

Benjamin Manning gets (possibly) his first mention in the North Devon Journal

While the 'Save Manning's Pit' team was doing research for the Exhibition at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon in May 2017 they searched the British Newspaper Archives for mentions of Benjamin Manning and came across the cutting below from the North Devon Journal of May 13, 1847 when he was living in Pilton Street. Presumably Maretop was what we now know as Maer Top. The toll gate was thought to be at the head of Shearford Lane (see 'The Turnpike Roads of Pilton 1763-1879' on the archive) which ties in with the description of its position in the cutting.

Here is the cutting and beside it is the text transcribed:

From the North Devon Journal, May 13 1847

TURNPIKE EVASION.—*Benjamin Manning*, of Pilton, butcher, was summoned by the Collector of turnpike tolls at the stop-gate on Maretop, charged with an evasion of toll under the following circumstances:—Mr. Manning had purchased a calf and two or three lambs, which he drove in a cart from Sherwill to Westaway corner, about a quarter of a mile short of the toll bar, where he dropped the cart, rode the horse, and drove the calf and lambs, all which paid the respective tolls, but the cart did not pay, not having passed through the gate. The gatekeeper held this to be a fraud, and summoned defendant accordingly.—Mr. Manning denied all fraudulent intention: he had dropped the cart in the road because he had no place to lodge it on his premises, and because it would be convenient in that place to be driven back again to Sherwill in the evening: he had no idea of evading the toll, in proof of which he said that when he knew from his son that complainant considered the toll to be due, he sent it to him, but he refused to receive it, and persisted in his refusal when it was offered to him two or three times afterwards.—The bench thought the evasion made out; but being willing to believe that defendant acted without fraudulent design, they mitigated the penalty to 6d and expenses, besides the amount of toll evaded (3½d.).

Benjamin Manning, of Pilton, butcher, was summoned by the Collector of turnpike tolls at the stop-gate of Mare-top, charged with an evasion of toll under the following circumstances:- Mr Manning had purchased a calf and two or three lambs, which he drove in a cart from Sherwill to Westaway corner, about a quarter of a mile short of the toll-bar, where he dropped the cart, rode the horse, and drove the calf and lambs all which paid the respective tolls, but the cart did not pay, not having passed through the gate. The gatekeeper held this to be a fraud, and summoned defendant accordingly. - Mr Manning denied all fraudulent intention: he had dropped the cart in the road because he had no place to lodge it on his premises, and because it

would be convenient in that place to be driven back again to Sherwell in the evening: he had no idea of evading the toll, in proof of which he said that when he knew from his son that complainant considered the toll to be due, he sent it to him, but he refused to receive it, and persisted in his refusal when it was offered to him two or three times afterwards. - The bench thought the evasion made out; but being willing to believe that defendant acted without fraudulent design, they mitigated the penalty to 6d and expenses, besides the amount of toll evaded (3½d).

Many thanks to the 'Save Manning's Pit' Team for unearthing this reference to Benjamin Manning.