



Man Walks into a Pub: A Sociable History of Beer

Pete Brown

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In *Man Walks into a Pub*, Pete Brown takes us on a journey through the amazing history of beer, from the first sacred sip of ancient Egyptian bouza to the last pint of lager on a Friday night. It's an extraordinary tale of yeast-obsessed monks and teetotaling prime ministers; of exploding breweries, a bear in a yellow nylon jacket, and a Canadian who changed the drinking habits of a nation. It's also the story of the rise of the British pub, from humble origins through an epic, thousand-year struggle to survive bad government and misguided commerce.

Man Walks into a Pub: A Sociable History of Beer Details

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Author : Pete Brown

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From Reader Review Man Walks into a Pub: A Sociable History of Beer for online ebook

Carla Coulston says

This book was given to my husband for Christmas and I only picked it up because of a dire lack of anything to read at the time. Being a dyed-in-the-wool wine drinker, I have no interest whatsoever in beer, or the history of it; but it was a book, and it was the only option available at the time.

Well! I have to admit I was pleasantly surprised. 90% of this book's charm is due to the author's funny and engaging style of writing, and I kept reading mostly for that; but as I found, the history of beer is actually quite fascinating. It helps that Brown brings it to life in his unique, witty way, but the story in itself is a ripper as well. If only there were one about wine (followup, Pete?) Rewarding read. Almost enough to make me want a Heineken. Almost.

Jake Goretzki says

A curate's egg and probably better if you do enjoy a chatty companion. His preface to the 2010 edition says how he's reined in the worst of the dad-joke footnotes, but I still found myself rolling my eyes at plenty of them (things like 'Don't ask me what that even means. Really' and 'As you do'). But they're well meant. I also got a bit wound up by the jingoism of some of the tone, which can feel a bit Clarksonian (lines like 'that's the French for you' and 'we're British, after all') - which, if you're not especially British, gets a bit tiresome.

Still, good on recent beer marketing history, hilarious booze crimes like Watney's Red Barrel and the ever-evolving, ever destructive industry. Does a valuable service too having a dig at CAMRA, and posing the question 'well, what is authentic anyway?'. Perfectly decent in its category, I suppose.

Tom Webster says

I have read quite a few books on beer in the past and have found that typically they all have one thing in common: they are either monumentally dull or a total farce.

Weighty volumes that document the complete history of a particular brewery right down to what tiny changes were made to a particular recipe and when are all very well and good. No doubt they are of great interest to men with big bushy beards who wear cable knit jumpers and who carry note books around with them but they are a bit too serious and stodgy for the more casual reader.

On the flip side of the coin I don't want to read a book written by some tracksuit wearing chav who just wants to brag about how he can drink 20 pints of Stella, fight some rival football fans and still drive his barely legal Vauxhall Nova that should have been scrapped before he was born.

That is where Pete Brown has got things bang on the money, he treats the subject seriously and manages to convey a lot of useful information whilst keeping things light and smattered with humour throughout.

By choosing to focus more on the social history of beer brewing and drinking he avoids bogging the reader

down with some of the useless minutiae that a lot of the more serious beer books pride themselves on.

I am also very impressed with the way that Pete Brown handles the often tricky real ale vs. lager issue. A lot of writers fall heavily on one side of the fence or the other and as such we often hear lager being decried as tasteless or a children's drink or ale being slagged off for being a drink for fat, bearded weirdos who need to get out more.

Whilst I have my own views on the matter I realise no one really wants to hear them, and in return I don't really want to hear their views rehashed over and over again either.

So it was certainly pleasant to come across an author who wasn't using their book as a soapbox to take pot shots at their target of choice.

If you have anything more than a passing interest in beer and have ever considered reading more about beer and drinking then you could do an awful lot worse than to take this book as a starting point.

Tom Webster says

Whilst the jokey, blokey tone can wear a tad thin on occasion, some of the jokes sound a bit too much like my Grandad made them. The engaging nature of Brown's writing works as a fine counterpoint to the near academic approach applied to the subject at hand by some of his contemporaries.

I am sure there is undoubtedly a large number of heavily bearded men in cardigans who need to know the precise output of Bass Charrington for Jan-March 1989, I am not one of them.

Neither are most of the people I know.

However I do still have more than a passing interest in beer, brewing and the nature and history of the public house.

With this in mind I found *Man Walks into a Pub* to be an interesting, well researched and mostly well written book which deals with its chosen topic in sufficient detail to keep the reader's attention whilst staying with the big picture view and not getting bogged down in nitty gritty details.

I just wish that Brown hadn't strayed so deeply into jingoistic, almost Clarksonian territory with such frequency.

