

**SOCIETY for the PRESERVATION
of BEERS from the WOOD**

(founded 1963)

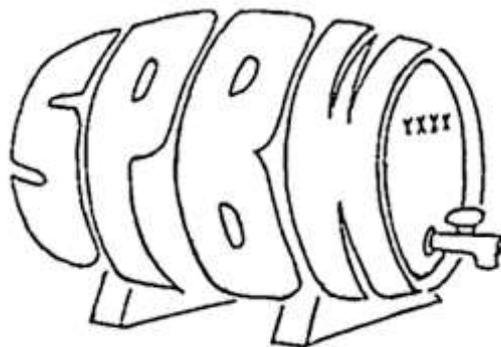
PINT in HAND

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The Bow Bar, a gem of a pub in Edinburgh



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 2010 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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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

By the time this issue is printed the General Election will have come and gone, thank goodness. I doubt somehow that the brewing and pub industry has figured much in the hustings but it would be nice to think that some small section of a party manifesto took some interest. How refreshing it would be if senior politicians would recognise and promote the benefits of drinking locally brewed ales in a well managed pub. The anti-drinking lobby needs to be put in its place: true a lot of people, particularly youngsters, seem to drink too much with the inevitable consequences. But the majority of us, by drinking good beer in the social and convivial surroundings of a pub (or maybe a beer festival), can have a good time without harming ourselves or bothering others to any great degree. But I suppose beer is hardly a vote winner.

Every so often an innovation in brewing world comes along to raise an eyebrow or two. So it was interesting to learn about Marston's 'Fast Cask' concept, which the brewery claims will make it easier for publicans to store and serve 'top quality cask ale' (obviously doesn't apply to Marston's products!).

The new technology means that yeast in the final fermentation process within the cask remains in pellet form surrounded by a permeable gel so the beer itself stays clear while the reaction with the yeast occurs and does not need to be stored flat for days in order to settle. This means that pub or clubs with cellars that are too small or inappropriate for storing cask ale can now do so, since casks can be moved or stored on their ends and don't need time to settle. The new style of yeast also means that finings will no longer be needed so cask ale will become suitable for vegetarians.

Marston's claim that in blind testing of 'Fast Cask' consumers have noticed no difference in the taste of the beers.

Now all this seems very worthy in the face of it. However, it does lead me to thinking of one major fault in a lot of draught beer in pubs these days, in that it is served too soon, green if you like. The concept of cellar conditioning does not seem to appear on the manifesto of many publicans. Admittedly many pub cellars may not have enough space for additional casks, and I suspect many of the leading brands are produced to drop bright and be ready for serving as quickly as possible. But beer does improve from extra maturation – and not just the stronger brews – and the really serious cellar people recognise this and their customers benefit by drinking (in moderation!) especially delicious ales. Regular readers will spot that there is no Roving Report from Andy Whitley in this issue. My humble scribe from Leeds has sent his apologies and normal service will hopefully be restored in the next issue!

Roger

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

Our yearly gathering brought together 25 or so members who indulged themselves in the splendid range of Harvey's beers as well as a veritable mountain of buffet food. As ever, the official proceedings were fairly brief, light hearted and free of controversy. Well, maybe the next time!

Remarkably there was no flood of volunteers for National Executive Committee posts, so last year's (and years before that) splendid body were re-elected unopposed. Just in case you forgot:

Chair: Chris Callow
Vice-Chair: Mike Hall
Secretary: John Rooth
Treasurer: Jim Woodcock
Branch Liaison: Bill English
National Membership Secretary: Roger West
Products: Dave Samuel
Publications: Roger Jacobson

The Chairman's Report and Accounts can be found on pages 6 and 7.

