

Orchard House

A medieval timber-framed house with a cellar still exists behind the frontage of the Fishing Shop in Stonehouse High Street. This was one of the freeholds of Stonehouse manor held with a few acres of land by the Fowler family, and was occupied in the early 17th century by Thomas Spokes, a baker.

In 1606 the manor court gave William Harmer and his wife Susan permission to build a house 'conditionally that they shall behave themselves honestly and decently as shall befit people of their sorte and havior to doe'. This was the stone part of Orchard House. The Harmer family, yeomen and clothiers, bought the adjoining timber building in 1659 and occupied the whole house for the rest of the century.

By 1709 Jonathan Harris, innkeeper, was running the property as the Swan Inn. At his death in 1715 his cellar held drink and vessels, and his garret stored glass bottles. He had a brewhouse, and plenty of tables and chairs. The manor court met at the Swan in 1715, hosted by the widow Harris, and probably on other occasions.

The inn flourished until the 1760s under the landlords John Taylor, his brother William and his niece Sarah and her three successive husbands. In 1774 a group of local clothiers and gentry established a charity school in the former Swan Inn, led by John Elliott Esquire of London and staffed from 1789 by his distant cousin, another John Elliott, and his family. In 1832 this school moved to new buildings, which now house the Stonehouse Park Infant School and Children's Centre in Elm Road.

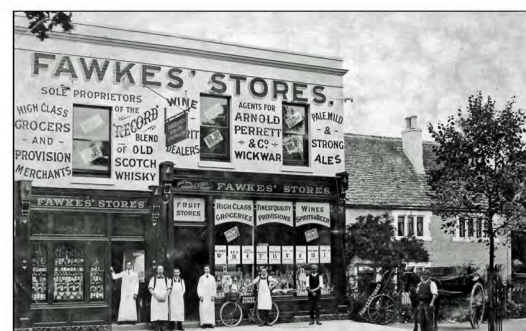
John Elliott lived in Orchard House until 1848, but the medieval part had become a shop after the school moved out. During the later 19th century a projecting frontage was added to the shop, housing a succession of grocers' stores, while a further cottage was added to the north end of the stone house.



This 19th century photograph shows the house before the shop frontage was added to the short L-shaped portion.



By 1900 the shop frontage had been built directly on to the old house, as shown in the background of this postcard



In 1909 Fawkes' Stores ran a thriving business in the medieval house with extension



The shop addition can be clearly seen in these two photographs taken in 2013