

Hunters Lodge Inn, Axminster

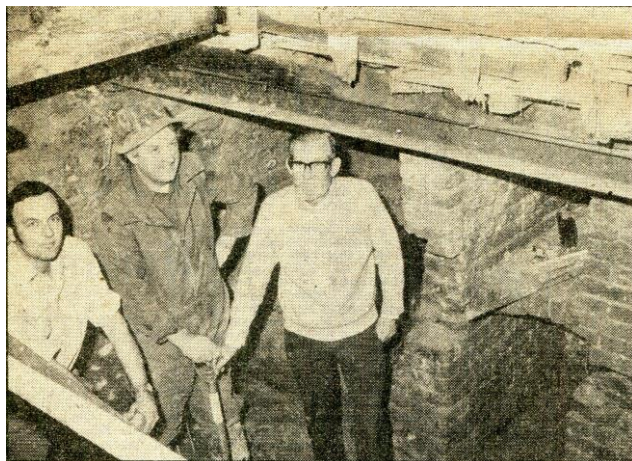
A Refurbishment in 1979

Summary of newspaper articles
by Fred Humphrey, 2019



The original building was believed to date back to the 16th Century, but has been much altered. It was a coaching halt on the London-Dorchester-Exeter route, and similar to many inns at the time was a farm and a smithy as well. It was rumoured to be a haunt for highwaymen, one of whom was hung on a gibbet opposite.

Work to refurbish started around the end of 1978, and the hotel was re-opened on Thursday 24th May 1979. The hosts were Reg & Patricia Dashfield, who entered the licensed trade in 1946, when Reg took over the Bell Inn at Axminster. After 5 years, he moved to the Old White Hart, Colyton, then after 14 years to Bass's Poulett Arms at South Petherton. There followed some years of senior management with Crest Hotels, (Bass's hotel subsidiary) and then he took over the Hunter's Lodge in about 1972.



A former coffee lounge was incorporated into a previous small bar, to make a much larger lounge, designed to cater for the large number of summer tourists passing on their journeys to the West Country. The designer for the refurbishment was Bob Keynton, Bass's interior designer.

The work entailed excavating the old floor, as the foundations were not thought strong enough to support new columns, and the builders, Davis & Hiscock (on a project of around £30,000) discovered an original cellar full of rubble. When this was cleared, it revealed the original bakery ovens. This was not expected, as the original bar had a large inglenook

fireplace where bread was baked. It was thought that the cellar bakery probably served the whole area. It was also thought that the cellars contained prison cells for when magistrates sat at the hotel and 'passed many fatal judgements.