

Young's Ram Brewery: a photographic essay

Steve Lyne

It started out as a request from my friend, Tim Goodman, for a shot of the Dray horses because he'd heard a rumour that the brewery may shut down. As a result I was introduced to the 'stable boys', in particular Henry Coward and then Stuart Middleton, who were instrumental in encouraging me to photograph the rest of the brewery and its people. Of course, once in, it became a race against time to photograph as many employees in their various roles as possible before they were gone for good. Ironically the shot I originally came in to do didn't happen for about another six months as the horses were one of the last things to leave). The first thing to do was to look and ask a lot of questions of the potential subjects. In this way you can work out what can and can't be achieved in a shot, for example where to put the lights so that the horses aren't spooked.

There was no formal introduction to the directors, but they (and of course the chairman Mr John Young) seemed happy for me to just get on with things. As far as I am aware there was no plan to document the site before I came along. In the brewery itself Derek Prentice, Ken Don and John Hatch were extremely helpful in arranging shots. Some people were suspicious of me at first as I think

they assumed I was on a 'paid gig' and they were all about to lose their jobs. However, once I got on the right side of them they were coming to me requesting to be photographed!

The thing that hit me most about the place was how self contained it all was, if some piece of machinery broke down then they had the staff to fix it. Even the delivery trucks were maintained by full time on site mechanics and if the boilers broke down there was David Gray and his team of engineers on hand to put things right. Most of all, in these times of image consultants, focus groups and bland and mediocre chain stores for the unimaginative, I was photographing an organization that was producing something of worth and this made it so satisfying (and of course the after work sessions in the sample room!).

Some of the shots may look natural enough and people will say 'you were lucky with the light in that one' but nothing happened by accident. To achieve the 'natural look' in such a busy (and potentially dangerous environment, particularly when working with the horses) required careful planning. I work using a lot of lighting which brings with it the inevitable miles of extension leads,

sync leads, lap tops, tripods, etc. to achieve the desired effect. In one instance one of the Shetland's was let loose taking with him an extension lead and two of my lights! All images were produced on a 35mm digital camera using Bowens and Metz lighting.

Head Brewer Ken Don writes: Many people are familiar with the classic business management graph which shows the dependency on people on one axis and systems on the other. Some companies are nearly all about systems, some are a 50:50 mix and a very few are like Young's which were 90% people and 10% systems. John Young used to start monthly management meetings by saying let's hear about what has been happening to people in departments as they are the most important resource we have. This in essence was the spirit of Young's. He also used to say that you cannot run a happy pub without a happy landlord and you cannot run a happy brewery without a happy staff. We all

tried to live up to that idea I- we worked hard and by heck we played hard. Everybody was willing to go the extra mile to ensure the job was done. In these photographs Steve has captured the spirit of what made Young's one of the most admired brewery companies in Britain. There is a warmth of feeling in these images which goes beyond the actual pictures and makes the reader feel part of the history, tradition and fun that working at Young's was all about. The pride in the job and in working for the company shines through the pages and is a fitting tribute to all those who contributed to the success of Young's over the years. It was in every sense a team effort. The brewery may be gone, but it will live forever in the images and pages of Steve's photographs.

If you would like to view more images from this collection or purchase copies please either visit Steve Lyne's web site at www.lyne.co.uk or call him on 020 8871 2519 or 07778 415 140.



