

THE PUNCH CLUB



1837-2012

A Supplement to the Club History 1986 - 2012

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by

Past President Brother GRAHAM DEWSALL and Past President Brother MIKE JACKSON

Preface

The Punch Club was rendered a valuable service by Past President Brother Harold Rudd who wrote an excellent history of the Club. However, his work on behalf of the Club ended in 1965. It was thought appropriate, in the year 1985 as the Club approaches its 150th Anniversary Year, to produce a supplement to his work. This supplement, to place on record the activities of the Club over the next twenty years for the further enjoyment of the Brothers of the Bowl, was appended to the History in 1986, when the History was re-issued to commemorate the 150th season. At the April 1987 meeting, a special guest of honour was invited to celebrate the 150th Year. The Rt. Honourable Bernard Weatherill, Speaker of the House of Commons, after commanding the Brothers to “order”, gave a brief, humorous insight into life at the “House” and compared it with a Punch Club meeting. He was presented with a commemorative brass Gavel on walnut Block with gyro mounted medallion, depicting on one side the Punch Club motif and the other recording the 150 years anniversary.

This second supplement to the Club History is dedicated to all those Past Presidents and Brothers that have gone before. All those Brothers who are known to us through their past generosity and support throughout their years of office, and who have maintained the continuity of the Club, the Brothers we have personally known, and those unsung Brothers, many of whom we do not even know their names, whom without their support and membership, the Club would probably not be here today.

The new supplement is written in a similar style to the original Harold Rudd history, and is not intended to replace it or re-interpret anything that has already been written. We purely wish to show how an ancient club with it's Georgian beginnings has managed to survive for 175 years, not only maintaining and retaining its traditions and its bond of fellowship, but how it has had to adapt with outside pressures and by the wishes of its ever continuing and changing membership.

The Punch Club 1986 - 2012

The Club continued to meet on the south side of Old Father Thames, opposite St. Thomas's Hospital, at THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, which unfortunately began to become rather gloomy and uninviting, in a similar way to the TALBOT RESTAURANT, on London Wall in 1968.

It was at a meeting in September 1988 that matters came to head, following a disastrous meal and exceedingly poor service. This situation continued through the season, when in December following a meeting with the director of Courage Ltd, the Committee decided that it was evident that the Punch Club were no longer welcome at THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, and an alternative venue would have to be sought, very quickly.

Thus it was in January 1989 that the Club made it's last move to THE VICTORY SERVICES CLUB in Seymour Street, by Marble Arch, where we still happily reside to this day. Initially the VSC could only offer us a small room on the first floor of their building, which was to say the least, a little cramped and only had a temporary bar. However, after a few years, once they

had got to know us, we settled into The Trafalgar Room, a delightful setting very apt for our October meetings, "Nelson and Trafalgar Night". The room is beautifully decorated with paintings of Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar, and has become the Punch Club home, with a comfortable feeling of belonging. Although it has taken some time for the chef to produce Steak & Kidney Puddings to everyone's satisfaction, it has to be said that there are very few complaints these days.

Since 1986 the world has seen many varied events of joyous times, tragedies and disasters. Throughout this period the Punch Club has, by virtue of the bond of fellowship of the Brothers, continued to survive. We have celebrated and grieved at those happenings and will continue to do so as the world evolves over the years. The membership has at times declined, but then been reinforced by new Brothers. Guests come and go, but some stay to become those new members. We celebrate those who have gone before, as without them our wonderful Club would not be here in its 175th year.

At the AGM in May 2007, our Pipe Master became the victim of British Government legislation. Due to the new laws relating to smoking in public places, the Victory Services Club had to impose a "No Smoking" rule throughout their Club, resulting in our President and Brothers being unable to partake in the pleasure of tobacco. However, the law did not rule out snuff. The Pipe Master's role then maintained the duty of keeping the President's pipe in good working order and extended to officially lighting the candles. This has developed into the exciting sport of "Pipe Master badgering" whilst he attempts to light all of the candles with one match, thus maintaining the Clubs solvency. Our incumbent Pipemaster estimates that the current box of matches should last until around 2017! We still have a good supply of new clay pipes, which are available for members and guests to purchase for their personal enjoyment at home. The original pipes, marked with a Brother's name, are held in a wooden case in the Punch Club cabinet, for posterity.

