

FACE OF CHEAM MAY 2005

WELCOME

Hello. Firstly a couple of pub renovations to report. In Sutton both the Cock & Bull and O'Neills have recently been done up with the former a definite improvement. Gone are the bouncers, pool table and discos and it has returned to what a typical Fullers boozier should be. O'Neills on the other hand is much the same with a few new tables, a lick of paint and a canopy for outdoor drinking.

Since my last newsletter, I have had a trip to Belfast due to my work where as you can see below I made the most of. Also football trips have taken me back to Birmingham, and to Blackburn with a change over at Crewe. Alas unless Saints get two wins against Norwich and Palace, I fear relegation which does at least open up some doorways for some new venues.

Finally for my intro, two pub crawls have been officially announced. The first on the traditional Whitsun Bank holiday which will be in towns on the Marylebone to Birmingham line, and as this date was not convenient for everyone, June 25th for the official crawl which is based on the Monopoly board of Brighton.

PUBS

Pub count is currently at 259. A fine total for the first quarter of the year. Since the last newsletter we have a new pub at the bottom of the ratings. The Clarence between West Brompton and Barons Court was a venue certainly not done up since the sixties, filled with smoke and many a working man in attendance. Probably a landlord who hasn't been beyond the four beige walls of the pub for twenty years too. Certainly had character but scored poorly as it's not a venue you'd choose for your local. Especially when you have the Colton Arms a short distance away next to Queens Tennis club. This looks like a house from the front and inside is like a country pub/inn. Very good.

West Bromwich was viewed recently and was not a great area to go out on the lash. From the outside the Fox and Dogs looked extremely pleasant, inside it was full of Rastafarians booming out their reggae. Did have a poster of John Holt inside though who wrote 'The Tide Is High'. Best place in West Brom was the Vine with a long narrow bar and nice backroom which reminded me of a school canteen.

Cardiff has been visited but unfortunately on the same day they won the six nations rugby. A proper write up will be done when it is quieter as I am sure another visit will be done to Dr Sharr later in the year.

Special mention to the eerie pub company's Black Widow in Kensington. This on a Friday evening played a fantastic selection of Classic Rock. Not Arf!

Blackburn seemed a reasonable place to frequent with the pick of places being the Moorings on the way to the football ground which overlooks the canal. The Adelphi near the station had a very cheap pint of Labatts lager (£1.40) and also seemed OK. I had to change at Preston on the way up where a swift half was had in Hartley's Wine Bar which seemed a nice venue, and on the way back I had over an hour and a half at Crewe, where the trendy bar called Office, and the Three Lamps scored well.

Finally, Belfast had some nice bars and awful pubs. Robinsons has a classic rock night on Thursdays which was well worth seeking out, and Benedict's was a large bar

with a circular bar was a nice drinking venue. The Crown is the main tourist pub which is the oldest building in Belfast owned by the National Trust. All typically Irish with many a craic. I wouldn't go the Capstan Lounge pub again though, which is upstairs above some shops and very dingy. In the traditional sense Whites was a very nice pub with a old style fire as part of the furnishings.

On the barmaid front, Emily in the Nightingale in Sutton grows more lovely with each visit even if she is inconsistent in her pricing of two pints. In fact there is a photo of her on the pubs website <http://www.the-nightingale.com/> . In the Gardiners Arms in Southfields there was a very nice tall blonde in pink jumper (no doubt Dr Sharr will holler in protest at this but its my newsletter!) and in the Ship in Wool, another blonde who I think I overheard as Molly was gorgeous and said the word 'curfuffelle' in an extremely sexy Dorset accent. As far as outfits are concerned the barmaid in the Three Lamps of Crewe takes some beating, a black vest top but with three rips at front and back revealing a very nice stomach and belly button piercing. Nice glasses and tied back hair too, Finally last night in the Nonsuch Arms, Sutton two new barmaids were there (if only to compete with Café Mango and Bar Room Bar) one who went to the same school as Mr David Brown and recognised him despite being three years younger and a good looking blonde whose name came up on the till as Hailey. She actually thought I thought something was wrong when I was casually looking at her breasts!

