

THE SUN INN (STAFFORD), THE TITANIC BREWERY AND THE SRL

by

David Jones

This is the story of how the SRL became associated with the *Sun Inn* and the *Titanic Brewery*. There is some information about the history of the *Sun Inn*, its licensees / managers and owners/leaseholders ... there is a link to Dr Crippen, the *Brides in the Bath Murders* and the *Charing Cross Trunk Murder*, amongst others! Included is some information about the *Titanic Brewery*.

Over the past eighteen months, the SRL has organised several talks at the *Sun Inn* (7 Lichfield Road, Stafford, ST17 4JX) – *Titanic Brewery's* flagship establishment in the County Town.



The Sun Inn: View from Lichfield Road (2016)
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The meetings are usually held on the second Tuesday of the month during autumn and winter from October to March in the function room from 7.30 pm for an 8.00 pm start. They have proved to be excellent social occasions, with a very convivial atmosphere, good company and excellent beverages. In addition to the main speaker, there are updates on SRL work parties and fund raising opportunities.

The programme of events, which has included a visit to the *Titanic Brewery* in Burslem, is listed below:

- 1 February 2017: Waterways of the Midlands (Ian Lane, CART).
- 14 March 2017: The Valley Canals of South Wales (Ken Turner).
- 10 October 2017: The Link, Its History and Restoration Progress Today (Ivor Hind).

- 14 November 2017: The Work of River Canal Rescue (RCR).
- 12 December 2017: Tour of the *Titanic Brewery*, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent.
- 9 January 2018: The Caledonian Canal (Phil Clayton).
- 7 February 2018: Garden Railways (John Potter).
- 20 March 2018: Bridge Chapels (Ken Turner).



The Sun Inn: The Bar (2016)
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We are very grateful to the Staff at the *Sun* for their help on the evening, and extra chairs are so speedily found when attendance exceeds expectations.

In addition, we are particularly grateful to Dave Bott of the *Titanic Brewery* for his tremendous support and encouragement; he allows us to use the *Sun Inn* for meetings and to display pictures and posters on the premises relating to the River Sow Navigation / Stafford Branch Canal.

The *Titanic Brewery* is owned by Dave and Keith Bott. They have a passion for promoting great beer, local food, proper pubs and supporting the community. Both Dave and his brother Keith grew up in Stafford and knew the public house well.

Dave first came across the SRL early in 2015 on one of his local biking routes which took him along the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and past the work site where the old junction used to be. He took a picture of the sign and googled away to find the SRL website and read about the former Navigation and the plans for restoration. Dave was surprised that, although he had been born in Stafford, he had been unaware that there had ever been a waterway into Stafford and hadn't previously heard of the SRL.

Dave was keen to become involved, raise the profile of the SRL and spread the knowledge further, initially by hosting a display at the *Sun*. He contacted Ivor Hind (SRL Chair) and came to a meeting at Stafford Boat Club. Also, Dave kindly offered a

room for meetings, and in November 2016 an open social meeting was proposed for early in the New Year. This meeting took place on 1 February 2017 at 7.00 pm and it was a resounding success. The SRL Programme of talks had been launched! And soon after, John Mountfort (SRL Vice-Chair) produced some framed historical pictures relating to the Navigation and these are now on display in the *Sun*. The rest, as they say, is history!

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUN INN

The *Sun Inn* was originally a coaching inn. It is situated in the Forebridge area of Castle Church, Stafford. The actual street where it stands probably became known as “Lichfield **Street**” between 1841 and 1851. The street was renamed “Lichfield **Road**” sometime between August 1876 and August 1877. The old name of “Forebridge” continued to be used for many years.

The building existed in 1799 and it is thought that beer was first served there in 1801.¹

In 1811 the inn was listed as the *Forebridge Posting House*, offering comfortable accommodation to travellers and stabling for coach and horses.¹ A “Post House” was an inn where post horses could be exchanged and their riders accommodated.

The original inn was just the section with the door and four windows. The right hand part with the bay window was the living quarters and this was completely rebuilt in the late 19th century.¹

The window under the gable was the entrance to the stables which in 1870 provided access to the newly opened Smithfield Cattle Market that operated until 1909 when a new one was opened in Lammascote Road. Although trade decreased, the *Sun Smithfield* continued trading until 1977 and a *Tesco Supermarket* was eventually built on the land.¹

A list of Owners/Leaseholders and Licensees/Managers of the *Sun Inn* is given in Appendix 1.¹

The *Sun* was originally owned by the Wright family (Edward Wright and then Henry Wright) between 1799 and 1828 and they were also the licensees. Henry Wright’s malt was “justly celebrated” and his Malt-house was “capable of working 90 bushels at each wetting”.²

In *White’s Stafford Directory of 1834* the *Sun* is listed under the category of “Hotels, Inns and Taverns” rather than under “Beer Houses”. It was clearly more than an average establishment. Beerhouses and alehouses sold beer and ale, but taverns also sold wines and spirits, and coaching inns were larger with better quality rooms and accommodation.

The Spilsbury family owned the *Sun* between 1828 and 1904:

- First was James Spilsbury (1828-1860) – he was also the licensee between 1828 and 1849. He died in 1861 and according to probate was described as a “Gentleman” with “Effects under £800”.
- Then came his son, Henry Spilsbury (1860-1888) – he was also the licensee between 1849 and 1867. He died in 1888. Probate recorded he was a “Gentleman” with a “Personal Estate £5,902 6s 6d”.
- Next was Henry’s widow, Mary Spilsbury (1888-1904).
- Finally, their son, James Spilsbury (1904), a chemist and druggist living in Birmingham.

