

# A HISTORY OF THE OLD RED LION

## Old Red Lion traces its roots back to 1415.

According to modern accounts of the history of the Old Red Lion the business is said to have been founded in 1415. We have identified several sources and the claim goes back over a period of many years. According to one source writing in 1937 the Old Red Lion is thought to be the oldest public-house in London 'with the possible exception of *Whitehead's* in Bishopsgate and the *Tabard*.' It also states that the "White Hart" in Drury Lane and the "Hoops and Grapes" in Aldgate also stake a claim.

In addition it also says that although the Old Red Lion has been re-built several times it is 'an historical fact' that a tavern called the "Redde Lyon" stood on this spot in 1415. A mention of 1415 as the foundation date for the pub is found in Samuel Lewis, *The History and Topography of the Parish of St Mary, Islington*, which was published in 1842. It noted that large letters on the front of the building claimed the Old Red Lion was 'established in 1415'. This fact is repeated in several books over the years including William Pink's *History of Clerkenwell* in 1865 which says that the pub was refurbished in about 1840 with the new sign added as above; and goes on the further state: Pinks goes onto to speculate that the Old Red Lion may have a....

***'Greater claim to antiquity than any other hostelry either in the metropolis or the environs, if we except, perhaps, the Talbot or Tabard in Borough, immortalised by Chaucer'.***

The Tabard was an Inn in Borough High Street, Southwark which was established in 1307 and made famous by Chaucer in "The Canterbury Tales". It was destroyed by fire in 1669 but rebuilt and renamed The Talbot. It was demolished in 1873. The George Inn, which stood nearby was also destroyed in the same fire and rebuilt in 1677 and noted as the oldest surviving galleried London Coaching House. Records from the Duchy of Lancaster show that it existed from at least 1543.

G. E. Milton, *Clerkenwell & St Luke's: comprising the borough of Finsbury/ edited by Walter Besant* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906) as well as more recently Philip Temple 'Rawstorne Street to the Angel', *Survey of London: volume 46: South and East Clerkenwell* (2008), pp. 336-357 also give 1415 as the starting point. To understand if there is any possibility that the pub was first established in 1415 we will have to research the late medieval period.

## Early History of the Area.

The site of the present day Old Red Lion was situated within the parish of St James, Clerkenwell, but was actually closer to Islington. For many years the land it stood on was the manorial land possessed by the Grand Prior of the Knights of St John of

Jerusalem whose headquarters were nearby. Another place of great importance of course, was the nearby "City" of London and in particular Smithfield Market. The inn was established on a major route (St John Road Street) from the Midlands and the North to Smithfield Market. In the year 1144-45, two religious institutions were founded by Jordan de Briset, a Breton knight, in the reign of Henry II (reigned 1154-1189). One was the convent of St Mary, Clerkenwell, situated close to present day St James church and the other was the Priory of the Knights Hospitallers (Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem), situated on the south side of Clerkenwell Green. These institutions had a huge impact as religious institutions in this era were very wealthy. Most of the inhabitants in the area would have been dependent on the religious houses for their livelihoods, providing the convent and priory with goods and services. In this earlier period (12<sup>th</sup> Century) the area where the Old Red Lion is now located might have been at the edge of a forest which covered most of Islington. There was probably only a very small settlement at Islington. Interestingly, archaeologists have found what appears to have been a Saxon settlement at Islington Green. The area grew slowly in the preceding years. Islington, like Clerkenwell benefited both from the establishment of religious houses in the area and both places benefited from being close to Smithfield Market which was used as London's main livestock market. Meat had been traded at Smithfield as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The livestock market expanded over the centuries to meet the demands of the growing population of the City.

The growth of Islington can be explained by its access to clean water from nearby springs and wells ( ref. "Clerk's well" or Clerkenwell, "Gods well" or Goswell and Sadlers' Wells) and also its closeness to London en route to Smithfield. It became a favoured place for cattle drovers to stop before entering the city. The road they used also dates from a very early age and it was due to the establishment of the priory at Clerkenwell that the road outside the Red Lion as it would have then been called became known as St John Street because it passed the Priory of St John of Jerusalem. The first known mention of this street was in 1170 not long after the founding of the Priory. It was noted as a road leading from Smithfield into Islington (Yseldon). It was first used as a packhorse road and then later became used as a highway to the Midlands and to the North of England leading as far north as to Edinburgh. It was probably to serve these needs that the Red Lion was first established. It was as a place where tired travellers could spend the night before journeying into Smithfield the next morning. The Red Lion was in an advantageous location to offer hostelry and refreshment to drovers and other travellers on the Great North Road. Situated at the most northern edge of the manor of Clerkenwell, at the northern tip of St John Street, Islington Green, by 1415 was becoming a small market village in its own right. Eventually Islington would become a place of permanent dairy herds and pens used for the overnight storage of animals. The link between Islington and Smithfield was certainly established by the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The Old Red Lion therefore, probably began life as a Private House which began to serve food and refreshment to passing travellers and later evolved into an inn, or Public House, with sheep pens opposite and accommodation for travellers. There were no Alehouse Licences at this time. They were not established until the 1550s under Edward VI, so it is assumed that any agreement to use a certain

property for the hospitality of travellers would have been made between the tenant and the landlord, which in this case would have been the Prior of St John. No doubt the Prior would have seen the advantage of establishing an inn in this area. With time, The Red Lion would have been in direct competition with numerous other hostelries that were established in Islington High Street. The famous Angel Inn on Islington High Street, which gave this strategic junction its name, was established much later than this period. The area around the Red Lion was mainly fields throughout the whole medieval period. It was a favourite place for Londoners to come and visit even in medieval times. There are reports that 'miracle plays' took part there, religious plays about the lives of the saints and other stories taken from the Bible and performed by the parish clerks of the City of London. This gave the area its name, as the plays were performed at the Clerk's Well or simply Clerkenwell. Thus the area's link to theatre began at a very early age. Other popular pursuits in the area were archery especially on nearby Finsbury Fields which could sometimes be fatal for random passers-by.

One major event which occurred in the area was the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. This was a large uprising against the royal government of the day. One of the main targets was the Priory of the Order of St John because the Head Prior, Richard Hale was also Lord High Treasurer of England and was the man responsible for the collection of the hated Poll Tax. The Priory was burned down, along with all records relating to the local area so that he and those who worked for him could not easily see who needed to pay taxes. Therefore, there are next to no records for the area held by the Priory between 1144 and 1381.

### **The Old Red Lion and 1415.**

At present there is no definite contemporary evidence to either prove or refute the claim that the pub was established in 1415. We are still actively researching this point and have commissioned a professional archivist to assist us. Our combined command of Latin at the Old Red is not quite up to scratch! Work is currently focusing on the 600 year old manorial parchments that are housed in The Metropolitan Archive, which ironically are housed behind Exmouth market, only a short stroll from St John Street and the Old Red Lion. We currently have documented evidence (see below) that the Inn existed from 1522.

The Inn appears to certainly have existed at the start of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It seems very likely that an inn or public house would have been established here. It was close to Islington which was the last stopping off point for travellers before entering the city of London. It was near to a good supply of clean water and it was on the main northern routes into and out of London. In the year that the Red Lion was first established the whole Country, especially London was in the grip of recession which had begun in 1412. In that year the Royal government had devalued the currency in a bid to restore trade however it did not work. The merchants of London were suffering from a shortage of coin and there are records of many bankruptcies in the city as well as many people fleeing the city for the countryside. Economic failure led to increased social strain. Lollardy, a religious movement had spread rapidly in the

city and spread discontent especially with the wealth of the Church. There was even a plot by the Lollards to seize the new King Henry V in 1414.

