

PINTS WEST

Newsletter of the Bristol & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale

Give it a go – life's too short not to

IT'S A SAD TRUTH that today's market for alcoholic drinks is as brand and advertising led as most other consumer industries. It's an even sadder truth that brewers prefer to spend millions on promoting fake foreign lagers while ignoring the great British beers that made their companies household names.

In 1999 real cask ale received less than 2% of the total UK advertising spend on beer. The truth is that in today's complex and monopolised brewing and pubs market, most big companies just can't be bothered to sell you interesting beers that require care to keep in the pub and go off if not properly looked after by a skilled cellar person.

Your typical big brewer marketing person tells us that "Our marketing is led by consumers". Call me cynical, but I think too many consumers are led by the marketing and it is this manipulation which threatens the great old industry that is British

brewing. The fact is that real cask ale is brewed using natural ingredients. Endless varieties of hops and malted barley are crafted together to create over 2,000 different brews. Unfortunately, it's only the enlightened few that seem to enjoy them. The majority of drinkers choose the same old boring lagers – led by the latest huge-spend TV

advertising campaign. Don't be afraid – try something different for a change! Just because you don't know the brand name, it doesn't mean that it won't be any good!

The 60,000-plus CAMRA members are fighting back. We believe that the only reason most younger drinkers prefer the safety net of big brand

lagers is because successful marketing has made it 'uncool' to try anything different.

In March 2001 CAMRA launched the biggest generic promotion of real British beer for over fifty years. This campaign to "Ask if it's Cask", has entered its second phase with new posters to tempt the most hardened lager lover to try the delights of fresh, cool real cask ale.

If you think the world of real ale is closed off to all but blokes with beards, think again! What can be more stylish than a beer that meets the needs of all modern consumers – it's cool, it's refreshing, it's natural and it's available. Just to cap things off, every real ale tastes different and there are over 2,000 to try!

Think about it. Life's too short to drink the same old lager every day. Be individual. Try something different. Try a pint of real cask ale – you never know you may even like it!

Next time you go to the pub.....

Ask if it's Cask!

Warning

Bristol Beer Festival 2002

Tickets for the Bristol Beer Festival at the Council House, College Green between 28th February and 2nd March are selling fast, with Friday already sold out. Don't miss your chance. Find out how to get your tickets by turning to page 3.

100% Liquid – Demand an Honest Pint

GETTING what you pay for is a basic consumer right. Whether you are buying bread, potatoes, petrol or thousands of other everyday products, a kilogram should be a kilogram, a litre should be a litre, and a pint should be a pint.

It's fair to expect that when you order a pint of beer in a pub you should get exactly that – 100% liquid – an honest pint.

Unfortunately, because of loopholes in the law, the reality is quite different.

Research carried out by Trading Standards Officers shows that many pubs serve short measures. The results are startling:

- 8 out of 10 pints served are less than 100% liquid.
- The average liquid served is less than 95% of a pint.
- Short measure is costing drinkers over £1 million every day.

The industry view

The huge majority of publicans are honest people who work hard to keep their customers happy.

But some unscrupulous pub companies place unreasonable demands on pub managers to get as much beer from a barrel as possible, to increase profits. The only way to achieve this is by serving short measures.

The British Beer and Pubs Association, which represents the pub industry, denies

that there are consumer complaints and thinks it is acceptable to serve 95% liquid pints and to give a top-up only to those who demand it.

CAMRA, the beer consumer's champion, believes this is unacceptable and there is a clear need for consumers to be protected in law.

Your rights today

If you are served a short measure you should ask the bar person for a top-up, which they should give with good grace.

CAMRA thinks this is an unsatisfactory solution to a growing problem. In a busy pub on a Friday night, it would cause chaos if everyone asked for a top-up.

We believe the law must be changed so that it is the publican's responsibility to serve you a full liquid pint every time. It should not be up to you, the consumer, to ask for a top-up – you've asked for a pint once already!

The Government view

The Government has pledged its support for new laws to protect consumers from short measure. It is a Labour party policy to tighten legislation to ensure you get a full pint.

But despite detailed and realistic proposals, this promise has not turned into

action and it is we consumers who are losing out, to the tune of £1 million a day (that's more than I earn – how about you?).

How you can help

If CAMRA is to be successful in our campaign for an Honest Pint Law we need your support.

- Sign up today to our on-line petition at www.camra.org or call 0845 6030208 and pledge your support.
- Write to your MP at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. Call 0207 2194272 if you don't know the name of your MP.
- Write to or telephone your local trading standards office. (Their telephone numbers are at the bottom of the back page of this *Pints West*.)
- If you are not happy with a pint served to you, complain **politely** to the bar staff and request a top-up.

Join Us!

Why not join us and help protect and promote choice, quality and value for money in the world of beer and pubs.

We are a volunteer-led consumer group, with over 63,000 members, which relies on the support of pub-goers and beer drinkers – just like you. Fill in the form on the back page now to join!

Adnams Brewery advert

Smiles Brewery advert

Friday sold out!



The CAMRA Bristol Beer Festival was a sell-out success in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001. February/March 2002 sees the fifth annual Bristol Beer and Cider Festival making a welcome return to the Council House, College Green, in Bristol city centre.

As in previous years the Festival offers a showcase of high quality real ales (around eighty of them) and ciders and perry from around the UK.

The Festival will be open to the public from Thursday 28th February to Saturday 2nd March at the following times:

Thursday evening	7:00-11:00	£3.00
Friday lunchtime	11:30-3:00	£3.00
Friday evening	5:30-11:00	£4.50
Saturday lunchtime	11:30-3:30	£4.00
Saturday evening	6:00-11:00	£3.00

Prices include souvenir glass and programme, plus a free half pint of any beer, cider or perry for CAMRA members.

Entry for all sessions is by advance ticket which, if not already sold out, are on sale from the following Bristol outlets:

Bridge Inn, Passage Street
Cornubia, Temple Street
Bag O'Nails, Hotwells
Hare on the Hill, Kingsdown
Humpers Off Licence, Soundwell
Kellaway Arms, Kellaway Ave, Horfield

You can visit our new web site at www.camrabristol.org.uk for up-to-date ticket information and the beer list.

Save our pubs!

WHAT'S THAT, I hear you say, save our pubs? But we've got loads of pubs in the Bristol area, haven't we? Well maybe we have, but we have lost plenty in the past and it appears that many more may be under threat of calling "time" for good.

Just a cursory look around the area recently sends some alarm bells ringing. Many of our pubs have closed – some have been closed for long periods and some have only recently closed. Others appear to have closed for business for varying periods in recent times, opening for intermittent periods and closing again.

Of course, while we have seen many pubs shutting, we have also seen many other pubs opening. But most of those that have opened in recent times are "branded" pubs from the major operators – things such as Pitcher & Piano, O'Neill's (in Baldwin Street), Brannigans and Walkabout. Although these can be perhaps classed as "pubs", it would be fair to say "community pubs" would not be how to describe them. So I suggest we are not replacing like by like.

Of pubs that have been closed, there are a significant number that spring to mind. In addition, as a result of the actions of some pub operators, we could see even more of our beloved boozers under threat.

Some of the closures are very high profile. The once excellent Sceptre Tavern in Baldwin Street, more recently known as BJ's Liquor Emporium, has been closed for a very considerable period. This could surely be an excellent pub again – but we hear it cannot be reopened free of tie and so some potential interested parties, perhaps a small local brewer or someone wishing to open a free house, may not be interested.

Then there is the Rummer in St Nicholas Market (perhaps this could be called the first Bristol "superpub" as it was huge inside, but with distinct drinking areas). Again, this pub has been closed for ages, and there does not seem to be much action going on to reopen it.

Around the Stokes Croft area, the Berkeley Castle has been closed for some months. Although some work appears to have been undertaken since closure, at the time of writing the pub has not reopened. The nearby King Charles pub was



closed for a very long period but thankfully reopened – but following various problems such as a flooded cellar and a broken down boiler, the pub had to temporarily close its doors to business. This pub should now be trading again, thankfully.

The Old Castle Green, a very old pub in Old Market, has closed and its future is uncertain.

The Hop Pole in Redfield, once a thriving community local with a fine brick Edwardian exterior, has recently been boarded up and the business is for sale.

Back to the central Bristol area and Condalls Ale House in St Nicholas Street has recently been boarded up and the rambling old Three Sugar Loaves on Christmas Steps appears to have open and closed several times in the last year or so – now open again as mentioned in another article in this issue.

As for the Cattle Market Tavern behind Temple Meads, the departure of Royal Mail to glorious Patchway appears to have resulted in closure.

Just off the M32 in St Judes, the Sportsman's Arms in Wade Street has been closed for some time and is looking very sorry for itself. The nearby Swan With Two Necks, once a local CAMRA favourite, has also been closed for a long time – but it has recently been acquired privately and it is hoped it will reopen in the near future following refurbishment, hopefully as a genuine free house.

In the Hotwells and Clifton areas, the Eldon House and the Portcullis have both had their problems – both are part of the InnSpired pub chain where licensees complain of onerous rents as well as supply deals that mean paying premium prices to acquire their beer, cider, etc. The Eldon narrowly avoided closure a while back. The Portcullis has had its moments closed, but we hope with the new licensees things are looking up.

Too many of our locals have closed or are under threat of closure. The neglect of the fabric of the buildings by national pub operators, high rents, supply "ties" that mean the landlords have to pay excessive prices for beer and cider, shifts in population and lifestyles, all are leaving a lot of pubs on the edge.

Many licensees are fighting back where they can, but a local won't exist without locals – so support them! These pubs will not last without your support.

Pete Bridle

Watch the Web

Bristol and District CAMRA are pleased to announce that we have a new web site at www.camrabristol.org.uk

This contains information on the local branch and the Campaign for Real Ale generally, as well as details of forthcoming meetings, socials and other activities.

The web site is regularly updated and so is the best place to find out about any last minute changes to arrangements as well as some of the latest real ale related stories.

Any comments on the web site or suggestions of content for inclusion should be emailed to camra@camrabristol.org.uk

Richard Brooks

CAMRA membership

Are you a member of CAMRA? If so, congratulations on being a part of the largest consumer group in Europe. If not, have you ever thought of joining? After all, what would we be drinking now if it weren't for CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale?

As well as promoting real ale and its brewers, the Campaign also lobbies on behalf of all drinkers for licensing and opening hours reforms and also supports landlords in their fights for fair terms in the leases that they have from the big pub owning chains. You only have to see previous issues for the problems that some Inspired tenants have faced.

There are other benefits of being a member such as brewery trips, advanced

notice of beer festivals, with entrance concessions (plus the chance to work at one!) and locally, minibus trips to those difficult-to-get-to out of town pubs. We also hold monthly meetings (see back cover for the next few dates) and I have been authorised to buy new members a pint of real ale at their first meeting or trip. With local membership standing at 963 at the time of writing, we hope to break the 1000 barrier early this year and will award a special certificate to that lucky 1000th member. If you want to be that lucky person, then enter the draw by filling the membership application form on the back page.

Pete Tanner
Membership Secretary

Hope & Anchor advert

Three Sugar Loaves reopens

The historic Three Sugar Loaves on Christmas Steps in central Bristol has reopened after extensive interior remodeling to make it a "destination bar".

Having said that there are some interesting architectural features including the exposure of roof beams by the removal of an upper floor. The bar obtains its beers from Courage and the sole real ale on offer at the time of writing was Courage Best (when tried in reasonable condition) at £2.10 a pint. The outside name boards advertise cask conditioned cider which at the time had yet to make an appearance, although the barman said they were keen to offer it and hoped it would be on the bar soon.

Good to see the place revived. When the destination bar craze blows itself out it would make an excellent real ale pub!

John Armstrong

Letting the train take the strain

The Bristol branch meeting for November was held at The Lamplighters, Shirehampton, which gave the branch the chance to support public transport by taking the Severn Beach train direct to the pub.

Over thirty members joined the 19:13 train from Temple Meads. Remarkably the conductor/guard failed to collect any fares or check any tickets, so this bumper loading will not appear in the fare box or records of Wessex Trains. This is a concern as so often we are told services are not used and are to be 'rationalised', i.e. cut. (The last thing we want is a cut in services on the false assumption that not many people are using it!) Accordingly CAMRA has written to the

various rail bodies and to the City Council who financially support the line, drawing attention to the non-collection of fares.

