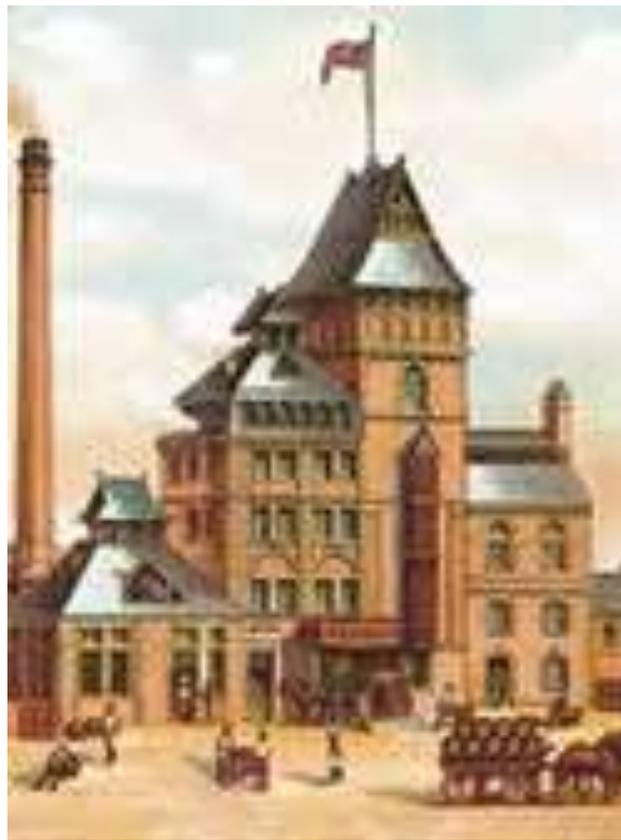


**SOCIETY for the PRESERVATION of  
BEERS from the WOOD**  
*(founded 1963)*

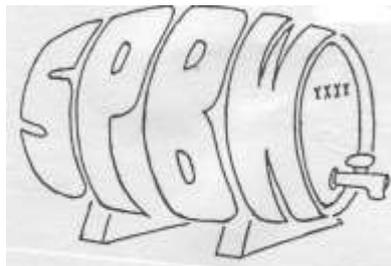
*PINT in HAND*

**Number 93**

**February 2005**



*Hook Norton Brewery – A Cotswold Classic*



**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 issue should reach the Editor by **20 April**.
- The Editor or the National Executive Committee of SPBW does not necessarily share opinions expressed in *Pint in Hand*.

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Anyone reading this that is not already a member of SPBW might like to know that annual membership costs only £5 (£6 non-UK). For information about SPBW together with a membership form, please send a stamped addressed envelope to the National Membership Secretary as above.

## ***OPENING TIME***

The consumption of alcoholic drinks has become a hot topic in the media in recent weeks. Proposals for the total liberalisation of licensing hours have highlighted what is seen as the 'English disease' of binge drinking. As an aside, the customary definition of 'binge' drinking seems like a reasonable night's imbibing to my reckoning (and I'm the very model of moderation). But what the media are talking about here is not sensible, mature adults with a discerning taste in drink (a category which surely includes all SPBW members) but some species of young wild ravers who get tanked up on cheap booze in town centre bars, inevitably ending the night in pool of blood and vomit (possible their own).

The move towards 24-hour opening has surely been driven by the large drinks companies (both manufacturers and bar owners). More consumption means higher profits and never mind the brain damage – there's another generation of young drinkers with more money than sense round the corner.

Many fine pubs have been reported on in these pages over the years. I've not visited but a fraction of them but it's a fair bet that many of them are either privately owned or tenanted pubs where the publicans see the customers as something rather more than profit units. They offer quality beers (and possible good wines as well), serve good food (more than likely) and offer the opportunity to sit down at leisure – rather than to swill down cheap

alcohol double quick before moving on to the next bar in the circuit to repeat the process ad nauseam.

The current Government seem determined to push through the licensing reforms but I'm not convinced this is a good move. I was in favour of ending the draconian hours, a legacy of World War 1, that were liberated in the late 1980s, and I think this has proved to be a good move for the trade and consumer alike. But I'm not convinced that this country (by this I mean England) is ready for a further extension of drinking time. It may be impossible to change the inherent drinking 'culture' but the Government would be better off working with the drinks industry to try and promote more sensible attitudes all round. Please let me know what you think.

Just time for a quick word about Pint in Hand. The last year has presented some technical problems for me as we've changed our method of printing. This has meant I've had to prepare PiH in a different format for the last few issues; something I can well do without. While we get ourselves sorted out, please forgive me if the presentation is even less orthodox than usual.

PiH is not the only form of SPBW communication nowadays. I realise that not everybody has (or wants) computer access, but our website and bulletin board are a source of information above and beyond what is contained in these pages and I recommend you dig into it if you can. Remember to drink sensibly in 2005!

*Roger Jacobson*

## ***NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE***

The SPBW National Executive Committee holds its regular meetings on the second Monday of each month, hopefully starting at 7 pm. Our new venue is the Royal Oak, Tabard Street, London SE1. This top-class Harveys pub should need no introduction in these pages.

These are strictly business meetings, but they are kept as brief as necessary. All members are welcome to attend, particularly representatives from branches.

