

An inn with a name to twist the tongue

THE inn with a perfect setting in rural surroundings is the Cat i' th' Well, nestling in the pretty Luddenden Dean valley. And on the hillside above is the White Rock, a local landmark shrouded in mystery — given a fresh coat of white paint every year by, some say, the landlord of the inn.

Now a popular spot with motorists and country-lovers,

ABOVE: This is an inn with a perfect setting in rural surroundings —but its name is something of a tongue-twister to strangers.

History doesn't reveal just how long the Cat i' th' Well has been a pub, but it was certainly being used for this purpose in 1783.

BELOW: Mr. Albert Clarkson and his wife, Violet, who run the ancient Cat i' th' Well.

the inn is also a mecca for folk with antiquarian interests, for the interior is brimming with curios from the past.

And one of the most attractive is the open firegrate

which came from Castle Carr, the mansion which once stood on the edge of wild moorland at the head of the Luddenden Valley.

How long the Cat i' th' Well has been an inn history does

not reveal, but it was certainly a "pub" way back in 1783, for there is a record of a property sale being held there on November 6 of that year.

Probably the longest-serving licensee at the inn was Joshua Shackleton. He took over in 1899 and was pulling pints right up to his death in 1930. And then his widow, Lydia Shackleton, took over. She handed over command on October 4, 1939 — 40 years to the month since her husband served his first pint of ale to a thirsty customer.

One theory about the inn's quaint name is that it is a corruption of some older name associated with St. Catherine's Well, St. Catherine being the patron saint of wells and springs. There is a Catherine House further up the valley and once there was an inn called Cat i' th' Window near Halifax Parish Church.

In 1953 during renovations, the secrets of beams spanning the ceiling of first-floor rooms were discovered.

The beams were found to be hollow and revealed a link with the Loyal Traveller's Rest Lodge, a friendly society, somewhere in the distant past.

First clues to the mystery were faded gilt texts inscribed on the beams. One example was "I give you good doctrine, forsake not my law." From behind the woodwork were extracted painted banners which could be lowered to the floor. They too bore inscriptions.

Mr. Albert Clarkson is now the tenant and he is helped by his wife, Violet.

