

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

*(founded 1963)*

*The original beer consumer organisation*

***PINT in HAND***

*Number 130*

*May 2014*



*Super Cooper – Alastair Simms at work (see page 16)  
Photo courtesy of David Litten*

Founded 1963



## ***PINT in HAND***

- ***Pint in Hand*** is published quarterly, in February, May, August and November. It is issued to all subscribing members and affiliated branches of SPBW.
- All members are invited to contribute articles for publication on beer-related subjects. Contributions for the August 2014 issue should reach the Editor by **25 July**.
- The Editor or the National Executive Committee of SPBW does not necessarily share opinions expressed in *Pint in Hand*.

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*All photos by Roger Jacobson unless stated otherwise*

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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 or visit our website.*



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## **OPENING TIME**

Generally I've given up on the subject of beer prices in this column. It's a given fact of life that they'll continue to rise whatever the Chancellor of the Exchequer may decide. Sure he knocked a penny off beer duty (and fair play to him for that), but it didn't stop a good few breweries whacking up their prices at around the same time. And you can bet that prices go up by 10p a go these days.

Only very recently I forked out a wallet-busting £4.25 for a pint of London Pride in a City of London pub (ok, hardly the cheapest area for drinking) and yet a few weeks earlier had paid little over two quid for a pint in a fairly smart hotel bar up north (there's more about this towards the back of this issue). Someone's making a few bob out of this lark somewhere and I'm not sure it's the publicans.

Pubs continue to close regularly (pedantically, they tend to only close once, but carry on) and rising drinks prices is surely one major factor that drives punters away. And yet, if there people out there with money to spend....Parts of the east end of London (notably Hackney and Bethnal Green) are now heavily populated with what were once known as yuppies. For my purposes they are young(ish) people with money to spend and time to spend it in pubs. And quite a few of these pubs are traditional-style establishments with an emphasis on proper draught beer. In fact, within a less than two mile radius of the Pint in Hand editorial suite there are five pubs with an in-house brewery.

What's more I even have a new 'local', this in an area which has seen several pubs close down over the last couple of decades. But new housing developments have brought in a new population with disposable income.

The SPBW is hardly immune to rising prices itself. Since we no longer have the benefit of cut-price printing, PiH has to be produced at regular commercial rates. We also have to contend with the ever-rising cost in postage rates. Prior to the recent increase in the cost of second class stamps we did a bit of panic buying and put together a stock of nearly 2,000 stamps which should keep us going for a year or so. The NEC is hardly destitute (you can see the 2013 accounts on page 7) but you can save us a bit more if you opt to receive PiH by email.

As I write this it's the last day of April and the sun is shining. Let's hope for another fine summer to work up some good thirsts to boost the brewing industry.

RJ

*Articles on beer/pub related issues for Pint in Hand are always welcome! 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; 86-114; 116-129. These can be obtained from the Editor (address on page 2) in return for 15 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.

Every issue of PiH can now be found on the SPBW website, in PDF format (see page 9).

## ***NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE***

The SPBW NEC 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 branch representatives.

## ***ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

The 2014 AGM of the NEC on 10 March was at a new venue for us, the Horseshoe, tucked away off Clerkenwell Green. The location didn't seem to deter members since about 40 turned up including a few new faces. The upstairs room, if rather basic, was quite spacious and of a more suitable layout than some venues. The beer range, if not spectacular, was adequate (pity the Harvey's Best wasn't on) and a pretty decent buffet was provided. The meeting itself was typically convivial and afterwards a raffle raised £56 to help offset the cost of the food.

The one main change to the Committee saw Patrick Deller elected as Chairman. Dave Samuels resigned his R & D post and Ken Davison (Campden Hill) and John Dearing (Common) joined as members *sans* portfolio. The National Executive Committee in full is therefore:

Patrick Deller (Chairman), Alasdair Boyd (Vice-Chairman), John Rooth (Secretary), Jim Woodcock (Treasurer), Roger West (National Membership), Bill English (Products and Branch Liaison), Roger Jacobson (Pint in Hand), Garry Wiles (Wood Liaison), Mark Hutchison (Technology and Communications), Ken Davison and John Dearing (without portfolio). See also pages 6 and 7.

## ***NATIONAL WEEKEND 2014***

This year's National Weekend is based in Huddersfield from **14 – 16 November** and is being organised by West Riding Branch. A provisional outline of events:

Friday: hopefully a visit to Mallinsons Brewery in Huddersfield. Definitely visiting pubs in the town including brewpubs the Sportsman and Rat & Ratchet as well as highly rated pubs such as the King's Head and the Grove.

Saturday: we will do the West Yorkshire part of the Rail Ale Trail starting from Huddersfield. First to Marsden, home of the Riverhead Brewery Pub. Then by bus to Slaithwaite for a visit to Empire Brewery; the beers can be sampled at the nearby Commercial Inn. Then by train to Mirfield and Dewsbury and, if time permits, to Batley.

