

Pilton Causeway

Pilton Causeway, connecting the lower part of Pilton Street with the north end of the town of Barnstaple, is barely recognisable today as a causeway, until it is noticed that the level of Pilton Park is several feet below that of the adjacent road. This whole area on each side of the causeway was once a marsh which flooded twice each day when the



tide came up the Rivers Taw and Yeo. In order to maintain a secure dry path between Pilton and Barnstaple an 800 foot causeway was built across the marsh, first

mentioned in a deed of the local leper hospital dated 1323, with a bridge at each end. There is much evidence in wills of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of money left by wealthy people of Pilton to maintain the causeway and bridges. In 1460 John Philipe, a salt merchant of Pilton, left 20 quarters of salt to be sold for the benefit of the 'use of the embankment of Pilton', and for the same cause Thomas Martyn, priest of Norton Fitzwarren in Somerset, who died in Pilton in 1510, left 6s 8d to 'the causey of Pilton'. Bequests such as these were one of the main sources of revenue for such maintenance, as each parish had to finance all road and bridge repairs by raising money in the form of a parish rate.

In 1678 Pilton Causeway and the two connecting bridges were rebuilt during the mayoralty of Richard Salisbury of Barnstaple. As the boundary between Barnstaple and Pilton lay in the bed of the River Yeo, the two had to share the cost, and this situation continued until the nineteenth century, with this route serving not only the people of Pilton and Barnstaple, but also leading to Braunton, Ilfracombe and all points north, as it was the only bridge across the River Yeo until 1830, when the Braunton Road was built, with a swing-bridge connecting Rolle Street with Barnstaple's North Gate.



In the early 20th century houses were built east of the causeway on land formerly known as Hollyford, but now known as Yeo Vale, and Pilton Park was added to the west of the road by the 1920s. These areas continued to flood, in spite of the causeway, well into the second half of the 20th century, but major flood defences in the second half of

the twentieth century have largely solved these problems, and a few puddles in the park on exceptional tides seem to be the only visible signs in recent years.

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