



TLC SHOWCASE

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Introduction to *Notes From the Green Man*

My narrative memoir is a long overdue love letter to the people of Suffolk, England, and to the beauty of the rural countryside. This story captures my experience as an 18-year-old U.S. Air Force aircraft mechanic arriving for duty in rural coastal Suffolk at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge. The title of the book refers to three truisms: I was a very green, naive young man; I wore the drab green of an American GI; and luckily, I found a home in my local pub, The Green Man, in the village of Tunstall. Having grown up in New York City, I somehow magically stumbled into a completely different world that transformed my life.

While I had written many unpublished flash fiction, short stories, and essays, after my service time I was fortunate to meet a journalism professor who became my writing mentor and friend over many years. Jan Haag encouraged me, pushed and prodded me to focus on writing the stories that became *Notes From the Green Man*.

As I've gotten older, I worried about forgetting people I had met and the wonderful places I had the privilege to experience living in Suffolk. This pushed me to record recollections in a handwritten notebook filled with memories of conversations, cottage furnishings, landscape, and aircraft maintenance activities.

In January 2020, I reread my notebook and committed to a daily writing routine, which launched the first draft of *Notes From the Green Man*. Within weeks of beginning my work, the global pandemic struck, and the subsequent lockdown provided a mandatory timeout, allowing me more time to focus on writing.

Needing an outside opinion and a reality check about publication, I discovered The Literacy Consultancy after an extensive online search. I invested in a manuscript analysis and was deeply impressed by the time, effort, and feedback I received from my reader. The TLC process was exactly what I needed — encouraging with spot-on feedback. Later, I turned again to TLC and utilized the submission package report to accelerate the search for a home for *Notes From the Green Man*.

Notes From the Green Man will be published in autumn of 2023 by River Rock Books, an independent publisher based in Sacramento, California.

Extract from *Notes From the Green Man* by Chuck Dalldorf

While I enjoyed exploring Aldeburgh, it was far enough away that daily trips from the base on a bicycle were not realistic. I needed an easily accessible safe place, a home away from home, and The Green Man pub in Tunstall fit the bill. Tunstall's only public house was linked to the Tolly Cobbold Brewery and meticulously operated by Reg and Monica Harper and their dog, Fred. The Harpers resided upstairs above the bar in the historic Victorian building.

The Green Man had two bars in separate rooms. The ornate snug was the front room, the smallest of the two bars that resembled a formal sitting room. The larger room was the more casual lounge bar with an easily cleaned stone floor that allowed farmers and footpath walkers with muddy wellies to enjoy a pint without worry of dirt or mud. Dogs were always welcome in both bars.

The Green Man sat prominently at the corner of several intersecting roads, and the historic two-story pub was the second largest building in Tunstall, after St. Michael's of All Angels Church. With its large outdoor garden, pond, and picnic tables, the pub was Tunstall's de facto village green and a perfect place for kids to play as their parents had a sunny Sunday afternoon drink. The pub had no television, jukebox, or fruit machine, no dart board or game boards on any of the tables. The Gun Club Room in The Green Man was a place to just be – and what a place it was.

The snug was named The Gun Club Room, a veritable museum of Reg's service with the RAF, most of which had been in India and the Far East. It was packed with a historic collection of spears, shields, muskets, rifles, knives, helmets, and several tiger skins, perfectly displayed and evenly distributed on just about every square inch of the walls and ceiling. Embedded in the bar were coins from all over the world, and a large, stately portrait of Sir Winston Churchill prominently hung on the wall next to the front door, keeping an eye on patrons of The Green Man.

The Gun Club Room was indeed very snug. Five stools were tightly placed around the bar, while upholstered wooden bench seats followed the curve of the wall under the large front window. There were small tables and Victorian-style chairs providing the remaining seating in the heavily carpeted room. The original fireplace, which had been sealed off to keep out cold drafts, was replaced by a heater called the electric fire installed in front of the former fireplace. The brick fireplace's hearth had shiny, traditional horse brasses tastefully attached to it, and next to the electric fire sat a small, ceremonial cannon – “convenient,” said Reg, “if anything ever got out of hand.”

The snug was my preferred place in The Green Man, and it felt extra regal and magical at night, the brass and silver of Reg’s collection of memorabilia glittering in the soft light, reflecting from antique lamps around the room. It was both a comfortable and comforting room in which to spend any evening, especially a cold winter night.

Fred, a full-time staff member of The Green Man and Tunstall celebrity, usually lay sound asleep on the rug by the electric fire. An older golden retriever with a beautiful honey coat, Fred was an incredibly mellow dog, frequently so relaxed he rarely investigated anyone arriving at the pub. Surrounded by hanging tiger skins and static décor around the room, Fred could have easily been mistaken for another well-placed decoration.

