

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

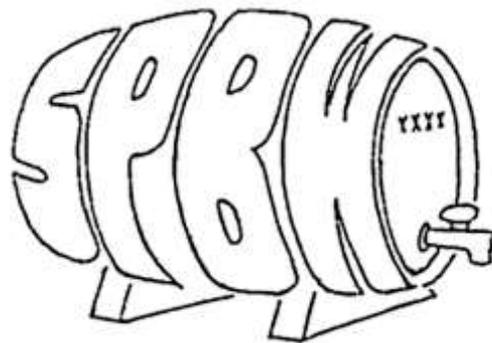
*PINT in HAND*

*Number 96*

*November 2005*



*The Shore Hotel, Old Laxey – home brewed Manx ale*



## ***PINT in HAND***

- ***Pint in Hand*** is published quarterly, in February, May, August and November. It is issued to all subscribing members and affiliated branches of SPBW.
- All members are invited to contribute articles for publication on beer-related subjects. Contributions for the February 2006 issue should reach the Editor by **20 January**.
- The Editor or the National Executive Committee of SPBW does not necessarily share opinions expressed in *Pint in Hand*.

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Website: <http://www.spbw.com>.

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

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

## ***OPENING TIME***

A few issues ago I touched on the question of smoking in pubs and the difficulties a ban or restriction may cause publicans. Now that the issue is coming to the boil with both the Government and the drinks industry getting worked up, maybe it's time I added my own humble opinions.

I don't think there's any dispute that smoking is a dirty, unhealthy and antisocial habit. If people want to wreck their health this way, well, it's a free country; I just prefer that they don't wreck my or my friends' health at the same time. This is why I'm in favour of a total ban on smoking in pubs, restaurants and the like.

The Government – and our friends at St Albans - are in favour of a compromise: banning smoking only in pubs that serve food or restricting it to separate rooms in pubs. Presumably these rooms will be fitted with some kind of airlock to prevent smoke escaping into the healthy sections whenever smokers come and go. This will also create a dilemma for pubs: do they want diners or smokers? Many pubs these days, particularly in rural areas, get a major part of their trade from catering; are they to be sacrificed for the sake of those who enjoy burning tobacco leaves?

Now, I consider myself to be a tolerant and compassionate person. I also think that drug addicts deserve some kind of sympathy for their plight. But addicts who cannot face up to their addiction or inflict the side effects on others, should not be tolerated. I doubt if many smokers would consider themselves to be drug addicts but that's what they are. The only difference between them and others hooked on heroin or crack is that nicotine is legal. Then there are those who I've seen quoted who say that they enjoy a smoke with their beer. There may well be those who would like to molest young boys while drinking, but would they be welcome in your pub?

I appreciate that this is not an easy one. However, there's a very strong chance that the proposed partial ban will in time be superseded by a total one, so why not cut out the middle ban now? Tough on ash tray manufacturers but we don't live in a perfect world. As ever, your opinions welcome, not least from those publicans among our members.

Eagle eyed readers will notice a change of format in this issue in that I've done away with using columns (there must be a technical printing term). This is mainly to avoid stress on my part when this PC won't do what I ask it. I hope this won't make the lucid prose in these pages less easy to read but let me know if you prefer the old format.

As the end of the year is on the horizon let me thank all those who have made this job easier during 2005. Andy Whitley in particular – his guidance in Belfast and York was also much appreciated – and Chris Callow for organising the printing and doing more envelope stuffing that he's probably prefer. Plus all others who have contributed material bought me pints and told me what a great job I'm doing. May all SPBW members, and brewers and publicans with pride in their profession, prosper in 2006.

*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.

## ***ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

The 2006 AGM National Executive Committee will be held on Monday 13 March at a venue to be confirmed (but probably the Royal Oak). Full details will appear on the SPBW website and in the next issue of PiH. This has become a short and informal business meeting and an excuse for SPBW members to get together for socialising and sampling some fine beers.

Anyone interested in standing for a post on the NEC should contact John Rooth (details on page 2) well in advance of the AGM.

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

By the time you read this issue, judging will be well underway. The nominated pubs are:

***Black Bull***, Whitechapel  
***Claret Free House***, Addiscombe  
***Coborn Arms***, Mile End  
***Cricketers***, Woodford  
***Greyhound Hotel***, Carshalton  
***Harp***, Covent Garden  
***Lord Clyde***, Southwark  
***Priory Arms***, Stockwell  
***Robin Hood & Little John***, Bexleyheath  
***Royal Oak***, Southwark  
***Sultan***, South Wimbledon  
***Trafalgar***, Merton

A bit of travelling for the judges there, even though the west and north of the capital are unrepresented, but I'm sure their efforts will be rewarded. The winner will be decided before Christmas and the presentation to the pub will be made before the end of January. All the relevant information will be posted on the SPBW website as soon as it is known. If you don't have access to the web, contact Bill English (details on page 2).