The year 1415 was also one of celebration. It was the year of Henry V's victory over the French, against all odds, at the battle of Agincourt. His victory came at a time when the county was in a miserable state and so it was all the more welcome. It seems clear that the Red Lion was established in interesting times. As for the name of the inn; it is not certain why the name 'Red Lion' was chosen. It was already a popular name for Inn's at the time from perhaps as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Although the heraldic significance and use of the prancing red lion is well documented, there is a separate event which may have influenced the naming of the Inn, that occurred around the same time the Red Lion was founded in 1415. In that summer, before Henry V's departure for France, an assassination plot to replace him with Edmund Mortimer, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of March was discovered. The Earl had a better claim to the throne than both Henry V and his father Henry IV, as he was descended from Edward III's second born son while the Henry's were descended from his third born son, John of Gaunt. The plot was revealed to the King by the Earl himself on 31 July while he was in Southampton preparing to sail to France and Agincourt. Arrests were made and a trial of the ringleaders was held in Southampton at a local prominent inn followed by executions for high treason on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of August. On the 11<sup>th</sup> August Henry V sailed to France where two months later he would defeat the French at Agincourt. The name of the inn where the court was held was the Red Lion. It has been suggested that the name Red Lion was taken from the name of the inn in Southampton where the King's enemies were brought to justice as a sign of loyalty to Henry V and also as a celebration of his famous victory over the French.

### **'Old Red Lion' in Tudor and Stuart times.**

When attempting to trace the Old Red Lion (formerly known as the Red Lion) care had to be taken not to confuse this Red Lion with others in the area. One Red Lion appears in 1653 in the west side of Islington High Street and also a little later appears the Carved (or Painted) Red Lion, on Islington Green or Upper Street which closed in about the 1830s. Also at Clerkenwell there was another Red Lion. This one gave its name to Red Lion Street (and later Red Lion Square) and it was situated at the end of that street on the south side of Clerkenwell Green near the site of the Priory of St John. In his account of the history of the area Richard Tames notes that this public house can be dated back to 1415, but he may be confused with our Red Lion, whose claim to 1415 has been well documented in many histories of the area. According to Temple's *Survey of London* this Red Lion was built at some point in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century and became a Coffee House. This does appear to be true, in the Victuallers Licences for the Finsbury Division dated 1725 shows that the Red Lion Coffee House appears with Edward Rogers, holding the licence. It was later re-named Jerusalem Tavern and was demolished long ago, although a public house of that name still exists in Britton Street. Yet another Red Lion, was also situated on St John Street, and appears in the Victorian Era, this is probably the 'New Red Lion' found in census returns for 1871. The area in which the pub now stands is believed to have been part of the manor of St John of Jerusalem. However, it may have been part of the manor of Highbury (also known as Newington Barrow) which possessed some land, separate from its main holdings, next to Islington High Street. The manor

of Highbury (Newington Barrow) was at one time part of the manor of St John of Jerusalem to whom it was granted by Alice Barrow in 1270-71. The manor was passed to the Crown at the time of Reformation and was held by the daughter of Henry VIII, Princess Mary after 1540. After briefly being restored to the manor of St John in 1558 it reverted back to the Crown and in 1610-1611 was granted to Henry, Prince of Wales, the son of James I. When he died it was passed to his brother who later became Charles I. It was eventually sold in the seventeenth century. The records for the manor date back to 1422.

In 1517 before a uniform road was in place there was a raised causeway paved with stones leading from St John Street to Islington parish church. There does not appear to be any sign of this causeway in later maps, but it undoubtedly would have passed the Red Lion. The Red Lion has been identified as being located on the east side of Islington High Street in the manor of Highbury in both the 1540s and 1580s. It seems that this is the Old Red Lion and not another one, as it located on the correct side of the street and it seems very unlikely that two Red Lions would operate in such close proximity to each other. The record for 1544 has been consulted and may provide the earliest reference to the pub on paper found so far. In that year the Red Lion Inn was being leased by Ralf Langley, Inn holder and his wife Alice. Alice herself had been the wife of Robert Lynford who was the previous Inn holder and resided at the Red Lion for 22 years. It seems that the landlords Thomas Ridley and George Clopton wished to evict the tenants from the house and lands and thereby probably break the lease. Langley and his wife's argument was that over the previous 22 years much of their personal expense was used up in improving the property, therefore making it much more profitable. They accused Ridley and Clopton of wanting to take advantage of this by evicting them. This record is interesting because it shows that Alice and Robert Lynford occupied the Red Lion in 1522.

Further records have also been identified. A collection of deeds relating to the 'Red Lion Public House' on St John Street, Islington date as far back as 1596 and in that year show an agreement between John Kiddye and John Southall made on 4 November. Unfortunately, this document appears to have gone astray so it is unknown if it mentions the Red Lion directly. In around this time Islington was still a rural location and distinct from London. In 1572 there is an account of a disturbance at Finsbury Field close to St John Street Road which mentions a Red Lion at Islington:

*7 April, 14 Elizabeth 1572.—Coroner's Inquisition-post-mortem, taken at Fynnesbury on view of the body of John Stocker late of London shoemaker, there lying dead: With verdict that, on the same day between two and three p.m., the said John Stocker was in the street called Bysshoppes Gate Strete within the city of London, together with a certain John Tyson late of London yeoman and John Keys also late of London yeoman, when the same John Stocker and John Tyson exchanged insulting words, after which speech John Tyson, having business to do at a certain house called the Red Lyone at Islington with a certain William Peirson of Buckby Co. Hertford yeoman and a certain John Knighte of the same parish and county, went off*

*to Islington; and That, seeing whither he was going, John Stocker with malice lay in wait, to intercept and assault the same Tyson on his return; and that afterwards being together in Fynnesbury Feild the two men fought together, John Stocker having a sword in his right hand and a dagger in his left hand, whilst John Tyson had a sword in his right hand, and in his left hand a cloak; and that in the affray, thus fought between them in Fynnesbury Feild, John Tyson with his sword gave John Stocker under the left side of his breast a mortal wound, of which he then and there died instantly. G. D. R., 22 May, 14 Eliz.*

Many of the earlier documents in the Old Red Lion collection of deeds appear to include reference to 4 houses near to or next to the Old Red Lion and possibly latter day Hermitage Place. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century the name Thomas Wickham appears in connection to these buildings and later Michael and William Hart followed by Jasper Harmer and Rose Harmer. These families also appear to have been related. According to Pinks in his study of Clerkenwell there is one record dated 7 October 1639 concerning a woman named Elizabeth Noone, who died holding four acres of pasture in the parish of Clerkenwell belonging to the Red Lion, in Islington.

During the Civil War, the area of the Red Lion was strategically important due to its location as a main entry into London. Trenches and ramparts were constructed at all the main highways into London and works were erected at the end of St John Street, close to the Red Lion when Charles I threatened to invade London. According to reports the royalists jeered at the citizens digging the ramparts and even made up a song to antagonise them called 'round headed cuckolds, come dig'.

