

The Public Houses of Pilton



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30p.

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Published by Porcupines, Barnstaple

Printed by Northgate Printing Works, Barnstaple

SBN 85531006 5

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the kind people who have co-operated so willingly in this humble effort, especially the following:—

The Rev. J. West for permission to make use of certain papers in his custody, and also Mr. A. Griffiths for his kindness when I worked in the vestry on several occasions.

Mr. P. A. Kennedy, M.A., and his staff at the Devon Record Office for much helpful information and the provision of copies of feoffee documents.

The Feoffees of the Pilton Charities for permission to reproduce extracts from their papers now in The Devon Record Office.

Mr. G. Morris and Mrs. Gaskin of the North Devon Athenaeum for their kindness, courtesy and help on many occasions.

Mr. R. A. C. Holden, LL.B., Clerk to the Justices, for providing lists of Pilton licensees.

Mr. R. Norman, who allowed me to use his copious store of newspaper cuttings.

Mr. W. J. Taylor and Mrs. M. A. Western who have helped and encouraged in various ways.

Mr. Roy Dymond for kindly photographing the present public houses of the parish.

Mrs. Susan Mosdell for her artistic impression of The Unicorn as it was between 1750 and 1850.

And particularly Mr. Gerald Mosdell for encouraging me to embark on such a project, and for constant help and advice, and my own husband for financing my researches and helping with his own memories of life at The Reform Inn.

THE PUBLIC HOUSES OF PILTON

By Margaret A. Reed

The Early Inns

The early inns of Pilton are, for the most part, unrecorded, but some surviving property leases from the 18th century onwards refer to their location and the names of their occupants. The parish rate levied in 1792 names three inns in Pilton — The White Hart, The Gardeners Inn and the Combemartin Inn, all of which are unidentified. They may be the former names of existing public houses or of inns now defunct. Publicans did occasionally change the names of their establishments for various reasons, and, in Pilton during the last century, both the Reform Inn and the New Inn were re-named. The innkeepers provided the parish with centres of conviviality at a time of great hardship and poor home conditions. Escapism in the form of drunkenness was common, but gradually, with better living conditions, human dignity was restored, with the resultant moderation in drinking habits.

Some of the early Barnstaple Borough Ordinances and By-laws mention innkeepers and their obligations. Alehouse keepers in Pilton were subject to the jurisdiction of the justices of the Hundred of Branton, as the following extract shows:—
1594—"All brewsters and tiplers of ale within the Hundreds of Branton and Shirwell appeared at Barnstaple before Mr. Dyllon and Mr. Ackland, justices, and bound by recognizances to keep good rule, etc." (Gribble's "Memorials of Barnstaple" p.622.)

The Borough Ordinance of about 1425 contains the following clause:—

"Also because divers men of the said borough and the country around often complain that it happens at times that there is a lack of white bread or beer on sale, it is ordained that whenever this shall occur in future the bakers shall be fined collectively in the sum of half a mark as often as there shall be a deficiency of white bread, and the same when the white bread shall not be good and wholesome for the human stomach; and the brewers in like manner shall be fined collectively half a mark when there shall not be a sufficiency of beer for sale, the fines to go to the borough fund." (Reprints of the Barnstaple Records, Vol. I.p.85.)

The succeeding ordinance of 1585 makes a similar stipulation:—

"If it happens all the bakers of the town to lack bread to sell according to the assize, then every one of them to be amerced

6/8d, and likewise the brewers, if there be no ale to be had to sell amongst them all according to the assize, then every one of them to be amerced 6/8d." (Reprints of the Barnstaple Records, Vol.I,p.92.)

The Oath of the Constables, as taken in the 16th century, contains the following passage regarding the inspection of licensed premises:—

"... To make due search in all the innes, victuling and tipling houses and alehouses for such of the inhabitants as shall repair and resort thither, and remain there drinking, tipling, or drunke, and the offenders to present at the next King's Majesties Court, with the nature of the offence..." (Reprints of the Barnstaple Records, Vol.I,p.175.)

Also among the Barnstaple Records of the same period, there is a proclamation, made on Mayor's Day, about the town after dinner. This contains the following passages regarding the duties of innkeepers at that time:—

"... And also that all brewers brew good ale, wholesome for man's body, and sell the same according to the assize, that is, an ale quart of the best ale for a penny, and twopence a gallon of the middle ale. And that all tapsters set out their signes as they ought to do, and sell their ale by measures fured and sealed, and that they deny not person any ale so long as they have any in their houses... That no inhabitant do presume to sell or tipple any ale or beer in their houses, except he be first duly licensed..." (Reprints of the Barnstaple Records, Vol.I, pp.179/180.)

Records from the 17th century show that Barnstaple justices granted licences to persons wishing to produce and sell intoxicants, and recognisances were made by the publicans each year in February or March. Bonds of £10 each with two sureties of £5 each were paid by the innkeepers, and the following recognisance of 1631 illustrates clearly the kind of restrictions placed upon them at that time:—

'The condition of this present Recognizance is such that, whereas the above bounden John Ley, is allowed to keep a common Alehouse, or Tiplinge house, for the yeare now following: yf, therefore, the said John Ley, during such time as he shall keepe such common Alehouse or Tiplinge house, shall not suffer any unlawfull plaie at Tables, Dice, Cards, Tennis, Bowles, Cloishe, Coits, Loggets, Shuffleboard, or any other unlawful games, to be used in his howse, garden, orchard, or backside, especially by men's Servants, Labourers, Apprentices or Idle

persons; nor shall dress, or cause or suffer to be dressed, or eaten in his howse, any flesh meate, upon days prohibited by the Lawes and Statutes of this Realme, nor shall wittingly receive into his howse any person defamed for thefte, incontinenie, or drunkenness, or such as shall be beforehand notified unto him by the Constable or Constables of this towne, to be an unmeete person to be received into a common Alehouse; nor shall lodge, or keepe, any strange person above the space of one night and one day together, without givinge notice thereof to some Constable of this Bourough; and if the sayd John Ley doe and shall well and truly observe and keepe the Assize or Ale and Beere, according to the lawes and statutes of this Realme, and lastlye, if the said John Ley shall, dureinge all the time that he shall keepe such common selling of Ale and Beare, shall use, maintaine, and keepe good order and rule in his howse, then this Recognizance to be voyde or els the several sumes abovesaide to be leaved upon their several goodes and chattles, lands and tenements, to the use of our Sovereigne Lord the Kinge." (Reprints of the Barnstaple Records, Vol.I,p.37.)

