

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

(founded 1963)

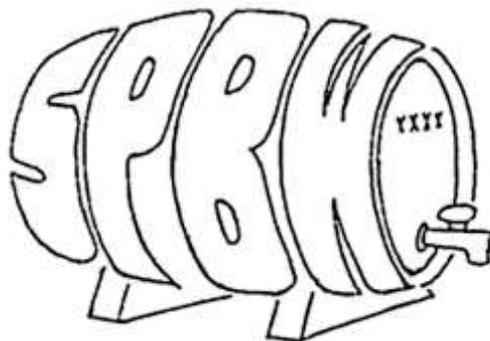
PINT in HAND

Number 95

August 2005



***Jennings of Cumberland, Ridleys of Essex –
Family Brewers under threat***



PINT in HAND

- ***Pint in Hand*** is published quarterly, in February, May, August and November. It is issued to all subscribing members and affiliated branches of SPBW.
- All members are invited to contribute articles for publication on beer-related subjects. Contributions for the November issue should reach the Editor by **20 October**.
- 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

At the end of June I spent a week in the Lake District, based in Keswick. Inevitably I spent some time in the several Jennings pubs in town. It was evident that most of these pubs had a wider range of Cockerthorpe brews than in previous years, and the quality was invariably spot on. A prime example of a local, family brewery on top of its game. Unfortunately, by the time we reached Cumbria, Jennings had already been taken over by Wolverhampton & Dudley, shareholders having been told that their offer was too good to refuse. Jennings is now merely a subsidiary of one of the country's two major regional brewing companies. I've no doubt that when I visit next year, Pedigree and Banks bitter will have been trucked some 150 miles up the M6 to displace beers brewed less than 10 miles away. So far W & D have made placatory noises about keeping Jennings open. So it's worth recalling that they closed the Hanson and Mansfield breweries within the last 15 years and would have happily closed Camerons had it not been bought by Castle Eden. It's not hard to imagine a year or two from now the W & D board wondering why they should bother keeping open this old brewery in the back of beyond when Jennings 130 houses offer the opportunity of expanding the availability of W & D's existing brands.

Like many other long-established local breweries, Jennings brews

beers to meet local tastes. Just about all their regular outlets are within 100 miles of Cockerthorpe. W & D's beers are mostly fairly bland - Pedigree can still be a classic ale if you're lucky to find a pub serving it properly - and to send truckloads of ale up the motorways from the midlands will inevitably be detrimental to the environment (and it won't improve the beer).

When SPBW was founded there were some 150 family owned breweries in the country. Today there are less than 10 and there has to be concern over the future of some of them (remember the family disputes that threatened the futures of McMullen and Bateman for instance?). I have said before that some of the best and most reliable beers around are brewed by such breweries and we can't afford to lose them.

This brings me to the plight of Riddles. On the face of it this is another case of the small fish being swallowed up by a predator; and the Hartford End brewery is most definitely doomed after 142 years. Before we start feeling too sorry for Riddle's we should bear in mind that their directors seemed only too happy to take GK's money and run; and let's not forget how they themselves took over and closed Tolly Cobbold nor so many years ago.

Support your local family brewer while you can!

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 current 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.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

An EGM of the National Executive Committee will be held on **Monday 12 September** at the Royal Oak, Tabard Street, London SE1; it will commence at 7 pm in the upstairs room. The main purpose is to agree

the NEC's accounts, which will have been audited by then. A minor amendment to the NEC Constitution (reflecting the change of our financial year) has also been proposed.

NATIONAL WEEKEND

We are now taking firm bookings for the National Weekend visit to the Nottingham area on 18 - 20 November. There is a trip to Hardy & Hansons brewery at Kimberley on Friday 18 November, starting at 7 pm. H & H is a fine example of a Victorian tower brewery, with a brewer who is a keen supporter of high quality cask beer. On the Saturday and Sunday, we will explore excellent pubs in Nottingham & Derby.

If you want to reserve a place, please send a cheque for £10 post-
<http://www.bedandbreakfast-directory.co.uk/uploads/estate/html/to-Nottingham.htm>
which is a useful link for accommodation in Nottingham. A number of us have already booked into the Gresham Hotel in

dated to 1 November 2005, payable to SPBW, to John Rooth (address on page 2). This will be used to offset costs (Note this cheque will not be banked until after the trip - and will either be destroyed or refunded if no costs - or partially refunded if less than £10 costs are incurred). At the moment as the brewery trip is free and we aim to use public transport, I am hoping that this will be the case.