The Severn Beach trains are an excellent means of reaching several pubs (see the previous edition of Pints West) and deserve to prosper. They offer a fast journey free of road congestion at a reasonable cost, and are a superb way of reaching The Lamplighters with its vast beer garden and views of the river. Whilst everyone likes a free ride it doesn't do much for the long-term viability of the line. So ride the line and try to pay the fare!

John Armstrong

Shakespeare, Totterdown advert

Butcombe advert

Pub News

Wetherspoon plans to open a further two pubs in Bristol. One, as yet unnamed, will be in the Temple Quay area, near Temple Meads Station, and will be one of their traditional music-free establishments. The other one will be in the Harbourside area, near the Watershed. This will be the first in the Bristol area to operate under their **Lloyds No. 1** branding, which does play music.

Matt and Sarah have now left **Horts** in central Bristol for a pub in Lancaster. The new managers and licensees have come from the another Young's pub, the Live And Let Live in Frampton Cottrell. Apparently there are big plans for the building, with the conversion of the upper floors into a hotel on the cards.

Work is underway on major refurbishment of the **Swan With Two Necks** in Little Anne Street, St Judes. The pub has been closed since Michael Blake left last year to move to the Cornubia.

Nursery Brewery has opened its first pub. They have taken over the **Old Bank** in Keynsham High Street. Other local breweries to take over pubs are **Bath Ales** who have got the **Wellington** on Gloucester Road, and **Wickwar** who, as mentioned last issue, have now got the **White Lion** on the Centre.

Pictured below is Fred, the landlord at the bar of the White Lion, standing behind his Wickwar range. He has previously worked at the Bag O'Nails and the Post Office Tavern, so hopefully he knows what a good pint is!

Photo

A pub on King Street that has had a lot of name changes over recent years is now called the **Indigo Bar**. When I moved to Bristol in 1988 it was called the Bunch of Grapes, then Dr Thirsty's, before becoming an Irish theme pub whose name escapes me.

Pete Tanner

Brewery Tap opens in Keynsham

Things changed for the better in Keynsham on November 30th 2001 when Nursery Brewery opened their first pub and brewery tap in Keynsham's High Street.

A dozen or so CAMRA members from Bristol arrived at the Old Bank just after opening time and on entering the pub we were greeted by the sight of three Nursery beers and three guest ales on handpump plus four Belgian beers.

The Brewery's new 3.7% pale ale,

Georgie Porgie, was on sale and was extremely popular. After a Georgie Porgie or two I decided to try the "pretty damn dark" 5.2% Old Mother Hubbard, and it was so good I drank it for the rest of the evening. I have been to the Old Bank several times since and on each visit the range seems to increase and now includes beers from Dwan Brewery from Tipperary in Ireland, a changing guest cider or perry, and a selection of bottled beers to die for.

Congratulations to Nursery Brewery and manageress Jenny Dalton!

The Old Bank is opposite Keynsham church and can be easily reached from Bristol by the 318 or 349 bus.

Phil Brooks

The Three Tuns

The Three Tuns on Deanery Road, near the Cathedral in central Bristol, was renovated in September 2001 and now boasts two front windows, one proclaiming 'Real Ale' and the other 'Good Food', an invitation that had to be put to the test.

Two real ales were available on a recent visit, with Butcombe Bitter in very good condition, plus a guest ale, Bishops Tipple, which had the beginning of sourness to it (the barman said they had not sold much of it and offered to change it). On a subsequent visit the guest was again Bishops Tipple, which this time was in good condition. Despite having three handpumps only two real ales are normally on offer.

The pub has one L-shaped room finished in the 'ale house wood style', with wooden floorboards and furniture. Being close to College Green it caters daytimes for the surrounding offices, whilst evenings and weekends see an emphasis on the student market and live music. A gig list is published for Friday and Saturday nights. As for the food, that unfortunately was rather too evident with an all-pervading smell of chip fat, the menu being heavy on the chips.

The pub is owned by the people who have the **Quinton House** near the Clifton Triangle, which serves a decent range and quality of real ale, so it will be worth watching how the Three Tuns progresses. It is handily located between the City Centre and the Bag O'Nails, making a useful stopping off point if you're en route to the Bag, or the nearby Hope & Anchor.

John Armstrong

Shakey beer

The Shakespeare in Totterdown is now a member of the Unique Cask Ale Club giving an even wider choice of real ales. As well as their usual offerings such as Smiles Best, Old Speckled Hen and Theakstons Old Peculier, punters can now look forward to an ever-changing selection of guest ales from such breweries as Wye Valley, Burton Bridge, Titanic, Daleside, Rebellion and others. And following the success and popularity of last year's festivals they are planning their third beer festival for 31st May to 4th June, when there will be even more to choose from.

Moles Brewery advert

On the buses with Beer Explorer

What a good idea! Pints West's occasional column on visiting pubs by public transport – you avoid the breathalyser and can still find your way to those interesting country pubs.

So when Vince Murray's "Beer Explorer Part 2" in the last edition guided you by bus and a Day Explorer ticket to The Crown at Churchill, the local branch's runner-up Pub of the Year, then it just had to be put to the test!

A beautiful, sunny (!) December day saw me take the 121 Badgerline service, which usefully stops on the Temple Meads station forecourt ten minutes after leaving the bus station. An hour's tour of picturesque villages along some very narrow country lanes, past interesting looking pubs such as the 16th century Prince of Waterloo at Winton, The George and Dragon at Felton and the Langford Inn at Langford was the prelude. Eventually the bus reached the traffic lights at Churchill where it turned right towards the village.

Here Bus Explorer's directions left a little to be desired, as they made no mention of the main landmark, the Nelson Arms, alongside which runs Skinner's Lane on which The Crown is located. The bus stop is actually beyond the Nelson Arms, so you need to walk back to The Nelson. The Crown is up the slight hill of Skinner's Lane

and is on the left-hand side. The pub cunningly disguises itself by having no sign, the main clue being tables and chairs on the front lawn and a row of cars parked outside. Then you know you have found the treasure!

The pub fully lives up to its award, with excellent beer from the cask by gravity, interesting beer range, excellent good value food and a warm welcome from landlord Tim and the staff. Getting there by bus makes you feel even more virtuous and thanks to public transport you can drink without worry.

The 121 service needs all the ridership it can get as, apparently in 2002, it is to switch to minibus operation. So the message appears to be use it or lose it. During the week it is 42 minutes past the hour from the bus station, ten minutes later from Temple Meads forecourt. You may not realise that there is a service on Sundays, the 822, which means you can enjoy a meal and a drink at The Crown. Departure from the bus station is 11:20, arriving in Churchill at 12:24. Buses back to Bristol are at 13:48, 15:48 and 17:48, or buses onwards to Weston-super-Mare at 14:24, 16:24 and 18:24.

A word of warning is that there will be major road works in Churchill from January to March which will mean bus diversions, so check times and routes before travelling with First Badgerline on 01934 429336.

Whilst at The Crown, there had been a party to celebrate the success of Pig Brother, an initiative by a local farmer to raise money for the Foot and Mouth Crisis Fund. Pigs named after politicians were filmed and shown on the Interent, with viewers voting to expel the unfortunate candidate. This gripping viewing attracted a large, appreciative audience, resulting in much money being raised.

Another useful feature of the 121 service is that it continues to Weston-super-Mare via Banwell. It passes the door of The Bell pub which is highly recommended by the Weston sub-branch for its beer quality and atmosphere. Regular beers are Butcombe Bitter and Old Speckled Hen, plus two interesting and changing guest beers. The bus stop is at Banwell School and you need to retrace your steps up the hill to find The Bell on the road junction, about 300 yards. It is well worth the effort, The Bell being an atmospheric pub with a commitment to live music. It is also worth trying The Brewer's Arms.

So help the bus service survive by using it! The Day Explorer ticket is only £5.70 and includes journeys in Bristol as well as Somerset and Gloucestershire. Less than the cost of petrol! Plus the chance to try all those beers. You know it makes sense to support public transport and thanks to Beer Explorer for guiding the way.

John Armstrong

Bunch of Grapes advert

Beaufort Arms, Hawkesbury Upton advert

Out and about with Bristol CAMRA

IT'S been a hectic autumn and early winter for Bristol & District CAMRA on tour, with twelve trips run from October to the New Year, including visits to Weston-super-Mare and Congresbury to meet up with our friends in the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch, and two breweries visited, **Oakhill** in Somerset and **Abbey Ales** in Bath.

It had been a while since we visited Oakhill, but we were made more than welcome by head brewer Gary Lumber, and it was good to sample beers such as Black Magic Stout in the brewery where it is created. Our thanks to Gary and all at Oakhill for a splendid evening.

It is fair to say that a trip to Abbey Ales is one of the most popular trips on the Bristol & District CAMRA agenda. This is due to the excellent hospitality from the amiable and straight-talking owner of the brewery, Alan Morgan. There is never a dull moment in Alan's company, and the beer flows as freely as anyone could wish for! And as ever it is a real pleasure to visit the wonderfully unspoilt Star Inn at the Paragon at Bath – currently Bath CAMRA's Pub of the Year – for further refreshment and to bring an excellent evening to an end.

As well as interesting and fun social trips, we have also been busily engaged in surveying for the 2003 Good Beer Guide (yes, already!) and several pubs stand out as due for a "mention in dispatches", like two old favourites in North Bristol, the **Kellaway Arms** in Kellaway Road, Horfield, a local *par excellence*; and, equally as good, the **Annexe** in Seymour Road, located nearer the city off the Gloucester Road. Both are handily placed for sporting events at the Memorial stadium.

Further afield, a visit to Pucklechurch was a particular pleasure, with both the

Rose & Crown and the **Star** proving a pleasure to visit. The former is a Wadworth house, and also an excellent place to eat good quality and relatively economical meals, but the drinker is not forgotten with a full range of Wadworth's beers plus Bass, all in "good nick". The Star is really noted for its traditional cider, with Cheddar Valley "Red" featured, but the beer is also fine, with Bass being brought up from the cellar in jugs, ensuring that the tradition of Bristol "flat Bass" is maintained.

A pre-Christmas crawl around Bristol city centre took in the **White Lion** in the centre, now in the hands of **Wickwar Brewery**, and already this establishment is

looking like a welcome addition to the city centre real ale scene.

Finally, it would be remiss not to mention the **Bank** in Keynsham, now reopened and acting as a brewery tap for the nearby **Nursery Brewery**. Six beers are usually available, including three Nursery beers, with a wide range of foreign draught and bottled beers, plus traditional perry on draught – altogether, a real "find".

Phil Cummings



Clifton Renaissance

Things are looking up a bit in Clifton. Guest ales have been making very welcome appearances in two Clifton Village pubs.

The **Quadrant** on the corner of Princess Victoria Street and Regent Street has introduced a regular changing guest ale, whilst the pub interior has been refurbished. Guest ales have include Caldedonian Deuchars IPA and 80-Shilling, Jennings Cokerhoop, Young's Special and Gale's Trafalgar Ale. They are proving very popular, supplementing the regular Bass and Courage Best, and by changing on a one or two weekly basis they add variety and interest.

The pub interior has been redecorated in a red and silver colour scheme, enhanced by spot lighting which gives a warm effect. The massive stuffed fish in a glass case which dominated the bar has departed to

rivers new. The lower level cocktail bar remains closed. Congratulations to landlord Tony Garcia for introducing guest ales and bringing variety to an area that greatly needs it.

Another pub now offering guest ales is the **Somerset House** on Princess Victoria Street, where the regular Courage Best and Old Speckled Hen have been supplemented by a semi-regular guest. Recently Bath Ales Barnstormer and Smiles Bristol IPA have had extended runs on the bar. This pub was also due for a major interior refurbishment, but landlord Julius Pope reports that this has been put back to later in the year. The aim is to emphasise the atmosphere of a local pub, whilst brightening the interior and making better use of space, especially the defunct food servery. Here's hoping they succeed and that the guest ales continue to appear.

John Armstrong

Bear Inn, Wiveliscombe advert

Dorothy Inn, Weymouth advert

Pub profile: The Penny Farthing

THE PENNY FARTHING on Whiteladies Road, Cotham gives the impression of being an old, long established pub, but in fact only opened for business in August 1995.