These rules seem to have been well enforced, as many presentments appear in the records regarding offences committed by publicans and their customers. The following list indicates the type of charges made at this time:—

"For tippling without license
For breaking assize of beer
For receiving and harbouring strangers
For forestalling and regrating barley and malt
For raffle board playing
For keeping a gaming house
For playing at cards
For a shuffleboard
For night walkers
For making a ryott."

(Reprints of the Barnstaple Records, Vol.I,p.38.)

Breaking the assize of beer meant, of course, departing from the proper price or measure. Malsters also had restraints laid upon them from time to time, in order that the Borough could keep control of the amount of barley which was malted.

The parish constable apprehended these malefactors, and a surviving account for Pilton shows the following entries relating to the public houses of the 17th century:—

- 1682 — Accompte of Thomas Street
 Itm. paid for a warrant to summon John May, Walter Vener, William Knill before ye Justices for Typlinge in an Alehouse on the Lord's Day in tyme of Divine Service . . . 1/-.
- 1685 — Accompte of Joseph Fairchild
 For going to Bittadown and bearing . . . one John Sparman for selling Ale without licens . . . 1/-.
 (Pilton Feoffees Documents, Devon Record Office.)

The reason for the journey to Bittadon was to bring the man before the Justice, who must have lived there, as this journey was made and recorded by the constables on several occasions at this time.

Throughout the 18th century the drinking habits of the inhabitants of Pilton were probably completely unaffected by the new cheap spirits then causing havoc in cities and large towns. Gin palaces of the type well-known by Hogarth in London had no place in the far West, and ale, porter and cider continued to hold the stage as the consolations of the working population in rural England.

The parish register mentions the following small number of people who pursued the various callings of "hostler," "Victualler" and "Innkeeper," whom I have been unable to "place" in any particular establishment, but, as changes were fairly frequent, this is not surprising:—

"Hostler"—Richard Pugsley	1838
"Victualler"—George Tribble	1833
Samuel Rowe	1850
William Laramy	1850
Samuel Toms	1851
William Jones	1852
"Innkeeper"—George Henry Crang	1876

Right up to the middle of the last century public houses were numerous and magistrates did not restrict the number of licences granted, so new ones were added to already "saturated" areas without restraint on their part. There were also beer houses, which were not licensed by the magistrates, and these were also known as "tiddly-wink" houses and needed only an authority from the Excise department on payment of a fee. They were, however, obliged to close at 10 p.m. Added to this, at Fair time, anyone could sell intoxicating liquor within the Borough of Barnstaple merely by putting a bush outside the house, and many took advantage of this concession. Until 1869 there was no restriction

to the number of hours that a fully-licensed house could remain open, in fact many opened all night. However, under the Licensing Act of that year, all licensed premises closed at midnight, and this was later amended to 11 p.m. (Gardiner, "Barnstaple: 1837-1897") There was an early morning trade which now has no parallel, and public houses in Pilton opened at 6 a.m. so that working men could partake of a little liquid refreshment on their way to work. The dosage, if possible, was repeated at midday, either in the public house, or, if distance prevented this, from a container filled at the early morning visit. Drinking again in the evening was a normal end to the day, when the fire and convivial company helped to compensate for the rigorous life most of them endured.

Beer, Ale and Cider

Beer and ale were commonly drunk in countries like Britain, where the climate was unsuitable for the vine. Ale may have been introduced by the Romans, and was certainly in common use in England in Anglo-Saxon times. This drink was made without hops — beer, the hopped beverage, was not brought to England until the 16th century (Encyc. Britt.) However, as hops were not common to the Westcountry, ale was still the common beverage, together with cider, long after this time. Hops were, however, brought to North Devon by sea in moderate quantities, and in 1679 the duty payable for their discharge at Barnstaple for "Kayage, Hallage and other Dutyes" was "Hops, the bagg. cont. the Hundred is . . . 50d." (Gribble "Memorials of Barnstaple" p.610.)

The manufacture of ale was common in large households, and normally evolved upon the womenfolk, hence maltster and brewster, feminine forms of malter and brewer. In fact, maltster is frequently used in error to denote both masculine and feminine as the feminine form was in much more common use. Brewer, on the other hand, seems to have survived a little better, but brewster is still to be found as a surname. The growth of the monasteries with their large brewing units, which were very well managed, saw the commencement of brewing for commercial purposes. At parish level, the Church House, present in most parishes, was the scene of "Church Ales, social events for the parishioners, held about five times a year, and for which the Churchwardens often brewed the ale themselves in the Church House. These events were the forerunners of bazaars and fetes, and the account of the Barnstaple Parish Churchwardens for 1564-5 contains the following entry, which shows that neighbouring parishes patronised

each other in their social activities: — "Item paid paid at a brekefast at Pilton Church House . . . 6/8d." (Reprints of the Barnstaple Records, Vol.I.p.213.)

During the sixteenth century the Barnstaple Parish Church brewed ale that was sold commercially and for the profit of the parish, but there are no existing accounts for Pilton which might throw light on the extent to which this Church House, which stood on the site of the present almshouses to the right of the arch at the top of Pilton, also acted as a parish brewery. In some cases bakers were also malters, as the common raw materials were grain and yeast.

The method of making the ale was quite simple. Malt was made by steeping barley or other grain in water until it germinated, this was dried in a kiln and roughly ground. Yeast was then mixed with it, the mixture moulded into small pieces and partially baked. These "cakes" were then crumbled and put into a jar of water to ferment. The end product had the texture of soup and was sometimes strained. Weak, or small beer or ale was considered a safer drink than water, the supply of which was often contaminated. (Encyc. Britt.)

The Ordnance Survey map of 1889 shows the malthouse, probably already obsolete at this time, occupying the site of Messrs. Berry's farm implement repair workshop near Pilton Quay. A malthouse was operational here in 1698, and is, recorded in a lease of this date among the feoffee papers although it was not the property of the parish. The indenture gives Philip Jones, the malter, and Joshua Barry, a weaver, permission to build at "The Backs," which was the part of Pilton Quay now used as a car park, but although they made use of the land, they do not appear to have erected any permanent buildings here, as a subsequent lease of 1725 does not mention anything of this nature. The old lime kiln near Pilton Quay is mentioned as a boundary, and this also appears in an old map of Pilton Quay dated 1776, although by this time it was no longer in use.