BEER & BUFFET

We seem to have established a tradition of holding an eve-of-GBBF social. The next such gathering happens on **Monday 2 August** at **Ye Olde Mitre**, Ely Place, London EC1N6 SJ. Tickets are £5 and available from John Rooth (details page 2) – cheques payable to SPBW please. YOM is an excellent historic pub tucked away down an alleyway off Hatton Garden, superbly run by the legendary Scottie; it has recently been voted Pub of the Year by Camra's East London & City branch. Although it is now owned by Fullers, it continues to sell a selection of guest beers, with Adnams and Caledonian often featuring.

OUT AND ABOUT

Our next public appearance will be at the Ealing Beer Festival, which we believe will be held in Walpole Park from 7 – 10 July. We usually end up with the usual small group of dedicated volunteers running our stalls at these events so we are always happy for others to come along and help out. If you can spare a few hours for this worthy cause, please let John Rooth know.

BEER & CURRY

The latest B & C session was on the last Sunday in February. A small select crowd began proceedings at the Coborn Arms before moving on to the Palm Tree (both Mile End); next stop was the Carpenters Arms in Bethnal Green and the last pub was the evergreen Pride of Spitalfields off Brick Lane. By all accounts, no one got involved in an argument, let alone a punch up, so it looks like our B & C merchants are mellowing in their old age.

FACEBOOK

The SPBW now has its own Facebook page (if that's the right technical term). If you're not familiar with this 'social networking' site, go to www.facebook.com – set yourself up with a password and put 'SPBW' in 'Search' and all will be revealed!

NATIONAL WEEKEND 2010

The 2010 Weekend will take place in **Shrewsbury** from **12 – 14 November**. We have lined up visits to two breweries: Salopian (Shrewsbury) on the Friday evening and Stonehouse (near Oswestry) on Saturday morning. (Thanks to local member John Lewis for arranging these). As well as this there are plenty of excellent pubs in Shrewsbury to visit, and it's an attractive and historic town in its own right.

Recent Weekends have been well supported by members from all over the country and have been much enjoyed. Let's hope we will be able to say the same about the 2010. If are interested in coming along, please let John Rooth know.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010

Welcome to the Royal Oak in London in the 46th year of the Society. I know that the weather can be unpredictable at this time of the year, but it is truly great to see so many of you here. The NEC meets here monthly and all meetings are open and all members are free to attend. Thanks to you if you managed to visit over the year and thanks especially to the Officers of the Committee who come month after month.

The National Weekend away was based around Sheffield. There is an excellent write up in PiH 113 which should be hitting your letter boxes in the next day or so. Other events arranged for Members were Beer & Buffet evenings, a Burns Night, beer & curry walkabouts; and of course the Tony Littler Trophy.

Pint in Hand has been going for 28 years, thanks to all contributors and Roger Jacobson for keeping it so fresh. Membership is keeping level; we print 500 copies of this document each quarter. Our Membership and Branch Liaison Officers are always on the lookout to increase numbers. It certainly helps to keep the numbers up by the regular beer festivals and brewery visits undertaken by Officers and Members.

The latest winner of the London Pub of the Year competition is the Pembury Tavern, which can be found at 90 Amhurst Road in Hackney. In case you are not aware, the Pembury serves a good range of Milton beers, but it also has an ever changing list of beers from micro-breweries from across the country. The London Pub of the Year selection process is very scientific, the dedication of the selection panel that visits all of the pubs nominated is outstanding.

As always there is a plug for the SPBW website maintained by Mark Hutchison 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, so please use it. On the products front, Dave Samuel is always on the lookout for something different. Small numbers of custom items are available, so please drop him a call.

Please let us raise a glass to those that cannot make it here tonight, let's say cheers to Dave Humphries and [founder member] John Gore who both died last year, but let's look forward and hope for an enjoyable year for the SPBW. Remember that in beer there is happiness and in water, bacteria.

