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CAMPAIGN
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PINTS WEST

Multi-award-winning magazine of the Bristol & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale
(incorporating the Bath & Borders Branch)



Collaboration 2012



Collaboration 2012

'Bitter' rivals down swords - and pints - to brew Bristol's 'Best'



In the spirit of collaboration six local breweries have come together to brew a very special beer to celebrate all that is good about beer in Bristol.

For the first time since 1889 when Bristol United Breweries was formed, the major breweries in Bristol are once again uniting to brew beer for Bristolians. **Arbor Ales, Bath Ales, Bristol Beer Factory, Great Western Brewing, RCH and Zerodegrees** are combining their skills, knowledge and passion for great beer to produce a brew that gives a modern twist to a style of beer that has been famously brewed and exported from Bristol for centuries.

The **Collaboration 2012** is to be released in mid-March in time for the Bristol Beer Festival at a time when beer has its highest profile in the city. The Bristol Beer Festival is bigger than ever this year, with an extra session to accommodate all the people who want to drink great beers. The group of local breweries would like to take the opportunity to unite and promote the thriving beer scene in the city. The best way to do that is to combine talents to produce a stunning beer that can be enjoyed at the festival and around the city afterwards.

The Bristol craft breweries have joined forces to brew a porter, a traditional dark beer made famous during the 18th century; there are records of the Porter Brewery in Bristol dating back to 1730. Jon Comer of Arbor Ales said, "We decided to brew a traditional, historical style that was important in the history of brewing in Bristol." Roger Jones from Bath Ales commented saying, "The brewing industry is truly unique. I can't imagine any other industry where six competitor businesses from the same city would get together over a beer and decide to collaborate their efforts."

Bristol Beer Factory Managing Director Simon Bartlett said, "The CAMRA Bristol Beer Festival is the most important event in Bristol for breweries and we wanted to unite to brew a beer that celebrated the fabulous talents of local brewers."

The six breweries will be launching Collaboration 2012 at the Bristol Beer Festival on Thursday 15th March. The beer will be sold in pubs owned by the all of the breweries involved as well as a number of freehouses in the city. The Collaboration 2012 will be available in bottles, casks and kegs, to be enjoyed from all forms of dispense.

To celebrate the most important week for beer in Bristol, the Bristol Beer Factory will be holding a number of events including a Brewery Tour & Tasting at the brewery on Tuesday 13th March with a sneak preview of the Collaboration brew.

The group photo shows, from left to right, Brett Ellis (BBF), Sam Burrows (BBF), Anna Schwaeble (Zerodegrees), Richard Dempster (Bath Ales), Chris Kay (BBF), Kevin Stone (GWB), Paul Worsley (Arbor Ales) and Ashley Stone (GWB).



Bristol Beer Festival tickets still available

The Bristol & District branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, held two organised ticket sales in Bristol for our 2012 Bristol Beer Festival, the first on Sunday 5th February at the Commercial Rooms and the second on Sunday 19th February at the Old Fish Market. Simultaneous sales took place at Off The Rails in Weston-super-Mare.

Overall more tickets were sold than ever before, with Friday lunchtime, Friday evening and Saturday lunchtime selling out quickly at the second session. However, at the time of writing there are still some tickets left for Saturday evening and a good number for the new Thursday evening session. These are available at the Seven Stars, Thomas Street, Bristol while stocks last.

For the first time we are also trying out online purchasing for the remaining Thursday evening tickets. This means you should be able to buy these tickets on the internet without needing to travel to Bristol to pick them up before the event. Full details are on our website www.camrabristol.org.uk.



The (very busy) membership table with the ticket sales desks and queue stretching beyond.

The fifteenth annual CAMRA Bristol Beer Festival will run from 15th to 17th March 2012 at Brunel's Old Station at Temple Meads. Our thanks go to the pubs for accommodating us, to the CAMRA volunteers who make the events happen and of course to everyone that turned up to buy tickets and maybe enjoy a beer whilst they were there. Tickets for the Friday lunchtime session of the festival proved the most popular and almost completely sold out at the CAMRA member ticket sales session at the Commercial Rooms.

For 2012 we have increased the overall capacity of the Bristol Beer Festival by 25% by adding a full public session on the Thursday evening. This meant there were still plenty of other tickets available to sell at the second sales event, which was open to everyone. The Old Fish Market also announced a week-long Fuller's beer festival starting on Sunday 19th February to coincide with our ticket sales event.

The first session at the Commercial Rooms set the record for selling the most ever Bristol Beer Festival tickets in one day. We also signed up 40 new CAMRA members. It's great to see so many enthusiastic CAMRA members getting there early to secure their tickets, although of course there would be a lot less queuing if more people arrived a bit later rather than long before we are due to start the session! However, the organisation seemed to work quite smoothly once again and you can see a short video of the ticket sales on our website www.camrabristol.org.uk.

Richard Brooks



2011 - boom time for ale but the fight must go on

They said it would be all over by now – the infernal economic downturn that is – but it looks like being with us for a long time yet. 2011 was undoubtedly another hard year for those trying to make a business work, with the pub and brewing sectors no exception. Despite that we have continued to see a huge expansion in the availability of great real ale in our area, however all is not as well as it seems. What is becoming increasingly plain is that in order to get a really good pint it is necessary for many of us to travel either into the town and city centres, or out into the countryside. Easier said than done when drink-driving is not an option and “Worst Bus” seems hell bent on removing vital bus services whenever they feel like it. More and more pubs and bars are springing up or reinventing themselves in the central part of Bristol and many of them are making quality real ale from quality brewers a big part of their offering. Most country pubs have had to also use quality food to attract customers. The big losers are our community local pubs in the suburbs where most of us live. Anyone travelling around many parts of Bristol and other towns cannot fail to have noticed the huge number of once thriving pubs that now lie dying behind boarded up doors and windows – the ones that have not yet been demolished that is. Many of these look highly unlikely to ever serve as a pub again. With the exception of a few areas such as Clifton, Redland and Bishopston – where there is a high concentration of professional workers who can afford £3.30 or more per pint and students who will always find ways of affording it! – the epidemic of closed pubs is everywhere. I live in Kingswood where almost half our pubs have gone or closed in the last few years.

Why should this be? Factors such as the high price of drinks, the low price in supermarkets, competition from suburban Wetherspoons and the like plus (to a small degree in my view) the smoking ban have all been factors. But for me the overriding reason is that virtually all suburban pubs are in the hands of the dreaded “pubcos” (pub companies like Enterprise, Punch Taverns, etc) who seem to go out of their way to make it impossible for tenants to make a living, let alone a healthy profit. The pubcos seem quite content to leave even the largest suburban pubs closed indefinitely – what a way to treat such an asset! It seems to me that the only possible motivation for such behaviour is in the hope that they can “demonstrate the non-viability” of the pub so they can then sell it and the land for redevelopment. It often seems that the biggest pubs with the most land are the ones that close – especially when they are in residential areas rather than High Streets. Many tales exist of folk investing their life savings and all of their waking time into such pubs only to end up broke or even bankrupt. Even when someone manages to do well, they find their rent immediately hiked to unmanageable levels. Most of the pubcos also heavily restrict tenants to buying their drinks from a restricted list at inflated prices far higher than those attainable if allowed to buy direct from brewers. The tenant then has to pass on high prices for limited choice to customers and the whole thing spirals downwards from there. Given a choice of beers restricted to those usually allowed such as Courage Best, Doom Bar and the like, or a bus trip to town to drink from a cornucopia of ales, often at lower prices, then what am I going to do? With generous CAMRA discounts in many pubs in town I get most of the bus fare back anyway. Until something is done about the pubcos and councils act to block changes of use, we may sadly continue to watch helplessly as the community pubs die a slow death, despite brilliant efforts from the Bristol Pubs Group and others. It is no coincidence that the Central and High Street pubs sold or released “free of tie” by these pubcos have almost all instantly thrived, whilst those still retained with tied tenants have struggled or closed. If licensees are free to buy beer of their choice from whom they choose and set their own prices, then a pub can still be a good business.

To return to the positive news, quality and choice has never been so good in Bristol, at least in the central parts. Choosing our entries for the Good Beer Guide is now the most difficult it has ever been and we have to leave out a lot of deserving pubs that would easily make the guide in other areas. In addition to those featured in the 2012 book and those that narrowly missed out, we have many new contenders – some of which I will mention here.

In our annual look back at the year just gone we reflect on an explosion of quality ale locally, but also note the increasing threats to our precious pubs

During 2011 several pubs reopened after periods of closure – these include the **Bag O’Nails** in Hotwells, now offering a great selection of five or six beers from all parts, under the stewardship of Luke Daniels, once of the Cornubia. The **Horse and Groom** behind the Council House is also now reopened with four or five beers and longer opening hours than before. In St Judes, the long closed **Volunteer Arms** now offers four changing beers and good food in a pleasantly refurbished bar. Just around the corner the **Phoenix** continues to thrive a year on after so many years closed. Another pub that reopened at the end of 2010 and has really kicked on is the **Gryphon** (formerly Griffin) in Colston Street which has found a real niche market for its hard rock music and selection of changing beers – many of the dark and/or strong variety. Food all day too. Bath Ales recently joined the party by opening **Beerd** at the top of St Michael’s Hill – usually two beers from Bath Ales plus two quality guests and a big selection of foreign brews and food.

The actual centre and waterfront area has suddenly developed several new or revamped bars that have a strong beer offering, changing it from an area previously to be avoided to a viable venue for a beery night out. On the waterfront is **No 1 Harbourside** which offers four beers mainly from local independent brewers, especially Bristol Beer Factory. A couple of doors along is the **Watershed** cinema whose airy and pleasant upstairs bar/café has really improved with four or five real ales from the likes of Arbor Ales and Downton. They no longer run out of beer at weekends either! Most unexpected of all is **Start The Bus** at the centre end of Baldwin Street – once an Edwards club venue before closing, but now a vibrant and flexible venue. A normal pub/restaurant during the day, it becomes more of a nightclub or live music venue late on at weekends, and even has a small market inside the pub some Sundays! Best of all it offers two Butcombe beers and two unusual guest beers – always including a dark brew. Recently Thornbridge Pica Pica Stout and Upnorth Cherry Porter were on at the same time! A place that I never thought that I would even enter is now very much on my regular circuit. Up in Clifton, the **Hop House** was acquired from Wadworth by the people behind the **Robin Hood** on St Michael’s Hill and now offers a great choice of beer too. In Redfield the **Red Lion** has reopened with up to four real ales of the more interesting type served.

On the brewing front **Arbor Ales** and **Bristol Beer Factory** continue to win national acclaim and are real success stories. **Butcombe**, **Cheddar Ales**, **Great Western (GWB)**, **Bath Ales** and **RCH** also seem in very good order. **Cotswold Spring** have extended their beer range and are always well received when spotted, and the fledgling **Ashley Down** beers are starting to pop up on bars too. Avon Brewing Company whose beers were always hard to find have ceased brewing, but we are expecting **Towles’ Fine Ales** in Lawrence Hill to release their first brews soon. **Zerodegrees** continue to brew some very tasty beers in their own unique way.

I have by no means mentioned all of the pubs with new or improved beer offerings and neither have I even mentioned any of the 63 pubs in our branch area or 17 reserves from the 2012 Guide, so you can start to grasp the wonderful choice of beer and pubs that we now have. Just little or none in most suburbs sadly. It really is a tale of the “haves and have nots” decided by which area you live and/or drink in.

Vince Murray

WARNING
From the Management of the
HOPE & ANCHOR
Exceptional Public House
BEER SPILL DON'T

News from Butcombe Brewery

Butcombe's new beer, **Adam Henson's Rare Breed**, was officially launched on January 4th with a double celebration. Calcot Manor near Tetbury was the venue for the lunchtime gathering for licensees, with the **Colston Yard**, Butcombe's city centre pub in Colston Street, hosting the evening party. Those who braved the appalling weather on the day were treated to a very pleasant evening with complimentary beer accompanied by 'Henson's Hotdogs'. Very good too! The two partners in the venture, Guy Newell and Adam Henson, must have set some kind of record for smiling through the numerous photo shoots!

Pictured here enjoying Rare Breed are Pete Hooper of the Colston Yard, Guy Newell, managing director of Butcombe Brewery, centre, and Adam Henson himself on the right.

For anyone who doesn't know, Adam Henson is a popular television presenter, often appearing on Country File, and partner of the Cotswold Farm Park. The farm is the source of the Maris Otter malting barley which, along with aromatic Herefordshire hops and Mendip spring water, goes into creating the distinctive refreshing and clean tasting golden ale.

Adam Henson's Rare Breed should be available on draught through Butcombe's twenty pubs, including four pubs in Bristol, as well as in bottle within the fifty largest Tesco stores in the South West.

For those that missed him, Adam Henson will be hosting a 'Rare Breed' evening at the Old Spot in Dursley in the not too distant future.

Current Butcombe sales are buoyant, which has encouraged the brewery to extend its northern delivery area from Gloucester to Ross on Wye, to Hereford, to Worcester, to Chipping Norton and Burford, where the new beer plus other Butcombe products are being welcomed.

Butcombe are celebrating the acquisition of their twenty-first pub, the iconic **Imperial** on South Parade in Weston-super-Mare. After Butcombe take ownership on 5th March, it will close for four days, with a grand re-opening on Friday 9th.

The previous owners refurbished it last year as the Imperial Brasserie, concentrating on food, but it will now revert back into the pub with the famous 'Imp Bar', selling four cask beers. The 'Bistro' will be retained and focus will be on function business in the upstairs Imperial Function Suite with its own bar and Butcombe Bitter on tap.

According to Neillson Stats, Butcombe is the fastest growing bottled beer producer in the UK over the last three months.

Margaret Evett



The new Butcombe beer for 2012
Adam Henson's Rare Breed

(available now)

Back by CAMRA demand
Old Vic Bristol Porter

(available February and March)



Good luck to
Mendip Spring

in the National SIBA Competition
Results on 8th March

Come and drink great cask beer at Butcombe's latest pub,
The Imperial
14, South Parade, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1JN.
Re-opening Friday 9th March.

News from Bath Ales



Say Hello to Barnsey

Bath Ales have changed the name of their premium bitter **Barnstormer** to **Barnsey** as from 1st January 2012. Barnsey is still the same beer as Barnstormer – and the pump clips, posters, the labelling on bottles and the colours and typeface used will all be as before.

So why Barnstormer in the first place and why now Barnsey?

The beer was named as a tongue in cheek joke, in dubious honour of a good friend of the brewers – Stuart Barnes, ex Bath Rugby and England fly half – in essence a bit of fun. The new name reflects their considerable admiration of Stuart (known affectionately as Barrel Barnsey) who still enjoys a beer or two with his mates at Bath Ales. And customers were already shortening the name Barnstormer when asking for it in the pubs. Stuart commented: “At long last an ale Knighthood in recognition for services to beer drinking over the years!” So Barnsey it is!

Seasonal Ales

Despite more Festivity being brewed than ever before at the end of last year, including double shifts before Christmas, it sold out very quickly. However the end of January **Golden Hare** returned, a 4.4 % golden ale brewed with floor malted Maris Otter barley and Goldings hops. Tasting notes for Golden Hare are as follows: “We’ve given Golden Hare a smooth-yet-dry taste. It’s wonderfully fresh and delightfully zesty.” More details can be found on the Bath Ales website www.bathales.com.

Also the return of strong bitter **Rare Hare** has been confirmed for April/Easter. Rare Hare has been described as a “Turbo Charged Gem” and at 5.2% ABV is the strongest brand in the range. Rare is a limited edition ale that’s available for a short time around Easter this year. In the tasting notes, Rare Hare is described as full in flavour and appreciably dry and clean on the palate. It’s a supremely smooth premium ale.

Bath Ales has grown a Beard!

December saw the opening of Beerd Craft Beer and Pizza bar, described as “one of the first bars of its type in the West ... this new concept bar has been introduced to capture those customers with an interest in world beer.” It’s situated opposite the Highbury Vaults on St. Michael’s Hill. Robin Couling, Bath Ales’ retail director explained: “We love great beer, both our own and the best from around the world. We expect Beerd

to become a vibrant, exciting venue that gives drinkers something different. We believe beer enthusiasts will embrace this new concept and enjoy what Beerd has to offer.”

Customers can choose from half a dozen cask ales and a variety of keg beers, (as well as a large variety of beer in bottles, kept in fridges) and they can be enjoyed in either pints, halves, one-third or two-third pint measures. For those wanting food there are bar snacks and a range of pizzas “created with ingredients imported from Naples in Italy, baked in a special oven on the premises.”

Bath Ales Biking Bonanza

Bath Ales are once again organising their annual Biking Bonanza charity bike ride, which raised £6,500 in 2011, and which this year will be held on Saturday 9th June. It caters for all levels of cyclists and takes place on the Bristol to Bath cycle path. Everyone gathers at lunch time at the half way point, which is the brewery, where Bath Ales will provide a barbecue, a bar, of course, and live music and entertainment. There is usually a raffle (last year for a bike) and proceeds go the Frenchay After Burns Children’s Club.

Bristol Beer Festival

Bath Ales is delighted to confirm that they will once again provide all stillage and bars for the Bristol Beer Festival. They are also privileged to have been invited to join with Bristol Beer Factory and others to brew **Collaboration 2012** especially for the festival.

The Wellington

The rooms in the Wellington are currently undergoing a drastic refurbishment and extra rooms are being added so that Bath Ales will be able to offer excellent boutique-style accommodation, ranging from single and double rooms to twin rooms with ensuite facilities. “Quality never goes out of fashion,” they say.

Rumours

Rumour has it that Bath Ales are very close to securing two more retail sites and it is understood that they are on the edges of their current trading area. More on that next time...

Roy Sanders



Our pubs...

...for those who know





<p>Beerd 157-159 St Michael's Hill, Bristol, BS2 8DH 0117 9744567 www.beerdbristol.com</p> <p>Graze 65 Queen Square, Bristol, BS1 4JZ 0117 9276706</p> <p>The Hare on the Hill 41 Thomas Street North, Bristol, BS2 8LN 0117 9095140</p> <p>The Hop Pole 7 Albion Buildings, Upper Bristol Road, Bath, BA1 3AR 01225 446127</p>	<p>The Live & Let Live Clide Road, Frampton Cotterell, Bristol, BS36 2EP 01454 772254</p> <p>The Salamander 3 John Street, Bath, BA1 2JL 01225 428989</p> <p>The Swan Bath Road, Swineford, Bristol, BS36 6LN 0117 9324101</p> <p>The Wellington Gloucester Road, Bristol, BS7 8HA 0117 9511022</p>
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**Record player with extensive
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Sign up a local pub to Community Pubs Month!

In April 2012 CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is to launch a new national pub campaign in a bid to get more people than ever involved in championing the importance of the community pub.

Community Pubs Month (CPM) is a initiative organised by CAMRA to highlight the importance of local pubs. The closure of many much-loved pubs and the ongoing threat to many more has been well documented. CPM is aiming to promote the awareness of local pubs and all that is good about them as invaluable community assets.