Peter Willett has now taken over as Products Manager, leaving Bill English to concentrate his efforts on Branch Liaison.

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

Our London Pub of the Year for 2005 is the ***Dog & Bell***, Princes Street in Deptford. The judges also had favourable mentions for The Oakdale Arms (Harringay) and the Sekforde Arms (Clerkenwell). (You can read more about the pubs and the judging on our website.)

The Dog & Bell was also the 2002 winner and just happens to be CAMRA's current Greater London Pub of the Year. Clearly an extension to the pub's trophy cabinet (disguised as a mantelpiece) is needed! The pub has hardly changed since it first won our award; indeed it's been improved by the addition of a new toilet block. Once the new kitchen is built things should be better than ever.

The pub is tucked away in the back streets of Deptford, not far from Evelyn Road and on the Thames Path between Rotherhithe and Greenwich. A former Fullers house, the D & B still serves London Pride

and ESB along with three guest beers. These often come from the likes of Cottage, Archers and Nelson breweries and are competitively priced – and always served in prime condition of course. A quiet pub, ideal for conversation, but you can also play bar billiards or join in the Sunday evening quiz.

A presentation to Charlie and Eileen Gallagher – who have run the Dog & Bell for 16 years – was made on 24 January. There was only a fairly small turn out of our members on a chilly night but we had the customary warm welcome and the beer range was up to expectations. Dark Star American Pale Ale was particularly memorable.

Thanks to Bill English who co-ordinated the judging with his usual enthusiasm and efficiency. We'll soon be thinking about the next competition so get ready to nominate your favourite London pub.

## ***ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

The 2005 AGM of the National Executive Committee will take place on **Monday 14 March** at the **Royal Oak**, 44 Tabard Street, London SE1. The meeting will be in the John Harvey Room (upstairs) and will kick off at 7 pm sharp. All SPBW members are invited to attend; it is traditionally a brief informal business meeting with plenty opportunities for drinking and socialising before, after and even during.

The *Royal Oak* is the 2004 SPBW London Pub of the Year and should be known to all lovers of fine beers in great pubs. So I hardly need to add that it is a Harvey's house serving the full range of Lewes brews, lovingly cared for.

The *Royal Oak* is just off Borough High Street, between Long Lane and Great Dover Street. Nearest tube is Borough (Northern line) and London Bridge station is only a few hundred metres away.

An amendment to the NEC constitution has been proposed by John Rooth and seconded by Roger Jacobson:

Under *Item 2 Headquarters*, delete:

"The National Headquarters of the Society shall be Ye Olde Watling, 29 Watling Street, London EC4M 9BR.]"

And replace by:

"The Society does not have a nominated headquarters. All correspondence and enquiries should be directed to the Chairman or Secretary of the Committee."

## ***BEER & CURRY***

This is becoming an annual event: a few beers followed a Brick Lane curry. This will happen on **Sunday 20 March**, starting at noon in the ***Hamilton Hall***, the Wetherspoon pub adjacent to Liverpool Street station.

Then it's on to two proper pubs: the Black Bull, Whitechapel High Street and the Pride of Spitalfields, Heneage Street (just off Brick Lane). All welcome; please let John Rooth (see page 2) if you're coming 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 ([secretary@spbw.com](mailto:secretary@spbw.com)) 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.

## ***NATIONAL WEEKEND***

The 2004 Weekend in Banbury was a great success and you can read about it in detail later in this issue. Now that's history we're planning this year's event which will feature the Nottingham/Derby area.

We have arranged a visit to Hardy & Hansons brewery in Kimberley for the evening of **Friday 18 November**.

For the rest of the time we hope to fit in a visit to a microbrewery in the area along with visits to the best pubs we can find. H & H is a traditional brewery producing some fine ales so it should be a good trip (and it's free!). More details will appear in the next issue so get the date in your diary now!

## ***SPBW WEBSITE***

Our website (<http://www.spbw.com>) has been much revamped and is better than ever. Please do take time to visit and perhaps sign the guest book. Our thanks to Mark Hutchison who generously volunteered his services as our Webmaster.

Another of Mark's initiatives is the SPBW Bulletin Board (<http://www.spbw.com/bb/>). This is intended as a way for members to

exchange information. There was more about the Forum in recent issues; basically it's very easy to get involved with and, as with most things, the more the merrier. We are particularly keen to see representatives of branches acting as moderators to help keep their sections up to date; contact Mark at: [marksalehousecom@hotmail.com](mailto:marksalehousecom@hotmail.com).

## ***FROM THE ARCHIVES***

The February 1995 issue sported a lurid orange cover with a picture of the Old Swan, Netherton. This was often known as Ma Pardoe's after the long serving landlady and was a renowned Black Country brew pub. At the time of this issue, however, the pub was in the middle of a spell of not brewing. Happily, working order was restored in 2001 and home brewed ales can be drunk here once more.

This was a fairly slim volume, albeit the only issue of PiH to report a Grateful Dead gig. More relevant was a warning about the new 'draughtflow dispense system' then being pioneered by Whitbread (remember them? They used to brew, you know). This was the dawning of the latest version of dustbin beers which have blighted pubs ever since. Stick to the likes of the Old Swan – not that I need to tell you that.