## ***PUBLICITY***

We have produced a stock of SPBW publicity booklets. In 8-page, PiH-style, these set out some history and general background of the Society, with an application form at the end. The general idea is for these to be placed in worthy pubs so they can be picked up by discerning imbibers. Copies have been sent to the select band of publicans who are SPBW members; if you think you can find a good home for these booklets please let me (Roger) know and I'll send you a bundle. A contribution to the postage would be very welcome: 5 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamps covers the cost of sending 30.

## ***NATIONAL WEEKEND***

By the time this issue goes out the Weekend will virtually be upon us. Some 15 – 20 of us will be visiting the Nottingham area with a visit to Hardy & Hanson brewery in Kimberley as the focal point; we will also be visiting the rather newer Derby Brewery. No doubt plenty of good pubs will also be on the agenda. You can expect a full account in the next issue. Any volunteers to organise the 2006 please step forward!

## ***RANDOM EVENTS***

As part of our campaign to take the SPBW to the drinking public we've been represented at two beer festivals since the last issue. In late August Peter Willet and his predecessor as products supremo Dave Brightwell were at the Clacton event. In October a stand at the Wallington festival was manned by John, Mike and Bill from the NEC. Both ventures were fairly successful in terms of selling products and donated items if less productive in recruiting new members.

We can look back on two social events. The **summer beer and buffet** bash at the Wenlock Arms seems to have become an annual event, and why not? The combination of the pub's excellent range of beers and Alasdair's fine cuisine is a winner and there was a healthy gathering to take advantage. Guest of honour was the landlord of the Star in Belgravia, surely one of the finest pubs in the Fullers estate, who wisely invested in some SPBW products.

The **Tony Littler Trophy** contest took place on 17 October. This is an inter-branch event in memory of a former SPBW stalwart. Wantz branch, as holders, hosted the evening at the Priory Arms in Stockwell, some way off their manor. Six branches were represented, including a RACS contingent from Sawbridgeworth, and about 25 members in all were in action. There was plenty of action at the bar where the beer range included Moorhouse Premier and Bear Ass from Beartown. The chosen game was Shut the Box, a dice and numbers game requiring no great skill. Wantz branch had been practicing the game for some time and this paid off as they retained the trophy. So Wantz will again be hosting the event next autumn. Let's hope that will be just as enjoyable.

## ***EGM***

The EGM of the NEC took place as advertised in September. The Committee were relieved that no one else turned up until the ordinary monthly meeting started. Shame to report that the necessary auditing of the NEC's accounts is not yet complete. The Hon Auditor has been incapacitated for some time; Treasurer Jim Woodcock has been on his back on a regular basis (I think I could have perhaps worded this better) and we hope that we will get this finished before very long. There are some minor amendments to the accounts published in PiH 94; if you want a copy of the revised accounts these are available from the Editor either by email or via a SAE.

## ***SPBW WEBSITE***

As you should all be aware, the SPBW Members Forum is still going strong at [www.spbw.com/bb](http://www.spbw.com/bb). Mark Hutchison, our webmaster, will always welcome suggestions on how to improve this and our general site; contact him at: [marksalehousecom@hotmail.com](mailto: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.

## ***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.

## ***FROM THE ARCHIVES***

The November 1995 issue had a black and white print of J W Lees brewery on the cover. An article in the centre pages reported on this worthy establishment, a visit to which had been the focal point of the then latest National Weekend. A superbly organised event I have to say though I was rather less with it when attempting to walk by the canal to Rochdale, the scene of Saturday evening's meeting with West Riding branch. Andy's account of the town's pubs gave me the acclaim my late and dishevelled appearance deserved. The evening ended with Chris Callow and me in an Indian restaurant near our digs, watching a customer being duffed up by staff for being less than fully appreciative of their efforts.

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

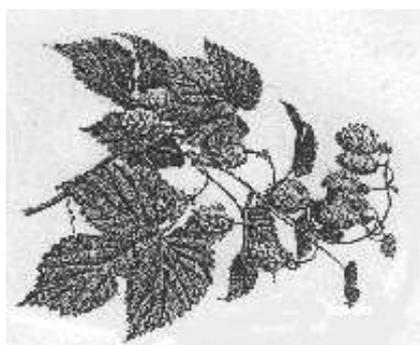
This bit of PiH is a platform for members to spread the word about the best pubs they have encountered. Since no other offerings have reached me I'll have to bring up one gem from my recent travels.