Chris Callow

TONY LITTLER TROPHY

Congratulations to Central London branch, winners of the latest competition for this much prized trophy. The event was expertly organised by RACS (who also fielded two 'neutral' teams) and held at the Shooting Star, Middlesex Street, close to Liverpool Street station. The downstairs function room in this Fullers pub was an ideal setting for a quiz on beer and other subjects. The scores were close after the 'verbal' rounds but when the 'marathon' papers were marked, Central London held off a close challenge from a very relieved Wantz. It was good to see a team from Ipswich taking part in a well attended event. Thanks to Jan Mead & Co for doing a great job and we look forward to next year's event, which of course Central London will organise.

LONDON PUB OF THE YEAR

Who will be the next winner of this prestigious award? Worthy pubs such as the Pembury Tavern, Dog & Bell, Royal Oak, Harp and the Wenlock Arms have been recent winners and there are plenty more potential winners out there. Over the next few months we will take on the task of finding the next LPotY.

All SPBW members – and branches - in the Greater London area are invited to nominate their favourite pub. Please contact Bill English (details on page 2) for a nomination form. *Pubs will not be considered for judging unless a completed form is submitted.* Closing date for nominations is **11 July**.

Judging will happen between August and the results will be announced in the November PiH. If you would like to be part of the judging panel, please let Bill know. Be warned though, this does involve visiting some excellent pubs and drinking their beers.

SPREADING THE WORD

We regularly produce a publicity leaflet for SPBW incorporating a membership application form. Some of you may even have joined us having picked one up! We put these leaflets in friendly and obliging pubs but we would like to spread them as wide as we can, especially outside the London area. If you can help us with this, please let Roger Jacobson (details page 2) know and a bundle of leaflets will be sent. Thanks to those of you who have already helped in this way.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Ten years back the May 2000 issue featured another pub on the front cover that wasn't mentioned inside – this time the Catherine Wheel at Goring. This was once an unspoilt old Brakspear pub although it had been tarted up somewhat well before that issue was published. A report of the latest Tony Littler Trophy event mentioned that plans for a darts and Quiz contest were thwarted somewhat by the absence of a dart board at the chosen venue. Mind you, going by the usual standard of SPBW darts (self included) this was probably not a bad thing. Campden Hill won the Trophy; the event was held at the pub formerly known as the Three Cups, just off Holborn. Then a Youngs house it is now under the Badger banner and known as Old Nick.

Further afield it seems that a new branch in Chicago had paid its affiliation but failed to submit a constitution. I'm not sure we ever heard any more from our friends in the Windy City.

Ten years earlier, PiH 34's cover pub was the New Inn at Walsall, popularly known as 'Pretty Bricks' due to the ornate tiling on its façade. This pub was also not mentioned inside although one of the early SPBW branches was based here. I visited here during a canal trip in the mid-90s and it was then part of the Tap & Spile chain, offering a good selection of ales.

The AGM had been held for the first time at the Rugby Tavern in Bloomsbury (then Fullers, now Shepherd Neame) and it was the last time for Sue Hart who stood down from the NEC after eight years as National Membership Secretary.

Remarkably this was a 24 page issue with most of the second half taken up by three long articles: Andy Whitley touring pubs in the Yorkshire Dales, yours truly steering Wantz branch around Macclesfield, and Bill Smith recounting the history of Woolwich branch in typically humorous fashion. The branch begun in October 1971 at a time when a lot of pubs were going over to dustbin beers. Woolwich would mark such demised with a mock funeral and it's worth repeating this account of events when the Who'd A Thought It, a Truman pub on Plumstead Common went over to fizz:

"The Chairman [*presumably the esteemed Howard Purdie – RJ*] dressed as a vicar conducted a funeral service over a 36 gallon barrel of beer on the forecourt of the pub. A saddened congregation of some 300 beer drinkers listened to his ranting sermon on the text 'They have visited us with the curse of the Demon Keg'. A trumpeter sounded the last post and the barrel (empty) was lowered to rest in the grave specially dug for the grieving landlord who was persuaded to allow the barrel to take his place. Truman ties were cast into the grave and the mourners returned hot foot to the pub to drink the last remaining 36 gallons of one of London's finest brews."