## **RONALD KODLICK**

Former President of Chesapeake Bay Ron Kodlick died in November 2004 after a long illness. Ron was certainly dedicated to our local beer scene and he will be missed badly. Ron was a BJCP certified beer judge, an avid home brewer and long-time member of the Cross Street Irregulars homebrew club. He volunteered at Maryland Science Center and was very active in his

community festivals and events. Ron was a very regimented person and he had deep passion for almost every task he took on. Members of SPBW from England who visited Baltimore have happy memories of Ron's kind hospitality. He is survived by his wife Gladys.

*Dominic Cantalupo*  
*President, SPBW Chesapeake Bay*  
*Branch*

## **DAVID ALLEN**

We were saddened to hear of the death of David Allen late in 2004. David was one of the founder members of Campden Hill branch – back in 1965 – and held the post of Treasurer through its early years. I hope to feature a tribute to David in the next issue.

## **A TASTE OF '71**

PiH 11 (August 1984) reproduced an article from *The Guardian* of 6 March 1971. It featured SPBW Founder Member Arthur Millard, under the heading "*Not a Keg To Stand On*". There were some choice quotes from Arthur:

On keg beer: "It tastes nasty, it blows you up like a balloon and it costs too much. In a lot of pubs nowadays one's dealing with just an automaton behind the bar. They only need a spanner to stock and serve it."

On the SPBW: "In 1963 there were seven of us who were getting a bit fed up with caling in at a pub and finding we couldn't get beer without

gas. We thought it quite improper that we couldn't get our traditional tipple delivered either by gravity or the old hand-pump. And so the Society just grew up out of bar chatter. We'd all had some experience."

Experience?: "About five or six pints a day, I suppose. But I'll have about 14 tomorrow, it's a works outing."

On the keg brewers: "We've been to lots of them. One or two of our members have been thought to be rude by these chaps in white coats. We don't get far with the big boys of course, they're not terribly interested in beer."

# A COTSWOLD CLASSIC

NATIONAL WEEKEND 2004

The 2004 National Weekend – helping to celebrate Wantz branch’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary – brought together the largest gathering of SPBW members for an event outside London for quite a few years. Some 20 of us from various parts of the country made the journey to Oxfordshire and were based in Banbury for the weekend. Naturally we visited the best of the town’s pubs. There are two Hook Norton houses: the **Coach & Horses** in Butcher’s Row, just off the High Street, is an unpretentious local serving only the Best Bitter. The full Hook Norton range can be sampled at the **Olde Reindeer** in Parsonage Street, just a short distance away. This is a splendid 15<sup>th</sup> century inn with a variety of drinking areas. Apparently Oliver Cromwell (not renowned as a toper) used to hang out here planning future battles. A notable feature is the Globe Room, generally used for private functions but worth a look - the impressive wood panelling was held at the Victoria & Albert Museum until 1946. Should you want a change from Hook Norton beers, there is usually a guest available (Pedigree on our visits). East of the town centre, across the Oxford Canal, River Cherwell and the railway line, you’ll find the **Bell** – and it’s a worthwhile diversion. The sign on the pub’s white painted exterior reveals its previous existence as an M & B house, but don’t be put off. Inside there are two separate rooms – one

a fairly basic but tidy bar with pool table, the other an L-shaped lounge with a real fire. Regular beers are Hancocks HB and Highgate Dark (formerly known as mild). Bateman’s XB and Springhead bitter were also on tap over the weekend in this friendly, welcoming community-oriented establishment.

Other good pubs in Banbury worth a visit were the **Woolpack**, a recently refurbished free house near Banbury Cross serving Brains and Adnams, and the **Horse & Jockey** which sold Hook Norton and Old Speckled Hen straight from the cask, although sadly not a wooden one, and the **Exchange**, a typical Wetherspoon pub with a couple of interesting guest beers.

The focal point of the weekend was the Saturday morning visit to Hook Norton brewery, an 8 mile coach ride from Banbury. The general consensus was that this was one of the best ever brewery visits. Of course, it’s a classic Victorian brewery with a maze of rooms and an interesting array of equipment; but the welcome and hospitality were second to none. One of our guides even put on a SPBW sweatshirt she’d been given by another party several years earlier!

Most breweries have some particular nuance that they are very proud of. In Hooky’s (as it is affectionately known by staff and locals) it is their old 25 horse power steam engine which drives most of the brewery processes and equipment – this is

the only brewery still run by steam. Hooky brews 750,000 gallons a year and we were all well pleased to try some of it. This ranged from the Dark (3.2%) which is a slightly different recipe and a re-brand from the old Mild, up to the seasonal Twelve Days -a dark Christmas 5.5% ale. In the middle were the best bitter, Generation (the hoppiest of the brews) and the well-known Old Hooky. All of the hops used are British from the female flowers (Challenger & Goldings), and some dry hopping is also done as well. (For the history of the brewery see PiH 88.)

One shadow over the brewery was the death of Managing Director David Clarke at the end of September. The great-grandson of John Harris, founder of the brewery in 1849, David had worked at Hook Norton since 1958, serving as head brewer for 10 years from 1974. By all accounts he was given a splendid send-off, with representatives from numerous family breweries in attendance.

Following the tour we were let loose in the visitor centre, looking at the brewery museum, spending money on Hook Norton merchandise and – needless to say - sampling the full range of HN beers at the bar. As part of the deal we received a badged half pint glass as a souvenir of a memorable visit.