The aim of Community Pubs Month is to give pubs a planned national celebration in April to host events that could last one day, a week or a month. It allows pubs to try different marketing and if successful may help pubs become more viable in the future.

Any community pub can take part in this initiative. The hope is that a good number in the Bristol and surrounding areas are willing to join in to raise the profile and therefore footfall into community pubs.

So, what can I do as a regular pub user or as a licensee to get involved in CPM?

A new web site – www.communitypubsmoonth.org.uk – will give pubs full details of the promotion. It will also list details of what pub events are going on around the country and list a range of suggestions of things that pubs can consider as part of the promotion. Here are some examples.

- Host some “meet the brewer” sessions.
- Hold a series of matching beer and food evenings.
- Celebrate our patron saint on the 23rd.
- Charity nights.
- Hold a mini beer festival.
- Host games and/or quiz evenings.
- Hold sports themed evenings – there are lots of major sporting events in April such as the London Marathon, Champions League semi-finals (17th, 18th, 24th & 25th) and FA Cup semi-finals (14th & 15th). Why not run a weekend promotion that covers both games and incorporates a loyalty passport scheme to encourage the community to use the pub over the Saturday and Sunday? Perhaps anyone who buys 10 pints of real ale over the weekend wins a prize donated by a local brewery that could sponsor this event. This does not mean they have to drink the 10 pints if you are worried about promoting something that is not ‘respon-



sible drinking’. It just means this is the number of pints they have to purchase.

- The Grand National.

Pubs can use any of the suggested promotions or come up with their own. They can have as many or as few as they wish. Each pub can choose how much time they wish to devote to CPM – it maybe one week in the month, one weekend, the same day every week, e.g. every Tuesday, every weekend – or even the whole month!

There is a free promotion pack available through the web site. These will include a variety of posters including ‘empty belly’ posters where pubs can advertise forthcoming events, plus beer mats, leaflets, pump clip crownners, etc.

NOTE: all pubs listed in the current CAMRA Good Beer Guide will automatically be sent a CPM promotional pack direct from CAMRA HQ – so please, customer/landlord, only order for non-current Good Beer Guide pubs.

Let’s all get behind our community pubs! Packs should be ordered well before April if possible, so that pubs can plan their events.

Landlords and landladies, please let us know what you are doing to promote Community Pubs Month as soon as possible. We will be issuing a press release to promote what is happening in April – so let’s have the details.

Please consider visiting the web site today and sign up and order your free promotional pack. We look forward to hearing from you.

Pete Bridle

Liquid asset

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www.otterbrewery.com
Relax with an Otter

WYE'S WORDS No. 12

Butty Bach
PREMIUM ALE
WYE VALLEY
BREWERY

“ PINT OF BUTTY AT NIGHT, ”
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Butty Bach is a Welsh term for **little friend** – and this smooth and satisfying premium ale has certainly made a few friends in its time. Brewed using locally grown Fuggles, Goldings and Bramling Cross hops, Butty continues to delight new fans and old followers in equal measure. **4.5% ABV**

www.WyeValleyBrewery.co.uk

WYE VALLEY BREWERY

SHARE OUR TASTE FOR REAL LIFE

BRISTOL PUBS GROUP

The Bristol & District CAMRA Pubs Campaigning Group – or Bristol Pubs Group for short – was formed in response to the growing number of pubs in the Bristol area closing or being drastically altered. The Group was launched formally in 2008 with the support of local councillors, members of the trade and the media.

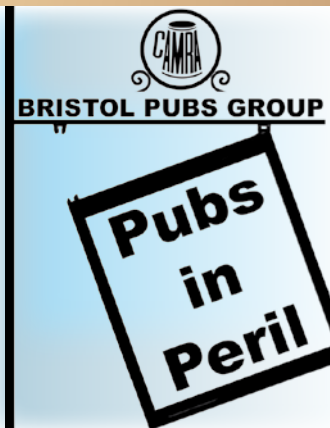
Our aims are simple.

The Bristol Pubs Group will:

Promote the use of community pubs.

Campaign against closure of pubs that could be viable.

Campaign against insensitive alterations.



Bristol Pubs Group pub news

There have been a lot of goings on in our local pub scene over Christmas and the beginning of the year. Starting in Old Market the **Palace Hotel**, aka Gin Palace, has its freehold advertised with Fleurets. It is however still open and trading on its lease until its full term. However, the **Coach and Horses** in Gloucester Lane is closed and its lease is for sale, and the **Long Bar** in Old Market Street, though still trading, has its lease for sale with Melrose.

The **Russell Arms** in Ducie Road, Lawrence Hill is 'To Let' with Admiral Taverns and is open. In Hotwells the **Bag O'Nails** has been re-opened by real ale stalwart Luke Daniels following a long period of closure. This is a long-awaited opening and we are sure it will be well supported. Nearby the **Plume of Feathers** could have had its final moult as it looks set for possible conversion into non-pub use. The **Alma Tavern** in Clifton Down, with its upstairs theatre, is for sale with Christie & Co. This unusual combination has worked well together over the years and we hope that it can continue under new ownership. Meanwhile the **Red Lion** in Clifton has changed in to a wine bar and is not selling draught ale but there are still several traditional pubs in that vicinity if that's your fancy, for example the **Jersey Lily** on Blackboy Hill which has recently re-opened. The **Greyhound** in Clifton Village has also recently re-opened.

Kingsdown has been dynamic of late with the opening of a brand new pub called **Beerd** on St. Michael's Hill. Formerly a music shop, then Rustic Vine, this new pub is a "craft beer" bar that will focus on speciality beers from small breweries around the globe, as well as from the pubs' creator Bath Ales – exciting stuff. Not so exciting is the closure of the **Kingsdown Vaults** in Kingsdown Parade and the impending demolition of the **King's Arms** in Little Paul Street.

South Bristol can, more than many areas, ill-afford the loss of yet another pub but the celebrated **Shakespeare** in Totterdown is currently closed and its future is unknown. But all is not lost in Bedminster where the **Plough and Windmill** in West Street has re-opened.

Elsewhere in the city, Eastville free-house the **Greenbank** has unexpectedly closed its doors but the **Golden Bottle** in Lockleaze has had its re-opened – excellent news for Lockleaze that has suffered no pubs open

of late. Over the border in Horfield the **Fellowship** is open for business but the rumour is that Tesco have their eye on taking on the lease. Those baddies that prey on our pub heritage, the dreaded supermarket chains, also have their eyes on the **Bell** at St. George and the **Wayfarer** in Brentry. Expect bad news for those pubs' future prospects. In Henbury the **Blaise Inn** has its freehold on the market and finally in Bristol, the **Greyhound** on Lodge Causeway in Fishponds has its lease for sale with Melrose while the pub still trades.

In North Somerset, JD Wetherspoon has a new outlet opening soon in Nailsea which has taken the local name of the **Glassmaker**. In Kenn the **Drum and Monkey** has re-opened and in Pensford the **Rising Sun** has its freehold for sale but is currently open for business. Pub reports in South Gloucestershire are that the **Highwayman** in Kingswood is still pending a planning decision on its fate, whether it is to be demolished for housing or if the pub can be saved and given a new lease of life. Staying in Kingswood the **Royal Archer** has closed, but expect to see the **Tennis Court Inn** opening soon.

If you're unhappy that your local pub may be at risk of loss then let your local councillor, MP and local authority know your feelings, and drop a line to us, the Bristol & District CAMRA Pubs Campaigning Group. Keep an eye on and look after your local pub, but most of all – keep using and enjoying it!

Mike Jackson

Bristol Pubs Group appeals to readers for help

The latest figures released by CAMRA in January 2012 show that we are losing pubs through closure at the rate of around 16 a week! Bristol Pubs Group does its best to monitor the situation locally, within the area covered by the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA.

One of our main aims is to save pubs which are considered important to the communities they serve. The sorts of things we look out for include pub closures, 'for sale' signs appearing, planning applications, building work taking place, changes of licensee, and even sometimes the re-opening of pubs. Apart from the latter, these can sometimes be a sign of a threat to a pub's future survival.

A large problem for us is our having only a few members to help with this. The approximate area we cover spans from Weston-super-Mare eastwards to Wells, north to Saltford and onwards to nearly reach Hawkesbury Upton, north-west around Thornbury over to the River Severn. We just don't have the number of volunteers to monitor every pub in this area. Our members may not pass through some more suburban or rural areas. A sign of change may be unknown by us, but not to you.

This is where you may be able to help. If you spot the sorts of changes mentioned above, including pubs reopening, we would appreciate your notifying us. Our email address is bristolpubsgroup@yahoo.co.uk and our postal address is **Bristol Pubs Group, PO Box 2960, Bristol & District CAMRA, Bristol, BS6 9FW.**

Thank you in anticipation.

Tim Belsten

Rucking Mole joins the pack!

ALL YEAR ROUND

IN SEASON

Tap Bitter 3.5%abv
Smooth malty flavour & clean bitter finish

Best Bitter 4.0%abv
Well balanced, copper coloured bitter

Molennium 4.5%abv
Deep amber coloured premium ale

Rucking Mole 4.5%abv
Clean, dry & malty golden bitter

Landlord's Choice 4.5%abv
Dark, strong and smooth hoppy bitter

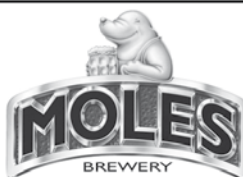
Molecatcher 5.0%abv
Copper coloured ale with spicy hop aroma

Holy Moley 4.7%abv
Spring beer that's heaven's scent

Barleymole 4.2%abv
Straw coloured Summer ale

Molegrip 4.3%abv
Rich ruby red, Autumn brew

Moel Moel 6.0%abv
Warming Winter ale



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www.molesbrewery.com

Rummer Renaissance

The main reason Bristol Pubs Group came about was to save landmark inns like the Rummer in central Bristol. In severe danger of becoming yet another statistic in the seemingly never ending round of permanent pub closures, throughout our existence we've kept a wary eye out for any developments regarding the fate of this once very popular venue – even writing to Bristol City Council to try and find out "what's occurring".

Knowing that one half of the sprawling old premises is enjoying a new life as the Rummer Hotel (on the St Nicholas Market side of the site) we have been keen for the High Street element get the same loving treatment. Life however, is not that simple, and the location has a complicated ownership in place, hence the time that has been taken regarding its fate.

After writing to one of the Council's officers on this topic we were assured that it was the aim of the Council to maintain it as a pub (the brief history below was written to support our enquiry) but were warned that the negotiation could be lengthy. Imagine then our mixed emotions when decorators were spotted inside the High Street elevation ... only to be told that it wasn't going to re-open as a pub. As soon as this was flagged up, Pints West's Bath correspondent, Andrew Swift, spotted an ad for the Rummer promoting it as "The Looking Glass Arts Space" – gloom and doom from our perspective or what?

This necessitated instant investigations on the part of Bristol Pubs Group and our first recourse was to see the manager of the Rummer Hotel, Brett Hirt. He was able to allay our fears about the building by saying that the move was only temporary and that the Council just wanted to make use of an empty building for the short term. A laudable aim but it really got us worried.

The building is listed Grade II and this will hopefully save its surviving interior. I asked Brett about the Rummer's famed 'Parliament Clock' but he's unaware of its whereabouts now, but he does know where two of the old brass Rummer signs are (Clifton) and the large wooden oversize Rummer 'glass' that used to reside in the upper bar (Isle of Wight!).

I told him I've got a picture of a whisky 'still life' that came from the old Rummer cellar Whisky Bar that dated back to Berni times in the early 1960's. It depicts a cork topped whisky bottle with the cork pulled, a cigar and glass of whisky on a marble topped pub table. Underneath it bears the legend "This old advertisement of John Walker's, issued around 1900, was found during the restoration work at the 'Rummer'".

A brief history of the Rummer

The Rummer is Bristol's most venerable pub, it has the city's first licence dated 1241, when it traded as the Greene Lattis, and it is sited in the oldest part of the city, in the High Street, just yards from the crossroads that once formed the heart of Bristol for over a thousand years. With extensive cellars dating back to Anglo-Saxon times, the inn has played a full part in many of Bristol's most historic events, hosting royal visitors such as Elizabeth I, Charles I and II, William III and even Cromwell during the Republic.

Politicians such as Edmund Burke made speeches from its balcony and others sparked rioting around the time of the Parliamentary Reform

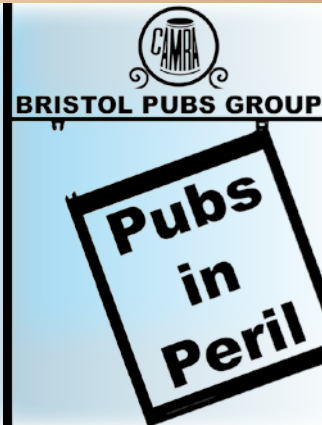
Bill when the pub lost its shutters, door frames and even part of the coach office. This had been created when the Rummer became the country's first coaching inn when it took part in the mail coach revolution that ultimately went around the world. Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge published his first magazine 'The Watchman' from here and other major episodes of Bristol's literary and sporting life were witnessed within.

The twentieth century wasn't very kind to the Rummer; its Medieval façade was bricked over and for many years of its recent past the High Street elevation has been boarded up and 'improved' with banal graffiti. The pub had a post war renaissance under the Berni Brothers banner, when they used it as one of their many flagship Bristol inns, but since that time the building has been down on its luck. Now is the time to give the inn another renaissance, using it as a cornerstone for a revival of this whole area of Bristol which surely deserves another chance given its history and location?

For other histories of the Rummer, please go to the Rummer Hotel's classy website or look up Duncan Shine's excellent article on "The Rummer Re-furb" in Pints West 68 (2005-6).

Here's hoping the Council are true to their word and the Rummer comes back in all of its former glory when, in Brett's words, "...the ale starts flowing again".

Mark Steeds (photos by Brett Hirt)



Some beer festivals to look out for

Star Inn, Vinyards, Bath

St Piran's Cornish Beer Festival 2nd to 5th March. Cornish beer, Cornish pasties and, more likely than not, Cornish singing.

Grand Pier, Weston-super-Mare

The Grand Pier is holding a beer festival on Saturday 17th March. "We are working with Butcombe to put this together."

Portishead Town Football Club

As part of their centenary year celebrations they are holding their inaugural beer festival on Friday 27th and Saturday 28th April. Tickets will be available from the Clubhouse and the Sports Shop in Portishead High Street at a cost of £5 (which includes a glass and two drink tokens). They are hoping to have at least 20 beers and 10 ciders.

Rose & Crown, Rangeworthy, South Glos

The 10th Annual Rangeworthy Beer Festival, Saturday 19th May. Afternoon 12 to 4.30 £5, evening 7 to midnight £8 in advance/£10 on the day. Admission includes souvenir tankard and programme. Tickets can be purchased from the Rose & Crown (01454 228233).

BADRAG - Bristol And District Rare Ales Group

BADRAG exists to encourage brewers, licensees and customers to try out some of the less commonly featured beer styles. This is fully in keeping with national CAMRA objectives but the Bristol Group goes a little further in extending the regular mild, porter, stout and low-alcohol bitter styles to include strong mild, barley wine and wheat beer. The main effort of the group is to arrange numerous social events where all the different styles can be sampled by anybody that cares to come along. Many regular members of the group are, of course, CAMRA members but the main objective wouldn't be achieved if taking part was restricted. Events are therefore open to all comers so please feel free to join up with the Group on any of the social gathering or mild trail events listed below – the more the merrier.

BADRAG, thanks in no small part to the willing participation of brewers and licensees in the area, has been remarkably successful in re-introducing mild and other rare styles. So much so that planning a series of mild trails for CAMRA's 'Mild Month of May' was a major task with over 40 pubs to be included – and not an exhaustive list at that! This Spring edition of Pints West always features the normal social gatherings plus a busy schedule of 'Mild Month of May' events. This year, owing to the extended Bristol Beer Festival starting one night earlier than usual, the regular March social would clash so an alternate date has been arranged.

We start the season with a regular social gathering on **Thursday 8th March**, starting at the **Bridge Inn** around 7pm and moving on to the **Cornubia** at about 9pm. Both pubs are well known for featuring a range of beer styles.

Since April will be CAMRA Community Pubs Month, BADRAG will be launching a series of 'Mild Month of May' events with an introductory social gathering on **Thursday 19th April** (the normal BADRAG meeting date for aficionados – the third Thursday of the month) when we will be visiting the **Barley Mow** (Dings) and the **Volunteer Tavern** (St. Judes), both very much community pubs which have established a tradition of serving a varied selection of ale.

Then we get into the main series of weekend mild trails, mostly designed to be in reasonable walking distance but with one coach trip where seats will need to be booked.

Saturday 28th April - Clifton & Kingsdown Trail

We start at the **Portcullis**, soon after 12.00, and plan to be leaving by around 12.45; moving on to the **Lansdown**, **Quinton House**, **Victoria**, **Vittoria**, **Highbury Vaults**, **Green Man**, **Robin Hood**, **Hillgrove Porter Stores** and **Gryphon**. This is one of the larger trails so some may prefer to join us for part of the trail. Trail leader Steve Wilcox (07973715959) can be contacted if you plan to meet up part-way.

Saturday 5th May - Harbourside & Bedminster Trail

The **Eldon House** will be the starting point, again shortly after 12.00 and moving on around 12.45 to the **Hope & Anchor**, **Bag O'Nails**, **Grain Barge**, **Merchant's Arms**, **Nova Scotia**, **Orchard**, **Tobacco Factory**, **Hen & Chicken** and **Robert Fitzharding**. Trail leader will be Phil Luxton.

Saturday 12th May - East Bristol Trail

My repeating the start time would get very boring, so let's just say they all follow the same pattern. A bus pass or Day Rider ticket will be handy for this trail. It starts at the **Miner's Arms** (St. Werburghs) and moves on via the **Van Dyke Forum** (Fishponds), **Sugar Loaf** and **Chelsea Inn** (Easton), then the **Old Stillage** and **St. George's Hall** (Redfield). Timing will be critical if everybody is to catch the various buses so make sure to keep an ear out for the five-minute warning.

Thursday 17 May - BADRAG Social Gathering

For a more relaxed evening join BADRAG at the **Annexe**, Bishopston around 7pm. Next stop will be the **Chimp House** around 9pm. The bus stop is just over the road and a frequent service means you can be

BADRAG, the Bristol & District Rare Ales Group, is a campaigning group within the local branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Its aim is to promote the rarer styles of ale such as stouts, porters, old ales, strong milds, barley wines, milds, low-alcohol session ales, wheat beers, brown ales and traditional strength IPAs.

www.badrag.co.uk BADRAG@camrabristol.org.uk

back in the city centre in just a few minutes.