The historic county of Rutland's main brewing claim to fame used to be Ruddles of Oakham, once doyens of the small independents. These days, with Ruddles no more than a footnote in the Greene King portfolio, there are two small breweries in Rutland, one of which is in Oakham. And it's not the Oakham Brewery, since that outfit moved down the road in 1998. These days the Grainstore Brewery helps to fly the Rutland flag in the beer world. In business since 1995 it's situated in an old (wait for it) grain store right next to Oakham station on the Leicester to Peterborough line. Brewing takes place upstairs and on the ground floor is the pub where you can drink the products. Among these is Rutland Panther mild which not won only the Mild category in CAMRA's Champion Bitter of Britain awards, but also the overall silver medal. The tasty dark brew is based on the recipe for Chester's mild, once of Salford. Grainstore's session beer is called Cooking Bitter, a title that hardly does it justice.

The pub consists of one long room with a correspondingly lengthy bar counter. This dispenses 5 Grainstore beers, which I take to be the full regular range. There were also 3 guest ales when I visited, also from small brewers. The room has mostly plain brick walls - not surprisingly in a former barn - decorated with assorted railway and brewing memorabilia. This helps to create a fairly homely atmosphere, rather than the sensation of drinking in a barn. There is also quite a bit of outside seating.

Returning by train to London involves a change at Peterborough and it seemed rude not to pop round the corner from the station to the Oakham Brewery Tap. This pub has been mentioned in these pages a few times before and it's well worth visiting for the excellent range of beers on offer. The area is still threatened with the curse of development so the Tap's days are numbered. But these two brewpubs separated by just a 20 minute train journey are both recommended.

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



## ***THE HERO AND HIS HORSE***

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

This recitation is the fruit of two visits to the town of Sheffield; the first near the end of July and the second about three weeks later.

The July trip came about when Sue, a herbivore of long standing, discovered that there was to be a veggie fair in Sheffield city centre. As I hadn't been to Steeltown for quite some time, I agreed that it would make a good venue: I'd read about some of the pubs there and it sounded interesting. So, after visiting the food fest, we headed for the tram tracks and the Supertram to Shalesmoor, an old industrial area that possesses a number of excellent inns. The hostelry of our choosing was the ***Fat Cat*** on Alma Street. I think the pub was originally known as the *Alma* and I do wish that historical pub names were left alone. Howbeit, this has been a free house for years now and has an excellent reputation for its ales and food. To concentrate momentarily on the latter, there is always a good range of veggie and even vegan meals for the choosy. As for the beers, I counted 7 on draught, plus a cider, alongside an intriguing range of bottled beers from foreign parts. We ordered our meal and I did a very quick survey of the pub: it has a most traditional layout of two rooms and a large lobby with a function room upstairs. In the room to the left (as you enter) please note the photograph of a 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party back in 1911 and the photos of the present landlady's great-grandparents. Dotted about are some interesting historical notes that give an idea of what the surrounding area was like in years ago – infinitely more pubs than there is now! Also obvious are the awards on display, indicating the pub's popularity with the *bon viveurs* of Sheffield. When our meal was served, we retired to the beer garden out back and I was surprised at how much larger this was than I expected. There is a rather good mural at the top end as well as a sort of small barn that is used for private parties etc. the beer is most palatable, and so is the food, so visit when ye be in the vicinity of Shalesmoor.

From the Fat Cat, Sue and self headed back to the Shalesmoor tram stop and caught the next one heading north to Bamforth Street, where we alighted. Our destination was the ***New Barrack Tavern*** on Penistone Road, we crossed over the road, walked past the Witchcraft Shop (I jest not) and took the second turning on the right. This is called Burton Road or some such and goes steeply downhill through the remains of what would have been a mixed residential and industrial area. The pub is to your left when you hit the main road at the bottom of the hill.

The New Barrack Tavern is a pretty imposing 1930s building in the 'roadhouse' style of that period. The inside still resembles the original interior and has a lobby and three rooms. There's a small back room with plain wooden floor and furniture that might be the dining area; the floor of the lounge is likewise plain wood, though about the size of a dance floor! There are upholstered settles around the walls; regard the many adverts and mirrors: I'd bet the ones for Worksop Bitter and Warwick's Pale Ale are original. The lobby, like the tap room (which is to the left of the entrance) has a mosaic style floor. As the hostelry is part of the Tynemill/Castle Rock pub chain, there's an inspiring range of beers for the customer. I counted 9 ales on draught, with a

cider and remarkable range of malt whiskies. The pub's website lists no less than 45 malts! To this one can add a worthy selection of foreign bottled beers at prices that are not silly. The Castle Rock presence is obvious given the large brewery mirror over the fireplace in the lounge and their beers on the bar. Live music weekly, but I'm not sure where the bands set up – the lounge probably.