As an aside, this James Spilsbury was the father of Sir Bernard Henry Spilsbury. Bernard Spilsbury achieved celebratory status as the UK’s most famous forensic pathologist. He was good looking, well-dressed, highly articulate, flamboyant, and enjoyed a sense of theatre. He was the Crown Prosecutor’s pathologist at many of the notorious trials held at the *Old Bailey* and other Assize Courts from the 1910s to the 1940s including that of *Dr Crippen*, the *Brides in the Bath Murders*, the *Button and Badge Murder*, the *Charing Cross Trunk Murder*, the *Blazing Car Murder*, the *Seddon Case*, the *Sydney Fox Matricide Case*, the *Armstrong Poisonings*, the *Crumbles Murders* and many, many more.

His work was held in such high esteem that few initially questioned his findings because he presented his evidence with such absolute certainty and flair. However, as time went on, defence lawyers became more critical of his methods and questioned the validity and reliability of the evidence; it became clear that in many cases his judgement was impaired, there had been miscarriages of justice and innocent people had been executed.

By 1947 Bernard Spilsbury seems to have become a shadow of his former self. He was 70, had lost his mistress, was estranged from his wife, had suffered several strokes, had lost two sons (Peter during the Blitz in 1940 and Alan from tuberculosis in 1945) and his professional reputation was being questioned. On 17 December 1947, after giving Christmas presents to his staff, he went to his laboratory at University College London, took a Bunsen burner, turned on the gas and committed suicide. In those days, the gas supply was coal (town) gas which contained about 28% carbon monoxide (CO). Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas; it is also very poisonous and is commonly known as *the silent killer*. He left £9932 4s 10d according to Probate.

In the 1841 Census (6 June) the *Sun* was not mentioned by name but in “Forebridge” James Spilsbury (55) is identified as an “Inn Keeper” and there were two other family members – his son, Henry Spilsbury (25) and daughter-in-law Mary Spilsbury (20). The household also included Ann Dickenson (70) of independent means, Sarah McAdam (25) and Fanny Woolrich (15) both domestic servants.

Over the years the *Sun* would appear to have been run by many astute, dynamic, individuals with a passion for what they were doing and the *Sun* seems to have been highly regarded and an integral part of the local community. In addition to selling beer,

ales, wines and spirits, there were regular auctions and societies/clubs used the premises for meetings and events.

For example, in 1843 when James Spilsbury was the licensee, the *Staffordshire Advertiser* gave notice of a property to be Let “with immediate possession, A Neatly built cottage, pleasantly situated in Lichfield-street, Forebridge, and a large Garden, well planted with fruit trees in full bearing; the vegetables may be taken to at a fair valuation. Apply to Mr James Spilsbury, Sun Inn, Forebridge, Stafford”.³

The 1851 Census (30 March) shows Henry Spilsbury (38) an “Innkeeper” living at the “Sun” Lichfield Street with his wife Mary (28). Also in the household was Sarah Slinn (20) a general servant. Henry had been born in Stafford, and Mary was from Burslem.

Henry Spilsbury continued to use the *Sun* as the venue to promote lettings and sales.

For example in 1852 he advertised a house “to be Let, at Lady-day next, a newly-erected Dwelling House, pleasantly situated, at the Hough, near Stafford, containing four bed rooms, parlour, kitchen, brew-house, pantry, cellar, with yard and garden, now in the occupation of Mr.Whiston. Rent £15 per year. – Apply to Mr Henry Spilsbury, Sun Inn, Forebridge, Stafford”.⁴

And in 1854 the *Staffordshire Advertiser* gave notice that “Messers C.and H.Gillard will sell by auction at the house of Mr Henry Spilsbury, the Sun Inn, Forebridge on 10 January 1854 at 7.00 o’clock in the evening precisely, the leasehold estate, term and interest of Mr Joseph Parker of and in a certain dwelling-house and premises in Pinfold Court, White Lion-street, Forebridge”.⁵

In 1857, the same newspaper reported that “The Forebridge Floral and Horticultural Society held their annual Tulip Show on 28 May 1857 at Mr Henry Spilsbury’s Sun Inn. The attendance was more numerous than usual, and the show was decidedly superior to any of its predecessors. The tulips were staged in the large room; and although the flamed and feathered bizarre, bi-blooms, and Rosers, were the principal varieties, there were also several fine specimens of self-coloured and other plants. In addition to the show of tulips, several fine specimens of calceolarias, fuchsias, roses and geraniums were staged, and also some very fine pansies”.⁶

The 1861 Census (7 April) shows Henry Spilsbury (40) as a “Licensed Victualler” at the “Sun Inn” with his wife Mary (34) and his father James Spilsbury (77). James Spilsbury is listed as a “Proprietor of Houses” and he was still the owner of the *Sun*. Also with them were three servants, Elizabeth Beresford (14), Eliza Walker (27) and George Fenneyhough (39) who was an ostler. [An “ostler” was a man employed to look after the horses of travellers staying at an inn ... derived from the Old French “hostelier”, an innkeeper. An ostler frequently had other duties including being a “boots”, a person who blacked and cleaned guests’ shoes and boots.]

