

The vanishing faces of the traditional pub

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Just as the production side of the British brewing industry has seen immense changes over the past half century, so too has its distribution arm. Nowhere is this more apparent than in public houses which is where the majority of beer (of all types) is still consumed.¹ In the 1950s and until the coalescing of the 'Big Six' brewers between then and 1972, drinkers would probably go to their local pub, consume beer from a local, British-owned brewery, in a pub owned by that brewery, find a choice of rooms to drink in, and expect to pay a price that reflected the plushness of the room or the lack of it. The customers would expect to be shielded by etched or frosted windows from the gaze of passers-by; many a working man's pub had a room from which women were excluded; drinks might be brought to the table in 'better' rooms; but, if they fancied a night at home drinkers could go down (or quite likely send the wife or kids) to the pub's jug and bottle for something to bring back.

Fifty years on this picture has been transformed. Eight out of ten pints brewed in

Britain come from international groups, only one of which is British-owned,² and none of which owns a chain of pubs. Pubs tend to be single room spaces (or interconnected ones), prices are uniform throughout, much etched glass has been replaced by clear panes, women may not legally be excluded from particular areas, and the jug and bottle has been substituted by the alcohol shelves at major supermarkets or, for many people, the



Figure 1. The Sherwood, Hall Green, Birmingham in August 1998. The bar-back and (left) one of the room divisions in this 1930s suburban pub: all this was ripped out a few months later when the pub was completely opened up.



Figure 2. *The King and Queen, Warrington. A typical, opened-out (in 1996), modern interior.*

thriving cross-Channel trade that exploits duty differentials between the UK and France.

The article that follows looks at these shifts in more detail and examines other, smaller scale changes that have affected the traditional pub in recent decades.

The meaning of the 'traditional pub'

A word of explanation is required at the outset. The term 'traditional pub' is used here to relate, almost exclusively, to English and Welsh pubs as they entered the 1960s. Scottish and Northern Irish pubs have long had rather different ownership, architectural, and fitting out practices, so their inclusion here would do nothing for the clarity of what will be said. The term needs something of an apology since the pub has been an evolving and transmuting institution for centuries: it may seem rather wilful to suggest that present-day pubs which exist in huge

numbers and still play host to millions of people every week - and are thus part of popular culture - are not in some sense 'traditional'. They clearly are but they are different in various ways from the pubs generally encountered before the 1960s. The sudden and radical changes that have taken place since have seen to that.

Measuring change

The loss of a considerable amount of any heritage asset leads to a desire to preserve what is left. Thus the great brewery mergers of the 1960s and the very real threats to traditional beer led to the foundation of the Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood in 1963 and the Campaign for Real Ale in 1971. The latter was phenomenally successful and ensured that real ale (as it became known) survived, and is probably now available in a historically unprecedented range and quality. With the ale tide turning CAMRA began to take an interest in the loss of traditional pub interiors which were clearly being lost in large numbers. Early moves were made in York where a Pub Conservation Group was started in the late 1970s. By 1985 this group had formulated what became CAMRA's national 'Manifesto for Pub Preservation' and, in 1987, felt confident enough to publish, for York, CAMRA's first considered listing of historic pub interiors.

Serious moves to create a 'National Inventory' of historic pub interiors were



Figures 3 & 4. The Chough, Salisbury. An interwar brewers' Tudor facade. Two doorways (centre and right) led to separate rooms. The right-hand doorway is now redundant as the interior wall has been pierced by a large opening (right) and a smaller one (left) to create a linked space.

begun in 1991. It was expected that something like 500 examples might be found among the UK's 60,000 pubs. This proved to be an over-optimistic view. By the mid 1990s it was clear that the figure would settle out at about 200 - that is, less than 0.5% of the nation's pub stock. Broadening the net to cover more altered pubs but ones still of regional historic value, the total remained pitifully small. The first 'Regional Inventory', for London published in 2004, included just 133 pubs out of some 5,700 in the capital. Such lists include what would once have been regarded as very ordinary interiors which would, indeed, have been the norm; now their rarity makes them very special survivals.

