

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

***PINT in HAND***

Number 125

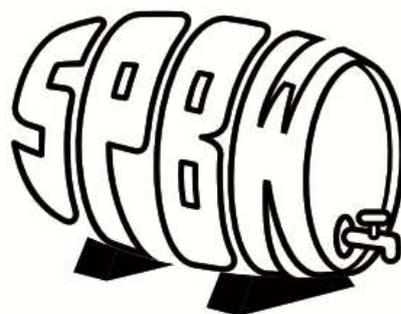
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February 2013



*The Cross Keys, Chester (page 15)*

FIFTY YEARS



1963 - 2013

## ***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 May 2013 issue should reach the Editor by **25 April**.
- 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 or visit our website.*



## **OPENING TIME**

And so we come to the year of the SPBW's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I hardly imagine that the Society's seven founders would have imagined that what started as 'a bit of fun with serious overtones' would have lasted so long. And I very much doubt that any beer lover in 1963 could have predicted what the beer scene might have looked like in 2013. The dreaded Big 6? Names all now virtually absent in beer terms apart of the odd surviving brand. Quite a few of the regional, family breweries are still operating though quite a few have been taken over and closed. The likes of Marstons and Greene King now among the major operators. The notorious big pub cos. And, last but hardly least, the hundreds of small and micro-breweries that have totally transformed the beer scene. Of course, quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality but there are enough new brewers showing real enterprise in tickling our taste buds.

So much for the beer – what about the pubs where we drink it? I think it's probably fair to say there are few really rough pubs about nowadays as there is more emphasis on hygiene and cleanliness. Too many pubs were knocked about in the 60s and 70s but there are still a good many traditional-type boozers around. At the same time there are many more modern-type pubs attracting a different (young? affluent? female?) clientele that are equally worthy, not least in serving quality ales.

While I'm talking (ok, typing, I do this in silence) about pubs, allow me one little moan. Why do some pubs insist in keeping their customers in the dark? By this I mean the use of extremely dim lighting? Is this meant to create 'atmosphere'? Or so we can't properly see what we're eating or drinking? Or just to save the electricity bill? It may be ok for a romantic tete-a-tete but if you should want to read the paper for instance while waiting for your companions to turn up, prepare for severe eye strain. Any other irritating things about pubs that are bugging you?

As I said/wrote at the start, this is our 50<sup>th</sup> year and there are plenty of events going on by way of celebration. Please do try and get involved, especially if you've not been to an SPBW event before. People do tend to be friendly and sociable and, of course, with a love of good beer. Hopefully the venues will be sufficiently well-lit that we can actually see each other!

*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; 86-124. 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 SPBW's National Executive Committee will be held on **Monday 11 March**, in the upstairs room at **Ye Olde Watling**, 29 Watling Street, London EC4M 9BR. The meeting will start at 7pm sharp and all SPBW members are invited to attend; AGMs are usually fairly brief and light-hearted. A buffet will be provided.

Ye Olde Watling is a historic pub with long connections to the SPBW, who were using it as a meeting place back in the 1960s (look out for the sign on a beam in the bar). The NEC used it as HQ from the early 70s for more than twenty years and, in the SBW's 50<sup>th</sup> year, it seems an appropriate time for a return visit. It's now part of the Nicholson chain and offers a range of up to 8 draught beers

The pub is on the corner of Watling Street and Bow Lane, the latter running between Cheapside and Queen Victoria Street. Nearest tube station is Mansion House (District and Circle lines) while Bank (Northern and Central and DLR) is about a quarter of a mile away. Buses 8, 25 and 242 run along Cheapside; routes 11, 23, 26, 76 and 388 along Queen Victoria Street.

As ever we will welcome volunteers for an NEC post; please contact John Rooth if you are interested.

## ***NATIONAL WEEKEND 2012***

The latest National Weekend attracted some 25 or so SPBW members to Chester for a good few days' socialising and imbibing, with visits to two small local breweries, Frodsham and Northern. A detailed account can be found later in this issue.

## ***.....AND 2013***

This year's event will be from 1 – 3 November, based in Derby. We have arranged a visit to Marston's brewery in Burton on the Friday evening. The rest of the weekend will include a trip to Derventio brewery near Derby and some rural pubs in the area, plus a tour of some of Derby's many excellent pubs. More details, when known, will be put out in the usual media.