The menu here is larger than that at the Fat Cat, and although there are many meat based dishes there is still a good range of veggie meals. Needless to say, the NBT is popular with the local CAMRA branch, as well as locals and visitors. The pub is well known for its efforts on behalf of wildlife charities and celebrated National Wildlife Week in June by putting out extra nesting boxes and feeding table etc for our furred and feathered friends. The landlord and landlady believe that it is perfectly possible to encourage a bit of biodiversity in an urban setting. They have helped raise considerable sums of money for this cause and the pub is therefore on Sue's list of Approved Inns. A splendid hostelry and a must to visit.

I was so impressed with the pubs that we visited that I suggested Sheffield as a venue to various cronies. This it was a few weeks later that a quintet of us boarded the tram for, among other hostelries, the **Hillsborough Hotel** on Langsett Road. Daydreamers please note – do not stay on the tram till the Hillsborough stop. The tram goes straight past the hotel and the nearest stop (Langsett/Primrose View) is about two minutes walk away. Unlike many with the 'hotel' appellation, the Hillsborough is the real thing, and has been awarded 2 stars by the English Tourism Council. All the accommodation is *en suite*, with single rooms at £35 and double/twin rooms at £50 (at time of visit in summer). Although the Edale brewery owns the hotel, it has its own brewery as well, which trades under the Crown Brewery name. On our visit, there were 7 beers available; one was from Edale with two from Crown alongside four guests. You can't gripe at the prices: Crown Middlewood Mild (3.8%) was £1.65 a pint, with the same company's Stannington Stout (5%) costing £1.95. The latter beer can be purchased in bottle-conditioned form as well. The original Crown Brewery apparently stood directly across the road many years ago. As a bit of added info, the modern day plant has a four and a half barrel run and brews weekly at the moment – brewery tours can be arranged. The Hillsborough itself has been around a while, being entitled the Wellington at one point and previously to that, the Hero and His Horse!

Another bonus is that the layout is not disappointing and has escaped the shoebox effect. There's a large bar room or lobby with a bit of authentic floor tiling and a dining room off to the side. At the top end, there's a conservatory with very good views of the hills beyond. You'll notice a fair few CAMRA accolades, including one from a Welsh beer festival that was awarded to the house brewery for one of its beers. And deservedly so too as the ale here was worth the journey and I can personally vouch for the mild and stout.

Please note – good things are never really special if they are available all the time. Thus it is with the Hillsborough; the public bar isn't open Mondays, but has recently started to open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 6.00 and on Thursdays to Saturdays you can start at 4.30. In case you have the memory of a chicken, the phone number is 0114 2322100.

## ***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 **Hammersmith Ram**, King Street, Hammersmith. 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). Website: [www.spbw.org](http://www.spbw.org).

**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](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.

**IPSWICH:** We hope the branch will finally get up and running in the near future. Contact Phil (01473 644923) or Iain (01473 251586).

**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.

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

**PONDS:** Time and place of meetings varies but usually in Carshalton area. Contact Dave Hamer (020 8395 8716 or email [dehamer@tiscali.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](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; [graham-hewitt@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:graham-hewitt@tiscali.co.uk)) for further details.

**WOOLWICH:** Meetings held first Thursday of each month in Greenwich or Woolwich or sometimes in central London. 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** visited the Lowiczanka Polish Centre Restaurant in King Street, Hammersmith for a meal in Mid-September. As usual we met in a suitable hostelry first, on this occasion the Fullers pub the **Andover Arms** in Aldensley Road. This is not the easiest pub to find, even with a map, but the Andover had the full Fullers range, including the Autumn Red and Discovery, all of which were in fine fettle.

On a Monday night the restaurant was fairly quiet. The menu included typical Polish fare: borsch (beetroot soup) was available with different types of Dumplings, as well as Tripe soup, and herrings (Jewish or regular - the difference apparently is in the oil and cream used), and Pate. Typical "local" main courses included beef stuffed with olives, goose or duck breast, stuffed cabbage, hunters stew, or smoked sausages. There was also a choice of Polish pork escalope, steak and fish. All of this could be washed down with reasonably priced French vin de table, or Polish beer (we had both). The beer was Zywiec a pils type beer at 5.6% which was very nice. Deserts included poppy seed strudel, apple crumble and ice cream. No trip to an eastern European restaurant is complete without trying the range of spiced and flavoured vodkas. These included walnut, cherry, lemon, pepper, spiced, fruit and several others. The whole lot including generous tip cost about £30 per head. The service was efficient, friendly and helpful, and the ambience was peaceful.