The conversion of a former NatWest bank was undertaken by brewers Wadworth of Devizes after a long battle to obtain a license. The result is not a “trendy wine bar” as one might have expected for the area but a traditional one-room pub with a small outside drinking area.

The pub is unusual for the part of Whiteladies Road known as “The Strip” in that there is a large selection of real ales on tap as well as the usual lagers and keg products. There normally at least eight and sometimes up to twelve real ales available and whilst it may not be a tinker’s (beer collector’s) paradise there should be something there for most tastes. As well as the usual Wadworth’s products (IPA, JCB 6X and seasonal beers) you will find beers such as Butcombe Bitter and Gold, Draught Bass, Adnam’s Southwold and Broadside, Badger Tanglefoot, and Everard’s Tiger.

The Wadworth products are served from traditional hand pumps on the bar whilst the other beers come from what look like barrels behind the bar. These are in fact just taps with the beer being drawn from the cellar by means of a gas-powered pump, but the gas does not come into contact with the beer.

Food is available at lunchtimes to suit those looking for typical pub food to go with their beer. As for access, toilets are downstairs (note the large bank safe door in the corridor), but there is a separate disabled toilet on the ground floor. There is a single step up into the pub from the pavement but once inside most of the drinking area is on one level.

Landlord Charlie and his wife Victoria have been at the pub since it opened, having moved all of 100 yards from what was

Photo

Crockers (now Finnegan’s Wake) in Cotham Hill. They were awarded Cask Marque status in 1999.

The Penny Farthing can be found on Whiteladies Road opposite Clifton Down Shopping Centre and is easily reached by bus (numbers 1, 8, 9, 43 and 54) which all stop outside, or by train (Clifton Down on the Temple Meads to Severn Beach line).

Pete Tanner

Bath Ales Brewery and pubs advert

Wickwar BOB advert

The historic Courage/Georges site

ON Wednesday 9th January there was meeting at the Council House in Bristol to discuss the success of the recent public consultation regarding Bristol's Local Plan.

Mark Steeds (landlord of the Beaufort Arms in Hawkesbury Upton) is a keen and knowledgeable local historian who has been campaigning hard in connection with the fate of the historic Courage/Georges site, which has had a brewing presence for hundreds of years. It is expected that a micro-brewery may be incorporated into the site's redevelopment plans, but will it be given space to be truly viable?

Reproduced here is the statement he presented to the meeting. The council officers were sympathetic to his opinions, but it has to be stressed however that it is the developers that have to be won over, the council can only make recommendations.

Presentation to Local Plan Cabinet

There is a golden opportunity to make the Courage Brewery a major tourist attraction from a small, very old portion of the site. Recent research proves that the site is one of the oldest remaining commercial breweries in the country and in all probability Elizabethan. Some of the surviving structures bear witness to the fact and are unique in that all the others in Bristol have either been bombed or redeveloped.

Picture

Picture

GEORGES BREWERY BRISTOL - Circa 1850

Brewing runs like a thread through all of Bristol's untold history. First the Saxons, then the Friars, Monks and even Knights Templar all brewed. In Simon Sharma's "History of Britain" he showed the witches of Bristol using an ale-based potion to help ward off the plague. Daniel Defoe met Alexander Selkirk in The Star, Cock and Bottle Lane, inspiring him to write the world's first novel: Robinson Crusoe. William Clarkson, the great anti-slavery campaigner, did major research in the Seven Stars, St Thomas Lane, which ultimately led to the abolition of slavery.

Where is Bristol's living history? We have nothing to rival Portsmouth, York, Liverpool or Plymouth. As for Bristol's brewing past, it has almost totally been overlooked as a major brewing centre – the same is true of the entire West Country. Cheltenham, Bath, Gloucester – none of them has any major brewing recognition, nor are they likely to.

Our friend Defoe wrote in the 1720s that Bristol had more than fifteen glasshouses in the city and filled bottles with wine, cider and beer to be sent to the West Indies – more so than London or any other mercantile centre. Where is the national glass museum? Sunderland!

In Victorian times, Millers of Stokes Croft, Gartons of Lawrence Hill, Rogers of Old Market and Bristol United of Levins Mead all won gold medals at international brewing fairs. Ironically the only company that didn't was Georges, but they and their predecessors were at the forefront of every beer style going.

The Bristol Porter Brewery was founded in 1730, just eight years after the style had been invented in London, and twelve years before Whitbread started brewing. Philip Georges Pale Beer Brewery was built just eleven years after Bass was founded in 1777. The site is saturated with history. Unfortunately the developers seem to just want to preserve facades of the oldest parts and build new up through them, changing the skyline forever.

At the two stakeholder meetings I have attended, the developers kept overlooking the potential for a ferry landing at the site, an alternative mode of transport which should be essential. Simon Jenkins' celebrated Times article mentioned the ferry operators' lament that all Bristol now has to offer are waterside flats and offices. The Georges site gives us the chance to break the mould.

If the micro brewery is a serious option, not just a five-barrel 'boutique' brewery, but something solid and tangible for visitors to see, coupled with Bristol's proud tradition of making drinking vessels and containers (glass and pottery) plus all the other support industries Bristol was once famous for, the addition of living history would give us an integrated tourist attraction any city would give their right arm for.

It's our last major chance to preserve history in-situ. Only today on television they featured 'The story of Oxford' attraction, illustrating that city's 800 years of history – similar to the format we could have for Bristol.

Local CAMRA branch chairman Richard Brooks has also attended a meeting with the developers, as well as having communication with some of the contenders for the site. Although no final plans have been granted planning permission as yet, we are currently optimistic that there will be a brewing presence.

The Fourteen Stars public house, Counterslip.

This was swept away by a development in Victorian times, to make way for the ill-fated Finzel's sugar refinery, some of which is still standing in the former Georges site. Times don't change.

The Good Bottled Beer Guide

IT'S a problem we all have to face from time to time. You're thirsting for a pint of real ale but, for some reason – work or family, perhaps – you can't get to the pub. There is, however, an escape route: it's called real ale in a bottle.

It may seem like a contradiction in terms, but, yes, you can have real ale in a bottle. Real ale, according to the CAMRA-agreed definition in the Oxford English Dictionary, is "beer which has been brewed and stored in the traditional way, and which has undergone a secondary fermentation in the container from

which it is dispensed". The definition is usually applied to draught real ales, beers which contain yeast and continue to mature in the cask at the pub (cask-conditioned beers), but it equally applies to bottled beers which contain yeast and which mature in the bottle (bottle-conditioned beers). Such beers need to be poured carefully to avoid the yeast sediment dropping into the glass, but the yeast won't do you any harm even if it does. The net result is a beer that tastes fresher, is more complex and has a much lighter texture than

ordinary pasteurised and filtered bottled beers.

When CAMRA began life in 1971, there were only five bottle-conditioned beers in regular production: Worthington's White Shield, Guinness Original, Gale's Prize Old Ale, Thomas Hardy's Ale and Courage Imperial Russian Stout. Guinness, sadly, has now been sacrificed to the pasteuriser, and Imperial Russian Stout and Thomas Hardy's Ale have recently been discontinued, but White Shield is going strong (at its new home at the Bass Museum brewery in Burton) and Gale's has kept faith with the powerful Prize Old Ale down in Hampshire. The good news is that these two stalwarts have now been joined by well over 300 other bottle-conditioned beers, from all over the country. The last few years has seen a remarkable revival in bottled real ale, thanks mostly to the imagination of Britain's smaller breweries and the opportunities provided by high street retailers, mail order companies, specialist beer shops, local craft centres and farmers' markets.

The choice of bottle-conditioned beers is now staggering and CAMRA Books has the whole field covered in its third edition of the award-winning *Good Bottled Beer Guide* (sponsored by Safeway). In its handy, pocket-hardback format, the book profiles all bottle-conditioned beers currently available in the UK, and includes features on storing, serving and tasting bottled beers, plus a survey of easy-to-find bottled real ales from overseas. Compiled by Jeff Evans, eight-times editor of CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide*, the *Good Bottled Beer Guide* is priced £8.99 and is available from good bookshops or (post-free) from CAMRA at 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW; tel (01727) 867201 (credit card orders accepted).

Swan Beer House advert

Pub News

Nick Luke is to give up the lease on the **Coeur de Lion** – generally reckoned to be the smallest pub in Bath – and take over the nearby **Volunteer Rifleman's Arms** – another tiny pub – as a free house offering four changing West Country beers. Nick also has the **Old Green Tree**, and also owns the freehold on the **Cornubia** in Bristol.

The **Robin Hood** on St Michael's Hill in Bristol is now under new management. Gone is the karaoke! Back is the well looked after real ale, with around half a dozen beers to chose from including changing guests.

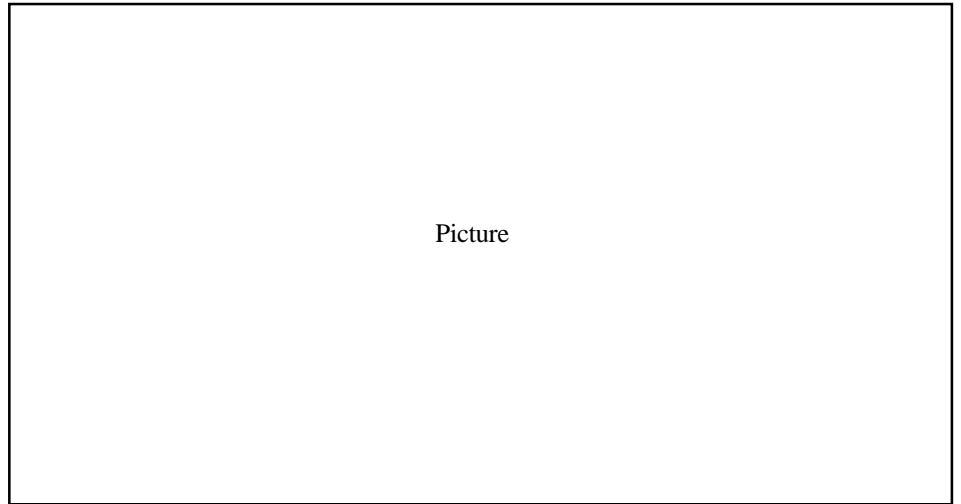
Becoming a Brewer *by Gary Lumber*

We asked the Head Brewer at Oakhill Brewery, Gary Lumber, to describe how his career in the industry began.

To be a brewer or work in a brewery is many men's perfect occupation, but to be honest I had never considered it as a career until nine years ago! Unlike the majority of brewers, I have not taken the recognised path into the industry.

My two chosen careers, a printer or pilot, became unattainable at the age of 16, when I discovered I was colour blind. Therefore, I opted to diversify into business and finance and completed a two-year BTEC National Diploma at college. Although I enjoyed the course, when I made my way into the "office" working 9 to 5, the enjoyment ebbed away and, once again, the career dilemma arose. So I drifted from job to job, with a broad spectrum, striving to find my ideal environment. By chance, I was given the opportunity to work for Gaymers (now Matthew Clark) within the final filtration and mill.

Whilst there I gained an insight into the drinks industry and enjoyed the challenges within a demanding and changing role. Due to my temporary contract expiring, I began to look for employment, and decided to continue within the drinks industry on a smaller scale, joining Oakhill Brewery in May 1994, as a cask washer. Although a lesser role than my previous job, the position offered me the chance to learn the whole process of producing real ale and under the guidance of Head Brewer Roger Jones, I began to develop and adapt my existing skills to my new role. From Cask Washer I was promoted to Assistant Brewer, completing my first 9½-barrel brew under Roger's watchful eye.



Picture

When Roger departed Oakhill, without a replacement, the real learning curve began. Before, if I was unsure I could just ask. That is when I realised that brewing was not plain sailing and problem solving is a huge part of the job – "it's always easier when someone else is doing it" – the knowledge and expertise Roger had shared had allowed me to rise to the challenge and for 6 months we continued to produce four varieties on a 17-barrel brew.

Dave Thomas arrived to ease the pressure and together we shared the running of the Brewery. Shortly after Dave's arrival, we moved from the "Old Brewery" to the "Maltings". Although only a few hundred yards up the road, it seemed like a million miles away, with newly renovated premises and plant. Going from a 17-barrel to a 50-barrel plant was no mean feat. We had teething problems, as with all new ventures, but over time these were resolved.