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

The winner of the 2013 is **Ye Olde Mitre** in Holborn, which emerged as a narrow winner after a prolonged voting session. The Mitre is not just a genuinely historic pub, and thus on the tourist route, but it serves a mainly office-working local clientele and also manages to fit in beer and pub lovers from all over. Whoever the customer may be, they're guaranteed a genuinely friendly welcome. The pub is run by the legendary Eamon Scott, known to all as 'Scotty', his wife Kathy and their highly efficient staff.

The pub has been through various ownerships over the years and fairly recently was acquired by Fullers. However, you'll find more than just Chiswick brews here: Deuchars IPA is a permanent offering alongside an Adnams or two and at least one handpump is set aside for a guest ale from a small independent. You can be assured that these beers will be served in prime condition. Food is limited to snacks such as pork pies, toasties etc.

Ye Olde Mitre (Ely Court, EC1N 6SJ) is not at all easy to find, being tucked away in a narrow alleyway between Hatton Garden and Ely Place, close to Holborn Circus. The pub is divided into two rooms, both elegantly wood-panelled, with a small snug area off the back bar.

The SPBW's award was presented to Scotty and Cathy on 28 January with about 20 members in attendance (picture page 11). Beers from the wood (Wadworth 6X and Henry's IPA) and a fine buffet were provided to help towards a highly convivial evening.

The very worthy runner-up was the Blythe Hill Tavern in Forest Hill/Catford. This is a prime example of a superbly run community pub. Sited on the A205 it has some three bars (and a huge upstairs function room) which are expertly manned by Con Riordan and his staff. Dark Star Hophead is the main seller among a selection draught beers. It's a very different pub from Ye Olde Mitre but it's good to know that Londoners are blessed with such a fine variety of pubs these days, selling a substantial range of beers.

We'll soon be thinking about the next competition. In the next issue we'll be inviting nominations – so if you live in and around London, start working out what you think is the best pub in town.

## ***ANNIVERSARY SOCIAL***

There was an informal two-pub social to celebrate 49 years of the SPBW at the end of November. 12 or so members came along to enjoy a variety of beers (from the likes of Summer Wine, Navigation, Brodie, O'Hanlon, Hobson and Fyne) in two esteemed London free houses, the Wenlock Arms and the Old Fountain. The actual SPBW anniversary was a week later, which was the time of the Pig's Ear festival in Hackney. A beer from Cambridge Moonshine brewery in a former Theakston wooden cask was on offer. This was fairly green (just 3 months in the cask!) and I'm reliably informed that the Wenlock will be serving the mature version sometime soon.

## ***TONY LITTLER TROPHY***

The Tony Littler inter-branch competition will take place on **Wednesday 24 April** in the upstairs room of the **Calthorpe Arms**, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8JR, 6.30 for a 7pm start. Campden Hill branch is hosting this event, which will involve a quiz and flipping beer mats; that is, beer mat flipping, a sport that strangely failed to appear in the Olympics. Drinking beer during the competition is to be positively encouraged. Buffet will be provided. All branches are invited to participate and the winning team has to organise next year's event. If you don't belong to a branch, come along anyway and we'll fit you into a team.

The Calthorpe Arms is an excellent Youngs house with usually one or two guest beers. It is a regular GBG entry and London Pub of the Year nominee. Nearest tube stations are Kings Cross (Circle, Hammersmith & City, Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria lines) and Chancery Lane (Central). Various buses stop close to the pub.

It will be helpful to know how many will be there – please let John Rooth (details page 2) know if you intend to come along.

## ***BEER & CURRY***

If you want to celebrate the anniversary of the wedding of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in style, why not join in this traditional event? 172 years after those famous nuptials, enjoy a healthy Brick Lane curry on **Sunday 10 February**. Kick off midday at the Eleanor Arms, 460 Old Ford Road, London E3 5JP, an excellent community pub serving well-kept Shepherd Neame beers. Then it's the number 8 bus route calling in at the Camel (Globe Road), Hare (Cambridge Heath Road), ending up at the Pride of Spitalfields in Heneage Road, off Brick Lane around 5.30. We'll eat from about 6.30.

## ***OUT AND ABOUT***

In recent years we've run stalls at Beckenham, Ealing and Wallington beer festivals and we hope to do the same this year. We always welcome volunteers to help out as this is a very useful way to recruit new members, sell products and generally publicise the SPBW. Look out for details in future issues.