### **'Old Red Lion' in Georgian times**

After the Stuart period Licenced Victualler records have survived and provide the names of the landlords. These records were created as part of the Middlesex Quarter Sessions. In 1722 within the Finsbury Division it was recorded that Edmond White of the Red Lion, St John Street, was a licenced victualler. These records begin in 1552 when victuallers were first licenced under Edward VI. The 1552 records only show the sureties (those who stood guarantor for the victualler) rather than the victualler himself or the name of his tavern or alehouse. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century there are numerous entries in the Quarter Session regarding Tipplers Licences, but likewise no certain information is provided, only a name and the street. As St John Street is very long, mention of it does not particularly help. The years 1687 and 1690 have Licenced Victualler records but likewise they do not provide any certain information. There is evidence that the Red Lion for a time in the 1730s changed its name to the Welsh Harp, although there does not appear to be an entry under this name in the Licenced Victualler Records for 1726, 1729 and 1747, however it appears to be true.

In 1613 Dame Alice Owen purchased some lands next to the Red Lion to provide for charitable purposes. She erected Alms-houses for the poor as well as providing education. These buildings were next to the Red Lion. In the Brewers' Company account explaining the story behind Dame Alice's reasons for doing this they mention that she had purchased land from the Welsh Harp to the Turk's Head on St John Street. It is not known what year the account was written but it was probably sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, therefore the writer may have used the contemporary name for the Red Lion, being the Welsh Harp rather than the name it was known by in the 1610s.

Further evidence for this can be found in the Deeds for the Old Red Lion itself. In this collection of documents there is an agreement dated 25 December 1732 between Fulke Taylor, Gentleman of Islington and Edward James, Vintner of Islington for Edward James to sell various alcoholic drinks such as 'wines, brandy, rum, ale, beer, cyder, and other liquors' at a tenement in the parish of St James, Clerkenwell on Saint John Street known by the 'Name or Sign of the Welsh Harp'. It goes on to say that the Welsh Harp was formerly in the possession of one Davis whose first name was left blank and since in the possession of Thomas Siliute. Not much information is known about either Taylor or James. It is known that Edward James left a will dated 1756 but there is no mention of a Welsh Harp in it. Fulke Taylor also left a will dated 1738. His will is interesting as it seems to confirm the location of the Red Lion or Welsh Harp. He made his will on 16 January 1737 and described himself as a Gentleman of St James, Clerkenwell, in Middlesex. To his wife Sarah he devised 'for the term of her natural life all that messuage or tenement with the appurtenances which I now live in situate near the turnpike in Islington Road in the said county of Middlesex'. This turnpike according to a map of the area in 1735 was at the junction we now know as The Angel at the northern end of what is now St John Street Road in the middle of what is now a cross roads between Islington High Street and St John Street and Pentonville Road and City Road. One thing to remember is that during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century the stretch of St John Street which ventures northwards from Percival Street and Corporation Row was during these times called Islington Road. It was not until later in about 1818 this road again reverts to the name St John Street. Bearing this in mind and despite the fact that he does not mention the Welsh Harp by name or any other tavern or alehouse, it seems clear that he was living where the Old Red Lion stands today as he mentions three other 'tenements or messuages ... also situate near the turnpike in Islington Road' these no doubt are the same properties that appear in the collection of deeds for the Old Red Lion and which are probably next to the Old Red Lion or very close by. He names some of the tenants; they are Mrs Davis, Mrs Ward and Mrs Whitaker. A witness to his will is Thomas Davies who might be the same 'Davis' who appears in the agreement of 1732. Another witness is Edward James, whom it is almost certain is the same Edward James, Vintner who also appears in the agreement of 1732.

Fulke Taylor died some time before 10 March 1737, the date that his will was proved. His home the Welsh Harp or Red Lion was devised to his daughter Sarah Taylor and the heirs of her body. If she died without having any heirs then

the property would descend to his sister Sarah Taylor and after her death to his brother Thomas Taylor and his heirs. Not much is known about Fulke Taylor himself. He was married in 1715 at St Andrew Holborn, to Sarah Huberd St Clements and we know they had at least one surviving daughter, Sarah in 1737. If he was about 30 years old when he married in 1715 he would have been born about 1685 making him aged just over 50 years when he died in 1737. It is not known who inherited his property.

It was at around this time that the famous artist William Hogarth both frequented the Red Lion and included it in one of his works of art. The Red Lion appears in the background of one of his paintings called *Evening* which taken together with *Morning, Noon and Night* make up the *Four Times of Day*. His work was completed in 1736 and was published in 1738. The famous Scottish poet and playwright James Thomson remembered for his masterpiece *The Seasons* as well as for the lyrics to *Rule, Britannia!* was also said to be a regular at the Red Lion at about this time when he lived in London in the 1720s.

At some point after this it is thought that the name of the Welsh Harp reverted back to the name Red Lion. In 1751 the 'Red Lyon at Islington' is referred to in a book with a very long title starting *Observations on the cure of William Taylor, the blind boy of Ightham in Kent* this concerned the work of a Mr John Taylor, an oculist, who was able to restore sight to those who had gone blind. The recording of events was compiled by William Oldys sometime before 1761. The book records 'patients restored to sight of different diseases' and first on the list was 'the daughter of Mr Drowater, master of the Red Lyon at Islington'.

A likewise reference to the Red Lion on St John Street appears in an account of a highway robbery which occurred in 1767 and resulted in two deaths. The victims of this assault had been drinking in the Red Lion before they met their untimely deaths. One surviving member of their party was Thomas Smith who lived on Goswell Street, who happened to be the Sheriffs officer. The proximity of Goswell Road to the end of St John Street makes it more likely to be in the Old Red Lion that these men were drinking in.

At this time it is known that the innkeeper was John Manning, as his name is recorded in the Licenced Victuallers records taken September 1765. John Manning lived at the Red Lion along with his wife Ann at this time. On 5 August 1767 they had some money stolen from their room upstairs. According to Ann Manning, about £25 was stolen. The case was heard at the Old Bailey on 7 August. She told the court that at seven o'clock in the evening she was asked by the accused Richard Thomas and William Edwards for brandy and water which she provided them with. She brought it up to them in an upstairs room which adjoined her own room which had a bow window in it. There were two other men with them called Mr Brooke and Mr Marsh who were printers. She said that the accused paid for their drinks and then left about half past eight. When she went upstairs into her room and she noticed that her money was gone. Her account is also backed up by Mr Brooke and Mr Marsh who also appeared at the Old Bailey. They said that on the same day they were at 'the



house of John Manning known by the Sign of the Red Lion Islington Road'. They said they were in the same room upstairs with the accused Thomas and Edwards for about three quarters of an hour, while waiting for 'some company from Sadler's Wells, and that they were afraid the room would not be large enough to contain them all'. The entry in the Middlesex Sessions Rolls dated 1 September states that 19 guineas, £4 14s 6d in money was stolen in total. It seems that William Edwards was also accused of another crime on the following day at St Pancras where he stole gloves worth over £81. The outcome of both cases is not recorded.

On 3 September 1768 there was a gruesome murder not far from the Red Lion. The victim was John Stoddart, keeper of the Bridewell, Clerkenwell who had been assaulted in a field near the head of the New River by John Mcloud and Tim Simpson. He was attacked by these two men who demanded money from him and who beat and stabbed him when he resisted. His cries of agony and later on cries of 'Murder! Murder!' were heard nearby by Miles Oddy of the King's Arms who was walking along St John Street towards Clerkenwell Green and by the men at the Watch House at Clerkenwell Green. It was stated that the killer left behind his coat at the scene of the crime during the struggle.