The Saturday morning silver cleaning sessions have been given up due to problems experienced by Brothers getting into London early and the advancing age of many members. However, the regalia is still cleaned and polished and always looks excellent at every meeting.

Another change that has been made is the use of a "computer" by the Vice-President. It is actually a series of cards upon which the appropriate toasts are written, in keeping with modern times, unlike the days when the first supplement was written, and Brother Vice was expected to remember his script, unaided.

Bowls continue to be awarded by Brother President for misdemeanours, forgetfulness, or any other instance where he considers a penalty is deemed to be worthy. Brother Treasurer still smiles, as we are sure all Brother Treasurers have done over the years, upon receipt of the fine. Brothers may, of course, donate a bowl in celebration of a birthday, or for any other special occasion.

Summer garden parties continue to be an important event in the Punch Club calendar. Over the years they have been held in the delightful gardens of Past President Brothers Derrick Horner and James Settle, and Brothers Eric Kennedy and Charles Bloom, and their respective Ladies. For the past three years, the Club has continued its July gathering down on the farm in West Sussex. Past President Brother John How and his Lady Lorna, have entertained us with our Ladies and guests, at Weppon's House near Steyning, an excellent venue for the garden party, where we have often enjoyed the company of a herd of Chanctonbury Pedigree Sussex calves. These garden parties have continued to provide a major income to the Clubs coffers, and have helped support it through difficult financial periods. To these Brothers of the Bowl and their families, the grateful thanks of the Club and its members were recorded.

Meetings

The Annual General Meeting continues to be held in May, with the ceremony of the Loving Cup still being honoured at the September, February and May meetings.

At the AGM in May 1995 it was resolved that the toast to “A Great Briton” would change to the January meeting, from January 1996, with the February meeting toast becoming “The Club and our Distinguished Forebears”. These changes have proven to be most satisfactory and have added to the enjoyment of the Brothers at the meetings.

It was also resolved at that AGM that from 1995, the November meeting toast would change to “A Decade in the Life of The Punch Club”, whereby the Brother who is privileged to propose the toast is given the dates for the decade upon which his toast is to be based. This enables the Brother to expand his oration to cover topical and historic events in that period.

We continue to honour “Winston Churchill and the Battle of Britain” at the September meeting. It never ceases to amaze the brethren that fresh information is always imparted on each occasion that the Immediate Past President, who has this privilege, proposes the toast. Extensive research is obviously the order of the day.

Although the VSC had a reasonably ideal location to hold Festivals in the Carisbrook Hall, it was decided at the AGM in May 2006 after much deliberation and with great disappointment, that the Ladies Festival was no longer a viable proposition. Excessive increased costs and lack of support, probably due to that type of gathering going out of fashion, the evening changed to our Ladies Night, a normal Club meeting, but to which Guests are invited and members continue to wear Dickensian costume. In March 2007 the toast to “A Great Lady Briton” was introduced, being in keeping with the style of the evening. The first toast was proposed to a really great lady, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, with other Ladies of distinction having subsequently been proposed by Brothers, also deserving of this accolade.

Brothers of Distinction

During the period that this supplement covers, there have been many Brothers who have come and gone, too many to mention by name, but there are a notable few that we cannot forget for one reason or another, starting with the authors of the first supplement, Past President Brothers Haig Ellis and H.Denis Goossens.

Past President Brother Haig was initiated into the Club in March 1946, and was President for the 1970/71 Season. He served as a Trustee from 1976 to 1989. For many years Brother Haig gave freely of his skills and abilities to the advantage of the Club and to its members great content. He was well placed to accept the responsibility for writing the first Club History supplement, for which he did most of the research, due to Brother Denis' ill health.

His co-author, **Past President Brother Denis** had his Presidential Season in 1965/66, and was very much the elder statesman, a gentle man and a stickler for proprieties. Denis took office as Jester in 1958 until 1963, and again for the 1970/71 Season. He too was a Trustee from 1970 until 1985. We never did find out what the “H” stood for.

Both of these Brothers are to be thanked for all their efforts in formulating the first supplement, and congratulated for their efforts in providing the additional excellent insight into the further development of the Club. We are indebted to them both.

