

## A HISTORY OF THE *THREE CUPS*, HARWICH, ESSEX

### PART FIVE – RECENT RESEARCH, ERRATA AND SOURCES

This history of the *Three Cups*, Harwich, Essex has taken more than a year to complete and thus, as the individual parts were published, feedback was received and further discoveries made. In this penultimate Part, I bring together that additional information which, although out of synch with the previous four Parts, is in, more or less, chronological order.

#### James Boswell and Dr. Samuel Johnson

In an article titled ‘Dr. Johnson in Essex’ published *Essex Countryside* magazine in August 1969 writer Molly Tatchell revealed that, early in the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> August 1763, Dr.



Johnson and Boswell left London in a stage-coach bound for Harwich. Boswell (pictured) was setting out on a grand tour of Europe and Dr. Johnson, apparently much to Boswell’s delight, had offered to accompany his young friend to Harwich to see him off on the boat for Holland.

They arrived at Harwich the next day and ‘dined at the inn by themselves’, Tatchell stating that the inn was ‘almost certainly the *Three Cups*’ which was ‘at that time the best known inn in Harwich, and had a large share of the trade of those stopping overnight before embarking for the Continent.’ Boswell apparently remarked that Harwich was ‘so dull a place.’

#### Activities, Clubs and Auctions

During the long period of time the *Three Cups* served the people of Harwich and visitors to the town it, like many other public houses, was utilised by many different clubs and organisations. As we have seen in earlier Parts, a number of civic functions and special receptions for visiting noble folk were held at the *Three Cups* as were auctions of property, farm equipment and animals.

During research for his book *Harwich and Dovercourt Pubs* (2004) Peter R. Goodwin reinforced the fact that the *Three Cups* was ‘a highly popular establishment’ where many organisations held functions. These he discovered included the Annual Dinner of the Harwich railway station staff (1901) and the Police Subscription Dinner in 1904. Goodwin also found that, in 1901, the landlord, Mr. Bray, was charged with permitting his house to be used as ‘a resort for persons of ill repute’; a case that was later dismissed.

More recently, Peter Goodwin’s daughter Abi, whilst researching the history of the Harwich Football Club, discovered that it was founded at the *Three Cups* in 1877. Sadly, details of the founders of the Club, which still survives today as Harwich & Parkeston Football Club playing in the Essex and Suffolk Border League, Premier Division, have, it seems, been lost to history.

#### M. Edmond C. J. Guignard

In Part 3 I mentioned Monsieur Edmond Charles Jules Guignard as taking over the *Three Cups* in the mid-to-latter part of the 1930s. Thanks to a recently-discovered local publication *Harwich – A Town of Many Pubs* (2002) compiled by Brian Woods and Richard Oxborrow we are able to learn a little more about Guignard from a cutting from the *Sunday Graphic* published sometime during 1936.

The writer of the piece (unidentified) visited the *Three Cups* ‘again’ that year and revealed Guignard was



*...a young Swiss...who learned his profession in the school of J. Lyons & Co. He came up from London with his savings, invested them in this old hotel business, and gave me the impression that he loves the history of it.*

So much so that there was a plaque to Lady Hamilton ‘on the wall at the back of the premises’ and ‘there are oak-beamed rooms in which the admiral is supposed to have stayed.’

Next!

### Derivation of the name

Just when I thought that I had all the finalists for the ‘Derivation of the name the *Three Cups* Competition’ along comes another one; this time courtesy of Mavis Sipple in her book *Titbits and Tales of Essex Inns* published in 2001.