Attempts to save what is left have centred on a CAMRA/English Heritage project in 1998-2000 to obtain statutory listing for the best hitherto unlisted examples, the raising of awareness of among the public

and local planning authorities, and vigorous campaigning when a historic interior comes under threat.

The small rural pub

Although not confined to the period from the 1960s to the present, these years have seen the extinguishing of many small, basic rural pubs. A few do survive but they are now a very fragile asset whose future must surely be in question as the owners/publicans grow older and give up the business through incapacity or death. Such pubs are reminders that once the countryside was scattered with thousands of small pubs serving their local communities and where the publican and his/her family may well have combined pub-keeping with other income sources, such as farming, carrying, smithing, or paid employment in a nearby centre. Until his death about four years ago, the licensee of the Cupid's



Figure 5. The Cider House, Woodmancote, Defford, Worcestershire, perhaps the most rudimentary pub in the country. The hatch to the serving area is behind the two standing figures. The lawn acts as the main drinking area in good weather; the old bakehouse (left) in bad.

Hill Tavern, Grosmont, Monmouthshire, could make a coffin for the dead as well as draw a pint for the living [Fig. 6].

Those who still run such pubs (or who ran them in recent years) are not doing so on normal business lines. The income from such pub-keeping is tiny and does not provide a livelihood in itself. Recent survival has only been possible because the building has been in the family, free of mortgage, and the needs of the publican are modest. In a few very rare cases, such as the Harrington Arms, Gawsworth, Cheshire, the pub is still linked to a farm. Any succeeding owner (if any) whether an individual or a company will, perforce,

have to run things differently. A dramatic example comes from Northern Ireland where a beneficent organisation like the National Trust took over the building housing the miniscule Mary McBride's Bar, Cushendun, Co. Antrim. It preserved the wonderful little snug bar but the vast additions, although not affecting snug's fabric directly, overshadow it and mean it can never be the simple, tiny local it was when Mary McBride was alive.

At the time of writing a handful of traditional, unspoilt rural/village pubs survive and have acquired an iconic status which, in itself, means they have become something they never were. Some key



Figure 6. The Cupid's Tavern, Grosmont, Monmouthshire (in 1999; now closed), a basic country pub where pub-keeping and coffin-making co-existed.

examples are: Harrington Arms, Gawsworth, Cheshire; Duke of York, Elton, Deryshire; Barley Mow, Kirk Ireton, Deryshire; Red Lion, Ampney St Peter, Gloucestershire; Sun, Leintwardine, Herefordshire; Star, Netherton, Northumberland; Cider House, Defford, Woodmancote, Worcestershire; Goat, Llanfihangel-yng-Gwnfa, Powys; Dyffryn Arms, Ponfaen, Pembrokeshire.

The multi-room pub

The traditional pub, as understood here, is essentially a multi-room establishment and one which involves a hierarchy of rooms. At the 'bottom' is the public bar (often simply entitled 'bar' on plans and door notices) where drink used to be slightly cheaper than elsewhere in the pub. This room will have a bar counter, have a more utilitarian feel than others and, especially in times past, will be predominantly a male preserve. Evidence of

the latter can often be found on plans whereby the room has easy access to a gents' toilet, whereas female customers could only find relief in facilities adjacent to a 'better' room. As touched on earlier, drinks in the public bar were a fraction cheaper than elsewhere; this was an effective financial incentive towards keeping customers in their appropriate place.³

This idea of financial (and social) segregation was an entrenched feature of pub-going until well after the Second World War. Pubs were still being planned in the 1960s with public bars and other, more genteel rooms. These went by a variety of names, the most popular of which were 'saloon', 'lounge' and 'smoke (or smoking) room' - all more or less interchangeable in terms of what they offered. In the north-east another couple of names were used for these 'better' rooms: the 'select room' was a cut above



Figure 7. A simple screen such as that at the Nova Scotia in Bristol Docks where it divides the small private bar from the public bar was a cheap and easy way of creating multiple spaces in Victorian pubs.