Throughout the period of this supplement there has been an Honorary Secretary, without whom, there is no doubt, the Club may have foundered. **Past President Brother Fred Bennett**. His dedication and unstinted support of the Club shows no bounds. Past President

Brother Fred served as Honorary Secretary from 1983 to 2005, and took the Presidential chair for the one hundred and forty-third season of 1979/80. He was initiated into the Club in 1973, and not only gave so much of his time for the Club, but also his knowledge and experience as a precision engineer. The beautiful and extremely functional brass bound portable cabinet, fitted to accommodate all of the Club's property that is used at every meeting, was designed and made by Brother Fred, as too where the 150th Anniversary Celebration Gavel and Block pieces, one of which was presented to The Rt. Honourable Bernard Weatherall, Speaker of the House of Commons. Brother Fred also presented to the Club a silver dish, to celebrate the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales in July 1981. But Past President Brother Fred's gift to the Club was not only material, his dedication to and love of the Club, inspired many other Brothers to take office, and deliver toasts in such a way, that they might not have done, without his gentle persuasion and encouragement. A guide and mentor to many a Brother. He hardly ever missed a meeting, and was always on hand to arbitrate over the occasional misunderstanding and correct a 'point of order' as and when it was required.

Past President Brother Fred's predecessor as Honorary Secretary was **Past President Brother John Pratt**. He too was an exemplary member and officer, who devoted much of his time to the well being of the Club. Brother John was initiated into the Club in October 1957, took the office of Secretary from 1963 to 1967, and again from 1971 to 1983, and only stood down for the years leading up to his Presidential Season of 1967/68. It would appear from the records that Brother John is probably the only member in recent years who did not pass through the usual progression from Punch Master to Vice President, prior to taking the President chair. In 1984, now there's a book to remember, Past President Brother John took on the onerous task of Minutes Secretary until 1990. These days the office is known affectionally as "Brother Scribe". His meeting minutes took on an individual slant of accurate humour, and became a jocular interlude for the Brothers attending the meetings, only surpassed by the verbal antics of the Jester of the day. It should be recorded that the minute books presided over by Brother John are all hand written in beautiful Copper Plate writing. It was Past President Brother John who presented the "Master of Music" Jewel to the Club.

In 2006, the Brothers of the Bowl honoured both Past President Brother John and Past President Brother Fred for their services to the Punch Club, rendered over a period of forty-six years and thirty-two years respectively. During these times, Brother John held office as Honorary Secretary for fifteen years and Brother Fred for twenty-two years. It was their dedication to the Club and the promotion of its History, Traditions and Customs whilst holding that office which contributed to and enhanced the survival and well-being of the Club. It was therefore decreed that the Brothers of the Bowl shall honour their memory, together with that of Past President Brother Sidney Butcher, at the ceremony of the Loving Cup, on each and every occasion that it is celebrated.

Another Past President who gave so much to the Club, was **Past President Brother Harry Fryer**, who made the April meeting his own, with the flags of England and St. George decorating both around the room and on the tables, with the banner of St George slaying the dragon (turkey) displayed above the Bowl, together with beautiful red roses for all those Brothers and guests who were in attendance at the meeting, to wear in their button-holes. He also gave the Club such eloquent subjects such as "the difference between a Wigwam and Tepee" or "the effect of alcohol on rats", which many Brothers and guests were asked to pontificate on, at the risk of incurring "cake-'ole money", which always supported a local children's charity. For the record, Harry's definition of the difference between a Wigwam and Tepee, was that "the Wigwam is a large portable dwelling, constructed of skins, firs and bark, supported on poles, that the North American Indians live and sleep in, whereas the Tepee is a smaller insanitary outbuilding to the leeward of the Wigwam". Brother Harry joined the Club in October 1982, took office as Jester from 1985 to 1989 and was President for the 1991/92 Season.

In July 2003, The Punch Club lost its oldest living member on record, when **Brother Jack Davis** “peacefully drifted away” at a nursing home in Buckinghamshire, at the age of 108, being at that time Britain’s oldest surviving First World War veteran. Brother Jack served with the 6th Battalion Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry, and escaped the battle of the Somme in 1916 because he had trench fever. He joined the Club in April 1976, having been proposed for membership by his brother Bill and seconded by Brother John Pratt. Brother Jack did not take office during his membership, and in 1984, at the age of 90, tendered his resignation from the Club due to ongoing ill health. This, however, was rejected by the Committee and he was the first Brother to be granted “Honorary Life Membership”.