Sunday: to Holmfirth possibly for a visit to the Nook Brewery and, possibly to Holmbridge as well, where a new brewery and pub have just opened. Also a visit to the Sair Inn at Linthwaite, one of the oldest brew pubs in UK. All are welcome to come along. If you want to attend please let John Rooth know and send him a deposit of £20 (cheques payable to SPBW please). We will publicise firm details when they become known.

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

It's time to get your nominations in for the next LPotY competition. All SPBW branches and individual members *based in the London area* are invited to nominate their favourite pub (*one per branch/member only*); please contact Bill English (details page 2) for a nomination form. Note *we cannot consider any pub unless a nomination form is submitted*. Closing date for nominations is **8 June**.

Judging will be done through the summer and early autumn with a view to deciding the winner by the end of October. If you want to help with the judging please let Bill know. You will of course be obliged to visit pubs and drink beer!

## ***DAY TRIP TO NEWARK***

West Riding branch is organising a day trip to **Newark** on **Saturday 19 July** and all SPBW members are invited to join them on a tour of the town's best pubs.

Meet at the Sir John Arden (Wetherspoon) 1 Church Street NG24 1DT (corner of Marketplace) from midday (or earlier if you like!)

Graham Hewitt will provide maps and pub details and folks can go round as they please - too many to all be going to same pubs at a set time and some may want to do more than others.

Contact Graham for further information: 0113 2624574 or [graham-hewitt@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:graham-hewitt@tiscali.co.uk).

## ***BEER & BUFFET***

We are holding our annual Eve-of-GBBF Beer & Buffet bash on **Monday 11 August**. Venue is **Ye Olde Mitre**, 1 Ely Court, Ely Place, Holborn, London EC1N 6SJ. Tickets are £5 (cheques to SPBW please) from John Rooth (details page 2). We'll be in the upstairs room from 7.00pm.

Ye Olde Mitre is a genuine historic pub, hidden away in a narrow passageway between Hatton Garden and Ely Place. Although owned by Fullers, it offers beers from Adnams and Caledonian as well as guest from smaller breweries, always well-kept and served by the redoubtable Scotty and his staff. Nearest tube stations are Farringdon (Circle, Hammersmith & City, Metropolitan lines) and Chancery Lane (Central line); several bus routes go along High Holborn.

## ***TONY LITTLER TROPHY***

The next inter-branch competition will be held on **Wednesday 24 September** at the **Calthorpe Arms**, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8JR. Events will kick off at 7 pm in the upstairs function room. Buffet will be provided. Wantz branch is hosting the competition which will consist of a quiz and anything else they can think of. We hope as many branches as possible will be represented. Don't worry if you don't belong to a branch – come along and we'll find a team for you to join. The Calthorpe is an excellent community pub serving Youngs beers and a couple of guests.

## **CHAIRMANS REPORT 2013/14**

2013 was a momentous year for us as we reached our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which we celebrated with many events. However it was also a very sad year, as our chairman, Mike Hall died in June. Alasdair Boyd has acted as Chairman since Mike's death.

**Finance**: Our finances look healthy – see accounts opposite.

**Products**: Bill English has looked after products and we have developed a number of new lines. He has been helped in this by Dave Samuel who with Mark Hutchison's help has the online shop up and running, and has also helped with product development (including the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary range).

**Branch Liaison**: We have gained a new branch, North Irish Sea, which gives us a representation in another part of the UK.

**National Membership**: Our membership software is now more solid and transferable thanks to Roger West. There has been a marked increase in membership over the last year.

**Pint In Hand**: This has reached 129 issues. We have had to change our printer; this has meant increased costs but a better looking magazine.

**Website**: Our website looks as good as ever thanks to Mark Hutchinson and colleagues who help to keep it updated.

**Wood Liaison**: Garry Wiles has contacted a lot of brewers and pubs who use wooden casks. His detailed summary of his findings to date are in the February PiH.

**Publicity**: We have tried to publicise the society and sell our wares at Ealing, Chelsfield and Wallington beer festivals; our thanks to the organisers for giving us house room and to those who helped out by manning our stalls. The new SPBW banner, courtesy of Patrick, has been on display at these festivals and other choice events.

**National Weekend**: The 2013 event was based in Derby with visits to two breweries: Marstons of Burton and Derventio in Derby. We also visited some excellent pubs in and around Derby.

**London Pub of the Year**: The Eleanor Arms in Bow is the latest winner. The presentation night in January was very well attended by SPBW members and locals and the award was much appreciated by Frankie and Lesley at the Eleanor.

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations**: Our Anniversary year was marked by numerous events, culminating in a dinner on our foundation date at the Magpie. We also marked the place of our birth by an event at the Rising Sun in Epsom in October, attended by the sole surviving founding member, John Keeble and his wife. There were numerous other events, mostly organised by our branches. This was as well as our usual events: Beer & Curry in the east end, Beer & Buffet at Ye Old Mitre (2013 London pub of the year) and the Tony Littler Trophy, won by Wantz branch.

