

**SOCIETY for the PRESERVATION of
BEERS from the WOOD**
(founded 1963)

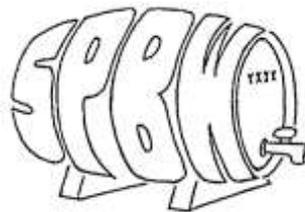
PINT in HAND

Number 110

May 2009



The Ship & Mitre, lots of good beer in Liverpool



PINT in HAND

- ***Pint in Hand*** is published quarterly, in February, May, August and November. It is issued to all subscribing members and affiliated branches of SPBW.
- All members are invited to contribute articles for publication on beer-related subjects. Contributions for the August 2009 issue should reach the Editor by **25 July**.
- The Editor or the National Executive Committee of SPBW does not necessarily share opinions expressed in *Pint in Hand*.

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All photos by Roger Jacobson unless stated otherwise

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Anyone reading this that is not already a member of SPBW might like to know that annual membership costs only £5 (£6 non-UK). For information about SPBW together with a membership form, please send a stamped addressed envelope to the National Membership Secretary as above.

OPENING TIME

It is now some 20 years since the Monopolies and Mergers Commission delivered its report on the UK brewing industry. I don't intend to delve into all the ramifications of that Report but I will consider one contentious aspect: the tied house system and the ownership of pubs generally. The Beer Orders resulting from the MMC Report effectively led to the break up of the vast tied estates of the major brewing companies that then dominated the scene. So far so good, but what we got as a substitute was the emergence of large pub-owning companies, such as Enterprise and Punch, whose estates outnumber even the brewing giants of yore.

I've often argued in these pages that this kind of control of the market cannot possibly be any good from the consumers' point of view, since it inevitably leads to reduction of choice. Thus it is that a pub group can restrict the choice of beer in thousands of pubs by concentrating on well known and heavily promoted brands from large regional breweries, at the expense of locally brewed (and quite often superior) beers. As it happens, both the companies I mentioned above have shown a degree of enterprise (ho hum) in allowing publicans a wider choice through such enterprises (stop it) as SIBA's Direct Delivery scheme.

There are many who would argue that the tied house system should be scrapped altogether – I think it may well be unique to the UK. I don't entirely agree, although I do believe the size of tied estates might usefully be restricted. A number of small and micro breweries have invested in a pub of their own, this being a guaranteed outlet as well as a showcase for their ales. A couple of examples I know: Woodlands of Cheshire have a pub (the Globe) on the outskirts of Nantwich which sells 8 or 9 of their distinctive ales; Derby Brewing Co's Brewery Tap (also known as the Royal Standard) offers up to 5 guest beers along with their own brews.

By contrast, both Greene King and Marstons have well over 2,000 pubs. Much of their expansion is as a result of smaller regional breweries being taken over and closed; both these companies are virtually national brewers now. It's one thing there being a strong representation of Greene King pubs in Suffolk, but the proliferation of these houses in, say, Nottinghamshire or London, suggests to me that the drinker is getting a raw deal.

I would venture to suggest that brewing companies can be allowed to own a certain proportion (say 50% maximum?) of pubs within a certain vicinity of the brewery – this cuts down transport costs and retains the 'local' aspect of the brewery. However, further away from the brewery, the company should be much more restricted in how many pubs in a particular area it may own. This might at least encourage the likes of GK to keep breweries like Hardy & Hanson open. And there should be a limit of no more than 1,000 pubs in a brewery's or pub group's estate, the surplus to become free houses selling a nice range of locally brewed ales at sensible prices. Well, I can dream.

Cheers for now.

Roger

DAVID HUMPHREYS

We were sad to learn that David died early this year. He had been a stalwart SPBW member for many years; as well as two stints on the National Executive Committee (Branch Liaison Officer 1989/90; Secretary 1995/96), David was also a co-founder with Peter Smith (obituary PiH 102) of Common Branch, and doubtless an instigator of its arcane rituals, such as a ram's head and black candle. Before this close involvement with SPBW David was active in CAMRA in its early days and was the first Chairman of its South West London branch.

I recall David's good nature and dry humour. A native of Manchester, he was well informed on a number of subjects and it seems surprising that he close to spend the later part of his working life as a messenger/office boy for the legal profession at Lincolns Inn. I also remember that, during his time as NEC Secretary, he tended to write the minutes of the previous minutes very shortly before the next meeting. Mind you, I don't think anyone ever queried their accuracy.

Having finally retired, David sold his flat next to Clapham Common and moved down to Ramsgate. By all accounts he never lost his love of good ale. David was a good man who lived a good life.

RJ

NATIONAL WEEKEND

For the 2009 National Weekend we are steeling ourselves for a visit to **Sheffield** from **13 - 15 November** (Friday – Sunday). We already have two brewery trips arranged: to Kelham Island on Friday at 7.00 pm. (cost £5 with food extra); the Brew Company at noon on Saturday (cost £15, but includes a tour, tastings, and drinks; food can also be provided at extra cost).