## ***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. 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.

## ***FROM THE ARCHIVES***

February 1983 saw the first time that Pint in Hand was adopted as the name of this illustrious organ. It was still a fairly basic duplicated newsletter in those days although this issue saw the first use of photos – albeit very poorly reproduced ones taken on a Woolwich branch frolic. Is that really Christine Smith (now Jenkins) with one of her branch colleagues' trousers? In my brief Editorial I note that some London pubs have been known to charge over 90p for a pint and I warned – “the £1 pint looms nearer”. That’s one I got right! On the cultural side, Maltworm reviewed references to beer in A E Housman’s *A Shopshire Lad*. Nowadays, the epic poem is commemorated in a beer brewed by Woods. Just to counteract this glimpse of culture, there was a lengthy incoherent ramble by another legend, Catweazel, recalling his exploits in Chicago.

Ten years later saw the only time (to date) that Egyptian hieroglyphics have appeared on the front cover. I see that the SPBW’s stall at the latest Pig’s Ear festival managed to recruit “well over 50 new members”. On the Saturday of the festival the Society had been mentioned on *Loose Ends*, Ned Sherrin’s Radio 4 show. PiH 45 also included accounts of trips to Rochdale, Hebden Bridge and Sowerby Bridge and north Wales.

The cover of PiH 85 in February 2003 featured the pub sign of the Wenlock Arms in Hoxton. This free house had been voted SPBW’s latest London Pub of the Year and the presentation was featured in the Hackney Gazette (just about the only story in the paper that didn’t feature murder, drug dealers or other inner city horrors). The pub was threatened with closure for a while but it’s survived and continues to serve a variety of ales in unpretentious surroundings. My roving correspondents had reported back from Sheffield and the Furness area of Lancashire/Cumbria (with a few Lake District pubs thrown in).

## ***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.

## ***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.

## **2013 – 50 years of SPBW**

6 December is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of SPBW. This is a fine landmark and we want to make this 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) am co-ordinating events. Contact me (details on page 2) if you can make any kind of contribution to 2013 activities.

The first event of the year was a small pub tour around the Euston/Kings Cross stations area on 24 January. A bunch of the usual London suspects was joined by a trio from BMAD as we took in the Bree Louise, Euston Tap, Doric Arch and the Parcels Yard, a new pub owned by Fullers in the revamped Kings Cross. A contrasting selection of pubs with a worthy choice of beers.

We have a few ideas for further events: these are definite:

- **Saturday 16th February:** Steve Quiller Memorial pub walk in Kingston. 1pm - 2.45: Kings Tun (Wetherspoons), 153-157 Clarence Street, visible from outside Kingston BR Station; 3 - 4.15: Druids Head, 3 Market Place, KT1 1JT; 5 – 6: Boaters, Canbury Gardens, KT2 5AU (free house); 6.30 - 7.45: Wych Elm, 93 Elm Road, KT2 6HT (tied Fullers house); 8: Willoughby Arms, Willoughby Road, KT2 6LN (free house); there will be a small buffet here.
- A Beer from the Wood festival at the Junction in Castleford, West Yorkshire on **Saturday 30 March**. It will feature about 20 different Beers from the Wood from local breweries and hopefully some from further afield. Some will be served from the cellar by hand pump and others direct from the cask. It is hoped that a special beer can be brewed for the event too. The Junction won a recent West Riding branch Pub of the Season award. It always has a beer from the wood available from Ridgeside Brewery and usually some others too. The pub is only 2 minutes' walk from the train and bus stations and is easily accessible from Leeds or Wakefield and will be open from 12.00 noon. The Junction, Carlton Street, Castleford WF10 1EE. Tel 01977 278867.
- Celebration dinner, on **Friday 6 December** at the Magpie, close to Liverpool Street station in central London. More details will appear in the next issue.

And these have been suggested:

- 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.
- Day trip to Macclesfield (Wantz branch).

Once we have more details of these and other events we'll publicise them through the usual means. We hope as many members as possible from all over the UK will be able to participate in these events. For a small organisation like SPBW to achieve 50 years is quite an achievement – so let's make the most of it!

Oh, by the way, we are also planning to produce a commemorative beer glass; details will be made known when we know them!

*Roger*

## ***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.

## ***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

## ***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.



## ***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).

**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://spbwkingston.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).