John Manning of the Red Lion, Islington appeared at the Old Bailey as a witness and said that he was told that Stoddart had been robbed and murdered while he was in bed. He said that when he was told a coat had been found at the scene he went to view it and recognised it as the property of John Mcloud who he had seen wearing it six or seven times or many more. Mcloud had been an apprentice to Mr Ashley of Islington. He said Mcloud had been keeping company with people of no good repute. Other witnesses also came forward regarding Mcloud. The case was heard on 19 October 1768 and Mcloud who claimed he was innocent said that it was his friend Tim Simpson who carried out the attack. This was not believed by the court and he was found guilty of murder and he was to be executed a few days later, his body was to be 'dissected and anatomised'. This case as well as the earlier case of highway robbery underlies just how dangerous this area was at the time. The Red Lion while close to the village of Islington and the Turnpike was still surrounded by fields at this time which could conceal all kinds of thieves and cut throats waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting passer-by.

The Highways into London were notoriously bad, and infested by highwaymen and danger in many forms. In winter time they were often practically impassable. According to one account taken a few years later:

*The highways and roads connected with this village [Islington] within the last half century [he wrote in 1811] were very badly kept and extremely incommodious. Formerly the avenues leading to Islington from the metropolis, exclusive of the footpaths over the fields, were confined to the road from Smithfield through St John's Street, the Goswell Street road leading from Aldersgate, and the ancient bridleway ... and these were frequently almost impassable in winter time. The former of these [St*

*John Street] seems to have been a road of some consequence at a very early period, owing perhaps in a great measure to its affording a communication between the two priories of St John of Jerusalem and St Bartholomew in Smithfield, with their possessions in this parish ... such was the state of the highways in this district, not more than 50 years back, that travellers were often obliged in their journeys to and from the metropolis, in the winter season, to remain all night at the inns in the village, as the roads, from their bad state, and being infested with thieves, were absolutely dangerous after the close of day. The Red Lion, the Angel and Pied Ball, were at that time houses of great resort for persons journeying the Northern Road.*

According to this account of the state of the roads into London and Islington, it seems clear the residents would have no desire to improve the condition of the road beyond that required by law. If the transport system ever became efficient they would lose a lot of trade. In 1774 an interesting reference is made to the Red Lion in the *London Gazette* concerning Debtors, Bankrupts etc. where it was noted that Richard Raulings, formerly of the Red Lion, Islington Road, in the parish of St James Clerkenwell, late of Dublin, Ireland, Sword Cutler, was a fugitive surrendered to the warden of his majesty's prison of the Fleet. It is assumed that Richard Raulings was a paying guest at the Red Lion (or perhaps disappeared before settling his bill).

On 15 July 1777 in the *Public Advertiser* the sad news of the death of Mr John Manning, Master of the Red Lion, Islington was recorded. He died, it said of the Dropsy on 12 July. The parish register for St James Clerkenwell duly records that he was buried in the churchyard on 16 July 1777. He was aged only 38 years. His place of habitation was described as Islington, although the Red Lion was in the parish of St James, Clerkenwell. His wife Ann Manning continued as at the Red Lion in his stead, her name appears in the Licenced Victualler records for September 1781.

The name of the Red Lion appears again in 1779 at Old Bailey connected to another violent theft or highway robbery. Mary Beachman, servant to a school master at Islington was attacked by two women at the end of the road 'by the Red-Lyon, the corner of Islington' the two women stole various items of clothing and footwear which she was carrying worth over 11 shillings. The accused Elizabeth Lambert and Mary New who were both identified by the victim were tried, found guilty and sentenced to death.

In 1785 according to the Licenced Victuallers Records the landlord was Henry Hare. Two years later in 1787 the landlord was George Stewart who on 14<sup>th</sup> September it was said was the victim of break in by a former employee, Edward Fisher. Mr Stewart said that he had various items stolen from him including 24 tickets for Sadler's Wells (!).whom alerted the Constable, John Dinmore who then traced the tickets to Edward Fisher who was found with a great number of tickets. Apparently, Edward Fisher confessed in writing to stealing the ticket but

would not sign the confession. He claimed he knew how to break into the Red Lion through the cellar window which could be weakened by shaking it until a nail fell out. Fisher claimed that he threw other items (of silver) into the Thames. The case was heard at the Old Bailey where Fisher was found guilty of stealing items worth 39s but not of the burglary and was sentenced to be transported for seven years.

The next landlord of the Red Lion was William Higgins who appears in the Middlesex Sessions Rolls on 26 April 1789 as providing bail to Edward Evans who had been accused of an assault on John Thomas. It was at around this time that Thomas Paine frequented the Red Lion and where it is said he wrote part of his famous work *The Rights of Man*.

One account of this appears as early as 1815 in a survey of the area by Rev Joseph Nightingale called *London and Middlesex: or An Historical Commercial & Descriptive Survey Vol. III*:

*A few houses further on towards Islington stands a public house called the "Red Lion". It is a small old brick house, having two or three tall trees in front. In this house was written that curious engine of political mischief 'The Rights of Man' by the notorious Thomas Paine'.*

The famous Samuel Johnson, more usually known as Dr Johnson is also said to have frequented the Red Lion. Possibly at around the same time Paine was residing there.

By the 1790s, parts of a wall belonging to the Red Lion was in need of urgent repair. At this time the owner of the Red Lion was Mr Charles Barron, Esquire, who lived at Covent Garden. According to a letter dated 30th October 1795 he attempted to evict the tenant Mrs Frances Bolton (probably the widow of Benjamin Bolton) because she could not pay for the repairs. However, in the letter, written by a Mr Carr of Bread Street Hill in the city of London, probably a solicitor or otherwise engaged with the law, he was advised not to do so because it was his responsibility to bear the expense of 'securing or repairing any party walls in your house at Islington ... rather than suffer it to be done by the Brewers' Company'. The Brewers' Company, were the owners of the alms-houses for the poor next door. On 28 October 1795 the wall was inspected by four men. It was described as a party wall between the yard belonging to the Red Lion at Islington occupied by Frances Bolton and a garden belonging to the Brewers' Alms-houses adjoining and between the said yard a shed belonging to the alms-houses. It was noted that the 'walls are ruinous & defective and the same might be taken down and rebuilt'. No doubt this wall was in danger of collapse and was therefore a danger. It was not recorded if the wall was actually repaired but the assumption must be that it was.

By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Islington was becoming built up, however, it was still a semi-rural place where drovers still passed with their sheep for market. On

6 July 1803 a case was heard at the Old Bailey regarding the theft of twenty nine lambs and a sheep. The lambs and sheep had been stolen while they were placed into sheep pens next to the Angel at Islington while their owner went to Smithfield; the owner had actually been assisted by one of the accused. A witness John Davis, himself a drover claimed he saw the two accused outside the Angel Inn and recognised them as coming from the Red Lion. He said he saw them lead the lamb and sheep out of the pen and down the City Road. He then reported the incident to the Fieldkeeper. The local watchman William Crisp was also a witness, he saw the accused prisoners 'sitting at the Red Lion door [and] sat down by them upon the bench for five minutes' where he overheard what he now realised was their plan to steal the lambs and sheep. He saw the lambs and sheep being led down Goswell Road, and he and the Fieldkeeper gave chase to them. In their defence the accused claimed he heard the owner of the sheep calling out for assistance with his animals while sitting outside the Red Lion. They both claimed they were helping him take the animals to market although the owner said he had not asked for this to be done. Both the accused were teenagers being aged 17 and 18 years of age. They found guilty and sentenced to death.

