

UNUSUAL PUBS - BY BOOT, BIKE AND BOAT

BOB BARTON

The author has spent three years seeking out quirky hostelries that offer more than your average local. They're Britain's most surprising licensed premises, where the reader's curiosity will be sated as well as their thirst. Walking and cycling trails to the pubs are included, as are waterways, making this a useful companion for leisure travellers.

Entries include pubs in a castle, abbey, windmill, shed and stable; former cinemas, a jail, a chapel, England's first car factory and the world's oldest grand music hall. Others are on boats, in caves and even a disused public toilet. Yet more have collections such as bookmarks, ties or musical instruments. There's an inn where Oliver Cromwell held court, others that inspired Charles Dickens. Another leans at such an angle that customers feel woozy without touching a drop. Amazing locations include beside a lighthouse, an 18-mile-long beach and a seaside pier. Some can't be reached by road. Pubs lit with glowing gas lamps, with ride-on railways or that double as barber's shops are included. Two were dismantled and re-built in new locations. The author has been on Britain's most bizarre pub crawl and now you can, too.

Fully illustrated with more than 150 author's photos and 17 historical ones.



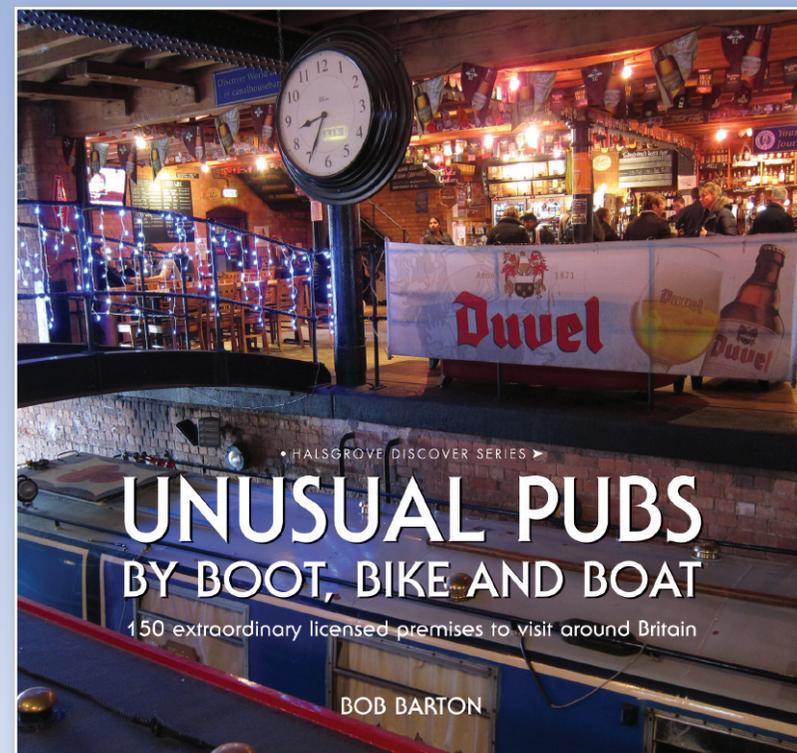
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Some of the hundreds of bookmarks decorating the bar of the Grove Inn, King's Nympton.

Left: The 700 year-old Birdcage in Thame, Oxfordshire is a forest of beams, inside and out.

Example of a double page spread

Writing inspiration: The Sun Inn at Beaminster Museum was modelled by some from Bishop Auckland, where it was called the Tiger Inn. It has an impressive period interior.

woodpecker, brass fittings and an assortment of stuffed animal heads. Pride of place is given to a taxidermed whelp, Jakey Bunny Mary, who was many racing trophies in his lifetime and was previously displayed in a pub called the Gerry near Thames, Co. Durham. The museum has exciting long-term plans, including opening an original Georgian coaching inn. Museum entrance charge payable.

By boat: A 3-mile circular Beaminster Woods walk starts near the museum entrance. A map is available at www.thamesham.com.

Route 7: Sunderland-Inverness passes to the south. It forms two-thirds of the Sea to Sea (G2G) route, 35 miles of which is traffic-free.

BERKHAMSTED, HERTFORDSHIRE

Front door is on canal not road – customers can advanced nothing for you here!

The Rising Sun, Canal Side, George Street, HP4 2EG. Tel: 01494 864913. <http://therisingthesun.co.uk>

A bound outside bears a photo of the Local Shop from BBC television's *Lesons of Goodness* comedy and declares: 'There's nothing for you here.' A sign in the porch goes further: 'Everyone who passes through this door brings happiness. Some

