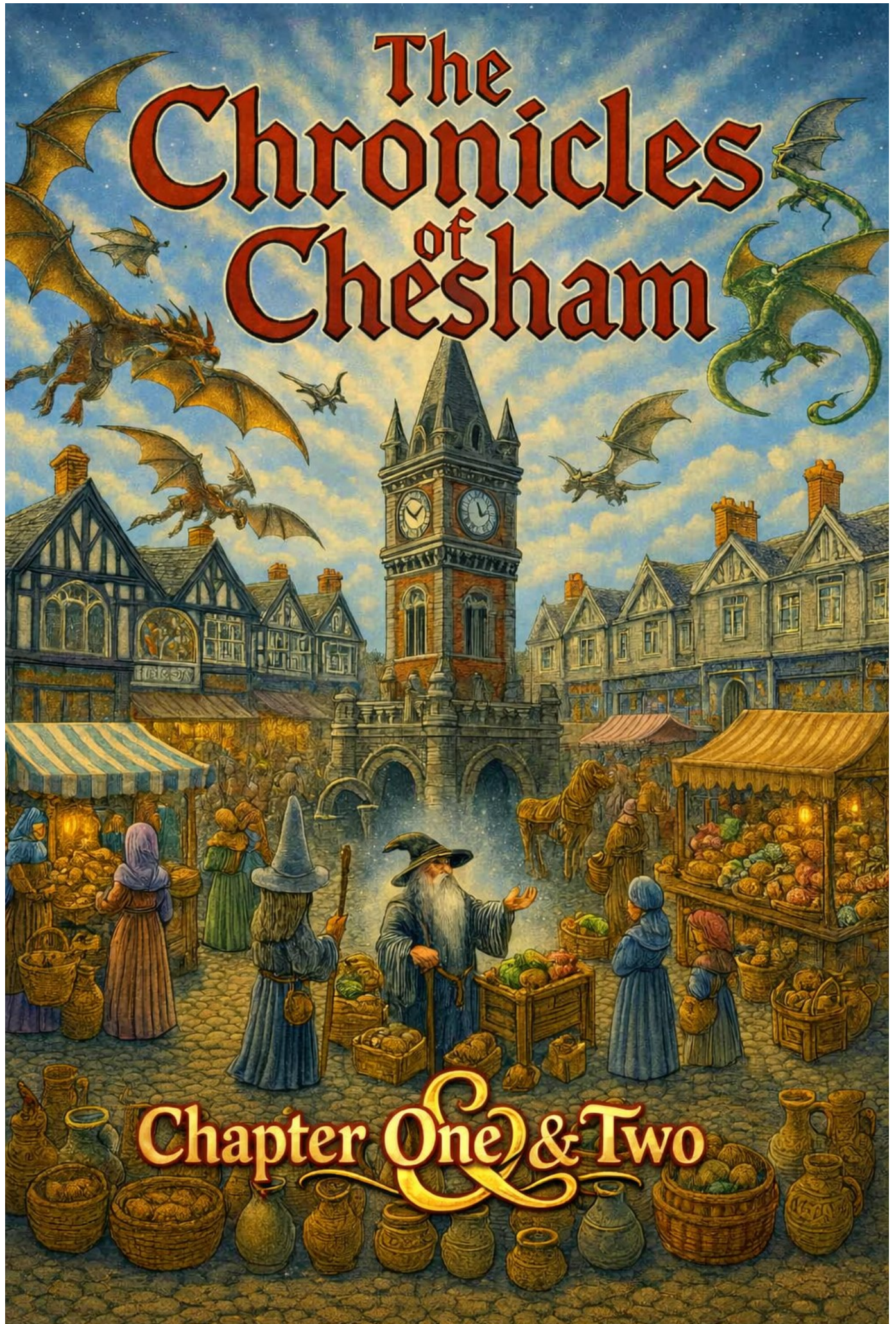