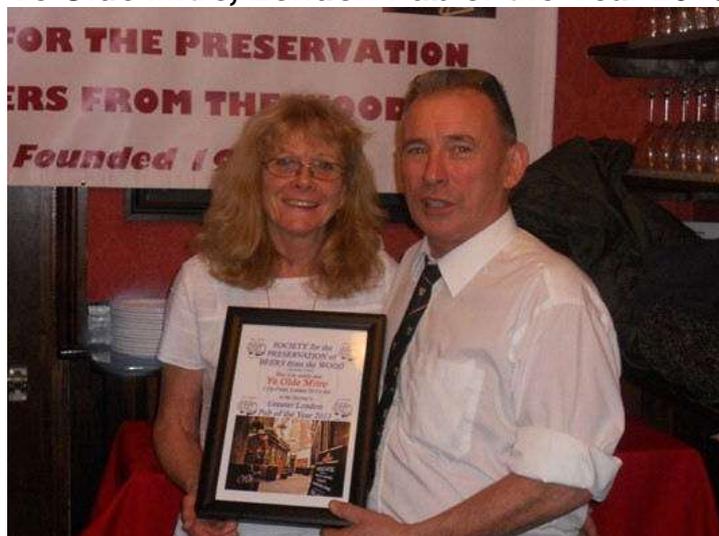
**WEST RIDING:** Meets (usually) on last Sunday morning in month in various pubs in and around Leeds. Brewery trips, day trips and crawls and other socials. Contact Graham Hewitt (0113 2624574; [graham-hewitt@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:graham-hewitt@tiscali.co.uk)) for further details.

**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!*

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### ***Ye Olde Mitre, London Pub of the Year 2013***



*Cathy and Scotty proudly display the LPotY award (photo by Bill English)*

## ***BRANCHES IN ACTION***

In late October **Camden Hill** branch did a 4 pub Southwark crawl, starting at the Royal Oak, then the Rake and Market Porter in Borough Market, ending up at the Wheatsheaf. In November we met up at the Tabard in Turnham Green, which had several interesting beers, including Vale and Rebellion, before adjourning to the Kleftiko Greek Restaurant in Shepherds Bush for NOT the Christmas meal. This had excellent food and wine and very efficient & friendly service (so obviously not chosen by me).

In December we braved the once a year yahoos to do a Clerkenwell pub crawl. We started at the Gunmakers Arms, which as usual had an interesting range of micro beers, then crossed Clerkenwell road, via the pie shop, to the Craft Beer Co, which had a vast array as usual, this time featuring Fyne of Scotland – fine indeed. The excellent Castle in Furnival Street also had a wide range, before we were warmly welcomed as usual by Scotty in Ye Olde Mitre (newly and deservedly crowned as SPBW London Pub of the Year 2013).

On Monday 25 February we have a 3 pub crawl of Notting Hill: Uxbridge Arms (7), Windsor Castle (8.30) and Churchill Arms (10). On Wednesday 20 March we are meeting at the Bree Louise by Euston station at 7, before adjourning for a Drummond street curry (8.30). This year's Keith Hudson darts competition will be on Monday 25 March at The Horseshoe, Clerkenwell.

**Common and Aldbrickham** branch enjoyed a pre-Christmas Social at their 2010 Pub of the Year, the Bell at Aldworth, a small village on the Berkshire Downs, on the Saturday before the festive day. This was attended by 5 branch members who managed to keep going for 4 hours on the pub's splendid selection of beers from the Arkells and West Berkshire breweries as well as enjoying their simple but tasty bar snacks. We hope to run a mini-bus trip in the Summer visiting this and a number of other less accessible country pubs and would of course welcome members from other branches. That also goes for the forthcoming 6<sup>th</sup> Peter Smith Memorial Pub Crawl which this year will make the pilgrimage to Canterbury on Saturday 9 March – storytellers welcome! Details from John Dearing.

**Kingston** branch's Christmas meal was again held at The Botanist on Kew Green. This homebrew pub was a lot busier than at the same time last year which is generally a good thing when lots of local pubs are struggling or closing but although there was a wider range of fine beers than twelve months ago the quality of food and service on the night was not as good as we would have hoped. We had a post Xmas pub crawl in Twickenham town centre which ended with us struggling to leave a Wetherspoons with a particularly good beer range on the night and a welcome revisit to The Eel Pie (a nice Hall & Woodhouse tied pub) where we enjoyed the Tanglefoot and Fursty Ferret. By the time you have read this Kingston Branch will have hosted one of the early 50th Anniversary celebration events with a pub crawl of some of Kingston's finest.