*These are not the actual words uttered by Alasdair Boyd, the acting NEC Chairman at the AGM, but a summary of NEC business and activities over the previous 12 months or so – RJ*

## SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BEERS FROM THE WOOD INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

<u>YEAR</u> <u>2012</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>YEAR</u> <u>2013</u>
849.63	Sales of Society Products and Donated Items	2136.68
	<u>Less: Cost of Sales:</u>	
709.23	Opening Stock at Cost	1043.83
990.24	Purchases for Resale	2406.15
<u>(1043.83)</u>	Closing Stock at Cost	<u>(1412.88)</u>
193.99	<u>Gross Profit from Sales</u>	<u>2037.10</u>
(104.00)	Funding for Events and Miscellaneous	99.58
245.00	Branch Affiliation Fees	446.50
1340.00	National Membership Fees	185.00
5.50	Interest on Deposit Account	1681.00
<u>1680.49</u>		<u>5.40</u>
		<u>2317.90</u>
		2417.48
	 <u>Expenditure</u>	
1309.29	Pint in Hand	1278.38
656.35	National Membership Provision	583.50
30.00	AGM Expenses	154.00
101.88	Administration and Sundry Expenses	488.20
<u>30.41</u>	Depreciation	<u>25.85</u>
<u>(447.44)</u>	<u>Balance - Excess of Expenditure over Income (2012 - Deficit)</u>	<u>2529.93</u>
		(112.45)

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2013

<u>YEAR</u> <u>2012</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>YEAR</u> <u>2013</u>
5158.92	Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2012	4711.48
<u>(447.44)</u>	Excess of Expenditure over Income (2012 - Deficit)	<u>(112.45)</u>
4711.48	<u>Balance at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013</u>	<u>4599.03</u>
	 <u>Represented By:</u>	
	<u>Fixed Assets</u>	
2392.69	Equipment at Cost	2392.69
<u>(2220.38)</u>	Depreciation to Date	<u>(2246.23)</u>
172.31		146.46
	<u>Current Assets</u>	
1043.83	Society Products at Cost	1412.88
-	Sundry Debtors	314.00
104.70	Cash in Hand	111.75
145.04	Balance at Bank Current Account	26.95
<u>5333.60</u>	Deposit Account	<u>5384.99</u>
<u>6627.17</u>		<u>7250.57</u>
	<u>Current Liabilities</u>	
2088.00	National Membership Provision	2671.50
-	Sundry Creditors	<u>126.50</u>
<u>2088.00</u>		<u>2798.00</u>
4539.17	<u>Net Current Assets</u>	<u>4452.57</u>
<u>4711.48</u>	<u>Net Asset Value as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013</u>	<u>4599.03</u>



## ***SOUTHWARK PUB WALK***

Heavy rain and a tube strike kept the numbers down this evening (6 February) but there was still a dozen or so members present, including a quartet up from Crawley. Starting point was the Royal Oak, Tabard Street, renowned Harvey's pub and the NEC's monthly meeting place. The pub was fairly busy but the beer was as good as ever.

We splashed a quarter of a mile to the Lord Clyde in Clennam Street, just off Marshalsea Street. The pub has a superb and wonderfully well-preserved frontage and it's pretty good inside as well. The main bar is an L-shaped room and there is a smaller side bar with a darts board. Beers included Adnams and Youngs 'ordinaries' as well as Hog's Back TEA and a GK Belhaven 6 Nations Rugby beer. This was pretty busy as well but the staff was friendly and efficient and the beer was in good condition.



*Lord Clyde*



*Charles Dickens*

Another 5 minute wade took us to the Charles Dickens in Union Street. This pub has gone through a few name changes over the years but nowadays it's a free house in 'modern basic' style. Six handpumps dispense beers from all over the place but there's usually at least one from a small London brewery – Portobello on this occasion. This was much quieter so we had plenty of room to sit and relax.

The last pub on the trail was the Prince William Henry on Blackfriars Road. This is a Youngs house where the NEC held meetings for a while in the mid/late 1980s and where the late Mike Hall had his retirement party! Sadly a good few of us missed out on a visit as the tubes were finishing early and wanted to get home and dry. But the first three pubs made for a good night out.

## ***BEER & CURRY***

Our latest B & C bash was on the first Sunday in March with some 14 members involved at various times. Having convened at the Eleanor Arms the party headed first to the Camel, where the beer was disappointing, then to three pubs on or just off Bethnal Green: the Old George, Kings Arms (a fast rising star I think) and Well & Bucket before ending the drinking section of the day, as ever, in the Pride of Spitalfields. I've had no feedback on the curry section but I assume all lived to tell the tale.