When we finally dragged ourselves from the brewery we strolled a few yards down the road to the **Pear Tree**, which is the brewery tap. This is another fine pub, well worth a longer visit than we had time for. This attractive, beamed 18<sup>th</sup> century pub offers the full HN range and yet again there was a very friendly welcome from behind the bar.

Sunday saw us visit the village of Bodicote, a mile or two south of Banbury. About half of our number took advantage of a sunny morning to walk there while the lazy brigade went by taxi. Our main port of call here was the **Plough**, which has brewed its own beer since 1982. Sadly the beers weren't in great shape and I believe that the brewer has been having trouble with yeast infections, so we did not see the pub in its usual good form. The food was very good though. Salvation was provided by the other two village pubs, the Bakers Arms and the Horse & Jockey, where we observed the Remembrance Day parade and sampled beers from Hook Norton, Shepherd Neame & Loddon.

Thanks to Roger Jacobson and Wantz branch for smooth organisation and to the brewers and publicans of Oxfordshire for their hospitality.

*John Rooth*



## ***MEET the BRANCHES***

*Most social activities in the Society take place within branches so it makes sense to get involved with one. You're sure to get a good welcome and most branches prefer to keep things very informal. Details of our branches are listed below; if there isn't one in your area you are welcome to start one! Bill English, (Branch Liaison Officer, address on page 2), will be pleased to tell you what you need to know. We will be happy to put you in touch with other local members.*

**BMAD:** Meetings held first Thursday of each month at the **Burnt Mill Snooker and Social Club** (CIU affiliated) in Harlow, Essex. Contact Tony Syrett (01279 423174)

**CAMPDEN HILL:** Meetings held first Monday of each month at the **Britannia Tap**, 150 Warwick Road, Kensington. Contact John Rooth (see page 2).

**CENTRAL LONDON:** Meetings held on the 18th of each month mostly in the form of pub evaluation walks - usually in central London. Contact Roger West (see page 2).

**CHESAPEAKE BAY:** Based in the area around Baltimore, Maryland USA - a great area for microbrews and brewpubs. Contact Dominic Cantalupo, email [DominicCantalupo@ChampionRealty.com](mailto:DominicCantalupo@ChampionRealty.com).

**COATE:** Meetings held third Monday of each month at the **New Inn**, Coate, near Devizes. Contact Eric Clark (ericclark@aol.com) or email [coate@spbw.com](mailto:coate@spbw.com).

**COMMON:** Meetings now held in Reading at the **Retreat**, 8 St Johns Street, every Sunday from 2.30. Contact Peter Smith 01189 670647.

**KINGSTON:** Meetings held first Wednesday of each month in the Willoughby **Arms**, 47 Willoughby Road. Contact Rick at the Willoughby [020 8546 4236]; or our website: [www.spbwkingston.co.uk](http://www.spbwkingston.co.uk).

**MAYDAY (Hastings):** Based at the **First In Last Out** brewpub, 14-15 High Street. Contact Helen or Tony Champion at the pub on 01424 425079 for further details.

**NORTH RIDING:** Meetings held in various pubs in Scarborough. Contact Bill Broadmore (01723 397066 [daytime] or 01723 351315 [evening]).

**NORTHERN IRELAND:** Contact Mark Hutchinson for details of meetings and events: [marksalehousecom@hotmail.com](mailto:marksalehousecom@hotmail.com)

**PONDS:** Meetings held third Monday of each month in the Swan Bar of the Greyhound Hotel, Carshalton. Contact Dave Hamer (020 8395 8716 or email [davehamer@btinternet.com](mailto:davehamer@btinternet.com)).

**RACS:** The Real Ale Club of Sawbridgeworth meets last Wednesday of each month at The Gate, London Road. Contact Jan Mead (01279 864398) or email [meadspanner@aol.com](mailto:meadspanner@aol.com).

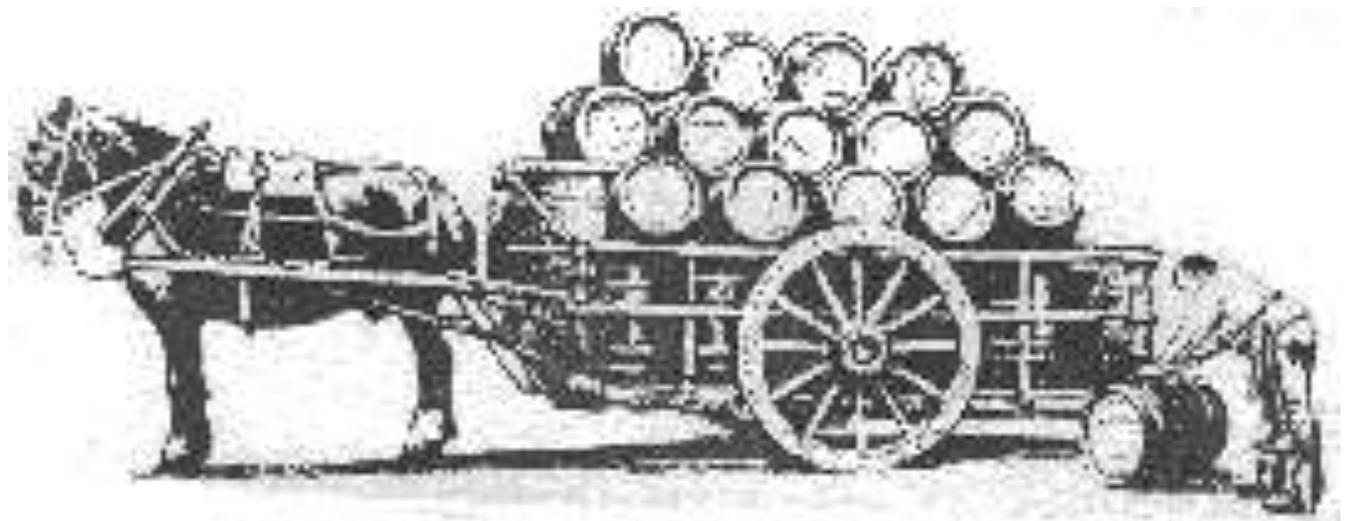
**SPECIAL:** Now reborn after 14 years, the branch holds annual, week-long gatherings around the inland waterways network. Check our website at: [www.geocities.com/canalnav/SPBW1.html](http://www.geocities.com/canalnav/SPBW1.html)

