



# English Publicans

## Michelle Dennis looks at resources for finding your English publican ancestors

**E**NGLISH PUBS FEATURE IN MANY A MOVIE AND TV series, filled with colourful characters such as longsuffering barmaids, comical or surly publicans and loveable village rogues.



An old village pub in Hampshire, England. (Wikimedia Commons)

The public house as we know it today is very different than those before the 18th century, which were mainly alehouses that sold beer brewed on the premises. Larger hotels might provide food, stabling for horses and accommodation. In England many pubs were bought by breweries with the object of selling only their company's products (tied houses).

The public house or brewery could be a tenancy or a managed house. The publican may be a manager on fixed wages, or responsible for his own trading income. The landlord may be tied to a brewery or in charge of a 'freehouse' (not tied to buying and selling beer from just one brewery).

Taverns and Inns were often larger premises and may have also offered travellers accommodation. Coaching Inns were normally about 10 miles apart in rural areas and often had attached stables for traveller's horses.

So, who became a publican or an innkeeper? Retired servants or tradesmen, legatees (those that received a

will legacy) – almost anyone that could afford to pay a license fee. Many children followed their parents into running pubs with the girls becoming servants, cooks, housemaids or barmaids, and the boys doing many duties such as cellarman (taking care of the barrels), potmen (keeping the pewter mugs clean and shiny) or ostlers (taking care of horses). Many women took over the running of the pub after the death of their husband or father.

If you, like myself, have an ancestor that lived and/or worked in an English hotel or pub, there are lots of places to find out more about them. Often publicans were not born into the trade but had another occupation first.



The Publican, hand colored etching 1799. (Creative Commons)



Village house, Winslow, Buckinghamshire. (Author photo)

My ancestor Thomas Rawbone was born in 1781 in Winslow, Buckinghamshire, England to parents Thomas Rawbone, schoolmaster, and Hannah Taylor. His brother John was also a schoolmaster at Rogers Free School in Winslow in 1798. In 1814 in nearby Dorton, Thomas married Mary Reeves, daughter of gentleman farmer Christopher Reeves (1752-1828) and wife Ruth Parrott (1764-1819). Their marriage announcement appeared in the Oxford University and City Herald Newspaper found on *Find My Past*.

Thomas and Mary had eight children,

- Ann b 1816,
- Emma b 1818,
- John b 1820,
- Hardwicke b 1822,
- Julia b 1825,
- Mary b 1827,
- Martha b 1828,
- Elizabeth b 1829.

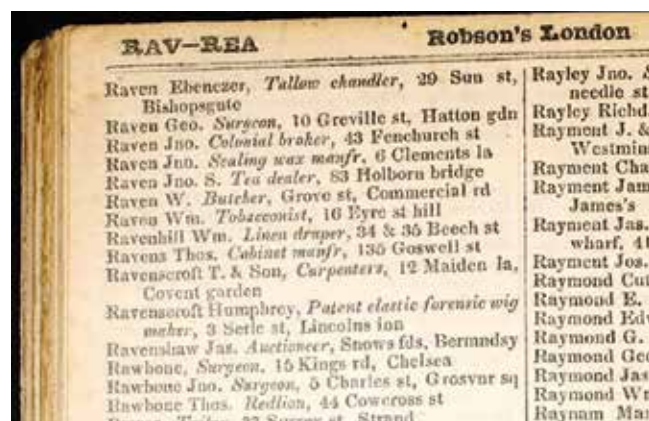
**Five Guineas Reward.**  
**STOLEN or STRAYED, on Sunday night, or**  
 early on Monday Morning last, from a Ground in the  
 occupation of Mr. Thomas Rawbone, of Upper Winchendon,  
 Bucks, a **GOLDEN DUN MARE**, about 14 hands high,  
 mottled with dark brown about the neck and shoulders,  
 black mane and tail, four black legs, the two hind heels  
 white, the mane cut off all along the neck on the off-side, a  
 cut sprigged tail, the hair considerably grown again.  
 If stolen, whoever will give information of the Offender  
 or Offenders, shall, on his or their conviction, receive a re-  
 ward of **FIVE GUINEAS**; and if strayed, whoever will  
 give such information as may lead to the recovery of the  
 mare, shall be handsomely rewarded for his trouble, by  
**THOMAS RAWBONE.**  
**Upper Winchendon, Oct. 4th, 1822.**

Thomas Rawbone newspaper notice in 1822 in the *Oxford University and City Herald* offering a reward for the return of a stolen horse. (Oxford University and City Herald)

The first six were born around Chalgrove, Oxfordshire and Upper Winchendon, Buckinghamshire, about 16 miles apart. The baptism registers of the children fortunately provide Thomas's occupation and his location over a period of 13 years from 1816 to 1829.

