

A touch of Greece in Florida

By DIANE BEDINGHAM
TARPON SPRINGS, Fla.

— In 1876 a young girl named Mary Ormond travelled from South Carolina to the west coast of Florida and settled in a tiny cabin with her father.

With no other habitation in sight Mary would explore her new home alone, occasionally gazing in wonder as giant Tarpon leapt from the crystal blue waters of the nearby bayou spraying a fan of water behind them.

According to local history, Mary named the tiny settlement which grew up around her cabin, Tarpon Springs, in memory of the spectacle.

In the years between then and now many changes, developments and cultures were introduced to the Tarpon Springs area, which today is renowned for its unique atmosphere and old world charm.

The greatest influence on the small community came about as a result of the natural environment of the area.

For beneath the warm Gulf waters which lap at the Tarpon Springs' coastline lay a treasure, as yet undiscovered or appreciated for its worth — a treasure of sponges.

For those unfamiliar with the species, sponges are tiny sea creatures which cling to rock or coral surfaces. They are cloaked in a black, rubbery skin and draw food and oxygen from passing currents of water. Once dried with the skins removed the absorbent remains have a variety of commercial uses.

Until an early settler sent out the first "hooker" boat in 1890, the creatures lay undisturbed. After his successful and lucrative



Sponges found in the surrounding Gulf waters helped to make Tarpon Springs, Florida a unique and prosperous resort with a mediterranean air. The influence of the original Greek settlers can still be seen on the community's bustling sponge docks.

foray into the deep, other men joined the venture and the famous Tarpon Springs sponge industry was launched.

Because the harvesting of sponges required experienced divers dressed in rubberized suits with bronze helmets and

shoulder pieces to walk along the ocean floor and pluck the unlikely treasures from their hiding places, the industry looked

to Greece for help.

Men and women from tiny Mediterranean villages, where sponge-diving was a way of life,

were coaxed to Tarpon Springs and with their influx the local industry rose in value to the \$3 million mark.

THE TIMES

England

Mystery shrouds old abbey

GLASTONBURY England — Ruins are mysterious teasers. What remains encourages speculation about what is no longer there, inviting the onlooker's imagination to fill in the masonry gaps.

Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset is one of the great ruins of Britain, just as it must have been its greatest abbey before the Dissolution of 1539.

The huge, and highly decorative remains, stand on 40 acres of manicured grounds in the small town of Glastonbury about eight miles from Wells.

Open to the sky (the upper portions of the walls are themselves small lawns), the cut stones are remarkably well preserved and the visitor can clearly see just how magnificent the building must have been when the abbot and his monks worshipped and worked in Glastonbury.

No historian is quite sure when an abbey was first built on the site, although an early chronicler left records about the destruction of the original building in 1184. This same historian also concluded that St. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, worked there in the second quarter of the fifth century.

In 1191 the bodies of King Arthur and his queen were said to have been found on the south side of the Lady Chapel, and in the presence of King Edward I and Queen Eleanor were removed to a black marble

tomb in 1278. Unfortunately the tomb didn't survive the destruction of the Dissolution, so only the original grave site is marked.

Glastonbury is very much a walk-around ruin, and although markers explain what does or does not stand in certain parts of the building, it's best to buy a guide book. There's so much of it that we almost missed the abbot's kitchen that stands intact. The soot of centuries of roasting still clings to the huge open chimney.

The Abbot of Glastonbury wielded so much power that much of the small town holds memories of the period.

In the late Middle Ages, his law courts were held in a house on the High Street. Now an elaborate stone front built in 1500 has replaced a half-timbered facade. Further along the same street, the main approach to the abbey buildings used by pilgrims, houses a small museum about the history of the small town. The abbey barn, built in the 14th century and used to store grain due to the abbey, is being turned into a Rural Life Museum for Somerset.

And if you really want to continue the historic theme, you can check into the George Inn, built in the late 15th century by Abbot John Selwood to house the wealthier pilgrims.

Wales

A history lesson at Hay-on-Wye

By JAY MYERS

HAY-ON-WYE, Wales — One hundred and fifty miles northwest of London on the Welsh border is the medieval town of Hay-on-Wye, home of the world's largest second-hand bookstore, the renowned Baskerville house (now Clyro Court) made famous in 1902 by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story, Hound of the Baskervilles, and some of the most exotic scenery in the British Isles where legends of ghosts and witches abound in and among the region's many ruins.

Here, the Golden Valley changes to the Black Mountains and Radnorshire with its mystical moors and small sheep farms. The town itself dates back to Roman times and afterwards the Norman Conquest. Walter de Breose, one of the Knights of King William I, built a castle which remains to this day as the centre of the town.

The history of the Hay up to the 16th century is that of its castles. Remains of two castles are among the town's many attractions. The earlier and small fortification was built on an artificial mound near St. Mary's Church while the second castle was built on the hill in the town's centre. Surrounding houses were built mainly in the 18th century from the beautiful grey stones of local quarries, although some medieval half-timbered buildings still remain.

Today the Hay has been restored to its former prosperity and is now the second-hand book centre of the world, offering a larger selection than London, Tokyo, Paris or New York. Every year, thousands of visitors from around the world come to browse through "the Town of Books."

The four major book shops of Richard Booth contain more than 1.25 million books on 8½ miles of shelving and the Hay is the only town in the world whose major industry is second-hand books. There are also six independent booksellers and about the same number of book proprietors who deal directly from their houses in the surrounding area. The shops are open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

By car the journey from London takes approximately three hours along the M4 motorway. Junction 15 at Swindon should be taken and signs followed to Cirencester, Gloucester, and Hereford to Hay-on-Wye.

Within several miles of the town are many fine hotels and bed and breakfast houses which can cater to almost everyone's needs. Close to the town's centre is the inexpensive Baskerville Arms Hotel where you can board for approximately \$12 per night. Nearby, across the Wye River is Clyro Court, an old mansion once belonging to the Baskerville family and now being converted into a luxury hotel by its proprietor Colin Stone.