

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

***PINT in HAND***

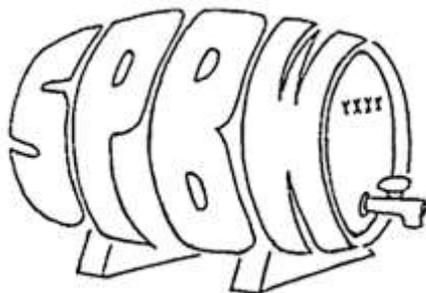
Number 124

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November 2012



*The Waterfall, Blackheath (West Midlands)(see page 18)*



## ***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 February 2013 issue should reach the Editor by **25 January**.
- 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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Website: <http://www.spbw.com>.

On-line forum: <http://www.spbw.com/bb>

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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**

A few issues ago I touched on the issue of 'keg craft' beers that are becoming ever more widespread. I don't know how much a genuine cause for concern this is but, whatever, here are my own thoughts.

Those of us of 'mature' years will readily recall the horrors of keg beers ("blown up from sealed dustbins" and the SPBW's Founders put it) thrust on the consumer by the national brewers of the time – Whitbread Tankard, Younger's Tartan, Watney's Red and the like. The problem with these beers was that they were, let's face it, rubbish; weak, cheaply brewed and rendered undrinkable by liberal applications of gas pressure.

This is hardly the case with the 'craft' beers you may find in your local pub, at least the British ones that is. These are most likely 'real ale' in the cellar but delivered to the point of dispense by light gas pressure. You may well ask why, if they are real ales why can't they be dispensed by traditional gas-free methods – better ask the publican or brewer. But there is no reason why they shouldn't be perfectly agreeable examples of the brewer's art. Mind you, they'll almost certainly cost a bit more than their cask-conditioned brethren.

At this point I'd better state quite clearly that I'm not putting forward here an endorsement for such 'keg' beers. The aims of the SPBW have always been "to stimulate the brewing and encourage the drinking of traditional draught beer.....without the use of gas pressure." Therefore, the Society cannot actually support such beers.

By the way, what actually is a 'craft' beer? According to the US Brewers Association a craft brewer must be 'small, independent and traditional'. These are fairly nebulous terms which may not be entirely applicable in the UK. The US definition of 'small' in this context is 'no more than 2 million barrels a year' – which doesn't sound very small to me!

Since we're getting towards the end of the year, let me send my usual seasonal greeting to all SPBW members, most of all those of you who have contributed to Pint in Hand and helped with its production (that's you Chris!). See you next year – our 50<sup>th</sup>!

*Roger*

*Articles on beer/pub related issues are always welcome! Contributions to the Perfect Pub Page and Last Orders features (both of which have been absent of late) in particular, as well as responses to my fevered ramblings above. If sending articles by email it would be very helpful if they are in Arial plain 12pt, single spacing with absolutely no formatting! Pictures should be in JPG format. Thanks.*

Some back issues of **Pint in Hand** are available:- numbers 46; 49; 86-123. 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.

Most issues from 90 onwards can now be found on the SPBW website, in PDF format.

## ***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 4JU. 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 2013 AGM of the NEC will be held on Monday 11 March at a venue to be decided (the Royal Oak was rather cramped this year so we may consider an alternative venue). Full details will appear in the February 2013 PiH as well as the usual electronic media. All SPBW members are invited to attend; meetings tend to be fairly brief and allow plenty of time for socialising.

If you wish to volunteer for a post on the NEC please contact John Rooth.

## ***NATIONAL WEEKEND 2012***

The 2012 National Weekend, 16 – 18 November, is based in Chester. 25 or so members have signed up for visits to Frodsham and Northern breweries and tours of local pubs. No doubt a detailed account of proceedings will appear in the next issue.

## ***LONDON PUB OF THE YEAR***

We had hoped to bring you the result by now, but voting has been delayed. This is because some of the judges have work commitments that have prevented them getting round all the pubs in time. We'll announce the winning pub and details of the presentation via the usual e-media as soon as we can.

## ***ANNIVERSARY SOCIAL***

An informal two-pub social to celebrate 49 years of the SPBW happens on **Wednesday 28 November**: 6.30 onwards at the **Wenlock Arms**, 26 Wenlock Road (off City Road via Windsor Terrace) N1 7TA; from 9ish at the **Old Fountain**, 3 Baldwin Street (off City Road near Moorfields Eye Hospital) EC1V 9NU. The two pubs are about 10 minutes' walk apart or various buses run along City Road. Both are free houses offering a wide selection of ales, mostly from small breweries. (The actual anniversary is a week later but it clashes with the Pig's Ear Festival).

