

# FAMOUS INNS OF THE WEST



*The Star Inn  
at  
Pucklechurch*

## Built on the Site of a Palace

Hostelry Overlooking  
Great Battlefield

By P. E. BARNES

**T**HE Star Inn, Pucklechurch, is famous by reason of the site on which it stands, rather than because of any particular traditions associated with the old hostel itself.

It faces the road from Hinton to Sodbury, and is a plain, square building, with two gables of different sizes, suggesting that there were originally two houses here, the old tavern on the side nearest Pucklechurch, and a cottage on the other.

By the side of the inn are a gate and a stile leading to a large field, and it is the history attaching to this field that has made the name of the Star Inn known far beyond the confines of Gloucestershire.

Centuries ago a momentous event took place here—an event which had a marked effect on the Saxon annals of this country.

### An Outlaw's Crime

**I**N the tenth century a royal palace of King Edmund, grandson of Alfred the Great, stood here. Perhaps hunting box would be a more strictly accurate description than palace.

At any rate, it was a royal residence of those times, and was doubtless raised at this site because what is now known as Pucklechurch was then at the edge of an immense royal hunting forest.

Edmund, despite his youth, was a ruler of culture and outstanding ability. Like most of the Saxon kings, however, he spent much of his time hunting and was frequently in residence at Pucklechurch.

On St. Augustine's Day, May 26, in the year 946, a full century or more before the Norman Conquest, a great feast was held at the Palace, and during the course of it, while seated at the festive board at the head of his guests, Edmund was murdered by an outlaw, Liulph, whom he had banished early in his reign.

### Famous Battle Ground

**C**ONSTERNATION spread throughout the kingdom at the news. The body was borne with pomp to the Abbey of Glastonbury and buried there.

Two Saxon kings lived at Pucklechurch after that tragic event, but with the coming of the Normans the palace fell into disuse, and in the twelfth century an ecclesiastical building took its place.

There are still some ancient stones in the field, half-buried in the turf, near a spreading walnut tree, which are pointed out to visitors as remnants of the royal palace. As a matter of fact, not a single vestige of the building remains, and these stones are really fragments of the ecclesiastical building which supplanted it.

Near here, too, are the remains of an ancient well, beside the wall of a piggery (what ironies are wrought by time!), and this well is also a surviving relic of the same building.

A little to the north, in the yard of a farm, called St. Aldam's Ash, is one of Gloucestershire's ancient holy wells, St. Aldhelm's Well.

Straight across the country, eastward, are Dyrham and Hinton hills, where one of the greatest battles in the history of these isles was fought, and the foundations of the Saxon kingdom laid.

### Sixteenth Century House

**T**HE Star Inn is probably a sixteenth century building, but there is some doubt as to whether it was originally built as an inn at all.

Since George's Brewery Company acquired the property a few years ago, it has been partly rebuilt and wholly repaired, but the thick, ancient walls remain, and the gabled front is much as it was in the old hostel's earliest years.

In the kitchen is still an old well, which was once the inn's sole water supply. There were once, too, hidden cupboards and secret nooks about the house, but modern accommodation has obliterated these, just as time has obliterated all trace of that subterranean passage which, a Pucklechurch tradition says, once ran from the site of the royal palace right to Syston Court, a mile and a half distant.