

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

(founded 1963)

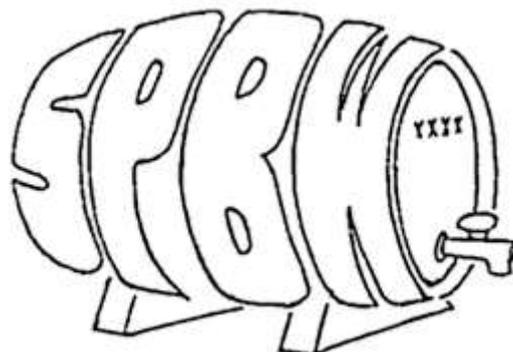
PINT in HAND

Number 115

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The British Grenadier, Colchester (see page 15)



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 November 2010 issue should reach the Editor by **25 October**.
- 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

Looking for inspiration for this issue's sermon I glanced back at my Editorial of ten years ago. I see then that the multi-international group Interbrew had taken over the brewing interests of Bass and Whitbread. Note to younger readers – these were historic major brewers owning thousands of pubs. These days Whitbread is an almost distant memory and Bass – I've just had to check with the Good Beer Guide that draught Bass, once a classic brew, is now produced by Marstons.

In this context, my 2000 notes added: "A quick skim through the big breweries section of the GBG reveals a list of beers that provokes a major yawn. Is there anyone who actually seeks out these beers and drinks them in preference to anything produced with care and devotion to the brewer's art?" that I think is still largely true, except that we now have a new generation of national breweries (GK, Marstons, Wells-Youngs) some of whose brews are not completely worthless.

One of the major brewing companies very much in the news of late is Tetleys: they are planning to close down the long-established (1822) Leeds brewery with brewing to be transferred to Banks's plant in Wolverhampton. I'll admit that I've largely avoided Tetley bitter for years but I do think it's a major pity that the brewery's heritage is to be dumped in this way. But I'm as naïve as ever: the brewery occupies a prime site which is ripe for development. And the brewery's name? Carlsberg UK – so much for heritage.

The second part of my 2000 rant was the introduction by a couple of brewers of draught beers aimed at weaning drinkers off lagers and dustbin beers. Examples were Youngs Triple A and 'Scottish Courage' Cool Cask. Anyone remember them? I'd forgotten as well. Since then there has been a substantial growth of light, golden beers, aimed at the same market, and which have become an established brewing style. There are those who bemoan the proliferation of such beers at the expense of traditional bitters, but there's nothing wrong with improved choice. In the case of a substantial regional brewer like Fullers, for example, the blonde Discovery sits happily alongside the long-established London Pride and ESB.

Something that has become noticeable in recent years is beers from smaller brewers becoming almost national brands. Taylor's Landlord is one prime example. Another, from an even smaller and much newer brewery is Sharp's Doom Bar. I've no axe to grind with the brewery but this has to be one of the most overrated beers around. What do people see in it? Sharp's produce a much nicer, lower gravity beer, Cornish Coaster (which just happens to be a golden bitter) which is all too rare (I know I live more than 200 miles from Cornwall but Doom Bar is readily available in these parts). But that's just my opinion of course. If you disagree, please let me know!

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.

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.

BEER & BUFFET

I'm writing this before the event at Ye Olde Mitre on 2 August but I do know that 20+ members will be there. It promises to be a typically enjoyable evening.

OUT AND ABOUT

We were again represented at the Ealing Beer Festival in July. This took place during a heat wave which made the marquee-based event quite pleasant. Trade was fairly quiet, leaving plenty of time to amble the many ales and ciders on offer.

Our next public appearance will probably at the Croydon & Sutton Beer Festival, 8 – 10 October. Venue is Wallington Hall, Stafford Road, Wallington, Surrey.

Further ahead is the Pig's Ear Festival, 30 November – 3 December (Tuesday – Friday). This is at a new venue: the Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, Hackney, half a mile up the road from the previous venue.

Once again, we will welcome volunteers to help out on our stands (and sample the beers!) Contact John Rooth if you can spare us a few hours.

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. We are now fully booked as far as the brewery visits are concerned, so bad luck if you were hoping to come along.

SPBW ON LINE

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. 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!