Andrea says

An interesting book, and one that made me think and want to go out and try different beers; however did not like how the author jumped backwards in time for each new subject. Would have preferred if he covered the developments chronologically. This jumping back and forward in time, made me skip pages.

Kristi Thielen says

Fun book, wittily written by a British adman with an extensive background in the beer industry. The breezy copy is punctuated with delightfully loopy footnotes which I found myself looking forward to.

Despite the humorous take on the subject, the author still provides a great deal of information about the ancient history of beer, the history of beer in Great Britain and the evolution of the pub. The latter - an institution in the UK - has undergone a number of renovations over the decades, sometimes with dubious results.

How important is beer? Well, as Pete Brown explains, on D-Day in Normandy, British Spitfires flew into France . . . with barrels of beer strapped under their wings. For the lads. Churchill had said beer was a part of a British soldier's rations and he wasn't about to forget that, just because the largest military endeavor in history was underway.

Lara says

I read Pete Brown's second book first and it was a lot more fun than this one. The second book details his travels around the beer-drinking world - my kinda trip! This book is the history of beer and the pub - yawn. There were some interesting factoids - the Heineken special yeast was "kidnapped" and held hostage at one point - but mostly it was pretty boring stuff. Still, it made me want to pack up and head to England for more pub experiences. Mmmm, beer.

Chadwick says

Enh. Brown spends way too much time denying any pretensions to expertise or intellectualism, writes a well-researched, coherent history of beer drinking amongst the English, and generally manages to be interesting or amusing about half of the time. It only actually gets really worthwhile when he starts discussing marketing and advertising, where his background in those fields makes him a little more compelling. The chapter on chain theme pubs is actually thought-provoking if you actually care about things questions like, "Why do people go to one bar, and not the other?" It's my industry. You don't have to read it. I'm just saying.

Trevor says

I first saw this book, fittingly, in a pub some years ago (Montreal's Burgundy Lion). Flipping through it interested me enough that I made a mental note to look for a copy. When I recently found a revised and updated second edition, that was all the incentive I needed to read it.

Man Walks into a Pub is a history of beer and pub culture in Britain (although it doesn't mention it in the title, the perspective is very UK-centric). It contains enough detail to show that it was well-researched, yet

the writing is passionate and humourous enough that it never feels dry or academic. Pete Brown takes us from the origins of beer itself, to the unique role of beer and pubs in British culture, up to the modern day state of the brewing industry. Of particular interest were the last few chapters on the modern era: the author's background is in marketing and this gives him a fascinating perspective on what drove modern trends and drinking habits.

Overall, it's an enjoyable read full of interesting trivia, which I'd recommend to anyone interested in learning more about beer or British pub culture.

Lana Svitankova says

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Heather says

I love, love, love when someone writes a book that involves PhD-levels of research but presents it in an engaging way that's sort of an irreverently academic self-deprecating memoir. I especially love it when the thesis is as grandiose as: "Beer is the root cause behind the emergence of civilization." Bill Bryson-y, I guess, is the best way to describe this book. But later Bryson. After Into the Woods.

Brad says

Not knowing quite what to expect, I found the book to be a great read, very funny and full of quotable trivia. Although beer and beer culture are the focus, the author does a great job of using the topic to shine a light on cultural shifts and tensions. The book begins in the deep past, and is quite funny, becoming more serious as the account becomes more contemporary, reflecting, I believe, the authors passion for the subject. All in all, a worthwhile and recommended read.

Lloyd says

A great trawl through the history of beer in the UK, not least in terms of its production and the places that we drink them in. Brown is particularly good on beer conglomeration, the rise of lager in the UK and the sociology of drinking (one example being thus: 'There is a very serious social stigma attached to not getting your round in. "He never buys his round" is a stain on one's character which few are prepared to live with.') Perhaps he's a bit too soft on the likes of Greene King and Marston's - they're in the same category as Heineken and Molson Coors in my book - and now and again I wondered whether this was a book written by a man for other men but Brown's a great chronicler and I hope he puts something together on the craft beer revolution at some point in the future.

Robert says

Reading, beer and pubs three of my favourite things. Out all together and heaven so always going to be 5 star
Very informative and funny

Daniel Etherington says

Despite Brown writing the book in a jokey, blokey style, it's actually almost academic in its scope and thesis. So the thing that frustrates me most about this edition is the lack of index. There are so many fascinating pieces of information that it'd be good to be able to look them up. Similarly, although he packs the book with footnotes, these are generally funny asides. That's all well and good, and some of them made me laugh out loud, but I'd kinda like to have proper references for his sources (rather than just a reading list at the back).

So a great book if you're happy to just enjoy it as a leisurely, humorous read, but slightly frustrating if you actually take seriously a lot of the stuff he actually takes seriously, beneath the chatting-in-the-boozer idiom.
