

BOOK REVIEWS

“Here’s Good Luck to the Pint Pot”: A brief history of Maldon’s Inns, Alehouses and Breweries
Stubbings, K., revisited Chaplin, P.
Langford, Allen Chaplin Publishing
2022, Pp.165, £10.00
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I have little knowledge of Maldon apart from spending some time ashore there at the start of a Thames barge race on the Blackwater estuary courtesy of Paul’s Malt when they owned the Ena and used her to entertain their brewer customers. Sadly I have no recollection whatsoever of the pubs visited!

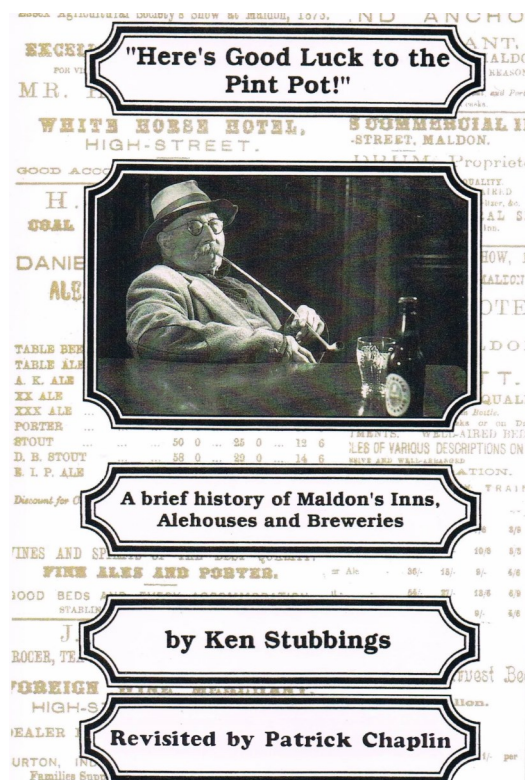
The book was originally written by Ken Stubbings in 1988 but has long been out of print. It has been brought up to date by fellow Maldonian Patrick Chaplin who observed that statements like ‘where Woolworths is’ mean nothing to a reader three decades later! Photos have also been integrated into the text rather than having their own section allowing a much more fluent read.

Chaplin has added more recent research including a chapter on two micro pubs in the town and a finale looking both backwards and forwards. Chaplin has put his additions in brackets so new research can be easily seen but these do not intrude into the flow of the text. Thankfully it is not a turgid list of pubs and licensees down the ages although there is a list of both as an appendix. The book is full of social snippets as we travel round town, firstly around the harbour where pubs had nautical connections followed by the newer part out of the reach of rising tides as the port silted up.

The original book started as three pages of a school exercise book. Stubbings had been asked to write a composition on Maldon history. He ignored the famous battle of 991 between the local Saxons and a bunch of Danish invaders which led to successive payments of Danegeld throughout the eleventh century, but wrote about 22 odd pubs regularly visited by his father. He does not mention what the teacher thought of his scholarship and now in his book he goes on to describe 93 of them.

Information is gleaned from victuallers recognizances, ale house licences, brewery takeovers, directories, newspapers, property records, censuses, wills, parish records, magistrates records, old photos and postcards where one pub has an advert for Salts Burton Ales in 1890. There is even evidence gleaned from archaeology. Chaplin reports that blue plaques have been put in the wrong place to celebrate long gone pubs because nobody bothered to read the book!

The theme follows pub names rather than being geographical, we start with the sea followed by animals, birds and end with royalty, the emergence of stage coaches and then the railway. Research was not helped by multiple Anchors, Bells, White Harts, White Horses and Stars. It is not clear why the Rodney named after a famous admiral became the Ship and Anchor and in 2017 the Black Rabbit!



To give you an idea of the snippets which Stubbings found, there are accounts of smuggling of wool in 1572, three pence for a night sleeping on a rope or six pence for a bed but you have to have a bath first. Bull baiting in 1784 with a prize of a silver spoon worth 14 shillings. Struggling with the coffin of a 42 stone Edward Bright from the Black Bull where he used to drink a gallon a day and sometimes more back in 1750. Interestingly the Volunteer employed a can boy to take beer to local workplaces and bring yesterday's empties back. We hear of justices sitting in pubs, permanent cockpits, quack doctors surgeries, brothels and even a library. There is a lengthy section of licencee and customers' misdemeanours. Bringing it more or less up to the present, it describes how American soldiers should address the locals during the war!

Breweries do not figure strongly. Early ale houses brewed their own of course. One Thomas Petchie took advantage of a Flemish trader loaded with hops in 1569, later he was prevented from brewing after allowing people to play tennis behind his pub...on a Sunday. There were but two major concerns in the nineteenth century; Gray's with links to Chelmsford which had a 3/4 quarter plant in 1818 but closed in 1960 and the Wantz Brewing Co which was active until 1929. Wantz is apparently named from the German Gantz for a cross roads. The other brewers which get a mention are those nearby supplying the town's pubs.

My only criticism is, I could have done with a map or two.

ROGER PUTMAN