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PINTS WEST

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

Women drink beer shock



Ninkasi shows how it's done

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale



What is it?

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is an independent, voluntary, consumer organisation. Membership is open to all individuals, but corporate entities such as breweries and pubs are not members. Most of its work is done by volunteers at a local level, reinforcing national drives.

The Campaign was founded in the early seventies with the aim of restoring drinker's rights and promoting consumer choice. A great deal has been achieved and over the last few years CAMRA has made a major contribution to getting a fairer deal for pub users.

CAMRA is financed through membership subscriptions, sales of products such as books and sweatshirts, and from the proceeds of beer festivals. We are a not-for-profit company limited by members' guarantee and our accounts are lodged annually with Companies House.

While CAMRA is a single industry group, it has a very wide area of campaigning interests. At present, campaigns that we are actively pursuing include the following:

- Improved competition and choice in the brewing industry
- Preserving the British pub and defending licensees from eviction by pub owners
- Seeking a fairer tax system for smaller brewers
- Seeking fuller information about the beer we drink, such as ingredients labelling
- A fundamental reform of licensing law (for example, longer opening if the licensee wishes)
- Fighting take-overs and mergers
- Encouraging higher standards of pub design
- Encouraging brewers to produce a wide

range of beer styles such as porter, mild and stout, in addition to their bitters

CAMRA also seeks to promote real cider and perry through a sub-organisation called APPLE. Like ale, these are traditional British drinks and like ale, the traditional product is very different from the 'dead' version.

Real ale, real beer, traditional beer, cask ale – whatever you prefer to call it – this is of course the Campaign's top priority. It is no exaggeration to say that CAMRA saved real ale, and as a result saved many independent breweries. No new ale breweries were set up in the UK for the fifty years before we were founded. There are now around 300 new brewers producing real ale, part of a massive real ale revival.

In total there are currently around 66,000 CAMRA members, from all walks of life. If you haven't already, why not add your voice to that of the most successful consumer organisation Europe has seen? Fill in that membership form on the back page now.

Wadworth 6X advert



The CAMRA Bristol Beer Festival was a sell-out success in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. February/March 2003 sees the sixth annual Bristol Beer and Cider Festival making a welcome return to the Council House, College Green, in Bristol city centre.

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

The Festival will be open to the public from Thursday 27th February to Saturday 1st March at the following times:

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

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

Entry for all sessions is by advance ticket which will be on sale from the following Bristol outlets from about Christmas time:

Bridge Inn, Passage Street
Cornubia, Temple Street
Bag O'Nails, Hotwells
Hare on the Hill, Kingsdown
Wellington, Horefield

Nearer the time you will be able to visit our web site at www.camrabristol.org.uk for up-to-date ticket information and the beer list.

Attention Ladies - why not try something real?

OCCASIONALLY we hear reports that women aren't much tempted to try Britain's traditional drink, beer. CAMRA has recently undertaken some research into why this might be, and found:

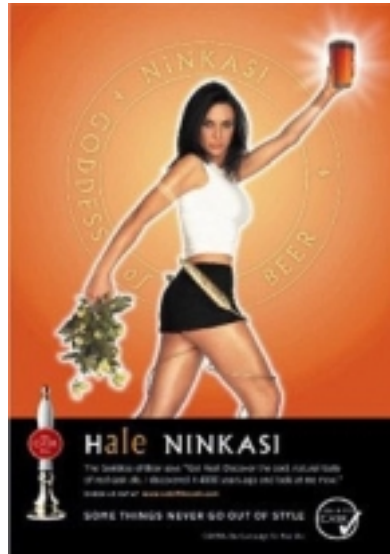
- 22% of women don't drink real cask ale because it isn't promoted to them
- 17% think it's 'old fashioned'
- 29% don't drink it because their friends don't drink it
- 17% think it will make them fat!

Encouragingly though, 23% of women *have* tried real ale in a pub, and 19% would try it if it was served in more stylish and fashionable glasses.

Four thousand years ago it was a different story. The Sumerians 'discovered' beer and the goddess **Ninkasi**, brewer to the gods, was worshipped by both men and women. Sumerian women took the lead in brewing beer and running the taverns, and presumably therefore had a keen appreciation of the stuff too. A modern incarnation of Ninkasi is back, helping CAMRA by urging drinkers to "get real and discover the cool natural taste of real cask ale".

The Bristol and District branch of CAMRA has many female members who have already discovered the variety and range of tastes that real cask ale has to offer. There are hundreds of different beers brewed around the UK and, just like wines, there are many styles. These range from pale or golden through the brown and ruby bitters to the dark and enticing stouts and porters, with a wide variety of strengths in most styles. Something, really, for everyone.

So, if you're tempted to try something



different, where would you go in Bristol to try some of our favourites? Well, three of the top choices nationally amongst women can be found in Bristol:

- *Hop Back Summer Lightning* (from Salisbury) is golden, refreshing and a perfect alternative to bland yellow lagers at 5% alcohol, and regularly available at the Coronation, Dean Lane, Southville
- *Timothy Taylor Landlord* (from Keighley, Yorkshire), a pale ale, can be tried at the Shakespeare in Redland
- *Young's Waggle Dance* (from Wandsworth, London) and brewed with pure honey can be found in pubs such as Horts, Broad Street, the Highbury Vaults, Kingsdown and the Rope Walk, Bedminster

However, there are many other beers brewed locally which we recommend:

- Smiles IPA, Best or Heritage demonstrate the range of styles from light to dark, bitter to sweet, and are all available at the Brewery Tap, Colston Yard (opposite the Children's Hospital)
- Bath Ales also offer a range, including the golden SPA found at the Hare On The Hill, Lower Kingsdown, the Merchants Arms, Hotwells and the Wellington in Horfield
- RCH Pitchfork, another golden, hoppy beer, often available at the Bell, Kingsdown
- Butcombe Gold, ditto, often seen at the Berkeley on Queens Rd, or the Quinton House in nearby Park Place
- Fuller's Honeydew, another honey beer, not brewed locally but available locally at the Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road, Redland and the Fish Market, Baldwin Street, off the Centre

Others worth looking out for are Abbey Ales Bellringer (in many pubs in Bristol and, for that special treat, the award-winning Star in Bath), and beers from Cotleigh and Cottage from Somerset. And with the nights drawing in, why not try something dark, moody and delicious like Black Magic Stout from Oakhill, Station Porter from Wickwar, or the oddly named Old Slug Porter from RCH (which actually tastes of chocolate, coffee, blackcurrant and black cherry!).

So, finally, does it make you fat? Well, no more than lager (and real ale certainly won't give you that bloated feeling) ... and real ale is brewed with all natural ingredients. So take your taste buds on a new adventure and treat yourself to some of the flavours of real ale!

Alison Bridle, Lesly Huxley

Wickwar's White Lion
and Princess of Wales advert

New brew from Nursery

A NEW beer from Nursery Brewery, named "K.E.Y.N.S.H.A.M.", has been produced as their 100th brew and was launched at the Old Bank in Keynsham's High Street on Friday 13th September.

It has a strength of 4% ABV, is ruby coloured, and is made from Perle and Saaz hops which give it a slightly sweet, crisp edge.

The reason for the name is connected with the football pools guru, Horace Bachelor, who lived and died in the town and was often heard on Radio Luxembourg saying "That's Keynsham, spelt K.E.Y.N.S.H.A.M.".

Phil Brooks

Cider Sisters

SINCE our last column, we're ashamed to admit we haven't managed to get away on a cider weekend (it hurts us more than it hurts you). But all's not lost – how could we resist taking up the kind offer made by a certain Mr. Weadon, regular Pints West correspondent on all things cider?

One Friday evening, after a few warm up pints of our favourite Thatchers and Cheddar Valley in the one and only **Cotham Porter Stores**, inspiration (or is that madness) hit and we found ourselves in the **Long Bar**, Old Market, in search of our mystery pen-friend. Like attracting like, and though the bar was packed to the rafters, within minutes we'd found our man. It's hard to describe what happened next, so we won't bother... let's just say, he promised cheap cider and his Ernie rendition, and we weren't disappointed.

As we've no trip further than the Evening Post building to share with you this time, we thought we'd bring you a treasure from our cider archives – no true fan of real cider should miss this one, which rates as one of our all time faves. We found it in a trip to Herefordshire during the height of the foot and mouth crisis – a strange weekend of empty lanes, barred gates and the stench of burning flesh. It's unsigned and unheralded, but if you can find it the **Monkey House** is a



traditional country cider house that could have come straight from the pages of Thomas Hardy.

The cider (Bulmers Woodmancote – made exclusively for the MH) is served in jugs from a half stable door, and drunk in a small one room outhouse (the old bake house) around a communal table. We stumbled up the dark path in a howling gale, and nearly walked straight into Bomber, of Auf Wiedersehn Pet fame, who luckily was just leaving as we could barely contain our schoolgirl hysterics at this incongruous brush with Cornish wrestling history. After composing ourselves and getting a couple of pints in, we settled down by the cosy fire and

left the outside world (and the 20th century) far behind.

Time lost its meaning as jugs were passed and glasses filled, food was shared amongst friends and strangers (us) alike and we wished we could stay forever... but there's a limit to how many home-made pickled onions you can safely eat in one night.

This cider house is one of a kind in our experience, the perfect place to shelter on a wild and windy night. It can offer anything your heart desires, as long as it's cider or Lilt. It can't be around forever, so make sure you don't let it pass you by. More details can be found in CAMRA's Good Cider Guide. If you do make the trip you could also take in the Cider Museum in nearby Hereford, which tells you everything you ever wanted to know about the apple elixir and a few things you wished you didn't, and where we read the following:

**Good cider is a drink divine
Tis better for you than all your wine
Food for maid & man & boys
Good in grief as well as joys.**

Couldn't have put it better ourselves. See you next time.

Freya & Erica McLuckie

Hop Back Brewery and Coronation advert

Cornubia advert

Castle of Comfort

IN the last issue of Pints West we reported that the Castle of Comfort in East Harptree had been declared Bristol & District CAMRA Pub of the Year runner-up for 2002.

We did say we would bring you a write-up of the pub in this issue. We have not been able to produce one this time, but hope to for a future issue. For the moment let us make do with a few words of description as taken from the Castle's entry in the 2003 edition of the Good Beer Guide:

"This 17th-century, stone cottage style pub earned its name from providing refreshments to prisoners on their way to being hanged nearby. Situated on top of the Mendip Hills, it is only five minutes' drive from the famous Cheddar Gorge and Chew Valley lake. This hostelry welcomes children, having a big fenced-in field behind, with a play area. The beamed interior features a real tree trunk, holding up part of the ceiling. The licensee is the chef and hosts mini beer festivals every Easter."

We paid the pub a visit recently to present licensee, Steve Crook with his

award. This was his reaction:

"I must say that I'm almost speechless at receiving this award. Having only been in the licensed trade for 18 months, it's with some pride that I accept this plaque on behalf of my wife and family whose support is paramount to our success. Prior to all this, I was a college-trained chef for eight years, then reverted to farming on the Mendips, my birthplace, after marrying.

"The sudden demise of farming left us jobless and homeless, but by a stroke of good fortune, being in the right place at the right time, I was offered the position of licensee of this pub. Lucky man!!! The catering side wasn't a problem but beer-wise it was. Having met you CAMRA people and being pointed in the right direction, the rest is now history you might say!

"Thank you CAMRA!"



Festival in the Bag

THE Bag O'Nails in Hotwells, Bristol is to hold another of its popular mini beer festivals this November. It will be running from Thursday 21st until Sunday 24th, opening all day each day.

It might only be a small pub but they certainly get through a lot of beers at these now annual events. There should be around forty different beers on over the period, with ten on at all times.

Knowing the Bag's reputation there are likely to be some exciting brews on offer to suit all tastes. And for those like me who enjoy their beers dark there should be a mild and a stout on at all times. And if like me you enjoy your beers light you'll be well catered for too. Well, truth be told, I like all sorts of beers, as long as they're real.

And for people who like food, Gordon's homemade fayre will be available from noon until 7 on Thursday and Friday, and until 3 on Saturday and Sunday.

SP

Bell, Kingsdown advert

Abbey Ales Bellringer advert

Pub News

B.J's Liquor Emporium, formerly the Sceptre, by Bristol Bridge has apparently finally been sold with work underway on a major refurbishment. It is one of two pubs close together (the other one being the Rummer) that have been closed for several years with no signs of reopening.

Pubco (un)Innspired recently advertised the lease on the **Miners Arms** in St. Werburghs as being for sale with additional "ingoings" of £10,000 being required.

The **Rat & Parrot**, one of the large pubs on Whiteladies Road, is closed at the time of writing for yet another refit. It is the second one since it opened some five years ago and seems strange timing to be closed for the first couple of weeks of the new university term.

Long suffering Innspired tenant Ray Barnes from the **Eldon House** off Jacob's Wells Road has finally given up his struggle and moved to pastures new. See back issues of Pints West for his letters on the problems of being a tenant of a pubco. Another Innspired tenant to have been forced to move on is Keith from the **Bank** in John Street near the centre of Bristol.

Pete Tanner

Hope & Anchor advert

Shakespeare, Totterdown advert

Whiteladies comfort station

AT the top of Blackboy Hill in Bristol, near the Downs, after one has sampled the dubious delights of the Whiteladies Road "strip", a haven of music-free rest lurks in a steep alley on the left hand side.

The **Port of Call** has for many years been a well-known outlet for a good pint of Bass (which you either like or don't). The landlord, Roger Skuse, an amiable host, now keeps a changing range of unusual guest ales. On the night I called in he had Wood's Parish Bitter, at 4% abv. This is a somewhat stronger version of their more common Sam Powell Original Bitter. The Shropshire brewery is well regarded in real ale circles and all their brews are worth seeking out.

The Parish was in perfect condition with a "moreish" citron nose and very hopped finish. But girding myself to stern duty, I tried the other guest, Church End Altar Ale at 3.6%. I suspect that Church End brew

something, taste it, then find a comic name for it. Over the years they've had some oddly named beers, including "What The Fox's Hat", plus various concoctions made with banana, lemon, spices and herbs. The Altar Ale was a standard midland session bitter, a fair pint for the type.

Roger showed me his future guest list, and one of the beers, Blackawton Bitter, I had tried in its native Cornwall and ended up having a few. I've seldom seen it up here.

The Port of Call has a nice snug, done up in the "glass float and fishing net" style, and a garden.

Over the humpy alley and through a steep hillside garden lies the **Beaufort Arms** in High Street, a Banks's outlet.

They are starting their famous seven veg. Sunday dinners again in October and also sell several draught ciders for the waning population of scrumpy fans.

A. McDougall

News from Wickwar

THE latest seasonal brews from Wickwar are the new beer for autumn, appropriately named Autumn Ale, and the old winter favourite Station Porter.

Autumn Ale is brewed to 4.6% ABV using the finest Maris Otter malted barley blended with three different varieties of hop. Managing Director Ray Penny describes the beer as "very complex, full of malt, ruby red in colour, silky smooth with a hint of pepper and that Wickwar long, dry finish."

Station Porter, at a powerful 6.1% ABV, is a smooth, dark ruby brown ale with an aroma and taste well suited to the colder months. Twice Silver Winner at CAMRA's

Great Winter Beer Festival, it is available October to February in cask conditioned format or all year round in 500ml bottles.

Both beers should be making appearances at Wickwar's two pubs, the White Lion in the centre of Bristol, and the Princess of Wales in Bedminster. Hopefully the free trade will taking lots too.

On the subject of Wickwar's pubs, both are under new management, with Paul and Lorraine at the White Lion and Max and Jane at the Princess of Wales. Both pubs should be selling at least one Wickwar beer at £1.20 a pint, irrespective of strength, until further notice.

SP

Bag O'Nails advert

Gloucester Road crawl

SO some local CAMRA members decided to wander up part of the A38 recently and check out the pubs and Real Ale scene. For those new to Bristol or not familiar with the area, Gloucester Road is one of the main drags in and out of the north side of the city.

The first pub we visited was at the bottom of Gloucester Road – the plan being to visit as many pubs as possible in the one evening – we will finish the crawl in the next Pints West!

