



AWARD-WINNING



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# PINTS WEST

Award-winning newsletter of the Bristol & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale

## What do these pubs have in common?



**The Old Green Tree, Bath (pictured)**  
**The King's Head, Bristol**  
**The Gin Palace, Old Market**  
**The Queen's Head, Willsbridge**  
**The Star Inn, Bath**

The answer is that they are all outstanding — take a peek inside to find out why

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

# Have you found it yet?

**THE HIDDEN BREWERY** seems aptly named. There have been some snippets of information in a previous edition of Pints West and visitors to our CAMRA Bristol Beer Festival earlier this year were able to try some Old Sarum, but beyond that most people have been unable to find out anything about it.

Well, we can now tell you a bit more about the new taste in the west.

The driving force behind the new brewery, located in rural Wiltshire, is Gary Lumber. Gary has been in the drinks industry all his working life and before founding the Hidden Brewery, was head brewer for an independent brewery for nine years. You may well have enjoyed the Oakhill beers he was responsible for.

The Hidden Brewery will be producing a range of cask conditioned real ales, and although it has only been running for a few

months, it already has two excellent products available.

**Old Sarum** is brewed to a strength of 4.1 per cent alcohol by volume (ABV) and is an aromatic, full-bodied, traditional bitter. **Quest**, at 4.2 per cent ABV, is a refreshing, single-hopped, light ale. Quest is the first of a range of products under the brand 'Froth & Nonsense', which will promote real ale with a modern twist!

The Hidden Brewery is working hard to secure its place in a challenging market, but with Gary's knowledge and determination, combined with high quality, unique products, we feel sure you will be seeing a lot more of the Hidden Brewery in the future.

Here are some tasting notes supplied by Gary for his two beers:

## **Old Sarum 4.1% ABV**

Traditional, well balanced bitter utilising a complex malt and hops combination. Aroma is floral/spicy, full-flavoured with dry bitterness. Colour is dark ruby brown.

## **Quest 4.2% ABV**

An amber coloured, fresh tasting bitter, with a malt background. This bitter has a fruity aroma, with a dry finish.

Both beers are cask conditioned for

ten days at brewery and once tapped should be served within four days by the retail outlet.

*Richard Brooks*

*(Some places where I believe I've spotted Hidden beers: Merchants Arms, Hope & Anchor, Bag O'Nails, Cornubia, Wellington. Ed.)*

Photo

Hope & Anchor  
advert

Hop Back and Coronation advert

Bell, Kingsdown  
advert

# Mixing beer with water

## In search of Real Ale around Bristol's Harbourside

SUMMER started early this year. We had some unusually warm weather during April, but apart from a rather disappointing May – by the end of which, in true British fashion, we were lamenting the passing of what had probably been this year's summer – a real flaming June was upon us, the sunniest on record since 1976. July, to date, has also made a promising start. So, with such a plethora of warm, balmy summer evenings to take advantage of, I set off on a quest in search of a nice cool pint around Bristol's harbourside.

In order to take full advantage of the early evening sun, first stop was the **Waterfront Tavern** (behind Jury's Hotel). Nice sunny location but only one real ale available at that time, Bath Ales Gem. We were advised, however, that a full range was likely to be available at weekends. One of our party (our Ed.) has a penchant for the traditional beer mug (you know, with a handle), but upon stating his preference he was offered a coffee mug by the inexperienced bartender. Anyway, the fact as to whether or not they had a beer mug proved immaterial as, because we wanted to sit outside, we had to make do with plastic glasses. The beer was good nevertheless.

Still wishing to take advantage of the evening sun, we wandered on to the **Arnolfini Gallery** café-bar. However, we were put off by the long queue protruding out of the establishment, but upon peering through the windows we noted Wadworth's 6X and Henry's IPA on the bar which might be worth a try, if you don't mind the wait. Another day perhaps.

And so, across Pero's bridge to the shady side of the water – to **Lloyds V Shed**. I was intrigued to understand why the 'V' in the name. Apparently, in a previous guise, a letter identified each warehouse along the waterfront.

Anyway, probably the best range of real ale was on offer here, with Butcombe Gold, Tanglefoot and Shepherd Neame's Spitfire, all at good prices but a bit on the cold side.

Just as I thought my quest for the evening was coming to an abrupt end as no other bar around there appeared to serve real ale, we called in at the **Watershed** as rumour had it that the café-bar might be serving something special. On offer was Bath Ales Gem and CAMRA's recent Champion Beer of Britain, Caledonian Deuchars IPA which was to die for. By far the best pint of the evening, just a shame you can't actually enjoy it outside, it being an upstairs venue. However, you could look out over the water. For connoisseurs of the continental 'wheat beer' style, the Watershed is perhaps the only bar in Bristol where you can enjoy Erdinger Weissbier on draught, which makes a nice change from the more well-known, but still pleasant, Hoegaarden.

A couple of weeks later, we set off around the Cumberland Basin end of the harbourside. First stop was the **Pump House**. Beer-wise, it has probably one of the best pints of Marston's Pedigree you will find in Bristol – after all, joint licensee, Chris Butler, was recently awarded Pedigree Beer Keeper of the year by the Union Pub Company. So proud is he of this accolade that Chris insisted on taking one of our party off to inspect the immaculate ground-floor 'cellar'. Chris believes in looking after his beers – in fact he keeps his Pedigree a full seven days conditioning in the cellar prior to putting it on sale. Also on offer was a 'guest' ale by Marston's called Old Empre IPA which has been extremely popular with locals, as well as Banks's Bitter. (Beers here are dispensed via a sparkler, but it may be removed if you ask.)

Not only has the pub won an award for its

beer, but it also boasts an award-winning celebrity chef, Ben Bartlett. Ben is about to represent Britain at the Kansas Royal International Barbecue Oscars, competing against 300 other teams for the barbecue crown. Ben's career began at a five-star hotel in Florence. He's also worked for Sir Terence Conran and has prepared meals for Nelson Mandela and other heads of state, as well as cooking at No. 10 Downing Street. The July Pump House Special Barbecue menu includes a wild'n' spicy ciabatta chicken, Caribbean calypso turkey fillet, and vegetable and fruit kebabs basted in bushman's tucker. What more could you want – good beer, a good barbecue, and all overlooking the water.

Moving on to a recently painted "terracotta" **Nova Scotia**, we have one of Bristol's most famous dockside pubs, full of atmosphere, with a rarely found snug area, mirrored back bar-drop and a decent range of real ales. Courage Best, Bass, Bateman's Swallow, Wickwar's Cotswold Way and Smiles Best were all available on the evening we were there. The Nova Scotia also offer Thatcher's real cider. The Folk Club still meets every other Monday and there's Irish music on Wednesdays.

Our final stop was the **Cottage**. Flowers IPA and Bass were the beers on offer – rather on the pricey side but then the location of this pub is second to none. As we sat outside, we took in views of the suspension bridge, Clifton Wood, the boats, the water, Cabot Tower – it was amazing just how much of our fair city you can see.

And so ended my quest in search of a cool pint around Bristol's harbourside.

*Alison Bridle*

*(What about the Ostrich? Ed.)*

Bear Inn, Wiveliscombe  
advert

Dorothy Inn, Weymouth  
advert

# CAMRA's National Inventory: featuring Britain's true Heritage pubs

**Calling for more recognition and protection for pubs with outstanding historical interiors.**

Of over 60,000 pubs in the UK, a mere 250 have interiors of outstanding heritage interest. The huge majority of pubs have undergone drastic alterations in recent years and less than four per cent have retained features of historic significance.

The 'National Inventory' (of outstanding historic pub interiors) has recently been released by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. It features 205 pubs with exceptional historic interiors and a further 43 pubs with particular internal features of national historic importance.

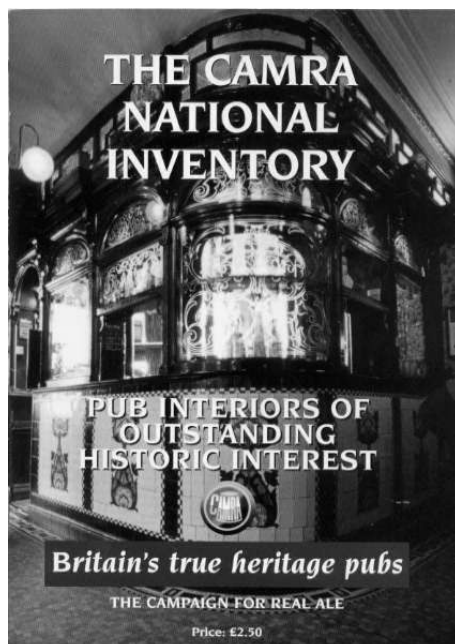
**Dave Gamston**, Chairman of CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group and Editor of the National Inventory said, "CAMRA fully appreciates that pubs have to survive in the real world of commercial pressures, adapting their business to modern needs, but all too often these pressures have led to 'change for change's sake', with wide-scale loss of historic internal features. Less than four per cent of the national pub stock remains unspoilt enough to be worthy of CAMRA's National Inventory, and holding on to these treasures is now a major conservation challenge. The National Inventory is about raising awareness of the problem with politicians, local authorities, pub companies and fellow consumers. It's also about celebrating the best of the pub heritage we have left".

The third edition of the National Inventory has been painstakingly compiled by CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group. It includes pubs from across the UK including Northern Ireland. Pubs are selected purely for their internal physical fabric and things such as beer quality or 'atmosphere' are not considered.

**CAMRA calls for more local authorities to protect pub interiors from unsympathetic alteration.**

A large number of National Inventory pubs are in statutorily 'listed' buildings – most of them at Grade II, which means their safeguarding is essentially entrusted to local planning authorities. In the past, local planning authorities have not always exercised their control powers with the same force to the insides as to the outsides of listed pub buildings, and this has contributed to the loss of many valuable pub interiors.

Not all historic pubs qualify for statutory listing, but they could benefit from inclusion in 'local lists' of the kind some local authorities already operate. CAMRA is calling for all local authorities to establish such lists, which can play a major part in influencing local planning policies and raising awareness about



locally-important historic buildings, including pubs. CAMRA believes that, at the present time, only about a third of local authorities choose to maintain such lists.

**Dr. Geoff Brandwood**, CAMRA and English Heritage Pubs Caseworker said, "Many pubs have interiors which are simple and unsophisticated and do not qualify for statutory listing, yet they are still of value to the people who use them and help to define the sense of local community. The local list initiative holds promise as a vehicle for protecting valuable local pubs and their historic interiors so that future generations can enjoy them".

**The Government is undertaking a review of building and area designation this year.**

This review is widely expected to place greater emphasis on character assessment of

localities, understanding what makes them special and the value local people attach to them, and through this process achieve greater engagement with local communities and their heritage.

Dr. Brandwood said, "Pubs need to be a central part of this process and CAMRA's National Inventory can be an important reference for planners and decision-makers in understanding which are the key historic pub buildings in a given locality".

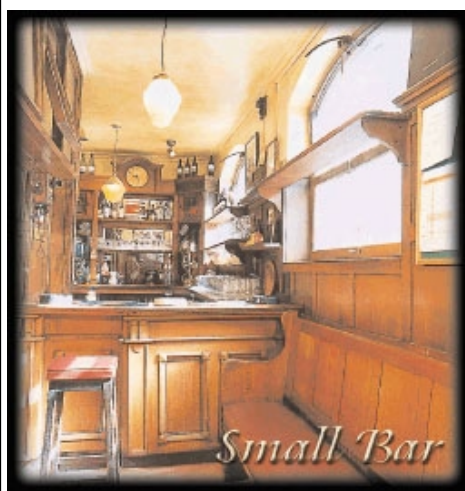
**Local authorities need greater resources for building conservation.**

A recent report from English Heritage has highlighted a shortage of resources within local planning authorities for dealing with the historic environment.

The report shows that 15 per cent of authorities have no Conservation Officer posts at all and three-quarters of conservation areas have no adopted character assessments. The report also found the influence of Conservation Officers within planning departments to be generally low.

Referring to the Government's policy document of December 2001 ('The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future') Dave Gamston said, "The Government is placing great importance upon conservation issues and character assessments in local planning. Yet there seems to be no plan at all to provide the necessary resources for planning authorities to action what is preached. Things clearly need to change if building conservation at the local level is to stand a chance of being successful."

**The CAMRA National Inventory of pub interiors of outstanding historic interest is available from CAMRA, priced £2.50. Visit the national CAMRA web site at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) or call 01727-867201 or email [camra@camra.org.uk](mailto:camra@camra.org.uk).**



Two views of the inside of the Star Inn

# Five outstanding pubs in our area

## Old Green Tree

**Green Street, Bath**

01225 448259

Mon-Sat 11-11

Sun 12-10.30

The Old Green Tree is a typical early 18th century Georgian terrace building but the interior is all of a piece.

It was refurbished in a very restrained way in 1928 and retains a complete ensemble of good-quality panelling in the two rooms and the drinking lobby in front of the servery.

There are wood-block floors in the drinking lobby and rear bar, and original fireplaces from the 1928 scheme.

The doors still bear the numbers which were used to identify the rooms for licensing purposes (1 = lounge, 2 = bar, etc.).

The pub, a free house selling an excellent selection of real ales, is Grade II listed.

## Star Inn

**The Vineyards, Bath**

01225 425072

[www.star-inn-bath.co.uk](http://www.star-inn-bath.co.uk)

Mon-Thu 12-2.30, 5.30-11

Fri 12-3, 5-11

Sat 12-11

Sun 12-10.30

The Star Inn is a wonderful, multi-room pub forming part of a Georgian terrace.

Outside it is a severe, plain building of four storeys, faced with smooth local stone.

Inside you meet a sequence of four rooms. They were fitted out in two main campaigns, one probably at the end of the 19th century, the other about 1928. It is not difficult to work out which is which.

The main doorway leads to a lobby and left of this is a lounge with a rear alcove. This room has extensive panelling of 1928. To the right of the lobby you come to a small snug with fixed seating along the street wall.

Opposite is a timber screen with glazed panels over which separates the snug from a public room behind, known as the 'Glass Room': this has a wonderful drop-down shove halfpenny board and fixed seating.

A further screen in front of the public bar: this has more fixed seating and a counter which is returned to provide a bar counter for the snug.

The servery is largely inter-war work. On the extreme right of the pub is a corridor with serving hatch for outdoor sales. There are plans on the walls showing the creation of the left-hand room in 1928 and minor changes following war damage in 1942.

The pub, owned by local Abbey Ales, is Grade II listed.

## King's Head

**Victoria Street, Bristol**

0117 927 7860

Mon-Tue 11-3, 5-11

Wed-Fri 11-11

Sat 7.30-11

Sun 12-3, 7-10.30

The King's Head is a wonderful pub with any interesting history.

The building itself goes back to the middle of the seventeenth century and the interior was refurbished about 1865 and again probably about the turn of the nineteenth century.

Inside there is one long room stretching from front to back with the counter on the right-hand side. The counter and superb bar back seem to be of about 1865 (the counter top, however, is of 1998).

It is obvious that at one time the counter ran further to the rear than it does now because of the way the bar back continues. At this time, apart from the small seated area at the front under the window, it was probably a stand-up only drinking establishment.

Then it was decided to increase the seating area, hence the installation of what is popularly called the 'Tramcar Bar' towards the rear as an enclosed space with seating round the sides. It has bell-pushes for waiter service.

Do take a close look at the splendid detail of the bar back with its high-level panels advertising various drinks and large glass panel in gold, green, cream and red advertising 'BURTON ALES AND DUBLIN STOUT' (signed by one, Fred Brean). There is also matchboard dado panelling along the left-hand side.

## Palace Hotel

**West Street, Old Market, Bristol**

0117 9540100

Mon-Thur 5-11

Fri-Sat 12-11

Sun 12-10.30

The Palace Hotel is listed in the Appendix for a superb bar-back: round arched, twisted, hollow brass columns. In the spandrels there are glass roundels with an eagle surrounded by a belt bearing the emblem 'Strength' (of what is this the emblem?).

There is a spectacular cornice below the ceiling, but otherwise modern furnishings. Bath Ales' excellent beers are on sale here.

A little history: it was built by one John Sharp who was a wine, spirits and porter dealer in Christmas Street until 1870. By 1871 he had moved to West Street and this



The Palace Hotel (Gin Palace)

new, purpose-built building.

You can still detect his name in the fascia outside. Sharp remained here until 1875 but in 1876 a Thomas Morgan was listed here.

From 1880 to 1885 we have Blacker Bros, spirit dealers, on the site: in 1887 the Palace name appears in the directories for the first time when the occupant was Mrs Blacker.

A story is put about that the building is a grand one because it was destined as a new hotel for a railway that was going to arrive nearby – this is the same sort of nonsense surrounding the building of Crocker's Folly in London (another Appendix entry): this story falsely explains the eagle roundels as the insignia of the Midland Railway Company. (*Well that certainly told us! True? Ed.*)

## Queen's Head

**Bath Road, Willsbridge**

The Queen's Head is a seventeenth-century building with a large eighteenth-century extension at the front.

The centrally placed front door leads to a corridor with the public bar on the right, all very simply furnished.

Behind tongue-and-grooved boarding is a further public room, and there is a third room at the rear.

The pub is a Grade II listed building.

# You want White Friar? . . . . . . then you've got White Friar!

ABBEEY ALES, the brewery of Bath, spent a number of weeks recently asking their customers to vote on the internet for their choice of the next special beer to be brewed by the company.

The demand for the prize-winning Bellringer usually occupies all of Abbey's brewing capacity, but an occasional beer is brewed by head brewer, Martin Langham whenever possible. However, the choice of beer always seems to suit some more than others!

"We are often asked to produce more occasional beers", said Managing Director, Alan Morgan, "but we are always struggling to keep up with the demand for Bellringer. When Martin does manage to schedule in a new brew, people always want their own particular favourite! By voting on our web site they were able to influence Martin's decision!"

By early July the lines were closed, the votes were in, and the mash tun poised — and Abbey Ales drinkers had decided, albeit by a narrow margin, for White Friar to be Abbey Ales' next occasional beer.

