from SAWYERS ARMS HOTEL to THE PHOENIX HOTEL
1854 - 1989
An advertisement in handset-type which appeared in the Lyttelton Times in 1865 offering attractions of the times.

On May 5th 1864 William Matthews informed the public that he had taken over the license from F. E. Hiscocks, and in September 1866 Matthew’s license was transferred to A. E. Fantham.

Henry Roil: The Roil family came from Stockport, Cheshire, arriving in Nelson on the Bolton in 1842. Henry, then 20, worked with his father on their Waimea East farm before coming to Canterbury.

Henry and his mate Robert Carr were cutting bush, when in August 1853 they purchased part of RS 203 on the corner of Harewood and North Roads for their timber dealing. About that time they became the publicans of the Sawyers Arms Hotel until they parted company in 1854.

Henry also owned 3 acres, part RS3 facing onto Sawyers Arms Road, and the west corner of Sawyers Arms Road, part RS5. He is also thought to have had a butcher’s shop at Kaiapoi.

In May 1862 he suffered what became a fatal accident when, driving a dray sitting on the shaft he bumped into a bullock dray driving in the opposite direction. He was buried in St Paul’s cemetery, survived by his second wife.
THE SAWYERS ARMS HOTEL

Papanui’s first hotel (or “public house” as it was first recorded) was a dwelling house on a 28 acre section purchased in 1854 by Robert Carr and Henry Roil from William Guise Brittan for £280. This was part of the original Rural Section 5 (RS5) which took in a fair portion of the Papanui Bush. This first hotel was about where the Papanui Domain is today in Sawyers Arms Road.

Our thanks to “Land Information N.Z.” for allowing us to photograph this original “Black Map” of the Papanui area. The map was drawn by the Chief Surveyor, Thomas Cass, in March, 1856, and shows the location and extent of the Papanui Bush.
The “Sawyers Arms” as it was known from its beginning was effectively the local community centre where the sawyers gathered not only to drink, but for public meetings. The Papanui Mechanics Institute—similar to a Night School—met there and it also housed the first Papanui Library.

In April 1854 Carr and Roil separated their partnership and Joseph Papprill and his brother Thomas became the publicans. The Pappriils held the license until about 1860 when Joseph took over the “Rangiora Arms” hotel and Thomas became a solicitor's clerk.

Henry Tankard took over the license for a short time, followed by Frederick Elijah Hiscock, and then William Matthews took up the license in 1864. By 1867 Joseph Fantham was the licensee and he was followed by John Wild about 1870.

It was while John Wild was licensee that the disastrous fire on the 3rd November, 1874 took place.

By the 10th June 1875 a new building was in place on the corner of the Main North Road and what had become known as Sawyers Arms Road.

On pages 5 & 6 are the reports that were in the Lyttelton Times and the Christchurch Press.

John Wild: in 1869 took over the license of the hotel. Prior to this he had been a carpenter living in Kaiapoi. John died in May, 1904 at age 63 and is buried at St. Paul’s, Papanui. There is no mention of his wife Mary on the headstone. They are thought to have arrived in New Zealand early in 1864.

Short Biographies

of John Toovey, Joseph Fantham, and Joseph and Thomas Papprill, are on pages 7 and 12.
Fire.—A serious fire occurred at Papanui yesterday morning, by which the whole of the Sawyers' Arms Hotel and stables, together with a quantity of building materials for additions to the hotel, were destroyed. It would appear that Mr and Mrs. Wild retired shortly after 11. o'clock p.m. on Tuesday, the house being closed and locked up for the night; but shortly after midnight Mrs. Wild was awoken by a suffocating sensation, and roused her husband. The latter detected a strong smell of fire, and at once got up. He opened the door, but found the passage so full of smoke that he was compelled to retreat, and, with his wife and children, had to escape by the window. He took his cash-box with him, and attempted to secure some of his account-books, but the fire spread so rapidly that he was unable to do so, or even to save his watch or any of the articles of jewelry lying on the dressing-table. There were some six or eight other persons sleeping in the hotel at the time, but these were all aroused in time to make good their escape, though without saving any of their property. When Mr. Wild had descended from his bedroom, the seat of the fire appeared to be in the vicinity of the kitchen fireplace. The whole of the hotel was enveloped in flames within a few moments of the fire being discovered, and it was impossible to save anything; indeed, the fire soon spread to the stable—a two-storey building 75 ft. by 16 ft.—and a large quantity of building materials intended for carrying out certain additions to the hotel also caught fire. As there were no means at hand for extinguishing the fire, nothing could be done but watch it burn itself out, which was done in a comparatively short space of time. Mr. Wild estimates his loss, including the building materials, at £1600, and his insurances are—£250 on the hotel, £250 on the stable, and £300 on stock and furniture in the National Office; £300 on the hotel, and £100 on the stable, in the Liverpool, London, and Globe Office.
SAWYERS' ARMS HOTEL.