## ***GAMES NIGHT***

Hosted by Frankie Colclough at his award-winning Eleanor Arms in Bow on 16 April, this was a fairly chaotic but highly enjoyable event. The games involved were Shut the Box, Shove-Ha'penny, Table Skittles, Pool and Darts. Apart from the travelling SPBW members, most of the pub's customers got dragged in, including the local vicar who holds bible study classes in the Eleanor on Wednesdays. A raffle was held to raise funds for SPBW and some tasty snacks were provided. At the end John Rooth was declared the winner and he may even receive a trophy.

## ***OUT AND ABOUT***

Running stands at beer festivals is a good way of meeting the beer drinking public to publicise the Society, hopefully recruit new members and sell products. We were represented at the Kidbrooke, south east London, festival in early May. We hope to be represented at the Ealing Beer Festival from 2 – 5 July as well as Bromley (September) and Wallington (October). However, we do need people to man the stall and the more helpers there are, the easier it is for everyone. Please contact John Rooth if you want to volunteer to help out.

## ***PINT IN HAND ARCHIVES***

If you want to follow the history of SPBW over the last 30 or so years, as well as the development of PiH, you can look at all back issues on our website. You can also look at some of the SPBW newsletters which preceded it. Check it all out at: <http://www.spbw.com/magazine.html>. Roger and Mark have spent hours working on this, so please take advantage! Thanks to Sue Hart for the loan of some old newsletters.

We also intend to set an Archive section, featuring all kinds of artefacts: photos, press cuttings, correspondence etc. If you have any such material I (Roger) would be delighted to receive it – either scanned by email or originals by post.

## ***SPBW ONLINE***

The SPBW **Members Forum** is [www.spbw.com/bb](http://www.spbw.com/bb). The Bulletin Board is intended as a way for members to exchange information. You can also join SPBW on **Facebook** at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). Our online shop can be found on the Products page on our website; just follow the links. We are aware people change emails for various reasons and we would like everyone to log on to the Forum and make sure their details are up to date - otherwise they will miss out on information mailed out by the SPBW.



## ***MEET the BRANCHES***

*We have 18 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.*

*We are hoping that new branches will be formed in Crawley and east London. 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 Crosse Keys, 9 Gracechurch Street, London EC3V 0DR. 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, 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: [admin@spbwni.co.uk](mailto:admin@spbwni.co.uk). Event details can be found at: <http://spbwni.co.uk/events.html> - for those not online send Admin your mobile number for event notification.

**NORTH IRISH SEA:** The Isle of Man based branch meets on Friday evenings, usually in the Douglas area, but also has many unofficial visits elsewhere on the island, and from time to time in the coastal areas of the traditional Lancashire boundaries. Contact David Halliwell (07972807934) [david.halliwell@manx.net](mailto:david.halliwell@manx.net) Always happy to meet up with visitors to the IoM.

**RACS:** The Real Ale Club of Sawbridgeworth meets last Wednesday of each month in various pubs in Sawbridgeworth. Contact Jan Mead (01279 724356) 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).

## **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 (page 2) know and a bundle of leaflets will be sent. If you can just recruit the odd friend or colleague, this would be ever so helpful as well. Thanks to those of you who have already helped in this way.

## ***THE WOOD BEER GUIDE***

There have been a few encouraging developments among breweries and pubs regarding beers from the wood in the last few months, as summarised below.

### **Brewery activities:**

XT brewery is supplying one beer in wood to the Reading Beer Festival in April.

Thornbridge and Cathedral Heights (Lincoln) breweries have been reported as maturing at least one beer in wood. Cathedral Heights reports that, although they sell all their beers in stainless firkins, they have an oak whisky barrel that is used every now and then (at least once a month) to add maturity and flavour to the beer. This practice seems to be gaining in prevalence as a way of imparting some of the character and taste of beers from the wood.

Master Cooper Alastair Simms has supplied 6 wooden casks to Abbeydale Brewery in Sheffield, making them the second brewery in Sheffield to use wood, the other being the Brew Company. Abbeydale have two pubs in Sheffield, the Rising Sun and the Devonshire Cat. Initially they intend to make available a 'Beer from the wood' at each outlet on a permanent basis, selected from their range which consists of a core of five permanent beers and between two and four "specials"; these are beers of which they produce only 30 barrels at a time, and brew at least one per week which allows them to experiment with their stocks of at least 50 different hops and occasionally different malts. The intention is that the beer from the wood will be constantly changing.

The Rising Sun is a community pub in the suburbs. Its main focus is cask beer and has 13 beer engines on the bar usually with 6 or 7 beers from the brewery and the balance from other microbreweries. The beer engines are all in one line and have ebony (black ceramic) pulls. The 'beer from the wood' will be distinguished on the bar by having a rosewood pull.