Henry Spilsbury was followed by Henry Hill (1867-1875) as the Licensee. Henry Hill was a former butler and was originally from Astley (Worcestershire) – his wife, Elizabeth, was from Fife (Scotland). Sadly, within a short time their youngest child, Charlotte, died on 7 August (1867) aged 5.⁷

The 1871 Census (2 April) records that Henry Hill (aged 49) was an “Inn Keeper” living at the “Sun Inn” Lichfield Street with his wife Elizabeth (40) and daughters Jane (14) and Elizabeth (10). There was also Emma Kibble (18) a general domestic servant, and George Fenneyhough (52) a brewer and ostler.

The Licence was transferred from Henry Hill to Henry Broad on 8 November 1875. The previous licensee, Henry Hill, died the following year aged 54.

When the Licence was renewed in August 1876, it was confirmed that Henry Broad (licensee between 1875 and 1880) would “hold all the Licences that may be held by a Publican for the sale of intoxicating liquors to be consumed on or off the premises” of the *Sun*, Lichfield Street in the Parish of Castle Church”. Twelve months later (August 1877) when the Licence was renewed, Lichfield **Street** had been renamed Lichfield **Road**.

The *Forebridge Quoit Club*, founded about 1870, seemed to have been based at the *Sun*. On 24 March 1877 notice was given that “the Annual Meeting of the Members and Friends of the above Club will be held at Mr Henry Broad’s Sun Inn, Forebridge, Stafford, on Wednesday next, at 7.30 p.m.”⁸ Henry Broad would have been pleased with the publicity; again the venue is closely linked to the Licensee and their reputation. As is well known, the success or failure of the business largely depends on the personal qualities of the Licensee and how they interact with the regulars/customers.

The Licensee after Henry Broad was Frederick Raynor (1880-1881); he had come from *Eaton’s Vaults*. The 1881 Census (3 April) does not mention the *Sun* by name, but just lists the address as: “7 Lichfield Road”. The Census records the following at the address: Frederick Raynor (38), a Licensed Victualler born in Hunstanton (Norfolk), his wife Mary (36) from Stafford and their children: Frederick (7), Beatrice Ann (4) and Walter (3); there was also John Kent (27) an ostler and Sarah Ecclestone (17) a domestic servant. Frederick Raynor moved to be licensee of *The Star* (Rugeley) later in the year.

Thomas Turner Ellis (licensee between 1883 and 1891) seems to have been quite entrepreneurial and frequently advertised various services in the local press. He was a former wine merchant’s porter who became a cab proprietor.

In the 1880s a variety of vehicles could be hired from the *Sun* – Brakes, Broughams, Family Busses, Hansom Cabs, Landaus and Dog Carts; the closed vehicles were suitable for Balls and Evening Parties. Estimates were given for Weddings, Picnics and other Parties. The charge for pleasure parties (minimum 20) was 1d per head per mile. There was also “a splendid Patent Hearse for funerals”. Weddings, Picnics, and Funerals were “furnished on moderate terms”.⁹

Thomas Ellis did not neglect the *Forebridge Quoit Club* at the *Sun Inn* either. For instance, in 1887 at the start of the season, notice was given that “the Grounds of the above Club will be opened on Wednesday April 6th. On Wednesday April 13th a Match is arranged at 5 p.m., after which the Annual Opening Supper will take place. Tickets 2s 6d each, which may be obtained from Mr Ellis”.¹⁰

In 1888 Thomas Ellis was advertising *Ellis's Pure Malt & Hop Ales*, sold in casks, with size and price to suit the purchaser. In 1889, the Home Brewed Ales in casks were sold from 6d to 2s per gallon and pure malt and hops were guaranteed.¹¹

By 1891, after Joseph Bird (1891-1896) became the Licensee, the *Sun* had been connected to the newly established telephone system and was "Telephone – No. 11".¹² Joseph had come from *The Woolpack* – he had originally been a tailor. The 1891 Census (5 April) lists Joseph Bird (41), who was born in Stone, as an "Inn Keeper (Pub)" at 7 Lichfield Road; he was living with his wife Emma (43) and children George Kingston (15) and Bertha (13); Sarah Ann Bowker (50), a servant, was also in the household.

The *Forebridge Quoit Club* continued to hold meetings regularly at the *Sun*; there were Annual Opening and Closing of the season Suppers, and in April 1894 Mr and Mrs Bird were thanked "for the excellent way in which they had conducted the catering arrangements".¹³

The *Sun Smithfield* continued to be popular and sales were regularly advertised and reported. There were livestock sales including fat and store cattle, sheep, calves, pigs, horses and Welsh ponies. At one sale in October 1896, although there was a large demand for cart horses, few very good quality animals were on offer and several horses only fetched about £13 each.¹⁴ A couple of months later, heifers averaged £19 each.¹⁵

In October 1897 about 1000 sheep were offered, lambs made 37s each, ewes 50s and theaves 48s 6d. A consignment of 100 cheviots made 25s. Trade was brisk.¹⁶

Agricultural produce was offered for sale too. For example, there was a "splendid crop" of Magnum Bonum Potatoes grown "on land specially prepared, and perfectly clean; best quality, without a trace of disease".¹⁷ There was also animal feed, including "Bags of Black Oats, &c".¹⁸

Arthur Moore was the Licensee from 1896 to 1900. He was also the Honorary Secretary of the *Forebridge Quoit Club*; the Club held an Annual Opening Supper at the *Sun Inn* on Wednesday 13 May 1896. Tickets cost 2s 6d and could be obtained from the Bar.¹⁹ Arthur was a skilled quoiter and was presented with a Cup and a gold medal at the end of that season at the Closing Supper at the *Sun* in the November.²⁰

His successor as Licensee was David Edward Dewsbury (1901-1920). Business seems to have been good and the *Sun* was often referred to as the "*Sun Hotel*" in the local press. In the 1901 Census the enumerator recorded that David Dewsbury was a "Licensed Victualler" while in the 1911 Census, which the head of the household completed, David wrote that he was a "Hotel Keeper".

