

'FACE OF CHEAM' JANUARY 2005

WELCOME

Seasons greetings to all of you. Just 14 days left of the year and it looks unlikely I'll make the 600 different bars/pubs. However, currently on 563 so not a bad total awaits. Ironically that if I could have been arsed to record the Bilbao pubs then 600 would have been no problem. Anyway Christmas is approaching and pubs are getting rammed. Where will these punters be in January? At home I tell you. Should really start a campaign to get people to treat every week like it's coming up to Christmas!

PUBS

So quite a few pubs done since my last newsletter. We may as well start with some crawls starting with the summer one of Godalming. This included a lovely large village pub called the Inn On The Lake where we managed to trap many a wasp under pint glass, and the Wey Inn which is a youngsters' pool bar but is as cheap as 20p per game. Special mention to the Bell & Dragon restaurant/bar which is a converted church.

Next crawl of note was the City crawl, which the Doctor has written up elsewhere on this site. I did a bit of research into Mr Giles's wedding and did the five pubs in Thames Ditton by the church where he was wed. The George & Dragon had the excellent Oranjeboom on tap.

What is becoming an annual crawl is the Waterloo to South Lambeth, which includes the Fire Station, Ruby Lounge and the Camel (formerley Elusive Camel). Alas the wonderfully named Walrus Social was closed!

Watford is chain pubs galore but a crawl was essential to drown the sorrow of Saints 5-2 hammering (although a few were done before the match). The Yates was probably the best of them, although the three non-chain pubs near Watford Junction are probably worth a visit, the Flag doing Carlsberg at £1.40 a pint! Bargain!

Cardiff is always good to visit and despite being a Wetherspoons, the Prince of Wales is always good fun. Another new Wetherspoons the Crocerton is open till 2am at weekends, whereas slightly off the beaten track 'The Gate at Cardiff' Institute had a fine bottle selection including three 'real' ciders. Can't see it lasting though as myself and Dr Sharr were the only people in there besides a not unpleasant barmaid! If you like your pubs to be true spit & sawdust you can't fail with the Park Vaults!

Norwich is a nice enough with most pubs doing a strange ale or two. The Complete Angler was a traditional pub near the station and worth popping into as was another Prince of Wales on Prince of Wales Road! Top marks too for Norwegian Blue if only for the name.

As far as crapness goes, Basingstoke is truly dreadful. The first bar was a Lloyds Number One bar which was like a big warehouse with a bar at the end, full of the scummiest people imaginable. Definitely the worst pub/bar this year! The standard didn't increase in the next two pubs on the edge of town, White Hart and the Lamb. The Red Lion hotel was ok, and the trendy Rhu Bar increased the standard slightly despite my brother getting short changed which was quickly rectified! We ended by the station in the Queens Head where again my brother was short changed and this time they refused to reimburse the fiver that they were short in the change. This was

after he had a pint knocked over him (accidentally) in the Anvil where we were at a gig!

Finally a mini crawl of Shepherds Bush was recently done before The Charlatans gig detailed below. The old spit & sawdust pub The Bushranger has been cleaned up with layered floorboards and now resembles a trendy restaurant and Edwards has now changed name to Defectors Weld.

Individual pubs worth mentioning start with Smiths Inn in Godstone Dorset, which claims to be England's smallest pub. It isn't unless going on floor to roof size. It was quite spacious inside compared to one of the pubs in Brighton.

The Ship in Croydon continues to be a fantastic heavy metal/goth pub although they weren't adverse to playing a bit of The Who when I entered there!

Despite being an It's a Scream pub, the Avondale House in Southampton won points for having Cobra, San Miguel, Budvar, Gambrinus and Red Stripe all on draught and also giving me a student rate on my Saints Season Ticket!

The Coronett in Holloway has to be the most impressive Wetherspoons I've been in. An old cinema which keeps the kiosk as you enter, when you open the door you are at the top of a flight of stairs looking over a whole thirties style ballroom.

Should the IRA or Osama return to the bombing of central London pubs a la the eighties (remember the Sussex?), they may start with the John Snow. A ridiculous stance on closing their toilets at 11.00pm at the same time they serve last drinks stating that you have to piss in the street after this time if you need to go. You were forcibly stopped should you try to ignore this and threatened with them calling the police alleging some drunken order offence if you did not comply!

On a happier note both Southampton and Manchester have had German Bier stalls in their high streets/town squares. Genuine imported Pilsner and their equivalent of Mulled Wine drunk outside of shops. Fantastic.

Besides beer, the other reason to go to pubs is of course the barmaids. A few to mention this time around, firstly the blond in the Yard of Ale, Birmingham who on a Saturday lunchtime was wearing the shortest skirt imaginable. Harvey in Southampton is always good for a letch, but the tall girl with curly brown hair (like Keegan only feminine) deserves credit, if only walking with a slight limp like she had had the seeing to of her life the night before!

A pretty girl called Debbie was in Clarets in Cheam one Sunday afternoon only to disappear the next week (assume she's a student then!) and Maria in Café Mango Sutton is in the running for barmaid of the year. Quite petit, black shoulder length hair and very sultry... mmmm nice!

There is always the one in the Prince of Wales Cheam on Friday nights who normally wears her jeans or trousers way down her hips too! Fantastic!

MUSIC

The last six months of the year saw a welcome return to Classic Rock. Both Whitesnake and Europe were both seen at the Hammersmith Odeon (albeit now called Carling Apollo). Both were loud and hairy. Both had classic metallers in the audience and both were being filmed for a Live DVD.

The Alarm 2004 continued their hard working schedule with a show at the new Marquee Club now at its fourth location. Having been to the previous three this is the worst so far and possibly the worst venue I've been to. It holds about four hundred

yet only about fifty can see the stage clearly. £4 a bottle of beer and three flights of stairs up. Would have been a top show at any other venue!

Dido made a welcome return to stage at the Brixton Academy. Audience did look a little bemused though when she played her hardcore dance tracks a la Faithless whom she sometimes guests on!

The Complete Stone Roses at the Mean Fiddler showed that it is always worth going to tribute concerts for a reasonable price. Just hurry up between tunes please!

Finally Miller was being served at Wembley Arena for the 50th Anniversary of the Fender Stratocaster, a show that now takes on extra significance as Paul Rodgers and Brian May performed together and realised that Queen would reform with Rodgers stepping into Freddie's shoes (let's hope he cleans them!)

I saw Bryan Adams twice (Wembley and Brighton) with a good mixture of old (good) and new (bad). Alas I missed the Cardiff show where he played the entire Reckless album in order!

The Gilmore at the Half Moon in Putney showed that there are some talented young songwriters out there. Just a question of knowing where to look for them!

Finally The Human League played all their classics at the Hexagon Reading and the Hoopy Empire. You just forget how many songs there were you know, (Mirror Man, Open Your Heart, Tell Me When, Heart Like A Wheel and of course Don't You Want Me & Electric Dreams). Classics one and all!

SULPHUR

All a bit quiet on the Sulphur front with no gigs since PorchAid. A few new songs written though (Helena's House, She Falls to name but two) and a few new covers worked upon. The studio beckons in January with gigs to follow!

HELLO GOOD EVENING WELCOME & GOODBYE

Hope the next newsletter doesn't take as long to materialise as this one and best wishes to you for 2005!

Rich (The Face Of Cheam)