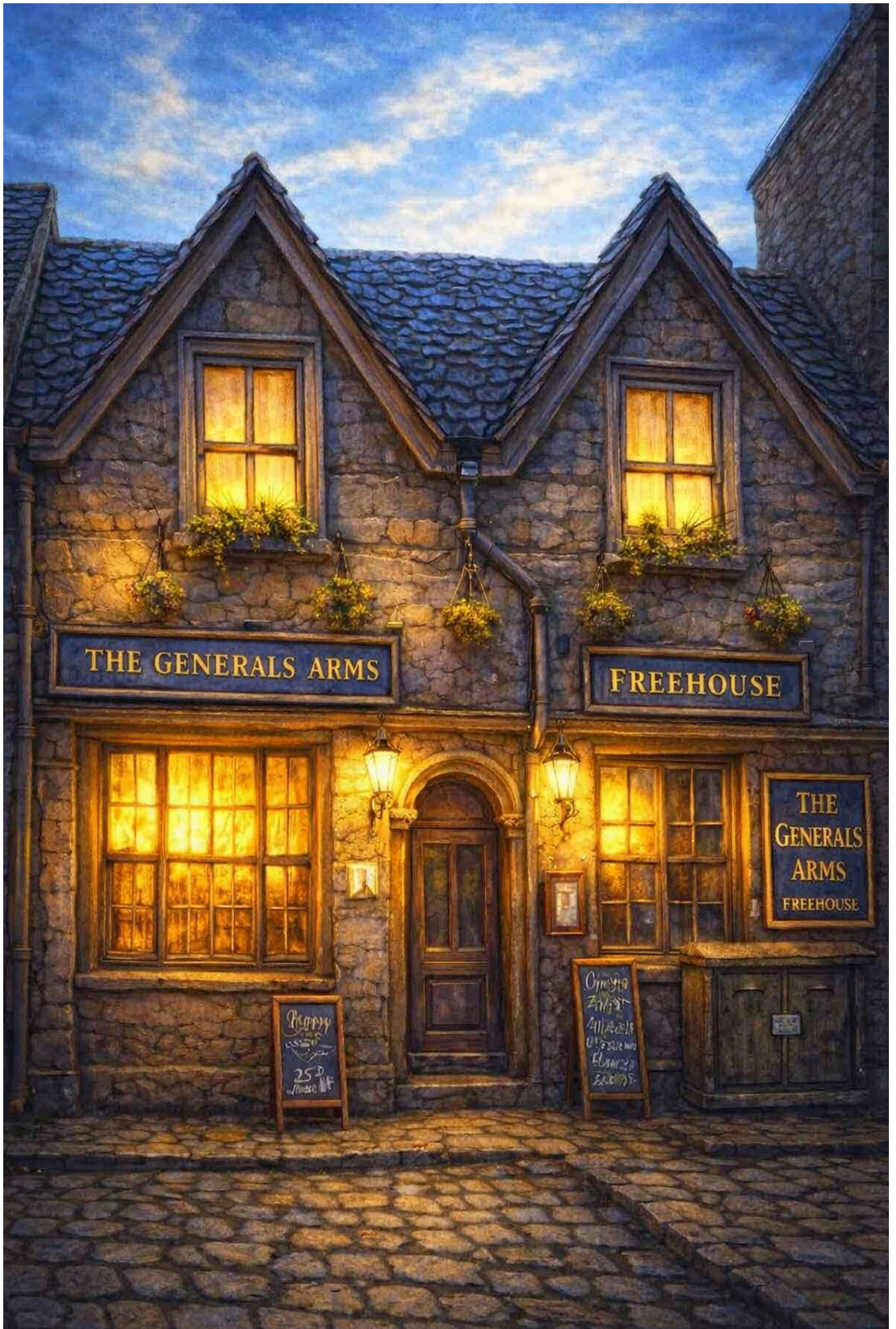