The Devonshire Cat is a city centre pub with a high turnover of cask beers. It has twelve beer engines; four from the brewery and the remainder from other micros. It also has stillaging for two firkins and the brewery proposes to stillage beer in wooden firkins here with cask taps. The visual impact will be impressive but there are concerns about possible resistance to beer not forced through a sparkler.

Abbeydale obtain the vast majority of its guest beers via swaps with other micros so there may be possibilities in the future for swapped backfills with other brewers owning wooden casks.

### **Pub activities:**

Nino's Italian Restaurant (The Fighting Cock), Clivinger, Burnley is serving beers from the wood. They had a beer festival 2-5 May serving 12 beers from wood.

The Bree Louise, by Euston station in London, has struck a deal with Wadworths to have beer in the wood delivered, was reported as serving 6X on gravity.

The Engineers Arms, Henlow, Bedfordshire, is having 2 oak casks custom-made. The first brew to be served from the wood will be from the Salamander brewery.

The Junction in Castleford has held another Beer from the Wood Festival (see next page).

Do keep an eye on the members' forum for latest developments with these and other reported activities involving beers from the wood.

*Garry Wiles, Wood Liaison Officer*

## **WOODFEST**

The Junction in Castleford held its annual Beer from the Wood Festival over the Easter weekend. In Britain's most wood-friendly pub, all of the beer is served from wooden casks, lovingly constructed by Alastair Simms of the White Rose Cooperage. For the Festival there were 50 beers from 10 different breweries, some drawn by hand pumps and some on stillage. There were a variety of cask types and sizes, rum casks, whisky casks and traditional oak beer casks. Ridgeside beers from Leeds regularly feature at the Junction but Walls, Five Towns, Elland, Wentworth, Hop Studio, Hobsons, (their award winning mild), were amongst the breweries supplying beers for the Festival. A few SPBW members from London ventured north to join some of West Riding branch at this excellent event.

*John Rooth*

## **BRANCHES IN ACTION**

**Campden Hill** branch competed for the battered Keith Hudson darts trophy at the Horseshoe in Clerkenwell. It was retained by John Rooth who beat Aidan Kerrigan in final. The standard as ever was more harrowing than arrowing. The Harvey's Best and Sharp's Cornish Coaster were in fine fettle and the buffet was good value.

In March we visited Marie's in Waterloo. This is a café type place serving Thai food, which is excellent value. Starters, main, dessert & coffee cost about £17 per head. We took our own wine after topping up before and after in the Hole in the Wall where the TEA and the Growler were both very good.

On Wednesday 21 May we have a Lebanese meal at the Karaam in Ealing, meeting at the Questers Theatre bar from 7.00. In June we have a Saturday summer away day.

**Common & Aldbrickham** branch is having another minibus trip to country pubs near Reading on Saturday 26 July. Details will be circulated soon.

**Kingston** branch's visit to the Battersea beer festival at the beginning of February coincided with a Tube strike so it was less crowded than in previous years. A fire alarm did not help either. Nonetheless many old friends were there.

On 20 February we visited The Bricklayer's Arms, Putney, Yorkshire beers festival - arriving early to secure the prime table near the stillage. Hand Drawn Monkey (Huddersfield) Smaller Stout was an excellent coffee flavoured beer at only 2.8%. Bad Seed (Malton) espresso stout 7.0% was a good beer to finish with.

Our Twickenham crawl was notable for the excellent turn out which made for an enjoyable evening. The route took us along the riverbank and the locals said they had never seen the water so high. We interrupted a quiz night in the White Swan, but their beers did not seem to be in great condition. The evening finished in the Old Anchor with a black IPA laid on for our pleasure.

On 28 February members visited the excellent Hope in Carshalton for one of their regular beer festivals. Downton Hope Stout at 6% was much appreciated. In late March we met in The Cap in Hand for the Wetherspoons beer festival.

For our April meeting for one month only we left our Willoughby HQ for the Old Anchor, Twickenham for their last ever Pork Pie & Cheese night prior to the pub being shut and possibly lost for ever. A sad loss of a classic local boozier. We are looking forward to the Kingston Beer Festival in May and are planning a visit to Twickenham Fine Ales Brewery in the not too distant future together with a summer bike ride (dates to be advised).

I have previously mentioned the impenetrability of the minutes of **Norfolksoak's** meetings. Have a peek at the branch's website to see if you can work out what they're up to: <http://www.spbw.com/norfolksoaks/index.html>

**North Irish Sea** branch has had a number of visits around the region, in particular to pubs in Ramsey and the Port Erin areas of the Isle of Man. Further trips are planned including a visit to Preston in May. In April the branch celebrated its first anniversary at the Isle of Man beer festival in Douglas.

**Northern Ireland** branch has been in discussions with Charles Ballantyne of Ards Brewing Company about the possibility of a bottled ale brewed specifically for the branch. A small batch should be going out in the near future as, hopefully, a precursor to a brew of around 1000 bottles for late summer or mid-autumn.