Not long after our expansion Dave moved on to pastures new. This time I was not alone for long and contract brewer Chaz Hobden joined the team. Chaz, a qualified and experienced brewer, brought new ideas and a fresh approach and with his admin and practical experience we streamlined the procedures at Oakhill. This made it easier to control the problems that might arise. As with most brewers, Chaz had other plans, one being his own Brewery (Wessex Brewery in Wiltshire) – thus leaving me for

The Oakhill Brewery before the fire

the last three years as Head Brewer (with Chaz being at the end of a phone!).

So that's my journey from Cask Washer to Head Brewer, it may not have been the most conventional way, however I got here in the end. I have been very privileged to be trained by three talented Brewers their knowledge and expertise have been invaluable and although I have learnt a lot, in this trade, you can never stand still, new experiences and challenges arise on a daily basis, so self-development and training never stops.

Cheers!



OAKHILL BREWERY FACT FILE

Products

Triple X Mature 3.7%, **Oakhill Best Bitter** 4%, **Charioteer** 4.2%, **Mendip Gold** 4.5%, **Black Magic Stout** 4.5%, **Merry Maltings** 4.8%, **Yeoman 1767 Strong Ale** 5%, **Mendip Twister** 6.3%, **Oakhill Original Stout** 7.5%.

Brief History

Oakhill Brewery can trace the ancestry back to 1767 when it was originally established

with the nationally famous 'Invalid Stout'. The brewery continued until 1924, when the brewery was devastated by fire. 1984 saw the reopening of the business in the original brewery buildings and since then Oakhill has expanded as the popularity of the traditional ales grew.

Tours Tues p.m., max 25 people @ £5 pp including buffet.

Production

Head Brewer : Gary Lumber

General Manager : Barry Moore

Brewery Assistant : Thomas Strong

Sales: Telesales : Maxine Grant

Accounts : Pam Thomas

Proprietor : Reg Keevil

Email : sales@oakhillbrewery.co.uk

Web page : www.oakhillbrewery.co.uk

WATERING HOLES IN THE DESERT

News from Weston-super-Mare

Good Beer Guide 2002

OCTOBER saw the launch of the 2002 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. Ten pubs and clubs in and around Weston are included in this national publication which highlights the best places to drink good real ale across the country.

The local press did us proud. The *Weston and Somerset Mercury* ran an article on the launch of the Guide and devoted a separate entire page to the pubs in the Weston area that are featured. The *Weston & Worle News* somehow managed to run the story for three consecutive weeks, each time with a slightly different angle. Finally, we were the main story on the front page of the *Evening Post* of 1st November, including a large picture taken at our launch event held at The Regency.

Our thanks to Andy Ridgeway of the Mercury, Oliver Hulme of Clevedon Newspapers Ltd, and Andrew White of the Evening Post for their help and support.

The Good Beer Guide is available from all good bookshops. It is good value at £12.99, but absolutely brilliant value at £9, if you join CAMRA – application form on the back page. So why not buy yourself a copy and find out just what is so good about these pubs and why Weston no longer justifies its old reputation as a beer desert?

Competition

What are our local entries in the 2002 Good Beer Guide?

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| T●● R●●●●●●● | Weston-super-Mare |
| T●● D●●●●● I●● | Weston-super-Mare |
| O●● T●● R●●●● | Weston-super-Mare |
| T●● W●●●●●●● | St. Georges |
| T●● C●●●●● I●● | Churchill |
| T●● L●●●● I●● | Axbridge |
| T●● P●●●●●● | Congresbury |
| T●● Q●●●●●'● A●●● | Bleadon |
| T●● B●●●● | Banwell |
| T●● W●●●●●●●●● C●●● | Winscombe |

Supply the missing letters and send your entry on a piece of paper to the Pints West editor (address on the back page) by 1st April 2002. The first correct entry selected at random after that date wins £10 worth of real ales at one of the Weston pubs (details to be arranged).

Upcoming events

IN February we will be attempting to shake off accusations that we are a fairly unfit, shambolic and unsporty bunch by taking to the alley for a skittles evening (well they say a gentle introduction to the world of exercise is best). The venue will be the **White Hart** in Palmer Row, which only has one real ale but this is always a good one. This pub's usual beer is Cornish Jack from Sharps, although they have also had a couple of beers from the Nursery Brewery and Hewish IPA from RCH. This will be our first visit to the White Hart as a group and we are looking forward to it. All will be welcome – bowling is optional!

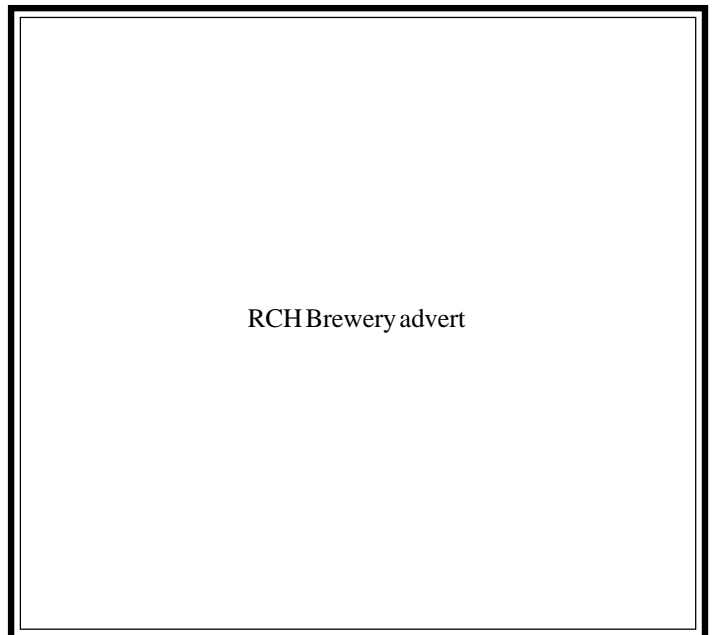
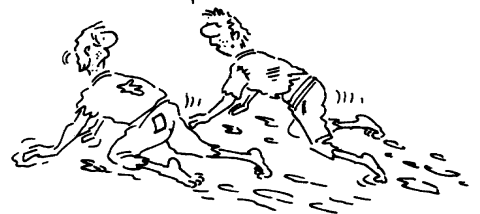
March sees a return visit to one of our favourite haunts, **Off The Rails**. There will be two or three real ales available, and for CAMRA visits landlord Colin Hicks usually gets something particularly good on.

In April we will be moving our monthly get-together from the third Wednesday to the last Friday. This is to enable us to enjoy one of the live blues nights at the **Bell**, Banwell. The Bell's regular beers are Butcombe Bitter and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. They are usually supplemented by at least one guest beer, often from RCH. There's a reliable bus service each way, so there is no excuse for not going!

Dates, times and contacts for branch events are shown in the diary section herein. *Non-members particularly welcome.*
Tim Nickolls



This isn't really a desert you know



RCH Brewery advert

2001 – A year in the life of our local brewery – RCH of West Hewish

JANUARY

Old Slug Porter wins third place at the CAMRA Winter Beers Festival held in Manchester.

MARCH

Expansion of the brewery completed, doubling its capacity to 130 barrels a week.

APRIL

Brewery owner Paul Davey is appointed National Chairman of the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA).

Brewery wins two awards at the annual SIBA Beer Festival at Tuckers Maltings, Newton Abbot:

- **Joint Supreme Champion** for PG Steam;
- **Runner-up (Porters/Old Ales/Stouts)** for Firebox.

AUGUST

Brewery wins two awards at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival at Olympia:

- **Winner Best Bitter Category** for Pitchfork,
- **Winner Bottled-Conditioned Ales** for Ale Mary.

SEPTEMBER

The brewery sponsors the very popular Somerset CAMRA Beer Festival, held at Minehead Station.

OCTOBER

Several representatives from the brewery travel up to London to attend CAMRA's 30th anniversary celebrations in the Porter Tun Room in the former Whitbread Brewery in London's Barbican. They were presented with their awards won at the Great British Beer Festival in August and a good time was had by all.

DECEMBER

Brewery is very busy with orders for Christmas, including very good sales of polypins.

A new beer is introduced for Christmas, Hewish Sunset at 4.6% abv, a golden beer incorporating Bramling Cross and Goldings hops. This was very well received and is to be produced again in the near future.

Other key events during the year included three shipments of beer to the USA, involving bottled Pitchfork, Old Slug Porter and Ale Mary (some of the Pitchfork was also on draught). During the July to September quarter, Double Header was the biggest seller on Wetherspoon's pub chains guest beer list.

The brewery was holding its breath for much of the early part of the year. If foot-and-mouth had reached this corner of Somerset, with farms either side of the RCH

brewery, MAFF would have ordered the brewery to be closed, with deliveries banned.

If you want to sample your local brewery's award-winning ales, they can be found regularly at the Dragon Inn and at Off The Rails. Ask at the Dragon when they are having their next "RCH Night". These feature up to six RCH beers on tap.

The beers can also be found further afield on occasion at the Woolpack, St Georges, the Plough at Congresbury, the Bell at Banwell and regularly at the Crown Inn, Churchill.

Bottled Pitchfork can be found at Safeway and Sainsbury, and Somerfield should be stocking Pitchfork, East Street Cream and Firebox in the near future. Ale Mary has been seen in Threshers off licences in Weston.

You can also purchase beer direct from the brewery shop from 9am to 4pm on Mondays to Fridays. There is always a good selection of bottles in stock, but you will need to order polypins of draught beer in advance (tel. 01934 834447).

Overall, a busy and eventful year for the brewery, when they continued to consolidate and expand their business. They also continued to further enhance their already great reputation with the nation's (not just Somerset's) real ale drinkers, stockpiling further awards in the process.

Mike Coleman

A YEAR OF FESTIVALS

AS MOST of the local branch will already know, I am considered to be a scratcher. For those who haven't come across this breed of beer drinker before, I'm the one to be seen drinking half pints of anything weird and wonderful while all around are sipping brand names. To ensure a constant choice of beers I regularly visit as many beer festivals as possible. So to try and encourage others to partake of the unusual I thought I would put together a diary of festivals and my thoughts.

As far as the local branch are concerned the first real festival starts off with our main branch in the Council buildings on College Green in the centre of Bristol. I won't go into detail on this one – suffice it to say that the selection on offer last year was brilliant.

The Plough Inn at Congresbury is a local treat with its own beer festival over the Easter weekend, but make sure you get there early, as the beer tends to run dry by Sunday lunchtime.

If you are stuck in Weston that weekend the Wetherspoon's local, the Dragon Inn has up to 30 beers as part of its national Easter Festival.

Next up is a Friday evening visit to the

Olympiad for Chippenham's Festival. This is a good place to sit and ponder over a list of 50 to 60 ales from all over the country. And the curry here is superb for the money.

As the summer begins we get a rush of festivals from far and wide, the main one of course being at Olympia in London, CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival. Prior to this is a great festival held by the Cotswold Branch of CAMRA in a large barn at Postlip Hall just outside Winchcombe. This is extremely popular and requires advance booking.

After Olympia we move on to Worcester Festival at the racecourse in the middle of August, then on to a non-CAMRA festival run by the Lions Club of Dursley, at Frocester near Stroud, followed smartly by the Somerset Branch of CAMRA in association with the West Somerset Railway on the Station at Minehead. For those who have not had chance to do this festival it is well worth the hassle of having to change from train to bus to train just to get there. Our local RCH man arranges the beer list for this one, so they tend to be very unusual to say the least.

Having taken us into September we now

have a bit of a rest until the Bath Festival in mid October followed by Cardiff at the end of the month, and of course another Wetherspoon festival for Halloween.

Due to the foot-and-mouth outbreak we lost the Newt Festival – South Petherton, and the Moor Brewery festival was delayed by four months.

How many more, I hear you cry? "Just the one" – Bristol CAMRA's Pub of the Year for 2000, the Bag O'Nails, with their mini festival held in late November.

There could obviously be a lot more than this, but family life dictates otherwise. Look out at pubs that you visit, they can surprise you by suddenly putting on a festival without much prior knowledge, one such being the Old Inn at Hutton at the end of September.

Please note that many of these Festivals require tickets to be bought in advance and some are not run by CAMRA branches.