In the 1901 Census (31 March), the *Sun's* name wasn't mentioned but the address was given as "7 Lichfield Road". In the household were David Dewsbury (29), originally from Bednall, his wife Eliza (31) born in London, his brother Charles (15) a shop clerk, and his mother-in-law Emily Anthony (66).

In 1904 the connection with the Spilsbury family ended. Charles Morgan & Son, Wine Merchants of 57 Greengate Street, were the owners between 1904 and 1914. They were followed by Eley's (Stafford) Brewery from 1914 until 1928.

In 1909 the *Sun Hotel* was noted for its bitter beer, Morgan's Wines & Spirits²¹ and that Horse Sales "are held periodically in the Commodious Smithfield at the rear of the Hotel".²²

In the 1911 Census (2 April), again the *Sun* wasn't named and the address was given as "7 Lichfield Road". There was David Dewsbury (39), his wife Eliza (43), their son David (10) and a general domestic servant Mary Chambury (21).

In 1911 the local paper reported that David Dewsbury had "worthily maintained the ancient traditions of the house. At the Sun Smithfield, which adjoins the house, successful cattle and horse sales are held, and on sale days an ordinary* is served. The house boasts of good stabling and there is a lock-up room for cycles. Eley's beer and Morgan's wines and spirits are on sale".²³

[*An "ordinary" is a set meal served at a fixed price.]

During the First World War David Dewsbury and his wife Eliza hosted a "Farewell Smoking Concert" at the *Sun* on 28 January 1916 on the occasion of the 3rd – 1st Battalion Staffordshire Yeomanry leaving Stafford after undergoing training. Before the Concert, Quartermaster Sergeant English reminded the men that "they should not forget that they were cavalrymen whose first duty was to their horses".²⁴

The Dewsbury Family did not escape the trauma of War. David Dewsbury's brother, Lieutenant-Corporal Charles Dewsbury, who had emigrated to Canada about 9 years before and was with the Canadian Infantry, was killed in action in France on 20 August 1917.²⁵ And four months later, in December 1917, David Dewsbury's brother-in-law, Gunner Edward Meredith, was also killed in action in France.²⁶

David Dewsbury continued to promote the *Sun* in the local newspapers, for example in December 1916, it was again advertised as the "Sun Hotel", selling Eley's Sparkling Bitter Ales, Morgan's Celebrated Wines & Spirits and Cigars of finest brands with a large market room, good stabling and accommodation for vehicles.²⁷

This promotion continued after the War²⁸ and at Christmas 1919 "Callers at the Sun Hotel will be welcomed by Mr David Dewsbury, proprietor of this old-established hostelry, who supplies Eley's ales and Morgan's wines and spirits".²⁹

In 1928 Eley's Stafford Brewery Ltd were taken over by William Butler and Co Ltd of Wolverhampton and they were the owners until 1960. The old name was modified and became "Eley's Stafford Brewery Ltd, Springfield Brewery, Wolverhampton".

Thomas Follows was the licensee from 1931 until his death aged 47 in April 1933. He was "a well known and much esteemed member of the licensing trade". He had not been in good health and been admitted to Stafford General Infirmary where a perforated gastric ulcer was diagnosed. An anaesthetic had been given but

unfortunately he died during the operation in spite of stimulants and artificial respiration. A subsequent post-mortem revealed he was also suffering from extreme fatty degeneration of the heart.³⁰ He left £251 2s 8d according to Probate.

The licence then passed to his widow, Florence, and she was licensee until she retired in 1945. Florence was the first female licensee of the *Sun*.

The 1939 National Registration (29 September 1939) taken at the start of the Second World War, records four people living at the *Sun Inn*: Florence Follows (the Licensee) and her three daughters – Jean and Edna (both Assistants in the Bar) and Pauline (who was a Junior Clerk in a local Electric Works).

In 1941 Cecil Cutler had the misfortune to leave his bicycle outside the *Sun* and while he was enjoying the hospitality of the house, his bicycle was stolen by John Findull aged 17. At the time, John was on licence from an approved school near Northampton and had been working as a labourer for a local farmer, George Walley of Haughton Villa Farm. The farmer was not too pleased with John either, because the lad had stolen a silver watch (valued at £3) and two gold sovereigns from him. At Stafford County Police Court, John pleaded guilty and apparently said that he committed the offences “because he was anxious to return to the approved school until he was old enough to join the Army”. John also “apologised to the farmer, and said he was sorry to have let the school down”. John had originally been committed to the approved school on charges of shop-breaking and theft, and while he was there had been trained in farm work. Apparently John should have returned to the approved school the week before and the headmaster suggested that John should return to the school until he was 18. The Chairman of the Bench, Mr C.J.Clay, was very understanding and directed that John should be sent back to the approved school and said that John “had every opportunity for doing well in the future”.³¹

The War did not stop the *Sun Inn* from being a venue for meetings. For example, the *Forebridge Quoit Club* continued to flourish and local press advertised meetings in 1942 and 1944.³²

Florence Follows retired in 1945 and went to live at 5 Warwick Road (Stafford). She died in April 1952 aged 67 after a long illness, at her daughter Jean’s home (17 Radford Bank, Stafford); probate indicated she left £6712 9s 5d.

