesting to revisit the explanations for the 1970s restoration approach forty years later and reflect upon how conservation practice has changed since. It is clear all the changes made in the 1970s were only done after deep and careful consideration, but the overall aim of recovering the form of the open medieval hall at the expense of later, but still historic changes, is perhaps a change that would need to be harder fought for under today's controls.

The 1971-2 restoration was carried out by architect John Warren with advice from Reginald Mason, an expert on timber-framed buildings. The decision was taken in the 1970s to remove the inserted floor and brick chimney stack from the hall in order to reveal the medieval hall in its original form. The first task was to strip away 'all later accretions, inserted ceilings, plaster off the walls and so on,' to see how much of the original frame remained. This was found to be largely complete but suffering badly from subsidence and from the careless insertion of dormer windows, which had badly weakened its structure and caused the outer walls to lean nearly 18 inches out of true.

To solve this, all the rafters had to be taken off and the frame braced back into position. When the roof covering was put back, the rather haphazard mixture of plain tiles and pantiles was rationalised, so that plain were used on the late medieval part of the building and pantiles on the later additions. Two original jaunty 'coxcomb' medieval ridge tiles were discovered, three 'combs' on the crown of each. One was completely undamaged, and was used as the pattern for the firing of a new set of similar tiles by Robert Packer, a potter based at Shottesbrooke. They are still to be seen on the ridge today. The roof of the south end of the building is half-hipped. Clear evidence for the original half-hip came to light during the re-roofing and 'a later gable was therefore removed and

reconstructed.' As relatively few half-hips of medieval date can be authenticated, this is an important example.

The 'newer' bricks from the hall chimney stack were salvaged and used to construct a panel of brick wall at the high end to indicate the position of this later stack – as well as to help support the building, since the original cross beam had been cut to allow the insertion of the stack. Oak was used throughout for structural repairs, and left unfinished to make quite clear what was old and what new.

When the original large window openings for the hall were uncovered, the slots for their mullions were found to have survived and so mullions were put back as they had once been, by a craftsman called Gunolt Greiner. The floor tiles in the hall are mostly old, a mixture of pammets and bricks.

In the partition between the hall and low end some panels of original wattle and daub survived and these were retained. Elsewhere, panels of wood-wool were inserted, 'as the closest modern equivalent of medieval material'[12] and then plastered.

In the high and low ends (at this stage converted as two separate Landmark lets with shared use of the hall, which was left unheated) a less rigorous policy of stripping out was followed. In the solar on the first floor of the high end, the later principal ceiling joists were left in situ to show how the building was altered. Later fireplaces have also been left and most of the doors, while old, are not 15th-century.

The original intention was to remove the crumbling 17th-century western false wing at the service end that projects towards the green in order to recover the original form of the late medieval inn. On stripping it down, however, the high

[12] This seems an interesting illustration of the revival of traditional skills in the last forty years. Today, we would have little hesitation specifying wattle and daub as a like-for-like replacement.

quality of the jettied structure ‘gave strong justification for its retention even though it obscured the profile and character of the medieval building.’ The east wall of the double bedroom in the low end also has a mullioned window from the original external west wall. Thankfully, it was therefore decided to retain this jettied extension, along with the additions south of low end, well-built cottages of the 17th or 18th century. Some other outbuildings were taken down, however, to create the open space at the rear.

The 1970s restoration was careful to distinguish new work from the original structure by the character of the materials. New oak is left with a band-sawn surface, and new plaster has a rough but distinct texture. The use of stained pine in the new stairs and joinery is, we may now feel, itself characteristic of 1970s fashions, not least since softwood was invariably given a painted finish historically. Old paving, not necessarily medieval, has been retained, and so have many of the cottage "insertions" at the high and low ends. The result both allows the original form of the medieval inn to be read, while also acknowledging the various later accretions acquired during centuries of domestic and craft use.

The back of the New Inn before it was restored. The brick lean-to was removed.

The back of the New Inn being restored.

The hall stripped back to its frame. The service doors to the low end can be seen in the right hand wall. Note the neat brick infill to the first floor panels.

Restoration of the rear nearing completion.

The interior of the hall during restoration looking towards the low end, with an iron girder that latterly supported the first floor still in situ. Panels of 15th-century wattle and daub were retained in this wall.

