

## The Buddle Inn, Niton Undercliff



This striking image of the Buddle Inn at Niton Undercliff is thought to date from around 1910 when the licensee was possibly John Cotton, for members of the same family fulfilled that role over three generations, starting in the 1880s. The Inn had obtained its first license in the 1850s, but its story as a drinking house went back three centuries. The local diarist, Mark Norman, recalled how the Buddle by the 1830s was famous for drinking and carousing among Niton's inhabitants. Smuggling of contraband liquor from the continent was rife on this coast, especially brandy and gin, and beer was brewed in-house. The gin came from the Netherlands and went under the name 'Hollands'. It was higher in strength than modern gin and had a more distinctive flavour. Norman observed that, among working men at the time, intemperance was the rule and there were sometimes drinking sprees that lasted for days. A notorious beverage for special events like weddings or christenings was known as 'egg flip'. It consisted of measures of brandy, eggs and ale that had been stirred up and heated over the fire. At other times, revellers just drank beer and brandy mixed together cold, then known as 'dog's nose'.

The Buddle almost certainly began life as a farm, for part of the original building once contained cow stalls and bacon curing was done in one of the lofts. In May 1932, the *Isle of Wight Mercury* reported on efforts that were being made to refurbish the Inn at that time. A massive inglenook fireplace had been uncovered, supported by a fine oak bressemer. Reputedly, it added immensely to the ancient appearance of the interior of the Inn, then being run by William (Bill) Chandler who had been a patient at the Royal National Hospital while suffering from TB. After surgery to remove a lung, he chose to remain in the Undercliff for his health and continued as licensee until 1961.

Ron Pusey, in one of his many recollections of growing up in Ventnor between the two world wars, would sometimes ride out in a pony trap to the Buddle while he worked as a delivery boy for Dick Burge, the butcher at the bottom of Pier Street. Saturdays were the regular day, for this was when Sunday meat joints were taken out to various houses along the Undercliff. The Buddle was always the last port of call and Dick Burge would hitch the pony to the hedge and deliver the meat, but then linger inside for refreshment. Sometimes Ron had to sit and wait for what seemed like ages. Eventually the butcher would emerge and mount the trap once more and off back home they went. But it was the pony not Dick Burge that was in control, for in between loud 'burps', Dick was intermittently dozing off.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre. You can read more about some of these stories in the two publications: ***Inns and Ales, and Old Men Remember***, both available at the Centre or else from the online shop.



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