Like his father and brother, Thomas began his working life as a schoolmaster, and can found working as one in Chalgrove at the time of his first daughter Ann's baptism in 1816. He then moved to Upper Winchendon soon after 1816, residing there as a schoolmaster until about 1827 when he moved again, and by the time his daughter Mary was born in 1827 he resided in Upper Winslow.

By 1828 when daughter Martha was born, Thomas and his family had moved down to London and she was baptised at St James, Clerkenwell. This baptism record was the first clue that Thomas had a big change in occupation, and he is now listed as a victualler (a person licensed to sell alcohol) and publican living in Cowcross Street, Islington, London. The move coincided with the death of his wife Mary's father Christopher Reeves in 1828. Christopher Reeves was a gentleman farmer in Dorton, and left a large legacy for his daughter Mary, most likely enabling Thomas and Mary to buy or lease their first London hotel together.



Robson's London Trade Directory 1830, Thomas Rawbone. (Google Books)

In 1828 a new Alehouses Act provided a framework for regulating inns and granting licences to sell beer, wine and spirits. In 1830 the Beer Act was passed which meant innkeepers could now brew and sell beer from their premises. As a result, many more beer houses were opened, causing an influx of brewers and innkeepers into the City of London. It seems Thomas now operated as the publican of the "Red Lion" hotel at 44 Cowcross Street (*London City Directory*).

From 1522 in England, any person wanting to sell alcoholic drinks had to apply for an annual licence

from the Quarter or Petty Sessions. Landlords had to make an annual statement that they would ‘not keep a disorderly house’ and enter into certain obligations before the court could issue a license. This form of legal pledge or obligation is known as a Recognizance or Bond. Landlords that failed to adhere to these requirements would appear before the Quarter or Petty Sessions Courts on charges of ‘keeping a disorderly house’ and could have their license revoked. County Record Offices hold these records.

In 1828 Thomas was listed in the annual *Register of Victuallers Recognizances 1828-29* Finesbury Division, Parish of Sepulchre. The records state - At a General Meeting in March 1828, Person Licensed – Rawbone, Thomas, Sign of House – Red Lion; Where situated – Cowcross st, London. The London Metropolitan Archives holds Licensed Victuallers records for Middlesex from 1552 at [https://search.lma.gov.uk/rg\\_pdf\\_creator/index.php?research\\_guide=68](https://search.lma.gov.uk/rg_pdf_creator/index.php?research_guide=68).

The Licenses may provide the pub name and name and address of the licensee, and details of a disqualification of the premises and a record of any convictions. Two witnesses would also sign as guarantors who vouched for the applicant’s principles of honesty and decency. Sometimes there will also be correspondence, copies of bonds and notes with the records.

In 1833 The *London City Directory* advised that Thomas Rawbone was now at 20 Bath Place, New Road, Marylebone where he was listed as a publican and wine and spirit merchant of the “Adam and Eve” hotel.

By 1839, *Pigots Commercial Directory of London* lists Thomas of 119 Tottenham Court Rd, under the Wine and Spirit Vaults category. The property was known



119 Tottenham Court Rd, London, premises of Thomas Rawbone. (London Street Views Website)



Northumberland Arms Hotel, St Pancras, London, publican Thomas Rawbone, 1841 (Author photo)

as the “Northumberland Arms” and was on the corner of Grafton Street. Two of Thomas and Mary’s children, Hardwicke and Ann, are residing at this address in Tottenham Court Rd, St. Pancras, London on the night of the 1841 census. Hardwicke is listed as the publican, and Ann is living with him, as well as several bar staff.

In the *London Commercial Directory* for 1846 Thomas is listed under Rawbone and Hawks, scotch ale brewers, Holywood Brewery, Little Chelsea.

**Trade and Street Directories** are useful in tracking down the names of landlords, pubs and locations. *The Historical Directories* website holds trade directories from 1760s to the 1910s for all of England. *London City Directories* can be found on Ancestry, [www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61265](http://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61265).

**Electoral registers** are great for pinpointing an ancestor’s residential address. Ancestry holds the London Electoral Registers for 1832-1965, [www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1795](http://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1795).

**Parish registers** may also give clues as to your ancestor’s occupation and address (especially baptisms), and census records are invaluable in seeing how many people worked in the hotel over the years, and the exact street location.

**Land records** are also worth consulting, especially if your pub of interest is in a rural area and more likely to have a small plot of land attached. Enclosure maps, ordnance surveys, title records, and valuation office returns may all give more information on a property. The Land Registry holds records of title deeds, [www.landregistry.gov.uk](http://www.landregistry.gov.uk).