Work in progress, looking into the hall from the rear.

The repaired rear wall seen from a high level within. As much of the original frame was kept as was possible, and the repairs are easily distinguishable to avoid any confusion with original fabric. In the foreground are the sockets for window mullions discovered for the great window on the back wall.

Crown post and tie beam of the hall before repairs. The tie beam beneath the crown post has been cut to give head room and the crude work of the inserted partition on the line of the open truss can be seen very clearly to the right of the crown post.

The inserted floor, later ceilings and partition have now been removed from the hall, revealing the crown post.

Wattle and daub infill to the fraking of the walls of the main hall after removal of the external skin of render upon lath. The original window mullions are visible top right of the picture.

The same wall showing the complete window.

Crown post in the high end chamber prior to restoration. The crown post at that time was completely concealed from view by a ceiling inserted below the tie beam, so it was an exciting discovery.

The crown post in the high end chamber.

New timbers and bracket inserted beneath the jetty at the high end.

New Inn front and rear after restoration.

New Inn revisited – 2013

From 1971 until 2013, New Inn functioned as three separate Landmark lets: High End and Low End (both for four people) and The Cottage (for five people, adjacent to Low End). The hall, left unheated and un-insulated, was intended as a communal space to be shared by all. It eventually became clear that this configuration had become unsatisfactory. Even in summer, the hall, the heart of the building, was rarely being used and in winter it became a 'cold sink' for the adjoining cottages. Rising energy costs and environmental awareness mean Landmark is working to improve the energy performance of all our buildings, and in 2013 we decided to revisit New Inn and carry out a major refurbishment to bring the hall into general use.

To encourage use and enjoyment of the hall and to ensure it felt 'lived in', we decided to combine High and Low Ends into a single Landmark for up to eight people. To make this work, the hall clearly had to be heated and insulated.

Some 1200 pammets and bricks were lifted and numbered prior to the installation of underfloor heating, warmed by an air source heat unit housed near the garage block to the rear. Such units work like a refrigerator in reverse, using a condenser to draw heat year round from the ambient outside air, which is then used to heat water for the heating elements. The sub-floor was excavated, a floor screed was laid, then insulation, then the underfloor heating elements, and finally a further screed finish before the pammets were relaid on lime mortar. The resulting floor level is at the same level as the 1970s one it replaced.

To boost the heating still further, a woodstove was installed at the high end of hall. This led to an interesting debate with the local planning department, who were keen that the chimney stack removed in the 1970s be reinstated at roof level. We felt this was not an honest route (not least since the open hall, as we were now dealing with, would never have had such a stack, which belonged

The hall at New Inn before the 2013 refurbishment. Note the underside of the clay roof tiles open between battens between the rafters. The brick panel indicates where the lost inserted stack cut through the timber frame – and, like it, helps support the building.

To gain access to the roof structure in 2013, the whole hall had to be scaffolded and a 'floor' once more inserted – but this time only a temporary one.

rather to its ceiled phase). The weight of such a brick stack resting on a fragile medieval roof structure was also problematic.

The roof structure had been left entirely open in the 1970s, simple clay tiles pegged over battens. We have now inserted further battens (very carefully, to avoid knocking out the pegs) to which multifoil insulation has been stapled, for best performance within the narrow depth of the joists ('greener' insulation materials all require greater depth for an equivalent performance). Plasterboard was placed over the insulation sheets, and then finished with a very thin plaster skim, no more than 10mm deep. This was an exacting process: the replacement, sawn 1970s rafters were straight and relatively easy to work with, but not so the wavy originals. It was a fiddly job to scribe the plasterboard around these, but we wanted to be sure that the whole roof structure was visible and that the finished plaster was kept back from the edges of the rafters to ensure a 'shadow gap' remined. The hall should now be warm enough to be enjoyed to its full potential.

At the high end, the ground floor room (a sitting room in the former Landmark configuration) has been made a ground floor bedroom, as we try to cater for those with lesser mobility. A tiny bedroom on the first floor, formerly a bunkroom, has become a storeroom.

In a way, reuniting the accommodation of the original mid-15th-century building like this completes its restoration to its medieval form and, we hope, also makes it a nicer place to stay.