



# PINTS WEST

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

## Do you know a Free House?

In case you're not aware, the accepted definition of a "Free House" isn't one that gives away free beer (sadly). It's actually a pub that is "free of tie" meaning that the licensee can choose which beers they want to sell and aren't restricted to products from one particular brewery, or perhaps to a small list available to pubs in a particular chain.

Many pubs display signs saying they are a free house when in fact they are not – the licensee cannot order any beer he likes.

We would like to hear about any pubs that you know of in the Bristol & District area where the licensee can choose what he sells. Some examples in Bristol are the Cornubia, Hope & Anchor and the Bag O'Nails, but you may well know of others. If so please drop us a line at [camra@camrabristol.org.uk](mailto:camra@camrabristol.org.uk).

Not only is this an issue that affects consumer choice and the licensee's ability to run his or her own business, but without genuine free houses small independent brewers (such as our own local breweries) find it almost impossible to sell their beer unless they can buy their own pubs. You'll hear more from us about this soon, but in the mean time please let us know of any free houses out there!

## DTI decision to revoke Beer Orders

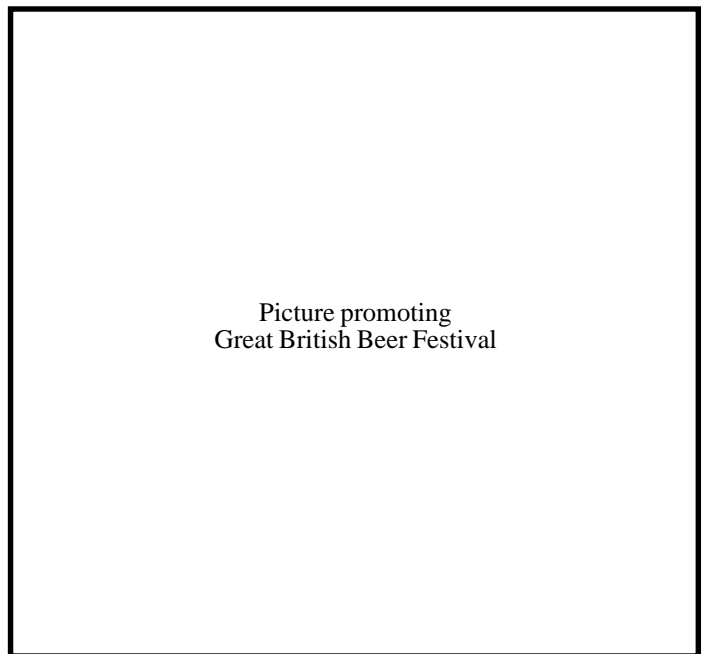
The Department of Trade and Industry acts **AGAINST** the advice of the Office of Fair Trading following its review in 2000 by pulling the rug from under Britain's 15 million beer drinkers and 400 small brewing companies leaving us to the mercy of global brewing giants and massive pub chains who will now be able to control the market unhindered.

See article on Page 3

## Tony's dis-honest pint

Are you getting enough?

See article on Page 5



Picture promoting Great British Beer Festival

See back page

## Budget 2002 – CAMRA welcomes Progressive Beer Tax to help small breweries thrive

The Chancellor is introducing a fairer tax system for Britain's small breweries who currently have just a tiny slice of the market share. This will help our smaller players who simply cannot compete with the marketing and distribution might of Britain's top four breweries who collectively have around 85% of the UK's beer market

See article on Page 2

## Watch the Web

Bristol and District CAMRA would like to remind readers that we have a new web site:

**[www.camrabristol.org.uk](http://www.camrabristol.org.uk)**

This contains information on the local branch and the Campaign for Real Ale generally, as well as details of forth-coming 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](mailto:camra@camrabristol.org.uk).

## Branch AGM

The 2002 Annual General Meeting of the Bristol and District branch of CAMRA will be held on Wednesday 26th June at the Naval Volunteer, King Street, Bristol starting at 8 p.m.

This is one of the most important meetings of the year as it is when a review is taken of the last year's activities, the branch accounts are submitted for approval and the new committee is elected.

Branch members are encouraged to attend – please bring your CAMRA membership card.

## Good news for real ale drinkers

**In case you missed the news, the Chancellor in his recent Budget has frozen duty on beer, spirits and wine, and for cider duty has been cut by 2%.**

**He is also introducing duty relief for small breweries, equivalent to a cut of 14p off the price of a pint.**

**Alcopops on the other hand will suffer, now to be taxed at spirits rather than wine rates.**

### Welcome

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale has warmly welcomed Gordon Brown's Budget announcement that Britain's 350 small breweries are to benefit from a fairer system of excise duty.

This is excellent news and we're very pleased that the Chancellor has responded positively after twenty years of campaigning. This will help even out the playing field for Britain's small brewing companies which will hopefully promote competition and increase consumer choice.

Britain's 350 small breweries have less than 2% of the beer market, but they produce some 2,000 real ales to cater for local tastes. The four biggest global brewers

have around 85% of the market.

A progressive system of beer tax will help:

- Increase investment in small breweries which are often based in rural or economically marginal areas;
- Improve cash flow – one of the biggest threats to small businesses;
- Create local jobs;
- Remove a major barrier to market entry;
- Be almost self-financing as multiplier effects come into play;
- Promote choice and diversity for consumers.

Hopefully we will see a far more interesting range of locally brewed beers on pub bars from now on.

### Beer Duty Freeze

CAMRA also welcomed the general freeze on beer duty.

This is the second consecutive year that duty has been frozen, which is effectively a small cut. We will continue to push for significant reductions in duty which will stamp out smuggling and help boost this important British industry.

CAMRA had called for a duty cut of only two pence in this Budget which would have been enough to significantly reduce the bootleggers' profit.

Adnams Brewery advert

Smiles Brewery advert

# Restrictive Covenants : can New Labour raise the dead?

READERS may have noticed the Government's recent announcement that it intends to revoke the Beer Orders, which were introduced in 1991 to give small brewers access to customers in pubs owned by the large national ones.

They allowed the licensee of any pub belonging to a brewer who owned over 2,000 pubs to stock one beer of his own choice from any source he liked – this soon became known as the “guest beer”. The Government now says that objectives of the legislation have now been achieved, so it can be revoked.

CAMRA's view on this should be familiar from other articles on the subject (we are against the abolition of the Beer Orders, because they are still providing valuable market access for numerous small brewers who could not afford to buy pubs – if anything, there are more of these now, and fewer true “free houses” for them to sell to, than there were in 1991; we are also against abolition because it will reduce the customer's choice in pubs where the licensee currently has the right to stock a “guest beer”). If the Government goes ahead with its plan, the only beneficiaries will be large pub-owning chains and the large brewers with whom they have supply deals. Small brewers and pub customers will lose.

In the same announcement, the Government also proposed to make it possible for pub owners to put restrictive covenants on their pubs when they sell them. This is a legal device to prevent anyone who buys the pub from reopening it as licensed premises,

or indeed from doing anything else the vendor chooses to specify (like keeping parrots, flying Union Jacks or holding church services of a denomination they happen not to like, for example).

Of course, what the vendor wants is to prevent anyone else from opening up in competition with any other pubs they may have nearby, and also to avoid the embarrassment of a new owner making a success where they could not.

It is scarcely credible that any Government should consider allowing restrictive covenants again, ten years or so after deciding against them; but especially a Government calling itself Labour. The legality of restrictive covenants was already in some doubt by the late 1980s, following some celebrated court cases where a buyer had successfully overturned a covenant on the grounds that it was a restraint of trade (e.g. The Bramley Apple public house in Southwell, Notts, where John Smiths were given their comeuppance and a thriving free house established in place of a moribund tied one). The European Commission has also been taking a close interest in any obstacles to free trade for some time now.

All told, this adds up to a very shaky foundation for restrictive covenants, a legal device which is profoundly against the public interest anyway, and which

can only have one possible beneficiary – a vendor whose interest is in suppressing someone else's enterprise, not in promoting or supporting anything. (Correction: I suppose lawyers will benefit too, when the inevitable test cases are brought.)

There are a number of other ways for brewers and pub-owning companies to make life difficult for competitors, such as aggressive price-cutting, intensive advertising campaigns, and even (perish the thought!) making such a good product that people prefer to buy it rather than someone else's. They should not need to resort to practices whose legality is at best open to challenge, and whose principle is about preventing new entrants to the market and stifling healthy competition. For any Government to condone such ideas is a betrayal of the public interest. Let us hope that New Labour sees the error of this proposal before it is too late; and if they are too dimwitted to change their minds, let us hope that pub-owners will not want to return to such underhand and unreliable ways of suppressing competitors.

Norman Spalding

Dorothy Inn, Weymouth advert

Cornubia advert

# Early Day Motion : MPs back call for duty cut on small brewers' beers

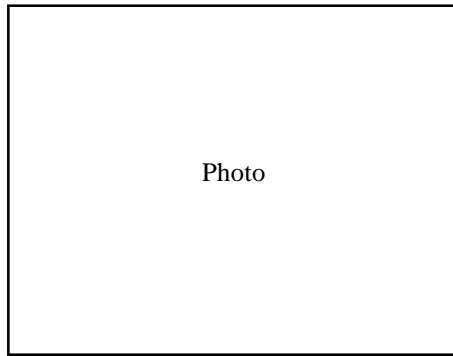
Managing Director of Abbey Ales, Alan Morgan takes the stage to air some of his views  
*(Written before the recent Budget)*

I recently warmly welcomed the move by over a 100 MPs who have backed an Early Day Motion calling for an immediate duty cut of 30p a pint on beers produced by small brewers.

The move, proposed by Liberal Democrat MP Norman Baker, would, he believes, encourage beer drinkers to drink their local ales and help struggling smaller brewers to survive.

As well as a sliding scale of duty for ale produced by small, local brewers, the EDM is calling for duty to be removed altogether on beer from Britain's 300 microbreweries. As the trade has been pointing out for some time, about 33p of every pint of beer bought in a pub goes on duty.

Now the MPs backing the proposal hope progressive duty will stem the tide of foreign lagers in British pubs and instead encourage pubs to stock Britain's regional



Photo

bitters, ales and stouts.

Well, did Mr Gordon Brown listen? He has been promising micro brewers a duty reduction for some time and in last year's pre-Budget statement the Chancellor said he was "minded" to introduce a sliding scale of tax for small brewers in the next Budget, due in April.

I do not in fact understand political speak and I do not know what "minded" actually means so I am not totally confident. However by the time you read this we will know one way or the other.

I totally agree with a sliding scale of beer duty and believe that local

pubs should sell local beers. In fact at Abbey Ales we do not personally deliver outside of a 20-mile radius of the brewery which I believe has been one of the secrets of Bellringer's success.

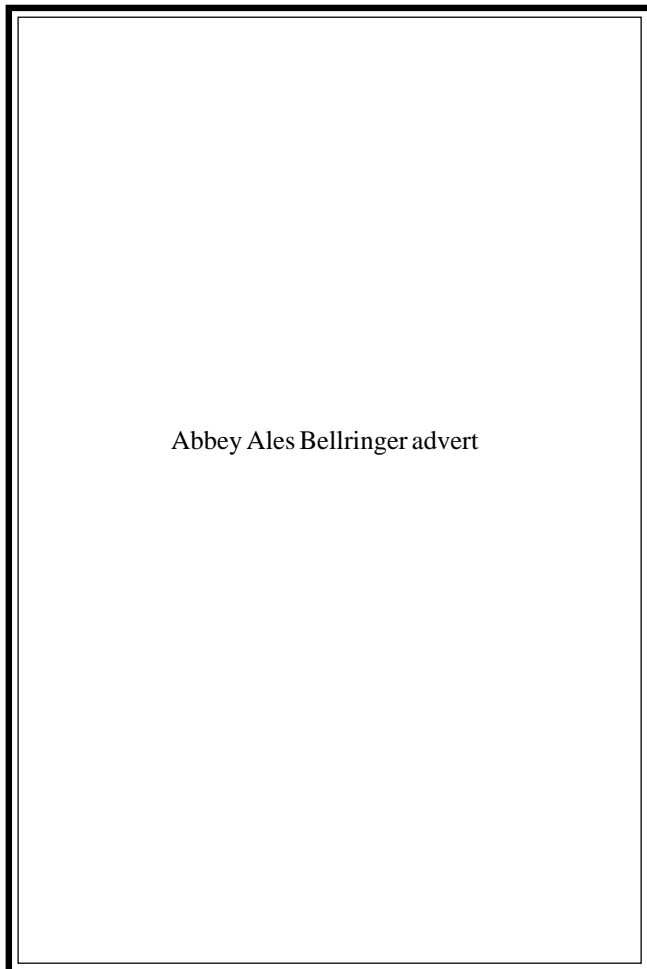
Landlords tell me that it is a great asset having a locally brewed beer to sell and in the majority of pubs in Bath that stock it, Bellringer is the pub's top selling cask beer.