For all CAMRA members, dates and where to purchase tickets can be found in What's Brewing, the monthly publication sent to all members. Non-members can log on to the national CAMRA website www.camra.org.uk where they will find a complete month by month list of festivals.

Rich Neale

Weston Whispers

Something stirs in Worle..... On a visit to **The Nut Tree** towards the end of November, it was a pleasant surprise to see the regular beers – Theakston Best and Courage Best – augmented by Young’s Special. Even better, a “Guest Beer” board had been installed. This innovation has been introduced by Andy Mannion, who says that he hopes the Nut Tree will become a free-house early in 2002, which will enable Andy to choose which beers he stocks. Andy’s intention is to introduce beers from independents – he mentioned Sharps and Blackawton breweries from Cornwall as personal favourites. Guest beers that have appeared so far include Everard’s Triple Gold, Jennings’ Cockerhoop and Bateman’s Christmas offering Rosey Nosey. Andy also mentioned that their Pints Wests disappeared pretty sharpish. The Nut Tree – one to watch in 2002?

The last Pints West featured the launch of the Nursery Brewery, based in Keynsham. Happily, we in Weston have had the opportunity to try a couple of their beers. Three Blind Mice has appeared at **Off The Rails** and the same beer, as well as Georgie Porgie, have been on at **The White Hart**. Most people have been very enthusiastic about the beers.

In October we went to **The Halfway House, Pitney**. The minibus took the best part of an hour but it was worth the wait. Despite seeming to be in the middle of nowhere, the pub was packed. Hardly surprising given the range of beers and food on offer. The lengthy beer list comprised Cotleigh Tawny, Butcombe Bitter, Hop Back Summer Lightning and Crop Circle,

Teignworthy Reel Ale and Pumpkin (a Halloween special), Otter Ale, and the rarely seen Archers Black Jack Porter. All beers sampled were in excellent condition and some of our party chose to sample the pub’s legendary curries.

Being greedy sorts, we stopped off at **The George, Middlezoy** on the way home. A rather quieter environment, but we received a very warm welcome and enjoyed the four beers on offer – Butcombe Bitter, Cotleigh Osprey, Eccleshall Slaters Premium and Hart Two Beauties. The landlord advised that their 2002 beer festival is due to take place from 1-3 June. Certain to be well worth a visit. The pub’s phone number is 01823 698215.

November saw an evening at **The Queen’s Arms, Bleadon** and a crawl of pubs in Congresbury, meeting up with the main Bristol & District Branch. The evening finished at **The Plough**, where hosts Steve and Jackie Armstrong were busy ferrying round plates of garlic bread as part of their Beaujolais Neuveau celebrations. Judging by the number of empty wine bottles in evidence and the number of glassy-eyed customers, it looked like the pub had had a very successful day. For those of us more committed to malt and hops, beers in excellent condition from the very wonderful RCH and Cottage breweries provided a very satisfactory end to our evening.

December meant our third annual Seasonal Ales Crawl. Sadly, this was rather a disappointing evening, as on the night in question only two pubs in town had a Christmas/winter beer on. We started at **The Regency**, which had Smiles Holly

Hops. We then went on to **The Dragon Inn**, where they had Burton Bridge Sante-Freeze, Titanic Eight Bells and the formidable Skullsplitter from the Orkney brewery. The latter was sold in halves due its strength – 8.5% abv. Rather surprisingly I was a bit disappointed with the Skullsplitter. Definitely very potent but, in my opinion, not as flavoursome as, say, Robinson’s Old Tom, Exmoor Beast or RCH’s Sante Fé. A very good turn-out by the branch, but it would have been nice to have had one or two more pubs to visit.

It should be mentioned that since our comments in the last Pints West concerning service standards at The Dragon, the general view seems to be that there has been a marked improvement of late.

On the subject of seasonal beers, over the course of December **The Dragon** seemed to cover all the beers on the Wether- spoon Xmas list (and a few more besides). **Off The Rails** had Smiles Holly Hops and Branscombe Vale Hells Belles and, as mentioned above **The Nut Tree** in Worle chipped in with Batemans Rosey Nosey. If there are landlords reading this who put on seasonal beers that we have not mentioned, I would simply say – let us know if you are putting on something special and we will come and drink it!

One wonderful night at the beginning of December saw **The Dragon**’s usual range supplemented by three beers from RCH – the mighty Sante Fé, East Street Cream and Double Header – Robinson’s Frederics and Exmoor Beast. I would be interested to know if anyone feels there has ever been a better line-up in a pub in WSM.

Tim Nickolls’ birthday bash at **The Major From Glengarry** was enlivened by landlord Ken Randall putting on Wadworth Old Timer. A good night was had by all – but can The Boy Nickolls really be 40?

T.N.

Wadworth JCB advert

Wsm Diary

Wednesday 20 February – Beer and skittles evening at The White Hart, Palmer Row, 8:30pm.

Wednesday 20 March – Off The Rails, 8:30pm.

Friday 26 April – Beer and Blues night at The Bell, Banwell. Live music. Live beer. Bus from WSM 7:45pm. Return bus at 10:52pm.

Wednesday 15 May – Bristol city centre crawl. Travel arrangements to be confirmed.

Contacts

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (eves)

Rich Neale - 01934 429808 (eves)

Every loser wins sometimes!

REGULAR readers may be aware that a group of us have got into the habit of spending New Year in Belgium. We are just back from another hugely enjoyable four night stay in Ostend, which was given added spice by the changeover from Belgian francs to Euros at midnight on New Years Eve.

We spent the first two days visiting Bruges (again) and Liege and Ghent for the first time. In Liege we had the great pleasure of an hour in the “**Vaudree**” a bar that literally **never** closes and also boasts the world’s largest known beer range – over 1,000 in bottles plus a few on draught! It is in just about the most unlikely setting imaginable for such a bar – in a not very glamorous side street adjacent to a suburban railway line in the “Angleur” part of the city.

The bar was plain looking from the outside but very pleasant and comfortable inside. There certainly were over 1,000 beers on the menu but of the eight we ordered between us two were not actually available. On a percentage basis that indicates that about 800 were probably in stock – not exactly a bad choice! Some of the beers are actually long dead brands from closed breweries that they just keep on selling while stocks last. We were there around lunchtime and it was quiet – it was difficult to imagine who might be about to

justify being open at 4 a.m. on a Tuesday for example, but they really do never close!

We also found time to visit the sister bars **Petit Vaudree** (200 beers) and the plusher **Vaudree Deux** in town (800 beers) both of which hardly ever close.

Bruges was its normal wonderful self (see previous articles) but Ghent was quite a revelation for us.

Spurred on in part by William Malik’s review in last summer’s edition of Pints West, we spent the daytime of New Year’s Eve there. We had time to see some of the wonderful sights of this majestic city, as well as visit several wonderful watering holes too. The **Waterhuis An De Bierkant** on the riverside and the very new **Trappistenhuis** in Brabantdam were both really excellent and served over 150 beers each (including some genuine rarities).

For New Year’s Eve itself it was back to our old favourite – the **Botteltje** in Ostend (250 beers). We are now treated like old friends there – to the point where the landlord insisted on lending me a guidebook to all the best bars in Flanders! They also kindly put on a special meal for thirteen of us at 6 p.m. even though we hadn’t booked (normally essential that night at all local restaurants). We attempted to repay them

by spending all our remaining Belgian francs in their bar before the Euro arrived. To our amazement one of our group, Clive Williams (who originates from Kingswood but is now exiled in Farnborough) disappeared at about 12:15 a.m. and returned with a fistful of Euro notes. He had got them from a cash machine that shortly before been happily dishing out francs! Can you imagine that level of efficiency from our banks if and when we join up?

After midnight we started a game of spoof, with the loser having to buy a 75cl bottle of strong beer to share with the others. Yours truly lost the first two games to much amusement. At about 3 a.m. Clive lost for the first time. He went to the bar to pay his forfeit (about £5 a time) and suddenly there was much commotion and flashing of camera bulbs. It turns out that there had been a secret award planned for the first person to use Euros in the bar – and Clive had won a large special bottle of “Picon” a lovely and aromatic local spirit. He had his photo taken – we think for the local paper – and was looking generally bemused by it all. The irony of it being won by an Englishman was not lost on us either!

So after losing a game worth a fiver, Clive found himself with a £10 bottle of drink. That’s what I call losing!

Vince Murray

Robin Hood, St. Michael’s Hill advert

Hopback Brewery and Coronation advert

Abbey ringing the bell for small brewers

Bristol has virtually no real free-trade pubs and as a result it is very difficult for micro and small brewers to get their beers on the bar.

That is the considered opinion of Alan Morgan, owner of Abbey Ales Brewery in Bath. We drinkers bemoan the lack of choice and variety in Bristol, the root cause lies in the structure of the pub trade. The upsurge in large pub chains has further distorted the market for smaller brewers. Chains will often not deal with smaller brewers, or if they do will demand discounts of 60%, a figure that is impossible for most brewers.

So do you go down the discount road or do you stand out for a fair price for a quality ale? Abbey decided to go for a quality beer, Bellringer, sold at a realistic economic price. It has also insisted that pubs sell the beer at a consistently good quality. If they don't then Abbey has withdrawn the supply and closed the account. "Poor quality beer sold in pubs damages the reputation of Abbey Ales and we are not prepared to tolerate this."

Happily Abbey Ales has been able to sell all the beer it produces, whilst cutting out poor quality pubs. The aim is to remain

small and sell all that can be produced with the existing plant.

Bellringer was conceived as a quality, easy-drinking beer with a light colour. For those of you who wonder, the beer does vary between summer and winter. The summer brews are intended to be lighter in appearance and taste. So now you know!

Bellringer is the top priority for the brewery, but efforts are made to fit in contrasting seasonal beers such as Chorister and Twelfth Night, both of which have involved a lot of work to perfect.

These views were expressed by Alan Morgan on Bristol CAMRA's recent visit to the brewery. They were put in his inimitable direct and colourful style – we have deleted the equally colourful expletives! It was good to hear someone speaking openly and directly about the brewery and pub trade and the need for change if small brewers are to survive economically. This is something that CAMRA nationally has been pressing the government to act upon by changing the beer orders that apply to brewers and the pub chains.

John Armstrong

News from Smiles

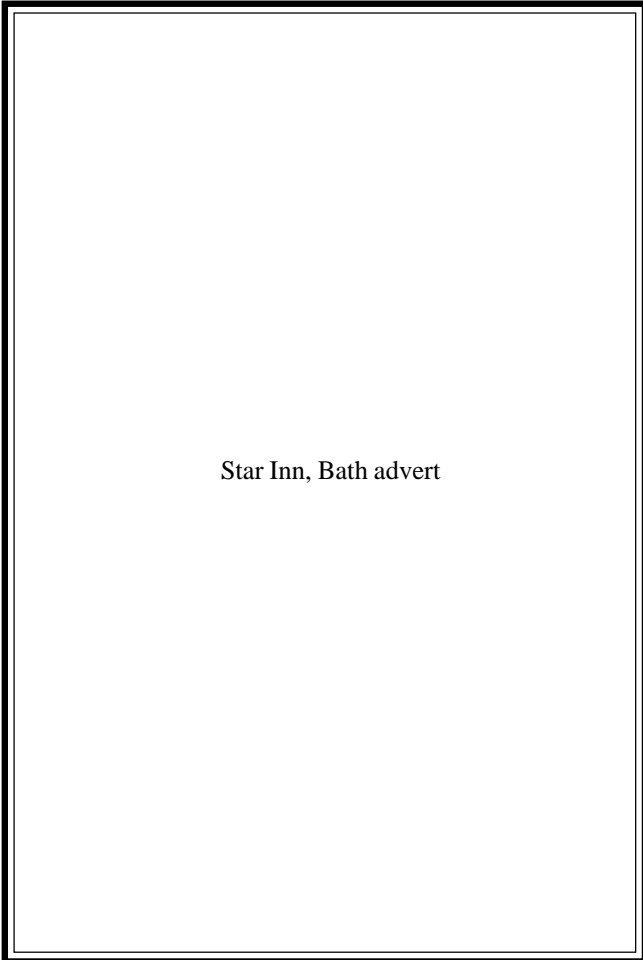
SMILES received some hefty exposure in the Bristol Evening Post on January 1st after they treated some journalists to their hospitality, as well as letting them have some involvement in the brewing process. We are sure this was done in the quest for a good story and not just a load of free beer!

