

# ***Rupert the Bear***

By Alan Miles – 8 Apr 2013 [[email](#)]

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A few years back I was chatting to an old mate, outside Rossi's Ice creams in Walthamstow High Street. He partly ran The Stow Club, which was on the opposite side of the road. I asked him "are The Kray's blokes still running the place?" he replied "No we slung em out years ago". He then invited me to go up there. I declined one reason being that I have arthritis in both legs, and the other reason because certain memories give me diarrhoea.

I do remember I once visited the club and most memorable was Tommy Brown, The Bear, one of The Krays Cohorts.

In 1965, late one night, I was strolling down the High Street with another bloke called Alan. We both felt a bit peckish so he suggested that we call in at The Stow Club for a fried-egg sandwich. The people that managed the club knew Alan , so it was OK to go in ( else you wouldn't have got in).The door of the club was the same as it is now signed 'The Stow Club-Members Only', on a dull brown background. It was above Ron Nagel's – The Bookies.

So climbing the stairs , and as we were about to enter the club , a large man wearing a cravat , white shirt, dark blue lounge suit suddenly walked onto the landing .He was so big he seemed to fill the landing up. I walked up a couple more steps, to meet this large ageing heavy, who had nice white fluffy hair. I was quite nervous of him and as he put his right hand in his coat pocket, I thought he was going to pull a gun on me; instead he pulled out a packet of Polos. He said to me " Do you wanna Polo son?" , I became quite nervous , and as I took a Polo , I said "Thank you Mr Bear". I think he took it all in good faith.

Tommy Brown in his earlier years was a sparring partner for Tommy Farr, The Welsh Wizard, but these days he worked as a doorman. Alan and I walked into the kitchen. In there making tea was a bloke called "Limehouse". He had two large scars down the left hand side of his face, and the man who had done this to him had put lime on the razor, and he became known as "Limehouse Willy" (not to be confused with Boxcar-Willy the Country and Western singer!). Limehouse looked at me and said

“Wot dya want shun?” I replied “Egg sandwich mate”. He then fried the egg and gave me my sandwich.

In the main room of the club, sat a circle of blokes playing Poker. The room was thick thick with smoke. I remember looking at the ceiling; it had gone yellow with nicotine and drops of yellow condensation occasionally poured off the ceiling.

The Stow Club was open 24 hours a day, and no doubt was like a second home for some.