The Prince of Wales is situated at the arches end of the Road – near the Zetland Road junction. This is a mostly wood panelled pub just about divided into two rooms by a wooden partition. The Prince has a fairly traditional feel about the place. However, it is under new management and some changes have taken place in recent weeks. The ceiling has been painted in a lighter colour and all the carpets have been removed. The flooring now consists of tiling and floorboards – this is a welcome improvement. On the night of our visit, in the left side bar, there was a TV showing the Manchester United v Everton match. If you didn't want to watch the soccer, the right side bar was TV free – queitish music was played from speakers – Frank Sinatra at the time. To the far right side, you could escape both TV and music. To the rear of the pub is an enclosed patio area. The beers on offer were Courage Best (£2.00), Directors (£2.25), Bass (£2.10) and Butcombe Bitter (£2.10). All the beers were in good condition and served at the right temperature for real ale – not warm – but just as important, not too cold!

The pub has a good atmosphere – it feels like a pub! Notice the wood panelling and the windows with stained glass. And that partition is so important – this must not be removed!

The next pub was not quite a “pub” but the area's premier live music venue, **The Prom**. The night we visited, the Emma Hutchinson Quartet was getting ready to entertain. The Prom is normally free entrance for gigs except Friday and Saturday when the door charge is normally between £3 and £5. On Tuesday nights, a pop quiz is held. The Prom currently sells Smiles Best (£2.15) and Wadworth 6X but is looking to increase the range and would like to hear what you'd like to see on the bar. It's all part of a punters' survey they're running at present. Addlestons real cider is also available at £2.30 a pint.

Returning to the right hand side of

the road, our next pub was **The Hobgoblin**. This street corner pub usually has a very colourful floral display outside. The pub had a major refurbishment about a year ago. On the night of our visit there were two TVs and a giant screen featuring the Manchester United game inside the pub – plus another TV showing the same match in the rear enclosed patio area. The pub has a stone flagged and tiled floor and is on split levels. It is popular with students and was very busy. Beers on sale at the time of our visit were Smiles Best (didn't catch the price), Wadworth 6X (£2.10) and Hobgoblin Giant Haystacks – the latter was the only beer we tried and was in very good condition. A lively pub, can be quite noisy, good to watch the big match.

A little further up the road is **The Foresters**. This is a wood-panelled, carpeted single bar. This pub also featured the footie – it had a TV and a giant screen next to each other. The pub had Butcombe Bitter and Bass on hundpump, plus Thatcher's Cider.

Next, we crossed the road and looked into “**It's a Scream**”. No Real Ale! “**It's a Shame!**” We did not stop for a drink!

A few yards further up is **The Goose at The Flyer**. This was the first pub without any music, giant screen or TV! This is a large pub, mostly carpeted on many levels with a good mix of customers – all ages. The licensee has recently acquired a “Cask Marque” accreditation – an industry award for good real ale. On sale at the time of our visit were Tetley Bitter (£1.25), Fullers London Pride (£1.60) and Bass (£1.50). We were told that Adnams Bitter is also usually on sale at £1.50. All the beers tried were in good nick and is good to see a no-smoking area. The pub also features a heated outdoor drinking area. We tried the London Pride – it was in good condition and full measure is promoted by means of a notice which says “*If you think the head on your beer is too large, we will gladly top up your glass*”.

Just across the road is **The Robin Hood** with its unusual curved brick exterior. This is a basic two-room boozier – note the stained glass windows. On the right hand side is the public bar featuring a pool table. The left hand bar is the smaller carpeted “lounge” area with a gas fire. The pub sells only one real ale, Courage Best.

A Gloucester Road crawl is certainly an interesting and varied one. To be continued next issue.

Pete Bridle

Great Christmas gift idea

DO you know someone who loves beer? Looking for the right Christmas present? CAMRA membership could be the perfect gift. Members receive:

- Our lively monthly publication What's Brewing, giving hard news from the world of pubs and beer as well as providing information about festivals and special events.
 - Free or substantially reduced entry to all CAMRA beer festivals throughout the UK, including the Great British Beer Festival.
 - Discounts on many CAMRA publications, including our best-selling Good Beer Guide.
- So why not give a gift this Christmas that will be enjoyed the whole year!

CAMRA Membership Application

Please fill in with recipient's details.

Title		Surname	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Forename (s)		D.O.B	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Partner Title / Surname (If applicable)			
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E-mail		<input type="text"/>	

Please indicate below (circle amount) which category applies to the recipient:

Single.....£16
 Joint.....£19
 Under 26.....£9
 Under 26 Joint.....£12
 Retired.....£9
 Retired Joint.....£12

Delivery Address: If you wish to present the gift yourself and the address is not the same as above please give the delivery details below.

Name.....
 Address.....
 Post Code.....

I enclose a cheque, payable to CAMRA, for £..... Send to: CAMRA, Membership Secretary, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW

Signed..... Date.....
 Applications will be processed within 21 days of receipt. Please make sure all applications arrive at CAMRA by December 9th at the latest

Merry Christmas

Bristol: an outsider's view

A LATE decision and a quick phone call to a hotel finalised the basic needs for a weekend in the Bristol area over the August Bank Holiday. Martin and I, therefore, found ourselves on the 8:15 from Paddington bringing us into Bristol just after 10 a.m.

Apart from occasional visits to city centre pubs when I was passing through or attending a meeting, I didn't know any pubs in the "Pints West" area. Fortunately, Martin is a frequent visitor to the area so knows a fair number of good hosteleries. From the station, we shot up to the bus station and collected the latest map and timetable.

We had a number of itineraries roughed out so a quick adjournment to the **White Hart**, a Greene King house at the bus station exit, gave us a few minutes for a swift half and to check bus times. The beer was acceptable but I feel that the pub is gradually losing interest. It was much better when I first used it in 1995.

We bought Day Explorers (£5.00) on the 350 and headed for LONG ASHTON as Pints West reported that the Miners Arms had been under threat. As it was a good pull up Providence Lane, we called in for a quick one in **Robin Hood's Retreat**, an unexciting youngsters' pub. At the **Miners Arms** the Bass was absolute nectar. I wasn't so impressed with the food though when a "real Cornish pasty" turned out to be a soggy mass-produced thing full of mince. We wanted to continue to Wraxall so returned to the main road for the 354. There was time at the bus stop for a quickie in the **Bird in Hand** where the hand-pulled Bass was as good as that on gravity at the Miners. We each had another half before wishing the new father and son team good luck. They have only been in the trade for seven weeks! *Please pay them a visit.*

We dropped off in WRAXALL at the church and found we had to walk on another mile to the **Old Barn**. What a gorgeous place with a friendly team serving a good range of cask ales. I sampled the RCH PG Steam. It was tempting to stay in this lovely location for the evening but, sadly we had to check in at our hotel and we also had our evening pub itinerary already planned out.

We returned to Bristol and took in a couple of favourites – the **Myrtle Tree** for a pint of Moles Bitter, followed by a Goff's Joustier in the **Bag O'Nails**, 141 St. George's Road, before checking in to the hotel and embarking on our evening jaunt. We spent the evening in KEYNSHAM in order to do justice to the Nursery Brewery pub, the **Old Bank**, where their full range of beers plus a couple of guests were available. As it was a music night, the pub was very noisy but Nick, the landlord, and Steve, the brewer, made us most welcome and

dispensed some excellent beer. Before catching the last 339 back to Bristol there was time to sample some rarely found Worthington in the **Old Ship**.

Although not shown on the bus map, First does operate a limited service on a Sunday on the 689 to Yate via PUCKLECHURCH where the **Star** (Inn Business) serves a fine pint of gravity Bass along with a number of hand-pulled beers. The **Star**, along with the other two pubs in the village, is food orientated but the place was comfortable and the menu looked interesting. We sought directions from there to the **Rose and Crown**, a Wadworth house in Parkfield Road, where another tasty menu was available. We sampled Wadworth's Summersault here before continuing to the **Fleur de Lys** for a pint of Butcombe Bitter, then caught the bus back as far as Mangotsfield.

It was planned to do some walking so we walked the 5½ mile railway route back to St. Philips. As well as offering some healthy exercise the walk gave us the opportunity to visit a couple of Wetherspoon conversions. The **Staple Hill Oak**, an ex motor cycle showroom, offered a good Ringwood Old Thumper, while, at the ex cinema, **Van Dyke Forum** in Fishponds a very acceptable Archer's Golden was available. A reasonable pint of Burton was found round the corner at the **Railway Tavern** a clinical, characterless place offering some drinks and food at low prices.

We didn't stop again until central BRISTOL where we first found the **Long Bar** as Martin wanted to check it out. From the other side of the road, it looked a cosy little pub but our hopes were dashed when we approached and found it tatty inside and heaving with karaoke. We left quickly and made our way to the **Swan With Two Necks** in Little Ann Street, an ex Hardington Pub which had been closed for a while. It reopened ten weeks ago as a free house under the excellent stewardship of Val and Leroy who seem to be doing very well as first timers in the trade. They hope to make it a good real ale pub and seem to be succeeding. We were made very welcome and provided with some very good Hop Back Summer Lightning, one of Martin's favourites. Our last port of call for the day was another welcoming pub, the **Hare on the Hill** in Dove Sheet, a Bath Ales house run by John Lansdall who used to run the Swan With Two Necks in its Hardington days. As well as Bath beers, Triple FFF beers were available as guests.

The bank holiday Monday was the last day of our trip so we started off in the new Wetherspoon pub, the **Knight's Templar** on Temple Quay. During the week this

useful station tap opens at 8:30 for breakfast although the bar doesn't open until 10:30. A short train ride to Bath gave us half an hour for a Greene King IPA in the **Royal Hotel** opposite the station. The bar is extremely comfortable but, as one would expect, the prices are a little higher than in the city's pubs.

Today's circuit started in SWINEFORD where the **Swan**, a free house, offers gravity Bass and a varied food menu. Opposite the pub is a path to the Avon Valley walk which we followed to the old railway path which we took to SALT FORD and the **Bird in Hand**, a Good Beer Guide entry which is very big on food. We were unfortunate to experience rather poor service on our visit. We didn't stay long but followed a field path to KELSTON where we were rewarded with the **Old Crown**, a wonderful gem of a place owned by Butcombe Brewery, where we were provided with a stunning pint of Butcombe Gold. Sadly we had to catch a bus a few minutes later but we are certainly going to return to this lovely traditional 18th century inn. Accommodation is available next door.

With plenty of time before our planned train back to London, we took the opportunity to sample some of Bath's drinking scene. We stopped off first at the **Hop Pole** owned by Bath Ales for a pint of Gem before trying the **Kings Arms** for a Bellringer, then continuing to **Hatchetts** in Queen Street. The pub needs some interior decoration, but was still a friendly little place where we both enjoyed pints of Archer's Golden prior to making a mandatory visit to the **Star** in The Vineyards. This is now an Abbey Ales house but still dispenses the legendary gravity Bass for which it is so well known. The pub has had a light refurbishment but this has not detracted from its character. If anything it is even better than before and deserves to be on every discerning pub lover's and real ale drinker's itinerary in Bath.

With time ticking on, we had to start making our way back to the station but not before calling in at the **Old Green Tree** in Green Street where, unfortunately, the bar was being propped up by a couple of drunken idiots. Our last drink of the weekend was Felinfoel Double Dragon in the **Lambretta Bar**. This bar, in North Parade, looks from the outside like a fizz place and not worth visiting. Don't be fooled! The Felinfoel is usually available together with three other guest ales. Toasted sandwiches are usually available and it's a very useful station/bus station tap.

All in all our visit was very enjoyable and, hopefully, a further one will be planned before too long.

John Crowhurst

Butcombe Brewery's record sales

Photo

BUTCOMBE BREWERY, one of the pioneers of microbrewing in the South West, is enjoying a sales boom.

The brewery, based in Butcombe, near Bristol, achieved its best ever figures during the past twelve months.

Butcombe produced more than 15,000 barrels of real ale for the first time since the company started brewing twenty-four years ago.

This success reflects the growing popularity of its two brands, the original Butcombe Bitter, at a strength of 4.0% alcohol by volume (ABV), and Butcombe Gold, 4.7% ABV, a classic golden real ale.

Demand for Butcombe's beers has consistently been high and looks set to rise further. But if sales continue to rise the brewery could cease to benefit from the introduction of progressive beer duty in this year's Budget.

"We are at the extreme end of the annual production affected by the reduction in duty," said managing director, Simon Whitmore. "This makes the amount per pint quite small and nothing like the 14p a pint announced by the Chancellor. Therefore, if our steady increase in sales is maintained, the small reduction in duty we qualify for now will stop after the next year or two."

Simon Whitmore rewarded his workforce with a weekend at the Munich Beer Festival for helping the brewery to reach the 15,000 barrels milestone.

He acknowledges that much of Butcombe's success is due to the loyal staff. Many of the team have been with the company for more than twenty years. They can carry out any job and regularly rotate their tasks.

The brewery has come a long way from when it was set up in 1978 by Simon and his wife, Maureen, in farm buildings adjoining their home. Then, they had just thirty accounts, one lorry and one employee.

Now it services 350 accounts directly, has a small fleet of lorries and a staff of sixteen. It also owns six pubs: the Bell in Hillgrove Street, Bristol; The Ring O' Bells at Compton Martin; the Swan at Rowberrow; the Lamb at Axbridge; the Old Crown at Kelston, near Bath; and the leased Red Tile at Cossington, near Bridgwater.

The company delivers direct to outlets within a fifty mile radius of the brewery, beyond which its beer is distributed by recognised wholesalers and pub companies.

"Business has been a struggle at times but, in reality, we have never really looked back," said Simon Whitmore. "We are proud to be known as the South West's biggest small brewery."

Black Friar

TO CELEBRATE its recent fifth birthday, Abbey Ales, based in Bath, launched a new seasonal beer called Black Friar to coincide with the 25th Bath CAMRA Beer Festival.

The beer, a stout, is a complete contrast to the regularly brewed golden Bellringer, being stronger and darker and brewed to an ABV of 5.3%. It is produced from the finest English malt available, Maris Otter, plus a mixture of roasted Chocolate malts and finished with Northdown and Bramley Cross hops.

Managing Director Alan Morgan said, "We always like to come up with a new beer for the Bath CAMRA festival and this year, because it's our fifth birthday and Bath CAMRA's 25th, we felt something a little different was needed and have produced Black Friar."

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)

FANCY A SMOKE?

Dear Sir,

May I answer Tim Nickolls' point in the last issue of Pints West about the no-smoking area at the Ring O' Bells, Compton Martin? The reason why the family room is a no-smoking area whereas the other drinking or eating areas of the pub are not is that the former is in a separate room some distance away from the rest of the pub. It is thus easy to isolate it from tobacco smoke.

The other three bars are interconnected and although we have smoke extractors it is difficult to stop smoke drifting from one bar to another. Furthermore, Tim might not like tobacco smoke but to a lot of people (and I don't know how many) smoking enhances a drink.

At our brewery, for example, when visitors have a pint or two after a tour I notice that often up to half of them are drinking outside even in the cold weather just so that they can smoke as they drink.

But not to be dog-in-the-mangerish we are going to experiment by making half the lounge bar – the area where most of the food is eaten – a no-smoking area and see how effective it is.

We hope that Tim will come and judge the results for himself.

Yours faithfully,
Simon Whitmore,
Butcombe Brewery Ltd.,
Butcombe, Bristol.

MUST TRY HARDER!

Dear Sir,

I was reading Pints West in the Dolphin in Weymouth during that pub's beer festival, and came across the article about Weymouth pubs by Vince Murray. He bemoaned the

fact that the alleged "brewery tap" for Quay Brewery didn't sell any Quay beers, but he didn't appear to have searched them out.

Had he headed towards the brewery he would have found that the Red Lion in Hope Square has Quay beers, and usually the Dorothy has one on.

I agree that it isn't easy to find them, but it's a pity to come to Weymouth and not make an effort to try the beers of its only brewery.

Yours,
Alex Bardswell
(W. Dorset CAMRA)
Wyke Regis, Dorset.

Vince Murray replies:
In the article I explained how...

a) I was bemoaning the misleading "brewery tap" sign;

b) it was a cricket tour not a beer one (the beer was an added bonus);

c) I was reliant on the Good Beer Guide – neither pub he mentions was in it.

