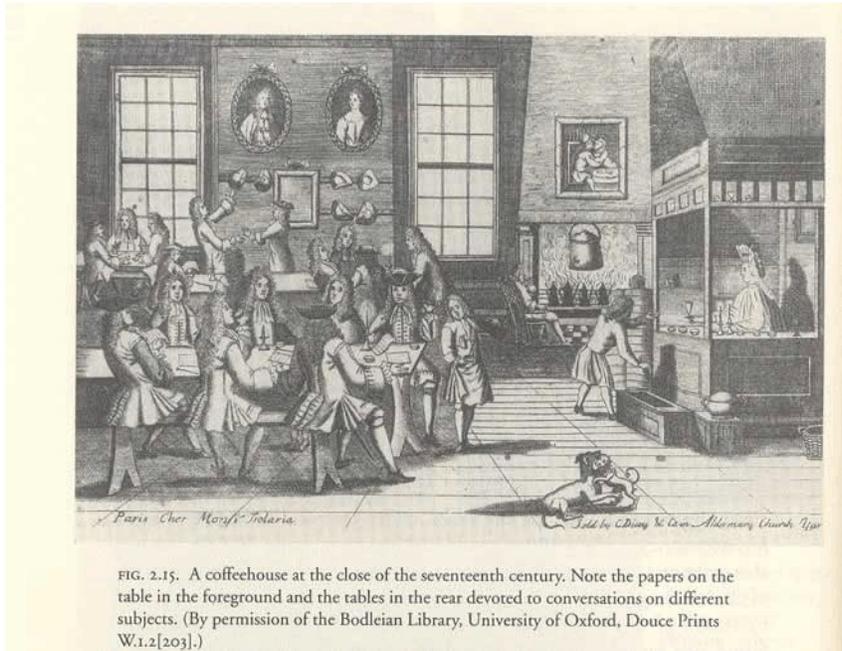


Cobourg's Coffee Shops



The first recorded coffee shop was established in Oxford, England in 1650 and by 1683 there was over 2000 of them in London alone. As with any thing new some people wanted to shut them down for various reasons, but the most serious was a charge that the meeting places were “notorious seats of sedition and intrigue”. We don’t have 2000 of these places of intrigue in Cobourg but we do have more than one. So here is the skinny on them all (those on King St).

Monroes, 20 King St. W

Push open the wide door (good access for strollers and wheelchairs) and you will notice that little remains of the previous tenants occupancy: Dave Tredree’s Radio Shack was a cluttered space filled to the rafters with electronic devices and the Cobourg’s first Lady Lawyer - Daisy MacCullough is nowhere to be seen. Jackie Munroe and husband Bob have done a superb job of installing the bar on the left side and the comfy furniture on the right. Talking with Jackie, a coffee shop veteran - this is her third in Cobourg, she says it all.

“We have no house speciality, just a list on the wall of good things but we are always asked for the speciality coffees and hot chocolates, and people like to see coffee in the pot, we never have a low one because it either goes or we change it.” Jackie goes on to explain that because “It is a welcoming place people will often come in alone, meet others and discover that they are neighbours in the same building.” Future plans include an application for a liquor license and Jazz evenings. Back to the future!

The Dutch Oven, King St W

What can be said about the oldest coffee shop and restaurant in Cobourg? It is still old, the fittings haven’t changed much and the food is still good and cheap. Yep all of that and more. Especially if you are a regular. A visit to the “Dutch” is still programmed into many people. Coffee breaks and lunches fill the place and takeout is a mainstay. Groups of regulars have been meeting in the spacious room for local gossip and opinion about how to fix everything. A group of local downtown businessmen met daily before opening and even set them selves up as a Chapter of the “Bombay Bicycle Club” and a plaque on the West wall commemorates the event. Even today a group of locally retired opinionators meet at ten for coffee and discussion of anything but usually politics. This is where “Old Cobourgers” come to drink regular coffee and have a home made muffin for a cheap price.