However there are still many managers in pubs in Bath and Bristol that would like to stock Bellringer but the pub groups they belong to will not deal with small brewers.

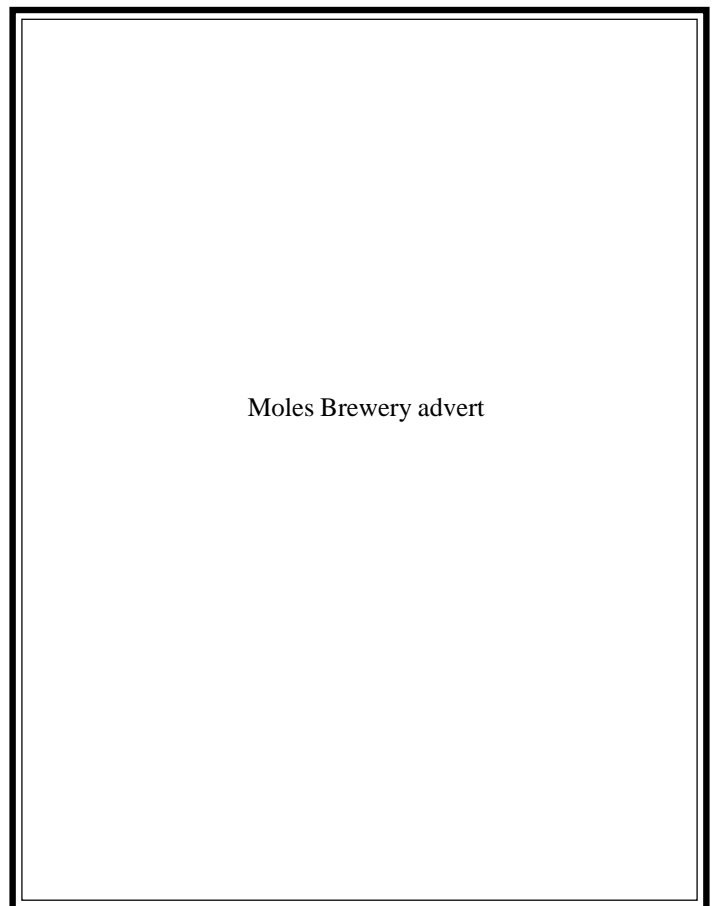
The shrinking of the market place is probably just as important to us and the Government needs to help here before there are no small brewers left.

I also strongly feel that this is a matter CAMRA should get behind especially now considering the recent discussion on the removal of the beer orders and particularly in Bristol where the free trade market has virtually disappeared thanks to purchases from regional brewers and pub groups who blatantly disregard what the customer wants. Without outlets, myself and many small brewers around the Country will vanish.

*CAMRA are campaigning hard for a complete review of the whole issue of Beer Orders, etc. - Ed.*



Abbey Ales Bellringer advert



Moles Brewery advert

# Tony's 'dis-honest pint' proposals

**A new DTI consultation issued on 18<sup>th</sup> March proposes to make it legal for pubs to serve pints with only 95% liquid. This is despite Ministers having already given backing to an honest pint law and the 154 Labour backbenchers who have signed a Parliamentary Motion calling for full pints.**

There is clearly widespread support for a full pint law from consumers – these latest proposals are absurd. Beer drinkers are already losing out to the tune of £1 million a day. A pint can never be 95% and if it becomes law, would this not encourage more publicans to serve short messages?

**CAMRA research stamps out industry myth that full pints will lead to higher prices for consumers.**

Results of research by CAMRA during 2001 shows that pubs that already serve 100%

liquid pints using oversized lined glasses or metered dispense are on average cheaper than pubs which do not guarantee full pints.

However, the reality is that in Bristol it was found that typically, in many pubs, customers were being short-changed by an average of 9p a pint. Things are, in fact, much worse in other parts of the country. Just across the bridge in Cardiff, for example, consumers were being short-changed by a massive 28p a pint!

Basically, current industry self-regulation has failed – nine out of ten pints are still less than 100% liquid and one in four are less than the current industry guidelines of 95% minimum.

Enough is enough – our research shows that over 80% of adults think that a pint should be 100% liquid. Please, there is still time to make your voice heard by writing to your MP or to Patricia Hewitt MP at the DTI **now**. You can also support the campaign by voting 'Yes' for full pints at CAMRA's web site [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk).

Alison Bridle

## Fox Tavern

The Fox Tavern, just off the Feeder Road (seen from the Cattle Market Road traffic lights, behind the new car showroom) at St. Philips has reopened. The Fox has been partly rebuilt after BBC's Casualty film crew drove a coach through the bars. Photographs of the film crew are on show in the snug bar.

The owners, Four County Inns have a policy of promoting cask ales. The three bars have been tastefully decorated and Greene King have refitted the cellar. In order to encourage the real ale trade, a pint of IPA costs as little as £1.20. Other ales have come from Nursery Brewery. However, the range should be extending to include more local ales.

Currently the opening hours are limited. This is because almost all the trade comes from the industrial estate. In order to increase the opening hours, the company has been advertising for part-time bar staff, preferably CAMRA members, who enjoy selling real ales.

Anyone interested should contact the Fox Tavern on 0117 977 4444.



## Jubilation

BATH'S Abbey Ales brewery is to start producing one of its limited edition ales to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. Brewery boss, Alan Morgan is hoping their golden, hoppy, 5.0% abv, strong best bitter will be a hit with drinkers in the brewery's trading area in and around Bath and Bristol.

Alan said drinkers could expect to see the new beer, called Jubilation, on the pumps in the weeks leading up to the celebrations in the summer. However, he warns drinkers it is a limited brew and will be sold on a first come first served basis, but he will be keeping back a certain amount on the off chance that Her Majesty The Queen will pop into the brewery on her forthcoming visit to Bath!

Abbey Ales is based just a stone's throw from the centre of Bath and the famous abbey from which it takes its name.

The only continually produced beer at the brewery, Bellringer, a golden, hoppy, 4.2% abv best bitter was launched at the City's CAMRA beer festival in 1997 and has since won prizes every year and is now Bath's top selling cask beer.

Limited brews are launched on a regular basis, but due to the brewery's limited capacity, priority is given to Bellringer.

According to Alan, part of Bellringer's success has been their commitment to the local area, with the brewery only making personal deliveries within twenty miles of the brewery.

The brewery also moved into the retail area two years ago, renovating and opening The Star Inn, Bath, listed on the National Inventory of Heritage Inns. Alan said, "The Star is providing an important outlet for real ale in the area. It is a traditional pub that offers an excellent selection of real ale and a warm welcome to all from licensees Terry and Julie Langley."

The Star features in the current Good Beer Guide and also appears on the front cover of the CAMRA publication Heritage Inns of Great Britain.

Star Inn, Bath advert

# Bristol Beer Festival



## I bring you beer!...

A CONSIDERABLE EFFORT goes into producing what is (hopefully!) a very enjoyable beer festival. As someone who has been fortunate enough to place the beer order for the Bristol Beer Festival, held at the Council House on College Green at the start of March, here is a little insight into what my role entails. (By the way, all workers at CAMRA festivals are unpaid volunteers.)

For each festival we plan to have about eighty kils of beer (a kil being an 18 gallon cask). As the primary goal of the festival is to bring real ale to the public, we look to have a range of beers of different types and strengths, including types not often seen in all but the most enterprising of local pubs, such as porters, stouts (the real thing rather than Guinness!), milds, wheat beers, and novelty beers with interesting ingredients, such as different fruits.

We look to promote and support our local brewers, so beers from the likes of Abbey Ales, Bath Ales, Butcombe, Nursery, Wickwar and Smiles feature. So as to provide variety, we do not exceed three beers from each brewery.

Local CAMRA branch members are given first choice to nominate beers of their choice at branch meetings toward the end of the previous year. Needless to say, we are never short of nominations from this source! Breweries who have been good enough to entertain the branch for a brewery visit and

those who advertise in Pints West are also high on the list. We look at sales figures for previous years for various beers, and also consider how easy they are to serve, i.e. do they settle well, enabling them to be served from the first session to the last of the festival.

A balance has to be struck between beers which are known to be good and popular, and novelty beers, and new beers which will keep the more seasoned drinkers happy. The majority of beers are sourced through wholesalers, and in this respect I would like to thank Malcolm Shipp and all at *Shipping Beer* whose excellent service did much to make things run smoothly.

Starting in early January, beer is ordered from local brewers by CAMRA members who have links with the breweries, or by myself, and I produce a "wish list" of beers which *Shipping Beer* chew over, returning to me with comments on price and availability. It is a matter of sadness that several regional brewers do not wish to deal with wholesalers or place prohibitive costings on any potential deals (Adnams and Wadworth are notable exceptions), while in contrast small brewers are delighted to be sending their beers out to prospective new customers.

Of course, as well as the work all this entails, I do have the opportunity of indulging my own tastes and picking out a few of my own favourites for inclusion at the festival. These included this year Enville Gothic, Bass Museum P2 Imperial Stout, Hobson's Best, and Old Swan Bumblehole and Dark Swan.

But what makes it all worthwhile is seeing the thousands of customers who attend the festival enjoying themselves and the satisfaction of doing my own small bit to promote real ale.

Phil Cummings

Photo

Malcolm Shipp delivers prior to the festival

## Festival results

**Beer of the Festival, as voted for by members of the public:**

- 1st - Roosters Yankee
- 2nd - Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild
- 3rd - Wickwar BOB

**Cider/Perry of the Festival:**

Olivers Perry

**Our special congratulations go to Wickwar as it's one of our local brewers! See the article on page 9 for details of the award.**

**Nearly 10,000 pints were drunk during the three days of the festival (that's 20,000 half pint measures in the festival glasses) so people tried on average seven or eight different real ales, and even the odd cider and perry as well.**

**And, thanks to the generosity of the punters, £497.10 was raised for charity, to be split equally between the Jessie May Trust, helping terminally ill children, and the PDSA, for pets who need vets.**

Photo

Lamplighters, Shirehampton advert

# 1,000 members and rising

Photo

We mentioned in the last issue of Pints West that the Bristol and District branch of CAMRA was approaching 1,000 members, and we are pleased to announce that this magical figure has been reached.

The people that took us through this barrier were Geoff Strench and Emma Hull (members 999 and 1,000) who signed up for joint membership at the Bristol Beer Festival, making a total of 27 new members who joined at the event.

And here they are, captured on film at that happy moment!

They have both recently moved to the area and are looking forward to exploring the real ale pubs of Bristol. Geoff says that he prefers dark porters and stouts whilst Emma likes lighter styles and wheat beers.

Hopefully media attention isn't too unwelcome for the unsuspecting couple as they will doubtless now become international celebrities!

Our thanks go to Smiles who kindly put on a free trip to their brewery for the new members who joined at the festival as an introduction to the local branch.

It is gratifying to see that we are getting new members along to branch meetings and on surveying trips – without an active membership their would be no Bristol Beer Festival, Pints West or Good Beer Guide.

Pete Tanner, Richard Brooks

## The Joy of Casks (a lesson to us all)

Jamie Caddick of Whitchurch wrote in to us following the recent Bristol Beer Festival with this – too good for the letters page so we've given it space as an article here...

MY ticket had been nestling quite snugly in my wallet for the best part of a month. Come Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> March, however, it was ready, willing – nay! – positively *gagging* to be released, handed over to the door attendant, and guided in the cavernous bowels of the Council House building on College Green, and immersed in the gorgeous aromas and delectable whiffs of some of the finest products ever created. Oh, the malt! Oh, the hops!. Oh, the sense of pure Heaven!

I am, of course, referring to the one, the only – well, fifth, actually! – Bristol Beer Festival 2002, organised by the Bristol and District branch of CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale). And what a splendid paradise of beers the place was! A positive cornucopia for the enthusiastic ale-quaffer. With over 85 beers and a generous selection of ciders and perries, it was, indeed, a dismal shame I had only purchased one ticket for the Friday lunchtime. For, as soon as I got there and laid eyes upon the many barrels lined up in front of me, I knew the time I had (one hour!) was really going to prove no time at all!