"Originally called Jubilation, it was first produced to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 2002," said Alan. "At that time Jubilation proved so popular that there was not

a drop left for the Jubilee banquet held at the Guildhall and attended by Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh. Fortunately, the Duke enjoyed Abbey's prize-winning Bellringer instead and actually went on to compliment this fine local ale!"

White Friar is a pale, straw-coloured, golden, hoppy, strong best bitter brewed to a strength of 5 per cent ABV, which looks set to be a big hit with local drinkers, and should already be available in Bath's pubs.

Voting on the Abbey Ales web site ([www.abbeyales.co.uk](http://www.abbeyales.co.uk)) resulted in 28 per cent opting for White Friar, and 25 per cent choosing its brother (ha ha) beer, Black Friar. Another 25 per cent wanted Bath Star whilst a further 21 per cent asked for Chorister. "Presumably the missing one per cent weren't sober enough to vote!" suggested Alan.

Alan said he felt that drinkers had made a good choice in White Friar, which as a much stronger ale is the perfect companion to session bitter, Bellringer on the pub bar.

Bellringer is the only continually produced beer at the brewery, and since being launched in 1997, this golden, hoppy 4.2 per cent best bitter has continued to win awards every year,

making it Bath's top selling cask beer.

Alan is very proud of his web site. "We have always done good business on the web thanks to our excellent web site, designed for us by Bath's local web company Moonshine Internet Solutions. It was they who originally suggested the idea for on-line voting to us.

"Our site has proved so popular, that we regularly receive orders for Bellringer in a box plus Abbey Ales' other merchandise such as T-shirts, etc., from all over the country."

Abbey Ales brewery, which started in 1997 and is based in Camden Row, has long been looking to expand due to its rapid growth but finding suitable premises has been a continual problem.

"We wish to stay in Bath because we are proud to be part of the City. Moving out is simply not on the agenda. However, we have found it very difficult to find suitable premises. What is even more upsetting is seeing local pubs such as the Windsor Castle close down. What could have been converted to a new brewery is now an eyesore would have been ideal for us, and we feel we could have kept it open and developed the pub as well," Alan added. And so the search must go on...

Star Inn, Bath advert

Abbey Ales Bellringer advert



# Shine on South Gloucestershire

As part of his research for the forthcoming Bristol Pub Guide 2004, Duncan Shine is visiting over 700 pubs and bars in the Bristol area. In a slightly off-beat report, he looks at the real ale situation in some of the villages to the North West of the City.

*Full details and photographs of all the pubs mentioned can be found on the [www.britishpubguide.com](http://www.britishpubguide.com) web site.*

**Picture the scene** — you find yourself heading round the A4174 ring road near Emersons Green, your partner has agreed to be the designated driver, and you fancy a pint. But what pubs are going to satisfy your frankly rather stringent taste criteria? You pull into a lay-by for a glance at the CAMRA Good Beer Guide. As if from nowhere, a shambling, slightly jaded looking figure approaches your car, and clears his throat...

"Down in Shortwood is the **Bridge Inn**," he says. "The beers are 6X, Courage Best and Bass, but the Cheddar Valley and Taunton Traditional ciders are a better bet. Or you could head for Pucklechurch. First pub you get to is the **Fleur De Lys**. You'll get Bass, 6X or Smiles Best in there. Or there's the **Rose & Crown**. That's a Wadworth house, and the 6X is as good as anywhere in the area. Henry's I.P.A., that new 'JCB' and Bass are also on handpump. Best bet, I reckon, is the Star Inn though".

It strikes you that you're listening to all this in a lay-by and wasting valuable drinking time. Before you know it, your shambling guide has jumped in the back and offers to show you the way. He guides you to Pucklechurch village green and the **Star Inn**. In you go to the single bar, where you choose the Bass. The lady serving brings it from the cellar in a jug, and it tastes divine. Your guide chooses from the three traditional ciders (Cheddar Valley, Taunton Traditional and Thatcher's Dry) and you settle down in the suntrap conservatory. Your guide continues...

"From here, you could head for Westerleigh. You've got two pubs there. The **New Inn** is a Greene King house, so they'll have I.P.A. and Abbot Ale on; while the **Olde Inn** — 750 years old since you ask — has Bass, Fuller's London Pride and Worthington Cask". You wonder whether 'Worthington Cask' is an oxymoron.



"Come with me" he says, downing his cider. You neck your pint, your partner leaves the diet sparkling mineral water with a hint of stinging nettle, and you're back on the road. You come out opposite the **Swan**

at Nibley.

"You could do a lot worse than there. OK, so the Bass, Courage Best and Speckled Hen may not be exciting enough for the likes of you, but you'll get a top pint of BOB. Turn left here, though. Look out for the **New Inn** on the left, and we'll stop there."

You are now technically in Mayshill, and you bang your head on the low door frame as you enter. There are three real ales on handpump; the Bass lives there, while the other two are weekly rotating guests from the Cask 100 scheme. On the day of your visit there is London Pride, and Brakspear Bitter. You and your guide choose your favourites, while your partner chooses a Lychee and Kumquat J2O. The quick turnover of beers ensures you get a top quality pint.

And so your odyssey continues through Mayshill opposite the New Inn, down some impossibly winding lanes until you reach Iron Acton. You by-pass the **White Hart** (a Hungry Horse pub offering Greene King I.P.A., Abbot and Speckled Hen), narrowly reject the **Lamb Inn** (where the BOB is excellent, and supplemented by Bass, 6X and Best Bitters from Smiles and Courage, but you can't pop in to every pub on one trip), and stop off at the **Rose and Crown**. To be fair you already knew about this little gem from your Good Beer Guide, but you are reassured to know that the Bass, Pedigree and Uley's superb Old Spot and Pig's Ear have now been supplemented by Taylor Landlord in place of the Flowers I.P.A. You wonder whether Madonna will be popping in. Your partner has a ginger beer with a slice of New Zealand Kiwi Fruit.



Although your partner is beginning to get a little impatient, you press on with a whistle stop tour of Winterbourne. You by-pass the **Swan Inn** and its Young's Bitter; the completely rebuilt **Wheatsheaf** and its 6X, Bombardier and Courage Best; the **George & Dragon**'s Courage Best, and the **Royal Oak**, which now appears to be an Indian restaurant called the Royal Raj. On the outskirts of Winterbourne the **Golden Heart** (Bass, 6X, Worthington Draught — as distinct from Worthington Cask, go figure — and Smiles Original Dry), and the **Masons Arms** in Watleys End (Bass, Courage Best) both whiz by in a blur.

Instead, you stop at the **Cross Hands** in Winterbourne Down. Taunton Traditional and Addlestone's Cask Cider attract your guide's attention, while you choose from the range of three resident ales (Bass, Courage Best and Speckled Hen) and two guests

(Church End Fallen Angel and 'Pulling Power', brewed specially for Elite Drinks). Landlord Pete Hughes tells you that they change the guests as often as they sell 'em, so your partner — drinking a half pint of semi-skimmed milk with an umbrella in it — makes a note to return here when you're driving.

Your guide suggests a trip to Frampton Cottrell and, with an air of resignation, your partner agrees, and so your trip ends in a small village with an admirable six pubs. The **Star Inn** offers Courage Best and Worthington Cask Ale, while the **Golden Lion** boasts Greene King's I.P.A., Abbot and Speckled Hen. The **Western Coach House**, with its Smiles Original, Adnam's Broadside and Bass, is a little out of the way, and you also give the **Live and Let Live** a miss, foregoing the Young's Bitter, Special and Triple A as well as the guest ale from Smiles.

Your own vague recollection of excellent pints past takes you to the **Rising Sun**, where you are rewarded with a pint of Dark Star Landlord's Wit — the guest beer on when you visit — rather than the excellent Bass, Butcombe, 6X and Wickwar Cooper's W.P.A. Your partner has a cranberry and lucozade spritzer.



"And now," says your guide "for the best of the bunch". He is referring to the **Globe Inn** on Church Road. You'd heard that Sue and Bruce Schofield had made real advances since refurbishing it a while back. What greets you is manna from heaven. As well as being sympathetically decorated, warm and welcoming, the pub has a top-notch selection of ales. OK, there are the ubiquitous Bass and Courage Best, with Butcombe Bitter as the other resident, but the three guests convince you to add this to your list of 'must-visits'. Beers from regional and micro-breweries all over the country seem to feature, with Gale's H.S.B., Hop Back Summer Lightning and Sid Slocombe's Golden Globe on when you visit. The guest beers change quickly and you and your guide stay long enough to confirm that all are in superb condition. Your partner is by now reduced to sucking on a damp J-cloth.

The next thing you remember is waking up some hours later. On your dining room table are two notes. One is from your partner, who has left you for a seventeen year old who has just passed their driving test. The second note is from your Guide. It just says: "Thanks for all the drinks. Do you mind if I write about our little session for the next issue of Pints West?"

*Duncan Shine*

Annexe Inn, Bishopston  
advert

Wadworth JCB advert

# When Roger met Carol

**IT is with great sadness that we report the death, in early July, of Roger Morgan, landlord of the Annexe Inn, Bishopston.**

Roger met Carol, his wife, when she was landlady of the Horseshoe in Filton. Following their marriage, a most successful partnership was formed in terms of pub management and when they arrived as relief managers back in 1993, owner Paul Bird, had no hesitation in asking them to stay, and they did.

Roger cared passionately about his beer and took the Annexe into CAMRA's Good Beer Guide in 1997. He and Carol willingly supported many of CAMRA's campaigns, particularly during the 'Save the Courage Bristol Brewery campaign' when they collected many signatures for our petition.

Roger will be sorely missed by the regulars and customers of the Annexe and our thoughts go out to Carol and the family at this very sad time.

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**A tavern is ...  
the busy man's recreation,  
the idle man's business,  
the melancholy man's sanctuary,  
the stranger's welcome,  
the scholar's kindness,  
and the citizen's courtesy.**

*John Earle (1601 - 1665)*

Bag O'Nails, Hotwells  
advert



# On tour with the branch

THERE is no more successful local brewery than **Butcombe**. Currently brewing four and a half million pints per year, the brewery is now in the hands of Guy Newell, a man who is no stranger to real ale as he was behind the highly successful Beer Seller wholesale company.

Big decisions lie ahead, and Guy is clearly set to continue the great work at Butcombe started by the brewery's founder, Simon Whitmore.

Further increases of production will take the brewery out of the reduced duty band, which it currently enjoys, so there will have to be considerable sales increases to make this worthwhile.

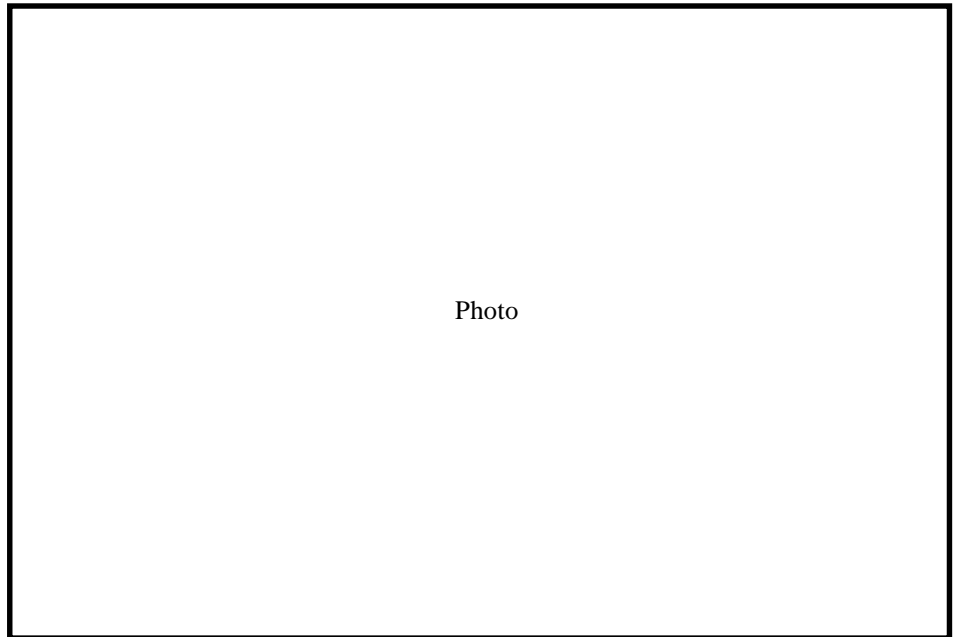
There is also talk of relocating the brewery (it is after all currently on the land of the Whitmore home!), of bottling some of the beer, and possibly more beers being produced.

The welcome at Butcombe brewery is as warm as ever – and we'd like to thank Guy for his excellent hospitality on our recent visit – and, of course, the beer is still as good as ever!

At the other end of the scale is **Blindman's Brewery** in Leighton, a small hamlet between Frome and Shepton Mallet. David Capps-Tunwell and his charming wife run the whole of the operation, from brewing to distribution, the only help being from the brewery cat!

Having already made a positive impression with **Mine Beer**, a second brew was then brewed to complement it – **Golden Spring** at 4.2 per cent ABV is, as its name suggests, a tasty, golden beer with a satisfying hoppiness.

The brewery is in picturesque settings, situated in a barn in a farm complex, and for



Photo

Branch chairman Richard Brooks (right) presents the Cider of the Festival award to Iain and David

making large beer deliveries a horsebox is sometimes used! On our recent visit, as the weather was fine we talked for a while in the yard, and then after a sample of the new beer it was off to the splendidly named "**Pub at Wanstrow**" for a chance to sit down and chat over more good beer. A more pleasant evening could hardly be imagined.

At the 2003 Bristol Beer Festival, the Cider of the Festival award was won by the very pleasing **Strummer** from **Stoneheads** cider producers, which proved to be a very distinctive (and powerful!) cider.

We were subsequently invited up to the **Crown at Axbridge** to meet Iain and David,

the two men behind Stoneheads. We were fortunate to be able to try some of their new production, this time named *Squirrel*. This is a dryish, more traditional offering than Strummer, but is just as enjoyable and, as is the way with traditional cider, it packs quite a punch! Iain and David have been able to indulge in many a drinker's wish, to make their own cider, and all who have tried it will vouch for their success.

The hospitality of the Crown was much appreciated. We spent much time drinking cider leaving very little time for the pub's beer! We must pay another visit sometime to sample what looked like a good selection of real ales.

*Phil Cummings*

## The price of beer

THE issue of beer prices is always something of a contentious one. There are many factors that appear to impact on the price at the bar, including ownership of the pub – with particular regard to whether the outlet is a brewery-owned pub, part of a pub-chain or a genuine free house.

For example, licensees of tied pubs often complain that they do not enjoy the benefits from their own brewery that the same brewery will offer by way of discounts to the free trade and pub owning chains. Then there are regional variations, local taxation issues, etc.

Earlier this year, CAMRA carried out its national pub prices survey. This indicated that across the country, the price of both real

ale and lager have increased roughly in line with inflation for the previous twelve months. So, real ale is still good value at £1.98 per pint nationally, compared to lager at £2.17.

The North West of England is still the cheapest region with real ale averaging £1.75 (£1.98 for lager). Perhaps, not surprisingly, the South East is the most expensive region where a pint of real ale will set you back £2.15 (£2.35 for lager).

It should be noted that the survey was completed prior to the Chancellor adding 1p to duty on beer (shame on you Gordon, boo!). Also, within the regions there can be tremendous variance in the price of a pint. For example, Holts of Manchester are

famous for retailing their beers in their own estate at prices that are substantially lower than anywhere else, even in the North West.

Now, is it my imagination, or in Bristol have we seen price increases far in excess of 1p on a pint? Prices for real ale in many Bristol pubs now appear to be more akin to those in the South East. We seem to have seen substantial increases in recent months and it now seems commonplace to be paying around £2.15 and £2.25 for a pint of ale, often more. Indeed, drinking a pint in some of the city centre, Whiteladies Road and harbourside pubs can set you back between £2.35 and £2.50.

At least I'm glad I drink real ale. With an average pre-budget price in the South West region of £2.02p this still compares favourably with lager and keg cider at £2.18 and keg stout, e.g. Guinness, etc., at £2.36.

*Pete Bridle*

# Wookey Hole Inn – Pub of the Year

THIS year's Bristol and District CAMRA Pub of the Year is situated on the very edge of the area that we are responsible for (which corresponds roughly with the former county of Avon).

The Wookey Hole Inn is situated directly opposite the famous Wookey Hole caves, just outside Wells in Somerset. When arriving in Wookey Hole do not confuse it with the Wookey Hole Club nearby.

Until the year 2000 the pub was an unremarkable Usher's outlet – then it was purchased and completely transformed by Mark Hey. Mark owned a pub in Southend in Essex, which he has since sold. Mark employed Rob Garbutt and his French wife Ginie to manage the pub along with a great staff team. He spotted potential in the pub, but was not content to go for the standard "nice old country pub with good food" formula. Instead he really did dare to be different in every way.

He started by introducing a range of eight draught and a dozen bottled Belgian beers, four ever-changing real ales from micro-breweries, unusual British and European keg products, plus food that is unsurpassed in my humble view by any other pub that I know. All of this in an atmosphere that, thanks to an eclectic mix of furniture and lighting mixed with laid back music, oozes charm.

One of their real ales is now known as "Wook Ale", which is brewed by Milk Street brewery in Frome. The others on offer could be almost anything, but are always served in top condition from the impeccable cellar.

The Belgian beers include Liefmans Frambozen (a 5 per cent raspberry beer that is loved by even non-beer drinkers and seems to appeal to women especially), and the wonderful L' Achouffe, which is a kind of spiced wheat beer and weighs in at an incredible 8.4 per cent whilst tasting more like 4.4 per cent! These beers are best ordered in smaller sizes as a pint is both dangerously strong and somewhat expensive!