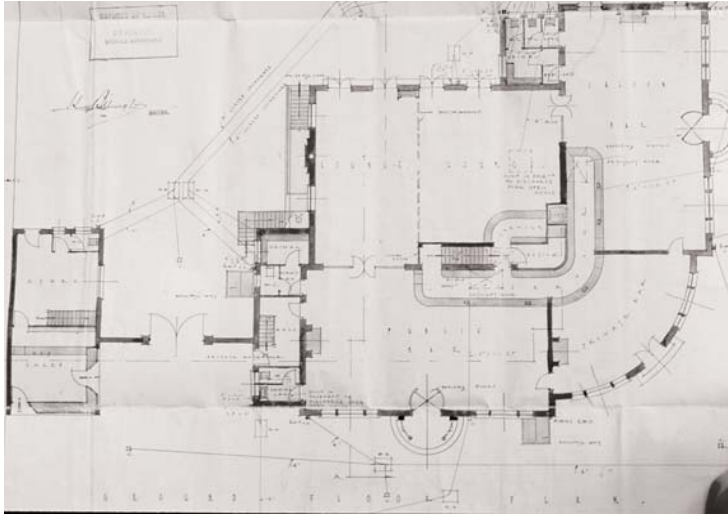


Figure 8. The Doctor Johnson, Barkingside, LB of Redbridge. Built in 1937-8 with a central servery surrounded by four separate rooms: public bar (bottom left), private bar (bottom right), lounge (top left), saloon (top right). On the left a detached off-sales shop.



Figure 9. The Doctor Johnson, Barkingside. The private bar.



Figure 10. *The Doctor Johnson, Barkingside. The public bar.*

the public bar but often had its own counter to the servery, while the 'sitting room' was just that, a place where customers sat to drink and probably expected that they could be served at their tables (see Table service below).

The catalogue of traditional pub room names is lengthy and the following is anything but all-inclusive: 'vaults' (often an alternative name for the public bar), 'private bar' (usually relatively small and clearly slightly superior), 'snug' (a small, cosy room), 'dram shop' (a now rare northern term and a reminder of stand-up spirit-drinking bars) 'news room' (another northern term, and suggesting a place for a little peace and quiet), 'commercial room' (where commercial travellers might

be expected to congregate), 'porter room' (especially in East Anglia for a better class room) 'music room', 'billiard room', 'club room' (all self-explanatory), and 'tap room'. The latter is a fairly common name and is particularly curious as it is suggestive of drawing off drink. Yet this was not the case. When compiling the book *Licensed to Sell: the History and Heritage of the Public House* (2004), my colleagues and I found that all tap rooms we had encountered were slightly or, often, far removed from the servery. Since then we have discovered one example, the Shakespeare in Dudley, West Midlands, where the (very small) room containing the servery is named in the (apparently *in situ*) window glass as the 'tap room'. Just occasionally one meets the vestiges of a



Figure 11. Two unique, tiny drinking boxes are attached to the counter at the Barley Mow, Dorset Street, London W1. (Michael Slaughter)

'ladies only' bar (e.g. glass in the Mitre, Bayswater, London, and a plan for the Crown, Aberdeen Place, London NW8).

Separate drinking spaces were formed in one of two ways: by solid walls which created truly separate rooms, or by screen-work which divided up large spaces into small ones. The latter, especially in London, could create diminutive drinking areas. Mark Girouard's classic study, *Victorian Pubs*, shows a plan from 1888 which has no less than ten compartments plus a 'dining saloon' all clustered round a servery which extends in peninsular fashion into the centre of the pub.⁴ The only place where such extraordinarily tiny drinking compartments have survived is at the Barley Mow, Dorset Street, Marylebone, where a couple of boxes looking like a pair of heightened Georgian box-pews from a church, are attached to



Figure 12. Many London pubs have a peninsula-like servery protruding into the drinking area. Originally these would have been surrounded by a series of compartments. The arrangements at the Prince Alfred, Maida Vale, probably refitted c. 1898, are a unique survival. (Michael Slaughter)

the bar counter (their precise date is uncertain but they are no doubt late Victorian) [Fig. 11]. A remarkable survival of screened off compartments is at the Argyll Arms, Argyll Street, W1 (c.1895), while the Prince Alfred, Formosa Street, Maida Vale (c.1898), is the sole survivor of screened compartments ranged around a peninsular servery [Fig. 12]. Although we associate the opening up of pubs with the post-war period, the process of removing extreme compartmentalisation almost certainly got going before 1939 although this has yet to be researched.