In 1725 Philip Jones leased his malthouse to William Charter, and also sold him two brass or copper furnaces, one at the Pilton malthouse and the other at William Charter's house in Barnstaple "at the sign of the Castle," one for each maltkiln. The Pilton parish register records that, in 1720, William Charter married Phillippa Jones, the daughter of Philip and Mary Jones, so in fact he took over the business of his father-in-law, and in 1776 a Mrs. Charter still occupied the site of the malthouse and also "The Backs."

Some innkeepers appear to have made their own malt, whilst others relied upon the malter of the parish for their supplies.

Very little information is recorded regarding tradesmen prior to 1813, when the parish register commenced listing the calling of each man and woman. From this time onwards, however, many malters appear. Between 1813 and 1850 the following gentlemen, on the baptism of their various offspring, styled themselves malters. The dates beside each name relate to the occasion on which the entries were recorded.

John Williams	1813
Philip Tucker	1814
Nathaniel Dovell	1824
George Vicary	1815, 1817, 1819
George Tribble	1824, 1826, 1829
Thomas Jones	1829, 1830, 1839
Edward Squire	1830
John Hamlyn Irwin	1837
Richard Kelly	1843
John French	1848, 1850

After 1850 no man styled himself "malter" in the register, but the following names occur in leases or various directories: —

Simon Whimble	1805
Edward Thomas	1819
William Carpenter	1850
Thomas Hancock	1852
John Knill	1857

John Knill was still operational in 1878, and was very likely the last one in the parish, as by 1890 no malter is recorded. The old malthouse had terminated an association of centuries with the inns of Pilton.

The brewers had by then developed the "tied house" system, which operates to the present day in many public houses. They started to buy inns and to instal tenant landlords, who had to buy their supplies from the owners in fulfilment of the tenancy agreement. This effectively curtailed the activities of the parochial malters and home brewers alike. The small number of "free houses" in existence today illustrates the extent to which the beer manufacturers continue to control the retail trade, although the large groups of companies now owned by each brewery group does mean that each publican has a much wider range of goods at his disposal. A more recent development of this trend is the installation of managers on fixed salaries, but in rural areas the tenant landlord is still far more common than in towns and cities. Habits die hard, however, and many a local landlord continued quietly obtaining "scrumpy" or rough cider from the farmers.

Proprietary brands were likened scornfully to "pop" by comparison, and fit only for children. The nicknames "gut rot" and "sock rot" indicate the strength of the local beverage, and as a cheap, strong drink it knew no equal.

Cider does not appear to be as ancient as ale, no orchards are mentioned in the Domesday Survey, but by the 16th century orchards were common, and "cider fruit" was the name given to some types of apples. In the 17th century a great increase in cider making seems to have occurred, and for a variety of reasons. This was the age of long sea voyages, which often saw their commencement in the Westcountry. Cider was recognised as a most suitable drink for seamen, as it remained in good condition far longer than beer, was cheaper than wine, and more economical. "Such plenty of cider is made in Devonshire, as many copyholders may pay their lord's rent with their cider only, which is found a drink very useful for those that navigate long voyages; whereof one tun serveth them instead of three tuns of beer, and is found more wholesome drink in hot climates. ("Risdon's Survey of Devon," p.7) Cider was exported to London, Liverpool, Yorkshire, in fact all parts of the country unable to produce the beverage for itself. At the end of the 18th century it is estimated that the crop varied from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 hogsheads per acre throughout the county. (Hogshead contained 60 to 63 gallons). In 1820, 10,265 hogsheads were sent from the ports of Exeter and Dartmouth with their satellites, exclusive of such cider as the makers shipped themselves. The exportation of cider was, however, chiefly confined to the South Hams, as in the North of the county the produce was mainly for local use and the victualling of ships at Barnstaple and Bideford. Farmers and their families drank cider almost exclusively, malt liquor being very rarely found in remote country districts; in fact strangers found it very difficult to obtain a "civilised" drink in Devon in the 17th and 18th centuries when travelling in remote parts of the county. Very occasionally two hogsheads of cider would be boiled until it was reduced to half the quantity. This produced an exceptionally strong and luscious drink, and was much prized. Excessive fermentation, however, deprived the cider of its strength. (T. Moore "History of Devonshire" 18.9.)

At this time each farm had two or three acres of orchard. The best apples were picked and stored and the rest were made into cider. An average of 20 hogsheads was produced on each farm, which was for the consumption of the farmer, his family and workmen.

Mr. Marshall, in his "Rural Economy of the Western Counties," makes the following comment regarding cider: —

"The effect of the cider upon working men is said to be relaxing; and another, and a still worse effect is what is called Devonshire colic, which is like that of Poitou. This is to be attributed not to the lead which is used in the cider presses, but to the cider itself, or rather perhaps, to a vile spirit called "necessity," which is drawn from the grounds or lees of the fermenting-room and which is very pernicious."

A description of the method of fermenting cider in Devon makes clear the difference between the rough and sweet varieties:

"The cider in general use in the county is that which had undergone the vinous fermentation, and has consequently become strong and hard, which, though it agrees with the natives, seems much too acid to strangers, and in them causes flatulency and colic, frequently to a serious and alarming degree. The sweet cider is obtained not from a different fruit, but by checking the fermentation by repeatedly racking it off, preparing the casks by burning brimstone in them, and other arts. This is prepared for the metropolis, and for general exportation; but it does not suit the taste of the inhabitants of Devonshire, nor, it is said, does it afford the nourishment and strength which it yields when properly fermented." (T. Moore, "History of Devonshire," 1829.)

Local cider making has almost ceased for economic reasons—the time and labour involved in maintaining orchards and manufacturing cider on a small scale make it no longer a cheap alternative to beer. There is still an apple orchard here and there, but local cider, when made at all, is for semi-private consumption. A few regular orders help to cover the cost for these farmers, but the cheeky little casks which sat on the jibs in Pilton alongside the "big brothers" from the brewery are probably completely extinct.