Trying to decipher minutes of **Norfolksoaks** meetings is akin to translating the Dead Sea Scrolls. It may be that the branch has had a trip to London and is

contemplating future visits to Liverpool and Bury St Edmunds. But what about the 'hot poker'? The February meeting is a week later than usual, on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**RACS** held a successful, festive Christmas party in December and their regular meetings continue on Wednesday January 30<sup>th</sup> 2013 at 8.00pm in George IV, Knight Street, Sawbridgeworth. We shall continue to move among the Sawbridgeworth pubs for our monthly meetings.

**Wantz** branch enjoyed a visit to Hackney Brewery at the beginning of November. One of the several small brewing enterprises recently established in this part of London, Hackney is run by two enthusiasts who met when they were working in the pub catering trade. Look out for their beers such as Golden Ale and American Pale Ale – we recommend them! After the visit we took to the bus to downtown Hackney and the Cock Tavern in Mare Street; this is the home of Howling Hops brewery (in the cellar) which produces beers which live up to its name. A week later we were in Leytonstone, meeting for aperitifs in the Red Lion before heading down to the road to our favourite Thai restaurant, Singburi, where the food was as good as ever.

A couple of events as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations are being planned. Definitely on is a visit to Leyton Orient Supporters Club beer festival at the end of February.

**West Riding** branch had its annual visit to Belgium in January taking in Ostend, Bruges and Knokke. Among many beer festivals visited was the 26<sup>th</sup> National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester, also in January. 16 February will see a day out in Sheffield. Next two branch meetings are on Sunday 24 February at The Grove in Holbeck and Sunday 24 March at Victory Bar at the Village Hotel on Otley Road, Headingley.

## ***ROAMING AROUND THE WALLS OF CHESTER***

The Roman city of Chester, or *Deva*, named after the Roman goddess of the River Dee, on which the city resides, was the amphitheatre for the 2012 SPBW National Weekend. Steeped in history and with many medieval buildings, Chester was one of the last towns in England to fall to the Normans, and has probably the best preserved Roman walls in Great Britain. Chester was host to a National Weekend back in 1987 but the choice of beer has expanded somewhat since.

Friday lunchtime and afternoon was spent in pubs close to the Shropshire Union Canal. The **Canalside**, in the ground floor of the Eaton Hotel, is home for Swifty's brewery since early 2012, but unfortunately none of their ales were available due to the brewer having a recent illness. Still, three Liverpool Organic brews served as ample substitutes. Barely twenty yards away along the canal bank is Old Harkers Arms. Part of the small Brunning & Price pub chain this former warehouse boasts half a dozen beers amidst a vibrant clientele and functional furniture. The pub was very busy with late lunchtime diners and early-finish drinkers, forming a cosy atmosphere with seating a premium, especially when new arrivals of SPBW cohorts filtered in!

A short distance west is the **Mill Hotel** with nine real ales on handpump. In a plush hotel, the bar has a public house feel about it! At least four of the beers were £2.60 a pint, and with the bar offering three thirds for the price of a pint, it was possible to have a nip of all or most of the ales showing.

The official meeting place in early evening was the **Cellar**, on City Road, a lively (ground floor!) bar with four interesting ales enticing the mixed clientele who take use of the 2.30am closing time on Friday and Saturday nights.

Then we boarded our minibuses for the trip to **Frodsham** brewery, some half an hours' drive north west of Chester. Owned by Barry Davidson and his wife Hazel and formerly trading as Station House, this 5-barrel plant brews a varied selection of ales, most of which are on sale in bottle-conditioned form at the brewery shop, based "front of house". Golden ale *Buzzin* (4.3) was sampled before, during and after our tour, with homemade meat pie soaking up the ale. Our party then departed in the pouring rain, to be ferried to the **Helter Skelter** in Frodsham town centre. Although the pub was heaving with Friday night drinkers, eight handpumps, offering beers from the likes of Facers, Hart and Happy Valley, awaited our arrival. Having drunk our fill, we were shuttled back to Chester, where some chose to further imbibe, some choosing to call it a night and get their heads down.



