



Book Review

One On Every Corner: The History of Some Westminster Pubs

Written & compiled by a Westminster City Archives Research Group, published by
The Westminster City Archives

ISBN 1-900893-11-8; 180 pp; A4; b & w illus; softback wire bound; £12.99

This book is the result of a project initiated in 1999 by a research group based at the Westminster City Archive. Their main objective was to compile a list of licensees within the area, which they hoped would be an aid the family history researcher. The authors admit that their work only partially covers the City of Westminster from a licensed premises point of view as well as a geographical one.

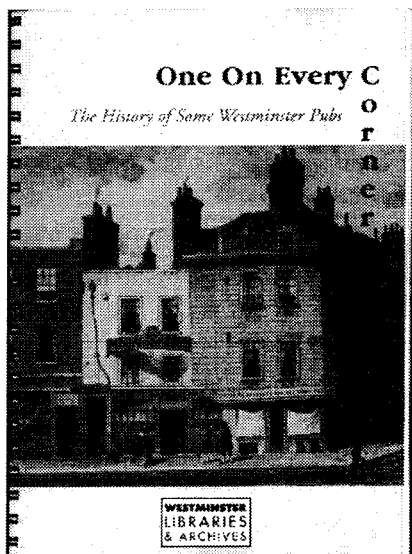
There is the promise of a second edition to fill in the missing parts but I read it as more of a plea for someone else to take it on!



The main introduction covers the general history of public houses in the area and the difficulties of research. Most of these facts of life are already very well known to us brewery historians - pubs change names, streets change names and official records are never as clear as they should be!

Following the main introduction, the City of Westminster is then split into its various localities. Each of these is treated as a chapter and is written by different members of the research group. Within the chapters, each locality has an essay as an introduction, followed by a map, then an alphabetical list of pubs with a narrative where information has been uncovered and finally a list of licensees and their dates. The local introduction allows each author to provide a brief social history of the area and its development.

Some of the pub narratives are very brief, indicating the lack of source material, whilst others are very detailed and cover a number of events in the lives of the pub and its inhabitants. The licensee information has been traced back to some very early owners – some to the 14th and 15th centuries.



Having a separate section listing each of the licensees is extremely useful. It can be used for family history research and the authors are to be commended as they have achieved that objective stated at the start. How comprehensive this is can only be guessed but the licensees do seem to flow more or less consecutively over the years but inevitably there are gaps. For some pubs the list of licensee is the only information available and the act of listing just licensee allows the authors to create a category for "unidentified" pubs. Thus leaving the way open for further research.

There are two overall indexes, one for pubs and one for licensees. This makes it very useful for the historian trying to trace a surname. However, I spotted a minor problem with the pub index. If the pub appears only in the licensee section, such as the Angel in Long Ditch, it does not appear in the overall pub index. A technical flaw that will cause a problem for the reader if they just rely on the index for help.

The production values are good for what is a limited run book. The pages are thick and the print clear. The colour cover features a nice tinted engraving and the internal illustrations come from a variety of sources, including a number of early tavern based woodcuts. The maps are clear and understandable but from a variety of sources. Thus some chapters have old maps showing where the houses were situated, whilst others are modern versions showing current road layouts.

From a personal point of view, and following another of my interests, I was keen to read the chapter entitled the Devil's Acre. This covers the Victoria Street area of Westminster. The pub now known as Finnegan's Wake is mentioned. It was for many years called Graftons after the family that kept it. I was disappointed to find that no mention is made

of its place in the history of British comedy. After the war it became a meeting place for young hopefuls trying to break into light entertainment. For fans like myself, it will be forever the birthplace of the Goons.

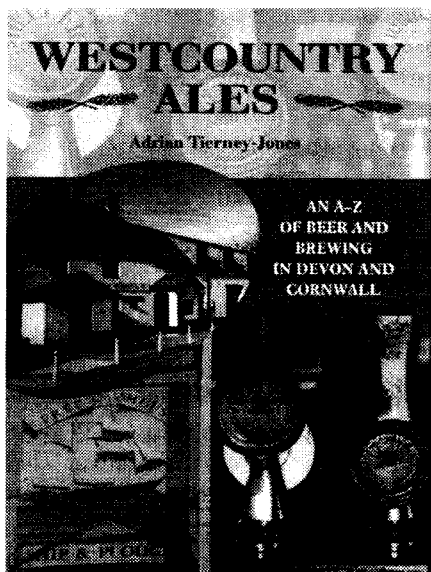
KEN SMITH

Westcountry Ales: An A-Z of beer and brewing in Devon and Cornwall

Written by Adrian Tierney-Jones; Published by Halsgrove

ISBN 1-84114-204-2; 160 pp; A4; b & w illus; hardback; £19.95

As its title suggests this is a book of 26 chapters with entries covering all sorts of beer related information, not just confined to Devon & Cornwall. The A-Z listing format allows the Author to introduce entries for standard topics such Porter and Lager as well as some more unusual ones such as Charity, Health and Lacework!



The Author is to be congratulated on his writing style. It is very upbeat and enthusiastic, looking at the future with optimism rather than at the past with nostalgia. There are a lot of expanded histories of the current micros in the area and their products. These entries containing a large amount of detail. The book is nicely illustrated with a mix of photos, old and new, and labels, old and new. There are lots of reference to pubs where you can sample the beers mentioned plus a whole chapter on the Author's personal favourites.

The format allows many of those current micros to appear several times. For example, Teignworth is referred to under A for Artic Ales, I for Imperial Stout, L for Labologists M for Mild and O for Old Ale. Coileigh appears under A for Animals and B for Birds of Prey, etc etc. You see how useful this can be!

The book is useful for those wanting to visit the two counties, as its guide to the current pubs and brewers is very useful. However, it is very brief on the histories of past brewing. Nevertheless, if you live in the area and are beginning your quest for real ale and real ale history, this is a very good starter for ten.

As you would expect of an A-Z book, there is no index. This makes it tricky to trace some companies who, as I mentioned before, appear under a variety of headings. As a result we learn about brewing in a rather disjointed way, hops and yeast being so alphabetically separated.

Production values are extremely high and the book is excellent in its look and feel, and this is reflected in the cover price.

KEN SMITH

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BHS FACT FILE

Lt Gen Sir WG Lindsell Chairman of East Anglian Breweries states that the policy of concentration is continuing. The company ceased to brew at Huntingdon at the end of September, all brewing and bottling activities being now carried out at the Forehill Brewery in Ely. For the present it is proposed to continue to malt at Huntingdon, and the brewery premises there are still in part use for distribution purposes.

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