The menu is changed daily, is different at lunchtime and in the evening, and features much organic and local produce. Main courses for lunch include various open sandwiches, and antipasto type dishes, plus home made burgers and sausages, and are priced at a very reasonable £6 to £9 for generous portions. Dinner is a more elaborate affair without being in any way formal and usually involves about six to eight choices of starter and dessert, and eight to ten main courses (with booking advisable).

Each dish is strikingly original and inventive and often includes unusual ingredients. They are always cooked to perfection in the kitchen which is clearly visible from the bar. Starters range from about £4 or £6 except for the huge antipasto dishes (big enough for two to share) at £10 each, and main courses tend to be between £12 and £17 each. For food this good it is well worth it.

A couple of examples from the menu are

"maize fed chicken breast stuffed with red onion marmalade and garlic, served with rich red wine reduction and mash" or "grilled yellow fin tuna with chipotle marinade and avocado salsa". Not your average pub grub!

Because the food is very popular seats for drinkers can be at a premium at times, although you are always welcome just to call in for a drink.

It's less of a problem in good weather as the superb garden, with its seating for 100 people, comes into play. There is also the "pink room" which is a small side area painted shocking pink, which can be used as an area for up to 14 people to dine privately or as somewhere for a quiet drink.

The Wookey Hole Inn also has five letting rooms upstairs, and whilst I do not personally know anybody that has used them, I have seen the rooms. As with the rest of the pub, they are strikingly original. Each is designed and furnished totally originally and they feature TV, video and hi-fi equipment, with a selection of cult movies, plus play stations.

Rob and Ginie have worked really hard to run the Wookey and make it the very popular and successful place that it has become. It was therefore very sad for us to discover, literally minutes after telling them of this award, that they were leaving on 5<sup>th</sup> July this year. They are moving to France to run their own gites (a kind of guest house). We wish them every success and a very happy future and thank them for all that they did.

The good news is that Mark Hey continues to own the business and has pledged to change nothing – he has employed Ashley Harlow as manager and he worked alongside Rob and Ginie for about five weeks before they left (unusual to get such a hand-over period in the pub trade). Ashley ran a pub in Wiltshire for some time and then worked at the highly rated Hotel Du Vin in Birmingham. He has stated

Photo

that he wishes to maintain the excellent formula and is delighted that he can offer real ale as part of the package, which he couldn't do at the hotel. Good luck Ashley – you have a hard act to follow. When we visited last week everything seemed as good as before though.

The other piece of good news is that Mark has recently opened a sister pub/hotel – the Devonshire Angel in Long Sutton near Somerton in Somerset. This offers four real ales plus 18 quality European beers on draught and is a conversion of a 14<sup>th</sup> century hotel. We look forward to visiting it soon.

What makes the Wookey stand out is that it would clearly be prosperous, even if it did not sell real ale at all. The food, ambience and foreign beers would still draw crowds. However it chooses to showcase real ale, from small independent brewers, and in doing so introduces it to many people who might otherwise never eat or drink at places selling it. This is exactly the kind of thing that CAMRA is trying to achieve nationally in moving away from the "beards and woolly sweater" image and we need more places like it.

I have personally taken two separate groups of people outside of CAMRA for an evening meal there (Staple Hill Cricket Club and a group of old school friends celebrating a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday) and all absolutely loved the place. The Wookey Hole Inn is therefore a very deserving winner of the 2003 Pub Of The Year award.

*Opening hours: Monday to Saturday 12-2.30 and 6-11 (late license for diners at weekends); Sunday 12-3.30 (closed Sunday evening)*

*Telephone: 01749 - 676677*

*Web site: [www.wookeyholeinn.com](http://www.wookeyholeinn.com)*

*(includes sample menus)*

*Email: [mail@wookeyholeinn.com](mailto:mail@wookeyholeinn.com)*

*Vince Murray*

Photo by Phil Cummings

# Highbury Vaults

## runner-up

THE Highbury Vaults, on St. Michael's Hill, is the runner-up in the Bristol and District branch of CAMRA's 2003 Pub of the Year competition. It is a traditional British pub situated in the Kingsdown area of Bristol close to the University and the Maternity Hospital.

Until a few years ago it was owned by Smiles but it was bought by London brewer Young's when they took over most of the Smiles estate. It now obviously stocks a range of Young's beers – Bitter, Triple A, Special and either Waggledance or Winter Warmer depending on the season. However Smiles Best and Heritage, and Brains SA are still big sellers here (for a long time it was the only pub in Bristol that sold the SA).

The entrance door leads into a corridor with a small cosy front room off to the right before opening up to the main wooden panelled and floored main bar and subdivided drinking area.

Going on past the bar billiards table will lead to the garden. This partly covered and high-walled extension to the pub has patio heaters and is as popular in the winter as it is in the summer. The toilets are at the foot of a flight of steep stairs off the entrance corridor.

Handpumps greet you as you approach the bar with the lager and other fonts hidden down below the counter top – the chalked up beer list which ends with "and begrudgingly Fosters, Stella..." bears testament to the fact that it is predominantly a real ale pub. Whilst food is served each lunchtime and in the early evenings (except Saturday and Sunday), it does not dominate the place as it can do in some places. The menu offers a choice of some ten or so simple, good value, home-produced meals.

It is good to see that a pub so close to the university, and with several others at close hand, does not have to resort to loud music, large screen televisions or gaming machines to attract customers – just good quality real ale.

Licensee Bradd, who has been in charge for eight or nine years now, is ably assisted by a team of young, friendly and enthusiastic bar staff who enjoy chatting to customers new and old – just don't ask silly questions.

The Highbury Vaults can be found at the top of St. Michael's Hill and is on the number 9 route that runs from Temple Meads station to Redland and back.

*Pete Tanner*

Photo

**Pictured left to right : Richard Brooks (CAMRA chairman),  
Rob Garbutt, Ginnie Garbutt and Mark Hey**

Photo

**Wookey Hole personnel with some of the CAMRA well-wishers  
(somewhere amongst them is the Pints West editor)**

# Good beer, good books, and a castle: weekend breaks from Bristol

**THE early May bank holiday weekend saw us touring the Wye and Warwickshire areas, combining what might otherwise have been two separate weekends away. We went in search of good books and good beer, which we found in plenty. We also found some great places to stay, good food and some excellent wine, all within an easy and very picturesque drive from Bristol. On our way home, we stumbled across the Big Apple cider competition in Putley ... but more of that later.**

## The Talbot at Knightwick, Worcester

We set off from Bristol up the M5 and turned left at Malvern to head for Knightwick. Set in a small village by the Teme river, The Talbot is run by sisters Annie and Wiz Clift and has a name as much for its locally-sourced and adventurous food as for the Teme Valley Brewery located behind the pub. Despite its enthusiastic write-up in CAMRA's *Room at the Inn* guidebook, it's always slightly daunting going into a village pub where everyone knows everyone else – except you: but our welcome couldn't have been friendlier.

The inn has a lovely cosy bar with lots of wood and a huge fireplace and semi-circular range. There is a much larger and less-characterful drinking area off this, although in the summer the glass doors to the patio with pergola must make this the more attractive option.

The bar serves local Old Orchard cider and a range of Teme Valley beers, interestingly named as This (3.7%), That (4.1%), T'Other (3.5%). The seasonal Fool's Gold (4.5%) was also available. We perused the local CAMRA newsletter (Pint Taken, Worcestershire branch) whilst we tasted the beers.

A separate restaurant in a lofty room with sky lights offers a quieter atmosphere than the pub, although both pub and restaurant serve the same menu. The food (we had fish) was very good, with some unusual local herbs and wild flowers (edible) as garnish. A fantastic fat, buttery Argentinian Chardonnay made my evening.

Teme Valley beers (including Wotever Next?) are also available in bottles, together with some excellent wines, from Knightwick Wines, also behind the pub (limited opening hours, check before travelling). Accommodation at The Talbot is in comfortable rooms – ours had a view to the front over the river bridge and surrounding countryside. The kippers and poached eggs we had for breakfast were equally fine.

## The Blue Boar, Kilverts and Old Black Lion, Hay-on-Wye

We could have headed off to Elgar country and the Teme Valley tour, taking in Malvern on the way, but kept to our plan to make: Hay-on-Wye.

Having left our wines and beers for collection on the way home, we drove the 45 minutes to Hay-on-Wye through the glorious countryside of the Wye Valley. This market town is one of my favourite haunts, and second-hand and antiquarian book heaven. After a couple of hours browsing some of the bookshops, we headed to The Blue Boar (Castle Street) for much-needed refreshment.

We've been here several times before – although not since the front bar area was remodelled, without losing too much of its character. As well as a fairly open drinking area, there are many oddly-shaped corners and alcoves to hide away in. Tables and chairs have the patina of old wood: a comfortable place serving Brains SA and Greene King IPA on this visit.

Unusually, the pub has a cafe attached (with separate seating) – if you want to partake of the snacks, soups and sandwiches on offer, you can buy from the cafe and eat in the pub.

More book-buying (and CD-buying, as there was a CD fair in the market place) left us in need of a rest, so we found our hotel (Kilverts, on The Bullring in the heart of Hay-on-Wye) and after a short respite, headed for the bar. This was a welcome surprise – a pub rather than the usual hotel bar, very busy and buzzing, lots more old wood and more friendly people. Beers on offer: Hancocks HB, Reverend James and Butty Bach. We ate in the hotel restaurant that evening – another great meal accompanied by a good Merlot. Our room here overlooked one of the small streets of Hay and was big and airy.

We went for an after-dinner stroll to the Old Black Lion (Lion Street), also listed in *Room at the Inn*, but full when we enquired for that weekend. Recently refurbished, this is another fine place for drinking and (we assume) eating and staying.

The bar isn't huge, but painted in a deep burgundy red with lots of dark wooden furniture and solid armchairs, it exudes comfort and style.

Mine host sported a quite splendid moustache – one to rival Gordon's at the Bag O'Nails in Bristol. A Wye Valley brewery beer is available as the house beer (house wines are also good). We were a little tired by this time, so didn't stay too long – a place to visit again soon.

## Bowling Green Inn, Old Fourpenny Shop, Cape of Good Hope: Warwick

After more kippers and eggs at Kilverts, in a room overlooking the lovely gardens, we headed off to Warwick – rather a long way round for the route home, but this was two weekends in one with the Bank Holiday, and I'd never been to Warwick Castle ... On arrival in Warwick (after another long but lovely drive), we went straight to the Castle and spent a good few hours in the sunshine enjoying the Castle's attractions (morris men, archers, falconry, state rooms, wax works, armoury, etc etc.).

By 4 p.m. we were once more in need of a drink, so wandered Warwick to find one of its many pubs that we *a)* fancied the look of and *b)* was open at that time on a Sunday afternoon. Some served only Tetley, with others variously offering Old Speckled Hen and Courage Best. The Bowling Green Inn was a good find, friendly, with several drinking areas and a big garden. Charles Wells Bombardier and IPA were good. Here we picked up *The Beer and Ragged Staff* newsletter of the Heart of Warwickshire CAMRA branch which helpfully identified some more places to try.

The first of these was another *Room at the Inn* listing that wasn't available for that weekend, The Old Fourpenny Shop in Crompton Street. Not surprisingly perhaps as it had six real ales on handpulls, a pleasant bar (but no food on Sundays) and very helpful staff and customers. Available were RCH Pitchfork, Church End Goats Milk, Greene King IPA, Abbot Ale, Weatheroak Redwood and a Bridgewater beer who's name I can't remember.

My halves were served in a stemmed glass (I wish pubs in Bristol would do this – so much nicer to drink from than the standard half glass) and staff were happy to remove the sparklers before serving. They and their customers were also very helpful in directing us to our next port of call – we all decided in the end that a taxi was probably the best bet rather than getting lost round the back of the race course!

The Cape of Good Hope was another gem, right on the canalside, with seating on the towpath. A large lounge (more big old wooden tables and chairs) also serves as an eating area – for some excellent big, tasty meals – whilst the bar canalside has a pool table and a hatch for outside serving.

Weatheroak Lock, Stock & Barrel was on gravity here. The pub is obviously popular with people taking narrow-boats along the canal – two groups of eight, obviously regulars, stopped off for dinner and drinks while we were there.



We finally headed for our bed at the King's Head, just off the central area of Warwick. A traditional pub that's been given a bit of a make-over, with a tapestry room one side of the bar, a music room the other. Warwickshire Best Bitter served here, but sadly not at its best on our visit – although the pub was very quiet, suggesting that perhaps the locals had themselves gone away for the weekend. Our room was comfortable and breakfast filling.

To round off the long weekend – and ensure we travelled by the most circuitous routes – we drove back from Warwick to Knightwick to collect our wines and beers. We picked up a leaflet advertising the Big Apple cider competition in Putley and decided to call in on our way home ... but that diversion aside, the Wye Valley and Warwickshire areas are well worth a visit and both are an easy drive out from Bristol through great countryside to good beer and other attractions to suit many tastes.

*Lesly Huxley*

## Big Apple cider competition - Putley



WE almost gave up trying to find this tiny place near Ledbury: we'd circled it, hill-climbing narrow country lanes, several times, before finally turning to leave and finding the village hall and Big Apple signs in front of us.

We weren't sure what to expect, but parked up in the designated field and wandered in out of the bright afternoon sunshine to the dark of the village hall. It could have been a mirage – as our eyes adjusted, row upon row of demijohns and bottles glowing gold, honey, russet and pale straw came into focus, as did the fifty or sixty people jostling for space (and tastings).

Blossom Time in Putley is a "celebration of English apples and cider in the Herefordshire parishes of Marcle Ridge". What looked like 200 or more draught and bottled ciders and perries had been subjected to careful judging over the previous days, and the winners – together with all contenders – were available for tasting and, in some cases, purchase.

As I was driving, my indulgence in tasting was limited – although apple juices were also available as small compensation.

We tasted to determine which we would buy, focusing in on Gwatkin of Abbey Dore for Oldfield Perry, Scrumpy Cider (very good) and Rat's Tail (one of my favourites), Oliver's of Ocle Pychard for draught perry and a fine Kingston Black as well as a champagne cider; Munsley (near Ledbury) for another perry and Brook Apple Farm (Rendcomb, Cirencester) for several different ciders, including a Kingston Black with rum and a sparkle, another without.

So, after our long weekend away, our car was very laden with cases of wine and beer from Knightwick, and draught and bottled cider and perry in some quantity from Putley. We've still to finish some of the bottled cider, including the champagne cider from Oliver's, as visits to local cider pubs in Bristol and Day's Cottage dry cider from Bristol's farmers' market keep us supplied with some excellent ciders.

Still, thank goodness it's not too long to go to October, when Blossom Time celebrates harvest and CAMRA's first dedicated cider month will give us another excuse (if one is needed) to make a return trip.

*Lesly Huxley*

## Days at the farmers market

### Where can I get a nice drop of real cider to take home?

Well you could go to a specialist off-licence that dispenses it on draught, such as Humper's Off-Licence in Staple Hill where four such ciders may be on offer.

Or you could ask for a take-away of your favourite cider from your local pub, if they sell it (you may have to take your own container.)

Or you could go direct to source and pay a visit to one of the farms that produce it, if you know where they are (CAMRA's Good Cider Guide will help you here).

Alternatively you could pay a visit to the farmers' market held every Wednesday in the centre of Bristol, in Corn Street. Here you will come across a stall operated by Day's Cottage.

Based in Brookthorpe in Gloucestershire, Day's Cottage does a great line in both pure apple juices (from unsprayed orchards), and their fermented derivative, cider. On their stall you may expect to find dry, medium or sweet ciders, still or sparkling, bottled or draught – and maybe even some perry (made from pears).

Only traditional varieties of cider and perry fruit are used, e.g. Kingston Black, Morgan Sweet, Foxwhelp, Dabinet, Michelin, Sweet Coppin Huffcaps, Butts, Malvern Hills and Blakeney Reds.

If you're uncertain about which to go for, or not even sure whether you like real cider and perry, they have small sample glasses allowing you a taste before you buy.

*SP*

Rotary Club of Wrington Vale  
Beer and Cider Festival  
Winscombe Recreational Ground  
12,13,14 Sept  
advert



# Watering Holes in the Desert

## News from Weston-super-Mare

### Weston Whispers (pub/beer news)

SUMMER is the time of year when some of the more imaginative pub landlords and citizens take the plunge and organise beer festivals. This year is no exception. **Please give your taste buds a treat and support these events.**

You just might get this Pints West in time for the **Old Inn Beer Festival, Hutton**. This runs from Friday 25<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July. Last year's event was much enjoyed by the local CAMRA members who attended (several times!), with a good mix of beers (national champions through to some fairly obscure brews) and good entertainment. There is no admission charge. Buses run to Hutton from Weston.

The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of August sees the first-ever real ale festival put on at **The Ashcombe** in Ashcombe Road. News of this came as something of a surprise, as this pub is not renowned in local circles as being a stronghold for real ale. However, landlord Peter Boyer is organizing a weekend when twelve beers from micro breweries will be featured. These will include the cream of Somerset breweries – RCH, Moor, Glastonbury and Cottage. It will be open from midday on both days. There will be snacks available and a barbecue on the Sunday. There is a good-sized car park, a bus stop on Locking Road about two minutes' walk away (handy for people using the Bristol bus service) and the pub is about a ten minute walk from Weston railway station. Further info from Peter on 01934 613700.

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September sees the first **Chew Valley Beer Festival**.

This will be held at Ubley Village Hall. For this first event (which the organizers hope will become an annual event), about a dozen real ales will be available. All of these will come from breweries within a fifty-mile radius of Ubley. It is known that Glastonbury, Uley, Hook Norton and Butcombe will be amongst the twelve breweries represented. There will be three sessions – 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and a 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. session on Saturday afternoon. It will be necessary to get tickets in advance for this event. These cost £5 per session, which includes a free pint and souvenir glass. Tickets can be obtained from Steve Blanchard, Birchcombe House, Frog Lane, Ubley, Bristol BS40 6PW. Make cheques payable to "S. Blanchard" and enclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Steve can be contacted on 01761 462468. There will be a minibus running from Weston on the Friday evening. Further enquiries on this to Tim Nickolls on 01934 628996.

