

**A HISTORY OF THE BELL INN, COLEORTON  
(THOUGHT TO BE A FORMER COACHING INN)**



**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - Feb 2020**

## PREFACE

Although little is known about the “Bell Inn”, the author felt it important that what we do know to date is recorded, as more information may come to light in the future. It is referred to as both “The Bell Inn” & “The Old Bell Inn” in documentary evidence. **Hand me down hearsay** has it that this was a Coaching Inn (Coach House / Staging Inn / Post Inn) and even a hotel at one time, but it has to be emphasised that no concrete evidence is available now to prove this. However, as the Inn was located adjacent to the Ashby / Loughborough Turnpike road, this seems a reasonable assumption to make. It is not possible to date when the original Bell Inn was built, but it was most likely to have been to coincide with the building of the turnpike road in the mid to third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest written reference to it found to date is 1813.

The reader must accept that few records of the Bell Inn exist, and those that do are challenging to interpret. However, we now have real evidence that the Bell Inn did exist in Coleorton and does not have to be left to hand me down hearsay anymore.

Taken from Wikipedia:-

*The **coaching inn** (also **coaching house** or **staging inn**) was a vital part of Europe's inland transport infrastructure until the development of the railway, providing a resting point for people and horses. The inn served the needs of travelers, for food, drink, and rest. The attached stables, staffed by hostlers, cared for the horses, including changing a tired team for a fresh one.*

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## THE BELL INN

**Maps and an aerial photograph showing the geographical location of the former Bell Inn are appended at the end of the article.**

John Crocker, a respected local historian, who sadly passed away some years ago, attempted to carry out some research work on the "Old Bell Inn" in 1988. John subsequently met with the owner at the time, who had purchased the plot c.1950 from the Beaumont Estate. The property on it was in a poor state but there was a sitting tenant at that time. Quite what the property consisted of is not known, but as there was a sitting tenant, it clearly was some form of living accommodation, presumably a cottage, of which there appeared to be others on the site. The fish ponds were purchased much later, c.1970, after the Angling Club declined to purchase them. A strip of land between what became Bell Cottage and the Fish Pond island had been purchased prior to this date.

The view was expressed by the owner, that the original Inn must have been parallel to the turnpike road on the east side of the present Bell Cottage. John Crocker concurred with this as he thought that the coach house and stable block would probably have been in a square around the stable yard.

John had also identified two old pit shafts either side of the new "Bell Cottage" build which would have been older than the original "Bell Inn". As numerous "Bell Pits" would have been in evidence in this area, could this have been how the "Bell Inn" got its name? The accurate position of the shafts John identified have now been confirmed by the author on a special O/S map which needs permission to publish.

**The following information is important, as amongst other things it confirms the name of the "Bell Inn":-**

*Thomas Stinson is recorded in a Beaumont Estate "Cottages 1827 Book" as an Inn Keeper of the "Bell Inn". He was living with his wife and five children, and the rent was £50, which included two cottages No.33 William Toone, and No.34. William Parker.*

In the Coleorton brickworks registers there is confirmation that bricks / tiles / etc between the following dates were being supplied to The Bell Inn in over the following period presumably for repair work - 1814, 1815, 1822, 1824, 1827, 1828, 1829 and 1830

In a rent book dated 1823, Thomas Stinson is in the first list, which appears to be those people paying higher rents, with his rent being set at £40 p.a. There is no description of the property / properties given. His rent in 1826 was £50 and in 1833 it was £76 10s. 0d., but the latter would have been at the Beaumont Arms and the attached farm where he died in that year.