Many bars and staff have been helpful this year and last and we thank them all. However, the JD Wetherspoon pubs across the province have most certainly helped the most, as in the past. To show our appreciation of JDW's support and help we presented an engraved plaque; this took place in the Bridge House, Belfast, helpfully arranged by manager Barry. Also present were Sharon (Tuesday Bell, Lisburn) and old friend (and ex-Area Manager) Phil who is now running the Spirit Merchant in Newtownards.

On Saturday 30 May we visit The Central Bar, Carrickfergus (under new management) from 1.30pm. Leave Europa at 12:15pm, arrive at 12:49. Hopefully we can all chat to the new manager and elicit support for the branch. Return trains are 24 and 54 minutes past the hour). Among future events I would like to have a look around several premises in central Belfast to see who is serving what. Several pubs are starting to serve bottled craft beer and I would like to visit and chat with the staff. I would like company and opinions so please let me know if you are interested.

To move forward we need more members - the more we have the more we can do. To get the members the branch needs volunteers for membership and publicity. If anybody has the time or the contacts to help please do get in touch. One person just cannot do all this alone, so please make an effort and come to the next branch meeting (see page 11) to discuss how we can expand.

**Special Branch** had a gathering in Birmingham in early April to celebrate Nantwich exile Colin's birthday. Members came from Cheshire, Shropshire, Kent and London and the focal point of the day was a lengthy session in the excellent Bartons Arms in Aston. This is definitely a 'must-visit' pub; dating from 1901 it has to be seen to be believed. It's owned by Oakham brewery so the beer almost has to be good; the pub also offers good quality Thai food, with which we washed down our beer. Before catching our trains home we had a couple in the Post Office Vaults in New Street – hard to find but a pretty good basement free house.

May sees our annual meeting, on two canal boats cruising (mostly) in Cheshire. Doubtless we'll boost bar takings a few times.

**Wantz** branch paid a return visit to Tayyabs in Whitechapel for an excellent Indian meal. We began the evening at the White Hart brew pub just down the road. Also in late February a few of us were at the Piglet beer festival at Leyton Orient Supporters Club. Numerous beers from obscure Cornish breweries plus a few more local brews were on offer to help make for a most pleasant few hours. Our April meeting was held in the recently refurbished Wenlock Arms as the Old Fountain turned out to be closed on Easter Monday. Planned events: our biannual Thai nosh at Singburi in Leytonstone at the end of May; and a tour of some of east London's brew pubs (too many to do on one evening) provisionally on 9 July.

**West Riding** branch held its 300<sup>th</sup> meeting at the end of April (at the Foundry Hill, Bingley). Formed in February 1989 it now has over 120 paid up members. There is always a full programme of events; the first outing of the year was to Hull where the attractions included two brewpubs, the Wellington and Whalebone Inn.

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

30 years ago, the Editorial for PiH 10 cursed the ongoing takeover and closure of regional breweries and warned that "the £1 pint looms nearer." Does anyone remember paying £1 a pint? The NEC Chairman's report bemoaned the demise of the original West Riding branch, but Ponds branch had been formed in south London. Over the year national membership had declined from 133 to 75, which seems rather alarming. Happy to say it's rather higher these days. The Chairman also observed that we had received one Christmas card from a brewery – which arrived in mid-January. On the branch front Central London had enjoyed a trip to Cardiff – not to visit Brain's brewery but to hear Wagner's Valkyrie performed by the Welsh National Opera. Also out west, North Devon branch's AGM comprised a coach trip to all the small breweries in the county while, back in London, I was elected Chairman of Special Branch.

The saddest part of that issue was the report of the tragic and untimely death of Tony Littler, a true SPBW stalwart, being a member of 4 branches and a keen participant in events. His name is commemorated in the annual inter-branch competition.

The May 1994 issue's front cover depicted Bateman's brewery, which had recently been visited by Wantz branch. On the way to the brewery we visited the signal box at Wainfleet station, and why not! The report of the NEC AGM reveals that Roger West had made his debut as National Membership Secretary, something I'm sure he's never regretted! Andy's article concerned a coach trip to Cheshire, focussing mainly on the county town, which is still an excellent place for pubs and beer.

Ten years on the front cover featured a certain Harvey's pub in Southwark, the Royal Oak having won the London Pub of the Year award. Head Brewer Miles Jenner came along to the presentation night and declared a 20 minute 'free bar'. Good man! RACS and Wantz branches had both recently enjoyed weekends across the Channel, to Lille and Brussels respectively. Wantz had a morning visit to Cantillon brewery, not the best idea after a long session on Belgian beers. Mind you, none of us stayed up drinking until 6.30 am like a couple of RACS people.

## ***THE FUTURE IS WOOD***

The ancient trade of making traditional casks from wooden staves for beer, wine, cider and spirits took on a new lease of life last year when Master Cooper Alastair Simms returned to God's Own County to establish the White Rose Cooperage Ltd on the Thorp Arch Estate near Wetherby. Alastair, the last remaining Master Cooper, together with three Journeyman Coopers, preserves the ancient craft of making wooden casks bound by metal hoops for the brewing industry.