It seems that the *Sun Inn* had a cribbage team in the late 1940s and played matches in *Butler’s Cribbage League* on Saturdays. Other teams in the league were: Baths Hotel, Castle Tavern, Coach and Horses, Dog and Rabbit, Doxey Arms, Falcon, Joiner’s Arms, Junction, King’s Head, Lord Nelson, New Inn, Plough and Trumpet, Plume of Feathers, Slipper Inn, Rose and Crown, Stafford Arms, and Star Inn.³³

The *Sun Inn* continued to be a popular venue into the 1950s and 1960s when Sidney Thomas Askey was Licensee (1950-1969).

At a meeting in the *Sun* held on 20 February 1951, the *Stafford Auto Club* was resurrected after three years of disbandment. First formed in 1945, it initially had a

membership of 80. However, in 1947 when petrol was almost unobtainable, membership was down to 27 and the Club folded.³⁴

Sidney Askey was also Chairman of the *Sun Inn Horticultural Society* that staged an annual Show at the *Sun*. The 1952 Show (held on Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 August) was a great success. The Show was opened by the Mayor of Stafford (Alderman C.E.Fowke) and attracted 550 entries in the fruit, flower and vegetable sections, an increase of over 150 on the previous year.³⁵

And a few weeks later (25 November 1952) Sidney Askey presented cheques for £10 to the Mayor & Mayoress of Stafford (for the Eventide Homes Fund) and to Mr J.W.Stonier (Principal of Fernleigh Old Peoples' Home) for the benefit of residents.³⁶

At the annual licensing sessions in Stafford on 9 February 1953 Sidney Askey's application to extend opening hours from 3.00 pm to 4.00 pm on Friday Market Days was granted.³⁷

The 1960s were a time of take-overs and mergers for the Brewing Industry, and the *Sun Inn* was involved.

In 1960 the *Sun's* owners, William Butler & Co Ltd of Wolverhampton, were taken over by Mitchells & Butlers (M&B) of Cape Hill.

The following year (1961) Mitchells & Butlers merged with Bass, Ratcliff and Gretton Ltd to form Bass, Mitchells & Butlers Ltd.

And in 1967 they merged with Charrington United Breweries to form Bass Charrington (Bass PLC).

In 1996 *Bass PLC* rebranded the *Sun* as an *O'Neill's* Irish Bar. It remained as an *O'Neill's* after it was sold to the *Unique Pub Company* in 1998.

Enterprise Inns took over in 2003 and initially it reverted to being the *Sun Inn* as a restaurant/bar in 2004 before being painted in a garish red and converted into a Mexican Restaurant and Wine Bar called the *Tequila Red* in 2008. It operated for a few months before closing in 2009.

It seemed that the *Sun* had lost its' way, the final curtain was about to fall, the last Act in a 200 year-old story had surely arrived, the inn neglected and forgotten? The *Sun* had set.

No, not quite. Neglected – yes, but not forgotten ... for it had been a red sunset ... the promise of a better tomorrow.

The next morning was bright and sunny, and two brothers who had been brought up in Stafford remembered the happy days and decided that such a special place should not be allowed to die and fade into history. It was the day of the phoenix.

And so it was that the *Titanic Brewery* purchased the freehold of the *Sun* from *Enterprise Inns* in March 2010 and converted it back into a traditional pub/restaurant.

The *Sun* reopened at noon on 22 July 2010 with two co-managers, Steve Aukim (who is still the manager today) and Tom Sinnot who stayed until May 2011 when he went to manage Titanic's new acquisition, the *Roebuck*, in Leek.

When the *Sun* reopened, Dave and Keith Bott had the pleasure of welcoming two former landlords of the pub from its *Bass Charrington* days, Ashley Howard (1970-1976) aged 79 and Brian Deakin (1976-1993) aged 76, who jointly pulled a celebratory first pint to mark the rebirth of the *Sun*.

Brian was the landlord when Dave frequented the *Sun* as a teenager. Around 1977 Dave bought an old Land Rover which needed much work, from the Smithfield Market which used to be behind the pub. Sheep were driven to the Market through what is now part of the pub, the area which has the large front window and the booth seating. Dave also remembers Eddie Woodcock (2006-2008) who was one of the last tenants of *Enterprise Inns* when the *Sun* was called the *Tequila Red*.

When Dave told a friend (Rob Scahill) that he had bought the *Sun*, Rob turned up with the old sign from the front together with the wrought iron bracket which it used to hang on. When the *Sun* was being turned into O'Neill's, the old sign and bracket were taken down and put into a skip; Rob, who used to work at the *Sun* during Brian Deakin's time, rescued and stored them for many years. Dave put the brackets back up and they are still there now, with a replica sign in place. The old sign is on display on the wall of the outside terrace under the glass area near the back entrance.

