

## THELBRIDGE CROSS INN

The following information is derived mostly from the History of Thelbridge Cross Inn, which was produced by the Ball family that owned the Inn for 32 years until 2017.

From the list of victuallers' licenses there has been an Inn at Thelbridge Cross for over 200 years; previously the building was a farmhouse. Historians have dated the building as late 17<sup>th</sup> century and from a photo taken in 1897 it appears that the roof was originally thatched.



Located at the crossroads between the road running roughly east-west across the parish (B3042) and the old turnpike road from the market towns of South Molton and Crediton, the Inn became a parish meeting place, collection point for the post and carters as well as a meeting point for the stage coach providing transportation to the towns and villages. The current car park was a yard used as a livestock market for many years and the Inn was headquarters of the parish cricket team which played in the field adjacent to the church.

### Landlords of the Inn

- 1799-1810 Daniel Bright, Mary his wife is buried in the churchyard
- 1810-1817 John Down, married Susannah Bright, daughter of the previous landlord
- 1818-c1830 John Nott
- c1830-1842 Mr & Mrs Bennet, by the time of the 1841 census Sarah Bennet was widowed. She married Henry Weeks in 1842
- 1842-c1861 Henry Weeks from the 1851 census Henry, born in Winkleigh, was also farming 75 acres. By 1861 this had increased to 100 acres.
- ?-? James Howe
- c1871 Thomas Farley
- c1891-1908 John Torrington Leach, married Lucy Farley daughter of the previous landlord. Their eldest son became landlord in 1911
- 1908-1911 Lucy Farley, the widow of J T Leach passed the inn to her son when she died in 1911.
- 1911-1921 John Leach Jnr, nickname Jack

- 1921-1945 William (Bill) Maynard, sold the inn to Harry Pinfold, but retained the farm and moved into the new house they had built. The son, Bill, lived there for over 50 years until he retired in 2002 and moved to Witheridge.
- 1945-1948 Harry Pinfold, setup up the Thelbridge Darts Team. He sold the freehold to the Tiverton brewery Starkey, Knight and Ford. Several subsequent landlords were tenants.
- 1948-1955 Philip Lyne, he also operated a milk round including Nomansland, Black Dog and Kennerleigh. He washed and refilled the milk bottles and on the day of the weekly cattle market his wife Lucy cooked a roast dinner for the farmers. Philip and family left the inn in 1955 when he joined the Royal Mail.
- 1955-1958 Bill Hannaford, the cattle market ceased in August 1956.
- 1958-1970 Frank Gowen (see photo), his son Peter was born at the inn and is a painter and decorator living in Witheridge. During Frank's tenancy, the Starkey, Knight and Ford brewery was taken over by Whitbread.



*1Frank Gowen behind the bar in 1968*

- 1970-1974 Jim Smith, at this time there was a permanent gypsy encampment on the field behind the car park. Jim left when he was given an offer he could not refuse by Whitbread, who wanted to dispose of the inn. The land on the opposite side of the road was sold to him for a peppercorn sum and he built the bungalow which he called the Forge since he was a blacksmith.
- 1974-1976
- 1976-1979 Alex & Jenny Penny, Jenny was a keen cook and built a reputation for the inn as a quality eating house at a time when pubs providing good food were few and far between.
- 1979-1986 Peter Davies
- 1986-2017 Bill & Ria Ball, prior to buying the inn, Bill had been bass guitarist with the Love Affair around 1974-5.
- 2017-2020 Sukhdeep Sond
- 2020- Mark Pulman and Louise Smalley

### [History of the Building](#)

The building was originally a farmhouse, and from the list of licenced victuallers, it is clear that it has been an inn for over 200 years. The building has been dated as late 17<sup>th</sup> century and was

originally thatched. At times the inn has provided a parish meeting place; a collection point for post and carters; a meeting point for the stagecoach; headquarters for the parish cricket team that played on the field adjacent to the church and the yard (now the car park) was the location of a livestock market. In the 1960s the inn also had a petrol pump. The winter of 1967 saw unusually heavy snow.



*2The Inn barn before conversion to guest accommodation*



*3Showing depth of snow in 1967*



*4Taken from Hele Lane, 1967*

In 1987 the kitchen was moved into an old disused stable block and the previous kitchen was used to extend the dining area providing up to 50 covers to add to the 25 in the bar.

By 1989 the demand for bed and breakfast prompted the conversion of the adjacent barn into seven guest rooms and the two buildings were joined to provide an additional lounge bar area and new toilets.

Due to demand for dining exceeding capacity, in 1995 the children's games room (where the gents' toilets are now) was redecorated and turned into a "snug" dining room for up to twenty and on occasions was used for private parties. This overflow dining room was used for almost nine years.

The need for a function room large enough to accommodate wedding receptions and anniversaries, Christmas and birthday parties etc. was identified and planning permission was applied for and granted in 2000. At this time Mr Maynard was persuaded to sell some of his land to the inn so the car park could be extended and a large vegetable garden established, which provided fresh produce for the restaurant. Before construction started in 2001 the foot and mouth crisis, poor weather and regional flooding plus the uncertainties caused by the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack in the USA caused the planned extension to be delayed.

After almost six months of building work, the Dukes Function Room was completed in June 2004. The work also involved the creation of a new reception area, alterations to the toilets making the old “snug” into the new gents and disabled toilets and combining the old gents and ladies’ toilets to make a much larger ladies’ facility.

As the inn became known for wedding receptions it was decided that newlyweds should be offered something better than the standard bedrooms, so an area that had previously been used for staff accommodation was refurbished as a bridal suite. The Rococo Suite opened in April 2007.