Everyone was given a comprehensive programme (containing a rundown and analysis of the beers being served), in addition to a souvenir half-pint glass, which was to be used to fill up and sample the fine liquid refreshments. Most of the beers were being sold at the very reasonable price of 80/90p per half, using the mandatory token system (a fiver's worth of tokens, a tenner's worth of tokens, etc). I considered it my mission, my goal, my *quest* to experience the flavours, pontificate over the tastes, and scrutinize the after-effects of what was on offer. And with names such as Skullsplitter, Croak and Stagger, Danish Dynamite, and Rite Flanker to get your lips

around (just as much as your glass's liquid content), the scene was set for a great time of random sampling and hearty inebriation.

And a great time, indeed, was had. The atmosphere was warm, comfortable and very welcoming, the variety of ales staggering, and the enthusiasm of fellow ale-guzzlers marvelously infectious. The beers didn't taste half bad, either!

Also wonderful to see was the age range of folks who attended the event. Drinking beers and ales has – for many years, at least – had the old-bearded-man-in-the-corner-of-the-pub-muttering-to-himself stigma attached to it. Recent initiatives, such as CAMRA's Ask If It's Cask campaign, have gone some way to redressing the balance; or rather, give (primarily) young people the opportunity to reconsider their views, and bring ale drinking to a wider social spectrum. Effectively, 'ale is cool, too, you know!' was the message. Of course, what CAMRA was also attempting to do – and, I'm sure, will continue to do – is to open up the possibility to non-ale drinkers that there is a myriad of tastes, flavours and beverages you can appreciate, respect and embrace, if only you give them the chance.

Put down your pint of over-cold, lousily-stored, dubious-tasting designer drink! Pay attention, and learn! Ale drinking requires a lifetime of eager, willing and pure focused commitment! God, it's an education!

By the same token, of course, you need to be selective about where you drink ales; at least, if you expect to drink one of any significant quality. You'll only get good beer if you frequent a drinking emporium where the landlord or landlady takes pride in its storage and serving; in short, pubs that care for their products. For every Bag O'Nails and Cornubia



you invariably get a Brannigans or Piano and Pitcher. A place where the emphasis is clearly on *product* and not *profit*. Admittedly, a pint of Roosters Yankee might not conveniently slip into the category of a trendy drink or garner as much hype and marketing exposure as your average bottle of chemically-concocted pop, but the rewards will certainly be forthcoming in terms of taste and on the wallet!

Real ale is groovy! Real ale is chic! You just have to open yourself up to its own taste world and dare, try, have the guts to brave something new. And at a time which sees the worrying increase of 'theme pubs' – resplendent and wallowing in their own crassness, vulgarity, tastelessness, mock-chicness, and pseudo-sophistication, along with the self-deluding belief they are promoting anything remotely resembling taste – we should do our utmost to preserve the diversity, range and importance of the smaller, independent – but fundamentally essential – hostels. Bear-hug character and taste; reject the rest!

With events such as the Bristol Beer Festival 2002, these basic elements serve the sole purpose of promoting and raising awareness of beer to, not only the many thousands of 'converted', but also to the 'soon-to-be-converted'.

After one hour and five halves of various ales later – Moles Landlord's Choice, Oakham's JHB, Roosters Yankee, Smiles March Hare and Stonehenge Danish Dynamite, thanks for asking – I couldn't help but feel the remainder of my afternoon would have been better served, not by returning to work (admittedly in higher spirits than I felt at 9 a.m.), but by sampling a few more...

# Cider Sisters

AND SO we were, facing each other across the breakfast table, gazing at two untouched bowls of cereal and wondering how it had happened...

Less than 24 hours earlier, we set off from Bristol in high spirits, wondering what joys this latest cider weekend would have in store. We were headed for the Wiltshire/Somerset borders – destination: the Red Lion Inn at Kilmington.

The Red Lion Inn is a 15<sup>th</sup> Century free house owned by the National Trust, nestling beneath the South Wilts Downs. It's a beautiful location, and the pub offers very reasonable accommodation, and a good range of real ales and ciders. We hoped to use it as a base to visit some of the many cider pubs of the area, but liked it so much we hardly went anywhere else.

The only other pub we made it to was the wonderful Seymour Arms at nearby Whitham Friary. What a beauty! An unspoilt two-bar pub with a central serving hatch – one of three identical estate pubs built by the Duke of Somerset, with a landlady who was born on the premises. The atmosphere was really friendly, with regulars and newcomers like us sharing the large communal tables and benches. We were particularly glad to see that pipesmokers were welcome as we don't



smoke but like to watch. And as far as cider went, we weren't disappointed.

We couldn't have been happier with the Rich's medium and dry cider on offer – we tried both, and they were both exceptional – delicious, light yet full-flavoured, lightly clouded – perfect party ciders. Not only that, they were 90p a pint – that's right, a pint!

As we sat and smiled, a huge electrical storm set in and the sky was black in seconds (it was only mid-afternoon by this time). So very sensibly we chose that moment to set off back to the Red Lion, and spent the whole journey screaming hysterically and dodging the lighting through the narrowest of country lanes.

Our shattered nerves were soon soothed by the perfect pub environment of the Red Lion Inn. In all honesty, it could have been a dream from this point onwards but we've

got the photographic evidence (and the bruises) to prove otherwise. After a couple of initial pints, the landlord – Chris – recommended a speciality of the house: half and half Cheddar Valley Farmhouse and Thatcher's Dry, with a squeeze of lemon. We'll never touch another cocktail...

The pub had a cider atmosphere that we've never topped – our fellow drinkers were all on cider, and had plenty of recommendations for future trips (we had a lot of trouble with spelling of the Huish Episcopi). Sadly, all good things must come to an end, and we finally headed up the steep stairs behind the bar to the accommodation above. Somehow, a couple of minutes later, one of us found herself back in the bar having fallen headfirst down the stairs in her big white nightie. After an embarrassing second round of goodnights, oblivion prevailed, and the next thing we knew we were facing the inedible cereal and feeling decidedly wobbly.

We recovered by taking a truly psychedelic walk round Stourhead Gardens, where the flowers smelt of ham and a woman of at least 90 kept overtaking us. We also managed to get literally tangled up with some morris men, a story too traumatic to recount even now.

Many thanks to Chris for a memorable weekend – we haven't been back since as shame has got the better of us, but we thoroughly recommend the Red Lion to any cider fans – just don't say we sent you.

Freya & Erica McLuckie

Annexe Inn advert

Wickwar BOB advert



# The BAD tour

THE TWO TRIPS that stand out on the travels of Bristol & District CAMRA for this year so far were about as different as you could get.

The first of these was on a Saturday night in January when we visited **West Croft Cider** at Brent Knoll to experience "Wassail". This ceremony has its origin in pagan Britain, when the trees would be protected from evil and be encouraged to produce a good crop in the following seasons by frightening off the evil spirits and awakening the trees.

And so, after refreshing ourselves with West Croft's delicious cider, we headed out to a rather muddy orchard, and there was much singing, music and offering of items such as toast and cider to the chosen tree.

The wassail is clearly a major community event in Brent Knoll; there were hundreds present including many families, all having fun, aided by the mulled cider and assorted refreshments available, and of course there was much imbibing of the ciders which are made on the premises.

Our thanks to John Harris at West Croft for a splendidly different evening.

In March, after the rigours of the Bristol Beer festival, we visited Ray Penny, proprietor of **Wickwar Brewing Company**. Happily, Wickwar's BOB had taken third place in the beer of the festival competition at the event (the winner being Rooster's Yankee, with Sarah Hughes' Dark Ruby Mild the runner-up), so we were keen to present a commemorative certificate and discover the latest news.

It's always encouraging to hear positive news, and Wickwar are continuing to look for new pubs (they currently have the Princess of Wales in Bedminster and the White Lion on Bristol city centre), and will be moving to an enlarged site very close to their present home

Photo

Bristol CAMRA chairman Richard Brooks presents Ray Penny (right) with his certificate

before long.

Ray also shared his concerns with us over the state of the beer market, commenting that the reason for the purchase of pubs was the lack of free trade in the local area, which severely restricts the chance to sell his beer, especially as many pub-owning groups seem to discriminate against small brewers.

We were able to sample many of Wickwar's excellent beers, and for me *Cotswold Way* and *Mr. Perrett's Stout* particularly stood out, the former a regular on the bar at the Bunch of Grapes in Denmark Street in Bristol, and the latter, as a winner of a competition by Tesco, can be found on supermarket shelves.

Brewery trips are open to all CAMRA members, so why not consider joining us?

Phil Cummings

# I feel very exposed

Ray Penny of Wickwar Brewery airs his views

**First of all many thanks to everyone who voted for BOB at the recent Bristol Beer Festival, which I thought was a grand affair this year.**

I thought that I would just put finger to keyboard and give you my views on the industry as I see it.

I feel very exposed at the moment because of the proposed revoking of the Beer Orders. The one and only flimsy lifeline that us small brewers have seems to be going out of the window, and there doesn't seem to be any legislation proposed to replace it. What we wanted was a reworking of the Beer Orders, not a revoking; perhaps they had had one or two pints of BOB, and didn't quite hear right! Or maybe it was the European lingo (revoking/reworking).

Once the Beer Orders have gone, and the pub companies get their mitts on more of our pubs (Enterprise have just acquired the whole of the old Unique/Voyager estate plus the tenanted estate of the Laurel Pub Company, giving them control of almost 10,000 pubs), you can bet your bottom dollar that as the old leases come up for renewal, the clause that says "the lessee **must** be allowed to purchase one cask conditioned beer and one bottled conditioned beer from an independent supply" will be removed. This in layman's terms means that even more consumers will be dictated to as to

what they can find to drink.

The FREE HOUSE in the real meaning of the term will become a thing of the past.

It has just been announced that the Hogshead chain is to drop the real ale led tag to concentrate on more female friendly brands, i.e. alcopops. Some of you may say that it's not a great loss, but it is a loss for real ale exposure; it is yet another pub on the high street that, if not immediately then definitely eventually, will not have any real ale on the bar – even if they do name themselves after a large cask of ale!

Some may say that Wetherspoon is a great idea; I know a lot of you CAMRA members sing their praises, but the underlying trend is that Wetherspoon sucks dry the business from any poor ol' neighbouring pub, because they just can't compete. If you haven't realised by now, that means all our lovely quaint pubs will disappear one by one over a very short period of time.

Like other medium sized breweries we at Wickwar Brewing Co. have realised that one way to compete is to have your own estate to supply to – you know, how it used to be years ago. So, the cycle starts again, but with a difference. The few large breweries that may or may not be left by the time that you read this do not all brew real ale (not REAL real ale), but there is a demand, as we know. The consumers demand choice and that is where us medium

sized breweries come in, to supply that demand, but you must be big enough to supply, if you are not, and you haven't your own estate, you will not survive.

## Sliding scale duty.

Since a sliding scale of duty was first mentioned in the Chancellor's pre-budget speech I have been inundated by the media suggesting that the cost of real ale is going down.

On that subject it has just been announced that the chancellor has knocked 14p duty off the price of a pint from small brewers. At this moment in time I would like to know at what alcoholic strength, because that is how duty is levied. It is not as simple as it sounds. If it's 14p at the top end of the strength scale, then in reality it's only going to be about 8p at the bottom end. This will only confuse the poor consumer who will expect a full 14p reduction in his or her pint. Another quirk is if the landlord doesn't pass on the reduction to the consumer.

By the time you read this it may have all been sorted out ... I wonder ... I'm off to ask my dad, Alan Morgan – you know him, the one with the Beer of Bath, or BOB for short.

Keep on BOBing, and watch out for the official opening of the White Lion on the centre.

# Pub crawls get cheaper by bus!

MANY OF YOU may not be aware of several recent reductions in certain ticket prices on local "First Buses". These have made the idea of trying extended pub crawls by bus very attractive. Two new tickets have been introduced which offer quite exceptional value.

Initially the "**First Day**" ticket was introduced in January 2002 and billed as being part of a January sale promotion, but it is still with us and has been extended indefinitely.