Kelham Island brewery was founded in 1990 behind the Fat Cat and has no connection other than nominal with the Kelham Island Tavern which is very close by! – and which is Camra's current National Pub of the Year. Kelham Island's Pale Rider was Camra's Supreme Champion Beer of Britain for 2004. Brew Company is a much newer enterprise which first brewed in the latter part of 2008.

For the rest of Saturday, and on Sunday, we shall explore some of Sheffield's many excellent pubs (an all day tram card costs £3.00 and is the best way to get around). Further details available from John Rooth (see page 2) who can also provide details of recommended accommodation and travel. A deposit will be required as both trips require advance payment.

<p>Some back issues of <i>Pint in Hand</i> are available:- numbers 46; 49; 86-109. These can be obtained from the Editor (address on page 2) in return for 12 second class stamps to cover postage for the full set. If you don't want the whole lot, send enough stamps you think may cover costs.</p>
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NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The SPBW National Executive Committee holds its regular meetings on the second Monday of each month, starting at 7 pm or thereabouts, in the Royal Oak, Tabard Street, London SE1. If possible we use the upstairs room (it's quieter but further from the bar). These are strictly business meetings, but they are kept as brief as necessary. All members are welcome to attend, particularly representatives from branches.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The upstairs room at the Royal Oak was bursting at the seams on the evening of 9 March. Plenty of familiar faces in attendance plus a few less regular; as ever it's good to see SPBW members from here and there coming to join in the conviviality of these occasions. As ever, the business aspect of the meeting was got out of the way quite painlessly and we even had some up to date (if unaudited) accounts to peruse. I hardly need to say that the range of Harvey's ales was in peak condition even if some of them (mostly the stronger ones) ran out before the evening ended. The Royal Oak is obliged to take a 'guest' beer from Fullers these days and the most popular has been the excellent Porter, superior, to my taste, to Harvey's version of this beer style. Back to business, there was a marked lack of volunteers for NEC posts, so the Committee remains unchanged yet again; for the record:

Chair: Chris Callow
Vice-Chair: Mike Hall
Secretary: John Rooth
Treasurer: Jim Woodcock
Branch Liaison Officer: Bill English
National Membership Secretary: Roger West
Products: Dave Samuel
Editor, Pint in Hand: Roger Jacobson

OUT AND ABOUT

Our next public appearance should be the Ealing Beer Festival, where we hope to be running a stall. The festival will again be in Walpole Park, starting on Wednesday 8 July and ending whenever the beer runs out on the Saturday!

The SPBW runs stands at Ealing, Wallington and Pig's Ear beer festivals. It tends to be the same few people doing the hard work (all that good beer to drink.....) but we welcome volunteers to help out. Contact John Rooth if you fancy getting involved and helping to promote the SPBW.

National Executive Committee Chairman's report 2009

Welcome to the Royal Oak in London in the forty sixth year of the Society, I am so glad that so many of you brave the elements to listen to my report. If this is your first time to the AGM, then hi!, I hope that you will join us on this annual event. All meetings of the National Executive Committee meetings are open and all members are free to attend. At this point I would like to thank everyone that has visited over the year and thanks also to the Officers of the Committee. I am also pleased to report that the bank balances of the NEC are healthy with enough capital to handle all of our commitments.

The latest winner of the London Pub of the Year is the Dog & Bell in Deptford. This pub served us various beers and supplied a good spread for us to eat when we presented them with their certificate. Charlie and Eileen were proud to be the first pub, since the event was resurrected, to receive this honour three times. They have an ever changing beer list, so every day is a beer festival.

The National Weekend away was based around Ipswich in Suffolk. There were visits to two breweries; St Jude's a small place tucked away; and the Old Cannon in Bury St Edmonds. Loads of pubs were visited, including some in-betweens in Stowmarket. There is a big write up in Pint in Hand 109. We are looking at going to Sheffield for this year's event so keep mid November free.

Our Products range has increased this year, and Dave Samuel is always on the lookout for something different. Small numbers of custom items are available; so please give him a call.

Pint in Hand has been going now for twenty seven years, and I hope that you can agree this is a tremendous achievement considering the only advertisements are pubs/breweries/beer festivals that members have visited. If you are a budding writer, please consider sending articles and pictures to Roger Jacobson who will be delighted to receive them for publication in Pint in Hand.

Our website is maintained by Mark Hutchinson who is keen for as many members as possible to use it. There is a popular forum with pages for each branch, this is the ideal location to publicise what your branch is doing, and advertise any events that are open to other members.

Please let us raise a glass to those that cannot make it here tonight, be it difficulties in travel or visits to the great pub in the sky; let's hope for an enjoyable year of the SPBW.