## ***BEER & BUFFET***

The latest B & B event was on 6 August at Ye Olde Mitre near Holborn. About 15 members and friends gathered in the upstairs room of this fine historic pub for an evening of conviviality with excellent beer and food as well. Scottie, the legendary landlord, even had a wooden cask of Wadworth 6X in the cellar. Welbeck Abbey Portland Black from Nottinghamshire was the other guest ale, alongside staples such as Deuchars IPA and various Fullers brews.

## ***OUT AND ABOUT***

Our loyal and hardworking band of volunteers ran a stall at the Wallington Beer Festival in mid-October. This proved to be fairly useful in terms of meeting the beer drinking public, getting a bit of new membership and selling the odd product. Customers would have seen our brand new SPBW banner unfurled for the first time; thanks to Patrick Deller for arranging this.

## ***PINT IN HAND BY EMAIL***

How would you like to receive PiH by email rather than by post? This would be of particular value to overseas members and would save the SPBW a few bob in terms of postage and envelopes – especially now that postage rates are being hiked in a big way. Beware that PiH is a substantial document (around 5MB) so you may need broadband if it's not to jam your inbox.

If you want to go for this, please email Roger West and Roger Jacobson (details on page 2) and we'll take it from there.

## ***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.



## ***BREWERY/WOOD LIAISON POST REVIVED***

Readers may be interested to know that I have filled the long-vacant post of Brewery/Wood Liaison Officer. For those who don't know me, I'm a member of the Central London Branch. My remit (subject to refinement as the post develops) is:

### **WOOD LIAISON OFFICER**

#### **Breweries:**

Maintain a list of breweries who handle beer in wooden containers, on a full time or occasional basis.

Keep contact & other relevant information up to date.

Obtain information about the history of the wooden containers used by the breweries; i.e. made on site or purchased elsewhere.

Investigate information of breweries, previously unknown to be handling wood, who might now be doing so.

#### **Pubs:**

Maintain a list of pubs who handle beer in wooden containers, on a full time or occasional basis.

Keep contact and other relevant information up to date.

Obtain information about the history of the wooden containers used by the breweries; i.e. who the supplier is, full/time/occasional.

Investigate information of pubs, previously unknown to be handling wood, who might now be doing so.

#### **SPBW:**

Liaise with the Webmaster to have such information displayed on the Website. Report back to the NEC on a regular basis for suggested visits from the SPBW.

Initially, contact breweries to make Wood Liaison position and Society known to the breweries. Continue contact on a regular basis.

If you have an idle moment, you may wish to have a look at the information currently posted on the SPBW Forum, which can be found at <http://spbw.com/bb/viewforum.php?f=58> . I'm taking as my first task to contact outlets listed to update the information they have previously provided. Thereafter, we'll see how things go, but one thing I'm keen to do is establish the possibility of arranging a visit to one or more establishments serving beer from the wood, so that we can revisit our 'roots' in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

Meanwhile, I encourage and welcome any contributions to the list, which you can either suggest via the forum link above, or to me direct at [grwiles@talktalk.net](mailto:grwiles@talktalk.net)

*Garry Wiles*

## **STEVEN WILLIAM QUILLER**

Kingston upon Thames branch has recently lost one of its founder members. Steve Quiller was what could be called a true enthusiast: he loved a good drop of real ale and whenever he ventured out of his local area, would always let us know where a particularly nice brew could be had. One always knew when Q was in the pub; his rich and fruity West Country accent was unmistakable. A proud Cornishman and as irreverent as the day was long, it was a pleasure to hear him described as an 'old fart' in his Grandchildren's tribute during his funeral service. His enthusiasm (that word again) knew no bounds when it came to other loves in his life, steam trains and a good hot curry. This was reflected in the inclusion of chilli peppers in one floral tribute. Whether you knew him as Q, Wonky or just plain Steve, you knew you had a true friend no matter what he called you. He knew the local pubs well and had worked behind the bar in the Wych Elm, but was most likely to be found in the Willoughby Arms. After the funeral, his life was celebrated there with Cornish ale, proper pasties and a toast of Irish Whiskey. We've all lost a good friend but he'll never be far away as his voice and that toothy grin are unforgettable. Our thoughts and condolences go to his wife Ellen and family at this sad time.