The "Sun" sign is usually shown with a human face and 12 or 16 alternating straight and wavy rays (representing the light and heat of the Sun respectively) emanating from its perimeter. This portrayal is known as "The Sun in Splendour" or "in his glory". Years ago, when landlords brewed their own beer, they would advertise their product as "the best thing under the sun".

The *Sun* was refurbished in 2015 with new furniture, carpets, curtains, paintwork and signage. Work began in mid-February and was completed on 5 March.

The *Sun's* future is bright, well done *Titanic Brewery!*

And perhaps we have not heard the last of the *Forebridge Quoit Club?*

THE TITANIC BREWERY



Brewing in Stoke-on-Trent was revived when the *Titanic Brewery* was founded in Burslem in 1985 by John Pazio.

The *Titanic Brewery* is named after Edward John Smith (1850-1912) who came from Stoke-on-Trent. He was Captain of the White Star Line's ship *RMS Titanic* and went down with the ship on its maiden voyage after it struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic 400 miles off Newfoundland on 15 April 1912.

In 1988 Dave and Keith Bott and their father, John, bought the business. Since then, the *Titanic Brewery* has grown from a micro-brewery, with a small 7 barrel plant and selling all its beer to one public house, to a business employing more than 150 people and brewing over 3 million pints of beer a year.

Keith was awarded an MBE in the 2017 New Years Honours List for services to the brewing industry and the economy of Staffordshire. He was a key figure in the 2002 campaign to secure the Small Breweries Relief which allowed smaller breweries to compete better with larger breweries. He has advised the Parliamentary Beer Group and campaigned to scrap the beer tax escalator in 2013. He has been Chairman of SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers) twice.

Over the years, the *Titanic Brewery* has won many awards including many from CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale). The *Titanic Brewery* was one of the first small breweries in the country to use American hops, create golden beers, brew a keg stout and produce fruit flavoured beers.

Their 'Fleet' range of beers includes:

- Steerage (3.8%)
- Iceberg (4.1%)
- White Star (4.5%)
- Titanic Stout (4.5%)
- Titanic Mild (3.5%)
- First Class (3.8%)
- Lifeboat (4.0%)
- Black Ice (4.1%)
- Anchor (4.1%)
- Plum Porter (4.9%)
- Captain Smith's Strong Ale (5.2%)

Special brews have been produced from time to time. For example “Titanic Founder’s Ale” (2010) in memory of John Pazio and “Potteries Centenary Ale”, a 4.8% full bodied, deep golden beer with citrus notes and a clean hoppy finish: it was produced in 2010 to commemorate 100 years of the federation of the six towns* in the Potteries that make up Stoke-on-Trent (Burslem, Fenton, Hanley, Longton, Stoke-upon-Trent and Tunstall).

[*Note: Arthur Bennett omitted Fenton when he wrote his Five Towns novels.]

At present, the *Titanic Brewery* has seven public houses:

The Bull’s Head (Burslem)
The White Star (Stoke)
The Greyhound (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
The Royal Exchange (Stone)
The Sun Inn (Stafford)
The Roebuck (Leek)
The Cheshire Cheese (Buxton)

APPENDIX 1¹

(Largely based on *The Inns and Alehouses of Stafford Part 2: Through the Northgate* by John Connor. Matador 2014: ISBN 978 178 3064 250. Pages 100-101.)

(1A) Owners/Leaseholders of the Sun Inn (1799-date)

1799-1801: Edward Wright
1803-1828: Henry Wright
1829-1860: James Spilsbury
1860-1888: Henry Spilsbury (son)
1888-1904: Mary Spilsbury (widow)
1904: James Spilsbury (son)
1904-1914: Charles Morgan & Son
1914-1928: Eley’s (Stafford) Brewery
1928-1960: Eley’s (Stafford) Brewery Ltd of Wolverhampton [part of William Butler & Co Ltd (Wolverhampton)]
1960-1961: Eley’s (Stafford) Brewery Ltd of Wolverhampton [part of Mitchells & Butlers]
1961-1967: Bass, Mitchells & Butlers Ltd
1967-1998: Bass Charrington (Bass PLC)
1998-2003: Unique Pub Co
2003-2010: Enterprise Inns
2010-date: Titanic Brewery

(1B) Licensees/Managers of the Sun Inn (1799-date)

1799-1801: Edward Wright
1803-1828: Henry Wright, maltster (1811 manager Ann Goddard)
1828-1849: James Spilsbury

1837-1840: Edward Worsley maltster
1849-1867: Henry Spilsbury
1867-1875: Henry Hill
1875-1880: Henry Broad
1880-1881: Frederick Raynor
1883-1891: Thomas Turner Ellis
1891-1896: Joseph Bird
1896-1900: Arthur James Moore
1901-1920: David Edward Dewsbury
1921-1924: Francis Henry Farmer
1924-1930: William John Langley
1931-1933: Thomas Follows
1933-1945: Florence Follows (widow)
1945-1950: William Smith
1950-1969: Sidney Thomas Askey
1969-1970: Arthur Dennis Fisher
1970-1976: Ashley John Henry Howard
1976-1993: Pauline & Brian John Deakin
1994: Lindsay J Taylor & Valda A Long
2005: Colin Jones
2006: Jon Evans & Karen Morris
2006-2008: Iain Alexander & Eddie Woodcock
2008-2009: Nick Roestenburg & Janette Machin
2009: George Martin (Manager: Mark Lacey)
2010-date: Stephen Aukim & Tom Sinnott (until 2011)

APPENDIX 2

CENSUS RECORDS (1841-1911) & NATIONAL REGISTRATION (1939) FOR THE SUN INN

1841 Census

Address: Forebridge.