The very casks themselves are now almost unobtainable, as the large manufacturers use metal containers. There is not a full-time professional cooper in the whole of North Devon, whereas at one time his calling was essential to every town and large parish. The cooper in Pilton in 1817 was John Carter, and his workshop was near the malthouse. He leased the "Backs" from St. Margaret's Hospital, just as Philip Jones did in 1698, thus continuing an association with this site and the liquor trade. By 1841 his son Joseph was continuing his father's trade, but by 1843 he styled himself "lath maker" in the parish register. Between 1858 and 1874 John Harding was coopering in the parish, but the site of his workshop is not known. Old Jack Radford had his cooper's shop up at Long Piece on the Marwood road at the point where the parishes of Marwood, Pilton and Heanton meet. Here

the road forks left to Whitehall, and the cottages at this road junction saw the manufacture of oak water pitchers to a centuries-old pattern, as well as cider casks and barrels. (North Devon Journal, 17th October, 1895.)

Wine and Spirits

Wine and spirits were not bottled by the manufacturers for the use of innkeepers, but came in small casks or stoneware vessels surrounded with wicker. Some spirits were bought in concentrated form, which the landlord diluted with the aid of a hydrometer. Two-gallon stoneware barrels were used to dispense the liquor, which was sometimes mixed according to local taste. Two such barrels, which were in use at the Reform Inn years ago bear the initials I. W. and P. B., which represent Irish Whiskey and Port and Brandy. This method, was, of course, open to abuse by over or under dilution, and eventually the sale of concentrated spirits became illegal, one of the functions of the Excise men being to ensure that the distilleries were not producing and selling it.

Conditions in the Public Houses

The beer in Victorian times would probably be quite unacceptable to the modern imbibor. It was dark, strong and cloudy, the accent being on taste rather than appearance. Today's customer, by contrast, expects to be served with a clear mild drink in a smart glass. Spittoons, now the prerogative of cowboy films, were the normal trappings of the public bar, and were often made of iron, which had to be blackleaded although other metals were also used. Ladies never entered the public bar in an orderly establishment — the lounge bar was used by gentlemen, ladies with escorts, rarely by unaccompanied females, and then only in a discreet and genteel manner. Any sign of unseemly behaviour was speedily stopped by respectable landlords, who had no desire to lose a good reputation. Rough houses rarely became respectable except under a new landlord.

The public bar was a spartan place—a bare wood or lime ash floor, a tortoise or similar stove, bare wood tables and kitchen chairs, and forms with or without backs, which were occasionally fitted to the walls.

At the Reform Inn a few years ago, some of the lounge and skittle alley furniture comprised seating taken from the old Lynton railway carriages and purchased when the trains and all their fittings were auctioned in the 1930s. These seats were made

of slatted varnished wood and retained the original mottled red and black velvet cushion seats.

The lounge bar was rather like a stiff front room of a private house, whereas the public bar compared to a kitchen. In the lounge the fire was usually open, the tables were of better quality. Pictures, ornaments and even potted plants sometimes found their way into the lounge, together with the occasional armchair. This room was often a haven of quiet from the noise of the skittle alley and the public bar, where darts, euchre, shove ha'pny and dominoes were played. The customers in the lounge, or smoke room as it was sometimes called, met to converse together in a convivial atmosphere over a glass, but a dart board was occasionally in evidence in this room.

Tobacco

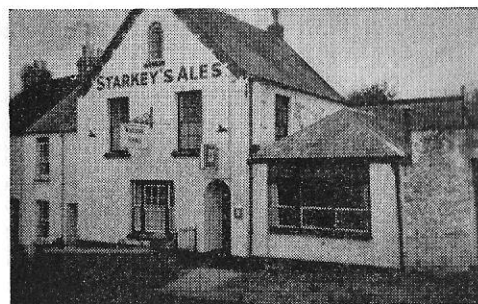
Clay pipes were provided free in public houses, and plug tobacco was used extensively, being both cheap and strong. No pouch was necessary, as a length could be kept in the pocket without mess or waste. It was hard and black, rather like dull liquorice, and was cut with a knife against a calloused thumb and crumbled between the palms of the hands before being stowed into the bowl of the pipe. The strength was derived from its being steeped in rum and mollasses and then beaten, and it was a product much favoured in nautical circles. One brand was called Cutty Pigtail, which referred to the hairstyle of sailors years ago.

It is abundantly clear that the inns of the past served the community in many ways apart from the fundamental function of providing shelter and nourishment in wide degrees of sophistication, as they do today. They were also the centres of village and urban indoor entertainments, offered mainly for the male population as adult females were not commonly free from domestic obligations. Two hundred years ago there was virtually no entertainment for a poor working man within his own cottage in the evenings. He either sat in the dim light with his family, helped with some domestic occupation, or sought company at the local tavern if so inclined. Here he could listen to the latest news as told by travellers, enjoy the entertainment of a strolling musician or even a small company of players, or simply relax with friends over a pot of ale. At a modest fee he could spend an evening of warmth and laughter which contrasted sharply with conditions at home and also at his place of work.

The inn also provided employment for a section of the community, as has already been shown, and young females were also employed as serving maids in the larger inns, although the land-



Previously
The Priory Arms,
The Rock



The Windsor Arms



Previously
The Ilfracombe Inn,
Littabourne



The Rolle Quay Inn



The Chichester Arms



The Reform Inn

The New Inn



lord's wife had to be extremely vigilant as to their behaviour in a respectable tavern.

The "demon drink" attitude of the 19th century still lingers with many people, but it is unfortunate, as there is no doubt that the service rendered then, as now, is undeniable. Obviously some drank and spent more than they should, as they do now, but a decent landlord knew his customers and their limitations and acted accordingly. One is left with the knowledge that the inns of Pilton, as elsewhere, provided not only entertainment and solace, but also a legitimate and reasonably harmless recreation for persons who might very well have resorted to other less savoury means of escaping the grim reality of their meagre existence.

THE PRIORY ARMS

The Priory Arms, situated at the right-hand corner of Priory Road, was a beer-house for a time in Victorian days. The property, together with Priory Road and Gardens and part of the Rock, was built in the 1820's to house the increasing labour force required for Pilton's industries. These cottages were built on part of the estate of Pilton House, and were auctioned in 1849, together with Westaway House and farm, Pilton House, East and West Trayne, and land comprising 210 acres in all. Lot No. 30 comprised :—

"The Priory Arms" public house, six other houses and six gardens let to Mr. Hooper Law (formerly Thorne) for the residue of a term of 90 years at the annual rent of £4 3s. od."

