

The Pub

General Historical Introduction

By the 19th century, ale (made from fermented malt) and beer (flavoured with hops) were sold through three main outlets: alehouses, in which the product was brewed on the premises; taverns, which also sold wine; and inns, which provided accommodation. Beer was introduced in the 15th century, prior to which ale was the only available choice.

Alehouses were initially mostly temporary concerns, run by local families to supplement their incomes. However, in the late 17th century their facilities slowly improved and they also began to increase in size. The term public house replaced alehouse in the 18th century and the first purpose-built public houses were erected at the beginning of the 19th century.

Inns grew in importance from the Middle Ages, when many profited from housing the ever-growing number of pilgrims, through the 18th century with its new turnpike roads and associated coach traffic, to the industrialisation of the Victorian period. From the early 19th century there was a tendency towards decline with the coming of the railways and the advent of hotels. It is important to remember that, in their heyday, inns not only provided refreshment and accommodation, but were also venues for local courts, meetings of all kinds, political debates and commercial activities.

Printed Sources (Non-Record Office material)

Useful books on the subject held by Devon Library & Information Services include the following:

- *Haunted Pubs in Devon*, Sally Barber (1995)
- *Old Inns and Taverns of Devon*, Frank Graham (1964)
- *A Book of Inns, No.2: The West Country*, William G Luscombe (1947)
- *The Public Houses of Pilton*, Margaret A Reed (1971)
- *Historic Inns of Devon*, Monica Wyatt (1986)
- *Westcountry Ales: an A-Z of Beer and Brewing in Devon and Cornwall*, Adrian Tierney-Jones (2002)
- *The English Alehouse: a social history 1200-1830*, Peter Clark (1983)

Most books or guides to individual towns or villages will contain some description of the local public houses. Books on architecture, such as *The Buildings of England: Devon*, Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner (1989), may also contain information on older inns. The Transactions of the Devonshire Association, published annually from 1866 onwards, are also worth consulting, as is Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries from 1900 onwards.

The Local Studies Library holds a list of Hotels, Inns and Public Houses in Barnstaple, 1745 to 1990, also showing the location, where known, of each.

Newspapers

The Local Studies Centre holds various local newspapers, mostly on microfilm, including the North Devon Journal from 1824 to date. The North Devon Athenaeum has compiled an index to the Journal from 1850-1895, which it is currently expanding. The index includes a section on public houses and is especially useful for anecdotal references.

The Local Studies Library also holds files of more recent newspaper cuttings, arranged by place and subject, which may provide both anecdotal and architectural information.

Historic Buildings Listings, etc.

The Department of the Environment/ DCMS Lists of Buildings of Social, Architectural or Historic Interest may provide the only architectural descriptions of those inns or public houses deemed worthy of listed building status. However, it may also be worth checking the Barnstaple Historic Buildings Survey, 1985-86 which describes the architectural features of any of the town's public houses included in greater detail.

District Council Minutes

The Local Studies Library holds sets of bound North Devon and Torridge District Council minutes from 1974 to present. These are not indexed, but may contain references to public houses in particular where public complaints, planning issues, etc. are involved.

Trade Directories

Both the Local Studies Library and the North Devon Athenaeum hold trade directories for Devon for selected years from 1830 to 1939. Trade directories will list each parish's inns and landlords, though their lists cannot be relied upon to be comprehensive.

Census Returns

Census returns from 1841-1901 for the north Devon area (and selected years for other areas) are also available on microfiche or microfilm. Census returns are also available online via Find My Past or Ancestry.com. The census was taken every ten years, and lists every inhabitant of a given district; from 1851 their occupations are also listed. It is therefore possible to use the census for any parish to discover the names of its public houses, their landlords, families, tenants, live-in staff, etc..

Maps and plans

The Local Studies Library holds Goad Insurance maps for Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe, c.1970 to 1997, showing the names of town centre businesses. The same information can be found on town plans for Barnstaple and Bideford, 1843. Ordnance Survey 25 inch to one mile scale maps are also available for north Devon from c1890 to present; these will name any public houses.

Photographs (Partly non-Record Office material)

The Local Studies Library holds the Francis Frith collection of Devon photographs and also its own extensive set of old Barnstaple photographs, complete with an index of locations. The Record Office and the North Devon Athenaeum also hold photographic collections. The Beaford Archive – not located in the Local Studies Centre – has an extensive collection of photographs relating to North Devon, an index and a selection of images is available online at www.beaford-arts.org.uk.