LONDON PUB OF THE YEAR

Many thanks to individuals and branches who have nominated pubs to be judged for the 2011 competition. We have 14 pubs on the list, as follows:

Blythe Hill Tavern, Catford; *Calthorpe Arms*, Clerkenwell; *Cask Pub & Kitchen*, Pimlico; *Cleveland Arms*, Paddington; *Dog & Bell*, Deptford; *Eleanor Arms*, Bow; *Harp*, Covent Garden; *Hope*, Carshalton; *Jerusalem Tavern*, Clerkenwell; *Old Fountain*, City Road; *Royal Oak*, Borough; *Southampton Arms*, Kentish Town; *Wenlock Arms*, Hoxton; *Ye Olde Mitre*, Holborn.

An interesting selection including six first time nominations as well as four past winners. The judging panel will drag themselves around these pubs during the next couple of months under the watchful eye of Bill English. The winner will be announced in the next issue of PiH and you can follow the judging process on our website.

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.

BOOK REVIEW

BAMBERG & FRANCONIA: A GUIDE TO BEERS AND PUBS

By John Conen; ISBN 978-0-9544426-3-7; £9.99

SPBW member John Conen has published an updated version of this guide, which first appeared in 2003. Bamberg is a German city renowned among beer lovers for its numerous breweries and pubs and this well-produced book should whet most appetites.

John describes Bamberg as 'the miracle city', not just for escaping obliteration by bombing in WW2, but for the survival of its brewing traditions. The latter is obviously much appreciated by the locals, who consume 330 litres *per capita per annum*, substantially above the national average. Bamberg is the centre of the Franconian brewing industry which boasts some 150 breweries in a 35km radius, nine of these in the city itself.

The book gives an account of Franconian brewing tradition and local beer styles. One of the most famous of these is Rauchbier and I was interested to read that in bygone days, all malt would have been kilned over wood fires and thus the beer would have had a smoky flavour. The centrepiece of the book is the section on Bamberg's breweries and pubs – in the latter case the author's favourites plus other recommendations rather than a comprehensive list, which would have needed a rather larger book! There's an amusing account of the Bamberg 'beer war' of 1907 when local breweries raised the price of beer by 1 pfennig (the first increase for 100 years!), causing locals to boycott local beers until the brewers finally gave in.

John also describes breweries and pubs in wider Franconia and also sets out suggested walking tours for the more energetic. As well as covering pubs and breweries, there's also plenty of useful information on local drinking customs, food, bierkellers (actually gardens), not to mention transport and tourism. John also throws in some local history and there are useful maps at the back to help you find your way about.

The book is liberally illustrated with colour photos and is very well presented indeed. It makes for an interesting read even if you've never been anywhere near Bamberg, but I suspect a few at least may be tempted to make a visit after reading this.

RJ

Copies of this book are available from the Camra website, £7.99 for members: www.camra.org.uk/books



FROM THE ARCHIVES

A drawing of the Carpenters Arms at Thornwood Common graced the front of the August 2000 PiH. This was (and I imagine still is) a free house close to Epping Forest that I recall visiting once after a walk in the woods. The pub is one of those mentioned in the legendary Colin Price's report on various pubs in that part of Essex. I contributed an article about the drinking delights of Bath following a Wantz branch day out; this attractive city has a plethora of good pubs and is one to visit if you haven't already. Meanwhile Andy Whitley reported on an assortment of alehouses in Lincolnshire and Derbyshire as well as well as various outposts of Yorkshire. There is an article about the Porter Brewery in Haslingden, Lancashire. This enterprising small outfit run by David Porter then owned five pubs serving a variety of decent brews. The brewery was bought by Pennine Ales in 2007 and supplies three tied houses plus some free trade.

We learn that the Gate in Sawbridgeworth, home to RACS, had just opened its own micro-brewery, and both pub and brewhouse are still operating. Member John Keller suggested that the Society reintroduced its London Pub of the Year contest, which was of course taken up.

The August 1990 issue sported a dark blue cover with a picture of the Kings Head in Shrewsbury. The town had been the venue for the latest National Weekend (and of course we return later this year). Apart from visiting local pubs there had been outings to the All Nations and Three Tuns brew pubs as well as the Plough at Wistanstow, the Woods brewery tap. Ossie Tillet reported on the GBBF at Brighton, where the SPBW ran a stall. Ossie represented the Society on the judging panel for Champion Beer of Britain. He was judging Best Bitters and helped to vote Taylor's Landlord the best. However, this was pipped as overall champion by Ind Coope Burton Ale. Andy gave an account of a day's drinking in Derby, a city which remains one of the best for good pubs and beers.

