Designators in Inn-Sign Names in Medieval and Renaissance England

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This is based on a collection of citations of over 4000 sign names in medieval, Renaissance, and early modern England; they date from the 13th century to 1650. Some of these names are taverns, others are named houses of various sorts: some single-family dwellings, others boarding houses. However, all have heraldic sign-style names or religious/story based sign names. There are many other types of house-names as well, often derived from the name of the owner or a specific feature (Leadenporch, for example). However, these are not treated here. Analysis of the sign name is a work in progress.

The earliest houses with names are attested around 1300; Lillywhite has a few citations before 1300, but other sources give the first citations shortly after 1300. Bynames that appear to be derived from sign names date to the mid-13th century, like *Rob' de la belle* 1222 or *Emma Attegreyhon* 1240.

The most common pattern is no designator at all. However, a variety of words and structures are used.

Inn:

the X+Inn: First appears 1454

le Georges Inne	1454	Cox
hospicium vocatum le George Inne	1501	Cox
le Whytehorse Inne	1543	Gairdner & Brodie
the White Harte Inn	1571	Cox
the Redlyon Inn	1638	Dale
the George Inne	1649	Cox
the Kings head-Inne	1649	Cox

X+Inn: First appears 1605

Star Inn	1605	Cox
Spurre Inn	1607	Crisp

Inn of the X: First appears 1540

the Inne of the Crowne	1540	Cox
Inne of the Swanne	1541	Gairdner and Brodie

Inn at the X: First appears 1638

The Great Inn at the Bell	1638	Dale
the Inn at the Bell	1638	Dale

Inn called the X: First appears 1440

an Inne called the herte and þe Swanne 1440 MED s.v. Swan

inn called The Crayne 1527 Cox

1 messuage or inn called the three Cupps 1579 Fry vol 3

the Inn called the Castle 1580 Fry vol 3

1 messuage or inn called le Crowne 1589 Fry vol 3

the messuage or inn called the Beare 1590 Fry vol 3

1 messuage, tenement, or inn, called le Crossekeyes 1601 Fry vol 3

Inn called the Lyon 1601 Cox

an Inne… called… the fawcon 1604 Cox

Tavern:

the X+Tavern: First appears 1543

le Whyte Horse taverne 1543 Gairdner and Brodie

the Rose taverne 1560 Nichols (Machyn)

the Roose Tavern 1579 Fry vol 3

the Rose Tavern 1579 Fry vol 3

The Greyhound Tavern 1638 Dale

the Mermayd Tavern 1638 Dale

the Nag's Head Tavern 1638 Dale

the Starre Tavern 1638 Dale

the Sun Tavern 1638 Dale

the Sun Tavern 1638 Dale

the Bull Taverne 1644 Cox

X+Tavern: First appears 1636

Croſſe Taverne neere Charing Croſſe 1636 Taylor Travels

Tavern at the X: First appears 1357

La Taverne atte Goot 1357 MED s.v. got

Le Taverne atte Belle 1380-1 MED s.v. belle

le Taverne atte belle 1380 Sharpe, vol 2

Tavern called the X: First appears 1514

the tavern called le Bell 1514 Fry vol 3

my great messuage or tavern called the Bisshoppshead 1582 Fry vol 3

the tenement or wine tavern commonly called the Popesheade 1583 Fry vol 3

the gt. Taverne called the King's head 1638 Dale

Brewhouse:

the X+Brewhouse: First appears 1638

The Peacock Brewhouse   1638   Dale
The Sunne Brewhouse 1638   Dale
The Bolt and Tun Brewhouse 1638   Dale
The Crown Brewhouse   1638   Dale

Brewhouse called the X: First appears 1509

1 large messuage or brewhouse or hospice called the Whitebeer   1509   Fry vol 3
1 brew-house called le Belle 1537   Fry vol 3
brewhouse and garden called le Bell 1537   Fry vol 3
a brewhouse called the Redd Lyonn   1580   Fry vol 3
1 messuage or brewhouse commonly called the Hartes Horne   1583   Fry vol 3
1 messuage or brewhouse called le White Harte   1589   Fry vol 3
that messuage and brewhouse called le Flower de Luce   1591   Fry vol 3
the brewhouse called the Three Kings   1597   Fry vol 3

