1920; see Gérard Jean-Aubry, *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1927) vol. II, p. 252.

Where Conrad Held Court*

FRED ARNOLD

Myself when young did eagerly frequent the Fleur-de-Lys in Canterbury, so perhaps I may suggest yet another reason why this attractive old inn should be saved.

I have not seen mentioned the fact that the Fleur-de-Lys was Joseph Conrad's favourite and, I believe, only port of call in Canterbury while he lived nearby.

In his declining years, both before and after his visit to the United States in 1923, each evening when it pleased him, at about nine o'clock, Conrad would enter the Fleur-de-Lys. Turning in right-handed round the partition which separated the tiny saloon bar from the manager's office, he would take up the seat tacitly reserved for him to the right of the window.

There he would chat for an hour in his forceful and staccato fashion with certain acquaintances or with the innkeeper of those days, Marcelle Sheppard, taking aboard the while a healthy master mariner's ration of his favourite gin. He almost invariably wore his old but well-brushed bowler hat but, if memory serves, very occasionally affected a rough homespun homburg with small blue 'flash' feather.

Canterbury should see that the Fleur-de-Lys is saved for its historic associations. Conrad is now one of them. And at least part of the old hotel's architecture is fourteenth-century, though little of that date is left.

Could not a small plaque be placed over the seat where this great and very human old sea-dog sat and voiced his robust opinions?

May I add that the force of character emanating from Conrad himself, and the never-failing courtesy and kindness of his latterly much-crippled but always most charming wife, are two of my outstanding and treasured memories.

* Letter to the Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 June 1958, p. 6.