MUSIC

The last few months has seen a return of classic British rock on the gig front. Timely with the tragic death of Mr classic rock Tommy Vance. Many a time as an early teenager I would listen to the Friday Rock Show, and he introduced me to such classic albums such as *Pyromania* by Def Leppard and *Reckless* by Bryan Adams. He will be missed.

However no doubt he would have been impressed by the return of Judas Priest and the Scorpions on the same bill at Hammersmith. Very loud as you'd imagine, the German Scorpions surprised us all by playing the anthem 'Wind of Change' midway through their set before ending with 'Rock You Like A Hurricane'. Both had their Spinal Tap moments none more so than when the Priest came back for the encore on a Harley Davidson. But you came away from the gig not being able to get 'Breaking The Law', 'Living After Midnight' and 'You Got Another Thing Coming' out of your head.

Before that, the Quire Boys at the Mean Fiddler and Thunder at Shepherd's Bush were as reliable as ever. Thunders version of 'Dirty Love' clocked in at over 15 minutes which may well be their record!

Finishing the classic metal gigs was Magnum performing their classic *Storytellers Night* album in full at the Astoria. They did two sets the first a 'best of' and second the album which was very good finishing before ten allowing my brother and myself time for the obligatory pint in the Intrepid Fox (which hasd a rather nice Goth barmaid who perhaps should have been mentioned above!)

I was privileged to see the Ronnie Wood and Friends show at the Drury Lane theatre. The obvious highlight was Mick Jagger turning up and displaying an enviable presence on stage. Beverley Knight did a rousing 'Take a Little Piece of my Heart' and Andrea Corr who was looking utterly fantastically gorgeous played flute and sang on a version of Hendrix's 'Little Wing'.

A very long evening was had at the Brixton Academy to see The Happy Mondays return. Shaun Ryder did not look well but Bez was on top form. A greatest hits set was played and everyone went home happy. Support came from the Farm who surprisingly ended with 'All Together Now' and did a splendid version of 'Groovy Train' and a Stone Roses tribute which you couldn't complain at. Also saw two DJ sets from troll Bill Bailey look-a-like Arthur Baker and Mani who for some strange reason ended his set playing the Jackson Five!

Finally UB40 were seen at the Albert Hall for the charity Teenage Cancer organised by Roger Daltrey. Despite being billed Rog did not show, but Clapton jammed with the Brummies on a version of 'I Shot The Sheriff'. Although not exactly my cup of tea, the UB40's did get the crowd going especially with 'Rat In The Kitchen'. When you look at the Guinness Book of Hits its amazing how many they have actually had!

SULPHUR

On Wednesday 13th April 2005 a crowd of around forty watched a rare solo set by myself in Lavery's bar in Belfast. Coming on just after midnight and greeting the audience with 'hello Belfast' I launched into a version of 'We Think We're So Clever'. Unfortunately due to the wait and unfamiliarity with the guitar I was using this version was fairly rough. However this was quickly redeemed with a storming 'Helena's House' which was fairly rockin'. As it was late, I decided to call the brief set to an end with a tender 'Share This World' which had couples in the audience holding hands and drew a couple of compliments after the set had ended.

No other Sulphur news to report as yet but watch this space as recordings draw nearer and nearer.

HELLO GOOD EVENING WELCOME & GOODBYE

So that's my newsletter for another period. With the football season approaching a tense climax (at least at the relegation end of the Premiership) the summer should hold some interesting crawls and gigs (Oasis at Hammersmith seems to be the highlight). We also have the Oaks at Epsom and some cricket to amuse ourselves with in the next few months.

Until the next one, keep rocking and rollin'

Rich (The Face Of Cheam)