Saturday 19th May - South Gloucestershire Trail

This will be a coach trip and seats will need to be booked via Andy Gray (Bristol & District CAMRA Social Secretary). Departure is from the customary point (the **Cornubia**, Temple Street) at 11.45. First stop will be at the **Cross Hands** (Winterbourne Down) followed by the **New Inn** (Mayhill), **Grapes** (Chipping Sodbury), **Beaufort Arms** (Hawkesbury Upton), **Salutation Inn** (Ham) and **Anchor** (Thornbury) before returning to the city centre. Steve Laurance will be trail leader.

Saturday 26th May - City Trail

The final trail of Mild Month of May starts at the **Three Tuns** then goes on to the **Commercial Rooms**, **Bank Tavern**, **Horts**, **Bridge Inn**, **Cornubia**, **Kings Head** and **Seven Stars**. Trail leader will be Denise Swain.

All the featured pubs are well worth a visit at any time but will be making a special effort to feature mild ales during CAMRA 'Mild Month of May'. BADRAG thanks all participating pubs for making that effort and we hope that more people than ever before will join with us in discovering the delightful range of mild ales that will be on offer. It is a sociable group so nobody will be left to sit in a corner, but feel free to come along with a couple of friends and discover some of the gems on the Bristol pub scene.

George Clarke, BADRAG Coordinator

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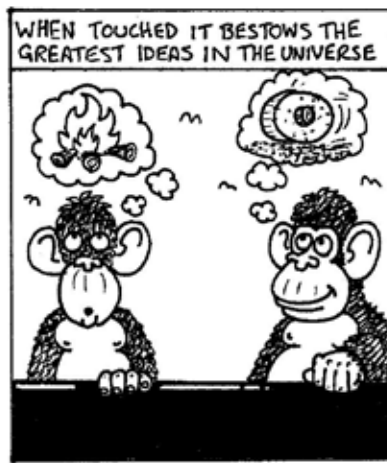
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Apologies to Stanley Kubrick
EDWARD TABERNER 16/05/11

My Mild Opinion

Mild: a style of beer ubiquitous with the term 'dying style of beer'. I honestly believe that is no longer the point. After Rudgate Ruby Mild and, last year, Mighty Oak Oscar Wilde mild, won Champion Beer of Britain, popularity has surged, almost pushing brewers to concoct their own version of a mild. The success isn't restricted to national brewers either. Cotswold Spring Old Sodbury Mild (now re-branded as OSM) and Arbor Ales Mild West have both picked up awards within the last couple of years.

Such is the resurgence of this style of beer, it is high time it lost its tag as a 'dying' style of beer. It has successfully been revived, what with Mild May campaigns and many awards, that the claim it is 'dying' seems to hinder its progress rather than help it now. People no longer want to associate themselves with a 'dying' beer, or 'old-fashioned' beer, when people are very happy to drink this style. Furthermore, by shaking off the now unwanted tag, this style of beer could last a lot longer than just the Spring months of the year.

On a side note, I have always believed that mild is more of an Autumn beer than Spring. I believe the style lends itself more to October than May. But hey, I'm just one person, and definitely haven't got enough say in the matter to change the drinking habits of the entire nation!

Mild by definition is "a low-gravity beer, or beer with a predominantly malty palate". Predominantly, milds are dark in colour, though occasionally you can stumble across 'light' milds, which are golden in colour. A good example of the golden style would be Dawkins Ingot, a 3.5% dark golden mild.

The beer has insanely little bitterness, and is very smooth indeed. On pouring, the beer has a clear, dark golden hue, but still very much a light coloured mild. On the nose, you get shortbread, and maybe a bit of sweet orange, almost marmalade. The marmalade-esque notes carry through to the taste, but with a strong toffee taste counterbalancing the orange. Toffee carries through to the finish, with no bitterness whatsoever. Very smooth and quaffable.

In terms of a dark mild, one of the best local examples would be Cotswold Spring OSM. Most drinkers would remember this beer as Old Sodbury Mild, a fantastic mild that uses oats and rye, as well as plenty of dark malt. As mentioned earlier, this mild is very well respected, and won SIBA Supreme Mild of Britain last year, and you can see why when you taste it.

This dark brown coloured mild has a sweet aroma, with a touch of

GRANDAD was *always* a bit of a practical joker.

So I should have known better when he took me down his local. Especially when he blindfolded me. Hand on elbow he steered me to a chair and sat me down. "Here, sup on this," he ordered, holding a glass to my lips. "What is it Grandad?" I CHUNTERED, apprehensively. "Never you mind," was the stern reply. "Just get it down you." I sipped, timidly, then again, bravely.

Then again, with NARY a care in the world. It was smooth, hoppy and dry. "It's delicious!" I exclaimed, ripping the blindfold from my eyes to reveal my Grandad's laughing face. "Theakstons Mild," he chortled. "I can tell it with my eyes closed. Now you can too." "But, even my dad says Theakstons Mild is only for pensioners," I protested. "Aye, your father's just not old enough to appreciate it," said Grandad, his eyes twinkling merrily. "But I reckoned his son would be."



caramel, before starting a tad bitter. You can get the Bramling Cross hops at the start of the taste, before a big hit of chocolate notes on the palate. The chocolate notes carry through to the finish, which is a little drier than you may expect for a mild, but it works beautifully. Expect the flavours to linger for a very long time as well.

Joseph Goldsworthy

Shine on Cheddar

If I say 'Cheddar', what's the first thing you think of? What? A Saudi Arabian city on the Red Sea coast? Sorry, I think you misheard me, I said 'CHEDDAR'. Yes, that's it. SO, what do you think of? The Gorge? The Cheese? Cheddar Valley Cider? The Reservoir? The Caves? The Cheddar Ales Brewery? That's a good answer in this publication, well done. Two points!

The truth is that in the village of Cheddar we have one of the world's most outstandingly beautiful places less than an hour's drive from Bristol. No wonder it swarms with tourists all year round, wheezing up Jacob's Ladder to be rewarded by one of the finest views in all England, or plunging underground to hear how Richard Gough discovered and explored the gorge's most famous cave, or popping into the museum to learn that human remains have been discovered here that date back some 14,700 years, to a time when bears roamed Britain, and not everyone was completely fed up with 'A Question of Sport'.

It is these swarms of tourists that perhaps explain why, in a parish whose residential population is little more than 5,000, there are still six pubs open and trading. So, when you've given the kids some money to play crazy golf and buy Mega-Sourz sweets with which to torture you later, where can you retreat for a decent pint?...



The White Hart

If you enter the gorge from the top – parking is free out of season, and not unreasonable at peak times – the first pub you will reach is the **White Hart**, just off the main through-road in the Bays. This is a lovely old stone building with pretty cream shutters, a magnificent beast on the sign and the nostalgic livery of Usher's of Trowbridge (Printer's Devil, 1986, Founders Ale. Happy Days...). There are bench tables at the front, and a pretty lawned garden to the side from which to watch Cheddar's own mountain goats. Inside is a two-roomed pub with beams on the ceilings, and plenty of tables for diners. However, out of season there is also a good number of locals and the pub has a warm and convivial feel. In terms of the beer, it was St Austell Tribute Ale, Sharp's Doom Bar and Butcombe Bitter when I visited, plus Thatcher's Cheddar Valley Cider. I like my bitter *bitter* so went for the local brew from Butcombe and it didn't disappoint.

Head across the stream and continue along the Cliffs until you see the **Galleries** on your left, through a welcoming arch, and up a pretty stepped slope and garden to an elevated entrance to perhaps the most self-consciously 'touristy' pub in the village. Certainly the garden is a cracking place for people watching as the hoards shuffle from cheese shop to cider shop via the cheese-and-cider shop. Inside the Galleries there is a sun-trap conservatory area as well as two smaller rooms. There is a pool table, and the food is very much of the quick and easy mass catering variety. The only real ale available on my visit was the seemingly ubiquitous Doom Bar. Now I quite like the fruity-flowery taste of Doom Bar, but it doesn't inspire me in the way the same brewery's 'Special' does.

Next pub as you walk back toward the centre of the village is the **Riverside Inn**, by the roundabout with the beautifully named 'Tween-



The Galleries

town', which is where I'd live if I were in a children's TV programme. The Riverside itself is built from the same stone as pretty much the rest of the village, and seems to have had the most 'refurb' money spent on it of all the pubs in Cheddar. A very plush lounge and dining area to the left is complemented by a more traditional saloon to the right. There is outdoor drinking garden to the rear and, as the name suggests, the stream runs past the bottom of the car park. For quaffing purposes, there was Doom Bar, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Otter Ale and the local Cheddar Ales Potholer, brewed just off the Draycott Road to the south of the village. Potholer is a lighter than average best bitter with an almost



The Riverside Inn

toffee-apple tang, but not as sweet as that suggests. I do really like the brew, but more importantly in a village with such a famous name, it says Cheddar on the pump clip. Surely more of the pubs should stock Cheddar Ales beers? I know the big chains have rules, but both the pubs and the local economy would benefit from a bit of local solidarity... Thatcher's Traditional Cider on offer here too.

Right in the centre of the village, where the more practical and less touristy shops are, you will find the **Bath Arms Hotel**. This is an impressive and imposing building in its own courtyard, with numerous bench seats out the front, and a children's play area to the rear. There's also a skittle alley. The grand facade of this lovely old building would



The Bath Arms Hotel



The King's Head

make it a dead cert to be the one where a murder happened if a TV detective were staying here (Midsomerset Murders perhaps). No such unpleasantness on my visit however. Beers here were Cheddar Potholer (yay!) and also St Austell Tribute and Sharp's Doom Bar (yawn).

Tourists and casual visitors would be forgiven for thinking that's all the pubs in Cheddar covered, but a little way up the hill at the western end of the Gorge, tucked away from all but the nosiest of visitors, is Silver Street, home to two more eminently visitable hostleries.

At number 1, the **King's Head**, a painted 18th century pub with a large car park to the rear, is an absolute joy. Enter from the rear car park and you come through a covered outside-but-not-outside area with a magnificent wrought iron chair. There are flagstones on the floor, Bristol Shipping Company clocks on the wall and a plethora of arcana throughout. Find your way through to the small, snug bar and you'll have a choice of Wells Bombardier Best Bitter, Bath Gem and Butcombe Bitter. On my visit the Gem was at its caramel best, and only enhanced by having a ginger cat perch contentedly on my lap as I drank.

Along at number 35 is the **Gardeners Arms**, a pale green two-bar



The Gardeners Arms

pub with a pretty garden to the rear and chickens at the far end of the car park. Its out-of-the-way location probably explains why this is a good locals' pub, and the bar on the left was awash with conversation when I visited. Doom Bar (I mean, really, I've nothing against Doom Bar, but five of the six pubs?!!) and Butcombe Bitter were on handpump, and it is refreshing to be able to say the Butcombe completed my Cheddar wobble with every pint in good condition.

Duncan Shine

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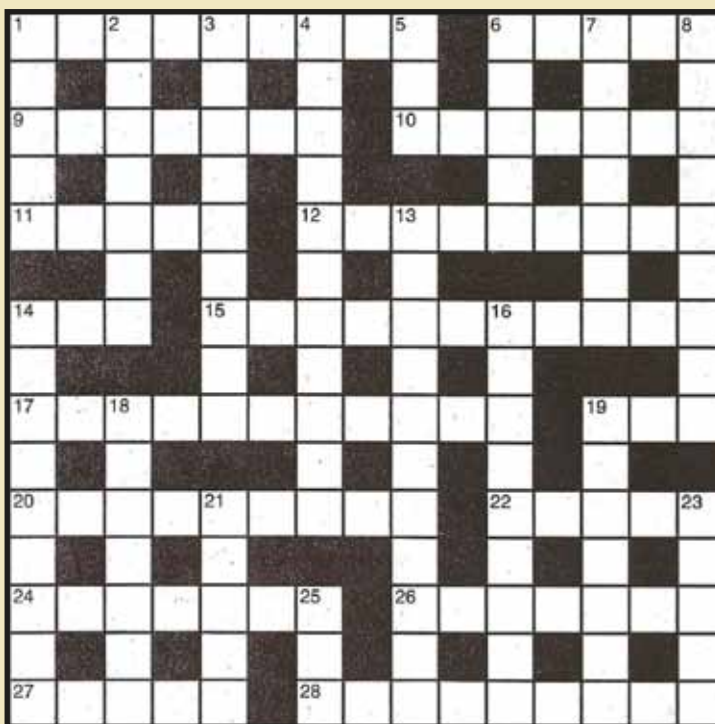
Compiled by Pete and Eddie Taberner

CLUES ACROSS

1. Use your loaf when lacking energy to find a national brewer (9)
6. Possessor of the golden touch amid a short measure (5)
9. Very fashionable bitter fermented in Cornwall (7)
10. The first whisky swallowed by tipsy Norse god on high is sickening (5,2)
11. Increase income by leaving beer out of stew (5)
12. Taller and loftier glass needed for beer from Ossett brewery (9)
14. Large volume, mostly gone, but leaving everything inside (3)
15. Beginning of a session - or when the pub closes? (2,3,6)
- 17 & 19 dn. Plant a brewery in this city! (7,4,7)
19. Pine for half a barrel (3)
20. Filton real ale pub supported by the local contributing tax (9)
22. Describing very bad style of drinks through straws (5)
24. A real ale that might be drawn at the Robin Hood? (7)
26. Copper-free cauldrons used to prepare pork fat for the cook (7)
27. Scottish muscle's to collect the glasses (4)
28. Is this Mr Hyde's favourite real ale pub? (3,6)

CLUES DOWN

1. What all teetotallers enjoy, right? Only initially (5)
2. Just one IPA or ESB for a starter (7)
3. Exmoor is a beast! (5,4)
4. Chaps keep score after Lee gets drunk. Singularly simple (11)
5. Just a small Dorothy Goodbody to make the point (3)
6. Little Alan spilt rum over the wall decoration (5)
7. Local pub chain where the famous academic atheist might be found (7)
8. 'A' celebrity status gained by award-winning Bristol pub 7 times over (9)
13. Violently crumble Ecstasy into headless beer for a sweet result (5,6)
14. Screwed up Lara bores at the Three Tuns (5,4)



16. Lack of self-restraint requires a sure nerve when tipsy (9)
18. Pint ensemble encapsulating strong flavour (7)
19. see 17 ac.
21. A local is the centre of sexual interest (5)
23. Lass I jostled shows real fibre (5)
25. The weak Tory politician is definitely not teetotal (3)

Solution on page 16

Celebrating real cider and perry

Jerry Says ... Wassail!



The Bristol branch of the Campaign for Real Ale helped celebrate the West Country's wonderful tradition for real cider and perry with a Wassail in Somerset in January.

Branch Cider Officer, Jerry Fletcher, organised the trip to Rich's Cider Farm near Highbridge for 14th January 2012, bringing 22 branch members to join more than 300 other hardy folk in the ceremony.

According to Jerry, the origins of the word 'Wassail' are still debated, but says "Waes Hael – from the middle English – means literally good health or you be healthy. The tradition itself is thought to go back as far as having a connection with Anglo-Saxon pagan rituals."

So what's it all about? Jerry says, "The purpose of Wassailing is to awake the cider apple trees, to scare away evil spirits and to ensure a good harvest in the Autumn." While details of Wassail ceremonies vary, the core elements tend to include a display of the previous year's fruit, the recitation or singing by gathered Wassailers and an offering to the tree spirits of toast soaked in cider. At Rich's, the gift of toast was made by the Wassail Queen, who was "lifted by bearers into the boughs of the oldest tree." Some cidemakers also fire guns into the apple orchard, presumably to wake the good tree spirits and ward off any evil ones.

Jerry says that, according to tradition, the first drink to be tasted at a Wassail should be mulled cider, and CAMRA branch members made sure that that tradition was kept. Also on offer were dry, medium and sweet ciders from Rich's, with the dry being Jerry's favourite. A hog roast also helped keep out the cold. Entertainment was provided by the Mangled Wurzels and what Jerry describes as "a very 21st century disco".

Rich's is a family-run business, based at Mill Farm, Watchfield, near Highbridge. The farm has a cider shop selling cider, apple juice, apple brandy and a whole host of locally-produced food and other drinks. The shop was shut on the branch's visit, although there was more than enough to keep visitors entertained on Wassail night. As Jerry says, "after a cold but enjoyable night, we arrived back in Bristol in the early hours; the event also raised over £4000 for Somerset Children's Hospice. Thanks for a great night!"

Lesley Huxley

(Jerry Fletcher can be contacted by email: jeremyfletcher@virginmedia.com)

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In conversation with Cotswold Spring

We've all heard a lot of talk about current economic times, famous brands such as Blacks Leisure and Barratts Shoes being amongst those that have recently gone into administration, plus so many pubs closing. But what impact is this having in the beer industry and what are our local breweries doing to make sure that they survive and come out the other side?

Being a CAMRA Brewery Liaison Officer I thought that I would ask Mark Frankcom, MD of the Cotswold Spring Brewing Company based in Chipping Sodbury, about their approach to business at this difficult time.

How do you see the performance of the economy?

Mark: We have more than 200 pubs as customers, so we get to see a pretty good cross section of pubs – both local and further afield. There's no doubt that some pubs are finding times a bit difficult, but there are plenty of others who are doing as well today as they ever have.

How are local brewers responding?

Mark: Well, there is some fierce competition on the ground. Not a week goes by without us hearing that 'so and so' brewery is offering some very aggressive price deals.

Is it changing what you do at Cotswold Spring Brewing Co?

Mark: Our pricing policy has always been to offer a good price for a craft beer. We can't compete on price with the bigger brewers – not even

some of the local ones, so we have to compete in other ways. Fortunately, we are blessed with one of the best brewers around in Nik Milo. Our beers are consistently good, and we find that people are increasingly seeking us out. Innovation is also key, and we have introduced new branding and several new beers this year, including Ambler, Vixen and Trooper, our IPA.

How has it impacted your marketing?

Mark: Keeping an eye on what you spend is always important, but that is especially true right now. Our focus is to really look after our local market, and that is why we are sponsoring this year's Bristol Beer Festival.

I'm glad you mention that. Is there anything the drinkers can look forward to?

Mark: Yes – we've rebranded our award-winning Honey Bear as Keeper and this will be at the festival. Also, although it's really an autumn beer, we're brewing a one-off special of Trooper, our IPA, for the festival because so many people have asked us for it, so we're giving them what they want.

So it is encouraging to know that Cotswold Spring is going from strength to strength in a difficult economic climate. The brewery offers many styles of beers (three regular and eight seasonal) and appears to have a defined strategy for future success.

Steve Matthews

Pete Waterman opens new Box Steam Brewery site



Standing with Isambard Kingdom Brunel are Pete Waterman, sales director Kevin Newbould and Box Steam Brewery owner Andrew Roberts

Legendary 80s pop impresario, Pete Waterman, officially opened a new 800-square-metre production facility for the Box Steam Brewery in Holt, Wiltshire, on Thursday 26th January. The move to larger premises, and the taking on of five new staff, enables Box Steam Brewery to increase production of their handcrafted real ales such as Tunnel Vision and Derail Ale significantly; and has been prompted by impressive year-on-year sales growth since the company was first established in 2004.