*Noel Jones*

## **SPBW ONLINE**

The SPBW **Members Forum** is still going strong at [www.spbw.com/bb](http://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. You can also join SPBW on **Facebook** at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). Our online shop is now up and running – look at the Products page on our website and follow the links.

## **STANDING ORDERS**

Members can now renew their membership by standing order if you wish. This does mean that you can only renew by one year at a time at the going rate. A form will be sent as part of the standard renewal form.

## **PINTS IN PUBS**

We have several publicans among our membership. If you are such a person and you are organising a beer festival, or any other special event in your pub, why not let us know? We can advertise the event in these pages and hopefully encourage our members to get along

## **2013 – 50 years of SPBW**

6 December next year will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of SPBW. This is a fine landmark and we want to make 2013 a year of appropriate celebration, involving as many of our members as possible. As well as participating, we hope that our branches and individual members can help to organise events. I (Roger Jacobson) have offered to co-ordinate events. Contact me (details on page 2) if you can make any kind of contribution to 2013 activities.

We have a few ideas for events so far, some firmer than others:

- Celebration dinner, probably on Friday 5 December at a pub in Central London.
- A tour of Black Country brew pubs and brewery taps, probably at August bank holiday.
- A tour of Titanic brewery pubs in Staffordshire.
- Visit to Wadworth brewery and cooperage.
- Beer from the Wood festival at the Junction, Castleford (West Riding branch)
- Tour of Kingston's finest pub (Kingston branch)
- Day trip to Macclesfield (Wantz branch).

Once we have more details of these and other events we'll publicise them through the usual means.

So get thinking and get active – we had a very good programme of events in 2003 so let's try and top that next year; the sooner events are organised the better. For a small organisation like SPBW to achieve 50 years is quite an achievement – so let's make the most of it!

*Roger*

## ***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.

Also, when events and news are published on the website you can be notified direct to your email by signing up for a FREE notification service on the news page. Go to: <http://spbw.com/news.html> and go to the 'Monitor changes' box in the bottom left corner.

## ***.FROM THE ARCHIVES***

The November 1982 issue of what since became Pint in Hand celebrated a year of regular quarterly publication, an almost unprecedented achievement in those far off days. As a result of this rare efficiency we had begun to ask members for renewals of subscriptions. The contents seemed to be dominated by Special Branch's wide ranging activities: cricket and football; gastronomy and charity pub crawls; not to mention trips to Hastings and Home brewery and a disco at Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese. On the technical side were features on finings and beer serving methods and two whole pages were dedicated to the feverish ramblings of the legendary columnist Maltworm, with input from the no less legendary playwright Howard Purdie. There is a brief reference to the revival of Main Line bitter by Allied Breweries under its Taylor Walker banner. Does anyone remember it, or the original version? There's an even briefer piece about Selby District Council's plan to build a nuclear fall-out shelter underneath John Smith's brewery at Tadcaster. As the writer concludes: "The question of whether the survivors would envy the dead has rarely been so clearly answered."

Ten years on PiH 44 consisted of a measly 16 pages, a fair chunk of which was taken up by Andy's article on the pubs of Buxton and Matlock; for some arcane reason he quoted beer prices in pre-decimal money (I got my granny to explain). The beers themselves were mostly from the likes of Marston and Hardy & Hanson. In the branch section I note with horror that I had been elected Chairman of Campden Hill; why did I let myself get talked into this?! Central London had held its AGM in the Royal Festival Hall – the foyer that is. We could also boast a new branch: Faithful City, based in Worcester and with close connections to the Jolly Roger brewery which operated there for several years. Sadly, just 2 pages on from that announcement was an obituary of one of FC's founder members.

And so to November 2002 and the cover of PiH depicts the Plough Inn at Plumpton in Sussex, a pub that's not mentioned elsewhere in that issue. It was, and remains, a Harvey's pub, apparently rebuilt in 1956 having been demolished in WW2 to make way for an airstrip. There was a report of the latest National Weekend, based in Hastings and including a visit to Rother Valley brewery in Northiam; the brewery is still in business. Wantz branch had enjoyed a day trip to Wolverhampton and district. A highlight was sitting in the Beacon at Sedgley and being invited to have a look round the adjoining Sarah Hughes brewery; needless to say we were too polite to refuse. There was a short piece about Chesapeake Bay branch and a rather longer effort from Andy about towns and geographically diverse as Louth (Lincolnshire) and Newtownstewart (County Tyrone), the latter being devoid of cask ale; have things improved since?

