300 Words Office

A LINK WITH DRAKE.

Burn freid Rollings

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Wandering far off the beaten track has always been an obsession with me and in 20 odd years my restless feet have carried me into many strange places.

In the summer of 1911 my wanderings found me in Sonoma County California, and there I stumbled on a very curious link with Britain, which so far as I know is unrecorded.

One would not expect to run across a relic of Sir Francis
Drake's time in the heart of a California forest, but that was
exactly what I did stumble on.

It was a flag pole, surmounted by an iron bear, the emblem of Britain in these far off days, and it stood in a little clearing in the forest many, many miles inland and about six miles from the little town of Bodega - a town by the way which in 1911 was practically as Spanish as it was centuries earlier when the Dons ruled the country.

On the butt of the flag pole was an inscribed plate of heavy brass - weather beaten and hard to decipher, but still legible enough for me to learn from it that a party from one of Drake's fleet had penetrated to this point in June, 1579, and erected the flat staff and claimed the land in the name of Queen Elizabeth, of course the pole is not the original one,

but one of more recent times, set up by the U.S.A. government which preserves the ancient relic. At one time the descendants of the Spaniards who then held California, were bitterly opposed to the preservation of the relic, and used to destroy the flag pole, until the government adopted stern measures to put an end to the practice.

In Bodega it is advisable not to show too marked a pride in English or things English for even now the inhabitants harbour bitter feelings against our country and still dream of another "Spanish Conquest".