

MEETING AND EATING

Midweek Meets

Although the first two meetings were in the Horse and Jockey at Upton (the Tuesdays of 7th and 14th March), the Park Hotel in Birkenhead was the earliest proper venue and remained so for a good ten years, with a meeting there every Tuesday from 21st March 1967. It was run by an amicable character called Barney. He was into "blue" films, as they were called in those days and was always offering a supply to show at the weekly meetings. How he thought new female members would have reacted was never put to the test because he was, of course, always politely turned down. When the Club had been there for ten years Barney was summoned up to the room and presented with a suitable gift, much to his embarrassment.

Some time in 1977, Barney left for the rural pastures of the Glegg Arms in Heswall. His successor was not in the same league, alas: cats used to pee in the room and there were complaints that the noise was keeping the landlady's kids awake. Eventually a room was found at the Observatory, just up Oxton Road from the Park Hotel, and the Club met there on Wednesdays from January 1979. There was a rather cultured chap and his wife, trying to purvey wine, for a short period, but it then changed hands and became particularly unsatisfactory when a pool table appeared in the upstairs room without much effort to explain to people that the room was reserved for the Club on Wednesdays. Eventually, it was back to the Park for a while, still on Wednesdays. It was not long before the Club received the news that the Park was going to be converted into an open-plan affair. The search was on again and from Summer '84 the weekly meeting was held at the Blue Anchor in Hoylake on Wednesdays a move organised by Barry Otterson.

The Blue Anchor was an excellent place to meet: not only was there exclusive use of the Hilbre lounge, there was even bar service in the room for a while. It was also amply big enough to hold the AGM and any other special meetings. After nearly ten happy years there the brewery announced that the pub was to be closed for a while and converted into yet another one-roomer. A controversial vote was taken between the Black Horse, West Kirby, the Saughall Massie Hotel, and the Crown in Birkenhead. The Crown won by a simple majority, the anti-Crown faction being split. In fact the Crown has not proved to be a disaster after all: there has been a steady flow of new members and that area of Birkenhead is being improved and developed, with a new bus station nearby and a new underground station on the West Kirby/New Brighton line. As the room at the Crown is too small to host the AGM, this has since then been held at Birkenhead Park Rugby Club, courtesy of Mike Gavin.

Annual Dinners

The first Annual Dinner was held on Friday March 1st 1968, at the Riverhill Hotel in Oxton. Twenty-four attended and paid 23/- per head. There was a tiny bar run by the two oldish brothers who were the proprietors. There were six more dinners there, the final one being in 1974.

In 1975 it was decided to move the Dinner to Wales and really become a Capel Curig Club. The present scene, though, really dates from the coming of the Wainrights in 1979. The Dinner that year was somewhat cramped due to building work on the new extension. In 1980, the first Dinner in the new function room took place, and, a year later, the disco was added to the proceedings at the suggestion of Anne Hamden, the "Iron Butterfly". There was much throwing up of hands in horror but the disco came and stayed and today is an integral part of the Annual Dinner. Even some of the older members can be seen bopping away before staggering to the functions bar next



Club Dinner: Fred Heywood giving the "Toast to the Club" speech



Club Dinner: Roger Hughes giving the "Toast to Absent Friends" speech

door. The good thing is that you can escape the disco if you want to. The Ty'n-y-Coed Hotel is effectively block-booked for the occasion, with guests also staying at the Chapel, the Cottage and other local B & B's and hotels. The numbers for these occasions vary but the current trend is for sixty to seventy guests to attend. (Numbers for the Silver Jubilee Dinner rose to an impressive one hundred-but for more details see the Silver Jubilee chapter). Traditionally, the Dinner is the only occasion in the Club year where dressing-up is expected. As a result some members often have difficulty in recognising each other. The more significant dates have been:

1968: The First Dinner

1974: The Last Dinner at the Riverhill

1975: The First Dinner in Wales

1977: The Tenth Anniversary Dinner

1979: The First Wainright Dinner (also known as the Cramped Dinner)

1980: The First Dinner in the New Extension

1981: The First Disco Dinner

1987: The Twentieth Anniversary Dinner

1988: The Twenty-first Anniversary Dinner

1992: The Silver Jubilee Dinner

1997: The Thirtieth Anniversary Dinner

Christmas Meals

Ranking somewhere between Annual Dinners and the Bonfire Party, the Christmas Meals, which normally take place on the second Tuesday of December, have been held at an assortment of venues: the Red Rooms, Arrowe Park; Ma Twyford's at Betws-y-Coed (held between Boxing Day and New Year); the Poste House, Ma Boyles, the Pen and Wig and the Queen's in Liverpool; the Alacadoo and the Dee Hotel in West Kirby; the Blue Anchor and the Spanish Tavern in Hoylake; the Oriental Delight in Bebington; the Jade Garden in Hoylake and, in 1998, the Ming Vase in Prenton.

Bonfire Parties

The first Bonfire Party, which incorporated a treasure hunt, was in 1976 and there has been one every year since. From memory there has only been one year (1979) when the bonfire failed to "take" due to continuous heavy rain. Similarly, there has only been one year when the chef



An early Bonfire Party in 1980
Showing the décor of the lounge at that time

failed to arrive back off the hill in time to cook. This was in 1995. Peter Chreseson (Cress) couldn't make it that year so Dave Gray (normally the assistant chef) volunteered to take over but was detained by the accident involving Julie Rose on the Glyders (see "Capel Curig Club"). Mrs McEneaney, ably assisted by Reg Cromer and Martin Stanley, stepped magnificently into the breach, telling Huxley to "get back to your damn bonfire, will you", when he had the cheek to enquire how the potatoes were going. The usual format is: bar open

(barrel of beer, wine boxes, soft drinks etc.) and bonfire lit at 6 p.m., food at 7 p.m., followed by fireworks. The tendency is to head for the pub at about 9 p.m. but some years the evening has been so mild and barmy that people have remained around the bonfire, chatting and staring into the embers. Given reasonable weather the Bonfire Party is an excellent social occasion.

Other Social Events



Fancy Dress Party in January 1982
Don MacIntosh and Mike McEneaney



Les Fowles at the same event

A plethora of other events such as 40th's, 50th's, weddings etc, dot the social landscape. These have included drinking champagne on various mountain-tops (Moel Siabod, Three Peaks of Yorkshire, Snowdon). The most recent of these was the mass ascent of Snowdon on 19th September 1998, for Sue & Neil's wedding. For those not on the hill on Sundays, the Irby Mill pub provides a convivial gathering place between two and four in the afternoon.

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