Also in September is the **Somerset Beer Festival** held at Minehead station on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September. There will be a party going from Weston by train on the Saturday.

The end of June saw the departure of Ken Randall from the **Major From Glengarry**. Ken and his family had been running this Wadworth's pub for two and a half years and had battled gamely to try and restore the Major to its glory days of the mid '90s when it made the Good Beer Guide. Ken has departed for Spain and, at the time of writing, a temporary manager was

running the pub. On my last visit Jennings' Cocker Hoop was on offer along with the normal Wadworth's beers.

**The Raglan** currently hides behind a wall of steel, looking very closed. No news on its future.

Wetherspoon's spring festival saw the usual great range of beers. Happily for us fans of dark beers, there was an unusually good choice of these. On one memorable evening in **The Dragon Inn** we were able to sample Gales Festival Mild, Young's Double Chocolate Stout and Ventnor Oyster Stout. Bliss.

*Tim Nickolls*

## WsM Diary

### Non-members welcome at all events

**Sat 9 - Sun 10 August** – The Ashcombe Beer Festival, The Ashcombe, Ashcombe Road, WsM (see separate article). Branch social at Festival on Sunday evening, 8.00 onwards.

**Wed 20 August** – Winscombe. Visiting Winscombe Cricket Club and The Winscombe Club. Bus 826 from the railway station at 7.50. Bus back leaves Winscombe at 10.45.

**Friday 12 September** – Minibus trip to the Chew Valley Beer Festival, Ubley Parish Hall. See separate article for full details on the event. A minibus will be leaving Off The Rails at 7.30. Further details can be obtained by contacting Mike Coleman on 631441.

**Wednesday 24 September** – Three-venue town social. We will begin with a short meeting at The Major From Glengarry at 8.30, moving on to The Cabot at 9.40 and The Regency at 10.30.

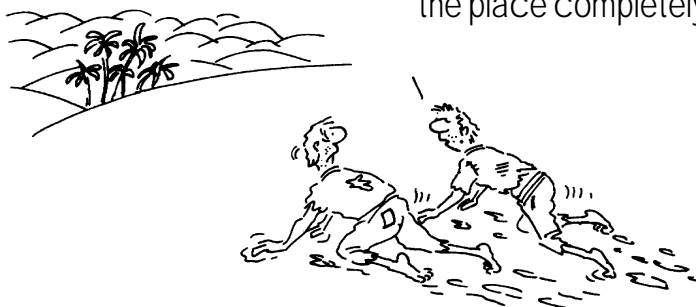
**Wednesday 22 October** – Bristol and District CAMRA Branch Meeting. To be held at Weston-super-Mare Cricket Club, Devonshire Road. 8.00 start.

## Contacts

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (eves)

Rich Neale - 01934 429808 (eves)

That was some session — we've drunk  
the place completely dry!



# Antique Ales

**This is the first of a series of articles on the historical, at times hysterical, aspects of real ale.**

**Further information from readers on the topics mentioned will be included in future articles.**

My earliest personal recollections of ale-making are of my mother brewing liquid bread in Ninkasi's temple in Err of the Chaldees. Women brewers were priestesses, the first connection between beer and religion. We also had a civic brewery and, on one occasion, the production of an undrinkable ale resulted in the ceremonious drowning of the brewer in it. This may have been the earliest example of quality control. The Egyptians used wheat for brewing but the process was similar to that which Mummy had used. They did, however, have better maltsters.

There had been brewing as early as the Stone(d) Age. In the Bronze Age, named after a Welsh barmaid, there were long barrows that may have been used for moving casks. The beaker people made the first pint drinking vessels and had round barrows for the burial of those who had not stood theirs. Brewing continued right through the Iron Age, thus named because the ale was flat. This did not deter Celtic supporters. At this time, the first social drinking establishments, called for obvious reasons 'round' houses, were built. One was the White Horse at Uffington. In the French uplands, strong ales called hill *forts* were popular.

To the Romans, wine was more sacred than beer and they were sadly the cause of a decline in the special status of women brewing ale. The 'Dark' Ages are wrongly named, as there is no evidence of mild or porter brewing at that time. The Anglo-Saxons, who used sacks to carry barley on beasts of burden, may have been responsible for the building of the first brewery in Shepton Mallet, over a thousand years before their Bavarian kinsfolk. The VIKings, named after the Six Kings Inn where they first landed, quaffed ale and were great trenchermen, making the Cheddar gorge famous. When Norman wisdom arrived, the new invaders could not produce the wine they had become accustomed to drinking so they brought their apples to make cider. They were responsible for the preparation in Greenwich of the 1086 Domesday Book. It mentioned local villages, but at Ashcombe the horses ran out of hay and they never got to the super mare at Weston.

Monasteries had good water supplies and became important brewers, first for on

sales, then opening off licences for pilgrims and finally selling to local supermarkets. The quality of the ale was one of the factors that induced pilgrims to visit a particular shrine. Obviously monks, possibly bad-tempered ones, introduced the indication of ale strength using crosses. Such a disturbed state of mind may have been induced by the presence of women in the celibate monastic brewhouse. In 1150, Canterbury and Ely were known to be brewing. By that time, continental monasteries were producing hops. These arrived in this country much later, along with ballet.

During the Middle Ages, each private house routinely brewed its own ale. Again the work of alewives, it was done in the same area used for baking bread and washing clothes. Some of the equipment for the foregoing was also pressed into service for brewing. Oliver Cromwell's mother was one of this merry band providing such a vital service. The best home brews attracted the locals and the houses of such gifted ladies became 'public' ones. Commercial breweries also sprang up and it is known that in 1267 Bristol had such, whose beer was being exported in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century. When the Reformation weakened the church, brewing started to become more the responsibility of these brewers. The brewing was often licensed by the sovereign as a local endeavour. Sometimes the very monks who had been sacked set up such enterprises. Henry VIII tried to help by banning women under 40 brewing or selling ale, possibly on pain of marrying them.

Returning to the local area, Axbridge, as a 9<sup>th</sup> Century burgh fortified to defend the seaward side of Royal Cheddar, would at that time have had ale houses, which brewed their own. Local architectural historian Frank Jarman told me the Christopher Hospice was the village's oldest inn, by the church steps until it disappeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Its wares would have needed to be approved by the local ale-taster. Such official's imbibing techniques have been lost in the mists of time but it seems that sitting for some time on a stool immersed in the ale whilst clad in leather shorts formed an important part of the process. It may well be that an ale still classed as drinkable after this test could indeed be imbibed without fear. The present 'Hunting Lodge' was 300 years too late to have served ale to King John's Hunt. Axbridge is far from the present River Axe but "Axe" shares with "Avon" and "Yeo" the meaning of "river" so there were many Axes, Avons and Yeos around in the times of which we speak.

Banwell may have had a monastery as early as 745. In Domesday, there were two mills taking advantage of the millions of gallons of water flowing without fail each day from the spring that drove them. At least one had probably been there long before Banwell came to the notice of the world at large in 904. The 14<sup>th</sup> Century church used a 15<sup>th</sup> Century thatched cottage as the basis for a church house in 1529 and by 1530 the first public brewhouse was up and running. Church houses were a particular feature in this part of England, being the medieval version of church halls. They were, however, probably even more popular as their main use was for church ales. As Banwell's name suggests, the locals were not allowed to drink the water as it was often contaminated, as was the milk. Ale was safe to drink and the local authorities of the time promoted its consumption. The processes of boiling and alcohol production get rid of most of the nasties in the original ingredients. It is a little-known fact that I am duly authorised to sign certificates attesting to this should they be required as a justification for attending CAMRA outings on health grounds.

Worle, once a medieval village of thatched cottages, may have been named after the effect the early brews had on the local residents. It seems to have had several breweries, only one of which has to date been identified. However, most farms brewed ale and alehouses opened informally just about everywhere. These brewed their own distinctive popular local drinks, which varied considerably from brew to brew and did not travel well. The one nearest to St. Martin's church would have brewed church ales. This custom lasted until Puritanism reared its ugly head and discouraged the parishioners from the largely innocent pursuit of such pleasures. The King's Head under King Starr was the stuff of local legends. The Valiant Soldier Inn was built about 1670, which date was shown above the door, and Judge Jeffries is reputed to have stayed there.

So far as Weston is concerned, it was not until 1807, when Uphill was the local seaside resort and the only shops were in Banwell or Worle, that Fry's Hotel, the present Royal, started to poke its head above the dunes. The first beerhouse was where now only my personal overnight bench stands in Grove Park.

In the next article, the ale ages of Axbridge will be looked at in more detail and any contributions would be greatly appreciated.

*Dr. John*

# A Round with Robin... and Jack

ON the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May this year I caught the train from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol with the intention of following the Bristol Jack-in-the-Green.

As you are probably wondering why this should interest you as a real ale drinker, I must point out that the route that Jack takes is punctuated by a few pub stops.

Jack is a colourful figure, nine feet tall and covered in greenery and flowers. He is accompanied by attendants who are also disguised in green rags, green face paint and vegetation. The attendants play music, dance and sing, as they guide Jack through the streets of Bristol from the City Docks to Horfield Common, where at the end of his journey Jack must die to release the Spirit of Summer.

The origins of Jack are unclear, but some people think he is linked with the Green Man of ancient pagan celebrations, who is often shown in medieval churches and on inn signs (more details can be found on the web site [home.freeuk.net/bristoljack](http://home.freeuk.net/bristoljack)).

We started at 10.30 outside the Arnolfini, which was a dry stop (although many pubs are in the vicinity). Leaving there after some dancing and the start of the rituals, Jack made his way to **Horts** in Broad Street, where I had a commendable half of Young's Waggedance. We were a little miffed that kids were not allowed in so we all sat outside on the pavement.

After dancing at St. Nicholas Market and Broadmead, we retired to the **Bay Horse**, much altered since I regularly used it in the early 1980s, for a pint of Charlie Wells Bombardier. It was not as good as we get it at the **Regency** in Weston, but passable.

There was then a long slog up St. Michael's Hill, passing many tempting pubs, but I stayed with the procession. We reached the **White Bear**, a pub I'd never been in before, and liked the ambience immediately. This pub has a courtyard, and space heaters, so even when the weather is not hot, you can sit outside and feel warm. This was the lunch stop and the pub was doing a good trade in barbecues. The beer also flowed well, and I had a pint and a half of Fuller's London Pride.

The weather, which had been a sparkling spring day, now deteriorated to a drizzle, but this could not dampen our spirits. We made our way past the peculiar pub in the middle of the St. Michael's Hill redevelopment, past the table-top sellers of bric-a-brac on Kingsdown, reaching the **Kingsdown Vaults** in Kingsdown Parade, which I'm pleased to say is as I remember it from the 1970s. I had the best pint of Bass I can remember for months there, and would have stayed longer, but we had to make our way through Cotham Grove, over the railway by Redland Station, and past the house with the nose on its east elevation!

A few doors up from there, was another

pub new to me, the **Kensington**, which was a good Greene King local with old photos of this area of Bristol on the walls. A perfect half of Greene King IPA was had, before once again moving off, downhill for a change, and stopping at the **Hobgoblin**, in Gloucester Road. Here I had a reasonable pint of Fiddlers Elbow, and mopped myself down when a drunk accidentally poured half a pint of lager down me. It could have been worse – Guinness?

Only one more pub between there and Jack's departure on the Common, this being the **Goose at the Flyer**, where the photo shows Jack. This was the only pub where I did not see real ale.

After the rituals on the Common, I caught a bus back to the centre and made my way to the **Commercial Rooms** for a grand pint of Arkell's Kingsdown. Having been mostly walking all day, I had a rest there and read the papers before moving off to the **Old Duke** for quick half of Courage Best. Making my way back towards Temple Meads, I called in at the **Portwall Tavern** for an excellent pint of Adnam's Broadside, followed by a half of London Pride.

On my return to Weston-super-Mare, I had an excellent couple of half pints in **Off The Rails** by the railway station of Cornish Tinnars, and Secret Kingdom Northumber-

Photo

land, before walking home.

I would recommend the Jack in the Green procession to anyone who likes to have their pubs chosen for them, and is prepared to walk, slowly, for six miles through the city of Bristol.

Robin E Wild

## Eating (and drinking) in Weston 2: The Regency

*This is the second in a series in which I will be seeking to offer people a steer on finding that rarity these days – a pub where you can get a good quality meal at an attractive price, accompanied by a decent pint of ale.*

The Regency has long been a popular pub in real ale drinking circles in Weston. It is located on Lower Church Road, opposite Weston College and close to the seafront. It is a friendly one-room pub with a mixed clientele. There is occasional background music but this is played at a low level, providing for a comfortable environment for a chat and a bite to eat.

Food is only available at lunchtimes, finishing at 2.30 Mondays to Thursdays and 3.00 Fridays to Sundays. On Sundays it is roasts only. However, the rest of the time, there are plenty of options available, all at a reasonable cost.

In the snacks line, there are sandwiches and baguettes that start at £1.95 for the likes of cheese, up to £2.50 for egg and bacon or steak and onions. Sausage and chips for £1.95 and a £3.10 brunch are also good value.

There are then a wide range of meals on

the permanent menu – these include various types of fish, omelettes, steak and ale pie, ploughman's and vegetarian options. There is only one meal on the menu over a fiver – rump steak and trimmings for £5.80.

In addition to the normal menu, there are always a range of daily specials available. These typically include chops, roasts and curries. Usually available is a mixed grill, which is an absolute bargain at £4.95. (Memo to landlord Mark Short – don't take this as an excuse to put the price up!) I normally tend to avoid mixed grills, as there always seems to be some bits that are black and burnt or you get a plate full of gristle. No such problems at The Regency. On the occasions I have gone for this there has been a rump steak, gammon steak, lamb chop, large sausage and liver all cooked just right and accompanied by good portions of chips, peas and salad. Indeed food quality is the watchword and it always seems to be very good at The Regency, with a genuine "home cooked" feel to it.

To accompany your meal there are always six real ales on offer. These are usually Bath Ales Gem, Wadworth's 6X, Boddington's, Bass, Charles Wells Bombardier and Courage Best.

Tim Nickolls

# Reed On... Why I Like Belgians

DIDN'T Julie Andrews once sing "These are a few of my favourite things"?

Well, just for the record, here are a few of mine: Brussels, Tintin, Snowy, Magritte (the painter), Orval (the brewery), Rochefort 10 (the beer), \*Plastic Bertrand (the 70's punk rocker), Pierre (ordinary 78-year-old foreign bloke) ... the list could go on.

The thing is, they all have one thing in common — they're Belgian.

But hey, you might think, who is that Pierre mentioned above? Well, read on...

On a welcome short break to France recently, I had the good fortune to spend some time with a very hospitable French couple in Nice. By chance the parents/in-laws were also staying with them at the time and my wife and I soon got chatting over a glass of Pastis on the terrace shortly after arriving. I was first introduced to mum and then step-father Pierre — Pierre the Belgian.

Now those who know me quite well will not be surprised to learn that the topic of conversation soon diverted towards beer. Well, as I said earlier he *was* Belgian!

Pierre proceeded to tell me that whilst not a beer connoisseur himself he had many friends who were. In particular he felt that the Czechs made the best beer in the world and his friends often endorsed this. I was both surprised and intrigued by that statement. He then began telling me a story about the spiders at a Belgian brewery (believed to

be the Cantillon Brewery in Brussels). Apparently when the brewery needed to replace the ancient roof a few years ago, so as not to disturb the resident spiders they built over the existing structure to avoid removing the old roof tiles.

The theory was that the beer depended on the yeast floating in it and by allowing the spiders to live undisturbed (the spiders eat the flies that would otherwise drink from the wort) the unique character of the beer would thus be preserved.

After imparting this fascinating tale, Pierre then promptly offered to send me, "the beer specialist", some beer "cardboards" if I was interested. He asked me to leave my address with him before I returned home and this I did without thinking any more of it for several weeks.

Then to my surprise, around four weeks later, a package arrived which included a magazine full of beer articles, a few bottle labels, lots of beer "cardboards" (mats to you and me) and, best of all, a massive fold-out beer map of Belgium indicating where all the breweries and bars are throughout the country!

See... now you know.

\*What's he doing here, I hear you say! Forty-something music aficionados should remember that "Ca Plane Pour Moi" was a 1978 Belgian punk record and a massive hit all over Europe, reaching number 8 in our

charts. I can still remember the horror of Pans People dancing to it like it was only yesterday.

*Steve Reed*

## (Bad) Poetry Corner

*Back by popular demand (allegedly)*

### Delivery

At Balmoral with Pints West arriving  
By Welsh police rugby team's imbibing  
Pedigree and Courage Best drunk dry  
So on to the Waverley I immediately fly

Bass and The Bishops Tipple are found  
With Usher's Best for those around  
The Ancaster has just the same beer  
So straight over to Cricket Club I fear

London Pride and Butcombe Bitter on  
Abbot Ale and Rev James all gone  
Bombardier will be their next guest  
And it's on to put fair Uphill to the test

The Dolphin Butcombe Bitter only has  
The Ship floats London Pride and Bass  
With some Old Hooky there to add tone  
About that I tell my friends on the phone

*Dr. John (aged 47 and ¾)*

Bath Ales  
Brewery and pubs  
advert

Windmill, Portishead  
advert

# Spring was Sprung – Socials Review

## April

We chose the hottest April day since “General Electric” was a raw recruit to take the big green bus to Congresbury. Arriving too late for the Senior Citizen Hungry Horse £2.99 lunch at the **Ship & Castle**, we tried instead to get a drink. Don’t like French food anyway. A lone lad trying to serve lots of hot, thirsty folk in shorts frustrated us. After what felt like ten minutes we gave up and fled.