Let's have a dip into the March 1981 Branch Newsletter, the last SPBW publication that I didn't edit! There's not actually a great deal of it (mostly a list of branch meetings and other events) but we do learn that the Cross Keys in Hammersmith, a Fullers house, had been voted our London Pub of the Year.

<p>Some back issues of <i>Pint in Hand</i> are available:- numbers 46; 49; 86-114. 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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SUPER COOPER

Alastair Simms, master cooper at Wadworth brewery in Devizes, has been admitted to the Livery of the Worshipful Company of Coopers in a ceremony at Painters' Hall in London. The ancient title of Liveryman used to refer to the gift of clothing and food made to the recipient but is now considered a prestigious reward for the contribution that a new member makes to both the industry and the Company itself.

Alastair received his citation from Lt Col Adrian Carroll, clerk to the Worshipful Company of Coopers. Col Carroll said: "It was unanimously agreed by the Court that Alastair Simms fully deserved to be admitted as a Liveryman because of his involvement in the educational side of the Company and, as the last Master Cooper in the country, his contribution to the industry as a whole."

With thanks to Wiltshire Gazette & Herald and Chris Callow

MATTERS ARISING

It's my policy to send a copy of PiH to any pub or brewery that gets a worthwhile mention in that particular issue. I don't often get feedback but it was nice to receive this email from Edinburgh:

Hi Roger,

Thanks for your recent mailing and newsletter from your organisation, I was very interested to read about your society and most grateful for the inclusion of the ***Halfway House*** in your review...!

I purchased the pub just over a year ago (should be renamed the Arm and a Leg..) and have been busy trying to keep the Pub running on the same lines as the previous owners – who had developed the pub very successfully in recent years. As you mention we have 4 cask conditioned beers on tap at all times – usually Scottish micros – but interspersed with a few English brews. A lot of the Scots clientele are very parochial tho' with their ale and I have to be a bit careful..!

I wish I was able to offer your members a discount, however the new Licensing legislation precludes me from doing so, (well that's how Edinburgh Licensing Board have interpreted it...), and I've been told I'd be liable for prosecution if I did !! Charming...

I'd obviously be happy to display any leaflets for you in the pub if it would help, and wish your society every success for the year ahead. Although a son of Hertfordshire, Edinburgh is my adopted home and a great city so if there's any more outings north of the border, do drop in and the first ones on me – the board can't stop me doing that..!

Kind Regards, *Steve Whiting*

So, should you find yourself in Edinburgh, you know where to go!

JOHN PASCOE

I was sorry to learn of the death of John Pascoe, formerly landlord of the Swan at Little Totham, Essex. John took the Swan from a run down village pub to being a twice winner of Camra's national pub of the year. It is described in the current Good Beer Guide as 'the epitome of the traditional pub' and it serves a good variety of mostly local ales straight from the cask.



John Pascoe, pictured right, outside the Swan

The Swan being somewhat out of the way I have only managed two visits (to date) but on both occasions I chatted with John and found him a very pleasant bloke and totally dedicated to the pub and its superb range of ales. By the time of my second visit John had handed over the running of the pub to his son and daughter in law who I'm sure will continue to maintain his high standards. The Swan was featured in PiH 92 on the Perfect Pub Page and was also depicted on the front cover. If you can find your way to this corner of Essex (between Maldon and Tiptree) the Swan is an essential pub to visit.



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 **Wargrave Arms**, 42 Brendon Street, London W1. 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. 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!

BRANCHES IN ACTION

Campden Hill has returned to the Wargrave Arms in Brendon St for monthly meetings now that it has been refurbished. The pub now has an amazing collection of malt whiskies as an accompaniment to the Youngs.

On the day of England's breathtaking display against Slovenia, we toured Richmond, which experienced a power cut meaning that viewers missed 40 minutes of the match. The Youngs was in great shape in The Orange Tree, the Old Ship, the Watermans and the White Cross on the river. The Prince's Head (Fullers) on the Green was the non-Bedford representative. Good weather was a bonus.