We will visit the Willoughby Arms (and some others) in Kingston on Thursday 24 November. Monday 5 December is the Not the Christmas Meal - Thai food in the Andover Arms, Aldensley Road, Hammersmith at 8.30. Meet in there from 7.00 onwards.

**Chesapeake Bay** has had an enormous surge in membership over the past year and now has over 170 members. We did a bus tour through our neighbouring state back in July and toured 3 breweries and a great beer bar. We had a huge crab feast in September with nearly 80 people in attendance. and plenty of real ale. Most recently we held our second annual Chesapeake Real Ale Festival. In just its second year, the festival has blossomed into one of the best real ale festivals on the east coast of the US. We featured over 21 firkins from regional and national breweries and hosted about 225 people. Many brewers were there in person to speak with attendees. The crowd was extremely well versed in real ale and had a great time despite some bad weather.

**RACS** are as active as ever. Over August bank holiday weekend they ran a stand at the Gate beer festival; the pub is holding another festival on 24 November. There will be Sunday evening quizzes for charity on 13 November and 11 December and a Christmas Booze Cruise to France on 26 November.

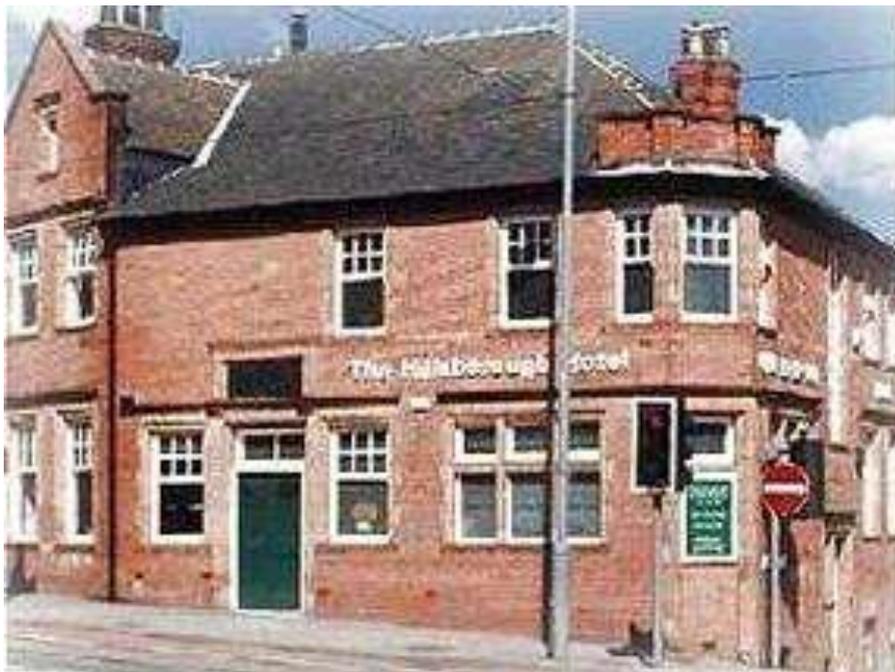
**Special Branch** have already got next years canal gathering sorted out. Having found some excellent boats courtesy of Black Prince Boats we again start in Cheshire and will attempt the Ring of that name. We're delighted to welcome back into our fold Steve Chapman, once Chairman of the original branch and since consigned to married exile. Steve hasn't forgotten what good beer is and will be joining us afloat next year.

**Wantz** have had two gastronomic evenings in recent months: the first at Ciao Bello, next door to the Lamb Tavern in Lamb's Conduit Street in Bloomsbury. Top class Italian food, and the aperitifs from Wandsworth were pretty good too. In September we revisited the Thai café in Leytonstone High Road whose name I never found out. More fine nosh here, washed down by cheap Polish beers from a nearby offie.

Two Saturday outings as well. In mid-August it was down to Brighton to visit a small selection of the many fine pubs here. A month later we took advantage of cheap rail tickets (£19 return) to visit the historic city of York. With guidance from the indefatigable Andy Whitley we enjoyed a good few of the vast number of pubs offering good beer. At least three of these were owned by the York Brewery but rather too many offered beers that are freely available back in London. Churlish to complain really, since the overall selection we had was excellent.

**West Riding** branch have been visiting numerous beer festivals in Yorkshire. On Sunday 27 November is the 200th branch meeting and celebration lunch at the Brewers Arms in Keighley. On Wednesday 7 December there will be a trip to Thwaites brewery in Blackburn.

*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 Hillsborough Hotel (see page 9)*

## *MANX FOR THE MEMORY*

Stuck out in the middle of the Irish Sea, the Isle of Man has always seemed a bit of a mystery to me. A British Protectorate with its own parliament, it's most famous I suppose for the annual TT motorbike races which tend to end with less competitors than started. In fact it's a delightful chunk of land with some scenic coves and harbours, particularly at the southern end, and mostly hills inland, culminating in the 620 metre high summit of Snaefell. I found it curiously old fashioned, like going back thirty years or so.