Young’s aptly named **Old Inn** solved our drinking problem, despite also having only one person serving and doing everything else. Smiles Bristol IPA (4.5 per cent alcohol by volume) at £2.10 was crisply sharp, with a clean aftertaste. Young’s Special Premium Ale (4.6 per cent) at the same price was smoothly excellent. Their equally priced Waggle dance honey beer surprised those new to it by not being too sweet on the palate and at a nice strong 5 per cent. Young’s Bitter was a pleasingly clear session ale with a hoppy finish at 3.7 per cent and £1.90. There was also an indifferent Bass on gravity at £2.10.

These prices are all up on those advertised for 52 years earlier, when pale ale was 1/3d a pint and bitter 1/-. The 9d cider had been replaced by Thatcher’s at £1.50. The 1/7d Berry Home Brew, wisely sold in halves, was off but there was still Free Beer Tomorrow on offer.

Following our star to the **Plough**, we

found three April/May guests on gravity at £2.10. The Wadworth 6X (4.4 per cent) was maltily drinkable. The Brakspear Three Sheets (4.6 per cent) was sharply nice and clear but a bit thin and dry on a hot evening. Fuller’s London Pride (4.1 per cent) was somewhat gassy. Further guests were promised, such as Redruth Cornish Rebellion (4.8 per cent), Usher’s Spring Fever (4 per cent), Wychwood Whirlygig (4.1 per cent), Butts Golden Brown (5 per cent) and Barbus Barbus (4.6 per cent), Cottage Limited Edition (5 per cent) and Gone with the Whippet (4.2 per cent), Branscombe Vale Summa That (5 per cent), City of Cambridge Silly Punt and Eccleshall Slaters Supreme (4.7 per cent) and Shining Knight (4.5 per cent). One well worth a phone call to see what is on.

The gravity Bass at the same price as above was not at all bad and there were session beers at a reasonable £2, including Butcombe Bitter. Thatcher’s was again £1.50. This is the Monday home of the Mendip Morris Men.

## May

Next time out, the minibus took us into deepest Somerset and the **Sheppey Inn**, Godney, known as the Rising Sun until 1975. We were greeted by a very enjoyable Cotleigh Old Buzzard Dark Ale (4.8 per cent) at £2.10.

Liquorishly, chewily good with a nice malty finish. The tasty Tawny Bitter (3.8 per cent) was surprisingly the same price. At £2.20 there was a flavoursome Barn Owl Bitter (4.5 per cent) with a smooth, balanced finish. The Cheddar Valley Farmhouse Cider (6 per cent) weighed in at £1.90. With a handy waterway out back, this is the site of the annual River Sheppey Raft Race, six skittles teams, shove ha’penny tournaments and bed and breakfast for those who find it all too much.

Moving circuitously on to the **Burcott Inn** at Wookey we found a good Hop Back Crop Circle (4.2 per cent) and a smooth Burcott Ale (3.8 per cent) brewed by Sharps, which had a pleasant

finish. Summer Lightning had just flashed by and coming soon were Cotleigh Barn Owl (4.5 per cent) and Osprey (5 per cent), City of Cambridge Hobson’s Choice (4.1 per cent), Eccleshall Slaters Premium (4.4 per cent), Butts Barbus Barbus (4.6 per cent) and Church End Vicar’s Ruin (4.4 per cent). Shove ha’penny can be played in the dark and here the historic watermill has a handy guesthouse with running hot and cold. The Burcott Buccaneers also have a Raft Race but the river here goes underground so, having no submarines, they use the Bishop’s Palace Moat in Wells.

Our third port of call was the unique **Wookey Hole Inn** with funky bathrooms and a very drinkable Hop Back Summer Lightning (5 per cent), a hoppy Spinning Dog Top Dog (4.2 per cent), The Leek Brewing Co. St. Edwards (4.7 per cent), Milk Street Wook Ale (4.1 per cent) and, the Drayman’s Best just having galloped off, a smooth session Branscombe Vale Best Bitter (4.2 per cent) with a mild finish. The problem here is that one is spoiled for choice with a wide range of Belgian beers available on draught or bottled which are a definite distraction to the palate. Weston Old Rosie Cloudy Scrumpy (7.3 per cent) is equally tempting. If you are into jazz on a Sunday, this may well be the one for you.

Also in May, we had a short meeting in the function room above **The Bristol Hotel** in Weston, accompanied by excellent quality pints of Butcombe Bitter. Having got the “work” out of the way, we retired to **Off The Rails**, which had its usual strong selection – Sharps dry, golden Doom Bar Bitter (4 per cent), St Austell Tinnars Ale malty Cornish bitter (3.7 per cent), RCH Hewish IPA at a fruity 3.6 per cent and, coming shortly, Hadrian and Borders Secret Kingdom (4.3 per cent).

## June

For our June social, we embarked on a pub crawl in Bristol. As usual, Off The Rails made it difficult for us to leave for the train. No less than four beers were on offer – Steamed Flames and Hewish IPA from the local RCH brewery and Doom Bar and Cornish Coaster from Sharps. However, the lure of some good pubs and the attraction of a £2.10 return rail fare enabled us to focus on the job at hand. Our first venue was the **Gin Palace**, a brisk 10-minute stroll from Temple Meads along Old Market. There we met-up with more Weston CAMRA members who work in Bristol and had made an early start. This pub was covered in depth in the last Pints West. Suffice to say, the Bath Ales Gem and Barnstormer were both in good condition and made for a good start to the evening.

We moved on to the nearby **Old Castle Green**, now a Wickwar pub but, puzzlingly, still displaying Wadworth’s (or was it Marston’s?) signage. Three Wickwar beers

Adnams advert



were on offer – Coopers WPA, BOB and Sunny Daze. The beers were priced at a very appealing £1.50, £1.65 and £1.80 respectively. The beers were acceptable, but perhaps not brilliant. Apart from our party there were only two other customers and they were not drinking real ale. If this is typical, then it is going to be a struggle to keep three ales without risking some “tired” beer. This would be a shame. Let’s hope Bristol drinkers give the pub the support it deserves.

Next up was the **Bridge Inn**, a personal favourite. It’s one of the smallest pubs in Bristol, featuring Bath Ales’ excellent beers in top-notch condition. On the night Spa, Gem and Barnstormer were on offer.

The 2002 Bristol & District CAMRA Pub Of The Year – the **Cornubia** – was the next port of call. Michael Blake, the man mainly responsible for the pub’s previous achievements, had recently departed and many were concerned that the pub might go downhill. So far it has to be said that the current operators have maintained the previous high standards. On the evening there were four excellent beers available. These were Dark Star Red Ale, Boggart’s Angel Hill, RCH Hewish IPA and Church End Gravediggers. The latter is a mild and was absolutely superb. Despite being only 3.8 per cent ABV, for me it was the tastiest and best beer of the evening. Most of the rest of our group were also very impressed, even those who do not consider themselves to be fans of mild. It was so good we aborted our last planned port of call and stayed with the Gravediggers until last train home time.

An excellent evening, sampling just a few of the really good pubs on offer in the centre of Bristol. Further crawls are planned!

## July

The fourth of July was commemorated with a trip to the second day of the **Ashcott Beer Festival**. A bus full of eager drinkers left Off The Rails at 7.15, drawing into Whitley Farm, the home of the mighty Moor Beer Company, at 8.00. The evening did not start too auspiciously – entrance was a hefty £5, which meant that, including transport, the Weston contingent had spent £11 each before buying a beer (I guess it should be noted that profits from the festival go to the local school, playgroup and playing fields).

Also, the anticipation of a summer’s evening in a wonderful rural setting with only the sound of singing birds and perhaps the odd cow mooing was somewhat shattered by the wall of sound that greeted us as we made our way into the barn housing the beers. Gang Green seemed to be a perfectly competent young rock band, but the noise level made communication impossible so we all retreated and found a more sociable spot outside (God, what a boring old fart I sound).

However, the mood picked up as soon as we started tasting the beers. There were 32 beers on offer and the selection was brilliant – certainly the best that I have come across at a festival of this size. There was also a real cider from Wilkins of Wedmore and Fosters lager, which was sponsored by a local plumbing

company (I will let you draw your own conclusions from this connection).

Twenty of the real ales were from West Country breweries, with the other 12 coming from further afield, including beers from Cumbria, Scotland, Wales and Carlow Eire. None of the beers were “name” beers – probably the best known was Hop Back Crop Circle. However, the 14 that I managed to sample in conjunction with my wife (aka the Madonna of real ale drinking in WSM) ranged from good to excellent.

Our hosts, Moor Beer Company, provided two very good beers – Pennine Fellsman and Torbay Tipple. There were also two excellent beers from the newish Glastonbury Ales – Golden Chalice and Pomparles Porter (the latter was my personal “beer of the festival”). Other stand-outs were Ten Gun Salute from Cannon Royall Brew of Worcester, 1863 Wellington Stout which was a lovely, creamy stout produced by Juwards Brewery of Wellington and Kripple Dick from the Keltek Brewery of Lostwithiel, Cornwall. The latter beer (more like a barley wine) weighed in at a mighty 8 per cent and was the “one for the road” for most of us.

The Ashcott Beer Festival is an annual event – this year’s was the fifth. It runs for four days and includes a wide range of entertainment over the course of the festival with plenty for children during the day on Saturday.

Very highly recommended.

*Dr. John and Tim Nickolls*

Moles advert

Wickwar BOB advert

# Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent  
Laurie Gibney

## Focus on THE STAR INN at Tickenham

FOR twenty years the licensee's name over the door of the Star Inn at Tickenham has been "Brian Victor Ball", and as I heard that the family do not plan to renew their Unique Pub Company tenancy and are moving on, I met Brian's son, Philip, who has managed the Star for his father during the past seven years, to ask how the Star ticks! (Apologies for the pun – I just couldn't resist it.)

The Star Inn dates back to coaching days and the stables, complete with feeding troughs, still exist behind the pub, being in use as a workshop and storeroom. Brian was previously licensee of the White Hart at Weston in Gordano and the Fox & Goose at Winford. When the family arrived at the Star it was very much a country pub, with a working farm next door and even a "Farmers Seat" which was quickly vacated when the farmer came in. There was a lounge bar and a public bar with skittle alley leading off. A "pick your own" fruit farm is nearby and the country atmosphere abounds, despite a busy road with "S" bends outside the door, where you will also find a bus stop for regular buses which run between Bristol, Long Ashton, Backwell, Nailsea and Clevedon, so you don't have to drink and drive.

The bar has changed considerably over the years, as the assistant bar manager for

fourteen years, Elaine Brady, will tell you. The skittle alley (still hiding beneath the carpet) was converted fourteen years ago into a carvery and two years later into a non-smoking family room with children's jungle house play area and slide. No under 14's are allowed elsewhere inside the pub. Ten years ago a non-smoking, twenty-four seat conservatory was added to the other end of the bar, and the garden has been equipped with a giant mushroom providing a tree house, swings and a slide. To compensate for all the changes the bar still has a log fire in winter.

Sixteen years ago part of the living accommodation was converted to provide two double, three single and one twin bed and breakfast letting rooms, which have *en suite* facilities, Sky TV, tea and coffee making facilities and phones. Planning permission was obtained a few years ago to provide extra rooms above the family room.

Real ale accounts for about fifty per cent of all draught beer sales, and is dispensed by hand pump assisted by gas-propelled pumps (with of course no gas entering the beer). Philip acts as Cellar Master and keeps a tidy cellar at a good temperature, and I certainly haven't had a bad pint in the fifteen years I've been visiting the Star. There is a choice of five real ales: Bass at £2.30 a pint, Courage Best at £2.20, Marston's Pedigree at £2.35, Old Speckled Hen at £2.35, and Smiles Best at £2.35. The prices reflect the fact that this pub is owned by the Unique Pub Company, whose pump prices at their other pubs in the area, the Ring of Bells and the Sawyers Arms, are on the high side, but

they offer plenty of choice and real ale usually in good condition. For the cider drinker there is Thatcher's Traditional Dry and Old Mill (keg) Cider.

The Star has gained a good reputation for its food, for which the Ball family are exceedingly grateful to their kitchen manager, Barbara Bird, who has been with them for sixteen and a half years and has been a major influence on menu choices, many of which are home made, particularly the Friday and Saturday evening specials. Fresh fish on Wednesdays and Thursdays is delivered direct to the Star from the Cornish fishing fleet. Zoe Ford has been Barbara's assistant in the kitchen for eight years.

On the day of my visit the chalkboard menu boasted six starters for between £2.95 and £5, six jacket potato dishes and five baguettes from £3.95 to £4.95, twenty-four main dishes including omelettes and four fresh fish dishes between £6.45 and £11.95, six vegetarian dishes at £6.95 and twenty deserts between £1.75 and £3.95. You may phone 01275 858836 to book a table.

From the wine list may be chosen ten white and nine red wines priced between £9.30 and £15.75, or four champagnes and sparkling wines priced between £11.95 and £40. There are plenty of soft drinks, including Hartridges Minerals, and nibbles – "a jar of cockles and a packet of Curry Twiglets" being a favourite combination of mine.

Phil manages twelve part-time and six full-time staff, including Hilmar Odemer who joined the staff from Frankfurt last September to improve his English and enjoy his love of cider. Helmar is due to leave in July to go to university in Holland; he speaks German, Portuguese, Spanish and now English with a Somerset accent.

## Tasting the BATH Waters

ONE Saturday in May my nephew and I, who now live in Nailsea, returned to the city of our birth, the beautiful City of Bath. The waters of Bath's volcanic springs are renowned for various healing properties, but that was not the purpose of our visit, which was to sample some of the Good Beer Guide listed pubs.

The train journey from Nailsea at 5.30 p.m. to Bath cost £4.80 return and a bus from near the station in Bath took a short time to take us up Lansdown Hill to the first pub, the **Old Farmhouse**. The pub has an "L" shaped bar on two levels. The walls of the upper level are a shrine to the landlord's two loves, jazz and Bristol Rovers football team. There is also a small outside drinking

Lamplighters, Shirehampton  
Real Ale & Music Festival  
13 Sept  
advert

area. The real ales on offer were Butcombe Bitter, Wadworth's 6X and Abbey Ales Bellringer; the **Abbey Ales Brewery** is situated in one of the pub's outbuildings.

Halves of Bellringer and 6X were enjoyed before a leisurely stroll downhill took us to Guinea Lane and the **Star Inn**, effectively the Abbey Ales brewery tap and listed in the CAMRA National Inventory of Heritage Pubs.

This multi-room small pub is an absolute gem and should be on all real ale fans' "must visit" list. Beers included Bateman's XXXB, Marston's Pedigree, Adnam's Bitter and Bass. The Bass is gravity fed from casks behind the bar into jugs and then into your glass – *it was Perfick!* Reluctantly leaving the Star Inn, where Laurie enjoyed many family get-togethers in the past, a downhill walk again took our real ale duo to the **Bell** in Walcot Street.

Bradshaw, who now runs the Old Farmhouse, ran the Bell during the sixties when it positively heaved with jazz fans, including one Laurie Gibney, particularly when the Riverside Jazz Band were playing. The Bell has a long thin bar area, a hard surfaced garden drinking area, and is now perhaps more geared to younger people. The real ale range is excellent with, eleven ales on offer which were well promoted with lists around the bar. On our visit they included Glastonbury Mystery Tor (3.8 per cent, £2 a pint), Courage Best (4 per cent, £2.10), Smiles Best (4.1 per cent, £2.10), Bath Ales Gem (4.1 per cent, £1.90), Abbey Ales Bellringer (4.2 per cent, £2.30), RCH Pitchfork (4.3 per cent, £2.20), a very

palatable Butts Barbus Barbus (4.6 per cent, £2.30) which was gravity fed from a bar-mounted cask, Courage Directors (4.8 per cent, £2.30), Hop Back Summer Lightning (5 per cent, £2.30), Stonehenge Danish Dynamite (5 per cent, £2.20), and Cottage GWR Ale (5.4 per cent, £2.40), which was tasty to start with a bitter finish. After the Star Inn and the Bell, could anywhere else live up to the high standards?

We walked along Walcot Street and shared a pizza before moving on to Northumberland Passage opposite the Guildhall and to the **Coeur de Lion** which claims to be the smallest pub in Bath. We were looking forward to draught Bass there but it was no longer on offer, instead the real ales that day were Charles Wells Bombadier, Greene King "Morland's" Old Speckled Hen and Jennings Cumberland Ale. I must say we were impressed when the barman cleaned each of the four tables after customers left.

Having a limited time left before our train back to Nailsea at 10 p.m. (there is another one an hour later), we walked under the station to Widcombe and the **Ram**, not in the Good Beer Guide but it should be a contender in our opinion. There is a front entrance but we entered up the stairs at the back of the pub, across the road from the canal lock. It has an "L" shaped bar with a room which it appeared could be used for private parties. The ales on offer were Bass and Smiles Best which we can vouch were in good condition, and Abbey Bellringer and Courage Best.

## Back in Nailsea

THE Mizzymead Social Club is to spend £30,000 refurbishing its function room which may be booked by non-members. The real ales on offer are Courage Best, Butcombe Bitter and a guest ale, which during the past few months has included Smiles March Hare, Tetley's Imperial Premium Cask Ale, Wickwar Olde Merryford, Smiles Anniversary Ale, Daleside St. George's Ale, Brains SA, Wickwar Cotswold Way, Wickwar Spring Ale, Theakston's Rocketeer brewed at Masham, Castle Eden Traditional Northern Ale "Nimmo XXXX", Butcombe Gold, John Smith's Magnet, Smiles Bristol IPA, Wickwar Old Arnold and Charles Wells Summer Solstice.

On a recent visit to Congresbury I enjoyed a lovely birthday meal at the **Bell** but was disappointed to find that they only have enough demand for one real ale which is Courage Best. Between Congresbury and Weston-super-Mare, a second pub has been converted into a restaurant – some time ago the Palmers Elm at Puxton was converted into the Pheonix Chinese Restaurant, and now the Prince of Wales at Congresbury is a Greek Taverna.



Pints West is distributed to fifteen pubs in North Somerset by the Nailsea team.