**WANTZ:** Meetings are held third Monday of the month at the **Britannia**, Church Street, Barking (Youngs), starting at around 8 pm. Contact Roger Jacobson (see page 2).

**WEST RIDING:** Meets on Sunday mornings in various pubs in and around Leeds. Contact Graham Hewitt (0113 2624574) for further details.

**WOOLWICH:** Meetings held first Thursday of each month in Greenwich or Woolwich. Contact Bill Smith (020 8310 5907).

*Are the details for your branch correct on these pages? If no please the Editor know before the deadline for the next issue; thanks!*



*If only we had more branches – I wouldn't have to use the same old pictures every time to fill the space!*

## ***BRANCHES IN ACTION***

6 hardy souls from **Campden Hill** ventured out along the Northern Line on 20 January for a mini Hampstead pub crawl. We started off in The Duke Of Hamilton, New End, which, though not a Fullers pub, serves the full range in excellent condition. Next came The White Bear in Well Road, which was very busy on quiz night; I think we might have done quite well. The beers on offer were Young's, Adnam's & Pride again. 'Arry Hart conducted us via the scenic and hilly route to the Holly Bush in Holly Mount; this had Adnam's and Harvey's best and was very atmospheric with candles and a real fire. We finished in the Young's house the Flask in Flask Walk. This still has a public bar as well as a lounge, but I think no price differentials. The Ordinaire was in fine fettle.

On Monday 21 February we have the Keith Hudson memorial darts competition at the Sekforde Arms, Clerkenwell. Can anyone break the winning sequence of Campden Hill's own Phil Taylor impersonator? We have a Branch Meal on Monday 21 March at Porters, Henrietta Street Covent Garden. Dine at 8.30 in a good value restaurant serving traditional English fare and also serving Fullers Pride & Boddingtons. Meet in the Harp, Chandos Place, an

excellent free house and one of the nominees for SPBW London Pub of the Year, from 7.00 onwards.

**RACS** are busy as ever. A trip to St Peters brewery may have happened by now or may be on 5 March. Ramsgate and Whitstable breweries will be visited on 27 April. Four days earlier will see St George's Day celebrated at the Gate.

**Wantz** branch celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in style with the Banbury/Hook Norton weekend, recounted in detail elsewhere in this issue. December saw a visit to Vinopolis on Bankside and our Christmas party with old stalwarts Alan Martin and Kevin Rowley showing their faces. A full programme of exciting events is being organised for our 31<sup>st</sup> year.

**Woolwich** is not very active these days; many of our members also belong to other SPBW branches and we are content to just meet socially. Several of our members (and hangers on) are 'Old Roans' – old boys of the John Roan Grammar School in Greenwich who have long been associated with the branch.

*Once again, only a few of our branches have contributed to this section. I'm sure these can't be the only active branches, so please keep me informed of what you are, and will be, up to.*

## ***THE PERFECT PUB PAGE***

It's a bitterly cold late November evening, and we're sat in front of the fire - but not at home. This is the **Cover Bridge Inn** at East Witton, north of the brewing town of Masham. Let me set the scene. It's 8 p.m. and we've eaten well. My wife

is sat at one side of the roaring log fire reading the paper and I'm sat at the other, pondering my next real ale. Our dog is stretched out on the hearth, exhausted from her first countryside experience.



We've never stayed here before but already feel at home. Nick, Anne and Yvonne plus all the staff ensure a relaxed, friendly atmosphere is maintained at all times. This is a pub with no music, no fruit machine and no pool table. I have the difficult choice of beers from Black Sheep, Copper Dragon, Robinsons, Taylors and Theakstons to contend with - but, with a 3 night stay and a short stagger up one flight of stairs, it shouldn't prove difficult to sample

them all (the Old Peculier is from the wood). Food is served in both bars as well as the dining room, and is simple, good quality pub food. The ham and eggs is worth the journey alone.

Whether for total relaxation or to explore the local history at Middleham, Masham and Richmond, the Cover Bridge Inn is a wonderful place to visit and stay. I am certain that, like us, you will return.