In July we visited 4 pubs in Croydon. The Dog & Bull by the street market is a quiet community local, serving excellent Youngs. The Spread Eagle is a large pub serving fair quality Fullers. Opposite that on the High Street is the Green Dragon (spiritual home of Crappers branch), which had half a dozen fairly unusual micro brews on hand pump and stillage, including Darkstar, Hogsback and Davenports. Further along the High Street we went in the Half & Half, formerly Bier Circus, which had excellent Hophead at £2.16 a pint, as well as numerous continental beers and the half and half mix of light & dark Budovar. On 16 August we are having a Lebanese Meal. Campden Hill events are listed under the Campden Hill Forum on the bulletin board/SPBW forum.

Many congratulations to **Central London** members Dot (now nee Brown) and Ray Goodearl who were married on 9 July. Celebrations included taking all the guests to the reception in an old London Routemaster bus, complete with bus conductor who issued real tickets. Dot's home town is York and both Dot and Ray are York City supporters

so they celebrated by treating their guests to a barrel of York brewery's Tettang seasonal beer. On what turned out to be the hottest day of the year this light cask single hop ale, brewed with great care by head brewer Nick Webster, proved a very good choice, was in great condition and appreciated by all. Needless to say, not a drop was left by the end of the evening. *Photo thanks to Linda West.*



On Saturday 18 September, following last year's success, we are looking forward to another of Ray's real ale rail rambles. In the meantime Alasdair Boyd will be leading us on a pub evaluation walk on Wednesday 18 August, and on Monday 18 October we hope to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Branch with a brewery trip to Sambrooks and a meal.

Pictured below is a bunch of **Ipswich** branch members at the Blackfriars Brewery Tap, Great Yarmouth. All the beer here is served from wooden casks. *Photo thanks to Ian Blacklaw.*



Special Branch's latest May canal week was blessed by uncharacteristic (but very welcome) warm sunny weather. We spent a relaxed time on the Stratford and Grand Union canals enjoying a variety of pretty decent ales. Favourite pub of the week was the **Harvester Inn** at Long Itchington: this was featured at length in PiH 106, the landlord

recalled the article and was most appreciative! Suffice to say the pub has hardly changed. The best of the other pubs start with the **Masons Arms** in Wilmcote, a village just north of Stratford famous as the birthplace of Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mum. This is a fairly homely pub serving Otter and Hobson's bitters at very reasonable prices. The **Cape of Good Hope** on the northern outskirts of Warwick stands right by the canal. The pub was built in 1800 and is a genuine free house with a fairly basic 'front' bar with tv and juke box (plus regular live music) and a smarter room to the rear more popular with diners. Beers included routine offerings from Greene King and Tetley along with a house beer by Church End named Two Llocks (or it may be Twollocks, I didn't check). Weatheroak Keystone Hops (direct from the cask) and another guest beer also feature. A lively pub popular with locals as well as boaters. Last but hardly least is the **Talbot Inn** in Leamington Spa. This traditional back street local stands just 50 yards from the canal (between bridges 37a and 38) and features an impressive mural on a side wall. There is a fairly basic room with the bar counter and a more comfortable room to one side. Regular beers are Wye Valley HPA and Butty Bach; Hop Back Summer Lightning and Elland Born To Be Mild featured on both our visits; guest beers included our favourite of the week, Blackwater Soul, which I believe is brewed by Salopian. Beers were in excellent condition and this is the sort of pub which deserves our support.

Wantz branch enjoyed yet another return visit to the excellent Singhburi Thai restaurant in Leytonstone High Road. We never fail to enjoy a good meal here. Aperitifs were taken in the Walnut Tree, a JDW pub a mile up the road with a decent selection of ales available. Our latest pub walk, in mid-July, started in Stoke Newington, taking in the Daniel Defoe (Wells plus guests) and the Jolly Butchers, a recently re-opened free house with about eight ales on tap. We appeared to be the oldest customers by some margin! A lively pub, perhaps a bit noisy for some tastes but a welcome addition to the beer scene. We rounded off the evening with a walk to the Anchor & Hope by the canal in Clapton. It's good to report that the pub remains unspoilt and the beers were in fine condition. We are planning further pub walks in the wider east London area, the next being in the Victoria Park/Hackney area on 1 September.

West Riding branch have a variety of outings lined up: on 21 August is a trip to the Dewsbury, Ossett and Wakefield area, possibly with a look at Bob's Brewery in Ossett. On 26 August is a train trip to Peterborough Beer Festival. In September there will be trips to Southport and Burnley (11th) and Elland brewery (18th).