On a financial note Smiles joined the Ofex market in December and now have quoted stock for shareholders to trade their shares. They now sit alongside other brewers such as Brakspear, Shepherd Neame, Adnams and Jennings Brothers.

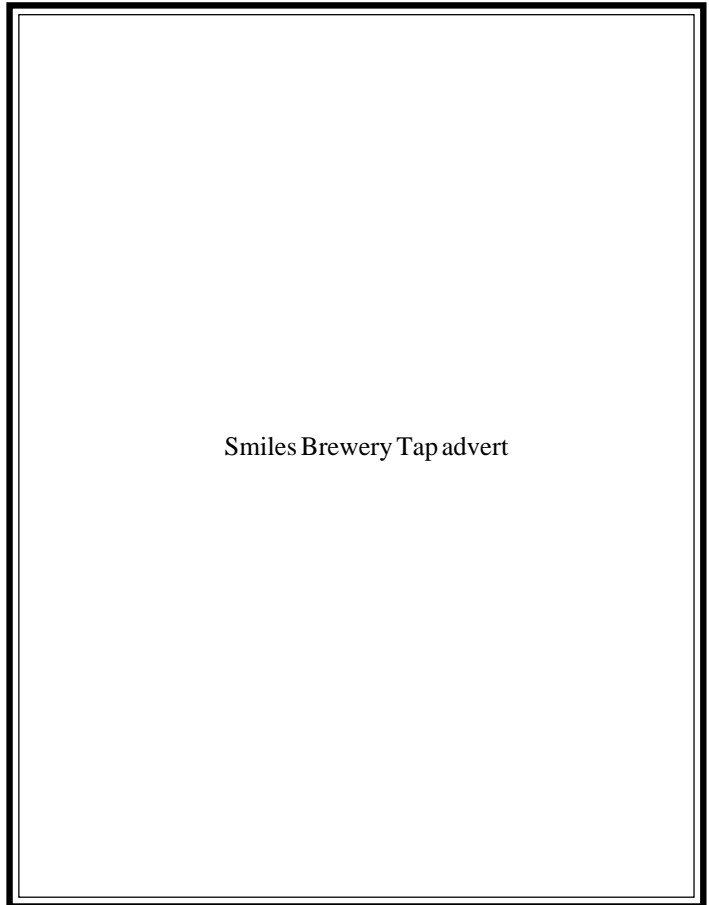
Sunday lunches are proving popular at the Brewery Tap, as are Smiles beer boxes and tours of the brewery itself. You can contact Smiles through their web site www.smiles.co.uk.

Recent new beers have included Headline Bitter and "Archies Ale" for the anniversary of that great Bristol legend Cary Grant. Both of these were limited runs and sold out quickly. Bristol IPA (4.5%) is continuing to sell well and Old Tosser (4.3%) is returning for January and February. This will then be followed by March Hare (4.0%) and April Fuel (4.8%). You can work out for yourself in which months these will be launched!

Richard Brooks



Star Inn, Bath advert



Smiles Brewery Tap advert

Cider Sisters



“Judging by early 17th century writings, the man in the street was for the most part a beer or ale drinker, except in the West Country where cider reigned supreme.” (*The Englishmen’s Food, J.C. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham, 1939*)

If only that were still true!

Sadly, even here in the West, in many a pub it is impossible to buy a decent pint of true West Country cider. However, if you look hard enough, there are pubs catering for the real cider drinker for whom a Woodpecker is a tree-bothering bird.

Over the last two years, we have made it our quest to search out just such pubs, who offer locally-produced ciders in a convivial atmosphere and at a price that’s half that you’d pay for their chemical cousins. We’ve covered Bristol and beyond, and have enjoyed the company of dedicated cider drinkers across the West, from Hereford to Somerset.

Our most recent trip took us the furthest afield yet, to Dartmoor on the weekend before Christmas to discover what Devon had to offer two gals with a powerful thirst.

We weren’t disappointed... Our notes, as ever, are somewhat hazy but here are the highlights (not including the car breaking down and a certain non-existent beer-drinking parrot). Our destination was the

Mary Tavy Inn, of which more later, but a beautiful sunny Saturday saw us stopping en route at a series of country pubs, all of which were able to provide a decent pint of what we were after.

Our particular favourites: **Perry’s Farmhouse**, **Burrow Hill** and pick of the crop – **Addlestone’s Cask Conditioned**. We enjoyed a delicious pint of Addlestone’s in front of a roaring fire in the **Mason’s Arms** in Branksome – a soft, melting and peary drop, with just the right degree of sweetness. And a very attractive pub, but a little too posh for our tastes and a bit too much of the huntin’, shootin’ and fishin’ (and standing around in ridiculous plus-fours).

Day two, and a little worse for wear we ventured out into a freezing cold Dartmoor day. A bitter wind and light snow meant there was no traditional recovery walk, so we had some chips and watched a chimney fire

in Princetown instead. Suitably, refreshed, we took in two historic pubs recommended by the Good Beer Guide: the **Warren House Inn** in Postbridge and the **Rugglestone Inn** in Widecome in the Moor. Both pubs were in stunning settings and definitely worth a visit, but not real session pubs. At times we were disappointed to experience inflated prices, something you don’t expect to find when you’re drinking farmhouse ciders.

Overall, we’d recommend Dartmoor as worth a visit – many good ciders, readily available, but we didn’t find the real cider-drinking culture we’ve enjoyed elsewhere. Our number one recommendation: the **Mary Tavy Inn** (Mary Tavy, near Tavistock). We stayed at the MTI on the Saturday night, and enjoyed a very warm welcome from our hosts Mike and Mary. Though a quiet night in the pub, we had a riotous time, thanks in no small part to the unique landlord’s mix of Sam’s cider: two parts medium to one part dry, and guaranteed to get your freak on. A great easy-drinking session cider, at a very reasonable price – it shouldn’t be allowed!

One power cut and one visit from a handsome RAC man later and we were off – happy memories of Dartmoor hospitality and thumping hangovers following close behind.

So if any of you beer drinkers out there fancy a change in 2002 – shout it loud: “make mine a cider!”

Freya and Erica McLuckie

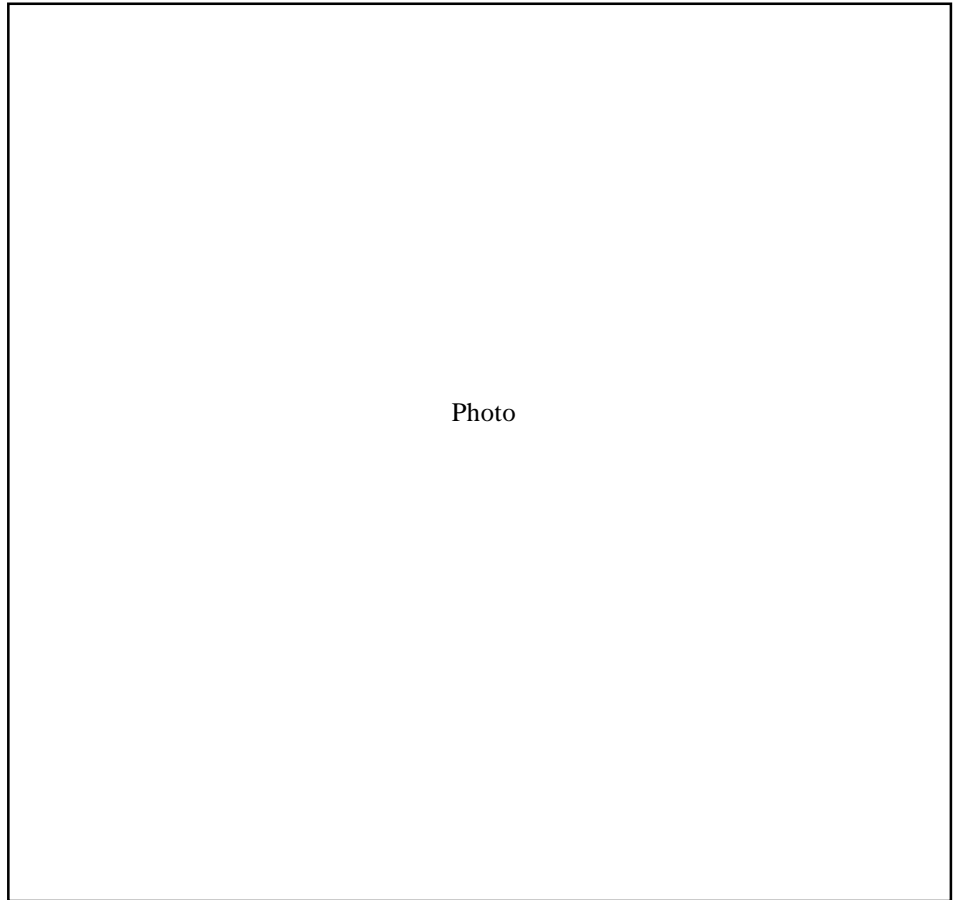
Bell, Kingsdown advert

Abbey Ales Bellringer advert

Furthest South with Beer and Biltong

I HAVE returned from a visit to Cape Town where the main object of the exercise was to visit my new granddaughter who had been born a month before. Once the adoration had been duly attended to, I was to some extent anyway, free to roam and explore. At first glance the beer in Cape Town was a choice of the rather bland Windhoek and Castle brand draught lagers, locally bottled Amstel and not much else. The ubiquitous Guinness was also to be found in a wood floored pub near where we were staying at Sea Point, but then two things changed all that.

The first was a visit to The Waterfront, the lively tourist area which used to be the Union Castle Line dock. There, in a converted dock warehouse, **Mitchell's Brewery and Brew Pub** is to be found. Mitchell's is trying hard to introduce cask ales to the Cape and its pub was as welcoming as the very best of pubs back home. While the usual crisps and other nibbles were on offer, it was interesting to compare the meaty biltong, a South African version of dried meat from either beef or game animals such as kudu, with our own fatty and decidedly less healthy pork scratchings. A selection of brews was on offer and while the rest of the family window-shopped around the Waterfront boutiques, I was left to my own devices for an hour or so as you see here. The regular Busun's bitter (4.0% ABV) was very acceptable but it took little persuasion to get me to try also a pint or two of Special Brew (5.8% ABV). Well hopped and very tasty, this ale was too strong perhaps for a sunny afternoon session, but nevertheless I did my best to persevere with it and eventually emerged into the daylight glad I did not have to drive home.



Photo

John Phillips enjoying the cask ales at the Mitchell's Brewery in Cape Town

The second find was as a result of seeing in the main street of Sea Point, a little old green van advertising the **Birkenhead Brewery**. I think the driver must have a friend in Sea Point as none of

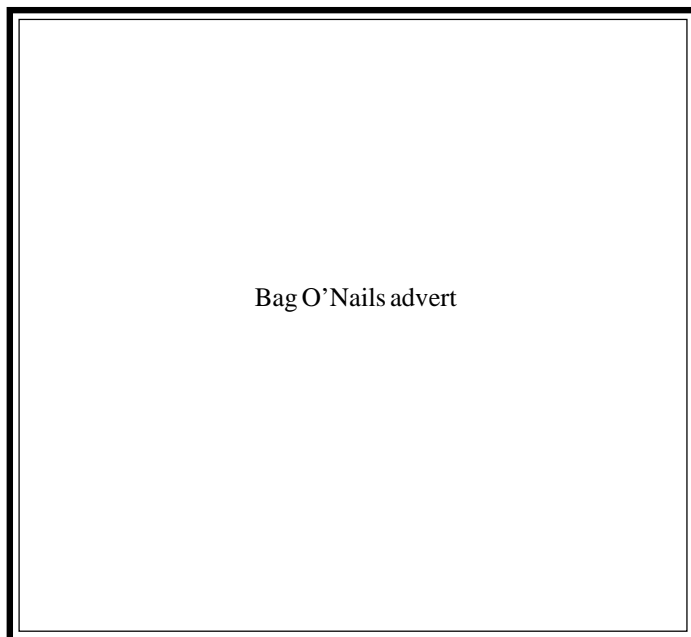
the local bars stocked the beers and so the next time I saw the van, I approached the driver and asked him for details. The Brewery is situated in rolling countryside at Stanford near the coastal town of Hermanus which is famous for whale watching. We combined a visit to both on one of our day trips finding the brewery a spotless facility. Birkenhead was laid out like a Cape winery, sweeping drives, lawns and free tastings and tours on most days. The origin of the name Birkenhead was taken

from HMS Birkenhead, a British troopship that sank in Walker Bay, near the village of Stanford in 1852 with the loss of many lives, giving rise to the advertising slogan "Nothing goes down like a Birkenhead."