This is a day pass offering unlimited travel on all City Line buses within a kind of "Greater Bristol" radius – its boundaries include Westbury-on-Trym, Keynsham, Stockwood and Emersons Green. It costs only £3 before 9 a.m. and a mere £2.50 after then. As a normal return from most parts of Bristol to the centre is around £2.40 this is great value indeed.

Just to whet your appetite a little – how about a pub crawl from Westbury (maybe

taking in one or more of the Post Office Tavern, Prince of Wales, Victoria and White Horse), stopping off at Clifton (Penny Farthing by the Clifton Down shopping centre and Red Lion in Worrall Road). You can then go on to the city centre and visit the Cornubia, Bag O'Nails, Bunch of Grapes or whatever takes your fancy, or move on to Bedminster (Coronation, Princess of Wales or Ropewalk perhaps), or even go out to Keynsham for the Old Bank, Ship or Lock Keeper. Other buses take you up the Gloucester Road or out to the Fishponds, Downend and Kingswood areas. There are many permutations available and the cheap ticket makes it easy to go and check out all those Good Beer Guide pubs around Bristol that you've never managed to get to. The best bit is – nobody has to drive!

Just in case you still feel the expense is too great, First Bus have just launched the new "**First Night**" ticket – available after 7 p.m. it gives the same unlimited travel for a measly £1.50 – cheaper than many single fares! Maybe too late in the day for the full cross-city adventure above but it still leaves plenty of scope to obtain value for money. It is on trial for "at least 3 months from April 1<sup>st</sup>".

So all you need is your Good Beer Guide, a current bus timetable and a small budget – what are you waiting for?

For the really adventurous – the "**Day Explorer**" ticket at £5.70 still allows unlimited travel on all City and Badgerline buses all around Bristol and the West – direct buses to Wells, Weston, Clevedon, Bath, etc. are frequent and pretty reliable – and you'd be surprised how many superb country Good Beer Guide pubs are directly on or very near to their routes. I am only aware of about five Beer Guide pubs in South Gloucestershire and North Somerset that cannot be easily reached by bus on these tickets.

All tickets can be bought from the driver of your first bus of the day.

I have been outspoken in my criticism of First Bus in the past but urge you to make use of these excellent fares and have fun doing so.

Vince Murray

Swan Beer House advert

Hope & Anchor advert

## New Hands for Kellaway Arms

THE Kellaway Arms, Kellaway Avenue, Horfield has changed hands. Bob and Carol Jenkins have left after a total of twenty-two years behind the bar at the Kelly. They have been in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for the last eleven years and were renowned for keeping perhaps the best pint of Courage Best in Bristol. The new owners are maintaining the beer quality and aim to build on the strong demand for real ale built up by Bob and Carol. Recently London Pride, Old Speckled Hen and Brakspear Bitter have joined the standard range of Bombardier and Courage Best.

Steve O'Shea

## BYO to the Grapes

AS someone who works close to the centre of Bristol I am sometimes at a loss to find somewhere comfortable to eat my sandwiches, or if I'm looking just to have a snack, I feel that some venues only encourage people who are buying a full meal.

It's now worth checking out the Bunch of Grapes in Denmark Street (opposite the side door of the Hippodrome) where landlord Colin has hit back at some of the local restaurants with their bring-your-own (BYO) drink policies.

While the pub does offer a choice of good value sandwiches and rolls for you to buy, lunch time drinkers are also welcome to bring their own food to accompany the pub's excellent range of high quality real ales. If you want something hot then Colin recommends the superb fish and chip shop next door to the pub – customers are then able to wash down their take-away with good beer, a soft drink or, if they must, even a lager.

Steve O'Shea

# Banana Bread Beer ?

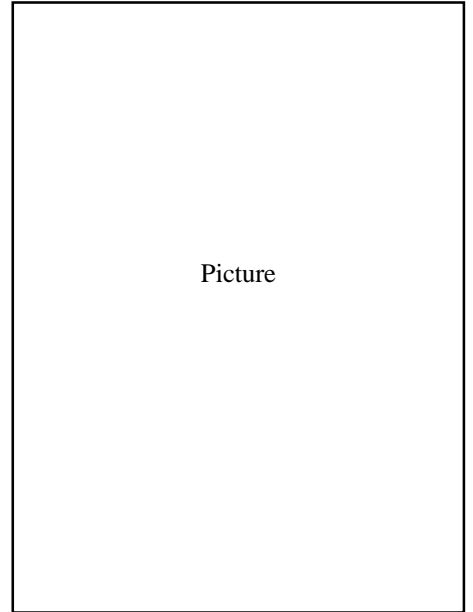
SEEN in a few local pubs recently has been a most unusual beer. Many of us have tried the occasional fruity beer at some time or other, but one that included bananas in its list of ingredients was something I'd not come across before.

The outfit responsible for this concoction is the Charles Wells Brewery, based in Bedfordshire. You've probably heard of them before – they also make Bombardier which is making frequent appearances in our local pubs.

Charles Wells Banana Bread Beer weighs in at 4.5% abv, and it partly takes its name from the Saxon phrase for beer – "Liquid Bread". This flavoursome pint retains the qualities and style of traditional bitter but with the subtle (or strong, depending on your tastebuds) flavour of Britain's biggest selling fruit, being made by adding real Fair Trade bananas to the mash.

If you haven't spotted any Banana Bread Beer on your travels, the Penny Farthing at Clifton Down has featured it a couple of times – where it proved popular, particularly with students apparently – and the landlord promises to have it again on future occasions.

With a launch of such an unusual cask ale, the people at Charles Wells will value any constructive comments on the beer, and



Picture

sarah.mcghie@charleswells.co.uk is where you can send your emails on the subject.

Banana Bread Beer in a bottle (5% abv) was launched nationally into Tesco and Safeways in March and should also be available nationally in ASDA, Morrisons and the Co-op from late spring.

SP



## Food fit for a Prince

THE food franchise at the popular Prince of Wales in Stoke Lane, Westbury-on-Trym has changed recently. Nicki who runs the food at the Hope & Anchor in Jacobs Wells Road, Hotwells has taken over the Prince of Wales food operation, and recent offerings have included Haggis, Neeps and Tatties, an excellent chicken and cider pie, and a good lamb curry (let down a bit by a flat nan bread?).

On the beer front Brakspear Bitter is available as a tasty low strength beer, together with beers such as Butcombe Bitter, Bath SPA, Fuller's London Pride and Courage Best.

Food is served from noon until 2 p.m. weekdays, plus Sunday lunches. The Hope & Anchor has gained a strong reputation for food, so it will be interesting to watch developments at the Prince of Wales, whilst enjoying the real ales and the pleasant garden and outside seating areas during what we hope will be the forthcoming summer.

The April edition of 'Whats On Bristol' magazine contains a feature on the pub, saying: "In a city that is constantly changing, it is nice to know that you can find a good traditional pub when you want one. The Prince of Wales is exactly the kind of place I'm talking about. If you are looking for a village pub a short drive (*or bus ride - Ed.*) from the city then I can think of no better place ..... it has a very distinctive local character, and it also has a very welcoming atmosphere." The article also identifies the Prince of Wales as Bristol's longest running free house at 22 years, a credit to the owners Richard and Fiona Ellis.

Good to see a traditional real ale pub given a free and positive write-up in one of Bristol's listings magazines, with emphasis on the range of real ales, described as "a real ale drinker's delight". Other listings magazines please note we would like more of the same! There is life beyond designer bars, and knowledge of the distinction between real ale and dead beer does help the reader!

John Armstrong

Bear Inn, Wiveliscombe advert

# WATERING HOLES IN THE DESERT

## News from Weston-super-Mare

### An MP writes.....

Several local CAMRA members showed their support for the national campaign for a full pint by writing to our MP, Brian Cotter. I think it is fair to say that everyone who did write was pleasantly surprised by the response. The fact that Mr. Cotter supports the proposed legislation was not a surprise, but the length and detail of the response certainly was. It was very well informed and included references to the Weights and Measures Act 1963, the Weights and Measures (Intoxicating Liquor) Order 1988, the Weights and Measures Act 1985 and the Magna Carta!

### The White Hart, Palmer Row, Weston-super-Mare

When we organised a CAMRA beer and skittles evening at the White Hart recently, I was amazed to find that some of our local members did not even know where the pub was!

As it has been showing promise lately on the real ale front, we decided it was a good time to do a feature on it.

The White Hart is a rare example locally of a two-bar backstreet local with a skittle alley and pool table. You can reach it from Meadow Street (down Hopkins Street) or from Orchard Street (down Palmer Row). It

is very easy to miss, having little in the way of external signage.

I first knew the pub in the 1970s as a Courage house, when we would use it for refreshment between games of badminton at the hall in the Boulevard across the way. When I returned to live in Weston in 1989 and worked nearby, I found the pub to be thriving with a very popular landlord, but one that could not be bothered with keeping real ale.

Several landlords since then have had one real ale on, but it is only since Nigel and Lou arrived from The Brewers Arms, Banwell, last summer that there seems to be an increased interest in keeping real ales. Offerings in recent times have included beers from the likes of RCH, Wickwar, Nursery, Brains and Butcombe.

Our recent social at the pub, when Wickwar BOB and Nursery Old Mother Hubbard were the offerings, seems to have sparked some extra interest and demand for the real stuff. We feel that the pub deserves the support and encouragement of local real ale drinkers and, hopefully, they can continue to have two interesting real ales on the bar and thereby make a valuable contribution to variety of choice in the area.

Mike Coleman



### Upcoming events

You might just get this before our April event, which is a short bus trip out to Banwell on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April. As usual we will be catching the number 126/826 bus which leaves Marine Parade at 19:45, Borough Arms at about 19:50. We plan to spend the entire evening at **The Bell**, a pub with a great atmosphere, which should be enhanced on the night by live music of the blues/folk variety. The beers at The Bell are Butcombe Bitter, Greene King Old Speckled Hen and two guest beers. The guests tend to be either unusual beers that are rarely seen in these parts or renowned classics from RCH. The bus back is at 22:52.

In May we revert to our normal third Wednesday meeting date. On the 15<sup>th</sup> we will be embarking on a short pub crawl in Bristol city centre. We will be catching the 19:45 train (we hope!), due in Bristol at 20:10. In order to maximise the time in Bristol, we will not be straying too far from

Temple Meads. However, this means that the likes of the wonderful **Cornubia** and Bath Ales' **Bridge Inn** will definitely be on the agenda. Trains back are at 22:35 and 23:15.

On June 19<sup>th</sup> the venue will be the Good Beer Guide-listed and ever-popular **Regency**, Lower Church Road, WsM. 8:30 onwards for this one.

July 17<sup>th</sup> sees an evening in Winscombe. We will be catching the afore-mentioned 126/826 bus. The plan is for a three-venue crawl, starting at **Winscombe Cricket Club**. We visited there last year and were impressed. We will then move on to **The Woodborough Arms** and the Good Beer Guide-listed **Winscombe Club**.

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

## WsM Diary

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

**Wednesday 15 May** – Bristol city centre crawl. Train from WSM at 19:45. Trains back at 22:35 and 23:15.

**Wednesday 19 June** – The Regency, Lower Church Road. 8:30 onwards.

**Wednesday 17 July** – Winscombe Crawl. Bus from WSM at 7:45. Bus back at 10:43.

## Contacts

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (eves)

Rich Neale - 01934 429808 (eves)

# A weekend in Lille

AFTER many months looking forward to our weekend break we had finally arrived in Lille, the Flemish capital of Northern France. For those of you not familiar with craft brewing in France, both Brittany and Normandy have been brewing distinctive beers for sometime now with possibly the most well known beers such as Jenlain and Ch'ti readily available in many supermarkets and off licenses.

Being confirmed 'Francophiles' the city appealed to us for many reasons but the prospect of combining visits to two 'brasserie' (the word means 'brewery' in French) smack in the city centre and within five minutes of each other was high on the list of incentives.

Our trip began at Waterloo International on the Eurostar train. This is an excellent way to travel to either Lille or Brussels, the former being just a two-hour journey from London and the latter a further 35 minutes down the line. Whilst probably not the cheapest way to get there it is quick, comfortable and efficient. The station at Lille, known as Lille Europe, is a modern homage to the new European ideal and has been designed to link with a chic shopping mall both of which are within a few minutes walk of the city centre.