Guest of honour Waterman joined customers, suppliers and press at the official opening day for a guided tour of the brewery followed by a tutored tasting of their key beers paired with food by renowned food and drink matching expert Fiona Beckett.

Waterman commented: "Box Steam Brewery combines my two



Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Pete Waterman raise a glass to the new brewery (photos by Jon Snedden)

greatest loves in life: beer and railways – and I've been imbibing their real ales for many years. I was honoured to be asked to open the new site and wish them all the best for the future."

Kevin Newbould, national accounts director at Box Steam Brewery, told guests: "We have ambitious plans to continue growing the business and this new site will enable us to drive greater distribution across the UK – and particularly Bristol and the South West."

Box Steam Brewery is a family-run producer of artisan, handcrafted real ales, available in both bottle and cask to the licensed on trade and independent retailers across the UK. The company is proud of its South West heritage and takes inspiration from the legendary 19th century engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, creator of key local landmarks including the Box Tunnel next to the original brewery site.

The Box Steam range of beers

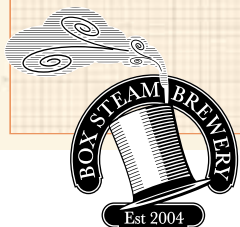
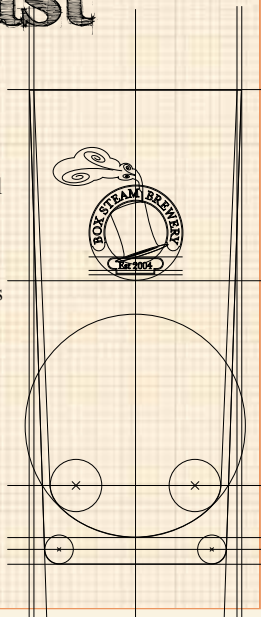
- **Chuffin' Ale** – A dark amber best bitter with a light fragrant nose and a pleasing hoppy character.
- **Golden Bolt** – A light, straw-coloured bitter with a hoppy aftertaste.
- **Tunnel Vision** – A well-rounded traditional bitter beer. Clean tasting with a slight bitterness on the palate.
- **Funnel Blower** – A dark brown porter contrasting the bitterness of roasted barley and malts with a subtle vanilla sweetness.
- **Piston Broke** – A subtle single-hopped golden-coloured beer with a hoppy aroma and a dry finish.
- **Dark & Handsome** – A smooth creamy beer with hints of lemon and blackcurrant and liquorice undertones.
- **Derail Ale** – A wonderfully traditional India Pale Ale with an intense floral aroma and balanced bitterness.

Our ales are built to last

(until the next round)

At Box Steam Brewery we believe in the exacting standards of yesteryear. Like the expertise and attention to detail that created age-defying engineering marvels like Brunel's Box Tunnel.

Our own quality control and meticulous methods mean that every pint of our handcrafted beers is as flavoursome and characterful as the first one. So your delight in them will last a lifetime.



engineered by hand
www.boxsteambrewery.com

Real Ale on Platform 3

There are many really good real ale pubs and bars on or adjacent to railway stations throughout the UK. Over the past year or so, the bar at Bristol Temple Meads station (on platform 3) has got in on the act. They started with Greene King IPA, but more recently the Butcombe beer range has been added, first with Butcombe Bitter.

Unlike Bristol airport, the beers have generally always been available. On the most recent visits, in addition to the Greene King offering, there have three other handpumps featuring Adam Henson's Rare Breed, Butcombe Bitter and the Old Vic porter. A shame, then, that you need more than a reason for a good draught ale (a ticket) to get you through the barriers.

Well done to First Great Western for embracing the real ale campaign!

Lesly Huxley

The Bag O'Nails is open again

The Bag O'Nails is something of an institution in Bristol. It must be one of the smallest pubs in the city and for a number of years now has been a major attraction for drinkers of real ale.

The Bag traded for a number of years – since 1862 in fact – as the American Eagle. It changed to its present name in the 1990s when it became a successful real ale venue – and indeed Pub of the Year – with the legendary Gordon in charge. He was followed by Geoff, who continued the good work, and Alan. Then two more changes of licensee saw a gradual decline in trade until the pub closed in 2010.

After 18 months of closure the Bag reopened in December 2011 in the capable hands of Luke Daniels. Luke ran the Cornubia for a while, and before that worked at various ale pubs in Bristol including the Merchants Arms at Hotwells, the Wellington on Gloucester Road, the Three Tuns, the Hare on the Hill and Smiles Brewery Tap. He has taken a fifteen-year lease, so he intends to be around for a while.

The interior of the pub has changed very little apart from some deep cleaning, a brighter look due to several coats of paint and some minor repairs and alterations (e.g. some of the gas lights are working again). However there have also been numerous other repairs and improvements outside the bar area, some of which were structural.

Currently there are five real ale pumps and two ciders, although this may change as trade develops. Luke tries to always have at least two pale beers and one dark one, with strengths generally between 3.7% and 5% alcohol by volume (ABV). He aims to sell the best locally and nationally distributed ales plus some new ones. Recent examples have included beers from Arbor Ales and Ascot, Cheddar, Dark Star, Glastonbury and Moor breweries. Luke says it is a long learning experience now that he can order any beer he likes.

A choice of 37 bottled beers from England, Belgium, Germany and the USA is available. Most of them are bottle-conditioned (real ale in a bottle). Luke aims to extend the range to nearer 100 by the end of 2012. There is also an eclectic range of spirits including some very unusual ones.



A beer festival is planned for the Autumn, probably on the same weekend as previous licensees did it.

Other attractions include some vintage beer glasses, a “vinyl only” music policy (customers are encouraged to bring their favourite records along) and some retro furniture, fittings and ornaments.

Opening hours are 5 to 11 Monday to Wednesday, 11 to 11 Thursday to Saturday and 11 to 10.30 Sunday. Simple food (bread, cheese and pickles) is likely to be available at all times.

You can keep in touch with the Bag through Facebook (Bag of Nails, Bristol), Twitter (@LukeBagofNails) or email (luke.daniels@gmail.com). The pub also has a website (www.bagonails.110mb.com) and a blog (sagaofnails.blogspot.com).

Norman Spalding

(Photo by Richard Brooks)

P.S. The pub kitten is called Malcolm.

The Bristol Beer Factory brews a wide and diverse range of Craft Beers.

Beers available from
www.bristolbeerfactory.co.uk
 - The Brewery Shop, North St
 - The Brewery, Durnford St

or from our outlets at the
 - Tobacco Factory
 - Grain Barge
 - Barley Mow

THE ELDON HOUSE

'Seldom do you find such a treasure as the Eldon. It's the village pub in the middle of the bustling city'.

- ★ 5 Real Ales usually locally sourced and competitively priced.
- ★ Silly prices with ales from £2.20 a pint. Saturday 12 - 6pm Sunday 6 - 11.30pm.
- ★ Good quality food served all day with a fine selection of wines available.
- ★ Monday night quiz, Tuesday film night and live music on Thursday.

6 Lower Clifton Hill just off the triangle opposite QEH school, Bristol BS8 1BT
 Tel: 0117 922 2271 email: enquiries@theeldonhouse.com Website: www.theeldonhouse.com

Solution to the crossword on page 13

Across: 1 Whitbread, 6 Midas, 9 Tribute, 10 Throw up, 11 Raise, 12 Excelstor, 14 All, 15 At the outset, 17 & 19 dn Bristol Beer Factory, 19 Fir, 20 Ratepayer, 22 Sucks, 24 Longbow, 26 Lardons, 27 Specs, 28 The Jekyll. Down: 1. Water, 2. Initial, 3. Brute fact, 4. Elementally, 5. Dot, 6. Mural, 7 Dawkins, 8 Superstar, 13 Crème brûlée, 14 Arbor Ales, 16 Unreserve, 18 Intense, 19 see 17 ac, 21 Pubs, 23 Sisal, 25 Wet.

A new brewery for Bristol Towles' Fine Ales



Having been CAMRA's Brewery Liaison Officer for Berrow brewery when I used to live down in Somerset, I have continued to keep in touch with James Johnstone and his wife Andrea at the brewery after moving to Bristol just over 10 years ago. James established this genuine microbrewery in 1982 and, after running it for almost 30 years as well as undertaking brewing consultancy work, he decided in 2010 to retire from brewing and put the brewery up for sale. As reported briefly in the last edition of Pints West, the brewing plant had been purchased in 2011 by Andrew Towle who planned to use it to establish Towles' Fine Ales in Bristol. I first made contact with him last December to learn of his plans for the new brewery.

Andrew has brewed for Archers, Smiles, Wickwar and Newmans breweries. It has always been his ambition to run his own brewery, ever since his first job at Archers in Swindon working for Mark Walington. This ambition was further cemented following subsequent promotions within the Archers brewery. He went on to work for Smiles brewery in Bristol as a shift brewer and was then promoted to senior brewer under Neville Mort. Andrew wanted to further develop his skills, still with a view to opening his own brewery so he left Smiles and spent a few years working in sales.

When he was eventually made redundant, he found a job at Wickwar brewery in Gloucestershire, which reminded him how much he had missed the world of real ale. He left Wickwar in October 2010 and, following a short stint at Newmans brewery in Caerphilly, he decided it was time his ambition was finally realised. A well-timed article on the sale of Berrow brewery in Pints West sealed his fate, and much of 2011 was spent finding the right premises, moving equipment, obtaining

the necessary licences and fitting everything from gas to waterproof floors. Eventually, on Friday 3rd February 2012, James came over from Berrow to assist with the first brew and Gyle No. 1 (Berrow 4Bs) was born.

Andrew intends to continue brewing 4Bs, Porter and Topsy Turvy from the Berrow range, the latter being a personal favourite of mine, and is keen to introduce his own beers, starting with Old Smiler (a best bitter that should come in at about 4.1% ABV). He is also keen to commence brewery tours, something he did a huge amount of for Smiles.

Towles' Fine Ales is situated in part of the old Bristol Wagon & Carriage Works Company buildings on Easton Road and the brewery includes a tasting room, which it is hoped will eventually resemble a tiny pub, and a shop. It is based on the tower brewery principle, making use of gravity to move the beer from one stage of the brewing process to the next. Andrew's wife Anna will be running the office side of the operation. They aim to produce consistent beer using traditional methods.

Having sampled the final beer brewed by James at Berrow last year, which was a 4.2% ABV amber bitter brewed using New Zealand hops and named, appropriately enough, Finale, I am looking forward to trying the first beer brewed by Andrew at the new brewery in Bristol using the former Berrow plant. Look out for Towles' Fine Ales on the LocAle bar at CAMRA's 2012 Bristol Beer Festival.

Dave Graham

*Towles' Fine Ales, Unit 11, Circuit 32, Easton Rd, Bristol BS5 0DB
Tel: 0117 321 3188 Email: info@towlesfineales.co.uk
Web: towlesfineales.co.uk*

Return of the Westbury Wobble

After a couple of years off, the traditional New Year's Sunday afternoon crawl – the 'Westbury Wobble' – returned to Westbury-on-Trym.

We started off at noon at the **Victoria** in Chock Lane for some excellent Wadworth ale from their standard range plus the seasonal Old Timer. It was a good move to go to this one first as it looked like it was going to be very busy with Sunday lunches.

We then left to head up to the **Mouse** to sample some of their fine ales and friendly welcome. The beer, which included ale from the Theakston brewery, was very good.

The next stop was to the branch's Club of the Year, the **RAFA Club**. Good selection in here including Wye Valley Butty Bach, plus some complimentary snacks on the bar to soak up the beer (nice touch).

Although it was difficult to drag ourselves away we still had a timetable to try to keep to so we moved on to the **Post Office Tavern** at around 2pm, for a warm welcome from Vikki and her team, and of course the pub's dog. In here amongst others they had on Bass and beer from Otter and Kingstone breweries.

Our next stop was the '**Dirty Duck**' (**Black Swan**) on Stoke Lane where the new landlord Andy was very welcoming, providing some very hot but exceptionally good roast potatoes to continue soaking up the beer. Three beers on offer here, Doom Bar, Courage Best and a seasonal beer, the name of which escapes me (well this was the fourth pub and I'm sure I'd had more than one in some of the previous ones).

Next was the **Prince of Wales** just a short stagger or stumble away. They had their usual selection of Butcombe Bitter, Bass, London Pride and Courage Best plus the seasonal Butcombe Christmas Steps. By now the timetable had definitely become more 'fluid'!

Our next stop was a visit to the '**Hole in the Wall**' (**White Horse**) which had Bass and Butcombe Bitter served straight from the cask, and a quiz machine which kept a few of the group entertained for a while.

The final pub was the Ember Inns **White Lion**. A good selection of beer here, which changes on a regular basis. This is definitely a place to watch for the real ales. I remember sitting by a lovely real fire which

we kept going with the logs at the side. Some of us formed a team and partook in the pub quiz and actually won! Not a bad effort under the circumstances, considering it had been a long day.

So all in all a very good day out with some excellent beers and venues. At its peak the group numbered around 30, though not all could be there for the whole crawl. Looking forward now to next year's or even a similar one in the summer.

Andy Gray

The Victoria
Real Ale
Real Food
Real Pub

Chock Lane, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol
www.thevictoriapub.co.uk
0117 9500 441

Bath Beer Festival

4-5 May, Widcombe Social Club

The 34th Bath Beer Festival – the first in its new canalside location – will be on 4th and 5th May, with an evening session on the Friday, and lunchtime and evening sessions on the Saturday. For those coming from out of town, the new venue is even closer to the railway and bus stations than the old one. It also has many more advantages – more of that anon.

The first thing you need to know is that, as the venue is about half the size of the old one, demand for tickets is likely to be high – so to make sure of getting in you need to book in advance.

Evening sessions on Friday 4th May and Saturday 5th May run from 6pm to 11pm. The lunchtime session on Saturday 5th May runs from 11am to 3.30pm.



Widcombe Social Club
with the spire of St Matthew's church rising behind it

Tickets go on sale on Thursday 1st March and can be ordered from: Martin Ansell, 38 Maple Gardens, Bath BA2 3AG (make cheques payable to Bath & Borders CAMRA, enclosing a SAE and details of which session you want to attend).

Tickets will also be available from Thursday 1st March from the Old Green Tree, Green Street, Bath; the White Horse, Shophouse Road, Twerton; the Star, Vineyards, Bath; and the Widcombe Social Club. Cheques or credit cards cannot be used to buy tickets at these outlets – cash only please.

Tickets cost £6 for each of the sessions, and include a free souvenir glass and programme. Card-carrying CAMRA members also receive £2 worth of beer tokens at the event.

A wide-ranging selection of over 48 real ales will be available, plus at least six traditional ciders. Details of the beers available will appear on the website when they are finalised.

Basket meals and other hot food will be available at all sessions. Anyone who has sampled the food at Widcombe Social Club – all home-cooked and freshly prepared – will not need any recommendation. The social club bar will also be open for snack food (crisps, nuts, etc) as well as a full range of alcoholic and soft drinks.

There will be live music at all sessions. The line-up, which will be every bit as good as in previous years, has yet to be finalised – watch the website for updates – but the lunchtime session on the Saturday should be a real treat. The weekly open mic session at the White Horse in Twerton – CAMRA Bath & Borders Pub of the Year – has become something of an institution in recent years, with many top local musicians performing on a regular basis. Your chance to catch some of the best acts comes on Saturday lunchtime, with an acoustic session billed as 'The White Horse Presents', sponsored by the pub.

For those in search of a quieter pint, there will be a quiet room and a canalside patio. And, for anyone who's not a fan of vertical drinking, there are loads of comfortable seats, plus tables to put your glasses (and food) on.

All of which is as tempting as it sounds – but, to reiterate, the venue is around half the size of the old one and demand for tickets will be high. Once they have sold out they really are all gone, and, if you're plan-

ning to buy a ticket on the door, the chances are you'll be out of luck. Details of which sessions have sold out will be posted on the website.

GETTING THERE

From the railway station: From the main entrance, turn right, go through the tunnel under the line and carry on across the metal footbridge; from the back entrance, head straight across the car park and cross the metal footbridge; once across the river, carry straight on across two sets of pedestrian lights, turn left and you will see the social club at the end of the street, opposite the White Hart.

From the bus station: Cross the concrete footbridge over the river, turn left and walk under the railway and alongside the river to the traffic lights. Cross two sets of lights, turn left and you will see the social club at the end of the street, opposite the White Hart.

From Bath city centre: From North Parade, head south along Pierrepont and Manvers Street to the railway station, go through the tunnel to the left of the station, go over the metal footbridge, cross two sets of traffic lights, turn left and you will see the social club at the end of the street, opposite the White Hart.

LAST DIRECT TRAINS FROM BATH SPA

Listed below are the last direct trains from Bath Spa station to various destinations on Friday 4th and Saturday 5th May. Line closures for engineering work over this weekend have been checked and services should be running normally, except for the last scheduled train on Saturday night to Trowbridge, Westbury and Frome which is replaced by a bus beyond Bradford on Avon.

All the departure times listed below are for through trains from Bath Spa:

- For Bristol Temple Meads: Friday: 2319 & 2349 (& 0115 Sat am); Saturday 2308 (& 0013 & 0108 Sun am).
- For Nailsea, Yatton, Worle, Weston-super-Mare, Highbridge, Bridgwater, Taunton, Tiverton Parkway, Exeter St Davids: Friday 2319; Saturday 2200.
- For Keynsham: Friday 2302; Saturday 2308.
- For Filton Abbey Wood, Patchway, Severn Tunnel Jn, Newport & Cardiff: Friday & Saturday: 2236.
- For Bristol Parkway, Yate, Cam & Dursley, Gloucester and Cheltenham: Friday & Saturday 1908 (a later service to Parkway, Yate and Cam & Dursley is available by changing at Temple Meads; later services to Gloucester and Cheltenham Spa are available by changing at Swindon).
- For Chippenham, Swindon, Didcot, Reading & London Paddington: Friday 2247; Saturday 2243.
- For Avoncliff, Freshford & Bradford on Avon: Friday 2338; Saturday 2329.
- For Trowbridge & Westbury: Friday 2338; Saturday 2238.
- For Frome: Friday 2338; Saturday 2107.
- For Warminster & Salisbury: Friday 2238; Saturday 2236.
- For Romsey, Southampton, Fareham & Portsmouth: Friday 2135; Saturday 2136.

NOTE: Although every effort has been made to ensure these times are correct, you are advised to check with National Rail Enquiries before travelling (www.nationalrail.co.uk).

WELCOME TO WIDCOMBE

Bath & Borders CAMRA look forward to welcoming you to the 34th Bath Beer Festival at its great new venue. While you're there, why not make a day of it and spend some time exploring this little-known corner of Bath. For centuries Widcombe was separate from Bath and it still retains a special identity. Pubs include the **White Hart**, built in the 1730s and boasting a Mediterranean-style garden at the back; the **Ring of Bells**, a noted gastropub; the **Ram**, a defiantly traditional boozer; and the **Royal Oak**, a recent Good Beer Guide entry with superb outdoor areas and big-screen TVs for all the sporting action. There are also a couple of excellent coffee shops on Widcombe's main street.