Please book your own accommodation; try:

Carrington Street, close to Nottingham station.

We hope to see another good turnout from our members for what promises to be an enjoyable event.

JOHN MORGAN

We were sad to hear of the John's death, in March, at the age of 72. When I first attended meetings of the SPBW NEC (way back in 1978 at Ye Olde Watling) John was well established as Chairman, a position he also held at Campden Hill branch. To me, John was a larger than life character with immense enthusiasm for the SPBW – and for good beer, of which he was a very keen imbibor. After stepping down from the Chair, John held one or two other NEC posts before retiring to the 'back benches. Although illness prevented him from being as active socially as he would have liked, John was keen and enthusiastic to the last; indeed, the last time I spoke to him was early in the year when he rang me to discuss how best to commemorate David Allen, another of our late stalwarts.

John was born in October 1932 and grew up in Ealing. He studied at Ealing College and founded a football and cricket club, the Dynamos, for which he both played and helped to run. When not playing he enjoyed watching Middlesex at Lord's and Brentford FC. After national service, John worked as an auditor and later moved to Harrow. Here he became a keen community campaigner, setting up a local residents association in the mid-1990s, which he chaired for several years.

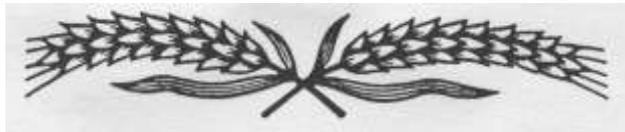
John had suffered from diabetes for many years and died following complications after an operation. He should be remembered for his contributions to the SPBW and far beyond.

R.J

JIM LENAHAN

Jim, who was another former Campden Hill stalwart, died in June aged 65. Jim was a keen photographer who was well informed on the pub situation in the Fulham/Earls Court area and would have known the history of most of

the pubs. He worked hard on the surveying and maps for the forthcoming Camra West London guide and as a result I have been told that the guide will be dedicated to his memory.



PAST AND FUTURE FESTIVALS

We ran a stall at the Ealing Beer on Broadway festival in June. Business was slow, partly because of our obscure location, but overall it was a worthwhile venture. Thanks to the organisers and to the NEC members who put in the hours on our behalf.

Once again we were priced out of attending the GBBF at Olympia in early August. But if we can't be at the largest festival we will be represented at one of the smallest – Clacton, over August bank holiday weekend. Peter Willett and our refugee from Turkey, Dave Brightwell will do the honours here.

LONDON PUB OF THE YEAR

It's that time of the year when we invite our London based members to nominate their favourite pubs to compete for this prestigious award. London branches are being asked to nominate up to three pubs and national members in the capital can put forward one. Nomination forms

can be got from Bill English (see page 2) and they must be returned to us by mid-September. If you fancy being part of the judging panel (warning: this involves visiting pubs and drinking beer) please let Bill know.

SPBW WEBSITE

As you all are aware, the SPBW Members Forum is going strong at www.spbw.com/bb. A lot of modifications have been tried out on a test forum before being installed on the live version. Most are background items that will help in administration, others are just little things to make your stay there better. While Mark Hutchison has been a Moderator on another forum for a few years he did not get into the Admin side overly much. Thus his knowledge of PHPBB and PHP is scant. If there is a member out

there who knows a lot of this stuff and is willing to give time to making the Forum a fun place to be, please get in touch with Mark at:

marksalehousecom@hotmail.com.

The Bulletin Board is intended as a way for members to exchange information. It's very easy to get involved with and, as with most things, the more the merrier. We are particularly keen to see representatives of branches acting as moderators to help keep their sections up to date.

WENLOCK BEER & BUFFET

Our third event at the celebrated **Wenlock Arms** takes place on **Wednesday 24 August** from about 8 pm upstairs – but I'm sure most of us will get there earlier for a few pints downstairs by way of an aperitif! The Wenlock has up to 8 handpumped beers, invariably in excellent condition; our chef Alasdair Boyd is a renowned practitioner of his profession, so be assured you can eat and drink in

style. And in good company too. The Wenlock is in Wenlock Road, London N1, off City Road, should you not already be familiar with this notable establishment.

Tickets cost £5 from John Rooth (see page 2). As we need to know numbers in advance of the event I suggest you ring or email John as soon as possible if you want to come along.