Chris Callow



SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BEERS FROM THE WOOD
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008

<u>YEAR</u>		<u>YEAR</u>
<u>2007</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>2008</u>
769.02	Sales of Society Products and Donated Items	1086.05
	Less: <u>Cost of Sales:</u>	
778.00	Opening Stock at Cost	674.93
335.90	Purchases for Resale	754.50
(674.93)	Closing Stock at Cost	(581.53)
330.05	<u>Gross Profit from Sales</u>	238.15
122.60	Funding for Events and Miscellaneous	92.07
220.00	Branch Affiliation Fees	200.00
1096.00	National Membership Fees	1276.00
72.64	Interest on Deposit Account	62.64
<u>1841.29</u>		<u>1630.71</u>
		1868.86
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
1090.20	Pint in Hand	1016.05
(6.00)	National Membership Provision	33.00
21.00	AGM Expenses	40.00
89.05	Administration and Sundry Expenses	485.17
68.53	Depreciation	58.25
<u>578.51</u>	<u>Balance - Surplus of Income over Expenditure (2007 - Surplus)</u>	<u>236.39</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2008

<u>YEAR</u>		<u>YEAR</u>
<u>2007</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>2008</u>
3828.02	Balance at 31 st December 2007	4406.53
578.51	Surplus of Income over Expenditure (2007 - Surplus)	236.39
<u>4406.53</u>	<u>Balance at 31st December 2008</u>	<u>4642.92</u>
	<u>Represented By:</u>	
	<u>Fixed Assets</u>	
2392.69	Equipment at Cost	2392.69
(2004.33)	Depreciation to Date	(2062.58)
<u>388.36</u>		330.11
	<u>Current Assets</u>	
674.93	Society Products at Cost	581.53
191.00	Sundry Debtors	-
161.32	Cash in Hand	130.76
409.86	Balance at Bank	977.82
3780.56	Current Account	3843.20
<u>5217.67</u>	Deposit Account	<u>5533.31</u>
	<u>Current Liabilities</u>	
1187.50	National Membership Provision	1220.50
12.00	Sundry Creditors	-
<u>1199.50</u>		<u>1220.50</u>
4018.17	<u>Net Current Assets</u>	4312.81
<u>4406.53</u>	<u>Net Asset Value as at 31st December 2008</u>	<u>4642.92</u>

Accounts prepared by Treasurer:

Signed:

Date:

Accounts audited by Hon Auditor: I have checked the above Accounts, presented by the Treasurer, and found them to be correct subject to verification of Bank transactions when Bank Statements are available.

BEER AND CURRY

The weather for this year's Beer & Curry was unseasonably mild and dry, unlike in some previous years. 13 members participated, but due to early departures and late arrivals, we were usually a dirty dozen, or legless X1 rather than the unlucky number who dined at the last supper (I suspect not on Lamb Madras). Despite LT's usual efforts to put on a service that would embarrass the poorest 3rd world country, we made it to the Bow Bells, where the Hook Norton was muddy and the London Pride insipid. Further up the Bow Road was the impressive Little Driver. All of the party opted for Harvey's Best rather than Directors, and it was at its excellent best. The pub roasts were very substantial, enjoyed by those with a big appetite.



Coborn Arms



Little Driver

Eschewing the free 25 bus, we strolled along to the Coborn Arms, an excellent Young's pub off Mile End Road, where the Ordinary and Deuchar's were both in fine fettle. For our next pub, it was necessary to brave the rugby scrum conditions on the 25, although a quick cry of "tickets please!" would have emptied the bus of most of its unpleasant load.

The Half Moon in Stepney Green, a typical Wetherspoons in a former theatre, had Robinsons Trouble N' Strife and Purity Mad Goose. We discovered a gem next door to it; L'Oasis bar had TT Landlord and Black Sheep (at £2.10 a pint) straight from the casks (not wood), as well as a selection of Meantime beers (including the excellent Chocolate beer). The roasts in here looked good too.

Another trip on the shantytown on wheels finally got us to the Brick Lane area about 90 minutes behind schedule. The Pride of Spitalfields, post-football was quieter than usual, but the Brewers Gold, was as good as ever.

How do you get 11 people to choose a curry house? After being solicited with the usual discounts we opted for the Saffron, where we were given the whole upstairs bit to ourselves. The food was good, everyone seemed mainly to eat the same dish, which they had ordered, but the promised discounts and drinks were a little misleading, so I think we may not have chosen the best option. It was dark when we left, so it was time to hurry home before the bus replacement services turned back into a pumpkin.

John Rooth

PERFECT PUB PAGE

Although I have only been to the ***Dun Cow*** in Durham twice, I have no doubts about recommending it to the readership as being worthy of Perfect Pub classification.