For a much bigger leap back in time, look no further than some of the Isle's transport system. Whilst the buses (routes cover virtually all of the island) are much as you would find on the mainland – and they run on time, the trains are something else again. The electric railway, running from Douglas north to Ramsey, is basically a tram line with cars that would hardly have looked out of place in New Orleans before the tragic deluge. Lovers of smoke pollution will enjoy the steam railway. Running south west from Douglas to Port Erin, this is a narrow gauge line that was opened in 1874, and still uses the original locomotives and carriages. It's actually a very relaxing way to travel and enjoy the scenery. Linking the two termini in Douglas is a horse drawn tramway along the promenade, dating from 1876 and also using its original rolling stock.

Don't worry, I am getting round to the beer. What is best known about Manx beers is that they have to be produced under the terms of the Manx Brewers Act 1874, which permits water, sugar, malt hops and no other ingredients. For many years the Isle boasted two breweries, Okells of Douglas and Castletown (in the town of the same name) until the former took over the latter in 1986. For a while the expanded company operated as Isle of Man Breweries before the Okells title was restored. The original and traditional Victorian Falcon Brewery was abandoned in 1994 and brewing was moved to a modern, out of town site. By now Okells had a rival brewery in Bushy's. This began life in 1986 as a brew pub in Douglas until expansion led to a move to a site in nearby Braddan. Bushy's has made a notable impact on the scene – it now owns three pubs, serves over 25 others and seems to be a major sponsor of the TTs. Its regular beers are Ruby Mild and Manx Bitter, both of which are very tasty, along with Old Bushy Tail, Bushy's original brew.

Okells remains much the larger concern with 56 pubs on the IoM (and 4 on the mainland) and a major stake in the free trade. This means in fact that there's hardly a pub on the island that doesn't offer an Okells beer. There is a mild and a bitter, both pleasant enough, but in a week of detailed exploration, I failed to come across any of the other beers they allegedly produce.

Beers from the mainland are relatively rare, although I came across offerings from Archers, Cains and Robinsons for instance as well as more esoteric ales such as Dent Kamikaze and Youngs Waggledance. I would guess that there are very few pubs not offering handpumped ales. The quality of beers served in all the pubs I visited was invariably top class. So let's talk about some of those pubs.

Let's start at Old Laxey, on the east coast between Ramsey and Douglas. Down near the harbour, by the river Laxey, we find the **Shore Hotel**, the island's only brew pub. This is a comfortable and friendly one room establishment, decorated by mementoes of the fishing trade. Old Laxey Bosun Bitter is the only draught ale and a very pleasant 3.8% brew it is too.

The adjacent village of Laxey is most famous for the Lady Isabella Wheel – at 72 feet in diameter the world's largest water wheel, built in 1854 to pump water from the mines. Laxey is also the starting point for the vintage Snaefell Mountain Railway which runs to the summit. Close to the station is the **Mines Tavern**, which offers a selection of Okells and Bushy beers. It has two separate bars, one of which has a counter made from a Manx Electric Railway car. At the other (southern) end of the village, on the main road, is the **Queens Hotel**. This is a lively local with one or two mainland beers on draught alongside the domestics. The landlord looked like a biker type and his interest is reflected in the pub décor.

Up in Ramsey, there are plenty of pubs around the quay area. The **Trafalgar** was serving both Cains mild and bitter on my visit (take it as read that Okells and/or Bushy's will be served unless I mention otherwise!). It's one of the town's oldest pubs and, although in reality a one room pub there is the impression of three different drinking areas. Just along the quay is the **Ellan Vannin** (the Manx name for the IoM). This basic, one room bar is owned by Bushy's and had a selection of their beers on tap alongside Wye Valley bitter and a traditional cider.



*The Elvan Vannin, Ramsey*

Another of the Bushy's houses is the **Rovers Return** in Douglas, tucked away in a narrow lane behind the town hall. There is a multitude of different rooms in this pub, mostly served from a ground floor counter with some extraordinary handpumps made from fire brigade brass pipes, looking more like the sort of fonts that deliver foreign beers. One of the downstairs bars hosts live music and I suspect this is not the ideal place for a quiet pint. The Rovers of the pub name are of the Blackburn ilk and one room is a 'shrine' to the football club with loads of vintage memorabilia.