## ***MEET the BRANCHES***

*We have 17 affiliated branches and details of these are listed below. We always encourage members to join a local branch and get involved with its social activities. Most branches would appreciate new members so you can expect a warm welcome. Branches tend to be fairly informal, meetings being free of boring bureaucracy.*

*If you don't have a local branch, why not start one? Bill English, (Branch Liaison Officer, address on page 2), will be pleased to tell you what you need to know.*

**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 **Duchess of Cambridge**, 320 Goldhawk Road, London W6 0XF. Contact John Rooth (see page 2).

**CENTRAL LONDON:** Meetings usually 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 Ed James, email [secretary@spbw.org](mailto:secretary@spbw.org). Website: [www.spbw.org](http://www.spbw.org).

**CHESHIRE REAL ALE PEOPLE:** Are based mainly around the Crewe/Nantwich area. Informal meetings are held each Monday from 7.30 in the Borough Arms, Earle Street, Crewe (some beers £1.50 a pint), then to Hops, Prince Albert Street, Crewe – all real ales £2 a pint for Camra members. Contact Colin Donald 01270 623376 email [colinsdonald@sky.com](mailto:colinsdonald@sky.com).



*The Duchess of Cambridge*

**COMMON & ALDBRICKHAM:** Meetings usually held in Reading; contact John Dearing 0118 958 0377 or [gpwild@btconnect.com](mailto: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](mailto:peterwillettuk@yahoo.com)

**IPSWICH:** Contact Phil (01473 280822) or Iain (07707 465750) for details of meetings.

**KINGSTON:** Meetings held on first Wednesday of each month in the *Willoughby Arms*, 47 Willoughby Road. Contact

<http://spbwingston.co.uk/diary> or email [mike.lapworth@talk21.com](mailto:mike.lapworth@talk21.com)

**NORFOLKSOAKS (formerly Norfolk Bears):** Meetings held first Thursday of each month at 12.30 in the *Fat Cat*, 49 West End Street, Norwich. The landlord, Colin Keatley, regularly supplies three pins of Fat Cat (and other) beers from the wood. More details at: <http://www.spbw.com/norfolk/about.html>

**NORTHERN IRELAND:** Normally meet at the Bridge House (JDW), Belfast, on a Friday night after 8pm, at the pillar beside the handpumps. Occasionally the Tuesday Bell (JDW), Lisburn, after 8pm on a Saturday. Contact Mark Hutchinson for details of meetings and events:

[marksalehousecom@hotmail.com](mailto:marksalehousecom@hotmail.com)

**RACS:** The Real Ale Club of Sawbridgeworth meets last Wednesday of each month in various pubs in Sawbridgeworth. Contact Jan Mead (01279 864398) or email [meadspanner@ntlworld.com](mailto:meadspanner@ntlworld.com) or the website [www.racs.org](http://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, Cumbria, Cheshire and Shropshire, or wherever we happen to be.

**WANTZ:** Meetings are held third Monday of the month at the *Old Fountain*, 3 Baldwin Street (off City Road), London EC1V 9NU, starting at around 7.30 pm. Contact Roger Jacobson (see page 2).

**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](mailto: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***

In August **Campden Hill** went on an East End pub crawl. Starting at the Dispensary in Aldgate, which had only one Adnams beer, we moved to the Still & Star which had six beers on including an Adnams Olympic special and a Banks fruity grapefruit beer. At the Three Lords in Minories the Youngs was in poor shape, and the Peacock had Black Sheep and Doombur, but the very friendly landlord gave us some Cottage beer from the cellar.

In September we visited the Thai Kitchen 100 in Hammersmith, for a really excellent meal. Starter and main plus 2 bottles of wine between 4 for £25. The food was authentically family cooked and very spicy with a large menu. An aperitif was enjoyed at the Swan in the Broadway, which had 6 beers on: Sambrooks, Leeds and Downton amongst them.