**Newspapers** are also invaluable for finding out about publicans, their staff and the pubs they ran. You may

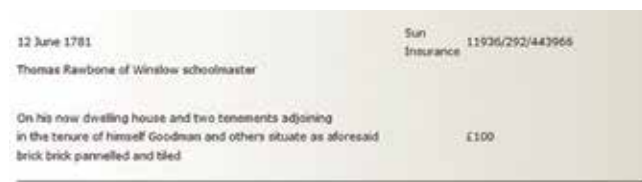


find notices of sale, advertisements, court cases involving pubs or publicans, departure of long serving landlords, pub activities, or charity work of local prominent publicans, [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

A few years later in 1846, an advertisement appeared in the *Law Times of London* newspaper regarding the dissolution of the partnership between T Rawbone and E Hawks, Brewers of Fulham Road in Chelsea.

In the Era Newspaper on 17 October 1847, Thomas Rawbone is listed under Transfer of Licenses for Islington – “Castle”, Holloway Rd. License transferred from John Tapps to Thomas Rawbone. “The Castle” later changed its name to “The Bailey”.

**Apprenticeship Records** – Brewers and publicans employed apprentices which may be found in *Stamp Duty Tax Registers* and in *Brewers and Innkeepers Livery records*, [www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1851](http://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1851).



Sun Fire Insurance policy 1781 Thomas Rawbone. (Winslow History Webs)

**Records of the Fire Insurance companies** indexed online on the UK National Archives and the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) website. The LMA holds the records of companies which were involved in insuring property against fire. Search by the name or address of the hotel, or publican, and obtain the full record from the London Metropolitan Archives or the relevant County Archives, <https://search.lma.gov.uk>.

**Guilds** – Both the Worshipful Company of Brewers and the Worshipful Company of Innholders (publicans) were once responsible for governing the beer trade and houses in London, [www.brewershall.co.uk](http://www.brewershall.co.uk).

**Blogs** – The London Street Views blog has lots of genealogical information about the people that lived at various addresses in London. Thomas Rawbone appears in the collection, at his wine vaults at 119 Tottenham Court Road, London including a sketch of his property, <https://londonstreetviews.wordpress.com>.

**Pictures** – if your ancestor owned or worked in a public house in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire regions of England, another somewhat quirky place to look for information is the website of the TV Show *Midsomer Murders Locations Index*. Locate your

village, e.g., Thomas Rawbone retired to Brill, Buckinghamshire. I can see that the village of Brill appeared in three episodes of the popular TV murder mystery show, and clicking on the Brill link, gives me photos of the village pub (The Red Lion), the church, and other town buildings.

**Rate Books** list the householder, landlord, rate levied and a brief description of the premises. Records will usually be found in local record offices, but Ancestry does have a good collection for London.

**Wills** can also be genealogical gems, and publicans are likely to have left a will, especially if they had property to bequeath. The attached inventory may also give a detailed description of the property including the fixtures and furnishings. Many wills, such as those proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury are available free to download from the UK National Archives, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>.

Thomas’s wife Mary Rawbone died on 17 December 1849 at Holloway Road, Islington (at their ‘Castle’ hotel). The death duty index registers for 1849 includes Mary Rawbone, residence Holloway Rd, to her son the Rev. Hardwick Rawbone of Birmingham. Mary was buried at St James, Westminster, Piccadilly, London, aged 59.



Annie Rawbone who worked in the Northumberland Arms with her father Thomas until her marriage in 1846. (Author photo)

Mary's will, written 1 October 1849, just three months before she died, mentions that she received 1000 pounds in stock left to her by her father Christopher Reeves, and that she wished to bequeath the stock to her four surviving named children – her son Hardwick, and three daughters Mary, Ann and Elizabeth. She appointed her son Hardwick the sole executor.

The Reverend Hardwicke Rawbone (who later changed his name to Rathbone) was first a publican like his father, then attended Cambridge University in 1842 and later became a clergyman. More occupation changes.

Daughter Annie had married in 1846 and had moved to Mile End, Stepney with her husband Dr. Samson Davis. Dr Davis was listed as practising medicine at 116 Tottenham Court Road, Marylebone, right near Annie's father's pub at 119 Tottenham Court Road "The Northumberland Arms". It is not hard to imagine how they met!

**PARTNERSHIPS DISSOLVED.**  
W. J. and J. G. Bell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, booksellers—Gill and Phillips, Easingwold, Yorkshire, attorneys—Barnes and Haines Sloane-street, wine merchants—J. C. Wilkins, and J. and W. Foster Ann-street, Birmingham, auctioneers—Blackwell, Jones, jun., and Oakes, Kingswinford, Staffordshire, and Dudley, Worcestershire iron and coal masters—Rawbone and Hawks, Fulham-road, Little Chelsea, common brewers—J. K. and S. H. Blackwell, and J. Jones jun., Dudley, Worcestershire, iron and coal masters; as far as re

Thomas Rawbone partnerships dissolved.