Having offloaded our baggage at the hotel which overlooked the vibrant 'Grand place' we headed off just round the corner to the famous brasserie called Les Trois Brasseurs (simply translated to 'The Three Brewers'). I'd heard a lot of good reports about this place and on entering was not disap-

pointed. You immediately notice the romantic copper brewing vessels on the right hand side as you enter just fractionally before the smoky bohemian atmosphere of this fashionable and popular venue hits you. On approaching the bar we had been advised by all previous reports to order 'Une Palette,' a wooden shoe containing samples of each of the four house brews. Working from one end I started by sampling the Blonde (no....don't even

think about it)! at 5.2% then the Blanche de Lille, a lovely cloudy fruity beer at 4.6% and probably our favourite. Next up was the red Rousse, again a distinctive beer with character and another favourite. Finally the darkest and strongest of the samples (we were fooled by this one until reading Roger Protz's What's Brewing article from a while back) a Belgian style Scotch ale around 8.5% and quite unlike anything you would normally encounter for sale in England. A few tips for anyone who should go there in the future: if you intend sitting down to drink go to a table and wait to be served and if you have not been attended to within say five minutes attract someone's attention as they may not know you are there. This is a busy place and tends to be a little impersonal.



Another tip is to try the food, and if you are a non-smoker you will be offered the chance to sit in the large rear bar which is non-smoking and equally as vibrant.

Even closer to our hotel and our first port of call the next day was La Taverne L'Ecu just off the Grand Place. This is another micro-brasserie with a very interesting and chequered history. According to Arthur Taylor's Good Beer Guide To Northern France the premises used to be a cinema and this is apparent when you approach via a long narrow cinema-style concourse before entering the premises set back from the pavement. Once inside you are again greeted by copper brewing vessels and much breweriana on the walls. Before its demise as a Burlesque theatre it was renowned for showing dodgy films and there are many original film posters displayed on the intriguing upper level

where the mash tuns are situated on the old stage area. Some 20 plus quality French and Belgian ales are for sale in bottles behind the bar but of course the main reason for visiting was the house beer. In similar fashion to Les Trois Brasseurs samples can be ordered in a 'shoe' with three small glasses. Our favourite beer was the Biere Blanche, a fruity wheat beer but the others on offer, a Blonde and Brune beer were not far behind. All in all this was

our favourite venue and we returned again later on that weekend to sample the wonderful Blanche and the excellent carbonade cooked in one of the house beers.

Also worth a visit is the quieter but friendly La Taverne Flamande (opposite La Gare de Lille Flandres railway station and close to Les Trois Brasseurs). A pleasant bar with pavement seating serving around 12 beers in matching labelled glasses, the stylish way to drink you favoured tittle. Amongst them we chose the Rodenbach, a red Belgian ale with a unique sour flavour which quickly becomes a taste soon acquired, although we could easily have plumped for Kwak or Tripel Karmeliet. My wife took a liking to the small round Ch'ti table we were sitting at and suggested should we

have had a car we could easily pull up late at night ..... well, whatever next? Lucky her handbag wasn't that roomy!

Aside from our modest bar exploits we had an amusing and quirky experience in the French equivalent of an off license at a place called Vinotheque Rohart, again not far from the Lille Flandres railway station heading towards the Grand Place. They had a superb collection of European bottled beers including many rare ones mostly for sale with their individual badged glasses. This place was quite an experience.

On entering we were greeted politely and assistance offered. On replying that we were interested in the beers we were immediately and swiftly told 'Come down to see our wine, you will like our cellar, its beautiful!' Having declined we were virtually pushed down a narrow 'rustic' staircase, the door behind us chained and soon amongst a dusty collection of very old wine bottles. This was clearly becoming 'A League of Gentleman' kind of experience. Fortunately other people had already been 'kidnapped' down there and were occupying the assistant with their custom so, having quickly viewed the 'lovely cellar', we were back up again. As we said it was the beer we were interested in although I have to admit that some the bottles of wine were selling at quite reasonable prices. The selection of bottled beer was mind boggling but as our trip was on foot could only be tempted to take few bottles and one glass. Be warned if you are planning a beer heist in Lille; don't travel by Eurostar, bring a car. Bottles are heavy when you have to carry them around, believe me.

On the Saturday we experienced a great high and even greater low. I had checked the map to find that the famous Cafe Jenlain was just behind our hotel across another square. I had suggested we make this our lunchtime venue as it had been an ambition of mine for some years to visit the brewery tap of the Duyck brewery, home of Jenlain, the classic biere de garde. The fine Flemish building is still there but the place has closed. What a shock! Why I do not know? There are signs that say they are closed for work but the place has been gutted and would appear to be up for sale. Even a lad at Tourist Information couldn't tell me how long it had been closed. If anyone knows more about the situation please let me know via email on sreed1905@aol.com.

Our final beer experience of the weekend came on the Sunday morning whilst by chance visiting the famous Wazemmes market just a couple of stops down on the Metro from the city centre. Amongst all the wonderful fruit and vegetable on sale together with hundreds of chickens roasting on spits and the alluring smells of hot ethnic foods to whet the appetite we chanced upon this permanent market building. Within it were cheese and butcher stalls galore and one very special beer seller. Even better than the Vinotheque Rohart? Yes, without question, and at market prices with no 'lovely cellar'. Wow! A scratcher's paradise (Rich Neale would be in heaven). Not more bottles to carry back? Oh well, c'est la vie.

Sante.

Steve Reed

Picture

# Think of a name, any name...

A FRIEND suggested I wrote an article about real ale, as seen by me, or rather as drunk by me. She imagined that it would cover a span of just a few years but I've decided to share my musings with you covering all my "drinking years" – running from the early sixties in Sussex, through to latter-day Weston-super-Mare. I have no title for this series of articles, having thought of many including "under the table", "boozings of a babyboomer", "a short history of real ale in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", etc. I expect there are many out there of my generation that will have had similar experiences with ale and my apologies if they bore you.

Unlike a biography this will not start with the early years, as I didn't go into a pub until aged about ten years old. When I did, they mostly seemed to have wooden floors (some having sawdust on them) and with beer engines on the bar, either handpumps or diaphragm dispensers (which used to fascinate me).

The first beer I remember drinking was at The Mermaid Inn at Rye, Sussex. I was on holiday with my brother, staying with my godfather, who obviously thought that as his

brother (my father) didn't take us to pubs, it was his duty to educate us in the matter of beer. I recollect that I had a bottle of lager (draught keg lager was not available then, in fact it was not until the late 1960s that keg beer began with Flowers Original, but hey, I'm jumping ahead). We kids sat outside, as children were not permitted in the bar. What is more there were no ladies in the public bar. Looking through the window, the bar had two handpumps on it with the notations "Bitter" and "Best Bitter." That was it. No ABV, nor information as to who the brewer was. Bottles behind the bar were of beer, Guinness, lager and tonics, but no alcopops, no soft drinks (other than ginger beer or orange squash), nor even cider.

By the time I was 14, being tall and with a fair bit of stubble, I was making my own way into pubs, especially rural ones where I wouldn't be known. One of my favourites was at Normans Bay, near Pevensey in Sussex. This pub I believe had only got electricity in the late 1950s and consequently was little changed by the time I was going there in 1962. The beer was served by gravity from a taproom you could see from the bar. Despite it being a Brickwoods pub,

they never seemed to have any Brickwoods bitter, so this was my first introduction to Worthington E.

Living on the edge of Croydon in Surrey in the late 60s had advantages in that brewers owned most pubs, through tied houses. Within a distance from which I was prepared to stagger home were pubs selling

Youngs, Fullers, King & Barnes, Harveys, Beards, Manns, Friary Meux, Courage (from Alton Brewery), Whitbread, Watneys, Charrington, William Younger, Bass, etc. Though most beers were on handpump, a few brewers had by the early 60s started to use electric dispensers and there were even a few canned beers to be had (notably Courage Light, Courage Brown, Long Life and the disgusting Watneys Party 7).

In 1966 I was working in Lincoln Inn Fields in London. The nearest pub was a free house, selling Youngers, Scottish & Newcastle and Sam Smiths. It was a tiny pub but always crowded. Also close by was Covent Garden, where the pubs had different licensing hours to the rest of Britain, being open early in the morning to bona fide market traders. When the market was moved to Nine Elms a lot of the pubs in Long Acre closed, but by then I had discovered the pubs in Soho, the West End and the Kings Road, Chelsea. I have to admit at this time I had turned my back on real ale and was drinking Light and Bitter Split (because in the busy pubs, the staff would pour you a large half of bitter and give you the bottle of Light, so you got more!). It was also the period in history when Real Ale was becoming increasingly difficult to find.

.....But more of that in the next issue.  
Robin E Wild

## Solution

Here is the solution to the name-the-pubs competition in the last edition.

The Regency. The Dragon Inn. Off The Rails. The Woolpack. The Crown Inn. The Lamb Inn. The Plough. The Queen's Arms. The Bell. The Winscombe Club.

*The winner was Gordon Pearce of Whitchurch who won £10 worth of real ales at one of the Weston pubs.*

Butcombe advert

RCH Brewery advert

## A visit to Butcombe Brewery

In March the WSM sub-branch accepted a kind invitation from Simon Whitmore to have a look around his brewery at Butcombe.

Seventeen of us, including our minibus driver Miriam and Colin Pursey the CAMRA Brewery Liaison Officer for Butcombe, were warmly greeted by Simon and his two dogs.

I was particularly interested to see how far the brewery had developed as I had previously paid a visit in 1979 in its very early days. From a single room operation then, it has since expanded considerably several times and now occupies several rooms of the converted farm building. With its current increased output (over 14,000 barrels a year), it probably merits a description as a small regional brewery rather than a micro-brewery.

We enjoyed an interesting and informative tour round the brewery. One highlight was when Steve Reed, having lost his wallet, mobile phone and Good Beer Guide on previous socials, almost added “lost consciousness” to his repertoire after sticking his head too far into one of the fermenting vessels.

The evening ended with an excellent sampling session of Simon’s two beers, Butcombe Bitter and Butcombe Gold, accompanied by a huge bowl of piping hot sausage rolls. The Gold was one of the finalists in the beer of the year competition at last year’s Great British Beer Festival in London. It is preferred by quite a few of our local group, although personally I prefer the more markedly bitter taste of the Bitter.

All in all, a very enjoyable trip and our thanks to Simon for his hospitality.

For our next brewery trip we are hoping to arrange a visit to the Moor brewery near Ashcott in Somerset.

Mike Coleman

*Footnote to above: Butcombe do not charge anything for their brewery trips or the refreshments at the end. I asked Simon why they do it without charging and his reply, unsurprisingly, was that he finds it a pleasure to be visited by real ale enthusiasts, landlords, etc. Often they are supporters of the brewery and its beers and he sees it as an opportunity to strengthen the brewery’s links with its customers. Whilst this is laudable, I don’t think anyone would argue with any breweries that seek to cover their cost for hosting these events. However, it would appear that some breweries see it purely as a money-making venture. A work colleague and a group of friends visited a certain brewery in Devizes last year (not a CAMRA trip), paid six quid for the privilege, and were not offered so much as a thimble of beer! Judging by the response of the visitors, their previous levels of loyalty to the company have been somewhat damaged.*

## Weston Whispers (pub/beer news)

For our January social, the WSM branch took in no less than six pubs.

We met-up at **Off The Rails**, which made leaving difficult, as it had Three Blind Mice from Nursery and a beer called Chadwicks Bitter (of which we no very little, but it was very popular) as well as the ever-present RCH Hewish IPA.

We forced ourselves out and onto the minibus and headed for Axbridge. Our first port of call was **The Lamb**. This is a Good Beer Guide-listed Butcombe house and sells both Butcombe beers and Wadworth 6X. Unfortunately, we suffered “bottom of barrel” syndrome with the 6X, but this was changed without fuss.

We then made the 100 metre journey to **The Crown**. This freehouse has been gaining plaudits for some time, so we were eager to visit as a group. We were not disappointed. The beers on offer were Wessex Growler from the Cottage brewery and Barn Owl from Cotleigh. Both were excellent and enjoyed by everyone. I felt rather sorry for the solitary barmaid, as the pub was already busy hosting a bar skittles league match and she then had to deal with the arrival of a bus of CAMRA drinkers, most of whom wanted a half of each beer.

A bit of an effort to leave, but **The Swan**, Rowberrow was beckoning. Another Butcombe house, The Swan also serves Bass and a guest. On this occasion it was the multi-award winning Timothy Taylor Landlord. All beers were tried and all got the thumbs-up.