Although only a couple of minutes from the station, Widcombe is on the edge of the country. The energetic can take a brisk walk up Beechen Cliff for a panoramic view over Bath, while another splendid walk takes you up



BATH & BORDERS BRANCH



Widcombe Hill, turning right along Church Street to the old church, where a left fork takes you to footpaths through fields – less than a mile from the city centre and with not a house in sight. For most people, though, it's the canal that is the star attraction. Long derelict, it finally reopened after years of hard graft in 1990, and is now one of Bath's unmissable sights. Whether it's watching boats negotiate the locks, looking out for kingfishers – they are there – or just wandering up for an ice cream by the old pumping station, there are few better ways to spend a sunny summer's afternoon. And if you carry on, you come to Sydney Gardens, eighteenth-century pleasure gardens frequented by Jane Austen, where two tunnels are adorned with the carved heads of Old Father Thames and Sabrina, spirit of the Severn.

And to whet your appetite a little more (if you still need it whetting) here are:

Ten things you (possibly) didn't know about Widcombe

1. The Ring of Bells, now a gastropub, was known in the 1970s as Rosie's, after the landlady. Rosie's catchphrase, which could be heard every night at drinking-up time, was "C'mon, ye buggers." If this failed to work, as it almost invariably did, she moved on to "C'mon, ye buggers – police'll be 'ere in a minute." The catchphrase reached a national audience when the BBC broadcast a folk session from the pub. As the programme drew to an end and the final number started to fade out, the nation was regaled by Rosie shouting "C'mon, ye buggers."

2. In 1842 a wooden toll bridge, which cost a halfpenny to cross, was built to link the railway station with Widcombe. In 1877, when the Bath & West Show was held on Beechen Cliff, high above Widcombe, hundreds of people swarmed off an excursion train and onto the bridge, which collapsed beneath their weight, with the loss of ten lives. The metal bridge that replaced it is still known as Halfpenny Bridge today.

3. Dates chiselled into the wall under Halfpenny Bridge indicate flood levels in days gone by.

4. The Kennet & Avon Canal, which joins the River Avon at Widcombe, opened in 1810 to link the Avon with the Thames. When a new road was built in the 1970s, two locks on the Widcombe flight were replaced by one, known as Deep Lock, adjacent to the social club, the second deepest canal lock in the country.

5. The new road through Widcombe is called Rossiter Road, after Bill Rossiter, the former landlord of the Royal Oak on Pulteney Road. Before the Second World War, the Royal Oak was a noted venue for mouse racing.

6. The hart above the entrance to the White Hart once stood over the doorway of the White Hart Inn in Stall Street, which Charles Dickens featured in *The Pickwick Papers*. The inn was demolished in 1869, but, because of its literary connections, the carving of the hart lived on. Apart from gracing the doorway of the White Hart in Widcombe, it was guest of honour at a civic banquet to honour the memory of Dickens in 1899, and the centrepiece of a Dickens exhibition in America. Its local nickname is Nobby, the reason for which you will discover if you stand underneath it and look up.

7. Prior Park Road, which runs to the right of the White Hart, was originally a tramway built in the 1730s to carry Bath stone from Combe Down to a wharf on the river. The cottages on the right-hand side of the road were built for the stonemasons.

8. The Ram, which opened as a beerhouse in the 1840s, was one of the last pubs in Bath to brew its own beer. Locals can still recall seeing brewing operations in the yard at the back.

9. Widcombe is home to the world-famous Natural Theatre Company, whose headquarters are opposite the entrance to the social club. Legend has it that the Natural Theatre Company got its name because the fledgling company used to visit the late-lamented Hat & Feather in Walcot after rehearsals and share a two-pint bottle of Taunton Natural Cider, known to

generations of West Country cider drinkers as 'Natch'. As they came through the door, the landlord would call out, in anticipation of their inevitable order, "Here come the Natch Theatre Company." The name, as so often happens in these cases, stuck. Or so the story goes.

10. Although it has not been a pub for many years, the Golden Fleece on Pulteney Road has one of the finest pub facades in Bath, with not only its name but 'Lamb Ales & Stout' chiselled into it. The Lamb Brewery in Frome, which once owned it, was absorbed by Usher's in the 1950s.

BATH COMEDY FESTIVAL

If you're a comedy fan and want a sneak preview of the Widcombe Social Club, the Bath Comedy Festival runs from 30th March to 9th April, with 15 acts booked for the club – including such famous names as Arthur Smith, Jeremy Hardy, Barry Cryer, Ronnie Golden, Jarred Christmas, Will Hodgson, Earl Okin, Bill Smarme and Henning Wehn. Details at www.bathcomedy.com.

Andrew Swift



The Widcombe flight on the Kennet & Avon Canal is a hive of activity on summer weekends

34th CAMRA BATH BEER FESTIVAL



WIDCOMBE SOCIAL CLUB

South of the River, five minutes walk from Bath Spa Station.

FRIDAY 4th MAY: 6pm – 11pm

SATURDAY 5TH MAY: 11am – 3.30pm & 6pm – 11:00pm

OVER 48 REAL ALES

plus Traditional Cider, Foreign Beers and Hot Food

LIVE MUSIC AT ALL SESSIONS

Tickets: £6 each session

Advance Tickets available by post from Wednesday 29 February from: Martin Ansell, 38 Maple Gardens, Bath, BA2 3AG.

Please state session(s) required and send cheque made payable to Bath & Borders CAMRA with SAE. The new venue is smaller than the Pavilion, so order tickets early to avoid disappointment!

Ticket price includes souvenir glass and programme. Card-carrying Camra members receive £2 of vouchers at each session at the door.

Advance Tickets also available (cash only) from:

Old Green Tree, Green Street, Bath
Star, 23 The Vineyards, Bath
White Horse, 42 Shophouse Road, Twerton, Bath
Widcombe Social Club, Widcombe Hill, Bath

See website www.bathandborderscamra.org.uk for more details



BATH & BORDERS BRANCH

Pub and brewery news from the CAMRA Bath & Borders branch

Bath and Surrounding Villages

Old Green Tree, 12 Green Street, Bath

Landlord Tim Bethune celebrated the tenth anniversary of his being at the Old Green Tree on Thursday 1st December with a beer especially brewed for the occasion by Blindman's.

Park Tavern, Park Avenue, Bath

This pub, situated on the western edge of Victoria Park, closed in September. We understand that it has been sold for housing.

Raven, 7 Queen Street, Bath

A *Pie and Real Ale* evening was held at the Raven on Monday 6th February with the Pieminister himself present to demonstrate his consummate cooking skills and to sign copies of his new book *A Pie for All Seasons*. Meanwhile a raffle was held in aid of the charity RICE.

Rising Sun, 3-4 Grove Street, Bath

This pub, which had been closed towards the end of 2011, has been refurbished and re-opened.

Rising Sun, 58 Lymore Avenue, Bath

This pub, situated in the Twerton area of Bath, has recently closed. The future of this pub is uncertain.

Royal Oak, Lower Bristol Road, Twerton, Bath

This pub, known locally for its large and ever-varying range of beers and ciders, closed suddenly shortly before Christmas. Happily, following a change in the lease, the pub re-opened on Saturday 21st January. Former pub manager Chris Powell is now the licensee and leaseholder. There has been a small makeover. Meanwhile the pub continues to specialise in real ales sourced from all over the country, offering seven beers on hand pump, and ciders also from far and wide.

East Somerset

Packhorse, 13 Christchurch Street West, Frome

This pub, just outside the town centre, had been closed for a while towards the end of last year but has since re-opened.

Greyhound Hotel, 1 High Street, Midsomer Norton

We understand that this lively town-centre pub changed hands last year and has since undergone a major refurbishment.

Full Moon Inn, 42 Southover, Wells

This smart and cosy pub, just off Wells city centre, was bought from Punch Taverns in August 2011 by John Bowles and Mark Reed and, fol-

lowing a substantial refurbishment, will be re-opening as a freehouse in March 2012. CAMRA members John and Mark will be stocking a range of local real ales and traditional ciders at reasonable prices with a discount permanently available to CAMRA members. The Full Moon will also offer a range of home-cooked food at competitive prices. The pub will retain its traditional feel with bar, snug and eating areas, together with open fireplaces and a large walled garden at the rear.

West Wiltshire

King's Head, Chitterne, near Warminster

This pub, situated in the idyllic village of Chitterne on Salisbury Plain, re-opened relatively recently. Now going from strength to strength it is building a good local trade. Beers from the nearby Plain Ales brewery and Fuller's London Pride feature regularly.

George, High Street, Codford, near Warminster

This pub, situated on the southern edge of the Bath and Borders branch area, is under new management

Dove Inn, Corton, Warminster

This pub, tucked away in the Wyllye valley, closed on 15th January for a major refurbishment and extension. It is believed that the work will take around a month. If the beer choice and quality remain the same this should be an excellent pub when it re-opens.

Prince of Wales, 94 High Street, Dilton Marsh

There has been a change of management, along with a small make-over, at this popular village local. Longstanding landlords Alan and Lynne Packman decided to retire from the pub business a year or so ago and finally sold the freehold to local pub-owning company Four County Inns just before Christmas. After holding a final party on Saturday 14th January, and a last Sunday evening quiz the following night, Alan and Lynne finally moved out of the pub during the following week. The pub closed for ten days for a minor refurbishment and opened again under new landlords Dawn, Kay-Leigh and Kev on Saturday 28th January to a packed house with an Irish American band playing in the skittle alley.

Alan took over at the Prince of Wales with his father, uncle and grandmother in July 1991, having previously run the Red Lion at Arlingham in Gloucestershire. Alan married local girl Lynne a few years later. From the start Alan ran the Prince as both a real ale freehouse, with usually four ever-changing guest beers, and as a pub that maintained its strong links to the community. The Prince has been in the Good Beer Guide continuously since the 1993 edition. Our best wishes go to Lynne and Alan, who continue to live in the village and look forward to using the Prince of Wales as customers.

Under the new landlords the mainstay beer of the pub has become Arkell's 3B, with the same brewery's Moonlight and Wiltshire Gold also regularly available. These are unusual beers for the area but already seem to have gone down well with the locals. Guest beers from other local breweries are already in hand and, at the time of writing (Sunday 12th February) cellarmen Kev was just about ready to tap his first guest beer, Stonehenge Great Bustard. Meanwhile Weston's Organic and Old Rosie ciders are regularly available.

Red Lion, 42a High Street, Heytesbury, near Warminster

This pub has been under new management since December 2011. The new landlords are from Australia and seem to have the right idea about how to run the pub. Beers from local brewery Plain Ales are a mainstay. We believe that the pub sold the last ever barrel of the brewery's Arty Party, which, due to the loss of availability of the New Zealand hops used to give the beer its distinctive flavour, has had to be discontinued. In its place the Red Lion now sells Plain Ales Innocence.

Carriers Arms, Stockton, near Warminster

This pub, which is situated in the idyllic village of Stockton midway along the picturesque Wyllye valley, has recently closed. We have no information on the reasons for closure or whether there are plans for the pub to re-open.

Woolpack, High Street, Sutton Veny, near Warminster

This pub, which had a major makeover around two years ago, con-



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tinues to go from strength to strength. Ringwood Best is the mainstay of the pub.

Prince Leopold, Upton Lovell, near Warminster

This pub, just off the A36 to the south of Warminster, has just celebrated one year under its new ownership. Three real ales are always available with usually 6X, a Butcombe beer and a guest, often from Keystone brewery, available.

Yew Tree, 174 Boreham Road, Warminster

This pub, situated on the southern edge of Warminster, has been under new management since around the beginning of December 2011.

Castle Inn, Bratton Road, Westbury

This pub, just off the town centre, closed last year and is up for sale. Selling agents Paramount are looking for £150,000 plus VAT for the freehold. At the moment the future of this pub is uncertain.

Horse & Groom, 18 Alfred Street, Westbury

This pub, just up from the town square, closed around New Year. The future of this pub is uncertain.

Railway Inn, Station Road, Westbury

This pub has had a major refurbishment, both inside and out, and is now serving Doom Bar and London Pride. Situated near the junction of Station Approach with Station Road, this pub is conveniently close to Westbury station and advertises itself as the "alternative waiting room".

Bell Inn, Wylfe, near Warminster

This pub, situated in the heart of the Wylfe Valley, is under new management. It is believed that the Bell is now owned or leased by the company who took over from the nearby Hidden Brewery. During a recent visit it was noticed that the pub seems to be doing well at attracting a younger clientele. Three real ales are available.

Steve Hunt

MP's behind bars!

All Hands to the Pumps!

The push to get MPs behind the bar to support the pub trade received a boost recently as Bath's local brewery, Abbey Ales, backed the campaign.

The initiative, launched by the head of the All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group, Burton MP Andrew Griffiths, and backed by the publicans' Morning Advertiser newspaper, urged MPs to support the trade by getting behind the bar.

Griffiths said the initiative would give publicans a chance to build a relationship with their local MPs and allow them to discuss the issues affecting their businesses.

With this in mind, Bath MP Don Foster, member of the APPG Beer Group, promised to get behind the bar at Abbey's Assembly Inn. Situated in Alfred Street, the Assembly is one of three pubs run by the brewery in the city alongside the Star Inn and the Coeur de Lion.

Alan Morgan, Managing Director of Abbey Ales said: "Don has always been very supportive of Abbey Ales and Bath's pub trade in general. In fact Don was so impressed with our flagship brew, Bellringer, that he arranged for it to be sold as a guest beer at House of Commons just days after we launched in 1997. We will be pleased to have him behind the bar with us." (The occasion was the afternoon of the last Thursday before Christmas.)

Alan added: "Issues such as record levels of red tape and beer tax need addressing if we are to help protect this great British institution and promote responsible drinking — our MPs can help make that happen."

Commenting further, Don said: "Pubs are a key aspect of our culture, history and modern society; however they are increasingly under threat with approximately 39 pubs closing every week across the country. In Bath we must ensure we do all we can to support these fantastic institutions that are so valuable to the city."

News from Dawkins Ales

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Dawkins beer news

Pacific IPA 5.5%. Big, full bodied, fruity and hoppy blonde beer
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Dragonslayer 5%: Classic English ESB for St George's Day

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B'Eire: Irish style, fruity red ale.

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Irish Whiskey Stout 5.3%: Dark and strong, made with real Irish whiskey.

For the Mild Month of May they will again be brewing three milds:

Milkmaid Mild 2.8%: Light, creamy and dark.

Ingot 3.5%: Rare golden mild. Juicy and smooth.

Miners Morris 3.8%: Dark, coriander-scented.

Dawkins pub news

Dates for your diaries of events at Dawkins pubs.

Spring Beer festival at the **Green Man** 29th March to 2nd April with over 20 LocAle ales plus ciders.

St George's Beer Festival at the **Victoria** 19th to 23rd April, returning for the fifth year with over 20 ales and ciders from around England.

For the Mild Month of May, all Dawkins pubs will be featuring guest milds alongside their own, and again will be running a passport-style trail with prizes.

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Contact Steve Plumridge steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk

Severn Vale CAMRA

How CAMRA came to Severn Vale

Having been a member of CAMRA for many years, I used to feel that there was no outlet for me to discuss beer and other topics regarding it, apart from friends who I met in a pub. I knew that CAMRA had branches, with one in Bristol, but not being inclined to travel to the Big City of an evening to attend a meeting with people I did not know – and even if I did the buses back to Thornbury of an evening were as rare as my son buying a round – so I had to content myself in reading Pints West. When all of a sudden, a light appeared from the east, – why don't we have a sub-branch in Thornbury? Well, if Weston can have one, why not Thornbury?

Now, being a simple person, I thought all that was needed was a few friends who were CAMRA members to get together and form a branch, then contact Bristol to tell them what we had done. How naive, a real plonker – I telephoned someone whose name I found in Pints West to

Severn Vale CAMRA is a sub-branch of the Bristol & District branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. The sub-branch covers roughly the area bounded by Thornbury in the north, Severn Beach in the south, the River Severn in the west and the M5 in the east.

tell him what I had in mind, to be told in no uncertain terms that is not the way it is done.

So not being one to give up (after 58 years of marriage it was a lesson I knew well) the next move was to ask around for help. Now, one of the criteria, I was told, was to have someone with a computer. (It was a long time before I was convinced to purchase one of these new fangled contraptions.) Then, my seed fell on fertile ground, in the shape of Dave Cox, landlord of the Anchor, Lower Morton. He listened (or appeared to) to my views, joined CAMRA, made some phone calls, and hey presto, a sub-branch was on the horizon.

Dave made arrangements and we both attended a Bristol branch meeting, then another, then another, but we got there. Letters were sent to all CAMRA members in the area and an inaugural meeting was held in the Anchor. I'd done it – we have our own Severn Vale sub-branch.

John Gatty

Budweiser Budvar Brewery visit

In mid November 2011 two members of the Severn Vale sub-branch, Keith McIndoe and Rod Lees, together with other CAMRA members Paul Dickinson and Dave Sutton, arrived in Linz Austria by Ryanair from London Stansted, where we picked up a car for our onwards journey. Our base for the three days was to be the UNESCO world heritage town of Cesky Krumlov in South Bohemia, just over an hour's run across the Czech border from Linz.

Cesky Krumlov is a picturesque medieval town in a valley setting, built around the meandering River Vltava and dominated by one of the biggest castles in the Czech Republic. It is in a popular holiday area for both Czech and foreign tourists.

Armed with the CAMRA Good Beer Guide to Prague and the Czech Republic, we spent the rest of day one exploring Cesky Krumlov and sampling our first Czech beers of the trip. It appeared evident after fighting our way through clouds of smoke to get into the first pub that a smoking ban was probably not in force. Nevertheless we enjoyed three of the local beers from the Eggenberg brewery based in the town. Beers sampled were two light beers, Svetle Vycepni and Svetly Lezak, and a dark beer Tmavy Lezak. Also tried was the famous Pilsner Urquell. Although other beers can be obtained in the many bars and restaurants of Cesky Krumlov the majority are from the local Eggenberg and Budvar breweries. We finished the night at Eggenberg's brewery restaurant where the complete selection of their beers was available including the cloudy yeast beer Svatovavlske.

On day two we travelled by local train the short distance to Ceske Budejovice – Budweis in German, hence the style Budweiser – and set out first to find the older of the two breweries that still survive. We eventually found the Samson Brewery but being a Saturday even the brewery shop was closed.

Before heading to the Budvar Brewery we called in at Hotel Maly Pivovar where a good range of Budvar beers were sampled – Svetly Lezak at 10 degrees and Tmavy Lezak, a dark beer, at 12 degrees. In the Czech Republic the beers are referred to by degrees which, broadly speaking, is the original percentage of fermentable sugar in the wort. The usual strengths are 8, 10 and 12 degrees, approximating to ordinary, best and strong (around 4.8% ABV) beer.