Likewise the ascendancy of the modern, single-room pub has yet to be charted. Certainly in 1960 any new premises had at least two rooms; by the 1970s, or at least the latter part of the decade, they almost certainly would not.

The end of the 'offie'

Examination of old plans of pubs, the evidence of inscriptions in many an etched window, and the presence of hatches facing entrance doors attest to the importance of the off-sales trade in pubs prior to the 1960s. The pub was where millions of people bought drink to take home (unless they availed themselves of home deliveries from a supplier such as Davenport's of Birmingham whose famous slogan of was 'beer at home means Davenport's'). Just as one type of drinking room in a pub might, in a very English way, take various names all

meaning the same thing, so the place where take-home drinks were obtained went under various titles: 'jug and bottle' (or less frequently, 'bottle and jug'), 'out-door department', 'off-sales counter', 'wholesale counter', 'family department' (a northern term) and more besides.

The demise of the trade was sealed in 1962 when legislation opened the way for a boom in alcohol sales in supermarkets. Where there were physical compartments for off-sales, formed by solid walls or screenwork, these became redundant and, naturally, were very often incorporated in the rest of the trading area. The surviving evidence takes the form of disused doorways, signs of removed walling or screens or a change in the detail of the bar-counter. Very occasionally in big inter-war estate pubs the sales department was a small shop slightly removed from the rest of the pub (as at the Doctor Johnson, Barkingside, London Borough of Redbridge (1937) and the Railway, Edgware, LB of Harrow (1931)).

Table service

With the room(s) of higher status in the multi-room pub went the possibility of table service. Hundreds of pubs with intact or vestigial multi-room arrangements also retain the evidence for table service in the shape of bell-pushes mounted on the wall. These were linked to a bell or buzzer and perhaps an annunciator box (like those in the service quarters of a country house) which



Figure 13. The fully tiles smole room at Bellefield, Winson Green, Birmingham (in 1998: now closed and vandalised). Mounted on the upper rail of the seating (left) a bell-push for table service.

showed where service was needed. Rooms where there was table service did not, of course, have their own counter, except perhaps a small hatch or a hatch-cum-door to the servery.

Like other aspects of the shift from the traditional pub, the timing and course of the decline and virtual demise of table service is uncertain. The writer started his drinking career in Birmingham in the early 1960s and remembers being surprised on going to university in Manchester to find waiters circulating in the rooms of various pubs there, taking orders for drinks and delivering them to the table. So far as is known the practice is defunct around Manchester but still has life (and seemingly a continuous history) at a few pubs on Merseyside.⁵ It occurs occasionally in west Yorkshire and elsewhere but generally is a modern, customer-oriented revival rather a survival of historic practice.

The tentative evidence suggests that table service has a geographical dimension. The continuance of the practice on Merseyside, and numerous pubs with bell-pushes in the Midlands and north suggests the practice was commonplace there. So far only one authentically old example of bell-pushes is known in London (the Forester, Ealing: 1909) [Fig. 14], and the south is otherwise only represented at present by the Bear, Albert Street, Oxford.⁶



Figure 14. Bell-push at the Forester, Ealing, the only known historic example in the capital. Did this rarity lead to the need for the explanatory lettering? (Michael Slaughter)

The changing face of the servery

The bar counter was introduced into public houses around the 1820s⁷ and by the end of the century was an almost



Figure 15. The bar counter has become, since the early 19th century, an almost universal feature of the pub and one of its most iconic symbols. It is thought that less than twenty pubs lack them, such as here, the Cock, Broom, Bedfordshire, where customers are served at the doorway into the cellar.

ubiquitous item, at least in larger urban houses. Its basic, practical function has never changed, creating a convenient separation between the staff, drinks and money on one side and the customers on the other. The earliest surviving counters are probably a few from the third quarter of the nineteenth century and in one respect little has changed. The most popular design of counter has proved extraordinarily long-lived and is still being used today. Its details vary but the princi-

ple involves a series of bays, divided by pilasters, often the use of console brackets or another termination beneath the counter top, and fielded panelling or some sort of boarding as infill for each bay. Of course, many modern pubs have broken with this tradition but that the basic design is still used at all testifies to its evident fitness for purpose.