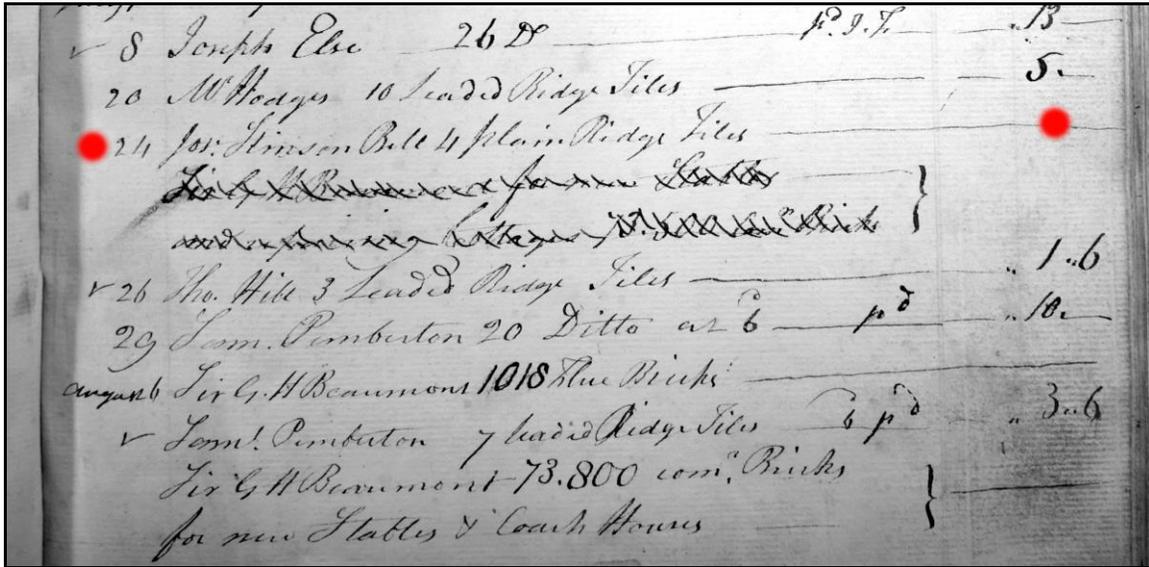
Many people like farmers and publicans had second jobs, as was the case with Thomas Stinson. In an undated Beaumont Estate "cottage index" notebook, his occupation is described as a "Hatter" living with his wife and seven children at the "Bell Inn", but as we know he was the licensee also. The property number was 36 and the buildings and land were valued at £50.

The centre of the local hat making industry was Ashby, but a number of hatters in Coleorton and Peggs Green have been identified also, they and their profession is described by the author elsewhere.

There is a long list of Stinson's shown in Coleorton as licensees of Ale Houses stretching back to 1788 (Hugh and Joseph partnership). Joseph had held a license in the Township of Thringstone in 1781 & 1782. Thomas Stinson enters the Coleorton list of licensees in 1796 with Joseph (apparently in partnership). This continues till 1805 when Joseph is then listed on his own up until

1813. Thomas is then listed on his own from 1814 till 1826. It is not unreasonable to assume that they were all licensees of the "Bell Inn".

Confirmation that Joseph Stinson was at the "The Bell Inn" in 1813 can be found in the following extract from the 1813 Coleorton Brickworks ledger, where it states:- *Jos Stinson "Bell" 4 Plain Ridge tiles*. There was no charge being made for the Beaumont estate repairs or for Beaumont's own use at that time as can be observed lower down where Sir G. H. Beaumont had 1018 blue bricks and 73,800 common bricks.



**The following advertisement appeared in the Leicester Journal on Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 1813:-**  
**Valuable Freehold Estate in Swannington**  
**To be sold by auction**  
**By Mr. Shaw.**

*At the house of Mr. Stinson's Bluebell (presumably should say Bell), in Coleorton, near Ashby – de – la Zouch in the county of Leicester, on Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> day of November 1813, between the hours of three and four in the afternoon, unless previously disposed of by private contract, of which the earliest notice will be given, in one or more lots, as may be suitable to purchasers.*

In 1825, a licensing Act was introduced making it a requirement to display the name of an Ale House. Before then, the "Bell Inn" already had a name **suggesting it was of some importance and needed to be known by the coach drivers and visitors etc.** It is somewhat frustrating however, that the Bell Inn is not named in the early licensing records.

An estate "Cottage Book" shows Francis Potter as landlord of the Queen's Head, but he was evicted by reason of neglect at Michaelmas 1827 at which time Thomas Stinson was awarded the tenancy. The author has confirmed in licensing records that Francis Potter was landlord of the Queens Head in 1827. He must have been re-instated as we know from sales advertisements for the Queen's Head that he was landlord there in 1831, 1832 and 1834.

It is of interest to note that Thomas Stinson stood surety for a number of other Ale House keepers, so he must have been of some standing in the community. He is also included as a licensee in the Thringstone Ale House lists from 1806 continuously through to 1821. Clearly he couldn't have been in several places at the same time, so the author is of the view that because of the Stinson' family standing in the community he was awarded several licenses but allowed others to live on the premises and run the Ale House. On one occasion, Joseph stood surety for Thomas and in 1807 Thomas stood surety for 7 different Ale House licensees in Thringstone

except for his own license. In fact that covered all the Ale Houses in Thringstone Township in 1807??

Thomas Stinson was one of the few land owners in Coleorton besides the Sherwins', Beaumonts' and the Church who owned land in Coleorton. In the 1842 Tithe map and register for Coleorton, he is shown as owning Stinson's Close (plot 262) between the Bell Inn and Coleorton cross-roads.