James Spilsbury (55) (Inn Keeper) born in Staffordshire.

Henry Spilsbury (25) born in Staffordshire.

Mary Spilsbury (20) born in Staffordshire.

Ann Dickenson (70) (Independent means) born in Staffordshire.

Sarah McAdam (25) born in Staffordshire.

Fanny Woolrich (15) born in Staffordshire.

1851 Census

Address: Lichfield Street (Inn).

Henry Spilsbury (38) (Inn Keeper) born in Stafford.

Mary Spilsbury (28) (Wife) born in Burslem.

Sarah Slinn (20) (General Servant) born in Stafford.

1861 Census

Address: Sun Inn, Lichfield Street.

Henry Spilsbury (40) (Licensed Victualler) b Stafford.
Mary Spilsbury (34) (wife) b Burslem.
James Spilsbury (77) (father) (Proprietor of Houses) b Stafford.
Elizabeth Beresford (14) (House Servant) b Rugeley.
Eliza Walker (27) (House Servant) b Rugeley.
George Ferneyhough (39): (Ostler) b Stafford.

1871 Census

Address: Sun Inn, Lichfield Street.

Henry Hill (49) (Inn Keeper) b Astley, Worcestershire.
Elizabeth Hill (40) (wife) b Scotland.
Jane Hill (14) (daughter) b Stafford.
Elizabeth Hill (10) (daughter) b Stafford.
Emma Kibble (18) (servant) b Church Eaton, Staffs.
George Ferneyhough (52) (servant) (Brewer & Ostler) b Stafford.

1881 Census

Address: 7 Lichfield Road.

Frederick Raynor (38) (Licenced Victualer) b Hunstanton, Norfolk.
Mary Raynor (36) (wife) b Stafford.
Frederick W Raynor (7) (son) b Stafford.
Beatrice Ann Raynor (4) (daughter) b Stafford.
Walter Raynor (3) (son) b Stafford.
John Kent (27) (Servant) (Ostler) b Stafford.
Sarah Ecclestone (17) (servant) b Short Heath, Staffs.

1891 Census

Address: 7 Lichfield Road.

Joseph Bird (41) (Inn Keeper) b Stone, Staffs.
Emma Bird (43) (wife) b Stafford.
George Kingston Bird (15) (son) b Stafford.
Bertha Bird (13) (daughter) b Stafford.
Sarah Ann Bowker (50) (Servant) b Cannock.

1901 Census

Address: 7 Lichfield Road.

David E Dewsbury (29) (Licensed Victualler) b Bednall, Staffs.
Eliza C Dewsbury (31) (wife) b London.
Charles Dewsbury (15) (brother) (Shop clerk) b Stafford.
Emily Anthony (66) (Mother-in-Law, a widow) b Surrey.

1911 Census

Address: 7 Lichfield Road.

David Edward Dewsbury (39) (Hotel Keeper) b Bednall.
Eliza Dewsbury (43) (wife) (Assisting in Business) b London.
David Edward Dewsbury (10) (School) b Stafford.
Mary Chambury (21) (General Domestic Servant) b Stafford.

Married 14 years and just the one child.

1939 National Registration

Address: Sun Inn Yard.

John Woolwich b 3 April 1877 (Caretaker Inn Yard)

Address: Sun Inn, Lichfield Road.

Florence Follows b 20 January 1885 (Licensee)

Jean Follows b 22 November 1917 (Assistant in Bar)

Edna Follows b 1 June 1919 (Assistant in Bar)

Pauline Follows b 14 December 1924 (Junior clerk, Electric Works)

APPENDIX 3

YEOMANRY SMOKING CONCERT IN STAFFORD

(Staffordshire Advertiser : 05 February 1916)

“Yeomanry Smoking Concert at Stafford. On the occasion of the 3rd – 1st Battalion Staffordshire Yeomanry leaving Stafford, where they have been training for some considerable time, a farewell smoking concert was given at the Sun Inn, Stafford, on the 28th ult. The following non-commissioned officers were present: - Sergt.- Major Williams (instructor), Qmr.-Sergt. English, Sergt. Hudson, and Corp. Dudley.

Qmr.-Sergt. English, giving advice to the soldier, said they had passed their elementary training and were going to join a reserve cavalry regiment with a view to drilling with drafts of reinforcements of the first line. They must not forget that they were cavalrymen whose first duty was to their horses.

Corp. Dudley said they were one of the most efficient drafts to be sent from Stafford, and they had to thank Sergt.- Major Williams for making them such an efficient company. (Applause). The Sergeant-Major had never spared any trouble in drilling them, and he was one of the best instructors he had ever met. He wished him luck and hoped he would see more of him in the future.

Sergt.- Major Williams thanked Sergt.Hudson, Corp.Dudley, and the other non-commissioned officers who had helped him in his efforts to train the men. He was

very sorry the men were going. Their regiment had got a very good name, and he was sure they would keep up the reputation of the Staffordshire Yeomanry.