As most will know, Durham City is a quite attractive place of great antiquity – the area name Elvet is from Anglo Saxon “*Aelfet Ee*” which probably means Swan Island. Elvet is bounded by the River Wear on its western, northern and eastern sides, so it is really a peninsular, but let’s not be pedantic.

As you stroll up the street from the town centre, the Dun Cow is on the left and you turn in to an alleyway. If you walk up to the top (as we did) and take the door on the right, you will enter the lounge/dining area at the back of the pub. This is the oldest part of the building (which is ancient) and the cellars are situated beneath here. The beers available were Castle Eden, Jennings Cumberland Ale and Black Sheep bitter. We chose the absolutely excellent Castle Eden, a beer rarely seen now in my part of Yorkshire.

I then recalled that if we opened the sliding door immediately by the entrance to the alley, it would lead us into the snug at the front of the pub. I gathered the horde and to here we marched. Intriguingly, this is the more modern part of the hostelry, dating from the 19th Century – have a look at the bricked up fireplace with the wooden mantelpiece and surround: this never came from Ikea! Regard also, the eye-catching Grade II listed bar back: seemingly, the doorway where the staff come through from the rear lounge is where the original pub entrance was. With its beamed ceiling and wooden wainscoting you might think the snug is far older than it actually is.

This is a totally traditional pub intended for conversation and quaffing (and munching) – the staff are attentive and service is about 100 light years faster than in, say, any Wetherspoon’s. The Dun Cow is a Perfect Pub – go there now!

Andy Whitley

The Dun Cow, 37 Old Elvet, Durham City DH1 3HN; tel 01913 869219

The Star, Acton, Cheshire

The Star was featured as Perfect Pub in the last issue. No sooner had that been printed than word reached me that the pub had been closed and boarded up following the sudden departure of Jim, the manager. Despite his success in less than a year at the Star (which was voted Pub of the Year by the local CAMRA branch and would have appeared in the 2010 GBG), it seems that he had a disagreement with Enterprise Inns, the pub’s owner, leading to his departure. The Star reopened in mid-April with a (so far) reduced beer selection and the new manager intends to extend the food side of the trade. Jim is now manager of the Beartown Tap in Congleton, which remains highly recommended.

MEET the BRANCHES

Most social activities in the Society take place within branches so it makes sense to get involved with one. You're sure to get a good welcome and most branches prefer to keep things very informal. Details of our branches are listed below; if there isn't one in your area you are welcome to start one! Bill English, (Branch Liaison Officer, address on page 2), will be pleased to tell you what you need to know. We will be happy to put you in touch with other local members.

BMAD: Meetings held first Thursday of each month at the **Burnt Mill Snooker and Social Club** (CIU affiliated) in Harlow, Essex. Contact Tony Syrett (01279 423174)

CAMPDEN HILL: Meetings held first Monday of each month at the **Monkey Puzzle** at 30 Southwick Street, London W2 (corner with Sussex Gardens). Contact John Rooth (see page 2).

CENTRAL LONDON: Meetings held on the 18th of each month mostly in the form of pub evaluation walks - usually in central London. Contact Roger West (see page 2).

CHESAPEAKE BAY: Based in the area around Baltimore, Maryland USA - a great area for microbrews and brewpubs. Contact Dominic Cantalupo, email DominicCantalupo@ChampionRealty.com. Website: www.spbw.org.

CHESHIRE REAL ALE PEOPLE: Are based mainly around the Crewe/Nantwich area. The emphasis is on the social side with trips planned in the near future. Contact Colin Donald 01270 623376 email colinsdonald@sky.com.

COATE: Meetings held third Friday of each month at the **New Inn**, Coate, near Devizes. Contact Eric Clark (ericclark@aol.com) or email coate@spbw.com.

COMMON & ALDBRICKHAM: Meetings usually held in Reading; contact John Dearing 0118 958 0377 or gpwild@btconnect.com to find out where and when.

CROYDON REAL ALE PRESERVATION SOCIETY: Meet on the first Tuesday of each month in **The Green Dragon**, High Street Croydon CR0 1NA, and also every subsequent Tuesday at a pub somewhere in, or easily reachable by public transport from, Croydon. (These additional venues change weekly, and are intimated by email during the previous couple of days if you have supplied your email address to John Smith.) Contact Pete McGill 07831 561296 (m) or John Smith 02071884844 (w).

FÝÇÝ: A social group formed by ex-pat SPBW stalwarts Peter Willett and Dave Brightwell. Contact Peter for more details: peterwillettuk@yahoo.com

IPSWICH: Contact Phil (01473 644923) or Iain (01473 253540) for details of meetings.

KINGSTON: Meetings held first Wednesday of each month in the **Willoughby Arms**, 47 Willoughby Road. Contact Rick at the Willoughby [020 8546 4236]; or our website: www.spbwkingston.co.uk.