*Laurie Gibney*

Bunch of Grapes, Bristol  
advert

# All ale and hearty at Wadworth

ONCE UPON A TIME breweries were part and parcel of the urban landscape. The malty fumes of their brews filled the air of dozens of market towns and industrial centres, while horse drawn drays and, later on, lorries criss-crossed the surrounding countryside delivering casks of the finest ale (most of the time!).

Two world wars and the predatory instincts of some of the larger concerns changed everything and a lot of breweries, whose beers could define an area (Strong's of Romsey used to have a slogan "You are entering Strong country") are nowadays just remembered by roads and estates with "Old Brewery" in their title, or, as in the case of Taunton's Brewhouse, a single relic.

As any dedicated real ale connoisseur knows, though, our breweries have not gone away but like a lot of trades which used to be part of town life they are almost out of sight and, all too often, mind.

These days, most of our breweries are hidden away down country lanes, in picturesque farms, on anonymous industrial estates, and in several cases bold and brash amid theme parks.

Change happens to all industries, but brewing seems to be in a state of flux more than most. Last year Brakspear left their historic home, while I recently saw a photograph of the partially demolished Lion Brewery in Oxford, which used to be the home of Morrells.

So, a recent visit to the Wiltshire market of Devizes heartened the soul – Wadworth, in spite of changing times and fashions, is still going strong.



If you've ever been to Devizes it's hard to miss the brewery. Go to the centre and on the Northgate edge, there it is – a massive, Victorian redbrick edifice with billowing smoke announcing that brewing is in progress.

Like Young's in Wandsworth, or Adnam's in Southwold, the building reeks of tradition. There are stables where horses are kept for the dual purpose of shows and delivering beers locally; next door to the stables you will find the sign-writing department where computers are no match for a steady hand and a good eye. It's more than just Waddies' distinctive inn signs which are produced here – as Paul Martin who is in charge of the department says, "You have to have signs for loos, exits restaurants, etc."

Then, somewhere inside the brewery, there is Alistair Simms, a bluff, confident Yorkshireman who is one of a handful of

coopers still employed in the British brewing industry. Earlier on the day of my visit, I had tried both 6X and Henry's IPA served straight from wooden casks at the Ivy in Heddington. They were heavenly.

Wadworth have 250 pubs and are an exclusively ale brewing brewery with 90 per cent being cask-conditioned – there are no lagers.

Up to ninety per cent of the real ale brewed is 6X, the brewery's flagship beer. During the 1990s, Wadworth entered into a trading agreement with Whitbread which meant that we saw a lot of 6X in pubs across the nation, not all of it, it has to be said, served in the best condition. I even had 6X drawn through a sparkler several times.

Last year, the agreement with Whitbread's successors, Interbrew, was terminated and now Wadworth look after it themselves.

Spring saw an extensive promotion of 6X with lots of ads playing on 6X appeal, etc. Despite some sources in the brewing industry being all doom and gloom about the prospects of real ale, Wadworth's believe that the market is growing and they are prepared to back their cask ales.



The brewery, like a lot of Victorian brewhouses, is a tower-style operation, which means that everything works by gravity.

Malt and hops are stored at the top, along with the hot liquor tank. Malt is ground before being put into one of two mash tuns, one of which came from former Bridgwater brewers, Starkeys in the 1940s.

When I visited the mash tun room it had that distinctive Horlicks-like aroma which means that a mash is ongoing. Wort was flowing from one of them into the copper below.

After this, the boiled and hopped wort finds its way into the fermenting vessels. Passing through the fermenting room there is a rich fruity nose (suggestions of banana) coming off the various beers, most of which are 6X.

On the ground floor of the brewery, racking takes place, but what is intriguing is ongoing work on a small experimental plant which is currently being installed. According to head brewer, Trevor Holmes, the plant came from the Farmer's Arms in Apperly, a small brewpub which Wadworth's bought a few years back. This is where Wadworth's special beers will be planned and tried out.

Mild fans will be happy to know that Trevor is planning to brew a mild here, as well as Fuggles 5% once again. The brewery

also owns another brewpub – the Red Shoot.

As well as 6X, Wadworth's also produce Henry's Original IPA, a traditional session beer which goes down a storm in Devizes, and the stronger JCB. Seasonal beers are Winter ale Old Father Timer (aka Old Timer) at 5.8 per cent, Summersault (4 per cent), which as the name suggests is available in the summer, and Malt 'n' Hops (4.5 per cent), which the brewery thinks was one of the first of the green-hopped beers to appear.

According to Trevor Holmes: "New season Early Bird Goldings hops are picked from the bine in the early morning and we send a truck and they are used straightaway. Half go into the boil, half onto the hopback plates. What it gives is zesty, citric and resinous flavours.

"It is nice to see the idea spreading. It used to be done in times when hop pickers brewed their own beers with fresh hops. We use Goldings at the end of the brew as well. Four weeks later we use Nathans Goldings towards the end of the season and you get a slightly subtler hop character to the beer."

The visit is concluded with a tutored tasting of Waddies' three regulars. Henry's is a revelation. I've not had it for years. On the nose there's a Burtonised, sulphury aroma plus biscuity malt and hoppiness; a few minutes in the glass also reveals some nuttiness. On the palate it's biscuity malt, then fruity leading to a dry and bitter finish. At 3.6 per cent you can have a few of these without falling over.

Next up is 6X which I have drunk a lot of over the years, but when you take the time to evaluate it, the complexity is thrilling. On the nose there's resinous hop, while the palate sees cereally malt, mid-palate hop fruitiness leading to a bitter and dry finish. As the beer warms up in the glass more fruitiness emerges. It's a complex, well-made beer which first appeared 80 years ago in bottle.

Finally, there's the relatively new boy on the block, JCB (4.7 per cent). This has a lovely hoppy nose, while the palate has a barley sugar character, also tropical fruit mid palate and a very hoppy, dry and bitter finish with some juicy malt coming through again. There's also a hint of spicy hoppiness.

In the uncertain, shifting world of brewing, Wadworth is a fixed point. They are committed to real ale and still believe that brewing has its place in the community.

Long may they have 6X appeal.

*Adrian Tierney-Jones  
(Taken from Pints Of View, newsletter  
of the Somerset branch of CAMRA)*



# Cider Sisters

FOR once, we have actually managed to get away on a cider weekend since our last column – back to Herefordshire, an old favourite.

We had a dodgy start – a wrong turn caused by over-excitement, and then the discovery that the Cherry Tree at Tintern was not just closed but looked half demolished.

And a dodgy middle – by the time we'd been to three pubs and still found no real cider, only the Inn-Bru imitator GL (Gold Label), we were starting to despair.

At the Moon in Garway, the Watkins was off, and at the Black Swan at Much Dewchurch the Dewchurch had just run out. However, there was a very friendly landlord in the otherwise League of Gentlemen-style Moon, and Johnny Cash jukebox singalongs at the Black Swan – if it weren't for our terrible thirst we could have been persuaded to stay (and they tried...).

We decided to go straight to the source, and headed for the Dewchurch Cider Farm itself at Much Dewchurch, where things really started to look up.

It was a beautiful spot, an old farmhouse and barns surrounded by pear and apple orchards in full blossom. It looked deserted, but we gamely pressed the cider bell (which could have woken the dead) and hoped for the best.

And the best was what we got – some great off-sales, served by Mr. Haig himself.

No perry unfortunately, but a choice of dry (described thus: "the dry is dry") or sweet ("the sweet is a bit sweeter but not very sweet"! ). We had an egg-cup full of each, which was hardly sufficient by this stage, but welcome nonetheless and delicious.

From Dewchurch we headed off through the Golden Valley (where we saved a runaway lamb from certain death – all part of the service) to Craswell and the Bull's Head, our resting place for the night. But we couldn't and didn't rest, not with Weston's Old Rosie, GWR, Bounds and Perry to choose from.

We got stuck in and worked our way through them all, though we were more than matched by the staff team, one of whom liked to relax with a Westons/Stella snake-bite. Hmm. It's a lovely old pub with flagstone floors and hatch service, in a remote and wild spot in the shadow of the Black Mountains, which inspired a lot of over-ambitious walking plans for the following day.

Sunday morning therefore found us halfway up Lord Hereford's Knob (part of the Black Mountain range, for those who aren't sure), windswept and semi-hysterical, laughing, hallucinating and exhausted in equal measures. Against all odds we honoured the previous night's drunken commitment and made it to the summit, where we thought we saw a well-known Bristol CAMRA figure that actually turned



out to be a horse.

Things that shouldn't move were moving and things that should weren't. We thought it might be time to start heading for home at this point. We drove through some of the most gorgeous countryside you could imagine, in dappled early summer sunshine, and our spirits soared, arriving at Abbey Dore on a natural high. In our new mood, we decided on one last pint, and finally got to try Gwatkins Cider at the Neville Arms – another good pub in a great setting. We enjoyed the dry but couldn't come at the sweet (which unlike the Dewchurch variety, was very sweet).

We had a wander around the ruined Abbey and rounded off the day with a dazed lie down in some lovely long grass. Another great trip – and it was a trip.

Enjoy your summer cider drinking – see you in the autumn.

*Freya and Erica McLuckie.*

## October 2003 to be CAMRA's first ever Cider & Perry Month

UNLIKE real ale production, which can happen at any time of the year, real cider and perry can only be made when the fruit is ripe.

Great skill goes into producing both products.

Great store is placed by the craft brewer in the quality of ingredients and variety of flavours created by the malt, hops, yeast and water used to brew the beer.

It is a "producer" rather than a "brewer" that makes cider and perry. They may use a mixture of bittersweet and bittersharp cider apples or sweet dessert apples, or a mixture of the two to make cider; but perry can only be made from specialized perry pears, which are high in natural tannin.

The choosing, pressing and blending of the fruit to make cider is just as much of a craft as making beer and produces a vast range of tastes, styles and aromas, similar to those produced in fine wine.

Like wine, each year's fruit produces a unique vintage, so much so that cider and perry has been sometimes called "The Wine of the West".

October is a very active time for producers, especially for those who make only a small amount of cider. Harvest time for cider fruit is roughly from September to November and by October production is in full flow.

Most, if not all, small cider producers will welcome people who have prearranged to come along to see the cider being made. It may even be possible to spend a couple of hours helping to crush the fruit in a scratter, some of which may still be powered by hand, horse, cattle, steam or run off a vintage farm tractor, then pressing the pulp using small farmhouse-scale presses.

Once the juice is pressed the cider or perry ferments in barrels through to the

following spring before being ready to drink by early summer. Larger producers use industrial size scratters and presses and may concentrate some or all of the juice so that cider production can be sustained throughout the year. For small producers, there is no next batch until the process begins again the next autumn.

CAMRA already has the month of May set aside as Mild Month, and following on the success of the Mild campaign, CAMRA has decided to set October aside as Cider and Perry Month, starting this year.

You may be wondering what can you do and what resources will be available for you to support this campaign. Well, I'm afraid you'll just have to wait a while. But do keep a look-out on CAMRA's national web site, [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) for announcements on activities during Cider and Perry Month.



## 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](mailto:steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk))

Hi Steve,

Just a short note to say how much I enjoy reading Pints West, passed to me by a real ale mate in Bristol.

One of the articles in the Pints Weston segment, by a Mr. Wild if I recall, talked about the Criterion and Captain's Cabin amongst other watering holes. I remember them both well from the late 1960s. The latter I especially recall for the delightful young ladies that frequented the place!

I have a Weston related question you may be able to help me with. When coming into Weston on the Bristol road, (still remember B&B's for under a quid!) and arriving outside the Odeon cinema, over to the right in the far corner near if I recall correctly a taxi rank and shelter, was a wooden door that was the back entrance to a small pub that I think was called the Cardiff Arms. Am I right or is the old grey matter fading? (*The Cardiff Arms was demolished and eventually evolved into a pub called The Shillelagh. This has recently changed name - not sure what to. Tim Nickolls.*)

Again from the 1960s, I was repping all over the bottom half of England and had a mate who was a CAMRA brewery liaison officer (if that's the correct title) in Slough. (*You may have your dates a bit wrong as CAMRA was not founded until 1971. Ed.*) I was also at the opening of the Fox at Easton, Bristol as a real ale pub. The story was that this property was bought by CAMRA as a means of promoting real ale as at that time Courage (the predominant brewer) had been taking out the hand pumps for top pressure taps. The day the Fox opened the evening weather was fine and the pub clientele were bursting out onto the pavement. Next door was a Courage house, as good as empty!

One more for luck, in my misspent youth, some mates and I were working on doing as many Bristol pubs as possible. On one occasion we had decided to do a return

to the Artichoke on the Centre. Parked the car, crossed the road and it was gone!

I understand there's still an Artichoke in Lewins Mead, but the one that 'went missing' was actually on the Centre, practically facing the statue (if they haven't moved it again), on if I recall Broad Quay? It disappeared for the wedge shaped building they put up on the corner of Colston Street/Broad Quay, facing what was known as the tramways centre. Interesting to hear that another pub retains the name. Lewins Mead is not that far away from the original site.

Good to hear one of my old locals, The Lamps at Shire is kicking real ale goals.

Here in Oz, you can get a very presentable Greene King Old Speckled Hen. Had a pint only this week at the Sherlock Holmes (you've guessed it, pretend pommy pub) in the centre of Melbourne. Also available at the Elephant and Wheelbarrow (ditto).

When back in Bristol for a visit to Mum and Dad's last October, had a good 'feed' of Hop Back Summer Lightning at the Knights Templar. Lovely!

Best regards,

Ray Bounsall,

By email from Australia.

PS: Love the section on old pubs now and then.



Dear Steve,

We would like to bring to your attention, perhaps for possible inclusion in the next edition of Pints West, that Bath Ales will once again be providing bar facilities at the next Oldland Show.

At Oldland Horticultural Show we celebrate our 30th event this August 23rd at the Sir Bernard Lovell Playing Fields, High Street, Oldland Common, Bristol. Gates open at 11.00 and admission is £4 (senior citizens and 12 to 16 years £3, accompanied children free).

For several years now Bath Ales have supported the Show by providing a welcome break for our visitors which usually tops 6,000 during the course of the day. As usual they will have a full range of their splendid beers on offer, and in the unlikely event that they should they run out we are only a stone's throw from their brewery!

Oldland Show is not just about horticulture, although we have a 10,000 sq. ft. marquee to accommodate those exhibits which include: vegetables, roses, chrysanthemums, dahlias, pot plants, floral art, fruit; plus many others which are in a separate hall including wines & beers, domestic, handicrafts, art, photography, and internet web site design.

Our Exhibitors Schedule for Oldland Show 2003 is now available, and a copy can be ordered from our web site, [www.oldlandshow.org.uk](http://www.oldlandshow.org.uk) or email [enquiries@oldlandshow.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oldlandshow.org.uk) or telephone Ron Heath on 0117-9325852 or 0117-9049994.

Many thanks for your time, we look forward to hearing from you if you require more information.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Heath,

Oldland Horticultural Society,  
Bristol.

Dear Editor,

*(This reflects something I've wanted to get off my chest for a long time and I know my views are shared by many others.)*

Has the person who runs your 'local' had the by-pass? I'm not referring to anything more serious than the 'personality by-pass' and, sadly, this 'illness' seems very prevalent in Bristol pubs.

You know the sort of person I mean. Very often he, or she, can summon up just about enough enthusiasm to stand at the end of the bar and give a good impression of doing a locum duty for the local undertaker.

They seem most reluctant to pull a pint and any idea of the customer getting a cheery welcome ... well that's simply a dream.

No longer is it fair to call those who allegedly run pubs today 'landlords' – they don't have any idea of what the word means or what the job done properly entails.

Many of them employ far too many staff – simply it seems so they can sit upstairs and watch sport on television. They forget that many regulars go into their local and want to see the 'guvnor' behind the bar and have a chat with him. Many of those who stand behind bars today can't string half a dozen words together to make an interesting sentence let alone start a conversation.

They have no public relations skills or marketing ideas whatsoever that would help their businesses tick along. Many are then taken by surprise to discover that the huge wage bill and dwindling customer base is leading to one thing – and one thing only – closure of the pub. Yes, it does happen. As a customer I've seen this scenario many times.

So where have all the landlords with character gone? I mean the ones who cared about their customers and were genuinely concerned if 'dear old Fred in the corner' didn't come in for his daily pint. Then there were the publicans who *always* opened on time. Many pubs, it appears, are now operated by the "I'll open up when I feel like it" brigade.

I believe the increasing number of pubcos are partly to blame. They'll give anybody a pub (as long as they can put up the 'ingoings' without caring if they can do the job).

The Licensing Justices always questioned potential landlords about their skills before granting a licence. That wasn't in the dark ages but it happened right up until the 1980s.

Perhaps Pints West should run a competition for "Personality Landlord of the Year".

M. Fells,

Clifton, Bristol.

# Prize competitions - win stuff!

## Thirty questions

The answers to all the questions below can be found somewhere in this edition of *Pints West*.

1. Name a cider producer whose products you might find at the Bristol farmers market. ....
2. By what name is the Palace Hotel in Bristol better known? .....
3. Name the only four ingredients that go to make Wickwar BOB .....
4. What beer did internet voters want Abbey Ales to brew? .....
5. In which county does the Hidden Brewery hide out? .....
6. What colour is the Nova Scotia? .....
7. Which month will be CAMRA's Cider and Perry month? .....
8. Which brewery makes Double Chocolate Stout? .....
9. Of which Weston pub is Peter Boyer the landlord? .....
10. Which Wadworth beer is made using fresh green hops? .....
11. What can you do lunchtimes at the Bell in Kingsdown? .....

12. What does Belgium mean to Phil Cummings? .....
13. How much are Hop Back beers at the Coronation on Saturday afternoons? .....
14. Which pub begrudgingly sells Fosters? .....
15. In which Street in Bath can you find the Salamander? .....
16. Name a Devizes brewery .....
17. How many real ales does the Windmill in Portishead sell? .....
18. Who is the managing director of Abbey Ales? .....
19. Which brewery is based in West Hewish? .....
20. Who makes Barleymole as their summer seasonal ale? .....
21. At which bar down by Bristol's Harbourside might you find Deuchars IPA and Bath Ales Gem? .....
22. At which pub can you find the Barn Restaurant? .....
23. Who is the new owner of Butcombe Brewery? .....
24. In which seaside town will you find the Dorothy Inn? .....
25. Which Shirehampton pub hosts a real ale and music festival each year in September? .....