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. There is a possibility of branches being formed in Oxford and Bromley – if you live in these are areas Bill can put you in touch with the relevant contacts.

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 (07707 465750) 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@ntlworld.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.

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!

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.

BRANCHES IN ACTION

In February, **Campden Hill** branch had an excellent curry at the Café Saffron; preceded by some Young's in the Sekforde Arms and followed by some St Peters in the Jerusalem Tavern. The Keith Hudson darts trophy was regained by John Rooth, who beat Ken Davison in the Final, at the Horseshoe in Clerkenwell.

In March we tried out the Wargrave Arms again for our monthly meeting, where the Young's was average. The April Meeting was held at the Prince of Wales in Paddington. The Mongolian food was good, but sadly the beer was pretty dire (as it unfortunately usually is in that establishment).

We managed a trek around Hammersmith with West London Camra on 25 March starting at the Grove, then the Dartmouth Castle, the Swan in Hammersmith Broadway (a new Nicholson's) and the Albion.

On Monday 17 May we have a Southwark pub crawl starting at 7.00 at the Horseshoe Inn, 26 Melior St near London Bridge Station.

Common and Aldbrickham branch held its third Memorial Pub Crawl near to the anniversary of the untimely death of its founder, Peter Smith, on Saturday 7 March. The destination this time was Cambridge and we were pleased that a number of members from the London branches also joined us for the day. We visited nearly all the best pubs in Cambridge, including two run by people who used to work at the Hobgoblin in Reading. The latter was not one of Pete's favourite pubs but I think we were impressed by the standard of the beer at these and the other pubs we called on.

RACS have been reasonably quiet for a couple of weeks following an Easter Raffle for our charity Cystic Fibrosis Trust - but they had a St George's Day bash on 25 April at The Gate - Morris Dancers, jellied eels and Steak and Ale Pie and some free beer. The following day, we hosted the Tony Littler Trophy Quiz at The Shooting Star. A "beery" quiz competition has been arranged.

Then, apart from the regular monthly meeting we are looking forward to our AGM on 26 May and the start of our 15th year, with commemorative T-shirts available when paying subs. After 10 years we have raised our annual sub from £3 to £5 - still amazing value!

Special branch members are girding their loins for the annual canal week gathering, this year entirely in Warwickshire. Hopefully we'll enjoy a few decent pints of locally brewed ale.

Wantz enjoyed their latest 'foreign' trip, to Edinburgh in April. Some reflections on the pubs we visited fill a few pages elsewhere this issue. In early March there was a pub walk in the Covent Garden area, starting at the magnificent Princess Louise (Sam Smith's, under £2 a pint!) on Holborn and finishing at the award-winning Harp. The pubs in between were pretty good as well. Three weeks later we had our latest 'Belgian'

evening at the Dove in Hackney. In fact, this pub serves a selection of handpumped ales, but the extensive range of Belgian bottled and draught beers is also very inviting.

West Riding celebrated its 21st birthday in April with more than 30 members visiting the Fleece (Pudsey), Fighting Cock (Bradford), Travellers Inn (Hipperholme) and the New Charnwood (Heckmondwike) with more than 30 different beers between them.

MALTS AND MIRRORS

A SWIFT GUIDE TO EDINBURGH

Edinburgh is a city of great character with an abundance of excellent pubs and I can hardly presume to offer anything but a superficial guide to its many delights. These days there are many Scottish small breweries producing a range of fine ales, so it's hardly the virtual beer desert of 20 years ago. First time visitors should be warned that the city is not exactly flat, least of all in the centre, so if you're walking between districts prepare for some up and downs. Wantz branch paid a three day visit in April and we did our best to take advantage of the delights on offer.

