

☞ The Public Houses ☞

Until recently, there were two public houses in the village: the Red Lion at Little Tingewick and the Kings Head near Finmere House. Most of the larger houses also had had their own brewery. At the death of Rector Robert Holt in 1802, the Rectory is described as having a '100 gallon (455 litre) Brewing Copper, a smaller ditto, Mash Vat, Brewing Tubs [and] Beer Casks.' Later, Rector William Jocelyn Palmer rewarded his labourers with his home brew. Warren Farm also had a brewery and employed jobbing brewers, George Paxton of Brackley in 1848 and William Adkins in 1851. Many of the larger houses probably used such jobbing brewers, as may have the public houses.

The Kings Head

We do not know when an alehouse first stood on the site of the Kings Head, or for that matter when it was first given that name. The earliest certain reference is a map of 1813 (page 10), when it was owned by the Duke of Buckingham. On 30 July 1848, the Duke sold the pub at an auction at the Cobham Arms in Buckingham. It was then generating a rent of £18 a year and was purchased by the tenant for £370. That tenant was Robert Greaves, also a brickmaker and farmer.

1848	2000
£370	£23,300

A Victorian Village Scandal

In the mid-nineteenth century, nearly all adults attended church at least once a week. Kings Head landlord, Robert Greaves, was among them. Finmere Rector, William Jocelyn Palmer, appreciated his devotion and described him as:

A respectable and sober housekeeper, a constant attendant at church and a frequent Communicant. (Rectors' Book)

Unfortunately, Palmer's admiration did not last. Robert was twenty-three when he married eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Petty in St Michael's Church in 1828. They had five children before Elizabeth's early death in July 1847. Robert's actions ten months after Elizabeth's death drew Palmer's anger. On 16 May 1848, Robert, aged forty-three, married Emma Northover, just twenty years of age. But they were not married in Finmere; the wedding was held in St Pancras Old Church, Camden, to avoid Palmer's scrutiny. The truth was, however, soon discovered.

Emma was not Emma Northover at all. She was Emma Petty, the niece of Robert's late wife. It was then illegal for a man to marry a relative of his deceased wife. Palmer acerbically condemned the marriage.

Even before Elizabeth's death, Palmer and Greaves were at odds. In 1844, Palmer wrote to Thomas Beards, Steward of the Stowe Estate.

Dear Sir

Hope for the pleasure of seeing you at the Vestry on Monday. I take the liberty of informing you that I trust we shall be able to proceed to business at 3 o'clock and considering the time of year and the coldness of the church that I shall first propose to adjourn the meeting to the Clerk's house where there will be a fire, and that I hope such a proposition will be agreeable to you. It has frequently been moved to the Kings Head but particular incumbencies just now render an adjournment there highly objectionable to me.

I remain

Yours truly

William Jocelyn Palmer

Finmere December 20 1844

[This] was in fact no marriage at all, either by the Ecclesiastical or by the Civil Law... the impediments were well known, but were intended to be got the better of by the form of marriage obtained under the disgraceful circumstance of fraud and perjury. (Rectors' Book)

Palmer refused the couple Communion, a symbolic gesture as the Greaves no longer attended church. They did not wish to suffer Palmer's 'repeated admonitions' on the legality of their marriage. Palmer's anger grew as Robert and Emma had children. He could not morally or legally refuse to christen a child, but his ire spilled over into his records of their christenings.

There has been issue [children] of this connection, which may be seen in the Parish Register in various forms. The last entry (1852) is supposed to be the most correct. (Rectors' Book)



A relaxed party at the Kings Head in the 1960s
From left to right: Wilfred Davis, Nellie Jones, Alice Banfield,
Trevor Banfield, Anna Banfield, Bill Banfield.

The Register entries show Palmer's difficulty in recognising the marriage.

1 March 1849. Thomas Henry Petty, son of Emma Petty, alias Northover, alias Neville, alias Greaves, single.

18 May 1851. Charles Frances Petty, otherwise Greaves, son of Emma Petty.

~~17 October 1852. Mary Emma Petty, illegitimate daughter of Emma Petty, living as wife with Robert Greaves, victualler.~~

17 October 1852. Mary Emma Greaves, illegitimate daughter of Robert and Emma.

In 1851, Robert's children by his first marriage were being taught at home—perhaps another reflection of Palmer's wrath, as he was school manager.

William Jocelyn Palmer died in 1853 and thereafter Emma and Robert's lives proved easier. Frederick Walker, who succeeded Palmer, made no adverse comment on the birth of the Greaves fourth child, Edward, in 1854. Emma died three years later, aged just 29. She is buried in the churchyard and her gravestone at last recognises her marriage.