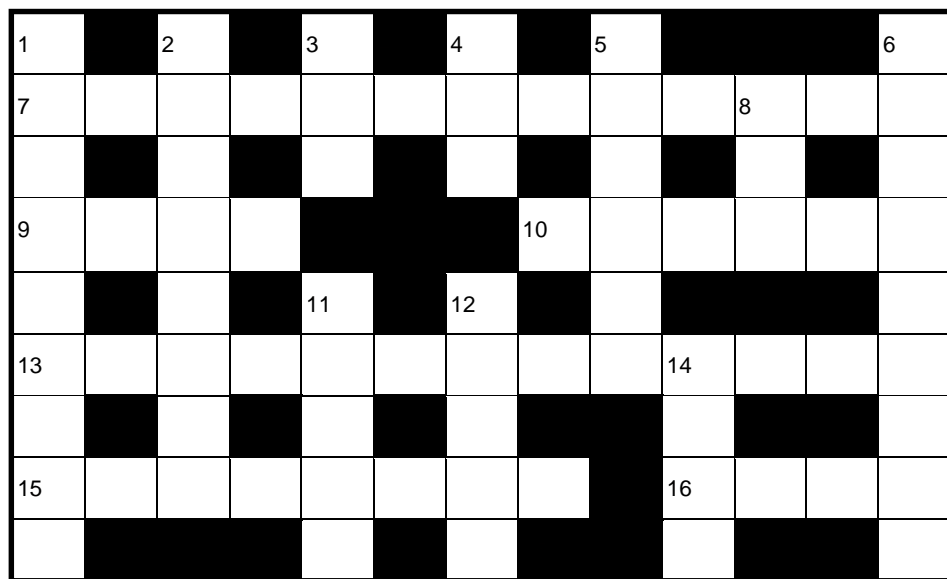
26. Name the pub at Weston-super-Mare train station .....
27. Where is the September Somerset Beer Festival held? .....
28. Which pub do Andy and Heather Harvey run? .....
29. Who supplies "Wook Ale" for the Wookey Hole Inn? .....
30. And finally, where does Ray Bounsall live? .....

Send your solution to either the 30 questions or the crossword to the editor (address on back page) by 1st October 2003. The first correct entry for each drawn at random after that date wins £10 and a copy of the new CAMRA National Inventory.

### Last issue's crossword answers:

Across: 1 Coronation. 5 Drake. 9 Raymond. 10 Dark Mild. 11 Lyte. 13 Bar. 14 Wages. 15 Swan With Two Necks. 18 Triple FFF. 19 Inn. 21 Bristol Brewing Co. 26 Rising. 27 Eco. 28 Bill. 29 Sun. Down: 1 Carters. 2 Royal Oak. 3 Tidy. 4 Old Castle Green. 6 Rampage. 7 Kilderkin. 8 Arc. 12 Tower. 16 Tipple. 17 Ryburn. 20 First. 22 Tuns. 23 Wood. 24 Nob. 25 Call. The winner was **Lin Gilks** from Southville, Bristol who receives £25 to spend on goodies from the CAMRA "shop".

## Crossword by Phil Brooks. A copy of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide will help with some of the answers.



### Across

7. Bristol & District CAMRA's current Pub of the Year. (6,4,3)
- 9,15. Pub in Two Mile Hill, Kingswood. (4,3,5)
10. Which beer is brewed to OG 1041 and

- ABV 4.2% by Trueman's brewery of Marlow? (6)
13. Established in 1698 this Kent brewery is believed to be the oldest continuous brewery in the country. It also brews a nice pint of

Spitfire. (8,5)

15. See 9.

16. Opening in the year 2000 and based in West Peckham, this microbrewery produces Whooper Pale at 3.5% ABV and Trumpster Best at 4% ABV. (4)

### Down

1. At 4.5% ABV what is the pale gold beer with a light fruity aroma brewed by Beowulf brewery of Birmingham? (9)
2. A 54-gallon beer cask. (8)
3. Described as being a light yellow ale with a dry finish, this beer is brewed to 4.4% ABV by Warcop brewery from Wentlooge. (3)
4. At 3.7% ABV what sort of talk do you get from Poachers brewery of Lincolnshire. (3)
5. Pub in Boyces Avenue, Clifton or Cumberland Road, Hotwells. (6)
6. Pub in Seymour Road, Bishopston. (6,3)
8. Pub in Alpha Road, Southville. (3)
11. What is the 3.8% ABV easy drinking session bitter brewed by Hexhamshire brewery of Northumberland? (5)
12. A drinking tour. (5)
14. What sort of life do you get from Blue Moon brewery at 3.8% ABV? (4)

# Pubcos - who are they?

## Part One – National and Regional Concerns

THE brewing and retailing of beer has undergone far-reaching change during the decade or so since the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) issued the Beer Orders in 1989.

One of the major ones is that the "Big Six" British-owned companies who until then owned over 85% of all pubs and bars, as well as dominating brewing, have sold off most of their retail outlets to specialist pub owning companies (pubcos).

Some of these pubcos are relatively small and localised, others are national concerns with huge estates covering whole regions of the country.

Several recent issues of Pints West have featured comment and criticism about "pubcos"; this two-part article is intended to list as many as possible of the ones who own or operate pubs in the Bristol and District CAMRA branch area.

Our knowledge on this fast-moving subject is probably not definitive, and we would be grateful for any additional feedback.

### Enterprise Inns

Cranmore Ave, Shirley, Solihull, W. Midlands

Formed in 1991 with pubs from Bass. In 2002 it bought the former Whitbread tenanted estate from Laurel Inns, and took a 20% stake in New Company, which had bought the Unique pub company and Voyager Inns from Japanese bank Nomura. Has previously acquired pubs from John Labatt Retail, Discovery Inns, Gibbs Mew, Century Inns, and Swallow Inns plus others taking current estate to 3,400 nationally – but still plans to grow to about 6,500. Takes beer from all major

brewers and many regional ones.

### Greene King

Westgate Brewery, Bury St Edmunds

This long established regional brewery celebrated 200 years in brewing in 1999. Following their recent acquisitions of Morland's brewery in Abingdon (which they closed, keeping the pubs), most of Morrell's pubs in the Thames Valley, and the Old English Inns pubco, their national tied estate is over 1,800 pubs including the food-dominated Hungry Horse chain. They also supply around 3,500 Free Houses nationally, many of which they used to own, but sold virtually tied through complex loan agreements. Beers available from brewery generally include all GK branded products but may now also include Morland, Ruddles and Morrell's brands – which are now also being brewed in Westgate St.

### Innspired

Wiltshire Drive, Trowbridge BA14 0TT

This company is the rump of Usher's of Trowbridge, who brewed from 1824 until 2000. After being bought by Grand Metropolitan (owners of Watney's at the time) in 1960, the brewery was the subject of a management buyout in 1991, at which time it acquired around 350 former Courage pubs in exchange for its own tied estate of similar size. Merger with the Alehouse Group of Southampton in 1999 led to brewery closure, and Usher's branded beers are now brewed elsewhere, initially by the Thomas Hardy Brewery of Dorchester. Refresh UK, the company that retails Usher's brands, bought the Wychwood

Brewery of Witney, Oxfordshire in 2002. The Group currently has around 1,000 pubs nationally, with plans to grow to 2,000. Licensees are allowed a wide range of beers, including some local and speciality ales; the choice is wider for those who pay a premium to join an improved scheme.

### Pubmaster

Greenbank, Hartlepool TS24 7QS

Formed in 1991 by Brent Walker to manage the former Cameron's and Tolly Cobbold estates – many early assets

were subsequently sold. Since 1996 a management buy-out and a more aggressive purchasing policy has seen the company grow significantly. Recent acquisitions have been from Mercury Taverns, Swallow Inns, Inn Partnership (was part of Nomura) and White Rose. Currently operating estate of 3,200 pubs. Beers from Coors, Interbrew, Carlsberg-Tetley and various independent brewers including Greene King, Adnam's, Fuller's and Bateman's. Recent discussions confirm range of real ale beers are currently available despite limited takeup by many tenants.

### Punch Group

Founded in 1998 to acquire the Bass brewing company's pubs, by a group team by Hugh Osmond, creator of Pizza Express. Bought Allied Domecq's pub estate in 1999. Now operates about 5,000 pubs. Beers mainly from Tetley, Worthington and a number of regional brewers, with some pubs in estate allowed a much wider range of cask ales to choose from than others. Punch claims its lessees are free to take guest beers, but brewers who want to supply them have to offer substantial discounts to be accepted, and this limits the number who can participate.

### Punch Pub Co

Lincoln House, Wellington Crescent, Lichfield, Staffs

Also includes Inn Business estate and a leased division of Punch Pub Co. Currently owns about 4,000 pubs nationally.

### Scottish Courage (ScotCo)

Fountain House, Edinburgh EH11 1DQ

Formed in 1960 by merger of Scottish Brewers (Younger & McEwan) & Newcastle Breweries. Bought Courage in 1995, Kronenbourg (France) and Alken Maes (Belgian) in 2000. Also owns Hartwall brewery (Finland) and the John Smith, Websters and Theakston ale brands (all in UK). Has been steadily selling off its huge tied estate in recent times to raise money for further brewery purchases. In July 2002 company arranged sale and lease-back scheme for remaining 1,500 pubs.

### Six Continents

Cape Hill, Birmingham B16 0PQ

When Bass sold their brewing interests to Interbrew, they had to rename their pubs division. In 2001 it became Six Continents, and now runs over 2,000 pubs nation-wide, including 550 it bought from Allied Domecq in 1999. Many of these pubs trade as either Vintage Inns, Goose or Ember Inns. Their licensees can choose from a wide selection of beers, especially in Goose branded pubs. Beers

RCH brewery advert



supplied include Bass, Worthington, Adnam's, Fuller's, Greene King plus a number of popular regional brands. There have been rumours about a possible merger with Scot Co pub division (1,500 properties), which would create the country's biggest pub retailer.

### Wetherspoon

PO Box 616, Watford, WD1 1YN

Rapidly expanding themed pub group with about 580 managed pubs. Chief Executive Tim Martin has always liked big venues, regular beer festivals and a policy of selling beer cheap which has helped to make them a popular, contemporary brand within a large section of the drinking community. No music is played in Wetherspoon's pubs (although sister chain Lloyds No 1 do have music); they all have no-smoking areas and food is served all day. Beers supplied from Scot Co plus a range of regional beers including Fuller's and Greene King. Bristol had eight Wetherspoon's at last count, some of which offer a good range of West Country microbreweries' beers. They also have spring and autumn beer festivals, with up to 30 real ales available over a weekend.

### Where are the local brewers?

Although there are currently dozen or so small independent micro-brewers within a 30-mile radius of Bristol, you will not see many of their beers in the majority of the area's pubs. The size of discounts being demanded by pub companies makes it virtually impossible for most small local brewers to gain access to most of the market. Instead you will normally only find their products on sale in true Free Houses. Fortunately for some local drinkers many of the current wave of small brewers have purchased at least one public bar and so have assured some regular local sales despite the vagaries of the "open market". Unfortunately their future growth is threatened by the stranglehold placed upon the rest of the market by the increasingly dominant pub groups.

### What can you do as a drinker?

1. **Support your local pub.**
2. Ask the landlord to stock quality real ale from a range of brewers (quality is the key word).
3. **If a pub claims to be FREE but does not offer much beer choice then ask the owner if they have considered other local brewers.**
4. If a pub is tied or part of a pubgroup and the landlord has no immediate options, then write to the pub company about the beers you like.
5. **Don't accept bland indifferent beers.**

*Norman Spalding*

# Obscured by cider

## A Yorkshireman samples the apple beverage

THE chance of a stroll round south Bristol with some seasoned cider campaigners sounded like a pleasant change so, large cooked breakfast on board, I arrived at **The Apple Tree** in Philip Street, Bedminster on a blazing hot Saturday lunchtime. This is a very small and characterful pub serving Taunton Traditional Cider to appreciative locals.

A familiar CAMRA face soon joined me and we found a seat. Next to arrive was one of the Cider Sisters whose writing regularly graces Pints West. It would be fair to say she made an impact on one of the pub regulars as he immediately informed her that she could be his next wife. She declined his kind offer with good grace and we introduced ourselves (the familiar CAMRA face having served her at the cider bar at the Bristol Beer Festival) and began to tipple the worzel nectar. The other Cider Sister was unfortunately unavailable.

We eventually found more of our crew in the pub garden and had another round of cider to refresh us before the six of us made the short walk to **The Grosvenor Arms** at 3 Coronation Road (near Asda). Here the very welcoming staff served more Taunton Traditional Cider to us. This was another traditional pub with a friendly atmosphere and the locals were enjoying England's victory over the All Blacks on the television.

Our next stop was **The Coronation** in Dean Lane where they serve Janet's Jungle Juice, an award-winning cider from Westcroft. This pub serves an excellent range of Hopback beers too, but the cider was rather special and much appreciated by all. Conversation was becoming more animated by now and the Cider Sister pronounced that people not living in the West Country were mad, as all sensible people should live in the scrumpy heartland. The hallucinogenic qualities of cider were also discussed, as well as how to recognise off cider; it can turn into either cheese or vinegar apparently.

A slightly longer walk took us to **The Avon Packet** at 185-187 Coronation Road, where a round of Thatcher's dry cider was quickly ordered. This was another fine pub where we were made to

feel very welcome by the staff and customers. We sat in the pub garden where ducks are kept in a fenced pond. The sun continued to shine and we had another cider, except for one person who had two. We also had some chips.

My notes for the trip become somewhat less clear at this point so here they are in full to convey the general atmosphere: "I think and it's out of my mouth – Freya. Walters' hair has gone funny. Scrumpy aids trade union recruitment. Freya = talking and drinking in perfect equilibrium. Norwegian blood. Sensual moment. Yoghurt for breakfast. Is that a pit bull?"

At this point a second wind lifted us out of The Packet and we crossed the River Avon, luckily using a bridge. My notes now stop completely but I will trust my memory. Two people headed for home but four of us actually made it to **The Orchard** in Hanover Place (off Cumberland Road), where Cheddar Valley cider was drunk with gusto. This was another excellent and friendly pub hidden away somewhere on Spike Island. We again sat outside in glorious weather. The final pint was really tasty and then I think a bubble car driven by a small elf drove us all home; early Pink Floyd was on the tape deck.

I can thoroughly recommend cider as a refreshing change from beer. Thanks to all concerned for a great day out and the Cider Sister for her infectious enthusiasm for the apple beverage. I am converted and await the next CAMRA cider summons with eager anticipation.

*Rob Wilson*

Eurobeer advert



# Belgium means Beer

THERE are not many things that can get you out of bed at 6 o'clock on a Sunday morning, but a trip to Belgium is one of them!

Leaving Bristol at 7 a.m. in the company of fellow beer enthusiast Vince Murray, and travelling via the Euro tunnel, we were in the Hotel Ibis Opera in Gent by 12.30 p.m. A quick change and we took a train out to **Denderleeuw**, an unremarkable small town on the edge of Brabant, but which features the excellent **Heeren Van Liederkerke**, sited in Kasteelstraat. A longer than expected (30 minutes) walk later, and we were in this, one of the most highly rated bars in Belgium. One of the delights of Belgian bars is the complete lack of conformity, with every bar being different.

The Heeren is a case in point. An L-shaped wooden dining room is complemented by a large patio area and garden. Curiously, the normally unused fireplace near the bar was being used to raise three chicks, which were chirping away quite happily! A tremendous beer list is available, and we sampled many superb rarities, including *Drie Fonteinen Framboos*, *Hanssens Kriek*, *Lindemans Fond Gueuze* and my personal favourite, the awesome *Westvleteren blond*. This was the first time we had tried the junior Westvleteren beer, and as it proved on this trip, the only time.

Many more bars now have Westvleteren on their beer menus, but as we found it's not always available as supplies are very limited (you have to go to the abbey and buy it off the monks, and three cases is all you are allowed!).

When, after a splendid couple of hours, we asked if we could order a taxi to take us back to the station we were told the nearest taxi firms were in Brussels, so one of the owners gave us a lift back to the station, adding superb service to superb beer and food. We shall definitely return!

On the return train journey we stopped to slake our thirst at the **Post House at Wetteren**, literally across the road from the station. An unremarkable and pretty scruffy exterior means you are unprepared for a totally unexpected interior – all done in very dark wood, with a very extravagant carved wood bar, and extensive old-looking murals all around, chequered tiled floor and a large 1930's style kitchen range in the middle of the floor!

The beer list proved of good quality, with *de Koninck* and *Westmalle Dubbel* on draught and 35 bottled beers – including no less than ten Trappist beers, including Westvleteren (sadly not available), gueuzes, krieks and lambics.

For Monday we had decided to go to **Beersel**, where we visited the wonderful *Drie Fonteinen*, a 10-minute walk uphill from the train station. It's located at Herman Teirlinckplein (opposite the church) and is one of a small and decreasing number of

bars where they prepare their own beers, the styles available including faro, kriek, & gueuze. Of course, all had to be sampled and they proved to be excellent.

A slightly forbidding post-war style dining room with wood predominating gives way to a delightful courtyard, with a large function room and typically interesting Flemish toilets! The place has a business-like air about it, and although most of the customers were having lunch we were quite welcome to just sit and drink, and when the time came to eat, a simple large plate of frites with home made mayonnaise was rustled up with efficiency, although the usual standard of cuisine here is rather more complex!



A train back to **Brussels** and a visit to **Lop Lop**, a characterful and slightly run-down bar. The friendly barman recommended the house beer *Malheur*, which when it arrived I found to be 12 per cent!