I did however give the Dorothy a good write-up anyway (having drunk Quay and others there). Weymouth is very well supplied with pubs and I could hardly just visit every one just in case.



We asked readers to let us know what they considered the best pubs for real ale in Thornbury. A number of people responded – and it looks like the Wheatsheaf is the popular choice...

Hugh Davidson said:

The Wheatsheaf is the only pub serving good real ale. Bass and 6X are the two regular ales, with a constantly changing guest ale always available. The beers are maintained in excellent condition and I have never been served a bad pint there.

Simon Chilcott said:

Couldn't help noticing your article on page 22 of Pints West number 55. Apparently you are looking for the 'best' pub in Thornbury. This interesting question provokes very little thought.....

Unless of course you exclude the Wheatsheaf from your consideration.

Once you exclude the warm, friendly welcome offered by Russel and Honey to both regulars and strangers alike.

Once you don't give any consideration to the fine surroundings including; the beautiful building, walls adorned with yesteryear's bric-a-brac, Honey's spectacular art, and that much too often lost homely feel.

Once you ignore the splendid menu with food that lives up to expectation in both quality and quantity, with extra special attention paid to a segregated no smoking area.

And finally if you remove that essential feature that makes a pub like the Wheatsheaf what it is. Excellent beer! Unless it is in perfect condition it is not served. It is always in perfect condition. Russel is an expert, and he cares about the product passed over the bar. The three stalwarts of the selection are Bass, 6X and Flowers IPA. And then there is the guest. And that will never fail to disappoint. Russel has a talent for bringing the very best beers to Thornbury. From local sources and further afield we have been treated to this finest of British drinks in all its varieties. Too many to list. Always served as it should, always consumed in an atmosphere conducive.

Once this fine pub has been removed from the equation, the question 'what is the best pub in Thornbury?' will need a lot more thought.

Andy Olive said:

I read with interest that there is to be a real ale festival in Thornbury, in October, as mentioned in the July-Sept issue of Pints West. In that you asked, at the end of the article, what is the best pub in Thornbury.

Well, I have only lived in Thornbury for a year, but I have found the Wheatsheaf on Chapel Street to be the best pub, as there is a good selection of real ales, Bass, Flowers IPA, Wadworth 6X and a guest beer, as well as providing a good selection of food, a pool table, skittle alley, and an outdoor garden and boules (petanq) pitch.

Dave Mead said:

In the town we have a few pubs. The best pint is served in the Wheatsheaf – a couple of commons and a guest, and Black Rat cider, well looked after.

Thanks to all who responded. We'd like to continue this and ask a similar question about another place which lies on the outskirts of the Bristol & District branch area – Cheddar.

So, what do readers consider are the best pubs for real ale in Cheddar?



Craig Weaden often writes in to Pints West, usually, as mentioned in previous introductions to his letters, extolling the virtues of cider, but recently claiming to have given up cider for good on health grounds (though his last letter suggested faltering determination). Now read on...

Dear Steve,

Well I'm sure you guessed: I succumbed to temptation and consumed the forbidden fruit. A luxury I paid a dear price for as my colitis flared up again and I'm back on

steroids. But gee I had some fun along the way. And it's prices that form the backbone of this note to you.

A local pub of mine, the Red Lion in Staple Hill, not long ago sold the delicious 'Stowford Press' (amongst cider drinkers I'm aware I'm in the minority in liking the sweeter ones which explains my fondness for perry). Although a superb drink its price tag at £2.40 a pint meant that I was a little disappointed but not at all surprised to see it go.

Whilst that situation I found thoroughly understandable, like many others I'm sure I've found it less easy to fathom how different pubs such as the Long Bar, Whitehall Tavern and Queen Vic at Old Market amongst others can sell Thatchers at £1.20 and Bulmers Strongbow and Blackthorn at £1.36.

The pub that's practically on my doorstep, the Crown at Soundwell Road, has installed a quite new arrival which I'm not familiar with and am intent on finding out more about: "Stroudy's" – delicious, a real thirst quencher and sensibly priced at £1.55 per pint.

It's worth noting also that by far the best selling cider in there is served from the chilled bottle 'Barnstormer' at £1.33 per pint. Not for my palate, but very popular all the same with my local QuickSave doing my all time favourite 3-litre bottles of 'Gaymers Old English' for a mere £2.39. How can I bloody resist?

But variations in price became ever more evident when I recently visited the White Swan (Dirty Duck to locals) in Downend, a pub I used to use regularly.

I was glad to see my old favourite 'Inches Stone House' was still there, but at the much inflated price of £2 per pint (last time I used that pub it was £1.40). All the while Blackthorn in most pubs I feel is also overpriced and overrated at over £2 per pint.

Anyone who questions the reasons for these considerable variations has only to read the letter from Ray Barnes, the Innspired tenant landlord of the Eldon House (*not any more - Ed.*) that was published in your last issue. Unfortunately I'm saddened to say I know all too well that he is correct in rightly speaking up for himself and many other tenant landlords.

It doesn't take a business genius to know that the persons best qualified to make decisions as to the wants and needs of a business are the ones with the hands on experience of running it. Sadly as his letter makes clear it would seem that this is too often not the case and so the present unsatisfactory situation that Mr. Barnes and many others like him have to experience and endure exist.

I'm glad to say this situation can't be said of the pubs I use regularly. But the proof, truth and sincerity of his poignant letter would be emphasised all the more I feel if one tried telling the owner/managers of the Long Bar or any number of other pubs I use that they were part of an ailing industry

in demise. I feel the exact opposite would be very evident indeed. And would only shed more light on the potential that is not being fulfilled by so many a public house because of the obvious restrictions being forced upon it.

This situation I'm sure is not unique in the licensing trade. It's disgraceful and anyone who uses the pubs I do could easily make comparison between them and the others that are plagued by the interfering middle men like contagious parasites contributing nothing and actually helping drain the industry of what is after all its bread and butter – the traditional local.

So I hope I echo the sentiments of many readers when I say it's a rather sorry and unfortunate state of affairs that results in the industry's greed achieving little more than biting the hand that feeds it, and certainly not gaining points for popularity from either the tenant landlord or customers. But then, as Mr. Barnes said, they quite obviously don't give a jot do they?

From the average customer's point of view, the simple and obvious conclusion is that actions speak louder than words and the upper hand the customer always has is his/her freedom of choice. So until this unsatisfactory situation is resolved the most effective thing we consumers can do is find the houses with the prices we're happiest with and stick to using them.

The ingredient of happiness that is so essential to keeping customers that Mr. Barnes speaks of at the end of this letter is most effectively achieved by keeping prices to a minimum which more often than not is not being achieved by so many pubs. So good luck too, and long live the pubs I use and the many like them.

And to Mr. Barnes, we haven't forgotten you, and I'm sure thousands like me are your as yet unseen custom that would welcome appease your needs given a chance of circumstances within the industry for the better.

Drink up ye cider and remember it's good for you!

Craig Weadon,
Soundwell Road,
Staple Hill,
Bristol.



WEYMOUTH TO BRISTOL

Dear Editor,

It was with great interest that we read Vince Murray's article, "Jubilee Weekend in Weymouth" (Pints West 55) as the two of us decided to escape all the ceremony in London and spend the same weekend in the same resort.

It's a shame that Vince encountered poor service at the Weatherbury as the beers can

certainly be recommended. It was our base. We seemed to have found most of the pubs that the Staple Hill group used. One not mentioned is the Chetnole Inn in Chetnole village, some twenty minutes' walk east of the station of that name and certainly worth a visit on the homeward trip.

As we have just spent the recent weekend in your area, I thought you might be interested in the attached write-up of our crawl. (*See "Bristol: an outsider's view" on page 8.*) I look forward to discovering more before too long.

May I offer a correction to Pints West 55: on page three (Bath Ales – the Hare wins again) you say that the Hop Pole in Bath is "about five minutes' walk east of the city centre". It is, in fact, ten to twelve minutes' walk west of the centre, on Upper Bristol Road (buses 14A, 17, 319, 332, 339 or 632 I believe).

Many thanks for an excellent magazine. I hope to be able to see future issues.

Yours sincerely,
John Crowhurst,
St. Albans, Herts.



WHO'S FOR A BUS TOUR?

Dear Steve,

It's taken several weeks, but I've finally got around to taking up a subscription to Pints West. I was the bloke who accosted you in the Cornubia sometime in late August, full of beer and fulsome in praise for the quality of your newsletter, which you were in the process of delivering. The beer-induced euphoria has long since waned, but the enthusiasm for your fanzine remains high – "newsletter" hardly does it justice. I enclose a cheque for £5 – not sure whether the 50p per issue includes postage or not (*it does - Ed.*) but I'll have as many as a fiver can buy.

We particularly enjoy the occasional column "On the buses with Beer Explorer" and if you wanted the occasional guest contribution for visits that can be made in the West Midlands (for the more intrepid of your readers), just let me know, and I would be happy to provide some words.

All the best,
Alan Reynolds
Smethwick, West Midlands.



WATERING HOLES IN THE DESERT

News from Weston-super-Mare

Local Beer For Local People... Some hope!

THOSE of you who got a copy of the last edition of Pints West will probably remember the "Local Beer For Local People" front cover. This slogan struck a chord with me and I have been reminded of it several times in recent weeks.

It would seem obvious to some real ale fans that it would be good to see more local beers available, albeit it is a sad fact that many real ale drinkers seem to be "stuck in their ways" and rarely venture beyond supping the same ale they have been drinking for years and would probably have difficulty naming a single Somerset or Gloucestershire brewery. However, it is clear that many pubs and even hotels (often in rural areas) can see the attraction to potential customers from them offering local products.

As an example, Laurie Gibney (read his Nailsea column elsewhere in this magazine) went to **The Commodore Hotel** in Kewstoke and picked up one of their promotional leaflets entitled "Welcome To The Commodore Hotel." In this, it says that the bar offers "a choice of traditional hand drawn local ales." These "local ales" comprised of Courage Best and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. Bemused by this, Laurie sent them a very polite note saying that he felt it was a bit of a stretch to describe beers brewed in Suffolk and Yorkshire as local. Unfortunately no reply has been received so we cannot solve the mystery of their sense of geography.

Towards the end of July **The Fox and Goose**, Brent Knoll, took a lot of advertising space in the local papers, advertising major changes to the pub and proclaiming "local real ales." I guess you know what's coming next. The beers on offer were Courage Best and Smiles Best. I wrote expressing

disappointment that choosing to promote themselves as offering local real ales, it would have been nice to see a Somerset-brewed beer. I acknowledged that the 30 miles or so to Bristol (Smiles home) is not a great distance, but a beer brewed 200+ miles away in North Yorkshire (Courage's home) is a bizarre choice to badge as "local." The pub appears to be a free house, so I pointed out that there were, at the last count, 13 breweries in Somerset producing a wide range of excellent award-winning ales. The pub even has a brewery (Berrow) about two miles away – now that's what I call local! Sadly, again, no reply to my letter.

An excellent evening was had at **Lympsham Cricket Club** early in September as part of the village's harvest celebrations. A large marquee had been erected in front of the clubhouse where a family disco was followed by a show by The Orphans. The club is known for having a good number of real ale drinkers and it is great to see a sports club taking the trouble to keep real ale. However, their permanent beer is currently Mansfield Cask Ale (brewed in Wolverhampton) and the guest beer was Camerons Strongarm, which is brewed in Hartlepool, nigh on 300 miles away. The beers were both in very good condition but on a lovely late summer's evening in rural Somerset wouldn't it have been great to have been supping one or two of the wonderful beers produced by Somerset brewers.

The bulk of pubs and clubs across the country are either tied to pub companies or large brewers who dictate what their landlords can stock. If people who *do* have the ability to sell what they like won't support Somerset's breweries there probably won't be one left in a few years.

Local Beers for Local People: still a pipe dream.

Tim Nickolls

Socials Review (or "Why you should join the Weston CAMRA branch")

AUGUST

A trip on the X1 bus to Congresbury.

Visits to Congresbury are usually very satisfying evenings and this was no exception. We started at **The Bell**, having noted that it was under new management and it certainly looked as though it had undergone a significant refurbishment. Smiles Best has been introduced accompanied by Courage Best. Both tasted good, surviving being wrung through the sparklers on the fonts.

Next stop was **The Old Inn**. In truth, our last couple of visits to this pub had been a bit disappointing, with the beer being too cold for most people's liking. However, things were much improved for this visit. Beers on were Young's Bitter, Special and Waggledance (Young's have done a good job replicating this ex-Vaux brewery beer), and Bass. Apparently they usually have Smiles Best as well, but this had gone off shortly before our arrival. A variety of beers were tried and all were very good quality.

Our eye was caught by a May 1951 price list on the wall in one of the bar areas. Parts of the list were as follows :-

Three draught beers (no mention of a brewery) –

- Bitter 1/-
- IPA 1/3
- East IPA 1/7

And a draught cider called Whiteways for 9d a pint.

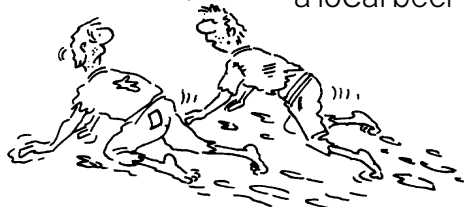
Various bottles –

- Luncheon Stout
- Berry Brown Home Brewed
- Velvet Stout
- Berkshire Strong Ale XXXXX (which could be bought in "nips" or halves
- Archangel Stout XXXXXXXX (ditto)

Can anyone remember drinking any of



It's a scandal and a disgrace that we should have to go this far to find a local beer



these beers?

The evening in Congresbury ended, inevitably, at the Good Beer Guide regular **The Plough**. Licensees Steve and Jackie Armstrong were away on holiday, but we were grateful that they arranged for Double Header and East Street Cream (officially best beer in England) from RCH to be the guest beers.

In The Plough I was delighted to meet Jeff Willingham and his wife Val for the first time.

Jeff started up a CAMRA branch in Weston in the early seventies and strove manfully to raise the profile of real ale at a time when its existence was in serious jeopardy (more on this in Robin Wild's column).

Jeff was, in effect, the founding father of campaigning for real ale in Weston and it was great to meet him and see him in fine form.



SEPTEMBER

We had two events in September. The first was a crawl in Taunton. A dozen or so of us caught the 19:06 from Weston, arriving in Taunton about 19:40.

We were met outside the station by Somerset CAMRA chairman Alan Walker and some of his branch's Taunton-based members.

We had decided to take the safety-first approach of starting at the pub furthest from the station and work our way back. The walk to the first pub, **The Perkin Walbeck** (Wetherspoon) is probably a 25-minute stroll. With Alan at the helm and operating at a fair clip, it took 10 minutes.

For a Wetherspoon, the selection was pretty poor, with Crag Rag, the summer ale produced by Jennings brewery of Cumbria, the clear stand-out which was chosen by practically everyone in our party.

After a massive 10-meter journey we found ourselves in **The Mason's Arms**, Somerset CAMRA's Pub Of The Year for 2002. There could not be more of a contrast than that found between The Mason's and its huge and rather impersonal Wetherspoon neighbour.

The Mason's has operated as a pub since 1855 and is a one-roomed pub which exudes warmth and character. The regular beers are Bass, Exe Valley Bitter and Otter Bitter. It also has a guest – on the night this was a beer called Bishop's Somerset Ale, brewed by Ted Bishop in Wellington. This one had the beer "tickers" salivating, as it had not been seen by anyone before – not even Alan Walker. A very nice beer it was and was most people's favourite of the evening.

After staying for a bit longer than we intended, Alan marched us out and on to another Wetherspoon – **The Coal Orchard**. The choice here was much better than Perkin Walbeck's, with three beers from Exmoor brewery (Fox, Gold and Stag), backed-up by Hook Norton Old Hooky and Everard's Tiger.

Next-up was **The King's Arms**, a traditional-style pub with four real ales on – Bass, Flowers IPA, Marston's Pedigree and St. Austell Tribute. Most went for the latter which was an excellent beer.

We concluded our journey at **Harpoon Louie's**, which is about 100 meters from the station. This is a rather unusual venue – very much a bar/restaurant, as opposed to a pub that does food. However, it should be described it is most definitely worth a visit.

