

Book Review

Licensed to Sell: The History and Heritage of the Public House (2nd Edition)

by Geoff Brandwood, Andrew Davison and Michael Slaughter

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The publication of the first edition of *Licensed to Sell* in 2004 was hailed in these pages as a important addition to the literature on public houses, containing as it did a wealth of absorbing primary research and beautiful illustrations. Now, seven years later, a second edition has been published with minor alterations, corrections and updates. The most substantial of the latter is a new final chapter, 'Into the 21st Century.'

The period between the editions has witnessed two major pieces of legislation that have impacted upon the pub; the 2003 Licensing Act (which came into effect in late 2005) and the ban on smoking in all indoor public spaces. Neither have had a significant effect on the physical nature of the pubs' interior, the only noticeable change has occurred outside with the 'blossoming' of canopies under which smokers now congregate.

Probably the most considerable change since the book's first edition has been the

dramatic number of pub closures. This reached a peak of 50 per week in 2009 and has now dropped to around 25 (14 net) per week in late 2011. The reasons behind this trend are complex, a mixture of rising beer duty, the availability of cheap alcohol in supermarkets and the profitability of converting pubs into residential and commercial properties have all played a part.

As *Licensed to Sell* concludes, the future of the public house, bleak in 2004, looks even worse in 2011. However, there is still room for optimism and if there is anything which can inspire us to fight for the survival of the pub this splendid book is it.