There are many other Brothers of note, who are worthy of a mention, but as many are currently active members of the Club, very much alive and pursuing that bowl of golden Punch, we would not wish to embarrass them by saying ‘nice’ things about them now, but will leave that to the authors of the next supplement.

Property

Since 1986, further items have been added to the property of the Club and a list is herewith recorded:

Commemorative brass Gavel on walnut Block with gyro mounted medallion, depicting on one side the Punch Club motif and the other recording the 150 years anniversary, a copy of the one presenter to The Rt. Honourable Bernard Weatherall, Speaker of the House of Commons, on the occasion of him attending as our guest at the 150th Celebration on 25th April 1987.

An earthenware tobacco storage jar.

A unique “Delft” plate bearing the Punch Club motif, being the only one ever made, given by Brother Peter Jensen, for being our first recorded Dutch member.

A commemorative Horse Brass mounted on a wooden display, presented by The Shaftsbury Society in recognition of the charitable support they have received annually from the Club.

A black hard wood plinth with silver circlet engraved with Club motif, presented in May 2000 by Past President Brother Fred Bennett. This is added to the bowl plinth, as the silver circlets on the two original sections are completely filled with Past Presidents signatures.

A Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee porcelain Loving Cup was presented in May 2003 by Past President Brother Mike Jackson.

In May 2010, Past President Brother Douglas Gale presented the Club with a limited edition Toby Jug in the image of Lord Nelson.

Presidents from 1986

Aled Hughes	1986-1987	Geoffrey Sperling	1999-2000
Frank Sumner	1987-1988	Pat Hartigan	2000-2001
Dick Richards	1988-1989	Gavin Edwards	2001-2002
Harry Thorogood	1989-1990	Richard Waitt	2002-2003
John Loveday	1990-1991	Mike Jackson	2003-2004
Harry Fryer	1991-1992	David Northwood	2004-2005
Graham Dewsall	1992-1993	Malcolm Hyland	2005-2006
Brian Broomfield	1993-1994	Carl Smith	2006-2007

Robin Lowe	1994-1995	John How	2007-2008
Dennis Pederick	1995-1996	John Trimmer	2008-2009
James Settle	1996-1997	Dennis Partridge	2009-2010
Bob Hope	1997-1998	Barry Currell	2010-2011
Vince Bennett	1998-1999	Terry Bennett	2011-2012

PP. Bro. Terry Bennett has the honour of being only the second Brother in the history of the Punch Club to take office for a second term. His second Presidential Year being our 175th Anniversary.

Vice Presidents from 1986

Frank Sumner	1986-1987	Pat Hartigan	1999-2000
Dick Richards	1987-1988	Gavin Edwards	2000-2001
Harry Thorogood	1988-1989	Richard Waitt	2001-2002
John Loveday	1989-1990	Mike Jackson	2002-2003
Harry Fryer	1990-1991	David Northwood	2003-2004
Graham Dewsall	1991-1992	Malcolm Hyland	2004-2005
Brian Broomfield	1992-1993	Carl Smith	2005-2006
Robin Lowe	1993-1994	John How	2006-2007
Dennis Pederick	1994-1995	John Trimmer	2007-2008
James Settle	1995-1996	Dennis Partridge	2008-2009
Bob Hope	1996-1997	Barry Currell	2009-2010
Vince Bennett	1997-1998	Terry Bennett	2010-2011
Geoffrey Sperling	1998-1999	Robin Lowe	2011-2012

Trustees from 1985

Haig Ellis	1985- 1988	Terry Bennett	1985-
Terry Bennett	1985-	John Kimble	1989-1999
Terry Bennett	1985-	Dennis Pederick	1999-2003
Terry Bennett	1985-	James Settle	2003-

Hon. Secretaries from 1983

Fred Bennett	1983-2005	Graham Dewsall	2005-
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Minutes Secretaries from 1984

John P.D.C. Pratt	1984-1990	Frank Sumner	1990-
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Hon. Treasurers from 1985

Dick Richards	1985-1987	Robin Lowe	2006-2010
Robin Lowe	1987-1992	Geoffrey Sperling	2010-
Harry Thorogood	1992-2006		