By 1806 the Red Lion was in the hands of George Hill and his wife Mary Hill. In a case heard at the Old Bailey on 19 February 1806 some property was stolen from Mary Hill on 31 December 1805, valued at 10 shillings. The thief was handed over to the authorities. He was a 63 year old man said nothing in his defence nor did he call any character witness. He was sentenced to two years in the House Correction and fined one shilling.

By 1811 repairs were again needed. This time extensive repairs were needed to both the Red Lion itself and to a house next door. A letter addressed to George Hill described the repair work that was necessary and have him 3 months to complete the work. An agreement was made between Charles Barron and George Hill on 30 March 1811 to have this work done. A plan was made of the repairs showing what work was completed during the month of April. The repairs were extensive and would have been very expensive. A floor plan of the property and a drawing of the front of the building is kept with the correspondence on this matter. According to the plan of the repair work, the works were completed on 'two houses at St John Road, St James, Clerkenwell, adjoining the Red Lion Public House'.

In 1820 another incident at the Red Lion became a matter for the Old Bailey. On 12 April 1820 Thomas Anthony was accused of embezzling the sum of 5 shillings and eight and three quarter pence which was the money of George Wells who was then the keeper of the Red Lion (on St John Street Road). Anthony was a former employee of Wells as a pot boy and general servant and had joined him in November 1819. He told the court that he had trusted him to receive small sums of money from his customers, and that he had a good character. He lived at the Red Lion for 3 months. It wasn't until shortly after 21 February 1820 several of his customers with unpaid bills told him they had paid Anthony that he suspected something was wrong. He then received a letter from Anthony saying

that he will now leave his employ for reasons he cannot say he had to flee the area ' I have no doubt that you will think harsh of me, and it will go as hard with me for so doing, but I dare not tell the reason'. Thomas Anthony, aged 19 years, was found guilty and sentenced to 3 months in prison.

One of the functions of the Red Lion over the years, and certainly by the 19<sup>th</sup> century was as a place where inquests were held especially into untimely or suspicious deaths. One such inquest was reported in *The Examiner* on 2 December 1827. On 29 November an inquest was held at the Red Lion, St John Street, on the body of Lucy Morris, aged 19. Apparently at around the time died she was of a 'gloomy disposition' and after having an argument with her employer poisoned herself with laudanum despite the best attempts to save her with the stomach-pump. The verdict was 'temporary derangement'.

At this time the Deeds of the Old Red Lion are very useful for determining who held the lease of the Red Lion. The owner in 1831 was still Charles Barron. However, according to a report in *Perry's Bankrupt Gazette* on 4 June 1831 William Griffiths may have had the lease in this year. It was reported that 'William Griffiths of the Red Lion, St John Street road, Clerkenwell, licenced victualler, last of the Bear and Ragged Staff, West Smithfield, became bankrupt. Later in that year the collection of deeds show a new lease between Charles Barron and brothers Richard and James Sleigh dated 27 December 1831. In 1840 in his account of the *History of Clerkenwell*, Pinks notes that Mr R Sleigh was joint landlord with his brother and said about him that he 'had the good taste to hang "thewainscoting" of the parlour with choice impressions from the plates of Hogarth's works and which have not been removed'. The Sleigh brothers continued their lease until 29 August 1839 when they surrendered it. James Sleigh, victualler of Clerkenwell died in 1849, it is not known when his brother died. The lease states that the property being leased out was 'Of the Red Lion Public House Islington and 3 cottages adjoining' making a total of four houses (same number of houses shown in the deeds collection). Underneath is a note saying that the rent was £157 10s per year. Despite the fact that the Sleigh brothers had the lease until August 1839, it seems that Joseph Ashford was in charge in 1833. We know from the records of a local journal, that the Hogarth Lithographs adorned the walls up until at least the second world war.

According to a report in *The Morning Post* on 8 February 1833 Mr Joseph Ashford of the Red Lion, St John Street, Clerkenwell charged William Jones, a baker with assault. Apparently Jones entered the Red Lion and behaved in a way that was very rowdy and argumentative. When remonstrated with he pulled off his coat and challenged to fight any three men in the house. Jones was a powerfully built man and so no one took him up on his offer. Mr Ashford said that if he would go into the street he would accept his offer, and so Jones went off into the street. When he did so Mr Ashford locked and bolted the door leaving Jones on the outside at which point he became 'exceedingly violent and was given in charge to the policemen'. Jones said in his defence that he was drunk and did not know what he was doing. He was granted bail.

Another Coroner's Inquest was held at the Red Lion on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1837 and reported the next day in the *Morning Post* on the body of Mr James Bowles aged 29 years. He was a coal merchant and lived on St John Street Road. A few days before when passing through Judd Street, St Pancras his horse took fright and the chaise was caught up with a gas lamp, throwing the deceased out causing his skull and several of his ribs to fracture. He was then taken home in a coach and was seen by a 'medical attendant' but he died three hours later. The inquest decided that this was an accidental death, he was not drunk but his horse was young and inexperienced. It was not determined what caused it to take fright. Mr Bowles left behind a widow and young family.

### **'Old Red Lion' in Victorian times.**

On the 30 August 1839 the Red Lion along with three cottages adjoining, still owned by Charles Barron was leased to Mr Robert Wing. The lease shows that Charles Barron lived at Pall Mall and was a wine merchant. It is thought that he might be a son of Charles Barron who owned the Red Lion in the 1790s. Robert Wing meanwhile, was living on St John Street, Clerkenwell. The lease is interesting because it shows that Robert Wing had been repairing the property, and mention was made at the start of the lease of the 'costs, charges and expenses which the said Robert Wing hath been put at and put unto in repairing and improving the messuage or tenement'. More will be said about these improvements. The lease gave:

*...Robert Wing all that messuage, tenement or dwelling house now and for sometime past used as a public house and called or known by the [sign of the ] Red Lion situate standing and being on the last [part of] Saint John Street Road, aforesaid together with the yard behind the same and also messuages or tenements & a wash house or outhouses standing together at the back of the said messuage or tenement called the Red Lion...*

The lease also mentions a passage way from the Red Lion to Goswell Street the other side where Charles Barron possessed another property and the Alms-houses next door then owned by the Brewers' Company which were the Red Lion's natural borders. It seems that Robert Wing is responsible for having transformed the front of the Red Lion and of giving the pub its present day name the "Old Red Lion". In Pinks *History of Clerkenwell*, he gives a description of the Red Lion in 1840 after the works were completed.

*... the house has been completely renovated at least externally, and it now presents an elegant façade, in the Elizabethan style of architecture. It is an object that cannot fail to strike with pleasure the ye of strangers entering London by that great Northern Avenue.*

Pinks seemed to think that the Red Lion was owned by the Brewers' Company and that they had paid for the renovations, however, as we have seen this was not the case. He continues:

*The following inscription appears in conspicuous characters on the front of the houses: - 'The Old Red Lion, established 1415'*

Pinks goes on to speculate that the Old Red Lion may have a **'greater claim to antiquity than any other hostelry either in the metropolis or the environs, if we except, perhaps, the Talbot or Tabard in Borough, immortalised by Chaucer'**.