66 King St East

Situated in the building that housed an IGA store, years ago, one wonders from the outside just how the owners will fill the large space? Very easily, with an eclectic collection of tables and chairs; none of which match but as a collection works well. With impressions of Miami "Art-Deco" and surreal Paris Cafe-Art coming together the Coffee shop is warm and entertaining, brightly painted in stripes and with interesting object d'art pieces carefully hung in casual ways. When asked about the house specialities, owner Edward Cunnington, replied, "All of our coffees are special because they are individually brewed." Explaining, with great pride, the workings of his coffee machine - a Swiss made Ambiente, that all cups are produced one at a time, with Swiss efficiency, after the machine has been programmed with the customer's order. This machine, because of its consistency and method: it combines the correct amount of beans, which are ground in the machine just before the filtered water is pressurised through them, will produce a cup that has forty percent less caffeine than normal. A pure cup of coffee can be mated with the house desserts, a cornucopia of delights. Not your normal coffee and donut shop! This house of coffee even has even had a piece of art, a quilt named "Coffee on King", donated by local artist, Dorothy Winter, displayed on the wall.



The Coffee House quilt

The Human Bean 80 King St W

80 King St West housed the Cobourg Meat Market for decades then about ten years ago the place became Cobourg's first coffee shop - "The Java Man". That establishment then morphed into "The Human Bean". THB run by Dave Glover and his wife Sue (Dingsdale-Glover) is much more than a traditional coffee shop. Asked for his house speciality, Dave responded by pointing out that he is the only shop to sell "Fair-Trade" organic coffee, and he brags about his Grilled Panini Sandwiches. If coffee shops are the places for Radicals to abound then the "Bean" does have a collection. Tuesday mornings would be the place to hear stimulating conversation where nothing is off-topic. Striking a balance in age groups, one would be foolish to try to get a table during the High School lunch hour. But come back on a Friday evening and hear all kinds of music from local performers. Friday is also Caribbean day - lunch and supper. All in all in keeping with the rest of Cobourg's coffee houses the human bean is an original as the rotating art collections (from local artisans), on the wall, attest to.

Scotty's 32 King St W. -The Minimalist Coffee Shop

One flavour of coffee, lots of standing space for smokers and a couple of tables that attract the hardy and that's Scotty's. Scotty Carrigan, a local Cobourger runs a convenience store with tables on the sidewalk. It has quickly become the place for old friends to gather, talk about the previous night's hockey game and smoke. The fact that it has all the ingredients for the finest of coffee houses, but has no house, shouldn't dissuade anybody from considering it as one! This place has the one ingredient for success - lots of avid, and loyal, customers.

The Gourmet Coffee Shop 91 King St. W

Located in a row of recently renovated stores on the South side of King St W. This coffee shop is the only one in Town that boasts two free internet stations. The usual rack of coffee urns line the small counter behind which the owners - Sharon, Ron and Amy Hodgins, serve. They are friendly and greet each customer by name and provide a full rack of newspapers, including - rare for Cobourg - The New York Times - for the customers. I just wish their web page wasn't a generic one that clicks to advertising.

Harden and Huyse, 201 Division St.

Not on King but a block south of Division, is a large building that used to be the Salvation Army Citadel, now in its second round of renos the lower floor is home to a large airy room filled with Swedish furniture and chocolate displays. On one side of the room is a coffee rack holding the machine needed to brew the usuals - Lattes, Mocha, Coffee and hot chocolate. Lacking the homey feel exuded by other shops, this store makes up by having plenty of room and being ramped for access.

The Coffee Shop, 39 King St W.

This is the Donut/Coffee house that only appears in real life and "Air-Farce" sketches. With nothing in the place newer than fifteen years old the coffee and donuts are the staples that the regulars crave for. The clientele want coffee and donuts and without the flash - they get it! At one time it was the last bastion of smokers and now the real coffee drinkers still smoke outside.

As I look back on the visits to the local coffee houses I cannot help but be drawn back to the quilt hanging at 66 King East. Titled "Coffee on King" this illustrates the link between the establishment and its adoption by local women who gather to pass the time, discuss pertinent topics and drink coffee. Much like those "places of sedition" years ago in Olde London!