Its one permanent beer is Otter Ale and it offers a number of guests. On our visit these were Schiehallion, the cask lager brewed by the Harviestoun brewery near Stirling, and Crop Circle from Hop Back.

A farewell to Alan and his chums and a brisk walk to the station and we were on the 22:28 back to Weston. The train got back in town at 22:59, just in time for last orders at **Off The Rails**.

An excellent evening – most people agreed that we should try and make this an annual event. Our thanks to the Somerset CAMRA people for their hospitality.

The second event in September was a two-venue social in town. We started at **The 49 Club** on Baker Street where we debated our current and potential Good Beer Guide entries, before moving on to **The Dragon**. Here I sampled one of the best new beers I have come across for ages, called Wee Murdoch, all the way from Aviemore, Inverness-shire.



OCTOBER

We began the month with a minibus trip out into the wilds. We left Off The Rails and headed for a near-legendary pub called **The Trotters Inn**, near Wedmore. A great "real pub" with bags of atmosphere. It feels like time has stood still. Even the magazines lying around for customers were years old. A pile of greying Private Eyes was topped by a 1989 edition with Margaret Thatcher on the cover talking to Mickey Mouse, greeting him as Salman Rushdie, who had then recently gone into hiding.

Beers on were Wadworth's 6X on handpump (which someone said was the best pint of 6X that they had had for ages) and Butcombe Bitter straight from the cask. This was top-quality, for me second only to the pint of it that I was lucky enough to have at the brewery earlier this year. The Trotters

is not easy to get to, but is worth the effort.

We then headed back in the direction of Weston, stopping off at **The Crown**, Axbridge. This pub has been a firm favourite of several local CAMRA members for some time and has made it into the 2003 Good Beer Guide.

It seems that whenever we arrive with a minibus full, that landlord Colin is away playing skittles and bar-person extra-ordinaire Claire has to stem the tide.

The pub does not have a permanent beer – it has two permanently-changing guests. These are usually from Somerset breweries (Colin being a believer in "Local Beer For Local People") and on our visit these were Cotleigh Tawny and Cottage Express. There was no appetite for leaving until everyone had tried both beers.

On the way back we decided to stop off somewhere we hadn't been before. After a couple of abortive missions (me diving in, taking a look and diving out again) we ended up stopping at a pub called **The White Hart** in Street.

Sadly, we were the only customers in the pub, although licensee Dave Williams helped create a lively, friendly atmosphere as soon as we arrived and settled in.

Dave is an ex-licensee of The Lamb, Axbridge and has been at The White Hart for 16 months, a pub belonging to Inspired. He does five beers – Courage Best, Bass, Greene King IPA, Butcombe Bitter and Butcombe Gold. He expects to drop down to four for the winter, although he is not yet certain which one will go. Dave assured us that his pub was famed for its crumbles – its beer wasn't bad either.

My eye was caught by a display of old Somerset brewery beer mats in a glass frame on the wall. These included the following: Double Stout by The Lamb Brewery of Frome; Holt Brothers Pale Ale from Burnham; "Home Brewed" by Frome United Breweries Co. Ltd.; and "Small Doctor Extra Stout" from Burnham Brewery.

Does anybody know anything about these beers or breweries? Let us know if you do.

We finished the evening in Banwell at **The Bell**. Current events surrounding The Bell are described elsewhere in Weston News ("Bad Times in Banwell"). Suffice to say we chose from three beers from Exmoor (Wildcat, Hart and Stag) and had a chat with a disconsolate licensee (although maybe no longer) – Rob Doddington.

Another fine evening, with a good variety of pubs and ales.

Tim Nickolls

Turn to page 15 for upcoming events.



A Round with Robin

WELL READERS, I see the editor decided that my column was to be given a title; fair enough, but that doesn't mean that it's always Robin's round!

The last article, to remind you, ended with my drinking years to the end of the summer of 1977. On my return to Weston I found that due to the good officership of Jeff Willingham, the local CAMRA branch was at an active stage. They had regular meetings at the Argosy bar (opposite the Playhouse) and frequent walking tours around Weston's pubs, but the variety of beers available were not a match for what we expect today.

I note that one walking tour started at the "Hansom Cab", now part of the Cabot, and went to "The Cardiff Arms" (demolished), "The Clipper" (now The Dragon) and "The Bristol and Exeter" (now The Town Crier). There were only five real ales on offer at all four venues combined!

In 1977 there was a membership of 50 in the Weston-super-Mare branch, and it was decided that we'd have a beer festival at The Grand Atlantic on the 9th and 10th of September 1977. We couldn't extend to Sunday 11th because of the licensing laws in force at the time. There were 20 beers to choose from and for the purpose of archival interest I note them all here with their quoted OG (Original Gravity) from the programme notes.

- Arkell & Sons – BBB (1038.2)
- Bass Worthington – Bass/Worthington "E" (1044)
- S. A. Brain – SA (1040.6), Red Dragon, (1035)
- Courage – Directors (1047)
- Donnington (Stow-on-the-Wold) – SBA Special Bitter (1040)
- Eldridge Pope – Dorchester Bitter (1031), IPA (1041), Royal Oak (1048)
- Felinfoel – Double Dragon (1040)
- Hall & Woodhouse – Badger Best Bitter (1041)
- Hook Norton – Best Bitter (1036)
- Ind Coope (Allied Breweries) – Bitter (1037)
- Marston, Thompson & Evershed – Pedigree (1043)
- Samuel Smith – OBB (Old Brewery Bitter) (1039.9)
- T&R Theakston – Best Bitter (1038.5), Old Peculiar (1060.3)
- Wadworth – IPA (1036), 6X (1039)
- Whitbread – Best Bitter (1039.4)

Needless to say it was very successful, although at the end of the Saturday session we actually had to pour beer away on the grass as the barrels were to be collected empty on the Monday. Entertaining the drinkers on the Saturday night was the local Morris dancing group, "The Chalice Morris Men." I was serving the beer on that night and did not see them dance, but when time

had been called a few of them stayed late to help "clear up" (perhaps for free beer?). One of them, a certain Alan Ramsden, who was also one of our CAMRA members, approached me and asked if I was a dancer. On responding in the negative I was told Bob Cross (another CAMRA member) would pick me up the following Wednesday to take me to practice in Highbridge. For me, this was the start of a long association with the Chalice Morris, which produced opportunities for drinking real ale wherever we went, and a good thing to, as Weston-super-Mare, though not quite the desert we were led to believe it was, did not have the variety of Somerset pubs.

Before I conclude this month's jottings, the last column resulted in me being asked what the four pubs in Weston were in 1977 that were within three-minutes walk from my flat in Longton Grove Road. Well, these were **The Britannia**, with Courage Best, Ordinary (boy's bitter) and Directors, if you were lucky; **The London**, with Flowers IPA and Original; **The Market House**, with Bass/Worthington 'E'; and **The Silver Jubilee**, with Worthington 'E', which is now The Regency.

The Silver Jubilee also was one of the first real ale pubs in Weston to become a proper free house, serving beers from micro breweries such as Mendip, Butcombe and Oakhill, as well as Guvenors from the Miners brewery near Priddy, The Bishops Tipple, Wadworth's Old Timer (in winter) and also local cider. I note from records kept by Jeff Willingham, then local CAMRA organizer, that pubs serving real ale in Weston and Worle around 1977 numbered a total of 21, serving 17 different real ales.

There will be some who are concerned that this is becoming a history of CAMRA in Weston — it is not, others will write that history one day, but our paths crossed then. Real ale was always prevalent. Morris dancing was to lead me to new ales around the county and further afield and this was to be an excellent thing.

To be continued....

Robin E Wild

Bath Ales brewery and pubs advert

RCH among the medals again

CONGRATULATIONS are due once again to our very own local RCH brewery, situated at West Hewish near Weston-super-Mare.

At the Great British Beer Festival held at Olympia in August, their East Street Cream at 5% ABV was judged best beer in the Strong Bitter section and second best beer overall in the Champion Beer of Britain competition. East Street Cream is a beautifully crafted beer with a myriad of flavours all vying for prominence – hoppy, fruity and bitter-sweet, with hints of chocolate.

In addition, the brewery's Hewish IPA at 3.6% ABV was placed third in the Standard Bitters class.

Here in Weston-super-Mare, we can be justifiably proud of this regularly award-winning brewery just down the road from us. If your local has not tried any of their beers yet, ask your landlord why not. Alternatively, you can pick up supplies direct from the brewery itself Monday to Friday, but do ring first on 01934 834447 to check availability of particular beers.

Mike Coleman

Reed On...

A BEER FESTIVAL NEXT DOOR? ...

Well, almost. About four doors away actually, but about as close as you could wish for.

Recently, things seemed to be looking up in Locking village (near Weston-super-Mare) or to be more specific, The Coach House Inn — long well known for its food but considerably less so for its beer, that is until last August Bank Holiday.

An increased range of beers specifically for the Bank Holiday was not hugely well advertised (perhaps wisely understated in retrospect) but nonetheless worthy of investigation being approximately a 30-seconds' walk from my front gate!

There had been a change of tenancy quite recently and following a brief chat with the new incumbents a while back, there seemed to be new enthusiasm to explore the 'mysteries' of cask conditioned real ale not seen at 'The Coach' for nearly 20 years.

To my surprise no less than eight real ales were on offer over that particular weekend (five on stillage out the back) and then I spied visible proof that they really did mean business 'Cask Marque' accreditation. Wow, that was a shock, I can tell you!

The pub is owned by the Laurel Pub Group who, it transpires, limited the 'Festival' to around eight or so beers over the weekend. For good measure they also put the mockers on the live band due to play as well. So in the end it wasn't really a festival after all.

The joint managers Andrew and Elaine Walton prefer to call that weekend a 'Tasting' session. They plan to have regular guest ales from a restricted list possibly leaning towards the stronger ales that seemed popular over the Bank Holiday.

During my lunchtime 'tastings' the beers sampled were fine but, perhaps cautiously, they were all chosen from the barrels out back. I'll explain.

As most of my enthusiastic friends would tell you, the 'Cask Marque' scheme does not always guarantee quality at the dispense particularly when it has been drawn from an often chilled cellar. Temperature can be a matter of opinion and is regularly a real issue depending on the type of beer being served, but..... remember this. Too cold and perhaps you can still enjoy your ale, eventually. Too warm and ... forget it!

Still, one to watch and a good initial effort from a pub that has always had a good steady clientele. Take note all you ale supping skittlers.

FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR MINEHEAD

Regular readers of Pints West may recall my report on last year's CAMRA Somerset Beer Festival, described as one of the best I'd visited. Well, a distinct feeling of déjà vu

descended upon me on September 18 this year when once again we set off by train to Taunton.

It was virtually an identical day to last year; a fine morning, good company and the anticipation of sampling ales from a well chosen list of mainly West Country breweries. This time though we had a couple of hours longer as there was no need to rush back for that now famous Germany v England World Cup qualifier. It made all the difference. Timings again worked a treat catching the bus from Taunton to Bishops Lydeard. A comfortable wait for the next steam train at the West Somerset Railway took us nicely to the festival for lunchtime.

Having arrived on time and purchasing a festival glass we were soon able to relax with a choice of over 40 beers and ciders from the likes of the Moor, RCH, Cottage and Glastonbury breweries to name just a few. The added bonus of this festival is that you are permitted to take your last drink on the train and this gives you around 50 minutes to enjoy 'one for the track' whilst travelling through the scenic Somerset countryside. Even then, two-pint 'take outs' were also available for those with further capacity over the weekend.

This event is rapidly becoming an annual 'must visit' for all local enthusiasts of beer and steam and is well organised and managed by our friends at Somerset CAMRA. Well done again!

One tip that I would recommend for anyone visiting a festival intending to 'sample' quite a few ales is to have a bottle or small flask of water handy. Try having a few swigs after each beer to cleanse the palate and avoid the inevitable dehydration that accompanies a session. It also helps with the quality of life the following day! It's something I have tried recently and have found really helps on all three counts. Try those small 500ml bottles or maybe a flask that isn't too much of a pain to cart around with you.

A Man Walks Into a Pub...

A man walks into a pub. As he passes the cigarette machine, he hears it say, "You smell awful and you're an ugly git." Then he hears a voice apparently coming from a nearby dish of peanuts. "You really are a very handsome young man."

The man turns to the barmaid and asks for an explanation.

The barmaid replies, "The cigarette machine is out of order but the nuts are complimentary."

Oh, and by the way, talking about nuts..... reminds me of The Crown Inn at Churchill following my gripe in the last issue. Just prior to release of PW the gents loos received a fabulous soap dispenser to make my remarks about lack of soap redundant. Thanks Tim and keep up the good work!

Steve Reed

Upcoming events

NOVEMBER: On the 20th we will be staying in Weston, visiting two newish venues. We will meet at 8:30 at **Weston Cricket Club** which always has at least two real ales on. At around 9:30 we will make the 10-minute walk to **The Ancaster**. This pub has not been visited before by CAMRA as a group. Ex-Ushers (but don't let that put you off) and an enthusiastic landlord.

DECEMBER: Two events. The first is on the 18th, when we hold our fourth **Annual Seasonal Ales Crawl**. We will meet at **The Regency** and the route from then on will depend on the pubs, which have made the effort to stock a Christmas or winter beer. We will conclude at **Off The Rails**, but will hopefully visit at least two other venues between The Regency and The Rails.

Landlords – if you will be offering a Christmas/winter beer, please let us know so we can come and drink some!

The following Monday (the 23rd) we will be holding our first ever **Christmas Party**. This will be held at **Off The Rails**, which will be offering three or four real ales, including at least two seasonal beers. A buffet will also be provided for CAMRA members and their guests. We hope CAMRA members we do not normally see and members from other branches are particularly welcome.

JANUARY: On the 15th we will be paying our first visit to Worle for three years. This will be a three venue social, taking in **The Nut Tree**, **The Lamb** and **The Century Club**. Details in diary section below.

WsM Diary

Non-members particularly welcome

Wed 20 November – Two-pub social. Weston Cricket Club, Devonshire Road, 8:30. The Ancaster, Devonshire Road, 9:45.

Wed 18 December – 4th Annual Seasonal Ales Crawl. Meet at The Regency at 8:00.

Mon 23 December – Weston CAMRA Christmas Party at Off The Rails. 8:30 onwards. Food, music and at least 3 good real ales, including some Christmas specials. CAMRA members from neighbouring branches very welcome.

Wed 15 Jan 2003 – Worle Crawl. Start at The Nut Tree at 8:30, The Lamb at 9:30 and The Century Club at 10:15.

Contacts

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (eves)

Rich Neale - 01934 429808 (eves)

Weston Whispers (pub/beer news)

THE 3-day beer festival run by **The Old Inn, Hutton** was very good. There were around 15 beers available, with a sensible mix of tried and trusted nationally-renowned favourites such as Timothy Taylor Landlord, RCH Pitchfork, Cain's Formidable and Badger Tanglefoot, mixed with some more obscure beers such as Hook Norton Haymaker (excellent), Robinson's Stadium Bitter and Cain's Triple Hop to keep the "tickers" happy. The Friday night featured an oompah band, complete with leather trousers.

The London Inn remains a place for a good value pint. Unfortunately, on my last visit the £1 Smiles Original was off, but the Smiles Best (straight from the cask) was one of the best pints of Smiles I have had for many a month. At £1.70 this was pretty good value, particularly when compared to some of the more extortionate prices increasingly being seen around Weston lately.

I did **The Windsor** a disservice in the last edition, by saying that they had replaced

Charles Wells Bombardier with Tetleys. In fact, the Tetleys is an additional beer, as the Bombardier is still available in the back bar, although you wouldn't know about this from going into the front part of the pub.

The Night Jar on Mead Vale, which is Cask Marque accredited, continues to offer good-quality Badger Best Bitter and Sussex Bitter. Good value pies as well.

The White Hart continues to be inconsistent. There can be good-quality beer, with some interesting ales not often seen in Weston (such as Gales Summer Hog and Robinson's Snowdon), but on other occasions no real ale at all.