If you're arriving at (or leaving from) Waverley station, the handiest pub is the **Halfway House**, in Fleshmarket Close. This rather unfortunately named thoroughfare is actually a long narrow staircase off Market Street. Quite obviously the pub is, in the best A A Milne tradition, halfway up the stairs. It's a fairly small establishment with much railway memorabilia, including old timetables, on display. Four draught Scottish beers are on offer and I sampled Kelburn Arran Gold on my visit. Remarkably for pub of such modest dimensions, regular beer festivals are held here.



Let's stay in the Old Town (basically the area to the south of Princes Street) for a while and move on to the excellent **Bow Bar**, in West Bow. Since this pub was mentioned in detail by Andy in PiH 112, I won't say a lot more. It's a small one room pub with lots of old brewery mirrors (a feature of many of the local pubs). You can choose between 8 beers

from all over Britain served by air pressure pumps, including a regular session beer at £2.85. Note that the tables here are no more than small boards bolted to the floor. There is an assortment of bottled foreign beers and very wide range of malts – the menu runs to 8 pages.

Moving south, the **Sandy Bells** in Forest Road is another one room pub where four handpumps dispense Scottish ales. There is also a font dispensing McEwans Export, which I recall as being particularly foul even by dustbin beer standards. The Bells is a well known venue for live folk music every night and weekend lunchtimes, and two fiddlers were in action while we supped our pints.

Our next stop is **Cloisters**, a converted parsonage. This pub seemed to be popular with the younger set compared to many we visited. 10 draught beers available here including Hyde's mild (very few milds were sighted). Among several old brewery mirrors was one for Aitkens A Mild. Take care if you need a comfort break as the toilets are reached via a steep spiral staircase.

If you enjoy grand old pubs, **Bennets Bar** on Leven Street, is a classic example on Camra's National Inventory, boasting tiled panels and yet more old mirrors. Caledonian Deuchars IPA and 80 shilling are the only draught beers.



Not far from Bennets is the **Blue Blazer** in Spittal Street. This has two bars on split level and offers 8 beers. Look out for the grand old fireplace. This is a good honest traditional pub and was fairly quiet on our visit; however I have been here on a Saturday afternoon when it was very busy although I recall the service as being highly efficient.

Now let's tackle the New Town, starting at the **Cask & Barrel**, on the corner of East London Street and Broughton Street. This is a large open plan pub with a substantial horseshoe bar. The collection of mirrors here includes one for Knox's of Alloa. If you want something else to look at there are plenty of tv screens. Another wide range of beers including Youngs Special, which we passed on. A good few wooden casks here, sadly only used as tables.

Just down Broughton Street is the **Barony Bar**, part of the T & J Bernard chain. There is one large L-shaped pub with two giant McLachlan whiskey mirrors on display. A less impressive beer range here (the likes of Theakston Old Peculier and Marston's Pedigree) so we tried Caledonian 'Wit' beer which was pleasant enough.

From here we moved to West Register Street, in reality a few narrow lanes off Princes Street not far north of Waverley station. There are two grand old pubs here, but the whole block was covered in scaffolding so we could hardly appreciate the exteriors. Happily, all was well inside both and we called first at the **Guildford Arms**, entering through the revolving door. This is another large open plan pub sporting very ornate décor; there is a restaurant upstairs in gallery. There is an impressive range of 10 beers including 4 from Wylam of Northumberland, as well as a variety of more local brews.

The other pub here is the **Cafe Royal**, as praised by Andy. I can't add much, except to observe that the impressive island bar seemed to take up a lot of space, resulting in a shortage of seating. But do visit.

At the near end of Rose Street (a long thoroughfare bursting with shops and bars) we find the **Abbotsford Bar & Restaurant**. This is another National Inventory pub with an island bar, wood panelling and an ornate ceiling. Air pressure pumps serve a good range of Scottish brews. Maybe I shouldn't go on about brewery mirrors, but look out for the long narrow Ballingales of Dundee. The food here is top class and most of us ate here two evenings.