by entering and some by leaving.' Underlined by quirky messages, people back to the River, once a quiet Beaminster local, now a free house and community focal point. Contrary to its address, the pub is not on George Street, where a short alley leads to it. Instead, the entrance is on the Grand Union Canal towards facing a lock, reflecting the waterway's past superiority as transport artery. Built in the 1880s and once incorporating stabling for canal horses, the layout is little changed. There's a compact, two-room bar with a separate snug (concealing its own serving hatch). There are well-tended wooden floors, farmhouse chairs, benches and tables with peeling varnish, plus shelves of books and newspapers. I glomped up to see 17 framed CAMRA awards fixed to the ceiling, many for its success as a cider pub. There were 14 ciders on sale during my visit, along with five well-chosen microbrews also, including River (ABV 3.7%) a qualitative house brew from Thing Brewery. Haziana cigars and tins of snuff are also available. We used to sell clay pipes, too,' said the barman, 'but there was little demand.' Dog owners are among the clientele, with free dog baskets on the bar. As I noted this, one of the licensees returned from a walk with three large, grey Weimaraners. Notices advertised a wide range of events held at the pub: From regular chess and folk clubs and monthly pop-up restaurant, to open-air theatre and a two-day *Pain the Lock* charity clothes you don't mind getting dirty's. As a 27-person chess snook up outside, the barman smiled knowingly and said: 'We've got the morris dancers coming tomorrow, we'll have to get more beer in.' Snacks, ambient music. Outside seating, beside canal and covered patio.

By boat: The Grand Union Canal Walk was the first National Waterways Trail. It starts at London's Little Venice and ends at the towpath in Birmingham. Locally, the Berkhamsted Waterways Walk is not one but three circular trails, from 2 to 6 miles in length, starting from the railway station – see www.walkerhamsted.org.

By bike: The canal towpath provides good traffic-free cycling and Berkhamsted is on the Children's Cycleway, a 170-mile route through these uplands. **By boat:** Beside lock 55, with mooring nearby.

The Rising Sun in Berkhamsted faces a canal rather than a road, from where it attracts walkers, cyclists and boat users eager to sample its quirky hospitality.

BEVERLEY, EAST YORKSHIRE

Unchanging tavern with gas lighting

White Horse (Public): 22 Regent, HU17 8BL. Tel: 01482 861973. www.whitehorse.co.uk (official website).

Gaslit, with a maze of stone-flagged and wood-floored parlours, snuffery and other rooms, some with blazing coal fires and each filled with customers and the buzz of conversation. It was established as a coaching inn in the seventeenth century but is best-known for Nellie Collinson – whose family had the brewery from 1927 and was licensee until the 1970s. Nellie will tell you she is still there in spirit. It has been a Samuel Smith's house since the mid-1970s, with the Talcott brewery's good

The White Horse, Beverley has a maze of gaslit rooms, with added illumination from candles on quiet nights.

LOCATIONS WITH FEATURED PUBS

Key to map numbers. These towns and cities appear in alphabetical order in the Gazetteer. Numbers in brackets show the number of pubs featured in each location.

- | | | |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1 Andover | 34 Edgehill | 65 Norton St Philip |
| 2 Aston (Cheshire) | 35 Edinburgh (4) | 66 Norwich |
| 3 Banbury | 36 Bretforton | 67 Nottingham (2) |
| 4 Barmouth | 37 Exminster | 68 Odcombe |
| 5 Barton-upon-Humber | 38 Fancott | 69 Oxford |
| 6 Beamish | 39 Faulkland | 70 Peterborough |
| 7 Berkhamsted | 40 Gateshead | 71 Piel Island |
| 8 Beverley | 41 Galdesdon | 72 Portliffen |
| 9 Birkenhead | 42 Glasgow | 73 Portishead |
| 10 Birmingham (3) | 43 Guildford | 74 Portland |
| 11 Blyth | 44 Hallatrow | 75 Ripley |
| 12 Boume End | 45 Harrogate | 76 Rosebush |
| 13 Bradford-on-Avon | 46 Havart | 77 Royston |
| 14 Bristol (4) | 47 Heme | 78 St Albans |
| 15 Broadstairs (3) | 48 Herne Bay | 79 St Dogmaels |
| 16 Burslem | 49 Himley | 80 St Mary Hoo |
| 17 Burton upon Trent | 50 Honey Street | 81 Sheerness-on-Sea |
| 18 Bury St Edmunds | 51 Huish Episcopi | 82 Sittingbourne |
| 19 Canvey Island | 52 Ilfracombe | 83 Sourton |
| 20 Carmarthen | 53 King's Nympton | 84 South Shields |
| 21 Causton | 54 Lacock | 85 Stockport |
| 22 Checkendon | 56 Leeds (3) | 86 Stockton (Warwickshire) |
| 23 Chester (3) | 57 Liverpool | 87 Sunderland |
| 24 Cholmondeley | 58 Llanthony | 88 Swansea |
| 25 Clanes | 59 London (28) | 89 Thame |
| 26 Claygate | NR Localities of individual pubs are in the index under 'London' | 90 Topsham |
| 27 Colnbrook | 60 Lydiat | 91 Turbridge Wells |
| 28 Combe Martin | 61 Manchester (4) | 92 Wakefield (2) |
| 29 Cresswell Quay | 62 Margate | 93 Walsell |
| 30 Defford | 63 Napton | 94 Walsall |
| 31 Drewsteignton | 64 Newcastle upon Tyne (3) | 95 West Boldon |
| 32 Dudley (4) | | 96 Wrotham |
| 33 Dungeness | | 97 York (4) |



Flower power: The Churchill Arms is covered in floral colour from pavement to chimney-pot. It is a regular winner of the London in Bloom competition.