No names of landlords are available, and directories of 1850 onwards make no mention of this inn, which had presumably become a private house by this time.

THE WINDSOR HOTEL

The Windsor Hotel was a new public house purpose built at Bradiford in the 1860's, at the same time as Windsor House and the terrace of cottages known as Windsor Terrace. The name of the builder and the reason for his obsession with the name of Windsor is not known. The public house is mentioned by Mr. Gardiner in his book "Barnstaple: 1837-1897", as being newly licensed in 1867, when Bradiford was a busy suburb of Pilton with several industries using Bradiford Water for motivating power. The Windsor took the place of "The Plough," which was a beer-house run by Thomas Hancock, who was also a farmer. The site of The Plough has not been discovered, and was prob-

bably one of the cottages in the village. The Windsor, having the combined attraction of a full licence and larger premises, soon eclipsed The Plough. The first landlord is not known, but by 1870 James Summerfield, grocer, baker and victualler was the innkeeper and he may have been the first landlord. By 1878 George Summerfield was in the saddle, and pursuing the same three trades as James, but by 1890 William Clark was at The Windsor, styled as grocer and victualler only, and not as a baker. From 1896 until 1969 the following tenants held the licence:—

<i>Date transferred</i>	<i>Licensee</i>
27.8.1896	Thomas Shaddick
22.4.1897	John Rice
23.8.1900	John Paddon Isaac
24.10.1901	Arthur Howard
14.10.1915	Alfred Ernest Cresswell
9.2.1922	Fred Searle
1.5.1924	Joseph Townsend
7.8.1924	Eva Townsend
24.9.1931	Alfred George Harris
24.9.1942	Rose E. Harris
1.11.1945	Sidney Claude Harris
30.10.1950	Archibald Norman Kerr
25.10.1956	Wallis Rex Mays
14.4.1960	Joan Mays

Up to 1898 the tenant paid £32 per annum for the freehold public house with stables, yard, garden, outbuildings and grocers' shop. The shop seems to have been the part now used as the public bar, on the right of the main entrance. On 1st April, 1898, during the tenancy of Sergeant Major John Rice, the Windsor was auctioned and bought by Messrs. Starkey, Knight and Ford of Bridgwater for £705.

The name of the house changed to "The Windsor Arms" on 21.3.1967.

THE REFORM INN

The Reform Inn was not the original name of this tavern, and probably dates from the 1830's when the Reformers had their political heyday, and it is very unfortunate that the former name cannot be traced. There is a possibility that it was the Gardeners Inn, which appears in the Parish Rate of 1792 among properties known to have been in the vicinity of the Reform, but this is only a conjecture which cannot be upheld by evidence. An account book of Ilfracombe Parish Church dated 1717 gives the

earliest definite facts regarding the Reform, when it was one of the properties owned by that parish, but unfortunately it is only referred to as "the Pilton house" at an annual rent of £2. William Charter's lease of 1720 mentions "the lands and ditches late of St. George of Ilfordcombe" as forming one of the boundaries of his malthouse, and a map of 1776 shows the property now the Reform Inn as "land of St. Georges." It is not quite clear how "St. Georges, Ilfordcombe" connects with the parish church there, as the present dedication is to the Holy Trinity, and no earlier dedication can be traced. All efforts to solve this problem have proved negative, and one can only assume that the connection was a close one. Unfortunately the account book of 1717 for this parish is not now in the possession of the incumbent, and this extract was printed in a book entitled "Ilfracombe Parish Church" by F. Nesbitt, M.A. (p.46). Lysons, on the other hand, may hold the key to this mystery, as in Vol.11, p.290 appears the following: — "Ilfracombe appears to have been in the Gorges family in the middle of the 17th century (i.e. the manor of Ilfracombe)."

The Gorges family, who also owned land in Braunton, are represented as "George" in the "George Hotel" at Braunton, but the reference to SAINT Georges, Ilfordcombe makes one hesitate to dogmatise. I therefore bring this point forward only as a possibility, and hope that further knowledge may be acquired to eliminate some of the doubts in this case. At the moment one can only arrange the evidence and ponder the possibilities.

Prior to 1867 the Reform Inn was just a beer-house, kept by Mary Grigg in 1850, followed by John Knill. He married Sophia, daughter of John and Mary Grigg, in 1853, and had become the landlord himself by 1860. He was a very energetic man and pursued the trades of victualler, malter, mason and builder all at once! Added to these activities, from 1867 when the full licence was granted, until 1869 when the Licensing Act was enforced, the inn may have been open all night! In a directory of 1870 John Knill is shown as malter and innkeeper only, but on the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth Ann in 1886, he was styled mason and innkeeper. Ilfracombe parish church sold the Reform Inn in November 1878 to a Barnstaple brewery for £370. This was probably Wivells of the Taw Vale Brewery, which eventually became Messrs. Starkey, Knight and Ford. The tavern was, at this time, in a ruinous condition, and a few years later was completely rebuilt. The tenancy remained in the hands of John Knill at least until 1886, but by 1890 George Bowden was the licensee, and from 1896 until 1970 the tenancy with dates of transfer can be traced as follows: —

<i>Date transferred</i>	<i>Licensee</i>
27.8.1896	Thomas Harding
26.10.1905	William Alfred Reed
16.7.1908	Beatrice Ellen Reed
31.7.1930	Harold William Reed
28.11.1957	George Edward Hill
9.10.1958	Robert George Bates

Since Mr. Bates became the landlord considerable interior alterations have been effected, the house adjoining being incorporated into the building. The removal of the partitions between the public and lounge bars, and the installation of fitted carpets and a luxurious modern decor have transformed the Reform Inn from the accepted standards of yesterday to the more affluent ones of today.

THE NEW INN

During the 1850's this inn was called "The Frasers Arms" with James Slee as the landlord. Sir William Fraser, Bart, lived at Pilton House at this time, an undoubtedly inspired the use of this name, but his connection with the parish was a short one, and so also the inn sign.