Pictures of pub interiors in Victorian and Edwardian times show, apart from hand-pumps, such items as food showcases and water heaters sitting on bar counters, but on the whole they are uncluttered. And so they remained until well after the Second World War. From the 1960s two things have happened. It has become quite usual to mount a shelf or series of shelves, mostly for glasses, as a gantry on the bar counter. Such features are often very clumsily designed and assume great visual prominence. What has fuelled their introduction no doubt is the increased number of glasses in circulation due partly to the wider range of drinks available and partly the habit of using a fresh glass of each new drink served.

A particularly disfiguring feature of pubs since the 1980s has been the explosion of branded, often illuminated dispensers for keg beers, lager and similar. The early origins can be traced back to the advent of the pump clip which is thought to have been invented in the 1930s as a means of identifying for non-local drinkers (such as commercial travellers) whose beer was for sale. But while the pump clip is a



Figure 16. A plain, unadorned counter is a very rare sight in the early 21st century. This one, at the Turf Tavern, Bloxwich, West Midlands, retains the simple appearance that would have been familiar to earlier generations of pub-goers.

fairly restrained piece of advertising the new generation of dispensers is not. Clearly marketing executives have tried to increase the size and visual prominence of their dispensers to outshine those of their rivals. The consequent battery of hardware has turned many a servery into a castellated fortification through which staff have to thread drinks while trying not to spill them.

As well as such additions, there have been losses. A key one has been snob screens whose function it was to give privacy to customers in 'better' parts of some pubs, creating a sense of physical and visual separation from the serving staff. Whilst widely known about, they are now incredibly few original ones left, although, ironically, some have been installed in recent years in mock Victorianising refits. The only ones in their original position and condition seem to be at the Prince Alfred,

Maida Vale [Fig. 17], and the Bartons Arms, Aston, Birmingham.

If the arrival of keg fonts has transformed the appearance of beer service, there have been changes too affecting the sale of spirits and fortified wines. Large wooden barrels, as seen in many a Scottish and Irish pubs, were not a common feature in English pubs but one still sees occasional, now redundant ceramic dispensers, just over a foot high bearing legends like 'Rum', 'Brandy', 'Scotch Whisky' and so on. The elegant glass dispensers with a tap at the base which were widely used in Victorian and Edwardian times have, so far as is known, vanished altogether (although their form is taken as the basis for the modern lamps at the sumptuously refitted St Stephen's Tavern, opposite the Palace of Westminster). Spirits and fortified wines were also sometimes dispensed through banks of taps linked to casks at some remove: the best examples are at the Queen's Head, Underbank, Stockport and the Haunch of Venison, Minster Street, Salisbury [Fig. 18].



Figure 17. Snob screens at the Prince Alfred, Maida Vale, London. (Michael Slaughter)



Figure 18. A bank of spirit cocks at the *Haunch of Venison, Salisbury*. Between them and the outside window is a tiny snug.

Visibility and other changes

Here we may note a miscellaneous range of changes that have affected pubs since the 1960s.

Window glass. Of these the most significant visually is the attitude towards window glass. The Victorian and early twentieth-century tradition was that pub customers expected and got some privacy from the gaze of the outside world. This meant the use of etched glass (and later frosted glass) which formed a screen between the world of the pub and the world beyond. Decorative patterns were augmented by information such as name of the pub, which brewery owned it, and, in the case of door glass, the name (and therefore the status) of the room(s) on the other side.

But attitudes have changed. Privacy in the pub matters far less today. Despite the best endeavours of pub reformers

between the wars, there was still a moral censure by large swathes of the middle classes visited upon pub-goers until well after the Second World War. But in recent decades this has probably declined hugely (although research into social attitudes would need to confirm this), and those using pubs probably care little for whether they can be seen there or not. There is also the question of cost: licensees have frequently complained to the writer about the cost involved in replacing broken etched windows and recite, usually with a good deal of exaggeration, that 'they are always getting broken.' Indeed, there is certainly a substantial extra cost: such glass is not *de rigueur* and not having it has no impact on the bottom line - hence the prevarication for years by the owners of the magnificent grade II*-listed Philharmonic, Liverpool, over replacing tawdry temporary windows by correct materials.⁸ Another major factor is women! A standard argument for replacing etched glass by clear is that it is 'women-friendly': that is, they don't feel they are entering a secret, threatening man's space; the world of the pub therefore becomes transparent both physically and metaphorically. The consequence of all this is that many pubs have been denuded of fine Victorian and Edwardian glass and this has had a dramatic effect on their appearance.

