

# *“A Pint of Ale”*

## *Southam’s Public Houses*

Summer Exhibition 2017 June to September

Open Tuesday & Saturday morning 10am-12pm

or by appointment

Today, there are only four of Southam’s once well-established public houses left in town, yet it was said that Southam had a public house for every 60 persons living there and indeed, the 1901 census records indicate that there was still one public house per 149 persons in the Southam licencing district. So why was this particularly so at Southam?

The shape of the town centre still shows how Southam’s Market Hill and Coventry Street’s Beast Market, were well situated on the busy cross-roads of both the daily north-south traveller’s road from London, and the west-east drover’s roads for livestock from Wales.

Ale or beer has always been a part of the British diet, because the process of brewing made it safer to drink than water, but the ‘*Inn*’ offered much more with full refreshment and accommodation for passing merchants, court officials, farmers and pilgrims, as well as providing centres for markets, fairs, auctions, gambling, gentleman’s sports, travelling theatres and many other businesses and entertainment. The warmer, inner rooms and bedrooms provided comfort for the gentleman, while the bar and outbuildings provided simpler accommodation for the labourer, each keeping to their own area.

In 1552 an act was passed requiring innkeepers to have a licence and in Southam we can name several inns earlier than 1650 and in our Collection are sale documents from as early as 1744, with further records at Warwick Record Office. Through these and alongside newspapers, we have been able to trace nearly 30 public houses in Southam and touch on their sometimes wild and unusual stories, alongside photographs from the Collection.