Our next port of call was **The Winscombe Club**. A firm favourite with Weston CAMRA members, the club was offering its usual Wickwar BOB at the amazing price of £1.28 (best value pint in the county?). Also on was their other regular beer, Courage Directors and a beer called Oliver’s Nectar (5.2%) from the Clearwater brewery of Torrington, Devon. Most people opted for the later beer – rarely seen – and gave it rave reviews.

Our final venue for the evening was **The Woolpack**, St. Georges. Their regulars of Courage Best and Oakhill Best were supplemented by Greene King Old Speckled Hen and Cottage Somerset and Dorset Ale. Many were delighted to see the latter – the opportunity to drink two different Cottage beers in one evening is a rare treat. Absolutely marvellous. In fact, all the beers were tried. The Courage Best was well-received although, interestingly, it was described as being very sweet and “nothing like it used to be.”

Six pubs visited (five Good Beer Guide entries) and a choice of 17 different real ales. Not a bad way to spend an evening! Why not join us and see what you are missing?

For those who like something a bit different, there have been some treats recently. First

there was Sign of Spring from the Stonehenge brewery, which comes up pale green! Equally interesting (and to several local imbibers more satisfying) was a beer called Banana Bread Bitter from Charles Wells. Not a brewery with a reputation for producing weird and wonderful beers, but this one really hit the spot for some (although admittedly one or two felt very sick). This beer really did smell and taste of bananas and surprised a few with its appeal. I had this at **The Nut Tree** and I believe it appeared elsewhere. The Sign of Spring was on at **The Bell**, Banwell and, much to everyone’s surprise, **The Cabot** on the seafront. The Cabot now regularly has a guest and is worth keeping an eye on.

Andy Mannion at **The Nut Tree** still has ambitions of making the pub a freehouse, but this is going to take time. He is still putting on a guest beer, although his lords and masters at Scottish Courage are making this difficult due to the limitations of their acceptable guest beer list. The ones Andy wants to put on are rarely available and on more than one occasion, he has been put in the laughable position of having to put on Directors as his guest beer! “Restriction of trade” is one of the more polite terms Andy has used to describe the situation – avoid the Nut Tree if you are a member of the Scottish Courage Supporters Club or are of a nervous disposition. Otherwise, do give it a try. The odd gem does appear and the beer is kept well.

It seems as though the **Long John Silver**, a Wadworth house in Kewstoke, has shut its doors for the last time. A sad looking sight and all evidence of being a pub has been removed.

Happily, three of the most popular beers amongst CAMRA members in town of late have been dark beers – Old Mother Hubbard from Nursery at the **White Hart**, Old Slug Porter from RCH at **Off The Rails** and a stout from Summerskills whose name I can’t remember at **The Dragon**.

The appearance of Old Slug was on a CAMRA social evening when **Off The Rails** had no less than four real ales on (those with long memories will know that there was a time when keeping two was a struggle). The other three were Sharps Doom Bar, Branscombe Vale Hells Belles and RCH Hewish IPA. The Old Slug and Hells Belles were described to me as “superb”, which I couldn’t possibly argue with. My personal favourite in recent weeks in OTR has been Anniversary Ale from Branscombe, described by landlord Colin as “nectar.” A pub not to miss for residents and visitors alike!

Tim Nickolls

## Pub Profile : The Duke of Cambridge, Easton

I FIRST used this pub a few years ago when it was a Marston's Brewery house. Although I enjoyed my Marston's Pedigree, the main reason for going to the Duke of Cambridge then was to hear the loud traditional reggae music played on a Sunday night.

In recent years the pub has undergone many changes. From being a Marston's pub it changed to being a Wadworth's house. In recent years though, most of the Duke's wet sales were Guinness, Red Stripe and other lagers. In fact, real cask ale had not been sold there for several years.

In July 2001 things started to look a little more positive for real ale. Martin Gibson acquired the freehold. Martin had, in the past few years, run two other pubs in the BS5 area and had turned both of them in to good real ale houses. I supped many an excellent pint at the Queen's Head in Easton during Martin's time, a pub that he converted back to two rooms – a welcome change when so many pubs have been converted to a single room. Martin then acquired the Red Lion in Whitehall and again improved the beer to such an extent the it appeared in the Good Beer Guide while he ran the show.

Back to the Duke of Cambridge. After acquiring the freehold, the pub was closed down for a while to carry out structural repairs, redecoration and minor improvements to the interior. The pub reopened in

August. Although, in recent years the pub had not served real ale, Martin, being a bit keen, installed four hand-pumps. Martin had a strong belief that what he had achieved in the Queen's Head and the Red Lion could be repeated at the Duke of Cambridge. He long believed that any pub in any area selling real ale that is kept in **consistently** good condition, at reasonable prices, and with a half decent and enthusiastic landlord, will prosper.

**However, you cannot turn round a pub overnight. In the first few weeks after reopening, it was necessary to throw away not an inconsiderable amount of beer – such was Martin's commitment to only serving real ale in tip-top condition. The commitment paid off and, as word of mouth spread and regulars realised good real ale was again available in good nick, sales dramatically increased.**

Although the Duke of Cambridge is a free house, there is a trading agreement with Courage Western in the form of the "**Cellarman Reserve Cask Ale Scheme**". This allows landlords to buy, through Courage, beers from a great number of small to mid-sized regional breweries. It effectively means that the pub can have as many as five different "guest beers" on at any one time plus a guest beer of the landlord's choice.

Like any good landlord, Martin did not

wish to stock more real ales than turnover would support. Therefore, you will find three "guest beers" on sale, which vary from month to month, plus Bath Ales SPA as the house beer, which is always on tap.

As well as good beer, the Duke of Cambridge remains a good venue for live music. On a Thursday night you will usually find an Irish/American folk music session. A more serious Monday night Irish session has become well established with as many as sixteen musicians at any one time. In the early weeks, some of these sessions were a commercial disaster for the pub but, as with the real ale, perseverance paid off. On Fridays now you might find jazz, funk, ska or folk being played – and you may need to push your way into the pub.

So, another welcome addition to the local real ale scene. Such has been the success that a beer festival is planned for Friday 14<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June. For this, the intention is to get together beers from every brewery within a 25-mile radius of Bristol so you can compare the merits of each under one roof. Perhaps some other pub operators can learn from Martin's success and his commitment to well kept real ale. Why not check it out?

Pete Bridle

*The Duke of Cambridge can be found in Lower Ashley Road (off the A4320 Easton Way)*

Robin Hood, St. Michael's Hill advert

Hopback Brewery and Coronation advert



## Pub news

A new pub is due to open soon opposite the M.o.D. Abbey Wood complex. It will be called the **Fox Den** and will compliment the new Holiday Inn under construction.

Two current Good Beer Guide entries have seen their landlords move on. The **Highwayman** in Kingswood and the **Kellaway Arms** in Horfield (mentioned elsewhere) have both changed hands since the last issue of Pints West. However the new incumbents are continuing to sell real ale – Burton, Bass and Tetley's at the Highwayman and four at the Kellaway.

Another pub under new ownership is the **Queens Head** in Hanham, having been sold to Wadworth. Very good reports so far.

As mentioned in the last issue Matt and Sarah, who built up **Horts City Tavern** to a Mecca for local real ales and 'flat' Bass, moved last December, leaving when they felt Youngs would not continue with guest beers. They have now emerged at the **Water Wytch in Lancaster** and would welcome any of their old regulars who happen to be in the area.

The **Hop Pole** in Avon Vale Road has re-opened, and work continues on the **Swan with Two Necks** in Little Ann Street, St. Judes – the latest news is that it should reopen on June 10th.

Pete Tanner

## Hit by a Wet Carp in Bath

As someone who hates going into a pub and coming out smelling like an ashtray from the smoke fug generated by smokers, it was refreshing in more than one sense to visit the Green Tree in Green Street in Bath city centre. The rear no-smoking room has eye-catching no-smoking notices which state:

**No smoking.**

**Anyone caught smoking on the premises will be hung upside down by the toes and pummelled into sub-consciousness (sic) with a wet carp.**

**By order of the management.**

Well that makes it pretty clear! The rear room is a very pleasant wood panelled haven from the bustle of Bath outside, made all the more enjoyable by the absence of smoke. The open fire and six real ales, including offerings from South West micros, help the atmosphere along very nicely. If you need a reality check, the trip down the steep steps to the toilets helps to keep track of how sober you are. A thoroughly recommended pub and a regular in the Good Beer Guide.

So what about smoking in pubs? It is a fact that smoke ruins the taste of beer, yet few pubs offer even a no-smoking area, let alone a fully no-smoking pub. One of the first to do this in the 1970s was in Appletreewick in North Yorkshire. A welter

of signs warned against the dangers of smoking and left you in no doubt that this was a smoke-free zone and a one-person health campaign to boot.

In California it is now an offence to smoke in any public place, and smoking in public has become seen as socially offensive. Why should people who have chosen to be non-smokers be obliged to inhale other people's smoke? Perhaps we should recall the sad death of Roy Castle allegedly from lung cancer caused by secondary inhalation of smoke in jazz clubs and his brave campaign. Most trains are now non-smoking yet we continue to allow smoking where food and drink are consumed, both of which are adversely affected by smoke. No smoking in food and drink premises is an issue which will grow in importance over the next few years.

The April edition of What's Brewing, CAMRA's own national newspaper, contains an article by Jeff Evans which raises the observation that the majority of smokers in pubs are lager rather than real ale drinkers. Your views please! Do you agree? Do real ale drinkers have a greater appreciation of how smoke affects taste as well as health compared to lager drinkers? Any examples of humorous no-smoking signs in pubs would also be appreciated.

John Armstrong

Bunch of Grapes advert

Bell, Kingsdown advert

## Hunt the beers (and the cellar!) in Keynsham by public transport

KEYNSHAM is emerging as a good place for a beer and pub tour, with four interesting and varied hostelries within easy walking distance of each other. An added bonus is that Keynsham is easily accessible by public transport. The train from Temple Meads takes just six minutes and is £2.50 cheap day return. The 349 bus from Union Street in Bristol has a daytime frequency of every 20 minutes and a journey time of 30 minutes, so to be charitable there is time to enjoy the scenery! One advantage is that Keynsham is in the First Bus Day Ticket area giving travel throughout Bristol for a current price of £2.50, representing very good value.

The first pub is the **Lock Keeper**. If coming by bus, get off at the church stop at the roundabout and walk back taking the right hand road, Station Road, which continues into Keynsham Road passing the railway station. If coming by train, leave from the Bath bound platform and turn right into Keynsham Road. Follow the road over the river and canal. The Lock Keeper is the three-storey building alongside the canal on your right hand side. Here you will find perhaps the best Young's beers in the Bristol area: Bitter, Special, a Young's seasonal, plus Smiles. There is a large canal-side beer garden and the pub does a range of quality bar meals.

From here retrace your steps to the church. The second pub (or first if you don't want the extra walk to the Lock Keeper) is the new Nursery Brewery pub, the **Old Bank** on the High Street, opposite the bus stop at the church. This one-room pub offers not only Nursery beers but also up to four guest ales, including regular appearances by Irish real ales. Also there is a wide range of continental draught and bottled beers, reflecting owner Malcolm Shipp's other

business interest, Shipping Beer. You may be spoilt for choice! Usefully, the pub is open 11 to 11.

Currently, Nursery is playing hunt the cellar, having been told that the building originally had a cellar the full width of the pub. Efforts are in hand to locate it, as this would have a major bearing on refurbishment plans. An underground cellar would free up some space in the building for a larger bar, eating area and badly needed new toilets. The pub hopes to start offering meals from April.

The third pub is the **Trout Tavern**. Turn right out of the Old Bank along the High Street which continues as Temple Street until you come to the Trout on your right hand side. This is an entry in the CAMRA Cider Guide for selling more cider than beer. Taunton and Thatcher's Traditional are on draught. The beers are Greene King IPA and Abbot Ale. This is a two-room pub with basic bar and a bar/lounge, well patronised by a lively clientele keen on their cider. There is an outside seating area at the rear of the pub.

Continuing a short way along Temple Street you come on your left hand side to the fourth pub, the **Ship**. This has a good range of real ales usually featuring Abbey Bellringer, a Bath Ales beer, Butcombe, Courage Best and a guest ale. It is a two-roomed pub with cosy beamed rooms and offers pub meals. During the week it closes in the afternoons from 3 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. At the rear is a terraced garden overlooking the river.

