

# The Names of Roads and Prominent Buildings of Upton from Previous Centuries.

## The Town. (Part 1)

Road names were a matter of common use not of council decisions. Sometimes roads changed their names as an important local feature disappeared or another was created or in reaction to current events. In 1934 there were only six roads which the parish council considered required name plates: Old Street, New Street, Church Street, Court Street, School Lane and High Street. Others existed, but it was unnecessary to name them formally.



The approach to Upton from the West was on the turnpike road which was much praised in 1787 for its excellence by Col. John Byng. He would have entered Upton down **Tunnel Hill**, which much resembled a tunnel with its steep sides and overhanging trees. Had he journeyed a century later Colonel Byng would have entered **Old Street** from Station Road, as the part nearest the Railway Station was known for some years after the coming of the railway in 1864. Old Street wended its way to the Cross where the Market Hall, and possibly the Market Cross, stood. That Market Hall has long gone and the cross has journeyed, via the grounds of Ham Court, to the Old Churchyard where it has a

relatively new life as the War Memorial. It may indeed have returned to very near its original position. **The Memorial Hall** in Old Street started its life in 1832 as a "new" market hall designed to take stall holders off the streets whilst upstairs was the magistrate's court and in the basement were the cells. It did not last long in any of its original uses, it became the Town Hall, used for meetings and entertainment, and was refurbished after the First World War, largely through the initiative and financial help of Major Jewell of The Hill, as a war memorial. Its hall was for general use; a cinema operated there and showed its first 'talkies' in 1931. Upstairs was the base for both the Rural District and Parish Councils. To the Left at the Cross was **New Street** and ahead the **High Street** which led straight to the Bridge, passing the Church and the *King's Head* on the left and the *Star* on the right. **Lower High Street** was often known as Bridge Street or Bridge End. Before the Church, on the left, was **Church Street** leading to the road to Hanley Castle. Along here on the left was the Manor House, the residence of the lords of the manor, and on the right, under the current roundabout, was what was known as Horsefair until the graveyard was extended there in the 1830s. Further on, on the left, was the Pound, where stray animals were gathered and where from the eighteenth century until 1915 there were the warehouses of the Kents' wine, spirit and vinegar business: it is now transformed into the Regal Garage. The Pound had been moved to the far side of the bridge.

Going back into the town from the abutment of the Old Bridge one leaves the Waterside and comes first to **Dunns Lane**. In the 1820s the trade directories refer to this as Queen Street and, in the 1830s, as Grey Street, but it had been Dunns Lane in legal documents since at least the 1760s and probably before. In 1768 Susannah Dunn was transferring land in "a street or lane known as Dunns Lane". There were many of the Dunn family around in the 18th century to whom the name might have referred, but by the 19th century they had gone. The temporary names were probably political statements: in *The Nation in the Parish* Emily Lawson records that Upton was illuminated to celebrate the 1820 acquittal of Queen Caroline, the estranged wife of George IV, of charges of immorality and also that some Upton boatmen took part in the Bristol riots in 1831 in support of the Reform Bill introduced by Earl Grey. It would not be surprising if the Queen and Grey were briefly commemorated in the name of the lane. **Lapstone Alley** on the left in Dunns Lane might owe its name to a cobbler who lived there: the lapstone was the stone on his lap on which a shoemaker beat the leather. The **Malt House** was known as The Tan House until the early twentieth century: this was a more accurate description of what work was done in this commercial as well as residential area of Upton. After Dunns Lane is **London Lane** from which the coaches left.



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