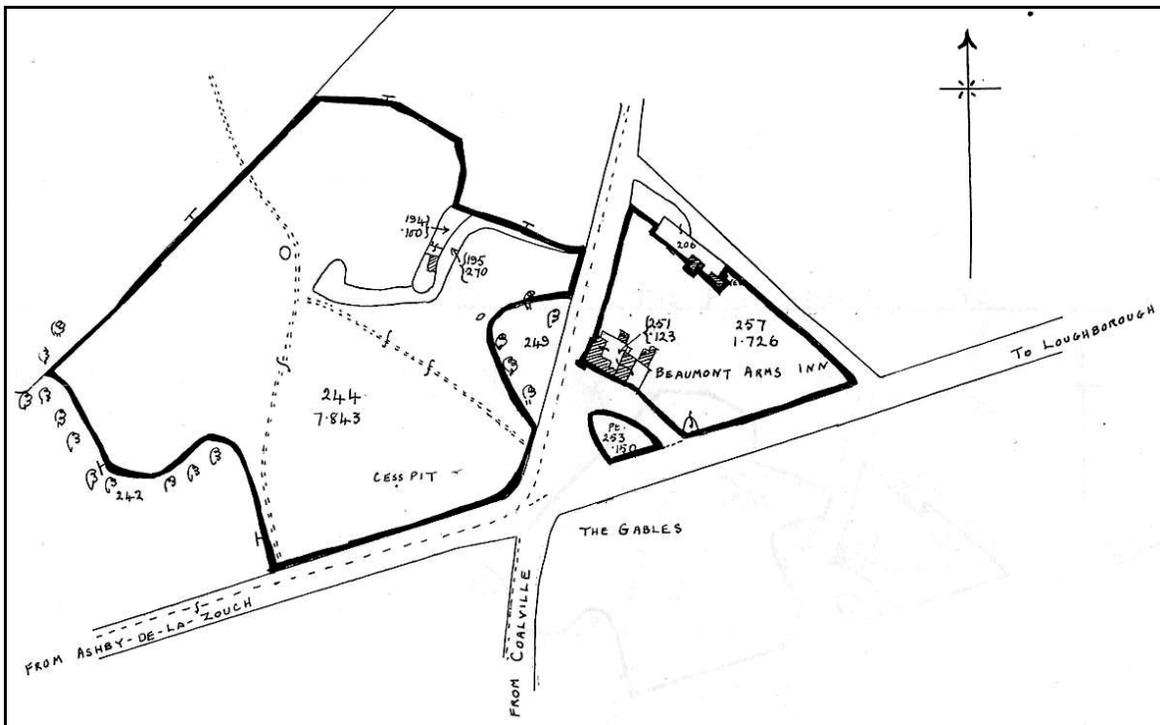
Estate notes confirm that Thomas was supplying victuals to haymakers (in the paddock) and the ice house men at the fish ponds during 1830. As quantities of various sough tiles were being supplied to Thomas Stinson at the Bell Inn in 1830, so it is not unreasonable to assume that the victuals were being supplied from there.

**The author thinks that it would have been shortly after 1830 when the Bell Inn ceased to exist as licensed premises, and was presumably then converted into cottage type living accommodations. It was at this time that Thomas Stinson would have moved to the Beaumont Arms, Coleorton as the landlord.**

**Sadly, the following obituary appeared in the Leicester Chronicle on Sept 21<sup>st</sup> 1833:-**

***Died – On Monday last, at Coleorton, aged 52, Mr. Thomas Stinson, of the “Beaumont Arms”, in that place, much lamented by his family and friends.***

The history of the Beaumont Arms is quite complex and will be covered in a separate dedicated feature on the website which the reader needs to read in order to more fully understand the possible relationship between the Beaumont Arms, the Stinsons and the Bell Inn. The following map shows the location of the Beaumont Arms adjacent to the old Coleorton cross-roads in more detail.





Above is an extract from the 1881 surveyed O/S map, which shows the former Bell Inn site (Bell Cottage) marked **A**. The Beaumont Arms is shown to the NE corner of the cross roads.



The above extract from the 1885 published O/S map shows the former Inn site 235 in a little more detail. There is also a Well to the SE of the property from where they would have obtained their drinking water



**Extract from 1948 R.A.F aerial photograph of Coleorton  
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- A – The Bell Inn building within red square**
- B – Coleorton Fish Pond**
- C – School**
- D – Church Hill**
- E – Coleorton Rectory**