So, four varied pubs with an interesting range of real ales, ciders and continental beers, easily accessible by public transport. It has to be worth a try!

John Armstrong

## Clifton Enterprise

THE January Pints West article "Clifton Renaissance" reached more parts than we anticipated due to the enterprise of Quadrant landlord Tony Garcia. He posted large blow-ups of our article on guest ales in the windows of his pub. This generated a lot of discussion about the arrival of guest ales in Clifton Village, and his regularly changing guest beer has proved very popular.

The beers are taken from the Scottish & Newcastle guest ale list of about forty beers, and a nice balance has been struck between the unusual and the well regarded and familiar. The list features mostly well regarded regional brewers rather than micros, but there are some surprises such as Aviemore Wee Murdoch, Ridley's new beer Prospect, an organic beer from Brakspear, and some excellent brews from Caledonian. The guest ales have added interest and variety and have generated extra business for this popular pub.

Not to be outdone, the other Clifton Village pub recently to start offering a guest ale also displayed a blow-up of our article. The Somerset House on Princess Victoria Street has been offering a guest ale more on a seasonal rather than a weekly basis, with each beer featuring for several weeks. Theakston's Frolic Bitter has been a recent guest, preceded by Smiles Old Tosser which caused some grief for landlord Julius Pope as it was open season for legalised insults when ordering a pint!

John Armstrong

*P.S. The guest ales at the Quadrant are a standardized £2.15. At the Somerset the same beers can be on at £2.30.*

Bag O'Nails advert

Nursery Brewery advert

# Island in the sea

NAILSEA lies in North Somerset south of Portishead, east of Clevedon, and west of Bristol and Long Ashton. It shares a railway station with its nearest neighbour Backwell and enjoys the relative peace of not having a major road running through it. Once famous for its glassworks and coal mines it is now mainly a dormitory town.

Many, many, many pints ago it is reputed to have been surrounded by the estuary of the Bristol Avon river before that cut through the Clifton Gorge, hence it was an Island In The Sea which translated to "Nailsea". The town was the home of Coates Cider and of Adge Cutler until his untimely death although his Wurzels play on.

With all that to make you thirsty, it was surprising that only one pub, the Blue Flame at Nailsea West End with gravity fed real ales and ciders, got into the Good Beer Guide until recently, when the Barn opened on the Wraxhall Road offering a greater choice of similar refreshment and is also now in the Guide.

Being semi-retired and a relatively new (naïve?) member of CAMRA I foolishly offered to take a few copies of the last edition of Pints West to some of the other establishments in Nailsea which might attract potential supporters of CAMRA. I also gave a note to the licensees asking them to contact me if they would like more copies of Pints West – only the Ring of Bells has taken me up on that offer ... so far.

I live close to Mizzymead Recreation Centre & Social Club which has a comfort-

able lounge bar, caters for bowlers, tennis players, snooker players, etc., and serves Butcombe Bitter, Courage Best, and about two guest beers each week mostly from the Scottish Courage stable. The Ring Of Bells at St Mary's Grove hosts the Nailsea Folk Club, and a Jazz Club, and serves Courage Best and about two guest beers each week from the Unique Inns guest beer list. Both took a stock of Pints West and CAMRA membership forms. Both serve food at lunchtimes.

Two smaller two-bar locals are the White Lion in Silver Street serving Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter and the Sawyers Arms at the Wraxhall end of High Street serving Courage Best and a very nice drop of Smiles Best – my favourite tittle.

The Moorend Spout (previously the Butchers Arms and renamed by Ushers) in Union Street has a small restaurant, and slightly louder music than suits my ear, and serves Bass, Courage Best and Wadworth 6X. Two other food pubs completed my tour, the Star on the Clevedon Road at Tickenham serving Bass, Courage Best, Marston's Pedigree, Greene King's Morland Old Speckled Hen and Smiles Best, and the Old Farmhouse off Trendlewood Way serving Badger's Bitter, Badger's Tanglefoot, and Badger's King & Barnes Sussex.

There are also four young people's pubs and a wine bar in the town centre and three other members' clubs. I'll leave them until another time.

Not bad for an "Island In The Sea"!  
Laurie Gibney

# Freeminer wasn't the pits!

Bristol and District CAMRA visited Freeminer Brewery recently, at its new home at Cinderford in the Forest of Dean.

It was a fascinating visit; not only because of the beer (there wasn't any to drink at the brewery, although we were able to sample some at The Miners Arms at Whitecroft, Near Bream, later in the evening – and very good it was too), but because of what the owner told us about how his business is changing.

Freeminer has been around for a few years now, having started in 1992 in very small premises near Coleford. It moved recently, after a fire, to its present home, which has eight times as much brewing capacity. This enables it to fulfill large once-off orders from large pub chains and supermarkets, without undue disruption to its regular trade through pubs and off-licences. In such a rural location, with no large centres of population and relatively little free trade nearby, this extra flexibility is very important for economic viability. This is especially the case in view of the Government's stated intention to abolish the Beer Orders – this will deny microbreweries like Freeminer access to many pubs which currently stock their beers.

Moving to new premises gave Freeminer an opportunity to improve the plant's energy efficiency; in fact the new equipment was put together so well that in a recent energy survey, it was found to be among the ten most energy efficient microbreweries in the country. Of course, this helps to lower costs to the levels needed to compete for the supermarket trade, as well as minimising the environmental impact of such an industrial activity in what is a predominantly rural area. Better this than cutting corners on the cost of ingredients – Freeminer has a well deserved reputation for not compromising on the taste of its beers.

Beers we sampled at the pub nearby included the Bitter (4% ABV), the chestnut-brown Speculation Ale (4.8%), the rather fine, strong Trafalgar IPA (6%) – listed by Michael Jackson in his recent book of the world's top 500 beers – and Deep Shaft Stout (6.2%) – altogether a fine portfolio of tastes and strengths.

Altogether, this was an illuminating and enjoyable evening. Long may small-scale brewing prosper in the Forest of Dean!

Norman Spalding



Wadworth JCB 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)

Dear Pints West,

Thanks for the mention of our pub, the King Charles near Stokes Croft, in issue 53 of Pints West. You will be pleased to know that with all the bad publicity Innspired Inns have had in the press recently, they seem to be attempting to rectify at least some of the wrongs.

I thought I would let you know a little more about our ales. We have Pedigree,

Smiles Best and 6X on at the moment all at £1.95 a pint. Monday night is Ale Night, so from 5 p.m. all ales are £1.60. We have recently had a small chiller fitted to the back bar, so we should be able to serve a guest ale from the cask.

We do food, with a bar and specials menu (changed daily). It may be advisable to book for Sunday Roasts.

Cheers,  
Andy Wogan  
The King Charles  
11 King Square Ave  
Kingsdown, Bristol



*From the chap who frequently writes in extolling the virtues of cider, particularly at the Kings Head in Kingswood...*

Dear Steve,

It's now high time I confessed to you that I haven't drunk any cider for several months now and don't intend to drink any more. Something I probably shouldn't feel any shame about. But the fact that I've had to sacrifice this pleasure for medical reasons is I feel regrettable and unfortunate for me. But the fact that I'm now in my thirties and have over indulged in this pastime for over fifteen years means that I don't suppose I've had too bad a run. But all is not lost as I've enjoyed discovering the pleasures of real ale. What's more over several Saturday nights during February and March at a very affordable price.

My lucky find was made on the spur of the moment quite unplanned and off the cuff.

On that Saturday night on the way back from my parents I decided to take a break from my usual haunts and at about a quarter to nine that evening I jumped off the bus in Hotwells and went in the Plume of Feathers (a real characterful pub only ten minutes walk from the city centre). Being familiar with the area having lived there with an ex-girlfriend over ten years ago meant that I could have comfortably settled in any number of pubs in the area. But no doubt it was the fact that that pub was where I had had my first date with her that played a part in fate's hand pushing me in the direction of the Plume.

On entering I was greeted with a chalk board that read

"Saturday nights £1 a pint". This went for all beers, lagers and cider, all night long. And a long night it turned out to be. Amongst the choice available was Greene King IPA, Abbot Ale, Old Speckled Hen and Ruddles County. And last but by no means least, my choice of Smiles Heritage. Reminiscent I thought of Marston's Owd Rodger, which I drank there many years before. Needless to say I was smiling all night long. What a happy, friendly bunch they were in there too. Not surprisingly I've gone there every Saturday night since. I took advantage of the night-time bus service from the centre getting the 1 a.m. bus home, making it one of the best and cheapest nights out I've had for a long time. In fact I had a great night out all for about a tenner. For lovers of real ale in particular I think you'll agree Saturday nights at the Plume is well worth a try.

Craig Weaden  
Soundwell Road  
Staplehill.

Steve,

As an exile from the North I have been researching the real ale scene of Bristol for the last 6 months. There are some excellent real ale pubs – notably the Cornubia, Bag O'Nails, Bell, Hare On The Hill, Coronation, all in the vicinity of the city centre.

But! .... why can I not get a pint with a bit of head? The majority of the pumps in the area have no sparkler on the pump at all. This seems to be a unique trait of the Bristol area, as I have not found a similar lack in the rest of the country. Whilst I do like a full pint a modicum of sparkle makes the beer much more lively and quaffable.

Alan Brook  
(by email)

*Thanks for your thoughts, Alan. Sorry to disagree though, but firstly it's not just Bristol – if anything it's probably more of a crude north-south divide. And secondly, though we do appreciate a bit of head, achieving this by means of a tight sparkler attached to the end of a swan neck is something Pints West has campaigned strongly against in the past. Irrespective of what it does to the appearance of the beer, we believe such harsh treatment destroys the taste and aroma of the beer, far more important aspects than its looks. I hope you can nevertheless continue to enjoy your beers in those excellent pubs you've mentioned. Ed.*

Bath Ales Brewery and pubs advert

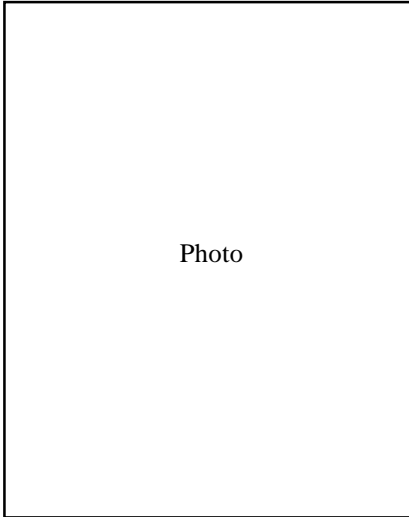
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## Bath Ales: doing the business

THE Brewery's remarkable progress has been recognised by the local Chamber of Commerce who have named Bath Ales Director Richard Dempster as 'Businessman of the Month' for February. He will now be put forward for the annual award.



Photo

Man of the moment Richard Dempster

On the brewing front Bath Ales' premium strong ale, Rare Hare at 5.2%, is now available. Brewer Craig has been struggling to keep going with five brews a week of the range of beers to keep up with strong demand. He's therefore taken on a new apprentice, Gerry, to take some of the pressure off himself and fellow brewer Tim.

'The Management' are looking forward to a trip to the Wye Valley Brewery where they will be formally awarded the trophy for Festivity which was voted 'best in its class' and overall runner-up at the CAMRA Winter Beer Festival.

The brewery has now joined SIBA, South West Society of Independent Brewers. The range of Bath Ales' beers were strongly represented at the Tuckers Maltings Beer Festival in Newton Abbott.

The refurbishment and redecoration of the Wellington Hotel, Gloucester Road, Bristol, is on target and the decorators will be working through spring to brighten it up. Landlord Steve is encouraged by the ever-increasing sales of real ale and is now offering a guest beer in addition to a range of Bath Ales.

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 at [www.bathales.com](http://www.bathales.com).

Steve O'Shea

## A taste of beer

Ever wondered where those beer descriptions at the back of the Good Beer Guide come from? The answer is from CAMRA's local branch Tasting Panels. These are made up of branch members who have taken taste training courses into the spectrum of tastes found in beer. The training is provided by professional staff from Brewlab at the University of Sunderland.

The task of the Panels is to taste the beers brewed in their branch areas on a regular basis throughout the year. Tasting is done in pubs, not at the breweries, in order to be representative of the pints sold to the public. And yes, tasters pay out of their own pocket for the beer, there are no freebies!