*In memory of Emma
Wife of Robert Greaves*

The Death of a Landlord

Robert Greaves was succeeded by George Everett, who was replaced a year later by James Shaw, who was born in Blackthorn, near Bicester. In the 1881 census, James is recorded as a butcher and innkeeper at the Kings Head, where he lived with his twenty-two-year-old wife, Emily of Bletchington, their son George, aged two months, and Sarah King, a servant from Luggershall. His stay at the Kings Head proved rather unluckier than that of Robert Greaves.

On 15 September 1899, Mrs Freeman of Little Tingewick heard a cart coming along the road and then a sound as though the horse had stumbled. She went towards the cottage door and saw the horse starting at a gallop. Just as she reached the door, the horse fell and she saw James Shaw fall head first out of the cart.

Forty-six-year-old James was a large man, weighing fifteen or sixteen stones. He was thrown over the horse's shoulders and crashed onto the road, with his head towards the horse. As he lay on his left side, the horse ran away and the right wheel of his cart ran over the lower part of his stomach. Shaw was doubled up with pain but he managed to creep on hands and knees into Mrs Freeman's cottage. She found him to be in dreadful pain and exhibiting symptoms of internal injuries. A bedside chair was brought down to the door of the cottage and neighbours lifted the injured man into it, where he remained for nearly an hour in great pain. A wagonette was fetched and he was taken to his home at the Kings Head.

James remained ill for ten weeks and in great pain despite frequent doses of opium. He died on 24 November.

We have to record the death of Mr James Shaw, innkeeper and butcher of Finmere. It appears that ten weeks back, he was out on business, when his horse stumbled, throwing him out of the cart. The horse recovered itself before Mr Shaw could do so, and most unfortunately one of the wheels of the cart passed over his body. He was taken home and attended by Dr Cheeseman, who found that he had severe internal injuries, and no hope was held out of his recovery... he died a few minutes to midnight on Thursday. (Buckingham Advertiser, 28 November 1898)

An inquest, held in the Council Chamber in Buckingham, heard evidence from Dr Cheeseman and Dr Duke. They agreed that death was caused by a mass of coagulated blood, weighing upwards of 1lb (0.5kg), which had obstructed passage from the bowel and the bladder. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death.

James had taken out accident insurance for £500 with the Railway Passengers' Assurance Society. The Society challenged the jury's verdict and refused the claim from his widow, arguing that the death had been caused by disease. A panel of three distinguished medical arbitrators in London heard the dispute in December 1899, a year after James's death. It was a lengthy hearing and the expert witnesses argued about the coagulated blood: was this the result of disease or the accident? The arbiters ruled that the accident was the cause and James' wife, Emily, received her compensation.



The Kings Head in 1984

The Kings Head was extended in 1983, when a room was added to the side. During the late 1990s, the pub was in need of investment and refurbishment. This was not forthcoming and, on 8 April 1999, the Kings Head closed and is unlikely to be reopened.

1899	2000
£500	£34,000



Customers leave the Red Lion in 1960

From left to right: Wilfred Davis, June Anderson and Bob Sikes. The name 'Albert Horwood' can be seen over the door. Albert's name has been fixed over that of his father, John.



Oxford Drag Hunt outside the Red Lion in 2000

The Red Lion

In common with many rural pubs, the Red Lion began in a small cottage, little different from others in the village. Before its modernisation from 1960 onwards, the pub had two rooms and beer was brought from the cellar in handled pots. The men's toilets were across the yard and pigs were kept in the paddock across the main road. The Red Lion dates from at least 1816:

James Terry applied for relief on account of his family when it appeared by complaint of the overseer that the said James Terry had idly spent his time and his money at Hugh Davis, at the Red Lion. (Vestry Minute Book, 1816)

John Horwood was landlord from 1907 to 1939, when his son, Bert, took over the licence. He was interviewed by John Simpson for the Hello Finmere broadcast on BBC local radio in 1971 (opposite). Bert Horwood was landlord until to 1981.



The Red Lion the early 1980s

JS: Well Bert, how long have you been here?

BH: 59 years

JS: You were born here?

BH: I was born here, yes

JS: In this pub?

BH: That's right, yes.

JS: It's not very often that you find a publican who was born in the pub he now looks after.

BH: Not very often. I dare say there is some about [but] I've never heard of them being in their own house all the while.

JS: It's the first one I've come across.

BH: Yes.

JS: Have you seen many changes here in Finmere?

