

Southwark and Borough Pub Walk

Saturday 13 April 2013 – 1.30pm

"...change your hearts or you will lose your inns and you will deserve to have lost them. But when you have lost your inns drown your empty selves for you will have lost the last of England."

So said Hilaire Belloc the French-born poet, historian, and essayist around 100 years ago. Although equally relevant to the English public house in the 21st century we haven't lost them all yet. And let's make sure we don't lose anymore by visiting a few of the very best pubs and bars that the historic borough of Southwark has to offer.

So away we go by easing ourselves into the day with a none too demanding public house situated just over the Southside of London Bridge:

The Barrowboy and Banker

6-8 Borough High Street, London SE1 9QQ



Apparently this building was in fact the very first branch of the National Westminster bank. Fortunately for us it's a pub now and has been sympathetically preserved by Fullers so expect a decent range of beers and marble floors. It contains more bankers than barrowboys.

The Rake

14 Winchester Walk, London SE1 9AG



From the pictures it looks like a garden shed but it used to be a greasy spoon café. Now it's one of London premier beer hideaways and contains more ale

than Rick can shake his tattooed Tottenham calf at. Try an unusual beer here if the mood takes you. A US brewer has written on the wall that it's the best pub in London. Rate it yourself and see if Americans know anything about anything. Likely to be crowded as it's so small, so we may have to stand on the terrace.

The Market Porter

9 Stoney Street, London, London SE1 9AA



A pub on the edge of the market that's likely to be busy so standing room only again. A traditional boozier with a lot of choice for the discerning drinker although we may have to compete for bar space with market shoppers who have just spent £35 on a sourdough baton and 100 grams of 19 year old Alpine air dried lightly smoked and cured Northern Italian pancetta cubes.

The Southwark Tavern

22 Southwark Street London SE1 1TU



Moving slightly away from the market is the 150 year old Southwark Tavern which has a pleasingly horseshoe shaped bar. With an interior that looks slightly more contemporary than the exterior would suggest, vegetarians in the group can eat a nut roast here.

The Wheatsheaf

24 Southwark Street London SE1 1TY



The original Wheatsheaf used to sit somewhere between the previous 2 pubs but had to make way for the new Thameslink viaduct. It's now in a basement of the corporate hospitality venue the Hop Exchange – an impressive building which used to be the commercial centre of the Hop industry. Architecture fans should look out for the elaborate and decorative ironwork featuring designs of hops and a tableau of hop-pickers over its massive doorway. It has a “modern old-school feel”. Make of that what you will.

The Old Kings Head

Kings Head Yard 45-49 Borough High Street London SE1 1NA



A no nonsense pub with stained glass windows down a small side road. This mean we should encounter less tourists and more market traders instead. If you're lucky we might pick up a bargain from the back of someone's Transit.

The George

77 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NH



Dating from the 17th century this public house is London's last remaining galleried coaching inn and it's actually owned by the National Trust. Considering the patronage that it's had over the years perhaps we should recreate a scene from "Romeo & Juliet" or "The Olde Curiosity Shop".

The Royal Oak

44 Tabard Street, London SE1 4JU



This should be a gem of a pub. A proper corner public house with two bars and an off sales area where you can buy free range eggs. Even better it's the only pub in London that owned by Sussex brewers Harveys. I hope I'm not disappointed.

The Charles Dickens

160 Union Street London SE1 0LH



Moving through from Borough on the way to Lambeth we'll find this small tranquil repose away from the hustle and bustle of the market. Apparently Charles Dickens liked a drink so this is our best chance of finding a Phil Daniels style character. There's a good view of the Shard from the street.

The Kings Arms

25 Roupell Street, Waterloo SE1 8TB



We're in Lambeth now and this back street local is tucked away in an historic street of 19th century workers cottages. It's not always been a pub and has been used as an undertakers and a magistrates court although it's not clear whether this was at the same time. For those interested in such things the London Nautical School is round the corner in Stamford Street.

The Hole In The Wall

Mepham Street, London SE1 8SQ



I'm hoping looks are deceiving with this, the last pub on the today's walk. Opposite Waterloo station and built into railway arches you can hear the comforting rumble of commuter freight rolling above your head while you sip from a wide range of beers. It's very popular with egg chasers as it's on the line to Twickenham.

That's 11 pubs by my reckoning (if we've not seen anything else interesting on the way) so it'll be a major achievement if we make it this far I'd say. The first 8 are however pretty close together so I reckon we've got a good chance of staying the trip and also seeing some real points of interest along the way.

Here's to an enjoyable day out!

Kev