NORTHERN IRELAND: Contact Mark Hutchinson for details of meetings and events: marksalehousecom@hotmail.com

RACS: The Real Ale Club of Sawbridgeworth meets last Wednesday of each month at **The Gate**, London Road. Contact Jan Mead (01279 864398) or email meadspanner@aol.com or the website www.racs.org.

SPECIAL: The branch holds annual, week-long gatherings around the inland waterways network. There are also unofficial visits to pubs of renown in London, Cheshire and Shropshire, or wherever we happen to be. Check our website at: <http://www.geocities.com/canaladmiral/Special.html>

WANTZ: Meetings are held third Monday of the month at the **Pembury Tavern**, 90 Amhurst Road, Hackney, starting at around 7.30 pm. Contact Roger Jacobson (see page 2); also check out our website at www.wantz.co.uk

WEST RIDING: Meets (usually) on last Sunday morning in month in various pubs in and around Leeds. Brewery trips, day trips and crawls and other socials. Contact Graham Hewitt (0113 2624574; graham-hewitt@tiscali.co.uk) for further details.

WOOLWICH: Meetings held first Thursday of each month at 8.30 pm at the Prince Albert (Rose's), Hare Street, Woolwich. Usually four handpumped guest beers are available. Contact Bill Smith (020 8310 5907).

Are the details for your branch correct on these pages? If not please the Editor know before the deadline for the next issue; thanks!

Thanks also to branches – all required affiliation fees were paid before the end of April, almost certainly a record!



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The May 1999 issue of PiH featured the Brakspear logo on the cover and an article on the brewery inside. This was the original Henley Brewery which was closed down a few years later. Brakspear beers are now brewed in Witney and the company is part of the Marston's empire.

The centre pages were taken up with an obituary of Arthur Millard, one of the SPBW's Founder Members. Although deeply attached to his pint of 'proper beer', Arthur never saw the SPBW as anything more than a social vehicle providing convivially like-minded folk to drink death and destruction to the big brewers while planning a variety of leisure activities, not least visits to breweries. Much like we are today in fact.

Elsewhere, my correspondents reported from outposts such as Canada and North Yorkshire, and we learn that the legendary Rick Robinson had taken over as NEC Secretary. Rick was then, and remains, mine host at the award-winning Willoughby Arms in Kingston (on Thames, that is).

10 years you could read my reaction to the Monopoly and Mergers Commission report on the brewing industry. I'm a little relieved that in conclusion I was unconvinced that the report would lead to the perfect brewing industry. We may have seen the demise of the legendary Big 6 brewers but the major pub groups that have arisen in their place have even more control of the market.

Ossie Tillett's latest feature on beer-related organisations covered the British Beermat Collectors Society. We got to know people from the BBCS quite well when they and SPBW used to run stands at beer festivals and I had the pleasure of bumping into some of them at the Battersea beerfest in February.

Back in May 1980 the SPBW was on rockier ground, the Newsletter highlighting the need for new blood and bemoaning the poor attendance at the AGM. Stepping into the breach was the redoubtable Nick Martin, making his debut on the NEC, calling for the SPBW to cultivate a better image than that of 'some CAMRA hangers-on'.

A whole (A4) page and a half was devoted to a suggested format for an SPBW London Pub of the Year contest. Although the contest lapsed during the 1990s it has become a well established part of the SPBW agenda since its revival and has achieved at least one of the main aims, that of providing publicity both for the Society and the winning pubs.

A random snippet, doubtless contributed by the legendary Maltworm, related a visit to south east London by the Rev William Spooner. He had been hoping to meet someone in the Dull Man in Greenwich; unfortunately his acquaintance was waiting in the Green Man in Dulwich.

SPBW WEBSITE

The SPBW Members Forum is still going strong at www.spbw.com/bb. The Bulletin Board is intended as a way for members to exchange information. It's very easy to get involved with and, as with most things, the more the merrier. We are particularly keen to see representatives of branches acting as moderators to help keep their sections up to date.

BEER AND BUFFET

The latest event was on 27 April at the Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Road, London WC2, with around 20 in attendance. It was good to see several branches represented along with some random National members. As ever at the Calthorpe the beers were in prime condition; Marstons Pedigree was a guest alongside the usual Youngs/Wells brews. This excellent pub served very good value meals and the buffet provided was varied and tasty.

We are thinking about the customary eve-of-Great British Beer Festival Beer & Buffet; this would be on Monday 3 August. Details will be circulated by the usual electronic means, or contact John Rooth nearer the time.

LONDON PUB OF THE YEAR

We've only just presented the latest award to the Dog & Bell and it's time to think about finding a worthy successor.

All SPBW members in the London area are invited to nominate what they think is the best pub in Greater London. Please contact Bill English (details page 2) for a nomination form – *pubs will not be considered for judging unless a form is completed*. Closing date for nominations is **12 July**.

