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SEAL'S LINK WITH BYGONE CENTURIES

ANTIQUE HOUSE WITH HISTORIC MEMORIES

ABODE OF MONKS:

VISITED BY ROYALTY

IN AN ancient house whose walls have echoed to the footsteps of monks, whose oak beams have seen the visits of royalty, lies one of Seal's most precious links with the past, one of its few remaining remnants of bygone centuries.

In it flourishes a century old business, the antique shop owned by two brothers, Mr. A. D. Barham and Mr. W. Barham, who live in this house of memories, and carry on the concern started by their grandfather in 1826.

The earliest records of this old house which I have been able to find (writes a "Sevenoaks News" reporter) date back to the seventeenth century, but there can be no doubt that it is certainly much more ancient than that.

When repairs were being carried out some years ago, a valuable clue to the years of history which it has seen was found.

A stone was discovered with the words "Restored in 1633" engraved upon it.

At one time the house was a monastery building belonging to the monks of Termondsey, and was still in existence at

the time of the Reformation, when Henry VIII was on the throne.

That the house is one of the oldest in the district there can be no doubt. There are many old oak beams to charm the heart of the lover of antiques, though he need not venture far inside the doors before he realises that he is surrounded by evidence of antiquity.

It is one of what was once a number of beautiful and historic old houses standing in Seal. Many are gone, but this still remains.

A curious fact about the construction of the house is that it is built largely of old church timbers. There are a number of points in which it coincides remarkably with the woodwork of the beautiful old village church, in the shadow of whose tower it is situated.

The King post in one bedroom, bears an unusual similarity to one in Seal Church.

An even more remarkable feature is a rood beam which I was shown. It was evidently once a part of a church—and Seal village church has no rood beam. Possibly this was removed at some time.

The beam runs through the house from front to back, and is 24 feet long. It is not the longest beam in the house—a 25 feet oak beam runs through the bedrooms.

But it is not only in this fine old house itself, and in its business, that one finds romance and history. In the contents as well they are found.

A QUEEN'S THRONE

In the front of the shop stands a gilded chair, its tapestry faded. This was once the throne of Queen Caroline of Brunswick, Queen of George IV.

I saw many charming antiques here—an old door stop in the form of a stove, an exact replica of that in Queen Victoria's room in Kensington Palace. Many of the antiques in the showroom at Knole House have come from this shop.

A proud day in its history occurred as recently as July this year, when Queen Marie of Roumania paid a visit and made purchases. Other famous visitors have included Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, and the Duke of Wellington (son of the famous Iron Duke).

And so this house has seen the changing face of the countryside around, and now stands on the brink of the twentieth century as cars dash by its windows. But once over the threshold, there still remains the dignity and character of olden days.