

## **Reminiscences of Minnie Harding nee Reed age 79 of 8 Pilton Street, interviewed in the late 1950s**

Born and brought up in Pilton, Minnie could remember the maypole being erected on the triangle of grass at the top of Dark Lane [grass removed only a few years ago]. The owner of Orchard House would provide milk and buns for the children who came there to dance. [*North Devon Journal* 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1878, see also note below about St. James in medieval Pilton] Minnie could also remember a greasy pole erected at the top of Pilton Street on these occasions and also the pump outside the top almshouses, visible in old photographs of the top almshouses.

Minnie's father was Frederick Alfred Reed and her mother was of the Tanner family of Pilton. The rear half of Bull Hill House belonged to her mother, but she gave it to her husband in order that he might have the right to vote. He was the miller at the Town Mills [between Mermaid Walk and the River Yeo] for forty-six years. Frederick's father was a Braunton postman, whose wife used to walk to Georgeham every day with the letters. Frederick's brother, also a part-time Braunton postman, was a shoemaker by trade.

Going back to her time at Bull Hill House, Minnie remembers that they owned the Great Hall, which had a ceiling at that time with a large bedroom above where the children slept in four double beds. The bedroom at the back was the one where Minnie and her sister did their dressmaking. There was an old Bodley in the 'chequer', which was their kitchen, and the sitting room was behind this, now demolished. In this sitting room there was a beautiful moulded plasterwork ceiling and a large chandelier. The main wall of the kitchen, facing north, had a curious copper-lined cupboard used for cleaning equipment.

When Dr Manning went to live in Medina Cottage, he wanted their house for a surgery, and he bought No:77 The Rock, where Minnie and her family went to live there. However, when Dr Manning married, his wife did not like Medina Cottage, so they moved into Choweree House on the corner of Boutport Street and Vicarage Street, where Dr Manning set up his surgery, and the Reed family moved back into Bull Hill House. Minnie remembered that their toilet was outside in the courtyard, near the front part of the house. Their garden was one of the little strips on the higher level, and there was also a very small garden down in the courtyard, where she could grow whatever she pleased – it was sheltered and warm there.

Minnie married Arthur Harding, and lived her long life in Pilton. She was related to the Reed family at the Reform Inn.

*Some notes about St. James in Pilton.*

*There was a chantry chapel dedicated to St. James dating from the middle of the thirteenth century, granted to Lord Henry de Tracey, which stood near the top of Church Path. [North Devon Record Office 1239F/E22]. Here there were anciently two old cottages, one of which was part of the old chapel and had a piscina built into a wall. There was a cemetery where Orchard House now stands, where bones were found. [North Devon Athenaeum, Harding MSS, Schedule II, No:16] Further information in 'Pilton Its Past & Its People' M.A.Reed.*

*Margaret Reed*