A national newspaper recently gave up its front cover to the story that Scottish Courage are deliberately putting their prices up for no other reason than to try and pitch real ale as a premium product! If any of their output that I have drunk in recent times is anything to go by, I can only assume that this is a vehicle to justify closing down their breweries due to poor sales at some time in

the future. Their new pricing policy seems to have had an impact at The Nut Tree, Worle, a Scottish Courage house, where a recent guest beer of only 4.3% abv was a mind/wallet-numbing £2.40. This ties for first place with the £2.55 pint of Otter Head (5.8% abv) on offer at The Queen's Arms, Bleadon, as the most over-priced pint seen lately. No wonder more and more people are increasingly being driven in to Wetherspoons.

Regular readers will know that I firmly believe that, given the opportunity to drink good real ale, many more people would do so and declining national sales trends would be reversed. My belief was re-affirmed on a recent family weekend trip to a holiday camp in Seaton, Devon. We had been before and, as with nearly all holiday camps I would suspect, there has only been keg beer. However, I was delighted to see that Otter Ale had been installed from the nearby Otter brewery. I had a chat with the bar manager and he explained that he had originally decided to give real ale a try on a trial basis and much to his surprise (but not mine!), the first barrel ran out on the second day and he had to ring the brewery for an emergency delivery. It has remained popular and will now be a permanent feature.

Tim Nickolls



Butcombe advert

Wickwar BOB advert

MOOR than just another brewery visit

HAVING previously visited the Moor Brewery in Ashcott with the Bristol & District CAMRA group, I thought it was high time that our sub-branch sampled the delights of the fresh Somerset air.

Luckily for me I knew just how to go about this, as both Arthur Frampton (owner of Moor Brewery) and a good friend of mine, known to most as Stan, regularly indulge in Pathfinder Railtours — one supplying the beer, the other drinking it!

Once a date had been agreed for us, our Transport Manager (Mike Coleman) set about taking numbers and hiring the proverbial minibus to get us there. Good numbers were forthcoming and we were able to take a full bus.

For those of you who haven't been to Moor, it is quite a surprise, as the brewery is located in a small farm holding in the village of Ashcott. On arrival we were met by Arthur, who took us through into the old cow shed, where the brewing has taken over from milk!

After a short introduction we were offered our first pint of beer, from the barrel. Amazingly, not one, but three barrels awaited, of which the venerable Old Freddy Walker was one. Quite a few set about an early trip to heaven with a pint of this, while the more discerning drinkers tried either the Merlins Magic, or the special beer brewed for Pathfinder Tours — Ayr Recceder II.

At this point we were introduced to Richard the brewer who then gave us a comprehensive tour of the various fermenting vessels and coppers, and the types of malt and hops used in each of the beers he produces. Needless to say a few more trips to the 'wood' occurred to fill up the glasses. Moor beers are sent all over the country by distribution as Arthur also has his own agency which helps to promote local and not so local beers to other areas. Two barrels spotted outside included Glastonbury and Dent Brewery beers.

Having spent a good hour inside we were then taken down to the local pub, the Ring O'Bells. This is a good example of a pub taking a local brewer's beer as Moor beer is regularly featured, today being Peat Porter's turn. The evening was completed with a selection of cheeses and pickles, just the job to help wash down the beer.

All in all a very happy bunch of drinkers made their way back onto the minibus for the trip back home. Finally a BIG thank you to Arthur and Richard for their hospitality, and we hope to see you again soon!!!!

Rich Neale

Bad times in Banwell

IN a few short weeks Banwell has gone from being a village with a very healthy selection of pubs and real ales to being a living (dying?) example of the havoc being created by the all-powerful pub companies.

About 6 months ago Paul Parsons took over as landlord of **The Whistling Duck**, which is owned by the Pubmaster group. It was clear that Paul was unhappy with the contractual relationship with Pubmaster, both in financial terms and in the way he was prohibited from stocking the quality of real ales that he wanted to. In particular he was keen to stock beers from some of our excellent local breweries and other beers from top micro-breweries from further afield. In fact, he took it upon himself to run a monthly beer festival promoting different breweries' beers. RCH and Ringwood were two breweries to have a range of their beers featured. Unfortunately, as these events contravened his arrangement with Pubmaster he was not able to publicise them, so they did not get the support they deserved. In the end Paul decided he could take it no longer, gave Pubmaster notice and declared UDI, getting his beer from anyone he wanted (and at a lot cheaper price than he was forced to pay Pubmaster). Myself and some friends heard the sad news on a memorable visit to the Duck early in August when the choice of real ales was RCH Double Header, Ringwood Old Thumper, Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby and Mauldons Suffolk Comfort. Nothing under 5% (they clearly have strong constitutions in Banwell) and quite possibly the most mouth-watering selection I have come across in a pub in the Weston area. Paul is now gone. I haven't come across it open for some time, as it doesn't open until 7:00 p.m., but passing by recently one lunchtime I pressed my nose up against the window and just about managed to see Greene King IPA and Bass on the hand-pumps. The locals must be chuffed!

As if this was not bad enough, an almost identical situation has arisen at **The Bell**, owned by Enterprise Inns. Rob and Donna

Doddington took over The Bell in July 2000 and quickly turned the pub around from being dead on its feet into the epitome of a good village local for the 21st century. They established a range of pub teams, introduced live blues and folk music on a regular basis, became a focal point in the local community and showed a strong commitment to real ale. Aside from the regular beers — Greene King Old Speckled Hen and Butcombe Bitter — Rob had a couple of guest beers each week. The local RCH brewery was often featured, but Rob also offered some rarely seen beers from all parts of the UK. The pub quickly became popular with real ale drinkers in the area and Rob's efforts were rewarded with a place in the 2002 edition of the Good Beer Guide. Sadly, by the time you read this Rob and Donna may well be gone. Despite the apparent successful progress they made at the pub, they cannot cope with the on-going haemorrhaging of their finances. Given the alleged financial demands and trading restrictions placed on any tenant by Enterprise Inns, it would appear that anyone now taking on a pub owned by a pubco would have to be either mad or financially naïve. If Rob and Donna are not the kind of people that Enterprise Inns feel are worth trying to keep running their pubs, then the future is bleak indeed. At the time of writing, the future of The Bell is uncertain.

Tim Nickolls

For more on the plight of Rob Doddington and the trouble with pub companies please turn to page 28.

RCH advert

The country's best beers

THE CHAMPION BEER OF BRITAIN

2002 was announced in August at the Great British Beer Festival where the annual finals in the competition take place.

Deuchars IPA brewed by Caledonian of Edinburgh was judged to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists. This is the first time that a Scottish beer has ever won the title of Champion Beer of Britain.

The beer is described in the 2003 edition of the Good Beer Guide as: "An extremely tasty and refreshing amber-coloured session beer. Hops and fruit are very evident and are balanced by malt throughout. The lingering aftertaste is delightfully bitter and hoppy."

The Edinburgh brewed beer was chosen as the overall winner from over fifty finalists in eight categories including beers from tiny micros to major regional brewers.

Roger Protz, one of the finalist judges and Editor of the Good Beer Guide said, "I think that the victory for Caledonian is well overdue. Deuchars IPA is a fabulous beer. A brilliant blend of malt and hop character and above all a drink with enormous drinkability. A great victory for Scotland!"

David Brown, Caledonian's Director of Marketing said, "We are absolutely thrilled to have won this award, particularly as we are the first Scottish brewery to do so. Deuchars has been a great success in

Scotland for many years and we appreciate the support that CAMRA has given us."

Local Silver

The Silver award went to East Street Cream (5% abv) from the RCH Brewery at West Hewish, near Weston-super-Mare. Our local tasting panel has supplied this description of the beer for the Good Beer Guide: "Superb premium ale, pale brown in colour, it is malty with chocolate hints, hoppy, fruity and bitter-sweet. All flavours vie for dominance in what is a notable and well-crafted ale."

RCH are no strangers to such awards, and well deserved they always are. For instance they won Gold in the Best Bitters category in 1998 and 2001 for Pitchfork, and Gold in the Bottle-conditioned Beers category in 2001 for Ale Mary. They have also won Bronze this year in the Bitters category for Hewish IPA.

The Bronze award this year went to Moondance from Triple FFF Brewery in Hampshire.

CHAMPION BEERS OF BRITAIN 2002

Supreme Champion:

Caledonian - Deuchars IPA
Silver: RCH - East Street Cream
Bronze: Triple FFF - Moondance

MILDS

Gold: Triple FFF - Pressed Rat & Warthog
Silver: Boat - Man In The Boat
Bronze: Moorhouses - Black Cat

BITTERS

Gold: Caledonian - Deuchars IPA
Silver: Rudgate - Viking
Joint Bronze: RCH - Hewish IPA
Joint Bronze: Oakham - JHB

BEST BITTERS

Gold: Triple FFF - Moondance
Silver: Crouch Vale - Brewers Gold
Joint Bronze: Orkney - Red MacGregor
Joint Bronze: Fuller's - London Pride

STRONG BITTERS

Gold: RCH - East Street Cream
Silver: Fuller's - ESB
Bronze: Hogs Back - Hop Garden Gold

SPECIALITY BEERS

Gold: Oakham - White Gold
Silver: Harviestoun - Schiehallion
Bronze: Nethergate - Umbel Magna

GUARDIAN/CAMRA BOTTLE-CONDITIONED BEERS

Gold: Fuller's - 1845
Silver: Brakspear - Live Organic
Bronze: Hop Back - Summer Lightning

Bunch of Grapes advert

Island in the sea

News from Nailsea

IN a previous Pints West I reported on a tour of some pubs in Nailsea, and was challenged to report later on the ones that I had missed. And so during the evening of 31st July I set about it. A quick 'phone call to **The Glasshouse** and **The Royal Oak** revealed, as expected, no real ale which saved a visit to them. The others reported real ales and my nephew and I set off on a tour.

The Queen's Head had by 'phone reported two real ales, Smiles Zummer Vat, and IPA, but on arrival outside this, the most central pub in Nailsea, the clientele and their language encouraged us to move on rather than setting foot inside.

The Friendship is a lovely old building with flagstone floors and offered a single real ale, Bass, which was acceptable but a little warm, and Thatchers Dry Cider. The other customers were mostly in the 18 to 25 year old bracket and as the jukebox music was getting louder we moved on.

The Courtyard off the High Street was our next stop. They have only one real ale – the best pint of Marstons Pedigree I have tasted in a long time. There was no obtrusive music; all ages appeared to be contentedly catered for and Maureen Buchaly, the licensee, agreed to take a CAMRA display stand with copies of Pints West and leaflets. If you are partial to a glass of wine they have a choice of twenty wines, with fourteen by the glass, and food is served at lunchtimes between 12 and 2.

We just missed the bus and as it was by then raining we hired a taxi from an office in the High Street to **The Ring of Bells**, and there we enjoyed a Marston's Perigree and a Young's Special.

Heading home we called in at **The Mizzymead Social Club** where the three real ales were all bitters (I don't like my beers too bitter) so I had a bottle of Smiles Heritage. I should add that on such tasting evenings I drink half pints of as many different real ales as possible.

On another occasion a family outing ended at **The Failand Inn** near Nailsea for an excellent evening meal, helped down with a half each of three real ales – Webster's Green Label, Bass and Marston's Pedigree, the other real ale being Courage Best.

Nailsea to Ireland

During June my wife Mary and I took our first holiday in Ireland which included a one week Wallace Arnold 1,000 mile coach tour and four days in Dublin. Overnight stops on the coach tour included Letterkenny, Oughterard, Killarney and Dublin Airport. We stayed in real ale-free hotels with none of those quaint little Irish

bars nearby except at Killarney, but every bar we saw had an identical set of keg-style taps from the Guinness empire, so I had to survive on fizzy Smethwick's and an occasional chilled and gassy Bass when it was on.

In Killarney, after touring the town looking for real ale, I asked the bar manager at the hotel if there was a real ale bar in town. He looked blank so I said, "A bar that serves Dwan beers" and he said, "Is that an English beer?" Dwan comes from Tipperary, only 83 miles away from Killarney. I did try Guinness in a couple of places, but found it as bitter as back home, unlike some of the beautiful real stouts to be found at The Cornubia in Bristol. Arriving in Dublin I again found those "set of keg-style taps from the Guinness empire" in every bar, and no sign of an alternative until ...

... crossing O'Connell Bridge in Dublin, an oasis in an apparent real ale desert appeared before me in the form of **Messrs Maguire** at 1 & 2 Burgh Quay. Built in 1808, the buildings once housed a tavern, a library and Messrs Maguire's Flax, Hemp & Rope Works. Now Messrs Maguire boasts four floors of beautifully carved wooden nooks and crannies with a bar on each floor. The food menu is extensive with eight starters and eighteen main courses. We ate there on two evenings and thoroughly enjoyed our meals. Don't be put off by the bouncers on the door – they are a regular feature of many shops, bars and other premises in Dublin.

Messrs Maguire have five other pubs in Ireland and a brewery. Although they also have a "set of keg-style taps from the Guinness empire" in every bar at Burgh Quay, they also hand pull eight of their own hand-crafted beers plus occasional specials, and the head brewer hails from Manchester. The service is excellent – I asked for a beer which was on their beer menu but wasn't evident on the first floor bar, and a member of staff was despatched to fetch it for me from a different floor.

The beer menu's eight beers are "Plain" at 4.3% ABV, a classic, easy drinking, plain Irish stout; "Extra" at 5.0%, a luxuriously smooth double stout; "Rusty" at 4.6%, a fruity, auburn red, complex brew; "MM Pils" at 5%, brewed in accordance with the German purity laws; "Haus" at 4.3%, a classic, European style lager; "Yankee" at 4.2%, a pale, quaffing lager made the American way; "Weiss" at 5.2%, a naturally cloudy, continental style wheat beer; and "MM Draught Dublin Ale" at 4.6%, a dry-hopped, cask-conditioned bitter. My favourites were the "Extra" and the "Weiss".

Laurie Gibney

News from Bath Ales

Millenni-yum!

IN brewing as in life landmarks come and go, but Bath Ales have recently passed a big one by completing 1,000 brews of consistently high quality real ale from its plant in Siston.

To put this in perspective close your eyes and imagine a total of three million pints of delicious SPA, Gem, Barnstormer, SPA Extra, and Festivity lined up before you.

I missed the seldom seen Rare Hare off the list as it is only brewed to mark very special occasions. Otherwise it couldn't be called "Rare". A dry, clean tasting, strong premium ale, brewed to 5.2% alcohol by volume, it is made using an old variety of English whole hop. The brewers chose to produce a run of the Rare Hare to celebrate their 1,000th brew – it's a must-try beer whenever you're lucky enough to find it.

Any one looking for an interesting evening out with a group of friends or colleagues might consider a tour of the brewery, located at Webbs Heath between Bath and Bristol. Tours are available most weekdays and can be booked by contacting Alison at the brewery on 0117 9071797. More information about tours and what's going on at Bath Ales can be obtained by visiting the website, www.bathales.com.

Bristol Branch on the road

The evening of September 2nd found about 30 local CAMRA Branch members gathering at the recently refurbished **Wellington Hotel** on the Horfield end of Gloucester Road. We were there for a social evening at the kind invitation of landlords Paul and Dee Tanner.

The Wellington is Bath Ales' newest acquisition and the evening gave members the chance to admire the high quality of the work done in transforming the pub to what has become the Bath Ales house style.

A big thanks to the landlords for providing an extensive buffet to compliment the range of excellent beers. Guest beer on this occasion was the CAMRA award winning East Street Cream from the RCH brewery. Guest beers at the Wellington tend to be from other South West brewers whose beers, despite being produced locally, are often difficult to find in Bristol.

Check out the back page for details of forthcoming socials, pub surveying trips and branch meetings.

Steve O'Shea

I met the brewer

EARLY October saw the Bag O’Nails in Bristol hosting a “Meet The Brewer” evening as part of Real Beer Week.

On hand for the customers at the pub to meet was Adrian Wood, Head Brewer of the beautiful **Palmers Brewery** in Bridport, Dorset (about 60 miles due south from Bristol). It was an informal affair, with Adrian there to answer any questions the punters may have had about brewing, Palmers, and real ale in general. There was also a free half pint of beer for all comers and a raffle which was hard to lose considering the number of goodies he’d brought with him to give away!

Real Beer Week is an initiative of the Independent Family Brewers of Britain (IFBB). This is the second year it has been held, its purpose being to introduce more drinkers to the delights of real beer (or real ale).