*Pied Bull and the Old Harkers Arms*

On Saturday morning the SPBW members assembled at the train station awaiting a coach for a lunchtime visit to the **Northern** brewery, at the Blakemere Craft Centre, just outside Northwich. Our 30 minute passage was soon rewarded with pints of on-site brewed Spellbinder (4.1) and Cosmic (6.0). Colin Stubbs and Mick Hill head a staff of four at this 5-barrel brewery, inaugurated in 2003. A recent new brewery shop hosts a vast range of bottle-conditioned brewery beers. Three Christmas specials were being created to bolster their ever-increasing ale portfolio, with a wide varied choice of beer tastes and styles. A buffet accompanied our beery exploits, before we bid our farewells to start our afternoon jaunt around several country pubs in Cheshire. First port of call, the **Fox & Barrel** at Cotebrook, where among the four beers on offer were Hornbeam Stretch and Weetwood Eastgate. A pleasant, dining-public house, friendly and airy. After a short ride, the two watering holes in the village of Bunbury were descended upon. Firstly the **Dysart Arms**, another

Brunning & Price pub with four standard ales on, the second the **Nags Head**, a locals drinking den with circa five independent brews. On to Spurstow, where the **Yew Tree** is a smart village pub with up to six real ales available amid a congenial atmosphere, and splendid cuisine. Many of us dined here, whilst enjoying locally brewed Offbeat Off Kilter Porter (4.3) and Merlin's Gold (3.8). A classy pub that caters for all.

On our way back to Chester, we visited the archaic **Travellers Rest** on the A51 at Alpraham. A no-nonsense, no frills, time-stood-still, 4-room free house of a bygone era. Tetley's Bitter and Weetwood Eastgate were the bitters on handpull to oil the larynx, in a pub where conversation certainly rules!

Sunday was devoted to a tour of Chester's pubs, with a noon rendezvous at the **Carlton Tavern** on t'other side of the Dee in residential suburbia. This Hyde's **pub** proved a bit disappointing, but the **Ship Inn**, close to the bridge, certainly made up for it. A trendy food-orientated venue, with six interesting ales to boot, including two excellent beers from Merlin brewery. Pick of the beers though, **Thwaites Cherry Good** (3.7), a black/red ale with deep Kriek overtones and a smooth mouthfeel finish.

Back over the River Dee now and into the **Bear & Billet**, owned by Okells but offering five ales in all. A fine historic pub with the Sunday ale and dining fraternity amassing by the minute. A few doors along is the **Brewery Tap**, owned by Cheshire brewery Spitting Feathers but with six or seven ales and a draft cider. By this time some 41 members of the SPBW West Riding branch had congregated, an amazing turn-out from this prolific and dynamic SPBW branch. Across the road is the **Cross Keys**, owned by Joule's brewery of Market Drayton. An impressively refurbished watering hole, this offered Blonde (3.8), Pale Ale (4.1) and Slumbering Monk (4.5). Here we had the pleasure of meeting Angela and David, our two members from the Isle of Man. After a visit to the **Marlborough Arms**, where Stonehouse beers were residing, we arrived at the **Pied Bull** in Northgate Street. This large city centre hostelry commands the discerning drinker's attention with its on-site cellar brewery (a few of us had an impromptu visit to the cellar to view the one-barrel plant at 11.30 the previous evening) and its enticing guest beer supplement. House brews were Sensi-Bull (3.8) and Pie Eyed (4.0). Popular for its extensive food menu, this is one of Chester's oldest public houses.

Next door to the Pied Bull is the **Red Lion**, a large Nicholson's pub. A dwindling group of us then moved to **Telford's Warehouse** for ale and exercise. This former canalside warehouse has been transformed into a sumptuous, quirky and idiosyncratic dining domain, tendering six alluring ales which included Frodsham Dark Art Ale (4.0) and Hafod Light (4.6). A pleasing experience and well worth the trek out of the city centre.

There was still time to experience the enigmatic **Kash** bar, a short walk from the train station. Owned by the radical Blue Ball brewery, now based in Runcorn, this upbeat, contemporary, urbane bar had a great vibe with a voguish aura that complimented the live music and the bars' innovative brewery beer range. Two hand-pumped ales, Blue Ball Indie Girl (3.8) and guest beer Liverpool Organic Empire Ale (5.3) was shadowed by some eight

font-drawn Blue Ball beers of different styles and ABV's. I personally loved the place, stylish, simple with a great drinking concept in modern day Britain. Chester hosts an inspiring opportunity for the real ale drinker to have some fun and enjoy some great ales in the plethora of pubs and bars that reside in this quaint Roman city. EGO VOBIS VALEDICO!