Down the street is another NI pub, the **Kenilworth**. Outstanding features here include ornate tiles and ceiling and stained glass. As usual, the beer range was dominated by Scottish ales, but we were all tempted by Thornbridge Jaipur IPA, excellent 5.9% brew.

Finally in this district is the **Oxford Bar** in Young Street, which I would say is my second favourite Edinburgh pub after the Bow Bar. There's not a lot of it but it does have good lively atmosphere. There is a small room where the bar is plus an equally small side room. Readers of Ian Rankin's Rebus novels (none of which I've read) will no doubt be familiar with the Oxford as it's a popular haunt of both author and character.

Let me just mention a few other pubs. First off there's **Kay's Bar** in Jamaica Street. This is a small cosy historic pub in a quiet back street in what I assume is the legal quarter. You'll find 8 handpumps serving (inevitably) mostly Scottish beers including my selection, Atlas Wayfarer (at £3.40 this was thankfully the most expensive pint of the trip). The building was the premises of a wine merchant for over 150 years until

the 1970s. A notable feature is the row of wooden casks on shelf behind seats.

Just to the north west of the city centre, just across the Water of Leith, is the **Stockbridge Tap** in Raeburn Place. Outside is a bright modern exterior; inside is an L-shaped room with a fairly basic area by bar and more formal dining/drinking area round the corner. A beer festival was being held a week after our visit and 25 or so beers from around Britain, including a few specially brewed, were lined up.



If Wetherspoon pubs are your thing, the **Standing Order** on George Street should meet your needs. It's a vast and busy pub in a former bank, with various drinking areas. I imagine it usually offers a fair range of ales – this was certainly case when I looked in as the JDW April beer festival was in full swing.

And that's by no means all – there are 6 or 7 GBG-listed pubs close to the centre we didn't manage to get to. All those mentioned above are reasonably close together – pubs with tons of character and an abundance of good beers. The beer is by no means cheap, pretty much what we are used to paying down in London. But if you've not been to Edinburgh, I don't think you'll be disappointed.

RJ

Some back issues of **Pint in Hand** are available:- numbers 46; 49; 86-111. 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.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

If you want to receive up to the minute news about SPBW events, you can get this information in the comfort of your own PC monitor. Send your email address to John Rooth and he will add you to his circulation list. We promise that your email details will only be used for the transmission of SPBW material.

THEREBY HANGS A TAIL

You travel over three hundred miles, walk into an establishment purveying real ale, only to find your locally brewed ale. Well, this happened to me, on a recent nostalgic visit to Inverness, when I walked into a bar only to find them selling Cameron's Strongarm. Before my retirement, working in Hartlepool many an enjoyable POETS (push off early tomorrow's Saturday) afternoon was spent in the Brewery Tap. Both past and present brewery employees along with Joe Public frequent the Tap so the ale has to be in good nick.

My taster was canny, considering it had been brewed some 312 miles away in Hartlepool. Not wishing to offend, nor reveal my interest, I did not pass comment to the barman, saying I would prefer a locally brewed Black Isle ale. I did think of returning next day wearing my Cameron's polo shirt but again did not wish to offend the Highland Clans, having Border Reiver ancestry myself.

Which brings me to how Strongarm came to be brewed.

During the 1950s the industrial workers of West Hartlepool were demanding stronger ale to quench their thirsts. On hearing their demands Cameron's Head Brewer – a Mr Sanderson – decided to do something about it and so, on 18 March 1958, the first pint of Strongarm went on sale in the Waverley Hotel for 1/7d and at an abv of 4.0%. The price translates to a fraction under 8p in decimal coinage and Strongarm's strength at that time is harder to explain, as it was never disclosed to drinkers, a practice then common on the grounds of 'commercial confidentiality'.

So how did the brew get its name? On looking out of his office window, Mr Sanderson's eye caught sight of the professional firm of Armstrong's. By reversing the name to Strongarm, along with the logo of a blacksmith at his anvil, this reflected the heavy industry of both the town and the north east of England.