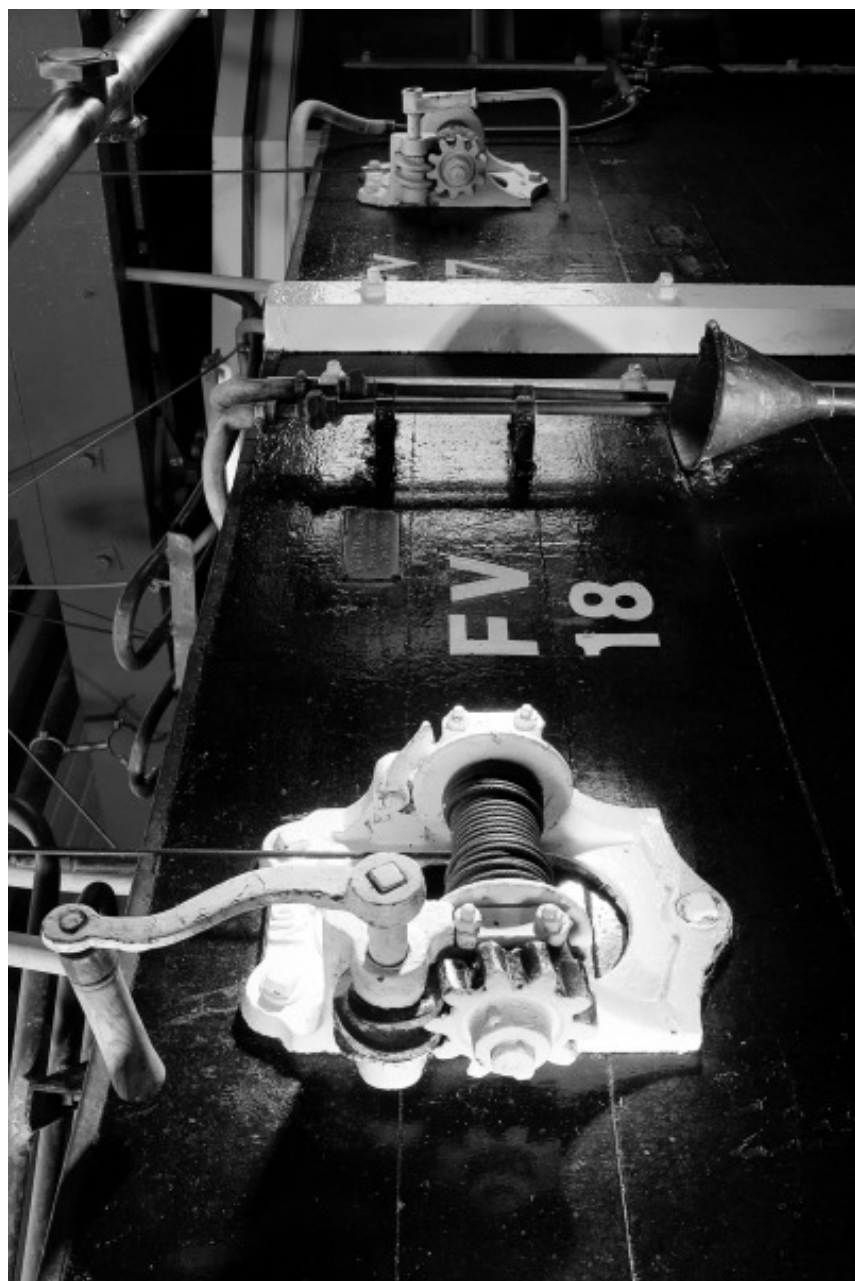
Aerial view of the Ram Brewery.



Entrance on Wandsworth High Street.



Chris Hayes the miller.



Fermentation vessel detail.



John Hatch and fermentation vessel.



Brewers Derek Prentice and Ken Don in the mash tun room.



Donald cleaning the old fermentation vessel.



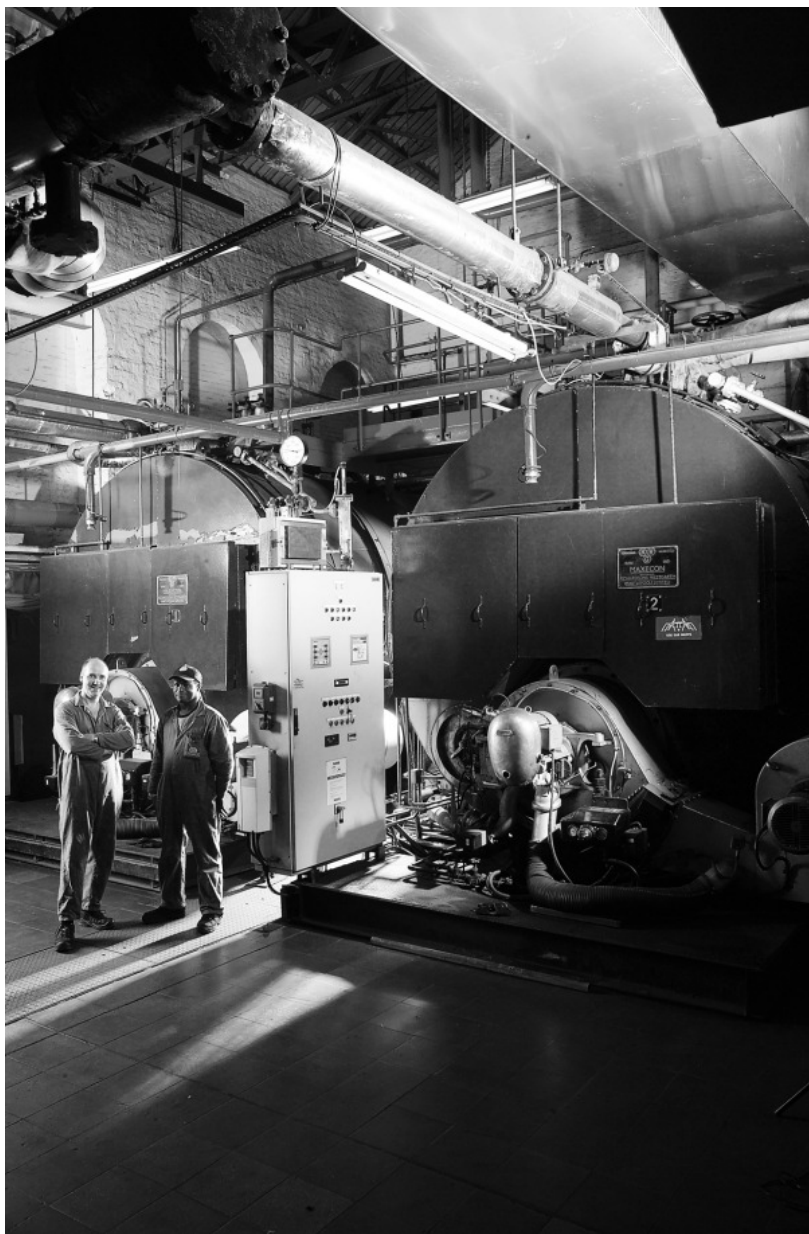
Cold rooms.