Licensing Records

From 1552, the Alehouse Act stated that alehouse keepers should be licensed by the Justices of the Peace. Records of north Devon courts in which Justices operated, namely borough Quarter Sessions and Petty Sessions, may therefore contain references to alehouses

licensing, as well as petty crimes associated with particular alehouses or victuallers. However, it should be noted that sessions court books are not indexed and before 1733 may be written in Latin. Quarter Sessions records for the County of Devon, including rural areas, are held at the Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter (01392) 384253. The North Devon Record Office also holds alehouse recognisances (bonds for good behaviour taken out by licensees) and licences, including those for Barnstaple, 1591-1963 (refs. B1, B102); Bideford, 1903-1963 (ref. B102); Braunton Petty Sessions (including Ilfracombe), 1872-1962 (ref. B102); Great Torrington, 1903-1961 (ref. B102) and South Molton, 1773-1779 (ref. 1190), 1901-1962 (ref. B102). Detailed lists of available court records held by the North Devon Record Office can be found on the Discovery website at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

Title Deeds

Deeds and leases, where public houses or inns are being conveyed, will list the owner and may also describe adjoining properties in some detail. Some deeds may include a plan. Deeds for many properties are held by the North Devon Record Office from the late 12th century to the present and can be located by checking the place index in the searchroom under the section 'title deeds' or by searching the Discovery website.

Apprenticeship Records

Records of apprentices being bound to victuallers are held selectively from around the 17th to the 19th century. The majority are in the form of parish apprenticeship indentures and can be found by using the poor law transcripts in the searchroom. Parish overseers' records and vestry minutes may also contain lists of apprentices and their masters. The North Devon Record Office subject index under APPRENTICESHIP will provide details of non-parochial trade apprenticeships.

Local Authority Records

As mentioned above, inns and public houses were frequently used as venues for political meetings, local clubs and societies, etc.. The records of parishes and parish councils may refer to such meetings, albeit briefly. The reference numbers for parish council records are all noted in our 'List of Collections', available in the searchroom and on our website. Lists of parish records can be found in the searchroom, arranged alphabetically by parish, and on the Discovery website.

The North Devon Record Office also holds local District Council records from 1894 onwards. These may contain minutes referring, for instance, to complaints against particular public houses, or planning applications for extensions. Some District Council records also include miscellaneous files which are worth checking. The reference numbers for District Council records are also noted in our 'List of Collections'.

Other Sources (Partly Non-Record Office material)

Parish registers will sometimes list occupations (including licensed victuallers), especially after 1813, when printed registers were introduced comprehensively. Registers are available on microfiche for most parishes in Devon and many are also available to view online via the Find My Past website.

As most inns were situated to benefit from road traffic, highway records may show their whereabouts. District Council records may include plans, enquiry files, etc. referring to local

roads. Similarly, books of reference for new railway lines, which show individual properties affected by the proposed route, are likely to give the location of any local public houses.

In the late 18th century, turnpike roads were set up by private companies, which levied tolls for their use. As with railway books of reference, Turnpike Trust records may list any inns or public houses affected by proposed routes, or may even contain documents recording the sale of particular properties. The North Devon Record Office subject index contains a section on COMMUNICATIONS: road/rail. The North Devon Athenaeum also holds a large collection of Barnstaple Turnpike Trust records.

Rate books will list local public houses and landlords, and can be found by checking District Council records. Similar information can be found in the Inland Revenue 'Domesday' Valuation books of 1910 (Ref. 3201).

Finally, it may be worth checking the North Devon Record Office subject index under BUSINESSES, or even MAPS, as a number of pre-Ordnance Survey parish maps survive that might reveal evidence for the location of older public houses.

North Devon Record Office
Library and Record Office
Tuly Street
Barnstaple
EX31 1EL

Tel: 01271 318792

Email: northdevon@swheritage.org.uk

Website: www.swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives

South West Heritage Trust is a charity and a company limited by guarantee registered in England.
Registered office: Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, Somerset TA2 6SF
Company number: 09053532 Charity Number: 1158791 VAT Registration Number: 197221592