Born in Masham, North Yorkshire, Alastair became an apprentice cooper at Theakston's Brewery in his home town in May 1979. Following a six month trial period he signed his indentures and went on to undertake his four year apprenticeship under the supervision of Master Cooper Clive Hollis. He successfully completed his training in 1983 with the "trussing in" ceremony and became a Journeyman Cooper. In 1994 he became a Master Cooper following the completion of his training of Peter Coates as a Journeyman Cooper. A year later, after sixteen years at Theakston's, Alastair moved to Wadworth Brewery at Devizes where he took over from the retiring Eddy Hodder. Meanwhile, at Theakston's, Clive Hollis passed away and his apprentice Jonathan Manby completed his apprenticeship under the guidance of Alastair in 1999. Eleven years later in 2010 he was admitted as a Liveryman to the Worshipful Company of Coopers which dates back over five hundred years.

After eighteen years at Wadworth, Alastair returned to his native Yorkshire to establish White Rose Cooperage on his 50th birthday in May 2013 as the country's only independent commercial cooper. When he began back in the 1970's, there were still around one hundred coopers in the UK but the advent of metal casks in the 1960's saw numbers decline resulting in the craft almost fading away but for the handful of skilled craftsmen existing today.

However, the amazing growth in numbers of real ale microbreweries in Britain as a whole and Yorkshire in particular has meant that there is hope and the revival of demand for wooden casks is already taking place. Leading the way are Maureen Shaw and Neil Midgley at the Junction pub in Castleford, West Yorkshire where only wooden casks are now used for real ale. After purchasing the run down, empty, failed pubco pub, not only have they transformed it into a wonderful traditional local with many unique features but have backed it up with the gradual introduction of wooden casks. Now "wood only" is their mantra and people are taking notice of this revolution. Neil and Maureen have invested in over 100 casks from Alastair and have around 10 local breweries supplying beers in the wood on a regular basis. The first and most regular supplier is Simon Bolderson and his Ridgeside brewery located in Leeds. Together, the pub and the breweries have proved that great beer can have that extra dimension if stored in wood. They have experimented with spirit casks and have also had great success with "Ageing in Wood". Not only do wooden casks add a depth of taste to the stronger, darker beers which metal casks cannot provide but successful recent trials with lighter beers also show that they certainly add that something extra to them too.



*Some of Alastair's handi(wod)work (photo David Litten)*

Several progressive brewers in Yorkshire and a few from around the country have also take note of this great revival and have already purchased casks or placed orders from White Rose Cooperage. Alastair has also carried out contracts and orders from more pubs (eg Engineers Arms at Henlow), traditional cider makers and produces custom made bespoke furniture. From the beer and cider perspective, perhaps the most interesting creations are the glass head casks which enable the viewing of the activity and changes that occur when traditional real ales are clarified in wooden casks.

Alastair is hoping to take on an apprentice and wife Julie also plans to join the business. The long-term aim is to buy a few acres of land to build a cooperage and visitor centre so people can learn about this historic trade and watch coopers at work. Back to the future - long may it continue.

Further information for Alastair can be found at: [www.whiterosecooperage.co.uk](http://www.whiterosecooperage.co.uk) and the Junction at: [www.thejunctionpubcastleford.com](http://www.thejunctionpubcastleford.com)

*David Litten*

## **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.

## ***THE MOST ON THE COAST***

A rare few days in the north west recently gave me the opportunity to pay a first visit to the seaside town of Southport. Situated about 15 miles north of Liverpool, the town in its present form was founded in 1792. At the turn of the 19th century the area became popular with tourists due to the easy access from the nearby Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the town quickly grew. Southport attractions include the second longest seaside pleasure pier in the British Isles, and Lord Street, a wide, elegant tree-lined shopping street, once home to an exiled Napoleon III of France.

I'm not sure if Napoleon was a beer drinker, but if he was there today he wouldn't have to go far to find a good choice of pubs and ales. I'm highlighting three contrasting pubs on or just off Lord Street. This impressive thoroughfare also has two Wetherspoon pubs which are fairly typical of this chain.

The Scarisbrick Hotel on Lord Street is an imposing building, a 3 Star hotel with two restaurants and several bars. The one to look out for is Baron's Bar. This is an elegant, wood-panelled room, with a relaxed atmosphere. It also offers the widest range of beers in town, including a number of local brews – I tried one from the Lytham brewery further up the coast. Remarkably, prices were very cheap, most beers costing £2.10 a pint. For some reason, Tetley bitter cost £2.35.