This tavern may have been in operation before this time under a previous name, but this is uncertain. It was only a beer-house until 1867, when a full licence was granted. In 1878, with Thomas Bushen, late of the Unicorn, as landlord, the name of the tavern was changed to The New Inn, and in 1890 Ishmael Helyer became the licensee. From 1896 until 1969 the following landlords are recorded, with dates of transfer: —

<i>Date of transfer</i>	<i>Licensee</i>
27.8.1896	Edward Gliddon Hellyer
29.10.1903	Malcolm Hardy
7.6.1906	John Morgan
28.1.1909	Frederick James Perkins
6.5.1920	Elizabeth Perkins
12.2.1942	Herbert John Stevens
No date	Mabel Stevens
30.6.1960	Arthur Douglas Lemon

THE ILFRACOMBE INN

The Ilfracombe Inn was at Littabourne House, and was also known as "The First In and Last Out," being a reference to its position on the outskirts of the town on the new turnpike road to Ilfracombe. This inn was full licensed, but relied almost exclusively upon the trade derived from the travellers on the turnpike road. The new route to Ilfracombe via Braunton in the late 1820's and 1830's followed by the dissolution of the Barnstaple Turnpike Trust caused this house to have a short life. The names of the landlords are not known, and no record of the inn appears in the various directories from 1850 onwards, so it seems that it predeceased the turnpike era by many years.

THE ROLLE QUAY INN

The Rolle Quay Inn was a beer-house when first built, between 1840 and 1850, and remained so throughout the 19th century. The trade was probably mainly from the quay, the river and the new turnpike road to Braunton, but was also the resort of unruly residents of Barnstaple, as it was just outside the borough boundary at that time. The following extract from The North Devon Journal of 1852 makes this quite clear:—

"Disorderly Public Houses — Mr. Aldham, superintendent of the Barnstaple police, preferred a complaint against Samuel Rawle, the occupier of The Rolle Quay Inn, for keeping open his house for the sale of beer on Sunday morning the 23rd of February. He stated that he had taken out this summons at the request of the Borough Magistrates. The Defendant's house was immediately outside the boundary of the Borough, and was resorted to by great numbers of disorderlies of the town, male and female, who made such noises and disturbances that the neighbours were much annoyed, and complained to him of the defendant's conduct. He called William Chanter, who stated that at half past twelve on the Sunday morning named he went on Rolle's Quay and there met a prostitute called Turner, who told him she was going in to Rawle's where she had been before and had left part of her beer undrunk. She knocked at the door, which was opened by the defendant, and went in, followed by witness, who found three men there with beer in a jug and two glasses. He added that he had frequently to watch this house in consequence of the noisy parties that were within.

Mr. Incedon Bencraft appeared for defendant and urged that in mitigation that he had never been complained of before and was not aware that it was past twelve on this occasion, until told so by the policeman.

The Chairman, in delivering judgment, said that badly conducted public houses were great pests, productive of all sorts of mischief, and the bench were determined to do what they could to put them down. The defendant was convicted in a penalty of £3 and costs, and one moiety of the penalty was awarded to Mr. Aldham, who said that the case was brought forward by him on public grounds, and he would place his moiety of the fine at the disposal of the Bench, who thereupon directed that it should go to the Infirmary, as a donation from Mr. Aldham."

Samuel Rawle, who was the landlord in 1850, and for some years afterwards, was a lath-maker and timber merchant, co-founder of the business that became Messrs. Rawle, Gammon and Baker. The original offices of the firm were in the cottage next door to the inn, whilst the saw pit and timber yard were on the other side of the turnpike road. Pit-sawing made for hard drinking, and the employees probably found solace across the road together with the bargees, shipbuilders, potters, lime burners and sailors who frequented the area, together with their attendant females. The extract quoted from the local press makes it clear that, although only a beer-house, the hours kept at this establishment greatly exceeded those allowed. The landlord, however willing to uphold the law, would probably have experienced difficulty in telling such brawny customers to go home to bed at 10 p.m.! In 1890 Walter Parminter was the landlord, and in 1903 he obtained a full licence for this inn. This implies that The Rolle Quay Inn was by this time a little more respectable, or the magistrates would have refused the application for a full licence. The complete list of landlords from the grant of this licence until 1969 is given as follows:

<i>Date of transfer</i>	<i>Licensee</i>
2.2.1903	Walter Parminter
21.6.1928	William Manley
23.4.1936	Frank Glover
22.4.1937	Harold Edwin John Bassett Sellick
26.9.1940	Thomas Hewetson Beck
24.9.1942	George Pottinger Evans
18.4.1946	Gilbert Frank Davis
28.10.1948	Donald Hubert Hill
7.12.1950	John Ellis Aitken
27.10.1955	James Kevin McNamee
25.10.1956	Gerald Joseph Donovan

THE RING OF BELLS

The inn was situated on the site of 13 Pilton Street, adjoining Messrs. Braileys Engineering Works on the north side, and belonged to the feoffees of the parish lands. Margaret Barwick, widow, leased this property in 1715, which was then merely a messuage "late of Robert Slee et al."

John Barwick, clothier, took out a new lease on 1st May, 1769, and this document refers to the property as "The Ring of Bells," which establishes that this inn dates from the period between 1715 and 1769. In a subsequent rental of 1783, when Francis Punchard was the tenant, the inn is described as "house late Slee's, now the Sign of the 6 Bells." Later in the same rental the inn is described as "The Ring of 7 Bells." In 1712 six bells were installed at Pilton Church following the rebuilding of the tower. The peal was increased to eight in 1854. The clock bell was hung in 1713, but it seems a little unlikely that this could account for the change of name, although it did bring the total number of bells in the tower to seven at the time that this was entered on the rental.

Francis Punchard married Jane Whimple in 1769 and her family was associated with the taverns of Pilton for many years. John Whimple was a Pilton victualler in 1705 and Simon Whimple kept the Unicorn in 1806. Francis Punchard was a carpenter by trade and he leased the Orchard Meadow from the feoffees, which indicates that he also kept some livestock. This field was occupied by him for some time, starting in 1761 and renewing in 1794 with a lease on three lives, but no subsequent long leases were granted. The Parish Rate of 1792 states that he was still at The Ring of Bells in that year, and the register shows that Francis Punchard died in 1797, and that his only son, Richard, predeceased him. Nathaniel Dovell, malter, who became the landlord in 1811 and was still there in 1823, held the last long lease for this property. Within thirty years of this date the inn was in a ruinous state, and after this time the Ring of Bells, in common with other feoffee property, was let at rack rent to yearly tenants. Auctioneers, however, were still using this inn for sales to serve the community as a tavern for many years.

