

Stewart Smith

Stewart Smith lives in Clapham with his wife Tina and children James and Georgina. Stewart is an experienced lorry driver. He is very proud of his Scottish ancestry.



I still have relatives living in Arbroath in Scotland. I try to visit them when I can and I always bring back Arbroath Smokies, which are the best kippers in the world. They are still naturally smoked and are hung over smoking coals in little sheds on the side of the docks in Arbroath.

I was married in All Saints' Church in October 1988, and lived in Queen's Park. Although I no longer live there, until The Coventry Arms sadly closed in August 2006, I spent Sunday afternoons with a group of friends, sitting in the garden, weather permitting. We would all take something to eat. It was not planned, we would turn up with whatever we fancied. Sometimes we all brought the same thing e.g. cheese and biscuits but when it worked out well, we would have a great selection. On special occasions such as birthdays, the landlord Bill would cook a joint of beef soaked in red wine.



The Coventry Arms is greatly missed by many of its old regulars

One of my favourite memories is when we celebrated Burns' Day (which also happens to be my birthday!). We followed the traditional format. It began with The Selkirk Grace:

*'Some hae meat and canna eat
And some would eat that want it;
but we hae meat and we can eat,
and sae the Lord be thankit'*

My role was to perform the Address to the Haggis. In this poem, when the line 'an cut you up wi' ready slight' is reached, I had to cut open the haggis with my knife, my SCIAN DUBH (the little dagger). It is tucked inside the garter of the sock worn with traditional kilts.

We had a traditional Scottish meal. Stovies for starters, then haggis, tatties (mashed potato) and neaps (swede mashed with lashings of butter and pepper) as the main course and finished with Scottish trifle. As is also traditional, much alcohol was consumed during the course of the celebrations!

The landlord's mum Margaret was Scottish and loved to sing and dance. We had many happy times in The Coventry Arms. It was like belonging to a large, closely knit family!



Stewart and Margaret in The Coventry Arms

Stovies

*1 1/2 lb potatoes
1 medium sliced onion
Salt and pepper
Corned beef (grated) as much as wanted
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
A little brown sugar*

Put the oil in a large pan and fry the onions gently for 2-3 minutes. A little sugar can be added to caramelise the onions if preferred. Peel and dice the potatoes and add to the pan with a little salt and pepper. Cover and simmer slowly until cooked. Add a little gravy stock if required, pile onto a serving dish and grate the corned beef over the top and serve.

Scottish Trifle

(unlike English trifle, it contains no jelly)

*1 sponge cake (preferably home made)
Raspberry jam
1 tin of peaches
A little sherry
1/2 pint custard
1/4 pint cream
Glacé cherries*

Spread the sponge with the jam and put it in a large, clear glass bowl. Drain the juice from the peaches and mix with a little sherry. Pour over sponge. Arrange the peaches over the sponge. Cover with a layer of custard. Top with whipped cream. Decorate with cherries.

The Coventry Arms being demolished



Going...



Going...



Gone