

History of The Lamplighters Pub

The Lamplighters by the riverside was originally called 'Lamplighters Hall', and as far as is known is the only Inn in the country to bear this uncommon name. First



mention of the Lamplighters comes in the Bristol Journal of 17th December 1768 when



offered to let as 'The Public House at Passage Leaze opposite Pill, commonly called 'Lamplighters Hall'. The next mention was in 1772 when the property was up for sale, and described as 'sometime estate of Joseph Swetnam, Tinman of Small Street, Bristol, deceased'. It is thought that Joseph Swetnam was probably the son of James Swetnam a Tinman who traded at the Three Ship Lanterns and was the first tradesman to use an engraved bill head on his

invoices. Joseph Swetnam must have been a prosperous businessman, because at one period he was contracted to light several of the Bristol Parishes by means of oil-lamps, and out of the profits he built himself a splendid house in the country 'in full view of the picturesque beauties of Pill' which he appropriately named 'Lamplighters Hall'.

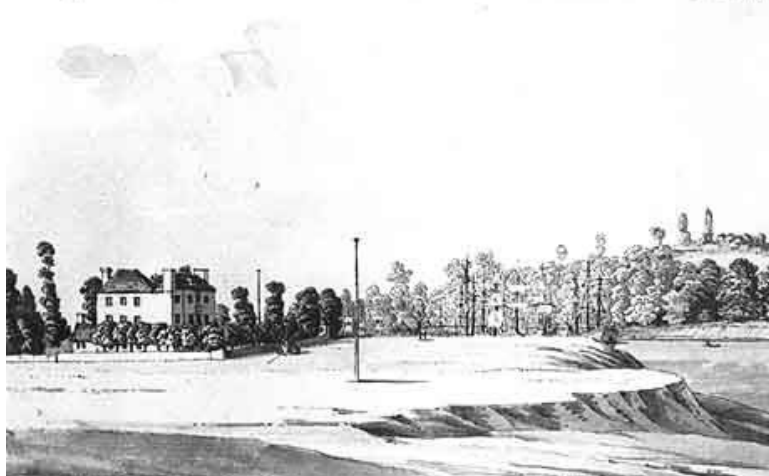
Isaac Taylor marked 'Lamplighters Hall' on the map he surveyed in 1777

Isaac Taylor marked Lamplighters Hall on the map he surveyed in 1777, and subsequently the Inn became a favourite resort of pleasure parties. On 12 June 1794 the Bristol Gazette reports that the annual dinner of the Bristol Sailing Society (founded 1785) was held at Lamplighters Hall and made a loyal fete to commemorate

the natal day of one of the best of Monarchs (namely 4th June 1794) which was Georges III's 56th birthday.

It was here William III landed, upon his return from Ireland, after battle of the Boyne before spending a night at nearby Kings Weston House. In March 1793 American naval captain John Shaw went to dine at Lamplighters Hall in the company of the notorious pirate Captain Henry Morgan. He noted: 'I cannot say I was highly entertained by the conversation, it being in a style I much dislike.' One hundred and fifty years later, the Welsh seaman, terror of the Spanish Main, was to inspire the name of one of the world's leading brands of rum.

This picture was vulgarly called Lamplighters Hall on the Avon near the Roberts, Gloucester, with the flagstaff where the King's Ship was landed, and the name given to Bristol by the river. Aug 15th 1788



The Lamplighters Hall came in for mention several times in connection with the history of the Society of Merchant Ventures of Bristol. From time to time the Standing Committee of that society went down to Lamplighters Hall at Shirehampton to examine the ships pilots, and to make its authority felt. On one

occasion the pilots had to be rebuked for being drunk and fighting in front of the Committee. When the committee examined the pilots here in the year 1800 it was found that some were deaf, one had rheumatism, one gout, one intoxicated and another suffered from nervous disorder. On that occasion it is not surprising that steps were taken to appoint suitable men in their places.

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By the year 1810 By the year 1810 the Lamplighters hall was known as 'Lamplighters Hotel' and advertised as being in especial favour – the landlord stating that 'his house was so much frequented on Sundays that he was under the necessity of engaging additional waiters from Bath. Ordinary every Sunday two shillings per head etc.' Further more, a Bristol Guide Book of 1824 suggested a days excursion as 'Voyage down the Avon to Kingroad, either in light boat with sails, or on the deck of one outward-bound steam-vessel as far as the Rivers mouth (i.e. Avonmouth). Opportunities to return the same day occur frequently with flowing afternoon tide, or by land-conveyance from Lamplighters Hotel'.

In more recent times the pub has been owned by numerous breweries including Georges & Co and Watney Mann who during the 1970's carried out a major

renovation removing all the original internal ground and 1st floors and walls and replacing them with the current layout inspired by ‘The House The Jack Built’ public house on St Johns Lane, Bedminster, now The Engineers Arms. The Lamplighters has, for more than 250 years, played a significant part in the history of the Parish and must have been well known to seamen from all over the world who visited this hostelry during long periods of anchorage in Hungroad.