The Chronicles of Chesham



Chapter One & Two



THE GENERALS ARMS

FREEHOUSE

THE
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Chapter One - The Beginning

Imagine, if you will, that the universe that we live in has many, many parallel versions. The same people, the same places, just each and every one of them ever so slightly different, thousands of them.

A pick n mix of universes where one could turn left at a junction in one (and get a cola cube), whilst in the other you turn right (and get a liquorice stick). Each time with different outcomes and possibilities for the inhabitants.

And if your mind is open to the possibility of this, then imagine that in some of the universes will be a world that we would recognise as similar to our own, and in others, although familiar, they would be very, very different.

Different periods of time, different technology, different politics, belief systems, industries, economies, the same gods of course, for these were their playthings, like different versions of the same game, with themes of their choosing, and their believers and non-believers living very much for their amusement but having no idea quite how much so. Quite a shock to find that out when you pop your clogs, I can tell you.

This takes us to one particular universe, where our story begins. The town of Chesham. A melting pot of a town, where magic and ogres, and dwarves and goblins exist. Where law and order are in short supply and it is nearly always raining. There are no magic rings or cloaks of invisibility but if that becomes a useful

plot twist then let's not rule it out altogether.

There were dragons, however. Re-introduced as part of the town's "sustainability" strategy, the council felt that getting them to breed again would be a wonderful thing. There are, of course, now loads of the buggers and they are becoming increasingly more confident, and aggressive.

From the Palace of Lord Jasper in the North East, to the forbidding Loop of Pednor, home to the Curious Stones and Herberts Hole. In the centre sits the main square, with its clock tower and markets (Wednesday and Saturday, Local Produce last Saturday of the month – nice!). It is also the place where the infamous Chesham Fringe was born, and the even more infamous "Shake your booty". In the North West lies the Guildmasters Square and the Aisle of the Apothecaries, where the locals go to cure that nasty rash.

Chesham has a unique quirk, every now and then ethereal magic would descend upon the town and it would physically change, overnight, brick by brick until it was the same, but somehow different, sometimes a new building would appear, sometimes new people but it happened in cycles that nobody could predict or understand, regardless of how much they said that they could.

In amongst the darkness, gloom and magic there is one thing true of virtually all residents of Chesham. They really, really like to drink. No, really really.

Some hostelrys have tables which are capable of removing your arm hair so efficiently that thrifty ladies have been known to pop in for a wine and wax. There was the plotting place, the Queens Head, where the nefarious and the well heeled come to discuss their ventures, both good and evil.

The serious drinkers head to the market square to the public house called Trekkers, that furnishes its customers with fantastical ales from lands far away, and then there is the Generals Arms.

The Generals Arms, situated near The Barracks, where the town garrison protects Chesham from unwanted intruders, mainly from High Wycombe. In the Generals you can gamble, drink, eat well (the Chesham sausage is glorious apparently) and fight. Perfect fayre for any soldier, and if you were lucky then you wouldn't have to spend the night in the Chesham Gaol (conveniently situated nearby). And of course, the Drawing Room, more mystical than magical, run by a monk like character named Richard of the Robe, it was boozy too, of course.

There were others, of course, the Jolly Sportsman for those who like to throw dwarves, and Vault Seventeen, which concealed a myriad of tunnels and secrets below its cellars.

Such is the thirst of the residents of Chesham that the Town Council had been forced to move recycling day from fortnightly to every single day due to the enormous amount of empties put out in the streets. Beer bottles, wine bottles, spirits, the

lowest standards and exclusive vintages, these people would drink an ocean dry.

To walk along Church Street on empties day was a wonder to behold, how does anyone get anything done?



And it is in the south west of the town that our story begins, at the Queens Head. For today is not any ordinary day. Today is Shouty Wednesday.



Chapter Two – The Queens Head

The Queens Head. The place where deals were done, pacts were struck and an awful lot of nonsense was spouted, no more so than on “Shouty Wednesday”. A place of low wooden beams, swords on the walls and a fire that burns bright and long, as if fired by some kind of ethereal magic (but was actually down to a pyromaniac called D.O.B).

Wonderful ales were served, in a jug or a straight glass depending upon what kind of guy (or girl) you are.

The public house was made of two main bars, the place where the (relatively) normal people went to eat, drink and be (relatively) normal. And then ... the saloon bar, the home of Shouty Wednesday, so called because of the deafening volume of just eight of its members.



The bar was staffed by Madame Manuella, a fierce lady with an incredible instinct for hostelry. She could sell condoms to a eunuch. When sat down for Shouty Wednesday, the ale flowed constantly, thanks to the efficient system run by Madame Manuella. For because of Madame Manuella, no one had to get up to get a drink, it came to you as soon as she could see your glass needed charging.

Of course, the by product of this was even more shouting and it took much longer to walk home for most of the constituents of Shouty Wednesday.

And so, why was Shouty Wednesday called so. The members would probably very much like to think that they came up with it but it was originally coined by a despairing River Elf, named Squeaky Dog Bob.

His name was indeed Bob, and his dog too was particularly squeaky. In these parts it was easy to earn a nickname but almost impossible to lose it, just ask John the Tosser in the beer garden, he won't throw anything across the pub again.