The Budvar Brewery is a large modern development and, although not on the scale of the American Budweiser Company, exports large quantities of beer around Europe and the rest of the world. The brewery is still rail connected and it was good to see rail wagons of beer being

dispatched to destinations within the Czech Republic.

There are various tours available but ours took just over an hour including sampling. There is a well stocked shop of beers and souvenirs and a restaurant, which unfortunately was fully booked on the day of our visit. The new beer, Pardal, was unusual in that a different picture of one of each of their employees (300) appears on individual bottles. Disappointingly, we did not sample the Budvar Strong which although available in the restaurant seems only for export.

Before catching the train back to Cesky Krumlov we visited Budvarka Pivnice, then to Restaurace Masne Kramy, Budvar's flagship pub and restaurant, for a Krouzkovany Lezak, a light krausened clear yeast beer at 12 degrees, followed by Kozel Velkopopovicky and Gambrinus Svetle at the Utri Sedlakuand – these went well with cold smoked sausage for a late lunch. Krausened beer has freshly fermenting wort added to the beer after lagering to restart the fermentation process to increase the carbonation level.

We then went on to the Potrafena Husa which had Staropramen Ne-filtrovaný, Granat, Cerný and Rezane. Finally, a draught Budvar Pardal at the station buffet completed our visit to Budejovice.

Back at base we called in at our smokey first pub and later dined in the Water Wheel restaurant where Krusovice Cerné, a dark beer, and Mustketyr, a golden lager, were drunk before retiring to our hotel after a very satisfying day.

Day three was spent visiting Hluboka Chateau and the UNESCO village of Holasovice. At lunch time we returned to Budejovice to search out the Samson beer but were unsuccessful. We consoled ourselves at a small riverside pub where Podskalák, a pale golden lager at 10 degrees, and an extremely dark Skalák Tmavé Speciální beer, both by Maly Rohozec, were sampled.

Travelling south from Budejovice we then came across, by sheer chance, the hostinec "U Petru", a Samson pub at last! Their beers seemed to be quite elusive and it was satisfying to end up with a clear gold B.B. Budweiser beer at 5%.

That evening we dined in one of the many cellar bar restaurants in Cesky Krumlov before spending a musical evening late into the night in the Hospoda Na Louzi Hotel where Eggenberg beers and Pilsner Urquell went down freely.

The following morning we departed early for Linz on the first part of our journey home having all experienced a very successful and enjoyable long weekend in South Bohemia.

Keith McIndoe & Rod Lees

Severn Vale CAMRA

Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival

I'd never been to the Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival before. To be honest, I'm not a great lover of beer festivals. I often find the beer is not at its best, they're too crowded, there's never anywhere to sit and the music's usually too loud. Maybe I'm just a grumpy old git who should have his own TV programme?

And getting to this one was no mean feat, either: 7.50 bus on the morning of 3rd February from Thornbury to Bristol Parkway; 9.10 train to Ashchurch, changing at Cheltenham Spa; bus into Tewkesbury (no published timetable, so who knows when we'd get there?); and then the same in reverse, with the added threat of bad connections leading to the possibility of missing the last bus from Parkway back to Thornbury at the staggeringly late hour of 6:43pm (I kid you not). Others from further afield had equally or even more daunting journeys.

And then, the weather forecast was for a high of about minus 1°C, with a northerly wind, and Rod's plan was to do a pub crawl before going to the beer fest (Rod being the one who seemingly knows every pub in the UK, and a large number outside the UK).

So all in all, pretty much a non-starter, right?

We were knocking on the door of the **White Bear** in Tewkesbury at 10:30, uncertain at first as to whether they were open. But we were very happy to be let inside and were given a hospitable welcome. Welcomed also by 'Smart Arse' from Preston – a good beer, but with a dreadful name and matching dreadful pump clip. Once warmed up – notwithstanding the ice lining the outdoor gents loo – we wandered a

couple of hundred metres back to another bear – the **Black Bear** – by all accounts the oldest pub in Gloucestershire, dating back to 1309.

Interestingly, and à propos nothing at all, I noticed there's a small residential road half way between these two pubs called 'Twixtbears'. Well – it caught my eye, anyway.

The oldest pub in Gloucestershire was closed. There were no opening times posted outside. Confident in the knowledge that this state of affairs would not persist for long, we dutifully hung around for 10 minutes until the doors were thrown open. And what a magnificent pub it is, too. I lost count of the number of rooms. There are dining rooms, lounges, snugs, bars – all strewn around what is, effectively, an island bar. A selection of five different real ales was available.

Further now into Tewkesbury, and into the **Nottingham**, another old-worldy pub on the High Street. Another wonderful pub, though I desisted because a) the beers were all readily available elsewhere, and b) there was still a winter ales festival to attend.

However, Rod's tour wasn't over yet. A short march brought us to the **Royal Hop Pole** – a large, wonderful building housing a Wether-spoon pub and hotel. It seems unfair that one town – probably only the same size as Thornbury – should have so many traditional, unspoilt watering houses.

By 1pm, we could delay it no longer. Off to Watson Hall – CAMRA membership cards at the ready – and into the thronging beer festival. I was wrong – there was seating available. But because of our late arrival, none was available to us. Ah well, back to standing. But – there was no music, there was ample space to lift your glass to your mouth, and I didn't have a single beer that I thought was in less than optimal condition.

There were some brain-damagingly strong beers on offer, with Dark Star's Imperial Stout taking the strongest beer title at 10.5%. The beers came from all over the UK, with about half being sourced from Wiltshire and further West. There were dark beers, stouts, porters, amber ales, and a fair selection of pale brews – around 70 different beers in all.

We were a group of seven people (Rod, Keith, Barry, Dave, Jim, Paul and myself), with Andy – who works in Tewkesbury – putting in a brief lunchtime appearance. Cap'n Sensible here stuck to those beers of around 5 to 5.5%, though some colleagues did try some of the stronger brews, kindly offering them round for sampling. Many of these power-brews were insanely sweet; I guess to provide the warmth expected of a winter ale, and to balance out the strength. You certainly knew you were drinking something very potent.

I tried Penzance Mello (5.5%); Freeminers Slaughter Porter (4.8%); the newly-founded Gloucester Brewing Co's Dockside Dark (5.2%); Great Western Brewery's Bristol Ruby Porter (5.2%) and Cotswold Spring's Vixen Winter Ale (4.8%), all of which were well enjoyed.

Suffice it to say that the return trip was unproblematic, leaving enough time for a quick half of something rather indifferent in the Beaufort Arms, Stoke Gifford before catching the last (6:43pm) bus back home.



The Black Bear in Tewkesbury

Aside from a beer festival though, I'm left to wonder where some of these beers might be sold? Certainly not in Thornbury where the selection of beers available is generally highly conservative, to be kind. Some of the truly free houses like the Old Spot in Dursley, or the Salutation in Ham, perhaps? But could even they manage to get through a nine-gallon cask of these strong beers in the three or four days 'window of freshness'? If not, does

this mean that these beers are indeed limited in availability to beer festivals? Whatever the answer, I'll probably be going to Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival again.

Martin Farrimond

Severn Vale diary

- **Fri 9th March** (lunchtime): Old Spot, Dursley.
- **Wed 21st March** 8pm: Sub-branch meeting, Bowl, Almondsbury.
- **Fri 6th April** 8pm: Pub survey trip to Oldbury-on-Severn, Littleton-on-Severn and Alveston.
- **Fri 13th April** (lunchtime): Old Spot, Dursley.
- **Wed 18th April** 8pm: Sub-branch meeting, Anchor, Oldbury-on-Severn.
- **Fri 4th May** 8pm: Pub survey trip, Thornbury town centre.
- **Fri 11th May** (lunchtime): Old Spot, Dursley.
- **Wed 16th May** 8pm: Sub-branch meeting, Wheatsheaf, Thornbury.
- **Fri 1st June** 8pm: Pub survey trip, north Bristol. Details to follow.*
- **Fri 8th June** (lunchtime): Old Spot, Dursley.
- **Wed 20th June** 8pm: Sub-branch meeting, Anchor, Thornbury.

*For up to the minute details, check out our diary page at www.severnval.camra.org.uk.

Severn Vale contact

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Severn Vale CAMRA

The Old Spot, Dursley

In 2007 the Old Spot in Dursley was proclaimed CAMRA National Pub of the Year. Having a liking for cask conditioned beer, I decided to board a number 311 (First) bus to Dursley from Thornbury, along with my eldest son Roger – who also enjoys a pint of ‘the good stuff’ – to try a pint or three of this hostelry’s wares. With me being of a senior age, this journey was taken F.O.C. thanks to my Diamond Travel Card.

On alighting from one of First Bus’s finest, and needing to take no more than thirty paces, we stood at the bar of this delightful public house, which had a row of around eight hand pumps offering a wide selection of real ales and cider and, to add to the my delight, no doolally music or one-armed bandits. Could heaven be better than this? What more could one wish for? Ah yes, something edible to go with the ale. Just to assist it to settle in the stomach. As luck would have it, I also found to my liking a fair selection of made-to-order, fresh sandwiches.

On our return to Thornbury, we extolled to our friends what a wonderful place the Spot was to visit. To be able sample a variety of ales of a variety of styles, with a landlord and staff who knew the beers and were happy to discuss them with you. So it was decided to re-visit this haven in the Cotswolds, taking along a few friends. If memory serves me right Bob, Chris and Dave were the initial group to join us. Once inside this haven of the brewery trade outlet, they too were suitably impressed. So it was decided we should make this journey on a regular basis, travelling every other month, on the second Friday in the month.

As word got round, several other imbibers showed an interest and it became the norm that six or more would join our happy throng. As time went on, the group grew further, with as many as fourteen sitting down to enjoy the landlord’s real ale selection last December. We also now

have a non-Thornbury regular, living in Stonehouse and making his own way to the Spot to join us.

We usually sit in the same side room, at the same table, and discuss, chat, and try to put the world to rights. Exactly what a great pub is for. At one of these gatherings, it was suggested that, as it was such a convivial get-together, we should “do this more often”. And thus it was proposed to make a monthly journey into this rural part of the Cotswolds to gather in the Old Spot. As we believe we live in a democracy, we took a vote (how democratic is that?) and nobody disagreed.

So now we have a date for every month of the forthcoming year which allows plenty of time for wives or lovers, to get used to their ‘man’ sprucing themselves up on a Friday morning once a month, to travel to a ‘little piece of heaven’ in the Cotswolds.

As the organiser, I decided we should have a name to set us apart from the ‘hoi polloi’, so I came up with the ‘Spotonions’. The members of this select society are (with apologies if I have left anyone out) Alistair, Andrew, Bill, Bob, Chris, Dave, Derek, Mal, Martin, Neil and Roger.

First bus number 311, heading for Dursley, leaves Thornbury Health Centre at 11:26 and should reach our destination at 12:23.

The dates for the next 11 visits are 10th February, 9th March, 13th April, 11th May, 8th June, 13th July, 10th August, 14th September, 12th October, 9th November and 14th December.

In closing, I would like to thank Steve and his staff at the Old Spot for a good welcome on every visit.

John Gatty

P.S. The brie and cranberry sandwiches are fantastic.

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Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2012

Cornish brewer floats to victory!

Alfie's Revenge, produced by Driftwood brewery of St Agnes, Cornwall, was recently crowned the Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2012 by a panel of judges at the National Winter Ales Festival held in Manchester.

The 6.5% ABV old ale is described in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2012 as a "strong and fruity, well-balanced premium ale."

Nik Antona, CAMRA Director, praised the outstanding quality of the champion. He said: "The beer is well-balanced, highly drinkable, and certainly belies its strength. A worthy winner, I congratulate this thriving Cornish brewer on their success."

Driftwood brewery began in 2000 in the famous 17th-century pub, Driftwood Spars, where the team continue to brew. A custom-built five-barrel plant, the brewery range has since expanded to ten regular beers.

Pete Martin, Driftwood Head Brewer, was taken aback when hearing of the brewery's success. He said: "We are thrilled to have won. It makes a big difference to us, and will put our brewery on the map, as well as Cornish breweries in general, as there are a lot of good brewers in the county. As a brewpub, we hope the impact on our business will be significant."



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Also in the overall awards, Silver went to Cairngorm brewery's Black Gold, whilst the Bronze medal went to Coniston brewery's No 9 Barley Wine.

A panel of beer writers, members of the licensed trade and CAMRA members judged the competition at the Sheridan Suite, Manchester in January.

Reigning supreme at the Winter Ales Festival, Driftwood's Alfie's Revenge, as well as the other overall finalists, will now enter into the final of the Champion Beer of Britain competition at the Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London, in August.

Winter beer styles, as taken from CAMRA's 'Dictionary of Beer'

Porter: A dark, slightly sweetish but hoppy ale made with roasted barley; the successor of 'entire' and predecessor of stout. Porter originated in London around 1730, and by the end of the 18th century was probably the most popular beer in England.

Stout: One of the classic types of ale, a successor in fashion to 'porter'. Usually a very dark, heavy, well-hopped bitter ale, with a dry palate, thick, creamy, and a good grainy taste.

Old Ale: Now virtually synonymous with 'winter ale'. Most 'old ales' are produced and sold for a limited time in the year, usually between November and the end of February. Usually a rich, dark, high-gravity draught ale of considerable body.

Barley Wine: A strong, rich and sweetish ale, usually over 1060 OG, dark in colour, with high condition and a high hop rate.

The results in full

Old Ales and Strong Milds category

Gold: Driftwood, Alfie's Revenge (St Agnes, Cornwall)

Joint Silver: Nant, Mwnci Nell (Llanrwst, Conwy)

Joint Silver: Brunswick, Black Sabbath (Derby, Derbyshire)

Bronze: Beowulf, Dark Raven (Brownhills, Staffordshire)

Porters category

Gold: Hammerpot, Bottle Wreck Porter (Poling, West Sussex)

Silver: Blythe, Johnson's (Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire)

Bronze: Sulwath, Black Galloway (Castle Douglas, Dumfries and Galloway)

Stouts category

Gold: Cairngorm, Black Gold (Aviemore, Highlands)

Silver: Cambridge Moonshine, Black Hole Stout (Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire)

Bronze: Acorn, Gorlovka (Wombwell, South Yorkshire)

Barley Wines category

Gold: Coniston, No 9 Barley Wine (Coniston, Cumbria)

Silver: Moor, Old Freddy Walker (Pitney, Somerset)

Bronze: Isle of Skye, Cuillin Beast (Uig, Isle of Skye)

OVERALL result

Gold: Driftwood, Alfie's Revenge (St Agnes, Cornwall)

Silver: Cairngorm, Black Gold (Aviemore, Highlands)

Bronze: Coniston, No 9 Barley Wine (Coniston, Cumbria)

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Weston whispers

More discounts at Weston pubs: the **Cabot Court** has joined the **Dragon Inn** in doing away with the Wetherspoon's voucher system, just show your membership card for CAMRA discount. On Wednesdays and Sundays for beer up to 4.9% this can mean paying as little as £1.29 a pint. Also the **Brit** (formerly the **Britannia**) will give you 10% off real ale.

On solstice night in December the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch had its winter festive ales crawl. This has become an annual event and most pubs visited that hadn't festive ale being served were largely ignored. We started at the **Criterion** where the *Cheddar Ales Festive Totty* (4.5%) was pleasant; the **Regency** had *Robinson's Mr Scrooge* (4.4%), and thence to the **Cabot Court** where a selection was to be found from their Christmas beer festival. I had one from *Moorhouses*. Although some of the party finished the crawl at the **Dragon Inn** or at the **Waverley**, most meandered at Laurie Jackson's recommendation to the **Brit** to partake of the *Bath Ales Festivity* and *Box Steam Porter*.

On the January social about a dozen members visited the two Good Beer Guide (GBG) pubs not already visited since the 2012 guide was issued. We met at the **Dragon** which allowed for most to have a swift half, before catching the bus to Hutton. At the **Old Inn** they had four beers and we found out from John Hayes, the publican, that we had just missed the rare *RCH B5* that he is supplied with. I had two pints of the *RCH Hewish IPA* (3.6%) for a reasonable £2.40 a pint. After about an hour there we caught the bus almost opposite the Old Inn to the **Ship** at Uphill, where the bus stop is opposite the pub. This is allegedly the oldest pub in Weston-super-Mare (excluding Worle?) and they had two splendid beers on, *Hook Norton Old Hooky* (4.6%) and *Dark Star Hophead* (3.8%). Some of the members went about 10.15pm but most stayed for the last bus back to the town centre, where quite a few had the *RCH Double Header* in the **Dragon** as a nightcap.

Thanks are due to Bob Reynolds for the way he has reorganised the group email system efficiently for members and other interested people; he has also taken over the running of the Weston diary and socials from me, and the co-ordination of Pints West deliveries and distribution in this area. Steve Reed does the really hard work of picking them up from Bristol, but if you have any doubts as to which pubs are getting how many copies you should email Bob (bobrey@onetel.com).

One social which I hope will be well attended has been organized by Graham Pillar, who recently moved from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol, for the 24th March starting at the **RAFA Club** in Westbury-on-Trym (see GBG) for a fun skittles game, hopefully against a team from Bristol

CAMRA, and then a mystery tour to pubs many of us have never been to before.

Robin E Wild

Weston diary

- **24th March** – Starting at the RAFA Club (see GBG) Bristol, 1pm for a fun skittles game hopefully against a team from Bristol CAMRA and then a mystery tour to pubs many of us have never been to before. Contact (for this trip only) Graham Pillar 07870283250 or email grampil@hotmail.co.uk.
- **6th April** – Good Friday wander around Weston starting at 12 noon at the Regency with time for lunch before strolling around some of Weston's best pubs, led by Tim Nickolls.
- **28th April** – Meeting at Highbridge station at 1pm. Somerset stroll by bus/train/walking led by Max French taking in Crossways, Royal Artillery and George Hotel and possibly others, time permitting.
- **26th May** – Mendip meander by 121 bus starting from WsM station at 12.30pm stopping off at three village pubs in Winscombe, Churchill and Wrington with return to WsM at around 5pm, led by Bob Reynolds.
- **2nd June** – Minibus trip to Malvern departing WsM station at 10.30am with return there by 9pm, visiting four to six pubs, arranged by Max French. Booking essential for this one.

Any enquiries on above outings or requests to join our social group please contact westoncamra@gmail.com.

Non-members welcome at all of the above events.

Weston contact

Robin E Wild: email robin-e-wild@hotmail.co.uk or text 07857602293 (only phone if really necessary)



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Cheques to CAMRA North West Wiltshire – please enclose SAE.



Organised by the North West Wiltshire Branch of CAMRA

www.nwwiltscamra.org.uk

The Return of Dr John



When some Weston Members did recently discern
That to these hallowed pages I was to return
They thought they had some reason to express concern
As in his grave the author of Beowulf would turn

Although penned when Pints West its high Awards did earn
'Twas only thus my previous pomes did I sadly learn
Might then have caused some people their reading to spurn
And so thought to pen perhaps better lines astern

I trust no one stern will this bit tear out and burn
For although as poet not much acclaim can I earn
I felt for the Weston Wassail tail you would yearn
And so from my sojourn I went back to the quern



(Dr John)

Weston Wassail Wander

Whilst a wise man was wending his way back to the dairy, his sat nav showing a completely different route; whilst bankers were shovelling bonuses into sheds shareholders had given them for Christmas; and whilst tasteless types were preloading on the cheap renal excretions of *diptera nematocera*, Weston members were at Orchard Barns, Rooksbridge for the Millwhites Cider Wassail, the fourth one there. That may be the longest sentence since one handed down to an elderly person jailed for defending their property against marauders.

