

About the John Snow Pub

Most members of the society know the story of the cholera epidemic in Soho in August and September 1854. Over a period of a few weeks, more than 600 people died within a few hundred metres of the corner of (what was then) Broad and Cambridge Streets. John Snow recognised the concentration of cases, and its implication that a water pump at this location was responsible for the epidemic. He then prevailed upon the local Council to remove the pump's handle – and hence his famous words in his book: "and because of what I said, the handle of the pump was removed." Though the epidemic was already on the wane, Snow's logic remains a model, and this remains one of the most famous incidents in the history of public health.

The John Snow Public House, known familiarly as "The John Snow" stands next to the site of the infamous pump. It has a long history as a pub, and was a tavern at the time of the 1854 cholera epidemic. Its name was changed to The John Snow about 1960, when it was owned by Watney's Brewery. Since then it has had a guest book for interested visitors, and has been an increasingly popular site for visiting scientists and public health officials from around the world. The pub was purchased by Samuel Smith's Brewery in 1990, and remains their property.

In 1992, Westminster Council set up a replica of the pump, suitably without a handle, at the corner of Poland and Broadwick Streets, about 50 meters east of the Pub. Those who know their history will recognise that this is not the site of the original pump, which stood on the south side of Broad (now Broadwick) Street, about 10 feet west of its intersection with Cambridge (now Lexington) Street. Indeed, a wall plaque on the side of the Pub indicates the true site, which is marked by a red granite kerbstone.

The Pub covers two of the five floors of 39 Broadwick Street, and retains a traditional décor. It displays maps and pictures about John Snow and his career in the first floor bar area, where Annual General Meetings of the John Snow Society take place.

Society members are always welcome at the Pub. If you require assistance, do not hesitate to ask the Manager, Nick Taylor, who will be happy to help. The Pub receives visitors from around the world, and all who honour John Snow are encouraged to sign the Guest Book, which is provided by the Society. This is normally kept on the ground floor, behind the entry-flap of the bar. Please look it over and sign it. You will recognise many signatures !

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