Squeaky Dog Bob, whose dog was actually quite deaf, was a left leaning River Elf. The sort you might find at protests, if he could be bothered. He was a frequenter of the saloon bar, and on one such occasion, when the volume had hit record levels, he took his squeaky dog, left the bar and as he did so turned around with a grand sweep of his arm and said "Oh god, it's Shouty Wednesday again!" Never to return to the main event ever again. And to the attendees.

Jeff the Engineer, a man of many complications. For although he claimed to be an engineer (an occupation that was not well known to the citizens of Chesham), he dressed exactly like a Wizard. He wore a wizardy hat, red velvet with gold moons and stars on, beneath which he had a fine mop of silvery hair. He wore a wizardy robe (more gold moons and stars) and he even had wizardy shoes, curled at the ends and made of the finest red leather. Jeff the Engineer had strong views, that became even stronger when tempered with some of the Queens Heads finest ales.



Then there was Frank the retired merchant. Frank was a man of some magnificence, he wore a top of the range portable sun dial on his wrist, that was made from the finest manufacturers in the whole of Chesham, Bolex. He wore the finest clothes, designer of course, and his footwear had the longest and curliest toes to them, to demonstrate his vast wealth. Frank liked nothing more than a fabulous lunch, and then there was his transport.

Most citizens of Chesham transported themselves via the medium of their own feet. Not so Frank. He had got made for himself a chariot, it had beautiful red paint, it had beautiful cream leather within which he and one other could sit. It had beautiful red wheels with gold trims and most unusual of all it needed no horses. It had been put together by a sorcerer from a far away land whom Frank had met when not a retired merchant. It was voice activated, however the thick accent of the people from where it originated meant that the chariot sometimes



found it hard to understand Frank, and was prone to getting instructions wrong.

For example, once when instructed to slow down it misheard it as “mow down” and the twins of Church Street have never been the same since.

Then there was Ben, also a merchant (semi-active), originally from a far off land but now very much a Chesham resident. He wore traditional merchant robes of fine material, and also had a flash sun dial on his wrist (of the Bolex brand, natch). Ben was prone to making deals, in itself of no particular issue. However, Ben also was a very, very enthusiastic consumer of ale. This meant that to do business with Ben, you had to also be an ale enthusiast – or try to be. The, slightly, disappointing result of this was that although many deals were struck in that place, no one could really remember what they were, and so the cycle continued, night after night.

And now to Richard, the half goblin. A quiet creature in comparison to the others, friendly and amiable, with a

wonderful greyish green tinge to his skin, pointy ears and slightly pointy protruding bottom teeth, as is common with the half goblin variety. He always wore a slightly

armoured tunic, and kept a 9 inch curved goblin knife tucked into the back of his belt – just in case.



Half goblins are a rarity in this part of the world, legend had it that Richard's father had a spectacular night out at the Jolly Sportsmen, and in the morning was awoken by a lady goblin who had somewhat taken advantage of his inebriated state – 9 months later Richard arrived.

This was not the only anomaly with Richard, who was also known as Ian. There was, of course, a simple explanation for this.

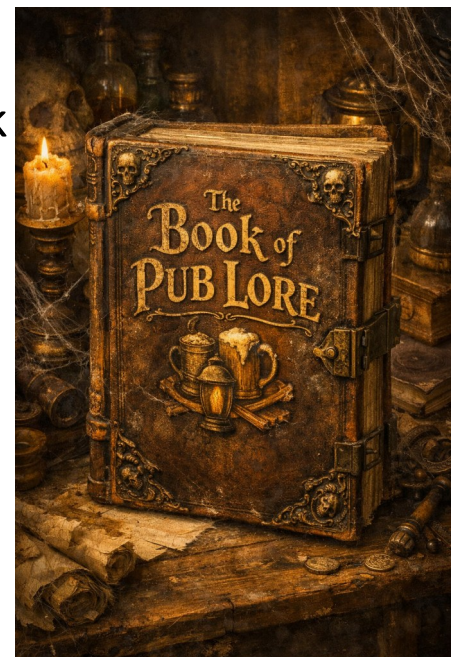
Pub Lore Fact

As with all public house lore, a man can ask another man his name the first time that he meets him, he may even ask for a reminder the second time that they meet but after that it is impolite to not remember another mans name.

End of Pub Lore Fact

Frank had been in this very situation and decided that Richard must be called Ian, and has so called him Ian for the last few years of their acquaintance. Richard/Ian being too polite to correct him has just put up with it.

