

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY GLOUCESTERSHIRE INNS

In 1393 Richard III had compelled publicans to exhibit inn signs and, at that time, if a new brew was offered for sale an ale garland was hung out to indicate a need for the services of the ale taster. This gentleman was chosen annually in the Court Leet of the Manor, or by the civic authority. By an Act of 1552 (5 and 6 Edward VI c 25) the Justices of the Peace were authorised to license at their discretion, persons in each county or borough who alone were to exercise the trade of keeping an alehouse. Originally these licences were granted at any time by two Justices of the Peace meeting together for this purpose. In 1729 (2 George II c 28) Brewster Sessions were instituted. These were held each September for the granting of licences. Conditions of holding licences were left to the discretion of the local Justices - they usually followed the pattern set out in a Royal Proclamation of 1618 ordering, for instance, closure during Divine Service on Sundays.

At these Sessions the publicans were obliged to deposit £10 as a recognisance for good behaviour and a further recognisance of £10 from a fellow citizen. Perusal of the ale house recognisance for Painswick in 1755 shows that in most cases the publicans stood surety for each other.

The Blathwayt papers (D1799. X12. X.13) contain presentments to William Blathwayt during the years 1734-41, and there are several relating to the local ale houses. Selling ale without licence was the commonest complaint - in 1734 Reuben Moreman was fined 20/- for

selling beer and ale without a licence, and if he refused to pay, goods were to be taken in default. A more serious view was taken of William Burnett's refusal to pay a fine for selling spirituous liquors without licence - he was committed on January 30th 1740 to the House of Correction at Lawfords Gate to "endure hard labour for the space of two months and before discharge to be stripped naked from the middle upwards and be whipped until his body be bloody." The publicans were not always the sinners for in 1740 Jonathan Brinkworth had to send for the Petty Constable to have John Price ejected from his house for "several outrages".

The Quarter Session presentments for 1733-40 show some of the local restrictions imposed on publicans. The most common complaint was the selling of ale in Divine Service, or suffering drunkenness on the premises on the Sabbath. In Dursley the publican of the "Princes Head" was returned "for that he suffered card playing in his said house at unreasonable hours and doth still continue that and like and illegal practices notwithstanding he has been frequently reprehended and forbidden by us." Skittle alleys and gaming on the premises were also forbidden. These presentments were most commonly made by the Petty Constable, who probably suffered much in the execution of his duties of measuring the standards and suppressing disorders. On January 13th 1736 such a sufferer presented "Walter Huntley for keeping a disorderly house and for aiding and assisting the vile persons harbouring in his House to beat and abuse me in the execution of my office."

The records of Thomas Kemble, High Sheriff in 1753 contain a set of bills relative to his expenses at the Bell Inn, Gloucester and the Talbot (now the Dog Inn) at Over during the Assizes of that year and show clearly the prices prevalent at that time.

The Talbot at Over

March 31st, 1753

Wine and casks	17. 00
Beer ale cyder etc.	2. 2. 6
Horses and Hay	3. 0.
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	£3. 2. 6.
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March 31st - April 6th, 1753

12 Mens eating and liquor at 2/6/day for 6 days	9. 0. 0.
Hay for 9 horses for 5 nights	1. 2. 6.
Hay for 3 horses on the 5th	1. 6.
3 Mens eating and liquor the 6th	2. 6.
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	£10. 6. 6.
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At the Bell Inn on the night of March 31st the Sheriff incurred the following expenses during a dinner -

A Hundred Gentlemen eating	15. 0. 0.
Ten Servants suppers	5. 0.
Beer	10. 0.

At the same time he purchased five dozen of wine at a cost of £6. 0. 0. - two were gifts to the Judges, two were sent to Over and one went to the Marshal and Clerk of the Assizes.

I had hoped to show the distribution of inns in Gloucestershire in the mid 18th century but unfortunately there are only records available for the Hundred of Bisley and the area around Chipping Sodbury. In 1740 Chipping Sodbury - then a flourishing market that had eighteen licensed houses, while in 1755 the parish of Painswick had fourteen inns and alehouses.

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Sources

- H.A. Markham, A History of English Ale and Beer, 1966
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1735-42
Glos. R.O., D190/8 Bills of T. Kemble, Sheriff, 1753.