Although Sipple cites the Worshipful Company of Salters (1558) version of the origin of the sign, previously discussed in Part 1, she adds

*There is a more romantic story attached to the name... The nearby church is dedicated to Saint Nicholas, patron saint of sailors. The story tells of three young girls who were desperately poor and could think of no way out of their poverty but by selling themselves. Nicholas discovered their plight and to save them from prostitution threw three bags of gold into their room one night. The three bags of gold, tied up at the top are supposed to look like three inverted goblets and so the nearby inn was named The Three Cups and the inn sign showed three golden goblets.*

At first I thought, “Are you OK Mavis?” Surely if someone thrust three bags of gold through the prostitutes’ window that might have given them the idea of setting up a bordello run by themselves rather than giving up the oldest trade. But then I checked out Paul Jennings’ book *A Feast of Days – A Saint...for Every Day of the Year* (1982) and there on St. Nicholas’s day (6<sup>th</sup> December) Jennings tells us

*The three golden balls (he is the patron of pawnbrokers) represent three bags of gold thrown through a window to save three girls from prostitution.*

So it’s balls now rather than cups...

### Famous visitors

At the risk of this saga of the *Three Cups* never reaching its end, I have to add to the list of famous people who had visited the *Three Cups* as declared by Mavis Sipple which included

*...Frederick the Great, Louis XVIII, Nelson, who addressed the crowd from the balcony. Lady Hamilton, in fact she is still there, her ghost, so they say, still haunts the inn. Sir Francis*



**Titbits and Tales  
of Essex Inns**  
by  
Mavis Sipple



*Drake and the Lord High Admiral were Harwich men. They met at The Three Cups after the defeat of the Armada. George II drank there incognito before taking the coach to his home. In 1821 the body of Queen Caroline rested there on its way to Germany to be buried. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have stayed there and to have very much enjoyed her stay.*

Tired now!

## **Errata**

During the period of publication of this series I have received a small number of corrections and additional information regarding the text.

Peter R. Goodwin advised me not to be misled by the story of Lord Nelson meeting Lady Hamilton at the *Three Cups*. He told me:

*He never did. He did come to Harwich in his ship HMS Medusa in 1801 but didn't step ashore. (The ship Medusa is where the shipping channel between Harwich and Walton gets its name from. Nelson named it that after negotiating the channel between the sandbanks.) The reason he entered Harwich Harbour was to replenish stocks of beer for his crew, water not being safe to drink. The beer came from the Cobbold brewery at Ipswich. I know this to be true as when the Tolly Cobbold brewery was closing the head brewer told me that old records were found in the loft and this was written in the records, a quite common happening in those days for HMS vessels to "refuel." The barrels were taken from Ipswich by barge to the ships lying in harbour.*

David Whittle, Vice Chairman of The Harwich Society, having read Part 1 wrote to tell me

*There is only one thing that is not quite right. It is a mystery where the Mayflower was built but many towns try to claim it but no proof can be found. The pilgrims did not build it either. Two ships were chartered. Christopher Jones of the Mayflower was living in Rotherhithe on the south bank of the Thames. He moved from Harwich in 1611. The second ship was the Speedwell that sailed from Delft in Holland and the two ships met in Southampton where they set off from. Unfortunately the Speedwell developed problems and was eventually left in Plymouth and the Mayflower with additional passengers sailed alone. The house of Christopher Jones still stands in Harwich and the Mayflower traded from the port.*



This may seem the end of my history of the *Three Cups* but no. (Sorry.) Part Six is pending.

The reason for this is that following my letter to the local paper, the *Harwich and Manningtree Standard*, some months ago I was subsequently invited to visit the former *Three Cups* by its current owner: a chance to see the interior of the premises as it is now and to reflect on what was and to see (or sense) for myself whether the spirit of Lady Hamilton looms large within.

However, I trust that PHS members have enjoyed (or maybe simply tolerated) my five-part history of this fascinating pub thus far and, as always, any and all feedback is appreciated.

What next after Part 6?

Well, the framed article and photographs that started this research are still in my possession (see above) with at least another *seven* Harwich pubs depicted thereon. For the moment though, I will give Harwich a rest.

### Patrick Chaplin

(With special thanks to David Whittle and Peter R. Goodwin.)