As reported in the last PiH, **Common and Aldbrickham** voted the Retreat in Reading as its pub of the year. As the present licensees, Bernie Whiten and Jane Marsden, announced their departure at the end of their ten-year lease, it was decided to convert the award to "Pub of the Decade" in recognition of their outstanding contribution to good ale and pub life in Reading. The award was made by Branch Organiser, John Dearing on Sunday 30 November with a full turnout of current branch members present.

**Kingston** Branch was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Steve Quiller, aka "Q", one of the founder members and an ex chair of the branch in August (see page 7). We will be celebrating his love of pubs and fine beer with a pub crawl of Kingston's finest next year (date to follow, all welcome).

Alton Bristol RE bus running day was a splendid event. Free buses travelled extensively through the area visiting remote rural pubs. Highlight was The Flowerpot pub in Cheriton which brews its own beers. When the free bus service stopped in the early evening there was still a fine selection of pubs in Alton itself to be investigated.

The Bricklayers Arms in Putney had a Kent themed beer festival which featured large numbers of 'Green Hop' ales brewed with young hops that have not been dried. A number of members spent Friday afternoon in the pub, with more present on the Saturday when Fulham were at home.

Sambrooks brewery in Wandsworth launched a new beer with a brewery tour, barbeque and a band playing from one of the brewery trucks in glorious September sunshine. Some members spent the afternoon there before heading to The Sultan in South Wimbledon which had a beer festival. However, the selection of ales was disappointing compared to previous years. Also in September we enjoyed a fine sunny afternoon out at Surrey Hills Brewery near Dorking. Whilst several members rode there and back the more sensible ones decided to get the bus. With the brewer doubling up as tour guide and shop assistant the "tour" lasted nearly three hours (it's in a small industrial unit!) so whilst he served we drank his beer and very good it was too; I think we all agreed the Greensand IPA was the standout. For a relatively new brewery Surrey Hills have deservedly won many awards for their beers which are widely available in the London area.

Our branch Christmas meal will again be at The Botanist brewpub on Kew Green in mid-December but before then we have the annual visit to the Old Ales Festival at the White Horse, Parsons Green.

What has just become **Norfolksoaks** began in 1995 when a few of us in The Fat Cat, Norwich, decided to take up the suggestion by that nice bloke at the CAMRA Beer Festival to start a local SPBW group. Those of us who had 'worked' in offices were resistant to the thought of self-imposed meetings, rules etc. Gets in the way of the drinking. But we took the next step, and found that SPBW Management was, as well as being efficient and helpful, the most laid-back organisation imaginable. All they wanted from us was a simple Constitution (in our case an extended laboured joke: we thought it was funny at the time). They didn't even want annual subscriptions. So we were off, with the name Norvic Nippers. Several brewery trips, seasonal excuses for more drink, and informal monthly meetings later we found that the group was breaking up a bit due to retirements and general dispersal of bodies, so we suspended activities.

Then in the winter of 2010 one of the old hands had nagged for long enough and we re-formed (nothing simpler: new Constitution and details for the website), this time as Norfolk Bears. See 'funny at the time' in the para above. People in Norfolk pronounce the word beer as bear, see? Should have thought this through. A year or so later there were mutterings of 'daft name...twee...do they know what bears do in the wood?...what have bears got to do with drink' etc.

So in August 2012 we decided to change. Many pints went into the discussion, some of which was coherent. Anyway, we are now Norfolksoaks. There is a famous oak in Norwich, Ketts Oak, named for the Rebellion man. And we are all, or have been, Soaks (a couple of members have been struck down teetotal after years of impressive devotion to duty). I feel that this name is not due to last either.

**RACS** have been quite busy recently. Regular monthly meetings continue to be held at different pubs around Sawbridgeworth. Members had an extremely successful Summer Show at The White Lion, Sawbridgeworth in late August. Despite the disappointing weather this year, a good selection of produce was on display. The following week the annual trip to the Chappel Beer Festival took place. As usual the enormous selection of beers available was quaffed (responsibly) by Members. RACS Members joined BMADs for their evening with the Brentwood brewer. At the start of October a day excursion to Ascot saw RACS enjoy a sunny day of racing and a beer festival at the racecourse.