A couple of miles outside Douglas is the small town of Union Mills. The **Railway Inn** stands on the main road (and TT route) and there should be no excuse for not calling in. Although not especially large, the pub has three rooms surrounding the bar area. There were five handpumped ales as I recall but to my chagrin I recall what the guests were. I did spot some interesting memorabilia, including a plaque advertising Clinch's brewery, a long vanished operation from Douglas. In the garden there was a wooden cask with the Castletown brewery stamp. The railway from which the pub took its name once ran from Douglas to Peel but the last train is long gone.

No trains, but buses run across to Peel on the west coast. This is one of the oldest cathedral cities in the British Isles; the now-ruined St German's cathedral dates from 1226. The ruins are sited on St Patrick's isle where we find Peel Castle, home to the kings and lords on Mann for centuries – Peel is said to be the heart of Manx heritage. In the heart of the town, on Tynwald Road, is the **White House**, offering possibly the widest choice of draught beers on the island. There were a handful of English guests and I did note Youngs Special retailing at £2.10, a good few pence less than you'll pay on its home turf. The White House is another multi-roomed pub, very much a locals' place but friendly and welcoming nonetheless.



*Bay Hotel, Port Erin*

Castletown was once capital of the IoM and the town is dominated by Castle Rushen, another former home of the kings and lords of Mann. The (steam) railway station is on the edge of the town and right outside is the **Sidings**. This is a long and narrow pub with three rooms, the middle one of which boasts an impressive bank of handpumps. Moorhouse and selection from Robinsons were available on my visit. The walls in this part of the pub were decorated with scarves from a variety of famous and obscure football teams. One of these proclaimed 'Green Rebels' which I took to represent Celtic or some League of Ireland team but turned out to be Panathanaikos of Greece.

You can take the train from here to Port St Mary but the station is also on the edge of town and it's a fair old hike to our pub of choice (although there are two other pubs on the way). It's well worth it as the **Albert Hotel** offers a friendly welcome and a good range of IoM-brewed beers. There is a public bar with pool and darts and a cosy lounge; there is also a small restaurant

attached. The pub overlooks the inner harbour – the town is the island’s main sailing centre – and I can imagine it must be very cheering to come in from the sea and enjoy a pint while warming yourself by the (real) fire.

Last stop, for this pub tour and the steam railway, is Port Erin. There is a sandy beach in a small bay and some dramatic scenery across to Bradda Head. Very close to the seafront in the centre of town is the **Falcon’s Nest Hotel**. This a substantial place with 30+ bedrooms and large restaurant as well as a bar where you can select from a range of IoM ales and a guest. While consuming these you can enjoy the views across the bay and be glad you’re out of the wind.



*Falcons Nest, Port Erin*

Look over to your left and there’s no missing the **Bay Hotel** right on the front. Another impressive building although this no longer offers accommodation. I assume that this is the third Bushy’s pub, given the range of their beers and lack of anything from Okells! The Bay has been well restored and has three quite separate rooms, one of which has an additional section for eating. What with a ladies’ darts match and Liverpool FC on tv this pub was very lively but service was efficient and friendly which, along with the excellence of the beer, would explain its popularity.

A few extra observations; first, most of the pubs had very distinctive frontages with the name very clearly depicted. Most pubs seem to be open all day, every day, often until midnight. Prices were cheap by my London standpoint: more than two quid a pint is very rare and I recall £1.70 as the cheapest we paid. The IoM has its own notes and coins equivalent to UK money and this may just be the last outpost of the pound note. But sterling is accepted, thanks! And the people everywhere we went were very friendly. As you may conclude, I can heartily recommend the Isle of Man to all of you.

*R.J*

# ***BEER BOOKS REVISITED***

## ***GOOD BEER GUIDE 1974 edited by John Hanscomb***

*(John Waddington Ltd)*

Being a young man with a growing interest in beer this book was a veritable box of delights. This was CAMRA's first Good Beer Guide (I believe there had been an earlier members only version) and was not a bad maiden effort for the still relatively new organisation. It was a tall slim volume with a somewhat austere cover, depicting a pint of beer (well, why not). There was some useful, basic, editorial, explaining what real is and the various methods of dispense. I am intrigued by one paragraph: *'Another feature of real ale that you ought to welcome is that it can vary from superb to undrinkable, even in the same pub. Every brew has its good days, its bad days and its indifferent days. Learn to accept the off moments and revel in the times when you hit on a really good pint.'* Well, this was more than 30 years ago; nowadays even the smallest microbrewer strives for consistency, and a stronger emphasis on good cellarpersonship makes for less undrinkable beer.

Of course the bulk of the book is the list of pubs – 1,500 compared to 4,500 in the latest edition. As of now they were listed under counties but for this issue only the counties were arranged in rough geographical order from north to south (in other words, Northumberland to Cornwall – Scotland was not considered worth covering). Thankfully there was a contents list to help you navigate the book. Nostalgia freaks will recall that publication just about preceded the reorganisation of English counties, so that the likes of Westmoreland, Rutland and Huntingdonshire have their own sections. I'm surprised to note that Monmouthshire is shown as in England rather than over the border.