Formed in 1993, the IFBB is made up of the 33 remaining family owned and run brewers and pub retailers. Together, the 33 members of the IFBB account for just 5% of the UK’s beer production but brew half of all the UK’s real beers. The IFBB’s main activities include lobbying the government

on pertinent issues as well as raising awareness of and for real beer, culminating in Real Beer Week.

The week ran from 30 September to 6 October and followed on from the success of Cask Ale Week as it was called last year. The IFBB supported the week through promotions in their pubs such as “Try Before You Buy”, and competitions to win brewery tours or beer for a year. The giveaways didn’t quite run to that in the Bag O’Nails though, but I did leave with some nice Palmers beer glasses.

For readers who haven’t tried Palmers beers, you’re missing a treat. The Bag, whose range of beers is constantly changing, does often come back to the old favourites, and normally has beers from Palmers perhaps once every couple of months or so, but it should be serving Palmers IPA for a period of about a month from when this issue of Pints West comes out. Just up the hill from the Bag is the **Hope & Anchor**, another genuine freehouse that is known to feature the occasional Palmers brew. And outside Bristol, a place where you’re pretty well guaranteed a nice drop of Palmers is the wonderful **Crown at Churchill**.

On the subject of Real Beer Week, one pub that has recently come to our attention, and that participated in the week’s events, is the **New Inn at Mayshill**, near Frampton Cotterell.

The pub was taken over a while back by David McKillop and Alix Salmon, and definitely looks like a pub to watch. The enthusiasm they have shown for their real ales is very encouraging, and their support for Real Beer Week highlighted this. For instance, customers of the pub were able to nominate the beers they would like to see featured during the week, with some interesting ones to choose from.

Participants were up for a possible prize if their nomination came out top. (Unfortunately I won nothing.) The chosen brews for the week turned out to be, in order, Elgoods Pageant Ale, Fullers London Pride, Blackawton Ale and Wadworth 6X.

Future guest beers planned for the pub include Smiles Original, Church End Alter Ale, Woods Parish Bitter, Stonehenge Body Line, Moor Withy Cutter, Hogs Back TEA, Arkells 3B, Hexhamshire Devil’s Water, smiles Old Russ Ale, Bridge of Allan Bannock Burn and towards Christmas, Otter Clause.

SP

Star Inn, Bath advert

Annexe Inn advert



The Windmill, Portishead

LOOKING FOR A PUB with a good range of well-kept beer? With good, reasonably priced food? Where you can take the family and still have a good beer? With a sun terrace and a lovely view over the estuary?

Look no further than the **Windmill**, in Portishead. The building incorporates the tower of a 19th century windmill, and for many years was the clubhouse of the adjacent golf course. During the Second World War it acted as the HQ for the local Home Guard! Licensed in 1960 as the Hole In One and owned by the council, it re-opened in 2000 as a smart and friendly free house. The single bar serves numerous drinking areas, many of which command good sea views, the downstairs area doubling as a family area.

The enterprising landlord supports local breweries, with the beer range including, besides the omnipresent Bass and Courage Best, some wonderful offerings such as RCH Pitchfork, Wickwar Sunny Daze and Butcombe Gold. All proved to be in good condition on our recent visit.

Good pub food is served from midday until 9:30 p.m. (10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays), and sensibly there is a separate order point for meals, keeping the bar area clear for drinkers. Although clearly a popular place for food, the drinker never feels under pressure as in some other food-orientated pubs.

Deservedly popular, the pub is easy to find — it's located on the Nore Road, which runs along the seafront.

Phil Cummings

Getting Fresh

ON 27 September 2002 Bristol & District CAMRA decided it was worth the time and expense to take our message to the large intake of students that arrived in Bristol this year. Accordingly a stall was booked at the Freshers Fair located at the University of the West of England campus.

Some real ale was needed for the occasion and we would like to thank Smiles and Bath Ales for kindly donating some Smiles Best and Bath Ales Gem, which were sampled by many thirsty and appreciative students.

Beer mats and leaflets provided by the breweries disappeared at great speed, as did large amounts of our campaigning literature. It was just as well we had the real ale to also revive the three members staffing the stall (Richard Brooks, Pete Tanner and Chris Bradley) because it was thirsty work constantly explaining the CAMRA message for four hours to a seemingly endless stream of students.

Once again it proved to be a successful day, with much interest in real ale and the Campaign. Awareness was definitely raised in an environment where novelty vodka, tequila and numerous night clubs were being promoted to the hilt.

And despite the legendary student reputation for being skint, sixteen people actually stumped up the cash to join CAMRA, with many more promising to do so in the near future.

To fire up the enthusiasm of the new members who joined at the Freshers Fair, we gave an open invitation to a tour of Smiles Brewery. Some branch committee members also tagged along to maintain order! A pleasant evening was had by all and we would like to thank Smiles for their hospitality and Tony Haynes in particular for conducting the very informative tour.

Richard Brooks

News from Smiles

SMILES have recently brewed a 4.3% abv ale for the Wetherspoon's Halloween festival called Looming Ale. Free Trade customers will also be able to purchase this from Smiles around the end of October. Another specialist brew has been created by Head Brewer, Neville Mort at 4.5% abv especially to celebrate the Freedom of the City of Bristol, which was bestowed on the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire & Wiltshire Regiment on 12th October. The soldiers of the regiment came to the Brewery in Colston Yard to brew the ale and it was launched on 2nd October at the Brewery Tap.

Smiles have recently taken on a new brewer by the name of Alex Kean. Alex comes with masses of brewing experience especially in their type of craft brewing. He reports to Chris Thurguson who is now Smiles First Brewer under Neville Mort.

Tony Haynes has now been back in charge of brewery tours for sometime and what a difference that has made. They are heading for record numbers of real ale enthusiasts who thoroughly enjoy their visits. For booking telephone Jane on 01275 375894. There are only a few spaces left now until the New Year.

Smiles was delighted to have won more medals for brewing fine ales in the last couple of months. The Tesco Challenge saw Bristol IPA win a silver medal, and with the same ale the company won a gold in the "Beauty of Hops" competition held in London against many other independent brewers.

Once again Smiles featured at the Great British Beer festival and Quentin Williams was invited to partake in the ale judging competition in the Best Bitter category.

Seasonal ales due between now and Christmas feature Old Russ Ale, abv 4.4% during October and November with Holly Hops, abv 5.0% in December. For those regular customers that wish to order boxes of Smiles beer for the festive season either contact the Brewery Tap on 0117 9213668 (or pop in), or Jane at the depot on 01275 375894.

The Brewery Tap has seen a few changes with the return of Catherine (Cat) Gully who will only be there until December before moving to undertake other activities. Meanwhile Smiles will be recruiting a "like minded" character to commence in time for Christmas and the New Year. If readers have any thoughts or are interested and have some bar and management background they may write in or call on the number above.

Richard Brooks

Down Memory Lane Late Summer 1954 "The Ship"

Dreaming on Redcliffe Hill.
Hard Wooden Bench.
Table running with spilt Cider.
Sawdust on the floor.
Fat Landlord with trousers
Held up by tie.
Trombone farting Trad.
Pies and Pickled Eggs.
Public House Perfection.
Scrumpy Nine-Pence a Pint.
White Heat Inside
Fierce like Wolves that tear.
I declare, tonight,
A reed will be broken and
Scattered by the Wind.
"Time Gentlemen Please."
A Gloomy Hush Descends.
A Fine Line has been
drawn in the Sand, We've
Had your money now Sod off.
We mutter but Obey.
The Landlord is Captain under God.
And there is no mutiny
In This Ship.

This poem was written whilst I was a young RAF Aircrew trainee stationed at RAF Filton. Cider was the drink of choice

for the young and broke, being 9 pence (about 3p). Beer was a shilling or more and weaker. Most landlords of the time were wary of selling it to teenagers, some would only sell you a half. There was an old lady in a licensed bungalow (cider only) halfway up the hill in Banwell, Somerset, who sold it for 7 pence, and she was crowded out with RAF men from Locking. She didn't care how much one drank. The police took the licence off her in 1956.

"The Ship" was a long, narrow pub on Redcliffe Hill. It had an intact Victorian interior with delightful snug corners. The whole range of houses on the hill survived the wartime bombing, during which a tramline was flung into the churchyard of St. Mary's (it's still there, sticking upright, half-buried as a memorial), only to be destroyed by the vandals who ran the "planning" department in the 1960s. Also to go was the unique shot tower next door. The sick joke being that the ugly new one in Counterslip is listed!

A picture of The Ship and shot tower can be seen in the late Reece Winstone's book "Bristol as it was 1956-59", photo number 191. Also 1963-75, photo number 286, in which the fine period frontage can be seen in close-up. The pub depicted in the poem does not reflect The Ship as such, but is more an ideal, like Orwell's "Moon Under Water".

A. McDougall

Smiles advert

A ratepayer writes . . .

Comments on the Jubilee Weekend in Weymouth article published in Pints West No. 55...

As a householder in Weymouth for over three years, I know all of the watering holes mentioned in Vince Murray's article. I would endorse all the comments he made (including the ones about the service in The Weatherbury), but would add a couple of other pubs that are worth a look if you are in town...

Park Street is an area of Weymouth that has not been on the itinerary for most real ale drinkers in recent years. Now, however, as Vince mentioned, Hop Back brewery have taken over The Dolphin, an ex Gibbs Mew pub that had been closed for a couple of years. It opened at the end of July in the capable hands of landlord John Spragg (previously at The Coronation in Southville, Bristol), and has been selling at least three of Hop Back's excellent beers ever since. Summer Lightning, Crop Circle, Entire Stout, all in fine condition... need I say more? Oh yes, and John had a beer festival over the August Bank Holiday featuring the ten award winners from CAMRA's 2002 Great British Beer Festival. Mmm.....

Just a hundred yards further along the same side of the street is The Star, a former Whitbread house which now has Bass, Wadworth 6X and a changing guest beer – often from Batemans of Lincolnshire. Definitely worth a visit, although it does not feature in CAMRA's National Good Beer Guide (yet).

Park Street's northern end is 50 yards from the main railway station, so it's easy to reach by train or landing craft.

Norman Spalding

Dorothy Inn, Weymouth advert

Prize crossword

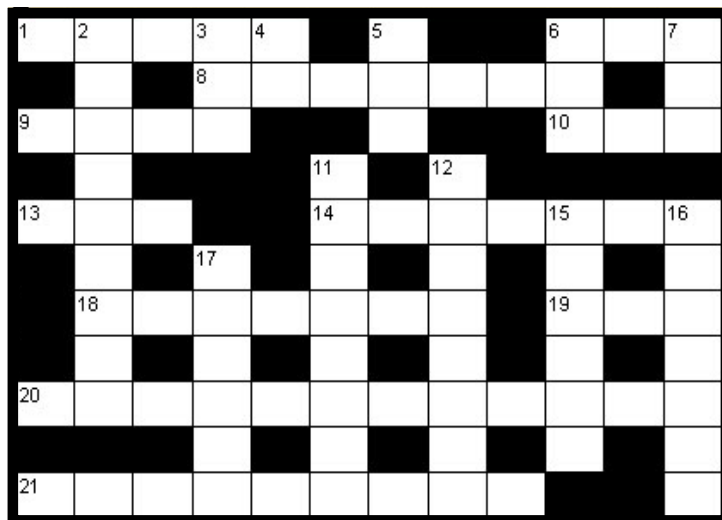
by Phil Brooks

Across

- 1,6A.** What is the 5% ABV full-bodied beer with a bitter-sweet aftertaste brewed by Greene King of Bury St. Edmunds? (5,3)
6. See 1.
8. The Hope & Anchor in Jacob's Wells Road, Bristol, was a brewpub in 1994 and 1995. What was the name of the brewing company? (7)
9. At 4.3% ABV this strongly bitter beer which ends dry and spicy is brewed by Hambleton brewery of Thirsk, North Yorkshire. (4)
10. Name the 4.2% ABV beer from Chalk Hill brewery of Norwich that has a delicate fruity aroma. (1,1,1)
13. Poachers brewery of Swinderby, Lincolnshire, only started brewing in 2001. One of their beers is pale amber with a musty fruit hop aroma, weighing in at 4.2% ABV. What's it called? (3)
14. From Titanic brewery of Stoke on Trent, this 4.1% ABV beer is brewed using American hops and was instrumental in sinking the ship of the same name. (7)
18. This Wiltshire town is home to both Archers and Arkells breweries. (7)
19. Pub that can be rising in Frampton Cotterell or Ashton. (3)
20. Nearest pub to Shirehampton railway station on the Temple Meads to Severn Beach line. (12)
21. What is the unspoilt 19th century pub in West End near Nailsea called? (4,5)

Down

- 2.** This London brewery which began in 2001 only brews one beer which at 4% ABV is called bitter. It had a power station as a neighbour until a few years ago. (9)
3,5. Name the 4.5% ABV beer from Uley brewery of Dursley which has a distinctive copper colour. (3,3)
4. Carters brewery of Caerphilly (until recently the White Hart brewery) brews one beer at 5% ABV. What's it called? (1,1)
5. See 3.
6. What is the 3.8% ABV light session beer with a dry hoppy taste brewed by Warcop brewery of Wentlooge, South Wales? (3)
7. What is the pale brown beer brewed by Fullers of London to 5.5% ABV that has a rich hoppy finish? (1,1,1)
11. Previously known as the Hole In One, this pub can be found in Nore Road, Portishead. (8)
12. Nursery brewery launched a new beer at the Old Bank on 13th September this year. At 4% ABV it's named after the town they



brew in. What's it called? (8)

- 15.** From the oldest brewery in Cornwall and the home of Spingo beers, what spring seasonal special beer does the Blue Anchor brew to 7.5% ABV? (6)
16. Brewed to OG 1038 and 4% ABV by North Cotswold brewery of Moreton in the Marsh, this beer has the same name as a famous band. (7)
17. At 4.2% ABV this beer is brewed by Trueman's brewery of Marlow, Buckinghamshire. (6)

Send your solution to the editor (address on back page) by 15 December 2002. The first correct entry drawn at random after that date wins an 18-pint box of Smiles Best. The winner must be prepared to collect their prize from the Smiles Brewery Tap. Please supply a phone number.

Last issue's answers:

Across: 4 Points West, 7 General, 8 This, 9 White Lion, 11 Lamp-lighters, 13 Brand Oak, 15 SA, 16 LAD, 17 Black, 18 Pint, 21 Ginger, 22 Bell.

Down: 1 Lion, 2 Ashton, 3 Roosters Yankee, 4 Pigswill, 5 Three Blind Mice, 6 Wellington, 10 Red, 12 Marld, 14 Kiln, 16 Long, 19 GB, 20 XL.

The winner is Liz Belgium of Lawrence Weston who receives an 18-pint box of Smiles Best.

Bear Inn, Wiveliscombe advert

Nursery Brewery advert

Iron Curtain Curiosities

FOLLOWING our correspondent's visit to the Czech Republic (Pints West 55), here are a few recent findings from Russia that may be amusing.

Visiting Moscow in August, it was surprising to find an "Old English Pub" next to the Metro station at the western end of Arbat, the city's main shopping street. It had two handpumps; one sported a pumpclip for Charles Wells' Bombardier; the other apparently contained something called John

Bull Blonde Lager. I was tempted to try the Bombardier, but at £6 a litre, thought better of it.

A few miles up the road at St. Petersburg, it was even more of a shock to find a local supermarket which had a carousel full of bottles of Double Diamond, something you don't see much the in UK any more. This one was a little stronger than the UK variety at 5% alcohol, and had an extra label announcing that it had been

imported via Sweden. The main label (again in Cyrillic script) appeared to describe a "traditional Burton Ale" brewed in Northampton!

One other little pleasure (especially if you follow the Premier League champions) was a very pleasant bottled lager called Arsenal, which tastes of butterscotch and even has a red label to match the UK football team's colours!

Norman Spalding

Random Shot advert

Honest Pint

Reply to the editor following a recent note to his MP asking for her support for an honest pint...