Research into rooks' bridges gives early indications that, as they can only move in straight lines, they cannot fly over the windy River Forth, possibly named in Gaelic 'Abhainn Dhubh', the Black River, after their colour.

Getting back to our tail, Millwhites' excellent traditional ciders use Somerset apples and oak barrels. The offer on the night included Whisky Cask 7.5% medium/dry, aged in Scottish whisky barrels, so Millwhites definitely have a Gaelic connection. To complete the Gaelic theme, we heard excellent Somerset and Irish music from The Somerset Paddies. A Chinese friend really enjoyed the music, possibly being reminded of the fields of home.

We were told that, in addition to the cider bar, there would be a complimentary buffet/BBQ. The likes of this had probably never before been seen at such an event. The flow of fabulous food was continuous, probably including a whole cider beef, and the quality superb. There were long Qs for the brilliant BarB.

The actual Wassail, from the Old Norse 'ves heill' for 'be healthy', took place in the nearby orchard with the aim of producing a copious crop of apples, a hard fruit, for this year's cider. Wassailing goes back to the 1400s, although we went for 1900 and still got in before the rush. Local children in procession carried lanterns, not Chinese ones, to a huge apple tree decorated for the ceremony, possibly in the New Year Honours. We sang as we walked and, as the idea was to wake the tree up and frighten away the 'evil spirits', we did a good job as even the

orchard gate did not need a key.

The Wassail Queen led the proceedings, having explained that the ceremony was being held near to the Old Twelfth Night. Studies of Arthurian legend have never revealed who was twelfth man but that reference is to 17 January, not the present 5 January Epiphany eve. The use of the word 'present' is for those with a degree of Iberian inclination who give presents on 'El Día de Los Reyes', Kings' Day, which is possibly not celebrated in either Cambridge or London. Moving from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1752 lost us eleven days in the manner of people in some jobs today, which is bad manners. Shakespeare's Twelfth Night was written in the 1600s, just in time for the opening night.

Getting back to Somerset, we formed a circle around the tree, made even more noise and watched the children hang pieces of toast soaked in cider on the trunk for the robins, who are the 'good spirits' of the tree. City supporters there were sponsored by Wonderbra. Shotguns were fired into the air to scare away the 'evil spirits' and then it was back to the cider bar, buffet/BBQ and raffle to raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital. A thoroughly good time was had by all at what may become an annual event.

In case anyone is still reading, the Wassail Song is also heard before Christmas as:

Here we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green o',
Here we come a-wassailing,
So fair as to be seen o'

Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too,
And God bless you and send you,
A happy New Year ...

Dr John

The Bar Code by Eddie Taberner



EDDIE TABERNER 08/09/11

A Round with Robin

I love going to the **Seven Stars 'Beeriodicals'**, and to report on them, and this gives me the excuse to go to other pubs in Bristol in the same area. The November 2011 was the turn of beers from Devon with *Red Rock Dark Ness* (4.5%) being my personal favourite. The *Isca Glorious Devon* (3.8%) was not to everyone's taste, but landlord Paul was correct when he told people that I would like it.

On the Friday of the **Three Tuns** beer festival I tried 10 out of the 21 beers that they had both inside and outside the pub. *Steel City Trees Come Down* (4.5%), *Arbor Alpha Ale* (dry hopped, 6.5%), and *Dark Star Smoked Porter* (5.4%) were my choice ales of the day. I'm sorry to say that I found the really strong Arbor ale too medicinal for my palate.

The following day four of us from Weston-super-Mare (WsM) went to Worcestershire by train (meeting Graham Pillar at Bristol Parkway station) to Gloucester, and thence by bus to Upton-upon-Severn and then a further bus to Hanley Castle. The object of our pilgrimage was the annual beer festival at the **Three Kings**, a former CAMRA national pub of the year, run by the same family for over 100 years and on the National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors. They had 33 beers, mostly on gravity serve, and all from 3.2% to 5.5% strength and costing £1.20p a half, the exception being the *Beowulf Walsall Gold* (9.5%) which was £1.80p a half. Most of us enjoyed the *Slater's Columbia* (4.5%) best, and all but one of the nine halves I had I enjoyed from the 28 ales that I'd never tasted before.

From there we went back to Gloucester to have a look at the city-centre pubs, following Phil Cummings' article in Pints West 91. First up we went to the **New Inn** in Northgate Street, where *Hobson's* beers dominated, thence to the **Fountain** in Westgate Street where, from a choice, I had *Old Hooky* and *UBU Goose*, finally to **Dick Whittington** (a Grade 1 listed building once owned by the Whittington family) where an even larger selection was to be found.

A few days later in Bristol, diverting from my usual recipe of good ales at the **Cornubia**, **Seven Stars** and **Barley Mow**, I wended my way up the hill past Colston Hall to the **Gryphon** to partake of the *Brentwood Clockwork Orange* (6.5%) and the *Titanic Cappuccino* (4.9%). The latter had a pleasing aftertaste of marshmallow and coffee.

A 65th birthday beer tour of Somerset pubs by minibus led by Laurie Jackson took us first to the **Globe Inn** at Sampford Peverell, actually just in Devon by the side of the Grand Western Canal. From there we visited the **Duke of York** at Shepton Beauchamp, the **Wyndham Arms** at Kingsbury Episcopi, **Eli's** at Huish Episcopi, the **Ring O'Bells** at Moorlinch, and the **Royal Artillery** at West Huntspill. At a few of the pubs skittles games were played badly on strange alleys but it was fun. *Otter* beers seemed to be to the fore at most of the pubs, except the last.

Towards the end of November I visited with friends from WsM the **Bristol Beer Factory** for their open day to look around the brewery and to order a case of the *12 Stouts of Christmas* for a friend's 50th birthday. We were made most welcome there and were told we could sample the *Southville Hop*, *Hefe*, *Rising Sun* and *Milk Stout* to our hearts' content and it was inevitable, I suppose, that some alchemy took place, initially frowned upon by one of the brewers who thought we were like naughty boys playing with his beer. However upon offering a mix of the *Milk Stout* and the *Southville Hop* to another of the brewers that he passed around, all agreed that in the right proportions it was very acceptable. On our way out we were given delicious stew made with stout, and walnut and stout bread. As we had been standing up a while, we went to the **Start the Bus** bar on Clare Street, near the city centre, for their comfy seats and to imbibe the *Cropton Blackout* (5%). This is a great bar with a good choice of ales but does get very crowded in the evenings.

It is rare to see *Abbey Ales Twelfth Night* outside of Bath, even in the period after Christmas, but to find it at the **Seven Stars** in November was even stranger. It made a good contrast to the *Spire Twist and Stout* (4.5%) which was on at the same time. The *Arbor Winter Cornubia* was a perfect blend of hop and spice, and best enjoyed watching turning turtles at the **Cornubia**!

At the **Regency** in WsM on the first week in December the *Nethergate 1248 Augustian* (4.5%) was available and I quaffed a few as it's one of my favourites from that brewery. During that week at the **Crown** in Axbridge I drank the *Sharp's Christmas Ale*, which did no harm to my skittles getting my first 18 spare in competition!

Redemption was my overall favourite brewer at the December **Seven Stars 'Beeriodical'** featuring beers from Greater London. Their *Trinity* (3%), a really hoppy fruity bitter, was their best, but I also approved of

their *Fellowship Porter* (5.1%) and the *Big Chief* (5.5%). *Ha'penny London Stone* surprisingly lasted three days but got better everyday, whilst most beers lasted only a day.

The **White Hart** in WsM had my annular *Dark Star* favourite *Winter Meltdown* and I did my best to make sure it wasn't at the pub for very long. At the **Cornubia** I really enjoyed the Christmas beer from the *Plain brewery Lords-a-leaping* (4.3%) which was as good as *Innocence* or the *Inncognito*.

The usual suspects from WsM made their trip around the classic pubs of Bath before Christmas, and it's good to see that the **Star Inn** is now offering beer in third-pint glasses. The *North Cotswold Winter Solstice* (4.5%) vied to be the best though the *Abbey Ales Twelfth Night* was good here too. The nearby **Bell** had nine beers on with their guest ale being the *BBF Southville Hop*. The **Pig & Fiddle**, recently refurbished, had four ales on including *Glastonbury Festive*, and at the **Green Tree** a half of *Stonehenge Rudolf* (5%) set me back £1.80p. But the best was left to last, as at the **Raven** they had their Xmas Beer Festival and the *Raven Christmas* (5%-ish) ale I tried had Amaretto in it. The *Moor* brewery Christmas ale *Gold Frankincense and Moor* (4.8%) was also excellent.

Over the Christmas period I was in Devon, so took the opportunity to visit the **Crediton Inn** where both the *O'Hanlon's Goodwill* and the *Ringwood 49er* were in best of condition. Just before the New Year at the **Cornubia**, Phil had the *Moor Illusion* which we both like and is very Moorish (sic).

At the first **'Beeriodical'** of 2012 the beers were from the Manchester area, consequently I visited the pub everyday in the week except Thursday, and on many occasions had the *Outstanding Standing Out* (5.5%) straight from the barrel. However on the first day the *Burton Bridge Bramble Stout* (5%) had to be disposed of, and I naturally helped out as much as I could. (I also had this wonderful stout in the **Dragon Inn** in WsM three weeks later.) My own favourite of this 'Beeriodical' was the *Brightside Darkside* (4.6%). The end of that week saw a Beatles day when performers sang 29 Beatles songs on the Sunday afternoon **Seven Stars** acoustic session accompanied by *Mayfield*, *Box Steam* and *Raw* beers.

The following evening in WsM, having lost at skittles, four of the team went to the **Dragon Inn** where they had *RCH Santa Fè*, *Double Header* and *Old Slug Porter* in fine condition; some alchemy ensued which I'm sure that brewer would have approved of. The Chalice Morris Men (to remind you, I've been a member of since 1977) this year went to a wassail at Baltonsborough, near Glastonbury. A much smaller affair than the *Westcroft* one we've done in recent years, it was well run and so friendly and their orchards help supply *Hecks* cider so that's what we had to drink.

Following a tip off by Vince Murray on email, Graham and I met up at the **Volunteer** in New Street, St Jude's as they had the first barrel of *Wickwar Station Porter* (6.1%) in Bristol, as well as *Cheddar Totty Pot* and two bitter beers. At this pub (see also article in last Pints West), Pete and Sam are most friendly and happy to have ideas on beers that the customers would like to see them trying to get. Pete also told me that he is planning to get a loyalty card system working as they do at the **Barley Mow**. The Volunteer is a pub really worth visiting.

If you like your dark beers, you could have been lucky at the end of January to drink the London beer *By The Horns Lambeth Walk* (5.1%) a smoky complex stout with a long hoppy fruity finish; this was certainly on at both the **Gryphon** and the **Seven Stars**.

On the first Saturday in February I went to the 17th Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival and this year they'd had a Thursday evening session for members, consequently 19 beers out of the 70 had sold out. However this still left a good many to try for the first time and some previous years' favourites too. Until late afternoon from all the beers tried the *Teme Valley Hearth Warmer* (6%) was the most fruity complex and robust beer I'd tried only for it to be beaten at the post by the *Arbor Approved Stout* (7%). I ask you, why did I travel all that way when you can find the best beer from a brewery in Bristol?

Robin E Wild



News from Great Western Brewing

Great Western Brewery (GWB) enjoyed a highly successful festive period with custom at the brewery shop increasing by 100% in the run-up to Christmas. Approximately 10,000 pints of their seasonal ale **Cock Robin** were brewed and sold which represents a three-fold increase on the previous year's sales.

Back in November two new fermenters were purchased which had been custom made to the brewery's own specifications allowing for an increase in capacity. The brewery hoped to have these installed and working by the end of February. They are also now using their own malt mill giving them a more consistent product to work with.

The managers of the brewery's own pub, the **Rising Sun** at Frampton Cotterell, have been in place there for two years now and are really enjoying it. Despite the current trends they have seen a steady increase in trade. The brewery's main offering Maiden Voyage is permanently priced at £2.55 per pint. On Tuesdays the pub has a 'homemade pie night' whilst on Wednesdays it's 'steak night' offering a good deal on food and a pint.

GWB recently competed in a 'Battle of the Breweries' at the Wetherspoon's pub, the Royal Hop Pole in Tewkesbury. As an occasional guest ale provider they were invited to submit a beer for the competition and they chose their seasonal ale **Old Higby**. This was sold alongside ales from five other breweries for a week and the highest seller, which was Old Higby, won the right to be



The new fermenters



The malt mill

a 'permanent' ale for three months until the next such competition. The other ales taking part were Prescott Hill Climb, Battledown Sunbeam, Goff's Mordred, Cottage Norman's Conquest and Sadler's Red IPA.

Mike Ingham



Kevin Stone, the brewery's founder, and his son Ashley who is the brewer

The Queen's Head, Hanham



A great real ale pub which is always worth visiting when in the Kingswood and Hanham locality is the Queen's Head on the main road between Kingswood and Hanham.

This is a Wadworth tied house, one of the few in the Bristol and District area, and is always worth a visit. The beers cover the standard Wadworth range plus any 'seasonal' specials. The Old Timer tried over the winter period was nothing less than exceptional and a real bonus during the cold, winter months.

Not only that, but this is a recommended pub for food in the area. An interesting menu and decent specials board ensure that quality is high – food might take a short while because it is cooked to order, but it is always tasty and good value.

The licensees are long standing, and they have a large car park and a conservatory to the side, which means extra seating if it gets busy. It's not what I would consider is a pub for the younger crowd, but the atmosphere is relaxed with polite background music being played.

Hours are relatively limited in this day and age, but what they do they do, they do well. Visit and I doubt you will be disappointed.

Queen's Head, 29 Lower Hanham Road, Hanham BS15 8QP
Tel: 0117 9674995

Opening times: Mon-Thurs 11.30-2.30 & 6.30-11.00;
Fri-Sat 11.30-2.30 & 6.30-11.30; Sun 12.00-3.00 & 7.00-11.00.

Richard Walters (Photo by Phil Cummings)

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Readers' Letters

Readers are welcome to send letters to the Pints West Editor

steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk

Steve Plumridge,
Garden Flat, 6 Royal York Villas,
Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JR

Slaughtered Lamb

Do you or your readers of Pints West have a photograph of the Lamb pub that was in West Street, Bedminster? And could you tell me the date it closed?

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Tony Noone.

(noonetony@gmail.com).

No photo I'm afraid. But on the front page of the Spring 1998 edition of Pints West we had this:

"THE SLAUGHTERED LAMB

The Lamb in West Street, Bedminster has been closed to make way for a car park. The pub has been in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for the last couple of years, offering top quality beers from Courage, Butcombe and Ruddles. Now the Lamb has been sacrificed by direct

marketing company, Mail-Marketing (Bristol) Ltd, which has bought the pub with the intention of demolishing it to make way for their cars. Same on them!"

Disabled access

Thank you for publishing my letter on disabled access (Pints West Autumn 2011). However, I see from the 2012 Good Beer Guide that my pleas have remained unheeded. Although Bristol now boasts 31 entries in the Guide (32 if the RAFA club is included), an increase over the previous year's 30, only three are listed as having disabled access and facilities, down from four last year.

I see from the last Pints West that the new Guide was launched at the Cornubia. Sorry, I can't get in there, although access has been promised for "some time this year". Neither can I get into the newly reopened Horse & Groom, or the Bag O'Nails, or the newly refurbished Shakespeare on Prince Street, because "it's a listed building". So is the Commercial Rooms, and that's accessible. Oops, sorry Greene King, the Commercial Rooms is, of course, a Wetherspoon's pub. But I can now get into the main bar of the Highbury Vaults unaided and without a lot of sweating and cursing. How? It's really quite simple. Bradd Francis persuaded Young's to rehang the door so that it opened outwards instead of inwards,

and filled the intervening gap between the door sill and the step with a ramp. Thank you Bradd.

You see, it can be done.

Bristol publicans clearly need some help, so perhaps they should call in their fellow landlords from Northern Ireland, where 100% of the pubs listed in the guide are accessible, or the Isle of Mann with 42%.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Buckell,

Bristol.

Rummer info wanted

I'm in the process of creating a sound installation for the reopening of the Rummer (soon to be 'The Looking Glass') on High Street, next to St Nick's market in Bristol. I am trying to collect together the odd snippet of stories from some of the people who have been involved in the Rummer's history, whether running events, performing in bands or drinkers in the establishment. As yet I have been unable to track down any of the previous licensees but would be keen to speak to anyone if they could be located. I would be grateful if anyone with such information as names/contact details would get in touch.

Best wishes,

Jess Rotas

jess.rotas@gmail.com 07736 279320.

Stone Cold in Vail

Greetings once again from Vail Village in Colorado. Residing once again at the Evergreen Lodge we were superbly placed to try the beers at the Alpine Sports and Billiards Bar which is on the ground floor of the hotel. Here the excellent bar staff, including Shawn, Zack and Cassidy served a wide range of beer to weary skiers and Lift Staff. Ron and I wrote about this lovely American Sports Bar in an article in Pints West last year along with two other bars, The George and Bart & Yetis. These bars buck the trend by remaining bars for the locals in a village that has suffered heavy 'Austrian-ification' in an attempt to mimic a European style Village.

On our arrival we were surprised to be remembered but stored safely in the hotel and bar are copies of last year's Pints West with a splendid if not handsome picture of Ron and I in extolling the virtues of these fine establishments. These great bars deserved their inclusion in Pints West and they were pleased to get a mention in a good English beer magazine.



Chatting to the staff we said that they really deserved their 'international recognition' as a place of good beer and great service. We met a dizzying array of bar managers, general managers and hotel inspectors and discussed what a great place this was to stay and why we were pleased that they liked the article. Behind each of these bars a little bit of England if not Bristol resides in the shape of the Pints West magazine.

Spurred on by this common love of a good beer and great service there was only one thing to do and work on a few beers for the article you now read. The 90-Shilling ale was a very drinkable as was the Avery's 'Ellies Brown Ale' which slipped down even smoother than Ron did on the slopes! Also on offer for those who enjoy their beer dark were, the Left Hand Brewery's Milk Stout, and the New Belgium Winter Snow both as smooth as an angel stroking my tongue at the end of a long day. Nestled amongst these was the Stone IPA one of many beers we tried from this notable brewery.

Away from the bar we tried the bottled Stone's Self-Righteous, an 8.7% beer that boasts 'its bitterness hits our sweet spot its darkness lightens our heart'. The equally strident Stone's Vertical Epic at 9.4% brewed with cinnamon and Anaheim chillies boasting 'larger than life experiences heroics and twists and turns' certainly arouses the senses as the smell of the cinnamon fills the air.