**Wantz** branch has enjoyed two pub walks recently. The first, at the beginning of August, was in Hackney/Haggerston and took in the Sebright Arms, Albion and Dove. The first of these is fairly new on the scene and specialises in beers from small London brewers to a mainly youngish clientele; quality was not great on our visit. The Albion was formerly the Duke of Sussex, a Shepherd Neame house that was a regular haunt of mine back in the mid 1980s; now it's a free house offering a small range of ales including, on our visit, Worthington E! Not the keg rubbish of yore but a real Burton brew. The

Albion of the pub name refers to West Bromwich, the landlord being a Baggies fan and the pub is decorated with all manner of football memorabilia from all round the world. Finally, the Dove in Broadway Market specialises in Belgian beers but also offers a range of handpumped ales and I tried selections from the new East London and Colchester breweries.

Pub walk number two, in October, was in Kentish Town, starting at the Southampton Arms in Highgate Road. This has become one of London's premier ale houses, offering up to 12 beers not to mention a big range of draught ciders. It's fairly small and Spartan but manages to squeeze in a piano for live entertainment. Not far from here is the Junction Tavern on Fortess Road, which is something of a gastro-pub but still has 4 well-kept ales on and I tried beers from Ascot and Windsor & Eton. Finally, the Pineapple, hidden away in Leverton Street, one of London's Real Heritage pubs. Ridiculous to think this could have been closed down for 'development' but for a campaign by the locals. Usually 5 beers on here and I tried a couple from Milestone brewery.

In November we have our regular Thai meal at Singburi in Leytonstone, plus a visit to the fairly new Hackney Brewery.

**West Riding's** next two meetings are 25 November (AGM) at Guiseley Factory Workers Club and 16 December at Haigy's in Bradford. The branch Christmas party is at the Grove, Leeds, on 29 December from 7pm.

## ***YORK TALK***

### ***Andy's Roving Report***

Here's a wonder of the age - a pub in ancient "taddy" not devoted to John or Sam Smith's offerings! A trio of us called in at the **Queen** early in the week after seeing a small mention of the pub in the York Camra magazine, Ouse Boozer. The **Queen** (which I've also seen listed as being on Leeds Road) might once have been the John Smith Brewery Tap, given its close proximity to the site, but now has a choice of 3 cask ales and a real cider. On the occasion of our visit, these consisted of 2 Saltaire beers, Copper Dragon Golden Pippin and Tumbledown medium from the Snail's Bank Cider Co. I tried the Saltaire South Island Pale, which was in very good condition and definitely cheaper than it would have been in Leeds. We had a natter with the barman, who is a beer and cider enthusiast and I had a peek at the pub itself. I'd say it was of the sports bar type - I spotted 4 telly screens in the main room and 1 in the small room off to the side, so things may be noisy at weekends. I think the pub is owned by the same company who have the "Bay Horse" on Marygate in York, the Little Tap Pub Co. Anyhow, it is well worth calling in at the **Queen** if you ever visit this bit of planet earth.

See the pub's Facebook page for further details.

**The Queen, 21 High Street, Tadcaster LS24 9AP.**

Situated on the corner of Goodramgate and Deansgate and a very short walk from the Minster, the **Cross Keys** is one of the more modern buildings in this part of York. According to the Open Plaques website, it was built by one Frank Raney in 1904 to replace an earlier hostelry that stood hereabouts. If you enter via the doors on Goodramgate, you go into a large, well upholstered bar area that runs lengthways and which attracts those who choose to dine here. This is joined to a much smaller part (former tap room perhaps?) that goes off to the back of the pub, where there's access to Deansgate as well. The bar counter for the main area has no less than 8 handpumps and, as the **Cross Keys** is part of the Nicholson's empire, the beers can hail from the four corners of the UK. I'd noticed previously that there always seems to be a handpump or two devoted to ales from north of the border and I wasn't disappointed this time, there being one apiece from Harviestoun and the Highland Brewing Company. More unusually, the handpumped cider was also from up yonder - Thistly Cross from East Lothian no less. I've always found the beer at the **Cross Keys** to be in very good condition and the pub is not the dearest in the city centre.

There's a telly at both ends of the larger area, though they are unobtrusive; you may prefer, depending on where you are sat, to look out of the windows towards the Minster or onto tourist thronged Goodramgate. At the weekend the **Cross Keys** likewise gets thronged, which is why I prefer to call in early on in the week. I'd say it's yet another York pub that's worth a visit.

Opening times; Sunday - Thursday, 10.00 - 23.00; Friday & Saturday 10.00 - midnight. See [www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk/thecrosskeysgoodramgateyork](http://www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk/thecrosskeysgoodramgateyork) for more details.