The Dog & Bell, as current winner, is ineligible this time round but there is no lack of worthy contenders. Judging will be done between August and October and the winner will be announced in the November issue of PiH. If you'd like to join the judging panel, let Bill know. You will, of course, be obliged to visit a lot of pubs and drink beer in them.

DURHAM, DARLINGTON AND A BROWN COW

Andy's Roving Report

Here's another of Durham City's hostelries, and what a splendid example the **Victoria Inn** is. Built in 1899, this remains a proper inn offering en-suite accommodation as well as refreshment to the weary.

As we called in on a mid-week dinnertime, only the tap room was actually open for trade. I think there were 4 or 5 ales available, including the all too rare Big Lamp bitter, which I think is a beer of great of great merit. As at the nearby Dun Cow, the back of the bar counter is worth admiring – this one is sweeping to say the least! Take a look up above the very comprehensive selection of whiskies and other spirits, up past the Toby jugs to the framed caricatures of legal eagles of times gone by. The only other place that I've seen a like collection of prints is in the Town Hall Tavern in Leeds. Is/was the Victoria Inn a watering hole for solicitors and judiciary in general?

The layout is quite unusual. At the top end of the tap room is a corridor that leads to the next room, which is a Victorian parlour *in situ* as it were. Anyone's great (or x2 great) aunt would feel right at home here amongst the gee gaws

and ornaments; all very baroque. I continued along from here, past the steps leading upstairs and saw what appears to be another room at the front of the pub, but I couldn't get into that. I had a look in from the tap room though and it seems to have a fireplace identical to the one in there.

A compulsory stopping off point when in the area – see their website at www.victoriainn-durhamcity.co.uk or just call in; well worth the walk from London, even if it's raining (see also PiH 100).

Victoria Inn, 85 Hallgarth Street, Durham DH1 3AS; 0191 386269

We called at **Number Twenty-2** in Darlington en route from Durham, as part of Graham D's birthday bash and celebrations. The previous time I was in Darlo (as the natives call it) was back in the 1970s, so from my point of view any pub visited would be brand new to me. As we had called in at a number of hostelrys earlier that day my description of this outstanding pub may be a bit sparse.

From the outside, the Number Twenty-2 looks rather diminutive, with a small frontage that one could easily miss. Once inside the doors however, the size of the place is instantly apparent, though I think the pub consists of at least two separate buildings. The front part has a very high ceiling, whereas the section at the bottom end has a low sloping roof which looks like it belonged to a 1940s pre-fab at one time!

Even though it was a Wednesday night when we called in, the place was packed out and not with your Hooray Alberts or students either, as the Twenty-2 is well known as a meeting place for cask ale drinkers. According to some websites that I have perused, it is known locally as 'Jurassic Park' due to the alleged age of its regulars, which at any rate seems to keep the riff raff out.

As for the beers, I counted no less than 11, with the handpumps being scattered along the lengthy bar counter. I am pleased to recount that, notwithstanding the crowd, service was immediate and the beer quality top class, graham had been informed beforehand that the White Boar bitter here was one of the best pints around and seemingly this is so. I understand that this is a regular beer and is brewed by Peter Wesley at Nick Stafford's Hambleton Brewery.

Quite rightly, there's a good display of CAMRA awards and I personally think that the Number Twenty-2 would improve the pub scene of any of our towns or cities, so when you are up north, head for Darlington immediately! Mind you, make sure you don't go on a Sunday, as the '22' is shut on the Sabbath day.

Number Twenty-2, 22 Coniscliffe Road, Darlington DL3 7RG; 01325 354590

Keighley is a medium sized Pennine town to the north west of Leeds that takes about 25 minutes to reach by train from there. It is well worth the journey as it is home to a number of rather good pubs, amongst which the **Brown Cow** can safely be numbered.

A quintet of us called in one Wednesday night in the middle of April as part of a short pub crawl around the town. The Brown Cow is about 10 minutes walk away from Keighley train station and seemingly dates from the 19th century. According to the pub's own website www.browncowkeighley.co.uk the building was originally four back to back cottages that were knocked through to create the pub. Cross Leeds Street itself was built around 1820 and a Trade Directory of 1870 mentions the hostelry by name. Oh yes, local brewers Timothy Taylor's bought it in 1901.

When we called in, there were 4 Taylor's beers available, plus 2 guest beers, these being Acorn's Bobek IPA and Mallinson's Pharos. I had heard good things of the latter company's products but had never come across them on my travels; therefore I tried the 3.6% Pharos, which is nearly as pale as Boddington's used to be and damn' decent. It was also cheap - £2.04 a pint. The beer prices here are, in general, cheaper than average and in some cases very much so. The pub is presently offering a Super Sunday saver, with one of its beers being £1.76 a pint all day. Taylor's mild costs £2.22 and landlord £2.54 – anyone who likes Taylor's dark Mild and Best Bitter mixed can get a pint here for £2.10. Should you fancy something more exotic to drink, there's a small selection of Belgian and German bottles, including Maisels Weisse. Note the lengthy row of Simpson & Simpson (Brown Cow) Brewery's beer clips behind the bar – one assumes that ales from this company must appear reasonably often.