**Census records** can be very revealing. Two years later in the 1851 census, the remainder of the family (Thomas and daughters Mary and Elizabeth) can be still found at 1 Albion Place, Holloway Rd, Islington, London running the Castle Hotel. Thomas Rawbone was a widower, aged 68, occupation licensed victualler, born in Winslow, Buckinghamshire. With him are his two unmarried daughters Mary aged 24, born in Upper Winslow and Elizabeth, aged 21, born at Clerkenwell, Middlesex. There is also James the barman, and two servants Eliza Long and Sarah Neil.

## Publican and Pub Resources

Ancestry holds a vast collection of records including alehouse license records, pub blacklists, licensed victuallers, register of recognizances, etc., - [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

UK City and Country Directories 1766-1946 - [www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/3145](http://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/3145)

Historical Directories - <https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4>

National Brewery Centre Archives - ledgers, books, plans, photographs from the breweries around the UK, [www.nbcarchives.co.uk](http://www.nbcarchives.co.uk)

London Metropolitan Archives holds the records for the Worshipful Company of Brewers - [https://search.lma.gov.uk/LMA\\_DOC/CLC\\_L\\_BF.PDF](https://search.lma.gov.uk/LMA_DOC/CLC_L_BF.PDF)

London Metropolitan Archives Research Guide 45: Licensed Victuallers Records - [https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.d11/144/RESEARCH\\_GUIDES/web\\_detail\\_rg?SESSIONSEARCH&exp=SISN+92](https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.d11/144/RESEARCH_GUIDES/web_detail_rg?SESSIONSEARCH&exp=SISN+92)

Pub History - 1600 to 1940 offering advice on researching a pub and historic directory listings of public houses covering London and a number of English counties. Search by pub name, surname, street name, district etc. <https://pubshistory.com>

Pub Heritage – a website devoted to pubs with historic interiors, <https://pubheritage.camra.org.uk>

Deadpubs, taverns and tokens - historical site about early London coffee Houses and Taverns, <https://deadpubs.co.uk>

Closed Pubs – a website dedicated to lost and closed pubs, mainly in London, [www.closedpubs.co.uk](http://www.closedpubs.co.uk)

Inn Sign Society – Inn signs, origins of pub names, etc., <https://innsignsociety.com>

Pub History by Simon Fowler - links and advice for researching pubs, brewers and barmaids and tracing ancestors who worked in pubs, [www.sfowler.force9.co.uk/page\\_12.htm](http://www.sfowler.force9.co.uk/page_12.htm)

The Brewery History Society – books, journals, defunct breweries, archives, etc., [www.breweryhistory.com](http://www.breweryhistory.com)

Beer Blogs – How to Trace UK Brewery's History - <https://boakandbailey.com/2015/05/how-to-trace-a-uk-brewerys-history>



In the 1851 Finsbury Petty Sessions, Thomas, when applying for his yearly victualler's license, was named as the Publican of the Castle Hotel at 81 Holloway Rd., and soon after the hotel became "The Bailey".

By 1854 it seems Thomas had had enough of his London publican's life, and had retired to Chilton, three miles from Brill in Buckinghamshire, and on 21 March 1854, aged 64, he married again to widow Anne Griffin in Brill in Buckinghamshire. His father was named as Thomas Rawbone, schoolmaster.

Soon after Thomas's marriage to Anne, his spinster daughter Elizabeth Rawbone also died in Brill in 1855, aged only 26 years. In her will she left her estate jointly to her father Thomas and her siblings Hardwick, Anne and Mary including two cottages situated in Little Chapel Street, Westminster, London, so it seems the pubs were a profitable enterprise. Thomas died on 20 December 1856 aged 75 years at his home in Brill.

Only three weeks earlier, Thomas had written an extensive will on 2 December 1856, stating he was

of sound mind, with beneficiaries being his wife, son, two daughters and a son in law. He left extensive legacies to his wife and children including the interest of the small fee farm rents at Bierton by Aylesbury to his son Hardwicke. The will detailed his personal possessions – a silver snuff box, a gold watch and chain, a diamond ring and wearing apparel, declaring a man of property, investments, and jewellery, and he obviously wanted to keep it in the family.

His second wife Anne (Griffin nee Welford) died in 1863 aged 75 in Brill and was buried with Thomas. When her will was probated in 1864 her remaining estate of less than 200 pounds was proved by her sole executor John Jennings of Brill, a builder. Thomas had made sure that all his previous wealth from his first wife and that of his own making was bequeathed only to his own children and continuing in the family line. Not bad for a village schoolmaster. ©

MICHELLE DENNIS is a blogger, family historian and freelance writer living in Melbourne, Australia. She has been researching her own family history for the past 30 years.