So thanks to the Evergreen and other bars for fantastic welcome, long may they continue serving the people of Vail and those of us lucky enough to be able to get there.

Jon Parr

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2012 Members' Weekend and AGM

The CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM 2012 will be held at the Riviera Centre in Torquay on 30th March to 1st April. It will provide CAMRA members with the opportunity to engage in CAMRA's national campaigns and discuss future policy and direction. It also gives members the chance to catch up with each other over a pint, visit recommended pubs and go on organised trips.

Torquay boasts a large number of good quality pubs, both in the centre and the surrounding areas. There are 10 breweries within the Torquay area, and many of them will be supplying their real ales for sale in the Members' Bar. For real cider/perry drinkers, the award-winning Ye Olde Cider Bar in Newton Abbot is close by.

Torquay boasts 22 miles of coastline, consisting of coves, cliffs and beaches, so there are plenty of local attractions for members to visit. If members fancy escaping Torquay, the Dartmoor National Park is nearby offering fantastic scenery, walks and pubs.

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- Have your say, review campaigning themes and form policy
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- Meet the formal requirements of an AGM, including presentation of accounts
- Meet up with CAMRA members from around the country, National Executive and HQ staff members
- Discuss ideas to forward to campaign through workshops, policy discussion groups and seminars
- Enjoy a few drinks in the members bar with a good selection of local real ales
- Visit pubs in Torquay and the surrounding areas
- Visit local breweries and cider producers on organised trips.

Website link: www.camra.org.uk/aggm

In Brief

○ Phil and Jacki at the **Cornubia** have recently signed a 20-year lease on the pub. They have also increased the real ales to 10 with the addition of some new hand pumps on the bar. To service these they have installed new racking in the cellar – 20 tilting cradles for the casks will allow 10 beers to be on with 10 ready to go as others run out. So there will always be plenty of excellent real ales to keep the customers well lubricated.

○ **Arbor Ales** has moved. The brewery is now located in new premises off Lawrence Hill in the central area of Bristol, with the first trial brew taking place on 15th February. (The new location is not far from the recently established Towles' Fine Ales brewery.) We hope to bring you more on this story in the next issue.

○ Peter Gibbs, the landlord at the **Volunteer Tavern** in St Judes, near Bristol's Cabot Circus, has now decided to offer a dark beer all the year round. It's good news for BADRAG members, and indeed anyone who likes that style of beer.



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Le Brewery

If any readers are planning a holiday in northern France, then they should not miss the opportunity of visiting a prize-winning English brewery or at least one of its two pubs. I had the pleasure of tasting some of the beers from Le Brewery at a special night at the White Horse, Twerton, which raised £100 for an orphanage in India. Here's the story of how the beers came to be there, from Gem Moase, a regular at the White Horse. He doesn't mention one of my favourites, Mysterieuse Lady, a gorgeous summery wheat beer, which could easily have passed for a white wine. The website, www.le-brewery.com, gives you all the details, and you can even camp there. Take it from me – these beers amply deserve every award they have gained.

Kirsten Elliott

I have always been incredibly lucky with pubs and have never lived far from a great real ale establishment. I thought this would all change when I moved to France in 2004 when I bought a derelict and ancient small holding to take a career break and build a big garden after my little city garden had featured on television. So it was with much surprise that I discovered an English brewer had opened a pub – Le Famous Knight – in a small village in the Mayenne called Couptrain.

My first experience was an open mic night and as a musician thought it would be an easy way in for me. Many years of lovely Sunday evenings followed especially in winter with real open fires and free beer for all performers. This pioneering brewer is called Steve Skews and we became firm friends with our mutual love of good beer and live music. Eventually, he asked me to take on the care of his hops. I spent hours on the internet, reading about their cultivation. Fuggle, Cobb and Challenger are the three main types that he grows on a half acre plot and for my time in France they became my charges. Steve is a very busy man and totally committed to making not just good but great beer and so for one day a week I'd do all that needs to be done for the hops. I learned to string them, pick the strongest shoots, take cuttings, organic treatments for pests (a good old nettle spray) and at the end of the season harvest and then dry them. It became yet another passion. I even learned to make hop bread to celebrate



the harvest and to do the guided tours for English speaking visitors to the brewery.

Steve also sells his bottled beer at many artisan shops across France. It is all bottled by hand and needs five people in a human production line. It became one of my other jobs and being tall I would start at the top of a high stack of bottles, clean them and then swap to the other end of the line when the bottles got too high for one of the other five of us. On a good day we could manage 3,000 bottles. Rain, shine or snow we always had great fun bottling.

If I was ever going to move into my house I needed funds for restoration and so in 2008 I packed my dog, my guitar and a few precious belongings into a friend's car and returned to England. Moving back was a real wrench to the system but the saving grace arrived in the shape of another good pub. Just around the corner from where I live is the White Horse, Bath and Borders CAMRA pub of the year 2011. Within a week of arriving I was happily scouring the local paper for jobs and supping on a great selection of well kept ales. I did not visit France for several years. So this year, having put my small holding on the market, I needed to go back and collect my things.

I decided to take my namesake beer Bath Ales Gem to France with us and give one of their gift sets to each of the regular boys and of course Steve. My friend Chris and I arrived at the Brewery just in time for lunch, the usual affair of good cheeses, lovely bread and of course a glass or two of beer. Steve being his usual generous host handed us a glass each and said you know where the cold room is, make yourselves at home. My two favourite beers that Steve brews are Conquerant, a dark, rich multi-layered beer, and one that inspired me to explore brewing, and his stout Odo. Odo is my favourite winter tipple, perfect to sip by a log fire when the world around is blanketed in snow. Steve always says the pyramids were built on beer and Odo completely explains why, it is nurturing and complex, sometimes too easy to drink and one of the few reasons in my 40's I have revisited hangovers through pure self indulgence.

The brewery is a family-owned and family-run concern on a small scale. Steve's beer has won many awards and 2011 bought a crowning glory at the World Beer Festival in Strasbourg when Odo walked away with a Gold medal for best stout. Chris and I selected a few boxes of bottles to bring back to the UK for a fund raiser and an great excuse to offer our English friends a chance to taste Steve's genius. If any of you are in Northern France add Le Brewery to your must-do list.

Gem Moase

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Le Brewery owner Steve Skews

Community life in Britain's suburbs under threat

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has recently called for urgent Government action to save Britain's historic pub culture in light of new research showing how 16 pubs now close across the country on a weekly basis. CAMRA has expressed particular concern that Government policy is failing communities on the peripheries of Britain's towns and cities, with half of these closures (eight a week) taking place in the nation's suburbs.

In just two years, well over a thousand pubs have been lost in suburban areas, with many community locals battered by whirlwind beer tax hikes and deep alcohol discounting from nearby supermarket chains, bringing about a general decline in pub going by consumers. Meanwhile, high street pubs are closing at a quarter of the rate – two per week – of suburban locals.

Mike Benner, CAMRA Chief Executive, said: "While high street city centre venues are showing a degree of resistance in the current climate, both suburban and rural areas are under threat as wholesale pub closures deprive more local people of a community centre. Pubs are vital for social cohesion and cultural integration, and therefore the Government must act swiftly to repair the damage inflicted upon local communities by offering genuine support for enterprising and hard working licensees.

"This research also further underlines the major problems caused by many hard-working pub lessees being unable to buy their beer on the open market, restricted by punitive measures imposed by greedy pub companies. The number of tied pubs has fallen by over 3,500 in just three years, with free of tie pubs remaining better placed to weather these difficult economic times by having the ability to offer greater beer choice and lower prices to the consumer."

These figures coincide with a ground-breaking new report by the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) into the social value of community pubs. The report reinforces CAMRA's figures by highlighting the need for a radical change in Government policy that recognises the important community function many pubs perform.

Recommended measures to provide vital support include business rate relief for pubs acting as 'centres of a community', reform of planning laws which prevent pubs from being demolished without the need for planning permission, and improving relations between large pub companies and their lessees to offer a guest beer option and an option to become 'free of tie' accompanied by an open market rent review.

IPPR Associate Director, Rick Muir, said: "Government must stop using a one-size-fits-all approach to licensed premises which is killing off our community pubs. Instead responsible well-run community pubs should be encouraged and supported.

"Our research shows community pubs aren't just places to drink but also places where people meet their neighbours; where local clubs hold meetings and events; and which support many important local services such as village post offices and general stores."

CAMRA membership at an all-time high

National CAMRA membership figures recently went above 135,000. And Bristol & District, the fourth biggest branch in the country, has just passed 2,600 for the first time!

If you haven't got around to joining, why not do it today and support the campaign as well as enjoying all the benefits! If you join on direct debit (about 80% of members pay by this method), you save a further £2.

See the application form on the back page or join on-line via the national CAMRA web site at www.camra.org.uk.

New pub closure figures show 16 pubs close across Britain every week

8 suburban pubs close every week, compared to 6 rural, and 2 high street

Over 1000 pubs lost in Britain's suburbs in just 2 years

10 tied pubs are closing every week compared to 7 free of tie, with the number of managed pubs actually increasing by 1 opening per week

CAMRA pub discounts

An extra benefit of CAMRA membership is that a number of pubs are now offering discounts on the price of real ale or traditional cider to card-carrying CAMRA members. Some examples from the Bristol & District branch area:

- **Anchor**, Thornbury
- **Bank**, John Street, Bristol
- **Barrel**, Thornbury
- **Bristol Cider House**, Surrey Street, Bristol
- **Cabot Court**, Weston-super-Mare
- **Commercial Rooms**, Corn Street, Bristol
- **Cornubia**, Temple Street, Bristol
- **Dragon Inn**, Weston-super-Mare
- **Globe**, Frampton Cotterell
- **Gryphon**, Colston Street, Bristol
- **Horse & Groom**, St George's Road, Bristol
- **Horts**, Broad Street, Bristol
- **New Inn**, Mayshill
- **Old Stillage**, Redfield
- **Orchard Inn**, Hanover Place, Bristol
- **Parish Pump**, Worle
- **Queens Arms**, Bleadon
- **Red Admiral**, Locking Road, Weston-super-Mare
- **Robert Fitzharding**, Bedminster
- **Seven Stars**, Thomas Lane, Redcliffe, Bristol
- **Three Tuns**, St George's Road, Hotwells, Bristol
- **Volunteer Tavern**, New Street, St Judes, Bristol
- **Woolpack Inn**, St Georges, Weston-super-Mare



The actual details of the discounts vary from pub to pub and from time to time. The discount is at the discretion of the pub and can be as little or as large as the pub feels suits their business. Some of the latest details may be found on our web site at www.camrabristol.org.uk but, even better, visit the pubs and check for yourselves.

There is even a national database of pubs which have been officially registered as participating in the scheme, which can be accessed at www.camra.org.uk/discountscheme. CAMRA members can use the search facility here to find details of participating pubs. Furthermore, pubs licensees / managers (or CAMRA branch officials on their behalf) can sign up their own pubs for the scheme here, and will receive some free posters to promote their offers.

Before visiting the pubs, you may wish to check with the licensee that the discounts listed on this database are still current. Pubs are within their rights to change promotions to suit their business and may not have got round to informing CAMRA of these changes.

www.camra.org.uk/discountscheme

The Avon Drinker

Bi-monthly

Free



A look back at local campaigning in 1989/90

In May 1989, *Pints West's* forerunner *The Avon Drinker* was launched and those early editions provide an interesting local CAMRA branch archive. So just what was the local branch campaigning about back in 1989/90?

Of course, brewing at Courage's Bristol brewery was in full swing, producing Courage Best and Directors, along with the lesser promoted Courage Bitter Ale, or 'BA', and it was the future of the latter that we were very concerned about. Courage BA, known locally as 'Boys Bitter' was a low gravity (1032) session bitter and as such benefitted from being supplied in nine-gallon casks, as opposed to 18s, due to its short life once the cask was broached. The reason we, and a number Bristol landlords, were so concerned was that Courage stopped supplying in nine-gallon casks which we all felt was a deliberate ploy to scale back production with a view to phasing the product out. We mounted a local campaign and from February 1990 Courage started providing BA in 9s once again proving that sometimes breweries do listen to the drinker. Alas, the product was eventually phased out following the closure of the brewery in 1999.

Back in 1989, Courage was owned by Australian brewers Elders and, having seen off Watney's Red ten years earlier, we were again seeing huge sums of money being spent by Elders on advertising what we considered equally dreadful products – fizzy bland lagers such as Fosters – to the extent that many of the famous red cockerel signs hanging outside Courage pubs were being replaced with garish Fosters illuminated signs which we felt was nothing short of an outrage to the people of Bristol!

Our annual prices survey highlighted the disparity in the cost of a pint between here and other parts of the UK. The cheapest pint of Courage Directors in Bristol, where it was brewed, was £1.05, yet in Birmingham it was just 88p! We were further aghast when a year or so later we found that the average price of Courage Best had risen to £1.18 a pint!

Another campaign we were waging was support for independent brewers. It's hard to believe that when *Avon Drinker* was launched the only two independents in the Avon

branch area were Butcombe and Smiles; the Fleece & Firkin was also a brew-pub back then. We now have at least eight plus Zerodegrees. Smiles, of course, is sadly no longer with us and brewing ceased at the Fleece at the end of 1989. Wickwar came on stream in April 1990 and in 1989 we reported that Ross Traditional Beers were setting up a small brew house in Hartcliffe. We mustn't forget also, that back in 1989/90 it was tough for independents as nearly all the pubs in Bristol were tied to one of the 'Big Six' national brewers so were unable to entertain a beer from an independent brewer. These brewers either had to own or lease a pub or try and get into a free house, such as the Phoenix in St Judes. Still, following the implementation of the 1989 Monopolies & Mergers Commission's report into the supply of beer, known as the 'Beer Orders', guest beers were starting to appear in Courage and Ushers pubs by 1990. We could only dream, back then, about the choice of real ale we have in Bristol now!

On the pubs front, Wolverhampton & Dudley Brewery opened new housing estate Bradley Stoke's first pub, the Bailey's Court Inn in May 1989, and the Old Castle Green in Gloucester Lane was 'Up Market in Old Market' and was the regular meeting place for Avon CAMRA (as we were then known). The pub served excellent Marston's Pedigree and became known as the 'curry pub' due to its fantastic curries. In 1990, Avon Branch awarded its first branch Pub of the Year to the White Hart at Littleton-on-Severn, then owned by Smiles. Runners-up that year were the Anchor Inn, Oldbury-on-Severn and the Old Crown at Kelston (both free houses). Highly commended were the Crown Inn, Churchill (also free), the Highbury Vaults (Smiles) and the aforementioned Old Castle Green. Throughout 1990 we waited in anticipation for the opening of Smiles' Brewery Tap – it eventually opened in early 1991. It seems quite ironic that it is Butcombe's Colston Yard that now occupies the site of the old Tap, but it's nice that they keep the Smiles memory alive!

Alison Bridle

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but does not apply to
beer. CAMRA is
currently
campaigning for this
legislation to be
extended.

to have the tie abolished will
never be discovered. The
brewing lobby is too powerful
and the Government will have to
compromise. A reasonable
possibility is for a tenant to be
able to have one or two genuine
Guest beers, but most brewers
will be able to argue that it would
be

(north) which has recently been
refurbished. Good range of ales.

Stop Press - rumour has it that
Eldridge Pope may be
discontinuing their Dorchester
Bitter from their real ale range.
We will keep you informed as
details emerge.

Branch diary

Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA

- **Sun 4th March** – GBG Selection Meeting, Horts 12.30pm
- **Tues 8th March** – BADRAG, meet at Bridge Inn 7pm then Cornubia from 9pm
- **Wed 14th March** – Committee Meeting, Cornubia 8pm
- **Thurs 15th – Sat 17th March** – Bristol Beer Festival, Temple Meads
- **Wed 28th March** – Branch Meeting, Horts 8pm
- **Thurs 29th March** – Bristol Pubs Group, Horse & Groom 7pm
- **Wed 11 April** – Committee Meeting, Cornubia 8pm
- **Sat 14th April** – Cider Trip, details TBC
- **Sat 21st April** – Pubs Group Social, details TBC
- **Tues 17th April** – Bath Ales Brewery Trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm sharp, cost TBC
- **Wed 25th April** – Quarterly Branch Meeting, Horts 8pm
- **Sat 28th April** – BADRAG Clifton & Kingsdown Mild Trail
- **Sat 5th May** – BADRAG Harbourside & Bedminster Mild Trail
- **Wed 9 May** – Committee Meeting, Cornubia 8pm
- **Sat 12th May** – BADRAG East Bristol Mild Trail
- **Thurs 17th May** – BADRAG Social Gathering, Annexe 7pm, Chimp House 9pm
- **Sat 19th May** – BADRAG South Gloucestershire Mild Trail
- **Wed 23 May** – Branch meeting, Horts 8pm
- **Sat 26th May** – BADRAG City Mild Trail

See page 10 more details of the BADRAG events.

Please check our website (www.camrabristol.org.uk) or sign up to our yahoo group for the latest information and more details on any of the above events, as sometimes events can change after press date – or email Andy Gray at camrasocials@btinternet.co.uk for the latest information. Please note that all coach and brewery trips must be booked in advance, either by email, or in person at a branch meeting.

Andy Gray (Social Secretary)



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Ten thousand copies of Pints West are distributed free to pubs in and around the cities of Bristol and Bath ... and beyond.

LETTERS: please email correspondence to:

steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk

or post it to:

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide: suggestions for future entries, and comments on existing ones, can be made to our GBG co-ordinator, Vince Murray: vincent.murray@blueyonder.co.uk.

Further information on all aspects of CAMRA can be had from Ray Holmes on 0117 9605357 (home).

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or visit www.tradingstandards.gov.uk

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Bath & Borders diary

- **Thursday 1st March 8:30pm.** The Good Beer Guide selection meeting at the White Horse, Shophouse Rd, Twerton, Bath. Come and vote for your choice.
- **Thursday 8th March 8:30pm.** A mini crawl of Hilpertion, near Trowbridge, starting at the Lion and Fiddle, and then on to the Red Admiral.
- **Tuesday 13th March 8:30pm.** A mini crawl of Beckington, near Frome, starting at the Forrester's Arms and then on to the Woolpack.
- **Thursday 22nd March 8:30pm.** A social at the Rising Sun in Grove St, Bath. We might then try some other nearby pubs.
- **Tuesday 27th March 8:30pm.** The Branch Meeting to be held at the Fromeway, Radstock.

Bath & Borders contacts

Branch socials contact: Denis Rahilly on 01225 791399 or 07711 004501, email denis.rahilly@talktalk.net.

Contact for all non-social matters: James Honey on 01373 822794.

Weston diary and contact

See page 26

Severn Vale diary and contact

See page 23

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Thanks to this issue's contributors

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I enclose a cheque for _____

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PINTS WEST (Bristol & District) - edition 93

12/10

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