The layout of the pub has a slightly 1970s effect, being made up of an opened out lounge with a few steps leading to a raised section at the top. The entrance to the meeting room around the back is here and there is no pool table or juke box. No bad language either is this is frowned upon.

As part of the décor there's an unusual collection of police headwear from all over and a few truncheons for good measure. Bibliophiles will find a choice of tomes to peruse, including a collection of Good Beer Guides going back to 1977! The Brown Cow has frequently graced the pages of that publication and there's a display of awards from the local branch of CAMRA as well.

Opening hours are from 4.00 (Mondays to Saturdays) and noon on Sundays. Get yourselves to the Brown Cow now!

Brown Cow, Cross Leeds Street, Keighley BD21 2 LQ; 01535 602577

BRANCHES IN ACTION

In April **Campden Hill** visited Ozer, the Turkish restaurant in Langham Place, to celebrate St George's day. This was the first time I had ever tried Turkish Wine, which was very good. Most of us settled on the Mezes type meal, which included 11 different dishes, with various dips and meat portions and stuffed bread. The speciality dessert of various fruit berries and milk pudding and strong Turkish coffee rounded things off. We went in the Nicholson's pub the Argyll Arms near Oxford Circus before the meal, where TT Landlord was in

good fettle, and we received a few free snacks and drinks thanks to St G. Afterwards a cheap pint of Sam Smiths in the Cock was knocked back.

At the end of February we had a short pub walk in the Kings Cross/Euston area; the final calling point was the Bree Louise close to Euston station, one of very pubs in London regularly serving beers by gravity.

Future dates include the 'Arry Hart memorial Tramway Crawl on Saturday 13 June and a joint outing with Common branch on Saturday 25 July.

Recent **RACS** events were a trip to Hitchin on 25 April to visit members Howard and Wendy who run the Half Moon and were celebrating their 5th anniversary at the pub with a beer festival (25 beers plus ciders, perrys and wonderful food); on the following day a St George's Day Celebration in the Gate featuring the Hertfordshire Hollies Morris Dancers and steak and ale pie (RACS Chair Jan Mead was cook) to feed 80 people. On Sunday 3 May RACS were at the Sawbridgeworth May Fayre, selling their merchandise (everything from shirts to umbrellas and mouse mats), running a bottle tombola - takings to their charity Cystic Fibrosis Trust - and handing out free beer, courtesy The Gate. The AGM is on 20 May at the Gate.

Special Branch is girding its loins for the annual gathering afloat in May. This year we take on a challenging circular route starting in Cheshire. Some excellent pubs are on the agenda, including some old faves, and we intend to defy the credit crunch and boost beer sales along the way.

Wantz made a return visit to the Dove, Broadway Market, Hackney, in early March. This is a sister pub to the Dovetail in Clerkenwell, where we have damaged our brain cells and bank balances a few times; the difference is that this one has a range of handpumped ales alongside a considerable choice of bottled and draught Belgian offerings. Mighty Oak Oscar Wilde mild and Crouch Vale Brewers Gold seem to be among the regular draught choices but inevitably we hit the Belgian stuff later so as to ensure a good night's sleep. Like the not so far away Pembury Tavern, the Dove attracts the young local trendies as well as mature drinkers like Wantz branch.

A key aspect of the branch's social calendar is eating exotic fare; our latest fare was Chinese *dim sum* Sunday lunch at the Mandarin Palace on Gants Hill roundabout (near Ilford). Most of our fellow diners seemed to be of Far Eastern extraction which is usually a good sign and the food was top class; we also just about ordered the right amount of a variety of dishes (none of us were quite sure about the chicken's feet mind you). As we were doing the traditional thing, the food was washed down with Chinese tea. To be fair, we had taken our aperitifs at the George, a Wetherspoon house a couple of tube stops away at Wanstead, which had a decent selection of guest ales.

West Riding will be visiting two Yorkshire breweries in June: Old Bear in Keighley on the 12th, then Yorkshire Dales in Askrigg on the 27th. The day after is the branch meeting – at Salamander Brewery in Bradford!



THE QUALITY OF MERSEY

One day is hardly sufficient to do justice to the many worthy pubs in Liverpool but it's worth a try! I made the trip in March with three Cheshire residents acting as guides and this is what I remember.

First was possibly best as far as our pub tour went. The **Ship & Mitre** in Dale Street has to be one of the premier free houses in the city. A striking 1930s Art Deco building, a few minutes walk from Lime Street station, the S & M offers up to 13 handpumped ales and an equally wide range of Belgian and German draught beers. I recall that Colin and I began the day's intake with Copper Dragon Black Gold mild, while Duncan went in at the deep end with Leeds Midnight Bell, a 4.8% stout. The pub hold regular beer festivals and you can find out more at www.shipandmitre.com.

