

# EAST DEVON SMUGGLERS' PUBS

**Terry Townsend**

East Devon smugglers of old risked life and liberty to improve the lot of their impoverished families by supplying untaxed goods to eager paying customers. Their area of enterprise encompassed the sweep of Lyme Bay from the River Axe to the River Teign where the expanse of rugged coastline and challenging interior were policed by Preventive Men based in the Custom House on Exeter Quay, open today as a visitor centre.

This superbly illustrated guide follows smugglers' trails revealing contraband landing beaches, secret hiding places and grand homes of aristocrats who helped finance the unlawful activities. Significant churches and churchyards are disclosed where contraband was hidden inside bell towers and table top tombs.

During the smuggling era the pub was the hub of rural communities and many functioned as the nerve centre for clandestine operations. Numerous landlords were directly involved in these nefarious goings-on and all were happy to buy spirits and tobacco at the right price. It was in these dens of iniquity with their low-beamed ceilings, flagstone floors and inglenook fireplaces that plots were hatched, arrangements for transportation agreed and smuggling runs commissioned. When visiting these wonderful old buildings today little imagination is required to sense the desperate days of the men who called themselves 'free traders'.

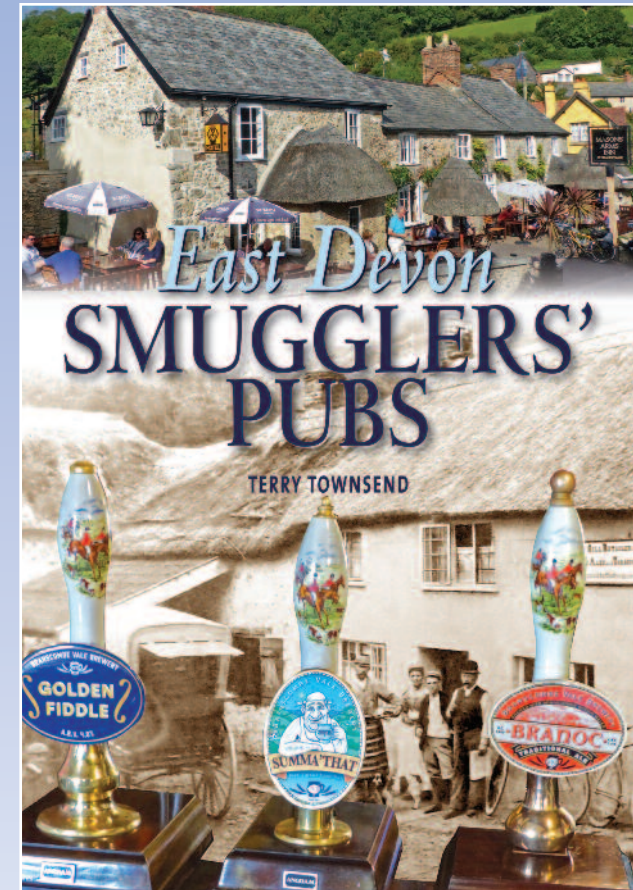
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Terry Townsend**, who lives in the West Country with his wife Carol and their cat Smudge, has written extensively about aspects of English life in the eighteenth century. This is his tenth book of Smugglers' Pubs.

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Halsgrove Publishing, Halsgrove House, Ryelands Business Park, Bagley Road,  
Wellington, Somerset TA21 9PZ Tel: 01823 653777 Fax: 01823 216796  
[www.halsgrove.com](http://www.halsgrove.com) e-mail: [sales@halsgrove.com](mailto:sales@halsgrove.com)

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The picture perfect thatched Harbour Inn is a pebble's throw from the Axe Estuary.



Above: Sheltered beneath the headland of The Ness, Shaldon's red sand beach was a favourite contraband landing site.



Left: Spy holes in the shutters allowed free trading patrons to keep a lookout for Customs Officers and the Press Gang.

Left: Batt's Close Cottage was at one time home to smuggler Jack Rattenbury and at various times also housed other free trading families.

Below: With its expansive sea views the Mount Pleasant Inn still stands above the Dawlish Warren marshlands.



Contraband was hidden in the bottom of Abraham Mutter's carts beneath legitimate loads of turf and timber.



Example of a double-page spread.