"The Tabard" was an Inn that stood on the east side of Borough High Street in Southwark and was established in 1307. It was made famous by Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales". It was destroyed by a major fire in 1669 and immediately rebuilt and renamed "The Talbot". It fell into disuse and was destroyed in 1873. Next door to "The Talbot" was "The George", known as London's oldest "Galleried" Coaching House. It is known from the records of the Duchy of Lancaster to date from at least 1543. It was destroyed in the same fire as "The Tabard", and was subsequently rebuilt.

This was also noted in another publication of the time, *Bentley's Miscellany* 1840 which noted 'The Old Red Lion bearing the date of 1415, and since lightened up some regard to the taste of ancient times'. Pinks in his description of the Red Lion noted the changing nature of the area as the century had progressed. Perhaps looking back nostalgically at the past in a time of rapid change was responsible for the Elizabethan style renovations to the front of the Red Lion. Pinks noted the following:

*It is not a great many years ago that the Old Red Lion stood almost alone. Opposite were pens in which sheep were folded previous to their being taken to Smithfield for sale ... the whole space besides, from St John Street Road to the Belvidere on the one hand, and Coppice Row on the other ... were all open fields ... the scene now has entirely changed, and the whole ground has been long since covered over with streets, and squares and chapels, and churches, forming no inconsiderable town. But at the period above adverted to it was a pleasant rural ramble from town to Islington...*

Robert Wing died some time in 1841. He was living at the Red Lion when the census was taken in June of that year also present was his son in law Leonard Bladon aged 40 years old and also his daughter Elizabeth aged 36 years. The census return shows that Robert and his daughter Elizabeth were both born in the county of Middlesex. He was aged 67 years in 1841 so therefore was born in 1774. His will made on 15 February 1839 shows that he was living at the 'Old Red Lion' on Saint John Street Road, and that he was a victualler. He was therefore living there before the lease of August 1839; he might have been an

under-tenant of Richard and James Sleigh. His description in his will of the Red Lion as the Old Red Lion is the first time the name has been used in any document. Subsequent leases still referred to it as the Red Lion. His will also said that his son in law Leonard Bladon and his daughter Elizabeth Bladon were living with him. His son William Wing had died some years before. His will was proved on 5 October 1841.

The next licenced victualler we know of for the Red Lion after Robert Wing's death is George Testar. According to *The Era* on 17 October 1847 on the day before George Testar passed the Red Lion to his James Testar (although the name was the Old Red Lion, it still appeared as Red Lion in many records and publications). According to the same publication dated 30 September 1849 the publican for the Red Lion on St John Street was Richard Reeve Pryke and was then given to Thomas Morris Harvey. About a month later there was another Coroner's Inquest held at the Red Lion. According to a report in the *London Daily News* on 29 October 1849 Elizabeth Mary Porter a shopkeeper aged 54 years had committed suicide through grief. Her son Henry Porter stated that three years she had lost a favourite son and she was deeply affected by his death and became partially deranged and that she was danger to herself. The unfortunate woman just a few days before it was determined had slit her own throat with her deceased son's razor and stabbed herself with a knife which was next to her. She survived for three days but finally died. The court had to examine the wound to her throat before giving their verdict; it would have been a very gruesome affair. She found thought to have been insane.

On 23 November 1849 Thomas Maurice (Morris) Harvey himself appeared in both the *London Standard* and the *London Daily News*. He was accused by a policeman of 'having kept his house open for the sale of liquors etc. on Sunday last, not being for the refreshment and accommodation of travellers'. It was illegal to sell alcohol on Sunday to the general public unless they were drovers or other travellers who were obviously away from home. It was reported that Harvey was found in the back room with a pint pewter pot on the table containing malt liquor. Harvey explained that the men were drovers from Newport, South Mimms and Leicestershire, but the police officer and inspector present said that because they could not drive cattle on a Sunday which was illegal they did not view them as travellers. The defence stated that due to the fact the rovers could not move their cattle on a Sunday they often stayed over on a Saturday night in Islington until Monday when they could move them again. It was asserted that the men in the back room were indeed travellers who could be served refreshment and accommodation. The court was satisfied that the men served drinks were drovers and the case was dismissed.

People in Victorian England were great believers in public charity and philanthropy to those less fortunate. On 23 June 1850 it was reported in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* that a meeting of the The Amicable Philanthropic Society was held at the Old Red Lion, St John Street Road, Islington:



*It was formed by a few inhabitants of Islington who are in the habit of frequenting the above named house, for the purpose of affording relief to the necessitous poor during the inclement season of the year; and although only established in the month of April 1849, they have been enabled to distribute to their indigent neighbours a considerable quantity of bread and coals (nearly 400 loaves of bread, and 300 bushels of coals) and from the ready support which has already been given to the institution, there is not the least doubt but that during the ensuing winter months to a number of persons who are at the time in a distressed and hopeless situation the most desirable assistance will be rendered. The society hold their meetings at the above named house every alternate Tuesday evening, at half past eight o'clock.*

This suggests that the Old Red Lion was at the heart of a very caring community. This image was supported by the following event that underlines the charitable mind of the incumbent landlord. According to the *Morning Post* on 4 July 1850 Harriet Fitter 'a fashionable dressed female' was accused of stealing a drinking glass by the proprietor Mr Harvey. On the Tuesday night before Miss Fitter left the Old Red Lion at one o'clock in the morning and was later seen near the Angel, Islington holding on to a drinking glass, she was apparently very drunk and she could not say why she had it. The police officer on duty who was there took her to the station. Miss Fitter 'wept bitterly' in front of the court and said she did not mean to do it. Mr Harvey explained that recently he had 'been plundered of glasses etc. but under the circumstance he did not wish to press the charge'. She was allowed to leave the court and the judge told her to be grateful and thankful for Mr Harvey for his charitable consideration.

The census for 1851 shows Thomas H Harvey, licenced victualler and his family present at the Old Red Lion. He was aged 42 years and was born in Twickenham. His wife Mary Ann was 34 years and was born in Portsmouth. Living with the Harvey's was Thomas Harvey's sister in law Elizabeth Taylor; she was married (aged 32 years) and was an 'annuitant' which meant she was receiving some kind of annual payment; she was also born in Twickenham. Other residents were three servants; a barman, general servant and pot man. The other four residents described as 'visitors' and 'travellers' were probably paying guests.

The Old Red Lion was not managed by the Harvey family for very long. *The Era* records on 2 May 1852 that the licence was transferred from Harvey to Henry Burton on 24 April that year. The pub continued to be a venue in which meetings could take place, as is illustrated in the choice of the pub as a venue for a meeting of the Railway Cab Monopoly group as reported in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* on 24 October 1852. They met in order to consider how to break up the then present monopoly at metropolitan railway stations by cab drivers.

A lease dated 17 July 1855 shows that the Old Red Lion lease was extended from Charles Barron, Esquire to Henry Burton, along with the usual three cottages adjoining. On 29 September 1856 the lease was then passed from

Henry Burton to William Brookin. A similar document shows that on 28 June 1858 William Brookin assigned the lease to Mr. W J Simpson.