Entering the snug, my preferred seat was at the bar, directly underneath Sir Winston Churchill’s portrait in the first seat to the left. The stool was adjacent to a tall, antique standing clock that ticked loudly. Sitting next to the clock, I could feel the vibration from the clock’s mechanism in my chest. It became my metronome – slowing my heart rate and allowing me to fully appreciate the Green Man’s relaxed rhythm.

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On quiet winter evenings, either Reg and Monica took turns working the bars, while the other was upstairs in their residence. On busier nights, they would both work the two bars. With no other customers on this chilly, wet evening, I nestled into my favorite spot, the first stool along the bar, adjacent to the standing clock.

Reg appeared from the back room, wearing his usual dark blue blazer and a dickie wrapped around his neck neatly tucked into his shirt collar.

We followed our traditional opening script:

“Good evening, Chuck. All right?”

“All right, Reg. You all right?”

“Oh, yes. All right indeed.”

The clock said, “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause.

Reg would take a moment, embracing the dramatic pause like a theatrical master as he looked up at the ceiling deep in thought, his chin straight out, parallel with the floor. I sat at the position of attention, eagerly anticipating the next line in our script.

“What can I get you then?”

It was my turn to pause.

“Hmmm, let’s see,” I’d say, looking at the beer pulls.

The pause was unnecessary as I always ordered the same thing every time, a pint of Tolly Cobbold Bitter. Regardless, the clock kept our line delivery spot on.

“Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause.

“A pint of bitter, please Reg.”

Studying me intensely through the lenses of his narrow, wire-rimmed glasses, Reg always appeared as if I had never, ever ordered a pint of bitter.

“That is an excellent choice.”

Reg pulled the perfect pint with just enough room for a narrow, slightly foamy head at the top of the glass mug, ceremoniously centering it before me on a freshly laundered beer towel. We would admire the beautiful, golden pint in a moment of silent awe.

The clock, breaking the silence, would say, “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause.

“May I buy one for you, Reg?”

Even though this was a routine line, Reg looked up, surprised and pleased.

“That’s very kind of you. It would be rude not to.”

He would pull another golden, glimmering pint for himself.

After handing over the dosh, Reg methodically distributed the notes and coins into the till, tucked under the bar. It was now time for my favorite Green Man moment. Picking up his pint, Reg would clear his throat, and with a wink and smile offer his reverent toast.

“May the Lord make us truly thankful.”

To conclude our ritual, we’d say “Cheers,” and finally sip the glorious, Suffolk beer. Fred would not have moved an inch from the electric fire. In the silence, the clock kept its calm, easy pace: “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause.

Such was the ebb and flow of a perfect winter night in The Green Man. Intermittently through the evening, we’d share bits of conversation and relaxed stretches of silence. Without a television or jukebox in The Green Man, I could hear the wind and rain lashing the windows. The gift of the quiet room often brought surprises: Sometimes I’d hear an owl calling or the honking geese overhead. Occasionally there was the distant, deep roar of a fighter jet engine being tested at Bentwaters, an unwanted reminder of why I was there.

Luckily, the clock would draw me back into the sanctuary of the snug.

“Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause. “Tick.” Pause.

The evening would end precisely at 11 p.m. when Reg rang the large brass bell, calling out loudly, “Time, gentlemen!” Even when I was the only customer, Reg moved swiftly to the bar, grabbed the knotted cord of the brass bell, ringing it sharply as he made his formal pronouncement. Finishing the last swallow of beer, I’d move to the coat tree to bundle back up for the bicycle ride to Bentwaters. Hearing the bell, Fred would stand up, yawn, and slowly escort me to the vestibule where Reg came around to lock the front door before heading upstairs.

Gathering my bicycle and turning on the headlamp, I would pedal out of the car park just as the light over the Green Man's sign clicked off. Riding through the darkened village, I could smell the fresh, slightly salty North Sea air mingling with coal smoke from cottage fireplaces.

One night as I made my way through Tunstall, a hedgehog surprised me as it waddled across the road. The rain had stopped, and the clear sky made the night feel quite cold and crisp. I looked up to see a magnificent night sky filled with winking stars and distant planets. An owl called out, and I heard its wings flap as it passed over the hedges, hidden in the darkened sky.

How was it possible that a kid from Brooklyn could find himself in this magical place? As I pedaled back to base, I found myself filled with gratitude and wonder about the incredible gift of living in Suffolk

About the Writer

Chuck Dalldorf grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He spent most of his active-duty service as an aircraft fuel systems mechanic at the Twin Bases of RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk, England. He went on to have a career as a political staff member in California state and local government, in addition to working on multiple political campaigns throughout the state.

He lives with his wife Lindsey on an island in the far northwestern corner of Washington state, adjacent to British Columbia. When he's not writing, Chuck works as a strategic communication consultant, and serves as a volunteer marine fire and rescue crewmember, chair of his town's planning commission, and an on-call aircraft deicing technician for a regional air carrier.