From here we moved to the city centre and the **Lion Tavern** in Moorfields. This is a highly impressive pub (on Camra's National Inventory) with a number of small, cosy rooms around the bar area. Some half a dozen beers on here, mostly mainstream offerings apart from one from George Wright which most of us plumped for. The Lion is named after a steam locomotive rather than a large animal.

Pub number 3 was, to my mind, the most disposable of those we visited. The **Cornmarket** is tucked away in a side road off Fenwick Street and seemed to consist of one large room with dark wood panelling. Beer range was limited to Jennings Cumberland and Deuchars IPA.



Lion Tavern



Baltic Fleet

We took a bit of a route march from here to the old Albert Dock area (now mostly upmarket housing and businesses apart from the touristy bits). On the main road named Wapping we find the **Baltic Fleet**. This is a marvellously evocative pub name, recalling the days when Liverpool was a major port (or maybe it's just my own Baltic ancestry). This is 'Pool's only brew-pub, being home to the Wapping brewery in a wedge-shaped Grade II listed building. The bar is at the 'wide' end and dispenses 6 or so Wapping beers; I've yet to encounter one which has disappointed. I've been here twice now and both times the pub struck me as a little shabby, as if it was in the middle of

refurbishment. Don't let this put you off though; most of the rest of the clientele seemed to be smart office types so it didn't bother them.

Most of the rest of the pubs we visited were relatively close together, back towards the city centre. The **Pilgrim** is found, remarkably enough, in Pilgrim Street: go downstairs into a large, dimly lit room with the bar counter at the near end. Being close to the University, the pub was full of students who were clearly not studying. There was plenty to occupy them though, not least a decent beer range, of which most of us chose Leeds Pale Ale. Live bands regularly appear in the upstairs room.



Roscoe Head



Ye Cracke

Just around the corner from here is **Ye Cracke** in Rice Street. This apparently was John Lennon's usual hang out when he was bunking off from art college. I imagine it's not changed a lot since then as it has a certain lived-in feel, although it has expanded over the years; the pub's name means that it used to be quite small. This is another of those 'beer range varies' pubs and I really can't recall what was on offer. I do recall a lively debate about the band whose music was being played while we had our pints and that I failed to identify it as 1980s Liverpudlians Echo and the Bunnymen.



The Pilgrim



Fly in the Loaf

I think the next pub was the **Roscoe Head** in Roscoe Street. This is one of a select few pubs which has appeared in every edition of the Good Beer Guide and why not? Another pub with a selection of rooms to sit and drink in though

again I fail to recall what it was we sat and drank; I'm sure it was really nice and the landlord seemed a pleasant sort of cove.

Back round the corner to a very different pub, the **Fly in the Loaf**. This is rather a barn of a place – perhaps I should mean granary, since this is a former bakery. The Fly is the second pub in the city to be owned by Okell from the Isle of Man, though there plenty of guest ales alongside the Manx beers.

No pub tour of Liverpool is complete without a visit to the **Philharmonic** in Hope Street. Built at the turn of the 18th/19th century for local brewer Robert Cain, the Philharmonic is a supreme example of grand pub architecture; indeed, experts consider this to be perhaps the greatest of them all. Just wander around the various rooms (not least the gents!) and marvel at it. If I have to quibble, various notice boards advertising the pub's food do rather cheapen the effect. Also the beer selection here is less impressive than many other pubs in the area. No matter, the Phil' is a must-visit pub.

And finally, the **Everyman Bistro**. This is just down the road from the Philharmonic, in the basement underneath the Everyman Theatre. Inevitably, food is a big deal here but the beer drinker is well catered for, with a selection of ales mostly from Yorks and Lancs.

And that little lot is less than half of the Liverpool city centre pubs listed in the current GBG (which I have liberally cribbed from, thanks chaps!). As Mr Lennon once sang, I'll be back.

RJ

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Last Orders - from Leicestershire

The 'Man Within Compass' in Whitwick possesses what may well be a unique pub name. Its meaning is something of a mystery although there are suggestions – not entirely convincing - that it is one of the religious signs popular during the Commonwealth, signifying 'in the compass of god's mercy'. No one at the pub seems to know the origin of the name but, to add to the confusion, it seems that the pub is known locally as the 'Rag & Mop'. Again, the origin of this inter alias is obscure although one version relates to local miners (when there was a mining industry of course) coming off shift to slake their thirst and bringing coal dust on to the then flagstones floor. The landlady, having mopped the floor, would then hang the rag mop outside at the front to dry.

Any other ideas? Or any other suggestions for unique pub names?

Thanks to Nottingham Drinker, one of the best local CAMRA mags, issue 90.

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