OCTOBER EVENTS

The inter-branch contest for the **Tony Littler Trophy**, hosted by Wantz branch, is to take place at the Priory Arms, Lansdowne Road, Stockwell on **Monday 17 October** from 7.30. We'll probably be playing Shut the Box. The Priory is a renowned free house and we hope many branches will be represented. You don't have to be a London-based branch to take part but we prefer that the contest is held in

London (the winning branch has to organise the next event). Of course, all members are welcome even if you don't belong to a branch.

John Rooth is organising a Saturday visit to the Crane Brewery in Twickenham, which began operating last year. The date has yet to be finalised so check with John, or the SPBW website for further details.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The August 1994 PiH was the first to be produced on a proper computer, rather than the word processor which had done the job for a few years. This technological novelty presumably accounted for the prodigious range of font styles used throughout the issue.

Just like the one you are reading, that PiH included a feature about pubs in Northern Ireland, courtesy

of Andy, and the original Kitchen Bar was depicted on the cover (scanned in from a beer coaster). Keeping up the Celtic theme, there were two articles about Scottish beer; one of these was about Maclay & Co of Alloa. This famed brewery ceased production in 1999 after 169 years and the name exists as a pub group with 'Maclay' beers brewed by Belhaven.

BEER BOOKS REVISITED

First in an occasional series

BEER AND SKITTLES by ***Richard Boston***

(William Collins 1976)

I guess there must be a number of you out there who, like me, had their eyes opened by RB's regular *Boston on Beer* column in the Guardian on Saturdays. Back in 1973 when the column was launched I was an apprentice drinker; I knew I liked beer but had rarely found anything that really excited me. But chance encounters with Adnams and Brakspears, excellent beers in great pubs, alerted me that it wasn't all keg and plastic pubs. However, living in Romford, in the shadow of the old Ind Coope brewery, meant that decent beer was not to be found on my doorstep.

Reading Boston's columns told me just why I couldn't find any decent beer locally. I learned about the dreaded Big Six: the ghastly keg beers they purveyed and the many small breweries they had taken over and closed to obtain an immense share of the beer market. This was stirring stuff that appealed to the quiet rebel in me and my sympathy for the underdog. Drinking good beer could be not just a source of pleasure but an act of defiance against the powers of evil as well.

I soon became committed to The Cause. I joined CAMRA and, in 1977, SPBW. I still appear to be supporting good beer and pubs.

Beer and Skittles was partly drawn from Boston's Guardian pieces and was an excellent primer for anyone developing an interest in all things beer-related. The author explained how his own interest in beer

developed before setting out a history of beer, brewing and pubs. There was a section on the different styles of beers and a chapter on how the Big Six came to be, and the subsequent growth of dustbin beers.

The SPBW gets a passing mention which is worth quoting: *'Though well-intentioned, the initial aims of the SPBW were a little misguided. Wooden casks are picturesque, and give better temperature insulation than metal ones. Otherwise they are rather a nuisance to all concerned: to the publican because they are heavy, and to the brewer because they are hard to sterilize and therefore more liable to infection. In due course the SPBW transferred its efforts to attacking extraneous CO² rather defending wood, but they were stuck with a name that gave the impression that they were barking up the wrong tree. Nevertheless, by its very existence the SPBW demonstrated that there was an opposition to what the brewers were doing. In the autumn of 1972 the brewers obligingly brought this opposition to the attention of the general public. The SPBW tried to take a stall at a commercially-organised beer exhibition at Alexandra Palace, but were excluded because of the objections of brewers who were exhibiting fizzy beer. The SPBW were joined by the newly-formed Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale (as CAMRA was then called) in picketing Ally Pally. The two organisations won more publicity by*

being kept out than if they had been let in.'

The final chapter is a guided tour of Britain's breweries, a lot fewer than there are now, with many long lost names among them.

What is striking, almost thirty years on, is how pessimistic Boston is about the future of traditional beer. He doesn't actually think it has much of a future, that it would become a kind of historical

curiosity, where it could be found at all. What RB could hardly foresee was the total eclipse of the big 6, the coming of the major pub groups and the remarkable revival of small scale brewing. Despite this, the book is written with RB's trademark humour which in itself helps to make this an entertaining, if rather dated, read.