On a warm sunny day in July the branch visited Daleside brewery in Harrogate. Two beers were available on hand pull for us to enjoy, Daleside Special Bitter and Summer Delight, also some Morocco Ale from the cask. We later visited pubs in Bishop Monkton, Ripon, Dacre Banks and Pool.

CANTERING IN CAMULODUNUM

A Saturday Sojourn in Colchester

Towards the end of July, an inter-branch outing took 8 of us (representing Campden Hill, Central London, Common and Wantz) to the oldest town in England (possibly) to sample some of its best pubs and beers (definitely).

Having arrived safely and on time at Colchester Town station (handier for the town centre than the main rail station) we hastened to the first of our chosen pubs, the **Playhouse** on St Johns Street. This is one of the Wetherspoon empire and is sited in, hardly surprisingly, a former theatre and cinema. It's been very well preserved, retaining the old circle and a couple of boxes, now filled with dummies. Old playbills decorate the walls to provide a bit of nostalgia for the more veteran amongst us. Four banks of 6 handpumps each adorned the long circular bar, although most of the beers were duplicated. Of particular interest were two ales from the fairly new Cliff Quay brewery in Ipswich, situated in fact on part of the old Tolly Cobbold site. I tried the 3.4% bitter which made for a pleasant start to the day's entertainment. Beers from Brentwood and Salopian breweries were also on offer, along with the customary JDW fare.

Just a few doors along the road was our next call, the **Fox & Fiddler**. The pub apparently dates back to the 15th Century and there are plenty of oak beams around, though rather too high to be original. The entrance leads into a smallish front bar with comfy chairs, but the pub stretches back a fair way. Beerwise, there were two Essex brews from Mighty Oak plus ones from 'Morland' and 'Hardy & Hanson'; well, they do at least come from East Anglia. While we supped we were entertained by John Rooth's selection on the juke box; it's not often you can listen to Miles Davis and John Coltrane in a pub, although he did lower the tone with some Hawkwind. What else? Well, the guvnor seemed to be a friendly fellow and the F & F looked like a pleasant retreat from the bustle of the shopping centre.

Moving swiftly on we headed south along Butt Road to the **Fat Cat**. I think this has a connection to the Cats in Ipswich and Norwich, but not to the original, in Sheffield. Whatever, the Colchester Cat is a bright and basic pub decorated with much breweriana. A fair range of beers was on offer, mostly from East Anglian breweries (eg Mauldon, Crouch Vale, Woodforde); although the bar sported a bank of handpumps, all the beers we tried appeared to be drawn direct from the cask – and very nice they were too. A feature here is the Thursday Curry Night, themed on recipes from different countries.

When the time came for us to drag ourselves to the next pub, the guvnor was very helpful in pointing us in the right direction to a short cut. Of course he may just have been keen to get rid of us! But the walk was more than worthwhile as it led us to one of the day's stand out

pubs, the **Odd One Out** on Mersea Road. Set on a busy main road in a residential area, the OOO is a real old fashioned establishment and a delight to visit. On crossing the threshold there is a smartish area to the right and the more basic sections and the bar counter to the left. The pub has been in the same ownership for more than 20 years, which may explain why it remains unspoilt. There are 5 pumps, one of which dispensed Mighty Oak Oscar Wilde, I think the only mild we encountered that day. You can also choose from 4 ciders from plastic casks on the bar. I bravely sampled a couple of halves and lived to tell the tale. Also available were filled rolls, sweets and assorted pharmaceutical products (possibly helpful if you overdo the cider). Other quirks here are that the beer prices are not rounded to the nearest 10p as seems to prevalent these days (the mild cost £2.54) and that the local brews are dispensed from wooden casks once used by Mitchells of Lancaster. No pub visit to Colchester is complete without a session in the Odd One Out.

If that was a hard act to follow, the **British Grenadier** on Military Road was not far behind. We were given a friendly greeting as we entered this street corner pub, its name and location a reminder that Colchester remains a garrison town. The BG is owned by Adnams and might have closed if not for the efforts of the enthusiastic couple who run it. Apart from the usual bitter and Broadside from Southwold, there were two guest beers (the pub takes full advantage of Adnams guest beer policy, testimony to which is the bar clip collection around the place). I tried Purity Mad Goose from Warwickshire which was up to the high standard of that brewery's output. The pub consists of one main bar with a pool room round the back, and is one to add to the list of essential pubs in this town.