*John Bell*

*As ever, contributions for this page will be very welcome; even more so if accompanied by an illustration!*

# **SHOWMEN, CHAMPAGNE AND SQUID**

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

First in my selection this issue is the ***Shoulder of Mutton*** on Methley Road, Castleford. It is less than 10 minutes from the bus station and well worth the small effort. This is a very traditional pub, free of brewery tie with both tap room and lounge. It is also apparently the oldest existing licensed business that is still trading in the town, although a local hostelry named the Mexborough may be an older building. There is always Tetley bitter and mild available in the *Shoulder*, along with a couple of guests. On the night of our visit these consisted of Skipton Copper Dragon's Black Gold and Old Mill's Old Curiosity. I can extol the quality of the Black Gold; in fact, I would be very surprised to hear of anyone getting a less than first class pint here. The prices are very competitive too – the Tetley mild is £1.66, bitter £1.68 and the guest ales £1.70.

As befits an authentic inn, the *Shoulder of Mutton* is home to a number of societies. It is the HQ of the Showman's Guild of Great Britain Fairground Operators (note their plaque behind the bar in the tap room) and is also home for the Castleford Heritage Group. The President of this estimable organisation is Ian Clayton, who works for Yorkshire Television. The area around the pub is steeped in history and was known as The Potteries for many years on account of the kilns and whatnots associated with this industry. Rather more recently, the pub won the local CAMRA pub of the season award for Winter 2003. Everyone who reads this article should pay a visit to this excellent tavern.

As one of my cronies suggested visiting the Belfast Beer Festival, my holiday sojourn there took place in icy November. The Society's local Rep, Mark Hutchinson, took us around a few pubs, including the ***Kings Head*** on Lisburn Road on the southern edge of the city. This is a pretty imposing Victorian edifice, originally built in 1868 for the senior management of the Great Northern Railway. Large though it be, it is dwarfed by the Royal Ulster Hall across the road, the local version of London's Olympia. I briefly mention the *Kings Head* back in PIH 43 (August 1992) but will bring things up to date. It was bought from Guinness by Botanic Inns in 2002 and given a big refurbishment in 2003/4, now extending to an upper level as well. It is hard to describe the different sections of this hostelry, but they range from the quieter, and possibly older, part of the building, which is furnished with chaise longues (I think) to the rather more upbeat bits that probably double as crush zones on weekend nights. The centrally sited bar is a fair old size – it needs to be, given the service area, and normally dispenses two cask ales. At the time of our visit these were both from the (reasonably local) Whitewater Brewery, being Belfast Ale and Mill Ale respectively. Unusually for over here, there is also a decent collection of foreign bottled offerings, including a couple of wheat beers and Anchor Porter amongst the examples from distant climes.

We were joined by the charming Marie Louise (general factotum and niece of the General Manager, Marianne Hood)

and given a run down on recent happenings in the *Kings* before she uncorked a bottle of Montana Lindanuer, pouring generous measures for us three. I must say that this is the first time that I've ever got free champagne in a pub; not even my most obsequious articles have ever got me more than a pint of beer. But this was not to honour my visit here, as you'd expect, but to celebrate the achievement of Richard Crozier, Head Chef at the *Kings* in winning the Publican award for Healthy Eating Option in the UK. I need hardly add that it is worth pulling on the old nosebag here and the beer is good too. Free champagne cannot be guaranteed though.

On the following night, we visited the beer festival in the Ulster Hall. There was a varied selection of ales available, both local and from further afield, all served in excellent condition. We sampled a number of beers before being led around some of the city's hostelries by Brer Smith, another Society member from hereabouts. **McHugh's**, a GBG entry, had run out of cask beer for our visit and the **New Kitchen Bar** charged £3.90 for three halves of Belfast Ale! This hostelry has taken over from the old *Kitchen & Parlour Bar*, lauded by me in a number of articles, which has now been demolished. The new version is nothing like the old, being a red brick barn of a place. The décor is part 30s art deco style and part Spartan minimalisation – see if you can miss the girder (on loan from Harland and Wolff perhaps) in the middle of the pub. My spies inform me that there are now two hand pumps on the bar, no doubt looking lost among the fonts, with Whitewater's Belfast Ale maybe having a permanent presence. The

prices here were not the steepest we paid either – that dubious award goes to the **Crown Liquor Saloon** where the Belfast Ale was £2.70 a pint! Ten minutes walk away, in what was then the Wetherspoon's (and is a now Lloyd's Bar) the same beer was about half this price. The pubs selling less expensive cask beer, other than the Wetherspoon's chain, are outside the city; such as the *White Horse* at Saintfield and the *Hillside* at Hillsborough.

A new hostelry to open in Leeds centre that is actually worth visiting is **Baroque** at 157 The Headrow, facing the City Library. Part of the Manx Inn pub chain, it joins their other houses in Liverpool and Chester as part of an expanding estate. It offers local drinkers a chance to sample some of the ales from the Isle of Man brewery, better known to all as Okell's. On my first visit here, these consisted of Okell's bitter, IPA and Maclir wheat beer, costing £2.00 for the former and £2.10 for the latter two. Unlike its two scouse siblings there's no mild (for shame!) but an ever-changing guest ale is available, though at £2.22 (irregardless of strength I guess).