R.J

RAIBs - AN ULSTER UPDATE

The last article about bottle conditioned beers here was not really upbeat. So, to brighten things up a bit I will bring you all up to date. Hilden are producing two of their beers as RAIB's (Real Ale in A Bottle as CAMRA now call it). Both Hilden and Molly Malone can now be obtained off-license. I have not seen the bottles behind bars here, but that is not to say that they are not out there somewhere. Sadly, Whitewater is pushing on with cask and has no plans for a bottled beer. I do think there is a chance for this, but that has yet to be discussed with them.

The bottled scene was quite limited and not progressing. A couple of off-licenses and the "usual suspects" - Tesco's, Sainsbury's etc. Then along came two guys based at Killyleagh in County Down. Not for them the usual business of setting up a brewery and then trying to start a market. They decided to get a product first which would be contract brewed. Then test out the ale market here, in the UK and especially the USA. Having found a suitable recipe they then went on to get in into a low end market here. By this I mean, a small niche in a largely beer complacent public. Hard graft, as the

public here have not experienced BCB's in many years since the utter lack of support of, and campaigning for, White Shield.

Some success came, but the doors seemed to open in the States. The potential there is great, but hard to break into as microbreweries are taking off rapidly. The UK market has given them a bit of a break as well. Now they have several bottled beers (all bottle conditioned at present) with their St Patrick's range being brewed with a small amount of shamrock. The beers are named after local history and taste excellent (to my palette anyway). They even had a cask or two at the local Belfast Beer Festival last year. Their overall hope is to get the product selling and well known. Once they have a good base then they will go for producing their own ale, probably with the bottles still being contact brewed for a while. They also have plans for a whiskey and sparkling water as a complimentary line to the beer. More information can be found at their website - www.slbc.ie - but I must warn you that their quiz is not for the fainthearted!

Mark Hutchison

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.

One of our regular contributors, Somerset Mark, is interested in getting a branch going. Anyone living within about 50 miles of Bath who would like to get involved, please contact Bill and he'll pass your name on.

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.

CHESHIRE: A bunch of beer lovers mainly around the Crewe/Nantwich area are getting together and we hope they'll decide on a name and get properly set up very soon.

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

COMMON: 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.

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.

NORTHERN IRELAND: Contact Mark Hutchinson for details of meetings and events: marksalehousecom@hotmail.com

PONDS: Meetings held third Monday of each month. Contact Dave Hamer (020 8395 8716 or email dehamer@tiscali.co.uk .

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.

SPECIAL: The branch holds annual, week-long gatherings around the inland waterways network. There are also unofficial visits to pubs of renown in London, Cheshire and Shropshire, or wherever we happen to be. Check our website at:

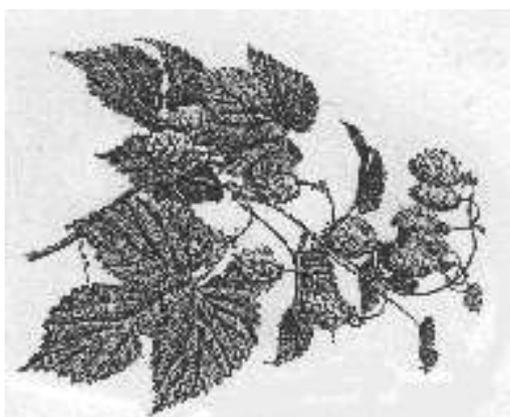
www.geocities.com/canalnav/SPBW1.html

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 not please the Editor know before the deadline for the next issue; thanks!



BRANCHES IN ACTION

Campden Hill branch visited a selection of pubs in Hammersmith on 25 July. On 19 September they will be consuming a Polish meal at a venue to be decided.

There's not a lot to report on **Ponds** other than we held our annual Wandle Walk on Saturday 23 July. Our monthly meetings have been a bit variable of late so check with Dave Hamer first if you want to come along. Our July meeting was in the Whispering Moon in Wallington (Wetherspoon's).

RACS's many events include a sports fun day with local Camra at the Queens Head, Allen's Green, in July. There are beer festival visits to GBBF and Chappell (in September) as well as taking part in the Gate beerfest over August bank holiday weekend.

