

(continued from previous page)

fashioned much of the magnificent wrought-iron work at Hampton Court, is believed to have made some of the iron signs.

Wide and varied are the signs displayed on our old inns, but invariably they have a purpose. Maybe they are named after some epic English victory as, for instance, *The Saracen's Head*, *The Spaniard*, *Admiral Benbow*, *Trafalgar Arms*, *The Nelson Inn* or *The Duke of Wellington*. Perhaps they signify a local industry as in *The Fleece*, *The Saddlers' Arms*, *The Cheshire Cheese*, or *The Hammer Pond*. There may be a sporting flavour as in *The Fox and Hounds* or *The Huntsman*, and, of course, you will find many bearing names connected with coaching days—*Coach and Horses*, *The Groom*, *Nag's Head*, *Bridle and Bit*, and so on.

It is no exaggeration to say that nearly every old inn in England has an interesting history. Many have associations with our great men and women of the past. Yes, women, too! Wasn't Queen Elizabeth one of the greatest inn-lovers of all time? Dotted about our countryside are many inns where she is reputed to have stayed the night, and at least one of them—*The Elizabeth of England* in Worcestershire—is named after her.

There is *The Swan* at Lichfield which Dr. Johnson used to frequent; *The Sir John Falstaff* in Kent, immortalised by Shakespeare in *Henry IV.*; *The Angel* at Bury St. Edmunds, rendezvous for Dickens's Mr. Pickwick; *The Lion* at Shrewsbury where Dickens himself stayed. There is *The Leg of Mutton* at Brecon, on the Welsh border, where Sarah Siddons was born and where Owen Nares died last year, and *The Jolly Farmer* at Farnham, birthplace of Cobbett.

Pepys, Ben Jonson, Sir Walter Raleigh, Chaucer, Jane Austen, have all been closely associated with our inns, some of which are still standing. And in more recent times Daphne Du Maurier chose *The Jamaica Inn* in the heart of Bodmin Moor as the scene for one of her novels.

Where Kings Scratched Their Signatures

In Portsmouth is the four-hundred-year-old *Star and Garter* where Nelson, Admiral Keppel, Sir John Franklin, Wellington and kings from George II. down to George V. used to wine and dine. There is a window in this inn on which many famous men and women have scratched their signatures.

Many of our old inns have unhappily been destroyed during the air raids of this war. Perhaps one of the saddest losses is *The Old George* at Portsmouth where Nelson frequently stayed with Lady Hamilton and where he spent his last night before Trafalgar. His last act was to address the crowds in the streets from the first-floor bay window of the building. Then he made his way down the back stairs and through the crowds on Southsea Common, who fell on their knees in prayer before him, bidding him God-speed as he set off to win one of Britain's greatest victories.



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