The 'Crow's Nest'.



Terry Wilkins cask washing.



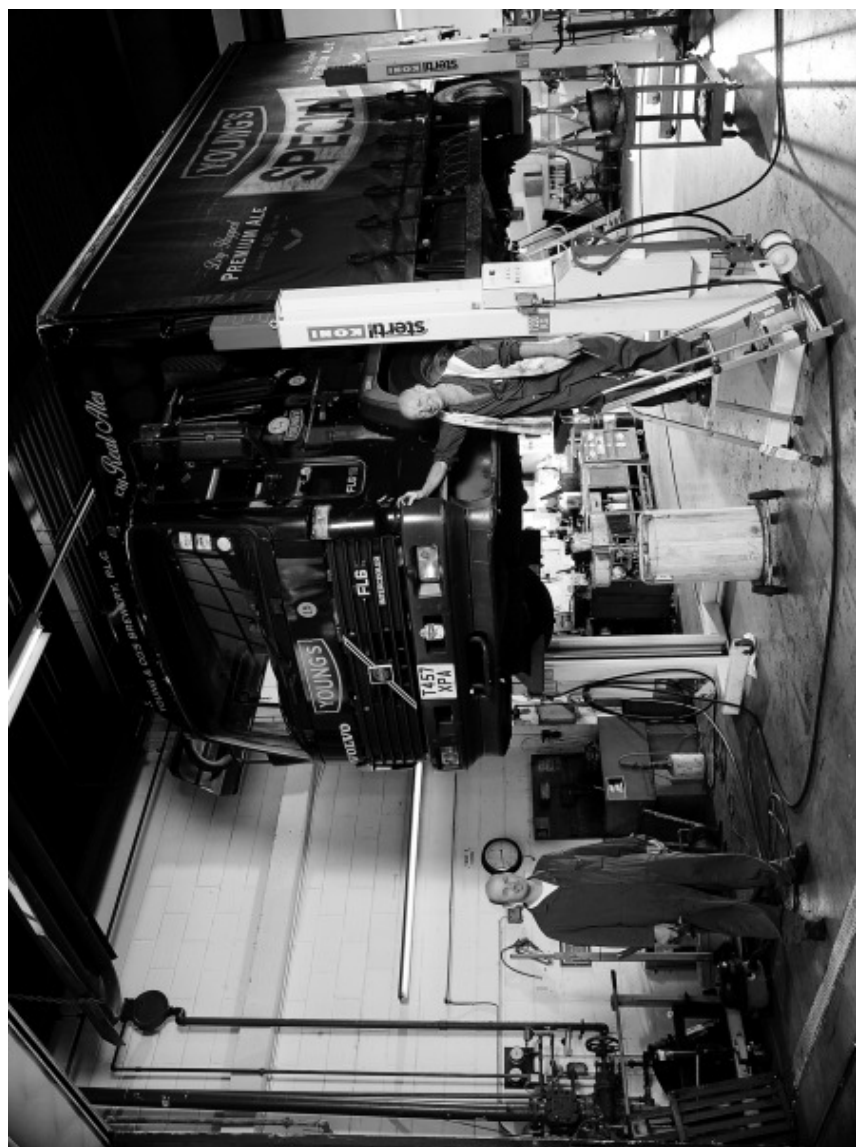
Terry Thomas and Leo McSween in the boiler room.



Old coppers.



Head Brewer Ken Don.



Big Dan and Little Dan.



Draymen Henry Coward and Joe House.



Head Driver Kevin Flynn, Stuart Middleton, 'Little' Joe.



Stable worker Garry McHale.