

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CHICHESTER

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ABSTRACT

HISTORY

Doctor of Philosophy

**THE INNS AND TAVERNS OF WESTERN SUSSEX, 1550-1700:
A REGIONAL STUDY OF THEIR ARCHITECTURAL
AND SOCIAL HISTORY**

by Janet Pennington (2003)

This thesis has been completed as a requirement
for a higher degree of the University of Southampton

This is a regional study, providing a detailed examination of the inns and taverns situated in the western part of the county of Sussex in the south-east of England. At the beginning of the period the English inn and tavern was entering an era of expansion and proliferation, though numbers grew only slowly in the region; by its end communications had worsened and there had been no great improvement to standards of paid hospitality. There were c.40 inns in 1550, increasing to c.120 by 1700; two-thirds were urban, some of which may have been taverns, either individually or more usually functioning as inns that sold wine. Problems of definition are examined in some detail.

The period sees some inns growing in architectural as well as social terms, while others decline, disappearing from the written and physical record. Reasons for their rise and fall are discussed. Maps, using new material, provide an understanding of the difficult terrain faced by travellers using Sussex inns, and show how important an intimate knowledge of regional geology is to the inn historian. Roads and communications are examined and discussed. A combination of architectural evidence from standing inn buildings as well as documentary and illustrative sources acts as a powerful research tool, revealing the typology and function of inns and taverns across the region. For the first time the function of rural inns is examined. Detailed tabling of the contents of 75 innkeeping probate inventories, associated wills and a few accounts supplements the interpretation of architectural features, as well as enhancing the understanding of early modern paid hospitality and innkeeping lifestyles. Documentary evidence from the archives of the region's many landed estates has been put to good use in the study, and manipulation of documentary sources entered on a computer database further aids the analysis.

The subject is treated chronologically within themed topics. Three case studies examine and enlarge on the problems of categorising inns and taverns, while revealing their varied functions as well as the lifestyles of their keepers. Close analysis and interpretation of the inn signs, linked with architectural evidence, has led to the discovery of their importance in indicating hierarchy and typology to the traveller, as well as patronage and land ownership to the local inhabitants.

For the first time a regional study of inn buildings and their function has been set against a firm legislative background. This enlarges present understanding of the subject and acts as a stimulus for further research. The thesis, which includes the first gazetteer for inns and taverns in western Sussex in the early modern period, makes a new contribution to the architectural and social history of the county. At the same time it acts as a basis for work in other regions, while adding to the historiography of the English inn.