Also present was the night watchman of the great gates to Chesham, Mick. He was a burly chap with a tendency to wear his night watchmen armour all the time. Due to the nature of his job, Mick the Watchman knew every single person in Chesham, and everything that they did.



Mick was a sports

fanatic, football in particular, although his love was for

unfancied lower division teams – it gave him something to moan about. Mick was also something of a writer, penning many articles on Chesham’s “amazing” decision to leave the Buckinghamshire Union (or BU), a trading bloc of different towns that

had encouraged free trade and free movement (not on his bloody watch). He felt it was an alright idea to begin with until he was being told who he could and couldn’t let in through the Chesham gates, that was after all, his job.

This sometimes put him at odds with Frank, who was somewhat pro BU and had wished that there had not been a Chesham referendum to come out of the BU. Both, however, knew that this was not a conversation to get Jeff running on – but of course they did .

And then to Timmy, tattooed Timmy the Orc. Orcs were similar to goblins in appearance, except they were rather louder on the laughing front. Some could hear Timmy laughing from the next town on a good night. Timmy, as with a lot of orcs, was born and bred to work on the nascent Chesham transportation system.

A brilliant idea of large carriages pulled by large horses to get the residents of the town around in an inexpensive fashion.



Brilliant indeed, until the Bringing Orcs Living Life Outside Collective Knowledge Standards Union was born. A movement dedicated to improving the lives of Orcs working on the transport system by making sure that they never really did any work at all. There have been so many strikes and disputes that most residents have forgotten that there was a transport system in the first place. Last month Timmy did work 3 days, but he doesn't like to talk about it.



Always tucked away in the corner of the table was Bob, a smiley individual with exceptionally lovely hair for a man of his years, a silvery mane swept back across his head like a septuagenarian chip monk. Bob was small in stature, wore basic clothes and the most ridiculous shoes for a venue such as the Queens Head.

He was a fan of the sandal type shoe – Groggs. He loved his Groggs but they unfortunately did mean that through the many holes in them his toes were visible, and not necessarily to everyone's taste. Bob carried a wooden staff, even though he didn't need it, to make himself appear wiser but the really fascinating fact about Bob was the unbelievable volume he could achieve on a Shouty Wednesday, much to the annoyance of Frank who found this quite objectionable.

Bob and Frank were not a good combination, and some poor bugger who was caught sat between them on a Shouty Wednesday would soon be subject to a masterclass of backward and forward abuse.

Some members of the Shouty Wednesday gathering would count in their heads before the first insult was thrown, and then – off we go again.

No one really knows why but it is understood that Frank once parked his voice activated chariot on Bob's front garden and squashed his turnips.

Maybe some day we will all know.



And finally, there was Russ, the outsider. He had arrived in Chesham only recently and somehow snuck his way into Shouty Wednesday on the basis of his enthusiastic consumption of ale, telling of extremely poor jokes at inopportune moments, and that he was apparently some sort of musician on the quiet. No one really knew how he made money because no one ever saw him go to work but enthusiasm was everything, and if you were good at drinking then Shouty Wednesday is the spiritual home for you.

Russ was a fan of the jug drinking vessel, perhaps because it resembled his own body shape.

Aside from this core group who attended Shouty Wednesday, there was one other character who was ever present in the saloon bar, Mr D.O.B (pronounced Dee Oh Bee). He was slight in stature, bald and tanned, and was single handedly propping up some of the less well to



do hostelries in Chesham. He would walk miles from public house to public house until he would eventually arrive at the Queens Head.

Casual observers have noted that he does not always make sense by the time he had got there. It was known that D.O.B was often too busy to go to work, and he was very, very sensitive to temperature. Upon arriving at the Queens Head, the Shouty Wednesday crew would often shout to him “How many layers on today D.O.B?” This would be met by a loud “whhhhooooooooaaaaaa” sound, to which D.O.B would just smile his rascally smile with his twinkly eyes and remove four layers of clothing before ordering his grog.

At that point he would then go to the fire and put on enough logs to heat the whole of Buckinghamshire.

And he would continue to do so for the rest of his stay. Everyone else just accepted that if D.O.B was there, it would be hotter than a summers day in hell.

And so, the scene is set. It is time to get on with the plot, an exercise that could well be very disappointing for you.