Just one more pub to visit for now, on the other side of town. We returned to Colchester Town for the short ride to the main line station. Just a couple of minutes from here, on Bergholt Road, is the **Bricklayers**. Like the British Grenadier, this is an Adnams house but with a much wider beer range, both from Southwold and guests (mostly I think from local breweries such as Nethergate.). Apart from a small room at the front this is mostly a large open plan house with a patio at the rear. Potted foliage and hanging baskets abound in this lively local and I recall the people behind the bar being very friendly as well. A good place to end a highly enjoyable day; well done to Bill English for sorting out the itinerary and thanks to the various publicans for looking after us!

RJ



HOPS BOATS AND DEER

Andy's Roving Report

The latest addition to the Ossett Brewery's estate, **The Hop** opened earlier this year in an area that was an ex-industrial wasteland up to a few years ago. The pub occupies two railway tunnels beneath Leeds City station and I am told that a part of the premises was previously home to a shop selling teddy bears!

The layout of The Hop is straightforward enough – two vestibules (being the entrance and fire exit) furnished with tables and chairs flank the almost cavernous main bar area; I understand that the total capacity throughout is estimated at 400 people in all. I was here on the opening night and can well believe that more might fit in at times. In better weather, one can sit outside in the square and survey the hotel and other supersized buildings that have sprung up hereabouts recently.

Of the 10 handpumps, 4 are usually reserved for Ossett's own products, one for a proper cider or perry and the other 5 for guests. Beers vary in price; in the middle of July, Ossett Blonde (3.9%) cost £2.50 a pint, whilst a guest beer, Rudgate Ruby Mild (4.4%) was 20p dearer. One of my more knowledgeable companions observed that there's racking space for 16 'nines' in the ground floor cellar, which is behind the bar itself. Also available is a small selection of foreign bottled beers. You get a decent deal on the food here – pie and peas plus a pint for a fiver. The pies come from Andrew Jones of Huddersfield and are well worth gnawing on.

Right above the bar counter is a mezzanine floor – here's where bands perform on Fridays and Saturdays. There's plenty of seating up here too and a good view down into the main room. Over all this is the vaulted brick ceiling, which prevents anyone waiting for a train on platform 16 above from dropping in to join you.

Verdict: well worth calling in for a pint or two, though weekend evenings can get noisy!

The Hop, Dark Arches, Granary Wharf, off Neville Street, Leeds LS1 4BR; tel 0113 2439854; hop.leeds@googlemail.com

Moving north east, the **Steamboat** in South Shields stands on what appears to be a street of pubs – out of four consecutive buildings, three are pubs and there's a bar tucked away up a nearby side street as well. They'd really have to be good to equal the Steamboat though. This is a tremendously traditional hostelry and gives you an idea what the area was like in its heyday. The bar room is absolutely festooned with nautical memorabilia and that includes the ceiling which is almost totally obscured by flags. I counted eight handpumps on the counter with five in operation; after all it was a Wednesday in February when we visited, so things were a bit quiet. Note also an eclectic selection of whiskeys. Apart from the bar room there appears to be two much smaller rooms

up some stairs on the left of the entrance. From my researches, I understand that this is an ex-Wards house, is one of the oldest pubs left in South Shields and used to be called the Locomotive many moons ago. The landlord has been here for a while too – over 21 years I understand (and that's usually the sign of a decent pub). All of our readers should visit the Steamboat immediately, so get going.

The Steamboat, 27 Mill Dam, South Shields NE33 1EQ; tel 0191 4540134.

The Antelope was the first pub a group of us from Leeds visited while on Ray's birthday trip in June, the route of which took us through the Belgravia and Westminster areas. Looking at the mini-mansions that make up a large part of Belgravia's buildings, it's intriguing to consider that this was a swampy area called Five Fields until it was drained in the 1820s, the landfill coming from dockland. I suppose it is fair to estimate that the Antelope dates from about the early Victorian period (unless it went up whilst William IV was about).



I've definitely been here before – about 25 years ago though I can't recall what was on sale then. The beers are now supplied by Fullers, there being no less than five available when we called in. Much to my alarm, the first thing I saw when I ambled in was the Editor of this noble periodical. My concern grew when the bar staff made no effort to throw him out, despite my stern admonitions.