Special Branch's annual gathering was another success. This year we tackled the scenic Llangollen Canal in north Wales, Shropshire and Cheshire. Some fine pubs were discovered and the overall beer choice was better than expected. A few highlights, pubwise: The **Willey Moor Lock Tavern** is a converted lock keepers cottage miles from anywhere, and has only been a pub since 1984. It's a fairly rambling establishment with several rooms and five or six handpumped beers, small independent brewers' products to the fore. The **Waggoners Inn** in the tiny village of Platt Lane, just a couple of hundred yards from the canal, is a friendly establishment with three rooms radiating from the bar counter. Salopian Shropshire Gold and Coach House Old Wharf were the beers of interest here. **Jack**

Mytton's, a canalside house at Hindford, is mostly a restaurant, but there is a small bar area and there were five proper beers on, including Shropshire Gold sold as a 'house beer'. Our pub of the week was the **Sun Inn** in Llangollen. On the edge of the town centre, and thus off the tourist main drag, the Sun offers a fine selection of ales. Shropshire Gold seems to be a permanent fixture and the other draught beers are from small independents. The large main room is host to regular live music – we caught the folk and rock nights on our two visits. If that's not to your taste, you can take refuge in the small snug bar or in the outside patio. Be warned though that the pub doesn't open until 3 pm every day.

Wantz branch's latest pub walk in early June took in some historic pubs in the Holborn area, notably the Citty of Yorke, Olde Mitre and, a bit further afield, the Viaduct Tavern, newly acquired by Fullers. To celebrate the 36th anniversary of the first moon walk we enjoyed an Italian meal next door to the Lamb Tavern in Lamb's Conduit Street. Coming up shortly is a day out in York on 20 August.

West Riding are still very active. Back in May we had a very good brewery visit to Hydes in Manchester. A lot of history in the old brewery and now they brew the Boddingtons in a totally separate brewery on the same site, using different staff and brewers as well, which must be unique.

We recently had our annual BBQ at The Grove in Holbeck which was a great success even with me (Graham) doing most of the cooking

due to our regular chef being away on holiday.

In mid-July we had two minibus trips in the same weekend. On Saturday we went all around the Dales taking in many good pubs that are not easy to reach without a car. On Sunday it was off to Whitby for a day out. And I was impressed by the quality and range of beers available for quite a small place. We called in at Beck Hole on the way back for a visit to the Birch Hall Inn where time has stood still for many years, a real classic pub. Malton was our last call of the day in the hope of catching the end of their beer festival, but alas it had

finished at lunchtime so we had to make do with the eight or so offerings from the bar.

We also visited Anglo Dutch Brewery in Dewsbury on 26 July and hope to visit Salamander Brewery in Bradford very soon. We are hoping to run some mini bus trips on the August Bank Holiday weekend but no definite details as yet.

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 have been, and will be, up to.

THE PERFECT PUB PAGE

On one of my recent visits to the `Fine City` (Norwich) to meet up with an old cycling/drinking (most drinking) mate, he told me that he had heard that the ***King's Head*** in Magdalen Street was open again after a long period of decline and then closure and was now reputed to be selling a good range of real ale. The pub itself has been intelligently refurbished and is comprised of 2 bars – one large back bar with a smaller one at the front. There were around 8 ales on handpull available mostly from local breweries; the Woodfordes `Easy` being enjoyed by my friend, whilst I supped a pleasant ale from the Spectrum brewery at nearby Wymondham. East Anglian born landlord Roland is a marine surveyor by profession, having

spent much of his former life on the gas and oil rigs of the North Sea. Now however he is firmly committed to making the King's Head a success through his obvious genuine love of real ale and `proper pubs`. We noted that he didn't serve food and questioned the financial wisdom of this but he was happy to readily dispel the myth propagated by accountants that a pub has to do food to survive. For a summer Saturday lunchtime the place wasn't crowded but I'm sure that this will improve with time, especially as the pub is handy for the better known (though in my opinion not nearly as good) `Rib of Beef` and also one of Norwich's two cathedrals.

Somerset Mark

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

AIRE TRENT & MERSEY

Andy's Roving Report

In a period that has seen the almost non-stop destruction or trendification of public houses it is with some relief that I point the reader to a hostelry that is worthy of the name. Yea verily, anyone who is in the vicinity of Shipley in West Yorks should visit the **Junction** in Baildon Road to the north of the town. A mere 10 minutes or so walk from the railway station, the pub stands at the junction of Otley and Baildon roads, being a very noticeable wedge shaped building of great solidity and plainly built to last.