House:

the X House: First appears c. 1382

j tenementum… vocatum le Herynghows.   c. 1382   MED s.v. hering

X House: First appears 1497

Horne howse   1497   Cox
Circittes [surcoats] Howse   1564   Lillywhite

House called the X: First appears 1556

house called the Bell and Cheker   1579   Fry vol 3
[my] house called the Maydenhed   1580   Fry vol 3
said house called le Flowere de Luce 1592   Fry vol 3
my house called the Three Cranes   1598   Fry vol 3
the howse called the Talbott   1626   Cox
The House called the Rames head   1638   Dale

House called X: There is a single example that omits the article, in 1556-8
a house called Sargyantes Heade   1556-8   Cox

Hostel(rie): This rarely used term first appears shortly before 1400
hostell callid the Bulhed   1425 Burford
This gentil hostelrye That highte the Tabard 1387-95   MED s.v. belle
The White Lion a common hosterie   1530 Lillywhite

Messuage:

Messuage called the X: First appears 1403

A messuage called 'the belle on the hoop' 1403 MED s.v. belle

mess' voc' le Hynd [messuage vocat] 1509 Cox

1 large messuage or brewhouse or hospice called the Whitebeer 1509 Fry vol 3

the… messuage and garden called le Bell 1537 Fry vol 3

the messuage called the three Cuppes 1579 Fry vol 3

1 messuage called the Boores Heade 1581 Fry vol 3

1 messuage called the Bishops Hedd 1582 Fry vol 3

the messuage called le Blewe Bore 1591 Fry vol 3

the messuage called the Cock 1594 Fry vol 3

the capital messuage called the George 1596 Fry vol 3

the messuage called the Green Dragon 1598 Fry vol 3

the messuage called the Crowne 1601 Fry vol. 3

Messuage called X: First appears 1594
There is a single example without the article.

the messuage called Redd Lyon 1594 Fry vol. 3

Tenement:

Tenement called the X: First appears 1451-2

the tenement… called the harpe. 1451-2 MED s.v. harpe

Unum tenementum..vocatum Le Belle on the Hope 1455 MED s.v. belle

my tenement… called The Cardinall Hatt 1579 Fry vol 3

a tenement called the Redd Cocke 1582 Fry vol 3

a tenement called the Fry vol. 3enge Panne 1582 Fry vol 3

the tenement called the Maydenheade 1582 Fry vol 3

1 tenement called the White Hart 1583 Fry vol 3

the tenement or wine tavern commonly called the Popesheade 1583 Fry vol 3

a tenement there called le Rose 1588 Fry vol 3

the tenement called the Bull 1590 Fry vol 3

my tenement called the Fawcon 1593 Fry vol. 3

Tenement X: There is a single example of this form; it first appears 1397.
Tenement Pope 1397 MED s.v. pope

Selde is an early term that falls out of use not long after 1400.
la selde coronata 1384 Keene & Harding

Crownselde 1395 Keene & Harding

Hospitium [of the] X: Latinized Hospitium and related terms take a variety of structures. Some give the sign-name in the Latin genitive, others using vernacular; they first appear 1428
De hospitio de le Suanne 1428 MED s.v. Swan

hospitium cum signo Sancti Georgii   1455   Cox
hospicium de le Saresyn hede 1461-3 Cox
Hospicio de Boryshede   1471-2   MED s.v.bore
hospic'm de la Hert   1476   Cox
inter hospium Arietis 1488   Cox
hospitium de le Hert   1492   Cox
hospicio le horne   c.1515 Cox
hospicium albe leonis 1512   Cox
hospicio leoun c. 1515 Cox