The Old Red Lion appeared again the records of the Old Bailey on 7 May 1860 when Philip Jacob Mendle was accused of fraud. He was accused of unlawfully conspiring to defraud Wilhelm Weisenbach of his goods and monies. It appears that Mendle got the defendant drunk, one of the places they went to was the Old Red Lion. When at the Old Red Lion the group that both men were with continued to gamble as they had been doing before. The defendant staked his gold brooch with a pearl and rubies in the game and some money and other items. The landlord William Simpson was called to the bar as a witness. He confirmed that the defendant was present at his establishment that night but could not confirm that Mendle was there. He told the court that he did not see anything suspicious and said he saw no gambling going on. For obvious reasons Simpson could not admit that gambling occurred at his premises which may explain why he appears to have had no idea what happening that night. The outcome of the case was that that Mendle was found guilty and imprisoned for 2 years. From Simpson's testimony we can gain some further details about the layout of the Old Red Lion. He said that the pub had a front and back entrance to it; this is something which has continued to this day.

At this time, this was why the Old Red Lion gained the nickname, the "in and out", which made reference to the front and rear entrance, which was allegedly abused by Hackney Cab customers dodging fares by running through the front and out of the rear exit!

On 25 June 1860 the lease was passed from Simpson to Mr Alfred S Rowlett along with the three cottages at the back. Rowlett was resident at the Old Red Lion at the time of the 1861 census. He was aged 57 years and was born at nearby Hoxton. His wife was Mary born in Launceton, Cornwall. They had one son called John living with them and three servants; one bar man, one pot man and one house servant. A few weeks later on 20 August 1861 the lease was passed from Rowlett to Jonathan Jones. He did not stay for very long either. On 17 July 1862 the lease was passed from Jones to William Hatswell.

The Old Red Lion appears in the *North London News* on 12 October 1861 where one Henry Coulbourn was found in state of intoxication after stealing large parcel from a haberdashery at the Angel Inn nearby. His stolen goods were found in the 'court adjoining the public house'. The name of the public house was only given as the 'Red Lion' with the Old attached to the start of the name.

The Old Red Lion appeared in an advertisement in the *London Standard* on 28 March 1868. An invitation was made to the inhabitants of the St John Street Road and neighbourhood to petition to parliament 'against the destruction of the Protestant Church in Ireland'. The petition was to be open for signing from nine in the morning to six in the evening. Similar petitions were opened all over the area and public concern seemed very high. This had been caused by the planned disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in that country which many

Londoners were alarmed at. The disestablishment of the Church occurred in the following year regardless of the petitions. Despite the invitation having been in the name of Mr Hatswell it appears that he was actually deceased. The National Probate Calendar for England & Wales shows that William Hatswell, of the Old Red Lion 87 St John Street Road had died on 6 December 1866. It shows his wife was Ann Mills Hatswell; his effects were worth under £800. The lease of the Old Red Lion was passed from Anne Mills Hatswell to Benjamin N Verge on 4 October 1868.

The census for 1871 shows that Benjamin Verge was resident at the Old Red Lion at the time. He was a local man and it appears he lived there with his wife and daughter. His wife it seems was deaf. The Old Red Lion appeared in *The Era* dated 11 June 1871 as it was placed up for sale by Verge. This was due to the fact that he had recently acquired a new public house opposite St Thomas' Hospital and wished to concentrate on that. The property was to be sold by Messrs Belton by auction. It was described as being '**one of the oldest-established houses in the Metropolis**'. It seems a buyer was found only 2 months later. The Old Red Lion was assigned to George William Churchman on 8 August 1871. The deeds show that Churchman's address was 7 Fitzroy Road, Regents Park. The property included three cottages at the back and a washhouse. This also included right of way into the City Road. The deeds for the Old Red Lion shows that on 7 May 1876 the lease was surrendered from Churchman to G J Young Esq, the premises were called the 'Red Lion' without the prefix of 'old'. The National Probate Calendar for England & Wales shows that George William Churchman, late of 186 St John Street Road, Clerkenwell (the address of the Old Red Lion) died on 27 October 1882. His wife was Eliza. At the time of his death he was living at Bromley-by-Bow. His personal estate was worth over £900.

By the time of the 1881 Census Robert Edwards, Licenced Victualler was resident. He was aged 39 years and was born in Deal, Kent. He lived there together with his wife Caroline and their five children. Other residents were five lodgers, four of whom probably worked there, plus one female book keeper. In 1882 the lease was taken over by Robert Elvery. According to the National probate Calendar for England & Wales, Robert Elvery formerly of the Old Red Lion, St John Street Road but late of the Imperial Arms in Fulham died on 13 November 1885 at the latter location. His wife Caroline proved his will. His personal estate was worth over £4,000 and when later re-sworn was actually assessed at over £5,000, a considerable sum.

A year later the name of the 'Red Lion' appeared again in the *Morning Post* on 31 December 1886 in connection to a shooting nearby from the street into the window of a woman called Caroline Pyke who lived at 213 St John Street, in the early hours of Christmas morning. It appears that the person who fired the shots was a man with whom she had been acquainted with at her place of work. The couple had been drinking together on Christmas Eve in the 'Red Lion public

house, Islington' after finishing work. It appeared the report that Mr Hallberg who fired the shot was very distressed at the time but did not mean to harm her.

In 1891 the census for that year shows that the Old Red Lion had a landlady, Maggie Snow. She was a young widow aged 27 years. She was born in London. Living with her were four servants who were employed in the Old Red Lion. The official name of the landlord appears to have stayed as Charles Snow; and he might have been Maggie's husband. The next landlords were Dickerson and North. It was under their management that the Old Red Lion was completely re-built. They came into the possession of the Old Red Lion sometime after 1895 and before 1899. It must be assumed that the building by this time with its very early structure deep inside the structure was beginning to become run down and that this must have been the reason for a complete re-building which of course would have cost a large sum of money.

The name Dickerson and North was taken from the surname and the maiden name of the new owners; Charles Dickerson and Amelia North, who were a married couple. Amelia North was born in 1860 in Bethnal Green; her father John Snow was a Licenced Victualler, so Amelia was brought up in that environment. Her father was born in Bethnal Green and was the son of a Silk Weaver. Amelia's mother also called Amelia, was blind; John North started as a carver but eventually became a successful Licenced Victualler. Public Houses managed by him include The Bull, on Devonshire Street, Aldgate, and the Horse & Groom in Hackney. On the other hand Amelia's husband Charles Dickerson was born in 1856 in Hackney and started off as a commercial traveller.

This couple were involved in a theatre in the East End before their time at the Old Red Lion. In 1889 according to various newspaper reports in November of that year including *The Era* and *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* they were brought before the court for staging plays without a licence and serving drinks with a licence. The theatre played to a Jewish audience and Amelia Dickerson was the bar manager, on a salary of 10s a week; it appears her husband was one part of the management of the theatre. The business must have been profitable, because a few years later they bought the Old Red Lion and began the project to re-build it.

According to a *Survey of London* covering the area and a report of the property made under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 carried out in 1994, the present structure was designed by Eadle & Myers and built by Charles Dearing & Sons in the years 1898-1900. The building was awarded a Grade II level listing. Much of the look of the Old Red Lion both inside and outside still bears the mark of Dickerson & North, whose initials remain on the building to this day. To celebrate the re-opening of the Old Red Lion some tokens were minted showing the address and the name Dickerson & North on one side and a Lion (rampant) on the other.