Going inside, the games room is to your right as you enter, at the bottom end of the wedge, with the bar straight in front and the entrance to the lounge to the left. The entire layout is far from large and this adds to the atmosphere in my view. There are normally 7 or 8 beers available from the likes of (for example) Pitfield, Oakham, Grantham and Fullers, whose ESB cost a relatively cheap £2 and that was the dearest beer on sale! The landlord prides himself on his choice of ales, as well as his collection of badges, framed and hung out of reach of thieves. Part of the display reflects his enthusiasm for Brighton & Hove Albion FC, the rest consisting of various beer badges etc. A multiplicity of mirrors and adverts are hung throughout the pub, with quite a few decorating the walls of the lounge. Another bit of décor is the local CAMRA Pub of the Season award for Autumn 2004, with more to follow surely. On every occasion that we've called in, the beer has been in excellent

condition and I was even asked if I wanted the sparkler taken off when I ordered the ESB; how many bar staff would bother these days? The Junction hosted its first ever beer festival over the last weekend in July and I expect this to have been a well-attended event indeed.

I now present a selection of taverns from the town of Newark, in Nottinghamshire, as visited by Sue and self in May this year. The town itself is very historical, and we wandered around the remains of the castle before perusing some remarkable buildings around the market place. Then it was off in search of some decent inns. The **Fox & Crown** on Appleton Gate is one of the Tynemill chain of pubs, which usually means a good range of ales. There were 8 beers on during our visit, 3 being from the Castle Rock brewery. Another that I tried was the Pegasus (stout?), which is produced by the Milton brewery and is a first class example of its type. The pub has, alas, been opened out at some point in the past, but at least the layout has left various areas, each having its own style – for example the flooring may be carpeted, or tiled, or stone. The bar counter itself is large, as it would need to be with all the beers on offer and undoubtedly has the largest range that is locally available. On the wall to the left of the bar, in what I imagine was once the tap room, I noticed the plaque presented by the West Riding branch SPBW back in 1998, the Fox winning its Pub of the Season award for summer that year. Not content with its usual number of

beers, the pub also runs beer festivals; an exhibition of Yorkshire ales being advertised as forthcoming.

Left out of the door and straight down Appleton gate; pass along the manky pedestrian precinct (totally out of kilter with most of the town) and left on London Road. You will almost immediately see the sign for the **Mail Coach**, an imposing looking building that started out as a coaching inn back in the late 18th century. This is a proper historical pub, but I would urge the owners to realign the front doors. There are three rooms (that I saw), the top two each having a striking and most efficient looking fireplace. If memory serves, the room to the left has sliding doors in place and is perhaps used for meetings. Sue visited the ladies and remarked on the Victorian wash stand that was still in use as a hand basin. The beer that I remember was Broadstone bitter at £2.20 a pint, which as a decent drop.

From here we took a stroll along the ring road and worked our way (eventually) to the **Vine** on Barnbygate, or the bottom of which, Barnbygate being bisected nowadays by a more modern road. This building was possibly the largest of the pubs we visited, or was perhaps the most visible, being situated on a street corner. The tap room is L-shaped and contains the pool table at one end. Hidden away at the back is the lounge – and please note the chandelier and glazed tiling in the old main entrance. I imagine that this was once a hotel of some standing. Howbeit, the beers were very much to my taste, including Castle Rock dark mild, Titanic Dark Destroyer,

Milton Aphrodisiac, plus a beer called 'Large' the provenance of which I know not. The dark mild was quite excellent and well worth the walk. Sue also approved of this hostelry as possessing the right degree of atmosphere as well as retaining some semblance of former glory.

I don't get across to Liverpool very often these days, but can sat that the city is a lot tidier than it was 25 years ago. Amazingly, some proper pubs have been left in the city centre, so different from my home slum of Leeds. One such tavern stands on the bottom of London Road, about 5 minutes walk from Lime Street railway station. This is the **Lord Warden**, which stands out from nearby buildings by virtue of its War Department green paint frontage and caricature of W Churchill on the hanging sign. The house is named after the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

Entering in, we found ourselves in a small, one-roomed hostelry with a central bar counter that is sizeable and somewhat ornately carved. Sadly, the Lord Warden has had its internal walls knocked through, but the raised areas at the rear and to one side help to break the room up. There is a fair amount of militaria on display, along with photographs and mementoes of the Gerards Gardens area prior to demolition. Note also the distinctly large list of Liverpool pubs on one wall. Beers available during our visit were Wells Bombadier, Old Speckled Hen and Fullers London Pride; the latter was £1.95 a pint and was one of the better pints that I've tasted of it. Since London Pride became a national brand, there's been a lot of mediocre stuff on sale. The Lord

Warden is a rare enough species nowadays: a city centre pub that still manages to be an old fashioned 'street corner' type of hostelry. If

you are grown weary of soulless premises that lack atmosphere or decent beer, may I recommend the Lord Warden to you as an antidote?

