

Stratford-on-Avon

Wherein a tour's the thing 'twill catch the eye

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Stratford-on-Avon, England, was a sleepy beam-and-plaster town 25 years ago. Today, it continues to share its history with those who perchance dream on the River Avon's shores.

If you have traveled to England, you probably have seen it. Residents there say that North Americans take the short and the long culture tour. The short one goes to London and Stratford, the long one to London, Stratford and Edinburgh.

It is a pretty town, sleepy and medieval-looking in the evening when the tourist mobs have dwindled. And it retains that quaintness in the winter, when some travelers stay at home. It's the kind of town you should know how to travel in.

Adequate accommodations can be found in nearby towns such as Henley-on-Avon or Evesham, where fewer tourists are visible, or in the town of Stratford.

The center of activity is near the bridge over the River Avon, downstream from the red brick Shakespeare Theater. On one side is a country inn called the Swans Nest, and Alveston Manor, a Trust House Hotel. On the opposite side is the relatively new Stratford-on-Avon Hilton.

The place to stay, if reservations can be secured, is at the Shakespeare Hotel on Chapel Street, a block north of the river. It is managed by Hans and Vera Schlad.

The hotel is centuries old and looks it. But if you like your history combined with good plumbing, you will approve of the renovations and remodeling. Rooms have been combined and now include bathrooms and bathtubs. The parking is good. The walls of the dining room and bar are beam and plaster, sporting a shiny new look that makes you think you are in the 16th Century when it was built.

It is the sense of being in a medieval town, with streets set out in the 14th Century by the Bishop of Worcester, that gives this town its special flavor. That and the local-boy-who-made-good, William Shakespeare.

The best way to tour the Shakespearean aspects of Stratford is to look at it through a little social history, alone or with tour guides like Cornishman Roger Thompson of Guides Friday.

Thompson will take you on your own or on a carnival-looking bus. His colorful version of English history is included in the price. A part of it follows:

"IT ALL started with the Arden family, who fought on the wrong side during the civil war. The head of the family was executed and the youngest son bought a farm near Stratford—a main farmhouse and a group of tenant farmers.

"The poor bloke had eight daughters and no sons. He married off all the girls except one, so he willed his farm to the unwed daughter to make her more marriageable.

"One of his tenant farmers was Richard Shakespeare, and it was his son, John Shakespeare, who married the lonesome Mary Arden."

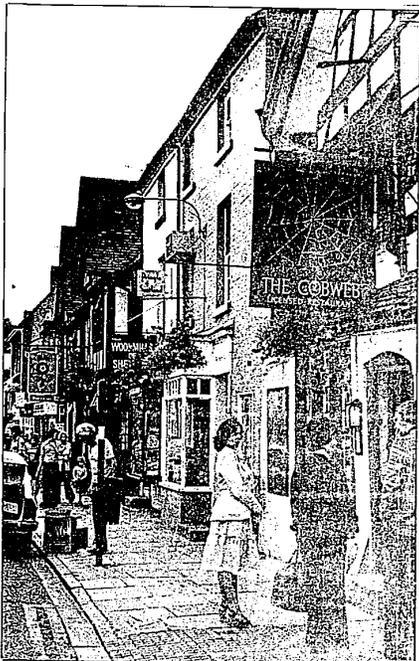
"This is timed to get you to Mary Arden's house, which is historic building number one."

"Now then, John held every political office from chamberlain to mayor in Stratford. He pulled himself up socially by marrying this Arden girl, but he expected his oldest son William to marry into money and make him richer.

"Willy was engaged twice, and married Anne Hathaway, which means he went down the social scale instead of up." At this point, you see the thatched rooftops of Anne Hathaway's house.

All of this leads up to Shakespeare's birthplace on Meer Street.

It was at the Meer Street address that William and Anne and their three children lived with William's parents and his five brothers and sisters. Some



No better way to toast the Bard of Avon than with a pint of your favorite at one of the many dining establishments in Stratford-on-Avon.

people say this is the reason for his departure to London to become a poet.

THE INGREDIENTS which create an interest in the theater were there in Stratford in the time of Elizabeth I, and they are there now. The records show that the Guild Church ran a first class school, producing pupils who could speak colloquial Latin and Greek.

Nearly great houses, which also should be on your itinerary, entertained the queen with strolling actors who would surely have visited the main market town of the area, which was Stratford-on-Avon.

Warwick Castle is nine miles away, its owners struggling to survive by living in a corner of the castle and opening the rest to tourists. The old duke recently scandalized the English when he offered to sell his historic objects to the highest bidders, who are Americans.

Fourteen miles away is Sir Walter Scott's Kenilworth Castle, where Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, entertained Good Queen Bess at an 11-day pageant that was the bing of Shakespeare's century. As a prominent local politician, Shakespeare's parents would probably have taken him there to see the players.

However it happened, young Will went to London to make his fortune. He came back rich, moved into New Place, rented 112 acres of land from the Guild church and started work on his own coat-of-arms, according to guide Thompson.

"He's buried in the churchyard, not because he was a great writer but because he was prosperous," Thompson says. "The family died out because one of his sons died, one daughter had three children who died, and his daughter, Susannah, had a daughter who chawed nutmeg, which makes you sterile."

It matters not whether this history is accurate; it gives you the flavor of the town in which William Shakespeare lived and points you to the buildings of interest.

The fifth building is Halls Croft, where Shakespeare's daughter, Susannah, and her husband, John Hall, lived. They moved from there to New Place after Shakespeare died because he left his estate to Hall on condition that Anne Hathaway have "the second best bed."