Anyway, the Antelope is a most attractive hostelry, the small frontage being decorated with hanging baskets which gave it quite a countrified air in the sunshine. The pub is of modest size, with an undersized front room bar with its 'island' bar counter and an even smaller back parlour, which may double as a sort of pygmy dining room. Upstairs is a function room with its own bar. It would be interesting to learn which building the wood panelling came from, or is it original to the Antelope?

In line with the rural feel of the place, the Antelope has a cricket team who regularly play their rivals at the Churchill Arms in Kensington for the

Anthill Cup. Never heard of it? Then peruse the paraphernalia related to this item which is on display here.

By the way, anyone planning to call in for a pint should make sure it is not on the Sabbath as the pub is shut!

The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, Belgravia, London SW1W 8EZ; tel 0207 824 8512

PERFECT PUB PAGE

The Lake District is well blessed with fine pubs and a gem amongst these is the ***Kirkstile Inn*** at Loweswater. Certainly, it can hardly be bettered for location, lying in the shadow of Mellbreak fell; the beers are top class and the food is excellent. If there's one drawback, it's a matter of accessibility. Loweswater is a tiny hamlet and the nearest bus stop is a mile and a half away (actually there isn't a bus stop at all; the driver will stop on request which is easy if you're going there – on the way back you have to jump in front of the bus and hope it stops) and services don't run in the evenings. Needless to say, going there from, say Buttermere along Crummock water makes a good walk but you still have to get back. But I assure you it's worth it!



My gang solved the transport problem by travelling from Keswick to the pub and back by minibus, allowing us to enjoy a splendid evening at the Kirkstile Inn. The actual pub is an adjunct the 400+ year old hotel which must be a nice quiet place to stay. Inside it's fairly small with low beams, but rambling with assorted drinking areas and a large garden for when the weather's fine and you can marvel at the views while relishing your pint.

Yes, I suppose I ought to mention the beer! I recall that there are six handpumps, almost all dispensing beers from the Loweswater Brewery. This was set up in 2003, restoring brewing to the pub after a 170 year break! In 2009 the brewery took over another micro, Cumbrian

Legendary Ales of Hawkshead and, to be honest, I'm not sure at which location the beers are currently brewed. No matter, the range of ales is very fine indeed. Melbreak bitter is the standard session ale (3.7%) and I recall that Loweswater Gold and Langdale were highly palatable as well. On our visit Yates bitter (from Cumbria's oldest microbrewery) was also available. The quality of all the beers was top class and I ought to mention here that the service behind the bar was friendly and efficient. We also ate here and not one of our party was less than highly impressed with the food; the menu includes some quite imaginative items alongside staples such as steak and ale pie.

PiH has recommended several Lakeland pubs over the years and I can only suggest that you add the Kirkstile Inn to your 'must visit' list.

The Kirkstile Inn, Loweswater, CA13 0RU; telephone 01900 85219; www.kirkstile.com

RJ

Last Orders – from north Scotland

BrewDog of Fraserburgh claims it has created the most alcoholic and expensive beer in the world, and it's presented in a stuffed squirrel (well, what else?). The maverick brewery has brought out The End of History, a 55% ABV beer priced at £500 for a 330ml bottle. The brewer says the beer's high alcohol content "can cure the binge drinking culture, not fuel it", and that the beer should be served in a small glass to be enjoyed like a fine whiskey.

The blond Belgian-style ale is served from bottles made with stuffed animals dressed in eccentric outfits. BrewDog says this "intentionally eye-brow raising statement" aims to "lift the veil on the mass market beer industry". The company says The End of History is the last high abv beer it is going to brew. "It's the end point of our research into how far we can push the boundaries of extreme brewing, the end of beer". Only 12 bottles have been produced, using 7 dead stoats, 4 squirrels and one hare. The packaging was created by a talented taxidermist, according to BrewDog, and all the animals used were road kill.

The brewer has been fighting a running battle with drinks industry watchdog Portman Group and health lobbyists over the strength and packaging of its beers. Last year, Brewdog launched a 41% abv quadruple IPA called Sink the Bismarck!, priced at £40 for a 330ml bottle.

Thanks to the Morning Advertiser website and Bill Stansfield



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Cape of Good Hope, Warwick (see page 13)