The Duke of Clarence Pub

ISOH was officially created as an organization at a meeting on 5 December 1991 at the Duke of Clarence Pub in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea in London, located at 203 Holland Park Avenue. It was around the corner from the Notting Hill Guest House, and down the road from the Kensington Hilton, where several of us stayed for the meeting. Holland Park Avenue borders Holland Park, one of London’s many lovely parks. In keeping with the internationalism of the Olympic Movement, the Pub also was very near to both the Algerian Embassy, the Greek Embassy, and the Uzbeki Embassy later opened almost across the road.

The origins of the pub are unclear, but it was one of many pubs in London and England called the Duke of Clarence, many of which no longer exist, a fate that “our” pub would also suffer. It was noted that the pub was, "Next door to the Hilton hotel and almost on top of the Shepherds Bush roundabout, there is a good pint of Bass available and a mixed crowd of locals and tourists from the hotel, with a fair number of overnighting aircrew. In the summer the enclosed beer garden is a pleasant spot. Good middle-of-the-road pub for a not-too-rowdy pint."

The pub was named after the Duke of Clarence, a title originally in the English Peerage, which was first granted in 1362 to Lionel of Antwerp, the third son of King Edward III. The title Duke of Clarence originates with Lionel, who owned the town of Clare, Suffolk in England. He actually came upon this from his wife, Elizabeth de Burgh, the 4th Countess of Ulster, who was descended from the previous owners, the de Clares, and the Manor of Clare was among the lands which she brought to her husband.

Lionel died without sons so the title became vacant. It was created again in 1412 for Thomas of Lancaster, the second son of King Henry IV, and again became vacant upon his death. In 1461 the third and final Duke of Clarence in the English peerage was George Plantagenet, the brother of King Edward IV, but he lost the title, and his life, when he was convicted of treason against his brother. There were two final associated creations of the title,
the Peerages of Great Britain and the United Kingdom. In 1789, Prince William was given the title of Duke of Clarence and St. Andrews, but when he succeeded to the throne in 1830, the title became vacant until 1890. In that year Prince Albert Victor of Wales, the oldest son of Albert, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, was given the title of Duke of Clarence and Avondale. Albert Victor died of pneumonia in 1892 and the title has lain vacant since.

The pub no longer exists. It was closed in mid-2001 although it was still occupied in 2002, as national flags supporting World Cup teams hung from upstairs windows in that year. The site was demolished in 2003. In June 2004, the London firm of Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Phillimore Hill Ltd to conduct an archaeological evaluation of the former site of the pub. This was done because, as they noted in their report, "Holland Park Avenue is believed to follow the alignment of a Roman route. It was therefore important to ascertain the archaeological potential of the area at risk from the proposed development." They found little, noting of the former site of ISOH's founding, "Rubble and weeds covered the ground surface of the evaluation area. Natural geological deposits beneath the Site were found to comprise yellow London clay." They concluded that there was "little or no threat to significant archaeological deposits from the approved development." What was the approved development? The Duke of Clarence has since been converted to 14 units of affordable flats for housing. And so it goes.

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