On to **Mort Subite**, a fascinating turn of the century style beer hall, and then the **Bier Circus** at rue de L'Enseignement – unpretentious but with a very strong beer list, including the rare sight of *Du Pont* on draft and many other rarities. Rated by critics as the best in Brussels, so who are we to disagree? Good snacks too are a feature, including a good line in Belgian cheese platters for 7 Euros. The European rock music makes a change from the appalling fare that sadly seems to pass for music at many Belgian bars, and there are shared toilets in the Flemish fashion.

In contrast to this most impressive pub was **Brasseurs**, also impressive, but a modern and very smart brewery/bistro built with the tourist in mind where much thought and money have gone into everything, except sadly the beer, which could have passed for any anonymous Euro-lager.



Tuesday was time to return to **Antwerp**, worth visiting just to see the railway station, an incredible gothic pile. We visited the cathedral to see the two Rubens masterpieces within and then repaired to the **t'Paters Vaetje**, a pleasant bar yards from the cathedral.

Also nearby is the amazing **Elfde Gebod**, surely unique as a religious theme bar, being decorated with a bewildering

array of quasi-religious icons, a pulpit included!

Well worth a visit is **Waaagstuk**, north of the cathedral at Stadswaag and situated in a pleasant square. It encloses a yard of its own which passes as an outside drinking area. Very smart inside, an excellent beer list included all the Trappist beers. We tried the *Zeppelin*, a dark sweet 8 per cent stout specially brewed for the bar to commemorate an alleged attack on the area in the first World War by an airship. It was slightly disconcerting being served by a barman who was a dead ringer for Fred Durst from the rock band Limp Biskit, but "Fred" certainly knew his beer, with each drink being poured with great care at the table for us.

After visiting the pleasant **Oud Arsenaal** we headed to the justly famous **Kulminator** in Vleminkveld, surely as close to heaven as most beer lovers will ever get. As I had signed the guest book on my previous visit I was able to use the free pint of draught beer voucher, which the bar had sent for my birthday!

A beer menu of great length with many aged beers is the major attraction here, many beers being listed by year. I tried a 1997 *Chimay Blue*, which was far smoother and creamier than the current beer, for me confirming the suspicion many beer lovers hold that Chimay is not what it used to be. Among the other superb beers we tried was a *St. Benoit Bruin* from 1994, *Achel Extra* and, perhaps best of all, a *Westvleteren Rood* from 1996. This is the style they dropped to produce the new equally superb blond beer. Why not brew both!

We saved **Gent** for the evenings, and visited several favourites; the best two bars in Ghent continue to be the **Trappistenhuis** on Brabantdam and the **Waterhuis aan de Bierkant**, on the riverbank at Groentenmarkt.

But surely the strangest bar in Gent, Belgium or anywhere else, is the **Velootje**. If you dare to push aside the heavy curtain which covers the entrance, from which emanates very peculiar music, you enter an incredibly cluttered, dark room. Almost the only source of light is from a fire stoked regularly by the owner, a gentleman seemingly as eccentric as his bar. The walls, ceiling, and in fact every corner of the room including the series of narrow benches which serve as seating, are covered in an astonishing amount of bric-a-brac, with old bicycles and ironwork predominating. The mind boggles as to how any place could ever get into such a state, let alone become a bar! Any British Environmental Health Officer would have a heart attack, but of course this is part of the charm of the place. If you risk a visit to the gent's toilets, remember to duck to avoid the two bikes hanging from the ceiling! The beer list includes *Orval*, a particular favourite of the author, although



Photo

The Kulminator in Vleminckveld, as close to heaven as most beer lovers will ever get.

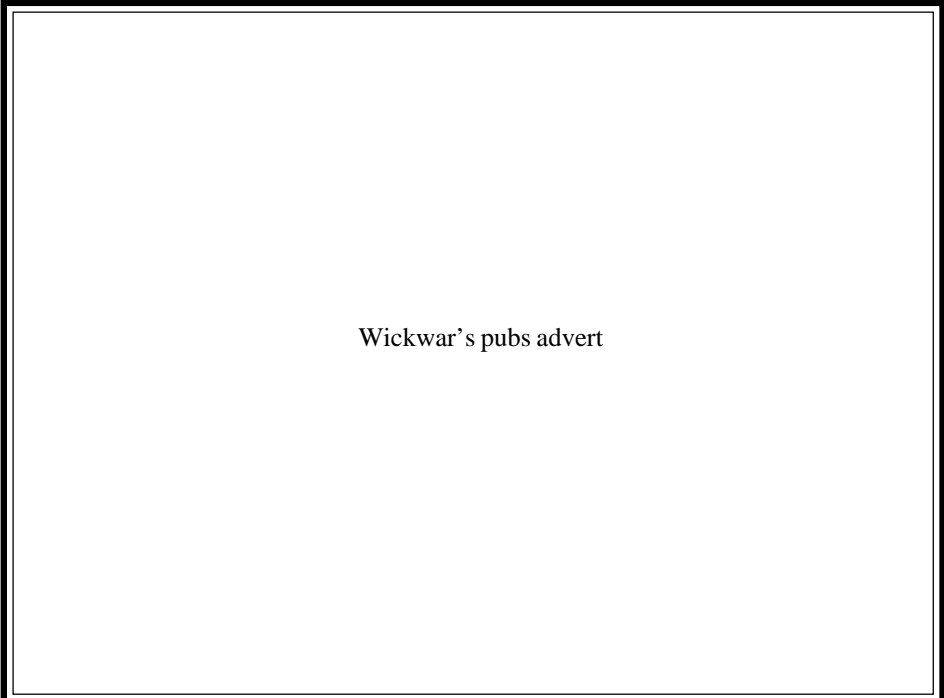
this was served at room temperature, unusual but perhaps in keeping with the strange surroundings!

On our last day we headed to Roselare to visit the Yves Streekbieren beer warehouse. After a longer than expected search we arrived to find it closed, the opening hours having been changed. The time consumed in finding it also ruled out a visit to Westvleteren, where we were planning to get some beer from the abbey, so with time running out we headed down the N38, going past Ypres and Poperinge and their doleful, neat cemeteries and made a dash for *Noel Cuvelier's*, a pleasantly quaint farm shop very close to the French border at Abele. An excellent range of beer was within, and also

local farm produce plus several brewery cheeses including Chimay (cheese making and brewing seem to go hand-in-hand for many Belgian breweries).

The excellent **Good Beer Guide to Belgium & Holland** by Tim Webb, now in its fourth edition, was an essential companion on our travels, as was the **Selected Guide to Brussels Bars** by Stephen D'Arcy (very strong on directions, and it covers many other Belgian towns in addition to Brussels). Don't cross the Belgian border without them! Driving back past Ypres and Poperinge, we were reminded that there is happily still much of Flanders and Belgium left for us to explore – we can't wait!

*Phil Cummings*



Wickwar's pubs advert

# Pub and Brewery News

Michael Blake, who ran the **Cornubia** for a few of years, has left to go travelling and to have a break from the pub trade. But fear not, the beers there are still excellent under the stewardship of the new manager, Luke Woodbury. The pub is still doing four ever-changing real ales, often featuring a dark one, and is still a rare outlet for the occasional real perry (at other times there may be a real cider).

Also, gone from the **Reckless Engineer** at Temple Meads is long-serving landlord Gary, who is also planning to have a break from dealing with the Punch Group.

The **Cotham Porter Stores** on Cotham Road South is under new management. Incoming licensee and former customer Andy has freshened up the decoration inside and is working on the outside as I am writing this. Well known for its cider, he has kept on the good value Thatcher's Traditional and Cheddar Valley Red but has now improved things on the real ale side. Recently there were two real ales on, Spitfire and Bombardier, and they've gone down well with the customers.

There's been another change in licensee at the **Eldon House** off Jacob's Well Road, where it appears that Innspired had asked the previous tenants to leave. Seems habit-forming. We wish the new people well.

**Channings Hotel** on Pembroke Road, Clifton has fully reopened after an overhaul.

The pub which has probably changed names more than any other in Bristol, has yet another new name. **Bar Tiny** on St. Michael's Hill, Kingsdown is the latest sign outside what was recently the High Society Café Bar and what many people used to know as the Royal Fort. It's also been known as the Howlin' Wolf and the Highbury Tavern, amongst other names.

A sign has gone up outside the old tram shed on Colston Street in Bristol proclaiming the coming of a new restaurant and brewery. To be called the **Zero Degrees**, it will probably brew just for the restaurant. There is one Blackheath, London, which opened in 2000 and now produces up to six beers.

Also making the local press is the plan to open a micro-brewery on the site of the old **Ashton Brewery** in Bedminster. Architect George Ferguson would like to be able to brew beer to sell in his nearby establishment, the Tobacco Factory arts centre.

*Pete Tanner*

# Latest news from Smiles

SMILES has been selected by Asda as one of four brewers in a recent national bottled ale competition. They should feature in every store within the UK from the beginning of September for a six to eight week period with a new package called "Bristol Imperial". At 5.2 per cent ABV, it's a new product at the higher end of the strength spectrum and uses the Bristol City Coat of Arms, bringing local heritage into their brands as with Bristol IPA which they launched last year.

Smiles are now to be found at Calais, France. They have forged a partnership with a company called "Planete Soif" who handle huge amounts of packaged ales for the Channel trade. They anticipate selling quite a lot of Best, Heritage and Bristol IPA, the latter of which is now being produced in 500 ml and 660 ml bottles.

During August and September Smiles will be re-introducing "Anniversary Ale" back into the trade following its success in April, when they celebrated their 25th anniversary. Apparently the forward orders look promising.

The Smiles annual AGM is scheduled for 10th October. For the third year running Smiles will be able to report many successes in the 2002 / 2003 year. As always, they expect many shareholders to join them on the day.

There have been a few changes of face, mostly in the sales area, all of whom are now familiar with their regular customers in and around Bristol. The Brewery remains in the capable hands of Neville Mort as Head Brewer, with Chris Thurgason and Alex Keen as lead and second brewer respectively.

With Tony Haynes running the brewery tours, they have passed the 2,200 mark for the number of ale enthusiasts visiting the brewery during the year!

*Richard Brooks*



## Flexible pubs hours only one step away

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, recently welcomed the progression of the Licensing Bill through both Houses of Parliament. The Bill will now go forward for Royal Assent.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns, said "After years of campaigning we're only one step away from dumping Britain's archaic licensing laws and moving to a more flexible system. Pubs will soon find it easier to extend their opening hours to meet the needs of their customers."

CAMRA is calling for all sectors of the beer and pubs industry to embrace the Bill and work with the Government and Licensing Authorities.

Benner added, "It's essential that the transition to the new system is made as smooth and painless as possible and this will require a partnership between the authorities and the trade."

Butcombe advert

Smiles advert



# Thrills and Spills at the Great British Beer Festival

Great British Beer Festival

London Olympia

5th-9th August 2003

***Don't miss out on the best beer festival in the world – make sure you put this year's festival in your diary.***

As well as a huge range of British and international cask and bottled beer, plus real cider and perry, you will find a wide selection of food available throughout the festival. It promises a great festival atmosphere, with plenty to entertain you including pub quizzes, traditional pub games such as skittles, roving entertainers, live music, tombolas and auctions.

There is also a Family Room, though please bear in mind that youngsters under 18 must be supervised by a family member. If you want to find out more about beer you could attend one of our tutored tastings hosted by beer experts which run throughout the festival and cover a number of different beer styles.

## So Much Beer

Where else could you find such a great choice? The Great British Beer Festival has the largest variety of draught beers under one roof in the world. Real ales from some of the smallest microbrewers to some of the most well-known brands in the UK are all on sale throughout the festival. The festival is the place to be if you love beer!

You will be able to sample a huge range of different beer styles. So what could we tempt you with? Do you fancy something dry and refreshing or full and malty? Smooth and chocolaty or fruity and hoppy? Whatever you prefer, you are sure to find the flavour you enjoy, as well as the opportunity to try something different.

There will be around 450 different ales, which are divided into the national and regional bars. Why not go on a tour of Great Britain, all under one roof!

## Delicious Cider and Perry

Lovers of traditional cider and perry – or the curious with little experience of the real thing – will find the Cider & Perry Bar providing a wide selection of drinks that were being quaffed in Britain before hops hopped across from the Low Countries to give us beer as we now know it.

Cider and perry is in danger of being replaced by characterless fizz but don't despair – the real thing is still out there. The delicious produce at the festival Cider &

GBBF poster

Perry Bar is proof that the small producers are right to stick to their belief that quality is most important.

Some of the best traditional cider and perries can be bought at the farm gate – if you can find the farm. With its Cider & Perry Bar, the Great British Beer Festival is the biggest farm gate around!

If you'd like to find out more about cider and perry, talk to the bar staff who care about what they drink and will be happy to help you find something to suit your taste.

## International Beer

So what, you may ask, is CAMRA doing selling foreign beer at the Great British Beer Festival? Well, there are many reasons why it is important to showcase beers from around the world at the Great British Beer Festival and you will find most of them at this year's Bières Sans Frontières bar.

The quality and range of beers from Germany, Belgium, Italy, USA, Czech Republic, Russia, The Netherlands and more will be enough to convince anyone that there's a lot of good beer out there. The growth of beer tourism has meant that an increasing number of the drinking public has been able to extend their drinking experience and at the same time support the indigenous brewing industries.

Bières Sans Frontières has grown in size over the years and has been able to introduce

many new beers to the British market. We were the first to sell cask-conditioned beer from America and Italy. Many of the 'New World' brewers approach brewing with a desire to show innovation and experimentation in brewing. For example you will find the delicate use of unusual herbs and spices, the unusual combinations of flavours, the unfamiliar hops.

## Champion Beer of Britain

Each year the Champion Beer of Britain is judged at the Great British Beer Festival and represents the consumers' choice.

Beers are judged within the following categories: Milds, Bitters, Best Bitters, Strong Bitters, Speciality Beers and Real Ale in a Bottle. The 2002 Champion was Caledonian Deuchars IPA (the first ever Scottish winner).

The 2003 Champion Beer of Britain will be announced on Tuesday, 5th August and should be available throughout the festival.

## Get Tutored

Tutored beer tastings are run throughout the festival. They provide you with the opportunity to taste beer like experts and really appreciate the different tastes and aromas. All tickets are £9 for CAMRA members and £10 for non-members.

This year we are running more tutored beer tastings than ever before, so if you want to improve your beer appreciation skills then you've come to the right place! Tastings this year run from 5th to 8th August and are led by an array of beer experts:

- Tuesday 6.30pm: Czech Beer tasting with Roger Protz hosted by Budweiser Budvar.
- Wednesday 12.30pm: 2003 Champion Beer of Britain tasting with Roger Protz.
- Wednesday 6.30pm: 2003 Champion Beer of Britain tasting with Roger Protz.
- Thursday 12.30pm: Belgian Saison Beer tasting with Tim Webb.
- Thursday 6.30pm: US Craft Beer tasting with Michael Jackson.
- Friday 12.30pm: German Pils tasting with Tom Perera.
- Friday 6.30pm: Kriek tasting with Lorenzo Dabove.

Bookings are now being taken so please contact CAMRA to reserve a ticket for any of the tastings on 01727 867201. Please book early to avoid disappointment as some of these tasting sessions will sell out very quickly.

Tue 5 Aug	5pm-10.30pm	£6 (CAMRA members £5)
Wed 6 Aug	12 noon-10.30pm	£6 (CAMRA members £5)
Thu 7 Aug	12 noon-10.30pm	£6 (CAMRA members £5)
Fri 8 Aug	12 noon-10.30pm	£6 (CAMRA members £5)
Sat 9 Aug	11am-7pm	£5 (CAMRA members £4)

**Season tickets also available for all sessions for £17.50 (CAMRA members £15)**

Tickets available on the door, or book on-line at [www.gbbf.org](http://www.gbbf.org)  
You can also telephone CAMRA during office hours to buy your ticket – 01727 867201

## DIARY



Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA.

See page 14 for the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch diary and contacts.

**Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> August.** Committee meeting at the **Cornubia**, Temple Street, Bristol, 8:00 p.m.

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August.** Preliminary Pints West planning meeting and social drink at the **Gin Palace** (Palace Hotel), West Street, Old Market, Bristol, 8:00 p.m.

**Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> August.** Branch meeting at **Horts**, Broad Street, Bristol, 8:00 p.m.

Branch meetings are generally held on the fourth Wednesday of the month and are open to all members (and would-be members).

Committee meetings are usually the second Wednesday of the month. They are open meetings in that any branch member can attend, space permitting, as an observer (rather than as a participant).

For more information on local events either attend our branch meetings or check the diary section on our web site [www.camrabristol.org.uk](http://www.camrabristol.org.uk)



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

This contains information on the local branch and the Campaign for Real Ale generally, as well as details of forth-coming meetings, socials and other activities. The web site is regularly updated and so is the best place to find out about any last minute changes to arrangements as well as some of the latest real ale related stories. **Past editions of Pints West can be viewed there!**

Check out also the independent pub web site [www.britishpubguide.com](http://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.

## PINTS WEST

- ☐ **TO ADVERTISE IN PINTS WEST** call Steve Plumridge in the first instance, evenings or weekends, on (0117) 9743242. (Email: [steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk))
- ☐ **LETTERS** can be sent to:   
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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).
- ☐ **SEVEN THOUSAND COPIES** of Pints West are distributed free to pubs in and around the cities of Bristol and Bath.
- ☐ **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** To be put on a mailing list send a cheque for £2 to the editor (payable to Steve Plumridge) for the next four issues. (Rate applies in the UK only.)
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Pints West 59

Bristol & District (AVN)

## CAMRA MEMBERSHIP GIVES

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

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

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

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

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

Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque payable to CAMRA, to:

Bristol & District CAMRA Membership Secretary,  
238 High Kingsdown, Bristol BS2 8DG.

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

Name(s).....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

Email.....

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

I enclose a cheque for .....

Date of birth .....

Signature .....

Date.....

Where did you pick up this copy of Pints West?