Hospitium called the X forms: These take vernacular sign names; they first appear in the 1430s
In nouo hospicio … vocata le Crone. 1431-4 MED s.v. coroune
hospicii uulgariter Belle nucupati   1443   MED s.v. belle
Hospicium …vocatum..le Belle on the hope 1453   MED s.v. belle
tenementum sive hospicium…vocatum Savagesynne, alias vocatum le Belle on the hope.   1453
         MED s.v. savage
hospicio quod vocatur George   1458   Cox
hospicio quod vocatur Bell   1458   Cox
De hospicio nuncupato le Crown   1474-5 MED s.v. coroune
messuage sive hospicium vocat le Unicorn   1547-53   Rendle & Norman
in hospicio vocatum le Sterre 1497   Cox
hospicium vocatum le George Inne   1501   Cox
hospice vocat' the Georgh [sic]   1540   Cox
hospic' voc' Le George   1550   Cox

Designator + Sign: First appear 1430-1
the messuage called the Signe of the Blew Boor and now called the Bolte and the Tunne   1581
         Fry vol 3
the great messuage called the Sign of the Hand   1582   Fry vol 3
the messuage and garden called the sign of the Bell and now called the sign of the Firye Ball
         1583   Fry vol 3
1 messuage called le sign of the White Bell   1593   Fry vol 3
1 messuage called "le signe of the greene dragon"   1598   Fry vol 3
my messuage or brewhouse called the sign of the Flower de Luce   1591   Fry vol 3
my house called the sign of the Sonne   1601   Fry vol 3
in nouum hospicium ubi corona est signum   1430-1 MED s.v. coroune
hospitium cum signo Sancti Georgii 1455   Cox

On the Hoop: One early form related to *sign* is *X on the hoop*; it first appears in 1323 (with the first non-Lillywhite citation dated to 1369). It is also sometimes used, as sign is, with other designators:

George on the Hoope	1369	Cox
la Bel on the Hop	1380	Sharpe, vol 2
[the] Aungell on the hope	1385	MED s.v. flour-de-lice
le castell on the hope	1389	Sharpe, vol 2
la Bole on the hope	1390	Keene & Harding
le Cristofre on the hoop	1405	Sharpe, vol 2
Tabard on the hope	1411	Cox
Seynt Andrewescros on the hoop	1405	Sharpe, vol 2
le Caterine on the hoop	1434	Sharpe, vol 2
Seynt Andrewescros on the hoop	1405	Sharpe, vol 2
le Belle and le Chekyr on the hoop	1478	Sharpe, vol 2
le Brewhous atte Cok on the hoop	1450	Sharpe, vol 2
[a hostelry called] The Belle on the Hope	1387	MED s.v. belle
A messuage called 'the belle on the hoop'	1403	MED s.v. belle
that messuage called The Harp on the Hoop	1583	Fry vol 3
[His tenement called] le Cok in the houpe	1348	MED s.v. hop
le Maydyn in the hop	1413	Sharpe, vol 2
le Peye super le hoop	1368	Sharpe, vol 2
le Cony super le hoop	1455	Sharpe, vol 2
le molyn sur le hop	a.1424	MED s.v hop
[The brewhouse at] le Hood sur le Hoop	1384	MED s.v hop
le Got atte hope	1363	Keene & Harding
le Castel atte hoop	1363	Sharpe, vol 2

Lack of Articles: Most inn names derived from signs include an article, but there are a few vernacular (or partially vernacular) forms with a designator and without an article.

the messuage called Redd Lyon	1594	Fry vol. 3
signe of three Conies	1603	Kingsford (Stow)
the signe of three Cuppis	1540	Cox
a house called Sargyantes Heade	1556-8	Cox
Hospicio de Boryshede	1471-2	MED s.v.bore
hospicio leoun	c. 1515	Cox
hospicii uulgariter Belle nucupati	1443	MED s.v. belle
hospicio quod vocatur George	1458	Cox
hospicio quod vocatur Bell	1458	Cox

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