**Cross Keys, 34 Goodramgate, York YO1 7LF: tel 01904 655082.**

Just a few doors down from the Cross Keys is a quite recent addition to the pubs and bars of Goodramgate that I must have walked past without noticing on a number of occasions, though I might add that the frontage of **The Habit** is fairly small. Apparently (up to about 2004) this was a furniture & gift shop, but when the city council decided to restrict parking in the area, the owner, one Simon Evans, hit on the idea of changing from the retail to the licensed trade. He appears to have done rather well judging by the glowing reviews that The Habit receives.

The downstairs room is very basic, bare floorboards with mostly bench seating and a small bar counter with two handpumps; The Habit is well known for getting its beers from local breweries, so you might find offerings from the likes of The Hop Studio (Elvington); Treboom (Shipton-by-Beningbrough); Yorkshire Heart (Green Hammerton) and of course, York Brewery. I had the choice of York Guzzler and The Hop Studio's XS, choosing the latter as I'd not actually tried it previously. I sat down and perused my surroundings; there's a wide range of events advertised, from yoga and poetry to a whisky festival! There's a good selection of this latter product at The Habit, including examples from England, Wales and Japan. For the peckish there's a pretty decent

menu, ranging from sandwiches to full meals like giant Yorkshire pudding filled with chili con carne and I'd say all seem reasonably priced.

Live music is a big deal here, with bands and singers performing upstairs; I wish I'd gone for a look around up there as I read elsewhere that there is "a roof terrace with unrivalled views of the Minster" which sounds most attractive. The music itself covers many styles, from the self-penned works of singer songwriters, through rock to ukuleles!

And now the reason for the name; the building is distinctly old and once housed stone masons and clerics. With this kind of background it was felt an ecclesiastical title might be suitable - hence The Habit. Certainly worth calling in, but note that squeezing in might be the case at the weekend. Get more info on Facebook.

**The Habit Cafe Bar, 40 Goodramgate, York YO1 7LF; tel 01904 611072**

### ***ELVIS WAS HERE***

Being a member of Special Branch I've got used to mixing good beer with canals but I have recently taken this to extreme levels. 4,000 miles away from the old Kennet and Avon, in fact - Central America.

Panama City is one of the world's great crossroads; the canal links the Caribbean with the Pacific, and the isthmus joins the small republics of Central America to Colombia - although you have to navigate round it because a highway has not (yet) been cut through the virgin rain forest of eastern Panama. The city shows great contrasts; across the bay from the forests of high-rises associated with tax avoidance (a.k.a. international banking) languish dank alleys of fetid slums where the locals have yet to benefit from the billions. In March of this year I based myself in the historic quarter of Casco Viejo, an engaging mixture of these two cultures. Here the smart money is slowly converting the decaying but elegant balconied housing, dating mainly from the late 1800s when the French made the first attempt to build the Canal, into boutique hotels and art galleries. I hope they take their time about it because I prefer seeing this shady Central American version of Havana while it lasts. I like hearing it as well; Panama is one of the homes of salsa, that wonderful combination of Spanish harmonies and African rhythms, not to mention the gentler accordion-based "tipico" which could be regarded as their equivalent of country music.

There are three main indigenous breweries and while none of their beers are that special, they are all cold and wet, and the fact that they come in small 330 cl bottles is presumably a cunning plan to make you ask for more. Balboa is the pick of these, proudly established in 1910 to commemorate the explorer who had first sighted the Pacific 400 years before. It has a malty and slightly vanilla-like finish at 5% and is a cut above the usual thirst-quencher. A fairly reasonable second is Atlas, founded in 1926 and somewhat metallic in taste. You have to be quite thirsty to want the last in this trio, Cerveza Panama, which doesn't give its foundation date - I wonder why.

Fortunately a couple who were staying at what, for want of a better word, was my hotel put me on to a new place which produces “cerveza artesanal” or craft beer, if you've had too many to pronounce the Spanish phrase. Named La Rana Dorada (Golden Frog), it's easy to miss because it lies just beyond a flyover from the more civilised part of town, but well worth the walk. It had been open for only two weeks but was finding its feet well with a lively crowd who enjoyed sitting at the pavement tables in the cool of the evening. The staff are locals but the brewer is North American and the place is the nearest thing to a Stateside microbrewery south of Tijuana.