Hard to miss is the extensive range of bottled offerings from far away places: the glass cabinet behind the bar can be fairly regarded as immense and displays some of the wares available. The customer may find it easier to pick up a copy of the beer list than to espy the content of the cabinet and fridges. The prices are not for the faint hearted or folk on my salary anyhow. Having said that, I can think of a number of hostelries where the prices are steeper, and that as far as the Liefman's Frambozen is concerned, it is on top form. Another saving grace is the fact that one may purchase the

highly rated Boon brewery's Gueze here. Anybody who yearns for a decent wine should find their heart's desire amongst the numerous brands represented.

Now for that name: *Baroque* is named for the rather ostentatious ornamentation atop its frontage. If you stand on the other side of the road you will see, amongst other things, the figure of Patrick James Foley, founder of the Pearl Assurance Company (whose building this was up to recent years) and MP for West Galway. He is flanked by two Griffins, but given the present state of most insurance companies, I would have thought Chimeras more appropriate. The building is made of Portland stone – very revolutionary when it was designed by William Blakewell in 1911. As for the inside, it made me think of a mix between a Georgian house and a

Baptist chapel, the décor being simple and plain. The windows, bearing the Okell's Brewery motif, are large and let in lots of light – this adds to the appearance of spaciousness. Given the fact that the drinking areas are on 3 levels with a large back room, you have this anyway!

Is it a wine bar or a pub? A bit of both really: the menu, which includes dishes like warm salad of squid chorizo, is unlikely to be found in a street corner boozier, but the very solid bar counter with its brass foot rail is not typical of a yuppie bistro either. Up to press, I'd say that Baroque is a positive addition to city centre hostelries; it is cheaper than many, offers a range of draught beers unobtainable elsewhere and keeps them in good condition.

A W

## ***THE BATTLE FOR BOTTLE CONDITIONED BEERS***

Why is it that the majority of CAMRA members will not accept that bottle conditioned beers are part of the brewing heritage and must be supported in exactly the same way as cask ale is? Indeed, many get quite irate when it is mentioned. Yet CAMRA HQ is solidly behind what they are now calling RAIB - Real Ale In A Bottle. It may be fine to take this attitude when your branch area is awash with cask outlets, but what about the country areas where there is little (if any) support for ale and where the ale would sour in the cask long before it can be sold?

Fifteen years ago the province had practically no ale outlets and what we, as a branch, did a decade ago could help many other branches. In the late

1980's Tony Dean, a figure of renown across Scotland, took up residence in Belfast and took over the Chair when the branch was threatened with closure. His first action was to visit every single cask outlet in the province, along with many pubs that he would class in the heritage style.

He noted that many bars could not, at that time, sustain enough sales to warrant keeping the ale. However, help was close by. Making contact with Bass Brewery in Belfast, he obtained a supply of Worthington White Shield (WWS) and made a concerted effort to persuade pubs to stock the bottle conditioned beers (BCB). Many were interested as the bottles could be kept on the shelves for many months. I entered the scene as the branch's

Newsletter Editor and Tony and I talked to many a publican. Mind you, we had to prove our commitment by imbibing quite a few of the bottles.

I took over as Chairman and pushed hard with Tony's legacy. In 1991 we had only 6 pubs in the GBG on half of a page, and one had WWS. This was the Crown Liquor Saloon, a Victorian gin palace truly worthy of being included! Five years later and we covered two full pages, 21 outlets in all. Ten served bottles and, of the remaining 11 pubs, five had now moved from BCB's to draught and the Crown was serving cask Bass. Brian Houston, Sales Manager for Bass Brewery (NI), had been told by his HQ that sales of the bottles did not justify shipment to the province. Brian, a staunch supporter and good friend, always tabled this comment last at meetings and time ran out before it could be discussed. While the branch was having a great success creating outlets and moving the outlets, where possible, to draught, we appeared not to have a good support from other branches. "Draught or nothing in the GBG" was the cry we heard. How many times have I spent arguing with branches that bottle conditioned beers are as much a part of our heritage as cask ale? Do they not visit the BCB bar at Olympia and count how many brands are sold there? At this time I taxied Roger Protz during one of his visits here and we had a heart to heart outside Whitewater Brewery on the matter. He held the same opinion as myself but advised me to talk to the current Editor, one Jeff Evans. Yes, for it was he! The Jeff Evans of BCB book and column fame. If we could follow the guidelines laid out by CAMRA for GBG entries then BCB's would be fine we were told.

At this time I was organising the branch beer festivals and here enters one Mick Slaughter. Mick and I have oft spent a day surveying local outlets for his work on the National Inventory. Many such pubs cry out for inclusion in this publication and in the GBG. Unfortunately many cannot sell cask ale but could hold a supply of BCB's. Things were looking up.

Times change and I have moved on to other things. Now another five years have passed. For whatever reason, BCB's are not sold in the on-license outlets. Bass no longer stocks WWS and I believe Brian Houston never sees the branch these days. Cask Bass has gone as well. Classic country pubs like the Crosskeys (Toomebridge) and the Crown & Shamrock (Glengormley) no longer appear in the GBG. Old-fashioned town and country pubs are disappearing due to a lack of contact and support. More would have disappeared or be "refreshed" if not for the likes of Mick Slaughter.