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) 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.

BEER IN THE HILLS

The best pubs in the Lake District have been featured in these pages before on a good few occasions. Quite rightly too, as this is one of the most beautiful parts of the UK, and the scenery is enhanced by some top class pubs, many selling fine locally brewed ales. Having recently had the pleasure of a return visit to Cumbria, I thought I'd highlight a few pubs not previously covered. Two of these are in tiny villages in spectacular locations.

First off is the ***Britannia Inn*** at Elterwater, a few miles west of Ambleside. This large whitewashed building overlooks both the village green and a bowling green. Just inside the front door is a small lobby, complete with rocking chair. There are separate rooms to the left and to the back, one of which may be a dining area. The small bar to the right as you go in is where you go to get served. Five handpumped beers were available on my visit: Jennings Cumberland, Coniston Bluebird, Taylor Landlord and two guests from Orkney Brewery: Dark Island and Skull Splitter, the latter,

at 8.2%, hardly a light summer ale! It being a fine sunny afternoon, there was hardly a soul inside the pub (other than those seeking refreshment); there is a large terrace in front of the pub with a substantial canopy for those seeking shade. You can get here by bus on the Langdale Rambler from Ambleside. If you miss the stop, the route ends at the Olde Dungeon Ghyll Hotel, which is also GBG-listed. By the way, Elterwater means 'swan lake', trivia fans.

Several miles north west of Elterwater lies the scattered hamlet of Loweswater, close to the lake of the same name. This is home to one of Lakeland's most noted pubs, the ***Kirkstile Inn***. The bar is off to the right of the hotel entrance and is a fairly rambling affair with several drinking areas around the bar counter. Here you can choose from noted Cumbrian ales such as Yates bitter and Bluebird, as well as three from the pub's own brewery which resumed operations in 2003 after a 170 year break. Melbreak bitter, named after the fell that overlooks

the village, is a fine session bitter, and Rannerdale Best and Grasmoor dark were pretty tasty as well. These beers are usually only available at the pub. Prices were very reasonable, especially to my jaded London wallet. This corner of Cumbria is not well served by public transport: buses run direct only on Sundays and bank holidays. However, the Keswick to Buttermere bus runs to within a mile or so and the pub fully merits the walk.

Now a quick mention of two other worthy hostelries. The **Ramblers Bar**, attached to the Scafell Hotel in Rosthwaite has long been a haven for walkers who enjoy a pint or two. It's a fairly plain bar with a small terrace overlooking the Stonethwaite Beck. What makes it worth a mention is that the beer range has been much expanded. Alongside Theakstons bitter and XB we found Helvellyn Gold and Scafell Blonde from the Heskett Newmarket brewery [see PiH 91] and Summer Rose from the Derwent brewery at Silloth, along with the expected Theakston Best and XB.

If you're changing buses at Ambleside you can do worse than stroll up the main road to the **Queens Hotel**. The public bar here is nothing special; other than the choice of beers that is. Beers from Yates, Coniston and Jennings, as well as the excellent Hawkshead bitter, are on offer, all at prices lower than you might expect in a smart hotel in a tourist town. The other recommended pub in town is the **Golden Rule**, a Robinson house where you may come across local SPBW man Alan Risdon.

In the past I've reported on other classic Lake District pubs, the **Old Crown** at Heskett Newmarket, **Kings Arms Hotel** at Hawkshead and the **Watermill Inn** at Ings. My scouts can confidently report that all these are as good as ever and that the Watermill is in the process of setting up its own brewery. Jennings beers are as good as ever (for the time being) and the likes of Hawkshead, Yates, Heskett Newmarket breweries produce some truly fine ales. Can there be any good excuse for not visiting this delightful corner of the country?

R.J



The Kirkstile Inn

Northern Ireland Ramble

Over the May Bank Holiday weekend 7 of us visited Belfast, with the aim of linking up with our Webmaster, Mark Hutchinson. Sadly we didn't manage this as Mark was rushed unexpectedly into hospital with a serious virus three days before we arrived. I am happy to report that Mark has recovered from his untimely scare. The mantle of tour guide thus passed to Andy Whitley, a man very cognisant with maps and timetables. Regular readers of Andy's PiH articles will know that he is familiar with many of Ulster's finest pubs.