The opening of the new hotel, Papannui, the Sawyers' Arms, was celebrated on Thursday evening by a dinner. About forty gentlemen sat down to an excellent spread, provided by Mr. Wild. Mr. J. A. Bird occupied the chair, Messrs. J. Barlow and J. W. Anderson occupying the vice-chairs. The table having been cleared.

The chairman said he regretted that the office of chairman had not fallen into better hands, as when he came up he did not think he would be asked to fill that position.

Three apologies were read from gentlemen who had promised to be present, namely, Messrs. Wynn Williams, the representative of Ward & Co., and F. Strouts; they all regretted very much that they could not attend through pressure of business. After the usual toasts had been disposed of,

Mr. Barlow proposed the "Agricultural Interests of Canterbury," and spoke in eulogistic terms of the farming district of Papannui.

Mr. Freestone responded, saying that the pastoral and agricultural properties of Papannui would compare favorably with any farming district of the province.

Song—Mr. Hawken.

Mr. Anderson proposed the health of the builder of the house, Mr. Goodland, speaking in high terms of the creditable manner in which the house was finished; very few houses in Christchurch would compare with it.

Song—Mr. A. Hawken.

Mr. Goodland thanked the company for the very handsome manner in which his health had been drunk.

Mr. Barlow proposed the health of the chairman, Mr. J. A. Bird. Drank amid loud cheers.

Song—Mr. Elliott.

The chairman returned thanks.

Song—Mr. Stevenson.

Mr. Freestone proposed the health of Mr. J. W. Anderson, of Prebbleton.

Song—Mr. Sunderland.

Mr. Anderson returned thanks.
John Toovey: died in January, 1897, aged 60. He was described as. “Hotel Keeper, ‘Star and Garter Hotel’ Oxford Terrace East.” His wife, Philippa, died in April, 1906 at the age of 69. They are buried at the Linwood cemetery.
John Wild remained the publican until 1885 when John Toovey took over. By 1889 John Cooper and his family were in residence and then on the 1st September 1898 the hotel was again burnt to the ground.

The Sawyers’ Arms Hotel at Papanui, owned and occupied by Mr. J. Cooper, was burned to the ground last evening. Mr. Cooper states that the hotel was closed as usual at ten o’clock, and at 10.30 the family retired for the night. At about 11.45 Mrs. Cooper was awakened by the smell of fire, and rushed her husband. They found that the partition in the dining-room, close to the chimney, was in a blaze. Help was quickly at hand, and buckets of water were thrown on the fire, but it had by that time got too strong a hold to be dealt with in this manner, and the dense smoke and heat drove the workers out. The building was a wooden structure, very old, and the timbers were as dry as tinder, and in a little over three-quarters of an hour from the time the fire was first discovered the walls had fallen in, and the whole was a mass of smouldering ruins. This is the second time the hotel has been destroyed by fire, the building occupied by Mr. Cooper having been built some twenty-three years ago in place of the Old Sawyers’ Arms when it was burnt down. The insurances as far as can be ascertained are £1,000 on the house and £800 on the stock and furniture, both in the Commercial Union office. Mr. Cooper has occupied the hotel for the past nine years. The origin of the fire is a mystery. The two chemical engines turned out, but after going to the North Belt, and seeing that the fire was a considerable distance out of town they returned.
“OUT OF THE ASHES A PHOENIX AROSE!”

Again, the hotel was rebuilt. But this time with a new name—“The Phoenix Hotel”.

John Cooper remained the licensee until 1906 when he advertised the hotel for sale:

On 4th December 1906 the transfer to Alexander Fairbairn was confirmed and the license granted. A. Fairbairn remained the licensee until 1918, when it was taken over by James Pawson. By 1920 W. C. Smith held the license and was at the hotel until 1925. Between then and 1945 there were a number of licensees including H. Hancock, A. P. Pratt, D. Coffey, F. L. Coutts, F. E. Douglas, L. A. Jensen, Jessie Cooper, A. Little, and J. W. Fantham.

Joseph Fantham had not been there long when he died and in June 1946 his wife Emma had the license granted in her name. In 1948 the license was transferred to Cecil Fantham who remained there until 1955 when Robert W. H. C. Smith renewed the license. In 1961 Cyril Clarke held the license and it is not known if he held it through to the demolition of the building in February 1989. The building at this stage was owned by J. Rattray & Son Ltd., who wanted to expand their Countdown Supermarket; but an appeal to the Planning Tribunal put a stop to that proposal.
The Phoenix Hotel
(photo ex Karen Rusbatch, ex Shona Elliott)

IN THE MIDST OF THE TRAFFIC—in 1913

Looking north down the Main North Road
Waimairi County offices on the left, Phoenix Hotel behind the cart;
ex Christchurch Library; photoCD 5 IMG0063 The weekly press 13/3/1913 p28
THE PHOENIX RISES NO MORE

The demolition last week of the Phoenix Tavern on the corner of the Main North and Sawyers Arms Roads marked the end of a building rich with the history of Papanui.

The tavern has been closed for the past few months. Its owners, J Rattray and Son Ltd, had intended to expand their Countdown supermarket on to the tavern site.

But an appeal to the Planning Tribunal by the New World supermarket chain saw that proposal overturned.

