

# Pub names take on a life of their own

WHAT is it with pub names? They not only take on a life of their own but they lend their identity to road junctions or even localities. It is not just pub-goers who use them as locators.

My father, who was a confirmed teetotaler, knew his way round London by its pubs.

Traditionally pubs had names and signs which could be identified by the illiterate. There were also pub names which commemorated a famous person (Lord Nelson) or a local feature (The Railway). Pubs have always had name changes but usually because the person or feature after which they were named had disappeared or gone out of fashion.



by **Nigel Friswell**  
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Some brewers are quite sensitive about the local relevance of a name. Wetherspoons, who arrived in Horsham amid a degree of controversy, were very careful to ask about local historical connections before calling their pub the Lynde Cross.

Whitbread were more careless about applying trendy names to their outlets and, since changing hands, many of their group's pubs have reverted to more traditional

names.

Now our local pub-owning breweries have disappeared we seem to be back in don't-care land. Horsham (with St Leonard's Forest) has a tradition of dragon legends so the Green Dragon is a very apt name for a Horsham pub and, as our local historian, Annabelle Hughes, has pointed out, that pub has had that name since the 1700s. Now it is the Olive Branch, but why?

Unfortunately Hall and Woodhouse are another 'absentee landlord' brewery so they have no idea about the traditions and significance of Horsham and its history. I wonder if they are more caring within their own home territory?

One of the lesser-known features of the Green Dragon in recent times were the public toilets! Horsham District Council had an agreement with the Green Dragon that they would maintain the toilets for public use in lieu (pardon the pun) of those which previously existed at the rear of the pub. I hope that agreement has been retained for the convenience of the public, not just pub users.

If the pub (and its landlord) want to be seen as part of the community then they should think very carefully about name changes. In one sense the name of a pub does not matter one jot. In another it can be vitally important.

If, as Hall and Woodhouse

has suggested, the aim of the Green Dragon's name change is connected with a wish to make a fresh start then the saga of the Horse and Groom should provide a salutary lesson. From Horse and Groom to 'Tut and Shive' and back again, name changes made no difference. It is the way in which a pub is managed and the clientele it attracts that determines its success.

This is a good opportunity to wish Wabi, the new occupants of the old Horse and Groom, every success with their new venture.

Hopefully it will put life back into this landmark building at the beginning of East Street, and what we are now being encouraged to

call Horsham's Restaurant Quarter.

The Horsham Society is one of the largest amenity societies in the country and is principally concerned with watching over the town's environment. It seeks to promote good planning and design, to protect Horsham's open spaces and to speak up for residents if decisions being made are likely to be detrimental to the well-being of the town. For more information about the Society or how to become a Member contact the Hon Secretary, Rod Cuming at 3 White Horse Road, RH12 4UL, phone 01403 268444, or E-mail [rodcuming@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:rodcuming@tiscali.co.uk) Website: [www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org)