Col.Aylmer, of the 19th Hussars, with whom he had served in India, said the regiment was a very good one and really a credit to the British Army. He (Sergt.- Major Williams) was very pleased with their work at Stafford, and they would have the satisfaction of knowing that they were going to more interesting work. – The health of Sergt.- Major Williams was drunk with musical honours, as was that of Mr.and Mrs.Dewsbury, the host and hostess.

A very good musical programme was provided, songs being well rendered by Sergt. Hudson, Troopers Charlton, Fullwood, Walker, and Edge, and Pte.Rickaty, R.A.M.C.”

APPENDIX 4

BEDNALL SOLDIER KILLED IN ACTION

(Staffordshire Advertiser : 19 January 1918)

“Bednall Soldier Killed in Action: Mrs.S.Meredith, daughter of the late Mr.Edward Dewsbury, farmer, Bednall, and sister of Mr.David Dewsbury, of the Sun Inn, Lichfield-road, Stafford, has received official notification of the death of her husband, Gunner Edward Meredith, in France. The Chaplain of his unit, in a letter of condolence, states that he was buried in the cemetery, and that a cross would be placed to mark the spot. The deceased soldier had previously served in the Army, and had been on the reserve for about 12 years, during which time he was on the post-office staff. He served in the South African War, and was present at Laing’s Nek, the Tugela Heights, and the Relief of Ladysmith. He held the Queen’s Medal with five bars, and the King’s Medal 1900-1. He rejoined on July 3, 1916, and crossed to France in March last with the Royal Garrison Artillery”.

References

- (1) *The Inns and Alehouses of Stafford Part 2: Through the Northgate* by John Connor. Matador 2014: ISBN 978 178 3064 250. Pages 100-101.
- (2) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 30 November 1833.
- (3) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 01 July 1843.
- (4) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 28 February 1852.
- (5) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 7 January 1854.
- (6) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 30 May 1857.
- (7) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 10 August 1867.
- (8) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 24 March 1877.
- (9) *Staffordshire Chronicle*: 15 January 1887, 3 September 1887, 25 August 1888, 20 April 1889 and 3 August 1889.
- (10) *Staffordshire Chronicle* 09 April 1887.

- (11) *Staffordshire Chronicle*: 11 August 1888, 24 November 1888, 30 March 1889 and 8 February 1890.
- (12) *Staffordshire Chronicle* 12 September 1891.
- (13) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 14 April 1894.
- (14) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 3 October 1896.
- (15) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 19 December 1896.
- (16) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 09 October 1897.
- (17) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 27 September 1890.
- (18) *Staffordshire Chronicle* 05 October 1895.
- (19) *Staffordshire Chronicle* 9 May 1896.
- (20) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 14 November 1896.
- (21) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 13 November 1909.
- (22) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 18 December 1909.
- (23) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 09 December 1911.
- (24) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 5 February 1916. (See Appendix 3 for full report.)
- (25) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 15 September 1917.
- (26) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 19 January 1918. (See Appendix 4 for full report.)
- (27) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 16 December 1916.
- (28) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 13 December 1919.
- (29) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 20 December 1919.
- (30) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 29 April 1933 and 6 May 1933.
- (31) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 15 February 1941.
- (32) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 11 April 1942 and 10 June 1944.
- (33) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 18 September 1948.
- (34) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 23 February 1951.
- (35) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 5 September 1952.
- (36) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 28 November 1952.
- (37) *Staffordshire Advertiser* 13 February 1953.

Sources of Information

- (a) Staffordshire Record Office:
- (a) *Register of Licences for Alehouses*: 1872-1879; 1883-1886; 1888-1890; 1892-1893; 1896-1899; 1903-1904 [D344/P/38 to D344/P/51].
- (b) *Register of Licences*: 1937-1958 [D3561/1/1/3/3] and 1959-1975 [D5853/4/1/2].
- (b) Census Records 1841-1911 and National Registration 1939.
- (c) National Probate Index.
- (d) *Staffordshire Advertiser* and *Staffordshire Chronicle* (various dates).
- (e) *The Inns and Alehouses of Stafford Part 2: Through the Northgate* by John Connor. Matador 2014: ISBN 978 178 3064 250. (Pages 100 – 101 : *The Sun Inn*).
- (f) The *Titanic Brewery*, Callender Place, Lingard Street, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST6 1JL. 01782-823-447:
- (a) Correspondence with Dave Bott.
- (b) The *Titanic Brewery* Website: www.titanicbrewery.co.uk .
- (g) *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*: www.gracesguide.co.uk .

Acknowledgements

David Jones would like to thank:

- (1) Dave Bott (*Titanic Brewery Ltd*) for his help and encouragement.
- (2) Amy Vickers (Marketing Manager, *Titanic Brewery Ltd*) for supplying the photographs of the *Sun Inn* and the *Titanic Brewery* Logo.
- (3) John Connor for permission to use the list the Licensees / Managers and Owners / Leaseholders of the *Sun Inn* on pages 100 and 101 of his book *The Inns and Alehouses of Stafford Part 2: Through the Northgate*: Matador 2014: ISBN 978 178 3064 250, and to quote some of the introductory information about the *Sun Inn* on page 100.

Further Information

- The Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA): www.siba.co.uk .
- Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA): www.camra.org.uk .

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