### SOURCES

#### Books:

- Anonymous. *Journal of a very young Lady's Tour from Canonbury to Aldborough, through Chelmsford, Sudbury, and Ipswich, and back through Harwich, Colchester, &c., September 13-21, 1804.* (No author cited. Privately published. 'Only 24 copies printed.')
- Barber, Norman (edited by Mike Brown, Ray Farleigh and Ken Smith). *Century Plus Plus of British Brewers 1890 to 2012* (New Ash Green, Kent: Brewery History Society, 2012.)
- Barker, Alan and Murray, Charles (Eds.) *9<sup>th</sup> Essex Beer Guide* (St. Albans: CAMRA Ltd., 1999.)
- Brown, A.F.J. *Essex at Work 1700-1815* (Chelmsford: Tindal Press, 1969)
- Christy, Miller. *The Trade Signs of Essex: A Popular Account of the Origin and Meanings of the Public House & Other Signs Now or Formerly Found in the County of Essex* (Chelmsford: Edmund Durrant & Co. 1887)
- Defoe, Daniel. *A Tour Through England & Wales* (London: J. & M. Dent & Sons Ltd., c.1927)
- Dunkling, Leslie and Wright, Gordon. *A Dictionary of Pub Names* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987)
- Goodwin, Abi. *Harwich Football Club* (unpublished MS received 16<sup>th</sup> October 2016)
- Goodwin, Peter R. *Harwich and Dovercourt Pubs* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2004)
- Guignard, Edmond C. J. and Griffiths, M. *The Three Cups Hotel* (Derby: New Centurion Publishing and Publicity Co., Ltd., no date but c. 1937)
- Jennings, Paul. *A Feast of Days – A Saint and a Diary Extract for Every Day of the Year* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1982)
- La Roche, Sophie von. *Sophie in London* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933)
- Longley, Robert and Barker, Alan (Eds.). *8<sup>th</sup> Essex Beer Guide* (St. Albans: CAMRA Ltd., no date but circa 1994/95.)
- Maxwell, Donald. *Unknown Essex* (East Ardsley, Yorks. S.R. Publishers Ltd., 1970) (Originally published London: John Lane Bodley Head Ltd., 1924)
- Sipple, Mavis. *Titbits and Tales of Essex Inns* (Benfleet: Brent Publications, 2001)
- Weaver, Leonard T. *The Harwich Story* (Harwich: Published by Author, 1975)



Weaver, Leonard T. *Harwich Gateway to the Continent* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1990)  
Woods, Brian and Oxborrow, Richard. *Harwich – A Town of Many Pubs* (Harwich: Harwich-Mem-Web Publication, 2002)

### **Newspapers and Magazines:**

*East Anglian Daily Times* – 21<sup>st</sup> May 1997

*Essex Countryside* – August 1969 (Vol. 17, No. 151); December 1971 (Vol. 20, No. 179); February 1972 (Vol. 20, No. 181), June 1978 (Vol. 26, No. 257) and December 1986 (Vol. 34, No. 359)

### **Photographs and illustrations:**

Maureen Chaplin, Winifred Cooper, the Rev. W. Davies, Donald Maxwell, George Pomfrey (key fob), J. A. Saunders, Ltd., and Author's Collection.

### **Websites:**

[www.bonhams.com](http://www.bonhams.com) (John Cleveley's painting)

[www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk](http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk) (Listed status)

<http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/1411>! (Image of Sir Anthony Deane)

<http://esah160.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/harwich.html> (ESAH Bull story)

[www.historyofwar.org](http://www.historyofwar.org) (Sea Fencibles)

[www.inflation.stephenmorley.org](http://www.inflation.stephenmorley.org) (Conversion of prices to current values)

<http://pubshistory.com/EssexPubs/Harwich/threcups.shtml> (The most complete list I have discovered to date of the licensees of the *Three Cups* (1839-1937) and data showing those present in the pub on census day.)

[www.visitessex.com/harwich.aspx](http://www.visitessex.com/harwich.aspx) (Harwich background)