Pub descriptions were very brief (or non-existent) and individual brands of beer were not identified – instead there were symbols for mild, bitter etc as well as one to denote method of dispense. Some towns and districts were very well represented while others were left fairly blank. This might either reflect the spread of CAMRA membership at the time or simply that there were a good few 'beer deserts' (or both). The whole of Norfolk, in the cold grip of Watneys and Whitbread, had a meagre 12 pubs as compared to 8 in the small town of Devizes. There is a story (apparently true) that, on the brink of the book going to the printers, the editor realised that there were no entries for Huntingdonshire. He got in his car one Sunday morning and did a lunchtime survey (12 – 2 only back then of course). Hence the map shows seven entries in a straight line along one road! Some of the pub descriptions indicate the dedication of some of the publicans; the landlord of the Wheatsheaf in Walsall 'has spent a considerable sum of money to retain handpumps.' Meanwhile at the Woodman, Burneston (Yorkshire) the landlady 'asks the brewery [Camerons] for wooden barrels.' And the Stag, Titley, Herefordshire, is 'highly recommended; landlord a dedicated draught man.' Quite right – said landlord was the late Frank Bingham, also a dedicated SPBW man.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the book came right at the end – the two page list of breweries with brief notes. Most famous was the entry for Watneys with the recommendation "avoid like the plague". Sadly this version was pulled on legal advice at an early stage and we had to make do with "avoid at all costs". Sound advice of course – do any of you have the original version? Hardly getting off any less lightly are Gibbs Mew ('a disaster'), Paine ('a complete waste of

time') and Phipps of Northampton ('don't bother'). And it's interesting to see what is said about the likes of Harveys ('difficult to find real ale'), Holden ('too much gassy beer') and Everards ('not generally recommended'). On a more positive note, the likes of Boddington, Hartleys and Wadworths are regarded as 'one of the best'. Apart from some of the breweries listed above, there are other long defunct companies such as Cook's of Halstead, Darley ('an unusual brew'), Hull, Lorimer & Clark of Edinburgh, Simpkins and Workington. Not to mention of course the 16 breweries owned by Whitbread.

The GBG opened up new horizons for me and my drinking companions. For not too many miles journey we could sample the likes of Greene King (when it was worth travelling for), Ridleys and Grays (just in time before brewing ceased). Sadly, most of the pubs concerned were somewhat remote which meant that someone (usually me) had to drive. But there were Youngs pubs in and around London and even some of the 'Big 6' brews were fairly palatable. And in time I would visit such gems as the Red Lion, Market Bosworth ('Excellent unspoilt house serving exceptional beer'), Three Tuns, Bishops castle ('A mecca for connoisseurs of real beer'), and the Tavern, Kington ('a must for lovers of the old English pub') and numerous other far flung pubs of repute.

You could keep your GBG up to date by joining CAMRA – annual membership £1 from their HQ in Salford (3 entries). All in all, a very good 75p's worth.

R.J



## ***The Last Word – from Japan***

Scientists at Okayama University in Japan have rather agreeably discovered that unidentified compounds in beers may help to prevent DNA damage leading to cancer. Some cancers are apparently provoked by heterocyclic amines - "DNA-damaging chemicals found in cooked meat and fish", *New Scientist* reports. The university team fed mice these compounds, and then noted that "the DNA damage to their liver, lungs and kidneys was reduced by up to 85 per cent if the mice drank non-alcoholic beer instead of water".

Lead boffin Sakae Arimoto-Kobayashi reckons the beer-borne chemicals "prevent the amines binding to and damaging DNA". Naturally, if they can pinpoint the beneficial compounds in question, brewers will be able to concoct cancer-battling superbrews.

But before we all rush off to the pub for a lifesaving pint, some unanswered questions remain. *New Scientist* notes that heavy boozing is responsible for around six per cent of cancers in the West. Since the mice were refreshed with non-alcoholic beer, the scientists cannot confirm that "moderate consumption of normal beer has any anti-cancer benefits".

Arimoto-Kobayashi notes: "The total benefits and risks of beer with alcohol are still under consideration."

Fair enough. When you've worked it out, give us a shout - we'll be in the Royal Oak Crown doing a bit of field research.

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Some back issues of ***Pint in Hand*** are available:- numbers 43; 44; 46-57; 60-62; 68; 70-81; 84-95. These can be obtained from the Editor (address on page 2) in return for fifteen second class stamps to cover postage for the full set).