Strange isn't it that this is happening yet we now have Tesco's, Sainsbury's and some local off-licenses doing a roaring trade on bottled beer. I admit, not many are BCB's, but customers know cask ale breweries and the demand for their products is there. Wetherspoon's have opened nine pubs and have plans for a few more to open. I spoke to their managers and they were all totally surprised by the demand for cask ales. Their pricing structure has rocked the complacent licensed trade over here. Many publicans now know about real ale, and cheap ale at that. Many are wondering about selling ale but all need support - information for their customers as well as sales. Whitewater Brewery has opened quite

a few outlets without CAMRA help or support and Hilden, the oldest independent cask ale brewery in the province is doing well.

Did Tony and I just go for it with WWS? No! We had a plan that extended over years not months. Slowly, and with a lot of pub visits, we talked to and weaned the owners and their customers onto real ale in a bottle. We were seen to be there.

Many, like the White Horse (Saintfield), have never looked back. Five pumps continuously used, the first off-license in the province to sell ale on draught and the only premise owned by a cask brewer (Hilden has a restaurant in its brewhouse). Not bad from the first couple of BCB's sold a decade ago.

*Mark Hutchison*

## ***BEER IN BANGKOK***

Bangkok is not the place a beer lover would expect to find anything of interest and to a certain extent this is true. Beer Chang, now the proud sponsor of Everton FC, is the top selling beer and at 6.4% abv you only need a few bottles to feel it. Singha is the other well known Thai beer and these are complemented by some even cheaper varieties, Leo, Thai Beer and, new to the market, Archa, as well as the so-called premium brands, Heineken, Asahi, Klosters and now Tiger. All of these are brewed in Thailand, mostly available in bottles but they are generally drinkable despite being filtered and pasteurised. Incidentally, Thailand is the only country I know where premium beer brands are weaker than the standard varieties!

So, what if you want something a bit different? Malaysian brewed Guinness is widely available, as is Paulaner and Erdinger Weissbier, the first two generally on draught, the latter in bottled and draught forms, though I prefer the bottles. The best place to sample these brews is at the Suan Lum Night Bazaar beer garden, a huge establishment with live entertainment, popular with locals and

tourists, and now easily accessible via the new underground system (Lumpini Station). Many German beers are available here, pilsner, dunkel, weissbier not just from the two breweries mentioned above. It is quite expensive by Bangkok standards at about £1.70 a half litre. Belgian beer has become harder to find; the importer had his last consignment detained at the docks for an indefinite time period and apparently it was never released by customs.

Then there are the brewpubs. Bangkok has three of these. Unfortunately the Brew Pavilion has closed recently. They are all expensive. The Londoner is on Sukhumvit Road near Soi 33 (Phrong Pong skytrain). A large establishment with several TV screens showing live sport and a live band. Happy hour can be a disaster as it is two for one on all draught and bottled beers. Their two home brews are Pilsner 33, unpasteurised and unfiltered but hoppy, with a strong citrus taste. Londoners Pride (sic) tastes vaguely like a cold keg English bitter but it does make a change from the proliferation of lager. The food is English in style and not bad. Try not to

laugh at the waitresses in beefeater costumes!

Tawandaeng on Rama III is difficult to find. You need a taxi. The beers are served in various sizes including a tall five litre container. The beers are fine: ale, dunkel, pilsner and wheat beer, the latter being my tippie of choice. I drank a few of these one evening and followed it with Erdinger in another bar and found the local brew to be superior. The venue is cavernous, it has live entertainment practically non-stop, which varies from the standard Thai singers and dancers to choreographed scenes from musicals as well as different styles of music. Actor Steven Seagal allegedly joined in with a blues band on stage one evening. A good place for a night out but if you want a table to eat the Thai-German food then book.

The best beer in Bangkok has to wait until your departure. Bangkok Airport has its own brewery. The wheat beer and regular pilsner are a little bland, the Killer Bee Lager has a bite to it but Headbutt Strong Ale is the one. 6% abv, it is weaker than Chang but much

more preferable. It's the nearest beer, despite being served under pressure, that you will find to an English bitter, or an American microbrewery style ale, in Bangkok. The Airport Brewhouse is at the far end of terminal 2 at Don Muang International Airport.

If you happen to venture to Pattaya, Hopf Brewhouse on Beach Road is a good stop for pub-brewed German style beers and good food. Tony's Entertainment Complex on Walking Street is, well, interesting for a mix of locally brewed beers (none exceptional but they do make a change), discotheque and working ladies. Finally the Brewery House in Central Festival Center is in a modern premises with glass all round. On my one visit there was a Thai company party taking place so I didn't sample the beer for very long.

All in all, if you want to find some different brews from the norm in Thailand you can but I don't know anyone who has visited this country with good beer as their number one priority.

*Steve Mitchell*

*(Steve moved to Phuket since writing this article but thankfully came through the tsunami disaster unscathed - RJ)*

## ***The Last Word – from York***

This snippet is lifted from *Ouse Boozer* (Newsletter of York & Scarborough CAMRA) and was written by 'JT' a domestic heating engineer.

While working in the kitchen of a student house I engaged the occupant in conversation. "Where's home?" I asked. "St Albans" he replied. "Oh I've been there, it's got

some good pubs." "Yes" he agreed "and St Albans is where they actually invented real ale and the rest of the country copied." "Goodness me" I exclaimed "I wonder what they drank before that?" "I don't know" he said "but that's why they have such big old pubs, like Wetherspoons." And there was me thinking brewing was an ancient craft!

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