The landlord in 1837 was W. Harris, in 1850 Henry Knill and in 1852 John Vile. It is not quite clear when the inn closed, but John Vile was still the landlord in 1870. In 1875 a report on the state of the delapidations was commissioned by the feoffees, but there is no evidence that the necessary repairs were carried out. In 1897 the premises, described as "formerly The Ring of

Bells" were let to Mr. G. W. Thomas at an annual rent of £11. In 1914 the feoffees acquired the adjoining six cottages from Mrs. Matilda Symons, which included 1 to 4 Laramy's Court, thus converting the whole site to Nos. 13 and 14 Pilton Street as we know them today. No. 15 Pilton Street was added at a later date.

THE UNICORN

This public house, which occupied the building now used as the Church Hall, has a long and interesting history. The Unicorn was the badge of the Bassett family, which had close associations with the parish in the 18th century. The tithe of Pilton was in their hands for many years until Francis Bassett sold it to Robert Newton Incledon in 1793 (Rev. Bagley's "Pilton Priory and Church" p. 31). In 1746 Robert Incledon, grandfather of Robert Newton Incledon, gave an annuity of 36/- arising out of his property, which was a "public house, known by the sign of The Unicorn, situate in the great street of Pilton," to the trustees of the poor of the parish of Pilton. This sum was to be used for two purposes—the provision of ten pairs of shoes for ten poor women and 6/- annually for the upkeep of the parish pump and its case, then lately erected near The Unicorn. ("The Charities of Devon" Vol. II, p.238).

The building itself is of some interest, containing many original features, including moulded plasterwork on one of the ceilings and much old timber. The centre ridge tile on the roof is fashioned in the shape of an animal. During the 18th century the inn was owned by three generations of the Incledon family, but the tenants are unrecorded. In 1807, when Robert Newton Incledon sold Pilton House and the adjoining estate to James Whyte, the Unicorn was sold separately, thus severing a connection "whence no man's memory runs to the contrary." Benjamin Pile Irwin, victualler, of Barnstaple, became the new owner — at the time of purchase Simon Whimple was the tenant, and Mr. Irwin paid £420 for the tavern. Mr. Irwin, however, had some financial difficulties, and was forced to seek financial aid at regular intervals. About 1835, the Rendell family, who already had a pecuniary interest in the Unicorn, became the new owners, but at first a tenant was installed to run the public house. In 1837 J. Knill was the landlord, in 1850 William Copp, and a conveyance from Rendell to Rendell of 1852 shows that there were two tenants at this time, Thomas Hancock and William Carpenter! Both were in the licensed victualling trade in Pilton, William Carpenter appears as a malter in White's Directory of 1850, and Thomas Hancock was an extremely active figure in this sphere.

Although he was a painter and glazier in the 1830's and 1840's, from 1850 until his retirement more than 25 years later he was the landlord of the Chichester Arms. In 1868 James Rendell held the licence of The Unicorn, followed in 1870 by George Rendell. There occurred, in March, 1871, a most unusual legal battle between this licensee and the Pilton feoffees. Mr. Rendell took the feoffees to the Barnstaple County Court on a charge of distraining goods to the value of £3-19-6. They claimed that they had taken this action to acquire the 36/- annuity which Rendell had not paid, and the balance represented their expenses! Serjeant Petersdorff, before whom the case was heard, reluctantly awarded Rendell his £3-19-6 without costs, as the gift had never come within the provisions of the Mortmain Act, which required it to be enrolled in Chancery within six months of execution. Mr. Finch, appearing for Rendell, asked his honour to appeal to the Trustees not to repeat such distrainments, but he declined. (Gardiner "Barnstaple: 1837-1897" p.181-2). This was clearly a case of an influential body trying to ride roughshod over a tradesman, however noble the motive, and it is most unlikely that the feoffees expected to be taken to court. In fact they probably imagined that he would be brought to heel smartly.

In 1875 the property once again returned to the owner of Pilton House, when Charles H. Williams, Esq., M.P., purchased the Unicorn for £455, and also paid £21-17-9 for the following interesting fixtures and share of the licence:—

List of fixtures at sale 9th March, 1875 — Rendell to Williams

Iron furnace and fixtures	Large kieve (sieve ?)
Brass furnace and fixtures	Small kieve (sieve ?)
Two coolers	Shute
Bucket and dipper	Six tubs
Four jibs	Eighteen casks
Barm tub	About 80 feet of gas pipe
4 gas burners and brackets	2 settles and seats
Prongs, mashing stick and 2 dippers	£18 15 9
Share of licence	£3 2 0
	<hr/>
	£21 17 9

A significant omission from this list seems to be drinking vessels. This seems to indicate that they were still required by Mr. Rendell, and that he possibly moved into another public house.

In 1878 William Thomas Knill, who was also a butcher, became the landlord, and no further innkeepers are recorded

before 1887, when a transformation was enacted on the premises. In November of that year it became the Unicorn Coffee Tavern, and was the subject of an article in The North Devon Journal. This editorial is reproduced complete, both for the details it contains and also the cloying expressions of praise employed:—
"The Unicorn Coffee House, Pilton — On Monday next the old Unicorn Inn at Pilton will be replaced under new auspices. As announced in our column some weeks since, Colonel and Mrs. Hibbert of Broadgate have been to the expense of extensive alterations and restoration of these ancient premises with the intention of opening a temperance house and reading room for the benefit of the working classes of the locality. In the neighbourhood of the inn a large number of factory hands are employed in whose welfare Mrs. Hibbert has manifested especial interest, and one of the features of the coffee house tavern is the extensive provision it contains for the creature comfort of this particular class. The work to which Colonel and Mrs. Hibbert have given much time and money is one of practical philanthropy and the purpose which they have in view is of such laudable character that it is sincerely to be hoped the new institution will be highly appreciated as it deserves to be. The donors have laid out the premises in a very thorough and discreet way. The bar and suite of rooms have a most attractive appearance, and in every particular of their accommodation indicate thoughtful consideration for the comfort of the patrons of the house.