Why the article's title? Simply that it is alleged that during the Napoleonic Wars, a monkey was washed ashore. The simple folk of Hartlepool (or Cod Enders as they are affectionately known) knowing that England was at war with France saw this animal chattering away. Neither having seen a monkey nor heard a Frenchman, the locals decided to hold court, tried this funny looking individual, found him guilty of being a French spy and hung him.

H'Angus aka Phil Chinery, Darlington

PERFECT PUB PAGE

There are some pubs described as being from a 'time-warp'. As a city dweller, I prefer to say that visiting the **Bridge Inn** at Topsham is like stepping into a parallel universe. I think I can say with some confidence that there are very few pubs like this left anywhere.

Topsham itself stands on the River Exe, a few miles south of Exeter, and is in its own right a pleasant small riverside town. The Bridge is on the outskirts, past the rail station, in a superb location by the River Clyst. What better than to sit outside with a pint looking over the delightful rural vista. Inside however, you can appreciate why the Bridge Inn is so special. A small, rambling building, the pub has a number of small rooms, although I think only a couple of these are for use by customers.



There is no conventional bar, just two small counters, one for inside customers and one for those outdoors. None of those new-fangled beer engines here either – up to 8 or nine beers are served in time-honoured fashion, direct from the cask. As you might expect, the emphasis is on locally brewed ales, of which there is now quite a considerable choice. Another throwback is that the beer is served in dimpled, handled glasses. Food is restricted to sandwiches, ploughmans and the like, available lunchtimes and early evenings.

The Bridge Inn also retains old-time opening hours: 12 – 2 and 6 (7 on Sunday) - 10.30 (11 Friday and Saturday), so plan your visit carefully.

It is thought there was a dwelling on this site as early as 1086, in the time of the Domesday Book. The stonemasons responsible for the construction of Exeter Cathedral may have lodged here. The present building mostly dates from the 16th Century, but the actual date of the different parts varies considerably. Most of the fabric is local stone, but the old brewhouse at the rear is traditional Devon cob. This has the remains of the hop drying floor, and is adjacent to a large brewing chimney.

The pub has been owned by the same family since 1897 when William John Gibbings from Clyst St. George took over the inn in 1897. The current licensee is Caroline Cheffers-Heard, his great-granddaughter. She is the fourth generation, and hopes that her daughter Riannon and granddaughter Amelia, born in April 2008, will carry on the tradition.

The Bridge made the news in 1998 when the Queen called in - her only official pub visit. I wonder if she thinks all pubs are like this? Sadly, very few are – which is one reason why I can unreservedly recommend a visit to this excellent establishment.

The Bridge Inn, Bridge Hill, Topsham, Devon EX3 0QQ 01392 873862
www.cheffers.co.uk

RJ

Last Orders – from Derby

Trevor Price is landlord of the Masons Arms in Mickleover, Derbyshire. Having begun his working career in the mining and engineering trades, he became a publican in 1985, running a number of Shipstones houses. He has a few memories about how Shippos operated before the brewery's demise: "We used to send quite a bit of beer back in those days. You would ring around six or seven pubs and say 'What's up with brew such and such?' and they would all say it was poor quality. Then you'd ring up the brewery and the reply was always the same: 'There's only you that's had a problem with it!'" Then there were the two Shippo's 'Cellar Quality Control men' who would always arrive at 5 to 2 of an afternoon in the days of 2pm closing. One was a burly Scot named Watson Millar and his sidekick was Norman. They'd say "We'd better just have a half with you" before handing over a credit note for a gallon of beer. They rarely left before opening time in the evening! Trevor also recalled that no landlord wanted a phone call from the brewery on a Friday afternoon: that was when they used to sack publicans. Then there was the Managing Director's wife who always drank a very rare Vermouth: every Shippo's pub had to keep a bottle in stock just in case she called in!

Thanks to Derby Drinker

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