**The Old Red Lion in the Twentieth Century and Today.**

The census for 1901 shows Amelia Dickerson as 'proprietor Public House'. She lived there with her family and servants in the present day building. She had a 19 year old daughter called Amelia and a 17 year old son called Charles. Her brother in law Albert J Clarke aged 22 years was also resident along with nine servants. Seven bar attendants, one domestic cook and a housemaid. The new building must certainly have been much larger to house all these servants who were also resident. Although Amelia lived on her own, she was still married to Charles Dickerson; therefore it is assumed that he was temporarily staying elsewhere on census night that year. Amelia and Charles were not resident for very long in their newly built public house. We know some further details of the builders of the present day Old Red Lion from the National Probate Calendar for England & Wales. It shows that Amelia Dickerson died on 30 January 1921; her address was 59 Holloway Road. Her state was worth over £1,000. Her husband Charles Dickerson died a few years previously on 23 July 1909 at Chatham Railway Station (it is not told how). His address was 26 Saint Mary's Road, Canonbury. His personal estate was worth £681.

In 1904 the Old Red Lion appeared in the newspapers again, this time on 5 August 1904 in the *Western Gazette* under the title 'Faithless Wives'. The article reports that two injured husbands, both innkeepers were awarded 'heavy damages' from a Divorce Court. It seems that George Lake while engaged to one young lady wrote a love letter to the wife of the manager of the Old Red Lion, Mrs Laura Muller. It would appear that the two were having an affair provoking Mr Muller to initiate divorce proceedings against his wife. It was a particularly outrageous case as it was revealed that Mr Lake had in fact written a love letter to Mrs Muller while his fiancé was in the same room. The letters were described as being the 'bedrock of villainy' and no doubt the event was the talk of the area. Lake had to pay Mr Muller £750 damages.

Needless to say the Mullers did not stay at the Old Red Lion for very long. The census for 1911 shows a new resident family. The manageress was Alice Agnes Harwood Bone, a widow, aged 47 years. She was born in Titchfield Street, London. Living with her was her nephew Lewis Wretham Bone aged 26 years and her sister Eleanor aged 48 years. She also had five servants resident as well; a cook, three bar maids and one bar man. The property at this time had nine rooms in the living quarters (including the kitchen). Agnes was the widow of one Cornelius Bone and they had married in 1895 in Lewisham. According to the National Probate Calendar she died on 20 August 1947. Her address was Woodcote, 84 Grove Avenue, Muswell Hill. Her estate, bequeathed to Alice Bone, a relation on her husband's side was worth over £3,0000. Her nephew Lewis died in 1953.

Records show that the Old Red Lion continued under the ownership of the Snow Brothers from at least 1910 and 1919 with the Mullers and Bones serving as management. It would have been under their ownership during the First World War which would have been a difficult time for many public houses as war time

legislation laid the foundations of modern Public House Licensing in England and Wales. During the war the government was very concerned about the level of alcohol being consumed. The belief was that drunkenness was hampering the war effort especially in the production of military equipment in munitions factories. In fact the government of the time was actively leading the campaign against alcohol. Most prominent of all in this was David Lloyd George who at the time was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and would later be Prime Minister. Concerns were that alcohol led to an increase in the number of days lost due to excessive intake leading to men and women being absent from work the next day. Wages had risen very fast during the war and that meant workers had more money to spend on drink. There was even a pledge involving national figures of the day to refrain from alcohol consumption during the war which had the support of King George V himself.

By the end of 1915 it was even illegal to buy a drink for any person other than yourself. The government also changed opening times which reduced public houses to opening only between 12pm to 2.30pm and 6.30pm to 9.30pm. Previously all licenced premises could open between 5am and 12.30am, over 17 hours a day. The government also took to buying certain nuisance public houses in order to close them down and also taxed alcohol to reduce consumption levels which was a resounding success. This was a very difficult time for public house landlords as no doubt these new laws affected their profits and also probably made them unpopular as they had to enforce the rules to an unwilling public. Repeated failure to adhere to these new laws could result in closure for the offending premises. Evidently, the Old Red Lion survived this difficult time during the tenure of the Snow Brothers.

In 1934 the landlord was Stanley G Saunders who remained there in 1938 a year before the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1944 Alfred Martin was landlord. The Second World War seems to have been a better time for public houses. They became places of community and refuge, despite the dangers of a direct hit under the threat of German bombers. One such bombing raid was in January, 1941 where the north side of Myddelton Square was destroyed. During war time the public house also became a place of refuge and escape from the war outside. In an article that appeared in the *Theatrical Journal* dated 9 April 1942 the Old Red Lion received a very positive review. The writer and his companion were taking shelter from the pouring rain and decided to step into the Old Red Lion.

They called it a 'very old fashioned house' however they liked what they found:-

On entering the parlour we were much struck by the number of pictures hanging round the room, and on examining them, found they were original engravings, the subjects being Hogarth's Marriage a la Mode, Morning, Noon, Night, Industry, and Idleness, etc., and indeed almost all the subjects that inimitable artist had painted ... the waitress, who was a very pretty woman, was very civil and obliging ... if any of our readers should be passing "The Old Red Lion" they will find food for the mind as well as the

body, a good parlour, an agreeable company, and a dish of good looks from the landlord and his worthy spouse.....

Islington and Clerkenwell is an area which has been known for its radical left wing politics. It was not far from the Old Red Lion that such figures as Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Lenin and many other members of the Russian Communist Party would live and meet. One anecdote that is repeated in several books on Islington records that often splinter groups of the various communist associations would meet in the upstairs room of the Old Red Lion, and on occasion Lenin would tip the Landlord to allow to him to open up the doors of the “dumb waiter” to be able to hear the debates in the room above!

The area also has links also to the early founders of the Trade Unions movement. This tradition extends into modern times and area is now famously regarded as being the ‘spiritual home of Britain’s left wing intelligentsia’. The Old Red Lion itself of course played a role in this. In the 1980s it was a meeting place for the *Revolutionary Socialist League* also called *Militant Tendency* (now called the Socialist party). Also in the early 1980s a frequent visitor was Jim Higgins (1930-2002), a Journalist and revolutionary socialist whose magazines operated from a nearby office but also from the Snug Bar of the Old Red Lion, which became an informal second office.

Also in the 1980s the Old Red Lion was a meeting place for Pauline Tiffen who is the founder of two of the leading Fairtrade companies; Café Direct and The Diving Chocolate Company. At the time she worked for TWIN an early Fairtrade organisation. At lunch times she and her colleagues would leave their nearby offices and hold their meetings at the Old Red Lion over a pint. Also in the same decade (1989) there appears a picture of a group of politicians standing outside the Old Red Lion in celebration. The picture shows the now well-known former Labour MPs Chris Smith (now Lord Smith of Finsbury) who was one of the first openly gay British MPs and Margaret Hodge while she was the Leader of Islington Council. The picture is thought to be showing celebrations following Candy Atherton’s appointment as Mayor of the London Borough of Islington for 1989-1990, in June 1989.

In 1974 the lease was taken on by Pauline and Tony Sheriff-Geary. In 1979 the upstairs of the Old Red Lion was converted from a boxing ring into a black box theatre space and the Old Red Lion Theatre was founded by Charlie Higgins and the theatre has grown and prospered into the current Old Red Lion Theatre. In its 35 years the theatre has hosted over 1000 different productions and live performance events. Many now famous names have performed there and we have written a separate history of the theatre.

In July 2000 the lease of the Old Red Lion was taken over by brothers Damien and Lorcan Devine and their family who run the Pub and theatre to the present day.

In 2015 we celebrate the 600<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of this amazing institution and invaluable part of London life.

We hope you can join us!

**Michael J. Devine**

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