Heading north beyond the main shopping area at the end of Lord Street we find the Inn Beer Shop. There seems to be a minor trend in the north west for specialist beer off-licenses also offering draught beers (well, there's another one in Crewe, anyway) and this is one of them. There is a small seating area by the entrance, then you go past shelves stacked with bottled beers from all over, to a small bar which offers two beers from Southport brewery. If you go out to the toilets you'll see the racked casks on the right. Very cosy and friendly and you can pass the time by examining the myriad bottles.

The last of this pub trinity is just off Lord Street, in Union Street, on the way back to the rail station. The Guest House can't be missed with its half-timbered Edwardian frontage. Inside it's a classic three-roomed pub with a central bar where you can choose your beer from a fair old range. My choice was from the Settle brewery in North Yorkshire. The GU has quiz nights and live music and seemed to be the archetypal community pub.

There are of course plenty of other pubs in Southport, several being GBG-listed, and it struck me as a pleasant place to spend a day enjoying a few pints. Mind you, I never did make it down to the pier.

*RJ*

## ***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.

## **WEIRD BEARD BREW COMPANY**

A few years ago, Gregg Irwin met Bryan Spooner in the Euston Tap. They were both keen home brewers and eventually they decided to set up their own brewery together. Brian sports a lengthy plaited beard (Gregg also has a beard) and as he had been called “weirdbeard” almost as many times as I have been called “Father Christmas”, the brewery had its new name. During their search for premises, they teamed up with Mike Ellenberg of Ellenburg’s Brewery as they realised that both breweries would benefit from a shared site. In November 2012 they finally found the right industrial unit for their new ventures. There is a lot involved in setting up a brewery so it took until February 2013 for them to brew their first batch. Temperature control problems meant the first two batches were not quite as they had planned, but these teething troubles were swiftly overcome and the brewery has been going from strength to strength, being voted Beer of the Festival in last Autumn’s Ealing Beer Festival with their excellent Black Pearl, a coffee milk stout of 3.5%. In another international competition, they were awarded the ranking of the fifth best new brewery out of a list of over two thousand. Following on from these successes, the brewery’s capacity has been increased from two fermentation units to four. They use a Union Bourbon Barrel to mature special brews.

Gregg was good enough to invite me to the brewery in Hanwell for an interesting tour and some samples (including a bottle of the award winning Black Pearl) which were excellent. I am very much looking forward to the bottle of “Bad Habit” – their Belgian Tripel style beer - Gregg gave me to take home. Although it is not a condition of employment in either brewery, everyone on site during my visit had a beard. I – for one – will certainly be looking out for their beers in their regular outlets like the Harp, by Trafalgar Square, or the Craft and Kitchen pubs.

*Derek Legg aka Catweazel;*

*this article was originally written for the British Beard Club magazine*

## **CLOSING TIME**

We finish this issue with the inspiring story of Chris Schryer, aged 33, from Toronto. Chris, who runs a beer-based website, gave up solid food for Lent; he ate his last ‘proper’ meal on 5 March. Since then he has been surviving mainly on high-calorie Dopperbock beer, which was specially brewed locally for the challenge. Mr S, a devout Anglican, even persuaded a clergyman to bless the 100 litres of beer. He said “I get tired more easily and I’m getting some irritation but apart from that I feel amazing”. He has also drunk water and weak juice.

Now, my understanding is that Lent ends on Easter Sunday, which means that Chris’s period of self-denial lasted 45 days. His beer intake there amounts to approximately 4 pints a day. And on an empty stomach!

*From The Times 18 April*

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## SPBW PRODUCTS

**All the products below carry the SPBW 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo.**

<b>Ties</b> Windsor purple, green, navy blue	£11.50 (£13 inc P & P)
<b>T-shirts</b> XL black, royal blue, jade, red; L black, royal blue, red.	£9 (£14)
<b>Sweatshirts</b> XL black, jade, royal blue, red	£15 (£21.50)
<b>Polo Shirts</b> XL royal blue, red, jade; L jade, royal blue, black, red	£13 (£19.00)
<b>Hats</b> Acrylic knitted, royal blue, red, burgundy	£5 (£7.50)
<b>Baseball Caps</b> black, green)	£7 (£10.70)
<b>Glasses</b> Straight handled pint mugs with etched logo	£8 (£14)
Please contact Patrick Deller if you wish to order a glass – <a href="mailto:pgadeller@gmail.com">pgadeller@gmail.com</a>	

We also have sweats, polo and t-shirts, hats and caps with the 'old' logo, plus rugby shirts, fleeces, enamel badges and sew-on badges: check the website for details.

You can admire our product range on the SPBW website! And you can buy products through our on-line shop: <http://www.spbw-shop.co.uk/>

- **Please send your orders to Bill English** (see page 2)
- **Please make cheques payable to SPBW** and include a telephone number or email address with your order. Allow up to 28 days for delivery.
- **Products are cheaper if they can be collected in person; contact Bill to see if this can be arranged.**



*The Guest House, Southport (see page 18)*