Arriving at various airports at various times, we were all resident in the South Belfast area, near Queens University, so an obvious meeting point was the ***Botanic Inn***, part of an Ireland wide chain of the same name, and adjacent to the Botanic Gardens. This crowded sports bar served Whitewater (County Down) Belfast Ale, which is a malty brew of 4.5%, and the most common beer in the pubs we were to visit.

Our next port of call was the famous ***Crown Liquor Saloon*** opposite the Europa bus and rail stations. This Victorian hostelry is reckoned to be the most ornate in the UK, with its colourful ceramic tiled façade, and its collection of woodwork, stained glass windows, tiles, ceramic walls and ceiling and checked marble floor. Food is served in snugs, which are wood and glass enclosed booths, like private dining boxes. Drinkers sit or stand along the very long bar. The beer is Belfast Ale again. Next door is the Beaten Docket, another impressive bar, with checked

marble floors, and carved wooden décor, including snugs, but sadly (and surprisingly for a Wetherspoon house) no real ale.

Another GBG entry the ***Rotterdam Bar***, near the docks, is Belfast's most famous music pub, but unfortunately they have taken out the cask beer, although they do have Leffe Blonde. If you require an alternative, Irish Guinness is drinkable, as is Magners Cider. Almost next door is ***Pat's Bar***, a traditional Belfast pub but also minus handpumps.

Better luck was enjoyed by the sightseers who journeyed miles to see the famous Giants Causeway, because the Wetherspoons in Coleraine, the ***Old Courthouse***, set in a mid-19th century courthouse, had Harviestown Bitter & Twisted, Orkney Red McGregor (with Williams Heather Fraoch about to come on) in a very Scottish line up. Back in Belfast the ***Kitchen Bar*** had a dark atmospheric feel and served Whitewater Knights Porter (5%) and a Banks and Taylor guest. This pub again has a lot of well-presented wood and glass panelling and a very long bar. For those who like that sort of thing jazz groups often provide entertainment. The Kitchen is in a new location in Victoria SQ, the old one having been demolished; the new version is reckoned to be not a patch on the original.

McHughs is a multi-floor pub, in the oldest building in Belfast, near the famous (leaning) Albert Clock. Belfast Ale was again the choice, in another pub with impressive woodwork. McHughs is again part of the Botanic Inn chain, which is

heavily into impressive food and extensive menus. Another member of this chain is the **Kings Head** on Lisburn Road, a short bus ride away and again selling Belfast Ale. This is an excellent dining establishment.

Some of the best pubs in the area are a short public transport trip away. The **White Horse** in Saintfield was accessed by bus. Whitewater Gold was added to the usual suspects, in another popular eating house. This is the only pub owned by the Whitewater brewery. Belfast has some spectacular coastal views. One of the best is from the **Dirty Duck** in Hollywood overlooking Belfast Lough (a short train journey). This one is another good place to eat and on our visit served three Inveralmond beers. The yellow stone **Esplanade** at the

resort of Bangor had a spectacular view of Ballyhome Bay and the harbour. Handpumps were in the tap room and Whitewater Glen and a Bank Top beer were available. In here we met up with Lawrence, a local SPBW man.

Last but not least, we made a trip out to the **Taproom**, which is the brewery tap of the Hilden Brewery, set in a cobbled courtyard. Hilden ale and Molly Malones Porter were enjoyed, in another house with high quality food.

Cask beer is a little thin on the ground, but the pubs we went in were atmospheric and friendly, and all served high quality food. In addition Bushmills whisky is always available, should you wish to help out the local economy.

John Rooth



The Last Word – from Slovakia

A Slovak man trapped in his car by an avalanche urinated his way to freedom after working his way through 60 half-litre bottles of beer. According to *Ananova*, Richard Kral was off on holiday when the snow swallowed his Audi in the Tatra mountains. Initially, he tried to dig his way out via the car's window, but soon realised that the snow would fill the vehicle long before he could break free. Mercifully, he had stocked up on essential supplies of

alcohol and quickly formulated a cunning plan: "I was scooping the snow from above me and packing it down below the window, and then I peed on it to melt it. It was hard and now my kidneys and liver hurt. But I'm glad the beer I took on holiday turned out to be useful and I managed to get out of there." Rescuers eventually found Kral staggering drunk on a mountain path four days after his ordeal began.

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The Coborn Arms, Mile End; the Editor's local!