

The Peacock at Rowsley

This attractive house is famous today as the Peacock Hotel, standing on the A6 in Rowsley village, well known for its hospitality. It has indeed been in use as an hostelry since the early nineteenth century, and it is easy to forget that it was once one of Derbyshire's delightful small upland seats. Built of coarse ashlar of millstone grit sandstone - Ashover Grit from Lees Moor/Lindup Wood, with similar dressings the house was U-shaped, with two straight coped gables to the front, under each of which were two bays each of six-light mullion and transom windows with hood moulds extended into bands and three-light mullions in the attics. Between the gables, set in a stone slate roof, is a wide projecting bay forming a two storey porch, battlement on top with an eight-light mullion and transom window over the plain door with its simple stone segmental pediment; a central dormer nestles behind. To the North are two gabled projections, quite plain. Later, two-storey one-bay wing was added to the west, and in late-Victorian times a long five-bay two-storey east front was added, overlooking the walled garden and in a plainer style. This has matching detailing and stone faced dormers. The parapet of the porch also acquired at this time a carved stone representative of the crest of the owner, the Duke of Rutland: a peacock displayed. The Peacock, however, was by no means the first seat on the site (or near, for we are short of knowledge about medieval Rowsley) for it had been held, from the 1190s at least by a family who took their name from the settlement, the Rollesleys, but who retained the ancient spelling thereof. Henry de Rollesley, the first of the family on record, had a son, Jordan, who left a daughter and heiress who married a man called Peter who assumed the name of Rollesley on succeeding to the estate. His descendent in the 11th degree, John, died 18th December 1562, a fortnight after his only son, leaving a daughter and heiress who created the estate to Sir William Kniveton of Mercaston, created a baronet in 1611. His son, Sir Gilbert, 2nd Bt, sold it to Sir John Manners of Haddon, who promptly leased it to John Stevenson, the son of a prosperous yeoman of the same name. In 1652 (according to the date on the stonework) he built the present house, being succeeded by his son another John, who also held Elton Hall and land at Stanton-in-Peak. The lease was probably for three lives, and the state certainly seems to have reverted to the Manners, who then became the Dukes of Rutland.

The Duke of Rutland then installed John Barker (1668-1727), his steward, also a competent former joiner, and carpenter & architect, who had been responsible for many of the works on the estate. His father Henry, of Darley, had also been a joiner and indeed, could conceivably have built Rowsley hall, for the quality of the panelling and chamfered beams within is high but without sufficient sophistication for them to be work of a man from, say Derby. Likewise the stone fireplaces and simple, attractive plaster work are also of a piece with the original build. John Barker was succeeded as steward by his son, Thomas (1709-1754), who is described as of Little Rowsley Hall, but who spent much time at Belvoir too. Thomas' son another John (1731-1795), was the last of the family to live there, moving to Bagshaw Hall, Bakewell, and later building Ashford Hall circa 1770. The house was then re-let, although it served as a seat for impoverished relations until the nineteenth century when it assumed its present role. The stable block is of later century date and almost certainly by John Barker, but the house, on which the six hearths were taxed in 1670, has remained free from drastic and unsympathetic alterations since. The modest estate was subsumed with that of Haddon.

The Peacock

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Past Innkeepers & Occupants

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1652	1655	John Stevenson..(6 Hearths) (Builder)
1655	1822	Stevenson/Barker/Stevenson Family
1822	1825	Sarah Shaw. (Innkeeper)
1825	1826	Thomas Clarke. (Innkeeper)
1827	1828	Ann Clarke. Married Samuel Severn 21.1.1828. Bakewell
1828	1852	Samuel Severn & Ann Clarke-Severn
1852	1863	John Cooper
1863	1865	Mary Ann & Sarah Cooper
1865	1887	Mary Ann Cooper
1887	1908	Sarah Cooper
1908	1928	Walter Bucknall Cooper
1928	1946	Harry Lewis
1946	1954	Eugene Mabillard?
1954	1958	Lilian Goodwin
1958	1960	Patricia Teresa Jackson?
1960	1963	Anthony James Preston-Parker
1963	1970	Alan Alexander Averty
1970	1972	Gerald Peter Allchin
1972	1993	George Michael Gillson
1993	1998	Patricia Gillson & C.T. Donnelly
1998	2000	Roger Michael Hudson
2000	-(2001)	Paul Carter
2003	-	Ian & Jenni MacKenzie MHCIMA