*Alan Sheppard*



## **CAPE TOWN CALLING**

It must be more than 30 now since I was introduced to the SPBW by John Gore whilst we were both living in Botswana and when infrequently communicating with the odd SPBW member, I often and quite understandably got a 'sniff' when referring to SA beer, (mainly lager) as when compared to 'real ale' it used to tick most of the boxes for 'dust bin rubbish'. There was even a sustained period when SA Breweries (although never admitted) used to introduce headache-inducing chemicals to better preserve the stuff.

SAB has over the years been made to become 'Honest' by the clever piss taking (out of SAB) advertorials for Windhoek Lager, brewed by Namibian Breweries which proudly adheres to the Reinheitsgebot Standards of 1516 and SAB Castle labels now proudly state, 'ingredients: water, barley, malt (gluten), maize extract and hop'. They however do have a fast brewing method which is frowned upon by the pundits although I wonder if that is in fact a minus? I recently met a retired Head Brewer of SAB and he remained steadfastly schtummm on the subject.

Bottom line here in SA is that we have a relatively wide selection of beers of which SAB has a large array, Namibian Breweries a good few, a handful of medium sized breweries, including Mitchell's and a growing number of small 'craft' brewers producing an abundance of new tastes and flavours. All of them however use gas to produce 'draft' and all bottles and cans are gas pressurised. There are also two crazy anomalies...both SAB and Windhoek produce 'draft' beer in cans and bottles which has thus far escaped wide comment by the SA beer imbibers.

"Why is this old member of the SPBW rambling on about lagers and stuff?" you say. Short answer is that whilst a hundred years of puffing the dreaded weed has stunted my taste buds and the old sniffer, all of the above offerings and some, all gassed, is what I get to sup living here and yet whenever I step off the plane at Heathrow, I have a sort of Damascus Road experience and convert to a model SPBW type, yearning only for a good drop of proper beer.

*Huck Endersby*

## **LOCH LOMOND BREWERY**

We had a holiday cottage booked in early October near Arrochar, Scotland for a week with the aim to explore the area, climb a Munro and to relax. We were lucky with the weather and we also found a good local pub by the side of Loch Long called **The Village Inn** which was very hospitable and did some lovely food. The big bonus was that they also served some local beers made by the Loch Lomond Brewery. We sampled the 'Silkie Stout' and the 'Bonnie n' bitter' which were tasty and very more-ish.

One of our party emailed the brewery and they invited us to call in. So after a boat trip on Loch Lomond we popped along to the brewery in Alexandria and were welcomed by Julia McEachern, the Director / Brewster, and Duncan, Sales Manager.



*Ray, Dot and Julia in the brewery shop (photo thanks to Ray and Dot)*

The brewery was officially opened in November 2011. It is situated in the Vale of Leven at the southern edge of Loch Lomond. It is a family run brewery and all the ales are hand crafted using traditional brewing techniques. They use the very finest quality malted and roasted barley which are blended with whole-flower hops sourced from around the world - plus the pure local water from Glen Finlas in the Luss Hills. They currently brew about twice a week on a 10 barrel brewery producing 360 gallons in each batch. They have a range of five permanent ales available in both cask and 500 ml bottles - and these are 'The ale of Leven' (4.5% - and voted the 'champion ale' at the Helensburgh and Lomond Real Ale Festival 2012), 'Bonnie n'bitter' (3.6%), 'Bonnie n' blonde' (4%), 'The West Highland Way' (3.8%) and 'Kessog Dark Ale' (5.2%).

The brewery continues to review its recipes and also produces some seasonal specials - the 'Silkie Stout' sampled locally had been made with New Zealand hops and had only been on the market two weeks and in the fermentation room they were brewing another new recipe using Munich malt called 'Loch Tober Fest'. Brewery tours can be arranged and there is a small shop on site. Discovering the Loch Lomond brewery and their ales was a great bonus to our holiday!!

Website [www.lochlomondbrewery.com](http://www.lochlomondbrewery.com); email [info@lochlomondbrewery.com](mailto:info@lochlomondbrewery.com)

Telephone 071389 755698

*Dot and Ray Goodearl*



**57 THOMAS STREET**  
***Andy's Roving Report***

The title is the name of this bar in Manchester incidentally, so I haven't missed anything out. **57 Thomas Street** (hereafter referred to as 57 TS) is one of the new breed of mini bars that occupy former shop premises - they seem to be opening everywhere these days. This one has a head start on many for product quality as it is part of the Marble Brewery estate which means it sells some excellent beers.