Of several interesting beers on offer one was Black & Tan, "South Africa's first politically correct beer," an ale/lager blend which at 5.0% ABV was good enough to take a case home. Here again I quote from the flyer: "Taste and smell the roasted nuts, the espresso coffee, the rich dark chocolate, the lingering dry spice, the black licorice. A sensuously savoury, rather than sweet experience... Enjoy large quantities of this beer with your most serious of friends. Goes well with discussion of state politics, eastern religion and marriage. Will improve your hand at Black Jack, Cribbage and Rummy. Serve well chilled (4-6°C) in a pub style glass."

So despite my early impressions, real ale is alive and well in South Africa. Birkenhead have now opened a second brewing facility and pub in Johannesburg and there are several other micro-breweries.

John Phillips



Bag O'Nails advert

Wonderful wonderful Copenhagen!

NOVEMBER 2001 found me spending a few days in Copenhagen for work. This was my third visit to a city I really like for its cafes, restaurants, architecture and shops - but which I'd never thought much of before as a beer-mecca.

However, my Scandinavian and German colleagues were all beer lovers and keen to show me some of the more interesting beer bars which are now beginning to open in the city. We actually had little free time, but still managed to find a couple of places serving quite a wide and unusual range of beers for a country where Tuborg, Carlsberg and Guinness generally reign supreme.

The places mentioned here are all within a maximum 20 minutes' walk of the railway station, and no more than 10 minutes from Nyhaven, the picturesque (though touristy) harbour area that you will find on all city maps.

Good food, good atmosphere, good architecture: shame about the beer!

The first night we ate at Peder Oxe (Peter's Ox), a restaurant in Gråbrødretorv (Franciscan Square) where, as you might expect, the menu was rather heavily weighted towards ox and reindeer and the only beers on the menu were from the ubiquitous Tuborg brewery. They did, however, offer the bottled Julebryg (Christmas Brew) alongside the green label.

Julebryg was first introduced in 1980, and was (apparently) such a success that it's been brewed ever since as a 5.6% sweet, brown, but still fairly thin beer.

Good marks for the food (I had fish) and the glass of champagne we started with, but not for the beer!

Similar fare was on offer in the downstairs bar, so although the square is one of many attractive ones to be found off main streets in Copenhagen, with several enticing-looking restaurants, we headed after the meal to Charlie's Bar in Pilestræde.

Cask English ale on tap alongside rare Danish beers

Charlie's Bar, 6 or 7 minutes away towards Nyhaven at no.33 Pilestræde, is run by Iain Russel from London and has an English feel to it, although much smaller than the pubs you generally find in the UK today. There are two drinking areas, linked by a couple of steps which take you from the front seats up to the dark wood bar with a couple of traditional hand pumps, fonts for Danish and Belgian beers, and rows of glasses and bottles.

On our visit there was also a nine-gallon cask of Black Sheep on the bar. Blackboards list a substantial range of bottled beers, mainly from the UK, the current offerings of Danish and Belgian beers

(about six or seven) and the 'people's choice' or cask on offer. Given the German contingent, it was a bit embarrassing to find that all the posters were for Shepherd Neame's Spitfire, with an anti-Teutonic theme.

I decided to try the draught Danish brewery offering rather than the UK beers. This was a 7.9% porter (Limfjords Porter) brewed by the Thy brewery and described by Michael Jackson as "full of character: a dense, brownish, head over a slatey, black, brew; full-bodied and lightly oily; a touch of burnt-grass, rooty, peatiness; a long, warming, finish ... The flavours were very complex, and I was not surprised to hear that both smoked malt and licorice were used".

It was indeed very fine and definitely not too sweet and malty, although I'm not too sure about the burnt grass. Not quite as smoky as Beowulf's Dragon Smoke Stout (one of my favourite dark beers of all time), but I had another pint just to make sure (yes, the draught beer is served in straight pint glasses).

I also tried one of the bottled Belgian beers (Westmalle Dubbel at 6.5%) before sharing a pint of Gambrinus Dark (10.5%) with my five, now travel-weary, colleagues. This very black beer is brewed by the strangely named Hancock's brewery (strange as it is named after an Englishman who married into the firm, stranger still as the owning family's name is, again according to Michael Jackson, Strange Neilsen). I was glad that I didn't have to drink it all by myself, as in very marked contrast to the porter it was unbearably sweet and sticky.

We wended our way back to our hotel near the station, not quite ready for a hard day's work the next day.

The Tattooed Widow: a missed opportunity

After that hard day's work I mentioned (chairing a workshop for 50 people from around Europe at the Technical University 11km outside Copenhagen, followed by dinner at a Greek restaurant on Skindergade with the same 50, and rather a lot of free wine), I cried off that night's beer exploration.

It seems I missed

a treat: The Tattooed Widow (Den Tatoverede Enke) is a Belgian Bar and Restaurant at Baron Bolten's Gaard, Gothersgade 8C. This is a long straight street that connects to Nyhavn. From my colleagues' reports (and subsequent searches on the web) it sounded like a beer paradise. It offers a dozen or more beers on tap, including all the main styles, and an extensive range of bottled beers.

Their site on the web found at www.dentatoveredeenke.dk makes my mouth water. If you want to find out what beers they have on offer, it may help you to know that the Danish word for beer is øl. Links on the page to beer lists are fadøl (beers on tap) and flaskeøl (bottled beers). Selecting the 'links' option at the end of the menu provides access to a few more Scandinavian beer bars. Here too is the Danish Beer Enthusiasts' page - Danske Ølentusiaster - affiliated to EBCU, the European Beer Consumers Union (the European equivalent of CAMRA), where there are more details about beer and places to drink it (unfortunately all but the introduction is in Danish, so you'll need a friendly Scandinavian, or a Danish-English dictionary, to get into the detail).

I'm visiting Lund in Sweden in April, and Copenhagen is only an hour's train journey away, so I'll add the Tattooed Widow and a few others to my sightseeing list for next time.


Lesly Huxley



Nursery Brewery advert

READERS' LETTERS

FROTH OFF!



Your chance to let off steam.

Readers are welcome to send letters to Pints West Editor, Steve Plumridge, Garden Flat, 6 Royal York Villas, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JR (steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk)

Cider me up, Landlady!

Dear Steve,

Yes, it's me again and predictably yes, I am going to sing praises for my favourite watering hole, the "Swamp" (Kings Head on Kingswood High Street).

I think I use it frequently enough for it to be said that I'm part of what is occasionally referred to as "pond life". Exactly how the landlady, Sarah categorises me mind I'm not

sure. As long as I come under something above an aquatic amoeba I don't mind too much.

I had to write to you once more if only to rectify my genuine mistake of last time. Sarah brought her concern to my attention that my last letter may have given the impression of her pub being little more than a collapsing ground for incoherent drunks – which is why she quite sternly told me that the "touchdown" record for one day stands not at six or seven as I said, but at three or "three and a sort of half" to quote her exact words, whatever that may mean. (I assumed someone stayed semi-conscious or didn't hit the deck full on.) Even you, it seemed, given my incorrect wording, were quite rightly a little concerned. As my dad once told me many, many moons ago, "If you can't handle your cider, don't drink it." Coming from someone with a classic touchdown under his belt I suppose that's a little rich really.

But anyway, that's that cleared up. The only other thing that my favourite landlady expressed concern over was that my brief description of her Sunday afternoon bar snacks failed to mention her hot dogs. So now hopefully everyone's happy or they will be once they get their wellies on and take a plunge into the Swamp.

Craig Weaden
Soundwell Road,
Staple Hill.



George's beers

Dear Steve,

Just a brief note to say that I have six full bottles of Courage's "George's Home Brewed", best before Sept '88! Anyone who collects beer memorabilia please ring me.

Regan Callow
Weston-super-Mare
01934 642242

Brian's beers

Dear Mr Plumridge,

I am writing to let you know of our beer and pub guide website, *www.briansbeers.co.uk*. This may be of interest to the readers of Pints West (I never miss an issue!) who may wish to contribute reviews and entries (the more the merrier!). Please let me know if you have any suggestions for improvements etc.

Your good health,
Brian Hooper
Redland, Bristol.

Gordon's cheers

Dear Steve,

I would like to thank all those who supported our Mini Beer Festival in November. You all made for a wonderful atmosphere and a pleasant weekend. We served 38 different beers over the period and all pretty good I hear. Geoff did a brilliant job and is now resting in a darkened room.

Gordon Beresford,
Bag O'Nails, Hotwells.

Annexe Inn advert

Cornubia advert

The tale of the Dun Cow

THE new CAMRA Good Beer Guide has used slightly different criteria to previous editions and so certain pubs have, often for no fault of their own, gone from the lists. The entry of one such in the 2001 GBG had intrigued me and I quote:

The Dun Cow (Cow's Tail)

Turn left at the Royal George, 1 mile along road

Darwin Evolution (H)

This unspoilt, traditional rural pub is now in its third century of ownership by the same family. Well off the beaten track, but well worth seeking out (ring to visit during the day). Internally virtually unchanged since first licensed in 1830. Other Darwin beers may be available.

Where? I hear you ask. Well it's a few miles South West of Durham City, near a little village called Billy Row and quite near the Darwin Brewery at Crook. My son is studying at Durham Uni you see, and I drove up a few weeks ago to take up some of his kit and I considered the Dun Cow, apparently known to all locals as the Cow's Tail as "worth the detour". I duly telephoned in advance as the opening hours seemed rather vague.

"Hello" I said to the female voice, "Is that the Dun Cow?"

"No," she said, "it's next door."

"Can you tell me if it would be OK to some bring people down to visit this evening at about 7:30?"

"How many are you?" ... "Can you make it after 8pm?" I was asked, even when I said just three of us. Funny I thought.

Anyway to cut a long story short and almost getting lost because the turn left at the Royal George does in fact depend on the direction one is coming from and I wasn't, if you see what I mean.

The pub was all I expected and more; the more consisted of cobwebs and not a little grime. Behind the bar was the publican, red of face, an octogenarian of sedentary shape who must have survived life due to rather than in spite of the calorific content of his beers. Alongside the bar was one customer, a local character of younger vintage but similarly well marinated in beer and cobwebs. That was it, just the two of them and the three of us, hardly an unmanageable number in the little bar. So there we were, on a bright Friday evening in the artificially lit back bar of a pub seemingly unchanged for centuries. The Darwin beer was acceptable rather than good, but the ambience and the welcome was really interesting. I have to confess that the strong Durham accents took a while to understand. We were encouraged to take a look at the various faded and nicotine stained prints on the walls and at the vast collection of tankards and jugs above the bar festooned

with the aforementioned cobwebs. The Tankards seemed to be the unclaimed belongings of long departed regulars. We stayed for just the one pint, needing to get back to Durham for a meal, but it is the kind of place, small though it is that repays further visits as one is bound to see and find out more on each visit. The catchment area for the pub must be tiny and its future must be in doubt, but if you are ever "up North" then seek it out.

For afters, that is after we had had a meal in the city centre, and feeling the need for even more excitement, we found another real ale delight hard by the cathedral. My son who is on the bar committee of his more modern college (St Aidan's) took us to the tiny cellar bar of St John's College. Out of Uni term time these bars can be rather too quiet, but this small bar had interesting and interested visiting academics talking about their respective interests. While the usual cask ale was unavailable on this particular night I enjoyed a bottle conditioned St John's Ale, a special brew from the Durham Brewery, and took away a bottle for my collection. College bars (with the permission of the porter) are generally open to the public and in a city like Durham, an experience not to be missed.

John Phillips



**Great British Beer Festival,
Olympia, London
6-10 August 2002.
Make a note in your diary
now.**

A philosophy for life

A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about two inches in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full? They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The students laughed. The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else.

"Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognise that this is your life. The rocks are the important things – your family, your partner, your health, your children – things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else. The small stuff.