Dear Mr Stephen Plumridge,

Thank you for your recent communication supporting CAMRA's campaign for an honest pint law. I can confirm that I have signed EDM 464, which states:

"That this House considers that when ordering a pint measure beer and cider drinkers should receive a full liquid pint without having to ask for a top up; notes research conducted by CAMRA which reveals that 80 per cent. of pints served in pubs are under measure, some by up to 15 per cent.; further notes that current legislation is insufficient to protect consumers from short measures and that attempts at self-regulation have comprehensively failed; believes that there is an urgent need for legislation to protect Britain's 15 million beer and cider drinkers from short measures; welcomes the Government's proposals announced in December 2000 to introduce more effective protection against short measures; and urges the Government to ensure drinkers receive fair measures."

It is worrying that so many drinkers seem to be sold short measures. Many drinkers enjoy a head on their pint, but they should not be penalised for this. Thank you again for your support on this issue.

Your sincerely

Valerie Davey MP

Labour MP for Bristol West
(4 September 2002)

Follow the Mole

MOLES BREWERY in Melksham, Wiltshire was founded twenty years ago by managing director Roger Catte (pronounced "Catee", with emphasis on the last syllable), and is perhaps one of the microbrewing world's unsung success stories.

The company is officially known as Moles Brewery (Cascade Drinks Ltd). In 1973 businessman Carl Borresen founded Cascade on the edge of a smart industrial estate in Bowerhill, a suburb of Melksham, to manufacture and wholesale soft drinks. In 1982, with the microbrewing boom under way, he decided to add a brewery and invited former Ushers and Watneys brewer Roger Catte to join him and run it.

Within a few years Roger was managing the whole operation and, when demand outstripped the production capabilities of the lemonade machinery, they shut it down and concentrated on brewing, buying in all the soft drinks.

"Then the owner wanted out," recalls Roger, "and rather than have anyone else take over my work I bought him out — a decision from the heart rather than the head."

The two concerns were run as separate companies for a while, but because Cascade was a customer of Moles they were amalgamated to save paperwork.

Sited as it is in an industrial estate, the brewery can hardly claim to be Britain's most beautiful. The offices are anything but palatial, the warehouse is starkly functional, and the actual brewery buildings are a symphony in breezeblock and corrugated roofing.

The original brewery was a low, single-storey building housing a purpose-built ten-barrel plant. Later, when Archers of Swindon upgraded their plant from 25 to 40 barrels, Moles bought the old equipment, a move which necessitated a new brewhouse. This is a two-storey breezeblock structure grafted onto the end of the original building, so that the process moves from the brewhouse to the fermentation room to the racking room to the cold store. "It's a traditional tower brewery," jokes Roger. "It just happens to be on its side!"

Brewing is the responsibility of Michael Andrews who joined Moles seven years ago, having previously honed his skills with Hall & Woodhouse and Ushers. Aided by colleagues Nigel Perry and Dave Rendell, he uses Maris Otter pale and crystal malt from Warminster and Crisp's maltings with traditional Kent and Worcestershire Fuggles and WGV hops to produce the company's six regular beers. One of the strongest beers, the distinctive Molecatcher, uses the American Cascade hop. All brews are late hopped, and are fermented with a yeast which Roger brought with him 20 years ago.

The brewery's output is some 1,500 barrels a year, which supplies about 100



regular free trade customers and other wholesalers, plus its one freehold-owned pub and most of its 13 leased houses. Most, but not all, because one is a non-real ale winebar, and of the pubs, leasing arrangements have led to a situation that forbid Roger to put his beer into two of them, although these were originally free of tie until a change of ownership.

Roger is understandably bitter. "The wonders of this world have allowed the likes of pub companies to switch leases and make them fully tied on guest beers," he says, and he firmly believes that the Beer Orders should have been applied to pub companies.

Moles is always on the lookout for more houses, but they must be free of tie!

In 1999 Burns Leisure approached Moles with a view to taking it over and forming a larger group. "It seemed a good idea at the time," says Roger. "There is safety in size these days, particularly if you've got a large pub group around you."

The intention was to do all the major brewing with the 40-barrel Archers Brewery equipment at Swindon and use the Bowerhill site for brewing seasonals and specials, and as a depot.

"Burns bought out a wholesaler in Bristol and made an offer for another pub company," says Roger. "On paper it looked pretty good, but they didn't have any money. Basically they went shopping without any."

Fortunately Moles came out of the business unscathed. The Burns/Archers partnership has been dissolved, and Moles

has picked up some of Burns's wholesale trade to add to its already extensive portfolio. "We can supply everything you find behind the bar, from water to whisky," is Roger's proud boast.

Unusually for a microbrewery, Moles has its own cider, Black Rat. The cider is actually produced for Moles by Thatchers, the family-run cider makers in Sandford, North Somerset. It is a genuine cider of 6.5% ABV made from a blend of Brown Snout, Dabinett and Yarlington Mill apples. Available on draught and in bottle, it is a dry, refreshing drink with a good apple bite worthy of anyone's attention.

The impression one comes away from Moles with is that, despite all the industry's problems, here is a brewery which will survive and flourish. It has an enthusiastic staff of 18, a varied portfolio of products to offer the customer, a clutch of good pubs, an annual glossy colour newsletter which is highly entertaining and, most importantly, a range of excellent beers, all between 3.5 and 5% ABV, to offer the drinker.

This is a cut-down version of an article by Roy Bailey which recently appeared in What's Brewing, CAMRA's national monthly newspaper for members.

Moles advert

The Good Beer Guide

Celebrating 30 years of campaigning for good pubs and good beer

The Good Beer Guide is more than just a pub guide. Britain's longest-running and best-selling guide has 5,000 of Britain's best pubs for real ale. But for beer lovers it also gives up-to-date information on the country's beers and breweries. It's compiled by 66,000 dedicated volunteers in the Campaign for Real Ale. There are no fees for listings, and every pub is checked many times a year.

The Good Beer Guide offers:

- The best pubs in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man that serve cask-conditioned real ale in tip-top condition.
- Full details of beer, food, entertainment, family facilities, history and architecture for the pub entries.
- The unique Breweries section that lists all the breweries — micro, regional and national — that produce cask beer, with tasting notes compiled by CAMRA-trained tasting teams. There's also information about beers suitable for vegetarians and vegans, as well as the growing number of organic beers. The Guide lists new breweries, closed breweries, mergers and takeovers, and keeps track of the new, powerful pub groups.

Plus:

- Terry Jones of Monty Python on why CAMRA and the Good Beer Guide play a vital role in Britain today.
- Internationally-acclaimed beer expert Michael Jackson on how craft brewers in Britain and the United States have brought flavour and character back to beer.
- Award-winning writer Jeff Evans on the campaign to save our country pubs.

And much more...

- CAMRA's listing of pubs of special importance that must be saved for the nation.
- The top prize-winning beers of the year.
- Beer festivals to visit throughout the country.

The Good Beer Guide is available from all good book shops, or you can order direct from CAMRA on 01727 867201 or check the web page at www.camra.org.uk. It is priced at £12.99, or just £9 for CAMRA members.



The local Bristol & District Branch launch of the 2003 Good Beer Guide was held at the Bunch of Grapes, Denmark Street, Bristol City Centre on 30 September and proved to be a very popular evening.

Forty copies of the Guide were sold on the night and three new CAMRA members signed up. The special offer of a Wickwar beer at £1 a pint proved so popular that it was all consumed whilst the event was still in full swing. Fortunately there was a Moles rep in attendance and after some quick negotiations with Colin the landlord the deal was transferred to Mole Catcher, which also seemed to go down very well.

'Pub is the Hub' wins Royal backing

THE Prince of Wales has given his support to a campaign to save rural pubs as vital hubs of their communities. Jeff Evans, current Beer Writer of the Year, reports in the 2003 edition of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide that the Countryside Agency, the British Beer and Pub Association, and Business in the Community have joined forces in a bid to save country pubs.

Writing the foreword to the 'Pub is the Hub' pamphlet, the Prince says pubs need to draw on their resourcefulness and resilience, and adapt to changing circumstances. "Practical action, not just fine words, is what is needed," he adds.

Jeff Evans says that around the country some 34 village and rural pubs have taken the Prince's advice and have gone the extra mile to ensure both their future and other services in their communities.

The Prince of Wales and the Countryside Agency launched their campaign in the Craven Heifer in Stainforth, North Yorkshire, which not only serves fine pints of Thwaites Bitter but also has a post office and grocery store. There's a special pensioners' lunch once a month for people using the postal services to get their pensions, and the pub also offers bed and breakfast accommodation.

The White Hart at Blythburgh in Suffolk and the Pint and Post at St Giles on the Heath in Devon also offer postal services in villages that have lost all their shops.

CAMRA's National Pub of the Year in

2001, the Blisland Inn, near Bodmin, Cornwall, is another pub offering postal services.

You can put your shirt on a good pint in the Diamond Inn at Butterknowle, Co Durham — it has a bookmaker's in one part of the pub.

The Miners Arms at Brassington in the Derbyshire Peak District has converted an upstairs room into a computer training club.

The Weir Hotel near Bacup in Lancashire offers perhaps the most unusual service in every meaning of the word: it has a Sunday morning church service as the village no longer has a functioning church.

The Crown Inn at Bathley, Notts, is a real hub of the community in a village without a hall, church or shop. Now the parish council meets in the pub, a soup kitchen is organised for the elderly in winter, and the local school holds its parties in the pub grounds.

The Cock Inn at Combe, Oxon, offers facilities for the sick to pick up prescriptions and medication thanks to a link up with a pharmacy in a neighbouring village.

The Olde Mill at Upwell, Norfolk, works closely with the local waterways trust and sports club, and lays on tea dances for the elderly.

Jeff Evans says: "The Prince of Wales hopes the Pub is the Hub will encourage other publicans to think imaginatively about ways to diversify."

Good Beer Guide editor attacks 'rampant greed' of giant pub companies

Roger Protz, editor of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide, launched a scathing attack at the national launch of the 2003 edition on the country's giant pub companies that are squeezing craft breweries and reducing choice for drinkers.

Protz cited the case of the revered independent brewery W. H. Brakspear of Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire which will stop brewing this autumn as it cannot make a living from selling beer to such national pub companies as Enterprise Inns, Pubmaster and Punch Taverns.

"Brakspear is producing more beer than at any time in its history, yet as a result of the rampant greed of the giant pub companies it cannot not make a sufficient return on its sales to justify staying in brewing," he said.

Protz blamed the cosy duopoly of national brewers and pub companies for the onslaught on smaller craft brewers. "The national brewers are prepared to sell beer at deep discounts to the pub companies — discounts the smaller breweries cannot afford."

Discounts don't mean lower prices for drinkers. "The pubcos demand beer at low wholesale prices and then sell those beers for high retail prices. In between lie obscene profits," Roger Protz said. "The national brewers are happy to play the discount game. Marginal profit on one cask becomes big profit when they are brewing millions of barrels a year. But for small brewers, the discounts demanded mean the game is not worth the candle."

"More than forty breweries have closed in the past ten years. Many were once flourishing regional or family-owned companies that saw no future in beer production and turned themselves into pub retailers, selling national brands."

Protz said the rules of the discount game are simple. "The list price or wholesale price of a barrel of standard bitter produced by a regional brewer, with an ABV of 3.8%, is £250. A national pub company will demand a discount of at least £100 off the list price. If it's a small brewer without a national profile among pubgoers, the pubco

will demand an even bigger discount.

"By the time a discount of around £120 a barrel has been deducted from a beer with a list price of £250, the brewer is often selling his beer at cost price.

"But the pubcos haven't finished yet. There's another pound of flesh to be carved from the body of the helpless small brewer in the shape of 'listing fees'. These are charges made by the pub companies to list a brewery and its brands in its promotional material sent to pubs."

Protz said one of the national pub companies, Punch, charges brewers £1,700 every six months for each of their brands.

"A small brewery owner in Yorkshire, who cannot be named as he is frightened of losing his business with a national pub company, told the Guide: 'I produce four regular beers. The pubco takes all four. So that's £13,600 in listing fees — £13,600 of my annual profits — before it sells a drop of my beer'."

The discounts are not passed on to publicans, who pay the full wholesale price for the beer or get only a tiny discount. The pubcos pocket the difference. The discount scam was exposed in May this year by the publicans' trade paper, the Morning Advertiser, when national brewer Scottish Courage sent an invoice to an Enterprise Inns publican instead of to the head office of the pub company. It showed goods delivered to the pub in one week totalled £1,171.03 but the tenant had been charged £2,000.42.

"As a result of the big brewer/big pubco duopoly," Roger Protz said, "beer is disgracefully expensive. In the South-East of England pubgoers find they are frequently charged more than £2.50 for a pint of beer. One reason for the increasing consumption of wine is that it is now cheaper for two people to share a bottle of good quality wine at home than it is to purchase two pints of beer in a pub."

"Real ale is a civilised drink. Keg beer is — well — a dead parrot," says Terry Jones of Monty Python.

The beer industry in 30 years ?

The Good Beer Guide is celebrating thirty years as the 'beer bible', but what will the beer industry look like thirty years on?

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is predicting huge changes in the British beer and pubs market over the next thirty years resulting in an increased stranglehold by large global companies. It claims that by 2032, if current trends continue:

- There will be just two major brewers producing two beer brands each
- Two big pub chains will control over 50% of all pubs with an increase in themed identikit bars
- Nearly 8,000 local community pubs will have closed, many having been turned into private houses
- 60% of all beer will be drunk at home with people enjoying a pint in 'virtual pubs' from the comfort of their arm chairs
- An increase of 40% (to 600) in the number of small specialised breweries selling local real ales, but with a tiny share of the total market
- A pint of beer will cost 20 new Euros (or £25 in 'old' money!)

Roger Protz, editor of the Good Beer Guide, said, "These are generally gloomy predictions which could become a reality if Britain does not begin to look after its beer industry. Since the first Good Beer Guide was published, over forty traditional family brewers have closed, national brewers have swallowed up and closed over two dozen breweries, and the stranglehold of the big brewers has increased two-fold with the top four now controlling 85% of the beer market."

Mr. Protz presented his views during a key note speech at a special dinner to celebrate thirty years of the Good Beer Guide on Saturday 12th October. At the dinner, achievement awards were made to past editors of the Good Beer Guide, as well as to winners of CAMRA's prestigious Champion Beer of Britain competition.

Mr. Protz added, "If we want to continue to enjoy the great British pint in local pubs of the future, action needs to be taken by the Government now, in the form of a national strategy to deal with growing anti-competitiveness by the large pub chains and global brewers."

Pubcos, who needs 'em? - again!...

REGULAR readers (there must be some of you?) may remember the feature in Pints West 49 about pub companies, i.e. the retail chains that have mostly arisen from the breaking up of the "tied house" estates of the big national brewers since the Government passed the Beer Orders in 1991.

The first of these companies were set up as a way round the legislation requiring brewers who had a large number of pubs to allow each licensee to sell a draught beer of his own choice; since then new owners and mergers have produced a number of new chains, ranging in size from thousands of pubs to fewer than fifty.

Our thesis in the previous article was that these relatively new entrants on the public house scene were taking a great deal of money from the trade, and in return were restricting consumer choice. The benefits for the consumer were few, and the costs many.

Pints West has recently come into possession of an open letter written by Rob Doddington, the landlord of a Good Beer Guide-listed pub in CAMRA's Bristol branch area, the Bell at Banwell, parts of which are reproduced below with the writer's permission. The letter paints a bleak picture of life for pubcos' licensees, as well as for their customers.

The unfortunate licensee recounts how he took on a village inn near Weston-super-Mare, in July 2000. "When I took over the pub was on its knees, but I hoped that I could turn it around and turn it into a busy village local, exactly what I wanted. To this end we set about cleaning and decorating, introducing real ales, encouraging pub teams, putting on some live music, starting up the folk club again and creating a happy sociable atmosphere for all ages and factions within the village.

"And lo, we succeeded! I am told the pub is now as busy as it has ever been, we are in the Good Beer Guide, and we have never had a problem or an incident that we haven't managed to deal with quickly and fairly.

"Brilliant, a success story except that our bank balance is going down not up. So, not to worry, it must be because of the money we've been reinvesting and our initial start up costs.

