

One for the road!

When next having a pint at your local pub, ignore the raised eyebrows and get under and around the furniture! Public Houses or Inns surely still offer one of the many neglected locations for common furniture studies may well have distinct regional or 'institutional' use characteristics in terms of style, timbers and disposition in relation to the local architecture. An excellent pioneering study appeared in our first anthology of articles produced by members in 1985, entitled "This length from London" by Gabriel Olive, which looked at these issues in relation to West Country pubs. Scope for further field work still abounds in most areas of Britain however, and apart from hostelries where the furniture is provenanced by long association, it may be that local brewers who owned a number of pubs may have had furniture made in a local centre, and in some cases branded or stamped it with the brewery's name.

This seems to have been the case with at least some of the traditional furniture made for Simonds Brewery from the Reading area of Berkshire, and recently an X end table of the type associated particularly with public houses throughout England, and perhaps in other parts of the British Isles in the 18th and 19th centuries, has been noted by a Society member, Danny Robinson, when has the name "Simonds" and "Reading" separately branded underneath the table top.

This brewery has now been taken over by Courage Ltd., and a letter asking them if they could give any information about their practices of ordering furniture in the 19th century has lead to the reply that they believe that Simonds would probably have ordered such furniture from one of the manufacturers in High Wycombe who specialised in making Inn furnishings. A search for more brewery stamps could give a completely new meaning to being "under the table"!

Bill Cotton

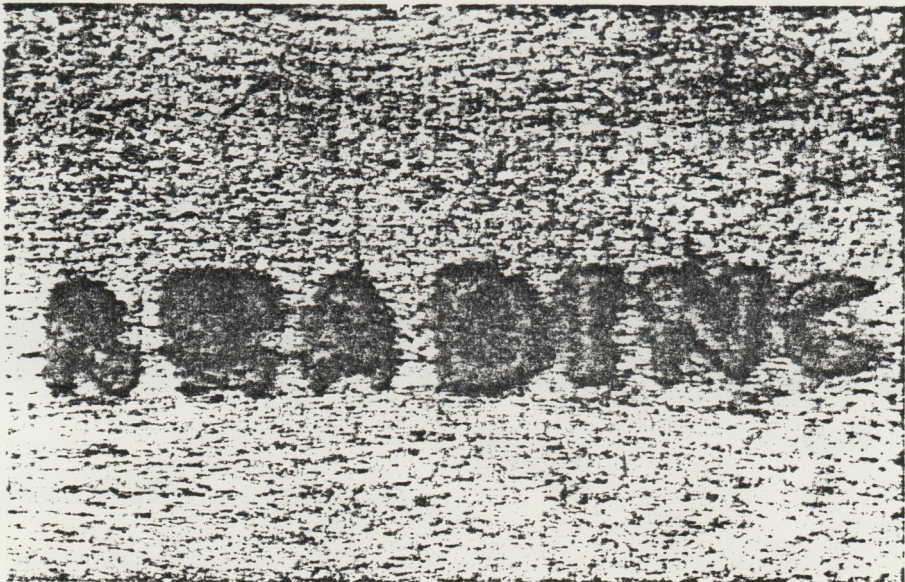
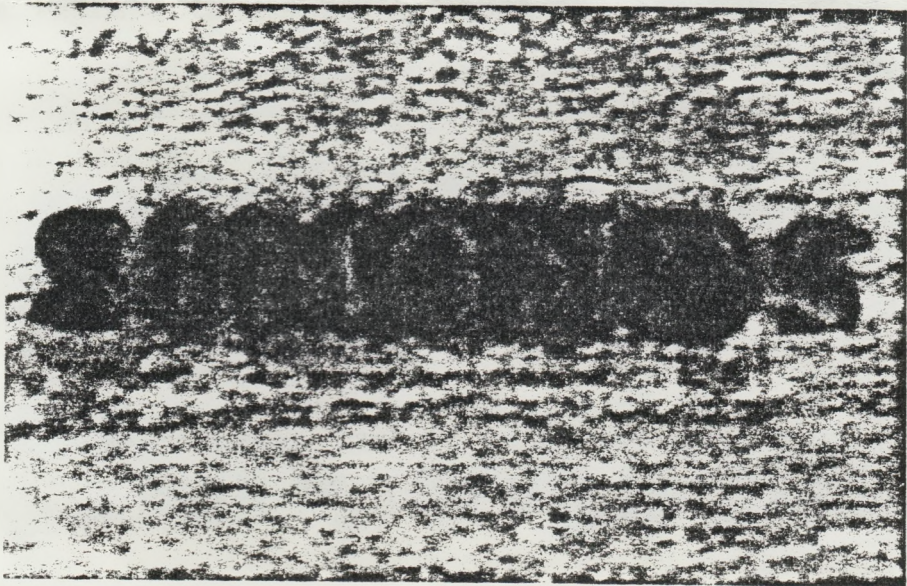
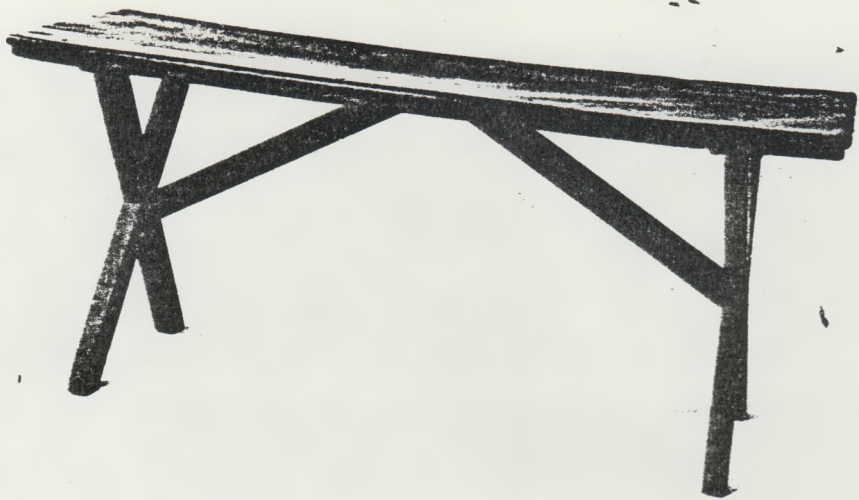


Table made for Simonds Brewery, Reading, with details of stamps.