*Human life in the Golden Frog (photo: James Collonette)*

Hence in addition to the beer you can get respectable pizzas and the sounds of good ole rock music (although I hope they play salsa sometimes). The Porter is an excellent smoky, tarry concoction, weighing in at “about” 4%. Their outstanding creation not only slakes the tropical thirst but is a golden heaven in a U.S. pint glass: the Pils, agreeably hoppy and rather dry, also at 4-ish%. Better news is to come, for they plan to produce two more brews, a red and a pale. Two more reasons for me thinking of returning to Panama City fairly soon.

So why Elvis? Well, he mentions Panama City in his 1968 single “Guitar Man”. He was probably referring to Panama City, Florida but you never know.

*James Collonette*

## **JEWELS AND WATERFALLS**

With bargain rail fares from London to Birmingham on offer I thought it wise to take advantage and in June I explored parts of the city and suburbs that I wasn't familiar with.

After a stroll around the canals in the city centre I found my way to Moor Street station for a train west. This is the least known of Brum's three rail stations but it's quite a gem. It was originally opened in 1909 but became ever less used and neglected until its recent revival. A Grade II listed building, it's been partially restored to its 1930s glory with reproduction lamps, clock, seating and signage. My train took me to Old Hill whence I walked up Waterfall Lane, crossing the Dudley No 2 Canal. This hits a dead end at Hawne basin near Halesowen a mile or so south; head the other way and you reach Netherton and the superb Olde Swan. For now I carried on up the hill, working up a healthy thirst, until I reached the **Waterfall**. This is not quite a unique pub name but rare enough and the pub is quite unmissable, sitting high on a bend in the road. It's owned by Holden's so you expect the beer to be good. Alongside the brewery's own offerings, Batham bitter is a regular and it's always a pleasure to sup a pint of this famous brew. The Waterfall also had four guest ales from small breweries, and at prices most welcome to my hard hit London piggy bank. There is a smart and tidy bar at the front and another room behind the serving area which I didn't venture into. Seemed like a pretty decent pub to me.

The Waterfall is technically in Blackheath and not far from the town centre. Here I looked into a couple more pubs, neither of which have lingered in the memory, and bought an excellent pork pie from a friendly butcher before making my way to Rowley Regis station for a train back towards Brum.

I alighted at Jewellery Quarter station, a mile or so north of the city centre. The jewellery trade has been long established in this area but really boomed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with more people being employed in the trade than any other in the city (over 20,000 in 1914). The Quarter still covers a wide area but I was here for the produce of brewers rather than jewellers. My first port of call here was the **Red Lion** in Warstone Street. A fairly traditional pub in lay out (two separate bars) it also has a more contemporary vibe to it. Batham bitter is a regular here but I plumped for Wye Valley Butty Bach from the two guests. Then I walked to the **Lord Clifden** in Great Hampton Street. I vaguely recall a small front bar with a larger room behind, and an extensive patio and garden beyond that. The pub boasts some of the best urban art in Birmingham, by the likes of Banksy, D\*Face, Blek and Obey (and I'm not making this up!). Four beers were on offer and I took my pint of Blue Monkey BG Sips outside to enjoy some late afternoon sunshine. Lord Clifden was apparently a Liberal MP for Cornwall East in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century before becoming a peer and I'm not at all sure of his connection to this neck of the woods.

This was my last scheduled pub in the area but, walking back towards the city centre, I noticed a pub called the **Brown Lion**. I can't recall ever seeing a pub by this name before even though brown is a fairly common colour for that species. A closer inspection revealed that this is the 'tap' for the nearby Two Towers brewery so I felt obliged to call in. Inside it was fairly basic and unpretentious with friendly bar staff. The full range of TT beers was on tap and I opted for Hockley Gold (Hockley being the other name for this area). The pub was refurbished by the brewery in 2011 and now hosts regular live music and comedy plus quizzes.

Continuing my journey south I passed by the Queens Arms in Newhall Street which boasts a superb and well-preserved frontage from its former Mitchell & Butler days. I didn't go in but I understand that I could have chosen between beers from Fullers and Purity had I done so. Instead I whiled away the time waiting for my train home in the Wellington on Benet's Hill, a pub renowned among beer lovers for its generous choice of ales (up to 15). A decent way to round off the day!

RJ



*Queens Head, Birmingham*

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*The Retreat, Reading (see page 12) (photo probably courtesy John Dearing)*