During tasting, a CAMRA tasting card is filled in checking the beer against a number of taste characteristics, such as malt, roast, caramel, hoppiness, fruit, sweet, bitter, sulphur and yeastiness. The colour, clarity, temperature and body/mouthfeel are noted. An overall comment on the taste and quality of the beer is made, and the beer is given a score out of ten. A tasting is limited to a maximum of four halves, as after that taste buds become jaded and unreliable.

The tasting cards are collected by the Chair of the Tasting Panel so as to obtain an overall picture of the taste profile of the area's beers. The cards are also the basis of the beer descriptions that appear in the Good Beer Guide. These are drawn up by the Panels with a word limit of thirty words. The descriptions are forwarded to CAMRA headquarters along with the overall scores for each beer. These scores are used to identify the highest scoring beers in various categories, and these are then considered for

inclusion at the Great British Beer Festival Champion Beer of Britain tasting, from which emerges the CAMRA Champion Beer of the year.

So the Panels play an important role in how CAMRA describes the many real ales, and in identifying the beers worthy of consideration as CAMRA Champion Beers of the Year.

Over past years Bristol has been well served by its Tasting Panel which has responsibility for beers from Abbey Ales, Bath Ales, Butcombe, Home County, Nursery, RCH, Smiles and Wickwar. The Panel endeavours to be fair but firm in its descriptions, telling it like it is and not going over the top into silly Jilly Goolden flourishes of "I'm getting wet dog and peaches and cream". Descriptions should be a guide as to what to expect in terms of beer style and flavour, so that you can judge as to whether it is to your palate. Indeed some of the descriptions drawn up by the Panel have been adopted by the brewery as their official description of that beer. A pleasing compliment.

The Panels have just completed the tasting and recording process for the 2003 Good Beer Guide due for publication in October. New for this year will be descriptions of the Nursery Brewery beer range, Wickwar's Mr Perrett's Stout, Smiles Bristol IPA, and RCH Double Header. So remember to buy a copy!

John Armstrong

*Any local CAMRA members interested in taste training can contact the Panel via the editor.*

## Great minds taste alike

At the January CAMRA National Winter Beer Festival held in Manchester, Bath Ales Festivity (5%) was runner up for the award of Champion Winter Beer of Britain. This success came as no surprise to the Bristol Tasting Panel (see the article above) as Festivity had already emerged from the tasting programme as the highest scoring beer of all those brewed in the branch area. This was some achievement as there are several very fine beers brewed in the area. The Panel's opinion was that the 2001/2 Festivity brew (it is brewed between November and March) was the best ever since the launch of the beer some years ago. The National Festival judges clearly shared our opinion and Festivity has gained well deserved national recognition.

It is interesting to note that Bath Ales describe Festivity as a "rum porter", whilst the Tasting Panel felt the beer was better described as an "old ale", as it has a generous balance of fruit flavours in addition to

the dry maltiness of a porter. Indeed at the Winter Beer Festival, Festivity was the Class Champion in - wait for it - the Old Ale Category. Nice to be vindicated.

Whatever category it is placed in, let us hope that next year's brew matches the quality of this year's. Seasonal beers can pose a problem to brewers of matching flavours after a lengthy break in production.

The Panel's tasting notes tell this year's story: "An outstanding example of an old ale. Aroma of rich coffee and chocolate roast and crystal malts. A taste of spicy hops with a blackcurrant and black cherry fruits and a hint of liquorice. Nicely dry and bittersweet leading to a long finish. Overall score 9.5 out of 10, an excellent rich and complex pint (pint served at the Bridge, Bristol in December)."

So keep up the good work - Bath Ales deserve a strong following for this excellent beer. Roll on November!

John Armstrong

# Snippets

## Beer and Breakfast

The well-publicised High Court decision to allow the White Hart in Brislington, Bristol to serve beer from 7 a.m. on certain days during the World Cup has been widely welcomed. The licensee, Martin Gough had his original request turned down by the local Magistrates Court. At an appeal to the High Court in London, the Lord Chief Justice stated that the event was a "special occasion of collective enjoyment".

CAMRA has long campaigned for licensing reform and perhaps this is a step in the right direction. There is far greater flexibility on licensing hours in Scotland, the Isle of Man and in much of Europe. Surely it's about time we fell in line.

## Posh Pub

As you may have read in the press, the Queen Victoria on James Street, St. Werbergh's has recently replaced its pub sign of Queen Victoria with one of 28-year-old Victoria Beckham (Posh Spice). Perhaps in future family-friendly pubs could have a sign of Emma Bunton (Baby Spice), and pubs which feature televised sports events could have hanging signs of Melanie Chisholm (Sporty Spice). Maybe some of the dreadful theme pubs could feature Mel B (Scary Spice) as the refurbishments have been pretty frightening, after all.

Coors Brewers Ltd is the new name for Carling Breweries. The US giant will have 20.5% of the UK beer market which will include the Bass and Worthington brands. It is noted that they've announced their intention to withdraw their sponsorship of the Worthington Cup.

## European Legislation

MEPs have voted to amend proposals, originally aimed at cutting noise in factories, to exclude reference to music in pubs. The legislation would have lowered legal noise limits from 90 decibels to 85 decibels which the trade feared would rule out live music, karaoke and even singing during football matches!

Wetherspoon has recorded a 22% rise in pre-tax profits to £24,900,000 for the six months to January 27<sup>th</sup>. The chain had five hundred and fifty-six pubs at the end of the half year. Eighty new openings are planned for the current financial year, compared with ninety-seven in 1999/2000.

Ali & Pete Bridle

## READERS' LETTERS



Hi Steve,

Could you let your readers know that the free, independent pub web site [www.britishpubguide.com](http://www.britishpubguide.com) is up and running.

Some 438 pubs in the City and County of Bristol are featured, plus many in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. By the end of February 2002 we hope to have pictures of all 438; and readers can dynamically search for their favourite real ales and traditional ciders.

It's a 'community' web site so we welcome readers' comments, additions and updates.

Best regards  
Duncan Shine  
(by email)

PS: Keep up the good work on an excellent and informative newsletter.  
*More letters on page 20.*

## Whistling Duck

As editor of Pints West I was contacted a while ago by the new landlord (since December) of the Whistling Duck in Banwell, named Paul Parsons.

He was very interested in letting CAMRA know about himself and his pub. He's with Pubmaster, and was previously with Hogshead in Crawley, Surrey. He was in the process of turning it from a one-real-ale pub (previously two pumps, only one used he said) to one with half a dozen, having extra handpumps plus casks behind the bar for gravity dispense.

At the time he contacted me the same cooling pipes were serving the real ale and the lager, so the ales might have been a bit cold, but that should change as he was planning to get separate pipes installed. There are likely to be well-known beers – Abbot, Old Speckled Hen, Directors, maybe Pedigree – plus the likes of Adnams and Batemans. The pub has two bars, one a sort of public, with traditional pub games. In his words he wants to make it a real ale pub.

I've not had a chance to visit the pub myself yet, though hope to before too long, so people may like to check the pub out for themselves and see how he's progressed. I have heard favourable reports!

SP

## You live where?

The former branch chairman sucked his teeth and said: "bit of a real ale desert there y'know." The normal response to being told that one has moved house is a query about how much work there is to do, what the garden is like, how are the neighbours? No such namby pamby nonsense for him.

This legendary figure cut right to the heart of the matter. Or so I thought after he left, my mind being focussed mostly on whether I could balance the iniquity of taking a holiday in Turkey (political oppression, no interesting beer) by joining Amnesty International and drinking even more of the right stuff on my return.

Later, a few days into the holiday, mellowed by sea, sun and a couple of bottles of Turkish fizz, I fell to musing on his thoughts. There are loads of pubs in my new area which sell a good pint of Courage Best. He must have been thinking in terms of 'Old Molestrangler' and the like – beers with silly names and high alcohol by volume (ABV)

content.

This is not an unusual viewpoint among ordinary drinkers, who sometimes see us as a campaign for beer scratchers and other deviants. (Incidentally, this last is an expression I first heard at a CAMRA AGM, just in case you thought they were dull affairs.) It's the view of the chap who said to me that he didn't drink real ale as it was too strong for him. It does not accurately reflect the views of the Campaign as a whole. Just because you drink an ordinary cask beer (oops, almost typed bitter there – make mine a mild) which is the only cask ale sold in the pub you use does not mean CAMRA is not for you.

The Campaign exists to work for all cask ale drinkers and pub users; some members drink only beer from independent brewers; some only from a mug (*are you referring to me? Ed*); some still stick with Courage Best. It's up to you. It is up to you and me – fill in that membership form and send it off.

Steve Gillen

## Competition

Sorry, there is no competition this time.

Here is the solution to the word search competition in the last edition:  
Abbey Ales & Bellringer. Bath Ales & Gem.  
Berrow & Topsy Turvy. Butcombe & Gold.

Home County & County Pride. Moles & Molecatcher. Nursery & Old Mother Hubbard. Oakhill & Black Magic Stout. RCH & Pitchfork. Smiles & Heritage. Uley & Old Ric. Wickwar & BOB.

The winner was **Simon Hall** from Widcombe, Bath who won a micro-cask of Bath Ales beer.



There are about 180 branches of CAMRA nationwide, and about half of those produce a newsletter. The above award recognises the efforts of all who contribute to Pints West.

## Horts Hotel ?

IN the event it took just a few months for most of the guest beers to disappear from the bar at Horts in the centre of Bristol, following the departure of original landlord, Matt Jackson and partner Sarah.

First to go was Wickwar BOB, then Abbey Bellringer, leaving just Bass to supplement the Young's/Smiles range. A great pity that what was an exciting real ale free house offering a wide range of changing beers is now just another Young's pub, good though Young's beers can be. The city centre has lost a real ale attraction which provided variety, interest, and good prices. There is clearly a niche in the market for another real ale free house in the city centre, so let us hope someone will fill the gap.

Meanwhile prices at Horts have been steadily rising, deterring some customers. It appears Young's have their sights set on converting part of Horts into a hotel development – with prices to match?

Is it just our imagination or did Young's promise to retain changing guest beers when they took over Horts? In a letter to us, which we published in edition 51 of Pints West, they stated: "The reason we purchased the pub, at considerable cost, was to sell our own famous beers. We do realise however that it would be a huge mistake to immediately discontinue all other ales being sold there. We shall allow Matt to sell some other brands in addition to our own full range, albeit fewer than hitherto, but including Smiles."

Okay, so it wasn't quite "immediately", and it's no longer Matt at the helm, and we do appreciate Smiles beers being available, but we could name one or two other brewers who feel betrayed. And we do miss the occasional mini beer festivals Matt used to put on.

John Armstrong & SP

In case people think we've just got it in for Young's.... not so. They recently bought the **Ropewalk, Nelson Parade, Bedminster** and what they've done with that place is worthy of praise, and the beers are excellent. We even arrange to have a lot of our CAMRA meetings there!

South Cotswold Beer Festival advert

# DIARY



Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA.

See page 12 for the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch diary and contacts.

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April**, Bedminster crawl, starting from the Ropewalk 7.30PM.

**Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> May**, Committee meeting, Cornubia, 8PM.

**Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> May**, trip to Nursery brewery, Keynsham. Depart from the Cornubia, 7PM.

**Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May**, Branch meeting, Ropewalk, 8PM.

**Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> May**, social with Mid-Glamorgan CAMRA in Llantrisant district - depart from the Cornubia, 10.30AM.

**Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> June**, Branch AGM, at the Naval Volunteer, 8PM. Please bring membership cards.

**Saturday, 23<sup>th</sup> July**, Regional meeting, Old Road Tavern, Chippenham, from noon.

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

**Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London**  
**6th-10th August 2002**

Tue 6th 5pm - 10:30pm £6  
 Wed 7th 11:30am - 3pm £2  
 Wed 7th 5pm - 10:30pm £6  
 Thu 8th 12noon - 10:30pm £6  
 Fri 9th 12noon - 10:30pm £6  
 Sat 10th 11am - 7pm £5

Advance ticket hotline  
 0870 730 7500  
 from May 1st  
**www.gbbf.org**

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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.

## PINTS WEST

- TO ADVERTISE IN PINTS WEST** call Steve Plumridge in the first instance, evenings or weekends, on (0117) 9743242. (Email: [steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk))
- LETTERS** can be sent to:  
**Pints West Editor,**  
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- 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).
- SIX TO SEVEN THOUSAND COPIES** of Pints West are distributed free to pubs in and around the cities of Bristol and Bath.
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Pints West 54

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).....

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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? .....