BH: Oh yes, quite a lot. Different things... When the old horse and cart used to come up the village instead of motorcars now.

JS: Because you're sitting here on the junction of the main road and the road going into the village and the traffic's actually stopped at the moment but just a few moments ago it really was busy.

BH: That's right. Yes, we get quite a lot, quite a lot of traffic through now. It's quite a busy road. Even in the village itself, there's quite a lot of traffic up and down.

JS: I suppose this wasn't so in days gone by?

BH: No, no. One car a day perhaps, something like that.

JS: What sort of trade do you do here? The locals or do you get many visitors in?

BH: Well, we rely more on passing trade, you know. That's our business more or less.

JS: Does this mean you're busier in the summer?

BH: In the summer, yes. Summer months... Winter's very quiet...

JS: When I came just now you were out on your garden. Does that mean you're a keen gardener?

BH: Oh, I like doing the garden, yes. We got quite a bit. I grow my own potatoes... I used to keep a lot of pigs at one time.

JS: Did you? What sort of pigs?

BH: Sows and that, breeding... About a dozen sows, keep them for breeding. Sell the little ones, eight or nine weeks old.

JS: Do you need much expertise to do this?

BH: Well, I was brought up with it. Father used to do it... when they were eight or nine weeks old we used to take them to market... and sell them at Banbury or Aylesbury.

JS: What do you feed your pigs on?

BH: Well, we used to have steamer boil up, boil the food up, which was the best I think. Better than a lot of this dry stuff today. The pigs used to do better, I think, than what they do now...

JS: Of course, the idea of keeping pigs and taking them to market has disappeared these days, hasn't it?

BH: Yes. You've got to go at it in a big way you see. Well, hundreds, thousands really.

JS: You said that you were born here, in the pub, and that you've lived in the pub all your life. Do you find pub work very hard?

BH: Well, no. I don't mind it... I think it's a very good job... What I like best is when there's plenty of people about... everybody comes in and when the sun's shining everybody seems happy. In the winter's the worst part, dull nights, quiet, no-one around much. Time drags then more.

JS: But you much prefer the summer?

BH: Well the summer's the best time. You get different holiday people in, from all parts of the country, coming in on the way to having their holidays and it makes an enjoyable time of it.

JS: I've always heard it said that if you are going to be a publican you have got to be able to stand and listen to other people talking.

BH: That is so, yes. You've got to listen to them and have all their aches and pains. Whether you're in aches and pains yourself, you have to put up with that.

JS: But you don't mind

BH: Well, no, no. Not if they're happy. That's it, you like to see everybody happy.

FINMERE,

NEAR BUCKINGHAM.

24 ACRES OF

OATS,

6½ Acres of Barley, 4½ of Wheat & 3 of Pulse,
Now standing and Growing on Stone's Farm, Finmere.
To be Sold by Auction, by

MR. JONAS PAXTON

At the Red Lion Inn, Finmere, on Thursday, August 15th, 1861, at 4 o'clock,
By direction of Mr. Stansbridge, who is selling.

CATALOGUE.

<p>Lot</p> <p>1 A piece of mixed Wheat, about 40 acres, in the Long Ground, with Barley of the same size on the 1st October.</p> <p>2 A piece of Black Oats, about 4 acres, in the Long Ground, with Barley of the same size on the 1st October.</p> <p>3 A piece of Barley, in the Long Ground, 14 acres, with Oats, Barley, and Wheat, all the 1st October.</p> <p>4 Piece of Mixed Wheat, about 40 acres, in the Long Ground, with Barley of the same size on the 1st October.</p>	<p>Lot</p> <p>5 A piece of Oats, about 4 acres, in the Long Ground, with Barley, from the 1st October till the 1st November.</p> <p>6 A piece of Black Oats, about 4 acres, in the Long Ground, with Barley, from the 1st October till the 1st November.</p> <p>7 A piece of Barley, about 4 acres, in the Long Ground, with Oats, from the 1st October till the 1st November.</p> <p>8 Piece of Black Oats, about 4 acres, in the Long Ground, with Barley, from the 1st October till the 1st November.</p> <p>9 Piece of Oats, about 4 acres, in the Long Ground, with Barley, from the 1st October till the 1st November.</p>
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Mr. Stansbridge will show the lots at any time previous to the Auction, and Catalogues may be had at
the place of Sale, or of Mr. Stansbridge, Farmer.

Two months Credit will be allowed, subject to the customary conditions of deposit and security, if required.

A. J. PAXTON, Auctioneer, London.

Auction Poster 1861



Delivery Van outside Finmere village store and Post Office
(now Furthering Hobbs) in 1983