

The Bull Hotel is another grade II listed building, dating originally from the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

The following extracts are from an unpublished paper, 'The Bull at Downton' by E A Clough, dated December 1969 (donated to the Museum and Archive by Sally Scott-Newman).

"It may be that the Bull first became established as a licensed inn at about the same time as Sir Thomas Gorges was building Longford Castle between 1574 and 1651. However, the first reference in historical documents that has so far been traced is that all borough properties were numbered, the Bull Inn being burbage number 73.

In 1782 it was conveyed by the Earl of Shaftesbury to a lawyer, who in 1783 conveyed numbers 72-74 to William Lucas of Odstock, farmer. At this time the Bull was occupied by Anne Warne, widow. In 1785, numbers 72-74 passed to Jacob, Second Earl of Radnor, as part of a general sale of Lord Shaftesbury's property in Downton. The Bull was leased by Lord Radnor in 1786 to William Moore. The 1791 Directory of Wiltshire shows Joseph Grace as being at The Bull at that time.

There is then a gap until 1842 when Pigot's Directory shows William Todd as being at The Bull. During this half-century The Bull was a well established coaching house. Even with the introduction of the railway from London to Salisbury The Bull maintained a linking coach service, and a notice in G Harrod's Commercial Directory of Wiltshire reads 'Coach to Salisbury from The Bull every afternoon to meet the up-train to London, returning every day at Noon'. The proprietor at this time was George Bailey. An earlier directory – Slater's National Directory 1852/53 does not mention coaches and gives the licensee as James Jackson. George Bailey is given as the landlord of The Bull from 1865 to 1880. The next reference is in 1895 when Thomas Dixon is given as landlord. He was succeeded by Mrs Mary Dixon in 1899.

In 1907 and 1911 William Holman is landlord and he was succeeded by Mrs A Holman who appears in various directories up to 1927. It was during Mrs Holman's occupation that the first reference appears to fishing in association with the hotel, for in 1923 it was announced that there was one mile of course fishing on the River Avon available. In 1931 F Ling is given as landlord and for the first time a telephone number is given - it was 27. This number changed to 74 in 1935 when Flight Lieutenant L A Parker, late RAF, became proprietor. He remained proprietor for some years: the last entry referring to him is in 1950. Edmund Harris is given as proprietor up to 1959 when The Bull was taken over by Peter and Mary Scott-Newman."

The Bull was next taken over in the early 1980s by David and Andrea Gregory. At that time it was owned by the Courage Brewery.

In this case the bull is not only a male cow, but also a male trout: for many years The Bull Hotel owned its own stretch of fishing rights on the River Avon.

Flight Lieutenant Parker, known as 'The Skipper', was an acknowledged fishing expert. His classic text book, 'This Fishing – or Angling Arts and Artifices', was first published in 1948 by Cleaver Hume. He took over The Bull in March 1932 and established its reputation as a fishing hotel. Anglers from the four corners still turn misty eyed at the mention of the 'Board Room', where they would talk about the days adventures into the early hours – a tradition continued by Messrs Harris and Scott-Newman. The Skipper retired in May 1950 when he moved down the Avon to Bickton Mill. He died on 3 February 1959 at the age of 72.

The Crossroads Post Office and Shop, demolished circa 1970 to allow improvements to the road junction of The Head...