Blink and you might stroll past 57 TS, it having a small frontage and slightly longer interior, though not too long come to think of it, as you seem to run out of room fairly suddenly! On our visit here on the evening of the 1st Saturday in December there was fair old crowd squeezed in; a very mixed clientele who plainly favour the bar's incredible selection of beers. On the counter were 3 casks, from which the beers are served direct, containing Marble Stout, Ginger Marble and Trial No 7 Lagonda IPA. The stout was very superior and I managed to shuffle around from my place at the counter to view the strikingly lengthy list of bottled beers (both foreign and Marble's own) on the schoolroom sized blackboard hung up on the wall. Mad apple or pear fans have a bottled range from Gwatkin's of Abbey Dore in Herefordshire and food/snacks are served for the peckish. The bar staff provided excellent service and proved themselves to be a fount of knowledge regarding the beers available. When doing a crawl of the northern end of Manchester city centre, definitely call in here.

Update: When we called back at 57 T.S. in January, we saw that the blackboard listing of bottled beers had gone, replaced by a large cabinet fridge containing the bottles themselves. You'll see this against the wall at the bottom end with lots more behind the bar!

**57 Thomas Street, Manchester M4 1NA, 0161 8320521.** See [beerhouseenq@marblebeers.com](mailto:beerhouseenq@marblebeers.com) for updates and further info.

## ***BERLIN – ANOTHER VIEW.***

Having read the article on bars in Berlin (PiH 123) I am left wondering what guide James Collenette was using, as the internet is awash with information about bars and brewing in Berlin. To be fair to James he doesn't say in his article how long he was there, but I have just enjoyed eight days of "beer hunting" in Berlin – which racks up my fifth "beer holiday" to this vibrant city. Far from bars being "thin on the ground" my colleague and I visited (and drank in) an impressive 12 brew-pubs, one of which (the Brauhaus Mitte ie City Centre Brewery) we visited twice, and 27 bars of which only two were visited more than once! I should also add that I didn't drink a single glass of pils – all were either hell, dunkel, weise, schwartz, porter, etc, etc.....

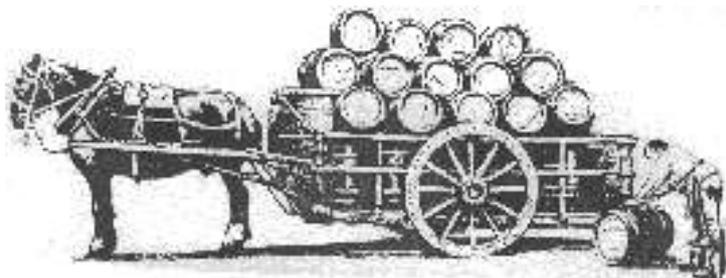
This list of bars and brew-pubs doesn't include the day we spent in Potsdam courtesy of the Berlin City Rover (€35 for 7 days). This ticket allows unlimited travel in Berlin and its environs plus travel on the trams and busses of Potsdam. I will not bore our readers with a blow by blow account of our exploits in Berlin but James might like to know that the Mommsen-Eck he visited in Charlottenburg has spawned another similar bar right in the city centre, near Potsdamer Platz! Also just to clarify, the "Zillemarkt" beers are not brewed on the premises but by the chef(!) whose micro-brewery is some 20km outside of Berlin. So this makes this Charlottenburg bar effectively a brewery tap – and it just happens to be right next to an S-Bahn station!

For those members thinking of visiting Berlin, the excellent "*Good Beer Guide - Germany*" by Steve Thomas is a good starting point as it not only includes all the Berlin brew-pubs up to 2006 but also has a section devoted to Berlin with some recommended bars. Sadly this book is now out of print but the newly published supplement ("Updates 2006 – 2011") is now available from Steve Thomas and lists all four of the most recently opened Berlin brew-pubs.

However, for serious "beer trekking" then you really need to purchase a copy of "*Around Berlin in 80 Beers*" by Peter Sutcliffe (pub.Cogan & Mater 2011). This includes a day long pub crawl that takes you past all the historic sites as well as some of the best bars. Included in this trail is the "Augustiner am Gendarmenmarkt" on Charlotten Strasse which should be high on every SPBW members "must visit" bars as from 18.00 each evening they serve one of the excellent Munich brewed Augustine beers straight from a wooden cask on the bar.....

Prost!

*Peter C. Wells*



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*Ye Olde Mitre, London Pub of the Year (see page 5)*