Women in pubs. Of little impact on the fabric of pubs, the coming into force on 1 January 1976 of the Sex Discrimination Act was a landmark socially and meant

the end of the 'G.O.', the gents' only bar that flourished especially in the north. Lettering in the left-hand bar at the Loggheads, Church Street, Shrewsbury records for posterity, not doubt with a hint of regret, 'GENTS ONLY until 1975'. The one impact in terms of pub arrangements is that the enforcement of women's rights is that they now can expect toilet facilities: there can now scarcely be a pub anywhere without a ladies' although the Grill, Union Street, Aberdeen did not have one until the last few years.

Inside toilets. Quaint though it may be to contemplate the stars from the outside gents' (aka 'the Planetarium') at the Bell, Aldworth, Berkshire, outside toilets are

largely a thing of the past. In recent decades many have been brought inside or had covered access to them installed. When carefully planned this is clearly an asset but occasionally the visual impact can be intrusive and have an adverse effect on the character of a pub.

Spittoons. The general gentrification of the pub, as represented by eradication of outside toilets, is mirrored in the disappearance of the spittoon and spittoon trough. The latter, as a receptacle for human expectoration (and other sundry detritus) running at the base of the bar counter, was still a regular feature of interwar pubs and examples are known from a few built after the Second World War (e.g. the now-demolished Maltese



Figure 19. The Prince Arthur, Walton, Liverpool, has a distinctive Taylor Walker tiled frontage of c. 1905. The windows have etched glass to create the sense of separation between the pub and the outside world.

Cat, Roehampton, SW15, built by Young's in 1961).

Numbers on doors. Many a pub door carries a number, or occasionally letter.⁹ They are usually screwed on and are the silent witness to a now-defunct and largely forgotten requirement by H.M. Customs & Excise. Every licensee had to identify to them the rooms in their premises and numbers (or letters) were a convenient way to do this. '1' might be the public bar, '2' the saloon, '3' the cellar and so on. Unfortunately the exact timing for the

demise of this requirement has not been established but it is believed to be in the early 1960s - thus, yet another example of the changes since that fateful decade which have affected our pub stock.

Smoking. The banning of smoking in pubs from 2007 in England and Wales (already in place in Scotland) will have an affect on the atmosphere of pubs in more ways than one. Physically it will mean the disappearance of ashtrays which have been a ubiquitous item of pub furnishing (and product advertising) for decades. On a very minor level, a reminder of smoking in pubs in former days can be seen in brass match strikers screwed to the upper parts of bar counters in many traditional pubs.



Figure 20. The corridor at the Swan with Two Necks, Stockport, expands in its centre to form a drinking lobby with enough space for a few tables and chairs (right) and customers to stand (left) at the counter.

The decline of regionalism

Returning now to the broad picture, the pub, like most aspects of retailing, has seen the squeezing of regional differences in recent decades. Just as one row of high street shops now consists of much the same companies and fascias as any other, so pubs have mostly lost their regional distinctiveness. Apart from a few framed panels about the site and locality, there will be nothing to mark out a new J.D. Wetherspoon pub in London from one in the north of Scotland. The shift to open-plan pubs since the 1960s has seen to that but here we may note some of the regional differences that may still be detected.

North and south: the drinking lobby. An

oft-mentioned feature of northern pubs, especially those straddling the Pennines in the Greater Manchester/ west Yorkshire areas but of wider distribution, is the drinking lobby. A classic arrangement is shown in the picture of the Swan with Two Necks, Stockport dating from c.1930 [Fig. 20]. Even the bar at the heart of the famous Philharmonic in Liverpool (1899-1900) is, in effect a drinking lobby. It is entered directly off Hope Street and is surrounded by a series of other rooms. The form is not unknown in the south: for instance, the Stockport plan is replicated at the Old Green Tree, Green Street, Bath (1928), but, nonetheless, the drinking lobby is more of a northern feature than a southern one.