"Not so – when I look at the figures with my bank manager there is nothing left for us, nothing. Having to pay Enterprise Inns rent and buy our stock through them, which can be as much as thirty percent dearer than on the open market, there is nothing left for our efforts. In fact we are losing money."

The writer shows his books to the Managing Director of a local brewery, who "tells me, based on the figures I have shown him, that Enterprise Inns are making, from

my business straight onto their bottom line, between £38,000 and £43,000 per year. Not a bad return on my efforts..... me, I'm losing money."

He goes to see his bank manager. During this meeting "we discuss a pub in Bristol which turns over £430,000 pounds a year, a pub I would like to run. After going through the figures with my bank manager it becomes apparent that I would be in exactly the same position, just dealing with slightly bigger figures.

"It suddenly dawns on me that if I cannot make any money here and a busy City centre pub cannot make any money, then nobody under this kind of regime is making any money, anywhere in this county and we all are being sucked dry by this huge parasite on our backs."

Meanwhile, Enterprise Inns made £46.2 million last year, although they have long term debts of £585 million. No wonder they need every penny they can suck from their outlets.

The writer concludes that "Not only are these idiots ruining our pub culture, they are doing it on borrowed money and being hailed as astute business entrepreneurs.... I came to the conclusion that it makes little difference to them if their tenants are successful or not as long as they can get them out when they have bled them dry which under the conditions of their leases, of course they can. Get them in, squeeze them dry and chuck them out. If they make their pub busy, great, if not, it is not a worry to them as there is always the next sucker in line."

The letter goes on to say that "This is wrong and it does affect an awful lot of people. The populace is paying over the odds for their drinks. The populace is losing the landlords who should be running our pubs, the populace is losing the independent brewers who are going out of business as they lose more and more of their outlets to pubcos who only deal with the major companies and pay nothing more than lip service to the real ale industry, and at the end of the day the populace is losing the pubs."

The writer suggests that a simple solution would be:

a) to pass legislation stating that pubcos could only offer 'Free of Tie' leases allowing tenants to purchase from the open market,

b) to set up an easily accessible, independent Rent Tribunal to ensure that the pubcos could not charge the ridiculously high rents they currently are,

c) that if the pubcos wish to carry on under a tied agreement they should be forced to employ the current tenant as their manager and pay that person accordingly.

He believes that if these things happened, all the small local breweries would suddenly have dozens more customers eager to stock their pubs with the local real ales.

He finishes by urging the "thousands of voices out there who would agree with me" to "cry out for these few greedy men to give the British back their pubs".

Unfortunately, any response will come too late for him; he left his pub, and the licensed trade altogether, on October 23rd 2002.

The events recounted in this story are sadly all too familiar, although often not made public by the licensees who lose their businesses, and seldom so eloquently put.

Another story which was in the national news recently exposes further the predicament of the country's small brewers, who are being squeezed ever harder by the advance of these national pub-owning chains. Roger Protz, editor of the 2003 Good Beer Guide (see also page 27), describes how pub companies demand discounts of around £100 a barrel off a standard bitter, whose list price might be £250; if the beer is "not a strong brand, lacking a high profile among pub customers", they will demand a bigger discount.

This puts the small brewer in a classic Catch 22 dilemma; he cannot afford the advertising that might build a reputation for his brand, but without it he cannot sell the product at a price that makes him a profit. Even the big national brewers cannot be making a great deal of profit with such huge discounts, although their huge volume and the brand loyalty built up by large marketing budgets will count for something.

To add insult to injury for the smaller brewing concerns, Protz recounts an interview with a micro-brewer in Yorkshire, who was told that a national pubco would charge a "listing fee" of £1,700 per six months for each of his beers that they offered their licensees. As he brews four beers, that's £13,600 he would have to pay them every year simply for the privilege of being on their wholesale price list, before he took a penny back in revenue – with no guarantee that any of their pubs would order any of his beer!

All in all, the story of the evolution of pubcos (i.e. pub-owning companies who do not brew) since the early 1990s has been a disaster for the discerning beer drinker.

Well-loved local beers have disappeared as the established companies decide to give up brewing and join the trend towards large retail chains. Newer micro brewers struggle to find a foothold in a trade ever more cut-throat and dominated by large (often multinational) companies. All the while, licensees' costs and the price paid by the

consumer for a pint of draught beer continue to rise inexorably, and with little relationship to the cost of producing beer.

CAMRA is a consumer organisation dedicated to promoting the cause of traditional English beer, or "real ale". In the face of the continuing loss of well-known historic producers, we fear for the diversity and distinctiveness of the product.

Even though real ale is widely available across the UK, the bigger brewers' products are mostly towards the bland and uninteresting end of the spectrum, with a continuing trend towards loss of flavour and variety – with a few notable and praiseworthy exceptions.

By and large, it is the smaller producers who keep our traditional national drink tasty and varied.

Developments such as the rise of the pubco are just another threat which we must watch closely, expose and oppose where it threatens to dilute further the proud brewing heritage that so many of us enjoy.

The message for the beer drinker who cares is clear; beware the pubco, don't let them fob you off with tasteless and expensive drinks, and keep spreading the word about how good real ale can be!

Norman Spalding

Pub companies and their lack of choice

The thoughts of Paul Davey, Managing Director of RCH Brewery and Chairman of SIBA

AS a small brewer I am finding it increasingly difficult to find and maintain accounts. One of the main problems is pub companies.

It has to be said that some pubcos are very friendly towards small brewers, such as JD Wetherspoon and the Unique pubco which uses the SIBA "Access To Market" (ATM) scheme.

However, I am losing on average about one account a week to a pub company which is buying up any pubs that it can, then tying them to its list of products.

SIBA are trying to give the licensee choice by introducing a scheme that allows local pubs to serve local beers, trying to overcome some of the problems with dealing with large pubcos – but I think that the only way that things will change and give the licensee and customer the choice that they want is for legislation to change and allow all licensed premises the right to a guest beer of their choice from an independent brewery.

ATM has proven that it is possible to

enter the pubco market, but only one pubco uses it at the moment, and only about 85 houses are allowed. ATM was started to demonstrate to the government that the beer orders do not work and how difficult it is to enter the market and have our products freely available to the people who want to drink them.

SIBA stands for the Society of Independent Brewers. It was formed in 1980 to represent the interests of the emerging new wave of microbrewers, and was originally named the Small Independent Brewers Association.

This name was changed in 1995 when members decided they wanted to get away from all the connotations associated with the word 'small'.

SIBA has one simple function: "To campaign on behalf of craft brewers to ensure that they have the best possible opportunity to bring their goods to the market."

Further CAMRA comment



HOW can the Government be so oblivious to this gross exploitation of tenants of pub companies. Regrettably, this whole sorry situation is nothing new and still nothing gets done. CAMRA is fully aware of the difficulties faced by tenants of pub companies, and whilst we sympathise with what Mr. Doddington has to say, CAMRA is a consumer-driven, rather than purveyor-driven, pressure group. But there is commonality in our aims in that we both want to see better consumer choice in pubs and bars across the UK and that tenants of pub companies should be allowed to buy what their customers want on a level playing field. It's an absolute travesty that tenants of pub companies should be made to pay up to 30% more for their stock resulting in the need to subsidise their own margins to get the punters in.

CAMRA has been lobbying the Government tirelessly for a full review of the ill-thought through legislation to which Mr. Doddington referred to in his letter when he stated: "The pub companies were formed to bypass the legislation which applies to breweries". The legislation was ridden with loopholes. It put a stop to brewers owning in

excess of 2,000 pubs, but not pub companies. So what did the brewers do? They sold off the pubs to Japanese banks and the like who appointed pub companies to run the pubs who in turn did supply deals with the very brewers who off-loaded the pubs in the first place. And what was the consumer left with? Nothing but the status quo. Enterprise Inns, for example, own 5,370 pubs and plan to merge with another company who own 971 pubs.

Thirteen years on, the DTI has recommended that the Government is to revoke the 'Beer Orders' on the grounds that market developments, in particular the large scale separation of brewing and pub ownership, have rendered the Orders irrelevant in today's market. CAMRA does not support revocation without a full assessment of the impact of such revocation on competition, consumer choice, prices, pubs and small brewers. This assessment should be part of a wider review of the beer and pubs industry leading to amendments to the existing Orders, or to their replacement by new legislation to counteract the anti-competitive effects of the complex monopoly which exists in the industry today.

It might be too late to for Mr. Doddington, but readers can help other tenants of pub companies by writing to the DTI or your local MP drawing their attention to the salient points made in his letter. Please also express concern at the Government's planned revocation of the Beer Orders for the following reasons:-

- Breweries will be allowed to refuse to supply beer for resale, enabling large players with key brands to force smaller wholesalers and retailers to stock all or most of their products even if they only want one;
- Brewers will be allowed to charge different prices to any number of different customers as they will not be obliged to publish wholesale price lists;
- Revoking the guest beer provision will allow any brewer to buy and tie many thousands of pubs to its own products, excluding smaller brewers such as Smiles, Butcombe, Wickwar, Bath Ales, and wrecking consumer choice;
- A lack of alternative anti-competitive controls specific to the industry will hand more brewing, distribution and retailing power to the large brewers and pub retailers.

Alison Bridle

Black Country to Blisland – Bristol & District CAMRA on tour

WITH the onset of summer it was time to get out our maps and head off to other districts.

The centrepiece of our visit to the Black Country was a visit to the marvellous **Olde Swan** at Netherton, known as “Ma Pardoe’s” after the matriarchal figure that ran it for over 40 years. The present licensee Tim Newey is a real Black Country character and is mainly responsible for returning the pub to its former glories, along with brewer Dave Rawstorne, previously the man behind Holt, Plant & Deacon beer and now producing the splendid range of beer brewed behind the pub – 15 to 20 barrels of their own beer is sold in the pub each week.

Tim regaled us with fascinating stories of the pub, as it was when he first worked there under Ma Pardoe herself, and we sampled all the beers in the beautiful bar, complete with original tiled ceiling. The prices were a pleasant surprise to Bristol drinkers, and an additional 10p was taken off all draught beer when the cut in duty came in.

Two other great independent breweries of the Black Country are Holden’s and Bathams, so we visited the ever friendly **Rose & Crown** at Brierley Hill, and then moved on to the **Britannia** at Upper Gornal, another wonderful historic pub with its turn of the 19th century tap room. We moved onto the **Fountain** at Lower Gornal, an exceptional freehouse, and Dudley & South Staffs CAMRA pub of the year for the last two years, before finishing off at the wonderful **Beacon Hotel** at Sedgley, home of the

mighty Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby mild.

Two weekends later we embarked again and headed down the M5 towards Devon and Cornwall, (mostly) succeeding in bypassing the holiday traffic. First stop was the **Blisland Inn**, on the edge of Bodmin moor, CAMRA’s national pub of the year 2001. We spent several very happy hours here trying the range of beers which are predominately from local brewers, looking around a most interesting pub, reputedly the only one in Cornwall on a village green, and

Photo

taking in a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Heading back up through Devon, we called in at the charming **Devonshire Inn** at Sticklepath, and then alighted at the **Beer Engine** at Newton St. Cyres, a well-known brewpub located almost literally on the railway line. There were three home-brewed beers for us to try here, and yet another pleasant garden to sit in, the weather being unusually kind to us on the day.

We finished off at an old favourite in Somerset, the **Coopers Arms** at Highbridge, a freehouse where most of the beers always seem to be over 5%. As the reader will gather, a good time was had by all!

Phil Cummings



Euro-beer advert

A future for Oakhill

OAKHILL BREWERY owner Reg Keevil has been playing his cards close to his chest on the future of the brewery after putting it up for sale. Scare stories recently circulated that the closure of the brewery was imminent with the site being developed for housing. We are therefore pleased to report that brewer Gary Lumbar has advised us there is a buyer and the deal should be going through in the new year.

Even better news is that the new owner is apparently keen to increase sales and expand the bottled products range and that at least for the time being the brewery will be staying on the current site.

We look forward to confirmation that the deal has been done and that we can go on drinking ale brewed in Oakhill.

Richard Brooks

Calling all West Country CAMRA Members!

Come to the CAMRA Members' Weekend including National AGM 2003

In April 2003 the CAMRA Members' Weekend including the National AGM is being held in Exeter.

This is the first year that it has been called a members' weekend and this is exactly what it should be called as, although the weekend is used to form CAMRA policy, the event is open to all CAMRA members and consists of far more than just the formal requirements of an AGM.

For this year and in the future the format is changing as part of an ongoing review, hopefully giving many more members the opportunity to provide valid input to the Campaign as a whole.

Also it is a very good opportunity for members to socialise with many activities planned for the weekend.

The event is being held at the University of Exeter, which has the advantage of the conference hall, members' bar and accommodation all being on one site.

The weekend starts on Friday 11th April with social activities, giving members the opportunity to sample a large range of the real ales available in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset at the members' bar. This is open from 4:00 p.m. until 12:30 a.m. At about 5:30 p.m. there are pre-arranged social trips for members who pre-book. The trips planned are to the following.

- Tuckers Maltings and Teignworthy Brewery.
- O'Hanlon's and Exe Valley breweries.
- Green Valley and Gray's cider producers.

After the social trips you can return to the members' bar.

On Saturday 12th April the formal business commences and includes reports, adoption of accounts, motions for debate, the guest speaker (Roger Ryman, the Head Brewer at St. Austell Brewery), and Policy Discussion Groups which allow members to consider and discuss issues in a more informal forum and to provide very valid input. Recommendations from these groups will be put to the full audience for ratification later in the weekend. Workshops are then provided for experienced members of the Campaign to share their expertise with others.

The members' bar is open during lunch and then after close of business until 12:30 a.m. Also, for members wishing a change of scenery, there are suggested pub crawls for the evening and these include: the following.

m Exeter, close to the university and city centre, including the Great Western Hotel.

m Exeter, based around the historic quay on the Exe which, for the brave, includes a walk to the Double Locks.

m Topsham, which includes the famous Bridge Inn.

m Newton Abbot, which includes the Dartmouth Inn and the famous Cider Bar for those who prefer apple and pear based alcoholic beverages.

Sunday 13th April starts with recommendations from the Policy Discussion Groups for ratification by the entire audience and this is followed by the remaining motions for

debate. The Chairman then closes the formal business when again the members' bar opens until 4:00 p.m.

From a local perspective it would be good to see as many members from the West Country as possible attend the weekend, and if you have never been to an AGM before then come along to see what it is all about and have your say.

All members have the right to attend and provide their input to the discussions and motions, all of which could have an impact on the policy and operation of the Campaign.

It is also a good opportunity to show the whole of CAMRA what the West Country has to offer.

Please come along, and if you are willing to help please let me know.

For more details go to the web site www.southdevoncamra.com or email me at ian@southdevoncamra.com or ring me, Ian Packham, on 01364 654242.

Hopefully we'll see you in Exeter next April.

Ian Packham
**Chairman, Members Weekend &
AGM 2003 Organising Committee**

Adnams Brewery advert

DIARY



Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA.

See inside pages for the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch diary and contacts.

Tuesday 29th October: Trip to Glastonbury Ales brewery. Depart from the Cornubia 6:30pm.

Wednesday 6th November: Cross Bristol pub survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia 6:45pm.

Saturday 9th November: Regional meeting at the Hyde Park, Mutley Plain, Plymouth, starting 12:30pm.

Wednesday 13th November: Committee meeting, Cornubia, 8:00pm.

Wednesday 20th November: Pub survey trip of North Somerset. Depart from the Cornubia 6:45pm.

Wednesday, 27th November: Branch meeting, Naval Volunteer, King Street, Bristol, 8:00pm.

Sunday, 15th December: Christmas social at the Wellington, Horfield, starting at 7.30pm.

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



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Watch the Web

Bristol and District CAMRA would like to remind readers that we have a web site at **www.camrabristol.org.uk**

This contains information on the local branch and the Campaign for Real Ale generally, as well as details of 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. **Past editions of Pints West can be viewed there!**

Check out also the independent pub web site **www.britishpubguide.com** which is now up and running. Over 400 pubs in the City and County of Bristol are featured, plus many in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, with pictures of virtually all! Visitors to the site can dynamically search for their favourite real ales and traditional ciders. It's a 'community' web site so comments, additions and updates are welcome.

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- ☐ **LETTERS** can be sent to: 
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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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