There are other things in Stratford. Coffee with the locals upstairs in the Cobweb on Sheep Street. Dinner with the young people at the Opposition, or the Rose and Crown nearby. Tour boats or canal boats on the river. And, of course, the theater, which must not be missed.

If you become so reverent towards old and famous writers and their words, some local persons may remind you that in Shakespeare's day there was a saying that went something like this:

"The cause of plague is sin and the cause of sin is players. Therefore the players cause the plague."

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



Let the buyer beware

Pan Am Flight 107, London to Detroit—You pay for everything in this world, including leg room on an airplane.

As I approached my seat, I felt smug because I had asked for an exit seat and I could see it ahead. It was beside the main emergency door and accorded me six feet of leg room instead of the usual 18 inches.

What I hadn't counted on was the fact that it was beside a bank of four toilets. Toilets are often used, and the crowd usually lines the aisle during long, overseas flights.

CHOOSING THE right seat on a plane is important. Smoking or non-smoking sections are offered, but unless you are specific, a randomly selected seat awaits you.

Airlines allow a little more space in front of a seat located beside an exit window or an exit door, in case of emergency. Don't take the seat that backs on an exit window, because it often won't recline.

Find out in advance what kind of aircraft you'll be traveling in, or look at the seating chart at check-in. If it has two seats beside the window, grab one. Most have three; the larger planes have rows of five or more seats in the center.

Avoid that center row of seats because people will walk over you and you will be too far from a window. Given a choice between window, middle and aisle seats, consider this—you have a view and can lean your head against the wall in the window seat; you can stretch your feet out from the aisle seat; and you can't do much of anything but pull your arms in from the middle seat.

THE STANDBY CONNECTION—A week ago, I flew standby from Detroit to London, saving two-thirds of the full fare. I knew I risked having to pay full fare on my return.

By the time I was ready to come home, I ran smack into a bank holiday weekend, a French comptroller's slowdown and hundreds of travelers eager to get home before school started.

When I called the airline the night before my flight to inquire about standby chances, the reply was: "There are 300 people waiting in the standby line already and it doesn't open until 6 a.m. tomorrow."

It still was worth the risk. I had not been able to save by advance booking, or by staying in England more than two weeks, but standby one-way still saved me \$200. You win a few, you . . .

TRAVEL AGENTS were on the inaugural flights of North Central Airlines recently to Atlanta.

North Central introduced a new Metro that includes four flights from Detroit, leaving Metro at 8:15 a.m., 12:15, 2:20 and 5 p.m., with arrival times about one hour and 40 minutes after takeoff.

The agents were Evelyn and Lou Grant of Royal International Travel, Birmingham; Marion Moller of Paul Henry Travel, Lathrup Village; Sheila Axler of Book-Ouzens Tours of Southfield; Lee Clarke of the Travel Shop, Troy. They were part of a group of 70 Michigan travel agents flown to Atlanta for the premiere Atlanta connection.

Eastern Airlines also announced a new service of non-stop flights from Detroit to Atlanta, which started Sept. 6.

Clem Childs of Southfield, manager of passenger sales for Eastern, flew with an apple tree to be planted in an Atlanta park as a gift from the Detroit area.

Non-stop Eastern flights will leave daily at 8 and 10:55 a.m. and at 1:19 and 5:31 p.m. for Atlanta, with all flights going on to Florida.

TRAVELERS FROM Oakland and Wayne counties are invited to a travel program at 6 p.m. Thursday at Bassett Travel Service of Southfield, 2377 Greenfield, Suite 170. Information on fall and winter programs will be given.

IF YOU favor Civil War sites when you travel, consider a series of classes offered by Jerry Maxwell at Farmington High School, starting Sept. 25. Maxwell will discuss his travels related to the Civil War and the life and death of Abraham Lincoln.

PHYLLIS and FRANK Young of Franklin discovered the answers to several interesting questions when they visited Anne Hathaway's cottage in Stratford-on-Avon this summer. The Youngs were touring England with their daughter, Laurie.

"Stratford is a quaint and beautiful town, but the part I liked best was the thatched cottage where Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway, once lived," Mrs. Young said.

"Those thatched roofs weigh 2½ tons and must be replaced every 25 years. Our guide told us that four-poster beds were designed to protect sleepers from the spiders and bits of thatch that fell from thatched roofs."

Mrs. Young also discovered that the English had some bright ideas about housekeeping in medieval times. The dining room table in Anne Hathaway's cottage is shiny and new-looking on one side, for company, but flips over to show a scented side for everyday use.

"It was all fascinating, even the morbid exhibit of mantraps used to catch poachers on the king's land," Mrs. Young said.

BED AND BREAKFAST at \$7 to \$13 a person, that's the travel style the Youngs recommend for people who really want to experience England.

"We had no reservations. Every town had an information center for tourists looking for accommodations, but we just looked around the town until we found something we liked," Mrs. Young said.

"The bathroom is usually down the hall, but we didn't mind that. The English breakfast was enormous—eggs, bacon, toast, marmalade, coffee, everything included in the price of the room."

"Even in London, where prices are atrocious for tourists, our daughter reserved bed and breakfast for us at six pounds and 50 pence a person."

Six pounds-50 is about \$13. Ask your travel agent about bed and breakfast places, and about staying with members of famous families such as the grandson of Charles Dickens.

Art and nature

The nature center of Oakwoods Metropark near Flat Rock will be the setting for an art show sponsored by the Cranbrook Institute of Science Sunday, Sept. 24.

Displays will include works from the 1978 Michigan Wildlife Art Competition. Michigan high school artists completed their work in charcoal, acrylic, watercolor and other media.

Center hours are 1-5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.

Vehicle entry permits are required—annual \$5 regular, \$1 senior citizen, or \$1 daily.

For more information, call 782-1255.

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