London compartmentalisation. This has been touched on above. Although traditional pubs had multiple spaces the extreme smallness that was commonplace in London is not matched elsewhere.

L-shaped corridor plans on Merseyside. A popular arrangement here for corner site pubs around 1900 was an L-shaped corridor (much used for stand-up drinking) with a doorway at either end and which embraced a public bar in the angle of the streets. Examples are the Lion, Moorfields, Liverpool [Fig. 21]; the Prince Arthur, Walton, Liverpool; and the Stork, Price Street, Birkenhead. Leading off the corridor away from the public bar were 'better' rooms such as a news room. It is said that the arrangement was favoured for supervision purposes by the police who expected to be able to enter by one



Figure 21. Part of the L-shaped corridor at the Lion, Liverpool.

entrance and leave by another.

Architecture and decoration. It is not surprising that local brewers sometimes developed their own very distinctive styles. Once established these could become self-perpetuating and could reinforce brand loyalty and recognition. Birmingham brewers (notably Holt's and Mitchells & Butlers) built many a 'tile and terracotta' pub around 1900, so-called from the red terracotta facing on the frontage and extensive use of tiles for decoration inside. They often have a shared, simple but effective plan with a public bar in the angle of the streets and a

smoke room tucked behind, and common decorative tilework and ceilings. Five examples within walking distance of one another in the Digbeth area make an instructive group: the Anchor, Bradford Street (1902); Eagle and Tun, Banbury Street (1900); the Market Tavern, Moseley Street (1899); the White Swan, also Bradford Street (1899-1900); and the Woodman, Albert Street (1896-7). Most, if not all, are by the local architects James & Lister Lea. Rich glazed frontages of c.1900 were a speciality of Brickwood's around Portsmouth, and such frontages are also commonly found on Tyneside. By 1914 there were at least seven pubs in North Shields faced entirely in glazed faience.¹⁰ Good surviving examples in the north east are the Berwick Arms, Trinity Terrace, North Shields (1913); the Half Moon, New Elvet, Durham (1908-9); Wardle's (formerly the Albert Hotel), Albert Street, Hebburn (1908); and the Wheat-sheaf, Carlisle Street, Felling (1907).

1989 and its consequences

The simplistic sketch of the traditional pub at the start of this article included the notion that one's local was probably owned by the brewery whose beers it sold - that is the long-established brewery tie. In the past decade and a half this piece of industrial vertical integration has been ripped apart.

The tied house system had a long history stretching back to the eighteenth century when brewers began buy up leases or tie

up a publican's business through loans. The process accelerated in the nineteenth century, especially towards its close. By 1948 75 per cent of on-licences in England and Wales were owned or leased by brewers¹¹ and the emergence of the 'Big Six' brewers between 1955 and 1972 served to concentrate pub ownership. Between them they owned over half the nation's pubs.

This state of affairs led to government inquiries and, finally, the Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order 1989, usually referred as the Beers Orders. Breweries were not permitted to own more than 2,000 pubs and the big brewers found themselves having to sell off 11,000 of them - that is, over one in six of the total stock. The resulting irony is well-known. The sell-offs have gone far beyond the original intentions with the largest brewers divesting themselves of pub-owning altogether with this role being taken up by massive pub-owning companies - pubcos for short - which have no interest in the production side of the business other than setting up hugely discounted bulk supply arrangements from companies that still brew. As stated earlier, none of the big, international players who supply 80% of the beer consumed in the UK own a pub estate. Even S&N Pub Enterprises manages 1,100 pubs for their owner, the Royal Bank of Scotland, despite the 'S&N' tag signifying the largest UK-owned brewer (Scottish & Newcastle). Between them the two largest pubcos, Punch Taverns and Enterprise Inns, own almost one in

three of the country's pubs. This amounts to very roughly 9,000 each, although numbers can fluctuate with the constant rounds of acquisitions and sell-offs. A far cry from the 2,000 pubs thought sufficient for any brewer to own! It is not surprising the government rescinded the Beer Orders in February 2003. The largest pub-owning brewers are Wolverhampton & Dudley, and Greene King at around 2,000 pubs each and the latter now topping that figure. Greene King now dominate parts of East Anglia in exactly the way the 1989 orders were meant to prevent.

