

Raymond Rowland - a life defined by Simonds Brewery.

When he left school, aged 16, Ray looked for clerical work and on the 10th May 1939 he started work in the cash office at Simonds Brewery, in Bridge Street, where he earned two shillings and sixpence a week. There was already a family connection with the brewery as Ray's uncle, Jack Rowland, was landlord at "The Star" public house in Pangbourne, having married the landlord's daughter and taken over as licensee on his father-in-law's retirement.



On 10th March 1941, aged 18, Ray volunteered for the RAF. The brewery wrote a letter confirming that they would accept him back into his former place of employment when he finished his military service.

On returning to work Ray was moved to the Hotels and Catering department, where he trained as a stock-taker under Mr. Sidney S. Brunsden for about three months, this was supplemented by two or three weeks with Mr. George Webber in Torquay. As a trained stocktaker his annual earnings for the tax year 1949-50 were £352. Ray later trained as an auditor. He worked in the Stocktaking Department till 1962, joining the newly formed Association of

Licensed Trade Stocktakers as member no.40 in 1953. This was as a direct result of the influence of Norman Clements, who joined the Hotels and Catering Department at H & G Simonds around 1950.

Ray enjoyed his work and the company of his colleagues, Jim Huntsman, Ken Organ and Les Field. He would often pop into the Simonds' Social Club after work, to "miss the rush-hour". He was a life member of the Sports and Social Club (membership no. 75), the social club room was two doors up the road from the Stocktaking Dept. offices in Castle Street and the sports ground was just off Berkley Ave, alongside the railway line. There are photographs of his wife taking part in the sports day races and the annual dinner dance, and his daughter Christina remembers the children's Christmas parties that took place at Huntley and Palmers.



This image from the Stocktaker's annual dinner of about 1951 shows Ray Roland on the right. The others are unknown.

Encouraged by his colleague, Mr. Clements (known as Clem), Ray supplemented his income doing one or two private jobs, stocktaking for the licensees at The Bull, and the White Hart, both in Sonning. He was also doing a lot of the stocktaking for the Simonds Sports and Social Clubs, with the occasional help from Mr. Clements and Mr. Edwards.

The merger with Courage and Barclays meant changes for the Stocktaking department. From June '62 to March '63, he was working for Arthur Cooper's, the off-licence part of the business. This was very stressful so his return to the Hotel's section of the Stocktaking Department was a welcome release.

In 1968 Ray was promoted to the post of Assistant Internal Auditor for Anchor Hotels and Taverns, on a salary of £1150 per annum for the first six months, increasing to £1200 per annum thereafter. That translated to a monthly salary of £13 18s 2d after tax, pension National Insurance etc. had been deducted. He started at Kinloch House, 17 Cumberland Ave. Park Royal on the 1st April. Two years later this became part of the Courage Eastern team, based near Kew Bridge, on the west side of London.

All Ray's working life had been spent with the same company but ill health forced him to take early retirement in November 1986, just a few months before his 65th birthday. This was around the time the firm was bought out and broken up by Hanson's. Although retired, Ray was invited to the Kew Bridge House farewell party, which took place at Blazers in Windsor on 27th Feb the following year.

Ray was given a set of bowls as a retirement present and he joined the Courage Bowling Club which still met, even after the Hanson Group sold the sports ground in 1990, as Harry Sexton (one of the founding members) organised bowling holidays where the members would travel to play other teams and stop at a local hotel. He later joined the Caversham Bowling Club where his knowledge of running a licensed bar was soon put to good use.

He never lost interest in his old job, continuing his membership of the Institute of Licensed Trade Stock Auditors and attending the Courage Pensioners Annual Re-Union Dinner every April. He also kept in touch with friends from work, passing on news in entertaining letters. Many of his former colleagues sent cards when he died at the age of 90, in 2013.