It seems Countdown now intends to use the site as extra parking in the meantime.

The Phoenix, originally the Sawyers Arms Hotel, has been a Papanui landmark since the original settlement.

In the earliest days all public functions for the north-west districts were held in the Sawyers Arms Hotel.

This was later burned down, rebuilt, and re-christened the Phoenix.

In the old Sawyers Arms Hotel the Papanui Mechanics’ Institute had its beginnings, a primitive night school for local workers’ sons—specialising in reading and blacksmithing.

The Sawyers Arms was also the first site of the Papanui Public Library.
May 10, 1888 Christchurch.

Fantham:

An entertainment in aid of the widow and children of Mr. Joseph Fantham was given in the Papanui Town Hall last evening. The attendance was good, but not so large as would have been in the case had the weather proved favourable. Some disappointment was caused by the absence of the Kaiapoi ladies, who had promised their assistance for the occasion. Mr G. Milsom however apologised for them, stating that from various causes they were unable to be present. Songs were contributed by Messrs Hanson, Dykes, Milsom, Brooke, Price, Hayton & Blyth. And an instrumental duet (violin & piano) was given by Messrs Wood and Blakey.

Mr. Rice delivered a most amusing stump speech.

Joseph Fantham died in August 1869 at age 62. There is no headstone on the Fantham grave at St Paul’s cemetery.
REMINISCENCES

Some reminiscences about the hotel from elderly residents of Papanui from a collection made by Des King in 1979.

“The hotel was called the Sawyers Arms after the bushmen who felled the timber down that road, (Sawyers Arms Road). Next door to the Phoenix were the stock yards. Stock used to be driven down Papanui Road to the Addington sale yards. With shingle roads the roads became quite dusty when the drive was on.”

“You could go down the road and hear the men standing outside the hotel having big arguments.”

“Then around Sawyers Arms Road was the remains of the Papanui Bush, the ‘Rec’ - now the Papanui Domain—and some orchards. There was also a stock pound in the road and it was started in 1875. On the corner of Sawyers Arms Road and the Main North Road was the Sawyers Arms Hotel, so-called because of the sawmill originally started in this road.”

“Next door to the Phoenix was the stock pound which later moved to Sawyers Arms Road. This pound was along the lines of a dog pound except the patrolling rangers impounded cattle and sheep that farmers had put out on the road side to graze, rather than canine creatures. The farmers had to pay a fine to get their stock back, and the Phoenix Hotel used to boast that you could buy “beer by the pound” at their premises.”

“All the roads north of Bealey Avenue were shingle; once Mr. Gregor got bogged down in his truck just outside the Phoenix Hotel. Both hotels had horse troughs outside their frontages for all the passing traffic.”
On one memorable occasion these two took the Sullivan’s goat and tied it to the knocker of the Phoenix Hotel. When the door was opened the goat of course rushed straight in.” (Names for “these two” were not given.)

The Phoenix, it was a mandatory stop for one resident after taking his produce to market, and maybe on other occasions. In a state of past-caring about worldly worries he’d be loaded (in more ways than one) in his cart, the reins secured over the front and the horse given a gentle slap to continue its journey home.”

**AND IN THE NEWS**

A trotting match for £5 a side took place at Papanui on Tuesday week between Mr Horner’s Advice and Mr Veitch’s Kitty. The course was from the Seven-mile Peg to the Sawyers’ Arms Hotel, and Advice won by three lengths in 16min 20sec.

A wager of a somewhat novel nature was decided a few days ago at Papanui (Canterbury). Mr. J. Wild, of the Sawyers’ Arms Hotel, backed a man named William Pouning-house for £10, to erect three chains of post- and rail fencing within eight working hours. The conditions were—two rails, 9ft. length, to be pointed, the post to be morticed and sunk 2ft. 6in. in the ground. Pouning-house worked steadily throughout, without making any great apparent effort, and completed the work in a substantial manner easily within the time. Mr. Wild thus won his bet. It is said the man could have erected another chain within the time had he pushed himself.
Joseph Papprill was the first of the family to come to New Zealand. He came in the "Cornwall" in 1851. He was born in Holborn, London in 1828 and worked as a tailor’s assistant. After arriving in Papanui he was a sawyer. With his brother Thomas who arrived in 1853 they took over the Sawyers Arms Hotel in 1857 and were there until 1863 when Joseph took over the Rangiora Arms. Some time in the late 1860s he moved to the Hutt Valley and he died in Taita in 1901.

Joseph married Sarah Elizabeth Moore who had come out on the "Bangalore" with her parents.

Thomas Papprill was born in 1834 at Holborn, London and worked as a solicitor’s clerk before coming to New Zealand with his sister Marianne on the "Northfleet".

Thomas married Elizabeth Flint at St. Michael’s in December 1860. When Thomas died in June 1904, he was described as a solicitor of Cranmer Square, aged 70.

The parents of Joseph, Thomas, and Marianne were Joseph and Marianne Papprill who emigrated on the "Phillip Lang" in 1856. Another son, Silas, also came to New Zealand.