From the point of view of the average pub customer, it is debatable whether he or she would notice much difference between the old brewery-owned and the new pub-owning regimes. The main outward change is that pubcos (other than the Wetherspoon chain of some 650 pubs) have no interest in creating a recognisable brand, in contrast to the brewers. In any case, so much of the drink consumed in pubs is of national (or international) brands which have vastly weakened any sense of loyalty from customers towards a local region or producer. In terms of the publicans and the pub buildings, it is sometimes suggested that the new pubcos have a more cynical financial attitude than the brewers they supplanted and who are popularly believed to have operated in kind, paternalistic lines. The latter may well be true of some of the smaller independent companies but behind the mythic ideal, publicans in the past could feel very hard done by the brewers. In terms of the buildings

themselves it is true that pubcos see them as assets to be sweated. However, it was mainly under brewery ownership that the vast changes in traditional pub fabrics took place in the quarter century down to 1989, and it has to be questioned whether pubco attitudes are very much different from those that preceded them.

The past three or four decades, then, have seen massive changes affecting our pubs, both in terms of their physical fabrics and the pattern of ownership. Pubs, for the most part, are no longer multi-roomed, hierarchical establishments, while the close links between brewer and pub have been substantially weakened. However, truly traditional pubs do still exist, albeit in reduced numbers, as the listings in the CAMRA national and



Figure 22. When tradition is gone, invent it! The romantically named 'Famous Old Porterhouse' in Liverpool seeks to capitalise on a vague sense of history in a new pub.

regional inventories show. Many of us hope that they will continue to thrive and survive, and there is every reason why should. Traditional pubs are part of our heritage and heritage is something that can and should be used for marketing purposes. Like so many aspects of present-day retailing, success depends on specialisation and market segmentation. We now have a greater range of types of licensed premises than at any time in history and there must surely be a place for the truly traditional pubs that do survive within this rich portfolio.

[Photographs: All are by the author except for those credited to Michael Slaughter.]

Note: As at October 2006, the Harrington Arms, Gawsworth (p. 112) is being separated from the farm business to which it has been historically linked.

References

1. The figures for 2004 show that 60% of beer (all types) was drunk in the pub and 40% was supplied through the off-trade (according to the British Beer and Pub Association). The corresponding figures for 1984 were 85.3% and 14.7%. Thanks to Iain Loe of CAMRA for this information.

2. Protz, R. (ed.), *Good Beer Guide 2006* (CAMRA Books: St Albans, 2005-6), pp. 827-

9. The exception is Scottish & Newcastle which repays the international interest in the UK by having interests in France, Belgium, Russia, east European states, China, India and Portugal.

3. At present the only example known to the writer of such differential pricing is at the Cricketers, Woodford Green, London Borough of Redbridge where a pint costs 4p. more in the saloon than the bar.

4. p. 74: the Equestrian Tavern, Blackfriars Road. Irritatingly he does not cite his source for this extraordinary plan. While researching for (2004) *Licensed to Sell: The History and Heritage of the Public House*, English Heritage: Swindon, I was unable, unfortunately, to discover any comparably dramatic plan in the London Metropolitan Archives. The best example was the Blue Posts, St James's, 1896 (reproduced on p. 63 of the book), which looks very much the vestiges of a similar arrangement still traceable at the Red Lion, Duke of York Street, nearby.

5. Full details are given in *Licensed to Sell, op. cit.*, p. 108.

6. Other examples must surely await discovery but, imperfect as the research is, there does seem to be a difference in traditions between north and south.

7. Clark, P. (1983) *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830*, Longman: Harlow, p. 276.

8. Which were insisted upon by Liverpool Council, much to its credit.

9. Letters seem to have been popular around Merseyside and in Birmingham.

10. Pearson, L. (1989) *The Northumbrian Pub*, Sandhill Press: Morpeth, p. 111.

11. Revealed by a Brewers' Society questionnaire quoted by Gourvish, T.R. and Wilson, R.G. (1994) *The British Brewing Industry 1830-1980*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p. 408.