"The old inn must have originally been a very curious structure. Its architecture is of a rambling and eccentric character. Odd bits of wood carving, floriated friezes, carved bordering and protruding beams meet the eye of the visitor here and there. As it is the present premises are very quaint in character, preserving a good deal of the antiquity and curiosities of the original. It abounds in the snug berths and cosy corners which are characteristic of the older race of inns. Instead of removing their peculiarities Colonel and Mrs. Hibbert have pursued the wiser policy of making them lend themselves to enhancing the attractiveness of the tavern, and they have succeeded admirably in so doing. The exterior of the Unicorn presents the appearance of a low and long two-storied dwelling in which our remote ancestors somehow contrived to lead a gay if a short life. The metamorphosis which the fabulous beast is depicted with a warmth of colour which the inn has undergone is first announced in the sign in that may be taken as a gentle hint of the nature of the reception to be met with within. There will be many a customer at the new tavern who will re-echo the tribute of the poet who received his 'warmest welcome at an inn.'

"A smart bar is first entered on the right of the front door. Here the mineral waters of the local manufacturers and Beckett's Celebrated Drinks make a bright array, the bar being fitted up with tea, coffee and cocoa urns and the room provided with generous seating accommodation. At the back of this there is a recreation room well supplied with indoor games. Upstairs on the right there is a capital club-room 14ft. x 25ft. which is particularly well furnished, and next, on the left, a reading room. Three large bedrooms and the necessary domestic offices complete the accommodation. The club room, which will comfortably seat a numerous audience, is hung round with pictures, etc. and is a most comfortable chamber. By special arrangement with Messrs. Baylis & Co. of the Pilton Glove Factory, the girls in their employ will be accommodated here at meal times during the day, the room being let for meetings in the evenings. Soup will be on sale at all hours, and, for the use of the charitable, books of tickets for refreshments of various values will be supplied with which the deserving poor and the visitor whom we have always with us, the ubiquitous 'tramp,' may be 'relieved.' Though as far as the rooms are concerned, the law 'all intoxicating liquors abandon ye who enter here' will be as inviolable as the edicts of the Medes and Persians, the line will be drawn at 'the fragrant weed' the use of tobacco, cigars and pipes being permitted. The premises will be opened at 5.30 a.m. and from that hour up to 12.30 breakfasts and luncheons will be the order, hot dinners from 12.30 to 2.30 and tea from 2 p.m. to the closing hour of 11 p.m. The management has been entrusted to Mr. George Chewter, who comes highly recommended from Guildford. He is rather a noted athlete and one of the attractive features of the reading room will be his display of Plate, etc., won at athletic meetings. The urbanity and activity of the manager promise well for the success of the undertaking. It is intended that the institution shall be self-supporting, and in the event of their admirable generosity being appreciated to this extent, Colonel and Mrs. Hibbert will probably extend the accommodation and increase the attractiveness of the tavern. They hold the premises upon a lease. Mesdames Hibbert, Wallis, Nicholson and others have presented a good selection of books to the library and pictures, engravings and illustrated works have been given by the same ladies.

"The institution deserves and should command the sympathetic support of all interested in practical promotion of sobriety and habits of thrift and decency among our working population. A hearty invitation is extended by the management to all interested in the work to visit and inspect the premises

whilst the invitation to the class whom it is especially sought to benefit cannot be better put than in the lines which figure on the sign-board of a like institution elsewhere:—

'A public house without the drink,
Where men may sit, read, talk and think,
And safely home return,
A stepping stone this house you'll find
Come, leave your beer and grog behind,
And truer pleasures learn.'

North Devon Journal, 3rd November, 1887.

Mr. George Chewter, however, did not stay long at the coffee tavern, as by 1890 Mrs. Maria Courtney was the manageress. It is not known to what extent the working population of the parish appreciated this establishment, but soon after the turn of the century it was closed, possibly for financial reasons.

By 1906 the Unicorn was owned by the Church and on the 2nd of January of that year the Lord Bishop of Exeter conducted the official opening of Pilton Church Rooms. In 1914 the rear hall was erected to provide a large room for concerts and all types of parish gatherings.

I would like to think that Simon Whimble of 1806, or even Robert Inledon of 1746, could still recognise this old building, walking from room to room through the same door-openings and gazing at the same timberwork.

THE CHICHESTER ARMS

This inn, although possibly in existence in 1792, was not mentioned by this name in the Church Rate of that year. It was, however, one of the three fully licensed houses in Pilton in 1837, the others being the Unicorn and the Ring of Bells. In that year the landlord was H. Sloley, whose family had been settled in Pilton for many years before this date. In the 18th century two closes of land in the parish were known as Sloley's Meadow and Sloley's Long Close. By 1850 Thomas Hancock was the landlord of the Chichester Arms, who was not the same Thomas Hancock who kept the Plough beer-house at Bradiford, in spite of some evidence in support of this theory. Both these gentlemen were baptised and married outside the parish, their wives were both called Ann, they both had a son called John, and kept licensed premises in Pilton in the 1850's. However, a search in the parish

register reveals that Thomas Hancock of the Chichester Arms, who was formerly a painter and glazier, had only two children, both living at his death in 1880, whilst Thomas Hancock of the Plough was a farmer with five children, one of which died at the age of two years. By the time that Thomas Hancock of the Chichester Arms died he was a man of some substance, and he bequeathed his business to his son John Nicholas, and four houses in Pilton to his daughter Mary Jane. John Nicholas Hancock did not pursue the trades of maltster or shopkeeper as did his father, but only that of victualler, and he remained the landlord until 1900, when the following licensees, with dates of transfer, bring the record up to 1969:—

Date of transfer Licensee

23.8.1900	Charles William Vicary
27.9.1900	William Augustus Collins
26.10.1905	Alfred Ware
24.10.1907	Walter Hookway
13.2.1908	Dennis Darke
8.4.1909	Edward Fletcher Mugford
7.4.1910	Harry Bennett
26.1.1911	John Morgan
16.10.1913	William Albert Hanney Glasby
15.10.1914	Arthur William Shelley
26.11.1914	William Henry Leach
19.8.1918	Edwin Lyle Whale
8.5.1919	William Hewitt
28.1.1932	Albert John Parsons
1.11.1934	George Edwin Beer Bament
4.12.1958	Edith Dorothy Bament
10.9.1964	Leonard Christopher Williams
3.8.1967	Thomas Gibson
7.8.1969	Joan Annie Gibson