Punch Masters from 1986

Dick Richards	1986-1987	Gavin Edwards	1999-2000
Harry Thorogood	1987-1988	Richard Waitt	2000-2001
John Loveday	1988-1989	Mike Jackson	2001-2002
Harry Fryer	1989-1990	David Northwood	2002-2003
Graham Dewsall	1990-1991	Malcolm Hyland	2003-2004
Brian Broomfield	1991-1992	Carl Smith	2004-2005

Robin Lowe	1992-1993	John How	2005-2006
Dennis Pederick	1993-1994	John Trimmer	2006-2007
James Settle	1994-1995	Dennis Partridge	2007-2008
Bob Hope	1995-1996	Barry Currell	2008-2009
Vince Bennett	1996-1997	Terry Bennett	2009-2010
Geoffrey Sperling	1997-1998	Robin Lowe	2010-2011
Pat Hartigan	1998-1999	Alan Guppy	2011-2012

Pipe Masters from 1985

Alan Evans	1985-1989	Vince Bennett	1995-1996
Brian Broomfield	1989-1991	Geoffrey Sperling	1996-1997
Dennis Pederick	1991-1993	Dennis Partridge	1997-2007
James Settle	1993-1995	Mike Jackson	2007-

Jesters from 1985

Harry Fryer	1985-1989	Pat Hartigan	1996-1998
Ron Purdy	1989-1990	Mike Jackson	1998-2001
James Settle	1990-1993	Vince Bennett	2001-
Dennis Partridge	1993-1996		

Master of Music from 1984

Harry Thorogood	1984- 1987	Mike Jackson	2005-2006
Bobby East	1987-1990	Harry Thorogood	2006-2009
Aled Hughes	1990-1994	Malcolm Hyland	2009-
Graham Dewsall	1994-2005		

The Punch Club Poem 2011.

Before we conclude this short tome in honour of the Brethren, past, present and future, we would like to add this little Poem written by a 'would be' guest of our incumbent Immediate Past President, who has on a number of occasions asked Mike Hazell to attend our gathering. To date Mike has not been able to achieve that ambition, but assures us that next season is looking good. We thank Mike most sincerely for his insight into our Club, based purely on Past President Brother Sidney Butchers History and the Supplement of Past President Brothers Haig and Denis. We trust that his pending visit will bring our Club more to life.

*A London institution of which very few have heard –
Perhaps as well as many might consider it absurd!
And yet this ven'erable group of men meet monthly through the year,
Except in warmer weather when the purpose is, I fear,
Redundant – yet in winter they will surely reappear.*

*The names of members are not known in homes across the land,
Although a national purpose is served by this happy band.
Most do not know the work they undertake, this learned crew.
With utter seriousness their work they rigorously pursue,
Unheralded, unlauded by the likes of me and you.*

*You would be none the wiser if the members' names you knew,
They cannot be deflected from their work, this happy few.
When Dickens was a guest, and Cruikshank was a member here,
They were but incidentals, a tradition held so dear -
Where men of learning count for little, you'll be glad to hear.*

*By now I'm sure you're keen to learn some more of what I speak,
I've kept you guessing now your interest is at its peak!
The men who guard tradition, of which few are now aware -
With whom a strong libation you will surely never share
In celebrated grandeur, or indeed just at the pub –
These men are members of that greatest secret – The Punch Club!*

Mike Hazell

CONCLUSION

Yes, the Punch Club remains in good heart and is flourishing. It will, we trust be the pleasant duty of another future Brother of the Bowl to continue this history, and we hope that when the next update is written, the same ideals will still hold true. This supplement has been written to record the affection with which the Punch Club is regarded and for the Fellowship found therein. Those same threads and bonds of Fellowship, Friendship, Camaraderie and the privilege of being a member of our ancient Club, still hold us together as they did in 1837.

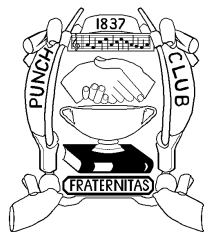
It ends with those same words of the English poet, Robert Blair:

“Friendship! Mysterious cement of the Soul!
Sweet’ner of Life and Solder of Society!”

The continuing toast is
“THE PUNCH CLUB”

Graham Dewsall
Mike Jackson
September 2011

THE PUNCH CLUB



1837 - 2012