

UNUSUAL PUBS AMAZING STORIES

120 remarkable licensed premises to visit around Britain

Bob Barton

If they could talk, what stories would pubs tell about themselves? Here is a compendium of tales, making a unique 'crawl' of Unusual Pubs around Britain. Delve into stories from history and folklore, of notoriety and celebrity, at hostelrys where events actually occurred. These are remarkable licensed premises that are far more than places of refreshment.

Drink in John Lennon's student local, and the inn where the Brontë sisters' sibling Branwell caroused. See where navy press gangs were outsmarted; the discovery of DNA was heralded; sup where smugglers schemed and Lancashire witches drank their last.

Bob goes in search of 'puppy-dog pie', the 'pub with no name' and a boozier once owned by the Kray twins. There's an inn where Henry VIII courted, one from which Charles II fled--and another where a Russian czar breakfasted on quarts of brandy. Enjoy establishments linked to writers and musicians – from Bob Dylan and the Stranglers to Shakespeare, Burns and Dickens.

Traditional tales of boggarts and dragons come to life; discover where Jack-in-the-Green and the Straw Bear are still pubgoers. Where the Maldon Mud Race and World Marbles Championships originated. All locations have been selected and visited by the author. Practical information includes contact details, ales served and nearby attractions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

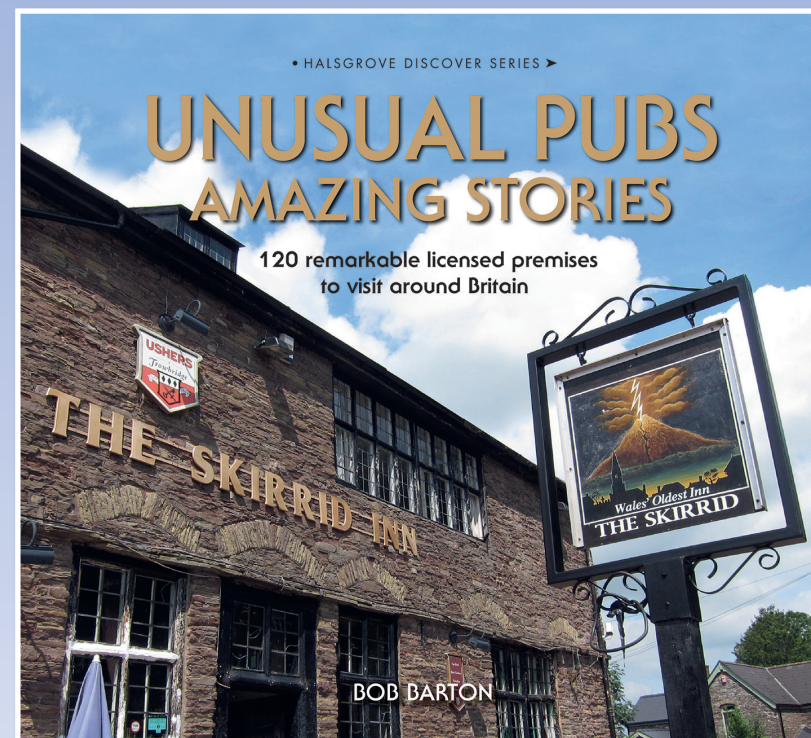


Bob Barton is a travel writer, columnist for nostalgia magazine Best of British and a member of the Pub History Society. His other titles for Halsgrove are *Unusual Railway Pubs*, *Refreshment Rooms and Ale Trains* and *Unusual Pubs by Boot, Bike and Boat*.

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Left: Salisbury's Haunch of Venison is six hundred years old and is known for its 'mummified hand'. Its owner was reputedly caught cheating at a game of cards.



Above: Shepherd Neame's Jack-in-the-Green ale is brewed for the eponymous festival held in Hastings.



Above: Star bar: the Troubadour (Earl's Court, London) is decorated with a variety of ephemera. Paul Simon, Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan are among those who performed there.

Below: Beer is served from the cask at the Boat Inn, near Monmouth, which once piped its spring water across the river to the local brewery.

GAZETTEER OF UNUSUAL PUBS

EDINBURGH, Lothian (3)
Where Duns dreamed and Duke and Hare stalked
White Hart Inn

Situated on the cobbled Grassmarket, beneath Edinburgh Castle, this is said to be the city's oldest inn. It dates from 1516, though only the cellars survive from that date. Above ground, the building dates from 1740-235. Anthony Cooke, *A History of Drinking in Scotland* (1780). Executions would be held just to the east and these public events kept generations of publicans busy. A wealth of stories emanate from the inn but I will quote two favourites. Robert Burns, the national poet, spent a week here in 1791, when visiting his lover Nancy Mackelose for the last time. Suitably inspired, he wrote *Auld Lang Syne*. Famous lines from his poetry are painted along the ceiling rafters, in the wood-beamed bar. The White Hart was the prison's demolition. Five different ales are served.

White Hart Inn, 34 Grassmarket, EH1 2JU.
Tel: 0131 226 2806; whitehart-edinburgh.co.uk

FLASH, STAFFORDSHIRE
The highest village pub
New Inn

I needed a pint after reaching this lofty pub (Flash is claimed as the country's highest village - 1518 feet above sea level). I'd cycled there on my Brompton, across miles of wild moorland. As my knees discovered, this folding bicycle isn't designed for hills. New Inn is a minisummer, as the hostess, fashioned from local millstone girt, has a 250-year heritage. Away from the law's prying eyes and close to the borders of three counties, the village once had a reputation for lawbreaking. It was the haunt of highwaymen and cock-fighting and coin counterfeiting rook players. It is said to be the source of the expression 'flash money'.

The pub has been modernised, though in a way that has maintained the atmosphere of a modest country house. A new pub sign, announcing 'Britain's highest village pub' in giant letters, sits on the stone floor awaiting erection outside. I preferred the old one hanging outside, soon to be replaced, bearing the proud portrait of a masked brigand who once 'work'ed the area. My first pint, Boley Cloud (ABV 41% from Macleod's's Storm Brewing, was enjoyed in the company of two friendly dogs and a few regulars. The pub became busier and livelier as the evening wore on - this is a place the locals enjoy, clearly encouraged by another sign, hanging above the bar: 'Diane welcomes you to the mad house'. Ambient music, dog friendly, outside seating.

New Inn, High Street, SK17 0SW. Tel: 01206 22911.

GLOUCESTER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Home of the Sunday School pioneer
Robert Raikes' House (formerly Golden Cross)

Journalists, once known as heavy drinkers, will no doubt raise a smile at the fact that this early newspaper office (the *Gloucester Journal* occupied it from 1758) is a pub. The restored, timber-framed building dates from 1560 and was home to newspaper proprietor Robert Raikes (1736-1811). Also a philanthropist, he is best known as founder of the Sunday School movement, which

Robert Raikes' House in Gloucester was home to a pioneer of Sunday schools in the 1760s and has been superbly restored.

The *New Inn*, Flash, with its old inn sign showing the head of a head brigand. It was once a lawless village.

Example of a double-page spread.