"If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

"Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the disposal.

"Take care of the rocks first – the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

But then...

A student then took the jar which the other students and the professor agreed was full, and proceeded to pour in a glass of beer. Of course the beer filled the remaining spaces within the jar making the jar truly full.

Which proves – that no matter how full your life is, there is always room for a beer.

Author unknown

Win a Bath Ales microcask

News from Bath Ales

O	T	E	D	I	R	P	Y	T	N	U	O	C
L	Y	Y	V	R	U	T	Y	S	P	O	T	Y
D	G	R	R	A	W	K	C	I	W	O	U	H
M	S	E	Q	U	I	F	T	R	N	P	O	O
O	T	S	M	H	U	C	S	H	U	M	T	M
T	L	R	K	A	H	E	E	S	E	H	S	O
H	L	U	E	F	L	G	E	C	U	M	C	L
E	I	N	O	A	S	L	O	J	I	E	I	E
R	H	R	H	E	A	U	X	L	G	A	G	C
H	K	T	R	Y	N	O	E	A	D	B	A	A
U	A	O	E	T	A	S	T	V	U	E	M	T
B	O	B	Y	G	E	I	G	U	L	R	K	C
B	B	E	L	L	R	I	N	G	E	R	C	H
A	R	R	O	E	S	T	R	U	Y	O	A	E
R	I	M	H	O	L	D	R	I	C	W	L	R
D	R	Z	H	E	B	M	O	C	T	U	B	Y

BATH ALES had a remarkable Christmas with demand exceeding all expectations. The delicious rum porter, Festivity, was extremely popular, with brewer Craig having to squeeze additional brews out of the plant at Siston Common.

Mini casks for maxi convenience

A particular success was the 8.8-pint microcasks which are a perfect way of taking real ale (casked at the brewery – not decanted bright off the sediment) home in a quantity that is easily drunk in one or two sessions. The advantage is that these pocket (if your name is Hagrid) sized containers are easily carried home so it doesn't require the planning needed to get larger volumes of ale into your living room.

The microcasks proved such an attraction that they sold out just before Christmas. I managed to get three different beers, Barnstormer, Gem and Festivity and was very impressed with how the quality of the beer was maintained by the patented venting gadget.

Microcasks are available again from any of the Bath Ales pubs or direct from the Brewery. Tours of the brewery, located at Webbs Heath between Bath and Bristol, are available most weekdays and can be booked by contacting Alison at the brewery (0117 9071797). More information about tours and what's going on at Bath Ales can be obtained by visiting the website, www.bathales.com.

Steve O'Shea



Locate the names of a dozen local breweries and a dozen beers in the grid above. Then match up the beers with the breweries and enter them below.

Brewery	Beer
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

Send your solution (photocopies acceptable) to the editor (address under 'Contacts' on the back page) by 1st April 2002. The first correct entry selected at random after that date wins a microcask of Bath Ales beer (winner must be prepared to collect from a Bath Ales pub).

Last edition's crossword solution

Across: 1 T'Other. 5 Rogue Ale. 8 Dark Side. 9 Death. 10 Coronation. 11 Old. 13 The Three Tuns. 14 Greengrass. 17 Miss. 19 Mutiny. 21 Lamb. 22 Ale. 23 Balance. 24 FFF. 26 Princess Of Wales. **Down:** 2 Old Mother Hubbard. 3 Hare On The Hill. 4 Restalrig. 5 Red Kite. 6 Eden. 7 Little Miss Muffet. 12 Asum Ale. 15 Archers. 16 Straw. 20 Yankee. 25 Bar. 27 OG. The winner was **Sarah Turner** from Brislington who won £10 worth of Oddbins vouchers.

Good Beer Guide 2002

Picture of Good Beer Guide cover

Fancy a decent pint? It used to be easy, but pubs and breweries are changing at such bewildering speed that you need an old and valued friend to take you to pubs that guarantee good beer in welcoming surroundings. That's why you need the Good Beer Guide with its unrivalled experience dating back almost 30 years. It employs no paid inspectors and accepts no payments for entries. It's researched by members of the Campaign for Real Ale, who monitor pubs and breweries on a regular basis, not a once-a-year spot check.

The Good Beer Guide has been given a complete overhaul for its latest edition. It's part of the drive by CAMRA to shed the false "beards-and-anorak" image beloved by satirists, and to prove that real ale is the smart drink for young people.

The guide still includes 5,000 of the best pubs serving cask-conditioned beer but 4,000 of them now have much longer descriptions.

As well as being on sale in most book shops, the Good Beer Guide is also available at Bristol & District branch meetings. There is a substantial discount in the price for CAMRA members if you buy from us direct.

CAMRA Bath & Borders Branch

SOCIALS and MEETINGS

JANUARY

Tuesday 29th - 8:30 p.m.

Branch meeting at the Star in Bath. We need to ensure the surveying for the 2003 GBG is under way so can as many as possible please come!

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 6th - 8:30 p.m.

Bath Crawl!! This is to check out a good few GBG pubs in central Bath. We start at Lambrettas at 8:30 and then on to the Rummer by about 9:00.

Tuesday 12th - 8:30 p.m.

The Fox and Badger at Wellow, south of Bath. A perennial favourite.

Friday 22nd

Minibus trip to the Wells area to visit and survey GBG pubs. Please contact James for times and pick-ups.

Saturday 23rd

Minibus trip to the Wye Valley area to visit a few of Pete and Nicky's favourite pubs before they bugger off!

Tuesday 26th - 8.30 p.m.

Branch Meeting at the Prince of Wales, Dilton Marsh.

MARCH

Thursday 7th - 8:00 p.m.

Bradford Crawl! Start at the Bunch of Grapes at 8:00 and then through town to survey some old favourites and some lesser visited pubs. Note the start time!

Wednesday 13th

Minibus trip to the Midsomer Norton/Wells area to visit and survey GBG pubs. Ring James for details for times and pick-ups. Last minute surveying!

Tuesday 19th

Trip to Bath Ales brewery and pubs! By minibus so please ring James for times and pick-ups.

Tuesday 26th - 8:30 p.m.

Branch meeting at the Griffin Inn, Frome. Our other Pub Of The Year, great beer and atmosphere!

APRIL

Wednesday 3rd

Trip to the Nursery Brewery in Keynsham and then on to their new brewery tap, the Old Bank. Ring James for details.

Socials contact only: James Honey — 01225 868481

Branch contact: Denis Rahilly — 01225 791399 / 07711 004501

Drink Cain's – if you're Able

WORRYING news from Merseyside – the very highly regarded Cain's Brewery of Liverpool is up for sale together with its estate of nine pubs. Its Danish owners have decided to offload the business as they claim it's not making enough money.

The Robert Cain Brewery was first established on its current site in 1850. The business was then acquired by Higson's in the 1920s and then by Boddington's of Manchester in the mid eighties. Then came the dreaded Whitbread takeover of Boddington's soon after and it looked like the brewery would be shut for ever – Whitbread had decided to close the brewery. However, following new management and a strong local campaign by CAMRA branches in the North West, the business reopened in the early nineties, on the same site, as an independent brewery. The business became The Robert Cain Brewery Ltd. It was sold to its current Danish owners about a year later.

Robert Cain's beers have gained a reputation in recent years for their high quality. The excellent Dark Mild, Bitter and

Formidable Ale (known as FA) gained a loyal following – particularly around the Merseyside area and beyond as the beers became known nationally through direct deliveries from the brewery and via wholesale distribution.

Now it appears, as a result of the cut-throat competition that is the reality of the UK beer market, the owners want to offload the business. This is causing a great deal of concern – particularly as Cain's is the only commercial brewery in the whole of Liverpool.

We must hope that the Cain's business can survive, and survive as an independent business still brewing from Liverpool, to maintain that key ingredient for such a business – a local, loyal following. Then the rest of the UK's beer drinkers can also enjoy these superb ales – they are that for sure.

I picked up a Cain's beer mat in Bristol very recently. On the bottom of the mat it states "Cain's Bitter – A Merseyside tradition worth holding onto". Let's hope we can.

Pete Bridle

DIARY



Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA. (See inside pages for Weston-super-Mare sub-branch and Bath & Borders branch diaries and contacts.)

Wednesday 30th January: Trip to Bristol district pubs. Depart from the Cornubia 6:45pm.

Wednesday 6th February: Trip to pubs in Axbridge and district. Depart from the Cornubia 6:45pm.

Saturday 9th February: South West Regional Meeting, Coopers Arms, Highbridge, Somerset, noon.

Wednesday 13th February: Committee Meeting, Cornubia 8pm.

Wednesday 20th February: Trip to pubs in North Somerset. Depart from the Cornubia 6:45pm.

Wednesday 27th February: Branch Meeting at the Ropewalk, Bedminster, 7:45pm.

Future Branch Meetings: Wed 27 March, Wed 24 April, Wed 22 May.

For more information on local events either attend our branch meetings or contact Phil Cummings on 0117 9858220 (evenings).

Thanks to Fran Brennan and Mike Machin of **Beer'tiz**, the excellent newsletter of the North Devon Branch of CAMRA, where our front page article first appeared.

CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Plumridge
Norman Spalding
John Armstrong
Richard Brooks
Freya McLuckie
Erica McLuckie
Phil Cummings
Mike Coleman
Steve O'Shea
Vince Murray
Lesly Huxley
John Phillips
Pete Tanner
Pete Bridle
Phil Brooks
Rich Neale

www.camrabristol.org.uk

Views expressed in Pints West are those of the individual authors and not necessarily supported by CAMRA. Inclusion of an advertisement does not necessarily imply endorsement by CAMRA.

Hounsfield Printing

57 Old Market Street
Old Market
Bristol BS2 0ER

Tel: 0117 925 5541
Fax: 0117 925 5561



CONTACTS

When contacting, please bear in mind that, as CAMRA members, we are all unpaid volunteers who do all CAMRA work in our spare time.

TO ADVERTISE IN PINTS WEST call Steve Plumridge in the first instance, evenings or weekends, on (0117) 9743242. (Email: steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk)

LETTERS can be sent to:
Pints West Editor,
Steve Plumridge,
Garden Flat,
6 Royal York Villas,
Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JR
(Email: steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk)



Suggestions for future entries for the CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE, and any comments on existing entries, can be made to our GBG Coordinator, Richard Walters, care of the editor (above).

FURTHER INFORMATION on all aspects of CAMRA can be had from Ray Holmes on (0117) 9605357 (h).

SEVEN THOUSAND COPIES of Pints West are distributed free to pubs in and around the cities of Bristol and Bath.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: To be put on a mailing list send a cheque to the editor (payable to Steve Plumridge) – rate is 50p per issue.

Published by the Bristol & District Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale, January 2002 ©

NEXT EDITION: April 2002 (probably).

Any **written article** in this publication may be reproduced **provided the source, including the contributor's name where applicable, is stated.** (No lifting of artwork, logos, etc. without prior permission.)



Contact numbers of local **Trading Standards Officers** for problems such as consistent short measures, no price lists...
Bristol: 0117 9223444
S. Glos: 01454 624000
Glos: 01452 426201
N. Somerset: 01934 632026
B.A.N.E.S: 01225 396755

Join over 63,000 CAMRA members now

Pints West 53

Bristol & District (AVN)

CAMRA MEMBERSHIP GIVES

Monthly copies of What's Brewing, CAMRA's entertaining, informative and highly-regarded newspaper.

Generous discounts on CAMRA products and publications (including the best-selling Good Beer Guide).

Advance notice of beer festivals throughout the U.K. and Europe - and discounts when you get there. Many festivals allow CAMRA members in at reduced rates or free.

An invitation to join in CAMRA's activities such as brewery trips, meetings and socials.

ABOVE ALL, you will belong to a flourishing consumer movement which is acting as a champion for beer drinkers and pub users. CAMRA has been hailed the most successful consumer organisation in Europe.



Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque payable to CAMRA, to: Bristol & District CAMRA Membership Secretary, 54 Apsley Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2ST.

Rates are:- Single: £16 Joint (at same address): £19
Under 26, Unemployed, Disabled, Pensioner: £9
Joint pensioners (at same address): £12

Name(s).....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

Email.....

I/we wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale and agree to abide by the Rules.

I enclose a cheque for

Date of birth

Signature

Date.....

Where did you pick up this copy of Pints West?

